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DETECTIVE STORY

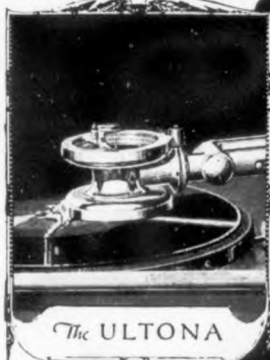
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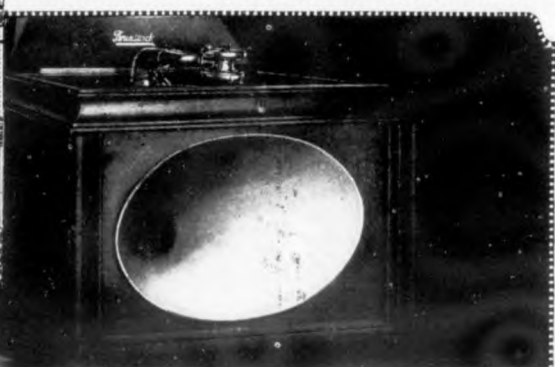
John A. Ketchum

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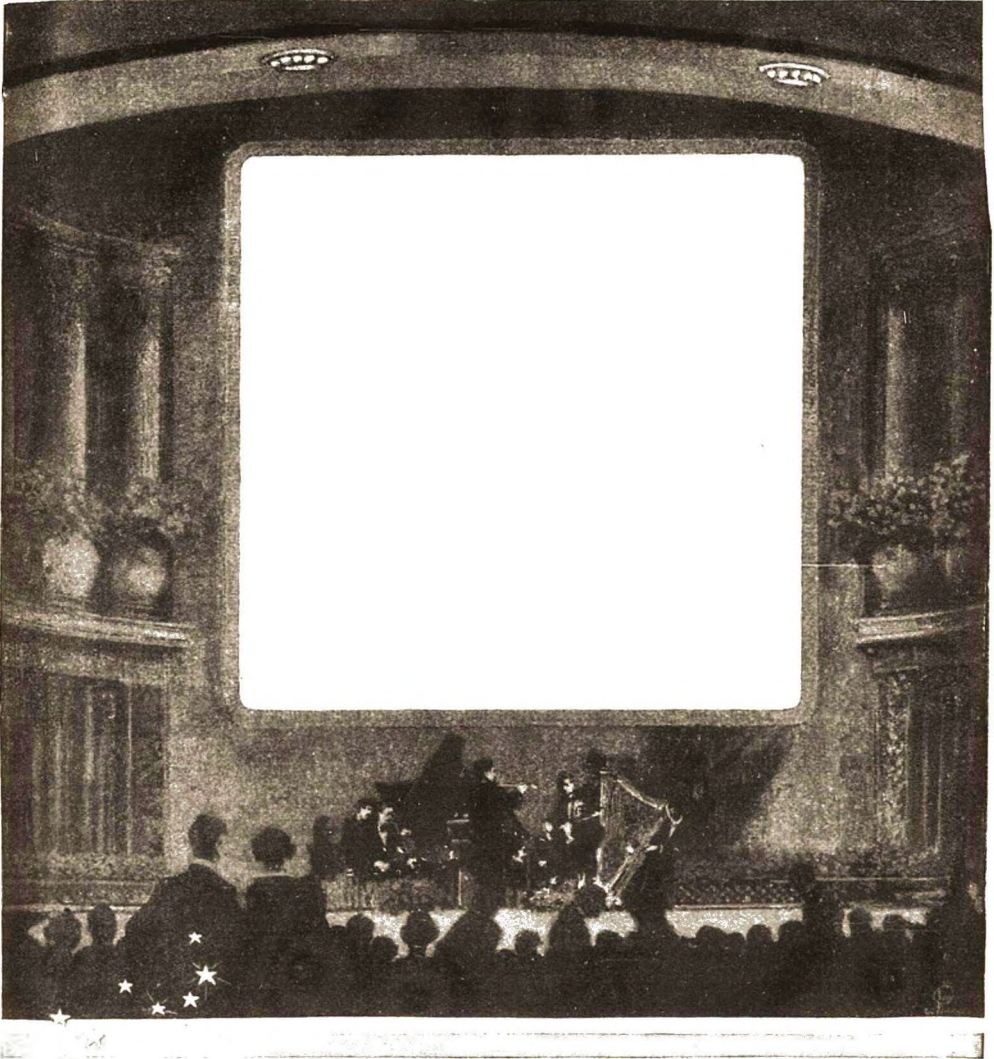
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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY TUESDAY

Vol. XXVII

November 4, 1919

No. 4

The Curse on the House of Carson

by Ernest M. Poate

Author of the "Doctor Bentiron" Stories, etc.

CHAPTER I.

IT APPEARS.

THE porter approached with the insinuating manner of his kind.

"'Most to Dunkirk, sah," he murmured, and wagged his whisk broom invitingly.

Arthur Ward rose, stretching legs which still ached from the lack of their accustomed puttees, and submitted to the deft ministrations of the white-jacketed negro, who covered much surface and removed little dirt, as usual. But he brushed vigorously and long, thereby advertising his hope of an extra tip. The railroad administration, powerful as it is, has not yet changed the nature of Pullman porters.

1D DS

As the train rolled through a wide street, a row of low shops on one side and the blue of Lake Erie on the other, a gratified negro picked up Ward's kit bag and started for the platform.

"Right here, sah!" He bowed delightedly as the braked wheels screamed to a stop. "Dunkirk, sah."

Descending, Ward looked about curiously, wondering who his unknown hosts might be; not the sort who demand first-hand stories of the war, he hoped. That girl in yellow, now with the gray-bearded man—she looked just like folks. And—yes, they were looking for some one; they were coming toward him!

The stranger gave him a keen look from gray-green eyes.

"Mr. Ward?" he queried, sweeping off his hat.

Ward bowed, his eyes on the tall, graceful girl.

"I am Carson," said the other, thrusting out a sinewy hand. "Glad you could come. My daughter, Alice."

The girl smiled at him from friendly black eyes. "I hope you will like us," said she. "You must have wondered what you were getting into."

"I shall always be grateful to the Red Cross for sending me to you," answered Ward, so warmly that she flushed and dropped her eyes.

"Come along, children," the gray-bearded man interposed. "We've thirty miles to drive. Had your supper, Ward?"

"I ate on the train," answered he.

"Well, come on, then," urged Carson, picking up the kit bag. "Got a trunk?"

"No," replied Ward, "and no clothes to put into one; that is, none but Uncle Sam's."

Carson was hurrying toward the waiting room. He was an uneasy man, abrupt and nervous; even his curious pale eyes were unquiet. Ward followed more leisurely with the girl.

They walked through the station, and toward a line of motor cars parked at an angle, hoods toward the curb. At one end, Carson fidgeted beside a big, four-passenger roadster, painted yellow. He had already stowed away the bag.

"Climb in," he urged. "It will be dark long before we get to Bemus, in spite of daylight saving."

The girl smiled indulgently. "We've lots of time," she declared. "But father's always in a hurry. We thought this would be so much easier for you than to go to Jamestown. You'd have had to change in Buffalo and take a stuffy local. This way you could come right through from New York—and it's only a thirty-mile drive to the lake."

"The lake?" queried Ward. "But that's right here, isn't it?"

"Oh, this is Erie. We're on Chautauqua, you know."

"Climb in," directed Carson once more. He was already in the driver's seat.

So the two young people bestowed themselves in the rear, and the motor started with a smooth hum which caused Ward to lean forward, listening.

"That's a *regular* engine," he approved.

With a grinding of gears and a sharp jerk the big car started. Alice frowned. "It's a good car," she declared, "when I drive. Father's too nervous."

Indeed Carson drove badly. He sat stiffly upright, clutching the wheel with both hands, his gray beard showing on this side and that as he watched the traffic. After a mile or two of brick, the big car lurched and swayed over a stretch of rough, ruddy dirt road, then emerged upon a wide, graveled highway. Its driver stepped on the accelerator.

Ward leaned back with a contented sigh, and turned to his pretty seatmate.

"It's a beautiful country," said he. "Do you live near here, Miss Carson?"

"Oh, no," she replied. "We're from Minnesota—just spending the summer on the lake. It's our first year here. Father didn't want to come, but I made him. I've always wanted to see Chautauqua Lake. But my name isn't Carson; it's Macy. He's only my stepfather, really. Now tell me all about yourself." And she settled herself comfortably to listen.

The boy chuckled. "That's a large order," he replied. "I went over there, and stayed long enough to get three stripes on one sleeve and one on the other. I saw some of France, and a little of Germany; I was in the Army of Occupation, you know. And for the rest of it, I peeled a lot of potatoes,

and dug a few ditches, and heard a gun go off once in a while. And I didn't get any decorations, and no French generals ever kissed me on both cheeks—but the sergeant major told me where to get off more than once. And when I got my discharge at Camp Upton last week I was kind of lost—I haven't any relatives, you see, nor any friends nearer than Denver. And then a Red Cross worker told me you folks wanted to entertain a returned soldier who hadn't any friends in the East. I was awfully glad to come; and now that I've seen you I'm gladder still."

Miss Macy smiled, her black eyes soft. "It was mother's idea," she confessed. "I didn't like it—at first. But—I hope you'll enjoy it with us," she finished, blushing.

"I'm sure to," declared Ward firmly.

And so they talked, the dark head and the light one coming closer and closer, while the car sped on through deepening shadows.

They swayed and bumped through another town, and went on slowly and uncertainly. Presently, at a fork in the road, Carson brought the car to a stop. The two in the back seat did not notice it until he stepped on the cut-out and raced the idling motor. At its racket the girl looked up, startled.

"Thought you were asleep," grumbled her father over his shoulder. It was quite dark; the shadow of his thick beard moved up and down to the words. "Which way here, Alice?"

"To the right," she directed. "It's better that way. Father doesn't drive much," she explained as the car rolled on. "And this is the first time he's been out this way since we came to the lake."

They swung into a wide macadam road, and sped silently on through the dark. Now they began to meet car after car; the road seemed alive with them. Bright headlights roared into view and swept past in a blinding glare

which made the succeeding blackness more intense. Carson muttered to himself, crouching over the wheel.

The two leaned forward a little, watching the dimly seen road ahead. In the blaze of their spotlight trees and bushes sprang into view, raced toward them and vanished as the lights swept on. To the left a pair of white stone pillars, ghostly in the blue glare, showed briefly.

"Oh, dear!" cried Alice, clutching involuntarily at Ward's hand. "That's the Lakeside Park road. I forgot! I drove father out this far last week, and he got awfully upset; said the road wasn't safe, and made me promise never to come this way again. We ought to have gone by the main road. Let's just keep quiet, and he'll never know. Things look so different at night."

They swung around a great curve. The spotlight touched an old, battered car standing idle at the side of the road.

"Look at that boat!" cried Ward, unconsciously raising his voice. "It's like the ghost of the very first auto!"

Not quite the first, perhaps; but it had the low, angular hood and wind-shield braces of fifteen years ago. Its tires were flat, and a high, canopy top flapped mournfully in the lake breeze. Beside it stood a single motionless figure, shrouded in a long gray coat.

So much they saw in one instantaneous glance as the big roadster rushed on. Then, almost abreast of the strange car, Carson turned his head, screamed shrilly, like a woman, and threw up both hands.

For a breath the speeding auto kept the road; then, on a curve, it swayed and crashed into the ditch, racing straight for a great maple tree.

Alice cried out, catching at the seat. Ward was conscious only of a humorous wonder that he should have sur-

vived two years of war to meet death thus.

CHAPTER II.

A NIGHT RIDE.

SO they sat, frozen, for an instant that seemed century long; then Ward sprang forward, reaching over his host's half-prostrate form, and snatched at the unguided wheel. With desperate strength he twisted it, scraping the line of trees so closely that a fender crumpled and one light went out in a tinkle of broken glass. But the car swung obediently and lurched back through the ditch into the road. Ward closed the hand throttle, reached far over and snapped off the ignition. The car rolled on, slower and slower, and stopped at the crest of a little rise.

"Phew!" sighed Ward, wiping a heated brow. Then he leaped out and opened the forward door. Carson lay huddled back in the seat, apparently half fainting. His teeth chattered audibly.

"Did you see it, too?" he whispered.

"See what?" asked Ward. "I didn't see anything but a battered old auto with some one standing beside it. What's the trouble? Are you sick?"

The older man ignored the question. "You called it a ghost," he said; "I heard you."

"Why," stammered Ward, perplexed by his manner, "I was joking."

"It was a ghost," declared the other. "A ghost!" He clutched Ward's arm. "Some one was standing by it—but *did you see the other two?*" It was a shrill, agonized whisper. Without waiting for a reply the sick man raised himself and looked about.

"Alice!" he called with an accent of helpless anger, and the girl came forward. "Alice—this is the Lakeside Park road!"

"I forgot, father," said she apologetically.

Carson groaned. "You forgot," he

repeated. "It's too late now—too late now!" His anguished voice broke on a sob; he looked over his shoulder, shuddering. "What're you doing?" he complained. "I can't stay here—I'm sick! Get in—drive me home—take me away! Oh, take me away—quick, quick—before they come!"

Alice looked helplessly at the younger man, her face ivory-white against the dark. "What shall we do?" she whispered.

Ward looked his host over shrewdly; he had seen stark fright before. "His nerve's gone," he whispered back. "Better humor him. Get him home as quickly as you can, and then give him a stiff drink—if you can find one, these prohibition days."

Together they lifted the broken man and helped him into the back seat. There he slumped spinelessly down and had to be propped with Ward's bag and overcoat. Then Alice took the wheel, and Ward climbed in beside her. He noted approvingly that her hands were quite steady, though her face was drawn and pale.

The big roadster started smoothly, answering to the touch of an accustomed hand, and began to race on, swifter and swifter, its one remaining light casting a long beam of radiance.

As it happened, their mishap had been on a road deserted save for that one mysterious car; but now they began to meet one after another—swift, roaring monsters, fiery-eyed, that hurtled past to the accompaniment of a light laugh or a half-heard snatch of song. But there was no merry-making in the yellow roadster.

Presently Alice turned a somber face toward her seatmate. "What do you suppose was the matter?" she asked anxiously. "Could it have been some sort of a stroke?"

"No," replied Ward bluntly. "The man was scared."

The girl shook her head. "I blame

myself," said she. "Father seems to hate this road for some reason. We should have gone the other way; but I never thought when I directed him. But I can't understand why seeing that old car should have upset him so.

Above the clear, low song of the speeding motor sounded a rattling roar, drawing rapidly nearer, although the speedometer registered forty-five miles an hour.

For the rear Carson clamored: "Hurry, Alice, hurry! Don't you hear them? They're coming, I tell you—coming after me!" Frenzied, he rose in his seat, shaking her shoulder, so that the car began to sway.

Ward broke the grip of the panic-stricken man's arm and eased his chattering host back. Even as he did so, the racket mounted deafeningly, and a motor cycle shot by, open exhaust rattling like a battery of machine guns, its rider goggled and wrapped to the semblance of some monstrous bug.

Carson dropped back, sobbing in relief; but there was no more talk in the front seat now. Alice drove faster and faster, her face showing set and strained in the dim light of the dashboard lamp, and the great machine leaped over the smooth road like some live thing rejoicing in its speed. They sped recklessly through the town of Westfield, and up a long, steep hill at whose crest began a splendid concrete road. If they had raced before, now they flew, the open cut-out roaring a warning that caused other motors to hug the ditch as they shot by. Through another town; around a sharp corner on two wheels; down a steep grade.

"That was Mayville," said the girl briefly. "It weren't so dark you could see Chautauqua Lake now, there at the right."

So for five miles more; then the deep song of the motor became syncopated and broken. Its driver moved throttle and spark without avail; they labored

up a long grade, the exhaust barking irregularly.

"Gas all out," announced the girl, examining the gauge. "Father must have forgotten to have the tank filled. If we only make this hill, we can coast to Bemus."

The car limped on, slower and slower, with a jerky, irregular motion; its occupants leaned forward, straining, as people will, to help it along. They reached the crest and dropped down a little incline; the motor picked up again, as the last dregs of gasoline flowed forward from the tank. But it was the final effort; as the road leveled out the engine gave one despairing gasp—and died.

Alice cut off the ignition, threw out the clutch, and waited. The car rolled on, slower and slower; for a breathless second it hesitated as though about to stop. Then the girl gave a relieved sigh, as they began to forge ahead with gathering speed.

"Over the hill," said she. "Now we can coast right to Tanner's garage."

They bowled silently down a long slope, the white road unwinding before them, swept past scattered cottages, and with their last impetus drew up before the welcoming light of a gasoline stand.

"Almost home now," said Alice cheerily. "We're only half a mile beyond Bemus." And she sounded the horn.

The garage was quite dark, and its door was closed, but beside it leaned a motor cycle.

"Billy must be there somewhere," declared Alice, and tooted more vigorously.

At the third sounding a sullen, grease-smearing youth emerged, cigarette in mouth like a true garage worker.

"Give us some gas, Billy," ordered the girl. "About a gallon; just enough to get us home."

With a surly grunt the boy picked up the hose, connected it, and began

to turn the crank. In a few moments the car was transformed from an inert mechanism into the semblance of life; the motor purred cheerfully, and they rolled away.

Now they drove slowly through a long village street. Lights showed here and there in the cottages which lined it, and little groups of white-clad idlers drifted aimlessly along. Hotels and soda fountains were still brilliantly illuminated; from the lake, a stone's throw distant, came the faint splash of paddles and snatches of happy talk.

The passing cottages became fewer and larger; the car swung sharply to the left, rolled up a short driveway and stopped beside a big, rambling house.

"Here we are," cried Alice. "Need any help, father?"

But Carson was already out of the car and hurrying into the house.

"You must excuse him," apologized the girl. "Father's not himself to-night. And you'll have to carry in your own bags; you're in the country now."

At the door a rather stout, matronly woman met them. "Get home all right, Alice? What happened to your father?" Her voice was gentle, placid, unruffled. Without waiting for an answer, she went on: "And this must be our soldier boy. Arthur Ward, the telegram said. I'm going to kiss you, Arthur." And she did. "Madge, take Mr. Ward's bags upstairs. Supper's all ready, children; you must be hungry after your ride."

From the next room Carson's voice sounded sharply: "What? What? Dead you say!" And then a crash.

All three hurried in, to find the gray-bearded man leaning against the wall, his face a sickly white, his lips loose and tremulous. At his feet lay the telephone, a piece of its transmitter broken against the floor.

"Why, George," said Mrs. Carson, her tones still quite untroubled, "what's the matter? I *told* you not to eat the

lobster—canned lobster's always so apt to upset one, don't you think so, Arthur? And poor George has so much trouble with his liver. Alice, run across the street and see if Doctor Otis is home."

Carson stirred. "I'm not sick, Mary," he muttered, and passed a hand across his forehead in a dazed fashion. "Not sick. I've had—bad news," he finished uncertainly.

"It was that lobster," insisted his practical wife.

There were steps on the broad porch; Alice reentered with the doctor—a short, wide-mouthed doctor with scanty, rust-red hair all awry.

"Lobster!" cried this individual bitterly. "That's right—lobster!" His stubby, thick-fingered hands went up and out in a gesture of angry excitement. "That's the way—stuff yourselves with indigestibles and then call for the doctor to help you out of your own damfoolishness. Yah!" He glared angrily about, from little, wide-set eyes of an extraordinarily brilliant blue, so that they all quailed before him, and he thrust both hands into his scanty, reddish hair, erecting it into twin horns on either side of a shining bald dome. Then his excitement disappeared as quickly as it had arisen.

"'S matter, Carson?" he inquired in a perfectly ordinary tone.

"Nothing," answered the other irritably. "I've had a shock, that's all. Bad news."

The doctor peered keenly at his gray face and clipped the wrist of one shaking hand for a moment.

"Bad news, hey? You look like it had scared you sick," he commented with calm indifference to his patient's feelings. "Go to bed and take a blue-mass pill. What's that?" as the sick man muttered something. "Ghosts? Rot! Take *two* blue-mass pills."

"I'll put him to bed, doctor," promised Mrs. Carson in her even-toned,

untroubled voice. "You children get your supper. Madge!"

Ward looked about. Hovering in the doorway, giving her absorbed attention to the scene within, was the maid who should have been upstairs with his baggage. She started guiltily at her mistress' call, picked up the forgotten bags and scuttled out.

"Madge!" Mrs. Carson called after her. "Open Mr. Carson's bed, and then get supper for these children, right away!"

"Yessum!" came an aggrieved voice from the stairs.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE ON THE LAKE.

NEXT morning Arthur Ward awoke with a start, glancing at his wrist watch. It was five-thirty! Had he missed first call? Then he smiled; no more reveille for him. He stretched luxuriously, turned over and went to sleep again.

When he finally rose, at half past eight, the house was still silent. He hurried through a shower in a sumptuous bathroom, all porcelain and nickel, then dressed leisurely, appraising the furniture of his room.

"Gee!" he reflected. "Some summer cottage! These folks must have money!"

He went to the wide window and looked out over a smooth, rolling lawn which swept down to the road. Beyond was a little, old-fashioned frame house, and then the still, blue lake, rippling faintly in the sun-hine. Beside the little house a hedge-bordered lane led to a bathing pavilion at the water's edge.

"Gee!" sighed Ward again. "I wish I were rich!" And he descended the stairs, following the faint, delicious fragrance of ham and eggs.

The atmosphere of the late breakfast table was strained. Carson greeted

him civilly enough, but his manner was distraught. He sat in moody silence, eating nothing, his strange gray-green eyes on his plate.

Alice gave him a friendly little nod, watching her stepfather furtively. "Don't notice him," she whispered. "He gets these spells sometimes."

Mrs. Carson alone seemed untouched by any sense of tension. Her plump, pleasant face was untroubled; her soft voice rambled on in a comfortable monologue, scarcely interrupted by her greeting to the guest.

"Good morning, Arthur. I'm going to call you Arthur, you know. Do you like a coconut pie? I was just saying I'd have Madge make one for dinner—unless you'd rather have something else? Something with whipped cream, maybe? If she made two, I could send some over to Doctor Otis. Poor man! That housekeeper of his doesn't half feed him. He ought to get married." The soft voice flowed smoothly on, waiting for no replies; it was the housewife's talk, all neighbors and food. Evidently the restrictions of wealth sat lightly upon Mrs. Carson's ample shoulders.

"I couldn't get to sleep last night," she went on. "So many cars going by. There ought to be a law against opening cut-outs—maybe there is, and nobody pays any attention to it. Did you mind the noise, Arthur? But I suppose you wouldn't, being right from the war, so. I think the doctor was out in the night; I'm sure I heard his little car; didn't you, George?"

George grunted sullenly, eyes on his plate, but his wife ran on, unheeding. "And Billy Jacobs was out, too, on his motor cycle. I hate them, don't you, Arthur? They're such noisy things! I should think it would drive his mother crazy, the way he's running round at all hours—and she must be dreadfully nervous, too. I know it makes *me* nervous, even to watch her making

faces like that, all day long. But Doctor Otis says she can't help it, poor woman." And so on. Such women are a blessing; they bridge awkward pauses so beautifully. And one need not even listen, since they never pause for a reply.

So Arthur Ward ate silently, with the soldier's appetite. Madge watched him from her stand at the door, her round red face resentfully amazed.

"These soldiers is worse'n if they'd followed thrashing," she muttered half audibly.

Presently Carson rose, scowling, and went to his study. Still talking cheerfully, the lady of the house departed kitchenward; and Alice led the guest out to the wide porch.

It was almost too close, Ward thought, to the white concrete road, where car after car flashed by, bearing gay parties. But it was all so comfortable, so homelike, after those weary months of war, and the wearier waiting in the Rhinelands. He settled himself contentedly in a deep wicker chair and looked out over the water.

"*This,*" declared Arthur Ward, "is living the life of Riley. I'll say it is!"

His companion sat back, smiling quietly at his evident enjoyment, while the boy let his eyes drift over the pleasant scene. On either side, wide lawns interspersed with maples; in front, the busy road, and beyond it the lake shore with its fringe of boathouses and bathing pavilions. In the distance a steamboat moved over the water, leaving a broad V of ripples on its smooth surface; a faint strain of music drifted from somewhere. It was all very beautiful, very orderly, save for one alien note—the tiny story-and-a-half house directly opposite.

It was a shabby, forlorn little house, and the grass about it grew high and weedy. On its narrow stoop sat a little old woman, all bent and gnarled, one crippled hand clutching a thick cane.

Her head nodded jerkily, and, so close were the two houses, Ward could see how her features contorted themselves into a series of grimaces.

"That's old Mrs. Jacobs," explained Alice, seeing the direction of his eyes. "She owns that place. Father tried to buy it when I persuaded him to come out here, but she won't sell. She doesn't seem to like us much. We wanted to get all that land, right down to the lake, but we had to put up with just the lane there."

Watching idly over his cigarette, Ward saw a half-grown youth come out of the little house, listen sullenly to some vehement direction from the old lady, and then go back to a ramshackle old barn. Presently he emerged with a motor cycle and racketed off up the street.

"That's Billy Jacobs," said Alice. "He's late again. He works in that garage where we stopped last night; he gave us the gas. But he doesn't seem to be there much—he's always driving round the country on that motor cycle."

Then a door slammed in the house at the right. Ward turned his head, to see Doctor Otis on his porch next door, stretching frankly. Then, bag in hand, the doctor descended the steps and lurched across the lawn toward them. He was exceedingly bow-legged; it gave him a curious gait. The morning sun gleamed from his bald head, on either side of which a tuft of rusty-red hair stood wildly up.

He stumped up to the porch. "'Lo, Alice," he greeted. "How do, young man. How's your father by now?"

"He's up and around, doctor," she answered. "I guess he's all right."

"Lazy," pronounced Doctor Otis. "Too much to eat; too little exercise. Ought to get him a job of work." Carson himself stepped out onto the porch. "Talking about you," declared the doctor, unmoved. "You got too much liver—ought to exercise."

Carson stared at him deliberately, chin up. His gray-green eyes were bleak, his heavy face set in dour, sullen lines.

"When I need professional advice I will ask for it," said he.

"Yah!" shouted the doctor, suddenly galvanized. Dropping his bag, he waved long arms; a flood of excited speech gushed forth. "Yah! Professional advice, hey? You need it *now!* Feel mean, don't you? Feel real ugly, *don't* you? Too much liver, that's what ails you. You need to sweat a little. But no—you'll wait till you get down sick, and then you'll come and want a pill to make you well again. Yah! Why don't you take decent care of yourself?"

But Carson had gone back into the house, slamming the door behind him. The doctor's excitement subsided abruptly; the broad mouth beneath his little upturned nose grinned widely at the two young people. His brilliant blue eyes twinkled.

"Old man's grouchy," he declared. "Ought to control his nerves, be calm—not get upset so easy." He wiped a heated face, nodded, picked up his medicine case and lurched off.

Alice and Arthur looked at each other, laughing; the doctor's precept accorded so ill with his practice.

"But he is a queer man," said Alice earnestly. "Father, I mean. Generally he's as good as can be, but he has a spell like this every summer, when he's awful ugly, specially to me. He acts just as if he hated me, and was afraid of me, too. I was only twelve when he married mother—that was out in Minnesota ten years ago—but even then I used to think he looked at me funny sometimes. And if I'd stare at him, like children do, he'd get just white and go out. 'I don't like black eyes,' he told me once. Come on, let's go down to the lake."

CHAPTER IV.

FAMILY FRICTION.

AS they started down the steps a broad, flapping straw hat appeared around the corner of the porch.

"Oh, look!" whispered Alice, catching Ward's wrist. "He's the *dearest* old thing. Good morning, Mr. Hopkins!"

The man addressed, a gaunt, shirt-sleeved individual, whose draggling mustaches were stained with tobacco juice, halted and thrust thumbs beneath his suspender buckles. The movement brought forward a large nickeled badge.

"How be you, Alice?" he inquired, and turned narrowed, quizzical eyes upon Ward. "This your young man?"

The "young man" flushed; Alice giggled demurely. "Mr. Ward, Mr. Hopkins," she introduced them. "He's staying with us for a few days. Going to take father fishing to-day?"

"We-ell," drawled Hopkins, and paused. With a quaint gesture of apology he turned his head away and spat dexterously. "We-ell, no; no, ma'am. The old man, he looks kind o' lowery's mornin'. No, I been round to see Madge a minnit." A slow grin widened his drooping mustache; crow's-feet radiated from his faded blue eyes. "She was telling me," he went on with exaggerated slowness, "'bout her sister, up here to Miss Curtinius'. She's took the Hunter cottage, y' know, old Miss Curtinius has; a old school-teacher, what's come into money. Well, seems she hired Irene Reynolds last week. Took her into the parlor, she did, an' told her just what she was to do. 'Chamber work,' sez she, 'an' wait on table. An' then,' she sez, 'you eat your meals in the kitchen,' sez she. Well, so that was all right, an' Irene done it, dinner time. Well, she fetched in Miss Curtinius' dinner an' went out. An' then Miss Curtinius

she sat right still a minnit, an' then picked up her plate an' stomped out to the kitchen, an' et with Irene. 'I was lonesome,' sez she. Heh, heh!" He slanted a humorous glance at Alice. "But mebbe you folks is more used to having hired help," he finished.

The two young people burst into laughter; through the old gentleman's flat drawl they visioned an unforgettable picture of the precise schoolmistress, torn between loneliness and pride. Then Alice softened suddenly.

"The poor, poor woman!" she cried.

"We-ell," drawled Hopkins; and spat once more, "we-ell, mebbe you're right. She's a dreadful hearty feeder, Irene is. All them Reynoldses is that way. D'ja ever see Madge eat?" And he turned away.

At the road he paused, waving a loose-jointed arm toward the little old woman crouched on her stoop opposite. "Mornin', S'loam!" he called, and slouched on.

"Salome!" repeated Alice. "What a name for that poor, crippled old woman!"

They crossed the road toward the hedge-bordered lane that ran down to the water. Their course brought them close to the weather-beaten brown house, and the old lady hobbled down the steps, leaning on a heavy, crutch-handled cane.

"Hey, Alice!" she called, bent half double, one gnarled hand on the small of her back. "Alice!"

Obediently the girl turned into the weedy little yard. "Yes, Mrs. Jacobs?"

Ward gazed at the old woman in involuntary repulsion; she was deformed, so wizened and bent. Her rough old hands were horribly crippled and distorted with chronic rheumatism, so that their knobby fingers pointed every way. Between high-bridged nose and pointed chin her lips fell away, witchlike, and she grimaced and mouthed continually,

blinking and scowling in a habit spasm that was evidently uncontrollable.

"How's Mr.—eh—Carson?" inquired the shrill voice with an odd, jeering intonation. "I seen the doctor go in."

"Oh, he's all right," replied Alice. "He got too tired last night; that was all."

"Yes, just tired," repeated the old woman in that strange, high drawl of western New York, which makes of "yes," "yay-us." Her twitching face produced the ghastly mockery of a smile; Ward, turning away, imagined an eerie chuckle.

"What a strange old woman!" whispered Ward.

Alice nodded. "I try to feel sorry for her," she apologized, "but she just makes me *creech*. This is our bathing house; you'll find several suits of father's in there. I don't suppose you brought any." And she opened one of the cubicles.

Ward undressed and arrayed himself in a bathing suit. It was rather too tight in the chest, and too loose about the waist, but it would serve. He emerged, to meet the girl, ravishingly pretty in a one-piece suit, her thick black hair hidden by a scarlet cap.

The girl stepped out on the spring-board, her slenderly rounded figure clearly etched against the bright water, then dived cleanly. Presently the two were splashing and romping like water spaniels.

All of that day and the next Carson kept to himself. Save at meals the young people scarcely saw him; nor was he greatly missed. They were busy with bathing, canoeing, motoring. Ward found the girl a delightful companion, and gave little heed to his silent host.

The man looked sick; his sallow face drooped heavily over cheek bone and jaw, and his strange gray-green eyes had a haunted look. He smoked thick black cigars, one after another, until

the whole house was rank with their heavy odor and the beard about his lips took on a yellowish tinge. At meals he sat and stared into his plate, drumming on the table with blunt finger ends; he ate almost nothing.

Mrs. Carson ignored his moods; her ash-blond serenity was unruffled, though she mourned her crisp lace curtains. "You know that smell will never come out, George," she complained gently. "Couldn't you smoke outdoors?"

It was at the supper table. Mrs. Carson's husband only grunted savagely, so that Alice gave him a mutinous look. "I don't mind his being rude to *me*," she whispered fiercely to Ward beside her, "but he's just got to be decent to my mother!"

But Mrs. Carson was quite undisturbed; her placid flow of commonplace ran on, unchecked, despite her husband's fidgeting. To-night it concerned motor cars.

"They don't look the same any more," she asserted, "and I don't think they've improved the looks of them a bit, either. I remember back in nineteen hundred and five—you were just a little girl then, Alice—Frank—that was my first husband, Arthur—Frank bought a Winston, and it was lots better looking than they make them now, *I* thought. The radiator was all bright and shiny, and you got in at a door in the back, like into a bus. And there were big brass rods from the fenders up to the top, and——"

Carson slapped his hand on the table. "Oh, shut *up!*" he snapped, and pushed back his chair. He stood so for a moment, his face working so that the gray beard wagged up and down, then met his step-daughter's gaze. Before her angry black eyes his own pale ones fell; his hands clenched and unclenched, and he shuddered visibly. Then, without a word, he wheeled abruptly and marched from the room.

Alice was furious. "I don't see what makes him act so!" she cried, half weeping. "Why do you let him talk to you like that, mother?"

"Why, Alice!" said that placid lady. "Madge," to the ubiquitous maid, who hung in the doorway, all eyes and open mouth. "Madge, we don't need you now. Your father is not well, Alice," she went on. "Don't mind what he says; I don't."

"But I *do* mind!" stormed Alice, white with anger. "He's got to stop treating you so, or I'll——" She broke off, hands clenched into fierce little fists.

Poor Ward fidgeted helplessly; he felt uncomfortable enough, as one must when caught in the whirl of such domestic tempests. Despite his hostess' comfortable urging of more dessert he muttered an excuse and retreated to the porch.

Here he pondered over a solitary cigarette. Evidently there were cross currents hidden beneath the surface placidity of this home. He sympathized with the girl's outburst; Carson *had* been abominably rude. Yet he could not find it in his heart to censure the man too severely; he remembered that drawn, agonized face. Truly his host was not well. Ward wondered whether the man's patent suffering was entirely physical.

CHAPTER V.

AN OPEN QUARREL.

NEXT morning the storm seemed to have passed. Carson was silent, somber, and nervous, but courteous enough. Alice's black eyes held a hint of enmity when she glanced at him, but Mrs. Carson was as serene and motherly as ever, and her clear blue gaze was untroubled. A lady to take her worries lightly, thought Ward, listening to her placid monologue over his hot cakes.

A leisurely routine held the house-

hold, and the young man settled cheerfully into it, charmed by this pleasant contrast to the strictness of army life.

Cool, moonlit nights in which to paddle over the placid lake, where the still air carried sounds with an uncanny distinctness, betraying the confidence of many an unseen lover; long hours of hushed talk with Alice Macy—the idle, yet absorbing talk of youth, whose meanings are hidden, not revealed, by its words; sweet, dreamless sleep with a late awakening; a wide, sunny porch on which to loaf, idly watching the throng of passing cars—three to the minute, all day long. It was a peaceful life, and Ward reveled in its inertia until the girl jested at his inactivity.

But she, too, loved to watch the road, where every car seemed fire-new; where one saw Florida license plates, cars from California, Oregon, Massachusetts; where every passer-by was gayly dressed, so that the occasional native seemed but a grubby brown moth to these butterflies.

The Carson's big roadster lay idle for days, but Doctor Otis stormed back and forth continually, driving his battered little car at thirty miles an hour, day and night; and Billy Jacobs' motor cycle came and went as erratically—and more swiftly. And directly opposite, from dawn to dark, old Mrs. Jacobs sat on her little stoop, withered and bent, nodding and mouthing weirdly, always watching, watching the big house across the road.

"How's Mr.—eh—Carson?" she would shrill, whenever Alice or Ward came within speaking distance. "Better, hey?"

Once, as the young people passed toward the bathing house, she hobbled out to meet them, stooped over her crutch-handled stick. "Alice, your pa looks sick," she began; and paused to grimace fearsomely. Her forehead wrinkled into a network of fine lines, her beady eyes squinted; the thin lips

twisted into the parody of a smile, showing toothless gums. "He's sick," she repeated emphatically. "Maybe you ain't seen it, but he knows he's sick, and I know it, too. You just tell him old Mother Jacobs knows he's sick—and knows why! And if he says anything, you just come up close to him, like this"—the dry, leathery lips drew close to the girl's fresh cheek—"and say 'Sal-o-me!' Just like that." The high, quivering voice had deepened and freshened, as in imitation of another. Her palsied head jerked earnestly; with a last facial contortion, which gave her the semblance of a grinning gargoyle, she turned about and hobbled back.

"That's a witch word," she threw over her shoulder. "That'll fetch him. You see!"

The boy and girl looked at each other, half smiling, half disquieted. There was something unwholesome in the malevolence of this twisted, withered wisp of humanity.

Alice made a little face. "Can you imagine my telling that to father, the way he acts now?" she inquired almost plaintively. "A 'witch word,' she called it. Well, she looks like a witch, with that big stick, and all crippled up and everything. Did you see how her nose almost touches her chin? She only needs a pointed cap and a cloak to look just like the pictures. And there's her cat!"

Sure enough, a huge black cat had trotted out to meet the old lady and rubbed against her skirt, tail waving gently.

"Yes," declared the girl half seriously. "I do believe she's a witch. Maybe she's put a spell on father; he acts like it lately!" She smiled rather ruefully.

Indeed Carson did look hag-ridden. In a week his beard had grown perceptibly whiter; his face was drawn and sunken, and his strange light eyes peered absently from hollow sockets, as

though brooding on things unseen of others. His big hands were unsteady, and he had developed a habit of looking nervously over his shoulder.

As they came up from the water he sat alone on the wide porch, huddled in the great wicker armchair which was his own particular place. He was drumming on the chair arm with thick, spatulate fingers, his pale eyes brooding upon the passing automobiles. In their depths was a hint of apprehension, as of an expected horror.

Alice looked at him doubtfully. "I can see the black dog on his back," she whispered. "I don't want to go up there. Come on; let's take the car out before dinner."

They walked around to the little garage, and presently the yellow roadster backed out and circled, Alice in the driver's seat.

"Get in, Arthur," she ordered. "We'll run out toward Westfield. It's a good road, and I want to go fast—fast!"

She stepped on the foot-throttle, and the great car leaped under her touch, striking up its deep, humming road song. They drove in silence, the miles slipping by quicker and quicker.

Just beyond Mayville a motor cycle shot over the rise ahead and raced toward them.

"That's Billy Jacobs," said the girl, waving a hand in friendly fashion. But the overalled rider rattled past, head down, sullen eyes straight ahead, and made no sign of recognition.

"He's always sulky," declared Alice, as they dropped down the long hill into Westfield. "Let's drive on down the lake road."

So they bumped over the rough streets of the town and turned to the left toward Lake Erie, looming indistinct on the horizon. They followed the shore for a time; then Alice slowed down.

"Here's where we crumpled that

fender," said she, pointing. "You can see the mark on that tree. They straightened it out pretty well, I think." Indeed, the mud guard scarcely showed a dent.

"I wonder what ailed father that night?" she went on. "He seems to hate this road. I drove him out this way once, as I told you, when we first came here, in June. And when we came to this crossroad"—she pointed to a narrow, leafy road whose beginning was marked by twin stone pillars—"I wanted to turn in. It's such a shady, inviting little road. But when he saw those stone posts father just yelled at me. He acted like he'd seen a ghost. He made me turn right 'round and go back, and he sat and stared and whispered to himself until we got into Westfield. Then he made me promise *never* to go up that road, or take him out this way again. 'Evil would come of it,' he said. I thought it was awfully queer; but father's been queer ever since we came East."

"Perhaps he used to live out this way?" suggested Ward.

"No," said the girl. "At least, I don't think so. He never said much about his past life, but I think he was born in California. Anyway, he came from there to Minnesota. He made a great fuss about coming here for the summer—said he'd always lived in the West, and didn't like the East. Well, anyway, he made me promise never to take that Lakeside Park road; and I've wanted to ever since," she finished, with feminine contrariety.

Then she glanced at her wrist watch. "Goodness, we'll be late for dinner!" she cried, and backed around.

They went homeward at a smooth fifty miles an hour; but they were indubitably late. By the time they entered the dining room Mr. and Mrs. Carson were at their dessert.

The lady of the house looked up placidly. "It's half past one, children,"

said she; for the Carsons had a mid-day dinner, after the old custom. "Your soup will be cold." But there was no reproof in her mild blue eyes.

She rang the bell, and Madge's broad red face appeared in the kitchen door.

"Bring these children some soup," she ordered.

The maid tossed her head. "Yes-sum," said she resentfully. "Ever'-thing's cold, Mis' Carson."

Carson had been sitting silently in his place, drumming on the tablecloth with thick fingers. He had not looked up at their entry, but now he raised a frowning face.

"Where've you been, Alice?" he asked.

At his hostile tone the girl raised her chin a little. "Out past Lakeside Park," she answered defiantly.

"What?" shouted her stepfather, his face black with wrath. "Out *that* road? How dare you? Haven't I forbidden it? You'll be the death of me yet, young woman! I believe you sent me that way on purpose, last week. Do you want to *kill* me? If you ever do that again I'll—I'll——" He choked, mouthing wordlessly, a thin foam flecking his gray beard.

His sudden causeless anger was shocking. Even his wife's placidity was disturbed by it, and the thick-armed maid, frozen in the kitchen doorway, allowed twin streams of soup to dribble to the floor from the gradually tipping dishes in her hands.

Alice had risen, her clear black eyes snapping dangerously, but Carson ran on, unheeding. "You want me to die," he accused her. "Don't worry—I'll go soon enough. But my money'll never do you any good; there's a black curse on it. Take it, and the curse goes to you!"

Then the furious gray-green eyes met the steady gaze of the girl's black ones, wavered and dropped.

"No—no!" cried Carson; it was al-

most a sob. "Don't look at me like that. Don't do it, Gra—Alice!—Oh, my God!" and he fairly ran from the room, hands to his twitching face.

The three left behind looked at one another queerly. "Well, my soul and *body!*" remarked Mrs. Carson, and forthwith resumed her usual calm. "Madge," said she, "you've spilled soup all over the rug. Get a cloth and wipe it up; then bring these children their dinner. Sit down, Alice."

But Alice would not. She was white with anger.

"Don't mind him," urged her unruffled mother. "Poor George is not himself to-day. Eat your dinner and you'll feel better, child."

The girl shook her head. "I can't eat," she whispered, eyes full of angry tears, and turned away.

With an apologetic bow Ward followed her, his appetite gone, his very skin prickled with the intense, helpless embarrassment of the spectator at such a scene.

In the hall Alice stopped, little hands clenched fiercely at her sides.

"The *beast!*" she exploded. "To talk to me like that—and before you, too. I'm not a child—and he's not even my own father. Oh, I could *kill* him!"

Thoroughly uncomfortable, Ward followed the furious girl back through the house and into the little garage, where she climbed into the big roadster. But when he made to follow she checked him.

"No," said she, unsmiling. Her black eyes were somber. "I don't want you, Arthur. Go back and eat—if you can. I want to be alone. I'm not fit to speak to now."

The engine started with a vicious roar; Alice threw in the clutch and drove recklessly out into the road.

So Ward went back to his serene hostess and strove with poor success to eat a cold dinner, while her stream of talk flowed smoothly on. Evidently

the foibles of her relatives did not greatly disturb Mrs. Carson.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GHOST CAR REAPPEARS.

AFTER a thoroughly unsatisfactory meal Ward followed his placid hostess to the wide front porch. Here they found Carson in his own corner, hunched in his big wicker chair, muttering soundlessly to himself, so that the thick gray beard wagged oddly up and down. He seemed to have aged in an hour; his stricken face was ghastly, and the trembling hands scarcely managed his inevitable cigar.

Mrs. Carson led Ward to the other end of the porch. "George will be better alone for a while," she explained wisely. "You mustn't mind all this, Arthur; my husband is sick. Something is troubling him—I don't know what. Why, the man hasn't slept in a week! Alice is young and high-strung; she hasn't learned to make allowances." She sighed a plump, comfortable sigh, and bent her ash-blond head over a bit of fancywork. "Just let them alone," she advised, "and don't let on you notice anything. Everything'll be all right again to-morrow. I see Doctor Otis is home," she went on, without a change of voice, nodding toward the house next door. "I guess there isn't much sickness around just now. I wonder if he has anything at all to do after the summer folks are all gone? Of course, I suppose there's sickness among the people who live here all the year round—Mrs. Jacobs over there, for instance. Poor old thing! She's so dreadfully crippled up. I wish something could be done for her; but the doctor says it's 'deformed something or other,' and incurable. Her face jerks so it makes me nervous to watch her."

Ward looked across the road to where the old woman sat on her narrow

stoop, clutching the crutch-handled stick. She was gazing fixedly at Carson; Ward imagined a malignant joy in her twitching features, and thought of the 'witch word.' Idly he wondered what would happen if he stepped up to his host and whispered "Sal-o-me!" Could the man be bewitched? Surely his conduct was singular enough, even for that.

As he watched, the sullen Billy stormed up on his motor cycle and leaped off, dropping it flat. He ran to the little stoop and whispered vehemently to his mother, his every gesture speaking haste.

The old lady listened for a moment, then nodded vigorously, laughing aloud; a thin, uncanny laugh that carried clearly across the road, and made the brooding Carson start nervously and stare about with his accustomed manner of one expecting some evil sight. Then she gave the boy some emphatic order and struggled up out of her chair. Billy helped her into the little old house. A moment later the shade of the half-story window was pulled down; Ward noted half-consciously that there was a small round hole in it.

His hostess's placid talk flowed on, unheeded. The memory of that shocking outburst at the dinner table, the sight of his sullen host huddled in the corner, and of the weird old woman mowing and nodding on her stoop—these things combined with his unappeased appetite to produce a sense of strained expectancy. His senses seemed oddly alert; every detail of the scene before him stamped itself upon his mind; the white road, now empty of traffic, the little brown house, and beyond, the still lake, now gray and threatening beneath a rapidly clouding sky. A rumble of thunder sounded in the distance. It was natural enough, thought Ward, that it should storm today.

And then, from far up the road came a faint, rattling murmur, a clanking, protesting sound, as of unoiled machinery.

"Is that a mowing machine?" asked his hostess, breaking off in her smooth monologue. "No; it's coming too fast."

A roll of thunder broke out once more; through it the distant clanking grew to a jangling dissonance, and a crazy, lurching motor car swept into view. Ward stared in amazement.

It was an antiquated, tarnished, dust-covered car of a forgotten year. Long, discolored brass struts swept up from its fenders to a high canopy top which flapped in rags above the rigid, motionless form in the driver's seat—the form of a woman, unrecognizable in linen duster and flapping veil. As the old machine groaned its anguished way toward him Ward saw that all four tires were torn and flat. It limped and swayed on battered, misshapen rims.

"*What* a ridiculous old boat!" cried the boy.

At the words Carson roused from his lethargy and glanced up, then turned an agonized stare upon the approaching auto. His hands, white-knuckled, gripped the chair arms; he strove to rise, but could not. From his loose lips came an indescribable sound.

Then the veiled driver opened the cut-out. Its rattling discharge added to the deafening medley of discordant sounds as the motor backfired spitefully.

A breath, and the car was opposite. A vivid flash lit the darkening sky, so that Ward, staring, seemed to catch a glimpse of hard black eyes behind the flapping veil. Then the thunder crashed right overhead; cutting through it, and through the clamor of the ancient car, came a sharp, whiplike report.

"A blow-out," said Mrs. Carson.

But all four tires were in rags. Moreover, Ward's ear, trained by a year on the firing line, dissented. He knew that sound! Instinctively he looked toward his host.

Carson had half risen, one clutching hand upon his stomach. Now he slid gradually to his knees, then dropped on his face, a huddle of loose brown clothes and gray beard.

Already the old car was disappearing down the road, its high-backed tonneau swaying like the stern of an ancient galleon on a rough sea. A moment he saw it clearly, then the storm broke and it vanished behind the gray lances of the rain. Even the clamor of its passing was stilled in an instant.

To be continued in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, out on Tuesday, November 11th. Do not forget that, as the magazine is published every week, you will not have long to wait for the next installment of this absorbing serial.

OCEAN PATROL BY FAMOUS FORCE

CANADA'S famous Royal Northwest Mounted Police have added another field of operations to their already numerous territories. They have become guardians of the waters off the coasts of Canada, and in a powerful seaworthy launch have taken up the patrol of the rough lumber camps along the western coast.

Hitherto the "Northwest Mounted" have policed the prairies and forests and inland waters of Canada, and have even at times crossed the great ice-covered bays of the distant North in pursuit of Eskimo and other outlaws. But this is the first time the force has shouldered, as a regular routine, the patrol of the ocean near the coast.

High Tide

By Anna Alice Chapin

Author of "Dog Collars," etc.

APPROVE of me, Jerry? Do I look all right?"

Mrs. Darrell revolved slowly and anxiously before her husband. There was a mirror in the dressing room, which, one might have supposed, could have told a woman rather more, anent her personal appearance, than the heavy, near-sighted man just then adjusting his white tie for the evening. But Mrs. Darrell, unlike ordinary women, knew how little a looking-glass really counted, when one came down to it. Lying things were mirrors, she had found; liars at their very best, giving a woman back the fairest or the ugliest of her according to her own capricious mood—or a defect in the lighting!

Being also unusual in that she honestly cared only for the opinion of the man she loved, she depended very little upon mirrors, especially at crucial moments such as this, when she was preparing to welcome her husband's friends and relatives for the first time. She looked at him.

"Is—is that lock of hair supposed to hang down over your left ear like that?" he inquired doubtfully.

Leila had taken some pains with that effectively drooping tress, but she merely said:

"Like it better pinned up, Jerry?"

"I think so. Would look a bit less odd," her spouse pronounced judicially. "I don't like odd things, you know, dearest."

"I know," she said, suddenly humble.

2D 15

"Yet I'm odd! I wonder why you like me? Look at me, and my hair again, Jerry."

He fumbled for his rimless glasses, failed to find them, and then it was not really tact but because even his near-sightedness could not ignore the obvious, that he said: "It would be a pity to hide your ear, anyway. You've very pretty ears, Leila!"

"Oh, you old darling!"

She flung herself into his big, kind arms, and he patted her gently. He was devoted to his wife, but he never could get used to her breathless, deep, desperate devotion to himself. On the honeymoon it had been startling, but pleasant. It was pleasant enough now, but an intensity of emotion which grew instead of subsiding conservatively. Darrell was a brave man enough, but his wife, in her strange, still, yet vivid moods sometimes almost frightened him. So he patted her gently, still marveling deeply as she clung to him at the ruthless yet restrained ardor of this strange vital thing which he loved, and which, mysteriously but indubitably, he had made love him.

Close against his breast she whispered:

"I'll do it all over again, Jerry!"

"Do what all over again? Your hair? Oh, it looks all right enough now, but it won't if you rumples it on my shirt front. And look at my tie. It's ruined for to-night. I'll have to put on a fresh one."

"Do," said Leila, laughing as she

surveyed the very crooked bow which he had originally achieved. "It's a mercy, dear, that you have to. And this time, angel, I'll tie it. Where, oh, where, Jerry, did you learn to tie white ties?"

Jeremy Darrell, for all his well-known "slow ways," was not in the least stupid, and the obvious rejoinder did come to his lips—but stopped there—"Where did you?" But he genuinely loved Leila, and accepted her and all concerning her with absolute trust and simple, confident delicacy. So he kissed her hand, somewhat clumsily, and merely said: "Sure to be better now you've done it. Guess I'll stroll outside, and see if the hampers and things have come down from town all right—eh?"

"Do! I'll attend to the lock of hair you don't like, and then go out on the porch to wait. I do look really nice, Jerry?"

"Bully!"

"D'you think they'll like me—your friends?"

"They'd better," her liege lord remarked, with the proprietary scowl she loved. She laughed again, and again looked deep into his eyes, that eager, almost terrible love of hers flaming in her gaze. Then she turned quickly away, and began to busy herself with her hair at the dressing table.

"Jer-ry!" she cried, just as he was almost out of the room. "Love me?"

"You? Love you? Me? Rather!" returned Jeremy Darrell, with a supreme and rather beautifully confident tranquility. Then he departed, with his heavy step and the bulky carriage that was not without dignity.

Leila smoothed her hair. She, too, could see the smoldering fire in her own eyes. It did not startle her, but it sobered her queerly. "I love him so!" she whispered voicelessly to herself. "What should I do if I were to lose him? What would I do to keep him? What would I do to keep him? What would I do to keep him? What would I do to keep him?" She sat very

still, staring at the brilliant yet relentless charm of her own face. She had never loved any one very much before; she did not know what it might mean, in time, to love like this. She had an idea that it might prove troublesome under complicating conditions.

Leila Darrell—Leila Starland as she had been called when Jeremy ran across her on an ocean crossing—was a peculiar, exotic little being, mysterious in her way, yet with a practical executive quality which kept her personality from being too elusive and baffling for the Darrell appreciation.

She emphatically belonged to another world from his—not an inferior, but an alien and wider world—and frankly admitted that her "past" had had to do with Bohemia, and the strange and scattered universe that lies outside that little country. That she was of good blood was obvious, but she was "different;" people sometimes said that it was merely because she was foreign. Others a trifle more discriminating, made the distinction that she "had lived abroad so much." Others still, most discerning of all, accepted her simply as a particularly charming citizen of the world who carried with her the fragrances of little-known corners of this earth, the shadows and glimmerings of adventurous happenings not familiar to commonplace lives.

She had told Jeremy Darrell very little about herself; that she was free, alone in the world, and—with a straight and fiery look upon her golden eyes—that there was no reason—that there was *no* reason—why he should not marry her, and that some day she would tell him everything about herself. Even literal Jeremy had doubted the complete veracity of this airy promise, but he was too wise a business man and judge of character not to believe the absolute honesty and clarity which he saw in Leila's eyes. He had, in fact, married her as quickly as he could get her. They

had traveled a bit, and now, having taken a cottage overhanging the sea, for the summer, were about to welcome Jeremy's old friends for the first time that night. They would be a kindly, well-bred, stodgy crowd, Jerry's "set"—such of them as had been available—but they belonged to him, and to his honest, clean, upright life, and Leila thrilled to meet them as she could not have thrilled at the prospect of a court presentation.

Alone, before the mirror, she revolved slowly and this time more critically. A creature of prescience and intuitions, she was swept by clouds of unreasonable forebodings, of questions concerning to-night, simple social gathering as it was scheduled to be.

"Mirror, mirror, tell me true," she quoted fancifully. "But you won't mirror, you won't! How does the rest of that old rhyme go? 'Mirror, mirror, tell me true,' then something about the future—the future——"

She tried to take stock of herself with the speculative, observant regard of those who were so soon to look her over. She was a small, firmly made woman, whose indubitable grace and charm were strong rather than ethereal, the grace and charm of a lovely little panther rather than a sylph of the spheres. With her dark gold hair and gold-flecked eyes, she was sufficiently delectable to behold, yet she frowned at her own image. Even with the offending lock of hair pinned back, there was something unconventional, unusual about her, and she resented the fact.

"They will say you are 'odd,' my dear," she told the glowing reflection. "And that will be the end of you. Oh, but it mustn't be, for Jerry's sake! They're his friends; I'd make myself all over again to please him, and them. I'd do anything. I——" Suddenly her eyes widened queerly, in quite genuine astonishment: "Why, I believe I'd commit a crime—murder or something

—for Jerry! Isn't that—funny—of me?"

She had chosen to dress in deep tawny gold, leaving the square of her creamy neck splendidly bare, and wore a big black velvet cloak, for the winds were wild down there above the surf, and high tide, with its increase of chill and sharpness of air, was but an hour or two away. And she and Darrell had agreed to have their first party on the "porch" that was perched well over the incoming waves.

Her frock was fashionable enough, but not extreme; she wore no jewels; the gold-toned satin was cut most conservatively; and yet—and, and yet——

She shook her head disapprovingly. She looked somehow, too vivid. Her own coloring was too sharply white and red and gold, for one thing. She had delicately tender lips, which nevertheless could sometimes look mysteriously hard, as if a soft and perfect flower were turned for the space of a second to unyielding metal. It was not the shape or the character of the mouth that disturbed her now; it was too red. She wished she might paint out the brilliant coral, and at the same time paint out or subdue her own too vital personality. It was herself, the throbbing, thrilling Leila, whom she would have made colorless, and sleek, and ordinary, to please Jerry's friends.

The clatter of dishes on the gusty porch recalled her to the practicalities of life. Hawkins, most perfect of butlers, would be getting the dainty tables ready, and she must direct him. She switched off the electric light, and whirled lightly out to confront that dignity with a suddenness that startled even his somewhat cumbersome superiority.

"Everything all right, Hawkins? Oh yes, I see! No, put that smaller wicker table where the wind won't reach it; it's blowing up quite a gale, isn't it?"

