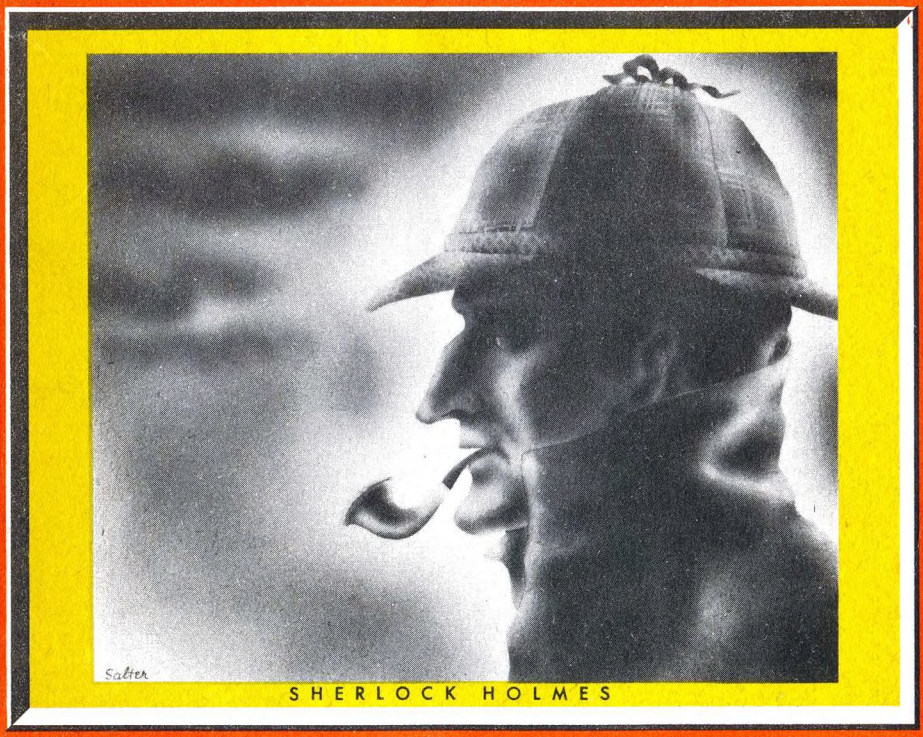
ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE



SHERLOCK HOLMES

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AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES, NEW AND OLD

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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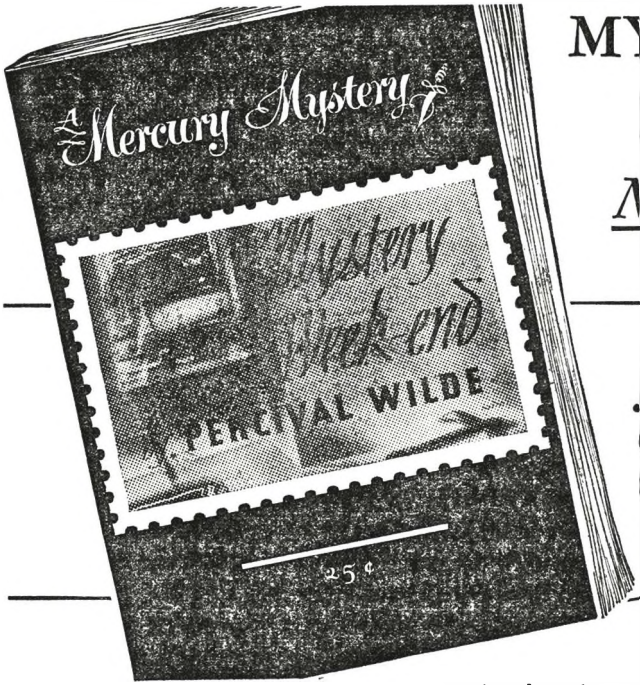

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THE ADVENTURE OF THE MARKED MAN

by STUART PALMER

IT WAS on a blustery afternoon late in April of the year '95, and I had just returned to our Baker Street lodgings to find Sherlock Holmes as I had left him at noon, stretched out on the sofa with his eyes half-closed, the fumes of black shag tobacco rising to the ceiling.

Busy with my own thoughts, I removed the litter of chemical apparatus which had overflowed into the easy chair, and settled back with a perturbed sigh. Without realizing it, I must have fallen into a brown study. Suddenly Holmes's voice brought me back to myself with a start.

"So you have decided, Watson," said he, "that not even this difference should be a real barrier to your future happiness?"

"Exactly," I retorted. "After all, we cannot —" I stopped short. "My dear fellow!" I cried, "this is not at all like you!"

"Come, come, Watson. You know my methods."

"I had not known," said I stiffly, "that they embraced having your spies and eavesdroppers dog the footsteps of an old friend, simply because

he chose a brisk spring afternoon for a walk with a certain lady."

"A thousand apologies! I had not realized that my little demonstration of a mental exercise might cause you pain," murmured Holmes in a deprecating voice. He sat up, smiling. "Of course, my dear fellow, I should have allowed for the temporary mental aberration known as falling in love."

"Really, Holmes!" I retorted sharply. "You should be the last person to speak of psycho-pathology — a man who is practically a walking case history of manic-depressive tendencies —"

He bowed. "A touch, a distinct touch! But Watson, in one respect you do me an injustice. I was aware of your plans to meet a lady only because of the excessive pains you took with your toilet before going out. The lovely Emilia, was it not? I shall always remember her courage in the affair of the Gorgiano murder in Mrs. Warren's otherwise respectable rooming house. And indeed, why not romance? There has been a very decent interval since the passing of your late wife, and the widow Lucca is a most captivating person."

"That is still beside the point. I do not see —"

"None so blind, Watson, none so blind," retorted Holmes, stuffing navy-cut into his cherrywood pipe, a sure sign that he was in one of his most argumentative moods. "It is really most simple, my dear fellow. It was not difficult for me to deduce that your appointment, on an afternoon as pleasantly gusty as this, was in the park. The remnants of peanut shell upon your best waistcoat speak all too plainly of the fact that you have been amusing yourself by feeding the monkeys. And your return at such an early hour, obviously having failed to ask the lady to dine with you, indicates most clearly that you have had some sort of disagreement while observing the antics of the hairy primates."

"Granted, Holmes, for the moment. But pray continue."

"With pleasure. As a good medical man, you cannot fail to have certain deep convictions as to the truth contained in the recent controversial publications of Mr. Charles Darwin. What is more likely than that in the warmth of Indian Summer romance you were unwise enough to start a discussion of Darwin's theories with the Signora Lucca, who like most of her countrywomen is no doubt deeply religious? Of course she prefers the Garden of Eden account of humanity's beginning. Hence your first quarrel and your hasty return home, where you threw yourself into a chair and permitted your pipe to go out while you threshed through the

entire situation in your mind."

"That is simple enough, now that you explain it," I admitted grudgingly. "But how could you possibly know the conclusion which I had just reached?"

"Elementary, Watson, most elementary. You returned with your normally placid face contorted into a pout, the lower lip protruding most angrily. Your glance turned to the mantelpiece, where lies a copy of '*The Origin of Species*' and you looked even more belligerent than before. But then after a moment the flickering flames of the fireplace caught your eye, and I could not fail to see how that domestic symbol reminded you of the connubial felicity which you once enjoyed. You pictured yourself and the lovely Italian seated before such a fire, and your expression softened. A distinctly fatuous smile crossed your face, and I knew that you had decided that no theory should be permitted to come between you and the lady you plan to make the second Mrs. Watson." He tapped out the cherrywood pipe into the grate. "Can you deny that my deductions are substantially correct?"

"Of course not," I retorted, somewhat abashed. "But Holmes, in a less enlightened reign than this our Victoria's, you would be in grave danger of being burned as a witch."

"A wizard, pray," he corrected. "But enough of mental exercises. Unless I am mistaken, the persistent ringing of the doorbell presages a client. If so, it is a serious case and one which may absorb all my faculties. Nothing trivial would bring out an Englishman during the hour sacred to afternoon tea."

There was barely time for Holmes to turn the reading lamp so that it fell upon the empty chair, and then there were quick steps on the stair and an impatient knocking at the door. "Come in!" cried Holmes.

The man who entered was still young, some eight and thirty at the outside, well-groomed and neatly if not fashionably attired, with something of professorial dignity in his bearing. He put his bowler and his sturdy malacca stick on the table, and then turned toward us, looking questioningly from one to the other. I could see that his normally ruddy complexion was of an unhealthy pallor. Obviously our caller was close to the breaking point.

"My name is Allen Pendarvis," he blurted forth, accepting the chair to which Holmes was pointing. "I must apologize for bursting in upon you like this."

"Not in the least," said Holmes. "Pray help yourself to tobacco, which is there in the Persian slipper. You have just come up from Corn-

wall, I see."

"Yes, from Mousehole, near Penzance. But how — ?"

"Apart from your name — 'By the prefix Tre-, Pol-, Pen- ye shall know the Cornishmen' — you are wearing a raincoat, and angry storm clouds have filled the southwest sky most of the day. I see also that you are in great haste, as the Royal Cornishman pulled into Paddington but a few moments ago, and you have lost no time in coming here."

"*You*, then, are Mr. Holmes!" decided Pendarvis. "I appeal to you, sir. No other man can give me the help I require."

"Help is not easy to refuse, and not always easy to give," Holmes replied. "But pray continue. This is Dr. Watson. You may speak freely in his presence, as he has been my collaborator on some of my most difficult cases."

"No one of your cases," cried Pendarvis, "can be more difficult than mine! I am about to be murdered, Mr. Holmes. And yet — and yet I have not an enemy in the world! Not one person, living or dead, could have a reason to wish me in my coffin. All the same, my life has been thrice threatened, and once attempted, in the last fortnight!"

"Most interesting," said Holmes calmly. "And have you any idea of the identity of your enemy?"

"None whatever. I shall begin at the beginning, and hold nothing back. You see, gentlemen, my home is in a little fishing village which has not changed materially in hundreds of years. As a matter of fact, the harbor quay of Mousehole, which lies just beyond my windows, was laid down by the Phoenicians in the time of Uther Pendragon, the father of King Arthur, when they came trading for Cornish tin. . . ."

"I think in this matter we must look closer home than the Phoenicians," said Holmes dryly.

"Of course. You see, Mr. Holmes, I live a very quiet life. A small income left to me by a deceased aunt makes it possible for me to devote my time to the avocation of bird photography." Pendarvis smiled with modest pride. "A few of my photographs of terns on the nest have been printed in ornithology magazines. Only the other day —"

"Nor do I suspect the terns," Holmes interrupted. "And yet someone seeks your life, or your death. By the way, Mr. Pendarvis, does your wife inherit your estate in the unhappy event of your demise?"

Pendarvis looked blank. "Sir? But I have never married. I live alone with my brother Donal. Bit of a gay dog, Donal. Romantic enough for us both. All of the scented missives in the morning mail are ad-

dressed to him."

"Ah," said Holmes. "We need not apply the old rule of *cherchez la femme*, then? That eliminates a great deal. You say that your brother is your heir?"

"I suppose so. There is not much to inherit, really. The income stops at my death, and who would want my ornithological specimens?"

"That puts a different light on it, most certainly. But let us set aside the problem of *cui bono*, at least for the moment. What was the first intimation that someone had designs upon your life?"

"The first threat was in the form of a note, roughly printed upon brown butcher's-paper and shoved beneath the door last Thursday week. It read: 'Mr. Allen Pendarvis, you have but a short while to live'."

"You have that note?"

"Unfortunately, no. I destroyed it, thinking it to be but the work of a stupid practical joker." Pendarvis sighed. "Three days later came the second."

"Which you kept, and brought with you?"

Pendarvis smiled wryly. "That would be impossible. It was chalked upon the garden wall, repeating the first warning. And the third was marked in the mud of the harbor outside my bedroom window, visible on last Sunday morning at low tide, but speedily erased. It said 'Ready to die yet, Mr. Allen Pendarvis?' "

"These warnings were of course reported to the police?"

"Of course. But they did not take them seriously."

Holmes gave me a look, and nodded. "We understand that official attitude, do we not, Watson?"

"Then you can also understand, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, why I have come to you. I am not used to being pooh-poohed by a local sub-inspector! And so, when it finally happened last night —" Pendarvis shuddered.

"Now," interrupted Holmes, as he applied the flame of a wax vesta to his clay pipe, "we progress. Just what did happen?"

"It was late," the ornithologist began. "Almost midnight, as a matter of fact, when I was awakened by the persistent ringing of the doorbell. My housekeeper, poor soul, is hard of hearing, and so I arose and answered the door myself. Imagine my surprise to find no one there. Without all was Stygian blackness, the intense gloomy stillness of a Cornish village at that late hour. I stood there for a moment, shivering, holding my candle and peering into the darkness. And then a bullet screamed past me, missing my heart by a narrow margin and extinguishing the candle in my hand!"

Holmes clasped his lean hands together, smiling. "Really! A pretty problem, eh, Watson? What do you make of it?"

"Mr. Pendarvis is lucky in that his assailant is such a poor shot," I replied. "He must have presented a very clear target, holding a light in the doorway."

"A clear target indeed," Holmes agreed. "And why, Mr. Pendarvis, did not your brother answer the door?"

"Donal was in Penzance," Pendarvis answered. "For years it has been his invariable custom to attend the Friday night boxing matches there. Afterwards he usually joins some of his cronies at the Capstan and Anchor."

"Returning in the wee sma' hours? Of course, of course. And now, Mr. Pendarvis, I believe I have all that I need. Return to your home. You shall hear from us shortly." Holmes waved a languid hand at the door. "A very good evening to you, sir."

Pendarvis caught up his hat and stick, and stood dubiously in the doorway. "I must confess, Mr. Holmes, that I had been led to expect more of you."

"More?" said Holmes. "Oh, yes. My little bill. It shall be mailed to you on the first of the month. Goodnight, sir."

The door closed upon our dissatisfied client, and Holmes, who had been leaning back on the sofa in what appeared to be the depths of dejection, abruptly rose and turned toward me. "Well, Watson, the solution seems disappointingly easy, does it not?"

"Perhaps so," said I stiffly. "But you are skating upon rather thin ice, are you not? You may have sent that poor man to his death."

"To his death? No, my dear Watson. I give you my word on that. Excuse me, I must write a note to our friend Gregson of the Yard. It is most important that an arrest be made at once."

"An arrest? But of whom?"

"Who else but Mr. Donal Pendarvis? A telegram to the authorities of Penzance should suffice."

"The brother?" I cried. "Then you believe that he was not actually attending the boxing matches at the time of the attempted murder of our client?"

"I am positive," said Sherlock Holmes, "that he was engaged in quite other activities." I waited, but evidently he preferred not to take me further into his confidence. Holmes took quill and paper, and did not look up again until he had finished his note and dispatched it by messenger. "That," he said, "should take care of the situation for the time being." Whereupon he rang for Mrs.

Hudson, requesting a copious dinner.

My friend maintained his uncommunicative silence during the meal, and devoted the rest of the evening to his violin. It was not until we were at the breakfast table next morning that there was any reference whatever to the case of the Cornish ornithologist.

The doorbell rang sharply, and Holmes brightened. "Ah, at last!" he cried. "An answer from Gregson. No, it is the man himself, and in a hurry, too." The steps on the stairs came to our door, and in a moment Tobias Gregson, tall, pale, flaxen-haired as ever, entered.

Smartest and sharpest of the Scotland Yard Inspectors, Holmes had always called him. But Gregson was in a bad frame of mind at the moment.

"You have had us for fair, Mr. Holmes," he began. "I felt in my bones that I should not have obeyed your unusual request, but remembering the assistance you have given us in the past, I followed out your suggestion. Bad business, Mr. Holmes, bad business!"

"Really?" said Holmes.

"Quite. It's this man Pendarvis, Donal Pendarvis, that you wanted arrested."

"No confession?"

"Certainly not. And moreover, the fellow is no doubt instituting a suit at law this very minute, for false arrest."

Homes almost dropped his cup. "You mean he is no longer in custody?"

"I mean exactly that. He was arrested last night and held in Penzance gaol, but he made such a fuss about it that Owens, the sub-inspector there, was forced to let him go free."

Sherlock Holmes drew himself up to his full height, throwing aside his napkin. "I agree, sir. Bad business it is." He stood in deep thought for a moment. "And the other request I made? Have they located a man of that description?"

"No, Mr. Holmes. Sub-inspector Owens has lived in Penzance all his life, and he swears that no such person exists."

"Impossible, quite impossible," said Holmes. "He must be mistaken!"

Gregson rose. "We all have our successes and our failures," he said comfortingly. "Good morning, Mr. Holmes. Good morning, doctor."

As the door closed behind him, Holmes turned suddenly to me. "And why, Watson, are you not already packing? Do you not choose to accompany me to Cornwall?"

"To Cornwall? But I understood . . ."

"You have heard everything, and understood nothing. I shall have to demonstrate to you, and to the sub-inspector, on the scene. But enough of this. The game is afoot. You had best bring your service revolver and a stout ash, for there may be rough work before this little problem is solved." He consulted his watch. "Ah, we have just half an hour to catch the ten o'clock train from Paddington."

We boarded it with but a moment or two to spare, and when we were rolling southwest through the outskirts of London my friend began a dissertation upon hereditary tendencies in fingerprint groupings, a subject upon which he was planning a monograph. I kept my impatience to myself as long as I could, and finally interrupted him. "I have but one question, Holmes. Why are we going to Cornwall?"

"The spring flowers, Watson, are at the height of their season. The perfume will be pleasant after the fogs of London. Meanwhile, I intend to have a nap. You might occupy yourself with considering the unusual nature of the warning notes received by Mr. Allen Pendarvis."

"Unusual? But they seemed clear enough to me. They were definitely intended to let Mr. Pendarvis know that he was a marked man."

"Brilliantly put, Watson!" said Sherlock Holmes, and placidly settled down to sleep.

He did not awaken until we were past Plymouth, and the expanse of Mount's Bay was outside our window. There were whitecaps rolling in from the sea, and a gusty wind. "I fancy there will be more rain by dusk," said Holmes pleasantly. "An excellent night for the type of hunting we expect to engage in."

We had hardly alighted at Penzance when a broad man in a heavy tweed ulster approached us. He must have stood fifteen stone of solid brawn and muscle, and his face was grave. An apple-cheeked young police constable followed him.

"Mr. Holmes?" said the elder man. "I am Sub-inspector Owens. We were advised that you might be coming down. And high time it is. A sorry muddle you have got us into."

"Indeed?" said Holmes coolly. "It has happened, then?"

"It has," replied Sub-inspector Owens seriously. "At two o'clock this afternoon." The constable nodded in affirmation, very grave.

"I trust," Holmes said, "that you have not moved the body?"

"The body?" The two local policemen looked at each other, and the constable guffawed. "I was referring," Owens went on, "to the suit for false arrest. A writ was served

upon me in my office."

My companion hesitated only a moment. "I should not, if I were you, lose any sleep over the forthcoming trial of the case. And now before going any farther, Dr. Watson and I have just had a long train journey and are in need of sustenance. Can you direct us to the Capstan and Anchor, inspector?"

Owens scowled, then turned to his assistant. "Tredennis, will you be good enough to show these gentlemen to the place?" He turned back to Holmes. "I shall expect you at the police station in an hour, sir. This affair is not yet settled to my satisfaction."

"Nor to mine, sir," said Holmes, and we set off after the constable. That strapping young man led us at a fast pace to the sign of the Capstan and Anchor. "Into the saloon bar with you, Watson," my companion said to me in a low voice. He lingered a moment at the door, and then turned and joined me. "Just as I thought. Constable Tredennis has taken up his post in a doorway across the street. We are not trusted by the local authorities."

He ordered a plate of kidneys and bacon, but left them to cool while he chatted with the barmaid, a singularly ordinary young woman from all that was apparent to me. But Holmes returned to the table smiling. "She confesses to knowing Mr. Donal Pendarvis, at least to the point of giggling when his name is mentioned. But she says that he has not been frequenting the public house in recent weeks. By the way, Watson, suppose I asked you for a description of our antagonist? What sort of game are we hunting, should you say?"

"Mr. Donal Pendarvis?"

Holmes frowned. "That gentleman resembles his extraordinarily dull brother, from best accounts. No, Watson, dig deeper than that. Look back upon the history of the case, the warning messages —"

"Very well," said I. "The intended murderer is a poor shot with a rifle. He is a person who holds a grudge a long time — even a fancied grudge, for Mr. Allen Pendarvis does not even have an idea of the identity of his assailant. He is a man of primitive mentality, or else he would not have stooped to the savagery of torturing his intended victim with warning messages. He is a newcomer to the town, a stranger. . . ."

"Hold, Watson!" interrupted Holmes, with an odd smile. "You have reasoned amazingly. Yet I hear the patter of rain against the panes, and we must not keep our constable waiting in the doorway."

A brisk walk uphill, with the rain in our faces, brought us at last to the steps of the police station, but there

I found that the way was barred, at least to me. Sub-inspector Owens, it appeared, wished to speak to Mr. Holmes alone.

"And so it shall be," replied Holmes pleasantly, to the burly constable in the door. He turned to me. "Watson, I stand in need of your help. Would you be good enough to occupy the next hour or so in a call on one or two of your local colleagues? You might represent yourself as in search of a casual patient whose name has escaped you. But you have, of course, some important reason for locating him. A wrong prescription, I fancy. . . ."

"Really, Holmes!"

"Be as vague as you can about age and appearance, Watson, but specify that the man you seek is a crack shot, he is very conversant with the locality, of unimpeachable respectability and — most important of all — he has a young and beautiful wife."

"But Holmes! You imply that is the description of our murderer? It is the exact opposite of what I had imagined."

"The reverse of the coin, Watson. But you must excuse me. Be good enough to meet me here in — shall we say — two hours? Off with you now, I must not keep the sub-inspector cooling his heels."

He passed on inside and I turned away into the rain-swept street, shaking my head dubiously. How I wished, at that moment, for the warmth and comfort of my fireside, any fireside! But well I knew that Holmes had some method in his madness. With difficulty I managed to secure a hansom cab, and for a long time rattled about the steep streets of the ancient town of Penzance, in search of the ruby lamp outside the door which would signify the residence of a medical man.

My heart was not in the task, and it was no surprise to me that, in spite of the professional courtesy with which I was greeted by my medical colleagues, they were unable to help me by so much as one iota. Owens, for all his pomposity, had been correct when he reported that of all the citizenry of Penzance, no such person as Holmes sought had ever existed. Or if he had, he was not among their patients.

I returned to the police station to find Holmes waiting for me. "Aha, Watson!" he cried genially. "What luck? Very little, I suppose, else you should not wear the hangdog look of a retriever who has failed to locate the fallen bird. No matter. If we cannot go to our man, he shall come to us. I have to some extent regained the confidence of the sub-inspector, Watson. You see, I have given my word that before noon tomorrow Mr. Donal Pendarvis shall have with-

drawn his suit for false arrest. In return we are to have the support of a stalwart P. C. for this night's work."

In a few moments there appeared down the street the figure of a uniformed man astride a bicycle. It turned out to be our friend Tredennis, who apologized for his delay. This was to have been his evening off duty, and it had been necessary to hurry home and explain matters to his better half.

"Maudie she worries if I'm not reporting in by nine o'clock," he said, his pink cheeks pinker than ever with the exertion of his ride. "But I told her that any man would be glad to volunteer for a tour of duty with Mister Holmes, the celebrated detective from England."

"From *England?*" I put in wonderingly. "And where are we now?"

"In Cornwall," said Holmes, nudging me gently with his elbow. "Ah, Watson, I see that your hansom has been kept waiting. Any moment now and we shall be setting our trap, somewhere near the home of Mr. Pendarvis."

"It's a good three miles, sir," said Constable Tredennis. "By the road, that is. Along the shore it's a good bit less, but it's coming high tide and no easy going at any season."

"We shall take the road," Holmes decided. Soon we were rattling along a cobbled street that wound up and down dale, past looming ranks of fisherman's houses, with the wind blowing ever wet and fresh against our cheeks. "A land to make a man cherish his hearth, eh, Watson?"

We rode on in silence for some time, and then the constable stopped the cab at the head of a steep sloping street that wound down toward the shore. There was a strong odor of herring about the place, mingled with that of tar and salt seaweed. I observed that as we went down the sloping street Holmes gave a most searching glance to right and left, and that at every subsequent street corner he took the utmost pains to see that we were not followed.

Frankly, I knew not what near-human game we were hoping to entrap in this rain-swept, forgotten corner of a forgotten seaside town, but I was well assured, from the manner in which Holmes held himself, that the adventure was a grave one, and nearing its climax. I felt the reassuring weight of the revolver in my coat pocket, and then suddenly the constable caught my arm.

"In here," he whispered. We turned into a narrow passage near the foot of the street, passed through what appeared to be in the dimness a network of mews and stables, and came at last to a narrow door in the wall, which Holmes unlocked with a key affixed to a block of wood. We

entered it together, and closed it behind us.

The place was black as ink, but I felt that it was an empty house. The planking beneath my feet was old and bare, and my outstretched hand touched a stone wall wet with slime. Then we came to an empty window with a broken shutter, through which the dank night air came chilly.

"We are in what was once the Grey Mouse Inn," whispered the young constable. "Yonder, Mr. Holmes, is the house."

We peered across a narrow street and through the open, unshaded window panes of a library, brilliantly lighted by two oil lamps. I could see a line of bookcases, a table, and a mantelpiece in the background. For a long while there was nothing more to see except the dark street, the darker doorway of the house, and that one lighted window.

"There is no other entrance?" demanded Holmes in a whisper.

"None," said the constable. "The other windows give out onto the harbor, and at this hour the tide is passing high."

"Good," said Holmes. "If our man comes, he must come this way. And we shall be ready for him."

"More than ready," said young Tredennis stoutly. He hesitated. "Mr. Holmes, I wonder if you would be willing to give a younger man a word of advice. What, do you think, are the opportunities for an ambitious policeman up London way? I have often thought of trying to better myself. . . ."

"Listen!" cried Holmes sharply. There had come a sharp screaming sound, like the shriek of a rusty gate. It came again, and I recognized it as the cry of a gull.

The silence crept back again. From far away came the barking of a dog, suddenly silenced. Then suddenly appeared in the room across the way, a man in a wine-colored dressing gown who entered the library, turned down the lamps, and blew them out. It could be none other than our client, Mr. Allen Pendarvis.

"As usual he keeps early hours," said Holmes dryly. We waited until one might have counted a hundred, and then another light showed in the room. The man returned, bearing a lamp — but mysteriously, in the few minutes that had passed, he had changed his apparel. Mr. Pendarvis now wore a dinner coat with the collar and tie askew. He crossed to the bookcase, removed a volume, and from the recess took out a small flask, which he placed in his pocket. Then he put back the book and left the room.

"A lightning-change artist!" I

cried.

Holmes, gripping my arm, said, "Not quite, Watson. That is the brother. They are very alike, from this distance."

We waited in silence, for what seemed an interminable length of time. But no light reappeared. Finally Holmes turned to me. "Watson," he said, "we have drawn another blank. I should have sworn that the murderer would have struck tonight. I dislike to turn back. . . ."

"My orders, sir, are to remain here until sunrise," put in the constable. "If you wish to return to the town, rest assured that I shall keep my eyes open."

"I am sure of it," said Holmes. "Come, Watson. The game is too wary. We have no more to do here."

He led me back across the sagging floor, through the door into the mews, and finally brought me out into the street again. But once there, instead of heading up the slope toward where our hansom was waiting, he suddenly drew me into the shadows of an alleyway. I would have spoken, but I felt his bony fingers across my lips. "Shh, Watson. Wait here — and never take your eyes off that doorway."

We waited, for what seemed an eternity. I stared with all my might at the doorway of the Pendarvis house. But I saw nothing, not even when Holmes gripped my arm.

"Now! Watson," he whispered, and started out in that direction, I tardily at his heels.

As we came closer I saw that a man was standing with his finger pressed against the Pendarvis doorbell. Holmes and I flung ourselves upon him, but he was a wiry customer, and we for all our superior strength and numbers were flung back and forth like hounds attacking a bear. And then the door was opened suddenly from within, and we all tumbled into a hallway lighted only by a candle held aloft in the hand of the surprised householder.

Our captive suddenly ceased his struggles, and Holmes and I drew back to see that we had succeeded in overcoming none other than Constable Tredennis himself. He held in his right hand an extremely businesslike revolver, which fell to the carpet with a dull thump.

"Mr. Pendarvis," said Holmes, "Mr. Donal Pendarvis, permit me to introduce you to your intended murderer."

No one spoke. But the apple-cheeked constable now had a face the color of the under side of a flounder. All thought of resistance was gone. "You are uncanny, Mr. Holmes," the young man muttered. "How could you know?"

"How could I fail to know?" said Holmes, arranging his disheveled clothing. "It was fairly evident that since there was no citizen in Penzance who possessed both an ability as a marksman, a knowledge of the tides, and an attractive young wife, our man must be a member of the profession where marksmanship is encouraged." He turned toward the man who still held the candle, though with trembling fingers. "It was also evident that your brother, who still sleeps soundly upstairs, was never intended as a victim at all. Else the murderer would hardly have bothered with warning messages. It was you, Mr. Donal Pendarvis, who was the bull's-eye of the target."

"I — I do not understand," said the man with the candle, backing away. I kept a close grip upon the unresisting form of the prisoner, and watched Holmes as he quietly produced his cherrywood pipe and lighted it.

"There was an excellent motive for Constable Tredennis to murder you, sir," said Holmes to our unwilling host. "No man cares to have his garden plucked by a stranger. Your death would have begun an inquiry which would have led straight to the husband of the lady you see on Friday nights. . . ."

"That is a black lie!" shouted Tredennis, and then subsided.

"Unless," Holmes continued quietly, "it was obvious to all the world that Donal Pendarvis was killed by accident, that he met his death at the hands of a madman with an unexplained grudge against his brother Allen. That is why the warning notes so unnecessarily stressed the name of *Allen* Pendarvis. That is why the murderer-to-be carefully missed his supposed victim and shot out the candle. I did my best, Mr. Pendarvis, to assure your safety by having you taken into custody. That subterfuge failed, and so I was forced to this extreme means."

Tredennis twisted out of my grasp. "Very well, make an end of it!" he cried. "I admit it all, Mr. Holmes, and shall gladly leave it to a jury of my peers —"

"You had best leave it to me, at the moment," advised Holmes. "Mr. Pendarvis, you do not know me, but I have saved your life. May I ask a favor in return?"

Donal Pendarvis hesitated. "I am listening," he said. "You understand, I admit nothing. . . ."

"Of course. I venture to suggest that, instead of remaining here in the household of your brother and amusing yourself with dangerous dalliance, you betake yourself to fields which offer a greater opportunity for the use of your time and

energy. The wheat fields of Canada, perhaps, or the veldt of South Africa. . . ."

