ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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NOVEMBER 1943

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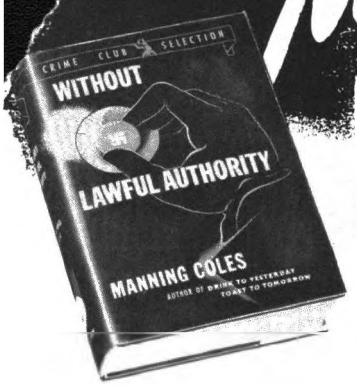

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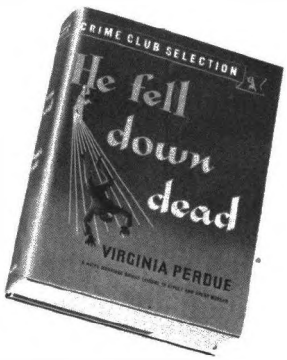

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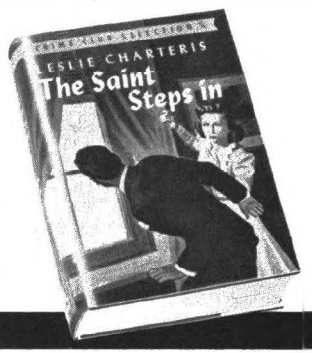

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THE CRIME CLUB

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

PUBLISHER

LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK

EDITOR

ELLERY QUEEN

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INNER SANCTUM MYSTERIES

PUBLISHED BY SIMON AND SCHUSTER · NEW YORK

Whenever Dr. Gideon Fell knocks on our editorial door, we promptly push a special button which signals our Third-Assistant-Vice-President-in-Charge-of-Welcoming to roll out the red carpet. For Dr. Fell is akin to visiting royalty. . . .

"The Locked Room" has never before appeared in the United States. It is a typical John Dickson Carr story — the impossible crime — baffling, ingenious, and in the end, completely possible!

THE LOCKED ROOM

by JOHN DICKSON CARR

You may have read the facts. Francis Seton was found lying on the floor behind his desk, near death from a fractured skull. He had been struck three times across the back of the head with a piece of lead-loaded broomhandle. His safe had been robbed. His body was found by his secretary-typist, Iris Lane, and his librarian, Harold Mills, who were, in the polite newspaper phrase, "being questioned."

So far, it seems commonplace. Nothing in that account shows why Superintendent Hadley of the C.I.D. nearly went mad, or why ten o'clock of a fine June morning found him punching at the door-bell of Dr. Gideon Fell's house in Chelsea.

Summer touched the old houses with grace. There was a smoky sparkle on the river, and on the flower-veined green of the Embankment gardens. Upstairs, in the library, with its long windows, Superintendent Hadley found the learned doctor smoking a cigar and reading a magazine.

Dr. Fell's bulk overflowed from a chair nearly large enough to accommodate him. A chuckle animated his several chins, and ran down over the ridges of his waistcoat. He peered up at Hadley over his eyeglasses; his cheeks shone, pinkly transparent, with warmth of welcome. But at Hadley's first words a disconsolate expression drew down the corners of his moustache.

"Seton's conscious," said Hadley. "I've just been talking to him."

Dr. Fell grunted. Reluctantly he put aside the magazine.

"Ah," he said. "And Seton denies the story told by the secretary and the librarian?"

"No. He confirms it."

"In every detail?"

"In every detail."

Dr. Fell puffed out his cheeks. He also took several violent puffs at the cigar, staring at it in a somewhat

cross-eyed fashion. His big voice was subdued.

"Do you know, Hadley," he muttered, "I rather expected that."

"I didn't," snapped Hadley. "I didn't; and I don't. But that's why I'm here. You must have some theory about this impossible burglar who nearly bashed a man's head off and then disappeared like smoke. My forthright theory is that Iris Lane and Harold Mills are lying. If . . . hullo!"

Standing by the window, he broke off and glanced down into the street. His gesture was so urgent that Dr. Fell, with much labour, hoisted himself up wheezily from the chair and lumbered over to the window.

Clear in the strong sunshine, a girl in a white frock was standing on the opposite pavement, by the railings, and peering up at the window. As Dr. Fell threw back the curtains, she looked straight into their eyes.

She was what is called an outdoor girl, with a sturdy and well-shaped body, and a square but very attractive face. Her dark brown hair hung in a long bob. She had light hazel eyes in a tanned, earnest face. Her mouth might have been too broad, but she showed fine teeth when she laughed. If she was not exactly pretty, health and vigour gave her a strong attractiveness which was better than that.

"Iris Lane," said Hadley ventriloquially.

Dr. Fell, in an absent-minded way, was startled. He would have expected Francis Seton's typist to be either prim or mousy.

When she saw the two men at the window, Iris Lane's expressive face showed many things. Disappointment, surprise, even fear. Her knee moved as though she were about to stamp angrily on the pavement. For a second they thought she would turn and hurry away. Then she seemed to come to a decision. She almost ran across the street towards the house.

"Now what do you suppose —— ?" Hadley was speculating when the doctor cut him short.

"She wants to see me, confound you," he roared. "Or she did want to see me, until you nearly scared her off."

And the girl herself confirmed it a moment later. She was making an attempt to be calm and even jaunty, but her eyes always moved back to Hadley.

"It seems," she said, after a quick look round the room, "that I'm always trailing the superintendent. Or he's always trailing me. I don't know which."

Hadley nodded. He was noncommittal.

"It does seem like that, Miss Lane.

Anything in particular on your mind now?"

"Yes. I — I wanted to talk to Dr. Fell. Alone."

"Oh? Why?"

"Because it's my last hope," answered the girl, raising her head. "Because they say nobody, not even a stray dog, is ever turned away from here."

"Nonsense!" said Dr. Fell, hugely delighted nevertheless. He covered this with deprecating noises which shook the chandelier, and an offer of refreshment. Hadley saw that the old man was half hooked already, and Hadley despaired.

Yet it seemed impossible to doubt this girl's sincerity. She sat bolt upright in the chair, opening and shutting the catch of a white handbag.

"It's quite simple," she explained, and hunched her shoulders. "Harold Mills and I were alone in the house with Mr. Seton. There was nearly three thousand pounds in the safe in his study."

Dr. Fell frowned.

"So? As much money as that?"

"Mr. Seton was leaving," said Iris Lane, with an effort. "He was going abroad, to spend a year in California. He always made his decisions suddenly — just like that." She snapped her fingers. "We didn't know anything about it, Harold and I, until he broke the news that morning. The man from the bank brought the money round; Mr. Seton put it into the safe, and told us why he had sent for it. That meant we were out of our jobs."

And she began to tell the story.

Of course (Iris admitted to herself), her nerves had been on edge that night. It was caused partly by losing a good job at a moment's notice, partly by the thick and thundery weather round the old house in Kensington, and partly by the personality of Francis Seton himself.

Francis Seton was a book-collector. When Iris had first answered his advertisement for a secretary-typist, she had expected to find someone thin and ancient, with double-lensed spectacles. Instead she found a thickset bull of a man, with sandy hair and a blue guileless eye. His energy was prodigious. He animated the old house like a humming-top. He had the genuine collector's passion; he was generous, and considerate when it did not inconvenience him.

But he whirled off at a new tangent that morning, a hot overcast day, when he called Iris Lane and Harold Mills into his study. They had been working in the long library on the first floor. The study, which opened out of it, was a large room with two windows overlooking a tangled back garden.

Seton stood by the big flat-topped desk in the middle of the study. Out of a canvas bag he was emptying thick packets of banknotes, one of which fell into the waste-paper basket.

"Look here," he said, with the confiding candour of a child. "I'm off to America. For a year at least."

(He seemed pleased at the way his hearers jumped.)

"But, sir ——" began Harold Mills.

"Crisis!" said Seton, pointing to a newspaper. "Crisis!" he added, pointing to another. "I'm sick of crises. California's the place for me. Orange groves and sea breezes: at least, that's what the booklets say. Besides, I want to make old Isaacson sick with my 1593 *Venus and Adonis* and the 1623 folio."

His forehead grew lowering and embarrassed.

"I've got to let you both go," he growled. "I'd like to take you both with me. Can't afford it. Sorry; but there it is. I'll give you a month's salary in place of notice. Damn it, I'll give you *two* months' salary in place of notice. How's that?"

Beaming with relief now that this was off his chest, he dismissed the subject briskly. He gathered up the packets of banknotes, fishing the dropped one out of the waste-paper basket. It made his face crimson to bend over, since Dr. Woodhall had warned him about high blood-pressure; but he was all energy again.

A little iron safe stood against one wall. Seton opened it with his key, poured the money into a tin box, closed the safe, and locked it. In a vague way Iris noted the denominations on the paper bands round the packets of notes: £1, £5, £10, £20. A little treasure-trove. Almost a little fortune.

Perhaps because of the heat of the day, there was perspiration on Harold Mills's forehead.

"And when do you want to leave, sir?" he asked.

"Leave? Oh, ah." Seton considered. "Day after tomorrow," he decided.

"Day after tomorrow!"

"Saturday," Seton explained. "Always a good ship leaving. Yes, make it Saturday."

"But your passport ——" protested Iris.

"That's completely in order," said Seton coolly.

The word which flashed through Iris Lane's mind just then was "robbed." She could not help it. There are times with everyone when the sight of so much money, all in a lump, makes the fingers itch and brings fantastic dreams of what might be.

She didn't mean it — as she was later to explain to the police. But there was a tantalizing quality in

what had happened. Only yesterday she had been safe. Only a week ago she had returned from a holiday in Cornwall, where there had been little to do except lie on lemon-coloured sands in a lemon-coloured bathing-suit; or feel the contrast between sun on baking shoulders and salt water foaming and slipping past her body, in the cold invigoration of the sea. The future would take care of itself.

And more. There was a pleasant-looking man, just on the right side of middle age, who came to do sketches at the beach. They were such intolerably bad sketches that Iris was relieved to discover he was a doctor from London.

By coincidence, a breeze blew one of the sketches past her, and she retrieved it. So they fell into conversation. By coincidence, it developed that the man's name was Charles Woodhall; and that he was Francis Seton's doctor. It astounded Iris, who saw in this a good omen of summer magic. She liked Dr. Woodhall. He was as good a talker as Seton himself, without Seton's untiring bounce. And he knew when to be comfortably silent.

Dr. Woodhall would sit on a camp-stool, attired in ancient flannels, tennis-shoes, and shirt, and draw endless sketches of Iris. A cigarette would hang from the corner of his mouth. He would blink as smoke got into one eye, and amusement-wrinkles deepened from the corners of his eyes almost back to temples that were slightly grey. Meantime, he talked, He talked happily of all things in earth and sky and sea. He also offered a profound apology for the bad sketches. But Iris, though she secretly agreed with him, kept them all; and so passed the fortnight.

They would meet again in London.

And she had a good job to go back to there.

All the future looked pleasant — until Francis Seton exploded everything that morning.

The thunderstorm, which had been imminent all day, broke late in the afternoon.

It brought little relief to Iris. She and Harold Mills went on with their work and were still working long after dinner, in the library under the shaded lamps and the rows of books behind their wire cages. It was a rich room, deep-carpeted like every other room in the house; but it was tainted with damp. Iris's head ached. She had sent off two dozen letters, and arranged every detail of Seton's trip: all he had to do now was pack his bag. Seton himself was in the study, with the door closed between,

cleaning out the litter in his desk.

Harold Mills put down his pen.

"Iris," he said softly.

"Yes?"

Mills glanced towards the closed door of the study, and spoke still more softly.

"I want to ask you something."

"Of course."

She was surprised at his tone. He was sitting at his own writing-table, some distance away from her, with a table-lamp burning at his left. The light of the lamp shone on his flat fair hair, brushed with great precision round his head, on his waxy-coloured face, and on his pince-nez. Since he was very young, it was only this pince-nez which gave him the sedate and donnish appearance; this, or the occasional slight fidgeting of his hands.

He almost blurted out the next words.

"What I mean is: are you all right? Financially, I mean?"

"Oh, yes."

She didn't know. She was not even thinking of this now. Dr. Woodhall had promised to drop in that evening, to see Seton. It was nearly eleven now. Seton, who always swore that his immense vitality was due to the regularity of his habits, was as regular as that clock over the mantelpiece. At eleven o'clock he would smoke the last of the ten cigarettes allowed him a day, drink his one whisky-and-soda, and be in bed by eleven-thirty sharp. If Dr. Woodhall didn't hurry . . .

Iris's head ached still more. Mills kept on talking, but she did not hear him. She awoke to this with a start.

"I'm sorry. I'm afraid I didn't catch ——?"

"I said," repeated the other, somewhat jerkily, "that I'm sorry for more reasons than one that we're leaving."

"So am I, Harold."

"You don't understand. Mine is rather a specialized job. I'll not get another in a hurry." Colour came up under his pince-nez. "No, no, that isn't what I mean. I'm not complaining. It's very decent of Seton to provide two months' salary. But I'd hoped that this job would be more or less permanent. If it turned out to be that, there was something I wanted to do."

"What was that?"

"I wanted to ask you to marry me," said Mills.

There was a silence.

She stared back at him. She had never thought of him as awkward or tongue-tied, or anything like the man who now sat and cracked the joints of his knuckles as though he could not sit still. In fact, she had hardly ever thought of him at all. And his face showed that he knew it.

"Please don't say anything." He got to his feet. "I don't want you to feel you've got to say anything." He began to pace the room with little short steps. "I haven't been exactly — attentive."

"You never even . . ."

He gestured.

"Yes, I know. I'm not like that. I can't be. I wish I could." He stopped his pacing. "This fellow Woodhall, now."

"What about Dr. Woodhall?"

He never got the opportunity to say. This was the point at which they heard, very distinctly, the noise from the next room.

When they tried to describe it afterwards, neither could be sure whether it was a yell, or a groan, or the beginning of incoherent words. It might have been a combination of all three. Then there were several soft little thuds, like the sound of a butcher's cleaver across meat on the chopping-block. Then silence, except for the distant whisper of the rain.

That was the story which Iris Lane began to tell at Dr. Fell's flat. Both Dr. Fell and Superintendent Hadley listened with the closest attention, though they had heard it several times before.

"We didn't know what had happened," said Iris, moving her shoulders. "We called out to Mr. Seton, but he didn't answer. We tried the door, but it wouldn't open."

"Was it locked?"

"No; it was warped. The damp from the rain had swollen and warped the wood. Harold tried to get it open, but it wouldn't work until he finally took a run and jumped at it."

"There was nobody in the study except Mr. Seton," she went on. "I know, because I was afraid we should see someone. The place was brilliantly lighted. There's a big bronze chandelier, with electric candles, hanging over the flat-topped desk in the middle. And there was even a light burning in the cloakroom — it's hardly more than a cupboard for a wash-basin, really — which opens out of the study. You could see everything at a glance. And there wasn't anybody hiding in the room."

She paused, visualizing the scene.

Francis Seton lay on the far side of the desk, between the desk and the windows. He was unconscious, with blood coming out of his nostrils.

His cigarette, put down on the edge of the desk, was now scorching the mahogany with an acrid smell. The desk-chair and a little table had been overturned. There was a stain on the thick grey carpet where his glass had been upset, together with a stoppered decanter which had not spilt, and a siphon enclosed in metal cross-bands. Seton was moaning.

When they turned him over on his side, they found the weapon.

"It was that hollow wooden thing with lead inside," said Iris. She saw it as vividly as though it lay on the carpet now. "Only six or seven inches long, but it weighed nearly a pound. Harold, who'd started to study medicine once, put his fingers down and felt round the back of Mr. Seton's head. Then he said I'd better hurry and 'phone for a proper doctor.

"I had backed away against the windows — I remember that. The curtains weren't quite drawn. I could hear the rain hitting the window behind me. I looked round, because I was afraid there might be somebody hiding in the curtains. We pulled the curtains back on both windows. Then we saw the edge of the ladder. It had been propped up against the right-hand window, from the garden below. And I noticed something else that I'll swear to, and swear to, and go on swearing to until you believe me. But never mind what it was, for a minute.

"I ran out to 'phone for Dr. Woodhall, but it wasn't necessary. I met him coming up the stairs in the front hall."

There were several things she did not tell here.

She did not say how heartening it was to see Dr. Woodhall's shrewd, humorous face looking at her from under the brim of a sodden hat. He wore a dripping mackintosh with the collar turned up, and carried his medicine-case.

"I don't know how he got in," Iris went on. "Mr. Seton had dismissed the servants after dinner. The front door must have been unlocked. Anyway, he said, 'Hullo; is anything wrong?' I think I said, 'Come up quickly; something terrible has happened.' He didn't make any comment. But when he had examined Mr. Seton he said it was concussion of the brain all right, from several powerful blows. I asked whether I should 'phone for an ambulance. He said Mr. Seton wasn't in shape to be moved, and that we should have to get him to bed in the house.

"When we were carrying him in to his bedroom, things started to fall out of his pockets. The key to the safe wasn't there: it had been torn loose from the other end of his watch-chain. And he kept on moaning.

"You know the rest. The safe had been robbed, not only of the money, but of two valuable folios. Apparently it was all plain sailing. There was the ladder propped against the window-sill outside. There were scuffed footprints in a flower-bed below. It was a burglar. It must have been a burglar. Only——" She paused, clearing her throat. "Only,"

she went on, "*both those windows were locked on the inside.*"

Dr. Fell grunted.

Something in this recital had interested him very much. He drew in several of his chins, and exchanged a glance with Superintendent Hadley.

"Both the windows," he rumbled, "were locked on the inside. You're quite sure of that? Hey?"

"I'm absolutely positive."

"You couldn't have been mistaken?"

"I only wish I could have," said Iris helplessly. "And you know what they think, don't you? They think Harold and I caught him and beat his head in.

"It's so awfully easy to think that. Harold and I were alone in the house. We were sitting outside the only door to the study. There was no intruder anywhere. Both the study windows were locked on the inside. It — well, it just couldn't have been anybody else but us. Only it wasn't. That's all I can tell you."

Dr. Fell opened his eyes.

"But, my dear young lady," he protested, blowing sparks from his cigar like the Spirit of the Volcano, "whatever else they think about you, I presume they don't think you are raving mad? Suppose you had faked this burglary? Suppose you had planted the ladder against the window? Would you and Mills then go about swearing the windows were locked in order to prove that your story couldn't be true?"

"Just a moment," said Superintendent Hadley sharply.

Hadley was beaten, and he knew it. But he was fair.

"I'll be frank with you, Miss Lane," he went on. "Before you came in, I was telling Dr. Fell that Mr. Seton is conscious. He's talked to me. And——"

"And?"

"Mr. Seton," said Hadley, "confirms your story in every detail. He clears you and Mills of any complicity in the crime."

Iris said nothing. All the same, they saw her face grow white under its tan.

"He says," pursued Hadley, in the midst of a vast silence, "that he was sitting at his desk, facing the door to the library. He swears he could hear you and Mills talking in the library. His back, of course, was towards the windows. He agrees that the windows were locked, since he had just locked them himself. At a few minutes past eleven, he heard a footstep behind him. A 'shuffling' footstep. Just as he started to get up, something smashed him across the head, and that's all he remembers. So it seems you were telling the truth."

"H'mf," said Dr. Fell.

Iris stared at Hadley. "Then I'm not — you're not going to arrest me?"

"Frankly," snapped the superintendent, "no. I'm sorry to say I don't see how we can arrest anybody. The windows were locked. The door was watched. There was nobody hidden in the room. Yet someone, by the victim's own testimony, did get in and cosh Seton. We've got a blooming miracle, that's what we've got; and, if you don't believe me, come along and talk to Seton for yourself."

Francis Seton lived, and nearly died, in the grand manner. His bedroom was furnished in the heavy, dark, and florid style of the Second French Empire, with a four-poster bed. He lay propped up with his neck above the pillows, glowering out of a helmet of bandages.

"Time's nearly up," warned Dr. Charles Woodhall, who stood at one side of the bed. His fingers were on Seton's wrist, but Seton snatched the wrist away.

Superintendent Hadley was patient.

"What I'm trying to get at, Mr. Seton, is this. When did you lock those two windows?"

"Told you that already," said Seton. "About ten minutes before that fellow sneaked up and hit me."

"But you didn't catch a glimpse of the person who hit you?"

"No, worse luck. Or I'd have—"

"Yes. But *why* did you lock the windows?"

"Because I'd noticed the ladder outside. Couldn't have burglars getting in, could I?"

"You didn't try to find out who put the ladder there?"

"No. I couldn't be bothered."

"At the same time, you were a little nervous?"

For some time Iris Lane had the impression that Seton, if it were not for his injury, would have rolled over on his side, buried his face in the pillows, and groaned with impatience. But the last question stung him to wrath.

"Who says I was nervous? Nervous! I'm the last man in the world to be nervous. I haven't got a nerve in my body." He appealed to Dr. Woodhall and to Harold Mills. "Have I?"

"You've got an exceptionally strong constitution," replied Dr. Woodhall blandly.

Seton appeared to scent evasion here. His bloodshot eyes rolled, without a turn of his neck, from Woodhall to Mills; but they came back to Hadley.

"Well? Anything else you want to know?"

"Just one more question, Mr. Se-

ton. Are you sure there was nobody hidden in the study or the cloakroom before you were attacked?"

"Dead certain."

Hadley shut up his notebook.

"Then that's all, sir. Nobody hidden, before or after. Windows locked, before and after. I don't believe in ghosts, and so the thing's impossible." He spoke quietly. "Excuse me, Mr. Seton, but are you sure you were attacked after all?"

"And excuse *me*," interrupted a new voice, thunderous but apologetic.

Dr. Fell, whose presence was somewhat less conspicuous than a captive balloon, had not removed his disreputable slouch hat: a breach of good manners which ordinarily he would have deplored. But his manner had a vast eagerness, like Old King Cole in a hurry. Iris Lane could not remember having seen him for some minutes. He lumbered in at the doorway, with one hand holding an object wrapped in newspaper and the other supporting himself on his crutch-handled stick.

"Sir," he intoned, addressing Seton, "I should regret it very much if my friend Hadley gave you an apoplectic stroke. It is therefore only fair to tell you that you were attacked, and very thoroughly battered about the head, by one of the persons in this room. I am also glad the police have kept your study locked up since then."

There was a silence as sudden as that which follows a loud noise.

From the newspaper Dr. Fell took out a soda-water siphon, and put it down with a thump on the centre table. It was a large siphon, bound round with metal bands in a diamond design.

And Dr. Fell reared up.

"Dash it, Hadley," he complained, "why couldn't you have told me about the siphon? Ten days in a spiritual abyss; and all because you couldn't tell me about the siphon! It took the young lady to do that."

"But I did tell you about a siphon," said Hadley. "I've told you about it a dozen times!"

"No, no, no," insisted Dr. Fell dismally. "You said 'a' siphon. Presumably an ordinary siphon, the unending white bulwark of the English pub. You didn't say it was this particular kind of siphon."

"But what the devil has the siphon got to do with it anyway?" demanded Hadley. "Mr. Seton wasn't knocked out with a siphon."

"Oh, yes, he was," said Dr. Fell.

It was so quiet that they could hear a fly buzzing against one half-open window.

"You see," continued Dr. Fell, fiery with earnestness, "the ordinary siphon is of plain glass. It doesn't

have these criss-cross metal bands, or that nickeled cap at the other side of the nozzle. In short, this is a 'Fountain-fill' siphon; the sort which you fill yourself with plain water, and turn into soda-water by means of compressed-air capsules."

Enlightenment came to Superintendent Hadley.

"Ah!" chortled Dr. Fell. "Got it, have you? The police, as a matter of ordinary routine, would closely examine the dregs of a whisky-glass or any decanter found at the scene of a crime. But they would never think twice about a siphon, because the ordinary soda-water siphon can't possibly be tampered with. And yet, by thunder, *this* one could be tampered with!"

Dr. Fell sniffed. He lumbered over to the bedside table, and picked up a tumbler. Returning with it to the centre table, he squirted some of the soda into the glass. He touched his tongue to it.

"I think, Mr. Harold Mills," he said, "you had better give yourself up for theft and attempted murder."

Dr. Fell chuckled as he sat again in his own library at Chelsea.

"And you still don't see it?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Dr. Woodhall.

"No," cried Iris Lane.

"The whole trick," their host went on, "turns on the fact that the 'Mickey Finn' variety of knockout-drops produces on the victim exactly the same sensation as being struck over the head: the sudden bursting explosion of pain, the roaring in the ears, and almost instant unconsciousness.

"Mills had a dozen opportunities that day to load the 'Fountain-fill' siphon with the drug. He knew, as you all knew, exactly when Francis Seton would drink his one whisky-and-soda of the day. Mills had already removed what he wanted from the safe. Finally, he had propped up a ladder outside the study window to make the crime seem the work of a burglar. All he had to do then was to wait for eleven o'clock.

"At eleven o'clock Seton drank the hocussed mixture, cried out, and fell, knocking over a number of objects on the carpet. Since the whole effect of this drug depends on a violent cerebral rush of blood, a man already suffering from high blood-pressure would be likely and even certain to bleed from the nostrils. It provided the last realistic touch."

Dr. Fell growled to himself, no longer seeming quite so cherubic. Then he looked at Iris.

"Mills," he went on, "deliberately fiddled with the door, pretending it was stuck: which it was not. He

wanted to allow time for the imaginary burglar to loot the safe. Then he ran in with you. When he turned Seton over, he took that piece of lead-filled broom-handle out of his sleeve, slipped it under the body, and dramatically called your attention to it.

"Next, you remember, he felt at the base of Seton's skull in pretended horror, and told you to go out and 'phone for a doctor. As a result of this, you also recall, he was for several minutes completely alone in the study."

Iris was looking at the past, examining each move she herself had made.

"You mean," she muttered, "that was when he——?" She brought up her arm in the gesture of one using a life-preserver.

"Yes," said Dr. Fell. "That was when he deliberately struck several blows on the head of an unconscious man to complete his plan.

"He removed the key to the safe from Seton's watch-chain. In case the police should be suspicious of any drinks found at the scene of a crime, he rinsed out the spilled whisky-glass in that convenient cloak-room, and poured into the glass a few drops of harmless whisky from the decanter. He had no time to refill and recharge the siphon before you and Dr. Woodhall returned to the study; so he left it alone. A handkerchief round his hand prevented any fingerprints. Unfortunately, mischance tripped him up with a resounding wallop."

Dr. Woodhall nodded.

"You mean," he said, "that Seton noticed the ladder, and locked the windows?"

"Yes. And the unfortunate Mr. Mills never discovered the locked windows until it was too late. Miss Lane, as you have probably discovered, is a very positive young lady. She looked at the windows. She knew they were locked. She was prepared to swear it in any court. So Mills, floundering and drifting and never very determined except where it came to appropriating someone else's property, had to keep quiet. He could not even get at that betraying siphon afterwards, because the police kept the room locked up.

"He had one bit of luck, though. Francis Seton, of course, never heard any footsteps behind him just before the attack. Anybody who takes one look at the thick carpet of the study cannot fail to be convinced of that. I wondered whether the good Mr. Seton might be deliberately lying. But a little talk with Seton will show you the real reason. The man's boasted vitality is killing him: it has got him into such a state of nerves that he really does need a

year in California. Once he saw that ladder outside the window, once he began to think of burglars, he was ready to imagine anything."

Iris was glancing sideways at Dr. Woodhall. Woodhall, a cigarette in the corner of his mouth, was glancing sideways at her.

"I—er—I don't like to bring it up," said Iris. "But——"

"Mills's proposal?" inquired Dr. Fell affably.

"Well, yes."

"My dear young lady," intoned Dr. Fell, with all the gallantry of a load of bricks falling through a skylight, "there you mention the one point at which Mills really showed good taste. Discernment. *Raffinement.* It also probably occurred to him that a criminal who proposes marriage places the lady in a blind-eyed and sympathetic mood if the criminal should happen to make a slip in his game afterwards. But can you honestly say you are sorry it was Mills they took away in the Black Maria?"

Iris and Dr. Woodhall were not even listening.

"Q"

Shipboard conversations, even in fiction, are usually dull affairs. But you'll find Ellen Glasgow's an exception — one of the most intellectually stimulating you've ever read.

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A POINT IN MORALS

by ELLEN GLASGOW

"THE question seems to be ——" began the Englishman. He looked up and bowed to a girl in black who had just come in from deck and was taking the seat beside him. "The question seems to be ——" The girl was having some difficulty in removing her coat, and he turned to assist her.

"In my opinion," remarked the distinguished alienist, who was returning from a vacation in Vienna, "the question is whether or not civilization is defeating its own aims in placing an exorbitant value on human life." As he spoke he leaned forward authoritatively and accented his words with foreign precision.

"You mean that the survival of the fittest is checkmated," remarked a young journalist travelling in the interest of a New York daily, "that civilization should practise artificial selection, as it were?"

The alienist shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. "My dear sir," he protested, "I mean nothing. It is the question that means something."

"Well, as I was saying," began the Englishman again, reaching for the salt and upsetting a spoonful, "the question seems to be whether or not, in any circumstances, the saving of a human life may become positively immoral."

"Upon that point ——" began the alienist; but a young woman in a white dress who was seated on the Captain's right interrupted him.

"How could it?" she asked. "At least I don't see how it could. Do you, Captain?"

"There is no doubt," remarked the journalist, looking up from a conversation he had drifted into

with a lawyer from one of the Western States, "that the more humane spirit pervading modern civilization has not worked wholly for good in the development of the species. Probably, for instance, if we had followed the Spartan practice of exposing unhealthy infants, we should have retained something of the Spartan hardihood. Certainly if we had been content to remain barbarians both our digestions and our nerves would have been the better for it, and melancholia would perhaps have been unknown. But, at the same time, the loss of a number of the more heroic virtues is overbalanced by an increase of the softer ones. Notably, human life has never before been regarded so sacredly."

"On the other side," observed the lawyer, lifting his hand to adjust his eyeglasses, "though it is all very well to be philanthropic to the point of pauperizing half a community and of growing squeamish about capital punishment, the whole thing sometimes takes a disgustingly morbid turn. Why, it seems as if criminals were the real American heroes! Only last week I visited a man sentenced to death for the murder of his two wives, and, by Jove, the place was literally besieged by women sympathizers. I counted six bunches of roses in his cell, and at least fifty notes."