She shivered, looking out to sea,

where the far skyline was only faintly discernible under the hurrying clouds, where the waves looked already a mere obscure tumble of black, touched here and there by feathery lines of dim foam. High tide and a storm were coming together. She wrapped the heavy black velvet cloak about her, and turned back to survey the porch which was to be the setting for her *début* into Jeremy's own particular crowd.

It was the usual over-the-sea veranda, large and square enough to be used as a room on occasion, with heavy Venetian blinds, and a starry garland of electric lights along the sloping cedar roof. A flight of wooden steps led down to the water. At low tide there was a tiny bathing beach which she and Jeremy proposed to use; at flood, the water swirled high beneath the porch, and sometimes, in particularly wild weather, drenched it with spray and bits of seaweed.

How charming the place looked now, she thought, with the string of lights, and the tiny tables piled with fine glass and china and silver—some of it the Darrell heirlooms—and a few quaint and out-of-the-ordinary objects which she herself had collected in her world wanderings. One, a small dull-blue stone paper weight with a sharp point at one end, she picked up and fingered idly. It had been put there to hold a table cloth from blowing in the blast, and she heard Hawkins murmur a remonstrance as she let the white linen folds swirl for a moment before putting the paper weight down, but the thing fascinated her. It had, she vaguely recalled, come from Mexico, and would be, with its heavy yet deadly keen point, no mean weapon. Weapon! There it was again. Now why, she asked herself, should her mind run on weapons and—murder—to-night?

She laughed quickly and light-heartedly. She had nothing to fear from the world, nothing. As a very young

girl she had been married to a horrible man much older than herself; he was dead, years since, and now she was safely and happily wedded to one nearer her own age, one who was not only good and kind and already a figure of public significance, but whom she adored. She was as yet only a year or two past thirty, and life looked very fair to her.

"Take down the two big hammocks, Hawkins, please! Just roll them up out of the way, where they can be hung easily again to-morrow. One over there in the far corner. And one here by the steps; there's a place just ready for it. See the little niche in the railing on each side! What on earth's the matter, Hawkins? You look quite green!"

Hawkins swallowed hard. His sal-low face did indeed show olive in contrast to his immaculate shirt front.

"N-nothing, madam," he stammered, nervously; "only there is a rumor of an escaped criminal, a murderer, I fancy, or—or something like that, madam! I—I feel quite upset myself about it, madam!" He turned back his coat to disclose a revolver, which must certainly destroy the perfect fit of those perfect clothes. "I hope Mr. Darrell is armed, madam?" he added anxiously. "And you, madam——"

Mrs. Darrell laughed at that.

"Mr. Darrell can take care of himself, Hawkins. How absurd of you to carry a pistol! My husband may have one somewhere at that. As for me——" she touched the Mexican paper weight, with an oddly lingering touch—"This would kill anybody, Hawkins, I am quite sure, if I, personally, were ever obliged to act in self-defense! I wouldn't worry."

"Very good, madam."

Hawkins turned away, still troubled, to arrange Limoges and Dresden, Sheffield, and Old Colonial silver, with a deftness which no one would have expected from his stiff appearance, had

they not known that he was a dyed-in-the-wool butler, come of a long line of butlers, and dedicated to the vocation or avocation by habit, training, and inclination.

Jeremy Darrell had a fine sense of the artistic in affairs such as the one in hand. His spirit rebelled against a slip in the arrangements for a "party" he was giving, and Leila sensed something wrong when she heard his voice in a deep rumble from back of the cottage:

"Hawkins! Oh, Hawkins! The champagne is all right—frappé to a turn, I should say by the feel of the bottles—but the claret is too cold. Man, don't you know that red wines should never be chilled?"

"Yes, sir, I know, of course. I'm coming; I haven't been easy in my mind this evening, that's all, sir."

He hurried away, and Mrs. Darrell was alone. She sank down upon the rolled-up hammock near the steps, for, like most small women, she liked lowly seats, and again she gazed out to sea, her mind strangely filled with conflicting emotions. The past, instead of the future, had for some inexplicable reason, suddenly risen before her, and the golden present swam somewhat jerkily across it. The winds were rising, the tide was coming in; already the flat waves were crawling about the foot of the steps—in—out—in—out—over the wet sand. The smell of sea and seaweed was strong, and the cry of the gale had an eerie note like the voice of the dead come back.

The dead come back, the dead come back. She shuddered in darkest memory, thanking what powers might be that her own dead could not come back.

And then—

She heard a dragging, stealthy, shuffling step coming up toward her from the sea. The drip, drip of sea water came to her, as if some ocean monster were creeping in from the far deeps. Mrs. Darrell did not move; a queer

spell was on her. What was it that was coming? She knew that it was danger, but she never thought of the escaped criminal poor Hawkins feared so much. She had a curious but quite definite conviction that the thing approaching was a personal menace to her mind rather than her body.

She sat still, her eyes fixed on the edge of the topmost step—waiting. It seemed a long time before it appeared—was it really a supernatural creature from full fathom five? She waited. She faintly heard Jeremy—who, determined to see himself that everything was going smoothly, had taken charge—in autocratic but good-humored altercation with Hawkins and the caterer, about some one of the trivial, agreeable preparations for festivities such as this. She knew that what she waited for would be neither trivial nor agreeable. So she sat still, her whole attention concentrated, riveted upon the top of the flight of wooden steps.

Drip—drip—drip—drip—drip—drip—and that creeping step coming up and closer every second, though the seconds lagged.

Then a hand—yes, it seemed to be a hand, though of a clammy hue and dripping salt water—appeared, first feeling for, then clinging to the wooden planks of the porch floor. It was almost at her feet. Her throat contracted slightly, and she seemed to go a long time without breathing.

Then came the face, livid, drenched, horrible, a monstrous mask for a human soul. It should have been that of a merman of most evil sort, but the creature was a mortal—and Mrs. Darrell recognized him.

Mrs. Darrell recognized him indeed! She smothered a shriek, and her hand closed on her tightened throat. Otherwise she made no sign; she was past that, for it was her dead come back to life, her terrible dead come back to life.

They faced each other with a queer, fixed gaze. He seemed, for a moment as appalled as she; then a peculiar, ugly grin twisted his mouth, and his yellow teeth showed unpleasantly.

"Leila!" he muttered huskily.

"I thought you were dead," she managed to utter with stiff lips that no longer were too red, but lost in the blank pallor of her face. "So that dreadful doctor lied in his letter?"

"Of course he lied. I was near dead, but I pulled through. I was as sick of you, Leila, as you were of me. I never could stand a saint!"

She braced herself and rose, still facing him. Was it her own disordered fancy that made her imagine she heard approaching motor cars, or only the rushing wind and the whirl of her brain? She fingered the little Mexican weapon, and remembered that she had told Hawkins she could always use it in self-defense. But she was quite fearless; she knew instinctively that it was Jeremy whom she might have to defend, Jeremy, and his fine public-spirited career and reputation.

"Anyway, you weren't my wife—not on the level, Leila!" the man added, with that cold twisted grin. "I had a wife already when I ran across you in Paris twelve years ago. You were easy—hasty, helpless, impulsive, anxious to be protected from this wicked world—so trustful, too!" He laughed noiselessly. "I think I mesmerized you. What's the matter? Shock too much for you? It may interest you to know that they're after me. The law at last—murder—"

She was swaying giddily, and the world went black before her for the space of an instant. She was free—free—Jeremy's true, true wife forever more! And Starland was a fugitive from justice. He would go to the electric chair if they caught him. God had ordained that he should die. Her head and vision cleared swiftly, miracu-

lously. Now she could hear the whirl of the automobiles distinctly above everything. All this creature could do was to make a scene before Jerry's friends, create a scandal or a nine-days' wonder, but— Her fingers closed tightly on the stone weapon of defense.

"Going to hide me, Leila?" muttered the man. "You'd better, for people are coming, and I swear I'll claim you. I'll—"

"Yes," said Leila Darrell, steadily and clearly. "I am going to hide you!"

Her arm flashed upward.

It was a brilliant, glowing, yet deadly white hostess who welcomed her guests that night; all white and gold and red, the red of her beautiful firm, vermilion mouth. She sat, a strange, memorable little vision, in her tawny satin gown, on a rolled-up hammock that was covered by a black velvet cloak. She did not rise as Darrell ushered out the first to be welcomed, a cousin of his, pleasant, middle-aged, well dressed, matter-of-fact.

"It's cousin Lydia, the cousin I've always been so fond of since I was a little boy, you know—" he began, then stopped short, seeing—for with his glasses on he was astute enough—a queer look about his wife. She was in the act, just then, of throwing away a Mexican bluestone paper weight, as though for some reason of her own she did not like to feel the touch of it between her fingers.

"What is wrong, dear?" he said quickly. "You are terribly pale! And why not put your cloak about you?"

"Leila raised her hand steadily to meet her husband's cousin Lydia's kind, fat beringed one, and smiled at her vividly.

"Try to like Jeremy's wife!" she said softly, and then added, with a clear golden look at Jeremy, the first lie she ever had or ever would tell him: "I've twisted my ankle, Jerry, and it hurts a

bit. Nothing seriously out of order, but I'll sit still for the evening I think. And I'm hoping the black velvet is a becoming contrast. Do you think so, Jeremy's cousin Lydia?"

"Your wife is quite lovely, Jeremy," said that good lady benevolently. "I hope you're not in severe pain, my dear?"

"Indeed I'm not!" She laughed exultantly. "Only a little cold—and I understand from Hawkins that I ought to be immensely alarmed! Did he tell you about an escaped prisoner?"

"How annoying of Hawkins!" exclaimed Jeremy Darrell. "He had no business frightening you."

"I don't frighten well, Jerry," she said sweetly. "I'm not afraid of anything, not of anything at all!"

"As a matter of fact," her husband went on, half to her and half to cousin Lydia Darrell, "they traced the man's footprints down almost to this cottage. I didn't want Leila to know; I scarcely knew what an intrepid little wife I had. If the man tried to take shelter anywhere under this house, as the local deputy was inclined to believe, the high tide must have him by now!"

"Yes," said Leila Darrell quietly. "The high tide must have him by now! Jerry, darling, I do really feel shivery; fetch me your hunting coat, there's an old dear. It's warm, and it ought to look well, too!"

It did, that coat of the hunting "pink" that is really scarlet, and that matched her lips that were still too red. So, red and white and gold, she crouched against the black of the velvet-covered hammock until all the guests were gone.

Then, and then only, did Mrs. Darrell raise herself slowly from the somber throne she had improvised for herself out of the rolled-up hammock and the black velvet cloak. She looked curiously at this strangely shaped couch on

which she had half reclined during the entire evening. A slow, difficult smile touched her lips which straightway grew stern again with the enigmatic half-beautiful sternness of the Sphinx.

Outside the motors were whirring, and people were calling good-bys; she was quite alone for a minute or two, anyway.

She looked up and down the porch, with the empty wicker chairs and disordered tables, the rockers clattering in the gale as if ghosts sat in them, the table covers fluttering fantastically, and the swinging lights overhead dancing to and fro in an impish, almost a diabolical fashion. There was no living thing there save herself. She could hear Hawkins moving about the dining room just inside the house, her husband's deep and cheerful tones as he sped their parting guests. The small and pleasant noises were for the moment not small at all to her, but loud and clamorous above the loud and clamorous midnight wind. They formed a brief safe curtain of trivial sounds between her and horror.

Listening, still with that strange, stern smile upon her lips, she bent, pulled the black cloak from the queerly rolled hammock, and, with another swift glance around, caught hold of the roll with all her strength.

It was close to the top of the steps, and she could have lifted the house at that minute. In another moment it would be in the pounding swirl of water, which would rip it apart, pound it, and perhaps what it held, to pieces. Dead men told no tales; dead men told no tales.

When Jeremy Darrell returned, his wife was standing, supporting herself by a cedar pillar. The hunting coat lay at her feet like a pool of blood in that light, and her black velvet cloak was hanging on her arm. She was staring down into the swirling water

that came so close beneath them—very marvelously close at the hour of high tide.

"Everybody gone!" he announced, with a sigh of comfortable relief. "Why, you're standing, Leila! Ankle better, old girl?"

She nodded, still gazing at the black and stormy water.

"The hammock," she said, with a marked effort. "I—I pushed it over." She pointed, and stood still looking, looking.

"By Jove, how did you manage to do that?" said her husband. "Not that it matters. It never was much of a hammock. Useful enough to-night, though, on account of the poor ankle, wasn't it, dear?"

She nodded, and stood gazing down. The hammock had disappeared. There was no doubt that in the changing tide it would be loosened, rent, and whatever it held given to the open sea. The waves, when trusted, at high tide, seldom betray secrets.

All at once she had to choke back a shriek, for it seemed to her that she saw a hand, a human hand, floating there in the dusk and rush and clangor of water. She flung her black velvet cloak violently at it, to cover it.

Then as her brain instantly cleared, she laughed hysterically, knowing that it had been only fancy. But the horri-

ble cloak had gone. She caught hold of Darrell and clung to him, as the chairs rocked and clattered in the wind, and the lights danced a fiendish saraband all their own in time to nothing at all but the rhythmless music of the wild high tide.

"Leila!" Jeremy Darrell exclaimed almost severely. "What is the matter with you? What an extraordinary thing to do—to throw your cloak away like that! We shall never be able to get it, now!"

"Never!" she gasped dryly, and he thought the sudden whitening of her lips came from the pain in her ankle.

"You're unstrung, Leila!" he said, with swift compunction and gentleness. "Your ankle probably got more of a wrench than you realized. How could you have done it? How did it happen? Never mind now. But the cloak, Leila. Not that I really care, I'll get you a dozen like it if you like, but——"

She shook her head. He went on holding her tenderly as he towered over her.

"Here comes Hawkins, Leila. Brace up. I'll help you in. And as for the cloak—well, it was merely such an odd thing to do, and you know how I hate your doing odd things!"

"Yes," she whispered, hiding her face against him. "I must never forget how you hate my doing—odd things!"



COAT PROVES POOR HIDING PLACE

HAVING no safe at her summer cottage, Mrs. Dora Schwartz, of New York, recently sewed three thousand dollars' worth of jewelry into the sleeve of one of her husband's coats. Then she ceased to worry about the jewels until some time later, when, having sent the coat to a tailor's, she remembered where she had secreted them. The coat came back to her neatly pressed, but the jewels could not be found. The tailor declared he knew nothing of them. Meanwhile the search for them is being continued, and Mrs. Schwartz has lost her faith in coats as safe hiding places.

Keeping Her Out of It

by *Howard Ellis Davis*

Author of "Lips of Evil," etc.

AS quietly serene as the proverbial calm before the storm was the little group in the Hardin Brothers' store late that summer afternoon, ignorant of the news of a near-by tragedy that was even then being brought on hurrying feet.

Ed Hardin was talking, and, when Ed talked, listeners usually hitched just a little closer, newspapers were laid aside, attention was undivided. Farmer, merchant, deputy sheriff, he was a man of standing in the community. He was known to be an excellent judge of human nature, a man of sound judgment; moreover, Ed read books.

Of course, every one who could read read the papers, the farm journals, and the Bible—or should have. But Ed read books, real books. In his home he had whole rows of them, books which, from "kiver to kiver," contained not a single illustration. This reputation as a scholar lent greatly to Ed's prestige.

His great frame was draped over a chair, straddlewise, elbows resting on back, and he was holding forth on the law, a favorite topic.

"I ain't sayin' I'm agin' the law. Without law this here man-made universe would break up an' knock itself to pieces in no time. But I do say the law ain't justice, an' justice ain't the law. It's more like justice was the ideal for which law was always strivin'

but which it seldom if ever reaches in full. I ain't so much concerned with civil cases, which are mostly a matter of money or property. But I'll say that the ideal way accordin' to my notion of adjustin' them is fer folks to git together an' talk over their differences in a common-sense way, or, at most, where things is sort of mixed up, each take his lawyer, meet on common ground, an' settle out of court.

"But often when I sits in a criminal court an' listens to a prosecutin' attorney, I thinks to myself: 'Son, you sho got a wedge driv' in between law an' justice, an' is a-knockin' wider the gap with sledge-hammer licks.' Of course, prosecutin' attorneys is as necessary as the rain an' the sunshine. If it wasn't fer them violence would run abroad in the land like a fence-jumpin' steer; an' it's a delight to the soul to see 'em git turned loose on some vicious old sinner an' do their darndest. Even then innocent bystanders so often gits hurt.

"Sometimes, though, the whole scheme goes wrong. Witnesses who can sit down on their own door step an' tell things as they is, when that exhorter of the law gits hold of 'em on the witness stand, lies agin' themselves, agin' their friends, an' in favor of some who the truth would hurt. Innocent folks gits smirched, an' the prosecutin' attorney, in the name of law, justice, an' God, mauls the stuffin'

outen justice as God intended justice to be. That's the reason I never likes to take snap judgment on a man who'll do most anything to keep his folks—especially his women folks—from bein' sot up there for all the world to see 'em pulled about an'——"

"Somebody must be hurt!" interrupted Lem Smith, who sat nearest the door and had a view down the road.

There was a hasty exit to the porch.

Coming toward them up the road was a man in overalls, his battered felt hat pulled low over his eyes. He was coming in a slow, heavy trot, his feet padding dully. As the unaccustomed pace grew too much for him he would slow to a walk; then, after a few steps, the urge of his tidings would face him again in his heavy, labored run. As he caught sight of the group watching him from the porch he waved a hand as though to indicate that the news he brought was of grave importance.

When he was in speaking distance, after halting for a few sobbing breaths, he blurted out:

"There's been murder done down the road—at the bridge!"

"Who?" was the chorus of replies.

The man paused to take off his hat, and, with a grimy handkerchief, mopped his face and head. His breath still came in choking gasps.

"Mr. Frye—shot. Stranger in car—chased 'im down road—comin' this way—killed 'im at bridge. Car turned an' run in creek just below bridge—they're gittin' 'im out now. Man who did shootin' kep' on up the public road. I come after Ed."

The news was out—the salient facts, anyway. Details could wait. All interest was now directed toward Ed Hardin.

He made no move other than to straighten to his full height of six foot two. Turning to Jake Carrol, he gave a direction:

"Git on the telephone, Jake. Notify

every place 'tween here an' Meridian to look out fer that man an' stop 'im."

Standing there on the porch with his feet planted slightly apart, his broad shoulders thrown back, he uttered no other word; but these friends of his knew just what to do.

One turned and darted into the store, dove behind the counter, and returned with Ed's repeating rifle, which he always kept loaded. Another, from its peg in the wall, brought the well-filled cartridge belt. Several disappeared in a hurry around the corner of the store in the direction of a shed where his small, one-seated "flivver" was kept. From this vicinity presently came much shouting, some swearing, and, in a moment more, the small roadster appeared, a driver perched at the wheel, while three men shoved vigorously behind. The refractory engine burst into a roar, then settled into the rhythmic chug-chug of potential driving power.

As many as could climb on rode with Ed down to the bridge. But they knew they were going in the capacity of mere onlookers, handy men to do his bidding, perhaps; for Deputy Hardin always handled his cases alone.

It was after dark when Maston Frye was extricated from beneath the wreckage of his car in the shallow waters and the heavy body laid on the grass beside the road. From down at the edge of the creek, where he had been carefully examining the contents of the smashed automobile, Hardin called to one of the men:

"Alex, go through his pockets."

When Ed returned to the group about the body Alex had laid out on a handkerchief spread in the edge of the road, besides some odds and ends, a gold watch and less than one hundred dollars in currency.

"Keep 'em with 'im," said the deputy, as, after counting the money, he dropped it back to the handkerchief. Then, turning to the other men now

gathered at a respectful distance, he asked:

"Who here saw the shootin'?"

Buck Remoll spat, drew the back of his hand across his mouth, cleared his throat. All looked at him appreciatingly.

"The sawmill had jes' knocked off," he said, "an' we was scattered 'long the road on our way home. We heard them autos comin' a-devil-bustin' an' got out the road. Frye come first, an' as he passed me he was turnin' in his seat to shoot back at the stranger, which he done fifty yards or so farther on. That there stranger was right opposite Tobe here when Frye shot, an' he didn't pay that bullet no mind a-tall."

"He didn't bat a eyelash," interposed Tobe.

Buck continued: "He was jes humped over his wheel, bareheaded, the wind blowin' 'is hair back, lookin' straight ahead, an' seemed like he was hell-bent on catchin' Frye—an' he was a-doin' it, too. We seen his game an' sot out on a run to see the up-come. Kase where this here road bends to go on to the bridge, Frye would jes natural have to slow up, an' that fellow could plug him from behind easy as dirt. He wasn't in no special danger hisself, kase Frye couldn't guide his car, fast as he was goin', an' shoot straight too. We heard the shot, an' we heard the smash of the auto."

Ed now asked for a description of the stranger; but beyond the fact that he appeared to be youngish, and was bareheaded, the information was vague.

Had any one noticed the number on his car?

It seemed that no one had thought of that.

The question was now asked Hardin whether the dead man should be taken to his home that night.

"No," replied Hardin. "Lay 'im

out in the store. Luke, you an' Tom stay with 'im." Here he raised his voice. "An' don't nobody carry the word to Mrs. Frye. I'll 'tend to that."

Then, entering his little car, he turned it about and drove off, alone.

Hardin wished to be the first to talk with Mrs. Frye. As there had been nothing in the automobile, or in the dead man's pockets to justify it, and from the additional fact that the pursuer had not stopped, Ed was certain that Frye had not been killed for the sake of anything he had with him. He therefore wished, if possible, to find out from Mrs. Frye who had a motive for killing her husband.

Although Frye and his wife had been living in her old home, the Somerville place, for only a few months, and Frye seldom came into personal contact with the people, many in the neighborhood had cause enough to hate him. He was always ruthless, dictatorial. His big roadster had claimed right of way on the public road; a dog had been run over and killed, a cow injured, a wagon struck and smashed to pieces, its occupants knocked out and bruised. Frye had never offered amends for his damages, and his only comments when he struck the wagon were curses directed at the driver when he had been forced to stop his car and extricate it from the wreckage. But in each case Hardin had gone quietly to him and returned with what the deputy considered adequate damage money. Following the incident of the wagon no one ever knew just what passed between Hardin and Frye; but after that Frye was more careful in his driving.

The man who had chased Frye down the road in an automobile Hardin knew could not be from around there; perhaps he was some enemy from Mobile, the nearest city, fifty miles away, to which Frye was a frequent visitor. Ed dreaded the interview with Mrs. Frye. She was alone, and little more

than a child. He could expect hysterics and all that sort of woman business, but he set his lips and drove on.

The way to the Somerville place led to Shoal's landing, three miles distant, and across the bayou—two miles up. Frye, because the roads leading toward Mobile on the other side of the bayou were poor and unkept, had been accustomed to stable his automobile near the landing and traverse the distance up the bayou in a launch.

Where the swamp road joined the highway Hardin drew his little car to one side and swung himself to the ground to proceed on foot the two hundred yards through the mud to the landing. Near the entrance to the other road his eye was caught by the glint of the starlight on metal, and he saw the dark outline of an automobile.

Cautiously approaching he found it deserted, and, with his hand on the radiator, he guessed that it had been there for half an hour. His alert mind quickly decided on the reason for its presence.

The stranger who had shot Frye was evidently seeking Frye's house. As the car was now headed about, either in his ignorance of the road he had driven past, inquired of some unsuspecting native, and returned to the place; or—and this was the contingency to be watched—he was properly headed for a quick dash back toward Mobile.

Evidently he wished something at the Frye house—perhaps Frye's wife. That might have been the meaning of the desperate chase when Frye had been determined to kill his pursuer—a sordid love affair. The madness of a jealous lover could very well be the motive that would drive him to ride down the husband and shoot him to death. What more natural than that the lover should then proceed at once to the woman?

With catlike stealth Hardin crept

down the road, and, from the darkness of overhanging bushes, approached the landing. Body close to the ground to avoid a silhouette, the muzzle of his rifle dropped forward in readiness, with the silence of a shadow he moved to examine the little house in which Frye's launch was kept. It was securely locked.

Down at the water's edge he found that from among the boats tied there one had been cut loose—the short end of smoothly severed rope giving silent evidence—and he knew that the man for whom he sought was already ahead of him up the bayou.

Running swiftly up a narrow path to a point among the bushes on the shore a hundred yards above the landing, he presently shoved out upon the open water in a narrow double-ender, and, with silent, powerful strokes of the paddle, headed upstream.

He had traversed almost the entire distance to the other landing before he heard on the still night air the clumsy cluck, cluck, cluck of oars in wooden rowlocks. Driving his canoe to the shadow of the overhanging trees he rounded a last curve just as the other's boat was being drawn from the water to the narrow shingle.

Beaching his own canoe he followed the shadow that flitted before him up the path.

Hardin half expected the man to go boldly in at the front door. Instead, after pausing for an instant at the steps, he crept around the corner of the house toward a window through which a light streamed.

Warily, prepared for any emergency, Hardin held to the gloom of the trees in the yard, but moved around to a point from which he could look directly into the open window. There was a stealth about the man's movements that caused the deputy to cock his rifle and hold it ready for instant use. Had a double murder been planned?

Mrs. Frye, a girl of not more than twenty, was seated at a table in the center of the room writing. Stooping low, the stranger crept to a position beneath the window, then slowly raised himself until he could look over the sill.

"Theo, Theo," Hardin heard him call softly from the window.

The girl looked up quickly, laid aside her pen, glanced toward the window. Then, with a cry of "Dick!" she ran forward and dropped on her knees before the man, her arms about his shoulders.

What passed in the smothered words of that meeting Hardin could not hear, nor could he hear their conversation when the man had lightly vaulted into the room and taken her in his arms. He appeared to be not more than twenty-three or twenty-four years old, and was tall, straight, and slender, with the pallor of the indoor worker. On his bare head dark-brown hair clung damply about his brow. He seemed to be explaining something to the girl at which she at first started back in surprise; then, as he seemed to be insisting, slowly shook her head.

Hardin now crept up and reached the window just as Dick was saying:

"I'll drive you directly to the train. It leaves Mobile for New Orleans about four o'clock in the morning."

"I can't do it, Dick."

"But it's necessary for me to stay and wind this thing up."

"We'll wind it up together, dear."

He turned on her fiercely.

"And spoil all my hopes of being able to keep you out of it. Since I learned the facts I've worked with that end in view. Nothing else matters to me. With the information you sent us we have been able to act fully. You will not be needed."

Again she shook her head.

In a gentler tone he continued:

"You have suffered enough in this

horrible thing. You must now go to New Orleans—directly there!"

Hardin stepped forward, balanced his rifle across the window sill, and called sharply:

"Surrender, both of you, in the name of the law!"

From where they stood close together near the table they turned quickly toward him.

"Who are you and what do you want?" retorted Dick, seemingly not at all impressed by the proximity of the threatening rifle.

"I'm the deputy, an' I want you—both of you."

"What do you want me for?"

"I want yer fer murder."

"Me? For murder?"

"Yep. Fer murderin' Frye."

"But you don't understand—there's a mistake—I didn't murder Frye."

"Well, call it unjustifiable homicide then, ef that'll ease yo' feelin's any."

"There's a mistake—you're entirely mistaken."

"Didn't you chase Frye down the road this evenin'?"

"Yes. But I didn't murder him."

"Call it what yo' like; but in this neighborhood folks can't go shootin' up the highways an' the byways so promiscuouslike an' expect' to git away with it. It's a onpleasant duty, but I'll have to ask you to go with me—both of you."

"I'll go with you," replied the boy. "But for Miss—Mrs.—this girl, it's out of the question."

"I said both of you," answered Hardin firmly.

"But she——"

"Both of you!"

"Then, by——" The young man turned and caught up a heavy brass inkstand from the table; but Theo placed a restraining hand on his arm.

"Tell him," she said. "Let me tell him."

"No!"

"Then I'll go with you."

"You'll do nothing of the sort!"

"I'd rather, Dick. I'd rather be with you."

Then, slipping her arm through the boy's, she turned to Hardin.

"We are ready," she said simply.

Going down the bayou Hardin sat in the stern seat with his rifle across his knees, while Theo crouched in the bow and Dick was at the oars.

"Sorry to put you to the extra trouble, son," Hardin told him. "But I reckon it's better that way."

As they swung around the last bend in the bayou Hardin could see the lights from lanterns swinging to and fro on the landing. As he followed his prisoners onto the shore he saw that Alex Rowe, Mr. Topper Spavin—the fat justice of the peace—and one or two others were there.

"Got 'im, did you?" said Mr. Spavin in his high falsetto voice. "We got in my auto an' trailed you this far. Been a-waitin' for you here. Knowed you'd git 'im dead or alive. An' a woman, too, by gum!"

The lanterns swung high for a better look, and Theo shrank back close to Dick, who protectingly placed an arm around her.

"Here, you fellers!" said Ed sharply. "This ain't no picture show. Alex, git ahead with that lantern an' light the way. The rest of you drop behind."

As they reached the main road they saw the blinding lights of an approaching automobile, and stood waiting for it to pass. Instead, it drew up in their midst.

"You there, Ed Hardin?"

"Yes."

"Might've known it. Got 'im I guess. This is Jim Ponce, U. S. marshal. Thought he'd make for this place, an' come soon as I could. Thought you'd be on the job, too."

Slowly he swung himself from the automobile, took the lantern from Alex,

and approached to where Ed stood with the prisoners.

"This him?"

"Yep."

He raised the lantern and peered into Dick's face.

The marshal swore. "You got the wrong man," he said. "I'm after Maston Frye. This is Mr. Richard Purvis. An' who's the woman?"

"Never mind who she is, Mr. Ponce," interposed Dick quickly. "I want you to explain to this deputy here that his arresting me is a mistake."

"Sure it is," replied the marshal. "Mr. Purvis is an employee of a bank in New Orleans. Maston Frye was a cashier of the same bank, and got into some funds about a year ago. It's just come to light, and I have a warrant for his arrest. I'm not as spry as I used to be, and he slipped me in Mobile; but Dick Purvis, here, struck his trail and followed him out of town."

Ed turned to Dick, and, in the lantern light, his eyes had a steely glint.

"If those are the facts," he said, "jes' explain why it was that after you had run Frye down and shot him to death, instead of stoppin', you kep' right on 'till you reached this woman, an' was so bent on slippin' her off to New 'Leans."

Dick threw his head back defiantly.

"Mr. Deputy, that's none of your business. You will please leave this woman's name out of it. I refuse to answer any questions in regard to her. Hold me in arrest if you like, and be damned to you!"

"I'll tell you, Mr. Hardin," said Theo. "I was engaged to Dick, and Maston Frye forced me to marry him by holding over me the threat that he would expose my brother for the embezzlement of funds from the bank unless I did. He seemed to have all the proofs. He brought me here to live, and forced me to make over my income to him. When I found out that it was

he who robbed the bank, he swore that if I ever exposed him he'd kill me. I notified the bank of the theft. He made that threat in Mobile to-day when Dick faced him, and set out to do it. Dick had no time to secure a weapon, but followed as fast as he could in an effort to reach me before Mr. Frye. As he had no weapon, it was impossible for him to shoot my—my husband. Just before he reached the bridge Mr. Frye turned to fire at Dick and lost control of his automobile. He must have——”

“What'd I tell you! What'd I tell you!” exclaimed Alex. “Frye didn't have a bullet hole in his hide. We stripped 'im to see. An' I said he must've run over that there turn.”

“Of course it will be necessary for us to remain until the circumstances surrounding my—my husband's death are cleared up. Dick was anxious for me to escape this.”

A silence now fell on the little group. All eyes were turned to Hardin. The situation seemed to have run itself into a hole, and these friends of his looked to him.

“Judge,” he said presently, reflectively rubbing his chin with the muzzle of his rifle, and turning to the justice of the peace, “seems to me a coroner's jury would find that Maston Frye met a accidental death. He was a pow'ful reckless driver. What do you think of it, Jim?”

“Appears reasonable,” said the marshal.

“Wonder he ain't broke his neck before this,” added the falsetto voice of the justice.

“An' now, Dick, son,” said Ed, turning to the boy, “ef you an' her is calculatin' on catchin' that fo'clock train for New 'Leans, yer might jes' as well be gettin' on yo' way—both of you.”



CRIMINAL REFORMED IN NEW JERSEY PRISON

WHEN George Whitson was brought before Judge Wadhams in New York recently two persons of prominence in social-welfare work appeared in court to ask clemency for him. They were Burdette S. Lewis, commissioner of charities of New Jersey, and Mrs. Maude Ballington Booth, of Salvation Army fame, and they told the judge that Whitson had shown a remarkable change in his attitude toward society during the seven years he had been confined in the New Jersey State prison at Trenton.

Several years ago Whitson escaped from the Tombs in New York, and was later arrested at Atlantic City and convicted of having robbed a woman at the point of a revolver. For that he was sentenced to seven years in the penal institution in New Jersey.

When his term there was about to expire he wrote to Judge Wadhams and asked for a chance to “go straight” without first being sent to jail as punishment for his previous deeds in New York. He said that the good treatment and the education he had received in the New Jersey institution had fired him with the ambition to lead a law-abiding life, and declared that a good position was awaiting him.

Judge Wadhams set Whitson free under a suspended sentence.

Stamped in Gold

by Edgar Wallace

CHAPTER I.

STAGE MONEY.

FRANK ALWIN lifted his manacled hands and gingerly pulled off his mustache. The sound of the orchestra playing the audience out came faintly through the heavy curtains which divided the stage from the auditorium. He looked round as the property man came forward with an apology.

"Sorry, sir," he said. "I didn't know the curtain was down. We finished earlier to-night."

Frank nodded and watched, as the man deftly unlocked the handcuffs and took them into his charge.

Five minutes before, Frank Alwin had been the wicked *Count de Larsca*, detected in the act of robbing the Bank of Brazil, and arrested by the inevitable and invincible detective.

He stood on the stage absent-mindedly as the nimble stage hands "struck" the scene. Then he walked to the whitewashed lobby which led to the dressing rooms.

A girl was waiting in her street clothes, for her tiny part had been finished an hour before. Frank, his mind fully occupied with other matters, had a dim sense of obligation. He had a keener sense that he had failed to surrender a great wad of paper "money" which he had filched from the property safe, and which now reposed in his pocket. He smiled into the girl's anxious face as he approached her and slipped half a dozen bills from his pocket. These he folded solemnly and pressed into her hand.

"For the child, Marguerite," he said extravagantly, saw the amazement in the open eyes, chuckled to himself, and mounted the stairs to his dressing room, two at a time.

He was near the top when he remembered and cursed himself. He dashed down again to find she was gone.

Wilbur Smith, late Captain Wilbur Smith but now just Wilbur Smith of the secret service, was lounging in a big armchair in the actor's dressing room, filling the small apartment with blue smoke. He looked up as his friend entered.

"Hello, Frank!" he exclaimed. "What's the matter? Didn't the show go?"

"I'm an ass," said Frank Alwin, dropping into a chair before his dressing table.

"In some things, yes," said Wilbur Smith genially; "in other things quite a shrewd man for an actor. What particular asinine thing have you done now?"

"There's a girl——" began Frank, and the other nodded sympathetically.

"I'm sorry. I didn't intend probing into your indiscretions. If you are that kind of an ass, why that counts nothing against you."

"Don't be a fool," said Alwin irritably. "It isn't that sort at all. There's a little girl in this company——" He hesitated. "Well, I can tell you. Her name is Maisie Bishop. She has a small part in the show."

The other nodded. "I have seen her, a very pretty girl. Well?"

Again Frank hesitated. "Well, the fact is," he said awkwardly, "she came

to me to-night as I was going on and said she was in some kind of trouble—her people I mean. And she asked me if I would lend her some money. It was only a few seconds before I went on. I promised her I would and forgot all about it.”

“Well, you can find her,” said the other.

“It isn’t that that is worrying me. Look here!” He thrust his hands in his pocket and threw a roll of bills on the table. “Stage money! I saw her waiting for me and clean forgot our conversation, so far forgot it that I acted the fool and gave her half a dozen of these by way of a joke.”

Wilbur laughed.

“Don’t let it worry you,” he said. “I promise you if she is arrested for trying to pass fake money I’ll see her and you through.”

He rose from the chair, and, walking across to the dressing table, picked up the bundle of notes. It was a very thick bundle, and the bills were of large denomination.

“That’s pretty good stage money,” he said.

In the process of rubbing his face with cold cream Alwin stopped to look. “It isn’t the usual stage money, either,” he said. “Why, you might think that was real stuff.” He wiped his hand on a towel, and, picking up one of the bills, examined it. “Silk threads O. K. Now what the devil does this mean? I’ve never had stage money like this before. That girl ought to be able to pass every one of those bills. Wilbur, I wish you would go down and see her. She lives on the East Side somewhere. The stage doorkeeper will give you her address.”

“Queer, isn’t it?” said Wilbur Smith thoughtfully, fingering a bill. “The realest-looking stuff I have ever seen and—good Lord!”

He had turned the bill over and was staring at its back.

“What is it?” asked the startled Alwin.

The detective pointed to a little yellow design which had evidently been stamped upon the bill.

“What is it?” asked Alwin again.

“What do you think it is?” demanded Wilbur Smith in a strange voice.

“Well, it looks to me like the picture of an idol.”

The other nodded.

“You’re nearly right. It is a picture of The Golden Hades!”

“The who?”

“The Golden Hades!” replied the other. “Have you never heard of Hades?”

“Yes,” said Frank with a smile. “It is a place you send people to when they are in the way.”

“It is also the name of a deity,” said Wilbur Smith grimly, “a gentleman who is also called Pluto.”

“But why do you call it golden? Because of its color?”

The other shook his head.

“This is the third Hades I have seen, but the others were in sure-enough gold.”

He picked up the bills and counted them carefully.

“Ninety-six thousand dollars!” he said.

“Do you mean,” asked Frank with a gasp, “that these are——”

“They are real enough,” said the detective, nodding. “Where did you get them?”

“I got them in the usual way from the property man.”

“Can you bring him up?”

“If he hasn’t gone home,” said Frank. Going to the door he roared for his dresser. “Send Hainz up.”

Fortunately Hainz was intercepted at the door just as he was leaving, and was brought back to the dressing room. As he passed through the door his eye fell upon the money on the table and he uttered an impatient “Tchck!”

"Why, I knew I had forgotten to collect something from you, Mr. Alwin," he said, "but being late for the curtain rattled me and made me forget it. I'll take these——"

"Wait a moment!" It was Wilbur Smith who spoke. "You know me, Hainz?"

"Yes, sir," said the man, grinning; "not professionally, but I know you well enough."

"Where did you get this money?"

The other stared. "Money? What do you mean? This?" He jerked his thumb to the bills on the table.

"I mean that," said Smith.

"Where did I get it?" repeated the property man slowly. "Why, I bought those from a bill man. I was running short of stage stuff and he had a lot. He was using 'em as a border for that movie, 'The Lure of Wealth.'"

"Where did he get them?" asked Smith.

"I don't know. He just had 'em given to him."

"Do you know where I can find him?"

The man produced a dingy little note-book and read an address.

"I know where he lives because he sometimes does a bit of work for me," he said.

When the man had gone Wilbur Smith faced his astonished friend.

"Get that paint off your face, Frank, and make yourself human," he said good-naturedly. "If you don't mind I'll take charge of that money and we will go and have supper somewhere."

"But what the devil does it all mean?" asked Frank Alwin.

"I'll tell you while we are eating," evasively replied Wilbur Smith.

He had little to tell as he frankly admitted half an hour later.

"The first time I saw The Golden Hades it was real gold," he explained. "It had been stamped on the back of a

thousand-dollar bill, and had been dusted over with gold leaf. Then it had the word 'Hades' in Greek beneath it, and that's how I came to identify the picture; it is pretty easy to identify from any classical dictionary.

"The bill came into my hands in a very curious way. There was a poor woman down on the East Side who worked as a helper in a Brooklyn hotel. According to her story she was returning home one night when a man walked up to her and gave her a big package of bills and walked away. She got back to her room, lit the gas, for the dusk was falling, and found that she had a hundred thousand dollars. She couldn't believe her eyes; she thought somebody was having a joke with her and thought, as you thought, that the money was fake. She put the money under her pillow, intending in the morning to take it to some one who could tell real money from counterfeit. In the night she was awakened by hearing somebody in her room. She was about to cry out when a voice told her to be silent; somebody lit the gas and she discovered that there was not only one but three masked men standing about her bed."

Frank looked at the detective. "Are you stringing me?"

Wilbur Smith shook his head. "This is dead serious," he said. "They asked where the money was, and she, speechless with terror at the sight of their guns, pointed to the pillow and fainted off. When she recovered the money was gone, all except one bill, that which I mentioned, which they had overlooked in their hurry. She brought this to the police the next day and told her story. They turned the case over to us. The chief thought it was a lie, and that the woman had stolen the money from the hotel where she was working, and, getting scared, had prepared this very thin yarn to exonerate herself."

"And was this so?"

The detective shook his head. "No," he said. "I took the case in hand. There was no money missing from the hotel. The woman had a very good character; was, in fact, one of the poor but transparently honest type, and we had no other course to pursue but to hand over the thousand dollars to her. This was the first time I ever met The Golden Hades.

"The second time," he went on, "was in almost as remarkable circumstances. This time the notes, several of them, were in the possession of a man named Henry Laste, a confirmed gambler who was picked up drunk in the street by a patrolman and rushed into the station. I happened to be making a call at the moment, and when the man was searched, eight of these bills for a thousand dollars were found in his pocket. We got him sober and he told us a story that his wife had found the notes between the leaves of a book she bought somewhere downtown. I got this information from him about eight o'clock in the morning," Wilbur Smith went on slowly, "and, as our operatives and the police work more or less together on a case in which both of us are interested, I started off with them for his house to interview his wife. He lived in a tenement, and when we got to the door and knocked there was no answer. I was deeply interested in the business and I knew there was something big behind it. I got the janitor to unlock the door with a master key."

"And the woman was gone?" asked Frank.

The detective shook his head. "The woman was there," he said simply, "dead! Shot through the heart with an automatic pistol, every room ransacked, drawers turned out, wardrobes——"

"The Higgins Tenement Murder!" exclaimed Alwin.

Wilbur nodded gravely. "The Higgins Tenement Murder," he said.

"And did you find any notes?"

"None. We wanted to bring a charge against the husband, but he had no difficulty in proving an alibi. He had been at a gambling house the whole of the night, had been in the police station since one o'clock in the morning, and the murder had been committed at ten minutes past two. The shot that killed the woman passed through her body and through an alarm clock which stopped at that hour."

They sat looking at each other in silence. The clatter and chatter of the restaurant jangled in the ears of Frank Alwin and there came to him a sudden realization of danger, mysterious, menacing, and real.

"I see," he said slowly. "Everybody who has handled those notes stamped with The Golden Hades have been——"

"Held up," the detective finished the sentence. "That's just it, and that is why I am going to stick with you through the night, Frank."

They had been friends for many years, the leading man at the Imperial and his old-time school fellow who had more crime discoveries to his credit than any of his colleagues.

Frank Alwin himself had three strenuous years of good service to his credit in the secret service, and had he not been a born producer, a brilliant actor, and a comfortably rich man, he might have made a reputation equally great with that which he enjoyed, in the same service as his friend.

"I don't like it," said Alwin after a while. "It is uncanny. Who was Pluto, anyway?"

"He was the deity of the nether regions, the one deity who is worshiped to-day by certain cranks. I suppose there is something about him that appeals to the modern demonologist."

A waiter came to the table at that moment.

"Mr. Alwin," he said, "there's a phone message for you."

Frank got up and the detective half rose to accompany him.

"Don't worry," said Frank with a laugh. "They are not going to kill me by phone. Anyway, they couldn't get the money, as you have it in your pocket."

Three minutes passed and he did not return. Five minutes went by and the detective grew uneasy. He beckoned the waiter.

"Go see if Mr. Alwin is still at the phone," he said.

The man returned almost immediately.

"Mr. Alwin is not there, sir," he said. "Not there?"

Wilbur Smith was on his feet in an instant. He pushed the chair aside and left the dining room. The hall porter said he had not seen Alwin go out but he had been absent from the entrance for five minutes. He had seen a car waiting at the door which was gone when he returned.

The detective ran into the deserted street. There was nobody in sight. The entrance stood between and at equal distance from two electric-light standards, whose rays were so thrown that immediately before the entrance of the restaurant was a little patch of darkness.

He saw something on the edge of the pavement, stooped, and picked it up. It was Frank's hat, battered and damp. He carried it to the light. One look was sufficient. His hand, where he had touched the crushed crown, was red with blood.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBER.

STEPS. Two steps—three steps—four steps—five steps—landing—turn. One step—two steps—three steps—four steps—five steps—six steps—landing—no, this was the end of the stairway."

A key clicked in the lock, and pre-

sumably a door opened, because there came a breath of cold and somewhat musty air. Then the journey was resumed.

Frank Alwin came to consciousness, or semiconsciousness, as they were carrying him down a flight of steps. By some peculiar trick of the mind he began his count at "two" without being conscious that the first step had been descended. His head was aching, and his face felt as sticky and uncomfortable as though somebody had spilled mucilage down it, and his arms pained dreadfully.

But the head was the worst. He had never realized how inspired was the coiner of phrases when he had described a "splitting headache." It was as though his skull had been rent in two and the broken ends were grating. The agony seemed unendurable; he could have cried out with the pain of it, but subconscious reason bade him be silent. Whoever carried him was handling him with care. He felt himself laid upon a bed.

"Spring bed, damp pillow," registered his mind.

Then the electric light was turned on and the sensation, after the darkness, was almost as painful as his throbbing head. He groaned and turned over, and groaned again.

"Phew!" said a voice. "Look at my coat! Blood will never wash off, and I'll have to burn it. I think it was a fool's trick, anyway, to bring him here. Why not leave him?"

"Because Rosie is right," said another voice—a deeper tone with a growl in it.

"Rosie!" The first speaker laughed contemptuously.

"Who was Rosie?" wondered Frank Alwin through his pain. "Was there a woman at the back of this extraordinary mischief? What manner of woman was she?"

He remembered coming out of

the restaurant because—because—he couldn't remember just why he had gone into the street. He had only the dimmest recollection of what had happened after. Anyway, he was here, and he was alive; that was something. But they were talking of Rosie.

"I tell you Rosie was right," said the growling voice. "This fellow Smith is the most dangerous man in New York—for us."

"What about Peter Correlly?" said the first speaker, and there was a silence, as though the second man, who spoke with such authority, was considering the matter, as apparently he was.

"Peter Correlly?" he repeated. "Why, yes, Peter Correlly is dangerous, but Wilbur Smith wouldn't have him on to the same job. Besides, I think it is much too big a thing for Peter Correlly, anyway."

There was another pause and the sound of somebody washing his hands. That some one was singing in a low voice and Frank judged this to be the washer. What is there about the sound of running water which inspires all men to song?

"But it is all nonsense," said the voice of the first man who had spoken, and the note of contempt still held. "Rosie doesn't think for a minute that Wilbur Smith will chuck up the job because his pal is in danger? Anyway, how is he to know that we haven't finished him? Rosie talks about killing two birds with one stone, but we ain't killed any birds yet. This nut hasn't got the money, and he's alive."

There was a long pause.

"Yes," said the growling voice, "that's so. Maybe we've got to alter our program. You are sure he said he gave the money to Smith? Maybe he didn't know what he was saying."

"He knew what he said all right," said the first speaker. "Smith has the money, and that alters things."

Frank was trying desperately hard to catch hold of the past few hours or few minutes. When had he said he had given the money to Wilbur Smith? He had no recollection of the few moments of consciousness which he had enjoyed on the way to this place. Yet somehow he knew that the man was speaking the truth, and he groaned again.

One of the men came across and looked down at him. "Hullo, you!" he said in a growling voice. "Do you feel better?"

Frank unscrewed his eyes—that is just how the sensation felt—and peered up at his questioner. He might have saved himself the trouble, for the lower part of the man's face was covered by a silk handkerchief.

"You're in luck," said the man. "You ought to be dead by rights. You're in a little place which was built specially for me—a regular swell apartment. Why, you can have a needle bath if you want one!"

Frank groaned again, and presently he heard no more. The man with the handkerchief sat down, pulled the unconscious man to his back, and lifted his eyelids.

"I thought he was dead for a minute," he said. "He's a bit soft. You didn't plug him that hard, Sammy?"

The man addressed as Sammy laughed. He was shorter than his companion, quicker of foot, more wiry, and he stepped over to the side of the unconscious Alwin and examined his hurts with deft fingers.

"It is nothing serious," he said. "He has only lost a little blood."

He rose and looked round the raw brick walls of the room.

"A very desirable residence," he said, "but I'm glad it is he and not me that's going to live here. Tom, if we ever have to hide for our lives, this is about the last place in the world we ought to be. Yes, I know it has a bathroom and lots of books and plenty of grub, and

it is the sort of place where you could sit quiet for a year if you were clever. But what applied six months ago does not apply now. I thought it was a grand idea of Rosie's when he first put it up. Rosie planned the whole building, brought the workmen up from Mexico, sent them home again, and no other human eye saw it being built."

He chuckled, then went on:

"But things have gone big since then, Tom. What looked like a little graft that nobody would take any notice of, is now the biggest thing we've ever struck. And Lord bless Rosie for it!"

"Rosie? Huh!" growled the other.

"Why, say, you were praising him up just now," sneered the second man, "which reminds me," he said suddenly, in a different tone of voice.

On the other side of the room from where he was sitting were two sea chests, one on top of the other. Their fastening was of a primitive character and he opened one, examining its contents with an approving eye. It was half full of books, papers, scrapbooks, wire table baskets, stationery racks, and paraphernalia of an office desk.

"Rosie wants this stuff sorted out," said the man.

"Sorted out," repeated Alwin, coming back to consciousness.

"Let him come and sort 'em out," said the other. "What's the hurry, anyway?"

He pondered a moment, then said:

"I suppose we ought to do it. Rosie said there was a lot of stuff in these boxes that might be of use, and a lot that might be damaging if it ever fell into wise hands. We could take it up to the Temple to-morrow night, then Rosie could persuade the mug to send them to his place."

What was the mug? Alwin puzzled over that word until he remembered that "mug" was English slang for fool. He heard the snap of the watchcase and the grating of the chair being

pushed against the wall. Then one of the men said briskly:

"Well, it is time. Why doesn't Rosie come?"

There was a sharp tap-tap at that moment which sounded to Frank as though it came from the ceiling. It was like the tap of a walking stick on a tessellated pavement, and he wondered what was above the vaulted roof.

"Talk of the devil," said the man called Sam. "Come on, Tom. He won't come down here. What about this fellow?"

"Leave him for a moment and leave the light. Let us see what Rosie has to say."

The door shut softly behind them, and with an effort Frank turned his head. He was in a large cellar. It was evidently the cellar of a house which had been newly built. It was oblong in shape, and the concrete floor was covered with matting; it was clean and apparently well ventilated. It contained three beds, on one of which he was lying, the others being in the corners on either side of the door. There was a plain table, two wooden chairs, and a wicker chair, and these, with the two chests, constituted the furniture of what one of the men had called his "apartment."

In the corner farthest from the entrance was a door, which apparently led to the bath of which the man had boasted.

By a powerful effort of will Alwin dragged himself to the edge of the bed, and, holding tight to the headboard, stood erect. His head swam, his knees felt as though they would collapse at any minute; he thought he was going to faint. He was sick and trembling and his head was one wild, frantic ache. His first thought was to find some weapons which his captors might incautiously have left behind in a moment of forgetfulness, but this miracle did not happen. After a few painful moments

he crawled back to the bed and lay down. The relief was such that he was satisfied to stay. He had put his hand to his head and discovered that some sort of rough dressing had been applied to the wound on his scalp, and there was nothing now to do but to rid himself of this intolerable ache and to recover some of his lost strength.

He must have dozed off, for he was awakened by the door being opened and the two men entering. The man called Tom was grumbling about the boxes. Evidently Rosie had been insistent. Though they spoke of this mysterious personage in tones from which they did not attempt to banish their contempt, he was evidently of some importance.

"What about this fellow?" said one of them suddenly, and Frank knew they were speaking of him.

"Give him till to-morrow night," said the growling voice. "Let us see what we can do with Smith."

"Do you think we can do anything with him?"

"Who? Smith? Sure we can. He has the money. Rosie says so and Rosie knows."

"That makes a difference. It complicates things to put this guy out of the reckoning. This is the third blunder Rosie has made in three months."

They lowered their voices here, and Frank could not follow them. He gathered that they were examining the two black boxes which stood against the wall, for he heard them pant as they lifted one down to examine the box underneath. Presently they left, and he heard the thud of the door as they shut it behind them.

CHAPTER III.

PRELIMINARY STEPS.

I AM sorry to disturb you."

In the gray of the morning Wilbur Smith stood, hat in hand, at the door of a small apartment and the

elderly man who had opened the door, clad in an old overcoat which was worn over his pajamas, gazed sleepily upon the unexpected visitor.

"Here is my card."

The man took it and read.

"Secret service!" he said, startled.

"Why, whatever has happened?"

"There's nothing wrong——"

"Don't tell me that Maisie——"

"There's nothing very wrong in the sense that your daughter is responsible. I suppose Miss Maisie Bishop is your daughter?"

"Come in, sir," said the man. "Just one minute while I light the gas."

The little room was furnished neatly but poorly.

"Is it about the money?" said the man anxiously. "I didn't understand it. You see, Maisie asked Mr. Alwin because he had been so kind to her in the past. I was amazed when she brought the money back. I didn't know he was that rich. I thought there must be some mistake. Mr. Alwin has sent you——"

Wilbur shook his head.

"Not exactly," he said. "But if you don't mind I would like to see your daughter."

He waited in some anxiety and was relieved to hear the girl's voice. Presently she came in, a little pale but looking pretty, he thought. She carried in her hand a little bundle of notes.

"Is it about these?" she asked.

He nodded.

"Mr. Alwin gave them to me," she said, speaking agitatedly. "I thought there was a mistake, but I didn't think he would send——"

"He has not sent anybody, be assured of that. I have really come to see that you are safe," said Wilbur kindly. "As to the money, you need not worry. I shall want it for a few days. At the end of that time if nothing happens I will return it to you."

"I hated asking Mr. Alwin at all," she

said, "but daddy has been troubled about money, and we owed a lot of rent. I tried everybody before I asked Mr. Alwin, and I think I should have sunk through the floor with shame if he had refused. It is awful to ask," she faltered.

"Don't worry about that, please," said Wilbur with a little smile. "I am only concerned about you, about the danger——"

"The danger?" she asked quickly. "What do you mean? You said something about my safety."

He was examining the notes under the gas. They each bore the yellow stamp.

"These are they," he said, and drew from his pocket a big bundle of notes which Frank had handed to him. The girl's mouth opened in astonishment at the sight of so much money.

"You see, the numbers are consecutive. I had better take a note of these."

He jotted some figures down on the leaf of his notebook and tore it out.

"Keep this for reference," he said. "Those are the numbers of the bills I have taken, and as I say they will be returned to you—if nothing happens. In the meantime," he drew his own bill fold from his pocket, "you must tell me how much money you wanted to borrow from Mr. Alwin and let me supply your needs." He saw the flush that rose to the girl's cheek and laughed. "You must take this as a loan from Frank Alwin," he said, and winced at the thought that Alwin at that moment was probably dead.

She named a sum in a low tone and he extracted the bills from his bill fold and passed them to her.

When he got to his office that morning after two or three hours' sleep he found a group of reporters waiting for him. Wilbur Smith had one way with the press, and it was the way of frankness, which he had found to pay ninety-

nine per cent of the time; the one per cent didn't matter anyway.

"Yes, boys, it is perfectly true that Mr. Alwin has disappeared, and so far as I know he has not been seen since last night." He had been on the phone before coming to the office. "There's a pretty big mystery behind this disappearance, and I think I have some sort of clew."

"Is there any connection between this crime and the Higgins Tenement Murder?" asked a reporter, and the detective nodded.

"I don't know how that story has got round, but there's a lot of truth in it," he said. "Alwin is a very good friend of mine, and you may be sure that I am not going to rest until I have tracked him down, as well as the men who took him away. Now, in case you get these facts mixed up, I will tell you just what has occurred," he added, and related the story of his meeting the actor in the theater, of their supping together, and of Alwin going out to answer a telephone call and disappearing. He made no reference either to the money or to The Golden Hades.

This was a matter, he thought, which could be left over until a future date might provide the press with further material. For the moment he had no desire or intention of warning this mysterious agency, as he would be doing if he let them know that he associated the crime and its predecessors with themselves. Whatever might have been his views, however, they were somewhat altered when a voice to the rear of the group of reporters which surrounded him asked:

"What about The Golden Hades, Smith?"

Wilbur looked up sharply.

"Who's that?" he asked, and a cub reporter was pushed forward.

"We received this at the office this morning," he said, laying a letter on the detective's table.

Wilbur opened it. Both paper and envelope were of the best quality, and the note it contained was typewritten. It ran:

Warn Wilbur Smith, unless he wants his friend to die, to let up on The Golden Hades.

Wilbur read the note twice.

"When did this come?" he asked.