"And if I refuse?"

"The alternative," said Holmes, "is an exceedingly unpleasant scandal, involving a lady's name. Your lawsuit for false arrest will present the yellow press with unusual opportunities, will it not, when they learn that it all arose from an honest attempt upon my part to save your neck from a just punishment?"

Mr. Donal Pendarvis lowered the candle, and a slow smile spread across his handsome face. "I give you my word, Mr. Holmes. I shall leave by the first packet."

He extended his hand, and Holmes grasped it. And then we turned back into the night, our prisoner between us. We went up the cobbled street in silence, the young constable striding forward as to the gallows.

We found the hansom still waiting, and set off at once for Penzance. But it was Holmes who called on the driver to stop as we pulled into the outskirts of the town.

"Can we drop you off at your dwelling, constable?" he asked.

The young man looked up, his eyes haunted. "Do not make sport of me, Mr. Holmes. You copped me for fair and I am ready to—"

Holmes half-shoved him out of the hansom. "Be off with you, my young friend. You must leave it to me to satisfy your sub-inspector with a story which Doctor Watson and I shall contrive out of moonbeams. For your part, you must make up your own mind as to your tactics in dealing with your Maudie. After all, the immediate problem is removed, and if you wish to transfer to some other duty with less night work, here is my card. I shall be glad to say a word in your behalf to the powers at Scotland Yard."

The hansom, at Holmes's signal, rolled onward again, cutting short the incoherent thanks of the chastened young constable.

"I am quite aware of what is in your mind," said Holmes to me as we approached our destination. "But you are wrong. The ends of justice will be better served by sending our young culprit back to his Maudie instead of by publicly disgracing him. . . ."

"It is of no use, Holmes," said I firmly. "Nothing that you can say will change my decision. Upon our return to London I shall ask Emilia to become my wife."

Sherlock Holmes let his hand fall on my shoulder, in a comradely gesture. "So be it. Marry her and keep her. One of these days I shall return to the country and the keeping of bees. We shall see who suffers the sharpest stings."

Here's a story that H. L. Mencken published when he was Editor of "The American Mercury." It appeared one year before THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE *rang the bell as a national best-seller; and in many respects it was a trial-balloon for that famous book.*

James M. Cain can write a blue streak. His work is tough, melodramatic, and peculiarly American. This story is tough, melodramatic, and peculiarly American. It concerns a rabbit of a man who had the mistaken notion he was another Frank Buck; a five-hundred-pound tiger named Rajah; a slip of a woman who had a strange affinity for cats; a snake doctor with a smooth line; a baby in an icebox; and — oh, yes, we almost forgot — as brutal and grisly an attempt at murder as ever demanded of its readers an especially strong stomach. Altogether, a hardboiled miscellany of human (and inhuman) elements calculated to make your blood run cold. . . .

THE BABY IN THE ICEBOX

by JAMES M. CAIN

OF COURSE there was plenty pieces in the paper about what happened out at the place last Summer, but they got it all mixed up, so I will now put down how it really was, and specially the beginning of it, so you will see it is not no lies in it.

Because when a guy and his wife begin to play leapfrog with a tiger, like you might say, and the papers put in about that part and not none of the stuff that started it off, and then one day say X marks the spot and next day say it wasn't really no murder but don't tell you what it was, why I don't blame people if they figure there was something funny about it or maybe that somebody ought to be locked up in the booby-hatch. But there wasn't no booby-hatch to this, nothing but plain onriness and a dirty rat getting it in the neck where he had it coming to him, as you will see when I get the first part explained right.

Things first begun to go sour between Duke and Lura when they put the cats in. They didn't need no cats. They had a combination auto-camp, filling-station, and lunch-room out in the country a ways, and they got along all right. Duke run the filling-station, and got me in to help him, and Lura took care of the lunch-room and shacks. But Duke wasn't satisfied. Before he got this place he had raised rabbits, and one time he had bees, and another time canary birds, and nothing would suit him now but to put in some cats to draw trade. Maybe you think that's funny, but out here in California

they got every kind of a farm there is, from kangaroos to alligators, and it was just about the idea that a guy like Duke would think up. So he begun building a cage, and one day he showed up with a truckload of wildcats.

I wasn't there when they unloaded them. It was two or three cars waiting and I had to gas them up. But soon as I got a chance I went back there to look things over. And believe me, they wasn't pretty. The guy that sold Duke the cats had went away about five minutes before, and Duke was standing outside the cage and he had a stick of wood in his hand with blood on it. Inside was a dead cat. The rest of them was on a shelf, that had been built for them to jump on, and every one of them was snarling at Duke.

I don't know if you ever saw a wildcat, but they are about twice as big as a house cat, brindle gray, with tufted ears and a bobbed tail. When they set and look at you they look like a owl, but they wasn't setting and looking now. They was marching around, coughing and spitting, their eyes shooting red and green fire, and it was a ugly sight, specially with that bloody dead one down on the ground. Duke was pale, and the breath was whistling through his nose, and it didn't take no doctor to see he was scared to death.

"You better bury that cat," he says to me. "I'll take care of the cars."

I looked through the wire and he grabbed me. "Look out!" he says. "They'd kill you in a minute."

"In that case," I says, "how do I get the cat out?"

"You'll have to get a stick," he says, and shoves off.

I was pretty sore, but I begun looking around for a stick. I found one, but when I got back to the cage Lura was there. "How did that happen?" she says.

"I don't know," I says, "but I can tell you this much: If there's any more of them to be buried around here, you can get somebody else to do it. My job is to fix flats, and I'm not going to be no cat undertaker."

She didn't have nothing to say to that. She just stood there while I was trying the stick, and I could hear her toe snapping up and down in the sand, and from that I knowed she was choking it back, what she really thought, and didn't think no more of this here cat idea than I did.

The stick was too short. "My," she says, pretty disagreeable, "that looks terrible. You can't bring people out here with a thing like that in there."

"All right," I snapped back. "Find me a stick."

She didn't make no move to find

no stick. She put her hand on the gate. "Hold on," I says. "Them things are nothing to monkey with."

"Huh," she says. "All they look like to me is a bunch of cats."

There was a kennel back of the cage, with a drop door on it, where they was supposed to go at night. How you got them back there was bait them with food, but I didn't know that then. I yelled at them, to drive them back in there, but nothing happened. All they done was yell back. Lura listened to me a while, and then she give a kind of gasp like she couldn't stand it no longer, opened the gate, and went in.

Now believe me, that next was a bad five minutes, because she wasn't hard to look at, and I hated to think of her getting mauled up by them babies. But a guy would of had to of been blind if it didn't show him that she had a way with cats. First thing she done, when she got in, she stood still, didn't make no sudden motions or nothing, and begun to talk to them. Not no special talk. Just "Pretty pussy, what's the matter, what they been doing to you?" — like that. Then she went over to them.

They slid off, on their bellies, to another part of the shelf. But she kept after them, and got her hand on one, and stroked him on the back. Then she got a-hold of another one, and pretty soon she had give them all a pat. Then she turned around, picked up the dead cat by one leg, and come out with him. I put him on the wheelbarrow and buried him.

Now, why was it that Lura kept it from Duke how easy she had got the cat out and even about being in the cage at all? I think it was just because she didn't have the heart to show him up to hisself how silly he looked. Anyway, at supper that night, she never said a word. Duke, he was nervous and excited and told all about how the cats had jumped at him and how he had to bean one to save his life, and then he give a long spiel about cats and how fear is the only thing they understand, so you would of thought he was Martin Johnson just back from the jungle or something.

But it seemed to me the dishes was making quite a noise that night, clattering around on the table, and that was funny, because one thing you could say for Lura was: she was quiet and easy to be around. So when Duke, just like it was nothing at all, asks me by the way how did I get the cat out, I heared my mouth saying, "With a stick," and not nothing more. A little bird flies around and tells you, at a time like that. Lura let it pass. Never said a word. And if you ask me, Duke never did find

out how easy she could handle the cats, and that ain't only guesswork, but on account of something that happened a little while afterwards, when we got the mountain-lion.

A mountain-lion is a cougar, only out here they call them a mountain-lion. Well, one afternoon about five o'clock this one of ours squat down on her hunkers and set up the worst squalling you ever listen to. She kept it up all night, so you wanted to go out and shoot her, and next morning at breakfast Duke come running in and says come on out and look what happened. So we went out there, and there in the cage with her was the prettiest he mountain-lion you ever seen in your life. He was big, probably weighed a hundred and fifty pounds, and his coat was a pearl gray so glossy it looked like a pair of new gloves, and he had a spot of white on his throat. Sometimes they have white.

"He come down from the hills when he heard her call last night," says Duke, "and he got in there somehow. Ain't it funny? When they hear that note nothing can stop them."

"Yeah," I says. "It's love."

"That's it," says Duke. "Well, we'll be having some little ones soon. Cheaper'n buying them."

After he had went off to town to buy the stuff for the day, Lura sat down to the table with me. "Nice of you," I says, "to let Romeo in last night."

"Romeo?" she says.

"Yes, Romeo. That's going to be papa of twins soon, out in the lion cage."

"Oh," she says, "didn't he get in there himself?"

"He did not. If she couldn't get out, how could he get in?"

All she give me at that time was a dead pan. Didn't know nothing about it at all. Fact of the matter, she made me a little sore. But after she brung me my second cup of coffee she kind of smiled. "Well?" she says. "You wouldn't keep two loving hearts apart, would you?"

So things was, like you might say, a little gritty, but they got a whole lot worse when Duke come home with Rajah, the tiger. Because by that time, he had told so many lies that he begun to believe them hisself, and put on all the airs of a big animal-trainer. When people come out on Sundays, he would take a black snake whip and go in with the mountain-lions and wildcats, and snap it at them, and they would snarl and yowl, and Duke acted like he was doing something. Before he went in, he would let the people see him strapping on a big six-shooter, and Lura got sorer by the week.

For one thing, he looked so silly. She couldn't see nothing to going in with the cats, and specially she couldn't see no sense in going in with a whip, a six-shooter, and a ten-gallon hat like them cow people wears. And for another thing, it was bad for business. In the beginning, when Lura would take the customers' kids out and make out the cat had their finger, they loved it, and they loved it still more when the little mountain-lions come and they had spots and would push up their ears to be scratched. But when Duke started that stuff with the whip it scared them to death, and even the fathers and mothers was nervous, because there was the gun and they didn't know what would happen next. So business begun to fall off.

And then one afternoon he put down a couple of drinks and figured it was time for him to go in there with Rajah. Now it had took Lura one minute to tame Rajah. She was in there sweeping out his cage one morning when Duke was away, and when he started sliding around on his belly he got a bucket of water in the face, and that was that. From then on he was her cat. But what happened when Duke tried to tame him was awful. The first I knew what he was up to was when he made a speech to the people from the mountain-lion cage telling them not to go away yet, there was more to come. And when he come out he headed over to the tiger.

"What's the big idea?" I says. "What you up to now?"

"I'm going in with that tiger," he says. "It's got to be done, and I might as well do it now."

"Why has it got to be done?" I says.

He looked at me like as though he pitied me.

"I guess there's a few things about cats you don't know yet," he says. "You got a tiger on your hands, you got to let him know who's boss, that's all."

"Yeah?" I says. "And who *is* boss?"

"You see that?" he says, and cocks his finger at his face.

"See what?" I says.

"The human eye," he says. "The human eye, that's all. A cat's afraid of it. And if you know your business, you'll keep him afraid of it. That's all I'll use, the human eye. But of course, just for protection, I've got these too."

"Listen, sweetheart," I says to him. "If you give me a choice between the human eye and a Bengal tiger, which one *I* got the most fear of, you're going to see a guy getting a shiner every time. If I was you, I'd lay off that cat."

He didn't say nothing: hitched up

his holster, and went in. He didn't even get a chance to unlimber his whip. That tiger, soon as he saw him, begun to move around in a way that made your blood run cold. He didn't make for Duke first, you understand. He slid over, and in a second he was between Duke and the gate. That's one thing about a tiger you better not forget if you ever meet one. He can't work examples in arithmetic, but when it comes to the kind of brains that mean meat, he's the brightest boy in the class and then some. He's born knowing more about cutting off a retreat than you'll ever know, and his legs do it for him, just automatic, so his jaws will be free for the main business of the meeting.

Duke backed away, and his face was awful to see. He was straining every muscle to keep his mouth from sliding down in his collar. His left hand fingered the whip a little, and his right pawed around, like he had some idea of drawing the gun. But the tiger didn't give him time to make up his mind what his idea was, if any.

He would slide a few feet on his belly, then get up and trot a step or two, then slide on his belly again. He didn't make no noise, you understand. He wasn't telling Duke, Please go away: he meant to kill him, and a killer don't generally make no more fuss than he has to. So for a few seconds you could even hear Duke's feet sliding over the floor. But all of a sudden a kid begun to whimper, and I come to my senses. I run around to the back of the cage, because that was where the tiger was crowding him, and I yelled at him.

"Duke!" I says. "In his kennel! Quick!"

He didn't seem to hear me. He was still backing, and the tiger was still coming. A woman screamed. The tiger's head went down, he crouched on the ground, and tightened every muscle. I knew what that meant. Everybody knew what it meant, and specially Duke knew what it meant. He made a funny sound in his throat, turned, and ran.

That was when the tiger sprung. Duke had no idea where he was going, but when he turned he fell through the trap door and I snapped it down. The tiger hit it so hard I thought it would split. One of Duke's legs was out, and the tiger was on it in a flash, but all he got on that grab was the sole of Duke's shoe. Duke got his leg in somehow and I jammed the door down tight.

It was a sweet time at supper that night. Lura didn't see this here, because she was busy in the lunchroom when it happened, but them people had talked on their way out, and she knowed all about it. What

she said was plenty. And Duke, what do you think he done? He passed it off like it wasn't nothing at all. "Just one of them things you got to expect," he says. And then he let on he knowed what he was doing all the time, and the only lucky part of it was that he didn't have to shoot a valuable animal like Rajah was. "Keep cool, that's the main thing," he says. "A thing like that can happen now and then, but never let a animal see you excited."

I heard him, and I couldn't believe my ears, but when I looked at Lura I jumped. I think I told you she wasn't hard to look at. She was a kind of medium size, with a shape that would make a guy leave his happy home, sunburned all over, and high cheekbones that give her eyes a funny slant. But her eyes was narrowed down to slits, looking at Duke, and they shot green where the light hit them, and it come over me all of a sudden that she looked so much like Rajah, when he was closing in on Duke in the afternoon, that she could of been his twin sister.

Next off, Duke got it in his head he was such a big cat man now that he had to go up in the hills and do some trapping. Bring in his own stuff, he called it.

I didn't pay much attention to it at the time. Of course, he never brought in no stuff, except a couple of raccoons that he probably bought down the road for $2, but Duke was the kind of a guy that every once in a while has to sit on a rock and fish, so when he loaded up the flivver and blew, it wasn't nothing you would get excited about. Maybe I didn't really care what he was up to, because it was pretty nice, running the place with Lura with him out of the way, and I didn't ask no questions. But it was more to it than cats or 'coons or fish, and Lura knowed it, even if I didn't.

Anyhow, it was while he was away on one of them trips of his that Wild Bill Smith the Texas Tornado showed up. Bill was a snake-doctor. He had a truck, with his picture painted on it, and two or three boxes of old rattlesnakes with their teeth pulled out, and he sold snake-oil that would cure what ailed you, and a Indian herb medicine that would do the same. He was a fake, but he was big and brown and had white teeth, and I guess he really wasn't no bad guy. The first I seen of him was when he drove up in his truck, and told me to gas him up and look at his tires. He had a bum differential that made a funny rattle, but he said never mind and went over to the lunchroom.

He was there a long time, and I thought I better let him know his car was ready. When I went over

there, he was setting on a stool with a sheepish look on his face, rubbing his hand. He had a snake ring on one finger, with two red eyes, and on the back of his hand was red streaks. I knew what that meant. He had started something and Lura had fixed him. She had a pretty arm, but a grip like iron, that she said come from milking cows when she was a kid. What she done when a guy got fresh was take hold of his hand and squeeze it so the bones cracked, and he generally changed his mind.

She handed him his check without a word, and I told him what he owed on the car, and he paid up and left.

"So you settled his hash, hey?" I says to her.

"If there's one thing gets on my nerves," she says, "It's a man that starts something the minute he gets in the door."

"Why didn't you yell for me?"

"Oh, I didn't need no help."

But the next day he was back, and after I filled up his car I went over to see how he was behaving. He was setting at one of the tables this time, and Lura was standing beside him. I saw her jerk her hand away quick, and he give me the bright grin a man has when he's got something he wants to cover up. He was all teeth. "Nice day," he says. "Great weather you have in this country."

"So I hear," I says. "Your car's ready."

"What I owe you?" he says.

"Dollar twenty."

He counted it out and left.

"Listen," says Lura: "we weren't doing anything when you come in. He was just reading my hand. He's a snake doctor, and knows about the zodiac."

"Oh, wasn't we?" I says. "Well, wasn't we nice!"

"What's it to you?" she says.

"Nothing," I snapped at her. I was pretty sore.

"He says I was born under the sign of Yin," she says. You would of thought it was a piece of news fit to put in the paper.

"And who is Yin?" I says.

"It's Chinese for tiger," she says.

"Then bite yourself off a piece of raw meat," I says, and slammed out of there. We didn't have no nice time running the joint *that* day.

Next morning he was back. I kept away from the lunch-room, but I took a stroll, and seen them back there with the tiger. We had hauled a tree in there by that time, for Rajah to sharpen his claws on, and she was setting on that. The tiger had his head in her lap, and Wild Bill was looking through the wire. He couldn't even draw his breath. I didn't go near enough to hear what they was saying. I went back to the car and begin blowing the horn.

He was back quite a few times after that, in between while Duke was away. Then one night I heard a truck drive up. I knowed that truck by its rattle. And it was daylight before I heard it go away.

Couple weeks after that, Duke come running over to me at the filling-station. "Shake hands with me," he says. "I'm going to be a father."

"Gee," I says, "that's great!"

But I took good care he wasn't around when I mentioned it to Lura.

"Congratulations," I says. "Letting Romeos into the place seems to be about the best thing you do."

"What do you mean?" she says.

"Nothing," I says. "Only I heard him drive up that night. Look like to me the moon was under the sign of Cupid. Well, it's nice if you can get away with it."

"Oh," she says.

"Yeah," I says. "A fine double cross you thought up. I didn't know they tried that any more."

She set and looked at me, and then her mouth begin to twitch and her eyes filled with tears. She tried to snuffle them up but it didn't work. "It's not any double cross," she says. "That night, I never went out there. And I never let anybody in. I was supposed to go away with him that night, but ——"

She broke off and begin to cry. I took her in my arms. "But then you found this out?" I says. "Is that it?" She nodded her head. It's awful to have a pretty woman in your arms that's crying over somebody else.

From then on, it was terrible. Lura would go along two or three days pretty nice, trying to like Duke again on account of the baby coming, but then would come a day when she looked like some kind of a hex, with her eyes all sunk in so you could hardly see them at all, and not a word out of her.

Them bad days, anyhow when Duke wasn't around, she would spend with the tiger. She would set and watch him sleep, or maybe play with him, and he seemed to like it as much as she did. He was young when we got him, and mangy and thin, so you could see his slats. But now he was about six year old, and had been fed good, so he had got his growth and his coat was nice, and I think he was the biggest tiger I ever seen. A tiger, when he is really big, is a lot bigger than a lion, and sometimes when Rajah would be rubbing around Lura, he looked more like a mule than a cat.

His shoulders come up above her waist, and his head was so big it would cover both her legs when he put it in her lap. When his tail would go sliding past her it looked like some kind of a constrictor snake.

His teeth were something to make you lie awake nights. A tiger has the biggest teeth of any cat, and Rajah's must have been four inches long, curved like a cavalry sword, and ivory white. They were the most murderous looking fangs I ever set eyes on.

When Lura went to the hospital it was a hurry call, and she didn't even have time to get her clothes together. Next day Duke had to pack her bag, and he was strutting around, because it was a boy, and Lura had named him Ron. But when he come out with the bag, he didn't have much of a strut. "Look what I found," he says to me, and fishes something out of his pocket. It was the snake ring.

"Well?" I says. "They sell them in any ten-cent store."

"H'm," he says, and kind of weighed the ring in his hand. That afternoon, when he come back, he says: "Ten-cent store, hey? I took it to a jeweler today, and he offered me two hundred dollars for it."

"You ought to sold it," I says. "Maybe save you bad luck."

Duke went away again right after Lura come back, and for a little while things was all right. She was crazy about the little boy, and I thought he was pretty cute myself, and we got along fine. But then Duke come back and at lunch one day he made a crack about the ring. Lura didn't say nothing, but he kept at it, and pretty soon she wheeled on him.

"All right," she says. "There was another man around here, and I loved him. He give me that ring, and it meant that he and I belonged to each other. But I didn't go with him, and you know why I didn't. For Ron's sake, I've tried to love you again, and maybe I can yet, God knows. A woman can do some funny things if she tries. But that's where we're at now. That's right where we're at. And if you don't like it, you better say what you're going to do."

"When was this?" says Duke.

"It was quite a while ago. I told you I give him up, and I give him up for keeps."

"It was just before you knowed about Ron, wasn't it?" he says.

"Hey," I cut in. "That's no way to talk."

"Just what I thought," he says, not paying no attention to me. "Ron. That's a funny name for a kid. I thought it was funny, right off when I heard it. Ron. Ron. That's a laugh, ain't it?"

"That's a lie," she says. "That's a lie, every bit of it. And it's not the only lie you've been getting away with around here. Or think you have. Trapping up in the hills, hey?

And what do you trap?"

But she looked at me, and choked it back. I begun to see that the cats wasn't the only things that had been gumming it up.

"All right," she wound up. "Say what you're going to do. Go on. Say it!"

But he didn't.

"Ron," he cackles, "that's a hot one," and walks out.

Next day was Saturday, and he acted funny all day. He wouldn't speak to me or Lura, and once or twice I heard him mumbling to himself. Right after supper he says to me, "How are we on oil?"

"All right," I says. "The truck was around yesterday."

"You better drive in and get some," he says. "I don't think we got enough."

"Enough?" I says. "We got enough for two weeks."

"Tomorrow is Sunday," he says, "and there'll be a big call for it. Bring out a hundred gallon and tell them to put it on the account."

By that time, I would give in to one of his nutty ideas rather than have an argument with him, and besides, I never tumbled that he was up to anything. So I wasn't there for what happened next, but I got it out of Lura later, so here is how it was:

Lura didn't pay much attention to the argument about the oil, but washed up the supper dishes, and then went in the bedroom to make sure everything was all right with the baby. When she come out she left the door open, so she could hear if he cried. The bedroom was off the sitting-room, because these here California houses don't have but one floor, and all the rooms connect. Then she lit the fire, because it was cool, and sat there watching it burn. Duke come in, walked around, and then went out back. "Close the door," she says to him. "I'll be right back," he says.

So she sat looking at the fire, she didn't know how long, maybe five minutes, maybe ten minutes. But pretty soon she felt the house shake. She thought maybe it was a earthquake, and looked at the pictures, but they was all hanging straight. Then she felt the house shake again. She listened, but it wasn't no truck outside that would cause it, and it wouldn't be no State road blasting or nothing like that at that time of night. Then she felt it shake again, and this time it shook in a regular movement, one, two, three, four, like that. And then all of a sudden she knew what it was, why Duke had acted so funny all day, why he had sent me off for the gas, why he had left the door open, and all the rest of it. There was five hundred

pound of cat walking through the house, and Duke had turned him loose to kill her.

She turned around, and Rajah was looking at her, not five foot away. She didn't do nothing for a minute, just set there thinking what a boob Duke was to figure on the tiger doing his dirty work for him, when all the time she could handle him easy as a kitten, only Duke didn't know it. Then she spoke. She expected Rajah to come and put his head in her lap, but he didn't. He stood there and growled, and his ears flattened back. That scared her, and she thought of the baby. I told you a tiger has that kind of brains. It no sooner went through her head about the baby than Rajah knowed she wanted to get to that door, and he was over there before she could get out of the chair.

He was snarling in a regular roar now, but he hadn't got a whiff of the baby yet, and he was still facing Lura. She could see he meant business. She reached in the fireplace, grabbed a stick that was burning bright, and walked him down with it. A tiger is afraid of fire, and she shoved it right in his eyes. He backed past the door, and she slid in the bedroom. But he was right after her, and she had to hold the stick at him with one hand and grab the baby with the other.

But she couldn't get out. He had her cornered, and he was kicking up such a awful fuss she knowed the stick wouldn't stop him long. So she dropped it, grabbed up the baby's covers, and threw them at his head. They went wild, but they saved her just the same. A tiger, if you throw something at him with a human smell, will generally jump on it and bite at it before he does anything else, and that's what he done now. He jumped so hard the rug went out from under him, and while he was scrambling to his feet she shot past him with the baby and pulled the door shut after her.

She run in my room, got a blanket, wrapped the baby in it, and run out to the electric icebox. It was the only thing around the place that was steel. Soon as she opened the door she knowed why she couldn't do nothing with Rajah. His meat was in there, Duke hadn't fed him. She pulled the meat out, shoved the baby in, cut off the current, and closed the door. Then she picked up the meat and went around the outside of the house to the window of the bedroom. She could see Rajah in there, biting at the top of the door, where a crack of light showed through. He reached to the ceiling. She took a grip on the meat and drove at the screen with it. It give way, and the meat went through. He was on it

before it hit the floor.

Next thing was to give him time to eat. She figured she could handle him once he got something in his belly. She went back to the sitting-room. And in there, kind of peering around, was Duke. He had his gun strapped on, and one look at his face was all she needed to know she hadn't made no mistake about why the tiger was loose.

"Oh," he says, kind of foolish, and then walked back and closed the door. "I meant to come back sooner, but I couldn't help looking at the night. You got no idea how beautiful it is. Stars is bright as anything."

"Yeah," she says. "I noticed."

"Beautiful," he says. "Beautiful."

"Was you expecting burglars or something?" she says, looking at the gun.

"Oh, that," he says. "No. Cats been kicking up a fuss. I put it on, case I have to go back there. Always like to have it handy."

"The tiger," she says. "I thought I heard him, myself."

"Loud," says Duke. "Awful loud."

He waited. She waited. She wasn't going to give him the satisfaction of opening up first. But just then there come a growl from the bedroom, and the sound of bones cracking. A tiger acts awful sore when he eats. "What's that?" says Duke.

"I wonder," says Lura. She was hell-bent on making him spill it first.

They both looked at each other, and then there was more growls, and more sound of cracking bones. "You better go in there," says Duke, soft and easy, with the sweat standing out on his forehead and his eyes shining bright as marbles. "Something might be happening to Ron."

"Do you know what I think it is?" says Lura.

"What's that?" says Duke. His breath was whistling through his nose like it always done when he got excited.

"I think it's that tiger you sent in here to kill me," says Lura. "So you could bring in that woman you been running around with for over a year. That redhead that raises rabbit fryers on the Ventura road. That cat you been trapping!"

"And stead of getting you he got Ron," says Duke. "Little Ron! Oh my, ain't that tough? Go in there, why don't you? Ain't you got no mother love? Why don't you call up his pappy, get him in there? What's the matter? Is he afraid of a cat?"

Lura laughed at him. "All right," she says. "Now you go." With that she took hold of him. He tried to draw the gun, but she crumpled up his hand like a piece of wet paper and the gun fell on the floor. She bent him back on the table and beat his face in for him. Then she picked

him up, dragged him to the front door, and threw him out. He run off a little ways. She come back and saw the gun. She picked it up, went to the door again, and threw it after him. "And take that peashooter with you," she says.

That was where she made her big mistake. When she turned to go back in the house, he shot, and that was the last she knew for a while.

Now, for what happened next, it wasn't nobody there, only Duke and the tiger, but after them State cops got done fitting it all together, combing the ruins and all, it wasn't no trouble to tell how it was, anyway most of it, and here's how they figured it out:

Soon as Duke seen Lura fall, right there in front of the house, he knowed he was up against it. So the first thing he done was run to where she was and put the gun in her hand, to make it look like she had shot herself. That was where he made *his* big mistake, because if he had kept the gun he might of had a chance. Then he went inside to telephone, and what he said was, soon as he got hold of the State police: "For God's sake come out here quick. My wife has went crazy and throwed the baby to the tiger and shot herself and I'm all alone in the house with him and — *Oh, my God, here he comes!*"

Now, that last was something he didn't figure on saying. So far as he knowed, the tiger was in the room, having a nice meal off his son, so everything was hotsy-totsy. But what he didn't know was that that piece of burning firewood that Lura had dropped had set the room on fire and on account of that the tiger had got out. How did he get out? We never did quite figure that out. But this is how I figure it, and one man's guess is good as another's:

The fire started near the window, we knew that much. That was where Lura dropped the stick, right next to the cradle, and that was where a guy coming down the road in a car first seen the flames. And what I think is that soon as the tiger got his eye off the meat and seen the fire, he begun to scramble away from it, just wild. And when a wild tiger hits a beaver-board wall, he goes through, that's all. While Duke was telephoning, Rajah come through the wall like a clown through a hoop, and the first thing he seen was Duke, at the telephone, and Duke wasn't no friend, not to Rajah he wasn't.

Anyway, that's how things was when I got there, with the oil. The State cops was a little ahead of me, and I met the ambulance with Lura in it, coming down the road seventy mile an hour, but just figured there had been a crash up the road, and didn't know nothing about it having

Lura in it. And when I drove up, there was plenty to look at all right. The house was in flames, and the police was trying to get in, but couldn't get nowheres near it on account of the heat, and about a hundred cars parked all around, with people looking, and a gasoline pumper cruising up and down the road, trying to find a water connection somewheres they could screw their hose to.

But inside the house was the terrible part. You could hear Duke screaming, and in between Duke was the tiger. And both of them was screams of fear, but I think the tiger was worse. It is a awful thing to hear a animal letting out a sound like that. It kept up about five minutes after I got there, and then all of a sudden you couldn't hear nothing but the tiger. And then in a minute that stopped.

There wasn't nothing to do about the fire. In a half hour the whole place was gone, and they was combing the ruins for Duke. Well, they found him. And in his head was four holes, two on each side, deep. We measured them fangs of the tiger. They just fit.

Soon as I could I run in to the hospital. They had got the bullet out by that time, and Lura was laying in bed all bandaged around the head, but there was a guard over her, on account of what Duke said over the telephone. He was a State cop. I sat down with him, and he didn't like it none. Neither did I. I knowed there was something funny about it, but what broke your heart was Lura, coming out of the ether. She would groan and mutter and try to say something so hard it would make your head ache. After a while I got up and went in the hall. But then I see the State cop shoot out of the room and line down the hall as fast as he could go. At last she had said it. The baby was in the electric icebox. They found him there, still asleep and just about ready for his milk. The fire had blacked up the outside, but inside it was as cool and nice as a new bathtub.