"Oh, but that is a form of nervous hysteria!" said the girl in black, "and must be considered separately. Every sentiment has its fanatics, philanthropy as well as religion. But we can't judge a movement by a few over-wrought disciples."

"Why not?" asked the Englishman, quietly. He was a middle-aged man, with an optimistic expression and a build of comfortable solidity. "But to return to the original proposition. I suppose we all accept as a self-evident truth the axiom that the highest civilization is the one in which the highest value is placed upon individual life."

"And happiness," added the girl in black.

"And happiness," assented the Englishman.

"And yet," commented the lawyer, "I think that most of us will admit that such a society, where life is regarded as sacred because it is valuable to the individual, not because it is valuable to the state, tends to the non-production of heroes."

"That the average will be higher and the exception lower," observed the journalist. "In other words, that there will be a general elevation of the mass, accompanied by a corresponding lowering of the few."

"On the whole, I think our system does very well," said the Englishman, carefully measuring the horse-

radish. "A mean between two extremes is apt to be satisfactory in results. If we don't produce a Marcus Aurelius or a Seneca, neither do we produce a Nero or a Phocas. We may have lost patriotism, but we have gained humanity, which is better. If we have lost chivalry, we have acquired decency; and if we have ceased to be picturesque, we have become cleanly, which is considerably more to be desired."

"I have never felt the romanticism of the Middle Ages," remarked the girl in black. "When I read of the glories of the Crusaders, I can't help remembering that a knight wore a single garment for a lifetime, and hacked his horse to pieces for a whim. Just as I never think of that chivalrous brute, Richard the Lion-Hearted, that I don't see him chopping off the heads of his prisoners."

"Oh, I don't think that any of us are sighing for a revival of the Middle Ages," returned the journalist. "The worship of the past has for its devotees people who have known only the present."

"Which is as it should be," commented the lawyer. "If man were confined to the worship of the knowable, all the world would lapse into atheism."

"Just as the great lovers of humanity were generally hermits," added the girl in black. "I had an uncle who used to say that he never really loved mankind until he went to live in the wilderness."

"I think we are drifting from the point," said the alienist. "Was it not: Can the saving of a human life ever prove to be an immoral act? I once held that it could."

"Did you act upon the theory?" asked the lawyer, with rising interest. "I maintain that no proposition can be said to exist until it is translated into action. Otherwise it is in an embryonic state merely."

The alienist laid down his fork and leaned forward. He was a notable-looking man of some thirty-odd years, who had made a sudden leap into popularity through several successful cases. He had a nervous, muscular face, with singularly penetrating eyes and hair of a light sandy colour. His hands were white and well shaped.

"It was some years ago," he said, bending a scintillant glance round the table. "If you will listen ——"

There followed a stir of assent, accompanied by a nod from the young woman on the Captain's right. "I feel as if it would be a ghost story," she declared.

"It is not a story at all," returned the alienist, lifting his wineglass and holding it against the light. "It is merely a fact."

Then he glanced swiftly round the table as if challenging attention.

"As I said," he began, slowly, "it was some few years ago. Just what year it was does not matter; but at that time I had completed a course at Heidelberg, and expected shortly to set out with an exploring party for South Africa. It turned out afterward that I did not go, but for the purpose of the present story it is sufficient that I intended to do so, and had made my preparations accordingly. At Heidelberg I had lived among a set of German students who were permeated with the metaphysics of Schopenhauer, Von Hartmann, and the rest, and I was pretty well saturated myself. At that age I was an ardent disciple of pessimism. I am still a disciple, but my ardour has abated, which is not the fault of pessimism, but the virtue of middle age ——"

"A man is called conservative when he grows less radical," interrupted the journalist.

"Or when he grows less in every direction," added the Englishman, "except in physical bulk."

The alienist accepted the suggestions with an inclination, and continued. "One of my most cherished convictions," he said, "was to the effect that every man is the sole arbiter of his fate. As Schopenhauer has put it, *'that there is nothing to which a man has a more unassailable title than to his own life and person.'* Indeed, that particular sentence had become a kind of motto with our set, and some of my companions even went so far as to preach the proper ending of life with the ending of the power of individual usefulness."

He paused to help himself to salad.

"I was in Scotland at the time, where I had spent a fortnight with my parents, in a small village on the Kyles of Bute. While there I had been treating an invalid cousin who had acquired the morphine habit, and who, under my care, had determined to uproot it. Before leaving I had secured from her the amount of the drug which she had in her possession — some thirty grains — done up in a sealed package, and labelled by a London chemist. As I was in haste, I put it in my bag, thinking that I would add it to my case of medicines when I reached Leicester, where I was to spend the night with an old schoolmate. I took the boat at Tighnabruaich, a small village, found a local train at Gourock, to reach Glasgow, with one minute in which to catch the first express to London. I made the change, and secured a first-class smoking-compartment, which I at first thought to be vacant; but when the train had started a man came from the dressing-room and took the seat across from me. At first I paid no heed to him, but upon looking up once or

twice and finding his eyes upon me, I became unpleasantly conscious of his presence. He was thin almost to emaciation, and yet there was a suggestion of physical force about him which it was difficult to account for, since he was both short and slight. His clothes were shabby, though well made, and his tie had the appearance of having been tied in haste, or by nervous fingers. There was a trace of sensuality about his mouth, over which he wore a drooping yellow moustache tinged with gray, and he was somewhat bald on the crown of his head, which lent a deceptive hint of intellectuality to his uncovered forehead. As he crossed his legs, I saw that his boots were carefully blacked, and that they were long and slender, tapering to a decided point."

"I have always held," interpolated the lawyer, "that to judge a man's character you must look at his feet."

The alienist sipped his claret and took up his words:

"After passing the first stop, I remembered a book at the bottom of my bag, and unfastening the strap in my search for the book, I laid a number of small articles on the seat beside me, among them the sealed package bearing the morphine label and the name of the London chemist. Having found the book, I turned to replace the articles, when I noticed that the man across from me was gazing attentively at the labelled package. For a moment his expression startled me, and I stared back at him from across my open bag, into which I had dropped the articles. There was in his eyes a curious mixture of passion and repulsion, and, beyond it all, the look of a hungry hound when he sees food. Thinking that I had chanced upon a victim of the opium craving, I closed the bag, placed it in the net above my head, and opened my book.

"For a while we rode in silence. Nothing was heard except the noise of the train and the clicking of our bags as they jostled each other in the receptacle above. I remember these details very vividly, because since then I have recalled the slightest fact in connection with the incident. I knew that the man across from me drew a cigar from his case, felt in his pocket for an instant, and then turned to me for a match. At the same time I experienced the feeling that the request veiled a larger purpose, and that there were matches in the pocket into which he had thrust his fingers.

"But, as I complied with his request, he glanced indifferently out of the window, and following his gaze, I saw that we were passing a group of low lying hills sprinkled with stray patches of heather, and that across

the hills a flock of sheep were filing, followed by a peasant girl in a short skirt. It was the last faint reminder of the Highlands.

"The man across from me leaned out, looking back upon the neutral sky, the sparse patches of heather, and the flock of sheep.

"'What a tone the heather gives to a landscape!' he remarked, and his voice sounded forced and affected.

"I bowed without replying, and as he turned from the window, and a draught of cinders blew in, I bent forward to lower the sash. In a moment he spoke again:

"'Do you go to London?'

"'To Leicester,' I answered, laying the book aside, impelled by a sudden interest. 'Why do you ask?'

"He flushed nervously.

"'I — oh, nothing,' he answered, and drew away from me.

"Then, as if with swift determination, he reached forward and lifted the book I had laid on the seat. It was a treatise of Von Hartmann's in German.

"'I had judged that you were a physician,' he said, 'a student, perhaps, from a German university?'

"'I am.'

"He paused for an instant, and then spoke in absent-minded reiteration, 'So you don't go on to London?'

"'No,' I returned, impatiently. 'Can I do anything for you?'

"'He handed me the book, regarding me resolutely as he did so.

"'Are you a sensible man?'

"I bowed.

"'And a philosopher?'

"'In amateur fashion.'

"With feverish energy he went on more quickly, 'You have in your possession,' he said, 'something for which I would give my whole fortune.' He laid two half-sovereigns and some odd silver in the palm of his hand. 'This is all I possess,' he continued, 'but I would give it gladly.'

"I looked at him curiously.

"'You mean the morphine?' I demanded.

"He nodded. 'I don't ask you to give it to me, I only ask ——'

"I interrupted him. 'Are you in pain?'

"He laughed softly, and I really believe he felt a tinge of amusement. 'It is a question of expediency,' he explained. 'If you happen to be a moralist ——' He broke off.

"'What of it?' I inquired.

"He settled himself in his corner, resting his head against the cushions.

"'You get out at Leicester,' he said, recklessly. 'I go on to London, where Providence, represented by Scotland Yard, is awaiting me.'

"I started. 'For what?'

"'They call it murder, I believe,'

he returned; 'but what they call it matters very little. I call it divine justice — that also matters very little. The point is — I shall arrive, they will be there before me. That is settled. Every station along the road is watched.'

"I glanced out of the window.

"'But you came from Glasgow,' I suggested.

"'Worse luck! I waited in the dressing-room until the train started. I hoped to have the compartment alone, but —' He leaned forward and lowered the window-shade. 'If you don't object,' he said, apologetically; 'I find the glare trying. It is a question for a moralist,' he repeated. 'Indeed, I may call myself a question for a moralist,' and he smiled again with that ugly humour. 'To begin with the beginning, the question is bred in the bone and it's out in the blood.' He nodded at my look of surprise. 'You are an American,' he continued, 'so am I. I was born in Washington some thirty years ago. My father was a politician, whose honour was held to be unimpeachable — which was a mistake. His name doesn't matter, but he became very wealthy through judicious speculations in votes and other things. My mother has always suffered from an incipient hysteria, which developed shortly before my birth.' He wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and knocked the ashes from his cigar with a flick of his finger. 'The motive for this is not far to seek,' he said, with a glance at my travelling-bag. He had the coolest bravado I have ever met. 'As a child,' he went on, 'I gave great promise. Indeed, we moved to England that I might be educated at Oxford. My father considered the ecclesiastical atmosphere to be beneficial. But while at college I got into trouble with a woman, and I left. My father died, his fortune burst like a bubble, and my mother moved to the country. I was put into a banking office, but I got into more trouble with women, this time two of them. One was a variety actress, and I married her. I didn't want to do it. I tried not to, but I couldn't help it, and I did it. A month later I left her. I changed my name and went to Belfast where I resolved to become an honest man. It was a tough job, but I laboured and I succeeded for a time. The variety actress began looking for me, but I escaped her, and have escaped her so far. That was eight years ago. And several years after reaching Belfast I met another woman. She was different. I fell ill of fever in Ireland, and she nursed me. She was a good woman, with a broad Irish face, strong hands, and motherly shoulders. I was weak and she was strong, and I fell in love with

her. I tried to tell her about the variety actress, but somehow I couldn't, and I married her.' He shot the stump of his cigar through the opposite window and lighted another, this time drawing the match from his pocket. 'She is an honest woman,' he said, 'as honest as the day. She believes in me. It would kill her to know about the variety actress and all the others. There is one child, a girl, a freckle-faced mite just like her mother, and another is coming.'

"'She knows nothing of this affair?'

"'Not a blamed thing. She is the kind of woman who is good because she can't help herself. She enjoys it. I never did. My mother is different too. She would die if other people knew of this; my wife would die if she knew of it herself. Well, I got tired, and I wanted money, so I left her and went to Dublin. I changed my name and got a clerkship in a shipping-office. My wife thinks I went to America to get work, and if she never hears of me she'll probably think no worse. I did intend going to America, but somehow I didn't. I got in with a man who signed somebody's name to a cheque and got me to present it. Then we quarrelled about the money; the man threw the job on me, and the affair came out. But before they arrested me, I ran him down and shot him. I was ridding the world of a damned traitor.'

"He raised the shade with a nervous hand; but the sun flashed into his eyes, and he lowered it.

"'I suppose I'd hang for it,' he said. 'There isn't much doubt of that. If I waited, I'd hang for it, but I am not going to wait. I am going to die.'

"'And how?'

"'Before this train reaches London,' he replied, 'I am a dead man. There are two ways. I might say three, except that a pitch from the carriage might mean only a broken leg. But there is this —' He drew a vial from his pocket and held it to the light. It contained an ounce or so of carbolic acid.

"'One of the most corrosive of irritants,' I observed.

"'And there is — your package.'

"My first impulse was to force the vial from him. He was a slight man, and I could have overcome him with but little exertion. But the exertion I did not make. I should as soon have thought, when my rational humour reasserted itself, of knocking a man down and robbing him of his watch. The acid was as exclusively his property as the clothes he wore, and equally his life was his own. Had he declared his intention to hurl himself from the window, I might not have made way for him, but I

should certainly not have obstructed his passage.

"But the morphine was mine, and that I should assist him was another matter, so I said:

"'The package belongs to me.'

"'And you will not exchange?'

"'Certainly not.'

"He answered, almost angrily:

"'Why not be reasonable? You admit that I am in a mess of it?'

"'Readily.'

"'You also admit that my life is morally my own?'

"'Equally.'

"'That its continuance could in no wise prove to be of benefit to society?'

"'I do.'

"'That for all connected with me it is better that I should die unknown and under an assumed name?'

"'Yes.'

"'Then you admit also that the best I can do is to kill myself before reaching London?'

"'Perhaps.'

"'So you will leave me the morphine when you get off at Leicester?'

"'No.'

"He struck the window-sill impatiently with the palm of his hand.

"'And why not?'

"I hesitated an instant.

"'Because, upon the whole, I do not care to be the instrument of your self-destruction.'

"'Don't be a fool!' he retorted. 'Speak honestly, and say that because of a little moral shrinking on your part, you prefer to leave a human being to a death of agony. I don't like physical pain. I am like a woman about it, but it is better than hanging, or life-imprisonment, or any jury finding.'

"I became exhortatory.

"'Why not face it like a man and take your chances? Who knows——'

"'I have had my chances,' he returned. 'I have squandered more chances than most men ever lay eyes on, and I don't care. If I had the opportunity, I'd squander them again. It is the only thing chances are made for.'

"'What a scoundrel you are!' I exclaimed.

"'Well, I don't know,' he answered; 'there have been worse men. I never said a harsh word to a woman, and I never hit a man when he was down——'

"I blushed. 'Oh, I didn't mean to hit you,' I responded.

"He took no notice.

"'I like my wife,' he said. 'She is a good woman, and I'd do a good deal to keep her and the children from knowing the truth. Perhaps I'd kill myself even if I didn't want to. I don't know, but I am tired—damned tired.'

"'And yet you deserted her.'

"'I did. I tried not to, but I

couldn't help it. If I were free to go back to her to-morrow, unless I was ill and wanted nursing, I'd see that she had grown shapeless, and that her hands were coarse.' He stretched out his own, which were singularly white and delicate. 'I believe I'd leave her in a week,' he said.

"Then with an eager movement he pointed to my bag.

"'That is the ending of the difficulty,' he added. 'Otherwise I swear that before the train gets to London, I will swallow this stuff and die like a rat.'

"'I admit your right to die in any manner you choose; but I don't see that it is my place to assist you. It is an ugly job."

"'So am I,' he retorted, grimly. 'At any rate, if you leave the train with that package in your bag it will be cowardice — sheer cowardice. And for the sake of your cowardice you will damn me to this.' He touched the vial.

"'It won't be pleasant,' I said, and we were silent.

"I knew that the man had spoken the truth. I was accustomed to lies, and had learned to detect them. I knew, also, that the world would be well rid of him and his kind. Why I should preserve him for death upon the gallows I did not see. The majesty of the law would be in no way ruffled by his premature departure; and if I could trust that part of his story, the lives of innocent women and children would, in the other case, suffer considerably. And, even if I and my unopened bag alighted at Leicester, I was sure that he would never reach London alive. He was a desperate man, this I read in his set face, his dazed eyes, his nervous hands. He was a poor devil, and I was sorry for him. Why, then, should I contribute, by my refusal to comply with his request, an additional hour of agony to his existence? Could I, with my pretence of philosophic freedom, alight at my station, leaving him to swallow the acid and die like a rat in a cage before the journey was over? I remembered that I had once seen a guinea-pig die from the effects of carbolic acid, and the remembrance sickened me.

"As I sat there listening to the noise of the slackening train, which was nearing Leicester, I thought of a hundred things. I thought of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann. I thought of the dying guinea-pig. I thought of the broad-faced Irish wife and the two children.

"Then 'Leicester' flashed before me, and the train stopped. I rose, gathered my coat and rug, and lifted the volume of Von Hartmann from the seat. The man remained motionless in the corner of the compartment, but his eyes followed me.

"I stooped, opened my bag, and laid the chemist's package on the seat. Then I stepped out, closing the door after me."

As the speaker finished, he reached forward, selected an almond from the stand of nuts, fitted it carefully between the crackers, and cracked it slowly.

The young woman in the white dress started up with a shudder.

"What a horrible story!" she exclamed; "for it is a story, after all, and not a fact."

"A point, rather," suggested the Englishman; "but is that all?"

"All of the point," returned the alienist. "The next day I saw in the *Times* that a man, supposed to be James Morganson, who was wanted for murder, was found dead in a first-class smoking-compartment of the Midland Railway. Coroner's verdict, 'Death resulting from an overdose of opium, taken with suicidal intent.'"

The journalist dropped a lump of sugar in his cup and watched it attentively.

"I don't think I could have done it," he said. "I might have left him with his carbolic. But I couldn't have deliberately given him his death-potion."

"But as long as he was going to die," responded the girl in black, "it was better to let him die painlessly."

The Englishman smiled. "Can a woman ever consider the ethical side of a question when the sympathetic one is visible?" he asked.

The alienist cracked another almond. "I was sincere," he said. "Of that there is no doubt. I thought I did right. The question is — did I do right?"

"It would have been wiser," began the lawyer, argumentatively, "since you were the stronger, to take the vial from him and leave him to the care of the law."

"But the wife and children," replied the girl in black. "And hanging is so horrible!"

"So is murder," responded the lawyer, dryly.

The young woman on the Captain's right laid her napkin on the table and rose. "I don't know what was right," she said, "but I do know that in your place I should have felt like a murderer."

The alienist smiled half cynically. "So I did," he answered; "but there is such a thing, my dear young lady, as a conscientious murderer."

Frankly your Editor doesn't know whether this story is true-life or fiction. If it's true-life, it has all the fascination of fiction. If it's fiction, it has all the fascination of true-life. Either way, the reader can't lose.

"The Rubber Trumpet" is a story in the grand tradition of Great English Trials — rich in characterization and in realistic detail. It will remind you on the one hand of the English psychological study told through the eyes of the murderer and his victim, and on the other hand of the painstaking work of such writers as William Roughead and Edmund Pearson.

And behind the character analysis and the probing of motive you will glimpse the patient hand of Scotland Yard's Department of Dead Ends — surely one of the most imaginative names for a police department ever conceived.

THE RUBBER TRUMPET

by ROY VICKERS

If you were to enquire at Scotland Yard for the Department of Dead Ends you might be told, in all sincerity, that there was no such thing, because it is not called by that name nowadays. All the same, if it has no longer a room to itself, you may rest assured that its spirit hovers over the index files of which we are all so justly proud.

The Department came into existence in the spacious days of King Edward VII, and it took everything that the other departments rejected. For instance, it noted and filed all those clues that had the exasperating effect of proving a palpably guilty man innocent. Its shelves were crowded with exhibits that might have been in the Black Museum — but were not. Its photographs were a perpetual irritation to all rising young detectives, who felt that they ought to have found the means of putting them in the Rogues' Gallery.

To the Department, too, were taken all those members of the public who insist on helping the police with obviously irrelevant information and preposterous theories. The one passport to the Department was a written statement by the senior officer in charge of the case that the information offered was absurd.

Judged by the standards of reason and common sense, its files were mines of misinformation. It proceeded largely by guesswork. On one occasion it hanged a murderer by accidentally punning on his name.

It was the function of the Department to connect persons and things that had no logical connection. In short, it stood for the antithesis of scientific detection. It played always for a lucky fluke — to offset the

lucky fluke by which the criminal so often eludes the police. Often it muddled one crime with another and arrived at the correct answer by wrong reasoning.

As in the case of George Muncey and the rubber trumpet.

And note, please, that the rubber trumpet had nothing logically to do with George Muncey, nor the woman he murdered, nor the circumstances in which he murdered her.

Until the age of twenty-six George Muncey lived with his widowed mother in Chichester, the family income being derived from a chemist's shop, efficiently controlled by Mrs. Muncey with the aid of a manager and two assistants, of whom latterly George was one. Of his early youth we know only that he won a scholarship at a day-school, tenable for three years, which was cancelled at the end of a year though not, apparently, for misconduct. He failed several times to obtain his pharmaceutical certificate, with the result that he was eventually put in charge of the fancy soaps, the hot water bottles and the photographic accessories.

For this work he received two pounds per week. Every Saturday he handed the whole of it to his mother, who returned him fifteen shillings for pocket money. She had no need of the balance and only took it in order to nourish his self-respect. He did not notice that she bought his clothes and met all his other expenses.

George had no friends and very little of what an ordinary young man would regard as pleasure. He spent nearly all his spare time with his mother, to whom he was devoted. She was an amiable but very domineering woman and she does not seem to have noticed that her son's affection had in it a quality of childishness — that he liked her to form his opinions for him and curtail his liberties.

After his mother's death he did not resume his duties at the shop. For some eight months he mooned about Chichester. Then, the business having been sold and probate granted, he found himself in possession of some eight hundred pounds, with another two thousand pounds due to him in three months. He does not seem to have understood this part of the transaction — for he made no application for the two thousand, and as the solicitors could not find him until his name came into the papers, the two thousand remained intact for his defence.

That he was a normal but rather backward young man is proved by the fact that the walls of his bedroom were liberally decorated with photo-

graphs of the actresses of the moment and pictures of anonymous beauties cut from the more sporting weeklies. Somewhat naïvely he bestowed this picture gallery as a parting gift on the elderly cook.

He drew the whole of the eight hundred pounds in notes and gold, said goodbye to his home and went up to London. He stumbled on cheap and respectable lodgings in Pimlico. Then, in a gauche, small-town way, he set out to see life.

It was the year when *The Merry Widow* was setting all London a-whistling. Probably on some chance recommendation, he drifted to Daly's Theatre, where he bought himself a seat in the dress-circle.

It was the beginning of the London season and we may assume that he would have felt extremely self-conscious sitting in the circle in his ready-made lounge suit, had there not happened to be a woman also in morning-dress next to him.

The woman was a Miss Hilda Callermere. She was forty-three and if she escaped positive ugliness she was certainly without any kind of physical attractiveness, though she was neat in her person and reasonably well-dressed, in an old-fashioned way.

Eventually to the Department of Dead Ends came the whole story of his strange courtship.

There is a curious quality in the manner in which these two slightly unusual human beings approached one another. They did not speak until after the show, when they were wedged together in the corridor. Their voices seem to come to us out of a fog of social shyness and vulgar gentility. And it was she who took the initiative.

"If you'll excuse me speaking to you without an introduction, we seem to be rather out of it, you and I, what with one thing and another."

His reply strikes us now as somewhat unusual.

"Yes, rather!" he said. "Are you coming here again?"

"Yes, rather! I sometimes come twice a week."

During the next fortnight they both went three times to *The Merry Widow*, but on the first two of these occasions they missed each other. On the third occasion, which was a Saturday night, Miss Callermere invited George Muncey to walk with her on the following morning in Battersea Park.

Here shyness dropped from them. They slipped quite suddenly on to an easy footing of friendship. George Muncey accepted her invitation to lunch. She took him to a comfortably furnished eight-roomed house — her own — in which she lived with an aunt whom she supported. For, in

addition to the house, Miss Callermere owned an income of six hundred pounds derived from gilt-edged investments.

But these considerations weighed hardly at all with George Muncey — for he had not yet spent fifty pounds of his eight hundred, and at this stage he had certainly no thought of marriage with Miss Callermere.

Neither of them had any occupation, so they could meet whenever they chose. Miss Callermere undertook to show George London. Her father had been a cheery, beery jerry-builder with sporting interests and she had reacted from him into a parched severity of mind. She marched George round the Tower of London, the British Museum and the like, reading aloud extracts from a guide-book. They went neither to the theatres nor to the music-halls, for Miss Callermere thought these frivolous and empty-headed — with the exception of *The Merry Widow*, which she believed to be opera, and therefore cultural. And the extraordinary thing was that George Muncey liked it all.

There can be no doubt that this smug little spinster, some sixteen years older than himself, touched a chord of sympathy in his nature. But she was wholly unable to cater to that part of him that had plastered photographs of public beauties on the walls of his bedroom.

She never went to *The Merry Widow* again, but once or twice he would sneak off to Daly's by himself. *The Merry Widow*, in fact, provided him with a dream-life. We may infer that in his imagination he identified himself with Mr. Joseph Coyne, who nightly, in the character of Prince Dannilo, would disdain the beautiful Sonia only to have her rush the more surely to his arms in the finale. Rather a dangerous fantasy for a backward young man who was beginning to lose his shyness!

There was, indeed, very little shyness about him when, one evening after seeing Miss Callermere home, he was startled by the sight of a young parlour-maid who had been sent out to post a letter some fifty yards from Miss Callermere's house. If she bore little or no likeness to Miss Lily Elsie in the rôle of Sonia, she certainly looked quite lovely in her white cap and the streamers that were then worn. And she was smiling and friendly and natural.

She was, of course, Ethel Fairbrass. She lingered with George Muncey for over five minutes. And then comes another of those strange little dialogues.

"Funny a girl like you being a slavey! When's your evening off?"

"Six o'clock to-morrow. But what's it got to do with you?"

"I'll meet you at the corner of this road. Promise you I will."

"Takes two to make a promise. My name's Ethel Fairbrass, if you want to know. What's yours?"

"Dannilo."

"Coo! Fancy calling you that! Dannilo what?"

George had not foreseen the necessity for inventing a surname and discovered that it is quite difficult. He couldn't very well say "Smith" or "Robinson," so he said:

"Prince."

George, it will be observed, was not an imaginative man. When she met him the following night he could think of nowhere to take her but to *The Merry Widow*. He was even foolish enough to let her have a program, but she did not read the names of the characters. When the curtain went up she was too entranced with Miss Lily Elsie, whom (like every pretty girl at the time) she thought she resembled, to take any notice of Mr. Joseph Coyne and his character name. If she had tumbled to the witless transposition of the names she might have become suspicious of him. In which case George Muncey might have lived to a ripe old age.

But she didn't.

Altogether, Ethel Fairbrass proved an extremely satisfactory substitute for the dream-woman of George's fantasy. Life was beginning to sweeten. In the daylight hours he would enjoy his friendship with Miss Callermere, the pleasure of which was in no way touched by his infatuation for the pretty parlourmaid.

In early September Ethel became entitled to her holiday. She spent the whole fortnight with George at Southend. And George wrote daily to Miss Callermere, telling her that he was filling the place of a chemist friend of his mother's, while the latter took his holiday. He actually contrived to have the letters addressed to the care of a local chemist. The letters were addressed "George Muncey" while at the hotel the couple were registered as "Mr. and Mrs. D. Prince."

Now the fictional Prince Dannilo was notoriously an open-handed and free-living fellow — and Dannilo Prince proceeded to follow in his footsteps. Ethel Fairbrass undoubtedly had the time of her life. They occupied a suite. ("Coo! A bathroom all to our own two selves and use it whenever we like!")

He hired a car for her, with chauffeur — which cost ten pounds a day at that time. He gave her champagne whenever he could induce her to

drink it and bought her some quite expensive presents.

It is a little surprising that at the end of a fortnight of this kind of thing she went back to her occupation. But she did. There was nothing of the mercenary about Ethel.

On his return to London, George was very glad to see Miss Callermere. They resumed their interminable walks and he went almost daily to her house for lunch or dinner. A valuable arrangement, this, for the little diversion at Southend had made a sizable hole in his eight hundred pounds.

It was a bit of a nuisance to have to leave early in order to snatch a few minutes with Ethel. After Southend the few snatched minutes had somehow lost their charm. There were, too, Ethel's half-days and her Sundays, the latter involving him in a great many troublesome lies to Miss Callermere.

In the middle of October he started sneaking off to *The Merry Widow* again. Which was a bad sign. For it meant that he was turning back again from reality to his dream-life.

The Reality, in the meantime, had lost her high spirits and was inclined to weep unreasonably and to nag more than a little.

At the beginning of November Ethel presented him with certain very valid arguments in favour of fixing the date of their wedding, a matter which hitherto had been kept vaguely in the background. George was by now heartily sick of her and contemplated leaving her in the lurch. Strangely enough, it was her final threat to tell Miss Callermere that turned the scale and decided George to make the best of a bad job and marry her.

As Dannilo Prince he married her one foggy morning at the registrar's office in Henrietta Street. Mr. and Mrs. Fairbrass came up from Banbury for the wedding. They were not very nice about it, although from the social point of view the marriage might be regarded as a step-up for Ethel.

"Where are you going for your honeymoon?" asked Mrs. Fairbrass. "That is — if you're going to *have* a honeymoon?"

"Southend," said the unimaginative George, and to Southend he took her for the second time. There was no need for a suite now, so they went to a small family and commercial hotel. Here George was unreasonably jealous of the commercial travellers, who were merely being polite to a rather forlorn bride. In wretched weather he insisted on taking her for walks, with the result that he himself caught a

very bad cold. Eucalyptus and hot toddy became the dominant note in a town which was associated in the girl's mind with champagne and bath salts. But they had to stick it for the full fortnight, because George had told Miss Callermere that he was again acting as substitute for the chemist friend of his mother's in Southend.

According to the files of the Department, they left Southend by the three-fifteen on the thirtieth of November. George had taken first-class returns. The three-fifteen was a popular non-stop, but on this occasion there were hardly a score of persons travelling to London. One of the first-class carriages was occupied by a man alone with a young baby, wrapped in a red shawl. Ethel wanted to get into this compartment, perhaps having a sneaking hope that the man would require her assistance in dealing with the baby. But George did not intend to concern himself with babies one moment before he would be compelled to do so, and they went into another compartment.

Ethel, however, seems to have looked forward to her impending career with a certain pleasure. Before leaving Southend she had paid a visit to one of those shops that cater to summer visitors and miraculously remain open through the winter. She had a bulky parcel, which she opened in the rather pathetic belief that it would amuse George.