"About half an hour before I left the office. It was sent up on the tube to the city editor, who opened it and handed it to me," explained the newspaper man. "What does it mean?"

Wilbur smiled. "I should rather like to know myself, son," he said. "So far, however, I am in the dark. I'll hold this letter if you don't mind—and even if you do mind," he said, smiling again.

"But this isn't the first time you have heard of The Golden Hades?" persisted one of the newspaper men. "How much do you know, Mr. Smith?"

Wilbur looked at the young man squarely.

"That is exactly what the gang want to find out," he said, "and that is just what I am not going to tell you. This note was only sent for that purpose. Maybe Alwin is alive and in their hands, and they are holding him to ransom. Maybe they'll kill him if I go any further in the matter. But this you can bet on, that the object of sending that note to your newspaper was to get you boys to dig out all I knew about The Golden Hades—and I'm not falling for it."

He shoo-ed the newspaper men out of his room and walked into the office. Gray-haired Sharpe heard the story without speaking.

"It sounds like something unreal," he said when the other had finished. "It is certainly out of the ordinary."

"It is rather unusual," said Wilbur Smith, "and right off all the usual lines. Why, compared with this, the Black Hand is child's play, and a Chinatown murder mystery is as simple as shelling peas."

The chief rubbed his bristly chin. "Do you know what I would do if I were you?" he said. "I'd get Peter Correlly on this job."

"Peter Correlly!" said Smith quickly. "Why, of course! I never thought of him. I'll phone him to come over and see me in the office."

"Where's the money?" asked the chief.

"In my safe. I'll bring it to you."

Sharpe examined the roll of bills carefully.

"Obviously your first job is to discover how this came into the theater. You've seen the property man, you say?"

"Yes," replied Smith. "I have yet to interview the billman. He may be able to throw some light upon the matter. I'm taking the money to the subtreasury," he explained as he wrapped and pocketed the bills, "because I am anxious to trace the notes to the bank which issued them. Once that is done, I may be on the way to discovering the reason why this money made its appearance in such a queer way, and why the holder is in line for trouble the moment he slips the money into his pocket."

He went back to his office to phone Correlly, then left the building. The officer on duty at the door saw him hail a taxi and go off. Three hours later his seemingly lifeless body was found in a vacant lot over in Brooklyn; and when they got him to the hospital and put him to bed and Peter Correlly searched his clothes, he found the money had disappeared.

CHAPTER IV.

CORRELLY'S STORY.

PETER CORRELLY came back from a visit to the hospital where Wilbur Smith was lying.

"A gunshot wound in the right shoulder, two legs broken, a small fracture of the skull, concussion and a few

bruises about the body," he reported. "The body bruises are not important, the shoulder wound is healing, and the only thing that troubles the doctor is the fracture. As it is a skull fracture it may be pretty serious."

"Has he recovered consciousness?" asked Sharpe, twisting his hands nervously on the blotting pad.

Peter Correlly nodded.

He was a tall, sallow young man with a perpetual stoop. His carriage suggested weariness, his apparent thinness deceived many good judges into the belief that he suffered from ill health. He was neither weak nor was he thin. He had the appearance of being chronically tired, but that only concerned the deluded people who were deceived by him. He was alert enough when he brought Madame Récamier to justice and exposed certain very foolish-looking society leaders who were "disciples" of that wicked old faker. That she took a name honored in history to advertise her séances was not the least of her sins. He traced Eddie Polsoo eight thousand miles after Eddie got away with Mrs. Stethmann's bank balance by a series of twists, and Eddie never complained of Peter's lethargy.

"I told you the whole of the story, Correlly," said the chief, "and you know very nearly as much as Smith does. I'm telling you because you are the man to take this case in hand. The possibility of running the gang to earth is now an imperative necessity. This crowd, whatever it is, has come right up against us and thrown out a challenge which at all costs we must take up. That they waylay, half murder, and rob an officer in broad daylight, argues a power and an organization greater than even poor Wilbur Smith imagined."

Peter nodded. "I suppose I'll have to take it up," he said in his disconsolate voice, and Sharpe gave him a quick glance.

"There are a lot of things about you, Correlly, that I don't understand," he said with acerbity. "I don't understand why a man of your ability and training should come into the secret service, anyway; but once he is in it I should have thought that he would have taken an intelligent interest in his work. Show some enthusiasm, man!"

Peter stifled an obvious yawn. "I am in this service," he explained, "because it pays me money. That's all there is to it, chief. It is not respectable to go poking your nose into other gentlemen's business, and it isn't the sort of thing that one would do in cold blood or for the fun of the thing. Yes, I suppose I'll have to take up this case; Mr. Smith won't be around for a couple of weeks—if he's ever around at all," he added lugubriously.

"Cheerful devil!" said his exasperated superior. "Get out and get busy!" and Peter Correlly slouched from the room, his hands in his pockets, and came to Wilbur Smith's office, where he found a convenient chair, fell into it, and went to sleep. People walked into the office, saw him, and tiptoed out again, and it was left to the irate Sharpe to discover him and rouse him with a vigorous shaking.

"Say, what is this, Correlly?" said the chief sternly. "I think you are carrying this Weary Willie business a little too far. You're supposed to be out tracking down men who have attempted to murder a brother officer."

Peter blinked and stretched himself.

"Quite right, chief," he said calmly, "but I have been up three consecutive nights in connection with this business, and I guess I'm a little tired."

"In connection with this business?" asked Sharpe, surprised. "But you were only called in to it to-day?"

"I've been on to it for over a week," said Peter, yawning. "If I hadn't been so infernally sleepy I should have been here in time to warn Smith. Anyway"

—he looked at his watch—“there’s nothing doing for another quarter of an hour, and then I’m going to interview a gentleman on the subject of miracles.”

Sharpe closed the door of the office. “Now, son,” he said, “just tell me all you know.”

“I know very little,” confessed Peter, shaking his head sadly. “You see, I’m on the case from another angle than Smith’s. I’ve also seen these bills with The Golden Hades stamped on the back. It happened about six months ago,” he said. “I was looking for Tony Meppelli, who stabbed a man at a picnic, and disappeared. It was necessary that I should live in a poor part of the town, and I rented a room and found that I had, as a fellow boarder, a girl who works at a factory and also does a lot of spare-time work with her fellow workers. She’s a genuine Uplifter, though she’s got hardly two cents to rub against each other. No, she isn’t pretty or interesting or anything except just a very serious, genuine kind of girl with a cheerful view of life—which is a most surprising thing to me, because, if there is anything in life that makes for cheerfulness—”

“Leave out the philosophy,” said the chief, “and come to the facts.”

“This girl’s name was Madison,” Peter continued. “Whether she was named after Madison Square or Madison Square was named after her I did not discover. She was going out to some sort of party which the Uplifters were giving to the poor children of the neighborhood. She had hardly taken a dozen paces from the house when a man turned toward her out of the darkness. Naturally, she was used to that kind of thing and was able to take care of herself, and she was preparing to say a few unfriendly words when he slipped a big packet into her hand, and with the words: ‘May the gods be propitious!’ disappeared into the night. It

was quite dark, and she did not see his face. All she could say was that he spoke with a very cultivated voice and was apparently a well-educated man. I happened to be coming down the stairs as she came in, and she related these circumstances, and I thought that she had been handed a brick or a bomb.

“On my suggestion she carried the parcel into my room or studio—I was there in the rôle of a poor but promising artist. I unwrapped the package on my bed, and to my amazement discovered that it was made up of four fat packages of bills, each for a thousand dollars. I looked at the girl and she looked at me, and then I had another look at the money.

“The first thing I saw when I detached a bill from the package was that on the back was stamped a neat little figure of an idol, as I thought, which had been dusted over with printers’ gold dust and had been done in a rather amateurish fashion, since the edges were smudged and blurred.”

“And it was real money?” asked the chief.

“Real money,” said Peter. “I don’t see much of it, but I see enough to know the good stuff when it comes my way. The girl, of course, was delighted. She was one of those simple creatures who believe in miracles. It appears that she had a great scheme at the back of her mind to build a big rest home in the country for working girls. The optimism of the untrained mind,” said Mr. Correlly, “is in itself a most—”

“Don’t moralize, Correlly,” growled Sharpe. “Get on to the story.”

“Anyway, she thought this gift had sailed from Heaven to the East River. She settled right down to decide whether the dormitories should be tinted pink or blue. At any rate, she carried the money away to her room, and I went out into the street, where there was room to scratch my head and

think. I intended returning early that night, but to the distractions of the evening was added the unexpected arrival of Tony Meppelli on the scene. He was full of fire water and high spirits. I have observed that drink has this quality in common with enthusiasm that it——”

“Never mind about drink,” said Sharpe. “Go on with the story.”

“Well, we got Tony to sleep after a great deal of rocking,” said the unabashed Peter, “and my job being over, I went back to my lodgings, gathered my possessions, and made a graceful retirement, intending to sleep that night in comfort. It was nearly one o’clock when I got home, and to my surprise I saw there was a light in the landlady’s parlor. That suited me all right, because I had to settle my bill. When I opened the door, however, I was immediately invited in by the Uplifter girl, who was evidently sitting up waiting for me. She then told me that I had hardly left the house before a car drove up to the door, and an elderly man had alighted, carrying a black bag. ‘And who do you think it was?’ she asked in triumph. ‘It was the president of the Tenth national Bank! He told me he had been roused from his bed by the gentleman who gave me the money, who was afraid I might lose it, and he had come to take the money right off to the bank and give me a receipt for it. Here is his card.’

“She showed me the cardboard with the name of the sure-enough president of the sure-enough Tenth National Bank, and on the back of it was written a receipt for one hundred and twenty thousand dollars.”

Peter paused.

“Well?” asked Sharpe.

“Well,” drawled Peter, “that’s the last she ever heard of her money and the first and last time she ever saw that particular president of the Tenth National.”

“In fact, he wasn’t president at all?” suggested Sharpe.

“That’s about it,” replied Peter.

Sharpe bent his brows in thought.

“It is all very curious. Why give her the money at all if they are going to take it away? Did you form a theory?”

“I never have theories,” said Peter. “They hamper my work. All I wanted were a few facts, and I did not get one until about a week ago——”

He stopped and asked abruptly: “Do you know a man named Fatty Storr?”

The chief nodded. “Yes, I know Fatty,” he said. “He’s an Englishman—a lanky, cadaverous-looking man; even a worse looker than you, Peter. He’s a chronic circulator of bad money. I haven’t seem him lately.”

“They call him Fatty,” said Peter without any trace of a smile, “because he is thin. You haven’t seem him lately because he has been in serious trouble, and even a more serious jail in New Orleans. A week ago Fatty was seen on the street looking very bright and beautiful. His gay and gallant attire was convincing evidence that he was out on a strictly business proposition. He was seen to stop outside a store, extract a note from his hip, fold it, and place it nonchalantly in his waistcoat pocket. He was then seen——”

“Who saw him?” demanded Sharpe.

“I saw him,” said the other calmly, “because I was watching him. That is invariably the best way to see people.”

“Then why didn’t you say so?” growled Sharpe.

“He walked in the store, made a small purchase, and tendered a hundred-dollar bill. Either there was some delay in the bill being changed, or else Fatty detected some movement which he interpreted as being hostile to himself, but at any rate he left the shop hurriedly and walked quickly away. Turning his head, he saw me and stopped walking.”

"Was he waiting for you?" asked the chief.

Peter shook his head. "When I say he stopped walking," he said, "I mean he started running, and Fatty sure can go. I lost him for a little while in a labyrinth of small streets and alleys, but eventually I picked him up. He protested his respectability and came back to the store. Fatty didn't want to go in, being of a modest and retiring nature, but I persuaded him.

"See here," he said, "if you saw me go into this store I might as well own up."

"We found the manager of the store and the bill Fatty had passed. I took it in my hand," said Peter slowly, "and turning it over I saw—The Golden Hades!

"This is the man," said the storekeeper; "he went out without waiting for his change. Has he stolen the money?"

"Is that a phony bill?" I asked.

"No, sir," said the storekeeper. "That bill's good enough, so far as I can see."

"For the Lord's sake," said Sharpe in despair, "what is the story?"

"That is just what I'm trying to find out," said Peter. "The man who was genuinely astonished was Fatty. I thought he would have swooned when he found that he had been trying to pass real money. I brought him in, but before I did he was hysterical and was wailing about the hundreds of thousands of dollars that he had given to a small boy."

"Then you've been on this job ever since?" asked Sharpe in surprise.

"That's about the size of it," replied Correlly. "You see, Fatty wouldn't talk. He was mad to get out and find the boy to whom he gave the notes. There is no doubt whatever that he did pass the notes on when he saw I was chasing him, being under the impression that they were all phony. I

was bringing him up to-day to see Smith. In fact, he ought to be in the office now."

"Go and see," said Sharpe. "If he's here bring him in. I presume he is the gentleman you are interviewing on the subject of miracles?"

Peter nodded. "Have you heard of anything more miraculous than a Fatty Storr working hard to pass good money?" he asked.

Fatty certainly belied his name. He was a gaunt, untidy-looking man, whose finery had run to seed in the few days of his incarceration. A low forehead, from which his mouse-colored hair was brushed back, beveled his undoubted intelligence. He sat with an officer on each side, and when Peter came into the room where he was waiting he looked up with a scowl.

"Look here," he blustered, "you've kept me long enough in this blasted place. You ain't got any right to do it. See? I'm a British subject, I am, and I'm writing to the English ambassador about the way you've treated me, you skinny perisher!"

"Oh, Fatty," said Peter reproachfully, "what abuse when I'm saving your miserable life! Come along to see the chief and just pour your young heart out, for he is a family man and has children of his own."

Fatty sniffed and shuffled along before his custodian.

"Here is the specimen, chief," said Peter.

Sharpe favored the prisoner with the nod of old acquaintance.

"You will observe the insufficient frontal development," said Peter, "the indentation of the temporals and the brachycephalic character of the skull. From the occiput——"

"We'll postpone the anthropological lecture for a later time, if you don't mind," said Sharpe. "Now, boy, let's have a little truth from you. We've caught you with the goods."

"What do you mean?" demanded the prisoner fiercely. "What goods did you catch me with? Good money, wasn't it? You can't pinch me for passing good money."

"We can pinch you for being in possession of money, good, bad, or indifferent," said the chief, "if we're not satisfied that you came by it honestly."

"And knowing you," added Peter, "we realize that you are constitutionally incapable of getting money by the sweat of your brow, unless you perspire when you run away with it."

"Now come, Fatty," said the chief, "you've got to spill it, unless you're going to be implicated in murder."

"In murder!" cried the startled man.

"That's about the size of it," said Sharpe. "There is a murder in that money."

"You're kidding me," said the prisoner uneasily.

"Not a bit," broke in the irrepressible Peter. "No, Fatty, the chief is giving it to you straight. There's one, two, and possibly more murders attached to that money, although I didn't know it when I pulled you in. Now there's no question of kidding you to give us all the information you have; you've got to know that we *must* have that information. You're a sensible man, Fatty, and you've been through the mill. You know that neither the chief nor I would put one over on you, using the murder argument."

"What do you want to know?" asked the man after a moment's consideration.

"We want to know first of all how the money came into your possession, and what happened to it when I was chasing you."

Fatty looked from face to face suspiciously. He was a shrewd enough fellow and his wits, sharpened by years of strenuous encounters with the po-

lice, were keen to the point of intuition.

"All right," he said at last, "I'll tell you all I know. But I'm not going to give anybody away—that is, anybody in my way of business."

The chief nodded. "If you mean that I'm going to ask you where you get your phony money from, you can set your mind at rest. I am not."

"That's all," said the man, relieved; "then I can tell you. First of all, I've got to say that I get it from a man in a certain town. He supplies it to me in wads of about two hundred bills. When I want money I send him a letter and he meets me by night at some place outside of New York where there aren't too many cops and where I'm not known. I've got to explain this to you, chief, because otherwise there's nothing to the story. Well, I arranged for this gentleman to meet me about a week ago—in fact, the day before I was pinched. Our arrangement is this: I send him the real money, and, passing me by, carelesslike, he slips the phony stuff into my hands. We've got another arrangement also. If there's anybody hanging about at the place where we've arranged to meet, we continue walking up the street or avenue or wherever it is, always keeping north. We make that arrangement so that we don't miss each other.

"Well, this night I turned up, but in the place where I should have met my pal there was a cop! Of course I walked on, following the street to the north. I must have walked about a mile, but did not see him. My idea is," said Fatty, "that there were too many people about. I never saw so many guys loafing round at that time of night in my life," he added disgustedly; "but at last I shook them off and came to a deserted stretch of the road where nobody was in sight—only a blank wall; and there I stopped. You see, I thought that possibly this friend of

mine was shadowing me. I waited about five minutes, keeping my eyes skinned for the police, and suddenly I heard a noise on the other side of the wall. It was a sort of twanging noise, and then something fell at my feet."

He paused impressively.

"What was it?" asked Peter.

"It was an arrow—a short, stumpy sort of arrow—the kind of thing you see at the Museum of Natural History. I picked it up, as I say, and then I saw there was a package tied to the end of it. I broke the string and walked to the nearest lamp to see what was in it. Then I saw the money."

"It was all money, then, eh?" said Peter, and the man nodded.

"I thought it was phony money, and that my pal was hiding on the other side of the wall. That was all I cared about. So I walked on and turned the corner, just in time to see two men beating each other up."

"This is the interesting part, I think," said Peter slowly. "Somehow I thought you would see two men beating each other up."

"I didn't want to get into any of that kind of trouble, so I crossed the street——"

"Like the Pharisee of old?"

"Don't interrupt, Correlly, please," said the impatient chief. "Go on, Fatty."

"Well, then I heard my name called, and who do you think it was that called me?" asked Fatty.

"It was your friend, the phony merchant, of course," said Peter, nodding his head. "He is a man named Cathcart."

A look of apprehension came into Fatty's eyes.

"Don't worry, I know it was Cathcart because he was picked up half dead by the police the following morning in Jersey City, and how he got there the gentlemen who had hammered him know best. Well, what did you do?"

"I beat it," said the other laconically. "It wasn't no quarrel of mine, and I didn't want to mix myself up with the affair."

"That disposes of one thing," said Sharpe. "Now what did you do with the money?"

"I gave it to a boy. I'm telling you the truth. I overtook him and he was carrying a big satchel slung over his shoulder, like a mail bag. I pushed the stuff into the bag and told him to take it to his father. If I die this minute, that's the truth!"

"Would you know the boy again?"

"Sure I'd know the boy again," said the crook contemptuously. "Do you think I go about with my eyes shut?"

Sharpe looked at his subordinate. "Well, Correlly, what do you think?" he asked. "Do you accept this man's story?"

Peter nodded. "I think so," he said slowly, "but I warn you, Fatty, that it may be death to you to go around New York without an escort."

The man looked uncomfortable.

"You're trying to get a rise out of me," he said.

Peter shook his head. He walked to the door and opened it, and called to the officers who had charge of the man.

"Take him back," he said, "and let him go just as soon as he wants. Maybe you'd better wait till night. If you take my advice you'll get out of New York just as quickly as you can."

A slow, cunning smile dawned on the face of the man.

"I get you," he said sarcastically, "but I'm just going to hang around New York till I get my hundred dollars back."

"Imprudent man!" was Peter's only comment as he closed the door behind the lank figure.

"Now," said the chief, "what are you going to do about it, Peter?"

"I'm going to wait for the next act

in this surprising drama," said Peter, "and——"

The next act began at that moment. The telephone bell rang and the chief took off the receiver.

"Who?" he asked, his eyebrows going up to the skies. Then, after a pause: "When was this? Where? Didn't the manager know her?" And then: "I'll send a man right away."

He hung up the receiver cautiously and looked at Peter.

"Do you know Miss José Bertram?" he asked.

"The banker's daughter," said Peter. "Yes, I know her, so far as the lowly may know any of the four hundred. Why do you ask?"

"Because," said the chief deliberately, "she is being detained by the private detective at Rayburns' Store."

"What!" said the astounded Peter. "Great heavens! They do not usually detain people like that. What was the charge?"

"The charge," said Sharpe, "was of attempting to pass a counterfeit hundred-dollar bill."

CHAPTER V.

JOSE BERTRAM.

THE girl whom Peter Correlly saw when he arrived, in the attempt to straighten out the ghastly error into which the store detective had fallen, made up in vitality and vehemence all that she missed in inches. With most women anger, or, indeed, the expression of any strong emotion, has a tendency to uglify; but this girl, white with anger though she was, firm and straight as were the lines of her scarlet lips, outthrust as was the daintiest, roundest chin, had qualities of beauty which were wholly unfamiliar to the young man who stood before her, hat in hand.

To say that he stood was to mis-

describe his attitude. Rather did he droop in her direction. And she, looking up at his angularities, his tired stoop, had a first impression of a thin, yellow face, two weary eyes, and a drawling voice which seemed too tired to continue the conversation which he began.

"The chief is extremely sorry, Miss Bertram, that you have been put to this indignity, and has sent me down straight away."

She nodded, tight-lipped, strangely and violently hostile to all the forces of law and order, and slowly and deliberately pulled on a glove—a glove which she had a few moments before as slowly and deliberately pulled off.

"It is monstrous that I should be detained here one moment," she said. "It is the sort of disgraceful thing which could only occur in New York. To hold me for a moment on the evidence of that man"—she pointed to a very dejected little man who cowered under the fire of her scorn—"is laughable."

"My dear lady——" began Peter.

"I'm not your 'dear lady'!" she flamed. "I will not have your insolence and patronage tacked on to the other outrage. My father will be here soon, and we will go right along to the police commissioner and make a complaint."

Peter sighed, and when Peter sighed it was less of an incident than an occurrence. He closed his eyes, and every line of his body testified to his unhappiness. Even the girl, flaming as she was, stared and would have laughed in spite of her anger.

Peter turned to the officer in charge.

"You can release this lady. She is well known to us and to the police."

If she was hesitating between being pacified or inflamed still further, this last speech decided her. For the moment she could find no words. Her lips trembled, and then:

"How dare you say I am known to the police!"

"Listen!" Suddenly Peter's languor had gone. "This city contains pretty nearly six million democrats," he said. "They may not all vote the democratic ticket, but are democrats according to the constitution in the sense that no one person is better than any other. A mistake like this is bound to occur. You go into a store where you are not known, you pass a counterfeit note, and you're pinched. And who in the name of Sam Hill are you that you should not be pinched if you attempt to pass a counterfeit note? You act, Miss Bertram, as though you were something better than ordinary people, and should have treatment which the other classes of human beings who occupy this city should be denied. If you think that's American, why, you're entitled to your opinion. I came here to release you. I treat you courteously, and you hand me the same kind of atmosphere that I'd get if I were raiding a pool room."

She looked at him speechless, her mouth and eyes open.

"In Petrograd," continued Peter, "in the days when the czars were going some, I guess the czarina would have fussed on something like you if Protopopoff had dropped in on the czarina and said: 'Mrs. Romanoff, you're pinched!'"

Here was an officer of the law—a common or an uncommon officer—standing before her, hands on hips, feet apart, glowering down at her and hectoring—yes, bullying—her, the daughter of one of the first business men in the city, if not a millionairess, the daughter of a millionaire; a social leader and a veritable autocrat in her own three or four homes. When he stopped she answered—meekly, it sounded to those who had only heard the imperious note:

"I'm not asking for any better treat-

ment than any other woman would receive. It was a stupid mistake for the salesman to make, but it is true that I have never been in this store, and I shouldn't have gone in only I wanted to buy some things for my maid's birthday, and she told me she had set her heart upon a gown she had seen here. But I really don't see why you should lecture me," she said with a return of something of her old tone.

"I am paid to lecture people," said Peter calmly, "to protect the children of the poor and punish the wrongdoer." This—he indicated the nervous little manager who had been instrumental in arresting the daughter of George Bertram—"this," said Peter solemnly, "is one of the children of the poor."

She looked for a moment at the little man, and then her sense of humor overcame her annoyance and she laughed till the tears stood in her eyes. "You're quite right," she said. "I have been rather foolish and bad tempered, and I'm afraid I have given everybody a lot of trouble. Here is daddy."

She walked quickly across the room to meet her father. George Bertram was a man of fifty-five, trimly bearded, perfectly dressed, a man who gave the impression that he was everlastingly wearing brand-new clothes. From the tips of his polished boots to the crown of his polished hat he was a model of all that a tailor would like a man to be.

His face, despite his fifty-five years, was smooth and unlined. His big, prominent eyes gave the keynote to his character, for they beamed benevolence. A mild, easy, man, he was nevertheless a brilliant financier, who, from the moment he passed through the gun-metal grille of the Interstate Bank to the moment he emerged to his limousine, had no other thought in his mind which did not begin and end with the dollar mark.

"My dear, my dear," he said mildly,

"this is extremely unfortunate. How did it happen?"

"It was my own fault, daddy," said the girl. "I just got mad when I ought to have been sane and explained to the store manager who I was."

"But what did you do?" he asked, and when she had explained he looked at her with amazement.

"A counterfeit!" he said incredulously. "But, my dear, how on earth did you get counterfeit money?"

She laughed. "From your bank, daddy. I called on my way to the store."

"Let me see the bill," he said.

The offending bill was produced, and George Bertram examined it carefully.

"Oh, yes, this is a counterfeit," he said. "Did you have any other money?"

She opened her bag and took out three or four bills.

"These are all right," said the banker, "but there may be a lot more of this bad money in the bank. I'm surprised that Dutton should not have detected it. My cashier"—he addressed Peter—"is one of the cleverest men in the banking business, and it is simply incredible that he should have passed this bill across the counter without detecting it. You are sure you had no money in your bag when you came out?"

The girl hesitated.

"I think I did, now that you mention it, daddy."

She counted the roll of bills.

"Of course I did—I had one bill. Now where did I get that? Somebody changed a bill for me. Wasn't it—" Her brows met in thought.

"I don't think it matters very much for the moment where you got it, Miss Betram," said Peter good-humoredly, "but if you can trace it back, I shall be glad if you can give me some information. I will call on you to-morrow."

She laughed. It was a pretty laugh, as Peter admitted.

"Please come," she said. "I would like you to finish your lecture on the rights of the democracy."

"The right——" repeated Mr. Bertram, puzzled.

"Oh, a little talk that Mr.—I do not know your name."

"My name is Peter Correlly; you had better have my card," said Peter. "I'd be glad if you'd return it to me when you've done with it. I've only six, and they've got to last me out. You see," he said, as they strolled to the door, "I very seldom need any other introduction than a pretty little shield."

"You're a very strange man," she said, as she held out her hand at parting.

She was interested in him and piqued by the knowledge that he was not particularly interested in her. His vocation and his queer drawl notwithstanding, he spoke like a cultured man; who but a cultured man would quote the lines from the Bible about the children of the poor? and he had that rare quality of self-command which she, despite her own impetuous nature, admired.

"You won't forget to come and see me?" she said, leaning over the side of the car. "You can improve my mind and morals."

"I don't know that either needs improving," was Peter's parting shot, and, looking back as the car sped on its way, she was annoyed to discover that he had not stood and gazed after her, but had turned his back and was slouching off down the street.

"As for you, Mr. Rayburn," Peter addressed the owner of the store, "you've got out of a mighty bad fix. Anybody but a man suffering from myopia, or altogether batty, could see that that lady was not the kind who would pass phony notes for the fun of it."

"But, Mr. Correlly," the storekeeper

answered, "I'm always getting that sort of trouble, and my losses this year in my two businesses are simply colossal. I've never met Miss Bertram before, but she's a customer of mine."

"You said she's never been to your store," said Peter.

"That's true, but I have a book store downtown, in the name of Mendelsheim. I bought it from Mendelsheim's son when the old man died. She is a good customer of mine there. I hope you're not going to mention the fact that I'm the boss, Mr. Correlly?"

Peter shook his head.

"She has all the new books that come out sent up to her, and she makes a selection. I wouldn't have had this thing happen for a thousand dollars—no, not for ten thousand dollars. We've had enough trouble this year. Why, do you know that that book store of mine was burgled two months ago, and every book in the store was practically destroyed!"

"Breathe your sorrows to some one else," drawled Peter. "Anyway, your story doesn't sound good. None of the burglars I know have literary tastes until they're juggled."

"But it's true, Mr. Correlly," said the man. "I thought you'd heard about it. You never saw such a mess in your life as I found when I went into the store in the morning. The books were scattered all over the place, every shelf was empty——"

"And the safe was opened and the accumulated savings of a lifetime were gone?" suggested Peter.

"That's the funny thing—the safe wasn't touched."

Correlly swung round. The bizarre in crime was especially interesting to him.

"Do you mean to tell me that the burglars who broke in to steal remained as rust and moths to destroy?" he demanded.

"I don't know anything about

moths," said the merchant hazily. "All I know is that they did more damage than a fire would have done, and I got no insurance."

Peter produced his notebook.

"Date?" he said laconically.

The man gave the date without hesitation. He had reason to remember it.

"Good!" said Peter as he covered two pages with his new entry. Then: "Would you let me examine your books for the week before and after the burglary occurred?"

"Surely, Mr. Correlly," said the other.

"I'll come along to your store at five o'clock this evening," said Peter.

He went out of the store in a very thoughtful frame of mind. He took a taxi to the hospital where Wilbur Smith lay. His inquiries brought satisfactory news.

"Yes, Mr. Wilbur Smith has recovered consciousness, and I do not think that the fracture is a very bad one," said the surgeon in charge. "Do you wish to see him? I don't think you'll do him any harm."

Wilbur Smith lay in a private ward, his head swathed in bandages. There was a gleam of satisfaction in his one undamaged eye when he caught sight of the lanky figure in the doorway.

"Hullo!" he growled. "Have you come to take my dying statement?"

"You look pretty wholesome for one who is no longer with us," said Peter, pulling up a chair to the bedside. "Well, they got you!"

"Huh!" said Wilbur disgustedly. "I was the easiest thing that ever happened, Peter. They had two taxis planted waiting for me. I took the first."

"It doesn't seem possible that that sort of thing could be done in broad daylight right here in the heart of New York," said Peter.

"That's where it was done," retorted the other, "and it was dead easy. No

taking me by unfrequented paths, no racing me away into the country, nothing to arouse the slightest suspicion, except that we were taking short cuts; then suddenly the car turns into a garage, the doors of the garage are closed behind us, and I jump out. Before I can pull a gun I'm plugged. That's about all I remember."

"Afterward they deposit you in a vacant lot, far from the madding crowd," said Peter. "I guess they thought you were dead. Did you see any face?"

"None," said Wilbur definitely. "I have no recollection except of being in an empty shed and seeing a man come toward me from the far end with a can of petrol in his hand. That was probably done," he explained, "to allay my suspicions. While I am making up my mind what to do, and what it is all about—plunk! They took the money, of course?"

Peter nodded.

"And you are on the job?"

Peter nodded again. "I have one or two new ends to the case," he said, "and they're all pretty interesting."

He related what had happened to the Uplifter who suddenly found herself possessed of a fortune beyond her dreams. Then he told the story of Fatty, and Wilbur Smith pursed his damaged lips.

"It is a weird case," he said, "the weirdest within my experience. Honestly, what do you make of it?"

Peter walked to the door of the private ward and closed it.

"I can't say that it is altogether novel to me," he said. "I am referring particularly to the picture of Hades that's stamped on the back of the bills. That is sheer devil cult."

"Devil cult!" repeated the other in wonder.

"Sure, devil cult!" said Peter confidently. "There are dozens of them in the world—genuine devil worship-

ers. You think I'm mad, but I can bring chapter and verse to prove what I say is true. There was a cult in Italy exposed during the Camorra trial. There was a cult in the north of England—a regular religious sect, conducted without any obscenity, and in a deep religious spirit. There are half a dozen cults in Russia, particularly in South Russia, each with its priests and ritual. There's a sect in Asia Minor——"

"But——" began Smith.

"Wait a moment," insisted Peter. "I want to tell you this, that it is an invariable feature of these devil worshippers that they put into circulation the image of their deity. The north-of-England crowd always used to send their totem out printed on envelopes, the design being covered by the postage stamp. The Nick worshippers of south Russia have the design burned into the soles of their boots, and I think it was in Russia where the practice was instituted of stamping the object of their veneration upon the backs of paper money."

Wilbur Smith was silent.

"You sound as though you were making it up, but I know you wouldn't do that," he said after a while. "Where did you get your information?"

"Well," drawled the other, "one lives and learns. I've been chasing fakers all my life, but even if I hadn't been, I could have procured a lot of information from any encyclopædia on the subject of demonology."

"Then you think——"

"I think there's a cult in America, but it is working out quite different from any other of its kind I have ever read about."

"Any news of Alwin?" asked the man on the bed, incautiously turning his head and wincing with the pain of it.

"No news at all. I've an idea that they have Alwin."

"I think he's dead," said Wilbur quietly. "Peter, I'm going to get out of this bed as soon as these darned ribs of mine will behave, and I'm going after the men who took Frank Alwan, and if it takes me the rest of my life I'm going to find the man who plugged him—and believe me, I'll get him!"

"You're a savage, ruthless fellow," said Peter with his characteristic sigh. "If you'd only devote your mind to thoughts of a better and brighter life——"

"Cut that out," said Wilbur. "But come again. I want some more of that devil dope."

"I'll be able to give you a whole lot soon," said the other, picking up his hat. "I'm seeing old Professor Cavan this afternoon."

"Cavan? Who the devil is Cavan?"

Peter made a gesture of despair.

"The people you do not know in this world would fill a pretty big directory. Do you mean to tell me you don't know Cavan?"

"I mean to say that I have never heard of the man," said the exasperated Smith. "When did you hear about him?"

"Yesterday," said Peter shamelessly, and made his exit.

He shared the actor's passion for getting off with a good line.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ESCAPE.

FRANK ALWIN in his cellar prison must have slept, and woke with his headache gone, feeling ravenously hungry. He was sore from head to foot when he got up, and he felt a little dizzy, but he was infinitely stronger and better than when he had lain down the night before. Evidently the men had returned while he was asleep, for on the table was a large box of crackers, a slab of cheese, and

a cold bottle. He had seldom enjoyed a meal more.

The boast of the bath was wholly justified. There was a cabinet full of linen and towels, and a cold bath was just the kind of tonic he wanted. Though he had apparently been searched, his watch had not been taken away; it was going, and it pointed to twelve o'clock. It might have been midnight, for no ray of daylight entered this subterranean room. The one electric globe which the men had left on still burned steadily.

He spent the rest of the day in exploring his prison, and made a few interesting discoveries. A small opening from the bathroom led to a tiny, square apartment, which at first appeared to have no special function, nor to possess any kind of door. This last impression was erroneous. It was indeed furnished with a sliding door which was now run back.

The "room" was four feet square and unlighted. It puzzled him as to why the door should have been open until he discovered that what he thought was a storeroom in reality served as a big ventilating shaft. A current of fresh air came from above, and the underground cellar was only habitable so long as the door was open.

He remembered, too, his first impressions, upon being carried into the cellar, of the closeness and stuffiness of the atmosphere, which must have freshened as soon as the obstacle to ventilation was removed. He felt all round the wall, and presently came in one corner to a steel bar placed diagonally from wall to wall. He felt upward and found another and yet another. So, in addition to this being a ventilating chamber, it must also be an avenue of egress.

Bracing himself to the effort, he began to climb upward, counting the rungs as he mounted. He adventured upward in some doubt, because the first

rung of the ladder was loose and had given under his feet; but those that remained were firm enough. After the twenty-eighth rung his groping hand felt into space, and, bringing it down gingerly, he located a small stone platform. To this he climbed. It was triangular in shape, and was just large enough to allow him space to sit.

He felt along the angle of the walls and found a wooden door, big enough to crawl through, supposing it were open. In point of fact, it was closed. He felt the keyhole. He knew instinctively that this was the only way out, and that any unaided effort of his to escape in this direction must be futile.

After a little while he swung his legs over into the darkness and descended again to the basement. He was weakened before he reached the cellar, and he lay down for an hour before he made any other attempt. He usually carried a bunch of keys in his pocket, but these had been taken away by the men who had captured him. A careful search of the cellar failed to reveal anything that looked like a key.

Late in the afternoon he made his second investigation, this time carrying with him the lower rung of the ladder which, after an hour's work, he had wrenched from the wall. With this he attacked the door. It was a long and painful job, but he succeeded. He had light now—a dim reflected light which came up from the open eaves of the building.

He was in the ribs of the building, in the space between the sloping roof and the ceiling, and he could look down under the eaves and see the green of grass. He stopped suddenly in his survey and listened. There were voices, and those voices were of the two men who had captured him. Hastily he made his way back down the ladder to the cellar, and was lying on the bed when the door opened and they came

in. One carried a pie, the other two bottles of beer, which they placed on the table. The faces of both men were covered, as on the night previous.

"Hullo," said one, and Frank recognized the man called Tom. "How are you feeling now?"

"I'm all right," said the actor.

"I hope you remain so," replied the other unpleasantly. "Here's some grub for you."

He put the packages on the table, threw a cursory glance round the room, then brought his eyes back to Alwin.

"Found your way to the wash house, have you?" he said. "Now let me tell you, young fellow"—his voice took a more serious and more menacing strain—"you're in a pretty tight fix, and if you get out of this without an obituary notice you'll be lucky. If every man had his due, you would have been dead. And if Rosie—if a friend of mine hadn't had a fool idea—"

"I won't trouble to tell you that you have committed a very serious crime," interrupted Frank.

"Don't," said the other briefly. "It isn't necessary. What ought to get you thinking is the possibility of a more serious crime being committed. See here, Mr. Alwin," said the man, speaking earnestly, "you have a pull with Smith; why don't you persuade him to let up on The Golden Hades business? He's still alive—"

"What do you mean?" asked Frank. "You haven't dared—"

"Aw! Dared!" said the man in contempt. "Listen. We're nearly through and if Ro—if one of the gang hadn't blundered, nobody would have been hurt. Smith knows a lot, and he's going to make trouble for us if he starts poking his nose into the treasury department. Suppose you write to him and tell him you'll explain everything when you see him, that you're well and happy, and ask him to let up on us until you see him? It isn't the bills

we want, believe me; he hasn't those any more! We just won't have him carry his investigations any further. Now, Mr. Alwin, you're a sensible man. Will you write to him?"

Frank shook his head. "I will not," he said decidedly. "Wilbur Smith can look after himself and he can look after you, too. If you went after him and left him alive, you'll be sorry!"

The cold eyes above the handkerchief mask surveyed Frank in a long, dispassionate scrutiny.

"All right," said the man. "I never killed anybody yet in cold blood. Maybe you are going to be my first experience."

Without another word he turned away and walked over to the box which his companion was examining. They exchanged a few words, dropping their voices, and Frank only heard "nine o'clock, after the séance."

He made a meal, for he was hungry. Waiting until quiet reigned, he again mounted the ladder and continued his search. If there was any way out, he could not find it. He tried the roof, using his bar, but the cross pieces which supported it were of iron and set too closely together to allow him to squeeze through, and though he did succeed in knocking off a shingle, he saw the futility of continuing.

There was another way of escape—the merest possibility, but one which he was determined to try. He worked then as he had never worked before in his life. His head was throbbing and every bone was aching when he dropped on the bed at seven o'clock in sheer exhaustion.

His chief difficulty was to prevent himself falling asleep. He was dozing when he heard a tapping above his head, and became at once wide awake. There was no sound at the door when he listened, no suggestion of footsteps on the stairs. He hesitated a moment,

then, taking off his shoes, he made the ascent to the roof, crept through the broken door, and lay on the cross beams with his ear pressed against the rough plaster work of the ceiling of the room below.

Hitherto he had hesitated to disturb this, knowing that detection was inevitable if any portion of the ceiling fell and if the room below was occupied, but now his curiosity overcame him. With a pencil which he found in his pocket he drilled through the soft fiber, pulling out little knobs of plaster until the hole was big enough to see through.

He glued his eye to the aperture and saw nothing but a section of black and white tessellated pavement. He enlarged the hole, being careful that not a single crumb of plaster fell to the pavement below. Now and again he stopped to listen, but there was no sound. He had made a gap in the ceiling as large as the palm of his hand when a sound of feet on the pavement below caused him to pause. Now he had an excellent view. He saw a plain interior along which Corinthian pillars, which he judged to be made of plaster, ran in two lines, from one end of the building, which was hidden from view by a long velvet curtain, to the other, where on a pedestal of marble stood something hidden under a white cloth.

As he looked the blue curtain parted and two men came in. They were clothed from head to foot in long, brown robes, their faces and heads hidden under a monk's cowl. Frank Alwin looked at them in amazement. Their attitude was that of sublime reverence. Their hands were clasped, their heads sunk forward. Slowly they moved along the pavement and came to within a few feet of the pedestal. The first man—by far the taller of the two—sank upon his knees as the second man passed to the pedestal and with an obeisance lifted the cloth.

Frank started. As the cloth lifted a blaze of light leaped from the altar, flooding the figure which was revealed. There was no mistaking that golden form sitting erect, a trident in his hand. It was The Golden Hades!

Spellbound, Frank watched the two men standing in rapt attitudes before the idol, and strained his ears to follow the weird ritual. He did not recognize the voice of the speaker. It was certainly neither of the two men who had been with him in the cellar. The voice was rich, tremulous with emotion, almost ecstatic.

"Oh, Hades! Great god of the underworld! Spouse of Proserpine! Giver of wealth! Behold thy servants! Oh, Mighty Pluto, by whose benefaction this man, who abases himself before you, hath grown to the splendor of great possessions, hear him, and be favorable to him, since he desires to share his wealth with the poor, that thy name shall be again established. Oh, Pluto! Dread lord of Hell! Give thou thy servant the word of thy approval!"

The taller man lifted his head and looked at the idol. Frank could see only the back of him; even had he been better placed it was doubtful whether the face would have been visible, for the only light in this strange temple were two electric bulbs which burned on either side of the altar and the reflected glare from the hidden lights concealed in the altar itself.

For a few moments no sound was heard, and then there came a voice. It was a far-away voice, hollow and unnatural, and it seemed to come from the figure.

"Thy gifts are favorable in my sight, oh, faithful servant! Thou shalt give to my chosen that which thou lovest best, and it shall be well with thee, and thy name shall be written in the Book of Hades in golden letters, and thou shalt sit with me as a god in the days to come."

The tall figure prostrated himself and remained prone for five minutes, then he rose, and together the men walked slowly down the aisle between the pillars and passed through the curtain out of sight.

Frank found himself breathing quickly, the perspiration streaming down his unshaven face as he slipped noiselessly through the door, down the iron ladder into the cellar again. He had plenty of time and had recovered his breath and was apparently asleep when the door opened and he heard a familiar voice.

The men who entered were not those who had taken part in that strange ceremony; that he would swear. He lay perfectly still under a blanket. One of the men tiptoed toward him. He needed all his self-possession to remain quiet, for he had no doubt at all that if it suited the purpose of these criminals, they would make short work of him.

He gripped the iron bar which he had brought into bed with him, determined to make a fight if need be, but they seemed satisfied with their scrutiny.

"You were a long time coming, Tom," said one voice, and the other answered under his breath. Frank thought he said something about a "tube."

Presently he heard a creak and a grunt, and gathered that they were carrying out the first of the two boxes. The door closed behind them and the key turned, for they were taking no chances. They brought the box through a second door into the open and deposited it in the portico of a tiny Greek temple of beautiful design, which stood in the midst of thickly wooded grounds. There was no sign of house or of any other human habitation. The men deposited the box, and one of them, taking off his handkerchief, wiped his perspiring face.

"Now what about that guy down there?"

He jerked his thumb to the side door leading from the portico to the crypt.

"He's not much use to us. Even Rosie admits that, and he's a pretty dangerous man."

They looked at each other in silence.

"I couldn't kill a man in cold blood," said the first speaker after a while, "but maybe if I gave him a punch or two he'd show fight—and then it would be easy."

The other nodded.

"Come on," said the first man, making for the door. "Let's get the other box up, and then we'll go down and settle with him after."

With some labor the second box was carried to the portico and placed by the side of the first. They sat recovering their breath for fully ten minutes. The night was still and the sky was full of stars. The dim shadow of two trees, the ghostly shadows of the temple, added perhaps an unusual terror to the somber task they had set themselves.

They seemed reluctant to move.

"Rosie fixed the next batch for the Philadelphia depot," said one, as if to make conversation. The other grunted.

Presently the man called Tom, rose, and took something from his pocket—something which glistened dully in the starlight.

"Come on," he said suddenly.

They made their way downstairs, unlocked the door of the crypt, and entered together. Tom walked straight over to the bed, and laid his hand upon the blanket.

"Now, then," he said, "you've got to get out of this, you——"

With a jerk he pulled back the blanket and disclosed nothing more human than a long, irregular ridge of papers and books. The man called Sam uttered an oath.

"He's gone," he said and raced upstairs.

The box under the portico was empty.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE RESTAURANT.

IT was a busy day for Peter Correlly, —much busier, as it proved, than he had expected. When he suggested that he had not heard of Professor Cavan until the previous day he was, of course, exaggerating. What he meant was that Professor Cavan had interested him yesterday for the first time. Everybody knew the little man with the straggling, cobweb beard, the bald pate, the lank gray hair, the big steel-rimmed spectacles, and, greatest eccentricity of all in one who had turned professor, the comfortable bank balance.

The door had scarcely closed upon his visitor when Wilbur Smith, despite his abstraction, identified Professor Cavan. Yet his forgetfulness was excusable, since his mind was running on crime and criminals, and it was very difficult to associate this brilliant little scholar with the mundane affairs of crime detection.

"Cavan? Cavan?" thought Wilbur Smith, his eyes cast up to the ceiling. "Why, of course; he is the classical man—Peter is going to discover all about Hades," and he chuckled.

If there was any man in the world who might know who Hades was, might help to elucidate the mystery which was puzzling the cleverest pair in the department, it was John Octavius Cavan.

Both society and the learned professions had taken the little man to their bosom when he had arrived from the old world three years ago. His erudition, his eloquence, plus his comfortable fortune, had been his credentials. He had been offered a chair in three universities and had declined—politely, eloquently, but positively.

He lived in expensive apartments on Riverside Drive, with a butler, a kitchen man, and a couple of women servants,

and his prosperity gave the lie to the suggestion that the scholastic profession was without profit. Even Peter, who was not impressed by most things, was taken aback when, in answer to his ring, the door of the apartment was opened by an impressive butler, a typical English servant of stout build and polite manner.

He found the little professor sitting behind a big oak table, which was littered with papers, books open and books closed. When Peter was ushered into the room by the butler, the old man was writing, his head bent low over the table. He looked up, straightened himself, picked up Peter's card, and read it again in a near-sighted way, then he pushed his spectacles to his forehead and leaned forward with a smile.

"Sit down, sit down, Mr. Correlly," he said. "James, put a chair for this gentleman. Would you like a cup of tea?"

"Thanks, no," said Peter. "That is a dissipation which I have not acquired."

"What a pity!" said the professor, shaking his head, "what a great, great pity! It is the most wonderful stimulant in the world. That will do, James. You can go."

When the door was closed he looked at the card again.

"Now, Mr. Correlly," he said, "I understand that you have come to consult me on a matter of Greek mythology. In fact"—he looked up with a quizzical smile—"you want to consult me about The Golden Hades."

Peter, excellent actor as he was, was startled. Nobody outside the office had mentioned The Golden Hades, which was, as he thought, a secret shared only by the heads of the department. The professor enjoyed the effect of his words.

"Come, come, Mr. Correlly," he said, "I am not clairvoyant. I only read the

newspapers very diligently. There was some reference to the matter in yesterday's *Evening Scream*," said the professor. "Apparently a letter was received by a newspaper editor——"

"I remember," said Peter. "Of course, Mr. Smith had it."

"That's right," said the professor, "according to the newspapers. Now, Mr. Correlly, what can I do for you?"

"I won't ask you, professor, to tell me who Hades or Pluto was, because I've enjoyed the dubious advantage of a college education, and among the fragments of knowledge which I have carried away from that institution is a bowing acquaintance with classical history."

The old man inclined his head. "So I gather," he said.

Peter did not ask him how he had gathered the fact, but went on:

"I understand, professor, that you are acquainted with such of the ancient cults as have survived to, or been revived in, this present century."

The professor nodded. "I certainly have an extensive acquaintance with survivals," he said, "and it is most extraordinary how many have come down, with their devotees, their priests, and their rituals, even to the present day. For example," he said, "in Norway there are still Troll worshippers—the Troll being a sort of devil who has passed into the literary legendary of Scandinavia. In Russia we have a large number of people who practice secret rites to Baba Yaga, another mythological creature who I think is to be identified with the Greek deity Cronus. In England and America there are a number of disagreeable people, of unpleasant antecedents, who worship one or the other members of the Greek mythology."

"When you say 'worship,' what exactly do you mean?" asked Peter.

"I mean they worship these beings as

reverently as the Parsee worships the sun."

"And they endow them with supernatural qualities?" asked the incredulous Peter.

"Certainly," replied the professor. "Now take the case of your Hades. There are two or three groups of Hades worshippers. For some reason or other, Pluto, which is his other name, has a fascination beyond all the other gods."

"And are there such people here in America, in the State of New York?"

"Absolutely," said the professor with a twinkle in his eye; "some conscious and some unconscious. Do not forget that Pluto is the god of wealth," he finished, chuckling.

"Let me ask you a plain, blunt question, professor," said Peter. "You're well acquainted with the best people in New York; do you know any of them who are worshippers of Hades? Before you reply," Peter hastily added, "let me tell you that for the moment I do not ask for their names."

"I would gladly give you them if I knew them," said the professor, "but happily, my activities do not lie in the direction of the study of eccentric cults. I merely know they exist because I have heard of them in a round-about way; but where the congregation of the faithful is to be found—why, Heaven only knows!"

He rose abruptly and offered his hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Correlly!" he said, and Peter, who had had no intention of going, found himself being ushered from the apartment.

He dined with Sharpe that night in the chief's favorite restaurant.

"I was hoping that you'd get Cavan to help you," said the chief. "I've been talking with an assistant to the district attorney all the afternoon. He came down to know what The Golden Hades was all about, and he's a pretty wor-

ried man. Cavan would have been of the greatest assistance, because, as the attorney tells me, he is one of the shrewdest and cleverest all-round men he has ever met."

"There wasn't a chance to make any proposition," said Peter. "I had hardly got beyond the pleasant introductions before he hustled me out."

"It is a pity," said the chief.

"Anyway," Peter went on, "I don't know what we could put up to him that would induce him to help. He has plenty of money, and as likely as not he has told us all he knows."

"Have you cleared up the question of the fellow who gave the money to the property man at the theater?"

"I've cleared up two matters that were rather worrying me," said Peter. "Both the property man's story and Fatty's story are true. The billman was billing posters of a new film. It was about money, and the advertisers had arranged that round the central picture should run a border made up of treasury bills; that is to say, pictures of bills that looked in the distance like money. And the billman went out from his office without taking the border. He had arranged for his son to meet him at a station where the poster was to be exhibited, and to bring along his lunch.

"The boy came by appointment, and told his father that on the way he had met a man who had thrust something into the bag he was carrying. On examining this they found that the something was a big bunch of money. The billman first thought they were intended to be pasted up as a border. He did paste one border of thousand-dollar bills, which we are now engaged in soaking off. He took the rest of them home, thinking that they were such good imitations that they would suit Alwin's property man, whom he had an acquaintance with, and who, he knew, was always looking for stage money."

"Then Fatty's story was true?"

"Perfectly true," said the other. "Evidently the billman's son was the kid that Fatty met when I was chasing him. And this I will say——" he went on, but stopped, his eyes fixed on the door.

A girl was strolling leisurely to her table through the crowded restaurant, and in her wake came the preoccupied Mr. Bertram. But it was only for the girl that Peter had eyes. In evening dress her serene beauty was dazzling. Then she turned her head and saw him. She bowed, and Peter was on his feet instantly. He saw her speak to her father, and George Bertram turned and bowed vaguely in their direction. Then she passed to the inner restaurant.

"Sit down, Peter. You're attracting attention."

It was only then Peter realized that he was still standing.

"That's Bertram and his daughter, isn't it? I gather that you fixed that matter to their satisfaction."

But Peter was watching the door. He was curious to know, for no particular reason that he could analyze, who were to be the other guests at the dinner party. He saw several Johnnies, very red of face and in a mighty hurry—Johnny had never kept time in his life; he saw a woman whom he did not know but whom the chief recognized as a society leader; and then:

"Why, look who's here!" said Peter in admiration.

The last of the party to enter was Professor Cavan—a strutting little figure in evening dress. His coat thrown over an arm and a tall hat in his hand, he passed through the restaurant, conscious that all eyes were on him and patently proud of the fact.

"I wonder if he would help if he knew," said Peter half to himself, but speaking aloud.

"Why don't you ask him?" said Sharpe.

"I will one of these days," replied Peter.

It was Sharpe's practice to sit long over his meal; but it was Peter's habit to miss the dessert because dinner was invariably too long. He made his excuses to his chief, took his hat from the cloakroom, and went out into the street.

It occurred to him then that this was the restaurant from which Frank Alwin had disappeared. Such a kidnaping would have been impossible at this early hour. The sidewalks were filled with people, and a policeman stood a few yards away, his hands behind him, watching the traffic with a proprietorial air. A few yards from the entrance to the restaurant a beautiful limousine was drawn up, and standing near the hood, talking over his shoulder with the chauffeur, Peter recognized the professor's butler. He asked the question of the doorman and was told that the car was Professor Cavan's. His curiosity impelled him to a close inspection. The servant recognized him and touched his hat.

"Good evening, sir," he said. "You're the gentleman who called at the house? The professor is dining."

"I know," replied Peter. "This is a beautiful car."

"Yes," said the man. "It is a Henault, one of the best imported cars in New York. You should get the professor to let you take a trip in her. She is a very smooth-running machine."

Peter laughed. "Why, I don't know the professor well enough to beg a joy ride from him," he said, "but it is certainly a handsome car."

"The interior cost a small fortune to fit up," said the man proudly.

He opened the door of the limousine and stepped in.

"The light isn't working. The professor snapped a wire with his umbrella, and we didn't notice it until we came out to-night. But feel these down cushions——"

"Hi——"

Peter, with one foot on the step, turned. A man came out of the shadow with unsteady steps.

"Hullo, Correlly," he said boisterously, "dear old boy, how are you?"

Peter turned. The man was obviously intoxicated. It was so unusual to be called by his surname—only Sharpe ever used it—that he was curious to know the man who was taking such a liberty.

"How's dear old Smith?" said the man thickly, and slipped and would have fallen, but Peter caught him and held him in his arms, his drooping head upon the detective's shoulder.

"Hold up, inebriate," said Peter sternly, "you're not allowed to sleep on the department."

"How's old Smith?" said the languid man. His voice died down to a sleepy mumble, but Peter heard all that the man said.

Thus they stood for a few seconds, the servant watching the scene with a certain amount of amusement. By this time the attention of the policeman had been called to the encounter, and he strolled across.

"Take this man," said Peter authoritatively. "I'll give you a hand with him as far as the next block."

"A lot of fuss over a simple drunk," said the professor's butler. He was a disappointed man. He had expected a much more exciting end to the adventure.

So had the drunk. "Peter," he was saying in the other's ear, "if you had gone into that car you would have had a headache—I'm Alwin."

CHAPTER VIII.

A FORCED MATCH.

PETER took his "prisoner" to the end of the block, and, dismissing the policeman, called a taxicab. He pushed the other inside and followed

him, and when the taxi was moving, he said:

"Now, Mr. Alwin, perhaps you'll tell me what it is all about."

Frank Alwin sat back in the taxi and laughed almost hysterically.

"I'm sorry to weep on your shoulder," he said, "but the fact is, I've been chased for the greater part of twenty-four hours, and if I'm not drunk I am at least starving."

Peter realized that this was not the moment for publicity, and he drove his charge to his own apartments and produced from a near-by restaurant sufficient food to satisfy the famished man. Frank, lying on Peter Correlly's bed, handed back the last tray with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Now I'll tell you the story," he said.

For half an hour Peter listened, never interrupting, to the amazing narrative.

"It sounds like a lie," he said, "and if anybody else told me I shouldn't have believed it. Did you see the faces of the men?"

Frank shook his head.

"And you have no clew by which you could identify them?"

"None, except—just as I was getting over the wall, one of the men made a grab at me and I hit at him with my bar. It just missed his head and caught his hand. I imagine it smashed his thumb, by something I heard him say."

He looked at Peter oddly.

"Out with it," said Peter. "You've something on your mind—something you haven't told me. What did you mean when you told me I should get a headache if I went into Cavan's car?"

The unshaven man on the bed shut his eyes.

"Good night," he said, and was almost instantly asleep.

Chief Sharpe had finished his dinner and had already called for his bill when Peter reappeared, laden with news.

"Nothing short of an electric battery would have kept that fellow awake," said the disgusted detective. "Now just listen, chief, and I'll tell you the only fairy story that I've ever believed in."

He narrated, with his own irrefutable commentaries, the story as he had heard it. Sharpe was nonplused.

"It is certainly like something out of a play. You don't think he dreamed it?"

Peter shook his head. "He's not that kind of fellow—he's human. Besides, he spent two or three years in the secret service during the war."

