Every Week • JAN. 7, 1928

Detective Story Magazine

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PRINTED PERIL
BY
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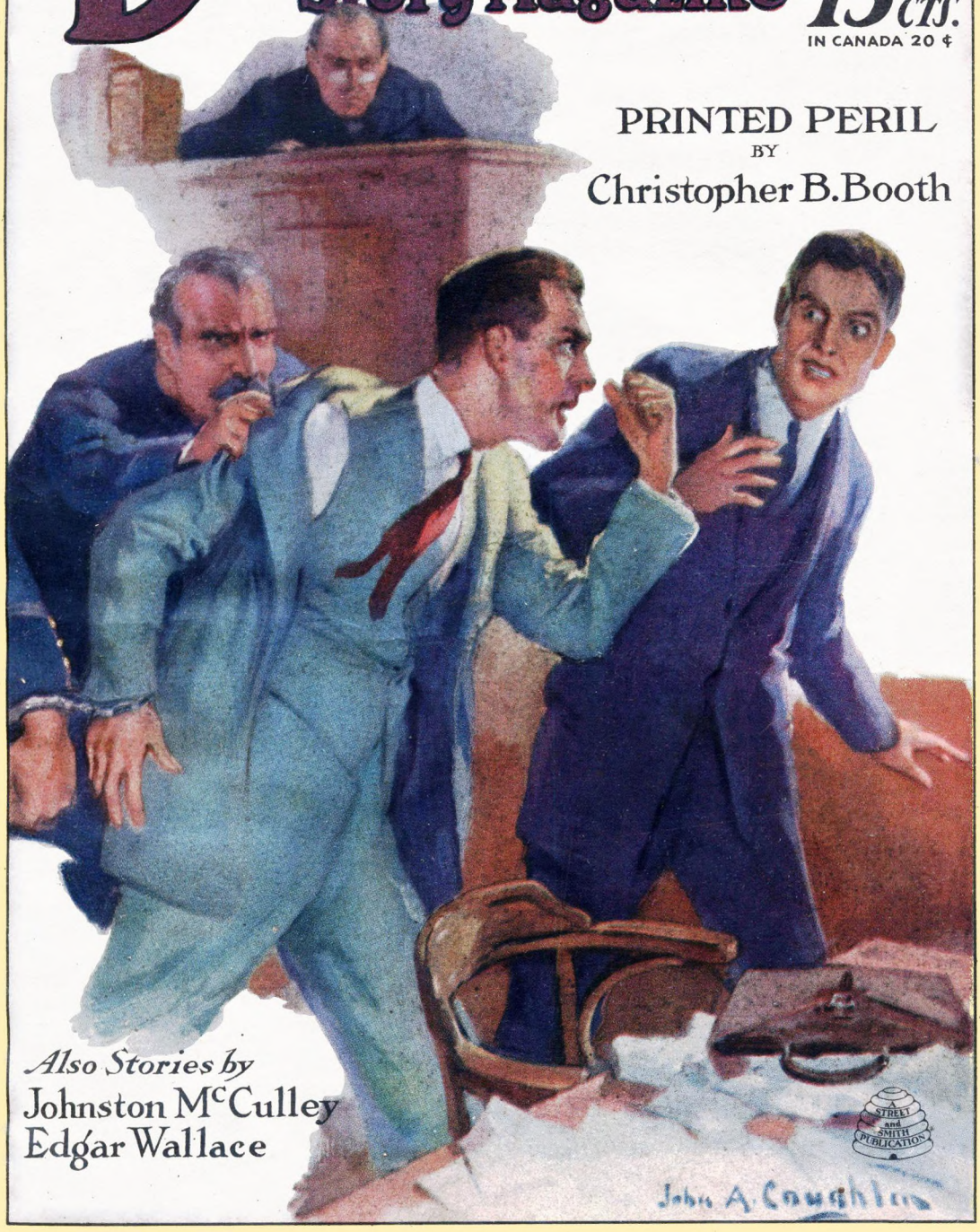

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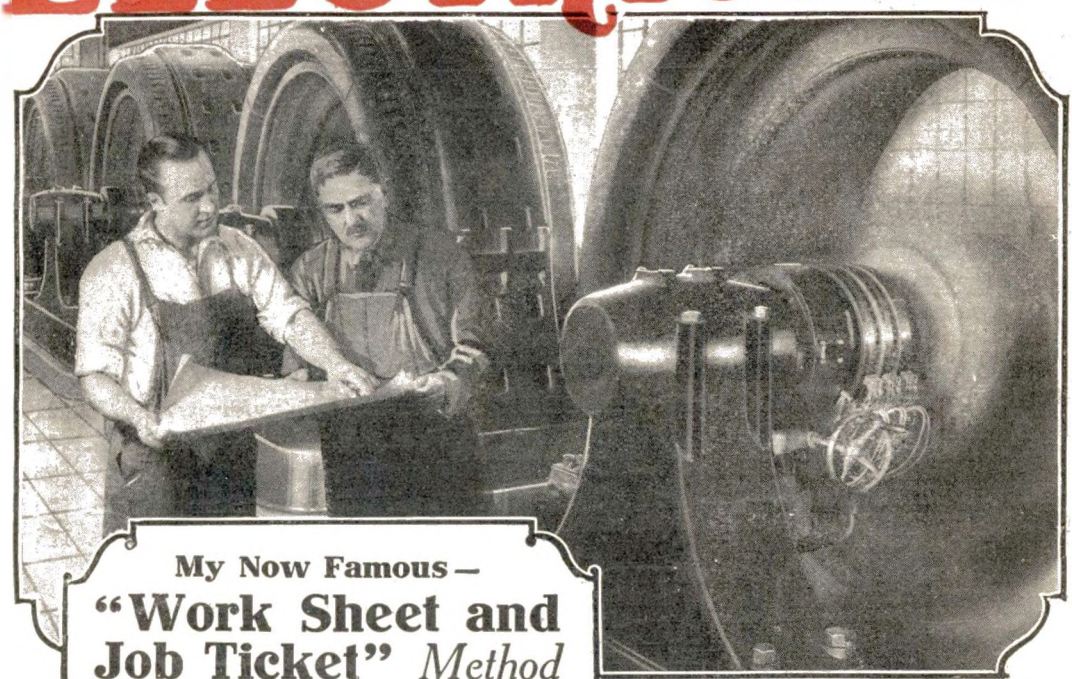

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E V E R Y W E E K

Vol. XCVIII **Contents for January 7, 1928** **No. 2**

ONE NOVELETTE

TWO SERIALS

FIVE SHORT STORIES

TWO ARTICLES

MISCELLANEOUS

DEPARTMENTS

Publication issued every week by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 4, 1917, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $7.50. Foreign, $8.50.

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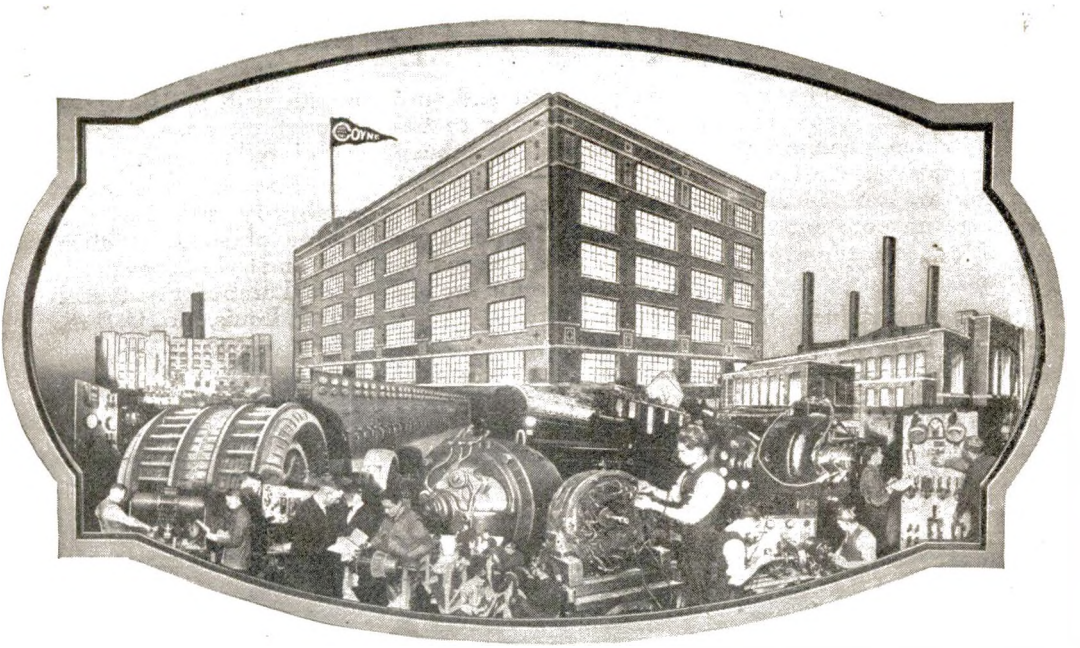

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Listerine immediately attacks the germ-producing bacteria in the mouth, nose, and throat.

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It may be, and very probably will be, the means of sparing you a long and trying siege of illness. Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

Gargle when you get home

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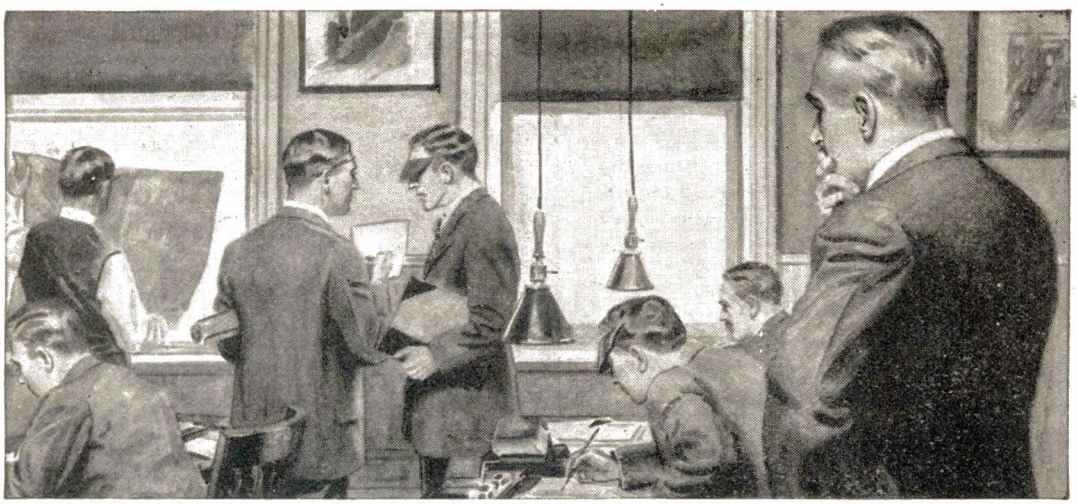

"Which Man Shall I Promote?"

THERE is probably no one problem in business that gives an employer so much concern as this —*"Which man shall I promote?"*

He must not—he *dare* not—take chances when a position of responsibility is open. The success of his department, his business, his very reputation depends on his ability to pick men.

In every office, in every factory, the problem always is the same.

Many, many men. Old men, young men, men of middle age. A score, a hundred ordinary routine workers.

But how few whose vision of the business, or whose aptitude for it, extends beyond the narrow limits of their own particular job! How startlingly few who are equipped to handle bigger work when Opportunity calls!

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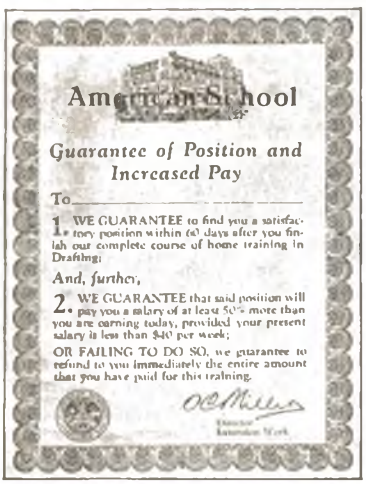

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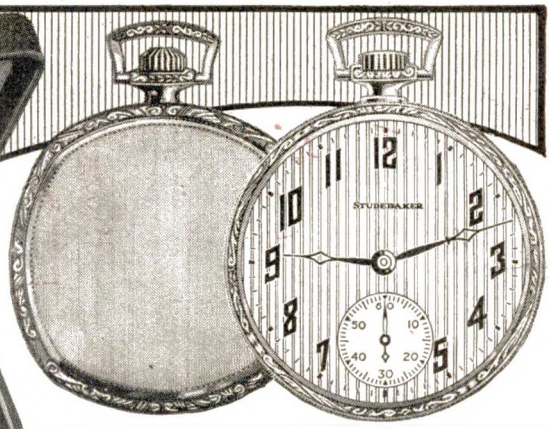

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You Cannot Lose Positively every one taking advantage of this opportunity is rewarded. Find the one house that is different from all the others and rush your name and address to me TODAY. A postal card will do, just say, "House No. —is different from all the others. Without any obligation please tell me how I can get this fine six-room house without one cent of cost to me."

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☐ Check here if interested in becoming representative.

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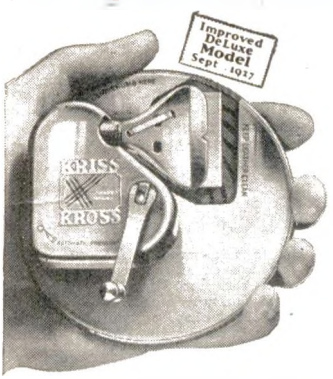

Another Triumph for KRISS-KROSS, The Most Amazing Shaving Invention Ever Patented! Mr. T. Liddle, of Illinois, Wrote Recently: "I Have Been Using One of Your Stroppers Since May, 1924. I Shave Every Morning And I Am STILL ON MY FIRST BLADE!" Read Astonishing Details. Then Act At Once For Real Shaving Joy.

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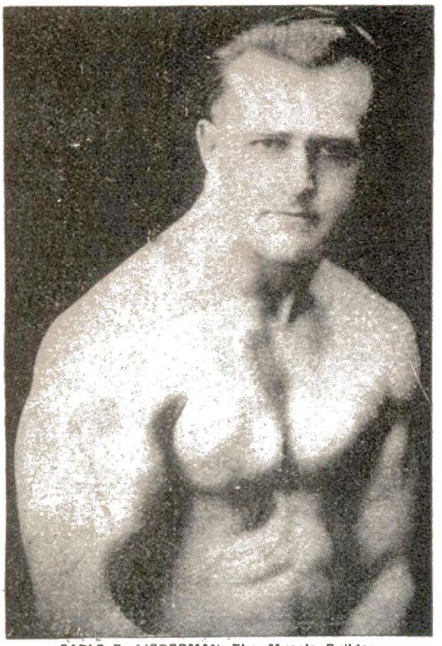

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CAN you do any of them? I can and many of my pupils can. It is remarkable the things a man really can do if he will make up his mind to be strong. I have taken men who were ridiculed because of their frail make-up and developed them into the strongest men of their locality.

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These are the days that call for speed. In olden days it took years to develop a strong, healthy body. I can completely transform you in 90 days. Yes, make a complete change in your entire physical make-up. In 30 days I guarantee to increase your biceps one full inch. I also guarantee to increase your chest two inches. But I don't quit there. I don't stop till you're a finished athlete—a real strong man. I will broaden your shoulders, deepen your chest, strengthen your neck. I will give you the arms and legs of a Hercules. I will put an armor plate of muscle over your entire body. But with it come the strong, powerful lungs which enrich the blood, putting new life into your entire being. You will be bubbling over with strength, pep and vitality.

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Many say that any form of exercise is good, but this is not true. I have seen men working in the factories and mills who literally killed themselves with exercise. They ruined their hearts or other vital organs, ruptured themselves or killed off what little vitality they possessed.

I was a frail weakling myself in search of health and strength. I spent years in study and research, analyzing my own defects to find what I needed. After many tests and experiments, I discovered a secret of progressive exercising. I increased my own arms over six and a half inches, my neck three inches and other parts of my body in proportion. I decided to become a public benefactor and impart this knowledge to others. Physicians and the highest authorities on physical culture have tested my system and pronounced it to be the surest means of acquiring perfect manhood. Do you crave a strong, well-proportioned body and the abundance of health that goes with it? Are you true to yourself? If so, spend a pleasant half-hour in learning how to attain it. The knowledge is yours for the asking.

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Cleared up—often in 24 hours. To prove you can be rid of Pimples, Blackheads, Acne Eruptions on the face or body, Barbers' Itch, Eczema, Enlarged Pores, Oily or Shiny Skin, simply send me your name and address today—no cost—no obligation. **CLEAR-TONE** tried and tested in over 100,000 cases—used like toilet water—is simply magical in prompt results. You can repay the favor by telling your friends; if not, the loss is mine. WRITE TODAY.

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When I first started making real important money I used to go down to the bank, draw out a roll—and just thumb it over in my office and grin! That's how good it felt to get success and big money, after years at a low-paid job.

Success and Big Money Were For Others, Not Me

Believe It or Not, That Was What I Thought of Myself—Just Twelve Short Months Ago

I'M TELLING YOU, just one year ago I'd never seen a hundred dollar bill in my life outside of a bank.

You'd think I'm kidding you if you saw the fine Radio business I own now. But it's gospel truth. Just twelve months ago I was only a poorly paid clerk, and I thought success had passed me by.

All my crowd in those days—the fellows I met in the pool-hall and at the bowling-alleys—said a fellow had to *have* money to make money. They claimed there was no chance for a fellow whose family didn't have money or some business to start him out in. And I'd decided they must be right.

I guess at that time I had just about given up hope. I thought there must be some kind of a mystery about making a lot of money. But I was due for a big awakening. Did I get it? Oh, boy! Read my story and judge for yourself.

IT ALL started one day last summer, when Helen, the girl I wanted to marry, was leaving for the seashore. Of course I went to the station to see her off.

As I stepped onto the station platform Bob Oakes and Wilmer Pratt had just rolled up in their cars. They climbed out with their arms full of bundles—books, expensive candy, flowers, all sorts of things. Well sir, I wished I could have swallowed in one gulp the little box of drugstore candy I had bought for Helen—it certainly looked pitiful beside all that stuff.

We three stood there talking to Helen until train time, while Helen's mother looked me up and down. Like any young girl's mother would, she had my financial standing already sized up within thirty-five cents. Cheap suit, cheap hat, she took it all in. And you could see on her face all the time what a lot of nerve she thought I had to give Bob and Wilmer a run for Helen.

Well, to make a long story short, Helen was nice, but her mother stood there looking scornful whenever she glanced my way, and she hardly spoke to me at all. I felt about as welcome as the measles, and as uncomfortable as the itch. I began to wish that I and my cheap suit and cheap hat could sink through the floor, but I stayed there and stuck it out.

WHEN Helen's train finally left, I slunk home, ashamed and humiliated. I went upstairs to my room and sat there with a lump in my throat, getting hotter and hotter and more ashamed of myself. Then I began to see red and redder.

Finally I jumped up and banged the table. "I'll show 'em," I growled through clenched teeth. "There *must* be some way for a man to make *real money!*" An idea suddenly flashed through my head.

Hastily I began thumbing the pages of a magazine on the table, searching for an advertisement that I'd seen many times, but passed up without thinking, an advertisement telling of big opportunities for trained men to succeed in the great new Radio field. With the advertisement was a coupon offering a big free book full of information. I sent the coupon in, and in a few days received a handsome book, telling about opportunities in the Radio field and how a man can prepare quickly and easily at home to take advantage of these opportunities. I read the book carefully and when I finished it I made my decision.

WHAT'S happened in the twelve months since that day, as I've already told you, seems almost like a dream to me now. For ten of those twelve months I've had a Radio business of my own! At first, of course, I started it as a little proposition on the side, under the guidance of the National Radio Institute, the outfit that gave me my Radio training. It wasn't long before I was getting so much to do in the Radio line that I quit my measly little clerical job, and devoted my full time to my Radio business.

Since that time I've gone right on up, always under the watchful guidance of my friends at the National Radio Institute. They would have given me just as much help, too, if I had wanted to follow some other line of Radio besides building my own retail business—such as broadcasting, manufacturing, experimenting, sea operating, or any of the score of lines they prepare you for. And to think that until that day I sent for their eye-opening book, I'd been wailing "I never had a chance!"

NOW I'm making real money, own a good car, stand high in my town, can borrow money at the bank any time I might want it. I'm getting some real *fun* and *enjoyment* out of life, not just *existing* from pay-day to pay-day.

And—just listen to this! Bob was in my place only the other day, and asked me for a job! Wilmer is still getting along pretty well on his father's money, but he'd trade places with me any day.

And Helen? Well—the honeymoon will be spent in Honolulu, starting two months from tomorrow!

HERE'S a real tip. Think it over—are you satisfied? Are you making enough money, at work that you like?

This new Radio game is a live wire field of golden rewards. The work in any of the 20 different lines of Radio, is fascinating, absorbing, well paid. The National Radio Institute—oldest and largest Radio home-study school in the world—will train you inexpensively in your own home to know Radio from A to Z and to increase your earnings in the Radio field.

Take another tip—No matter what your plans are, no matter how much or how little you know about Radio—clip the coupon below and look their free book over. The information it will give you is worth a few minutes of anybody's time. You will place yourself under no obligation—the book is free, and is gladly sent to anyone who wants to know about Radio. Just address: J. E. Smith, President, National Radio Institute, Dept. 1-A, Washington, D. C.

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Dear Mr. Smith:

Please send me your 64-page free book, printed in two colors, giving all information about the opportunities in Radio and how I can learn quickly and easily at home to take advantage of them. I understand this request places you under no obligation, and that no salesmen will call on me.

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To daily divers

The desperate gentleman wearing the submarine millinery has climbed into his bath determined to go down among the molluscs and the octopi, if need be, on the trail of his cake of sinker soap.

If you have been compelled to plow along the tub-bottom in search of a cake of soap like that—

And if you do not own one of these fashionable deep-water derbies—

You can simplify, shorten and immeasurably improve the whole bathing operation by investing a carfare in a cake of Ivory.

Ivory *floats!*

Perhaps it has already occurred to you that the function of a soap in the bath is to get you clean—comfortably, luxuriously, quickly and triumphantly—and not to be the object of a feverish search every time it slips out of your hand. Well, then, you will welcome a floating cake of Ivory as a shipwrecked man welcomes the approach of a fifty-foot yacht with dinner on the table.

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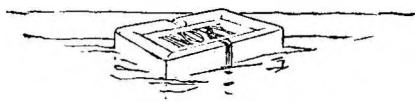


DETECTIVE STORY
MAGAZINE
EVERY WEEK

Vol. XCVIII January 7, 1928 No. 2

PRINTED PERIL

By Christopher B. Booth
Author of "The Sketchbook Clew," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A MAN IN FEAR.

DESPITE a notoriously quick and eager eye for a pretty face, it had taken Leo Thatcher almost six months to make the discovery that his new private secretary was an unusually attractive young woman. This surprising oversight had two explanations.

One reason was that at the time of Louise Crawford's transfer from the billing department to take Miss Hirsch's place during the vacation period, Thatcher had been emotionally occupied with a gay widow who was demanding a great deal of his time; so much of his time, in fact, that his mind had become deeply concerned over managing a speedy disentanglement.

The main reason, however, was that

Miss Crawford had masked her natural charms behind a deceiving severity of dress, wore a pair of owlish, horn-rimmed spectacles which made her look very prim, and encased her shapely ankles in cheap hose. Either she was extraordinarily ignorant of those deft little feminine touches or she was deliberately trying to avoid masculine attentions during working hours.

If it were the latter, the ruse would have been a complete success except that one afternoon she absent-mindedly removed those hideous spectacles, and it suddenly dawned upon Leo Thatcher that the girl was not only an unusually efficient secretary, but also "a peach" in either accidental or intentional disguise.

Miss Hirsch did not come back from her vacation, and Louise Crawford became permanent in a position that was to have been temporary. She mastered details in a way that made her extremely valuable—and then her employer realized that she was a pretty girl.

It wasn't the first time that Leo Thatcher's fancy had been intrigued by a member of the office force, and he tried his usual formula. Miss Crawford caught an error that might have proved costly—that was a part of her job, of course—and he sent her a box of silk stockings, costing five dollars a pair. She promptly returned the gift.

After a long, hard day at the office, Thatcher suggested that she had earned a treat and invited her to dinner and the theater. She refused. In these rebuffs, he found a challenge to conquest.

The firm of Thatcher & Co., was a prospering concern; there were unpleasant stories about Leo Thatcher's methods, but the fact remained that he was making a financial success of a business which only three years before had been on the rocks. Leo Thatcher himself was a man of force and personality; he was a go-getter, a man who hurdled obstacles.

It was on Tuesday morning, and Thatcher sat at the center of the big, shiny-topped desk in his private office, answering the morning mail. Louise Crawford sat near him with her pencil and notebook, taking dictation with unfaltering speed. For the moment, at least, she was just a cog in the machine.

"And, until we have more complete data, it will be impossible for me to give you a final decision." Leo Thatcher's voice was not unpleasant as the words rolled crisply from his tongue.

His hand reached across the desk, and he turned two or three leaves of his desk memorandum calendar, and suddenly his body stiffened. The expression flashing across his face was unmistakably one of fear, and with it a pallor washed all the color from his slightly ruddy cheeks. His blunted fingers were noticeably unsteady.

Obviously, it was something written on the memorandum pad that had so strangely unnerved him. Scribbled in his own hand, cryptically brief, the notation seemed commonplace enough.

"R. B.—to-morrow."

That was all, but Leo Thatcher stared at it in a fascinated and deeply concerned thoughtfulness, an uneasy frown pinching together his eyebrows, the eyes themselves narrowed. After a moment, he was again master of himself, at least outwardly, and darted a quick glance at Miss Crawford. There was no indication that she had taken notice of his perturbation; no sign, that is, beyond the stenographic pencil gripped rigidly in her slim hand.

Thatcher ripped the page from the calendar pad, crumpled it into a small, tight ball, and clenched it against his palm. The swivel chair creaked faintly as he shifted his weight and picked up the letter to which he had been dictating a reply.

"Just where did we leave off?" he asked, a question that was most unusual with him.

Without lifting her head, Louise Crawford read from her notes; her voice was clear, musical and softly pitched.

"Um—let me see—oh, yes. Until we have more complete data, it will be impossible for me to give you a final decision, and in the meantime——" His voice trailed off; he frowned again, cleared his throat, and looked relieved when the telephone, ringing at his elbow, provided a welcome distraction. Reaching for the instrument, he gave his private secretary a curt gesture of dismissal.

"Transcribe the letters I've already given you," he said; "we'll finish the rest of them later."

Louise Crawford left the private office, and the door closed quietly behind her. Not until she was at her own desk, did she let herself go. It would have dumfounded Leo Thatcher could he have known that the girl also had experienced a tremendous reaction to those scribbled words.

Louise Crawford sat down at her typewriter and stared at the blank wall with eyes that had become moist and blurry behind her ridiculous spectacles. Her mouth relaxed from its tension of restraint, and her now softly curved mouth trembled.

"To-morrow!" she whispered. "Roy comes back to-morrow—and my hands are empty!"

She removed the glasses, dabbled at her eyes with her handkerchief for a moment, and then began typing with speed and accuracy, just as though nothing had happened.

Thatcher's telephone call was of no particular importance; it had merely provided him with an excuse to be alone. When finished with the brief conversation, he smoothed out the wadded bit of paper and took another look at the notation which he had carefully penciled a good many weeks previous.

"Yes, Blaisdell comes out to-morrow!" he exclaimed under his breath. "Didn't realize the time was so close; doesn't seem possible it can have been three years!"

Again he crumpled the slip of paper, and this time tossed it into the wastebasket. Opening the bottom drawer of the desk, he groped for the pint liquor flask that he remembered was there. He removed the silver cap, which likewise served as a drinking measure, poured it brimming full and swallowed the stuff straight. His mounting fear, however, was not so easily anæsthetized.

"I wonder what his attitude's going to be?" Thatcher asked himself. "He was mighty bitter that day in the courtroom, and, for a proud man like Blaisdell, three years in prison is tragic. I didn't think he'd live through it; no, I didn't think he'd come out alive."

His nerves were so jumpy that he couldn't endure the inaction of sitting quietly as he sought to meet what he so apprehensively felt would be an unpleasant and perhaps a menacing issue. He leaped to his feet and began striding up and down the length of the office.

"The wise move," he muttered, "would be to slip out of town for two or three weeks and give him a chance to cool off, but, with the Atchinson deal pending—no, it can't be done. I'll have to take the risk but use all possible caution."

At length, he came to a decision regarding taking measures of safety. He returned to his desk reached for the telephone directory, thumbed nervously through the pages, and called a number, that of The Atlas Detective Agency, a concern which at various times had furnished him with the services of an operative. He got on the wire the man-

ager of the agency, a man named Starbuck.

In response to this call, there arrived at Leo Thatcher's office thirty minutes later, an operative from The Atlas, a brisk-looking man who, from his appearance, might have been a high-class salesman. Thatcher had been very particular to request that whoever was sent should have one outstanding qualification: that he did not look like a detective.

"I don't want to be embarrassed," Thatcher had explained, "by being seen in the company of a fellow who's got 'cop' written all over him."

So Manager Starbuck had detailed the member of his staff who responded to the name of Mr. Winthrop Cunningham. He wore his clothes faultlessly, and he was particularly valuable to the agency in handling such cases as required an operative to mingle with the gentry without arousing comment. Yes, Mr. Winthrop Cunningham had a gentlemanly name and did his best to live up to it. Being "a gentleman" amounted to a passion with him.

He even carried it so far as to have an engraved card which gave no hint of his profession. Being expected, Mr. Cunningham was immediately admitted to Leo Thatcher's private office. The latter gave this unusual detective a long, hard stare and wondered if the manager of The Atlas hadn't been perhaps a trifle overgenerous in filling the specifications. He noted, however, that Mr. Cunningham seemed to be an intelligent fellow and that also, more importantly, he looked capable physically.

"I suppose," said Thatcher after a moment of scrutiny, "that Starbuck explained why I want you."

Mr. Winthrop Cunningham sat down, gently hitched up the knees of his trousers to protect the freshly pressed crease, and, with a movement of his well-manicured hand, took from his pocket a leather cigar case.

"Why, yes, Mr. Thatcher, in a broadly general way, but he said that you would supply the details." Cunningham's voice was carefully modulated, his English precise, to fit his name and his manner. "I gathered that you have reason to be concerned over your personal safety. Is that correct?"

Leo Thatcher had a feeling of irritation. After all, what he wanted was a bodyguard. Winthrop Cunningham seemed to divine the other's annoyance and gave a confident smile.

"Because I haven't an undershot jaw and am not flat-footed from walking a patrolman's beat, Mr. Thatcher, it does not necessarily follow that I am incompetent. But if you are in any way dissatisfied with your first impression——"

"Oh, not at all," Thatcher broke in a trifle hastily; "I'll admit you're somewhat of a surprise, but you must know your onions or Starbuck wouldn't have sent you. I send the agency a good deal of business in the course of a year."

"Quite so: Mr. Starbuck lists you as one of his valuable clients, and I shall look after you to the best of my ability. If agreeable to you, we will proceed." He gestured to the desk. "I can see that you are a busy man and that this is one of your busy days."

Leo Thatcher leaned forward in his swivel chair, took a cigar for himself from the humidor, struck a match and puffed almost furiously, sucking in and out such a prodigious amount of smoke that his face was half concealed behind the blue haze. He always smoked when he met a situation which could not be frankly dealt with, for he had discovered that the human eye frequently betrays a falsehood, and there was nothing like smoke to give a man a plausible excuse to hide his gaze behind masked lids.

"This firm," he began with the cigar caught in the corner of his mouth and

locked between his teeth. "is now Thatcher & Co., and *I* am Thatcher & Co. It used to be Blaisdell & Thatcher, and, before that, it was Thomas Blaisdell & Co.

"I started in with old man, Blaisdell, as an errand boy. I worked my way up. Tom Blaisdell was a sick man several years before he died, and I ran the business. After his death, I bought into the firm and we changed the name to Blaisdell & Thatcher. The son, Roy Blaisdell, wasn't long out of college; young, irresponsible and—I regret to say—none too honest.

"Roy Blaisdell needed more money than the firm could afford to let him have. Business wasn't very good, you see, at that time. I knew he was reckless but I didn't think he was a crook!"

Thatcher paused, smoking furiously.

"I won't go into the details," he pursued; "I thought I was holding him down, but there came the crash. Banks demanding the payment of notes with my name that I hadn't signed! Forgery! Everything was hopelessly tangled. Finances were juggled, some of the books missing.

"For his father's sake, I'd have lost my last dollar rather than prosecute, but the banks didn't feel that way about it. They went to the district attorney. Indictment, prosecution, and conviction followed. I had to tell the truth under oath, didn't I? Protected him all I could—for his poor father's sake."

He paused again and drew a deep breath.

"Roy Blaisdell got a five-year sentence but he's had to serve only three of it—time off for good behavior. I don't know if it was a grandstand play or just plain insanity, but he took a lunge at me right there in the courtroom. With a lawyer holding him back on one side and a bailiff on the other, he shouted out at the top of his voice that I had framed him and that he'd get me. I think he'd have killed me on the spot if they hadn't stopped him."

Mr. Winthrop Cunningham had listened politely, without interruption. Now he nodded, still without speaking.

"I gathered together the wreckage of the business," added Thatcher, "borrowed some capital and launched out alone. It looked for a time that I wouldn't be able to keep afloat, but I managed it, and this concern has been profitable, very profitable indeed. When Roy Blaisdell sees what I have done with the old firm, I am afraid, if he still has the idea of revenge——"

"Naturally," agreed the genteel detective, speaking for the first time; "particularly if he has no money himself."

"Not a dollar," answered Leo Thatcher; "he hasn't a dollar or a friend."

"Has he renewed his threats since his release?"

"He doesn't come out until to-morrow," Leo Thatcher explained; "I don't actually know that he means to do anything, but, if he still means to harm me, I believe that he will strike without warning—and quickly. I want to be prepared for the attempt—if it is made." He squared his shoulders. "Of course, you may think me a coward, but——"

"Oh, not at all!" Winthrop Cunningham exclaimed warmly. "It's not cowardice to protect yourself from violence. Prison does embitter a man, and it's wise to play safe. You are using good judgment, Mr. Thatcher." He gave a smile of encouraging confidence as he reached across the desk and neatly flicked the ash from his cigar into the receiver of the smoking set. "Go ahead with your business, Mr. Thatcher, and don't worry. With The Atlas protecting you, there is absolutely no danger."

Despite this assurance, Leo Thatcher suppressed a shiver of dread, for guilt stood sentinel over his fear, and he

looked toward the morrow with a foreboding that was not to be so easily quieted.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER THREE VOID YEARS.

IN the mirror on the wall of the big prison's "dressing-out" room, Roy Blaisdell stared at his own reflection with a kind of fascinated intensity. It was like meeting an old acquaintance after a lengthy parting, for to-day was the first time in three years that he had seen himself clothed in anything other than drab convict denim. A white shirt and a linen collar certainly made an amazing difference.

"I guess I haven't changed so much," he thought, but he had changed a great deal more than he himself realized. His face was graver, his eyes had lost their boyish glisten of enthusiasm, their old sparkle of constant laughter, and his mouth was set into a firmer line, almost grimly hard.

"Get a move on you," growled a guard from the doorway, giving Blaisdell a curious look. Usually, the released convict with only a margin of minutes separating him from liberty, was in a frenzy of haste to put the city of stone and steel behind him.

"All right," Roy Blaisdell answered absently. A half-tremulous smile moved his lips as he picked up the coat of the neat, well-tailored suit. It saved him the necessity of going out to face the world clad in those hideous prison-made garments—the gift of the State—which, unless he is fortunate enough to have money or friends, he must wear like a brand.

He remembered this suit of clothes; he had paid a hundred and forty dollars for it at an exclusive tailor shop on LaSalle Street, and had worn it for the first time that afternoon he and Louise Crawford had motored out to Fox Lake. Of course, he and Louise had taken other drives to Fox Lake, but this had been in the afternoon he had asked her a certain question, and she had given him the answer that he had hoped for. And, less than twenty-four hours later, had come his arrest as a forger and a thief!

No need for him to question by what agency this particular suit of clothes had reached him here within the prison! Louise had taken charge of his personal effects, and he knew that it could have come only from her. As he picked up the coat, an envelope dropped out from between the folds and fell to the floor at his feet. Picking it up, he broke open the flap and read the brief note inclosed:

Roy, DEAREST: I had planned to deliver this package in person and come back with you on the train, but something has happened to make this impossible, so I am sending the things by messenger.

I telephoned this morning and was told that you will probably reach Chicago on the afternoon train. I shall make the utmost effort to be at the station, but, if I am unable to make it, you will please come at once to my apartment and wait there for me. You will find the key in the watch pocket of the vest.

Oh, my dear, you don't know how I have been counting the days, even the hours. With all my love. LOUISE.

Roy Blaisdell read this note with mixed emotions, mingled disappointment and relief. How he yearned to see her again—and yet how he dreaded it!

There had been hardly a day of his imprisonment that she hadn't written, but his pride had recoiled from the thought of Louise seeing him with his prison clothes and the horrible number sewed to his prison garb. He had begged her not to visit him, and now he shrank from the one thing that there had been left for him to look forward to.

"Get a move on you," the guard growled again; "you ain't the only guy dressin' out to-day."

Roy Blaisdell slipped on the coat, picked up the gray hat, and passed through the first door to the right for the brief routine that led to liberty. There were certain formalities in the warden's office before it could be officially recorded that he had discharged to the State a debt of dishonor, paid for with three bitter years of shame.

Absently, he listened to the warden's words of parting advice; mechanically, he accepted the railroad ticket and the sum of ten dollars in cash. A few minutes later, he had passed out into the corridor and through the last barrier. The steel gate clanged, and he stood blinking in the strong sunlight.

He should have been glad, and, in a way, no doubt he was, but he was engulfed in a feeling of helplessness that amounted to despair. All through the past night, he lay awake on the narrow cot of his cell, facing grim realities. There could be no future until he had removed the blot from the past, and he had come to the decision that he had no right to see Louise again until he had cleared his name of the unjust stain. However, he must see her just once. For one thing, she had custody of five hundred dollars, all his capital to make a fresh start, and she had the storage receipt for his personal belongings, what few of them there were left; but more important, it would be both cruel and cowardly to obey the impulse of vanishing with no spoken word.

The train was more than an hour late. Roy Blaisdell reached Chicago at ten minutes past five. He paused within the station, his eyes searching for a face in the crowds. She had not come to meet him! A dull pain stabbed through his heart; perhaps, her loyalty had been only kindness and pity; perhaps she wanted to delay the blow of having to tell him what he himself knew, that there was no future for them together.

"It will be better," he told himself dully as, with slumped shoulders, he made his way through the station toward the exit. "The sooner we face the stark truth the better—for both of us."

Louise lived on the North Side. Blaisdell walked over to The Loop, climbed the steps to the elevated station, and boarded a Wilson Avenue express.

The apartment was on the second floor of a four-story walk-up, overlooking a small, neat garden with a fountain in the center. He climbed the stairs, and his finger trembled a little as he reached for the bell. He could hear it ringing but there was no response. After a moment or two of hesitation, he took the brass key from his pocket, snapped back the lock and slowly pressed the door inward.

The two rooms and a kitchenette were small but in perfect taste. In the living room, the gate-leg table was spread with linen and set for two; there were candles in silver sticks. Louise had planned for them to have dinner together. But—why wasn't she here? Her absence provided a mystery which he unconsciously resented.

On the piano was his photograph in an oval silver frame, and, propped against it, was a square of stiff notepaper upon which something was written. It was placed in this conspicuous position, he judged, so that it would catch his attention. He was right, and Louise had preconceived his puzzlement.

ROY, DEAREST: You are probably wondering a great deal why I am not here to greet you. I will be home between five and six, and I may have some very wonderful news for you, the most wonderful thing that could happen—for both of us.

Roy Blaisdell's pulse bounded, for, surely, she could mean only that she had found the proof of his innocence, and that would make everything different. Dull and hopeless despair gave

way to impatient eagerness that very nearly approached frenzy. How had she managed this miracle that his lawyers hadn't been able to perform? His imagination failed to provide an answer.

He waited about ten minutes before he heard the door being opened. He turned and took a step toward the tiny entrance hall, and there was Louise.

For an instant or two, each of them stood perfectly still, held in the grip of an emotion that held both of them momentarily bereft of speech. She was the first to break the transfixed silence.

"Roy!" She rushed toward him, and her arms went about him. "Oh, my dearest, my darling!" Her cheeks were wet with streaming tears.

He tried to answer her, but his voice choked, and his own eyes were blurred with a blinding mist. He held her close with an embrace of fierce and hungry intensity. With a laugh that was half sob, she drew away, urged him to a chair and dropped to her knees beside him, holding his hand to her damp cheek.

"It's been so long!" she murmured. "I've been so afraid that you would never come back. Hold me close to you, darling, and—and let's not speak for a little while."

The little French clock on the top of the piano softly measured the escaping seconds, and the girl and the man were slowly dimmed by the twilight deepening into darkness. Theirs was, truly, a happiness too great for the spoken word.

Presently, Louise Crawford stirred.

"It has been only three years and yet it has seemed forever!" she whispered. "You will never know, dear, how long it has been to me. If you have suffered, so have I—but we mustn't talk about that. The future is what matters."

"It is the future I have always thought about, Louise, but there was no future and there is no future, unless——"

She knew, before the sentence was finished, that he had in mind the hinted promise of the note she had left for him on the piano. With a quick intake of the breath, she got to her feet and groped her way across the room for matches. A flame flared, and she lighted the candles, revealing her face with its former ecstasy vanished, and Roy Blaisdell's heart dropped like lead.

"I thought, I had hoped——" he began dully, and Louise rushed back to his side as she saw the look of keen disappointment which amounted to suffering.

"It was wrong of me, Roy, to raise your hopes, but I was sure, oh, so sure, that I would be able to do it. Don't lose heart, dear, for there is still a chance. Perhaps to-morrow, or at least soon I shall have my chance."

"You aren't very clear, Louise; I don't at all understand what you mean, what you're trying to do."

"Roy, please don't look so stricken; I tell you that I shall have it very soon—the missing book. I know where it is; I have seen it, almost touched it with my own hands!"

Blaisdell gripped the arms of the chair and raised himself only to drop back again with an incredulous shake of his head.

"You must be mistaken, Louise, if you mean what we used to call No. 3 ledger. Thatcher has destroyed that; he wouldn't be such a fool to have kept it."

"You're wrong, Roy; he has kept it. I tell you I've seen it; he's got it in the safe that he keeps at his house. I guess it must contain records that are still important in the business."

"Yes," Blaisdell agreed with a nod, "so it does, but, if he keeps it in a safe at his house, I don't understand how you could know."

Louise Crawford hesitated for she knew that Roy wouldn't like hearing the thing she was about to say.

"I had to try to do something; I simply *had* to, and the only way was to work from the inside. For the past six months, I have been Thatcher's private secretary."

This news left him too dumfounded for speech, and then amazement gave way to resentment and indignation, for he knew Leo Thatcher's boldness with women; during their partnership, Thatcher's advances to girls in the firm's employ had been more than once the occasion for Blaisdell's objection and interference. Louise was much too pretty a girl to have been long in Leo Thatcher's office not to have been the recipient of the man's unwelcome attentions.

Louise saw the blaze which leaped from his eyes and knew what was in his mind.

"Don't be so foolish, Roy! If that man of all men had ever put his hand on me, I'd have turned tiger and scratched his eyes out."

"But he must have! He couldn't be an hour around a girl half as good looking as you are without getting fresh."

"You can take my word for it that he hasn't got fresh with *me*—and we'll talk no more about that if you please."

"All right then, we won't." Roy Blaisdell responded gruffly, "but how on earth did you manage?"

"It's not so hard to do a thing that you know you've got to do and can do," Louise told him. "I knew that I was going to be Thatcher's secretary, for that was my objective, and every effort I was capable of was turned toward making it happen.

"I started in taking a course in stenography just a few weeks after—after you went away."

"After I was sent up!"

"Don't be bitter, Roy, please!"

"Most anybody would be bitter after three years in the pen on a frame-up by a dirty scoundrel."

"I know, Roy dear; yes, I know all that, but the scales are about to be balanced. I'm sure of it; if you will only be patient a few days longer, I'm certain everything is coming out all right for us."

He made no response, and Louise went on.

"Well, it took me a good many weeks to get a position; it was just addressing envelopes and checking up the mailing list, and I worked at that for quite a long time, so long that there were times I almost got discouraged. I wasn't getting anywhere very fast, but finally I made a suggestion that got me a promotion into the billing department, and then I got chummy with Miss Hirsch, who was Thatcher's secretary. I never tried so hard in my life to win anybody's friendship. After a while, we took this apartment together, and it was a good while before I felt safe to take her in my confidence, and I shouldn't have done it then except that she was getting married and about to resign.

"Between us we fixed it up for her to get a vacation, recommend me to fill in during her absence, and then it was up to me. You see, I had to be so efficient that Thatcher simply couldn't let me go. Miss Hirsch resigned by letter—and that's how I got the job permanently."

"But the ledger?" questioned Roy Blaisdell. "What were you doing at the man's house?"

"He had the grippe and couldn't come to the office for several days; he telephoned for me to come out to his house."

"I'll bet it was just a trick so that he could get you alone!" he flared suspiciously.

"Roy, you ought to be ashamed of yourself trying to quarrel over such things," she protested, and yet his jealousy did not exactly displease her.

"I know Leo Thatcher too well," he growled in retort.

"He does a great deal of work at home," Louise went on; "one thing I've got to say for the man, he is industrious."

"So is the devil," snapped Roy.

"He has an office on the second floor of the house with everything arranged quite businesslike, and I suspect that he transacts deals with men that he wouldn't want to come to the office because of the risk. He has gone in for municipal contracts and gets them mostly, I suspect, through some sort of bribery.

"It was about two months ago that I saw the missing ledger. How I did want to make a grab for it and run! But I wouldn't have had a chance to get away; the servants would have stopped me before——"

"Servants?" asked Roy Blaisdell. "Since when has Leo Thatcher had an establishment that required servants?"

"He has made a great deal of money," Louise reluctantly admitted; "he has resorted to methods that you would never have permitted.

"Day before yesterday, Thatcher called in a private detective to protect himself from you. He is afraid that you intend——"

"To give him what he deserves!" gritted Roy. "Heaven knows that's what I *should* do! One thousand and one hundred nights I have spent on a hard cot in a prison cell, and there was hardly a night that I didn't imagine my fingers about Leo Thatcher's throat."

"Hush!" cried Louise with a shiver. "Ever since that horrible afternoon in the courtroom, I have been afraid it might come to that. I can't blame you, dear, but thank heaven there is a better way.

"Leo Thatcher is badly frightened. To-day he stayed away from the office to avoid all possible risk that you might —well, ambush him. He sent for me to come out to his house and take dictation. He didn't have any occasion to open the safe as I had hoped. He won't be at the office again to-morrow, and is trying to save his pride by giving as an excuse that he isn't feeling well. Perhaps to-morrow——"

"Yes, perhaps!" exclaimed Blaisdell. "And it's a pretty slim 'perhaps.' But since I know the ledger is in the safe——"

"No, Roy; no!" Louise cried in quick panic. "You mustn't trust yourself to come face to face with Thatcher. With your heart so full of bitterness, your anger would run away with you, and, Roy, you mustn't ruin our future."

"Future?" he echoed hollowly. "There can be none until I have cleared my name. I refuse to let you sacrifice yourself."

Louise put her fingers over his lips.

"Almost three years I have worked and planned for the chance to prove your innocence, and I know that I will not fail."

"He may not open the safe to-morrow any more than he did to-day, and, even when he does, there is no assurance that you will be given a chance to get it."

"Thatcher is frightened and I want to *keep* him frightened," declared Louise; "we must keep him so *badly* frightened that he'll not dare take the chance of going back to the office for some time. Sooner or later, if I keep going to the house, I'm going to get my chance. I am sure he must know your handwriting, and I have a plan——"

She was interrupted by the soft-noted chiming of the little French clock on the piano.

"Come out into the kitchenette while I tell you," she said; "it's time I was starting dinner. I have all the things you like very much."

CHAPTER III.

THE THREAT.

IT was the morning after Roy Blaisdell's release from prison, and Leo Thatcher sat on the second floor of his securely locked house, in the room that he used for an office, making some crafty calculations on a sheet of paper. He was arriving at the figure which he would be able to offer a certain unscrupulous politician named Deems in exchange for a fat municipal contract which Deems would be able to deliver to Thatcher & Co. Bribery? Certainly! It was such methods that had enabled Leo Thatcher to accomplish financial success, to buy this fine house out in the fashionable suburbs, to furnish it luxuriously and, although a bachelor, to equip it with servants, including a butler. Unaccustomed to this mode of living, he was, it must be confessed, still a bit awed by the stiff-backed, wooden-faced fellow he had hired as butler.

Since a butler can demand a higher salary if he can boast of English training and service in the household of a titled family, John Faulkner, born in Kansas, had seen the wisdom of dropping his "h's." Moreover, he had changed his name to John Higgs.

Despite the presence of his armed bodyguard from The Atlas Detective Agency, Leo Thatcher had decided to spend another day at home instead of taking the trip downtown; this was a decision he had made the previous afternoon, and he had requested Miss Crawford, his secretary, to report for duty at his home instead of going to the office. The hour was now a quarter past nine, and the girl had not arrived. Promptness from all employees was one thing Leo Thatcher demanded, but he was so occupied with his figures that he hadn't noticed that she was late.

The door into the hall was opened so quietly that the man at the desk heard no sound of the other's approach. Mr. Winthrop Cunningham, the genteel detective, stood upon the threshold in a well-tailored suit of gray tweed, a blue polka-dot tie setting off a wing collar. He paused for an instant, moved forward, and Leo Thatcher raised his head with a startled jerk, attesting to the state of his nerves.

"Well?"

As he sat down, the face of Mr. Winthrop Cunningham registered an expression of injured pride. From his pocket he took a cigar and held it elegantly between his fingers, delaying lighting it until he had spoken.

"Really, Mr. Thatcher," he said in a protesting voice, "it is quite ridiculous, shutting yourself in like this. You are a man of affairs and, surely, your business must feel the effects of a continued absence from the office. With The Atlas Agency and myself responsible for your complete safety, I assure you——"

"I'll go to the office when I choose and stay at home when I choose without any advice from you or anybody else," snapped Thatcher.

Mr. Cunningham's cheeks turned pink. "I only wanted to suggest——" he began.

"Also," rasped the other, "when I'm paying you fifteen dollars a day, there's no reason why I should keep you in cigars. Those you've been helping yourself to from my humidor cost me exactly twenty-eight cents apiece by the box."

Mr. Winthrop Cunningham's face changed color again, this time from a pinkish tinge to a beet red.

"Really, Mr. Thatcher, you misjudge me; I assure you that these cigars are——"

"You'll assure me nothing!" broke in Leo Thatcher. "I'm telling you to keep your hands off my smokes. Now get out; I'm busy."

At this moment Higgs, the butler, ap-

peared in the doorway holding an envelope in his hand.

"What is it, Higgs?" barked Thatcher.

"Hi found this in the downstairs 'all, sir," answered the butler and approached the desk, placing the envelope in his employer's hand. The effect on the latter, as soon as his eyes rested upon his own name, was startling. His face blanched, and his eyes suddenly bulged with an unmistakable light of terror in them. For a moment, he held the envelope in hands that had begun to shake.

"Wait!" he cried hoarsely to Cunningham who was already leaving the room and had reached the door. The detective paused and turned, himself aghast at the other man's transformation.

"What is it?" he asked. "What has happened?"

With shaking fingers, for he had recognized the handwriting as that of Roy Blaisdell, Leo Thatcher tore open the flap of the envelope and was drawing forth the single sheet of paper. It took him but a moment to read the message; the note was brief, just six words.

I'm going to make you pay.

That was all. There was no signature, and none was necessary. Leo Thatcher steadied himself a little and turned toward the butler.

"Where did you say this came from, Higgs?" he demanded in a husky voice.

"Hi found it on the little table, sir, in the downstairs 'all."

"And how did it get there? That's the important thing. How did it get inside the house?"

"Is it anything to do with the matter in which I am retained?" murmured Winthrop Cunningham.

"A fine detective you are to let a thing like this get into the house without your knowledge!" shouted Thatcher. "It might as well have been Blaisdell himself for all the good you'd have been!"

"You mean it's a threat from Blaisdell?" Cunningham's manner became briskly professional. "Let me have a look at it, please."

Thatcher surrendered the six-word warning. The private detective read it with a faint frown puckering his forehead.

"I suppose there's no doubt as to who wrote it?"

"None! I'd know Roy Blaisdell's writing if he wrote me a letter in Chinese."

Winthrop Cunningham turned to the butler who had a slightly defensive look as though he fully expected to be blamed for this matter which he by no means understood.

