FLYNN'S

ISSUED WEEKLY

WILLIAM J. FLYNN, EDITOR
Twenty-Five Years in the U.S. Secret Service

10¢ PER COPY FEBRUARY 20 THE YEAR $4.00

TWO FIXED - ONE FLASHING

By Maxwell Smith

A Good Brush or what have you

I had an old lather brush. It was worn and weary. Its bristles were down to less than an inch. It was an antique, and had that kind of odor.

A new brush seemed indicated. I bought one. I bought some more. Home-make and import. From $2.50 up—way up. My ambition was not to make a collection, but I succeeded. None of 'em would do.

Then we developed the Mennen Lather Brush. Oh, man! It's the real thing. Soft and silky. Won't prick the skin. Works up the lather quickly, richly and plenty. I never knew there was so much lather in the world. Spreads smoothly over the cheek area and snuggles into the corners, too. Easily the equal of any $4-priced brush—if not better. I buried the old brush, with tears in my eyes.

I got Mr. Mennen to let me sell 100,000 at the special price of $1.25. They'll sell like Mennen Shaving Cream.

Send me a section of a Mennen Shaving Cream carton showing the trade-mark and $1.25 and I'll mail you yours. Your money back if you don't think it's a bargain.

You've been using Mennen Shaving Cream and Mennen Talcum for Men ever since they captured the preference of millions.

But have you tried Mennen Skin Balm—after shaving? Gives a tingle, then cooling comfort—brisk, refreshing, antiseptic.

Jim Henry
(Mennen Salesman)

THE MENNEN COMPANY
377 Central Ave., Newark, N.J., U.S.A.

NAMES

YOU meet Mr. Howard and Mr. Walters in a gathering. Their names are to you but two of many you hear.

A few days later you meet Mr. Howard again. And again. He becomes a friend, perhaps an intimate in your social as well as business life.

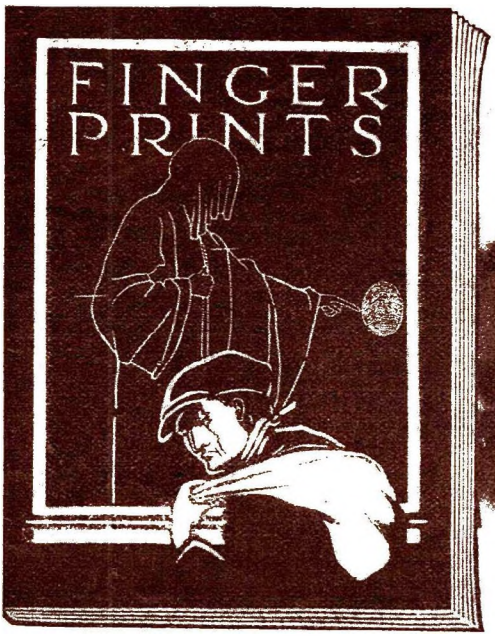
Mr. Howard's name grows to mean a lot to you. Mr. Walters is rarely seen again and soon forgotten.

In this publication are other names—names of advertised products. Time and again you see them. They are like old friends—to be trusted. Their names mean economy, full value and integrity.

The unadvertised products—perhaps you see one in a store—or in a friend's home. Soon the name is forgotten—a stranger about whom you know little.

Fill your medicine closet, your pantry, your wardrobe with products whose names are guarantees of their integrity—advertised products. Like intimate friends—you know what they are and will do.

Read the advertisements to know the names that are worth knowing in the market place



Send for this Free Book!

A FASCINATING BOOK of Detective stories that shows how ordinary boys and men have won nationwide fame, thousands of dollars in rewards, and important official positions by solving finger print mysteries!

" . . . Shortly before midnight a young couple slipped away from the dance. They sought out a long, low, rakish roadster. With powerful headlights picking out the path, it moved cautiously through the parking space and out onto the high road.

"Early next morning—a farm boy found the girl's dead body crumpled in the wayside ditch. Concealed in the bushes at the side of the road lay the boy's lifeless body, also shot from behind."

Who had committed the murder?

Read the rest of the story on page 15 of our new Finger Print book. Find out how the murderers were traced, tried and convicted, and how a certain finger print expert solved five murder mysteries and secured 97 convictions in less than a year.

Find out how you can become a Finger Print Expert.

Thirteen Thrilling Stories of Mystery and Achievement

Thirteen stories of crime, daring robberies, mysterious murders, thrilling escapes. You'll enjoy "Snowflakes," a great dope story—"The Invisible Finger Print," a blackmail mystery.

In "Foiled," a true account of a great political coup, you'll read of the astounding rise of a young country photographer who saved the Mayor of his city and was later appointed to the most important identification position in the state.

You'll read of men who achieved fame, big rewards and important positions in a short time through the study of finger prints.

Any man who can read and write can become a finger print expert.

PARTIAL LIST

Graduates U. of A. S. Recently appointed Finger Print Experts of these States, Cities and Institutions.

State of Iowa
State of Idaho
State of Colorado
St. Paul, Minn.
Columbus, Ohio
Detroit, Mich.
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Great Falls, Mont.
Idaho Falls, Idaho
East Lansing, Mich.
Schenectady, N. Y.
Lorain County, Ohio
El Paso, Texas
Galveston, Texas
Houston, Texas
Lincoln, Nebr.
Everett, Wash.
Ogden, Utah
Butte, Mont.
Pueblo, Colo.
Albany County Penitentiary
Albany, N. Y.
Wilkes Barre, Pa.
Livingston, Mont.
Alhambra, Calif.
Tulsa, Okla.
Havana, Cuba

Finger Print Experts Needed!

More and more the detection of crime resolves itself into a problem of identification. Trained men are needed every month to fill the new positions that are created. Records show that University of Applied Science graduates get first choice at the big positions. Listed below are some of the city and state bureaus to which U. of A. S. men have been appointed.

You can learn finger print identification in a few months in your spare time—at home.

Send the Coupon!

This book cannot be bought at any newsstand or bookstore—but it will be sent to you FREE if you write to us at once. Thirty-two pages, illustrated in color with weird crime pictures. This book explains your opportunities in the finger print world—shows how you can get your training in a few months—tells how you can get a professional finger print outfit free. Write for this book today.

University of Applied Science
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 11-42, Chicago, Ill.

University of Applied Science, Dept. 11-42
1920 Sunnyside Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Please send me free your 32-page illustrated book "Finger Prints." I understand that there is absolutely no obligation. Also tell me how I can become a finger print expert by studying a few months in spare time—and how I can get a professional finger print outfit *free*.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

FLYNN'S
ISSUED WEEKLY

WILLIAM J. FLYNN, EDITOR
Twenty Five Years in the Secret Service of the United States

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THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N. Y., and
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C. T. DIXON, President ARTHUR B. GAUNT, Treasurer RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $6.00 to Canada, and $7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY.

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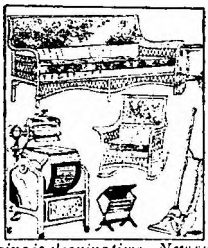
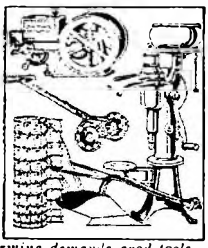
We are style headquarters. From the designing rooms of New York and Paris come the new modes shown in our catalog. You pay nothing extra for style—but you get it, and quality besides, when your selection is made from the World's Largest Store. We guarantee a saving.

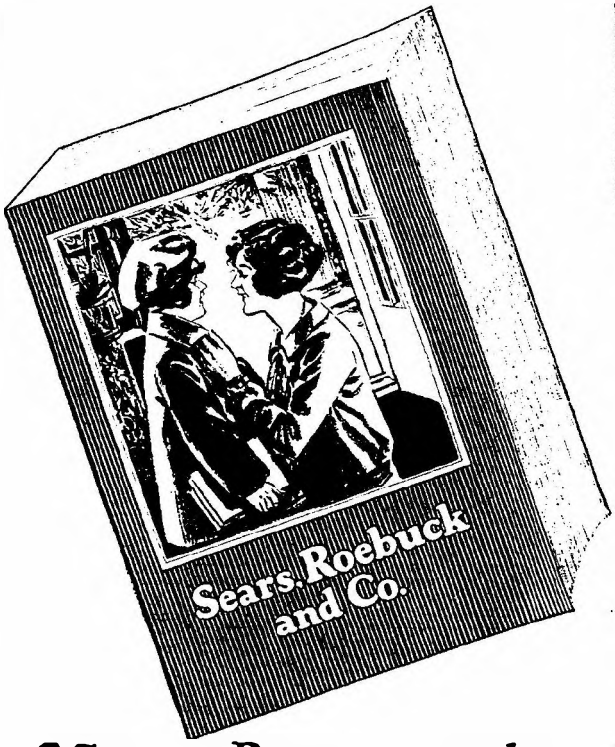


Spring is cleaning time. New rugs; a davenport for the living room; a new vacuum cleaner; a bedroom to be kalsomined. Everything you need to make your home attractive is priced in the Thrifty Book to save you money. And we give Real 24-Hour Service.

Men order from the World's Largest Store because they find it convenient and economical. Style apparel and sturdy work clothing are displayed at attractive prices in our new catalog. Nine million families buy from the book of 35,000 bargains. You should have it, too!



Farming demands good tools. We have them. Most everything used on the farm is quoted in the Thrift Book and at a price way below that asked elsewhere. Our line of hardware, implements, gas engines, harness and cream separators is most complete. Be sure you have our catalog.



The THRIFT BOOK OF A NATION

35,000 *Bargains in this New Spring Book*

With this new catalog—"The Thrift Book of a Nation"—you have access to 35,000 bargains, the greatest store in the world!

So complete is this book that practically every need for the family, the home, the farm, and the shop can be supplied from its pages—at prices that insure big savings.

Millions buy from the World's Largest Store because they have found here the quality they prefer; have learned that 99 out of every 100 orders are actually shipped within 24 hours after they are received; have proven to their own satisfaction that they make real savings.

Our new catalog is ready. Your copy is waiting for you. Just fill in and mail the coupon.

Sears, Roebuck *and* Co.

Chicago • Philadelphia • Kansas City • Dallas • Seattle

We give real 24 hour service

Mail the coupon TODAY *to the store nearest you*

SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO., 78A21
Chicago - Philadelphia - Kansas City - Dallas - Seattle
Send me free your big Spring and Summer Catalog.

Name .....

Postoffice .....

Rural Route ..... *Box No.* .....

State .....

Street and No. .....

WORLD'S LARGEST STORE

WE OWN AND OPERATE SUPER-POWER RADIO BROADCASTING STATION W-L-S—TUNE IN ON 345 METERS

Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rate in The Munsey Combination comprising:

Munsey's Magazine -
Argosy-Allstory - -
Flynn's - - - - -
Minimum space 4 lines.

Combination Line Rate $3.00 Less 2% cash discount

March 27th Flynn's Forms Close February 27th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

AGENTS: $11.80 DAILY IN ADVANCE (send for sworn proof) Introducing New Insured Hosiery. 57 styles, 40 colors, guaranteed seven months. No capital or experience required. You simply take orders. We deliver and collect (or you can deliver, suit yourself). Credit given. PAY YOU DAILY, monthly bonus besides. New line now ready. We furnish samples. Spare time will do. MACOCHEE TEXTILE CO., Card 2704, Cincinnati, O.

MAKE $75 A WEEK AND UP, SELLING OUR FINE, MADE-TO-MEASURE, ALL-WOOL SUITS. DIRECT TO WEARER—ALL ONE PRICE. $31.50. BIGGEST VALUES. COMMISSIONS IN ADVANCE. WE DELIVER AND COLLECT. 6X9 SWATCH SAMPLES FURNISHED. W. Z. GIBSON, INC., DEPT. P-400, CHICAGO.

WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR. SOAPS, EXTRACTS, PERFUMES, TOILET GOODS. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. CARNATION CO., DEPT. 1040, ST. LOUIS, MO.

A PAYING POSITION OPEN TO REPRESENTATIVE OF CHARACTER. TAKE ORDERS SHOES—HOSIERY DIRECT TO WEARER. GOOD INCOME. PERMANENT. WRITE NOW. TANNERS SHOE MFG. CO., 1-32 C ST., BOSTON, MASS.

AGENTS—WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLES. SELL MADISON "BETTER-MADE" SHIRTS FOR LARGE MANUFACTURER DIRECT TO WEARER. NO CAPITAL OR EXPERIENCE REQUIRED. MANY EARN $100 WEEKLY AND BONUS. MADISON COMPANY, 564 Broadway, New York.

BRING HOME THE BACON—selling Stuart's famous Food Flavors. Quick sellers. Big profits. Write for free sample and terms. C. H. STUART & CO., 6505 Main, Newark, New York.

66 MILES ON 1 GALLON. WONDERFUL VAPOR HUMIDIFIER for autos. All makes. Spare or full time Agencies wanted everywhere. Exclusive. I Free to Introduce. Big profits to any man with car. CRITCHLOW, Inventor, D-39, Wheaton, Ill.

WE START YOU in business, furnishing everything. Men and women, $30.00 to $100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 93, East Orange, N. J.

ONE CENT! POST CARD BRINGS FREE SOLID GOLD STUD OFFER TO AGENTS. Rajah Raynbo Gem deceives experts. RAYNBO GEMS, Dept. F-25, Salisbury, N. C.

DISTRICT SALESMAN FOR UNION MADE, HAND TAILORED, ALL WOOL SUITS AND OVERCOATS at $23.50. Prefer married man with sales experience. $35.00 weekly to start. Apply L. D. HARVEY, Mgr., Box L. D., Chicago.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC., ARE WANTED FOR PUBLICATION. GOOD IDEAS BRING BIG MONEY. SUBMIT MSS., or write LITERARY BUREAU, 110, HANNIBAL, MO.

SONG POEM WRITERS—IF YOU WILL SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS to me today, I will send you my proposition. Get in touch with me now. A postal card will do. RAY HIRBELER, D-3, 2104 N. Keystone Ave., Chicago.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

HERE'S YOUR LAND! $10 DOWN AND $10 A MONTH BUYS TWENTY ACRES OF MY BEST LAND IN CENTRAL MICHIGAN FOR $400. OR TEN ACRES FOR $250. WRITE AT ONCE FOR FREE 48-PAGE PICTURE BOOK. G. W. SWIGART, Y1245 First Natl. Bank Bldg., Chicago.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

$$$ FOR IDEAS. PHOTOPLAY PLOTS ACCEPTED IN ANY FORM. REVISED, CRITICIZED, PUBLISHED, COPYRIGHTED. ADVICE FREE. UNIVERSAL SCENARIO CORPORATION, 209 SECURITY BLDG., SANTA MONICA & WESTERN AVENUE, HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

Agents and Distributors. We pay $85 a week from start introducing amazing new invention that converts any washboiler into a real washing machine in one minute. Quick demonstration clinches sale. Works wholly automatic, no electricity, gas engine or hand power needed. Does big family washing in 30 min. Wonderful all-year seller. Tremendous demand. No competition. Sells for only few dollars complete on a money-back guarantee. No capital or experience necessary. You make 100% profit. $8,000 to $10,000 a year easily. Write for **FREE** Demonstrating Outfit offer at once. Dept. 2-36, MERLE MFG. CO., Aurora, Ill.

Mirrors Re-Silvered At Home. Costs less 5c per square foot; you charge 75c. Immense profits, plating like new, brassy worn-off auto parts, reflectors, tableware, stoves, etc. Outfits furnished. Details free. SPRINKLE Plater, 19, Marion, Indiana.

LIGHTNING STRANGE BATTERY COMPOUND. Charges discharged batteries instantly. Eliminates old method entirely. Gallon free to agents. LIGHTNING CO., St. Paul, Minn.

SELLING LIKE BLAZES! ELEVEN PIECE TOILET GOODS ASSORTMENT AT $2.00 WITH TWO PIECE CARVING SET FREE to your customers. 100% profit. DAVIS PRODUCTS CO., Dept. 12, 1311 Carroll, Chicago.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 54, East Orange, N. J.

WE PAY $200 MONTHLY SALARY, FURNISH CAR AND EXPENSES TO INTRODUCE OUR GUARANTEED POULTRY AND STOCK POWDERS. CLEANER, ETC. BIGLER COMPANY, X506, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.

QUIT RINGING DOORBELLS. I MADE $800 MONTHLY, NO SOLICITING. NO GOODS TO BUY. WHY NOT YOU? DETAILS FREE. R. McNOWN, 308 Wilkinson, Omaha, Neb.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES: EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.44. Ten orders daily easy. Samples and information free. WORLD MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 9, Newark, N. J.

District Salesman: Must be reliable. Prefer married man, 30 years of age or over and permanent resident in his community. EXCEPTIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR GOOD MAN. Address SALES MANAGER, Dept. 108, 844 West Adams St., Chicago.

DO YOU WANT AGENTS AND SALESMEN TO SELL your merchandise? Men and women who are educated in personal salesmanship and know the house-to-house, office, and store canvassing proposition. These advertisers are getting them year in and year out, and there are thousands more for you among the readers of the Munsey Magazines. Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, Munsey Combination, 280 B'way, New York.

FARM LANDS—CANADA

LESS THAN $1 PER ACRE.

4½ acres on Georgian Bay	$40.50
12½ acres fur farm	$43.20
25 acres hunting campsite	$60.30
50 acres Muskoka Lake District	$63.00
100 acres Hunting and Trapping	$91.80
160 acres Farm Canadian West	$315.00
Mining claim near mines that have paid millions	$378.00

The very desirable properties listed above are being seized and sold for taxes, together with hundreds of other equally choice parcels of land at merely nominal prices. Many of them could not be bought in the ordinary way at ten times the price. Beautifully situated hunting and fishing camps for moose, deer, caribou, ducks, partridge, trout, whitefish, bass, etc. Summer homes, heavily wooded lands, for pleasure and investment. Easy monthly payments of $5 upwards. Send for free illustrated list, with complete explanations. Send no money, but send for list to-day, so you will get first choice. TAX SALE SERVICE, Room 611, 72 Queen Street W., Toronto 2, Ontario, Canada.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

Extra Thick Full Oversize

Derby CORD Tires

$1.00 Down

Balance on Easy Payments

Yes, only $1.00 down now brings you the genuine Derby Cord tire on approval. This is your opportunity to equip your car with *brand new, first grade* genuine Derby Cord tires at lower than list prices of advertised brands and on small monthly payments without feeling the expense. Read:

Guaranteed 10000 Miles

The genuine Derby Cord tire is guaranteed to be absolutely first quality. If any defects should develop, we will replace or repair the defective tire on the basis of 10,000 miles of service. The Derby tire is branded with the Straus & Schram name and backed by Straus & Schram ironclad guarantee. We know how the Derby is made and we say—no matter what brand or what price, there is no better tire than the Derby. The Straus & Schram Derby Oversize Cord is an **EXTRA HEAVY, EXTRA THICK, FULL OVERSIZE** cord tire. Compare it for size and weight with ANY other well known makes sold for cash at higher prices.

Derby Special Non-Skid Tread

Our exclusive Derby Non-Skid Tread is extra thick and semi-flat, providing nearly twice as much wearing surface as the ordinary rounded or flat tread. So tough that it will show almost no wear after thousands of miles of service. The tread is scientifically designed to give the highest non-skid efficiency. The friction surface is of unadulterated new rubber, carefully vulcanized to prevent separation. The Derby Cord tire has that handsome all black color now preferred by motorists. **Terms as low as—**

Our Prices (*6 Months to Pay*)

	Clincher Cord Tires.		Number
30 x 3	Standard Size	$15.95	Z8628A
30 x 3½	" "	16.85	Z8629A
30 x 3½	Oversize	18.65	Z8630A
30x3½	**Giant Oversize**	**20.95**	**Z8631A**

Note! We particularly recommend our **30x3 1-2 Giant Oversize** Derby Cord—a bigger, better, stronger tire. Gives greater comfort and greater mileage and the price is only a few cents more a month!

	Straight Side Cord Tires.		Number
30 x 3½	Giant Oversize	$23.90	Z8632A
31 x 4	" "	30.85	Z8633A
32 x 4	" "	33.75	Z8634A
33 x 4	" "	34.40	Z8635A

Balloon Cord Tire (*To fit Ford cars equipped at factory with small diameter wheels*)

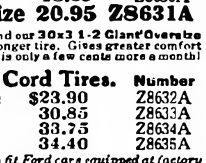
29 x 4.40	Full Oversize	26.85	Z8636A

(We do not furnish any other sizes)

Inner Tubes

Order a New Tube With Your Tire

We offer gray inner tubes, extra strong, especially built to eliminate leaks. Also extra heavy red inner tubes which are 50% heavier than standard weight tubes and give extra service. All tubes of best materials, thoroughly tested. *Experts will tell you it's best to have a new tube with a new tire.*



Size	Gray Tubes		Red Tubes	
30 x 3	$2.90	No. Z8637A	$3.70	No. Z8642A
30 x 3½	3.35	No. Z8638A	4.75	No. Z8643A
31 x 4	4.60	No. Z8639A	5.80	No. Z8644A
32 x 4	4.80	No. Z8640A	5.90	No. Z8645A
33 x 4	4.95	No. Z8641A	6.00	No. Z8646A
29 x 4.40 for Balloon Tires—Red—			4.90	No. Z8647A

Straus & Schram
Dept. T2272, Chicago, Ill.

$2.50 a Month

On this wonderful new plan, if you need tires now, you need not wait until you have the cash. Send only $1.00 with the coupon now and get as many tires as you'll need for your car this entire season up to $50.00 worth. For over $50.00 worth send 10% down. Pay the balance while using them in six equal monthly payments. You won't feel the expense on this monthly payment plan and you'll be free from tire trouble all year.

On Approval Send Coupon

Only $1.00 with coupon brings the Genuine Derby tire to you on approval at our risk. If not satisfied after examination, send it back and we will refund your dollar plus transportation charges. Send the coupon today while these lowest rock-bottom prices last.

STRAUS & SCHRAM, Dept. T2272, Chicago, Ill.

I enclose $1.00. (*If your order is over $50.00, enclose 10% down.*) Send me *on money-back approval* and subject to your 10,000 mile guarantee the Genuine Derby Cord Tires and Tubes I have ordered below. If I am not satisfied, I may return the tires at once and you will refund my deposit including transportation charges. If satisfied, I will pay the balance of the total amount of my order in six equal monthly payments.