Well, that was about all. They cleared Lura, soon as she told her story, and the baby in the icebox proved it. Soon as she got out of the hospital she got a offer from the movies, but stead of taking it she come out to the place and her and I run it for a while, anyway the filling-station end, sleeping in the shacks and getting along nice. But one night I heard a rattle from a bum differential, and I never even bothered to show up for breakfast the next morning.

I often wish I had. Maybe she left me a note.

In October 1942 Little, Brown & Company published your Editor's THE DETECTIVE SHORT STORY: A BIBLIOGRAPHY — *the first and only work of its kind in the world. Shortly after publication, Mr. Christopher Morley phoned your Editor and called his attention to an omission in the Bibliography. No mention had been made of the short stories in which the literary sleuth, Dove Dulcet, performed his detectival feats.*

You've never heard of Detective Dove Dulcet, created by Christopher Morley? You don't know what you're missing! With the help of data supplied by Mr. Morley, we immediately set about tracking down the "forgotten" Dulcet — with the happy result of finding no less than seven of his exploits, four of which are undeniably detective stories. It was too late to include proper listings in the Bibliography, but the Bibliography's loss is your gain. For here is "The Curious Case of Kenelm Digby," first published in 1921 — a highly literary murder mystery solved by that unique manhunter, Dove Dulcet, who is half literary agent, half well-known poet, and all detective.

(You should have heard Mr. Morley chuckle every time your Editor reminded him that Dove Dulcet would be "revived.")

THE CURIOUS CASE OF KENELM DIGBY

by CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

WE HAD been dining together at the Hotel Ansonia, and as we walked up the shining breezy channel of Broadway my friend Dove Dulcet (the well-known poet and literary agent) vigorously expounded a theorem which I afterward had occasion to remember.

"There is every reason," he cried, "why a poet should be the best of detectives! My boy, there is a rhyme in events as well as in words. When you see two separate and apparently unconnected happenings that seem (as one might say) to rhyme together, you begin to suspect one author behind them both. It is the function of the poet to have a quick and tender apprehension of similarities. The root of poetry is nothing else than describing things as being like other apparently quite different things. The lady who compared herself to a bird in a gilded cage was chaffed for her opulent and spendthrift imagination; but in that lively simile she showed an understanding of the poetic principle. Look here: what is the commonest phrase of the detectives? To put two and two together. What else, I ask you, is the poet doing all the time but putting two and two together — two rhymes, and then two rhymes more, and making a quatrain?"

He swung his stick, puffed strongly at his cigar, and amorously surveyed the deep blue of the night, against

which the huge blocks of apartment houses spread their random patterns of lighted windows. Between these granite cliffs flowed a racing stream of bright motors, like the rapids of a river of light hurrying downward to the whirlpool of Times Square.

"Either for a poet or for a detective," he said gaily, "this seems to me the ideal region. I tell you, I walk about here suspecting the most glorious crimes. When I see the number of banana splits that are consumed in these glittering drug stores, I feel sure that somewhere, in the purple silences of the night, hideous consequences must follow. Those who feed so violently on that brutalizing mixture of banana, chocolate ice cream, cherry syrup, and whipped marshmallow, must certainly be gruesome at heart. I look out of my window late at night toward the scattered lights of that vast pile of apartments, always thinking to see them blaze some great golden symbol or letter into the darkness, some terrible or obscene code that means death and terror."

"Your analogy seems to have some sense," I said. "Certainly the minor poet, like the lawbreaker, loves to linger about the scene of his rhyme, or crime."

"You are an amateur of puns," he replied. "Then let me tell you the motto I have coined to express the spirit of this Little White Way—*Ein' feste bourgeois ist unser Gott.* This is the proud kingdom of the triumphant middle class. It is a perilous country for a poet. If he were found out, he would be martyred at the nearest subway station. But how I love it! See how the quiet side streets cut across highways so richly contrasting: West End Avenue, leafy, expensive, and genteel; Broadway, so gloriously cruel and artificial; Amsterdam Avenue, so honestly and poignantly real. My club is the Hartford Lunch Room, where they call an omelet an *omulet*, and where the mystic word *Combo* resounds through the hatchway to the fat man in the kitchen. My church is the St. Agnes branch of the Public Library, over on Amsterdam Avenue. In those cool quiet rooms, when I watch the pensive readers I have a sense of treading near an artery of fine human idealism. In all this various neighborhood I have a cheerful conviction that almost anything might happen. In the late afternoons, when the crosswise streets end on a glimpse of the Jersey bluffs that glow like smoky blue opals, and smell like rotten apples, I feel myself on the doorsill of the most stunning outrages."

We both laughed, and turned off on Seventy-seventh Street to the small apartment house where Dulcet had a comfortable suite. In his book-

lined sitting room we lit our pipes and sat down for a gossip.

We had been talking at dinner of the extraordinary number of grievous deaths of well-known authors that had happened that year. As it is almost unnecessary to remind you, there was Dunraven Bleak, the humorous essayist, who was found stark (in both senses) in his bathtub; and Cynthia Carboy, the famous writer of bedtime stories, who fell down the elevator shaft. In the case of Mrs. Carboy, the police were distracted because her body was found at the top of the building, and the detective bureau insisted that in some unexplainable manner she must have fallen *up* the shaft; but as Dulcet pointed out at the time of the Authors' League inquiry, the body might have been carried upstairs after the accident. Then there was Andrew Baffle, the psychological novelist, whose end was peculiarly atrocious and miserable, because it seemed that he had contracted tetanus from handling a typewriter ribbon that showed signs of having been poisoned. Frank Lebanon, the brilliant short-story writer, was stabbed in the fulness of his powers; and there were others whom I do not recall at the moment. Mr. Dulcet had suffered severely by these sad occurrences, for a number of these authors were his clients, and the loss of the commissions on the sale of their works was a serious item. The secret of these tragedies had never been discovered, and there had been something of a panic among members of the Authors' League. The rumor of a pogrom among best-selling writers was tactfully hushed.

"What is your friend Kenelm Digby writing nowadays?" I asked, as I looked along Dulcet's shelves. Digby, the brilliant novelist, was probably Dulcet's most distinguished client, an eccentric fellow who, in spite of his excellent royalties, lived a solitary and modest existence in a boarding house somewhere in that part of the West Side. Outside his own circle of intimates, Dulcet was almost the only man whom Digby saw much of, and many of us, who admired the novelist's work, had our only knowledge of his person from hearing the agent talk of him.

"By George, I'm glad you reminded me," said Dulcet. "Why, he has just finished a story, and he telephoned me this afternoon asking me to stop over at his house this evening to get the manuscript. He never has any dealings with the editors on his own hook — likes me to attend to all his business arrangements for him. I said I'd run over there about ten o'clock."

"That last book of his was a great piece of work," I said. "I've been

following his stuff for over ten years, and he looks to me about the most promising fellow we've got. He has something of the Barrie touch."

"Yes, he's the real thing," said Dulcet, blowing a blue cloud of his Cartesian Mixture. "I only wish he were not quite so eccentric. He lives like a hermit-crab, over in a lodging house near the Park. Even I, who know him as well as most people, never feel like intruding on him except when he asks me to. I can't help thinking it would be good for him to get out more and see something of other men in his line of work. I tried to get him to join The Snails, but he says that Amsterdam Avenue is his only amusement. And Central Park seems to be his country club. I wonder if you've noticed that in his tales whenever he wants to describe a bit of country he takes it right out of the Park. I suspect that's the only scenery he knows."

"He has attained a very unusual status among writers," I said. "In my rambles around among bookshops I have noticed that his first editions bring quite a good price. It's very seldom that a writer — at any rate an American — gets 'collected' during his lifetime."

"Did you ever see any of his manuscript?" asked Dulcet; and on my shaking my head, he took out a thick packet of foolscap from a cabinet.

"This is the original of 'Girlhood,'" he explained. "Digby gave it to me. It'll be worth a lot some day."

I looked with interest at the neatly written sheets, thickly covered with a small, beautiful, and rather crabbed penmanship.

"Worth a lot!" I exclaimed. "Well I should say so! Why, the other day I was browsing round in a bookshop and I found a lot of his first editions marked at $15 each. It struck me as a very high price, for I know I have seen them listed for three or four dollars in catalogues."

"Exorbitantly high," Dulcet said. "I'm afraid your bookseller is profiteering. I admire Digby as much as anyone, but that is an artificial price. The firsts aren't rare enough to warrant any such price as that. Still, I'm glad to know about it, as it's a sign of growing recognition. I remember the time when it was all I could do to get any editors to look at his things."

We sat for a while chatting about this and that, and then Dulcet got up and put on his hat.

"Look here, old man," he said. "You squat here and be comfortable while I run round to Digby. It won't take me more than a few minutes — he lives on Eighty-second Street. I'll be back right speedily, and we can go on with our talk."

I heard him go down in the elevator, and then I relit my pipe, and picked out a book from one of his shelves. I remember that it was Brillat-Savarin's amusing "Gastronomy as a Fine Art." I smiled at finding this in Dulcet's library, for I knew that the agent rather prided himself on being something of a gourmet, and I was reading the essays of the jovial French epicure with a good deal of relish when the telephone rang. I went to it with that slight feeling of embarrassment one always has in answering someone else's phone.

To my surprise, it was Dulcet's voice.

"Hullo?" he said. "That you, Ben? Listen, I want you to come round to Digby's right away," and he gave the address.

Thinking he had arranged a chance for me to meet Digby (I had long wanted to do so), I felt hesitant about intruding; but he repeated his message, rather sharply. "Please come at once," he said. "It's important." Again he gave the street number, made me promise to come immediately, and rang off.

It was nearly half-past ten, and the streets were fairly quiet as I walked briskly along. The house was one of a row of old cocoa-colored stone dwellings, and evidently someone was watching for me, for while I was trying to read the numbers a door opened and from a dark hall an arm beckoned to me. I went up the tall steps and a stout woman, who seemed to be in some agitation, whispered my name interrogatively. "Is this Mr. Trovato?" she murmured.

"Yes," I said, puzzled.

"Third floor front," she said, and I creaked quietly up the stairs.

I tapped at the front room on the top floor, and Dulcet opened.

"Thank goodness you're here, Ben," he said. "Something has happened."

It was a large comfortable room, crowded with books on three walls, furnished with easy chairs and a couch in one corner. A brilliant blaze of light from several bulbs under a frosted hood poured upon a reading table in the middle of the room. Sitting at this table, in a Windsor chair, slumped down into the seat, was a short stout man whose head lolled sideways over his chest. He was wearing a tweed suit and a soft shirt, and looked as though he had fallen asleep at his work. In front of him were some books and a can of tobacco. I recognized him, of course, from the photographs I had often seen. It was Digby.

I looked at Dulcet aghast. But, as always at such moments, what was uppermost in my mind was something trivial and irrelevant. I had an

intense desire to open a window. The air in that room was thick and foggy, a sort of close, strangling frowst of venomously strong tobacco and furnace gas. After the clear elixir of the wintry night, it was loathsome. It was the typical smell that hangs about the rooms of literary bachelors, who work all day long in a room without ever thinking of airing it.

"Yes," he said. "He's dead. Pretty awful, isn't it? I found him like this when I got here. No sign of injury so far as I can see."

There was something profoundly dreadful in this first sight, as mere sagging clay, of the brilliant and powerful writer whose books I had so long admired, and whom I had thought of as one of the strong and fortunate few who shape human perplexities to their own ends. I looked down at him with a miserable blackness in my spirit, and laid a hand on Dulcet's shoulder in sympathy.

"I've sent for a doctor," he said. "Before he comes I want to get all the information I can from the landlady. I wanted to have you here as a witness. I haven't touched anything."

The woman had followed me upstairs, and stood crying quietly in the doorway.

"Come in, Mrs. Barlow," said Dulcet. "Now please tell us everything you can about where Mr. Digby went this evening, and anything that has happened."

Mrs. Barlow, who seemed to be a good-hearted, simple-minded creature, snuffled wretchedly. "Oh dear, oh dear," she said. "He was such a nice gentleman too. Let me see, he went out about seven, I suppose for his supper, but he was always irregular about his meals, you never could tell, sometimes he would eat in the middle of the afternoon, and sometimes not till late at night, I always would urge him that he would die of indigestion, but he was so kind-hearted."

"You don't know where he went?" said Dulcet.

"Perhaps he went round to the laundry," she said, "for he had a parcel with him, which I took to be his laundry because he usually took it out on Monday evenings because by that time the clean shirt he put on on Sunday was ready to go to the wash. I hate to think that in all the years he lived in this house his laundry was the only thing we ever had a difference about, because I used to have it done in the house for him, but he said my washwoman tore the buttons off his shirts or collars or something, so a little while ago he started taking his things out to be done, but I don't know where because he called for them himself."

"You haven't any idea where he used to eat?" insisted Dulcet.

"Oh no, sir, he liked to go different places, you know yourself how he was always a bit queer and concentric and he never talked much about where he went, but always so nice and considerate. Oh, he *was* a fine gentleman."

Mrs. Barlow, plainly much grieved, wept anew.

"Please try to tell us everything you can think of," said Dulcet gently. "What time did he come in, and did you notice anything unusual?"

"Nothing out of the way that I can think of, but then I was down in the basement most of the evening, for I let my maid go to the movies and I had a deal to do. I suppose he went along Amsterdam Avenue, he was always strolling up and down Amsterdam or Columbus, poor man, getting ideas for his literature I guess. He came back about nine o'clock I should say, because I heard the door about then. Just a few minutes before he came in there was a man came to the door with a tin of tobacco for him, which he said Mr. Digby had ordered sent around, and I took it up and put it on his table there it is now, poor man, Carter's Mixture."

Mrs. Barlow pointed to the tin of Cartesian Mixture that stood on the table. Evidently it had only just been opened, for it was practically full.

"Yes," said Dulcet. "Here's his pipe lying on the floor under his chair." He picked up the briar and glanced at it. "Only just begun to smoke it, for the tobacco is only a little burned. He must have been smoking when he . . . There wasn't anything else you can think of?"

The woman dried her eyes with her apron. "There was just one other thing I noticed, but I suppose it's silly. But I took note of it special, because I thought I had heard it before, lately. While he was out, and a little before the man brought the tin of tobacco, I heard a sharp tapping out on the street in front of the house. I noticed it special, because I thought at first it was someone rapping on the door, and I wondered if the bell was out of order again, but when I went I couldn't see anyone. But I wondered about it because I heard it two or three times, a sharp kind of tapping, it sounded someway like hitting on stone with a stick of some sort."

Dulcet and I looked at each other rather blankly.

"And after that," she went on, "I didn't think about anything one way or another till you came in and I told you to go right up."

There was a clear peal from the front door bell.

"That's the doctor," said Dulcet, and Mrs. Barlow hurried downstairs.

I have never seen anyone so brisk and matter of fact as that physician, and after his arrival the affair seemed to pass out of Dulcet's hands into the painful official machinery that takes charge in such events. Dulcet, acting as the dead writer's literary representative, went into the adjoining room, which was Digby's study, to look over the papers in the desk for any manuscripts that he ought to take care of. He wrote out a list of friends and relatives for me to send telegrams to, and I went out to attend to this. I don't know how they get wind of these affairs, but the reporters were already beginning to arrive when I left.

The next day, and for several days afterward, the papers all carried long stories about poor Digby's brilliant career. Then the literary weeklies took it up. At the libraries and bookshops everyone was asking for his books, and I have never seen a more depressing illustration of the familiar fact that a writer's real fame never comes until it is too late to do him any good. Editors and people who had hardly been aware of Digby's genius while he was alive now praised him fluently, speaking of him as "America's most honest realist," and all that sort of thing. Moving picture people began inquiring about the film rights of his novels. Some of the sensational newspapers tried to play up his death as a mystery story, but the physicians asserted heart failure as the cause, and this aspect of the matter soon subsided.

Except at the funeral, which was attended by a great many literary people, I did not see Dulcet for some days. I gathered from what I read in the news that Digby's will had appointed him executor of his literary property, and I knew that he must have much to attend to. But one afternoon the telephone rang, and Dulcet asked me if I could knock off work and come round to see him. As I was living uptown at that time, it only took me a few minutes to go round to his apartment. I found him smoking a pipe as usual, and looking pale and fagged. He welcomed me with his affectionate cordiality, and I sat down to hear what was on his mind.

"You must excuse me if I'm a little upset," he said. "I've just had an interview with a ghoul. A fellow came in to see me who had heard that I have a number of poor Digby's books and manuscripts. He wanted to buy them from me, offered big prices for them. He said that since Digby's death all his first editions and so on have gone up enormously in value. Apparently he expected me to do trading over the dead body of a

friend."

He smoked a while in silence, and then said:

"Sorry not to have seen you sooner, but to tell the truth I've had my hands full. His brother, who was the nearest kin, couldn't come from Ohio on account of serious illness, and everything fell on me. I had to pack up all his things and ship them, all that sort of business. But I've been wanting to talk to you about it, because I'm convinced there was something queer about the whole affair. I'm not satisfied with that heart-failure verdict. That's absurd. There was nothing wrong with his heart, that I ever heard of. It's very unfortunate that for the first few days I was too occupied with urgent matters to be able to follow up the various angles of the affair. But I've been turning it over in my mind, and I've got some ideas I'd like to share with you. You remember what I told you, with unfortunate levity, about the secret of detective work being ability to notice the unsuspected rhymes in events? Well, there are one or two features of this affair that seem to me to rhyme together in a very sinister fashion. Wait a minute until I put on my other coat, and we'll go out."

He went into his bedroom. I had not liked to interrupt him, but I was yearning for a smoke, for leaving my rooms in a hurry I had forgotten to bring my pouch with me. On his mantelpiece I saw a tin of tobacco, and began to fill my pipe. To my surprise, just as I was taking out a match he darted out of the bedroom, uttered an exclamation, and snatched the briar from my hand.

"Sorry," he said bluntly, "but you mustn't smoke that. It's something very special." He opened his penknife, scraped out the weed I had put in the bowl, and carefully put it back in the tin. He took the tin and locked it in his desk.

"Try some of this," he said, handing his pouch.

I concluded that the tension of the past days had troubled his nerves. This rudeness was so unlike him that I knew there must be some explanation, but he offered none. As we went down the elevator he said, "The question is, can you make a rhyme out of tobacco and collar buttons?"

"No," I said, a little peevishly. "And I don't believe anyone could, except Edward Lear."

"Well," he continued, "that's what we've got to do. And don't imagine that it's merely a nonsense rhyme, any more than Lear's were. Edward Lear was as great as King Lear, in his own way."

He led me to Eighty-second Street. The December afternoon was

already dark as we approached Mrs. Barlow's house. At the foot of her front steps he halted and turned to me.

"Is your pipe going?" he said.

"No," I said, irritably. "It's out. And I haven't any tobacco."

"Don't be surly, old chap; I'll give you some if you'll tell me what you do when your pipe goes out."

"Why, you idiot," I cried, "I do this." And I knocked out the ashes by striking the bowl smartly against the palm of my hand.

"Ah," he said. "But some people do this." He bent down and rapped his pipe against the stone ramp of the steps, with a clear sharp hollow sound.

"Yes, a good way to break a nice pipe," I was remarking, when the basement door of the house flew open, and Mrs. Barlow darted out into the sunken area just below the pavement level. In the pale lemon-colored glare of a nearby street lamp we could see that she was strongly excited.

"Good gracious," she panted. "Is it Mr. Dulcet? Oh sir, you did give me a turn. Oh dear, that was just the tapping sound I heard the night poor Mr. Digby died. What was it? Did you hear it?"

"Like this?" said Dulcet, knocking his pipe again on the stone step.

"That was it, exactly," she said. "What a fright, to be sure! Was it only someone knocking his pipe like that? Oh, dear, it did bring back that horrid evening, just as plain."

"So much for the mysterious death-rap," said Dulcet as we walked back toward Amsterdam Avenue. "I can't claim much ingenuity for that, however. You see, the morning after Digby's death I went round to Mrs. Barlow's early, before she had been out to sweep her pavement. The first thing I noticed, by the lowest step, was a little dottle of tobacco such as falls from a half-smoked pipe when it is knocked out. That seemed to me to make a perfect couplet with Mrs. Barlow's tale of the tapping she had heard. She heard it several times, you remember, in a short space of time. That suggests to me someone standing on the street, or walking up and down, in a state of nervousness, because he didn't smoke any of his pipes through. When they were only half smoked he knocked them out, in sheer impatience. Was he waiting for someone?"

"Perhaps it was Digby himself?" I suggested.

"I don't think so," he said. "Because, in the first place, nervousness was the last thing I would associate with his temperament, which was calm and collected in the extreme. And also, he always smoked Brown-

Eyed Blend, and had done so for years. That was the first thing that struck me as unusual the night we were there. That tin of Cartesian on the table. He was a man of fixed habits — why should he have made a change just that night? I picked up the little wad of tobacco I found lying on the step, and took it carefully home. It's Cartesian, or I'm a Dutchman. So item 1 in our criminal rhyme-scheme is, find me a nervous man smoking Cartesian."

"It's a bit fanciful," I objected.

"Of course it is," he cried. "But crime is a fanciful thing. Ever let the fancy roam, as Keats said. What the deuce is the line that follows? Suppose we stroll down Amsterdam Avenue and have dinner."

"Poor old Digby," he said, as we walked along admiring the lighted caves of the shopwindows. "How he enjoyed all this. You know, there is a certain honest simplicity about Amsterdam Avenue's merchandising that is pleasant to contemplate after the shining sophistications of Broadway. In a Broadway delicatessen window you'll see such horrid luxuries as jars of cocks' combs in jelly; whereas along here the groceries show candid and heartening signs such as this: 'Coming Back to The Old Times, 17c lb. Sugar.' Amsterdam Avenue shopkeepers speak with engaging directness about their traffic; for instance, there's a barber at the corner of Eighty-first Street who embosses on his window the legend, 'Yes, We Do Buster Brown Hair Cutting.' That sort of thing is very humane and genuine, that's why Digby was so fond of it. There's a laundry along here somewhere that I have often noticed; it calls itself the Fastidious Laundry —"

"Speaking of laundries," I said, "what do you think of this?" We stopped, and I pointed to a neatly lettered placard in a laundry window which had caught my eye. It said:

NOTICE TO ARTISTS AND AUTHORS
WE SEW BUTTONS ON SOFT COLLARS
FREE OF CHARGE

"By Jove," I said, "there's a laundry that has the right idea. I think I'll bring my —"

I broke off when I saw my companion's face. He was leaning forward toward the pane, and his eyes were bright but curiously empty, as though in some way the mechanism of sight had been reversed, and he was looking inward rather than out.

"That's very odd," he said presently. "I've been up and down this street many times, but I never noticed that sign before."

He turned and marched into the shop, and I followed. In the soft

steamy air several girls were ironing shirts, and a plump pink-cheeked Hebrew stood behind a counter wrapping up bundles.

"I noticed your sign in the window," said Dulcet. "What do you charge for laundering soft collars?"

"Five cents each, but we mend them too, and sew on the buttons."

"That's a good idea," said Dulcet genially. "I wish I'd known that before; I'd have brought my collars round to you. How long have you been doing that? I often go by here, but I never saw the sign before."

"Only about a week," the man replied. "Let's see — a week ago last Monday I put that sign up. You wouldn't believe how much new trade it has brought in. I thought it would be a kind of a joke — the man next door suggested it, and I put it in to please him. But most everybody wears soft collars nowadays, and it seems good business."

"The man next door?" said Dulcet, in a casual tone.

"Sure, the cigar store."

"Is his name Stork?" said Dulcet, reflectively.

"Stork? Why no, Basswood. What do you mean, Stork?"

"I mean," said Dulcet slowly, "does he ever stand on one leg?"

"Quit your kidding," cried the laundryman, annoyed.

"I assure you, I do not trifle," said Dulcet gravely. "I'll bring you in some collars to fix up for me. Much obliged."

We went out again, and my companion stood for a moment in front of the laundry window, looking thoughtfully at the sign.

"While you ponder, old son," I said, "I'll run into Mr. Stork-Basswood's and get some tobacco."

He seized my arm in a firm and painful clutch and whispered, "Look at the corner!"

The laundry was the second shop from the corner. Under the lamppost at the angle of the street I saw, to my amazement, a man standing balanced on one leg. Directly under the light, he was partly in shadow, and I could only see him in silhouette, but the absurd profile of his one-legged attitude afflicted me with a renewed sense of absurdity and irritation. Dulcet, I thought, had evidently suffered some serious stroke in the region of his wits.

"Now," he said softly, "can you see any rhyme between soft collars and standing on one leg?"

As he spoke, we both started, for somewhere near us on the street there sounded a sharp tapping, a ringing hollow wooden sound. Evidently it came from the one-legged man. This was too much for my composure. I broke away from Dulcet and ran to the corner. As I got

there the one-legged creature put down a concealed limb and stood solidly on two feet, in a state of normalcy as an eminent statesman would say. I was confused, and said angrily to the man,

"Here, you mustn't stand like that, on the public street you know, on one leg. It's setting a bad example."

To my amazement he made no retort whatever, but turned and scuttled hastily down the avenue.

"My dear fellow," said Dulcet calmly, coming up to me, "you shouldn't have done that. You've very nearly spoilt it all. Come on, let's go in and get your tobacco."

Basswood's proved to be one of those interesting combination tobacco, stationery, toy, and bookshops which are so common on the upper West Side. I have often noticed that these places are by no means unfruitful as hunting ground for books, because the dealers are wholly ignorant of literature and sometimes one may find on their shelves some forgotten volume that has been there for years, and which they will gladly part with for a song. A good many of these stores have, tucked away at the back, a shabby stock of circulating library volumes that have come down through many changes of proprietorship. Only the other day I saw in just such a place first editions of Kenneth Grahame's "The Golden Age" and Arthur Machen's "The Three Impostors," which the storekeeper was delighted to sell for fifteen cents each.

A dark young man was behind the tobacco counter, and from him I got a packet of my usual blend.

"Mr. Basswood in?" said Dulcet.

"Just stepped out," said the young man.

We lit our pipes and looked round the shop, glancing at the magazines and the queer miscellany of books. As it was approaching Christmas time there was a profuse assortment of those dreadful little bibelots that go by the name of "gift books," among which were the usual copies of "Recessional and Vampire," Thoreau's "Friendship," "Ballads of a Cheechako," bound in what the trade calls "padded ooze." I was particularly heartened to observe that one of these atrocities, called "As a Man Thinketh," was described on the box (for all such books come in little cardboard cases) as being bound in antique yap. This pleased me so much that I was about to call it to Dulcet's attention, when I saw that he was looking at me from the rear of the store with a spark in his eye. I approached and found that he was staring at a doorway partly concealed by a pile of Christmas toys and novelties. Over this door

was a sign, "J. Basswood, Rare Book Department."

"Can we go in and look at the rare books?" said Dulcet.

"Sure thing," said the young man. "Help yourself. The boss'll be back soon, if you want to buy anything."

Mr. Basswood was evidently a man of some literary discretion. To our amazement we found, in a dark little room lined with shelves, a judicious assortment of modern books, several hundred volumes, and all first editions or autographed copies. The prices were marked in cipher, so we could not tell whether there were any bargains among them, but I know that I saw several particularly rare and desirable things which I would have been glad to have.

"Good heavens," I said to Dulcet, "friend Basswood is a real collector. There isn't a thing here that isn't of prime value."

He was staring at a shelf in the corner, and I went over to see what he had found.

"Upon my soul," I cried, "look at the Digbies! Not merely one copy of each, but three or four! This man must have specialized in Digbies."

"Not only that," said Dulcet, "but he has three of 'The Autogenesis of a Novelist,' the first thing that Digby wrote. It was privately printed, and afterward suppressed. It's devilish rare, even I haven't got a copy. I wish I knew what prices he asks for these things."

"Look at this," I said. "Perhaps this will tell us." I picked up one of a pile of pamphlets that were lying in a large sheet of wrapping paper in a corner of the room. It was evidently a new catalogue of Mr. Basswood's rare books, that had just come from the printer.

"Here we are," I said, turning over the leaves. "Look at this."

SPECIAL NOTE

FINE COLLECTION OF DIGBIANA: J. Basswood wishes to call particular attention to the Digbiana listed below. Anticipating the growing interest in collectors' items of this great writer's work, J. Basswood has taken pains to gather a stock of first editions and presentation copies which is absolutely unique. The prices of these items, while high, are a fair index of the appreciation in which this author's work is held among connoisseurs. All are copies in good condition and their authenticity is guaranteed.

November 15, 19—

Dulcet seized the catalogue and ran his eye down the pages.

"'Girlhood,' first edition 'Boughton Rifflin Company, 1901, $100," he read. "'The Nuisance of Being Loved,' first edition, $75. 'The Princess Quarrelsome,' $90. 'The

Anatomy of Cheerfulness,' autographed copy, $150. 'Distemper,' acting copy, signed by the author and Richard Mansfield, $200.

"Why," he cried shrilly, "this is madness! I am in touch with all the dealers in this sort of thing, and I know the proper prices. This man has multiplied them by ten." He thrust the catalogue into his pocket and glared round at the musty shelves.

"I suppose it's due to poor Digby's death," I said. I saw that Dulcet was overwrought, and suggested that we go out and get some supper.

"Supper?" he said. "A good idea. I know a place on Broadway where we can get some guinea pigs." He strode out of the store and I followed, wondering what next. He seized my arm and hurried me along Seventy-ninth Street to Broadway.

In the clarid blue of the evening that blazing gully of light seemed to foam and bubble with preposterous fire. Chop suey restaurants threw out crawling streamers of red and yellow brilliance; against the peacock green of the western sky the queer church at the corner of Seventy-ninth, with the oriental pinnacle and truncated belfry rising above its solid Baptist wings, seemed like the offspring of some reckless marriage of two infatuated architects, one Jewish and one Calvinist. It was a fitting silhouette, I thought, congruent with an evening of such wild humors. Guinea pigs for supper, how original and enlivening! "Are guinea pigs properly kosher?" I asked sarcastically.

Dulcet paid no heed, but holding my arm urged me along the pavement to an animal shop on the western side of Broadway. The window was full of puppies and long-haired cats. All down the aisle of the establishment were tiers of birdcages, covered with curtains while the birds slept. In lucid bowls goldfish pursued their glittering and unprofitable round.

"Those guinea pigs I ordered," said Dulcet to the man, "are they ready?"

"All ready, sir," he said, and took out a cage from under the counter. "Very fine pigs, sir, strong and hearty; they will stand a great deal."

"Yes," I said, with a wild desire to shout with laughter. "But will they stand being eaten? They will find that rather trying, I fancy."

