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by Hugh Dawson

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EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXXV Contents for May 9, 1925 No. 1

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MISCELLANEOUS

DEPARTMENTS

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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXXV May 9, 1925 No. 1

The Midnight Terror

by

Hugh Dawson

Author of "Stalked in the Dark," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE BELFRY GHOST.

ANXIOUSLY the young man peered about into the jet-black night. "Barbara," he asked earnestly, "are you sure that you are not afraid to go home alone?"

His lone companion, a charming college senior in her early twenties, laughed musically. "Afraid?" she answered, feigning scorn. "What of, pray? The campus is as dark as a dungeon, to be sure. But there are sufficient lights along the walk to give me a feeling of security. What on earth has come over you, Ray Harris? You were cheerful enough at the dance. But now, to hear you talk, one would think we were in an old graveyard."

Above them, the boughs of an aged hemlock rustled in a gentle spring breeze. To the young woman this rustling was romantic, a part of the intoxicatingly gorgeous night. To the lover who was wooing her, it was ominous, funereal.

"Well," he admitted reluctantly, "possibly there is no basis for my appre-

hension, other than a man's instinctive desire to safeguard the woman he loves and hopes to win. But something makes me uneasy. I have a peculiar premonition of evil."

"Don't be silly," Barbara protested. "You are always having queer notions. For a student of chemical engineering, a very practical pursuit, you certainly are temperamental, Ray."

"Better let me have my way," Harris urged. "Permit me to accompany you to your dormitory. Or, at least, allow me to follow within call."

"You will do nothing of the sort." She refused him firmly. "If you tag along, it will double the chances of attracting attention, and I want to reach my room by way of the fire escape without being seen. Although I am a senior, I am subject to Bentler College's inexorable rule that girl students must be in their quarters before ten o'clock unless out on special leave—which I am not."

Harris chuckled. "We've had such a fine time," he said, "that I'm glad we missed the nine-thirty interurban car at Hagerville. It brings you home two hours later than you expected, but it gave us just that much more time for dancing. A wonderful night in every way, Barbara."

"Yes," she breathed, "it was. What a pity, there is no moon."

Through the darkness came the mournful striking of the tower clock in faculty hall. Harris counted the strokes. There were twelve.

"Midnight," he said with a slight shiver. "I should think that would make you fearful to walk alone past the hall. You know the tradition."

Barbara, too, shivered. "The ghost of Peter Barton is said to haunt the belfry at midnight. Sometimes I wonder if there is anything to the legend. Was there really a Peter Barton, or is he just a myth?"

"Peter Barton was a real person, all right," Harris assured solemnly. "He was a student here at the college nearly a century ago. He was murdered—stabbed to death—in the belfry some time around midnight. They never did find out who killed him. I don't exactly believe in ghosts. But I haven't any particular craving to loiter around that belfry at this time of night."

"Does any one ever imagine he sees the ghost?"

"Not in recent years. But my grandfather swears with the utmost conviction and sincerity, that he saw it long ago when he was a student here. He describes it as a queer sort of specter, black and vicious. That is what one might expect, for the original Peter Barton was wild and wicked. It came out, after his death, that he had shot and killed a man in a duel down in Alabama."

A weird sound floated to them through the night.

Barbara clutched her lover's arm. "Oh, Ray!" she gasped, her heart fluttering. "What was that?"

"It gave me a start, too," he said. "But I think it was just a screech owl."

"It was unearthly."

"Don't be alarmed, Barbara. The worst that can be said of a screech owl is that its call is supposed to be a bad omen."

The girl laughed nervously.

"I am going to get to my room and pull the covers over my head just as fast as I can," she declared with emphasis. "Having played basket ball all winter, I can run with the best of them—ghosts or humans. So you need not be concerned for my safety. By-by, Ray, and I'll see you after chapel in the morning."

Harris was tempted to shadow her. But she had given strict orders. He sighed deeply. Then he swung about and strode in the direction of his fraternity house at the far side of the campus. Being tall and athletically vigorous, he covered ground rapidly.

Barbara also moved swiftly. Her

route along the winding stone walk would bring her directly past faculty hall with its dread belfry. But she had no intention of continuing that far in the illumination from the scattered electric lights.

This was not the first time she had returned to the dormitory "after hours." On a former occasion, having boldly kept to the walk until in sight of her destination, she had been observed and reported by a supervisor who was watching at a window. Barbara's athletic gait was unmistakable, even at a considerable distance. This experience had taught her that it was strategic to seek darkness for her approach before the dormitory loomed in sight. She knew she must take caution.

Accordingly, she veered off into the black night shortly after leaving Harris, and began to skirt faculty hall from the rear.

Bentler College, a coeducational institution with about five hundred students, was located at the top of a hill. In the valley below and to the west gleamed the lights of a town of some ten thousand population.

The campus was approximately square. From side to side it measured roughly a quarter of a mile. It extended over the flat top of the hill and sloped downward toward the town. It was well sodded. Grass now was growing actively after a long and severe winter with heavy snows. The sod had been dried to considerable extent by the warm spring sun, except at the bottom of the ravine.

This ravine wound through the campus like a snake. It was about fifty feet across and fully as deep. Walks crossed it over two bridges.

Barbara's course led her down into the ravine and up the other slope. There was a narrow brook to leap across, also numerous natural pitfalls. Having attended this college nearly four years, she knew every inch of the ground. So she had no difficulty picking her way through the darkness.

Emerging from the ravine, her dancing pumps dripping with dew, she advanced a hundred or so paces before she reached the rear of faculty hall.

She kept well away from the ancient brick wall of the building. The thought of the belfry four stories overhead, with its reputed phantom, started her heart pounding.

The night, she suddenly noticed for the first time, was clammily chill.

Hark! What was that?

She paused and listened.

There it was again—stealthy footsteps, somewhere behind her.

Turning, she stared into the black. "Ray!" she called tremulously. "Ray, is that you?" Quite naturally, her instant surmise had been that the young chap, who was eagerly besieging her for a promise of marriage, had disobeyed instructions and shadowed her as a bodyguard.

But no answer came.

Nor did the footsteps cease. Instead, the stalking rustle changed to a swift pat-pat-pat.

Some one was running toward her, no doubt of that.

A wave of consternation swept through her. For an instant she stood frozen with sudden terror. Her heart skipped and she had a sinking sensation. In that moment Barbara underwent an agony of fears and wild thoughts. What was wrong with her, she wondered. Why did her limbs refuse to carry her forward in flight? Was she paralyzed? She tried to scream. No sounds came from her throat.

Who was leaping toward her through the darkness? His haste and his failure to answer her call could mean only one thing—an impending attack.

Nearer came those dreadful sounds —closer—closer——

And then Barbara was conscious that somehow she had regained control of

her muscles and was fleeing at top speed into the black night.

Desperately she mustered her entire strength. But the pursuer was gaining. His quick footfalls sounded not more than a dozen paces behind her. Panic-stricken, she prayed for speed. Her prayer was not answered. The gap between them was narrowing swiftly.

On—on—— It seemed to Barbara that she had been running for hours. Yet she had not reached the far end of the rear of faculty hall.

A terrifying hissing and gurgle from the enemy reached her ears. It was inhuman, bestial, uncanny.

A glad cry gasped from her. For now she had rounded the corner of the building and was dashing frantically toward the stone walk with its double row of electric lights in opaline globes at the top of eight-foot poles. A hundred yards or so to the right was the young women's dormitory. She realized that she could not reach it before being overtaken. But she had the hysterically illogical conviction that safety would be hers if she won the race to the lighted walk.

Her pursuer apparently feared as much. Low cries of animal rage rose from him. They spurred her on.

The lights were close at hand. She had a mad craving to leap and embrace them. These lights gleamed on her whitened face and bobbed black hair. They glittered in her frenzied dark eyes.

It flashed over her that the pursuer, too, must now be visible in the illumination from the globes.

She turned her head for a fleeting glance. And what she saw sapped her strength so abruptly that she stumbled.

The thing that was swooping down upon her was tall. It ran on two legs like a man. But it looked like a gigantic bird. From head to foot it was dull black. The face, too, was black. From it glared two phosphorescent and vicious eyes.

The dreadful creature raised what might have been arms. But as they loomed aloft they had the appearance of bat wings.

One thought and only one swept through Barbara's terrified brain—that this must be the phantom that was reputed to haunt the belfry of faculty hall, the ghost of the wicked, murdered Peter Barton of generations ago.

Barbara collapsed in a heap.

As she went down, her strength concentrated in a shriek of anguish and horror, a shriek that carried through the black night to the ends of the college campus and beyond.

Then she swooned. Merciful Providence submerged her in unconsciousness the very moment the pursuer dropped on all fours and reached for her throat.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLACK DEMON'S FIRST VICTIM.

HAROLD VAN NESS was utterly unlike his name. After all, names are frequently deceptive. Many a lily is coal black. And not infrequently a Percival is a hard-boiled roughneck.

The name Harold van Ness suggested that its owner might be a man of culture, an artist, or a shrinking weakling.

Quite to the contrary, Harold van Ness was the champion rowdy of Bentler College. He attended this institution of higher learning merely because his rich father insisted on it and provided copious funds for college diversions outside the classroom. As a student, he barely managed to squeeze through.

Harold's real ambition was to be a prize fighter. He had the makings of a successful middleweight pugilist. Nature had given him exceptional strength, endurance, and physical dexterity. So, naturally, he starred in school athletics. On the track team he excelled in cross-country running and even some of the shorter distances. He made an excellent half back on the football team.

At present, with spring in the air, Van Ness was not interested in much except baseball.

This night he had dined downtown with some pals. They had gone to a movie, then prowled along the river front until midnight was approaching. Reluctantly they climbed the hill to the college.

At the edge of the campus, Van Ness' companions left him and trotted into their fraternity house. Harold was a freshman, and it was a local rule that a student could not be invited to join a Greek letter organization before his second year. So he strode briskly away, headed for his dormitory.

He cut across the grass, humming a popular tune. His route would bring him out onto the main walk in the vicinity of faculty hall.

Van Ness was quite pleased with life and the world in general. He was carrying a new baseball bat he had purchased downtown. It was a bat which, he had decided as soon as he picked it up and hefted it, was made especially for him. As he walked, he swung this bat idly with his right arm, much like a man slashing the air with a pet cane.

Van Ness was within a stone's throw of faculty hall when his keen, youthful ears detected the quick patter of feet on sod. He stopped walking and stared through the darkness.

Into the illumination of the two rows of lights along the main walk came Barbara Hamilton, fleeing as if Satan were after her. Close behind was the black creature with what looked like bat wings. Van Ness saw the fugitive glance wildly over her shoulder; saw her stumble and collapse in a heap; heard her agonized scream.

And then he went into action. Never, even on the track, had he covered ground faster.

As the black creature dropped on all fours and clutched eagerly for Barbara's throat, Van Ness leaped into the light like a warrior at his foe. His right arm was aloft, the hardwood baseball bat poised to crush the attacker's skull.

But the attacker perceived the onrushing danger while Van Ness still was a dozen feet away. The creature in black sprang up and aside with a snarl.

Apparently it had no pistol. Nor was it under any delusion that it could come to grips with the rescuer before the baseball bat would smash down upon it. Whether animal, human or ghost, the bat-wing menace displayed aversion to taking chances on combat with the infuriated, cursing Van Ness.

Back into the night, at top speed, dashed the frustrated attacker of Barbara. And it did not travel alone. Van Ness, ever eager for a fight, was after it like a shot.

So they vanished, around the corner, along the rear of faculty hall, on down into the ravine.

Barbara's scream, shrill and piercing, brought quick response from all directions. Scores of lights began gleaming in the young women's dormitory. Windows were pulled up. Excited voices called back and forth. From fraternity houses at the edges of the campus streamed energetic young men who had not yet retired. They were soon followed by a horde of others who were out of bed on the instant and dressing with breathless speed.

First on the scene was Barbara's lover, Ray Harris. He ran up, panting, alarmed, furious at himself for not having insisted on escorting her all the way home.

"Oh, my darling!" he cried agitatedly, kneeling and gathering her limp form close.

A moment later he said: "Thank Heaven!" For her pulse, he discovered, was beating firmly, though with alarming rapidity. Her breathing was tremulous and convulsive despite her unconscious

condition. Her body twitched. Repeatedly she gasped and moaned, for the black demon still was pursuing her in dreamland.

Harris carried her along the walk and up the stone steps of the women's dormitory. Out over the campus he heard shouts and the running of many feet. College boys, roused by the screams, had rushed into their clothes and were streaming forth from fraternity houses and other quarters, to share the excitement.

In the dormitory reception hall he found the dean and her assistants, also quickly dressed. They were agitated, with the exception of their chief, a white-haired old lady of extreme dignity and poise, who bore up very well in the emergency. Harris placed Barbara on a davenport. The women found her uninjured.

"What happened?" the dean asked.

"We had been to a dance at the Hagerville Inn," Harris answered. "Missed the nine-thirty interurban car home. The next car, as you know, left two hours later. It is a trip of twenty minutes from there to the college. It was close to midnight when Barbara and I parted near the chapel."

The dean frowned. "You permitted her to cross the campus alone at this time of night?"

Harris flushed. "I couldn't help it, ma'am. She insisted on going by herself. Being late, she intended to return to her room by way of the fire escape. And she was afraid that, with two of us, there would be more chance of being seen by one of the supervisors who might be watching from a window."

"Foolish girl! I was preparing for bed when I heard her scream. It gave me a frightful shock. Go on with your story."

"Luckily," said Harris, "something unexpected happened to make the attacker take to flight. I had reached my frat house and was loitering there on the steps a few minutes with my thoughts, before going inside. From where I was, I could see under the trees and across the campus. It was quite a distance. But I saw her come into view on the walk near faculty hall. That was almost the same instant she screamed."

"Did you see her pursuer?"

"Yes, I did. It was a black figure, too far off for me to identify. I ran forward as fast as I could. On the way, I saw another person appear on the scene —a man who came leaping out of the darkness. He was flourishing a club of some sort. The attacker took to its heels, the newcomer close behind. Neither of them was in sight when I arrived where Barbara was lying unconscious."

The dean spoke imperiously to her companions, who were working to resuscitate the girl. "Take Miss Hamilton into the nearest bedroom. Try smelling salts. Chafe her wrists. Dash cold water in her face." She turned to Harris. "Young man, this is a very serious business. You may wait outside. I shall come to the door and inform you as soon as the young lady emerges from her swoon. What is all the commotion outdoors?"

"You hear the boys," Harris answered. "By this time they must be out in full force. I'll have them scatter and comb the campus. Maybe they can round up the fiend. At any rate, we should hear shortly from whoever it was that chased the attacker into the night."

As he opened the door and stepped out upon the landing at the top of the stone steps, a roar went up from the hundreds of college lads. They had congregated before the dormitory entrance in a jostling, closely packed mob.

"Men," he shouted, "Barbara is uninjured."

No need to give her last name. The popular girl was one of the college idols.

A deafening cheer rolled upward and off into the black night.

"The dean," Harris continued, "instructs me to remain here within call. Beat it, the rest of you, and find the scoundrel who attacked Barbara. Even if you don't locate him, you're sure to find an unknown third person who arrived and chased him off in the nick of time."

The men, following roars expressing determination for vengeance, turned with one accord and swiftly vanished as the crowd broke up into searching parties.

The chase was on.

Harris regretted that he could not join it. But he had been ordered to remain where he was. It was quite probable that he could be of more value, after all, under this arrangement. There already were more than enough searchers. And he might be needed at any moment for such a mission as summoning a physician in the event that simple restoratives failed to rouse Barbara from her swoon.

From out over the campus he heard a confusion of shouts and a murmuring of voices as the dragnet spread.

He turned, in response to a tapping on the glass of the door behind him. The dean had drawn the curtains aside and was beckoning. Harris entered the dormitory. Despite the gravity and tension of the situation, he was unable to restrain a smile at the speed with which the feminine members of the faculty had dressed under the urge of curiosity. The dean herself was the prim sort that normally would require fully half an hour for getting into her clothes. Yet she had garbed herself in a few minutes, for she had been ready for bed when Barbara's scream shattered the still night.

"It has just occurred to me," said the dean knowingly, that——"

"How's Barbara?" Harris interrupted.

The old lady smiled understandingly instead of frowning at his impulsively thoughtless discourtesy.

"Barbara will be all right," she informed him. "In fact, she is coming to, now. What I started to say was that I have a suspicion this is just a prank on the part of one of the college lads. Some of them have an atrocious sense of humor."

"I never thought of that," said Harris. "It may be."

"I am almost convinced," the dean insisted. "Barbara's first words, when she began to emerge from her faint, told us that she had been attacked by a black creature with huge wings."

Harris eyed her intently. "Do you believe in ghosts?"

"Tush!" the old lady remonstrated. "You surely are not referring to the myth about the wicked Peter Barton's ghost?"

Harris shrugged. "I never saw a ghost myself, but that doesn't prove that there aren't any ghosts. And the superstition, as I have heard it, is that Barton's spook haunts the belfry of faculty hall around midnight."

The dean opened her lips as though to speak. Then she hesitated until she had glanced about to make sure they were alone in the reception hall.

"In strictest confidence," she confided, "the older I get, the less inclined I am to scoff at the supernatural. When I was a girl like Barbara, the radio would have been considered as uncanny as a ghost. So would moving pictures or the auto, for that matter. I have had several peculiar experiences in my life that tempted me toward a belief in spiritualism. I doubt if there is any one, who has lived to my age, who has not encountered similar phenomena that could not be explained by any known laws of nature. Deathbed visions, you know, are quite common."

Harris shivered. "My old grandfather," said he, "swears by all that is

holy, that he saw the ghost of Peter Barton with his own eyes."

The dean nodded gravely. "I have been at Bentler College for years, and I could tell you of many such cases. The ghost, too, invariably was said to be dressed in black as was the custom when the wicked Peter Barton lived. If you are interested along this line, endeavor to get Professor Baxter to talk."

At this point she veered back to her original idea. "Barbara," she pointed out, "claims her attacker was garbed in black, and had bat wings. That suggests a costume. Therefore, I attribute the incident to a masquerading student with a decadent sense of humor, bent on frightening young ladies out of their wits."

They had been so engrossed in their conversation that they had failed to observe the opening of the door and the entrance of Harbaugh, a slim little student with pinched nose and gray eyes.

He coughed to attract attention to his intrusion. They turned. His face quite shocked them, for it had the pallor and gravity of one who bears serious tidings.

The dean gave a startled exclamation.

Harris stepped forward. And still the intruder did not speak. Harris shook his shoulder vigorously.

"What's wrong?" he demanded. "Why, your face is ashen. Don't stand there like a statue. Speak up, old fellow."

Harbaugh's gray eyes were gleaming with unusual brilliance. And there was no doubt that the emotion flaming in those eyes was horror.

He seemed uncertain just what to say; his lips moved and twitched without making a sound. Finally he blurted out to the dean: "I stepped through the door just in time to overhear your theory, Miss Crandall. You can dismiss any notion that this was a college boy's idle prank. No, ma'am, it was far more serious business."

"Then you found the person who attacked Barbara?" Harris queried.

Harbaugh stared at him dully. "Who do you think arrived in time to rescue Barbara and chase the attacker off?" he asked in a monotonous tone as though not quite sure that the news he was about to unfold was real. "I'll tell you. It was Harold van Ness, an antagonist powerful enough to make almost any one take to his heels. And, besides, Harold happened to be carrying a weapon after his own heart—a new baseball bat."

Comprehension was dawning on the listeners. The dean swayed somewhat. She groped for a chair and sat down.

"They met, then, and struggled?" Harris asked.

Harbaugh nodded. "They did. We —we carried the body back with us."

Harris blanched. His scalp tingled and his blood ran cold. "What!" he murmured. "Then there was a killing?"

"A killing, yes," said Harbaugh. "I'm all upset. It's the first murdered man I ever saw."

Harris shuddered. "Must be an awful sight. But any jury will surely exonerate him."

Harbaugh's red tongue tip moistened his dry lips. "Exonerate him?" he echoed. "Say, are you cuckoo?"

"Why, you don't mean—you don't mean——"

Harbaugh nodded gravely. "That's it," he announced brokenly. "You didn't grasp it at first. The dead man we found was Harold van Ness, not the fiend who attacked Barbara."

CHAPTER III.

PROFESSOR BAXTER, PSYCHOLOGIST.

THE murder of Harold van Ness stunned the students of Bentler College. It dazed the faculty. It shocked the near-by town in the valley below. The story went out over the telegraph

wires and gave the nation a new thrill next morning. By noon it was a rare community that lacked a host of supporters of the theory that the assassin had been the ghost of wicked Peter Barton, dead nearly a century.

Van Ness, however, had been murdered by very actual instead of ghostly methods. His skull was crushed by a blow. As though to make sure of the job, the assassin had strangled him.

An oppressive pall had settled over Bentler College. Gone overnight was the exuberance of youth. In class rooms, professors and students spoke in strained voices. Even in fraternity houses levity had vanished, and the gayest tunes on mandolins and ukuleles had a funereal undertone.

The tragedy's most pronounced reaction was in the young ladies' dormitory. A score of girls packed their trunks and left for home on the first daylight train. Those who remained were apprehensive, and timidly vowed they would never again venture forth at night without strong escorts.

The police of the near-by town could not take a hand, since the college was outside corporation limits. True, they eagerly went over the grounds in a futile search for clews, but this was done unofficially.

The sheriff of the county took charge of the investigation. William Madder was the sheriff's name. And the longer he investigated, the madder he got. For the assassin had vanished into thin air without leaving a trace. At least, that was the way the sheriff described the situation. This was the first murder that had come under his jurisdiction. In fact, it was the county's good fortune not to have had a known killing for a generation. No doubt, more than one had been done to death by poison and other violent means, in secrecy.

Until the elections of a few months previously, Sheriff Madder had been a retired farmer with few worries except the income tax. His motive in seeking the office was mainly to have a title.

A shrewd old chap he was, as certainly as he was tall, rawboned and weather-beaten. But, barring luck, no one could reasonably expect him to accomplish much in the way of rounding up the mysterious murderer. When it came to tracking criminals, Sheriff Madder was an amateur. He would always be an amateur, regardless of experience.

Impressively he went about his investigation of the foul play. Very busy he was, hustling, bustling, importantly grilling, advancing theories, discarding them—yet all the time running in circles and getting nowhere.

It was quickly apparent to Ray Harris, that if the killer were ever brought to justice it most certainly would not be through Sheriff Madder.

Now, on the faculty of Bentler College there was a most extraordinary and unique individual by the name and title of Professor Camden Baxter. To be precise, he had the necessary degrees to make him a doctor in his calling instead of merely a professor. Yet, years before, Baxter had been in the subordinate rank, and there are some characters so lovable and admirable that the title of their earlier struggling days clings to them, in the nature of a nickname.

So he was affectionately referred to as "Prof" Baxter, and sometimes thoughtlessly so even to his face, though in classrooms he was always Doctor Baxter.

Although he was a veteran teacher, he still was in his late thirties.

Professor Baxter taught that profound subject, psychology.

His classes were conducted in a peculiar fashion. Rarely did a student arrive in Professor Baxter's room on time, for the instructor himself invariably was ten minutes or more late. He would come hurrying in, lean and loose-jointed,

and announce, as though talking to himself, that he had been detained by an interesting phenomenon. One time it would be a spider spinning its web against unusual wind difficulties. On another occasion he had paused to study a horse figuring out a unique manner of slipping its halter. Again, he had lingered to observe that finely functioning mechanism, an auto, and wonder if by any chance the machinery had intelligence, though not volition.

When this latter caused a smile, he defended himself with: "Ah, yes, but if you consult a railroad engineer he will tell you that a locomotive occasionally becomes stubborn or manifests other emotions."

Extremely absent-minded was Professor Baxter, and eternally wandering off from the main topic of discourse. Seldom did he ask questions of his students to learn whether they were perusing their text-books. Instead, he would lecture and narrate in his interesting way, rambling and woolgathering. Yet at the close of the semester his pupils had acquired from him all that their books held—and more. Acquired it, too, so indelibly that in most instances it was never to be forgotten.

Professor Baxter was a bachelor. The college had an unshakable tradition that his celibacy was due to a mortal fear that, if wedded, he might forget which mate he had selected from so many charming possibilities. To him, young ladies were delightful flowers, without exception.

He lived in a small ancient house at the east end of the campus. His sole companion was an old woman named Roxy, who prepared his meals, which he frequently forgot to attend. She served as a general housekeeper, picking up after him and attempting to restore order out of the chaos of his slipshod habits.

Late in the afternoon following the murder, Ray Harris received a telephoned invitation to share Professor Baxter's six o'clock dinner at his home. Harris arrived on the stroke of the hour. He was little short of dumfounded to learn that his host had actually remembered the appointment.

The student was alert and eagerly expectant. Nothing was said during the meal, as to the purpose of this meeting, but he intuitively sensed that it had to do with the murder.

Professor Baxter was delighted beyond measure to learn that Barbara had been uninjured, and was now quite recovered from her nervous shock.

After the repast, the professor led the way to his library. It was a cozy little room with a cluttered, disorderly reading table. From floor to ceiling the walls were lined with books on home-made shelves. They sat before the open fireplace, basking in the heat from crackling logs.

Professor Baxter had brought his dessert along from the table—an apple. He peeled the red fruit; then absent-mindedly tossed his penknife into the fire and stuffed the peelings into a trousers pocket. Harris smothered a laugh with difficulty.

Professor Baxter's pale cheeks twitched as he watched the flames. In deep thought he slowly stroked his long, tousled, sand-colored hair. His hands, moving rhythmically, were delicate and artistic. Finally he turned, and his bright-blue eyes studied his guest.

"Mr. Harris," said he, his voice soft but impulsively quick, "you have, no doubt, seen this Sheriff Madder, who has charge of the investigation of the murder. How does he strike you?"

"Why," the student answered, "if Sheriff Madder gets anywhere, I'll be prepared to believe that the moon is made of green cheese."

Professor Baxter nodded impetuously. "My sentiment exactly, sir. Nor have I much more confidence in any private detective that the faculty will employ on

the case. Accordingly, I feel compelled by a sense of duty to run down the murderer myself."

The visitor was unable to conceal his incredulity. "But, sir," he suggested, "have you had any experience?"

"My lack of experience might be an asset. A country lad starting as a newspaper reporter in a big city has no experience. Yet everything is new and striking to him. So he sees important things that a trained veteran overlooks. So with me. Crime is one of my hobbies. That is quite natural, since I teach psychology, the science of why men do as they do. After all, crime is merely an emotional or intellectual reaction."

The professor rubbed his knees enthusiastically as he continued:

"Every person, mark you, is a detective at heart—from the gossiping woman endeavoring to fathom a neighbor's mysterious conduct, to the average man blaming the police for not solving crimes that he believes would swiftly yield to his own sagacity."

"More power to you!" Harris approved. "Where do I come in?"

Professor Baxter leaned closer. His voice shook with fervor. "I desire you to assist me."

A thrill tingled through Harris. "Count me in."

"I thought so. Admirable!" Professor Baxter extracted a cigarette from a drawer of the table, after much fumbling among a litter of papers and odds and ends. His guest produced a match and tendered it. The host puffed feebly, without exhaling, rather spitting the smoke out. "This is no ordinary murder case," he continued. "In fact, I incline to believe that the killing was just the opening episode of a series of outrages."

"You look for more attacks?"

"I most certainly do. To begin with, no one can have any grudge against the lovely Miss Barbara Hamilton. She was the first objective of an attack merely because she chanced to cross the killer's path. Emboldened by his successful get-away, he will make another murderous assault. Should I refer to this stealthy, foul creature as he? The imaginative student body, I understand, has christened it The Midnight Terror."

Harris caught his breath.

"Then, sir, you are not sure it is a man?"

"I am sure of nothing. It may be man, woman, beast, or phantom."

Harris leaned back in his chair with the impressive manner of one about to announce something of importance.

"I made a peculiar discovery late this afternoon," he informed the professor in an awed half whisper. "Harold van Ness, as you know, was murdered at the bottom of the ravine. He was a powerful young man, armed with a baseball bat that he could swing as quickly and readily as you or I would use a riding whip. To have mastered him before he could get his club into play, his murderer must have exercised cunning strategy."

There was a tense pause. Somewhere in the hall beyond the closed door of the library, a grandfather's clock sounded. It seemed ominous, funereal.

"Within a few minutes after the killing," Harris continued, "the body was discovered and a mob of several hundred students was tramping about the scene of crime. Stupid fools! They obliterated footprints that might have been followed or, at least, been valuable as clews. In going over the place just before dusk, I chanced to notice this: The chase of The Midnight Terror, by Van Ness, led across the brook at the bottom of the ravine. There the fugitive had ducked under the dwarfed evergreen whose branches spread out close to the ground."

Professor Baxter was fidgeting with excitement.

"And there," he surmised, "there in the damp soil under the low-lying limbs

of the tree, you found undisturbed footprints of Van Ness and this Midnight Terror."

Harris nodded. His face was quite white. Nervously he glanced at the room's lone window as though half expecting to see a terrifying specter glaring in at him from the night.

"The shoes of a running man strike the ground with force," said he. "They make a deep impression where the soil is moist. I studied the prints. One set belonged to Van Ness, there could be no doubt about that. I examined his footgear to-day. The left shoe had his initials, H. V. N., on the bottom of the heel in projecting nails. Doctor Baxter, those initials showed faintly but undeniably in the tracks under the tree"

"Come, come!" Baxter urged intensely. "What of the other tracks? They are the important ones."

Harris swallowed. His voice came sepulchrally. "The other tracks, sir, made my blood run cold."

"Why?"

"The Midnight Terror was not wearing shoes."

"Barefooted?"

"Yes. And, believe me or not, the feet were not human."

"What?" cried the professor, his eyes popping.

"No, sir. If you doubt me, I will lead you to see with your own eyes. The tracks of The Midnight Terror were three-toed—like the prints of a gigantic bird."

CHAPTER IV.

A DECOY FOR THE MIDNIGHT TERROR.

AGHAST with horror, Professor Baxter stared at his young visitor. A dismal wind was rising outside. A few drops of rain spattered the windowpane, vanguard of a menacing storm. It was to be a wicked night.

"The tracks of a gigantic bird!" the professor echoed as soon as he recovered his breath. "Come, come, Mr. Harris, are you positive?"

"So help me! As certain as that I sit here talking with you."

"This is most uncanny. There were prehistoric monsters that made such tracks. But, in modern times—why, it is unreal. I wonder if this eliminates the possibility of a ghost."

Harris laughed jerkily. "Surely, sir, you do not believe in the superstition that the spirit of Peter Barton haunts the belfry of faculty hall."

Doctor Baxter stroked his chin. He squinted at the flames of the fireplace.

"The longer I study psychology and delve into its unknown mysteries," he informed the student, "the less inclined I am to scoff at anything supernatural. To me, death is a simple change. The soul is to the body what an auto driver is to his car. When the car wears out, it is discarded and the owner gets a new one."

"It is an odd theory," said Harris. "How about ghosts?"

"I am leading to that," Professor Baxter answered. "What is this thing you call your body? It contains raw materials worth in total about ninety-eight cents. There is enough water in your body to wash a pair of blankets, enough iron to make a tenpenny nail, enough lime to whitewash a chicken coop, and so on. Suppose you cut off a lock of your hair or trim a finger nail, or lose an arm in an accident. They are gone. But your real self still exists unchanged. Now, your heart and other organs do not constitute your real self any more than the missing hair, finger-nail fragment, or arm. Your real self must continue existing after the entire body is gone, as it is separate from the body."

"Most of us believe as much."

"All right," said Professor Baxter. "Now! In the final analysis, nothing is left of man except intellect and emotions—call it spirit if you will. Disembodied intellect and emotions survive

death, is my belief. It may be that in some cases they can manifest themselves in our material world after death, as they do by means of their ninety-eight cents' worth of body during life. That brings us to a premise for a belief in ghosts."

Harris countered: "I don't see, though, why a spirit would come back with three-toed feet like a bird."

"A mystery, to be sure. But we are dealing with mystery. This much is certain, I swear it, that I shall run to earth The Midnight Terror, whether man, woman, creature, or specter."

"Have you figured out any definite plans?"

"I have. We must keep our feet on the ground. Let us start with the assumption that The Midnight Terror is human. If so, it may be some one we rub elbows with in college life. In such case, our problem is one of elimination until we find the right person—the guilty one. Or it may develop that the killer is a fiend from the near-by town down in the valley. If creature or ghost, we shall deal with it when encountered. The main thing is to encounter it."

"I gather, then, that you intend to lure it out."

"Precisely." Professor Baxter stood up. "Look at me. I am about the same height as Barbara Hamilton. True, she is more plump, but that can be remedied by a little padding."

His voice died away into an incoherent muttering to himself. He walked to a corner of a room, picked up a bundle wrapped in newspaper, and carried it to the table. There he quickly undid the package.

"Why, it's Barbara's dress and hat," Harris exclaimed. "Are you going to masquerade as her?"

Professor Baxter chuckled. "I am. At midnight I shall walk in the vicinity of faculty hall, approaching as if I were Barbara stealthily leaving her dormitory by fire escape for a rendezvous. If The Midnight Terror is lurking near by, it will come forth on the run."

"Eh!" the student exclaimed. "Where do you want me to ship your body?"

The professor frowned. "Upon my soul!" he murmured. "I never thought of that. The attack might be murderous."

"Might be?" Harris scoffed. "No might about it. Most certainly it would be."

"Nevertheless," said Professor Baxter determinedly, "I shall risk the danger. How would you like to be my bodyguard?"

He fumbled in the long drawer of the reading table. His tapering fingers came forth gingerly, holding a pistol.

"I bought this weapon last winter when there were so many robberies. It had occurred to me that possibly a lawbreaker might force his way into my library and filch some of my rare volumes. The storekeeper who sold me the pistol assured me that he loaded it for me, ready to use. I am not familiar with such things. Perhaps you are."

Harris examined the gun. "Loaded for bear," he announced. "Just the kind of pistol I like, too. I do a lot of hunting whenever I can get up north, and always carry side arms."

"It is a complicated mechanism," Professor Baxter declared respectfully. "I have been unable to fathom it. Once I attempted. The miserable device went off. You can see the hole it made in the floor by the hearth. Roxy was quite upset by the incident and threatened to leave my employ if I tampered further. So I placed it in the drawer, and it has been there ever since."

"Only one cartridge has been exploded," Harris said after inspection. "There are five others in the chamber, which should be plenty. How's the weather?"

He strode to the window, raised it, and leaned out.

"Black as pitch," he called back. "Too

many clouds for the moon to show through. Wind quite violent. Seems to have stopped raining after that first light shower. But it'll be pouring cats and dogs by morning, or I'll eat my hat."

Professor Baxter glanced at his watch. "We have quite a long wait until midnight. Suppose we read. Yonder is a pile of magazines. I am reluctant to throw them out. They stay until Roxy cleans house in my absence."

At eleven fifty o'clock they left by the rear door and started forth through the night, Baxter carrying his bundle. The campus was as black as a tomb except along the lighted walk, which they took pains to keep well away from. The success of the venture would depend largely on baiting their trap without being seen.

Both of the investigators were keyed up to high nervous tension. They realized that they might be taking their lives in their hands, and possibly were facing far more danger than they anticipated. Harris shivered. His breath hissed inward.

As for Professor Baxter, he was tremulously eager. Being a nervous individual, he panted softly with excitement. His heart thumped. But his curiosity, his scientific zeal for exploring the unknown, so monopolized his attention that it never occurred to him to be frightened. He was the sort that would face death excitedly but fearlessly, absorbed in studying the situation and the reactions produced by it. He was the true, eager scientist.

Professor Baxter had an intuitive conviction that somewhere near by lurked The Midnight Terror. Ruthless and fiendish, indeed, must be the monster that had committed a murder to avoid having its identity disclosed. For, after all, prior to the murder it could have been accused of no greater crime than frightening a young woman—something that quite plausibly could have been laughed off as a prank.

Instead, The Midnight Terror had viciously struck down its pursuer. As far as Professor Baxter knew, no third party had been present at the moment of the crime. Presumably the attacker had ducked and got in the rear of Van Ness, or dropped to the ground and used its body to trip him. Probably the skull-crushing blow—from blackjack or whatever it was—had fallen first. Surely that had made Van Ness unconscious.

Why, then, with its pursuer out of commission, had The Midnight Terror snuffed out a life by strangling? The deed was as unnecessary as it was atrocious.

Strangely enough, Harris had a feeling of security rising from the presence of Professor Baxter. This struck him as ludicrous, considering the professor's physique. Why, The Midnight Terror could handle him like a child. Yet Baxter had intellect of the highest order—that force which is the greatest strength, which through thousands of years of struggle gradually enabled man to make captive playthings of beasts far more powerful than himself.

Stepping cautiously through the black, they were approaching the young women's dormitory by skirting faculty hall at the rear. The ground was wet and yielding after the shower. The air was clammily damp.

A clap of thunder sounded, so near by and loud that the night prowlers were startled. They jumped.

Lightning was flashing now repeatedly. In its glare, as they looked upward, they caught glimpses of the roof of faculty hall and, rising from its slopes, the small belfry. It would have quite harmonized with the hour and the natural stage setting, if the ghost of Peter Barton had suddenly appeared at one of the tower windows.

Abruptly the air reverberated with a cry of distress. They paused; stood mo-

tionless. Baxter dropped his bundle. There was no mistaking that shriek. Some one was convulsed with uttermost agony. It was such a cry as might arise from a man who suddenly sees the gates of death yawning for him, and who knows that his end is to be violent.

"Horrors!" Professor Baxter gasped. "That made my blood run cold."

"Mine, too," said Harris. His teeth were chattering. "The cry seemed to come from up above us."

"No doubt of that," Baxter agreed. "As my perceptions registered and localized it, the owner of that tortured voice is somewhere on the top floor of the hall. And it was inside the building, for the shriek sounded a bit muffled."

Again the night was pierced—this time by a shrill, chattering protest of unintelligible words.

Another scream followed.

Then came a crash, a swish of something falling in the air, and almost immediately the tinkle of glass shattering on the ground.

Bong! bong! bong! The belfry clock slowly, mournfully struck twelve times.

"Merciful Heaven!" Professor Baxter faltered. "It is The Midnight Terror. Harris, we are too late."

Oh, if they could only pierce the dark with their eyes and witness what was taking place at the upper window whose pane had been smashed to fragments!

Ah! Another glare of lightning bathed the hall and the landscape in pale, ghostly light.

In its illumination, they saw clearly the windows of the top floor. And in the most central of these was a sight they were never to forget. Only for an instant did the light last. But in that instant they beheld a vile deed.

A man, squirming and fighting for life, was being thrust out through the smashed window. His enemy was garbed in unrelieved black.

"Oh, oh!" moaned the student. "Look, look! It's The Midnight Terror he's battling with."

A ghastly sight it was. The struggling victim seemed to be held in a grip of steel. He was resisting frantically, savage with desperation. But the black figure, conquering, shoved him out—out——

The pale glare of the lightning vanished. Darkness again engulfed the fatal window.

And now the screaming voice was silent.

Professor Baxter, paralyzed with horror, realized that the victim had been hurled from the window and was falling down.

With a shudder, the professor thrust his hands tightly over his ears to shut out the sickening thud that was inevitable.

CHAPTER V.

THE MIDNIGHT TERROR'S SECOND VICTIM.

A GHOST could not select a more appropriate place to haunt than faculty hall. It was a brick building erected nearly a century before. It showed its age. The banisters of the staircases were of precious black walnut, worn glassy and smooth by the hands of generations of students. These stairs and the flooring creaked despite repeated nailing.

The brick walls of the hall were almost entirely covered with ivy. There was a rear entrance opening on to a flight of half a dozen iron steps. This was rarely used. At the front one ascended worn stone steps to a long built-in veranda or open gallery with big stone Colonial pillars. In the center of this portico was the structure's only other ingress, a double door.

Inside, all woodwork was painted white. The plaster walls were tinted pale yellow. So antiquated was the place that the electric lights in frosted

glass globes seemed out of place. Candles would have been more harmonious.

The layout of the interior was ideal for a skulker. Long and narrow, the building was separated into three sections by two broad stairways, which rose from a hall that connected them along the front. Access to this hall was by the main entrance, from which another corridor led to the rear door. Jutting off from the stairs on each landing was a central hall that ran the full length of the formerly elegant edifice.

On the night following the murder of Harold van Ness, faculty hall was jet black in the corridors, stairs, and all the rooms except two.

It was not unusual for lights to be shining from scattered windows. Professors—and bachelors in particular—frequently of an evening busied themselves in their classrooms or laboratories, and remained late.

On this particular night, the watchman, Henry Jenkins, was quite pleased to see second-floor lights glowing mellowly as he approached faculty hall on his hourly rounds.

Jenkins was of very black Ethiopian extraction. He believed in "haunts" as firmly as had his ancestors of the jungle. He muttered with delight and heaved a sigh of relief at the comforting thought that the building was not deserted. It gave him a feeling of security to know that educated white men were within call in case The Midnight Terror should turn its attentions to the guard of the college's costly scientific equipment.

"Dag-nab it!" the negro groaned as he walked up the front steps. "Ah was so 'grossed in thinkin' o' dat Terror, Ah done fuhgit t' fetch along mah gun."

For years beyond the memory of any save the most aged members of the faculty, Henry Jenkins had been the night watchman. And in all those years he had never encountered a thief. Times innumerable, he had been scared half out of his wits by suddenly meeting unexpected prowlers in the dark. But without exception these had been college students bent on innocent pranks, such as, for instance, hanging a class flag where it would goad rivals in the morning.

Quite naturally, the carrying of a pistol had long since ceased to be a habit with him.

Henry's oil lantern cast a flickering, spooky light as he climbed the north stairs. His gait was languidly slow. But he did not pant at the exertion. For a man in his seventies, he was quite strong—a matter of inheritance, not training.

Jenkins' routine was to explore the top floor first. He would try all the doors to make sure they were locked. Visit the belfry? Not much! The thought sent cold shivers through him. Inspection of the third floor completed, he would descend to the second story. That was where the lights were burning, in two rooms at opposite ends of the building. He would open the doors of these rooms and respectfully pass the time of night with the professors who were laboring inside.

It was a marvel to Jenkins, that these instructors could brave faculty hall at this late hour, in view of the recent murder and the reputed presence of Peter Barton's ghost in the belfry.

On this night he certainly would be effusive in greeting the professors. And, delivering himself of quaint bits of wisdom and shrewd observations, he would linger as long as they would tolerate him.

He reached the top floor, emerging into a wide hall. Uneasily he glanced at the narrower stairs that led up to a trapdoor opening into the belfry. To his apprehensive senses, it sounded and felt as though some one were softly moving back and forth up yonder.

Jenkins did not loiter to investigate. Precipitately he fled around the corner to the left, into the side hall.

And, as he ran, the lantern in his right hand naturally swung out. It crashed against the wall. There was a tinkle of glass. The impact had broken the globe.

"Holy Moses!" he exclaimed in consternation. And he paused, fearful that the air would extinguish the flaming wick. With the globe shattered, the lantern gave forth only a feeble light. He had no desire to continue into the darkness with such treacherous illumination.

"No, suh!" he said fervently, speaking aloud to himself as men are apt to do when alone. "Ah'll git anothah globe at de injun house an' come back."

He turned. "What dat?" If kinked hair can stand on end, it now did.

To his ears had come an unmistakable sound—a slow creaking. Years of service had made him familiar with all possible noises of this building.

The trapdoor leading up to the belfry was being opened stealthily.

Midnight, he suddenly realized with rising panic, was close at hand.

"Oh, mammy!" he gulped. "It am de ghos'!"

If he fled on down the hall, he would only be running deeper into a trap with no exits save windows high above ground. His one escape was back the way he came. Possibly he could reach the stairs before the phantom came from above and reared itself in his path.

Teeth chattering, Jenkins leaped forward.

He rounded the corner, emerging into the larger hall. And then abruptly his legs refused to obey his urge. He stopped and, shaking, stared with bulging eyes.

Down the steps from the belfry, a figure was leaping like a huge cat. Yet it was not a cat. Nor did it look human. From head to foot it was garbed in unrelieved black. Black was the face, with two phosphorescently gleaming eyes.

As it ran, it lifted what might have been arms, had they not the appearance of large bat wings.

But Jenkins' greatest horror came from his sight of the thing's feet. They were inhuman, each spreading out in three long toes like the talons of a monster bird.

It was The Midnight Terror.

The Terror apparently had been quite as surprised at the encounter as was Jenkins. From it came a harsh cry as of rage at not finding the coast clear.

The watchman now saw innumerable specters in the air.

To him this could mean only one thing: Death impended, the grave yawned, and his deceased relatives were at hand to escort him across to spiritland.

Jenkins shrieked. Although convinced that he faced a ghost, he quite naturally attempted to defend himself in the same manner as though the thing leaping at him were alive and human.

He hurled the lantern. The Midnight Terror ducked. The lantern struck the stairs.

The flame of the wick was extinguished by its rush through the air. Absolute darkness followed, the black of a tomb.

Next instant Jenkins was struggling with what felt like icy-cold fingers that clutched his throat in a grip of steel.

Having had the misfortune to encounter The Midnight Terror unexpectedly, it was his unfortunate fate to pay the penalty.

The negro fought desperately, knowing that his life was at stake. But his blows might as well have rained on a stone wall. He tugged frantically; was unable to loosen the talons that were suffocating him.

The Midnight Terror was forcing him backward now. The victim resisted step by step. The Terror let go his throat and seized his shoulders. Jenkins was far from strangled, for only a

few seconds had elapsed since the beginning of the attack. He caught his breath with a convulsive gulp and began sending scream after scream into the night. His cries echoed through the halls and down the stairs. They were desperate cries, anguished, imploring.

The Terror viciously shoved Jenkins against a window. The glass shattered. The broken parts whistled in the air and tinkled on the ground below.

Came thunder and lightning. In the pale, ghostly light, the struggle at the window was observed by Professor Baxter and young Harris out on the campus.

It was all over quickly—the body was thrust forth into space.

And so Henry Jenkins, faithful and unoffending college watchman, with malice toward none, plunged to his death.

The Midnight Terror leaned out the window in the wake of its victim, staring down into the darkness. Its huge bat wings fanned the air triumphantly. It drew back swiftly as another flash of lightning illumined it.

And now the thing moved with uncanny precision through the black hall. It leaped to the stairs that led up to the belfry, and none too soon. Downstairs Professor Baxter rushed into the front hall and switched on the lights.

CHAPTER VI.

TRACKED TO ITS LAIR.

PROFESSOR BAXTER had promised Harris faithfully that he would bring a pocket flash light on their expedition that night. It must be admitted that he had left his young guest in his library and gone prowling in his bedroom in search of the article. And, no doubt, if he had not forgotten what he was after, he would have located it and thrust it into his side coat pocket as planned.

Again, if no need for the flash had developed, he probably would have had it on his person.

But when, by lightning glare, they saw the watchman's body thrust from the upper window and knew that it was about to fall through space to the ground, Professor Baxter fumbled for his electric torch and recalled that it was forgotten.

Apologetically, as they ran forward, he broke the news.

"Never mind," Harris groaned. "I have a box of safety matches. I'll examine the body and watch the rear door. You run around front."

Professor Baxter had barely entered faculty hall when Harris came dashing up in his rear. The corridor lights were on, and under them the young fellow's face was pallid.

"Dead!" he announced in a whisper. "It was old Henry Jenkins. His neck was broken in the fall. He's dead, sir, no doubt about that. I felt for the pulse. But there wasn't any. So I left him at once. Examined the rear door. It's locked. The Midnight Terror couldn't get out that way. It gave me the creeps, out there in the dark, so I followed you on the run."

"Listen!" said Professor Baxter tensely.

Was it imagination, or did they hear a quick, soft patter of footsteps somewhere above them in the building?

"It's the fugitive," Harris cried excitedly. "Come on, we can catch him."

"Hold on," said Professor Baxter quietly. "Your ears play you false. The footsteps are getting louder. Some one is approaching, not retreating—and the killer wouldn't be running down here into the light."

He was correct. Down the stairs, in a great hurry and with consternation on their intellectual faces, came the two professors who had been working in their rooms on the second floor—Smythe and Murchison. They exclaimed with relief as they made out the identity of the two men awaiting them.

"What's up?" Professor Smythe de-

manded. He was badly shaken. His face was almost as colorless as his snow-white hair. "I heard a scream—several of them."

"So did I," Professor Murchison chimed in. His gray eyes peered excitedly through spectacles with huge tortoise-shell rims. He had abundant red hair and, as his chin moved in speech, a fiery, closely cropped beard moved up and down.

"Yes, gentlemen, you heard screams," Professor Baxter informed them gravely. "There has been another murder. Jenkins, the night watchman, was hurled to his death through a window on the top floor."

Horror gleamed in his listeners' eyes. They stood there at the foot of the stairs, motionless from shock, their faces strained as though hoping to learn that the dread truth was a hoax to be promptly denied.

Baxter clapped his hands sharply. "Come out of your trances!" he said. "I got to the front door fast. The killer must still be upstairs. After him, men! Harris, stand guard here where you can watch both doors while we search."

Reluctantly the student obeyed. He waited alone, fervently hoping that The Midnight Terror would come his way. He would punish it!

Up the steps ran the three professors, Baxter in the lead. Reaching the second floor, they switched on the lights. Under Professor Baxter's generalship, the exploration was systematic and thorough. He and Murchison inspected the rooms, unlocking them with a pass key such as every member of the faculty carried. Both of them were keyed to high nervous tension, excited, ready for an attack.

Professor Smythe remained in the central corridor, where he could watch both staircases and detect any fugitive slipping from one floor to another as the dragnet approached.

"He is too old and frail to halt any one by force, but he can at least shout an alarm," Baxter whispered. "I am glad I have you along, Murchison. Neither of us is a Samson. But, between us, we should be able to overpower an enemy."

"I am no gymnast," was the answer, "though at this moment I wish I were. It sort of takes my breath every time we enter one of these rooms."

No skulker came to view on the second floor. So they hurried to the top story and turned on its hall lights. Smythe panted up the other stairs and resumed his vigil.

Baxter, having an excitable temperament, was plainly on needles and pins. Murchison, too, was nervous. There were more pleasant pastimes than braving scores of rooms, from any one of which a fiend might leap at them.

But Murchison carried himself with confidence and dignity as the exploration continued. His nervousness manifested itself only in an odd little trick of taking great pains not to step on certain stair steps or cracks between flooring boards.

The search of the building neared its end without the slightest sign of success.

Professor Baxter was dejected. "Well," he admitted regretfully, "we've combed faculty hall with the exception of the belfry and the rooms on the first floor. The belfry is our next stop."

Dubiously he looked up the narrow steps leading to the trapdoor. He ran a dry tongue around still drier lips. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he smiled as though amused at his temporary shrinking from the reputed citadel of Peter Barton's ghost.

His bright-blue eyes sparkled. He strode briskly. The trapdoor creaked dismally on its hinges as he raised it.