On this offer, you can buy up to $50.00 worth for $1.00 down. For over $50.00 worth enclose 10 per cent down. Balance in six equal monthly payments.

.....*Derby Cord Tires.* *No.*.....*Total Price*.....
How Many — Fill in Tire No.

.....*Tubes.* *No.*..... *Total Price*.....
How Many — Fill in Tube No.

Name.....

Address.....

Shipping Point.....

Post Office.....*State*.....

Makes Pumping Up Tires Unnecessary

Chicago, Ill.—F. E. Hughes, Suite 160-B, 2512 Monroe St. of this city has perfected a new air-tight valve cap that enables auto owners to pump up their tires once and never touch them again until punctured or worn out. Leading tire manufacturers, after thorough tests, have approved Mr. Hughes' invention and banished the old theory that air escapes through rubber. One inflation lasts the life of a tire, and tire mileage is doubled. These caps retail for $1.25 for set of five. The inventor wants agents and will send proof and samples Free. Write him today.—Adv.

Clear-Tone FOR PIMPLES

Your skin can be quickly cleared of Pimples, Blackheads, Acne or any Eruptions on the face or body, Barbers Itch and Eczema, Enlarged Pores, Oily or Shiny Skin. CLEAR-TONE has been Tried, Tested and Proven its merits in over 100,000 test cases.

FREE WRITE TODAY for my FREE Booklet —"A CLEAR-TONE SKIN" telling how I cured myself after being afflicted for fifteen years.

E. S. GIVENS 116 Chemical Bldg. **Kansas City, Mo.**

Be one of the lucky thousands to wear the marvelously hued Sun Stone, symbol of the sun's mysterious power for health, wealth and happiness. Strange tales abound of lucky strikes, sudden good fortune in love, in games and various undertakings. The first 1,000 imported since 1914. Set in weird beautiful Gold Acid Test Ring. Reminiscent of powerful Hindu Charm and Talisman. For men and women. $2.75 and postage. Money-back Guarantee. "Lucky Gems"—how to know and wear them sent FREE. Send No Money. Pay When Delivered. MAGNUS WORKS, Box 12, Varick Sta., New York, Desk M.C.

© 4-COLA

BECOME AN EXPERT

ACCOUNTANT

Executive Accountants and C. P. A's. earn $3,000 to $10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. Only 6,000 Certified Public Accountants in the United States. We train you thoroly at home in spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Training under the personal supervision of William B. Castenholz, A. M., C. P. A., and a large staff of C. P. A.s, including members of the American Institute of Accountants. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession that Pays."

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 276-H, Chicago

The World's Largest Business Training Institution

Teach Children To Use Cuticura

Soothes and Heals Rashes and Irritations

Cuticura Soap Keeps the Skin Clear

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

HELP WANTED—MALE

EARN $110 TO $250 MONTHLY, EXPENSES PAID, AS RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR. WE SECURE POSITION FOR YOU AFTER COMPLETION OF 3 MONTHS' HOME STUDY COURSE OR MONEY REFUNDED. EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES. WRITE FOR FREE BOOKLET CM-30. STAND. BUSINESS TRAINING INST., BUFFALO, N. Y.

MEN WANTING FOREST RANGER, RAILWAY MAIL CLERK AND OTHER GOVERNMENT POSITIONS, WRITE FOR PARTICULARS. MOKANE, B-12, DENVER, COLO.

ALL MEN, WOMEN, BOYS, GIRLS, 17 to 65, willing to accept government positions, $117-$250 (traveling or stationary), write MR. OZMENT, 198, St. Louis, Mo., immediately.

HELP WANTED—FEMALE

$6—$18 A DOZEN DECORATING PILLOW TOPS AT HOME. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. PARTICULARS FOR STAMP. TAPESTRY PAINT CO., 128, LAGRANGE, IND.

MISCELLANEOUS

YOU READ THESE LITTLE ADVERTISEMENTS. Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people would read your message—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe your own services? Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Munsey Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS—Write for FREE Guide Books and "Record of Invention Blank" before disclosing inventions. Send model or sketch and description of invention for Inspection & Instructions free. Terms Reasonable. Prompt Attention. Highest References. VICTOR J. EVANS & CO., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

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"If you can only bring him to for just a minute—for half a minute."

TWO FIXED—ONE FLASHING

By Maxwell Smith

"THREE RED LIGHTS, TWO BEARING ON THE FLASH; THAT WAS THE PLACE," BENNETT'S VOICE BORED DIMLY THROUGH THE VEIL

CHAPTER I

THE SEALED SECRET

LEANING close, the lieutenant made out the muttering—

"Two fixed lights and one flashing—Get that—You can't miss—Two fixed lights bearing true—"

The voice, a mere wisp of sound, faded away again to unintelligibility; ceased altogether.

The officer, Skerry of the New York City Detective Division, rumbled an oath of frustration. His hand went out as if to take hold of and shake further speech from the motionless man on the bed.

"Careful!" The surgeon stayed him. "He's dying, you know."

"Don't I know it!" said Skerry tartly. "That's why I've got to make him talk,

isn't it? Say, you,"—his voice boomed loud in the hospital quiet—" what lights? Where? What are you trying to say?"

" He can't hear you," said the surgeon. " He's unconscious. He's been unconscious since they brought him in—since he was found. There's absolutely no use yelling at him."

" Maybe not," said Skerry, " but I've seen them snap to for a minute when you talked hard at them. If I could only stir him up some—say, you Bennett, where are the lights you're talking about? Don't you hear me? Where are they—the lights? Come on, Bennett, get your head together and tell us about them. Say, listen! You hear me, don't you, Bennett?"

The wounded man remained silent, motionless. His face, drained of blood, was pallid almost as the bandage shrouding his head. His eyes, closed, lay sunken in their sockets, and hollow were his cheeks as though the hand of death had touched them. He was so still, his breathing so faint that he seemed already dead.

The detective hushed his futile questioning and straightened up, disgruntled.

" Gone?" he demanded, a sharp quick syllable which with the accompanying scowl rather implied that the doctor was to blame, had cheated him.

Finger on Bennett's pulse, the surgeon shook his head.

" Not yet. There's a spark left."

He nodded to the attending nurse and she handed him the hypodermic syringe she had ready. Administration of the stimulant had no noticeable effect.

" Can't you give him a big enough shot to bring him to?" grumbled the detective. " Give him a real jolt, can't you, that'll start him working. I want him to talk, you understand."

The surgeon returned the hypo to the nurse with the instruction " Whisky," then turned to Skerry with dry humor.

" It's hardly necessary to kill this man with drugs. He'll die quite comfortably as he is, I'm afraid."

" What's the difference," argued Skerry, " if he's going to pass out anyhow? If you let him go without talking, you're holding up police business. Give him all you've got if it'll bring him to for a minute. We need what he knows. Go ahead with the gun and snap him out of it so he can talk sense. It's all the same to him, ain't it?"

" Not quite; no. You see," the surgeon expounded deliberately, " he still has a chance. While there's life, you know."

Lieutenant Skerry flung out an arm impatiently.

" You say yourself—"

" That he has a chance. I'm not going to interfere with it. If he comes to, well and good. You can talk with him—provided he can stand the effort. If he doesn't come to—" A shrug said the rest.

" And all the while a hundred and seventy thousand dollars worth of diamonds are getting further away from us, when a word from this bird would show us where to head in. That ain't right, doc; you know it ain't. He wants to talk, you can see that yourself. He wants to tell us about these lights, only he can't make the grade the way he is. He needs a boost and it's up to you to give it to him with the needle. This is police business, see?"

" It's a man's life."

" I know, but"—Skerry tried wheedling —" he wants to talk, don't he? He wants to get this job off his conscience. You don't want him to die a crook, do you, when he don't want to?"

The surgeon smiled at the naïve plea but didn't answer. He stared thoughtfully at the drawn face on the pillow. Though marred by pain, it seemed a good face, well-fashioned, sturdy, strong of mouth through this great travail, the squareness of chin unhidden by several days' growth of whiskers. A good face—yet its owner was a man charged with the theft of one hundred and seventy thousand dollars' worth of diamonds.

" Are you sure, lieutenant," said the surgeon absently, " that this poor fellow is your man?"

" As sure as I am that he wants to get this thing off his chest and die in peace. He's Bennett, all right—Edward C. Bennett. That scar on his hand tags him. He's it."

Skerry waited hopefully, his gaze shifting to the nurse as she refilled the hypo for

emergency. He had an exaggerated notion about the power of drugs. And the surgeon, feeling Bennett's pulse, seemed to be considering whether to make use of them as suggested.

"Give him another shot, doc, and—"

"You don't seem to understand." The surgeon looked at him with mild amusement. "This man has suffered an injury which in nine hundred and ninety-nine of a thousand cases would have caused death before now. He was shot in the head, above and slightly back of the left ear, with a thirty-eight caliber bullet. Fortunately for him—perhaps—it struck at an angle upward.

"For that reason, I mean, it didn't penetrate the brain as would have happened had it struck a hairbreadth more on a horizontal line. But while the bullet itself didn't actually enter the brain, it carried along sizable fragments of skull and drove them into the brain. Into the folds of the brain tissue, that is. So that, although the brain escaped rupture from the outside, it suffered grave general congestion from the blow—and there is considerable internal hemorrhage."

As he paused to let that sink in, a woefully thin whisper from the dying man wafted up to them—

"Three lights—Two fixed and one flashing—That's the place—True—Two fixed lights ranging—"

The detective bent eagerly to get the words.

"Where, Bennett," he urged, "where? What lights?"

But Bennett again was still and silent as the death that was stealing over him.

Skerry pleaded: "If you can only bring him to for just a minute—for half a minute."

"I'm trying to make you understand his condition," said the surgeon. "The men who found him on the roadside thought him dead. The doctor they called, in fact, at first pronounced him dead. When brought to the hospital here he was as close to being dead as—well, as he could be while really alive. He was in a state of complete paralysis caused by the pressure exerted by the fragments of bone that were forced among the convolutions of the brain—plus, of course, the cerebral hemorrhage. He had practically no pulse or respiration. He's surprised us mightily by remaining alive so long."

"Uh-huh." Skerry wasn't much interested in the technical details; he hadn't called for a lecture. "That's all right, but listen—"

The surgeon listened with studied patience, but squinted at the speaker with puckered eyes. He had been called from bed to perform the delicate operation upon Bennett and, though he believed that his patient was beyond human skill, he nevertheless was standing by to do all he could in the losing fight. If Skerry had his way the fight would be quickly finished. Skerry apparently had an unreasoning single-track mind; dull.

"We've given him all the relief we can," said the surgeon with finality. "We've removed the bullet which was imbedded in the roof of the skull and the fragments of bone from the brain; and consequently the pressure. While that pressure existed, please remember, he was completely paralyzed. Had he been conscious, he was without even the power of speech. There's nothing more we can do except keep him going with stimulants. The hemorrhage will have to correct itself or—" The doctor gestured eloquently

Skerry took out a cigar and chewed on it, cold. This was what he called a tough break. Here he had risked his neck charging down from New York to the Jersey shore at sixty miles and more an hour in a car, all set to get Bennett's confession with the dope on where to recover the loot. And just because this fool doctor wouldn't jazz Bennett up enough to let him talk, it looked like the crook was going to pass out without talking. Without giving the straight tip, as he plainly desired, that would place the lights he kept mumbling about.

The surgeon lifted one of Bennett's eyelids. The eye was rolled upward, showing too much white underneath, unnatural, glassy, fixed, pupil dilated. But a good eye for all that, the doctor commented to himself: gray-blue—a good eye in a good face. A thief—musing, he closed the eye, won-

dering what it would say now if capable of expression.

CHAPTER II

THE MISSING MESSENGER

THE newspaper story was fresh in mind.

Five days ago Edward C. Bennett, employed by a firm of diamond merchants in New York City, had left the office with stones valued at one hundred and seventy thousand dollars, which he was to deliver in Chicago. When he didn't show up, the Chicago consignee queried New York.

It was discovered then that Bennett had not occupied his reservation on the Tri-State Limited. He had left his home on the upper West Side about an hour before train time. Thereafter his movements were unknown. When the alarm went out he had been missing thirty-six hours. He was listed immediately as a fugitive.

During the ensuing three days no trace of him was found.

The only development lay in the fact that the taxi he had called to take him to the station was not the one in which he traveled. Its driver said that when he reached the apartment house Bennett already had departed in a cab. The hallboy said that the driver of this other taxi had come in and asked for Bennett. He was unable to give anything like a useful description of this chauffeur; and as to the machine, why, it was just a common yellow cab.

From the beginning the police refused to consider the possibility that Bennett had been held up. So did his employers, despite the complete confidence with which they had intrusted to him such a fortune in gems, which were so easily convertible into cash. So did the company that had written his bond for the sum of one hundred thousand dollars.

If he had been held up, they argued separately and in collective conference, he wouldn't be missing. True, he might have been murdered—but even so, it was most improbable that the bandits would have increased their hazard by freighting the body away to a place of concealment. In the event of an abrupt killing, unpremeditated, such as may occur during a holdup, the body of the victim is something to get away from without loss of time.

Bennett's body, of course, might have been thrown into the river, but somehow, the interested parties all were disposed to doubt this. Until the matter should be otherwise demonstrated, the missing man stood elected as a thief.

A circumstance which tended to give strength to that contention appeared in the fact that he had not called a cab to take him to the train. His family attempted to explain this point, saying that he never had summoned a cab to the house, but always had walked over to Broadway, a step away, and picked one up. They added that he had done so as a measure of safety, to avoid the danger of a bandit driver being rung in on him. By choosing a cruising cab at random, he felt reasonably safe against the driver having foreknowledge of what he was carrying.

"All right," declared the police, his employers, and the bonding company, "that knocks out the holdup proposition, doesn't it? If he had called a cab to the house, the tip would have been passed and a bandit cab rushed in to get him. There's a chance, certainly, that the bandit cab was hanging around to pick him up, but with diamonds worth a hundred and seventy thousand dollars on him, he'd be leery of any cab that was hanging around.

"He'd take one," they replied to his family, "on the fly, like you say. That idea is all right. Taking his time and then grabbing any old taxi out of the string coming down Broadway, he could be pretty sure he wasn't stepping into one that was planted for him. But then again, it would have been a better idea if he had called a machine right to the house to get him. He could have arranged for one that was safe. Why didn't he? Because, if he had done so, he'd have left just that much of a trail to wherever he quit the machine, when he didn't want to leave any trail at all.

"He didn't take any taxi," they summed up; "not near where he lived, anyhow, be-

cause he didn't want any driver to remember picking him up thereabout. He made his first jump out of the picture over a route where he wouldn't be noticed—on the subway, that's what."

There was nothing to dispute the official viewpoint. No taxi driver could be found who had carried Bennett or anybody resembling him that night.

Telegraph, telephone, wireless, radio, carried his description over the continent. Ports and borders the country around were watched. Ships at sea were searched; European, South American, even Asiatic, police were warned to be on the lookout for him. The hundred and seventy thousand dollars' worth of diamonds made him an important individual. All to no purpose. He had vanished.

And then, as the sun came up on the fifth day of his disappearance, he was discovered apparently dead on the beach at Keansburg on Sandy Hook Bay, fifteen miles from the Battery.

The local police failed to identify him as the much-wanted Edward C. Bennett. This, probably, because his face was caked with blood and unshaven; his linen mussy and outer garments rumpled as though he had slept in them for days. His pockets were empty.

Along that beach a ready explanation presents itself for the finding of a dead man at any time.

"Another bootlegger gone," said the local police. "A stranger—probably belonged to a truck crew that came to get the stuff. A hijacker maybe. Oh, well."

They summoned the coroner and the county undertaker, and, just as a formality, a physician. Presently the doctor astonished himself by perceiving that the supposedly dead man was clinging to a slender thread of life. Sustained by strychnin, Bennett was rushed to the hospital in Long Branch. Not by his haggard features, but by a scar on his hand which the broadcast description had emphasized, a Long Branch officer recognized him and notified New York. By the time Detective Lieutenant Skerry reached Long Branch the operation to relieve the pressure from Bennett's brain had been performed and he was talking—of the trinity of lights, two of which were fixed and one flashing.

CHAPTER III

A THIEF—PERHAPS

"IF you care for my opinion," said the surgeon, "you'll learn no more from him than what he may say in delirium. He's holding on, that's all, thanks to an unusually strong constitution, strychnin and whisky. My expectation is that he'll go out suddenly—like you would switch off an electric light—and that may happen any minute. The chances are that he'll say no more than he's already said. His repeated reference to lights, and no more than that, shows that they are topmost in his mind. How about that? Can you make anything of what he's getting at?"

Skerry chewed morosely on his cigar. The prospect of standing by and seeing Bennett go out like a light, carrying into the final darkness with him the information which should lead to recovery of the vast loot, was exasperating. It angered him. He couldn't see why the devil an effort should not be made to make Bennett burn more brightly for a moment; bright enough to make himself clear. He was dying, anyhow, wasn't he?

"I get his drift," returned Skerry sourly, "but I'm not so sure it's going to help us much right away. It's like being handed a street number without the name of the street and told you'll find whatever you're looking for there. I'd rather have the street name and never mind the number."

"You think, then, that he's referring to lighthouses or buoys?"

"I'm betting he is. He's a bug on boats—has a big motor cruiser lying up in the North River and a sailboat out on the Sound. We've been figuring that's how he ducked out—on a motorboat he'd got ready on the quiet."

"Perhaps," nodded the surgeon, directing a slow frown of perplexity at the unconscious man. "Yes, that seems probable enough if— Hm. I don't suppose there are many combinations of lights like the

one he's talking about. Didn't he say, that last time, that the fixed lights were range lights?"

"He used the word 'ranging'—whatever that means. I'm no sailor myself. You know what it means?"

"Yes. You take a bearing from range lights by lining them up—placing yourself in a straight line with them. So since he evidently tried to say that the two fixed lights range on something, we may assume that by extending the line through them, we'll arrive at the position he wants to indicate. Which, I presume, is the flashing light."

"Uh," grunted Skerry. Even with this key to the proposition, it didn't look immediately promising. "There's enough lights around New York harbor and down the bay to make us all cross-eyed before we get half through looking them over."

"There can't be many groups lined up as he says," repeated the surgeon. "Probably not more than one, in fact. They would be confusing—"

"How do we know they're near New York at all?" interrupted the detective. "We don't. Chances are they're not. They may be anywhere around Long Island or up the Connecticut shore or clear up to Boston or halfway down to Florida. He's been gone five days—God knows where!"

"But he was found at Keansburg, right on the edge of New York City."

"What of it?"

"Well, that being so, I should take it to mean he hasn't been far away. Once away from New York, why should he have come back practically into the city? I've heard it said," he smiled, "that the best place to hide from the police is next door to a police station."

"Maybe so," said Skerry; "try it sometime. But now suppose he didn't *come* back. Suppose he was *brought* back. How about that?"

"After he was shot?"

"After he was shot. Sure."

"Oh, come now," protested the surgeon, "that's scarcely reasonable. If he had been dead, I could see a motive in that, but since he wasn't dead and therefore could tell where he'd been brought from—"

"Has he told you that?"

"No-o—; but he has given me a clew—"

"A fat clew," scoffed Skerry. "Three lights in a row—somewhere. And didn't you tell me the first doctor who saw him said he was dead? Well, if a doctor said that, why wouldn't the fellow who shot him think he was dead?"

The surgeon was stopped. How, indeed, could a layman have detected signs of life, when Bennett's cataleptic condition was sufficient to deceive a physician?

"Still," he demurred, "it's a wonder they didn't pump a couple more bullets into him just to make sure."

"A gun makes noise," said Skerry testily.

"Quite so. But if, as you intimate, they brought him across the bay, they were miles from shore—"

"And sound carries a long way over water. And there's a bunch of rumchasers around the bay nights, so it ain't a good spot to do any shooting, if you're trying to sneak by without anybody noticing. Nope. I don't say they brought him across the bay, because I don't know, but if they did, it's a safe bet they figured he was plenty dead. Which he might as well have been, for all the use he is to us."

"I was going to say," pursued the surgeon, "that if the man who shot him had him well offshore and out on deep water, a more thorough job could have been made of it by throwing him overboard than by bringing him along and leaving him on the beach. His body might never have been found."

"Maybe they wanted it found," opined Skerry wisely. "A crook always thinks he's acting fly. This outfit probably figured on making us run our legs off over here in Jersey when we should be working over on Long Island or up in Connecticut, or over in Brooklyn somewhere. Uh-huh, it looks phony, for if he did get shot there at Keansburg any dumb-bell would have had sense enough to dump him off the dock and let the tide take him out."

"The tide may have been coming in."

"There's boats," said Skerry laconically. "Anyhow, I dropped three men there on the way down, but I don't expect they'll

get anything. I guess he was planted, all right, to give us a steer. I don't hear anybody saying they heard any shots."

"You're not likely to," smiled the surgeon, "not along that shore. It's a good place to mind your own business, especially after dark."

The detective's forehead wrinkled, brows far up, while his eyes cocked wide with a thought.

"Bootleggers, you mean?"

The surgeon nodded.

"That's an idea!" pronounced Skerry. "Bennett could have made a deal to hide out on one of these boats on Rum Row and get away on it after awhile when things quieted down. Maybe he got out there and the bunch on board doped out who he was and knocked him over for the diamonds. That's worth looking over. Maybe it'll hitch up with this stuff he's spilling about lights. If he'd only loosen up a bit more—"

"Hush!" The surgeon pointed.

Bennett's lips were moving again, speech coming faintly.

"That's the place—three red lights—two fixed and one flashing—you can't miss—"

The words became inaudible, but his lips kept moving, slowly, weakly.

"Hell!" ejaculated Skerry violently. "If this ain't—"

"Hush!'

Beneath his fingertips, in the sudden skipping of the feeble pulse, the surgeon could feel Bennett's life slipping away. He almost snatched the hypodermic syringe from the nurse and administered its contents swiftly.

"That's about all," he said grimly, glancing at Skerry; "it looks like you lose."

Skerry scowled at the dying man's lips as they moved soundlessly. If he could but get what they were saying! He tried to read the words as a deaf person reads speech; in vain.

"Red lights," said the surgeon. "You got that, didn't you. They're three red lights. That's something now."