Dulcet tapped his forehead, and the dealer smiled indulgently. My companion took the cage, paid some money, and sped outdoors again. I made no further comment, and in a few minutes we were in Dulcet's apartment.

"You have no kitchenette here,

have you?" I protested. "Or do we devour them raw? Oh, I see, you have a camp oven. How ingenious!"

He had put on the table a large tin box. With complete seriousness he now produced a small spirit lamp, over which he fitted a little basket of fine wire mesh. When the flame of the lamp was lit, it played upon the basket, which was supported by legs at just the right height. He now put the unsuspecting guinea pigs into the tin box, which was shaped like a rural free delivery letter-box, with a hinged door opening at one end. He took the spirit lamp with its attached basket and pushed the contraption carefully into the box with the pigs. Then he opened both windows in the room.

"Admirable," I exclaimed. "Like those much advertised cigarettes, they will be toasted. But won't it take a long time?"

"Don't be an ass," he said.

He went to his desk, and took out the tin of Cartesian Mixture he had snatched away from me earlier in the evening.

"Your mention of those cigarettes is apt," he said, "for in this case also, the fuel is tobacco. Please go over by the window, and stay there."

I watched, somewhat impressed by the gravity of his manner. From the tin of tobacco he took a small pinch of mixture, and carefully placed it in the mesh basket above the lamp. Reaching into the box, he lit the wick of the lamp with a match, and hastily clapped to the hinged lid. The guinea pigs seemed to be awed by these proceedings, for they remained quiet. Dulcet joined me at the window, and remarked that fresh air was a fine thing.

We waited for about five minutes, while the guinea pig oven stood quietly on the table.

"Well," said Dulcet finally, "we ought to be able to see whether it rhymes or not."

He snatched open the door of the tin box, and skipped away from it in a way that seemed to me perfectly insane. He picked up a pair of tongs from the fireplace, and standing at a distance, lifted out the lamp. The tobacco was smoking strongly in its mesh basket. Holding the lamp away from him with the tongs, he carried it into the bathroom, and I heard him turn on the water. Then, coming back, he inserted the tongs into the tin box, and gingerly withdrew first one guinea pig and then the other. Both were calm as possible, quite dead. Looking over the sill to see that the pavement was clear, he threw the tin box into the street, where it fell with a crash.

"Surely they're not cooked already?" I said.

"I haven't heard from the doctor

yet," he said; "but he promised to ring me up this evening. I'm awfully sorry to have delayed your dinner, old man. Meet me at the Lucerne grill room, Seventy-ninth and Amsterdam Avenue, tomorrow evening at seven o'clock, and we'll eat together. You've been a great help to me."

"I hope the doctor is a mental specialist," I said; but he pushed me gently out of the room. "We'll finish our rhyme at dinner tomorrow evening."

I went out into the night, and sorrowfully visited a Hartford Lunch.

The next evening I was at the Lucerne grill promptly. This modest chop house was one of Dulcet's favorite resorts, and I found him already sitting in one of the alcoves studying the menu. He was in fine spirits, and his quizzical blue eyes shone with a healthy lustre.

"Are you armed?" he said, mysteriously.

"What," I cried, "are we going to do some more guinea pigs to death? It was cruel. I have scruples against taking innocent lives. Besides, your experiment proved nothing. Those pigs would have died anyway, shut up in an air-tight box like that."

"Stuff!" he said. "The box was not hermetic. I had left small apertures: there was plenty of oxygen. No, it was not the confinement in the tin box that killed them. After you had gone, the chemist whom I had consulted called me up. My suspicions were sound. Have you ever heard of fumacetic acid?"

This is going to be terrible, I thought to myself, and ordered tenderloin steak, well done, with a double order of hashed brown potatoes.

"Have you ever heard of fumacetic acid?" he repeated relentlessly.

"No," I said nervously.

"It is a deadly and little-known drug," he said, "which (so the chemist tells me) possesses the property that when vaporized the slightest whiff of it causes instant death if inhaled into the lungs. The tobacco in that tin had been doctored with it. I sent the chemist the pipe that poor Digby was smoking when he died, and he analyzed what was left in the bowl. There is no doubt whatever. He was poisoned in that way. I tell you, my professional duty as a literary agent requires that in my clients' interest I should sift this thing to the bottom. It may explain some of those earlier deaths that baffled the Authors' League."

"But Mrs. Carboy, surely, did not smoke," I was about to say; but I checked myself in time.

"Dove," I said, "you are superb. But I wish you would tell me how you worked the thing out. What was

it that first aroused your suspicions? If it had not been for you, I should never have guessed anything wrong."

"Of course," he said grimly, "it was that murderous placard in the laundry window, and that is to your credit, for you noticed it. That was the one thing that made plain the whole complicated business. Naturally I suspected the tobacco from the first, for (as I told you) it was a mixture that Digby never smoked ordinarily. But when I heard that that eccentric and damnable placard had been put there at the suggestion of the tobacconist next door, and then found that the tobacconist was also a bookseller, I knew the worst. I have spent today in rounding up the threads, and I think I may say without vainglory that the miscreant is in my power."

"But the man standing on one leg?" I said puzzled. "What was he up to, and why did he run?"

Dulcet's face shone with quiet triumph.

"I told you," he said, "to look for a nervous man smoking Cartesian Mixture. That tobacconist, Basswood, smokes Cartesian. It is a very moist, sticky blend, as you know. It can only be shaken out of the pipe, after smoking, by vigorously knocking the bowl on something hard. Very well, and if there is no stone step or something of that sort handy, what will a smoker tap his pipe on? Why, he will stand on one leg and knock it out on the lifted heel of the other. And his running away when you addressed him so whimsically, wasn't that a pretty good sign of nervousness — and also of a guilty and doubtful spirit?"

He finished his tumbler of near-beer that has made Milwaukee infamous, and leaned forward earnestly.

"You know very well," he said, "that that laundryman would never have thought of his grotesque notice, addressed to 'Artists and Authors,' if someone hadn't suggested it to him. Obviously he was only a gull. That card was intended as a decoy, to lure Digby away from his room, so that Basswood could leave the poisoned tobacco for him. Basswood had studied Digby's habits, and must have known that that notice about the collars would be sure to catch his eye. Now we had better be going. The police will be at Basswood's shop at eight o'clock."

I could have done with a little strong coffee, but he haled me out of the restaurant, and we walked up Amsterdam Avenue. How little, I reflected, did the passersby, hurrying about their kindly and innocent concerns, suspect our dark and perilous errand.

"The motive, of course," said

Dulcet, "was to profit by the increase of value Digby's death would give to his literary work. You will see a proof of that in a moment. Here we are. Come on, this is no time to hang back!"

He strode into the brightly lighted shop, and I followed with a clumsy assumption of carelessness. I must confess that my eye wandered in search of suitable cover in case there should be any gun play.

Mr. Basswood was behind his counter, smoking a battered looking briar. One side of the bowl was worn down nearly half an inch (from repeated knocking out on stone steps, I suppose). He was a fat, cross-looking person, with a black jut of moustache and a small vindictive eye.

"A friend told me about your bookshop," said Dulcet. "He said that you sometimes buy books and manuscripts and that sort of thing."

"Yes, sometimes," said Basswood, without enthusiasm.

"I have an unpublished story of Kenelm Digby's," said Dulcet. "It is about forty pages of manuscript. What would you give for that?"

The dealer's eyes brightened. He took his pipe out of his mouth, and knocked it out smartly on his heel, tramping on the glowing cinders. Dulcet looked at me gravely.

"Let me see it," Basswood said eagerly.

"I haven't got it with me. But give me an idea what it would be worth to you."

"If it is genuine, and characteristic of Digby's genius," said Basswood slowly, "I would give you two hundred dollars for it."

"Nonsense!" said Dulcet. "It isn't worth half that. I would not dream of selling it for more than seventy-five."

Basswood looked startled.

"I guess you are not in touch with the market for such things," he said. "There is more interest among collectors in Digby's work than in any other recent writer. Perhaps you don't realize what a difference his sad death has made in the prices of his editions. It is very regrettable, but the death of a writer of that kind always puts a premium on collectors' items, because there will never be any more of them."

"Oh, I see," said Dulcet politely. "It is his death that has made the difference, is it?"

"Exactly."

"Well, then I suppose this manuscript *is* worth more than I thought. By the way, I think the title of it will interest you. It is called 'The Mystery of the Soft Collars' and deals with a murder that took place on Eighty-second Street."

I couldn't help admiring the glorious nonchalance with which Dulcet

made this remark, gazing the dealer straight in the eye. Basswood's face was a study, and his cheek was pale and greasy. But he too was a man of considerable nerve.

"I don't believe it's genuine," he said. "That doesn't sound to me like Digby's style." His voice shook a little, and he added: "However, if it's as interesting as it sounds, I might pay even more than two hundred for it."

"You rascal!" shouted Dulcet. "Do you think you can buy me off? No, keep your hands above the counter!"

He had whipped out his revolver, and held it at the man's face.

"Look here, Mr. Basswood," he said. "Even the cleverest of us make mistakes. Let me call your attention to one thing. If it was Digby's death that made the difference in the values of his books, how is it that this bill from your printer, for that new catalogue of yours, is dated ten days before Digby died? I picked it up in your back room the other day. Doesn't that seem to show that you knew, ten days before the event, that there was going to be a sudden boom in Digbiana? Ten days before he died you were multiplying the prices of the items you had gathered. Now, you dog, explain that!"

Basswood shook, but still he clung to his hope.

"I'll give you a thousand for that manuscript," he said.

"Ben," said Dulcet to me, "just slip around the corner and whistle three times. The police are waiting on Eighty-fifth Street."

"There's still one thing that puzzles me," I said to Dulcet late that night as we sat in his room for a final smoke. "I remember that before we discovered that sign in the laundry you said that what we needed to do was to find a rhyme between tobacco and collar buttons. Now what the deuce started you off on collar buttons?"

He smiled patiently.

"When I had to pack up poor old Digby's belongings," he said, "I had the sad task of going through his bureau drawers. You know the devilish little buttons that the manufacturers insist on putting on soft collars. They always come off after one or two washings, and then the collar collapses round your neck into an object of slovenly reproach. Digby was a bachelor, and there was no one to do any mending for him. And when I found that every one of his soft collars had its little button neatly sewed on, I knew there was something wrong."

Up to the present time, as far as I know, Basswood remains the only bookseller ever to be electrocuted.

CrimInological Data

by JOHN L. COONEY

So you knew who the murderer was all the time? Before you start patting yourself on the back and complimenting yourself on your deductive powers, let's see how well you know your criminology. Below are listed ten questions. They all deal with some phase of the science of criminal investigation. Some are quite easy — but others might puzzle the immortal Sherlock Holmes.

If you can answer all ten correctly, you won't win $64.00 but you can consider yourself a criminologist *par excellence*. If you answer eight or nine correctly, you can still pass as a topnotch criminologist. If you answer seven — well, you're better than Watson.

After you answer the questions, please turn to page 127 for the correct answers.

1. When a criminal speaks of "casing a joint as a cold prowl," what does he mean?
2. Sherlock Holmes could recognize 42 different kinds of tobacco by their ash. Of what value would this knowledge be to the modern criminologist?
3. Explain briefly the system of criminal identification commonly known as "The Bertillon System."
4. What is known as a "Box Job"?
5. Modern police science has three separate and distinct phases. What are they?
6. What is meant by the term poroscopy in fingerprint identification?
7. If a man is on trial for murder and is acquitted by the jury, may the authorities institute a new action if more evidence is uncovered?
8. What may a detective deduce from tire marks left at the scene of the crime?
9. Where and when were fingerprints first used as a means of identification?
10. What is a "Hot Boiler"?

Let's begin by paraphrasing the famous lines —

> *"The time has come," the Walrus said,*
> *To talk of bests and worsts:*
> *Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax —*
> *Of EQMM's firsts."*

But seriously: the dominating purpose of this magazine is to bring to its readers the finest detective-crime short fiction ever written — both old and new. A vital part of this program, from the long-term point of view, is to discover new writers and to offer them a quality market for their maiden detectival efforts. Since our inaugural issue, dated Fall 1941, we have given American fans a remarkable number of first detective stories by new writers, aged fifteen years and up, to whom the pages of "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine" have been the happy medium of their first breaking into print.

These first stories have been sandwiched in between the works of the acknowledged masters in the field — Dashiell Hammett, Agatha Christie, John Dickson Carr, Dorothy L. Sayers, Georges Simenon, Edgar Wallace, H. C. Bailey — and the "unknown" detective stories written by the literary great, including Mark Twain, W. Somerset Maugham, O. Henry, H. G. Wells, James Hilton, Ellen Glasgow, and Gilbert K. Chesterton.

Some of the first detective-crime stories for which your Editor has assumed full baptismal responsibility are:

> *Samuel Duff's "The Bow-Street Runner"*
> *Craig Rice's first short story, "His Heart Could Break"*
> *Margaret Manners's "Squeakie's First Case"*
> *James Yaffe's "Department of Impossible Crimes"*
> *Lillian de la Torre's "Dr. Sam: Johnson, Detector"*
> *Cornelius A. Tilghman's "Death in the Dog House"*
> *Pat Hand's "The Showdown"*
> *Jerome and Harold Prince's "The Man in the Velvet Hat"*

And now we bring you another first detective story, this time by a young member of the U. S. Army — "Seeing Is Believing" by Sergeant Russell Hughes. It introduces you to Wilmurt Robin, alias Detective Inspector Robin of New Scotland Yard — the day-dreaming young man whose wildest dream came true. Another distinguished "first" — but let's end as we began: by paraphrasing — "Reading Is Believing."

SEEING IS BELIEVING

by SERGEANT RUSSELL S. HUGHES

MOMENTOUS happenings in the life of Wilmurt Robin were so scarce as to be non-existent. Their occurrences were remote possibilities that lay beyond even the scope of Mr. Robin's fertile and far-reaching imagination. It wasn't that he didn't believe himself capable of coping with any emergency. No, not at all. It was just that he had long ago given up hope that he would ever be called upon to put into play the enormous powers of ratiocination and analytical reasoning that were his when he assumed the brilliant character of Detective Inspector Robin, New Scotland Yard.

Therefore, Mr. Robin's entry into the case of the "Addonbury Chalice" was an exciting, totally unforeseen turn of fate.

On the morning of January fifteenth Mr. Robin walked to his office not at all the Detective Inspector. Instead, his mood was romantic, inspired by the sight of Miss Evelyn Thompson.

Miss Thompson was a faraway star in Robin's firmament. Once, in a daring mood, he had made discreet inquiries. Miss Thompson worked for a newspaper. She wrote. That in itself was enough for Mr. Robin. Anyone who could put on paper what Mr. Robin lived in a dream world was a person of untouchable remoteness. That Miss Thompson was lovely to look at helped also. Mr. Robin had never spoken to her — nor she to him. In fact, Robin was certain that she had never so much as glanced at him. Probably because Mr. Robin had always crossed the street when he saw her approaching.

So, on this morning his thoughts were not on crime but on the task of getting Miss Thompson through the wind-blistered trail that led precipitously up the Himalayas. Hostile Tibetans, angered by the Robin Everest Expedition, were close behind. All of Robin's day-dream faculties were strained.

Perhaps that was the reason he did not see Miss Thompson right away. When he finally realized that she was approaching him it was too late to cross the street. But there was no need to. Miss Thompson's heels clicked a hasty tattoo as she swirled past him.

Robin stopped short. Something was troubling the girl. Her face, usually serene, was drawn into a sharp, angry frown. Robin watched

her slim figure disappear around a corner and then he turned ahead.

Ten paces in front of him was the store of Conrad Wallace and Sons, Auctioneers and Dealers In Rare and Antique Objects. Standing in front of the store was a large, blue, Irish policeman. Obviously, thought Robin, the store and the policeman had something to do with Miss Thompson's anger. Policemen, to Robin, meant one thing — trouble. That, coupled with the girl's mood, made up Robin's mind for him. He immediately abandoned the Robin Everest Expedition and became Detective Inspector Robin, New Scotland Yard.

He walked briskly to the store, pressed his face against the plate-glass window and peered in. Inside were two men in animated conversation. One was slight, middle-aged, and wearing a hat. The other was elderly, beautifully dressed and seemed to be explaining something to the slight man. It took Detective Inspector Robin three seconds to place both men. The elderly man was Conrad Wallace. The slight man was a detective.

Robin pressed his nose flatter against the window and was trying to lip-read the conversation when he felt a prod against his ribs. He turned to find the Irish face of the policeman close to his own. The Irish face opened and said:

"Move along."

Just those words alone were certainly not enough to anger a man of Mr. Robin's placid temper. It was the tone. A condescending, unflattering tone implying that meek-looking men have no place in the brutal, kill-or-be-killed world of crime.

Now, in the life of every man, there is a moment when he finds himself face to face with the opportunity to take on, in reality, the most precious of his dream-world characters. Some men refuse the golden chance quickly. Others — very few others — grasp Fate by the horns and wade out into deep water. Mr. Robin had two incentives that morning. One, the policeman's condescension; the other, the fact that Miss Thompson was somehow embroiled in this affair.

So it was that three deep breaths later Mr. Robin found himself introduced to the elderly, beautifully dressed gentleman who was Lieutenant Rigby, New York Detective Force.

Mr. Robin forgot that he had deduced the wrong identities. The slight, middle-aged man was Conrad Wallace, proprietor of the store. All Mr. Robin knew or cared to know at the moment was that he had suddenly identified himself actually as

Detective Inspector Robin of New Scotland Yard. And that by a small white card, one of several he carried with him to give his nebulous character a touch of reality.

He looked wildly about him for a moment. The large policeman blocked the way to the door. Lieutenant Rigby was looking expectant. Conrad Wallace was nodding delightedly.

Mr. Robin felt terrible. Here he was, right in the middle of some sort of a crime surrounded by a Lieutenant of Detectives who by this time was eyeing Detective Inspector Robin sharply.

Let it be said to Mr. Robin's credit that he met the situation as he imagined he would always confront an emergency. He smiled. Weakly at first, then more broadly as he shook Rigby's hand. He wondered about an English accent and then realized he couldn't carry it off. So, when he spoke, it was in his normal manner.

"I'm very sorry to butt in like this, Lieutenant."

Rigby nodded: "No bother at all. Swell of you to take an interest. I'm sure Mr. Wallace won't mind."

Conrad Wallace ducked his head up and down. "Certainly not. This is quite an honor. And I think you'll find this quite a little problem, Inspector. Am I right, Lieutenant?"

Rigby frowned. "It's got its points. Care to hear about it, Inspector?"

Mr. Robin plunged all the way. "Of course. I'm on vacation. Been visiting my relatives in Canada. Born there, you know." Thus by a master stroke did Mr. Robin kill the necessity for an English accent and, at the same time, explain his presence.

Rigby smiled. "Busman's holiday. All right, Inspector. Here's the dope. Ever hear of the Addonbury Chalice?"

Mr. Robin nodded eagerly. Always a voracious reader, his tastes were catholic and he knew a great many things people would never expect him to know.

"Addonbury Chalice. Of course. Quite a collector's item. Found near Addonbury Abbey in England around . . . let's see . . . around the year 1548. Supposed to have been one of the cups used at the Last Supper. Not worth much intrinsically, but definitely worth quite an amount to a collector. It was stolen or it disappeared in the early nineteenth century. Turned up again about fifteen years ago. Sold to an American collector for twenty-five thousand dollars." Mr. Robin stopped.

There was a little silence. A silence in which the awe of the omnipotence and omniscience of the great could be felt like a warm wave that poured over Mr. Robin and turned him fiery red.

Rigby coughed and said: "That's it."

Conrad Wallace was almost hopping on one foot. Gleefully he turned to Rigby and said: "Wonderful — wonderful."

Mr. Robin felt something was needed from him so he said: "Sorry to have gone on like that — but . . ."

Rigby held up his hand. "Forget it, Inspector. It's a relief to get the straight dope without a lot of trimmings. Now — you say the thing disappeared in the early nineteenth century. Well, it's done it again."

Mr. Robin thrilled: "Gone again? Stolen . . . ?"

"So says Mr. Wallace." Rigby glared at the store owner.

"It certainly *was* stolen." Wallace glared back.

Wearily, Rigby turned back to Robin. "Look, Inspector, we'll give you the story straight — as straight as I got it — which is not too good. Come on back here."

He led the way toward the rear of the store, to a small room closed off from the store proper by a glass-panelled door. He stopped at the door. "Now," he went on, "here's where the thing gets fishy. See that cabinet in there?" Rigby pointed through the glass panel into the little room beyond at an oak cabinet that stood against a wall. The side of the cabinet faced the door.

Mr. Robin nodded.

Rigby continued: "Well, the Addonbury Chalice was in that cabinet this morning at eight-thirty — so Mr. Wallace says."

Conrad Wallace pushed his hat back on his head. "It certainly was. I have no reason to believe I'm either going blind or losing the power of identifying my own property."

"Okay. So you saw it. Now, Inspector, at nine o'clock this morning there was to be an auction. The Chalice was one of the items offered for sale. At eight-thirty a young woman, Miss Evelyn Thompson, came into the store and asked for permission to look at the Chalice. She said she was doing an article for a Sunday supplement about precious relics and the Chalice was good enough for a feature. So — Mr. Wallace here gave her permission to look at the Chalice. Okay. She walked in the room, in company with Loring — he's one of the clerks here." Rigby opened the glass-panelled door and went into the room. Robin followed, aglow with the thrill of the hunt. Gone now was all his fear of discovery. All he knew was that miraculously his dream character had come to life and was on a real case — a case moreover in which Miss Thompson figured.

Rigby walked to the cabinet and stopped. "Now, Inspector, see if you

can get any sense out of this. Mr. Wallace says that Loring opened the cabinet like this." Rigby suited action to words. "Then Loring took the Chalice from the top shelf, handed it to Miss Thompson who after looking at it for a couple of minutes, handed it back to Loring. He returned it to the shelf, closed the cabinet and ushered the girl out of the room. She was in the store about ten minutes. That right?" Rigby looked at Wallace.

"Quite right," said Wallace.

"Okay. Now — to make a long story short and even more fishy — no one came into this room until nine o'clock, when the Chalice was to be brought out for sale. Loring came in to get it, opened the cabinet and nearly fainted when he saw that the thing was missing. Gone — like that." Rigby snapped his fingers.

Mr. Robin felt a dreadful sinking feeling at the pit of his stomach. What had he got into? Why had he done this? Here was a case that would have been a poser for Detective Inspector Robin at his best. It was one thing to think up cases in the mind and solve them in the same mind. You knew all the clues then — or you simply invent them. It was just a mental game to hide the guilty party until the right moment. Robin realized that Wallace and Rigby were staring at him. He had to say something — do something. But what? He cleared his throat and edged toward the cabinet. Weakly his voice came.

"The Chalice was on the top shelf?"

Wallace nodded and leaned forward as if expecting Mr. Robin to materialize the stolen object.

"You're certain you saw Loring put it back? I mean — the girl couldn't have slipped it into a bag, under her coat . . . or . . . or something like that?" Robin realized that his groping was flimsy.

Rigby shrugged his shoulders. "We've gone all over that, Inspector. Mr. Wallace is willing to swear that he saw the girl hand the Chalice back to Loring and saw Loring put it back on the shelf."

Robin shook his head in self-pity. The others thought it was a gesture of perplexity. Robin turned to the cabinet. He looked into it. It was empty but for a small, bronze cup on the bottom shelf. He wished that some alchemy of concentrated thought would change this cup into the missing Chalice. He had to say something again. It was expected of him.

Then inspiration came to Robin. He felt a little guilty using Miss Thompson as the means, but he had to establish himself firmly. He turned to Rigby and said:

"By the way — this girl — Miss

Thompson. Is she about five feet two, brown hair and eyes, slender? And was she wearing a tailored brown gabardine suit, small hat to match, dark green gloves?"

Again there was that awed silence. Mr. Robin felt like Sherlock Holmes in front of two Watsons. Rigby blinked and answered:

"Yes — that fits her."

Robin nodded wisely and walked slowly toward the cabinet hoping desperately that no one would ask how he knew. But the shock of his out-of-thin-air description of Miss Thompson was still strong upon Rigby and Wallace. They stared. Robin turned back to Rigby.

"I should like to speak to the girl. And Loring."

Rigby nodded. "Okay. Loring's right outside. As for the girl, she —" Rigby stopped short, cocked his head on one side and looked shrewdly at Robin. A tiny smile touched his mouth. He walked to the door and raised his voice: "Loring, come in here." He looked back at Robin. "The girl will be back soon. We couldn't hold her, of course, so we let her report to her paper. Matter of fact, she left just a minute or so before you came in, Inspector." Again there was that shrewd, appraising look.

Robin became uncomfortable. Why couldn't he have left well enough alone? Just coming into this as a fake was bad enough; but he had to ornament his character with pseudo-deduction. Just as he was about to say something a dapper young man slid into the room, smiled in a superior way, and waited.

Thankfully, Robin turned to him and disliked Mr. Loring on sight. He thought furiously of a way to pin the crime on him. He asked: "Mr. Loring, you're quite sure that the *girl* put the Chalice back on the shelf?"

Loring smirked. "Not at all, sir. *I* put it back on the shelf. The top shelf."

Detective Inspector Robin would know how to deal with a smirking young man. But the real-life Mr. Robin could only say: "Yes, of course. Well, then, Mr. Loring — you *know* that the Chalice went back on its shelf immediately after the young lady finished looking at it?"

Loring grinned like a cat. "Absolutely, sir. The young lady handed it to me and I placed it on the top shelf. Mr. Wallace will verify that, I think."

Wallace threw up his hands. "If I'm asked to say that again . . ."

Rigby grunted. "Sometimes people see things. I mean *see* things." His tone was nasty.

Wallace bridled. "Look here, Lieu-

tenant; I know what you're thinking. Insurance and all that. Well, I stand to lose more by the disappearance of the Chalice than I could possibly gain from insurance. You can check on that."

"Okay. Just trying to get some place." Rigby turned to Robin. "Well, Inspector, what's your idea?"

Robin wished himself far, far away. Here he was — an impostor — faced with a problem that couldn't possibly have a solution. When he spoke his words came slowly.

"Is it possible someone might have entered this room after the young lady and Loring left?"

For answer Conrad Wallace waved his arms to take in the entire room in the gesture. "Inspector, you can see for yourself that the door is the only entrance or exit to this room. The door is glass-panelled. If anyone had entered after Mr. Loring and the girl left, I most certainly would have noticed it."

Rigby spread his hands. "How do we know that? Someone might have come back in. Loring, for example."

All eyes went to Loring. The young man daintily straightened his tie, smiled silkily and said: "Yes, that's true. I might have. But between the time the young lady and I left the room and the time I re-entered to get the Chalice for the auction, I was busy with other details. Mr. Elliot can vouch for that."

Wallace nodded. "Right enough. Loring was arranging for the auction. He and Mr. Elliot were at the far side of the store."

Robin spoke up. "Let's see, then: the girl and Loring were in here at approximately eight-thirty. They remained here for about ten minutes. Is that correct?"

Loring smiled agreement.

"That would leave about twenty minutes between your departure from and your return to the room."

This time Loring's smile was accompanied by a mocking little bow.

"And in those twenty minutes the Chalice was stolen."

"That's it, Inspector." Rigby walked to the door of the room. "Now, all we've got to do is figure who got in here and how."

Conrad Wallace squeaked: "Good God, man, you're back where you were a half-hour ago. We know all this."

Rigby smiled sourly. "*Exactly* where we were. But we had to go over it again to give the Inspector an idea of what happened."

Robin thought he detected a note of sarcasm in Rigby's voice. Or was it the first tinkle of suspicion? Mr. Robin wanted to escape — to invent some excuse that would get him out. He was saved by Miss Thompson — this time in person.

She came into the room followed by the large policeman who looked uncomfortable. Miss Thompson looked around the room, then spoke:

"Well, I hope this is the last time I'm to be brought back here."

"Certainly, Miss Thompson, certainly. Please sit down." Rigby introduced the girl to Robin. There was something not quite natural about Rigby's courtesy. Robin decided it was much too elaborate.

Miss Thompson sat down, coolly. Rigby stood in front of her.

"Now, Miss Thompson. We don't want you to be frightened — or nervous."

The girl looked up. "I certainly have no reason to be, have I?"

Rigby's quick little frown smoothed itself out in a smile. "Of course not. All we want is that you tell Inspector Robin what happened this morning."

Miss Thompson glanced at Robin — sharply. She kept her eyes on his face as she spoke.

Her story was exactly the same as he had heard from the others. When she finished, Robin reflected that he was left with the same twenty minutes between the time the girl and Loring left the room and the time Loring returned to bring the Chalice out for the auction.

Lieutenant Rigby shook his head sadly. His voice was mournful.

"Somebody's lying here. Either the Chalice was missing when Miss Thompson and Loring left the room or it was stolen in those twenty minutes."

Conrad Wallace spoke: "I've told you fifty times, Lieutenant, that no one — *no one* came into this room in those twenty minutes. Good God, man, I have eyes — I can see."

Robin cleared his throat. "If I may suggest, Lieutenant, perhaps the other clerks . . ."

Lieutenant Rigby went to the door and called the remaining two clerks. They came in — frightened and nervous.

Rigby looked at Robin. "Maybe you'd like to question them."

Mr. Robin was certain he had no idea where to begin. But he went ahead. The first clerk's name was Claridge. He, too, told the same story. Yes — he'd seen the girl and Loring enter the room. Yes — he'd seen them come out. Loring had closed the door behind him, escorted the girl to the door, and then had busied himself with the other clerk, Elliot, until it was time for him to get out the Chalice. No — no one else had entered the room.

Elliot told the same story.

Mr. Robin felt helpless — adrift on an oceanic crime without a straw of a clue. Detective Inspector Robin was strangely absent. He had deserted his creator in his greatest hour

of need. Robin felt panic creeping up around his head and buzzing in his ears. He was conscious again of the expectant stares. Now the stares were slightly contemptuous and he got a little angry and blurted out:

"It's pretty obvious that someone is lying." The words sounded foolish and trite. Rigby had said them before. Robin tried again. "The Chalice just didn't take wings." This remark also was greeted with undisguised disappointment. Loring sneered openly and began polishing his nails on his coat lapel. Conrad Wallace pushed his hat farther back on his head and threw up his hands. Rigby alone looked somewhat sympathetic as he said:

"It's a poser, all right, Inspector. We've looked all over this joint and the Chalice just isn't here. Whoever took it got it out of the store. And no one's been out of this store but Miss Thompson."

Miss Thompson smiled. "I suppose that makes me guilty?"

Lieutenant Rigby shook his head. "Didn't say so, did we?"

The girl stood up. "No, not exactly. But the implication was there, Lieutenant. And now, if you're through with me, I should like to leave. I have work to do."

"Okay, you can go. But you'll be watched, Miss Thompson."