There was no light in the belfry, save the electric glow that illuminated the dial of the clock overhead. This light was reflected upward from the bottom

of the dial so that it was of little service to them. They could see each other's faces, indistinctly, but not much else.

Professor Baxter began striking matches.

The belfry was about eight feet square, with no hiding places. Baxter examined its windows. He was ludicrously stoop-shouldered as he went from pane to pane, the rear of his coat collar rising like a deformity several inches above his thrust-down neck. Being nearsighted and having forgotten his spectacles, he was obliged to inspect at close range.

"Hello!" he exclaimed shortly.

"What's up?" Murchison asked eagerly. "Find something?"

"Yes," said Baxter. "Three of the windows are nailed shut. In the fourth, the nails have been pulled out. Look you, the window swings open on its hinges."

He struck it a sharp blow with the flat of his palm. A rush of cool air entered through the opening. And now, for the first time since the search began, they were conscious of the thunder outside. An occasional peal of it was accompanied by a glare of lightning that momentarily disclosed lashing treetops without.

Old Professor Smythe unceremoniously pushed Baxter aside and thrust his head through the casement.

"Now we are getting down to hard facts." He snorted. "This disposes of the ridiculous ghost theory that is going the rounds of the college. Why so? This window is warped so that it stays shut even without nails. We observed as much, Baxter, from the difficulty with which you opened it. Unless I am an imbecile at deduction, the murderer escaped this way. It is as clear and evident as daylight. Out he went, closed the window, and so on over the sloping roof, down yonder to where he could step from the eaves to that big tree bough. Thence to the ground and away into the night."

Professor Smythe drew back triumphantly.

Murchison groaned in exasperation. "What a pity, you and I did not come this way instead of going downstairs when we heard the screams," he lamented.

"We acted naturally," Smythe countered. "It was difficult to localize the sound. I was in my room, grading some test papers, when I heard the screams. My first impression was that the calls came from out over the campus. So I rushed to the window, raised it and wasted precious time peering into the darkness."

"And I," said Murchison, "was in my laboratory at the other end of the building, on the same floor as yourself. Hearing the screams, I thought at once of the old sealed-up elevator shaft. On the possibility that a student might have fallen down, I rushed to the hall and made for the shaft, but found nothing amiss."

"You got there fast," Professor Smythe said. "The grass did not grow under my own feet, but I found you staring into the shaft, close to my door, when I hurried from my room. The same thought flashed over me then, that a student——"

He was interrupted by a startled cry from Baxter, who had been on his knees searching the floor with lighted matches.

"Have I gone mad?" Baxter gasped. "Look!"

He struck a fresh match. As it flared up, his companions cried out in amazement. A chill went through them, and it was not the cold of night.

The match flickered: expired. Its red glow faded into black. The belfry suddenly had become sepulchral.

For, clearly outlined in the heavy dust of the floor, they had beheld the tracks of what looked like the three-toed feet of a gigantic vulture.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER SUSPICION.

THE silence that followed, up there in the gloom of the belfry, was such a stillness as comes only to men who are dazed by the supernatural. Although Smythe had pointed out that the murderer apparently had escaped through the window, the professors had the creepy feeling that The Midnight Terror still hovered near them.

It was an emotion that they could not readily shake off. Under the dim glow from the clock dial overhead, they peered at each other, and their faces looked indistinct and spectral. The very air seemed to vibrate with the uncanny horror of the killer's personality.

Professor Smythe had always scoffed at ghosts. But now he was badly shaken. "Merciful heavens!" he gasped as soon as he recovered speech. "What were those three-toed marks that I saw in the dust on the floor?"

Professor Baxter rose to his feet. "I wish I could answer your question," he said shakily. "The same sort of tracks were found in the mud near the body of Van Ness, the first victim. In my mind, there is no doubt. They are the tracks of The Midnight Terror, which now has two murders chalked up against it—and will probably have more unless we capture it."

"Surely, Baxter, you do not believe in ghosts!" Smythe remonstrated. "The subject has been thoroughly investigated by science."

Baxter laughed in a challenging way. He answered quietly: "If you assert that science has disproved the existence of ghosts, you certainly need to brush up on your science."

"Just the same," Smythe said dryly, "one would at least expect a ghost to strike its victims down in some ghostly way—not by knocking them in the head, strangling them, or hurling them from a window. But the hour is late. We cannot get out of this accursed place too quickly to suit me. It seems that there is nothing more to be discovered up here, for the present."

They left the belfry, closing the dismally creaking trapdoor behind them, and went downstairs to where Harris was on guard. He greeted them eagerly.

"Nothing happened at this end," he reported. "I listened closely, but haven't heard a sound."

They went through all the rooms on the main floor, but found no lurker, nor was anything that might look suspicious in sight.

Professor Smythe returned to his own classroom. He came back promptly, with hat and cane. "This affair is a task for trained police, not for an aged professor like myself," he said. "So I bid you good night."

He strolled away into the darkness. Baxter followed him out onto the pillared gallery and glanced around. He ambled up and down for a few minutes, then rejoined his companions and closed the door. "We have no audience out front," he reported. "I presume the watchman's shrieks did not carry far, being drowned in noisy wind and thunder. Otherwise, a mob of students would be surging around the building. Harris, could you carry the body of Henry Jenkins by yourself?"

Harris shuddered. "Easily, but I don't overfancy the job. Anyway, it's against the law to touch a corpse, when there has been foul play, until the county coroner arrives."

"Then, please, you go to my home. You will find the telephone in the library. Get the coroner out of bed. After that, wait for me there."

"All right. By the way, sir, what became of the bundle you had wrapped in newspaper?"

"I must have dropped it outside."

"I'll get it."

The young man left.

"And now," Professor Murchison asked, "what is next on the program?"

"Let us sit down and put our thinking caps on," Professor Baxter suggested.

"We might go up to my laboratory."

Murchison led the way. He had, Baxter observed, the eccentricity of genius. For, in going up the stairs, Murchison repeatedly broke his stride so that he would touch a certain step with both feet. It was a nervous idiosyncrasy akin to his chronic habit of either stepping on every crack of a sidewalk or avoiding the cracks entirely.

As Murchison opened the door of his room where he conducted experiments in leisure time, he snapped his fingers in annoyance and rushed forward. A foul stench was rising from a crucible in which chemicals had "boiled dry."

"The shriek of the murdered victim," he explained, "interrupted me at my work. I was so startled that I rushed forth without pausing to turn off the gas."

He opened a window. The damp night air quickly dissipated the fumes. Professor Baxter went over, nevertheless, and leaned out into the night. His temperament was such that he was as warm as toast even when lightly clad in cold weather. When he shivered, which was rarely, the cause was emotion rather than weather.

"I should have specialized at chemistry," Professor Murchison commented. "Never quite as happy as when I am producing reactions in a test tube. However, I am just as glad that I chose biology for my profession. It involves sufficient chemistry to appease my cravings."

"Chemistry," said Professor Baxter, "is your suppressed function, not the calling for which you were best fitted by nature. Now, my suppressed function is criminology. Yet it is possibly for the best that I became a psychologist. As the vaudeville booking agents say, when they can dance they want to sing, and when they can sing they want to dance." Baxter smiled. He eyed his companion intently.

"What are you staring at?" Murchison asked.

"Upon my word! You have felt the valve handle of that Bunsen burner not once, but eight times."

Murchison flushed shamefacedly. "I wanted to make sure the gas was turned off," he explained. "Don't you ever do fool things like that?"

"Surely," Professor Baxter admitted blandly. "It is a mild nervous derangement that we all have at times. Often I have got out of bed several times and tried the door to make sure it was locked. Every one does such things now and then. You would not be a genius, sir, if you did not have this peculiarity, which we know as psychasthenia. Old Doctor Samuel Johnson recorded how he had the weakness. In passing a fence, he must touch every picket with his cane. Sometimes he would imagine that he had missed one, and he would suffer agony unless he went back and struck the doubtful picket."

"It is an annoying habit," Murchison admitted. "I am glad that you, too, are tarred with the same stick. At times, it does not bother me. Lately, though, I have been working with my experiments too far into the night. I must relax more."

Professor Baxter closed the window, for now the atmosphere of the room was quite cleared of the chemical odor.

"Regarding this Midnight Terror, do you know of a student who might have a homicidal tendency?" he asked.

Murchison meditated. "No," he answered presently, "I cannot think of any at the moment."

"I have gone over the list of students time and again. None of them looks suspicious in any way."

"I agree with you," Murchison said

heartily. And then a sudden thought seemed to come to him. He snapped his fingers. "Hold on, though, we have forgotten a possibility. How about young Harry Pryor?"

"What makes you mention him?"

"I just recalled that Pryor was kicked in the head during the football game last Thanksgiving. For weeks after that injury to his skull, he was a bit queer."

"I remember as much, distinctly," Baxter agreed.

Murchison's voice dropped to a whisper. "Harry Pryor was a suitor of Barbara Hamilton, on whom The Midnight Terror directed its first attack. She threw him over for Harris. And you know that intense love, if spurned, can turn to bitter hate, even murderous frenzy. It would not be the first time that a man wanted to murder his ex-sweetheart so another could not have her."

The two professors stared at each other, horrified.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FISH IN THE NET.

THE finger of suspicion at last pointed to a definite person. Professor Baxter, determined to bring the murderer to justice, thrilled with elation. But his joy was short lived. It was displaced by a sickening feeling of anguish. This bachelor-professor loved his college above all else. And he dreaded the disgrace of one of its students being branded as a killer. For this reason, he hoped fervently that the assassin would not be disclosed as connected with the school.

Professor Murchison, too, appeared to realize the enormity of the suggestion he had raised. He shook his head mournfully. He shared Professor Baxter's love of Bentler College, whose reputation had been without criminal blemish since the murder of Peter Barton nearly a century ago.

For fully a minute they were speechless. The silence was pierced by a sharp cry of pain that came from Professor Baxter.

Murchison leaped to his feet, overturning his chair. "Great grief!" he gasped. "What's wrong?"

"I apologize for disturbing you," Baxter said. His lips were tightly puckered. "Unfortunately I was so intent on thinking of our suspect that I absent-mindedly thrust the wrong end of my cigarette into my mouth. The burn was perceived by my senses and telegraphed to my brain with great emphasis."

"I should think as much," Murchison muttered. "You nearly scared me out of my shoes. For the moment, I fancied you had been shot. Would you care for some bicarbonate of soda? It is very soothing for a burn. I believe that I have some in the chemical cabinets yonder."

"Pray, do not bother. I shall forget the injury at once. My defective memory on such occasions is a blessing in disguise. And now, sir, you apparently have established a motive—hatred—for the attack on Barbara. If Harry Pryor staged that attack he could not, if caught, plausibly plead that it was a mere prank for the sole purpose of frightening her. Small wonder, then, that in the agitation of flight he turned on his pursuer and killed him."

"And," said Professor Murchison, "once he had committed a murder, his very life depended on keeping his identity from being disclosed. Hence the second murder, when he was confronted by the night watchman here in faculty hall."

Baxter became pensive. The figure and personality of Harry Pryor rose in his imagination—tall, powerful, and with quickness of movement that had made him desirable for the football team. In this branch of athletics, he had starred as companion half back with Van Ness,

whose body was now homeward bound in a coffin.

His proficiency at football had won Harry Pryor a certain following and given him a social standing. But, aside from the gridiron, he had little to commend him to popularity. His nature was reticent, sullen, and with the trickiness that made the crowd cheer him when he was carrying the pigskin.

"Some men," said Murchison, "mope and succumb to self-pity when rejected in love. Others fly into a rage, their vanity offended, and their love turns to hate. Pryor is of this latter classification. Like so many individuals who have few abilities to boast of, he is notoriously vain."

Murchison paused. His lips shaped themselves for words, but he hesitated.

"What is on your mind?" Baxter asked. "Speak freely."

Murchison laughed hollowly. "My own life, I fear, has been in danger lately."

Baxter was startled. "No! Can that be? In what way?"

"I have been shadowed. By whom, I do not know."

"Have you enemies?"

"We all have enemies," Murchison said philosophically. "In my own case, I have incurred considerable enmity among members of the wealthy class, by reason of my active leadership in the movement to tax the rich more heavily. I am progressive in thought instead of reactionary. So they brand me as a radical. All I seek is social justice."

"Surely, the rich who object to your propaganda against them would not hire thugs to put you out of the way."

"Stranger things than that have happened," Murchison said bitterly. "Many a prison holds a man, detained on a technical charge, but really incarcerated because powerful interests object to his so-called socialistic activities."

"This is an alarming state of affairs," Professor Baxter murmured. He rose and began pacing slowly, back and forth past the windows. "How often have you seen this shadower?"

"On four occasions that I am positive of."

"Then, my dear fellow, you must be on your guard. Are you sure there has been more than one person dogging your steps?"

"N-n-no. But why do you ask?"

"Has it occurred to you that possibly you have been stalked by The Midnight Terror—that it has marked you for its victim?"

Professor Murchison clutched his knees tightly. His eyes bulged and the lids twitched behind his huge spectacles.

"Great guns!" he gulped. "I never thought of that." And then he tugged here and there at his red beard.

An exclamation of astonishment rose suddenly from Professor Baxter. In his restless pacing he had paused before one of the windows and, face pressed tightly against the cold pane, was staring out into the black night.

"What's wrong?" Murchison cried, springing forward.

"Back, back!" was the warning. "Don't let yourself be seen."

Abruptly Professor Baxter began to act a part, as though pretending that nothing in the darkness had attracted his attention. He turned so that the side of his face was parallel to the window, the profile clearly outlined in the light and distinctly visible from outside. He yawned languidly, then stretched both arms high above his head. Next he laughed loudly, taking pains that his mouth opened wide.

Slowly he resumed his pacing.

"Murchison," he said gravely, "as surely as I stand here before you, our windows are being watched."

"What!"

"Yes, sir. It is as black as the grave, on the campus below. But, dimly illumined by the glow from the electric lights of the front walk, I made out a

shadowy figure under the hemlocks. There was no mistaking the white patch in the black. It was a face, looking up and watching me at the window. All circumstances considered, the presence of a spy is more than suspicious."

Murchison was visibly disturbed. He pulled off the spectacles with large tortoise rims. His eyes, bloodshot from too much strain during excessive hours of study, blinked agitatedly.

"What shall we do?" he asked, his voice brittle. "Shall we slip down and rush this skulker?"

Professor Baxter already had his mind made up. "I have a better plan than that. You take my place at pacing up and down before the windows. Keep close to them, but do not look out. It is imperative that the spy have no suspicion we have detected his presence."

Murchison already was obeying orders.

"That is fine," said Professor Baxter approvingly. "Now, as you walk, open your mouth, and gesture. Do this to convey the impression that I am still in the room conversing with you. While you conduct this hoax, I shall slip downstairs, out the rear door, and, circling, creep upon the lurker from the rear. And, unless my reasoning plays me false, I shall shortly have my fingers on The Midnight Terror. Better open a window, as though for ventilation, so you can hear me if I shout for aid."

Baxter softly pattered through the doorway, intent on a fresh adventure. His exit could not be observed by the watcher, for this room was so far above ground that a spy below could see only what was close to the windows.

Murchison did a very good job of acting. His pacing was leisurely, his gestures natural. In short, seeing him parading at the lighted windows, a person down on the campus would have taken oath that he was persuasively arguing with a visitor.

The rear door of faculty hall was locked, but Professor Baxter opened it readily enough with his pass key. Stealthily he tiptoed down the iron stairs and strode off into the darkness, keeping close to the old brick wall.

He had not taken more than half a dozen paces when he tripped and fell headlong.

Absent-mindedly he had forgotten that the body of the night watchman, Henry Jenkins, had not been removed. The coroner lived in the valley, at the far end of the town, and had not yet had time to dress and walk this distance in response to the telephoned summons from Harris.

A shudder convulsed Professor Baxter. It was followed by a fear that caused his heart to falter—the fear that, in falling, he might have cried out loud enough to make his quarry take to its heels.

Had he exclaimed at all? Professor Baxter could not have answered, for the world. He cursed his wretched memory.

Ah, well, he soon would know.

His gaunt figure cautiously picked its way on into the black. He detoured in a wide circle, realizing that after he reached the end of the building he might be seen in the lights from the front walk unless he skirted from afar and crept up in the spy's rear.

The night was sepulchrally black. He was glad that the lightning had ceased. A lone glare of it would have revealed him and wrecked his plans. Much was at stake, of that he had no doubt, and he was grateful that nature was sufficiently in his favor to enable him to proceed unseen. A fine mist was falling. It could hardly be called a rain. The wind was moaning around the belfry and eaves of faculty hall, and rustling in the trees. These sounds drowned the swishing of his shoes through the grass.

Gradually he edged forward. Now he was completing his circle, coming back in the direction from which he had started. Ahead lay the hall. High up

were four rectangles of light—comforting yellowish-orange glows—the windows of Professor Murchison's laboratory.

Back and forth at these windows paced Murchison, gesturing so naturally that the amateur detective smiled with satisfaction.

The going was becoming more perilous, for Professor Baxter had emerged into the zone of faint illumination from the two rows of electric lights placed at the tops of low poles along the main walk across the campus.

His heart leaped jubilantly. Some fifty feet ahead, huddled close to the trunk of one of a group of aged hemlocks, was the watcher whom he had observed from the upper windows.

Quite unsuspecting was the mysterious loiterer.

The fifty feet narrowed to forty—to thirty—to ten——

At this point, Professor Baxter stepped on a twig. It snapped, the sound shattering the stillness of night.

The thing under the trees cried out in alarm.

Professor Baxter leaped forward.

They came to grips.

CHAPTER IX.

OUT OF THE DARK.

THE thing that Professor Baxter seized that night under the hemlock trees was no ghost. It was flesh and blood. Furthermore, it was human. The professor was painfully aware of this, an instant after he clutched his quarry about the body.

Following a startled cry, the enemy—reaching blindly—grasped Baxter's tousled sand-colored hair with both hands and wrenched savagely.

The hair did not come out by the roots. But the attack reacted in an agonized shout that reached Murchison's ears and started him rushing downstairs to his colleague's rescue.

The captured man quickly abandoned his hair hold. He began swinging with powerful fists. By reason of being held tightly about the waist, he could pommel only the back and head of his adversary.

If spectators had been present, the betting would all have been in favor of the mysterious stranger.

But Professor Baxter was not as weak as he looked. Admittedly, he did not have great brute strength. But this deficiency was more than compensated for by a knowledge of jujutsu which he had acquired in Japan during his sabbatical year. Jujutsu had appealed to him strikingly. It was, he saw, the logical defense and offense for a man like himself.

Jujutsu is a scientific method of using an opponent's own strength and weight to disable him.

The prowler had things happen to him so fast that he was dazed. The outcome was that he was flat on his stomach, Professor Baxter sitting on his back and holding his arms so that they were twisted up over his shoulder blades. He was completely mastered. For, at the least sign of resistance, his captor could have wrenched both arms from their sockets.

Professor Murchison came up on the run. "Get off him, you devil!" he shouted. "It is two against one now."

"Oh," Baxter assured him, "I am doing the riding."

The prisoner faltered: "Is that your voice, Doctor Baxter? If I'd known it was you, I wouldn't have resisted."

"Who did you think I was?"

"I didn't know. The murderer of Van Ness, was my first hunch, when you leaped on me in the dark."

Professor Murchison struck a match and held it close to the captive's face. "Harry Pryor!" he exclaimed.

At the name, Baxter immediately relaxed his hold. He stood up and stepped aside. Pryor moaned as he straightened his arms. Then he, too, got to his feet.

"Come along, my lad," Murchison ordered sharply. "Keep between us."

Pryor obeyed. "You needn't grasp my arm so tightly, sir," he protested. "I won't break and run for it. What's wrong? I haven't done anything."

"Pray, be silent, my lad," Baxter urged. "Explanations can come a little later."

Up in the laboratory, with the door closed, they examined him intently. He was dressed in the tweed suit which he customarily wore in the classrooms. His hat was missing; probably he had lost it in the scuffle.

His greenish-gray eyes stared dully at Professor Baxter. Pale lips moved in his almost expressionless face. "I say, sir, Doctor Baxter, you certainly handled me easily enough. How on earth did you do it? Why, I must be half a head taller and fully thirty pounds heavier."

The question was ignored. His lips twitched resentfully.

Professor Baxter was going through the motions of poking holes in all his pockets. Observing which, Murchison tendered the desired article, a cigarette, along with a lighted match. Baxter puffed in his amateurish way, spitting the smoke out instead of exhaling.

"Well, young man," he said calmly, "you needn't look at us as though we were your jury. Pray, endeavor to make yourself more at ease. Take a chair. We'll do the same. Now, just what were you doing down there under the trees at this time of night? It must be around two o'clock."

"Oh," Pryor evaded, "I prowl around quite a bit. Ever since I got kicked in the head in the football game last Thanksgiving, I get restless nights when I can't sleep. Then I go out and walk and walk and walk."

"You were not walking when I looked down from yonder window and first observed you," Baxter reminded him. "You were standing there, staring up at these windows, the same as when I seized you later."

Pryor nervously moistened his dry lips with the tip of his tongue. "I wasn't watching these windows," he declared. "I was just hanging around, keeping an eye on the belfry."

"What for?"

"Why, haven't you heard? Barbara Hamilton's father has offered a reward of one thousand dollars for information leading to the apprehension and arrest of The Midnight Terror. I could use that money. I don't come from a rich family like Van Ness did. And I thought that if I hung around this place for a few nights, maybe I'd get a look at this Terror thing and be able to take a crack at it."

Baxter absent-mindedly was twisting a button off his coat. "Then why didn't you tell us so in the first place, instead of asserting that you were merely out taking a stroll?"

Pryor did not raise his eyes, which were evasively intent on the boards of the flooring.

"Muddled," he answered presently.

"There's another discrepancy in your story," Baxter continued. "You say you were watching the belfry. But you couldn't see the belfry at all from where you were standing. You were too close to the wall of the building."

Pryor scowled. "I didn't think of that," he muttered, the words slipping out before he realized. Hastily he added: "What I meant to say was that I was watching the building in general."

"To be sure, to be sure," Baxter agreed. His manner had become quite genial. "Will you have a cigarette? No? All right. This young man tells quite a straightforward story, Professor Murchison. I'd like to chat alone with him for a few moments. Do you mind —er—hope there's no offense——"

"Not at all!" Murchison asserted. But, as he swept out of the room, his stride and the angle at which he held

the head with its glittering red hair had an imperiousness typical of a man who is easily peeved.

Murchison was, by nature, a talker, not a listener. In tune with his minor frailties, which were far eclipsed by his fine traits, he resented Professor Baxter's handling the cross-examination instead of urging him to take charge.

"I am glad to get rid of him," Professor Baxter confided, smiling openly to reassure and disarm young Pryor. "Professor Murchison is instinctively suspicious. He probably attaches all sorts of evils to your innocent presence under the hemlocks. Now, I know you! Know you like a book. Nothing could convince me that you were up to mischief."

"Thank you, sir." Pryor's voice was mechanical, respectfully distant.

"How do you feel, my boy?"

"All right."

"I trust I did not wrench your arms too severely."

"No, sir; they don't hurt at all now."

"While we are on the subject of your well-being, I recall that you suffered an injury of some sort in a football game. I believe you mentioned it a few minutes ago. Are you quite recovered?"

"Oh, yes, sir, altogether."

"That's fine. Still have that queer pain in the head, though, you say?"

"No, I didn't say that."

"I fancied you did. Well, no matter. I'm very absent-minded. It's quite a misfortune. Maybe you can appreciate it. Do you have any lapses of memory, such as I mention about myself?"

Pryor hesitated. "Well, sir, sometimes I think I do. A queer feeling comes over me, now and then, as though I had suddenly come out of a dream to find myself in a certain place without any recollection of having walked there."

"Oh, pshaw! I have the same experience, often. For instance, you sort of come out of a daze and look around and you're in a classroom. No memory of the trip. Last thing you recall, you were some place else."

Pryor, under Professor Baxter's coaxing, was warming up to a confidential attitude. "That's it, exactly. Does the same thing happen to you?"

"Yes," said Professor Baxter truthfully.

Pryor sighed with relief. "I'm glad you told me. Do you know, sir, I've been wondering if that was a sign I was going cuckoo!"

"Stuff and nonsense! You mentally unbalanced? Not at all."

"Gosh, that's a relief."

"What do you think of this thing they are calling The Midnight Terror?"

"Well"—cautiously—"what do *you* think?"

"This Terror is mighty cunning, if you ask me—superintelligent, a genius in crime."

"That's what I think," said Pryor. "You can't help admiring the way the Terror gets away with his stuff."

He laughed. And the laugh was so strange in tone, so brutal, that Professor Baxter shivered.

This Harry Pryor, he realized, would not harm any one as long as he was in his right mind. But how about those lapses of memory that he had described? What happened then, in the periods when morals and scruples might vanish along with consciousness of his normal identity and relationship to others?

"That will be all for to-night," said Professor Baxter. A peculiar chill had come over him.

CHAPTER X.

A VOICE FROM THE GRAVE.

PRIVATE detectives, employed by Barbara Hamilton's father to find her attacker, arrived at the college next morning. There were three of them. They were quiet, businesslike individuals, well dressed and pleasant enough

to meet. Only the faculty knew their real identity. The students, with the exception of Harris, who was let into the secret by Professor Baxter, were quite in the dark as to the newcomers. They paid little attention to the visitors. A rumor went out, and was generally accepted, that the three men were contractors and architects who had the job of building an additional laboratory.

This rumor, of course, was started by the detectives. They played the part, looking over the construction site and flourishing blue prints.

It was quite natural that they should be shown the campus from corner to corner, and the various structures from cellar to garret. They attended morning chapel services, too, sitting on the platform as guests. From this position, they could study the faces of the students, in hope of finding a criminal countenance.

Sheriff Madder was also on hand, bustling about importantly. He wanted to make a good showing, whether he was successful or not, so that he could point with pride to his activity when the next election rolled around.

The sheriff met the detectives in private, so as not to arouse suspicions or speculation among the students. The sleuths listened to Sheriff Madder's theories intently and respectfully. Behind his back they exchanged dry smiles and winks. However, his suggestions were valuable, if for no other reason than showing them what not to do. The trails he was most enthused about would probably be the ones to avoid.

Professor Murchison was insistent on informing the detectives of the questionable night vigil of the young man, Harry Pryor.

But Professor Baxter firmly refused. "For," said he, "if this poor young fellow is innocent and we should fasten the crime on him, it would be fiendish. Personally I am far from convinced that he is guilty, though I am equally doubtful that he is innocent. But a jury might jump to a false conclusion."

Professor Murchison was wrathful. "Look you," he reminded the other indignantly. "In Harry Pryor we have our first definite trail. Is it fair to the detectives, not to let them in on our information?"

"Quite!" answered Professor Baxter. "Let the detectives go their way and we shall go ours. You and I are quite competent to follow our lead without assistance."

"Have your own way, then," Murchison agreed reluctantly. "But you will have to work alone during this day. I have a very busy calendar. There is a convention of tax reformers down in the town, and I am the principal speaker."

He announced this grandly. Professor Baxter concealed his mild amusement. He knew Murchison of old—knew him as a fire-eating battler for greater justice to the oppressed. Like many chronic reformers, his schemes were Utopian, too visionary to be practicable.

"It must be admitted," Baxter confided to Harris, "that this world would be ideal if every one were as noble-spirited as our charming Murchison. Too bad, he is such a dreamer. Human nature seems to run to extremes. People either are too reactionary or too progressive. Under such widely divided leadership, the mob splits into two far-flung camps. The net result is close to a deadlock."

Harris nodded. "Professor Murchison certainly is always Johnny-on-the-Spot to get into the limelight. I'm not challenging his motives, to be sure. No doubt he is sincere. For instance, during the war he was so obviously a sympathizer with the enemy—or, at least, his opposition to the war in general amounted to that—well, the rest of the faculty sure was in hot water."

"We were able to keep him on the

teaching staff only with the utmost difficulty and diplomacy," Professor Baxter said. "You have no idea of the pressure that was brought to bear on us to dismiss him. To muzzle Murchison was almost as big a job as handling the peace conference itself."

"How did you ever do it?"

"Oh, I studied him a long time and suggested a plan. We won him over by making him chairman of relief committees and other humanitarian movements."

This conversation had taken place directly after chapel services. A bell was ringing its warning of last call to classrooms.

"Mercy!" Professor Baxter exclaimed. "I had entirely forgotten my students. I shall be quite late—must hurry. Can you meet me in my library about five this afternoon? I shall have something of the utmost interest to show you, I hope. You will stay for dinner. Roxy has taken quite a fancy to you, and you can count on an excellent repast."

Harris accepted enthusiastically. They parted.

They day slipped by rapidly, it seemed to the students. This was because they had an interesting topic of conversation —the second murder by The Midnight Terror. They talked of little else in spare moments. Classroom records were wretched. Few were able to keep their minds on their studies.

The three detectives inclined to the belief that the killer was a mental defective—possibly a moron from the near-by town. They set forth to mingle among the community's inhabitants and listen to popular theories. One never could tell when a clew might develop unexpectedly, when a chance surmise might lead to something that was really tangible.

The weather was cloudy, with occasional showers. In this dismal atmosphere, the menace of The Midnight Terror brooded over the college, vicious, threatening.

When Harris arrived at Professor Baxter's cottage to keep his dinner appointment, at five in the afternoon, it already was beginning to get dark. Dusk and fog obscured the landscape so that he could see not more than a dozen yards ahead of him as he hurried across the wet campus.

Baxter was on hand. He had built up a roaring wood fire in his library grate. The warmth was soothing after coming in from the clammy damp. Harris made himself at home. He stood before the fireplace, rubbing his hands briskly.

Baxter was lukewarm in his welcome to his guest. But this was because his thoughts were far away. Presently he came out of his semitrance with a start, and inquired:

"What is that big bundle wrapped in newspapers on the table? Did you bring it?"

Harris smiled tolerantly. "You wrapped that bundle yourself, yesterday evening. Don't you remember?"

"Are you jesting?"

"Surely you haven't forgotten?"

"Upon my soul, I cannot for the life of me recall it."

"Why, it's Barbara's dress and hat."

"Oh, to be sure. I intended masquerading in it last night to lure The Midnight Terror into attacking me. Well, my boy, I have something of extreme interest to show you."

Going over to the table, Professor Baxter opened an old bound volume to a page near the middle, locating it by a bookmark.

"Read this," he instructed. "Read it aloud. Begin here where I have my finger." So Harris, still standing, took the volume.

"Looks like a diary," said he.

"As you'll note," said Baxter, "it was written with ink shortly after the Civil War. In those days they had no col-

lege newspaper or magazine in this institution. So the literary society kept a record for the future, and it was bound up, a year to a volume."

Harris read aloud:

"April 28, 1867.—Bright and fair. The college was thrown into an uproar last night by an occurrence that will make the participants' blood run cold for many a day. Weird and unbelievable though the events may seem, they are here set down in good faith and with fidelity as behooves the compilers of this record, in order that future generations may judge for themselves.

"Sharp on the stroke of midnight George Whittlesby, of the senior class, than whom none has a greater reputation for veracity, was lying in bed sleepless with insomnia, in the dormitory. As narrated by Whittlesby, at twelve o'clock sharp the air was rent by an unearthly cry. It was an ominous wail, rather than a scream. Yet was it vibrant with anguish and horror.

"Springing from bed, Whittlesby ran to the window and peered out as he thrust the curtains aside. The night was clear, with a full moon bathing the campus, in its glow.

"Rising in full view under the moonlight, he beheld the belfry of faculty hall. And, standing on the pinnacle, was a figure garbed in unrelieved black. The uncanny cries continued, apparently coming from this figure.

"Instantly there occurred to Whittlesby, the old superstition that the ghost of Peter Barton haunts the tower at midnight. He hurried down the corridor and summoned Doctor Grenfall, the dean. They returned to his chamber, where—to his surprise—Dean Grenfall assured him that he, too, beheld the black figure.

"Dean Grenfall's natural conclusion was that one of the students was embarked on a prank. He dressed and ran out upon the campus. When within a stone's throw of faculty hall, he was horrified to observe the black creature rise onto the night and float outward above his head."

"Hold!" Professor Baxter interrupted. "I want you to pay particular attention to what follows in the entry."

Harris continued his reading, his voice jerky with excitement, his eyes seeming to protrude from their sockets:

"According to Dean Grenfall, the figure in black lifted what might have been its arms as it silently floated through the air. But instead of arms it appeared to have what looked like the wings of an enormous bat. And, as it moved, he saw its feet clearly outlined against the moon. Later he recounted that the creature's feet were huge, each being three-toed like a bird's.

"The creature vanished among the treetops. And so the matter rests, with the students and faculty divided into two camps, both of them fearfully excited. One faction believes that the so-called specter was merely a draped dummy form, and that a student-jester pulled it toward him, in his place of concealment in a treetop, using a long cord. The other faction is equally insistent that Dean Grenfall saw the ghost of Peter Barton, dead these many years. They point out triumphantly that, according to tradition, Peter Barton's ghost is reputed to be black, with great bat wings and three-toed feet. A careful examination of the scene of this horror to-day disclosed unmistakable three-toed tracks in the dust of the flooring inside the belfry."

The bound volume slipped from Harris' limp fingers and thudded to the library table as he finished reading. His cheeks were white. His jaw gaped. He sat down slowly, and it was noticeable that he trembled.

Professor Baxter's face was grave. He ran his long, slender fingers through his tousled, sand-colored hair. His clear blue eyes gleamed feverishly.

"It gave me, too, quite a start when

I first read it," he said. "I spent considerable time rummaging through the old college records before locating this entry."

Harris was breathing quickly, as though suffocating.

"It seems very close in here," he muttered. "Ive got to get some fresh air."

He strode to a window and, opening it, leaned out into the misty dusk. Presently he turned.

"Leave the window open," said his companion.

"I'm afraid I acted deucedly like a child," admitted Harris shamefacedly. "But this description, penned in 1867, matches so closely our idea of The Midnight Terror, that my blood ran cold."

Professor Baxter fumbled in the drawer of the reading table until he located a cigarette and match. He puffed in his amateurish manner, spitting the smoke out. With his free hand he turned pages of the bound volume until he again located the entry Harris had perused.

"Now," said he, "this one is the only passage I was able to locate that seems at all pertinent. Nothing further developed regarding the specter, in 1867. There are a few lines to that effect, here and there. Gradually the incident was relegated to oblivion, though I fancy that a few who were attending the college at that time are still living and recounting the horror to any one who will listen. What is your opinion of the recent murders, after reading this old account?"

"By George!" said Harris slowly. "I've never been much of a hand for believing in the supernatural. But now, for the first time, I incline to waver. You are, I understand, a profound student of psychic investigation. Are there any authenticated instances of so-called ghosts committing murders?"

Professor Baxter awkwardly tossed his half-smoked cigarette into the fireplace. It fell short, alighting on the Afghan rug of rectangular patterns. He kicked the smouldering fag over onto the hearth.

"Roger Bacon, I fancy," he answered, "would, if he were here, place a bet on the existence of a ghost. Yes, there have been isolated instances of ghostly murders, apparently authentic. I could relate a long list, especially those of oriental origin. For us the trail apparently again leads back to the theory that an apparition or something supernatural killed Van Ness and Jenkins the night watchman."

"Which, of course, is in favor of the suspect, Harry Pryor. I am not particularly fond of him. But I should hate to see him convicted of the two atrocious killings."

Professor Baxter smiled like one about to spring a surprise. Undoubtedly, he had something up his sleeve.

"Take this volume again," he said, holding forth the book. "Examine the handwriting that made the record in 1867."

"Quite a good hand this man wrote, whoever he was," Harris commented. "Almost fine enough for a copperplate engraving. They don't write like that now. The typewriter has ruined penmanship. This entry was written in black ink."

Professor Baxter was breathing loudly. "What else do you notice about the ink?"

"Nothing—except these places where you have done some underscoring."

"What is underscored?" Baxter asked, as though he did not already know.

"Just a few phrases."

"Call them off."

"The first is, 'garbed in unrelieved black.' The others are, 'great bat wings' and 'three-toed feet.'"

Professor Baxter briskly pawed his sand-colored hair. "Those phrases that are underscored," he pointed out, "are

the major features we have observed about The Midnight Terror."

"That is why you underlined them?"

"Harris," the professor informed him tensely, "I did not do the underlining."

"Who did?"

"God grant me power to find out," said Baxter solemnly. "Those marks were there when I opened the volume. And the marks have been recently made. That is evident from the fresh, unfaded appearance of the ink. The librarian had no record or recollection of any one's having recently applied for this volume. Whoever had it, got it in secrecy. I am confident that the underscoring was done quite unconsciously by the reader. People often do it, as you have noticed in text-books and the like, to emphasize important or disputable passages."

Harris gazed at Baxter in understanding.

"Then you think the murderer was a man, made up, and that he got his ideas for his costume from this old record of 1867?"

"It looks that way. Furthermore, the underscoring was done with purple ink. Presumably this ink came from a fountain pen, for a skulker would not be apt to carry a bottle of ink and a pen into the reference rooms and files of the college library. No, since he had ink at hand, it is probable that he used a fountain pen."

"But there are about half a thousand fountain pens in use among the students. We all have them."

"True, but what is the college regulation as to ink color?"

"I begin to follow your reasoning. We have to use blue-black ink, for uniformity in our test papers and to make them more easily read. I recall using green ink in my freshman year, and being compelled to copy it over in blue-black."

"On the other hand," said Baxter, "a lot of us carry more than one fountain pen. Now, purple ink is not as scarce as hen's teeth, not by any means. But it is comparatively rare. You seldom see it; at least, around the college."

"Then your main task is to find some one with a fountain pen that writes purple."

Professor Baxter had become so excited that he could not speak. His voice was choked by his emotions. A tear dripped from the clear blue eyes. Restlessly he paced back and forth before the fireplace. Finally he regained control of himself and spoke.

"Mr. Harris," he confided brokenly, "I am grief stricken. A possibility is looming, of such ghastly enormity that it appals me. I pray for guidance."

"What! Then you know——"

"I do. I have located an individual whose fountain pen writes purple, and whose handwriting has a faint tremor such as you observed in the lines underscoring the pertinent passages of the description of the ghost penned in 1867."

CHAPTER XI.

A PROWLER IN THE BELFRY.

IN criminal detection, it is a long step from suspicion to proof of guilt. And unconfirmed suspicion, even though confided to a most reliable friend under solemn oath of secrecy, may by a thoughtless remark become public property. Rumor magnifies in the telling. It may be utterly baseless, yet by distortion it may blast a clean reputation, and cling to the falsely accused throughout life.

Accordingly, Professor Baxter refused to disclose to Harris the identity of his suspect—the man whose fountain pen flowed purple ink and whose handwriting had a peculiar tremble.

"You will know in due season," the professor promised. "Now, to-night we shall watch faculty hall and its belfry from outside. Conditions will be ideal, for apparently dense clouds are certain to hide the moon. We shall be enabled

to lurk in jet darkness. But we need some one on guard within the building."

"How about Professor Murchison?"

"Under the circumstances, I could ask for none better. He is as zealous as myself to round up the murderer and free the college of this terrible thing that broods over it. So he has gladly consented, and to-night he will again remain late in his laboratory—ostensibly engrossed in experiments, but really waiting with a watchful eye and an ear cocked for the least sound that is suspicious."

Roxy had, as promised, prepared a most delicious dinner. They enjoyed it thoroughly. Then they returned to Professor Baxter's library and lounged in easy-chairs before the crackling logs, discussing the vast science of criminology, until an hour before midnight.

Determinedly they went out into the foggy night and advanced stealthily across the campus.

Harris still had the professor's pistol, five shells in the chamber. Baxter was carrying the bundle containing Barbara's dress and hat.

It was no discomfort for Professor Murchison to spend the evening in his laboratory at faculty hall. Nothing delighted him more than to experiment with his test tubes, germ cultures, and other things that figured prominently in his research work.

This night he was alone in the building.

The hours slipped by. Ten o'clock came. Nothing happened to attract his attention. Presently it was eleven, and still no suspicious sounds. Yet Professor Murchison did not abandon hope that he would witness some excitement. As Baxter had pointed out, The Midnight Terror was accustomed to make its appearance around midnight.

At times Murchison became so engrossed in his experiments that he completely forgot his capacity as a watchman. Of late he had been exploring outside his regular field—searching for something that would destroy the tuberculosis bacillus without injury to the blood of the victim. To date he had achieved promising results by a concoction based on gold and calcium.

Murchison realized that the possibility of his discovering a cure for tuberculosis was extremely remote. But there was always the slim, alluring chance. The thought of success made his heart pound furiously. What a blessing it would be to humanity! And how the world would ring with the fame of Professor Murchison, towering benefactor!

It was quite apparent that this man was overworking himself, taking dangerous chances with his health, in his almost fanatical desire to aid mankind. His college duties were a sufficient burden in themselves. Spare hours were devoted to research and reform. Sadly enough, he habitually reached too far—aspired to the idealistic or the unattainable. So his humanitarianism was rather a matter of intent than of results.

He had locked the door of his laboratory, as any one would naturally have done under the circumstances. Murchison had no desire to have an attacker creep up in his rear.

He paused in his work and frowned. Had he really locked that door? Blessed if he were certain. So he strode over and twisted the knob to make sure. Later he was agonized by the same doubt; again he yielded to it and tried the door. This happened half a dozen times. He realized it fully, cursed his nerves, and stood out against the urge until large globules of perspiration trickled over his brow.

"I must slow down and relax," he muttered, "or my nerves will go to pieces."

It now was half past eleven o'clock. Professor Murchison was conscious of a mounting excitement. The dread hour, in which The Midnight Terror staged its foul deeds, was close at hand.

He felt a premonition of approaching horror. It was as though another presence had materialized beyond his locked laboratory door—unseen, unheard, yet registered by a sixth sense.

Professor Murchison softly laid aside the test tube which, in order to obtain a better view of its contents, he had been holding in direct line with his eyes and an electric light overhead.

Breathless, he listened.

To his ears came a faint and irregular creaking of boards out in the corridor, sounds such as would come from a prowler tiptoeing through the dark, making his way cautiously. This could not be imagination, nor the noises natural to an aged structure. The sounds had approached from below and were continuing on up the stairs to the top floor.

Professor Murchison approached the door, as silently as possible. He pressed an ear to a panel.

An unmistakable creaking reached him.

"Some one is raising the trapdoor leading into the belfry," he reflected.

So Murchison reached out and touched a switch, throwing his laboratory into darkness.

This was a prearranged signal. It started Professor Baxter and Harris, who had been waiting in the shadows out on the campus, rushing toward the front entrance of faculty hall. They found the stairs and corridors in darkness. Quietly they continued up until Professor Murchison met them in the gloom on the second floor, and in a whisper outlined the situation.

On to the third floor they groped their way, and up the narrow stairs leading to the belfry. Then Professor Baxter raised the trapdoor and turned on his pocket flash light.

Clearly outlined in the cone of light was the prowler. He had opened the loose window and was halfway through it, on his way to the sloping roof.

He cried out in consternation at the banging of the trapdoor and the unexpected illumination, and leaped forward.

But Professor Baxter had leaped faster. He caught the fugitive by an ankle. Unceremoniously he hauled him back into the belfry.

Harris had expected to see a figure garbed in black, with huge bat wings and three-toed feet. But the captive was dressed in an ordinary blue serge suit and plaid cap. He turned his face to view.

"Harry Pryor!" Professor Murchison exclaimed triumphantly. "This is the second time we have caught him in suspicious circumstances. I guess you will not be averse to turning him over to the detectives now—eh, Professor Baxter?"

Baxter impatiently waved his flash light.

"Silence!" he ordered sharply. Murchison bit his lower lip, resenting any command. "And now, Mr. Pryor," Baxter said, "tell us what you are doing here."

"Aw, I'm not doing anything to hurt anybody."

"Then why are you lurking in the belfry at this hour?"

Pryor grinned. He reached under his coat and brought forth two streamers of cloth, one yellow, the other black. Vigorously he flourished these.

"My class colors," he explained defiantly. "I thought it would be a daring stunt to hang them to the top of the belfry at the hour when The Midnight Terror is supposed to haunt the place. Boy! No sophomore would have the nerve to do it."

"An excellent alibi to carry with him," Murchison cut in; "mighty cunning, if you ask me."

"Cunning—and *plausible!*" Harris reminded him. "If I were a freshman, I think I'd have tried the same stunt."

"Please!" Baxter urged. "Allow me to do the talking." His tone softened, became flattering, coaxing. "You are

a brave young man, Mr. Pryor. Did it not occur to you, that a person takes his life in his hands by approaching this place, of late? The Midnight Terror might attack you—kill you."

"I'm not afraid of it," Pryor said with a chuckle.

"Why not, pray?"

The prisoner did not answer. A crafty smile played about his lips.

"Why should he be afraid—of himself?" Murchison asked.

"You think I'm the Terror?" Pryor demanded defiantly. "You'll have a swell time proving it."

"When did you get this idea of affixing your class colors to the belfry at midnight?" Professor Baxter inquired earnestly.

"I don't remember," Pryor answered after a moment. "It must have occurred to me in one of those spells I told you about, when I have a lapse of memory."

Baxter held his flash light so he could see his watch. "Hello! It is a quarter of twelve. Harris, we must rush back to my house. I forgot to tell you that Barbara Hamilton's father was due on the late train to-night. I have invited him as my guest. He should reach my house shortly after midnight. Barbara is coming over from the dormitory, shortly, to talk to us. She thinks she can identify the voice of The Midnight Terror, which she heard the night she was attacked."

Baxter swung his flash light so they saw Pryor's face. It was twitching. His eyes had a hungry gleam.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MIDNIGHT TERROR STRIKES AGAIN.

PROFESSOR BAXTER seemed not to have noticed Pryor's telltale expression. He patted the youth on the shoulder and said: "Run along home, my boy. And don't be afraid. I believe in you."

Pryor left eagerly. His gait, they observed, was loose-jointed like an animal's. They heard his footsteps retreating down the stairs.

"Merciful heavens!" Murchison protested. "Aren't you going to watch him and make sure he doesn't linger to attack the girl?"

"No," said Professor Baxter calmly. His companions mentally cursed his stupidity. "I think he has had enough of a scare for to-night. Barbara will not be molested. Come, let us get out of this ghastly place."

As the three investigators left the belfry, Professor Baxter continued gravely. "Things look very dark, indeed, for young Pryor. I fear that he has not fully recovered from being kicked in the head during the football game last Thanksgiving. He has memory lapses, as he claims."

Murchison laughed skeptically. "So he says, at any rate. I believe in giving people the benefit of the doubt. But one has to draw the line somewhere. Of course, if Pryor is mentally unbalanced, he is not responsible, and a jury would not give him the extreme penalty. Instead, they would incarcerate him in an institution."

They had now reached the door of the laboratory. Murchison went in and turned on the lights.

"We leave you here," Baxter announced, "to keep our appointment with Barbara's father. It would be a good idea if some one camped in the building until after midnight. Just as a precaution, that is, in case the Terror comes prowling about. If you don't mind doing this for me——"

"Well, I'd thought of closing up and going home," Murchison said. "But I can stay a while longer in my lab. A half hour should be enough. Good night, friends."

"We will not bother to turn on the hall lights," Baxter decided. "Let us leave everything as we found it. Come, Harris."

They felt their way downstairs, holding to the black walnut banisters for guidance.

"Is that straight," Harris asked, "about Barbara's father arriving on the late train?"

Professor Baxter chuckled. "Not at all. I said that for young Pryor's benefit. If he is the guilty one, he will wait and attack me disguised as Barbara. I double-baited the trap by saying that she thinks she can identify The Midnight Terror's voice. After we left, it was on the tip of my tongue to confide this to Professor Murchison. But, on afterthought, I decided that you and I had better keep our plans to ourselves. I do not believe in broadcasting unnecessarily. Murchison will be quite as valuable as a guard, without knowing that I am the bait for Pryor. In fact, Murchison has a strain of the cavalier in his makeup, and he will be more alert if he thinks the person in peril is a girl."

In the jet darkness of the lower hall, Baxter groped until he found his newspaper-wrapped bundle where he had dropped it. He took his coat off and slipped into Barbara's dress, finally donning the hat.

Harris chuckled. "I wish we dared to have a light so I could see you," he said. "How does it fit?"

"Oh, it's all right. I tried it on over home. The lights along the sidewalk are dim enough to aid me, provided they do not reveal my atrociously large feet. The skirt is about as short as it would look if Miss Hamilton were wearing it. I have rolled my trousers to the knees, and have on a pair of long stockings borrowed from Roxy. We'll leave by the rear door. I'll skirt the darkness to the left and strike out across, then toward the walk as though coming from the young ladies' dormitory. You keep far enough behind me, so you'll not be seen. But be ready to rush forward quickly out of the black."

Harris slipped the pistol from his pocket. He was a fairly good shot. Yet he had never realized until this moment the advantages of being an expert marksman. It is one thing to hit a target in daylight. It is quite another matter to take aim in the darkness of the night.

Softly closing the rear door behind them, they tiptoed down the iron steps and moved off into the night. The fog was not as dense as it had been during the early evening. It had thinned out in the dormitory windows, and soon they made out the illuminated walk with scattered trees near by; but objects were somewhat blurred.

The mist was swirling a lot, for a restless wind was playing over the hilltop.

All around, the night was spectral, just the sort of stage setting that was ideal for the maraudings of The Midnight Terror.

A dismal, melancholy sound came from the belfry and lingered in the air. The tower clock was striking. Twelve times its funereal tones reached them mournfully.

They were so far back in the darkness, away from the lights of the walk, that Harris was unable to see his companion. But he could hear Baxter's feet swishing over the wet grass some fifty feet in advance.

The last stroke of midnight blended away into silence.

It was the dread hour that already had brought death to two victims of the Terror.

Baxter was emerging into view now. He was close to the winding sidewalk, about halfway between the dormitory and faculty hall. Apparently he had done much rehearsing, for he walked with a graceful, athletic swing that was strikingly like Barbara's gait.

Suddenly the professor halted. A low cry of consternation came from him. Harris broke into a run. Straining his

eyes to penetrate the mist, he saw what had attracted his comrade's attention.

And it was a sight that raised the young man's skin in prickles of goose flesh. He stopped running, and suddenly stared.

Ahead on the walk, swiftly approaching faculty hall, and already only a stone's throw from the front entrance leading up to the stairs and on to the belfry, was a woman.

She, too, had a gracefully athletic stride. Harris knew on the instant that her gait was the original, which Professor Baxter had been counterfeiting.

The woman was Barbara Hamilton.

On she went. Her lover was mute and motionless, stricken with fear for her safety. Could it be real? Or was it all a dream? Certainly, the environment was that of dreamland. He watched her take a dozen steps before he emerged from his daze. Then he leaped forward at top speed.

"Barbara!" he shouted warningly. "Come back, come back."

The girl turned. Startled, she hesitated, stood still.

Harris caught up with Professor Baxter. They ran side by side. Fully two hundred feet separated them from the girl.