Such slight elaboration didn't arouse the detective to any enthusiasm. It was a poor crumb to be satisfied with when the whole was practically within his reach—but just beyond. What he wanted to obtain was a location, definite, or at least a stated radius within which to work.

For the first time since his discovery on the beach five hours ago, Bennett made a movement of his own volition. He turned his head slightly, facing toward the surgeon. His right hand twitched. His lips compressed, as with pain. There was a fluttering, barely perceptible, of the eyelids.

"Doc!" Skerry drew breath noisily. "Doc, another jolt will bring him to—"

A peremptory motion silenced him.

Bennett was on the borderland of consciousness—as near to it as he ever would be.

The surgeon noted the quickening pulse as it increased from forty to forty-eight. His opinion was unchanged: that Bennett would die without recovering his senses. The improved pulse could be attributed to the strychnin—or, with the brief muscular reaction, to the little rally which in cases of severe injury to the brain, often occurs just before death.

Bennett moved his head again. His brows drew together just a trace.

The detective broke out angrily: "That guy's half awake now. All he wants is a jolt to snap him to. Give it to him. This is police business—get that, will you. Here, lemme talk—"

"I'll try him." It was, of course, police business, with huge plunder at stake—and some one to be punished for murder. And there was a chance of penetrating to Bennett's consciousness.

"Bennett"—the surgeon spoke quietly, with deliberate enunciation—"who shot you?"

"Never mind that," snapped Skerry. "Ask where are the diamonds. That's what we want. Where are they? Who's got them?"

The surgeon's jaw clicked on a sharp retort. After all, one question was as good as another. The loot should point out the murderer.

"Where are the diamonds, Bennett?" he asked, reiterating. "What did you do with them? Who got them? The diamonds, Bennett, where are they?"

Dimly his voice bored through the veil, but to the man on the other side it was only the vaguest sound.

Bennett's mind remained in its groove.

"Three red lights. Two fixed lights. Bearing on the flash. That's the place. Two fixed and one flashing. Red."

That was all.

A few minutes later he died peacefully, without sigh or tremor to mark his going.

"That's tough," grunted Skerry—a remark which obviously referred not to Bennett's death, but to his failure to furnish the desired information.

The surgeon eyed him dourly, resenting that attitude.

"You've a murderer to catch now. That comes first, doesn't it?"

"Huh?" The detective was busy sympathizing with himself, but got the question when it was repeated. "I'm looking," he replied, "for the diamonds this bird got away with—a hundred and seventy thousand dollars' worth."

"But murder—"

"I'm not worrying over him," said Skerry superfluously, jerking his head at the dead man, "except that he's balled us up by going and getting himself killed. We'd have caught up with him after awhile, all right, but now we've got to run around looking for three lights to find out where we head in again after the diamonds. When we get them, we'll probably get the bird who knocked him over. If we don't, what of it? The killing wasn't done on our lot—and, anyhow, he was only a thief."

Anger sparked in the surgeon's eyes, but he said nothing. What use?

"I'm going up to Keansburg now," added Skerry, "but it looks like a tough break all round. And say"—he paused at the door—"maybe we better keep still about this lights stuff. How many know about it?"

"Just you and I—and the nurse. He said it first just a moment before you came in."

"Keep still then, and maybe we'll make a clean-up on it. Right? So-long, doc. We got rotten luck."

As the door closed on him, the nurse spoke out most unprofessionally:

"The beast!"

"Eh?" The surgeon turned from quizzical contemplation of the dead man. "What did you say, nurse?"

Embarrassment heightened the flush of indignation flaming her cheeks.

"Nothing, doctor. I was—thinking of something."

"So was I,"—he had heard what she said—"and I rather agree with you. Yes."

He lingered a moment, thoughtful gaze returning to Bennett's worn features. Not all that he saw there had been written by shock and pain from the injury that killed him. No. That wasn't all he had suffered in the last five days—since he disappeared with a fortune in diamonds. Of course, not. The strain of being a fugitive, of dodging from under every man's hand, must also have left its record there. Assuredly. That—and was that all?

The surgeon repeated Skerry's amen:

"He was only a thief!" But his inflection was different and without apparent reason he tacked on, "Perhaps!"

CHAPTER IV

RUM ROW'S VISITOR

SKERRY'S conception of the case was adopted by his superiors and so, tentatively at any rate, became official.

The investigation conducted at Keansburg tended to support his conclusion that Bennett had been conveyed from some other place and, presumably dead, left on that bench for the purpose of leading the police away from the actual scene of the shooting.

Through certain channels sounded by the local police, absolute assurance was obtained that there had been no shooting on or within hearing of the beach that night. This was stated by men who had spent most of the night wakefully only a couple of hundred yards from where Bennett was found.

Why these men were on the beach was not material. They were trustworthy, affirmed the local authorities, in all except perhaps some disregard for the laws against smuggling.

Murder having been done—and being convinced that the killing could not involve any of their friends—these trustworthy citizens became comparatively loquacious in their desire to be helpful.

Quite a number of motor boats, they admitted, had been offshore between midnight and daybreak. For most of the craft they were, without going into details, able to vouch. Regarding a couple of rum-chasers which had nosed by on a still and empty hunt, they naturally could not speak with absolute knowledge, but they were willing to give the revenuers the benefit of the doubt.

The only boat of which they knew nothing was one that had hung on and off for a good two hours. The night having been moonless, they had not actually seen this boat, but they recognized it as the same on each of its visits, by the sound of its engine.

First they knew of it was about two o'clock when, running without lights, of course, it ran close in and signaled with a blinker. Apparently getting no reply, it hovered some thirty minutes and then retreated upon the approach of another boat. Four times thereafter it returned, to lie with engine dead and showing only an occasional blinker flash. It departed finally around four thirty, just before the east began to brighten, and headed straight across the bay in a line for the Brooklyn shore, ten miles distant.

The givers of this information tendered for what it was worth the suggestion that the unidentified craft had a load of the fine fresh made-in-Brooklyn Scotch intended for distribution from the Jersey side as real old stuff, in from Rum Row. Themselves, they never—but no matter.

Upon further thought, prompted by Lieutenant Skerry, they conceded the possibility that on the last time it stood in, the stranger might have sent a rowboat briefly ashore. They couldn't say positively one way or the other, having been busy right then with their own concerns.

"That's my idea, ain't it?" said Skerry complacently. "Because that boat was hanging around a rum beach, don't mean it was loaded with hooch. A crook gets a swelled head and most always thinks he's fly, see? So the way I dope it is that the gang that bumped Bennett figured it would be a bright idea to dump him over here like he'd got bumped off in some bootlegger battle. Or, like I said awhile ago, that he made a deal to get away on one of the rum fleet and got knocked over when somebody got wise to who he was.

"Where we want to look for the lights he talked about is over Brooklyn way or maybe around Manhattan or Long Island or up the Sound. This Jersey stuff is a stall. Nobody ever saw him around here and nobody heard any shooting. He came off that boat, sure as hell."

As to why those aboard the craft in question had dallied so long over such a simple affair as unloading a body onto the beach, Skerry had answer for this, too.

"There were bootleggers along the beach, wasn't there? Well, the bunch who had Bennett knew that and had to wait for their chance, till the bootleggers got busy with their own stuff. The idea, don't you see, was to make out that bootleggers turned the trick on him."

Why had the boat shown light signals?

"Same idea," said Skerry. "Trying to tie the whole racket up tight with the bootleggers. Let's get over to Brooklyn and see can we pick up something. There's nothing here."

Leaving one of his men to root around Keansburg some more with the local police, he was back in New York by mid-afternoon. He went at once to the New York branch of the United States Hydrographic Office to learn where he could find two fixed red lights ranging upon a red flash.

This lead was being kept strictly under his own hat; and through his foresight would be withheld from the newspapers.

CHAPTER V

A SKIRMISH WITH RICKY STERN

THE whole police theory with regard to Bennett was wrong. He was not a thief. Besides being involuntary, his disappearance had been induced only under overwhelming force of arms.

The affair sprang from one Ricky Stern,

who in his own circle had considerable reputation as a specialist in highway robbery and kindred arts; and who, as such, held place as the directing genius of a formidable "hoist" gang. Bond messengers, pay roll carriers and diamond salesmen comprised his favorite dish.

Ricky Stern's eye had been on Bennett for some time. As always, he was acting upon information received. There never was anything hit-or-miss about his efforts. He knew precisely what he was going after and the odds in favor of or against him.

Having a cardinal rule that the odds must be on his side, Stern opened his campaign with a careful study of Bennett's movements and habits, notably for a possible preference for some certain one of the numerous brands of taxicabs which clutter New York. This surveillance had been satisfactorily concluded when, through the devious and disloyal ways in which such tips generally reached him, he heard that Bennett was to take to Chicago diamonds worth a hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

For instance, Ricky Stern knew that Bennett would walk the half block from his apartment to Broadway and there pick up a cab. Which was all he really needed to know.

Thus it came about that Bennett was only a few paces from the house when Ricky Stern's stick-up machine began functioning. Its motions were in nowise original—were, in fact, hoary with age—but then there isn't so much room for outstanding originality in such an abrupt incident as a holdup.

The simpler the procedure, and the more time-honored, Ricky had found, the less likely was it to startle the victim prematurely. Try something fancy and the chances were he'd shy off. Give him the same old stuff and he'd fall like a busted balloon.

So an expensive-looking young woman emerged from the doorway of the adjoining apartment house an instant after Bennett reached the street. She turned as though for a parting word with some one, then cut diagonally across the sidewalk toward an expensive-looking limousine—and incidentally toward the approaching Bennett.

Automatically, he saw her and the limousine which was standing slightly nearer him than the entrance to the building from which she had come. He saw her hesitate with an air of indecision in the middle of the sidewalk, as though just remembering something, and then retrace her steps.

There was nothing in that to alarm him. Nor was there in her further evidence of indecision when she again hesitated, prettily posed, with head tilted, then headed once more for the limousine.

Perhaps Bennett's eye was filled overabundantly with the sight of her. At any rate, he was in her way when she turned to resume her journey to the car. She ran into him.

Had she grabbed him or made any other move which might have been construed as overt Bennett doubtless would have balked, instinctively suspicious. Filled though his eye was with her, he was still alert to the fact that he was a shining target for bandits.

But their collision was of the slightest. Almost as she touched him she jumped back with a quick exclamation of fright; a retreat so instantaneous that the hand which he gallantly raised to preserve her balance was too late.

Standing where she had brought him to a stop, he was starting an apology when, on her second step backward, she stumbled and nearly fell. Thereupon she exclaimed again, now with a note of pain.

Bennett should have known better—and did—but there was some justification for his being momentarily off guard.

The expensive-looking young woman appeared to be hurt—because of his blundering, of course. Her right foot was drawn up clear of the ground and her arms fluttered out from her sides in a quite charming effort to maintain her equilibrium on a single high-heeled shoe.

"My ankle!" she gasped, gingerly putting her right foot to ground. "O-oh!"

Dropping his traveling bag, Bennett hastened to aid her. He failed to observe that she had stumbled toward the curb and that the limousine, with noiseless engine, had eased up alongside.

While he apologized profusely she leaned, featherlike, on his arm. Quite so.

"My fault entirely," she insisted delightfully. "Oh, yes it was. I didn't look where I was going. If you'll just help me to my car, please"

Of course. Bennett glanced round and found the limousine almost at his elbow. The chauffeur had the door open. He helped her.

In his solicitude to spare her pain another item escaped his notice—that the windows of the limousine were rather heavily adorned with fluted curtains and that its interior was unlighted.

Pausing on the step of the car, she mentioned the lack of light within; something, apparently, had gone wrong with the wiring. And—

"Thank you so much," she smiled deliciously. "I can manage now."

But Bennett saw it was both a duty and a pleasure to assist her to her seat.

"I can manage," she said again; but he wouldn't let her.

While handing her into the machine he himself got halfway inside.

A gun prodded his ear and a hand grasped the lapel of his coat. That was Ricky Stern, who believed that a mess of rocks worth a hundred and seventy grand merited his very own personal attention.

Simultaneously, another gun prodded Bennett in the small of the back. That was Stern's ablest lieutenant, a hair-trigger young man known as Swifty Gorman.

CHAPTER VI

THE RIDE TO NOWHERE.

"COME in!" said Ricky along his gun barrel into Bennett's ear.

"Get in!" said Swifty from behind. His gun urged the utmost speed.

And Bennett, yielding to discretion, got in. He had a gun, but no chance on earth of using it.

Gorman passed in Bennett's traveling bag and followed.

They put him on the seat beside Stern, whose gun pressed into his side. Gorman sat on a tumble seat facing him, gun trained on his stomach. Stern disarmed him.

"Get out, Madge," said Stern. "If this bird as much as turns a whisker he gets the works. We don't want you around. Beat it, kid."

Madge got out, leaving an unkind shaft for Bennett to chew on—"Good-by, boob!"

The car started smoothly, turned its back on Broadway and rolled down to Riverside Drive.

"You got me, fella, didn't you?" queried Stern. "Just one little whisper out of you and I'll lay you cold. See?"

Bennett nodded. He could think of no good reason for doubting that the threat would be carried out under slight provocation. All he could do was sit still and wait. The diamonds had not yet been taken from him. Something might happen to give him a chance. They might get wrecked—anything.

The limousine went north on Riverside Drive, purring along circumspectly at an even twenty miles. Bennett glimpsed the hundreds of passing automobiles hopefully, but at the same time hopelessly. If one of them would only run wild and crash into the bandit car! But none did.

He received further advice with a promise of his personal security.

"You keep your ears in, and you won't get hurt. We'll turn you loose after awhile. All you've got to do is sit quiet and show sense. See?"

Bennett nodded helplessly. Suppose he let out a shout? Would they shoot him then and there? Perhaps not, but they assuredly would batter him into insensibility. And his shout probably would fail to attract attention; it could be only a muffled cry at best.

He asked dumbly: "Where are you taking me?"

That drew a grin.

"For a ride," said Ricky Stern, "a nice ride down on the floor. Go down now and wrap your head in that rug. Go ahead like a good fella. We don't want to hurt you, but just the same you don't have to see too much. Wrap up your head and you'll be O. K."

Consequently Bennett knew nothing of this journey, except that it lasted over six hours. When the limousine finally halted

about two o'clock in the morning, and he was permitted to come from under the rug, he found their destination to be a commodious bungalow with woods fringing its lawns. The house, however, was scarcely more than a bulking shape in the darkness; he could make out no distinguishing feature by which he might remember it.

Ricky Stern and Swifty Gorman close-herded him from the car, their guns precluding any attempt to escape. The door was opened from the inside by another man, who at once inquired if there had been any trouble.

"Candy!" grinned Stern. "And now let's open the package. Come on, fella, let's look. Be good and hand over the stuff, so we don't have to take you apart to get it."

Swearing over his helplessness, Bennett unbuttoned vest and shirt and turned over the belt containing the diamonds.

"That's the idea," said Stern amiably. "Cuss all you want to, but not too loud, you understand."

Bennett availed himself of the scant privilege—but not too loud.

They led him to the cellar, a tight concrete cellar, one corner of which was enclosed with a stout wooden cage front. They shut him in there with the man who had let them into the house on guard.

"You're going to visit with us a couple of days or so," imparted Stern jocularly, "and don't forget you'd be a damn lot worse off—stiff. There's a cot to sleep on, and you'll get your meals. What more do you want for nothing!"

Bennett cursed them till he was breathless; an impotent spasm. He read the program aright. He was to be kept prisoner for a few days and then turned loose—to be captured as a fugitive. Who would believe that he had been held up and kidnaped on his own doorstep? His statement would be ridiculed—and the fire of accusation trained upon him.

Even though he could point out the place of his imprisonment he would have small chance of obtaining belief. And he had no expectation of being able to point it out. He would be taken away as he had come, in the night, with his head under a rug!

Of where he was he had not the faintest idea. A six-hour ride from New York City—that was all he knew. How far was that? As well ask himself that classic question, "Who struck Billy Paterson?"

In that smooth-running car it had been impossible for him, blindfolded, to form any estimate of the speed and therefore of distance covered. For all he knew, he might still be in New York City. Or he might be a hundred and fifty, two hundred, miles up State or in New England. He had an elusive impression of having driven over a long bridge—which would imply that he was on Long Island. Maybe. It was all very futile speculation.

Not having crossed on any ferryboat, he did not consider that he might be in New Jersey. He didn't think of the bridge across the Hudson at Poughkeepsie, the only way other than ferryboat by which an automobile can move between New York State and New Jersey south of Albany. This was the bridge of which he had that dim impression. Ricky Stern had achieved his object of going eighty miles up the Hudson, a vastly roundabout way, in order to deny his unwilling passenger the hint of direction which passage on a ferryboat would have given.

The bungalow wherein Bennett lay dejectedly behind bars was on Rumson Neck, New Jersey, between the Navesink and the Shrewsbury Rivers, less than ten miles from the beach on which he was found four days later so near death.

CHAPTER VII

HE REACHED THE ROAD

BENNETT precipitated his own killing.

When his beard had grown enough to make it appear that he wished it to mask his features Ricky Stern would have let him go. Stern's bright thought was to make him drunk when that time arrived, force him to drink himself into a state of stupefaction, and drop him off practically into the arms of a cop in either Buffalo or Pittsburgh.

If Bennett, then, could argue his way out of the situation, well and good. But appearances would all be so much against

him that it would take a powerful amount of argument to make even a slight dent in the charge that he was the thief. If he were innocent, where had he been, why the beard, why was he drunk? An answer to the third question would be found in the presumption that he had tried to drown his sorrows because some other thief had robbed him of his loot.

As for any information Bennett might give regarding his kidnapers, Stern had no fear of that. He gave Bennett no opportunity to observe him closely. Likewise with Swifty Gorman. It didn't matter about the two men who took turns at guarding Bennett. They were going to take a trip on their share of the plunder. And, of course, Bennett could give no clew to where he had been held captive.

All in all, Ricky Stern figured, not illogically, that he and his gang were sitting on the world, while Bennett was headed for the stone pile.

But along about ten o'clock on the fourth night Bennett tried a trick for which he had paved the way by adopting a manner of abject despair. He asked, miserably, for a glass of water. As it was given to him he caught his jailer off guard.

Through the wooden bars of his cage Bennett snatched at the man's throat.

The guard jerked away, his mouth opening on an oath. Bennett's fingers dug into it. Before the other could shut his teeth on them they clamped on his jaw.

With savagery incomprehensible to himself Bennett struggled to hold his man. The guard gagged, sputtering inarticulately. With sudden reversal of his motion Bennett pulled with a twisting wrench which almost tore the jaw from its socket! He dragged the distorted face, smashing it against the wooden uprights.

A hand pawed through the bars to break that excruciating grip.

Bennett met it with that same unbelievable ferocity. He flung his weight on the arm, fulcrumed as it was between the bars —he felt the bones snap!

The man sagged in a swoon of agony.

Holding him up, Bennett reached into his pockets. There was a pistol—and a key to the padlock which made fast his cage.

Brief examination showed that he could not get out through the cellar windows. Heavy boards fastened with big screws covered them. The only way out was upstairs and through the house.

Pistol ready, he paused on the top step with his ear against the door. No sound came to him. Cautiously turning the knob he found the door unlocked. He opened it a crack, listened, stepped out into the darkened kitchen.

He was opening the kitchen door to go out when lights flared up in the garage back there. He saw two men—Ricky Stern and Swifty Gorman—talking together, and a third getting behind the wheel of a roadster. He saw, too, grimly, the limousine in which he had been brought here.

Three men—the trio that had kidnaped him. He didn't know whether the man who drove that night had since been acting as one of his jailers. If not, there was a fifth man unaccounted for; and he probably was in the house.

Also, if the three out there were all going away now they would be getting out the big car and not the roadster. Therefore one of them, or two, would return to the house in a moment. What if he, or they, should come in by the kitchen door.

Bennett elected to take the front way out. He got there without seeing or hearing any one. But as he closed the door behind him the sound of an automobile came from the rear of the house, approaching.

For the fraction of a second Bennett hesitated, peering to locate the nearest cover. The trees girdling the lawn seemed nearer on his right. He started in that direction—and almost ran into the car as it came past the house.

Ricky Stern and the chauffeur were in the machine; Swifty Gorman on the running board, talking. It stopped to let Gorman down. He saw Bennett running in the murk just outside the luminance cast by the car's dimmed lights.

Bennett was going at top speed straight down the driveway leading to the public road which a passing automobile had shown him was less than a hundred yards distant.

"Light!" barked Gorman at the driver. "Light 'em up. He's loose!"

The dimmed headlights turned to brilliance. Gorman was on the running board again, grinning deliberately over the sights of his gun. He held his fire; the range was too great.

"Run him down!" snapped Stern. "Step on it! Get him!"

The car started with a swoop.

Within twenty yards of the road Bennett half turned to fire, hoping to call at least a momentary halt to the pursuit.

Straight ahead of him lay a road running at a right angle to that which passed the bungalow and practically a continuation of the driveway down which he was fleeing. Coming along that road, perhaps a mile away, were the lights of two automobiles. If he could keep clear until they arrived he should be saved.

Instead of firing, however, he cursed and went on awkwardly, when he should have exerted his last effort in a sprint. He could not beat the pursuing car to the road. He couldn't get away.

Maddened by defeat after having won so far, he lost his head. He could have dived into the woods on each side of him, but rage upset his judgment. He ran sidewise clumsily, facing backward in a frenzy, because his vision could not pierce the dazzling radiance of the twin lights which blinded him. He wanted to shoot and kill the men who had robbed and discredited him—and he could not see them for these glaring orbs which set him out as in the white light of day.

He did not fire; he had nothing to fire at except that blaze of light.

Swifty Gorman had—and did.

Bennett reached the highway, got half way across it, still looking backward, knowing that he was done, but praying that those aboard the approaching cars would see and understand what inevitably was about to occur.

Then he saw another light beside the two great eyes on the car—the stabbing flash of Gorman's gun.

The car slued alongside him as he fell. Gorman dropped from the running board and scooped him up into the car. Stern crowded over and jammed him into the seat.

"Go!" commanded Stern. "Straight ahead. If these birds coming saw anything we'll damn soon know when we meet them. If they try to block us give her gas and chase them off the road."

The foremost car held a man and a girl who could see nothing but each other just then. It had shut off the murderous scene from those in the following machine.