The girl turned toward the door. "I'm sure of it. And I'm equally sure that whoever watches me will be so disappointed."

Robin started. Something hit him in the back of the head. An idea. Just a tiny seedling of deduction that began its germination in something he had seen and stowed away in his subconscious. So, surprised even at himself, he said: "Er . . . if you don't mind, Miss Thompson — I should like to walk with you a little."

Robin saw Loring's quick frown. Rigby squinted at Robin.

"You're leaving us, Inspector . . . ?"

"Yes. I'm sure there's nothing more we can do here."

"Okay. But maybe you'd like to let me know where I can get in touch with you."

Miss Thompson smiled and said: "Since I haven't had any lunch you'll probably be able to reach the Inspector at the *Maison Gaston* — on Sixth Avenue. He's taking me to lunch there."

Robin experienced a violent flutter. He bowed slightly and felt more foolish than ever when he straightened up.

Twenty minutes later he was sitting opposite Miss Thompson watching her do justice to a shrimp cocktail. He tried to tell himself that he had gone with her as Detective Inspector Robin — purely in the in-

terests of deduction. But he knew he was wrong. So many things had happened and now, by the miracle of coincidence (and his own unprecedented actions), he was sitting opposite the girl whom he knew only as one who walked apart from him.

Miss Thompson spoke suddenly: "Do you think I took the Chalice, Inspector?"

Robin started. The question brought him back to earth. He realized he had to desert romance and clothe himself in the impervious character of the Detective Inspector. He said: "I don't know, Miss Thompson. You're obviously clever enough to carry through a daring crime." His speech sounded stilted. That wasn't what he had intended to say. It was small consolation to realize it was the "Detective Inspector" who had said it.

The girl didn't seem perturbed. She buttered a roll and went on: "Thank you. That's a nice compliment — rather left-handed — but nice." She smiled.

Robin took courage. "Certainly you or Loring had the opportunity. Or both of you — er — together."

"Together?" The girl puckered her nose.

"But I don't think you were accomplices!"

"Why not?"

"Because you're not the type to associate with a person like Loring."

Evelyn smiled. "That's very shrewd, Inspector. And, as it happens, I never saw Loring before in my life." She broke the roll and nibbled on it.

Robin watched her. As he did, that small, insistent tapping at the back of his mind started up again. What was it that he had seen? Something — something. He broke out of his worried thought to find the girl staring at him peculiarly. Robin started to say something but she spoke first:

"Why do you think I suggested that you take me out to lunch?"

Now Robin knew what she was going to say. He cringed a little. Like a small boy with his fist caught in the cookie jar. But he had to go through with it.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because you're no more an inspector than I am."

Mr. Robin drooped visibly. He didn't try to defend himself or deny her statement. All he wanted to do was crawl away. He felt an infinite sadness when he realized that he could never be anything like the Detective Inspector of his day dreams. He was a misfit. A never-do-anything who lived adventure in an armchair and experienced thrills and excitement only through the vicarious medium of imagination. But now he

stood revealed as just plain, ordinary Wilmurt Robin. That realization hurt more than anything else. His failure to live up to his created character stabbed deeper than his exposure as a fraud. He looked at Miss Thompson and she looked at him. Mr. Robin wondered what she was thinking. His long silence, he knew, had confirmed her accusation. Finally she went on:

"Just what your game is — or was — I don't know. All I want to know is — why do you pass yourself off as a detective?"

"How did you know I wasn't?"

"Oh, the detective part might have fooled me. But not the Scotland Yard variety you claimed. In the first place, there's your overcoat. The label inside shows you bought it here in New York. The coat is worn, therefore you couldn't have bought it recently unless you bought it second-hand. That's unlikely. When you took your hat off as we came in here, I saw the label in that. Same thing. No, you're not an Inspector from Scotland Yard."

Robin fumbled with a spoon. He said lamely: "You — you're a detective yourself." He tried to laugh a little. It sounded weak and flat.

The girl's expression changed. Became softer. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to sound — smart. The overcoat and hat deductions were — well — maybe I was doing a little acting of my own."

"Acting?"

"Yes. You see — I knew I'd seen you somewhere before. On the street, wasn't it? Maybe we live in the same neighborhood. . . ."

Robin's spirits lifted. "You mean — you've *noticed* me?" That sounded foolish, too. He went on quickly: "All right, Miss Thompson — I — I'm an impostor. But I honestly didn't mean to be. I — I . . ." Robin stopped for a moment and then, in a burst of words told the girl the whole thing. When he finished he was astonished to see that her eyes were a little moist. That made him feel worse. Her laughter and amusement he could have understood and accepted. But her pity . . . He got up to go but she pulled him down again.

"Please — there's nothing so wrong about what you've done. Misrepresentation, of course — but . . ." She shrugged her shoulders. "I think it took courage to do what you did. Most of us day dream but we're ashamed to admit it. The fact that you tried to live what you wanted to be — well — I like it."

Robin shook his head. "But there's nothing I can do about it. I mean about Rigby. He'll find out — as you did."

Miss Thompson spoke firmly.

"Then there's only one thing left for you to do. Solve the thing. Find out who took the Chalice."

Mr. Robin smiled sadly. "Is that all? No, Miss Thompson, I'm afraid it's impossible. I'm simply not cut out to be a detective."

The girl laughed softly. "But you are."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because you knew I didn't steal the Chalice. Didn't you?"

Robin looked at her sharply. He wondered if she was trying to sound him out. He suspected her of reading his mind. Of probing back into his subconscious and seeing that little, half-formed idea.

Evelyn went on, over his thoughts. "You must have some sort of instinct for it or you wouldn't have believed I'm innocent. Am I right?"

She leaned across the table toward him. Robin nodded without speaking.

"All right then. Use your brain. You have imagination. Try to think who might have taken the Chalice in those twenty minutes and how it was done without anyone seeing it." She sat back in her chair as if that was all there was to it.

"But it's so hopeless! If you or Loring didn't steal it then . . ." Robin's voice trailed off. Then he sat up straight in his chair. The notion in the back of his mind was bouncing more violently now. It was trying to break through into clear space where it could be seen plainly. The girl must have seen it on his face because she looked eagerly at him.

He drummed on the table with his fingers. "There *is* something. Either something I saw or heard. But I can't quite remember . . ."

"Who said it — or did it?"

"I don't know. But it has something to do with that cabinet — I think. At least, I keep going back to that cabinet."

She looked disappointed. "But there was nothing wrong with it, I'm sure. No trap doors or secret panels. It's just an ordinary . . ."

Robin interrupted. "No . . . I don't mean that. Nothing that fancy. It's just . . ." He stopped suddenly and his eyes widened.

The girl grasped his arm. "Go ahead."

"Look, Miss Thompson, do you think that you could sketch the Chalice for me?"

Evelyn frowned. "Sketch the Chalice?"

"Yes — draw a picture of it. Here's a pencil. Draw it on the back of the menu."

The girl took the pencil, looked at Robin for a moment and then began to sketch. As the drawing took form, Mr. Robin fidgeted in his chair. Before the sketch was finished he

grabbed it.

"It's not very good but it'll give you an idea."

Robin almost shouted. "An idea? It's given me the whole thing! Miss Thompson, are you hungry? I mean, do you still want lunch?"

Bewildered, the girl shook her head. "But I don't see. . . ."

"Never mind. We're going back to Wallace's." Mr. Robin was halfway from his chair when the hand fell on his shoulder.

Lieutenant Rigby had never been a fool — so it wasn't like him to accept the presence of an Inspector from New Scotland Yard without question. Certain inquiries had convinced him that Robin was either mad or playing a sharp game. The Lieutenant inclined to the second idea.

Still keeping his hand on Robin's shoulder, he sat down and smiled happily. "Well, Inspector, we're so happy to have had you with us. And you'll probably be with us a lot longer."

Robin looked at Evelyn Thompson and took heart. He said: "Lieutenant, I know you think I'm crazy. . . ."

Rigby interrupted. "Not at all, Robin. I just think you're very dumb. I didn't expect to find you here. I can't figure out why you didn't use the gate while it was open." He shook his head sadly.

"I don't know how you managed to pinch the Chalice. But that we can find out. What I don't get is why you thought *we* were so dumb. Didn't you know we'd check on you? And, when you knew that, why didn't you evaporate?"

Mr. Robin's words came in a rush. To the Lieutenant he told the same story he'd told the girl. When he stopped he saw that Rigby's expression was one of mingled skepticism and puzzlement. The Lieutenant looked at the girl, then back at Robin before he spoke: "You're nuts. You don't expect anyone — a jury, for example — to swallow that?"

"I don't expect anyone to consider it the action of an adult, Lieutenant, but I want you to give me a chance. What if I told you I know who took the Chalice — and how it was done?"

Rigby grunted. "You're still nuts. Anyway, let's see what papers you've got on you to identify yourself."

Eagerly, Robin pulled out his wallet, spilled its contents. As he did so he said: "You can check where I work, where I live. Describe me and everyone will tell you who I am."

Evelyn Thompson spoke. "Please, Lieutenant . . ."

The Lieutenant threw up his hands and raised his eyes: "I'll be fried in

oil if I've ever came across anything as screwy as this. But — well, maybe you're telling the truth."

The girl smiled at Robin.

"But," Rigby went on, "you're still not out of the woods. You know you just can't walk right in on a police investigation and impersonate an Inspector from Scotland Yard and then expect us to pat you on the back and send you back home. Hell, no — there's more to it than that."

"I know that, Lieutenant. But I'm positive I've got it all figured out. Please, take us back to Wallace's. Just let me check on one or two more points. Then, if I'm not right, you can do anything you want with me."

Rigby stuck out his lower lip. "You mean you're willing to take the rap for impersonating an officer if you're not right about your solution?"

Robin nodded.

"You're willing to stake your freedom on your ability as an amateur detective?"

"Yes."

Rigby laughed loud and long. When he caught his breath he said: "Robin, you might be nuts — you might even be a pixie — but, by God, you've got the guts to back up your insanity. Okay, let's go."

Everyone sat in the little room from which the Chalice had been taken. There was Wallace, Elliot, Claridge, Miss Thompson, Rigby, the large Irish policeman, and Loring. Robin stood to one side, nervous. He glanced at Rigby who nodded.

Robin cleared his throat and began: "Ladies and gentlemen . . ."

Someone tittered. It was Loring.

Robin frowned and went on. "Early this morning between eight-forty and nine o'clock the Addonbury Chalice was stolen from this room." Robin walked to the cabinet. "When it was last seen, or apparently last seen, it was in this cabinet. Is that correct, Mr. Wallace?"

Wallace started to speak, changed his mind, and just nodded.

"All right. From that statement we can conclude that the Chalice was stolen in the twenty minutes between the time Miss Thompson left the room with Loring and the time Loring came back in to get the Chalice for the auction. Does everyone agree to that?"

Everyone nodded.

Robin warmed to his subject. "Very well. No one came into this room during those twenty minutes. That's also agreed. So, since it is obviously impossible to take an object from a room without entering it, then we must look for another way in which the thief spirited the

Chalice from the cabinet."

Without realizing it, Robin was finally playing Detective Inspector Robin — even to the language. Robin continued. "Now we have a paradox. The Chalice was stolen without anyone coming near it. Impossible. Mr. Wallace, when was the last time you saw the Chalice?"

Wallace turned fiery red with anger. "Blast it, I told you — when Loring put it back in the cabinet after Miss Thompson finished looking at it."

Mr. Robin smiled and opened the doors of the cabinet. He looked directly at Wallace. "Mr. Wallace, have you ever attended a magic show?"

Conrad Wallace tried his best to stay calm. The tone of his voice clearly implied he was humoring an idiot. "Yes — what of it?"

"Then you know that sometimes you don't really see things you *think* you see. I mean, the magician shows you a large red ball. He places the ball in plain sight. He does things with it until he's sure that its size and shape are impressed on your mind. Then he throws a cloth over the ball and apparently carries it to another table. When he removes the cloth the ball is gone. In short, Mr. Wallace, you merely assumed the ball was under the cloth. It was really left on the first table — pushed into a well — or behind the table onto an invisible tray. Do you follow me?"

Rigby was sitting up straight in his chair. Evelyn Thompson leaned forward, intent on Mr. Robin. The others were frowning.

"In a similar manner you were fooled this morning, Mr. Wallace."

Wallace exploded. "That's nonsense! I know the Chalice when I see it."

"Yes — when you *see* it. Do me a favor. Go outside and stand in the store. Look in here just as you did this morning when you saw Loring put the Chalice back into the cabinet."

Wallace rose slowly and left the room. He stood directly outside, peering intently through the glass panel.

Robin beckoned to Evelyn Thompson. "Now, Miss Thompson, pretend I'm Loring. We start from the door of the room. . . ." Robin closed the doors of the cabinet, then led Miss Thompson to the entrance to the room. Taking her arm, he led her back to the cabinet. "As Loring, I open the doors of the cabinet — so. I take the Chalice from the cabinet and hand it to you."

No one but Robin noticed the tiny gasp that came from the girl. He silenced it by talking quickly over it. "Good! Now examine the Chalice — talk with me as you talked

with Loring. Look at the cup I handed you — pretend it's the Chalice. Now hand it back to me and watch me put it back on the shelf and close the cabinet doors." Robin followed words with action and then waved the girl to her chair.

Rigby slumped down in his chair with a muffled, "I'll be ——"

Robin beckoned Wallace into the room. Slowly, Conrad Wallace came in. Robin spoke: "Well, sir . . . ?"

Wallace hesitated a second, then: "Mr. Robin, I owe you an apology. I couldn't see a thing the way you and Miss Thompson were standing. I saw only the motions."

"I know. I saw that this morning. It bothered me but I didn't realize what it meant. Not until it came to me all of a sudden. The door of this cabinet opens toward the door to the room. When you look in from the store, the hands of anyone standing by the cabinet — and anything they hold — *are hidden by the door of the cabinet.* Isn't that true, Mr. Wallace?"

Wallace ducked his head in assent.

"Therefore, the power of suggestion did the rest. Mr. Wallace saw Loring take something from the cabinet, hand it to Miss Thompson, who then examined the object and handed it back to Loring. Loring put the object back on the shelf. The object was *not* the Chalice but this other cup remaining in the cabinet. Miss Thompson's rough sketch will prove that."

Robin pulled the menu from his pocket. He threw open the cabinet doors again and took out a cup. "This is the cup that was shown to Miss Thompson by Loring — not the Chalice."

Wallace spoke: "But where's the Chalice?"

Robin smiled. "That you'll have to ask of the man who saw it last. I mean *really* saw it last. You should know who that is, Mr. Wallace."

"By Heaven, I do! Loring, you put the cup in the cabinet last night. You locked this room and we all left."

Loring was sickly green: "Of course I did. You saw me put it back last night."

"But I didn't — you only said you did."

Loring shook his head feebly. "You can't prove a thing."

Robin jumped in with both feet. "Oh, but I think we can! It's unlikely that you've got rid of it since you stole it last night. You said you put it into the cabinet, but you really carried it out with you. You wondered how to clear yourself of suspicion that inevitably would fall on you. When Miss Thompson came in this morning, you got your chance. You knew she had never seen the

Chalice before — so it was easy to pass this other cup off on her as the real Chalice. Mr. Wallace, watching the whole thing — or *thinking* he was watching the whole thing — made it perfect for you. And you saw to it that you had a perfect alibi for the twenty minutes that followed. . . . Lieutenant Rigby, I suggest you search Loring's apartment. If the Chalice isn't there, check with all the collectors."

Rigby got to his feet. There was no need to collar Loring. He couldn't move. The Lieutenant turned to Robin and said: "If there's insanity in your family, I wish to God some like it would run in mine. Okay, Loring, let's go."

The night was crisp — not cold. Full of a good dinner, Wilmurt Robin stepped out into the darkness with assurance. What he had done that day had suffused him with the comfortable, satisfied feeling that comes to a man when he has done something over and beyond the range of ordinary affairs. But it had come close to tragedy. Robin stopped. He took out his wallet and from it extracted several white oblongs of cardboard. Robin tore them up slowly — regretfully. He was breaking off forever with Detective Inspector Robin, New Scotland Yard. He sighed as the fluttering white pieces flashed under the light of a street lamp and were swallowed up in the shadow of a refuse can.

Robin squared his shoulders and started down the dim street. He almost didn't hear the soft voice that said: "Exit, Detective Inspector Robin."

Robin wheeled around.

Miss Thompson smiled, took his arm and said: "We're going the same way, aren't we?"

There were no words for Robin then. Only the exultant feeling that somehow the exodus of Detective Inspector Robin didn't matter any more. He straightened his shoulders, smiled and nodded.

The two figures melted into the deep night. Wilmurt Robin was realizing another dream.

To the best of our knowledge "A Lesson in Crime" by G. D. H. and M. I. Cole has never before appeared in the United States — one of the very few Superintendent Wilson stories that American devotees have not had the good fortune to read. It was the title story of a book published in London eleven years ago; why the book was not issued on this side of the Atlantic is a mystery only the Coles could explain — and perhaps even they do not know.

"A Lesson in Crime" is a disturbing tale (disturbing to your Editor) about a detective-story writer who meets a dissatisfied and vindictive reader — with fatal consequences. (Don't let this story give you any ideas!) "A Lesson in Crime" might also be called "A Lesson in Crime Writing" — genus: modern British school; species: once-over-lightly style, with a gentle sprinkling of satire.

A LESSON IN CRIME

by G. D. H. and M. I. COLE

JOSEPH NEWTON settled himself comfortably in his corner of a first-class compartment on the Cornish Riviera express. So far, he had the compartment to himself; and if, by strewing rugs, bags, books and papers about he could make himself look numerous enough to drive fellow-travellers away, there was hope he might remain undisturbed — for the long train was far from full. Let us take a look at him, and learn a little about him before his adventures begin — and end.

Age? Forty-five would not be a bad guess, though, in fact, he is rather less. As for his physical condition, "well-nourished" is a polite description; and we, who desire to have no illusions, can safely call him paunchy, and, without positive grossness, flabby with good living. His face is puffy; his mouth is loose, and inclined to leer.

His fair hair, which is rapidly growing thin, is immaculately brushed, and his clothes are admirably cut and well-tended, though he has not the art of wearing them well. Altogether he looks a prosperous, thoroughly self-satisfied, and somewhat self-indulgent member of the British middle class; and that is precisely what he is.

His walk in life? You would put him down as a business man, possibly a merchant or a middle-sized employer, not a professional man. There you would be both right and wrong. He is a professional man, in a sense; and he is certainly in business.

In fact, he is Joseph Newton, the best-seller, whose crime stories and shockers were plastered all over the bookstall he has just left with his burden of newspapers under his arm.

He has sold — heaven knows how many million copies of his stories, and his serial rights, first, second, and third, cost fabulous sums to secure.

But why describe him further? All the world knows him. And now he is on his way to Cornwall, where he has a pleasant little seaside cottage with twenty-seven bedrooms.

The train starts, and Newton's carriage still remains empty save for himself. He heaves a fat sigh of relief and picks up a magazine, in which he turns instinctively to a story by himself. For the moment he cannot remember who wrote it. Poor stuff, he thinks. He must find out which "ghost" was responsible, and sack him.

Joseph Newton was interrupted in his reflections at this point by the consciousness that someone was looking at him. He glanced up and saw the figure of a man who was standing in the corridor and staring fixedly at him, with a curious air of abstraction. Newton stared back, trying to look as unwelcoming as possible. It would be really bad luck, he felt, if someone were to invade his compartment now.

The newcomer, after a moment more of staring, pushed back the door and came in, flinging down on top of one of Newton's bags a rug and a pillow done up in a strap. He seemed to have no other luggage. Newton unwillingly got up and cleared a corner of his belongings, and the stranger sat down and began to unbuckle his strap. Then he settled himself comfortably with the pillow behind his head, and closed his eyes. "I hope to goodness he doesn't snore," Newton thought.

While our second traveller is thus peacefully settling himself for a doze, we may as well take a good look at him also; for it may be important to know him later on. He is a scraggy little man, probably of sixty or more, with a completely bald pink head and a straggling grey beard which emerges from an incredibly folded and puckered yellow chin. His height is hardly more than five foot six, and his proportions are puny; but there is a wiriness about his spare person that contrasts strongly with Newton's fleshy bulk.

He is dressed, not so much ill as with a carelessness amounting to eccentricity. His clothes, certainly cut by a good tailor, hang in bags all over him. His pockets bulge. His waistcoat is buttoned up wrong, and sets awry, and his shirt has come apart at the neck, so that a disconsolate shirt-stud is hanging out on one side, while his red tie is leaning towards the other. Moreover, the sole of one of his boots has come loose, and flaps helplessly as his

crossed leg swings slowly to the rhythm of the train.

Yet, despite these appearances, the newcomer is certainly a gentleman, and one is inclined to deem him eccentric rather than poor. He might be an exceptionally absent-minded professor; though, as a matter of fact, he is not. But who he is Joseph Newton has no idea.

For some time there was silence in the compartment, as the Cornish Riviera sped westward past the long, spreading ribbon of London. Newton's fellow-traveller did not snore. His eyes were closed whenever Newton glanced at him; and yet between whiles the novelist had still a queer feeling of being stared at. He told himself it was nonsense, and tried to bury himself in a Wild West story; but the sensation remained with him. Suddenly, as the train passed Maidenhead Station, his companion spoke, in a quiet positive voice, as of one used to telling idiots what idiots they were. A professional voice, with a touch of Scots accent.

"Talking of murders," it said, "you have really no right to be so careless."

"Eh?" said Newton, so startled that his magazine dropped from his hand to the floor. "Eh, what's that?"

"I said you had no right to be so careless," repeated the other.

Newton retrieved his magazine, and looked his fellow-traveller contemptuously up and down. "I am not aware," he said, "that we were talking of murders, or of anything else, for that matter."

"There, you see," said the other, "you did hear what I said the first time. What I mean to say is that, if you expect intelligent people to read your stories, you might at least trouble to make them plausible."

Newton suppressed the rejoinder that rose instantly to his lips. It was that he had far too large a circulation among fools to bother about what intelligent people thought. He only said, "I doubt, sir, if you are likely to find my conversation any more satisfactory than my books," and resumed his magazine.

"Probably not," said the stranger. "I expect success has spoiled you. But you had some brains to begin with. . . . Those Indian stories of yours ——"

Perhaps no other phrase would have induced Joseph Newton to embark upon a conversation with the stranger. But nobody nowadays ever read or bothered about his Indian stories, though he was very well aware that they were the best things he had ever done.

"—— had glimmerings of quality," the other was saying, "and you might have accomplished something

had you not taken to writing for money."

"Are you aware, sir," Newton said, "that you are being excessively rude?"

"Quite," said the other with calm satisfaction. "I always am. It is so good for people. And really, in your last book, you have exceeded the limit."

"Which of my last books are you talking about?" asked Newton, hovering between annoyance and amusement.

"It is called *The Big Noise.*"

"Oh, that," said Newton.

"Now, in that book," the stranger went on, "you call the heroine Elinor and Gertrude on different pages. You cannot make up your mind whether her name was Robbins with two *b*'s or with one. You have killed the corpse in one place on Sunday and in another on Monday evening. That corpse was discovered twelve hours after the murder still wallowing in a pool of wet blood. The coroner committed no fewer than seventeen irregularities in conducting the inquest; and, finally, you have introduced three gangs, a mysterious Chinaman, an unknown poison that leaves no trace, and a secret society high up in the political world."

The little old man held up his hands in horror as he ended the grisly recital.

"Well," Newton asked, "any more?"

"Alas, yes," said the other. "The volume includes, besides many misprints, fifteen glaring inconsistencies, nine cases of gross ignorance, and enough grammatical mistakes to — to stretch from Paddington to Penzance."

This time Newton laughed outright. "You seem to be a very earnest student of my writings," he said.

The stranger picked up the rug from his knees and folded it neatly beside him. He removed the pillow, and laid that down too. He then moved across to the corner seat opposite Newton and, taking a jewelled cigarette case from his pocket, selected a cigarette, returned the case to his pocket, found a match, lighted up, and began to smoke. Then he again drew out the case and offered it to Newton. "Lavery's," he said. "I know your favourite brand."

As a matter of fact, Newton never smoked Lavery's; but for a handsome sum he allowed his face, and a glowing testimonial to their virtues, to appear on their advertisements. Well, he might as well find out what the things were like. He took the proffered cigarette, and the stranger obligingly gave him a light. Newton

puffed. Yes, they were good stuff — better than might be expected, though rather heavy.

"Now, in my view," the stranger was saying, "the essence of a really good murder is simplicity. All your books — all most people's books — have far too much paraphernalia about them. A really competent murderer would need no special appliances, and practically no preparations. Ergo, he would be in far less danger of leaving any clues behind him. Why, oh why, Mr. Newton, do you not write a murder story on those lines?"

Again, Newton laughed. He was disposed to humour the old gentleman. "It wouldn't make much of a story," he said, "if the murderer really left no clues."

"Oh, but there you are wrong," said the other. "What is needed is a perfectly simple murder, followed by a perfectly simple solution — so simple that only a great mind could think of it, by penetrating to the utter simplicity of the mind of the murderer."

"I can't abide those psychological detectives," Newton said. "You'd better go and read Mr. Van Dine." ("Or some of those fellows who would give their ears for a tenth of my sales," his expression added.)

"Dear me, you quite misunderstand me. That wasn't what I meant at all. There would be no psychology in the story I have in mind. It would be more like William Blake's poetry."

"Mad, you mean," said Newton.

"Crystal sane," replied the other. "Perhaps it will help you if I illustrate my point. Shall I outline the sort of murder I have in mind?"

"If you like," said Newton, who found himself growing suddenly very sleepy.

"Very well," said the stranger. "Then I'll just draw down the blinds."

He jumped up and lowered the blinds on the corridor side of the compartment.

"That's better," he said. "Now we shall be undisturbed. Now supposing — only supposing, of course — that there were two men in a railway carriage just like us, and they were perfect strangers, but one of them did not really care for the other's face —— Are you listening, Mr. Newton?"

"Yes," said Newton, very sleepily. He was now having real difficulty in keeping his eyes open.

"And, further, supposing neither of them had brought any special paraphernalia with him, except what any innocent traveller might be carrying — say, a rug, a pillow, and a rug-strap ——"

As he spoke, the stranger picked up the rug-strap from the seat be-

side him.

"Hey, what's that about a rug-strap?" said Newton, roused for a moment by a connection of ideas he was too sleepy to sort out.

"Except, of course, just one doped cigarette, containing an opiate — strong, but in no wise fatal," the other went on blandly.

"What the ——?" murmured Newton, struggling now vainly against an absolutely stupefying drowsiness.

"There would really be nothing to prevent him from committing a nice, neat murder, would there?" the old man continued, rising as he spoke with startling agility and flinging the loop of the rug-strap over Newton's head. "Now, would there?" he repeated, as he drew it tight around his victim's neck, and neatly fastened it. Newton's mouth came wide open; his tongue protruded, and he began to gurgle horribly; his eyes stuck out from his head.

"And then," said the stranger, "the pillow would come in so handy to finish him off." He dragged Newton down on the seat, placed the pillow firmly on his upturned face, and sat on it, smiling delightedly. The gurgling slowly ceased.

"The rug," the cheerful voice went on, "has proved to be superfluous. Really, Mr. Newton, murder is even easier than I supposed — though it is not often, I imagine, that a lucky chance enables one to do a service to the literary craft at the same time."

Newton said nothing; for he was dead.

The stranger retained his position a little longer, still smiling gently to himself. Then he rose, removed the pillow from Newton's face, and, after a careful survey of the body, undid the strap. Next, he picked up a half-smoked cigarette and threw it out of the window, folded his rug neatly, did it and the pillow up in the strap, and, opening the door into the corridor, walked quietly away down the train.

"What a pity!" he murmured to himself as he went. "It would make such a good story; and I am afraid the poor fellow will never have the sense to write it."

The body of Joseph Newton was actually discovered by a restaurant-car attendant who was going round to collect orders for the first lunch. Opening the door of a first-class compartment, which had all its blinds drawn down, he found Newton, no pleasant sight and indubitably dead, stretched out upon the seat where his companion had left him.

Without waiting to do more than make sure the man was dead, he

scuttled along to fetch the guard. A brief colloquy of train-officials then took place in the fatal compartment, and it was decided to stop the train short of Newbury Station, and send for the police before anyone had a chance of leaving it. It seemed clear, as there had been no stop since they left Paddington, that the murderer must still be on it, unless he had leaped from an express travelling at full speed.

The police duly arrived, inspected the body, hunted the compartment in vain for traces of another passenger — for the murderer had taken the precaution of wearing gloves throughout his demonstration— took the name and address of every person on the train, to the number of some hundreds, had the carriage in which the murder had occurred detached, with much shunting and grunting, from the rest of the train, and finally allowed the delayed express to proceed.

Only those travellers who had been actually in the carriage of which Newton's compartment had formed a part were kept back for further inquiries. But Newton's companion was not among them. Having given his correct name and address to the police, he proceeded quietly upon his journey in the empty first-class compartment two carriages farther back to which he had moved after his successful experiment in simplicity.

There were four hundred and ninety-eight passengers on the Cornish Riviera express whose names were taken by the police at Newbury; or, if you count Newton, four hundred and ninety-nine. Add guards and attendants, restaurant-car staff, and the occupants of a travelling Post Office van — total five hundred and nineteen.

Of these one hundred and twenty-six were women, one hundred and fifty-three children, and the rest men. That allowed for quite enough possible suspects for the police to follow up. They were followed up, exhaustively. But it did not appear that any single person among them had any acquaintance with Joseph Newton, or any connection with him save as readers of his books. Nor did a meticulous examination of Newton's past suggest the shadow of a reason why he should have been murdered.

The police tried their hardest, and the public and the Press did their best to assist, for the murder of a best-seller, by a criminal who left no clue, was enough to excite anybody's imagination. Several individuals, in their enthusiasm, went so far as to confess to the crime, and gave Scotland Yard several days' work in disproving their statements. But

nothing helpful was forthcoming, and at long last the excitement died down.

It was more than three months later that the young Marquis of Queensferry called upon Henry Wilson, formerly the chief official of Scotland Yard, and now the foremost private detective in England. His modest request was that Wilson should solve for him the mystery of Joseph Newton's murder.

When Wilson asked him why he wanted it solved, the Marquis explained that it was for a bet. It appeared that his old uncle, the Honourable Roderick Dominic Acres-Noel, had bet him fifty thousand pounds to a penny he could not solve the problem, and he, who had the title but not the money, would be very willing to lay his hands on fifty thousand pounds which his uncle, who had the money but not the title, would never miss. Asked the reason for so unusual a bet, he replied that the reason was Uncle Roderick, who was always betting on something, the sillier the better.

"Our family's like that, you know," the Marquis added. "We're all mad. And my uncle was quite excited about the case, because he was on the train when it happened. He even wrote to *The Times* about it."