The parcel contained a large child's bucket, a disproportionately small wooden spade, a sailing-boat to the scale of the spade, a length of Southend rock and a rubber trumpet of which the stem was wrapped round with red and blue wool. It was a baby's trumpet and of rubber so that it should not hurt the baby's gums. In the mouthpiece, shielded by the rubber, was a little metal contraption that made the noise.

Ethel put the trumpet to her mouth and blew through the metal contraption.

Perhaps, in fancy, she heard her baby doing it. Perhaps, after a honeymoon of neglect and misery, she was making a desperate snatch at the spirit of gaiety, hoping he would attend to her and perhaps indulge in a little horseplay. But for the actual facts we have to depend on George's version.

"I said, 'Don't make that noise, Ethel — I'm trying to read' or something like that. And she said, 'I feel like a bit of music to cheer me up' and she went on blowing the trumpet. So I caught hold of it and threw it out of the window. I didn't hurt her and she didn't seem to mind much. And we didn't have another quarrel over it and I went on reading

my paper until we got to London."

At Fenchurch Street they claimed their luggage and left the station. Possibly Ethel abandoned the parcel containing the other toys for they were never heard of again.

When the train was being cleaned, a dead baby was found under the seat of a first-class compartment, wrapped in a red shawl. It was subsequently ascertained that the baby had not been directly murdered but had died more or less naturally in convulsions.

But before this was known, Scotland Yard searched for the man who had been seen to enter the train with the baby, as if for a murderer. A plate-layer found the rubber trumpet on the line and forwarded it to them. They combed the shops of Southend and found that only one rubber trumpet had been sold — to a young woman whom the shopkeeper did not know. The trail ended here.

The rubber trumpet went to the Department of Dead Ends.

Of the eight hundred pounds there was a little over a hundred and fifty left by the time they returned from the official honeymoon at Southend. He took her to furnished rooms in Ladbroke Grove and a few days later to a tenement in the same district, which he furnished at a cost of thirty pounds.

She seems to have asked him no awkward questions about money. Every morning after breakfast he would leave the tenement, presumably in order to go to work. Actually he would loaf about the West End until it was time to meet Miss Callermere. He liked especially going to the house in Battersea for lunch on Sundays. And here, of course, the previous process reversed itself and it was Ethel who had to be told the troublesome lies that were so difficult to invent.

"You seem different lately, George," said Miss Callermere one Sunday after lunch. "I believe you're living with a ballet girl."

George was not quite sure what a ballet girl was but it sounded rather magnificently wicked. As he was anxious not to involve himself in further inventions, he said:

"She's not a ballet girl. She used to be a parlour-maid."

"I really only want to know one thing about her," said Miss Callermere, "and that is, whether you are fond of her?"

"No, I'm not!" said George with complete truthfulness.

"It's a pity to have that kind of thing in your life — you are dedicated to science. For your own sake, George, why not get rid of her?"

Why not? George wondered why

he had not thought of it before. He had only to move, to stop calling himself by the ridiculous name of Dannilo Prince, and the thing was as good as done. He would go back at once and pack. When he got back to the tenement Ethel gave him an unexpectedly warm reception.

"You told me you were going to the S.D.P. Sunday Brotherhood, you did. And you never went near them, because you met that there Miss Callermere in Battersea Park, because I followed you and saw you. And then you went back to her house, which is Number Fifteen, Laurel Road, which I didn't know before. And what you can see in a dried-up old maid like that beats me. It's time she knew that she's rolling her silly sheep's eyes at another woman's husband. And I'm going to tell her before I'm a day older."

She was whipping on hat and coat and George lurched forward to stop her. His foot caught on a gas-ring, useless now that he had installed a gas-range — a piece of lumber that Ethel ought to have removed weeks ago. But she used it as a stand for the iron.

George picked up the gas-ring. If she were to go to Miss Callermere and make a brawl, he himself would probably never be able to go there again. He pushed her quickly on to the bed, then swung the gas-ring — swung it several times.

He put all the towels, every soft absorbent thing he could find, under the bed. Then he washed himself, packed a suitcase and left the tenement.

He took the suitcase to his old lodgings, announced that he had come back there to live, and then presented himself at the house in Battersea in time for supper.

"I've done what you told me," he said to Miss Callermere. "Paid her off. Shan't hear from her any more."

The Monday morning papers carried the news of the murder, for the police had been called on Sunday evening by the tenants of the flat above. The hunt was started for Dannilo Prince.

By Tuesday the dead girl's parents had been interviewed and her life-story appeared on Wednesday morning. "My daughter was married to Prince at the Henrietta Street registrar's office on November 16th, 1907. He took her straight away for a honeymoon at Southend, where they stayed for a fortnight." There was a small crowd at the bottom of Laurel Road to gape at the house where she had so recently worked as a parlour-maid. Fifty yards from Number Fifteen! But if Miss Callermere noticed the crowd she is not recorded as having commented upon it to anyone.

In a few days Scotland Yard knew that they would never find Dannilo Prince. In fact, it had all been as simple as George had anticipated. He had just moved — and that was the end of his unlucky marriage. The addition of the murder had not complicated things because he had left no clue behind him.

Now as there was nothing whatever to connect George Muncey with Dannilo Prince, George's chances of arrest were limited to the chance of an accidental meeting between himself and someone who had known him as Prince. There was a hotel proprietor, a waiter and a chambermaid at Southend and an estate-agent at Ladbroke Grove. And, of course, Ethel's father and mother. Of these persons only the estate-agent lived in London.

A barrister, who was also a statistician, entertained himself by working out the averages. He came to the conclusion that George Muncey's chance of being caught was equal to his chance of winning the first prize in the Calcutta Sweep *twenty-three times in succession.*

But the barrister did not calculate the chances of the illogical guesswork of the Department of Dead Ends hitting the bull's-eye by mistake.

While the hue and cry for Dannilo Prince passed over his head, George Muncey dedicated himself to science with such energy that in a fortnight he had obtained a post with a chemist in Walham. Here he presided over a counter devoted to fancy soaps, hot-water bottles, photographic apparatus and the like — for which he received two pounds a week and a minute commission that added zest to his work.

At Easter he married Miss Callermere in church. That lady had mobilised all her late father's associates and, to their inward amusement, arrayed herself in white satin and veil for the ceremony. As it would have been unreasonable to ask George's employers for a holiday after so short a term of service, the newly married couple dispensed with a honeymoon. The aunt entered a home for indigent gentlewomen with an allowance of a hundred a year from her niece. George once again found himself in a spacious, well-run house.

During their brief married life, this oddly assorted couple seem to have been perfectly happy. The late Mr. Callermere's friends were allowed to slip back into oblivion, because they showed a tendency to giggle whenever George absent-mindedly addressed his wife as "Miss Callermere."

His earnings of two pounds a week may have seemed insignificant beside

his wife's unearned income. But in fact it was the basis of their married happiness. Every Saturday he handed her the whole of his wages. She would retain twenty-five shillings, because they both considered it essential to his self-respect that he should pay the cost of his food. She handed him back fifteen shillings for pocket-money. She read the papers and formed his opinions for him. She seemed to allow him little of what most men would regard as pleasure, but George had no complaint on this score.

Spring passed into summer and nearly everybody had forgotten the murder of Ethel Prince in a tenement in Ladbroke Grove. It is probably true to say that, in any real sense of the word, George Muncey had forgotten it too. He had read very little and did not know that murderers were popularly supposed to be haunted by their crime and to start guiltily at every chance mention of it.

He received no reaction whatever when his employer said to him one morning:

"There's this job-line of rubber trumpets. I took half a gross. We'll mark them at one-and-a-penny. Put one on your counter with the rubber teats and try them on women with babies."

George took one of the rubber trumpets from the cardboard case containing the half gross. It had red and blue wool wound about the stem. He put it next the rubber teats and forgot about it.

Wilkins, the other assistant, held his pharmaceutical certificate, but he was not stand-offish on that account. One day, to beguile the boredom of the slack hour after lunch, he picked up the rubber trumpet and blew it.

Instantly George was sitting in the train with Ethel, telling her "not to make that noise." When Wilkins put the trumpet down, George found himself noticing the trumpet and thought the red and blue wool very hideous. He picked it up — Ethel's had felt just like that when he had thrown it out of the window.

Now it cannot for one moment be held that George felt anything in the nature of remorse. The truth was that the rubber trumpet, by reminding him so vividly of Ethel, had stirred up dormant forces in his nature. Ethel had been very comely and jolly and playful when one was in the mood for it — as one often was, in spite of everything.

The trumpet, in short, produced little more than a sense of bewilderment. Why could not things have gone on as they began? It was only as a wife that Ethel was utterly in-

tolerable, because she had no sense of order and did not really look after a chap. Now that he was married to Miss Callermere, if only Ethel had been available on, say, Wednesday evenings and alternate Sundays, life would have been full at once of colour and comfort. . . . He tried to sell the trumpet to a lady with a little girl and a probable baby at home, but without success.

On the next day he went as far as admitting to himself that the trumpet had got on his nerves. Between a quarter to one and a quarter past, when Wilkins went out to lunch, he picked up the trumpet and blew it. And just before closing-time he blew it again, when Wilkins was there.

George was not subtle enough to humbug himself. The trumpet stirred longings that were better suppressed. So the next day he wrote out a bill for one-and-a-penny, put one-and-a-penny of his pocket money into the cash register and stuffed the trumpet into his coat-pocket. Before supper that night he put it in the hot-water furnace.

"There's a terrible smell in the house. What did you put in the furnace, George?"

"Nothing."

"Tell me the truth, dear."

"A rubber trumpet stuck on my counter. Fair got on my nerves, it did. I paid the one-and-a-penny and I burnt it."

"That was very silly, wasn't it? It'll make you short in your pocket money. And in the circumstances I don't feel inclined to make it up for you."

That would be all right, George assured her, and inwardly thought how lucky he was to have such a wife. She could keep a fellow steady and pull him up when he went one over the odds.

Three days later his employer looked through the stock.

"I see that rubber trumpet has gone. Put up another. It may be a good line."

And so the whole business began over again. George, it will be observed, for all his unimaginativeness, was a spiritually economical man. His happy contentment with his wife would, he knew, be jeopardised if he allowed himself to be reminded of that other disorderly, fascinating side of life that had been presided over by Ethel.

There were six dozen of the rubber trumpets, minus the one burnt at home, and his employer would expect one-and-a-penny for each of them. Thirteen shillings a dozen. But the dozens themselves were thirteen, which complicated the calculation, but in the end he got the sum right. He made sure of this by doing it

backwards and "proving" it. He still had twenty-three pounds left out of the eight hundred.

Mrs. Muncey had a rather nice crocodile dressing-case which she had bought for herself and quite falsely described as "gift of the bridegroom to the bride."

On the next day George borrowed the crocodile dressing-case on the plea that he wished to bring some goods from the shop home for Christmas. He brought it into the shop on the plea that it contained his dinner jacket and he intended to change at the house of a friend without going home that night. And as he was known to have married "an heiress" neither Wilkins nor his employer was particularly surprised that he should possess a dinner jacket and a crocodile dressing-case in which to carry it about.

At a quarter to one, when he was again alone in the shop, he crammed half a gross (less one) of rubber trumpets into the crocodile dressing-case. When his employer came back from lunch he said:

"I've got rid of all those rubber trumpets, Mr. Arrowsmith. An old boy came in, said he was to do with an Orphanage, and I talked him into buying the lot."

Mr. Arrowsmith was greatly astonished.

"Bought the lot did you say? Didn't he ask for a discount?"

"No, Mr. Arrowsmith. I think he was a bit loopy myself."

Mr. Arrowsmith looked very hard at George and then at the cash register. Six thirteens, less one. at one-and-a-penny — four pounds, three and fivepence. It was certainly a very funny thing. But then, the freak customer appears from time to time and at the end of the day Mr. Arrowsmith had got over his surprise.

Journeying from Walham to Battersea, one goes on the Underground to Victoria Station, and continues the journey on the overhead electric. From the fact that George Muncey that evening took the crocodile case to Victoria Station, it has been argued that he intended to take the rubber trumpets home and perhaps bury them in the garden or deal with them in some other way. But this ignores the fact that he told his wife he intended to bring home some goods for Christmas.

The point is of minor importance, because the dressing-case never reached home with him that night. At the top of the steps leading from the Underground it was snatched from him.

George's first sensation, on realising that he had been robbed, was one of relief. The rubber trumpets, he had already found, could not be burnt, would certainly have been a

very great nuisance to him. The case, he knew, cost fifteen guineas, and there was still enough left of the twenty-three pounds to buy a new one on the following day.

At closing-time the next day, while George and Wilkins were tidying up, Mr. Arrowsmith was reading the evening paper.

"Here, Muncey! Listen to this. 'Jake Mendel, thirty-seven, of no fixed abode, was charged before Mr. Plowden this morning with the theft of a crocodile dressing-case from the precincts of Victoria Station. Mr. Plowden asked the police what was inside the bag. "A number of toy trumpets, your worship, made of rubber. There were seventy-seven of 'em all told." Mr. Plowden: "Seventy-seven rubber trumpets! Well, *now* there really is no reason why the police should not have their own band." (Laughter.)'" Mr. Arrowsmith laughed too and then: "Muncey, that looks like your lunatic."

"Yes, Mr. Arrowsmith," said George indifferently, then went contentedly home to receive his wife's expostulations about a new crocodile dressing-case which had been delivered during the afternoon. It was not quite the same to look at, because the original one had been made to order. But it had been bought at the same shop and the manager had obliged George by charging the same price for it.

In the meantime the police were relying on the newspaper paragraph to produce the owner of the crocodile case. When he failed to materialise on the following morning they looked at the name of the manufacturer and took the case round to him.

The manufacturer informed them that he had made that case the previous Spring to the order of a Miss Callermere — that the lady had since married and only that previous day her husband, Mr. Muncey, had ordered an exactly similar one but had accepted a substitute from stock.

"Ring up George Muncey and ask him to come up and identify the case — and take away those India-rubber trumpets!" ordered the Superintendent.

Mrs. Muncey answered the telephone and from her they obtained George's business address.

"A chemist's assistant!" said the Superintendent. "Seems to me rather rum. Those trumpets may be his employer's stock. And he may have been pinching 'em. Don't ring him up — go down. And find out if the employer has anything to say about the stock. See him before you see Muncey."

At Walham the Sergeant was taken into the dispensary where he

promptly enquired whether Mr. Arrowsmith had missed seventy-seven rubber trumpets from his stock.

"I haven't missed them — but I sold them the day before yesterday — seventy-seven, that's right! Or rather, my assistant, George Muncey, did. Here, Muncey!" And as George appeared:

"You sold the rest of the stock of those rubber trumpets to a gentleman who said he was connected with an Orphanage — the day before yesterday it was — didn't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Arrowsmith," said George.

"Bought the lot without asking for a discount," said Mr. Arrowsmith proudly. "Four pounds, three shillings and fivepence. I could tell you of another case that happened years ago when a man came into this very shop and —"

The Sergeant felt his head whirling a little. The assistant had sold seventy-seven rubber trumpets to an eccentric gentleman. The goods had been duly paid for and taken away — and the goods were subsequently found in the assistant's wife's dressing-case.

"Did you happen to have a crocodile dressing-case stolen from you at Victoria Station the day before yesterday, Mr. Muncey?" asked the Sergeant.

George was in a quandary. If he admitted that the crocodile case was his wife's — he would admit to Mr. Arrowsmith that he had been lying when he had said that he had cleverly sold the whole of the seventy-seven rubber trumpets without even having to give away a discount. So: "No."

"Ah, I thought not! There's a mistake somewhere. I expect it's that manufacturer put us wrong. Sorry to have troubled you. Good-morning!"

"Wait a minute!" said Mr. Arrowsmith. "You *did* have a crocodile dressing-case here that day, Muncey, with your evening clothes in it. And you do go home by Victoria. But what is that about the trumpets, Sergeant? They couldn't have been in Mr. Muncey's case if he sold them over the counter."

"I don't know what they've got hold of, Mr. Arrowsmith, and that's a fact," said George. "I think I'm wanted in the shop."

George was troubled, so he got leave to go home early. He told his wife how he had lied to the police, and confessed to her about the trumpets. Soon she had made him tell her the real reason for his dislike of the trumpets. The result was that when the police brought her the original crocodile case she flatly denied that it was hers.

In law, there was no means by

which the ownership of the case could be foisted upon the Munceys against their will. Pending the trial of Jake Mendel, the pickpocket, the case, with its seventy-seven rubber trumpets, was deposited with the Department of Dead Ends.

A few feet above it on a shelf stood the identical trumpet which George Muncey had thrown out of the window on the three-fifteen, non-stop Southend to Fenchurch Street, some seven months ago.

The Department took one of the trumpets from the bag and set it beside the trumpet on the shelf. There was no logical connection between them whatever. The Department simply guessed that there might be a connection.

They tried to connect Walham with Southend and drew blank. They traced the history of the seventy-seven Walham trumpets and found it simple enough until the moment when George Muncey put them in the crocodile case.

They went back to the Southend trumpet and read in their files that it had not been bought by the man with the baby but by a young woman.

Then they tried a cross-reference to young women and Southend. They found that dead end, the Ethel Fairbrass murder. They found: "*My daughter was married to Prince at the Henrietta Street registrar's office on November the sixteenth, 1907. He took her straight away for a honeymoon at Southend where they stayed a fortnight.*"

Fourteen days from November the sixteenth meant November the thirtieth, the day the rubber trumpet was found on the line.

One rubber trumpet is dropped on railway line by (possibly) a young woman. The young woman is subsequently murdered (but not with rubber trumpet). A young man behaves in an eccentric way with seventy-seven rubber trumpets six months later.

The connection was wholly illogical. But the Department specialised in illogical connections. It communicated its wild guess to Detective-Inspector Rason.

Rason went to Banbury and brought the old Fairbrass couple to Walham. He gave them five shillings and sent them into Arrowsmith's to buy a hot-water bottle.

Here is one of the most unusual detective stories your Editor has discovered in a year's hard reading. But let the author speak for herself. She wrote:

"I send you one of a series of 18th century detective tales in which Dr. Sam: Johnson devotes his learning and penetration to the detection of crime and chicanery. . . . How did I come to write these stories? One day not long ago it dawned on me that James Boswell — the immortal Bozzy — is truly the greatest of 'Watsons.' The hint was enough: stories in detective form began to shape themselves around every queer personality and dubious event of Johnson's lifetime. They are many; the 18th century was a kettle of queer fish. . . .

"I take a rather useless [sic!] pride in the authenticity of my facts and language."

This story has for its basis the unsolved theft of the Great Seal of England in 1784. The detectival elements, needless to say, are invented.

Your Editor does not pretend to be an expert on Dr. Samuel Johnson and his times. But of one thing he is certain: Miss de la Torre recreates that grand old gentleman-and-scholar in all his glory. You will find an atmosphere in this tale — a magical flavor of old times and old manners and old speech.

"Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine" is proud to bring you this unique detectival experience, printed here for the first time anywhere.

DR. SAM: JOHNSON, DETECTOR

(as related by James Boswell in 1784)

by LILLIAN DE LA TORRE

ON THE night of March 23, 1784, the Great Seal of England was stolen out of Lord Chancellor Thurlow's house in Great Ormonde Street, and was never seen again. In August of that year, Lord Chancellor Thurlow very graciously intimated to the friends of Dr. Johnson that that learned philosopher might draw against him at need for as much as £600.

The connexion between these two events forms a part of secret history. In that history I, James Boswell of Auchinleck, advocate, played a not inconsiderable part; and my learned friend, Sam: Johnson, displayed at large his inimitable powers of ratiocination and penetration, the more that he was then confined to his dwelling with a dropsical condition, complicated by asthma, that was soon to prove mortal.

In early March I was at York, and in two minds whether to press on to London or to retreat to Edinburgh. News that Parliament was about to be prorogued, with a general election to follow, inclined one of my broad principles to return to my home port to weather the storm; but then I should miss seeing Mannering hang. Mannering was the last of the Tyburn hangings, a gallant and a duel-

list, and he was to hang for spitting his man and missing the French packet.

I sat long in the ordinary at York, weighing my principles against the last of the Tyburn shows; and in the end I rode post for London to be in at the death. I rode up to Tyburn as dawn was breaking, and saw all from the spectator's gallery.

Had I not done so, I had missed the greatest of Dr. Johnson's feats of ratiocination. For coming away from the gallows while the mob was still shouting, I encountered George Selwyn in the press, and he carried me in his coach as far as St. James's Street; and there I met Lord Chancellor Thurlow coming out of Brooks's arm in arm with Charles James Fox; and that in itself was a portent of stranger things to come.

The Tory Chancellor was composed and sardonic. His swarthy skin was cool and his black eyes were watchful under their bushy brows. The Whig leader was deucedly foxed, his usual condition at that hour of any morning. He was rumpled and bleary, and his bushy hair stood on end. He was also in a complaining frame of mind.

"Look at him," he complained, gesturing at Thurlow in a way that threatened him with immersion in the kennel. "Look at 'm. Been standing by the gaming tables all night long. Wha's he got? Got his pockets full, tha's what. Looka me. Been standing by him all night long. Gaming? No. Mustn't game, Mrs. Armistead says. Gaming's ruin. Me, I been drinking. Stanning right by him, he's gaming, I'm drinking. Wha's he got? Got his pockets full. Wha've I got. Got my snout full. Armistead's all wrong. Never make that mistake again. Whoosh."

A final windmill gesture set him on his broad rump on the pavement. His grievances continued to run through his head.

"Pocket full o' money, and going to pro — prorogue Parliament tomorrow an' send all the Whigs home to stay."

"You say true, Mr. Fox," replied Thurlow icily, "for there's not a borough in England will return a Whig to the new Parliament."

Fox slewed him a quick look. It occurred to me that he was not so incapacitated as he seemed.

"A wager," he cried. "A rump and dozen that I'm returned for Westminster. Guineas to shillings Parliament an't prorogued. My head to a turnip you lose the seals, you trimming half-faced Tory."

He swayed to his feet. His contorted face was diabolic in the red light of dawn. Then it dissolved into a silly grin. He wagged his head to himself.

"These proposals," says Thurlow,

still calmly, "would hardly meet the approval of Mrs. Armistead."

"Keep your tongue off Armistead," said Fox surlily. "Who are you to talk?"

Thurlow's eyebrows went up; then he shrugged and turned his back.

"A night at Brooks's," he remarked, "is a night wasted among Whigs and scoundrels; and a pocketful of guineas off the gaming tables is poor enough pay. Pray, Mr. Boswell, will you ride along with me to Great Ormonde Street and break your fast?"

I accepted with alacrity; and so it fell out that I played a part in the strange events of secret history which I am about to narrate. The Chancellor entered his coach, and we were carried at a smart pace toward Great Ormonde Street.

As I drove along at Thurlow's side, I reflected with some awe on the inscrutable ways of Providence, that I, a poor Scotch advocate, should be breaking my fast on terms of intimacy with the Lord Chancellor of England and the Keeper of the Great Seal. I thought with indescribable emotion of the sacred nature of the Great Seal, and I resolved to beg a sight of it, that I might record for posterity the feelings of a man of sensibility on beholding that aweful symbol of Kingly authority.

Accordingly I led the discourse subtly in that direction.

"Pray, my lord," I began, "inform me whether the Great Seal is not necessary to the dissolution of Parliament?"

"It is always affixed to the King's writ of whatever kind," replied Thurlow. "Ha! 'Twill *seal* the fate of the d——d dastardly Whigs, I promise you."

Lord Thurlow is noted for his profane swearing. I ignored it, and followed him as he stepped from his carriage and mounted his elegant stair in Great Ormonde Street.

"Pray, my Lord," I continued as best I could for climbing, "could you not gratify me with a sight of the Great Seal, for I have never seen it?"

"Nothing is easier," replied Thurlow, "for when all is said and done 'tis no more than a handful of soft metal, and I always keep it by me. Pray step this way."

I followed the saturnine Chancellor into a study on the first floor. The walls were lined with elegant authors in calf bindings. Opposite the door stood a graceful writing bureau, its drawer half open. Beside it stood something covered with a green baize cloth. Thurlow twitched away the cloth, and with an easy movement handed me a heavy club surmounted by a crown. My wrist snapped with its weight.

"'Tis the Mace!" I cried between awe and delight.

"'Tis the Mace," assented Thurlow carelessly, "and well it is that 'tis borne before the Chancellor by a bravo with a porter's knot, for I've known many a d——d puny little monkey of a Lord Keeper who could not have wielded it to save his life. Now the Seal is lighter."

He drew out the half-open drawer, and his face changed. A sickly green came up in his swarthy cheeks, and his voice dried in his throat. I made bold to peer over his shoulder. The drawer was empty.

Or rather, not quite empty. In it lay two bags, turned back and tossed down like carelessly drawn-off gloves. One bag was of leather; the other was a precious and costly purse of silk, richly embroidered and bejewelled.

Both bags were empty. The Great Seal was gone.

The Lord Chancellor stood like one struck to stone while one might have counted to three. Then he damned the Whigs. He damned them for a thieving, scoundrelly pack of highway robbers, with no fear of their God or their King. He damned them for breaking and entering, for debauching the electorate, and for picking pockets. He promised to have them pilloried, lampooned, and disfranchised. All the time he was turning out the drawers of the bureau and searching the room. 'Twas useless. The Great Seal of England was gone.

"Boswell," cried Thurlow, "do you mount guard here, lest the d——d thieving Whigs come back for the Mace. I charge you, don't stir for your life. If the dogs are in the house, I'll rout them out." With a solemn sense of responsibility, I kept close watch over the sacred symbol of majesty.

I thought long till Thurlow returned. The house was quiet as the grave. Once I thought someone stood in the doorway behind me; but when I whirled, there was nothing. Once I thought Thurlow had apprehended the Whigs indeed, for there was a great clatter below-stairs and the sound of Thurlow swearing. But again the solemn silence supervened; and in a few moments more the troubled chancellor returned.

"All is clear, Boswell," said he, his old truculent composure restored. "The miscreants have escaped. Come with me."

He dusted the rusty streaks from his palms, locked the drawers of the cabinet, and led me below to the domestic offices. There he showed me how the bars of the back kitchen window had been wrenched loose. I looked at the loosened bars lying in the court below under the open

window, and shook my head over the pools of plaster lying on the kitchen floor.

"With bars at every window, surely a man ought to be safe from the d——d Whigs," he muttered.

"This is clearly a matter for the philosophical mind of Dr. Johnson," I cried. "I will wait upon him at once."

"'Tis a matter for the bailiffs," responded Thurlow surlily, "they shall wait upon the b——y b——y Whigs at once."

I wondered if he meant Mr. Fox, and so my mind turned to Parliamentary affairs.

"What will come of this?" I queried. "How is Parliament to be prorogued?"

"I'll prorogue 'em," cried Thurlow grimly. "I'll find a way to send the scoundrels home. But I must search out precedents. I'll go straight off to Downing Street and consult Pitt."

"And I," said I, "will go straight off to Bolt Court and consult Dr. Johnson."

"Do so," responded Thurlow, "and I'll come after you as swiftly as I may."

I found Dr. Johnson lying late in his bed-gown, with a kerchief on his grizzled head. He stared as I burst into his chamber.

"Bozzy!" he exlcaimed, "What brings you to London? 'Pon my life, 'tis some weighty affair of state. By the bulging of your eyes, you are big with news of the great world. Well, well, I will hear it."

The tone of raillery piqued me. Composing my countenance, therefore, I seated myself and enquired politely for my venerable friend's state of health.

"The indisposition is abated," replied Johnson impatiently. "Come, Bozzy, your news! What brings you to London?"

"To see Mannering hang."

JOHNSON: "And did he hang with a good grace?"

BOSWELL: "He did not hang."

JOHNSON: "So you were cheated of your entertainment after all."

BOSWELL: "No, sir, my entertainment was very well. All the world and his wife was there, with my Lady Lanchester that Mannering fought for supported by three gallants in the forefront, and the dead man's brothers glowering at the gallows foot. 'Twas a noble sight to see Mannering smile on them and never turn a hair, with his arms bound at his sides and the man of God mumbling beside him and the cart ready to move off and leave him dangling."

JOHNSON: "Why, is not this better than turning a man off hugger-mugger at Newgate, as the new law

requires? Why must we do without the procession to Tyburn? The public is gratified with the procession; the criminal is supported by it. Why must it be swept away?"

BOSWELL: "I know not; but so it must be."

JOHNSON: "But come, Bozzy, be not so close-mouthed. How came Mannering so near the other world, and yet remains in this?"

I own I was tired of my tale, and longed to astound my friend with the grave news which was agitating me. I had no more time for Mannering.

"Why, sir," said I, "thus it was. At the very point, when Mannering had perforce to give over his strutting and his ogling and let the handkerchief fall, comes a cry from the crowd *A reprieve, a reprieve;* though 'twas in truth no reprieve, but the King's pardon engrossed at large with the yellow wax on the tapes; and Mannering kissed the boy that had brought it, and rode away in his coach as he had come, with never a glance at my Lady Lanchester. As for her, she let out a screech and fell into a swoon; and 'tis all the talk that it has come to mortal hatred between them, and that the dead man's brothers will kill Mannering sure if he remains in England."

"Why, so," says Dr. Johnson, "this is a docket indeed, and George Selwyn himself could not have told it better; though indeed it falls something short of the great affairs I thought you big with."

This was my opportunity.

"Pray, sir," I said quietly, "what news would content you? How if I tell you that the Great Seal of England has been stolen, and that I was by when the loss was discovered?"

Dr. Johnson was thunderstruck. A staunch Tory, and a great supporter of Kingly authority, he appreciated to the full the infamy of the deed. I presented Lord Thurlow's request for the assistance of my friend's known acumen; to which he replied:

"I am an old man, Bozzy, and my infirmities gain upon me; but I solemnly declare that I will neither repose nor recruit till I shall have put the Great Seal of England into Lord Thurlow's hand."

Rising, he summoned Francis Barber to bring his clothes; and as he dressed and broke his fast with me, I told him all the circumstances of the audacious theft.

He heard me through in silence, shaking his head and rolling his great frame the while. Only when I had finished did he question me.

"The domestic offices are on the lowest floor?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the writing-bureau on the floor above?"

"That is so, sir."