"My fault!" Baxter gasped. "Original plan, to have her here—changed mind—decided to masquerade in her stead. Forgot to tell her."

What else could one expect from such an absent-minded individual? But Harris gritted his teeth in rage. They ran on. The distance to their goal had been halved.

And then, at Barbara's rear, they saw a black figure leap from behind a pillar of the gallery that fronted faculty hall. As it touched the ground and darted to the walk, it raised what might have been arms but they were webbed to its body like the wings of an enormous bat.

It was The Midnight Terror.

A few bounds brought the thing to Barbara's back.

One wing circled as though to clutch her. The other swung backward. And, as it swung, something that flashed like a knife came into view at the wing tip.

Abruptly Harris fired his pistol.

Purposely he sent the shot wild, fearful of hitting the girl.

The Midnight Terror instantly changed its tactics. It released its hold. Barbara fainted, collapsing in a heap. The Terror leaped aside. It sought safety.

Harris fired four more shots. Apparently all went wild, for the Terror neither slackened its rush nor cried out. Harris' brain was riotous with wild thoughts. One of these was that the enemy must, after all, be an apparition, and that bullets would go through it without injury.

Next instant the Terror might have been a thousand miles away, for all Harris cared. His sole concern was for Barbara. Breathing convulsively, he dropped to his knees and gathered her in his arms. Quick examination disclosed that she was unhurt.

And when she presently emerged from her swoon, she huddled close to him and their lips met in the kiss of pledged love.

Professor Baxter had no young lady at hand to claim his attention. Probably that was all for the best, since he was so engrossed in capturing The Midnight Terror that he undoubtedly would have forgotten her presence.

The black figure moved with an agility and speed that were suggestive of the superhuman. It leaped upward to the flooring of the gallery and vanished into the black shadows. Baxter heard a soft patter as the thing fled along.

He followed, running to the steps and up, hoping to head off the fugitive. The door of faculty hall banged shut. Baxter opened it and plunged into the dark hall.

As he entered, down the stairs from above there floated a laugh that was as mocking as it was unearthly and blood-curdling.

Yet Baxter did not pause in dismay or apprehension. With the certainty of familiarity with his surroundings, he touched the switch that turned on the corridor lights. Then up the stairs he went in pursuit, mustering all his energy for swiftness, well knowing that failure would probably be his if he lost the race to the belfry.

Reaching the second story of the building, he hesitated only to switch on another tier of lights. To advance into darkness would be folly, for The Midnight Terror might lurk and strike him down with its knife or by other means. Again came the taunting laugh, as though to lure him on. And again he boldly accepted the challenge.

The Terror had climbed the stairs faster than its pursuer. This had increased its lead. As Baxter ran toward the steps leading up to the top floor, he heard the pattering feet break their rhythm. There came the sounds of a scuffle.

Professor Murchison's voice rang out triumphantly. "Aha! I have you this time, you devil."

Baxter slipped on a step which he later discovered had been soaped. He tumbled back to the landing. And, as he fell, he heard a low, deep cry of intense pain.

Then came the thud of a body.

After that, all was ominously silent above.

Baxter dashed on. Arrived at the hall from which narrow steps led to the belfry, he felt along the wall for a switch. In his reach there was no such certainty as had been the case on the lower landings. Only too well he had sensed the meaning of the silence. His fingers shook as he groped to turn on the electricity.

A click, and the lights shone dazzlingly. In their glare was revealed a sight that caused him to exclaim in alarm.

Sprawled out at the foot of the belfry steps was the body of Professor Murchison, motionless, eyes closed. The face was turned to Baxter. And, as he looked, he saw blood trickling down over the high white forehead.

CHAPTER XIII.

INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE.

WAS it murder? Had The Midnight Terror claimed a third victim? Professor Baxter did not linger to investigate. For the present he had a more urgent duty.

The silence of this corridor in which he now was standing did not extend into the belfry above. Beyond the trapdoor he heard a creaking.

A light would be needed up there. Fortunately, his flash light had not dropped out of his trousers pocket during the chase. He had quite forgotten about it in the excitement. For the first time it occurred to him that he might have used it on the way upstairs. His eyes rested on his costume. He smiled at thought of how ridiculous he much look in this dress borrowed from Barbara Hamilton. It had impeded his running until he had clutched the skirt up around his waist. The hat, a jaunty little turban, fitted tightly on his large head.

As though ashamed of his feminine trappings, he flung the hat aside. Off came the dress. He now could move freely. Coatless and with trousers still rolled up to his knees, giving him a ludicrous appearance, he darted up the narrow steps and raised the trapdoor.

Boldly he stepped out into the small belfry. The trap banged shut behind him. His flash light swept the room.

Disappointment appeared in his anxious face. He sagged somewhat and had a vague impression that he was wilting.

For he was alone in the belfry. Where he might have encountered specter, beast, or man if he had arrived sooner, he now found only empty space.

Tick-tick, tick-tick, tick-tick. The tower clock above his head continued its monotonous functioning. In its ticking he fancied he detected a sort of triumphant taunting, as though the clock shared The Midnight Terror's secret and would guard it eternally.

What was that sound he had heard from below—the distinct creaking? This was a question that was speedily answered. His roving eyes rested on an open window. It was the one from which nails had been drawn and which, when closed, was held tightly by reason of its being warped. Now it was wide open. It creaked on its rusty hinges as the wind toyed with it.

Professor Baxter leaned out the casement window and stared into the night. He could not see much, as there was no moon. But a faint illumination rose from the double row of lights along the walk below. He saw swaying branches of trees.

The rays of his flash light explored back and forth over the sloping roof, thence to the eaves from which a fugitive could step to a large projecting branch, and so on to the ground.

"And Harris," Baxter reflected. "Harris probably is so concerned with his sweetheart that he wouldn't notice a Terror coming down a tree trunk a foot from him."

Checkmated in the belfry, Professor Baxter's thought of his stricken colleague, Murchison. He raised the trapdoor and hastened down to the still body that lay stretched out at the foot of the steps.

Murchison was not dead.

He had, in the struggle, received a wicked blow on the side of his head. From it came the blood which still was trickling over his high, white, intellectual forehead. The blow had cut the scalp badly. Surgeon's stitches would be necessary.

Professor Baxter examined the unconscious man thoroughly. He found no other wounds. Murchison, he felt sure, would recover consciousness soon. The pulse was rapid, but regular. His breathing was deep and rhythmic, utterly unlike that of a man who is perilously close to the grave.

Quite satisfied that there was no cause for alarm, Professor Baxter rose to his feet and dusted his knees. He felt the need of a cigarette and accordingly groped in his pockets. Finding none, he took the liberty of patting Murchison's pockets from the outside. He felt nothing that suggested a packet or box of fags. Anyhow, it would be treacherously ungentlemanly to explore a colleague's clothes under such circumstances.

So Baxter went downstairs to Murchison's laboratory on the second floor. He found the door open. The light still was out, as he had noticed in passing during the chase. This was to be expected, for Murchison—hearing a rush of feet—would keep his room in darkness so that he could leap upon The Midnight Terror unawares. Apparently he had decided it would be more strategic to come to grips on the floor above. Up there, of course, the Terror would seek its habitat, the belfry, and the narrow stairs leading to the belfry would be a better place to come to grips than on the other and wider stairs. Such must have been Murchison's logic. At any rate, whether he had waylaid the Terror or followed it when it fled past the laboratory, poor Murchison had encountered disaster.

Baxter turned on the laboratory lights. No cigarettes were in sight. But he was badly shaken and needed a stimulant, so he ransacked the room in every direction.

Finally he found what he wanted.

He reappeared on the top floor, in-

dustriously puffing, spitting the smoke forth in his amateurish way.

Murchison still was unconscious.

Professor Baxter was beginning to become a trifle worried. He thought of going along the corridor and opening a window to summon Harris. Still, that would undoubtedly be a waste of energy. He knew Harris intimately, and understood his mental processes. At this moment, Professor Baxter would have wagered his head, Harris was in the young ladies' dormitory delivering his sweetheart to tender hands.

"He'll show up on the run just as soon as he sees the girl safely home," Baxter muttered aloud. "I think I'll take another look at the belfry."

A brief delay intervened while he searched for his flash light, which was missing. After cudgeling his memory, he finally recalled that he had left it on the belfry floor. There he found it.

The professor whistled tunelessly as he lingered motionless, in deep thought. He had no doubt that The Midnight Terror had on more than one occasion used this loose belfry window for an exit. But, if the Terror were a man, would he be apt to go out over the roof, down the tree, and off across the campus in his theatrical garb? If he departed in his black suit, with its bat wings and three-toed feet, would he not most assuredly be risking detection? A creature of such fiendish appearance would be brave, indeed, to chance being seen by prowling students.

A new line of thought occurred to him. His heart leaped at this idea:

"If I were The Midnight Terror, what would I do? Why, I would slip out of my costume before departing into the night. And what would I do with the costume? Would I carry it away with me? No, decidedly not, for it would be incriminating evidence if I were accosted and questioned after reaching the campus. What, then? Why, the answer is simple: I would have a hiding place for the costume right here in the belfry."

And now Professor Baxter's heart was racing and his breath came hotly. He was tremulously excited, convinced that at last he was on the right trail. If his reasoning proved correct, he would soon know whether the Terror were human or specter. And, if he found a costume, it might be traced.

Eagerly he examined the room with his flash light. His eyes strained upward, searching the works of the clock for a hiding place. But none was apparent. Furthermore, the clock would be a foolish location for a cache, since it was visited daily by the janitor who oiled and wound the clock and otherwise cared for the mechanism.

As for the walls, they were out of the question, being so constructed that they afforded no place of concealment. These walls consisted of a skeleton of two-by-four planks which were surfaced only on the side exposed to the weather. Within, they gave the appearance of an unfinished attic.

So there remained only the flooring as a possible cache. Professor Baxter stooped over, head on a level with his knees, examining the boards with his light. Board after board he inspected without seeing anything suspicious.

He was almost despairing of success, and ready to admit that he was on the wrong track, when his eyes rested on the floor close to the trapdoor.

Was it imagination, or did two of those boards project up at one end as though the nails had come loose?

Instantly he was on his knees, feverishly prying at the ends of the two boards, with his pocketknife.

A cry escaped him as they came loose.

He turned them over and examined the back. Nails had been driven in, then cut off close to the wood so that when the timbers were replaced they would look as if nailed solidly.

The opening that yawned in the floor

was only about six inches wide. Professor Baxter thrust a hand into it. The hand encountered something soft.

He pulled forth a bulk of fine black silk that had been hastily wadded before being shoved into the hiding place. Also, he found a pair of peculiar overshoes.

Then he stood erect and shook out the folds of the cloth. It dropped down —spread out—and Professor Baxter fairly squealed with delight.

In his hands he held The Midnight Terror's costume, a garment that would garb a figure in unrelieved black. There was a hood with slits for eyes. And the sleeves, when lifted, gave the appearance of enormous webbed bat wings.

CHAPTER XIV.

TELLTALE PURPLE INK.

SO The Midnight Terror was not a ghost, after all. Professor Baxter accepted the truth regretfully. He had for many years been a profound and enthusiastic student of psychic phenomena, and it had always been one of his supreme hopes that some day he would encounter a genuine apparition. Ghosts, however, would not bother with black silk costumes.

The next task was to find the owner of the garment. Professor Baxter proceeded briskly, with the evident confidence of one who has secret information up his sleeve.

Whistling tunelessly, he replaced the two boards in the flooring so that the next visitor would not trip and break a leg. Then he rolled the black silk into a loose bundle and thrust it under his left arm. Raising the trapdoor, he went down the steps.

Professor Murchison still was unconscious. But his head had turned so that the face was upward. It was a sorry sight, skin pale, and hair clotted with blood.

Baxter picked up Barbara's dress, which he had cast aside, and wrapped it around the overshoes and the black silk. Then he went to a near-by water cooler and, returning, dashed a glass of the cold liquid in Murchison's face. The shock reacted instantly. Murchison twitched, jerked, opened his eyes.

He gazed dully at his comrade.

"Oh-h-h!" he groaned. Gently he fingered the injury in his scalp. Feeling the stickiness around the gash, he withdrew his hand, and his gray eyes gleamed with alarm as they stared at it.

"Don't be excited," Professor Baxter said soothingly. "You may need some stitches. But it is nothing to worry about. What happened, my friend?"

Murchison sat up. "I heard sounds of a chase," he explained. "So I ran up here to waylay the fugitive. For, naturally, I figured it was The Midnight Terror, and that it would come this route to the belfry."

"You guessed rightly. And then?"

"I clutched him. Whether Harry Pryor or not, it was a human being, all right. His muscles felt like steel. He swung at me. Something hard struck the side of my head. Everything went to the dogs then. I heard a mighty roaring and lost consciousness. When I came to—well, that was just a minute ago, as you know. And how about the Terror? Did he get away?"

Murchison's voice had risen eagerly. It had a demand for vengeance in it, which was not to be wondered at, considering his throbbing head.

Professor Baxter smiled sheepishly. "I regret to say," he answered, "that I found the belfry deserted and the window open. Yes, The Midnight Terror has escaped again—off into the night. Unfortunately for him, though, I have struck a few clews. Within an hour, I am confident, the Terror will be under lock and key."

"Let us hope so!" Murchison said fervently. "I couldn't stand many such welts on the head as he gave me tonight. So you have clews, eh? Then

I fancy you are more inclined to agree with me that Harry Pryor is the guilty one. Poor chap, if he had not been injured in that football game, this wretched affair would never have occurred."

Baxter stepped forward. "Do you feel strong enough to stand up? Here, let me give you a hand. There!"

"Thanks," said Murchison gratefully. "No, I am not dizzy. I can stand alone without toppling over. In fact, I would feel fine if my head were not thumping and pounding. Shall we go to my lab? I want to hear about your late discoveries."

"Instead, let us go down to my lecture room on the main floor. "The evidence I mentioned—possibly I flatter myself without reason when I use the word 'clews'—is in my own room. I want you to see my exhibits and give me your counsel before we proceed further."

Murchison, despite his insistence that he did not feel dizzy, held to the shining black walnut banisters as they descended the steps.

Professor Baxter went along the hall and got his coat. Then he returned and opened the door of his lecture room. He stood aside for his companion to enter. Then Baxter followed. He closed the door and reached for a near-by switch. Lights blazed on.

"Hello!" Professor Murchison called out, surprised. "We have quite a gathering here to-night."

Lounging in chairs were the three private detectives who were at work on the case, also Harris, County Sheriff Madder—and the suspect, Harry Pryor.

Professor Murchison nodded approvingly as his eyes rested on young Pryor. The suspect was fidgety. His eyes blinked and roved, and they had an undeniably frightened gleam. Never was a man more plainly uneasy.

The detectives awaited developments, stony faced, without speaking.

But the voluble Sheriff Madder could not restrain his voice. "It was a darned long wait, Professor Baxter. Sitting here in the darkness since ten o'clock, without talking except in very low whispers, and then only occasionally, has been a real job. When Harris fired those five shots from his pistol out front, we were tempted to disobey your instructions and go into action. We would have, at that, if it hadn't been that we could see the fracas from the window. We saw The Midnight Terror drop the girl too quickly to have injured her, so knew there hadn't been another murder."

Baxter nodded approvingly. "You might have darted out and caught the Terror as he ran through the hall to the stairs. But I could not be sure in advance, that he would flee that way. For all I knew, he might have used a rope ladder. So the best thing was to make you promise to sit pat and leave the capture to us."

"Huh!" the sheriff snorted. "And you botched the job—let the Terror escape."

"He has not escaped," Professor Baxter assured the other quietly. He was intently studying Harry Pryor's perspiring face.

"How did Pryor get here?" Murchison asked. "You told him to go home after we caught him in the belfry."

"Harris grabbed him out front a few minutes ago," said the sheriff.

Baxter searched his clothes for a cigarette. He found none. Harris came to his assistance. Baxter smoked in an absent-minded way, as though arranging a definite sequence of thoughts in his mind. He spat the smoke out irregularly instead of exhaling in streams. Finally he sat down and awkwardly crossed his knees.

"In common with any successful detective," said he, "my obvious rôle was not to betray to the killer that I suspected his identity. It would have been

fatal to my plans if he realized that I was on his trail. I had more than one suspect, and I employed the same tactics on both. I feigned to be baffled. I purposely did a number of things that must have looked stupid to The Midnight Terror and caused him to have many a laugh in private."

Baxter coughed and continued: "If Barbara were just a chance victim of attack, if the fiend leaped upon her merely because she happened to be the first woman to pass faculty hall that fatal night, it would indicate that the Terror was an individual of subnormal intelligence."

Professor Murchison interrupted. "Yes, or that the killer was *temporarily* unbalanced mentally—say, by a blow."

Baxter ignored the suggestion. Murchison frowned indignantly.

"I quickly dismissed that theory," said Baxter. "Why? Well, the Terror plainly had a lot of imagination. That was shown by his fanciful make-up and by his playing up to the Peter Barton ghost superstition. His imagination was the sort that indicated very high intelligence. So, since he was clever and brainy, I plainly had to do with a madman."

All eyes turned to the suspect, Harry Pryor. His pallor changed to a flush either of anger or fear.

"What is insanity?" Professor Baxter pursued. He was absorbed in his subject, as enthusiastic as when he lectured to his classes in psychology. "Insanity, after all, is just a deviation from the normal. Time was when a man who thought the world round instead of flat was considered crazy. Madness is relative. What is madness in one generation may be sanity in another."

"That is quite true," Sheriff Madder cut in. "Local settlers thought my father was crazy when he bought stock in the old Atlantic and Great Western Railway."

"Precisely," said Professor Baxter. "There are all kinds of mental instability. Take my own abnormalities. No doubt, my chronic absent-mindedness is a brain weakness. In that respect, I am not sane. There is another type of mental unbalance. Allow me to read from a bulletin issued by the department of public health:

By the term psychasthenia is understood a group of conditions. There is a tendency to obsessive ideas and doubts which persist in coming against the will of the patient. In extreme psychasthenia the difficulty of making up the mind, of deciding, becomes so great that a person may suffer an agony of internal debate about crossing the street, putting on their clothing, eating meals; in fact, about every detail of acting and thinking. There is a group of impulsions and habits. The impulsions are sometimes absurd, as when a person feels compelled to step over every crack, to touch the posts along a journey, or to take three steps at a time.

"Gentlemen, most of us have psychasthenia in one form or other."

Professor Murchison nodded. "Myself, for instance. I am highly nervous from overwork. Many of the symptoms you just described fit me like a glove."

Professor Baxter dropped his cigarette to the floor and extinguished its glowing tip underfoot.

He continued: "Let us pass on to more extreme mental derangement. Again I read from the pamphlet:

Conspicuous among these eccentric individuals are the paranoid personalities. These individuals are peculiarly sensitive. Their ego is dominant and they care more for its promptings than for the commendation of the other members of their group. These individuals frequently head reform movements, but more often they live a thorn in the flesh of their associates, quibbling over the social transgressions of their neighbors, and attempting numerous social measures, the main motive for which is an unconscious and blind struggle against the dictates of the larger herd or group of people.

Among these will be found sympathizers with the enemy in time of war, certain conscientious objectors, and those who habitually form themselves into "anti" societies.

Carried to the extreme degree, these in-

dividuals are called paranoiacs—those who are so far unbalanced as to have delusions of persecution and ideas of grandeur.

"And that's that!" said Professor Baxter emphatically, pocketing the pamphlet.

Harry Pryor for the moment had become forgotten.

All eyes were concentrated on Professor Murchison.

He squirmed and flushed. His long fingers were drumming nervously under his chair. His cheeks twitched and his nostrils quivered.

A peculiar tension had taken hold of his watchers. The very air seemed charged with an evil force.

Professor Baxter walked to the door, locked it and shoved the key into his trousers.

The ominous truth had not escaped Harris, that the description of a paranoid personality, which Baxter had just read, applied strikingly to the personality of Professor Murchison.

"Now, gentlemen," Professor Baxter said sharply, his words coming slowly and stabbing the air dramatically, "it is a well-known fact that the mental disease, paranoia, *often produces a homicidal tendency—the desire to murder human beings.*"

A tremor passed through Sheriff Madder. He glanced longingly at the locked door, as though he regretted that he was not outside the building. His eyes brightened as his gaze swept to the windows. One did not have to be a mind reader to follow his line of thought. He was reflecting that, in emergency, a man might escape by plunging head first through a glass pane without much danger to himself, save, perhaps, a few cuts.

Professor Baxter laughed hollowly.

"My friends," he said grimly, "insanity is one of my pet subjects. You will pardon me when I say that all of us at times are mentally unbalanced—and that I probably could take each of us in turn and make out a case of insanity of one form or another."

Professor Murchison was the only member of the group who endeavored to smile—and his was a wan attempt.

"I want to show you something interesting on a pad of paper," Professor Baxter stated amiably. "Professor Murchison, may I please borrow your fountain pen?"

Mechanically Murchison plucked his pen from a vest pocket and tendered it.

Professor Baxter picked up a pad from the desk. He made a few wavering marks and held them aloft so that they were plainly seen.

"Look, look!" Harris cried, springing to his feet. "The fountain pen writes purple!"

"Yes," said Professor Baxter slowly, "Professor Murchison is The Midnight Terror."

CHAPTER XV.

THE TERROR TRAPPED.

PROFESSOR MURCHISON snorted angrily. He leaned back in his chair, his head elevated proudly. Aside from his indignation, he had perfect self-control. Behind the spectacles with huge tortoise-shell rims, his gray eyes were crafty. There was an air of defiance about him. His watchers viewed him with respect. Professor Murchison had an impressive personality. His large skull housed an exceptional brain. The forehead was high, the mouth firm, the ears small.

Yet, as they stared at him, they fancied that he had certain marks of an archcriminal which they had never before noticed. And, no doubt, he would be a ferocious fighter if trapped in a corner. His red hair and beard suggested a highly emotional temperament which, however well it might be controlled normally, was certain to assert itself in any desperate predicament

"Sir!" Professor Murchison said

coldly, fastening upon Professor Baxter a glare that was intended to be withering. "Sir! Yon are an asinine dolt! Stupid and blundering as you are absentminded! I shall have vengeance through the courts. You have slandered me most vilely, and you shall pay the penalty."

"Your challenge is accepted," Professor Baxter replied calmly.

"May I ask," Murchison queried sarcastically, "just what you expect to prove, by ascertaining that my fountain pen writes with purple ink?"

"Certainly!" Baxter answered quickly. "In the library we found an old college record describing a supposed materialization of Peter Barton's ghost in the year 1867. Certain phrases had been underscored recently. These phrases covered the prominent features of the ghost make-up, such as the three-toed feet, the black body, and the bat wings. The underlining was done with purple ink."

Professor Murchison laughed boisterously. "As if I were the only person in the world who uses purple ink in my fountain pen! Why, your deduction is absurd. It is the surmise of an imbecile."

"Have it your own way," Baxter conceded. "However, I am confident it will be found that there are few other purple-writing fountain pens around the college, if any. But this is a minor factor of my evidence. For one thing, I got in touch with Barbara Hamilton's father by telephone, to learn whether the college houses one who might be his enemy. I learned that you are the son of a wealthy man who was forced into bankruptcy by the competition of Hamilton's enterprises."

"That is true, I admit. But it proves nothing as regards my being The Midnight Terror."

"Nevertheless," Professor Baxter said, "it was sufficient to set me watching you. I have known you for years, sir, have long feared that your paranoid personality would become so acutely developed that you would be dangerously violent. It was for your own good that I repeatedly urged you to slow down your pace."

"Then you have been dishonorably spying upon me!"

"Well," Baxter admitted dryly, "it looks as if I have kept a close eye on you. Another thing that convinced me you were the killer, was that you tried so hard to fasten suspicion on another —on Harry Pryor. You never overlooked an opportunity to do that, once he loomed stealthily in our investigation."

Professor Baxter turned to Pryor. "You played your part admirably, young man.

You see, Murchison, his visit to the belfry earlier to-night was planned. I staged it, to draw you out. He knew that the detectives and Sheriff Madder were waiting in the darkness of this room. So, when he left us, he came here to join them. It was a hoax, when we told you a few minutes ago that he had been nabbed outside by Harris."

"Thank you, sir," said Pryor gratefully. "I did my best. I shall never forget that I might have been falsely accused and brought before a jury, if it had not been for your goodness."

The next move was up to Professor Baxter. So far, he had proved nothing of major importance.

Dramatically he strode to the desk, his steps resounding hollowly in the high-ceilinged classroom, and picked up the bundle of cloth. Unwrapping Barbara's dress, which was on the outside, he brought to view the black silk costume that had been worn by The Midnight Terror during its maraudings.

The garment, held by the hood, unrolled until the lower part touched the dusty floor. Then he spread the webbed sleeves to disclose the bat wings.

Exclamations of amazement followed,

for this was the watchers' first view of the fatal garb.

At sight of it, Professor Murchison gave a violent start.

"So you recognize it, eh?" Baxter drawled. "I found it in its cache under the belfry flooring."

"How can you prove that it belongs to me? You cannot!"

Baxter smiled. He was ready to spring his greatest surprise. He turned to Barbara's dress and unfolded it further, bringing forth two large objects that flapped as he handled them.

"Observe!" he said triumphantly. "Here we have the rest of The Midnight Terror's make-up. It is a pair of overshoes, and to their soles have been cemented three-toed rubber feet that would leave tracks like a gigantic bird. I do not know how they were molded. But that is a trivial matter. Murchison, finger prints are all over the rubber. Are you willing to permit us to compare these finger prints with your own?"

Professor Murchison's hands clenched tightly. It was a movement that betrayed him—almost a confession.

"You, too, are absent-minded, Murchison," Baxter informed him. "In making these things, you used an old pair of overshoes. And you forgot that you had previously inked your initials R. M., for Ralph Murchison—in small letters inside, above the heels, to identify them in a mix-up. Initials might have been planted, but the finger prints could not be."

Beads of perspiration had sprung out on Professor Murchison's tall, white forehead. His eyes shifted from face to face. But, no matter where he turned, he encountered only grave looks which seemed to show that all considered him guilty.

Suddenly he moved like lightning. He sprang to his feet. His right arm flashed to a side pocket of his trimly tailored coat.

His hand came forth empty.

Professor Murchison snarled.

Professor Baxter bowed. "I took no chances," he said. "While you were unconscious to-night in the upper hall, I deprived you of your pistol. It is on my hip at this moment."

Murchison sat motionless. He was stunned. His head sagged to his bosom. The red hair glistened.

"You have me dead to rights," he admitted presently. His tone was dull, lifeless. "Barbara's father forced my father into bankruptcy. Had it not been for that, I would be wealthy to-day, living the life of luxury in which I was reared. It took struggle and deprivation to put myself through college. Do you wonder that I hated Hamilton? Do you not understand how natural was the reaction which caused me to develop unbounded hatred for the rich, and deep sympathy for the poor and oppressed? That is why I have been so zealous in reform movements.

"Ah, well, I have come to a sorry and disgraceful end. I presume I went crazy. My hatred of Hamilton became maniacal. I conceived the idea of masquerading as Peter Barton's ghost. I lay in wait for the girl. Then came the night when I caught her crossing the campus alone."

"Would you have killed her?" Professor Baxter asked, awed and horrified.

"Killed Hamilton's daughter? Taken his dearest treasure from him?" Murchison sneered. "I would, indeed. I would have strangled her for revenge, with pleasure. But things went wrong. I was interrupted by Van Ness. He pursued me into the night, flourishing his baseball bat. If I were caught, I could not laugh the affair off as a prank. It meant disgrace, dismissal from the faculty, the loss of everything I held dear. In short, all that was worth while in my life would come toppling into ruins at my feet. I had to keep my identity concealed. Well, that night I was carrying a blackjack which I had

purchased in a pawnshop during a trip to Pittsburgh. I ducked in the darkness of the ravine and let Van Ness have it in the head as he ran past. Then I went right out of my head, frenzied at having been thwarted in my attack on Barbara Hamilton. They say that I made sure of the job by strangling Van Ness. I don't remember.

"Again I was forced to commit a murder, to save myself from exposure, when the night watchman interrupted me as I came down from the belfry. That is all, gentlemen."

"It is enough," Professor Baxter commented with a shudder. "But tell us about your being found unconscious tonight."

"That should be obvious. You were close at my heels. I had taken your bait and waylaid the girl again. Running up the stairs, I barely had time at the top to slip out of my costume. I faked sounds of a struggle and cried out, as you came on. Then I tossed the costume into its hiding place, closed the trapdoor, and came down the steps and hurled myself through the dark so that my head collided with the wall. It knocked me out, all right. I figured it would look as though the Terror had assaulted me."

Sheriff Madder took a hand. He produced a pistol and handcuffs. "Come with me, Professor Murchison," he ordered gruffly as he clicked the steel links around his prisoner's right wrist and his own left. "Maybe the judge will just stow you away in the asylum for the rest of your days."

The three detectives had been silent observers. There had been no occasion for them to interrupt. Nor had they the desire, so fascinated were they by Professor Baxter's skillfully handled accusation, by his logic, and by the evidence he had produced. It was decidedly a one-man victory.

One of the detectives spoke up. "I guess you'll get the one thousand dollars' reward offered by Hamilton for information leading to the arrest of The Midnight Terror."

Professor Baxter's eyes widened at his impending good fortune.

"If so," he said, as he absent-mindedly twisted a button off his shirt, "I think I shall expend the money on a memory-training course."

Far above, in the belfry, the tower clock mournfully tolled the hour. Sheriff Madder led his manacled captive off into the foggy night. The county jail was new and strong.

DETECTIVE TRAILS HIS FORMER "BUDDY"

HERE is a story which sounds like fiction, but is fact. John H. Syron and John Horeau of Newark, New Jersey, went to war in the same outfit. Off the coast of Ireland they jumped off a cutter to rescue a man from drowning. Both were decorated for it. After the war they were separated. Syron became a messenger for a trust company. Horeau was employed as a detective by a surety company which bonds bank employees.

Some time ago Syron was sent with three thousand in cash and seven hundred and fifty dollars in checks to deposit in a bank. It was charged that he deposited only one thousand in cash and the checks. Horeau was put on the case by the surety company. He caused the arrest of Syron, and later appeared in court as Syron's accuser. Syron pleaded guilty of embezzlement and was held in five thousand dollars' bail. Horeau told the court of his old friendship for Syron. "He was decorated five times for bravery," Horeau said proudly.

His Last Bargain

by R. M. Bemis

Author of "The Canary That Wouldn't Sing," etc.

IN the hurrying throngs on the sidewalk of Summer Street in the damp mist of a late afternoon, Patterson was a unit. Head down, he followed the man in front of him with unseeing eyes, his mind intent on the things he must do this night. Some subtle sense warned him just as he was about to pass under the ladder, which slanted out across the sidewalk, bearing a man in overalls and raincoat, fixing a sign.

Curious eyes stared at him out of the throng as a sudden exclamation of alarm and consternation left his lips. The man behind him pushed him on, laughing, then grunting a soft, expressive oath as Patterson squirmed aside, bucked the crowd for a moment, and slipped around outside the ladder. But no one seemed to notice the shivering fear that gripped him. He was lost in the crowd again. "That was a fearfully close shave," he was thinking. "Under a ladder—tonight!"

It was not until he had crossed the bridge, turned down a side street and climbed into his parked car that the fear left him. He smiled rather grimly. "It's a good sign," he thought. "A good sign." He started the engine and waited, eyes on the stream of homeward-bound people on the sidewalk, his fingers clenched about the rim of the steering wheel. He was ready, satisfied that the gods were with him.

Patterson was a slim bit of a man, with a perfect oval face, a sharply pointed, slightly Roman nose, thin lips, and delicately moulded chin. His cheeks were plump and soft. The brown eyes, behind the big, round lenses of his glasses, were close set, but mild. The lids of them were squinted, as the man peered out through the door of the coupé. As he caught sight of Latimer, a steely glint came into Patterson's eyes. Under his guidance the car moved out into the street, turned into Summer Street and swung up to the curb beside Latimer, who was plunging head down with the rest of the crowd toward the South Station. Latimer was Patterson's immediate superior in the office of Mead, Barlow & Stevens, dealers in wool.

A careful scrutiny of the sidewalk assured Patterson that no one who knew him was in sight. "Hey, Latimer!" he called, "Want a ride out?" Latimer lived out in the same suburb with Patterson, but he kept no car, and rode in on the train. Latimer was a thick-set man, with a round face, steady blue eyes and a mustache that was sprinkled with gray. He was nearing fifty, several years older than Patterson. A quiet, dependable sort, was Latimer, but close, his friends would have said. Latimer was saving his money. He had a garden out at his place, and hens, and even a cow, which roamed the pasture between Latimer's house and Patterson's, on the edge of the little village, yet not too far from the railroad. Many times before this had Latimer accepted a ride in Patterson's car.

"Guess it's going to be a nasty night," he said as he climbed into the coupé.

"Yes," answered Patterson placidly.

"I expect it will rain harder, toward morning." He spoke as though he had carefully figured that matter all out; confidently, as though it was part of his plan to have it rain, and harder toward morning.

"Yeah," agreed Latimer in his gruff voice that was neither harsh nor gentle. "Paper says it's going to be quite a storm."

Patterson was satisfied that no one had noticed that he had picked up Latimer. He drove on a few blocks, turned into a side street with a sudden exclamation of annoyance, and drew up in front of a drug store. Patterson had been here before; he knew that it had a public telephone in a booth, so placed that one using it could see out into the street. He wanted to keep an eye on Latimer.

"Have to telephone," he apologized as he crawled out past Latimer. "Won't be a minute." Latimer agreed without particular interest.

In the booth, with the door closed, Patterson gave a number, and waited with a cautious eye on Latimer. The latter was sitting in the coupé, his lips puckered up as though whistling; that was a peculiar trick of Latimer's, whistling without making a sound.

Patterson waited anxiously for the voice he expected to hear. If the wrong person answered him his plan would be spoiled. There came a childish voice over the wire, saying "Hello." The small eyes behind the big glasses flashed with an expression of satisfaction. Patterson waited till the voice came again, a bit louder, assuring him that it was Latimer's ten-year-old son, Ralph.

Patterson spoke gruffly into the telephone, imitating the voice of Latimer. "Hello. That you Ralph? . . . Daddy won't be home to-night. I've got to go to Albany on business, understand?"

"Yes. Daddy, can I milk the cow?"

Patterson hung up without answering. As he left the booth he was smiling; the brown eyes squinted slightly; the lips were in a straight line. "That ladder was put there on purpose to show me that everything was all right," he thought. "It was a good sign." He crawled into the coupé with a few words for the other man about the fancied business over the telephone. The car started again and crawled out through the south end, Patterson driving slowly, for the streets were slippery, and the mist was getting thicker. He wanted no accident to mar the perfect plan which his brain had built up.

Latimer chatted about the business, and Patterson agreed, and disagreed with him in an abstracted way, as he drove. "I say," suggested Latimer, breaking off suddenly, "you wouldn't mind letting me out to get a few groceries, would you, Patterson? These cash-and-carry places, one of them, you know."

The little man at the wheel grunted assent, yet growled inwardly. Just like Latimer, always buying his stuff at cash-and-carry places, to save a few cents. Close, Latimer was. He swung the car up to the curb at a red-fronted store, peering in, through the mist, and wondering darkly if the other man would take it into his head to telephone out that he would be home a few minutes earlier than usual.

But Latimer did not telephone, the man in the car outside kept a close watch, his fears lessening as Latimer came out with a paper bag full of groceries. "No trouble, no trouble at all," he protested at Latimer's words. "I'd do a bit of shopping myself if my wife didn't do all the buying."

Latimer put in his package, and with one foot on the step suggested eagerly. "Why not call her up? They've got a sale on, in here." Latimer was like that, thought Patterson disgustedly. If he found a place where he could save half a cent on five pounds of salt, he wanted

to pass the word along to everybody he knew. But Patterson was not worried.

"Wife's out of town," he said. "She's gone over to her mother's, won't be back till to-morrow." That was a part of Patterson's plan, but his lips smiled that straight, hard smile as he thought of it again. Everything seemed to fit in with his scheme.

Latimer got in and the car rolled on through the darkening mist. By the time they had reached the suburb where they lived it was dark enough for him to have turned on the headlights of the car, but Patterson prefered to drive in darkness. Their houses were on the far side of the little village, which consisted of a general store, a lunch room, and a drug store, besides the residences. No one was on the streets. The rain was serving a good purpose there, for Patterson did not want any one to notice that he had Latimer with him in the car.

Patterson's place was isolated, beyond the village, Latimer's a hundred yards further on, around a sharp bend in the road. Usually, when Latimer rode on the train he cut across through his pasture just before he came to Patterson's place, and went over the stone wall and through the scraggly trees and brush. Usually when Patterson drove him out in the car he rode to Patterson's house and then walked down the street. But to-night Patterson stopped at the place where the path was. Latimer looked a trifle surprised as his friend suggested that he get out, but all in all it was shorter by the path through the woods. He climbed out and took his bag of groceries under his arm. "Much obliged, old man, for the ride," he called back, and went over the wall, on into the misty woods.

Patterson seemed to have difficulty in starting his car again. The motor purred for a second, then sputtered and stopped. By the time Latimer had entered the path into the pasture, Patterson was climbing out of the car. He followed Latimer, who was striding on ahead, dimly visible in the misty darkness.

Barely out of sight of the road, the man behind, padding along the damp ground silently, came up with Latimer.

"Hey, Latimer," called Patterson, "Got something over here I want to show you. Over here in the bushes." It was a remarkable request. Latimer grumbled. "Bushes are all wet," he said. "Can't it wait till some other time?"

But his friend was hurrying on. Arrived at the center of a clump of scrubby bushes, he pointed down at the ground. "Come and have a look at this," he exclaimed again. Grumbling, Latimer went. There was a little bare spot surrounded by bushes, seven or eight feet across. "Don't see anything," he said. Patterson maneuvered to get behind the other man, fumbling in his hip pocket. "Look closer," he said. "Queer thing, that, Latimer." His voice was steady, the lips smiled that straight-lipped, almost triumphant smile as Latimer looked at him, then stepped forward and peered closely at the ground.

Patterson's brain must have become more of a thinking machine than the brain of a man, else he never could have done what he now managed. Even so, he had discovered that he could not shoot Latimer while the man was facing him. But as the man stooped and peered, Patterson drew his gun swiftly, raised it steadily and fired. With the dull report of the weapon Latimer sank to the earth, in the opening in the bushes. The bullet had gone through his brain.

Many are the reasons men give for desiring the death of their fellow men. Patterson's reason was a trivial thing. If his brain had not been more of a thinking machine than the brain of a man, the thought of murder doubtless would never have occurred to him, or if it had occurred to him it would have been a dreadful fantasy not to be

thought of too deeply. With the expected retirement of old Mr. Barlow, there had come rumors of taking one of the older men in the office into the firm. That would mean either Patterson or Latimer. Patterson believed that the man chosen would surely be Latimer, and his thinking-machine brain had plotted for the removal of his friend. Until now he had not thought, in fact had not allowed himself to think, of his act as anything more than "removal." He had a strong will, had Patterson; when guilty thoughts had come, he had resolutely put them aside, grimly determined that emotion should not enter into his plans. He had calculated his chances well, and being more than ordinarily superstitious, and more of a fatalist than the average man, he had resolved to commit his murder in the best manner he could think of, and take whatever chances should go with it, without fearing them.

Patterson gently slipped the gun back into his pocket. His plan of action necessitated getting back to his car at once, before some one should come along and find it there. He found it hard to take his eyes off the still form on the ground. A shiver went through him, and he clung to a small birch tree for support, the little eyes behind the big glasses wide and staring with horror. Then the thinking machine that was his brain began to restore itself to order. "What is the capital of West Virginia?" he asked himself in a steady voice. He snapped his fingers petulantly as the answer would not come. But by the time he had pushed his way through the wet bushes and down the path to his car, he was rapidly putting questions and answering them, as though he had never in his life killed a man, or seen death, or been troubled with an uneasy conscience.

Two minutes later he drove his car into the garage and entered his house, which was dark and silent. He would have the evening alone to dispose of the body of Latimer. He quietly set about getting himself something to eat. Occasionally he would catch himself suddenly and put a sharp question, and answer it methodically, quietly. Once he pressed his face against the glass and looked out across the darkness over Latimer's pasture. Out there, less than a hundred feet from him, lay the body of Latimer, hidden away in the opening in the bushes, under the straggling trees that stood in scattered clumps, thicker in this end of the pasture than in the other. But no thought of dead men crossed his mind. He was concerned only with the gentle rain that fell, and the softly moaning breath of the east wind, promising more rain toward morning.

After supper he methodically set about clearing up, and washing the dishes, a task he hated. To-night, however, he seemed almost to welcome the job, painstakingly scrubbing and wiping each dish and setting it back in its accustomed place, exactly where it should go. He even spent some minutes in trying to remember whether his wife folded the dish towel once before she hung it on the bar, or whether she hung it without folding. He tried it both ways, solemnly, to try the effect, and decided that it would dry better without folding.

He took off his shoes and put on his slippers and smoking jacket and sat down to read. But reading was impossible. He took off the big-lensed glasses and wiped them carefully and sighed deeply. "I have a dreary business to attend to, before the thing is done," he whispered. For a few seconds he thought, or perhaps it was that he was about to think of it, for he caught himself up sharply, right there—he almost thought that the thing he had done was not worth while. He got up and shuffled about the house in the slippers, rapidly naming the capitals of the States of the union, over and over again, till it seemed that he was saying them by rote. Then he started on a new line of questions.

Usually Patterson went to bed at half past nine, or ten. At half past nine, then, he went to his bedroom and sat on the bed till ten, then turned out the light and came down, put on shoes and overshoes and raincoat and slipped out the back way. The front door he had carefully locked before retiring. He locked the back door as he went out. In the garage he got a pick and spade, and a ten-quart wooden pail. It was raining very gently as he climbed the stone wall behind the house. He was in Latimer's cow pasture.

The cow pasture was an acre or so in extent and oval in shape. It ran from this end down past Latimer's house, bounded on the other side by another street, where there were no houses. In this end there was a growth of birches, a few scattering small pines and clumps of blueberry bushes, with an undergrowth of smaller brush. A little beyond the path was a small brook, which had entered into Patterson's calculations.

The little man with the shovel and pick and wooden pail pushed through the bushes till he had come to the path. It was pitch dark. He could see nothing at all but the dim outlines of the thicker leaved trees as he looked up. Dark and very wet, too, with the rain drizzling down and the bushes dripping water and dousing him with every touch. In his pocket he carried a small flash light, but he did not use it till he had come to the place where the body of Latimer lay. Then he allowed the glow from it to shine only dimly. Latimer lay as he had left him, with his paper bag of groceries beside him, broken open, and the contents spilled and soggy. The five pound bag of salt had wasted away, half gone, dissolved by the drenching of the rain. Patterson contemplated it with something of a smile. "Your last bargain, Latimer," he muttered. But it was a sorry attempt at a joke.

From a near-by farmhouse, beyond the other street, a dog howled. Patterson shivered suddenly, a quick spasm of the muscles. He threw down the shovel and pail and went doggedly to work with the pick. It was a long, slow job. He alternately loosened the dirt with the pick, and threw it out on the side opposite the dead man. Down two feet and he heard the distant ringing of a clock bell. It might have been eleven, or twelve, he didn't know. But he kept on. Another foot and a half, and the bell struck one. It was raining harder. At four feet down he stopped, climbed out, staggering with weariness from the unaccustomed labor, his nerves still tense with energy. He stood and listened. The wind was rising, and the rain beating down on the leaves gustily. It was very dark, so dark that he could see nothing at all yet he moved about without the aid of his flash light until he had straightened Latimer's body and pushed it over into the grave, where it dropped soggily. Then he had to use the light, very dimly, to pick up and throw in the wet paper sack and its contents, and the wasted bag of salt, and Latimer's felt hat. Then he began to shovel in the dirt again, getting down into the grave at times and treading it down firmly. Yet when the hole was filled, there yet remained a little heap of dirt to be disposed of.

This dirt he shoveled into the wooden pail he had brought, pushed his way through the bushes to the brook and dumped it in. Then back for another load. It was a tedious process; the clock bell struck two before he had got it all moved. And yet remained the most difficult task of all. He must replace the leaves and pine needles over the grave to make it look just as it had before.

Another slow hour dragged by, while he picked up leaves from here and there in the pitch darkness of the woods, carried them to the grave and sprinkled them on, arranging them by the faint

glow from his light. There was the spot where he had piled the dirt from the hole. It had to be perfectly cleaned off, and the leaves put on there, too. Painstakingly he arranged the place, plodding about doggedly; then there were many footprints to brush out. He carried water from the brook and splashed it about. When he was through he searched again and again for some spot which might have been overlooked. At last he picked up the pick and the shovel and the pail and pushed his way through the darkness toward the house. It was still raining, a steady, obliterating rain. He carefully washed the dirt from his clothes and shoes, and from the tools and pail. He put the latter in their places, and went into the house. He was tired out. The blood pounded against his temples so that his head ached. His mind, it seemed, was too dull now to need the questions and answers which it had needed before. More than anything else in the world Patterson wanted to go to sleep, yet when he got into bed he found that he could not sleep. He must go over again and again the chances of success, the possibility that some one had seen Latimer get into his car on Summer Street, or had seen him in the car on the way out. Could any chance passer by have heard him digging, in the middle of the night? Could any one have heard the shot, or noticed the car stopped in the middle of the road, last night? Had he left any clew in the woods so that his long hours of digging and covering up the signs of it would be revealed to some one crossing the woods?

"It's in the hands of Fate," he told himself again and again. If it was to be that he would be discovered in his crime, then it was to be, that was all. After a time Patterson went to sleep, and did not awaken till after nine in the morning, which was as he had planned. He knew that he could not go to work on this day. The strain of the previous night would show in the tired lines of his face, and in the eyes, too. Patterson had thought that all out before. He would pretend sickness.

Sleep had strengthened him. He resolutely put away all thought of the horror of last night's terrible drudgery. He made a pot of coffee and drank several cups, and even permitted himself to think of the time when he would be summoned to become a partner in the firm. That was an hour for which Patterson had been waiting a long, long time. Latimer, he told himself, had gone away, to return some time, perhaps.

The rain had ceased, and the sun was breaking through the clouds. They were swift-flying, fleecy masses. The wind had changed to the northwest. In a few hours it would be a sunny day again, clear and cool.

After his coffee Patterson donned his overshoes and raincoat. He wanted to casually stroll out through the pasture and make sure that everything was in perfect order, as he knew that it must be.

He had approached the spot, and was studying the ground where he had buried Latimer when he heard a sound in the bushes on the other side. It was Latimer's cow. She had poked her black-and-white head through a parting of the bushes and stood gazing at him. There seemed something deadly and baleful in the steady stare, as though she had known all along that this man had murdered her master, or so it seemed to Patterson, as he licked his lips quickly and half heartedly muttered an imprecation. "Scat! Get out of here!" he growled, but instead of leaving, she stepped forward a pace.

Patterson wanted to throw something at the creature, but he controlled the impulse, and started toward the house, looking back, to see the cow, head down, moving toward Latimer's grave. Fascinated, Patterson watched, the little eyes behind the big glasses staring in

puzzled wonder as the cow stopped over the exact spot where Latimer lay.

To Patterson it seemed as though she must have smelt out her master, doglike, and come to grieve over his grave. He bit his lip, fighting back the uncontrollable desire to return and drive her away. Then he picked up a small stone and threw it at her, cursing softly. She raised her head and looked at him with that steady, wide-eyed stare as he approached. He threw another stone, and she snorted and galloped off.

The long night's labor, the sleepless hours of worry, had left Latimer's brain weakly unreasoning. The simple action of the cow impressed him with a sense of foreboding that swept everything else before it, for why should Latimer's cow come to stand over his grave? Even a dog would not have done such a thing. What animal instinct, or supernatural cause would bring her here? It worried him. When he got in the house again, the first thing he did was to peer out the back window again. And as he watched, Latimer's cow came back, pushing her way through the bushes toward the hidden grave, with uncanny certainty.

Patterson had cleaned and oiled the gun and put it away in the desk drawer. Suddenly he found the gun in his hand, and he was rushing out the back way, hatless and coatless, plunging through the wet bushes with mad haste, breathing in sobbing gasps.

But he stopped before he had come to the cow, watching her, fascinated. The cow turned her head and looked at him as she had done before. In the big brown eyes Patterson saw reproach, and patient, dumb understanding. Then, as a dog might lick the face of its dead master, the cow lowered her head and began to lick the ground beside Latimer's grave. Patterson choked, as he would have screamed at her. He put an unsteady hand to his forehead, and leaned against a tree, shivering. *"How does she know?"* he sobbed.

Something slipped in Patterson's brain. A second later Latimer's cow jumped, startled at the sound of a shot, and turned to gaze steadily, a bit frightened, at the body slumped down where Patterson had stood. She snorted once at the smell of the hot blood. But the still body did not move. She flicked a fly off her back with her tail, and sniffed at the ground again, and began to lick the little bare spot she had cleared in the leaves with her long red tongue, the spot where Latimer's bargain had wasted away beneath the steady rain of the night before. Little affection had she for Latimer, dead or alive, or fear of Patterson, alive or dead. Lately her salt ration had been omitted, for Latimer didn't know much about cows, so she began greedily licking the salty ground, satisfying an inward craving that neither Latimer nor Patterson seemed to know anything about.

DO DETECTIVES RESORT TO DISGUISES

RECENTLY we saw it stated categorically in an article dealing with detective technique that a good detective never resorts to stage disguises. In view of numerous instances which we could recall where clever detectives resorted to character disguises to get "their man," we decided that the author of the article, himself a clever detective, had a complex on the subject of disguises. A recent number of the illustrated section of a New York newspaper contained a photographic reproduction of City Marshal John E. Parker of Gloucester, Massachusetts, made up as a woman. Mr. Parker used this disguise to go sleuthing in the local dance halls for evidence against bootleggers. On these expeditions he is accompanied by Officer Charles O'Maley and Sergeant Edmund Cronin, who act as his escorts.

Sealed Murder

By Christopher B. Booth

Author of "The Guilty Three," etc.

CHAPTER VII.

BERTHA IS QUESTIONED.

WHEN Doctor Villard returned to the Hawley place, the three women had left the kitchen and gone to the front of the house; from the far end of the hall he could hear Emma Hudspeth talking, her voluble sympathy a convenient vehicle for any number of curious questions. The physician sat down to await Jim MacMasters' coming.

It was a matter of almost a quarter of an hour before Jim arrived, for he had to make it on foot. Villard heard the approaching crunch of the young lawyer's shoes in the snow and went to the door to meet him. Jim's face was pale and anxious, his eyes troubled.

"You'd better come with me—into the study," said the doctor before the other could begin asking questions. "We're less liable to be interrupted in there. It's a bad business, Jim, a nasty business, any way I look at it. Walk lightly, my boy, for I don't want that Mrs. Hudspeth to be interrupting us—which she will certainly do if she gets wind there is anything irregular."