"Put on your thinking cap, Higgs," said Cunningham. "The only way this envelope could have got into the house was for some one to *bring* it in. It didn't walk through locked doors and windows, you know, and settle itself on that table downstairs. It didn't come through the mails and, therefore, it was either delivered to you by messenger——"

"No, sir!" the butler declared positively.

"Then, what would you suggest?" the detective demanded pointedly.

Higgs' forehead was corrugated with a heavy frown. "Hi don't know, sir, unless——"

"Unless what?" barked Leo Thatcher. "Quit that mumbling and speak up."

"Unless it could have been Miss Crawford. No one else 'as come in or gone out since yesterday afternoon, and the young lady, sir——"

"Well, why don't you go on?" rasped Thatcher.

"She came in just now, and, it was but a moment after she 'ad some upstairs, that Hi found the envelope on the little table."

"Ah!" Winthrop Cunningham exclaimed significantly. "It is easily apparent, Mr. Thatcher, that the young woman, your secretary I believe, is the person who can explain what promised to be a neat little mystery."

None of the three men had heard Louise Crawford's approach outside the door, for the double reason that they were very much occupied among themselves, and that the girl softened her tread to a tiptoe as she crept closer to the opening. She had stood listening, forced to the depressing realization that her plan was by no means as successful as she had hoped for. It had not been her intention that the note she had planted downstairs should be found so soon. There was, she saw now, no other logical explanation except that she was accountable for its appearance within the house.

She reached the belated realization, also, that if the presence of the warning was made unexplainably mysterious, it might entirely defeat instead of help her plan; for, if Thatcher came to the decision that he could find safety not even in his own home, locked and guarded as it was, he might seek further refuge in flight and a temporary absence from the city, costly as this move might be to his business. This was a possibility that had not previously entered into her calculations.

Louise saw that she had created for herself a very ticklish situation, but she was a quick-witted girl and, listening to what was being said within the room, she swiftly decided upon a course to pursue.

"We'd better talk to that girl," the detective was suggesting to Leo Thatcher.

Louise softly retreated a few steps and then walked again forward, letting her heels fall unmuffled upon the floor. An instant later, she was within the doorway with that brisk manner which is becoming to the efficient private secretary. She held stenographic notebook and a supply of sharply pointed pencils in her hand.

"Good morning, Mr. Thatcher!" she called with that cheerfulness, which denotes an employee coming to work with freshness and enthusiasm for the tasks before her. Then she paused. "Perhaps I am intruding."

Leo Thatcher gave her a glare of suspicious hostility. Cunningham had the note and the envelope, and he waved it in his hand with an accusing gesture.

"Tell us where you got this," he ordered, forsaking the role of gentleman for that of the detective inquisitor. "Come on now; no stalling."

For a moment, Louise Crawford was thrown off her mental balance, but only for a moment. Her head went up resentfully.

"I'll answer that question if you will ask it again—civilly," she replied.

"Forget the dignity stuff," growled Leo Thatcher, watching her intently.

"I am waiting," Louise said to the detective, "for you to ask me the same question with a reasonable politeness of manner."

Winthrop Cunningham's browbeating tactics were instantly surrendered.

"I beg your pardon, miss, but we are very anxious to know——"

"That's better," Louise broke in and managed to smile, "and now I'll tell you. As I was turning in at Mr. Thatcher's house, a strange man asked me if I would mind handing a message to Mr. Thatcher. I am sorry if any harm is done, but I couldn't see that there was any harm."

With a grunt of relief, Leo Thatcher relaxed and, pulling a handkerchief with a colored border from his pocket dabbled absently at his damp forehead. Cunningham spun on his heel, took two broad strides toward the window, flung up the sash and leaned out across the window sill, looking up and down the street.

"No sign of the fellow," he reported, turning back into the room. "Don't be alarmed, Mr. Thatcher. You know the old adage about barking dogs—they never bite."

Proverbs, no matter how long they had stood the test of time, gave no consolation to Leo Thatcher. There was no analogy, to his way of thinking, between a barking dog and a wronged man whom, doubtless, three years of unjust imprisonment had turned into a human wolf, feeding his hate and sharpening his fangs behind stone walls and steel bars.

Louise Crawford didn't know it, but at this moment her strategy was having the effect she had wanted. Thatcher, shaken and terrified, despite the relief of knowing how the warning had got into the house, had come to the decision that no power on earth would draw him from the safety of his guarded house until he had full assurance that Roy Blaisdell wouldn't be lurking within some doorway, ready to spring out at him. He held himself together as well as he could, for he had a pride—perhaps conceit is the better word—where the opinion of a woman was concerned, and he had recently discovered that his secretary was a beauty in disguise. His bluff fooled nobody unless it was Higgs, and butlers are not usually easily fooled. The latter, seeing that nothing further was wanted of him, discreetly withdrew with that noiselessness of approach and departure which sometimes annoyed his master.

"What do you think?" Thatcher asked Cunningham.

"Blaisdell is either a madman or a fool, and perhaps some of both," answered the detective. "He's sure put his head in the bag for us with that threat of his. Threats from a released convict! You can prove that's his handwriting, eh? Ask the police to pick him up and hold him for the parole board! He had a five-year sentence to serve. He was paroled at the end of three, but only entitled to his freedom so long as he behaves himself! Back to prison he goes, Mr. Thatcher, if you want to press the matter."

"Yes!" Leo Thatcher barked vigorously, and it was a good thing for Louise Crawford that neither of the two men happened to be looking at her. Her face had gone dead white, and there was a look of horror in her eyes. To conceal her agitation, she hastily turned her back and, steadily as she could manage, walked to the window, staring unseeingly into the quiet street below.

"Back to prison!" Detective Cunningham's words echoed like a shout through her brain, and she fought down the sob which rose in her beating throat. Could it be possible that, trying to help the man she loved, she was sending him back to another two years of living perdition? Yes, she supposed that the detective was right, and Roy was only released on parole. They could send him back.

Louise offered a prayer that she would be able to reach Roy at the hotel where he was stopping in time to give him warning.

CHAPTER IV.

FAILURE.

THE situation worked around more to her advantage than she could have hoped for, at least, in one particular. There were some records that Leo Thatcher wanted brought out from the office, and Louise was dispatched to fetch them. While she knew that, during her absence things would be moving toward Roy's arrest, the errand gave her the opportunity of getting clear of the house.

When she reached a drug store, she rushed to the telephone. Roy had told her that, to avoid the possibility of newspaper reporters, he was registering

at the hotel under an assumed name. She called the hotel and asked for him by his incognito, only to be harrowed by the information, "Not in his room."

Boarding an elevated train, she rushed to the hotel in person and, finding him still absent, chose the only means left of getting the news to him—that of writing a note. Even after she had left this message with the clerk, she waited about the lobby for some minutes, hoping Roy would appear, but at length she gave it up.

In the meantime, being assured by both his own private detective and by an official of the police department that Blaisdell's arrest and detention would not be long delayed, Leo Thatcher returned to a nearly normal state of mind. In fact, with a reaction of relief, he became almost cheerful.

It was somewhat inconvenient, of course, running a business by medium of a telephone, but he had things pretty well organized down at the office, and the important matter on hand was the pending municipal contract, profits from which would run into a large sum of money That, also, was shaping itself not only satisfactorily but swiftly.

Negotiations of a tentative nature had been under way for several days between Thatcher and a political underling named Jannings. As every one, who knew anything about local affairs was aware, Jannings was the trustworthy collection agent of the crooked boss who was, for the moment at least, in the political ascendancy.

Shortly before noon, Jannings called, following a brief telephone conversation, and, being expected, Higgs had instructions to admit him.

Jannings was a short, stout man with an oily look. And, when he spoke, his voice was purring, quiet. He and Thatcher were closeted in the room on the second floor for more than half an hour, two shrewd men with hardly one decent scruple between them, each taking the other's measure, fencing for an advantage.

It came to a question of price, a dicker in graft; and it was at this point that Jannings reluctantly revealed that "the big boy higher up" wanted quick money. He wanted all he could get but, more important, he wanted it within twelve hours.

And so Leo Thatcher drove a bargain—not too stiff a one, of course, for he wanted to do the same kind of business again—that he would pay over twenty thousand dollars for the big boy's promise to "deliver the goods."

"It's gotta be cash," cautioned Jannings in that well-lubricated voice of his; "nothing doing on checks."

"Exactly," heartily agreed Leo Thatcher; "I don't want to risk a check any more than you do. I can have the money here for you inside an hour and a half. You can either wait or come back."

Jannings looked at his watch. It was an unusually fine timepiece; his monogram worked in diamonds.

"H'm!" he debated purringly. "Gotta be at the City Hall this afternoon; gotta see another guy at six and likely I'll be tied up with him for a coupla hours. How about nine to-night? Well, mebbe a little after nine?"

"Any hour that suits you," Thatcher genially agreed. "I'll be home all evening."

They shook hands, and the fixer departed. Thereupon, Thatcher called up the office and got George Huss, his cashier, on the wire.

"Thatcher speaking, Huss. Miss Crawford still there or has she started back?"

"She's in your office, I think, Mr. Thatcher; I'll call her."

"Don't be so quick," said the other growlingly. "If I wanted to speak to her, I'd have rung in on my private wire, wouldn't I? Now listen to me! I've got a cash deal on and want the

money out here at the house. Will the pay-roll account stand twenty thousand?"

"I think so, Mr. Thatcher, but day after to-morrow is pay day, and we'll need——"

"Yes, yes, I know," the other broke in impatiently, "but I need this money to-day. I've got nobody to send downtown, and the pay-roll account is the only one you can sign a check for. I'll cover it with a cash transfer the first thing to-morrow morning."

"Just as you say, Mr. Thatcher."

"Tell Miss Crawford not to leave the office until after you've come back from the bank. Tie up the money in a package and—um—I don't believe I would mention to her that it's currency she's bringing back. Everything quite clear, Huss?"

"Yes, sir; twenty thousand from the pay-roll account, tie it in a package and give it to your secretary. Anything else?"

"That's all. Good-by." Leo Thatcher clicked the receiver onto the hook at his end of the wire.

Thus it was that Louise returned to her employer's house in the fashionable North Side suburbs, unsuspecting that the small package she carried in her purse contained a tidy little fortune. On her way back, she had again stopped at Roy's hotel but with the same result, and she was in a frenzy of apprehension that he had already been placed under arrest.

Entrance to the Thatcher house, however, was to be gained only after the same cautious scrutiny as had been maintained since yesterday. There was no relaxation of vigilance.

"The police haven't found him—yet!" Louise exclaimed under her breath as the door opened the few inches which represented the short length of the safety chain. Higgs peeped through the crack at her. Of course, seeing who she was, the butler straightway admitted her, and she went directly upstairs to the room that Thatcher used as his office.

His manner was so different since her trip downtown that again alarm became her dominant emotion. Since he seemed no longer afraid, she became suspicious.

"That terrible man," she forced herself to say, "have the police found him?"

"Not yet, my dear," replied Leo Thatcher, thinking that the question bespoke personal concern and not a little pleased by the thought, "but it's only a question now of a few hours, I've got influence in politics, and the police have a G. P. O. out for him."

"What is a 'G. P. O.,' Mr. Thatcher? I don't believe I understand."

"Means General Pickup Order in the police language, little girl," he explained. "Headquarters has flashed that bird's description to every precinct in the city."

"Just like he was a murderer!" gasped Louise before she could check the words.

"And that's exactly what he *would* be if he got the chance," said Leo Thatcher. "I don't know if you understand what the situation is or not, but this man I'm protecting myself from is a former partner who turned thief and went up the river. Like all the other birds who get into trouble, he's got to blame somebody else for his troubles."

"I see," murmured Louise and turned away for a moment lest her eyes betray her.

"Huss gave you a package at the office?"

"Yes, Mr. Thatcher, so he did; I had forgotten that. I have it here in my purse."

In taking the little package which she offered him, he caught her hand.

"You do have a sneaking kind of liking for me, don't you, my dear? Don't like to admit it, but you do." He tried to draw her toward him. Louise was

trying to find a compromise between her flaming desire to strike him across the face as hard as she could and the wish to avoid a definite break, when the situation solved itself by the ringing of the telephone. Never in her life had she been so glad to hear the tinkle of a telephone bell. He released her, turning toward the desk. She fled to the typewriter desk which, as it happened, was no great distance from the big iron safe in the corner, a strong box which held a treasure that meant more to her than all else in the world.

The conversation was brief; it was merely Huss down at the office wanting to know that the twenty thousand had reached Thatcher's hands without mishap.

Louise didn't see Thatcher tear open the end of the wrapping about the packet of currency and swiftly verify that the amount was correct, but she did see him move toward the safe and put his hand on the combination dial. There was a strong light flooding through the window, and she could see the numbers quite clearly. Suddenly, her body became tense, and she strained forward, apparently to pick up the typewriter eraser which she had let fall noiselessly to the thick-piled carpet. But her eyes were glued to the dial of the safe as her employer moved it swiftly to the right and to the left.

The first stop at the notched center marker was twenty-five; then there was a turn and a half to the right, stopping at seventy; back to the left; a pause with the indicator pointing to forty, and then Thatcher seized the handle which shot open the bolts. A click of the mechanism, and the door swung outward.

Louise Crawford's pulse was racing madly; her heart was beating so violently that it seemed to have moved upward into her throat. She had the combination to the safe! Safely stenciled upon her memory as it was, she picked up her pencil and wrote in shorthand, with excitedly trembling fingers, those magic numbers which would enable her to give back to the man she loved a name that he would no longer be ashamed to let her share with him.

No longer would it be necessary for her to wait until some fortuitous moment when she was left alone in the room with the safe unlocked, the slim contingency for which she had waited so long. Now, thanks to this, all she needed was a minute or two, and the missing ledger would be in her hands. Already, she was planning how to make that chance hers.

The afternoon was wearing to a close and there were, true, letters of some importance, but it might have seemed a little strange that the usually efficient Miss Crawford should be finding them so tedious and difficult. She frowned a good deal over her notes, something that Thatcher had never seen her do before.

"What seems to be the matter, my dear?" he asked and stood behind her chair, letting his blunt-fingered hand rest presumingly upon her shoulder. His touch seared her as though it had been a brand of fire, and she flinched.

"I guess there has been so much excitement that I am just a little nervous."

"Of course you are, little girl; to be sure. Now I tell you what we'll do. I've got an excellent cook and a mighty nifty dining room. We'll go downstairs and have dinner. After that——"

"No, Mr. Thatcher! I couldn't, I really couldn't."

"Oh, come now, don't be so ridiculous. The work you're doing isn't so important that it can't wait until tomorrow. We'll have a nice dinner together."

"I can't; I have an engagement; a very important one."

"With your sweetie, eh?" And Thatcher laughed a trifle harshly.

"With the man I'm going to marry,"

Louise answered in a tone of chill dignity.

"Some twenty-five dollar a week clerk, no doubt," sneered Thatcher.

"No matter what he earns," retorted Louise so pointedly that the man's face flushed, "he is at least a gentleman."

"You're a little fool," Thatcher told her and, swinging about on his heel, strode out of the room to go and dress. Donning his dinner jacket every evening had become one of his fairly recent vanities.

Louise drew a deep, tremulous breath of relief, of exultation. Her plan was working; by deliberately blundering with her work, she had managed to be alone in the room with the safe during the hour that Thatcher would be at dinner, and a few minutes was time enough. Just a little longer, and the precious ledger would be in her hands —the missing proof of Roy's innocence.

She went on with her typing, thinking it wise to wait until the gong sounded, and Thatcher was safely at dinner. How the time did drag! It seemed an eternity before Higgs announced that dinner was served.

Leo Thatcher appeared in the doorway, standing stiffly behind the starched bosom of a dress shirt, giving a self-conscious pat to the tabs of his wing tie.

"Haven't changed your mind?" he suggested.

"No," Louise answered coldly without turning her head, and went right on clicking the keys of her machine.

Thatcher hesitated for a moment, moved his shoulders in a shrug, and turned on his heel without another word. For a moment after he had gone, the girl pounded furiously at the keys of her typewriter and then leaped to her feet, going to the door and listening. Yes, he was safely downstairs, and the coast was clear. There was no longer any reason for delay.

She closed the door and paused for a moment breathing very hard and fast. A sound came in her throat—a laugh of hysterical excitement.

"Twenty-five, seventy, forty!" The numbers repeated themselves in her mind, over and over again, as she went toward the safe and bent forward. Her hands were shaking as though she had a chill and made her fingers clumsy in turning the dial. She must have passed one of the numbers in her nervous haste for the bolts failed to click when she twisted the handle. Could it be possible that she had forgotten the combination? She turned toward her desk, referred swiftly to her notebook, reassured herself that there was no mistake, and returned to the safe. This time she dropped to one knee for the combination was low on the door, and now she turned the dial more slowly.

It was unfortunate for Louise that she had closed the door into the hall although, for that matter, so intent was she at her task she might not have heard the approaching footsteps. She had been certain that Thatcher was downstairs but, in fact, he had returned to his sleeping chamber, and it had been other voices, not his, that she had heard below. An insignificant thing like a handkerchief for the breast pocket of a dinner coat was to demolish an opportunity that it had taken her three years to grasp!

Thatcher missed the clatter of the girl's typewriter. He paused with his shining, patent-leather-clad foot already lowering to the first downward step of the stairs, and glanced back along the hall. The door to the room that was his office, he noted, was closed, and that struck him as being a little peculiar, sufficiently so to make him curious.

He turned back, paused again and listened. Not a sound could be heard on the other side of the heavy panel, and now curiosity became a kind of vague suspicion.

"Wonder what's she's up to?" he

asked himself and reached out his hand for the knob. Very gently, he turned it and gave the door a sudden shove. There was Louise at the door of the safe.

"So!" Leo Thatcher's accusing exclamation was like an explosion.

Louise Crawford gave a sharp cry of consternation and turned an ashen face. She didn't speak. After all, what was there that she could say? Dumbly, she rose to her feet and stood there, her lower lip quivering until she caught it between her teeth.

"So!" Thatcher said again, coming into the room, a grim smile at his mouth. "What have you got to say for yourself, young woman?"

Louise remained silent.

"Oh, such a *good* girl!" he went on with deep sarcasm. "Too good to have dinner with your employer! He *might* try to kiss you, and here I find you trying to get at the twenty thousand you knew was in my safe."

"I—I didn't——"

"Don't waste your time lying," rasped Thatcher. "You knew there were twenty thousand cash in that package you brought from the office, but, how you thought you could get the safe open is something I don't understand. A lady Raffles maybe!"

Louise's wits emerged from a state of petrified numbness and began to work. She tried to bluff it out.

"W-why, Mr. Thatcher," she gasped, "I can't believe that you actually think I was trying to open your safe. You are accusing me wrongfully."

"Aw, come off!" he retorted coarsely. "I caught you at it. Guess, maybe, you thought you could pull that 'listener' stuff that you read about, eh?"

"Honestly, Mr. Thatcher," she protested with truthful earnestness, "I didn't know about the money."

"Tell it to Sweeney! You had the door shut, and that's how I caught you. Thought I was safely downstairs, I'll bet. Do you realize, young woman, that I can put you in jail?"

Leo Thatcher's voice had become very loud, and it attracted the attention of Winthrop Cunningham, the detective, who was coming down the hall. The latter looked in.

"I've just discovered Miss Crawford trying to get the safe open." Thatcher explained to the detective.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Cunningham. "I wouldn't have put her down for a crook!"

"I detest a thief," growled Thatcher with that indignation which is often to be found in men unscrupulous when it comes to a question of their own property being in jeopardy; "especially in an employee. I think I'll turn her over to the police, Cunningham."

The detective stared at the girl for a moment and then glanced at the door of the safe.

"Huh!" he murmured. "There doesn't seem to be any evidence that she actually——"

"Wasn't *her* fault she didn't get it open!" snapped the other man. "She was on her knees in front of the door, her hand on the combination, when I came in and caught her. She'd have got away with it if I hadn't gone back to my bedroom for a handkerchief."

"I had dropped my pencil, and it rolled under the safe," Louise improvised, now more sure of herself; "I—well, I suppose I did grasp the knob of the door."

"What a liar!" snorted Thatcher. "She brought twenty thousand dollars from the office this afternoon; and, by jove, she wasn't sitting so far away when I opened the safe to put the money in but that she might have been able to watch me work the combination. I hadn't thought of that. She had the door shut; she thought I was downstairs at dinner, and that she could grab the money and get out of the house without my being any the wiser."

Cunningham was on the fence, but one thing, at least, he was sure of: there was no proof of the girl's guilt that would justify an arrest. If Thatcher had wanted to get the goods on her, he should have waited until she had actually opened the safe. He stepped closer to the other and gave voice to this opinion in a confidential undertone.

"Yes, I realize that," growled Thatcher; he was thinking what an embarrassing state of affairs it would have been for Jannings to come and not find the twenty thousand dollars.

"Get out!" he roared at Louise. "Grab your things and get out of my house, you little sneak thief!"

The girl made no further protests for she knew that she would never get another chance at the safe. She could not keep the tears from her eyes as she lowered her head and walked toward the door. Three patient years she had waited for this chance that had been snatched out of her hands, and all because a man had forgotten his pocket handkerchief. Surely, she thought bitterly, there must be a vast amount of truth in the old saying that "The devil looks after his own."

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

A REPORT OF STATE CRIME COMMISSION

THE State Crime Commission has recently made public a report of an investigation of 25,000 felony cases in 1925 and states that the big crimes are committed by professional criminals under twenty-five years of age.

The crimes mostly practiced by the professional criminals are robbery, burglary, and grand larceny. Assault, sex crimes, and homicide usually are the result of unsuitable conditions.

Moreover, the chances for acquittal after indictment are best in New York City and poorest in rural sections of the State.

A powerful appeal can be made to the juries by youth, especially if they feel that the culprit has not had a great deal of experience in crime.

Then again there is the repeated use of the plea of guilty which seems to be a development of the tactics of the defense together with certain things in the justice machinery.

Grand larceny apparently leads all other, and more so in some large cities; burglary leads in rural districts.

The report points out that the "crime problem is not a problem of the occasional criminal, nor of the crimes committed in passion, nor of the crimes committed by defectives," but of the professional criminal.

The report further states "that twenty-nine per cent of those whose guilt is established are given suspended sentences."

BIG-NOSE CHARLEY, GOOBER GRABBER

By Charles W. Tyler

Author of "Big-nose Charley and the Merry Widow," etc.

BOTH Inspectors Morrison and Dodsey left Pemberton Square together. They walked down the hill to Scollay Square and turned onto Tremont Street. A light drizzle was falling.

"Blasted weather!" complained Inspector Morrison fretfully. "My rheumatism is at it again."

"I knew it was going to be a rotten day," said Inspector Dorsey. "My bunion ached all night."

The two officers moved toward Boston Common at a deliberate pace. They nodded at the traffic cop at the corner of Beacon and Tremont, paused to watch workmen on a new building and, after a little, drew up to peer through the iron pickets that closed off the old Granary Burying Ground.

The shrill chatter of a flock of sparrows came from the towering trees, upthrust against the somber office buildings that loomed above the resting place of some of Boston's oldest families. A few pigeons hovered about, watching hopefully for donations from passers-by. Here and there gray squirrels hopped among the bleak headstones, burying nuts for the winter that was ahead.

"Thrifty little beggars," said Inspector Morrison, nodding at the furry animals.

"Reminds me that I haven't ordered my coal yet," grumbled Mr. Dorsey.

A woman moved among the headstones, apparently unmindful of the light rain, pausing here and there to scrutinize the dim epitaphs. A short distance away, a tall and lanky individual stood before a monument, seemingly deep in contemplation at the grave of a patriot. After a little, the gentleman moved on slowly. He saw a squirrel scampering across his path, and stopped to watch it.

Inspector Morrison blinked rapidly several times; then rubbed his eyes and, scowling, pressed his face against the pickets.

"Heavens!" he croaked.

"Now what?" asked Mr Dorsey, eying his brother officer.

"If that old coot in there isn't 'Big-nose' Charley, I'll eat my hat!" exclaimed Mr. Morrison.

Inspector Dorsey craned his neck, while his jaw set, and a hostile light appeared in his eyes. "My gosh, that's who it is!" he growled after a hasty examination of the person indicated by Inspector Morrison. "I thought he was in California."

"What in the name of Moses is that blasted old fool doing in Granary Burying Ground?" Mr. Morrison wanted to know.

"If he ever comes around where I am after I'm dead," declared Inspector Dorsey, "I'll rise from my coffin and sock him in the eye."

The two officers saw Big-nose Charley, scalawag at large, fish some peanuts from his pockets and toss them, one at a time, to a bushy-tailed inhabitant of the ancient cemetery. The squirrel buried each offering with care, one above the remains of Jeremiah Todd, and one beside the headstone of Zedekiah Thomas, and one in the care of Alonzo Smith.

The inspectors watched the old peterman curiously for a time, and then entered the cemetery and approached Charley. So intent was the latter with his distribution of peanuts among the squirrels that he did not note the approach of the officers until Mr. Morrison addressed him.

"Say, what's the idea?" demanded the inspector gruffly. "Can't you even let the dead rest in peace?"

Big-nose Charley glanced up to find the keen eyes of his archenemy, Inspector Morrison, fixed upon him. A foolish grin spread itself over his face, while he nodded a friendly greeting.

"Why, howdy do, of'is'r. Looks kinda like rain, don't ut?"

"I'll tell the weary world!" said Inspector Dorsey. "It looks worse than that. What's the matter; California give you the gate?"

Big-nose Charley shook his head slowly. "I wuz jist gittin' a li'le homesick, an' I come back to see the folks. How's all the dicks an' flat-foots at the front office?"

"Look here, Charley," said Inspector Morrison, laying his hand on the other's shoulder. "I want to tell you something."

"Oh, my, yea-ah," said Charley meekly. "What is ut?"

"You've been out on the coast about three years, haven't you?" Mr. Morrison pursed his lips and squinted at Charley meditatively.

Big-nose Charley nodded. "You got a good memory, of'is'r. "Ut's jist three years las' June."

"Well, if you know what's good for your health, you'll start right back." Inspector Morrison's voice was harsh. "No man's going to leave all that nice warm sunshine and come back here unless he's got a darn-good reason. I've got a hunch that you think there is a little easy picking in Boston for you. Let me set you right. We've got more crooks here now than we can keep tabs on, and I'm danged sure I am not going to take a chance on having you balling up the works with your sweet little jobs."

Inspector Dorsey rattled a pair of handcuffs that he had in his pocket, suggestively. "You birds from the great open spaces want to stay clear of this town," he said. "First you know you'll be registered in the 'big house.'"

"'At would be tuff," agreed Charley, wagging his head dolefully. He cocked an eye first at Mr. Morrison and then at Mr. Dorsey. "I t'ank you fer tippin' me off, an' I wuz pleased t' meet you. Guess I'll be shufflin' alon'. Goo'-by." He nodded stiffly and sidled away, his face solemn and innocent.

The officers followed Big-nose Charley toward Winter Street, using care to

keep at a distance. "We'll let him see that we're on his tail," said Mr. Morrison, "and maybe put the fear of the law in him."

"We'd ought to give the big stiff the gate," Mr. Dorsey declared in a surly tone. "I thought he was gone for good. Might have known a darned-sight better. They say that everybody that goes to California isn't satisfied there until they have been back once. Huh!"

On Washington Street Big-nose Charley entered a well-known jewelry store. He asked to see some small diamonds. After a brief examination he selected four unset stones, for which he paid nine hundred and forty dollars. As the old-time crook stepped to the sidewalk he was confronted by the police inspectors.

"Ah, Charley," said Inspector Morrison, "we meet again."

"Ut's a small world, at that," said Charley, rolling a cigarette, while he cocked a speculative eye at the officers.

"Pardon me a minute," put in Inspector Dorsey. He pushed on into the jewelry store, and Mr. Morrison engaged Big-nose Charley in conversation.

In the jewelry store, Mr. Dorsey made his identity known, and explained that an infamous old scoundrel and stone getter had just left there. The inspector merely desired to know if everything was all right.

"A tall gentleman in a dark suit and with grayish hair and a big nose bought four diamonds from me," one of the firm's partners explained. "He paid cash money. I sold them myself. Everything was entirely businesslike, and there was no monkey business."

When Inspector Dorsey rejoined Big-nose Charley and Mr. Morrison, he was plainly disappointed. "Well, the old stiff didn't try anything in there," he said, shaking his head. "Bought four diamonds," he told his brother officer. "See here, you"—he tapped Charley on the chest with a stout and admonitory forefinger—"I don't know what your game is, but, if you know what is good for you, just watch your step. I don't like your eye, and I don't like your looks, anyway."

"Yes'm," murmured Charley meekly, lighting his cigarette. "Thank you, adm'r'l."

"Never mind yessing me!" scolded Mr. Dorsey, giving Charley a push. "Go on, beat it now!"

Big-nose Charley looked hurt, but he moved off promptly, walking toward the Old South Church. He turned onto Milk Street and shuffled through the door of an office building that had entrances on two streets and an alley. He emerged a few minutes later in Spring Lane. After doubling back and forth between Province and Washington Streets, he felt that he had safely evaded the officers, and could proceed with the business he had in mind.

He went to the office of a diamond merchant in a dingy building on Washington Street and explained to the man who waited on him that he wished to see some unset diamonds. A tray of glittering stones was brought for his inspection. After a careful study of these, he decided that there was nothing suitable for his purpose; he would look further, he said.

Once more the old scamp searched out an establishment that dealt largely in diamonds. Here he borrowed a glass, his tongue wagging glibly, and began a painstaking examination of the stones that were placed out for him to select from. At an instant, when the attention of the diamond merchant was momentarily drawn to some detail by a partner, Big-nose Charley deftly substituted the four diamonds, which he carried concealed in the palm of his hand, for four stones on the velvet-lined tray.

With fingers long trained in the art of certain sleight of hand, the old scal-

awag succeeded in his sly subterfuge without arousing suspicion.

Twice now he had swapped diamonds with unsuspecting dealers, the four original stones which he had purchased a short time before having, during the process of gradual assimilation, gained in size remarkably.

When he took his apologetic departure from the fourth store which he had flattered with his presence, the diamonds had very nearly doubled in size. However, the strain was beginning to tell on Augustus Witt, alias Big-nose Charley. Between trying to outgeneral keen-eyed and shrewd diamond dealers and keeping a weather eye out for squalls in the form of those two dicks, Dorsey and Morrison, he was getting extremely fidgety.

And Charley's uneasiness was not without foundation. A fashionable lady fence had given him an order for four diamonds of a certain size, and it would be necessary for him to make at least one more visit to a diamond merchant. Provided his luck held out, he could then consider that he had passed a very profitable day. If, on the other hand, he was detected in the act of acquiring larger diamonds by substituting in their place smaller stones that temporarily escaped the notice of the dealer involved, it would not be so good.

Morris Stainer, returning from his favorite restaurant on Summer Street, met Harry Boom.

"How is business?" asked Mr. Stainer.

"There ain't any business," complained Mr. Boom. "I don't know where it has gone to, or I would go there."

"Just like me, Harry," agreed Morris. "I couldn't sell di'monds and jewelry at half the price. Folks are buying too many automobeels. For show they get sedans."

"A biggish feller walks into our place just before I come out," said Mr. Boom, "and wants he should see some nice unset di'monds. I have sold him four already, but then he changes his mind and don't take them. You know, Morris, I got suspicions of that feller right away. Some of the di'monds get smaller, it looks, and I can't believe my eyes. If I wasn't watching so close I would think maybe he tries funny wrinkles."

Mr. Stainer shook his head. "The world is full of crooks and low-lifes. You should be like me. I don't stand no monkey business from a feller like that. He wants to buy or he don't. I ain't got no time for foolishness."

Mr. Boom shook his head. "With my own eyes I was watching him in the face, and still those di'monds don't look the same. Marcus, my partner, knows the di'monds we got like a pinochle deck, but he is at an auction, and I ain't so sure. Oi, what a business!"

"The smelts are commencing to run," said Morris irrelevantly. "I got a boat for Sunday at Crow Point."

"They should be running a lot," replied Harry. "Lowen sits by me in a rowboat all last Sunday an' catches two dozen, while I get vet an' two hundred dirty Tommies cod and scalpains."

"You don't know fishing any better than di'monds," declared Mr. Stainer loftily. "You fish too deep, an' watch a feller by his face when it should be his hands. So long, Harry."

"Huh!" retorted Mr. Boom. "I should be ashamed if I was so ignorant of pinochle as you. If I didn't know any more yet of di'monds I would have benkruptcy staring me in the face. So long, Morris."

Mr. Stainer returned to his place of business well satisfied with himself, the world at large and the excellent cigar the jewelry drummer, with whom he had dined, had given him. His partner prepared to go to lunch, and Morris settled himself with a paper.

However, he was soon interrupted by a tall, angular individual who shuffled through the door and leaned against the show case. Glancing up, Mr. Stainer saw a gentleman in a dark suit with broad pencil stripes. A black derby was settled firmly on a head that was given something of an air of distinction by hair decidedly gray. The recent arrival wore a barred red-and-yellow necktie and a diamond scarf pin of generous proportions. The stranger possessed impassive features, a mild and innocent eye and an ample nose, conspicuous because of its large pores.

The fact that the newcomer was indulging an apparent appetite for peanuts grated on Mr. Stainer's more-or-less sensitive nerves. He scowled. "How do you do?" His greeting was anything but cordial.

"Oh, purty good fer a ole feller who's tryin' to git along," said Big-nose Charley flippantly. He wiped his lips; then proceeded to crush another peanut. He flipped the meaty brown nuts deftly into his mouth and attacked them with apparent relish. "I wuz j'st goin' by," Charley explained, punctuating his words with sounds made necessary by the attention his jaws were giving the matter in his mouth, "an' I thought I'd drop in an' see if you had any nice unset di'munds."

Morris Stainer looked at the individual across the show case estimatingly. The gentleman was "biggish," and he wanted to see some unset stones. Instantly, the diamond merchant was reminded of his recent conversation with Harry Boom. Could it be that this was the individual referred to by his friend?

Mr. Stainer arose. He was annoyed, and yet there was the feeling that he might, perhaps, be instrumental in capturing a diamond thief. He would earn the gratitude of the trade, and at the same time have the laugh on his friend, Harry.

A crafty light appeared in the eyes of Morris Stainer as he walked toward the safe at the rear of the room. "Sure," he said, "we got di'monds."

"I wuz lookin' every place," Charley explained glibly, "but I couldn't find nothin' like what I wanted. I'm wery purtickler. You see, I'm gettin' 'em f'r a lady fren'. Oh, my, yea-ah."

Which was the truth. The lady to whom he referred, however, was a fence with whom Big-nose Charley had already made a provisional agreement.

Mr. Stainer brought out a tray of diamonds. Charley beamed. "Meh name is Witt," he put forth in a friendly vein. "Augustus Witt. Mebbe you heard of meh. I'm a sorta di'mund financier—I mean fancyner. Ut's a hobby." He attacked another peanut, throwing the shells on the floor.

The diamond merchant eyed the lanky person across the show case sharply. He began to have doubts concerning the possible dishonesty of the customer. It did not seem as though an innocent-looking individual like this could be a hardened crook. The fellow was droll, it was true, while he seemed to lean slightly more toward the simple than the shrewd and alert type of criminal one would picture as a diamond thief.

Mr. Witt seemed to know stones, for he talked intelligently of them to Mr. Stainer. He examined each diamond displayed with great care, pausing between times to munch peanuts, while he scattered the shells at random.

"Can't you look at di'monds without eating them peanuts all the time?" Mr. Stainer demanded at length in exasperation, at the same time brushing shells from the show case.

"I beg you puddin'," Charley apologized. "Ut's wery careless of meh. Would you show meh some bigger di'munds?"

A second lot of the brilliant gems was brought for the inspection of Augustus Witt. These were larger, more expensive stones. Mr. Witt beamed,

while he rubbed his hands delightedly. "My, ain't they purty! Would you let meh borreh your glass, adm'r'l? J'st a minut'."

As the diamond merchant complied with the request of his prospective customer, Big-nose Charley, under cover of the movement of his left hand to receive the glass, dropped a diamond from the palm of his right hand softly to the tray and deftly flicked up a considerably larger diamond with the fingers of the same hand.

As Augustus Witt continued his examination of the stones before him, he entertained Mr. Stainer with a continuous flow of talk. Between the conversation and the peanuts, he managed to complete the exchange of the diamonds in the palm of his hand for larger gems which he transferred to his person with lightning movements and almost magical adroitness.

In the meantime, he had selected two large diamonds. These, he explained, he would like to have set aside for him. "I got to go to the bank an' get meh some monneh," he pointed out.

"Mm-humh!" said Mr. Stainer, drawing his lips together. "So." He frowned at Mr. Witt. "I could promise nothing without a deposit," he stated sourly.

"Oh, my, yea-ah," murmured Charley. "A deposit. How much, adm'r'l?"

"A hundred dollars," replied Morris, a crafty light in his eyes. Whether this feller was a crook or an honest man, he would not put anything over on Mr. Stainer. Had not Harry said that a "biggish" gentleman had selected four diamonds, and then changed his mind? When a buyer changed his mind, it cost him money.

"I'm j'st a li'le short," said Big-nose Charley, taking some bills from his pocket. "I could give you fifty bucks —until I got to the bank."

"All right," agreed the diamond dealer. "I give you until three o'clock, and then the sale is off. You don't get your deposit back after then."

Charley took another peanut, and rolled a couple across the show case toward Mr. Stainer. "Puddin' meh," he said. "I never thought to offer you any, skipper."

"I don't eat peanits," Morris said snappishly.

Big-nose Charley counted out fifty dollars and handed it to the diamond merchant. "I'll see you some more," he said, moving toward the door. "Goo'-by."

Morris Stainer, however, made no reply. His eyes were fixed on the diamonds on the velvet mat before him with a sort of desperate intentness. He separated a diamond from those about it and gave it his closest scrutiny, his brow deeply furrowed. Then another, and another. Could he believe his eyes? He would have sworn that there had been no diamonds so small in this lot!

Maybe Harry Boom was foolish in the head, and maybe he wasn't, but there was monkey business here somewhere. He spoke hurriedly to a young woman at a desk in a corner. "You watch the store. I will be back again."

Mr. Stainer hastened to the hall and galloped down the single flight of stairs that led to the street. In the doorway he collided with a burly individual who was entering.

"Ain't there room for a man to get by you?" cried Mr. Stainer, angrily. "Do you want the whole world?"

"What's your hurry?" demanded Inspector Morrison, with a sudden premonition that all was not right.

The two inspectors had been passing on the opposite side of the street when they happened to glimpse the familiar form of Big-nose Charley angling from a doorway at a gait that seemed entirely out of proportions to a man's normal progress.

Seizing his brother officer by the arm, Inspector Dorsey had exclaimed:

"There's that old stiff now, Morrison. I thought we'd run across him again in Diamond Row."

"The blasted old coot acts as though he was in a hurry!" said Mr. Morrison. "Looks guilty."

"I tell you." Inspector Dorsey shot the words out quickly. "You go into the building and see what he's been up to, and I'll trail him. He's making for Bromfield Street. I'll either get hold of a patrolman or the traffic cop at the head of the street and leave word which way I went."

As Morris Stainer untangled himself from the inspector, he panted: "I want a perleeceman! A biggish feller that just left my place took some di'monds, I think."

"You think?" cried the inspector impatiently, flipping his coat that the excited man before him might see his badge. "Don't you know whether he took them or not?"

"If he didn't take them," fumed Morris, "I got to get my eyes attended to at once."

"That's the trouble with you birds," scolded the inspector. "You are not sure of anything, and a clever thief whitewashes the proof, and you haven't got a leg to stand on. But come on; we may grab this old blat before he can get rid of the loot."

Big-nose Charley had reached the corner of Tremont and Bromfield Streets when he glanced behind him and observed the red-faced Mr. Dorsey heaving in his wake. Charley dodged through the traffic and pulled up in front of the old Granary Burying Ground.

A woman near the entrance had been tossing nuts to the squirrels. One of the small animals, hopping back for a fresh supply that was to be added to his winter store, was attracted by a peanut tossed at him by a newcomer. The furry creature gave his tail a flip and nosed the peanut, promptly taking it into its mouth and hurrying away to cache it beside the headstone of one Zedekiah Thomas.

Another peanut followed, and the squirrel quickly planted it on the lot of Jeremiah Todd. At that moment, Inspector Dorsey arrived. He eyed Charley with a hostile gaze.

"Feeding the squirrels, hey?" Mr. Dorsey's voice carried an exultant note. He had a hunch that Big-nose Charley was caught flat-footed.

"Ain't no law against that, is they?" the old peterman demanded, a bit resentfully. He flipped another peanut to the waiting squirrel.

Inspector Dorsey shot a glance toward Bromfield Street, and observed Mr. Morrison heaving into view with a hatless and apparently excited gentleman half trotting at his side. Mr. Dorsey gave a short nod of satisfaction, and took Charley gently but firmly by the arm.

"I guess your job has gone sour," said the inspector, tightening his grip. "Thought you'd come back to Beantown and grab the mint, eh?"

Big-nose Charley ate another peanut, and tossed one to the waiting squirrel on the other side of the iron pickets. "You got meh all wrong, of'is'r,' he said in a smug tone. "I ain't done nothin'. I wuz j'st lookin' th' ole town over."

"You was looking it over all right. Huh!"

At that moment Inspector Morrison and Morris Stainer arrived. Both were puffing. Charley eyed the diamond dealer questioningly. The latter flourished his hands excitedly.

"Now what's the story?" Inspector Morrison asked the man at his side.

"This feller comes into my place," the other began, "an' wants he should see some nice di'monds."

"So!" cried Mr. Dorsey exultantly. "Collared on the get-away."

"I show that man unset stones," Mr. Stainer went on breathlessly, "an' he

examines them, while all the time it looks like they get smaller. A biggish feller like Mr. Vitt here was at Harry Boom's, an' Harry tells me not half an hour ago that his eyes is failing him, on account of the way them di'monds commence to get little."

Inspector Dorsey glanced at Mr. Morrison. Already he was assailed by faint doubts. To suspect Big-nose Charley of stealing diamonds was one thing, but to furnish proof was quite another matter—unless, by chance, he was caught with the goods.

"So your name is Witt now?" said Inspector Morrison, frowning at Charley, and at the same time taking him by an arm. "That's funny."

"Ut's a family name," Charley pointed out. He cracked a peanut and ate it; then carelessly tossed another to the squirrel. Joyously, the little animal picked up the peanut and hopped away to bury it close beside the headstone of Alonzo Smith.

A number of pedestrians, sensing excitement, had gathered to watch developments.

"Come along, Charley Witt," said Mr. Dorsey, giving a tug at the old crook's arm; "we'll take a little stroll."

As the group moved away along Tremont Street in the direction of Scollay Square, the woman, who had been feeding the squirrels near the entrance gate of the old burying ground, watched them from the corner of her eye, but without turning her head. Inspector Morrison, his sharp eyes ever alert, was vaguely aware of something familiar in the woman's profile, but made no attempt to define it at the present moment. The satisfaction of having at last caught Big-nose Charley, apparently red-handed, overshadowed the vague suspicion that all was not as it seemed.

At headquarters, they turned Big-nose Charley inside out, as the saying is, but found nothing incriminating on his lanky old person. He had no diamonds of any description.

"What did you do with those four diamonds you bought a little while ago?" demanded Inspector Dorsey, looking into Charley's ears, and running his fingers through his hair.

"I didn't like 'em so good," Charley explained easily, "an' I sold 'em to a feller I met."

"Did you actually lose any diamonds, or what?" Mr. Morrison demanded of Morris Stainer in exasperation.

"I told you before once," retorted the diamond merchant. "I didn't miss any stones, but some nine hundred-dollar di'monds all at once is worth about seven hundred right before my eyes."

"You'd have a fat chance of getting a conviction on that kind of evidence," said Mr. Dorsey with disgust. "This big hunk of cheese may have put something over on you, but, as you don't know what it's all about, we'll have to turn him out. If the thing went to trial he'd get a smart mouthpiece who'd make you look foolish."

Mr. Stainer shrugged his shoulders. "Well, what can I do?"

"You got fifty dollars deposit," Charley reminded Morris. "Guess I won't bother with no more di'munds t'-day."

At the old Granary Burying Ground, a woman was, apparently, intent on deciphering the lettering on the tombstone of Zedekiah Thomas. However, had one been watching her intently, he would have discovered that, using her notebook as a shield, she was scratching in the earth with her silver pencil, probing gently at a spot where the squirrel had buried one of the peanuts that Big-nose Charley had tossed through the pickets but a short time before.

In the course of a short interval, the mysterious woman, who was known to the underworld as "Back Bay" Mary, had recovered four of the peanuts that Big-nose Charley had apparently do-

nated to the friendly gray squirrel. In one half of each shell was a brilliant diamond, worth approximately nine hundred dollars. The shell had been split on one end and, following the insertion of the stone, sealed by means of a bit of chewing gum.

Doubtful as to whether the sagacious little animals would accept a shell that contained entirely foreign matter, Big-nose Charley had left a peanut in one half of each shell. And the subterfuge had worked to perfection. Aided by clever hands and a seemingly voracious appetite for goobers, the old scalawag, formerly of Kerry Village, had succeeded in not only defrauding certain diamond merchants, but in once more evading the law.

It was Inspector Morrison who first solved the riddle of Charley's clever coup. In a flash, the identity of the mysterious woman he had seen at the Granary Burying Ground was revealed to him.

"Dorsey!" he cried, as his brother officer walked with him toward their favorite restaurant for a belated lunch. "Remember that woman we saw in the burying ground the same time we first saw Big-nose Charley there?"

The other nodded. "I thought she was some old nut, poking around in that drizzle."

"She was still on the job when we collared Charley. I noticed her near the gate. Know who she was?"

"No. Who?"

"Back Bay Mary, fence."

"She's been on the loop, I guess," said Mr. Dorsey sourly. "I haven't seen her for a year."

"Well, I'll wager Big-nose Charley has," declared Mr. Morrison. "Bet you a dollar they framed this diamond job between them. I get it now, by George! That old thief swapped diamonds with some of those jewelers, gradually building up the smaller diamonds he bought until he got what he wanted; then he planted 'em in some peanuts in case there was danger of the thing going sour. When we caught a hot trail, why, he tossed 'em to the squirrels under our noses, and the woman fence marked where the gray buried 'em."

"We're a pair of dubs!" exclaimed Inspector Dorsey in disgust. "You've sized up the lay all right, but let's go and see if we can check up on it a little."

Together they hurried to the old Granary Burying Ground, and there, near the spot where Big-nose Charley had been picked up, they discovered evidence of several tiny excavations in the greensward.

"Well, that guy picks up the marbles again," said Mr. Dorsey in a croaking voice. Witt by name and wit by nature. The next time I see him I'm going to run right up and sock him on the nose."

Some time later Big-nose Charley met Back Bay Mary by appointment, and received from her his share of the "take," which netted him a very neat little pile of sugar for a pleasant hour's work.

DRUG SYSTEM IN PENITENTIARY

IT has been revealed recently that a drug ring has been existing at the Eastern penitentiary. It is said that this ring involved agents inside the walls of the prison as well as outside. A sergeant of the prison guard and one other man are believed to be the "outside buyers" of the drug.

The system was well organized and well financed, and convicts were able to obtain narcotics constantly. After a long grilling by prison officials and detectives, one of the suspects weakened and confessed, which led to the arrest of several others.

THE STOOL PIGEON

By Johnston McCulley

Author of "The Crimson Clown's Double," etc.

CHAPTER I.

DISASTER.

CROUCHING against the wall of the dining room in the darkness, Mark Battenlag almost held his breath, strained his ears to catch the slightest sound, and wished that his heart would not pound so against his ribs.

He told himself that he could not understand the feeling that possessed him. Why should he experience such a premonition of dread, of impending disaster? Everything seemed to be all right; and certainly this was not the first time that he had entered a house to rob it.

Mark Battenlag was gray at the temples now, and police records showed that he should own to the age of fifty-one. Those records also revealed that Mark Battenlag had done time twice, and that his second stretch had been for five years, all for burglary. He had an enviable reputation as a burglar. That is, the had enjoyed such a reputation among criminals and with the police prior to the last three years.

For, leaving the big, gray prison the second time, to find that his wife had passed away and that his only child, Mary, a daughter of twenty-two, was at the mercy of the world, Mark Battenlag had gone straight. For the last three years he had fought a bitter fight to make an honest living, winning a minor victory now and then, but generally losing in the campaign, yet firm in his decision to play an honest rôle. And now he had gone back to his old "trade" again!

Necessity compelled him, but the law would take no stock of that. Mark Battenlag was in a house where he did not belong, at two o'clock in the morning, with burglar tools in his possession. He had entered that house forcibly, contrary to the law and the statutes. Discovery meant that he would return to prison for the remainder of his natural life. He would

be declared a habitual criminal if convicted. And then Mary would be left alone.

Yet it was for Mary that he was doing this to-night, he told himself. So it must be his part to have courage and carry it through. He had been an honest citizen for three years, and now he was a thief once more. But he hoped that this job would be his last.

Mark Battenlag stepped noiselessly away from the dining-room wall and walked on the balls of his feet to the nearest door, which opened into a hall. He held an electric torch in his left hand, and he played its beam around the edge of the room and upon the door for a moment, then snapped it out and opened the door slowly and cautiously. Nobody was supposed to be in the house at this time, but a man never could be sure. And the feeling of premonition persisted.

"There isn't any sense in it!" Mark Battenlag told himself. "Nothing can go wrong to-night. It's just nervousness because I haven't been on a job for so long."

He negotiated the hall without flashing the torch again, going slowly and feeling for articles of furniture. His shoes were muffled, and he did not make the slightest sound. Coming to the front stairs of the house, he stopped to listen for a time, but he heard no noise to cause him alarm.

"No reason for feelin' nervous!" he declared to himself. "I'm actin' like a kid!"

He took a deep breath and started ascending the stairs, going up a step at a time and feeling his way. Mark Battenlag knew that some staircases were wired for burglar alarms, but he did not believe that such was the case in this particular house. It was the residence of a wealthy family, but the house was an old one, and it did not contain all the up-to-date things.

Mark knew that he had entered without setting off a burglar alarm, for he had guarded against such a thing carefully. He had studied this house for several days, ever since he had realized that necessity would compel him to resort to burglary again. The family had gone away for the season. Only an old caretaker remained. One night a week this old caretaker slipped away from his trust to visit a married daughter.

Mark Battenlag had seen the man depart about eleven o'clock. He had cut out a basement window to enter, neglecting carefully to touch the casement. Now he had only to do his work and get out of the house with his swag.

"Nothing to it!" Mark Battenlag muttered. "Nothing to get nervous about!"

On the upper floor of the big house he stopped once more to listen. The wind was howling outside, and the branches of a tree scraped against the side of the house. There was no traffic on the broad avenue in front at this hour of the night, for this was a quiet residential district. Inside the house, there was not the slightest sound. Just get the swag and get out, Mark Battenlag told himself.

Mark scarcely knew what he would find in the house. He had no definite information regarding valuables. The dining room had yielded nothing, for the plate had been stored. Mark did not expect rich loot; he did not require rich loot. He wanted stuff that could be disposed of easily for a couple of hundred dollars, and no more. He wanted only what he needed sorely at the moment.

The man kept telling himself that; he would take no more even if he found it!

Ten minutes later he had opened a tiny wall safe, chuckling softly as he did so. He could have opened it with a hairpin, he said to himself. That

safe was of little value, except as a protection for documents during a fire.

He flashed his electric torch and took a bundle of documents from the safe, but one glance at them told him there was nothing negotiable. A small chamois bag held a couple of rings; a glance at them convinced Mark Battenlag that they were heirlooms and that their value was small. For some chivalrous reason, he left them.

At the bottom of the little safe he found a few bills. They totaled about forty dollars. Battenlag stuffed the currency into a pocket of his waistcoat and closed the door of the little safe.

The next room that he entered belonged to the son of the house, a wild young man in his late twenties, whose name had been in the newspapers as the result of several unsavory escapades. Mark had the idea that the scion of the family was a reckless, careless young man, and that perhaps he had left valuables scattered around when he had packed quickly to accompany the family.

Once more he stopped to listen, and again he assured himself that there was no cause for alarm. The wind was howling outside, and it was raining fitfully. A dark, squally night—just the sort of night for a successful burglary!

If a man could call this one a success! Mark Battenlag would have curled his lips in scorn in the old days at such a haul as this. Then he had gone after his thousands. But circumstances had changed, even as Mark had changed.

He flashed his electric torch again after making sure that the heavy shades were down at all the windows. It did not take him long to jimmy the drawers of a dressing table. Within ten minutes he held in his hand a pair of diamond-studded cuff links that he knew would bring a hundred from the fence. They were a little out of style now; so the son had tossed them carelessly into a drawer.

But Mark was not done. He wanted a couple of hundred at least, wanted to be certain that his swag would total that. He knew where he could dispose of loot for cash before dawn. Then he could get back home with the money, and Mary would never know how he had got it. She would think that he still held his job as night watchman, whereas he had been discharged six weeks before.