"The bars of the window were dislodged and fell to the ground?"

"Yes, sir. I ought to say that the window faces the open fields, whence the house-breakers are supposed to have come."

"And plaster and rubbish lay on the kitchen floor? Sparse, or thick? Under the window, or more generally dispersed?"

"Thick, sir, under the window, and sparser where it had been tracked into the passage."

"Footprints?"

"No, sir, only a line of faint smudges, as it might be off the boots of a man who had stood in plaster; and indeed Lord Thurlow and I made such another track when we came away from the window."

"The servants?"

"All in their beds on the lowest floor. Lord Thurlow rouzed them as we came away."

"Had they heard aught in the night?"

"Nothing, they said."

"Yet a band of Whigs broke in and abstracted the Great Seal. Pray, whom of his household has Lord Thurlow about him?"

"I know not. His irregular connexion with Mrs. Hervey is well-known; but I never saw her, nor any of her children."

Dr. Johnson shook his head in dissatisfaction. There was a summons below, and my friend's black servant announced Lord Thurlow. We descended to him in the panelled drawing-room, where the sage and the politician greeted one another with great mutual respect.

Though separated in age by upwards of twenty years, these two famous men were not unlike: Thurlow tall, strong-built, of a saturnine cast, with sharp black eyes under beetling brows; Johnson as tall, but more massive, his heavy face marred by the King's evil. If Johnson roared, Thurlow thundered. The one had met his match in the other, and they were mighty civil and polite together.

"Well, Dr. Johnson, what think you of this outrage?" demanded the Lord Chancellor. "But the d——d thieving Whigs shan't make good their purpose, I promise you. I have taken the opinions of Gower and Kenyon; a new Seal is making, and Parliament shall be prorogued tomorrow. So all is happily resolved, and we'll send the d——d Whigs home to stay in spite of their teeth. Mr. Boswell, Dr. Johnson, I thank you for your good offices in this matter, and beg that you'll discommode yourselves no further over it."

"Surely, Lord Thurlow," protested my Tory friend, "the matter is not to end thus. Have you taken

no steps for the apprehension of the thief?"

"You mistake me, Dr. Johnson," replied Lord Thurlow, "one Lee, a notorious receiver of stolen goods, is under our eye. We think to take him in the fact, if we but have patience. But my first care is to send the rascally Whigs packing; and this we may do, for the new Seal will be ready by nightfall."

"Pray, Lord Thurlow," replied Dr. Johnson, "indulge me. I am no thief-taker; but I have had my successes as a detector of problems, and I have sworn to lay the stolen Seal in your hand. Pray let me have your answer to a question or two."

"I will do so, Dr. Johnson; but pray be brief, for I have yet to wait upon his majesty."

"Tell me, then: the Great Seal was customarily preserved in a bag?"

"Two bags, Dr. Johnson, of silk and of leather, the one within the other."

"How were they secured?"

"With a thong or draw-string."

"The silk bag was costly?"

"That is so. It is enriched with gems and bullion, and cost upwards of fifty guineas."

"So that the thief," said Dr. Johnson meditatively, "though 'twas worth his life to be found there, lingered so long as would serve to untie, not one bag, but two, that he might leave behind him fifty guineas worth of booty; when he might in a single motion have pocketed bags, Seal, and all, and made good his escape. This is a strange sort of thief, and one who cannot hope to rise in his profession. A practised thief will disdain no loot that comes to his hand."

"Nor did he so," said Lord Thurlow quickly, "for he carried off my silver sword-hilts, and a matter of £35 in fees, that were laid up in the writing-bureau."

I looked my surprise at this news.

"'Tis a bagatelle, to the loss of the Seal," continued Thurlow, "and I have given it scant attention; but such is my personal loss, out of the drawers that were ransacked."

"One more question, then," said Dr. Johnson. "Who of your family were at home with you in Great Ormonde Street?"

Thurlow looked like a thundercloud.

"How can this be to the purpose, Dr. Johnson?" he enquired stiffly.

"Pray, my lord, do not hinder me," said Dr. Johnson firmly, "for I am resolved to get to the bottom of this matter, whatever I may find there."

Thurlow looked blacker still, but he replied to the question:

"Why sir, Mrs. Hervey is taking the waters at Bath, and my little girl

with her. My household at present is only my daughters Catharine and Caroline, and my cousin Gooch's boy, Ned Durban."

"What's he?"

"Why, sir, he's a young springald come to me for old times' sake to be made a man of fashion; though indeed 'tis all in vain, for the d——d stubborn young dog is a Whig and a gamester, and I can make nothing of him."

"Pray, Lord Thurlow, make these young people known to me."

Lord Thurlow rose from his place.

"Very well, Dr. Johnson, if you wish it. Will you come down to Great Ormonde Street?"

"No, sir, I will not. I am a dropsical old man, and I cannot gallop about London like a Bow Street runner. You must be my courier, and send Great Ormonde Street to me."

"Let it be as you wish," said Lord Thurlow coldly; and left us with scant ceremony.

The morning was half gone when a hackney coach deposited a young lady and a young gentleman at the mouth of Bolt Court. I watched them from the two pair of stairs window as they crossed the court. The young lady was sombrely dressed and cloaked in black to her heels. Her companion, thin and shambling, was gorgeous in mulberry brocade from his wig to his buckled shoes. He made play with a muff and a clouded cane. He handed his companion carefully up the steps and supported her into the withdrawing room, where Dr. Johnson received them.

"Your servant, Dr. Johnson," lisped he of the clouded cane, and made a leg, "Ned Durban at your service. Here's Caroline."

"Miss Thurlow," said Dr. Johnson gently, "I bid you welcome."

The girl in the black cape looked at him mutely. She was very young, not more than fifteen, with pale ivory skin showing dark shadows under the eyes. She wore her own soft dark hair, not a made head, but swept back any how. She was dressed in gray tabby, without ornament.

Gravely Dr. Johnson led her to his deep wing chair. She sat gingerly on the edge, and looked at Ned Durban. The exquisite youth came to her, and took her hand.

"Never fear, my dear," he said gently, "you are to answer what Dr. Johnson asks; he won't hurt you. He only wants to find the Great Seal."

The dark eyes turned to Dr. Johnson.

"Truly, truly, sir, I know nothing of the Seal."

"Nor I, sir," added Durban; "but ask me what you please."

I was liking the shambling exquisite a little better, when he fell to sucking the head of his cane.

"Then tell me, pray," began Dr. Johnson, "how you have spent your time since yesterday."

Durban left off sucking his cane, and replied:

"Strap me, sir, 'twas a rare night for me, for I never once saw the inside of Brooks's, though I have a card there, and seldom miss. But last night I carried my cousins to sup at Ranelagh, and so on to the masquerade in Oxford Street; and so it fell out we three were together till the east showed gray."

"All the time?"

"From supper till morning."

"Pray tell me, sir, is it your custom to squire your ladies so closely?"

Durban cackled, and replied:

"There you have me, Dr. Johnson. 'Twas the first masquerade from which I have failed to follow one or other devastating little mask and let the rest go hang. But, d'ye see, sir, little Caroline here was half beside herself, and Cathy and I in dejection, and we just sat one by another and watched the masquers, until near dawn we could bear it no longer and came away home together."

"How late?"

"Perhaps an hour before sunrise."

"And you then retired?" enquired Dr. Johnson.

"Yes, sir. I had half a mind to the hanging, but the thought of it was so deuced dumpish and depressing, in the end I carried a bottle to bed with me, and the next thing I remember my Uncle Thurlow was shaking me and bidding me rise and come down to Bolt Court."

"And you, my dear?" Dr. Johnson turned to Caroline Thurlow.

She looked at Ned, and he squeezed her hand and nodded at her.

"'Twas as Ned said," she faltered.

"And after? When you came home?"

"I went to my bed."

"Do you lie alone? Or with your sister?"

"With my sister," whispered the white-faced girl.

"Well, my dear, and so you fell asleep and slept till mid-morning."

"No, sir. I lay awake and watched the day break. I couldn't sleep."

"And you heard nothing?"

"Yes, sir, I heard a great clatter and a rending sound. It made me afraid. My window fronts the fields, and sometimes men fight there."

"Did you look out?"

"Oh, good lack, no sir. I hid my head under the counterpane."

"What an unlucky chance," I exclaimed. "You might else have detected the thieves."

"When was this rending sound, my dear?" enquired Dr. Johnson.

"I cannot say, sir. I had lain awake for hours, and the sun was risen."

"And your sister slept by you?"

"All the night, sir. But it was morning before I slept, and when I awoke she was gone."

"Whither?"

Caroline looked at my benevolent friend without speaking. Durban answered for her.

"O lud, sir, who knows where a lady goes o' mornings? To the milliners, to pay calls, I know not what. She is to follow us when she returns."

"She comes pat upon her cue, sir," I reported from the window, "for here is Lord Thurlow crossing the court, and with him a most exquisite lady of fashion."

"'Tis Cathy," said little Miss Thurlow wistfully, "for Cathy's eighteen, and a reigning toast."

Cathy came into the sombre panelled room like a queen. She wore lavendar lutestring, and a made head full twelve inches high, powdered and picked out with plumes. She was a sparkling girl with her father's eyes. I bent over her hand as Dr. Johnson saluted the Lord Chancellor.

"Why, Cathy," said Caroline. "Where ever have you been? All the time I lay awake you were snoring, and as soon as I slept you rose up and left me."

"Nowhere," said Cathy. "Everywhere. What do you think, Cathy, the mantua-maker has the impudence to be indisposed! What am I to wear to the ball tonight?"

Thurlow greeted his little daughter tenderly.

"What, poppet, look up, my dear. Never fret about the Seal. The new one is as good as made, and there's no harm done."

"Nevertheless the Seal is to be found," said Dr. Johnson. "I have taken so much upon myself."

"I take this resolve very kindly of you," said Thurlow cordially, "nevertheless I would not have you fatigue yourself unduly."

"Nay, sir," replied Dr. Johnson, "we progress, and without fatigue. I have learned much about this strange thief, who does his housebreaking by day-light, who takes the Seal and leaves the Mace and the jewelled bag. Pray, answer me one question more: when did you last see the Great Seal?"

"Why," says Thurlow, "last sealing-day."

"Recollect yourself, sir. I think it was when you sealed Mannering's pardon."

"That is so, sir," replied Thurlow instantly.

"And I think that was done last night, else how comes it that it nearly came too late?"

"Prodigious, Dr. Johnson! Again

you are right. The document came late from the engrosser's. 'Twas close on midnight, and I sealed it then and there and sent it by hand to the unfortunate man's friends."

"And did you then deposit the Seal in the bureau?"

"I did, sir," replied Thurlow.

"And was anybody by to observe these transactions?"

"Sir!" began Thurlow angrily.

"Pray, Papa, no heroics," said Cathy languidly. "I was by, Dr. Johnson. I helped. I served as chaff-wax, as I have often done before — haven't I, Carly? — *Carly!*"

Every head turned to the winged chair. Caroline's face was the colour of lead. Her eyes were closed, and her breath came shallow.

"The child's fainted!" cried Thurlow angrily. "Come, Dr. Johnson, a truce to this inquisition."

Catharine moved stiffly to her sister — stiffly from the effort of carrying her stately powdered head — and cut her stays with despatch and decision. Ned Durban laid her tenderly on the sofa, and gradually her breath and her colour returned. She opened her eyes, looked into his face above her, and burst into a storm of weeping. As he smiled tenderly into Caroline's eyes, muff or no muff, I liked the boy.

Miss Thurlow's indisposition put an end to my acute friend's researches for that while. Catharine donned a green baize apron belonging among Francis Barber's kitchen gear, and with her own hands made a posset for her sister; and very strange she looked in her lavendar lutestring with the plumes in her powdered head.

Soon Caroline was sitting up. Her weeping fit had done her good. There was pink in her cheeks, and a smile began to play about her lips. Nevertheless, Dr. Johnson swore that she must not be moved, but the whole company must stay and dine. Thurlow excused himself on the ground of much business; but Caroline consented, and Ned and Catharine elected to stay with her. Francis Barber was to be sent to the ordinary to bespeak chickens and sweetbreads.

The Lord Chancellor then took his leave, promising Dr. Johnson a sight of the new Seal before supper-time. I offered to accompany him, if I could be of use; and he gratefully closed with my offer. So I departed with the Lord Chancellor; and of my doings that afternoon suffice it to say, that my usefulness was all in fetching and carrying, fetching and carrying.

I returned to Bolt Court as evening was falling. I found Dr. Johnson on the step taking leave of a visitor;

and so I greeted for the second time that day Charles James Fox, the fascinating and beloved Whig leader.

This was a different Fox, however; fresh from the hands of his man, wigged and point-device; with his irresistible smile on his broad lively-looking face.

"You may set your mind at rest, sir," Dr. Johnson was saying. "I promise you no one shall suffer for the sequestration of the Great Seal, save alone him who destroys it."

"Then I will promise you," rejoined Fox in his rich voice, "that no Whig has it, no Whig took it, and no Whig will destroy it. 'Tis my belief, Dr. Johnson, that the surly Chancellor himself could tell us much, if he would."

"Lord Thurlow has already told me much," replied Dr. Johnson, "and the matter approaches its end. But pray gratify my curiosity in one particular. Boswell here tells me that Thurlow spent last night with you at Brooks's. How can this be, that a staunch Tory should be found in the Whig stronghold?"

Fox laughed.

"He came by that way after supper," he replied, "to threaten me, in his amiable way, about Ned Durban, who is personally attached to my party, and of great use to me. When he was announced, Jack Wilkes tipped me a wink, and laid me guineas to crowns I could not make so good a Whig of him as to keep him in the club till dawn. Well, sir, I never refuse a wager; and a hundred guineas is more than curling-paper money. It took all my finesse to get him to the tables; and there I guarded him like gold till the night was spent. 'Twas hardest of all to see him winning, and lay no stakes myself, but I dared not. Had I begun gaming, he might have walked away, and I would never have followed. Jack Wilkes was by, and saw fair play; and when the light began to come in at the windows, he paid down my guineas on the nail, and I got Thurlow out of Brooks's and consigned him to the devil, for I don't like the man."

"You never left his side?"

"I stood by the black-browed Tory from ten in the evening till daylight, and 'tis a task that's ill-paid at a hundred guineas."

"One question more: how knew you that I was employed in the matter?"

Fox smiled blandly.

"Nothing Thurlow does," he replied, "is unknown to the Whig leaders; and at this very moment, I'll lay a guinea, someone is telling Thurlow that Fox has called at Bolt Court."

"Well, sir," says Dr. Johnson, "I will serve you, if I may serve justice

at the same time."

"'Tis all I ask," replied Fox, "for indeed whether the old curmudgeon has made away with it himself, and blames the Whigs, or whether a thief has it indeed, and Thurlow has put about this Whig story to turn it to his own ends, 'tis all one to me; the Whigs have it not."

"You may set your mind at rest, sir," replied Dr. Johnson; and the Whig leader took his leave.

"What, Bozzy," exclaimed Dr. Johnson, peering into my face as he gave me welcome, "you're again great with news."

"That is so, sir," I exclaimed eagerly as we mounted the stair.

"Stop, I will tell you," said Dr. Johnson, "there was a felonious entry at the Petty Bag in Rolls Yard last night."

"There was indeed," said I, dumbfounded, "but —"

"But nothing was taken," finished Dr. Johnson.

But I still had a couple of crumbs.

"'Tis thought," I told him, "that they looked to find the Great Seal there, for 'tis there they have the engrossing of pardons and such-like; but they had their labour for their pains, and so went away to the Chancellor's house, and there fared better."

"Do you say so?" said Dr. Johnson politely.

"Furthermore," I concluded triumphantly at the drawingroom door, "Lee, the receiver of stolen goods, is taken, and will be arraigned for purchasing the stolen Seal. 'Tis said he had it of a woman for forty guineas."

"So the Seal is found!" exclaimed Johnson, thunderstruck.

"No, sir. 'Tis feared it is into the melting-pot already."

Johnson opened the panelled door, and we entered the room. I bent low over Catharine Thurlow's hand. She had been crying, but she was more beautiful than ever with a last tear sparkling in her eye, and her glossy dark hair in little ringlets all over her proud little head. She reminded me of an ancient statue — or a portrait — what was it? — something I had seen recently.

Dr. Johnson was most assiduous in his attentions to both the ladies. The Whig Maccaroni fondled his muff and smiled at vacancy. I had my mouth open to sound the opinion of the Great *Cham* on the strange events just passed, when Francis Barber announced Lord Thurlow, the latter coming in briskly on his heels with a leathern bag in his hand.

"Now, sir," says Thurlow, "we'll prorogue 'em," he brandished the leathern bag, "we'll prorogue 'em and send the d——d dog-stealing Whigs back to their kennels. Here's

the little beauty will do it."

"The new Seal!" I exclaimed.

"Ay," said Thurlow, handing the leathern bag to my learned friend, "the new Great Seal. 'Tis a replica of the old one, and equally as handsome, brass though it may be."

My near-sighted friend carried the bags to the window. The leathern bag yielded a silk purse of exquisite workmanship; the silk purse yielded a heavy disc of yellow metal.

"You say true," remarked Dr. Johnson, hunching his shoulders as he peered at it in the light from the sky, "this is not to be told from goldsmith's work."

He passed the heavy thing to me, and I at last beheld, albeit of brass and hastily constructed, the GREAT SEAL OF ENGLAND.

I gazed with indescribable emotion on the sacred person of George III, represented as seated on a charger; on the obverse the same, seated in state. I handed the heavy metal disc to the young ladies. Caroline regarded it with wondering eyes; but Catharine shrugged her slim shoulders.

"This is no nine-days' wonder," she said indifferently. "'Tis no different from the other one."

She yielded it back to my friend.

"Francis," called Dr. Johnson from the passage, bagging the Great Seal the while, "pray let us have our tea."

"I cannot drink tea with you," said Thurlow instantly, "for I am on my way to Downing Street with the new Seal; but my daughters may do so, and I will send the carriage back for them."

"Very well, my Lord," responded Dr. Johnson, "I rejoice that the crisis is happily over, and we may drink our tea with light hearts."

"So?" says Thurlow, "have you, then, given over your determination to lay the Great Seal in my hand?"

"Sir," says Dr. Johnson. "The Great Seal is but metal, till the King's will gives it life; and so I hold that the disc you carry there in its bag is in very truth the Great Seal and no other; and in that belief I rest from my labours."

"Now," says Thurlow, "you speak like a man of sense. Sir, I am obliged to you. Pray command me. Give me the pleasure of serving you to requite your trouble in this matter."

"I thank you, my lord," replied Dr. Johnson. "I have but one request: freedom for Lee the receiver."

"Freedom? For the tool of the Whigs? The man who melted up the Great Seal of England? Sure, sir, you jest."

"Not so, my lord. I counsel you, Lee must not be brought to trial."

"Not? When twenty witnesses stand ready against him?"

"No, sir. There might come a

twenty-first witness you would not wish to hear."

Thurlow looked sharply at Johnson. Then he lifted his shoulders.

"I can see," he remarked, "that I am in your debt indeed. Lee shall go free."

"I thank your lordship," said Dr. Johnson; and Thurlow took his departure. I attended him into Fleet Street and so we parted.

As the Lord Chancellor mounted his coach, I took note of a young man who was lounging in front of the Dolphin, smoking a church-warden and watching the mouth of Bolt Court. No sooner had the Lord Chancellor driven off, than he shook out his pipe and put himself in motion. To my surprise he caught me up at Dr. Johnson's door. I stared at him. It was Mannering.

Mannering had elected to hang in peach-coloured velvet, picked out with gold. He was still in peach-coloured velvet, and he was still smiling.

"Exit the heavy father," he murmured; "enter the lover. We should all make our fortunes at Drury Lane. Pray sir, is this the right stair for Dr. Johnson? And who are *you?*"

"James Boswell, at your service, Mr. Mannering. Pray come with me."

"Oons, nothing like hanging to get oneself known," drawled Mannering, mounting the stairs before me. There was no handsomer man in England. He carried himself like a grenadier; his handsome sallow face was like a player's, melancholy and sentimental, with shades of sensibility constantly playing over it.

Like a player he threw open the drawing-room door and stood motionless on the threshold. He got his effect.

The languid Durban leaped to his feet, crying:

"Tom! Stap me, 'tis Tom!"

Catharine Thurlow applauded softly, saying,

"Bravo, well timed, Tom!"

But Caroline Thurlow crossed the room in one motion, and threw herself on his breast. Dr. Johnson peered at the newcomer, who seemed to be mightily relishing the scene.

"Permit me," said Catharine sedately, "to make Mr. Mannering known to Dr. Johnson." Though Caroline's head was pressed tight against the peach-coloured chest, Mannering managed a graceful salutation.

He touched Caroline's dark hair gently.

"Be satisfied, little one," he said, "they can't hurt Tom Mannering." He set her gently in her chair.

"How come you so pat, Tom?" said Durban.

It was Catharine who answered.

"I sent to him," she said, "by Francis, when he bespoke the chickens at the ordinary."

"And I," said Mannering, "came when dusk fell. I have enemies in England."

"Had you but come a little sooner," says Caroline in a dreamy voice, "you might have thanked Papa for your pardon."

"Papa!" cried Mannering. "Trust me, I will give Papa a wide berth."

"Pray, sir," said Dr. Johnson, "be seated and take a dish of tea with us."

"I thank you, no. I ride for Dover in an hour, and so over into France. 'Tis safer so, I think."

He looked directly at Catharine Thurlow.

"I had not looked to speak before an audience," he said (I thought he minded us little enough) "but time presses. I thank you for my life. Will you marry me and come with me into France?"

Catharine Thurlow returned as level a look.

"I have not changed my mind," she said. "I couldn't see you hang; but I will not marry you, Tom, tonight or ever."

Mannering scowled.

"You'll be the death of me," he said, "whose fault was the Lanchester affair?"

"I've made amends, I think, for driving you into her arms," replied Catharine. "Go over into France, Tom, and God take care of you, for I won't again."

Caroline stood up. "I'll come with you, Tom."

Mannering looked at her.

"No, no, little one, you're too young and tender. I'll go alone." He touched her hand; looked a long moment at Catharine's vivid face; bowed, and was gone.

Catharine Thurlow went to her sister and set an arm about her shoulders.

"Catharine," said Caroline wonderingly, "what did he mean, about Papa?"

"Why, you little goose," cried Catharine, "where did you think I went, when I left you weeping your heart out in the darkness and went off dressed like a link-boy?"

"You said you were going to fight a duel," said Caroline doubtfully.

"That was to keep you quiet, you little moppet," said her elder sister. "I lay there in the dark listening to your sobs, and wished I could have got father to save Tom; and it came over me that if I were bold enough I could do it myself."

"How?" said Caroline.

"By sealing a pardon and carrying it myself. It wasn't hard. I carried the Seal to Rolls Yard, and engrossed a pardon in form as best I could.

'Twas a botch, but a bold botch. I sealed it with yellow wax, and then I had to run all the way to get there in time. The hangman never looked at it; how could he, with the press shouting *A reprieve, a pardon*, and Tom Mannering getting into his coach as cool as a cucumber."

I stared at the intrepid girl.

"All had gone well," she continued, "had my father not taken a freak to look at the Seal at six o'clock in the morning."

"'Twas I," I said, "who took that freak."

"You have given me a bad day, Mr. Boswell," she replied; "but all's well that ends well."

"Yet give me leave," I begged, "to know the answer to a question or two. Pray how had you a boy's suit by you?"

"I had gone to the masquerade as a link-boy."

"Did your father know of this?"

"Not when 'twas done; but like Dr. Johnson he saw that 'twas not the work of a thief, but of a member of his household. Therefore he wrenched out the bars of the kitchen window, that it might look the more like a house-breaking."

"And therefore he was so fierce against the Whigs?" I added.

"No, sir; he is fierce against the Whigs from long practise."

"Pray, Dr. Johnson, was this known to you?"

"Sir, by little and by little. At your first account I saw plainly, from the rust on his palms, from the clatter below-stairs, from the plaster *inside* the window though the bars had been cast *outside*, that 'twas Lord Thurlow himself who had breached his own defenses. Therefore I summoned to me all who lived above-stairs, and learned that all had been in company with others till nigh on dawn. I was puzzled to know which of the young people had abstracted the seal upon their return home, and why. Then I mentioned Mannering's pardon, and Father and daughter immediately lied in concert. Lord Thurlow claimed to have sealed Mannering's pardon and Miss Catharine to have served as chaffwax. Obviously both lied, for Lord Thurlow was at Brooks's all night long, though he knew not that I knew it and Miss Catharine was at the masquerade. Then Mannering's pardon was forged. And by whom? Not Lord Thurlow — he could have procured a genuine pardon, had he so wished. Therefore Miss Catharine was the forger; Lord Thurlow guessed so much, and lied to cover her. 'Twas all news to Miss Caroline that Mannering had got off; she fainted away with the revulsion of feeling."

"Pray, Miss Thurlow," I en-

quired, "did you indeed steal £35 and two silver sword hilts?"

"No, indeed, Mr. Boswell. I now hear this accusation for the first time."

"'Twas a detail your father invented to lend verisimilitude to his version of the house-breaking," explained Dr. Johnson, pouring his fifth cup of tea.

"Now sir," said I rallying him, "what's this supping of tea? Did you not swear not to rest nor recruit until you had laid the Seal in Lord Thurlow's hand?"

"Why, sir," returned Dr. Johnson, "you saw me do so."

I stared.

"Why, Bozzy," exclaimed Dr. Johnson, "did you think I would let the King's writ pass under base metal? Here is the brass one." He drew it from the capacious old-fashioned pocket of his snuff-coloured suit.

I continued to stare.

"But, sir, how came you by it?" I exclaimed, "without stirring out at the door all day."

"I detected its hiding-place, and asked for it."

"Where — ?"

Catharine Thurlow laughed aloud.

"Pray, Mr. Boswell, is it the custom in Scotland for ladies of the *ton* to wear a made head before breakfast? 'Tis not so here; but when a lady has chopped off her hair in a hurry to pass for a boy by daylight, she must needs don a wig; and what better hiding-place for a thing she must conceal on her person till the hue and cry is over than the inner reaches of that same wig?"

"Pray, Mr. Boswell," said Dr. Johnson, "accept of the brass seal as a memento of this day's transactions. As for me I desire no better reward than to have saved a lady from the consequences of her rashness."

In fine, Dr. Johnson was true to his word; for though all became known to the Chancellor through the agency of his younger daughter and though he made the proffer with the utmost delicacy, Dr. Johnson was steadfast not to touch Lord Thurlow's £600.

Georges Simenon created three different detectives in his books of short stories (Inspector Maigret appears only in novels and novelettes). In our November 1942 issue we brought you the patient, precise M. Froget in "The Case of Arnold Schuttringer." In our last issue, September 1943, we brought you the eccentric armchair detective, Joseph Leborgne, in "The Three Rembrandts."

Now we introduce to you — G. 7. We say "introduce" because this story about G. 7 has never before appeared in the English language. It was translated by Anthony Boucher (our favorite translator) who again captures the exact mood — sinister and psychiatric — of Mr. Simenon's original French.

A few words about G. 7: Actually he is Inspector B. of the Sûreté — but Inspector B. is so important a figure that Simenon does not dare reveal his full name. The nickname of "G. 7" was given to Inspector B. by the narrator (the same "Watson" who chronicled the Joseph Leborgne cases) in memory of a taxicab of that number in which the narrator and Inspector B. first met.

"The Secret of Fort Bayard" is a strange and brooding tale, full of unforgettable horror. Do not read it on an empty stomach. . . .

THE SECRET OF FORT BAYARD

by GEORGES SIMENON

(translated from the original French by Anthony Boucher)

We missed the most terrible part of this adventure, G. 7 and I. But the case remains my most vivid nightmare. The most sinister prison seems to me a delightful spot compared with Fort Bayard.

This fort is on an islet off La Rochelle. Two large islands, Ré and Oléron, here lie parallel to the coast, thus enclosing a magnificent roadstead which was formerly of strategic importance. Napoleon, among others, bestrewed it with forts which still stand amid the waves. The best known of these is Fort Bayard.

In the center of the roadstead, hardly a mile from Bayard, lies the island of Aix, on which a hundred or so inhabitants live — mostly on fish and particularly on oysters.

The setting is a harsh one, even in the summer season. In November it is sinister. The ocean roars and surges, and the people of Aix are sometimes cut off from the mainland for weeks.

When we arrived, the excitement aroused by the affair had not yet died down, but the worst was over. We landed on the island of Aix one foggy noonday. The gasoline lamps were already lit in the houses. You could believe that it was twilight.

G. 7 had George's house pointed out to him. This George was the

only fisherman on the island who had his own small cutter to haul his net. We found him at home, before the fireplace, surrounded by his wife and three children. He was a man of about forty, large, strong, rough-looking, but with a disconcerting calm about him.

Despite which, public opinion had accused him of the most hideous crime. The woman's eyes seemed to me dead and lightless. Even the children seemed crushed by the atmosphere of suspicion that pressed down on the house.

The dialogue was brief:

"Will you take us to the fort?"

George didn't stir. "Now?"

"Yes, now." G. 7 showed his badge.

The man rose, took down his oilskin from a hook, threw it around his shoulders, and changed his wooden shoes for hip boots. For a moment he looked at us in our city clothes, then shrugged as though to say, "So much the worse for you. . . ."

A quarter of an hour later, we were on the bridge of the cutter, clinging to the rigging as we pitched unceasingly, our eyes fixed on the black walls of Fort Bayard as its outline slowly became clear through the fog.

At the helm, George never opened his mouth. There was such a calm in the man's blue eyes that it hurt me to look at him.

A week earlier, a yacht cruising through these parts had anchored by the iron ladder that still stands on one of the walls of Fort Bayard.

It's a dangerous spot, full of rocks. The fishermen never go there unless for some very good reason. The crumbling walls are a danger, too. Though there is a narrow opening through which you can get into what's left of the fort, no one ever had the curiosity to do so, for fear of a blow on the head from one of the rocks that fall from time to time.

The yachting party were strangers to the district and lacked the native's prudence. That is how they came to make their monstrous discovery.

There was a being living in the fort. A human being. *A woman.*

You'd have to see the place to realize how much those words mean. The papers are fond of sob-stuff about the hard lot of the lighthouse keepers, isolated out in the ocean. But lighthouses are liveable. At least other men come there occasionally. At Fort Bayard, the wind whirls in through a hundred holes. The rain pours down through a roof that is now nothing but a few beams.