And so, since he was apparently dead, Bennett was thrown on the beach eight miles away. As Ricky Stern doped it out, Bennett didn't look much like himself any more, and in all likelihood would be buried by the county as another unidentified casualty in the rum-runner's dual conflict with Government and hijackers. He hadn't noticed the distinctive scar on Bennett's hand which had led to his identification.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TWO FIXED AND ONE FLASHING

ETECTIVE LIEUTENANT SKERRY was grievously disappointed in the United States Hydrographic Office. It could give him fixed red lights in almost unlimited number, and so with flashing red lights, but it regretted its inability to direct him to any two fixed red lights which, regarded as range lights, would bear on a red flash. More precisely, to such a combination which would be likely to prove useful in solving his problem.

There were such combinations in New York waters, but none of them bore any promise of reward. They were channel buoys out in the bay and without any relation to anything which could be regarded as a "place," either within or without the meaning of the law. And since Bennett had said that the red flash indicated by the two fixed lights marked the location he wished to identify, it was patent that he did not mean a spot tenanted only by a buoy miles offshore.

"Aside from buoys," said the Hydrographic Office, "the best we can do for you in red lights around New York are a flashing red beacon on Norton Point, Coney Island; a red and white alternating flash at Fort Wadsworth; the red sector lights on

West Bank and Old Orchard Shoal; and the Point Comfort Beacon over at Keansburg. Going up the Sound—"

"Huh?" Skerry's drooping ears pricked up. "What's that about Keansburg?"

"A fixed red beacon," he was told again.

He grunted. "Sure it ain't a flash?"

The Hydrographic Office smiled, quite sure.

"If you'd tell us just what you're after," it suggested, "we might be able to figure better for you."

Skerry wasn't telling, however; he didn't want his only lead to leak before he was sure it was worthless. His faith in it was waning, though; he guessed that Bennett had just been talking in his sleep. But if that damn doctor had only rolled him over on the other side—

"That light at Keansburg," he said further, "maybe I got things twisted. How about figuring on two flashes and one fixed light? Can you line up a couple of flashes with the Keansburg thing?"

That couldn't be done either.

"There are two occulting red lights out at the junction of Gedney and Main Channels," he was told, "which by stretching the imagination might be reckoned as bearing on Point Comfort Beacon—but occulting lights aren't flashing lights, you understand. If we had a closer idea of what you're aiming at—"

"Never mind," said Skerry. "You're sure you can't dope out what I want somewhere up the Sound?"

The Hydrographic Office was sure but patiently went into details.

Skerry returned to Keansburg to see for himself that the Point Comfort Beacon was not a flashing light! And—well—to scout around there some more to make certain that he hadn't drawn overhasty conclusions and missed a bet.

Ricky Stern and Swifty Gorman were in New York when shrieking headlines on the evening papers brought them up, all-standing, with the announcement that Edward C. Bennett, missing with one hundred and seventy thousand dollars' worth of diamonds, had been found dying on Keansburgh beach.

Dying! That was what got them.

"Bunk!" said Gorman emphatically. "He was deader'n hell. Sure he was. The fool newspapers have got it wrong."

"Perhaps," said Stern, softly, eyes narrow, "perhaps. I hope to God they got it right when they say he can't talk. Here's where we dig in for awhile—yes."

They dug in deeper, when later editions confirmed that he was alive; and stayed dug in, even when assured that he was dead and that he had not talked. If Bennett had placed the bungalow, Ricky Stern was up against large-sized trouble. He was the owner.

For forty-eight hours they buried themselves. When nothing new on the case appeared in the papers they took a chance on telephoning the bungalow. They had to find out somehow if the police had crashed in there and were keeping the fact quiet.

Nothing had happened. The man they had left in charge was on the job. His only kick was over being left so long alone.

"We'll be down to-morrow," said Stern. "We'll give you a ring when we start."

The tightness that had been about his jaw during these two days relaxed as he hung up the receiver. His grin looked natural once more as he turned to Gorman.

"It's all right, I guess," he said. "Jake didn't sound like he had a bull hanging on his neck."

"Sure he didn't," said Gorman confidently. "That guy was dead as he'll ever be when we ditched him. The papers got it balled up, that's all. Let's have a drink."

Ricky Stern nodded. "We'll go down to Rumson to-morrow—if nothing breaks. Here's how!"

Detective Lieutenant Skerry was convinced that the Point Comfort Beacon was a fixed light, but he could not convince his chief that the shooting of Bennett did not take place in or close to Keansburg.

"Never mind what you think," said his chief pointedly. "In fact, you may stop thinking. But get back over there to Jersey and get something—get something. And stay till you get it."

Skerry did his best and still was doing it four days after the shooting, but with

nothing to show for it. He believed he could remain there for the rest of his life and still have nothing to show.

He exhibited a splendid grouch when the surgeon who operated on Bennett got him on the phone at the Keansburg police station. He bellowed an amazed, incredulous, but greedy "Wha-at!" at the message that was given him.

"I said," repeated the surgeon quietly, "that I've found the lights Bennett spoke of—two fixed red lights and one flashing. I've already asked for a detail of State troopers. If you want to get in on it, meet me in Red Bank, at Broad and Front Streets, in fifteen minutes."

"Hey!" roared Skerry. "Wait a minute—"

"We'll wait fifteen. You can get here in ten if you hurry."

The receiver clicked in Skerry's ear; and he hurried.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN THE FIGHT ENDED

RICKY STERN and Swifty Gorman were discussing diamonds; not in the abstract, but more pleasantly in the concrete.

"Tell Epstein to go to hell with his forty per cent," said Gorman pithily. "What's he think? That we're in business for our health? Forty ain't enough."

"No." Stern squinted meditatively into his highball, then ran a hand caressingly about his middle, where close to his skin reposed the belt with its little pouches of diamonds as he had stripped it from Bennett. "No," he agreed, "forty isn't enough, but I'm willing to be gouged some just to get them off our hands. They're getting heavy, Swifty, damn heavy, see. I'm getting jumpy carrying them around."

Gorman plugged his recommendation: "Salt them away, I'm telling you, till we get a better bid. Epstein will come up if he thinks he ain't going to get them. Salt 'em away—or run 'em out through the hock shops. They'll assay higher that way, anyhow."

Stern shook his head. "The hock shop route's too slow and money isn't important when you get it in nickels and dimes. No. I guess we can jack Epstein up to around sixty. Say a hundred grand flat for the lot. That gives him seventy grand clear; enough to make him see straight. He'll be back from Chicago in the morning. We've got a date—"

"Say!"—Jake, whose ostensible job was house servant and caretaker of the bungalow, burst in on them anxiously—"here's a car piling in with three guys aboard and two of them are cops!"

As he spoke, the machine pulled up at the door. Detective Lieutenant Skerry of New York City and two New Jersey State troopers descended with orderly haste and mounted to the veranda.

"They walked us in," intoned Stern in a queer subdued tone—"walked us in like hicks."

He backed away across the room, his face pale and frozen in a lopsided, sickly grin.

The door knob rattled, but the door was locked. A weighty hand thumped on the panels and the bell shrilled.

Swifty Gorman snarled, his body slightly crouched, pistol held flat against his hip bone and hidden by his coat—a living picture of leashed sudden death.

"Blow 'em up!" he rasped. "There's only three. We've got the jump—let's gun 'em, Ricky."

"Conned!" said Stern speaking aloud to himself. His hand strayed again across his middle, feeling the belt loaded with the loot which would hang him.

He pushed Gorman from the room into the hall as a trooper looked in a window from the veranda.

Jake stood back in an angle of the hall, gun in hand, awaiting orders. The chauffeur was in the garage.

"We can beat them on the go," persisted Gorman. "That guy at the window—I can get him from here."

"Wait. You, Jake, take a look out back. If we can get to the car—Sam's out there tuning it up—we can give them a race. Let's know where we're at, Swifty, before we start shooting."

A long minute passed during which they

could hear Skerry and the troopers still on the veranda.

Jake crept back with the news that nobody was in sight at the rear of the house—only the chauffeur who in answer to a signaled question had given the high-sign that the big car was ready to go.

Ricky Stern fidgeted with his gun. He didn't like the layout—why was the back of the house being left unguarded? That looked like more come-on stuff. Still, these were hick cops, weren't they? Maybe they didn't know any better than to come to the front door and rap.

"We'll make a sneak," decided Stern. "If we make the car, we'll blow them apart as we go by. Come on. Let's find out where we're at."

Impetuously, Gorman led the way out the back door. There was a swagger to his going, more than mere bravado in the measured paces with which he walked the first twenty feet. He had nerve, grit, to back his bravo spirit.

Ricky Stern and Jack came close behind him, steadily enough, but with the short quick steps of men walking on hot bricks. Stern's head kept swiveling, his glance darting backward to give warning if their retreat was observed.

In the garage the chauffeur sat coolly behind the steering wheel of the limousine. He had both doors open to receive the others.

Jake's pace quickened. Walking like that in the open with cops right behind him was too much for his nerves.

"Back up!" Gorman grinned wolfishly. He swaggered frankly, actually relishing the situation. What the hell you running for? Whoa."

But Jake's semipanic had touched Ricky Stern. He, too, wanted to rush over that open ground. He wanted to get aboard the car and make his dash for freedom.

"Run!" he said suddenly, sharply. "Run!"

Swifty Gorman spun about expecting to meet attack. He bumped into Stern and they fumbled an instant confusedly. Jake was already several paces ahead and running.

"What's the idea?" snarled Gorman, seeing no threat of attack. "What you yelling for? What—"

Jake interrupted, shouting an alarm as he halted abruptly in his tracks.

A trooper had stepped from behind the garage and was making significant motions with two automatics.

Swifty Gorman, turning to learn what had made Jake cry out, fired at the trooper on sight.

There began the end. The police had come doubtful as to their rights. They were acting solely upon a possible interpretation of the delirious utterance of a dying man. They had not come to use force—unless the circumstances they encountered should justify force.

Gorman's shot said much. It was an admission that he and his companions were lawbreakers in some way, if not indeed the murderers of Bennett.

The trooper squatted on his heels as Gorman fired. The bullet chugged into his left shoulder. But both his automatics spat fire before his left arm hung useless. His remaining gun fired again, twice, as he rolled back of the garage.

And others were shooting. Five more troopers, placed to surround the house, were potting at Ricky Stern and Jake and Gorman—a demonstration of strength at first intended simply to obtain surrender.

Stern raced for the garage, shooting, but dropped with three bullets buried deep in his body.

Jake flopped down, unwounded, and lay full length with hands up.

Swifty Gorman stood alone, rocking slightly, recovering from the staggering shock of a forty-five caliber bullet in his right breast. His gun hung loose in his hand.

The firing ceased.

From a corner of the house Detective Lieutenant Skerry called to him:

"Drop your gun and—"

Swifty Gorman turned slowly, locating the voice. He grinned, his mouth a bloody streak from his bullet-torn right lung. Then quicker than lightning his gun snapped up. But his eye was misty, weary with pain. The bullet chipped splinters from the wall a foot from Skerry's head.

An automobile engine roared, thrown into high as it started. The limousine charged out of the garage, the chauffeur making a bid for liberty. He yelled to Gorman, giving him his chance—if he could take it.

The advertisements said that this car could be accelerated from one to twenty-five miles an hour within fifteen feet. It did so.

Swifty Gorman whirled, making his last play. His gun was empty. The car would pass within two feet of him, its doors swinging open. He gathered himself for the leap.

But when he sprang the car was recovering from a heavy lurch—a lurch caused by jolting over the prostrate Jake.

Swifty Gorman's grasp fell short. The door struck him viciously and sent him floundering. He lay still. His neck was broken.

The limousine, its driver shot through the head, crashed full tilt into the house.

The surgeon led Detective Lieutenant Skerry to the T-shaped junction of the highroads at the end of the driveway from the bungalow.

"I noticed them as I drove through here this forenoon," he said. "I was coming down that road"—he pointed to the one corresponding to the upright stroke of a T, the road in line with the driveway—"when I got the idea. You can't see the lights now, of course, because they're shut off during the day. But up there you'll find two red traffic lights. And here"—he pointed to a round bull's-eye on a standard at the entrance to the driveway—"is the red flash. It shows motorists coming down the road that stops here that this is a right-angle turn, you see?"

"Uh-huh." Skerry took it in. "Huh. Now, how could anybody expect a man to dope out that he wasn't talking about a lighthouse. I bet—"

"Sometimes," the surgeon chuckled quietly, "they call a light of this kind a silent policeman."

"Huh? What's that?" Skerry scowled, then grinned. "Yeah," he said, nodding, "I get you."

THE END

He passed the chambermaid, looking straight before him and "very queer"

THE BAFFLING BRAVOS

By Louise Rice

WHO DID IT, AND HOW, AND WHEN, STARE YOU IN THE FACE, AND YET NONE CAN POINT A FINGER WITH CERTAINTY

A Story of Fact

EVERY once in awhile the investigator of criminals comes on a story which remains a mystery that is intact at the end of a long series of years, dissipating any hope that there ever will be any light thrown on it. Such mysteries are worth reading about, since they show how extraordinary must be the acuteness of the people who do solve other mysteries, in their way as baffling.

In nearly all the cases where the crime or the truth of a story has remained concealed, we might expect that the officers of the law did not have associated with them any especially acute mind, to bring to bear upon the mystery that acumen which perceives what is the significance of very small actions.

The man who gives his name to this case is a Mr. Bravo, fairly well-to-do, who, in 1874, married a Mrs. Ricardo, who was quite wealthy and a woman of unusual personal charm.

Bravo was a very hearty, healthy, well-

set-up man who had his share of good looks. He was rather a stupid fellow as to brains, but was ardent and impetuous in temperament, and although the wealthy widow had had a good many admirers, she capitulated to Bravo almost without knowing him, and married him after a whirlwind courtship of three months.

Bravo was a very jealous man, in which he ran true to type, for people who have not a great deal of mental weight to throw into the scales against passion and egotism and selfish desire, are never able to be very calm about anything and are always a prey to their own emotions.

Bravo Complains Often

This was something which the former Mrs. Ricardo soon found out, for her second husband was jealous of the very air she breathed, as the expression is, and disliked to have his wife go out socially without him.

Mrs. Ricardo had made no secret of the fact that but for the entrance of the handsome Bravo on the scene, she would have soon married another gentleman, and she very incautiously said, after her marriage, that she did admire that gentleman greatly, still.

This was enough to set Bravo off; he quarreled bitterly with his bride of a few days and in the most excited manner stated that he wished that he had not married when he did. This, however, was only for a moment or two; he then took his wife in his arms and vowed that he loved her better than any one else could and that he would make her forget the previous lover.

Mrs. Bravo, who had been accustomed to a great deal of attention, and who had had a social career calculated to increase some natural vanity which she had, did not seem to realize the danger of arousing the feelings of a man of Mr. Bravo's temperament. She continued to speak of the former admirer, although she was not then nor afterward, so far as anything was ever known, in communication with him.

Mr. Bravo got to that state in which he would rave about this man whom he had seen but once or twice and who, he was sure, his wife had not seen since her marriage, since he never let her out of his sight —and Mrs. Bravo got to that state where she was rather cool to her husband, being a woman of admirable self-control who did nothing but shrug her shoulders with serene superiority when Mr. Bravo lost his temper; which did not help things.

Mrs. Bravo got to the point of being bored with the insistent society of Mr. Bravo and she thereupon took to herself a female companion, a Mrs. Cox.

This Mrs. Cox was a woman of irreproachable character, but—like a good many others of irreproachable character, rather vinegary, rather huffy in disposition, rather self-righteous. She very naturally took the part of Mrs. Bravo on all occasions, that lady being her employer and not the lady's husband; also it was not to be denied that Mr. Bravo was usually in the wrong.

He got into the habit of complaining about the wine, of which, according to the custom of that time, there was a great quantity drunk, and although the handsome house at Balham, where the couple lived, was chiefly maintained by her, he was always interfering with some detail of the management.

Friction in the Home

He was really temperate for those times, and so were the ladies of the household, but they were all very particular about what they ate and drank, being able to afford the best and having plenty of time to think about their appetites' satisfactions.

Bravo was a "barrister" as it is the custom to call a lawyer in England, but he did not work very hard at his profession and frequently refused work which did not appeal to him. He and his wife maintained some handsome horses, lived just outside the town, and were well served by a competent and what would be to-day a very elaborate staff of household servants.

The trouble was, from the standpoint of Mrs. Bravo, that there was very little real entertaining in the house. There were people who came to dine frequently, but these were never the type of gallant and interesting men who had composed a good part of her social circle before her second marriage.

In this statement there is no insinuation of anything against the character of the lady, who, every one stated, was always the soul of circumspection; but there was no denying that she did like to have gallant men attending on her and also no doubt this was a thing to which Mr. Bravo was most antagonistic.

Well, then, we have this household going forward, very rich, very snug and comfortable and yet with a good deal of friction. Mrs. Bravo, perfectly independent of her husband, financially, feels a bit aggrieved that her life is so set out and controlled for her; and Mr. Bravo, really in love with his wife, and even if not as wealthy as she, nominally the head of the house, yet knowing that his wife is looked to by the servants and that she resents his lordship. The companion, Mrs. Cox, is outwardly respectful to him, but really allied on the side of Mrs. Bravo.

What Happened Tuesday

As already stated, there is no implication in this that there was anything deeper than meets the eye, yet it is most essential that this proper background should be understood and should be thoroughly fixed in the mind's eye before we go on with the presentation of the tragedy which took place the week of April 17, 1876.

On Tuesday of that week, Mr. and Mrs. Bravo had breakfast together as usual, Mrs. Cox being in and out of the room on some household matter and noting there was an atmosphere of that cool aloofness between the two, which meant that something slightly disagreeable had taken place between them at some time after their retiring the night before.

She thought nothing of this, as such a state was apt to blow over through Mr. Bravo's sudden return to the charming and deferential manner which had won her in the first place.

This, in fact, was what did happen. Mr. Bravo suddenly threw off the sullen mood he was in and soon succeeded in winning smiles and attention from his wife. They arranged to drive into town; the horses were brought around and the pair got into the vehicle and for a short time were engaged in animated conversation. Then something was said in a low tone by Mr. Bravo, after which there fell the sudden dead silence, which the coachman recognized at once as the sign that another disagreement had precipitated itself into the pleasure jaunt.

Mrs. Bravo remained cool even when her husband tried, later, to excuse whatever it was that he had said and the pair parted in the town, Mrs. Bravo to do some shopping with the horses and Mr. Bravo to soothe his troubled nerves in a Turkish bath, after which he lunched with a relative of his wife's at St. James's Restaurant.

Then he took a stroll, in the course of which he met an old friend and fellow barrister, whom he invited out to have dinner on the following day. He then went home, arriving there about half past four. Mrs. Bravo was home, but did not meet him, and he got a horse and went out riding, very fretful and jerking the animal about a good deal. On the way home the horse, as irritated as its master by that time, bolted and carried him far out of his way, so that he was really exhausted when he got home, and for awhile sat in a chair, looking quite sick.

At the Dinner Table

Mrs. Bravo seems not to have paid any attention to this, but Mrs. Cox and the chambermaid did and it was on their urging that the master of the house had a hot bath—although one would think that a Turkish bath in the morning would have been enough of that for the day. And, in fact, contact with the hot water did seem to be painful, for the husband was heard to cry out, and on the maid calling in to him to know if he was in pain, he stated that the water hurt his side. However, he did not want Mrs. Bravo worried, he said, and soon was dressed and down to dinner.

The chambermaid was also the waitress and she observed that the master seemed in pain, that he laid down his knife and fork several times in order to press his hand to his side, but he conspicuously avoided attracting the attention of Mrs. Cox or Mrs. Bravo to his condition.

The food was eaten by all three, but Mr. Bravo drank Burgundy, of which he was

very fond, and the two ladies drank sherry and Marsala.

This matter of the wine was afterward very minutely gone into. It was the custom of Mr. Bravo to drink Burgundy at both lunch and dinner. Sometimes there was enough left from the one bottle served at lunch to do for dinner and sometimes there was not. The manservant who had charge of the wine cellar on this particular night could not remember afterward which was the case and, in any event, none of the wine from the bottle which Mr. Bravo used on this night was left.

Bravo Looks "Very Queer"

This is the first of any oddities in this case, for a servant who has charge of the wine is apt to remember with great particularity every circumstance of the serving of the beverage, especially in a household which had such few members that you might say every drop taken would be noted by that servant.

Nevertheless, the servant, and the maid also, maintained against all urgings, that not the next day nor at any subsequent time did either of them remember whether a new bottle of Burgundy was opened at dinner or whether it was the bottle of that wine already open. That this should be true is really very hard to believe.

However, Mr. Bravo ate his dinner and drank whatever Burgundy he did drink, and Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Bravo had their sherry and Marsala and the dinner was, on the whole, a very cool and silent affair, although Mr. Bravo tried to talk a few times, but invariably would end with some irritable and unreasonable remark, as he found that the ladies did not play up to him.

Getting almost beyond his own control, he tried sharply to pull himself together and remarked that he was in a bad mood because he had a toothache and had had, besides, a very annoying letter about some professional matter.

The dinner was ended at half past eight and the three then went into the morning room and talked in a casual manner until nine o'clock when Mrs. Bravo went upstairs and Mrs. Cox accompanied her. After they had gone upstairs, Mrs. Cox went down again and brought up to Mrs. Bravo a glass of wine and water.

The housemaid was in the habit of taking hot water to the rooms of the two ladies at half past nine, every night that the family was home—for even in this wealthy home, at that time, there were no plumbing arrangements for conveying hot water to the upper story of a house by pipes—and on this night, after the hot water was delivered, she was asked by Mrs. Bravo to go downstairs to the dining room and get her another glass of water and wine.

It must be remembered that the use of water and wine is very common in Europe to-day and that this is drunk for thirst. Mrs. Bravo and all other members of that household were anything but really intemperate.

The girl, on her way to the dining room, met her master on the stairs, and although it was his habit to always murmur some slight greeting, or to at least nod as he passed any of the servants of his house, he passed the chambermaid, on this occasion, without even a glance, looking straight before him and "very queer" as the girl afterward testified. He had been alone in the morning room from the time that he had stood as the ladies went out and upstairs, to the time that the maid met him on the stairs. Mrs. Cox afterward stated that she did not see him when she went downstairs to get the first glass of wine and water for Mrs. Bravo.