"I forgot that," said Sharpe. "Now that you recall the fact, I remember that they spoke very highly of him. Well, The Golden Hades should be tracked down, with three men like you and Alwin and Wilbur Smith on the trail. Here comes your dinner party."

"Not mine," said Peter, interested nevertheless, as Professor Cavan and Bertram, the banker, came from the inner room.

The professor was in excellent spirits, and if George Bertram was gloomy it was a gloom consistent with his general attitude toward life.

"Where is the girl?" asked Sharpe.

Peter was asking the same question himself, and the party waited at the main door of the restaurant some three minutes before she appeared. Peter made a little noise in his throat.

"Hullo!" he said, half to himself.

If José Bertram had not been crying, then he had no knowledge of women. Her eyes were red, there was dejection in her gait, a certain listlessness which told of her distress. The party passed out together, and Peter, leaving his chief without an apology, walked into the inner room and interviewed the head waiter.

"What's the trouble, Luigi?" he asked.

"With the young lady?" the little

Italian asked, smiling. "Some love affair. It was with her father she quarreled—only slightly, and then she left the table and did not come back. It did not matter much," said the little Italian philosophically, "the dessert was not the happiest effort of our chef."

This was all the information Peter could get, and by the time he returned Sharpe had disappeared. He remembered his engagement with the girl and determined to keep it the next morning.

That a girl should weep at dinner, especially an emotional girl and one who had already demonstrated her electric temperament, was not amazing, not even a matter for regret, unless she happened to be to you a shade different from all other girls. It was just that with Peter, who, being neither impressionable nor ardent, could not be affected as other men were affected.

José Bertram did not impress him as she would impress others. To say that Peter had fallen in love with her at first sight is hardly to state a fact. It is true that the sight of the girl, whom he had seen only once before, and then in circumstances which did not arouse his passionate admiration, was sufficient to bring him to his feet, and that all the time he was speaking to Sharpe one-half of his mind was running after her. But that was not love; that was just extraordinary interest.

Nor did Peter groan within himself because she was above his station or because her father was very wealthy, and therefore she was inaccessible. In fact, he did not regard her as being above his station. He did not look upon her father's wealth as anything more remarkable than if he were possessed of any other eccentricity such as a weakness for yellow waistcoats or a fondness for caylar.

The Bertrams had three houses—one in New York proper, which was seldom used; one on Long Island, and

an estate in New Jersey. It was to the latter house that Peter made his way on the following morning, having discovered that the family was in residence at Hollywood.

George Bertram's family consisted of himself and his daughter, and it is true to say that the household was in reality two households, since the girl, though on excellent and affectionate terms with her father, had a suite which occupied one wing of the building, while her father lived practically alone in the other.

As his car hummed up the long tree-shaded drive, Peter found himself wondering how far he could revive the unpleasant memories of her detention on a serious charge. He was anxious to know the cause of her weeping, but doubted his ability to bring the conversation to that incident.

A liveried servant took his card.

"Miss Bertram is expecting you, I think, sir," said the man, "and told me to show you into the drawing-room. Will you come this way?"

Peter was not a little astonished but followed in the man's wake.

"A gentleman to see you, miss," announced the servant, and the girl came forward and stopped dead at the sight of Peter. On her face was such a mixture of consternation and surprise—yes, and even fear—that Peter permitted himself to smile.

"You weren't expecting me, I think?" he said.

"I—I——" began the girl in confusion. "No, I was expecting—do you want anything particular?" she asked suddenly.

Peter saw it was his turn to be concerned, that in the brief time the salutations had taken, the girl had gone deathly white. She sat down, too, in the nearest chair so suddenly that Correlly, who had seen these symptoms before in less highly placed circles, was filled with a sense of dismay. She re-

covered herself instantly and rose with a little smile.

"I asked you to come, didn't I?" she said. "I'm so sorry I'm such a fool, but I've had a bad headache all morning. Won't you sit down?"

Peter found a chair and seated himself, feeling mighty uncomfortable. There was an unexpected hostility in her tone, and her face had suddenly become a mask from which all expression had vanished. She was holding herself in consciously and for a purpose. What that purpose was, the detective could not even guess. He decided to make the interview as short as possible; but he would not have been Peter Correlly if he had not proceeded in his characteristically direct way.

"You're mighty scared about some thing, Miss Bertram," he began.

"Indeed, I'm not," she said rather stiffly, sitting a little more erect. "What should I be scared about? Do you imagine that I'm afraid of your arresting me or something of that sort?"

"You're scared about something," said Peter again, speaking slowly, "and it's a pretty big something, too."

He pursed his lips and looked at her with solemn eyes. She met the glance bravely for a moment, then her glance fell.

"Really, Mr. Correlly—that is your name, isn't it?—I do not see why you should worry your head about matters which do not in the slightest concern you. I am very glad you called, of course, because I invited you, but it is rather embarrassing to me that you should be so—so——" she hesitated for a word, then added: "intimate."

"You're scared worse than anybody I ever knew," said Peter, "and I'd just give my right hand if I could help you get rid of that feeling, that panicky fear which, I know, is sitting on you at this very moment."

She looked up sharply, alarm in her eyes. A little frown gathered on her

forehead, and for the first time a touch of color tinged her cheeks.

"You'd give your—your right hand," she stammered, "to help me? How absurd!"

But her "how absurd!" was half-hearted. He thought he detected a plea in her voice.

"Of course I am not in trouble. How could you help me?"

She looked through the window.

"I am expecting somebody very soon," she said. "I hope you will not think I am inhospitable if I cut this interview short."

He rose and crossed to her. "Miss Bertram," he said quietly, "I came here to-day with no other idea than just to renew your acquaintance under more pleasant circumstances, and maybe to ask you a few questions. I don't know you. I have seen you only for five minutes in my life, and I have no right at all, not even the right of a friend, to interfere in your private affairs. I have no authority to question you or to urge my confidence upon you, but I want to say just this, that there isn't any kind of difficulty you may be in that I wouldn't and couldn't help you with."

She rose quickly and walked past him to the window, turning her back to him.

"Go away now, please," she said in a low voice, and shook a little. "I—I think you are kind, but unfortunately you cannot help me. Good-by!"

Peter hesitated a moment, then picked up his hat and walked to the door, and his hand was on the handle when she called him. She was holding out her hand and he hastened to take it.

"Good-by," she said. "Perhaps when I am in really serious trouble I will ask you to——" she stopped and shrugged her shoulders. "What is the use?" she cried passionately. "My trouble is nothing—nothing! Besides, what does it matter, Mr. Correlly?" she went on.

He felt something of the strain, of the tension under which she was speaking.

"What does it matter! I suppose I shall have to marry sooner or later, and one man is as good or as bad as another—you know enough of men, Mr. Correlly, to know that."

Peter nodded.

"So you're going to be married? That explains it then. Would it be an impertinence on my part if I asked who is the fortunate man?"

She looked at him and her lips curled.

"The chosen of the gods," she said bitterly.

Peter drew a long breath. "The Golden Hades?" he suggested, and she started back as if he had struck her, and again the pallor left her face.

"Good Heavens!" she whispered. "Do you know that? Do you know that?"

Without another word she brushed past him out of the room, and he waited until he heard the thud of a closing door, then he, too, went out.

The car swept down the drive and passed a man who was walking up. It was Professor Cavan's butler.

"Good lord!" thought Peter, with a sudden spasm of dismay. "She's never going to marry that old runt!"

"I hit his thumb," said a cell in his brain and Peter half rose to check the driver but sat back again.

For quickly as he had passed the professor's butler, he had observed the bandaged hand.

CHAPTER IX.

TRACKING "ROSIE."

THREE men sat in a private ward of a Brooklyn hospital and compared notes.

"Look here," said Wilbur Smith, shaking his bandaged head, "we've got to keep you hidden, Frank."

Frank Alwin laughed.

"There's no sense in laughing," said Wilbur Smith seriously. "The gang isn't on to you, or you wouldn't be walking around a live man. You know a great deal too much. It is probable they imagine you know more than you do." He turned to the other. "Well, Peter, did you see Mendelsheim's books?"

Peter nodded. "The story is clearing up," he said, "but the devil of it is that the more I go into the matter, the more Miss Bertram is implicated. You remember the Higgins Tenement Murder, when the wife of Laste, the gambler, was shot?"

They nodded.

"You remember that Laste said his wife had found these thousand-dollar bills in a book which was bought by Mrs. Laste at Mendelsheim's stores on the afternoon of the night the store was burgled. She was a great book reader, was Mrs. Laste, and she got this particular issue at bargain rates because it had had ink spilled on the cover. That is why the manager of Mendelsheim's remembers the sale so well. It also helped me to trace the book back to where the ink was spilled. You remember my telling you that that store-keeper fellow, Rayburn, was in the habit of sending up all the latest novels to Miss Bertram, who chose what she wanted and sent the rest back? Well, the book which Mrs. Laste had was one of these. I have no doubt in my mind that it was in the cover of this book that the thousand-dollar bills were hidden. It is likely that she found a much larger sum than she told her husband, knowing that he would gamble away every cent."

"What do you suggest?" asked Wilbur Smith bluntly, "that Miss Bertram put the money between the leaves of this book and sent them back to the store?"

"I have no theory," said Peter. "I'm telling you the facts."

JD DS

He was a little irritable, which was unusual in him, and was duly noted by the observant Wilbur.

"All I know is that the two events occurred within twenty-four hours—the return of the books purchased by Mrs. Laste, the burglary at the book store, and less than twelve hours afterward the shooting of Mrs. Laste."

"Two things we have to find," said Wilbur Smith after consideration. "The first is the temple in the garden, and the second is the mysterious individual who is called Rosie."

"Rosie I'm trying to locate," said Alwin. "When I was in Washington during the war I was brought into touch with Lazarus Manton, who, in spite of his foolish name, is a police captain or superintendent—I don't know what they call them—at Scotland Yard, in London. I have cabled him, because I have an idea that Rosie is English."

"It's too bad, Frank, you were in too much of a daze to remember where that temple is," said Wilbur Smith. "But the obvious thing to do is to watch the Pennsylvania Station. The words which Alwin heard when he was sitting tight in the box must have a special significance. You're doing this, of course, Peter?"

Peter nodded.

"Watching the Pennsylvania Station is a mighty big proposition," he said, "and, although I've two men on the job, I shouldn't feel very confident if I had a squad."

"Where have you posted them?" asked Smith.

"In the waiting rooms," replied Peter. "Locating the next demonstration of The Golden Hades at the Pennsylvania Station is about as explicit and as useful as locating it in Greater New York. I'd give a couple of hours to the work in the busy time of the afternoon, but what are we looking for? Alwin cannot help us to recognize the men, and as we don't know exactly what

they're going to do or what particular act we've to frustrate, why, the task is hopeless."

Nevertheless, it was the Pennsylvania Station which produced the most important clew in this most intricate and difficult case. Peter himself was on watch the following afternoon, sitting hunched up on a bench in such a position that he could look over and see the people who came in a never-ending stream from the arcade. It was such a stream of humanity as ordinarily interested him more than anything else. He checked them up—the alert man, the tired men, the old men, women, and children; some came at their leisure; there were units in frantic haste. There were women with parcels and women without parcels—at such an hour the Pennsylvania Station was a microcosm of the great city.

It was his seventh sense which directed his attention to a middle-aged man carrying a collection of parcels under his arm. The man came wearily to a vacant seat and flopped down, placing his packages by his side. Peter marked him for no especial reason, then turned his eyes again to the stairs. When he looked at the man again he saw that somebody was sitting by his side and that it was a man. He sat only for a minute, then rose and strolled away. It was only a back view, but it was a back which was familiar to Peter, though for the moment he could not identify it. The man with the parcels looked at his watch, then threw a helpless glance around, and rose undecidedly.

Peter watched him as he moved toward one of the many exits, which would take him eventually to his train. He watched him idly, having no particular interest that he could understand or analyze, and was not even stirred from his apathy when the man was intercepted near the exit by a girl. They spoke together for a little while,

and it appeared from the man's attitude that the girl was a stranger.

Presently the man carried his parcels to a vacant seat, and, laying them down proceeded to count them, the girl watching the process. Then he detached one, and with a smile handed it to her—and Peter still saw nothing extraordinary in the circumstance.

"He has been shopping and has taken the wrong parcel from the store," he thought. "Lucky girl to recover your property before it was too late."

They parted, the man lifting his hat and passing through the exit, the girl turning and walking with quick steps up the stairway. She was halfway up before Peter decided to follow her. He did not know why he came to such a decision—probably the seventh sense again. He lost sight of her, and was on Seventh Avenue before he picked her up, walking rapidly away from the depot, looking neither to the left nor to the right. He was hesitating whether to follow her further, when a limousine swung out of the center of the street and drew up just in front of her. She opened the door and stepped in, and the machine sped on.

It was at that moment that Peter had an inspiration. His qualities as a sprinter were proverbial, and he had leaped on to the footboard of the car before it had gone half a dozen yards.

"Sorry to trouble you," he said coolly, "but I——"

He stopped dead. The girl was José Bertram.

She held a little parcel on her lap, a parcel from which she had ripped the cover as she entered the car, and under her hands was a great package of bills.

Without another word Peter opened the door of the limousine and stepped in. He took the bills from her unresisting hands and turned the top one over. It bore the glittering stamp of The Golden Hades.

No word was spoken for the rest of

the journey. Peter seemed deprived of speech. The girl sat, her hands clasped before her, staring steadily at the back of the chauffeur's head. Only when the car was pulled up by a traffic policeman at Times Square did she make a move, giving some instructions to the chauffeur through the speaking tube. The car changed its direction, running up Fifth Avenue, till she tapped at the window. She had thrust the money into one of the deep pockets in the side of the car, and apparently she was no longer interested in its fate.

"Let us walk in the park," she said, and they paced along, still in silence.

Peter hardly knew where to begin. The girl was evidently in as great a dilemma.

"Mr. Correlly," she said at last, "how much do you know?"

"About The Golden Hades?" he answered. "I know a lot, Miss Bertram, but I am hoping that you will tell me more."

She shut her lips tightly, as though she was afraid that she might involuntarily disclose the heart-aching secret which was hers.

"I can tell you nothing," she said. "What is there to be told? This money is mine. It is not an offense to carry money, even in New York."

"It is an offense to carry money which bears that stamp," said Peter sternly. "It is an offense to be associated with a sign which itself is associated with a ruthless murder."

She looked at him in horror.

"Murder!" she faltered. "Murder! Oh, not murder!"

"Murder and worse," he said. "It was at the back of the Higgins murder. It was behind the kidnaping of Mr. Alwin——"

"But I don't understand," she said, bewildered. "I knew it was a folly. I knew that the thing is wrong—all wrong; but not murder? Oh, tell me there is no murder!"

Her agitation was painful to watch. She stood there, a pathetic little figure, a look of unutterable sorrow in her eyes, wringing her hands in an agony of despair. He laid his hand upon her arm, and at his touch she shrank back.

"Miss Bertram," he said, "why don't you let me help you? I want to help you more than I ever wanted to help any human being in this world. I am speaking to you as your own brother might speak to you. Won't you trust me?"

She shook her head. "You can't—you can't," she almost wailed. "It isn't I, it isn't I that wants help."

"Who is it?" he asked.

"I can't tell you," she said. "I wish I could, but I can't tell you. It is horrible, horrible!"

He took her unresisting arm in his, and drew her by unfrequented roads from the curious eyes which were observing her.

"Tell me this," he said at last. "How long have you known about The Golden Hades?"

"Two days."

The detective nodded.

"It was at your little dinner party?"

She looked at him quickly.

"Answer me, please. Was it at the dinner party?"

"I didn't know, but I had an idea, and that night I found out for certain."

"Was that when you discovered that you were—going to be married?" He hesitated before he asked the question.

She nodded, and it seemed as though the question of her marriage had faded into insignificance beside some graver issue.

"I am going back now," she said suddenly. "Please do not come with me. I believe we are watched."

She shook hands with him, and was turning to go, when she said:

"If I want you, Mr. Correlly, I will telephone. I have your number. It is on the card." She smiled. "You re-

member the card you asked me to return?"

Without another word she went, and Peter followed her at a leisurely pace. He came out on to Fifth Avenue in time to see the back of the car disappearing, and made his way back to his office.

There was a letter on his table waiting for him, but he did not trouble to open it. He leaned back in his chair, elevating his feet to the desk, and thought and thought, and the more he thought the more puzzled he became, till at last he realized that he was departing from his practice and was building a theory, and he hated theories.

He stretched out his hand, and, taking up the letter, opened it. It was a brief note from Alwin. He had never seen Alwin's writing before, or he would have opened it sooner. It ran:

DEAR CORRELLY: JUST received this cablegram in reply to mine. What do you think of it? Sincerely,
FRANK ALWYN.

He unfolded the cable form, and read:

The only Rosie we know is John Cavanagh, commonly called Rosie Cavanagh, who was released from jail four years ago, after serving ten years in Portland for fraud, carried out through the medium of spiritualism. He is a well-educated man, age about sixty-five; very short; has encyclopedic knowledge of Greek mythology. Think he is in Spain, but am inquiring.

Peter looked from the cablegram to the ceiling and from the ceiling to the cablegram, and a slow smile dawned on his face.

CHAPTER X.

A USEFUL MAN.

PROFESSOR CAVANAGH was cleaning six apostle spoons. He was in his shirt sleeves, which were pulled up to expose his skinny arms. A big white apron was tied about his waist, and he was reciting to himself in a reedy whine. His good-looking English butler sat on the edge of the table, pulling

at a large cigar. His kitchen man, who was smoking a rank pipe, was busy at the table repairing a rubber stamp.

"Rosie," said the butler, "if you don't stop that infernal row I'll give you a crack on the head."

"Let him sing," said the other, "let him dance; let him do anything but talk."

The professor smiled. "You boys would be in trouble if I couldn't talk," he said. "I doubt if there's any man in this city who has my line of conversation."

"And ain't they proud of it?" growled the butler through his cigar. "Rosie, you've a pretty good opinion of yourself and your oratory. If you were as clever as you think you are, you would never have seen the inside of an English jug."

"If I'd never seen the inside of an English jug," said Cavanagh, "I should never have met you, my lad. If we hadn't sat together on the same bench, sewing mail bags for the honor and glory of the King of England, you would have been breaking safes at a hundred pounds a time, and been pinched twice out of every three times."

"It is very likely," said the butler carelessly. "What would Sam have been doing?"

Sam at the table looked up. "I should have been faking old masters and selling them," he said. "It is a nice, quiet way of earning a living, and I wish I'd never seen any other."

"You've a lot to growl about. How often have I told you that if you want to make big money you must take big risks?"

"Not the kind of risks you'd take, Tommy," said the other, and he shivered. "I'll never forget that woman Laste."

A frown gathered on the butler's face.

"It was her own fault," he said. "If she had pulled off my handkerchief

she'd have recognized me. It was me or her. What do you say, Rosie?"

The professor viewed a glittering spoon critically. "Well," he said, with some caution, "I'm such an old gentleman that really it doesn't matter to me what happens. I'd as soon go to the electric chair—a novel and a scientific method of dispatch which is wholly painless, according to such information as I can secure—as I'd spend the rest of my life in an American jail. If I may say so, Tom," he said apologetically, "you're precipitate."

"The whole thing was your fault," interrupted the butler violently. "Didn't you tell that fool banker to hide his money, and the gods would take it and give it to the poor?"

Rosie nodded.

"I didn't tell him to put it between the leaves of his daughter's books," he protested. "I didn't know that she was sending the books back to the store, did I? You should have let it go. There was plenty more coming."

"We've all muddled it a bit," said the man at the table gloomily. "It wasn't Rosie's idea that the money should be shot in the air from a bow—it was yours, Tom."

"It was my idea that you should be there to get it," said the other grimly.

"I'd have been there if I'd known where it was falling," said the other, calmly resuming his occupation, "and I was on to the man as soon as I saw him running."

The professor chuckled. "A very good joke," he said, "dee-lightful! A person who trafficked in counterfeit bills. Very reprehensible!"

He put down the spoon suddenly and looked up at the butler, twisting his head like an inquisitive hen.

"Do you know that I nearly got into very serious trouble? I only discovered it the other day."

"What was that?" asked the butler, stifling a yawn.

"Miss Bertram asked me to change a thousand-dollar note, and I changed it, giving her——"

"Not the phony money?" said the man on the table sharply. "You old fool, you didn't do that?"

"Quite an accident, my dear boy," said the professor airily, resuming the polishing of his spoons. "I explained it away satisfactorily."

The man at the table rose.

"What you guys have got to understand," he said, "and what doesn't seem to have penetrated the bone under your hair, is that there's a time to finish everything and clear out. I've seen some of the best men at the game caught by going after a little too much."

Tom Scatwell looked at the other through narrowed eyelids. "I haven't got what I want," he said quietly, "and there's no backing out till I get it. We've money—yes. It cost a devil of a lot to get it, but the money was worth spending. We've sunk thousands in financing Rosie and setting him up in his position as a society man—that limousine cost five thousand and the furniture in the apartment cost twelve—but that's beside the point. We have the money, but there's a bigger thing still. The old man is getting nervous—isn't he, Rosie?"

The professor nodded. "Skeptical is a better word," he said sadly. "He is uneasy and worried. He asked me last night if the gods did not interest themselves in anything except the spending of money. That was bad."

"Some day he'll open his mouth and blow the gaff," said Tom Scatwell, "and then it'll be good-by for all of us. We must shut his mouth unless we all want to go to the chair. Oh, you needn't look like that," he went on. "We're all in it."

"My dear Thomas," said the professor, "I am not in it, if you are referring to the crime of willful murder. Violence is contrary to my principles

and methods. Any dick will tell you that I have never given the slightest trouble to any representative of the law; that I have not so much as hurt a child in the pursuit of any graft which attracted me. I am a faker," he said with modest pride. "I admit it. I make money out of the occult, because the technicalities of the occult are at my finger tips. I had not the slightest idea two years ago when George Bertram and I discussed the possibilities of the old gods exercising influence upon the modern world, that it would turn out as big a thing as it has."

"Is he mad?"

It was the man at the table who asked, and the professor stroked his chin. "I don't think so," he said. "He is just impressionable—out of business hours."

Tom Scatwell laughed quietly. "Is a man who works a system at Monte Carlo mad?" he asked. "Are people who believe in 'hunches' mad? Are fellows who won't sit thirteen at table, who refuse to go under ladders, are they mad? Maybe it is madness of a kind. No, he is not mad, but he's got his soft side. With most men the soft side runs to women. Look at the hundreds of well-conducted, nice-looking, clean-talking business men who come into town every day, who discuss religion and art and all that stuff as sanely as Rosie would. And then get some woman or other to tell you the truth about them. And you'll think they're madder than Bertram. I know a man in this city"—he paused and shook his head regretfully—"if I wasn't in a hurry I'd make him pay for my knowledge—a respectable half millionaire, with a wife and family, who is stark, raving mad over a flat-footed manicurist with a face as ugly as sin."

There was a ring at the bell, and the man at the table rose, slipped on his brass-buttoned jacket, and went out. He came back in a few minutes.

"The superintendent's brought the glazier," he said, and as Rosie began to slip off his apron in a hurry, he continued: "Don't worry—he's a dago and doesn't count."

"How did those windows get broken, Rosie?" asked Scatwell.

It was evident that he was the real boss of the household.

"Boys!" said Rosie briefly, "three in one afternoon—it is disgraceful. And yet they say that New York is the best-policed city in the world."

"It took a pretty hefty boy to reach a third-story window," growled Scatwell. "I suppose the young devils used sling shots."

"It was an extraordinary occurrence," said Rosie. "I was sitting at my table reading, for the third time, that delightful volume of Gibbon's—you should read it, Tom—the style is limpid, the construction faultless—when crash! went the window. I immediately leaped to my feet—"

"Oh, be short!" snarled Tom. "Nobody expects that you would leap to your head! Did you see the boys that did it?"

"I did not," said Rosie, his dignity offended.

Scatwell slipped from the table and walked into the big sitting room. A lean, dark-skinned man, with a mop of black hair and a chin which apparently had not felt a razor for a week, was working at the broken window.

Scatwell was not easily shocked but he could only look at the man in speechless amazement, so extraordinary was his resemblance to the man, who, above all, he regarded as his most dangerous enemy.

Presently he spoke. "Hullo, Joe," he said. "How long are you going to be?"

The man grinned and shook his head. Fumbling in his blouse, he produced a stained and soiled card and handed it to the other. Scatwell read: "This man does not speak English."

"Italian, eh?" said Scatwell in that language.

He lay hidden for four long years in Naples, and had not wasted his time.

"Yes, signor," replied the man instantly. "I have only been in the United States for a month. I came straight from Stressa to my brother, who has good work here. It is beautiful to hear my language spoken again. My brother mostly speaks American, and all his friends are the same."

"You would like to make plenty of money?" asked Scatwell.

The idea that had come to him was little short of an inspiration.

"Yes, signor, I would like to make very big money and go back to my own home at Stressa," said the man. "My wife has not come to this place, and I promised her I would go back to her in three years. Yes, I would do anything for money if it were honest, signor. You understand that I come of a very respectable family."

"Have no fear about that," said Scatwell in Italian. "But I would like to play a joke on a friend, you understand, and perhaps you could help me."

He left the man at his work and walked quickly back to the pantry, where his two companions were, and shut the door behind him.

"Have you seen the dago? Have you had a good look at him?" he asked eagerly.

The other was surprised at his excitement.

"Yes, I saw him."

"Did you notice anything about him?"

Tom hesitated. "Nothing particular. Go and look at him, Rosie."

The professor did not trouble to pull off his apron, but went out of the room and presently came back.

"Well?" asked Scatwell.

"Well," answered Rosie, "I don't see anything remarkable about him. Really I don't, my dear fellow."

"Then look at him again, you bat," said Scatwell. "Why, the man is almost the double of Correlly."

"Correlly? Do you think it is Correlly?" said Rosie in alarm. "Perhaps he's come here disguised."

"Don't be a fool; I merely said he was like Correlly."

"But what if he is?" asked Sam.

"He'll be very useful to us, and to me in particular," said Scatwell. "Suppose we got him to cut that hair of his, and we doll him up? Why, he'd pass for Correlly anywhere."

Mr. Samuel Featherstone put down his rubber stamp and strolled into the sitting room to give the smirking workman the once over. He returned full of praise for Scatwell's scheme.

"I don't say that this fellow is like Correlly," he said, "because I haven't seen Correlly close enough to swear to him feature by feature. But"—he faced Scatwell squarely—"what is the idea?"

"Yes, that's it," said the professor. "We want to know what's the idea, Tom. We don't care to risk anything new—and we've had enough and too much of this funny business. I agree with Sam that the sooner we skip the better for us."

"You can skip out if you want to," said Scatwell, "but you don't skip before you've seen this through. I tell you that I'm out for the biggest stake of all, and I've half won."

"There will be certain difficulties with the girl," said the professor. "She won't accept without hesitation the command of the—er—gods."

"She'll accept the commands of her father," said Scatwell, "and if I can get this wop to work with me, it is as good as done. Suppose she knows that her father is mixed up in this Golden Hades fake, and that we can put him in the pen as an accomplice to murder? What do you think she's going to do to shut our mouths, eh?"

"Where does Correlly come in?" asked Sam.

"You'll find out all about that," replied the other vaguely. "The point is, will the dago take on the job, and will you all stand by me if he does?"

"What's the good of asking a question like that?" snarled Featherstone. "We've got to stand by you, haven't we? Go and put it up to him."

The window repairer expressed his doubt—indeed, his suspicion.

"It may be a joke, signor, but in my country it is the sort of joke that would put me in the hands of the *Carabinieri*. I do not like those kind of jokes. I am a stranger to your country, but I know that your police would be very sore."

"You're not asked to do anything illegal, you poor boob," said Scatwell. "You've nothing to do but to dress yourself in fine clothes and be seen about. If anybody speaks to you, don't answer them. There's a thousand dollars for you in this."

Still the man shook his head. "I don't like it at all. Perhaps it would be better if you got somebody who speaks your language," he said.

At fifteen hundred dollars, however, he wavered, and at two thousand he fell. He was quick enough to take up the idea once Scatwell had propounded the details. He listened and asked intelligent questions, but to the suggestion that he should live under the same roof as the three, he turned a deaf ear.

"I see very well, signor," he said, "that I cannot return to my brother's house, because that would excite comment, and the people would talk. Maybe you could get me a little place to sleep, but here I would not stay, nor is it wise. Your joke would be no joke if I were seen to leave here."

"He's right," said Rosie, "perfectly right. He could have the room that we hired for Sam when he was playing chauffeur for Wilbur Smith."

Guiseppe Gatti—such was the name he gave—was conducted to the lodging, and the professor, having secured a photograph of Peter which was printed in a newspaper in the previous year, took the man's measure with his own hand and procured the clothes. Guiseppe insisted upon having his own barber, a compatriot whom he could trust, and when, at ten o'clock that night, a knock came at the door, which Featherstone opened, that worthy nearly collapsed.

"Why, why!" he stammered, "Mr. Correlly!"

But the newcomer answered in Italian, and the dazed Featherstone led the visitor to Scatwell's room.

"Say, look at him," he said. "Rosie, who is this?"

Scatwell jumped up, his eyes shining.

"I knew I was right," he said. "Why, that would deceive even Smith himself. Stoop, Guiseppe, so. Hunch your shoulders over like this"—he gave an imitation—"and when you walk you've got to drag your feet a little."

For two hours they coached him in the manners and mannerisms of Peter Correlly, and at the end of that time Scatwell pronounced him perfect.

"Suppose anybody speaks to me?" asked the man. "What shall I say?"

"Nobody will speak to you," said Scatwell. "If they do, you must not reply. Very soon I will take you to a young lady, and then to every question I ask you you shall answer: Yes—y-e-s."

"Yis," said the man.

"A little more practice," said the exultant Scatwell, "and half of Bertram's roll is as good as in my pocket."

It was on the next afternoon that Peter Correlly came face to face with José Bertram. She was her old self, bright and tantalizing, and she showed no trace of the grief which had crushed

her on the previous day, and Peter marvelled not a little.

"How do you do, Mr. Correlly? I saw you this morning walking on Broadway, but you took no notice of me."

"On Broadway?" said Peter. "I was not on Broadway this morning. In fact, I have scarcely left my office since last night."

He observed that the professor was eying him with unusual interest.

"What is the matter, professor?"

Peter smiled and put his hand to his chin, which was ornamented by a small square of sticking plaster. "I cut myself thi smorning," he said. "Is anything wrong with it?"

"No, no, Mr.—I've forgotten your name already. No, no, Mr. Correlly, I was merely looking at you, but thinking of something else, something entirely different."

Peter smiled and turned to the girl.

"I suppose you're a very busy man, Mr. Correlly," she said, "not too—not *too* busy, I hope," and there was a significance in her words—almost an appeal.

Peter shook his head. "Not so busy that I cannot interest myself in the affairs of my friends," he said. "You will remember——"

"I remember," she said hurriedly.

She thought he was going to quote his telephone number, but in this she was wrong.

There was nothing more to talk about, and it seemed to him that she wanted to end the interview, almost as though she found the strain of acting a part too much for her endurance. But the meeting had given her strength, had endowed her with just the quality of courage she required.

They left Peter and came to the portals of the Inter-State Bank. Here she stopped.

"I'm going in to see my father," she said, turning to her companion. "I do

hope, professor, that you will add your voice to mine. You cannot believe—it is impossible that an intelligent man like you can believe—such abominable things."

The little fellow spread out his arms in a gesture of helplessness.

"I can only believe what I know to be true, my dear young lady," he said. "There are certain mysteries which are hidden from the ordinary human eye, which are visible only to those who are gifted."

"By the gods?" she suggested dryly.

"By the gods," he repeated in all solemnity.

She set her lips tightly.

"Then I take it that you are not going to help me cure father of these hallucinations."

"If they were hallucinations, yes," he said, "but, my dear young lady, they are not hallucinations. Your dear father is specially favored, I assure you. Why, I myself," he spoke solemnly and deliberately, "heard Pluto speak—yea, speak in clear, unmistakable language—to your father."

She looked at him incredulously, and he met her gaze unflinchingly.

"Surely you're joking," she said. "You have heard an idol—a statue—speak?"

He inclined his head.

"When did Pluto learn English?" she asked.

"The gods know all languages," replied the professor soberly.

With a shrug of her pretty shoulders she turned abruptly away, and the professor rode back to his apartments with a smile which did not leave his lips until he got home.

He had much to report and Scatwell listened with satisfaction to his subordinate's description of the interview with Correlly.

"You've got to be careful, though, boys," said the professor, pulling a short pipe from his tail coat pocket and

lighting it. "If you make Correlly suspicious, and his double is seen too much abroad, why, there'll be some inquiries made, and the wop will be pinched. Where is he now?"

"Gone back to his lodging," said Scatwell. "He's been gone an hour or so."

"There's one thing I want to tell you," said the professor, remembering. "Correlly has cut his cheek, level with his lips, on the left side, and he wears a small square of sticking plaster. You might put Tony on to that if you see him again. And what's more, he's much too well dressed. That fellow Correlly looks more like a tramp. You've got to be careful—a fashionable-looking Correlly will attract attention."

Scatwell nodded. "Sam, run round to that fellow's lodging and tell him he's not to come out except by night. And, say, tell him to put a bit of sticking plaster on his left cheek. Show Sam where, Rosie," and Rosie illustrated the exact position, the size and the shape of the patch.

Sam went forth on his errand to find Signor Guiseppa Gatti throwing dice against himself, wearing on his smooth face an expression of unutterable boredom.

CHAPTER XI.

ON FORBIDDEN GROUND.

ALL day the girl had been nerving herself for her supreme effort. The afternoon had passed with painful slowness. She had tried in vain to read the hours away. She heard the whir of her father's auto and his light step in the hall, and went up to his room. How should she begin it? How much should she say? How far was he involved in this terrible business? She had rehearsed a dozen openings but had rejected them all.

George Bertram had been a good father to her. In his soft, amiable, vague

way, he had been all that a father should be, and she loved him dearly. He was a rich man and could afford many follies, but this was one he could not afford. She wondered if he were mad, and the thought made her wince. But there were other men who had ideas as strange, and they were sane enough. She rang the bell and Jenkins, her father's English servant, who had been in the family for twenty years, came.

"Shut the door, Jenkins," she said. "I want to ask you something about father."

"Yes, miss," said the man.

"You know I have never asked questions, and it isn't right that I should, about my father's life. But now, Jenkins, something very serious has happened, and I want you to help me all you can. What is hidden in the inner park?"

The man shook his head.

"I'm sorry, miss. I can't tell you that, because I don't know," he said. "There isn't any servant in this house who has ever put a foot into the inner park. When Mr. Bertram bought this place nine years ago, the inner park was all part of the estate. You could walk there; in fact, I've walked through it a dozen times. But two years ago, after we came back from Florida, where we had been for the winter, we found a high wall had been built right across the estate, and that's how the inner park came into existence," he said. "You were at college at the time."

The girl nodded.

"Mr. Bertram had the door put in, and since then nobody has ever entered the park to my knowledge. I believe he had a summerhouse built, or something of the sort, miss," he went on, "but I haven't seen it—or anybody else; at least, nobody that I know."

"Did father forbid you to go into the inner park?"

The man nodded.

"Yes, miss, every servant in the house was threatened with dismissal, though Mr. Bertram is such a good master that he had only to say he didn't wish us to go, for us to have obeyed him."

"Doesn't any gardener go there?"

The man shook his head.

"No, miss, there's about one hundred and fifty acres of land, and that just grows wild."

She sat chin on hand. She had learned very little that she had not known, and went up to change her dress for dinner. It was not often that they dined together without company. Usually the professor, or one of her father's business friends, had been invited. Of late, however, these latter seldom found a place at George Bertram's board.

Mr. Bertram, throughout the meal, was preoccupied and nervous. Once he caught his daughter's eye fixed on him and dropped his own in confusion, as though he had been detected in an act of which he was ashamed. There was scarcely any conversation, and after the meal was finished and he was rising, as was his habit, to go to the study for the rest of the evening, she stopped him.

"Father, I want to have a little talk with you before you go off to-night," she said.

"With me, my dear?" he said in mild surprise. "Is there anything you want? I thought your account at the bank was——"

"It isn't money," she said, smiling, "or dresses or parties or anything so feminine. It's you, daddy."

"Me, my dear?"

He went very red. There was something remarkably childlike in this grown man. It was this quality that she had so often remarked and which so puzzled and distressed her.

"I want to talk about The Golden

Hades," she said calmly, feeling herself mistress of the situation.

"The—The—Golden Hades!" he stammered. "My dear, surely that is a matter—um—that is a matter which is a little beyond your range, darling."

"I think it is a matter which is also a little beyond your range, darling," she said gently.

He never got angry with her. The worst that could happen happened now. He was reduced to that condition of mind which lies midway between righteous anger and self-pity, and which is graphically described as "huff." He was never more than huffy with her, but huffy he was now.

"You are going against my wishes, José," he said, with a bold but unimpressive attempt at sternness. "Yes, you are really. The other night I thought you were so sweet, I really thought the gods had spoken to you as they have spoken to me."

A look had come to his face which made his handsome features almost ethereal. The girl watched him, her lips parted in speechless amazement.

"It is difficult for you to believe that the gods have chosen a husband for you, and that in your happiness I shall find my reward for my gifts to Pluto's poor, but——"

"Wait, wait!" she interrupted. "The gods have spoken to you? Daddy, don't you realize what you are saying? You shocked me frightfully when you told me so casually the other night that the gods had chosen a husband for me. When I asked you the next morning, and you spoke so seriously, so simply, about the tremendous sums of money you were throwing away——"

He laid his hand on her arm.

"By the dispensation of Pluto that money dissolves into the hands of those whom the gods favor, and who have most need," he said, with rising enthusiasm. "Sometimes the money is given to the poorest of the poor; sometimes

a message comes that it must go into the hands of the tenth man I meet after the clock strikes a certain hour. Sometimes it is shot to the heavens from a bow and falls wherever it listeth."

She rose, and, passing round the table, sat on his knee, her arm about his neck.

"Yes, yes, daddy," she said. "You told me something of that, and how the gods had ordered you to leave a great sum at the Pennsylvania Station."

"No, no—not that. The gods spoke of the Seven——"

She could have laughed, but she could have cried as readily.

"It was on the seventh street," he went on solemnly, "in the Temple of Mercury, the Palace of Speed, where men are carried to the ends of the earth by fiery horses."

"Yes, yes, I know, dear," she said practically. "The Pennsylvania Station answers more or less to that description, and I know money was to be left there! What miracle was that money to perform?"

He looked at her doubtfully, as though he were not certain of her mental attitude, for he was childishly sensitive to ridicule.

"It was to fall into the hands of one who needed it very greatly," he said shortly. "Please do not interfere in these matters, José."

"And yet it fell into my hands," she interrupted quietly, "and I do not need it—not yet."

"Into your hands?"

He stared at her.

She nodded. "I saw the money left. I was watching your messenger, and I took the packet from the man to whom it was given.

"I took the money!" she repeated calmly.

"But—but——" he said, "I don't understand."

"It fell into my hands, and so far I have escaped with my life. Look!"

She walked to the sideboard and opened a little box she had brought in with her when she came from her room. From this she took a thick bundle of bills and laid them on the table before him.

"Surely the gods make no mistake," she said. "They could not have come to me unless they were intended for me."

His face flushed now with anger at the irony in her tones.

"Why did you take this money?" he asked harshly.

"To save the life of the man they were intended for," she said.

"To save——"

"To save the life of the man they were intended for," she repeated.

George Bertram gazed at her in amazement. He was so astonished that his momentary spasm of anger was forgotten.

"Will you please explain yourself, José?"

She stood by the table, her hands resting on its polished surface, and looked down at him.

"Father," she said quietly, "I do not wish to be flippant, but there is a saying that those whom the gods love die young. It is certain they die quickly. Have you ever heard of a murder called the Higgins Murder?"

He frowned. "I remember the case," he said, "yes. But what has that to do with this matter?"

"It has this to do with it," she said, "that that woman was murdered to secure the money which you sent out on its errand of mercy."

"Impossible!" he gasped. "I——"

"A detective who secured another batch of your money was half murdered and robbed. I tell you this, that the money you sent out under the inspiration of Professor Cavan has left behind it a trail of brutal crime. Men and women have been murdered, beaten, and kidnaped, and burglaries

have been committed—in the name of the gods!”

He jumped up. “I don’t believe a word of it,” he said, a little wildly. “You cannot shake my faith, José. These are things which are beyond your understanding.”

“I——” she began.

“Not another word!” he stormed. “You shall not shake my faith!” and he almost ran from the room.

She followed more slowly, but by the time she reached the hall he had disappeared. She went up to her room, locked the door, and changed from her dinner gown into a serviceable serge. The mystery of the inner park she was determined to solve. From a drawer in her dressing table she took a little revolver and loaded it.

With this in her pocket she turned out the light, opened the French windows of her bedroom, and stepped out on to the balcony. There was a possibility that her father might remain at home, and the light was showing in his study when she began her vigil. She had waited an hour when it was extinguished. A few moments later she saw his dark figure traversing the path which led to the inner park. Swiftly she passed through her bedroom, down the stairs and out through the front door, keeping to the grass, which deadened the sound of her footsteps and also brought her to the cover of the bushes.

She lost sight of him against the foliage, which half hid the wall, but heard the sound of his key being inserted in the lock of the door. Presently the door slammed and she could walk boldly forward. She had already made many inspections of this barrier, but never before had she thought of disobeying her father’s injunction. The wall was at least twelve feet high, and the door through which he had passed was small and narrow.

She had, however, already made a

reconnaissance and her preparations. Some fifty paces to the left of the door was a thick clump of alders. From this she drew a light ladder of ash, and, setting it against the wall, she reached the top without difficulty, pulling the ladder up after her and lowering it down on the other side. Before she continued her search she made a survey of this unknown ground and came to the inner side of the door. From the door a path led into the unknown. This was all the information she wanted. It was very necessary that she should be able to find her way back to the ladder, and, once this was assured, she could go forward on her exploring expedition without trepidation.

The path was well defined, and the moon shed just sufficient light to enable her to find her way without the aid of the pocket lamp she carried. She came upon the temple unexpectedly and was brought to a standstill by the sight of it. It was a perfect little building—evidently a replica of the Temple of Minerva—much more beautiful than she had ever imagined.

“Poor Pluto!” thought the girl, with the one little gurgle of amusement she had indulged in since this grisly business had begun, “to be worshiped in the Temple of Athena!”

There was nobody in sight, no light shone in the building, and apparently no guard was deemed necessary. She made her way with noiseless footsteps across the grass and up the shallow steps that led to the columned portico.

The big wooden door, big in relation to the size of the building, was ajar, and she tiptoed her way in. She was fronting a heavy velvet curtain, but light came over the top. She stepped close up and pulled aside a fold.

She found herself looking up an aisle of pillars to an altar, where blazed a golden statue, but her eyes were fixed rather upon the two men who stood in adoration before the image. There was

no difficulty in recognizing the little man by her father's side, despite his weird cloak. There was a beautiful rich quality to his voice which would have distinguished him even in a crowd.

"Oh, Hades, Giver of Wealth!" he said, his arms outstretched in supplication, "give a sign to this saverer! Speak, thou Pluto, Lord of the Nether-world, Patron of Fortune!"

The girl strained her ears but no sound came, and the silence was oppressive. Then unexpectedly came a voice—a hollow, booming voice, and it seemed to proceed from the statue itself.

"Oh, stranger, remember thy promise! Thou hast vowed before me and before Prosperine that thou wouldst give thy daughter to my chosen. The hour is at hand. Prosperity and happiness shall shine upon thee. There shall be a place at the table of the gods for thee, my servant."

The girl's heart was beating fiercely. She felt that if she did not get into the open air she would choke, and even as she moved her head swam. She tumbled down the steps and fell full length on the ground.

So this was the secret, this was how the inspiration came! José dragged herself to her knees, and though her legs were trembling under her she ran to the other end of the building. She expected to see the man whose voice had come from The Golden Hades, but there was nobody in sight. She stood puzzled and in the problem forgot the panic into which she had fallen.

If she had known that in one corner of the building was a ventilating shaft up which she—to her—unknown Alwin had climbed, she might have accepted the existence of that chamber as an explanation. But in truth the shaft had nothing to do with the phenomenon.

She thought quickly. There was something in the quality of Pluto's

voice which seemed familiar. It had sounded as though—as though—then in a flash it came to her! It was the sound of a voice through a speaking tube! If such a tube ran from the outside of the building, it would be found in line with the exact center, where the figure stood. She roughly judged the distance and began her search, but there was no sign of a pipe.

She knelt down and pressed her ear to the earth and was rewarded by a faint murmur of sound. She looked round for some kind of tool, but had to be content with a piece of dead wood, and with this she attacked the earth.

Her search was quickly rewarded. Buried less than six inches beneath the surface, she found the little pipe line leading straight back from the temple to a small thicket which she subsequently found was about fifty yards distant.

Cautiously she moved toward the wood, taking care to make no sound, and, arriving at its outskirts, she slipped from tree to tree nearer into the heart of the inclosure. She stopped every now and again to listen, but there was no sound, until just as her foot was raised to make another advance she heard a loud "buzz" which so startled her that she nearly cried aloud.

It was almost at her feet and was much too noisy for even the most angry and biggest insect to have made. It was a signal. She caught her breath as this simple explanation came to her. Of course, the man in the temple would have to signal when his confederate was to speak and in proof of her theory a voice quite close boomed:

"Thus saith the Lord of the Nether world——"

She had taken out her little electric lamp and now she flashed it in the direction of the voice. A man lay face downward on the earth, and he held a flexible tube to his mouth. She had time to see the small cement well in

which, presumably, the speaking tube and the signal were kept hidden, and then the man dropped the mouthpiece and scrambled to his feet with an oath.

"Am I speaking to Pluto or one of his satellites?" said the girl ironically.

"Miss Bertram!" cried the man, and she recognized him.

"I see," she said. "You are the professor's butler, aren't you?"

She still held him in the light as he dusted his knees, and there was something about the calmness of this man caught in the act of his treachery to her father, which brought a sense of dismay to her heart.

"Well, it is no use bluffing," he said. "You've caught me with the goods. Miss Bertram, I think you know now all there is to be known about The Golden Hades."

"I know all there is to be known about you, I think," she said, "and tomorrow, if there is any law in this country——"

"Don't let us talk about the law," he said coolly. "It won't do any of us much good, especially your father."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"Just be a sensible girl and think you've dreamed all this," said he, "and just go along as though you had never been behind the scenes. Carry out the instructions of the god."

"And marry his chosen, I suppose?" she said with a lift of her eyebrows.

"And marry his chosen," he repeated with a nod, "which happens to be me."

She looked at him speechless.

"It will save you a lot of trouble and save your father worse," he went on. "Now, Miss Bertram, you must be sensible. You'll have to be sensible because you're the only person who can keep your father out of this affair, and keep us out of trouble."

"Even if I wanted to—and I don't," she flamed, "I would not help you—no, not any of you. My father is innocent

of any of the crimes you have committed."

"That you will have to prove, and you'll find it pretty difficult," said the man.

"Even then I could not save you," she said. "There is a man on your track who will never let up until he has put you where you belong."

"There is a man on *your* track," drawled Tom Scatwell, with a little sneer, "who will never let up till he gets *you*. I am thinking of the same individual—Peter Correlly."

She peered at him through the gloom; she had long since switched off the light of her torch.

"But I don't understand."

"You don't, eh? Oh, Rosie isn't a fob!"

"Rosie?" she asked, puzzled.

"I'm talking about the professor. He isn't a fool, I say, and, although he is a mighty bad crook, he's the grandest reader of men's minds and the finest psychologist that you're likely to meet. Rosie just saw how Correlly looked at you and diagnosed the case."

She flushed and was grateful for the darkness which hid her face.

"You're mad," she said. "You're trying to insult me. I'm going back to my father."

"One moment, Miss Bertram."

He laid his hand on her arm.

"Whether Peter Correlly is in love with you or not makes no difference. That's his business, and I guess I can attend to him—after we are married. Marry me you will, and marry me you must, whether you like it or not, unless you are prepared to see your father in prison, charged with murder. There will be a run on the bank when it gets out that he has thrown away hundreds of thousand of dollars in this tomfoolery. You understand me?"

"I understand," she said, and turned back to the house.

Scatwell did not attempt to stop her.

CHAPTER XII.

VICTORY.

IT was one o'clock in the morning when, summoned by telephone, Peter Correlly presented himself at the Bertram mansion. The girl opened the door to him, and after a glance at her white, set face he knew that something unusually serious had happened. She took him not to the drawing-room but to the library, and as he passed through the hall he saw a man descending the stairs whom he recognized as one of the foremost physicians of the city.

"My father has had a stroke," she said quietly, "and the doctors think it may be months before he is well again."

Her eyes were red, and her lips trembled as she spoke. There was little that Peter could do save to murmur conventional regrets, so he said nothing.

"And I—I am in trouble, in great trouble, Mr. Correlly," she said.

She seated herself in a low chair, crouching over the little fire which burned in the open grate, and never once did she meet his eyes.

"You once told me that if I ever was in trouble I was to send for you and that you would help me."

"You did right." He stood leaning against the chimney piece, with one elbow upon the mantel, and looked down at her. "Tell me just what you can, and let me guess all that you do not want to say. When did his seizure occur?"

"Nearly two hours ago," said the girl in a low voice. "I think he was worried about—about me. You see, I had to tell him something to-night, Mr. Correlly, and it wasn't easy for him or for me."

"Had he been to the temple?"

She looked up quickly.

"You know of the temple, then?" she asked, and he smiled.

"I didn't know it was here, but I guessed as much," he replied.

She inclined her head slowly. "My father has been in the hands of this gang for two years," she said. "I—I had to tell him all I had learned. There was a terrible scene."

She did not particularize the gang, but he knew to whom she referred.

"Poor daddy! He has always been interested in the occult, and has written a little book on the subject. Did you know that?"

"I knew that," said Peter simply.

"It was called 'The Netherworld,'" she went on. "I think it was this book which must have attracted the attention of the gang, and, through the professor, my father was entangled in this awful business. I do not know who the professor is—to me he was always an amusing, simple-minded, somewhat vain little man, repulsive in many ways, but the very last man in the world I should have associated with any crooked plans. I knew that father and he were very good friends, because he used to dine here almost every night, and I was rather glad, because daddy had very few friends and no hobbies. It gave me a sense of relief to know"—she smiled faintly—"that he was off my hands. They must have met when I was still at school, for when I came back here they were already inseparable—and the great wall across the park had been built."

"I see," said Peter, nodding. "That is how it came about that you had no knowledge of its building. That puzzled and worried me a little."

"I had no idea of its existence," she said, "nor had any of the servants of the house. It must have been built under the direction of the professor or of his fellow conspirators, and none but foreign workmen, who were chosen for the purpose, were employed. I have only learned this since—since I took the trouble to inquire."

"Have you any idea how his affairs

stand?" asked Peter gently, and it pained him to see the girl wince.

"I don't think that is a matter for anxiety," she said. "I do know that daddy is enormously rich. When mother died she left me a million dollars, which is in the hands of trustees, so I am not worrying about the finances of the bank. Daddy could afford all the money he has thrown away on these villains."

Strangely enough, this news brought a sense of the greatest relief to Peter, who had worried more about the condition of George Bertram's fortune than about any other aspect of the case. Somehow it seemed to him that the name of Bertram, honored for three generations, had better be associated with almost any other crime than with bankruptcy, and a bankruptcy which would drag thousands down to ruin with him.

"There is one thing I want you to tell me to relieve my mind," he said, "and that is that the absurd suggestion that you should marry the chosen of the gods has been entirely dismissed from your mind with these revelations."

To his surprise she did not immediately answer, nor did she meet his eyes.

"You don't mean——" he said in astonishment.

"I mean that that marriage may have to go through," she said, with a catch in her voice. "Mr. Correlly, don't you realize that the idea of the marriage emanated from the gang, and that from among these the most presentable was chosen?"

"That I can guess," he said, "but there are ten thousand reasons why any promise you or your father may have given should not be fulfilled. Good heavens! It is an appalling idea!"

Still she did not look up.

"I want you to help me to get through this most difficult time," she said; "but first tell me, is there any way

by which my father's name can be kept out of this terrible business?"

It was his turn to be silent. He knew that no influence was big enough to keep the name of George Bertram from the case, and she read his silence rightly.

"Don't you see, Mr. Correlly, that I am entirely in the hands of these three men? It is my father's word against theirs, and they can put him—oh, it is terrible!"

She covered her face with her hands.

"They can implicate him in the murder, if that's what you mean," said Peter, and she bowed her head in assent. "And you think if you marry one of them, who I suppose is the leader of the gang, that they will let up on your father? Why, Miss Bertram, you don't know that gang of crooks. The matter isn't in your hands, anyway; it is in the hands of the authorities. It isn't a question of their giving one another away, or of their being in a position to say whether or not they shall make a disclosure to the police. We have sufficient evidence——"

She shook her head, and for the first time met his eyes and looked him straight in the face.

"You're wrong, Mr. Correlly," she said quietly. "You have no evidence; you have only theories. Only my father can prove that they defrauded him, and he—he——" she stopped and brought her handkerchief to her lips.

Peter absent-mindedly drew a cigar from his pocket, bit off the end, and lit it before he knew what he was doing. He would have thrown the cigar in the fireplace but she stopped him with a gesture.

"Please smoke," she said. "I should have asked you when you came in."

Two curiously unhappy figures they were—Peter, hunched up over the fire on one side, the girl with her chin on her

hands on the other—and the thoughts of both followed identical lines.

"There's a lot in what you say, Miss Bertram," he said at last, "and that's just the thing that has been worrying us. It is an amazing fact that up till now we have no evidence. Nobody saw Mrs. Laste shot; nobody saw the man who beat up Wilbur Smith or kidnaped Frank Alwin. There is a strong supposition, but that supposition will not carry us very far to a conviction."

He puffed away at his cigar for five minutes, and there was no sound but the tick of a French clock on the mantelpiece.

"There's a lot of truth in what you say, José."

The girl started, and stared at him. Evidently he was unconscious of his lapse, and he went on.

"We have known the difficulties all along, ever since we were fairly certain that we had the gang at our mercy. We've been hoping against hope to get the right kind of evidence, but so far the only person who is immediately under suspicion—is you."

"Me?" she said, startled.

"I have evidence sufficient to convict you three times over," he said, "and I know you were a perfectly innocent instrument in the hands of unscrupulous men. I know, too, that if it comes to a showdown, and unless they have some strong inducement to keep silence, the whole gang will implicate your father in the murder, and implicate him in such a way that it will be practically impossible to prove his innocence."

Another silence and then the girl rose.

"So you see," she said with a gesture of despair, "for father's sake I must further the interests of these men, even if it means—marriage."

She got the word out with difficulty. Peter came up to his feet slowly. There was a smile on his lips but a hard glint in his eye which fascinated her.

"Well, Miss Bertram," he said, "I guess there are going to be a few more tragedies added to the credit of The Golden Hades."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean just this," said Peter slowly. "There are three men in this gang—Rosie Cavan—that's the professor; Tom Scatwell, another English crook; and Sam Featherstone. Maybe they had assistance to hold up Wilbur Smith, and pressed a little local talent into their service, for Wilbur isn't exactly popular with certain criminal classes; but outside of these three there is no gang. Three men," he said deliberately; "and unless matters take a much brighter turn than they promise, I am going to add three tragedies—three irreparable disasters—to the tale of devil work."

For the moment she did not understand, and then with a little "Oh!" she stepped forward and laid both her hands on his arm, lifting her pale face to his.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," she said in agitation. "Do you hear? I won't have you do it! I would rather stand the trial myself; I would rather my father took the responsibility, than that you should do so wicked a thing."

In that instant she caught a glimpse of his mind and she knew its deadly purpose.

"You are not to do it," she said. "I promise me you will not do it, please! Please!"

He laid his big hand on her arm and smiled down into her face.

"It is a far, far better thing I do now——"

The little hand shot up to his mouth.

"Peter!" and the word electrified him and left him breathless, "unless you really want to break my heart, to fill me with everlasting shame, that I was responsible for your risking your life, you will put this thought out of your mind. Let them stand their trial."

He could not speak, and she misunderstood the cause of his silence and shook him with all the strength she could muster.

"There must be another way," she said. "Please! Please! For my sake! You called me 'José' just now, and I know you like me."

Suddenly she was gripped in his arms.

"Like you!" he said huskily. "My dear little girl, if they set your statue in the temple I would worship you."

She laughed—a nervous, tearful little laugh, and struggled to escape.

"You would be a devil worshiper, then, if you did this thing. Peter, won't you promise me? Peter dear——"

He took the girl up in his arms and pressed his lips to her burning cheek.

"Maybe I'll not shoot 'em," he mumbled in her ear. "Maybe I'll just poison 'em," and she laughed again, a little hysterically, for she knew she had won her battle.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CONFESSION.

TOM SCATWELL dressed himself with unusual care, rejecting waistcoat after waistcoat which the anxious professor brought. He was a good-looking man of thirty-nine, powerfully built. That he was not in the best of tempers the conciliating attitude of Rosie showed. Even the somber Mr. Featherstone, who never shrunk from an encounter with his superior, made himself scarce.