MacMasters restrained himself until they were in the study and the door had closed behind them. His fingers closed tightly about the doctor's arm.

"Tell me," he blurted. "Wade Hawley, you say, is dead. Do you mean that he has been—murdered?"

"Things point that way, Jim," Doctor Villard answered grimly. "He died of cyanide poisoning. I haven't probed very deep; I thought it best to wait until you were here. After all, it's your job, your official job, Jim. I know this puts you in a terrible position, but"—he gestured expressively with a toss of his hands—"what else could I do but send for you?"

"What you mean, doc," MacMasters said in a hoarse whisper, "is that you think, you suspect, that Charley Bush——"

"Either Charley or Sophie, Jim. We can't get away from it that one of them poisoned Wade Hawley."

"Let's have the facts," groaned the lawyer. "Your suspicion against Charley Bush, I suppose, is based on that outburst of his the night you and I were in the drug store—the night after the Hawleys had returned to Mayfield. That's it, isn't it, doc?"

"Not alone that, Jim; I wish to heaven that were all. Neither of us took Charley Bush's threats that night as seriously as we should. Charley has eaten his heart out with hate for eight years, and we should have known that a hate which endures for so long a time is dangerous.

"I have very little actual proof, Jim, but the circumstances are damning, utterly damning. Hawley has been murdered with the deadliest of the known poisons, cyanide or hydrocyanic acid."

"You are keeping me in suspense. You are certain that you have not made a mistake as to the cause of death?"

"There's very little chance to be mistaken about cyanide, particularly when one has witnessed the death of the victim." Swiftly he described the violent reactions of the poison, making it clear that there could be practically no chance of a mistake.

"But," protested MacMasters, "you say that Hawley was yet alive when you got here. I had an idea that death from cyanide was always instantaneous."

"That depends upon the size of the dose, Jim. A single drop of pure acid placed inside the eye would cause instant death, but it would be possible for a man to take a small dose and live for half an hour, perhaps longer. First symptoms would be a feeling of weight, accompanied by head pains. There would quickly follow nausea, and dizziness, the loss of muscular power—and that is what caused Hawley to fall from this chair which was overturned.

"Had I been here when he was stricken I might have saved him with an injection of atropine, but I got here too late. Hawley died in convulsions as I was preparing the hypodermic. No, Jim, the effects of cyanide are unmistakable, and I found——"

"Couldn't the poison have been self-administered?" MacMasters broke in. "We know Hawley must have been broke or he wouldn't have come back to Mayfield. A man like Wade Hawley doesn't come down easily. Isn't the theory of suicide even more likely?"

"Doctor Villard shook his head gloomily.

"The wish is parent of the thought, Jim. It's a wish that I share with you, and if it had been a less deadly poison, I might be more hopeful about that. But cyanide is not an easy poison to procure."

"Pelsue, the jeweler, uses it to clean silver," answered the other. "I've seen him. That doesn't look as if it were very hard to get. Just because Charley Bush is a druggist—that isn't proof."

"Now see here, Jim, I'm no more anxious to pin this onto Charley Bush than you are, but"—his hand went to his pocket—"here's the one thing that makes it look particularly bad."

MacMasters stared at the box of quinine.

"Well?" he demanded.

"I found this on the desk, Jim, and beside it a glass of water. Charley Bush always boxes quinine a dozen capsules to the box. There are eleven here. One of them has been taken. Wade Hawley took it."

"And I wouldn't put it past the man to have arranged that to throw suspicion on Charley Bush," retorted the lawyer.

"That's nonsense and you know it," declared Villard. "I can't very well blame you for grasping at straws, my boy, for your position is even more harrowing than mine, but we are facing facts, and the facts are that either Charley Bush or Sophie is responsible——"

"Why do you include her?"

"I wonder if people realize how difficult a thing it is to make their faces support a lie? I saw Sophie's face and of one of two things I am convinced. If she is not guilty, at least she knows more than she wants to tell. When you see her I think you will know what I mean." He lapsed into silence for a moment. "The first thing to find out is about this quinine—who purchased it and when. To-day, I should think, since only one capsule has been taken."

Jim MacMasters, his hands clenched, flung himself across the room, stood for a moment at the window, staring out across the snow-carpeted lawn.

"Don't you think the first thing to do," he said thickly, "is to discover if there is really poison in those capsules? Shouldn't we do that before we openly accuse any one?"

"I am sure," answered Villard, "that the result would be negative. It wouldn't be likely that there was poison in more than one of the capsules."

The young lawyer turned, his face drawn and haggard.

"You know what this means—to Betty Lou," he said. "If you are right, then either her father or her mother is guilty of murder. Doc, I can have no hand in this, in blasting her life. Isn't there some way to——"

"To cover it up, I guess you mean, Jim," finished the doctor. "No, I'm afraid there isn't. Murder can't be ignored in such a fashion as that. And you are the prosecuting attorney."

Jim MacMasters continued to pace the room, and the other man knew from his face what a terrific battle he was having. "Of course you could resign your office, Jim, but that wouldn't help much, would it?"

The prosecuting attorney came to a halt beside the desk; his clenched hand struck the top of it with a resounding blow.

"It's the job of my office to guide the administration of justice, and that means the establishment of innocence as well as of guilt. I don't believe Betty Lou's father did this thing. That blow-up of his in the store that night means nothing, absolutely nothing. Just words. I don't believe Betty Lou's mother did it. If it had been the firing of a pistol in the heat of a sudden passion I might think differently, but there is something so reprehensible, so calculating, so cowardly about a murder by poison, that I can't and I won't believe it. I'll stake my life that you're wrong. I'm going ahead with this investigation—and prove that both Betty Lou's father and mother are innocent."

Jim MacMasters was absolutely honest in this and tremendously in earnest, but he was, of course, inspired by personal considerations. The doctor shook his head slowly.

"In that event," he asked bluntly, "who *is* guilty?"

"It was suicide," shouted the other, "and I am going to prove it. Wade Hawley was broke and he couldn't stand the gaff. The presence of the quinine was only—only a circumstance."

"I wish to heaven I could agree with you, Jim. I'm mighty fond of Charley Bush, and I am sorry for Sophie, very sorry for her."

"Your friendship for Charley Bush takes a most amazing course," MacMasters retorted, not without some bitterness. "You've accused him of this dastardly thing without a shred of real evidence."

Doctor Villard sighed heavily and looked completely miserable.

"I hope you don't think me a hard man, Jim," he responded, "but I suppose I am afflicted with what is called a conscience. I can't wink at murder, Jim; I had the same temptation, but I can't do it. Not for the sake of the most precious friendship in the world. I—well, I'm just built that way. In the same breath let me say that I don't blame you for your attitude. A situation like this about tears a man's heart in two."

"Mark my words," said Jim MacMasters with what was pretty obviously an unconscious effort to overwhelm his own doubts, "I shall disprove your suspicions. I shall clear Charley Bush—and her mother. I shall do it before I leave this house!" He flung himself into a chair by the desk. "We might as well begin now. For a start we had better put some questions to this servant girl you have mentioned. Would you mind asking her to come in here?"

As Doctor Villard opened the study door and stepped out into the hall, Mrs. Hudspeth was taking an apologetic departure, very much to his relief.

"I know it ain't right for me to run off and leave you alone like this, Sophie," she was saying, "but the truth is I left a roast in the oven and I've just got to run back home for a minute and look after it. I'll be right back, Sophie, poor dear."

She came hurrying down the hall and paused for a moment at the doctor's side.

"It'll be a revelation to some folks in this town," she declared, lowering her voice a trifle, "to see how hard she takes it. Most ever'body had the notion she married Wade Hawley for his money, but I always said different. She thinks just as much of him this minute, when there ain't no money left, as she did the day she run off from poor Charley Bush."

"So it would seem," answered Villard with more curtness than he intended, and the woman went on toward the rear of the house, surprised and hurt that the town's kindly, beloved doctor should have spoken to her so sharply. He was saved the trouble of calling Bertha Krump by her appearance from the front room. He motioned her toward the study, ushered her into the room and closed the door.

Jim MacMasters, his face set into grim lines of purpose, his mouth clamped like the jaws of a steel trap, motioned her to the only other chair, which he faced, and her blue-bead eyes surveyed him with a sort of stolid curiosity.

"Let me have that box of quinine, doctor," he said, his voice brittle with a forced steadiness. "What is this woman's name?"

"Bertha Krump," Villard told him as he handed over the little drug store box. MacMasters held it up for the woman's inspection.

"Did you ever see this before, Bertha?"

"Ja," she answered promptly as her head nodded ponderously. "Quinine. I buy heem at drug store. Twenty-five cents."

"When did you buy this quinine, Bertha?"

"This morning," she replied. "Mister Hawley got cold, bad cold. Frau, she say, 'Get quinine,' so I got."

"Mrs. Hawley told you to get the quinine? You're sure about that?" demanded the doctor, his voice rising sharply, and MacMasters' face went a shade more pale. The obvious conclusion of this was not a pleasant one. Betty Lou's mother had caused the quinine to be purchased! In this one sentence the weight of suspicion veered sharply from Charley Bush to Sophie. Jim fought for self-control and if Bertha Krump sensed anything strange in these questions, in the tenseness of the two men who cross-examined her, she gave no sign of it.

"Did you tell the man at the drug store who the quinine was for?" It was Villard who asked this question.

"Ja, I tell heem. He ask me."

The lawyer winced as if she had struck him with one of her massive hands, for this was almost a deathblow to one of his towering doubts, the improbability that Charley Bush would trust the violent poison to these quinine capsules which might bring about the death of an innocent person. The druggist *had* known for whom the quinine was intended.

"Was it before or after he gave you the quinine that he asked you who it was for?" asked MacMasters.

Bertha puzzled over this question for a moment before she fully grasped the meaning of it.

"Before he giff me it," she finally responded. "Why you ask me so much?"

Both men ignored that question of hers and, as the lawyer nervously laced and unlaced his fingers, it was the doctor who proceeded with their quest for information regarding the quinine.

"Did you give this box to Mr. Hawley yourself, Bertha?" he demanded.

The woman shook her head, promptly and positively, and some of her stolid calm was lost with a show of impatience over what doubtless seemed to her a lot of ridiculous interrogations.

"I giff it to Frau Hawley," she replied, her manner becoming resentful and sullen. "Ach! Such a nonsense over nothings!"

"No, Bertha, this is not nonsense. As you feel that way about it I suppose I had better tell you that your master was poisoned," declared Villard, ignoring MacMasters, signs that he was to keep silent before the servant. Bertha Krump's passive blue eyes grew wide.

"You mean—she kill heem? Midt quinine?" she gasped.

"We want you to tell us everything that happened, Bertha, after your return from the drug store—everything that had anything to do with either your master or your mistress," said the doctor.

Bertha Krump began to jabber in almost hysterical gutturals, reverting to her native tongue as she did when moved to infrequent moments of excitement. As she proceeded she jumped from German to English and back to German again. Jim MacMasters was able to grasp only an occasional word and even the physician, whose German had become rusty with years of disuse, was hard put to follow her.

"What is she saying?" demanded the lawyer when her deep voice came to a pause.

"Enough to make it look very bad—for Sophie," Villard answered. "Bertha had spilled some milk on her coat. Mrs. Hawley took the quinine and went to her room, ostensibly to get some cleaning fluid with which Bertha could remove the milk stains. She was gone quite a few minutes—long enough, I take it, for her to have opened one of the capsules and put in poison. I am not definitely accusing her, understand. I am merely pointing out to you that, from Bertha's account, Sophie would have had the opportunity of tampering with the quinine-box.

"When Sophie returned with the cleaning fluid she drew a glass of water —the identical glass of water now standing on this desk. She picked up the mail that Hawley had been clamoring for and went into the study. She evidently gave her husband the capsule and went to her room. It was about half an hour later that Bertha heard the fall of the chair and found Hawley lying upon the floor."

Jim MacMasters' hands were trembling; his stubborn loyalty was forced to waver but he made one more effort to give denial to the obvious.

"You have already explained that cyanide is a practically instantaneous poison," he protested, "and yet Bertha's story establishes beyond any question that it was a full hour before he was stricken. How do you explain that?"

"In the simplest manner, my boy," replied the doctor. "It might take even longer than a half hour for a gellatin capsule to dissolve in the stomach, depending, of course, on gastric conditions. It would be impossible to make an absolute time-table of it, but I should say that half an hour or thereabouts would be about the right time it would take in a fairly empty stomach. It does fit, doesn't it?"

Jim MacMasters' shoulders slumped.

"It's only circumstantial evidence," he muttered, "but it does look bad. Only, what motive could she have had?"

"Bertha has just told us that Sophie and her husband led a cat-and-dog life, quarreling continually. She even goes so far as to say that Sophie had many times made the threat to kill Hawley."

"Ja," chimed in Bertha Krump, "hundreds! I guess she do it all right. Ja, she do it."

"That's the way it looks now, Jim," agreed Doctor Villard. "He undoubtedly treated her very badly."

"She's done a thorough job of wrecking Betty Lou's life, hasn't she?" Jim said bitterly. "If it had to be one of the two I'm glad it was this way. It would have just about killed her if it

had been her father." He looked up dully and then asked, "Where do you suppose she got the poison?"

"I have a theory as to that," answered the physician. "I think she got it from Charley's store."

"What a fiendish imagination you've got!" MacMasters exclaimed hotly. "Isn't it enough to have her mother guilty of a terrible thing without intimating that her father, too, had a hand in it?"

"I've intimated no such thing," retorted Villard, a trifle impatiently. "Your nerves are raw, Jim. Come, we've got to have this out with Sophie and see what she has to say. She's at the front of the house; we'll go there."

Slowly Jim MacMasters dragged himself to his feet. Suddenly his face lighted with a ray of hope and his fingers closed about the other man's arm with an intense pressure.

"Wait!" he cried. "I—I've just thought of something, doc. If it were true that she gave him the poison in the quinine capsules, does it seem reasonable that she would have left them here on the desk?"

But Doctor Villard made no effort to combat this question. He freed his arm from Jim's fingers and moved toward the door.

"We will see what kind of an explanation Sophie has to make," he said. "Come with me, please."

In passing out into the hall, they left the door of the study open behind them, and this incident, small as it was, was destined to make a chapter, and a most amazing one, of the Hawley tragedy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLACK CAT.

THERE had been a time when the library of Hawley Park had been a cheerful room, but dust and dampness had reduced the once attractive furnishings to a state of decay. There was a mildewed blotch on the back of the sofa, the gilt on the picture frames had tarnished, and the wall paper had mottled and faded until a pattern which had been pleasing to the eye had become hideous and distorted.

Sophie Hawley, white of face and tight of lips, sat listlessly. She was comparing the blemished pattern of the wall paper with the ugly pattern of her own life. She was aware of neither the doctor's return nor of MacMasters' arrival. The latter would have meant nothing to her for she did not know him, much less his official position. She had relaxed some of the earlier tension which had been so noticeable, although there yet remained unmistakable signs of her nervousness and apprehensive dread.

Doctor Villard and the white-faced, grim young man who was a stranger to her were in the room before she had been aware of their approach. With a startled gasp Sophie jumped to her feet, and she would have been, indeed, a very dense person had she not sensed the extreme gravity of their mien.

Jim MacMasters stared into the woman's drawn, frightened face. He did not miss her terror and his last hope crumbled. This was Betty Lou's mother! Yes, he would have known that without being told, for, despite the ravages of her unhappy eight years with Wade Hawley, there was a striking resemblance. He found himself resenting this likeness. She was a murderer, a poisoner!

"Yes?" said Sophie in a shaking undertone. "You—you startled me. I—I did not know you had returned."

"Sit down, Sophie." Villard's voice was stern.

She obeyed without protest. Her struggle for self-control was apparent. After a moment she managed to lift her head with a desperate, almost pitiful, defiance and forced her eyes to meet those of the doctor.

"Why do you speak to me like that?" she demanded.

"You will find evasions entirely useless, Sophie. I have known for the past hour that Wade Hawley was killed —with poison. I saw him die and there is no mistaking the effects of cyanide, particularly when a medical man sees it at work. We are waiting to hear what you have to say—if you care to make a statement."

Sophie Hawley's body twitched, became rigid, and relaxed. Her eyes closed and her head sagged heavily. Jim MacMasters took a step toward her, thinking she had fainted and that she was about to fall from the chair, but she recovered the use of her muscles and a measure of her composure.

"If what you say is true," she declared faintly, "Wade killed himself. He—he had often threatened to since things went against him. His money was gone, his health was gone, and he——" Her voice trailed off, perhaps because she saw Doctor Villard shaking his head skeptically.

"No, Sophie, you can't make me believe that. This man with me is the prosecuting attorney. I telephoned for him to come because almost at once I suspected that your husband had been——"

Her cry interrupted him before he could give voice to the dread word "murdered."

"No!" she screamed. "No!"

"He was poisoned," Villard went on relentlessly, "with cyanide placed within one of these." His hand came out of his pocket with the box of quinine held between his fingers. With his thumb he slid it open so that the capsules were visible to her horror-stricken gaze. "It was you, Sophie, who asked the servant girl to get these at the drug store."

Either she did not sense the accusation in this statement, or perhaps she merely ignored it.

"No!" she said again in desperate denial. "He—Wade did not take one of them. I did have Bertha get them—for Wade's cold—but he was in an ugly mood and refused and then—why I really can't imagine——"

"That won't do, Sophie. These capsules came from Charley's store, and Charley is one of those invariably methodical fellows who always does the same thing in the same way. He always puts up his quinine with an even dozen capsules to the box, and there are now but eleven here. The twelfth capsule was taken by your husband this morning. We know it was that which caused his death."

She stared at him for a moment, a dull, almost blank, expression frozen to her features as if her brain had been paralyzed, and then she broke down. Flinging her body across the arm of the chair she broke into a fit of wild sobbing. It continued for some minutes. There was nothing to be gained in attempting to question her while she was in this state. Jim MacMasters stared miserably at the doctor; he was thinking it strange that so kindly a man as Doctor Villard could have such a stern side to his nature. It seemed to him that the physician was taking a good deal of voluntary authority upon himself, and then it occurred to him that Villard's part in the investigation was official; he remembered that the county coroner was an ancient old fellow and much too feeble for active duties and that Villard, upon those rare occasions when the offices of the coroner were required, took charge of things. There were not many unnatural deaths in this rural community. Even accidents were few and far between and, as for murder, this was the first one that Macmasters could remember in some years. That had been the case of a farm hand who had quarreled with his employer over wages and had struck him down with an ax.

Presently Sophie Hawley's hysteria

subsided. She seemed to steel herself for a continuance of her ordeal.

"I am sorry, Sophie, that it has fallen to my lot to get at the bottom of this terrible affair," said Villard in as gentle a tone as he could, "but I can't very well help myself. The county coroner is an old man and a sick man. At present he has gone to Hot Springs for his health and before he left he had the court deputize me to fill the position. I explain this to you so that you will realize I am not taking this upon myself unnecessarily.

"Now, Sophie, the best thing for you is to make a clean breast of the whole thing."

"But there is nothing I can tell you —absolutely nothing!" she protested nervously. She paused for a moment as if trying to be very careful of what she said, and then she added, "It is true I told Bertha to buy the quinine. I carried it into the study, with the glass of water and Wade's mail. After that I don't know what happened."

"You didn't give your husband a capsule of the quinine—one particular capsule?" pressed the doctor.

"No," Sophie replied in terrified haste. "You don't mean—you can't mean that you think——" She seemed, for the first time, to realize that it was she who was under suspicion.

"I think what circumstances compel me to think," the doctor answered her unfinished exclamation of horror. "We know that your husband was poisoned with cyanide contained in one of these capsules. We know that the quinine was purchased at your direction, that it was given into your hands by Bertha Krump, that before you took it to your husband you went to your room where you remained for some minutes—certainly long enough to have added this deadly ingredient. Then you returned to the kitchen, got a glass of water and went into the study."

Sophie Hawley made a choking sound and stared at him, her eyes glazed, her mouth twitching with quick, piteous spasms of nervous restraint. She made no response to these accusations. She merely stared.

"You had only the average knowledge of cyanide," pursued Villard; "you knew that it was a quick and deadly poison. What you didn't know is that every poison produces its peculiar symptoms and that those of cyanide are particularly violent. You did not know that Hawley would be still alive when I reached him.

"Those are the things, Sophie, you did not know the night you went to Charley's store and took some of the cyanide from the poison cabinet when you found him absent. You see, Sophie, how useless is any denial. I have traced every step you took."

"She took the poison from the drug store?" asked Jim MacMasters with a shudder. "How could you have known that?"

"There is always some mysterious force at work against the evildoer, Jim," the doctor answered. "In this instance, it was nothing more than an accidental remark Charley Bush made to me this morning. He told me that Sophie had come to him at the store, one night when he was working late on his books. He was out in the back getting some coal, he told me.

"As Charley returned Sophie was at the cabinet containing the stock of poisons which, carelessly enough, are not kept under lock and key. It was then—that night—that she got possession of the cyanide."

This had been more or less a shot in the dark, a slender basis of fact and the rest presumption. What Charley Bush had said, in telling of Sophie's visit to the store, was, "She was standing, just where you are standing now," and that spot had been within arm's distance of the poison cabinet. The rest of it was a theory, but the accuracy of this bit

of guessing was proved by the woman's desperately vehement protest.

"Wait!" she cried. "I will tell you about that—the whole truth of it. I—I did not know Charley saw me at the case. I—I really had only opened the door of the cabinet and hadn't had time to put my hand on anything when I heard him coming back, heard the rattle of the latch.

"No, don't interrupt me, Doctor Villard. I am going to tell you *why* I opened the door of the cabinet. My life with Wade was miserable—almost from the start. A hundred times I had thought of putting an end to it—by killing myself. And that night I went to the drug store, I felt there was but one thing I had left to live for, and that was—my little girl."

"Yes, you have proven how much you loved Betty Lou," Jim MacMasters broke in bitterly. "After wrecking her life——" Villard silenced him with a reproving frown, for this was no time for personalities. Sophie went on as if she had not heard him; perhaps her mind was too intent with her own thoughts for her to have grasped the meaning of the outburst.

"There has not been a day in the past eight years my heart hasn't been hungry for her. Oh, you can never know! You know, Doctor Villard, how many times I have written; you know that I have written to you, begging you to talk to Charley about letting me see her sometimes. I wrote you since I came back to Mayfield.

"As the days went on, knowing that she was almost within the sound of my voice, and that I had not had so much as a glimpse of her, I felt I couldn't live unless I saw her. That night I could not sleep. I got up and dressed. I intended to go to Charley's house. I just couldn't stand it any longer. I had to see him—beg him to let me see her—give her a chance to make her love me.

"As I passed the store, there was a light. The front door was unlocked and I went in. There was no one there, but I heard him out in the back, shoveling some coal. While I was waiting for him to come in I saw the bottles in one of the cases. I saw one; it said, I think, 'morphia.' That impulse I have had a hundred times to put an end to everything came over me. There was sleep, eternal sleep, forgetfulness, in that little bottle. Betty Lou was the one thing in the world that made me want to live, and if I was never to see her again—it seemed such an easy way out of my troubles. There it was, within reach of my hand.

"I tried the door and it moved a little; I—I had thought it would be locked. But before I could take any of the little gray pellets out of the bottle, I heard Charley at the door, and—and it was too late."

This statement of Sophie Hawley's carried a convincing sincerity. Perhaps Jim MacMasters believed her because he wanted to believe her, and an exclamation of relief burst from him. Doctor Villard, however, seemed unmoved by her story.

"Bertha Krump," he said, "tells us that he has often heard you threaten your husband. Is that true?"

"People say many extravagant things when they are angry," she answered, "but I didn't do it. Heaven is my witness, Doctor Villard, I didn't do it." She must have seen the expression of sympathy in MacMasters' face, for her hand stretched toward him impulsively, a quick little gesture that reminded him of Betty Lou. "You believe me! I can see that you *do* believe me."

"Yes," answered Jim, "I believe you. I also believe that your love for Betty Lou is real and genuine, and that for her sake, if for nothing else——"

"The guilt," broke in Doctor Villard's voice, "lies between her and Charley Bush. One of the two did it."

In a sweep of emotion the young

lawyer had forgotten that here guilt must be a two-edged sword, cutting either way it swung. Yes, one of the two; either Betty Lou's mother or her father. All of his despair returned. Sophie Hawley's hands clenched and her head lowered.

"And the moral guilt is mine!" she said in an almost inaudible whisper. "If it hadn't been for me, this—this would not have happened. I wanted to protect him. I think—I think I would have taken the blame, but I couldn't let my little girl think that her mother——"

A hoarse, guttural scream came from the lower end of the hall. The two men leaped to their feet, and it was Jim MacMasters who plunged first in the direction of the study. There was Bertha Krump, leaning heavily against the doorway, staring within.

"What's happened?" demanded Jim.

"Look!" panted Bertha, gesturing with both of her ponderous hands. "The cat! Look!"

The murdered man's black Persian cat was stretched upon the floor at the side of the desk, writhing and twisting in the grip of convulsions.

"Cat got some of that quinine; she have fit like Mister Hawley!" said Bertha Krump.

"Yes," said MacMasters, his voice thick with excitement, "the cat has been poisoned—as Hawley was poisoned. And it was *not* the quinine! It couldn't have been the quinine, doctor, for the remaining eleven capsules are in that box you've got in your hand! This upsets all of your suspicions. This cat has led us to the truth—and some people say that a black cat is bad luck!"

Doctor Villard, who had been staring into the study over the younger man's shoulder, abruptly pushed his way into the room. A look of vast relief showed in his face, but he made no response as he carefully counted the eleven capsules in the cardboard box to make absolutely certain that one of them had not been carelessly dropped to either the desk or the floor. And then he dropped to his knees and began to examine the stricken feline.

"Yes, Jim," he finally agreed, "the cat got some of the cyanide, and the poison was not in the quinine. I have been on the verge of making a terrible mistake and I thank God that I have been wrong!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE THIRD SUSPECT.

WHERE had the black Persian cat got the poison, the same deadly cyanide that had caused the death of Wade Hawley? That was the question which now confronted them.

This sudden turn of things had swerved Doctor Villard into a complete reversal of opinion, but there returned some lingering misgivings. He was wondering, rather apprehensively, if there could have been, either by accident or design, thirteen of the quinine capsules. It was possible that one of them had been dropped by Hawley himself, and yet that was hardly probable. Thinking out these points, his faith in the innocence of both Charley Bush and Sophie gained strength.

In the mind of Jim MacMasters there remained no doubt whatever. He was only determined to get completely to the bottom of the mystery so that no shadow of suspicion should cast its ugly shape over either Betty Lou's mother or father, and for the first time he was eager in the investigation.

"Have you anything to suggest, doctor? There is no doubt, I suppose, it was cyanide that killed the cat?"

"Not the slightest doubt of that, Jim, but as for having any theories—well, to be truthful about it, my mind is still in somewhat of a maze. What do you think, if I may ask?"

"My first suggestion that Hawley took his own life is not so preposterous

after all," the lawyer answered. "Some of the poison might have been spilled either on the desk or the rug where the cat licked it up. It wouldn't take a large quantity to be fatal, would it?"

"A very small amount," agreed the doctor; "particularly would that be true as to the cat. As you see, the animal is already dead. How long between the time it got the stuff and Bertha found it, I don't know. We'll see what she can tell us about that."

But Bertha Krump was not present to answer their questions. She was attending her mistress who, when she discovered how this miracle had almost positively removed both herself and her former husband from suspicion, had fainted dead away. She had been carried to her room by the stalwart Bertha, the latter making a futile effort to grasp what it all meant.

Jim MacMasters' eyes searched the floor. Then he quickly dropped to his knees and began to examine the rug carefully.

"The cat has been on the desk," said Villard. "Here are some sheets of paper and some envelopes that have been——" His words terminated in a sharp exclamation as he stooped down and began to gather up these disturbed items. His finger had touched the flap of one of the envelopes and it adhered to the skin. The glue was still moist and sticky.

"What have you found?" demanded MacMasters, glancing up inquiringly. "Anything of importance, doc?"

"Impossible!" muttered the doctor. "It's impossible, and yet——" Very gingerly indeed he was examining the flap of the envelope and it seemed somewhat strange that he could find it so interesting. It was a cheap grade of envelope, without any printing, and a hurried comparison showed that it was identical with those of a packet in the dead man's desk.

"What have you found?" MacMasters demanded a second time, his voice sharp-edged with impatience.

"Perhaps nothing," Villard answered. "Only the glue on the flap of this envelope has been recently moistened, and it makes me wonder——" His voice trailed off speculatively.

"Why don't you tell me? What can that envelope——"

"What can a harmless looking thing like an envelope have to do with it, eh? That's what I am trying to answer myself, Jim. As I said, the glue on this envelope is damp and sticky, and that can mean but one thing—the cat has licked it. Glue has a certain sweetness that an animal would like."

Jim MacMasters stared uncomprehendingly for a moment before he began to grasp the significance of it.

"You mean," he gasped, "that the cyanide might have been—on the flap of that envelope?"

"Hardly on the flap of *this* envelope," answered Doctor Villard, "but there are others scattered about. There's almost a whole package of them on the desk; more than likely the cat pawed them from one of the pigeonholes. Careful, man! If I happen to be right, a little of that moist glue will be a dangerous thing to handle. Ah!"

From the floor at the end of the desk, where it had previously escaped the doctor's notice, there was an envelope different from those that Wade Hawley had patently used for his correspondence. In the corner there was printed in neat gothic letters, "Karnes & Johnson, Woodward Building, Chicago."

The envelope was stamped, and it had been addressed, with a typewriter, to "Mr. Henry K. Johnson, Karnes & Johnson, Brokers, Woodward Building, Chicago, Illinois."

The doctor touched a cautiously inquiring finger to the flap; it, too, was damp and sticky. He held it beneath his nose and sniffed. His eyes glinting, he held it toward MacMasters.

"Smell that!" he said tensely. "The thing which seemed ridiculous, preposterous, is true. Wade Hawley was murdered by mail!"

Jim MacMasters sniffed. There was a faint odor but he was unable to classify it.

"The odor is the proof," said Villard. "The cyanide family is quite a numerous one, but they all retain the same odor. It is, of course, more pungent in the liquid. It is all quite clear now, Jim. This is a stamped, self-addressed envelope, sent to Wade Hawley on the very probable chance that he would use it in sending his reply—and that is what he did. We will, I am quite sure, find his answer hidden somewhere about the desk.

"He moistened the flap of the poison envelope with his tongue. The cyanide had been mixed with the glue. If you will look here you will see the grain of the powdered crystals. There's enough to have killed a dozen men, but Hawley got only a little of it. The envelope fell from his hand and was lying on the desk when we were in the study before. The black cat had her little feast of glue and tongued the flap of this envelope among a number of others. Yes, Jim, we're on the right track. Murder by mail!"

MacMasters was pawing among the scattered papers, and very quickly he found a letter that bore the printed name of the Chicago brokers. It was brief and businesslike.

DEAR MR. HAWLEY: A customer of ours has requested us to buy for him one hundred shares of Michigan Lumber Corporation stock, and we are informed that you hold, or recently held, a considerable amount of this stock. If you are willing to offer it for sale will you please advise us the price you ask, or if you have disposed of it will you let us have the name of the purchaser. We inclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for your reply. Very truly,

KARNES & JOHNSON.
Per H. K. J.

Dictated but not signed.

Underneath the above, Wade Hawley had scrawled his reply, which said, "You have been misinformed. I have never owned any of the stock you mention."

"The letter was nothing but a subterfuge," said MacMasters. "The only purpose of it was to have Hawley use the poisoned envelope. What a hideously clever scheme it was!"

"And what an amazing piece of luck it was we got on the track of the truth," added the doctor. "We've a clear trail ahead of us now—straight to the offices of this firm in Chicago."

"I'm not so sure about that," returned MacMasters with a dubious shake of his head. "It doesn't seem likely to me that a fiend so clever would be so careless as to use the letterhead of the firm where he was employed, if that's what you mean. That would be coarse work."

"Also," argued Villard, "it is not likely that the man who did this had the slightest thought that the method would be discovered. And had it not been for the cat, either Charley Bush or Sophie would have remained the victim of circumstantial evidence."

"I can't believe a sensible man—but for all we know it might have been a woman—could have been so stupid."

"The letter paper was used to insure the communication's receiving a respectful reading," said the doctor. "Had it been written on a blank sheet, Hawley, like as not, would have tossed it into the wastebasket without answering it."

"But not the letter paper of the man's own firm," persisted Jim MacMasters. "If we are to judge from these initials, that is if we are to accept them as genuine, it came from Henry K. Johnson, one of the members of this concern. I'm certain we will find that the signature is as bogus as the inquiry about these shares of stock. 'Dictated but not signed,'" it says. That, of course, was for the purpose of avoiding a signature.

The initials, you see, are printed. It's ridiculous to presume that the poisoner ran the risk of taking a stenographer into his confidence. A guilty conscience would have prevented that if nothing else."

Doctor Villard nodded meditatively.

"Yes," he admitted, "it seems pretty sound reasoning, Jim. You've got the lawyer's grasp of such things. I haven't much faith in my ability as a detective after the one bungle I made of the effort, but you'll have to admit things *did* look mighty black, first for Charley and then for Sophie. What would you suggest is the next move?"

"Continue our talk with Mrs. Hawley," Jim answered promptly. He paused for a moment, and then added, "Under different conditions, thank Heaven! It may be that she can give us a clew to some enmity that Wade Hawley left behind him in Chicago."

"Bertha took her to her room."

The two men went around the turn in the hall, and the sound of voices guided them to Sophie's room. Bertha had revived her with smelling salts and as the doctor and the young lawyer entered, Sophie raised herself to a sitting position on the bed.

"It wasn't the quinine?" she demanded tremulously. "Wade's eat——"

To have kept her in suspense would have been a cruelty and MacMasters made haste to tell her what they had discovered. He did it in a few brief and illuminating sentences. She stared at him for a moment and then her lips framed a single word, a name.

"Carl!" she whispered. "Carl!"

"Carl?" echoed Doctor Villard. "You mean Carl Hawley? What could Carl have to do with it?"

"It was Carl who killed him—as he had so many times threatened to do," Sophie told them.

"I am afraid you don't realize what you're saying," the doctor protested. "Carl Hawley is confined in an asylum, and the murder letter was mailed from Chicago."

"Oh, but you do not understand!" she cried. "He—he escaped. Wade got news from the sanitarium several days ago. The superintendent wrote, warning Wade that his life was in danger while Carl had his freedom. Wade was in deadly fear, expected Carl to come here at any day, any hour. He has been armed day and night since he received that word. Carl has taken his revenge!"

"At last we have the answer to it all!" exclaimed Jim MacMasters. "I have heard that the insane are often capable of great cunning. What a weird brain a man must have to think up such a diabolical scheme! Carl Hawley knew, of course, that there was grave danger of his capture before he had accomplished his purpose if he came to Mayfield."

"Let's not be too sure, Jim, that it was Carl who sent the poison envelope," interposed Villard. "We've seen how easy it is to make a mistake in accepting the obvious."

"But it *had* to be Carl Hawley!" MacMasters insisted with impatient vehemence. "Who else?"

"That's precisely what we must talk about now. Did your husband have any other enemies, Sophie?"

"None, I think," she answered, "who could have hated with sufficient bitterness to have killed him."

"But he did have enemies?"

"A number of them," Sophie replied. "Wade was always unscrupulous in his business dealings and that was particularly true when the pinch for money became tighter and tighter. Yes, there was one in particular. His name was Jacobs and, from what I could understand, this Mr. Jacobs accused Wade of robbing him of several thousand dollars. One night he came to our apartment in Chicago; I did overhear him make some threats, but—oh, no, I can't believe that

Mr. Jacobs did it. Carl did it; it must have been Carl!"

"Did this Jacobs have any connection with a firm, Karnes & Johnson?" MacMasters asked her.

"No, I don't think so; at least I never heard of the firm you mention. Mr. Jacobs had a factory out near Oak Park. He made—I believe it was washing machines."

MacMasters wrote that information down in his notebook and glanced at his watch.

"I've got just forty-five minutes to catch the two o'clock train for Chicago," he said. "You agree with me, doctor, that this is the proper course to take? While the murder took place in Mayfield, the crime of mailing the poison letter was committed in Chicago. The Illinois courts would have jurisdiction, and I shall have the coöperation of the State's attorney of Cook county."

"Yes, I agree with you about going to Chicago," Villard agreed, "but not about taking the afternoon train. It doesn't run through, and The Hummer, leaving Mayfield to-night, will put you there at seven o'clock to-morrow morning.

"As you say, you will have the help of the State's attorney in Chicago and I happen to know that he has a large staff of experts at his command. If Sophie can put her hands on a picture of Carl Hawley you had better take it along. Photographs are so much better than verbal descriptions. Perhaps, too, Sophie can give us some information as to the most likely part of the city where Carl might be found."

"I think I can find a photograph," she answered, "but it was taken a good many years ago, and may not look much like he does now. Seven years of confinement in that sanitarium must have aged him. I have seen him only once since my marriage to Wade and I can tell you nothing about his former habits."

"It takes a great burden from my mind, Sophie," said Villard, "that you bear me no resentment for what has proved an unfair accusation. It wasn't an easy thing for me to do, but I had a duty to perform. If there is anything I can do——"

"I understand, Doctor Villard," she told him, "and I do not blame you. As for doing something for me, yes. If you could help me about—about the burial arrangements, I would appreciate it very, very much. I feel so alone and helpless."

"Arrangements shall be made with the undertaker for the removal of the body at once," Villard promised. "Now if you will see what can be done about getting Carl's photograph for Mr. MacMasters——"

Sophie went to the front of the house and, after considerable rummaging, found the picture. It was one taken of Carl Hawley when in his middle twenties and Jim MacMasters very much doubted if it would be of any particular value. He took it, however, and held out his hand.

"Something told me from the beginning," he said huskily, "that Betty Lou's mother could not have done——" Perhaps the tone of his voice told her something of his true feelings toward Betty Lou, for she gave him a swift glance and a wan smile.

"There is nothing that matters to me so much as—as her happiness," she whispered tremulously. "Make sure, make very sure that she—— You understand me, I know."

The doctor and the lawyer left the house together. Villard got his horse but did not mount the saddle. Leading the animal behind him, he walked in the middle of the road beside the other.

"Jim," he said solemnly, "it's things like those that have happened to-day that make a man believe in Providence. If we hadn't left the door of Hawley's study open, giving that black cat a

chance to get into the room, there is no telling how this would have turned out."

"Don't even mention it!" exclaimed MacMasters with a shudder.

CHAPTER X.

A BLANK WALL.

AT a few minutes after seven o'clock the next morning Jim MacMasters arrived in Chicago. Had he used his ordinary good sense he would have known that he would not find the State's attorney or his assistants in their offices until nine o'clock or after, but he dived out of the Union Station, and into a taxicab just as soon as, by consulting a telephone directory, he had learned the address of the criminal courts building. The result of this useless haste was that he missed his breakfast and had to cool his heels for a good two hours in the corridors.

The State's attorney himself was engaged with a murder trial which had aroused national interest and it was impossible to gain his personal attention, but there were a number of assistants. Except for his card, Jim MacMasters probably would have been shunted into the office of some minor employee of this very busy law enforcement organization, but his title of prosecuting attorney cut a good deal of red tape and brought him, with very little delay, once the wheels had begun to turn, into the office of a weary-looking man whose name was Mr. Hornblower.

Despite his name, there was nothing trumpetlike about Mr. Hornblower. For eight years he had been an assistant State's attorney, under two administrations, and a constant procession of human weaknesses seemed to have saddened him immeasurably. As Jim MacMasters was shown into the office, Mr. Hornblower appeared to be staring hopelessly at the vast accumulation of papers on his desk, as if wondering how he should ever manage to get through with his work. He was, as a matter of fact, taking another look at his visitor's card.

"Good morning, Mr. MacMasters," he said. "An extradition proceeding, I suppose. Is your man under arrest?"

"I think I am going to startle you," answered MacMasters with a tight-lipped, grim smile, "and I take it that you are not a man easily startled."

"Humph!" grunted the assistant State's attorney.

Jim took from his pocket a small flat parcel and began to remove the wrapping. Between protecting layers of cardboard was the poisoned envelope, the accompanying letter and a second envelope in which both had reached Wade Hawley.

"Did you ever see a more harmless looking instrument of murder, Mr. Hornblower?" he demanded. "This envelope killed a man."

The other frowned, suspecting that perhaps this was a joke.

"How could an envelope kill a man?" he asked sharply, yet he bent forward and stared at it closely, noting the Chicago postmark and the name of the firm printed in the corner.

"Cyanide mixed with the glue on the flap," MacMasters answered tersely.

"The devil you say!" exclaimed Mr. Hornblower. "Humph, you've certainly kept your promise to startle me." His face had lost its look of weariness and had become animated with interest. "Go ahead, please, and let me hear the facts. A most unusual case, Mr. MacMasters."

"Murder by mail," said Jim, borrowing the phrase which Doctor Villard had coined, and then he plunged into a swift but none the less thorough review of the facts; he included a brief history of the Hawleys, Sophie's divorce from Charley Bush and her marriage to Wade Hawley, the reputed dissipation of Carl Hawley's share in the estate and the mentally deficient brother's commitment to a sanitarium. He told of the sus-

picion that Charley Bush had put poison in the quinine capsules, and how the story of Bertha Krump had turned this suspicion toward the poisoned man's wife, and then the dramatic climax of the black cat's death.

Mr. Hornblower lost no time in ejaculations of amazement.

"The firm of Karnes & Johnson," he said, "is one of the most solid brokerage houses in Chicago. Karnes has retired and Henry K. Johnson is the active head of the institution. He is several times a millionaire and it is little short of ridiculous to think that Johnson sent this letter. Let me see it, please; no, not the envelope, the letter."

The assistant State's attorney examined it for a moment or two, closely analyzing the type.

"I am not a typewriting expert, Mr. MacMasters, but eight years in this office has given me a considerable knowledge of some of the fundamentals. It is readily seen, for instance, that this letter was written by a person not a regular typist. Note the irregular pressure of the keys. Some of the letters are punched almost through the paper. It is characteristic of the self-taught operator who has learned to pick out the letters with two fingers."

"Yes," Jim MacMasters agreed, "common sense told me that the letter was never written by a stenographer; it would have been a stupid thing for the murderer to have done. Does it tell you anything else?"

"More than likely it will tell our typewriting expert a great many things," answered Mr. Hornblower. "Has the flap of the envelope been subjected to a chemical analysis to make sure, beyond any question of doubt, that cyanide is present in the glue?"

"Not a chemical analysis," Jim answered. "Doctor Villard has a fair knowledge of chemistry. He lacked the equipment to conduct any experiments, but he tried it on a second cat yesterday afternoon. The cat died as did the first, and that certainly settled it beyond all doubt."

"Yes, that settles it," agreed Hornblower. His finger touched a button on the desk. "I shall turn you over to Mr. Packard, one of the detectives on our staff. The proper place to begin, of course, is at the offices of Karnes & Johnson."

In response to the assistant State's attorney's ring, there entered the office a thick-set man with the bulging shoulders of a wrestler. His face was dull, heavy and homely, but there was nothing dull about his clothes. His London overcoat was tan with green checks; beneath showed the proper creases of his well-hung trousers. He carried a walking stick. His jaws moved with a steady, tireless motion as he chewed a wad of gum, and, with the play of his facial muscles, his derby hat, clamped tightly over his temples, moved up and down in ceaseless rhythm.

"Packard, this is Mr. James MacMasters, the prosecuting attorney from Mayfield, Missouri," said Mr. Hornblower. "He's brought us one of the most amazing murder cases that has ever come to my notice. A man in his town was murdered—with this envelope. Can you guess the answer?"

Detective Jerry Packard hooked the crook of his walking stick over the bend of his arm and looked at the evidence on the desk. He chewed his gum a little faster and jerked his head in an affirmative.

"Sure," he said. "That's a new wrinkle in murder, all right, but I can see how it was done. Stamped and addressed, huh? Poison on the flap. Ain't I right, huh?"

Jim MacMasters formed an entirely new and this time a favorable opinion of Detective Packard. There was more to the man than a wooden face; his head was something more than the top ornament of an animated clothes rack. Mr.

Hornblower, as if he had read the other lawyer's thoughts, smiled faintly.

"You won't find Packard exactly a Dumb Dora," he said with a chuckle. "Give him your facts, as you have already given them to me. Now if you will excuse me for rushing you off so hurriedly——" He reached for some papers that he must have ready when he appeared in court that afternoon.

"We'll go into one of the offices across the hall and talk it over," the detective said. "Better bring along that letter and those two envelopes. I'm going to like this case."

When they had crossed the corridor, Packard provided himself with a fresh cud of gum, draped himself upon a chair, carefully hitched up his trousers so as not to endanger the creases, and jerked his head.

"All right, Mr. MacMasters," he invited. "Shoot."

Jim again presented the facts, and with such lucidity that it was not necessary for the other to interrupt him with questions to clear up any vague points. Jerry Packard offered no comment when he had finished. Silently he reached for the letter, written on the stationery of Karnes & Johnson. He examined it, first with his naked eyes and then through the lens of a magnifying glass.

"Of course," observed MacMasters, "that letter is an out-and-out fake. I haven't the slightest notion that it was written by Henry K. Johnson. Nor was it dictated to a stenographer. I doubted that from the first and Mr. Hornblower tells me that the typing was not done by a professional typist. He could tell that, he said, by the irregular force with which the keys were struck. It's rather marvelous that so much can be told from a typewritten letter."

Detective Packard, his jaws moving industriously, continued his scrutiny of the typewritten sheet.

"Yeah, right you are," he agreed, "and I can tell you more than that. This letter wasn't written in the offices of Karnes & Johnson, and it wasn't written in any other business office, either. We can be sure of that."

"How?" MacMasters demanded, and perhaps his tone was more than a little skeptical.

"Oh, that's an easy one," grunted Packard. "The letter was written on a make of typewriter that isn't used in business offices. Every make of machine leaves its own signature. This is one with which I am not familiar, but it is not of standard manufacture. The ribbon was new, but the type was old and I'd say the roller was pretty badly battered. In some places the letter is clean and in others it's so faint it hardly makes an impression."

Jim MacMasters looked interested but discouraged.

"I was hoping we'd be able to pick up some sort of a clew at the brokerage office. If what you say is true, it doesn't look very hopeful."

"Well, we'll have a try anyhow," answered the detective. "That's the place for us to begin, but there's not one chance in a thousand that anybody who worked there had anything to do with it."

"How do you suppose Carl Hawley went about getting the firm's stationery?" asked the other. "You do think Hawley is the poisoner, don't you? It *had* to be Carl Hawley."

Packard frowned in disapproval.

"I never take it for granted a man is guilty until I have his confession," he retorted. "Not always then. Yeah, I admit that as things look now the dead man's brother is the most likely suspect, but in this business a man gets a few bumps that keep him from being too certain about anything. I always work on a case with an open mind.

"As to getting the stationery, that wouldn't be much of a trick. Good many ways it could have been managed. Offer the average office boy a five-spot

for a sheet of blank paper and a couple of envelopes, and the kid would most likely fall for it. Then in some of these offices it would be but the reach of the hand to a desk—and there are other ways it could be done."

"Yes, I see," nodded MacMasters. "The job on your hands, of course, is to find Carl Hawley, and that may not be easy."

"May take time," agreed the detective, "but we'll land him if he hasn't blown the town."

"Crazy or not, he's got sufficient wits to evade capture by the sanitarium people. You've told me how easy it was to get hold of the Karnes & Johnson letter paper; perhaps you can explain how he went about getting his hands on cyanide. The more I think about that feature of it——"

"Might have stolen it," Packard responded.

"Stolen it?"

"Why, sure. If he wanted it bad enough. Risky, yeah, but a crazy man doesn't think about risks. Doesn't take a high-class burglar to break into a drug store, particularly one of 'em in the outlying districts where there isn't any too much police protection. It happens four or five nights a week. Hop-heads looking for dope, y'know. See in the papers only this morning a copper in Rogers Park caught a sniffer crawling out of a pill shop with enough cocaine on him to keep him in pleasant dreams for a year to come."

The detective chewed his gum vigorously for a moment or two, tapped the ferrule of his walking stick against the side of his shoe, and then added, "Don't want to be personal, Mr. MacMasters, but I take it you've got a personal interest in this case. Am I right?"

"Just what do you mean by 'personal interest' in the case?" Jim demanded with a flush. "What have I said to make you think——"

"It wasn't what you said so much as how you said it," Packard replied with a slow grin. "Bush, the druggist, and his former wife, you mentioned, have a daughter, and I had a hunch—oh, don't get your back up. I'm not trying to be nosey."

"Well, since her father and mother are out of it," MacMasters flared, "I can't see what my 'personal interest' has got to do with it."

"Probably nothing," admitted the detective, "but you'll have to admit the druggist *did* threaten to kill Hawley, and that the woman probably had provocation. What I wanted to ask you is whether or not either of them had an opportunity to mail the poison letter."

"That's ridiculous!" Jim exclaimed indignantly. "Charley Bush's threats were made in a moment of great excitement. If he could have come face to face with Hawley he might have been stirred to some act of violence, but—oh, it's a waste of time even to consider such a thing. The brother is insane, but still sane enough to know that his brother robbed him; he has made threats and he has escaped. Our job is to find Carl Hawley."

Detective Packard got to his feet, hooked his walking stick over his arm as he removed the wrapper from a fresh stick of chewing gum and moved toward the door of the office.

"We'll go over to the brokerage office and see what information we can pick up. Got an idea it won't be much."

And Jerry Packard was right in that surmise, for what they found at Karnes & Johnson was next to nothing. As Jim MacMasters had been positive from the very beginning, the initials of Henry K. Johnson were a forgery. Mr. Johnson was suffering from his annual attack of bronchitis and had gone to North Carolina for a month's stay, keeping in touch with vital matters by telegraph and telephone.

Mr. Shapiro, the office manager, became excitedly indignant over the affair

and was at first inclined to resent their questions, but he presently cooled down and tried to be of some help. Not only had no customer requested the firm to purchase a hundred shares of Michigan Lumber Corporation stock, but the manager did not know that such a company existed. When the directory of corporations had been consulted it was found that the concern was entirely mythical, existing only in the imagination of the poisoner.

Three stenographers were employed by Karnes & Johnson, each of them being equipped with the same make of typewriters, and while this verification seemed entirely unnecessary, the machines were examined and it was immediately demonstrated that the murder letter had not been written in the brokerage office.

"Can you suggest, Mr. Shapiro," asked Jim MacMasters, "how any one managed to get your letter paper and the envelopes?"

The manager shook his head and gestured expressively with both of his hands.

"Haven't the faintest idea," he answered. "Of course, there are ways it could have been done."

"It was done," grunted Detective Packard. "We might ask the office boys —I see you have two—if they can tell us anything."