Clothes! There were nothing but clothes that he could not carry away and sell! But Mark went through them thoroughly. He found a ten-dollar bill in the pocket of an outing coat, and tucked it away. But he needed more.

Quietly he went on into another room. He could tell the moment he flashed his torch that this was the room of the daughter of the house. It was a dainty room, and, had Mark Battenlag only known it, more dainty than the daughter.

Mark hesitated there for a moment. He was thinking of Mary, his own daughter, and, for a moment, his eyes stung with unshed tears. He felt quite sure that he loved his motherless girl as much or more than the parents of this girl loved her.

"I don't like to steal from a girl," Mark muttered. "But she's got so much, and Mary ain't got anything!"

The daughter of the house had been careless, too. Mark jimmied a drawer in a dressing table and was confronted by the lady's second-best toilet set, which looked absolutely first-rate to Mark. It was of heavy gold and studded with jewels. Mark assured himself that the stones were genuine—he knew a great deal about such things—then slipped two brushes and a comb into his pockets. He did not have time to extract the well-set jewels.

Now he told himself that he had

enough. He would keep his word to himself and not search for more. Quickly, he left the room and slipped noiselessly into the hall and along it, to come to a stop at the top of the staircase. Once more he listened, but no sound reached him.

"I was nervous for nothin'!" he muttered.

Now he felt an eagerness to be gone from the place. He had to get away from that section of the city, travel for quite some distance, and reach the fence who would buy his stuff, then manage to get home a little after dawn. And every moment would be fraught with danger. He had a record, had done time twice, and was a man to be watched, hounded if the police so willed. To be caught with that stuff on him would mean instant disaster.

He put the toilet articles and the cuff links in the right-hand pocket of his coat, so that he could toss them away, possibly, at the first hint of danger—get rid of the evidence. He would retain the electric torch, for he had been working as night watchman and had the right to carry one. The few tools that he carried, he would drop outside, making sure that he left no finger prints on them.

Down the wide stairs he went and back along the dark hall. He descended to the basement and stopped there to listen again. Now was a moment of danger. Getting out of the house unseen was as difficult as getting in. It always had been a nervous moment with him. Inside, he felt like a trapped animal. Outside, and a short distance away from the scene of his crime, he would be himself again.

He felt his way along a basement corridor and got into the laundry room, through which he had entered the place. Standing just below the windowpane he had cut out, he listened once more. Nothing he heard hinted at danger.

Quietly he got upon a laundry tub and prepared to crawl through the window. Once more that feeling came to him, a premonition that all was not well. He told himself that there was no sense in it, and tried to shake off the feeling.

The rain had let up some, but the wind still howled. It was a fine night for a get-away if a man was careful about passing beneath street lights. Mark had got what he had come for. He had worked alone after three years of honesty, and possibly the police would not even suspect him.

Certainly, this was not like one of his old jobs. He had left no "calling card." They could not point to this and say instantly that it was a Battenlag job. And, since he had closed the safe and the drawers, the old watchman might not know that the place had been robbed. He would find the window cut out, but he might decide that the thieves had been frightened away.

Mark Battenlag went through the window cautiously, got upon his feet and crouched against the wall. He would cross the rear lawn to the alley and go through that to the dark side street, he decided. Then he would make his way as rapidly as possible from this part of the city.

He stepped out from the wall, his head bent against the wind, every sense alert.

Light flashed suddenly in his face as an electric torch was leveled at him.

"Hands up, Battenlag!" a coarse voice commanded.

CHAPTER II.

THE WAY TO FREEDOM.

A CRY escaped the lips of Mark Battenlag that was caused by the shock of the thing as much as by fear. He knew that voice. It was the voice of Thane, a plain-clothes man. And

Thane was one of Battenlag's particular enemies in the police department.

Mark's hand had dived into his pocket. Even with the glare of the torch revealing him, his first thought was to get rid of what he had stolen. But he felt his wrist gripped, and he knew then that there was another man with Thane.

"Take it easy, Mark!" this other man advised.

Sedley! Thane and Sedley! The pair of plain-clothes men who were notorious for framing men, for using stool pigeons, whose method of work were such that other officers curled their lips when they were mentioned.

"Well, Mark, we've got you cold!" Thane said. "No question about that, is there?" He was going through Mark's pockets as he spoke. "Ladies' toilet articles don't belong to you, I guess. Nor these diamond-studded cuff buttons. Sticky fingers, Mark! And you made a neat job of cutting out that window, too!"

Mark Battenlag said nothing at the moment. His brain and tongue seemed numbed with the shock of it. There surged through his brain thoughts of what this meant. He would be sent up for life. Mary would be left alone, save for Bob Gattcher, a decent sort of youngster who was in love with her and with whom she was in love, but a youngster who could not stand on his own feet yet.

A vision of the big stone house up the river came to Mark, sudden remembrance of the deadly monotony of prison life, cruel guards, unhealthy toil. Life!

He took a deep breath and tensed his muscles. But Thane and Sedley had been waiting for that. They grasped him, and handcuffs clicked. The touch of the metal seemed to unnerve Mark Battenlag.

"You—you got me!" he gasped.

"Surest thing you know!" Thane said. "And we've got you good! You'll spend the rest of your life in stir, Mark!"

Mark Battenlag seemed to go to pieces suddenly. Tears gushed from his eyes.

"Listen!" he begged. "You—you men can't be so cruel as to send me in!"

Thane laughed. "What do you take us for?" he wanted to know. "We catch you robbing a house, and you expect us to let you go. I suppose you want to take along the swag, too."

"It isn't much!" Mark said. "You know that. I had to do this job, Thane. I've tried for three years to go straight. I had a watchman's job, and I got fired because I had been a con. I've got a daughter, Thane. I couldn't see her starve, couldn't have her put out into the street. So I went in there. I only wanted a few dollars to pay rent and buy food until I can get a new job."

"You can't get a new job—and hold it," Sedley put in.

"Let me go," Mark begged. "It ain't as if I'd cracked a crib and got thousands. I wouldn't have done it if I could have got work."

"Loose talk!" Thane commented.

"I thought that I would be safe on a little job like this. How—how did you——" Mark questioned.

"Oh, we've had our eye on you!" Thane told him. "We watched you getting down and out. We know how you love that girl of yours. And we knew that, when you had to do it, you'd crack a crib to get money. We've watched you smelling around this place, Battenlag, and we simply trailed you and waited here for you to come out with the swag."

"You—you got me fired!" Mark accused.

"Sure we did! We didn't want you working."

"I was trying to go straight."

"Yeh! We knew that. Why should you go straight? You're a professional crook, Mark. You had a good reputation as a burglar. You've got the confidence of other crooks."

"Why did you spend so much time and trouble on me?" Mark asked. "You drove me to this! If I had a rod on me, I'd use it now on both of you."

"But you haven't a rod on you," said Sedley.

"I'd sit in the hot wires for a chance to get square with you!" Mark screeched.

Thane laughed. "Bring him along!" he commanded.

They took Mark Battenlag to the dark alley and along it. Parked in the side street was a small car, and they got in with Mark between them, and Thane took the wheel and they started.

"Life is what you'll get, Mark!" he said.

"And you'll get credit for an arrest, you and Sedley," Mark Battenlag said. "Why didn't you leave me alone?"

"You're a crook, aren't you? You planned to rob that house, didn't you? And you did it, and we caught you at it! That's all there is to the deal."

"Let me go this time!" Mark begged. "Think of my girl! It isn't as though I hadn't tried to go straight. I'd have starved myself, but I couldn't see her suffer. I really needed the money. I could have taken more stuff, but I didn't."

"Loose talk!" said Thane.

"Old Mark Battenlag beggin' like an amateur," Sedley put in, chuckling.

"You don't know what it means!" Mark cried. "You won't get much credit for taking me in. Let me off this time, boys."

"Why should we?" Thane wanted to know. "We don't gain anything by letting you off."

"I'll go straight if I starve—even if Mary starves."

"Yeh? Why wouldn't you keep right on cracking cribs if we let you off?"

"I wouldn't! If I do, take me in and send me up!"

"We're taking you in right now," Thane reminded him. "You're finished, Mark. You'll have a number for the rest of your days. Buried alive, Mark!"

"For Heaven's sake, stop!" Battenlag cried.

"There'll be a guard or two who'll take a dislike to you, probably, and handle you as they please. They don't worry much about a lifer, Mark. Kill him off and make room for another! Sorry, Mark, but you're strictly up against it."

"Let me go this time!" Battenlag begged again. "I wouldn't have done it but for Mary."

"Your girl, eh? She'll have a long life to live outside while you're inside. No relatives, either, has she? We know all about your affairs, you see. Well, she'll probably get along some way."

Mark Battenlag almost went insane at the thought. Mary was not the sort of girl to fight the world. No relatives, and but few real friends!

"I can't be sent up," Mark whined. "Let me go, men! I—can't I do something to make you let me go?"

"Well, now, I don't quite know as to that," Thane said. "We've sworn to uphold the law, you know, and letting a burglar go——"

"I know you!" Mark interrupted. "It isn't your oath of office that's stopping you."

"You got anything to suggest?" Sedley asked.

Mark Battenlag could not say the words. He drew a deep breath and tensed his muscles again, but he felt the muzzle of a weapon suddenly jammed against his ribs.

"Easy!" Sedley warned. "Being

dead won't help your daughter any more than you being in stir!"

Battenlag relaxed. The fight was gone out of him. He seemed to be numbed again, mentally and physically.

"Let's go!" Thane said.

He guided the car down the dark side street and turned a corner into another thoroughfare. Mark was trying to think of something to say or do. His captors were silent, giving him ample opportunity to think.

His brain was busy with the situation. He reviewed his past and his future in a few minutes. He wet lips suddenly dry, and sighed.

The car turned another corner, and then Mark Battenlag noticed that Thane was keeping to the dark streets. Thane did not want to be seen by beat patrolmen with Mark a prisoner beside him. Suspicion flamed in Battenlag's brain again.

"You've framed me," he accused. "You had me fired, and you watched me until I had to have money."

"But we caught you in an act of burglary, didn't we?" Thane asked, sneering. "We didn't tell you to rob that house, did we?"

"No," Mark replied. "You've got me, all right."

"All right, then!" Thane said.

"You're not driving toward the station," Mark said. "You're keeping to the dark streets."

"Maybe we want to pick up somebody else," said Thane. "What business is it of yours? Mark, we've got you dead to rights, haven't we?"

"Yes."

"And if you were to escape us right now, we could pick you up later and turn you in, couldn't we?"

"I suppose so," Mark said.

"If you were to get away now, say, we could send you up for life any time we wished, wouldn't we?"

"Yes," Mark said.

"Better remember that!" Thane advised him. "We can do anything we like with you, Mark. We can send you up for life any time we please, any time you do anything we don't like, or refuse to do what we command!" There was a peculiar emphasis in the last statement.

"I suppose so," Mark Battenlag said.

"Come to think of it, Mark, you rate pretty high with crooks. You've got their confidence because you always played square. They tell you secrets. What a stool pigeon you'd make!"

"Stool pigeon!" Mark cried.

There was horror in his voice. Stool pigeon! How he hated them! How all decent crooks hated them! Spies for the police, pretending to be crooks themselves. In some places they were allowed to commit minor crimes and the police turned their backs, and in return they reported to the police the movements of crooks.

"Stool pigeon is what I said," Thane told him. "If somebody turned a trick, and you were a stool pigeon, we could simply tell you to find out for us the name of the guilty man, and you could do it!"

"You—you——" Mark mouthed.

"But, of course, we've nabbed you right!" Thane continued. "You are going up for life! It's hard luck about your daughter, but——"

"Curse you!" Mark Battenlag screeched.

"You wouldn't be our private stool, of course, for you love crooks more than you do your daughter," said Sedley. "You wouldn't tip off a few crooks and maybe help frame a couple even if it meant that you could live in peace and make a home for your daughter. It wouldn't be bad, Mark, if you could turn a little trick now and then like you did to-night, and have protection at headquarters."

"I'm done! I'm going straight!"

"You sure will if you get sent up

for life, and that is what's coming to you," Thane said, laughing. "Even if you're fool enough to go straight, it wouldn't be bad to have a job and get along without being bothered. I know jobs where they'd keep a man I said to keep."

Thane turned the car around another corner and stopped at the curb in the darkness. For a moment, both he and Sedley were silent. Then Thane unlocked the handcuffs and put them into his pocket.

"Get going, Mark!" he said. "You can keep those few trinkets you picked up in that house, since you need money in a hurry. Get down to your old watchman's job this afternoon, and the superintendent will give it back to you at an increase in pay. You understand, don't you?"

"Yes, I understand," Mark said miserably.

"You know better than to try to make a run for it out of town, don't you?"

"Yes."

"All right, Mark! We'll know where to find you when we want you. Don't forget that! And any time we want to take you away from that daughter of yours and send you over the road for life, we can do it. Don't forget that for a moment. Good night, Mark!"

Thane and Sedley drove away, leaving Mark Battenlag standing there in the darkness. Force of circumstances had turned him into the thing he most despised—a stool pigeon!

CHAPTER III.

MARK GETS ORDERS.

MARK got three hundred dollars for his swag, and the next day got the watchman's job back again. The superintendent of the building where Mark had worked evidently was under the thumbs of Thane and Sedley; he discharged another man to give Mark the job.

During the long night hours Mark Battenlag had ample time for thought. He realized his predicament fully. Thane and Sedley were unscrupulous. They had set the net and had caught him neatly. They had planned it so that he would get out of funds, had caught him breaking the law, and now held a life sentence over him. Oh, they could have him railroaded to prison at any time, all right!

And now he was their private stool pigeon. He would be compelled to betray men he knew, perhaps some of his old friends, that Thane and Sedley might get glory at headquarters and possibly promotion.

If he refused, he went to prison for life, and Mary would be alone in the world. If he complied, he would despise himself. He would have made a decision in a moment but for Mary, and that decision would have sent him to prison. But there was his motherless daughter to consider.

And he knew men like Thane and Sedley. He knew that he would live in constant terror as long as they were alive. Moreover, he might serve them faithfully for some time, only to have them turn upon him when such a course would be to their credit.

He felt like a manacled man. Then he worried about the situation, and the fact that Thane and Sedley did not communicate with him caused him to worry twice as much. Mary noticed the drawn look in his face, and Bob Gattcher noticed it.

"Anything wrong with you, dad?" Mary asked. "You don't seem to be yourself lately."

"Just a little cold, maybe," Mark replied.

"You sure look sick and worried, dad," Bob Gattcher said. He was calling Mark "dad" already.

Mark smiled at the two of them. It

was late afternoon, and he was preparing to go to work. Bob Gattcher was the son of a well-known crook, but never had he done a crooked thing himself. His mother had guided him into the right path of life. But Bob Gattcher knew crooks and their ways.

A good, clean boy of twenty-four was Bob Gattcher. He was a garage mechanic, but just now he got only four days of work a week. He was not solidly established yet, not ready to claim a wife, to Mark Battenlag's way of thinking.

And then there was the crook strain that bothered Mark a bit. He felt quite sure of Bob, but there was a chance that the boy had inherited a strain of crookedness from his father. The father had been dead for several years now, and Bob's mother also. Mark never had seen Bob in a corner. Would he turn crooked in a pinch? Mark did not want his Mary married to a crook. He did not want her to suffer as her mother had suffered.

Bob Gattcher left the little flat with Mark, and they walked down the street together, cutting across a park where they would not be overheard.

"Dad, come clean with me!" Bob Gattcher said. "It's all right to keep from Mary things that might worry her, but you tell me all about it. Try to imagine that I'm your son. I know that you're in trouble."

"And maybe it is you who makes me worry," Mark said.

"What do you mean, dad?"

"Bob, you've been acting strange lately. You work only a part of the time."

"I explained that. Our boss at the garage kept all of us on part time instead of discharging half of us."

"That sounds reasonable, Bob, and I happen to know that it's true. But how do you spend the time when you're not working? I've had my eyes on you, Bob, on account of Mary."

"What do you mean, dad?"

"You've been hanging around crooks, Bob, and not all of them because they were old friends of your father. Watch yourself, Bob! I won't have Mary the wife of a crook!"

"Think that I'm slipping, do you?" Bob asked. "I know what my father was, and what my mother suffered because of it. It is bad enough to be the son of a professional crook; I'm not thinking of being one myself."

"You understand, Bob, that it's just because of Mary?"

"Of course. But what about you, dad? Come clean with me!"

Mark Battenlag came clean. He told Bob Gattcher the whole story, knowing that Bob would understand.

"And now I'm to be a stool pigeon," he concluded. "What can I do? It isn't only that I don't want to be sent up for life, Bob. I'm thinking of Mary. It'll break her heart, boy. And she'd be alone in the world, only for you. And you're young and untried."

"Those two devils!" Bob cried. "It'd be worth sitting in the wires to finish them off!"

"None of that talk, Bob! You forget it! This is my problem, and I guess that I've got to solve it alone."

"Dad, if Thane and Sedley try anything, you come to me and talk it over before you make a move."

"If I can, Bob," Mark promised.

Mark went on to work, and Bob Gattcher drifted along the street. There was a peculiar smile on Bob's face.

At the office building, Mark reported for duty, and the superintendent beckoned him aside.

"Thane was around here an hour ago. He said that he'd be around again about ten o'clock to-night, and he wants to see you then."

So it had come! Thane and Sedley had work for him to do. This was the show-down.

Mark made his rounds like a man in a daze, inspecting here and there methodically, punching his time clocks. He was fighting the mental battle again. But for Mary, he would give Thane and Sedley an answer that would burn their ears.

He wondered whether that would not be best. Mary would grieve for a time, but she would have Bob Gattcher, and Bob would care for her. He would marry her immediately if Mark said the word.

But he was not sure about Bob. He knew that Bob had been consorting with crooks recently, in a quiet way. Perhaps that meant nothing, but it worried Mark.

"I wonder what they want," Mark mused. "And I wonder whether I can do it."

This would be the test, he knew. If he did one job of stool-pigeon work, he would go on doing it as long as Thane and Sedley held the whip over him. One moment of hesitation, and they would send him up for life. They would manufacture evidence, say that they had just discovered who had robbed that house. An old offender like Mark would get scant mercy from jury and judge.

At ten o'clock, Thane came to him alone. They talked in the big, empty corridor on the first floor of the building.

"Mark, you know Sam Kabel?" Thane asked.

"By sight and reputation. I'm not on speaking terms with him," Mark replied.

"Sam Kabel is back in town. He's been in Europe for almost three years, handlin' a mob of crooks over there. He'll probably have a mob here, but he hasn't yet. He stood pretty good politically when he was here last. It was Sam Kabel that kept me and Sedley from promotion to detective."

"How was that?" Mark asked dully.

"Oh, we had something on him, and tried to work it. But we didn't scare him worth a cent. Sam pretended to fall in with us, but he tricked us. He pulled a few wires, and we went back to pounding beats. We're plain-clothes men now, but we'd have been full detectives and maybe sergeants by now if it hadn't been for Sam Kabel."

"I understand," Mark said.

"He hasn't turned a wheel since he came back, and maybe he isn't planning to do anything just yet. He seems to have plenty of money, and he's living high. Pretends to be a great sport; bets on the races and goes to all the ball games."

"Then how can you get him, if he doesn't make a move?"

"Don't be an ass, Mark! He'll have to be framed," Thane replied. "Just a little matter of revenge for me and Sedley. Sam Kabel gets caught with the goods, and Sedley and I catch him. Understand?"

"Yes, I understand," Mark replied.

"You're not forgetting what we can hand you?"

"No need to mention that," Mark said. "What is it you want me to do?"

"Frame Sam Kabel!"

"How can I do that?" Mark asked. "I don't know the man personally. You say he has money. He'd laugh at an old, poor, broken-down burglar proposing a job."

"Yeh? You've got brains, Mark. The cops always said that. A burglar with brains. You proved it in the old days. Make your brains work, Mark, if you want to stay at liberty."

"But what can I do?" Mark asked.

"Sedley and I will make some plans, and you can put in a few suggestions. But you get busy and see if you can't think of something, Mark. If you want time off from this job to get a line on Sam Kabel, I'll fix it with the superintendent. Your pay will go on just the same."

Mark Battenlag did not dare hesitate, and he knew it. "I'll try to think of a way," he said. "But I don't know just how to go about it."

"Every high-class crook knows you, Mark. Fix it to get an introduction to Kabel. Cultivate the hound and make him have confidence in you. Then I'll tell you what to suggest to him. It must be certain, Mark! Sedley and I are going to see Sam Kabel go over the road, and then we're going to grin at him through the bars!"

"I'll get busy thinking," Mark said. "It won't be hard to meet him."

"And don't get it into your head that you can play along all year on this little deal," Thane told him. "We want action. I'll drop around in a few days and have another chin with you, and you'd better be able to report progress."

"All right!" Mark muttered.

"I'll fix it with the superintendent so you can get off for a few nights. He'll tell you so when you report for work to-morrow evening. That's that! And there is another thing. Sedley was going to speak to you about this, but he's on an assignment to-night, so I'll make the talk."

"What is it, Thane?"

"It's young Bob Gattcher."

"What about Bob?" There was a measure of fright in Mark's voice as he spoke.

"We want Bob Gattcher out of the way," Thane said. "He's got to go to the big house, Mark, and you're going to send him there!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE DILEMMA.

SHARPLY, Battenlag sucked in his breath and choked back the exclamation that was on his lips. This was a moment for caution, he knew. Thane was watching him closely.

"What's the idea about Bob?" Mark asked. "He's always gone straight; works in a garage."

"Think you can tell me more about him than I know?" Thane said, sneering. "You listen to me, Mark. This is Sedley's affair, but we're partners. Sedley wants Gattcher out of the way."

"I don't understand."

"Bob Gattcher has been making up to that girl of yours."

"She's engaged to him," Mark said.

"But not married yet. Sedley wants the girl."

"What do you mean?" Mark cried. His eyes flamed, and Thane knew this was a time to move carefully.

"Oh, take it easy!" Thane said. "Sedley met your girl at a dance a couple of months ago and went crazy about her. Wants to marry her, the fool! Marry a crook's daughter! If it was me——"

"Don't say it!" Mark thundered.

"Oh, well! Sedley is crazy about her. He has been trying to meet her, but she avoids him. She's crazy about Bob Gattcher. That son of a crook has the inside road."

"He's a decent boy!" Mark said. "And Sedley——"

"Yes?" Thane asked, grinning. "Were you about to say something nasty about Sedley?"

"No, I—I——"

"Better not!" Thane advised. "You'd better realize, Mark, that you're to jump when Sedley and I pull the strings! Gattcher must be got out of the way. And you've got to use your influence and make the girl marry Sedley. That's luck for you. You'll sure have protection with a detective for a son-in-law."

"I want to go straight so I won't need protection," Mark said, his voice flat with emotion. "And you're asking me to make my girl marry Sedley. Let her alone! And let Gattcher alone!"

"It is strictly up to you, Mark. You

can be put away any time, you know. Then Sedley can handle Gattcher and the girl. Why not frame Gattcher and Sam Kabel together?"

"The boy isn't a crook. He never turned a trick in his life. His father was a crook, but Bob is square."

"He'll be a crook when we get through with him," Thane said. "Talk to him. He'll listen to you. Coax him into a job and fix it so we can land him. Those are your orders, Mark! And they'd better be carried out. You start the work, and Sedley and I will plan something big enough to attract Sam Kabel. We'll land Kabel and Bob Gattcher in one bag."

"And what about me?" Mark asked.

"You fool, we'll fix it so you'll keep out! We need you in our business. Sedley and I are going right up the ladder! Promotion all the time for good work." Thane laughed. "And you're going to help us! You'll help us frame crooks, and we'll get credit for captures."

Mark Battenlag could only glare at him. He fought against an impulse to jump on Thane and throttle him. But that would avail him nothing, he knew. There would be Sedley to settle with later. If he killed Thane, he would go to the chair, and "sit in the wires." That would not help Mary and Bob.

For the remainder of that night, Mark Battenlag worked like a man in a trance. When morning came, he went home and ate his breakfast silently, while Mary watched him, wondering what was troubling him. She said nothing to him then, for Mark went to bed. But she held a long conversation that noon with Bob.

Gattcher, remembering what Mark had told him and knowing the problem Mark faced, tried to laugh away the girl's fears. He would talk to Mark and find out what was the trouble, he promised. But he had to go to the garage that afternoon for work, and Mark was gone when he got back to the little flat again.

Mark "made good" to a certain extent. The superintendent told him to take the night off, and, as many more as he wished, and Mark Battenlag wandered to his old haunts and was greeted cordially by men who wondered whether Mark Battenlag was going back into the game again. The second night he managed to meet Sam Kabel.

He did not like Kabel, who was an oily, unscrupulous scoundrel. Sam Kabel would double cross a man, Mark decided. Helping frame a man like Kabel would not be so bad. He was a crook other crooks did not trust; he played the game so that the most benefit would accrue to Sam Kabel.

He reported progress to Sedley and Thane.

"You keep it up, Mark," Thane instructed. "Hint, when the proper time comes, that you've got something big in view. Sam Kabel will want to get in on it. You hesitate and say that you'll let him know later. Then Sedley and I will lay the plant."

"And don't forget Bob Gattcher!" Sedley added. "I want him out of the way. You know why."

"My girl never told me she had met you," Mark said.

"Well, she did, all right. And she turned up her pretty little nose at me—a crook's daughter turning up her nose at a plain-clothes man! No Bob Gattcher is going to stand in the way!"

"Oh, let my girl alone!" Mark said. "What do you want with a girl who doesn't love you?"

"I'm crazy about her, Mark! It won't hurt you any to have me for a son-in-law. You talk to the girl, too! She'll listen to you."

Mark talked to his girl the following day.

"Mary, I met Sedley, the plain-

clothes man, yesterday," he said. "He told me that he knows you."

The girl's face clouded. "I met him accidentally at a dance and danced with him twice," she replied.

"And he's been bothering you?" Mark was persistent.

"He's been making a nuisance of himself," she confessed. "But it is nothing to worry about, dad."

"Just what has he done?" Mark wanted to know.

"He tries to meet me, wants me to go around with him. He telephones all the time. It's all right, dad. I made a conquest when I didn't intend to, or want to. I hinted to him that I was engaged to Bob, but that hasn't stopped him."

"And why didn't you tell me, Mary?"

"Why should I, dad? You have troubles enough, and I can handle Mr. Sedley. He'll get tired soon and get it into his head that I'm so much interested in Bob that I can't see any other man."

"Did you tell Bob about it, Mary?"

"No, dad. Bob is hot-headed, you know. I didn't want him to get into trouble."

Mark Battenlag sighed and sank into a chair. He had been standing and watching her closely as she talked.

"Dad, something is troubling you badly," the girl cried. "Why don't you tell me?"

"My troubles are my own, Mary."

"But what sort of daughter am I if I don't share them with you, now that mother is gone? Is it anything that Bob and I can help you with?"

"Don't you worry your pretty head, Mary. I'll find a way out."

She did not get a chance to talk to him longer, and Mark went forth to spend another night in the company of Sam Kabel and his friends, knowing that he was being watched continually, that Thane and Sedley were suspicious of him. And they could strike at him any moment that pleased them!

If he refused to do as Thane and Sedley ordered, they would send him to prison for life. That would break Mary's heart and leave her to the mercy of such men as Sedley. And Mark Battenlag knew that he would not last long if he went back to prison.

If he framed Bob Gattcher, granted that he could arrange it, that would break Mary's heart also, and she probably would learn that her father had ruined her sweetheart, hence he would lose the love and respect of the girl he loved.

If he removed Thane and Sedley from the world of living men, he probably would go to the electric chair for it, and that would kill Mary.

"I can't see a way out!" Mark said to himself, as he jostled his way along a thronged street. "I've got to tell Bob about it, and let him help me."

CHAPTER V.

MARK HAS AN IDEA.

HE saw Thane and Sedley at a corner, and they beckoned him to one side. He followed them through the rear door of a questionable establishment and to a little room where they could talk.

"Got Sam Kabel ready yet?" Thane demanded. "We want to see him put away."

"I think that I've got his confidence," Mark replied.

"And how about young Gattcher?" Sedley asked.

"I—I've sounded him. He's running straight, and he says that he always will. I guess we'll have to count him out."

"Don't lie to us, Battenlag!" Sedley snapped. "You want to save Gattcher on account of your girl! You'd rather have that son of a crook for a son-in-law than have me. Let me tell you

something, Mark! The fence where you took that stuff does as we say. He has the stuff. We can take you in any time and pin that job on you, and send you up for life!"

"We sure can!" Thane put in. "Any time you want to start for the big stone house, Mark, just let us know. We're about ready to tell you our plans about Kabel. But you've got to work on Gattcher, too."

"Haven't you any mercy?" Mark cried. "Sedley, my girl wouldn't marry you even if Bob was put away. She's the kind who would be waiting for him at the prison gate."

"It's your job to see that she does marry me after he's put away!" Sedley said. "If you don't make her do it, you take the long trip!"

"And we're not going to wait much longer, Mark!" Thane warned. "Get out of here now, and get busy working on Gattcher!"

When Mark Battenlag got home that morning he looked like a wrecked man. His appearance was enough to get a little cry from Mary.

"Dad, you've got to tell me what is troubling you!" she said.

"I told Bob some of it," he admitted. "But I told him not to tell you."

"I have the right to know."

"Wait until Bob comes. I didn't tell him all of it."

"He will be here this morning, dad."

Mark Battenlag ate his breakfast, but he did not go to bed. He paced the floor and sucked at an empty pipe that he did not even realize was empty. He would have to tell them everything; this was a battle he could not fight alone.

And so, when Bob Gattcher came, Mark Battenlag told them everything, while Mary sat white-faced and listened without saying a word, and Gattcher muttered an imprecation now and then.

"They've got me!" Mark said. "Any way I turn, they've got me! Can I tell the commissioner about his crooked cops, when they've got that evidence on me? It might be the end of Thane and Sedley, but it would be the end of me, too."

"Let's go away!" Mary cried.

"Useless to think of that!" Bob said promptly. "They'd bring him back."

"It doesn't seem possible that such a thing could be!" she said. "I can't realize it."

"Any way I turn, they've got me," Mark repeated. "And all I want is a chance to be straight, and to live in peace, near Mary."

"Dad, did you ever stop to think that with Thane and Sedley removed, you'd be safe?" Bob asked.

"None of that talk, Bob."

"I'd almost do it, and sit in the chair, to save you and Mary."

"Bob!" Mary cried. "Do you know what you are saying?"

Gattcher walked across the room to a window and looked down on the busy street.

"Crooked cops!" he said. "Every department has them, I suppose. There are bad men in every line. And the decent ones hate them. Thane and Sedley would be kicked out in a minute."

"And I'd go up for life!" Mark said. "Maybe that would be best. I can let them run along, and pretend to help frame Sam Kabel, and you, Bob. Then I can tell the whole thing. That will finish Thane and Sedley. I'm willing to go up for life to see them get what's coming to them. And you and Mary can be married, and go away and start clean. I'd be almost happy—up there—knowing you were safe and having your chance."

"But do you think that we could be happy, dad?" the girl cried. "Bob, isn't there any way out?"

"If Thane and Sedley were fixed so they could not talk——"

"Not that, Bob!" Mark cried. "If that had to be done, it'd be better for me to do it. Maybe, after they heard my story, a jury would only give me life."

"And Sedley wants Mary, does he?" Gattcher cried. "That double-crossing fiend!"

"He'd never get me!" Mary said.

Mark Battenlag drew a deep breath and faced them. "And we are just where we started," he explained. "We haven't thought of a way out. We've got to do something. Thane and Sedley are watching me closely and they want results. If only something would happen!"

"Dad, we'll all think about it!" Gattcher said. "I'll come again tomorrow morning."

He got his hat and hurried away almost before they could speak to him again. Mark Battenlag held his weeping daughter in his arms and tried, in his clumsy way, to comfort her. He had that numb feeling again. He seemed incapable of consecutive, constructive thought. His brain seemed to be whirling with ideas, none of which would focus.

And suddenly an idea came to him. It was like a shock at first. He never had thought of such a thing before. Like a flash the idea was in his mind, and it grew and grew until it obsessed him.

But he said nothing of it to Mary, for it was only an idea, and it might not work out. It was a forlorn hope, a last chance. He ate the evening meal and went forth with Mary's kisses warm upon his lips—went forth to face the problem again. He hurried to the place where he knew he would run across Sam Kabel.

Sam Kabel had taken quite a liking to Mark Battenlag. Perhaps Kabel thought that he could use Mark some day. And to-night, when Mark intimated that he had something of importance to impart to Sam Kabel in confidence, Kabel immediately made it possible.

They went to Sam Kabel's hotel room, and Kabel set out the cigars and drinks. Mark touched neither. He only wanted to talk.

"I've got something funny to tell you, Mr. Kabel," he said. "I want you to hear it through before you decide anything."

"Always ready to listen," Kabel said.

"You used to have a big political pull, didn't you?"

"I did. But politics have changed, Battenlag. My gang is out now."

"And you haven't a pull any more?"

"No; I have to watch my step."

"Not even pull enough to have a couple of crooked cops handled in some way?"

"That depends. What's on your mind?"

"If those cops were trying right now to frame you?" Mark persisted.

Sam Kabel sat up straight in his chair and tossed aside his cigar.

"Trying to frame me?" he said.

"Two who tried it before," Mark told him.

"Thane and Sedley! They are the only ones who ever tried it, and they got the worst of the deal."

"And they never forgot it, Kabel!" Mark said. "They're scheming right now to get you."

"How do you know so much about it?"

"Because," said Mark Battenlag, "they're trying to make me help them!"

There was a moment of silence, save for the heavy breathing of Sam Kabel. Mark noticed that Kabel's face gradually grew pink, then red, then purple. His anger gathered like storm clouds in a summer sky.

With a sudden movement, Sam Kabel brought forth a lethal weapon. He covered Mark Battenlag with it.

"Talk!" Kabel snapped. "And you'd better tell the truth!"

Mark laughed. "I'll talk!" he said. "You can't scare me with that gun, Kabel. I've got to the point where I'm not sure but what a bullet would be welcome. I'll talk, and you listen!"

CHAPTER VI.

FREEDOM.

IN a low, monotonous voice, Mark Battenlag told the entire story, how he had been hounded and had resorted to crime again, how he had been caught by Thane and Sedley, and how they had tried to make a stool pigeon of him. He even brought in Mary and Bob, told the entire thing and made it convincing.

Sam Kabel got up and paced the floor when Mark had finished. His face was purple again, and his hands had become fists.

"The double-crossing fiends!" he cried. "I knew Bob Gattcher's father, and I'm glad that the boy is straight. And I know a lot about you, Battenlag. You've told me the truth!"

"Can't you do anything to help?" Mark begged.

"I haven't any power now," Kabel said. "No pull! They'd laugh at me down at headquarters now. I've got to keep my eyes open to protect myself. But I can do something. You get out of here, Battenlag! I'm so mad I don't want to talk even to you. I'll see you to-morrow night."

Mark got out and walked the streets, careful to dodge Thane and Sedley. After an hour or so, he went home.

"Bob hasn't been here, dad, and he hasn't telephoned," Mary said. "He isn't working at the garage to-night, either."

"Probably walking around trying to think of a way out for us," Mark replied. "I had a talk with Sam Kabel, and told him the whole thing."

"Dad! Can he help us? I never thought of going to him."

"He hasn't any political pull," Mark said sadly. "His days of power are at an end. All he can do is get mad, and be careful that Thane and Sedley don't frame him. I hope that Bob can think of something."

He compelled the girl to go to bed, but he sat in front of the window himself, trying to think, sat there until he saw the dawn come up over the housetops. When the first stirrings of life appeared in the streets, he slipped from the house and went out. Down the street he walked, with no particular destination in mind, seeking relief for his tortured brain.

There was a bundle of newspapers on a stand in front of a corner store, papers wet from the press. Mark Battenlag dropped his pennies from force of habit, and picked up a paper. As he walked on, he opened it.

Headlines screamed at him. One glance, and he was clutching the paper like a madman, his hands shaking.

Thane and Sedley had been slain, shot down in a gun fight! It had happened less than two hours before, and the details in the paper were meager.

Thane and Sedley! Mark Battenlag was saved!

"Bob!" he gasped. "Bob did it! He said that it was the only way."

He was like a man stunned for a moment, and then his brain became active. Bob Gattcher had done this, to save the father of the girl he loved.

"The young fool!" Mark mouthed. "Too mad to cover his tracks! They'll get him and send him to the chair. Oh, the fool! And how can I tell Mary?"

Mary! He guessed how her heart had been given wholly to Bob. And after this, she would be like a withered flower, the girl he had wanted to see happy. He was saved. Thane and Sedley could not talk now. He did

not have to be a stool pigeon. He could keep going straight, make the fight for decency. Possibly, he could get out of town with Mary, go some place and start anew.

But Bob was in danger. Mark wondered whether they had him already. He knew that police are active when one of their number is slain, though the slain man be not worthy. Crooks must be taught that they cannot escape when they kill an officer.

"The boy! The boy!" Mark muttered. "This will kill Mary! I've got to know what happened."

A wild idea came to him. He would surrender and say that he had killed Thane and Sedley because they were hounding him. He was getting old, and Mary needed a young man for protector. Bob could guard her for years and years, whereas Mark Battenlag would not last much longer. Perhaps that would be best.

But he had to learn the facts first. He had to have more news, later news than was in the paper.

He hurried toward a corner where he could get transportation to that section of the city where men would be talking of this double slaying. A man rushed up behind him and grasped him by the arm.

"Dad! Are you deaf? I've been shouting at you for the last block. What's the rush?"

"Bob!" Mark Battenlag cried. "Are you crazy, boy? They'll get you!"

"What are you talking about?"

"You won't be able to fool the cops, boy. You've killed two of them——"

"Dad! Did you think I had killed Thane and Sedley? I didn't learn of it until an hour ago. I was coming to tell you and Mary. You're safe, dad. We're all safe! Thane and Sedley are gone."

"You—you didn't do——" Mark gasped.

"No! I was trying to think of a way out. And somebody else cleared the sky for us, dad. It was Sam Kabel who did it!"

"Kabel?" Mark cried.

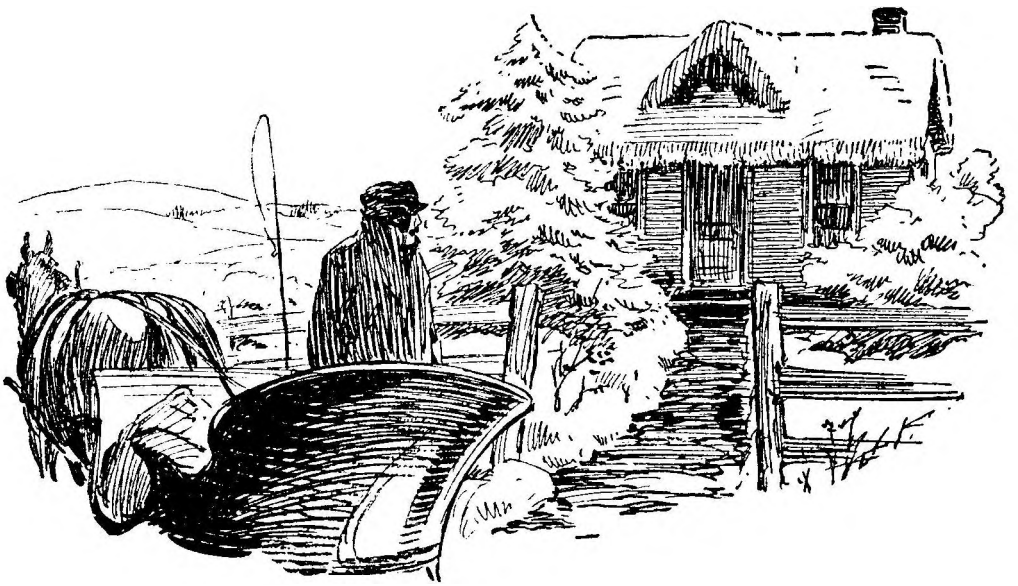
"Yes. He died an hour ago in the hospital. Kabel met Thane and Sedley and accused them of trying to frame him. They shot it out, and Kabel got both of them. They got him, too, but he managed to get away. But he dropped before he'd gone far. He told it all before he died, Kabel did, and he never mentioned you. I was talking to one of the hospital cops. Just the end of their old feud, everybody thinks."

"I can't seem to grasp it, boy."

"Everything's all right, dad. Thane and Sedley are dead, and the sky is clear again for all of us. We'll pack up and get out of town. I can borrow money enough to get all of us to some place out West. We'll run clean and straight, dad."

"Bob, I think I'm going to cry!"

"Cut it!" Gattcher snapped. "Somebody will see you. We aren't interested in this case, remember. Careful now! Do you want to spoil things when everything is fine? Just one thing to do now, dad—hurry home and tell Mary!"



DISCORDANT BELLS

By Frederick Ames Coates

Author of "Sun-Branded," etc.

IT was with a thud rather than a roar that the charge went off. Swift, acrid fumes darted into the room. The door of the old-fashioned safe toppled onto the stuffed mail bags which had been placed to receive it.

Dan Totten, crouching near the window of the little room, did not stir for several seconds. Shivers crept down his spine, partly from nervousness, partly from the cold that seeped through. The window beside him was unlocked, but closed tightly: a provision against the carrying of the sound. There was little danger in such possibility, however. The immediately adjacent buildings were devoted wholly to business purposes. At this hour of the night, or early morning rather, they contained no living occupants.

The danger, if any, was from within. The post-office building was a small, two-story frame structure. Postmaster Lafe Parsons had his simple living quarters upstairs. Parsons was more than a little deaf; but Dan Totten had no knowledge of whether or not he was a sound sleeper. The vibration, rather than the noise of the explosion, might rouse him.

A thud from the floor above brought to Totten the bad news that the postmaster was awake, and that he was getting out of bed. There was ample time to get away, by shoving up the sash and tumbling out into the night. He had not come here, however, merely to get away empty-handed. There was not time to make even a quick inspection of the safe's contents if the threatened interruption materialized.

Footsteps seemed to indicate that the postmaster was about to descend the creaking wooden stairs. If so, he would no doubt be armed: would carry one of those ancient, rusty, large-calibered revolvers which were considered the proper form of armed protection in this neck of the woods. There was a

better than even chance that the weapon would miss fire. Probably, it had not been discharged in years. That chance, however, was one which Totten did not relish taking.

He crouched behind the safe, which jutted out from the side wall, and saw a pair of slipper-clad feet feeling their way on the top step. They were only dimly visible to the watcher, in the fitful light of the oil lamp which the postmaster carried. In a moment the shoulders and the alarmed face of the old man appeared in the full glow of the lamp.

The post office boasted of electric lights, as Dan Totten knew. There was no general switch, however, each light being turned on from its own fixture.

"Who's there?" quavered the old postmaster, pausing in his descent.

Dan Totten, who had been hastily knotting a large handkerchief around his head below the eyes, to provide against recognition, realized suddenly from the old man's peering look that he was in no immediate danger of being seen. The base of the lamp cast a round, trembling, black shadow on everything below stairs. Its flame lighted the ceiling, and glared into the postmaster's eyes—a very poor arrangement for any one investigating strange noises in the night.

Emboldened by his knowledge of the other's deafness, he pushed with his foot a filled mail sack to a position against the lowest step of the staircase. He had no desire to use his own ready automatic. Killing was not part of his plan; and unnecessary noise was antagonistic to it.

Postmaster Lafe Parsons continued his downward progress, slowly but boldly. His left hand upheld the lamp. From his right, hung at his side, there depended the dim glint of the revolver. His feet did not pause to feel their way on the well-known steps.

From the lowest step of the flight, a foot struck boldly forward, followed by the weight of the man behind it. On the thick but yielding bulk of the obstructing mail sack, Lafe Parsons stumbled. He tottered for a moment, wildly striving to regain his balance without upsetting the lamp. After a vain attempt he fell headlong, the lamp flying from his grasp, and its chimney shattering loudly on the floor. A fragment of hot glass seared the flesh of his wrist, but that went almost unnoticed. For a heavy body lunged itself onto his back, knocking the remaining breath from him. A whispered voice commanded silence. Strong hands yanked his arms behind him, and bound them uncomfortably tight with a heavy leather strap such as is used to secure the mouth of a mail pouch. In the midst of his discomfiture, the old man saw the last licking flame from the upset lamp die into blackness, and knew that the danger of fire at least was averted.

Dan Totten made short work of securing his prisoner. With the man's legs secured, the burglar thrust into his mouth the handkerchief which he had used as an improvised mask, and fastened it in place. He then lifted the postmaster into a chair, to which he tightly fastened him, and shoved the chair into a corner to such a position that the prisoner's back was turned to the room and the safe. He felt free now to use his flash light within the strong box.

The contents were disappointing so far as cash was concerned, yet enough to assuage the need of one who was hiving up for the winter, cut off from his ordinary sources of income. Living in the country—the cost of mere living—was unbelievably cheap. Such a life was worth even less than it cost, but it was enforced on Dan Totten by considerations more important than economy.

The stamps and the money-order

blanks he thrust aside. He was not interested in them. A few registered letters which reposed in a compartment he tore open hastily, and with disappointing results. Two thick wads of currency stuffed into his pockets represented for him the profit on to-night's transaction.

The robber wasted no time in the place after getting what he wanted. He gave a single glance at the huddled figure in the chair, sitting immovable where he had been placed. Then he laid his hand on the knob of the rear door, already unlocked from inside as a means of exit.

The door resisted his outward push. Dan Totten put weight against it, and it crunched slowly outward against a mass of soft snow which covered the doorstep to a depth of several inches.

Totten under his breath greeted the season's first snow with searing words of disgust. This was a contingency upon which he had not counted. Snow means footprints: tracks that can be followed. The hard ground had been his safety. The white blanket, that now covered it, spelled danger. It must have been snowing particularly hard, for none had fallen before his entry into the building an hour earlier.

It meant slow going, too; for Totten had come afoot on his expedition of pillage. He was content with the modern predilection which attributes every robbery in an out-of-the-way country place to automobile bandits. Cedarville, whose post office he had just robbed, was on a main highway. He had counted on the fact that the hue and cry, when it arose, would follow the road in both directions; that no one would suspect that the robber had walked across the mountain trail from a town twenty miles distant.

The mountain spine which separated the State into east and west valleys was considered practically impassable in these days since men had abandoned reliance upon their legs as means of locomotion. Scarcely once a year did a party cross the mountains now, and then it was a feat to be talked about in the village stores. The normal intercourse between the two sections was infrequent, and was by way of rail or road through gaps that lay many miles to the south and to the north.

That twenty-mile mountain journey promised to be far from easy under present conditions. Dan Totten became immediately aware of the need of haste. So long as the snow continued falling, his footprints would be rapidly obliterated. It behooved him to be as far on his way as possible before the fall ceased. He gave the door a savage backward slam; one which failed of its effect because of the snow collected around the jamb. Then, with scarcely a backward look, he plunged across the yard and struck out for home.

Only at first did he exercise even a minimum of caution. There was little likelihood of any one being abroad or awake in Cedarville. Beyond the scattered limits of the village he could plod along with no thought for anything except his own fatigue and the task that lay ahead of him.

A sense of direction brought him at last to the ascent into the mountain pass. The darkness and the deceptive swirl of the snow made it next to impossible to recognize landmarks. He was not sure that he could have recognized many, even under more favorable conditions. Until to-night, it was all of fifteen years since he had tramped the round trip over the pass with his father, in those rustic boyhood days when a visit to Cedarville had seemed like a trip to a metropolis.

Much had occurred since then, besides his father's death. The Totten place had become an abandoned farm, remaining in Dan's possession only because he could find no purchaser for it.

Even the town refused to take title to it for back taxes. On two previous occasions since beginning his hectic city career, Dan had found the old farm an ideal hide-out: a place to rusticate while police memories grew dim. He had an idea that the homestead might conveniently serve other uses in future. It would be an ideal place to conduct moonshining operations. It was so far from the nearest neighbors that even the smell of mash would be in little danger of being noticed.

The old farm was far away now, however. Hours of laborious progress lay between the man and his destination. Dan Totten cursed loudly at the luck which the storm had brought. He had not expected to work so hard for the money which to-night's expedition had netted him. One ray of satisfaction existed, however, in the fact that his footprints were being erased almost as fast as he made them.

The snow lasted until daybreak, by which time he had reached the crest. Though his wearied limbs cried out for rest, Dan Totten pushed on. The leaving of a trail here meant no danger, since there was not a chance in a thousand that any one else would traverse the pass before spring.

Finally the fugitive rested, when it seemed physically impossible to drag his limbs farther. Under a jutting rock he found a sheltered spot, almost a cave, which he could reach by brushing away the snow from the entrance. Within was mossy ground that was not too hard to lie upon. The warmth of his body soon raised the temperature of the small inclosed space to a degree that was almost comfortable.

He awoke in the midst of a nightmare of suffocation, to find that the air in his dark chamber was in fact becoming very close. The reason was apparent as soon as he rallied his sleepy faculties. The entrance to his cave was blocked with snow.

In a panic, Dan Totten clawed at it with his hands. He knew well enough the possibility of becoming snowed in here in the mountains, alone and unmissed, where he might die of starvation and exposure. He had been a fool to chance even a needed nap, when his very life hung upon the weather.

As he burst through into the open air, he gave a vast breath of relief. It was not snowing again. The blocking of his cave was due to his own action—which he had forgotten—in scooping snow back against the entrance to increase the warmth of his resting place. It behooved him, however, to start on at once, lest nature might play him such a trick.

Totten scarcely noticed the stiffness in his legs as he plodded along with renewed determination. Three hours ought to bring him to his own front door, and his watch showed him that it was not yet noon. It was a downhill journey now, and he broke from time to time into a run. His steps left clear prints in the snow, but that caused him little concern. No one would ever see them here unless they came looking for them. Only as he approached home need he worry about that. His mind worked busily on the problem of making the end of his journey as unmarked as its beginning had been.

By half past two he came in sight of his house, almost as far below him as it was ahead. Here he abandoned the trail which led, steeply enough, down to the road at a point a hundred yards south of his own driveway. By virtue of the very fact that it was the trail, it was too free from wooded growth, presented too even an expanse of snow on which he would leave prints that would be apparent to any one who came along the road.

It was a final satisfaction to note that the white surface of the road was as yet unbroken. Nobody had been this way since the snow had set in. The

only end of it which was ever used now led into the village of Benson's Corners. The Totten house was not the farthest out from the village, but the two places which lay beyond it, out of sight in clearings of their own, were both deserted, as was his own most of the time.

Through the trees and brush, Dan Totten scrambled toward the road by a purposely difficult route. Tracks here would be concealed by the shrubbery. Furthermore, he was making his way to a ledge that jutted out almost vertically over the road, at a height of twenty feet above it.

Gaining the ledge, the man did a peculiar thing. He carefully picked a path fifteen feet long, leading to the lip of the crag. This path he traversed three or four times to tread it down. Then with quick running steps he sped along it, and leaped.

His landing, though broken somewhat by the thickness of the snow, was a jarring one. But the spot where he picked himself up was well across the road, in his own yard. There remained but one thing to do to insure his safety.

He crossed the yard and let himself into the house with his key. From the woodshed at the rear he brought a snow shovel, which he carried back through the house. Then, with a labor which was more swift than thorough, he began shoveling a path across the yard, following the line which his returning footsteps had taken. It was not a wide path, and, within half an hour, he had brought it as far as the roadside, so that it included and obliterated the spot where he had landed in his jump from the cliff. There was now no visible evidence that he had been beyond the place where he stood resting on his shovel. The entrance to the regular trail, down the road, showed an unbroken surface of white. It would not occur to any one to look on the top of the cliff for trampled footprints which were not visible from the road.

Dan Totten hurried into the house. He was stiff with cold and exertion, and the chill within doors was nearly as great as that outside. He wasted no time in bewailing the steam-heated life which he had left behind in the city. Beside the large round stove in the living room was a painted wood box, filled with oak slabs and with kindling. In a few moments he had a fire roaring, gradually spreading its circle of warmth toward the sides of the room.

In the kitchen range he started another fire, opened some of the canned food which he had bought last week at the Corners, and put it on to warm. While waiting, he hurried upstairs and changed into dry garments. He slit the edge of his mattress with a knife, and placed in the improvised hiding place the money from the post-office robbery. Later, he would find a more secure spot for concealing it.

Dan Totten ate ravenously, to make up for his long fast. When he had finished, he lounged in an easy-chair, with a copy of an old magazine on his lap, basking in the warmth which the two stoves quickly spread throughout the ground floor of the house.

Into his sense of comfort and security came a discordant noise. He sat upright and listened. Sleigh bells!

He rose and went to the window, trying to stifle a premonition of danger. A cutter was coming slowly along the road, with one lone man in it. That was reassuring; if the visit were one of danger to him, the visitor would not have come alone.

The cutter stopped at the gate, beside the newly-shoveled path. As the man clambered out of the rig, awkward in heavy overcoat, mittens and muffler, and started toward the house, Totten realized that this was the rural-delivery carrier.