The Family Retires

Mrs. Bravo was in her dressing room and her husband went in there at once, as soon as he was upstairs, to complain that the quality of the wine had been inferior at dinner that night. This would have been a most significant matter, in view of what was soon to happen, were it not for the fact that this complaint was something which he had made again and again, totally without reason, as the servant who had the wine in charge stated.

The maid went into Mrs. Bravo's bedroom, to prepare the bed for her, and Mrs. Cox was passing out of the dressing room as Mr. Bravo went into it. She stated

that the remark about the wine was made in French, presumably to prevent the maid in the other room from being cognizant of what was said. Mrs. Bravo took this with her usual cool and contemptuous silence. He flung out of the room and went to his own bedroom.

The maid came out of the bedroom and passed Mrs. Bravo on her way in, partially undressed. Mrs. Cox went into her bedroom. Mrs. Bravo stated that she drank her Marsala and water and got into bed.

Near to Death

There was never any check on this statement of hers, nor any means of ascertaining whether or not she did as she said or whether she had gone into her husband's room, for both the maid's and Mrs. Cox's rooms were so situated that they could not have been seen, even if Mrs. Bravo had gone to her husband's room.

It was about fifteen minutes after the house had seemingly settled for the night that Mr. Bravo was heard to jerk his door open and to shout:

"Florence! Florence! Some hot water!"

The maid, who was not yet undressed, ran into Mrs. Bravo's room to help her get into a gown, and Mrs. Cox, who had not begun to prepare for bed, at once ran into Mr. Bravo's room.

She found him in his nightgown, standing at the open window, vomiting on the leads of the house, having evidently tried to get a receptacle from the washstand and being too ill to do so. The maid, leaving Mrs. Bravo to draw on some clothing, came into the room and at Mrs. Cox's startled exclamation, saw her master at the window. She then ran back to Mrs. Bravo and it was while she was out of the room that Mr. Bravo made an alleged statement to Mrs. Cox, which was one of the pivotal points of the mystery that soon arose.

"I have taken poison; don't tell Florence," Mrs. Cox always insisted that Mr. Bravo said to her, alluding to his wife, after which he suddenly sank to the floor unconscious.

Mrs. Bravo now arrived on the scene and together the three women tried to raise him and they did succeed in getting him into a large chair. Mustard and water were procured from the now thoroughly aroused household, but the unconscious man could not swallow, nor could he take coffee. They put his feet in a hot mustard bath and a doctor who had attended Mrs. Bravo was sent for by one of the servants.

Then as the sick man remained unconscious and as the coldness of his skin and his general condition became more alarming, Mrs. Bravo became greatly agitated and dispatched another servant for a physician living quite near at hand, unknown to her personally, but thought to be very good.

This medical man arrived in a few minutes and found Mr. Bravo in the chair quite unconscious and very near to death. He got him on his bed and tried to give him brandy, but could not get his mouth open, his jaws being tightly locked.

The other physician who had been first sent for now arrived and both the doctors united their efforts to the end that they might revive the patient, whose serious condition was becoming every moment more apparent. Mrs. Cox then made her statement that Mr. Bravo had declared that he had taken poison.

Laudanum for a Tooth

The patient still remaining in a sinking condition, Dr. George Johnson, of King's College hospital, a great specialist, was sent for and arrived in haste, in time to find Mr. Bravo vomiting again, mostly blood, and near to being strangled, since he was still unconscious.

The three worked over him for hours without changing this condition greatly, but at three o'clock he recovered consciousness. Of course, the first thing that they did was to ask him the question:

"What poison have you taken?"

Mr. Bravo shook his head as vehemently as his physical state would allow him and he protested that he had taken nothing whatever but a little laudanum for his toothache. He persisted in this, and the very small bottle of laudanum from which only a few drops had been taken, bore him out.

Hot water and hot blankets and brandy

and other methods of restoration were used copiously, and Mr. Bravo seemed to revive—and to wonder in seemingly honest perplexity, what in the world could be the matter with him.

Asked if there were any poisons in the house, he said that there was the laudanum in the bottle, some chloroform, some fluid for burns and "rat poison in the stable."

Forty Grains of Antimony

To this statement he stuck, even when, fifty hours after he was first taken ill, it began to be seen that he was sinking; even when he knew himself to be dying, he protested that he did not know what had happened, that he had nothing after dinner, that he had taken no poison of which he knew and that he did not know what it was which was killing him. He showed to Mrs. Bravo, who seemed stricken with grief, the utmost tenderness and kindness. At the end of fifty-five hours, after he was seen to be standing, ill, at his bedroom window, he died.

All during those fifty-five hours the desperate efforts of the attending physicians had been to discover what the poison was which was causing the trouble and they had repeatedly searched the bedroom. They found exactly nothing. The laudanum bottle was almost full and the amount of chloroform was so little that if it had all been taken it would not have caused death. Also there was a little liniment in the house, but absolutely nothing else. The poison in the stable was intact, not even having been opened.

The post-mortem showed a frightful irritation, right down to the bowels, but otherwise the body was that of a man in perfect health. The chemical analysis of the body organs did not yield any explanation, either, although death owing to the introduction of some powerful irritant into the body was the diagnosis.

Even the matter vomited by the patient during his unconsciousness and just before his death did not establish anything, but one of the physicians remembered that the sick man had stood at his window when he was first attacked by illness, and the leads of the house being examined, some material was found there which was sufficient for the chemical analysis—which established a perfectly astounding fact.

Mr. Bravo had gone to his death through taking the enormous dose of forty grains of antimony!

There was at once, and of course, a fine-tooth combing of every possible place where such an unusual drug could have been procured, and a most rigid examination into the lives of all the persons in the Bravo household.

The full account of the marriage, the conditions prior and subsequent to it, and the general tenor of the life lived in that household, were investigated, but the facts brought out after the most searching study made by veteran police officers, left everybody just where they were before.

Not a druggist anywhere had sold anybody connected with the Bravo household any antimony; what was more, no druggist within reasonable distance had sold any antimony at all! A painstaking hunt through the town and all places where anything of that nature was retailed showed practically none of the drug sold, and the small amount that was, was well accounted for by reputable physicians.

Not a Hint for the Police

Mrs. Bravo was prostrated by the death of her husband and even the calm Mrs. Cox seemed shaken. They showed themselves aghast when suspicion began to point their way and if they were guilty, together or singly, it is certain that a high degree of histrionic talent was shown by all and sundry!

Try as they would and searching every available place as they did, the police never got even a hint as to where the forty grains of that deadly and malignant poison was procured from, nor as to how it came, most unfortunately, into the body of Mr. Bravo.

There was the fact, though, that he had told Mrs. Cox, in the first strangling moment of his illness, that he had taken poison, and the fact that she had told the first physician to arrive that that was what happened. And there was the fact, not to be blinked at, that the man had denied this, word for word, not only when he regained

consciousness and thought that he might recover, but when he knew himself to be dying.

Did Mrs. Cox poison the man whom she suspected of making her beautiful and clever mistress unhappy? Had she had the antimony hidden for some years. Was this given to Bravo in his wine? But if so, why was he so ill during dinner? And before dinner?

The Servant Who Forgot

He had not taken any wine on returning from his horseback ride and it could not be said that his illness had been coming on all day after his lunch, since he did not lunch at home on that day and all that he partook of was taken also by the man who shared it with him.

Yet, he undoubtedly seemed ill after lunch, when he walked with his friend and made the agreement for the dinner of the following day, and he seemed not himself when he returned at half past four and was decidedly ill and in pain before dinner.

This chain of reasoning dismissed from the minds of the police the possibility that any member of the household could have given the poison to the master of it. But if not, then where did he get it? He was well known to the town, a conspicuous figure even to those who did not know him. It would have been very hard for him to escape special attention in any chemist's shop and he had not been seen in any.

He was a man who knew nothing of chemistry and at that time antimony was a rare poison, not only hard to come by, but a thing of which even the average educated person would know nothing.

The servants were ordinary folk, so far as the most careful probing into their lives could reveal. The wife's companion, Mrs. Cox, had a long record of faithful attention to the duties of a most mediocre life. She had not been away from the vicinity of the town for a long time.

The person remaining in the mystery, whose actions could not be checked, was Mrs. Bravo.

She had traveled much; she was rather well educated; she knew a great many people, and she had been accustomed to a life which was free and roving. It must have irked her greatly to be pinned to a suburban house in which there was seldom any of the gay and sophisticated company to which she was so used, and to be obliged, as she was, to account for every moment of her time and every act of her life, to a man who was really her inferior in a good many ways—who was really without that cosmopolitan training which, while in some ways superficial, yet does make such an impress on people.

She might have written to some scientist friend of hers and had the antimony sent her. That part is easy enough. But how could she have administered it? Antimony is a fearful dose and forty grains of it could hardly be taken by a victim without some suspicion of a foreign substance being in whatever would be the food vehicle.

Again, there is the fact that the symptoms of illness were spread all over the day, seemingly, when the illness would surely have appeared within not more than half an hour of the taking of the dose, unless the bottle of Burgundy was opened before it came to the table and the poison put in.

The one suspicious thing in this connection is the fact that the servant who had charge of the wine could not "remember" whether the bottle had been opened or not when he brought it up from the wine cellar, or whether it had been already in the cellerette before dinner. On the other hand, it is not to be denied that we all have lapses of memory which, were the matter with which they are concerned vital, would appear most suspicious.

What Is the Answer?

So there that fact has to lie—either the servant and the waitress did really forget the detail of whether or not the wine was part of a bottle or a whole one, which the servant would have opened—or they knew something about that wine!

However, it does not seem that there could have been anything to know, for that a man so accustomed to wine as Mr. Bravo was, could have taken *forty grains* of antimony in a bottle of it and not have known that there was something seriously wrong with it seems impossible.

There is the fact, of course, that he did complain of the quality of the wine to Mrs. Bravo after dinner, but this was a staple complaint of his and was only a method of registering the constant irritation in which his jealousy of his wife kept him.

And, besides—if it were really the wine which had been drugged, it seems incredible that the man should not have shown signs of the poisoning before he did, for it was a full hour and a quarter, if not more, after he had had his first glass of wine at the dinner table before he opened the door and called for help.

An amazing affair, all around, this, to which there was no solution at the time and to which no solution has been found since, although every criminologist who studies well known crimes has given it the careful and mystified attention that the writer of this account of it has done.

It might have been possible that there was a double-edged explanation. If Mrs. Bravo, with that cool and detached mind of hers and with her intense and aggressive personality which was being slowly smothered, not only by her husband, but by the fact that in Victorian days it was practically impossible for a woman who wished to keep her place in the world to get even a separation from a husband—thus she saw no way of release—it may have been that this woman had, indeed, sent away for the poison and that the perspicacity of the jealous had shown to Bravo the fact that she had done so.

Loving her as he did, furiously and jealously, he would be driven to madness by this. Suppose that he purloined the poison from its secret hiding place? Suppose that he took it, first with the deliberate intention of throwing the blame for his death on his wife, counting on the fact that in some way or other there would be the revelation that she had procured it—suppose that in the moment after he had taken it—that moment after he had left her, still cool and scornful in her dressing room—he decided to shield her, and even in his agony gasped out to Mrs. Cox that he had taken poison.

Then suppose this: that when he regained consciousness after his hours of collapse, the first impulse was again in the ascendant and he determined to throw the blame on the woman who had calmly plotted the death which he was now bringing on himself?

There is also the possibility of that fifteen minutes after the maid and Mrs. Cox had left Mrs. Bravo, presumably to drink her Marsala and water. No examination of this glass was ever made!

Suppose that Mrs. Bravo, with the antimony right at hand, put it into her glass of wine and water and went into her husband's room with the statement that she had something which would ease his toothache and make him sleep. With a kindliness which was common with her, when she was not in one of her icy moods, she could always melt Bravo.

Then, did he drink the fatal dose, knowing that it tasted queer, but believing that it was because of medicine in it? Did the woman then leave him at once?

When he first felt the terrible effects of the poison, did he have a flash of knowledge and in his last expression of love for the woman who meant everything to him, strive to shield her? Was it a true lapse of memory after he had been unconscious for so many hours, that made him declare that he had taken nothing?

Well, that's all we can even guess about this strange affair which occupied the English papers for months at the time—and despite our searching of every kind, we find we have achieved no further result than all those persons who have gone over the story before us.

"Did any one notice that this watch has gone dead?" he asked Gordon

THE PRODIGAL DE LUXE

By Owen Fox Jerome

THE VERY FOUNDATIONS OF HIS SLEEPY, OLD HOME TOWN TREMBLED, WHEN THE WANDERER RETURNED TO WAKE IT UP

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

JOHN HARDY comes home after ten years' absence, a millionaire. He has been a fighter all his life. Immediately he gets into a scrap in rescuing Zoe Ann Wright, daughter of Howard Wright, owner of one of the town's newspapers, the *Blade*. Wright is in jail charged with the murder of Thurlowe Fosdick, to whose bank Wright owes money. John Hardy plans to buy Wright's paper, free Wright of the murder charge and clean up the town.

He does buy the paper and starts work upon his task of freeing Wright. After receiving a call that a Professor Walker has concluded his analysis of some blood found at the scene of the murder, Hardy and Zoe Ann start for the teacher's laboratory.

CHAPTER XXIV

A ZEALOUS REFORMER

THE call was for Hardy from the *Blade's* editor, Presley, informing Hardy that Professor Walker wished to see him right away about an analysis. John and Zoe Ann left the courthouse immediately.

As they walked up Elm Street they noticed that the street lamps were partially hidden by the dense foliage of the old trees, so that the walks were darkened except in small circles directly under the lights at each corner. There was little near-by sound as John assisted his companion down the lonely sweep of steps.

It was true that West Fork was a Saturday night town, but all of the noise and traffic pulsed up and down Wilson Avenue save for the occasional hum of an automobile and its piercing double lance of light when a motorist sought the deserted Elm Street in his desire to make haste.

It was a scant two blocks from the ad-

This story began in FLYNN'S for February 6

ministrative building to that of the *Morning Blade*. They walked along in silence, the man taking it for granted that she would wish to go to the newspaper office with him. For the first moment since he had come home he felt like he was enjoying a calm spell. He had leaped from one action to another with such rapidity that he felt he had earned a breathing spell. A faint void within informed him that he had as yet eaten no evening meal, and it was after nine o'clock.

The girl's voice recalled him.

"If you are to be busy, I can take a street car or a taxi home," she said. "As Raymond Mallory brought me down I left my own car, you know."

"Oh, pardon me, I had forgotten," said Hardy. "I must speak to Presley a moment, if you please, and then we will go."

"I don't mind going home alone."

"Please, I'd like to take you."

"Thank you, John Hardy," she made answer as they paused before the entrance. "And when will you get that report on the last blood tests? Surely that will clear papa's name completely."

"Oh, that? Yes, that was Presley who called me on the phone. That's why I want to see him. Professor Walker is calling for me."

"Professor Walker? Is he making the test for you?"

"Yes. That is, I think so. He hadn't come in for supper when I went by his house, but I left my suit case there with the packages of soil to be examined. I left a note explaining exactly what I wanted him to do. I didn't have time to wait to see him personally. I thought it best to let different men analyze the different specimens, and Callahan suggested Walker."

"I see. You think of everything. May I—do you think it will be all right for me to go with you? I'm so anxious to hear about it."

"Why, certainly," he agreed heartily. "Wait until I see if the photographer has delivered those prints for me and see how Presley is coming along with the revised edition he is putting out. I won't be half a minute. Do you care to come upstairs?"

She declined and turned to stare through the big windows at the linotype machines and their nimble-fingered operators. It was hard for her to view with a sense of detachment the familiar scene which she had always associated with her father. The monotonous buzzing of the ventilator fans, circulating the humid air of the hot night, had a sort of hypnotic effect on her.

All that she surveyed now belonged to a stranger. Her father had lost the means he had with which to fight for the people. Instantly she rebelled against that thought. It was unjust to think that the *Blade* belonged to a stranger. Rather, it belonged to a powerful friend. It was an effort to realize that she had known John Hardy less than twenty-four hours. It seemed weeks almost since that brief encounter of the morning.

"Are you ready?" his voice sounded in her ear. "Professor Walker is waiting for me at the high school laboratory. We can walk over to Wilson Avenue and get a taxi."

"Let's walk," she suggested. "It's only twelve or fourteen blocks. We can go up Elm Street and cross over by the Catholic Church. I want to talk to you."

"All right," he agreed readily. "I'm sorry it's so warm to-night."

They traversed the first block in silence. The subdued roar from Wilson Avenue reached their ears faintly across the intervening buildings. A slight breeze set the leaves and boughs overhead to whispering and murmuring.

The metallic click sounded occasionally as some hard-shelled nocturnal insect had a head-on collision with a light globe. Zoe Ann shuddered as she saw the lights of the county jail and thought of her confined father, who could do nothing but wait. If her companion noticed this involuntary action he gave no sign.

"John, what did you mean by telling Brentwood and Mallory to read to-morrow's *Blade* to give them something to do?" she finally broke the silence.

"Just what I said," he responded gravely. "In that fight we had this morning they are called a pair of ruffians instead of prominent citizens. The *Blade* to-day has ceased printing insignificant news items for

the personal aggrandizement of private individuals who deserve no such publicity. Then, there will be other news of interest. The Board of Industry belongs to the monied interests. The *Blade* devotes an entire page to this sad condition and begins to agitate plans for a new organization composed of disinterested merchants. And this week we begin to expose the Suicide Club."

"Suicide Club? What is that?"

"The First National Bank. They killed my father, they are trying to kill yours. Do you remember Mr. Gregg, the president of the Gregg Grocery Company? Well, that was a big wholesale house which was not run by the greedy wolves of West Fork. They couldn't dictate to Gregg, so they broke him. He killed himself so that his family could collect his life insurance to keep from being penniless."

"Oh, that is horrible. I remember dimly that he shot himself some fifteen years ago, but I didn't know what was the reason."

"You were a little girl then, and I wasn't much bigger. But I remember what my father said about it. I have Presley digging up the facts. Do you remember Grottshein? He was the biggest retail clothier here when I was a boy. The bank pinched in on him, and he killed himself in despair. But he was so involved that this act didn't save his business."

"But, John, how did the bank get him into that condition, and why did they close down on him?" Zoe Ann cried.

"How? That's easy. He banked with them, he borrowed money from them. When they caught him long on merchandise and short of cash they demanded their loan back, just like they did with your father. They are as cunning and patient as spiders, and when they spring their traps there is no escape. To bank with them is to sign your own death warrant.

"That's why I have called that bank the Suicide Club. And I'm going to prove it in the *Blade*. You are asking why they broke Grottshein? Because Trundham wanted to be the biggest clothier in West Fork, and Trundham is the brother of Judge Mallory's wife."

"Why didn't Grottshein borrow money elsewhere?"

"Where could he have got it? The Farmers' National is in the ring. They wouldn't have saved him. Both banks have fattened off of the small individual. Look at their system of handling these little industries organized here at home. After Mr. Citizen buys stock enough to put the industry in operation the banks wait until it gets on its feet and then break it.

"They buy in the company for next to nothing, reorganize, and go blithely on with the money donated by private citizens who now have nothing to show for their funds except worthless and defunct stock certificates.

"These things ought to be changed. I'm going to see what I can do about them."

"And did you come home just with that intention?" Zoe Ann asked breathlessly.

"No," he admitted frankly. "I came home to lick Fosdick. After meeting your father and you I decided to stay and lick the town."

CHAPTER XXV

A NEW KIND OF FEAR

"BUT, John," Zoe Ann ventured, "don't you think that is a terribly big job?"

"Yes, I do. But it's one to my liking."

Silence fell again as they passed by the church and turned up Maple Avenue. Here the street lamps were spaced farther apart where the residences of the middle class began. Cigar or cigarette tips glowed from the darkness of front porches, an occasional voice sounded, and now and then there was the appearance of some figure in white who passed like a ghost in the night.

The singing of belated crickets, the earthly smell of a garden freshly sprinkled, the mingled odors of growing flowers, the murmuring laughter of a young couple in a car parked without lights. Under cover of the dark which hid any changes of time, John Hardy felt himself being carried back across the span of years to his school days.

He had been so busy during the years of his absence that he hadn't had much time to think of home. Now, a queer ache seized him. In spite of all, West Fork was home

to him. Many times had he walked along this same Maple Avenue. He had trod the way before his father laid the first curb and gutter which marked the era of paved streets. Thoughts of his father brought a lump to his throat.

At the next corner, which was without a street lamp, he silently took the girl's arm to assist her across the side street. Safely over the second curb, he released her. His fingers slipped down the length of her soft, young arm to hang at his side. Their fingers met, and Zoe Ann clasped his strong hand in an impulsive little squeeze. John returned the pressure, and neither loosened their grip. So they walked along under the whispering maples hand in hand.

As they waited for the night watchman of the school building to respond to their knock and admit them, she held out her hand frankly. He clasped it warmly, and their friendship was sealed for all time.

CHAPTER XXVI

MEMORIES OF A PROFESSOR

JOHN HARDY was not given to philosophy; he was a man of action. Yet, when he pondered on the matter at all, it seemed to him that life was a swiftly flowing stream which flashed across a brief open space of sunshine between two grim and forbidding cliffs. It was an unknown underground river which burst without warning from the black depths preceding the cradle, ran swiftly across the sunlit space and plunged again into darkness through the opaque clouds of mist which obscured the opening in the cliff of death.

From whence it came and whither it went no one knew. Man was conscious only of that fleeting moment of sunshine between birth and death. Like a voyager borne along in a skiff without oars, he was helpless to stay the rush of the stream. All he could do was to note the snags and try to avoid them, note the rocks and eddies and trees which served as landmarks of time and try to remember them if he could.

Of his voyage past the quiet eddy which composed the life of Professor Thomas Walker he could recall but three little snags or rocks which stood out in a row across the mouth of the chemist's little bay of existence as Hardy saw it. To others whose life stream mingled or came into contact with that of the professor, there might be other marks of identification, but to Hardy there remained just these three.

His first outstanding recollection of Professor Walker came to him the first week he became a student of chemistry. Because of the necessary freedom of speech and action in the laboratory there was less discipline in Walker's classes than in others. Unruly or exuberant spirited students took advantage of this opportunity to carry on conversations or flirtations foreign to the business of atoms and their valences. Just so much of this would Walker tolerate before he would bring the culprits to order with a favorite sharp remark. The first time John Hardy heard it he found that he himself was being addressed.