"What time will you be back, Tom?" asked Rosie.

"Mind your own business," growled the man.

"Sam and I wanted to know," said the professor apologetically, "because we have an engagement this afternoon at three, and we shouldn't like to be out when you come in."

"I am unlikely to be back before

three or four," said Scatwell. "You have all the baggage packed?"

"Every bit of it," said the professor. "When do you think we shall make the get-away?"

"Don't worry about that," replied the other. "I'll give you plenty of notice."

"There's a boat sails to-day?" suggested Rosie.

"We shan't take that. Maybe we'll go to Canada."

Rosie watched him fussing about, brushing his hair and brushing it again, fixing it at the back, changing and re-changing his cravat.

"Tom," he said presently, "I'm short of ready money. Could you give me a check?"

"How much do you want?"

"Oh, I don't know," said the professor in his vague way.

"Well, make up your mind," growled Scatwell, who stood looking at his watch.

"Are you expecting anybody, Tom?" asked the professor.

The man turned on him in a fury.

"What's worrying you, Rosie?" he snarled. "You're as jumpy as a cat. What the devil do you want to know my business for? You go on like a man who's expecting to be double crossed."

The professor laughed, a tittering little laugh of amusement.

"Oh, no, Tom, not that," he said. "That's the last thing one would expect from you. If anybody dared suggest such a thing about you, Tom, I'd—I'd strike him down at my feet."

"A devil of a lot of striking you'd do," said Tom contemptuously, "if you want to know. I'm waiting for that dago—there's the bell; show him in here and leave me alone with him."

He had put on his coat and was surveying himself in a long mirror when the visitor came in.

"Sit down, Guiseppé," he said in Italian. "You are late."

"I had to wait for a taxi," said the other in the same language. "I find it very difficult to have the courage."

"Courage for what?"

"To call a taxi," said the man. "I fear they will detect me and say: 'Who is this poor Italian man who begs rides in my taxi?'"

"You've got the money, haven't you?" said Scatwell. "Now listen. I am taking you away to a grand house in the country. There you will see a lady who will mistake you for somebody else."

"This is a joke, eh?" demanded the other.

"This is a joke," said Scatwell grimly.

"What shall I do?"

"You'll sit quiet and say nothing," answered Tom Scatwell. "You have merely to be seen and no more. If the lady speaks to you, you will say: 'Yes.'"

"Yes," said the other mincingly in English.

Tom nodded his head satisfied.

"Now, Guiseppe, my car's at the door, and we will go along. While you're riding, keep your face out of sight. You understand, I do not want you to be seen."

"I understand perfectly, signor," said the other as he led the way from the room, Scatwell following.

In the lobby the professor was waiting, an ingratiating grin on his face, an open check book in his hand. Scatwell hesitated.

"Can't this wait?" he asked. "How much do you want?"

"Make it a hundred dollars, Tom," pleaded the professor.

"Fill it in," said Scatwell, and scrawled his name at the bottom of the check.

The door banged behind him, and presently they heard the whine of his car as it sped on its way. The professor watched the car out of sight,

craning his neck through the window; and when it had disappeared he took up the telephone and called a number.

"In twenty-five minutes," was the message he sent.

He went out into the hall and called: "Sam!"

Mr. Featherstone came immediately.

"What time does that boat leave?" asked the professor.

"At half past eleven," replied the other.

"Good! We've plenty of time. Have you booked the stateroom?"

"Of course I've booked the stateroom," said the other, aggrieved. "I booked it with the Boston Agency in the name of Miller and Dore. Here are the tickets."

He produced a leather pocketbook.

"That's all right," said the professor quickly. "Now just fill up that blank check."

"How much shall I make it for?"

"What is his balance?" asked the professor.

"About fifty thousand dollars."

"Make it about forty-five and be on the safe side," said the professor. "I hate to leave the swine anything, but he asked for trouble. Oh! the greed of these low crooks!"

While Featherstone was filling in the check, the professor was busy clipping his spidery whiskers.

"You've never seen me clean shaven, have you, Sam? I'm some sight—but you'll have to endure me."

Featherstone went out with the check, and was back in twenty minutes with a roll of bills.

"What about the safe deposit?" he asked, and the professor's chin, covered with lather, shook.

"No, thank you," he said. "That stuff has The Golden Hades printed on it, and that's the totem I don't want to carry around just now. Forty-five thousand dollars is a lot of money, Sam. It ain't all we deserve, but it's

enough to get away on with the stuff we've sent to England. How do you like me?"

He turned a tiny rosy face to the other.

"Good Lord!" said Sam, genuinely shocked. "Do you look like that? Gee! I'll never say a word against whiskers after this."

The professor looked out of the window.

"There's our taxi," he said. "Where's the suit case?"

"Ready," said the other promptly.

"Get 'em down. I'll follow you."

He had a last look round, a regretful look as he surveyed his by no means modest library, for Rosie Cavanagh was a genuine book lover. Then he, too, left the apartment, closing the door behind him. Five hours later, as the *Aquitania* dropped over the eastern horizon with Sandy Hook a faint blur on her port quarter, the professor remarked, scratching his chin regretfully:

"I ought to have left a note for Tom."

"You can carry politeness too far," said Sam.

Whatever may be said to the discredit of Tom Scatwell, this credit is his, that he played big and played boldly. He was a man without ruth or pity, but ruthlessness calls for a certain kind of courage, which he possessed to the full. He had a premonition that the net was closing round him, that only by one master coup could he save all his carefully conceived plans from utter ruin.

While his companion chatted incessantly all the way out to Bertram's house, hailing such sights as might be novel to a friendly alien, or speaking of Italy and the life he had left behind him, Scatwell was silent, answering only in monosyllables. The talk of the man neither disturbed nor irritated him. It was empty but soothing, and

gave him a background against which he could work out his own designs. As the car turned into the drive he gave his last instructions.

"You will stay in the car, which I shall stop at some distance from the house. When you see me coming back with a lady, you will get out of the car and stand near the door, but you will not speak or smile or do anything save stand where I tell you. You understand?"

"Yes, signor."

Less than fifty yards from the house the car was stopped. Usually its driver has been Sam Featherstone, but to-day Scatwell had hired a man from the garage, and for him also he had instructions.

"Son," he said, "you get down and stroll back to the gate. When I want you I'll send for you."

"Do you want me to leave the car here?" asked the man in surprise. "Suppose you want me——"

"Don't argue. Do as you're told," said Scatwell, "and if I'm wearing out your shoe leather you can put it on the bill."

The man touched his hat.

"Remember, Guiseppa, if you see me with a lady you step down."

"Yes, signor," said the man again.

José knew—but how she knew she could not tell—that Scatwell would call that morning. Since breakfast time she had been pacing the long veranda in front of the house, and she had heard the sound of the motor's wheels long before Scatwell came into sight. She walked slowly to meet him.

"I thought you mould come," she said, with such self-possession that he marveled.

He stood, hat in hand, before her, a trifle nervous, for the stake for him was a big one.

"How is your father?" he began.

She stopped him with her uplifted hand.

"Please do not talk about my father," she said. "This is hardly the time for polite inquiries, Mr. Scatwell. What is your proposition?"

He was embarrassed and showed it.

"Shall we go into the house?" he said.

"We will talk here," she replied. "What is your proposition?"

"It is a very simple one, Miss Bertram," he said after a pause. "The game is up so far as we are concerned, and we want to get out of our trouble—and to avoid worse. I have reason to believe that the police have got on to us, and I reckon I have forty-eight hours to get across the border. In fact, I'm on the way there now."

"With your friends?" she asked.

He laughed.

"In a case like this," he said, "it is every man for himself. They'll have to shift as well as they can. I am going back to New York to draw my money from the bank, and then—"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"And then?" she said.

"Everything depends upon you, Miss Bertram," he said. "It is not my intention or my desire to go alone. In fact, I do not think I should get away alone. With you as my wife, matters would be simplified. I think you are the only person who has any real evidence, and, frankly, marriage would deprive the State of its principal witness if it came to a trial."

"That I can see," she said. "But supposing I agree, what other reward do I have than the dubious honor of bearing the name of a crook?"

He made a little grimace, as though her cold scorn had hurt him.

"I clear your father," he said. "Miss Bertram, there is no evidence at all, either for or against him. If you will do as I wish, if you will promise to marry me, I will make a statement before a mutual friend of ours, which will exonerate your father—"

"A mutual friend of ours?" she said suspiciously. "To whom do you refer?"

"I am talking of Peter Correlly," he said. "I have brought him with me."

He expected this statement to create a mild sensation, but he was unprepared for the effect of his words upon the girl. Her hand went up to her mouth, as if to check her cry of amazement. She went red and white.

"Mr. Correlly?" she said unsteadily. "I don't understand."

"He's here," said Scatwell, well satisfied with the impression he had made.

"But how can he take your statement and not arrest you? It isn't true. This is a trap."

He half turned away from her.

"Come with me," he said. "You need not be afraid. I will not take you out of sight of the house. How Peter Correlly and I squared matters doesn't concern anybody but ourselves. As you are probably aware, certain men are not exactly angels."

She was white with anger now.

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "Do you suggest that Mr. Correlly can be bribed? That is a lie, and you know it is a lie."

"I suggest nothing," he said hastily. "I am not giving you theories but facts in this matter."

A wild panic seized her. Perhaps Peter would betray his service and help this man escape. That would be worse than the other dreadful remedy he had suggested, and she shook at the thought.

Then they came in sight of the car and the man stepped out.

"Who is that?" she whispered.

Her eyes never left the face of the man by the car as the distance between them lessened.

"Peter!" she whispered, half to herself.

Thus they stood, the man by the car,

the white-faced girl, and Tom Scatwell, eminently satisfied with the success of his plan.

"Now, Miss Bertram, in the presence of Mr. Correlly, I am keeping my promise. You know the statement I am going to make?" he said, turning to the man.

"Yes," replied the other.

It was like Peter's voice, and yet it was not, she thought. Yet she could swear to him, the tan of his face, the stoop of his shoulders, the humor of his eyes.

"I'm saying this," Scatwell went on, "that Mr. Bertram had nothing to do with any of the crimes which were committed in the name of The Golden Hades. He is as innocent as his daughter. It was I who shot the woman Laste; it was I who kidnaped Frank Alwin, the actor, and then Wilbur Smith. In all three acts, I was assisted by Rosie Cavan and by Sam Featherstone. Does that satisfy you?"

He turned to the girl. She could not speak. Her eyes were fixed on Peter's face and she could only nod her reply.

"Now, Miss Bertram, are you prepared to carry out your contract?"

"Yes," she said in a low voice, but could not take her eyes off Peter.

How strange it was that he could stand listening unmoved to all this!

"In ten minutes I will have the car waiting for you," said Scatwell.

"Why not now?"

Scatwell wheeled round, staring at Guiseppè Gatti.

"Why wait ten minutes?"

"Who—who are you?" asked Scatwell hoarsely.

"What a question to ask when you've just introduced me! I'm Peter Correlly."

"Where is Gatti?" whispered Scatwell.

"There never was a Gatti," said Peter calmly. "I came to your apartments to mend the windows I smashed the day before, because I wanted to see what you looked like when you were all at home. Anybody who knows me well will tell you that Italian is my long suit. I——"

Scatwell was quick on the draw, and Peter had flung himself aside in the nick of time. A bullet sped through the bushes, and before Correlly could pull his gun, the man had plunged through the hedge which fringed either side of the drive, and was lost to view. Peter did not attempt to follow.

"I hope——" he began, and then three shots rang out in rapid succession and he drew a long breath.

"Unless Wilbur Smith has lost his nerve," he said soberly, "we ought to have heard of The Golden Hades for the last time."

The girl had collapsed into his arms. He was holding her, his cheek against hers, when Wilbur Smith and Alwin came slowly through the plantation, their smoking revolvers in their hands.

LOST MINISTER FINDS HIMSELF

FOR three years the fate of the Reverend J. Paul Reeves, of Morrowville, Kansas, was a mystery to his relatives and friends. Not only was he lost to them but also to himself, for while on the way from his home town to Washington, Kansas, his memory failed him and he forgot who he was.

Recently, while employed by a feed and fuel company at Anaheim, California, the minister's memory returned and he hastened to acquaint his family with his whereabouts.

Scotland's Most Famous Criminal

by Charles Kingston

BRODIE'S CLOSE, in the Lawnmarket, remains to this day a memorial to the man whose extraordinary career stamped him as one of the most remarkable men old Edinburgh has produced. William Brodie's life was a romance proving truth to be stranger than fiction, and he is remembered when better men have been forgotten.

If ever a family stood for respectability it was that of the Brodies. They came of ancient stock, and gave many sons to the learned professions as well as to the trades to which persons of good birth and education were proud to belong. When William Brodie, better known as "Deacon Brodie," was born his father was a wright and cabinet-maker whose social position in Edinburgh was very good. He was rapidly making a fortune. It seemed, therefore, impossible that any son of his should end on the gallows, especially as young Brodie was carefully educated.

The Brodies occupied the principal residence in Brodie's Close, and the deacon's father was a member of the town council for some years. It was only natural that the son should succeed his father, for there was always the money to maintain the standing the family had acquired, in addition to which he would, as a member of the governing body of the old city, be in a position to secure remunerative contracts for his own benefit.

Brodie was never good looking, but he did his best to overcome this handicap by dressing with excessive care.

He was only five feet four inches in height, his complexion being dark and sallow, while he had a cast in his eye. But if his looks went against him he always had plenty of money, and was a sportsman.

When the day's work was done young Brodie frequented the clubs with which the city abounded, and he became a great patron of the ignoble sport of cockfighting. The throwing of dice for large sums was another of his weaknesses, and how he managed to keep his doings secret from his father is a astonishing, for he soon became known to a large circle of disreputable gamblers.

In the conduct of the family business he took an active and important part, but whenever he could he made excuses in order to get away to his favorite clubs. It was sufficient for him to tell his parents that he was going to the Cape Club, about the best of its kind in Edinburgh at the time, and they were satisfied. They had been proud of their son's election to it, because they knew it was something of an honor.

Cockfighting became a passion with Brodie, and he wagered large sums on it. In his early days when he lacked experience and believed everything he was told by the "sharps" by whom he was surrounded, he would back certain

birds for large sums, trusting to an adviser, who was, of course, in league with the owner of one of the birds. Brodie would lose and pay up, without knowing that the money went into the pocket of the "friend" who advised him to make the bet.

In course of time, however, he learned the tricks of the sharpers, and could hold his own fairly, but before he reached this degree of cunning he was heavily in debt.

His father had been more than generous, and young Brodie had extracted considerable sums from him, with which he kept off his more pressing creditors. But he realized that the time was not far distant when he would be face to face with ruin. The only hope was that his father might die suddenly and leave him in possession of his considerable estate. Brodie, senior, however, seemed destined to outlive his son, for he led a steady and regular life, while William passed his nights in dissipation.

Harassed by creditors, some of whom were threatening to expose him to his father, Brodie was at his wit's end to know how to raise a fairly big sum in the summer of 1768. His greatest terror was caused by the certain knowledge that if his father discovered his real character he would disinherit him.

Francis Brodie's pride in his son was almost pathetic. He was fond of dilating upon his many merits, pointing out that William never neglected business, regularly attended church, was never heard to utter a foul word, and was, indeed, a model son. At the age of twenty-one Brodie had been made a Burgess and Guild Brother of Edinburgh, and the path to the town council itself was clear.

In the circumstances a disclosure of the truth would have broken the old man's heart. Young Brodie was not troubled by that, but he feared that he

might lose his inheritance if his father learned the truth about him.

When his difficulties seemed likely to overwhelm him Brodie happened to be sent by his father to superintend some repairs to the counting house of Johnston & Smith, bankers in the Exchange. We may be sure that his mind dwelt on the close proximity of large sums of money as he carried out his duties, and we do know that, seeing the key of the outer door of the bank hanging in the passage, he was tempted to take an impression of it in putty.

A few nights later he entered the bank and stole eight hundred pounds in bank notes.

It was his first step in crime, and, although he lost two hundred and twenty-five pounds of the sum, dropping it unwittingly near the door of the council chamber, to which he had accompanied his father, it returned a sufficient proof to convince him that he had the necessary cunning and daring to make a successful burglar. With the net profit of five hundred and seventy-five pounds from this exploit he paid off a dangerous and threatening creditor, stopped the mouth of a young woman who was likely to "talk too much," and left himself with a small balance.

Had it not been that his father was living Brodie would have followed up his robbery of the bank with other thefts, but it seems that he lay low and waited. Probably he was able to raise loans on the strength of the money he would in the ordinary course inherit from his father, who had no reason to suspect his son, of whom he grew fonder every day.

When in September, 1781, Brodie—now forty years of age—was elected a member of the town council as Deacon of the incorporation of Wrights, Francis Brodie's happiness was complete. He felt that he had not lived in vain, and it is to be feared that he

bored excessively elderly acquaintances with stories of his son's goodness and upright character—the son who was henceforth to be known as Deacon Brodie.

In the year following Deacon Brodie's election to the town council his father died, bequeathing to him ten thousand pounds in cash and several houses in Edinburgh.

It was a splendid inheritance, and all Edinburgh talked of the lucky heir. He was accounted to be a very rich man, for apart from houses and money there was a prosperous business. No wonder it was never suspected that the deacon led a double life.

His relief at his father's death must have been intense, for shortly before that event he had become more than friendly with two girls, Annie Grant and Jean Watt, and when there are women in the case it is difficult to keep their existence a secret.

Brodie, however, was now freed from the greatest danger of all. He was his own master, and his reputation in Edinburgh stood at its highest. The honor of the deacon's acquaintance was sought by the leading inhabitants, unaware that for all his splendid inheritance he was compelled to lead a hand-to-mouth existence.

Gossips spoke in awe-stricken whispers of Deacon Brodie's riches, but the reality was that his father's death left him little better off than he had been previous to that event. The ten thousand pounds in cash speedily went to settle numerous gambling debts and to provide his lady friends with much-needed necessities. The houses were borrowed on in secret, and, prosperous as the family business was, it could not stand its new owner's neglect and the extravagant demands he made upon its resources. Deacon Brodie was always calling for fresh supplies, and when these failed him he remembered his successful exploit in the counting

house of Johnston & Smith, and he resolved to repeat it again.

Of course his position enabled him to lead a double life with greater success than would have fallen to the lot of anybody whose reputation and standing were less than his, and, as if realizing this, he took risks which would have frightened any other man.

One day, for example, after attending a meeting of the town council, he went to see an old family friend, an elderly lady, who had a tremendous admiration for the—as she thought—successful and prosperous deacon.

He took tea with her, and during their conversation she casually mentioned that she had over two hundred pounds in the bureau desk in the corner of the room.

Brodie made no comment, but he determined to return the next evening and steal the money while the old lady was at the kirk. He carried out his program, entering the house silently, his face covered with a mask of black crape. Stealthily, on tiptoe, he crept into the sitting room, only to be taken aback at finding the owner sitting in a chair reading. She had been prevented at the last moment from attending the kirk.

Hesitating for a fraction of a second, while he thought of retreating, the burglar, tempted by her helplessness and the knowledge that a large sum of money was only a few feet from him, walked up to the table beside the old lady, took up the keys, went across to the bureau, opened it, and abstracted the bank notes. Then he locked the bureau, returned the keys to their original position on the table, and, with a bow, left the room.

The terrified old lady, who had been paralyzed into inaction by the presence of the masked figure, now staggered to her feet with the exclamation: "Surely that was Deacon Brodie!"

The next moment she was reproving

herself for being a fool. The famous town councillor, the chief heir to the riches of Francis Brodie, the owner of one of the most prosperous businesses in the city! How could she suspect him of being a common thief? It was absurd. Thus she reasoned with herself, and as a result she never told anybody until Deacon Brodie was brought to justice some years later.

A similar venture would also have resulted in his ruin had not his reputation saved him.

He had a friend who had often stayed at the Brodies' house in the Lawnmarket in the days when Francis Brodie was alive, and a couple of years after the death of old Brodie he entertained the deacon in his own house. It was a well-furnished place, containing a quantity of valuable silver, but the host did not suspect that his bosom friend meant to return that very night and appropriate his cherished possessions. He gave the deacon of his best, and they had a jolly time until toward midnight, when he saw him to the door, and parted with expressions of good will and a cordial handshake.

Next morning the servant aroused her master with the startling intelligence that all the silver had gone, and later the master himself was able to add to his losses a fairly large amount of money.

Both silver and money had been stolen by Deacon Brodie, who had, in the darkness of the unlighted street, crept back to the house, clothed in somber black, one hand holding the bunch of false keys in his pocket, the other keeping his famous dark lantern in its place. Pausing only to cover his face with a black mask, he had entered and despoiled his friend of a large portion of his property.

Brodie was the first of the victim's friends to call and commiserate with him on his losses. Indeed, the councillor burglar seems to have had a rare

sense of humor, for he loved to rob his friends and then condole with them, and they were very grateful to the eminent citizen who took such an interest in their misfortunes, never guessing that he was in reality only laughing at them.

While Brodie was comforting the victim of the burglary the servant entered the room and started when she caught a glimpse of the visitor's profile. Later, when Brodie had gone, she told her master that she had seen a strange man making his way down the street in the early hours of the morning, obviously going away from their house.

She explained that she had been unable to sleep, and had stood looking out of her bedroom window in order to get some fresh air, and she was convinced that Brodie was the man.

Her employer denounced her for her unworthy suspicions, and commanded her not to create scandal by repeating them. It was madness to suspect the deacon, who was ten times richer than he was. The servant retired in confusion, but she kept the secret, and Deacon Brodie's name was not mentioned in connection with the robbery, except as a friend of the victimized householder.

But the "gentleman burglar" was fond of taking risks. It tickled him to dine with a friend, listen to him dilating upon some favorite possession, and then return after midnight and steal it, although the pecuniary result of the burglary would be small.

Apparently he was fond of proving to himself that he was absolutely above suspicion, for the risks he ran for little or no return were tremendous. Sometimes a burglary would bring him in no cash at all, and he would present the stolen goods either to Annie Grant or Jean Watt, or, perhaps, throw dice for their value in a tavern and lose them.

In the daytime, however, he was always the respectable town councilor and business man, and, despite his double life, his reputation steadily grew. The time was coming, however, when he had to plan burglaries on a very large scale, and he only postponed it because as yet he had no one to help him. For years he carried on the profession of burglar alone and unaided, but he aimed at bigger things, and after a series of trivial thefts he began to look around him for a partner.

One of Deacon Brodie's favorite haunts was the tavern kept by Michael Henderson in the Grassmarket. Here, when his finances were at their lowest and worst point, he could wait for a country bumpkin and rob him of his guineas by means of loaded dice; and it was to Henderson's that he went after dark when it was essential that he should "raise the wind."

Naturally he was not the only "sharp" among the "flats," and it was at Henderson's that he struck up an acquaintance with an Englishman named George Smith, a hawker, who was an inveterate gambler.

Brodie had avoided the fellow until he learned that he had been at one time a locksmith. It was a trade that suggested possibilities. He saw at once that Smith had no scruples of any sort, and at the right moment he suggested to the Englishman that he should join hands with him and undertake several profitable jobs, which Brodie outlined.

Of course Smith was only too pleased to consent. Brodie's position and resources were known to him, and no doubt he knew that if the worst happened he could make a pretty penny by blackmailing the outwardly respectable councilor.

Brodie and Smith were now partners, and the deacon proceeded to draw up a list of shops and houses to be attacked.

They started in November, 1786,

when they broke into a hardware shop in Bridge Street, owned by a Davidson McKain. Brodie provided the "firm" with a quantity of false keys, a crow-bar, and a dark lantern—the lantern and bunch of false keys can be seen to-day in the museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland—and with the keys and the bar Smith made his way into the shop, Brodie keeping guard outside. Despite a second visit a fortnight later, however, the proceeds from McKain's shop did not amount to ten pounds.

Without delay they set to work on another shop. This was more profitable. Then they attacked a tobacconist's, stealing goods and money, and after that they entered the premises of John and Andrew Bruce in Bridge Street, and effected a haul of several hundred pounds' worth of gold and silver articles. Burglary after burglary followed.

Dominated by the deacon's personality and inspired by his thoroughness and coolness, Smith worked with a confidence he had never known before. The councilor could give him many lessons in the art of burglary, and Smith learned more of the scientific side of the "profession" than he had ever known before.

Sometimes two other frequenters of Michael Henderson's tavern were admitted into this firm of "Burglary Unlimited." These were Andrew Ainslie and John Brown, two rogues who earned a precarious living with the aid of their wits. The three men acknowledged Brodie as their leader. He was the guiding genius, and under his command they ravaged the city of Edinburgh.

It was Brodie's habit to take long walks abroad in the daylight, when he surveyed the land and made mental notes of places which it would pay to rob.

On one occasion he took Smith with

him to the library of the University of Edinburgh, and, having shown him the silver mace, ordered him to steal it for him as quickly as possible.

Smith carried out the commission within twenty-four hours, and the silver mace of the university was dispatched to a receiver of and dealer in stolen goods, whose business premises were the "Bird in Hand" tavern in Chesterfield. The magistrates advertised a reward of ten guineas for the recovery of the mace, but they never had to pay the money, as the mace was never seen again. Meanwhile the gang proceeded from success to success.

Brodie's intimacy with the best people in Edinburgh enabled him to spy out the land very effectively. Whenever he dined at the house of a rich merchant or took a meal with a well-to-do professional man he would carefully note the contents of the sideboard and the position of the silver chest, and not forget odds and ends that could be turned into ready money. Then he would marshal his gang of expert burglars, assign each man to his post, and proceed to despoil the house where he had been an honored guest a day or so previously.

A long series of burglaries culminated in the theft of four hundred pounds' worth of goods from the shop of Inglis & Horner, silk mercers, at the Cross of Edinburgh. This aroused the authorities, and a reward of one hundred and fifty pounds was offered for information that would lead to the arrest of the thieves. The question of the burglaries now became a serious one, and it was debated in the town council, Deacon Brodie taking part, and, no doubt, chuckling inwardly at the humor of his position.

Immediately after the burglary at Inglis & Horner's, Brodie was denounced by a master sweep of the name of Hamilton for cheating him with loaded dice, and Hamilton, furious at

having lost nearly seven pounds, complained to the town council. Brodie replied protesting his innocence, and as it was a case of councilor against sweep, the latter got no redress.

The fact was that the city was too disturbed by the depredations of the gang or gangs of burglars—Deacon Brodie's exploits were popularly ascribed to a dozen different thieves—to have the time to listen to the complaints of a sweep.

The councilors were roused. It was felt that they were on their mettle. The town guard, too, were being criticized by the incensed citizens, and altogether there was a great outcry.

In the midst of it Brodie was summoned to appear on the jury chosen to try two men charged with the murder of a ferryman who had met his death resisting the excise officers, who were collecting certain dues.

On his way to the courthouse that morning in February, 1788, Deacon Brodie must have been amused by the prominence of the bills announcing the offer of a reward for the discovery of the burglars who had stolen the silk mercer's goods.

It was an ironical position he found himself in. Here he was going to settle the fate of two men charged with the most serious of offenses, murder, the punishment for which was death—the same penalty that was meted out to burglars—but he kept his countenance, and along with his fellow jurors acquitted both prisoners, holding their action justified because the deceased had resisted them while they were doing their duty.

It must have been during this trial that the idea of breaking into the general excise office for Scotland, in Chessel's Court, Canongate, occurred to Brodie. He knew that large sums of money were frequently kept overnight in the offices, with which he was well acquainted, as he had a relative, Cor-

bett, who often came from his home in Stirling to do business with the excise staff in Edinburgh.

After making up his mind to rob the revenue, he wasted no time, and at the first opportunity he visited the office in company with Mr. Corbett, and at a favorable moment, when he was unobserved, he took a putty impression of the key of the front door which was hanging up in the passage, as was the general custom.

Everything was done with the utmost thoroughness, and as a preliminary Smith and Brown called one night at the excise office to test the keys Brodie had made for them. The key for the inner door leading to the cashier's room was faulty, and they decided to smash their way into it on the night chosen for the grand attack.

Accordingly they assembled in Smith's house in the Cowgate, and here Brodie presided over a full meeting of the gang, Ainslie, Brown, and Smith listening attentively while he told them what to do.

Instructions were issued for every man to be armed, and they were to aim at giving the impression that they were smugglers from the country, and who had broken into the excise office with the object of recovering certain goods which had been confiscated by the revenue authorities. To heighten this illusion Brodie said he would leave a spur behind him so that the authorities would believe the burglars had ridden in from a distance.

Wednesday, March 5, 1788, was the date selected for the burglary which Brodie expected to crown all his achievements. He was in the best of humor that day, and in the afternoon he gave a tea party to friends and relatives, at which he was the soul of the party, singing songs and cracking jokes as though he was the last man likely to commit a capital crime before he was many hours older.

But when his guests had gone Brodie ran to his room and changed from his gay attire into the faded black suit he always wore when engaged in business at night. Then he put his bunch of false keys into his pocket, and, having concealed his dark lantern about his person, set out to meet his confederates.

The burglary at the excise office was marked by many exciting incidents. While Brodie kept guard the three men smashed their way into the offices and ransacked the desks, but all told they found only sixteen pounds. They were busy searching when one of them went down to see if Brodie had anything to report. He discovered that the deacon had disappeared, and he went back at once to inform his companions.

Instant panic took possession of them, and they fled from the place with their spoils—sixteen pounds. In their fright they overlooked a desk with over six hundred pounds in it.

The next day Brodie met them, and they divided the spoils evenly, four pounds each. Such was the result of the carefully planned burglary, which Brodie had expected would produce at least a thousand pounds.

As it happened it was destined to be the most costly enterprise Brodie ever engaged upon.

It is the old story of dishonor among thieves, and in this case Brown was the traitor. He was an outlaw because he had not gone abroad to serve a sentence of transportation, and he was tempted by the offer of a pardon to any of the confederates who would betray the burglars who had despoiled Inglis & Horner's shop.

Brown, therefore, went to the sheriff-clerk's office and told his story, omitting, however, all mention of Brodie, whom he intended to blackmail as soon as he—Brown—had received a pardon from the crown.

After Brown's confession it was

merely a question of an hour or two before Smith and Ainslie were prisoners in the Tolbooth. Brodie heard of their arrest with an ashen face. Had they betrayed him? Would they give him away? No mention had been made hitherto of the attack on the excise office, but Brodie realized that it would not be long before Smith and Ainslie were charged with that crime, and then his name was bound to be dragged into the wretched business.

Tortured by uncertainty, Brodie resolved on a bold step. He would in his capacity as a town councilor walk into the Tolbooth and ask to be allowed to see the prisoners. It was a risky step to take, but his desperate position justified it, for if he succeeded he would be able to bribe them into promising to respect his secret. Attired, therefore, in his most fashionable clothes, and wearing a cocked hat, he sauntered toward the Tolbooth, interviewed the jailer, and, having congratulated him on his having secured the rogues, asked to be taken to their cell. The jailer dashed his hopes to the ground when, in the most respectful manner, he told the deacon that he had orders to admit no one.

Brodie went home with the sure and certain knowledge that the game was up. He must leave Scotland at once and seek safety abroad, and the following Sunday morning, when all his respectable friends and acquaintances were at church, he secretly left Edinburgh for London, and, after a short stay in the capital, went to Ostend, his ultimate destination being America.

His flight was soon known, and the procurator fiscal, realizing that the biggest fish of all must be caught, offered two hundred pounds reward for the arrest of Deacon Brodie.

But the deacon was well beyond his

reach by now, and he would undoubtedly have escaped to America had he not written three letters, including one to Annie Grant, for whose welfare he was very anxious, and entrusted them to a chance acquaintance on the boat, named Geddes. The latter opened the letters and handed them over to the authorities, and by means of the information they contained the fugitive was traced to an ale house in Amsterdam and arrested.

Brought back to Edinburgh, Deacon Brodie, along with George Smith, was placed on trial before Lord Justice-Clerk Braxfield and four other judges.

His guilt was obvious, and an eloquent defense did not save him from conviction, and he returned to the Tolbooth under sentence of death. Not long before he had been appointed by his fellow members on the town council to inquire into the improvements needed in the grim old prison to enable the authorities to hang capitally convicted prisoners outside it. And now he was to be one of the first to be hanged under the conditions drawn up by himself!

On the first day of October, 1788, Deacon Brodie and George Smith were executed in sight of an enormous gathering of spectators, who came to see the last of the extraordinary man. Immediately after his death he became the subject of many legends, and it was even reported that he had not been executed at all. Years later an "oldest inhabitant" swore he had conversed with the deacon in Paris in 1790, and there were many who believed the story told of the exhumation of the deacon's coffin and the discovery that it was quite empty. But these are only samples of the fairy tales inspired by the life story of Edinburgh's famous gentleman burglar.

"Little Poison Hate"

by Grover Kidwell

FROM his position astride his horse Whitley Teague smiled down at a young woman standing in front of a log hut. It was over in the Hickory Creek country, a section that Teague had never visited and where he believed he was unknown.

The man was tall and strong and looked like a prosperous sportsman. The haversack swinging at his side held a fine reel and other fishing material, and in his hand, done up in a neat case, he carried a costly fishing rod.

"'Bout two mile from here," the young woman was saying in answer to his question, "you'll come to Low Branch. The road follers the branch right on to the creek."

He inquired if bass were plentiful in Hickory Creek. She replied that she had not seen any one fishing lately, but added that in the spring a man had caught a good many big "jumpers."

"The same feller that took 'Sim' Davis off fer makin' licker," she said.

The man lifted his brows in mild surprise.

"A revenue officer fishing?" he asked.

"Yes, he was. He fished two days; then two more strangers come over here and all together they went and got Sim Davis and took him off."

"Well, well! Poor Sim!"

"That's what ever'body round here said—'poor Sim.' It's what folks always say in sech cases; and of course it didn't do Sim any good that you could tell it." She looked at Teague meaningly as she added. "'Twon't be good fer the next revenueur that comes pokin' round over here."

"I guess not," he agreed.

"If I was to see anybody I thought was a revenueur," she said significantly, "I'd advise 'em to go on back over the mountains, out of danger, and stay there."

Teague was interested. He leaned slightly toward her.

"Are the people over here so very dangerous?"

"You couldn't guess how dangerous, stranger. They even hold meetin's sometimes to plot agin' the revenueurs—and they ought to."

"But isn't it the duty of a revenue officer to search for moonshiners?" inquired Teague. "I thought it was."

She frowned.

"Us folks don't look at things that way," she said. "We know about the whisky laws, and that now the bone-dry law's been passed; but still we don't believe any man's got any business pokin' round in our country lookin' fer moonshines. This land, these mountains, ever'thing over here's ours. The corn we raise is ours, and if any licker's bein' made out of it, that's nobody's business but ours. That's the way we look at it."

"And that's very reasonable," he admitted, grinning. "What's yours is yours, and you believe you're justified in doing as you please with it. Yes, very reasonable. But," he added, "you have no right to kill your child merely because it's yours, have you?"

"Oh, of course not," she said, and looked at him with perplexity in her eyes. "But that's different, ain't it?"

"Yes, a little. But, as no revenue officer is after you or me, there's no

need that we discuss it. I must go now if I'm to do any fishing. Good-by.”

He continued his journey. Looking back he caught the woman gazing after him.

An old man living near Low Branch agreed to see after the stranger's horse, and half an hour later Teague was standing on the shores of Hickory Creek.

He began casting at once, using artificial bait; but though the water looked fine he had no luck. He tried for a bass a long while, then began slowly to make his way upstream. He spent considerable time at every pot-hole, and here and yonder he saw a bass shoot through the clear water. He could not, however, get so much as a strike.

At two o'clock he ate a light lunch from his haversack; then, after a long, thoughtful smoke, he continued up the stream.

It was late in the afternoon when suddenly his heart throbbed. Something—a slight noise, he thought—caused him to glance at the top of a cliff overlooking a pot-hole in which he was fishing. And he saw up there, half concealed behind a bush, part of a very still and very tragic-looking human face. He saw also the barrel of a rifle.

He knew it was time to go, and he went; and as he worked his way upstream he occasionally thought he heard a faint noise out in the growth, as of the breaking of a twig or the crunching of a foot among dead leaves.

But Whitley Teague was not at all excited or nervous. Though he had been startled for a second, he was now perfectly calm. He even lit his pipe.

Half a mile or so farther on he came to a cold little branch. On its bottom, lodged against pebbles and small rocks, he noticed a white substance and paused to examine it. It was mostly corn meal which had been boiled, and is known among “shiners” as “still slop.”

Whitley Teague glanced quickly about. He smiled faintly. The still slop had come from somewhere up the branch, of course.

Having wet his hands in the branch, he reached for his handkerchief; and as he produced it, a little tin box, as large in circumference as a silver dollar and an inch thick, fell to the ground. He picked it up and returned it to his pocket, frowning.

As Teague stood there by the branch a rifle spoke from the top of a ridge on the other side of the creek and a bullet struck a rock at his feet and went singing off into space. But instead of dashing for the trunk of the nearest tree, as most men would have done, he acted as if he had noticed nothing unusual; he did not so much as touch the big revolver swinging in a holster under his left arm. He merely lit his pipe again with steady fingers and continued his way upstream, creeping through the bushes along the shore and pausing here and there to cast his artificial bate into the creek.

That particular bullet, he reasoned, was not intended for any part of his person, for it is a poor mountaineer who can not hit so large a target as a man at so short a distance. The next bullet might take effect, or the next, but the first shot had been only an invitation to move on. If the man with the rifle were not a fool, he would not shoot to kill until very sure that he was following an enemy. Even then, if he were like most men, he must hesitate.

The sun was setting when Teague reached a point where the creek curved about the end of a high bluff. A little log house, the first he had seen since he began fishing, stood at the foot of the bluff, and as he waded the creek and approached it a young woman came to the door. She was followed by a young man, and he was followed by an elderly woman.

Were they, Teague wondered

vaguely, expecting him? Their attitude was suggestive. But all wilderness people are curious.

He approached them deliberately, removed his hat, bowed, and politely inquired the distance back to Low Branch. The girl, a lovely creature with innocent blue eyes, answered him, telling him the nearest way.

"When you git to the road on the other side of this bluff, just go straight north. Can't git lost. And there'll be a bright moon."

"Ain't exactly a road," said the young man. "Just a path. But you can't miss it."

Teague thanked them and was about to go, when, quickly, the elderly woman made a remark. The stranger answered her and again made as if to depart, but now the girl began to talk again, and in a moment they had all joined in conversation.

In a surprisingly short while Teague learned that they were mother, daughter, and son, and that the father was from home, working at a sawmill fifteen miles away.

Teague noticed, as they talked, that the girl watched him. Every time he looked at her he found her blue eyes on his face—eyes clear and soft and gentle. He did not like such attention at all.

"You'll stay to supper, won't you?" the young man asked.

"Thank you, no," said Teague. "That would detain me too long. Besides, I have lunch in my haversack and can eat as I walk."

That was his excuse. There was another reason why he could not have thought of sitting down to eat with these persons.

Here the mother and her daughter withdrew suddenly, leaving Teague and the young man talking near the doorway. Teague seemed mildly anxious to be off, but the young man kept talking

in a very friendly fashion and his remarks made replies necessary.

Teague's sharp eyes discovered the shell of what had been a rifle cartridge lying on the ground near him. He gazed at it thoughtfully, his forehead a trifle wrinkled.

"Forgot to tell you my name's Jack Davis," said the young man smiling. "I'm Sim Davis' brother. He was arrested for makin' licker."

Whitley Teague looked at him narrowly. "Was it funny?" he inquired.

"Not by a darn sight."

"I asked only because you're smiling."

"Just my way, stranger. Hate al'ays makes me smile. But we won't talk about it. I thought maybe you'd already heard."

Mrs. Davis and her daughter returned to the doorway. The girl carried a glass and a spoon. The glass contained some milk and a few scraps of bread.

"My gal wants to show you Bill and Ike," said the mother to Teague. "Bill and Ike!" she added with a cackling laugh. "Nell's powerful silly about 'em."

Nell stepped to the ground, nodded smilingly to Whitley, and led him to an oak tree several yards from the house. Under the tree sat a small box. It had a little door in its side which was fastened with a wooden button and the hinges of which were of leather.

"My tiny pet 'coons," said the girl. "They're the cutest things! Now watch 'em come fer their supper." She opened the door quickly, stepped back, and tapped the glass rapidly with the spoon. But nothing appeared.

"That's queer," said Nell, frowning. "I guess maybe they're asleep. If you'll reach in and git 'em fer me, I won't have to put the glass on the ground. Don't be scared; they won't bite you. You'll laugh when you see

'em eat. The cutest things you ever did see!"

Teague hesitated. He glanced back toward the doorway. Mrs. Davis and Jack had entered the house.

"Are you sure the 'coons won't bite?" he asked the girl, eying her.

"Of course I am; I've handled 'em a hundred times," she answered. "But never mind; I'll get 'em."

"Oh, no," he objected hurriedly; "I'll get them." He stooped as he spoke and thrust his hand into the box. As he did so something hard struck his wrist, near a blood vessel, and a pain shot up his arm; and in less than a second Whitley Teague became something other than the polite and softly spoken gentleman he had appeared. With an utterance that was half a curse and half a cry of horror, he sprang back, trembling with fear and rage. At that instant a long, slender creature slid shadowlike from the box and glided swiftly away.

"A copperhead!" cried Teague. "You—you——" But the girl was fleeing toward the house. He ran after her. She slammed the door almost in his face and a bolt grated as he plunged savagely against the heavy boards.

"You treacherous cat! You fiend!" he shouted, beating on the door with a clenched fist. "Open this door!"

He heard Nell Davis and her brother laugh.

"We know what you are!" the girl cried mockingly. "Now git out of the woods—if you can! And you better hurry! Jack's rifle is pointin' at the door!"

Groaning and cursing, Whitley Teague dashed away into the loneliness of the night that was gathering. Great fear consumed him. Sweat stood on his forehead and his eyes stared wildly. His big left hand clutched his right arm, and that arm already was swelling and turning purple. His legs grew weak and quivered.

In the woods some distance from the house he suddenly paused and felt in his coat pocket.

"Good Lord!" he said, and ran toward Hickory Creek.

II.

Jack Davis rose at dawn and prepared to set out for his moonshine still, not to operate it, but to remove such parts of it as he could carry to another and safer location. He knew the probabilities were that the "revenuer" was lying dead somewhere in the deep forest, for there was not another house within five miles, and it was therefore hardly reasonable to believe he could have secured aid. Then, again, the copperhead was a very large one, and Nell said that apparently it had bitten the "revenuer" on the "soft side" of his wrist. Still, Jack Davis could not be sure just what happened, and he was not the sort to take chances.

So he would remove the valuable parts of his still, return to the house, and send his mother and sister to visit friends several miles away; then he would take up a diligent watch for any enemy that might happen along. If the man had not died Jack would learn of it soon; if he had died Jack was anxious to know whether he had talked with any one before he passed out.

"I'll be back in three hours," the mountaineer told his mother and sister. "You two be ready to leave here fer a few days."

"You better look fer him instead of movin' the still," said Nell. "If that feller ain't plumb poison proof you can find him somewheres between here and the mouth of Low Branch."

"I think that, too," said Jack. "I don't *know* it, though; so I'm gonna play safe as I can."

But Jack did not return to the house within three hours, nor within four hours either. He had not returned at

the end of four hours and a half, and by this time Nell and her mother had grown not only restless but very nervous. Mrs. Davis was pale, for in her old age she had come to fear and hate the "revenuers" even more than she feared and hated the deadly rattlers and copperheads.

"Jack ought to be here," Nell kept saying as she stood watching in the doorway. "He ought to be here."

Mrs. Davis, seated behind her daughter, continually but slowly tapped the floor with her thick-soled shoes. She stared straight before her—at nothing—or possibly at a mental picture that was hateful to say the least.

"Maybe I'd better go see about him," Nell suggested. "Maybe he——"

"I guess you had, honey," said her mother. "And go quick. Yes, go ahead, honey. Hurry. Of course Jack's all right—of course he is. But—well, go on, honey—and hurry."

With anxiety in her heart the "shiner's" pretty sister ran all the way to the still—over ridges, around cliffs, through deep, quiet hollows—and there met the shock of her life. The cold little singing branch was as peaceful as ever, but the still beside it was a terrible wreck. Every part of it bore striking evidence of the "hated revenuer's" strong, ruthless hand. The copper boiler had been hacked full of holes; the thump-keg looked as if it had been picked up and smashed with mighty force against the ground; the five barrels of mash had been overturned and bursted; the water trough had been broken apart, and the copper worm was gone.

Nell's great surprise quickly gave way to anger.

"Not dead?" she said. "Not dead?" And then, quivering pale, her eyes fiery, she added: "The dog! The mean dog! The mean houn' dog!"

She stared wildly about. Against a tree stood Jack's rifle, and from the

barrel of it protruded a little roll of paper—a note. She dashed forward, snatched the paper with trembling fingers, unrolled it feverishly. Then her burning blue eyes read:

DEAR LITTLE POISON HATE: I have done my duty, and Jack is now wearing a nice pair of new handcuffs. The sun is just now rising. In a few minutes we shall be on our way to Low Branch, where my horse is waiting. There I shall tie poor Jack to my saddle girth, and away we'll go over the beautiful Cumberland!

I have all the proof I want against your brother, and so he won't be home for possibly a year—not for six months anyhow. I hope that then he'll lead a better life.

As for your attempted murder of me, I'm gallant enough to let that pass; you need fear nothing. It may be, however, that I shall demand a kiss at our next meeting.

I deeply regret, of course, that your own hatred and that of your mother and brother was such that you wished to kill me with a snake instead of with lead. I was beginning to like you, Nell, tremendously. By George, I like you still!

I didn't find any whisky here to cure my snake bite with. I didn't need it, anyhow. Look under the flat rock against this tree. Very sincerely,
WHITLEY TEAGUE.

Nell crushed the note savagely in her hands; then she stooped, seized the flat rock, and threw it violently aside.

Before her lay a little tin box as large in circumference as a silver dollar and an inch thick, and a handkerchief which had been torn into three strips. Nell picked up the lot gingerly. The pieces of cloth evidently had been soaked in water and then coated with a white powder. Most of this powder, as well as the greater part of each strip of cloth, had turned a poisonous-looking dark green.

Nell breathed rapidly as she examined the tin box. On its lid was a red-bordered label, and on the label three words.

"Muriate of ammonia!" she cried. "The dog! Drawed the poison out with muriate of ammonia; then watched all night for Jack and took him unawares. The mean, sly dog!"

The Disappearance of Kimball Webb by Rowland Wright

OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE A FREE SUBSCRIPTION.

How did Kimball Webb leave his room?

To each of the five readers who send us the best letters of one hundred words or less, detailing correctly how Kimball Webb left his room, we will give one year's subscription to DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE. Answers, to receive consideration, must reach "SERIAL," DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, before November 11th, 1919.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

EARLY in the morning of the day set for his wedding to the beautiful Elsie Powell, Kimball Webb, a playwright, disappears from his home. His absence is discovered by two household servants and his sister, Henrietta, who, after breaking in the only door giving egress from his rooms, find the windows also securely fastened. A diamond pendant, Kimball's present to his fiancée, is missing.

Fenn Whiting, best man, who also loves the girl, suggests that perhaps one of the guests at Webb's bachelor dinner the night before had kidnaped the bridegroom as a joke. Mrs. Webb, Kimball's mother, a spiritualist, is sure that her son has been levitated out of the house by supernatural means. Upon breaking the news to the Powells that her brother has vanished, Henrietta Webb is accused by Elsie of being so antagonistic to the marriage that she has imprisoned Kimball secretly. Mrs. Powell supports her daughter in this attitude, but Mrs. Gerty Seaman, Elsie's sister, is undecided about Henrietta's guilt.

Elsie goes to Kimball's room and finds on the carpet there a chalklike powder, and learns that the servants had noticed an odor of bananas when they had broken in.

As the hours pass and no word comes from the missing man, the wedding is postponed.

CHAPTER IV.

AUNT ELIZABETH'S WILL.

MRS. POWELL soon returned, utterly unable to do her part in the awful task of telling people not to come to the wedding. Their exclamations and questions were too much for her. She went to her room, suffering from a severe attack of nervous exhaustion.

Gerty Seaman, who, like her sister Elsie, had strong powers of endurance and ability to meet emergencies, stuck to her post until all on her list had been spoken to and had promised to tell others.

It was a big undertaking to get word to the larger part of the expected assembly, but it was fairly well accom-

plished. Of course, many people did go to the church, and were there informed that there would be no wedding there that day.

The Webbs, mother and daughter, were equally busy in the matter, but with them there was a secret undercurrent of satisfaction, not admitted even to themselves, but there all the same. The mystery of Kimball's disappearance was yet to be looked into, but whatever might be revealed regarding that, at least he was not to marry Elsie Powell to-day.

The Webbs were honest in their disapproval of the match. They had really nothing against Elsie or her family save that it was not, in their estimation, in the same class with their own. And, too, they didn't approve of great wealth.

A moderate income seemed to them more in keeping with high standards and fine traditions than millions.

"Of course," opined Henrietta, "she will marry some one else if Kim—"

"Of course," returned her mother. "By June there will be no further danger, I'm sure."

The Webbs had decided not to state over the telephone what was the reason for the recalling of the invitations. It seemed to them more decorous merely to say there would be no ceremony, and let the people find out why for themselves. Intimate friends were given a hint, but others received only formal announcements, mostly from the Webb servants.

"Of course," Mrs. Webb said to her daughter, "Kim saw the truth at last. He realized how undesirable it was that he should marry Elsie, and he chose this way of getting out of it. Not a very commendable way, but I, for one, don't blame the poor boy."

"*You* wouldn't blame him if he had chosen to kill Elsie as a way to escape marrying her," Henrietta returned, smiling grimly.

"Nothing could make me blame my son." Mrs. Webb complacently folded her hands. "But, if we have guessed the truth, Kim ought to let us know soon where he really is."

"That's the queer part," mused Miss Webb. "Wherever he is, how did he lock his door after him?"

The afternoon dragged away, and the evening passed, somehow.

There was no further communication between the two houses; it had been agreed that if either family heard any news of the missing bridegroom they would at once notify the others.

Fenn Whiting went back and forth from one house to the other several times. He, as best man, was alertly ready to do anything in any way bearing on the matter. He was in posses-

sion of the wedding ring, the tickets for the projected honeymoon trip, luggage checks, and all such details of a best man's duties. Whiting's all-round efficiency and his general capability made him a valuable assistant to a bridegroom, and Kimball Webb had entrusted everything to him.

"You'd better take the ring, Elsie, and keep it," Whiting said to her in the evening. "I'll try to redeem the tickets, and I'll cancel the reservations as far as I can. Understand, I'm perfectly sure Kim will turn up soon, but there's no use holding staterooms and hotel rooms. You see, if the boy has met with some accident—and to my mind that's more plausible than a joke—it may be a day or so before we hear from him, that is assuming— Oh, hang it all, it's so mysterious there's no assuming anything! What do you want me to tell the reporters?"

"Tell them the truth!" Elsie replied. "There's no sense in holding anything back. And full details may help to find him. I have no fear that Kim has deserted me—that's too ridiculous—though Henrietta Webb does more than hint at it! No, Fenn; Kimball is as true to me as a magnet to the pole. I don't care who knows the whole story. Kim has done nothing wrong; a wrong has been done to him."

So all the strange details were given to the press, and next morning's papers were full of the story of the mysterious disappearance of Kimball Webb on his wedding day.

Though not a celebrity, Webb was fairly well known as a playwright. He had had one or two real successes before he went to the war, and since his return had been busy on a new play, that was to be his masterpiece.

High comedy, founded on satire, was his field, and the new play was pronounced a wonder by all who had heard its plot and plan. A member of the Workers', and of a fraternizing

nature, he often talked over his play at the club with other members engaged in the same occupation.

He had laid aside his work for a fortnight's honeymoon, but both he and Elsie were too anxious for the completion of the play in time for late summer production, to devote more time to idleness. They had expected to spend the summer in a mountain resort not too far from New York, where Kimball Webb could work.

Webb was a forceful man, tall, well built, and with a strong, fine face. Athletics were his hobby, but an injury to his knee, suffered while in France, was not yet entirely healed. He limped very slightly, and would eventually entirely recover, but at present was debarred from active physical effort.

Of a gentle, rather easy-going nature, Webb was an Indian when roused. Even Elsie declared if she ever really deserved his wrath she should run away from him, that nothing would induce her to face him when angry! But, on the other hand, the man was so just in his dealings and so tolerant in his opinions that only righteous indignation would ever move him to punish an offender.

For the rest, Kimball Webb was merry, light-hearted, kindly, and, if careless of social obligations and indifferent to acquaintances, he was a staunch friend and an ideal lover.

All the poetry of his nature was brought out in his love for Elsie Powell, and the girl was enthralled, and sometimes bewildered, at the depth and sincerity of his expressions of devotion. And she was worthy of it all. Notwithstanding Henrietta Webb's disparagement, Elsie Powell was a desirable mate for any man. Not clever in Kimball's ways, she was a strong, true-hearted woman, and her faithfulness and loyalty quite equaled Kimball's own. Moreover they were exceedingly congenial, enjoying the same things and

liking the same people. And Elsie was capable of appreciating Webb's talent, and interested herself in his plays with an understanding that surpassed that of Henrietta herself.

Had it not been for Kimball Webb, Elsie would doubtless have married Fenn Whiting. For the latter had great charm, and his passion for Elsie was a matter of long standing. Though a few years older than Webb, he was of a vital energy that defied age and made him seem far younger than he was. But when Elsie made her choice, Whiting stepped back and proved his manliness by a cheerful acceptance of the inevitable.

When Webb asked him to be best man he hesitated but a moment and then agreed to do so. And now, in the mysterious emergency that had come upon them all, Whiting was endeavoring to do whatever he could and whatever Elsie wished him to do, to be of any possible help or comfort.

"I think," Mrs. Powell said, as the evening wore on, "we'll send Elsie to bed now. You've been a good friend, Fenn; I don't know what we should have done without you. Now, what are we going to do next?"

"What is there to do?" spoke up Gerty. "We can do nothing but wait for Kimball to return, and, for my part, I don't believe he ever will. I think there's more to this thing than a disappearance; I think you'll find there's been a crime."

"Oh, hush, Gert!" wailed Elsie. "I've been afraid somebody would say that. I won't think of it—anyway, not to-night! It isn't true! It can't be true!"

On the verge of a breakdown after her trying day, Elsie ran out of the room. Her mother followed, bidding Whiting a brief good night as she passed him.

Left alone with Gerty Seaman, Whiting asked if she had any errand he

might do for her, and then he proposed to say good night.

"No," said Gerty, "there's nothing more to be done to-night, I should say. Oh, Fenn, what do you think of it all?"

"What is there to think, Gerty? Every one of us knows as much as the next one about it, and who among us can suggest even a possible explanation?"

"Nobody can. And yet, Fenn, there must be an explanation. I mean, Kimball *did* get out of his room——"

"Of his own volition; of course, Gerty. How he managed to lock the door behind him is, to be sure, an enormous mystery, but not so great a one as to imagine that any one else did it! Why, that idea of a practical joke won't hold water a minute."

"I thought it was your theory."

"Only until I figured it out. How on earth could anybody abduct Kim, take him from his room unwillingly, and depart, bolting the door behind them? It couldn't be done. Kim's fastening the door behind himself is a puzzle, but an easier one, it seems to me, than for an outsider to do it. Kim could get downstairs and out, unobserved, if alone, but not if he was being kidnaped by a jocularly inclined comrade!"

"I don't see it that way," Gerty said thoughtfully. "I think the mystery of the locked door is a thing by itself, and in no way affected by or dependent upon other circumstances. However, it doesn't matter much. Will the police take a hand?"

"Yes. I happen to know they are to be at the Webb house this evening. I'm going there now. Oh, Kimmy will be found, of course. Never doubt that!"

"But—but you know about the will, Fenn—do you suppose he'll be found by Elsie's birthday?"

"When is that exactly?"

"The thirtieth of June."

"And it's now the sixth of April.

Nearly three months! I should say so! If he isn't found in that time, he never will be!"

"And—what then?"

"What then? Oh, you mean about Elsie's money. I know there's some tie-up there, but I don't know just what it is. Her old aunt's freakishness, wasn't it?"

"Yes; Aunt Elizabeth Powell. Elsie is named for her. She left all her fortune, millions, to Elsie, with a reservation. You've heard the story?"

"Not in detail; tell me."

"Well, you see, the Powell money was half my father's and half his sister's, Aunt Elizabeth's. Father lost all his, sooner or later, in Wall Street. Aunt Elizabeth—she never married—left hers with a trust company, this way. Father was to have the interest of it all as long as he lived; then the interest went to Elsie—for the name, you know. Besides, at the time the will was made, my husband was alive and well-to-do. But, you see, only the interest was to come to Elsie, until her wedding day; then she is to have the whole fortune."

"Oh, well, the interest is enough for you all to live on, isn't it?"

"Goodness, yes; we've lived on it for years, comfortable enough. But here's the trouble: If Elsie isn't married by the time she is twenty-four, the whole fortune goes to a distant cousin of Aunt Elizabeth's."