Wilson rejected the idea that he could solve a case which had utterly baffled Scotland Yard when the trail was fresh, now that it was stone cold, and all clues, presumably, vanished into limbo. Even the most lavish promises of shares in the fifty thousand pounds did not tempt him, and he sent the young Marquis away with a flea in his ear.

But, after the Marquis had gone, he found that he could not get the case out of his head. In common with everybody else, he had puzzled his brains over it at the time; but it was weeks since he had given it a thought. But now — here it was again — bothering his mind.

Hang it all, it wasn't reasonable — it was against nature — that a man should be able to murder another man and get away without leaving any clue at all. So, at any rate, the Marquis's crazy old uncle seemed to think, unless, indeed, he was merely crazy. Most likely he was.

Wilson could not say exactly at what moment he decided to have one more shot at this impossible mystery. Perhaps it was when he recollected that, according to the Marquis, Mr. Acres-Noel had himself travelled on that train to Cornwall. It might be that Mr. Acres-Noel had noticed something that the police had missed; he was just the sort of old gentleman who would enjoy keeping a tit-bit of informa-

tion to himself. At any rate, it was one thing one could try.

Wilson rang up his old colleague, Inspector Blaikie, at Scotland Yard, and Blaikie guffawed at him.

"Solve it, by all means," he said. "We'll be delighted. We're sick of the sound of Newton's name. . . . Yes, old Acres-Noel was on the train — I don't know anything more about him. . . . Oh, mad as a hatter. Completely . . . Yes, he wrote to *The Times*, and they printed it . . . Three days afterwards, I think. Shall I have it looked up for you? . . . Right you are. Let us know when you catch the murderer, won't you?"

Wilson sent for his own file of *The Times*, and looked up the letter of Mr. Acres-Noel. *The Times* had not thought it worth the honour of the middle page, but fortunately had not degraded it into the "Points" column.

"Sir," it ran,

"The methods of the police in dealing with the so-called Newton Mystery appear to show more than the usual official incompetence. As one of the passengers on the train on which Mr. Newton died, I have been subjected to considerable annoyance — and I may add compensated in part by some amusement — at the fruitless and irrelevant inquiries made by the police.

"It is plain the police have no notion of the motives which prompted the murder. Their inquiries show that. If they would devote more attention to *thinking* what the motive was, and less to the accumulation of useless information, the apparent complexity of the case would disappear. The truth is usually simple — too simple for idiots to see. *Why* was Newton murdered? Answer that, and it will appear plainly that only one person could have murdered him. Motive is essentially individual.

"I am, yours, etc.,
"R. D. Acres-Noel."

"Upon my word," said Wilson to himself, "that's a very odd letter."

He read it over several times, staring at it as if the name of the murderer was written between the lines.

Suddenly he leaped to his feet, and with an excitement he seldom showed, dashed down Whitehall to Inspector Blaikie's office. Within ten minutes he was making a proposition to that official which left him starkly incredulous.

"I know," Wilson persisted, "it isn't a certainty, it's a thousand to one chance. But it *is* a chance, and I want to try it. I'm not asking the Department to commit itself in any way, only to let me have a couple of

men standing by. Don't you see, the whole point about this extraordinary letter is the way it stresses the question of motive? And, more than that, it suggests that the writer knows what the motive was. Now, how could he do that unless ——"

"But, if that's so, the man's mad!" Blaikie protested. "Whoever heard of anybody murdering a complete stranger just to *show* him?"

"Well, he certainly is mad, isn't he? You said so yourself, and his family's notoriously crazy."

"He'll have to be pretty well off his rocker," Blaikie remarked, "if he's to be kind enough to come and shove his neck in a noose for you."

"One can but try," Wilson said. "If you won't help me I'm going to try alone. I must have one shot at getting to the bottom of it." And eventually Blaikie agreed.

The upshot was that Wilson, immediately after his interview, arranged for the posting of the following letter, forged with extreme care so as to imitate the handwriting of the supposed author. It was dispatched from the pillar-box nearest to Joseph Newton's Cornish cottage.

"Dear Mr. Acres-Noel," it said.

"Ever since our chance meeting a few months ago, I have been thinking over the very interesting demonstration you were kind enough to give me on that occasion. May I confess, however, that I am still not quite satisfied; and I should be even more deeply obliged if I could induce you to repeat it. As it happens, I shall be returning to London this week-end, and travelling down again to Cornwall on the Riviera express next Wednesday. If you too should chance to be travelling that way, perhaps we may meet again.

"Yours very truly,

"JOSEPH NEWTON."

Someone remarkably like the late Joseph Newton settled himself comfortably in the corner of a first-class compartment in the Cornish Riviera express. He had the compartment to himself, and, although the train had begun to fill up, no other traveller had entered when the train drew out of the station. Very discreetly, passengers who came near it had been warned away by the station officials.

The train had not yet gathered its full speed when the solitary traveller became conscious that someone was standing outside the compartment, and staring in at him. He raised his eyes from the magazine he was reading, and looked back. Slowly, the newcomer pushed back the sliding door, entered the compartment, and sat down in the far corner.

He was a little old man, with a straggling beard, wearing very shabby

clothes. He flung down on the seat beside him a rug and a pillow tied up in a strap. Undoing his bundle, he settled himself with the pillow behind his head, the rug over his knees, and the strap beside him.

Wilson said nothing. It was nervous work, waiting for his cue. But by this time he knew he was right. The millionth chance had come off.

The train flashed at length through Maidenhead Station. Suddenly the old man spoke.

"Talking of murders," he said, "it is my turn to apologise. I am afraid I bungled it last time."

"Not at all," said Wilson, hoping that his voice would not give him away; "but if you would kindly just show me again how ——"

"With pleasure," said the old man.

He moved with alacrity to the corner opposite Wilson, took from his pocket a jewelled cigarette-case, and proffered it. Wilson took a cigarette, and did a second's rapid thinking before the match was produced. A cigarette was something he had not allowed for, and it might even turn out to be poisoned. However, no use to hesitate now. He suffered Mr. Acres-Noel to light it, and the heavy sweetish taste confirmed his fears.

Fortunately, however, it was hardly alight before the other rose and went to the window.

"You won't mind my pulling down the blinds, will you?" he said; and Wilson took advantage of his movement to effect a lightning exchange of the suspicious cigarette for one of his own. This was a relief, but clearly he must show some signs of being affected. Sleepiness seemed the most likely cue. He yawned.

"You follow me so far, I trust," said the other.

"Perfectly," said Wilson slowly. "Please — go ——." Slowly his eyes closed, and his head began to wag.

The old man seized the rug strap.

"This is the next step," he said, attempting to cast it over Wilson's head. But Wilson sprang to his feet, warded off the strap, and pressed a button beside him which had been fixed to communicate with the adjoining compartment.

Almost as he grappled with his now frenzied antagonist, two stalwart policemen in plain clothes rushed in to his aid. Mr. Acres-Noel, alternately protesting his innocence and shrieking with wild laughter, was soon safely secured.

Mr. Acres-Noel, safe in Broadmoor, has only one complaint. The authorities will not supply him with Joseph Newton's new books. He wants to see whether that popular writer has benefited by his lesson in practical criminology.

Fredric Brown has a "touch." It's light, it's amusing, it's unusual. In his first story for EQMM — "The Djinn Murder," in the January 1944 issue — Mr. Brown gave us that rare combination of fairy-tale-and-detective-story. Now Mr. Brown goes to the other extreme — he abandons fantasy and drops in your lap a realistic, down-to-earth, it-might-have-happened-round-the-corner murder. But he hasn't lost his "touch."

Here's a fascinating story about the murder of a shoe repair man — the sort of man you bring your own shoes to for re-soling. Just a simple soul who worked all day in his dusty shop, cooked his own meals, and slept in the back on an old broken-down cot. The kind of man everybody called "Pop."

And the detective who solves the case — well, he's not one of your dilettante amateurs, or your hardboiled agency dicks, or your painstaking professional policemen. He's Willoughby Simpson, aged twenty, familiarly known as "Porky." You'll take a shine to young Willoughby — like his creator he has a "touch" all his own.

MURDER WHILE YOU WAIT

by FREDRIC BROWN

A year ago, I wouldn't have hired a young punk like Simpson for all the rubber in Brazil. But the war changed a lot of things, including rubber; I mean all the rubber in Brazil turned out to be not enough to get me a new set of tires for the agency car, and anyway it wasn't a year ago he came in for a job, or I wouldn't have hired him, even for a day.

One day; that was how long he lasted.

He looked like two Joe Colleges, and that wasn't because I was seeing double. I hadn't had a drink for two days, and he wore shell-rimmed spectacles. He looked like as likely a candidate for a private detective as a blind man is ever likely to see.

But my ad had been running a week and he was the third applicant to give it a tumble. The first one had walked with a cane and the second one had been deaf in one ear and dumb in the other.

"Willoughby Simpson, huh?" I said, staring at him. "How old are you, Willoughby?"

He said, "Twenty, Chief," and I winced. The last operative I'd had who called me Chief had gone out on his ear. "But don't call me Willoughby, Chief. Call me Porky. Everybody does."

"All right, Porky," I told him, "and don't call me Chief. Nobody does. What makes you think you could be a detective?"

"I've always wanted to be one,"

he said, earnestly. He was so earnest there was sweat on his forehead. "I majored in criminology in college, and I've studied on the side. You know, toxicology and fingerprints and footprints and — everything."

"Um," I said, "can you identify Trichinopoly ash?"

"Huh?"

"Skip it," I said. "Well, listen, Willough — I mean, Porky, you won't need any of that. You need good legs, and you got to be able to run a typewriter because I write a letter once in a while, and you do it for me. Mostly you hold down the office, when I go out on a case."

"Oh," he said, sounding disappointed. "Well, I guess it will be experience, anyway. How many operatives have you?"

"One, counting you," I told him.

"Do you have many murder cases, Mr. Larkin? I think murder cases are the most interesting. I hope you'll let me work on some of them."

I grinned. "I'll let you work on every murder case we have."

He brightened immediately. "That's great, Mr. Larkin. I didn't hope that I'd get in on *all* of them. Uh — shall I buy myself any special equipment? I have a pistol, of course, although it's only a twenty-five. But — uh — a magnifying glass, perhaps?"

I looked at him to see if he was serious, and he was.

"By all means," I said, "you'll need a magnifying glass. Here." I opened the drawer of my desk and took out a dime-store one I'd got once when there'd been a flurry of counterfeit bills around town — only I'd never happened to get stuck with a counterfeit bill.

He said, "Thanks, Chief," and put it into his pocket. "Are we working on that shoe repair shop murder?"

"No, we aren't working on — *What* shoe repair shop murder?"

"Haven't you seen a morning paper?"

I shook my head, and he handed me one and pointed out an article on the bottom-half of the front page. The headline was "Shoe Repairman Slain in Shop," and I read the first paragraph and said, "Good Lord — it was Pop Klondyke."

"Huh? That isn't the name given in the paper. Peter Berghofer, isn't it?"

I nodded. "I never knew his right name, but he's done all my shoe work for ten years. His sign is 'Klondyke Shoe Repair Shop' and everybody called him Pop Klondyke. All the coppers did, anyway. He soled a lot of brogans for harness bulls. I'll be —"

I quit talking so I could read the rest of the article. There wasn't

much to it. His body had been found by the beat copper at two a. m., when he'd investigated because the light was still on behind the drawn blinds of the shop. The old man, who was alone in the shop, had occasionally worked until ten or eleven in the evening behind drawn blinds after he'd closed the shop at eight. But two in the morning was something else again, and the policeman had knocked and then forced his way in when there was no answer.

He'd found the old man on the floor beside the chair in which he sat to work. He'd been hit over the head by something heavy that might have been the butt of a pistol, and had died instantly. The shop had been ransacked from front to back, even floor boards ripped up in places.

Lieutenant Maloney of Homicide was in charge. The rest of the article was routine handout and it looked like there was nothing for the cops to work on.

I said, "They'll probably never get the guy."

"Why not?"

"He must've taken some time to search the joint," I explained. "Couple of hours, probably, from what it says here. He took his risks then, and unless he was sap enough to leave prints while he was doing the looking, what is there to work on? He made his getaway. He's in the clear."

"But the motive might —"

"Motive my foot," I said. "Pop Klondyke had the reputation of being a miser and keeping his money in cash. He worked in the shop twelve hours a day and slept there on a cot. He didn't bank, as far as anybody knew. So the killer figured the money was in the shop."

"Did he really have a lot of money?" Porky asked.

"How the hell would I know? I didn't know him personally; just had him fix my shoes. Come to think of it, I haven't seen him since last summer. But the gossip was that he had lots of hay, and it wasn't a bad bet at that. He kept open from eight to eight and was busy all the time. He didn't have much overhead and by sleeping there, he didn't have to pay for a room. He *should* have had money saved up. Or so people figured. Some of the cops told him he was sticking his neck out by getting that reputation."

"But he wouldn't —"

"He told them to go roll their hoops, and that he could take care of himself. He just didn't trust banks or something. Some people are funny that way; money doesn't mean anything to them unless it's cash in hand or in the mattress they sleep on. Only I don't think Pop had a mattress on that cot."

"But Chief, there ought to be

some sort of a lead on every case."

I said, "Don't call me Chief, blast it. And there are plenty of unsolved crimes, my pudgy young friend. On a fancy murder where the motive is something personal, that's one thing. But a straight robbery where anybody with a yen for money could have done it — well, where are they even going to start?"

"But there might be a clue that they could—"

I lost my temper a little. I said, "Why am I arguing with you about a case we haven't got anything to do with? Listen, we don't *handle* murder cases. This agency—"

"Huh?" He looked positively startled. "You mean you turn them down?"

"We don't even turn them up," I said. "In twelve years in this office, nobody's come in *yet* to hire me to investigate a murder. Why should they? The police do, and they've got the organization to do it better than we can. A private agency, Porky, gets stuff the police don't handle, and that's all. I don't mean we don't get any crime work, but it's usually investigating some employee suspected of dipping into the till, or something like that."

He said, "You mean that—"

And then the door opened and somebody walked into the outer office. I said to Porky, "Maybe it's a client," and went to see.

It was.

He was a tall, thin man, middle-aged and fairly well dressed. He said, "Mr. Larkin?" and when I admitted it, "My name is Mitchell Berghofer."

"Berghofer?" I said, "Any relative of — uh—"

"Of Peter Berghofer? Yes, his nephew. I take it you've read the newspaper account of his murder. I'd like you to conduct an investigation for me."

Behind me, I heard my new operative breathing hard.

I took Berghofer into the inner office. I said, "Uh—Porky—" and he said "Yes, Chief," and ducked into the outer one.

But he was back right away with a notebook and pencil as though that was what I'd meant, and I had to let it go at that or make a sap out of myself. Anyway, I thought, maybe taking notes wouldn't be a bad idea.

"You mean," I said, when we were settled down, "that you want us to work with the police in finding your uncle's murderer?"

"Yes, Mr. Larkin. And in finding my uncle's money — which, I believe, is now my money. True, I want the criminal brought to justice, and I believe the police will do their best on that end of it. But — uh — the money is something else again.

You understand what I mean?"

I said, "I think I do. You are Pop Kl — Peter Berghofer's heir?"

"I am his only living relative, and to the best of everybody's knowledge, he never made a will. He had no lawyer, and no will has turned up as yet. If he did make one, it is still probable that I would inherit the bulk of the estate, for he and I were on good — if not intimate — terms. He had no reason to — uh — leave his money to any one else."

"Okay," I said, "so you're the heir. To what? I mean, do you know, beyond just guessing, that your uncle had money — in any sizeable quantity, I mean?"

He nodded. "Two weeks ago he went into the State National Bank with a big stack of bills — all sizes — and traded them for a ten-thousand-dollar bill."

Porky started to whistle, and I glared at him. He subsided and bent over the notebook again. I turned back to my client.

"I'd heard a rumor about that," I told him. "Not the exact amount of the bill, but that he'd done something of the sort. I didn't know whether it was fact or just a story, though."

"It's fact, all right. The police traced the rumor back this morning and an assistant teller at the State National lost his job for not keeping his mouth shut about it. Undoubtedly that story getting out is the direct cause of my uncle's death, so I can't say I feel sorry for that teller."

I nodded. "Looks like your uncle had something to say for his point of view in not trusting banks. Of course if he'd deposited — But if he didn't, there's no use thinking about that. I take it he cashed in the bulk of his savings for a single bill so he could hide it easier."

"That is the presumption, Mr. Larkin. And the point is — did the killer find that bill? He had, the police guess, from two to three hours, depending on how much nerve he had, to search the shop, and he certainly turned it upside down. But a single bill would be an awfully difficult thing to find, if it was carefully hidden."

"You think, then, that it may still be there?"

"I think there's a fair possibility of it," he said. "Oh, he may have found it, of course. But if I know Uncle Peter, he wouldn't have hidden it where it could be easily found. And a single small piece of paper like a bill —"

"I don't think he found it," said Porky.

I started to glare at him, but he was looking so serious that I asked why instead.

"On account of what the news-

paper said about the floorboards being taken up, or some of them. It's noisy to take up floorboards and I don't think he'd have done that except as a last resort after he'd looked everywhere else and was desperate. So I'd say he didn't find it anywhere else. And probably not there, either, at least if the boards had been nailed down."

"Why?" I asked him. "I mean, what's if the boards were nailed down got to do with it?"

"Because — well — I imagine he'd want that bill where he could get at it, and look at it once in a while without having to rip up his floor to do it."

"Um," said Berghofer, "I wouldn't be surprised if your secretary is right, Mr. Larkin. It's clever reasoning, and it fits what I know of Uncle Peter. He *would* want the money accessible. And as this young man points out, the killer would hardly have gone to the trouble of tearing up the floor unless he'd tried everywhere else he could think of, and without finding it."

I thought a minute and then nodded. "Do the police have any leads?"

"No, nothing to speak of, anyway. I left there — the shop, I mean — just now and they hadn't turned up anything of importance. They were taking photographs and dusting for prints, and were still at the stage of not disturbing things. Lieutenant Maloney told me they'd be starting a detailed search soon — a systematic one."

"To hunt for the ten-grand bill, huh? And it's yours if they find it. That is —"

"Yes. It will be mine eventually when the estate is settled, less inheritance taxes and so on. So I'd like you to — uh —" He broke off as though thinking out the exact words he wanted to use — but I saved him the trouble.

I said, "You want me to be your representative, sort of, and keep an eye on the search they'll make. You figure a single bill like that would slip awfully easy into the pocket of whoever found it, and that coppers are only human."

"Well — I had something like that in mind. And it's possible, of course, that you might see something they'd overlook. A clue, I mean, that might point to the killer."

I nodded, and explained our terms and he agreed, so I stood up.

Porky stood up too.

"You stay here," I told him. "Watch the office, and if anything important comes up you can reach me at —"

"But, Chief, you promised me that on the next murder investiga-

tion I could go along, didn't you?"

"What do you mean I promised —"

And then I remembered; I had. It hadn't meant anything when I'd said it, but I *had* said it. And something in Porky's face told me that if I reneged now, I'd have to start running that want ad again. And anyway, he couldn't do any harm, could he?

I said, "All right, blast it, come on."

Our client had his car downstairs, and he was going back to the shoe repair shop anyway, so I left the agency car on the lot and we went over with him.

Although it was bright daylight now, the blinds of the little Klondyke Shoe Repair Shop were drawn, and the lights were all on behind them. There was a uniformed patrolman — one I didn't know — standing in the doorway.

"Shoes Repaired While You Wait," read the sign over the door.

The guard at the door nodded to Mr. Berghofer and let us in. A couple of cameramen from homicide were just coming out, their arms full of equipment, and we sidled past them.

I said, "Hullo, Maloney," to the big man leaning against the counter inside. He nodded without saying anything, and didn't seem surprised. I judged that Berghofer had already broken the news that he was leaving to engage a private detective. What reason he'd given Maloney for doing it I didn't know and didn't care. Maloney would have seen through the stall, whatever it was, and he'd have to pretend he didn't mind, whether he did or not.

Maloney said, "Orland and Galinsky are on their way over and the three of us are going to case the joint when they get here. You guys can stay and watch us work, but you don't help. Understand? You got to stay clear of things and keep your hands off. Who's the kid, Larkin?"

I said, "My new operative, Porky Simpson. Meet Lieutenant Maloney, Porky." I grinned. "Porky specializes in investigating murders, Maloney."

Maloney laughed and said, "The hell he does." But he shook hands with Porky. He said, "Kid, if you find out who did this one, don't keep it a secret. We could use some enlightenment."

Porky grinned, kind of embarrassed-like, but his eyes were shining. He said, "How do you figure it happened, Lieutenant?"

Maloney shoved his hat back from his forehead, and then turned and pointed to a chalk outline on the floor. He said, "There's where we found him, kid. Two A.M. and the

lights on, and the place torn up. Coroner's report shows he was killed around eight o'clock, which is the time he always pulled down the blinds and closed up.

"Most likely thing is that the killer came in at five minutes of eight, say, and wanted some shoes repaired while he waited. Took 'em off and handed 'em over the rail. Now if he'd watched Pop's habits, he knew Pop always pulled the blinds and latched the door at eight, so no more customers'd come in. See what I mean?"

Porky nodded excitedly. "So then, just as he's finishing the killer's shoes, the killer —"

"Why then?" Berghofer cut in. "Why not right away, or after he'd — uh — handed them back?"

Porky said, "Because from where they found him, he was sitting in his workchair when he was hit. That means he'd been working on the shoes and it means he must have finished, or just about. Because the killer wouldn't want to go away with a sole or heel missing from one shoe, would he?"

"Or loose stitching, either," said Maloney. "Smart reasoning, kid. I hadn't exactly looked at that angle of it, but it seems sensible figuring."

I was getting left out of things, apparently, so I put in two-bits worth. I said, "Do you think the killer would have just put the slug on him and then started looking? He could have, of course, but I'd say he'd stick a gun on Pop first and ask him where the money was. He'd have nothing to lose, and save himself a lot of hunting around if Pop kicked in. I'd say he leaned across the railing here behind Pop and put the gun in his back and asked him. And apparently Pop wouldn't tell, so he killed him. And started looking."

"That's the way I figured it," said Porky, and I glared at him. But he missed the glare and went on. "And if he knew the repairman's habits, he knew he sometimes worked till ten or a little later, after he'd locked up. So he had two hours to search, and from the fact that he got desperate enough at the end to rip up some of the floorboards, it's pretty sure he didn't find it."

"That's what the Inspector said," Maloney chimed in. "Says he wouldn't have started on the floor till last, and that he wouldn't have found it under there because —" And he went right on with the line of reasoning Porky had pulled back at the agency about why that wasn't a place in which the ten-thousand-dollar bill would be likely to be hidden.

Then Orland and Galinsky came in. They took off their coats and

rolled up their sleeves and Maloney did too, and they started in to take that shoe shop apart.

Berghofer and I and Porky stood outside the railing and watched things, and believe you me, they weren't missing a trick. They worked a system from the back to the front and the way they took things apart they wouldn't have missed a blonde hair, if they'd been looking for one; let alone a bill. A piece of paper is a little thing to find, but not when you make that kind of a search for it. It had to turn up, if it was there.

They turned up plenty of dust, though. The room was thick with it and it began to settle on our clothes and in our hair and up our noses.

Berghofer started sneezing, and I had to blow my nose a couple of times and keep my eyes wiped.

Nobody talked much. Berghofer made a few suggestions about the search, if he thought they maybe didn't give enough attention to some piece of equipment or something.

At seven o'clock, when it was getting dark outside, Maloney and his men had reached the front windows.

"It ain't here," he said. "Unless he kept it somewhere else —"

"No," Berghofer said. "It had to be here. He lived here and worked here. He wouldn't have —"

Maloney said, "There's still the back steps. And the outside ledge of the back window. Darned unlikely, but we'll look."

He took Galinsky with him and went back. It was such an unlikely last-hope bet that none of us made a move to follow them. Anyway, they'd keep one another honest.

Berghofer was leaning dispiritedly against the wall. The wall was dirty and he had on a light suit, but there was so much dust on it anyway that a little more dirt wouldn't matter. He looked like a man who hadn't inherited ten grand.

Porky was looking thoughtful, which made him look something like a sick calf. He looked so bad I felt sorry for him.

I said, "Don't worry, Porky. You can't expect to solve your first murder case in four hours, and it looks like this one won't be solved anyway unless they catch the guy when he tries to change that bill."

"But Chief, he couldn't have found —"

"Either he did, or Pop didn't keep the money here. One or the other. Or that search would have turned it up."

He shook his head thoughtfully. He turned toward the workchair beside the last, stepped over the railing and sat down in it.

He said, "He was sitting here, like

this. Look, Chief, pretend you're the killer and stand there behind the railing and pretend you're holding me up."

I grinned, but I moved so I'd be right behind him and I said, "You're covered, Porky. Where's the bill?"

He sat there a minute without turning, or without answering, and then he got up and said, "It sounds screwy, but it *could* —"

He didn't finish because Maloney and Galinsky came in from the alley and announced that they hadn't found anything in the alley but a dead cat.

When I looked back at Porky, he was staring down at the floor, although there didn't seem to be anything to stare at except a thick layer of dust that had settled there during the search.

And all of a sudden, darned if he didn't whip the magnifying glass — the dime-store one I'd handed him for a gag — out of his pocket and bend over to look at the floor through it.

Maloney looked from Porky's posterior up to my face and said, "What gives?" in a mystified voice.

Porky said, "Step back a minute, will you, Chief?" I stepped back and I answered Maloney by shrugging. If my new assistant turned out to be a looney, I wasn't going to admit it in public.

But then Porky straightened up and his face didn't look crazy or like he'd been spoofing. It looked slightly scared.

Hoping he wasn't going to make a fool of himself — and the agency — which meant me — I said, "Well, Porky?" And tried to keep my voice noncommittal as to whether I was taking him seriously or not.

He said, "I — I got an idea."

"Spill it, kid," Maloney said. "And I hope it's good."

"It sounds kind of screwy, but —"

"Go ahead, kid. We won't laugh."

"Look, we agreed that he had the money here and that the murderer didn't find it. When you didn't find it either, you decided that one of those assumptions was wrong. Maybe neither of them was wrong."

I said, "Then why didn't they find the money?"

"Suppose," said Porky, "he liked the ten-thousand-dollar bill so much he kept it *on* him — say in a secret pocket of his work apron or somewhere like that."

Maloney's face fell. He said, "Hell, kid, don't think that his clothes — and the body too, for that matter — weren't searched plenty. If that's your idea —"

"That isn't the idea, Lieutenant. Or rather it's only part of it. Look — try to put yourself in his place last night. You're sitting there fixing

a man's shoes, after you've closed up the shop. You've got the money in an inside pocket, say, of your work apron. And the man leans over the rail and puts a gun in your back and asks you where your money is. Well —"

"Well?" Maloney prompted. He looked interested.

"Well, you know when he does that, he's going to kill you. Even if you give him the money he's going to make sure you don't talk to the police afterwards. He's *got* to kill you. You're dead already, practically, whether you give him the money first and then get killed, or get killed and then let him find it.

"So it doesn't make any difference, in a way, whether you give it to him or not. But just the same you don't want him to have it, naturally. So isn't your best revenge to see that he'll never get it?"

"Um," said Maloney. "You turned some sharp corners, but I guess I'm still with you. All right, I'm Pop Klondyke, and I'm in the situation you just dished out. I got the money on me, and I don't want him to have it. So what do I do?"

"You give it to him," said Porky. His eyes were shiny now with excitement and being the center of attention. "But you give it to him so he doesn't know it, and probably never will."

"Huh?" Maloney tilted his hat back farther and stared. "How the hell could he have worked that?"

"Say he was just nailing a new heel on the second shoe. His back's toward the owner of the shoe, the guy who's going to kill him. He sneaks the bill out of his pocket — It's already folded flat — and slips it under the heel and then hammers it down — pretending he's working automatic-like while he's considering his answer. And then he turns around and gives his answer and the gun-butt comes down on his head.

"And so the killer searches Pop Klondyke first and then the shop until it gets so late he doesn't dare risk staying longer, and he doesn't find it. And why? — *because he's been walking on it all the time!*"

Maloney whistled softly. He tilted his hat back still farther and it started to fall off and he grabbed it just in time.

He said, "Kid, that's so screwy it could have happened. I'll be a three-toed tree-toad if I don't think you're right. I knew Pop and he sure would have hated for anybody else to enjoy that money if he couldn't, and — Holy smoke!"

I happened to glance at Berghofer, and his face looked a yard long. He said, "Young man, I certainly hope you're wrong. It's a most ingenious theory, but —"

"Yeah," I said. "If it's right, I'm afraid you're out ten thousand bucks, Mr. Berghofer. I mean, since there isn't any clue to the identity of the killer —"

"But there is," Porky said. "Footprints."

We looked at him as though he was crazy.

"Footprints?" Maloney echoed. There weren't any here."

Porky said, "Look," and pointed down to the floor near his feet, where there was an unmistakable footprint in the dust. He took the dime-store magnifying glass out of his pocket and handed it to Maloney. "Look at that footprint."

I laughed. I said, "Porky, you're screwy. That thick dust is fresh from the tearing up of this joint this afternoon. That footprint was *just* made. In fact, I think it's mine."

Porky's face was pale, but he said, "It *is* yours, Mr. Larkin. That's what I mean."

I said, "Porky, are you crazy?"

"Those shoes you have on, Mr. Larkin, aren't new, but they have brand-new rubber heels, with sharp edges that have never been worn down. And they're the same brand as those over on the shelf, and those are reclaimed rubber and haven't been on the market long.

"And this morning when we were talking about this case, you told me you hadn't seen Pop Klondyke since last summer, but you said he did *all* your shoe repair work for you. You might have had those shoes soled and heeled last summer and not worn them, but not with reclaimed-rubber heels. And you'd heard the story about his getting the big bill at the bank, and you knew his habits and — well —" He petered out into silence.

Maloney had a sort of incredulous look on his face, but he was watching me, and Orland and Galinsky were standing right behind me.

I said, "That's the craziest thing I ever heard."

"It is," Maloney said. "And I'll apologize afterward, Larkin, but take off those shoes a minute first."

The two coppers behind me moved closer. I took off the shoes and handed them to Maloney.

Porky'd been wrong, of course. There wasn't any bill under the heels. But he got credit for the case, just the same, and they waived the overweight angle to give him a job on the force, since he wouldn't be working for me any more.

No, the heels had been nailed on before I'd leaned across the railing. Pop Klondyke had been slipping new innersoles into the shoes.

Maloney found the ten-thousand-dollar bill under one of the new innersoles.