The mailman waved a letter in his

hand as he approached. "Mail for you!" he cried, as Dan Totten opened the door. "Didn't know whether I'd try to make it or not. There's nobody else on this end of the route. But I thought maybe this was important mail; and that I'd better try to break out the road now, instead of waiting till later when maybe it would be harder. You look 's if you was expecting me or somebody: all shoveled out down to the road. Glad to see that you ain't froze up or starved, out here all alone by yourself."

"No," said Dan. "Keeps me busy, though tossing wood onto the fires. It's not much like hard coal in a steam heater, like I'm used to. Why, last night I had to come downstairs twice during the night to keep the fires going."

The letter carrier chuckled. "Guess you ain't forgot your country bringing up, even if you have been away! But have you got enough victuals and stuff in the house to last you a spell? Another blizzard like last night's would shut you up here for weeks on end, maybe."

"Thanks," said Totten. "I got enough for a while, I guess. I did think of walking up to the village last night, and getting somebody to drive me back; but it looked so much like snow I thought I'd better not try it." It was just as well, he thought, to emphasize, unobtrusively but as firmly as possible, the supposed fact that he had been at home continuously. "When I first came out here, after arriving by train a week ago, I stocked up on provisions, and came out on the grocer's wagon when he delivered them. I didn't expect then that I'd be sticking as close to the house as I have. I'd forgotten how dependent folks in the country are on horses—and unluckily I haven't got one."

"And telephones," amended the letter carrier. "Too bad you ain't got at least a phone, so you could call up if anything was wrong. Not to mention getting the news——

"And talk about news! I most forgot. Some bandit held up the post office over in the other valley, at Cedarville, last night. Way I heard about it is, the post-office inspector was making his regular visit to the Benson's Corner's office this morning, and he got a phone call about it asking him to come right over."

"That so?" asked Totten with unsimulated interest.

"Yes. I had to get out on my route, so I ain't had time to pick up any details. Blew the safe, though, I understand. Probably some professional yegg that's had his eye on Cedarville for a long time. Well, I'm glad he ain't loose on *this* side of the mountains!"

Dan Totten agreed gravely. It was working out just as he had thought. No one would suspect that any traveling crook could have crossed the mountains, which were considered impassable in these days of good roads. For that matter, no one without long and thorough knowledge of the section could have done it.

He stood and watched the mailman clamber again into his cutter and start back toward the village. Dan Totten saw the man look back at the house before driving off, and wondered cynically if there had been any trace of suspicion among the motives which had prompted the visit. The folks in this section where he had spent his boyhood had no inkling of his life in the city. At any rate, the man found him at home, sitting, in dry garments, in a warm room. Any theory that he had been elswhere during the past week would require some proving. There was nothing at all to support a suspicion of such a fact.

Almost as soon as darkness had set in, Totten fixed the fires for the night and tumbled into the bed upstairs—the bed in whose mattress the loot was con-

cealed. He was extremely tired; even if his conscience had been more tender than it was, it could not have kept him awake.

Broad daylight was streaming in at the window when he finally awoke with a sudden start, a sense of something wrong. He propped himself on an elbow, and listened. An unmistakable knock at the front door of the house came to his ears. What could it mean?

He scrambled out of bed, and stooped to put on his shoes. These, and his coat and collar, were the only articles which he had removed last night, so it took him but a few moments to dress. He made sure that his pistol was in his pocket before he descended the stairs to answer what must be the third burst of knocking.

His alertness, his readiness for any emergency, did not appear in his manner as he opened the door. Two men stood on the step. One of them he recognized as old Saul Ransom, from the Corners —a man who had not noticeably changed during the last fifteen years.

"Daniel, meet Mr. Jones," introduced Ransom. "He's going to bring you good news, maybe. I s'pose, like near every body else around here, you'd be glad to sell your place, wouldn't you?"

Sell! That was a possibility which had not occurred to Totten; at least, not since those first few months after his father's death. If he could get real money for the place, he could find plenty of pleasanter and equally safe resorts to spend the winter.

"I've been scouting around for an abandoned farm that I could buy right," explained Jones. "There seem to be plenty of them; but the fact that you're living here now seemed to promise that this place would be more habitable than some I've seen. I warn you, though, I don't expect to pay any fancy price. And I might not like your place anyway. I would like to see it, though."

"Certainly," assented Totten. "Glad to have you. It's not in very neat shape just now. I'm alone, and I guess I ain't much of a housekeeper."

He led the way through the various rooms, including the bedroom which he had recently left, with the blankets heaped over the mattress. He unfastened the back door, and they walked out to inspect the barn and stables in the rear.

"Hear about that robbery over to Cedarville night before last, Dan?" asked old Ransom.

"Yes," said Totten. "But not any details. Have they caught the fellow that did it?"

"No; and don't seem likely to. Poor old Lafe Parsons, the postmaster, is in bad shape. The robber tied him up tight, and then went off and left the door open. It was a cold night, and Lafe like to've froze to death, with his circulation all shut off by the straps on his wrists and ankles. They might have to amputate his hands. And he didn't get even a look at the fellow's face. Not that it would have done much good. Probably a stranger anyhow. I wish they could catch him, though. Twenty years in prison would be too easy a sentence for a skunk that'd do a thing like that."

"You're right. I hope so, too," mumbled Dan, in a successful effort to conceal his avid interest in the gossip.

They returned to the house, and Dan Totten put more wood on the fires. The stranger, Jones, warmed his hands and then turned about with a businesslike air.

"I like your place. You've got thirty acres of land, I understand. How'd two thousand dollars strike you as a price? Oh, I know it don't sound like much; but land's going begging around here. It's the house I really want. And that's my top figure. Take it or leave it."

Dan Totten made a pretense at

thought before replying. "I'll take it," he said firmly.

"Good!" Jones took out a legal form. "Here's an agreement. Read that over and sign it. It provides for a payment of one hundred dollars now to bind the bargain. And—I'd rather you wouldn't say anything about this until next week. I've been dickering with several others, you see; and half the township's at my heels. If you go spreading the news that I've bought your place, I'll deny it, and probably back out of my bargain, too. In that case, you'd be in a hundred dollars, and out a sale." He took from a billfold a hundred-dollar note. "Here's your money. I'll take the paper. And you'll see me again within a week. Good day."

Dan Totten closed the front door behind the men, and watched until they had driven off out of sight around the wooded knoll. Things were certainly coming his way. In a week, when Jones returned with the rest of the purchase money, he would have the best of excuses for clearing out—and plenty of money to take him to new and pleasant scenes. Why, two thousand dollars was more than the amount he had got from the post-office safe!

Thought of the loot reminded him that he must find a safer concealment for it. If the visitors this morning *had* come with the intent to search the house, it would have taken but little search to discover the slit mattress. It was quite possible that Jones might return to inspect his purchase almost any day. Meanwhile, Dan could add the hundred-dollar bill to the hoard, and take from it some bills of smaller denomination for his present needs.

He went upstairs and stooped over the mattress. The slit was easy to find; and, thrusting his hand into it, he drew out the fat rolls of bills.

As he straightened up, he suddenly became rigid, and a shiver passed down his spine. He sensed a presence in the room with him; and he dared not turn his head.

"Put 'em up—straight up!" commanded a crisp voice. "Don't turn your head or try any tricks. I warn you that handling dangerous crooks is my business; and my gun's pointed right for your middle!"

Dan Totten, standing with his hands in the air, felt the chill touch of steel about his wrists, heard the snap of the handcuffs. His captor then took Totten's weapon from the side pocket where he carried it.

"Now, I'll relieve you of that loot and let you sit down," he said pleasantly. Dan slumped to the edge of the bed and faced the man for the first time.

"Who are you?" he asked. "And—what do you mean by——"

"I thought my meaning was fairly clear," said the other. "Just a minute, though."

Without taking his eyes from his captive, he went to the window, opened it after considerable tugging owing to its being cemented down with frost, and fired three shots from his pistol. "My signal," he explained, "to Jones and his driver. They're waiting only a quarter of a mile away. Jones is the post-office inspector, you see. I'm from the secret service, myself. Name's Clagg. Jones sent for me to come here this morning on a hot tip."

"How did you——"

"Get in?" finished Clagg. "Easy. That's why they led you out to look at the barn. I was hiding in the house when the three of you returned. Jones isn't interested in real estate, of course. That hundred-dollar bill was *my* idea. A hundred-dollar bill is just about as negotiable in this part of the country as a confederate shinplaster. You'd be suspected the moment you tried to spend it—unless you had a perfectly good explanation of where you got it. And

Jones spiked that explanation by making the transaction secret. So we figured that you'd hurry right off to put it with your hidden loot, thus leading me to the loot—as you did. I see you hadn't taken time to hide it very effectively yet; but if you had, you'd probably have done the same thing. Let's see, now. This roll, minus one hundred, ought to total the exact amount that's missing from the Cedarville post office. If it does, we won't need any other evidence."

Dan Totten groaned. Through the open window, he heard the mocking sound of sleigh bells. They were returning to carry him off to jail. It was useless to pretend innocence now; they had him with the goods. In his black fancy, his manacled hands seemed as useless as the frozen hands of the old man he had ruthlessly robbed and exposed to the bitter weather.

"But what first set your mind in my direction?" he demanded, fuming. "Hang it, man, you weren't setting traps for everybody in the county! Especially on this side of the mountain."

"No," admitted Clagg. "That was a unique honor, bestowed only upon you. These post-office fellows aren't so dumb: Jones, and even the R. F. D. carrier. In fact, it was the carrier who really did the heavy thinking and furnished the clew.

"It's a dangerous thing to tamper with fact, my boy. It takes an expert—and there aren't any experts. You tampered with fact when you told the carrier yesterday that you'd been here all the previous night, trying to keep warm. *He* wasn't interested in where you'd been. But the remark stuck in his mind when he went out to his sleigh, and happened to look back."

"What's all that got to do with it?" asked Dan Totten.

"Plenty. Look back yourself when you go out to the sleigh. Look at the roof of this house, and at the barn roof too. You'll see the barn roof covered with a foot of snow; and you'll notice that this one is nearly clear, with the shingles showing through. It's heat that does it. There's heat in the house, but none in the barn. Yesterday, when the carrier was here, the house roof was just as thick with snow as the barn roof. There weren't even bare, melted spots around your two chimneys: places that your fires would easily melt off within two or three hours. Today your house roof is nearly clear, except for accumulations of slush on the overhang of the eaves—and the outdoor temperature is the same as yesterday. Yet you claimed that night before last you got up more than once to heap wood on your fires; while last night, judging from the embers this morning, your fires nearly went out. Do you blame the carrier for guessing that you lied—and wondering why? For guessing that you'd been here not more than an hour when he came? Just a little matter of ignorance or thoughtlessness on your part. And you brought up in the country, too!"

A STEAL FOR HEALTH

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "Unwanted Pardon," etc.

THE shrewd, young woman who presided at the outer desk in the Ratlein loan offices took the application in a half-hearted manner, with sharp, little upward glances. The tone of her questions dripped icily, and took the warmth out of the appealing argument John Brickman had summoned to the tip of his tongue. Lean, pallid, stoop-shouldered, he found the situation taken completely and unfeelingly from his grasp.

She was a wise young woman, impervious to special appeals. One man in search of a loan was like any other, to be weighed as to the prospects of repayment and not to be considered from the standpoint of his own necessities.

"I've never borrowed a cent before, here or anywhere else," John Brickman began, "but my family——"

Her voice sliced off the thread of his speech and left the loose end of it dangling helplessly.

"Name and address!"

It was not an inquiry. It was a demand. He gulped, and forgot all the pitiful details he had meant to emphasize. He told her his name and address. She never seemed to look above the top button of his vest, yet Brickman felt that, somehow, she was peering into his eyes, seeing his every thought as though it were a tangible object. Her businesslike head did not move, only her heavily spectacled eyes did, up and down between the application form and the point where John Brickman's pale necktie disappeared beneath the lapels of his vest.

"Age?"

Another drop of ice water!

"Forty-nine," Brickman told her.

"Married?"

"Yes, ma'am. Wife and four children."

"Employed by?"

"The Forest State Bank."

It was then that she looked up into his troubled eyes, not with especial interest but more with the air of one who deemed it a waste of time to proceed further. John Brickman was prepared for this. He had heard some one say that loan sharks did not like to do business with bank employees. Some bank in Forest City, a few years previously, being served by a loan broker with a notice of garnishment in connection with one of its bookkeepers, had taken up the matter of usurious interest. They had made it hot for the loan broker; had driven him out of the city, in fact. Bank employees and newspaper reporters were dangerous to loan brokers, or, at least, the brokers thought so.

John Brickman, being aware of this obstacle, made a valiant effort to hurdle it.

"Miss," he said, and the flatness of his voice was lost in the eagerness that drove him on, "it's like this. The bank won't know a thing about it. I know you don't like banks, but——"

Again her thin lips operated as a pair of scissors on John Brickman's speech.

"What makes you think we don't like banks?"

"Why—well, some one told me bankers give you trouble if you have to garnishee a man who works for one of them. But you see, in my case——"

"What position do you hold at the Forest State Bank?" The young woman was crispness itself.

"Clerk in the bond and mortgage department."

"Salary?"

"Three thousand a year."

"How much money do you wish to borrow?"

"Well, I was thinking—— You see, I've got a boy seventeen years old, in high school. He's my oldest boy, and the doctor says he'll die if——"

"What amount, please?"

She had a way of saying "please" which robbed the word of its courteous implication. It became, as she used it, an insistent demand for a specific statement on the part of John Brickman. But Brickman had an idea that a quick "good afternoon" would follow his request for five thousand dollars if he were not to have a chance first to submit an appeal and an argument.

"My wife's sick too," he said, "sick abed. And my little girl, she's seven. I was going to tell you what I need the money for, and how important it is that I pay it back, interest and all, without the bank knowing a thing about it. I'm afraid my little girl might get the same thing the boy's got. It's their lungs, miss, and the doctor says——"

"How much do you wish to borrow?"

John Brickman could not escape the finality of this.

"Five thousand dollars," he said.

She laid down the fountain pen with which she had been filling in the application form.

"I've got it figured," Brickman pressed on, "where I can pay back a thousand a year, and interest. No doubt about it, miss! I'm only forty-nine. I'm in fine health. It'll only take me five years—principal and interest. I didn't just come dashing up here. I've been thinking about it a long time, and know just what I can do. A thousand a year and interest. I don't drink. I'm a steady worker. I think maybe I'm going to get a raise the first of the year. I might be able to clean the whole thing up in four years. You see——"

"Do you own your home or do you pay rent?"

"We pay rent."

"Own a car?"

"No, ma'am."

"Collateral of any kind?"

"No, I haven't, miss. That is, I haven't just now. But if I could borrow five thousand here, I'd pay off the mortgage on my furniture, and then offer that——"

"How much is that mortgage?"

"Only two hundred dollars, and a little interest."

She had not even bothered to pick up the fountain pen.

"The largest salary loan we ever make," she announced, "is a thousand dollars. To borrow a thousand dollars, a man must have an income of five thousand a year."

"Yes, I know. A friend of mine said you had rules like that, but I thought—— Well, I've worked for the Forest State Bank nineteen years, miss. I've got to hold that job. If I don't pay my debts, I'll lose the job. We've got to send the boy and the little girl out West for a year, the doctor says, and my wife has got to have special treatment. Oh, I know I can pay the money back. I get a salary check the first of every month, and I'll come right up here as soon as the bank closes and make my payment—once a month. You can't lose!"

The pen remained on the desk.

"I cannot submit your application, Mr."—she looked at the form—"Brickman. It's a waste of time."

Brickman's lips tightened, then opened.

"Can I see Mr. Ratlein?" he asked.

"He is out of the city."

"Well," he begged, "you take my application, anyhow. I'll write a letter to file with it. I'll show you people that if you'll break your rules for me—why, I'll show you how I've got to pay off the loan! I won't borrow another cent for five years. I've never borrowed a penny on my salary. With the little mortgage on my furniture paid off, this'll be the only debt I've got. I'll lay aside so much of my salary every month to make my payments—a thousand a year and interest. You take my application. I can explain things in a letter. I'm not much of a talker, and——"

"It's against orders," she informed him, "for me to take an application whose terms are contrary to our rules."

And so ended John Brickman's negotiations in that quarter.

The bustle of Forest City's main street, the clamor of street cars, the noise of traffic, the stir of pedestrians were lost upon him. His mind was elsewhere. He walked—alone with his thoughts, and so pressing were they that the operation of clambering aboard a car, paying his fare, and taking a seat was more mechanical than it was conscious. He saw nothing of the streets through which the car passed; at least, nothing made any impression on him.

Yet he was smiling when he entered his own front door. He was practiced in this phase of domestic deception, of making his family think he was cheerful and confident when he was not. Of his four children, only two were well. To his wife's anxious questions that morning, he had replied vaguely that he had hopes of raising money during the day. Yes, he thought, he might be able to start the oldest son and the little girl on the Western trip within a few days.

The eyes of the family had for several days been turned westward, ever since the doctor issued his pronouncement regarding the oldest boy's lungs. The little girl, too, he had said. There were colonies out there where both would be received and treated. He could make the arrangements by telegraph, once John Brickman notified him he had the necessary money.

The boy was in bed, on a sleeping porch at the rear of the house. The

little girl was not so badly off, and was playing about the yard. The wife was in bed, and her condition, too, demanded special treatment, though that could be obtained in a hospital in Forest City. Yet no move could be made, and John Brickman felt like a man in chains.

He suffered fits of inward rage, brought on by realization of his own futility. When no member of his family looked at him, his face was dark and scowling.

He looked at the boy on the porch, talked with him a few moments, and again mentally mortgaged his soul if some unseen power would trade for it the miraculous, healing air of the West.

"It's only air they need," he said to himself, thinking of the boy and the girl. "Air—the cheapest thing in the world! And I can't get it for them. But," he added, walking toward his wife's room, "I will get it."

To her he said:

"Well, things look better, Mary. I had a talk to-day about a loan. Nothing definite. No promise, but it looks favorable! You see, Mary, my nineteen years with the Forest State Bank counts for something now. It isn't what a man makes that gets him credit. It's his attitude toward his debts. Well, I've always paid mine. Yes, yes, Mary, things look good. But borrowing money is a slow business. There's a lot of red tape to it. Don't fret at a day or two, Mary."

He knew that her restlessness included no thought of herself. He sat at the bedside, holding her hand, and thinking. And then, suddenly, the thought that he must get the money in any way he could came to him. It persisted and would not give him peace.

"As a last resort," he told himself. "Only as a last resort. Five thousand! Bonds! Five thousand! Then one at a time! Pay them back, one at a time. A hundred bonds, fifty dollars apiece. Negotiable, unregistered! Yes, they've got to be unregistered. I can buy them back, one at a time, and replace them."

These reflections were with him—eating and walking and working. They were with him when he awakened in the night. They frightened him. He studied his face in every mirror he encountered. A troubled, haggard face!

"But that doesn't show," he assured himself. "That thought, it doesn't show."

At the bank, his mind was now constantly in quest of a way, a safe and fool-proof way. Thousands and thousands of dollars in bonds were within reach of his fingers much of the time, but a brazen theft would only bring disaster. If five thousand dollars' worth of bonds should come up missing, and John Brickman made a big outlay of money within a few days thereafter——

He had exhausted every last possibility for the acquisition of five thousand dollars by any other means. The initial expenses of putting his wife on special treatment at the hospital and of getting his two children established in the West, with assurances of the best medical treatment, would run to well over four thousand.

John Brickman had not much time. Seeking an opportunity, he recognized it instantly. Similar chances had come every few day for years and years, but he had not thought of them. Now he did think.

John Brickman, sitting at his desk in the bond and mortgage department, on the mezzanine floor of the Forest State Bank, looked down upon the busy scene on the banking floor.

The entire bank was within his range of vision; the tellers and clerks inside the wicket, the corridors now comfortably filled with customers, big Matt McLaren, dressed in a gray uniform,

the bank's own policeman. Matt eyed every stranger who came in. He had a quick, shrewd gaze, a faculty of cataloguing men instantly. If one looked dangerous or the least bit furtive, as though he might have a "sour" check to pass or a gun to thrust into a teller's face, he got out from under Matt's surveillance only when he passed from the bank.

Matt had given more than one wink to a paying teller who was about to cash a check that appeared genuine. The delay thus brought about sometimes saved money for the bank and led to the capture of a crook. Not always, of course! Matt's judgment was not infallible, and honest transactions had sometimes been delayed because of his warning wink. The customer never knew the exact reason for the delay, as tellers have a way of postponing payment without seeming to imply distrust; yet an honest man can have no complaint against the precautions of a bank. Some of the strangers, however, turned out to be crooks, and it was these successes which atoned for Matt McLaren's mistakes.

He had come to be more than a policeman, a day watchman. He was a detective. He had achieved celebrity in Forest City some few months previously, and regular customers of the bank usually stopped for a word with Matt on their way in or out of the bank.

John Brickman's gaze fastened on Matt McLaren. A tint of envy colored his meditations, as he sat at his desk, watching.

"Now there's Matt McLaren," John Brickman ruminated. "He's been with this bank only about three years, and look what he's got. Close to ten thousand dollars in one bunch!"

Brickman was thinking of the rewards that had come to Matt McLaren, the biggest amount when he captured single-handed four holdup men who had dashed out of the bank after a stick-up at the paying teller's window. Matt had been wounded twice by pistol shots, but he wounded two of the bandits and held the other two under threat of his gun until the police arrived. Matt's wounds had healed, and he was back on the job. The holdup men were in the penitentiary.

Matt's rewards for that job totaled nearly ten thousand dollars. The bandits had been wanted in various cities, and numerous premiums were on their heads. The Forest State Bank made Matt a present of one thousand dollars. Identification of the robbers, with the news that Matt McLaren had captured them, brought in other rewards.

Matt had profited, too, by the occasional apprehension of an "inker"—forger, or a "lifter"—check raiser.

"It's all luck," John Brickman ruminated. "Put Matt at my desk here, and he couldn't earn his salt. But down there on the floor, just watching people, he picks up a fortune. And what's he got? Nothing but strength and nerve, and a quick eye. He can't add up a column of figures, but he can pick out a crook. Well, he ought to. He traveled with 'em once. He knows 'em—knows how they look when they're up to something. At that, Matt's a good scout, and I shouldn't be sitting here thinking unkind things about him."

Yet, Brickman could not help feeling envious, and disgruntled over the breaks of life. Matt McLaren had a small fortune tucked away, all earned since he entered the employ of the bank as a watchman. He had been a gangster, a pugilist—never a crook himself, but a man who lived in the seamy quarter of the city and rubbed elbows with crooks. None ever said that Matt McLaren was a crook, that he ever stole a penny. His crimes, in the days he ran with gangs in the slums, were confined to assault and battery. He had fought with the gangs for the sheer

love of fighting, but, approaching middle age, had given up drinking and fighting and gone in quest of a job.

The president of the Forest State Bank, who had sat at the ringside at several of Matt's professional pugilistic encounters and who admired his physical prowess, took him on as a watchman. Matt had a hard, fight-scarred countenance, and a big, powerful body. He was a formidable figure in the corridors of the bank, a compelling and admirable figure in the neat, gray uniform.

He had hung onto the job by the simple process of staying sober and paying attention to his duties. As time went on, he proved his value by the occasional apprehension of a crook.

"And I've been with this bank nineteen years," John Brickman continued meditatively. "Chained to this desk nineteen years. I've saved the bank money too, by catching mistakes in bond shipments. Caught a lot of mistakes in nineteen years, but the things I do for the bank don't stick out like Matt's work. He gets his name in the papers, and the rewards flow in. I don't do no shooting and I don't grab no crooks by the neck and hand 'em over to a policeman.

"Did this bank ever give me a reward? I should say not! I remember the time I recovered thirty thousand dollars in bonds, all wrapped up in another package and about to be shipped to the wrong place. Maybe they'd have come back and maybe they wouldn't. No one knows. But it was me who got the hunch that the bonds were addressed wrong, tucked in with another shipment. It was me who opened that package and took 'em out, and spoke to the cashier about it. He was so nervous with joy that he fairly yelled. He said, 'Thanks, Brickman, thanks! That's a fine piece of work. I won't forget this, Brickman. I won't!'"

John Brickman's lips tightened, and a hard look crept into his usually mild eyes.

"But he did forget it," he reflected. "Never mentioned it again. Never gave me a raise, nor any work that amounted to promotion. Now, if I had caught a holdup man stealing thirty thousand dollars from the bank, why, I'd have been a hero! Name in the papers, a big fat check presented to me in the presence of the bank staff, with a speech by the president, and all that stuff. But no! I rescued those bonds too quietly; mentioned it in a whisper to the cashier. And he thanked me in whispers. A fellow's got to make a noise if he wants to get on in this world."

His reflections broke off sharply. The opening he had been sparring for, for several days, dawned at that moment.

The incident that gave John Brickman his cue happened near the big front doors of the Forest State Bank. It was Monday morning.

Jeff Fisher, a skinny little man, who looked more like an unsuccessful book agent than he did like a brokerage messenger, stepped into the bank and began to talk to Matt McLaren. John Brickman knew what Jeff Fisher was after.

Bonds! Twenty-five thousand dollars' worth perhaps. Thirty thousand, thirty-five! None could say exactly until Jeff presented the written order of the brokerage house for which he worked.

But the amount would be large, and the makeup of the order of such character that six thousand dollars of it could be extracted with comparative safety.

Six thousand dollars' worth of bonds would net John Brickman around five thousand. In the shady quarter of the city, there were places where the bonds could be disposed of without questions. Gilt-edged securities like that were al-

most like so much cash. John Brickman had heard of a sleazy little pawnbroker who bought such bonds, bought them from holdup men and embezzlers.

John had been talking with Matt McLaren. He had talked, too, with a newspaper reporter of his acquaintance. Both liked to talk of criminals and their ways. Brickman had been very careful, getting his information in such way as to leave no hint he wanted it for his own use. He showed merely a normal curiosity in crime and the disposition of loot. Scores of respectable citizens, after Matt became celebrated in the city as a man uncommonly versed in the ways of the underworld, had asked him the same questions. Why, even the president of the bank had quizzed Matt for details as to how crooks worked, from the moment a theft was conceived to the get-away and sale of the loot.

Matt McLaren would never suspect that John Brickman himself had thievery in mind. John knew that buyers of stolen securities paid high for the kind of bonds he meant to filch, for there was a minimum of chance in handling them. Bonds of big-face values and registered brought little to the thief.

But Jeff Fisher, who was still talking to Matt McLaren, was after bonds of a small-face value and unregistered.

The brokerage house did a big business with such securities. It had a long list of clients in the wage-earning class, thrifty customers from the factories, who sent their women to buy bonds on Mondays, following the Saturday pay days. The brokerage house, buying bonds in large amounts, got them cheaper than individual buyers could, and sold them a shade cheaper than the banks could sell small lots.

The buyers were of a class which did not wish to be bothered by the intricacies of registration and reassignment if they sought a quick turnover. With six thousand dollars' worth of them in hand, John Brickman saw himself with at least five thousand in cash before the week was out.

One hundred and twenty bonds of fifty dollars each—six thousand dollars! One hundred and twenty pieces of paper, new, in compact bunches. He could carry them in his pockets, and properly scattered, there would be no telltale bulge.

In about an hour, he would go to lunch.

But Jeff Fisher, the brokerage messenger, was spending an unusually long time in conversation with Matt McLaren. They talked earnestly. Jeff, whose hat came about to Matt's collar, stood with his back to John Brickman's desk. Matt faced that part of the mezzanine floor occupied by Brickman. John could look down upon the pair.

Matt's eyes glowed under the peak of his policeman's cap. He gazed down into the upturned eyes of the undersized messenger. Jeff's hands performed gestures. He did most of the talking.

John Brickman was puzzled until he remembered that both Jeff and Matt were rabid baseball fans. The world series games were scheduled to begin two days hence. Matt and Jeff were inveterante bettors on sporting events. They often exchanged news as to where money could be put down to the best advantage.

"They're probably putting up dough on the games," Brickman concluded. "That's why they're so serious. Baseball nuts, both of 'em."

The cautious looks that Matt McLaren occasionally turned into the street, through the open doors of the bank, impressed John Brickman only as the habitual glances of a policeman on duty.

Jeff walked to the stairway leading to the mezzanine floor, and up. Brickman watched him lay a slip of paper

on the bond cashier's desk. The cashier at once turned it over to a vault clerk. Within a few minutes the order, in sealed bunches and each wrapper labeled, lay on a metal tray on a table just outside the vault.

The vault clerk came to John Brickman's desk and laid thereon the order slip brought to the bank by Jeff Fisher.

The moment was at hand, yet John Brickman's fingers did not tremble even a tiny bit as he picked up the slip. His knees were as firm as ever when he got up and walked across the room. There was no vision of himself as a thief in his mind—nothing but the haggard face of his son, and the gauntly bright eyes of his little girl. He saw his wife, too, on her bed of pain.

On that tray lay health for all three. Sour bitterness was in John Brickman's heart, for, wherever he had tried to borrow money, he had not only been rebuffed, but rebuffed in a way that stung. He was a man up against the extremity of his last recourse, and driven by the goad of family misfortune.

Now he was bending over the tray. The order slip lay beside it. He had a pencil in one hand. He had noticed, by the list, that the bonds would be exactly what he wanted—of small denominations, unregistered, and gilt-edged, worth to any man almost the full face value. Easily convertible into cash, and in the slums there were shady characters who would be glad to get their hands on them for the profit they could make between John Brickman's five thousand and the six thousand he meant to spirit away. No questions would be demanded. Brickman's name would not even be asked. None could say whether he was a holdup man or an embezzler, nor could they say that the bonds came from any bank in Forest City.

The bank would not advertise the theft. The bank would be unable to say when it was committed. None except John Brickman knew how cleverly he had planned this.

From his lowered eyes, John Brickman stole a furtive look over the parts of the department visible to him. He saw only the backs of a clerk and a bookkeeper. The other desks were out of sight from the vault and the table at which Brickman worked, he being in an alcove.

The time was ripe. He had mentally selected the packets he meant to swipe from the tray.

There was a drawer in the table. John Brickman's alibi was in the drawer, put there just before the close of business Saturday afternoon. The alibi consisted of a dozen packets looking exactly like many of the packets on the tray. From the bank he had taken pieces of the thin, tough, wrapping paper used on parcels of bonds, as well as a variety of the printed binders, containing descriptions of standard bonds in which the bank dealt, as well as labeled amounts. He saw that he would need only six of the dozen packets he had prepared, but he had fortified himself with more in order to make a wise selection and to cover up adequately at the moment of the theft.

He unlocked the drawer and slid into it the six packets of bonds he meant to steal.

Then he put in their place on the tray six packets which had reposed in the drawer since Saturday evening. These contained blank pieces of paper, cut to the size of the bonds. The binders on them seemed to show that the packets contained bonds of a different description, but of the same face value, than the packets he had removed from the tray.

The drawer was locked now, and the key in his pocket. Brickman, the order slip in one hand, raised a scowling face. He barked:

"Benny!"

Benny was the vault clerk. He came hurrying.

"You've got this order twisted." John Brickman told him.

Benny had made mistakes before. He was young and anxious to make good on the job. His manner was apologetic as he bent over the table.

"See here," Brickman pointed out, still grouchy, and proceeded to show Benny where he had apparently put six packets onto the tray, whose descriptions did not fit the order.

It was unusual for John Brickman to be grouchy. To all office boys and under clerks he was known as a good guy, amiable, gently spoken, patient with their mistakes.

"I'm awful sorry, Mr. Brickman," Benny said. "I was careful about that order too. If Mr. Barnes finds this out——"

"He won't find it out, Benny," Brickman assured him in a softer tone. "Say nothing about it, and I won't, only watch yourself, Benny. Barnes won't stand for many mistakes in bond orders, but we'll let this one slide."

"Thanks, Mr. Brickman. Gee! I'm glad you found it, instead of Mr. Thorley. He'd go right to Mr. Barnes."

"All right, all right, Benny! You skip along. I'll fix it up."

"Thanks—thanks, Mr. Brickman!"

So John Brickman took the six packets of blank paper and went into the vault. He traded them for six packets of bonds bearing labels identical with the worthless bundles and each stamped "$1000." The latter he put on the tray. The packages containing blank paper had been arranged with the other bonds so that they would not be reached for several weeks, in the ordinary course of business, and then only one or two at a time.

The substitutions might be discovered in some distant city, to which the bank often made shipments. Who could say where the theft was committed, in the bank or along the line somewhere.

John Brickman had in the locked drawer of the table, just outside the vault, six thousand dollars' worth of bonds.

No one but Benny, the vault clerk, knew he had been in the vault, and Benny could be depended on not to say anything about it. If anything came up a few weeks hence, and Benny was questioned, John Brickman could say, if Benny related the incident, that the bonds he took back into the vault were of some other kind than actually they were. Benny would handle thousands of packages of bonds meanwhile. Details would soon slip from his mind.

At noon, John Brickman took the bonds home. He concealed them in the basement. After the bank closed in the afternoon, he took home the six extra packages of blank paper with which he had provided himself in case he needed them.

Before burning these, he opened the packets, to be sure that he had made no mistake and got the bonds mixed with the subterfuges in the drawer. He made no mistake. He burned the packages of blank paper, and looked into the packages of bonds.

There they were, in the basement of his home—and good for five thousand dollars in cash.

Yet, that evening, he lacked the spirit to go into the shady quarter of the city, as he had planned, and make arrangements for the conversion into money. He put it off.

At his desk next morning, John Brickman saw much more clearly than he had at any time since his troubles descended upon him. He had slept little.

"Much better to lose the family," he reflected, "than to save it like this. Much better that we should all sink."

He forced himself to look his fellow workers in the eye.

About ten o'clock, he assured himself that he would go home at noon, recover the stolen bonds, and with them replace the spurious packets he had planted in the vault. This might be difficult, of course, for it would be necessary for him to formulate another excuse to go into the vault. But he would manage it somehow.

"There must be a way," he kept saying to himself, "to get what I need honestly. Why, even if the boy and the little girl came back in fine health, I'd never be able to look 'em in the eye again."

At that moment he was not thinking of discovery and the penalties and disgrace incident thereto. He thought of himself only as a thief under cover, forced to live a lie all the remainder of his days. Conscience, stifled, thrust back, while the crime was under way, was asserting itself now.

Sight of Matt McLaren, the bank's policeman, talking with a plain-clothes man whom Brickman knew by sight did not alarm him. His theft could not possibly have been discovered, nor even suspected.

"I always thought that thieves worried about arrest," he ruminated. "It ought to ease my mind to think I've got the bonds and covered things up so cleverly. But I can't ease my mind without putting those bonds back."

There was no element of terror in his reflections.

Yet that came very quickly, at quarter past ten, to be exact.

The bond cashier came to John Brickman's desk.

"We've just got a big order," he said. "It will clean us up, or just about, on the fifties and hundreds. Get some one to work with you, and hustle it out."

That meant, very soon, the discovery of the theft. It was a local order, to be delivered to the brokerage house for which Jeff Fisher worked. They were probably making a big out-of-town shipment, yet every package of bonds would be opened in the brokerage house, and the contents checked before the shipment was assembled for reconsignment.

The packets containing the blank pieces of paper would be opened.

Benny, the vault clerk, would be questioned at once. What had happened yesterday would be fresh in his mind. Everything would come down with a crash. Benny would remember the labels.

John Brickman thought of things he had never thought of before. Friends of his could say that he was sorely pressed for money, that he had been trying for two or three weeks to borrow five thousand dollars.

He could not go home until noon. Working with another clerk, as he was now, he could not slip the stolen bonds back into place and remove the dummy packets, even if he had had the plunder on his person.

In just a short time, every package of fifty-dollar bonds and hundred-dollar bonds in the bank would be on the way to the brokerage house. They were being handed out to him by the other clerk. A bookkeeper sat at the table, right under John Brickman's nose, checking the packets.

He had no chance to spirit the phony packets out of the mass that came to him from the vault. Indeed, not seeing the clerk inside removing them, he could not identify the false bundles among the real.

The clerk's voice inside droned his descriptions. John Brickman's voice droned too as he repeated them, and so did the bookkeeper's as he spoke after them. Each word and each spoken figure was a note in the dirge that sang in John Brickman's soul.

Because of what Benny could say,

suspicion would point its finger at John Brickman almost at once. He would probably be taken to police headquarters and pumped for hours. He did not think he would be able to bear up.

Disgrace would fall on the Brickman family very soon now, and crush it with a heavier weight than illness could ever do.

But John Brickman was caught in a vise. The life was being slowly squeezed out of him by the pressure of circumstances that compelled him to go through with his appointed duty, and thus speed the moment of disaster.

Presently, the consignment of bonds was ready. It was carried out of the bank by two men sent by the brokerage house. This was too big an order for little Jeff Fisher to handle. There was probably a guarded car outside ready to receive the bonds, maybe an armored car.

John Brickman sat down at his desk, to await the crash.

A few seconds later he saw Matt McLaren, in civilian clothes, leave the bank by a side door.

"That's funny," Brickman thought. "I never knew him to take off his uniform during banking hours. Thought he didn't eat lunch till three o'clock. Wonder if they're using him as a guard for that bond shipment?"

But there was nothing that John Brickman could do but wait. He estimated that the bonds would arrive at the brokerage house within the next twenty minutes. Opening the packets and checking probably would start at once, since it was a hurry-up order. Discovery would come any moment thereafter, depending on when the first dummy package was encountered.

"They'll probably telephone the bank," John Brickman thought. "They'll hustle through the shipment, after they find the first fake bundle. They'll soon have the news—six bundles of blank paper. Six thousand dollars lifted. I wonder how my face will look when they ask me the first question?"

And then, a few moments later, startling news came into the bank and spread like wildfire. It was spreading over the city, too, to the music of gunfire and pursuit.

The automobile transporting the bonds had been held up.

It was a successful holdup, too, one of those daring jobs in a crowded street that makes every one ask, "How in the world could they do it?"

But the holdup men, traveling in another car, with confederates probably in other cars around them, had done it. The bandits fired no shots. Pursuers fired, but so far as known, hit no one.

The bond shipment was in the hands of bandits. Bandits, and not the brokerage house and the bank, would come across those six packages of blank paper. They would swear a little perhaps, with the loot cut short six thousand dollars, but their swearing and their discomfiture could not harm John Brickman.

Nothing could harm John Brickman now, not even recovery of the bonds. Would not every one think the thieves had started to substitute blank paper for the bonds in the packets, for some mysterious reason of their own? If the whole consignment was recovered, who could say that the thieves had not quickly got away with six thousand dollars of the loot—passed that much to a confederate in another car?

John Brickman was safe. Disaster had been miraculously whisked from above his head.

He had six thousand dollars in negotiable bonds in the basement of his home. The evidence of his crime was wiped out.

Yet, amid the excitement and commotion in the bank, John Brickman's lean body sagged in his chair. His hands lay helplessly in his lap.

News kept filtering into the bank. Pursuers had not caught the bandits. All sight of them had been lost. None of the loot had been recovered.

Brickman saw very clearly now. The upheaval in his soul had quieted down. Somehow, he knew just what had happened inside him. Out of the welter of fright and remorse, that had torn at his nerves since he hid the stolen bonds in his basement, came one clear thought. His mind was no longer a turmoil of surmises and doubts. His head nodded briskly, as he got up to join a knot of bank employees talking about the holdup.

"It makes my job all the harder," he muttered, "but I'll do it!"

The clerks in the bond and mortgage department were asked not to take the usual time for lunch; merely to dodge out to the nearest restaurant, eat as quickly as possible, and return. The police would want several lists of the stolen bonds. Work should be started on them at once.

John Brickman did not have time to go home that noon.

Suspects in the bond robbery had been taken into custody, but not one packet of the loot had been recovered.

Matt McLaren returned to the bank about two o'clock and donned his policeman's uniform, after a talk with the cashier. Matt had been one of the guards in the car that was held up, but was unable to do anything toward saving the bonds. He had joined in the pursuit.

"I've been ordered not to talk about it," he said to every one in the bank who asked him about the holdup.

John Brickman, sitting at his desk and thinking of what he meant to do after the doors of the bank were closed at three, studied Matt McLaren.

"I think I'll talk it over with Matt first," he decided. "He knows thieves, and maybe he can give me some advice. I'd like to talk with some one. Matt's always been friendly with me."

He went down to the banking floor, and said to Matt:

"I'd like to have a talk with you at three o'clock, Matt. Can you come up to my desk?"

"I can't talk about the holdup, Mr. Brickman," Matt replied; "to no one."

"I know that. I want to talk about something else just as important. I've got a surprise for you."

"I'll be up and see you," Matt promised.

Matt changed into his civilian clothes as soon as the bank closed. Employees began to drift out soon thereafter, though there were others who would work until four or half past. At John Brickman's desk, there was chance for private conversation.

"Matt," John Brickman said, "I stole six thousand dollars in bonds yesterday."

Matt stared at him in amazement, and looked around cautiously, as though some one else should discover, too, that John Brickman had gone insane.

"It's no joke, Matt, and I'm in my right mind. Listen!"

He told Matt McLaren the story to its last detail—motives, the way he did the job, everything.

"And I'm going to return those bonds to the bank," Brickman confided. "I can't see my way to do it without confessing, but they've got to be returned. I can't drop them in the vault and say we missed them when we were making up the shipment. The other clerk will know better, the bookkeeper too, and the men that checked the bonds while putting them in the grips. And I've got to take the blame for it, Matt. If I just dropped them in the vault, every one who works around here would be suspected."

This was true. It would be evident that some one's conscience got the bet-

ter of him. Every one who had a chance to steal from the vault would be under suspicion indefinitely.

"Where're the bonds at?" Matt inquired.

"In the basement of my home."

"Could I go up there and get 'em?"

"Why—well, yes, you could, but——"

"I got a scheme," Matt announced.

John Brickman took hope. He told Matt exactly where the bonds were, at the bottom of an old trunk filled with discarded hooks and junk. Brickman had the key to the trunk. He could give Matt a note to some one at his house.

"You stay here, wait for me here," Matt instructed. "I'll go get them bonds, and come back. Got work to do that's maybe an excuse for staying after every one else goes?"

"Yes, I can fix that."

Matt went down to the banking floor. Brickman saw him enter the cashier's private office, but he knew that Matt had probably been called in there to answer more questions about the holdup. He saw a teller take into the cashier's office a large sum of money, having got it just before the downstairs vault was closed.

Then Brickman saw Matt McLaren go out.

Matt was back in less than two hours. There was no one in the bank now but the night watchman and John Brickman. The watchman let Matt in.

"I couldn't find them bonds," Matt said.

"You couldn't—— What's that, Matt?"

"I couldn't find no bonds in that trunk. If you ain't kidding me, Mr. Brickman, you better go home and search that cellar o' yourn. Darned if there's any bonds anywhere in that trunk!"

"Why—why, there are too! In a wooden box, at the bottom of the trunk. I left them there. No one—no one saw me——"

"Well, you better go find 'em."

John Brickman tore out of the bank, and home.

With a haggard face, he lifted the lid of the trunk, and dropped to his knees. He could see that the junk in it had been disturbed since he last looked into it, but that, of course, could have been done by Matt McLaren, who had been there a short time earlier. He dug down to the bottom and hauled out the box.

He opened it. The box was empty except for a long envelope addressed to himself, in the crude hand he knew as Matt McLaren's. It was a bulky envelope. John Brickman ripped it open.

There were six pieces of paper in the envelope. One was a folded sheet of letter paper covered with writing.

The other five were alike—five thousand-dollar bills.

Matt's letter ran:

Take a tip from me. Don't never try stealing. There's them that can do it and them that can't. You are a fellow that can't, which is why I am loaning you this five thousand dollars. You can pay me from your salary. I got plenty of money and it don't make so much difference if I don't get this back for ten years. I would sooner trust you than lots of fellows who give their note and put up security. You proved that when you give the bonds back after you found there was no evidence against you.

Now listen to me, only don't say nothing at the bank in the morning if the news ain't public yet. It will be public if they catch the gang and the kingpin of it as they aim to do. That mob did not get the bonds. They got packages of blank paper marked like bonds. Only a few at the bank know it. The bonds was taken off your floor in the elevator down to the basement and put in the safe in the safety-deposit department. I helped handle them and the bundles of blank paper.

We dumped the bonds out and threw the other bundles in the grips. It will be easy for me to say I found some packages of bonds that must of got away from me in

the hurry, and I will say maybe there's some bundles of blank paper among the bonds. Leave it to me! I will fix it, and they trust me. They will believe any lie that I say. That holdup was framed after Jeff Fisher found fellows following him. The brokers and the bank and the police fixed it for news of a big bond shipment to get scattered around and they pulled the shipment as bait, laying for a gang the police been after a long time.

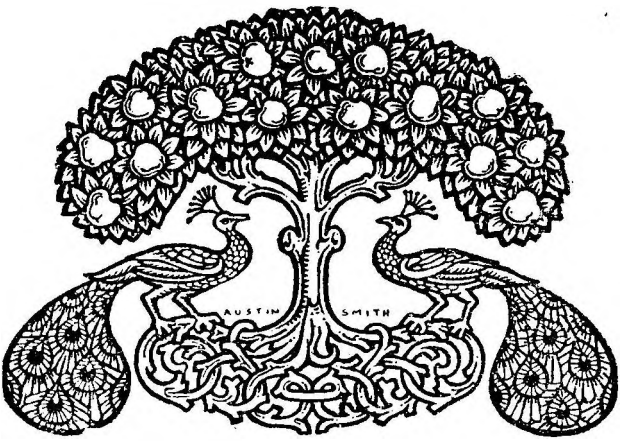
They let them pull the holdup so as the gang would lead them to the kingpin of the mob. They maybe will get him before the night is over, as there will be an awful mix-up and maybe some fights in that gang when they come across the blank paper in them bundles.

Detectives are watching the house where the gang is at, waiting for the leader to show up. They will get him, and there will be a big reward for me and Jeff Fisher. We give the tip to the bank and the brokers, and the police framed up the holdup. I guess I can afford to lend five thousand dollars, which is like putting it in a bank to loan it to a fellow who wants to give back something he stole after there ain't no chance of him getting found out.

I hope your kids and wife get well.

John Brickman, sobbing and laughing hysterically, ran upstairs to his family. In one hand he held the torn bits of Matt McLaren's letter, with the other he waved the five one-thousand-dollar bills.

"I must call the doctor!" he cried. "I've got it—got the five thousand, and now you'll all get well!"



A NEW KIND OF SPITE FENCE

FOR many years there have been neighbors who did not agree about one thing and another, and sometimes to settle a dispute, one of them has built at the edge of his or her property, a high, board fence. At times this fence serves to hide the unpleasant figure of Mrs. Smith from the still more unpleasant—it depends upon which side of the fence you are on—face of Mrs. Jones. Often, it only serves to darken the windows of Mrs. Smith's dining room, while it shuts out the street view from Mrs. Jones' ever active eye. In almost all cases, both neighbors suffer equally by what is generally termed as a "spite fence."

Mrs. Hester Clemens, of Aurora, Illinois, had her neighbor, Mr. Gray, arrested, recently, because she maintained that the fence which separated their property had been electrified by Mr. Gray, and when Mrs. Clemens came near the fence it held her fast. The fence was originally erected when Mr. Gray's drain pipe spilled some water over into Mrs. Clemens' yard.

When the plaintiff was unable to recall the date of the electrical display in which she was the unwilling victim, the case was dismissed.

A BRAVE COWARD

By Leslie Gordon Barnard

Author of "Green Depths," etc.

HIS mother was coming across the green level of the plateau when the shot crashed from the bush. Blaine had watched her progress lazily without interest, sitting on the cabin steps, chin in hand, noting the movement of her scarlet dress against the vivid green. She always wore red; it was a silly thing to do, but then who would think of making a target of a woman?

Blaine was watching the gathering storm rather than the home-coming of his mother across the meadow. Thunderstorms possessed for him a horrid fascination, aroused in him a terror nothing else could. Then he forgot all about the storm. A sharp crack jarred the clear, hushed atmosphere. Upon the vivid green of the meadow lay a patch of red, motionless.

He left the cabin step on which he had been sitting, and ran. There was no one in sight to help him; he almost expected another shot, directed at himself, but scorned to be afraid of that. Singularly, none came. In the tense, uneasy silence that preceded the storm, he carried his mother to the white-washed cabin, and to her bed. Shortly afterward, the storm broke. It came eddying up, black as the death that was reaching out to take his mother.

When the boy wanted to go out for help, she would not let him go the necessary miles for a doctor; "Be dead, lad, before you got halfway. Stay with me now!" she said. Once, when he went outside for more water from the well, the ominous look of the storm rooted him for unnecessary moments. Against the stark, white cabin, the hollyhocks she'd planted stood stiff and defiant before its threat; but there was frightened sibilance among the smaller plants and flowers. The hollyhocks were like his mother.

"Bring me the Book!" she bade him as he entered the room again. He was surprised, almost startled. Boy as he was still, and not much versed in life, he knew his mother for a woman with

a code of her own, but not what you'd call religious. If he himself knew of this Book, it was no fault of hers. Cal Maybee's wife—a gaunt, unfathomable woman whom he called "aunt" by courtesy—had brought it to the house, a Christmas gift; there it had long lain in state; only when his mother was out did Blaine, half-shamedly, touch it.

"Bring it!" said the woman again, imperiously. He obeyed. "Swear!" ordered the woman. "Jim Diller shot your brother; your paw he shot Jim; Jim's eldest, Clem, he swore to get back at us, and he's been seen hereabouts, hangin' round the last few days. Now he's shot me. 'Tain't honorable, that—shootin' a woman; it ain't held with even among the Dillers. You got to shoot Clem. Take the Book and swear!"

The boy hesitated.

"Make haste, son! I can hear death a-sweepin' up!"

"It's the storm, maw!"

"It's the death-angel's wings. Your father, he heard them. Make haste. Say: "I swear——"

"I swear——"

"By my honor and the holy Book in my hand——"

He quavered it; his mouth dry, his tongue cleaving.

"To avenge my maw's death by the death of Clem Diller—speak up, boy—as a sacred trust and oath, if I have to foller him to the end of the world, and the end of my life, so help me God. Now kiss the Book!"

He obeyed.

"Don't look so queer about it," she said. "It's right there in the Book; a life for a life." Her voice drifted off. He returned the black-covered, gold-lettered volume to the table. He stood for a moment, fingering it; turning the pages. Cal Maybee's wife had underlined in red certain passages; they stood out always as you flipped over the pages; before one of them now the boy halted; doubly girt about with red, and pierced by a red arrow, it challenged him, bringing slow but awed comprehension.

"Maw!"

No answer!

"Maw, it says here:

> Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst——

And now his voice stopped, or was lost in a sweeping, torrential rain, a shaking wind that caught the cabin and played with it. The boy put down the Book with a little cry of fear; the sweeping, rushing sound became for him the envisioned angel of death. He ran, and caught his mother's hand. She was dead. Instinct told him that, after one look at her face.

He threw himself upon the bed at her feet. Overhead swept the storm, carrying her, as it seemed, away from him. It lasted an hour; after that, came utter peace. Late sunlight reflected from behind a peaceful ring of hills; earth and sky were clean washed and tranquil; a shimmering evening quiet pervaded. But by the cabin the smaller plants were beaten into the ground, and even the hollyhocks were bowed into the mud.

A man went by, driving furiously, so that the sound of it in the evening stillness sent the crouching, defeated boy out to look. The man turned once, and waved in derision. Blaine could not see his features, nor would he have known them had he done so; but he was certain it was Clem Diller. The boy darted into the house, and was out in an instant with an old rifle, but the man and rig had rounded the turn and vanished.

Only the clear tranquillity remained, and the broken, beaten flowers of his

mother's planting. Blaine sat there on the low step beside them, brooding, until darkness blotted out the distant hills, the familiar fields, the drooping, broken flowers, and himself, still there on the step, clutching the rifle to him.

He was glad when some one at the funeral told him Clem had taken a hasty and complete departure. Then he fell to despising himself for being such a weakling. His father used to say that the boy, Blaine, took after the only queer one in the family line. That was a couple of generations back: his grandfather's cousin. It comforted Blaine's father to reflect that, even if the fellow bore the family name, he was not in the direct line. He was some kind of a preacher johnnie, too. Used to go about telling people it wasn't right to kill, even in war—that love was a more effective weapon.

Blaine's father laughed in derision when he told that part. "Didn't work out for him anyways," said Blaine's father with proud logic. "One o' the Diller clan met him one day. Picked a quarrel. 'Takes two to make a quarrel,' says the queer un, smilin'. 'Then you won't fight,' says Diller, nasty as you please. 'Not in your way,' says the queer un, still smilin', and Diller figures he means it uncomplimentary, and roars at him to draw his gun, or be shot like a dog.

"Well, the queer un never toted no gun anyway, so he just stood there smilin', and they said when he fell, he was still smilin'. That's a story-tellin' end to it," said Blaine's father, "but he was dumb fool enough for it to be true!"