"Mr. Hardy, I am running this circus," rapped out the professor. "If you want to put on a show, get a tent of your own."

Slang! Argot of the street! This crude, but succinct phrase falling from the lips of an otherwise cultured professor! John Hardy never forgot it.

The second episode anent Walker he recalled with something of chagrin. In some manner, perhaps through discussion of Mendel's law of heredity, the matter of mixed blood arose. Was America sufficiently a melting pot to absorb the Negro and the Indian? Examples were discussed. Professor Walker vetoed the suggestion that the Negro blood would successfully mingle with white, but, as the Indian was of a disappearing race, numbering considerably less than half a million, and there being a number of conditions to consider, an amalgamation of Indian and white blood was more or less probable.

Hardy, ever positive in his beliefs and convictions, took issue with the speaker.

"An amalgamation between white and red men is intolerable," he declared vehemently. "It is no more to be thought of than mixing with the Negro."

"And why, may I ask?" demanded Walker with some asperity.

"Why? Because the Indian is not white," stated John proudly.

Walker merely looked at him without reply. A faint flush rose to the chemist's cheeks. A chill fell upon the subject and it was dropped. It was some time after this that Hardy learned there was Cherokee blood flowing in Walker's veins from his mother's side of the house. He thought of the professor's high cheek bones, the queer expression in the man's eyes as his pupil proudly disdained Indian blood.

Regardless of the permissible difference of opinion on the subject, Hardy would never have intentionally hurt the older man's feelings. And, having learned this bit of Walker's family history in an indirect manner, it was not a point upon which he could apologize to the professor. The matter was never mentioned again. After all these years it was to be doubted if Walker would remember it. But John Hardy never forgot it.

The third and most significant landmark by which he remembered the chemist was something in the nature of an epochal event. It concerned Hardy's experiment with nitroglycerin. When the class came to that section of the work dealing with explosives Walker furnished guncotton in minute particles and a tube gun with which to explode it. He produced pure sodium and demonstrated the theory of spontaneous combustion.

All of this led to discussions of fire and insurance bugs and their methods. The class enjoyed a two weeks' sojourn in the giant land of explosive power, carefully guarded by their instructor. When the subject of glyceryl trinitrate, more popularly termed nitroglycerin, was reached the class was bidden to read the lesson, learn to distinguish the properties of the explosive, and forget it.

Because of the danger surrounding this high explosive, its manufacture was forbidden. Not so to hard-headed John Hardy. He had already survived a mixture or potassium chlorate and sulphuric acid. He desired to read the riddle of the heavy, sweetish, innocuous glycerin which his mother had mixed with rose water for his chapped hands as a child. Withdrawing to a workbench against the wall, well away from the other pupils, he proceeded to follow instructions concerning the mixture of nitric acid with glycerin.

He added the necessary sulphuric acid to take up the water formed in the mixture, placed a rubber stopper in the test tube, and carefully set the little phial in a rack against the wall. Unfortunately he had a Bunsen burner going within a few inches of this product. He paused to consider how he was to test the efficacy of this new compound and how he was to dispose of it safely thereafter.

The Bunsen burner acted as the judge in this question. Heated under pressure, the nitroglycerin reacted true to form. There was sudden ominous thunder. John Hardy came to himself on the floor with Professor Walker bending anxiously over him. His wandering eyes observed an expanse of blue sky where a moment before had been a thick wall.

"Wha—what happened?" he quavered.

"That's precisely what I want to know," answered Walker. "What were you doing, and where are you hurt?"

"I—I just made a little nitroglycerin, professor," he answered weakly. "I put it in the rack while I was deciding what to do with it. Did I blow that hole in the wall?" he asked, as he got haltingly to his feet.

The semicircle of students about them began to laugh nervously.

"You did," agreed Walker grimly. "The only thing that saved your life is the fact that nitroglycerin does not explode away from resistance, but toward the point of nearest resistance. The proximity of your mixture to that wall saved your neck. You certainly fit your surname, young man."

The questionable fame he bore for some weeks, the irate school board, the matter of repairing the damaged wall, all faded into the forgotten things of the past before the memory of the chemist kneeling over him with anxious face, which was at variance with his angry words.

All of this had been some twelve years ago. Hardy had seen and talked with Walker many times in the two years that followed ere he left home. But nothing

stood out in his mind as he and Zoe Ann climbed the stairs of the deserted school building except these three lone markers of remembrance.

"Doesn't it seem queer to be passing through these familiar old halls again?" murmured the girl almost wistfully. "The building is alive with memories and the faces of chums of school days. Can't you just see society nights, reception nights, graduation — senior plays — debates on Thanksgiving after a close football game with Dansville or Piney Grove? Those things still go on, yet how deserted the old place is, just because we know it is vacation time, I guess."

CHAPTER XXVII

WHAT THE ANALYSIS SHOWED

HARDY'S nostrils twitched at mention of football.

"Yes," he sighed. "I can see the beribboned section of the auditorium set aside for the football squad who came to see if their debaters and orators would win the cup after they won the football game. The noise and the cheers, the music and smell of cut flowers, and a fellow's best girl he could walk home with afterward. How short those days were."

"And how long they seemed to be then," she smiled. "Did you have a best girl, John?"

"A new one every year," laughed Hardy. "Sometimes three or four."

"But wasn't there one particular shy mouse of a girl, or perhaps a regular belle of the school, that you felt you were going to marry when you finished growing up?" persisted Zoe Ann. "Wasn't there one girl you liked above all others?"

"No, there wasn't," said Hardy soberly. "I have always been too busy getting into trouble to think of marrying. To tell you the truth I can't do any more than recall the names of some of the girls I knew. Here we are, and Professor Walker is probably tired of waiting."

Ten years had not changed the chemistry instructor more than might be expected. At fifty he looked very like the man Hardy had known at forty. It was true that his black eyes seemed more tired, his high cheek bones higher, the lines in his face deeper, and the mole on his chin more hairy. But then Hardy had himself reached an age where he was far more observant than a thoughtless, careless youth. Perhaps Professor Walker's shoulder stoop was a trifle more pronounced, but his step still had the active spring and resiliency of yore. And his handshake and his voice were firm and steady.

"Well, well, so you've come home, John Hardy. We had begun to think West Fork had lost you for all time; your name was rarely mentioned any more. I might say that nothing has surprised me more in recent years than the note you left with Mrs. Whitlowe. That was the first inkling I had of your return. I am sorry I wasn't at home, but I was out in the woods for the afternoon. Of course, you ran true to form and got tangled up with trouble the moment you landed."

"Yes," agreed Hardy soberly. "Big trouble this time, professor. You know this young lady, don't you?"

"Certainly," Zoe Ann answered for the chemist. "We meet each other on the streets frequently."

"My dear girl," said Walker, holding out his hand sympathetically, "you don't know how sorry I am that your father has been brought into this affair. Who would have dreamed that they would dare draw his name into it on such flimsy evidence?"

"Oh, it's simply awful," she made answer, trying to smile bravely.

"I cannot understand the workings of fate," murmured the scientist, shaking his head slowly. "In death, as in life, Fosdick causes trouble and agony for better men than he."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that, Professor Walker," exclaimed the girl. "Poor man! I am sorry for him. Think how he must have suffered."

"Yes, yes," agreed Walker thoughtfully. "I, too, am sorry—for your father."

Evidently Walker had not held the deceased banker in very high esteem. Hardy covered the awkward pause.

"Did you analyze that soil for us, pro-

fessor?" he asked. "I judge that you did, from what Presley told me."

"Yes, I did. I have all the figures here on my desk," replied Walker, leading the way into the laboratory. "I am glad I was here to do the work for you. I generally go up into the mountains for the summer, but things haven't been going smoothly for my finances the last two or three years. So I've been staying in West Fork."

"You won't have to this summer," promised Hardy generously.

Walker smiled faintly.

"If you mean that you intend sending me on a vacation for telling you what you want to know, I fear that I will remain in West Fork," he answered gently.

"What do you mean?" cried Hardy quickly.

Zoe Ann merely looked her distress.

"You specifically asked me to test these specimens of soil for two different kinds of human blood, did you not?" asked the chemist, waving his hand toward a table upon which were the several newspapers holding little mounds of dirt.

"Yes."

"I have done so. I have been two or three hours at it for you. That was a clever thought of yours, John Hardy, and I am proud of you. Out of several hundred people it would be well nigh impossible to identify the blood of each, but out of two or three individuals there should be all the chance in the world of separating and identifying specimens.

"You know that the general composition of human blood is the same, being composed of liquor sanguinis—liquid of blood—water, proteids, salts, nutritive and excrementitious matter. The red corpuscles are one thirty-two-hundredths in diameter and the white are one twenty-five-hundredths. The white corpuscles exist in the proportion of one to three hundred reds, sometimes as high as four hundred reds to one white. They will vary in size a fraction with individuals, also. Then there are disease germs and varying quantities of salts in individuals. Following Ehrlich's side chain theory regarding amboceptoids—"

"But, Professor Walker," cut in Hardy worriedly, "aside from the laboratory method of doing the work, what did you find out?"

"I was just trying to tell you that while such a test as you wanted was delicate, still it could be done," remarked Walker in disapproval of the interruption. "And the chances should have been ten to one that the two different kinds of blood offered for analysis would be sufficiently different to be distinguishable from each other. This, I regret to say, is not the case. The soil you brought me most certainly contained human blood. However, it was every drop from the same individual—or else the two persons had blood that was identical in character so far as I could determine."

Hardy and Zoe Ann looked at each other in dumb misery. The hope which they held had faded.

"Are—are you sure of that?" demanded Hardy earnestly. "This is a mighty important thing, Professor Walker."

"Positive. Here are my figures. There is your soil. Have it done over by some one else," suggested the chemist stiffly.

"No, I didn't mean to doubt your ability, sir. But you don't understand what this means. If Wright's blood should happen to test out the same as this—but it couldn't! There is no question that part of this is Fosdick's blood, and Wright's tests out differently."

"Isn't—isn't it queer that the assassin should have blood exactly like that of Mr. Fosdick?" Zoe Ann managed to utter.

Walker eyed her white face keenly. His features softened a trifle at the suffering depicted in her countenance.

"If I may venture an opinion," he said softly, "I should say that there is no blood here save that of Fosdick's."

"Then—then you think that the murderer got off from the fight without losing any blood—without getting hurt in the encounter?" she murmured.

"Without question," agreed Walker.

"But—from the description of the body's condition there must have been a regular battle," protested Hardy. "How would you account for that, professor?"

"I should say," replied Walker shrug-

ging slightly, " that Fosdick at last ran into something he couldn't browbeat."

There was silence for a moment. Then:

" If Mr. Brentwood learns of this result, he'll try to lay the blame on papa again," murmured Zoe Ann. " The fact that there are no marks on him will but bear out this analysis. Being such a big, strong man, Brentwood will say that he was able to beat down Mr. Fosdick without receiving a blow in return."

" If they learn of it?" muttered Hardy. " When they learn of it, you mean. I promised them to-night to let them have proof of the blood test. I guess I talked a little fast, Zoe Ann. I—I'm awfully sorry. But I was too sure of the results of this analysis."

" Don't," protested Zoe Ann, the tears coming to her eyes. " Don't try to blame yourself, John. You have more than overbalanced this slip—if slip you call it—by all else that you've done."

CHAPTER XXVIII

A NEW SUSPICION

" WELL, I guess we'll have to begin all over for a clew," said Hardy.

" Maybe they won't be so anxious to push things after what you said about the time limit involved," offered the girl hopefully.

" I'm sorry," murmured Professor Walker. " Here are the notes, John. And your suit case is there by the table."

" You didn't find anything else in the soil?" queried Hardy desperately, clutching for a last straw.

" Not a thing," said Walker. " Of course, there is some grass and perhaps a twig or two. I didn't sift the dirt for any articles."

" I didn't mean that," said Hardy wearily, shaking his head. " Still," he went on as he picked up his handbag, " there might be something in that. I'll just take these packages of dirt with me, too."

" I'm sorry I couldn't earn that vacation," Walker offered, essaying a smile meant to be cheerful.

Hardy looked up from the bundles he was making.

" You have, Professor Walker, just the same," he said. " Where do you want to go, and how much will it cost you?"

The chemist raised a protesting hand.

" I was just trying to be cheerful," he said. " I do not care to go anywhere this summer."

" Come now," Hardy said. " You've worked hard enough on me in the past to earn a dozen vacations. How much do you need?"

" I couldn't think of taking a dime from you," declined Walker firmly.

" Perhaps not for a vacation," agreed Hardy, " but you shall for this analysis work. It is worth five hundred dollars to me to find out that I haven't anything to depend on. You've got to know exactly where you stand before you tangle with the law enforcement league here. Will five hundred dollars be enough?"

" Five hundred dollars? My dear boy, you—you are generous, to say the least," gasped Walker. " I'm sorry, but I cannot accept a penny of your money."

" But I insist. I don't like to rest under obligation to anybody when money will lessen my debt. You must be paid for what you've done at any rate."

The chemist eyed the speaker rather queerly.

" Very well," he said. " Five dollars will cover everything."

" That won't pay you for your time," snorted Hardy. " You have earned a vacation this summer."

Walker drew himself erect. His dignity was impenetrable.

" I am sorry, but I cannot accept your generosity. I beg of you to desist."

Further urging would have been extremely distasteful to the man. As unostentatiously as possible Hardy laid a five-dollar bill on the desk. The chemist folded and handed to him the paper containing the results of the analysis.

" Do you play golf, Professor Walker?" Zoe Ann asked irrelevantly as they bade the elderly man good night.

Walker's black eyes were almost piercing in their intensity as he looked at her.

" I do not," he stated distinctly. " Such amusements are not for poor professors."

On the way to the Wright home Hardy tried to shake off the depression which was settling upon his shoulders because of the astonishing result of the analysis.

"Anyway, I'll have time at last to care for my black eye," he endeavored to speak lightly. "I'll change this ruined suit for a suit of pyjamas. Good Lord! I haven't registered at any of the hotels. I forgot it. Do you think I can get a room at the Marlton at this time of night?"

"I suppose one could," Zoe Ann replied almost indifferently.

"Thank you for your interest," Hardy rejoined, faintly sarcastic.

"Oh, excuse me," she said, rousing herself. "I was thinking about Professor Walker. Hotel? You're not going to any hotel. You're going home with me."

"But—but, isn't such a proceeding a bit unusual?" he queried. "I appreciate your kindness, but there is something else I have to do yet to-night. And then, I've just come to town, and it is rather late at night to be walking in with you. And then your father isn't home—"

"I wish everybody wouldn't remind me that my father is in jail," she declared, bursting into tears.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to recall that to you," he said helplessly. "I—"

"I—I guess I'm buckling under the strain," she tried to smile. "Excuse my childishness. But we have a big house and two or three servants. There's lots and lots of room for you. It seems like an age since—since yesterday morning."

"There, there," soothed Hardy. "You're just getting tired, that's all. You're a brick to stand up under what you've been through. I'd be glad to accept your invitation, but there's one more thing I've simply got to do to-night."

"What?"

He studied her features for an instant. Should he tell her? If she were becoming hysterical it was hardly the right thing to discuss at the moment. Yet, it was either tell her or accept her hospitality.

"Well," he hesitated, "you see, to-night is the only chance I'll have to see Fosdick's body for myself. I don't know whether that can do me much good now, but I don't want to overlook anything. That's why I can't accept—"

"All right," she agreed, "I hadn't thought of that, but you are right. Let us hurry. I shall go with you."

"You? Why, Zoe Ann, I wouldn't think of taking *you* to such a place. Why—"

The tears were gone. Her expression was grim and her rounded young jaw was squared and hardened in a delicious manner.

"We are fighting for my father's life," she declared. "I'll go anywhere and do anything."

"You are simply immense!" he stated slowly. "I didn't know there were any young women like you."

"I didn't think there were any men like you," she answered.

Her frankness was disconcerting. Abruptly Hardy changed the subject.

"What made you ask Walker if he played golf?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, that was queer. I asked him that because I saw among the other bottles and things on his desk a freshly opened bottle of New Finish."

"New Finish? And what is New Finish?"

"It is a white enamel for recoating old golf balls. I thought it queer that he should have a bottle of the stuff up there at the school building during vacation time."

CHAPTER XXIX

A GRIM TASK

SILENCE! Silence and midnight! Too late for the hum of traffic to sound from the deadened street without. Too late for trolley cars, too late for automobiles, too late for revelers in West Fork—too late for all this noise, had it existed, to penetrate this silence. A subdued glow from the dome light in the ceiling—the sickening, cloying odor of mingled flowers—banks of floral designs around and over the gray casket in the alcove—soldierly array of folding chairs with the name "Greenwald" stenciled on the back—a peaceful sleeper whom noise will ne'er awaken—brooding solitude—silence. And midnight.

The last candle gutters in its socket. The

vain display is o'er, and life turns to witness the antics of a newer puppet. Gather ye young buds and old bloods while ye may! Strut the boards and speak your squeaky lines from your different levels of society. Here is the goal of all. Death is the great leveler of all things temporal. What matters a ten-thousand-dollar funeral or a ten-dollar pine box? Worms are no respecters of bodies. Marked with the cold dew of death, bankers and policemen, drab slatterns and society matrons, bootleggers and kings are all alike.

Who are you to puff and blow so pompously to-day? From sanctimonious Sam Kimball down to Bob, the ragged street urchin of nameless parentage! From Jersey Jim, the poetical hobo, up to Mrs. T. Wayne Gibson, the ancient and aristocratic aunt of Judge Mallory who has had her face lifted to regain a semblance of youth! To-morrow the mold of the grave will be on you—the world will have forgotten even your name, or, if remembering, will shrug indifferently. Despite your air of importance to-day you will have lived to slight avail.

Witness the faint, mocking smile about the pallid lips of this sleeper who wakes not. You, Jersey Jim, you disreputable, filthy, shiftless tramp, you are fully as great as Thurlowe Fosdick, banker of reputation! You, Thurlowe Fosdick, with your petty politics, your horrible, cold, merciless nature and thieving cant, you are even less than Jersey Jim! For the worthless tramp still lives and breathes. He is worth a thousand dead men yet, while you—you have ceased to be!

To-morrow morning you will be surrounded by sorrowing relatives, by sniveling hypocrites, by curious idlers. You will be attended by the pomp and fuss of a ten-thousand-dollar funeral. You will be eulogized by an ardent minister who keeps one eye on the billy-goat face of Sam Kimball. To-morrow—ah! To-morrow you will be well attended.

But to-night you sleep alone, surrounded only by the shadows of your iniquities. How peaceful must be death. You smile in your sleep like a happy child. The Grim Reaper has, with the assistance of Henry Greenwald, on your battered face ironed out much of the wolf's expression. You rest peacefully and smile, while a better man than you ever dreamed to be rests in the shadow of the gallows to-night.

Come! Unlock those smiling lips, open those cold, piercing eyes once again. What is the secret which envelops your death? Now is no time to rest and smile at the mockery of life. A human soul is in travail because of you. Unseal the gates of death for one brief instant and speak. Only you know the secret of your murder. Speak! Speak, and in death show one act of mercy that you did not show in your life. Knowest thou aught of thy demise? Speak, and free a fellow being, or condemn him to the gibbet. That cold smile is more baffling than Mona Lisa's—than the Sphinx.

"The old codger looks pretty good, doesn't he? You should have seen his mug when they brought him in—he was a wreck."

John Hardy glanced swiftly at the downcast face of Zoe Ann Wright and then scowled warningly at the speaker.

"Can't we have a little more light in here?" he asked in a voice which radiated disapproval.

"Sure," agreed the undertaker's assistant cheerfully, unabashed at the other's attitude. "There! Take a good squint at him now. No marks of violence on his map, are there? Dermalite is the stuff that does it. That's a compound we use to fill up holes. Then we paint 'em up. We could show the beauty parlors a few tricks. You—"

Zoe Ann shuddered convulsively.

"Heavens! Can't you be quiet, man," growled Hardy roughly.

"Me?" gaped the young fellow incredulously. "Sure. But what's wrong? You said you weren't relatives, didn't you? I was just trying to explain to you how Fosdick looks so nice. Say! You sure have a beauty of a shiner yourself. Want me to paint up the old optic for you?"

"Your chatter is annoying because—this young lady is the daughter of the man accused of this deed," stated Hardy tersely. "No, I don't want my eye camouflaged."

"Oh!" exclaimed the talkative embalmer. "I didn't know it. I'm sorry if

I spoke callously, miss. It's all in the day's business to us, you know. I—"

"Never mind," interrupted Zoe Ann gently, essaying a faint smile. "I know you didn't mean any offense. And we have come to learn all you can tell us about it. Please explain—to Mr. Hardy—how the body looked and—and anything he wants to ask you. Go on, John, see if you can learn anything. I won't faint, or anything. And I want to hear about it."

"Do you know Howard Wright, young man?" demanded Hardy, smiling encouragingly at the girl at this brave speech.

"Only by sight," admitted the embalmer. "Sit down. Just as well be comfortable. Fosdick won't mind. I've read his paper quite a bit. Smart man—too fast for this burg. By the way, my name's Gordon—Neal Gordon."

Hardy winced at the easy reference to the deceased banker, but he shook hands and smiled. It was hard to be angry at this garrulous apprentice.

"Let me tell you clearly where I stand before we go any further," he said. "My name is Hardy. This is Miss Wright. I am the new owner of the *Morning Blade,* and my sole purpose here to-night is to see if I can't unearth some bit of evidence which may help me to prove Mr. Wright's innocence. I am bitterly opposed to the crowd who are seeking to pin this crime on Howard Wright. In view of this admission will you aid me with all the information you can give me? I ask nothing but the exact truth."

Gordon cocked his head to one side like a quizzical puppy.

"Will I? Brother, I don't know what you can learn from me except how many gallons of embalming fluid Fosdick used and how many patches I had to make in his hide, but whatever I can tell you—consider it told."

"Thank you. You are not a native son of West Fork, I take it."

"Not hardly," Gordon grinned happily. "Furthermore, I don't owe the town vultures a thing. In fact, the favors go the other way. Fosdick, there, owes me something for parting his hair so nice. Fire away. What do you want to know?"

"The banker's body was brought here some time yesterday, I think. Was it brought directly from the Country Club?"