The woman was naked. When she saw strangers, her first movement was to flee.

And now, while we were sailing to what had been her prison, she was in

a mental sanitarium in La Rochelle, surrounded by doctors.

She was eighteen. A girl.

But what a girl . . . ! Knowing nothing of human speech, casting frightened glances about her like a hunted animal, hurling herself avidly upon her food. . . .

As I said at first, we arrived only when the case was almost over. The photograph of the girl had appeared in all the papers. And already a man had come from Amsterdam who had recognized her, who had given a name to that enigmatic face: Clara Van Gindertael.

"Here! Grab the ladder!"

George held tight to the helm. We had reached the fort. The surf could shatter our boat against it. G. 7 grasped an iron rung and passed a mooring rope over it.

So this was the examination of the scene of the crime. What should one call it? A prison? But even prisons have roofs. . . .

Four ancient walls. Loose rocks. Seaweed. Rubble and rubbish of all kinds. I could imagine the girl crouching in some corner. . . .

I tried to imagine the man who must have brought her food regularly. Mechanically I turned to George, who seemed calmly detached from all that lay around us.

When the yachting party had found Clara Van Gindertael, there had been a stock of provisions for her not more than a month old. Public rumor accused the fisherman. People remembered that he was the only man who ever dared the dangers of this region and dragged his net near the fort.

I examined his features. I asked myself if it were possible that this man, whom I'd just seen at home with his children, could have been coming here for thirteen years, bringing monthly provisions for a human being.

Thirteen years! Clara was five then. Much the same age as George's children. . . . It was horrible. I felt unhappy. I was impatient to get away from this accursed fort.

The magistrates had already questioned the fisherman.

His answers had cast no light on the problem: "I don't know anything. I never saw the woman you're talking about. I used to fish around the fort, but I never set foot inside. . . ."

He ended his deposition with a question which embarrassed his examiners: "Where am I supposed to have picked up this little girl?"

The fact is that she was kidnaped in Paris, where George had never been. G. 7 had showed me an old newspaper clipping:

A mysterious abduction took

place yesterday in a hotel in the Avenue Friedland.

For some days a Dutchman, M. Pieter Claessens, had been occupying a suite on the first floor of this hotel, which he shared with his five-year-old niece, Clara Van Gindertael, the child-heiress, whose guardian he is, since she is an orphan.

His personal valet looked after the child.

Yesterday then, while M. Claessens was out, this servant went down to the kitchens where he remained about an hour, leaving the child alone in the suite. When he returned, she had disappeared.

The description of the little girl is as follows: rather large for her age, slender, fair hair, blue eyes, wearing a white silk dress, white socks, and black patent leather shoes.

The police have begun an investigation.

Pieter Claessens had arrived at La Rochelle three days after the discovery of the girl who was still known only, in the phrase of the press, as "the Fort Bayard Unknown." He read in the papers the account of the yachtsmen's find. There was a photograph of the girl. And there was the statement that she had on her left wrist the scar of an old burn.

This was what clinched the identification for her guardian. He said that she had received the burn when she was only four, from the explosion of an alcohol heater.

That was as far as the affair had gone. You can imagine the many questions that arose:

Who had kidnaped Clara Van Gindertael thirteen years ago?

Why had she been taken to Fort Bayard?

Who had regularly brought her provisions?

What interests were at work behind this maddening drama?

The one most concerned, the victim herself, could not speak a word. According to the doctors, it would take many years to make a normal human being of her. Some specialists doubted that it could ever be done.

Reporters argued furiously over Fort Bayard. Photographs of the spot had appeared in all the dailies. The most unlikely hypotheses had been seriously considered.

It was a wonder that George was still at liberty. I knew myself that this was at the express order of G. 7, who had telegraphed from Paris to La Rochelle as soon as he got wind of the affair.

What was his own opinion? And why had our first step been to visit the fort, though it had seemed more logical to me to start off by seeing

the victim herself, especially since we had had to come through La Rochelle?

I had no idea.

G. 7 was as calm as the fisherman.

The two men were not without certain points of resemblance. One was as niggardly with words as the other. They both had the same clear eyes, the same imposing figure.

Was their silence with each other a sort of challenge?

I was ill at ease. I wandered clumsily around the square enclosure, my feet slipping on the seaweed. The empty food containers had a more sinister significance here than elsewhere.

There was a mountain of them.

It was beginning to get dark all around us, though it was only three o'clock. We heard the prow of the boat striking against the wall with every wave.

As for G. 7, he paced up and down with long slow strides, his head lowered.

"You've been married how long?" he asked suddenly, turning toward George.

The fisherman started, then answered promptly: "Eighteen years."

"You . . . you love your wife?"

I saw his Adam's apple quiver. It was some moments before he spoke. At last I heard a dull murmur: ". . . and the kids . . ."

"Let's go!" G. 7 concluded unexpectedly. He turned toward the only break in the walls through which we could get back to the cutter. He took my arm. And he whispered, while George hoisted the sails, "The affair has only begun!"

I heard the rest of his speech in snatches. There was a storm coming up. I kept my eyes riveted on George, who sat motionless in the stern, wrapped up in his oilskin, the helm between his legs, his attention fixed on the swelling of the sail.

"The guilty man," G. 7 said, "betrayed himself, you see. Reread that clipping I gave you. Reread the description of the child. The point at that time was to give the most complete description possible, wasn't it? A description that would help find her? It lists the details of shoes, even socks. And it doesn't say a word about the burn on the wrist. Why? *Because that burn didn't as yet exist!* Thanks to that, I knew the truth even before we came here. . . .

"Or listen: Pieter Claessens has no fortune of his own. But he's the uncle and guardian of Clara, who is very rich in her own right. At the same time he is the child's heir. . . .

"Is he afraid to commit, strictly speaking, a crime? . . . Does he fear that he'll be accused. . . . I don't know. . . . At any rate he shuts up Clara, or has her shut up,

in Fort Bayard and there abandons her to her fate. . . . She is sure to die there. . . .

"After the delays of legal formalities, he inherits. He returns to his own country. He doesn't think of the child again. . . .

"Then why, suddenly, after thirteen years, does he feel this intense need of knowing what's become of her, of making sure that she's really dead? I'll bet anything you please that he had his eye on an inheritance which only the girl herself could receive. . . .

"Claessens tells himself that she may be alive, that people may have picked her up. . . . He comes back secretly to see. . . . At Fort Bayard, he finds her. . . .

"But still he has to find her *officially.* There still has to be his official *identification.* Merely a resemblance, after so many years, wouldn't do for the courts. . . . Some identifying mark is better. . . . a scar, for example. . . . He has only to burn the girl's wrist. . . .

"Claessens returns to Holland and waits long enough for the scar to seem reasonably old. The girl's exposed life would help there. His accomplices play out the comedy of the yacht and the discovery. The papers announce the find. He rushes to the spot — too fast, in fact. Beforehand he spreads the story of the scar. . . .

"There was the slip! I repeat, if that scar had existed at the time of the kidnaping, it *must* have appeared in the description. . . .

"Do you understand now that the affair has only begun? That man thinks himself safe, free from all suspicion. . . . Another man has been accused."

"George?" I asked.

G. 7 glanced at the fisherman and lowered his voice. "And George won't talk. . . . Why? . . . He found the child, long ago, by pure chance. . . . He hid his discovery for motives that I can't explain to myself too clearly. . . . These simple people can sometimes have horribly complicated souls. Was he afraid that they'd think his story was a myth? That his wife might suspect him of palming off as a foundling a child of his own? Again, I don't know. . . . He fed the child. Little by little she became a woman. . . . Now do you begin to see? It is monstrous, I know. They say that Clara, despite her strange life, is beautiful. . . ."

Up till then I had never stopped looking at George. Now I turned abruptly to the sea. It was a relief to lose myself in the tumult of the raging elements.

You'll wonder why we accepted this new story, never before published anywhere. It's not a detective story. It has no mystery. It isn't even a crime story. Yet, somehow, it seems to fit into our editorial scheme of things.

"The Killer" is the story of a criminal — coming home. Just that — coming home. But there's the enormous pain of it — the aching remembrance of things past — the ancient conflict of good and evil — the same good that men of good will are now fighting for, and dying for. . . .

Here is a beautifully written story — sensitive and sincere — the stuff of crime and punishment and — poetry.

THE KILLER

by CYRIL PLUNKETT

He rapped on the kitchen door, and waiting there he could see the barn, its bulk palely shaped against the starlight. He could see the orchard, and he remembered other days in spring, green fields, and the smell of lilacs, and he'd told all this to Dot. "*It's a funny little farm,*" he'd said to Dot. "*Fences painted white, and crooked — and sometimes crooked furrows in the fields because I liked to see them different —*"

He shivered, thinking now of Dot, and he didn't want to think of Dot, or of the past, but his mind was bubbling like a spring and filled with memories. Of the ground that swelled to form a hill beyond the barn. Of his wonder, as a child, about that hill and what was on the other side. What was it Mom had said? "Joe Lacey, don't you dare run away again!"

Yeah, Mom in tears that time, and frightened. Mom with brown hair waving, and in those days singing in the kitchen, baking pies and cakes and cookies, hands all white with dough, and telling him of God and angels.

He remembered. . . . The tree, in the center of the cornfield. Very high the tree was, and reaching to the sky — and he'd stared at it hours, daily, one whole summer. The thought had come to him that he should like to touch the sky. Examine it. Feel it in his hands. Determine if a cloud was lace or foam, and soft and tender. So he'd climbed the tree, dizzy half way up but fighting fear and pressing on until the branches bent beneath the weight of him.

She'd screamed, Mom had, that day. She'd pleaded with him. And

his father, long since dead, had whipped him; and he'd sat outside a long while after, wondering *where* the sky was, really, and *how* one went about to get there. Always wanting what was beyond reach. Diving in the river, clutching muck and rocks to learn what held the river up. Hopping trains, not for the thrill; not to get somewhere quickly, but to taste the wind. Dancing all night — when he was nineteen, twenty; very wise, dark, with curly hair, and very thin then — dancing less for pleasure than to *feel* the music —

The kitchen wakened suddenly with light, and footsteps that were coming toward the door. He wore a grin, thinking to say, "Hi, Mom!" Thinking to reach out and hold her by the arms and look at her. The door was open, and she wore a faded robe, frail in it, and old. She stared at him, backing up a little at his entrance — until her hands, behind her, touched the kitchen table.

"Joe — !" she said.

She was very white, and trembling, and now he saw the thinness of her. He was surprised and shocked to see this change. Words still bubbled on his lips: "I brought you home a present. For you and Danny. This is Jitters, Mom. I brought you home a dog." But these words he'd planned to say remained locked there on his tongue, and he felt embarrassed and ashamed and aware of the years between them; and then he looked around the kitchen, he looked at Jitters, but he could only say, "How's Danny?"

"Sleeping," she said. "He's upstairs."

"Big now?"

"As tall — as tall as you are, Joe."

"You aren't crying, Mom?"

"I — I can't help it."

He tried to bridge the gap of five long years; he tried to break down all those years by laughing. Surer now, and thinking: *She's surprised. She'll be all right. Hell, she's glad to see me.*

"Joe — my boy —" she said, and then she turned away and left the kitchen hurriedly. He heard her going up the stairs, and she was sobbing and calling, "Danny! Danny! Joe's come home."

Home. . . . He lit a cigaret. He crossed the kitchen, to stand before the window. Dawn was breaking just atop the hill, and he had a queer feeling, looking at the hill. Lord, he *knew* what was on the other side. A lousy field, a woods — nothing more than that, and still . . . and still . . . *You're a sucker, Joe,* he thought, and he thought of Sam, the darky who had cleaned the cellblock in the clink back in Oklahoma. The darky who had always rolled his eyes, and

shied away from Joe's cell just a little.

"Who's your friend, Sam?" Joe said, one morning.

Sam said, "I dunno, boss. He's a dawg, I guess. Leastwise he looks kinda like a dawg now, don' he?"

"Yours?"

"Please, suh?"

"Your dog?"

"No, *suh!*"

"He's been following you around."

"He jist ain't got no jedgment," Sam said.

The terrier made a wary step or two toward Joe's cell, sniffing. "You little bum," Joe said. "What do you want to hang around a place like this for? Hey, Sam, let him in."

"No, *suh!*"

"A buck says you do."

"Fustest?"

"Sure." Joe shoved the dollar from the cell.

"I dunno." Sam looked at the bill and at his keys. Sam scratched his head then. "Ain't no rule nohow about dawgs —"

The trouble was, he hadn't locked the pup in the cell with Sam. He'd let the pup tag after him, feeling soft, feeling like a guy disposed to treat, with freedom like money in his pockets. He had the jitters; the pup, ever at his heels, gave him the jitters. Okay, he should have kicked the pup. "Scram," he should have said — but could you do that to a friendly little cuss that licked your fingers?

You're a sucker, Joe, he thought. And now he heard Danny, upstairs, saying sleepily, "Mom, you're kidding me. Mom, it is Joe, really?" Danny's feet hit the bedroom floor. "Joe!" he called. "Hi Joe, old boy, old pal! Hey, I'll be down as quick as I can get my pants on!"

He ran down the stairs a minute later, Danny did. He was wide awake, his hair uncombed and curly black, and his eyes were quite black, like Joe's; and bright, like Joe's; and he was twenty now, Danny was, and Joe thought queerly: *why, he looks like me.*

"This is swell!" Danny said.

Joe grinned and said, "Hi, kid."

"Mom's going to dress, and then she'll fix breakfast."

"Eggs and bacon?"

Jitters barked from the kitchen doorway, and Danny said, "Well, I'll be darned. Hello, pup."

It was strange to see yourself, like this, in another person. To feel you were another person, to cut the years away. It worried Joe Lacey, and he watched, frowning just a little, while Danny fooled with Jitters. He remembered Danny, quiet as a kid — but five to ten, ten to fifteen, the years in childhood separating them, had always made a difference.

Perspective, Joe thought; he'd had to go away to get perspective.

"The place look the same to you, Joe?" Danny said.

Joe looked around the room. "Telephone."

"I put it in for Mom. She's alone all day."

A nice kid, Danny. Clean.

"The biggest thing since Hitler," Danny said.

"Who, me?"

"Sure. You're famous, Joe. You're number one."

Joe grinned. "That's what I've been reading."

"I clipped the stuff. Trouble was, you never stayed long enough in one place —" Danny laughed. "I thought I was going in the Army — my number's coming up — but golly, Joe, the Army's tame! It's going to be great tying up with you."

"Wait a minute," Joe said, and frowned. "You mean the going's tough around here? There's a chip on your shoulder, kid? People say, 'He's Joe Lacey's brother —' is that it?"

"If they don't, I tell 'em!"

"Kidding me?"

"Not a bit."

Joe shook his head. "It's a funny world. Look, Danny, about me, the Army — ever want to climb a tree?"

Danny laughed again.

"I'm serious, kid. Way up, the top I mean. Where you know the branches won't hold you."

"Why would I do a crazy thing like that?"

"I see," Joe said. He gnawed his under lip. "Money?"

"You don't get the idea, Joe. My God, you're *big*."

"Got a girl friend?" Joe said abruptly.

Danny blushed. "Remember the Osborn family, on the highway, just outside of town?"

"How does *she* feel about you?" Joe said. "About me?"

"Well," Danny said, "she's swell."

"So she believes in you? Look, kid, what's she like?"

"Blonde and slender —"

"Blonde?" Joe said.

"Yeah. Dot was just a kid when you —"

"Dot?" Joe said. Queerly.

The five and dime, it was. In Des Moines, or maybe it was Davenport. She'd been at the music counter, at the piano, playing something sweet he didn't know the name of, something very simple.

"Hello," he said.

She said, "May I help you?"

She had a voice like music. Low, an oboe playing. He looked at her. She was blonde and very pretty. Her eyes were blue and fine and smiling.

"Would you play that song again?"

He bought the song, and then he said, "I suppose you get tired, banging piano keys all day."

"No. I love it, really."

"Do you? Music?"

She was shy, a little wistful. "It's a world apart for me."

"Now that's a funny thing to say," he said. "I've never been able to put it into words like that. Know what that song makes me think of?"

"The country?"

"That's right! A hill, in the country. Look, my name's Joe — Joe Smith. I'm a stranger here in town. Would music sort of introduce us?"

Dot her name was. Dorothy. They went across the street that evening, after work, and to a restaurant. They had thick broiled steaks, and over coffee and cigarets, he told her about the farm, back home, and she was different from the other girls that he had known. She listened. Liking what he said, and liking him, he hoped, and then he noticed the way she wore her hair, brushed straight, the ends curled up at her shoulders.

"Would you mind if I came to the store tomorrow?"

"Would minding make any difference?"

"No," he said, "it wouldn't."

One evening he bought tickets for a concert, and listening to the music he held her hand, fearful and excited. *I've got to say goodbye*, he thought. *I've nothing for this girl but shame and sadness. Damn you, Joe*, he thought. *Damn everything.* And the next night she came to him. She stood just inside his door, leaning back against it.

"Two men," she said. "Just a while ago, at the counter." She fought for breath, and then she whispered. "Joe, you should have told me."

He lit a cigaret, hating them, the dicks, and damning them from a corner of his mind, and frightened with the rest of it.

"Dot — what was it that they said?"

"Did I —" She couldn't seem to get the words out. "Did I know Joe Lacey? I said no, I didn't. But they had a photograph." And she was close to him suddenly, in his arms, and clinging to him. "I lied, Joe. I said I didn't know you."

He was very calm. His hands were cold, but he was very calm. "Were you followed here?"

"I — I don't think so."

"Cautious?"

"I tried to be, Joe."

"Okay." He ground out his cigaret. He got his coat. He strapped on his shoulder holster. He let her see the gun.

"There's something wrong, Joe. Wrong," she said. "You're not cruel or bitter. You're not wicked.

"I love you, Joe," she said. "I haven't any shame, and no regrets. Joe, I — I read a book, just the other day. How a man and woman went to Canada. How they lived there, a thousand miles from nowhere, hewing out their destiny."

He kissed her. Her eyes were closed. Her lips were crushed against his lips, and he could feel her heartbeat and the tumult in her.

"Look, Dot —" His voice was new to him, and husky. "Three blocks down the street. You know, Dot, the drugstore. Fifteen minutes, darling."

Fifteen minutes. . . . He went down the stairs and out the back way, to his car. He turned into the street, but not toward the drugstore. He drove all that night. . . .

"Tired? Sleepy, Joe?" Mom said. Eggs and bacon. Toast and coffee. Breakfast.

"You can't stay here," Mom said. "I want you home, Joe, but it's too late. You can't stay here.

"Joe —" The tears were in her eyes again. "Where will it end?"

"Aw, cut it, Mom," said Danny. "I tell her all the time, Joe, not to worry. I get sore. You take the punks now, asking for it. Nuts to them! You're different. Mom, can't you *see* Joe's different?

"Take that time in Kansas," Danny said. "Joe, take that time you doubled back and made monkeys of the cops."

"Skip it, kid," Joe said.

The sun was up. The sun was warm upon the kitchen window, and presently he stood by the window as Mom was going up the stairs; he watched Danny from the window, and *he'd* gone out like that, mornings, with the milk pails. *I'm looking at myself*, he thought, *five years back.* He wondered then if Danny's Dot liked music, if she could play. He clenched his hands, and he thought of Mom then.

She'd had ambitions and ideals. "Yes, I've two fine boys," she'd said once, very likely. Proud of them, and dreaming of the day when they'd be grown and married, with children of their own, and a position quite secure in the community. After all, it wasn't much to ask for, was it? Not to worry?

He lit a cigaret, and the house suddenly was very still. Not even Jitters with him in the house; the dog had followed Danny. And then he heard Jitters barking, and Danny's laughter, and it wasn't Danny's voice but what was *in* Danny's laughter that excited him. *Danny, ever want to climb a tree?*

You're a sucker, Joe, he thought, but he raised the telephone.

"Did you call to me, Joe?" Mom said, from upstairs.

"No, I didn't."

"I'll have your bed made in a minute."

"Thanks, Mom. That's fine."

The road, the highway, was visible from the front window. He stood watching the road; the town beyond; smoke; a factory stack. He wondered how he would have looked in a uniform — and how Danny would look. Soon he could see two cars racing on the highway.

"Your bed's made for you, Joe."

"Okay, Mom. I'll be right up."

He walked back to the kitchen, and he could see Danny now, coming from the barn. Danny with the milk pails, strong and sure, and free to move about. Free to make Mom happy. Danny stood still abruptly. "*Joe* — !" Danny cried. Jitters barked, and from inside the house, from upstairs, Mom suddenly was screaming.

He slammed the kitchen door behind him. It was beautiful to run. He could taste the wind, and it was clean and fresh. He was running toward the barn, then up the hill, and the cars were in the lane — he could hear them. Then there was a new sound, as though again the kitchen door had slammed; not once, but two or three times.

The guns, he thought, *the guns!* And suddenly he sprawled. He sprawled just atop the hill, with thunder in his mind, and music, and Mom and Dot and Danny in his mind. He'd always wondered about this hill, and what was on the other side. Now he knew.

The League of Forgotten Women

NUMBER 1

Sophie Lang

Your Editor's newest anthology, published a short time ago, is called THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES: The Great Women Detectives and Criminals. *Naturally it contains a Sophie Lang story — "The Jorgensen Plates."*

We quote from our own editorial comment in THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES: *"The notorious Sophie Lang has long been a favorite of ours — as long as Mr. Anderson has been one of our favorite authors. We like the spider-slow, spider-patient way he weaves his intricate webs; we like his cunning irrelevancies, his wealth of detail; we like the strange manner in which all his characters flit in and out of most of his stories, making his apparently heterogeneous tales warp and woof of one giant tapestry; and most of all we like his subtle indirection of style. . . ."*

These remarks, so far as your Editor is concerned, apply equally to "The Signed Masterpiece," which inaugurates our League of Forgotten Women. In addition to the "legendary" Sophie, you'll meet two old friends — Deputy Parr, the manhunter, and Oliver Armiston, the "extinct" author. But if you know your lady larcenists, you'll put your chips on the one and only Sophie!

THE SIGNED MASTERPIECE

by FREDERICK IRVING ANDERSON

No. 142, on the south side of the street, was a high-stoop, English-basement dwelling, a survival of that commodious Van Bibber era of only yesterday, when Manhattan was still a native island, and its inhabitants retained elbow-room and a sense of substantial living. Most of the town, in these parts, had taken the gentle hint and moved north. But No. 142 and a few other stalwarts with shiny plate-glass windows, scoured door-steps and pull-bells, still held their ground, with supercilious apartment houses and gilt hotels jostling them on both sides and in the rear.

No. 142 was occupied by the widow of Amos P. Huntington. The departed, a drab, inoffensive little person, had only once achieved newspaper notoriety, when he accidentally blew himself into Eternity while compounding synthetic rubber. The relict was a little Dresden china affair; as evidence of her qual-

ity, she drove a smart plum-colored brougham, drawn by a smarter pair of roached hacks of a water too luxurious for this day and age; and on the box, when she was a-wheel, sat a coachman and footman in plum-color, two stern, middle-aged males, close-shaven and showing that curious prison pallor acquired by upper-class servants who spend most of their days in the semi-obscurity of old-fashioned entresols, and below-stairs.

This former fashionable segment of the town had begun its migration from a side-street just below the Park some years before. One by one the brown-stone residences on the north side, the sunny side, which faced No. 142 and its few brave companions, had been converted into red-brick stables with sharp roofs, cottage windows, and wide doorways. For a brief period the *ancien régime* had been forced to inhale ammonia and horse-liniment, and to witness the capers and antics of the highsteppers of the superior class of equines, led off every afternoon by their cockney grooms to the Park paths to rack and amble for the benefit of digestions of overfed masters and mistresses.

Then the superior horses disappeared, and in their stead came superior artists, who raised north lights over the old haylofts, filled the air with the odors of turpentine and wet clay, and for the most part, dined unromantically in the pastry-shop around the corner. Then the city like a rank forest encroaching on a forsaken meadow wiped the artists and their studios out of the picture, and set up in their places unsightly garages, and machine-shops for sick motors. The sunny side of the street became slippery with grease from leaky oil-pans, the air thick with the odor of gas and rubber. At the curb, at all hours of the day and far into the night, diseased insides of broken-down automobiles strewed the sidewalks, while begrimed mechanics tinkered and tested. Through all these vicissitudes the old guard hung on grimly; No. 142 and its companions, by protest, seeming to grow more immaculate. Mrs. Huntington, in addition to these aggressions on her domestic peace, had suffered the further indignity of being dragged from her sheltered grief into open court by the insurance guarantors of her husband, who maintained that any one so temerarious as to tamper with synthetic rubber could have but one motive — suicide. Twice the little widow had won the sympathy of the jury who, in two suits, had awarded her the full amount of the claim, a quarter of a million dollars.

Directly across the street, in No. 143, was a machine shop which in

grime, odor and noisy clamor differed in no respect from its neighbors. An observant person might have noted, with some stirring of curiosity, that all of its mechanics were young, stood six feet, and weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds. Unknown and unsuspected, No. 143 was of the police; it was one of that series of carefully masked dead-falls which that arch man-hunter, Deputy Parr of Center Street, had planted in unexpected corners throughout the city. Crime is sporadic, nevertheless it is also regional and vocational. Here, through his minions, he eavesdropped on the night-birds indigenous to Automobile Alley; in Broad Street he maintained a bucket-shop, manned with mammoth messenger boys and clerks; in Maiden Lane a platinum refinery, whose wrinkled old alchemist could tell him at a moment's notice the chemical signature of any batch of platinum in existence; in Fourth Avenue he had a two-by-four office among the brokers of raw silk, a commodity that attracts thieves as honey draws flies; and in Central Park West he conducted, under an able lieutenant, a spook parlor for table-tilting and slate-writing, where occasionally a wire got through from the "other shore." Many a poor wight languishing behind bars wonders, but will never know, how he came so summarily to his doom. It was simple enough, merely getting acquainted, being neighborly.

At ten of an early winter morning, a car of some consequence came to a jerky, sputtering stop, sighed and died, at the curb in front of No. 143. The driver, a man of six feet, weighing, say 185 pounds, got down, opened the hood, and stood regarding his ailing motor with the forlorn look of a medico whose patient has gone beyond his skill. A red-headed mechanic, six feet of height, 185 pounds of weight, came out, evinced sympathetic interest, put his head under the hood.

"The Chief," said the driver, bending down and speaking in the mechanic's ear, "wants a report on Number 142."

The mechanic reconnected a high-tension wire with a spark plug, thus restoring the consequential power to its full faculties, if an emergency arose. He tore a blue ticket in two, along a line of perforation, handed one half to the chauffeur with the remark, "No tickee — no washee," and tied the other half by a stout cord to the windshield of the automobile. The chauffeur strolled away to a back-room haunt of chauffeurs and mechanics, to while away a few hours getting acquainted. The mechanic resumed tinkering, meantime

studying out of the tail of his eye that respectable domicile opposite, No. 142, vaguely speculating on what turn of the weather-cock in Center Street had brought the Dresden china widow under the surveillance of the police.

An hour later Mrs. Amos Huntington descended the steps and entered her brougham. She had small feet encased in trim high boots, which she displayed by a modishly short skirt; her complexion was very white, her eyes blue, and her hair of that peculiar shade of mahogany which can be retained only by unremitting attention; she was in full mourning, of a rich correctness that suggested one of those fashionable specialty shops in the next block just off the avenue, that devote themselves exclusively to the millinery of grief. Her footman wrapped her in moleskin and mounted the box; her mincing pair moved off in perfect step, as if in time to the tinkle of some antique gavotte. At this moment the red-headed mechanic, scratching his auburn thatch with a grimy set of fingers, seemed to come to the decision that a trial run was necessary. He started his hypochondriac motor, and rolled along in the wake of the plum-colored brougham, bending a sympathetic ear as if to catch some symptomatic murmur from the engine.

At Columbus Circle, that eternal whirligig of traffic, the traffic signal fell against the plum-colored brougham and the horses came to a stop, snorting motors on all sides instantly piling up with the fecundity of a log-jam. The attention of a man in a brown derby on the sidewalk was arrested by the flapping blue ticket on the windshield of the motor directly behind the brougham. He halted at the curb, and casually catching the eye of the red-headed mechanic, he took off his brown derby — though it was freezing weather — and mopped his forehead. The red-headed mechanic answered by blowing his nose in a red bandanna, and turning, stared abstractedly at the plum-colored brougham. The traffic sluices opened, the jam started to move. But the red-headed mechanic had lost interest in the plum-colored brougham. He turned east, and in ten minutes was back to No. 143.

"Does any one follow, William?" asked the Dresden china widow in her telephone.

"No, ma'am," responded William, the footman, speaking out of the corner of his mouth, without moving his lips, into the receiver at his shoulder. "There was one," he added, encouragingly. "The mechanic opposite — but he turned off."

Mrs. Huntington did not permit herself to be lulled by a sense of security. For twelve years she had been most circumspect. During those twelve years she had never driven out without inquiring, sooner or later, "Does any one follow, William?" There had been occasions which seemed to the capable William to hold forth a promise. But these promises were never fulfilled: always the particular person or vehicle that had attracted the suspicious scrutiny of William lost itself in the ceaseless shuffle of the city street, much as the red-headed mechanic, who had momentarily aroused William's interest, was now lost.

That afternoon two studious young men, bearing heavy instruments, called at No. 142 to test the electric meter. This task having to do with slide-rules and logarithmic calculations, shiny instruments were spread out on the basement stairway with the interested servants watching and now and then obligingly handing the two scientists, by request, tools whose nickel-plated surfaces had been especially prepared for finger-prints. The next day telephone linemen asked for and received permission to pass through the house to the roof to untangle wires. An inspector for the water department, a most entertaining fellow, inspected taps for leaks. A dispute having arisen in some obscure quarter as to encroachment on the building line, a young man must enter and open every window from the inside to measure the protruding sills with a rule. Once, when he was leaning far out of a drawing-room window, he asked politely over his shoulder would Mrs. Huntington please pass him his magnifying glass, which the little widow did graciously, picking it up quite unconsciously in the hand in which she held her lace handkerchief. In departing he offered her his fountain pen to sign his call-slip, but, not seeing the gesture, she used her own pen instead. There were other callers at the basement door, all civil, and outwardly at least, simple. By the end of the week a complete dossier of No. 142 was in the hands of Mr. Parr. It had to do with the mistress and her *ménage*, down to microscopic details. If she had nursed a fancied sense of sanctified privacy, she would have been horror-stricken to know how simple it had been for Parr's camera-eyed sleuths to turn No. 142 inside out and upside down, in the process of preparing Mr. Parr's dossier. In only one point had they failed: they carried away nothing bearing the imprint of the pink finger-tips of the pathetic widow herself, although her household had been most obliging in this respect.