"What an unjust will!"

"Oh, no; you see everybody would expect Elsie to marry before she was twenty-four. The reason of it all was Aunt Elizabeth's own love affair. If she had married young all would have been well, but she waited, thinking she was *too* young, and her lover married somebody else. She never got over it; I think it affected her mind. She wouldn't look at anybody else, though she had lots of suitors, of course. So she made a condition that Elsie should

marry before she was twenty-four. It never seemed to us a hard condition, for Elsie was engaged to Kimball before he went to France, you know. They would have been married much sooner but for the war. However, the wedding day, which was to have been to-day, was in ample time to meet the requirements of the will. And now——"

"Oh, well, Gerty, Kim will surely turn up before the birthday in June! And, if he doesn't, Elsie will surely marry some one else, rather than lose the inheritance!"

"That's just it; she won't. She's as stubborn as Aunt Powell herself, and she'd go to the poorhouse before she'd marry anybody but Kimball Webb!"

"Don't worry; Kimball will return. Why, he's too wrapped up in that play of his to stay away from New York very long."

"But there's no sense to it all. If anybody spirited Kim off for a joke, they'd surely have returned him in time for the ceremony."

"You'd think so. The only other alternative is to think that he went away voluntarily—which is, to say the least, hard on Elsie."

"He never went away because he didn't want to marry her—not much!"

"Mrs. Webb thinks he was spirited away."

"So do I! But by very human and physical spirits! I firmly believe Henrietta Webb or her mother, or both, managed the whole business, and they will keep Kim out of the way until after Elsie's birthday, thinking she will marry some one else, and then they'll produce Kim!"

"A queer theory, but perhaps about the easiest one to believe. And if, as you assume, Elsie won't marry some one else, what then?"

"That's what I said a few minutes ago. It will come hardest on mother and me. Elsie doesn't care much for

money. Oh, of course, she likes things comfortable; she doesn't realize what it would mean to have them any other way; but she'd give up all for love. Now, mother and I have absolutely no income except the interest Elsie gets from the Powell money. I have two little children, and mother is practically an invalid. I think I may well ask, what then?"

"I think so too, Gerty. It's tough on you. I didn't know all this. Why, it will be awful if Elsie doesn't marry! What will become of you all?"

"I don't know. I don't even know how Elsie's going to look at it. If she sees it right, and if Kimball never returns, of course she ought to marry some nice man rather than let all that money go! But she's quite capable of refusing point-blank to marry any one but Kim—and that's what I think she'll do."

"She most likely will, if I know anything about Elsie!"

"You—you like her, Fenn?"

"Oh, Lord, yes! I've been in love with her ever since I've known her. But she won't look at me. And—ahem, Gerty, I'm not a fortune hunter!"

"Oh, no, of course not! But I do hope Elsie will be safely married before she reaches twenty-four!"

"So do I! I'm with you there! I'd hate to see all that money go out of your family. A pretty shabby will, I call it."

"Oh, no, Fenn; nobody could foresee this thing that has happened. And but for this mysterious disappearance, Elsie would be already married and everything all right."

"She's willing to allow you and the children and your mother enough to live on, after she's married?"

"Yes, indeed. She's most generous. Her allowance to us is all we could ask. I wish I knew her ideas about it all."

"Poor child, I don't believe she has

any ideas as yet. It's an awful shock to her, and it came so suddenly. I wonder she bears up at all."

"Oh, that's Elsie. You'll see—to-morrow she'll be ready with all sorts of plans and suggestions about hunting up Kim. They won't amount to anything, they can't, but she'll try every possible way to find him."

"Hopeless task—hunting for him, I mean. If he can he'll turn up of his own accord. And if he can't—"

"Fenn! You don't—you don't think—he's—dead, do you?"

"I haven't any reason to think that, Gerty. Yet it must be considered among the possibilities. You know, there's the question of that diamond pendant. Kim had it with him at the dinner, and he had it after he reached home last night, for he showed it to his mother, they say. Well, suppose a burglar got into his room to steal that. It must be worth ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes, it is—or a little more."

"Well, isn't a burglar a more plausible supposition than a practical joker, after all?"

"How did he get in?"

"That question, Gerty, must be asked regarding any intruder. Moreover, how did he get out? must be asked in connection with an intruder, or with Kim alone. Anyway, the diamonds are not to be found."

"Kim probably has them with him, wherever he is."

"That's true enough, but a probability isn't a certainty."

"If, as I still think, the two Webb women are behind it all, they have the diamonds."

"Yes, of course. Why are they so down on Elsie?"

"Oh, only because she wasn't born in Boston!"

"Really? Is that all?"

"Yes; that is, I mean, the Webbs don't think the Powells in their own social rank. Nobody could dislike

Elsie, personally; she's the sweetest thing in the world!"

"Of course she is, but she never seems to hit it off with friend Henrietta."

"It's Henrietta's fault entirely! Elsie has been like an angel to her, but Miss Webb is always haughty and superior. She has never been reconciled to the match and never will be!"

"Well, I hope old Kimmy will turn up and the match will come off in time to save the inheritance!"

"The match *will* come off, if Kimball can be found, whether it's in time to save the inheritance or not!"

This announcement was made by Elsie herself, who suddenly appeared in boudoir robe and cap. "I heard you," she went on, "and I came in to tell you my decision, to state my platform!"

Her eyes shone with excitement, her cheeks were flushed, and she was trembling nervously.

"Elsie, dear," begged Gerty, "don't let's talk any more about it to-night."

"Yes, I will. I've been listening to you two, and as Fenn is going over to the Webbs' now, and he will see the police there, I suppose, I want him to know just where I stand. I shall make it my work—my life work, if necessary—to find Kimball. I know, as well as I know my own name, that he was taken away by force. I won't say who I think did it, or was responsible for the deed, but I shall get him back. The police can go ahead; let them do all they can—it won't be much. The abduction of Kimball Webb—for it is an abduction—was a carefully planned, cleverly carried-out scheme. I won't say who's at the bottom of it, but I know."

"You mean the Webbs," said Gerty sagaciously.

"It's an awful thing to say," Elsie admitted, "but I do mean the Webbs. Who else could it be? That joke business is nonsense, and besides the jokers would have restored him in time for

the wedding. They wouldn't be so cruel to me."

"No, they wouldn't," agreed Whiting. "But be careful, Elsie, how you accuse the Webbs. You don't want to get into deeper trouble than——"

"I can't be in deeper trouble than I am now! You know that, Fenn. But I've got sense enough to know better than to accuse the Webbs openly. I know that would be the very way to spike my own guns. No; Miss Henrietta Webb is a very clever schemer, but I'll outwit her yet!"

"And if not?" said Gerty, alarmed at the possibilities crowding her mind.

"If not, if Kimball Webb is never restored to me, I shall live and die an old maid, just as Aunt Elizabeth did."

"But Elsie," Gerty cried, "think of mother, think of me and the children! Surely, you have some generosity, some loyalty to your people?"

"Not to the extent of selling myself for them," said Elsie sternly. "If anybody in this family is to marry for money you can do it, Gerty. You have several rich suitors to my certain knowledge."

"Nothing of the sort, Elsie! I think you're disgraceful!"

"No more disgraceful than for me to marry some one I don't love, in time to secure Aunt Powell's money! And, anyway, I can look after mother; I can work."

"Yes! What could you do?" Gerty scoffed.

"Oh, I don't know; stenography or something. Anyway, I could take care of mother, and you certainly could do as much for yourself, Gerty. If you don't want to marry you could work, too."

"Oh, Elsie! And leave this house, this apartment!"

"Yes; I'd far rather, than marry anybody—anybody except Kimball. But, understand this: I'm going to find that man and——"

"Elsie," exclaimed Whiting, "you speak as if he were held somewhere in durance vile!"

"Not durance vile, but held, yes! And by his mother and sister."

"With his own consent?"

"Most certainly not!"

"Then your theory is rubbish. How could they hold him against his will?"

"I don't know; but I shall find out! Good night."

CHAPTER V.

THE RIVAL PLAYWRIGHTS.

ELSIE POWELL'S nature was generous. She gave of herself to all with whom she came in contact, and gave freely and willingly, time, thought, and sympathy as well as more material gifts. Her disposition was so free from selfishness that not always did she sufficiently guard her own interests. But when need arose, she promptly met the emergency.

The morning after the day which was to have been her wedding day, she awoke with a saddened heart but a mind alert and ready to plan and execute action of some sort that should bring the end of her troubles. She wasted little time in grieving; indeed, her mental attitude was that of dumfounded amazement rather than grief.

Lying in her pretty room, partly dismantled by reason of her anticipated flight from it, she sized up her situation to herself.

"If I go to pieces," she mused, "it will do no good, and will be small comfort to me. Therefore, I will brace up, put my wits to work, and do my part toward solving the mystery. And I'll do more than any fool detective. I never had much opinion of their cleverness, anyhow. To begin with, they'd never dare suspect Henrietta Webb, and if they did, she'd pull the wool over their eyes. But she can't bamboozle me, and I'm going to start out

by assuming that in some mysterious way she has hidden Kim and means to keep him hidden until I marry somebody else—which, of course, she thinks I'll do in order to get my inheritance. But I shan't! How would I feel, married to 'John Doe,' and then have Kimball come home and look at me reproachfully! Not much. If I don't marry Kimball Webb, I marry nobody at all—and that settles that!"

Her decision arrived at, Elsie hopped out of bed, and dressed and went to breakfast quite as usual.

"Why, Elsie," exclaimed Gerty, "you needn't get up! I'll look after everything. I suppose there will be reporters and, later on, callers in shoals."

"Yes, 'Gert,' you may attend to those; I'm going on the warpath!"

"Meaning?"

"I'm going to solve the mystery of Kim's get-away though it's no mystery to me! But I'm going to get him back. That's all about *that!*"

"How are you going to set out?"

"Dunno. First, I'm going over to the Webb house and see what they've got to say. I didn't get any satisfaction out of them yesterday, but I'm going to make them surrender. They owe me one Kimball, and I'm going to collect!"

"I don't think you ought to go out to-day, Elsie."

"Rubbish! You talk as if Kim were dead! I'm not a widow, to stay in seclusion. No, ma'am; I've thought it all out and I've made up my mind."

Gerty protested no more. She knew from experience, when Elsie's mind was made up nothing could shake it.

At the Webb house Elsie found her prospective relatives-in-law closeted with a detective. He was from the Bureau of Missing Persons, and he was deeply interested in the case. The absolute insolubility of the puzzle of how Kimball Webb managed his flight,

or how it was managed for him, gave an exceptional aspect to the disappearance.

Elsie's arrival also thrilled the detective. He turned eagerly to question her.

However, he found himself the questioned one instead of the inquirer.

"I'm glad to meet you, Sergeant Hanley." Elsie smiled at him. "Tell me, won't you, just how you're going to set to work on the case? For I mean to help you, and I want to do so intelligently."

She glanced at the two Webbs for a nod of sanction, but she received no such encouragement.

Indeed, Henrietta gave a scornful sniff, and Mrs. Webb remarked:

"Don't be forward, Elsie. You can't help, and it would look very queer if you tried."

"It'll be queer if I don't try," Elsie returned, but with a smile that freed her words from rudeness. "I'm most certainly going to work on the case; if Sergeant Hanley doesn't want my help, I'll work on my own lines."

Hanley looked at her with growing respect. Here, he decided, was no silly society girl, but a young woman of brain and, perhaps, initiative.

"You know nothing that will throw any light on Mr. Webb's absence?" he asked, gazing intently at her.

"No, indeed; if I had I should have told it without being asked. I'm here to learn, to seek, to solve, not to inform."

"Yes—oh, certainly."

The detective sergeant was a little flustered. Miss Webb had been haughty, even condescending, but Hanley knew that sort. Elsie's attitude was a new one to him, and he had to adjust himself.

"Well, Sergeant Hanley," the sweet voice went on, "which is it to be? Do we work together, or each for himself?"

"Together, miss, by all means. I'll

be only too glad of any help you can give me."

Hanley had decided; it would certainly be better for him to be in with the one most nearly affected, and he considered that Elsie was. Although, to be sure, the Webbs had called him in, and he was responsible to them. Nor did it require an abnormally acute mind to discern that the Webbs and Miss Powell were not entirely at one.

This impression of his was deepened when Miss Webb said severely: "I must beg of you, Elsie, not to disgrace us by any public effort in this distressing matter. We are already sufficiently embarrassed at the unfortunate publicity it has gained, and I want to keep further disclosures entirely to ourselves."

"Can't be done, Miss Webb," said Hanley; "the thing is out. Why, ma'am, it had to come out! And now you can no more stop the press notice of it than you could dam the Hudson! Better take that part of it calmly, for the papers will be full of it for nine days, at least. Now, ma'am, I'd like to see Mr. Webb's room."

Dejectedly Henrietta Webb led the way. Elsie followed, as a matter of course, and soon Hanley was silently but carefully scrutinizing the furniture, walls, and floor of the room in question.

"No exit but the door, so far as appears on the surface," he remarked at last. "You don't know of any secret entrance, I suppose?"

"Certainly not," said Henrietta positively. "Those things occur in old country houses, not in city homes."

"Well, we must think of everything," Hanley said. He proceeded to tap walls and partitions in a knowing manner.

"Nope; nothing of that sort," he concluded after exhaustive experimenting.

"You're sure?" asked Elsie, her eyes

shining with eagerness. "I had thought there might be something like that."

"No, ma'am," declared Hanley; "I know a lot about building, and I can tell for sure and certain there's no entrance through these walls, of any sort. Why, look at the wall paper—intact all round. And not only that, but I can tell by tapping, there's no chance for a secret door or panel."

"Mr. Whiting is an architect, and he said the same," observed Miss Webb coldly, as if to disparage Hanley's would-be superior knowledge.

"There, you see!" said Hanley, taking the snub in good part. "If a smart architect and a smart detective agree there's no secret passage or entrance or exit, you may depend on it there isn't any."

"What about the chimney?" asked Elsie. "I've thought this all out, you see."

"Quite right, miss."

But Hanley's investigation of the chimney, that he made by looking up inside the big, old-fashioned fireplace, showed him at once the impossibility of any one entering or leaving the room by that means.

"A monkey couldn't negotiate that," he stated, "let alone a man."

The bathroom gave no hint of help. The little window had been found closed and fastened, and save for the entrance door there was no other break in the walls.

In a word, Hanley expressed his positive assurance that nobody could by any chance enter or leave Kimball Webb's room, except by the door that opened from the hall.

"The windows are out of the question," he asserted. To begin with, they're third-story windows, with a sheer drop to the street. Next, they were opened only at the tops for a few inches, and fastened in that position. Nobody could get through one of those narrow apertures."

This was so evident there was no use dwelling on it.

"Then," said Elsie slowly, "the problem comes down to this: How did Mr. Webb get out through the door, and leave it fastened behind him, not only locked with a key, but bolted with a strong, firm bolt?"

"That's the problem."

The detective looked at her in admiration. He had never seen a young woman, a mere girl, who could so succinctly state a case.

"But, granting that," urged Henrietta Webb, "where is he now? The front street door was fastened with heavy bolts, all of which were intact in the morning. The rear door, the same."

"Then," said Elsie, turning on her quickly, "he must be in this house still!"

Henrietta Webb turned pale. "What nonsense!" she cried. "In that case, Elsie, are you smart enough to find him?" With a suppressed exclamation, half shriek and half gasp, she ran from the room, and they heard her go downstairs to her mother's room.

"Good!" cried Elsie. "I'm glad she's gone! Excuse me, Sergeant Hanley, but though she is his sister, I am Mr. Webb's fiancée, and I have really more reason to want to find him than anybody else on earth. And I'm going to find him, too! But, first, can *you* form any theory? Can you make any suggestions?"

"I can't. I've never seen a case that ran so hopelessly up against a blank wall. There's foul play somewhere—that is, unless—— You don't think——"

Elsie read his thoughts.

"No, I *don't* think Mr. Webb went away of his own volition. I know he did not! Quite aside from his love for me, and his wish to marry me yesterday, if those things hadn't been so, Mr. Webb is too much of a gentleman, too kind-hearted a man, to go away and

leave his mother and sister, to say nothing of myself, in this fearful predicament."

"That's right. No decent man could be such a sneak! Well, then, as it's perfectly clear you suspect Miss Webb of being implicated—why do you?"

"I don't want to say anything against Miss Webb. I've nothing to say against anybody. But oughtn't a detective to suspect everybody—or, at least, to investigate the possibilities of every suspect?"

"Yes'm; that's right. Never mind why. I'll bear in mind that Miss Webb's part in the matter must be inquired into. Any more hints?"

"Oh, that isn't a hint. What sort of a detective are you, asking for hints! Why don't you get busy? Hunt for clues, or something definite like that!"

"Clues? Why, it isn't a murder!"

"You don't know; it may be! And, anyway, there are clues to other crimes than murder."

"But it isn't a crime. Leastways——"

"Leastways, you're absolutely useless! Go away; I'll hunt for clues myself. First of all, where are those white marks that were on the floor yesterday?"

"White marks? What sort of marks?"

"Just some white daubs. They showed clearly on this plain green carpet, and now they're gone."

"Anything else been disturbed?"

"No, except that the whole room seems to have been cleaned, the bed made, and the chiffonier tidied."

"Oh, well, they told me about that. The condition of the room only went to prove that Mr. Webb had retired as usual on Wednesday night, and then he went away either in his evening clothes, and carried his night clothes with him, or he went wearing his night things and carrying his dress suit."

"Either of which suppositions is ab-

solutely ridiculous! As he had been to bed, why dress again in his dinner clothes, and why take his pajamas with him? Or, if he went away in his night clothes, why in the world wouldn't he carry a morning suit with him, and not full dress!"

"Right you are. It all don't get us anywhere!"

"But it ought to! The very fact that the conditions are ridiculous, inexplicable, ought to make it easier to get up a theory. If he had gone away in a business suit and carried his night things in a bag it would be easily believed he had suddenly been called on some important matter. But to go off with evening clothes and no other suit is so ridiculous that it ought to point to some inevitable conclusion, even if not a definite one!"

"My! You sure are a thinker, Miss Powell! But let's hear that indefinite conclusion you'd draw from the facts."

"I haven't drawn it yet, but I shall, and I want you to help me."

Elsie's appealing smile brought a hearty, "Sure I will, miss!" and after some further futile looking about, they both went downstairs.

Elsie waylaid the chambermaid and stepped aside to speak with her.

"Did you do up Mr. Webb's room yesterday?" she asked.

"Yes, miss," replied the girl a bit frightened.

"That's all right; only, tell me, did you notice those white marks on the carpet?"

"I did, ma'am, and I tried hard to get it all off. Did I leave any sign of it?"

"No; I wish you had! But never mind. What do you think made those marks?"

"I couldn't say, ma'am. They was like chalk, now; and mighty hard to get off they was."

"You remember just how they looked, and where they were?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am."

"Very well, then, that's all. Don't mention the matter to anybody, please."

"No, ma'am; I won't."

Elsie went on down to the drawing-room, and there found Mrs. Webb making the detective's hair stand on end, as she detailed to him her experiences with spirits and her reasons for belief that her son had been taken away from his home by supernatural means.

Hanley listened, more with a horrified interest in her talk than with any belief in its bearing on the present case, and Elsie almost laughed outright as she heard Mrs. Webb solemnly avowing that she had seen, at séances, live people wafted through a solid wooden door.

"Oh, come now," she said, as she entered the room. "Dear Mrs. Webb, don't ask us to believe such things!"

"Believe or not, as you choose," said Mrs. Webb haughtily; "your skepticism only exposes your ignorance. Why, innumerable such cases are on record; to students of spiritism the passing of matter through matter is one of the proved facts of psychical research."

"And you think that Kim passed through that locked wooden door—through the panels—and left no trace of his passing?"

"I do—indeed I do, Elsie! For, my dear child, what other explanation is there?"

Mrs. Webb's triumphant air impressed her hearers, even though it amused them. The trusting soul believed so implicitly in her creed that one must respect her sincerity, at least.

"Who lives next door?" asked Hanley suddenly.

"Which side?" asked Mrs. Webb. "On the left is the home of Owen Thorne, the banker; and on the other side the Marsden St. Johns live. They're at Lakewood just now; they're always there in the spring. But they don't own the house they live in. It's

Mr. Whiting's. Part of the estate his father left him."

"Are the Thorne family at home?"

"Yes, so far as I know. They were there yesterday. Why?"

"I only wondered if any of the neighbors saw Mr. Webb leave this house during the night."

"Maybe he hasn't left it," put in Elsie.

"He must have done so. He couldn't be concealed here against his will all this time, and you won't allow that he's willingly absent."

"Of course I won't!"

"Then he must have left this house between the hours of two a. m. and, say, seven—or, when did you call him, Mrs. Webb?"

"About eight, or soon after."

"Very well. Say he got away, somehow, between two and eight; there's a possibility that a watching or wakeful neighbor might have seen him go."

"Oh, I see." Mrs. Webb nodded. "Well, make inquiries. As I said, the St. Johns are away, and their house is closed; but ask the Thornes if you like. It's quite possible they saw something!"

The weird look came again into her eyes, and Elsie at once surmised that Kimball's mother had a mental vision of her son, wafted by supernatural means through his own bedroom door, down two flights of stairs, and through the closed and locked street door, out, away, nobody knew where, and the interested neighbors looking on!

Then Henry Harbison was announced, and with a sigh of relief Elsie turned to talk to him.

Harbison was to have been an usher at the wedding, and he called to see if he could be of any assistance to the family of the missing bridegroom.

After sympathetic greetings and inquiries, the young man took an active part in the discussion of the mystery.

"It's the strangest thing I ever heard of!" he declared. "But I bet I can put

you wise to a possible solution, anyway."

"Good!" cried Hanley. "I confess it baffles me. I'm about to give up my part in it and ask the inspector——"

"Don't!" begged Elsie. "You and I are working together, you know, Sergeant Hanley, and I like your methods."

Hanley stared. What had she seen of his methods, as yet, he wondered.

"Well, here's my theory," began Harbison. "I was at Kimball's bachelor dinner, you know, night before last, at the club. Also, Wallace Courtney was there. Now, you know, Mrs. Webb, your son is writing a play, a mighty clever one, too, founded on a satirical view of New England aristocratic tendencies."

Mrs. Webb flushed almost angrily.

"I do know it, and I regret it exceedingly. I strongly advised Kimball against such ridiculing of his native town and of his own family traditions and standards, but he only laughed and said nothing was too sacred to use for material for a play. Yes, Mr. Harbison, I know all about that play. It's nearly finished, too."

"That's the point. As you may or may not know, Wallace Courtney is a playwright, also, and by the merest chance he is writing a satirical play on the very same subject. Now, he didn't know about Kim's play until the night of the dinner; it was mentioned then, and Courtney asked Kim what it was about—that is, how he had treated the matter. Well, sir, do you know they've chosen almost identical plots! Why, whichever of those plays first reaches the public, the other will be stamped as a plagiarism. Courtney was terribly put out. He tried to conceal his wrath, but it kept cropping out."

"Why, Kimball wasn't to blame!" cried Elsie.

"Not a bit. But Courtney was upset at the coincidence, and the peculiar sit-

uation. Well, he worried around until he found out that Kim's play was nearing completion, and then he went to pieces for fair. 'You shan't put it on!' he cried excitedly. 'I'll move heaven and earth to prevent you! Why, it wipes out my every chance!' Oh, he said a lot more in that strain, and Kimball added fuel to the fire by treating it lightly. 'Go ahead with your play, Wally,' he told him. 'I'm going on my honeymoon, and I'll be gone a fortnight or more. You'll have time to get ahead of me.' Of course that wouldn't give Courtney time enough, nor anywhere near it, and he sulked all the evening. We all guyed him on his ill nature, but that only made things worse. Now, here's my suggestion, pretty slim, I admit, but take it for what it's worth: Might Courtney somehow or other have kidnaped Kimmy, intending to keep him put away until he can get his own play finished and on the road to production?"

"Motive all right," said the detective smiling; "but how about the method?"

"That's where I get off." Harbison laughed. "You see, while the whole affair is pretty awful in a social way, and has made a fearful mess of the wedding, and all that, I can't look on it as a tragedy."

"Who does?" asked Elsie. "Of course there's no tragedy, if you mean any harm to Kimball personally, but I do call it a tragedy all the same!"

"It is," Hanley agreed; "but, of course, the angle I get is the mystery side of it. How did Mr. Webb get out of his door and lock it behind him? That's what I want to know!"

CHAPTER VI.

WHITE MARKS.

YOU'RE right, man," declared Harbison; "let's tackle that problem seriously. How *could* it be done? No matter how absurd the suggestion."

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"First," enumerated Hanley, "there's Mrs. Webb's suggestion of spirits."

"It would be hard to beat that for unlikeliness!" said Harbison, speaking very seriously, and entirely ignoring Mrs. Webb's disdainful expression. "Now, see here. How about turning the key from the outside by means of a very powerful magnet?"

"No such thing possible," Hanley declared. "There's not a magnet in existence that could do that. And shoot the bolt also, did you mean?"

"Yes, I did. But, of course, it's only a suggestion. Well, what else?"

"Untruthfulness!" said Elsie suddenly, coming out into the open. "I regret exceedingly to mention such a thing, but as there is no explanation of the alleged facts, must we not doubt the truth of the alleged facts?"

Henrietta Webb glared at her. "Do you mean," she cried, "that we have not told you the truth about finding Kim's door locked?"

"That's precisely what I mean!" A red spot appeared on Elsie's either cheek. "If you can offer the slightest, vaguest sort of hint as to how your story could be true, I'll listen; but if you can't, you must not be surprised that I refuse to believe it."

"Doubt my word? Let me tell you, miss, a Webb does not speak untruth!"

"Not ordinarily, nor do most of us. But I know, Henrietta, that you would resort to any means to prevent Kimball from marrying me, and I am justified in thinking you have done so."

"What do you mean, Miss Powell," asked Hanley; "that Mr. Webb went away voluntarily?"

"Not exactly. I mean that I think he was persuaded, forced, or tricked into going away by his sister, and that the broken lock and burst bolt are fabrications to mislead investigators."

Henrietta Webb looked at Elsie, first with amazed scorn, and then, her face changed to gentler expression,

she said: "You are not quite responsible, dear. I shall not hold your speech against you. And, really, I'm not surprised that you try to grasp at any straw in this sea of mystery. But"—she turned to Harbison and the detective—"there is no reason to doubt the truth of the story of my brother's disappearance. Our butler and chauffeur will corroborate it, and will tell you just how much difficulty they had in entering the room."

At Hanley's request, Hollis and Oscar were summoned, and they told in detail the events of the morning before.

"And you heard or saw nothing that could give you the slightest hint as to any reason for Mr. Webb's disappearance?"

"No," both men answered.

"You saw or heard nothing unusual or that you could not understand?" the detective continued.

"Well, sir," Oscar began, "when I ran upstairs, and Miss Webb was waiting outside her brother's door, I heard her say to herself, 'Oh, if it *should* be! sort of excited like."

"Whom was she speaking to?"

"To nobody, sir; just to herself."

"What did you mean by that speech, Miss Webb?" Hanley inquired.

"I didn't make it," replied Henrietta coolly. "Oscar is mistaken. He imagined it all."

"I told you so!" Elsie cried irrepressibly. "I knew Miss Webb was at the bottom of it all!"

"Well, such a speech as that doesn't prove it," Hanley observed. "It rather lets her out. If she had concealed her brother previously, why should she say those words? And if she was merely hoping he had gone away, it goes to show she had no hand in the matter."

Henrietta's face was expressionless, as if the subject interested her not at all.

"You will all have to agree with me, sooner or later," Mrs. Webb began.

"There is, as you've seen, no normal explanation. Only the supernatural remains. And, you ought to know that that room of Kimball's has been haunted for a long time."

"What! haunted!" exclaimed Hanley.

"Yes, sir. Not only my son and my daughter have heard and seen strange things in it, but the maids have also had such experiences."

"Such as what?"

"Hearing queer sounds. Once there was a complete conversation carried on by voices that belonged to invisible people."

"This is interesting only if confirmed by credible witnesses," Hanley said.

"It interests me, anyway," said Harbison. "I don't believe in levitation and the passing of a human body through a locked door, but a haunted room always thrills me. Tell me some more about it."

"I will," said Henrietta. "For the last year or two there have been times when voices were audible there. Not loud or entirely distinct, but vaguely to be heard—like the sound of a far-away speaker. My brother heard them; he frequently told me so."

"Well, not frequently, Henrietta," said her mother, correcting her, "but two or three times."

"Who else heard them?" asked Hanley briefly.

"The servants," Henrietta informed them. "One chambermaid was so frightened she left at once."

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" cried Harbison. "This gets us nowhere! If they were really spirits it is absurd; and if, as I thought at first, they were human voices, heard through a secret passage or a hollow panel, it's up to us to find the secret entrance."

"There isn't any," declared Hanley. "I've sounded and tested every bit of wall in the room."

"All the same, I'd like a try at it,"

Harbison declared, and, asking permission, he went alone up to the room that had been Kimball Webb's.

"Who saw Mr. Webb last?" asked Hanley, by way of pursuing his duty.

"I suppose I did," answered his mother. "He came to my room to say good night, as he often does after he's been out late. We had a little chat, and then he kissed me good night, and I heard him go upstairs."

"Did you hear him, Miss Webb?"

"N-no; I was asleep."

"And he didn't wake you as he passed your door?"

"No; it was closed. I didn't hear his footsteps."

"But you went up to his room later!" Elsie cried accusingly.

"N-no, I didn't! What do you mean?"

Henrietta Webb spoke hesitatingly; one would have said she was prevaricating, from the manner of her speech. But she looked straight at Elsie and demanded an explanation of her words.

"Then you were up in Kim's room before he came home that night."

"No, I wasn't. Why do you say these things?"

"When were you in your brother's room last, before he—went away?" Elsie demanded.

"Oh, not for several days. I sometimes go up there to chat with him, but he's been so preoccupied lately, with his play and his wedding preparations both, that I haven't intruded on his time."

"You were up there the night before last, after Kim came home from the dinner," Elsie declared, looking straight at Miss Webb, "and you sat on the little sofa between the front windows."

"I've been considerate of you, Elsie," Miss Webb said coldly, "because I feel sorry for you, and I make allowances for your disturbed nerves and your—your natural lack of poise—but I warn you I won't stand everything! Your

accusations are not only false, they're ridiculous! If I had gone to Kim's room and talked to him after his return, why should I deny it?"

"Because you're afraid it will incriminate you in his disappearance! Oh, Henrietta, *where* is he? Give him back to me! I love him so—I want him so! Oh, Kimball, my love!"

The girl gave way and burst into hysterical tears. Truly, she had not the poise of the woman before her, but she had resiliency. In a moment she pulled herself together, steadied her voice, and said:

"You *were* in Kim's room that night, and I can prove it by a witness! Stay here, all of you!"

She ran out of the room, and they heard her go upstairs.

"Don't put too much reliance on what Miss Powell says," Henrietta said to the detective. "She's not quite herself."

"All right, ma'am," returned Hanley, but he looked closely at the speaker.

"Any news?" asked a man's voice from the doorway, and Fenn Whiting came into the room. "I couldn't keep away," he went on; "I've been over to the Powells, and they said Elsie was here." He looked about.

"She is," began Henrietta.

Harbison, who had returned from his futile quest, impatiently broke in:

"I say, Whiting, listen to my theory."

He proceeded to detail the matter of Courtney's play and recalled to Whiting the wrath that Courtney exhibited at the bachelor dinner.

"By Jove, he was mad!" Whiting agreed, his attention arrested at once by the ideas Harbison put forth.

"And, though it sounds like a cock-and-bull story," Harbison went on, "suppose Wally thinks to himself: 'If I could only tie Kim up somewhere till I can get my play finished and accepted by a manager, it will be my salvation!' Now, of course, if he kidnaped Kim it

had to be done before the wedding, so——”

“It’s far-fetched,” said Whiting thoughtfully, “but I’ll say it’s the first thing I’ve heard put forth by way of a motive. You know, finding a motive is a necessary step to be taken before finding the perpetrator of this thing.”

“I know the motive,” Elsie’s voice announced, as she entered in time to hear Whiting’s closing words. “I’ve found the perpetrator, and I did have proof—but she’s destroyed it.”

Elsie’s stern gaze at Henrietta Webb decidedly discomfited that cool, calm personality, and for the first time Miss Webb’s poise seemed about to desert her. Ignoring the others, Elsie addressed herself to Hanley.

“I found a real clew yesterday morning,” she said, “when I went up to look around Mr. Webb’s room. On the floor, in front of the little sofa, were several white marks——”

“How absurd!” cried Henrietta. “I beg of you don’t discuss the shortcomings of a careless housemaid!”

“White marks,” Elsie went on, as if uninterrupted, “that were made by the rubbing on the carpet of a woman’s white shoes. Shoes, I mean, that had been whitened with some of those chalk preparations that most women use—or their maids use for them.”

A side glance at Henrietta’s face showed Elsie that it was as white as the chalk in question, but she went on:

“I know that those marks were made by Miss Webb’s shoes; I know that it was at her request that the maid carefully removed the marks from the green carpet; I know she gave the maid orders to say nothing about the matter; and I know she has destroyed or concealed those shoes!”

Henrietta’s face became like a stone. Impassive, unreadable, its expression showed neither embarrassment nor fear. Only in her eyes was there a sign

of perturbation. Her glance at Elsie was defiant and a little threatening.

“Well, Miss Webb,” Hanley began, “you advised me not to be too much impressed by Miss Powell’s statements, so I’ll ask you for a bit of explanation right here.”

“There is nothing to explain,” Henrietta began calmly. “I deny everything she has asserted. I may have been in my brother’s room during the past week, I may have left some white marks from my shoes on the carpet, but I do not recollect such an occasion, nor do I think it at all pertinent to the matter in hand. As to the matter of the housemaid, that is pure fabrication. I am not in the habit of conniving with servants, as Miss Powell seems to be.”

“Which shoes of yours are so whitened that marks on the carpet are usual; and where are the shoes?” Elsie demanded, pointing an accusing finger at Miss Webb.

“I really don’t know.” Henrietta shrugged her shoulders. “You must ask Janet; she looks after my wardrobe.”

“Come, come, Miss Powell,” said Hanley, impressed more by Henrietta’s indifference than by Elsie’s ‘clew.’ “I don’t think you’re adapted to detective work. You overestimate the importance of trifles.”

“Nothing is a trifle if it points the way to discovery,” said Elsie, her brown eyes flashing and her red lips quivering as she looked from one to another for help or sympathy.

And it came, from Fenn Whiting.

“I think, Miss Webb,” he said a bit shortly, “that you owe us a little information. Doesn’t the maid clean the rooms each morning?”

“Certainly.”

“Then white marks, as of chalked shoes, early in the morning would seem to me to imply that you *were* there the night before. Why not own up to it?”

It couldn't have been on any secret errand?"

"Of course it couldn't. But I wasn't there at all. The marks, if they existed outside of Elsie's imagination, must have been made by one of the maids. They wear white shoes sometimes."

"Then call the maid, and let her produce the shoes," cried Elsie. "I tell you, Mr. Hanley, this is a clew, and a real one. If you let it slip you are not doing your duty."

Hanley became angry.

"It isn't for a man twelve years on the force to be taught his duty by a chit of a girl who ought to be in school herself!" he exploded, and the nod of approval from Henrietta decided him to go on. "I'm sorry, indeed, for you, Miss Powell, and it's small wonder that you're nearly distracted, but I must insist that it isn't right for you to imagine that Miss Webb is implicated. It seems to me much more likely that we ought to look in the direction of this Mr. Courtney. If he is the sort of man to stop at nothing in the furtherance of his own schemes, I can believe that he has somehow secreted Kimball Webb in order to get his play done first."

"How could he?" Elsie cried. "How could he get into the house? How could he get Kimball out?"

"Those questions are unanswerable at present, no matter who the suspect is," the detective returned imperturbably. "Now, look here, Miss Powell, I want to know about this will business. I've heard a vague story. Is it true that if you are not married by a certain date, your fortune is taken away from you?"

"It is," she replied; "and the date is the thirtieth of June. That gives us three months, nearly, to find Mr. Kimball Webb."

"And that's about time enough for Mr. Wallace Courtney to finish his precious play! I predict that you will

not see Mr. Webb until Mr. Courtney's play is finished!"

"And you're going to let him get away with it!" cried Harbison. "Can one man put another aside in that fashion, at will, without prevention or even protest?"

"Well, hardly; but after all, it may not be Mr. Courtney at all. Here's another point I want cleared up. In the event of your not marrying by the given date, Miss Powell, what becomes of your aunt's money?"

"It will go to a cousin of hers, who lives out West somewhere. I don't know exactly where."

"A relative of yours?"

"No; my aunt was my father's half sister. This man is a connection of her mother, and is no relation to my father or myself."

"You know him?"

"Only his name, Joseph Allison. I've never seen him, never heard from him. You see, there was no question of the fortune not being mine, as I expected to marry Mr. Webb within the prescribed time."

"I see. May we not assume an interest on the part of this young man as to the disposition of the estate, in the event of your not marrying?"

"Hello!" exclaimed Harbison, "that opens up a new field of conjecture. May not the young man have been sufficiently interested to go to the length of removing Kimball Webb from the field of action altogether?"

"Oh, no," Elsie said. "You see, it's this way. Mr. Allison tried to break the will at the time of my aunt's death, four years ago; but there wasn't a chance of it, and so, as the lawyers told me, he gracefully gave up the matter and has never been heard from since."

"That doesn't prevent his still being interested," persisted Hanley. "You see, Miss Powell, I'm an experienced detective, and I keep my eyes open, with the result that I see a hole through

a millstone, now and then. And I think I've learned about all I can pick up here just now. I shall look into the matter of Mr. Courtney and his play; also into the affairs of Mr. Joseph Allison. And let me advise you, Miss Powell, not to put your inexperienced fingers into pies that you don't understand. A girl of your ignorance of these things can't be a detective, even an amateur one. So leave it all to those who know the ropes."

Hanley went away, and the others remained for a time.

There was a silence at first, and then Henrietta said:

"I'm not going to reprove you, Elsie, I feel too sorry for you to do that, but I am going to ask you not to trump up any more such foolish yarns as the one you spun about the white shoes!"

"What became of the shoes, then?" asked Elsie bluntly.

"What shoes? There are no especial shoes to be considered. Drop the subject, dear. Such harping on it makes it seem as if you were not quite calmed down yet."

"And I'm not, and I never shall be until Kimball is given back to me! I'm going to find him myself—I don't care what that detective says. Who is going to help me?"

"I, for one," said Henry Harbison promptly. "I'm mighty sorry for you, Miss Powell, and you may command me as you like."

"Thank you, Mr. Harbison; I know you're a firm friend of Kimball's, and I gladly accept your friendship also."

"I suppose you know you can depend on me to see you through, without any definite avowal," said Fenn Whiting, smiling.

"Of course, Fenn, you are my right-hand man. But I want all the help I can get."

"We'll help you, Elsie," Henrietta began; but Elsie only gave her a scornful glance.

"When you are ready to help, Henrietta, begin by telling me about your white shoes."

Miss Webb made a despairing gesture, as of one powerless to aid such a willful girl, and Mrs. Webb began on her hobby.

"You can all search and detect and deduce all you like; there is nothing that can explain Kim's disappearance or solve the mystery of his absence except supernatural forces. Carp as you will, object as you see fit, you must admit there's no other way out!"

"You're right to a degree, Mrs. Webb," said Fenn Whiting slowly; "there's no other way out! I don't for a minute believe in spooks, but I'm ready to agree there's no other way out."

"Then we must stay in," said Harbison.

"Not we," declared Elsie; "not I, at least! And you men have promised to help me. Now, first of all, is there any chance of Joe Allison being implicated? I hadn't thought of it, but it must, as Mr. Hanley said, be looked into."

"How could he manage it?" asked Whiting. "Courtney looks more possible, if you ask me."

"I do ask you," said Elsie, "I ask you all. I want your help, your counsel, your advice. I *am* inexperienced, I've no knowledge of police work or detective work, but I have courage, hope, and a will that is unbreakable and unshakable! I will go through fire and water, I will move heaven and earth, I will face danger of any sort, I will suffer or endure anything, if it will help in the least degree to get Kimball back."

"Never mind the theatrical demonstration, Elsie," said Henrietta scoffingly; "we all want Kim back, but we don't announce it from the housetops!"

"Nor am I doing so." Elsie spoke quietly but with flashing eyes. "I will

omit all personal remarks hereafter, but I must still insist upon my determination and my perseverance—which, after all, are my stock in trade!"

"Good for you, Elsie!" Whiting smiled at her. "I'm with you, and we'll never let up until we find the boy! Harbison, you're in on this?"

"To a finish! Now, how do we begin? I'm all for looking up Courtney. It's too much of a coincidence that he should want Kim out of the way, and immediately Kim is out of the way! Isn't that a bit curious?"

"It is, now you put it that way." Whiting looked visibly impressed. "Let's run him to cover first of all."

And then the telephone rang, and Detective Sergeant Hanley informed

them that Wallace Courtney had disappeared as suddenly and as inexplicably as Kimball Webb had himself!

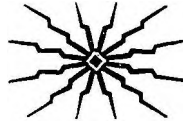
"That settles it!" declared Harbison, jumping up and grasping his hat. "I've got to get in on the ground floor! Good-by, all!"

He left the house hastily, and Fenn Whiting was eager to follow. But he spoke first to Elsie.

"Shall I go," he asked, "or stay with you?"

"Go!" she cried, with shining eyes. "At last, we're beginning to *do* something! Go and find out all you can about Mr. Courtney, and report to me at my home. I'm going over there, as soon as I have this matter out with Henrietta!"

To be continued in the next issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, out on Tuesday, November 11th. Do not forget that, as the magazine is published every week, you will not have long to wait for the next installment of this serial.



STRANGE EFFECTS OF SHOCK

THAT sudden joy may kill as well as sudden grief is a matter of common knowledge, for incidents of persons dying of heart failure on receipt of unexpected joyful tidings are of frequent occurrence. Not so rare, either, are the tales of a man's or woman's hair turning white overnight. But to see a man's hair turn white in half an hour is out of the ordinary, when compared even with such unusual happenings as are mentioned above.

Nevertheless there is at least one reported case—that of an East Indian mutineer awaiting execution—in which, before the eyes of many spectators, the man's jet-black locks become silver-gray in half an hour. Under the strain of impending death certain changes in the composition of the coloring matter of the hair took place.

A very different readjustment of the pigment of the body under great emotional stress was made in the case of a woman condemned to death during the French Revolution and then set free a short time before the sentence was to have been carried out. The woman bore up well until told that she would not be killed. Then the color of her skin began to grow darker, finally becoming black. That color it remained until her death, thirty years later.

Gold Bricks

by Stephen Lee

Author of "Madman's Vengeance," etc.

LIMPING under the weight of a battered suit case Toledo Tim stole nervously down the squeaking stairs in Mrs. Dugan's lodging house, opened the door a crack, and glanced warily up and down the street. It was a few minutes after midnight, and, save for a few pedestrians scurrying homeward under the shelter of their umbrellas, the thoroughfare was deserted.

As he pulled his slouch hat down over his forehead Toledo Tim turned to the left and hastened down the street with the furtive air of one whose business is not strictly legal. He clung close to the shadows of the murky walls that flanked the sidewalk and from time to time he glanced back over his shoulder as if to make sure that he was not followed. He was a short, thin man, and apparently the suit case was taxing his strength to the utmost, for he frequently shifted its weight from one hand to the other.

"It's a fierce night," he muttered. "I wisht I had an umbrella."

He did not seem to notice a thickset man in raincoat and black derby who had been standing in a dark doorway across the street from Mrs. Dugan's establishment and who had been galvanized into sudden activity upon Toledo Tim's appearance. His footfalls deadened by rubber-bottomed shoes, the raincoated man chuckled softly to himself as, keeping at a discreet distance, he took up the pursuit of the man with the suit case.

The approach from the opposite di-

rection of a policeman leisurely walking his beat caused Toledo Tim to slink into a dark alley, where he waited until the officer had passed. Selecting dimly lighted side streets and pursuing a zigzagging course, he described a half circle around the central portion of the city. Still seeming blissfully unaware of the shadow lurking less than a block behind he appeared to gather courage as he drew farther and farther away from the district in which Mrs. Dugan's lodging house was located.

Finally at a corner diagonally opposite the railroad station he stopped and set his burden down beside a lamp post. Shrugging a little shower of raindrops from his clothing he gazed dubiously at the brilliantly lighted stretch of pavement which he must traverse in order to gain the terminal. Trying to appear unconcerned he picked up the suit case again and started to cross the street, but the sight of a uniformed man at the main entrance brought him to a dead stop.

"That's Casey—drat him!" he mumbled. "That thick-skulled bull's after my scalp. Guess I'd better step careful."

Realizing that his hesitancy might attract notice Toledo Tim plunged forward again, but he avoided the main entrance and instead walked around to the carriage portico at the side of the big building. From this point he made his way through several long corridors, contriving to reach the baggage counter without crossing the main concourse.

"Want to check this," he announced, lifting the suit case to the counter and placing a dime beside it.

The attendant listlessly handed Toledo Tim a check and attached the counterfoil to the suit case. Turning, Tim cast a sidelong glance about him, sighing his relief as he saw that no one had seemed to observe him. Stepping as jauntily as if he had just rid himself of a mental as well as a physical burden, he stuck the baggage check into his vest pocket, purchased a good Havana at the cigar counter, and leisurely strolled out of the station.

"Now for the bunch of eats," he told himself gleefully. "I feel like celebrating a bit. This joint," halting before a garishly lighted restaurant, "don't look so bad. Guess I'll——"

He felt a touch on his arm and wheeled around to face a thickset, unpleasantly grinning man in a raincoat and with a black derby on his head.

"You'll have to let the eats wait a while, Tim," declared the man in tones of mock suavity. "I'd like to have a little chat with you. This place is too noisy. Suppose we stroll along?"

A single glance at the man who had accosted him seemed to give Toledo Tim a profound shock. For several moments he could do nothing but stare into the rugged and crafty features and the small, shrewdly peering eyes.

"Spiggley!" he exclaimed shakily. "What—what d'ye want?"

"A little chat, as I told you," announced the other with a chuckle.

"Why can't you dicks ever let a man alone?" grumbled Toledo Tim. "The police ain't got a thing on me. What do you want to bother me for?"

"All I want is a quiet, sociable little talk," asserted the other. "I know of a cosy little place down the street where we can be alone. This way."

Tim had either recovered from his first shock or he realized that objections would be useless, for he followed

meekly as the detective nipped at his sleeve and led him several blocks down the street to a corner café. Stepping through the side entrance they found the little back room unoccupied. Spiggley rang and gave the waiter an order.

"Much doing these days?" he inquired casually after they had been served.

"What's it to you?" asked Tim testily, his suspicious, mouse-colored eyes scanning the detective's face.

Spiggley tossed off his dripping raincoat, then pushed his chair a little closer to Toledo Tim's. A frosty smile curled his lips and his small eyes gleamed with satisfaction. He waited several moments before he answered.

"Night before last," he began in low, confidential tones, "Christopher Manville's house on the boulevard was broken into and about five thousand dollars' worth of jewels and silverware carted away. Know anything about it, Tim?"

"Only what I seen in the papers," asserted Tim sullenly.

"That all? Don't happen to have any inside information, eh?"

Toledo Tim drew up his slight frame with a show of indignation. "What you drivin' at?" he demanded.

"It looked like one of your jobs, Tim. I haven't turned in my report yet, but I'd be willing to swear you're the cuss that did it."

Toledo Tim's nervousness was apparent, but he forced a contemptuous laugh. "That's it, is it? Somebody busts into a house and gets away with a bunch of silver and sparklers, and I get the blame. You're too lazy to look around a bit and find the feller that did the job, and so you make me the fall guy. You're a hot detective, you are! See here, Spiggley, I swear I didn't have nothin' to do with the Manville job."

The detective grinned complacently. "You're pretty free with your oaths,

Tim. I remember you swore up and down you didn't know anything about Mrs. Forrester's sunburst, but I fished it out of your hip pocket before you were through talking."

"That's different, Spiggley." Toledo Tim's face changed expression. "You had me dead to rights there. But what are you kickin' about? I split with you on the Forrester sparkler and we agreed to keep mum about it, didn't we?"

"Correct," admitted the detective. "Forrester is in bad with the administration, and when people of that kind lose their gewgaws the department never gets very excited over it. I could have sent you up for five years or so and raked in a little credit for myself, but what was the use? I am strong for the cash, Tim, especially when it comes as safe and easy as it did that time. But what I'm driving at is this: You lied to me about the Forrester job till I found the goods on you, and I know you're lying now."

"I'm not," declared Tim doggedly. "I wasn't anywheres near the Manville kipp night before last."

Spiggley shrugged as if Tim's denials carried not the least weight with him. He leaned toward his companion and lowered his voice to a whisper. "Listen, Tim. Manville is another of those misguided boobs that the administration ain't got much use for. We are investigating, of course, but we aren't losing much sleep over it. Get me?"

"Yes, I get you." Toledo Tim sneered. "You want me to split the swag with you again. Look here, Spiggley, why don't you ditch that tin star of yours and be an honest crook instead of a crooked dick? You'd have more respect for yourself if you did."

"Maybe," said Spiggley, not at all offended by the other's aspersions, "but that's beside the question. What do you say to my proposition?"

Toledo Tim made a wry face. "You're talking to the wrong party. I can't split with you this time because I haven't got the swag. Why don't you brace the guy that pulled off the job?"

"Enough of that," grunted Spiggley, his face hardening. "You ought to know by this time that your stalling don't go with me, Tim. You did the job and you've got the swag. I know."

"Know a lot, don't you?" Tim turned his head to light a cigarette, and a look of contempt and sullen hatred showed in his thin, gnarled face. "Just because I've pulled a few tricks; because I'm in bad with the police you want to blame me for all the crooked work that's goin' on in the whole blooming town. Why don't you let up on me and get after some of the other crooks? Think I'm the only one in the burg? You make me tired!"

"Easy, Tim." The detective spoke soothingly. "Your speeches sound very fine, but I'm hardened to that kind of oratory. I'm willing to bet a year's salary against a plugged dime that you did the Manville job."

"Think you're some sport, eh?"

"Well, yes. I've made you a sporting proposition. Are you going to take me up, or must I pinch you, turn the sparklers and the silver over to Manville, and send you up for a long, quiet rest? Which do you want?"

Toledo Tim leered provokingly. "What's made you so sure that I did the job?"

"I'll tell you," declared Spiggley patiently. "The moment I gave the job a once-over I thought it looked like your workmanship. I wasn't sure, though, and I kept my suspicions to myself. I strolled over to the place where you're living—that rooming house over on Oakwood Street. It's been a hang-out for crooks as far back as I can remember. I watched the place all day yesterday."

"Oh!" said Toledo Tim in startled tones; but the look in his eyes as he turned his face to blow out a whiff of tobacco smoke hinted that he had not been altogether unaware of Spiggley's espionage.

"But you didn't come out," continued the detective. "You were lying low, of course, and I guessed that the swag was salted somewhere in the house."

"Why didn't you walk in and look for it?" asked Tim sneeringly.

"Because I didn't want to act till I was sure. Anyhow, there are some pretty nifty hiding places in that joint, and I might not have found the stuff. Well, Tim, I'm a patient man, and I kept watching the place, knowing you'd come out sooner or later. It was a long wait, but finally, about forty-five minutes ago, I saw you slip out with a suit case in your hand."

"Oh!" said Tim once more, but again his averted face indicated that he was not greatly surprised.

"It wasn't hard to guess what was in that suit case," Spiggley went on in complacent tones. "I could tell from the way you walked that it was heavy, and of course I knew at once that you were moving the swag to a place where it would be safer than in Mrs. Dugan's rooming house. I figured you were too wise to take it to a fence for a day or two yet, and I was curious to see where you were going to salt it."

"I'm interested," remarked Toledo Tim dryly. "Go on with the yarn. Why didn't you pinch me and catch me with the goods?"

"I could have done just that little thing, of course," replied Spiggley suavely, "but for reasons of my own I didn't want to. You see, I thought there might be more stuff hidden in the place where you were taking the suit case, and anyhow I wanted to get you off in a quiet little corner and talk business with you. You did some

fancy steppin', Tim, and for a long time I couldn't imagine where you were headed for. Of course you never guessed I was shadowing you."

"Of course not," assented Tim, his shrewd, gray eyes twinkling.

"When I saw you heading for the station I thought you'd made up your mind to skip town. If you had I'd been forced to pinch you and turn the stuff in at headquarters. I wouldn't have liked that a little bit, but it didn't take me long to get wise to your little game. The idea of checking stolen goods as baggage at a railway station is so old that it's got whiskers on it, but it isn't bad at all. There's a mighty slim chance that the stuff will be found among hundreds of bags and suit cases, unless," and Spiggley gave an elated chuckle, "somebody should happen to be watching you when you check it. Of course your scheme was to let the suit case lie there till things had quieted down a bit and it would be safe for you to take it out."

"You're some dopester, Spiggley," observed Tim. He appeared to be thinking hard. "I'd hate to have your suspicious nature though. Danged if I wouldn't! Just because you see a feller take a suit case out of his lodging house and check it at a baggage counter you right away suspect him of crackin' a crib or something. Ugh! You make me sick!"

"I'm the suspicious guy all right," admitted Spiggley cheerfully, "especially when I see a fellow who acts as though he had murder on his conscience. You ducked into an alley when the cop on the beat hove into sight. A glimpse of Casey at the main entrance to the station scared you stiff, and you sneaked in from the side. You didn't act guilty—oh, no! I suppose you'll tell me that there's nothing in the suit case but two pairs of socks and a boiled shirt?"

Toledo Tim's fingers trembled a lit-

tle as he flung away his cigarette and lit a fresh one. He held his face averted and seemed absorbed in deep, troubled thought.

"Still deny you stole the Manville sparklers and silverware, Tim?" inquired the detective softly.

"Of course I do," declared Tim stoutly. "Go ahead and pinch me if you like. It wouldn't be the first time you got me wrong and you know it."

Spiggley winced a little. "True enough, but I've got you bang to rights this time. Suppose you hand over the baggage check and let me take a squint at it."

Tim did not seem inclined to accept the suggestion. "You're wrong, I tell you. I didn't have anything to do with the Manville job."

Spiggley grinned skeptically. "What's in the suit case, then?"

"Gold bricks."

"Eh?"

"Gold bricks. I guess I might as well come across with the straight goods, seeing as you lamped me with the suit case. There's nothin' in it but gold bricks—the good old-fashioned kind. There's a sucker coming in from the alfalfa belt in the morning, and I've got it all fixed up to trim him. He's the easiest thing that ever wore chin whiskers. I wanted to have things handy for him in the morning. That's why I brought the flimflam outfit to the station to-night."

"Congratulations!" said Spiggley sarcastically. "Didn't know the flimflam stuff was in your line, Tim. Going in for real classy work, eh? Next thing I know you'll be a regular, high-class crook. I'd like to have a look at that flimflam outfit of yours. Suppose we stroll back to the station?"

Toledo Tim gave a little start. "Suspicious again, eh? Won't take my word for it, what? I suppose you think I'm lying."

"Oh, no. Far be it from me to ac-

cuse a gentleman of lying," declared the detective derisively. "I'm just suggesting that it would be an easy thing to prove your statement by letting me take a peep into the suit case."

Toledo Tim did not answer. Puffing furiously at his cigarette and steadily averting his face from the detective, he seemed to be in an embarrassing dilemma.

"Just as I thought—you're not very anxious to back up your gold-brick story." The detective's manner changed and he spoke brusquely now. "It's about time for you to quit your stalling, Tim. I'll give you thirty seconds to decide whether you want to divvy up or get pinched."

He pressed the button and ordered the waiter to bring more refreshments.

"Well, Tim?" he inquired tartly when the order had been served and the door had closed behind the waiter.

Toledo Tim looked up with a crushed expression. "Do we split even?" he asked.

"Hardly. If you hadn't done so much stalling maybe I'd be more generous with you. There's about one hundred and fifty in my jeans. Take it or leave it."

"Hundred and fifty!" echoed Tim disgustedly. "You offer me a hundred and fifty for five thousand dollars' worth of stuff?"

"You ought to consider yourself lucky," remarked Spiggley dryly. "It's a lot better than going to stir."

A flush crept into Tim's peaked face. "If you push me too hard I'll turn State's evidence against you," he muttered thickly. "Better be careful, Spiggley. I'll stand just so much and no more."

"I guess you won't do anything so rash," declared the detective, but an uneasy gleam crept into his shifty eyes. "I can't get more than twenty-five hundred for the stuff, and I run a big risk

disposing of it besides. Better take the hundred and fifty, Tim."

"I won't. I'll go to stir first, and I'll bring you along with me. I mean that, Spiggley. Give me five hundred and we'll call it square. Even at that you'll be two thousand to the good."

Spiggley stroked his chin and considered. His small, round eyes twinkled greedily. "Two hundred and fifty," he said.

"Not a cent less than five hundred," declared Tim in tones of finality.