Shapiro called them over. One of then, thought Jim MacMasters, as Packard began to snap out questions, had every appearance of guilty knowledge, but neither of them were shaken in their denials of having passed any of the office stationery to a stranger.

"S-say!" stuttered the frightened one of the pair. "There's the guys what come in and out with tel'grams. They's always hangin' 'round one of the desks while they's waitin' fer a signatoor, or an answer. It would of been a cinch fer one of them guys to of copped it. Nobody never pays no mind to them fellers. One of 'em could of done it dead easy."

This did seem a plausible theory.

"The boy may have hit upon it," said Mr. Shapiro. "Our office opens at nine or before—the doors I mean—but most of the employees do not get down until later. Our day begins, you see, with the stock market. There are always a considerable number of telegrams delivered the first thing in the morning and at a time when the place is almost deserted. It would have been simple, very simple, for one of the messengers to have helped himself to some of the stationery." He gestured with his hand. "Take that stenographer's desk; all one has to do is reach over the railing."

"I had noticed that," said Packard. "We've got as much information as I had expected. Thanks for trying to help us out. Come along, Mr. MacMasters; we've nothing more to gain here."

Thus, abruptly, the detective terminated this part of the investigation and Jim MacMasters followed him out to the street. They walked side by side to Madison Street, Packard swinging his cane jauntily and chewing his gum with meditative fervor before any word was spoken.

"Looks as if we were up against a stone wall," the lawyer said morosely.

"I've been up against 'em before," retorted the other. "I usually manage to climb over. The trouble with fellows like you is impatience. You expect to walk around the block and nab your man. Huh, I've been on cases where it took me weeks. Yeah, and months."

"What!" exclaimed MacMasters in dismay. "You mean that it may be months before we find Carl Hawley?"

"Well," grunted the detective, "you must admit we haven't much to go on, not even a good description, but I'll get that from the sanitarium. Thinking of asking one of the men from there to come here and help us with the search,

although we're not even sure Hawley is in Chicago."

"I've got his photograph, but it's one taken of him a good many years ago. I've never seen him myself so I can't tell you how much it resembles him."

"That may help some. You hadn't mentioned the photograph until now. Let me have a look at it." Packard, as they continued walking along, removed the paper wrapping from about the picture the other handed him and studied the features of the suspect. "You're right; it *was* taken a good many years ago. The man can't have been more than twenty-five or thirty here. He may have changed, particularly with the years he's spent in the asylum, but it may be useful at that." He replaced the paper about the cardboard and thrust it into the inner pocket of his London coat and quickened his pace.

"Our next call will be in Oak Park," he announced.

"Oak Park?" asked MacMasters.

"Why, sure," replied the detective. "That's where you said the man, Jacobs, lives, eh?"

"You don't believe that Jacobs——"

"I believe in being thorough; that's one of the reasons why I'm a crack man." Strangely enough, this statement did not give the effect of boasting.

CHAPTER XI.

CARL HAWLEY.

BOTH Chicago morning newspapers made a great sensation of the strange murder, and the copy editors, those pencil-pushing gentlemen who write the headlines, quick to seize upon the unusual, naturally used the arresting phrase "murder by mail," which appeared in the interview with Jim MacMasters and which Jim had borrowed from Doctor Villard.

It was stated that Mr. George Jacobs, a former business associate of the murdered man, had been questioned, but that he had wholly and completely removed himself from suspicion. In fact, Packard and MacMasters, upon their arrival in Oak Park, discovered that a full two months ago Jacobs had suffered from a stroke of partial paralysis which had made him bedridden.

The newspapers did not openly accuse Carl Hawley, but it would have been a most dense person indeed who could not read between the lines. Carl Hawley was a man mentally irresponsible, he had escaped from an asylum, and it was a part of his mania that he had been wronged by his dead brother. He had made frequent threats.

There was the picture of the suspected man, furnished by Detective Packard, who had decided that this was an occasion in which newspaper publicity might be extremely helpful. It brought results more quickly than was to be expected.

That section of Madison Street adjacent to the Union Station is crowded with cheap hotels and still more inexpensive establishments which are unattractively referred to as "flop joints." In the latter a bed can be procured for twenty-five cents and the shabby, grimy hotels advertise, by medium of their dismal signs, that accommodations may be had for five dollars a week and up."

Like a hobo with an aristocratic name, the Hotel Regal was tattered and unkempt. The office was upstairs and the "lobby," of which it was a part, was the gathering place of a morose company of down-and-outers and those who were down but wouldn't admit they were out. There was the salesman who had gone on a spree and had spent the money which he had collected from customers, and which belonged to his firm; there was the youngster who had run away from home and hadn't been able to land a job, struggling between pride and the impulse to wire his family for money; there was the genteel looking old man who made a weekly trip to the

pawnshop and had very little left to pawn.

One of the men had signed the tattered, soiled register as "J. A. Adams." He had arrived without baggage, and since his arrival he had grown a beard which, like his hair, was streaked with gray. He didn't join with the others in recitals of his misfortunes. He kept to himself and, when he could find it vacant, occupied the chair by the street window, his hat, cheap but new, drawn down over uneasy eyes that had in them a brooding gleam. Frequently his lips moved in unintelligible mutterings, and a man who talks to himself repells the company of other men. No one bothered "J. A. Adams" and he seemed in no wise irked by this isolation.

But not all of "Mr. Adams'" time was spent in the chair by the window of the hotel office. He made various excursions, not always at the same hour; sometimes it was during the afternoon and again under cover of darkness. No one was concerned as to where he went, or why.

It was almost noon. The genteel looking old man who had been living on what he could pawn had a copy of the morning paper and was reading the want ads. With a sigh of hopelessness he refolded the paper neatly and put it aside. Wearily he got to his feet and shuffled away.

The self-styled Mr. Adams sat morosely, muttering behind his newly grown beard. Suddenly his hands clenched as his eyes became focused upon the abandoned newspaper, and upon that particular place on the front page which had the picture of Carl Hawley. Above the half tone was the caption, "Police Seek This Man."

The paper rattled noisily as he took it between his trembling fingers; he continued to stare at the picture in a sort of fascinated and horrified interest.

"Me!" he whispered. "It's me. My picture!" He glanced furtively about him, and fancied that the clerk was staring at him with a fixed and suspicious scrutiny. His nervousness became a panic. He slid the paper beneath his coat and bolted for the stairs, seeking the privacy of his own room which was on the floor above. As he darted a backward glance across his shoulder he saw that the clerk's eyes were still upon him.

Reaching his room, Carl Hawley, alias J. A. Adams, bolted the door and sat down upon the mean bed. The room was on a dark court, the windows were grimy and he got up again to turn on the electric light so that he might read those black headlines and the smaller type. His breath sucked in through his beard; he was laughing but the laugh cackled with fear. Again and again he stared at the printed picture; he remembered the time when he had had it taken. It had been for a girl. She had asked him for his photograph. They had been engaged, when one of those uncontrollable fits of epilepsy had come over him in her presence. She had, until that time, been unaware of his mental affliction. Her discovery of it brought about the termination of his only love affair.

"Dead!" he chortled. "Yes, Wade's dead; he's good and dead, all right. He can't send me back to that asylum now, for he's dead." His insane mirth, however, soon gave way to terror. He read on through the printed columns until he had come to the end of the news account. Again he stared at what had once been his likeness, with the alarming caption, "Police Seek This Man."

The picture no longer bore any close resemblance to Carl Hawley, but to his terrorized apprehension it did. Perhaps the hotel clerk already knew and was telephoning for the police.

"They'll send me back!" he muttered thickly. "Maybe—maybe they'll hang me. I must get out of this place; I must get out of Chicago." He un-

fastened his vest and his shirt. Pinned inside his underclothes, wrapped in a handkerchief, were ten twenty-dollar bills, for he had spent only a hundred and twenty-five dollars of the money he had so cunningly stolen from the trunk of the sanitarium keeper before his escape. This remaining two hundred would take him a long way. The main thing was to get out of Chicago just as quickly as he could.

The insane often possess much craftiness, and Carl Hawley was sufficiently in command of his faculties to know that the railroad stations would be watched. However, there were trolley lines which would take him to suburban points. He reached beneath the bed and pulled out the cheap straw suit case which he had purchased only the day before. He opened it and fished through a wadded mass of soiled shirts and collars. His fingers closed about the handle of a cheap revolver that he had bought in a Madison Street pawnshop the day after his escape from the sanitarium. He put the weapon in his pocket.

"I won't let 'em send me back!" he muttered. "And they won't hang me either."

For a moment he debated about taking the suit case, but decided not to do so. A man with a suit case, he told himself, would attract more attention than a man without one. Particularly did this apply to his leaving the hotel.

Carl Hawley had confined his expenditures to the barest necessities. He put on the overcoat that he had purchased at a secondhand store for nine dollars, let himself out of the shabby room, and began to descend the stairs. Passing through the hotel office to gain the street he was again aware of the clerk's scrutiny and forgot his determination to make his exit unhurried and casual. Apprehension mastered him, and he made a bolt for it.

This proved a fatal mistake for, while the clerk was only mildly curious about him and would have in no way interfered with his movements, he did notice it when Hawley plunged hastily to the street. His eyes had a wild light in them and his bearded face was set into tense lines of desperation. Halfway to the corner he passed a policeman in uniform. The patrolman stared at him with quick suspicion and Hawley broke into a run—the worst thing he could possibly have done.

"Hey!" roared the officer, swinging around as the other darted past him. "Halt!"

The wanted man ignored the command and increased his speed, pounding down Madison Street like the lunatic he was. As he ran he twisted his head and looked back. The sidewalks were covered with a slush of melting snow and a crust of ice so that the footing was insecure. He lost his balance and fell to his knees.

"They're not going to send me back; they're not going to hang me!" he panted and, still on his knees, tugged at his pocket to free the revolver that had caught in the lining. The cloth ripped, and as the weapon was released and appeared in his hand, the patrolman did what any sensible officer would be expected to do under the circumstances. He whipped his police forty-five from its holster and pulled the trigger.

With the bark of the loud-voiced revolver, Carl Hawley pitched forward on his face. He was right; they would not send him back to the asylum and they would not hang him. The man was dead.

It was the picture, torn from the front page of the newspaper and found in the watch-pocket of his vest, that gave the clew to his identity. Less than two hours later Detective Packard telephoned Jim MacMasters at the latter's hotel.

"We've got Carl Hawley," he said tersely. "He's in the morgue."

"Morgue?" shouted MacMasters.

"Yeah, that's right. He's dead. Tried to shoot it out with a copper. Didn't expect it to turn out like that." Swiftly he gave the details of the unexpected manner of the wanted man's capture.

"Perhaps it's just as well this way," said Jim. "I'm satisfied. There's nothing else I can do. I'll go back home on the evening train. You'd better hold the body until I can find out what disposition is to be made of it. Shall I see you again before I leave?"

"Don't think so," grunted the detective. "This is one of my busy days." With that he terminated the conversation—an abruptness that left Jim MacMasters with a very poor opinion of Packard's manners.

CHAPTER XII.

FOR A WOMAN'S HAPPINESS.

TWO hours before daylight the next morning Jim was back in Mayfield and, although it was only half-past four, he made for Doctor Villard's house. The latter was expecting this visit and was up to meet him, eager for all the details. Jim supplied them with no credit to himself. The speedy solution of the case, he admitted, was entirely due to the Chicago detective.

"We held the inquest yesterday afternoon," said Villard when the other had finished. "After I had received your telegram there was no further necessity for delay. The verdict, of course, was that Wade Hawley had been willfully murdered by his brother, now dead. I also spoke to Sophie about Carl's burial. Even under the circumstances she does not want him buried in the potter's field." He shook his head slowly. "What a sad end of our once magnificent Hawleys! A family doomed for tragedy."

"How does Charley Bush take it, doc?" Jim asked.

"He says very little, Jim; in fact, I have made it a point not to discuss the tragedy with him. Poor Sophie, I wonder what's going to become of her? What little of the Hawley estate is left is tied up with so many legal strings that I doubt she gets more than a thousand dollars out of it—perhaps not that much."

"Well, she shan't starve if Betty Lou and I——"

"Very decent of you, Jim; Sophie has paid a high price, a mighty high price. I hope she's able to get a little happiness out of life from now on. What about a cup of coffee? My wife went to Sedalia yesterday afternoon; her sister is ill. But I think we can manage to rustle a bit of breakfast."

Both men went out into the kitchen where the doctor turned cook, having already started a fire in the range. They remained in the house, talking mostly about the murder, until about eight o'clock. Walking downtown together they parted company in front of the post office, Jim going to his law office and Villard quickly heading for the drug store.

As MacMasters reached the head of the stairs he came to an abrupt stop, hardly able to credit his senses. In front of his door stood a man in a London coat, tapping his walking stick impatiently against the stairway railing and chewing his cud of gum as if he were doing it for wages.

"Packard!" exclaimed MacMasters.

"Yeah, it's me."

"How in the name of heaven did *you* get to Mayfield?"

"Same train that brought you, Mr. MacMasters. Knew you'd ask a lot of questions and get yourself all excited if I went in the same car."

"But why—why?" gasped Jim, filled with a vague uneasiness. "What should have brought you here?"

"The Hawley case," grunted the detective. "What else?"

Jim MacMasters' hands were a trifle

unsteady as he unlocked the door of his office.

"I don't believe I understand, Packard, what you're driving at. Isn't the case solved?

"Not yet."

"What do you mean by 'not yet?' Carl Hawley is dead, isn't he?"

"Yeah, dead as a hammer, but I've got a hunch he wasn't the man who sent the poisoned envelope. Had that hunch right from the start. His having the gun made it stronger. Not a doubt in the world that he intended plugging his brother with that gun. That's what he bought it for. If he'd known that his brother had come to Mayfield, he'd have been here on the first train that could bring him—and have shot him.

"Then there's the cyanide. It would take some chemical knowledge to dope out that trick. Of course, I know you're going to hit the ceiling when I suggest that the druggist——"

"You're crazy!" shouted MacMasters. "It would have been impossible for Charley Bush——"

"Not so impossible as you think," Packard broke in with a grim smile. "What you mean is that he's had no chance to get to Chicago. Well, I've been studying the time-tables and I can tell you exactly how he could have done it, and how he probably did do it. There was that trip of his to St. Louis——"

"St. Louis isn't Chicago. If you're thinking he was in Chicago I can spike that right now. I was calling on his daughter in St. Louis and he was right there."

"Sure he was," grunted the detective, "and that was his alibi. Did he happen to mention what train he took to St. Louis?"

"Number Twelve," Jim answered shortly.

"Yeah, that's just how I had it doped out. Now wasn't it queer, MacMasters, that he should have taken a train that landed him in St. Louis in the dead of night when he could have taken a later one and got there before breakfast?"

"I suppose he wanted to get some rest," mumbled Jim. "Anyhow you haven't explained——"

"But I'm going to right now. He could have left Mayfield on Number Twelve and got off at the next station where he could switch over to the Chicago & Alton's Chicago train, 'The Hummer,' three hours later. That would have landed him in Chicago about seven o'clock.

"Almost four hours in Chicago and then he could take a train to St. Louis, landing him there about six p. m., which fits in with the time he showed up to see his daughter. Am I right? Yeah, I'm right. I can read it in your face. He was a clever bird, this druggist.

"A fellow can do a lot of things in four hours, MacMasters. When he got off the train in Chicago he walked toward the Loop on Monroe Street until he came to LaSalle. The offices of Karnes & Johnson are right around the corner. The doors were open but there were hardly any of the employees there so early. He slipped in, got some of their stationery, and——"

"Well, say it!" groaned Jim, who began to realize that Packard had, indeed, some reason to suspect Charley Bush.

"Now where would he go from there?" pursued the detective. "He had to have some place to work on the envelope, to moisten off the glue and mix it with the poison. There was only one place where he could have the privacy and that was a hotel. He got a room, and worked his little scheme."

"What about the typewriter?" Jim argued with a sort of hopeless belligerency.

"Glad you mentioned that," nodded Packard. "That's one of the big things. Now the typing of the murder letter was, as I told you, done with a machine with which I was not familiar. But I went to work on that and discovered

that it was a little flat typewriter, not much larger than a portable, called 'The Flint.' They're sold by mail at about half the prices of the standard machines, and on easy payments. You clip a coupon, sign your name and the typewriter is sent on approval."

Jim MacMasters remembered the typewriter which he had frequently seen in the drug store, and it was, true enough, small and flat. A groan burst from his lips.

"As it happens," pursued Packard, "the Flint Typewriter Co. has its offices and factory in South Chicago. I went out there yesterday afternoon, and—their records showed that four years ago they sold one of their machines to Charles Bush of Mayfield.

"Bush took the typewriter along with him. Did he have it when you saw him?"

"I didn't see any typewriter," Jim answered dully. "I don't believe, I won't believe that her father——"

"It's pretty tough, old man, but we've got a murder on our hands, and we can't let sentiment interfere. The typewriter is small enough to have been put inside a suit case. Did Bush have a suit case with him in St. Louis?"

"Yes," MacMasters had to admit, "he did have a suit case. It's no use lying to you about that, but Packard, isn't there some way——"

"Afraid not, MacMasters. If you prefer to keep out of it as much as you can, I'll go over to the drug store without you."

"No, I'll go with you, Packard; I can't escape this horrible business so easily as that. Perhaps you're dead wrong."

"Not much chance of that."

"But if you were so certain it was Charley Bush, why did you want to get hold of Carl Hawley?"

"Hadn't checked up on the typewriter then. There had been a good deal of doubt up to that time, although I figured from the beginning that the druggist might be the guilty man. And when you mentioned that Bush was in St. Louis the day before the murder it started me thinking."

They left Jim's office and crossed the street to the drug store. As they entered, Doctor Villard looked around from behind the colored-glass partition. When he saw MacMasters' ashen face, he came out, glancing questioningly at the Chicago detective.

"What's the matter, Jim?"

"Where's Charley?"

"Out in the back unboxing a crate of varnish. Good Lord, boy, what's happened to you?"

"Something *has* happened to me, doc. I've just had a terrible blow. I found Detective Packard waiting for me at the office, and he says—he says that it was Charley Bush who sent the poison envelope!"

Villard's face went almost as pale as Jim's and in his open-mouthed silence that followed this amazing statement, there could be heard at the rear of the store the pound of a hammer against wooden crating as the druggist unpacked some gallon tins of varnish which had come by freight that morning. In towns such as Mayfield the drug store usually handles such commodities as paint, oil, wall paper, stationery, et cetera.

"Impossible!" gasped the doctor, swinging toward Packard with an air of hostility. "How can you make such a ridiculous statement? Didn't Carl Hawley prove his guilt when he was killed yesterday afternoon in Chicago in avoiding capture?"

"All he proved to my mind," answered Packard, "is that he had a horror of being returned to the asylum. Added to that, he was probably convinced that he was going to be railroaded for a murder he hadn't committed."

"Why could you think it was Charley

Bush?" demanded the doctor in an undertone. "Oh, it's safe enough to talk; while Charley is making all that racket in the back room there isn't any chance of his overhearing us. I want to hear the grounds for your suspicion before I would agree to reopen the inquest. The coroner's jury has brought in its verdict, holding Carl Hawley responsible for the poisoning."

Although the detective did not go into the details with the same care that he had a few minutes earlier when talking to MacMasters, he showed how it was entirely possible for Charley Bush to have been in Chicago and St. Louis on the same day. The clincher, of course, was the typewriter.

"I don't suppose he took it into consideration," concluded Packard, his voice cautiously lowered, "that he might fall under suspicion. Certainly he did not know that he would be called upon to fill a prescription for the man whom he hated and to whom he had already mailed death. It's pretty sure that he must have been startled when he was called upon to sell those quinine capsules for, unless he was an idiot, he must have known that here was a chance of bringing himself under suspicion. However, he hardly dared refuse to make the sale.

"What I want now is a chance to examine Bush's typewriter. I shall know the minute I have done that if I am right or wrong, and there isn't much doubt that I am right. Where does he keep the typewriter, doctor?"

"Back here behind the prescription case," Villard answered, his voice unsteady. Evidently he shared the opinion that, in the light of Packard's discoveries, there could be little doubt of Charley Bush's guilt. The latter's failure to call on Betty Lou in St. Louis until evening, his departure from Mayfield on No. 12 when a later train would have sufficed, his ownership of an unusual make of typewriter; all these factors seemed to draw the net unescapably about him.

The Chicago detective followed the doctor behind the prescription case and Jim MacMasters trailed along behind, hoping against hope that there would happen another "miracle" to lay the obvious by the heels. He was able to summon little hope, however, and while he was a sworn official of the State he could not keep from wishing that in this case justice had not been so relentlessly persistent. If there were only some way that he could protect Betty Lou from the terrible knowledge that her father was a murderer!

The typewriter rested on the top of the desk, covered. Packard lifted it down and swiftly removed the top. Staring across the other's shoulder, Jim gave voice to a sharp exclamation of relief.

"You're wrong!" he said thickly. "Look at that old ribbon; it's black, and the typing of the letter to Wade Hawley was blue."

"Don't disappoint yourself, Mr. MacMasters," grunted the detective. "It's only a matter of a couple of minutes to change a typewriter ribbon. The typing itself is what we are interested in."

He twirled a sheet of paper beneath the roller and began to press the keys, squinting at the letters as they were transmitted to the paper."

"Well?" demanded Doctor Villard. "Is that the final proof?"

Before he replied Detective Packard took from his pocket the letter written to Wade Hawley on the stationery of Karnes & Johnson; he compared it with what he had typed on the drug-store typewriter, and then he nodded his head with positive solemnity.

"Yes," he said, "this is the final proof. I don't think it takes an expert to determine that. The letter 't,' for instance. You can see with the naked eye that the bottom curl is missing. Look at the 'l' with its battered shoulder, and

at the 'h' that is very difficult to distinguish from an 'n.' You agree with me?"

"I can't very well help agreeing with you," the doctor said heavily; "I only wish to Heaven I could."

Jim said nothing but he knew that the case against Betty Lou's father was complete. There was nothing that could be done other than charge Charley Bush with the crime and place him under arrest.

In the shed-room at the rear of the store there still came the sounds of the little druggist unpacking merchandise from boxes, the thump of the hammer, the whine of nails being withdrawn from the wood.

"You had better call him in, doctor," suggested Packard. "This isn't a nice business for either of you two, so if you prefer to let me do the talking, it'll probably be easier all around."

Jim MacMasters slumped down into a chair and the doctor went to the door and opened it.

"Charley!" he called, and his voice was hoarse and thick. "We want to have a talk with you."

"Who's 'we'?" the druggist demanded in response, but he came in from the shed, his face damp with perspiration from the exertion of the work he had been doing. He stood for a moment, the hammer balancing in his hand, a questioning stare in his eyes. He saw Villard's tense, set face; he saw Jim a dismal and dejected figure in the chair; and he saw the stranger in his loud clothes, chewing gum industriously, his derby hat rising and falling with the movement of his jaws.

"Well?"

"Charley, I'm sorry, mighty sorry, that it has turned out this way, but at last we know the truth."

But even before the doctor had finished saying that, the druggist's thin face blanched, and his mouth twitched. He had seen the typewriter, its cover removed and a sheet of paper in the roller. He saw in the hand of the stranger the letter that had carried death to Wade Hawley. The hammer slipped from his hand and crashed to the floor.

"We have just finished comparing this letter, which you wrote in Chicago, with the work of your typewriter," said Packard. "It proves to us beyond all doubt that it was you who sent the envelope with the poison on the flap. Have you anything to say?"

Charley Bush reeled as if he had been struck. Villard caught his arm and supported him to a chair.

"You'd better make a clean breast of it, Charley," he advised. "It's the only thing you can do."

"It is our duty to warn him," Jim MacMasters broke in hoarsely, "that anything he may say will be used against him."

The druggist lifted his clenched hand and passed it across his forehead.

"Yes, I did it," he whispered, the colors from the prescription case playing over his haggard face. "It was Wade Hawley's fault; he drove me to it. He had no business coming back to this town; he had no right to tempt me like that—just when I was beginning to forget what he had done to me.

"He stole my wife from me, and took my little girl's mother away from her. Ever since that night she left me for him I have wanted to kill him, but so long as he stayed away from me I could fight it down.

"And then he came back. I hated him more than ever because—because he had mistreated her. He had made her life miserable. She didn't have to tell me; I saw it in her face—that night she came here.

"I have always loved her; even when she went away I still loved her. I—I even love her now as I could have never loved any other woman. I wanted her back; I have always wanted her back. I killed him because I couldn't help my-

self; I fought against it day and night —after they came back, but my hate for him was too strong. I had to do it, and I have no regrets except——" They knew he was thinking of his daughter.

There was a moment of silence, broken by the sound of Detective Packard snapping his gum between his teeth. "How did you get Karnes & Johnson's letter paper?" he asked, wanting to clear up the one point regarding which he had only a theory.

Charley Bush was breathing noisily. When he answered it was with seeming difficulty.

"When I left Mayfield," he said, his words coming in jerky gasps, "I had the envelope with the poison on it already fixed up, but I had some more of the cyanide in a little bottle. Didn't want to use blank envelopes unless I had to; Hawley might not use the return one. Knew it was better to get the stationery of some responsible firm.

"When I got to Chicago I went to half a dozen offices along LaSalle Street, but Karnes & Johnson was the first place where I could get paper. No trouble at all. Just took it and walked out." He repeated that sentence several times as if his mind was wandering a little. His body twitched, a strange sound came from his throat, his jaw sagged, his eyes closed and his head fell forward. He would have crumpled over to the floor had not Doctor Villard caught his shoulder. The latter saw the telltale pallor which crept across the guilty man's face.

"He's dying!"

After that Charley Bush did not stir, and Villard, making haste to apply his stethoscope to the little druggist's chest, shook his head slowly.

"He is already dead."

"Poison!" cried Jim MacMasters. "He has killed himself with the same poison that he used to avenge himself on Hawley. Isn't that what he has done, doctor?"

"A fine pair of fools we are!" Detective Packard muttered ruefully. "We've let him poison himself right in front of our eyes, and I didn't have my eyes off of him for a minute."

"Both of you are mistaken," answered Villard. "Cyanide always causes horrible convulsions—as Jim ought to know from having witnessed the death of Hawley's black cat."

"What did he take?" demanded Packard.

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing," the physician answered. "What has killed him is a cerebral hemorrhage—the bursting of a blood vessel in his brain. The excitement did it, of course. Heaven is very kind to him; perhaps Heaven understands that his sin was not of his heart but an ugly twist of his poor, disordered brain. And God has let him pay in the easiest possible way."

"And has left Betty Lou to keep on paying!" Jim MacMasters exclaimed bitterly. "She can't escape so easily. Call it poetic justice if you want, but where is the justice for her? Is it justice that the innocent must suffer with the guilty? She must go through the rest of her life knowing that her father was a murderer. It's not fair!"

"Yeah, it's pretty tough," agreed the detective; "pretty tough on the girl." He reached out his arm and put his hand on Jim's shoulder. "Tough on you, too, MacMasters. I guess you've got the notion that I'm as hard-boiled as they come, but maybe I'm not so hard as you think. Under my fifth rib I've still got an organ they call a heart although there are some fellows, post-office address Joliet, you could never make believe it.

"What I'm about to say isn't regular, in an official way, but if the doctor is willing, then so am I. You've already had an inquest over Wade Hawley and a jury has rendered a verdict. Carl Hawley's name isn't hurt any by it be-

cause the law has declared him mentally irresponsible. He hasn't got any family to feel disgraced over it, and I can't see that it's going to hurt anybody's happiness if we leave things where they are—if the doctor is willing."

Doctor Villard's face flushed.

"You've just told us, haven't you," Packard asked him, "that Bush died of natural causes? All I'm suggesting is that you lose the past half hour out of your memory."

Jim MacMasters caught the detective's hand and clung to it warmly.

"Packard," he said huskily, "you're a decent fellow to do this for me."

"For you? Huh! Guess again. I've got a daughter of my own and she's being married next month to a darn nice youngster who, like you, happens to be a lawyer. Maybe that's why it got next to me."

"Of course," Doctor Villard said slowly, "it is an irregular thing to do, but—— After all, there's nothing quite so precious as a woman's happiness. Yes, I agree to let things remain as they were."

"And that's a 'regular' thing to do!" exclaimed the detective, helping himself to a fresh stick of chewing gum. "When's the next train back to Chi?"

TOO DEAF TO HEAR

AN irate stranger recently walked into an engraving company's office on Chambers Street, New York, and demanded the company's pay roll, at the same time ordering everybody in the place to reach for the ceiling. Perhaps if Harry Pflaum, who is seventy years old, and becoming more deaf every day, had been able to hear the threats of the stranger against his life, the pay roll would have disappeared with the stranger. As it is, the pay roll is safe, two men who wanted it are in jail, and Mr. Pflaum has a sore head.

About noon a short time ago a stranger entered the place and began a discussion with the manager about some engraving he wanted done. Pflaum was engaged at his daily stunt over an engraving stone. The visit was well timed, for just after the entrance of the stranger, Miss Bertha Goldsmith, the cashier, left for the bank to get the weekly pay roll. Almost immediately after her departure a second stranger entered the establishment and, without preliminaries, commanded: "Hands up!"

Hereupon all hands went up, and the first stranger conducted the manager and all the employees into an anteroom—all except Mr. Pflaum. He had not heard the command to elevate his arms, and he went on with his work. As the first stranger passed Pflaum's bench, on his way to wait on the steps in the hall for the return of the cashier, he brushed against the old man. Pflaum looked up and saw all his fellow employees had gone. At once he began to shout loudly. The stranger whacked him over the head with the butt of his revolver. Pflaum screamed and ran to the fire escape, where he began to cry: "Murder! Robbery! Fire! Help!"

The stranger in the hall ran away, and his companion was caught as he leaped out of the door, by a mounted policeman who had come in answer to the old man's cry for help. The police learned the name of the other would-be robber from their prisoner, and he was arrested a short time later in his apartment.

When the Door Opened

by Kenneth Duane Whipple

Author of "Live Bait," etc.

THE last level rays of the autumn sun lay upon the Coniston Hills, bathing their fir-clad slopes in warm yellow light. Shadows of dusky purple, creeping out from the Vermont shore, were already darkening the still reaches of the upper Connecticut, glassy smooth and flawless that warm fall evening. But on the higher ground of the New Hampshire side it was almost as light as it had been an hour before, and the curl of smoke from the chimney of a house beside the narrow dirt road high in the hills rose against the blue of the sky in a feathery white tuft.

A hundred yards down the road, half hidden from the house by the hook of the highway, two men sprawled beside an old roadster whose dirt-begrimed sides gave no hint of the power beneath its hood. The jacked-up wheel, the worn casing, the half-inflated tube —these tokens, conspicuously displayed, spoke in familiar language to the infrequent passer-by.

But a close observer might have noted that, despite the rapid approach of darkness, neither of the supposedly stranded motorists was making more than a perfunctory pretense of repair work. Instead, the two were conversing animatedly, yet with a furtive lowering of tone which lent a sinister tinge to their presence in what was evidently—to one, at least—unfamiliar terrain.

"Sure this is the place, 'Pug?'" queried the smaller and older of the men.

Pug laughed, but there was little mirth in his laughter.

"I'll tell the cross-eyed world I'm sure," he said. "Think I'd forget where Andrew Barker's silver fox farm is, after that first trip 'Floppy' Elton and I took up here? The pens are right out there, back of the house—see? There's about forty pairs, besides the young ones. And with pelts worth what they are, I can pile enough fur in the back of this roadster to keep me warm for awhile, or my name ain't Pug Dart."

The other shook his head.

"I trapped in Canada for thirty years, when I was younger," he said, "but I never expected to see the day they'd be raising pelts in captivity, the way they do nowadays. And just think of a silver fox pelt bringing as much as a thousand dollars!"

"You said it," assented Pug. "Sounds goofy, don't it? But it's straight goods. I had all the dope on it last spring when our trip flivvered. Didn't I tell you about Floppy gettin' caught in the wire and cashin' in?"

"Shot, you mean?"

"Naw—scared to death," returned Pug scornfully. "This guy Barker comes out with his gun, and Floppy's heart goes back on him when he hears it go off. I read all about it afterwards

in that hick paper my cousin Jim's wife gets from up here—you bet I didn't wait around that night any. But we was goin' at it wrong, just the same. We oughta skinned 'em and stuck the hides in the back of the car, like we're goin' to do this time. Course, we weren't up to that kind of a job, like you are——"

Roger Barr, the old trapper, stared up at the darkening sky.

"A couple hundred isn't much for this job, after all," he said, a hint of mutiny in his tone. "Seems to me it ought to be worth a share—a quarter of the whole thing, at least. You know——"

Pug's angrily congested face indicated clearly that the topic was no new one.

"Ain't I told you a dozen times that's all you get?" he snarled. "Who knew about the place, and got up the whole thing, and furnished the car? And who picked you up the other day bummin' around the Common without a cent in your pocket? You didn't kick then when I said twenty. And now I've raised it to two——"

He broke off suddenly, bending above the rim by the roadside.

"How d'ya think we're goin' to get up through to Woodsville to-night if you don't get a move on?" he said gruffly. "Hand me that tire iron and shoot some wind into that tube."

Moving obediently at the sudden command, Barr glanced cautiously about for the cause of Pug's sudden activity.

Just coming into sight around the curve below them was a young woman in calico, carrying in one hand a pail of what upon nearer approach proved to be butternuts. She went by hastily, with a curious glance at the laborers by the roadside. Roger Barr, looking up, met her gaze squarely. When she had passed his eyes still followed her.

"She's gone now," he said to Pug after a moment. "Nice looking girl, ain't she? Looks a little like my daughter used to. Is she—— Why, what's the matter?"

Pug, straightening up, was wiping beads of perspiration from his forehead.

"That was Mamie Barker—the fellow's wife," he said. "Floppy was sweet on her before she married this guy. She used to know me, back in Boston—I was scared stiff she'd recognize me. What's she wandering around for, anyway, this time of night? She ought to be back home washing up the supper dishes, instead of out here queering our plans."

He glanced again at the western sky. The sun had been set for many moments now, but a file of crimson clouds, banded with black, still lingered along the horizon. Against their ruddy radiance the homestead on the hillside stood out starkly black, clear cut against the scarlet clouds with their sable borders.

"Beats the deuce how long it stays light up this way," he grumbled. "Back in Boston 'twould have been dark before now. Well, let's make the best of it. Fish out that bottle we got at Joe's on the way up, when we stopped for gas. It's in the pocket of my coat, there on the seat."

He took the flat, square flask which Roger Barr handed him and raised it to his lips, passing it back to the latter with obvious reluctance.

"Easy," admonished Barr. "Save it for the trip back. And besides, you want to be——"

Once more both men fell feverishly to work as a two-horse team creaked around the corner above them. It was not until its rattling wheels could no longer be heard in the distance below that they looked up again.

"Dark enough," said Pug tersely. "Here—let's go."

Together they swiftly replaced the tube in the casing and the casing on the rim. They attached the spare to the rear of the car and removed the jack from

beneath a perfectly well-shod rear wheel. Then by hand, taking care to make as little noise as possible, they backed the car into a little, brush-filled lane just behind them, shaded by overhanging branches of sumac and wild apple.

The feet of the two men made no sound in the soft dirt of the road as they advanced single file toward the house, Pug leading the way. It was almost pitch dark now. The crimson borders of the black clouds had vanished, leaving the moonless sky gloomy and overcast. In the grass at the roadside crickets chirped feebly, and far off in the woods sounded the muffled note of an owl.

It was an eerie spot for a city-bred man, there in the loneliness of the Coniston Hills. But liberal helpings from the flat flask had banished from Pug Dart's mind the last vestige of fear and had left but little of caution. With a sure step he led the way as they turned from the highway into the elm-shaded lane leading to the farmhouse and halted, crouching behind a huge trunk, to reconnoiter. A whispered conference, and they went forward once more around the corner of the house, prostrating themselves in the grass beneath a side window through which gleamed the yellow rays of a kerosene lamp.

Pug, raising himself, stared through the window. Then, ducking suddenly, he placed his thick lips close to the ear of Roger Barr.

"He's just sat down," he whispered, "and his back's to the door. Now, if them hinges don't squeak——"

Slipping his blackjack from his hip pocket into his right hand, he tiptoed up the steps and cautiously tried the door. It yielded without a sound; his black bulk vanished within. There came the sound of a dull thud; a brief scuffle; silence.

Roger Barr's growing anxiety had increased tenfold before Pug finally emerged, his satisfied stride slightly tempered with chagrin.

"Never heard me," he whispered. "I soaked him good and hard, but it didn't quite put him out; I had to hand him one on the chin before he took the count. But I couldn't find a blamed bit of rope to tie him up with—we'll have to lug him out here where we can keep an eye on him. I couldn't find Mame, either—looked all over for her, too. So much the better if she ain't home, though. Come on. What you waitin' for?"

"But you didn't hire me to—to——" protested Barr. "You ain't payin' me——"

"I'm payin' you to do as I tell you," rasped Pug. "Snap into it, now—lively!"

The older man, obeying, felt a premonition of uneasiness as he entered the cozy kitchen—a premonition which all too soon proved well founded. For as the two men bent above the body sprawled before the kitchen stove, a startled gasp sounded behind them.

They wheeled—to face Mamie Barker, white as death, her wide eyes roving from the unconscious form of her husband huddled on the braided rug, to the intruders who stood, one at Andrew Barker's head, the other at his feet, staring back at her.

For a long moment the tense silence remained unbroken. Then Mamie Barker, a flame smoldering in her black eyes, took a step forward and leveled an accusing finger. The flickering firelight, glowing dully through the isinglass on the front of the stove, struck across her girlish face, drawn and strained by the stress of anger and fear.

"So it's you again, Pug, is it?" she demanded. "Still after them, aren't you? I've often wished it had been you instead of Floppy. I thought you'd had your lesson. I never dreamed you'd try again. And now——"

She broke off as her eyes sought the

form at their feet, but she made no move toward it.

"And now," she went on, still in the same low voice, "you've killed him. Now I hope you're satisfied. Kill me, too, if you want—I don't care. Take your foxes and go back. They've only brought bad luck. First Floppy, and now Andrew——"

"Aw, can it, Mame!" interrupted Pug, bristling. "Lay off the weeps. I was a fool to trust Flop last time. I'm doin' the job myself to-night, and doin' it right. And if the bulls think they can find me after daylight—try and do it, that's all!"

But Mamie was not listening. She was looking past Pug's gross bulk to where a slight movement had attracted her attention. The next moment she was on her knees on the braided rug.

"He's alive!" she cried. "He's alive! Oh, Andrew, Andrew!"

She was up like a flash. Before either man could move to stop her she was making a mad dash for the half-open door, screaming shrilly.

"Help! Help! He——"

Her shriek was cut short as Pug, leaping up, drove his heavy fist into her face. With a cry she fell forward and lay moaning, her slender body half across her husband's feet.

Barr moved forward uncertainly, his lips parted to voice a protest. But sight of the drink-mad ferocity of Pug's face, as the big man turned toward him, halted him in his tracks.

"Take your flash," ordered Pug, "and go out to the barn and bring in some heavy rope—there'll be some, somewhere. We gotta tie these birds up good. Quick, now—this bozo'll snap out of it in a few minutes."

The older man cast a timorous, uncertain glance over his shoulder at the deathly stillness of the night outside the little farmhouse, so lately the scene of such violence, now quiet with the silence of stupor, if not of death.

"I don't want to go, Pug," he said uneasily. "What if——"

"What if what?"

"What if some one had heard her? They'd be coming, and see me coming out, and——"

Pug turned upon him with an oath.

"There ain't a house for a mile each way," he snarled. "But I'll get it myself. You stay here and keep your eye on them. And Heaven help you if either of them lets out a peep while I'm gone."

One shuddering look the old woodsman cast at the two unconscious forms sprawled on the floor under the sickly yellow rays of the smoky oil lamp. Then he edged toward the door.

"I'll get the rope," he muttered, and vanished into the darkness.

Andrew Barker, gripped in Pug's strong arms, was struggling dazedly to escape when Barr returned, bearing an assortment of rope halters. With obvious reluctance the latter aided Pug to bind and gag the prisoners.

"I wasn't hired to do this," he muttered under his breath. "If I'd known——"

Pug, ignoring him, directed a final scrutiny at the two figures securely trussed in their chairs, as, allowing Barr to precede him through the door, he halted upon the threshold for a final glance.

"Take it easy," he advised the captives sardonically. "They'll find you in a week or so."

He overtook Barr a dozen steps down the path. The older man started uneasily as Pug's heavy hand fell on his shoulder.

"The pens are right ahead of us," he said. "I'll be watchin' here, and if anything goes wrong I'll whistle and you beat it for the car. And when you're ready, you whistle, and I'll help you carry 'em down. You told me you were a good man, and a fast one. Now let's see you come across."

The late quarter moon was just rising above the pines when Pug Dart, depositing his load in the roomy back compartment of the roadster, straightened up with a grunt of relief.

"There—that's done," he said. "Got a handkerchief? My hands are all over blood. Well, never mind. We'll stop somewhere and clean up. There must be some horse troughs somewhere down the line. All right—hop in."

Roger Barr stood looking back in the direction of the lone farmhouse, now but a black blur on the hillside under the dim light of the newly risen moon.

"Those folks back there—aren't you going to untie them?"

Pug glowered incredulously.

"Untie—nothing!" he snarled. "And have them phoning ahead to have us held up? Not a chance! We'll have trouble enough as it is, even if we do get to Boston before they get loose. And if I can't get my—— Well, what's eatin' you?"

Roger Barr, one foot on the running board. still hesitated his weak, yet kindly, face blurring in the edge of the hooded dash light s gleam.

"It seems—it seems too bad to keep them tied up any longer," he said. "Especially a nice girl like that. I know there's probably nothing else we can do with them, but—— She's got a cut lip where you hit her, and it's bled quite a lot. I thought—if there was only something——"

Pug's fingers closed about Barr's collar. With a powerful heave he fairly lifted his smaller companion into the seat beside him.

"Now never mind actin' like one of those soft eggs that can't bear so much as to shoot a little birdie or kick a little doggie because they're too kind hearted," he sneered. "More like you've fallen for that skirt. Oh, I saw the way you looked at her. Darned if I know what it is about her. First Floppy, and now you——"

He threw off the hand brake with a vicious jerk. The car nosed its way cautiously out of concealment; bumped across the ditch into the highway; gathered increasing momentum on the long slope of the hilly road.

Pug switched on his dimmers and carefully threw the engine into gear.

"We'd be crazy to think of it, old-timer," he said with false joviality. "Forget it. Our job's to make time for Boston."

Roger Barr, his quiet face a little pale, did not reply. Pug, absorbed in their progress at increasing speed as the dirt road gave way to infrequent stretches of paved highway, gave little heed to the nature of his companion's silence. He did not realize that, as they sped on through the night, the man at his side was nursing a series of grievances to which Pug's brutal treatment of Mamie Barker had added the last straw.

A trifling thing precipitated the inevitable crisis. It came as the car, rattling over a rough road across a flat, treeless meadow, ground to a hissing halt, the air whistling from a gaping rent where the valve stem had torn from the tube in the right rear wheel.

Pug was out of the driver's seat in haste, wrenching off the rim. Roger Barr, descending more slowly, found his companion staring at the damage revealed by the beam of his heavy flash light.

At his advent the bigger man turned a face distorted with rage and fear.

"Whyn't you be a little careful, puttin' that rim back on?" he demanded. "Now she's worked loose on these jumped-up roads—and look what we're up against!"

Barr bent closer.

"We didn't have the wheel off," he protested. "Don't you remember——"

"You close your trap! Don't you think I know what we did? If you'd only kept your eyes on your work, in-

stead of rubberin' after a jane young enough to be your granddaughter, you would certainly——"

"You've no right to speak about her in that tone! She was a nice——"

"Who're you, I'd like to know, to tell me how I'll talk? I'm the boss, and I'll say what I please—see? I'm payin' you more'n you're worth——"

"You lie! It's worth ten times what you're paying, and I'm not going——"

"Ah, shut up!" growled Pug, and swung furiously with his heavy flash light.

The beam of light described a wide circle across the field and was extinguished with a dull thud as its bulging lens took Roger Barr squarely between the eyes.

The tungsten filament, snapped across by the jar, did not light again. It was the flickering flame of a match, held by unsteady fingers, which showed Pug Dart the white, lifeless face of Roger Barr lying there in the grass at the roadside with a splinter of glass embedded in his brain just back of the right eye.

The sheer surge of terror which shook him at realization of what he had done, momentarily swept clear Pug's mind of hooch-born courage and braggadocio. Standing there in the darkness, with the embers of the match scorching his thick fingers, he saw clearly his peril; rallied all his cunning to meet it.

"He didn't have no friends in Boston," he muttered, "or he wouldn't have been down on his luck there. And nobody knew we was comin' up here tonight. So no one's goin' to be lookin' for him if I drop him off along in the woods here somewhere. There ought to be plenty of places——"

He cast a disparaging glance out across the meadow. The moon, now well aloft, showed no opportunities for concealment. Shuddering a little, he lifted the body of Roger Barr into the roadster, placing it on the floor of the car.

The spare was half on when a sudden thought struck him. He paused, scowling.

Mamie knew.

Mamie had seen them together. She might identify the body of Barr. All too well Pug realized the difference in the thoroughness of the search which would be made for a murderer as compared with that which would be made for a thief. No matter how carefully he might hide——

It was as he squatted there, hesitating, that there struck into the corner of his eye a faint, far-off gleam of light. With a start he twisted his head to stare back over his shoulder at twin points of radiance—the headlights of an oncoming car.

He rose to his feet, rapidly weighing his chances. Was it merely another southbound night tourist, putting in what was undeniably a decidedly inopportune appearance? Or could it be that the loot of the silver fox farm had become known—that the pursuit had already begun?

For the latter, he realized, instant flight was the only remedy. For the former—well, even the most incurious of nocturnal travelers may be moved to play the good Samaritan to a brother motorist stranded on a lonely road. And should they stop, well, what then—perhaps——

Pug Dart, in his ten years of driving secondhand cars, had had extensive experience in changing tires. But never had he completed a change with such rapidity as now, spurred to speed by the oncoming car. And yet, though he had never worked so fast, yet never had he seemed to himself so slow, so bungling, so helpless, struggling there in the darkness as the purring of the approaching motor, coming clearly across the plain, grew moment by moment so ominously near.

Less than a hundred yards separated the two cars when, worming his panic-stricken way behind the wheel of the roadster, Pug threw in the clutch with a jerk.

The car leaped forward. The race was on.

Through town after town Pug's pace-making car whirled, beneath feeble, far-scattered electric bulbs, past now and then an all-night garage in whose window a dozing mechanic lolled in a tilted chair; then out again into the pine-bordered blackness of the rough, winding highways.

But drove he fast, or drove he slow, in the windshield before him still glowed the persistent reflection of two yellow lights. Sometimes they were larger, sometimes smaller. Now and then, for a moment, they vanished altogether, only to wink back the next instant into full view.

Pug had always prided himself upon the power of his car. But to-night no speed he could coax from its motor on the few straight stretches could shake the pursuit.

There was nothing he could do but cling to the familiar route. He dared not turn aside on one of the unknown highways lest, lost, he should be ingloriously trapped. In ultimate desperation he sought to slow down, to see if the other car would not pass; the panic of his frayed nerves jammed his foot hard down on the accelerator at the last moment. Well might the two hilarious college boys who were utilizing him as a guide over a strange route, have roared with laughter had they realized the emotions their joy ride was rousing in the breast of the driver ahead as he tore furiously through the night.

It was nearly four o'clock when Pug brought his car to a grinding halt at the side door of Joe's. His legs shook as he crawled to the ground. Every mile of the last eighty had taken its toll of his beclouded brain, his depleted nervous force. The flat flask in his hip pocket was empty—had been for the last half hour. Its final drops had given him the reckless courage to draw slightly away from the car behind; had given him, at last, the courage to halt and defy pursuit.

His mouth was dry; his hands twitched.

"I gotta have another shot," he said. "Joe'll fix me up. And if those birds——"

The flare of lights down the highway caused him to crouch hastily in the shadow of his car, his automatic half drawn. His head hammered madly as the other machine with a grind of brakes drew up just ahead. The next moment he drew a deep breath of relief at sight of the two youths who burst from their car, galloping into the lunch room with a loud demand for hot dogs with plenty of mustard.

He spared a glance for their machine and slowly nodded understanding.

"A roadster, same make as mine," he muttered. "No wonder I couldn't shake it."

His mouth fell slightly ajar, and a gleam of cunning came into his face. Slowly his eyes shifted to the door of the little roadside stand which the boys had closed after them. Then, his lips twitching, he felt in his side pocket for the key to the rear compartment of his own machine.

"Maybe 'twon't fit," he muttered. "But if it will——"

Two minutes later, overcoat collar high-turned, he entered Andy's and took a seat at the far end of the counter.

"Gimme a ham sandwich and a cuppa coffee," he said.

Not until the college boys had noisily paid their bill and made a hilarious exit, draining to the last drop their silver flask, did he pass his own bottle across the counter to be filled. Joe, pale-faced and shifty-eyed, slipped through a tiny door with a nod of acquiescence.

Pug, alone in the room, strained his ears to catch the buzz of talk outside. A vein throbbed in his forehead as he sat rigid, motionless.

Outside a starter ground, a motor suddenly roared. Pug's tense features relaxed. Joe, returning, was surprised to find him grinning.

"I'll take a sample of that right now, Joe," he said. "No, not outa here. Slip me four fingers."

"What's that on your hand—blood?" he asked.

Pug, who had reached for the glass, glanced hastily down. The telltale fox blood still stained wrist and sleeves. Too late he remembered that he had forgotten to stop and wash it off.

"Cut myself," he mumbled, gulping down the liberal potion. "Broke windshield—some kid chucked a rock at me. Here—gimme another try at that."

Joe, his pale eyes inscrutable, poured out the drink. Pug swigged down the strong spirits and stumbled to his feet. Any idea of asking to be allowed to clean up was now rejected; Joe would remember too much, as it was. He hurried unsteadily down the graveled walk and climbed with a breath of relief into the waiting roadster.

Gin-born exaltation once more lent its thrill as he shot away down the broad boulevard. Snugly packed away in the roomy compartment behind him were pelts worth more thousands than he could well vision, subject now not even to the meager fee of Roger Barr. And as for that which lay in the back of the other car, bound for an unknown destination and due to play a ghastly joke upon the gay party——

Pug breathed a sigh of relief as the lights of Lowell loomed ahead of him. Daybreak was yet not even a smudgy gray in the east. He knew every mile of the highway to Boston. In less than an hour——

He flashed past the bright bulbs of an all-night gas station glaring down upon its cement drives with their whitewashed rims. Beneath one of the lights stood a car. A concerted shout from the two men beside it brought his red-rimmed eyes to a startled focus.

One look was enough. His foot trod heavily on the accelerator; the roadster shot forward with a roar.