At the funeral of his mother, Blaine kept thinking of the queer un. He'd always held a sneaking regard for the man; sometimes, when the vendetta spirit was at its height, in the earlier days, when Blaine was just a child, and men of Blaine's blood swore great oaths about their desire against those of the Diller blood, Blaine seemed conscious of the queer un's presence. It was almost as if he'd been there in the flesh, and when this happened, the great oaths and ambitions seemed very hollow things. Then Blaine would creep away, ashamed at himself for being thus untrue to what was undoubtedly the greatest thing in his own blood and line.

Cal Maybee's wife took charge of most of the funeral arrangements. When it was all over, and the last carriage had driven away, she came out and sat with the boy on the steps. Near them the hollyhocks, lifting themselves from the mud of the storm of three days back, flamed again against the cabin wall.

"You've heard the talk goin' round," said the woman presently. "Are you goin' to listen to it, sonny?"

"About what?" he hedged uncomfortably.

"I guess you know right enough. They say now you'll be killing Clem Diller. Of course, 'tain't necessarily so. There's a law in the land; it'll tend to him."

It was not a prating woman who would tell any of Blaine's blood and line what was what; so Blaine fought against his deeper convictions, to say, after the code of his father's: "Law don't count with us!"

"It ain't all these years," said Carl Maybee's wife, "because your people or the Dillers have had a say who'd get elected to look after the law hereabouts; and the nearest any came to the rope was the Diller who did for the queer un, and that wasn't near enough by half. It's been a tradition of the countryside to let your families fight it out, and hush up things when some one got killed. But I hear there's a new sheriff takin' over. I reckon they aim to clear these parts up."

Midafternoon light drenched the

garden Blaine's mother had planted, and that already appeared neglected. Like a bee that went in and out among the hollyhock faces, so flitted Blaine's mind, now to the garden and its needs and its memories, and then to the dark issues under discussion. Finally, he said: "The law never got anywhere; it never proved anything!" He said it with a fierce pride, perhaps because the garden was of his mother's planting, and family pride and feeling were stirred and revived.

"It never had nothing to go on," declared the woman. "Everybody knew who shot who, but nobody could ever prove it. You got to prove a murder against a person. Nobody'd speak, neither, if they did know anything. Nobody ever seen any of the shots actually fired, except the once; nobody ever used a rifle that could be traced. That's part of the tradition on both sides." The boy stared at her, a little startled; there was exultation in her voice, and he recognized it.

The countryside was proud of its local feud. A sane, staid countryside, remote but law-abiding in the main—except for this! They might talk and fume against it, and they did; but secretly they were proud of it. It lent color, glamour—a real pioneering touch! An incredible feud—the kind of thing you read about in books! And to think that all the authority and ingenuity of the law could bring no one to account!

The boy and Cal Maybee's wife faced each other.

"You've got it, too!" said Blaine at last, almost bitterly. "You got the same look the others had. You'd say it if you dared, like some of them did, no matter if you did put red ink in the Book! Right here at the funeral some of 'em said it—that Clem Diller's the last on his side, and I'm the last on mine, and whoever wins——" He broke off, and stood, arms folded, gazing at the distant hills. The woman was silent, too, her eyes shrewdly upon him. He stood there, a sun-drenched, upright stripling—the last of his line.

The woman began speaking presently. Her voice, when it came, reminded Blaine startlingly of his mother's.

"It's true. What you say's true. I've fought against it. I've tried to fight against it. But it's in the blood. You've called me 'aunt,' Blaine, but maybe you never knew there was real blood of yours in me. I'm of your stock, Blaine." She looked away; then back. "Are you aimin' to get even with Clem Diller, Blaine?"

"I swore so to maw!" said Blaine dully. "I reckon maybe——"

"You swore on the Book?"

"Maw made me!"

"It's an oath, and it'll hold you," said Cal Maybee's wife. "I just wanted to find out, Blaine. You never knew, sonny, I'm in the line of your granddaddy's cousin, him as they called the queer un?" A grim line held her mouth. "I've always figured there must be some of him in me—a likin' for scriptur' and all. But I guess it didn't bite deep, somehow. I thought it did, Blaine; I've mouthed a lot of it in my day, but it come to me at your maw's funeral, Blaine, that the queer un's blood's purty faint in me. I take more after your dad." She stood up to go. "I reckon it's up to you to keep the tradition, sonny. If I can help, let me know."

He saw her striding off then, in the golden light; watched her until she became a speck on the road, and disappeared. The hot haze danced before his eyes. His mental balance, having been thrown askew by the woman, he felt shaky physically also. Nausea attacked him, whether due to fear, excitement, or some more subtle and dangerous thing he did not know.

He'd counted on Cal Maybee's wife, whose gift book, with passages ringed

in red, had forced themselves upon him the night his mother died. She had fought, she said, and lost. Now she had no compunctions about killing or anything; she had abandoned herself to family pride and traditions of blood. And she had, more than Blaine, the strain of the queer un in her—the one who of all the line alone had fought it out another way.

If Cal Maybee's wife had lost out to this fever to slay, who was Blaine that he should win? For here in the garden of his mother's planting, when he thought of Clem, the tender light that quivered about the neglected flowers became a red mist of hate, washing in dizzy, curious waves, fantastically, over the garden, and splashing the purity of the whitewashed cabin wall.

Blaine sat until the shadows grew long upon the grass, and the color deepened and then retreated from about the place. Beyond the distant hills, across the green plateau now graying with night, amethyst clouds marched in stately procession. They were great thunderheads, presently to change from amethyst to sulphur yellow, but that prophecy at present escaped the boy. He was lost in their beauty.

And there again Blaine had kinship with the queer un; Blaine's father used to warn him:

"If you don't everlastin'ly watch sharp with your fancies, you'll go queer like him. I mind the times he come to visit us after your maw and me was married and located here: set on the step, he would, communin' with natur', and a good hot meal sizzlin' on the table inside to be communed with. My, how he uster make your maw mad, and her puttin' herself out to set a good table, and spread herself with the cookin'. Watch your fancies, Blaine! Nature's well enough, I guess, but she's sure got to be kep' in her place!"

He practiced what he preached, did Blaine's father. A stranger stopping one day for a drink in passing, remarked on the marvelous view from the step. Blaine's father nodded unenthusiastically, then his eyes glowed with sudden complete pride. "But, say," he offered, "if you want to see something real purty, come and I'll show you what I got behind the barn." Later, Blaine's father made comment to his family: "Blame fool! He don't know a good litter when he sees one!"

On that occasion, Blaine rose from the table and went out. He was actually hurt in his soul. In the stately lift of the hills, in the shallow cup of the valley, full at evening with purple wine, there was balm for his hurt. He was only a child at the time; as most children have unseen comrades and playfellows—imagination born—so Blaine conjured up and made real the shadowy figure of the queer un. He used to fancy, as a child, that the elderly figure came and shared with him the inmost secrets of his soul.

As he became a man, he put this from him more and more; never could he quite escape from it. And to-night, watching the panoply of evening, a sense of eternal spaciousness came to him. Suddenly, as if photographed on the amazing background of sky and mountain, he saw again the strange drama of the queer un's death.

Blaine stood up.

He couldn't kill. Let the law see to Clem Diller. He hoped fervently the law would get him—the killer of a woman! A quivering shock ran through Blaine; a sudden revulsion. Shame on him not to be, even now, hot after his mother's murderer! A woman killer! Slayer of his mother!

But, for the moment, clear vision followed and prevailed; so clear it seemed indecent in its penetrating

power. A woman, yes, and his mother—but she was part, after all, of a feud. He could hear her right now: "Swear! Jim Diller shot your brother; your paw he shot Jim; Jim's eldest, Clem, he swore to get back, and he's shot me. You got to shoot Clem. Take the Book and swear!" That grim, harshly defiant voice—no softness even in death—bidding him swear to kill.

But he had sworn a sacred, unforgettable oath to do it. No escaping that!

There was one straw to which, in these moments of torment, of alternate passion and clear vision, he desperately clung. How could he seek out and kill a man whose very features were unknown to him? Once, in the early days, his father had pointed him out in a crowd, but no identifying remembrance remained; Clem Diller had been elsewhere in the intervening years. There seemed small hope of finding a man of unknown countenance in the city to which he had fled. He could get a description easily enough; that might help. But no; he would go to the city, and if he chanced across the man, he'd take it as a sign!

A distant rumble brought to Blaine for the first time—though ordinarily he was acutely sensitive to such portents—the prophecy of coming storm. His old, childish horror of thunderstorms was intensified now by memories of the night his mother died—just three days back.

Already dust was blowing up the road, in curving, pirouetting swirls. The end of the road, that is where it ended from sight at the curve, was hung with a dusty veil. This veil, as he watched, seemed to part, revealing a hastily driven rig; he recognized the familiar action of Cal Maybee's white mare. Cal Maybee's wife was driving; ordinarily she drove hard, but now she swung into the clearing at an unusual pace. The mare was lathered with sweat. The woman herself resembled a Valkyrie.

She leaned forward, as she drew the animal up on its haunches, pointing at Blaine with the whip, still clutched so tightly that the bones of her hand looked fleshless.

"Blaine, I got news for you!"

Her eyes were two spots of feverish light. He had never seen her so upset. Quietly, he waited for her to get her breath; inside, he was cherishing a hope that he might persuade her to stay and rest until the storm passed. He didn't want to be alone with the storm to-night.

"I came back to ask: did you ever see Clem Diller?"

He started; shook his head.

"I reckoned not," she said shrewdly. "I figured you'd not likely seen him since he's been away all these years and only come back to murder your maw!" He shrank at her words, her tone excoriated him. "Well, I guess you'd better get to know your man. You can't miss him, Blaine. Tall, lean kind he is. You'll know that much, I reckon, from seein' him when you was little. Well, his hair's black as a crow. But the thing you can't miss, Blaine, is the scar on his face. Pinkish-white scar, from mouth to ear!"

Her face, pushed forward under an ancient and bedraggled hat with stiff, ridiculous feathers, leered at him. Thunder crashed through the hills; the mare moved nervously.

"You got that, hey? Pinkish-white scar from mouth to ear, left-hand side facin' him. That makes it his right side. And, Blaine——"

Thunder drowned her words. She motioned him nearer, shrilled into his ear:

"It's all a bluff, his leavin' for the city. He took the train right enough, but he dropped off goin' through the bush where the grade's heavy. He

dropped off, and I reckon he's a good man for you to shoot on sight! I reckon, Blaine, he aims to finish you off before he moves on. If you don't get him, he'll get you, and the Dillers'll win the game right enough.

"I'd watch for him, and shoot on sight, if I was you! And there's the swamp back of your bush!" She peered into the boy's face. "Remember, son, he's a blackguard—shootin' a defenseless woman—murderin' your poor maw!" She nodded decisively, clucked to the mare; called back shrilly once: "Pinkish-white scar; you can't miss!" She halted the uneasy mare again. "And, Blaine, it's all your game if you play it right and quick. He ain't never seen you near to hand, any mor'n you him; so you remember the pinkish-white scar, and shoot quick!"

The dust from the wheels lifted in swirls as she swung the rig about, with a scraping of wheels, and urged the mare into a quick, decisive trot.

The boy remained nervously on the cabin step, watching the approaching storm. The ordinary mellow dusk that, by this time, should be filling the shallow valley and covering the plateau of meadow land, was replaced to-night by a saffron glow that, by its very presence, delayed the coming of darkness. It had a muffling quality like the rising of dust in a brickyard; in time, Blaine looked upon a sulphurous sea swirling within the confines of the ringing mountains, beating up against them, to his awed fancy, and washing back. So, he knew from experience, would the storm itself be caught and held in the hills, and beat itself in fury over the plateau and the valley.

Few habitations ordinarily were in sight, but now what few there were had been blotted out; their lights—lit against nightfall—unable to pierce the murky atmosphere. In the curious, dim light the cabin stood out in stark ghostliness, the hollyhocks rising defiantly against it. He was reminded vividly of the night when his mother had heard the wings of the death angel sweeping to take her.

How like his mother Cal Maybee's wife had become; to Blaine she was possessed of a new personality since his mother's death; the mantle of the dead taken over by the living. "Pinkish-white scar, and shoot quick!" The threat of storm could not keep his mind from that. Sometimes, as the yellowish dust bore down in swirls upon the cabin, he fancied it embodied the woman, like a witch, chanting that strain. "I reckon he aims to finish you off." She said that, too; her look as she said it, lifting from him to the road, was one of almost immediate expectancy.

Blaine rose to his feet. It would be self-defense then to shoot, wouldn't it? And his oath to his mother would be made good. Fear, heightened by the approaching storm, now called out in him every instinct of self-preservation. Going in, he fetched a rifle, and saw that it was loaded and ready. After that he returned to the step, and sat there, tensely, as if expecting the dust clouds to embody the enemy who sought his life.

The sulphurous sea was turning darker now, its increasing blackness shot through with electrical flashes; the lightning drawing nearer filled the valley with a bluish terror. For a moment or two the glare was withheld, the dust clouds died, the storm hovered. Then, in an instant, it sprang upon the valley; with it came blinding sheets of rain. In that same instant Blaine was struck with a new, but not unexpected, fear. Something was coming along the road in the lurid light; a rig driven furiously.

Few rigs came by this lonely back road, unless the cabin was their goal.

It would be like a Diller to drive up thus upon a lonely boy, in a solitary place, and do his deed. But the storm now occupied the boy's attention. Rifle in hand, he sprang inside the door for shelter and, by the exertion of every ounce of strength was able to close it against the cyclonic fury of the gale.

The cabin rocked with the tempest; was lighted to its most intimate corners by the continuous flashes; repelled with its steep-pitched roof, a deluge of descending water. Blaine crouched on the old horsehair sofa, abandoning himself to, but ashamed of, his sensitiveness to this elemental terror; forgetting, as if he had never seen it, the furiously driven rig on the highroad.

The storm swept by, or, for the moment, was measurably subdued; it would come back, Blaine knew, as storms always did in this valley ringed about with hills. The comparative quiet brought little relief; the elements played with the valley like a cat with a mouse. They would pounce again. In the lull, Blaine fancied he could hear the accelerated thudding of his heart. And then he poised, quivering with a new apprehension, or a revived one. Some one was knocking at the door.

He caught up his rifle.

The knocking sounded again; an odd, uncertain rapping. He stood clutching his weapon, his teeth bared a little. If it was one of the impetuous Diller blood, why didn't he thrust open the unlocked door? Perhaps, he was waiting, too; the one who did the opening of the door would be at a disadvantage. The thunder was distant now, the lightning intermittent; near-by sounds—the drip of water, the slight stir of wet leaves—were accentuated.

Blaine remained silent, on guard, but the knocking was not renewed. He glanced apprehensively at the unshuttered windows; Clem might have crept around to any one of them; even now death might be peering at him from an unknown quarter.

Blaine determined to open the door. Making sure of his rifle, he took three cautious steps on tiptoe to the door, lifted the latch, swung it open, and leaped back quickly into a defensive attitude.

Silence and darkness greeted him. And then a flash of lightning revealed a crumpled figure on the muddy pathway just below the step. Blaine, fearing treachery, shook this figure cautiously, then more boldly. It was inert, unresponsive. After that he fetched a lantern.

Closer inspection revealed a man of middle years, of more than average height, inclined to gauntness. His face was caked with mud and crimson smeared, his clothes freshly crimson stained, in spite of the cleansing deluge. Blaine, accustomed to the accidents and incidents of rough-and-ready existence, saw that the cuts about the head and face were minor; but from the wrist a red stream spurted alarmingly from a deep gash.

Instinctively, with practiced hands, Blaine twisted a rough but effective tourniquet—the colored handkerchief from his own neck, tightened with a stick of rain-soaked wood. A little more bleeding like that and the man would be dead! Curiously, this need of immediate and practical action had thrust other considerations into the background.

But now he realized that, all the while, his heart had been beating quickly with nervous excitement and foreboding. He contemplated lifting the wounded stranger into the house, but one attempt convinced him of the tremendous nature of the task for a boy of slight physique. Instead, his heart fluttering noticeably, he hurried in and returned with a pan of water

and a clean cloth. Equipped thus, he commenced to bathe the man's face.

Blaine, afraid of himself now, of something vaguely ugly that was growing within him, forced himself to work dispassionately, starting at the forehead. This ministration for the moment roused the victim; the boy, leaning close could distinguish the words: "Horse—frightened; storm—ran away!" Consciousness lapsed again. Blaine, thinking it queer that his enemy, murder bent, should suddenly fall into an accident that would throw him for help upon his contemplated victim, hastened to acquaint himself with a certain fact. He dipped the cloth in the pan, wrung it out, and, with shaking hands, washed the caked mud from the right cheek.

It did not require the lantern that he held close to reveal the sign. The electrical heavens had already lent light sufficient to disclose to the kneeling boy a scar, pinkish-white from mouth to ear.

His hands shaking with excitement, Blaine took the lantern presently and plowed through the mud to the gate. The path was always more of a watercourse than a footway in times of heavy rain. He thought: "No marks will show here. His are already washed away!" He reached the gate and the high road.

Here, the soil was more sandy; the lantern disclosed wheel marks; they had passed the gate, swaying, biting deep into the roadway as the vehicle raced along. Following these tracks, he stood transfixed. The wreckage was not ten yards away. A wheel had caught against a tree trunk and been wrenched off; the rig had collapsed in the ditch three yards farther; the marks in the soil showed that the horse had broken loose with effort, and galloped on.

At this point, Blaine hastily put out his lantern, and the action made him, potentially, a murderer. His plans were vague, but certain in their intention. It wouldn't do for any one to see his lantern hovering about here. The atmosphere was clearer now; he must be careful. Clem Diller must die here alone on the road, by accident!

Murder! Was it murder? Rather, surely, a just retribution for his mother's death; besides, his own safety depended on it—and his own. If the law caught Clem Diller, it would do away with him. Bleeding to death was much easier than—than the rope. Besides, the law might fail again to establish proof!

It would be so easy! Undo that tourniquet, that was all! He was already unconscious; a few minutes probably would complete it. They would find him in the morning by the wreckage, where Blaine would place him. Blaine would know nothing about it; better that way, because nasty questions might be asked. As for the crimson stains, the gentle rain now falling, and that was coming on more heavily every minute, would soon wash them away, and every mark would vanish from the flooded path.

If he took the fellow in and tended him, and later turned him over to the authorities—with no real proof against him—people would laugh. It would become a standing joke; in after years, it would become almost legendary; it'd be like the case of the queer un; like the tale of the man who died smiling.

Blaine slowly retraced his steps. Scraps of the Scripture, that had fastened themselves uncannily upon him on the night of his mother's death, returned to haunt him: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," saith the Lord. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst——"

Vengeance! Blaine choked over that. Then vengeance must be a right

thing, if God himself were vengeful! Perhaps, this accident itself was God's vengeance on a wicked man! Then Blaine shouldn't interfere. He should let the man die. But his brain refused to stop there; it raced on. He was not analytical, not given to theory, and theology he knew nothing about; but the very simplicity of his mind lent vision. If God told men to feed their enemies, to give them drink, to repay good with evil—and God was better, and higher, and more kind than men were——

He lifted his face, fevered with the complexity of emotions, to the cooling rain. Above, the heavens were a glory of changing, shifting light; the lightning was not near enough now to frighten him, and there was only beauty in the skies—a startling, eerie beauty. A spacious beauty! Light ran behind the hills, and threw them up in dark, pine-tipped splendor. As always, a sense of spaciousness brought remembrance, and subtle kinship with the queer un.

And suddenly there came to mind a story they told of him. He'd been a schoolmaster once, the queer un had, beloved of most his scholars, disliked only by an intractable three, who, playing a mean, low trick upon him, were brought to book by their incensed schoolmates.

And there was the schoolmaster on the scene, taking it in. "That's my affair!" said the queer un. "I'll attend to them. I'll do whatever's necessary!" And he took the offenders inside. The others waited outside the schoolhouse windows. No sounds of punishment came. But, when the intractable trio came out, they were crying. The others asked: "Did he beat you?" "No!" "Did he expel you?" "No!" "What did he do then?" They wouldn't say.

But, when the schoolmaster came out, there were tears in his eyes, too. One of the boys in the yard had perception to see the thing, and whispered in awe: "He wept with them!" Queer! Perhaps God was like that. He said in effect: "Leave vengeance to me. I will repay. I will do whatever is necessary!" And, when He did, perhaps He wept with them. A spacious thing, like the ringing circle of the hills lit up with running fire! A breaking thing—too big to comprehend—though a simple boy might stumble close to it!

Blaine stood motionless, quivering, but the vision died.

Thunder rumbled ominously again; the wind whispered, running through the forest with a sigh, and touching the hollyhocks against his mother's wall.

"Oh, God, help me!" implored the boy.

Blaine said that because these other things—the queer un and ideas about God—were far away, or so it seemed to him. And Clem Diller was very near. The man lay there in the mud, unconscious still, and his state should have roused reluctant pity in the boy. But, instead, something ugly grew in him as he regarded his enemy; the spaciousness of the heavens was reduced by racing clouds, flying low over the earth.

Any coolness that had come with the first sweep of storm had lost itself again in a dull, portentous stickiness. These other things were fine-spun theories, momentary inspirations, but here was the man who had shot Blaine's mother in cold, deliberate murder, and now sought Blaine's life as well. Here was the man who had fled derisively by on the day of the murder.

Scarcely conscious of his own sodden garments and bedraggled state, Blaine leaned over the still figure with a bitter decisiveness. His fingers touched the wet band of the tourni-

quet; felt the wooden strip he had adjusted for securing pressure. He turned this twice, unloosing the bandage—hesitated and then continued.

At each flash of lightning, increasing now in nearness and vividness, he halted; in the succeeding spaces of darkness, he went about his work. Blood spurted out upon his clothes. He started up, frightened. What a fool, not to have been more careful! And what a greater fool to untwist the thing here. He should have hauled the body to the road first, and set it beside the wreckage as he had planned.

The body! He shivered at the word. He couldn't bring himself to touch it again. The lightning played more fiercely; he retreated from the grisly, dying thing on the doorstep. But he must, Blaine knew, get it to the scene of the accident. He forced himself to kneel again, hastily endeavoring to renew the tourniquet, temporarily.

A blinding light and quickly following crash that shook the ground, stunned him; earth and sky were luminous with an awful glare; Blaine left his task barely started. Leaping over the prostrate figure, he plunged into the refuge of the doorway, shivering, shaking with an utter terror.

A bolt must have struck not far away; its nearness, coupled with the grisly business he was in the midst of, completely unnerved him. The storm had leaped again upon the valley. Not leaped, this time, so much as swept up, he could hear it now, as if the blinding light had been a signal. Crouching there, he fancied he could hear his mother's voice again:

"Make haste, son. I can hear death a-sweepin' up!"

"It's the storm, maw!" He almost repeated that aloud, too.

In reality, his sensitive imagination was stirred to poetic terror again; the death angel was sweeping up the valley—for Clem Diller! It would not enter the cabin to-night; it would call for him just at the door.

He crouched there, aghast, conscious now not of the lightning, but only of that sweeping progress; the wind and torrent rushing across the shallow valley; he could measure its progress by the sound—in the farther trees, across the plateau, the nearer bush—beating now, at last, against the door.

Blaine cried aloud; an inarticulate expression of utter horror. He couldn't stand it. He leaped to the door, closed against the tempest; the latch once lifted, the wind snatched the hinged wooden thing from his hand, and the storm rushed in upon him.

Beating into the downpour, head down, he lifted the sodden figure, praying dumbly that it might not be dead; struggled incredibly with its weight; achieved the horsehair couch with his load; twisted a fresh tourniquet; then stood, sobbing and breathless, wiping the crimson stains from his coat with his hands, forgetting even to close the door.

He knelt presently beside the couch of his enemy, listening with thankfulness to the sounds of continuing life, bending low beside the scarred cheek to pick these reassuring signs of life from the continuous thunder of the storm.

When again he went outside, the stars were shining; the storm had definitely passed. Presently, the stars were dimmed by the rising moon that lifted above the eastern hills and flooded the valley with a tranquil light. Blaine set lamps alight within the cabin, satisfied himself as to the progress of his guest, put coffee on the stove to boil, and returned outside.

As before, the night had been grotesque with tumult, so now it was full of a peaceful witchery. Sensitive to one as to the other, the boy stood gazing across the valley, deeply stirred.

Before long it would be dawn; people would get to know about this and dub him a fool. Cal Maybee's wife, who had ringed that Scripture around in red, but with whom Scripture didn't "bite deep," would be bitterly derisive. They would call him another queer un—to take in a man who had killed his mother, and come to kill him; to take him in, and care for him, and give him coffee before the law came to take him away.

Already dawn threatened to supersede the moonlight. Blaine went in and completed the making of the strong coffee; the man on the couch opened his eyes unwillingly when offered the liquid, but managed to swallow a little and was apparently grateful.

Blaine remained with him no longer than necessary. He didn't feel just safe—to stay in there—with the man who had shot his mother. He might again be tempted.

Instead, he sat in his usual place on the cabin step, watching the growing dawn. Already, the first birds were twittering when a rig came along the road; its gig lamps, sparks of light in the lessening gloom. It halted at the wreckage, then came on, turning in at the gate. Blaine knew it for Cal Maybee's rig; he was glad it was the farmer himself and not the wife who occupied the seat.

Cal Maybee was a great hulk of a man, ordinarily silent, of few words, but more practical and matter-of-fact in his philosophy of existence than his morose countenance and apparent preoccupation would indicate. He drew up, as Blaine went forward. Blaine saw that the man's eyes were grim, tragic, but with a curious resignation.

"Bad storm!" Cal Maybee said bluntly. "Purty bad over here, too, I guess?"

"Pretty bad!" assented Blaine.

Cal Maybee nodded.

"Struck our chimney," he said. "Missus was settin' there by the hearth; got her arm and side—internal, too, I guess. Just fetched the doctor over, and he says she's goin' to pass on. Better so!" muttered Cal Maybee, rubbing his chin. "Forty year I've lived with that woman, and I don't know her to-day as well's when I met her, courtin'. Angel or devil—or somewhere midway between—you never know which. Nice thing, boy"—he eyed Blaine pathetically—"blame nice thing for your wife to end up a murderer, eh?"

Blaine blenched at the word.

"It's your family blood in her," declared Cal Maybee uncompromisingly. "It's as well you should know. She was afraid maybe you'd not finish off the last of the Dillers—so she done it herself. Happened on the fact that he got off the train again, so she trailed him, and shot him. I'd a thought more of her," said the man moodily, "if she hadn't got panicky then, and lost her wits.

"She got scairt over what she'd done; and when she got wind of it that the new sheriff was hep to the whole business, it turned her properly sour. Seems he was on the train Clem Diller left goin' upgrade, and had his suspicions and dropped off quietlike, too; only my missus she treed Clem first, with the sheriff chap hard by. She seen the sheriff and he seen her, but she got away, knowin' the bush well. She kep' track of him until she knew he'd got a rig, and was nosing up the road, stoppin' at every farmhouse, to ask questions and look around. Course no one'd give her away, but she knew he'd get her in time."

Cal Maybee shifted his quid. Then he said slowly:

"Angel or devil—you never know which. I've tried to figger it out from what she's told me since she got shocked that way. Seems she got it.

into her head she'd shot Clem to help you out, and now it was your turn to take a hand. She figgered if you'd just put the sheriff out of the way, it'd be a handy thing all round.

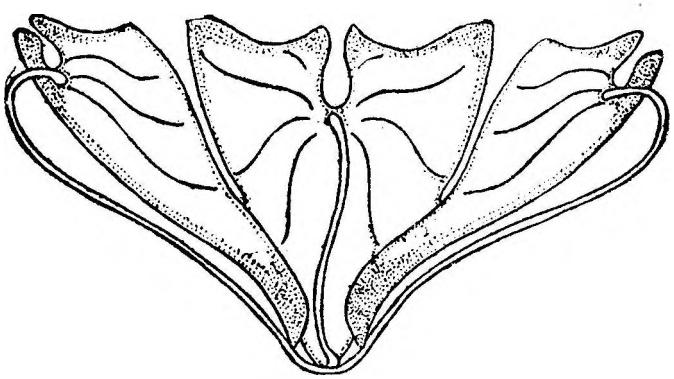
"Figgered if she would get you to the point of shootin' him, you'd have sense enough to use the swamp back o' the bush there to hide the evidence. And nobody'd ever be able to prove nothin', same as usual. They'd suspicion lots, but there'd be no proof. And it'd make people hereabouts kind o' proud of the last of your family, Blaine!"

Now he was eying Blaine queerly, but he said, quite coolly:

"That's as far as I could get it out of the old lady, when she got all het up and excited. 'You git right over to Blaine,' she told me, 'you git right over there and tell him that Clem Diller never had no scar; it's the new sheriff has! You git right over there, and tell him that,' she says. So I come along. That's all, Blaine. It don't signify much to me, but she was bound I'd tell you quick off. Well, must be gettin' back. Looks like somebody'd had a smash-up on the road last night, hey?"

He was eying Blaine shrewdly again, in his looming, near-sighted way. Blaine glanced down at the crimson stains on his sodden clothing. His voice wouldn't come at first; then he managed it.

"Yes," he gulped. "A pretty bad accident it might have been. The new sheriff, it was. On his way up the road here, I guess, and the storm frightened his horse, close by. I—I reckon I saved his life."



TOO MANY ALIENS IN U. S. ILLEGALLY

HARRY E. HULL, commissioner general of immigration said recently that from 1,000,000 to 3,000,000 aliens have entered this country illegally and that they could be deported if apprehended.

However, he went on to say that some aliens who have entered the country illegally have become responsible people of the community and that some hold public offices.

He hopes Congress will legalize the presence of those responsible people who entered prior to adoption of Quota Law of 1921.

Mr. Hull points out especially that there are many aliens in prisons and insane asylums who have entered here illegally.

Furthermore, he advises that the wife of an immigrant, who is legally under the quota be allowed to join her husband.

SINISTER HALLS

By Edgar Wallace

Author of "Heard by the Burglar," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

DICK STAINES, detective of Scotland Yard, enters Walter Derrick's house one night and finds the caretaker bound on the floor, and a girl searching his pockets. The girl is Mary Dane, the nurse with whom Tommy Weald is infatuated. The girl and her accomplice escape.

On the beer glass is found a thumb print which seems to be the same as the one found on the barrel of a certain pistol which, some years ago, shot and killed a cashier in Slough.

Jack Brown meets Dick Staines and tells him that Mary Dane looks exactly like a girl, a Miss de Villiers, he had met in Capetown. He also tells Dick that he knows Derrick because he met him in Pakasaka, when Derrick's leg had been bitten by a lion.

Derrick tells Dick that Brown is an enemy and probably wants money.

Again there is a disturbance in Derrick's house. When Dick investigates he finds that Jack Brown is dead. Superintendent Bourke asserts that Jack Brown was killed by the same hand that killed the Slough cashier. When Derrick's home is broken into again, the guilty ones tear the house apart, apparently searching for something very important.

In the meantime, Mary Dane confesses that she loves Dick.

Dick tells Mary that he is sure that she has a double; also that she is mixed up with the crowd that has been searching Derrick's house. Dick discovers that Derrick's father married a Miss Belfer and that Derrick doesn't know about it.

Mary enlightens Dick that the murderer of the Slough cashier was Herman Lavinski.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BOSS

DICK was on the telephone to the record office at Scotland Yard within half an hour. If Mary Dane was fooling him—well, she had done her work well. But he had a feeling that, when she gave the name of Herman Lavinski, she was in deadly earnest.

He gave the office time to look up their data and then he called London again.

"No, sir, he's never been through our hands, but we had him on supplementary list A some years ago."

"Supplementary list A" was that in which were tabulated foreign wrongdoers who were expected to be in the country.

"Read his description," he ordered,

and, when this was done: "No finger prints?"

"No, sir. He may have had a conviction abroad. I will put through an inquiry to Paris. I'm not so sure they keep finger prints."

Dick wasn't sure either.

This fact was patent, there was a man called Lavinski, and the description that had been read to him tallied with that ten-year-old description that had been handed down to the archives of Scotland Yard. It was no invention of Mary Dane's; he would have been surprised if it had been.

It always gave him a pang to see Tommy and the girl together, and he rejoined them on the beach with no great pleasure. Mr. Cornfort was asleep. He saw the unshaven chairman sitting on a public bench, smoking a clay pipe and at peace with the world.

"What is the name of that beast of burden of yours?"

"If you mean our chairman, you're being very disrespectful," she said severely. "His name is Henry."

"Does he ever speak?"

"He has been known to ask for his dinner," she said. And then: "Mr. Staines, I want you to talk to Tommy. He's being difficult."

Tommy was sulky, sitting cross-legged like a naughty boy and throwing all the stones within his reach toward the incoming sea.

"I really don't think that we want to discuss the matter, Mary," he said testily. "I mean to say, it's perfectly private between you and me."

"But it isn't perfectly private between you and me," she said. "It's perfectly public at least, you wanted to make it so."

He rose with dignity.

"I'm going back to town," he said.

She drew off the little emerald circlet from her finger.

"Take this with you."

He wilted under the implied threat.

"Don't be perfectly ghastly," he said. "Put it on, put it on!" Then suddenly he bent down and seized her hand. I told you that ring didn't fit you. I'll have it tightened up to-morrow, old lady."

"Don't call me 'old lady,' Tommy," she said wearily. "You know, you make me feel all curls and crinolines."

Tommy looked at his watch rather importantly. He had risen from the depth of gloom to the height of confidence in the course of a minute.

"I'll dash up to the hotel. You won't come to dinner?"

"I'm dining with Mr. Staines," she said.

Tommy winced at that.

"Oh, well, all right." He went away making incoherent noises.

"What's the trouble?" asked Dick.

"Tommy wants to be affectionate; I don't think he ever had a mother's care. And, by the way, you needn't dress to-night. Mr. Cornfort is sleeping, and he expressed a desire to go out in the evening after dark. You shall join the caravan with me."

They talked idly and aimlessly. Dick mentioned casually that he had seen Walter Derrick's car at Lewes.

"Do you like him?" she asked.

"Yes, I do, rather. Don't you?"

"I'm rather prejudiced. You see, I haven't forgotten my narrow escape."

"You didn't go on as if it were a narrow escape. I thought you were the coolest person I had ever met."

"That was sheer swank, I think. Yes, I was terrified. Ever so much more frightened than when poor Jack Brown discovered in me his mortal enemy. You've inquired about Lavinski, of course?"

He nodded.

"Well?" she asked. "Is there any such person?"

He nodded again.

"Are you surprised?"

"I should have been surprised if there

wasn't," he said, "after you had told me."

She laughed softly.

"That implies a very touching faith in me! Do you like the idea of my marrying Tommy?"

He drew a long breath.

"I think it's horrible. Not that Tommy isn't a very good fellow," he said guardedly, "but——"

"Why is it horrible?" She looked at him, so intently that he almost forgot that he sat there in view of thousands of children and nursemaids, mothers and fathers, to say nothing of itinerant photographers.

"Because I love you."

It didn't sound like his voice speaking that. She did not move her eyes from his; they were very searching, eager eyes. He had seen pain in them, and that made them surely more precious.

"When did you discover this—at Victoria? Have I provoked you into this declaration?"

He shook his head.

"I think I loved you at Brighton, and realized it in Lowndes Square. I really don't know why I love you at all."

The ghost of a smile trembled on her lips.

"It sounds rather a sententious thing to say, but does anybody know why anybody loves anybody?"

"I don't know why I love you," he repeated doggedly, "especially as I'm full of suspicion about you. Even now I can't get rid of it. There's no other woman in the world like you. I know your eyes, your mouth, I know every line of you. I saw you in Derrick's house last night—in the hands of a masked man who was trying to strangle you. I've been looking for the bruises all the day."

"Have you?"

And then she did a surprising thing. She wet the tip of her finger and brought it down her neck, and under his eyes there came into view a blue, oval bruise.

"Like that?" she asked.

He was incapable of reply.

She took a little gold box from her bag, opened it, looked in the mirrored lid, smoothed a pad down her throat; when it had passed, the bruise had disappeared.

"I saw you looking," She was half smiling, very serious. "You were peeking at my throat when you met me this afternoon."

"Then it was you?" he asked in a low voice.

She nodded.

"Yes, it was I."

He could only shake his head helplessly.

"For heaven's sake, why? Yet it couldn't have been you. Tommy was with you all yesterday evening."

She touched his hand—that little petting trick of hers that she had. How sweet it was!

"You're the most impossible man, Dick Staines," she said. "Having proved that I was being slowly strangled to death, that I was the wicked housebreaker, you are now trying to prove an alibi. Now I'll show you the greatest trick of all."

Again she took out her little box, again brought the bruise into view. Then she wet the corner of her handkerchief with the tip of her tongue and drew it across her throat, and lo the bruise had disappeared.

"Now are you satisfied?"

"But—hut——" he stammered.

"There isn't a bruise," she said, "but I hated to disappoint you. I thought I'd make a dramatic revelation of it at tea. It occurred to me this morning that you would expect to see it and my ingenious mind got to work. I first painted the bruise and then I covered it up with a special kind of damp powder. What else would you like me to do? I'm full of tricks to-day!"

He reached out and took her hand.

"I should like to marry you," he said simply.

She looked away.

"I wonder." Then, with a sigh, she got up. "Come along. I'm going to change again. Life's one darned dress after another! Dinner at half past seven, and don't keep me waiting in the vestibule, or I shall be terribly dignified and distant!"

After she had gone, he climbed up to Beachy Head and stood for so long admiring the view that he almost qualified for her displeasure. He had five minutes to tidy himself; she was waiting for him in the hotel lounge, asborbed in an evening newspaper. He saw the page she was reading and was surprised.

"Are you interested in the stock markets?"

She looked up quickly and threw down the paper.

"Yes, a little," she said. "I have some African stocks that jump up and down; they afford a little excitement in life. They're constantly jumping up and down. At the moment they're down."

"I didn't know you were a rich woman."

"I wouldn't call myself rich. I have ten or twenty thousand pounds."

He was taken aback.

"I'm sorry. Did that hurt your feelings?" she asked.

"Why on earth are you a nurse?"

"I love my profession," she said solemnly. "No, seriously, I used to be terribly keen on it. I was the youngest qualified nurse in my hospital. Then I got rather tired of it, and daddy wanted me at home."

"Have you a daddy?" He apologized for the crudity of the question, but it was unnecessary.

"Of course I have, and a very clever daddy."

She did not speak of him again. Always she returned banteringly to what she called the haunted house.

"I'd love to know what you think about it all," she said. "Tommy says you're bright, and that's the highest praise Tommy gives to anybody!"

He wished she wouldn't drag Tommy into the conversation. He was not quite sure how he and Tommy would meet that evening. If he were in Tommy's place, he thought he would be rather annoyed. He tried to bring the conversation to her wedding. She sidetracked his effort with consummate skill, and when he returned again by a vague reference to wedding presents, she said:

"I wish you wouldn't talk about it. I'm not marrying Tommy. How could I?"

"But surely——"

Between her emphatic announcement and his sense of loyalty to his absent friend he made an unconvincing showing.

"Is it really fair to Tommy to let him think——"

"I wish you wouldn't discuss Tommy," she said. "Just leave it! You've no idea how things work out: nature and Providence and fate perform miracles."

"But Tommy ought to be told; one can't make a fool of him."

Her voice changed.

"I shall not make a fool of Tommy. You're very rude to suggest that I should. At the right time I shall explain things, and Tommy will be just as happy and more."

After dinner she left him, telling him where they were to meet, halfway down the sea front, near the road. Mr. Cornfort did not like going on the actual front: he was a very nervous man, besides which he attracted a lot of attention; and he was a very sensitive man: he didn't like the noise that the bands made because he was a very weary man.

Tommy was waiting near the band stand when Dick came up, and apparently he was in his usually amiable mood.

"Wonderful girl, isn't she, Dicky?" he said enthusiastically. "Such strength of mind and character, old boy! Took no notice of my tantrum. Off she went to dinner with my best pal and left me flat. Would any other girl do that?"

Would any other fiancé stand it? thought Dick.

"I like character in a woman," Tommy went on, "though there are times when Mary shows just a little bit too much of it. We've had our little tiffs, old boy—lovers' quarrels and all that sort of thing." He dusted his knees complacently. "But she's always given in or I have. The point is, one of us usually 'fesses up that I'm in the wrong. I might say it's always me who's in the wrong, but we take it in turns to admit it."

"Why on earth did you tell her about that vacuum pump?"

Tommy opened his blue eyes wide.

"Did I, old boy? I don't see why I shouldn't."

"But who told you?"

"My butler told me, and I suppose Larkin told him. And who told Larkin? You!" He pointed an accusing finger, and Dick was so staggered at having the war carried into his own country that he did not protest.

"She's marvelous," Tommy went on. "She's knitting me a tie with my old school colors."

Tommy was an old Etonian: it was the only thing he had ever done in life, and he liked to tell the world about it through the medium of his neckwear.

"And sew, my boy! She showed me some work the other night that you couldn't buy in a shop."

His rhapsody was interrupted by the arrival of the inseparable three: Henry tugged at the handle, and kept up a regular, if funereal, pace; Mary walked by the side and a little behind the yellow chair; and Mr. Cornfort alternately dozed and stared. They followed the path that runs parallel a few feet from the road. It was getting quite dark, for, though the night was warm, it was cloudy.

But it was very pleasant walking at her side, talking for the main part nonsense, hearing her low, sweet laughter. They were nearing the end of the long green strip which separates the beach from the road. Here pedestrians were few.

"I think we'll turn, Henry," said Mary.

The bath chair came round at a leisurely pace. Henry was bending to the pull when, from nowhere, appeared a small car, coming toward them at a furious pace: a black car with dim lamps; there was just enough light to distinguish its shape and make.

"He's taking a risk, on the wrong side of the road."

The driver's face was hidden behind monstrous motoring goggles. As Dick was speaking, he slowed. Then the detective saw his hand come up and shoot forward. Something hurtled through the air, some black, swirling body that Dick with a thrill of horror instantly recognized. He leaped forward and up, fielded the missile, and, spinning round, with one motion he flung the thing into the sea.

"What——" began Mary.

Just before the object touched water, there was a terrific explosion. Something whizzed past with an angry burr; from behind them came the smash of breaking glass.

And then a surprising thing happened. Henry, the bent chairman, straightened himself. Dick saw his hand stiffen upward. There was a staccato rattle of shots, and the car swerved dangerously, almost capsizing as it turned, and fled down a side road at an increasing pace.

"I think I got him!" said Henry in a very calm and gentle voice.

There was commotion enough on the beach; people were running; a mounted

policeman came flying along toward them; Dick saw another policeman sprinting in their direction.

"What's the trouble?" What was that explosion?"

"A man threw a bomb from a car," Dick explained quickly. He said nothing about Henry's strange behavior.

"I thought I heard pistol shots, too. Which way did he go?"

They pointed up the road where the car had vanished, and the mounted man went galloping after him.

In a few minutes, they were the center of a large crowd. It was typical of Mr. Cornfort that he only opened his eyes to note the fact that he was an object of interest, and then fell into a deep sleep.

The first sergeant of police who arrived, Dick took on one side and revealed his profession.

"It's a surprising thing, inspector. You're sure it wasn't a firework?"

"Not it," said Dick, shaking his head. "You may find a casualty in one of these houses. I heard a window smash. No, it was a Mills bomb, and it was beautifully placed." He calculated that it would have fallen into Mr. Cornfort's lap, in which case Mr. Cornfort would have been asleep permanently.

At last the crowd scattered, and they moved on. Mary said nothing, but he saw in the failing light that her face was very pale.

"It was splendid of you not to tell about Henry," she said in a low voice.

Henry was the amazing feature of the evening to Dick; that silent and preoccupied man had been revealed as an expert gunman. Dick knew what pistol shooting was. This man was an adept.

"Henry's rather like that. I think he must have been a soldier some time."

"And do soldiers shoot at motorists?" he demanded.

"If they don't like them," she replied gently.

They were talking under cover of Lord Weald's conversation, addressed indiscriminately to Henry and to the slumbering Mr. Cornfort. It was a conversation made up with suggestions for the punishment of people who threw Mills bombs at invalids. Tommy was happy in that he needed neither the stimulation of agreement nor the provocation of dispute. He was one of those radiant natures that emits vocal energy unceasingly. The peculiar thing was that he had not seen Henry shoot, and, as Henry was his chief audience, Tommy unwittingly deprived himself of a great deal of subject matter.

There was Henry pulling at the bath chair, slow and self-absorbed, an unshaven figure of a man.

"Are you frightened?" asked Dick.

"I was—after. I didn't realize at the time. It almost seemed as if he knew I'd told you."

Dick stopped dead.

"Who?"

"Herman Lavinski."

"Do you mean——" he began.

"Don't stop, please, or Tommy will come back to us. I know it was Lavinski. That was his first recorded offense—throwing a bomb into a jeweler's shop. Not a fearfully dangerous one, but enough to scare everybody under the counter, during which he cleared out the window."

"You know a lot about him," said Dick suspiciously.

"I'm a great student," she replied demurely; "and since I have known you, naturally I have taken a tremendous interest in crime."

"If you laugh at me, I shall——"

"Not in public," she said, in the same low voice. "Tommy will tell you that I'm rather a fanatic on the subject. Poor Henry!"

"Why, 'poor Henry'?"

"Because he'll get no sleep to-night, poor dear! He'll be sitting on the doorstep waiting for developments. Henry is a great optimist."

"You're a puzzling lot of people," said Dick in despair.

They had turned the corner of the road, and the bath chair and Tommy were out of sight. They were in the darkest part of the promenade and nearly alone. As if by common agreement, their pace slackened to its slowest.

"You'd better go now," she said softly, and put up her face to his.

For a second he held her in his arms, his lips against hers, then gently she drew clear of him.

"That's for not telling on Henry," she said breathlessly, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXI.

A PROMISE.

HAPPINESS can keep a man awake as readily as trouble. It was past three o'clock before Dick Staines fell asleep, and he awoke so light of heart that, in the midst of his shaving, there was a knock on the door and the chambermaid came in.

"The gentleman next door says would you please stop singing, sir? He's suffering from nerves."

Dick's roar of laughter was probably as disturbing as his song.

He saw the girl only for a few minutes; a telephone message from Bourke urged him to come back to town at the earliest opportunity. Tommy came with him to the station, and Tommy's exuberance brought the first pang.

"Everything's all right, old boy," said the jubilant young man. "We've made it up."

"Made what up?" asked Dick. "I didn't know you'd quarreled."

"Oh, you weren't there!" said Tommy, remembering. "It was just before she went in with the dear old wreck. I asked her—well, you know what I mean. I mean, it's quite the natural thing for a feller to do, and she gave me a perfectly frozen face and went inside without saying good night. I toddled up and down broken-hearted, old boy."

"Toddled up and down who?"

"I mean outside the house," explained Tommy. "Then she came out into the garden. Old boy, she was divine!"

If Tommy had struck him, Dick could not have had a greater and more hurtful shock.

"What do you mean by divine? Did you—kiss her?" he said desperately.

"Naturally," said Tommy.

"I give it up," growled Dick.

"You're always giving things up, old boy."

Dick got into the train.

All the way to town he was trying to reconcile the two Mary Danes he knew. Her double was more like her than she. How could she treat Tommy as she did? He remembered that she was almost rude when she snatched her hand away when Tommy was speaking to her. What was Tommy saying? Oh, yes, her ring didn't fit her.

His power of volitionary thought ended here, paralyzed by a half revelation. She had snatched her hand away. From some pigeonhole in his mind came forth the recollection of something she said to him on the way to Victoria that night: "I told you a lie." He fell back in the corner of the seat and gasped. For he knew the lie! All that was inexplicable was now plainly and understandably written.

Bourke was waiting for him when he got to Scotland Yard, and the stout inspector had before him a whole sheaf of documents.

"How did you get on to Lavinski?" was the first question he asked.

"Oh, they told you, did they?" voiced Dick. "I didn't really get on to him at all, but a young friend of mine offered the suggestion that that was the name of the Slough murderer."

"How did she know?"

"For the matter of that, how do you

know it was a she?" challenged Dick, changing color.

"A little bird told me," said the superintendent. "Anyway, it doesn't matter. I suppose you asked, and the reply wasn't satisfactory. We'll leave it at that for the moment. Here's the point."

He turned over the documents and took out a square card covered with thumb prints. The language, Dick saw, was German.

Convicted in Munich, 1911, Lavinski alias Stein, alias Griedlovitz, alias Paul Stammen. Speaks German and Russian with a broken accent; believed to be of English extraction.

Bourke read German as easily as he read English.

"Look at that thumb print."

Dick hadn't to look twice.

"It's our man," he said. "How did you get it?"

Very fortunately, the police department attached to the German embassy had a record of a number of English nationals who had been convicted in Germany.

"The other embassies have the same, and I was intelligent enough to send round a memorandum asking if they'd give us particulars of Lavinski. I was hoping to get a photograph. By the way, the German description makes him a much thinner man, but he was very much younger then. It was for the same type of offense that he got time in Germany: shooting up a cashier and getting away with the pay roll. We've got a later description of him, but the thumb print is the thing. If it hadn't been for the disorganization of the embassy following the war, we'd have had this man. As it is, I've written across to the German minister of justice asking him to let us have a photograph. He may not be in England."

"I think he is, sir," said Dick. "If I were a betting man, that would be the certainty I should back."

"Anyway, we are using the press" said the superintendent. "I've circulated this description."

He pushed the slip of paper across and Dick read from:

Wanted by the police in connection with a number of offenses. Herman Lavinski——

through all his aliases, to end of the paragraph.

"It will be in the last edition of the evening newspapers. I'm expecting that we shall have the usual crowd of reporters down, but nothing is to be said to connect this man with the Slough murder."

When Dick reached Tommy Weald's house, he saw two workmen coming through Mr. Derrick's open doorway. He had lost no time in repairing the damage that had been done to his wall. To his surprise, Derrick himself followed the workmen.

"I am blocking up the secret passages of this fine old medieval castle," he said cheerily. "Either I do that or I shall sell the house."

"And leave the gold for somebody else to find," said Dick.

Derrick smiled.

"I've told you before, and I tell you again: the only gold in this house is on the picture frames. Have you been out of town?"

"Yes. I thought you were in Brighton; I saw your car at Lewes. The ostler told me you had gone on there."

Mr. Derrick nodded.

"I stayed the night at Brighton, but the place was terribly full."

When a Brighton habitué starts to talk about Brighton, there is no room for any other subject of conversation for a while.

"The one good thing this business has done," Derrick went on, "is to show me how deuced uncomfortable this house is. I'm having it refurnished from top to bottom. Where are you dining to-night?"

Dick pointed to Tommy Weald's residence.

"At home," he said.

Derrick laughed.

"It must be almost like a home to you by now. Will you dine with me or shall I invite myself to dine with you?"

Dick was glad enough to extend the invitation.

Although he made light of these extraordinary happenings that had so distressed him, it was obvious to Dick that the strain was telling on Derrick. Behind his joviality, was a hint of nervousness and apprehension. Over the dinner table, he confided the astonishing fact that the one thing which really "rattled" him was the ghost.

"I can't understand that spook. Larkin is a very nice fellow but has no imagination at all; he could not have invented it. Are you afraid of ghosts?"

Dick smiled. He might have confessed, but did not, that he had been scared of more substantial things than ghosts in that house.

"Not very, eh? Well, I am," confessed the owner heartily. "I'm so scared that I dare not spend a night there to catch him. Larkin says he comes regularly. And he's more frightened than I am!"

"Why don't you allow me the free run of the place?"

The other smiled good-humoredly.

"It seems you people have taken it. When I came here this morning, I found two detectives inside and chased them out. But if you do hear or see anything, I'll tell Larkin to unfasten the upstairs window and leave the lights on the landing. Oh, by the way——" he took an evening newspaper out of his pocket—"who is this Lavinski? What is he wanted for?"

"Quite a number of offenses, including murder."

Derrick looked at the sheet again and read the paragraph slowly.

"It doesn't say murder. I suppose that's a little dodge of yours By the way, Larkin says that the 'ghost' always appears from half past eleven to twelve. So if you want to be thrilled to death, you might step in round about then."

He was going to a hotel in Weybridge, a beautiful house, in a wooded park, which had the advantage of a private golf course.

Dick spent the evening with a book. He was feeling tired. Once he went up to his own room, stepped onto the balcony and saw that Mr. Derrick had been as good as his word; that the French windows were fastened by a catch which he could easily open with his finger from the outside.

He came downstairs, read a little, scribbled a little and thought much. He wondered if Mary would call him up. Hitherto, he had been suspicious of these long-distance calls, but now—he smiled at his secret thought. By the evening post he had an intimation to the effect that his flat was available for his use, his tenants having decided to spend the rest of the period abroad. Ordinarily, he would have been glad to have this news, but now he didn't very much care one way or the other.

He had made himself very much at home in Tommy's best room. Poor old Tommy. How would he take it, he wondered? Or would he ever know? Yes, Dick thought he would know, and be very pleased. After all, this cheerful man had his moments of doubt concerning Mary. Without confiding as much, he had revealed something of his apprehension unconsciously. There were moments when Mary terrified him. Yes, Tommy would accept the situation in a good spirit.