"All right," said Spiggley after a few moments' hesitation. "I haven't got that much with me, but I know the man who runs this joint. Maybe he will help me out."

He rang and instructed the waiter to summon the proprietor. When the latter, a fat, red-faced individual, entered the back room, Spiggley led him to a corner, where the two held a conversation in whispers. Finally the proprietor stepped out, returning in a few minutes with a thick wad of bills.

"Well, did you get the kale?" inquired Toledo Tim when he was alone with the detective. Spiggley nodded and made a flourish with the roll of bank notes.

"All right then." Tim pushed his glass aside and rose. "We'll hike over to the station and you can hand me the spondulix when I turn the suit case over to you."

"We'll do nothing of the kind, Tim," declared Spiggley cautiously. "The suit case can stay where it is for a few days. Maybe it would be safe enough

for me to get it out now, but I would rather not take chances till this thing has quieted down a bit. It don't look just right for a detective to be lugging a suit case at one o'clock in the morning. All you've got to do, Tim, is to hand me that baggage check, take your five hundred, and beat it."

Toledo Tim slowly removed the check from his pocket. There was a glint of wariness in his eyes.

"You're on the square, ain't you?" he asked suspiciously. "You ain't going to pull me in for the Manville job after I've handed you the check."

"Shut up, you fool!" growled Spiggley impatiently. "I wouldn't dare to double cross you on this deal even if I felt like it. Here's your money. Now give me the check."

Toledo Tim held out the baggage check with one hand and picked up the wad of bills with the other.

"Now get!" snapped Spiggley, putting the check in his pocket.

Crumpling the bills in his fist, Toledo Tim slunk out and hailed a taxicab on the corner. A satisfied grin creased his face as he leaned back against the cushions.

"I guess I've taught that fool dick a lesson," he told himself. "He wouldn't believe me when I swore it wasn't me that pulled off the Manville job, but he will know I told him the truth when he opens that suit case and finds the three bricks I picked up in Mrs. Dugan's basement. I gold-bricked him, all right—five hundred dollars' worth."

SAFE RENTED WITH OFFICE

IN California you may, in many instances, rent a safe with your office if you choose, instead of buying one and having it moved from place to place as you change your business address. The charge for a small safe is one dollar a month, and for a larger one from two dollars to three and a half dollars a month, depending upon its size. San Francisco has probably more offices provided with safes by the owners for the tenants than any other city in the country.

A Confession in Writing

By C. O. Ates

Author of "Showing the Way," etc.

THE popular young deputy sheriff laid down the piece of board which he had been whitening, closed his knife, and called through the open doorway: "Hey, Cyrus! That looks like your rig coming down the road—and it sure is coming!"

Cyrus Ingalsby stepped from behind the counter of his grocery store and emerged onto the porch outside—the porch which served as clubroom and village forum to all the idlers in the place, and others who had a few minutes to spare during the day. He craned his scrawny neck in the direction indicated, and an angry light gleamed in his close-set eyes. "By Judas, it is!" he ejaculated, reluctantly believing the evidence of his own eyes. "What in time's got into that boy, anyhow? That's no way to treat a good hoss. I'll show him!"

A moment later the rattling grocery wagon with its panting horse drew up before the store, and a perspiring, white-faced boy jumped down from the seat and came straight for the deputy sheriff, ignoring his irate employer entirely. "Oh, Mr. Leavitt," he cried gasping, in evident terror, "there's been a murder!"

"A murder? Where? Who?" asked Giles Leavitt quickly.

"Old Judson Phillips, at his house out on the Centerville Road. I went there to leave the order of stuff that he has every week, and couldn't get in.

I tiptoed up and looked in the window—and there he was, with a lot of blood around."

"I know the place," said Leavitt unemotionally. "Is Ray Cole here? Get out your flivver and take me out there, will you, Ray?" Inwardly he was tingling with excitement over his first important case, for he had been appointed very recently to his office; but he let nothing appear in his demeanor other than a businesslike calmness. "Cyrus, you call up Doctor Brastow, the coroner, and send him out there. And I guess you can overlook the boy's abuse of horseflesh this time, eh?"

Cole, who ran a renting garage near by, had a car alongside in a moment, and as soon as the deputy had stepped into it, it shot off in a cloud of dust at a speed not authorized by law. Cole was eager to arrive soon at the scene of the tragedy, if Giles was not; and he didn't care who knew it. The distance of three miles consumed only five minutes. Leaving the machine beside the road, the two men made their way across the rocky meadow in the midst of which, on an elevated ledge, stood the small square unpainted building which Judson Phillips had called home.

With Cole at his heels, Giles Leavitt tried first the front, then the back door; failing of entrance by this means he forced a locked window in the kitchen and clambered inside.

"Nothing here," he commented after

a glance around. "In either the bedroom or the front room, then. Hold on, Ray. Better let me go ahead. And remember, I don't want anything disturbed—might destroy some evidence."

Two doors opened from the kitchen, both of them being closed. The deputy sheriff turned the knob of the one leading to the living room, and threw it open.

"There he is!" cried Cole.

The dead man lay in a crumpled position beside an overturned chair, in a pool of blood that had issued from a gaping wound in his forehead. Beside him, on the floor, was an old-fashioned six-chambered revolver. It required only a superficial examination to confirm the fact that he was dead.

The room was only dimly lighted, so Leavitt's first care, after another cautioning word to his companion, was to put up the ragged shades at both windows. The bright sunlight which flooded in emphasized the gruesome horror on the floor.

"He must have been sitting in that chair when he was shot," commented Leavitt, "and toppled it over with him when he fell. Hello! What's this?"

On the bare board table which stood between the two windows lay a sheet of paper. It was unfolded, and without touching it or disturbing it in any way, the deputy sheriff read the wording which it contained:

I'm just sick of everything, so I'm going to end it all. Send my body to Harrison Phillips, my nephew, at Goldsboro, and I want my farm, such as it is, to go to him, too.

JUNSON PHILLIPS.

"It's not a murder at all, then," said Cole, who had looked over Leavitt's shoulder. A disappointed tone was discernible in his voice. Since the man was dead anyway, he felt cheated that there was not to be more of a mystery.

"It seems that way," agreed Leavitt. "Did you know the old man?"

"No. I bet I haven't seen him

more'n a dozen times in all the five years he's lived here. He never came to town."

"Nor I either," said the deputy. "He kept pretty much to himself, I guess. Isn't that the doctor's car outside, Ray? If it is, you might as well go back. He'll take me with him when he goes." Ray Cole departed, eager to be the first to bring the authentic news to the village, and Doctor Brastow came in. With a nod and a word for Leavitt, he knelt immediately beside the body and made a thorough examination.

"H'm. By the condition of the wound and the coagulated blood," said the coroner, "I should say he's been dead twenty-four hours anyway, and more than likely for a longer time. That bullet wound is sufficient to have caused death, and no doubt did so. No other marks on the body except some bruises probably made by his fall. Face blackened and scorched with powder—shot must have been fired at very close range. This pistol was right here where it is now? One chamber has been fired. That was probably the shot that killed him. Finding the bullet might make it more certain. No signs of a struggle—nothing disturbed except the chair. You haven't rearranged anything, Leavitt?"

"Not a thing," said Giles. "Nothing's been touched. But look at this." He indicated the note on the table.

The doctor read the note and nodded. "That's the story, then. The position of the wound is such that it might have been made by himself. I'll take this paper along to show at the inquest. As a matter of form we'd better verify the writing and the signature. Let's see if we can find any other sample of his writing in the place."

"Now that you've seen everything as it was," said Leavitt, "I'd like to look around a bit."

"Go to it," replied the coroner, as he searched the drawer of the table.

None of the three rooms was carpeted, and the furnishings were so meager that the search promised to be a short one. Not that Giles Leavitt really expected to find anything: the death was evidently a suicide. But he felt the importance of his first case, and wished to be as thorough as possible.

The room of the tragedy netted no results other than those already obtained; likewise the bedroom. The kitchen, too, was disappointing; but it was there that Giles noticed a thing which impressed him as slightly peculiar. On the shelf which served as a pantry he found a tin cup and a cracked earthen bowl full of salt.

Though feeling that his labor was gratuitous, Leavitt tried to frame a plausible explanation for the circumstance. Why should Phillips have emptied his supply of salt into these containers—particularly in view of the evident scarcity of both cups and bowls? The solution came almost with the question: he had wanted to use the salt bag for something. For what? His search had not disclosed the missing bag; but he attached no importance to that fact. There were many uses to which it might have been put, and it might be anywhere about the little farm; or he might have used it to carry something to town in.

The floors were all immaculately clean: apparently the dead man had been, in his way, a good housekeeper. But near the kitchen door, and the more noticeable because of the general neatness, was a small scattering of dirt. Giles knelt to examine it, and picked up a few grains in his fingers. It was fresh earth, just such as might have been carried in on dirty shoes; but the fact that none of it was crushed flat on the floor, and that it did not follow the outline of a footprint, seemed to argue against that. It looked rather as if it had been spilled. And mixed

in with it were some minutely gleaming white particles. The deputy sheriff collected a number of these and placed them on his tongue. The taste told him that it was salt.

The coroner, meanwhile, had not been able to find so much as a scrap of writing anywhere in the house, except the note. "Of course," he said, "the old fellow didn't have occasion to do much writing. No doubt we can find something of his in the village. He hadn't many friends, I guess; nobody seemed to know him very well."

"And he hadn't any near neighbors, either," said Leavitt, "except that cripple who lives a quarter of a mile up the road; so of course nobody would have heard the shot. Let's have another look at that letter."

It was written in ink on a piece of manila wrapping paper, such as might have come wrapped around groceries. The writing was bold and rather uneven—the kind of script that was natural with a man who worked with his hands and used a pen only occasionally.

"By the way," asked Giles suddenly. "You found the pen and ink, of course?"

The doctor was startled at the question. "Why, no, now that you mention it. Strange, too; but I'm sure there are no such articles in this room."

"And they aren't in either of the other rooms," said Leavitt. "Something wrong there. He couldn't have written this note without them. I wonder if anybody could have been in here before we came, and taken them with him? But what object could he have had?"

"Or if he'd planned his suicide in advance, and wrote the note somewhere else?" suggested Doctor Brastow.

"Or if somebody else wrote it?" hazarded Giles.

They could think of nothing more to do at the house, so they left in the coroner's car, making a stop at the

house of Malcolm Utley, the nearest neighbor.

Utley's household arrangements were similar to those of the dead man. He too lived alone; but his little house was by no means so neatly kept as the other. Garments, dishes, cooking utensils were in evidence in the front room; and the man evidently had just risen from a rickety couch that stood against the wall.

The man greeted his visitors with an apology for the evident confusion. "I been feeling mighty poorly the last two or three days," he explained. "I've been lying down; and I ain't had nobody to help me out. I thought maybe Jud Phillips would be over. He often does drop in."

"Jud Phillips is dead," announced the coroner.

"Dead! Land sakes! How? When? You just come from there? You're a doctor, ain't you?"

"I'm the coroner. He's been dead perhaps as long as two days. We thought you might help us to fix the time more exactly, being his nearest neighbor. You might have heard the shot."

"The shot?"

"He was killed by a bullet from a revolver," explained Leavitt. "Probably shot himself."

"So that's why he ain't been near me," said Utley, more to himself than to the others. "No, I didn't hear any shot. With my doors and windows closed I couldn't have heard it anyway, even if the wind was right. Well, poor old Jud!"

"You knew him well?" asked Leavitt.

"Pretty well. You see, him an' me was both alone, an' bein' so near, we used to help each other out quite a bit. He wasn't any too husky, on account of his age—must have been nigh onto seventy—an' I ain't so handy with this stumpy as if I had a whole hand." He

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waved his right arm before them, with its crippled hand from which all the fingers and a part of the thumb were missing.

"I see," said the coroner. "Notice anything suspicious about him lately?"

"Why, no. He was never what you'd call a cheerful fellow—never had much to say, neither. He might have been feelin' blue at times: livin' alone like this is likely to make a fellow feel that way. I get that way myself. Poor old Jud!"

The doctor offered his professional aid if it were needed; but on being informed that Utley was "feeling smarter now," he and his companion departed, after asking the cripple to keep an eye on the Phillips house until the undertaker arrived.

At the village the two alighted at Ingalsby's grocery store. "Maybe Cyrus has got something that the old fellow wrote," suggested Leavitt. "You've got the letter with you?"

By the merest chance Ingalsby was able to supply them with what they were after. Phillips, who almost never came to town, wrote out his order for groceries each week, and handed it to the boy when he delivered his load. These orders were of course thrown away; but the one for the current week had been attached to the goods for purposes of checking; and the grocer had removed these from the wagon after the boy's hurried return. They now lay in a pile behind his counter, with the slip of paper on top. Eagerly the two men picked it up and compared it with the letter they had.

"This is his writing, all right," concluded Doctor Brastow. "There's no signature on this order, but the writing's the same—and it's even on the same kind of paper."

"And here's the same kind of paper right here," said Leavitt, tearing a piece of wrapping paper from the roll at the end of the counter. "Not much doubt,

then, that he wrote the note, and that he killed himself. I suppose we might take them over to the cashier of the bank—he's a sort of an expert on handwriting."

"Bank's closed now," said the doctor, looking at his watch. "I'll do that in the morning, though. I'll be going after the undertaker. So long for the present."

Giles Leavitt retired to the porch to think things over. This was by no means easy, as a curious crowd kept firing questions at him; so he excused himself and started for a walk, refusing company. Like Ray Cole, he was rather disappointed at the simplicity of the tragedy. He would not for the world have wished any harm to Judson Phillips or any other man; but since he was dead anyway, he could hardly keep from wishing that the death had occurred in a manner that required ferreting out, and that would give him a chance to employ his deductive powers and make a record in his office as deputy sheriff. The identification of the handwriting on the suicide note had been a disappointment to him. Without that, there would have been a possibility of complications. And, for that matter, what was the meaning of the salt, and the dirt on the floor—and the absence of pen and ink? Nothing involving human agency happens without a reason: did the reason for these apparently unimportant facts have any bearing on the tragedy?

He stepped into the village hotel to telephone to his chief, who lived in the next town. The sheriff listened to his story, including the puzzling details, and decided that there was no need for him to come in person. "You just keep your eyes open, Giles," he said. "You never can tell what might come up, however simple it seems. And you'd better get some one to take turns with you in watching the house until after the inquest."

As Leavitt came out of the booth, the proprietor of the hotel called to him. "There's a young lady upstairs that says she's Phillips' niece," he said. "Got in on the afternoon train from Goldsboro, she says. She heard about the suicide from somebody out on the street. My wife's up there with her now. Want to see her?"

"I guess I'd better," said Giles.

He went to the room indicated and knocked; at a summons to come in, he entered.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, on which she had evidently been lying, was a girl of about nineteen. Her eyelids were swollen and red from weeping, her hair was disarranged, and her breathing even yet was punctuated by an occasional sob. Yet Giles registered an opinion then and there that she was decidedly good to look upon, and he bewailed the fact that he should have had to meet her under such painful circumstances.

The hostess, stout, capable, and comforting, rose to introduce him. "This is out deputy sheriff, dearie. Mr. Leavitt."

The girl held out her hand to acknowledge the introduction. "You're Mr. Phillips' niece?" he asked, thrilling at the touch.

"He was my great-uncle—my grandfather's brother," she said, correcting him. "Oh, Mr. Leavitt! I can't believe it. It seems so horrible. And he hadn't an enemy on earth. What reason could any one have had for killing him?"

"Killing him?" repeated Giles, mystified. "Why, he killed himself. I thought you knew."

The girl jumped to her feet and stared at him wide-eyed. "Killed himself? Uncle Jud? Oh, no. That is impossible!"

It was evident that her horror of such a thing was much greater than that excited by the idea of his murder. He tried to soothe her feelings.

"Of course the inquest hasn't been held yet, but that's the way it looks." He decided not to enter into any of the details, gruesome as they must be to her. "But what makes you say it's impossible?"

"Oh, he couldn't have done it—he wouldn't have done it. He wasn't that kind. And he had no reason to do such a thing."

"No money troubles?" suggested Giles, rather foolishly. He wanted to appear professional, but at sight of her evident distress he found it impossible to concentrate his mind on anything but a wild desire to comfort her somehow, to erase the marks of anguish from her face.

"Of course not," said the girl. "He wasn't very well off, of course, but he had enough; and he knew that he was always welcome to come and live at father's house, just as he did for a few years before he came here. And it isn't as if he didn't have anybody that cared for him."

"You?" suggested Leavitt.

"Yes—and dad and mother. I was always his favorite niece. Why, he seemed so anxious to have me come and see him—he telegraphed me last Monday. But I had some other engagements, and couldn't come until to-day. If only I'd come, maybe this wouldn't have happened." She covered her face with her slim hands, and seemed to be about to burst into a paroxysm of tears. The hostess supported her with her mothering arm.

"He telegraphed you to come and visit him?" exclaimed Giles. The question roused the girl from her anguished thoughts more effectually than any intentional comforting could have done.

"Yes, last Monday. Oh, don't you see now—that almost proves it, doesn't it? That he was—mur—murdered. He wouldn't have wanted me to visit him this week if——"

"Right you are, miss!" exclaimed Giles. "That is an important fact. And, if it'd do you any good to feel that I——" he stammered, thoroughly stricken with the appealing glance she had given him. "Oh, well! What I mean to say is, if your uncle did meet his death by foul play, I'm going to track down the man that did it if it takes from now till doomsday, and if it takes every drop of my—— Well, good-by, miss! I've got to be off." He slammed the door and stalked off downstairs.

He was not too hurried, however, to stop at the desk to see if she had registered; and he found, in a schoolgirl script, her name, "Nina Phillips."

"Well, at least I know her name," he thought grimly. "Now I've got to get to work and forget her. This business is too serious to allow personal feelings to enter it." And, though he scorned himself for doing it, he called up the telegraph office and asked the operator about the telegram. The operator remembered sending the message on the date which the girl had mentioned; and after a search through his files he found it, and read it over the telephone to the deputy sheriff. It was condensed within the conventional ten words, and was simply an invitation to the girl to come and spend a few weeks with him. Phillips had appeared in person to send it. And that was only three days ago.

It was indeed strange if within twenty-four hours after sending such a message, the old man had taken his own life!

Again he sought Ray Cole and was driven out to the Phillips house, where he planned to spend the night; and as Cole had expressed his willingness, it was arranged that he should relieve Giles early the next morning.

The deputy sheriff prepared himself a supper from the dead man's meager stores, and sat far into the night trying to construct some explanation of all the things that were puzzling him. In

a case so obviously a suicide he did not wish to make himself appear ridiculously over-officious; yet he was far from satisfied. Anything out of the ordinary course, he doggedly insisted, much have some sufficient reason; and the mere fact that it might appear to be of no importance did not alter the truth at all. In fact, perhaps its very unimportance signified that it was a valuable hint; for any criminal would naturally try to conceal the big clues, and in so doing might overlook the little ones. The missing ink bottle, for example: it was a small thing, one easy to forget or overlook. The coroner, in fact, had overlooked its absence until his attention was called to it. If Judson Phillips had merely written his farewell note and killed himself, where could the pen and ink have gone? And when—before or after his death? And above all, why?

But if all was not as simple as it appeared on the surface, then it meant just one thing: that somebody—some "person or persons unknown," to paraphrase the language of a coroner's court—had guilty knowledge of Phillips' death, either as murderer, or as accomplice or accessory to his self-destruction.

Finally, after thinking in circles for hours, the deputy sheriff lay down, fully dressed except for his shoes, on the bed in the chamber, and quickly fell asleep. And strangely enough, his dreams were not at all of the gruesome display in the next room, but of a girl with slender hands and trustful eyes that bored into his very being.

At six o'clock he awoke with a start as Ray Cole entered the room. "Say, you've certainly got your nerve!" exclaimed the latter aghast, on being informed that Giles had spent the night in sleep in the dead man's bed. "I wouldn't have slept there for a hundred dollars! Well I s'pose you'll be glad to get back to town and have some

breakfast. You can drive the car in if you want to—only don't forget to come and get me."

"You'll have plenty of company today, I guess," said Leavitt. "I'll probably be 'round here most of the day myself."

Before departing for the village, however, Giles took a few minutes to examine the ground around the house. It was in the main a poor, rocky sort of soil, and except for about a quarter of an acre planted with garden truck, was not under cultivation. In numerous places, where some ledge cropped out, not even grass grew. There was a small ramshackle barn a few hundred feet from the house, and he explored it, but without result. From the house a well-worn path led down to the roadway where Cole's car stood, and another, less defined, branched from it toward the house of Malcolm Utley, the cripple. This bore out the latter's statement that the two had been fairly intimate, and went frequently back and forth to lend assistance to each other.

Giles was about to give up further examination of the premises when he recollected that he had seen in the barn a spade caked with rather fresh earth. He had found in the garden no indication of recent spading or digging; and the specks of earth on the kitchen floor came into his mind. Somewhere on the place there ought to be signs of digging; and quite possibly it might have a connection with the riddle. He tramped the little farm again more carefully, and came upon a place, shielded from his first observation by hummocks of the rough ground on all sides of it, where there was a filled-in hole of about three feet in circumference. His first thought was that it was a well which had been dug and then filled in and abandoned because it had not struck water; but he resolved to investigate it further at his leisure.

When he had arrived at the village

and taken a hurried breakfast, he proceeded to the bank. The cashier had just arrived, and had not seen the specimens of writing on which he was to give his opinion. A few minutes later, however, Doctor Brastow entered the bank, and the three men went into session, Leavitt having already explained what was wanted.

The banker compared the two bits of paper, first with his unaided eye, then with the help of a small reading glass. "The same," he said conclusively. "Both written by the same hand."

"By Judson Phillips?" asked the coroner.

"Can't say as to that. He had no account here, and I haven't even seen his signature before. Only, if he wrote this grocery order, then he wrote the letter too."

"That settles it, then," said the coroner. "We know he wrote the grocery order." Leavitt made a mental reservation to this statement: it was quite possible that he had written neither. He took the two papers as the cashier handed them back, and glanced idly at them.

"One thing more," continued the banker. "By the way the pen moved over the paper, I should say that he was probably left-handed; either that, or else he had a very unusual way of holding his pen."

"It might be valuable to know that," commented Leavitt. He had noted on the order for groceries which he held that one of the items was for one bag of table salt. And that was this week's order! Remembering the cup and the bowl full of salt in the kitchen of the Phillips house, he wondered what in the world the man could have been wanting with more. The only explanation he could think of was that he wanted another salt bag.

From the bank he turned his steps to the hotel. Though he was unwilling

to admit it even to himself, he had been looking forward all the morning to this visit. And yet Nina Phillips—with the exception of the crippled Utley—was the only person between whom and the dead man there had been any connection shown, and so, theoretically, he ought to look on her as a suspect. And her insistence that her uncle had not died by his own hand—was that not constructive evidence of some knowledge which she was concealing?

But all such thoughts were forgotten the moment he came into her presence. It was in the ladies' parlor of the hotel this time, instead of her own room; and she presented quite a different appearance from yesterday. The lines of grief were subdued so as to be scarcely discernible; the eyes no longer were fringed with the red of weeping; and having had time to prepare for visitors, she presented a vision of feminine loveliness which he could hardly reconcile with the stricken girl of his last interview. She now seemed older, too, and more self-possessed. Wisely, Giles decided to be as brief and businesslike as possible.

The girl had some questions to ask him, first, as to the progress which he had made in unraveling the case; questions which he evaded rather than answered. She reiterated her opinion that her uncle had been the victim of a crime, and expressed her determination to remain in the village until it was cleared up, her father, whom she had apprised by telephone, approving.

"Was your uncle left-handed?" asked Giles at his first opportunity. "Don't think the question silly, Miss Phillips. I have a good reason for asking it."

"Nothing could be silly that has any connection with him," she said. "No; he wasn't."

"You're quite sure?"

"Positive. I would certainly know, because he lived with us so long; and we were great chums, he and I."

"But did he write with his left hand?" persisted Leavitt. He had known of people who, left-handed in most matters, wrote with the right hand; and it was possible that Judson Phillips reversed this process.

"No," said the girl, evidently puzzled. "As a matter of fact——"

Giles interrupted her by taking from his pocket the grocery order and spreading it out. "Is this his writing?"

"No. He couldn't write at all."

"Not write at all?" exclaimed Leavitt in surprise.

"No. He could read print, of course; but aside from that he was a very uneducated man. He was quite sensitive about it, too, and didn't want people to know it. I used to do all his writing—the little that was necessary—and even sign his name, and he passed it for his own. I was going to teach him; but he hadn't progressed very far with it when he left father's and came here."

The deputy sheriff turned this information over in his mind. "Then that would be why he telegraphed you to come, instead of writing?" he asked.

"Why, no," answered Nina. "I've had letters from him before—quite regularly, and recently, too. I thought it strange that he should use the telegraph, especially as his message wasn't very urgent."

"You say you had had a letter from him recently?" asked Giles, feeling that he was on the track of something important, and racking his brains to find the connection that would make everything clear. "Didn't he make any mention then of your coming to see him?"

The girl thought a moment. "He may have," she admitted, "but not a definite invitation. He had always said that he was going to have me come for a long visit some time, but that he hadn't got his house fixed up well enough yet to entertain me. He used to say, half jokingly, in his letters, that when he made his fortune I was to

come and live with him. So he may have mentioned it, in that way, in his last letter."

"When he had made his fortune!" exclaimed Leavitt. "Of course, as you say, he was joking; but I wonder—his sending you a telegram to come might have meant that he had made his fortune, or at least had some piece of good luck."

"It might," said Nina eagerly. "Because if he'd just planned for my visit in general, he wouldn't have arrived at the decision to invite me so suddenly as to telegraph only a few days after he had sent me a letter in which he didn't mention it."

"Then, too," supplemented Giles, warming to a possible clew, "he might for some reason have wanted to invite you without the knowledge of the person who wrote his letters—whoever that may be. And it seems to me it's pretty important for us to find out."

"Let me see that paper again," said the girl. "Yes, this looks like the same handwriting as that in his letters to me, though I can't be sure."

"One thing we are sure of," concluded Leavitt, "and that is that somebody did quite a bit of writing for your great-uncle. And that presupposes some degree of intimacy, and that he saw him frequently. Yet he had practically no acquaintances that we can discover. Did he ever mention any friends here to you, Miss Phillips?"

"No," replied Nina after a moment's thought. "He spoke once or twice of a neighbor——"

"Was his name Utley?" asked Giles. "Malcolm Utley?"

"That seems like it," said the girl. "It was a peculiar name."

"Eureka!" exclaimed Leavitt, jumping to his feet. "I've got it!—or I think I have. But I beg your pardon, Miss Phillips, for showing such silly enthusiasm while you are mourning the death of your uncle. Only, I'm on the

trail now, and I'm going to get your uncle's murderer just as sure as fate—thanks to you."

"All the credit is your own, Mr. Leavitt," said the girl, erasing a momentary spasm of grief from her face. "I have every confidence in you. And if you do," she added impulsively, laying her hand on his arm, "I'll—I'll just love you!"

"You don't mean that, my dear girl," said Giles, drawing away from the intoxication of her nearness. "But I wish you did—and I'm going to try to make you!" He dashed from her presence and down the stairs without awaiting the effect of his words. He felt certain now that Judson Phillips was no suicide, and that he was rapidly closing the net around his murderer.

He shuddered at the thought of how the old man, by his perfectly innocent and childlike endeavor to conceal the fact of his own illiteracy, had placed the power over his very life in the hands of another—and that other a man who had the fiendish wit to take advantage of it.

Yet he realized that even if his suspicions were correct, he had much still to do to make out a plausible case. Not only had he discovered nothing in the way of a motive for the crime, but he had as yet no evidence that would justify a hard-headed jury in convicting his suspect. If he did not clinch his case, however, it would certainly not be because an incentive was lacking. He thought of the girl, and the rashly promised reward, and determined to do all in his power to earn it.

He made inquiries from a number of people in the village as to Malcolm Utley's antecedents. His guarded questionings led into a blind alley, however: the cripple was as much of a mystery as Phillips himself. Nobody knew him well, and no one could state positively where he had come from, though sev-

eral were of the indefinite opinion that he was a Westerner. He had settled on his farm a couple of years before the arrival of his neighbor Phillips. He was evidently not much of a farmer, but his previous occupation was unknown. Well, there was one way to find out, and that was to ask him. But that would put him on his guard, and it would be well to exhaust all other sources of information first. He cranked Ray Cole's car once more, and drove out to the scene of the tragedy.

At the house he found the undertaker in charge, and was informed that Doctor Brastow would be along shortly. Giles determined to satisfy his curiosity as to the filled-in well which he had discovered; and to prevent any possibility of being surprised at his task by Utley, he took Ray Cole into his plan. Together they got the spade from the barn and made for the spot where the digging had taken place. On their way they held the shovel in such a manner that it could not be seen from the direction of the cripple's farm; the spot itself was, as Giles previously had found out, invisible from all sides. The noon whistles at the village could be heard as he set to work.

Spadeful after spadeful of the soft earth he turned up, without result. Evidently his conjecture that it was a well was correct. But so long as the earth remained soft, he kept on. He wished to reach what had been the bottom of the original digging; there, if at all, he would find some clew. Of course he might be on a wrong trail; even if the well had been connected with the tragedy, it was hardly likely that it would in itself contain evidence. So far as he could reconstruct events, something dug up from the ground had been placed in a salt bag; this bag had then been removed from Phillips' house, and in the removal some grains of earth had fallen to the floor with some of the salt that clung around the mouth of

the bag. But whatever it was, it was far from likely that it had been buried again, and in the same spot.

He reached the bottom of the hole in disgust at his fruitless and laborious exercise. He gave one more jab with the spade, and threw the earth on top of the pile. Then he lifted himself out of the hole.

Ray Cole had been watching him with amused interest. "Find anything, Giles?" he asked. "Say, what's that funny yellow stone you just turned up?"

Leavitt glanced at it in disgust. "Nothing, I guess. I don't know much about stones; but that wasn't what I was looking for, anyway."

At that moment the doctor, who had been directed from the house to where they were, appeared. "What's that about a funny stone?" he asked. "I've got a collection of minerals, and if it's any native stone that I haven't got, I want a specimen."

Cole selected for him a piece of the stone, a dirty yellow in color. The doctor looked at it, then took out his pocket knife and cut into it. It was so soft that he could cut entirely through the lump.

"I'd say that it's the ore of some metal," he ventured, putting the specimen in his pocket. "Copper, probably—though I never knew of any in this part of the country."

Giles Leavitt straightened up. "When he made his fortune," he murmured to himself. "Come over to Utley's with me, doctor. I've got a pretty good hunch, and I want to ask him some more questions."

"About Phillips' death?" asked the coroner, noting the eagerness in Leavitt's voice. "You think he knows something that he hasn't told us?"

"Yes—a great deal. I won't explain now, because I'm not quite sure; but you let me do the talking, and we'll see.

For one thing, I've learned that Judson Phillips couldn't write."

"Couldn't write?" exclaimed the coroner. "Then that means that he didn't——"

"Exactly. But I think before we're through with that man Utley, we'll be a great deal wiser. Come on."

The cripple seemed mildly astonished at being visited by them again so soon, but professed himself willing to tell anything he knew.

"All right," said Leavitt. "I'm going to have you repeat what you told us yesterday, and I'll copy it down and let you sign it. That will save your having to testify at the inquest."

He took a small notebook from his coat pocket and drew a chair up to the table. "Have you got a pen and some ink?" he asked. "I left my fountain pen at home."

The cripple brought the desired articles from his bureau. "I won't be able to sign that paper, though," he said craftily.

"Why not?" asked Giles, looking up in surprise.

Utley waved his maimed hand in explanation. "Can't write without fingers."

"That's right," agreed Leavitt. "I hadn't thought of that. How did you muss up your hand, by the way?"

"Hatchet. I was chopping some wood for kindling, and the block slipped and the blade came down on my hand."

"I see," said Giles. "You're left-handed, then. You must have been holding the hatchet in your left hand."

The man looked at him uneasily. "Yes," he admitted.

"Then tell me," asked Giles pleasantly, "why it is that the injury to your right hand prevents your writing with the other?"

The question took effect. Utley stammered and changed color, and it was very evident that he had been lying—and also that he had been taken

completely by surprise. This cross-examination could not have been anticipated by him.

"Come, now, Utley," said Leavitt smoothly, "something's wrong there. You must have been mistaken when you told how you lost your hand, weren't you?"

The man, for want of a better way out of his dilemma, seized on the offered explanation. "Yes, that's it," he said.

"Well, then, how did you lose it?" persisted Leavitt.

"I was settin' off a blast once, an' it went off in my hand," replied the cripple; and from the readiness of the explanation, Leavitt concluded it must be the truth.

"Oh! You're a mining man, then?" he asked quickly. It did not, of course, follow; but it fitted into the deputy sheriff's theory; and from the agitation which the question caused in Utley, it must have struck close home.

"No, I never said I was," said the man.

"Just pass over that piece of ore you've got in your pocket, will you, doctor?" asked Leavitt. "Look here, my man. Do you know what this is?"

Utley regarded it with ill-concealed terror in his eyes. "No. Where'd you get it?" he countered.

"In a very peculiar place," said Leavitt deliberately. "I found it in a—salt bag!"

The man jumped to his feet and looked around wildly. "You found that?" he cried. "I don't know anything about it!"

The deputy sheriff had followed the involuntary glance which the man had given toward the couch. He wanted to find that salt bag; and by pretending that he had already done so, he hoped he had trapped the man into betraying himself. The bag would be very tangible evidence.

"Sit down, Utley," he commanded

sternly. "You're under arrest for the murder of Judson Phillips!"

The man collapsed into the chair, white and trembling. Scarcely less surprised than he, was the coroner, who had not been prepared for such a dramatic revelation of Leavitt's summons to the interview.

"I've got all the evidence in my hands," went on Giles. "The evidence you thought you'd concealed—the evidence that's going to convict you. You thought you were safe when you left that suicide note, but you forgot that there was neither pen nor ink in Phillips' house. You have claimed that you can't write, yet you've got writing materials here. What for? Sure enough, you can't write with your maimed hand, but that suicide note was written by a left-handed man.

"You knew that Phillips had discovered copper on his land, while digging a well. Perhaps you were there when he found it. So you killed him, and concealed all the ore that had been taken out, with a view, I suppose, to buying his farm after his estate was settled, when nobody but yourself would know that it contained valuable minerals.

"Utley, you're the meanest, most cold-blooded scoundrel I ever hope to meet—to murder, in cold blood, an old man, a man who had been your nearest friend, for money."

"It wasn't cold-blooded," protested Utley, who had recovered from the first shock of the accusation. "You've got me, all right—that bag of ore did it. You must have come in here awful quiet last night, to get it without waking me up. But I tell you now, and it's the truth, that I never planned to kill him."

"Let's have the whole story, then," suggested Doctor Brastow. "It can't hurt you any, and may help."

"I helped him dig a well," began Ut-

ley. "When we'd got down about five feet he turned up some of that copper ore like this piece here. He didn't know what it was, an' didn't pay no attention to it; but I knew, 'cause I was a mining man once, just like you said. I prospected for fifteen years, just before I quit and come here; an' always I played in rotten luck. Why, say, hundreds of nights—yes, thousands—I'd dreamed about makin' my big strike some time; an' it never came. An' then, to have old Phillips turn up a rich vein right here on his farm, an' not even know what it was—well, I felt like it was mine, because without me knowin' what the stuff was, it wouldn't have been no good to anybody.

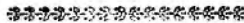
"But I told him. I didn't aim, then, to do him out of it. I thought maybe we's go in partners, an' both be rich. We was goin' to send off some of the ore, secret, an' have it assayed, before we told anybody about it. But old Jud didn't seem to take to the idea at ail that I had any claim in it. The idea of all that money a-layin' there under his ground seemed to make him suspicious. I went over there the night before we was goin' to send the stuff away, an' had some plain words about my right to it. I'd seem him sneak off to town that afternoon, an' I followed him an' seen him go into

the telegraph office. So I thought he was sendin' for some expert to come, an' was goin' to go ahead with the mine an' leave me out in the cold. I was mad, I admit; an' he made me madder. But that pistol—it was his own. He took it out an' pointed it at me an' told me to get out of his house. I didn't know if it was loaded or wasn't, but I clinched with him, an' in the rough-an-tumble it went off. I seen right away that he was dead.

"So that's how I come to write that note, knowin' that nobody'd heard the shot, an' that I had plenty of time. An' since he was dead, I thought if I hid the stuff so's no one would find it, I could buy the farm, like you said, and nobody be the wiser when I discovered a mine on the place."

"Well," said Giles, "you'll have to come to town with us now. Maybe the jury'll make it manslaughter, if you can tell a good straight story. I'll take that bag of ore as an exhibit for the trial." To the mystification of his prisoner, he crossed to the couch, and, turning back the covers, lifted a bag from where it had been embedded in the mattress.

"And now," he said smiling, "as soon as I've turned my prisoner over to the jail, I'm going to claim—or rather put in a preliminary application for—my reward."



TRIAL CONDUCTED BY TELEPHONE

HAVING ridden his motor cycle through the streets of Seymour, Indiana, without a license, Dewey Mails, of Columbus, was served in the latter city with a warrant for his arrest. An officer from Seymour apprehended Mails and took him to police headquarters in Columbus.

There he told the officials that he would lose considerable money and valuable time from his work if he were compelled to go to the other city to stand trial. The police were sympathetic, and, calling Mayor Swope, of Seymour, by telephone, they explained the situation to him. Thereupon the mayor agreed to have Mails plead guilty to the charge against him by telephone, and fined him one dollar and costs. The careless motor cyclist paid the money to the Seymour policeman and was at once released.

Miss Mystery

By *James Edward Hungerford*

Author of "The Girl He Forgot," etc.

WHO was the girl, and why had she come to Willowville?

This was the enigma that was exciting the curiosity of most of the town's population, particularly of the young unmarried men, the middle-aged bachelors, and the widowers, who, having "been through the mill" once, or more, were only waiting an opportunity to be ground into still finer grist in the matrimonial pulverizer. The female contingent of this more-or-less thriving little community was likewise stimulated—intoxicated, in fact—with curiosity.

Who was the girl?

The register at the Jones House told only that she was "Miss Sally Smith of Chicago." The young lady herself told nothing.

Why had she come to Willowville?

For her health? Hardly. She was a picture of pink-cheeked plumpness and physical perfection. And Willowville was no health resort. Was she thinking of going into business—opening a millinery shop, or a dressmaking establishment on Main Street, perhaps? Not likely, as she had patronized "The Parisian" the second day she was in town, and purchased a hat, and other habiliments. She ignored real-estate offices, as well as the "real-estaters" themselves. She had no friends in town, apparently, as she visited no one, and received no visitors.

Willowville began to sit up and take notice.

The first Sunday after the young lady's arrival she attended morning services—wafted down the aisle, a pink-checked vision of demure loveliness, and out again, immediately after the last "Amen." Before the Reverend Blythe could cover the distance between his pulpit and the church entrance, to welcome the newcomer into his flock, as was his usual custom, she was gone.

During the service she had looked neither to the left nor right, but kept her gaze focused circumspectly on the exhorter, and upon her hymn book. Some of the elderly ladies described her as looking "a bit wistful, poor dear," while a number of the younger ones remarked upon her "vampirish" appearances, and were quite certain she had a "past."

As for the unmarried boys—the young ones and the old ones alike—the game was on! Livery rigs and flivvers were ready for action. Flowers and candy and soda-fountain exhilarations were on tap. All that remained was a "come-on" sign from the young lady herself.

Which was not forthcoming. Miss Smith was obviously content with her own society. In fact, she appeared to be quite engrossed in herself. She took her meals alone in the hotel dining room, and went alone on her walks down the quiet village streets, along the lanes through the woods and meadows, and over the green hills. She always appeared to be deeply preoccupied.

Though the town at large ogled and

"lamped" her, smirked, stared, smiled, and sneered at her, she apparently saw no one. She refused to be lured into the usual exchange of conventionalities with the hotel clerk, or the Jones' House proprietor. "Good morning" and "good evening" was the best—and all—they could elicit from her. She had paid her bill two weeks in advance, upon her arrival at the hotel. She ordered her meals, tipped the waitresses liberally, and smiled; nothing more.

A few of the town's imaginative matrons and romancing spinsters were quite certain that she had suffered some great secret sorrow, and had come to Willowville "to forget." Perhaps her husband—if she secretly possessed one—had deserted her, or eloped with an "affinity." Perhaps he had turned embezzler, and been sent to prison. Or maybe her lover had proved false, and married the other girl.

Gradually Miss Smith, of Chicago, became "Miss Mystery," and Willowville scratched its head figuratively, wrinkled its brow, and wondered—and fretted.

The town constable began to rubber-shoe around, looking knowing and mysterious, as though he had discovered something, or was just on the point of doing so. The villagers, in fact, rather looked to him for a solution of the enigma. Didn't they pay him to untangle mysteries? And what was more mysterious than a pretty, stylishly gowned young woman, who attended strictly to her own affairs, refused to become acquainted with any one, and went about alone, demure and preoccupied?

But if the object of all this curiosity was aware of the interest she was consciously or unconsciously arousing she gave no hint of it. She continued to maintain her quite unapproachable attitude, and nipped in the bud all attempts to get acquainted with her.

Which only served to make the vil-

lage maids and matrons more curious, and the village swains more amorous, and yet more determined to get acquainted.

A few of the bolder ones had the temerity to send her flowers, by having them slipped into her room during her absences. Whether she appreciated the gifts or not she gave no visible outward sign. She never wore them publicly, but the hotel clerk tipped off the senders that she put them—at least, some of them—in a vase on her bureau, or in her water pitcher. This, at least was encouraging!

"Ez" Banks, the constable, a middle-aged, bald-headed widower, was one of the flower senders. These posies he cultivated in his own little garden, which the late Mrs. Banks had originally planted and tenderly nurtured until the day of her demise. After that Ez tended them, with the chief object, apparently, of presenting them to the widows and maiden ladies and sweet young things of the village. But, too, many of them had known the late Mrs. Banks—who for years had aired her domestic tribulations—to accept Ez's floral offerings with any degree of seriousness. As a constable Ez was all right, but as a matrimonial proposition—none of Willowville's eligible ladies had any inclination to follow in the footsteps of the late Mrs. Ez.

Another of the flower senders was a quiet, grave-faced, serious-eyed young man who worked in his father's bank. Good looking, well-to-do in his own right, steady, and industrious, "Cal" Hawkins was, and had been for a number of years, besieged by the mothers of Willowville's marriageable daughters—and the daughters themselves.

But Cal had remained stoically unimpressed. He liked the girls and was friendly and gravely courteous to all, but none had so far managed to inveigle, bewitch, or intrigue him into popping the question. Truth of the

matter was that, locked away in the most sacred recess of his heart, Cal cherished an ideal—a girl that he had been waiting and yearning for, for years.

And "Miss Sally Smith, of Chicago," was it. The minute he saw her, he knew. She was the embodiment of all his dreams and fancies—the realization of his most cherished imaginings—the one girl.

Once he sent her flowers, and after that contented himself with just looking at her in an odd, preoccupied sort of way whenever she happened within his line of vision.

Twice she came to his window at the bank for change. He looked steadily into her eyes on both occasions, and once—the last time—he thought he saw the tiniest pink flush suffuse her face. But he wasn't sure of it. She pretended not to see him after that; probably she didn't.

So Cal dreamed on and waited. For all he knew she might be a clever crook or an adventuress. He didn't care. He knew that, whoever she was, he would never look into another pair of eyes like hers again. He didn't even examine the bills she handed him, to see if they were "phony." If they were, he would make them good out of his own pocket, and say nothing. He was hard hit, but nobody suspected it.

Miss Mystery had been in Willowville two weeks when a series of odd events began to occur. They had to do with the old Haydon residence on upper Elm Street—more commonly known in the village as "The Ghost House."

The Haydon residence had once, a number of years before, been the scene of a mysterious murder. Old Joshua Haydon, living there alone—a crabbed, miserly, eccentric recluse—had been found dead in his library, with a knife thrust over the heart. His old-fashioned strong box had been looted, and

the house ransacked of valuables, jewelry and the like, mostly heirlooms.

The murderer was never caught, although a number of detectives, brought down from the city, had worked tirelessly on the case. It was the common belief that a tramp had consummated the crime, but there was no proof of this. No one had been seen loitering about the place prior to the robbery, and the murderer had left no clews behind him. Some said it was the work of an expert cracksman, but in any event, the crime eventually passed into the category of unsolved mysteries.

The old house remained tenantless, and people began to shun it and whisper of odd lights and mysterious noises that emanated from it after nightfall. People hurried their steps in passing it. The garden became neglected and weed grown. The old iron-picketed fence surrounding the property grew rusted, and the gate sagged on its hinges and shrieked protestingly when opened. Creeping vines covered the house, and a brooding, ominous something seemed to settle upon it.

The property was in the hands of lawyers in a distant city. They had "For Rent" and "For Sale" signs set out on the premises—and then seemed to forget the place. At least none of them came to Willowville.

And the property was—or had been—the finest in town. Years before Joshua Haydon, reputed wealthy, had lavished a fortune upon the house and its furnishings, afterward bringing his bride there. She had died a few years later, leaving him alone and inconsolable. He had continued his residence there, cynical and embittered, seldom leaving the premises and shunning his fellow beings until the day of his death.

No one in Willowville wanted the property. The price asked for it was more than reasonable, but they couldn't have been paid to live there. Now and then strangers came down from the

city to inspect it, but for one reason or another they never invested. Perhaps it was the talk that impressed them unfavorably, or perhaps they had no inclination to take up residence in Willowville after seeing the town. In any event the years passed and the old place remained untenanted.

And it was more than ever shunned and breathlessly hurried by when Miss Mystery came to Willowville.

Chancing to pass The Ghost House one night, Constable Banks came to a sudden, startled pause. For a moment he stood motionless, peering into the dusk, his breath coming in short, sharp gasps; then, with his hands clutching the old iron-picketed fence, he leaned over, staring in dumfounded, incredulous amazement.

Miss Sally Smith, of Chicago, was calmly fitting a key into the front door of The Ghost House! A few moments later, with quick glances about her, she vanished within.

Constable Banks could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes. For a minute he stood staring dazedly; then, recovering from his astonishment somewhat, he climbed over the fence and crept through the shrubbery.

• What was the girl doing there? And at night? What errand could have led her away from the security and comfort of the hotel, to the old murder house? And where had she obtained the key that had admitted her?

These questions and many others crowded swiftly through the constable's dazed brain as he made his way cautiously through the weed-grown garden toward the house set far back in the premises.

Presently as he peered ahead he caught the sudden glimmer of a light filtering through the shuttered window of one of the rooms on the first floor—the very room in which old Joshua Haydon's dead body had been discovered—the library.

The constable's eyes widened with amazement. To think of a woman—a mere girl—having the nerve to enter there, to walk boldly into the room where a man had been brutally stabbed to death, and where the stain of his life's blood was still upon the carpet. It was inconceivable. Few men in the village would have had the courage to do it, and no woman would have even approached the house at that hour, let alone enter it. He himself would have thought twice before going into The Ghost House—into the murder room—at night.

Collecting his wits the constable crept as noiselessly as possible up to the window through which he had glimpsed the light, and applied an eye to one of the broken shutter panels. For a moment he stood staring incredulously, then a breath of astonishment escaped him.

Inside, the girl, her right hand clutching a candle, was bending over *examining the carpet*. In the flickering light her face was pale, tragic. The hand holding the candle shook visibly.

Constable Banks had no trouble in guessing at what she was looking. He had seen it a number of times himself. The first time was when he had discovered the body of old Joshua Haydon lying before the safe, years before, in a pool of his own life's blood, now but a dim, brown stain in the ancient carpet.

As the constable watched the girl presently straightened, and a few minutes later, after a quick survey about her, passed out of his range of vision, into one of the adjoining rooms.

Swiftly he crept around the house, but there were no broken panels in the shutter this time, and he could see nothing of what was going on inside. His face was ludicrous in its disappointment.

Of a sudden it occurred to him that, in his official capacity as guardian of the law and solver of mysterious, it

was up to him to find out what the girl was doing there. What right had she to trespass—as much as he admired her courage for doing so—upon the property of the late Joshua Haydon? It was his duty to make the young lady give an account of her actions, and a chance to solve the riddle of her identity, which had been puzzling Willowville for a fortnight. Also—Constable Banks admitted this latter with a fluttering heart—it was a chance to get acquainted with the young lady herself.

Straightening his necktie, settling his hat more firmly upon his head, and assuming his most official and dignified bearing, he strode around to the front door of the house.

To his surprise the key was still in the lock. Cautiously opening the door he stepped inside, but not so boldly as he had approached it.

The musty odor of ancient carpets, furniture, and hangings assailed his nostrils unpleasantly. His shoes sank sole deep in the thick rug that carpeted the hall, and a board creaked under his weight as he closed the door softly behind him. For a few minutes he stood waiting until his eyes became accustomed to the dark; then he made his way into the old library, the door of which was standing ajar, as the girl had left it upon entering.

Crossing the library he entered the adjoining room and came to a halt. It was dark, but the room beyond it was dimly illumined.

The constable approached the doorway, and as he reached the threshold, the girl who, candle in hand, was looking about her, glanced up with a startled expression.

"Oh!" she gasped, her eyes widening with fright. "Oh!"

"Nothin' to be afraid of," assured the officer, stepping into the room. "It's just me, miss—Constable Banks."

The girl, staring at him over the candle, instantly showed relief. "How—how you frightened me!" she exclaimed. "I thought it was——"

"A ghost?" interjected the constable, glancing about uneasily.

"No, I don't believe in ghosts," she answered in a decisive tone. "I thought perhaps it was some one who had followed me here—a tramp, maybe."

"No tramps around here," the constable snapped back. "The minute they land in town they land in the calaboose! I've been upholdin' the law in this here community goin' on twenty year, and"—he was eying her suspiciously—"nobody ever put nothin' over on me!"

"Which is much to your credit," answered the girl, who had somewhat recovered her composure. "I should judge that, as an officer of the law, you are quite capable and efficient."

For the moment the constable forgot his suspicions and beamed. It wasn't often that girls tendered him such frank flattery. "I am that, if I do say it myself," he returned. "Ain't nobody can come here to this town and"—his eyes again narrowed—"put over any funny business on me."

"As you remarked before," answered the girl in a slightly ironical tone. "You're right on the job at all times, I should imagine." A smile suddenly lighted her face. "To be perfectly frank, I was expecting you to follow me here."

The constable's surprise was obvious. "Oh, so you was, eh?" he blurted. "Well, then, as you was expectin' me, mebbe you'll be so kind as to tell me what you are doin' here?"

"With pleasure—under certain conditions," answered the girl quietly. "Sit down, constable. Let's talk matters over."

The constable, his face flushing with embarrassment, dropped awkwardly

into a chair. The girl set the candle on a table and seated herself. For several moments she sat eying him thoughtfully, then suddenly she leaned forward and spoke in a low, decisive tone.

"First," she said, "I want you to solemnly swear that, for the present, at least, you will not repeat one word I may say to you. This is absolutely necessary. If you refuse I will be forced to remain silent, and there is absolutely no charge upon which you can arrest me, not even for trespassing. As a matter of fact I have taken possession of this place—with the consent of the agents—and am going to reside here for a week, possibly longer."

The constable's face changed expression and he stared. "You're—what?" he managed to blurt out.

"Live here, in this house, for a week or more," repeated the girl evenly. "If you will swear not to repeat a word, I'll explain. Do you agree?"

For a minute the constable sat staring dazedly. Then: "It—it ain't no trick, is it? You ain't tryin' to put nothin' over on me, are you?"

"No," answered the girl, meeting his gaze candidly. "It in no way concerns you personally, nor will it in any way injure you in your capacity as constable of Willowville."

"You promise me that?"

"Absolutely."

"All right," said the constable. "I reckon I'm as game as the next." Whereupon he lifted his hand and solemnly took oath.

The girl drew nearer to him, and, leaning forward, began to talk rapidly in a low, confidential tone. As she spoke, varying shades of astonishment, incredulity, and bewilderment played over the constable's sun-burned and be-wrinkled countenance. His lips opened and closed several times, but no words issued from them.

"Well, I'll be gosh-darned!" he finally ejaculated.

The girl arose. "And now, constable, I must hurry back to the hotel. If you would care to escort me that far——"

"I reckon I would," broke in the constable, hopping to his feet. "Tickled to death, miss, I assure you."

The two walked from the house—out of the stagnant, oppressive atmosphere into the soft, flower-scented balm of the summer night. The constable took a long, deep breath and expelled it.

"Every time I come around here," he said in a husky whisper, "I get the idea that somethin' is watchin' me out of them library winders."

"Nonsense," said the girl. "It's just what happened there that makes you feel that way, and imagination does the rest. This ghost idea is absurd."

"Well, mebbe," returned the constable skeptically. "I sure do admire your nerve, miss. But believe me I wouldn't stay in that house alone overnight for a hundred dollars!"

"I'm hoping that it is going to be worth many times that to me," answered the girl quietly. "And I'm not in the least afraid."

Next day Miss Sally Smith, of Chicago, took up residence in The Ghost House.

As was to be expected it caused a sensation in Willowville. If her appearance in town and her subsequent behavior had occasioned comment and speculation, her latest move created a furor. Village tongues wagged unrestrainedly. The topic was discussed over front gates and back fences, in every house, shop, and gathering place in town.

Why had she moved into The Ghost House? No one, not even the wisest of the village sages, could venture a solution. But whatever her motive, her courage and fearlessness were marveled at. A woman, to live alone in such a

place—and at night! The feminine population gasped, shuddered, and thrilled. The thing was almost incredible.

Constable Banks was assailed on all sides by those insistent for an immediate solution. What did he know? Did he know anything? What did he suspect?

He knew nothing. He thought nothing. His attitude to all comers was the same—mum and mysterious.

And the occupant of The Ghost House maintained her former outward reserve and secretiveness. She gave no one the slightest chance to question her. In fact, she spent most of her time in the house of mystery, seeing no one save those who delivered groceries and the like at her door, and to those she said nothing save in a strictly business way.

Night found half the village surreptitiously peering over the iron-picketed fence surrounding the old house. But if the girlish tenant saw them or was annoyed by them she gave no evidence of it.

And always a light shone through the broken shutter panel of the library window. Evidently she was spending her evenings in the murder room.

Looking up from his work in the cashier's window one afternoon Cal Hawkins was surprised, startled, in fact to find her facing him. He had been thinking of her—as usual. In a businesslike tone she requested change for a fifty-dollar bill. He thrust the bill into the drawer, with scarcely a glance at it, and gave her the money.

"If anything should happen up there, and you need—er—anybody," he said quietly, "I am at your service."

"Thanks," said the girl. "But I can't imagine anything happening."

"Ghosts?" said Cal, a twinkle in his gray eyes.

"Nonsense!" answered the girl. "I don't believe in ghosts."

"Nor do I," answered Cal smilingly. "It's foolishness."

This time he was certain the girl flushed. "You're sensible, at least," she returned, and hurried from the bank.

At closing time Cal's balance was all wrong, and he had to work overtime to straighten it out.

On the way home late that night he passed The Ghost House, and stopping, rested his arms on the iron-picketed fence. "What a girl!" he muttered fervently. "Oh, what a girl!"

Suddenly he straightened. Peering into the dense foliage of the old garden he had detected a figure creeping through the bushes, a darker blot against the enveloping darkness.

Climbing over the fence stealthily he crept catlike through the shrubbery. Suddenly he came to a pause, staring breathlessly. A man's crouching figure was just ahead of him. The fellow whirled as Cal sprang upon him. Their bodies clashed, and for a time they struggled furiously. Then suddenly both broke away and stood peering at each other through the darkness, getting their breath in jerks.

"What the thunderation are you doin' here?" demanded the astonished voice of Constable Banks.

"And what the thunderation are *you* doing here?" returned Cal with equal surprise.

"Tryin' to solve the mystery," answered the constable sheepishly.

"Same here," answered Cal in a similar tone. "But I guess it's your job. Beg pardon, constable. I thought you were somebody else." Striding across the garden he vaulted the fence and was gone.

The constable grinned. "I can hang around here all I want to 'tryin' to solve the mystery," he muttered. "I'll bet Cal Hawkins is wishin' he had my job right now!"

A few days later the following half-

page advertisement appeared in the town's leading newspaper:

A NOTICE

TO THE CITIZENS OF WILLOWVILLE.

For the past several weeks I, the undersigned, have succeeded in keeping the curiosity of this town's good people at a veritable fever heat. I did this purposely and for a very good and practical reason, which I will now explain.

To begin with, Joshua Haydon, who met death in a tragic and mysterious manner in the house on Elm Street, was a distant relative of mine on my mother's side of the family. Eventually his property came into my hands, and the so-called "Ghost House" belongs to me as Joshua Haydon's sole surviving heir.

It has been my wish for some time to dispose of the property, as my interests are in the city in which I live. But no purchaser could be found by my agents for the reason that the property bore the unenviable reputation of being "haunted." This is absurd, of course, but, as matters have stood, the property is valueless. And yet it had the reputation at one time, I am told, of being the finest property in Willowville.