His heart pounding in panic, Pug shot a glance back over his shoulder. That the two youths had discovered the nature of their cargo he did not for a moment doubt. Beads of sweat glistened on his low forehead as he swung on to the straightaway and fairly lifted the heavy car to a fifty-mile clip down the wide, smooth highway.

Through Tewksbury Center and Wilmington he roared, his spirits soaring as the miles reeled past with no signs of visible pursuit. His car possessed a power, a speed, it had never displayed in all his months of ownership. His hands, tense and sure, guided its mad flight; his voice, raised in snatches of hoarse song, roared antiphony to the staccato bark of the motor. He could scarcely credit the reality of the cycle-mounted apparition which drew alongside in the outskirts of Woburn until the gauntleted motor cop reënforced his signals with unmistakable vocal demands.

For an instant Pug, staring bewilderedly, contemplated flight. A remnant of his good sense caused him to reconsider. It was only a speeding charge, easily fixed. If only he could get to the police station, on the side street, before the pursuit came through.

"Straight ahead six blocks, then two to the left where the tracks turn," ordered the officer. "No funny business, now—I'll be right behind you, remember."

The light above the door glowed evilly, Pug thought, as he drew up before the squat brick building. Vaguely he wondered at the number of men who emerged.

"Out, now—lively!" commanded a burly bluecoat. "What's at the bottom of this business, anyway? First we get this call from up the line that doesn't make any sense, and then you come shootin' through here about thirty an hour faster than the law allows, and—— Hello, what's this? Blood?"

Dully Pug looked down at his hands, his wrists. Under the bright arc light above their heads the rusty stains showed clearly.

"Cut myself," he mumbled. "Caught my hand in the door——"

At the rear of the car the motor-cycle cop, who had been turning his torch on the license tag, spoke up suddenly.

"Here's some blood or something back here, too," he said. "Let's take a look in here. Come across with the key. What you got—a load of booze?"

"It's only some furs—some pelts," babbled Pug, frenziedly fighting to push away the firm hands which ran rapidly through his pockets. "I been trappin' up north this fall. I was just takin' 'em in to sell——"

With a grind of metal the door of the rear compartment creaked open. It was not so much what any of the gaping ring of patrolmen said as the expression on their white, staring faces, which caused Pug, his spine prickling, to press suddenly forward to stare into the blackness of the interior.

The flickering ray of the arc light, shining in, cast a ghastly light upon the white, placid face of Roger Barr, staring with its one sightless eye at the moths fluttering about the grimy globe overhead.

A decidedly sobered youth leaned from the driver's seat of another car as it slid to a stop at the curb.

"That's the fellow we had them phone about!" he cried shrilly. "We drove his car off by mistake back up the line—didn't find it out till we ran out of gas up at Lowell. Say, old man, I'm awfully sorry this happened. We were a little pie eyed, I guess. If an apology will fix things up——"

But Pug Dart did not hear the apology. His madly pounding heart had ceased to a mere flutter as he slumped quietly to the pavement in a dead faint.

JEWEL SHARPERS FAIL TO TRICK BUTCHER

THREE smart jewel sharpers recently tried to victimize Louis Shain, who is a butcher, doing business in Brooklyn, New York. The game was worked in this wise: First a prosperous-looking stranger, displaying what appeared to be a fortune in diamonds, made his acquaintance. These diamonds the stranger hinted were worth all of twenty thousand dollars. At this point a second stranger entered and edging into the conversation, hinted that the diamonds were not worth anything like that sum. The discussion ended by the two strangers telephoning for a diamond expert of their mutual acquaintance. In due time this gentleman arrived on the scene, and after examining the stones, declared that they were worth only thirty-five hundred dollars. At this juncture, Mr. Shain was invited to come in on the bargain and purchase the diamonds at the "expert's" price; but the butcher declined to be the "fall guy." He refused the offer to acquire a bargain in fine stones and sent for detectives who arrested the two strangers and the expert as plain, every-day con men. The expert, according to the police, was not a jewel expert at all, and the diamonds which he appraised as worth thirty-five hundred dollars were valueless.

Simon Trapp's Double-jointed Burglary

by Roy W. Hinds

Author of "Burglar's Golden Wedding," etc.

THE Broome Street pawnbroker, Simon Trapp, was in a quandary. His visitor appeared to be a man of the prosperous business type. He might be, as he said, a lawyer. He might be a crook or a detective. At any rate, he had Simon Trapp in a hole, and the old pawnbroker had to be nice to him.

"What is it you say this fella's name should be?" Mr. Trapp inquired with a friendly grin.

"Stoffer," the man replied. "Charles Stoffer. Don't you know him?"

"Well, now, I don't think I do. Stoffer—Stoffer? No, I don't know nobody by that name. Where should he live at?"

The caller, who stood in front of the counter in the pawnshop, hesitated before he answered that question. He seemed to be debating as to whether he should go on with the affair in hand. If the old pawnbroker didn't know Charles Stoffer, there was nothing further to be done there. Indeed, it might be dangerous to go on. Yet he seemed to get a hint of the old man's state of mind.

"Where does he live?" he repeated. "Well, at present he's getting his mail at Ossining—and all his letters are opened before he gets them. Understand?"

The pawnbroker's grin broadened.

"Ossining is where that Sing Sing prison is at, ain't it?"

"Yes, and Charles Stoffer's in Sing Sing."

"Well," Simon Trapp announced after a pause, "I don't know nobody that's in prison."

They searched each other's faces.

"Now look here, Mr. Trapp," the visitor said, "don't you really know Stoffer, or are you afraid to admit it? Do you think I'm trying to play some sort of trick on you?"

The pawnbroker shrugged his shoulders. He plucked at his thin beard, and looked expectantly at the man across the counter.

Yet the visitor failed to come across with a sign that he really was a friend of Charles Stoffer, and therefore to be trusted. Charley Stoffer, Simon Trapp was sure, wouldn't send a stranger to him unless he gave him one of the infallible signs which certain thieves used to establish an understanding with the old man. Had Stoffer really sent the man there? If so, all right. He could be trusted. He could be permitted with safety to catch a glimpse of the workings inside that littered the dingy pawnbroking establishment. If Stoffer hadn't sent him—well, it looked bad. The man had information which might prove the undoing of Simon Trapp. It needed but a breath of suspicion in the right quarter to bring disaster to Simon Trapp. The very fact that he seemed to assume that the pawnbroker and Stoffer were friends revealed that he knew at least something about the shady affairs of that place. What was to be done about it?

Simon Trapp inquired: "This man—what is it you said his name was—oh, yes, Stoffer. Well, what did he say when he told you to come and see me?"

"He merely said that you'd help me out of a difficulty."

"A difficulty? Is it that you wanta pawn something?"

"No, no—I don't want to pawn anything. I've got business of a confidential nature with—well, I thought it was with you. But if you don't know Stoffer, there's no use talking." He was certain now that he was not mistaken. He couldn't have been wrong about it. Charles Stoffer had given him the name and address. He meant to force the pawnbroker's hand. "I guess I've made a mistake," he added. "I'm sorry. Pardon me for troubling——"

"Now you shouldn't go just yet," Mr. Trapp suggested. There was a thoughtful frown on his brow. "I'm old and forgetful, and maybe I do know this fella Stoffer. Maybe he pawned something here and I got his name on my books. I'll see."

The other, feeling sure of his ground now, announced bluntly:

"It's time you and I stopped beating about the bush. You don't have to look at your books. Charles Stoffer is a burglar. I defended him once, not at his last trial, but in another case a few years ago. He was broke, but I thought they were trying to railroad him to jail, so I took his case, and I cleared him. He wasn't guilty, but the police knew he was a burglar, and they meant to send him over. Naturally, Stoffer was grateful to me. He never paid me anything, but he told me that he'd like to have me call on him if he ever could be of any service to me. A couple of weeks ago I found I needed the help of a man like Stoffer. I looked him up, and found he'd been sent to Sing Sing. I went up there to see him, and, being a lawyer, arranged a private talk with him. I told him of my difficulty, and he said that I should call on you. He intimated that he knew you well, and that his name would help me get acquainted with you. Now that's the truth."

Simon Trapp hoped that it was. There was only one hitch in it. Why hadn't Stoffer given the man a sign—a sign that would absolutely prove his trustworthiness. Almost any one, getting a suspicion of Simon Trapp's dealings with crooks, could come there and use the name of some thief friendly to the pawnbroker, and the pawnbroker knew that if trickery were in the wind, such a visitor would choose the name of a man in prison. Simon Trapp couldn't easily go to a man in prison and ask questions. Yet it occurred to Mr. Trapp that Stoffer might hesitate to give one of their secret signs to an outsider, a man who wasn't himself a crook. He might wish to bring this lawyer and Simon Trapp together, but he would hesitate to intrust the lawyer with one of their private signs. He might depend on Simon Trapp's judgment once the two men were together—and the lawyer perhaps could achieve his object without being let too far into things.

Simon Trapp decided to take a chance. His scrutiny of the visitor had strengthened his belief in the man's sincerity. Nothing was to be gained, and perhaps much was to be lost, if he sent him away without giving him opportunity to state his business.

"I remember this fella Stoffer now," the old man admitted. "When you talked about the police railroading him that brought him back to my mind."

"You knew him all the time," the other man said with a smile.

"Well, maybe. What is it you said your name was?"

"Widdifer—Lucien Widdifer."

"Well, Mr. Widdifer, we can talk better, maybe, if you come back in my parlor. I got a young fella that works here for me; I'll call him."

Simon Trapp summoned "Puggie" Rooks, his youthful protégé and assistant, and left him to mind the shop. He led Lucien Widdifer into the parlor. Once they were seated, the lawyer plunged into his business.

"I'm representing a certain business man in this town," he said. "I need the services of an expert burglar, and Charles Stoffer said that you could find me such a man."

"A burglar? Well, in this pawnbroking business I meet all sorts of people. Maybe I know a burglar."

"Yes, of course. Well, I want such a man. My client is prepared to pay ten thousand dollars, if the burglar does the work for him. He——"

"You should tell me your client's name," Simon Trapp insisted.

"Is that necessary?"

"Absolutely. I never do business if I don't know everybody in it; but I keep secrets."

"Yes, certainly." He mentioned the name of a New York business man. Simon Trapp didn't know the name, but he would, of course, verify things before he proceeded very far. "This man," Widdifer went on, "is being hounded by business opponents who've stolen certain documents from his office. Those papers must be recovered. We are sure we know where the papers are, but we can't prove it. It will take a burglar to do the job. I want you to get the burglar, and I'll pay you ten thousand dollars for the job."

"Well now," Simon Trapp explained, "I ain't in the burglary business. Only thing I could do is maybe get a burglar for you. I know a fella that's going straight now—he comes here to see me when he's hard up and I lend him money. I heard one time that he was a clever man. He might be willing to do a job like this—but he wouldn't steal no money."

"He doesn't have to steal money," Widdifer assured the pawnbroker. "That's exactly what we don't want him to do. He'll have to open a safe to get the papers, and perhaps there will be money in the safe. He mustn't touch that. You understand I can't be a party to burglary of that sort—stealing money. I'm justified in having the safe burglarized for the papers, for that's the method my client's enemies employed, but this burglar mustn't touch money, if there's any in the safe."

"That would suit a fella like I know," the pawnbroker said. "He ain't working as a burglar no more. You see, I don't know no reg'lar burglars except maybe the fellas that come here to pawn things. If I got suspicions about 'em I don't take their things. You know how it is in a pawnshop. We meet all kinds of people. I got a young fella in mind that's a burglar—he knows how—only he's going straight. He's hard up and a job like this might suit him. I'll see."

Moment by moment their understanding became stronger. Doubt as to the reliability of Lucien Widdifer had almost vanished. Yet Simon Trapp continued to stall. He made his bargain with Lucien Widdifer, yet Lucien Widdifer learned nothing about the affairs of Simon Trapp. He may have had suspicions that the pawnbroker dealt with crooks as a fence. He probably had had that suspicion when he first set out to look him up.

But certainly the lawyer never got a hint that this old pawnbroker was the head and brains of one of the most active crews of thieves in the city. Simon Trapp, if he wished, could get a hundred expert burglars; and, of course, his talk about the young man who was going straight was all a bluff.

II.

Simon Trapp never set about a new enterprise without putting two and two together—to see if there were not some other angle of his affairs which could

be made to jibe with the new venture. He had so many irons in the fire that it required considerable dexterity to handle them all. He had, of course, an organization through which he could get almost any sort of information swiftly and accurately. Information was what he wanted now.

He sent for "Feeney the Heel." This young man, sly and shrewd, was called "The Heel" because his methods had a kinship to movements on rubber heels. He was an expert "trailer" of the underworld—a man who could be sent out to shadow or to dig up information about an individual, and who could be depended on to bring back every bit of necessary news.

"Feeney," said Simon Trapp, "I wanta look up a lawyer by the name of Lucien Widdifer. Get that name in your head. See where his office is at and inquire around if he's one of them lawyers who's always dickering with the police or the district attorney. You can find his name in the telephone book. And then I want that you should go up to Sing Sing and——"

"Sing Sing!"

The very name sent a shudder up and down the spine of Feeney the Heel.

"Yes," Simon Trapp insisted, "Sing Sing. Now they ain't gonta keep you there."

"Yuh, I know," Feeney admitted, "but it gives me the shakes to think about that place. I was in hopes I'd never see that joint."

"Well, you ain't never seen it yet. That's why I'm sending you on this job. Your face ain't known in Sing Sing. Now you should go there and ask to see Charley Stoffer. You know Charley?"

"Yuh—I know him."

"All right. You just go there and say you're a friend of hisn—understand? They'll let you talk to him. What I should wanta find out is, did he tell this Lucien Widdifer to come and see me. That's all. If he did, then I know Widdifer's all right. That'll settle it. You can mention Widdifer's name without no danger even if the guards do hear it. It's the name of a lawyer—and it'll be all right. Prisoners talk about lawyers with visitors. But don't mention my name. You know how to talk about me without saying my name. Skip along now, and bring me all the news you can in a hurry."

Feeney the Heel "skipped along."

Then Simon Trapp sent for a very close friend—a burglar. To this man he said:

"About a week ago you was telling me about 'Reddie' Tipton. I'm beginning to worry about him. You say he's hitting the booze pretty heavy and that sometimes he talks about trimming me?"

"Yes—he's fulla talk."

"But why should he wanta trim me?"

"Nuthin' 'n partic'lar," Simon Trapp's friend replied. "He's out t' clean up a few thousand and duck. That's all. He's down and out, and he don't care who he trims—fulla booze like he is. He just hinted t' me about gittin' you t' send us out on a job, and then him and me duckin' with all the dough. That's all. I shut him up so quick he didn't go on with it. I just said fer you to watch him—that's all. Don't give him no job t' do."

The pawnbroker meditated.

"Well, what kinda shape is he in?" he asked.

"Shape? Well, he ain't so bad. His nerves ain't all gone yet. He don't look so bad—only when he's in the dead middle of a bust. Why?"

"I was just wondering. Do you think he'd keep his mouth shut?"

"Oh, he won't 'stool'—if that's what you mean. He'll never run t' the p'lice. They got too much on him—and, besides that, he's afraid. He ain't afraid t' walk off with your dough, but he'd be afraid t' put the p'lice on this place. He

knows somebody'd git him—somewheres, some time. I just warned you not to give him a job t' do—that's all."

Simon Trapp made a decision.

"You find him and tell him I wanta see him," he said. "I got a job for Reddie Tipton."

It was a surprising decision for Simon Trapp—that he should choose, for a job in which trustworthiness seemed to be a high essential, a man whom he knew he couldn't trust.

Feeney the Heel, on the afternoon of the next day, returned to Simon Trapp's pawnshop with information that convinced the pawnbroker of the sincerity of Lucien Widdifer. Charley Stoffer, doing time in Sing Sing, had sent Widdifer to Simon Trapp—and Charley Stoffer was as trustworthy as they made them in his relations with Simon Trapp and the underworld in general.

So there was not much for Simon Trapp to do in this particular affair except to wait for Reddie Tipton. Reddie put in an appearance on that very night.

Reddie, a tall, loose-jointed young fellow with a hangdog air, was suspicious. He had an idea that Simon Trapp had been told of certain things he had said while under the influence of liquor. Reddie, however, hadn't changed his intentions, as Simon Trapp presently suspected. His part now was to make the old man believe that it was the liquor that had talked. Simon Trapp appeared to believe that, and Reddie Tipton was overjoyed when he learned that the pownbroker had a job for him.

It was something he'd been waiting for—an assignment from Simon Trapp, for things would be made easy for him. The only care he had to exercise was to see that Simon Trapp sent no one with him. Reddie made up his mind that he would insist, as he had in the past, on opening the safe alone. Undoubtedly it was a job which had to do with the opening of a safe. That was Reddie's specialty, and there were few better in the business. Working on a job for Simon Trapp meant that others would prepare the way for Reddie—see about getting into the building, and all that sort of thing. Reddie Tipton was delighted.

III.

It was a hard job for Reddie Tipton to keep sober, yet he wasn't in such bad shape on the night he reported for business. Simon Trapp studied him critically.

"Now you remember everything I told you," said the pawnbroker. "There'll be a fella with you to lead the way into that building. All you gotta do when you get inside is go upstairs to that office I told you about and pick the lock with them keys I give you. Inside you'll find the safe. Open it, and bring back to me all the papers you find in the safe. Nothing but papers, understand. You ain't to touch the money. There's maybe three or four thousand dollars in the safe, but you leave it alone. We can't take money on this job. If you bring them papers back to me I'll give you a thousand dollars—and that ain't so bad when you figure that you ain't done anything on this job yet. I had to go to all the trouble of fixing things for you. It cost me a lotta money to buy the watchman. You're absolutely safe. You ain't running no chances in that building—and a thousand dollars is pretty good pay for the little work you gotta do. But if you take any money outa that safe I tell you right now you better make yourself scarce in New York. I won't stand no foolishness from you. You should deliver me them papers, and don't touch nothing else. I'm gonta have the watchman look in that safe after you're through with it and—well, that money better be there."

"I ain't gonta touch no money," Reddie Tipton promised, but as a matter of

fact he had made all his plans to get away from New York.

He didn't intend even to deliver the papers to Simon Trapp. He was through with Simon Trapp and all his friends. They didn't trust him any longer, and, as is often the case with the would-be double crosser, he was sore and regarded himself as ill used.

Three or four thousand dollars was a lot of money to Reddie Tipton, under present circumstances. For months he hadn't pulled a real job—a job of big money. Reddie couldn't get any one to work with him, and while he was a clever man on safes, he knew little about framing up burglaries. His abilities were going to waste, for he could no longer get the help of clever fixers and "lay-out men." If he didn't have some one to lay out a job for him, to operate on windows or doors, to attend to the innumerable details preliminary to a burglary, Reddie couldn't find a chance to exercise his skill.

But now a job had been fixed for him, and fixed by men sent out by Simon Trapp. That meant that the lay-out work had been done by the best men in the business. Simon Trapp had even said that he had "bought" a watchman in that office building.

Reddie Tipton had no fear; he had his plans laid. He had worked this very cleverly. He was supposed to join his confederate in the hall after he got the papers out of the safe. That man would be on lookout duty there. They were to make their way out of the building and to the pawnshop of Simon Trapp.

But Reddie, during the few days that had elapsed since Simon Trapp took him into this job, had investigated things at that building and in that particular office —on that whole floor, for that matter. The floor was only three stories above the ground. It was an old building, and the various office suites were cut up by halls and corridors. There were innumerable dark nooks and corners, and it would be simple enough, in the dim lighting employed there late at night, to leave the office by another door and make his way to a fire escape. He would thus dodge the lookout, and be on his way, with the three or four thousand dollars he had pledged himself not to touch. Then for a life in some new field—first a glorious jag, and then profitable burglary with friends he would make in the particular city to which he intended to go, where he wasn't known, either by the police or the local crooks.

Reddie Tipton had played himself out in New York. He was "in bad" all around—hunted by the police and distrusted by thieves. And he meant to trim Simon Trapp for expense money. The few men who knew about this particular job were amazed that the pawnbroker was sending such a man as Reddie out on it.

Yet Simon Trapp seemed to know what he was doing.

At the appointed place Reddie met the man who was to lead the way into the building, and who was also to do lookout duty in the corridor while Reddie was operating on the safe. It was about ten o'clock at night. The office building was in a quarter of the city deserted soon after nightfall, and ten o'clock was as safe a time as any for burglary.

Reddie Tipton soon found himself alone in the office wherein the safe was located, but he did not go to work at once on the safe. He explored. Off an inner room he found a means of egress into a short corridor. He opened the door into this corridor by turning the snap lock on the inside. From that corridor he could make his way unperceived to the fire escape, while the lookout stood oblivious at his post.

It was a cinch. Reddie Tipton returned to the safe. He took another drink of liquor from a bottle he carried.

He already knew the general charac-

ter of this safe. It was an old model, and Reddie, who had studied safes as closely as a doctor studies human anatomy, had a mental picture of the hidden locking mechanism. He had the necessary tools—and he hadn't had enough liquor to interfere seriously with his skill. In about twenty minutes he had the safe open.

Though he was supposed to be there for papers and documents, Reddie brushed these aside in his feverish hunt for money. There weren't many papers there—two or three bulky envelopes with notations on them that meant nothing to Reddie. Two of these envelopes were sealed, but Reddie could tell by the feel of them that they did not contain money. The contents were papers too large to be bank notes. There were a few other folded pieces of paper.

In money the safe held exactly twelve dollars—two five-dollar bills and two ones.

Reddie, in his rage, handled the papers roughly. He handled roughly everything he touched. He cursed Simon Trapp.

Yet he realized that he must return to Simon Trapp. There was nothing to do now but deliver the papers to the pawnbroker and collect the thousand dollars. He had an idea that Simon Trapp had invented the story about three or four thousand dollars being in the safe merely to draw him on. Well, he didn't know what the papers were. They were of no use to him, and, anyway, he wouldn't dare steal them for himself and remain in New York.

"A thousand dollars is my drag," Reddie muttered ruefully, "and I better go collect it."

So he gathered up the envelopes and the papers and joined the lookout in the corridor. They went together to Simon Trapp's establishment in Broome Street.

Simon Trapp, in his little parlor, pawed over the papers with eager hands. He seemed to be looking for a certain document. He didn't find it. He looked through the papers again.

"They don't look right," he said. "No, sir, they don't look right."

Reddie gulped. Was he to lose even the thousand dollars?"

"I brought every paper I found in that box," he declared, "just like you said. I done my part—and I want my money."

Simon Trapp looked up impatiently.

"Didn't I say to you that you'd only get two hundred dollars if you didn't bring me the right paper?" he demanded. "Well, I'll pay you two hundred dollars—and I guess I'm lucky to get rid of you. I shouldn't never 'a' sent you out on this job—a booze fighter like you. But I was trying to help you—and I bet you left the right paper in that safe."

"I didn't leave no paper at all in that safe." Reddie insisted. "I done my work."

"How about the money?"

"Money!" said Reddie scornfully. "Twelve dollars—that's the money that was in that box. Twelve dollars."

Simon Trap stared at him.

"If you ain't telling me the truth," he warned him, "and if I find out that you took that three or four thousand dollars——"

"Three thousand—four thousand!" Reddie cried. "Say! That whole office ain't worth one thousand. It's the scrubbiest-lookin' place I was ever in——"

"Scrubby—scrubby! Say, young fella that office is a rich place with nice things in it. What you talking about—scrubby? You got too much to drink, that's the trouble with you. I can see it in your eyes. I should 'a' known better. And now you bungled my job. You opened up a safe but you missed the right paper. Oh, my, it's a shame! I don't know what I should do now. Listen to me—did you leave that safe open?"

"No," said Reddie sullenly. "I locked it again, like you said."

"Well, we gotta open it again. It's only a little after midnight now—plenty time. You should look good for them papers—in the bottom drawer inside that safe, and——"

"Bottom drawer?" Reddie Tipton cut in. "That's what I looked for first thing—like you said. But there ain't no bottom drawer. There ain't no drawer at all in that box. A few pigeonholes and a coupla little shelves, and a little tin box with twelve dollars in it, but no bottom drawer."

"No—no bottom drawer? Why—why——"

Simon Trapp was too surprised to proceed for the moment. He simply stared at Reddie Tipton. He swallowed dryly. Finally he asked in a weak voice:

"Reddie, what office did you go into?"

"The one you told me to," Reddie replied doggedly. "Four-o-eight. I didn't make no mistake——"

"Four hundred and eight is it you said?" the old pawnbroker cried. He clasped a shaking hand to his forehead, and moaned: "Never again will I have nothing to do with a man that drinks. Oh, my, oh, my, he says he didn't make no mistake—and he went inside four hundred and eight. And what I said was four hundred and six——"

"Wha-what's that? Four-o-six? You didn't——"

"Don't talk to me!" Simon Trapp almost shouted. "Didn't I tell you that four hundred and six was the office where the safe is at, and that four hundred and eight was the room you could hide in if there was any trouble there, as you could get to the fire escape better from there? Ain't that what I said? Didn't I say that there was a door between them two offices—bolted on both sides, as the offices belong to different firms? You was to pick the lock on four hundred and six, and while you was working on that safe this man here"—he pointed to the man who had accompanied Reddie—"he was to pick the lock on four hundred and eight and draw the bolts on his side. If there was a rumble you'd stand a better chance by hiding, maybe, in four hundred and eight, and sneaking out the fire escape if you had to. Ain't that it?" He turned to Reddie's confederate. "Did you pick one of them locks?"

"Yes—four-o-six, like he said," the man replied. "I thought he knew the layout after we got upstairs. All I was s'posed to do was get him inside and keep lookout while he worked. I done like he said—opened four-o-six, and drew the bolts in that door, but that was lost motion. There wasn't no rumble, and we——"

"Don't make no difference if there wasn't a rumble," Simon Trapp persisted. "It was the safest thing to do, and it was the way I tried to protect you. And this fella here"—he turned to Reddie Tipton—"he goes and makes a botch——"

"I swear I didn't think I had them numbers twisted, Simon," Reddie quickly asserted. "I thought sure that as long as——"

"Well, there ain't no time to waste in talking," the pawnbroker announced briskly. "Thing now is to get the paper I want. You fellas go on back there, and, Reddie, you open the safe in four hundred and six and bring me the papers you find there. I'll pay you fifteen hundred dollars if you get the right paper. Maybe I should 'a' given you the name of the office instead of just the number. Here you"—he addressed Reddie's confederate—"while Reddie is opening the safe in four hundred and six you leave these papers in four hundred and eight. Stack 'em up nice in the drawer of a desk, as we can't monkey to open the safe again. We'll just let 'em wonder how them papers jumped from inside the safe to the in-

side of that drawer. Go on now, you fellas, and listen, Reddie, you bring me back the right papers this time."

Reddie Tipton was more than eager to return to the job, for undoubtedly he would now come across the three or four thousand dollars he had been forbidden to touch.

Reddie Tipton went to work with a vim on that second safe. It was somewhat larger than the other, but it, too, was a safe of the old-fashioned variety. It required no more effort on the part of the skillful Reddie Tipton than the first. He opened it.

Inside he found quite an accumulation of papers and bulky envelopes. Yet he wasted no time with these, for he also found three thousand eight hundred dollars in money.

All he had to do was pass into the other room, the bolts on both sides of the door having been drawn, and slip out of the building by the route he had previously planned.

He had trimmed Simon Trapp. Before dawn Reddie Tipton was on a train, bound for a distant city.

IV.

"You say you wonder why I done all that," Simon Trapp said to a friend a few days later. "Well, it was a good way to get rid of Reddie Tipton. He was getting dangerous. He thinks he trimmed me. He won't come back to New York—not him.

"Now Reddie brought me the right paper the first time. If he'd 'a' found money in that safe he'd 'a' locked up the safe again and flew the coop. Well, he hadda be paid for his trouble. I couldn't play a trick on a man without paying him. I wanted Reddie to get outa town, but I didn't wanta cheat him outa no money. He earned what money he got, but I made him get it in a way that he'll always think he trimmed me. He'll be afraid of me and my men. I got a dangerous man off my hands—and I got him to do a ten-thousand-dollar job for me. And I paid him. My conscience is clear and nobody can say that I played a mean trick on Reddie.

"Oh, it wasn't so hard as maybe you think. You see, this fella that I done the job for—I don't mind telling you he was a lawyer by the name of Lucien Widdifer—he had everything fixed. The safe where we planted the thirty-eight hundred dollars is in the office of a friend of Widdifer. That part of it was easy. I guess it was easy, too, for Widdifer to fix the watchman in the building. Anyway, I knew there wasn't no danger, and I found out, too, that it was a decent job for a man to do. Widdifer's client was in the hands of a bunch of dirty crooks—not my kind of crooks, understand, but crooks that'll do anything. Well, I got the papers back for him.

"It was just a plain job, you see—the way it was put up to me, but alla time I have troubles on my mind. Alla time I'm thinking how can I handle some of the things that're bothering me. In my business I hafta keep my eyes open. Well, I got rid of one of my troubles—Reddie Tipton. I wish him good luck."

IT DOESN'T PAY

A FORMER bobbed-hair bandit of Greeley, Colorado, known as Lucille Lavalette, was recently sent to prison for ten years for the part she played in the robbery and holdup on December 16 of Mr. and Mrs. Clark of Greeley. The husband of the girl bandit, a boy of eighteen, was given from ten to twelve years. A second accomplice and participant in the crime, was given from ten to fifteen years.

Poison

HER INSURED HUSBANDS

by Edward H. Smith

Author of "When a Confession Counted," etc.

A FRAIL little Irish girl, named Jennie McNamee, died at the home of her aunt, Mrs. Annie F. Monahan, 43 Bassett Street, New Haven, Connecticut, on March 7, 1913. In life, no one had taken much account of or trouble about Jennie. She had been orphaned when quite young, and so had her four brothers. Those who were old enough had gone out into the world to make their way. The younger children had been distributed among the sisters of their mother, one of whom was Mrs. Monahan, to whose lot fell little Jennie. At fifteen, the girl had been put to work as a filing clerk. At seventeen she was dead—of tuberculosis, it was said. Nothing strange at all in that.

But there was the matter of insurance. Soon after Jennie McNamee had come to live with her aunt, the agent of a life insurance company had been invited by Mrs. Monahan to canvass her boarding house for business. The man had been unable to convince any one but Jennie McNamee, who took out a policy for five hundred dollars in the interest of her kind aunt. Mrs. Monahan paid the premiums and assisted in filing out the questionnaire, in which it was stated, among other things, that there had never been any taint of tuberculosis in the family of the insured girl. Soon after this occurrence, other insurances on the life of Jennie McNamee were procured by the aunt and the same statements were made in each case. Finally, the little girl's life stood insured for something more than two thousand dollars, of which one thousand five hundred and ninety-three dollars was to go to the aunt as beneficiary. In other words, if the girl died, her aunt would be richer in the measure of a fur coat, a good piano or a new automobile.

Some time after the procurement of these policies, Mrs. Monahan again approached one of the insurance companies and tried to take out a larger policy on the life of the girl. In making the application, she stated that there was no other insurance in any other company—a bit of ignorant folly. The insurance company investigated and found out the truth. There was immediate suspicion and an inquiry followed. The insurers learned that Jennie McNamee's mother, father and sister had all died of tuberculosis. They not only refused to issue more insurance but attempted to cancel what had already been written. When Mrs. Monahan tried to pay the premiums they were refused, so she went to another town and paid them through an agent with whom she was acquainted. Later, the insurers tried to return all premiums and cancel the policies, but she refused to receive the money.

Not long after that event, Jennie McNamee died. The three interested insurance companies insisted on an investigation and put their men quietly to work. The first discovery aroused

suspicion. Though the little girl had been ill about a month, she had been irregularly attended by physicians. One doctor had seen her once or twice. He was surprised to hear of her death, not having believed her illness serious. The death certificates had been signed by Doctor Isaac Napoleon Porter, a negro physician. He later admitted that he had been a little suspicious but felt his diagnosis of neuritis and heart disease would be found correct. He said nothing about tuberculosis, and the girl had evidently not shown any marked symptoms of this disease. It was also found that, while Jennie lay ill in bed, her younger brother, Frank, had been sent for a package of rat poison, which was heavily loaded with arsenic. The boy recalled that he had brought the poison in the tablet form and had been sent back by his aunt to bring another package in which the stuff was powdered.

With these suggestive matters in hand, the insurance men took the police into their confidence and further investigations were begun. Mrs. Monahan's past was now looked into—and it was not without interest. The lady was soon shown to be allied to her third husband. She had originally married one Joseph F. Pallman. He had died on November 20, 1906, "of dropsy and pneumonia." He left about four hundred dollars of insurance money, not much more than enough to bury him decently. On June 3, 1908, the widow married Joseph Monahan, a laborer and mechanic. He died on November 14, 1909, after seventeen months of wedded life, and the diagnosis placed on the death certificate was gastritis. There had been some suggestive circumstances connected with this death. Doctor P. R. Stetson, who had attended Joseph Monahan in his last illness, recounted that he had been to see the patient, who was supposed to be suffering from alcoholic gastritis. The doctor had just left the house, where he had failed to note any immediate dangerous indications, when he was called back to find the sufferer dead. The widow explained the strange death laconically.

"He got up and took a drink of whisky and that finished him," she said.

Husband No. 2 left five hundred dollars insurance to solace his widow.

After Monahan had been embalmed and buried, the doctor became a bit suspicious. The symptoms had been strange. He wondered whether arsenic poisoning were not the real explanation. But when he contemplated an exhumation and autopsy he found that the embalming fluid then in use contained large quantities of that drug. Therefore, nothing could be gained by such a proceeding. This same consideration prevented the investigators for the insurance companies from exhuming and analyzing the remains of both Monahan and Pallman, now that the earlier suspicions of the doctor had been strengthened by a more convincing matter.

The matter of the embalming mixture did not, fortunately, enter into the case of Jennie McNamee. In the intervening years the laws of Connecticut had been changed so as to forbid the use of arsenic in such fluids. The change had been made for the very reason that its employment acted to conceal cases of murder accomplished with this most common poison. Accordingly, when Jennie McNamee was embalmed another preservative was used.

On a night in the last week of June, 1913, three months after her death, the body of little Jennie was raised from her grave in St. Lawrence's Cemetery and autopsied by Doctor M. M. Scarborough, the city medical examiner. He sent the viscera to Yale, where chemical analyses were undertaken. A few days later the scientists reported that there was enough arsenic in the body of Jennie McNamee to have killed three men.

That night the coroner issued a warrant, and the following morning Mrs. Monahan was taken to the county jail and held without bail to answer the gravest of criminal charges. To say that the town was shocked and incredulous is to underplay the truth. Mrs. Monahan was a woman of forty, who had lived in New Haven all her life. She was a plain, simple, respectable person. She went to church and paid her bills and had no reputation of any kind, save that which clings to and abides with all lowly and inoffensive folks. Could it be possible that this humble soul had deliberately killed that frail, sweet little niece of hers for a few paltry dollars? The notion was monstrous and grotesque.

The officials suggested that the accused woman might not be quite so humble and honest and straight as was supposed. The sudden deaths of her first and second husbands were spoken of. Worse yet, Mrs. Monahan, widow of Joseph, had married her dead husband's brother, John T. Monahan, only a month after the other man's death. In other words, she was doubly Mrs. Monahan, by dint of having wedded two brothers. Not only that, but the present husband was about ten years her junior. The final bit of venom was put into the brew when it was disclosed that the priest who had married John T. Monahan and the accused woman had objected.

"Your second husband hasn't been dead a month and here you are with a third," he was quoted as having said. "Is this man you wish to marry any relative of the deceased?"

"None whatever," the widow is said to have responded.

But, for all that, New Haven refused to take the charge seriously, partly for the reason that the moving complainants were life insurance companies bent on avoiding the payment of their risks. In the common mind such a state of affairs always arouses sympathy for the accused and antagonism to the "soulless corporations." Neither strangers nor relatives would believe that Annie Monahan had poisoned her niece, even though it was shown that she had hurried to collect the insurance the day after the funeral and had then stated, under oath to one company, that there was no insurance on the girl's life except two hundred dollars, when there was really about one thousand five hundred dollars more outstanding.

In the end, the authorities decided that all the facts discovered by the investigators were suggestive rather than conclusively evidential. Mrs. Monahan was not brought to trial, but released without any legal proceeding beyond the original accusative verdict of the coroner's jury

So Annie Monanan was free of the charge of murder, but hardly acquitted of various strange and fancy pieces of lying and fraud. Yet she went placidly back to her young husband and her old place in the town, apparently with very little to trouble or annoy her. She had been persecuted by evil life insurance corporations which still refused to pay their honest obligations. That was all the substance there had been to the whole affair. She was a good woman, whose only misfortune was the common lot of poverty.

A curious thing had happened in her domestic sphere. When the woman was arrested for the killing of Jennie McNamee, her husband was, as the newspapers say, prostrated with surprise and apprehension. He was, as a matter of fact, very badly frightened and not entirely because of the bitter peril in which his wife stood. Indeed, he quite naïvely disclosed one of the sources of his fear when he blurted out that he himself had just taken out four hundred dollars of insurance at the suggestion of his wife. But, if this matter caused him some rising of the hair at that time, he forgot about it after

his wife had been released. They went back to their quiet and simple habits of life. Nothing was changed except that they moved to 137 James Street, a poorer neighborhood, where they occupied half of a dilapidated house. Here about three years passed placidly enough.

Early in October, 1916, however, John T. Monahan was taken suddenly and mysteriously ill. It was the more remarkable since he was still a man under thirty-five, robust and active, a teamster and hostler at times, an ex-soldier, and latterly a mechanic in one of the hardware factories of New Haven.

The man's symptoms were unusual. Though he said he had never been ill a day in his life and had never suffered from indigestion, he was now seized with an acute inflammation of the alimentary tract. This caused constant attempts at vomiting, which resulted in nothing but slight hemorrhages. His kidneys were soon affected to the point where he suffered constant pain. At the same time his legs became stiff and almost useless, so that the popular diagnosis for his ailment was paralysis and kidney trouble.

A physician was called, again after slight delay. This man looked the patient over with some care, saw that there was a conflict of symptoms, inquired the name of the patient, his wife's name, the name of the employer of the sick man and other details, which the wife seemed loath to supply. A prescription was given and the doctor went his way. He had no recollection of the "trouble" in which Mrs. Monahan had been caught less than four years before, but the condition of the man and the strangeness of his complaint puzzled the doctor. He came again and insisted on calling a colleague into consultation. There was a plea of poverty and some other objection, but the second doctor came. He took one look at the woman and whistled softly under his breath. He examined the patient with great care and asked many little questions which seemed to be indirect, needless and full of menace.

The two doctors left together.

"What do you think?" asked the first.

"What's your impression, doctor?"

"It's a very puzzling case."

"Yes. So it is. Did it occur to you the man might be poisoned?"

"That's why I called you in. Still—er——"

"The woman was in jail four years ago charged with killing a little girl with arsenic."

A third doctor was called after this conversation. Then a fourth visited the humble Monahan house. A few days later, when the condition of the sick man showed no improvement, and he seemed to be growing weaker, a consultation was held with the city authorities. The next day an order was issued commanding the transfer of John T. Monahan to the New Haven Hospital, where he was waited upon by still other physicians—six in all.

It must not be concluded that all this took place in a few days or even weeks. Monahan was taken ill in October. He was in bed for some time before the first doctor was called, and this man treated the patient for weeks before he began to doubt his own powers and considered calling aid. The second man was immediately suspicious but he, too, wanted further opinion on which to base his actions. So the matter dragged along through the winter, while the sufferer grew worse and worse. It was the break of spring before he was finally taken away from the tumbledown house in James Street and transferred to the hospital ward.

The physicians who waited on the sufferer were not in the position of the usual doctor called to wait upon a man who is being secretly poisoned. In the latter case the physician cannot know

and often does not even suspect what is afoot. In this case, however, the physicians were fully forewarned, mailed with suspicion and armed with the active coöperation of the police, who were determined to fasten guilt upon the suspected woman, if only to vindicate them after their failure and discomfiture of four years before. The physicians, accordingly, watched the patient with the greatest care, took several tests of his bodily excretions, kept elaborate records and, meantime, did what they could to restore the suffering man to health.

The scientific demonstration may have been a success but poor Monahan died after months of torture and suspense, on June 12, 1917.

On the following day, his wife was once more in the toils of the law and back in her cell, waiting to be tried for the arsenic poisoning of her third husband. She took her arrest with the utmost composure.

"Whenever any one dies," she said, "they accuse me of having murdered them."

And this view was not without sympathetic adherents in New Haven. The public mind is, as may have been remarked before, a curious mechanism. The fact that the woman had previously been accused and released only because the technical evidence to fasten guilt upon her was not forthcoming, failed to impress most persons as a circumstance to be counted against her. Instead, it was felt that the life insurance companies were still persecuting a poor and harmless woman, an old resident whom every one knew, for no better reason than that she had insisted on being paid what was due her—a trifle of life insurance on which she had honestly and at considerable self-sacrifice, paid the premiums. The money was still unpaid and the big companies meant to make sure it never would be paid. They were, no doubt, assisted by the police and the doctors. Everything is possible when one contestant is a rich corporation and the other a poor woman. Nor was this astonishing attitude to be changed by the publication in the local papers of circumstantial accounts of the illness and death of the third husband, backed by the statements of the doctors and the revelation of parts of the evidence. Public sentiment had formed and was immovable.

Accordingly, neither the prosecution nor the defense was in any hurry to bring the woman to trial. Her attorneys hoped that delay might work its usual feat of scattering witnesses and dulling the edge of testimony. The State hoped that the feeling in favor of the widow would harden after a little while. Accordingly, there were many delays and deferments. Finally, however, toward the end of January, 1919, more than eighteen months after the death of the husband, the case appeared near the top of the calendar and was at last commanded to be tried without further delay.

The evidence submitted was, because of the circumstances, almost wholly of a technical kind. It was shown that Mrs. Monahan had again purchased rat poison in he course of her husband's illness. A small phial of medicine which the doctors had seized in the Monahan home was shown to have been dosed with arsenic. The examination of the dead man's internal organs confirmed the theory that his sickness and death had been caused by dosing with a corrosive poison. Finally, there was the testimony of the physicians, who told of the symptoms they had noticed in the course of the long illness of the victim and of the general behavior of the accused woman at the time.

I need hardly say that the jury was not permitted to know that the same woman had been accused of the earlier killing of her niece or informed of the life insurance tangle involved in the case. But, quite without this, the

evidence was apparently conclusive. The jury brought in a verdict of guilty on February 13, 1919, and sentence of life imprisonment was immediately pronounced by the court. For those who like to bolster their pet superstitions with incidents from life, it may be interesting to note that Mrs. Monahan had been arrested on the thirteenth of June and convicted on the thirteenth of February.

The convicted woman took the verdict calmly, and when Judge Webb announced the sentence she smiled broadly and gave no sign of the slightest emotion.

The trouble with any verdict in a case of this kind, as usually tried and delivered in this country, lies in its exclusiveness. The prosecutor, instead of trying to thresh the whole matter out in court and attain an exposition of the whole truth, a discovery of the complete story of the accused, with all the motives and counter influences, understands that he is face to face with a highly complex body of formalism. He must proceed, not toward the truth, but toward a favorable verdict. Consequently, he chooses the single capital charge that he considers himself most likely to prove, judging by the evidence he has to present. So in this case. The jury decided that Annie Monahan had poisoned her third husband.

But far more interesting, both to the curious and to the scientifically concerned, is the question as to whether or not she also killed her niece and her earlier husbands. If she did not, she is an ordinary killer. If she did, she takes rank with the extraordinary and the monstrous, to whom attaches a perennial and perhaps an imperishable romantic fascination. Proceeding on the well-known legal and social maxim to the effect that one cannot further damage a convicted murderer by imputing to him or her other killings, we may speculate among the probabilities.

The first husband dies after a brief wedlock under circumstances which are later considered suggestive. His death certificate says that he died of dropsy and pneumonia, an almost incredible combination.

The second husband is acquired eighteen months later. After the elapse of another eighteen months he is dead of gastritis and, once more, the doctor is suspicious. He has just left his patient in a satisfactory condition when he is notified that the man has died suddenly. The wife says he took a drink of whisky and it finished him. He has been suffering from what the doctor believed to be an inflammation of the stomach, due to overindulgence in drink. But arsenic produces this same inflammation, with fatal results. The doctor does not become suspicious until after embalming, when it is too late to determine anything.

The rains have not yet settled the second husband's mound when his widow marries his younger brother, deceiving the priest so that he will permit the wedding. Soon a niece, who is to be adopted and reared because she is orphaned and destitute, comes to the house. The life of this little waif is insured for more than two thousand dollars, while the bread-winning husband is insured for nothing at first and later for only four hundred dollars. The girl's insurance is obtained by deception and fraud. An attempt is made to insure for still more money but it fails because a false statement arouses the suspicions of the insurers. There is trouble. Soon afterwards the young girl dies and, for the third time, the circumstances are highly suggestive. The body is exhumed and the viscera contain enough arsenic to have killed several strong men. Public sentiment prevents a murder trial.

The wife is released and goes back to her husband. Three and one half years pass. Then he is taken ill. He

lingers for six months or more in the care of doctors who are suspicious from the beginning and watch for all evidences of poisoning. Eventually, the man dies and this time the woman is tried and convicted.

The conclusion, in reason if not in law, seems only too obvious. A very poor woman, suffering from the beginning from the form of mental abnormality seen in so many killers, namely, the almost total lack of the emotions of sympathy or human pity, makes away with her husband and collects four hundred dollars of insurance money. She is humble and respectable. No one suspects. The body is filled with an embalming fluid containing arsenic, which effectually prevents later detection. She remarries and soon does away with the second husband in the same way. There is only a mild suspicion and that comes too late. This time she collects five hundred dollars. Next, she does away with her niece by the same method and tries to collect about sixteen hundred dollars. She is accused of murder, escapes being tried but fails to collect the money. The arrest has frightened her, however, and three and one half years pass before she again takes the poison pitcher to the dreaded well. This time she administers arsenic to her third husband, whose life is now insured for only two hundred and fifty dollars, barely enough to pay for the funeral. The sum to be gained seems too small for even a murderer's motive, but she has probably reached the apex of her madness. Poisoning has become a habit, a necessity with her. She lusts for what Nietzsche termed the happiness of the knife. She kills again, in the same way. But now she has taken her vessel to the spring once too often. The trap has been laid for her and she touches the trigger.

These cases are, to be sure, recurrent enough. We had Landru in France not long ago, and more recently we have had Haarman in Germany. Before that we had Johann Hoch in Chicago and the dread Holmes, who ranged the whole country before he was finally brought down. These are but instances that come to mind.

The interest, the final curiosity, attaching to Annie Monahan lies, therefore, not in her probable multiple guilt but in the slight and empty motives that drove her to her acts. Four hundred dollars; five hundred dollars, out of which, each time, she had to pay funeral expenses. Then sixteen hundred dollars and two hundred and fifty dollars, which sums she never got!

Was it this little gold that made this woman take up the black phial, or was it a darkness in the brain and a shadow over the heart?

THROUGH THE WINDOWS

A SHORT time ago in Brooklyn three young men were surprised in the act of robbing a drug store on Dean Street. One of the three was apprehended, and the other two escaped by leaping, feet foremost, through the plate-glass front window of the store. A patrolman on his beat saw the men moving about in the store, and he went to a side door to investigate.

As he attempted to open it, the door stuck, and the officer put all his weight against it. The door gave suddenly, and he was precipitated into the room. He caught one of the men, but the other two broke away from him and ran to the front of the store. Here, despite the officer's bullets, they crashed through the window and made their get-away.

He Certainly Does

By Charles J. Dutton

Author of "The Bootlegger's Hoard," etc.

IN a very easy chair by the great fireplace in his bookstore, David Phelps was stretched comfortably. The shop was not very large, nor were the bookcases along the wall many. It is true that the books were well chosen, for he had picked them out for one of two reasons —either he had read them himself, or at some time he had wished to read them. There was one other noteworthy fact about this shop. The small gold letters across the window spelled "Peter Collins' Bookshop"—and the real name of the owner was *not* Peter Collins, but David Phelps.

It was almost five, and twilight was approaching. The tall figure with the snowy hair had dropped the paper he had been reading. Under the large, rimmed glasses his eyes twinkled, and there was a smile on his smooth, intellectual face as he bent to pick up the paper which had fallen to the floor. He turned to the front page, and read once more the item in the first column, smiling as he did so.

One reading the article might have wondered why a bookshop owner in a small city in Pennsylvania should have found anything of interest in it. If the observer had been at all curious, he might have been still more puzzled as to why he should smile over it. For the item was a long story of robbery and crime, and it contained a rather heated statement made by the head of the New York police. It was the usual story—that there was a crime wave, but that the police know who was back of it, and that an arrest would soon be made. Similar statements have been published a hundred times, and yet the odd thing about it was that Peter Collins was smiling as he read it.

But then, again, perhaps he had good cause to smile. For Peter Collins knew the head of the police department, whose statement he was reading. What is more, the police chief knew him, but knew him as David Phelps, not as Peter Collins. Furthermore, the police would have given a good deal to have been able to have fastened several jewel robberies on Peter Collins, alias David Phelps. In fact it was the head of the police department in New York who was directly responsible for the fact that David Phelps was running a bookstore, in a little city, under the name of Peter Collins.

It had come about in a simple manner. Because a necklace had suddenly vanished from the hotel in which he had been staying, the police had told him to leave the city. Leave it he did, to try out a theory he had long pondered over, and one which was very simple. It was based upon the idea that a small city offered to a man of intelligence, who at the same time did not have any too great a regard for the criminal code, opportunities to enrich himself.

Things never work out as you expect them to in this world, and they did not in his case. He had known the great cities of Europe, and the great cities of America. If you had ever told him that he would begin to enjoy the easy, familiar life of a small place, he would

have smiled. But to his surprise, Peter Collins, after three months as the owner of a bookstore, discovered not only that he was making many friends but that there was something about the life of the place which appealed to him in many ways.

He was thinking of this when he heard the door of his shop open. He turned to see who had entered, for, after all, he did not have many customers, nor for that matter did he wish many. The book store in a sense was a blind. True he knew books, and sold them to people who also knew them and loved them. There were not many such people in the city. Also, it was now five, and most people were hurrying home to dinner, which was at six.

He rose from his chair to meet his customer, who proved to be a clergyman, the only clergyman that he had ever known personally. He was a tall young man who smiled a greeting as Collins went over to him. Ministers, of course, had been outside his line, but he liked this one. He had been his first customer, and barely a day went by that he did not drop into the shop to talk a while about this book or that.

As a rule, the minister was in good humor. But this afternoon, after Peter Collins had shown him a rare edition of Aretino, something which at another time would have caused a stream of talk, he saw that the man was troubled. In fact as the minutes went by, and the minister turned rather listlessly the pages of several volumes, Peter Collins at length ventured to ask him what was the matter. There being no response to this, he changed the conversation by remarking that a book he had ordered for the minister would be in from Europe in about a month.