"Yep—late yesterday afternoon after the home town sleuths got through sleuthing. I pickled—embalmed him last night. I caught myself that time, Miss Wright. Say, are you the fellow who wanted a blood test of the dead man this afternoon? The day man told me about some such request. Lucky we were able to furnish it."

"That is one of my lines of investigation," admitted Hardy gravely. "Now, about Fosdick. What became of his clothes? His family come after his effects yet? And I suppose the police hold the remains of his golf club?"

"Everything is still here—what's left of 'em."

"What do you mean?"

"The front was pretty near torn off of him," enlightened Gordon. "When the killer got through with him he looked like he'd run into the side of a speeding express train covered with barbs. He—"

For the first time confusion halted his speech, and he glanced guiltily at the white-faced girl who listened.

"Never mind me, Mr. Gordon," she declared proudly. "It was not my father. Go on. We are here to find out."

"I'll show the things to you," offered Gordon, recovering his aplomb. "Come on back here."

He sprang to his feet and started to lead the way rearward out of the mortuary chapel.

CHAPTER XXX

THE SILENT WITNESS

"WILL there be any—er—gruesome sights?" hesitated Hardy, glancing quickly at his companion.

"Not any," beamed Gordon, carelessly pointing toward the casket of the banker. "Only stiff in the house to-night."

Hardy swung around, half exasperated. Zoe Ann quickly held out her hand to him and smiled in understanding.

"Come, John," said she. "He doesn't of-

fend me in the least, and he's trying to be as nice as he can. Don't think of me at all, but see what you can learn. Why, if it would have helped any I'm sorry we didn't get here last night in time to see the poor lacerated body before it was touched. I can stand anything for papa's sake—with you to lean on."

He squeezed her fingers comfortingly as they followed in the wake of the breezy and irrepressible Mr. Gordon.

The heavy white duck which had constituted Fosdick's golfing togs amply bore out the embalmer's description. The goods were badly stained with blood, and both shirt and knickers were torn and ripped unaccountably in a number of places. Hardy subjected the garments to a severe scrutiny. He found several minute slivers of hickory imbedded in the cloth. That these came from the shattered club was obvious, but why were they driven into the material?

"Were any shreds of cloth beaten into his flesh?" queried Hardy, pointing at one of the rents.

"Only in one spot in his side where I took out a good-sized splinter of wood," informed Gordon. "Otherwise he just seemed a mass of bruises."

Without comment Hardy examined the banker's golfing shoes. These were fairly new. He started slightly as he recognized the markings on the soles to be identical with the markings he had photographed in Wright's footprint in the ravine. The only difference was that the dead man's shoes were appreciably smaller.

"And this is the half of his golf club," added Gordon, holding out a leather-wrapped handle as Hardy straightened up. "The effects found in his pockets are in the safe in the office."

"How does it happen that the police didn't take charge of this?" asked Hardy, gingerly accepting the handle which the murdered man had been gripping at the instant of death.

"It was glued to the stump of his right hand with blood," Gordon replied. "I suppose you knew that the two forefingers of that hand were missing? Well, it was so apparent that no other hand had touched this handle except Fosdick's that they didn't bother to disturb it. I had to soak it loose, myself."

"Uuumm—I note that the leather, even though stiffened with blood, coils down a bit below the end of the wood grip," frowned Hardy. "In fact this leather-wrapped handle is not as long as it should be."

"Of course not," stated Gordon. "The police said that the blow which cut off those two fingers took part of the handle as a matter of course."

"That's the queer part of it," continued Hardy thoughtfully. "If the slayer sheared off two fingers and cut through the hickory handle by a particularly violent blow of his more or less sharp instrument, how does it happen that this leather grip isn't torn or cut somewhat? Can't you see that the fingers were removed and the wood was broken while the spiraled strip of leather between fingers and wood was not injured?"

Gordon whistled.

"That's mighty funny," he offered.

"There's something wrong in the theory of the blow," pursued Hardy. "Yet—I can see no way to account for the loss of the fingers by any other method, myself. Tell me how you patched up the mutilated hand. Just how did it—"

"I didn't," responded Gordon quickly. "I just washed it up and put on a silk glove with stuffed fingers. I didn't see any need of making new fingers. He'll never sign any more papers."

"Good boy!" cried Hardy. "Quick! Let's have a look at the hand."

Back in the chapel Gordon deftly removed the glove and exposed the banker's right hand. Zoe Ann, as interested as she was, could not restrain a faint quiver as Hardy lifted the hand and bent over to examine it.

For a long moment he stared in silence at the mutilation. Some tiny cell of memory leaped into active life and waved a warning flag frantically. He had seen this very thing before, somewhere, some time. He knit his brows and strove to think what was familiar to him in the appearance of this torn flesh.

There was a difference; it had been living flesh he had examined before. This hand

would never heal, because nature was forever through with this bit of clay in its present form. But somewhere in Hardy's brain was the exact knowledge of how this hand would have looked had its owner lived to see it heal. How the dickens could he know this? What elusive thought trembled on the edge of remembrance? Queer and tricky thing, the human mind.

He slowly shook his head and relinquished the cold hand. He stared uncertainly at the club handle while Gordon replaced the silken glove with its two cotton fingers. Then, at the embalmer's questioning eye and Zoe Ann's expectant silence he sighed.

"I can't quite grasp it," he said. "I guess we've seen all we can see here. Before we go, will you show us his personal things, Gordon?"

Upon his last morning on earth Fosdick had not been burdened with many of the trappings of civilization. A bunch of keys, a combination card case and billfold, a gold pencil, a clubhouse score card, an elegant watch with a belt chain, some small change, a signet ring, and a pair of monogrammed handkerchiefs were the net sum.

His companions were silent while Hardy fingered the articles delicately. There was little enough he could learn from these things. The pencil and watch were engraved with the banker's name. The pocketbook contained thirty-two dollars, a railroad pass, and membership cards to the Country Club and two fraternal orders. Loath to relinquish these inanimate witnesses to a crime, Hardy picked up the watch again.

As he stared at its face a significant little fact which he had overlooked the first time gradually forced itself upon his consciousness. The timepiece was silent. He placed it to his ear. But of course it would have run down since yesterday morning. He tested the spring. The watch was wound fairly tight. This excited his interest. He shook it vigorously and listened again. He desisted at length and looked up queerly.

"Did any one notice that this watch has gone dead?" he asked Gordon.

"No," admitted Gordon quickly, having gathered the importance of Hardy's actions. "I didn't put these things away—Greenwald did. Beyond noting that the body hadn't been robbed I don't suppose the police paid any attention to it."

"Zoe Ann! Zoe Ann!" cried Hardy so sharply that the girl started.

"Yes, yes," she answered feverishly. "What is it, John?"

"This watch proves our case about the time limit involved in the murder," he declared with shining eyes. "Fosdick was not the man to carry a dead watch around with him, was he? And it is a foregone conclusion that nobody has wound this timepiece up since he last did so. Yet it is wound up and stopped. He wound it up early yesterday morning. And yesterday morning is when it stopped. Look! Look at the hour at which it quit working."

Both Zoe Ann and Gordon stared at the watch. It had ceased to tick off the seconds at seven thirty-six.

"Our silent witness!" exclaimed Hardy. "Seven thirty-six! Just about the time a fair golfer starting at seven would get around to the spot where Fosdick was murdered. This exonerates Howard Wright."

"Oh, it does, it does," cried Zoe Ann.

"I guess it does," agreed Gordon thoughtfully as he turned the watch over in his fingers. "I'm mighty glad if this helps your father out of a tight hole. But say, Hardy, look at this biscuit. There isn't a mark or dent on it. Why, the crystal isn't broken even. It's a cinch the murderer didn't hit Fosdick in his watch pocket and queer the timepiece. If this watch stopped at the instant Fosdick was bumped out, all right. But why did it do it? I'm not strong for psychic phenomena."

"Neither am I," agreed Hardy soberly, that same elusive memory cell playing hide-and-seek with him down through mental corridors. "I can't answer your question. All I can say is that it did so. Lock these things up in a safer place, where no one can get at them. On your life, don't surrender them until we have an expert jeweler look at the watch. I'll see that it becomes legal evidence to-morrow."

He pressed a ten-dollar bill into the young man's hand, and turned to conduct a happy girl out of the building.

CHAPTER XXXI

STARTING THE DAY

SCORCHING days, but cool, comfortable nights. Up in the Ozark tablelands, at a desirable number of feet above sea level, West Fork may have sweltered during the dog days, but it cooled off delightfully at night.

John Hardy slept soundly until the chill of dawn's low temperature crept into his blood. His strenuous day, and perhaps long association with trouble, rendered him impervious to all else save slumber from the instant his head touched his pillow until the sun peeped over the rim of the world. He drew the light covers up about his form and turned on his side to resume his pursuit of Slim Brentwood through the shadowland of subconsciousness.

But his years in the cattle country had built up a habit which now played him false. Accustomed to rising at dawn to tackle another day of sweating with obdurant steers, and in days after that, obdurant well drillers, he could not go back to sleep.

He rolled over on his back and lay staring about the big, airy room. And thus he lay when the first shy shaft of sunshine launched itself athwart his bed. He heard the twittering of birds in the big maple just outside his eastern window, the whispering of the star-pointed leaves in the cool breeze of dawn.

The faint rattle of milk bottles on the side porch attested the arrival of the milkman. A shrill whistle from the street and a dull thud as a bulky newspaper caromed against the front steps announced the paper boy. West Fork was astir. The wheels of industry quivered and then, with a subdued clank of machinery, resumed the daily grind of civilization, which halted not even for the funeral of a Fosdick.

Hardy stretched luxuriously and yawned gloriously. His eyes fell on the braided sleeve of his pyjama coat. Almost curiously he felt of the fine texture of the cloth. A far cry from the rough garments of Texas. He glanced toward the chair which held the damaged suit he had worn the day before. He had outfitted himself rather lavishly in Kansas City, a sort of reaction against the lean years in Texas. Now he was worse off than before, unless his trunk was waiting his pleasure at the railway station.

As he had told Howard Wright, his plans had been hazy, his reasons for coming home vague. There had been little of enmity against a living being in West Fork. Even his remark about thrashing Fosdick had been more or less in the nature of conversation. But he had been unsettled in plans for the future.

He was entirely too young a man to be turned, idle, upon a world with twenty million dollars ready at his hand. The calm of two or three months which had followed his triumph in the oil fields of his ranch had become irksome. His descent upon unsuspecting West Fork had been somewhat in the nature of an experiment.

He sighed deeply and grinned in remembrance of an exceedingly busy Saturday. His homecoming had been all that he could have wished. In trouble up to his neck and with unlimited ways in which to put his money to work. While he was a big enough man to exert his wealth and ability wisely, it is to be admitted that he reveled in the joy of opposition. There was plenty of work to do in West Fork. John Hardy was satisfied.

He opened his suit case and began going through his papers, counting his cash reserve, and laying plans for the bringing of part of his main capital to the city. There was so much to do and so many details of all kinds to handle that he began to jot down ideas and resolves. It was borne in on him that the first thing he had to do was to find a permanent place of residence and then establish a regular business office. That he couldn't carry on various activities in an office of the *Blade* was obvious. He made a memorandum to take a suite of offices to-morrow in the most modern building in town.

Then he needed more lieutenants. Presley was one. Callahan was another of a different type. He needed a real estate man,

a factory man, an organizer, a secretary, and a minister. This he entered in his notes.

In the case of Howard Wright he might yet need the service of detectives; this would come later. For a lawyer he was satisfied for the present with Barbington, who seemed to possess more than the average intelligence. When he got ready to attack the political machine, he would enlarge his plans accordingly. He glanced over the list of the names Callahan had made out for him and checked several that he found promising.

He was whistling softly as he laid out fresh undergarments, a clean shirt, collar, and socks. He felt tenderly of his bruised eye and studied it in the mirror. It was much better this morning. While swollen and still somewhat discolored, it had improved. Zoe Ann had spent enough time on it last night to all but cure it. Brentwood would be much longer obliterating the marks of that fray than John Hardy.

He shaved and bathed. Clad again in fresh garments except for the trousers which he had brushed carefully, in shirt sleeves, he descended the stairs. The grand staircase was a delight to Hardy. It made the lower rooms seem so much larger and lighter. The waxed hardwood floors, the many small rugs, the massive furniture, relieved here and there by some dainty thing of Zoe Ann's purchasing, made the great house a thing of beauty and taste.

Zoe Ann was before him when he strolled out to find the paper he had heard the boy throw a couple of hours before. He met her at the steps as she came from the rose garden with a fresh bouquet of flowers for the breakfast table. Fresh and radiant, she was lovely this morning, and Hardy caught his breath in contemplation of her beauty.

"Good morning," she greeted him with a smile. "Aren't these roses beautiful? Just smell them."

Hardy obliged with a willing sniff and drew back with his nose covered with beads of dew. With a little laugh Zoe Ann reached up and wiped away the drops of water with a wisp of a lacy handkerchief.

"Excuse me," she murmured, turning aside and gently shaking the bouquet until it showered a silvery spray to the steps.

"Ah, don't do that," he begged quickly. "They are much prettier with their pearls of dew. Besides, don't you think they are entitled to their morning bath. The land of dew is a fairy land of enchantment. Have you ever seen a cactus plant in the early morning? Or a spider's web?"

She glanced up at him in astonishment. "I thought only romantic-minded girls thought of such things."

"Not so," he defended quickly. "He who looks sees the beauty of nature without being a sentimentalist. But I'm surprised to find you out so early."

"Why, it's nearly eight o'clock, sir. I've been up for an hour."

"And I've been awake for twice that," he smiled. "Habit is a stern mistress."

"You have? And I thought I was letting you get a well-earned sleep. Come. I think Margaret has breakfast ready for us. I must hurry so I can take a basket of things down to papa."

CHAPTER XXXII

AN ACTOR'S LAUGH

A SHADOW crossed her face, conjuring up for Hardy the vision of a big man pacing the length of a cell with downcast eyes.

"Certainly, if you wish it," he agreed, stooping to pick up the newspaper he had come out to get. "I must see Mr. Wright this morning myself and tell him how things are going. However, except for your wish to take him something from home, you needn't worry about his meals. I made arrangements with the Tuxedo Café yesterday afternoon to send them to him for the rest of the time he is being held."

"You did? You think of everything, John Hardy. I never met a more efficient person."

"Not quite everything, Zoe Ann," he answered gravely. "But food is one thing a cowpuncher never overlooks. You needn't worry about that item. Besides, we'll have your father out on bail before to-morrow night. I have Barbington's word for it."

The girl buried her face in the flowers she carried to hide her emotion.

"I—I don't know how we can ever thank you for all you have done," she faltered. "I—"

"Don't try," he said quickly. "Let's go on through with everything without the customary reactions of emotions. Let's take everything that comes as a matter of course no matter how out of the ordinary it may really be. Do you see? That will give us a game to play, a sort of stage drama to move through. And at the same time it will provide a safety valve for our emotions."

"I don't understand—exactly."

"I'll try to explain. Take yesterday, for example. It was a most unusual day, wasn't it? I never had so much action crowded into twelve short hours before. Yet, I think I moved through it all with more or less calm. Do I flatter myself unnecessarily, or do you agree with me?"

"You are the calmest man I ever saw," she cried quickly. "I never saw any one handle situation after situation as easily as you did. You met every exigency beautifully—especially when you broke into Mr. Brentwood's office last night."

"There! That's what I mean. I stalked through the day's doings as calmly as an actor going through a play for the thousandth time. Yet I assure you that I was hard put from one minute to the next. I was never mixed up in anything which approaches the present tangle before in my life—and I've been mixed up in plenty of trouble."

"I think I see what you mean," she said. "You mean to accept everything as calmly as though it were expected. As though the whole thing were nothing but a play."

"Precisely."

"Oh—oh, I couldn't be so banal," she whispered.

"I know it's harder for you than for me, but it isn't banality. It's safety. It lets you view things in an unbiased and detached way. It keeps you from getting a warped viewpoint. Let's try it this morning. Here we are in your home, you and I, without a chaperone save Margaret, who is putting some iced grapefruit on the table, I perceive.

"This is an unusual occurrence. Very well. Let's sit down and I'll unfold this paper while you arrange your roses in the center of the table. Here, I spread open a newspaper which is loaded with dynamite and which is going to bring a storm of trouble about my ears. All this is decidedly unusual, but we'll dawdle over our coffee as though it were an every day occurrence. And we'll glance over the various headlines in the paper as impersonally as though they merely mention a birth in Oshkosh or a society wedding in Japan.

"Here's one: 'West Fork Needs Honest Board of Industry.' Here's another: 'Sims Gang Has Collected Sufficient Tribute.' That's a wallop to the jaw, isn't it? And again: 'First National Banking Methods Strangling Business Growth.' That'll start a riot. And: 'Financial Fossils'—"

"Surely nothing like *that* is in the paper?" cried Zoe Ann in horror.

For answer Hardy passed the paper across the table to her and calmly picked up his spoon to assault the grapefruit.

"There's also a smashing article proclaiming your father's innocence, an editorial on the new ownership, but merely enlarged policy of the paper, an item on the back sheet about John Hardy thrashing two—"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" gasped Zoe Ann as her quick eyes scanned damning headline after damning headline.

"You see, you are taking it all seriously again," chided Hardy. "That won't do at all. Come, eat your breakfast and let's discuss what kind of a car I shall buy and where I shall live. I've simply got to have my trunk. My roughneck days are over."

"John Hardy, you are simply—simply incorrigible," she informed him, wide-eyed. "Haven't you assumed enough trouble to keep you busy in fighting, to prove papa's innocence?"

"This will give them something else to think about," he assured her gravely. "You remind me—I am in honor bound to tell Brentwood about the results of Walker's analysis. Where can I locate him, do you know?"

"You might call the Kimball residence," she suggested faintly. "They spend lots of their time there—Madeline Brentwood is Mr. Kimball's daughter, you know. I

imagine you'll find them there, that they'll be there to-day."

Hardy excused himself and went to the phone. He located the district attorney and got him on the wire.

"Hello, Brentwood," he said crisply: "this is John Hardy. Last night I promised to give you the results of my third analysis, which would furnish you a clew in the blood composition of the murderer. I'm sorry to report that there was no blood about the victim save his own, impossible though this sounds. What did you say?"

"I said we do not need your admission to strengthen our case. We—"

"Just a minute," chuckled Hardy interrupting. "I'll admit that I talked a little too fast last night, and I'm sorry I can give you no direct clew. But let me add that I saw the personal effects of Fosdick at the morgue last night and I want to tip you off to the fact that his watch went dead at seven thirty-six the morning of the murder.

"It stopped at the time he was killed, and I am taking steps to make that silent witness a bit of vital testimony. In making out your case, don't overlook the time limit involved. This proves that Wright couldn't have been guilty."

"Oh!" exclaimed Brentwood's voice queerly. There was a brief pause while the attorney assimilated this new fact. Then:

"Isn't that nice?" he said. "You buffaloed me last night, Hardy, with all that evidence you flashed on me. But that you talked too fast is right. As six o'clock this morning I sent out two men to check up on that footprint you found in the ravine between the second and third holes. They found it and photographed it.

"It checks up perfectly with the shoes Wright wore that morning and is still wearing. And they also found several perfect footprints of the same shoe and its mate in the woods between the spot where Fosdick was killed and that country lane which runs along the far side of the golf links. You failed to look that far back in the shrubbery, didn't you? But your industry set the detectives an example. Thanks for the footprint clew.

"Also thanks for your information about the watch. Wright just had enough time to kill Fosdick at seven thirty-six, then retreat through the woods to Bigby Lane, drive around to the club entrance and start his alibi game at eight o'clock. Now chuckle that off."

The receiver clicked as Brentwood hung up triumphantly. Slowly Hardy replaced the instrument on its stand, all the while staring vacantly at the opposite wall.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" queried Zoe Ann anxiously, rising and coming toward him with clasped fingers.

Hardy's eyes did not raise to meet hers. His whole being throbbed with pity at this cruel blow. He couldn't think of saying the words which would destroy her happiness, cradled in the belief that the watch proved the innocence of her father. Without answering her he grasped the phone and called Brentwood again. He couldn't tell her until he had had time to check over this new clew with her father.

"Hello. Say, Slim," he drawled into the transmitter. "Have you seen this morning's *Blade?* No? Well, glance over it. And you laugh that off!"

He hung up the receiver and smiled faintly up at the girl.

"What is it?" he said slowly, repeating her question. "It's just that Slim Brentwood and I have passed between us some of those calm banalities we were talking about awhile ago. He told me a funny story and then I told him one. So we're both laughing on the wrong side of our faces this morning."

CHAPTER XXXIII

WEST FORK AWAKENS

FOR twenty-four years Terry Callahan had worked for the city without missing a day's duty outside of his meager vacations. By dint of much patient labor he had patched and mended and added to his little cottage on North Third Street during his spare time until the four small rooms and scanty porch had become an enviable dwelling.

The flowers and plum trees of Mrs. Callahan, the neat fence and the rows of white-

washed brickbats along the tiny walk and around the flower beds, the carefully tended little plot of grass and the vegetable garden in the rear marked this place as the home of a thrifty and happy couple. Some folks are blessed like that; they can make everything out of nothing.

To-day, for the first time in twenty-four years, Terry did not hurry into his coat and hat, kiss Mollie and rush to work. He no longer heard the call of civic duty. For the first time in years he was a private citizen. While Mollie cleared away the breakfast things Terry sat in the worn rocker on the front porch sans shirt and shoes. Cramming his burned and strong old pipe with tobacco, he proceeded to read his copy of the *Morning Blade* at his leisure.

His attention was gripped at the first headline. His blue eyes popped wider and wider, his teeth gripped the pipe stem tighter and tighter. The glow in the bowl died a quiet death; Terry forgot that he even had the pipe in his mouth. In a sort of ecstatic horror he read the paper clear through.

Two hours later, when Mollie Callahan came into the little living room from the kitchen she found Terry cleaning and oiling his police revolver with a grim earnestness that was little short of ferocious.

"Terry Callahan!" she exclaimed in apprehension at his attitude rather than at his actions. "What on earth? I thought you had quit the police department?"

"So I have," he rejoined. "But 'tis a domned good thing I haven't turned in me permit to carry a gun."

Mollie Callahan wiped her hands on her apron and seated herself quietly.

"Terry," she said gently, "you haven't gone and got into trouble, have you? There's no kind of trouble we can't weather without the aid of a firearm. What has happened, honey?"