I decided to take matters in my own hands and see what could be done. I came to Willowville and acted in a "mysterious" manner, to draw attention to myself and arouse curiosity. When I succeeded in this I moved into the Haydon house.

My object was—and is—to prove to the people of this town that the idea of the house being haunted is ridiculous. If I, a girl, can live there alone and unprotected, then certainly others in this town—possible purchasers of the property, except for the ghost idea—can live there.

It is my desire to sell the property at once, and return to the city where I reside. Otherwise I would most certainly continue to live on in the Haydon house, as it is a most desirable place, and in every way an ideal home.

Those who are interested may apply to the owner.
MISS SALLY SMITH.

The property sold immediately. Cal Hawkins purchased it and proposed to the former owner. She accepted him. The Ghost House has been thoroughly renovated inside and out, and the young couple are now living there very happily.



MOTHER SAVES SONS FROM ARREST

ARMED with a revolver the mother of Grover and Edwin Bergdoll recently held at bay agents of the department of justice who sought to enter her home in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to arrest the two young men. Both have been wanted by the United States government since 1917 for evading the selective service draft.

For two years they had been at large, their whereabouts unknown, until a short time ago, when detectives saw them enter their mother's home. Then federal agents surrounded the house and demanded admittance. In response to their ringing of the doorbell Mrs. Bergdoll appeared with the revolver and declared she would shoot the first man who entered the house without proper search warrants.

The detectives waited for three hours before they were admitted, and then they found no one except Mrs. Bergdoll and her aged mother. They did, however, discover a trapdoor to an underground passage leading to the garage on the property, by means of which the Bergdoll boys are thought to have made their escape.

Headquarters Chat

WHILE we do not deny that there are policemen and prosecuting attorneys who are so depraved that they will conspire to send a fellow being to prison, or even to the gallows, when they know he is innocent of all wrongdoing, we maintain that such "framing" is of very rare occurrence, and that, as a whole, policemen and district attorneys are fine, upstanding men who are trying to do their duty in the community.

It is true, of course, that for various reasons—hate, a desire for promotion, or, more often, to get a person whose presence as a free agent has become dangerous, safely tucked away in stir, with the odium of a criminal record branded upon him—perfectly innocent persons have been "framed," convicted upon manufactured evidence. This we know is a ghastly fact—one almost too awful to contemplate. And it has always been our opinion that if there is a hell, then one supreme, exquisite method of torture is reserved for him who would thus convict his fellow man.

But, and it is a great big BUT, far too many innocent men—though it is the spirit of the law that a thousand guilty men escape rather than an innocent one should suffer injustice—are convicted and serve time. One reason for this is overzealousness on the part of the police and prosecuting attorneys. It is only too easy to see how this occurs. The job of the police is to apprehend criminals. And when a crime is committed, the police, being just as human as the rest of us, come to very decided and honest conclusions as to just who the guilty person is. As with views formed upon any subject, opposition only makes one keen to prove his point. So the policeman—and when we say "policeman" we mean all members of the department—in order to convict, will be led, without any dishonesty on his part, to do things that are often, perhaps, not quite ethical, to say the least. Also, in the same manner, a prosecuting attorney who is paid to prosecute, oversteps the bounds of fairness. While the results attained are the same—an innocent person is convicted—there is this much to say for such miscarriages of justice: There was no guilty intent.

There is another reason why the innocent far too often suffer for the acts of the guilty, a reason far beyond the ability of man to circumvent or understand, for that matter. It is that fickle thing called "CHANCE." It is chance that sometimes forms a chain of circumstances so strong that innocent men, caught in its meshes, have many times pleaded guilty, so sure have they been of conviction, in order that their sentence might be a lighter one.

All but the last reason that is responsible for sending innocent men to jail, a reason which is something that no help can be found for, should be stamped out from our criminal procedure. And we are glad to say that, from personal observation and research, they are being stamped out. But the good work must go on, and we must be constantly on the alert that there is never a letup in it.



Although we have no visible mascot, we really begin to suspect that a four-leaved clover or a rabbit's foot or some such thing must be concealed somewhere

about the offices of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, for lately we have fallen into one piece of luck after another.

One piece of good fortune is our securing Rutherford Scott to conduct a vocational advice department in connection with Miss Rice's. Don't fail to read his article in this issue, and the articles and answers to queries that will appear in subsequent issues.

Here is another—we gave you a hint about it last week: William J. Burns is to conduct our Expert Detective Advice Department. Yes, we mean *the* Mr. Burns—Mr. Burns of New York—Burns of the William J. Burns International Detective Agency—the detective about whom every well-known detective-story writer has woven some of his best tales. What do you think of that? Don't you agree with us that there's a mascot somewhere about the premises? So send in your cases. No matter how intricate they may be, or how simple, you can be sure that the most acute brain and the greatest experience that any sleuth could offer is at your service.

EXPERT DETECTIVE ADVICE

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM J. BURNS

Mr. William J. Burns is a well-known criminologist, who for years has been engaged in the study and investigation of crime and criminals. Any of our readers may consult Mr. Burns through this magazine in regard to any matter relating to crime and its detection, to psychological problems, and the protection of life and property against criminals and other evil-doers. Letters seeking expert information along these lines should be addressed to the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. These letters will be answered personally by Mr. Burns, without charge, if stamp for reply is inclosed; they will be discussed in this department, the names and addresses in all cases to be omitted.

The One Essential Thing

By William J. Burns

F ICTION writers have said that courage is the great quality needed by detectives, or that inventiveness is, or that unusual reasoning powers are; but the real and absolutely necessary faculty which every successful detective must possess is that of observation.

This faculty must extend to very minute things. In fact, there is almost no field of knowledge in which close and accurate observation is not needed by a man who means to climb in this profession. The odor of tobacco, for instance, does not seem very important, yet in a famous case in England a detective declared that a certain criminal had committed a murder because the air of the close room in which the body of the victim was found still held the taint of certain rank cigarettes which the suspect was known to smoke. Upon this flimsy evidence, not really evidence, in the proper sense of the word, the detective ran down and convicted the smoker.

A detective should be able to identify a man by many things which would escape the eye of the average person. He should notice teeth, finger nails, ears, characteristic movements of the hands and feet, intonation of the voice, and so on. These are the points most difficult for even the cleverest criminal to disguise.

A memory for the peculiarities of criminals is included in this faculty of observation. A well-known secret-service man caught a much-wanted spy during

the Great War by seeing a man, of whom the operative had no suspicion at all, shudder violently when drinking a cocktail. This peculiarity was known to the operative as a marked trait of an international spy, well known for his successful disguises. That one, involuntary thing the spy could not disguise, and shortly afterward he was arrested on suspicion, and his disguise removed, when the real man was easily recognized.

It would be good practice for any one who intends to become a detective to try how accurate a description he can write down of the ten men with whom he is most intimately acquainted. He will be surprised to find that even the exact color of eyes or shape of mouth is difficult to remember and to describe.

ANSWERS TO READERS' QUERIES

A. D. JENNINGS.—If I were you I would try to get work as an ordinary detective with some good agency. From that work, and the experience and self-confidence it would give you, you could work into your special line.

M. M. HADLEY.—Since the manager of your apartment house has offered you a chance to do detective work on the case in hand, you would be fully authorized to follow any clues that you could discover. Any person may do this. Reporters for newspapers, unauthorized by any one, have frequently done excellent detective work, in connection with their effort to get interesting "copy" for their papers. Before opening a private detective agency, or announcing yourself publicly as a detective—which amounts to the same thing—you should look up the laws of your State. Every State has separate and often conflicting laws for detective agencies and private detectives. You understand, do you not, the distinction between trying to follow out some clues, as in the case you speak of, and setting yourself up as an authorized private detective? Write to the secretary of state about the procedure, if you are really to take to the profession seriously. Yes, a woman detective, properly authorized, could make an arrest, the same as a man. For that matter, any private citizen, believing that a crime has been committed, or coming upon the scene of a crime at the moment of its accomplishment, has a right to demand that the suspect hand himself over to the citizen; the citizen, in turn, being bound to hand the suspect over to the first policeman or authorized detective he can find. If you decide upon the profession I would advise you to seek work, for a time, with a high-class agency, where you may familiarize yourself with the practical details of the work.

E. M.—You gave your address so indistinctly that it is impossible for me to write you personally, as you request. I will give you the information "blind," and I am sure you will understand. There is no exact method for doing what you ask. The report should be made out under tabulated form, written clearly, and with few remarks. What you suggest is about right. It would vary, you see, with the local conditions. In case you have difficulty, get any expert accountant, who is used to office work, to make you a working model.

ALLEN RAKOWSK.—I do not believe that a boy of fourteen should make the decision to be a detective. Your parents would be the first ones to object, I am sure. When you are eighteen will be plenty of time for you to decide the matter. In the meantime, if you want to be fitting yourself for the profession, in the only way practical while you are still a schoolboy, cultivate the habit of observation, about which you will find a few words at the beginning of the department.

What *H* and *and* writing Reveals

A black and white illustration of a hand holding a magnifying glass. The magnifying glass is positioned over the word "and" in the title "What H and writing Reveals". The word "and" is written in a cursive script and is significantly larger and more detailed than the other words in the title, which are also in cursive but smaller. The hand is shown from the side, holding the handle of the magnifying glass.

If you are an employer and desire to place your employees in the positions in your office or factory for which they are best fitted; or if you are just about to step out into the world to earn your own living; or if crimes involving handwriting have been committed in your community; or if you want to know the characters of your friends as revealed in their chirography—send Louise Rice, in care of this magazine, specimens of the handwriting of the persons concerned, and inclose a stamped addressed envelope. She will analyze the samples submitted to her and will give you her expert opinion of them, free of charge.

Every communication will be held in strict confidence. When permission is granted, cases will be discussed in the department, with or without the illustrations. Of course, under no circumstances will the identity of the persons concerned be revealed.

Miss Rice has on hand a thousand or more specimens of handwriting from readers who wished their handwriting analyzed in the magazine. On account of restricted space, it will be a long time before these letters appear. We therefore suggest that these readers send Miss Rice a stamped addressed envelope, and she will give them an analysis of their handwriting in a personal letter.

P. E. H.—Fifty-seven, are you? I'd never have thought it from your writing. Shows plenty of vigor and vitality, your "hand" does, with pronounced independence of mind. I'd like to venture a whole lot that you are and have been for a long time the mainstay of your family and friends. As for your daughter, I do *not* advise her to study art or music. But I would advise her to go into some form of business where her eye for color and arrangement would best be appreciated. One of those exclusive little decorator's shops, for instance, where everything is so wonderful—and so dear. N. L. P. shows beautiful impulses and a generous and open mind, but not a compact, self-sufficient personality. X. Y. Z. is a person of unusual interest—though a bit impractical. In fact, you are all interesting folks, P. E. H.

FIDGE.—Goodness, I'm so glad when a girl of sixteen tells me that she's going right after a trade or a profession. Suitable? Why not? There are very few doors even half closed to women just now, and by the time you are twenty I guess they'll all be wide open. The thing to do is to be very sure that we are going into the right door, and I am sure that the one with "Chemistry" on it is all right for you. I'm sure that the careful, orderly work of a druggist is just as suitable for girls as for boys.

SHIRLEY.—There is no doubt that you have the temperament which ought to let you be a good mimic. Mind you, this distinct talent is not shown in

writing, but the temperament that produces it is. You lack self-confidence, however, and this is absolutely necessary if you would succeed. The specimen R(14) shows a person who is naturally of refined taste. The specimen G(9½) is not quite mature enough for me to say anything of importance, except that there is a tendency to a poor memory, which should be corrected. The specimen E(12) shows more maturity than the years. This writer will easily develop practical ability.

PEGGY.—I wish you dear girls were not so fond of this *nom de plume*. You'll have to guess at who's who from what I say. I don't believe you need to have a bit of fear about your sweetheart's honesty. He is an impulsive lad, with a hot temper, and he might do things on the spur of the moment which he would afterward regret, but he is a warm-hearted, loving chap, who can easily be influenced by the girl he's in love with. Just make him feel that you are expecting him to be one of the best men you ever knew, and you'll help him a lot.

D. M. W.—No, no, I can't tell you a single thing about your future, nor what your future work "will be." But I do most positively assert that if you keep on being opinionated and "bossy" and impatient, you won't find any work especially productive of success. What you need is to pin yourself down to the realization that your character is yet in the making, and that it behooves you to take advice and training wherever you can get it. And at that, you have such a hopeful, courageous spirit that your personality, with just one little change, would be very winning. Take up that question of personality, and the work will take care of itself.

H. I. M.—So you have a lovely diamond ring, have you, and you want to know if you'll be a good wife? Why, yes, my dear, if you mean that you are sweet-tempered and appreciative and affectionate and clean of soul. You're all of that, and it's lovely. I don't see a lot of patient understanding or a strong sense of humor, and you'd better start in to cultivate 'em right away, because you'll need 'em, dear; you will, indeed. Any girl who plans to make a mere man a life's companion needs just those identical qualities. No, I'm not scoffing at your very fine and reverent attitude, my dear. But just the same, you *will* need 'em.

MISS VINCENT.—Is marrying a man the special "enterprise" of which you speak? I don't know what that enterprise is, you know. Yes, if you are marrying, choose a man of your own type, and be sure that he has similar tastes and likes and dislikes as you. This talk of it being a good thing for opposites to marry is nonsense. It is true that opposites are often fascinated by each other, but the attraction does not wear, and usually ends in a big fight.

ALBERT M. N.—Your handwriting shows me that you are rather a self-satisfied person, but that you have a font of very real and genuine tenderness and ideality in your nature, nevertheless. You need a wider mental horizon; more charity and sympathy for the aspects of human nature and life, with which you are not familiar.

L. H. W.—Yes, I do get a lot of what you call "confessions," but, you see, no one sees them but myself, and the letters are safely locked away where only I can get at them, and lots of people are helped just by having put on paper their troubles. Did you ever notice that when you write a friend about some

difficulty, you seem to have solved the matter by the time you are through? About your character—oh, yes. Well, you are a hasty-tempered, generous, affectionate, pleasure-loving, ardent, imaginative, and impractical young person. How do you like that?

VIOLETTA D. D.—You are entirely too impulsive; entirely too much at the mercy of your moods; too easily affected by your surroundings. Stiffen your spine, my child! A man's backbone, physical and metaphorical, was given to him so that a weight on his head would not crush him.

G. E. C.—Well, I'm sorry that you have that temper, but glad you know you have it. Forewarned is forearmed. And I'll tell you a secret. The only way to conquer a temper is to learn to laugh at it. It's ridiculous. You know it is. So when you begin to get angry, remember that and laugh at yourself. In time, you'll learn to laugh before any one knows that you are angry. But as for "holding" your husband—now look here, don't take that attitude. It's the cause of half the unhappiness in the world. Just love him and enjoy him and be happy. That's the perfect lover's mood, and the one which holds love. No, you haven't literary ability, but I suspect you of having musical talent.

WILLIAM COCHARON.—I wish you had given me your house address, William, so that I could have written to you, because I'm afraid this will not appear in time to do any good. The specimen which you inclose shows me that the writer has a very quick temper, and for that reason he might not get along with you chaps at your summer camp, but he means well, and if you will reason with him when that happens, and see that you do not unnecessarily provoke him, you ought to get along all right. I'm glad that you boys have confidence in graphology, and hope that you will interest yourself in it, as a science.

VINCENT N.—Your handwriting shows me a nature which is unusually self-controlled, and yet I suspect you of being quite a young man. At least, your impulses and your ideals are both mature, and this means that you will have far less of trouble with your inner self than most people do. You have a clear head and a well-balanced nature, and ought to get a good many friends, as life goes on; though you will not win them brilliantly.

The How, When, and Where of Success

THIS department is the result of thousands of inquiries which have been sent to Miss Rice. "How and where can I learn to be a librarian?" "How much does a master plumber make a day?" "What is 'commercial advertising?'" "How can I become a finger-print expert, and how do I get work after I am proficient?" "What are the various branches of engineering, and what is the approximate future prospects for each?" Come to think of it, how *does* one become a librarian? Is it a profitable profession? And what are the possi-

bilities of advancement? We will venture to say that not one in five thousand of you can answer those questions, off hand, or would know how to go about finding the answers. Even Miss Rice, with her wide experience of men and businesses, found herself obliged to turn over a good many of those questions to a vocational expert of her acquaintance, Mr. Rutherford Scott.

Mr. Scott has made a special study, as he puts it, of "*The How, When, and Where of Success*," and after seeing some of the careful and accurate information which he gave Miss Rice, we determined that our readers should have the direct benefit of his unusual knowledge and world-wide acquaintance with labor, science, and commerce. In writing Mr. Scott, you will be getting in touch with the actual, down-to-the-ground working conditions of life. He will tell you, for instance, whether mining engineering is a profession which is overcrowded in, say, South America. He will tell you approximately how long it will take you to learn to be an architectural draftsman, what it will cost you, and what you ought to make, year by year, afterward. He will open up a whole series of businesses which are not overcrowded. Very often, you can combine Miss Rice's services and his. You write Miss Rice, and she will tell you, from your writing, what is your real talent. Then you watch for Mr. Scott's articles on that talent, or, you write him a personal letter and tell him all about yourself, and what Miss Rice has said, and he will show you how to work out the "how, when, and where" of your ambition.

We put this department before you very, very earnestly, feeling that for many it will open the door to success and happiness, which otherwise might remain forever a closed page.



The Publicity Man

By Rutherford Scott

CHARLES HARDMAN, Zanesville, Ohio.—A "publicity man" is a man who helps organizations, civic bodies, actors, charitable organizations, religious or educational movements or singers or artists or musicians—to fame. He does this by giving out interviews to newspaper men, by writing things for the press about them, by arranging interviews for them with important people, and by generally so conducting their affairs that the public shall be constantly reminded of their existence.

To start on this career, begin right there in your own town. Select some cause which is struggling for recognition—a hospital, for instance. Go to the board of managers and ask them to let you arrange a publicity campaign, on a commission basis. That is to say, that you are to have a certain per cent of the donations received through your efforts. This is the customary way in which direct, soliciting work is paid.

Now, put yourself in the attitude of the reporter. Isn't there a good "story" in that hospital? Any interesting or piteous cases? Any doctor who has performed an unusual operation? Any notable social figure among the usual women who are on its list of patronesses? Write your "story" as well as you can and send it to all the papers. That is, if it is a news item. If it is a "feature" story—by which is meant something that does not merely relate a happening—then try to place it with one newspaper, exclusively. Very often, if your material is

good, the paper will pay you something for it. Look over the literature of the hospital. Does it present the claims of the institution in a practical way? Is the printing and general appearance of the literature good? If the wording lacks direct appeal, get permission to rewrite some of it.

See the clergymen of the town, and ask that mention of the hospital be made at some church service. One or two will always do it. Call upon the president of the ladies' aid societies of the churches, and upon the officers of the Epworth Leagues, and the girls' societies of Catholic churches. Of course, if the hospital is denominational, you must confine your efforts to the religion it represents. See if some of these societies will not get up fairs or suppers for the hospital. If they do, be sure that you get good preceding and following notices in the papers.

If you get that far in your program, you will see all sorts of opportunities to pursue your work. Keep your attention open, too, toward other lines, for a publicity man must go from one job to another, always trying to get more and more important assignments.

Look at the possibilities of working up interest in some special product of your town. Interview the president of the factory turning out such a product, *after* you have decided upon some special and interesting program of publicity to offer him. If you do this for a year, you will then be justified in trying for larger fields.

A little capital is absolutely necessary, to begin with. You must not place yourself in the position where you have to ask for money for your daily expenses. And you must dress well. That is part of the work. In becoming a publicity man you are practically going into business for yourself, so count on having to invest some money, just as if you were about to open a store.

Personally, I do not believe that less than a thousand dollars would be sufficient, because your first two or three jobs may net you very small returns, and may take four or five months of your time.

In future articles I will discuss other phases of publicity work.



UNDER THE LAMP

CONDUCTED BY HENRY A. KELLER

William Olsen, of Brooklyn, New York, has been a member of our Under the Lamp circle almost since the department's inception. We had a letter from him the other day, in which he told us what he thought about his favorite magazine—and his opinion was, as a whole, an inspiration.

In his letter Mr. Olsen laid particular stress on a point we have tried to emphasize in the puzzle department. We reprint that portion of Mr. Olsen's letter to which we refer. It speaks for itself:

"As a general rule I have no trouble solving the problems in your Under the Lamp Department, but, I must confess, once in a while I run across one that stumps me. I suppose nearly every one has the same experience, and naturally so, because it stands to reason that some kinds of puzzles appeal to certain people more than other kinds. I myself prefer a cipher problem.

"But the thing I have found out about the weekly puzzles, after following them for nearly two years, is that I need never be afraid I am being kidded. Al-

ways the problems are legitimate. There is an honest-to-goodness answer to them; they are always presented in a clear-cut way. I hate the so-called 'catch' problem, the one that can have half a dozen or more answers, and has a different meaning every time it is read. When I tackle a problem in 'Under the Lamp,' I am sure I'm going adventuring on solid ground, and not on the thin ice of a trick puzzle. Keep up the good work!"

This week's problem is a further test of your patience and power of concentration. I was standing talking in the composing room when one of the men dropped a "form"—which is another way of saying "he let fall a page of type"—and "pied"—that is, jumbled—the letters. I was close enough to the man to see what remained of the printed matter he had just set up. After taking a good look at it I asked him to let me have a printed copy, for I knew that by his accident he had created an excellent puzzle. Here is how the pied letters looked:

xonjth ilpekreqwagimversbe u nrjoupkoscuwzeig udhrppt at xillusikzolsuvbfi
 uyoptbxderawqhienyjqpmounirdnedpwalwaqurtuvsim plu vnvgovhjaisijgorun
 eafilntyufioc zkuqnyhi jdg als imedsibilomniluvanpionugbur sahuqnotorimed
 iuntuvpr i bxeamijumoccondittaoynutvewo puturzikkloedor

By studying these letters carefully you will find that by eliminating some of them, you can make a complete, well-balanced sentence. You do not have to rearrange any letters. Simply by taking out a few you will have a sentence with words and letters in words all in proper place. See if you can find the sentence. I'll be interested to know how long it takes you.

Look for the answer in next Tuesday's issue.

The solution to the cipher problem in last week's issue, which is a bit of philosophy from the pen of Inspector Steele, is: "In solving ciphers it is foolish to jump at conclusions. Careful analysis is the only method that leads to success." The complete cipher alphabet, compiled by Miss D. S., of Gorham, Maine, follows:

A,S8.	D,S10.	G,S9.	J,H4.	M,Hj.	P,D3.	S,D7.	V,CL.	Y,C6.
B,Sk.	E,S2.	H,H5.	K,HI.	N,D8.	Q,D10.	T,C9.	W,C4.	Z,Cj.
C,S3.	F,S7.	I,HL.	L,H6.	O,Dk.	R,D2.	U;C5.	X,CL.	

HIS POLITENESS DID NOT PAY

WHEN a sympathetic woman read the placard hanging on the breast of a beggar in St. Louis recently she was so moved by it that she asked impulsively:

"My poor fellow, how long have you been deaf and dumb?"

The mendicant, equally moved by her interest in him, and desiring not to seem discourteous, promptly answered:

"About twenty years, ma'am."

Then the woman dropped a dollar bill into the faker's tin cup and went her way, not realizing that she had been grossly deceived.

During the colloquy a detective standing behind the beggar had overheard the conversation. He promptly arrested the man, who ended an otherwise profitable day in jail.

MISSING

This department is offered free of charge to readers of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE. Its purpose is to aid readers in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address, often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

When you hear from the person you are seeking, tell us, so that we may take your notice out.

Now, readers, help those whose friends 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," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

WAGNER, FRANK. He was last heard from about nine years ago at Akron, Colorado, and was then talking about going to Denver. His father is very anxious to hear from him and will be most grateful to any one who will give him information that will lead to his communicating with him. **JULIUS WAGNER,** 623 Taylor Avenue, N. S., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

HAFFLER, MARI.—She was last seen in November, 1918, when she was staying at 1312 Canal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana. She is asked to send her address to **M. DARGLSEN,** 1105 Jefferson Street, Kansas City, Missouri.

DOUGLASS, HARRY, now twenty years old, about five feet eight inches tall, and weighs one hundred and forty-two pounds. He left West Haven in June, 1913, for parts unknown. A friend would like very much to hear from him. **WILLIAM DAVEY,** 34 Thomas Street, West Haven, Connecticut.

CUTHBERT, CLARENCE, alias **FEDERICO MONDRAGON,** native of San Francisco, California, where he has relatives and friends. It is thought that he was with General Francisco Villa up to December, 1918. He holds the rank of colonel in the Mexican army. Anybody knowing this person, or the whereabouts of his relatives, kindly communicate with **MENDEZ,** care of this magazine.

ADAMS, ROY D., formerly of Colorado Springs. Your brother Robert is dead, and your mother and sisters are very anxious to hear from you. **Mrs. L. LACEY,** 948 Mariposa Street, Denver, Colorado.

RODNEY, DAVID.—He went out one Monday morning four years ago, leaving the impression that he would be back on Friday night, and that is the last that has been seen of him. He is a small man, with brown hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. The top of his head is bald, and most of his teeth are filled with gold. He is now about thirty-six years old. Any one who has seen him, or who knows where he is at the present time, will do a great kindness by writing to **N. M. R.,** care of this magazine.

FEINEL, CHARLES G., **MAMIE C.,** or **ISA-BELLA,** who lived at 1035 or 1135 Spruce Street, Easton, Pennsylvania, three years ago. Please send any information to **G. DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.**

DAWNE, AMBY, who was last heard of in Pittsburg, Kansas, in 1912. I have some papers that were given to me by a man four years ago on Peace River, Canada, and which I promised to deliver if possible. Any one who can help me to trace any of the family will confer a great favor. **TEX WILSON,** Booth, Nevada.

On August 30, 1919, **MR. JOSEPH COIDEN** was killed at **CONY ISLAND.** Eye witnesses, or those who know of eye witnesses, kindly communicate with the missing department of this magazine.

SHEA, WILLIE, known as **PETE.**—He left Albany, Oregon, about six or eight years ago for Utah, or somewhere in that part of the West. He is thirty-eight years old, has black hair and eyes, and is about five feet four inches tall. His sister is very anxious to hear from him. **Mrs. LILLIE PAURY,** Box 111, Prineville, Oregon.

ROUNDS, DANIEL.—He was last heard of in Kalamazoo, Michigan, twenty years ago. He is over sixty years of age, and of fair complexion. He weighed nearly two hundred pounds when he was a young man. His children, Asa, Della, and Lucy, would like to have news of him, as they do not know whether he is alive or dead. Please write to **DELLA,** care of this magazine.

YOUNG, PAUL CLEVELAND.—When last I heard of him he was employed by the Pecos Valley Drug Company, Roswell, New Mexico. I would like to communicate with him. **JOHN T. REDWINE,** Sandy Hook, Kentucky.

SETZER, MARVIN, thirty-eight years old. He has brown hair, blue eyes, and weighs about one hundred and sixty pounds. He is a carpenter. Any one knowing his present address, please notify **M. M. G.,** care of the missing department of this magazine.

MOOK, EMIL, JR.—He left home to go to a hospital in New York City September 16, 1914, and has not been heard of since. He left a wife and three children. His mother is very ill, and offers a reward for information of him, dead or alive. He has gray eyes, dark hair, and had a heart with dagger tattooed on one arm. Any one having seen him, or having knowledge of him, please write to **Mrs. Gick, 2319 Ludlow Avenue, Unionport, Westchester.**

GALLAGHER, PATRICK, who went from Hazleton to Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, twenty years ago, with his children, John, Pat, Marv, and Helen. His sister is very anxious to hear from him, and will be grateful to any one who can give her information regarding him or his children. **Mrs. PATRICK McGRATH, Pleasant Street, Wynd Moore, Pennsylvania.**

WILSON, MRS. L. M., who at one time lived at 576 Sierra Street, Los Angeles, California. I will greatly appreciate any information about her, or her descendants, and would be glad to know their present whereabouts. Please address **GREG R. WILSON, Machinery Division, U. S. Naval Station, Cavite, Philippine Islands.**

SCOTT, MRS. IDA, who lived at 1222 or 1224 McGee Street, Kansas City, Missouri, some two years ago. She has a grown-up son. Any one knowing her present address would do a great favor by writing to **B. S., care of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.**

BEALL, WILLIAM J.—He is fourteen years old, dark complexion, with black hair and brown eyes. He has not been seen since he left home to go to work on July 14th last. He wore a striped shirt, black and white check cap, black shoes and stockings, and knickerbockers. Please send any information to **Mrs. MARY BEALL, 1442 Ives Place, S. E. Washington, D. C.**

CAMPBELL, LEO BERNARD.—Last seen in Worcester, Massachusetts, in January, 1919. Your family has moved to Baltimore, Maryland, 200 East Read Street. Please write. **LIDIA.**

CONGER, BRUCE, of Detroit. If he sees this he is requested to write to an old friend whom he knew in Kansas City seven and a half years ago. **E. K., care of this Magazine.**

GUINN, HAROLD, fourteen years old, fair complexion, light hair, large blue eyes, a scar on his neck. He was taken from Brandon, Manitoba, Canada, by his aunts, the Misses Jennie and Mary McLeod, in July, 1916. They went to Calgary, Alberta, and from there to Ruth, Nevada, U. S. A. In January, 1917, he left Ruth with his aunt Mary McLeod, and is supposed to have gone to Salt Lake City, Utah. He is probably living with his grandmother and aunts, who are dressmakers. A suitable reward will be paid by the boy's father to any person who can give reliable information that will lead to his recovery. **E. J. GUINN, Box 551, Neepeawa, Manitoba, Canada.**

CRAWLEY, ROBERT N., who was last heard of in Philadelphia, in 1903, or his brother, **E. F.,** who at that time lived in New York. Any one knowing their present address will greatly oblige by writing to **M. C., care of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.**

SUELTON, WILLIS D.—He is sixty-five years old, six feet one inch tall, has snow-white hair, with a bald spot on top of head, no upper teeth, heavy voice, slightly round shouldered. Is a member of the Masons and Odd Fellows of Canaan, Connecticut. He left Bridgeport on the 12th of December, 1916, and has not been heard from since. He used to drive a laundry wagon in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Information in regard to him should be sent to **WILLIAM E. BERTON, Washington and Madison Avenues, Bridgeport, Connecticut.**

DAVIS, BESSIE TAYLOR, daughter of Mrs. Emma Davis who, some years ago, lived at 210 Chauncey Street, Brooklyn. Her father has been trying for years to find her, and has tried every possible means, but in vain. He will be deeply grateful for any assistance that may be given him by readers of this magazine, and is hopeful that he may meet with success through this medium. Please write to **GEORGE DAVIS, care of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.**

COHEN, or TUCK, LOUIS.—Information regarding his whereabouts desired by his relatives. Age thirty-eight, height about six feet, light hair, and has a white spot over one eye. He is believed to be an auctioneer or a horse dealer in Illinois, or Ohio. Address **N. T. C., care of this magazine.**

CLARK, RALPH WALTER, my brother, who was last heard of in Michigan. He left home in November or December, 1913. I should be very glad to hear from him. My sister was placed in a Catholic home in Allegheny or Pittsburgh, and was adopted by people who did not wish her to remember any of her relatives. She was registered either as **MAY** or as **MARY ELIZABETH YASINSKI, or CLARK.** She is now about nineteen years old. Any one who can give me news of her will earn my deepest gratitude, as I have tried for many years to find her. Please write to **Mrs. VIOLET CLARK, Seward Hotel, Seattle, Washington.**

WOOD, or WOODCOX, EDWIN A., who came from Main some years ago. His children would like to hear from relatives. **Mrs. F. J. WEGNER, 2937 Champa Street, Denver, Colorado.**

WILSON, JAMES.—Information wanted of the relatives of James Wilson, who was born at Dayton, Ohio, about fifty years ago. His mother's maiden name was **Salina Stouder, or Stoddard,** and she lived near Trotwood, Ohio, with her parents. At one time, when her child was about fifteen months old, she worked at the soldiers' and sailors' orphan home at Xenia, Ohio, as cook. She is supposed to have had a daughter also living there at that time. If the readers of **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE** can help to find these relatives, they will confer the greatest kindness by writing to **JAMES WILSON, 109 Union Street, Piqua, Miami County, Ohio.**

ATTENTION.—A broken-hearted mother has been trying in vain to find her son, who was in Supply Company, Three Hundred and Forty-third Infantry, A. E. F. The war department has not replied to her inquiries, and the Red Cross has been unable to secure information. His name is **EDGAR V. LIVINGSTON, 2,066,512.** Any news of him will be welcome to his anxious mother, who does not know whether he is dead or alive. Please write to **Mrs. ANNIE D. LIVINGSTON, 1201 Olive Street, Seattle, Washington.**

HARDING, Z.—We have news for you in regard to Carl Lockwood, and as letters sent to Hominy, Oklahoma, have been returned to us, we would ask you to send another address.

CONDON, MRS. GEORGE H., or MARY LOWE, who was last heard of at Menominee, Michigan. Any information concerning her will be gratefully received by **GEORGE H. CONDON, South Haven, Michigan.**

HAROLD.—Come home. Your mother and father have forgiven you, and both are heart-broken.

NELLIGAN, DAVID, son of Patrick Nelligan, who died in Detroit two years ago. He is six feet one inch tall, and of powerful build. He has five brothers and three sisters in the United States. His son is very anxious to get news of him, and any information will be gratefully received. Please write to **FORREST RAIN, 165 1/2 Drummond Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.**

LONG, ELMER.—Skinny, I would like very much to hear from you. LEO VAUGHN, General Delivery, Salt Lake City, Utah.

BURGESS, ALBERT. who left England for Halifax, Canada, with the 101st Regiment, about forty years ago, and is believed to have settled in New York. He has probably married and had children. Information that will lead to communicating with him, or with any member of his family, will be gratefully appreciated by his brother. Please write to SAMUEL, care of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

STRADWICK, LILLIAN, formerly of Hamilton, Ontario, and last heard of at Cleveland, Ohio, in October, 1918. Good news awaits her if she will please write to MR. C. J. STRADWICK, 454 Herkemer Street, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

YOUNG, MRS. MAY.—We have information for you regarding Mrs. Mattie Thompson, and as mail sent to you at Bisbee, Arizona, has been returned to us, we would ask you to send us another address.

BOES, ALICE.—She was last heard of in San José, California. Any one knowing her present address please write me. RUSSELL ZANONE, 1581 Bardstone Road, Louisville, Kentucky.

AMBROSE, BELLE AND GEORGE.—Your daughter Constance was left by her mother at the Children's Home and Aid Society in Chicago, Illinois, and was adopted by Clayton R. Lewis some eighteen years ago. Any one having information regarding either of these persons will confer a great favor by writing to their daughter, P. L. L., care of this magazine.

STEWART, LOUIS, thirty years of age, weighs about one hundred and forty pounds, and has light hair and complexion. When last seen he was boarding a train from Anderson, Indiana, for Greenville, Ohio, in December, 1918. Louis, my boy, please come back to your old friend "Cappie." Do you remember the old Arena? Write to C. A. C., 1318 Ohio Avenue, Anderson, Indiana.

RIVES, DORA.—Your father is very ill as a result of your absence. Please call to see him as soon as possible, and relieve his anxiety. E. R.

BYRNE, WILLIAM.—Why do you not write? I answered your letter, but have received no reply. 10622 Dupont Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.

LEWIS, ALLAN H., who was last heard from in Troy, New York, in 1915. He is short and dark, with curly hair and brown eyes, and is an excellent talker. Allan, communicate with your old buddy, R. G. R. I have something of importance to tell you. Write me care of this magazine.

HALL, GEORGE.—He has dark hair and eyes, and is about five feet nine inches tall. When last heard from he was in Philadelphia, but is supposed to have gone later to McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania. He is a railroad man, and a brakeman. Any one knowing his address please write to Mrs. LELA DRAPER, 305 West Grove Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

MURPHY, JOHN AND WILLIAM.—They were born on First Avenue and Seventy-third Street, New York City; John in 1878 and William in 1882. Their mother, whose maiden name was Mary Fitzmartin, died in 1884. They have not been heard from for about sixteen years. Their father will be most grateful for any news of them, and any one knowing their present whereabouts will do a great favor by writing to him. JOHN MURPHY, Box 316, National Military Home, Los Angeles, California.

ATTENTION.—If any soldier familiar with the circumstances surrounding the death of PRIVATE ALBERT PATRICK, of Company L, Eighteenth Infantry, First Division, A. E. F., who was killed in action, July 18 to 23, 1918, will write P. O. Box 288, Des Moines, Iowa, in regard to same, the favor will be very much appreciated by his father.

EDWARDS, GILBERT B., thirty-six years old, five feet nine inches tall, weight about two hundred and twenty pounds, black hair tinged with gray, and blue eyes. Teeth not very good. He worked as railroad man, and was last heard of in Nashville, Tennessee, in November, 1918. His mother is very ill, and wants him to come home. If any one who knows him will please call his attention to this, or write to his brother, their kindness will be greatly appreciated. CHARLES W. EDWARDS, 910 Garden Street, Hoboken, New Jersey.

SNOOK, GEORGE.—When last heard of he was living in Merchantville, Pennsylvania, or in Camden, New Jersey. Any one who can give information concerning him, please write to M. H. P., care of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

WALLACE, WALTER J.—The last two places that he was heard from were Butte and Billings, Montana. He is a sign painter. Any information regarding him will be gratefully received by STANLEY CZARNECKI, 585 East Fort Street, Detroit, Michigan.

SELIM.—Do you remember the G. Flats, and the pal you called Bub? I hear from Dick. Write me in care of this Magazine. B. U. B.

DAVIS, MRS. GEORGE.—We have a letter for JOE from his mother. Please send us your address so that we may forward it as soon as possible.

HANSON, HENRY A.—He was last heard from in Louisville, Kentucky, and is supposed to have gone to New York City. Occupation, soda dispenser; home, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Height about five feet ten inches, light hair and complexion. Weight one hundred and fifty pounds. Any information will be appreciated by GEORGE F. MCNEELY, 22 Burt Avenue, Auburn, New York.

JONES, MICHAEL.—We have received a letter in regard to your notice for Mr. Ralph Jones, and as letters sent to Fort Madison have been returned, we would ask you to send us your present address.

DRAPER, GEORGE LUCIOS, who lived at 641 Twenty-second Street, Oakland, California, and who has not been heard from since October, 1918. If any one knowing his present whereabouts will write to me, the information will be gratefully appreciated. E. M. MCGREGOR, 352 Sierra Street, Reno, Nevada.

WILLIAMS, MRS. NELLE, who was last heard of in Murray City, Ohio. An old friend would like to hear from her, and renew the friendship. Any information will be gladly received by G. W. DRESCHER, R. D. No. 2, Jeromeville, Ohio.

BILL, your old pal of San Antonio, Texas, would like to hear from you. G. R., care of this Magazine.

JACKSON, THOMAS WESLEY.—He is about forty-eight years old, fair, and of rather heavy build. He is a carpenter and worked for the Krenser Company in Pittsburgh, who have no trace of him. He was last heard of in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1915, since when all trace of him has been lost. He was a member of Local Union No. 41, Cleveland. Any information regarding him will be gratefully received by A. S. BAXTER, 2511 German Street, Erie, Pennsylvania.

INFORMATION WANTED of MRS. CLARA CONKLIN, or CONKIN, daughter of George Brody, who was also known as George Jones. Her mother's maiden name was Nutting. She lived at one time in Detroit, Michigan, also in New York City, and when last heard from was in Palm Beach, Florida. Any information as to her present whereabouts will be received as a great kindness by M. E. JONES, care of this magazine.

PRYOR, GEORGE O.—He was last seen in St. Joseph, Missouri, in April, 1918. Any one knowing his address will confer a favor by communicating with J. A. Sullivan, 3408 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri.

ELMER, P. C.—Please come or write. I am very ill, and greatly troubled. Your lonely wife, P. H. C.

JOHNSTONE, HOWARD DEWITT, sometimes goes by the name of John Stone. He is thirty years old, tall and slender, weighs about one hundred and forty pounds, and is very fair of complexion, with large, light-blue eyes. Has two front upper teeth missing. He left home one Sunday afternoon in June, to be absent only two hours, and no trace of him has been seen since. His wife is very ill, and his three small children are in need of his care. Any one who can give information about him will confer a great favor by writing to his wife, care of this magazine.

MORTIMER, HIRAM T.—I have tried very hard to find you ever since you left. When you wrote to me you did not give an address. If any one who sees this knows his whereabouts and will write to me, the favor will be greatly appreciated. Any news of him will be welcome to his niece, MISS BEATRICE COONEY, Egg Harbor, New Jersey.

ALLEN, GRACE.—Please write. Your friends are worried. Are you still with Reuben and Cherry? MAC.

LAUBACH, TOM, who resided at Montgomery Street, San Antonio, Texas. He is seventeen years of age, five feet seven inches tall, and is a boy scout. He may be in New York. Any information will be thankfully received by HERBERT S. HERSKOWITZ, 303 Texas Street, El Paso, Texas.

INFORMATION WANTED as to the whereabouts of my mother, whose maiden name was AGNES BETTS. At the time of my birth, in 1887, she was living with my father's parents, whose name was Wooster. Dear mother, if you see this, please write to your lonesome girlie, for she loves you so much. Grandma Wooster is dead. ETHEL, care of this magazine.

HENRY.—Please come back at once. Everything will be all right. M. V. L.—M. O.

JERVICK, WILL.—If he answers this he will hear of some information that will prove profitable to him, and he is asked to send his address to this magazine.

RICHE, A. H.—Please come to your wife, or write to her at once. Her mistaken sense of duty to Mabel and me is affecting her reason, so do not fail to act without delay. L. F. C.

MARTIN, JUDSON F., who was last heard of on August 23, 1918, when he was with Company C, Sixth Developing Battalion, Camp Grant, Illinois. His letters were miscarried, and were received by his family two months after date of writing. If any one knows where he enlisted, or has any information that will lead to communication with him, they will contribute to his happiness, and will do a great kindness by writing to his sister. L. M. H., care of this magazine.

ALGUR, HENRY M., who married Lena Thomason in 1902 or 1903, at the home of his sister, Mrs. Hattie Steele, in Colorado City. I would like to hear from him or his sisters, as I have important news for them. MRS. EVELYN KOLY, 515 East Ninth Street, Kansas City, Missouri.

TUTTURLE, HERBERT, who was stationed at Camp Sever, Greenville, South Carolina, in 1918, and received his discharge from that place last December. He is something over six feet tall, is twenty-five years old, and has light hair. Any one knowing his address please send it to M. E. H., care of this magazine.

ELLARD, EDWARD, sometimes called Edward Pillson, who was born in the State of New Jersey, and was formerly a sailor. Any one knowing his whereabouts please communicate with his sister, Mrs. H. H. POLLARD, Regent Apartments, Colonial Avenue and Olney Road, Norfolk, Virginia.

LAMBERT, WILLIAM.—Any one knowing his present address please send it to the Missing Department of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

WHITE, REUBEN, who left Texas when he was about twelve years of age. His sister and his niece would be glad to hear from him. Mrs. BERTIE RUSSELL, 309 Avenue D, Miami, Florida.

CAMPBELL, W. D., who was last heard of in Nashville, Tennessee, is requested to write to Mrs. H. C. M., 509 Locust Street, Montgomery, Alabama, who has news for him that it will be to his benefit to know.

DONNER, JOHN FRANZ, who was working at the Dupont Powder Works, Carney's Point, New Jersey, when last heard of. Any information regarding him will be gratefully appreciated by W. B. MACDONALD, 809 Government Street, Mobile, Alabama.

HEINRICH, MRS. JOSEPH, whose maiden name was MARY MATHILDA BRAUN, and who was married at Emanuel Church, Dayton, Ohio, by the Revend Carl J. Hahue, in May, 1891. Her home at the time of her marriage was in St. Louis, Missouri. Her mother's maiden name was Ruth McDough. Any one knowing her or her parents please communicate with her daughter, Mrs. F. D. PERRY, 1512 Michigan Street, Toledo, Ohio.

HEWETT, FRANK L.—Age twenty-six, five feet seven or eight inches tall, and weighs about one hundred and sixty-five pounds. He was last heard of at Vancouver some three years ago, when he was discharged from the Canadian army. He was a member of the Duke of Connaught's Own 158th, 12th Platoon, 12th Section, number 3, Company. His regimental number was 646127. In 1916 he married Jean Sutherland, of Vancouver, whose father was a comrade in the army. His mother and sister are very much worried about him, and will be thankful for any information regarding him. Mrs. MABEL COPPERBERG, 836 Willamette Boulevard, Portland, Oregon.

A. J. B.—Last heard of in Western States. If you are anywhere near Detroit, please write. A. B.

WANTED, information regarding the parents or relatives of a boy born on the 27th of April, 1894, and adopted in May of the same year by a Mr. and Mrs. S. F. Lawrence, of Dayton, Ohio, who took him from St. Joseph's Orphanage in Cumminsville, Ohio. He was christened Paul, and was returned to the institution in 1909, and remained there for about five months. There is important news for the relatives of this boy, if they can be found, and any assistance given in the matter will be sincerely appreciated. Please write to JOHN B. LUTZ, care of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

ABOUT thirty years ago a young girl was placed in an orphanage near Springfield, Massachusetts. Her name was MARY. She does not remember her surname, but knows that her father's first name was WILLIAM. She also remembers something of being with her grandparents at their home near Williamsett, before being placed in the orphanage. She thinks that her parents' home was in or near Chelsopee, Massachusetts. Any one who can give information that will help her to find her relatives will do a great favor by writing to MARY, care of this magazine.

HOWARD.—Everything will be all right. I am in the same place. The baby cries for you. Please write to me. Your wife, BUBBLES.

DANIELS, C. J., who was last heard of in Newark, New Jersey, some six months ago. He is about fifty years of age, and has blue eyes, gray hair, and fair complexion. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will greatly oblige by writing to the Missing Department of this magazine.

FROTZ.—A baby named Lula Ann Frotz was left at an institution in Milwaukee, or South Milwaukee, in the year 1900. It is thought that her parents lived in some part of Oneida County, Wisconsin. Any one knowing the whereabouts of these people will do a great kindness by sending their information to C. D. S., care of this magazine.

FEUNSTON, JAMES F. or **WILLIAM C.**—Any one knowing the whereabouts of either of these men will confer a favor by writing to their friend, BEN W. TUCKER, 72 Foster Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

EMERY, W. W.—He is about sixty or sixty-five years old, and when last heard of was in Ardmore, Oklahoma, in 1910, and is supposed to have gone to Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1911 or 1912. His son will greatly appreciate information concerning him, and will be glad to hear from any one who may know his present whereabouts. Please write to YOCLEY F. EMERY, General Delivery, Canton, Ohio.

MARTZ, JULIUS, who was taken from the poorhouse at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, about twenty-seven years ago. His sister is very anxious to find him, and will be most grateful to any one who will be kind enough to help her to communicate with him. Mrs. KATH COURTS, 153 Church Street, Sunbury, Pennsylvania.

ATTENTION.—Information wanted of those overseas soldiers: **CORPORAL DON HART** from Oregon, with Sixth Infantry, Fifth Division, last heard of at St. Germain-sur-Meuse, in September, 1918. **CORPORAL JOHN CROSSBELL**, once of Company K, One Hundred and Sixty-first Infantry, last seen going into action near Romagne, with the Sixth Infantry, in October, 1918. **DAVE M. SHEPHERD**, of Golden Valley, Hennepin County, Minnesota, and **GEORGE C. STICKLER**, of Fountain Run, Kentucky, last seen in St. Aignau-sur-Cher. Persons having any information please communicate with D. W. BAILEY, 1000 Washington Avenue, Monaca, Pennsylvania.

ROBERTS, MARY.—In 1879 I was taken from my mother by my father. I had a baby sister named Anna, who was two years old at that time. I was taken to Howell County, Missouri. I am anxious to find my mother and sister, or to get some information about them, and shall be most grateful for any assistance in the matter. Mrs. OSIE ROBERTS, 3745 Race Street, Dallas, Texas.

BURNS, L. C., who worked as a telephone line-man in Topeka, Kansas, about 1885 or 1886. Also **LOREN W. WILLIAMS**, who worked for Trumbull's art store on Kansas Avenue, and attended the First Baptist Church in Topeka, in 1892. Please send your addresses to **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE** for further particulars.

HOLMES, WILLIAM HILARY.—He is twenty-two years old, and has black hair, gray eyes, and weighs one hundred and fifty pounds. He was last heard of in Norfolk, Virginia, where he went to take place in S. B. ship, March 8, 1919. Mrs. NELLIE LESTER, Tourist Hotel, Savannah, Georgia.

DUNSMORE, JOSEPH PINKNEY.—His mother has not seen him for twenty years, and as she is now advancing in years, she would be very happy to get news of him, as she does not know whether he is dead or alive. It is thought that he was employed by the Standard Oil Company in New York City. He is now about thirty-four years old, and has blue eyes and a fair complexion. Any information of her son will bring comfort to his mother. Mrs. MARY DUNSMORE, 400 East Madison Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

MANN, JOE J.—He enlisted in the United States navy about twelve years ago, and was discharged in Seattle Washington, after four years of service, when he wrote, saying that he was returning to his home town, Chicago, but he did not come. In November, 1918, an insurance card from the government was sent to his mother, who was then dead. This card stated that he was in the army, but no further news was obtainable from the government. It was heard from other sources that he was in the Thirty-seventh Field Artillery, and was about to sail for France when the armistice was signed. He was discharged February 5, 1919. We have been unable to get any information about him, although we have written to the war department several times. He is twenty-nine years old, and has Auburn hair and brown eyes. Any one who will help me to find my brother will be gratefully remembered. CHARLES W. MANN, care of this magazine.

SIMONSEN, SYNER.—When last heard from he was in Dawson City, Alaska. That is twenty-two years ago. At the present time he is supposed to be somewhere on the Pacific coast. If any one who reads this knows anything about him, please write to his nephew, VICTOR SIMONSEN, Box 136, Sutton, North Dakota.

KEHR, WALTER, who left Harriman, Pennsylvania, some time ago. He is about five feet four inches tall, of dark complexion, and has three scars on the left side of his face. His initials, W. K., are tattooed on his right arm, and a Kewpie doll is tattooed on his left forearm. Any news of him will be gratefully received by WILLIAM J. WILSON, Hotel Victory, Harriman, Pennsylvania.

GREGG, MRS. HOMER.—When you sent your inquiry for your brother, you failed to give us an address. We have news of him which we would like to forward to you. Please send us your address.

HORTON, ENOCH GEORGE, whose parents lived at 169 East One Hundred and Nineteenth Street, New York City, some years ago. He is said to have been in the navy in 1906. Any one knowing his whereabouts will do a great favor by writing to the missing department. The advertiser would also like to have news of the brother of the above, DANIEL HORTON.

RAMSEY, MYRTLE and ELROY, who were last heard of in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1912. Your father is anxious to hear from you. Please write to him at once in care of this magazine, and as soon as he hears from you he will send you a letter, and let you know where he is.

WILLIAMS, MORRIS.—I would like to know his present whereabouts. His home was in Lewiston, Idaho. Any one knowing where he is, or having any information about him, please write to FRANK PREBLE, care of Universal Film Company, Universal City, California.

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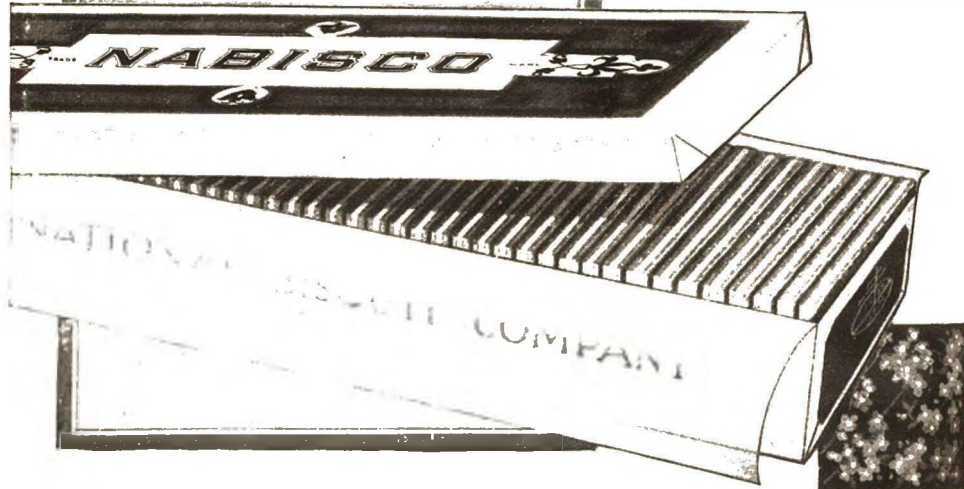


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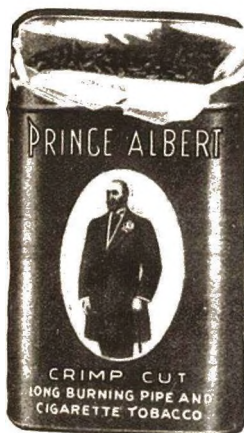
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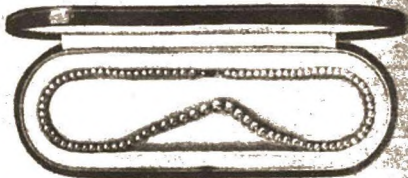
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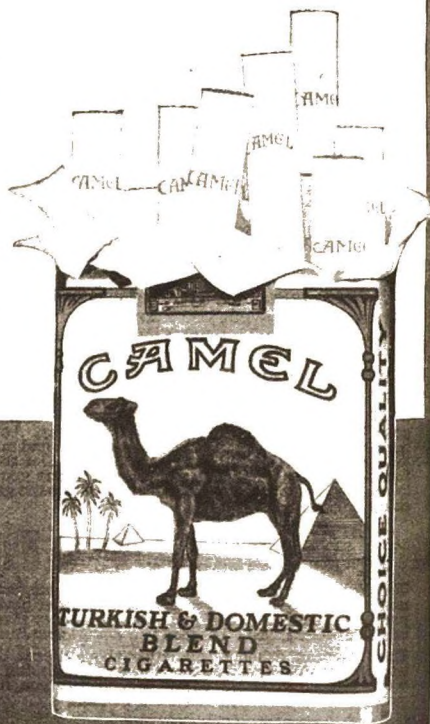
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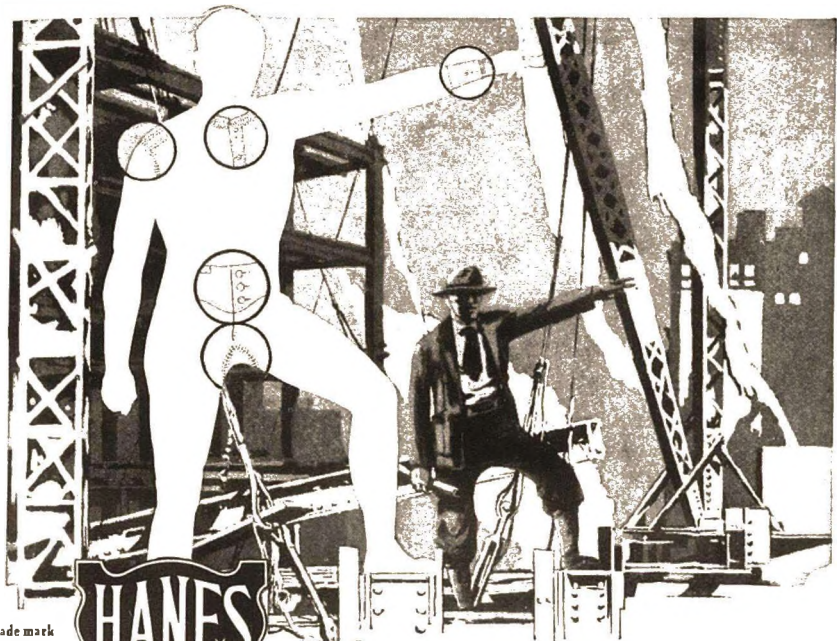
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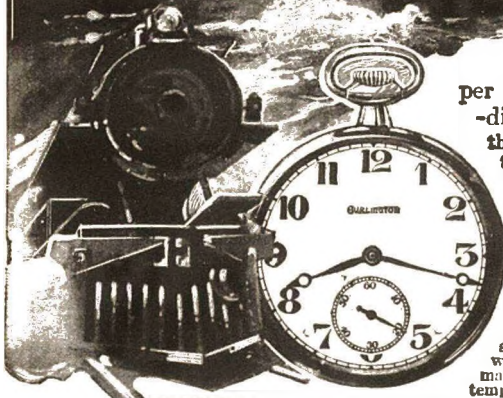
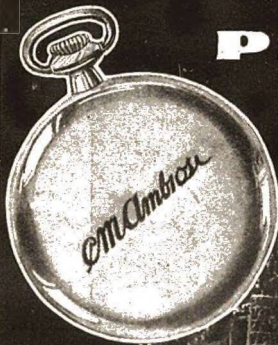
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