He looked up at the clock: it was twenty minutes to twelve, and the ghost was due! He really did not take that ghost very seriously. At the same time, many things that he had not taken seriously had proved tragically disturbing.

As he rose to go upstairs, the phone bell rang.

"Take this call from Margate," said a voice, and Dick purred inwardly.

He waited an interminable time. Somebody else was talking on the line—a thin, high, woman's voice, speaking at a tremendous rate as though she realized the value of a three-minutes' conversation and was anxious to crowd in every syllable. And then:

"Is that you, Dick?"

It was Mary's voice, hard with anxiety.

"Dick, is that you?"

"Yes, my dear."

"You haven't gone into Derrick's house, have you? Dick, I don't want you to go. I want you to promise me."

The gabble of the other woman's voice grew faster and faster, drowning all other sounds but the soft undercurrent of the humming wires.

"Dick, can you hear me, darling?—I don't want you to go into——"

Click! He was cut off. Again, he heard the gabble, and that too, died as suddenly. He jerked the hook savagely, called the local exchange.

"I was cut off," he said. "Get me through at once."

"What number, sir?"

He did not know the number.

"Hang up your receiver," came the monotonous instruction. "They will call you."

He waited five minutes, but no call came through. Why was she anxious that he should not go into the house next door? The old ghost of suspicion rose in his mind—and a resolution also. He waited another four minutes, but the bell didn't ring, and, running up the stairs, he passed through his room onto the balcony and swung across. With his finger, he lifted the latch and pushed open the window. There was no sound. The door was wide open. He turned the switch; the lights had been cut off at the main, probably by Derrick's order.

He took a step forward, and, for the second time in that room, he was seized with an unaccountable terror, and in an instant was bathed in a cold perspiration. What was it? Danger of some kind—that animal instinct of his calling to him urgently, loudly, yet he could not interpret the message.

Then he took one step on the landing. As he did so, he felt the lightest of obstructions against his ankle. He was wearing silk socks, which was what may have saved his life—that and the cautiousness of his advance. It was a thread across the door. He drew back quickly and retreated to the balcony. And then he heard a man calling in an agitated voice: it was Minns.

"Mr. Staines, don't go into this house; the young lady says there's a spring gun set on the stairs!"

"Bring me my lamp," said Dick after a pause. "I left it by the side of my bed."

The butler came back.

"For heaven's sake be careful, sir."

In spite of his preoccupation, Dick was amazed to hear the distress in the man's voice. For the first time, this butler of Tommy's had shown himself human.

Dick took the lamp from his hand and went back flashing a powerful beam ahead. There was the gun, so artfully concealed on the top stair that he might not have noticed it even if it had been light. He stepped delicately across the silken thread, keeping out of the way of that deadly muzzle, and, stooping, removed the cap and gently let down the trigger. It was old-fashioned, painfully so. The broad muzzle would have belched death at him, tearing his flesh to ribbons, at so short a range.

"Miss Dane is still on the phone, sir." It was the butler calling from the balcony.

Dick went back and, going downstairs, took the last two minutes of the call.

"Dick, is that you? Oh, Dick, did you go in? Oh, thank heaven you're safe! Did you see it?"

"The gun? Yes. I nearly got it. I should have had the sense to wait until you called up again."

"Darling, I've nearly died at the end of this phone. Why did you go?"

"How did you know it was there?"

"I guessed; I swear I didn't know. Just guessed, from something I'd been told. Was it a gun?"

Dick described it. He heard the quick intake of her breath.

"I said 'spring gun,' but I wasn't sure. I knew it was something very, very deadly. Dick, you'll not go into that house again—will you promise me that?"

And then he said a bold thing.

"Will you promise me that you won't go in?"

After a long pause, an operator's voice intruded itself.

"Your three minutes is up."

"I promise," Mary spoke quickly, "not without you."

Then they were cut off.

CHAPTER XXII.

TOMMY'S AMAZEMENT.

TOMMY sat down in his hotel sitting room to take stock of himself. There were quite a number of people in the world who regarded this fresh-faced, young, irresponsible man of thirty as an easy mark. But Tommy Weald was no fool, and, if proof were necessary, his bailiff could have revealed quite a number of interesting facts. Contrary to the general belief that the late Lord Weald was not a very rich man—he was certainly a careless one. He had left his estate in some confusion, and it had been Tommy who had shored up the tottering fortune of his house and most shrewdly rebuilt its foundation.

Perhaps his patent innocence helped him. He had been "let in" by acquaintances on the stock exchange to several good things. They expected him to speculate gently, and leave the fat pickings of the market to themselves; they were pardonably indignant when they found their novitiate gambling with the sang-froid of a hardened jobber, and, what is more, skimming the cream of the market.

Tommy was no born manager of estates, but he had the knack of choosing the right man. He had found his reputation for innocence something of an asset and had steered between many dangerous rocks, across many disastrous shoals; he had avoided in the process, a lady who was popularly believed to have a million of money but no personal attractions, at least two cousins, a charming widow or two, and divers detached and distantly related females.

He ran his fingers through his untidy hair and stared solemnly at his reflection in the mirror. Tommy always sat before a looking glass when he was alone and if there was one available, for he was a gregarious creature and loved company.

And here was the fact that Tommy had to face: for the first time in his life, he was desperately in love with a girl who, from self-consciousness or some other cause, treated him, in his own words, like a beastly poodle by day, and by night was to him the most adorable and the most loving of women.

Tommy had none of the uncomfortable thoughts which usually beset a man in his position. He had no relations to please or displease; for his aunts, if the truth be told, were so many pegs on which he could hang timely excuses. They were timorous old ladies very much in awe of their nephew. He had money. The woman he loved, so far as he could judge by voice and manner, was a lady—he never even speculated upon this—and, except for her unfortunate shyness or awkwardness or what-

ever was the disturbing quality which made her so impossible in daytime, adored him.

An aunt had rather diffidently raised the only objection in the course of a letter which was filled with reserved congratulation.

One, of course, must know her people. Many modern young girls have the most presentable manners and are indistinguishable from ladies and members of a good family until one meets their relations.

Tommy replied to that, hotly.

He was marrying Mary and not her relations, but he was quite prepared to discover that they earned a precarious livelihood in the ancient and honorable profession of ragpickers, he said romantically.

Nevertheless, he had his uneasy moments. There were a few gritting the slides of life, even now.

He had not dressed for dinner, and sat watching the slow minute hand of the clock on the mantelpiece move imperceptibly toward the hour of his rendezvous; it was not remarkable that he should be waiting outside the charmed house a quarter of an hour too soon.

There was a diversion to occupy his mind. He had passed, at the corner of the road, a very inebriated gentleman who sang as he staggered a song about love. Tommy watched him reel through the drizzle, and, long after he had passed out of sight, his melancholy cadences were yet audible. He saw a movement near the house, and a dim figure melted out of the bushes near the doorway and came toward him.

"Oh, Tommy, I didn't know it was raining," she said, her voice full of self-reproach as she opened the gate and led him onto the dark lawn. "How mean of me! I could have come out before."

"Nothing, dear old thing, nothing," said Tommy briskly. "If I wait till it stops raining, I should never see you. How's that jolly old rascal, Cornfort?"

"He has gone to bed," said the girl as she slipped her arm in his: "He's terribly tired."

There was a canvas swing in the garden and above, a most substantial awning which would have kept out the ultra-violet rays of the sun if the sun had ever shown itself, and did, in point of fact, serve as a protection from the heavy showers of rain, which were not infrequent.

Tommy sat down by his companion's side and put his arm about her shoulder.

"Tommy, you're purring," she said in alarm.

He accepted the accusation as a compliment. Her head sank lower on his shoulder; he drooped his head, and her velvet cheek was against his. They must have looked very silly, but nobody saw them, and two people in such circumstances can never look silly except in one another's eyes.

Presently, Tommy straightened up.

"Mary, my darling," he said, "I've got a fearfully important question to ask you."

He heard her sigh.

"Tommy, I hate answering fearfully important questions."

But he was determined.

"Aren't you awfully keen on Dick Staines?"

She thought this matter over a few moments.

"I like him," she said thoughtfully; from what I have seen of him, he seems rather nice."

He cleared his throat, for he was putting a question which, properly and satisfactorily answered, would sweep away a great deal of the unhappiness which clouded his waking moments. "Honestly, aren't you in love with him a little bit? I mean, he's a shriekingly good-looking chap, and I know I'm a perfectly ghastly sight. Every time I look at a baby it goes blue in the face; it's a fact! What I mean to say is, don't

you think you would be happier with him than——"

"What nonsense you talk, Tommy?" There was a little touch of petulance in her voice. "I don't know why, but I love you better than anybody in the world. Do you believe that?"

"Believe what?" asked Tommy, who was always cautious at the wrong moment. "That you don't know why?"

She sat bolt upright.

"Of course, I don't know why. Does any girl, Tommy? If I am in love with you, which I suppose I am, is it remarkable that I shouldn't know why?"

Here was a problem in psychology which could not readily be solved. Tommy liked a reason for everything—even for falling in love. And it had seemed to him that, in the day time at any rate, Mary's attitude was distinctly frigid, especially in Dick Staines' presence.

"That's all right," he said with satisfaction. "The truth is, old darling, I've been fearfully worried. You and old Dicky get on so well together, you have your secret palavers, and there have been moments when I've been frantically jealous."

She squeezed his arm gently.

"Then you've been frantically foolish," she said.

The house where Mr. Cornfort had his lodgings was on the corner of two roads, and the large gardens were flanked by low-cut hedges. From where they sat, the front door was obscured by clumps of rhododendrons which also hid half the tiled path to the gate, which was not only in view in the daylight but even at night. Beyond the pathway, the ground sloped down to a sunken garden, so that anybody, passing to the gate from the house, showed against the skyline.

Tommy's hearing was particularly acute. He heard the front door open and close softly and the faint crunch of feet, and smiled.

"Who is that?" he asked.

She shook free of his arm and sat up.

"What was it?"

Before he could answer, the figure of a man came into view. He limped quickly across their line of vision; they heard the squeak of the gate, and he disappeared in the darkness of the roadway.

"Jumping snakes!" gasped Tommy. "That's old Cornfort!"

He had seen the thin face, the mop of gray hair, the long, hawklike nose.

"I thought you said——"

"Nonsense, Tommy!" Her voice was sharp. "Mr. Cornfort's in bed. That was another lodger."

He looked around at her slowly.

"Mary," he said, "you lie in your boots, old dear! If that's not Mr. Cornfort, I'll eat my right ear!"

For a second, she was too taken aback to answer.

"You're probably right," she said with devastating coolness. "But why shouldn't he take a little exercise now and again?"

Nevertheless, in spite of her calm manner, he detected a tremor of agitation in her voice when she asked this audacious question.

"Wait," she said, and ran across the lawn, disappearing into the house.

Presently she came out, followed by a man whom Tommy recognized as Henry. Henry had been something of a puzzle to Tommy. He had never quite known whether the bath-chair man was a permanency; certainly, he was unaware until that moment that Henry had lodgings in the house of his employer.

The girl and the man talked together quickly in a low voice, and Tommy thought he heard the chairman curse. This in a chairman seemed near to profanity. Henry hurried out into the road, and he also disappeared. She waited for a few seconds, looking over

the gate, and then came slowly back and sat down by Tommy's side.

"It is really nothing," she said. "Mr. Cornfort has these little fits of energy but I don't like him to go out alone. He may have a fit of vertigo and fall over a cliff or something."

"Which would give him a nasty taste in his mouth," said Tommy flippantly. "Old Cornfort! Fancy the old blighter being hauled around in a chair all day and trotting about all night on his flat feet!"

"We like to encourage him to walk," said the girl hastily.

He had an idea that she was listening, as all her senses showed, for some sound, he knew not what. When, a few streets away, a motorcycle backfired incessantly, she nearly jumped to her feet.

"What was that?" she gasped. Her voice was agitated.

"Sounds like a motor cycle to me," said Tommy, but, when he put his arm around her, she was trembling from head to foot.

"I'm a terrible coward," her voice quavered. "I wish I had the courage of——" She stopped short.

"You've got plenty of courage, old dear. It's this beastly job trotting round after the poor old chap that gets you rattled," said Tommy. And——"

This time there was no question as to the noise. It was the sound of a shot, clear and unmistakable. The girl sprang to her feet.

"Oh, Tommy!" she gasped. "I wish he hadn't!"

And then came the sound of running feet.

"Let me go," said an angry voice.

The gate was flung open, and Mr. Cornfort sprawled in as though he had been violently pushed from behind.

Henry followed, closed the gate and leaned over. Tommy thought he saw something glitter in the chairman's hand.

"Anything wrong?"

Henry looked around. It seemed that he was only then aware of the visitor's presence.

"No, my lord, nothing's wrong. I shouldn't sit out here if I were you, young lady."

"What is it?" she asked in a low voice.

"Somebody," was the ambiguous reply. Then, to Tommy: "Did you see anybody, my lord, when you came in?"

"There was a fellow at the corner of the street, rather tight," said Tommy, remembering the appearance of the inebriated wayfarer.

A policeman came into sight under a street lamp. He crossed the road.

"Did you hear somebody shooting?"

"No, sir." Henry's voice was almost humble. "There's been a motor cycle exploding around here."

As he spoke, as though by a prearranged signal and to confirm his explanation of the sound, came another backfire and a quick succession of loud pops from the distance.

"That's what it was, eh?" The policeman seemed relieved. "After that bomb throwing, I've been set to keep an eye on the house. I happened to go around the corner to see my friend on the next beat. I didn't half get a fright!"

He chatted for a few seconds and then walked along the road. Henry came slowly back to where they sat.

"I think I should go now if I were you, sir." He was very respectful and apparently undisturbed by any adventures through which he might have passed.

Before Tommy could reply, a voice called urgently from the door.

"Hurry. Come and get your arm dressed quickly."

It was Cornfort speaking, and for one on the verge of eternity there was considerable vigor in his voice.

"Are you hurt?" The girl's voice was almost a wail.

"Nothing, nothing at all," said Henry, showing his first sign of impatience. "A scratch, my dear, a bush caught my —er—sleeve."

Then it was that Tommy saw he was holding his left arm a little above the wrist.

"Darling, you *are* hurt!" said the girl, almost tearfully, and Tommy nearly dropped.

"Darling?" Was ever bath chairman addressed in such endearing terms?

"Miss Dane, you are entirely mistaken." The chairman's voice was very firm. "Now, Lord Weald, you would greatly oblige me if you went home."

In the confusion of farewell, the girl disappeared. Tommy had hardly left the house when he heard her call him.

"Good night, Tommy!"

He turned to kiss her cold lips.

"I'm awfully frightened to-night, Tommy, I'm so terribly wicked. I was never meant to be——"

Before he could ask for an explanation she had gone.

"Dashed extraordinary!" said Tommy aloud, and strode fiercely back to the hotel. He kept a lookout for the drunken man but did not see him. Nearing the front, he found himself following a stocky individual who might have been the songbird he had seen earlier in the evening.

He walked more quickly to overtake the suspect, but, as if he knew he was being followed, the man walked faster: they came to the fringe of a carnival party either going to or returning from a dance, and his quarry disappeared before Lord Weald could make his acquaintance.

For a long time that night, Tommy sat on the edge of his bed, with folded arms, frowning at the ineffective wall paper. There were one or two things that the future Lady Weald must be taught—as, for example, the bad form of addressing bath chairmen in terms of excessive endearment.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RED BOOK.

DERRICK confessed to having an even nature. Few men whose houses were marked by gangs of armed burglars, who had suffered the outrages which had been his, had been subjected to the horror of having murder done in their dining rooms, would have accepted so philosophically the amazing sequence of events which had punctuated recent weeks.

"My equanimity," he told the reporter of the *Post Herald*, "is nine tenths laziness, a sheer disinclination to trouble my head about things I cannot rectify or put right; laziness is my pet vice. My house is an extraordinary house. Something alarming is always happening there. A week ago a man, who claimed acquaintance with me during my stay in Africa, was found dead there. A few nights later, a portion of the wall of my drawing-room was excavated, and certain rumors I have heard, coupled with mysterious inquiries which have come to me from the police, and especially from my friend Inspector Staines, lead me to suppose that yet another outrage was attempted or committed only a couple of nights ago."

"Is the house haunted?"

"One of my servants swears that he has seen the ghost of my father! But that, of course, is a trick, and a particularly cruel trick."

"What do you imagine the burglars are after?" asked the newspaper man.

Mr. Derrick smiled broadly.

"What are all after?" he demanded. "Money! The theory has been advanced by one of the most brilliant police officers at Scotland Yard that my father hoarded a large sum of money in some secret place. That may, of course, be true. If it is, then it is better that I should find it than my persecutors. I, at least, would pay to the Inland Revenue the additional death

duties! I do not, however, imagine for one moment that my father did anything so stupid or so secretive. His death, though he was an invalid, was very sudden, and he had no opportunity of discussing his affairs at the last. But I feel sure that, if there had been any money hidden, he would have told me during the last years of his life."

Dick Staines read his interview while he was still in bed. He had been in a state of wonder that the murder in Lowndes Square and all the peculiar events, which had preceded and followed, had attracted so little attention. Reporters had called and had received the usual vague statements which police officers issue on such occasions.

But the episode of the spring gun—which had not been reported—had shaken him surprisingly. Neither Larkin nor Walter Derrick could offer him any explanation. Derrick was certain that, when he had walked down the stairs five minutes before he left the house, no such trap had been laid. Larkin was equally emphatic. Unless there was another way into the house, as yet undiscovered, how could the gun have been placed in position and the "leads" so carefully adjusted?

There had been workmen in the house. Dick saw the foreman, who assured him that none of the men had ascended beyond the drawing-room floor. Examined at Scotland Yard, the gun proved to be of a type common enough six years ago in country districts—a muzzle-loaded, big-jawed musket, the barrel sawed off to within a few inches of the lock.

On his return to town, after giving an interview with the reporters in Lowndes Square, Walter accompanied Dick to Scotland Yard and examined the machine. No sooner did his eyes fall upon it than he uttered an exclamation:

"That is mine," he said.

When he had bought Keyley, he had found in the stable, among a lot of other rubbish, this old spring gun. He pointed out the half-obliterated crown stamped in the brass butt plate and two notches cut in the grip.

"I haven't seen it for months—years. Oh, yes, I have," he corrected himself quickly. "I showed it to Tommy Weald last Sunday week, and he suggested I should send it to a museum."

Which was rather like Tommy; he was very public-spirited with other people's properties.

"There was also an old powderhorn which probably belongs to the set," Walter went on, "but I don't remember seeing any bullets."

He had taken a surprising resolution, at least, it was surprising to Dick.

"I am trying to decide to spend a week in my haunted house, and do a little gold digging myself," he said. "I can't persuade my servants at Keyley to come back to Lowndes Square, for the reputation of the house has been quite sufficient to scare them stiff, so I am relying on Larkin to assist."

"If you would care for me to share your watch——" said Dick.

Walter nodded.

"That was my idea. I can't make you as comfortable as Weald does, but I may be able to give you a more exciting time!"

They walked up to the house together, and, just before Derrick went in:

"You were telling me the other day about old Endred, the local inspector. He seems to know a great deal more about my father than I do. I suppose there is no objection to my having a chat with him?"

"Don't you know him?" asked Dick.

Walter shook his head.

"No, I have no recollection of him. So far as I can ascertain, although he knew my father very well, he never met me. I was at school in Northumberland until I was seventeen."

With the aid of Larkin and a couple

of charwomen that the caretaker was able to engage, Mr. Derrick had restored something like order and tidiness to his outraged drawing-room. A square of canvas still covered the hole in the wall when old Inspector Endred called that afternoon. He was in mufti, for he was off duty, as he explained.

"I never make any private calls in uniform, Mr. Derrick," said the grim, old man. "I am one of those old-fashioned police officers who do not mix business with pleasure."

He looked around the drawing-room curiously.

"It must be fifteen years since I was here as a visitor," he said. "Fifteen years! And it seems like yesterday!"

He pointed to an old grandfather's chair near the fireplace.

"That was your respected father's favorite chair," he said. "I'd like a fiver for every time I've seen him there!"

"Did we ever meet?" asked Walter, interested.

The inspector shook his head.

"No, sir, you were at school at the time, if I remember rightly. The only occasion you were down in London, I was away on leave, but I knew your father very well and a very nice man he was. He wasn't popular with some people, but I speak of a man as I find him."

The inspector was a loquacious old gentleman with a fund of reminiscences.

"Yes, I knew him quite well; but I had no idea that he had married again. I suppose you didn't know either?"

"No," replied Mr. Derrick, "that was news to me."

"It was news to a lot of us," said the inspector, shaking his head, "but I always say that nobody really knows anybody."

"How did you come to be acquainted with my father? He is hardly likely to have been very much interested in police affairs."

The inspector smiled broadly.

"We came into touch over the finger-print business, and, after I was shifted to N Division, I still used to correspond with him. As a matter of fact, Mr. Derrick, I am of the same opinion as your father. I believe there are duplicates to finger prints. It stands to reason that the present system can't be infallible, when less than a fortieth part of the population can be examined and checked. Do you see what I mean?"

"No, I don't," said Walter frankly.

The inspector was now riding his hobbyhorse, and apparently, he held views even more drastic than those held by the late Mr. Derrick. It was more than possible that old Derrick had his first lessons in skepticism, and had been started on his hobby, as a result of his acquaintance with this gray-haired police officer.

"Suppose there was a dance on at the Albert Hall," said Endred with relish, "and there were two thousand people present, and a complaint came that a lady had lost a diamond necklace? Do you follow me, Mr. Derrick?"

Walter nodded.

"Suppose I had permission to search the crowd—the whole two thousand—the crowd—the whole two thousand. Instead of searching two thousand, I clean bill. Would that be fair? It is the same with the finger-print system. The only prints we have belong to criminals; the law-abiding population never comes under review. And it is any odds that if you were to take the finger prints of the forty million people in this country, you'd find duplicates, and once you'd found a solitary duplicate, the whole finger-print system would collapse!"

"That was my father's view, too," said Derrick thoughtfully.

"And it was a good view," insisted Inspector Endred emphatically. "That is what your revered father was trying to prove. He had finger prints by the thousand—by the hundreds of thou-

sands—of non-criminals, clergymen, bankers, and everybody he could get to give him a print."

He was amused at a recollection.

"It's curious how people gibed at it, though! Even the most innocent people objected to giving themselves away. I must confess," he chuckled, "that, when he asked me for my own finger impressions for the family book, I didn't at all like the idea!"

"The family book?" said Derrick quickly. "What do you mean?"

Endred's eyes were dancing with laughter.

"You've forgotten it too! I forget nothing. I've got a memory like a card index, Mr. Derrick. I remember that book—a little red book with padded, leather covers. His finger prints were in it, and yours, and his housekeeper's; you wouldn't remember her; she died when you were a child. Miss Belfer's, his sister's, and his partner's, old Carlew, were there. I suppose it was a great honor for him to ask me at all, but I didn't like putting my fingers on the pad, and that's the truth."

There was a silence and then Derrick said slowly:

"Of course! I remember now. His little private book. The family book! I must have been about fifteen when he called me up to his study and asked me to put my fingers on the page."

"Four fingers and thumb," stated Endred. "Just the same as they do it at the police station. The fact is, your father was a fanatic on the subject."

Derrick sighed heavily.

"Yes. A strange man. It is curious how I'd forgotten that little incident! I don't remember having seen the book since!"

"It is in the house somewhere, I'll bet," said Endred. "I wonder you don't find it; it would be rather a curiosity, Mr. Derrick."

Derrick was looking out of the window, his attention concentrated upon a horse-drawn milk cart. The horse, unattended, was straying across the road.

"That's very dangerous," he said, pointing, "the way these milkmen allow their horses to wander. A little red book with padded covers! I recall it now. Rather like an autograph album. Do you remember if my mother's was there?"

The inspector shook his head.

"No, sir, that is hardly likely. He hadn't got the finger-print craze when your respected mother died. But I believe there was an old aunt's, because he pointed the prints out to me and said that the index finger was almost exactly like another print that he had taken of a chimpanzee at the zoo!"

Mr. Derrick turned the conversation to the neighborhood, and the old religious order that had occupied his house. Mr. Endred plunged immediately into a learned and authoritative dissertation enriched by his recollections of divers eccentric religious bodies he had met with in his time.

As the inspector was leaving the house, Dick Staines came from the house next door.

"Hello, inspector!" Dick's curiosity was piqued. "Is anything wrong?"

"Nothing, nothing," said the old man genially, "I've just been having a little chat with Mr. Derrick about old times."

"Oh, yes!" said Dick, remembering. "I gave him your address."

He was going in the same direction as the older man, and they walked away together.

"Calling at the Yard, are you, Mr. Staines? That's curious, so am I. I'm finishing the last thirty-five days of my service, and there's some talk of getting me a testimonial. In principle I am against allowing constables to subscribe to presentations. It is against the best interests of the service, but——"

"But," broke in Dick, "when a veteran of your record retires, I'm all for producing a silver teapot and a nicely in-

scribed salver. You've got to surrender your principles, inspector."

He called a taxi and, Endred protesting, he pushed him in.

"Exercise is a splendid thing, but it can be overdone," he said. "Well, how is Mr. Walter Derrick looking?"

"A fine man that," said Endred solemnly; "a regular chip off the old block. I never met a more good-natured gentleman in my life. I happened to mention about the presentation——"

"And he offered to subscribe a hundred guineas."

Endred gasped.

"Did he tell you?"

"No, I guessed," said Dick, a twinkle in his eye.

"Of course, I couldn't allow that. It——" began Endred.

"I should surrender my principles once more. Anyway, you deserve it. There are no rich prizes for a foot-slogging uniformed inspector, and if the taxpayer who has helped to starve you all his life wants to make up for his neglect, and give you a little bonus—well, let him!"

Old Endred looked relieved.

"As a matter of fact," he confided, "I've got his check in my pocket. That's what I'm seeing the assistant commissioner about. I don't want to break any regulations so near to the end of my service, but if he says it's all right——"

Dick knew the old inspector rather well and guessed that many influential and moneyed people in the neighborhood had heard the story of his retirement and his objection to presentations on principle, but his willingness, if his superiors agreed, to accept some small honorarium. Probably Derrick was to be a test case, and, if the "principle" was admitted, Inspector Endred would carry quite a number of handsome little checks to solace his days of retirement.

"Mostly we discussed finger prints, which was his old father's hobby, as I've told you before. It's funny what tricks memory plays on a fellow! He didn't even remember the family book."

"What was the family book?" asked Dick, who was hardly listening to the voluble officer's recital.

Inspector Endred told him of the little red book with the padded covers; he described its binding, its shape and the approximate number of its pages.

"Oh!" Dick sat bolt upright, looking at the old man. "Do you remember it very well?" he asked quickly. "Who else was in the book?"

Endred recited the names he could remember: it was doubtful if he missed one.

"And I think there were no more, unless there were some after mine," he said proudly. "I forget nothing. I've a memory like a card index, as I told Mr. Derrick. I can see the old man sitting down there and writing underneath the print my name, the year I was born, where I lived and everything! And I remember his limping up and down the room, laying down the law about the system. 'Endred,' he says to me——"

At that moment Dick signaled the cab to stop. They had turned on the Thames Embankment and were within a short distance of Scotland Yard.

"I'll go in if you don't mind. The assistant commissioner gave me an appointment." Endred looked at his large watch. "Dear me, I've only a minute."

Dick let him go and paid the cabman at his leisure. He walked slowly down toward the entrance of the Yard, and then noticed a man standing on the curb. His back was toward the detective, but the figure was familiar. Where had he seen him? He walked slowly past and looked at him sideways and then stopped.

"Why, Henry!" he said in amazement.

It was the unshaven bath chairman who was drawing meditatively at a clay pipe, and his eyes were fixed upon the pageant of the river.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WEARY WAITING.

HE was not particularly startled, he was not even surprised. He gave Dick the impression that nothing in the world had ever succeeded in agitating him.

"Good morning, sir."

His voice was soft and deferential. He had a queer little droop of his head which was almost like a bow.

"This is a beautiful place. To me the river is even more interesting than the sea. Look at that tug and those barges, like a swan with a number of ugly ducklings! One wonders what sort of a life these bargemen live."

"When you have finished being philosophical, Henry, will you tell me why you are in London, and what poor Mr. Cornfort is doing in the meantime, to say nothing of Miss Dane?"

The bath chairman looked at him reproachfully.

"Mr. Cornfort is in bed," he said in a hushed voice. "I fear he may never use the bath chair again."

"As bad as that, eh?" asked Dick cheerfully. "Well, you can't live forever."

Henry was pained.

"And Miss Dane?"

Henry shook his head.

"She is in town, sir, making inquiries about something she lost in London. An inconsiderable trinket, but very precious to her. Young girls have their peculiar fancies, Mr. Staines, and it is difficult to plumb the minds of youth."

Dick was amused, a little irritated, too. He had a feeling that this man was secretly laughing at him.

"And who is looking after Mr. Cornfort?" he demanded.

Henry's face fell.

"Three trained nurses," he said in a hushed voice.

Dick looked around at the arched entrance to Scotland Yard.

"Is she in there?"

"I believe so, sir."

"But that isn't the place she would go to make inquiries about lost property. It is farther along." He pointed.

Henry followed the direction of his finger and seemed interested in the low-roofed building the gesture indicated.

"Is that so, sir?" he asked interestedly. "I'm afraid Miss Dane has only a rudimentary acquaintance with police procedure. I have an idea that her loss was of such importance that she was seeking an interview with the chief constable."

Dick gaped at him.

"With the chief constable? Bourke?"

Henry nodded.

"She is a peculiar young lady who invariably makes it her business to go to the fountain head."

Dick examined the man carefully, but the blue eyes met his scrutiny with the least effort at evasion.

"You speak rather nicely for a bath chairman," said Dick. "What were you before you engaged in this profession?"

Henry for a moment looked embarrassed and coughed behind his gloved hand. Dick noticed that, as he raised his hand, his action was stiff and that he winced. He wondered what had happened to his arm.

"In my youth I was a professional prize fighter," he said, and Dick was staggered. "It is rather difficult to believe that a man of my meager physique could have ever had any success in such an arduous profession," said Henry, speaking with the greatest precision, "and in order to tone down the shock I would explain to you that I was also a teacher of mathematics at a very honorable university. I found pugilism was more lucrative though it was somewhat disastrous to my scholastic career."

"A lightweight?" asked Dick, unconvinced.

"A featherweight," said Henry gravely. "I am the only man who ever

knocked out 'Digger' Bill Ferrers. He fell asleep in the thirteenth round and was never the same man afterward."

Dick looked at the man suspiciously. Was his leg being pulled by this mild dragger of bath chairs? Before he could ask a question he saw Mary Dane come into view. She was walking quickly, but checked her pace at the sight of the detective. Henry regarded their meeting with great imperturbability. Dick had the suspicion that he was mildly amused.

"I suppose Henry's told you the news about Mr. Cornfort?"

"Is he dead?" asked Dick brutally, and she looked at him reproachfully.

"How brutal you are! Of course, he isn't. The poor old man is in bed."

"And you've come up to Scotland Yard to make an inquiry about a——"

"Whatever Henry told you it was," she interrupted calmly enough. "Please don't cross-examine me on the King's highway! I think your Mr. Bourke is rather a darling."

"I will convey your views to him," said Dick.

She was looking at him thoughtfully, biting that red nether lip of hers, and then:

"Thank you, Henry, you needn't wait. Mr. Staines is taking me to tea at Sollinger's. Let's walk through the park—I like parks."

"So I understand," said Dick.

He looked back over his shoulder. Henry was still standing where they had left him, his contemplative eye on the river.

"Where's his bath chair?" he demanded. "I should have thought that he would at least have brought that interesting mustard-colored vehicle to town; he looks almost lost without it! I should have loved to have seen you both being held up by a traffic cop!"

"You're being rather unpleasant this afternoon," she said. "I never use bath chairs. I am taking you away from your work, which is selfish of me, but I'm not feeling a bit penitent."

"You are my work," he said, "and my worry."

He did not provoke her to a reply.

They crossed to Whitehall, into the park gates, and their walk slowed to a saunter which is a pace appropriate to parks.

"How is the ghost?" she asked as they lounged along the edge of the lake.

"Not so well," said Dick. "He has given up his bath chair and has taken to bed."

"You mean Mr. Cornfort? How absurd you are!"

"I meant the gun-laying ghost."

"Did they nearly get you? My dear, I was worried ill that night! I hope you will never feel as I did. It was horrid!"

"What made you think there was a spring gun in the house?"

"Instinct," she said, and he knew that she was speaking the truth. "I suppose when a woman feels, as I do toward a man, her intelligence is sharpened to a point where instinct gets a chance of operating. I thought I would die as I sat by that telephone waiting to hear your voice, Dick. You're not taking any more chances?"

"As a matter of fact, I am."

She stopped dead and looked at him, her lips parted, her eyes wide with fear.

"What do you mean?"

"Mr. Derrick is coming back to live here, and he has asked me to sleep on the premises."

She said nothing, but slowly resumed her walk.

"When do you go in?"

"To-morrow, I think. Tommy hasn't said when he's returning." And then, as he remembered, "He is probably in town."

She shook her head.

"No. I told him I was coming back to-night."

"And aren't you?"

She hesitated.

"Henry rather wanted to see a theater, and I promised him he should." And then she went off at a tangent. "I like your Inspector Bourke. Superintendent, is he? Well, whatever he is, he's a nice, fat darling of a man. He was very severe at first, but we became quite good friends."

"What did you see him about?"

"I lost a bangle," she said. "Why do you make me lie? I saw him about the bomb throwing. As a matter of fact, he wrote to me and asked me to come to see him. I suppose you know the municipality of Eastbourne has offered a reward of £200?"

Dick nodded. He had seen the announcement in the paper. Moreover, this evening of his in Eastbourne had kept him fully occupied since he came back to town. Dick tried to question her about several matters in which he was interested, but very skillfully she headed him off, and they reached the great departmental store without his being any the wiser. She had some purchases to make, she told him, and went by the elevator to the fourth floor, and he waited at the entrance of the inquiry bureau.

He knew this department very well. Here letters could be written and received. There were writing tables for the use of customers, and the room was fairly well filled, mainly by women. He had often speculated upon the value of such a department as this to the criminally minded man or woman. He knew at least one unpleasant case that had its focal point in a pigeonhole behind the polished mahogany counter. Presently, he saw Mary Dane come in and go to one of the girl attendants and ask a question. The attendant shook her head, made a rapid search of a pigeonhole and came back with another head shake. Then Mary saw him, smiled and waved her hand in greeting.

"How dreadful," she said, with mock humility when she came up to him. "You have caught me in the act—clandestine correspondence. Why do you peep? Is it because you're a detective?"

"I wasn't peeping!" said Dick indignantly. "I happened to be near the entrance, and I saw you."

"I didn't leave you at the entrance," she said severely. "Now, stay here, and don't move. I am going to buy certain garments."

He waited for ten minutes, for a quarter of an hour: but she did not return. Then he made an inquiry of the shopwalker.

"Yes, sir, I remember the lady. She went down to the first floor to the ladies' undergarments."

Dick waited another quarter of an hour. There was no sign of the girl. He was turning to go when he saw coming toward him the counter attendant of the inquiry bureau.

"Excuse me, you were with Miss Dane, weren't you?"

"Yes," he said, wondering.

"The cable just came through over the phone." She had a slip of paper in her hand. "Will you be seeing Miss Dane?"

"I hope so."

She went back, took an envelope from the counter and slipped the paper in, and handed it to him.

Dick put the message in his pocket and went down in search of the girl. She was not on the floor where he expected to find her, and he ascended again to the place she had left him. He was a patient man, but nobody short of an angel could wait an hour without feeling a sense of irritation. At last, in no pleasant temper, he decided to go. He was passing out of one of the big spring doors onto the street when a commissionaire came running up to him.

"You're Mr. Staines, aren't you? A young lady left a message for you. She said she'd been called away and Mr. Somebody, whose name I've forgotten, is ill."

"Cornfort?" said Dick.

"That's the name, sir," said the commissionaire. "She asked me if I knew you, and of course I do, because you've been here before on business." He grinned. Dick was not in a smiling temper.

He was annoyed with Mary, more than irritated with himself. She had acquired the habit of making him feel extremely foolish, and he was in a savage mood when he swung into Scotland Yard and collided with the portly figure of Mr. Bourke, who had stopped hazardously at the corner of the corridor to light a cigar.

"You're a little over two hours late," snapped Bourke, as he retrieved his injured cigar. "Don't apologize, for I'd forgotten the appointment. We've arrested a man at Bexhill for throwing the bomb, but he looks like proving an alibi. It was undoubtedly his car, but there seems no doubt that he sold it at junk price the week before last."

"What did Mary Dane want?" blurted Dick.

"Mary Dane?" Bourke scratched his second chin. "Let me see, now, what did she want? Oh, yes, it was about the bomb throwing. Rather a nice girl, that, eh?" He looked at Dick shrewdly. "Clever, too! What a criminal she'd make!"

"Do you think——" began Inspector Staines.

"Never," replied the other, promptly. "Too brain-wearing. I'll see you in the morning."

He was gone before Dick could fire in another question. Undoubtedly, the superintendent was peeved, as he had every right to be, for Inspector Staines was considerably over two hours late for his appointment, and, moreover, he had spoiled a very good cigar.

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

DOG IS A GOOD DETECTIVE

BECAUSE a dog persistently sniffed at the door of a room which had been rented to a couple the night previous, Mrs. Mary O'Neill, herself the landlady of the boarding house at 30 Parmelee Avenue, New Haven, Connecticut, found what was believed to be a suicide and murder.

John Massaro and his wife, Rose, had come to the house the night before, and had retired almost immediately. It was said by friends that the couple had been separated for several years, but had effected a reconciliation. There had been no disturbance to awaken other members of the household and some time might have elapsed had not the faithful dog, with his instinct keener than human reasoning, sensed something was wrong behind the closed door. Upon investigation, it was found that the couple had been slashed to death with a razor.

DRUGS AND CRIME

TREATMENT OF DRUG ADDICTS—PART II

By Ernest M. Poate, M. D.

Author of "The Bromides and the Hydrocarbons," etc.

THE best medicine for the cure of drug addicts is still, in my opinion, hyoscine or scopolamine. It is not only an efficient narcotic which will keep the patient comfortable and sleepy during the acute withdrawal period; but it is also antagonistic to opium, and corrects some of the opium symptoms. It should be given hypodermatically, in doses of about 1/200 grain, repeated every two or three hours, as indicated. It should be given often enough to keep the patient quiet, comfortable and sleepy for thirty-six hours. After the first thirty-six hours of withdrawal, it should be stopped entirely.

The drawbacks of hyoscine are two: First, it dries the mouth and paralyzes accommodation. The patient may have stomatitis—sore mouth—after treatment; and he may have eye trouble for some time. Second, its first sedative effect is followed, as we have seen, by a delirious reaction. For about three days after hyoscine is stopped, the patients will show a wildly delirious state, so that they must be kept under constant watch in a locked room with well-guarded windows.

Luminal, on the other hand, produces a staggering, silly sort of drunkenness. Patients under its influence often fall out of bed; they cannot stand or walk, and tend to spill things. They will continue to be silly drunk for five or six days.

After this clears up, however, the patients begin to improve almost at once. After hyoscine, the appetite returns more quickly; but whichever medicine be given, within the week the patients can eat solid food and begin to gain in weight.

Such cases are very commonly hypomanic for some weeks. That is, they are mildly excited, overtalkative and overcheerful. They are restless, of

course; they will talk loudly and rapidly, saying how happy they are to be rid of drug slavery, until they are shouting hysterically. They weep easily, and are subject to marked swings of mood. Naturally, they sleep poorly; but they will usually get four to six hours of sleep during each twenty-four hours, in snatches of an hour or so, perhaps. They sleep in all sorts of odd, strained postures; and they sleep lightly, so that often they will declare, quite honestly, that they have not closed an eye when, actually, they have had a number of cat naps.

It takes at least two months for such cases to recover normal mental and physical equilibrium, and during that time they must be kept under close observation, for relapses are frequent. Once the patient has fully returned to his normal state, his chances of remaining cured are reasonably good. He has, at least, no need of drugs. If he leads a regular life, and retains good physical health, he may, and often does, remain cured permanently. Cured addicts bear pain very badly. Their memories of pain-relieving drugs are too vivid, and they are likely to resort to opium even for a stomach ache.

During the period of convalescence, these cases are very prone to develop colds and coughs. For some reason, they have a greatly lowered resistance to respiratory infections, and few pass through convalescence without catching cold, and developing a coryza or bronchitis. Unless kept under close watch in a sanitarium, they will almost certainly return to opium to cure the cold. They never mean to reacquire a habit, of course; they will only take one dose or two, but a cured addict who takes even one dose of his drug, whatever the excuse or justification, will almost certainly take another, and another; until presently he is caught again.

This covers what is, to my mind, the very best and most successful method of treating opium addictions. By this means, every addict may be cured without danger to life, and without actual suffering. He is not called on to undergo anything worse than moderate discomfort; and even feeble and bedridden addicts may thus be treated without risk.

Perhaps no other medical discovery of modern times has brought so much hope to a class so unfortunate and hitherto so hopeless and misused.

There are, of course, other types of treatment in vogue, notably the Towns-Lambert treatment. This, and a number of other, similar, methods of treating drug addictions, are probably more widely known than Pettey's technique.

Essentially, these methods consist of the administration of tincture of hyoscyamus, or of belladonna, or both, mixed with opium in graduated amounts, so that the hyoscyamus is increased as the opium is reduced. With this mixture, the patient is given repeated purgation; usually in the form of the "compound cathartic" pill, of calomel, colocynth, gamboge, et cetera. One method calls for six such "C.C." pills every four hours—which seems rather savage. In a general way, such methods are intended to tide the patient over the acute withdrawal symptoms by the use of hyocyamus, the drug from which hyoscine is extracted. To my mind, none is as efficient as the method outlined above, developed by Doctor Pettey. There are institutions which claim to complete their treatment in a few days—usually in five days. Prospective patients are allowed to infer that they will be cured, and discharged, in five days or so; and some institutions will even allow their "cures" to leave at the end of this brief period.

This is inexcusable. No matter how efficient, or how successful, the treatment used, no addict should be allowed to leave for home within three weeks after withdrawal; and even this time is

too short. To turn such cases loose, with shattered nerves and bodies still run down from the very exhausting strain of withdrawal, in a week or so, is to invite, and almost to insure, re-establishment of the drug habit. The patient is given no time to build up his physical health, or to develop habits of self-control. Weak, emotional, unable to sleep, often suffering from acute indigestion or coryza or bronchitis, as soon as he is left to his own devices, he will go straight from the institution to the nearest drug peddler.

The only other type of treatment for morphinism which is worth mentioning is that which substitutes some other opium derivative. Dionine, which is an opium derivative, an alkaloid without much effect upon the mind, has been used thus; and codeine, in certain cases, may be used effectually.

In such treatments, the drug, whether opium, morphine or heroin, is first reduced in dosage. In passing, it might be said that gradual reduction as ordinarily practiced is unsatisfactory. Instead of reducing the dose by a certain fixed fraction, however small, each day, the patient will suffer much less, and bear the reduction much better, if his dose be reduced by a considerable amount—say one fourth—at once, at intervals of ten days. The first reduction may even be one half, for most addicts take more than they need to be comfortable. If the addict's usual dose be cut in two, he may be somewhat restless and uneasy; he will yawn more or less, and be rather irritable; but he will not suffer, and in a week or ten days he will be quite as comfortable on the half dose as he was before on his full dosage. When equilibrium has thus been reëstablished, the dose may be reduced again; this time by not more than one fourth. Again, after ten days or so, the addict will be quite comfortable, and his dosage may once more be cut, until it has been thus reduced, not regularly but by intervals, to the low limit of tolerance. This varies with individuals, but is usually about one to two grains of morphine per day, one half to one and a half grains of heroin, and perhaps six or eight grains of opium.

When the drug has been reduced to this low limit which is the point at which any further reduction will cause marked withdrawal symptoms, it is stopped entirely, and dionine, or codeine, is given instead.

If the patient be given brisk catharsis, as outlined above, during this period, the change may be accomplished without much suffering; and dionine, or codeine, will keep him reasonably comfortable during the withdrawal stage. If one grain of morphine, for example, will keep an addict comfortable, about four grains of codeine will keep him almost as much so. This dosage of codeine should be continued for five to seven days, after which the codeine may be reduced quite rapidly. In ten or twelve days, two grains of codeine in the twenty-four hours, in half-grain doses, will be enough to keep the addict comfortable, and will permit him to sleep six or eight hours a night. After the twelfth day, a single dose of codeine per day for three or four days—about three-quarters grain—is enough. In two weeks to sixteen days all medication may be withdrawn.

This method is of use particularly in very infirm cases, and in those who, by reason of unfortunate experience, perhaps, have an abnormal fear of other methods. It requires more time and patience than the Pettey method, and is no more efficient. Its advantage is that there is no period of intense suffering, so that no powerful narcotic need be given, and there is no stage of delirium or drunkenness such as follows hyoscine or luminal.

We have now summed up, briefly, the accepted methods of treatment for the opium disease and its allied ailments,

morphinism and the heroin habit. It must be emphasized that *no drug addict can be treated at home.*

Whatever the method used, the addict must be in an institution, under close and constant supervision, so that it is impossible for him to obtain his drug secretly. Treatment ought not to be given in general hospitals, if it can be avoided. It is best applied in institutions designed and operated especially for such conditions, and by physicians and nurses especially trained and experienced in handling them. The average physician, however efficient in general medicine, is not competent to apply withdrawal treatment. He will be frightened by the patient's symptoms, or deceived by the patient's sly efforts to obtain his drug. After the first three weeks, convalescence may be more rapid outside of such an institution; because, where the ex-addict is cooped up, day and night, with fellow sufferers, all occupied with their discomforts and cravings, his mind is certain to be filled with thoughts of his drug and with longings for the ease it would bring. He will think opium, or morphine, and talk opium, or morphine, all day long—and dream of his drug at night.

If he can now be moved to some convalescent home where proper supervision can be maintained, he will probably return to a normal mental attitude more quickly; for his mind may be distracted from the drug. However, he must be watched as closely—even more closely—during the second month after withdrawal. For some weeks after withdrawal, the addict does not usually feel as though opium would do him any good. But, as he recovers his usual health, the craving for the drug increases. Consequently, it is during the latter weeks of convalescence that he needs to be watched most carefully lest he relapse.

The cured addict must lead a regular life, avoid all mental strains and undue fatigue, late hours and excitement. He should particularly avoid drinking; for the depression which follows alcoholic intoxication will almost certainly reawake his craving for opium. Always, he must be on the alert against temptation. His physician should take extraordinary pains to keep him in health, and especially to prevent indigestion and all painful conditions, however insignificant; for pain will surely remind him of that drug which used always to relieve pain.

But, if he will, the most confirmed addict may be cured of his addiction, and may remain cured all the rest of his life, and may die free of addiction, a conqueror. None need abandon hope; not even the addict who has "taken the cure" a dozen times. If he will take it once more, and then resolve that, no matter what the temptation, he will never again take even that "one li'le shot 'at can't give nobody a habit, see? Jus' one jolt, an' yuh needn't never take no more;" if he will stick to it, and stick it out, he may still earn and keep his freedom.

There seems to me no need to go into detail as to the treatment of the other drug addictions. In general, the theory of all is the same: brisk catharsis, to remove all retained drug from the system, and some sedative—hyoscine and luminal being the best—to tide the patient over the first acute stage of withdrawal.

Since the present anti-narcotic legislation went into effect, all drug addicts are, of course, technically criminals—excepting those specifically exempted from the operation of these laws: persons suffering from certain incurable diseases, particularly cancer and tuberculosis. Such incurable invalids, and those aged and infirm addicts who, in the opinion of reputable physicians, could not withstand the shock of withdrawal, may still obtain their drugs legitimately; but all other addicts are

lawbreakers. Nobody knows how many addicts there are in this country, and, as far as I know, there is no practicable method of finding out. But there are a great many; perhaps half a million, perhaps more. Some say over a million. And a very large majority of these are lawbreakers by reason of their addiction, if for no other cause.

It is evident that drug addiction has an important criminal bearing. Addicts fall foul of the law merely because of their addiction, at times; but most addicts who are committed to prisons or detained in jails are arrested upon other charges, and their addiction is discovered afterward.

According to my understanding, the narcotic bureau of the internal revenue department, which is charged with such matters, does not, as a general policy, attempt to arrest and punish the otherwise law-abiding addict. The attitude of the United States revenue officers is usually sympathetic and kindly. Their efforts are chiefly directed toward stamping out the traffic in habit-forming drugs. The department endeavors to check smuggling, and to break up drug-distributors' "rings;" it hunts out drug bootleggers and peddlers, and proceeds against those physicians who debase their high calling by dispensing drugs to addicts, or prescribing them for addicts at wholesale.

Overzealous agents have made mistakes, and reputable and honest physicians have been arrested, and indicted; but this is rare. I do not believe that the revenue department intends to countenance prosecution of any reputable physician who prescribes, or dispenses, drugs for a single addict on a single occasion, when, in his judgment, it is necessary to prevent serious consequences. A doctor may relieve suffering, and handle an emergency according to his best judgment; but he may not continue to prescribe narcotic drugs for an addict—always excepting such incurable cases as are permitted by the law to obtain such drugs—without falling foul of the revenue department.

Its agents are active throughout the country, day in and day out. Their work receives much less publicity than does the work of the prohibition enforcement officers; but they accomplish their purposes more successfully. Almost weekly, one may read that another drug-smuggling or distributing ring has been broken up, its principals arrested and its cache of drugs confiscated. One reads of physicians and druggists arrested for distributing drugs unlawfully. One reads of attempts to smuggle drugs, whether over the border from Canada or Mexico, or by steamship, nipped by vigilant revenue men.

But, as I have said, the department rarely prosecutes, directly, individual addicts who are not concerned in the distribution of drugs. They are being punished enough; the department is interested in them chiefly as a means to an end, and endeavors, through them, to discover the source of their supply. I have no authority to speak for the revenue department; I am merely stating the results of my own observation.

A considerable number of the persons committed to every jail and prison in the country are discovered to be drug addicts. In every prison, and to an even greater extent in every jail and house of detention, the problem of handling addicts and addictions is a serious one.

In many jails and prisons of the old regime, prisoners who are addicts are still allowed to suffer, untreated. They "get cold turkey;" they are forced to "kick it out" without assistance. The more modern, and humane practice, however, is different. In New York, and in several other States, there are prison hospitals equipped to treat addicts, as well as wards in workhouse hospitals, and special institutions. At

King's Park State Hospital and elsewhere, there are special wards to which drug addicts may be committed for withdrawal treatment, either by court order or at their own request.

The treatment given is usually either a modification of the Towns-Lambert method, or of the catharsis-and-hyoscine treatment described by Doctor Pettey. Narcosan has been used largely, in New York City, of late.

In most large cities to-day, the drug addict who is committed to prison because of any criminal act, or who applies to the courts for treatment, may be assured of receiving modern and humane withdrawal treatment in State or municipal institutions, either without cost or at a very moderate price in the case of voluntary applicants.

The matter is not so simple as this, however. Many addicts—perhaps most of them—do not desire to be cured. They will go to almost any lengths to obtain their drug. In every jail, house of detention and prison, there is an illicit traffic in drugs. Wardens and responsible officers do their best to break it up, and often believe they have succeeded, only to discover in a few weeks or months that drug smuggling continues. While jail and prison guards are poorly paid, and addict prisoners have money, or can get it, there will always be some trafficking in narcotics. Turnkeys in prisons have a disagreeable job, which tends to brutalize many. Constant contact with criminals will always corrupt an occasional weak character; even pity for the sufferings of a prisoner undergoing cold turkey may move his guard to help him out. Among guards, also, are a few addicts, and every addict has a fellow feeling for other addicts which will move him to aid them when he can.

So the problem of handling addictions does not end at the prison gates. The addict discharged from the hospital as cured, even though he may be cured —though in some prison hospitals, drugs are easily obtained by those who have the price—will not stay cured if he can help it. Prison life is miserable enough, at best; narcotics help to make it endurable. Many a criminal first learns to use drugs while in prison. Some prisons, according to the underworld dictum, are "regular drug stores."

The problem of handling drug addicts exists in every jail, particularly those in large cities, and most of all in such towns as San Francisco, in which, because of the considerable Oriental population, drug smuggling is common. Chinatown is, or used to be, a veritable Mecca for fiends of all sorts, but especially for opium and morphine addicts. Addicts expecting arrest will conceal a supply of their drug with extraordinary cunning; they sew packets of morphine or opium into their clothes; quilt loose, powdered drugs into the wadding of coat shoulders, between the thicknesses of cloth of coat lapels, or trouser cuffs; they hide drugs in scapulars, in the heels of their shoes, in all manner of odd places. In many jails and station houses, the police are accustomed to turn the hose upon prisoners suspected of drug addiction, clothes and all. Thus any powdered drug which may be sewed into their garments is dissolved and washed out.