There fell a silence after this statement, broken by the minister's saying, "I am very much afraid I will not be here then."

Peter raised his eyebrows at this, but said nothing, and the young man went on.

"It looks very much as if I am going to lose my church, and my job——"

Now Peter Collins knew nothing about the manner in which a minister could lose his church. He said as much, expressing himself with a good deal of wonder. The minister listened, then walked over to the fireplace, and when Peter had finished he said:

"On Saturday evening, there is to be a meeting of the trustees of my church. They are to decide if they wish to throw me out. And there is very little doubt but that they will show me the door."

"But what under heaven have you done?" came the startled question.

With a bitter laugh the minister answered, "Nothing. I preached a sermon on prohibition the other Sunday, and I said what every one knows to be true: That it is not enforced, and that there seems to be little effort made to enforce it. I said that if the government could not enforce the law, it ought to be changed to something that people would obey. And that's the reason for the trustees' meeting."

Peter Collins looked at him in amazement. Because of his utter lack of knowledge regarding churches, he failed to see any reason why any one should get excited over what the minister had said.

"It's like this," the clergyman explained. "It seems to be true in my church that a minister cannot say what he thinks is true. That statement regarding prohibition so horrified one of my leading members, that he said I was a 'wet.' What is more, he has called a meeting of the trustees to kick me out. I don't care much about myself, but I must think of my wife and the children. If I am forced to resign I doubt if I can ever get another church. And preaching is probably the only thing I can do."

Peter Collins made an expression of

disgust. Then he asked, "Who is this man who is going to kick you out?"

"It's Robert Garvin," was the reply.

Now Peter Collins knew Robert Garvin, that is, he knew who he was. And he did not like any of the things he had heard about him. The man was the owner of the leading store in the city. His name headed almost every civic board. He was a member of all committees. But when there had been a community-chest drive he had made every one of the seven hundred employees in his store give ten per cent of his weekly salary to the chest. He had taken the money out of their pay checks. He would not allow the girls of the store to sit down and rest during the long hours they were behind the counters. He was a civic figure; but he was also stingy, bigoted, and conceited. This man would insist upon his own way—and because he was wealthy he nearly always succeeded in having it. Also he was an ardent church worker, and he ruled his church in the same way that he did his store. The more Peter Collins heard about him, the more he disliked him. One thing was sure, if this was the man who wished to throw the minister out of his position, there was little doubt but that he would do it. Then Peter thought of something.

He turned to the minister. "Good heavens, why should he get excited about prohibition? I even know the bootlegger he gets his Scotch from."

The minister gave a sigh. "No doubt you do. Though he is the leading member in my church, in fact runs it, I must say he is not always consistent. Perhaps it is because he gained his wealth without gaining an education at the same time. Anyway, I probably lose my job on Saturday."

There was little more said, and a short while later the minister left the shop. After he had gone, Peter Collins locked his door and started on the walk which he took every evening before dinner. He was a commanding figure as he strolled through the business section. His fine face, with the mass of snowy hair, caused more than one person to turn and glance at him.

The walk ended where it always did —at the public dock. For a while he gazed across the blue water of the lake, to the dark green trees of the wooded peninsula a mile away. As a rule the beauty of the scene held him. But tonight for some reason he was not impressed. He could not keep the thought of the minister from his mind.

He had liked the young man, admiring his sincerity. It seemed rather hard to him that the minister should be forced from his position simply because he had spoken the truth. A peculiar smile, and one far from pleasant, crossed his lips as he thought that the minister's wife and children would be put out of their home because of the warped mind of a man like Robert Garvin. Above all other things, Peter Collins hated a hypocrite.

He was through his dinner, and was waiting for the waiter to bring his coffee, when his eyes fell upon an item in the local paper he was reading. It was only a short item, and it should not have held any interest for Peter Collins. But it did. What is more remarkable, he saw it in the society columns, which he seldom read, and had no interest in. The item read:

> Robert Garvin, the well-known owner of the Bon Marche, will entertain to-morrow evening, at his home on Sixth Street, the trustees of the First Congregational Church, and their wives. The following will be present——

Peter Collins read the names of those who would be present at this dinner with great interest. He was looking for a name which he knew he would not find —the name of Robert Garvin's minister. He did not find it. One of course might have expected that when the head of the board of trustees of a church gave

a dinner for his fellow trustees, he would invite his minister. But Peter Collins knew what this dinner was for. It was to prepare the grounds for discharging the minister at the meeting which was coming. Leave it to Robert Garvin to have his plans well formed.

Now, up to this point, one might say that all Peter had felt in the matter was a more or less academic interest. He was sorry for the minister, and he wondered how any man of sense could have been alarmed at the sermon. Garvin he despised, as most men despise a hypocrite. But up to this point his interest was academic. And then all at once it became personal.

He was having his dinner in his club. In a sense it was not an exclusive club. You will find its clubhouses in every city of the land. But in this city it had on its list of members almost everybody of any rank in the place. A rather mixed membership indeed. Doctors, a few clergymen, business men, and even bootleggers. It was the voice of one of the last which roused Peter Collins from his thoughts.

His own table was by the window. Five feet away from him, two men were engaged in conversation. One of them he did not know. The other, a tall man who looked like a successful lawyer, he did know. He was the bootlegger to a selected few. There never was any question about his Scotch. His twenty customers included not only Peter Collins himself, but also Robert Garvin. As the bootlegger's voice floated over to his table a great light broke upon him.

What the bootlegger had said to his friend was, "I will not be able to see you to-morrow night until about eight. I am going to Buffalo at ten thirty, and have to make a call on Sixth Street when I return. My date there is at seven, and I will see you later."

Nothing very startling in this statement, but it was enough for Peter Collins. He knew why the bootlegger was going to Buffalo. He brought his Scotch from there, brought it in suit cases. But he also knew something else. Only two days before the man had told him that he only had two customers on Sixth Street, and that one was away for the summer. The other customer was Robert Garvin.

When Peter Collins rose from his dinner, he was sure of two things. The first was that the bootlegger was going the next day to Buffalo, for whisky, the second was that at about seven o'clock he would deliver a suit case containing Scotch at Robert Garvin's house. Two simple facts, nothing startling, but enough for Peter Collins. He had a plan, and after all he was not in the city for his health.

If any one had followed him around the next day, he might have wondered somewhat at his actions. The first thing he did was to telephone the bootlegger and ask him to stop at his shop. When, at about ten, the man arrived, Peter asked him for six bottles of Scotch. Not that he wanted the liquor, but he did want the information the bootlegger gave him. The man was going to Buffalo and would be in on the six thirty train. He made arrangements for him to deliver the six bottles of liquor which he had ordered, the delivery of which would take place on the return from Buffalo.

In the afternoon Peter Collins might have been seen in a pawnshop, where he made an odd purchase. It was a badge, a shiny thing, which looked like the sheriffs' badges one sees in movie comedies. Later he entered a store which sold various kinds of legal blanks, and bought several. Still later, he might have been observed at his typewriter, engaged in filling in one of the legal blanks. And as his fingers struck the keys, Peter Collins hummed a foolish little tune. He was at peace with the world.

At a little before six, he locked the

front door of his bookstore, and went to the three rooms above, rooms which were his living quarters. There he became active. From a trunk he produced several objects. He took off the large, rimmed glasses, which he always wore, and changed his gray suit for a dark one. Next he took up the object he had placed on the desk, and grinned when he looked at it. It was a black wig, of remarkable workmanship. In fact several years before he had paid a very high price for it in Paris.

When at length he was ready to go out, he very carefully looked in the mirror. Any one who had seen him come into the room, would not have recognized him in the figure the glass reflected. Then his hair had been snowy white. Now not only was it black, but it gave a much different look to the shape of his face. Then his eyes had been hidden by his great glasses. Now they could be seen—dark gray, and sharp. A few lines had been penciled around his lips and eyes, and the penciling had been well done. For a long time he studied the figure before him, then with a shrug of his shoulders, turned from the glass. One thing was sure. Those who saw him slide out of his door into the street never would have known it was Peter Collins.

Strange to say, his steps led him out of the business section, toward the fine homes of Sixth Street. In a short while he reached the great brick house of Robert Garvin. It was built back from the street, and from its windows the light flowed out into the night. As he stood there gazing at the windows, a young man, perhaps twenty years of age, who was rather poorly dressed, passed him. Peter Collins hailed him.

"Want to earn ten dollars?" he asked.

The young man's response was eager. In a few words Peter told him that if he would stand by the tree on the sidewalk, and wait until Peter came out of the house, he would give him the ten dollars. He said something about a suit case he would like to have carried to the station. As the youth leaned back against the tree, which was under an electric light, Peter Collins walked up the graveled path, and a moment later rang the bell of Robert Garvin's house.

As the maid half opened the door, and before she could say a word, he slipped into the hall. The girl looked at him in surprise. When he said he wished to see her master, she said that he was in, but did not wish to see any one. But Peter rather coldly informed her that he was expected, and the girl, after a moment, led him into the library.

It was a large room, with a few books. The furniture was a bit gaudy. Left alone, the first thing Peter did was to go to the large bay window, sweep aside the curtains, and look out into the night. His gaze swept across the lawn to where he could see the figure of the young man, slouching against the tree. His glance from the window was interrupted by a voice from the library door. It was a voice which told that the speaker was a little angry, and also that his Scotch accent was a bit cultivated.

"What do you want to see me for?" came the half-angry words.

Peter Collins turned, and with a cold face watched the man walk from the door to the chair behind the great desk. It was Robert Garvin, and there was a frown upon his face, as if he had not cared to be disturbed. A rather slight man was Garvin. His face was red and his manner very self-assertive. He gave a quick glance at Peter Collins, and, noticing his rather shabby suit, dismissed him in his own mind as of no account. "Well, what do you want?" he growled.

Peter Collins eyed him for a moment before he spoke. It was the closest he had been to the wealthy merchant. As he looked at him the dislike he felt for the man increased. Robert Garvin's eyes were small, his lips thin, and his

face cruel. Then all at once Peter Collins spoke—only a few words, but he spoke them in a voice as cool as the tinkle of the ice in a glass of mint julep.

"Why, Mr. Garvin," he drawled, "I happen to be a Federal enforcement officer, and I have here a search warrant to go through your house."

The merchant's face grew so red that Peter wondered if the man would ever be able to speak. He sat back, his face a study of rage and fear, then leaped to his feet and shrieked out, "What do you mean by this insult? Don't you know who I am? I am the leading merchant of this town. My name is prominent in civic and church affairs. I am——"

Peter interrupted him. "I am not asking for the history of your life. I don't care who you are."

He waited for that to sink in, then leaned across the desk, and his voice was cold as he continued:

"I don't care who you are, or what church you go to, or anything else. I know your general reputation in this city. You may be all the things you have said. But people grin when they speak of you. You are simply an overgrown, conceited hypocrite. I have been working up this case for some time. Some of you rich men think the law was not made for you. If you want to see my search warrant——"

He paused to reach in his pocket and pull forth a legal-looking document. Across the folded paper, were the words "search warrant" in big letters. Not for nothing had Peter Collins visited the store which sold legal blanks. His voice was a bit sarcastic, as he added:

"Here is the search warrant. And here is my official card, and my badge——"

He pulled a card from his pocket, and gave the man a glimpse of it. Actually it was nothing but an advertisement. But there was no doubt about the shining badge which was on the inner side of his vest. He saw the man give one bewildered and frightened look at it as he turned his vest back. Then to make him feel more frightened he added, "That's not all. Of course I know you have been buying Scotch for a long time. I know how much you pay for it, who delivers it, and a good bit more. I know also the time you have it brought to your house."

He smiled as he saw the man give one hasty look at the clock upon the wall. The clock said fifteen minutes to seven. Peter had timed his visit so that the bootlegger would be at the house only a few moments after he himself arrived. He knew what the frightened glance at the clock meant. Robert Garvin had just remembered that in fifteen minutes a case of Scotch would be delivered to him. And he thought the man before him was an enforcement agent.

To hide his nervousness, the merchant rose and walked to the window, and looked out. Peter knew he would see the young man who was waiting under the tree. After a second, he walked over to Garvin and said, "You can see that one of my men is outside. I have others."

Now Robert Garvin was a hypocrite, and what follows shows it. He turned, walked slowly back to his desk, and threw out his hands in a horrified gesture. Then he turned to Peter.

"But if this gets out, it will ruin me. It will destroy my reputation in this community. Can't you fix it up in any way?"

For a few minutes Peter Collins was a model of virtue. His voice expressed his horror at the idea that a government man could be bribed. But he purposely allowed himself to weaken, admitting that it could be fixed up, and that no one would ever know what had taken place. Then when Robert Garvin mentioned that he had three thousand dollars in the house, Peter at length allowed himself to be persuaded to accept the

money. In return he would forget about the search warrant.

His face was cold as he took the money and placed it in his pocket. Before he left the room he took the search warrant from his coat and laid it upon the desk.

"Just sign your name here, and write after it three thousand dollars," he said, pointing with his finger to the warrant.

The merchant gave him a startled look and started to protest. But Peter Collins stopped him, saying, "I told you, I had not very much liking for anything I had ever heard regarding you. But I am taking no chances. You sign your name there. Then if you try any tricks, you will find it very difficult to explain what the words mean. So far as I am concerned, I will hide this warrant. There will be no blackmail, but you see I don't trust you any too much."

There came a long look between the two men, and it was Robert Garvin's eyes that fell first. Then without a word, he took his pen, and wrote what Peter had told him to. But he did not walk to the door to show Peter Collins out.

Out in the night, Peter paid the boy the ten dollars he had promised, and just as he walked away he saw a car stop before the drive. He turned and saw the bootlegger alight with a suit case and walk to the steps. He chuckled as he walked down the street, and wondered a little at the reception the man would receive. As for himself, he was contented. The whole affair had worked out just as he had expected, though, to be honest, Peter had one more thing to do.

He did it the next morning. It was very simple, only the writing of a letter, addressed to "Robert Garvin, Bon Marche, City." Part of the letter was as follows:

> After I left your house last evening, I called on my old college friend, who, I discovered to my surprise, is your minister. Judge my wonder when he told me you had called a trustees' meeting of the church for Saturday—a meeting for the purpose of discharging him, because you do not like his views on prohibition. That last rather surprises me. In fact, I am forced to say that if I hear that your minister has lost his job at the meeting Saturday evening, I will have to use that search warrant. You know it's even a worse offense than having liquor, to bribe a government official.

The week passed, and it was not until the next Monday that Peter saw his customer, the minister, come into his shop. The two men talked a while about books, and then when there came a silence Peter asked, "Well, did they fire you Saturday evening?"

The minister shook his head. "Do you know, Mr. Collins," he said, "it was a queer meeting. Nothing was said about discharging me. In fact Robert Garvin made a speech, and before he got through proposed that they raise my salary one thousand dollars. I don't understand it."

Peter Collins smiled, but he said nothing. There was a wondering tone in the minister's voice as he spoke.

"You know, Mr. Collins, I can't understand why Mr. Garvin changed his mind. I must have misjudged him. Certainly, 'The Lord moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.'"

Peter Collins gave a sudden smile at the last, and there was a lilt in his voice as he replied, "He certainly does."

THIEF PAYS CONSCIENCE MONEY

LAST fall, while on her vacation, Miss Meta Cronce, of Hackettstown, New Jersey, was robbed of forty dollars by a thief who broke into her home. A few days ago, she received a letter containing two twenty-dollar bills. She believes that this was conscience money from the thief.

The Ringer

by Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Sinister Man," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

"THE RINGER," Henry Arthur Milton, an escaped murderer, and an expert in the art of disguise, has returned to England from Australia and is threatening Lewis Meister, a crook lawyer. Cora Milton, The Ringer's wife, has asked Mary Lenley to give her a description of all the people who visit Meister each day. Mary is Meister's stenographer. Her brother Johnny is serving time for theft.

When Mary tells Meister of Cora's request he turns livid with fear and tells her to be sure to do as Cora asks. He has an iron-work grille put inside his window and hires Sam Haggitt, a pugilist and ex-convict, to stay at his home and office in Flanders Lane as a bodyguard.

Unexpectedly, Johnny Lenley returns from prison; his sentence has been remitted. He goes to Meister, who double crosses him by telling him that the loot from his robbery is still "planted" behind a chimney at No. 57 Camden Gardens. Then Meister tells Police Inspector Alan Wembury that Johnny is planning a job at that address that evening. Wembury loves Mary and is worried at Meister's interest in her. He knows that Meister is "shopping" Johnny. He tells Meister that Sergeant Atkins has been assigned to protect him from The Ringer.

That afternoon, after he has been summoned by Cora Milton and warned of The Ringer's intentions, Meister tells Mary that he has some papers which would send Johnny up for life. If she wants to see them and make arrangements for destroying them, she must come to his office at midnight that night, through a "mystery" door that leads from the garden to his room. He leaves her to think the matter over, and when he has gone, the world starts to spin around her, and she grasps a doorpost for support.

CHAPTER XI.

FACE TO FACE.

"NOTHING and nobody," said Sergeant Atkins, in answer to the query. "The only suspicious individual I've seen this day has been Sam Haggitt. I can't understand Sam going honest. It is as unnatural in a thief as it would be for a tailor to become a carpenter, or a ship's captain to give dancing lessons. Haggitt's got some graft."

Wembury shook his head.

"I don't think so. I fancy he is a badly scared man since he learned that The Ringer was loose. You've seen nothing of the cadaverous gentleman?"

"The fellow that Harrap saw? No. What'll I do when I see him?" he asked dryly.

"It certainly is not an offense to look like a stage villain," admitted Alan, "and unfortunately people do not carry their character in their faces."

"Thank God!" said Atkins piously, for nature had not favored him in the matter of looks. "The nicest looker I've ever seen murdered his wife and three children and buried them in cement under the kitchen floor. And if you ever saw old Lord Leverthil in the dock, you'd give him ten years on his face alone—and he's done more for infant welfare than any man in the country! Do you know what I often wish, sir?"

Alan suggested increased pay.

"Yes, I could do with that," said Atkins, who was something of a philosopher. "But what I've often thought is, how easy this job would be if things happened like they happen in plays. You know the villain first pop, the moment the curtain goes up; and you know the hero as soon as the first curtain's down. And everybody's the same right through the piece. The heroine never gets a swollen face with toothache, or cusses when the maid drops a milk-

jug. She's just the lord's little lady from start to finish."

"You've been talking to Doctor Lomond," said Alan good-humoredly. "Doctor Lomond stole all his ideas from Doctor Young—or, let us say, he adjusted them; only *he* thinks that police work is easy, given the necessary amount of brains, and he's got a scheme for catching The Ringer—been sitting up all night working it out and reducing it to writing. And he's promised to give me first peek!"

Atkins snorted.

Alan crossed the roadway, rang the bell and was admitted to the house, and he came at a propitious moment.

Mr. Meister had come back to the room and he had taken up the conversation where he had broken it off.

"There's one thing I want to tell you, Mary; you needn't depend so much on Wembury. I've told you Wembury thinks your brother is a crook. He did his best this morning to get me to talk about him."

"Mr. Wembury wouldn't do such a thing!" she cried indignantly. "He promised me he was giving Johnny his chance."

"Promised you!" said the man contemptuously. "A policeman's promise! Where have you lived all your life? That is part of their job, promising this and that—anything to gain your confidence."

"Don't let us discuss it."

She turned to go, but he caught her by the arm and swung her round. His face was aflame, his eyes were shining.

"Mary," he breathed, "don't you realize I'm the best friend—your brother could have?"

Tap, tap, tap.

He dropped his hands as if he had been shot, and swung round.

Tap, tap, tap.

Somebody was knocking at the mystery door. His jaw dropped; he could only stare. Then he heard Wembury's voice in the hall below and came running to the head of the stairs.

"Come up!" he yelled.

Wembury went up the stairs two at a time.

"What's the matter?"

The man could only gibber and point to the door.

"Somebody's there!" he gasped. "Somebody on the other side of the door!"

Alan slipped back the blots, took the key from the hook above the fireplace, and the door swung open. The passage was empty.

"There's nobody here. Look for yourself."

But Meister remained rooted to the spot.

"Arthur will give you a warning. He'll play fair!"

The Ringer's knock; the knock that he gave in the old days when he used to come secretly through the garden and up those stairs, and the two men would be closeted together throughout the night, discussing under their breath the plan which was to make them both millionaires. Three deliberate taps on the panel of the door—The Ringer!

Alan came back, slammed the door and shot the bolts home before he turned the key.

"You must have been dreaming."

"Was she dreaming?" The man almost screamed the question, pointing with a shaking finger at Mary Lenley. "She heard it!"

Alan looked at her and she nodded.

"If I was dreaming, it's the kind of dream I never want again. Nobody there!"

He stepped closed to Wembury and thrust his large face up to the detective's.

"There's a footprint in the dust outside the door—I saw it."

Wembury had seen it, too, but said nothing.

"There was no place for a man to

conceal himself—not a normal-sized man. I'll have a look in the garden," he said. "Do you still use that back door of yours, by the way? I mean the hole through the gate? It was a very popular entrance with some of your clients in the old days, they tell me."

"They'd tell you anything!" said Meister, stung to offensiveness in his agony of mind.

He waited until Alan had gone, then: "You heard it?"

"I heard it, Mr. Meister—three taps."

"Tap, tap, tap, eh?" He wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "Dreaming!" He laughed. "That got me, sure! Got me rattled. Just as I was beginning to think that with you by my side I should fear nothing——"

"Will you please not discuss that again, Mr. Meister?" pleaded Mary. "I'm sure you really don't mean——"

"I mean that when you're with me, I'm a new man, with a new, strong courage."

Before she realized his intention, his arm was round her, his damp face seeking hers.

Tap, tap, tap.

With a scream he ran to his desk and wrenched open a drawer, and she saw a long-barreled revolver in his hand. On his face was a grotesque grin of terror.

He tiptoed to the door, lifted the bar of the little trapdoor noiselessly and wrenched it open.

For a second he stood, frozen to the ground. Framed in the opening another face gave grin for grin; the white, drawn face of a sick man, hairy-lipped and hairy-chinned.

Meister's nerveless fingers slipped and the mouth of the trap crashed back in its place. The girl's scream brought Wembury at a rush, and at the sight of the huddled figure on the floor he gave a gasp of dismay. But The Ringer had not struck—Mr. Meister had fallen into a fainting fit, from which he did not recover for an hour.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MAN WHO PEEKED THROUGH THE DOOR.

DOCTOR LOMOND was writing a book on crime. It was one of those electric decisions which he confessed to, and pursued with unrelenting energy. Apparently he wrote in his study, in his bedroom, whilst he was at breakfast, and, with Alan's approval, occupied the inspector's desk in his little office at Harlboro Street when Wembury was absent. An exercise book, its pages covered with the microscopic execrable writing of one who was born to write prescriptions came Alan's way, and he learned the nature of the pretentious work from the proud author.

"Certainly you can read it. You may be able to check your own observations with mine. For the moment," confessed the doctor, "I am dealing entirely with Indian crime, and this has some bearing upon The Ringer, because I understand that his wife was born in that delightful country——"

"Indiana is a long way from India," said Alan with perfect gravity and calmness.

The doctor's face fell.

"Still, that really doesn't affect the issue," he said. "Now, let me read you the first bit."

"Thanks, I'd rather read it when I am alone, doctor," said Alan hastily. He had met other authors anxious to read their literary efforts. "I think you may help me, however," he said. "I've just come from old man Meister, who's in a state of collapse."

"So early?" asked the sympathetic doctor.

"No, it isn't booze this time; it is sheer, unadulterated funk. The man is in a state of terror, and it only needs just a little push one way or the other

to throw him off his balance. I'm going to tell you the story."

And the doctor, settling himself on the edge of his seat, listened with wide-eyed interest to the story of the killer and his vendetta.

"Hardly seems credible," he said, "in this country. And yet I've known a dozen cases of family feuds that have been handed on from father to son. Take the case of Ahmet Mahomet Ali, who lived——"

"Yes, yes, doctor," said Alan tactfully, "I know that case very well. But this is not the East, and, as you say, it is incredible."

The doctor fingered his little beard and looked wisely through his pince-nez.

"Is it established that The Ringer is in England?"

Alan nodded.

"Then why not do what we did in India? I know all talk of India sets your teeth on edge, but the case of Ahmet Mahomet Ali, which you most mendaciously claimed to know, may give you a hint. How do you shoot lions by night?"

"I've never shot lions by night or by day," said Alan.

"I'll tell you; you tether a live goat near a tree, and you sit on the tree, and if the mosquitoes will only be reasonable you get your lion when he's just making a leap at the bleating billy. It seems to me that the goat in this case—if Mr. Meister will not be offended at my describing him as such—is bleating loudly enough to draw the oldest and the deafest of lions; and if you only place him properly, you ought to catch The Ringer."

"In other words, bait a trap for him?" he asked.

"Exactly," said the doctor in triumph. "They baited a trap for Ahmed Mahomet with a brother-in-law whom he cordially detested. A wedding was staged in a little hill village, and up turned Ahmet with his bold men and fell into an ambush—I went to his hanging."

Alan was dubious. "If you make it too easy for him he'll smell bait and trap. What do you suggest?"

But the doctor was not ready with an immediate solution. He said he would think the matter over that night and deliver a written plan in the morning. Alan thought he would have made an excellent Anglo-Indian official, with his weakness for reducing all human activities to the dead level of a written report.

"Where do you think the blow will fall—what is the most likely place?"

"His own house," replied Wembury promptly. "He's near his friends for one thing. There isn't a Laner who wouldn't give him house-room, and they'd risk their own lives to get him away. The Lane is a queer, theatrical sort of place. We raided a house a year ago and, exploring the cellar, found that there was a clear passageway underground from one end of the street to the other! What we thought were separate cellars were in reality huge stalls, packed tightly with the most appalling specimens of humanity. Visible Flanders Lane is bad enough, but when Flanders Lane gets down to its bolt-holes it is frankly horrible."

Alan greatly desired to interview one man in Deptford and that man was Peter the Nose. Whilst he was satisfied that no mistake had been made and that The Ringer was in London, he was anxious to secure the kind of confirmation that only Peter could give; for Peter was a wonderful sorter of truth from fiction, legend from fact. Alan went in search of him, without success. His usual haunts knew him not, and the detective went on to Rotherhithe, to a crazy little riverside warehouse which served as a habitation for an old lady and her ancient son who made a good living out of combing the river flats for flotsam. Old packing cases,

hay bales which had fallen overboard from barges, the body of a suicide or so—the authorities paid seven and sixpence for a body. Sometimes the scourers found things which were not lost, but it is always very hard to prove a negative. But Peter was not there.

The old lady, sitting before a fire of driftwood, a ragged cigar between her discolored teeth, thought he had left London. He had a home in Devonshire, it appeared, and stolid and decent farm-laborers as his relatives. It was difficult to picture Peter with bucolic associations, but afterwards Alan learned that this was the truth.

Nor was Peter in the house of the cobbler of Friendly Avenue, who "fenced" petty loot. It looked as though there were some foundation for the theory that Peter had shaken the dust of London from his shoes and had gone out into the clean air of Devonshire.

Coming back along High Street, he saw Mary Lenley and her brother on the opposite sidewalk. They had been shopping. High Street, Deptford, though farther afield than the Lewisham Road, has a reputation for cheapness. There was a smile on Lenley's face that gave the detective a little pain. Johnny was carrying a bag full of provisions; the girl, her arm in his, was looking up into his face as they passed out of Alan's sight. He shook his head. Rotten work—police work. He had not realized its rottenness before. He turned his thoughts to The Ringer; such was his concern for Mary that the man who was, at that moment, dominating the police mind, performed the humble service of keeping in the background the vision of a girl stricken with sorrow.

In every station house throughout the length and breadth of the land the question of The Ringer and his menace was an urgent matter for discussion. The long blue lines of policemen parading for duty stood stiffly at attention whilst inspectors, great and minor, read emphatically the meaningless details of his height, color and appearance.

On the blackboards before the stations, amidst notices of children abandoned and unknown bodies found, a square sheet had appeared.

WANTED FOR MURDER
£500 Reward

Henry Arthur Milton, alias The Ringer, aged thirty-four. Height sixty-seven inches, blue or gray eyes, brown hair. May be disguised. Believed to have arrived in this country from Australia. Latest news of him is that he has recently recovered from a bad attack of pleurisy. The man is wanted on charges of murder, prison breaking, and murderous assault. Dangerous; carries firearms. The above reward will be paid to any person giving information that will lead to his arrest. Notify Superintendent McFarlane, New Scotland Yard, S. W., or any police officer.

By Order.

Beneath the line announcing the reward was a photograph, obviously taken in prison. It was a picture of vacuity; there was absolutely no expression in the blank face. The lips were parted, the eyes vacant and without life. The portrait was admitted to be The Ringer's chef d'œuvre, for without the slightest aid from the instruments of artifice, he had so completely hidden himself from the eye of the camera that even Cora Milton, stopping—as she often did—to examine the picture, could trace no resemblance to her husband. And yet it was he; the prison photographer at Pentonville had taken the photograph. A governor and a chief warder could swear that it was The Ringer who had "sat"—with equal truth they could swear that not one of them could have recognized the prisoner from the print that was made.

In Flanders Lane they pointed to the ears that stood away from the head, and hugged themselves with unholy joy when they related, one to the other, the queer gift of a man whose will commanded

even the muscles that in ordinary mortals had no control over those appendages. There was nobody like The Ringer—nobody in the world. Sympathy was general in Flanders Lane. He had half killed a "screw" and had "done" a snout—but who loves a prison guard or a sneaking police spy? Certainly no Laner. They would have turned out to a man and a woman in his defense; it would have been an honor to die for him.

When Cora Milton found herself picking a way through the litter of the Lane early that evening, she had proof of the glamour which enwrapped the wife of Henry Arthur Milton. A gawky boy, terrier-faced, yelled a derisive comment on her smart appearance. Instantly somebody darted from a doorway, caught the terrified youth by the scruff of his neck and flung him, half stunned, against the area railings with a shrill dissertation upon his dubious ancestry.

She had to wait some time before the door opened, and then she saw a face that was vaguely familiar. He was certainly a "busy." She was conscious of the atmosphere of authority in which he moved.

"Good evening, Mrs. Milton. What can we do for you?"

She frowned into his face.

"Atkins, isn't it?"

Sergeant Atkins nodded.

She winced and her color changed.

"Nothing wrong with Meister, is there?" she asked sharply.

"You know him better than I," replied the sergeant, and she was relieved by the flippancy of the reply.

"I want to see him," she said.

"Want to see Mr. Wembury, too?"

"If he's here." She saw the smile on the man's features and guessed accurately. He was not. "Am I supposed to be scared at Wembury?"

Sergeant Atkins chuckled and led her along the paved pathway to the door. An old withered face peeped out from the kitchen but was quickly withdrawn.

"Who's that?"

"That's his housekeeper. Want to meet her?"

At that moment the door of the kitchen slammed, and there was the unmistakable sound of a key turning in the lock.

"She's not used to visitors," said Atkins. "Maybe she doesn't think it proper for beautiful young ladies to call on the old man after business hours."

"We girls have our peculiarities," said Cora and followed him up the stairs.

She waited outside the door whilst Atkins went in.

"Who?" she heard Meister say, and then: "Right! Show her in."

He was sitting in his armchair, his hands complacently folded over his expansive waistcoat, a newly lit cigar in his mouth, and though he did not attempt to rise he was pleasant. even good-humored.

"You'll be getting me a bad reputation, Cora," he said. "Sit down."

"On the floor or somewhere?" she asked.

He got up with a grunt and found a chair for her.

"Well, have you come to say good-by to me before I sail for Australia?" he asked humorously, and shook a reproving finger at her. "You're a naughty girl!"

"I had a list of your visitors from that stenographer—I couldn't trace Arthur."

He laughed gently.

"You couldn't trace Arthur, could you? I'll bet you couldn't! You'll trace him in Australia—somewhere in Collins Street, Melbourne. Or you'll pick him up on the track at Flemington. But you won't trace him here, honey."

"I like you best when you're sober, Meister," she said. "You don't talk so prettily. Where is Wembury?"

"Sleeping under my bed." Meister was quite amused at the jest. "I had a pillow and a blanket put for him, and there he sleeps to-night!"

And then she asked a question which took the smile from his face.

"Who was the guy you saw—the man who peeked through the door?"

"Who told you that?" he asked angrily.

"Haggitt," was the calm reply. "That stenographer of yours wasn't talkative enough for me. Now don't get heated up, Meister. Sam has left you, or I wouldn't have told. Besides, I'm only trying to help you."

"The thieving scum!" he growled. "That fellow couldn't drop straight!"

"Who was the man?" she asked again. "I've seen him once——"

"You've seen him?"

She nodded.

"Yuh, just for a second. I saw him at the Sports Club."

Mr. Meister's hand was out of jurisdiction, it was fumbling at his lips.

"But is it he?" he demanded in a harsh voice.

"I don't know—it might have been. But it is queer—his being here."

"Fake!" said Meister loudly. "Fake! It's all part of the game to scare me into quitting. But you'll not do it, Cora, neither you nor the gang. I'm too wise, too—too clever for you all."

There was a little table in the center of the room, covered with a white embroidered cloth. It was a delicate tablecloth and a small settee had been pulled up against it. Her shrewd eyes missed nothing.

"Having a dinner party?" she asked.

Mr. Meister glanced at the table, smiled and recovered some of his lost self-assurance.

"A client, that's all," he said airily.

She walked over to the window and, pulling aside the curtains, examined the grille.

"You don't think he's in England!" she remarked sarcastically. "What's the idea of this? To keep out the rats? Listen, Meister, I've got a feeling here," she touched her heart, "that there is bad trouble coming to you. Bars won't keep Arthur away from you, nor detectives nor policemen, nor a whole army. Get that into your mind. I'm giving you a chance, and you hate me for it."

He said nothing, and she mused a while, looking down at the floor, then her eyes again returned to the table.

"That's a mighty pretty stenographer of yours, Meister," she said carelessly and she saw the ghost of a smirk on his lips. "Are you sure of her?"

His mouth opened in astonishment.

"Of Mary Lenley? What do you mean—sure?"

"I'm only asking. Are you sure of anybody? Are you sure of me?"

As if by magic, a stubby automatic had appeared in her hand. He shrank back against the wall, livid, his hands outflung. For a moment she rocked with silent laughter, and then dropped the gun into her bag.

"You're not sure of much," she said. "I could have killed you then, but I guess that Arthur would have hated me worse than ever, if I had!"

She left Meister in a state of quivering fear. For her own part, she was not altogether free from anxiety. She went into the street, letting herself out, for Atkins, at the sound of the closing door, had passed to his place of observation. She saw him there, nodded a farewell and walked quickly up Flanders Lane into High Street.

Following her at a distance walked a man who slackened and hastened his pace to match her. When she stopped before a jeweler's to glance at the window and he passed her, she saw him for a second in a careless glance, but she did not recognize the parson in the horn-rimmed glasses as the man she had momentarily seen in the doorway of the Sports Club.

CHAPTER XIII.

A TELEGRAM FROM AUSTRALIA.

THERE was an air of serenity about Harlboro Street station house; a calmness which had been disturbed all that day by the chip and jangle of steel on stone; for the commissioners had belatedly agreed that the charge-room was ill lit, and a wide gap had appeared in one wall—covered now at the end of the working day, with canvas and laths —and not all the industrious sweepings of the housekeeper had removed the white of plaster from the door.

Station Sergeant Carter had no views on the æsthetic; he was a little touchy as to tidiness, and held very strong views indeed upon drafts, which blew about his legs as he worked at his high desk. There was a silence in the bare charge-room, broken only by the sober ticking of the clock and an occasional tinkle as a cinder fell in the steel-bottomed fender.

Wembury stood with his back to the fire, an evening newspaper in his hand, his derby hat on the back of his head. He was reading the story of The Ringer. The newspapers had only just awakened to the fact that drama was walking abroad, and when he returned to the station house he had found three reporters waiting to be misinformed.

The sergeant dropped his hand on a bell-push and a policeman came through the door leading to the cells.

"Get that sack out of the way," said Sergeant Carter testily, pointing to the offending article that was draped over a trestle, "and push the trestle up to the wall."

As the policeman obeyed, he turned to the twinkling Wembury.

"The place is more like a pigsty than a charge-room. This is no place for honest workingmen who only work seven hours a day."

Wembury looked up over his paper.

"Expecting company?" he asked, and the sergeant grunted.

"No. We haven't a good night club in this district, worse luck! Now, when I was up west, you couldn't pass ten minutes without somebody being brought in. Ugh!" he shivered.

Wembury looked at the gap in the wall approvingly.

"It was about time they put in a window. This is the darkest station house I've ever been in," he said.

"You've had a bit of luck," growled the sergeant. "Personally, I'd rather have a station dark than chilly. There's a draft coming through that hole that's paralyzing. Good story, sir?"

Wembury had put the newspaper down and had taken a little book from his pocket and was turning the leaves slowly. He looked up.

"This? No."

"Novel, sir."

Wembury shook his head.

"I don't believe in novel-reading. It puts ideas in your head," said the sergeant disparagingly. "I wonder whether the doctor's got any romance out of that job?"

"Where is he?"

"He's in the cells, putting a bandage round the head of a nut who tried to climb a lamp-post with a two-seater car. The doctor thinks he's drunk. I certainly had suspicions myself when he wanted to shake hands with me after he was charged. No, he's not a local. Is there anybody in Deptford that owns a two-seater of an expensive make?" he asked sarcastically. "Said his steering-gear went wrong. Maybe he was right —*his* steering-gear! It certainly slipped the drum when he tried to walk across the charge-room."

Wembury was evidently not inclined for conversation. His mind was intent upon the closely printed pages of the little book. Presently the sergeant put down his pen.

"Do you believe The Ringer's in town, sir?" he asked.

"Do I believe it?" said Alan Wem-

bury in surprise. "Why, of course I believe it! Even Peter thinks so."

The sergeant smiled tolerantly.

"Peter would think anything for a pint of beer," he said. "No, I haven't tried it—beer's dear."

Doctor Lomond came up from the cells a little importantly, and the sergeant, getting down, made room for him at his desk.

"Drunk, doctor?" Alan asked the question with a smile.

"Undoubtedly, in spite of his being a member of two good clubs. He'll probably plead neurasthenia and shell shock, but for the moment he's intoxicated."

"Nothing romantic?" asked Alan innocently, and the doctor glared at him over his glasses.

"If you're going to roast me every time I have to examine a boozer——" he began and then laughed. "I asked for all this trouble. Nevertheless, I hold on to my theory. I believe that if anybody brings about the arrest of The Ringer, it will be me!"

Sergeant Carter looked pathetically at his superior, and the doctor, raising his eyes quickly, intercepted the glance.

"You feel almost sorry for me, don't you? But unless I'm greatly mistaken, I'm going to give you clever people the shock of your lives. I'm wasting my time because I'm talking to a wholly skeptical audience," he said reproachfully, and went on with his work.

Alan Wembury resumed his study of the book until:

"The constable wants you, Mr. Wembury," said Sergeant Carter.

Looking across to the open door, Alan saw that the officer on duty was making signs.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Peter, sir. You told me to keep an eye open for him."

"Peter!"

Wembury put down the book and walked to the entrance of the police station.

It was not Peter's habit to come direct to headquarters. He was generally satisfied to show himself in the street. Usually he passed by the station, made a signal to the man on the door and walked slowly on, to be followed by any detective who happened to be on duty at the moment. But now, to Alan's surprise, the little man came straight to the steps and mounted them.

"Can I see you a minute, Mr. Wembury?" he muttered as he passed, and Alan followed him into the charge-room. "In your office, sir?"

The inspector nodded, opened the door of the office and they went in together.

"Well, Peter, what have you found?"

"They're going to do that warehouse in Hinton Street to-morrow night—Ben Skoffer's doing the job. Lenley's out; he came up to London this morning."

"I know that."

Peter was nervous—a curious phenomenon in him. These minor details were the merest cloak to hide the real purpose of his coming.

"Sam Haggitt—him that works for Meister, the lawyer—he's hopping it to Canada."

"Going to Canada? When?" asked Alan quickly.

"To-night," was the astounding reply. "I had it from the girl he goes with. She's leaving, too. I saw him yesterday come out of the C. P. R. offices on Cockspur Street."

"Are you sure?" asked Alan incredulously.

"Yes, yes. He's bought his ticket," Peter went on. "He's got the money off of Cora Milton for *that*, but he's got some more coming from somewhere else."

He walked to the door, tried the handle and returned to the table.

"The Ringer's back," he said, lowering his voice. "I've got it straight."

"Anybody seen him?" asked Alan in the same tone.

Peter Litt shook his head.

"No, nobody's likely to see him. But his landlord——"

"I know all about his landlord. He may have been mistaken. One voice sounds very much like another. Besides, The Ringer would 'ring' his voice, too, Peter."

The little man looked round the tiny office uncomfortably, nervously.

"I've been looking for you all day," Wembury went on. "You can forget the little thieves and the small burglars —Haggitt and the rest of them—but keep your eyes skinned for this man. There's big money for you if you detect him. Wait!"

Peter had made a protesting noise.

"I don't want you to walk up and lay your hands on him. I hardly imagine you'd be such a fool. But when you see him," he dropped his voice, "go to the nearest phone, call me up and tell me what he looks like."

Peter shook his head vigorously as they passed out into the charge-room.

"I'm not going to nose on The Ringer." He was very definite for Peter. "Meister wanted me to do it and I kidded him I would. But not me, Mr. Wembury!"

He was shivering stupidly.

"And so would you be if you was me," said Peter, when the detective remarked upon his condition. "The Ringer's death to a nose! Here—there was a feller who nosed on him once—a feller named Toby Law—ever heard about him?"

"That's right," said the sergeant unnecessarily. "They took Toby out of the river a week later. Found drowned. Is that the murder he's wanted for, Mr. Wembury?"

Alan agreed.

"They done him down at Silvertown," Peter went on. "All the boys know it, don't they, sergeant?"

"Don't ask me," said the sergeant. "I'm not a 'boy.'"

"We know it, at any rate," said Wembury, "but you need not be afraid that anything like that will happen to you."

"I'll watch that it doesn't," said Peter hurriedly. "I'll be going now."

He was obviously anxious to avoid a repetition of Alan's request. It was not like Peter to come openly to the station house. He was by nature furtive, had in him something of the cat. But to-night the little man took a view of the station house which was novel in him. The ugly building with the blue lamp stood for safety and sanctuary. There was a cheering sense of strength in its very grim solidity.

He slunk out of the door again and was lost to view. The sergeant looked at Wembury.

"What do you think about that?" he asked. "I've never seen him in that state before. Maybe he's taken to drugs. All these 'grasshoppers' get that way if they don't drink themselves to death."

The doctor blotted one of the many puzzling forms which he had to fill up, and stepped down from his stool.

"Here is the certificate, sergeant," he said briskly. "Now what about Meister?"

"What about him?" asked Alan, secretly amused.

"I've got a theory," said the doctor, "but I realize I shan't be able to work it out single-handed. You told me yesterday that underneath the Lane is a subterranean passage."

"I told you that the tenants had knocked down the cellar walls and made a run from one end of the road to the other. But that is only on the south side of the Lane.

"Which is the same side as Meister's house," said the doctor promptly. "Where does the passage end?"

Alan wrinkled his brow in thought.

"I think about fifty yards from Meister's house; certainly not nearer."

Doctor Lomond smiled blandly.

"It isn't fifty yards if it's the end house. A continuation of exactly twelve feet would bring a man into the passage underneath Meister's garden. I've been to the trouble of going up to the Borough Surveyor's office and I examined the plans. And I have reached this conclusion: You've got a man outside the grounds—in my judgment that is perfectly useless. He should be posted inside, midway between the tree and the northern wall. I should have the ground bored, and unless my judgment is at fault, you'll find that the cellars of the Lane are the best way in for any person who has designs upon our friend's life. When I was district surgeon at Bulalli, we had a party of tommies who were being held for some civil offense, and they made their way down into a storehouse——"

Alan listened with exemplary patience. But it was always Doctor Lomond's fate to be interrupted in the most interesting portion of his narrative. A telegraph boy came in, and looked round somewhat awe-stricken at finding himself in such an unusual and fascinating environment.

"For you, sir," said the sergeant, taking the message.

Wembury opened the envelope and read the two closely written pages, folded them up and put them in his pocket.

"You can save yourself a great deal of speculation, doctor," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "The Ringer is in Australia, and the Melbourne police think they will arrest him to-night!"

CHAPTER XIV.

CALLERS AT THE STATION HOUSE.

MARY LENLEY got home later than she expected, to find Johnny dozing in an armchair before the fire, for the night was unaccountably cold. A strong northerly wind had brought the chill air from the Pole, and though it was early summer, London was walking about in its overcoats.

As she gently put her hand on his shoulder, he woke with a start and stared up.

"Hullo, dear!" he said, yawned and rose.

In a sense she was thankful that he was not his old alert, watchful self when she had come in. She had time to go to her room and hide the traces of her tears. The last half hour before she had left Meister had been an agony to the girl—thirty searing minutes. She had been in her little room when Cora Milton had called; the worst part of the interview was after The Ringer's girl had left the house.

She came back to find her brother in the kitchen, brewing the coffee. It was his one contribution to the domestic day. Johnny made coffee well—made it in large quantities, so that it only needed heating when it was required at any hour of the day or night.

She was on the point of telling him that she had to go out again that night, though for the life of her she could not think of one plausible excuse, when he said:

"I've got to go round and see some people, old girl. You won't mind being left alone?"

"Will you be late?" she asked, a fluttering at her heart as she faced him with the question.

"About eleven; maybe a little later. Why?"

"Because I want to see—go—to a sick girl friend."

She hated herself for the lame lie, and thought he would detect it instantly, but he was so out of touch with her life and her acquaintances that he did not seem to think it strange, and was indeed relieved a little.

"Sick, is she? That was the one dread I had when I was away," he said, "that you'd be left with nobody here to look

after you. You're leaving Meister—have you told him?"

She nodded.

"We shan't be able to give up this place for a month or so. I want to get fixed in the country."

He was busy pouring out the coffee.

"Cottages are hard to come by, but I know a man in Hertfordshire who'll find me a corner somewhere. I've had it in my mind for a long time to start a poultry farm. There's a big demand for English birds of the right kind. I met a man in prison who would have made a fortune out of breeding silver foxes, but they got some sort of disease and died."

He, too, was ill at ease, restless, nervous and could not keep one position for longer than a minute. He was hardly seated at the table before he rose again, went from the room and came back, only to remember that he had left his pipe in the kitchen. When he went out finally, his departure was a little abrupt, and she was not at all sorry to be left alone.

Here and now she had to make her final decision. Was Meister bluffing? Was it possible that he could hold proof, and, if he did, that Johnny could be punished for an ancient crime, however heinous it might be? If she only had somebody to advise her—somebody in whom she could confide! Her mind went instantly to Alan Wembury and to his invitation.

"If you are ever in any kind of difficulty, will you come to me?"

But could she tell him—a police officer? If it was anything else but an old crime of Johnny's, it would have been easy. She was not greatly perturbed by Meister's view of the police and their treachery; she knew he cordially hated them. But Alan Wembury was different.

The clock moved inexorably forward. Time was indeed flying; and as every minute passed, the tension grew, till at last she rose, took down her hat and coat and went out.

Back in the station house, Alan was still engrossed in his book when the telephone bell rang. The sergeant pulled the instrument over to him.

"Hullo!" He looked up at the clock mechanically to time the call in his book. "What's that?" He covered the receiver with his hand. "The night watchman at Cleavers reports there's a man on the roof in Camden Crescent."

Alan thought for a moment.

"Yes, of course. Tell him not to worry, it is a police officer."

"On the roof of Camden Crescent?" asked the sergeant incredulously.

Alan nodded, and the officer addressed himself to his unknown *vis-a-vis*.

"That's all right, son. He's only one of our men. . . . Eh? He's sweeping the chimney. . . . Yes, we always have policemen sweep chimneys and we usually pick on the night." He hung up the receiver. "What's he doing up there?"

"Looking round," said Alan indifferently.

Doctor Lomond had once said that he felt the police were very hard on little criminals, that they sought crime, and grew callous to all the sufferings attendant upon its detection. Alan wondered if he had grown callous. Perhaps he had not. Perhaps no police officer should. They came to be rather like doctors, who have two personalities, in one of which they can dissociate from themselves all sentiment and human tenderness. And then the object of his thoughts appeared. John Lenley came into the charge-room, nodded to the sergeant.

"I'm reporting here," he said.

He took some papers out of his pocket and laid them on the desk.

"My name's Lenley. I'm a convict on license."

And then he caught Wembury's eye and came over to him and shook hands.

"I heard you were out, Johnny. I congratulate you."

All the time he was speaking, there was in his mind the picture of that crouching, waiting figure of justice on the roof of Camden Crescent. He had to clench his teeth to inhibit the warning that rose to his lips.

"Yes, I came out yesterday," said Johnny.

"It seems only yesterday you went away," said the sergeant, reaching down his book to take particulars of the "brief."

"To you, but not to me," said John Lenley shortly. "To me, it seems somewhere in the region of twenty million years. Time passes much more quickly in a police station than in Ward C., Dartmoor."

"Your sister was glad to see you?"

"Yes," said Lenley curtly and seemed disinclined to make any further reference to Mary.

"I'd like to find a job for you, Johnny," said Alan in desperation. "I think I can."

John Lenley smiled crookedly.

"Prisoners' Aid Society?" he asked. "No, thank you! Or is it the Salvation Army you're thinking of? Paper sorting at twopence a hundredweight. Compulsory service twice a day; they give you a ticket 'please admit bearer,' and if you don't attend you're kicked out! When I get a job, it will be one that a waster can't do, Wembury. I don't want helping, I want leaving alone."

There was a silence, broken by the scratching of the sergeant's pen.

"Where are you going to-night?" asked Alan. At all costs this man must be warned. He thought of Mary Lenley waiting at home. He was almost crazy with the fear that she might in some way conceive the arrest of this man as a betrayal on his part.

John Lenley was looking at him suspiciously.

"I'm going up west. Why do you want to know?"

Alan's indifference was ill assumed.

"I don't wish to know particularly." And then, "Sergeant, how far is it from here to Camden Crescent?"

He saw Johnny start. The man's eyes were fixed on his.

"Not ten minutes' walk," said the sergeant.

"Not far, is it?" Alan was addressing the ticket-of-leave man. "A mere ten minutes' walk from Camden Crescent to the station house!"

Johnny did not answer.

"I thought of taking a lonely stroll up west," Alan went on. "Would you like to come along and have a chat? There are several things I'd like to talk to you about."

Johnny licked his lips.

"No," he said quietly. "I've got to meet a friend."

Alan picked up his book again and turned the leaves slowly. He did not raise his eyes when he said:

"I wonder if you know whom you're going to meet? You used to be a bit of an athlete in your early days, Lenley—a runner, weren't you? I seem to remember that you took prizes."

"Yes, I've got a cup or two," he said in a tone of surprise.