Later, when the magnifying glass was used in Center Street, it yielded only a hazy replica of her fine lace handkerchief.

"I know it is the fashion," said Deputy Parr, settling himself in his favorite elbow chair by Oliver Armiston's desk, "to assign us cops the rôle of solid ivory, in modern detective drama. A thick cop always makes a hit!" He shot a venomous gleam at Oliver who, running his fingers through his single gray lock, looked up from his work, but did not deign to reply. "Some bright young man," went on Mr. Parr ponderously, "might make a name for himself, by endowing one of us with a glimmer of brains." He selected a cigar for himself from the pasteboard box by Oliver's elbow. "I realize," he said, nipping off the tip with his finger-nails, "that there is a popular prejudice against it. But it could be done — it could be done."

He struck a match with a single magic twist in the air, applied the light, and drew a few meditative puffs, eyeing Oliver through half-closed lids.

Armiston, the extinct author, was merely another phase of Deputy Parr's amazing versatility. For the most part Parr practised logic, not intuition. Through long experience of the habits and resorts of the creatures he hunted, he set his traps in what he knew to be good game country. Then he retired to wait for some prowling creature to spring them. But occasionally his traps yawned empty; not so much as the snap of a dry twig rewarded his longest vigil along well-known runways. Then, like his prototype, the savage hunter, he would withdraw stealthily to consult his Medicine. Armiston occupied this position. Armiston had been a weaver of tall tales, thrillers. On one occasion he had been too realistic: a cunning thief had actually copied Oliver's fiction into fact, with murder as its outcome. The ensuing sensation had driven the hectic author into retirement. Here the argus-eyed deputy found him. If fiction could be done into fact, then why not fact into fiction? So reasoned the very practical deputy of police.

His method was simple. An insoluble mystery or a hesitating dénouement aroused the dormant faculties of the extinct author as the clang of a gong revives a pensioned firehorse. Parr would dress the stage for Oliver, with characters and scenery, ring up the curtain on a frozen plot — and in his most ingratiating manner invite Armiston to "go to it." The results had, occasionally, been startling. They always, to the

matter-of-fact policeman, bordered on the mystic. Oliver's imagination, once aroused, had an uncanny fecundity.

Now the deputy, with a sigh of too much girth, picked up his left foot, encased in a Number 12 boot, and deposited it on his right knee; he tapped the sole significantly — it was a new sole, a very slab of a sole, spiked into place, designed for wear, not stealth.

"It cost me two seventy-five," he said lugubriously. "It used to cost fifty cents. Even the price of detecting crime has gone up. Sole leather!" he exclaimed with some vehemence. "That's what achieves results in my business. Whenever I take on a new man, I look at his feet, not his head."

He paused. Oliver, by continued silence, seemed to reserve judgment.

"As a matter of fact," said Parr, confidentially, "we don't detect crime. Crime detects itself."

"It's too bad the perpetrators aren't so obliging," put in Oliver.

"But, my dear fellow, they are — that's just the point," said Parr, expansively.

"They detect themselves, Parr?"

"Oh, absolutely. Inevitably. That is — eventually. The element of time enters, of course. We simply wait," explained the policeman blandly. "Sooner or later every crook comes home to roost. I have a man sitting on the door-step waiting for him." Parr smiled childishly.

"You must admit it requires some intelligence on your part to pick the right door-step," said Armiston.

"Not at all!" retorted Parr. "That's the least of our worries. They give us the address." He chuckled. Armiston returned to his ciphering. He had the hurt air of a credulous child who had been imposed on.

"Every dog has its flea," said Parr, nodding solemnly to the fat Buddha in the corner of the study. "Every crook has his squealer. I have never known it to fail, Oliver," he said, turning to Armiston; "if I ever caught up with the squeals that fall on my desk every morning I would close shop and call it a day." He added gruffly: "I haven't had a day off in twenty years."

"How about the lone-wolf — the crook without a pal?"

Parr sniffed contemptuously.

"He brags," he said tartly. "Squeals on himself. On himself or the other fellow — it's all the same, in the long run. Failures? We have no failures. Unfinished business, yes. Sooner or later somebody blabs — blabs to me! That's what I'm here for!" He jabbed his chest fiercely. "Let me illustrate," he went on gravely. "Did you ever hear of

Sophie Lang? I suspect not. She was before your time."

Armiston shook his head; the name meant nothing to him. But it had a tang, either in its accidental combination of letters, or in the way Parr pronounced it that suggested inherent possibilities. The man-hunter became mellow in reminiscent mood.

"In the old days," he said, "we used to assign our bright young men to the Sophie Lang case. It was like sending a machinist's apprentice for a left-handed monkey wrench, or a quart of auger holes. There wa'n't no such animal." He laughed.

"Oh, ah! A legendary crook! I say, that's beautiful!" exclaimed Oliver, cracking his knuckles.

"Legendary is right," assented the deputy. "None of us ever saw her. We knew her only by her works. When we came a cropper, we'd say 'that's Sophie.' When something slick was turned, we'd say 'that's Sophie.' We used to say that Sophie signed her serious work, like any other artist. Well, finally," said Parr, thrusting his hands into his pockets and stretching, "we filed Sophie away as unfinished business'."

He fixed his fierce little eyes on Armiston, and waited. Armiston, too, waited.

"Sophie's turned up," said Parr softly.

"In bracelets!" ejaculated Armiston.

"Not yet — but soon."

"A squeal?"

"Certainly. What else? Haven't I been telling you?"

"But who — who squealed?"

Parr assumed a hurt look.

" 'Who'?" he repeated. "How the devil do I know? What the devil do I care? An anonymous letter." He grunted. "They drop on my desk like the gentle dew from heaven. If they stopped coming, I'd be out of a job. As it is," he added, with a queer smile, "I am assigning myself, in my old age, to the Sophie Lang case. Do you get the humor of that, Oliver? But this time she ain't no impossible animal. Sophie —" he paused for effect. "Sophie is Mrs. Huntington."

"The widow — the insurance widow?"

Parr nodded, his eyes gleaming.

Armiston eased himself back in his chair and said disgustedly:

"You don't believe that, Parr."

"I am certain of it."

"I've been meeting her around for years. She's — she's eminently respectable," protested Oliver.

"Sophie would be," agreed Parr.

Armiston found Parr's complacency irritating.

"Is there anything to suggest Sophie?" he demanded.

"There's that quarter of a million dollars," chuckled Parr.

"Forget your feet, Parr," said Oliver sarcastically. Then, with sudden inspiration: "Has she signed it? You say she does — or did."

"There isn't a flaw in her case," said Parr. "That's her usual signature. Limpid. She's beaten the insurance people twice, your sheltered little widow. They put the burden of proof on her. It wasn't any burden — for Sophie." He guffawed. "She hasn't got the boodle yet — they are marking time for another appeal. They'll only get themselves disliked, for picking on a poor helpless female. Helpless female is good!" And Parr fairly shook with mirth.

"Have you looked her up?" demanded Armiston.

"Naturally. Everybody has looked her up. Clean slate. Too clean! That's Sophie. Sophie doesn't react to the ordinary methods," the deputy said. "That's why I've come to you. I thought maybe you'd like to undertake a little psychic research."

Lowering his tones instinctively with a cautious look around for eavesdroppers, the deputy explained that he conducted a spook establishment under an assumed name in Central Park West merely for the purpose of occasionally availing himself of the spook service. He revealed to Oliver that the nefarious crew that deal in things relating to the "other shore" maintain a nation-wide clearing-house for their clientele which, for the trade, will dig up the unsavory past of any poor unfortunate on the face of the earth. But they gave Mrs. Huntington a perfect Sunday-school card.

In addition to this he himself had been prying into the seams of the sanctified privacy of No. 142 for the last week — with no results. Except for the one negative fact that the pathetic widow had avoided leaving the imprints of her pink finger-tips on his carefully prepared recording instruments, the record was blank. Parr volunteered the further information that he had just entered a new line of business — window-cleaning. One of his best operatives was weekly polishing No. 142. Then there was the red-headed mechanic and his satellites — and (unknown to the latter) two casual loafers haunting the block. Sophie's time was pretty well accounted for.

"What's her line, Parr?" asked Armiston when Parr finished.

"Anything. Sophie isn't squeamish," said Parr. He added with a vacant stare: "I've got a paperweight in my museum collection, with some human hair on it — and some finger marks. I've always though I'd like to see Sophie's fingerprints." He arose, and began buttoning his coat, looking down on Armis-

ton smiling. "There are a certain number of obvious things I might point out to you," he said. "But I won't. They might obstruct the psychic machinery." He had his little laugh.

There was a full silence. The fire crackled on the hearth, the grandfather's clock at the head of the room was emphasizing the passage of time, with dull sedate thuds. Suddenly as if to recall the two men, it began to intone the hour. Toward the end of its count of noon, a little gilt magpie of a clock on the mantel woke up and joined in briskly. The deputy looked at his watch; and from his watch to Armiston whom he regarded with a pleased smile. Oliver was abstractedly brushing his white lock with contemplative fingers. Helping himself to a fresh cigar, the deputy of police guessed he would be moving.

"Does any one follow, William?"

The sheltered widow smiled almost wistfully, as she whispered the inquiry through the speaking tube.

"The mechanic from across the street, ma'am," replied William out of the corner of his mouth, without moving his lips. The faithful sentry added that the red-headed mechanic was on foot this time. "Now he passes under the red cigar sign."

"Drive slowly," commanded the bereaved woman. "Don't hurry him."

But the red-headed mechanic, who, of course, had no idea that he was the object of so much thoughtfulness on the part of his widow, straightway began to lag; he discovered an interest in window-shopping, particularly in those windows displaying tires of renovated rubber, of which there were many in this neighborhood. Shortly he found what he sought, for he entered a shop — and that was the last she saw of him for this time.

But that same afternoon, when she was about to turn into the Avenue (at that misty hour of winter twilight when the street lamps awake with sickly blinks, and gorgeous limousines, whose interiors present charming Romney groups of women and children, move hub to hub in opposing tides) she picked him up again, in her "busy-body" mirror. Mrs. Huntington's prancing pair were brought to a prancing stop at the Avenue corner, ready for their cue to join the ceremonial procession, when the red-headed mechanic (exercising another sick car) pulled up behind, his bumper grazing milady's wheel felloes. In the mirror the cut of his jib fairly screamed his origin and purpose, to the experienced eyes of the widow. Police! No doubt of it! Now abruptly the ave-

nue stream broke in two at the traffic signal, opening the sluices for the cross currents. William whirled his whip smartly, the stylish pair danced on their tender toes, and slowly wheeled into their place in the parade. The flutter of the motor sounded behind.

"Careful, William — pocket him!" cautioned the lady.

"He's gone, ma'am — gone crosstown," confessed the disconsolate William.

Now suddenly Sophie Lang became all alert. Like a wily old fox that has been idly scratching fleas, waiting for the hunt to come within mouthing distance again, Sophie now instinctively gathered her faculties, aware of a pleasing thrill. Figuratively she nosed the air, to catch the first telltale taint; figuratively she cocked an ear, for the distant song of the pack. It had been a long wait, this last one, for the bay of the hounds, years of ennuied respectability, shared with a colorless husband. Husbands, merely as such, had never appealed to Sophie.

"Did you see him pass the 'office,' William?"

But William had not.

Undoubtedly the "office" (she had unconsciously dropped back into the argot of her craft) had been passed. It was not coincidence that her red-headed mechanic had found an errand to take him in her direction whenever she drove out these last few days; nor had it been coincidence that he lost interest in her before they had gone half a mile through the teeming streets. They were hunting her in relays!

Sophie preened herself. This was almost subtlety on the part of the police. It was her due; her dignity demanded it. She laughed softly, almost the first genuine revelation of amusement she had indulged in since her widowhood. Instantly she closed her pretty lips over her pretty teeth again. Out of the corners of her long eyes she examined her neighbors in the procession. Among them she knew must be one tied to her heels like a noonday shadow. But the faces she looked into were blankly anonymous. She tried her old bag of tricks, one by one. Like the wily old fox doubling, back-tracking, side-stepping, taking to earth, to water, to fallen timber. But with no results — except certainty. When finally that afternoon she returned to her domicile, by devious ways, her red-headed mechanic was tinkering with still another sick motor at the curb in front of his shop; he did not even raise his eyes when her brougham drove up and drove away.

From that moment Mrs. Amos P. Huntington gradually faded out of

the picture. The outer semblance of that quondam widow remained — her clothes, her speech, her aspect of grief; but beneath it all was Sophie, watching with beadlike eyes. For several days she devoted her talents to catching the red-headed mechanic in the act of passing her bodily to the tender mercies of his relief. But never did she detect the actual moment. This was finesse! Maybe it was the great Parr himself! She thrilled for an instant on this note. Then she decided on a stroke boldly characteristic.

When William had tucked her in among her moleskin robes, he crossed to the red-headed man and, with that curious condescension upper servants bestow on mere artisans, informed him that his mistress would have speech with him.

"What is your name?" she asked when the red-headed man stood respectfully, cap in hand, at her carriage door.

"John Hanrahan, ma'am," he replied.

"I have had my eyes on you for some time, John, without your knowing it," said she, kindly. She had her eyes on him at that moment; and as he met them, he had the startling impression that he and she understood each other perfectly. But the impression was fugitive.

"You are to enter my service," she informed him, with the large air of conferring an inestimable favor; and without awaiting an answer she informed John that he was to go with William to bring home a new car — she was giving up her pair because the pavements were too hard on their feet. William was instructed to take John to the tailor and have him outfitted. All this with a gracious smile, while she complimented John on the way he carried himself — John's particular uprightness was the regulation product of the police gymnasium. The widow spoke in a little thread of a voice which broke, here and there, when she would close her eyes with a sigh. If the red-headed man had been a thousand devils he could not have refused so pathetic a figure. But the element of humor in the transaction was the ultimate appeal.

A few days later Parr himself, held up by one of his own regal traffic cops at a busy corner, had the grim satisfaction of seeing Sophie taking his red-headed mechanic out for an airing. The new car itself was quite as perfect, in its way, as had been her prancing pair — a town-car imported from France, where they do themselves well in such things. The motor occupied a glistening bandbox away up forward. Sophie was enclosed in a gorgeous candy-box away aft. Parr's man was exposed to the

world and the weather as the only visible living thing aboard, perched on a slender capstan of a seat rising out of the bare deck amidships. She was making a Roman holiday of him. Parr could not repress a chuckle — it was so like Sophie!

The Dresden china widow (or what remained of her for popular consumption) did not vary her surface routine by a jot. At home and abroad her shuttle-like eyes were always moving slowly back and forth under the screen of her long lashes. Before many days had passed she had isolated her red-headed mechanic's pack-brothers. One was a man with a brown derby, who always chewed a cold cigar. The other was a frayed taxi-driver with a moth-eaten beard, who had a stand just off the avenue. She never hurried them, never lost them; they were safe and sound and stupid, as her man on the box. They were merely the hounds following blindly. It was the huntsmen behind of whom she must catch a glimpse. The system of espionage was perfect, but no intellect informed it. Her sixth sense told her that her daily life was as closely hemmed in as is an expanse of ocean by a cloudless sky. The real artist of the game was yet to reveal himself. Some move must be impending.

She surreptitiously examined bolts, locks, bars, doors, window-ledges, painted surfaces, for telltale marks. In the act of crossing her boudoir she would pause softly, her senses alert and receptive as if in the very cloister of her retreat something lurked, would strike.

Her telephone she handled with the utmost delicacy — they had tapped that, of course. Whenever she used it, she would set it down softly, then instantly pick it up again, and listen for minutes on end. It was filled with voices, disembodied and inarticulate and far-off, that swirled and eddied through the ceaseless river of speech. Nothing there — it required exquisite patience. And then, under her very elbow, some one yawned incautiously three times, and said lazily, "Oh dear, oh dear!" Sophie showed herself her little white teeth in the mirror that looked down on her eavesdropping. Her nimble mind drew a picture: it would be a big bare room, with a lazy man in a blue uniform, with receivers strapped to his ears, seated at a desk; and this police ear grafted to her wire would always be attentive.

Once Sophie was rewarded by hearing a door open, in that vague room. Again she heard the tread of feet; then the murmur of cautious voices. But it was the ticking of a clock — two of them, in fact — that pleased her most of all. How

like a stupid cop, to lie in wait breathless at the mouthpiece of a microphone, with a blatant clock at his elbow! Sophie giggled.

Meantime our friend, Mr. Parr, the police deputy, who had assigned himself in his mature age to the Sophie Lang case, was gloomy and bad company. The end of the fourth week found him yawning and scowling. There was the daily harvest of squeals falling on his desk. Betrayed crooks with bracelets on came home to roost as inevitably as rain drops trickle back to the ocean. But just as all rivers flow into the sea and yet the sea is not full, so Parr was conscious of an aching void. He had the uncomfortable sensation of being laughed at.

"The damned thing is frozen — solid!" he muttered, settling himself heavily in his favorite elbow chair by Armiston's desk.

Armiston said nothing. It wasn't frozen, to him. It was merely that the element of time had entered in. This yarn had "written itself," as he would say professionally. He had merely brushed the tips of his clairvoyant fingers, invoked the oracular keys of his faithful typewriter, and the congealed action which Parr had laid at the feet of his Medicine had straightway come to life, started to move. It had developed the impetus of the inevitable. He had written *Finis*, and locked his typewriter, and packed for Lakewood. Then he waited for his friend Parr to call on him.

Leaning back in his chair Armiston idly tinkered with the needle of some electrical contrivance. The grandfather clock ticked, the fire crackled, and the deputy scowled misanthropically at the fat Buddha in the corner. Silence didn't embarrass Oliver. In fact it was his observation that if silence were maintained long enough, the other fellow would say something interesting. But Parr seemed tongue-tied. As if tired of waiting for animate things to show a sign of life, the needle Oliver held in his hands made a spontaneous gesture. It swung over to the middle of a calibrated arc — and stayed there, as if intent on something. Armiston, with a yawn, set the thing down, and presently picked up the telephone. He rested on one elbow, watching his friend Parr while he waited.

"Rotten service!" he mumbled, after a long wait. Parr nodded gravely.

"Parr," said Oliver abruptly, over the top of the telephone, "have you made any effort to find the husband? He's the one that squealed, of course. I suppose the poor devil got tired of hiding out."

The effect of these words, or rather

of this act, on the deputy of police was electric. He reached out with one gorilla-like hand and snatched the telephone from Oliver's grasp.

"Was she on there?" he demanded.

"Certainly," said Oliver easily.

He pointed to the electric needle, trembling over the middle of the card. That telltale needle gave warning every time a receiver was lifted off its hook in No. 142. To the two watchers at that moment, that tremulous needle personified the woman herself, the eavesdropper, probably at that instant cocking her pretty head with the swift movement of a startled doe.

"So you tip her off — under my nose, eh? Eh!" snarled Parr.

The sudden brain-storm that evoked these words gave him a look ape-like in its ferocity. His huge hand clamped itself on the extinct author's shoulder. Oliver could almost feel the bones crunch. He gritted his teeth, but continued to watch the spying needle on his desk. It was the needle itself, at this juncture, that came to his rescue. Abruptly, as if released by an unseen force, it flopped back to zero, nothing, on the calibrated scale. It was as significant as the snap of a dry twig. The lurker was withdrawing, on tiptoe.

For another instant Parr sat there glaring into Oliver's eyes. Then the deputy jammed his hat down, and rushed from the room as if the very devil were prodding him on.

While the Lakewood train was picking its way across the drawbridges that span the estuaries of Newark Bay, the Dresden china widow was rolling over hill and dale to Byam, a little lake among the hills where her stylish hackneys were acquiring winter coats and new hoofs, in drowsy ease. On the spur of the moment this morning she had thought of her beloved horses, with a tinge of self-accusation. It was honest John Hanrahan, the red-headed mechanic, as usual, who conducted her. Some distance behind, coming into sight now and again as her car topped a rise, came on the man in the brown derby, only for this occasion he had discarded his derby for a cap, thrown away his cold cigar and acquired a mustache.

Life had become a bed of thorns for the red-headed mechanic. Perched out there in the open where the widow could watch him breathe wasn't his idea of being a detective. And so little had transpired in four weeks that he was beginning to have grave doubts of the infallibility of his great chief. But ahead of him this morning was a taste of paradise.

Arriving at the farm, he was waiting in the kitchen, sourly meditating on life, when there entered a pert little French maid, a round pink person of Chippendale pattern, on high heels which gave to her walk the tilt of a Gallic poodle. She caught the reflection of herself in a mirror, and before the astonished eyes of John, she began to rehearse those very arts of coquetry which he, in his ignorance, had always assumed to be spontaneous, when exercised on helpless males. In the act she caught sight of him. She was not at all abashed. Indeed, quite the contrary. She tripped daintily over to him, sat down on the edge of his bench, and indicated with a propelling shove that he was to move over a little — not too much. She folded her hands primly on her little lace apron, regarded him under her lashes. Then, they both fixed their eyes on the wood-box, and smiled happily.

An hour later, when his lady upstairs called for her motor, the red-headed mechanic (city-bred) had changed his ideas about the attractions of the country.

As the little maid handed his lady into the car she boldly pressed a tiny hand in John's ample paw. The motor rounded the drive and as it passed the gate cityward the maid tossed a kiss to the moon-struck sleuth.

In West Broadway, among the spaghetti factories, the junk-shops and the holes in walls where artificial flowers grow, the windows are always dingy. The elevated trains growl all day and all night, peering in at the upper floors as they pass, where life is frankly uncurtained.

A man in seamy uniform, and a brass-bound cap, with a number, that proclaimed him an elevated motorman, examined doorway after doorway, always with a glance at the upper windows, as he picked his way along the sidewalk. Finally he came to a halt at a broken-down stoop, and ascending three rickety steps he rang a grimy bell, in response to which there appeared a capacious Sicilian woman with a baby squatting on one hip. She could understand nothing he said. With a twitch of a shoulder, she conferred upon him the freedom of the house.

The motorman ascended a creaking flight of stairs, and on the first landing, after some deliberation, picked out a door toward the front of the house and rapped sharply. He listened in open-mouthed concern. Then he rapped again and again, louder and louder. Doors above him opened and shut, tousled heads peered down on him over the banisters. But the door he attacked stared at him blankly.

He retraced his steps to the street,

walked briskly north a block. At the corner he sighted a policeman.

"What's that?" said the policeman, bending his head to listen. He gave more careful heed to the motorman's rapid flow of words. Together they crossed the street swiftly, their unusual pace attracting a trail of loungers.

"There," said the motorman, bringing the policeman to a halt and pointing through the latticework of the elevated structure. "I think that man is dead. He's been sitting in that window for thirty-six hours. At first he was reading a newspaper. But not lately."

He went on to explain that he had passed and repassed that face in the window on his day and night shifts at the controller of his train — until finally it got on his nerves, so he had come on foot to see what was up. He added that he hadn't been able to sleep last night, for seeing that face, and — But the policeman pushed his way through the halted traffic and stamped up the stairs, the crowd banking up against the entrance like a swarm of bees. He put his shoulder to the door and it fell with a weak splintering smash. The man was dead — quite. The officer threw up a smeared window and blew on his whistle, paying no more heed to the man in the chair. Shortly other policemen appeared, running. A little while later a black wagon backed up to the door and carried away the man in the chair covered with a horse-blanket. Another wagon bore off the fat Sicilian woman and her baby, and several other terrified denizens of the house. They said he had been a lodger for some months, a poor man, oh, yes, very poor. It was his habit to sit in that window by the hour, by the day sometimes. Had he any friends come to see him? Who could say? The whole world might pass up and down that dingy staircase, without question. The wagons moved off; in a moment the crowd was fluid again; in five minutes it was all forgotten.

In pawn-shops timorous clients are apt to be made more timid by the stare of a heavy-set man who lounges at one end of the counter, idly puffing a cigar, and watching them as they beg and haggle. Well they may be: it is one of Parr's invincibles. In the little building on the river front at the foot of East 26th Street, where black wagons drive up at all hours of the day and night and deposit burdens covered with horse-blankets, just such a man stands, smoking the same cigar, quite as languidly interested as his brothers in the pawn-shops. Dead souls come here; they must be inspected, suspected, like any object offered in

pawn. Others come here, anxious mothers, brothers, friends, seeking. An attendant pulls out drawer after drawer for their inspection. Sometimes a shriek tells the hangers-on that a quest has ended. Outside, undertakers' runners, like flies, flock about them when they emerge.

A stocky man, evidently a mason, who had come directly from his work, was whispering to the attendant, trembling. The attendant listened, and nodded. He knew — yes, it was here; and he rolled out a drawer. The mason inclined his head, brushing his eyes with a lime-stained hand. His brother, he said. The attendant made a grimace over his shoulder, and the man with the cigar approached, eyeing the mason with a bleary look. He took out a notebook, and they talked in low tones, the policeman making entries as the other answered.

"You will have to be corroborated, of course," said the policeman, not unkindly. "Any one could come here and pick what he wanted, otherwise."

"But why?" ejaculated the mason, horrified at the idea of any one having use for a dead body, and going to the city morgue to pick out one to his liking. The policeman said he couldn't say why — it had been done, and they had to be careful. The mason produced his union card and other credentials to establish his identity.

Outside the tip had gone forth. The grisly hangers-on lay in wait for him, and he gruffly selected one who led him triumphantly to his near-by store. The next day a little funeral party departed from that side-street "parlor," with what pomp the poor may give to their dead. There were four carriages, three of them empty with blinds drawn, and in the first the only mourner, the mason.

On their return, the policeman with the cigar met the foremost carriage — there were some final papers to sign, for the records. When the mason stepped down, he looked up and saw they were at the porticoed door of a big building, with massive towers and turrets of red brick. He drew back involuntarily, but the man with the cigar had a double twist on his coat sleeve.

"Come along quietly, and don't start anything," he said amiably and led the mourner up the stone steps, down the corridors and into a big room in which sat a man at a desk. The man at the desk was Parr, deputy commissioner of police.

"Ha, ha! At last. Well, how'd it go?" asked Parr, looking up. The mason crouched like an animal, one hand stealing behind him to try the door. He straightened up, breathing hard.

"Sophie almost got away with it," said Parr — "knocking the old duffer off, like that, with arsenic in his dope! And turning the stiff over to us, to hand out to the first claimant that comes along to identify it — you thought you weren't even taking a chance, didn't you, William?"

It was William, the footman — William redrawn, some lines erased, as plausible as a raised check. Nevertheless, it was William. He swallowed hard.

"Come over here. I want a good look at you," commanded Parr.

The man obeyed, sullenly. Parr pointed to a glass paper-weight on his desk.

"Did you ever see that before? Answer me!" he snarled, with sudden ferocity. William looked from Parr to the paper-weight, and back again, but maintained silence.

"What did Amos P. Huntington call himself twelve years ago, when he left his finger-prints on that paper-weight, in the Park Place Murder?"

Parr referred to a crime that had gone down in the annals as a celebrated mystery. It was a mystery no more. The obscure man who was found dead in his chair in West Broadway had the same finger-prints. That was why the man with the cigar had been so polite to the mason when he called on his sad errand.

William did not answer. His eyes roved round the room, avoiding the one thing he feared.

"What did you blow up, in your rubber plant, William?" asked Parr. "Was it a basket of cats — or dogs — or did you borrow another of your brothers from East 26th Street? Sophie put the remains through the crematory so fast we didn't have a look in."

Parr laughed. So did William. By that laugh Parr knew that questions were useless. At that moment the door opened, and Armiston came in, swinging a stick.

"Take him down-stairs!" growled Parr to an attendant. "Charge him with complicity in the murder of John Doe, *alias* Amos P. Huntington."

Armiston dropped his stick with a clatter, and started back with such a genuine movement of fright that the policeman who was ushering him in actually grabbed him, thinking him the murderer.

"No, no, not that one; this one!" said Parr, indicating William. Parr's eyes twinkled. When William had been led out he said to Armiston, with some relish:

"As a matter of fact, Armiston, you ought to be down-stairs, on that charge!"

"But how — what — I got your wire — I came right in. Is there — did she —"

"Certainly," responded Parr, nodding. "You are a wonder, Oliver!" he added, rubbing his hands comfortably. "What put it into your head to start Sophie after her husband? Don't tell me you didn't," said the deputy, as Armiston tried to break in with a word. "I heard you. You knew Sophie was listening-in on the telephone the other day in your study, when you told me in a loud voice to go out and find her husband — that he had squealed on her. Squealed on her!" cried Parr. "On the level, Armiston, I could have strangled you at that moment! I thought you were squealing on me! Then it all came over me — just like that!" and he snapped his fingers to indicate the unusual suddenness of the mental process. "You've got the goods! You're all right, Oliver!"

"Well, it was the obvious thing to do, of course," agreed Oliver, now preening himself. "I knew you couldn't find him. I knew the only way was to scare her into starting after him herself — then your men could trail along behind. It made a very good ending of the story, I thought," said Oliver. "Your men trailed her, of course?"

"Well, as a matter of fact," said Parr, weakly, "she got the jump on us. You know Sophie! So we just sat back and waited."

"Waited!" ejaculated Armiston.

"Oh, Sophie did her part — she produced him, all right," said Parr. "Dead," he added grimly. He related swiftly how the bogus Amos P. Huntington, who had been blown up by synthetic rubber and cremated, in the end came to his death and burial in so obscure a manner that the police would never have known who he was, except for one thing Sophie overlooked.

"My window-washer," said Parr. "He's a wonder, too. He managed to borrow a razor, among other personal effects of the late Amos P., that Sophie had packed away in a box. We found finger-prints on it that corresponded to that," he said, pointing at the glass paper-weight. "When his dead body turned up, with the same finger-prints, the rest was simple enough. We merely sat on the door-step and waited." And Parr, who had complacently encompassed the murder of a murderer, by neglecting to follow Sophie too closely, leaned back in his chair. "Oh, they all come to pot, sooner or later."