It is a triple-barreled pleasure to offer you another exploit of Careful Jones, Cardsharper Extraordinary. Yes, triple-barreled — as your Editor will prove by calling his shots. First barrel: it is a pleasure to have persuaded "Pat Hand" to turn Careful Jones into a "series" character. Second barrel: it is a pleasure to inform you that "The Imponderables" is as pure a gem for the devotees of pip and chip as was "The Showdown." Third barrel: it is a pleasure to announce that a third *Careful Jones adventure is under lock and key and will appear in an early issue. . . .*

Captain Verity of the U. S. Army Air Forces had climbed too recklessly into the stratosphere of draw poker and was in danger of being shot "clean out of the air." But Careful Jones, Poker-Pilot Extraordinary, was a high flyer too . . .

THE IMPONDERABLES

by "PAT HAND"

THIS *officer is losing more than he can afford,* thought Dr. Henry Casimer, uneasily.

The old doctor never played poker but he took a keen interest in watching the game. He would sit back, pipe in mouth, his eyes flitting from one face to another, noting the expressions which possessed them—uncertainty, cupidity, guile, anger, fear. Men showed their real natures when they engaged in this battle of wits; and for that reason he found much satisfaction and profit in his role of onlooker.

As he had many patients in the Congress Hotel and was in and out of that huge, gilt-and-chromium caravanserai at all hours of the day and night, the staff had fallen into the habit of telling him whenever a game was in progress. On this particular evening, he found himself observing the battle tactics of a group of six. Three of them were old acquaintances, veterans of the game who loved it passionately and could well afford the moderately high stakes which had been set. The others were strangers to him and it was in them his interest centered.

The young officer, who had roused his concern, wore the insignia of the U. S. Army Air Forces. His name was Verity and he had acknowledged, though only after direct questioning, that he had taken part in the conquest of Tunisia. He was now on leave, to recover from a bullet wound in the thigh, and had stopped off on his way home to San Francisco. He had the perfect face for a flyer: brow

which receded slightly, bold nose, clear and rather daring eyes, mouth which smiled when the breaks went against him. They were going against him steadily in the game.

One of the other two was an aggressively well-dressed individual whose amateur standing the observant physician had doubted the instant he set eyes on him. His name was Striker; he was hard, incisive, sure; and with an immediate and bristling insistence on the letter of the poker law. He had, in addition, certain traits which the doctor disliked intensely: a clawing movement of the hands while raking in his winnings, a steady flow of ill-natured comment, a tendency to goad the other players. His most biting taunts were levelled at Captain Verity and the doctor sensed in them a deliberate intent to unsettle the flying officer's judgment, to rush him into unwise risks. If such was his purpose, he was having complete success. Verity was betting recklessly and, as his pile of chips diminished, that of Striker grew until it resembled an architectural model for a skyscraper.

It was an infuriating duel to watch, but the old doctor could find no grounds for interference. Striker never actually overstepped the line and it was clear that the unlucky officer would resent any effort to champion him. As the game progressed, however, it became apparent to Dr. Casimer that the third stranger at the table was taking Verity's part, and doing it so unobtrusively that no one else in the room had sensed what was going on.

This third stranger was a fat old man named Jones. He had an impassive face, in which an unlighted cigar was clamped, and he seemed on the surface completely apathetic about the game. When his turn came to deal, he distributed the cards with large hands which fumbled occasionally. But now that the doctor's attention was focused on Jones, he became aware of a most peculiar thing: Whenever Jones was the dealer, Captain Verity won. When this happened half a dozen times in succession without a break, Dr. Casimer sat up to watch developments with an exultant tingle of interest. It could not be a coincidence. He was sure those slow, puffy fingers were manipulating the cards to the yôung flyer's advantage. Had the sharp, professional eyes of Striker noticed this also?

Apparently not. It had been decided to stop at midnight and the clock on the wall crept around to twelve o'clock without any disturbance or serious dispute. The old man's jugglery had kept Verity solvent but one disastrous tilt in which Striker had topped the officer's flush

with a higher one had reduced Verity's pile to its lowest level of the evening. The cards came to Jones and he shifted his heavy frame to peer at the clock.

"Two minutes left," he grunted. "Last hand, gentlemen?"

Striker looked at his plethoric formation of chips and repeated, "Last hand," with a note of satisfaction.

"Our young friend here is down quite a bit," said the old man, smiling across the table at Verity. It was surprising how the heavy expression of Jones's face dissolved into warmth at this, his first smile of the evening. "What say we give him one last chance to get even? Suppose we take off the limit for this last hand?"

"Suits me," said Striker. "We can bet cash as well as chips, then? But no checks unless okayed at the desk."

The other players nodded their concurrence. Verity said nothing but it was clear he welcomed this last opportunity to recoup. He counted his small pile with a hand which suggested inner misgivings. Dr. Casimer watched him with deep concern, wondering if what he had lost would mean the cancellation of plans for the enjoyment of his leave. Fixing his eyes on Jones, who was shuffling slowly, the old doctor said to himself with sudden heat, *Make it good this time, make it good!*

The cards were dealt. Striker, sitting on the dealer's left, pondered a moment and opened for ten dollars. Verity, who sat next, hesitated and then with a reckless hand shoved all of his remaining chips to the centre of the table.

"Might as well shoot the works," he said. "Fifty dollars there, gentlemen."

Two of the others stayed. Jones looked at his cards, grunted, and stayed also. Striker's face was quite without expression but Dr. Casimer was certain that he was well pleased with the way things were going.

"I still like my cards," announced Striker. "I'll meet you, young Mister Flying Ace, and raise you another hundred."

Verity's face showed that he now regretted his rash plunge. He stared hard at the pasteboards in his hand, as though hoping to find more promise there than he had detected before. Jones was watching him intently and it seemed to the old doctor that he was endeavoring to convey a message of encouragement to the undecided player. If such were the case, Verity failed to notice it. He kept his head down. Seconds passed. Once he made a move as though to toss in his cards and Dr. Casimer's heart sank. Then Verity suddenly changed his mind, and reached into his pocket. The roll of

bills he produced was quite thin.

"Here she goes!" he said. "I can just make it."

The doctor sighed with relief. He had no doubts whatever of the outcome.

The other two players dropped out, one of them saying disgustedly, "Too rich for my blood." Much to the doctor's surprise, Jones himself saw the raise.

Jones, as dealer, squinted at Striker and demanded, "How many?"

"I'll play these."

The distress on the soldier's face deepened. "Might have expected it," he said. "Well, perhaps I can improve mine. One card, please."

The plump hand of the dealer trembled as he pushed the top card off the pack. It fell face up on the table. The four of hearts. Verity drew in his breath sharply and stared at the exposed card with unbelieving and unhappy eyes.

Good Lord, thought the doctor, *It was the one he needed!*

There could be no doubt of it. The dismay on the flyer's face was clear proof that the one card he had hoped for lay face up on the table in front of him.

"I'm sorry," mumbled Jones. He was actually perspiring in the extremity of his distress over the mishap. "I'm terribly sorry. Sometimes my hand seems to stiffen on me. Guess I'm getting too old to handle the cards."

"You can't take it," spoke up Striker. "House rules. Cards exposed during the draw can't be used. You'll have to wait for your new card until the rest of the deal's completed."

"That's right," said Jones, looking even more apologetic.

Dr. Casimer was completely at sea. If Jones could deal a succession of winning hands to one player, he was not likely to fumble at such a crucial moment as this. Was he in cahoots with Striker after all? Had he been merely preparing things for the kill? The fact that he was staying himself was highly suspicious. The doctor caught Verity's eye and the utter misery he saw there caused him to reach a resolution. *If he loses, I'll take a hand in this when the deal's over*, he said to himself, grimly.

Jones drew one card and laid his hand face down on the table. Then, with unusual care, he dealt the top card to the young flyer. Verity had lost hope quite obviously. He picked it up with an apathetic air. The doctor, watching him with compassionate eyes, saw him stiffen suddenly, then sit perfectly still, his eyes glued to the five cards in his hand.

"Had you both beaten before the draw and I'm willing to bet I still have the edge," said Striker with con-

fidence. He shoved what was left of his mountain of chips to the centre.

"How much is it?" demanded Jones with sudden sharpness.

Striker began to divide his stake into even piles. "Count it yourself," he said. "I make it six hundred and forty dollars. That's what you'll have to put in, Mr. Dealer, if you want to see these cards of mine. I think," he added slyly, "it will shoot our friend, Mr. Ace, clean out of the air."

Verity was not a good poker player. His hand was trembling. *He's filled it after all!* thought Casimer, exultantly. The doctor looked at Jones to see what he could read in the face of that inscrutable individual. The fact that Jones was still in and counting his chips was a disturbing factor.

"I've only a few more dollars with me," said Verity, looking anxiously about the table. "But I have enough left in my bank account at the Broker's Trust. Will a check do?"

Striker frowned. It was clear he had not expected any further action. "They'll have to initial it downstairs," he said.

"But it's after midnight. They don't know me here. I'm afraid they won't do anything about it at the desk."

"You look honest to me Captain Verity," said Jones, "I'm willing to chance it."

"I'm not!" declared Striker. "We made the rule before the hand was dealt. No checks unless properly endorsed. I stand by that."

Dr. Casimer spoke up. "I'll endorse your check, young man. Here's a fountain pen, if you need it."

Verity looked at him with such gratitude that the old doctor felt a warm glow steal over him. It made him very happy to do this for one whose ribbons testified to a fine war record.

The flyer made out his check and tossed it on top of the jumble of chips and bills. "Eleven hundred and forty dollars," he said. "Six hundred and forty to see, five hundred to raise."

Jones indulged in an aggrieved chuckle. "I'm out of my depth," he said. "Sorry I stayed as long as I did."

Striker was realizing now that something had gone wrong. Could the flyer have caught another card that filled? He looked at Captain Verity with narrowed eyes. Then he studied Dr. Casimer's face for a moment before turning his head in the direction of the dealer. A suspicion was growing in his mind. He picked up his hand, studied it, replaced it on the board.

"Well," he said, finally, "you may have something, but on the other hand you may be running an army

bluff on me. I'll have to see which it is."

His fingers stiff with misgiving, he extracted a wad of money from his billfold and counted out five of the highest denomination there. They seemed to stick to his hand as he laid them slowly on the pile.

"A full house—fours up on nines!" declared Verity, spreading his hand on the table. "I drew the diamond four. It doesn't seem possible, does it? But there it is."

Striker threw his cards down in a fit of such passion that his face actually looked black. "A pat flush!" he exclaimed. "Ace, king, queen high." He glared suspiciously at Jones. "It *doesn't* seem possible! This looks very fishy to me."

Jones said, with an air of injured innocence: "You're not blaming me, are you? Great fishhooks, I didn't shuffle the cards! I only dealt 'em—and nearly lost him his chance at that with my clumsiness."

Dr. Casimer and Jones were alone in the room, the rest of the party having gone home. The old physician puffed on his pipe and smiled at his companion who had finally lighted his cigar.

"I suspect you're pretty good, Mr. Jones, at this sort of thing."

"Yes, I'm still good. Not what I was though. Sometimes my hands bother me a little. I'm getting on, you know."

"Was it a cold deck?"

Jones grinned. "Of course. No man alive could stack 'em as neatly as that. Slipping in a cold deck is one of the best things I do."

"If I read your idea correctly, you turned the four of hearts over deliberately. You wanted Striker to be certain he had things his own way. He wouldn't have gone all out if he hadn't been dead sure Verity had lost his chance."

The cold eyes in the tallowy face twinkled for a fraction of a second. "Kee-rect, Doc. My idea exactly. I like to add little improvements of that kind, especially when I'm out to get a dirty muck-ant like this fellow Striker." He exploded with sudden wrath. "Do you suppose I was going to sit by and let that dirty card-sharper take a fine young fellow who had been doing his bit for his country?"

"No, certainly not. I got on to what you were doing early. I don't mind telling you it made me very happy. You seem to do things in a pretty thorough way, Mr. Jones."

Jones smiled. "I'm sometimes called Careful Jones."

The doctor took his pipe from his mouth. "Of course! Careful Jones! I've heard of you." After a short pause, he went on: "But, see here,

how could you be sure of getting the second four to him? You had no way of telling about the others. Suppose one of them had stayed in and called for cards? That would have thrown things right out of kilter."

"Haven't you ever heard of second-card dealing? It's not easy, Doc. I don't suppose there are more than half a dozen operators in the country who can manage it. I had the four of diamonds on *top* of the deck from the start and always dealt the card *under it*. I have to practise half an hour every day of my life to keep my hands in shape for that one."

They sat in silence for several moments. "Well, Mr. Jones," said the doctor finally, "I'm ready to concede you can take care of every possible emergency that has to do with the cards themselves. But there's one department where you can't exercise any control at all. What we might call the Imponderables."

Jones blinked in a puzzled way. "I'm not educated, Doc. Never heard that jawcracker before. What's it mean?"

"The things that can't be weighed in advance. The things that have to do with state of mind. For instance, how could you be sure young Verity would have the nerve to stay with only two pair when Striker gave him that stiff bump? Suppose he had been so upset later, when you turned over the card he needed, that he had dropped out — or did something to disqualify himself? You had no way of controlling his *feelings*, you know. In that case, you would have built up a pretty pot for the obnoxious Mr. Striker."

Jones chuckled. "Would I now? I guess I can take care of your imponderables after all, Doc. Didn't you notice I stayed until it was certain the young fellow was going through all right? It cost me some dough but I wasn't taking any chances. No, Striker wasn't ever going to win that pot."

He reached for the cards he had thrown in and spread them face up on the table.

He had held four jacks.

Jones smiled again. "You see, Doc, sometimes I'm called *Extra*-Careful Jones!"

*Mr. Hatch's hobby is to keep statistical records of the detective story. He can tell you what crime novels, omnibuses, and mystery magazines have been published since Poe's super*TALES *(1845) and all the pertinent details. Does that make Mr. Hatch sound like a walking almanac? As Archie would say, "Perish forbid!" Mr. Hatch is a prodigious "fan" — indeed, a contender for the world's championship — and a grand fellow!*

GUESS WHO?

by TALBOT C. HATCH

ONE moment, please. What is that strange uproar outside the door? A long-continuing noise, rather like that of an elephant stomping and pawing the ground, accompanied by a trumpet-like sound resembling a challenge at feeding time. Then a loud and violent knocking on the door itself.

The door opens and — shades of Rabelais! — we are confronted, it would seem, by Gargantua himself! A great bandit-like figure, the more so because of his enormous mustaches, stands on the threshhold, his twenty stone draped in a box-pleated cape of tent-like proportions, and his large red face topped by a shovel hat. His small, sharp eyes glare at us through eyeglasses clamped firmly on his surprisingly small nose and anchored to his person by a broad, black ribbon. In one hand he holds a large, red bandana handkerchief which he flourishes violently, and with his other he brandishes a crutch-handled stick which he points in our direction while he greets us with a stentorian "Hoy!"

And there, *mes amis*, stands one of the greatest of crime-puzzle solvers of all time. Not a criminologist, in the accepted sense of the word, for he eschews the sciences and will have nothing whatever to do with even ordinary police routine, but possessed, nevertheless, with an uncanny ability to read the criminal mind and a unique wizardry of analytic imagination that enables him to turn the light on what would seem to be the most insoluble of crimes. In fact, it is only the "impossible" crimes that interest him. As he himself says: "I am a consultant on the *outré* . . . the old guy who enjoys funny business."

He now lives at Hampstead, although we first met him at Number 1, Adelphi Terrace. He is surrounded by bookshelves and lying about (as likely on the floor as anywhere else) will be found such volumes as "Hocus Pocus Junior, or the Anat-

omy of Legerdemain," 4th edition, 1654. A Colombian devilmask adorns the wall over the mantelplace and a shield hangs between the windows. On the table will be found a cigar box, a pile of hunting prints and (for no apparent reason) a loaded revolver. Here, in a" probability, you will find him patiently trying to build card houses or reading a detective story.

There are no halfway measures about any of his actions. If he likes you he can't do enough for you; if he doesn't — beware! He speaks with fiery argumentativeness and a fierce earnestness; yet he is far from being a misanthrope. He thoroughly enjoys telling funny stories, at which times his face glows like Old King Cole's, and he raises his eyebrows cherubically as though wondering why anyone could see anything funny in them.

In moments of relaxation his cheeks puff in and out and gentle earthquakes of deep breathing animate the series of ridges in his waistcoat. He roars, rumbles and wheezes; even his whispers are thunderous like wind along an Underground tunnel. Yet despite the vehemence of his gestures and movements in general, he is given to the mildest of expletives, his favorites being: "Oh, my ancient hat! Oh, Bacchus! Archons of Athens!"

It cannot be said that he walks about; he lumbers, usually so heavily that the chandeliers shake. When he rises from a table he barely avoids upsetting it, coming up in a vast surge like Leviathan rising under a submarine. When he enters a room it is like a liner easing into port.

He is very fond of beer and tobacco, these being, as he admits, "the twin warming pans of my declining years. To the first," he adds, "I have devoted an entire chapter of my work, 'The Drinking Customs of England From the Earliest Days.' " And that he is amply qualified to produce an opus of this nature is evidenced by his personal dictum that: "All drinkables are supposed to be taken in quantities of from ten to fifteen pints. If I cannot do the thing handsomely, I am not going to do it at all."

It is said of him that when he approaches a subject to be discussed he does so with all the gradualness and delicacy of a load of bricks falling through a skylight. His mind, however, moves so fast that it is round the corner and in at the window before your mental eyesight can follow it. And he can split a hair sixteen ways and still have something left over. All of which makes him, academically, somewhat of a terror. Do you know who he is? Can you

GUESS WHO?

(*Solution on page 121*)

American readers are not half as familiar with the work of Roy Vickers as they should be. EQMM is plotting and contriving to remedy that situation.

The first step in the campaign was the printing of "The Rubber Trumpet" in our November 1943 issue. The second step is to bring you now another Department of Dead Ends story — the brilliant case history of a man who learned the knack of murdering in public, and almost got away with it — almost, but not quite.

The third step is to arrange for the appearance of a Fidelity Dove exploit, which we hope to have for you soon. Fidelity Dove is Roy Vickers's slick lady crook — no relation, by the way, to Christopher Morley's Dove Dulcet in this issue. Readers of your Editor's 1943 anthology — THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES: THE GREAT WOMEN DETECTIVES AND CRIMINALS — *have already made the acquaintance of the ethereal Fidelity, and to judge from the fan mail, they fell in love at first reading with this modern female Robin Hood. So enthusiastic an aficionado as Anthony Boucher promptly "gave us the Dickens" — asking for more.*

But be patient: read "The Man Who Murdered in Public." If you like the persistent, grasp-at-any-straw, never-say-die Department of Dead Ends, emulate Mr. Boucher and do an Oliver Twist — ask for more.

THE MAN WHO MURDERED IN PUBLIC

by ROY VICKERS

How little do you know about a man if you only know that he has committed four murders! That is all the public of 25 years ago knew of George Macartney. The papers handed out the usual thoughtless nonsense about a "human monster" and reminded the public that he was the son of Henry Macartney, the fraudulent financier — and that he therefore had a tainted heredity.

Now it is impossible to inherit a tendency to falsify balance sheets (not that George ever did anything of the kind). And as to the human monster stuff, with its suggestion of morbid blood lust, it may be remarked that George netted by his murders a little over £22,000. Further, it is the essence of anything to do with morbidity that the act should be secret. George Macartney is perhaps unique amongst murderers in that each of his four murders was eye-witnessed by anything from a dozen to several hundred persons, including a policeman or two. Yet in spite of this, it was left to the Department of Dead Ends to catch him by one of their luckiest flukes.

All the same, the fact that Henry Macartney, his father, actually re-

ceived 14 years penal servitude is the key to the queer psychology of George himself. It was, however, not a matter of heredity, but of objective circumstance — being the direct cause of young George receiving his first thrashing.

George was a late grower both physically and mentally. Eventually he grew into a hefty man with plenty of pluck and intelligence. But at 15 he was about the physical size of a boy of 11, with much the same mental range. And a pretty dreadful little boy, too!

His mother was a very good sort, but she had died when he was 3. His father in his private life was amiable and undisciplined. There had been two or three schools which he had allowed the boy to leave, and two or three governesses who had been allowed to give up in despair. George had become a dreadful little snob and a bully.

The story of the murders really starts with this boy sitting down to lunch at home in the big dining room of their Surrey house on the last day of his father's trial. Akehurst the butler, and the parlormaid, are both in the environs of the Old Bailey waiting for the verdict which is expected at any time. Elsie Natley, the first housemaid, is waiting on George and thoroughly detesting him. In fact, her fingers are itching to get at him — and she is a very muscular girl of 20.

"You've got to stand behind my chair when you wait on me. If you don't I shan't tell father — I shall jolly well tell Akehurst and he'll make you cry. I've seen him do it."

"All right, Master George! I'll stand behind your chair when I come back."

She ran out of the house because she had seen a telegraph boy coming up the drive.

"Guilty. Fourteen years. Akehurst."

The other servants had not seen the telegraph boy coming so they could wait. She put the telegram down on the hall table and from a bracket she took a clothes brush.

"Now, Master George!" she said. She whipped his coat over his head and dragged him on to the table, smashing the crockery. It is doubtful whether she was consciously avenging the three governesses and all that the butler and a succession of parlormaids had endured, but there is no doubt that she laid it on well with the back of the clothes brush.

We may assume that the pain to his person was no more than salutary. Nevertheless, damage was done of a more subtle nature. He knew that she was only 20. And she was a girl. And he was 15 and a boy. And for all his budding manhood he had been

unable to offer effective resistance.

The girl cannot be blamed. She was behaving naturally, as others ought to have behaved before — with no cruelty and with no more violence than she would have used towards a young brother if she had had one. It was beyond her imagination that she should have inflicted a deep hurt that would take years to heal.

After the home was broken up George did not see Elsie again until he was 21 and she was 26, when he met her by chance at Ilfracombe.

In the meantime a sister of his mother's had taken him over and sent him to an expensive private school run on public school lines. He was there until he was nearly 19. They gave him a rudimentary education, taught him manners of a kind, but finally expelled him in spite of the fact that he had won a swimming cup for the school.

She sent him up to Cambridge, but he did not last there a full term. His aunt did not turn him out — he just drifted off and eventually joined a theatrical touring company where he was quite a useful man provided he were cast to type.

Elsie had kept herself very well and had scarcely changed at all. To George she no longer looked so dreadfully muscular — she looked rather pink-and-white and nice. He took off his hat to her and smiled.

"Well, Master George! Oh, do excuse me, calling you that when I ought to say 'Mr. Macartney!' Who would have thought of meeting you."

The conversation followed standard lines. Elsie was having a holiday in a boarding house selected by her late mistress who had departed for America, after which she intended to look round again for another job. George gave an account of himself, truthful except for a little romantic color. He presented her with a stall for that night's performance and the next afternoon hired a boat and took her for a row.

A muscular girl, too, and full of physical energy, George, in spite of some philandering experience, was perhaps a bit slow in making the running. For when they were about a mile off shore she became bored and suggested that she should row.

Anything to please her, thought George, like any other young man.

"Here, I may knock this. Put it in your pocket for me, George, and don't forget to let me have it afterwards."

She detached a bracelet, liberally set with big red stones. George affected to think it valuable. He put it in his pocket for her and she began to row. She had never rowed a sea boat before and the inevitable hap-

pened. She lost an oar and made grab for it. He made a grab, too, and the boat capsized.

George, as we have noted, was a crack swimmer, so here was a chance to play the hero in real life to a maiden in distress. But Elsie had not had time to consider George in the role of hero.

"Leggo, you brute, you'll drown me!" she cried, and landed him a useful blow on the nose.

("I swear I had no thought except to rescue her, like anybody else would. But when she hit me, somehow it all came back. I let her swim a couple of strokes to the boat, which was between us and the shore, and then before I knew what I was doing I collared her by the head from behind and put her under.")

Fifty or sixty holiday makers had seen the accident from the Capstan Hill. But there were no motorboats in those days and it was some little time before a boat rowed by two seamen reached them. George was clinging to the upturned boat with one hand and with the other supporting Elsie. But Elsie was in a perpendicular position and her lungs had been full of water for something like a quarter of an hour.

At the inquest George admitted that she had been a housemaid in his father's house and that they had met by chance. He described the incident truthfully and then:

"I came up under the upturned boat and when I got out it was on the other side. I looked round for Elsie and couldn't see her, for she was on the sea side. Then I wriggled round the boat and after a bit I saw her hand come up. And then I caught hold of one of the oars which was floating and splashed up to where I'd seen her and after a bit I got her. I can't remember much about how I got her back to the boat because I'd swallowed a lot of water myself."

He took the risk of implying that he could hardly swim at all and no one in the theatrical company could deny it. The Coroner gave him a lecture on the folly of standing up in a small boat, opined that he had had a terrible lesson which would stay with him for the rest of his life and then, like everybody else, forgot about him.

The company had moved on to Plymouth before George discovered that he was still in possession of the bracelet which Elsie had asked him to hold. He had not the slightest intention of stealing it, but he did not want to stir things up. So he kept the bracelet and a little later gave it to Polly, a small-part girl in the company. When they quarreled she gave it back to him and something she said revealed to him that it was worth about £80. He was

delighted, for he intended to pawn it at once.

Then he reflected that if it was worth all that money Elsie had almost certainly stolen it — which might lead to complications. It would be safer to get rid of it or keep it out of sight for a few years. He kept it.

The theater held no future for him. At the end of the tour he went back to sponge on his aunt for the few remaining months of her life. She was an annuitant with a negligible capital, but she left him some £2000 with which he established himself as a motor car agent.

Selling motor cars in 1903 was a slow and heart-breaking process. It is incredible nowadays, but on the rare occasions when you booked a customer some eight months would pass before you could redeem the car from the coach builder's and collect.

The two thousand did not last very long. Soon a more balanced concern took over the agency and employed George as part clerk, part salesman. His new employer had been one of his father's victims, but very generously felt only sympathy for George. He suggested that the name was an unfair handicap and himself paid the expenses of George changing his name by deed poll. Between them they constructed the name of "Carshaw" as a good omen for business.

George was living fairly contentedly in lodgings in Richmond. We have no clue to his inmost thoughts at this time, but we may deduce that at the back of his thoughts was the consciousness that he had committed murder and got away with it. What fools, we imagine him reasoning, are murderers to be caught! To mess about with poison and guns and knives which always leave clues! Whereas, if you have an accident which lots of people can witness it does not even matter if you contradict yourself a bit. You are expected to be flurried. And unless they can prove that you deliberately upset the boat there is no possibility of their proving anything.

His evenings tended to be lonely, for he was not a very sociable young man and had no friends of his own sex. Indeed his earnings did not give him scope for much in the way of social activities and he was already inclined to believe that the motor car trade held no prospects.

Spring came with its insistent urge to be up and doing. If he could have Aunt Maud's £2000 over again he would know better what to do.

Violet Laystall was a house parlormaid and he picked her up one Sunday afternoon. She was reasonably good-looking and of quiet manners; and George, though he thought of

himself as a gentleman, had been cured of snobbery and class consciousness. On May 5, 1904, he married her, a notable gift from the bridegroom to the bride being the ruby bracelet that had once belonged to Elsie.

He took her to live in his rooms, for his holiday was not yet due. On May 9 he insured her life for £2000. He proposed his own life for a similar amount, but the proposal was rejected by the insurance company on account of certain medical information he felt obliged to give the doctor about himself. And, of course, they made wills in each other's favor.

Their deferred honeymoon took place in the middle fortnight of August. He took her to Bognor (not yet "Bognor Regis"). On the first three days the sea was choppy. On the afternoon of the fourth day he hired a small rowing boat. When they were about a mile from the shore he suggested that she might like to try her hand at rowing.

She was a docile little woman and obediently took her place on the thwart. She pulled a few strokes while he manipulated the boat broadside to the shore. There were several pleasure boats dotted about, but none of them too close for his purpose and the nearest was that of the attendant on the fringe of the bathers.

He waited for her to lose an oar, but as time was valuable he leaned forward and bumped the sea side oar out of the row lock. Then he stood up and capsized the boat.

The little play had already been rehearsed and he had only to repeat his lines. Even the Coroner made very much the same little speech about its being a lesson to him for the rest of his life. When he was leaving the court, in a suitable state of collapse, an official handed him the ruby bracelet that had been taken from the dead woman's wrist.

Even with £2000 in the bank, George Carshaw, as he now was, did not lose his head. Go slow and look around was his motto. The motor trade, it seemed, was improving of its own accord and without any extra effort George was soon more than equalling his salary in commission. He decided to stay on, a course which presented no embarrassment. His employer did not even know that he had married; and, as George was an unsociable man, he had not confided in any of his colleagues where he had intended to go for his holiday.

There being no immediate opening for capital, George thought a fellow might as well do himself comfortably for a bit. He began to spend his evenings in the West End. Shortly before Christmas he ran

across the girl with whom he had a flirtation in the touring company. She had a one-line part in pantomime and was now glad to be taken out to supper. Before the pantomime was actually put on she resigned and joined forces with him, without benefit of clergy, in a flat in Baker street.

She could not be described as mercenary, but she helped to make a very large dent in the £2000. He grudged her nothing, for she fascinated him. She was known as "Little Polly Flinders," lived as Miss Flinders and would never tell him her real name. She certainly did not grab and it was certainly he who tumbled on the original idea of replenishing their dwindling capital on the race course. By June she discovered that she was not good for him and left him for his own sake. She may even have meant it, for they remained friends and from time to time renewed their association.

In September he married Madge Turnham, who by an eerie coincidence was employed by a Dr. and Mrs. Crippen, the former himself destined to attain world notoriety some years later as the first murderer to be caught by wireless.

Madge was another muscular girl, a quick-witted, suspicious cockney. But there was nothing very much to be suspicious about. He gave her the ruby bracelet and she promptly sneaked off and had it valued. When she learned its worth she opened her eyes. When she had assured herself that he really was employed by a respectable motor agency she thanked her stars for a mug and eagerly married him.

At this stage George was undoubtedly planning everything very carefully. He insured her life for £100 only. Again he proposed a similar policy for his own life and again got it turned down on the "confession" he made to the doctor.

Life insurance at best is a troublesome matter; but accident insurance is very simple. He took out an accident policy on both their lives for £10,000 each. The policy covered death by any kind of accident — including, of course, the accident of drowning.

Of his three wives, Madge, who was the second, was the only really bad one. She was slovenly and quarrelsome. Her ill-nature, indeed, came near to impelling George's plan. For she soon became known as a termagant — the kind of woman that nearly every kind of man would very soon come to hate. They lived in the upper part of a jerry-built house in Harringay and all the neighbors knew that occasionally they came to blows, after which she would be docile and well-behaved for nearly a

week.