"If I were you"—still Alan did not raise his eyes from the book—"I'd run and not stop running until I reached home. And then I'd lock the door to stop myself running out again!"

The desk sergeant was intrigued.

"Why?" he asked.

"He might get another cup or a diploma or something."

Johnny had turned his back on Wembury and was apparently absorbed in the information he was giving to the sergeant.

"Lenley, I thought I saw an old friend of ours in the street the other day—Henry Arthur Milton, the man they call The Ringer."

"Did you?" said Johnny Lenley sourly. "Well, the next time you think you see him, you'd better walk up to him and make sure!"

Alan chuckled.

"You were with him in Dartmoor, weren't you?"

"Yes, for a week or two."

"See much of him?"

"No, I was working in the laundry; he was in one of the shops. I don't admire him particularly. He's in Australia, they tell me."

Wembury nodded.

"Then how could you have seen him?" Johnny's eyes were hard, and then he laughed a bitter little laugh. "You never lose an opportunity, you fellows, of trying to trip up a man, do you? Is the job you've got for me one connected with this admirable trade of yours?"

Alan shook his head.

"No, you're the last man I should choose for a 'nose.'" And, as the man made for the door: "Good night, Lenley, if I don't see you again."

Johnny spun round.

"Do you expect to see me again?" he asked. "To-night?"

"Yes—I do."

The words were deliberate. It was the nearest to a warning that he could give consistent with his duty; and when, with a shrug, Johnny Lenley went out into the night, the heart of Alan Wembury was sore.

"God! What fools these people are!" he said aloud.

"And a good job, too!" returned the sergeant. "If they weren't born suckers, you'd never catch 'em!"

Wembury said nothing. He was standing with his hands behind him, his chin on his chest, his eyes examining a bright nail that showed in the floor.

"Get Meister on the phone," he said. "I want him to ring the station every hour."

It was a few minutes before the call came through, and when Alan took the receiver and heard the oleaginous voice of the man at the other end, he realized that courage had returned, and wondered how big a price the man had paid for that jauntiness of speech.

"Yes, it's Wembury talking. I've had a cable from the Australian police saying that The Ringer is not in England. That may be true, and yet there is the chance that he has sent one of his crowd to deputize for him, so the precautions will continue. I want you to phone me every hour."

"I am coming round to have a look at you, dear boy," said Mr. Meister's voice.

It was a cheerful voice, yet there was a quaver in it, as though, through the haze of alcohol, the underlying ferment of fear was working.

"Tell Atkins," warned Wembury. "Don't walk—take a cab and let him ride with you. What's the trouble—anybody been tapping on your door?" He smiled at the answer. "Oh, no, I'm sure you're mistaken. If there had been any person on the landing I should have seen him. I went through the garden immediately afterward."

He replaced the receiver, returning to his position before the fire, and Sergeant Carter leaned back on his high stool and grew speculative.

"I can't understand old Meister," he said. "You wouldn't think that a fellow as wise as he is would have a convict's sister in his office. She's straight enough, of course——"

"I'm glad you put in that qualification," said Alan stiffly, "or I might have been annoyed with you."

"Annoyed with me, sir?" Sergeant Carter was hurt. "Hope I haven't said anything out of place?"

"It is no offense to be the sister of a convict," said the annoyed Alan, "under any law I know—from the laws of the Medes and Persians to the laws of auction bridge."

"Certainly not, sir," said the sergeant. "Miss Lenley couldn't think crooked."

Alan realized that the little grimace which Sergeant Carter made was intended for himself. It said so plainly: "Oh, is that how the land lies!" that he went red.

"If there's anything remarkable about the business, it is why a girl of her character should work for Meister."

Once on the subject of Mary, he found it extremely difficult to think or talk of anybody else. When the sergeant said that it was remarkable what women would do for money, he could have murdered him.

The conversation was interrupted by the phone and a formal announcement of a street accident.

"No, sir, not a serious one—at least, it wasn't when it happened, but the constable's giving him first aid—he only started learning last week. You were saying about that young lady, sir?" said the old gossip innocently.

Alan pocketed his book.

"I don't want you to get a wrong impression about Miss Lenley. I've known her for some years; she came from the same little village as I. The Lenleys were great people—until the old man got the gambling fever and went broke. And why I should be telling you all this, I don't know."

"No, sir," said the agreeable sergeant, "but if it eases your mind to talk——"

"It doesn't," snapped Wembury, "I don't want to discuss it any more."

Carter approved.

"As I often tell my good lady, if a fellow is stuck on a girl, it doesn't matter who she is."

"There is no suggestion that anybody is struck on Miss Lenley," said Alan hotly. "I merely know her just as you might know a lady."

Sergeant Carter was instantly virtuous.

"I don't know any ladies, sir," he disclaimed. "I'm a married man myself."

"You're a fool," said the irritable Alan.

"Very likely, sir. I've often thought so myself."

Sergeant Carter was that type of policeman that belongs to the past, to the days of the old regulars, before every amateur in the land thought there was money in burglary. He could reminisce about burglars by the hour; old broken men, whom he met nowadays, standing miserably at the corner of the street, who had acquired their hundreds with the aid of a jimmy and two inches of candle, and to-day could not raise their 'bus fares. The big burglars did not trouble Blackheath any more. Poverty was creeping like an autumn mist toward the grand houses. One or two had become boarding houses; one at least was falling to pieces for want of repair, above the heads of its occupants. The up-to-date burglar, who required a lorry to carry his kit, worked north of the river.

Wembury would have gone out had it not been for the lawyer's expressed intention of coming to the station house. He did not want to be around when the inevitable happened and Johnny Lenley was brought in—unless he had taken the hint. Had he? It seemed impossible of belief that he could have the situation so plainly put before him, and yet ignore the warning.

He heard a light patter of feet on the stone steps outside the station. It was a woman. He gasped with amazement as he saw the girl who came in—Mary Lenley.

CHAPTER XV.

THROUGH THE WALL.

SHE came toward him and from the pallor of her face and her obvious distress he thought that she had discovered her brother's plans.

"May I see you, please?" she said breathlessly. "Alone. I want to talk."

He opened the door of his room, but she shook her head.

"No, I can't stay."

"What on earth are you doing here?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Has Mr. Meister come?"

"No. Why—is anything wrong? He told me a little time ago that he would call."

"Yes, something is very wrong. I made him very angry to-night—oh, I don't know what I'm saying!" She covered her eyes with her hands. He remembered that gesture of hers so well; he had seen it in the days she wore pinafores; the dog had died and she stopped at the cottage gates to tell him.

"Did you know he was coming here?"

She nodded.

"I was in his room when he phoned. I didn't intend going, but something took me there to ask him—— Have you seen my brother?"

"Yes, he was here a little time ago. I wonder you didn't meet him."

Her mouth was dry, her pulses were racing erratically. Acting on the impulse, she had first gone to the house. Atkins had seen her and let her in, and the interview which followed had been valueless. She had found Meister a being exalted, unsteady of foot and vinous of breath; he had grown out of his fear, and when she had begged him to let her off the promise she had made, he had been adamantine. And now, in a last desperate endeavor to save herself and her brother, she had come to tell Alan Wembury what she should have told him at first.

"I want you to advise me, Alan. You told me to come if I was in any difficulty, and I'm in a terrible difficulty. I don't know how to put it to you. Suppose—suppose that before Johnny went to prison, he had done something even worse than burglary?"

Wembury was glancing uneasily at the door, but at her words he concentrated his gaze upon her.

"Won't you come into my room?" he begged.

She shook her head.

"No, I mustn't wait. Johnny will be coming home very soon. I want to see him before I—I go out. I'm working rather late to-night. Alan, suppose Johnny had done something dreadful in the past, could they punish him now? That is what I want to know. You understand what I mean—something he did before he was arrested and sent to prison?"

It was the last question in the world he expected from her, because he thought he knew Johnny Lenley's record rather well.

"It depends upon what the crime was," he said slowly. "You don't know?"

She shook her head.

"If it was serious—more serious than the charge on which he was convicted—they would try him again. But a case of that sort—years old—would take a lot of proving."

"But suppose there were proof?" she said desperately. "Documentary proof?"

He stared at her.

"Forgery?"

"No, no, no—I don't know. Oh, I oughtn't to be telling you this at all," she wailed, and he took her hand gently in his.

"You have told me nothing as yet. And if you do tell me something that you'd rather I hadn't known, why, I'm a pretty good forgetter."

Sergeant Carter was pretending to be busy, and had an excuse, for Doctor Lomond had followed the girl into the charge-room and was searching for the fountain pen which, alternately with his glasses, he was always losing.

"They could punish him, then?" she asked anxiously.

"It depends. I shouldn't think that

they would punish him, after his sentence and the way in which he earned remission."

He found it hard even to offer this grain of comfort, knowing that yet another charge might soon be preferred against the man. The sight of her grief was agony to him, and her next words cut him even a little deeper.

"Oh, how awful!" she whispered. "And he's only just come back from prison! That year has changed him terribly, Alan! It is as if all the humanity had been drawn out of him, and something hard and solid had been put in its place."

"Won't you pretend that I'm not a police officer?" he asked in a low voice. "Give me just a little of your confidence, Mary. What is behind this story of an early crime?"

"I'll—I'll tell you," she said jerkily.

The heavy footfall of Meister came to them; she heard and recognized it, looked wildly round for a way of escape. Before Alan could open the door of his office, the lawyer lurched in. His overcoat was open, his silk hat was on the back of his head, an unaccustomed cigarette drooped from his lips. The transition from the dark street to the well-lit charge-room temporarily blinded him. He stared for a long time at the sacking that hid the hole in the wall, and then slowly brought his eyes in the direction of Mary Lenley. Before he could speak of her, she confronted him.

"Why have you come?" she asked in a voice that shook. "After I promised you——"

Alan saw a slow smile spread upon the vacuous face.

"The little girl doesn't think I'm double crossing her?" He patted her arm affectionately. "She doesn't trust her old lawyer! Just come to see the inspector," he said soothingly, "about a man I'm defending. What a suspicious little girl you are! I wouldn't do Johnny harm, you know that; even though he's threatened me." He shook his head stupidly. "He'll take the nine o'clock walk to the scaffold, eh? He may take that walk!"

And then, partially sobered by the horror on her face:

"No, no, I didn't mean that, my dear."

"What do you mean?" she asked intensely.

"I don't think you'd better stay here, Miss Lenley." Alan had joined them, and there was a plea in his voice which was irresistible. He was in an agony of mind lest at any moment John Lenley should be brought in. He himself had wished to avoid meeting the man; most passionately he desired to save the girl that misery.

"Quite right," said Meister with solemn, drunken gravity. "Quite right. The inspector knows."

He drew Alan aside.

"Have they brought him in? I don't think he'd be fool enough to do the job, but he's better away, my dear Wembury, very much better."

"Did you come to find out? You might have saved yourself the trouble by telephoning," said Alan sternly.

The whole mien of Meister suddenly changed. The look that Alan had seen in his eyes before reappeared, and when he spoke his voice was harsh but coherent.

"No, I didn't come for that." He looked round over his shoulder. The policeman had come from the door to the sergeant and was whispering something to him. Even the doctor seemed interested. "Haggitt cleared out and left me alone—the dirty quitter! Alone in the house!"

Up went the hand to his mouth.

"It got on my nerves, Wembury. Every sound I heard, the creak of a chair when I moved, a coal falling from the fire, the rattle of the windows——"

Out of the dark beyond the doorway

loomed a figure. Nobody saw it. The three men talking together at the desk least of all. The gaunt man stared into the charge-room for a second and vanished as though he were part of some magician's trick. Then the policeman at the desk caught a glimpse of him and ran to the door. The sergeant and the doctor followed at a more leisurely pace.

"Every sound brings my heart into my mouth, Wembury. I feel as though I stood in the very presence of doom."

His voice was a husky whine.

"I feel it now—as though somewhere near me, in this very room, death were at my elbow. It's awful—awful!"

He covered his face with his hands.

"Why don't you go abroad—go away?"

Meister looked at him with sour suspicion.

"Go abroad?" sneered the lawyer. "Are you in that game, too? I'll stay—I'm not going to be scared of a shadow. If The Ringer is here, it is the duty of the police to detect him—your job! Do you hear, Wembury?" he roared. "Your job!"

Suddenly he swayed and Alan Wembury caught him just in time. Fortunately the doctor was at hand, and they sat him on a chair whilst Sergeant Carter delved into his desk for an ancient bottle of smelling-salts that had served many a fainting lady, overcome in that room by her temporary misfortunes.

"Now won't you go away, Mary?" Alan asked the question urgently.

"Why is he afraid?" She was looking at the huddled heap in the chair with pity and disgust.

"Some day I'll tell you. But won't you go now?"

All the time his eyes had been on the door, his ears strained to catch the tramp of feet. Then, to his relief, she smiled suddenly and nodded.

"I'll go. Thank you for seeing me."

She caught his hand in both of hers.

"You've told me all I wanted to know," she said.

He shook his head.

"I'm afraid I haven't been much help to you, my dear."

"If there are proofs against Johnny then——" she began.

"Let us talk about that to-morrow." He was terrified that the man would come.

"To-morrow!" Again she smiled. "I hope you'll think well of me to-morrow."

For a second their eyes met, and had Alan been less preoccupied with the thought of Johnny Lenley, he would have seen into her heart. He went to the door and watched her until she disappeared, and came back to find that Meister had recovered under the doctor's treatment. He sat with his face screwed up in a grimace of distaste. Lomond had given him one of his most noxious restoratives.

"That's beastly stuff," he said, smacking his lips.

"Then it must be very good," said Lomond. "None of the real tonics of life are sugar-coated, Mr. Meister."

The man staggered to his feet, and for the first time noticed the absence of Mary.

"Where has she gone?" he asked.

"She's gone home—to her own home," said Alan quietly. "I advise you to go home to yours. Let Atkins stay in the house with you; he can sleep in your study."

Meister shot a queer glance at him.

"Yes—but not to-night."

The slow, sly smile came back to his face.

"I shan't be alone to-night."

There was a pause.

"You won't, eh?" said Alan Wembury softly. "You're having a friend to stay with you?"

"That's it—a very good friend—if promises mean anything."

"A man friend?" The searching eyes were on the lawyer's face.

"Oh, of course!"

"I can't imagine that you would ask any other kind," said Wembury slowly, "or that you would employ some influence you hold to induce an unwilling —individual to keep you company."

For a second Meister was taken aback by the accuracy of the detective's guess, and then, with a return to his best judicial manner.

"I don't consult the police about the kind of friends I have to stay with me," he said.

"I'm not talking to you as a policeman." Wembury's face was a shade paler; his voice had the sting of a whip. "I'm talking as a friend of your friend. You're a useful man to us, Meister; you give us very valuable hints. But in the past years we've accumulated quite a lot of information about you."

"Are you threatening me?" bullied Meister.

"I'm warning you! You're the second man I've warned to-night."

The lawyer started to say something. Then with an impatient wave of his hand he changed it to:

"Let me alone. I don't want to quarrel with you. A man has got to find his happiness where he can. You haven't adopted—a certain person, have you?"

Wembury nodded, and the next second turned his face to the door.

"There he is again!" it was Lomond; he was pointing up the street. Meister gripped the arm of the detective and asked quickly:

"Who is it?"

"He's been watching the station ever since Meister came in," said Lomond. With a scream of terror the lawyer's knees doubled up under him. This time it took three men to lift and carry him into the inspector's room, where a couch was quickly cleared.

"I'm afraid he's gone right out this time," said Wembury. "Who was it you saw?" he asked the doctor.

"I've seen him before. He's been hanging round all the evening. This fat man is going to die in one of these fits."

Happily there was a little washbasin in Wembury's room and running water. As the doctor swabbed the face of the unconscious man and tore off his collar, he proceeded to enlarge upon the psychology of conscience.

"Meister has evidently done something particularly bad in the past," he said, and Alan knew it was useless to agree or disagree, so brought the doctor back to the subject of the mysterious watcher.

"What was he like?"

"I saw a glimpse of him—in fact, I passed him rather closely. A thin-faced man who looks ill and miserable and if I may use the word, 'sinister.' I know you imagine I see a ferocious criminal in the most innocent people, but that is how he impressed me."

"What was he doing?"

"Standing on the other side of the road under the lamp-post."

Alan beckoned Atkins, who had accompanied Meister to the station and sent him out to investigate. He returned in a few minutes to announce that there was no sign of a man, sinister or otherwise, loitering about in the dark street.

Doctor Lomond took a serious view of the happening. "I've seen him before," he said, "once in High Street. I had the illusion that he was following me."

"Do you know anybody answering the description?" Wembury asked Atkins.

The latter nodded.

"Yes, sir, he is undoubtedly the man who was challenged by Harrap near Meister's house last night."

"It occurred to me," said Doctor Lomond, lifting the eyelid of the still un-

conscious Meister, "that it might have been The Ringer——"

"The Ringer!" snapped Alan. "Don't make me laugh! Everybody's seen The Ringer except me! He's like the Russians who came through England at the beginning of the war with the snow on their boots to prove their nationality!"

"Maybe they did," said the doctor, game to the last. He bent his head over Meister and listened. "I think we can leave him here for a little while; he'll recover as quickly as he went. These fainting fits are mainly digestive derangement." So did this lover of romance reduce tragedy to its lowest denominator. "He ought not to walk home, by the way," he said as they went out of the room together, closing the door.

"I agree," said Alan grimly. "Fortunately you have a cab, Atkins, haven't you?"

The sergeant nodded.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

His keen ears had caught the sound of the measured march, the peculiar tempo of a man in custody, and he drew a long breath as Johnny Lenley, his arm gripped by a plain-clothes policeman, came through the door and was pushed into the steel dock which was the one imposing feature of the charge-room. There was no preliminary.

"I am Detective Constable Bell," said the tall man. "This evening I was on the roof of 57 Camden Crescent, and I saw this man come up through a trap-door in the attic of No. 55. I saw him searching behind the cistern of 57 and took him into custody. I charged him with breaking and entering No. 55 Camden Crescent, and attempting to break and enter No. 57."

Lenley stood with his arm on the steel rail of the dock, looking down at the floor. He scarcely seemed interested in the proceedings, until he raised his head and his eyes found Wembury's, and then he nodded slowly.

"Thank you, Wembury," he said. "If I had the brain of a rabbit I shouldn't be here."

Carter at the desk dipped his pen in the ink.

"What is your name?" he asked automatically.

"John Lenley."

Silence and a splutter of writing.

"Your address?"

"I have no address."

"Your trade?"

"I am a convict on license," said Johnny quietly.

The sergeant put down his pen.

"Search him," he said, and Johnny spread out his arms while the tall officer ran his hands through his pockets and carried what he had found to the desk.

"Who put me away, Wembury?"

Alan shook his head.

"That is not a question to ask me," he said. "You know that very well." He nodded to the desk to call the prisoner's attention to the man who was, for the moment, in supreme authority.

"Have you any explanation for your presence on the roof of 57 Camden Crescent?" asked the sergeant.

Johnny Lenley cleared his throat.

"I went after the stuff I got my seven for. It was supposed to be planted behind a cistern, and I went to get it. And it wasn't there. That's all. Who was the snout? You needn't tell me, because I know. Look after my sister, Wembury; she'll want some looking after, and I'd sooner trust you than any man——"

It was unfortunate for all concerned that Mr. Meister chose that moment to make his bedraggled appearance. He stared foolishly at the man in the dock, and Johnny Lenley smiled.

"Hullo, Meister!" he said softly.

The lawyer was staggered.

"Why—why—it's Johnny!" he stammered. "You haven't been getting into trouble again, have you, Johnny?" He raised his hands in a gesture of despair.

"What a misfortune! I'll be down at the court to defend you in the morning, my boy." He ambled up to the sergeant's desk. "Any food he wants, let him have it at my expense," he said loudly.

"Meister!" The word came like the clang of steel on steel. "There was no swag behind the cistern!"

Mr. Meister's face was a picture of wonder and amazement.

"No swag behind the cistern? 'Swag'? I don't know what you're talking about, my boy."

Lenley nodded and grinned mirthlessly.

"I came out too soon for you. It interfered with your little scheme, didn't it, Meister? You might have found a less drastic way of clearing me out."

Meister's smile was a blend of pity and amusement.

"Johnny, you're talking nonsense," he said. "A little rest will do you good, anyway. Came out too soon, did you? And now you're going into the country —alone!"

"That will do, Meister." Wembury caught him by the arm and jerked him back angrily. "I am not going to allow you to jeer at a man in trouble. He's going to the country alone, but while Mary Lenley is in London and I am here, she is not alone—do you understand that?"

He beckoned the jailer.

"Take him away," he said.

At that second John Lenley dropped and dived under the rail, and before Wembury could realize what was happening, he had the lawyer by the throat. In a second four men were struggling in a heap on the ground.

"Handcuffs!" called Alan.

The sergeant snatched a pair from a hook on the wall and Wembury caught them deftly. In a second he had dived into the scrimmage, had gripped one strong wrist and snapped the bracelet fast. Before he could reach the other, Lenley, with a superhuman effort, wriggled himself free, knocking Atkins backward in his bull rush. A policeman started for the door to cover that exit, but with one spring John Lenley was through the hole in the wall; there was a sound of rending, tearing and snapping laths, and he was gone!

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

THE FALL OF A PRODIGY

RUSSELL SCOTT, thirty-one years old, a former Canadian financial prodigy, was sentenced to be hung a short time ago for the murder of Joseph Maurer, a nineteen-year-old drug clerk of Chicago. Maurer was shot down when Russell Scott and his brother, Robert, who has never been apprehended, raided the City Hall Pharmacy, at La Salle and Washington Street, Chicago, as throngs of homeward-bound theatergoers passed the store. Scott was traced through an overcoat which he left behind in his flight. In his trial he tried to shift the blame for the murder on his fugitive brother.

Scott was formerly a star bond salesman and promoter. At one time he held the record in Canada for the best bond salesman. In two years he is said to have fallen from his financial position to the level of a rum runner, burglar, common footpad and murderer.

Headquarters Chat

IT takes more self-restraint than we possess to suppress a chance to prove some well-established fact. Editorials in magazines and newspapers constantly assail a long-suffering public with truisms of incredible triteness. Having admitted that we are as weak, if not weaker, than the average editor when it comes to triumphant acclamations of this nature, we beg to call your attention, if you are in a charitable frame of mind, to the two letters which follow:

"DEAR EDITOR: I was disgusted after I read the comment upon the Mr. Chang stories by A. E. Apple made by Mr. McCoubrey.

"Why must he want everything so accurate? As Mr. Apple stated, readers of the magazines to which he has written before did not insist so much upon accuracy as they did on a good plot.

"Mr. McCoubrey, if the writer of fiction used facts and accurate location, the story itself would not be as interesting as good fiction is.

"In my opinion, Mr. Editor, your magazine is a topnotcher but for one thing—you should run *at least three serials,* or two serials and two complete novelettes. I do not enjoy a short detective story nearly as well as I do a novelette. In fact when I first started reading DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE I read the whole book but I didn't care for the short stories so now I only read the serials—I am sorry there are not three or four instead of two—and the complete novelette.

"The best novelettes I have ever read are the 'Mr. Chang' stories by A. E. Apple. Apple surely has an imaginative mind and his stories are wonderful. Really, if Mr. Chang was not occasionally in the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE I would not buy it at all. Can't you write more of them, Mr. Apple?

"The week that you announced that you would have 'Mr. Chang and the Treasure Trunk' in the next issue, I went for a vacation. That next Tuesday I walked three and a half miles for a copy of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE. I assure you I wouldn't have done it if it was not for Mr. Chang.

"I realize I have made this letter rather long, but I wish you would print this so Mr. A. E. Apple and Mr. McCoubrey as well as the other readers can read my opinion.

"A. M. DOKTOR.

"132 Esther Street,
"Toledo, Ohio."

"EDITOR DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE: Some time ago you mentioned in your Headquarters Chat some lady readers saying that they did not like the Thubway Tham stories, and wanting to hear from other women readers, so here goes. I want to say that I read and enjoy these stories whenever they appear, in fact I always read a Tham story first when there is any. One lady said, I remember, that she did not read them because she could not pronounce the lisping part. I don't see any difficulty for any one to do that.

"Others I like very much are Bignose Charley, The Picaroon, Mother Hansen, Old Windmills and Blue Jean Billy. There are others that I like but I cannot recall the titles of them just now. *I don't like serial stories nor the Mr. Chang stories.*

"I would like to ask what has become of the writer who used to write stories occasionally with a character in who was an invalid, with a Chinese servant, who was very lucky in helping solve mysteries and crimes. I have often wondered why there weren't more of these stories. Also what became of the Balbane and Doctor Bentiron stories?

"A WOMAN READER."

See, some like one thing, some like another. Q. E. D.

Newton Perkins, of Marshall, Texas, expresses very well and very helpfully the following sentiments:

"MY DEAR EDITOR: Although I have missed nary a copy of your magazine in over nine years, I've never taken the opportunity of boring you with a letter of my opinions to the Chat. However, I always read what your other readers have to say, and enjoy their viewpoints quite enormously, though I don't, of course, always agree with some of them.

"But to-day I am spending a two-cent stamp in *praise of A. E. Apple, creator of the fascinating Mr. Chang.* Apple's tales of the quick-witted Chinaman are charmingly arresting to mere me. This writer has something to tell, and he tells it with rare ability. His stories never drag, they move on rapidly, logically, irresistibly to an always surprising dénouement. And they are instructive to a certain degree. I doff my Stetson to Mr. A. E. Apple!

"Now a word about the other writers.

"Adele Luehrmann is very fine, though her later stories don't seem to me as good as her former ones. But perhaps it's my imagination. Charles W. Tyler's railroad stories are real—they ring true to me and I am a railroad man. The above three authors are my favorites—keep 'em working.

"I notice that quite a good number of your readers are fond of Johnston McCulley. I used to like him, too, but his stories became of a sudden so farfetched and of a 'sameness' that was irritating. I no longer read him. Roy W. Hinds is fair. The rest of your writers are good and indifferent—there are no bad ones.

"Mr. Edward H. Smith is a brilliant writer, forcible, clear, and tremendously instructive. Any article of his alone is worth far more than fifteen cents, the price of our magazine. One has the thought while reading his articles that 'this man knows what he is talking about.' Allow me to say that he lends a graceful dignity to your popular magazine.

"Give us more of Mr. Chang pronto."

A JUDGE FOLLOWS HIS PRISONER INTO JAIL

ROBERT ALLEN, a prisoner at Sing Sing, was much troubled when informed that a certain judge had lodged a warrant against him for his rearrest as soon as he was released from prison. Allen asked the prison guards to try to get the judge to withdraw the warrant, and he particularly wanted to know the name of the judge. Later, to his intense astonishment, he discovered that the judge was Justice Lewis Raisig, of Cedarhurst, Long Island, who is now serving time in the prison for embezzling fines.

Allen was informed by the guards that when Justice Raisig finishes his task upon the prison coal pile, he can speak to the judge in person, as they are now on a plane of legal and social equality.

MISSING

This department is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track. While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

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.

L. C. T.—I have a good position now, and want you. Nothing can change my love for you. Please write R. C. A., McDonald, Ohio.

WORLEY, OLIVER S.—He is twenty-three years of age, five feet seven inches in height, has brown eyes, dark complexion, and weighs one hundred and fifty pounds. He left home almost a year ago. Any information regarding his whereabouts will be gratefully received by Mrs. W. J. W., Route 2, Box 65, Monroe, Louisiana.

WILSON, GUSTAVE.—You need not be afraid of any trouble, as everything is forgiven. Please write or come home. Tillie.

FLETCHER, SCOTT A.—He is twenty-one years of age, five feet eight inches in height, has dark hair, bluish-gray eyes, and weighs one hundred and seventy-five pounds. In July, 1919, he went to Hutchinson, Kansas, with an older brother. At the end of two years he went to Glenns Ferry, Idaho, where he worked on a fruit ranch. His mother fears some accident has befallen him, and earnestly asks for information of him. Mrs. Annie J. Fletcher, Box 168, Custer City, Oklahoma.

HELEN.—Your mother and father long to hear from you. Please write to them before it is too late. E. W. Quinn, South Dakota.

J. L.—Please write more often. After May, we will be at 1362, on the same street. Carolina, Eva L.

PHELPS, CORWIN or **CORY.**—His last known address was San Miguel, New Mexico. Any information will be gratefully received by Sophia Dearman, whose married name is Mrs. C. A. Russell, 300 Camden Street, Pasadena, California.

ORLOSKY, JOE.—Please write to me, as I have good news. Edward Orlosky, 2034 Indiana Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

NICHOLSON, OSCAR R.—He is five feet eight inches in height, has brown eyes, brown curly hair, and stoop shoulders, one somewhat lower than the other. His father, mother, and old pal have stood by him. He is asked to send his address to his mother. Mary.

JONES, JACK.—He was last seen in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he was manager of the Baby Reno show. News from him will be appreciated by his friend, R. M. Pendleton, 716 Burnie Avenue, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

HYDE, BILL.—I am lonely and sick, and will think you don't care for me any longer if you do not write to me at once. Send mail to the same address. Kitty.

LAACK, HENRY HERMAN.—He was last heard of in California. His niece would welcome news of him, as she has important information for him. Please write Esther Koehler, Drake, North Dakota.

GATHRIGHT, DENNIS.—He was last seen in Spokane, Washington, in 1923. Any information will be gratefully received by Carroll F. Fellows, 2417 West Fairview Avenue, Spokane, Washington.

STUDLEY, GEORGE.—He was born in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada, about seventy years ago, and was last heard of living in the West. Any news will be gladly received by his nephew, Arthur B. Studley, 247 Washington Street, Dorchester, Massachusetts.

GILDAY, JOHN or **ARTHUR**, formerly of New Jersey. He is forty years of age, and a carpenter by trade. Any one knowing the whereabouts of his wife and children will confer a great favor by notifying M. C. S., Box 5, Glendale, California.

REYNOLDS, FRED.—He is five feet ten inches in height, has brown hair, blue eyes, and wears glasses. He has the head of an Indian squaw tattooed on one forearm, and a snake on the other arm. On December 10, 1924, he left his home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is asked to return at once or write to his wife, Daisy Reynolds, care of this magazine.

NEWMAN, VIVIAN, VERNON, or **V. E.**—He is six feet in height, and weighs one hundred and seventy pounds. In 1919 he was living at Belleview Place, Indianapolis, Indiana, and was an automobile mechanic by trade. His brother is very anxious to find him, and asks him to write Taylor E. Newman, Camp Lewis, Washington.

PAUL, DOROTHY M.—She is thirteen years of age, has blue eyes, and light hair. She was with her father, Tilford A. Paul, in Small, Idaho, when last heard from, and she should be in the fifth grade at school. Any one kind enough to send word of her whereabouts will receive thanks from Mrs. Eola R. Pyper, General Delivery, Caldwell, Idaho.

REECE, S. C.—He is five feet ten inches in height, has brown curly hair, light complexion, and weighs one hundred and sixty pounds. He was last seen in Davenport, Iowa. His old comrade is anxious to find him, and asks for information as to his whereabouts. Write to Jack Reeves, Box 1152, Tucson, Arizona.

ROUZEE, HOBART M.—Please get in touch with an old friend, who is very eager to hear from you. Mrs. Aurore Anderson, Box 1612, Jacksonville, Florida.

FRANKLIN, HENRY.—His father's name is B. D. Franklin, and he is known, to the members of his family, as Boss. If he wishes to hear from his brothers, F. M. and Doctor B. D. Franklin, he is asked to communicate with his nephew, F. Henry Franklin, Big Springs, Texas.

MORGAN, JOHN.—He is a son of Thomas Morgan. Any information will be appreciated by his brother, Frank Morgan, Box 121, Victoria, Virginia.

PLESTID, JOHN ALEXANDER.—He is six feet one inch in height, has gray eyes and dark hair. His former address was 68 Windmere Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. Any news from him will be appreciated by his daughter, Mrs. W. R. Stanchfield, 580 Main Street, South Portland, Maine.

O'HARE, CLARENCE, formerly of 55 Heard Street, Chelsea, Massachusetts. He enlisted in the navy, and has not been heard from for five years. He is asked to communicate with Mrs. W. R. Stanchfield, 580 Main Street, South Portland, Maine.

SMITH, EDDIE.—He is over five feet in height, has black eyes, and dark hair. In 1908 he joined the Marine Corps, and served until 1912. He also served in the army during the World War. Any information will be gladly received by his friend, Mrs. W. R. Stanchfield, 580 Main Street, South Portland, Maine.

PLESTID, PAUL.—He is twenty-eight years of age, has blue eyes, and dark hair. He is married, and formerly lived in Maine. Any information as to where he may be now will be welcomed by his sister, Mrs. W. R. Stanchfield, 580 Main Street, South Portland, Maine.

HESS, CARL; BLAND, BEC; HAUSER, JIMMY.—They were last heard of in Sugar Hill, New Hampshire. Information as to their present whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by Bill West, 1072 North Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, New York.

PARSON, OLE.—He is forty-five years of age, six feet five inches tall, has light auburn hair, blue eyes, and fair complexion. His home was in Hibbing, Minnesota. His sister wishes him to write her. Mrs. Jacob Matson, South Cascade Street, Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

McCONNELL, JIM.—If you need me, don't fail to let me know. Please write to your old pal, J. L. Haley, care of Sutter Basin Company, Grafton, California.

BARTLES, CHRISTINA.—Twenty years ago my father and I lived at Hartford, South Dakota, and in 1900 we became separated. I am most anxious to find him, and will appreciate any information of him. Please write to E. F. E., care of this magazine.

BUCKLUND, MARIE.—She is the daughter of Simon Bucklund, and was born in Finland. Later she came to the United States, and lived in Boston, Massachusetts. She is asked to write to her uncle, who is anxious to find her, Mr. Jacob Matson, South Cascade Street, Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

WEBSTER, MERL.—He is about forty years old, and is known as Kid Webster, the boxer. He left St. Louis, Missouri, in 1902, and later was in California. His father, Charles Webster, and his sister, Goldie, would greatly appreciate news of him. Please write to Mrs. Goldie Nugent, 177 Sammitt Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.

WAGNER, RICHARD, or **BARTLES, JOHN.**—He was taken out of a Home for Children in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, by a family named Wegner or Wagner. When last heard from he was taking a medical course in Wheatland, Wyoming. His brother is anxious to get in touch with him. Notify E. F. E., care of this magazine.

ROBINSON, MILLARD.—He is twenty years of age, and was living in Springfield, Massachusetts. His sister would appreciate information as to his present whereabouts. Laura Elizabeth Robinson, or Mrs. Joe Harnishfeger, Granville Road, Westfield, Massachusetts.

ROONEY, THOMAS or **BERNARD.**—Please write to your sister, Winifred Rooney, care of this magazine.

MINTON, J. S.—He is forty-eight years of age, six feet tall, has blue eyes, sandy complexion, and weighs three hundred pounds. In 1908 he was living in St. Louis, Missouri. Information will be gratefully received by Bill Minton, Nolin, Kentucky.

CHADWICK, THOMAS L.—He is thirty-seven years old, has brown eyes, dark hair, and complexion. On one of his arms he has a tattoo mark, and he is crippled in one leg. About nine years ago he left Middlesboro, Kentucky, and went to Old Mexico. Any news concerning him would be appreciated by his niece, Miss Lucy Chadwick, 402 Doncaster Avenue, Middlesboro, Kentucky.

SINKINS, ARTHUR CECIL.—In May, 1910, he sailed from England, on board the "Tanui," under the name of Cecil Hill. He was in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1912 His son asks for news of him. Please write to Leslie Albert Sinkins, care of E. E. Ladd, Tulford, Quebec, Canada.

TUCKER, LORENZO.—Your notary in Alberta, Canada, made a mistake in the deed to property I bought of you in 1915, at Saginaw, Oregon. I need your signature, so please write to your old friend, D. W. McKinney, Saginaw, Oregon.

SHOOK, LEMUEL L.—He is forty-one years old, five feet nine inches tall, has black hair, blue eyes, and weighs about one hundred and sixty pounds. In 1911 he was living in Thurber, Texas. Any news of him will be welcomed by his daughter, Estelle Shook, R. F. D. 1, Gordon, Texas.

J. E. V.—There is no reason why we cannot correspond. Please write, and send us your address, so that we can write to you. Mother.

L. B.—I know there has been some mistake. I still love you, and am willing to forgive. Your letter is almost killing me. Won't you please write and give me your reasons for leaving? E. M. B.

ROSE, GEORGE A.—He formerly lived in Lansingburgh, New York. In 1887 he was bookkeeper for a dry-goods firm, on Third Street, in Troy, New York. Information of him will be gladly received by Mrs. Etta Reade, East Pembroke, New York.

J. C.—Please communicate with me, as I am very anxious to hear from you. Annie Sexton, Box 16, Kansas City, Kansas.

ATTENTION.—Mother, dad, and the babies are with me. We are very anxious to hear from you. Please write to Mrs. S. E. Stillings, 907 Corley Avenue, Beaumont, Texas.

E. S.—Everything is all right. I have good news for you. Please write at once to your brother, D. Sexton, 108 West Washington Street, Champaign, Illinois.

ROBERSON, W. B.—He was in Purcell, Oklahoma, in 1901. Any one knowing his present whereabouts please send word to Laura Attaway, 1208 South San Pedro Street, Los Angeles, California.

WILLIAMS, GEORGE.—He is five feet eight inches in height, has light hair, blue eyes, wears a mustache, and weighs one hundred and eighty pounds. In 1906 he traveled with me from Washington to Alaska, and he knows me by the name of Tom or Monty. News of him will be gladly received by J. A. Searles, 4003 Seventy-sixth Street, Southeast, Portland, Oregon.

KITTY.—I love you as I always did. Please write and let me know where you are. Sergeant Claude E. Sissem, Battery C, Fifth Field Artillery, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

M. A. P.—I have been quite sick from worry and suspense over your long absence. Your silence will not improve my condition, so please write me at once. Mother.

PATTERSON, E. D.—He is thirty-nine years of age. He left home and went to Colorado in 1924. Any information will be gratefully received by R. A. Patterson, R. R. 1, Canyon, Texas.

HAYWARD, GRACE.—I am not in Texas any longer, and I did not go back to Georgia. Your silence and absence are worrying me to death. I forgive your last letter, and want to do the right thing by you and the children. Please write at once, and I will wire you money. Dad, care of this magazine.

ATTENTION.—I would like to get in touch with any of my buddies, who served in the Sioux Indian Dawphian, at Rose Bud Agency. They were later transferred to Wyoming. Please write to F. C. Wood, R. F D. 1, Rock Hall, Maryland.

ANDERSSON, CHARLES.—He left Ozark, Missouri, forty-two years ago. His daughter is most anxious to find him, and will appreciate any information concerning him. Please send word to Mrs. Pearl Gibson, R. R. 10, Box 405, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

ELSTROME, CORPORAL.—He was in the Canadian army, at St. John, New Brunswick, Canada, from 1915 to 1918. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by an old friend of his, Sergeant J. E. Gaudet, 146-C Pearl Street, Somerville, Massachusetts.

PAULY, MALITIA.—She has blue eyes, light hair, and fair complexion. Her home was in Los Angeles, California. Her father is anxious to find her. Please write to S. W. Clinkenbeard, care of Mrs. Maud Calson, R. R. 2, Ringling, Oklahoma.

CARTER, ALICE.—She has light hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. Nine years ago she was in Sulphur, Oklahoma. Her father would appreciate word from her. S. W. Clinkenbeard, care of Mrs. Maud Calson, R. R. 2, Ringling, Oklahoma.

CLINKENBEARD, DAISY and **OLLIE.**—Daisy has black hair, hazel eyes, and light complexion. Ollie has blue eyes, light hair, and fair complexion. Their father, who hasn't seen them for sixteen years, would be grateful for any information concerning them. S. W. Clinkenbeard, care of Mrs. Maud Calson, R. R. 2, Ringling, Oklahoma.

A. R. P., AGNES or **McEWEN.**—Two years ago she was living at 4056 Lake Park Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. It is very important that she write at once to L. A. Kennedy, United States Bureau of Mines, Box 428, Midwest, Wyoming.

BORDELEAU, EDMONDS E. or **B.**—He served three years in the United States navy on the West Coast. When last heard from he was at 4028 Minnesota Avenue, Park Point, Duluth, Minnesota. Any information will be welcomed by an old buddy, Charles J. Gibson, Company D, Twenty-first Infantry, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

McCAIN, JOHN R.—He is forty-two years of age, six feet five inches tall, has dark hair, gray eyes, and weighs one hundred and seventy-five pounds. He left home on November 9, 1923, and was last seen in Whitefish, Montana. Any one knowing his whereabouts please notify Mrs. Lucille McCain, General Delivery, Kansas City, Missouri.

FLACK, VERNON HOLBERT.—Please come home as mother is very ill. No one is angry with you. Wanda.

PLUM, ESTHER.—She is five feet two inches in height, has dark-brown hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and twenty pounds. She was living in Hinsdale, Montana. Any information will be appreciated by her adopted daughter, Lucille Plum, or Mrs. Lucille McCain, General Delivery, Kansas City, Missouri.

MORTENSON, P. C.—He is asked to write to his sister, in Minnesota, who is most anxious to find him.

FRAZER or **SMITH, SAM.**—His home is in Bristol, Tennessee, but he was last heard from in Kansas City, Missouri. He is asked to write to Box 2580, St. Petersburg, Florida.

CHARLIE.—The whole world is empty and lonely without you. Please come back to your Louise.

HAGER, JOHN.—We would be very glad to hear from you, and to know where you are. Mr. and Mrs. Benedict, 1239 West High Street, Detroit, Michigan.

SMITH, A. A.—Nothing can change my love. I still want you. Please get in touch with me soon. M. Y. M.

SARGENT, WILLIAM ALFRED.—He is known as Bill, and formerly belonged to the navy, but is now an engineer in the marines. He is asked to write to A., care of this magazine.

LAS CRUCES.—The Las Cruces boys, who were at Elephant Butte Dam, are asked to please write to Denner, care of this magazine.

LULU.—All is forgiven, and we harbor no hard feelings. Please come home or write at once, as we are heartbroken. Your sister, Edna.

CLANCEY, LEO F.—He ran away from Aquinas College, on March 4, 1921, and was heard from in Boston, Massachusetts, in June, 1923. There is a matter of importance, which he should know about. He can receive this information by writing to his sister, Velma Clancey, Garden Theater Building, Columbus, Ohio.

HORSBURGH, ROBERT MERLE.—He is thirty-one years of age, five feet six inches in height, has black hair, gray eyes, smooth-shaven face, and weighs one hundred and thirty pounds. He usually wears a cap, and a seal ring with a fanciful horse's head. He is married, and lived at Fayetteville, North Carolina, until January 7, 1925. Later he was seen in Washington, District of Columbia. His wife and mother are very anxious because of his absence, and will greatly appreciate any news of him. Please write to Box 287, Asheville, North Carolina.

ELLIOTT, JOHNSTON.—He was in Silver City, New Mexico, in 1907. He then went to Old Mexico, and in 1913 was in Pueblo, Colorado. Any information will be appreciated by his son, Royal J. Elliott, 549 Wall Street, Los Angeles, California.

LUCHTMAN, JOSEPH.—He has not been heard from since 1921. He is asked to return home, as the past is forgotten. Any news from him will be appreciated by his wife, Mrs. Luchtman, 2504 South Robinson Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

EMERSON, CHARLES LESLIE.—He was taken from a Sister's school, in Tekoa, Washington, when he was only six years of age, by his father. Information concerning him would be gratefully received by his mother, Mrs. Josie Emerson McDermott, 232 Third Avenue, East, Kalispell, Montana.

ATTENTION.—Buddies of Detachment No. 19, United States troops, Bautzen, Germany, in 1919, please write to me. Sergeant Walter Trenton, 79 Ponders Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia.

McCLANAHAN, HARRY.—He is eighteen years of age, five feet four inches in height, has blue eyes, black hair, and weighs about one hundred and thirty pounds. He is deaf, and cannot speak plainly. Two years ago he went to St. Louis, Missouri, to seek employment. Any one knowing of his present whereabouts please write to Mrs. William McClanahan, R. F. D. 7, Box 74, Springfield, Illinois.

PEESO, WILLIAM WALLACE, formerly of Rochester, New York. He is five feet tall, has light hair, blue eyes, and a hair mole on his chin. He went to sea about thirty years ago. Any one having information of his present address will confer a great favor by notifying his mother, Mrs. Isabelle Peeso, 19 Cornwall Street, Stratford, Connecticut.

BERRY, JOHN; RISAKOFF, ARKADY, or **ST. VRAIN, RAY.**—He formerly lived in Colorado. Information concerning him will be appreciated by R. P. Rose, "Hartford Courant," Hartford, Connecticut.

TANDE, ALBERT.—He was born in Norway thirty-five years ago. He is six feet tall, has gray hair, and hazel eyes. On May 27, 1922, he saved Margaret from drowning in Williams Lake, Washington, at Bunker's Landing. In September, 1922, he was in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. He has two sisters living in North Dakota. Any information will be thankfully received by Margaret, care of this magazine.

WRIGHT, JOHN T.—He is twenty-three years old, five feet nine inches tall, has blue eyes, brown hair, and weighs about one hundred and seventy pounds. In October, 1922, he left Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and was heard from in Nelson, Arizona, in 1923. His mother and father will be extremely grateful for any information of his present whereabouts. J. G. Wright, 1517 West Main Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

GREIG, ALEXANDER LINDSAY.—He was last heard from in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, in 1911. He worked for a railroad company, and he may have been a bridge builder. His sister, whose maiden name was Robina Greig, is very anxious to find him, and she will be most thankful for any information regarding him. Please notify Mrs. James Reid, 42 Jane Street, Leith Walk, Leith, Scotland.

HASSE, FRED.—If you are in the United States please write to your friend, W. B. Harris, Box 339, Fresno, California.

BRANNON, OCIE.—She is about eighteen years of age, has black hair, and blue eyes. From 1914 to 1916 she lived in Putnam County, Missouri. Later, it is thought, she moved to the southern part of Missouri. She is asked to write to her old friend, Gertrude Matthew, 172 North Van Ness Avenue, Fresno, California.

BURTON, LESLIE, formerly of San Antonio, Texas. We all miss you, and are heartbroken over your departure. Please reconsider, and let us hear from you. C. L. M., 329 West Twenty-eighth Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.

SCHWARTZ, ALBERT.—He is fifty years of age, and a barber by trade. He formerly lived in Kansas City, Kansas. News of his present whereabouts will be appreciated by his sister, Mrs. J. E. Hill, R. R. 2, Kremlin, Oklahoma.

DAVIS, RALPH.—I will always love you, and am sorry I was angry. You don't know how I have suffered. Please come, or at least write me in care of Peggy, or to general delivery. Effie.

NELSON, ENNA.—She was last heard of in Wenatchee, Washington. Any one able to give her present address please write to Mickey L., 333 21 Avenue, West, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

BARRY, EDWIN.—His home is in Bridgeport, Nebraska, and he worked on the gravel dumping gang on the Western Pacific, during the spring and summer of 1924. He is asked to write to his old friend, G. H. Smith, Box 144, Glenns Ferry, Idaho.

BLONDY.—She had a rooming house in Palisades, Nevada, during the spring and part of the summer of 1924. She is asked to write to the fellow to whom she gave the wedding ring. Care of this magazine.

BONNER, H. E.—He left his home on the 19th of July, 1924. His wife will be very happy to welcome him back home. Any information as to his whereabouts will be gratefully received by Mrs. H. E. Bonner, Manila Hotel, Everett, Washington.

HOGAN, TOM.—I have found my uncles, Joe and John, and all is well. Please write to your son, A. T. L. Hogan, care of this magazine.

GROSS, PHENIA.—She is five feet two inches in height, weighs one hundred and thirty pounds, and is a blonde. Ten years ago she was living in Louisville, Kentucky. An old friend and sweetheart is anxious to get in touch with her. Frank Denham, 470 S. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.

AUDE, AUGUST and **CHRISTIAN.**—August lived in Hector, Renville County, Minnesota, and had two sons, and one daughter, Frederikka. Christian and his wife, Adelheit, have six or seven children and live somewhere in New York. Information concerning them will be appreciated by their niece, who is the daughter of Nicoline and Blicher Miller, Mrs. C. W. Anderson, 1010 North Mullen Street, Tacoma, Washington.

BABE.—Please write to me care of this magazine. Boy.

YORK, VIOLA.—She left Empire City, Oklahoma, in 1924, and was last heard of in Snyder, Oklahoma. Any one knowing her present whereabouts please write to Mr. L. J. Stewart, Box 92, Empire City, Oklahoma.

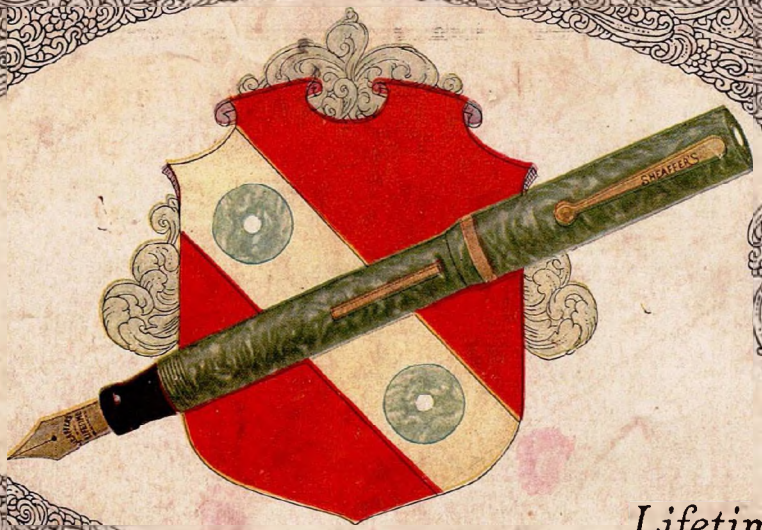
McNEW, CLIDE and **JOSIE.**—They lived in Sweet Water, Texas, in July, 1923. News from them would be welcomed by their father, Will Wright, R. R. 1, Ivanhoe, Fannin County, Texas.

HINDS, T. K.—Will you please write to me at 1109 Vanburn Avenue, W. Huntington, West Virginia? Elizabeth Layne.

MANIS, CHESTER.—He has dark hair and eyes, and was last heard of in Los Angeles, California. Any information will be greatly appreciated by Albert C. Manis, 2520, 13 and Vine Street, Ironton, Ohio.

WIERSMA, FRED.—He is twenty-two years of age, five feet seven inches in height, has light hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and forty pounds. His mother is worried, and is very anxious for his return. Any one knowing his present address will confer a favor by writing to Mrs. J. Wiersma, 1461 Genesee Street, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

GIBBS, MULDY.—He is forty-one years old, has black hair, brown eyes, dark complexion, and weighs one hundred and sixty-five pounds. He was last seen at Pasadena, California, where he was working in the oil fields. His brother asks him to write. Herbert Gibbs, R. R. 1, Box 76, Ivanhoe, Texas.



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