All sorts of means have been used to smuggle drugs into prisons and jails. Powdered morphine, or cocaine, is concealed beneath the stamps on letters mailed to prisoners, the stamp being pasted only at its edges, while the tiny pocket behind it contains, perhaps, as much as two grains of drug.

Morphine or cocaine, or heroin, may be sent in letters written on thick absorbent paper, like blotting paper, which has been soaked in a saturated solution of the drug.

Such paper will take up a surprising quantity of morphine or cocaine; and, as long as drug crystals are not visible

to the casual glance, it is likely to pass unnoticed. Guards will scarcely taste prisoners' letters. Similarly, drugs are sent in candy, cakes, bread and the like; either concealed within them—in which case breaking the loaf or each piece of candy in half will usually reveal the cache, or actually made a part of them—in which case it may pass censorship. This will rejoice the heart of the prisoner addict who eats bitter bread or candy with eagerness. In one instance within my knowledge, a prison guard was made very sick by eating a chocolate cream which turned out to be a mixture of fondant and cocaine coated with chocolate. The bitter of the chocolate disguised the taste of the drug sufficiently so that the guard downed it all, though he pronounced it "rotten bad candy." And so it was—for him!

Another important aspect of drug addictions should be mentioned: that is, their relation to police spy work. Everywhere, the police depend more or less upon stool pigeons or "slims," or "rats," persons who are called by these and various other bitter names, and who make a precarious living by trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. As, no doubt, everybody knows, a stool pigeon is a petty criminal who earns partial immunity from police action by supplying the police with information as to more important crooks and their jobs and doings.

Many of these stool pigeons are drug addicts. In cities where opium smoking is common, such stool hop heads are of considerable service in spotting addicts. One of them will go down a line of suspects, and pick out all drug addicts with startling accuracy. Thus, the police are enabled to focus on these hop heads, in order to obtain from them information as to the location of the hop joint they frequent. In many instances, in certain cities, at least—which I shall not name, of course—it is the custom, as I have been authoritatively informed, to supply such stools with drugs for their own use. Narcotics confiscated by the police in raids upon hop joints and drug caches are doled out to stool-pigeon addicts, who are thus made entirely dependent upon the police. To earn the drug they need, these pitiful creatures will split on any one and every one; will manufacture evidence, frame the innocent, if need be; will perform any service, no matter how degrading.

In justice to the United States revenue service, I ought to say that, as far as my knowledge goes, it does not countenance this practice. As far as I know, the revenue department does not supply stool pigeons with drugs, or permit them to be so supplied. The practice is local, and belongs to the police forces of certain cities only.

Obviously, drug addiction is also of great service to the police in another field; that of the third degree. Given a suspect who is a known drug addict, and the police have a third degree ready made, which may be used without overt action, and without exposing the force to criticism.

It is not only considered permissible; it is even held by uninformed public opinion to be praiseworthy, to deny his drug to an addict. "Isn't it a vicious habit, anyhow? Why, it would be morally wrong to permit a drug fiend to have his drug at all." Consequently, it is perfectly easy, polite and proper for the police to say to a prisoner suspected of a certain crime: "Very well. Unless you confess—make a clean breast of it, spill the works—why, no dope! Not one single little jolt." Thus far, at least, it is quite all right. Perhaps public opinion might be more dubious as to the next step, which is: "But, if you'll come clean, why, we'll have the doc, here, to give you a good, big shot, see?"

Very few, even of the most hardened criminals, will take cold turkey when, by turning "slim" they can obtain even

a single shot of dope. That one shot is all they can see or think of; if they get that, the future can take care of itself. And so, usually, the prisoner "comes clean." He tells everything he knows, and, very likely, everything he thinks the police believe that he ought to know. And he gets his shot.

I do not mean to imply that this is wrong. I believe such a procedure is perfectly justified, as long as denial of the drug is not carried to the danger point. Afterward, information having been obtained, the addict may be given appropriate treatment, and his drug may be withdrawn scientifically, without danger to him, and without undue suffering.

Perhaps a word should be added as to the use of narcotics by blackmailers and others. If any person, no matter how upright, can be persuaded to become a drug addict, whether by fair means or foul—by subterfuge, administering morphine instead of some harmless, prescribed remedy; by force, even—it has been done—while the victim is kept hidden for a few weeks, that person, once his addiction is well established, is wholly within the power of the man who can supply him with his drug.

Thus, otherwise honest men may become embezzlers and forgers; reputable persons may be induced to steal private letters and turn them over to blackmailers. That person who controls their source of supply can, and does, compel such unfortunates to almost any degradation. The returns of the drug peddler are often much larger by reason of such indirect methods than through straight selling of dope, at no matter what price.

But if we continue to investigate the ramifications of the narcotic drug evil, and endeavor to enumerate all of the various ways in which it degrades those who touch it, and all of the various sorts of crime and suffering and shame which it causes, we should never be done. The thoughtful reader may consider for himself how numerous are the ways in which this terrible force may be used for evil—and may be certain that, no matter how vivid his imagination, he can scarcely conceive of one which has not been practiced, and is not being practiced to-day.

One more word, and I have finished. It will be noticed that I have said nothing of that new drug, "narcosan," which has been so much in the newspapers of late.

Great claims have been made for narcosan; in the newspapers, many doctors who should have known better have made glowing statements as to its efficacy. Briefly, the claims made for narcosan are, that, in some way, it supplies a specific counteraction, or changes the body fluids, or creates a sort of antitoxin for opium. Narcosan will, in some way, counteract and neutralize the effects of opium and morphine, so that the addict no longer needs his drug for comfort. In fact—or so they say—after being given narcosan, the ex-addict will be poisoned if he attempts to take his drug.

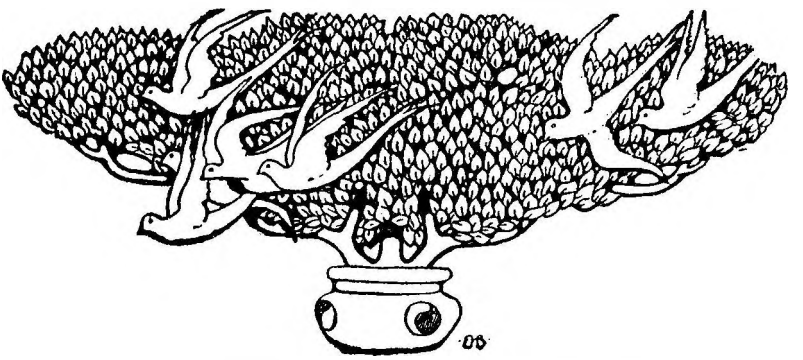
Now, all this is still debatable. Narcosan was first introduced for quite different conditions, and with an entirely different set of claims. Its backers applied to the American Medical Association for inclusion in the list of "new and non-official remedies." Narcosan was rejected, on the ground that the claims made for it could not be proved, and that it was not a new chemical combination, but a mechanical mixture of uncertain content.

As far as my knowledge goes, narcosan has not yet been admitted to the list of approved remedies. Its publicity has been mostly in the lay press; it has been advertised unethically. Reports of its use in the treatment of drug addictions vary greatly; while some claim wonders for it, others state that it causes horrible suffering. The fact is, probably, that it has no great effect.

As I have said, addicts properly prepared for withdrawal by severe purgation will get along without any other treatment whatever—though they will suffer greatly for a short time. I fancy that a series of controlled experiments would show that addicts given nothing but proper purgation would do quite as well as addicts given purgation plus narcosan.

However, as I have said, the matter is still in debate. Narcosan may yet prove a valuable remedy; and I greatly hope that it may. At this writing, narcosan has by no means thus proved itself, in my opinion. I believe that the Pettey method, as already mentioned, is still the best.

Certainly, I should not advise any addict to submit himself to treatment by narcosan unless and until he was urged to do so by a competent physician experienced in the other, and more thoroughly tested, methods of treatment.



FINGER PRINTS FOR ALL

MANY of us who have not thought about it particularly, are inclined to think that some sort of disgrace is attached to having one's finger prints taken. This is, doubtless, because up to the present time, this method of identification has been used principally in connection with criminals.

The suggestion has come from Doctor Raymond F. C. Kieb, State commissioner of correction, that a system be arranged whereby every person be finger printed. This is not for the sole purpose of being able to fasten a crime on a person, but may be used to good advantage in countless circumstances.

Occasionally, it has happened that babies have been mixed in hospitals and there has been no way of proving their proper identity, either by blood tests or card systems. If the mother were finger printed when she entered the hospital and the baby finger printed at the moment of its birth, onto the same card, it would be impossible to give Mrs. Jones' baby to Mrs. Smith.

Persons suffering from amnesia and unable to tell their own names could be located and returned to their homes by this method, for nowhere in the world are there two "prints" exactly alike. One may learn another's handwriting or disguise one's face and appearance to resemble that of another, but it is impossible to disguise one's finger prints.

A victim of an accident or drowning could be identified when mutilation prevents any other way.

Doctor Kieb believes that, were this system enforced, it would greatly benefit civilians and do away with much of the litigation and doubt which clouds the lives of many who are unable to prove absolutely their point in question. Finger prints cannot lie, so they are sure.

STUMBLED IN

By Howard E. Morgan

Author of "Haggerty Detects and Quits," etc.

WITH smug satisfaction, Joe Lampard counted himself an unqualified success. His idle thoughts enjoyed frequent consideration of this gratifying subject. That he was a successful crook did not matter to Joe Lampard; success to him was a matter of dollars and cents. Most large fortunes, he told himself, were accumulated by crooks, genteel crooks to be sure, who kept within the letter of the law, but crooks, nevertheless.

He was unusually well pleased with himself this dreary spring night, as he sat in a little restaurant, watching the rain splatter on the glistening pavements outside. Rain always urged his thoughts into pleasant channels somehow. He was like a bird, he told himself; birds always sing in the rain, and to-night he felt like singing. For the tenth time within an hour he reminded himself that it was not every young man of twenty-eight who could sign his name to a check for fifty thousand dollars. Joe Lampard could do it, not with one check of course; his money was well distributed among half a dozen banks, and he was absolutely in the clear. Three well-planned robberies, and he had never seen the inside of a jail!

All in the clear! He laughed softly and turned to a paragraph in the back of the newspaper, propped against the coffeepot before him. Queer how many dumb-bells there were in the world. Take those people out there, the theater crowd hurrying home through the rain. Most of them lacked something from the neck up. He laughed again. Of course, he couldn't speak for the world in general, but certain it was that Joe Lampard had never experienced any difficulty in finding a sucker when he needed one. His smiling eyes reread the paragraph in the newspaper to which he had turned.

"John Haines Seeks New Trial."

This was the heading. The balance of the short paragraph explained in brief reportorial style just why John Haines would probably not be granted another trial.

Joe Lampard's grin broadened. He and John Haines had worked side by side at the plant of the Henderson Electric Co. for two years before the robbery, when Joe Lampard, after six months' careful preparation, had stolen the company's pay roll amounting to approximately twenty thousand dollars. Haines had known absolutely nothing about it, and yet, right now he was doing time for the crime which Joe Lampard had committed. Framed! Yes, John Haines had been framed. Always, in his few dismal moments, Joe Lampard could bring his thoughts back to their usual pleasant state by recalling the Haines' trial. Poor, honest, hard-working, earnest John Haines! Not so dumb, either, just earnest, and as guileless as a new-born babe. But John Haines was not the only one who had been framed. There had been others—two others.

On both of his previous jobs, Lampard had in each case successfully laid the blame at the door of an innocent man. These things, he told himself, were the marks of genius. He was clever, no doubt about it. No one appreciated Joe Lampard's cleverness nearly as fully as did Joe Lampard himself.

It was nearly midnight, and the few stragglers, who had stopped in the little Boylston Street restaurant for a bite to eat before going home after the show, were leaving, singly, in pairs and in groups. Pleasantly engaged in his own thoughts, Lampard paid little attention to the heterogeneous throng passing in and out, around and about his table. Born and brought up in the heart of the city of Boston, he had become used to people. He felt out of place, self-conscious, disturbed, when he was alone. A patch of green grass on the Common, for instance, dew-wet and beautiful on a sunlit summer morning, impressed him only as a dismal spot—if there were no people about. Endless processions of human beings formed a definite and necessary background to his very existence. His best-laid plans had been formulated, and developed to the point of action, in the restaurants, in theaters, wherever there were people.

Hence, Joe Lampard's pleasant train of thought broke abruptly when he realized that he was practically alone in the restaurant. There was a girl there, a blond and rather pretty little thing. She had been there when he came in, and he had purposely chosen a table where he could watch her, and where, if things turned out right, he could carry on a silent conversation with her. Joe Lampard was thoroughly appreciative of feminine pulchritude. He liked blondes, particularly, and availed himself of every chance offering the possibility of becoming acquainted with one of these.

This particular lady, however, had paid no attention to his long-distance advances, and, after a few futile attempt, he had turned his attention to one more appreciative of the good qualities of Joe Lampard, to wit, himself.

There was one other reason why he had not thrust his attentions too forcibly upon this certain young lady. There was something vaguely familiar about her; perhaps he had been out with her before. He did not recall it, but if he had, perhaps something unpleasant had happened; it might be just as well if he did not attempt to renew his acquaintance. Queer, she had sat so long here in the restaurant, alone. Perhaps she was waiting for some one; but she did not seem to be watching the clock and she did not wear a wrist watch. Joe Lampard shrugged away his wonderings. He should worry; she was rather a washed-out girl at that,

very pale and with no make-up to disguise the whiteness of her cheeks. She got herself up well though; he liked her hat and the way she held her head up. In profile she was downright pretty; but full face, there was a drawn look about her eyes.

"Time you were in bed, kid," Joe Lampard muttered. "You're staying up too late nights." The girl did not hear him, of course, but he grinned at his own remark, as he pulled on his topcoat. The coat seemed rather tight. He joked about it to the cashier as he paid his bill. "I'll have to stop eating in these good restaurants; getting fat."

The bobbed-haired cashier did not look up. She smiled, a brief manufactured smile that went with her job and was used a hundred times a day in response to a hundred comments similar to this one, at which she was supposed to laugh.

As he pushed out through the swinging doors, Joe Lampard noticed out of the corner of an eye, that the blond girl was also getting ready to leave. Briefly, he considered waiting for her. Any girl, even a prude, would be better than no girl on a rainy night such as this. But he did not wait. Memory of several recent disappointments soured his anticipation.

The wind was cold and he pulled his topcoat more tightly about him. He grunted his surprise. The coat scarcely met about his middle. Impressed with the suspicion that he had come away from the restaurant with some one else's coat, he stopped before a brightly lighted drug-store window and inspected the garment. He laughed. The coat wasn't his! It was the same make, the same color, but smaller; and it wasn't as good a coat. It was quite badly worn, frayed at the cuffs, and there was a hole in one pocket. He started back toward the restaurant.

Then, recalling that there had been no other man in the place when he left, he realized that, whoever had taken his coat, had probably left earlier and would not return to the restaurant on a rainy night such as this in the forlorn hope of securing his own coat. The other fellow had the better of the exchange anyhow, and chances were probably ten to one that he never would make any attempt to effect an exchange. In the right-hand pocket of the coat there was a letter.

Standing before the brightly lighted store window, Lampard shamelessly read this letter. It was a longhand note, scrawled on an engraved letterhead. Not without considerable difficulty, Lampard deciphered the scribbled legend. It read:

DAN: See you after the show, about twelve thirty, Tuesday night.

The signature Lampard could not make out, but in the upper left-hand corner of the sheet was an engraved name and address.

Louis M. Jacobs,
278 Burrell Street,
Boston, Massachusetts.

Burrell Street! That was just around the block. Joe Lampard grinned. Evidently the chap who had taken his coat, probably by mistake, was right now calling on Mr. Louis M. Jacobs at 278 Burrell Street. Why should not he also call upon Mr. Jacobs and get his coat? He had always liked that coat. He couldn't wear this one. If the other chap was a decent sort, as he probably was, there should be no question about effecting the exchange.

Lighting a fresh cigarette, Lampard strode purposefully down Boylston Street. Fifteen minutes later, he turned into Burrell. Tall brownstone apartment houses lined both sides of the narrow street. The arc lights were typically Boston, dim and flickering. Most of the

houses were in darkness. He found 278, however, without difficulty, mounted the high steps and rang the bell. A light flared dimly in the back of the house somewhere, but no one answered his ring. He rang again. Still no answer! He pushed tentatively against the door. Much to his surprise, it gave to his touch. He rang the bell again, then stepped into the dark hallway.

It was very dark in this hallway, but just beyond, a reflection of the hazy light in the rear of the house, pointed out an old-fashioned hatrack on which there hung several coats and hats. This dull light also showed a cord dangling from the ceiling, evidently the light cord controlling the light switch in the main hallway. No doubt his coat was right now reposing on that hallrack. The light flaring in the back, indicating that the apartment was occupied, combined with the failure to answer his ring, angered Lampard and lent strength to his desire to regain possession of his coat. He hesitated briefly, then pushed the outer door open and entered the dark hallway.

Treading softly, as a man will instinctively do when walking in complete darkness, eyes fixed on the light cord farther along the hall, Lampard's groping foot met a yielding substance. Assuming it was a thick-bristled rug, he stepped higher to make sure that he would not trip. He came down full weight on a yielding substance, which he knew immediately for what it was—a thing of flesh and blood!

He cried out, involuntarily, stumbled and fell, hands outstretched, groping for the floor. The outstretched fingers of one hand touched a whiskered face. The other hand, reaching frantically downward to support his unbalanced body, landed palm downward in a sticky substance that covered the floor. Instinctively he knew that the sticky substance was blood and that he had fallen over the body of an injured man—a dead man perhaps.

As a drowning man will catch at a straw, Lampard caught at a small object which came beneath his clutching fingers. With a quick twisting motion he regained his balance and sprang to his feet, thrusting both hands against the wall in the process. The object which his crimson-stained fingers had found, gleamed dully in the dim light. It was a knife, and the lower half of the blade was covered with crimson. He dropped the thing as though it had been a hot coal, then crouched against the wall, gasping, eyes staring, his heart pounding wildly.

The dim shadows along the long hallway flickered, grew suddenly brighter, then died down again. In that brief brightness, the body of a man stretched out flat on his back, came clear to Joe Lampard. Lampard stooped quickly and touched the whiskered face. It was cold. The man was dead. Again that uncertain light emanating from the back of the hall grew bright, and then suddenly, the entire hall was flooded with bright light; half a dozen high-powered electric bulbs flamed with dazzling light, all at the same instant.

Squealing with fright like a cornered rat, Lampard sprang over the body of the dead man and dashed out through the brightly lighted front doorway. He slithered down the steps, scarcely touching them with the toes of his feet, in his frantic haste. If there had been a hundred men waiting for him at the bottom of those stairs, Joe Lampard would have plunged unhesitatingly into their midst. There was a woman there, a girl, standing on the curb, watching. His hasty glance identified her as the blond girl who had sat near him in the restaurant. This fact did not impress him particularly. Just at that moment, his startled thoughts were capable of grasping nothing beyond the gruesome details of

the experience through which he had just passed. He ran at top speed along the dimly lighted street.

Espying a bulky blue-clad figure lounging beneath an arc lamp on a street intersection just ahead, he dodged into an alleyway. The alley was black. He stumbled noisily over an ash can, picked himself up and ran on, hoping against hope that the particular alley he had chosen would not be a blind one. In this respect, fortune favored him. A street, glistening in the rain, appeared at the end of the alley. He slowed his steps and strove frantically to regain his composure. Then, with a last fearful glance behind him, he stepped out onto the brightly lighted street which he recognized immediately as Huntington Avenue. No living thing was in sight. A single taxi sped recklessly cityward along the opposite side of the street. He waved his arms, but the taxi driver did not see him, and the red-and-white car was soon beyond hailing distance.

Walking swiftly, looking behind at every dozen steps, Joe Lampard cut across town, paying little attention to direction, his bewildered thoughts considering but the one thing, which was to put all distance possible between him and that house back on Burrell Street. He finally found himself battling against a strong headwind and discovered to his amazement that he was on Harvard Bridge, over the Charles River. The cold air served to clear his thoughts. He stopped in the middle of the bridge, and, after making sure that he was the only foot passenger on his side of the bridge, he huddled down into the collar of his wet coat and tried to bring his muddled thoughts about into a semblance of order.

For the first several minutes as he stood there, shivering in the icy breeze, and staring down into the black waters of the Charles River, one thing ran continually through his mind. His white lips repeated one word over and over and over again. Framed, framed, framed! He, Joe Lampard was framed. Of course, no one had done this thing to him; he had just stumbled into it. But imagine stumbling into a place where a murder has just been committed! That hallway would be cluttered with his finger prints. He had even handled the knife, with which the job had been done. Of course, they might never get him. He had never been arrested before; hence his finger prints were not on file, and they would have no way of connecting him up with this business unless they did get him.

These thoughts generated a brief glow of optimism. But this optimism did not persist. Somehow, he was convinced that he would be connected with that murder on Burrell Street. Of course, no one had seen him enter or leave the house, with the exception of that girl—that blond kid he had seen in the restaurant. Curious that she should happen to be in front of 278 Burrell Street at the exact moment when he was trying to flee as though the devil himself were after him! Had she recognized him? But that really was not the point. Did she know him? Did she know his name?

In some vague way she had looked familiar. If she had recognized him and knew who he was, that was one thing. If she had recognized him and did not know who he was, that was something else again. If the latter was the case, all that was necessary was for him to keep out of sight for a while. Yes, that was all. And too, chances were, if she *had* recognized him, she wouldn't do anything about it. Most people, particularly women, would go out of their way to keep out of things like this. She probably wouldn't know that a murder had been committed at 278 Burrell Street, until she saw the morning papers.

All of these optimistic points followed along the lines of sane logic, Lampard was sure, and yet he was scared—more scared, he told himself, than if he had actually committed the crime. And it was all foolishness. How could they connect him with the thing?

The more he thought about it the more thoroughly convinced he became that they could not, and yet, that single ominous word crept continually to the fore—framed! If, by some chance they did pick him up, the stupidest jury in Massachusetts would readily convict him of the murder of that man at 278 Burrell Street. He had no alibi—nothing. His finger prints were all over the place, and, even if that blond girl didn't identify him, they would have him cold.

"Joe Lampard on Trial for Murder."

He could see the headlines in the paper. What a stupid fool he had been, stumbling into that house the way he had done; but it was too late to remedy things now. The thing was done. However, he certainly could not be put on trial for a murder he did not commit—while he was free—and he did not intend allowing himself to be picked up, if he could help it.

First thing to do, was to park himself somewhere for the night. Tramping the streets might be safe, but it was not particularly comfortable. Briefly, he considered returning to his own apartment. This would be the natural thing for an innocent man to do, he told himself. But he didn't do it, and he knew from the moment the thought occurred to him, that he would not do it. Deep in his heart, he was still afraid. His legs were shaking, and, despite his best efforts at self-control, he continued to look around at frequent intervals.

In whichever direction his thoughts traveled they invariably reverted to pessimistic channels. Somehow, he *felt* unlucky; which was quite unlike Joe Lampard. Luck had played an important part in the affairs of his life, so far. Many times, he had smilingly admitted this to himself. He was a firm believer in the so-called infinity of chance, and he had always felt that some day his luck would break. Right now, he was, in some curious manner, convinced that his lucky streak had finally broken.

Shuffling on toward the Cambridge side of the bridge, he tried his best to shake off the morbid fear that clutched with icy fingers at his heart. He succeeded partially. "Don't be a fool now, Joe," he muttered, "they'll never get you. How can they? Brace up! Use your head!"

He stopped again and searched the bridge carefully in both directions to make sure that he was alone. Then he took off the checkered topcoat, rolled it into a bundle and dropped it into the black waters of the Charles River. "Perhaps that was kind of dumb," he told himself, "but I sure feel unlucky, and I'm takin' no chances."

On the Cambridge side of the river, he strode swiftly away, hands in pockets, hat pulled far down over his eyes. On a little side street, he found a small hotel. An old man, perched on a rickety stool behind a wire cage, thrust a much-thumbed register toward him. "With or without bath, mister?" the old fellow piped. He squinted out through the little aperture in the wire cage. "Be you alone?" he asked. Lampard nodded. "What say?" the old man shouted, and then looking up impatiently, Lampard discovered that the old clerk wore thick-lensed glasses, and was peering at him nearsightedly.

"I'm alone, and I want a room with bath. How much?"

"Dollar fifty in advance."

Settled in his bare little room on the third floor of the dilapidated old build-

ing, Lampard considered that perhaps his luck had not broken, altogether at that. The nearsighted old clerk certainly came under the classification of a lucky break. The bed was fairly comfortable, but he could not sleep. For an hour he rolled and tossed, his thoughts a hodgepodge of unrelated events. Somehow, he could not get that blond girl out of his mind. Where had he seen her before? Was it accident that she had happened to be before 278 Burrell Street just as he ran out, or had she followed him? Assuming that she *had* followed him, why had she done it? What was her motive? Who was she?

The rain pounded against the single dirty window. A milk wagon rattled along the cobblestone street below; an alarm clock noisily informed some early riser in a near-by room that it was time to get up. The blackness of night took on the sullen grayness of foggy dawn.

Just as the old hotel was beginning to come to life for the new day, Joe Lampard slept.

It was nearly noon when he awoke; but he was not refreshed. His sleep had been dream-haunted, filled with unpleasant nightmares. He awoke covered with perspiration. His hands and feet were cold. His head was hot and ached as though from a blow. He dressed quickly, unpleasantly aware of his wet clothes. It was no longer raining, but the day promised to be dark and gloomy.

At the foot of the stairs, he hesitated. A dark hallway stretched the length of the old building. In the front, he could see the wire cage where he had signed the register the night before. A girl was on duty there now. There were several people lounging about the dingy lobby. He pulled his felt hat far down over his eyes, preparatory to venturing out through the front entrance, but at the last moment he changed his mind, and followed the hallway out through the kitchen. In the back, he stepped around a negro who was juggling several garbage cans, and so out into a back street.

Near the end of this street he entered a lunch wagon set on wheels in a vacant lot. Coat collar turned up, hat pulled down over his eyes, he slouched into the darkest corner and ordered a cup of black coffee and some ham and eggs. While he was waiting to be served, he picked up a discarded newspaper from the floor at his side. Despite the pessimism, which had taken so firm a hold upon him, he was totally unprepared for the message conveyed by the inch-high heading covering the entire front page of the paper.

It had happened! The worst had happened; He, Joe Lampard, was suspected of the murder of Louis Jacobs, the man at 278 Burrell Street. They were after him. And, in the exact geometric center of the front page of the paper, was his picture. A remarkable likeness at that! He was amazed at this. Newspaper reproductions of photographs were usually not so good, but this one was well nigh perfect. And where had they gotten it? To his knowledge, he had never had a picture taken. Frantically, he skimmed over the smaller type giving the details of the affair.

The girl, the blond girl, had done it: when the police arrived at the scene, they had found Mrs. Abbey, Jacobs' housekeeper, sobbing in the arms of a young lady who gave her name as Mrs. Ethel Crosby of Brookline, Mass., Mrs. Abbey was hysterical and for some time was unable to talk coherently. After considerable questioning, it developed that she had retired early, and, along about midnight, had been awakened by the persistent ringing of the front doorbell. She had made no move to answer the bell at first, knowing that

Mr. Jacobs was at home, and knowing, too, that he seldom retired before one or two o'clock in the morning.

Often he received visitors late at night. He would, without doubt, answer the bell. When it continued to ring, however, she had finally put on a dressing gown and turned on the gas jet outside of her room in the rear of the house and stood there by her door, with the door half open, waiting, to make sure whether Mr. Jacobs would or would not answer the bell. A draft of wind finally made her think that the front door had in some unknown manner blown open. Then, just as she was about to start forward to investigate, there was a noise as though some one had fallen in the front hallway.

She then turned on the electric lights, flooding the hallway and the front of the house, and went forward to investigate. She found Mr. Jacobs lying on his back on the floor, dead. He had been stabbed through the heart. Mrs. Abbey ran out of the house, screaming. At the bottom of the steps she said she met Mrs. Crosby. Mrs. Crosby was able to give an accurate description of the murderer, or at least, of the man who was apparently last with Mr. Jacobs; and who, judging from his subsequent actions, gave every indication of being the guilty man.

As she was passing by on the way to her own home, Mrs. Crosby said that a man whom she immediately recognized as Joe Lampard, rushed out of the house and ran swiftly up Burrell Street. As she hesitated, Mrs. Abbey came screaming out of the front doorway. Lampard had not appeared at his apartment on Coldwater Street during the night. His description had at once been broadcasted, and the police expected hourly to pick up the suspect.

Ignoring the food which the proprietor of the little lunch cart set before him, Joe Lampard read on.

Very little is known about Lampard. Investigation shows that he has not been employed for some time. His last employer, the Henderson Electric Co., speaks very well of his general character and ability.

Lampard tossed the paper back on the floor and began to eat the food which had been placed before him. Somehow, now that the uncertainty was over, he was quite calm. The fact that the ultimate in the way of hard luck had actually come to pass, did not come as a blow, inasmuch as he had, somehow, been prepared for just this thing.

The proprietor of the lunch wagon paid him no attention, and, as he ate, Lampard's thoughts worked swiftly and accurately toward a solution of his difficulties. As is usual, in moments of great mental stress, one thing of seemingly unimportant nature persistently came uppermost. That picture! Where had they gotten that picture? He had never to his knowledge, allowed a picture to be taken of himself. Not for several years, anyhow. Nevertheless, this picture was a recent one; he recognized the clothes. Of course, it didn't really make any difference. The picture was there, and it was a remarkably good one. It even showed very clearly the checkered clothes which he was so fond of and always wore. But he wasn't behind prison bars, yet. Mrs. Crosby! The blond girl's name was Crosby. The name was unfamiliar to him. And yet, *she knew him.*

He ordered another cup of black coffee and drank it quickly. It warmed him pleasantly and filled him with a new confidence. The thing to do, of course, was to keep out of sight for a few days, until the first flurry of excitement over the Jacobs' murder had subsided somewhat.

Time would dim the details of that excellent picture in the minds of those who would be most actively on the lookout for him. He had very little money

and would have to get some more. However, he did not realize how short he really was, until he drew out his bill fold to pay for his breakfast. He was startled to find that there was but a single dollar bill in the bill fold. Even so, he was not particularly disturbed. He had money, plenty of it, well distributed in several banks.

In all cases, the money was in safety-deposit vaults, in his own name of course. He scanned, mentally, the various banks in question. The vaults in most of them were under the charge of some old fellow who had outgrown his usefulness in more active duties about the bank. Some of these old chaps were friendly—too friendly; others paid him no attention at all.

He finally decided that the Sussex Trust Company in Lynn would be his best bet. There was seldom any one in attendance there. He would go to Lynn by a roundabout way, boldly visit the bank, take enough money for his immediate needs from his deposit box in the vault; then get a room in some small town near by—Revere perhaps; and, under the plea of a temporary illness, have his meals brought to him for a week. At the end of that time, he should be able to get out of town and away, without any real danger of being apprehended.

It all sounded very simple; it *would* be simple, he did not doubt. A bold move, of course, but chances were a hundred to one that the old fellow, guardian of the vault, the one man who knew Joe Lampard when he saw him, would be on duty in some other part of the bank. Not more than once out of the ten or a dozen times he had visited his vault in the Sussex Trust Company had the old man been on duty inside the vault.

There was another very good reason why he found himself ready to choose the Sussex Trust Company in Lynn. In his deposit box there, there were two thousand dollars in new bills besides a lot of other worn bills. These new bills he had carefully sorted out of his plunder, resulting from the pay-roll robbery of the Henderson Co. New bills were usually recorded by the bank giving them out, and he had intended taking no chances. The Henderson Co. had, without doubt, reported the loss of these bills to the bank issuing the money, and the finding of these new bills in a safety-deposit box, would serve definitely to connect Joe up with the robbery, the crime for which poor old Johnny Haines was now serving time.

Of course, the mere theft of the pay roll now appeared in a relatively unimportant light to Joe Lampard. Still, although it looked as though he was framed in connection with the Jacobs' murder, there was always a chance that the real murderer might be apprehended. In this event, Joe Lampard had no intention of being caught and later on brought to trial for some of his previous real crimes. Yes, it would be a very good idea to remove that two thousand dollars in new bills from his vault at the Sussex Trust Company. He wouldn't attempt to use the money, of course; not for a long, long time yet.

For a time Lampard was undecided how best to get out to Lynn. It was only eight or ten miles; a B. & M. train could get him there; or the Narrow Gauge; or he could go by trolley. This difficulty was solved for him in an unexpected, and to him, most pleasant manner.

An old fellow in a rattling flivver stopped and offered him a ride. "I'm going out Lynn way," Lampard said. The driver seemed pleased at this. "Me too," he said; "hop in."

Without an instant's hesitation, Lampard accepted the invitation. Within the first quarter of a mile, Lampard discovered that the driver of the car was

a baker. He was a foreigner of some kind, of German extraction probably, and all he knew or was interested in, was baking. Lampard attempted to turn the discussion to current events and felt relieved when he found that his companion read only one newspaper and that a German newspaper, printed once a week. Learning Lampard's destination in Lynn, the driver of the flivver obligingly turned out of his course and dropped his passenger in front of the bank.

In what he was sure was a most casual manner, Lampard pushed through the swinging doors and up the few short steps into the bank. In the hallway a uniformed policeman was on duty. The bluecoat was reading a detective-story magazine and did not so much as look up when Lampard entered.

A quick glance assured Lampard that the vault chamber in the rear of the bank was empty. Whistling softly, inwardly and outwardly unperturbed, he went straight to his box in the vault, unlocked it, removed the two thousand dollars in new bills, then stuffed an inner pocket with worn money which he could readily use. He locked the box and sauntered casually but swiftly through the bank and out into the street. No one looked twice in his direction, although the street was filled with the usual noonday throng.

Suiting his pace to the majority, Lampard angled on toward the center of the town, turning to the left onto Union Street. He had stuffed the two thousand dollars in new bills loosely in his left-hand coat pocket. Somehow, these telltale bills seemed to burn his flesh through his clothes. He touched them gently at first, then gripped them fiercely in his hands.

And then, suddenly, his arm was gripped in a strong, firm grasp. He did not struggle. Quite calmly, he turned and looked into the face of a uniformed policeman. Unaccountably, his fingers tightened on the packet of bills in his pocket. Suddenly, the bluecoat yanked at his arm. His hand pulled free, bringing the packet of bills with it. And then, panic seized Joe Lampard. He yelled hoarsely, with a mighty effort pulled free, darted across the street in front of a fast-moving truck and into an alley between two new buildings. As he struggled through the refuse in the back of the alley, a police whistle shrilled.

Not until he was temporarily safe on the opposite side of a high board fence, did he realize that he had dropped the packet of new bills. That two thousand dollars in new money, the one thing that would definitely serve to connect him with one of the real crimes he had committed, was gone, and in the hands of the police, probably, right now.

Curiously enough perhaps, this minor misfortune impressed the fleeing man more than had the news shouted to him that morning from the front page of the paper. He floundered up a cinder slope, across some railroad tracks and down the other side. For some distance, he stumbled along through the cinders, ten feet below the railroad roadbed.

A train approached, puffing slowly and laboriously out of the Lynn yard. On the near side of the little viaduct, he waited for the train to pass. So far there was no sign of pursuit, which was not strange. They probably were still looking for him back in that alley.

The old engine was followed by a freight train, moving slowly. On the spur of the moment, Lampard swung aboard. Riding between two cars, he passed on through West Lynn and on out across the salt marshes toward Revere. The tide was low and the marsh lands were dry. Big chunks of ice, water worn and thin, lay like tufts of dirty down here and there upon the marshy flats.

In a sparse grove on a spot of high ground, several wooden frame houses appeared, summer camps, enjoyed by those who were willing to put up with the wetness in order to be near the beach.

On the spur of the moment, Lampard dropped to the ground, and, as the freight puffed noisily away, he started toward the little grove and the scattered frame shacks of the summer colony. These places would be deserted now. What better place to hide away for a few days?

He chose one of the least pretentious of the buildings, and, with the help of his jackknife, readily forced an entrance through a boarded-up window. The place was dark, cheerless, and cold. Splotches of green mold covered the floor, the furniture, everything; even the roll of dirty blankets which he found in a corner of the single bedroom, were damp and smelly.

The single iron cot was rusty and squeaked protestingly under his weight. In a cupboard, he found three kerosene lamps. The bowl of one of these was half full of oil. He lighted it, placed it on a table, and spread his hands above it, for such warmth as the spluttering flame might give. There was not a scrap of food in the place. He really had not expected to find food, however, so was not disappointed. The possibility of hiding away for long without food did not appeal to him. A couple of days at the most, he told himself, then he would chance a trip outside in search of food.

With the incoming tide, a dense, wet fog covered the marshes. Lampard rolled in the filthy blankets and tried to sleep. He found sleep impossible. Never in his life had he been so uncomfortable, so completely and thoroughly miserable.

In whichever direction his perturbed thoughts ran, they always circled back into the same channel. He was caught, caught like a rat in a trap. Now, for the first time, he regretted his lack of knowledge of criminal matters. He had always considered that he was being very clever in keeping away from others of his ilk. Now he realized that a knowledge of police methods would be of great help to him.

There must be some way out of his predicament, some way of avoiding those watchful minions of the law. Some one on the outside to go to in his difficulty, would be very welcome; but there was nobody, not a single friend who might help him. He had always gone his own way, unassisted, alone, free of all obligations. Now, he thoroughly regretted his selfish mode of life. But it was too late for regrets. He was framed.

By the merest accident, he had stumbled into that place on Burrell Street, and now, even if by some rare chance he should be able to clear himself of a murder charge, trial for one of the crimes which he had actually committed, faced him. That package of greenbacks which he had left back there in Lynn would, alone, serve to convict him; and still, uppermost in his frenzied, hopeless thoughts, was a picture of that blond girl—Mrs. Ethel Crosby, she had called herself. Who was she? Where had he seen her before?

Joe Lampard stuck it out for three dreary, uncomfortable nights, and two dismal, equally uncomfortable days.

On the morning of the third day, he crawled weakly out through the broken window and staggered drunkenly across the salt marsh. He was weak from hunger, chilled to the bone from the dampness, and thoroughly miserable, mentally and physically. He stuck to the middle of the marsh, halfway between the two much-traveled thoroughfares leading from Lynn to Boston.

Where a crossroad joined the two

main roadways, cutting the marshlands into the form of a gigantic letter H, he scrambled out onto the road, and, regardless of the many curious glances his disheveled appearance attracted, stumbled along, his thoughts intent upon but one thing—food. He grinned uncertainly as his shaking fingers touched the big rolls of bills in an inner pocket. There were about fifteen hundred dollars there that he had also taken from the vault and could use without fear of incrimination—enough money to buy an entire restaurant, and yet he was starving. After a bit, he realized, vaguely, that he was in West Lynn.

A little restaurant adjoining a garage, finally caught his eye. The girl behind the counter watched him suspiciously until he presented a five-dollar bill, acknowledging the fact that he was able to pay for whatever he might order. An elderly man, with a crutch on his lap, sucked on a pipe and observed Lampard with pleasant eyes.

"Nasty weather we been having."

Lampard nodded. "Rotten," he agreed.

"Rotten for my business, all right. You see, I run this little restaurant just as a side line. I'm a car painter, by trade. I——"

Lampard's attention wavered as the food he had ordered was place before him. He tried his best not to gobble it. He noticed, disinterestedly, that the girl had gone from behind the counter; also, that the man's voice was still for the moment. In the mirror on the opposite wall he saw the girl talking to the man with the crutch. After a bit, the man hobbled away, and the girl returned to her place behind the counter. She asked him solicitously if there was anything else he wanted. He felt much better. "Another piece of pie," he said. "And have you a morning paper?"

She brought the pie and the paper. A quick scanning of the front page assured him that there was no mention there of the Jacobs' murder case, nor of Joe Lampard. He grinned uncertainly. Evidently, he had been forgotten already. Fair enough. Still, there ought to be something, somewhere; if nothing else, an indication that the police were still looking for Joe Lampard. The same old salve! He finally found what he was looking for in a remote section of the paper under the general heading, "Human Interest Items." One of the items read:

Since "Boston Dan" Donnally's confession to the murder of Louis M. Jacobs of 278 Burrell Street, secured immediately following his arrest on Wednesday, no trace has been found of Joe Lampard. He escaped from Officer John Killeen in Lynn Wednesday morning, leaving in that surprised officer's hands a package containing two thousand dollars in new bills. These bills definitely connected Lampard with the Henderson Electric pay-roll robbery, for which John Haines, Lampard's coworker and friend, is now serving a ten-year sentence. Further investigation revealed the fact that Lampard had deposits in various banks totaling over fifty thousand dollars. Police are now working on the theory that Lampard may have engineered several other thefts during the past few years.

It is interesting to note that a sister's belief in her brother was responsible for Lampard's undoing. Mrs. Ethel Crosby, who was Ethel Haines, is a sister of John Haines. For some reason, unknown even to herself, Mrs. Crosby suspected Lampard from the first.

She admits that she has watched Lampard for over a year. It was she who supplied the picture of Lampard. It was she who followed Lampard from the Boylston Street restaurant Wednesday night and identified Lampard as he fled from the Burrell Street house, where Louis M. Jacobs had just been fatally stabbed by Dan Donnally. Lampard, the police are sure, is in hiding somewhere near Lynn. It is practically impossible for him to escape; and the police expect to have him under arrest, hourly.

It will be recalled that, from the first, John Haines swore that he was being framed. This paper has often called attention to the fact that a great number of innocent men are doing time for crimes which they did not commit. Here is a concrete proof of

this oft-repeated statement. John Haines, an innocent man, has served two years of a ten-year sentence for a crime of which he is not guilty.

With his eyes glued to the printed words on the sheet before him, Joe Lampard did not hear the door swing open. He did not hear the tramp of heavy feet across the board floor. The first thing he knew he was yanked bodily from the little stool. Both of his hands were prisoned in an unbreakable grip, and a pair of glistening handcuffs were snapped upon his wrists. He looked up into the round, red face of the officer whom he now knew as John Killeen. The officer seemed to be enjoying a joke.

"Got anything you want to leave with me this time, Joe?" he asked. Three other policemen joined in Officer Killeen's joke, but Joe Lampard did not laugh. He was thinking of Ethel Crosby and through his hopeless thoughts ran a single word over and over again—framed! That blond, doll-faced kid had framed him. But no, *she* had not framed him. It was fate, of which the girl was merely the chosen instrument.

LOSS OF MEMORY AFTER WITCH-HAZEL JAG

GEORGE H. TAYLOR, of Salem, Massachusetts, is on trial for the murder of Stella Pomikala. Taking the stand in his own defense, Taylor testified that on June 5th, he bought some witch hazel in a drug store. Then he went to the Casino at Hampton Beach, where he entered an automobile with four other men.

He admits he then drank the witch hazel, after which he remembers nothing that happened until the next day. Then he found himself in the Boston hotel. He walked from Boston to Everett, and from there he hitch hiked until he was picked up by William H. Dow. Taylor said he found in his pocket the woman's wrist watch which he sold to Dow. It belonged to the dead girl.

He denied having run away because of the belief that he was suspected of murder. He did not read the newspapers and was unaware that he was wanted for murder until the time of his arrest. Moreover, he denied having worn sun glasses. However, it is alleged that glasses similar to those he wore, were found near the girl's body.

Taylor admitted that on March 10, 1913, he pleaded guilty of robbery in Marshall County, West Virginia, under the name of Elmer Thompson. The Buffalo authorities have been seeking a man named Elmer Thompson who is charged with the murder of a boy named Gervaise. This crime was also committed in 1913.

FAMOUS CRIMINAL LAWYERS

SIR EDWARD MARSHALL HALL

By Edward H. Smith

Author of "Swindlers and Scoundrels," etc.

WITH the death in England of Sir Edward Marshall Hall, the modern criminal bar has lost surely the most colorful pleader of our times. In his own country, his very rivals ranked him as the foremost defender of the accused, the most effective swayer of juries known to the recent decades. He defended successfully six of the most celebrated murder cases tried in Britain in recent times, and figured in many other actions which were reported by the newspapers, as the first sensations of the hour.

"Easily the most brilliant advocate for a defense ever known," says Sir Richard Muir, Hall's veteran opponent in many a great cause.

Edward Marshall Hall was born at the big seashore resort town of Brighton, on September 16, 1858. His father was Doctor Alfred Hall and the family was prosperous and socially well situated. The future lawyer went to school at Rugby and finished at St. John's College, Cambridge. He was called to the bar at the Inner Temple in 1883, when he was twenty-five. He "deviled" for Sir Forrest Fulton, later Recorder of London, which is to say judge of the lord mayor's court.

Hall was never for a moment in doubt as to the kind of legal career he would have. The criminal law, with its dramatic trials and its strong play of human emotion, drew the young man with an inevitable attraction, for he was all his life an actor, playing real instead of fictive parts. Tall, handsome, well proportioned, with a chiseled face, he looked like some actor molded to great rôles, and every trial he conducted was colored by the histrionic talent of the man. His fondness for posture and ges-

ture, his great eloquence and forensic ability, and his positive genius for moving effects were those of the striking performer before an audience. He was, in short, the legal exhibitionist in fullest flower, and so most intimately related to the men of the stage.

Hall began his practice in the North London sessions, where he met and often sparred with such men as Richard Muir, Charles Mathews, both subsequently knighted, and F. E. Smith, now the Earl of Birkenhead. In this district, Hall soon worked up a good practice, which later extended itself to the southeastern circuit and presently to the Old Bailey, that famous court of criminal trials. In 1898, fifteen years after his call, he "took silk," which means he became Queen's counsel, the lawyers of this rank wearing the costlier stuff while others are clad in bombazine. And two years later, he was in Parliament for the Southport Division of Lancashire. He lost his seat at the end of six years, but, in 1910, was again elected by the East Toxteth division of Liverpool. In that year, he also became a bencher or senior member of the Inner Temple. And he certainly could have had a judgeship. But, of this, he once said:

"I'm never going up there," nodding toward the bench. "Why not? I prefer to take my rest elsewhere."

And, no doubt, the decision was wise. He must have been a judge of moderate stature, even as he was a wholly indistinguished member of Parliament., while, as a lawyer, he was never anything but the most brilliant bird of the flock. Honors came to him readily and numerously enough, so that a judgeship can have meant little. He was made Recorder of Guildford in Surrey in 1916, and, the next year, came his knighthood. Rufus Isaacs, F. E. Smith, Charles Mathews and Patrick Hastings are a few of his lawyer contemporaries who got much higher formal honors, possibly because Hall was so poor a politician, quite as likely because he preferred excellence in his profession to offices and decorations.

However, Edward Marshall Hall needed neither greater nor lesser honors at the hands of the authorities. The famous cases in which he was the outstanding figure, the wholly marvelous defenses he contrived for his clients, the acquittals he got from the dour English courts in seemingly hopeless affairs, and the spectacular brilliance of his advocacy made him a figure as well known in the Empire and to thousands of readers in the United States as any private citizen of the age. He was the English Delphin Delmas, Abe Levy and Dan O'Reilly, all in one; he was Bill Howe, minus the man's tricks and rogueries. In America there is no legal figure quite like him to-day, unless it be Clarence Darrow, who is far less showy and a good deal more serious.

More than anything else, however, the sensational nature of the cases he tried served to make Hall famous and popular. If we review a few of them we get some idea of the man and his work.

We come first upon the notable Camden Town murder. Phyllis Dimmock, a notorious woman, was found lying across her bed with her throat cut, on the morning of September 11, 1907. In her room was found a card from a man making an appointment. This was unsigned, but, when the police caused a facsimile of it to be published in the newspapers, there came forward a young woman named Ruby Young. She informed the officers that the card had been sent by Robert Wood, a young artist who had been her sweetheart. The girl added that she had promised to aid Wood by swearing to a false alibi. Her motive for betraying the man she once had loved was, she said, a conscientious one. She would not be a party to concealing a murderer.

On this evidence Wood was arrested,

indicted and brought to trial, Hall having charge of his defense. Ruby Young gave her testimony, which appeared to establish the connection through the postcard. To this Wood answered that he had known the unfortunate woman and had been with her the night before her body was found until eleven o'clock. He pleaded that he had known her only three days at the time, that he had not been well enough acquainted to have any close attachment for her, and that there was no motive. His story was contradicted by the victim's friends, who said Wood and Phyllis Dimmock had been friends for two years. Clearly, the jury was in danger of being swayed, as in so many American cases, through moral prejudice. There was the gravest peril that Wood would be sent to the gibbet, not so much for having slain the girl as for having associated with her kind.

Realizing this peril, Hall faced the jurors with the impressive challenge:

"You dare not hang Robert Wood on the evidence produced. You are trying this man for murder, not for immorality, and upon what the crown has put forth I defy you to hang him!"

The jury promptly acquitted the youth, to the wild cheers of the spectators in Mr. Justice Grantham's court. The hostile witnesses were attacked by the mob and got away with difficulty but not without cuts and bruises.

The famous Seddon case in 1912 brought Marshall Hall again into the most lambent publicity. Frederick H. Seddon was accused of having poisoned an elderly spinster whom he had persuaded to live in his home and to convert her property into an annuity purchased from him. He was a business man in respectable circumstances but a miserable miser, a man insane on the subject of making money in small and scheming ways, and one capable enough of the terrible crime with which he was charged. He had bought both arsenic and arsenated fly papers, the latter being used in the poor woman's room. By this device, Seddon evidently hoped to mislead the jury into a doubt of his guilt, since the lady might have drunk the poison. But, brilliantly as Marshall Hall strove for the man, the evidence against him was too complete and his own behavior too indicative. The jury found him guilty in short order, and he was hanged in Pentonville prison. This case was prosecuted by Rufus Isaacs, now Viceroy of India, and it was here the two men had their most remarkable contest.

The case of Ronald Vivian Light, known the world over as the Green Bicycle murder mystery, tried at the Leicester assizes in June, 1920, was another in which Marshall Hall, then a knight, procured one of his remarkable acquittals. On the night of June 5, 1920, the body of Anna Bella Wright, a pretty young factory worker, was found still warm by the roadside. She had been killed by a shot through the head. The girl's uncle had seen her talking to a man who had a green bicycle, and two little girls said they had passed such a man, who had stopped, talked with them and become friendly, so that they took alarm and ran off.

For more than a year, the police and others hunted for the man on the green wheel. Finally, the towrope of a barge on the Leicester Canal became entangled with something on the bottom and brought up—by what magical coincidence—a green bicycle. One wheel and other parts of it were missing, while identification marks had been filed off. By taking the bicycle apart, the officers found the maker's secret number, traced the dealer who had sold it, and so came upon Ronald Vivian Light, an ex-soldier, now an assistant master in mathematics in a near-by school.

Light denied to the police that he had ever owned a green bicycle, but later said he had possessed such a machine but had sold it years before. He also denied

having owned a pistol, when a holster and some cartridges were brought up from the canal bottom. But neighbors and others testified that he had owned a pistol and that he had been seen with the green bicycle on the very day before the girl was found dead.

The case against the man seemed strong, save for one thing. No one could testify that Light had ever been seen with Bella Wright at any time previous to the evening of her death, or that she and he had been connected in any way. The girl's uncle said the stranger on the bicycle, who had waited an hour for the girl, had called her "Bella," which suggested previous acquaintance, though by no means proving it. Again, he may have fancied that he heard the girl's name. Thus, since the body had not been violated or disturbed in any way, there seemed a total lack of motive. It was quite as easy to suppose that the girl had been struck down by some half-spent rifle bullet as to say that Light had done the deed, since he was, as far as any one could testify, almost a total stranger.

Light took the stand in his own behalf, and, under the skillful guidance of Sir Marshall Hall, made a good witness. He admitted having owned the bicycle and the holster taken from the canal, and said he had thrown them there because the police were hunting for a man with a green wheel. Since he had been in the girl's village the day before the death and had met and ridden with Bella Wright, he felt he was employing only ordinary prudence in disposing of such falsely suggestive evidence.

Here again, Marshall Hall argued before the jury in so adroit and moving a manner, with such fine shadings of logic and such bursts of eloquence, that the jury, after some deliberation, brought in a verdict of not guilty.

Five months later, this great defender, appeared in one of the most dramatic of all his roles when he defended Harold Greenwood, a prosperous Welsh solicitor, at the Carmarthen assizes, against a charge of having poisoned his wife, Mabel. The wife, a sister of a former lord mayor of London, and for many years a semi-invalid, had died suddenly on June 16, 1919. A month later, Greenwood announced his betrothal with Miss Gladys Jones, his stenographer, to the immense indignation of the decedent wife's family and the consternation of various respectable and formal friends, who affected to see a new Crippen case. In spite of these protests and suspicions, Greenwood married the girl on October 10th, adding further fuel to the indignation and dismay.