It is probable that her detestable temperament made George speed up the program. They had a scrap on the Thursday before Whitsun 1906. George lost his temper this time and very nearly had to call a doctor for her afterwards. After the thumping she was extra docile and perhaps George saw his last chance of staging a reconciliation. He took her to Paignton, a growing seaside resort on the south coast of Devon.

She said that the sea made her sick and she wouldn't go on it. But George, of course, was much more intelligent than his wife. He put up a convincing little pantomime with a £5 note concealed at the back of his pocketbook against a rainy day— teased her and said that she should have the fiver if she could stay in a small rowing boat with him for an hour without being seasick. And the greedy fool succumbed.

We imagine that George put to sea with a certain confidence. He had found a method of murder that was clue-proof. But on this occasion he was very nearly tripped by the element of time. For artificial respiration was applied in the boat that picked them up, and the heart was actually restarted, though it beat for a few seconds only.

But this was the only little contretemps — except that George caught a very bad cold. The inquest went off without a hitch. For neither the Coroner nor the local police kept indexed news clippings of other boating and bathing fatalities in other years and at other places.

But the Department of Dead Ends, which kept a large number of more or less useless records, used to file a cross-index of every death by violence in any form. They found that within the space of two years George Carshaw had lost two wives in precisely the same circumstances, detail for detail. In each case the boat had capsized about the same distance from shore. In each case he had made an ineffectual effort to save his wife. In each case he had prevented the body from sinking, but not from drowning.

Then there was the cross-index ("Fatality — Sea — Boat"). In ten minutes a clerk had found that a similar accident, detail for detail, had happened at Ilfracombe in 1903 with Elsie Natley and George Macartney.

Detective-Inspector Martleplug was the one who worked most closely with Dead Ends at this time. Martleplug dug out the deed poll and identified George Carshaw with George Macartney. He found that the two wives had been insured, that Elsie Natley was not his wife and was not insured — which puzzled him.

He found George arranging for a

sale of his furniture and effects in Harringay. This was a fortnight later. George had drawn the insurance and their few sticks were not worth preserving. The only joint possession of any value was the ruby bracelet, which he had again recovered.

The detective opened in a friendly manner and George responded. Martleplug revealed his knowledge of Violet, but kept Elsie up his sleeve.

"It fairly beats me, Mr. Martleplug, and that's a fact!" said George. "You'd think that when a thing like that's happened once it couldn't possibly happen again. It used to haunt me — and that's why poor Madge persuaded me to go out again. And that — but why talk about it?"

"I've come here to talk about it," said Martleplug. "And I want to ask you a few questions."

"I am sorry," said George, who did not make the ignorant mistake of confusing a detective with a judge, "but the subject is very painful to me and I cannot discuss it. If you don't like that, why don't you arrest me for murder? I'll tell you why you don't — because you haven't got any evidence and can't get it."

George, as you will know, was quite right. The public prosecutor informed Martleplug that he agreed with George.

Of course, as far as common sense goes, they were quite sure that George had murdered Madge. But George was saved by a very simple point in legal procedure. The only ground for assuming that he had forcibly drowned Madge was that he had taken part in two exactly similar "accidents" before. Neither of these two earlier accidents could be put in as evidence in regard to the third accident, since there was no connection between them except the assumed connection in George's mind.

Ten thousand pounds enabled George to throw up his employment and start an independent agency once again himself. This time he could do it in style. He was able to buy two cars for demonstration purposes. He had a decent show room with a well equipped workshop in Tottenham Court road.

One of his first customers was little Polly Flinders who came in on the arm of a prosperous broker from Newcastle. She was astonished to see him and rather pleased. In the course of the trial run he persuaded her to drop the broker. It meant losing a customer, but Polly was worth it, and he had more than half the £10,000 in reserve.

They took a flat on the unfashionable side of Regent's Park, which was conveniently near the office. This time Polly was determined to be good for him. She put her foot

very firmly down on horse racing and after the first week or two refused to let him give her expensive dresses — except just a few, which, she said, would be economical in the end. He must, she said, learn to be sensible with his money. He must not speculate — he must invest. And if you invested your money sensibly you could get as big a return as if you had speculated with it. There was, for example, The Theater, of which George already had too much practical knowledge to be fooled, as he had been fooled by racing tipsters.

She had, it turned out, heard of a play only the other day which contained great possibilities of profit. By the instrumentality of one of the economical-expensive frocks she obtained the script from the author. When she read the part which she would play if George should decide to go into production as a side line, he agreed that it sounded fine.

George paid for the play to be put on and by running a small mortgage on the agency managed to prop it up for six weeks at one of the minor West End theaters. He had just enough left to send it on tour in the provinces — with Polly in her part. So he lost both his money and his girl — though she continued to write him most affectionate letters from the provinces until the tour collapsed.

George did quite well with the agency. He had a liking for motor cars and put in plenty of work. But he was handling one of the smaller makes that has since perished. There was the slack first quarter of the new year in which the rent and wages of the workshop staff became a problem. He pulled up a bit in the summer, but not quite enough. If the agency were to live it must have new capital.

He found May Toler outside a servants' registry office in Piccadilly. She was 32 and the only one of his wives who was definitely pretty, with beautiful long hands, which she had been able to preserve; for it was more than ten years since she had been anything but a very good class parlor-maid.

With her he had to exert all his resources and his rather crude charm. And there were several setbacks. Her family, who lived at Willesden, did not like him at first. But their hostility was killed by his gift of the ruby bracelet which they recognized to be valuable.

She married him, against her better judgment, in February, 1908. He had persuaded her to cut out the still-querulous family and more or less make an elopement of it. For the ceremony was performed with paid witnesses before the registrar at Camden Town.

Possibly he thought that in this way he was preventing the police from learning of his marriage. On the other hand we can be quite certain that at this stage his attitude to the police was one of open defiance. He was aware that they believed him to be a murderer. Well, he had invented the perfect murder that could even, as it were, be performed in public. And here we must reluctantly concede a small point to the fanatics of heredity — for his father had behaved just like this, faking his balance sheet with a system of his own when he knew the police accountants were looking for the fake.

They took out joint-life insurance for £500. The joint-life element can hardly have been a serious attempt to throw dust into anyone's eyes, for he used it subsequently as a means of raising a small loan for his business. They made wills in each other's favor — and he sent her on her own to take out an accident policy with a different company for £10,000 against death by accident.

Their circumstances during the summer were easy enough, but the winter was a bit of a pinch. They had taken a small, noisy flat off Theobald's Road. The very superior parlormaid proved a very indifferent cook and a hopeless manager. Personally, too, she went to pieces very soon after the wedding. He seems to have been kind enough to her and she herself was not quarrelsome. But she missed her occupation and she would whine a good deal and drop into melancholy and latterly there is evidence that she took to drink.

It became doubtful whether George would have enough capital to take full advantage of next summer's business. So between Easter and Whitsun he took her to Colwyn Bay in North Wales.

This time the only variation in the program was that he rowed her farther out from shore. There was no question of her being alive when they were picked up.

He got his shock this time in the Coroner's court. He had just repeated his little speech as to how it had all happened when a barrister got up, who represented the police.

Now the rules of evidence in a high court are many and varied. But the rules of evidence in a Coroner's court are just exactly what the Coroner likes. It may be a legal anomaly that the man who is often an amateur is given more discretion than a judge — but there it is. And George had to make the best of it.

"Was your wife insured, Mr. Carshaw?"

"We had a joint policy for £500, in mortgage for my business."

"Any other insurance?"

"I don't know. She may have."

"You don't know. Was your last wife insured against death by accident for £10,000?"

"Yes."

"Did she on June 15, 1906, meet with an exactly similar accident at Paignton? I mean, had you rowed her out and did the boat capsize in — er — the precise manner in which you have just described in respect of your — er — latest wife?"

Point by point he brought out the details of the drowning of Madge, then of the drowning of Violet and, point by point, matched them with the drowning of May.

Three was good enough. He could not make the insurance point in respect of Elsie, so he left it alone.

It is open to the critical to take the view that this cross-examination was a definite "wangle" on the part of the police. They could bring the facts out in the Coroner's court, though not in the high court. But by the time the Coroner's case was reported every man in the country who was likely to sit on the jury would have been certain to read the facts. So the jury would know.

But the Coroner's court carried them a bit further than they meant to go. The jury brought in a verdict of willful murder against George Carshaw and he was committed for trial on the Coroner's warrant.

The Crown felt that it must go on with the case. George was brought up for trial in the following June.

In the meantime Martleplug had traced George back to the private school where he had been instrumental in winning a swimming cup. They had against him now that he was a powerful swimmer and that his thrice-repeated tale of floundering about with an oar was all nonsense.

But even so George got away with it.

It was a rising young lawyer, now well known as Sir Ernest Quilter, K.C., who saved George Carshaw from his reasonably certain fate of being hanged as the murderer of his wife, May.

Counsel for the prosecution opened by describing in minute detail the circumstances in which May had met her death. He then paused and looked at the judge — an action which was very close indeed to being a prearranged signal. But as this was done by arrangement with the defense there could be no objection. The judge promptly ordered the jury to retire and then listened to arguments on both sides as to the admissibility of evidence of the two previously drowned wives (owing to the absence of the money element the Crown had come to the conclusion that the first drowning, of Elsie

Natley, was a genuine accident which had given George the idea for the subsequent murders).

The prosecution claimed admissibility of the previous accidents and quoted precedent. But Quilter scotched him.

"In all the precedents which my learned friend has quoted there has invariably been the *prima facie* assumption of guilt. In this case I submit that there is no *prima facie* assumption of guilt whatever. There is the overwhelming assumption of an accident — which can only be upset by consideration of the previous cases."

A bold line — for it admitted by implication that George was a murderer.

The judge agreed and ruled that the evidence of the previous drownings was inadmissible until the prosecution had established a reasonably strong *prima facie* assumption of guilt in respect of May. Each counsel seemed extremely pleased with this ruling.

At an early stage the prosecution called George's old schoolmaster, together with one of his staff and two men who had been pupils with George. These men proved George's swimming prowess. The prosecution was triumphant.

"My lord, the deceased was drowned admittedly within a dozen or so yards of the upturned boat. Is it to be believed that the prisoner, who was a very able swimmer, was unable to effect her rescue as he stated? I submit that a *prima facie* case has been made out of the prisoner's guilt. I shall therefore ask your lordship's leave to introduce — other evidence."

Mr. Quilter had been waiting for this.

"I object, my lord. It is no part of my case to deny that my client could have saved his wife from drowning had he wished to do so."

Daring again! Sailing right into the wind! There was what the newspapers insist upon calling a sensation in court. And Quilter went on:

"My learned friend has forgotten more law than I ever knew, so he will not object to my reminding him of the principle enshrined in the doggerel —

"Thou shalt not kill, but needst not
strive
Officiously to keep alive.

"I admit that Carshaw did not strive to keep his wife alive. I am not here to defend his moral character, nor his conscience. I am still waiting for my friend to show that any action of Carshaw's betrays evidence of felonious intent."

Quilter scored again.

Once those two persons were in the water the most that could be

proved against George was that he had deliberately refrained from rescuing his wife. Again, the law may be at variance with the public conscience, but the law remains. And the law lays it down that you need never rescue anybody from anything if you don't want to.

That limited the prosecution to proving that the boat had been feloniously capsized by George — which in the nature of things was unprovable. At the judge's direction the jury found George Carshaw "not guilty."

After escaping under police escort from the mob around the court, George showed his gratitude to Mr. Quilter by briefing him to recover the £10,000 from the accident insurance company in respect of May's death. And again Quilter won.

Fortunately for George, he had given his agency a fancy name and was able to resume business, equipped now with ample capital. He got in touch with Polly Flinders, but this time she shrieked when he came near her and he had to run for it.

There was, it would be safe to say, no one in the country who doubted George's guilt. He had to take an assumed name, without deed poll this time. But whatever inconvenience he may have suffered in this way was compensated for by his egomaniac delight in the fact that the police knew him to be a multiple murderer and could not touch him.

Nor could they — until the Department of Dead Ends had a piece of undeserved luck.

In the following October there arrived at the Carlton Hotel a Mr. and Mrs. Huystefan. Mrs. Huystefan was an Englishwoman who had married an American. One evening while she was dressing for dinner she was assaulted in her bedroom and robbed of her jewelry. She was too shaken to be of much use to the police that night. But her husband, who was a methodical man, gave them an old typewritten list of the items of his wife's jewelry.

His name, he contrived to explain, was that of an old Southern family who had arrived before the Mayflower and on all the gold pieces the family crest, a lion couchant, would be found stamped.

The Yard had not very much hope. A Carlton Hotel job would mean crooks in a good way of business. But they sent out the dragnet and were rather surprised to get a response from a pawnbroker in Holborn, who produced a ruby bracelet with the crest stamped inside the gold ring.

"How long have you had this?"

"Pawned with me last February by a Mrs. Carshaw. There's the address — Theobald's Road —"

"Then you're all right, because it's not what we want. But you might leave it with us for a couple of days."

On account of the name and address the bracelet went to the Department of Dead Ends as a matter of routine. No purely logical detective would have wasted a moment over that bracelet. Mrs. Huystefan had been in England a week and this had been pawned in London last February. And it wasn't as though the crest were in any way an unusual design.

But a ruby bracelet was listed amongst the stolen jewelry. So Tarrant requested Mrs. Huystefan, now restored to health, to call at the Yard and identify it. She identified it at once as her bracelet and then became profusely apologetic.

"I'm so sorry you've had this trouble with the bracelet," she said. "I forgot it was on that old list my husband gave you, or I would have notified you at once. I gave it away as a present when I was in England six years ago. I'm very sorry she had to pawn it. If you are in touch with her, I would be so glad if you would give me her address, as I would like to help her again."

"Help who, Mrs. Huystefan?"

"The girl I gave it to. Elsie Natley. She was one of my maids in town here just after I married Mr. Huystefan. We took a bungalow that year at Croyde near Ilfracombe in North Devon and she came with us as cook-general for we were roughing it, you know. You don't want the whole story, but I gave it to her because she saved my life. It wasn't the sort of thing you could give a money tip for, was it? If she's in trouble I would so like to know her address."

"Do you mind telling me how she saved your life, Mrs. Huystefan?"

"It was at bathing — yes, bathing! The currents round there are simply dreadful and I didn't know it. I swam out and couldn't get in again. It was a bit choppy and my strength was going. My husband rushed in after me, but he was a poor swimmer. Elsie spotted my trouble from the bungalow. She came rushing out, whipping off her skirt as she ran, then her shoes. She outstripped my husband and got to me just in time and brought me in. She was a magnificent swimmer — her father used to be a water man on the River Lee."

"Thank you, Mrs. Huystefan! You don't think of leaving England for a few weeks?"

"No, we're over for six months."

Tarrant thanked her again, then looked up the dossier of Elsie Natley. Elsie had died, as had the other women, of asphyxia resulting from

drowning. Not of anything else.

Tarrant told his tale to the chief and soon was telling it again to a junior lawyer from the public prosecutor's office.

Tarrant, of course, was privileged and he received the young man with a smile.

"If you have been able to prove that Carshaw's wife, May, had been a very strong swimmer, you'd have got a conviction, wouldn't you?"

"Of course we would! We could have used it to prove, what everyone knows, that he held her under! Also, it would have established a *prima facie* case and we could have brought in the other cases."

"Well, there's a Mrs. Huystefan to prove that Elsie Natley was a strong swimmer. And you've still got the two other cases left — Madge and Violet. And as they wouldn't let you use them the other day you can use 'em now."

George was hanged on December 7, 1909, for the murder of Elsie Natley.

***Solution to* "Guess Who?"**

Right-o! Genial, brilliant, razor-witted Dr. Gideon Fell — that behemoth of fictional sleuths whose exploits have come to us in nearly a dozen baffling tales from the facile pen of John Dickson Carr. Carr, under the pseudonym Carter Dickson, is the author of the equally famous Sir Henry Merrivale (HM) series.

Watch for the first Dr. Fell radio story ever to appear in print; it is called *The Hangman Won't Wait* and will be in the next issue (September 1944).

This radio story was written especially for and at the request of the United States Government. Don't let that scare you — read it as a straight detective story. But when you've finished, take its theme seriously to heart: it concerns the most important issue in our lives — the winning of the war.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE WOUNDED LIEUTENANT

by ELLERY QUEEN

The Characters

ELLERY QUEEN	*the detective*
NIKKI PORTER	*his secretary*
INSPECTOR QUEEN	*his father*
SERGEANT VELIE	*of the Inspector's staff*
LIEUT. JACK SENTER	*of the U. S. armed forces*
"TEX"	*of the U. S. armed forces*
"INDIANA"	*of the U. S. armed forces*

SCENE 1: *Police Headquarters*

INSPECTOR: (*Pleased*) Ellery? Nikki? Come on in. (*Door closes.*) What brings *you* two to Police Headquarters this morning?

NIKKI: Oh, you know Ellery, Inspector. Always looking for new crimes to conquer.

ELLERY: Who, me, Nikki? But as long as the subject's been brought up — *is* there anything interesting at Headquarters this morning, dad?

INSPECTOR: Not a thing, son — it's quiet as a Sunday on Mars. Talking about Mars — I've just heard some good news about one of our *own* gods of war.

NIKKI: (*Puzzled*) Meaning whom, Inspector?

INSPECTOR: (*Chuckling*) Jack Senter — used to be *Detective* Senter, Homicide, Brooklyn, U. S. A. Now *Lieutenant* Senter, one of Uncle *Sam's* finest.

ELLERY: Jack Senter! Isn't he the chap who enlisted the day after Pearl Harbor?

INSPECTOR: That's our Jack. Well, word's come that Jack is back in the big town after seeing action far, far away. Velie's out trying to locate him now. (*Gleeful*) By thunder, I'm taking Jack out and we'll — we'll paint the town!

NIKKI: Let me help you paint, Inspector? (*Men laugh*). Especially if Lieutenant Senter's on the good-looking side.

ELLERY: (*Chuckling*) Very much so, Nikki. Six feet one of he-man.

INSPECTOR: Let's make a party of it — (*Door opens*) Hi, Velie! (*Door*

closes.) Locate Jack yet?

VELIE: (*Very grave*) Yeah, Inspector. I located him.

NIKKI: Why, Sergeant, how glum! What's the matter?

VELIE: (*Reluctantly*) Well . . .

ELLERY: (*Apprehensively*) What's wrong, Sergeant? Where *is* Lieutenant Senter?

VELIE: In a base hospital. (*Bursting out*) I tell ya, when I heard about it, I — (*Bitterly*) Jack came back, all right — *half* of him.

INSPECTOR: (*Horrified*) Half of him!

VELIE: Both legs. (*Pause*) He's askin' for ya, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: (*Heavily*) Yeah . . . Okay. Let's go!

SCENE 2: *Hospital*

JACK: (*Fretfully*) So here I am, Inspector, chained to this bed —

INSPECTOR: (*Gently*) Yes, Jack, we . . . know all about it.

JACK: Oh, I don't mean what happened to *me*, Inspector. *I* was lucky —

NIKKI: *Lucky*, Lieutenant?

JACK: At least I'm back, Miss Porter. But my buddies — big Tex, little Indiana, practically my whole outfit — they'll *never* come back. (*Pause*) And in a few minutes some Intelligence officers 'll be here to ask me how it happened, and I won't be able to tell 'em!

VELIE: How what happened, Jack?

JACK: How my outfit came to be wiped out, Velie. I can't understand it — nobody can!

ELLERY: There's a mystery involved, Lieutenant?

JACK: An impossible mystery. Yet it happened, Ellery. We were overseas — never mind where. We had our orders — secret orders. An important offensive assignment. Its success depended on catching the enemy completely by surprise. So every precaution was taken against a leak, And yet —

INSPECTOR: They were waiting for you, Jack?

JACK: (*Bitterly*) In the exact spot, Inspector — at exactly the right time! Outnumbered us 20 to 1. We never had a chance. The lives of all those swell guys — the months and months of training — that wonderful equipment — all *wasted*. Tossed away! Because there was a leak — *somewhere* . . .

ELLERY: Wasn't an investigation made at the base, Lieutenant?

JACK: On the spot, I'm told. Of course, I was out like a light. But they grabbed the rat who passed the vital information on to the enemy — a half-caste native who worked in the Officers' Canteen. But they couldn't get a word out of him. How did *he* find out? Such exact information? I'll vouch for every man in that outfit! Yes, El-

lery, I'll say it's a mystery — a mystery *I* can't solve!

INSPECTOR: Why not tell us about it, Jack?

VELIE: Yeah, we may see somepin' you missed.

JACK: But I don't know what I *can* tell you.

ELLERY: Suppose you give us an exact account of what happened the last time you and the boys were in the presence of that native spy, Lieutenant.

JACK: Well, all right, but — We were in the base Canteen. Sitting around a table. Tex and Indiana and I — just kicking the time away . . .

SCENE 3: *Canteen*

JACK: So what did the USO gal say, Tex?

TEX: Say, Jack? Why, she says to me: "Lootenant, can you jitterbug?" I says: "Ma'am, can a hound dog scratch fleas? Why, the boys even named our ship 'Jitterbug' after me!"

INDIANA: How'd you make out, Tex?

TEX: Indiana, I darn near busted mah leg. An' two o' hers! (*They laugh.*)

JACK: How about another round? Boy! Over here!

NATIVE: Yessa.

TEXAS: Three more pops, boy . . . Fight for Uncle Sammy, see the world on soda pop — an' like it! Hey, Indiana, why are *you* lookin' like a dogie?

INDIANA: (*Subdued*) Me, Tex? I was just thinking.

JACK: Thinking! About what?

INDIANA: Home, Jack. (*Pause.*)

TEX: (*Heartily*) Here's the gar-song with our pop! Lucky the boys back home can't see me.

WAITER: Three pop. Yessa. Thank you, sa. I will clean the table . . .

INDIANA: Elm Street would look mighty good to me right now. Elm Street and Maizie. And the kid.

JACK: Say, I wonder how Broadway looks in the dim-out.

TEX: Funny thing. When I was a yearlin' ridin' herd — the ol' sun would come up, an' there was Texas. All around me. Everywhere I looked — Texas. Used to say to muh hoss: Bronc, some day I'm goin' to see Africa. Or Alaska. Or South America. The places yuh read about. Yuh know?

INDIANA: (*Moodily*) Last letter I got, Maizie wrote the kid's ten months old. And he's tryin' to walk — already! That's a he-kid, ain't it? A kid that's never seen his old man. Me here — and him and his mother on an Indiana farm . . .

JACK: Hey, guys. Look at the time. (*Pause.*)

TEX: Uh-uh.

INDIANA: (*Sighing*) We'd better hit the hay if we're going to get a good night's rest . . . I wish I could see my kid tonight.

TEX: Buck up, Indiana! You're goin' to see the dawn come up like thunder.

INDIANA: Thanks, Tex. I'm okay.

JACK: Ready, fellows?

TEX: (*Humorously*) Orders, Lieutenant?

JACK: (*Quietly*) Orders.

SCENE 4: *Hospital*

JACK: . . . and that's all. But when we went into action, there was the enemy — laying for us. Were *we* surprised — the handful of us that lived to *be* surprised. I saw them all go — Tex, who was always cheering us up — poor Indiana . . . his kid'll never see him in *this* world —

NIKKI: (*Tearfully*) Gosh, it's . . . Ellery, I can't understand it, either!

ELLERY: You should, Nikki. There was a crime committed.

INSPECTOR: (*Grimly*) Yes, *sir*.

VELIE: A crime, Maestro? Oh, you mean that two-timin' native — the spy . . .

ELLERY: No, Velie. I mean the crime by which the spy was tipped off.

JACK: Tipped off! (*Angrily*) See here, Ellery. If you're cracking that one of my buddies was a traitor —

ELLERY: (*Gently*) No, Lieutenant. He was a good American soldier who was committing the crime without realizing it. If he'd been on the alert — watching his tongue — he'd have stopped himself in time.

JACK: But *what* crime?

INSPECTOR: (*Gravely*) The crime of loose talk, Jack.

ELLERY: Yes — dropping scraps of information within hearing of the enemy's agents — who are everywhere. In this case, Lieutenant, loose talk gave your secret attack away to the native spy and he transmitted his information to the enemy. Result: annihilation of an entire fighting force.

NIKKI: But Ellery, I didn't hear any loose talk in Lieutenant Senter's story!

JACK: Of course not. Nobody said anything that night at the Canteen, Ellery, that gave the show away!

ELLERY: But someone *did* say something that gave the show away — in fact, several things. Lieutenant, loose talk that night answered three of the vital questions the enemy is always interested in: What, when, and where!

JACK: And you know, too, Ellery?

ELLERY: Yes, I do.

JACK: (*Bewildered*) But . . . why, I

haven't even told you what branch of the armed forces we were in!

ELLERY: All right, Lieutenant, I'll prove it to you. I'll tell you *what kind* of attack you were going to make, *when* you were going to make it, and *where* . . . all from loose talk!

The Solution

SCENE 5: *Hospital*

JACK: Okay — what kind of attack were we making, Ellery?

ELLERY: Well, Lieutenant, take that little story Tex was telling you and Indiana in the Canteen. Exactly what did Tex say? He said: "Why, the boys even named our ship 'Jitterbug' after me!" Innocent remark, but careless — so careless it answered the first of those three vital questions.

VELIE: But how did *that* give away Jack's outfit, Maestro?

ELLERY: Tell him, dad.

INSPECTOR: Velie, to what type of fighting equipment do the armed forces permit the boys to give a jazzy name like "Jitterbug"? A battleship? cruiser? destroyer? aircraft carrier? No, nothing like that —

NIKKI: I know — a tank!

ELLERY: But it couldn't have been a tank, Nikki. Tex actually called it a *ship*.

VELIE: But if it ain't a ship on the ocean . . . Oh! A *plane!*

ELLERY: Right, Sergeant. And since Tex called it "*our* ship," it could only have been a plane with a *crew* — a big fellow. So the native spy knew that Lieutenant Senter and the others were *airmen* — that if there was to be an attack, it would be by *air*, and by big planes — a *bombing* attack.

JACK: (*Groaning*) Yeah. But how about *when*, Ellery? You said we gave away the *when* of the attack, too!

ELLERY: At the end of your three-cornered conversation, Lieutenant, you called attention to the hour. Indiana agreed it was time to go to bed. Then Tex said: "Buck up, Indiana, *you're going to see the dawn come up* — like thunder." *Dawn!* Obviously, the attack was to be made at dawn the morning after you boys had to "get a good night's rest" — *dawn of the following morning.*

JACK: (*Groaning*) Sure . . . that's it!

INSPECTOR: I saw *those* two, Ellery. But how about *where?* The *place* of the attack?

ELLERY: Dad, why should Tex use the very unusual phrase: "You're going to *see the dawn come up like thunder*"? Because, having the place of attack on his mind, it unconsciously *suggested* that unusual

phrase to him! So the clue must be in the phrase. Where does that phrase come from?

VELIE: (*Doubtful*) "Where the dawn comes up like thunder"?

NIKKI: Rudyard Kipling's poem — the famous song!

INSPECTOR: Of course! Kipling's "*On the Road to Mandalay*"!

ELLERY: Yes, because of Kipling's internationally-famous poem, Lieutenant, there's only one place in the whole world where you and your fellow airmen could see "the dawn come up like thunder" — and that's Mandalay, Burma! So I knew that you men were probably based in *India* — and I knew, as that native spy knew, that your outfit was going to make a *bombing attack on the road to Mandalay* the *next morning* at *dawn!*

JACK: If Tex 'd thought before he popped off, he and the rest of the boys would be alive today.

NIKKI: The attack *would* have been a surprise —

VELIE: You'd have caught those dirty Japs flatfooted —

ELLERY: Exactly. So Lieutenant, now you can tell the Intelligence officers coming here to question you that *loose talk costs lives.*

(*Music up*)

Answers to CrimInological Data

1. The criminal means that he has carefully inspected the scene of an intended burglary and believes that the actual burglary will be quite simple.
2. A detailed examination of tobacco ash produces very meager results. In fact, we must seriously doubt whether the beloved Sherlock could have possessed such knowledge, inasmuch as the differential diagnosis of tobacco ash, even under the most powerful microscope, offers little of value. Cigarette ashes are distinguished by the presence of pa-

per ash; pipe tobacco ashes can be differentiated by variations in the shape of the individual particles. No difference is apparent, however, between different brands or types of tobacco within these general classifications.

3. "The Bertillon System" is a method of identifying and classifying criminals by bodily measurements. This system, for the most part, has given way to criminal identification by means of fingerprints.
4. A "Box Job" is a safe burglary.
5. Phase One: The identification and examination of persons, both living and dead. Phase Two: The field work carried on at the scene of the crime by specially trained detectives. Phase Three: Police laboratory work — the scientific analysis of all clues found at the scene of the crime; even the wax in a suspect's ears may furnish clues that only the scientist can discover.
6. If fingerprints found at the scene of the crime are only partial and do not possess enough characteristics for positive identification, the sweat pores of the friction ridges may be used for identification. These pores, which appear as small white pin-points on fingerprint impressions, are absolutely individual for each person. The pattern of the pores, like the pattern of the friction ridges, never changes; if the skin is injured in any manner, the pores will reappear in their original pattern after the skin is healed.
7. No. Article V of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States reads: "nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life and limb."
8. Direction in which vehicle traveled. Type of vehicle — that is, passenger car, truck, motorcycle, etc. Weight of car. Possible identification of vehicle. Criminologists believe that there are more than 100,000,000 possible combinations of tire patterns on an automobile, and each one of these combinations would have many possible conditions of wear.
9. More than a thousand years before Christ the Chinese used fingerprints as seals for personal identification. During the same period the Babylonians pressed a fingerprint into the soft clay tablets when they wrote receipts and other important documents, to protect themselves against possible forgeries.
10. A "Hot Boiler" is underworld slang for a stolen automobile.

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Killing the Goose

By Frances and Richard Lockridge

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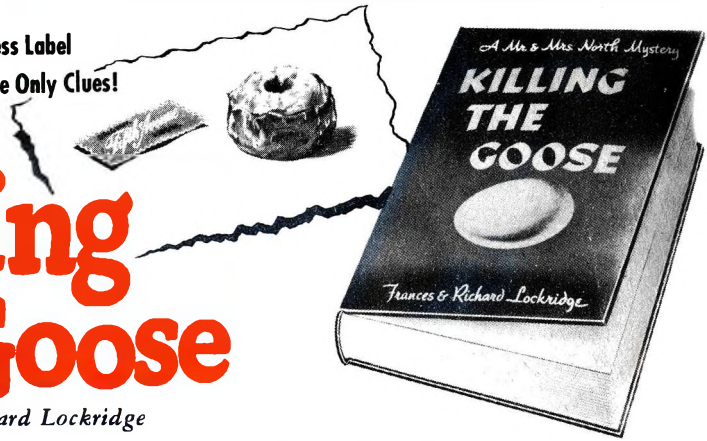

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