"But, Sophie —"

"Oh — she's on her way downtown now," exclaimed Parr. "Sit still. You'll see her."

The Dresden china widow, an hour before, had set out on her afternoon drive to air her red-headed mechanic. At Forty-second Street a

policeman said gruffly: "Drive up to the curb, young fellow." The red-headed mechanic had obeyed with alacrity. "Let me have your keys," commanded the traffic policeman. He took the proffered keys and calmly locked the doors of the litter. Sophie could not escape now, except by smashing glass. "Take her to Headquarters!" commanded the traffic man. While Parr and Oliver sat talking, Sophie was announced. The graceful little woman clothed in a cloud of black entered weeping and sniffling in her handkerchief under her veil.

"Lift up the curtain, Sophie," said Parr, with elation. "This is where you stop for the night."

She lifted the veil, disclosing a tear-stained face, pathetically pretty. Parr with an oath lifted himself out of his chair.

"What's the joke, Hanrahan?" he bawled, at the red-headed mechanic.

"Joke, sir? Joke?" protested Hanrahan.

"Look at her, you fool!" snarled the deputy. "Look what you've brought here — this rag doll done up in crêpe!"

The lady here burst into a torrent of words. "I not understan'," she wailed, in French accents. "I am Madame 'untington maid. She move. I come to town — three-four days — to make ready. She move. This afternoon, I go out — to get leetle air. The policeman — he lock me in! I scream — I cry — I knock on the window. I come here. This man, he say to me 'don't start nothings'—"

Hanrahan was holding his head. He was reviving that episode in the kitchen that made the country seem so attractive to him a few days ago.

"Where did you get those clothes?" demanded Parr roughly.

"Madame, she give them me — she no want them more. My 'usband — he was die — *Il est mort!*"

"Take her away!" roared Parr.

"What is the charge?" asked the meek Hanrahan.

"Oh, anything — anything," snarled Parr, "so long as the newspapers don't get it. You, a detective! You on the Sophie Lang case!"

When the door closed on the figures, it was Armiston who broke the painful silence.

"After all," he said dreamily, "it was a signed masterpiece! Eh, Parr?"

That was the end of the Sophie Lang case. There were loose ends, of course, such as William, and the maid, and the jettisoned quarter of a million dollars. The underlings proved to be very faithful tools of the lady, who took their medicine, maintaining to the end their ignorance of such a purely legendary person as Sophie Lang.

The creator of Captain Hornblower and the author of that superb psychological thriller, PAYMENT DEFERRED, *proves in a brand-new way that time and tide wait for no murderer — especially time. . . .*

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

by C. S. FORESTER

"WHAT always beats them in the end," said Dr. Matthews, "is how to dispose of the body. But, of course, you know that as well as I do."

"Yes," said Slade. He had, in fact, been devoting far more thought to what Dr. Matthews believed to be this accidental subject of conversation than Dr. Matthews could ever guess.

"As a matter of fact," went on Dr. Matthews, warming to the subject to which Slade had so tactfully led him, "it's a terribly knotty problem. It's so difficult, in fact, that I always wonder why anyone is fool enough to commit murder."

"All very well for you," thought Slade, but he did not allow his thoughts to alter his expression. "You smug, self-satisfied old ass! You don't know the sort of difficulties a man can be up against."

"I've often thought the same," he said.

"Yes," went on Dr. Matthews, "it's the body that does it, every time. To use poison calls for special facilities, which are good enough to hang you as soon as suspicion is roused. And that suspicion — well, of course, part of my job is to detect poisoning. I don't think anyone can get away with it, nowadays, even with the most dunderheaded general practitioner."

"I quite agree with you," said Slade. He had no intention of using poison.

"Well," went on Dr. Matthews, developing his logical argument, "if you rule out poison, you rule out the chance of getting the body disposed of under the impression that the victim died a natural death. The only other way, if a man cares to stand the racket of having the body to give evidence against him, is to fake things to look like suicide. But you know, and I know, that it just can't be done. The mere fact of suicide calls for a close examination, and no one has ever been able to fix things so well as to get away with it. You're a lawyer. You've probably read a lot

of reports of trials where the murderer has tried it on. And you know what's happened to them."

"Yes," said Slade.

He certainly had given a great deal of consideration to the matter. It was only after long thought that he had, finally, put aside the notion of disposing of young Spalding and concealing his guilt by a sham suicide.

"That brings us to where we started, then," said Dr. Matthews. "The only other thing left is to try and conceal the body. And that's more difficult still."

"Yes," said Slade. But he had a perfect plan for disposing of the body.

"A human body," said Dr. Matthews, "is a most difficult thing to get rid of. That chap Oscar Wilde, in that book of his — 'Dorian Grey,' isn't it? — gets rid of one by the use of chemicals. Well, I'm a chemist as well as a doctor, and *I* wouldn't like the job."

"No?" said Slade, politely.

Dr. Matthews was not nearly as clever a man as himself, he thought.

"There's altogether too much of it," said Dr. Matthews. "It's heavy, and it's bulky, and it's bound to undergo corruption. Think of all those poor devils who've tried it. Bodies in trunks, and bodies in coal-cellars, and bodies in chicken-runs. You can't hide the thing, try as you will."

"Can't I? That's all you know," thought Slade, but aloud he said: "You're quite right. I've never thought about it before."

"Of course, you haven't," agreed Dr. Matthews. "Sensible people don't, unless it's an incident of their profession, as in my case.

"And yet, you know," he went on, meditatively, "there's one decided advantage about getting rid of the body altogether. You're much safer, then. It's a point which ought to interest you, as a lawyer, more than me. It's rather an obscure point of law, but I fancy there are very definite rulings on it. You know what I'm referring to?"

"No, I don't," said Slade, genuinely puzzled.

"You can't have a trial for murder unless you can prove there's a victim," said Dr. Matthews. "There's got to be a corpus delicti, as you lawyers say in your horrible dog-Latin. A corpse, in other words, even if it's only a bit of one, like that which hanged Crippen. No corpse, no trial. I think that's good law, isn't it?"

"By Jove, you're right!" said Slade. "I wonder why that hadn't occurred to me before?"

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than he regretted having said them. He did his best to make his face immobile again; he was afraid

lest his expression might have hinted at his pleasure in discovering another very reassuring factor in this problem of killing young Spalding. But Dr. Matthews had noticed nothing.

"Well, as I said, people only think about these things if they're incidental to their profession," he said. "And, all the same, it's only a theoretical piece of law. The entire destruction of a body is practically impossible. But, I suppose, if a man could achieve it, he would be all right. However strong the suspicion was against him, the police couldn't get him without a corpse. There might be a story in that, Slade, if you or I were writers."

"Yes," assented Slade, and laughed harshly.

There never would be any story about the killing of young Spalding, the insolent pup.

"Well," said Dr. Matthews, "we've had a pretty gruesome conversation, haven't we? And I seem to have done all the talking, somehow. That's the result, I suppose, Slade, of the very excellent dinner you gave me. I'd better push off now. Not that the weather is very inviting."

Nor was it. As Slade saw Dr. Matthews into his car, the rain was driving down in a real winter storm, and there was a bitter wind blowing.

"Shouldn't be surprised if this turned to snow before morning," were Dr. Matthews's last words before he drove off.

Slade was glad it was such a tempestuous night. It meant that, more certainly than ever, there would be no one out in the lanes, no one out on the sands when he disposed of young Spalding's body.

Back in his drawing-room, Slade looked at the clock. There was still an hour to spare; he could spend it in making sure that his plans were all correct.

He looked up the tide tables. Yes, that was right enough. Spring tides. The lowest of low water on the sands. There was not so much luck about that; young Spalding came back on the midnight train every Wednesday night, and it was not surprising that, sooner or later, the Wednesday night would coincide with a spring tide. But it was lucky that this particular Wednesday night should be one of tempest: luckier still that low water should be at one-thirty, the best time for him.

He opened the drawing-room door and listened carefully. He could not hear a sound. Mrs. Dumbleton, his housekeeper, must have been in bed some time now. She was as deaf as a post, anyway, and would not hear his departure. Nor his return, when Spalding had been killed and disposed of.

The hands of the clock seemed to be moving very fast. He must make sure everything was correct. The plough chain and the other iron weights were already in the back seat of the car; he had put them there before old Matthews arrived to dine. He slipped on his overcoat.

From his desk, Slade took a curious little bit of apparatus: eighteen inches of strong cord, tied at each end to a six-inch length of wood so as to make a ring. He made a last close examination to see that the knots were quite firm, and then he put it in his pocket; as he did so, he ran through, in his mind, the words — he knew them by heart — of the passage in the book about the Thugs of India, describing the method of strangulation employed by them.

He could think quite coldly about all this. Young Spalding was a pestilent busybody. A word from him, now, could bring ruin upon Slade, could send him to prison, could have him struck off the rolls.

Slade thought of other defaulting solicitors he had heard of, even one or two with whom he had come into contact professionally. He remembered his brother-solicitors' remarks about them, pitying or contemptuous. He thought of having to beg his bread in the streets on his release from prison, of cold and misery and starvation. The shudder which shook him was succeeded by a hot wave of resentment. Never, never, would he endure it.

What right had young Spalding, who had barely been qualified two years, to condemn a grey-haired man twenty years his senior to such a fate? If nothing but death would stop him, then he deserved to die. He clenched his hand on the cord in his pocket.

A glance at the clock told him he had better be moving. He turned out the lights and tiptoed out of the house, shutting the door quietly. The bitter wind flung icy rain into his face, but he did not notice it.

He pushed the car out of the garage by hand, and, contrary to his wont, he locked the garage doors, as a precaution against the infinitesimal chance that, on a night like this, someone should notice that his car was out.

He drove cautiously down the road. Of course, there was not a soul about in a quiet place like this. The few street-lamps were already extinguished.

There were lights in the station as he drove over the bridge; they were awaiting there the arrival of the twelve-thirty train. Spalding would be on that. Every Wednesday he went over to his subsidiary office, sixty miles away. Slade turned into

into the lane a quarter of a mile beyond the station, and then reversed his car so that it pointed towards the road. He put out the sidelights, and settled himself to wait; his hand fumbled with the cord in his pocket.

The train was a little late. Slade had been waiting a quarter of an hour when he saw the lights of the train emerge from the cutting and come to a standstill in the station. So wild was the night that he could hear nothing of it. Then the train moved slowly out again. As soon as it was gone, the lights in the station began to go out, one by one; Hobson, the porter, was making ready to go home, his turn of duty completed.

Next, Slade's straining ears heard footsteps.

Young Spalding was striding down the road. With his head bent before the storm, he did not notice the dark mass of the motor-car in the lane, and he walked past it.

Slade counted up to two hundred, slowly, and then he switched on his lights, started the engine, and drove the car out into the road in pursuit. He saw Spalding in the light of the headlamps and drew up alongside.

"Is that Spalding?" he said, striving to make the tone of his voice as natural as possible. "I'd better give you a lift, old man, hadn't I?"

"Thanks very much," said Spalding. "This isn't the sort of night to walk two miles in."

He climbed in and shut the door. No one had seen. No one would know. Slade let in his clutch and drove slowly down the road.

"Bit of luck, seeing you," he said. "I was just on my way home from bridge at Mrs. Clay's when I saw the train come in and remembered it was Wednesday and you'd be walking home. So I thought I'd turn a bit out of my way to take you along."

"Very good of you, I'm sure," said Spalding.

"As a matter of fact," said Slade, speaking slowly and driving slowly, "it wasn't altogether disinterested. I wanted to talk business to you, as it happened."

"Rather an odd time to talk business," said Spalding. "Can't it wait till to-morrow?"

"No, it cannot," said Slade. "It's about the Lady Vere trust."

"Oh, yes. I wrote to remind you last week that you had to make delivery."

"Yes, you did. And I told you, long before that, that it would be inconvenient, with Hammond abroad."

"I don't see that," said Spalding. "I don't see that Hammond's got anything to do with it. Why can't you just hand over and have done with it? I can't do anything to straighten things up until you do."

"As I said, it would be inconvenient."

Slade brought the car to a standstill at the side of the road.

"Look here, Spalding," he said, desperately, "I've never asked a favour of you before. But now I ask you, as a favour, to forego delivery for a bit. Just for three months, Spalding."

But Slade had small hope that his request would be granted. So little hope, in fact, that he brought his left hand out of his pocket holding the piece of wood, with the loop of cord dangling from its ends. He put his arm round the back of Spalding's seat.

"No, I can't, really I can't," said Spalding. "I've got my duty to my clients to consider. I'm sorry to insist, but you're quite well aware of what my duty is."

"Yes," said Slade. "But I beg you to wait. I implore you to wait, Spalding. There! Perhaps you can guess why, now."

"I see," said Spalding, after a long pause.

"I only want three months," pressed Slade. "Just three months. I can get straight again in three months."

Spalding had known of other men who had had the same belief in their ability to get straight in three months. It was unfortunate for Slade — and for Spalding — that Slade had used those words. Spalding hardened his heart.

"No," he said. "I can't promise anything like that. I don't think it's any use continuing this discussion. Perhaps I'd better walk home from here."

He put out his hand to the latch of the door, and, as he did so, Slade jerked the loop of cord over his head. A single turn of Slade's wrist — a thin, bony, old man's wrist, but as strong as steel in that wild moment — tightened the cord about Spalding's throat. Slade swung round in his seat, getting both hands to the piece of wood, twisting madly. His breath hissed between his teeth with the effort, but Spalding never drew breath at all. He lost consciousness long before he was dead. Only Slade's grip of the cord round his throat prevented the dead body from falling forward, doubled up.

Nobody had seen, nobody would know. And what that book had stated about the method of assassination practised by Thugs was perfectly correct.

Slade had gained, now, the time in which he could get his affairs into order. With all the promise of his current speculations, with all his financial ability, he would be able to recoup himself for his past losses. It

only remained to dispose of Spalding's body, and he had planned to do that very satisfactorily. Just for a moment Slade felt as if all this were only some heated dream, some nightmare, but then he came back to reality and went on with the plan he had in mind.

He pulled the dead man's knees forward so that the corpse lay back in the seat, against the side of the car. He put the car in gear, let in his clutch, and drove rapidly down the road — much faster than when he had been arguing with Spalding. Low water was in three-quarters of an hour's time, and the sands were ten miles away.

Slade drove fast through the wild night. There was not a soul about in those lonely lanes. He knew the way by heart — he had driven repeatedly over that route recently in order to memorize it.

The car bumped down the last bit of lane, and Slade drew up on the edge of the sands.

It was pitch dark, and the bitter wind was howling about him, under the black sky. Despite the noise of the wind, he could hear the surf breaking far away, two miles away, across the level sands. He climbed out of the driver's seat and walked round to the other door. When he opened it the dead man fell sideways, into his arms.

With an effort, Slade held him up, while he groped into the back of the car for the plough chain and the iron weights. He crammed the weights into the dead man's pockets, and he wound the chain round and round the dead man's body, tucking in the ends to make it all secure. With that mass of iron to hold it down, the body would never be found again when dropped into the sea at the lowest ebb of spring tide.

Slade tried now to lift the body in his arms, to carry it over the sands. He reeled and strained, but he was not strong enough — Slade was a man of slight figure, and past his prime. The sweat on his forehead was icy in the icy wind.

For a second, doubt overwhelmed him, lest all his plans should fail for want of bodily strength. But he forced himself into thinking clearly; he forced his frail body into obeying the vehement commands of his brain.

He turned round, still holding the dead man upright. Stooping, he got the heavy burden on his shoulders. He drew the arms round his neck, and, with a convulsive effort, he got the legs up round his hips. The dead man now rode him pick-a-back. Bending nearly double, he was able to carry the heavy weight in that fashion, the arms tight round his neck, the legs tight round his waist.

He set off, staggering, down the imperceptible slope of the sands towards the sound of the surf. The sands were soft beneath his feet — it was because of this softness that he had not driven the car down to the water's edge. He could afford to take no chances of being embogged.

The icy wind shrieked round him all that long way. The tide was nearly two miles out. That was why Slade had chosen this place. In the depth of winter, no one would go out to the water's edge at low tide for months to come.

He staggered on over the sands, clasping the limbs of the body close about him. Desperately, he forced himself forward, not stopping to rest, for he only just had time now to reach the water's edge before the flow began. He went on and on, driving his exhausted body with fierce urgings from his frightened brain.

Then, at last, he saw it: a line of white in the darkness which indicated the water's edge. Farther out, the waves were breaking in an inferno of noise. Here, the fragments of the rollers were only just sufficient to move the surface a little.

He was going to make quite sure of things. Steadying himself, he stepped into the water, wading in farther and farther so as to be able to drop the body into comparatively deep water. He held to his resolve, staggering through the icy water, knee deep, thigh deep, until it was nearly at his waist. This was far enough. He stopped, gasping in the darkness.

He leaned over to one side, to roll the body off his back. It did not move. He pulled at its arms. They were obstinate. He could not loosen them. He shook himself, wildly. He tore at the legs round his waist. Still the thing clung to him. Wild with panic and fear, he flung himself about in a mad effort to rid himself of the burden. It clung on as though it were alive. He could not break its grip.

Then another breaker came in. It splashed about him, wetting him far above his waist. The tide had begun to turn now, and the tide on those sands comes in like a racehorse.

He made another effort to cast off the load, and, when it still held him fast, he lost his nerve and tried to struggle out of the sea. But it was too much for his exhausted body. The weight of the corpse and of the iron with which it was loaded overbore him. He fell.

He struggled up again in the foam-streaked, dark sea, staggered a few steps, fell again — and did not rise. The dead man's arms were round his neck, throttling him, strangling him. Rigor mortis had set in and Spalding's muscles had refused to relax.

Curiosities In Detection

NUMBER 3

Would you like to read — for auld lang syne — a genuine, 24-carat dime novel? The real old stuff, pure and unadulterated?

Here's a short story of authentic dime-novel vintage. It appeared in Some Queer Stories, *by A New York Detective, No. 272, Vol. 1, in The New York Detective Library, published by Frank Tousey, February 18, 1888.*

Your Editor warns you here and now: "The Topaz Cuff-Button" is of the "horrible example" genus — a miniature dime-novel at its worst. Hack writing, pretentious style, utterly lacking in ingenuity, and with a typical melodramatic climax.

Two things should strike you with great force after reading this story: one, it was published only one year after the initial appearance of Sherlock Holmes; and two, "The Topaz Cuff-Button" represents the pulp-writing of 1888 — surely we've come a long way since the Gay Eighties and a girl detective named Lizzie Lasher, "The Red Weasel"!

Bibliographic note: In 1920 the same Frank Tousey was publishing a 10 cent magazine, issued twice a month, called "Mystery Magazine." Each issue contained a "feature story," usually written by a contemporary. (One of these feature stories, in the issue of September 15, 1920, was "The Spirit Bell" by Charles Fulton Oursler, alias Anthony Abbot!) To fill out the rest of each issue, publisher Tousey blithely hijacked his old dime novels and reprinted old short stories.

"The Topaz Cuff-Button" reappeared in the July 15, 1920 issue of "Mystery Magazine" — but not without certain changes for the benefit of oldtimers with long white memories! Lizzie Lasher, for example, became Lizzie Basher; the original narrator of the story (presumably A New York Detective) became a headquarters man named Mack; and the authorship of the new version was ascribed to one "Emma Alice Jordan."

Final comment: the reprinting of old short stories is by no means a lost art; but modern readers can be thankful that modern editors do not resort to such piratical subterfuges as "Emma Alice Jordan."

THE TOPAZ CUFF-BUTTON

A NEAT bit of work was once done by a young lady detective, whom we happened to have on the force at the time.

Her name was Lizzie Lasher, but she was better known in the profession as "The Red Weasel." She was a weasel on a trail, alert, agile and always certain in the end to nab the game she had marked for her own.

She had been dubbed "red" in a jocular way and for a simple reason.

She always wore the color; on duty and off duty, except in special instances where a disguise was necessary, she always dressed in red of a dark, dull, unobtrusive hue.

She was a mere girl, not more than twenty, but her shrewdness and daring were matchless. She often succeeded in dufficult cases where the keenest and bravest among us had failed, and she became a terror to the wrong-doers of the city.

The case, the incidents of which I am about to record, was remarkable for nothing except its mystery. It was a case of robbery, and the victim was an aged lady who resided in an old-fashioned house in the extreme upper portion of the city.

She was known as Mrs. Brinley; she was wealthy and a widow; and she had no relatives except a grandson, who was a telegraph operator employed in a downtown office, and with whom she had lately quarreled and forbidden the house. The old lady lived alone with the exceptions of a decrepit and half-deaf and blind woman servant and a handsome girl — a Miss Tennie Travers — who had been her companion for several years.

On the night of the robbery she had retired at the usual hour to her sleeping room, a large second-story apartment with windows opening on the roof of a low veranda at the back of the house.

Somewhere about midnight she had been awakened by some unusual sound. And at the moment she perceived a masked man rifling an old-fashioned wooden chest, wherein she was accustomed to keep her valuables and ready money.

Her start of terror warned the masked intruder; and before she could utter an outcry he was beside her. In an instant he clutched her throat in a terrible grip. She knew nothing more; when her senses were restored to her it was broad day, and her servant, with Miss Travers, stood amazed and trembling with fright at her bedside.

She had at once sent for me, although this proceeding had been opposed by Miss Travers, who, it seemed, had almost unbounded influence with the aged widow.

"We all think that the masked robber must have been my grandson — Ben Brinley! — nobody else knew where I kept my money and valuables," the old lady said to me. "And Tennie don't like the idea of my being disgraced by the exposure. But the relationship won't save him; if Ben is guilty I am determined he shall be punished."

"Miss Travers is much attached to you," I remarked.

"Yes; and she will some day have all my property, now Ben has turned out so badly," was the answer.

It would seem that with a view purely of her own self-interest handsome Tennie Travers would have no motive in silencing suspicion against Ben Brinley.

"Have you any theory as to how the robber gained entrance to the house?" I asked.

"By the window over the veranda, we think. All the other windows and the doors were bolted on the inside, and the fastenings have not been disturbed."

I had just examined that particular window, and had convinced myself beyond a doubt that the masked robber had neither made his entrance nor his exit by that way.

"Are you sure you secured your own door on retiring?"

Tennie Travers answered for her.

"Oh, aunty never locks her own door," said she. "I am a light sleeper, and my room is within call."

"And you neither heard anything nor saw anything last night?" I queried, with my eyes full upon her handsome countenance.

She showed no sign of confusion; her self-possession remaining perfect.

"If I had I don't think aunty would have been robbed of so much money and her diamonds too." She spoke as if she wondered at the absurdity of the query.

"No one outside the house except my grandson knew I had those diamonds," Mrs. Brinley remarked.

Miss Travers suggested that if the lady really meant to have the young fellow exposed and punished, there was no use allowing him time to escape.

"This gentleman has my orders to lock him up the moment he puts eyes on him," the old lady said.

I informed her that there was no evidence as yet to justify me in doing that unless she should swear out a warrant for his arrest.

And so ended the interview.

I made a thorough inspection of the premises and detected several items of importance. The yard at the back of the house opened by a wooden gate into an alley leading toward the river bank. Between this gate and a rear door of the house I discovered footprints — the tracks of a man's broad shoe soles, and of a woman's small boot heels. It had rained early the previous evening, and these tracks were clearly defined in the partially dried earth. I had also noticed stains of mud in the hall and up the stairs.

From these facts I was convinced that the masked robber had been admitted to the house by an inmate, and that the inmate was a woman. I discovered also something which I believed to be a possible clue.

In a tuft of grass beside the gate I found a cuff-button — a curious ar-

ticle of novel and uncommon workmanship. It was of perfectly plain silver, highly polished, shaped like a shield, and set with a single yellow topaz, sparkling as a diamond, and the size of a pea.

I spent the remainder of the day in sundry investigations, but learned nothing which tended to actually incriminate young Ben Brinley. From the few points disclosed it promised to be a case of peculiarly baffling mystery.

If Ben Brinley was the robber then I was satisfied he had an accomplice in the house. It was impossible that accomplice could be the deaf and decrepit woman servant. But if the confederate was handsome Tennie Travers, why would she express a belief in his guilt and advise his immediate arrest?

And why had she in the beginning so strenuously objected to detective service? Her reasons for having done so struck me as being insincere.

But would she be likely to abet a robber in plundering such a large amount from property which would some day be her own?

I was obliged to admit I could not solve the riddle. And it was at this stage of investigation that the case was turned over to the girl detective, "The Red Weasel."

And so with the slight evidence I had collected and the clue of the curious sleeve-button, she started on the trail.

Several days passed and I had no report from her.

In the meantime the young telegraph operator had been arrested on Mrs. Brinley's warrant and was held for examination.

I shall record the adventures of "The Red Weasel," as that sharp-eyed and long-headed young woman related them to me.

She had at once decided to shadow Mrs. Brinley's handsome companion. Nearly a week passed without a result of any kind. Then, late one afternoon, Tennie Travers left the house and took a significantly circuitous route toward the wild northwestern quarter of Central Park.

Miss Travers appeared hurried, and from time to time she glanced furtively and searchingly about her. But she failed to notice a tall and agile figure in dull red, which was gliding not many paces behind.

In one of the least frequented parts of that mostly unfrequented locality Mrs. Brinley's trusted companion met a young man, whose appearance impressed the girl detective as being not wholly unknown to her, although for the moment could not place him.

She slipped quietly behind a screen of thick shrubbery close to the spot where the two had paused.

That Miss Travers and the young man were lovers she saw at a glance.

"I wouldn't take such risks for anybody but you," she heard Mrs. Brinley's promised heiress say.

"I shouldn't want you to, Tennie."

"I hurt my fingers dreadfully fastening things after you the other night, Mort."

And Miss Travers exhibited a swollen digit for her lover's contemplation.

The young man took the uplifted hand in both his own, and the motion showed an immaculate white cuff fastened by a curious button of polished silver, set with a sparkling yellow topaz.

For once "The Red Weasel" forgot her cunning.

At sight of the novel cuff-button — the counterpart of her clue — the girl detective started excitedly from behind the concealing shrubbery.

The jewel was not the sole cause of her excitement. With the mention of his name she had recognized the young man as an individual named Mort Sarkey, whom she had once helped bring to justice for some daring swindle in another city.

As the girl detective sprung so abruptly from the concealing shrubs Miss Travers and her companion stared, the one in alarmed surprise and the other in defiant consternation.

It was quite obvious that Sarkey had instantly recognized the dreaded "Red Weasel," and understood she was again on his trail.

His features turned livid; his eyes blazed like those of an infuriated tiger. He whispered something to Miss Travers — something which the alert ears of the girl detective did not catch.

It was evidently a request for Tennie to leave them, for with a reluctant backward glance she turned and disappeared rapidly down a path among the thick trees.

"The Red Weasel" knew she was alone with a man rendered desperate by the fear of being again tried for a heinous crime.

As she realized that in so unfrequented a spot she was in a measure at his mercy, she commanded all her marvelous coolness and faced the situation.

"Resistance now won't help you any in the end, Sarkey."

She spoke quietly. One hand slipped among the folds of her red dress and drew forth a small pistol.

The movement seemed to madden him.

In an instant he struck the weapon from her hold, pinioned both her arms in the grip of his desperate hands, and so forced her into a grotto among the rocks.

"No one ever comes here but the

rats. I have only to roll a big rock across the mouth of this charming grotto and you will have them for company the rest of your life, my trapped weasel," he hissed.

He had apparently mistaken her unresisting quietness for the stupor of overmastering terror.

For just then he loosened his grip with the intention of executing his threat and making her a captive in the grotto. But he had miscalculated his chances. It was the very moment for which the shrewd girl had hoped, and that moment was his doom.

In a second she had flashed out of his reach, stationed herself at the entrance of the grotto and covered him with a revolver.

The weapon he had struck from her hold was an unloaded toy affair, which she had displayed with the certainty that he would attempt to disarm her.

She had outwitted him.

He was her prisoner in the grotto, at the entrance of which she stood, resolute and unflinching, with the black muzzle of her formidable automatic yawning before his astonished eyes.

"If you move a step nearer you are a dead man," she said, and he knew she meant it too.

Fortunately at that moment there was a thud of horses' hoofs, and the sound of voices in a bridle path within reach of her call.

Without moving a muscle or removing her terrible gaze from her captive's face, she uttered a ringing shout for help.

In an instant more a little crowd of persons, among them one of the park police, gathered about the grotto. And with the aid of the burly officer in gray the redoubtable "Red Weasel" had the satisfaction of escorting her prisoner to the nearest police station.

The charge of the Brinley robbery was fully proven against him, and he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

Tennie Travers was never arrested. In the shame of being exposed as his accomplice, in her grief of being separated from the knave whom she loved despite his crimes, she ended her own life.

Of course, Ben Brinley was honorably released. He effected a reconciliation with his aged relative, and eventually inherited all her property.

The money and diamonds were recovered. And a pleasant ending of the case was the ultimate marriage of the manly young fellow with the brave girl detective, who had saved him from a life-long disgrace by her wonderful ability, aided by the clue of the topaz cuff-button.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE ONE-LEGGED MAN

by ELLERY QUEEN

The Characters

ELLERY QUEEN	*the detective*
NIKKI PORTER	*his secretary*
INSPECTOR QUEEN	*his father*
SERGEANT VELIE	*of the Inspector's staff*
WILLIAM HOLSTER	*the great ordnance engineer*
MISS MULLER	*Holster's plant secretary*
LUPTON	*Holster plant superintendent*
BERNARD	*Holster plant personnel manager*
WASHINGTON OFFICIAL	*an important Government figure, who must remain anonymous*

and

Plant Employee — Telephone Operator — Etc.

Scenes

The Queen Apartment in New York City —
The Holster War Plant "Somewhere on Long Island" — an Inn Room on Long Island

SCENE 1: *The Queen Apartment*

(*The telephone rings — two short rings. Nikki Porter goes to the phone.*)

NIKKI: Hello. . . . Oh, yes. . . . Washington, Ellery.

ELLERY: Washington, Nikki? (*Nikki:* "*Here.*") Hello? (*A bit excited*) Yes, I'll wait . . . Nikki! Know who's calling? (*Nikki, bored:* "*Who?*") The same government bigwig who called us to Washington a month ago — !