More and more rumors began to fly about, nor did the chatter die away. The following March, nearly six months after the marriage and nine months after the death, an anonymous letter to the authorities caused an exhumation of the body; this occurred on April 26, 1920. The viscera, sent to London and analyzed, showed traces of arsenic, and Greenwood was promptly arrested. A discharged maid testified at the trial that she had served a bottle of wine at dinner and that only Mrs. Greenwood had drunk from it, the inference being, of course, that Greenwood had poisoned the drink. The wife's symptoms were witnessed, and the medical findings introduced.

Sir Marshall Hall made it clear throughout that an arsenical preparation had been used on the grass and plants of the Greenwood place, and that traces of the poison might thus have got into the body of the victim through her having walked on the lawns and handled the shrubs. He brought out through testimony that the victim had eaten green-gooseberry pie on the night before her last illness, and that this might have caused the abdominal symptoms noted.

But the wily lawyer of the defense had saved his climax. Into a case ap-

parently as strong as many another in which a man has been hanged. Marshall Hall now dramatically introduced Greenwood's fifteen-year-old daughter by the dead woman. This half-mature girl, Irene, had been alienated from her father by his early remarriage, and she took the stand in his favor with evident reluctance. But once in the witness chair, she related with the greatest firmness and in minute detail, that she had drunk from the same bottle of wine at table with her father and mother, that her wine had been poured at the same time and that she had suffered no symptoms whatsoever.

The jury, after a delay of two and one half hours, brought in a verdict of not guilty. The British newspapers soundly rated the Treasury—in which department is the Director of Public Prosecutions—for ever having prosecuted a charge founded on anonymous letters, rumors, vile gossip and the prating of one with obviously malicious motives.

In 1923, came the acquittal of Mme. Fahmy, the French wife of the fantastically rich and extravagant young Egyptian, Ali Kemal Fahmy Bey. This scion of a princely Mohammedan house had gone to Europe, where he met Marie Marguerite Lorens, once the wife of a struggling notary, but now one of the queens of the uppermost Parisian demimonde. She had woven about the mad and foolish boy all the spell of a woman of her type, and he, enslaved, had married her. After seven months of bickering and fighting, she shot him to death in a corridor of the Savoy Hotel in London, as he ran from their rooms into the hall, evidently to escape her. Her third shot pierced his brain.

Here was a case in which the outcome might have been doubtful had the trial been set for an American court. For the woman was, though no longer in her first youth, still beautiful, imperious and fascinating. Men still saw in her slender suppleness, her fine eyes and her queenly bearing the charms that had once caused her to be called one of the most beautiful women in Europe. And, surely, an impressionable and sentimental jury of Americans would have refused to believe that anything so handsome could be vicious. In England, on the other hand, there was every reason to believe that Mme. Fahmy would go to the gibbet, with many other feminine killers, or to prison with many more.

Marshall Hall, however, managed her defense so well and pleaded so eloquently that even the stern justice of John Bull was weakened. Hall set up a plea of self-defense, got the woman to testify that Fahmy Bey was exceptionally jealous and brutal, that he had repeatedly beaten her, and that he was threatening and attempting to kill her when she chased him from their rooms and shot him to death! In his address to the jury, Hall dragged the whole story forth in so pathetic and mournful a light that he got a ready acquittal.

Another murder defendant in the life of Marshall Hall was, in many respects, the strangest of all the great attorney's clients. Moreover, he gave Hall the most fantastic experience of his life. George Joseph Smith was a great, brutal-looking man, with wild and strange eyes, who readily fascinated many women of the lower social strata and made it his business in life to prey on them. He had practiced this low art for a number of years, using his charms and magnetism to attract stupid females, usually of the saving servant class, whom he presently cheated out of all they had and absconded.

After a time, George Joseph Smith took into mind the notion that it would be much more profitable to marry these damsels and then murder them, for their fortunes or whatever insurance money he might be able to get. It was found that he had thus married at least nine innocent women and drowned three of

them in bathtubs; hence his popular title "Bluebeard of the Bath," was conferred on him by George R. Sims, a popular London journalist.

It was found later on that Smith had been a criminal from childhood, having been sent to a reformatory at nine, and later sentenced to seven days for a petty theft at the age of eighteen, six months at hard labor at nineteen, and twelve months at twenty-four. He then married and made a thief of his wife, sending her into wealthy homes with forged references and having her steal whatever was of value. He was presently caught and served two years for receiving.

His method with the women he gulled but did not kill was simplicity itself. He flirted with them at the seaside resorts, such as Brighton, found out how much money or property they had and then married them. Then he would persuade each wife to withdraw her money or convert her property into cash for the purpose of opening a little antique shop. As soon as he got the money into his hands, he took his wife to some other resort for a cheap trip and managed to get her out swimming or boating. Leaving her on the beach on some pretext, he would rush back to the hotel, pack his things and anything of hers that was valuable and take French leave, but not without writing an insulting note for her astounded eyes.

In August, 1910, he married Bessie Mundy at Weymouth, and, when he discovered that her money was tied up by a settlement, he took all her cash, a paltry one hundred and thirty-eight pounds, and fled. But in March, 1912, he met her again at Weston, and reingratiated himself. Presently, he suggested that they make mutual wills. In July, he took her to Herne Bay and went to a doctor, whom he informed that his wife had epilepsy. The doctor asked whether she showed this and that symptom, and Smith answered that she did, whereupon the easy-going physician prescribed some innocent bromide of potassium. Two days later, the unfortunate woman was drowned in a bathtub, apparently in an epileptic fit.

Two months later, he received all her property, in spite of a caveat lodged by her family. And, a year later, he married Alice Burnham, a nurse, at Southsea. He had the poor lady's life insured. Five weeks after the marriage, he took her to Blackpool, the Asbury Park of Lancashire, and there she developed a headache, which caused her to be found dead in her bath. This was in 1913, and, for once, the thirteenth was unlucky. Only six days after the death of Alice Burnham, Smith married Margaret Lofty at Bath. The same day they went to London, and that evening at eight fifteen, she, too, was found dead in her tub.

Relatives of one of the previous wives, seeing the report of this latest affair in a publication called *The News of the World*, were struck by similarities and called the attention of the police. The result was that a curious inspector took up the trail and soon had the Bluebeard in a cell.

Marshall Hall defended the man, though he knew the case was hopeless. He had no witnesses and could do no more than make a short address to the jury in which he noted the irresponsible abnormality of his client. He pleaded the reasonable doubt, protesting that no one could drown in eight inches of water. However, all this eloquence was vain. The man was quickly convicted and shortly hanged.

But not before he had given Marshall Hall the weirdest and most uncertain hours of his life.

"Smith was a difficult case," said the lawyer later in relating his adventure with the murderer. "A man who had for years made a hobby of destroying his wives in baths was certainly a diffi-

cult person to defend. I insisted on seeing Smith by myself. I did so, and the secret of his power over women became apparent. The man was a mesmerist. After being with Smith two hours in Brixton, I came out weak and faint."

The eminent lawyer, if no other, believed to the end of his days that Smith had tried to hypnotize him.

Marshall Hall also appeared for the Honorable John Russell in the notorious divorce and paternity case involving the son of Mrs. Russell. Her husband contended that the child must be illegitimate, and Marshall Hall won the case for him through all the courts, only to be reversed in the House of Lords, on the ground that it was contrary to public policy, morality and decency for a parent to testify to the illegitimacy of his or her children and that such testimony had been improperly admitted in evidence.

The great defender also appeared for Lieutenant Colonel Denistoun in that celebrated contest with the officer's wife. Hall gave the lady a bad experience on the stand and won a technical victory, though all sides came through the mess sorely spattered.

The defense of another Smith, Alfonso, was the last and crowning trial of Marshall Hall's life. He was then, in the fall of 1926, in his sixty-ninth year and in poor health. His temper and wind were short, so that he got himself into clashes with the judges. He carried odds and ends of medicines about with him. Indeed, he was an aged man with but one great effort left in him. With Smith saved from the gallows, the old tragedian retired to spend a quiet winter at his home, hoping to summon back his powers and appear again upon the legal stage. But, with the spring he died, worn out with victories.

DOUBLE ARRESTED, MAN GOES FREE

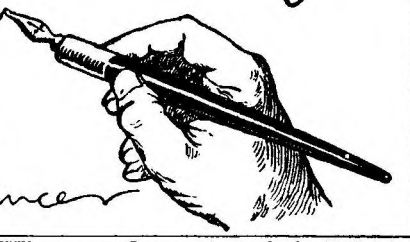
AN odd case came before the public eye a short time ago when Max Gottlieb, 311 Broome Street, New York, spent five months in the county jail protesting his innocence to a charge of grand larceny. If convicted it meant, under the Baumes Laws, that Gottlieb would spend the rest of his days in prison as a fourth offender.

At two trials, Gottlieb was identified by five persons as the man who obtained $4,500 from a Hicksville shoemaker and $3,000 from a Hempstead, Long Island, shopkeeper, by selling them paste diamonds.

The man continued to protest his innocence while his lawyer pleaded with the authorities to give him time to find the guilty one. At last, Abraham Schwartz was brought into court, much to the astonishment of witnesses and counsel. The resemblance between Schwartz and Gottlieb was so remarkable that the police were not sure but that Gottlieb had escaped and was being arrested all over again. But their fears were set at ease when they brought Schwartz into court and found the original prisoner still there, still insisting upon his innocence.

The five witnesses then identified Schwartz as the man who had swindled them, and the latter simplified matters by confessing to the crime.

What Handwriting Reveals



Conducted By Shirley Spencer

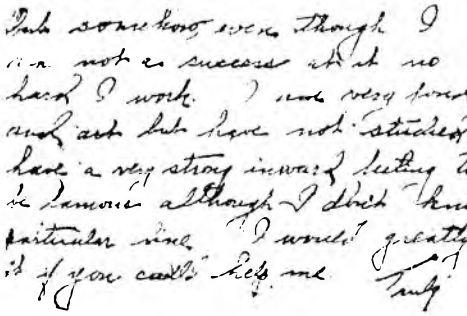
If you are an employer and desire to place your employees in the positions in your office or factory for which they are best fitted; or if you are just about to step out into the world to earn your own living; or if crimes involving handwriting have been committed in your community; or if you want to know the characters of your friends as revealed in their chirography—send specimens of the handwriting of the persons concerned to Shirley Spencer, in care of this magazine, and inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. Shirley Spencer will analyze the samples submitted to her and will give you her expert opinion of them, free of charge.

Also, coupon—at end of this department—must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read. If possible, write with black ink.

All communications 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.

Every care will be taken to return specimens of handwriting, but it is to be understood that Miss Spencer cannot be responsible for them.

A. A., St. Louis: There are a great many people like yourself who are ambitious and greatly desire to be famous, but who haven't decided in what they would like to excel. Naturally, nothing comes of this longing except day-dreams.

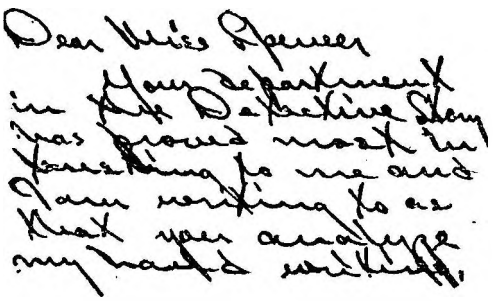


It is not enough to have talent—one must become strong and above the ordinary in every way. The first thing to do is to discipline oneself so that there isn't any handicap that will keep one from getting ahead. Your great fault is your temper. You are extremely nervous and irritable. While your energy is being used up by every little jar, you cannot expect to do your best work in the arts. If music is what you can do and love best, then devote all your energy to making yourself a better musician and don't scatter your forces in other directions.

I see that you seek better things and that you could reach them if you applied yourself. Concentrate!

You really should do something about your nervous condition. It is not in my province to give medical advice, but your physician could no doubt help you and tell you what to do.

J. G., New Brunswick: Your writing is peculiar, and I must admit that it is immature. But at least it is individual and shows that you are a very independent person and will not be molded to the standard form. Some people mature early in life and then stop, and others gain maturity slowly and keep right on until late in life.



Your writing shows great vitality. It also shows that you are extremely combative. Be careful of such a disagreeable characteristic. You will always be hurting others and antagonizing them unless you control your temper better and have more sympathy and understanding. You are very cold and selfish, though you are capable of deep affection if you would be yourself. I think all this coldness and exclusiveness and fighting mood are a pose to hide the real person which is underneath all this; and, when you really mature, you will throw off this cloak and be an interesting person. You use this as a sort of protection because you are strongly emotional and try to hide it.

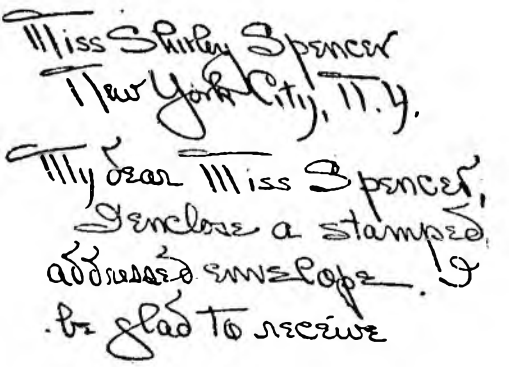
You should go into the arts.

A great many readers ask about using different pens. Naturally, the pen does have something to do with the kind of pen pressure produced. Usually people write with the type of pen they prefer —otherwise they should mention that they are writing with an unusual pen for them.

The fact that some people prefer a stub pen or a fine pointed pen has to be considered in making a delineation that is important, for the person who writes with a heavy pressure will naturally select a pen that permits the ink to flow easily; and the person who is particular to use a fine point does so because it produces a lighter-looking script and is more in keeping with his character.

D. J. M., Colorado Springs: You write a very artistic hand. Your capitals show artistic talent in a constructive way.

You are a very independent and thoroughly capable person. No one will ever rule your life for you shape it out yourself, competently and forcefully, with all the confidence in the world.

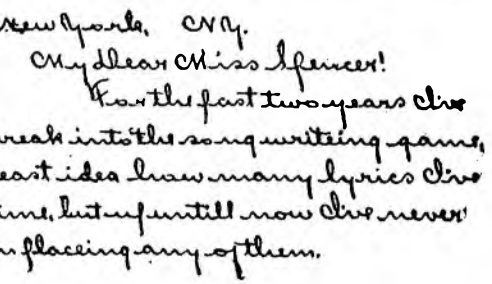


Ambition and pride are strongly marked in your writing. Those bold strokes show energy and great physical vitality. Being a thoroughly materialistic person, you seek the things of the material world and measure your success accordingly.

You are apt to be rather hard and ruthless when you have set your mind to do a thing, and you never waste any sympathy or time on those who are weaker and unable to keep up with you. You are tenacious, once your mind is fully made up, and have plenty of physical courage.

F. O., WILKES-BARRE: Well, you have picked a rather tough proposition, I should say. Song writing is pretty difficult to get anywhere with—under the existing conditions. I'm sure that it is not the fault of your lyrics, but that such a thing as having one accepted is rare and unusual.

Yes, I know that you hear of new ones every day so some one must be getting them accepted. But you must remember that the men who are successful have some connection with the publishing business. Moreover, they are assured success, not because their stuff is better, but because they have made a certain impression on the public, or have had influence in the quarter which is responsible for getting the song on the market. It's a great game, but I can't hold out any hope for you. Keep that up your sleeve as a hobby.



Your writing does not show much imagination. You are quite a matter-of-fact person—unemotional, methodical, and accurate. You would make a good librarian.

You seem to be young and have not had a great deal of experience as yet. Don't become too set.

Mr. D. W. Y., New York City:—I know that you do feel the sting of those "slammed doors," for you are a sensitive person and really shouldn't be in the selling game. You are very emotional and impressionistic.

Some of your capitals show your artistic leanings. I don't think that you are the theatrical type, though. You will probably find that you will lean more to writing as you develop. You need training, however. Your signature shows much more promise than the body of your letter. Develop your excellent taste and get your emotions under control.

Mrs. Y.'s handwriting shows emotion, but of a different order. She is very affectionate and sympathetic, but not a deeply emotional person. She finds it much easier to adjust herself to the practical than you do. Both of you have some technical ability.

P. M.:—How I admire your courage! For a toe dancer and a woman to have her leg disfigured through an auto accident is a piece of bad luck. However, to take it as you do makes it not so bad. I can see that it has meant a great change in your life.

I do not see anything "bad" in your writing. I find lots of nice things. You are a very affectionate, sympathetic person with a pleasant and cheerful personality. I do not see any signs of great literary talent, however. I think that you ought to be successful in what you are doing now.

I still get many letters which have not the self-addressed envelope or the coupon. Also, I wish those who have unusual handwriting would use black ink so that I can use it in the department, as colored inks are as a rule valueless for reproduction in these columns.

Handwriting Coupon

This coupon must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read.

Name .....

Address .....

UNDER THE LAMP

Conducted by Helen Haven

This department is conducted by Helen Haven for those of you who like puzzles. If there is any particular kind of puzzle that you prefer, please tell us and Helen Haven will do her best to give it to you. Also, won't you work on a puzzle of your own, send it in, and let the other readers wrestle with it?

Answers to this week's problems will be printed in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

All letters relative to this department should be addressed to Helen Haven, care of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Some felon has escaped from jail—
Don't let this fact your mind befog:
Although he's *hot* upon the trail
This **hound** is not that kind of **dog.**

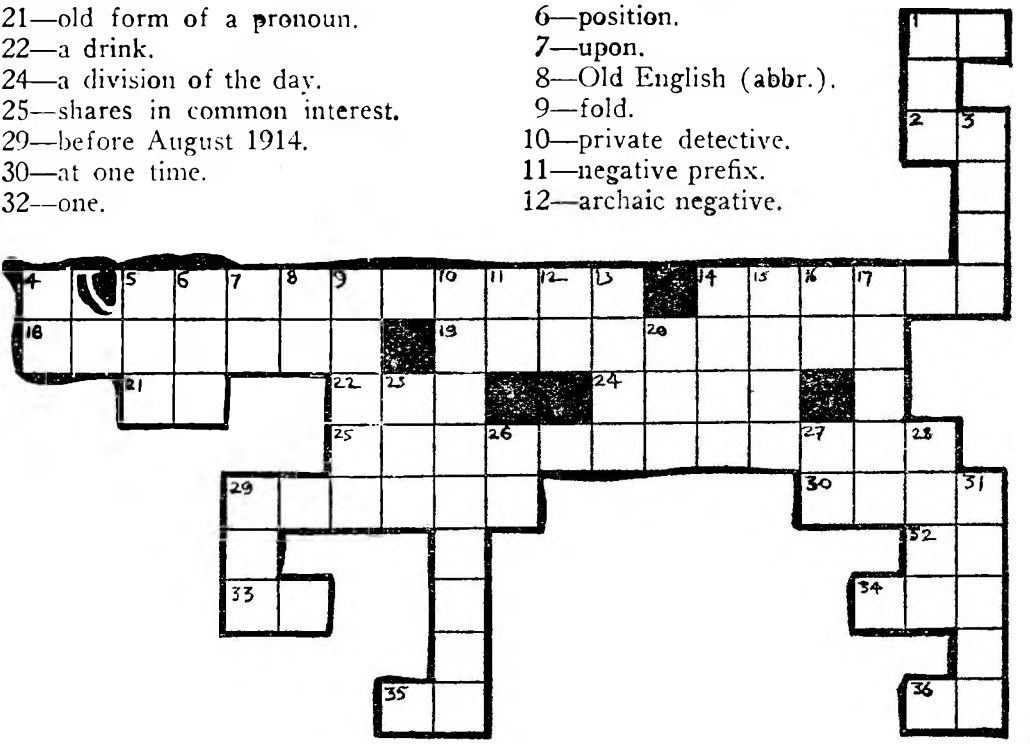
Crossword puzzle definitions.

Across.

1—a parent.
2—concerning.
5—the kind of a dog he is.
14—one who makes an arrest.
18—less obscure.
19—a disease.
21—old form of a pronoun.
22—a drink.
24—a division of the day.
25—shares in common interest.
29—before August 1914.
30—at one time.
32—one.
33—negative.
34—nickname of a president.
35—exist.
36—belonging to me.

Down.

1—one who makes a business of sports (coll.).
3—alarm.
4—to a higher place.
5—the kind of a noise this kind of a dog makes.
6—position.
7—upon.
8—Old English (abbr.).
9—fold.
10—private detective.
11—negative prefix.
12—archaic negative.



13—short form of a Scotch name.
14—prison (coll.).
15—girl's name.
16—mixed type.
17—captured.
20—French for "me."
23—legal science.
26—initials of a president.
27—toward.
28—strike-breaker (coll.).
29—prison (coll.).
31—foe.

The following cryptogram comes from one of Dickens' books, and will be very familiar when you have solved it.

KMKM, KBAMAERX, KBGLAWH, KWGURX MUO KWDXF, MH JRWH NBBO ZBWOX TBW AQR HDKX, RXKRSDMHH KWGURX MUO KWDXF.

In the following puzzle, sent by J. H. Newell of Tonkawa, Oklahoma, you must find a key number of two digits, and repeat it under the letters of the cryptogram, thus:

H F P I Y I N P
2 4 2 4 2 4 2 4

The correct solution, J H NEWELL, is found by taking the second letter before H, the fourth before F, the second before P, the fourth before I, and so forth. If a key letter is so near the first of the alphabet that the key number carries you back further than A as the correct letter, consider Z as the next after A, Y the next, X the next and so forth, as far as necessary. Mr. Newell's puzzle is in two parts, as a question and answer, and there is a different key number for each of the two.

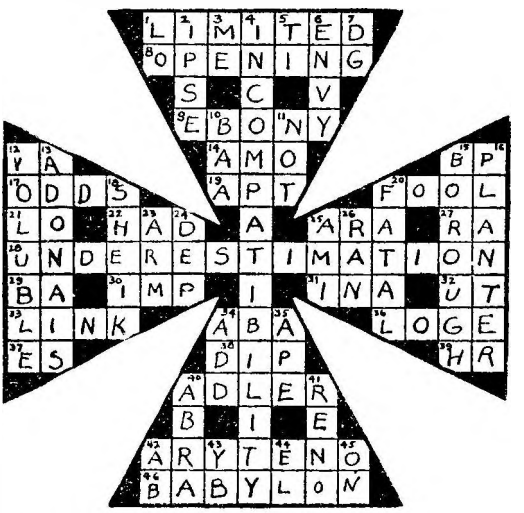
XJFTF FJF CKMNZ GWGOU HQ BHVGS VIG LGOV BHGCJT, BPE DZ YICU PBOF KT JF MOQXP?

JH NLXHU LP FJLEDIR; JH KV MQQZP DU "VCLRSGUA WKP."

And I wish you luck.

Solutions of last week's puzzles.

Cross-word puzzle.



And here is the word square:

H O M E
O M E N
M E N D
E N D S

And then of course the jumbled type is: "God Bless Our Home."

Headquarters Chat

THE "third degree" means the use of forceful methods to obtain a confession of guilt from a person suspected of a crime. The two words strike terror to the hearts of all who hear them and recognize their meaning.

We do not defend the use of the third degree; in fact, we abhor its practice. Yet, we ask you, how, in many instances, can convictions be obtained unless it is practiced?

Criticism of the use and the abuse of the third degree, like criticism of the use and abuse of methods practiced in any business, are easy to make by those who have never been involved in police affairs, who have never been confronted by one of the most difficult of all problems, that of solving a crime, pinning the guilt on its perpetrator and, then, *convicting* him.

It is impossible for one who has had no intimate association with the police in obtaining a conviction, remotely to realize what a feat this is. Strangely enough, it seems as if every citizen, good and bad, must want the criminal to escape detection, for all they try to do in the way of giving help. Of course, there are good reasons for this seeming lack of interest. Few persons want to "get into trouble" or become involved in any difficulty, even if it's only because it will cost them time and expense. Of course, there are many other reasons, too. Some people shrink from the publicity. Then there is the fear of exposure to the anger of the criminal and his friends—a very real danger, let us tell you, too. Also, there is the very human desire to see a hunted thing escape. These and other equally understandable motives make "good" citizens reluctant to come to the aid of a body of men whom they have hired to preserve the law and order, that they themselves may live in a state of peace, security and happiness.

It was only a few nights ago that we were dining with one of the most famous inspectors of police whom it has ever been the privilege of the greatest city in the world to have in its service. This man has an international reputation. He is an honest and fearless officer of the law. Personally, he is as gentle and kindly a soul as ever lived. But on duty he is a policeman, first, last and always.

The inspector spoke of a number of district attorneys as being a bit "soft" when it came to putting the third degree into practice. "But there was Blank," the inspector specified, in a tone of patronizing condescension, "Blank realized that we couldn't do it all by one process of law. We'd have had the suspect in the detention room for some time, going over and over his story—where he had been, what he had said, and so forth, and so forth, at the time of the crime. We'd be getting nowhere. Couldn't trip the suspect. Then I'd just hint to Blank that it was about dinner time, that he must be getting hungry. Blank would take the hint, would Blank, and leave us for a couple of hours."

There came, then, an expressive pause in the inspector's narrative. His big frame hunched up a trifle as he leaned over the table. Very slowly,

his right hand closed about his water tumbler, while his left took into its grasp a salt shaker, and moved it very slowly in a circle over the tablecloth.

"When Blank came back," continued the inspector, with a note of unmistakable satisfaction in his voice, "we had as pretty a little confession drawn up and signed by the prisoner"—note, not the suspect—"as any prosecuting attorney would want for a sure-fire conviction. There would be nothing else for me to do but prove what had really happened."

"To get a conviction." That is what the police want. That's what they're hired to get. They have obtained much evidence of the suspect's guilt. They are morally sure that he committed the crime. They need one thing more—his admission, with convicting details, that he did the act.

What do they do to get this admission? They turn back to methods used upon them and by them as boys. They remember the schoolroom and the teacher's threat to do this or that, if the boy who drew the picture on the blackboard did not come forward for punishment. In the case of their early impressions they had received the same treatment. "Make a clean breast of this, or it will be the worse for you. I know that you're lying to me. Tell the truth." The suspect will recollect bigger boys holding him, while others twisted his arm and kicked his shins in an effort to make him "tell."

So what does he do? The suspect is seated in a corner and, in a gentle, conversational tone is questioned, first by one and then by another. The interrogators work in relays. Now the screws are figuratively tightened even as in reality, during the Inquisition days, they were given a twist that stretched a little more the limbs of the unfortunate on the rack. Soft voices, then, take on a harsh, accusing tone. Insinuations and innuendoes are hurled at the now cowering, crumpled figure in the uncomfortable chair. And then—there is always the rubber hose.

You see, the police feel sure that the suspect is lying. They tell him so. They want the truth. They are paid to get the truth. But truth is golden, and gold is scarce. So far efforts to get the truth in ways, other than from the lips of the suspect, have proved unavailing. Perhaps, sufficient efforts have not yet been made. However, much time and much trouble are saved, if only the suspect will tell all about it. And so the police get out their little picks and, in the rôle of miner, swing them with vigorous and well-directed blows upon the likely vein, the suspect.

We want you to write and tell us what you think of the practice of using the third degree. We don't mean simply tell us that you think it an outrage that the police find it necessary to use the third degree, thus sticking to primitive methods of getting at the truth. Most of us feel that way about it.

What we mean is this: Can any of you suggest methods by which the use of the third degree can gradually be eliminated?

There is a movement on foot, in connection with the third degree, in fact, with all punishment of criminals, which suggests a preventive for the use of force to compel confessions. It is contended by those back of this movement that all criminals are "sick," and that they, therefore, merit the attention, care and methods used in treating those who are ill in mind and body. It must be remembered, too, in considering this treatment of "wicked" persons, that even among the wild tribes of North American Indians, mentally defective persons were not only treated with consideration but with respect. This was recognition, in part, that a diseased mind needs treatment and not punishment.

MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

OLIVER, ERICKSON.—Ill and broken with grief. Wire or write me immediately at Uncle Charlie's where to meet you. Use my maiden name. Do not care to go to Oakland. R. P.

SULLIVAN, ALBERT.—Forty-two years old, blond, six feet and three inches. Last heard of in Detroit, Michigan. Information greatly appreciated by his daughter, Mrs. Margaret Sullivan Huss, 5549 Maxwell Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

MR. KERR.—Was employed at electric power plant in San Gabriel Canyon, Azusa, California, in 1903. Can repay your kindness. Anxious to locate you. Information appreciated by Mrs. Almeda Harrell, Route A, Escondido, California.

HAPPY or **SMILES.**—Received your letter September 17, 1927. My letters returned. Please send correct address. Your little partner and pal, Mollie or Bud.

CARTER, LEONARD or **NICK.**—About thirty-two years old. In Los Angeles five years ago. Intended to go to South America or Alaska. Will not give you away if you are in trouble. Others are worrying. Write to C. L. M., care of this magazine.

GRAY, ALBERT.—Last heard of in Omaha, Nebraska, July, 1925, at State Hotel. Would like to hear from him. Your pal, Private Frank Foil, Company M, Nineteenth Infantry, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

BICKNELL, C. B.—Of Washington. White Star R. M. S. "Cretic," 1915, wireless operator would be glad to hear from you. M. J. P., care of this magazine.

HOOPS, GUSTAV.—I once made you a promise. Will you remember and return to your wife and children? They are lonesome. G. A. H.

GANG OF 128TH STREET, BARBERTON, OHIO.—Would appreciate news from any of you. An old pal, Ira Shifflet, 1911 Industrial Avenue, Flint, Michigan.

ADAMS, CLARICE.—Last heard from at Alexandria, Virginia. May have gone to Philippine Islands. Send address to Mrs. Fred Arndt, care of this magazine.

HOFFMAN, FRANK.—Formerly of 2116 and 1934 South Trunbul Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Hungarian, barber. Family destitute. Information appreciated by wife and baby, whom he left last November. Mrs. Sophie Hoffman, 97½ East Seventh Street, New York City, care of McCallion.

PARDEE, FRED S.—Last seen in 1915. Please write your niece, Mrs. Frances Mitchell Johnson, 1301 North La Salle Street, Chicago, Illinois.

HOLLAND, F. N.—Big Chief, am still your friend and love you. Please write. Sunshine, care this magazine.

HERB.—Mother nearly frantic with trouble and worry. Write to her immediately, giving address, or come home. Your sister, M. M. I.

MARE, JOHN WEBSTER.—Left home about fifty-two years ago, at the age of sixteen, leaving sister, Annie M. Dawney, ago five. Information appreciated by sister, who is now Mrs. Annie M. Needles, Crawford, Nebraska, care Bert Rummer.

SMOOT, ROY ARTHUR.—Last heard from in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in 1924. Twenty-five years old, six feet tall, part of one little finger missing. Information appreciated by his mother-in-law, Mrs. J. T. Dukes, Branchville, South Carolina.

RUSTY.—If we can help you again, write to us care of this magazine. Squire.

JIMMIE or **D. L. M.**—Still waiting for you and anxious to hear from you. Am at the same place. Love. Zelta.

MOTHER.—Maiden name, Annie Green. Married John Call and left him about fourteen years ago, in Lamar, Colorado, and went home to Rector, Arkansas. Information appreciated by her son, Frank Call, Pawnee, Oklahoma, R. 1, care of Joe Penny.

HEYWOOD, JAMES and **DIEL, MURRAY.**—Last heard of in Chicago, Illinois. Please send addresses to George, care of this magazine.

CLARK, JAMES.—Forgive me. I shall wait and be true always. Am heartbroken and lonely. Write Sissie, Darlington P. O., Milwaukie, Oregon.

McNALLY, SHERLOCK, or **OLLIE GILE.**—Twenty-two years old. Last heard of in Illinois. Information appreciated by David C. Gile, care Western Southern Insurance Co., Kalamazoo, Michigan.

DICKESON, ARTHUR D.—Thirty-nine years old, six feet one inch tall. Last heard of en route for Montana nine years ago. Aged mother anxious. Address communications to his sister, Mrs. Katherine Dickeson Everson, 8053 Meridian, Seattle, Washington.

TRUITT, WILLIAM CECIL.—Last heard from in San Diego, California, February, 1927. Present address appreciated by Miss Virlan Hernandez, 216 Europe Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

MATE, MRS. I. V., nee **VIOLA MARIE LOWE.**—Divorced her first husband, W. P. Jacobs. Four children by that union—Alice Fay, died in infancy, Anna Beatrice, Viola Marie, and Wilson Peter. Married Mr. Mate in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. Has two sisters, Lottie and Emma, and three brothers, Emmons, Leo, and Frank. Information concerning any of the above appreciated by Mrs. Anna Beatrice Jacobs Burke, 1375 North Lowell Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

JACKSON, CHARLES H.—Son of Isaac Jackson, formerly of Wiscasset, Maine. Please communicate with Anna Jaqnitti, 930 Fourth Street, McMinnville, Oregon.

FERRIS, ANNIE MAE.—Last heard from in Charleston, Mississippi. Information appreciated by Elmer James Roy, U. S. N. Hospital, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

DUNLAP, WILLIS GRANT.—Last heard of at Luverne, Iowa, November, 1926. Please write to sister, Mrs. Pearl Burns, 178 Woodward Avenue, Paducah, Kentucky.

COLE, PHILIP N.—Left Owego two years ago. Sister anxious. Information appreciated by Mary Valentine, Box 208, Newark Valley, New York.

VIVIAN A.—Please let me know where you and Sonny are. Am well. Your loving mother, Mrs. Sarah Miles, 1016 South Frey Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri.

GEORGE, ROBERT.—Last heard of in Jacksonville, Florida. Write your old pal of Ft. Myers, George, care of this magazine.

MARSHALL, FRED, or **T. J. WATSON.**—Write and send address. Mrs. Alta Marshall, care E. W. Leathers, Alliance, Nebraska.

LIPSETT, WILLIAM.—About fifty years old. Address at one time Sherman House, Prescott, Arizona. Last heard of in 1906 at Goldfield, Nevada. Any information concerning him appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Harold R. Miller, East Walpole, Massachusetts.

BOB.—Am in distress and need a friend. Telegraph or write at once. Sago Lily, Buckeye, Arizona.

ROBERTS, LESTER A.—Last heard from at Fallon, Nevada, December, 1921. Information appreciated by his father, E. F. Roberts, Hur, West Virginia.

MILLER, ORVIS ROBERT.—Last heard of in Wenatchee, Washington, two years ago. Right thumb cut off above the nail. Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. Robert Miller, 445 East Fourth Street, Pomona, California.

DONLAN, JAMES.—Last heard of in Chicago ten years ago. Please send information to Mabelle, care of this magazine.

JOE, CHAS.—Last seen in 1925. Please communicate with Elaine Henry, 538 Bristol Street, Brooklyn, New York.

ATTENTION.—Men in F and A Battery, Sixth U. S. Field Artillery, during September, 1919, or Headquarters Troop and Detachment, First Division, in May, 1920, please write to me. Ex-Private Charles R. France, 24½ North Jackson Street, Greencastle, Indiana.

ELLISTON, HARDY.—Have news for you. Write to Charles R. France, 24½ North Jackson Street, Greencastle, Indiana.

BOYER, or GILMORE, HATTIE.—Colored. Last heard from in Seattle, Washington, in 1922. Expected to go to Anchorage, Alaska. Information appreciated by Juanita Downing, 400 South Frederick Street, Oelwein, Iowa.

AUSTIN, HARRY L.—Laborer. Left St. Paul Minnesota June 1927. Two or more teeth missing in front. Five feet seven inches tall dark complexion hazel eyes. Information appreciated by D. N. C., care of this magazine.

R. RYDER.—Your father has made plans for your future. Write at once. B. M. Sparkes 2½ Federal Street, Salem, Massachusetts.

LYNNE.—Come home or write. Everything will be all right. Mother and Zelda. 314 North Second Street, Goshen, Indiana.

FORSYTH, THOMAS.—Left Cornwall, Ontario, Canada, for California, about forty-seven years ago. Information gratefully received by Archibald Thomson, "Elm Lodge," Grande Ligne, Quebec, Canada.

LAUFFER JAMES.—Last heard of in Downs Kansas. Father ran Van Nay Interstate Hotel. Nineteen years old on September 18, 1927. Write to Keith A. Horton, 922 Polk Street, Topeka, Kansas.

DE COURCEY, KATHERINE, nee **McGUIK.** Formerly of Fifteenth Street, New York City. Lived near Deposit, New York, about ten years ago. Husband a barber. Please send information to Mrs. W. Ritlaw, Box 92, Milford, Michigan.

CLEVELAND, RUSSELL LOUIS.—Last heard of in Marysville, California, traveling with his two brothers, John and Ed, as a steeplejack. Can play a number of musical instruments and is a good dancer. His three children need him. Please send any information to Worried, care of this magazine.

AUNT MYRTLE.—We all love you and worry about you. If you do not wish to disclose your whereabouts, write Bobbie in care of this magazine.

GREEN, CALVIN.—Would like to find my relatives. Lived near Walkertown, Indiana, about twenty-three years ago. Father and mother separated. Information appreciated by his son, Donald Green, 208 Gleeson Street, Plymouth, Indiana.

CULLINS, LAWRENCE W.—Formerly of 610 McAllister Street, San Francisco, California. Last heard of in March 1927. Thirty-two years old, tall, dark hair and eyes. Information appreciated by Mattie Cullins, Belvins, Arkansas.

BRYAN, JOSEPH LEON and daughters, **ETHEL DORIS** and **RUBY OLIVE.**—Last heard from in Cincinnati, Ohio. Information appreciated by H. L. Coleman, 1305 Broad Street, Augusta, Georgia.

KNULL, BONNY.—Last heard of in Newport, Arkansas. Black curly hair, brown eyes, and dark complexion. Please send information concerning her to Marvin Knull, General Delivery, Little Rock, Arkansas.

BRENNAN, WILLIAM M.—Born in Belfast, Ireland. Came to New York City in 1915. Lived at one time in Bakersfield, California. Is a good violinist. His brothers and sisters in New England would like to hear from him. Kindly notify Pat Brennan, Northampton, Massachusetts.

AMBROSE, HARRY.—Last seen in Memphis. Please write to Bertha, in care of this magazine.

DALRYMPLE, JAMES.—Last heard of in Los Angeles, California. Please write to your old pal, Leonard J. Le Drew, U. S. S. "Colfax," Pier 18, Stapleton, Staten Island, New York.

LAWRENCE, MRS. FRED.—Last heard from in Camp Travis, Texas, in 1923. Still think of you and would like to hear from you. Mrs. Anna Knapp, 1211 Fifteenth Street, Niagara Falls, New York.

EKIS, ROY R.—Member of Company M, Twenty-seventh Infantry, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, until December 18, 1926. Please write your stepmother, as she is worried. A Friend.

WALTER, ROSIE.—Thirteen years old. Come home if you want to. We do not blame you. Please write to your worried mother, Mrs. Ada Walter, Box 152, Edwardsville, Illinois.

GRADY, OMAR.—Please write to your brother, Tolbert Grady, Birta, Arkansas.

McDONALD, JIM and **JOHN.**—Last heard of Jim in Michigan and John in Willard, Utah. Parents buried at Watertown, New York. Your brother, Norman, now seventy years old, would like to hear from you. Write his son, C. E. McDonald, Box 158, McDonald, Kansas.

SPICER, JOHN HENRY.—Formerly of London, Ontario. Left Detroit, Michigan, in 1923. Last seen in Fulton, Kentucky. Please send information to J. O. James, 214 Texas Avenue, Monroe, Louisiana.

SMALL, ANDY.—Write your old pal, O. D. Taylor, 3268 Frankford Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

ZIMMEMAN, PETER.—Native of Switzerland. Was in gold rush of '49. Believed to have died in California, a millionaire, about twenty-five years ago. Would like to hear from any one knowing this party. H. L. Leslin, Pulosky, Minnesota.

BARNES, CLARENCE L.—Served with Company E, 112th Ammunition Train, A. E. F., 1918. Information concerning him appreciated by Mrs. Marie M. Summers, care Bear Creek Log Co., Boring, Oregon.

WILSON, SAM A.—Last heard of in Tivoli, Texas, two years ago. Information appreciated by Mrs. J. E. Montelth, care of Y. Ranch, Box 2, Odessa, Texas.

KENDELL, MRS. E.—Last heard of in Toledo, Ohio. Any one knowing her present address please let me know at once. Don Morgan, 306 North Broadway, Los Angeles, California.

PRINER.—Of Texas. Have not forgotten you and never will. Please write Ruth, of Alabama, care of this magazine.

COOLEY, GEORGE.—Last heard from in Pasadena, California, in 1925. Write to your old friend Mildred, Box 50, Blackie, Alberta, Canada.

SANDEFUR, JACK.—Please write or come back and explain. I believe in you. Love. Linn.

OLSON, TOM.—Please write to your old friend, Orvis Gorman, Route 8, Viroqua, Wisconsin.

ADAMS, LILY.—Born in Webb City, Missouri. Nineteen years old. Mother died and left us with Aunt Martha, who gave you to an aged couple when you were eight years old. Last heard that you were in Portland, Oregon. Would like to find you. Write your sister, Elza Adams, 204 Picher Street, Picher, Oklahoma.

THOMPSON, CHESTER J.—Late war veteran, enlisted from Montana. Last heard from in Fresno, California, in April, 1927. Please send information to his mother, Mrs. Grace Thompson, Belden, California.

O'TOOLE, JOHN A.—Last heard from in Worcester, Massachusetts, October, 1925, working at City Hospital. Write your old pal, Private Edward P. Daley, Company M, Nineteenth Infantry, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

THOMEZ, JACK CHARLES.—Was stationed at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, in 1917-1918. Last heard from at 107 Base Hospital, Nancy, France. Please write to Little Soucx, at 723 East Seventh Street, St. Paul, Minnesota.

SAM.—Your babies need you. Please come home or write in care of Jack and Edith.

BLANCHE T.—I may be coming back soon. Write to "I do," in care of this magazine.

PEGGY.—Am broken-hearted and miss you. Would not have caused you suffering for the world, had I known what I was doing. Please write me at hospital or to Robert, in care of this magazine.

POLISH, or **POLTICK, FRANK.**—Has not been heard from in sixteen years. Has two daughters, Frances and Cora, who were married a year ago. Information appreciated by Mrs. Frances Fetherolf, 4725 West Thirty-eighth Avenue, Denver, Colorado.

HETHCOAT, JAMES WILSON.—Formerly of 1428 Market Street, St. Louis, Missouri. Information appreciated by B. B. Shipman, 2914 Dawson Street, Dallas, Texas.

AUSTIN, ROBERT ELMER.—Last heard from in Scofield Barracks, Hawaii. Mother anxious. Please notify his sister, Miss Lilly Robbins, 32 West Deshlin Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.

RONEY, or **ROONEY, ROSCOE VERN.**—Last seen in 1917. Was heard from later in the Southwestern States east of the Rockies. Twenty-seven years old, blue eyes, heavy set. Information appreciated by Howard Kenedy, Route 7, Box 68, Jacksonville, Illinois.

FAEOLER, LLOYD NOEL, or **BOOTS.**—Was in Abilene, Texas, in 1924. Information appreciated by an old friend, R. D. G., in care of this magazine.

OBEN, EDWIN ALBERT.—Eighteen years old, January 13, 1928. Left Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on a motor cycle in July, 1926. Worked on a farm near Strafford for one month. Last heard of in Detroit, August, 1926, out of work. Brown eyes and hair. Stutters. Father worried. Write Mr. Oben, 298 Dupont Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

TOOKER, RICHARD.—Please write or come home, Mother.

GEORGE, NATHANIEL J.—We were together at Fort Terry, New York, in 1910, and later on a cop job at Bridgeport, Connecticut. Please write to your old pal, Clarence I. Dodge, Ellisburg, New York, Star Route.

LOUWAERT, WILLIAM J.—Nineteen years old. Last heard from in Philadelphia. Parents worried. Please write to Mrs. P. Louwaert, 222 Gates Street, San Francisco, California.

MILLER, or WILSON, MARY.—Last heard from six years ago in West Virginia. About forty-eight years old. An old friend needs you. Write R., in care of this magazine.

METTLER, Mrs. FREDRIC, nee CYNTHIA GARDINER.—Born in Nova Scotia. Graduate of R. S. Sanitarium. In 1917 resided at 559 West 171st Street, New York City. Had a sister, Mrs. Parsely, in South Boston, Massachusetts. Information concerning her appreciated by Mrs. W. Davis, Box 112, Melrose, Massachusetts.

GUENTHER, WILLIAM J.—Last heard from at Purdu University, Lafayette, Indiana, in 1920. Please write to Lillian, care of this magazine.

JAMES, GLENNA LOIS or DORIS.—Formerly of Paris, Texas. Your brother has important news for you. Please write W. F. H., care of this magazine.

HULLENDER, FRANK.—Last heard from in North Carolina. Important. Please write to W. F. H., care of this magazine.

STEVENS, NORMAN H.—Left Butler, Missouri, fifteen years ago for Oregon. Please write to Milton A. Stevens, care of this magazine.

PHILLIPS, GREY.—Last heard from in Utah or Nevada, working for U. P. Railroad. Tall, slender, reddish-brown hair, extremely talkative. Mother worried. Please send information to A. D. P., Jr., care of this magazine.

BILLIE.—Mother not well, the rest fine. All is forgiven. Write often. S. M. Turpin, Hector, Minnesota.

GREGORY, HARRY.—I need you. Write Allie, 715½ West Third Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

FLETCHER, ROBERT A.—Killed near Hartshorn or Haileyville, Oklahoma, at that time Indian Territory, about twenty-five years ago. His wife's name was Minnie. Children that were placed in orphanage at Fort Smith, Arkansas, were Robert, Mary, Alice, and Georgia. Any one knowing anything about my father's life kindly write to Georgia Lee, care of this magazine.

COYLE, CATHERINE.—Left at the New York Foundling Hospital when two weeks old. Adopted by a family in Morrowville, Kansas. Would like to locate my real parents and relatives. Information appreciated by Mrs. Guy Swartz, Box 789, Mercedes, Texas.

JOE BENEDICT'S SONS.—Twins. Last heard of on a farm near Cornersville, Tennessee. Mother's name was Mary. Heard Joe was dead; if so, would like to hear from his sons. Information appreciated by their cousin, Anna McVay, Box 75, Augusta, Arkansas.

WRIGHT, CLARENCE.—Sorry for the misunderstanding. Am ill. Please come at once. Mrs. Bernice M. Wright, General Delivery, Vienna, West Virginia.

GALAHO, GENE and JANE.—Last heard from in Pueblo, Colorado. Were living with their grandmother. Gene a cripple. Information appreciated by their cousin, Edward Warner, Polytechnic, Montana.

BELL, NORA.—Your sister Anna, who was adopted from the Arkansas Children's Home in Little Rock, Arkansas, by Mr. and Mrs. Merrill, of Stuttgart, Arkansas, is anxious to find you. Please write to Anna Bell Merrill, Box 178, Roe, Arkansas.

ROGERS, BEVERLY.—Taught school in Texas. Last seen in 1918, after a canteen dance in New York City. Sailed for France the next morning. Still hoping to hear from you. Write to H., care of this magazine.

TERRY, JOHN WILLIAM.—Died at New Castle, California, about thirty-six years ago. Have pictures of his brothers who lived in Ennis, Texas. Information concerning his brothers or sisters appreciated by his daughter, Lela Terry Hogg, Route 3, Box 597, Sebastopol, California.

MEYERS, MR. and MRS. RUSSEL.—At one time belonged to the Independent Order of Foresters. Last heard from six years ago, in Bartlett Street, San Francisco. Please write Mrs. Lela Hogg, Route 3, Box 597, Sebastopol, California.

GREGORY, OSCAR L.—Last heard from in Dyerville, Iowa, in March, 1921. Was then employed by the Chicago Portrait Co. Thirty-eight years old. Earl and Alice are in high school. Information appreciated by them. Please write to R. E. Gregory, Jr., 17 Moody Street, Greenville, South Carolina.

RYAN, JOSEPH.—Last heard from twenty years ago. Is a bank manager in Michigan. Your nephew would like to hear from you. P. A. Ryan, Jr., 1107 Eleventh Street, East, Nutana, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

DOWNS, SADIE.—Was in New Rochelle New York, in 1904 and in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1908. An old friend is anxious to hear from you. Write to F. R. H., 6 Whipple Street, Kittery, Maine.

SPICER, HORACE ALLISON.—Would like to know what company he served in, in the Spanish-American War and also from where he enlisted. Please send information to H. A. S., care this magazine.

MULL, M.—An old friend of Great Falls is lonesome for you. Please send your address to Y. D., care of this magazine.

RAY, W. D., or "DOWL."—Important news for him. Information appreciated by Sally, care of this magazine.

LEE, MAY, GOLDY, CARL, and EDNA.—Mother's name, Frane Bates. Please write to your father, who is getting old and would like to hear from you. R. E. Lee, Trowbridge, California.

LAMPSON, EARL.—Thirty-five years old. Last seen in Proberta, California, in 1916. We moved to Susanville, California. Am married to Bert. Write to sis, Mrs. R. E. Lee, Trowbridge, California.

THACKER, SALLIE, BLANCHIE, and HATTIE MAY.—Your stepmother, who has not seen you in twenty-five years, would like to hear from you. Write Virgie Reese, Masidona, Texas.

BINNELL, MR.—Engineer. Last heard of in Arizona. Never knew why you stopped writing to Box 768. Father and mother are dead. Write A. B., care this magazine.

B. R. G.—Please write to mother. Give your orders. All will be well. Brother A. was hurt, and N. shot. Write to R. A. G., care of this magazine.

GLAUSER, M. A., or DICK.—Last heard from in Chicago in June, 1927. Dark-brown hair and eyes. Any one knowing where he is please write to Mary, care of this magazine.

BENTON, ZEB DAVIS.—Last heard of in Alabama City, Alabama, in 1912. Separated from my mother September, 1909, in Columbus, Mississippi. I was born January 4, 1910. Have never seen him but have his picture. Would like to hear from him or any of his relatives. Please write to his son, David Elight Benton, 13 Short Street, Gadsden, Alabama.

ROBERSON, WILLIE MAE.—About twenty-two years old. Had a brother, Raymond. Her mother married Mike Shoeman. Information appreciated by Maude Cannon, Box 17, Wilson, Arkansas.

WICKMAN, MRS. HAROLD.—Last heard from in Memphis, Tennessee. Formerly lived in Arkansas. Had two children, Harold, Jr., and Fern. Information appreciated by Maude Cannon, Box 17, Wilson, Arkansas.

SCHEFFE, CAROL PHILLIP.—About thirty-five years old. Blond. Last heard from in vicinity of Irvington, Indiana. Worked at the shops on Brookville Road. Write to your old friend Bob, care of this magazine.

SCOTT, LIZZIE MAY.—About fifty-one years old. Believed to be in California. Please write to your lonely sister. Am the only one left. Mrs. Alice Scott Hawkins, Route 2, Jackson, Michigan.

SCHELFF, GEORGE.—Please let me hear from you. Helen G. Poels, 221 Risoli Street, San Francisco, California.

DEVENPECK, GLENN, or JAMES McDONALD.—Formerly of Willows, California. Last heard of in Florida. Father dead. Estate cannot be settled without you. Please notify your brother, Wayne Devenpeck, care W. T. Belleu, Willows, California, or Willows News Agency, Willows, California.

DUNLEVY, SERGANT G. J.—Also any who served with Company I, Thirteenth Infantry, at Fort William McKinley, Manila, Philippine Islands, in 1914 and 1915, and any who served with the Fifth United States National Guards, Company L or H, at Camp Cotton, El Paso, Texas, in 1916 and 1917. Please write, O. E. Burnett, 500 Spring Street, Richmond, Virginia.

SULLIVAN, ALBERT.—Blond. Six feet three inches tall. Forty-two years old. Mother's maiden name, Mary Lake. Information appreciated by his daughter, Mrs. Margaret Sullivan Huss, 5549 Maxwell Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

PIERCE, HOMER S.—Left home July 26, 1927. Last heard from in Denver, Colorado. Wife and baby need him. Information appreciated by Mrs. Homer S. Pierce, 633 Davids Street, Marion, Ohio.

HOLLAND, ERTLEY.—Dark hair, blue eyes, right hand shrunken from infantile paralysis. Information appreciated by Marvin Gregory, East Marion, North Carolina.

MORMON, EARL.—Was at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, in 1924 and 1925. In Battery A, Fourteenth Field Artillery. Please write to your old pal, Edward Jackowski, Battery B, Second Field Artillery, Gatun, Canal Zone, Panama.

MARTIN, JOHN or JACK.—Ticket agent at Sterling, Colorado, until fall of 1919. An old friend would like to hear from him, as he has a good proposition to offer him. Write C. D. E., care of this magazine.

DULANEY, LILLIAN.—Lived at 1331 Elati Street, Denver, Colorado, and attended Evans Junior High School. Please write an old schoolmate, C. D. E., care of this magazine.

At the first sign of cough or cold take a Luden's . . . . Let *Luden's Menthol Action* spread its gentle, cooling comfort over the irritated spots in nose and throat. Soreness fades, stuffiness clears, coughing stops . . . . *relief is quick.* In the triple-sealed yellow box everywhere.

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