NIKKI: (*Excited*) The torpedoed-warship case!

WASHINGTON OFFICIAL: (*He has a distinguished voice*) Mr. Queen?

ELLERY: Yes, Sir! (*He is very respectful throughout.*)

OFFICIAL: Well, I warned you I might have to put you to work again as Special Investigator for the Government, Mr. Queen. Only it's come sooner than I expected.

ELLERY: Not too soon for me, Sir. What's the case?

OFFICIAL: Do you know William Holster?

ELLERY: The ordnance engineer? I don't know him personally, Sir, though of course, like everyone else in America, I've heard of him.

OFFICIAL: Well, something peculiar has come up involving Bill Holster. Holster's factory is on Long Island, so I thought of you.

ELLERY: What's the trouble with Holster, Sir?

OFFICIAL: I don't know. He phoned me only a few minutes ago — sounded excited, asked for help, but said he didn't want to discuss it over the phone. Take a run out to his plant and find out what's wrong.

ELLERY: Yes, Sir. Will I be admitted without fuss?

OFFICIAL: I'll arrange things by phone so that you and your party get the usual admittance pass. Whatever's wrong, Mr. Queen, set it right. Holster and his plant are doing invaluable war work. We can't let anything happen to either of them.

ELLERY: I'll do my best, Sir. Report back to you?

OFFICIAL: As usual. Good luck.

ELLERY: Thank you, Sir. 'Bye! (*He hangs up.*)

NIKKI: Well?

ELLERY: Phone Dad, Nikki. It's another job for Uncle Sam!

SCENE 2: *The Executive Offices of the Holster War Plant*

(*Sounds of factory activity surround the Queen party as they follow a plant employe in the vast building.*)

EMPLOYE: That office over there. You'll find Mr. Holster's secretary in there.

ELLERY: Thanks. (*The employe leaves them.*)

SERGEANT VELIE: Man, this is a war plant, ain't it?

INSPECTOR QUEEN: Sure is, Velie. See those cannon? Big babies!

NIKKI: Makes you feel all proud inside, Inspector. (*They stop at a door.*) "Mr. Holster" —

VELIE: "Plant Office." (*Ellery opens the door and they go in.*)

MISS MULLER: Yes, please? (*She is a typical secretary, troubled-looking and worried.*)

ELLERY: Miss Muller? We'd like to see Mr. Holster.

MISS MULLER: (*A bit troubled*) Mr. Holster's not here.

INSPECTOR: Then where can we find him, Miss Muller?

MISS MULLER: I really don't know. Superintendent Lupton and Personnel Manager Bernard have both been calling for him, but I haven't been able to locate him anywhere in the plant.

VELIE: (*Low*) Uh-uh.

NIKKI: (*Low*) But he phoned Washington, Sergeant. . . .

ELLERY: Did you try Mr. Holster's home, Miss Muller?

MISS MULLER: He's not there. He really ought to be in his *private* office —

INSPECTOR: Isn't this his private office?

MISS MULLER: No, sir, just his plant office. His private office is a one-room building isolated on the factory grounds — completely surrounded by a high stone wall. Mr. Holster's been working there by himself day and night for over a week, making a duplicate set of plans by hand.

VELIE: Then that's where he is. What's the mystery?

MISS MULLER: But he doesn't answer his phone.

INSPECTOR: Sounds bad, son. (*Ellery looks troubled.*)

NIKKI: Why don't you ring him again, Miss Muller?

MISS MULLER: I *told* the switchboard girl . . . Just a minute. (*She picks up her phone.*) Lottie. Any answer yet from Mr. Holster's private office? . . . Well, you'd better try him again. I'll hang on.

ELLERY: We'll take a look for ourselves, Miss Muller —

MISS MULLER: (*Quickly*) Oh, no one's allowed in there. Not even Mr. Bernard and Mr. Lupton. You *couldn't* get in, anyway.

VELIE: How come?

MISS MULLER: The stone wall has only one entrance, a steel door with two locks, a safe-combination lock and a special key-lock, and only Mr. Holster knows the combination and has the key. The same key opens the door of the one-room building in the yard — What, Lottie? Well, I can't understand it! (*She hangs up.*) There's still no answer from Mr. Holster's office!

VELIE: We don't have to go through the door in the wall. We'll just climb *over* the wall —

MISS MULLER: You'd be electrocuted. It's spiked at the top and fitted with live wires —

ELLERY: Miss Muller, do you know who I am? Any of us?

MISS MULLER: Why, no. . . .

ELLERY: Yet you've had no hesitation in telling us all about Mr. Holster and his secret office.

MISS MULLER: (*Annoyed*) But you asked for him, and —

ELLERY: How do you know we can be trusted with this information?

MISS MULLER: (*Uncertainly*) Well, you got into the plant, and they wouldn't have let you in unless . . .

ELLERY: You haven't any idea how we got into the plant.

INSPECTOR: We might be carrying false credentials.

ELLERY: The fact is, you've told us a lot of things some Axis agent would give a great deal to learn!

MISS MULLER: (*Nervously*) I didn't say anything important. I'm just a secretary. Everyone in the plant knows —

VELIE: It ain't your job to say what's important.

NIKKI: (*Gently*) You're working in a *war* plant, Miss Muller.

ELLERY: Where can we find the superintendent?

MISS MULLER: (*Near tears*) Mr. Lupton's usually at his desk in the main assembly room —

ELLERY: (*Grimly*) Miss Muller, you'd better come along with us to Mr. Lupton!

SCENE 3: *The Main Assembly Room* (*The factory sounds are louder than before. Everywhere there is great activity.*)

LUPTON: (*A keen-looking man, executive type*) But I have no idea where Bill is if he's not in his private office, Mr. Queen.

ELLERY: Funny. . . . Mr. Lupton, how has Holster been acting lately?

LUPTON: Well, he's been very upset about the U-boat menace. Hasn't been able to talk about anything else for months. Says it's our biggest problem —

INSPECTOR: How long have you been working for Holster, Mr. Lupton?

LUPTON: Since the early 1920's. Bill, Bernard, and I were buddies in the World War. 2nd Engineers.

NIKKI: Is that where you . . . ?

LUPTON: Lost my left arm to the shoulder? Yes, Miss Porter. Bill Holster's minus his left leg — we left 'em in the same shell-hole. And Bernard lost his right eye at Belleau Wood.

VELIE: From one vet to another — hi, buddy!

LUPTON: (*Chuckling*) Hi. Now if you'll excuse me — time is ammunition. I wouldn't worry too much about Bill — like all geniuses, he's a queer duck. Miss Muller! (*Miss Muller starts nervously.*) When you've located Mr. Holster, tell him I've cleared the East Wing and had the special machinery installed, as he directed.

MISS MULLER: (*Leaving gratefully*) Yes, Mr. Lupton. . . .

ELLERY: (*Grimly*) Mr. Lupton, suppose I tell you I'm an Axis spy.

LUPTON: (*Blankly*) Huh?

ELLERY: For all you know I *might* be an enemy agent — all four of us might. Yet you just gave Miss Muller — in our hearing — confidential production orders!

LUPTON: (*Blustering*) Well, I — I didn't say anything that —

ELLERY: The apparently innocent little scraps of information you let

drop — added to what Miss Muller obligingly told us — begins to give me a pretty good idea what Bill Holster's been working on in supposed secrecy in his office!

INSPECTOR: (*Coldly*) There's an awful lot of loose talk around here, Mr. Lupton.

LUPTON: (*With a nervous laugh*) You *can't* know anything. *I* don't know anything — and certainly Miss Muller doesn't! Anyway, what's all this got to do with where Bill Holster is?

ELLERY: (*Grimly*) It's got a great deal to do with it, Mr. Lupton. Take us to the personnel manager — Bernard!

SCENE 4: *Personnel Manager's Office*

BERNARD: (*A harassed-looking executive with gray hair*) But Lupton, I've been trying to get hold of Bill myself.

LUPTON: What did *you* want him for, Bernard?

BERNARD: I've finished checking in the special workmen Commander Cooley sent up on Holster's request from Norfolk to work in the East Wing.

LUPTON: Well, these people have some idea Holster's in trouble. Here in the plant, Bernard.

BERNARD: Trouble? What kind of trouble? Whatever Holster's up to, it's a secret. Why, even Lupton and I don't know what he's doing, Mr. Queen!

ELLERY: It's no secret any more, Mr. Bernard.

INSPECTOR: Each one of you — even though you *don't* know the secret — has let loose a couple of clues that, added up, tell *us* what it is!

ELLERY: And if we can put those scraps of information together, an Axis agent could have done it before us. Yesterday — or a week ago.

NIKKI: *That's* why Mr. Holster phoned Washington for help! He found out a spy is operating —

VELIE: An' he suspects sabotage — or murder!

NIKKI: Or kidnaping! Ellery, Mr. Holster's been kidnaped — that's why he's missing!

BERNARD: But that's so silly. . . .

LUPTON: Bernard's right. Holster's office is like a fortress —

INSPECTOR: Remember what happened to the Maginot Line, Mr. Lupton.

ELLERY: Dad, this investigation *must* begin at that one-room office of Holster's. If anything's happened to him, it happened there.

VELIE: Then let's get goin' before it's too late, Macstro —

INSPECTOR: (*Grimly*) If it's not too late already!

SCENE 5: *An Isolated Part of the Holster Plant Grounds*

(*The Queens, Nikki, and Sergeant Velie are climbing over the high wall of the enclosure which houses Holster's private office, by means of a ladder Ellery has requisitioned. The Inspector has had the electric current in the charged wires atop the wall turned off. They are all over the wall now, except Nikki.*)

ELLERY: Jump, Nikki! (*Nikki obeys.*) Wait, you three. Let's look things over before we mess up this snow that fell last night.

INSPECTOR: One-room concrete building in the middle of this yard — yard surrounded by wall —

VELIE: Wall solid except for steel door — (*He tries it.*)

NIKKI: And the door's locked.

ELLERY: Yes, no sign of tampering. Then how did this set of footprints get inside the yard?

VELIE: Prints of a right foot startin' at the wall here, and leadin' towards Holster's building.

NIKKI: Didn't Lupton tell us Mr. Holster lost his left leg in the World War? Mr. Holster *himself* must have left this one-legged trail in the snow

VELIE: Yeah, he don't wear no artificial leg, Maestro.

ELLERY: But he always uses a *crutch*, Sergeant. Where are the prints of the crutch? There aren't any!

INSPECTOR: That *is* queer. Marks of a right foot only — one directly ahead of the other — just prints of a man walking . . . *on one leg, without support.* Ellery, these prints are impossible!

NIKKI: (*Wonderingly*) No one-legged person could walk without *some* artificial aid — he'd lose his balance.

VELIE: He could hop. : : :

INSPECTOR: But these are *not* hopping prints, Velie! They show average stride — ordinary depth — they're *walking* prints.

ELLERY: Impossible is right, dad. Holster couldn't have made these prints. It was the spy.

INSPECTOR: One-legged trail goes from the wall here to that window in Holster's office — then it turns around and comes back again in a wide outcurve . . . to this same spot at the wall. Can't understand it —

VELIE: Whoever it was didn't even go near Holster's door. Just the window.

ELLERY: Let's take a look at that window. (*All run in snow.*)

NIKKI: Maybe the spy got *in* through the window, Ellery —

ELLERY: (*Dryly*) Past those iron bars, Nikki?

INSPECTOR: But the window itself is partly open, Ellery! (*They stop at the window.*) Enemy agent could

have poked a gun past these bars and through this open window into the room —

NIKKI: To . . . shoot Mr. Holster. (*She cries out.*) Look — there! The corner of a cot — and — and a *foot!* Not moving!

VELIE: Just one foot. It's Holster on that cot, Inspector. I guess he's —

INSPECTOR: Try the door, Velie. (*They run to the door.*) So they got him after all —

VELIE: (*Shaking the door*) It's locked, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: Break it in.

ELLERY: Looks too strong for one man, Sergeant. Let's try together. One, two . . . (*They fling themselves at the door.*)

VELIE: Hardly made a dent. Once more, Maestro. One —

ELLERY: Wait! (*They hear a key turning in the lock inside.*) A key . . . from inside . . .

NIKKI: (*Whispering*) Opening the door . . . the *spy* . . .

INSPECTOR: Get set, Velie. Your gun — (*The door is flung open.*)

HOLSTER: (*A sharp, haggard man — from inside the room*) Don't move!

NIKKI: (*Dazed*) A *one*-legged man . . . with a *crutch* in one hand . . .

INSPECTOR: (*Feebly*) And a .45 in the other. Hi, Mr. Holster.

VELIE: He was only *sleepin'* on that cot. Whew!

ELLERY: (*Crisply*) Glad we're in time, Mr. Holster. You can put up that revolver, and—

HOLSTER: I said don't move. I shoot the first one of you who tries to to put a foot inside this room. Now—you! How'd you get into this yard?

ELLERY: I'm Ellery Queen, Mr. Holster. We got in by climbing over your wall after turning the electric current off. I'm a Special Investigator for the Government—

INSPECTOR: I'm Inspector Queen. This is Miss Porter—

VELIE: (*Genially*) Not to mention Sergeant Velie, Mr. Holster. So if you'll let us in—

HOLSTER: I said don't move. If you're Ellery Queen, brother, hand over your credentials. And don't try any tricks. I may be minus a leg, but there's nothing wrong with my trigger finger.

ELLERY: You're perfectly right, Mr. Holster. Here.

VELIE: I'll say! The others blabbed without even checkin' up on us.

HOLSTER: (*Smiling*) Well! Here you are, Mr. Queen. Come in. (*They enter his office.*) But what's this about blabbing? Who's been blabbing?

INSPECTOR: Lupton and Bernard.

NIKKI: And your secretary, Miss Muller. They all said things about your work, Mr. Holster—

HOLSTER: They can't possibly have. They don't know what work I'm doing.

ELLERY: Mr. Holster, shall *I* tell you what work you're doing?

HOLSTER: (*Grimly*) It's a good trick if you can do it, Queen.

ELLERY: Anybody could do it. Nikki, what was Miss Muller's loose talk?

NIKKI: She said Mr. Holster's been working day and night all by himself for more than a week in here, making a duplicate set of plans by hand.

ELLERY: Mr. Holster, why should a famous *ordnance* engineer, head of an arms plant, shut himself up for over a week in an electrically protected stronghold and make a *duplicate* set of plans *with his own hands?*—Not trusting an assistant? *Because he must be secretly designing a new weapon of extraordinary importance to the prosecution of the War.*

HOLSTER: (*Frowning*) Go on.

ELLERY: What new secret weapon? Well, Lupton mentioned that you've been very "upset" lately—haven't been able to talk about anything but *the U-boat menace* for months.

INSPECTOR: Bernard mentioned that *Commander* Cooley had sent down special workmen on your instructions from Norfolk. A "Commander" is a *naval* officer, and Norfolk is a *naval* base!

ELLERY: Naval Officer? U-boat menace? Therefore, Mr. Holster, you've been designing *a new type of defensive weapon to be used against Axis subs by the United States Navy.* Sergeant, what else did Lupton blab?

VELIE: He said he'd cleared the East Wing of the plant and installed the "special machinery"—

NIKKI: And Mr. Bernard said he'd just finished checking in the special *workmen* for the East Wing.

ELLERY: So what does the enemy know, Mr. Holster? That you've designed an important defensive weapon against U-boats—that the design is a secret known only to you—that you're past the planning and model stage—that you're ready to begin production! Isn't that enough to make the enemy take action?

HOLSTER: (*Slowly*) Those footprints in the snow . . . So *that's* why I've already had a visit from a spy. (*Abruptly*) Situation's even worse than I thought. Mr. Queen, we'd better hold a council of war —right now!

SCENE 6: *Holster's Private Office*

INSPECTOR: You phoned Washington for help, Mr. Holster. You'd spotted those footprints in your yard?

HOLSTER: Yes, Inspector. I'd come into this building before the snow fell, so I knew the footprints couldn't be mine. I was puzzled. Whoever it was couldn't have got over the wall without being electrocuted, couldn't have got in through the wall door, either, because one of the two special locks is a safe lock, to which only I know the combination, and I have the only key to the other lock on a chain around my neck.

VELIE: So you got worried, figured it was espionage—and phoned Washington, huh, Mr. Holster?

HOLSTER: Right, Sergeant. But then I fell asleep on my cot—I was exhausted from my week's grind.

NIKKI: But *I* can't understand why the enemy agent pretended to walk like a one-legged man, Ellery.

ELLERY: So that if a guard looked over the wall, Nikki, he'd think the prints were made by Mr. Holster.

HOLSTER: Mr. Queen, you've got to grab that spy before he can sabotage my plant!

ELLERY: That's what we're here for.

INSPECTOR: The danger is to you, Mr. Holster, not your plant. Plants can be rebuilt—but not your brains.

HOLSTER: I can take care of myself. Look. I've finished one set of duplicate plans—they're in this blue envelope on my desk. I'm nearly finished with the second duplicate set—and that one has to go to Washington, so I'd better finish it right now while you start your spy hunt.

ELLERY: Notify us the moment you're through, Mr. Holster. If we're not in the plant, you can reach us at the Island Inn, a few miles toward town. I'm registered under the name of Hilary King. . . .

HOLSTER: Wait, I'll write that down. . . . Where's my gold pencil? Thought I had it in my vest pocket. . . . Miss Porter, would you hand me one of those drawing pencils on the desk?

NIKKI: Of course, Mr. Holster. Here —

ELLERY: Just a moment! Why should your pencil be missing, Mr. Holster?

HOLSTER: I must have mislaid it. Thanks, Miss Porter. (*He scribbles on a pad.*) "Hilary King — Island Inn —"

INSPECTOR: What's bothering you, son?

ELLERY: Dad, in a case like this, anything out of the ordinary is suspicious. We'd better look for that pencil. Velie — dad — (*They agree, and all begin to search.*) You search, too, Mr. Holster.

HOLSTER: Right. It's a gold mechanical pencil with my initials on it. . . . Might have dropped onto my cot. . . . No. Or on the floor under it —

NIKKI: Here it is! (*They all look up.*) Gold mechanical pencil, initials W. H. — found it under the desk.

HOLSTER: Thanks, Miss Porter. I'll put it in my vest pocket this time.

ELLERY: This case has affected my nerves. Glad it's nothing, Mr. Holster. Well, let's be going, you three. (*Holster: "I'll let you out." He opens the door.*) Phone us the minute you're through. (*Holster nods and lets them out. They begin walking in the snow toward the ladder.*)

INSPECTOR: (*Grimly*) Affected your nerves! You haven't got any more nerves than a battle wagon, Ellery. Why'd you make that fuss about Holster's gold pencil?

ELLERY: (*Chuckling*) You old ferret. Nothing escapes you, does it? No, dad, it wasn't the pencil. I just wanted you all occupied for a moment.

NIKKI: While you did something behind our backs!

VELIE: Such as what, Maestro?

ELLERY: Such as committing a crime, Sergeant.

INSPECTOR: *You* committed a crime? What crime?

ELLERY: Never mind now, dad. We've got to get on the trail of that Axis agent before he does some damage!

SCENE 7: *A Room at a Nearby Inn*

(*The Inspector and Nikki are going over long lists of names. Ellery is stretched comfortably on a sofa, staring into space.*)

INSPECTOR: (*Wearily*) We'd better go over this list of plant employes again, Nikki.

NIKKI: (*Same*) All right, Inspector. But it seems to me we're getting nowhere fast.

VELIE: While the Master Mind stretches out on a hotel sofa and does nothin'. Is that the way you're gettin' on the trail of this Nazi snoop, Maestro?

ELLERY: (*Absently*) Yes, Sergeant.

INSPECTOR: Don't you know how my son solves cases, Velie? By thinking. (*Velie grunts.*)

NIKKI: Thinking won't catch *this* spy.

ELLERY: That's where you're wrong, Miss Porter. Thinking — (*Phone rings.*) Ah, there's Holster's call.

NIKKI: It might be his secretary. I told her where she could get you in an emergency. (*She answers the phone.*) Hello?

INSPECTOR: He must be finished with that set of plans for Washington —

NIKKI: What! Ellery — it is Miss Muller! Something terrible's hap-

pened — here — (*She hands Ellery the phone.*)

ELLERY: Hello, Miss Muller!

MISS MULLER: (*She is crying*) Mr. Queen, please — come over to the plant — right away!

ELLERY: What's happened? What's the matter?

MISS MULLER: *Fire.* A *fire* broke out in Mr. Holster's private building. . . . (*Ellery: "Fire!" The others exclaim.*) The plant fire department's working hard on the blaze but they can't get into the building — the heat's too intense. . . . (*She cannot go on.*)

ELLERY: What about Mr. Holster?

MISS MULLER: He's . . . he's in there, Mr. Queen. *B-burning.* . . .

ELLERY: We'll be right over. (*He hangs up.*) Dad —

INSPECTOR: I know. Sabotage. (*Grimly*) Come on!

SCENE 8: *Outside Holster's Private Office*

(*Two plant fire engines are playing streams of water on the one-room building. The fire is almost out. Excited employes mill about.*)

INSPECTOR: (*Tired*) Well, Mr. Bernard, it's under control.

BERNARD: (*Dully*) Yes, Inspector.

NIKKI: Isn't there any chance at all that Mr. Holster — somehow — managed to — escape, Mr. Lupton?

LUPTON: (*Heavily*) No, Miss Porter. They found the door locked. He was trapped in there. Poor old Bill.

INSPECTOR: Ellery! (*Ellery comes pushing through the crowd.*) Well?

ELLERY: Well, dad, it was a thorough job. Concrete building didn't burn, of course, but everything inside is gone. Velie's waiting for the Fire Chief's report.

BERNARD: (*Groaning*) That means Holster's plans — Holster himself — up in smoke. Smoke, Lupton!

LUPTON: (*Same*) If he'd only confided in us, Bernard.

BERNARD: We have no idea what the weapon was, gentlemen. The machinery isn't complete — Holster held back the last few vital parts —

LUPTON: It was something big — it must have been. It might have ended the War a year sooner —

VELIE: (*From the crowd*) Inspector!

INSPECTOR: Velie! What's the Chief say?

VELIE: (*Appearing*) Holster's dead. Burned to an ash. (*They fall silent.*) That was a real hot fire.

NIKKI: Wasn't *anything* saved, Sergeant?

VELIE: Nope. No papers, no records, nothin'. Chief says the fire centered on where they found Holster's ashes — like as if an incendiary bomb'd gone off in his lap.

ELLERY: (*Fretfully*) I missed somewhere. I should have prevented Holster's death — (*Softly*) *Of course. . . .*

WASHINGTON OFFICIAL: (*From the crowd — pushing through, preceded by Secret Service men*) Queen? Mr. Queen!

NIKKI: Ellery — look! It's your boss — from Washington!

ELLERY: I know, Nikki. I phoned him. . . . Sir, I'm sorry about Holster —

OFFICIAL: (*Appearing*) Got here as soon as I could by plane, Mr. Queen. Holster's —?

ELLERY: Dead, Sir. Burned to death.

OFFICIAL: (*Grimly*) Then it's murder as well as sabotage. (*Sternly*) You're in charge of this case, Mr. Queen. I expect you to solve it.

ELLERY: (*Quietly*) It's already solved, Sir. (*They all look dazed.*)

OFFICIAL: But it just happened, Mr. Queen!

ELLERY: Just the same, Sir, I know the Axis agent who caused this fire and murdered Bill Holster!

"The Adventure of the One-Legged Man," as you have just seen, centers about the grave and serious problem of loose talk, and how the innocently wagging tongues of well-meaning but thoughtless Americans provide vital war information to the thousands of Axis agents and sympathizers whose ears are ever alert to catch any scrap which comes their way. So the solution of this case should have added zest for you. Stop here and try to solve the mystery before ELLERY *reveals the one and only answer, based upon logical deductions from clues now in your possession. Naming the criminal is not sufficient, if you play the game according to* ELLERY'S *rules; you should get the correct reasoning, too. Problem: Who is the enemy agent who set fire to Holster's private office and murdered the famous ordnance engineer?. . . Now check your solution by reading* ELLERY QUEEN'S *own solution to "The Adventure of the One-Legged Man."*

The Solution

SCENE 9: *A Private Office at the Holster Plant*

OFFICIAL: (*Grimly*) All right, Mr. Queen. This office is quite private. Let's have it.

ELLERY: Point One, Sir: How did the spy get into Holster's yard? Not through the door in the wall — Holster had the only key to one of the locks on a chain around his neck, and he was the only one who knew the combination to the other lock. Therefore the spy *must* have come over the wall.

NIKKI: But how, Ellery? He'd have been electrocuted.

INSPECTOR: We came over the wall,

and *we* weren't electrocuted, Nikki.

VELIE: He turned the juice off — the way we did!

ELLERY: And who could have switched off the electricity in those wires on the wall? *Only someone in the plant.*

OFFICIAL: Then the agent's someone in the plant. What next?

ELLERY: Point Two, Sir: Why did he invade Holster's yard? Well, what happened afterwards? Holster's office went up in flames. Therefore the agent had come over the wall for the specific purpose of *throwing an incendiary bomb into the office.*

INSPECTOR: Through the *open* window — past those iron bars!

ELLERY: Point Three: What *was* the incendiary bomb? Well, what was the only suspicious thing in Holster's office? The gold pencil you found, Nikki, under Holster's desk. And when you found it, Holster placed it in his *vest pocket.* But what was the Fire Chief's report, Sergeant?

VELIE: That the fire *centered around Holster's body.*

ELLERY: So the incendiary bomb must have been the gold pencil in Holster's vest — going off *in Holster's pocket.*

OFFICIAL: (*Grimly*) Up to their old tricks, eh? The incendiary pencil was used by the Germans as far back as the First World War. Then it's clear, Mr. Queen, that the agent found an opportunity to steal Holster's pencil and convert it into an incendiary. But who *is* this Axis agent? You said you knew.

ELLERY: We can deduce his identity, Sir — Point Four — from the trail of prints he left in the snow. Were those footprints made by a one-legged man? No, it's impossible for a one-legged man to *walk* without a crutch or other artificial aid, and there were no signs of any such aid in the snow. Therefore the footprints could not have been made by a *one*-legged man.

NIKKI: They were made by a man with *two* legs!

VELIE: But how, Ellery?

ELLERY: Once you realize a *two*-legged man made that trail of single-foot prints, you see how it must have been done. Simply by wearing *two right shoes* instead of a left and a right, and placing one foot directly ahead of the other while walking!

INSPECTOR: But son, we know the spy left those prints to make it look as if Holster'd made them. If he's someone in the factory, he must know Holster always used a crutch. . . .

VELIE: Yeah, so why didn't the spy

use a crutch and leave crutch marks in the snow, Maestro?

ELLERY: The vital question. Was it an oversight on the agent's part? Hardly. If he'd taken the trouble to wear two right shoes, he couldn't fail to carry a crutch under his *left* armpit to complete the illusion. But he *didn't*. Conclusion: He didn't because he *couldn't* . . . it was physically impossible for him to carry a crutch under his left armpit!

NIKKI: But Ellery, how could that be?

ELLERY: Only if the enemy agent *has no left arm*, Nikki — only if the enemy agent's left arm is *cut off at the shoulder*. And who in the plant *has* no left arm to the shoulder? Lupton — the plant superintendent! Lupton told us about it himself. Didn't you, Lupton?

LUPTON: (*With a nervous laugh*) If this is a joke —

INSPECTOR: Velie, prove to this traitor that we have no sense of humor whatsoever.

VELIE: Come on, *Herr* Lupton. . . . (*He hustles Lupton out.*)

BERNARD: (*Gasping*) *Lupton* — an enemy agent?

OFFICIAL: The dirty fingernails of the Gestapo, Mr. Bernard, are attached to a mighty long arm. Mr. Queen, it's too bad you didn't solve this case in time to save poor Holster's plans for that anti-sub weapon of his.

ELLERY: But they *were* saved, Sir.

OFFICIAL: I thought everything in Holster's office burned up!

ELLERY: Yes, Sir. But one set of duplicate plans — in a blue envelope — were not in the office when the fire started. I took them out myself.

NIKKI: The "crime" you said you committed, Ellery!

INSPECTOR: Swiped that set of plans while we were searching for Holster's pencil!

ELLERY: Yes, dad, I was afraid something might happen that we couldn't prevent. Here are Holster's plans, Sir.

OFFICIAL: Great work, Mr. Queen. You've saved Holster's new weapon — and that weapon may be the answer to the most serious problem the United Nations face this year — licking the U-boat menace!

(*The music comes up.*)

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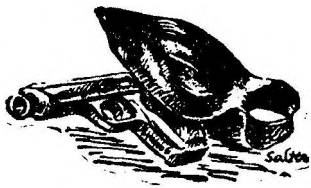

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(— Continued from other side)

though the identity card in her purse bore that name. Even though all her personal possessions were monogrammed "S.C."! And she *knew* she WASN'T insane — despite frequent mysterious attempts to DRIVE her mad. But she realized that if she didn't escape from this maddening terror soon, she actually WOULD become the person the evil "woman in red" *wanted* her to be — a half-wit named Sheila Campbell!

Suddenly Julia thought of Colin Bruce — her ONE friend! She tried desperately to reach him. But to intercept and destroy Julia's messages was no trick at all to this fiendishly clever "woman in red" who would stop at *nothing* to gain her mysterious ends — NOT EVEN MURDER!

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To New Members of the Detective Book Club

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By Anthony Gilbert

Suppose YOU were Julia Ross. What would YOU do if "the woman in red" claimed you were her half-witted niece of another name . . . and you yourself couldn't prove you WEREN'T!

WHAT happened to Julia Ross could happen to anybody . . . to YOU! Only twenty-four hours earlier, she had been just a penniless, unemployed Nobody – without a friend or enemy to her name! Now, suddenly and without warning, she had been made the victim of an inhuman plot to destroy her identity, her sanity . . . even her life!

WHY had the sinister "woman in red" been so pleased in hiring a personal secretary who had *no* friends, *no* relatives? *Was it because she wanted a girl whom no one would miss if she should suddenly vanish?* WHY had she been brought *here* – to this heavily shuttered house? *Why was "the woman in red" telling everyone that the girl locked in the upstairs room was her feeble-minded niece, Sheila Campbell?*

Julia knew she WASNT Sheila Campbell. Even though they CALLED her by that name. Even

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