Terry reached over and patted his wife gently.

"Shure an' there's nothin' th' matter wid me, darlin'," he grinned. "Ye know thot I've gone to work fer Johnny Hardy at double me old salary. Shure an' ye didn't expect me to earn it by doin' nothin'? Read th' paper there an' see what Johnny's done. There'll be hell poppin' before night an' he'll be needin' old Terry to keep off th' mob."

Encouragement was all that Presley had needed. For a harassed editor who didn't have time to change the make-up of his paper before it went to press, he succeeded admirably. The dust must have arisen in clouds from the file of facts which had heretofore been taboo. Without mentioning it to Zoe Ann that morning, Hardy had observed that Presley had started off with a great deal more than Hardy expected. Every single item was true, but Hardy offered up a silent prayer that Presley had the necessary proofs to substantiate his statements.

West Fork was not so solidly welded together that an attack on one of the leading citizens would have brought direct reprisals from all the rest. This would have been a Utopian tyranny inconsistent with human nature fortunately. Outside of their financial deals and agreements the city's arbiters handled their personal affairs to suit themselves. Disgrace, publicity, or trouble of any sort affecting Sam Kimball would have elicited nothing from his associates, save a silence in which they would have watched him struggle out of his difficulty.

But Sunday's *Blade* opened fire upon not less than eight of the leading lights of West Fork. The things said about any one of the eight were so unusual as to seem unreal, but to see in print attacks on *eight* prominent citizens made for the impossible. Groups and clusters of insignificant citizens gathered Sunday morning and discussed the calamity in low tones.

It excited awe, fear, laughter, joy, or indifference, according to the personality and connections of the individual. But the majority of West Fork wriggled its toes in ecstasy and pinched itself in order to be assured that this was no dream.

In the privacy of his room in a quiet, old boarding house near the high school, Professor Walker perused his copy of the *Blade* without visible change of expression. When he had finished reading the main articles he stared off into space in such a muse that he failed to hear the call for breakfast.

A light grew in his eyes and a faint flush mounted to his high cheeks.

"Just what this town needs, all right," he said aloud. "A good shaking up. I hope Hardy's not too late. How Kimball, Sims, Morris, and all the rest must be quivering in anger this morning. I'm afraid they'll ruin the boy. But this is just like him. My God! Such temerity."

Joseph Morris lived in a rambling, old-fashioned frame house on North Seventh Street. In appearance Joseph was like a crane. Thin, long-nosed, and cadaverous, he was never seen on the street without his umbrella and black derby. Rain or shine, summer or winter, the black derby and furled umbrella were to Morris what high beaver and baton were to a drum major. They constituted his regalia, his distinguishing hallmark, his contribution to the fashions of men.

Ordinarily Joseph was calmness itself in his munching of toast and perusal of his morning paper. In fact, the astounding article about Major Sims had not disturbed him. Neither did the deluge about the First National Bank. And then his eye unhappily fell on that which caused the eruption. Wild excitement reigned and choleric anger grew apace. Sam Kimball's telephone began ringing violently.

"Sam Kimball, you—you—" Morris spluttered wildly. "What kind of stunt you pulling in the *Blade?* What's this monkey business about new ownership? You closed down on the paper, didn't you? Who the hell is John Hardy? What d'yuh mean by that slanderous article on me and Wilson of the Farmers' National?

"What article? About how we got our start by mismanaging the Buchanan estate, that's what. I'll sue you for this. Why—why, it's criminal liability, you—you—you. Hey! You didn't? Eh? You don't? What! No, I hadn't heard. I was out of town yesterday. Oh! Oh! Aha! Yes, I saw that about the First National.

"So that's who he is, eh? Well—what you gonna do about it, huh? I'll put him in jail for life. It's all your fault, you old fool! Don't you dare threaten me. I know enough about you to—what do I care about the telephone girl? Sure I'll come to see you. Right now."

Slam! Up with the receiver. Thud! On with the black derby. Biff! Armed with the inevitable umbrella. Bang! The screen door slams to behind an aroused crane.

Major Sims was a beefy, red-faced individual with flintlike eyes which were mere slits of cruel granite in a fat face. His voice was a harsh whisper which never rose to the sound of normal tones and which aroused intense antagonism in the breast of each listener. Perhaps he had ruined his voice in his youth by yelling at the stock on his father's rock-ribbed farm.

This momentous Sunday morning he was adjusting a ready-tied neck scarf by hooking it over his front collar button when Charlie, collector of bridge tax, district number two, burst into the bedroom with the *Morning Blade*.

"Pa!" he shouted. "Read this!"

Pa read. Pa snatched the paper and digested the flaming article more slowly. His face grew redder and his neck swelled.

In treating of Major Sims and his hoarse voice and coarse tactics, Mr. Presley had been merciless. The fact that three big railroads did not pass through West Fork was laid at his door. A mass meeting held twenty years before was recalled to the public mind. The survey had already been made for one of the railroads and all that was needed was a station site at a reasonable price.

"Naw!" Major Sims was quoted as having grated. "Whatcha want to have a mass meeting to give the railroad anything for? Don't make a single concession. They can't miss us; they got to go through West Fork. Ain't it a logical point? Haven't they already surveyed the way? They can't miss us. Don't give 'em nothing. We'll make 'em pay for the privilege of coming through here. For one I vote to soak 'em. I ain't gonna give any of my land away."

You were vastly influential, even twenty years ago, major. Three cheers for your foresight and spunk. You succeeded in carrying your point. You didn't give away anything. And the Central & Western railroad couldn't miss West Fork, could it?

Only by twenty miles! It goes through the hamlet of Birchfield in place of putting a terminal point at West Fork to-day.

In your earliest days even, you robbed the city. You manufactured the first gas and lighted the street lights under contract. Who were the two boys you hired to ride behind the old street lamp lighter to turn out every other light as fast as it was kindled? You promised to furnish street lights until eleven o'clock at night, and you paid these two boys with ponies fifty cents apiece to turn them out before nine o'clock. And the taxpayers still pay tribute.

Again Sam Kimball's phone tinkled merrily.

"Kimball, you handled that matter of closing down the *Blade*," rasped the major's voice. "Talk turkey quick or I'll kill you. What does this morning's paper mean? You didn't? You failed for a change? Well, you've made a fine mess of things. Sue? On what grounds? A hundred to one he's got the proof. We can't sue, but I'll break him so quick he won't think he ever had a paper.

"And you get busy and see that he is thrown in jail at once on some charge or I'll not answer for myself or my sons if we meet either him or you. Huh? Damn Fosdick's funeral! Do what I tell you and do it quick. You'll hear from me again this afternoon."

Dr. Ward Loftmead had never had the breath of scandal lifted against his immaculate self or his prosperous clinic before. He was so astounded that he could only stare through his distinguished glasses and comb his fingers through his distinguished beard. To think that, after all these years, the little arrangement between himself and the authorities during the days of the smallpox scare, when he was health officer, should see the light of day now.

Whose business was it if they bottled up the city and forced everybody to be vaccinated, *by the health officer only*, at five dollars per arm? What was wrong in saving and safeguarding life—while the makers of that agreement pocketed twenty thousand dollars each?

And what was this further scathing onslaught on the rotten condition of the Wilson Avenue property he owned? Who dared call his buildings firetraps and cesspools?

Whence had come this account of the plumbing inspector's delight in examining his Royle Building and the inspector's righteous indignation at its condition—until the tenant of the first floor made a hapless remark about the structure belonging to Dr. Loftmead, a man who should, above all others, desire cleanliness? At the name of the owner, the plumbing inspector had abruptly torn up his notes and grinned pityingly at the occupant. Dr. Loftmead was beyond reach of municipal law.

This was ruinous! What had come over the *Morning Blade?* Sam Kimball and Thurlowe Fosdick had been—ah—making arrangements to take over the *Blade*. Fosdick would no longer answer to his fellow citizens, having been called to a higher tribunal, but Kimball remained to explain the catastrophe. Why, Ward Loftmead, surgeon and X-ray specialist, could never hold up his head again unless these libelous statements were retracted. And the good doctor wielded enough influence as a member of the city council to see that a suitable and soothing anodyne was offered.

Again the Kimball phone buzzed violently. It no longer rang; it had been muffled.

CHAPTER XXXIV

COMING TO GRIPS

ALL in all it was a most exciting day and a tempestuous time was had by all. There were others more or less directly affected, whom Sam Kimball had the pleasure of seeing at the funeral. And this ten-thousand-dollar affair was a fizzle. Nobody had any time to consider the pomp and glory of the last rites administered to a dead man when there was so much live news about live people.

By mid-afternoon Sam Kimball was in that mental turmoil and cataclysmic state known as majestic rage. Like a caged billy-goat he trotted up and down the floor of his library, giving vent to an assortment of snorts and bleats, stopping ever and anon

to glare at Cyrus Brentwood across the library table, as though the latter gentleman were the author of all these ills.

Bang! Sam's fist crashed down on the table.

"Well!" he snarled savagely. "Why don't you say something? You've heard all the squeals I heard to-day. What do you advise?"

"I thought it was taken for granted that I tie this Hardy up with various legal actions to-morrow," responded Brentwood coldly.

Bang! Again that blow with the fist.

"To-morrow! To-morrow! What am I going to do to-day? Where's all your foxy legality now? Sitting there and staring at me isn't helping any."

"You needn't vent your spite on me," stated Brentwood. "What can I do to-day?"

Bang! Again the massive table quivered. Kimball turned abruptly and resumed his pacing. Two trips across the floor he made and then whirled to face his son-in-law again.

"What can you do to-day?" he growled. "You can go with me to see this young villain. That's what you can do."

"That is foolish," stated Brentwood. "It wouldn't do any good. Wait until to-morrow and I'll tangle him up good and plenty. If he's got any money left after buying the *Blade*, we'll strip him penniless."

Bang! The table vibrated.

"That isn't enough," snarled the old man viciously. "He must go to the penitentiary. I'll teach him! I'm going to see him this afternoon. How can you young and spineless men stand such inactivity? Are you afraid of him?"

At the sneer in the old man's tones Brentwood stiffened and flushed.

"You're making a mistake in hunting up Hardy," he declared, "but come on then. You know damned well I'm not afraid of anybody."

"No? What are you taking that gun for then?"

Brentwood's battered features twisted into a scowl.

"You're liable to cause trouble," he growled. "And Hardy is not going to lay his hands on me again and live."

It was between five and six o'clock. The Wright gardener had started to sprinkle the lawn. The swelling chorus of dog-day cicadas in the thickets of shrubbery hailed the soft coming of dusk. John Hardy sat on the top step and rested his head against a porch pillar. In the level rays of the setting sun he lazily surveyed the picture of Zoe Ann reclining in the hammock. It had been a busy day for them also. Intriguing noises from the interior of the house indicated that Margaret was busily engaged in preparing a cold repast of dainty sandwiches and iced tea.

The click of the gate latch aroused them. Messrs. Kimball and Brentwood were calling. The swing of their walk bespoke volumes. Even the locusts seemed to falter in their plaintive chant.

The girl sat up rather apprehensively. Hardy grinned encouragement.

"Now for a display of fireworks," he smiled.

"Young man, we want to see you," announced Kimball ominously, opening the conversation with commendable abruptness.

"Come in and sit down," invited Hardy. "It is rather warm, isn't it?"

"You—you scoundrel!" choked Kimball, shaking a badly worn copy of the *Blade* at him. "You—you—"

"This is Miss Wright, gentlemen," cut in Hardy coldly. "As this is her home I would suggest ordinary courtesy at least."

Brentwood had the grace to remove his hat and mutter a greeting. Kimball merely glared.

"Bah!" he ejaculated. "You—you—"

Hardy gravely took the tattered paper from the hand of the incensed manufacturer and noted how it was folded. Taking up his own paper from a chair behind him, he folded it in similar manner and solemnly offered it to the other.

"A fresher paper, Mr. Kimball," he said in ironic courtesy. "None of the words are blurred."

"Take it easy," warned Brentwood in an undertone to his father-in-law. "Hardy, we've come to find out what you have to

say about these—these unprecedented libelous statements in your newspaper. Before filing suit against you on a number of counts Mr. Kimball wants to protect you if he can. Your life has been threatened more than once to-day and—"

"My life has been threatened? And why, may I ask?"

Brentwood ignored this interruption.

"You have launched a terrible and impossible attack against the leading citizens of West Fork," he went on. "Just what your object is no one seems to know. Before to-morrow night the town will be too hot to hold you. Instead of confining you in jail, where you will be in danger of a lynching, Mr. Kimball has come to make you an offer. You sign over to him the *Morning Blade* for the sum of one dollar and we will shut our eyes and give you twelve hours to get out of town. I guarantee there will be no prosecution if you stay away from West Fork."

"What? You offer me one dollar for the *Blade?*" gasped Hardy.

"Exactly," nodded Brentwood. "You will be getting out of a bad mess mighty lightly. I was for taking legal action, myself."

"I suppose this offer comes from your goodness of heart," murmured Hardy ironically.

"Precisely," growled Kimball. "And I've been hunting for you all afternoon. That smirking fool, Presley, couldn't be found until a short while ago to tell us where you were. You—"

"I am sorry if you have been put to any inconvenience on my account. However, until further notice, you will find me here at the Wright home. Mr. Wright and his daughter have extended me the courtesy of insisting that I remain as their guest. I am opening a suite of offices downtown to-morrow. In the future, any complaints of any nature you may refer directly to me during business hours. Don't bother to quarrel with Presley; he is merely following his orders."

"Well, what about my offer?" snarled Kimball, banging his fist against a porch pillar. "D'you want to get out of this with a whole skin?"

"I am very sorry, but I wouldn't sell the *Morning Blade* for double what I paid for it. Is there anything else I can tell you, gentlemen?"

"What? You refuse?" gurgled the old man. "Why, you young fool, don't you know it would take hundreds of thousands of dollars to keep you out of the penitentiary for all that libel?"

"We'll see," replied Hardy coolly. "And, speaking of physical violence, allow me to remind you that I have a personal guard who is watching the pair of you right now. I see that you have a gun in your right-hand coat pocket, Slim. You wouldn't live to know whether you shot me or not."

"Bah!" howled Kimball. "Bluff! All bluff."

"I never bluff," said Hardy stiffly. "Oh, Terry!"

"Yes, sir," responded the voice of Callahan promptly, and the old Irishman's form appeared in the doorway.

Brentwood and his father-in-law glanced from the ex-jailer's pistol hand to the stern features of John Hardy who stood so erect before them.

"Not only that," continued Hardy in a smooth voice, "but it is possible for two men to be held in jail for murder at the same time even in West Fork. And in this case there would be no doubt about the assassin's identity."

Kimball grew apoplectic. Emotion so choked him that he could scarcely articulate. His little goatee quivered spasmodically and he banged his right fist against the pillar beside him in his speechless rage.

Brentwood turned an expressive eye in his direction.

"I told you it was useless," he said coldly.

"Come on," whispered his father-in-law. "Let's go. As for you, you scoundrel, I'll flay you alive. I'll strip you less than penniless. I'll make a beggar out of you and then send you to prison for life. You'll find out who runs this town before this time to-morrow."

"Stop!"

Hardy's crisp voice halted the two men at the bottom of the steps.

"When you get ready, go ahead and

crack your whip," he said in a level, hard voice. "I thrive on trouble. But let me warn you to read this day's paper mighty carefully for any untrue statements before you start proceedings. I can prove everything I print. I'm more than willing for you to learn how I stand. Have one of the banks wire the Industrial National Bank of Kansas City for confidential information about me. And then drop this idea of spending your money trying to break me. You'd better spend it in trying to reform. Good night."

CHAPTER XXXV

FOOTPRINTS AND FINANCE

MONDAY morning, the grand jury found a true bill against Howard K. Wright and bound him over for trial for the murder of Thurlowe Fosdick. Barbington presented the evidence John Hardy and Callahan had unearthed in the former newspaper owner's defense. This was taken at its face value; Hardy's testimony went unquestioned. The attendant at the country club was not even summoned to corroborate his statements. Neither was Professor Walker called to add his scanty testimony. Everything moved along smoothly. But Wright was indicted.

Doubtless the footprints discovered by the detectives in the woods between the spot where the body of the banker was found and Bigby Lane were sufficiently damning to bind Wright over. Nevertheless, it was obvious to Hardy that, footprints or no footprints, the grand jury had already received its instructions from the circuit judge or Sam Kimball direct. A different Cyrus Brentwood was presented for his approval, too. The man was keen. He was smooth and cold, utterly impersonal. There was no question of his ability.

He presented his evidence to the jurors and made out his case just as if they had not already been fixed. He saw that no hitch hindered the proceedings. His dignity and calm confidence transcended his marred countenance. He was not the same Brentwood who had cut so ludicrous a figure the previous Saturday.

Hardy realized that he was up against the first real revolution of the wheels that controlled the town. He could tell it, not in the verdict of the jury, but in their manner of hearing the evidence and returning a verdict. And this was just the beginning. After all, it was a titanic task for one man to revolutionize a town the size of West Fork, no matter who the man was. It wasn't just foggy ideas and a certain amount of capital that he challenged; he was fighting many men who were under the dominance of a few men.

Hardy's formidable face became harder as he watched and listened. His jaw set tighter in contemplation of the task he had set for himself. When the hearing was over he waited with Wright while Barbington made arrangements for bond. This was set at one hundred thousand dollars at first. When Wright promptly offered to put up his own bond, using the proceeds from the sale of the *Blade*, there was a furor. This acquisition of cash had been overlooked. Irregular though it was, the court doubled the amount of bond.

Silencing the indignant Wright with a gesture, a hard smile on his lips, John Hardy wrote out a check for the entire amount of the bond himself. The check was drawn against the Farmers' National Bank of West Fork. Mallory raised an objection to the check.

"Telephone the bank," suggested Hardy grimly. "I opened an account there this morning for five times the amount of that check. Or, better still, send over and get the cash while we wait."

Brentwood used the phone. He had seen enough of Hardy to heed the latter's words. He learned that John Hardy's balance was something like one million dollars, that it had been deposited in the form of a certified check, and that a wire from the Kansas City bank on which it was drawn had confirmed the deposit. The local bank could not refuse payment on the check if it wanted to, having accepted the account.

Barbington, Wright, and Hardy left the courthouse together. They proceeded directly to the offices of the *Blade*. They found Presley busy with a notary public taking affidavits from several persons, giv-

ing himself proof on which to launch further attacks through the columns of the paper. Wright felt a trifle helpless in view of the sweeping change which had taken place during his incarceration.

" What—what am I to do now?" he murmured uncertainly. " It looks like you don't need me here any more. And God knows I can't sit idle, twiddling my thumbs while I wait for my trial to come up."

" You won't," promised Hardy. " The first thing is to help me run down this new clew on footprints. When you give me a lead on this, I have plenty of work for you to do. You know this town as well or better than I do, Mr. Wright. I want to open a suite of offices where I can plan my different steps, of which the management of the *Blade* is only one. I need a general manager, an organizer. I'm asking you to take the job. Will you do it?"

" You want me to assume control of your various activities?" frowned Wright.

" Exactly," smiled Hardy. " This is too big a job for one man. I need you and Presley and Barbington and others. I have enough to do to clear you of this murder charge. In other words, while I work for you, will you work for me?"

" Here in West Fork? With this murder charge hanging over my head?"

" Why not? You need something to occupy your mind. And why consider West Fork? It is my desires only that you need take into account—not the self-righteous inhabitants of this town."

" Where is Zoe Ann this morning?" demanded Wright irrelevantly.

" Well, it was hardly necessary for her to sit through the ordeal of seeing you granted bond," Hardy said. " Right now she is picking out a comfortable suite of offices. By the way, she applied for the position of secretary to my new manager and I gave her the job."

Wright took a deep breath and squared his shoulders.

" And you've found your manager," he announced tersely, holding forth his hand.

The compact was made.

" Now for the matter of those strange footprints," resumed Hardy. " Yesterday you told me that you were not over in those woods and you don't remember having ever been in the rough in that particular spot."

" To the best of my knowledge and belief I have never been where those footprints were found," averred Wright solemnly.

" Perhaps the prosecution planted them," suggested Presley. " I wouldn't put anything past those eggs after yesterday's *Blade*."

" I hardly think they'd dare go that far," frowned Barbington. " It has been more of ignorance than willful enmity on the part of the law, I think."

" I hope so—for their sake," commented Hardy grimly. " Where did you get these shoes, Mr. Wright?"

" From the Whalen Shoe Company about a month ago."

" They are good-looking sport shoes," approved Hardy, admiring the two-tone pigskin leather. " The calking on the bottom is a special design for golfers, I understand."

" Yes. The Alltree people make a snappy line of men's shoes. I like them."

" I see. Does any body else in town handle that shoe?"

" I can assure you that they do not," stated Presley. " Whalen has the exclusive on them. Our ad staff men can tell you anything you want to know about the shoe."

" That won't be necessary. Tell me something about this Whalen instead. Who is he and where did he come from? I don't remember the name."

" Whalen used to make this territory for a shoe manufacturer in Wisconsin," obliged the editor. " About six years ago he opened a retail shoe store on upper Wilson Avenue. He's a wide-awake young chap, about thirty or thirty-two. And he's having an uphill tussel to get started on limited capital."

" Six years in business and still getting started?" Hardy raised his eyebrows skeptically.

" You forget the banks," smiled Presley. " Whalen is an outsider."

Hardy nodded an understanding. He turned toward Wright.

" Do you mind going home and changing shoes for me? I want this pair for an hour or so."

" Mind? My dear boy, I've got to go home and take a couple of baths," shud-

dered Wright. "I haven't seen a bathtub since early Friday morning. I feel utterly filthy, despite the clean linens Zoe Ann furnished me."

The others smiled sympathetically.

"Good enough," Hardy called after the departing Wright. "I'll meet you here at noon. Mr. Barbington," he went on, turning to the lawyer, "there is a watch at Greenwald's place that I want requisitioned for evidence. Unseal the necessary legal tape so that I can get it at once. I'll take a detective with me, of course."

Barbington bowed and lifted the telephone.

"Presley," said Hardy, turning to the editor, "who is the best jeweler in town? The Hinton Jewelry Company used to be."

"It still is," affirmed Presley. "Miles Hinton is the main squeeze. His father is dead."

"So old Blake Hinton finally drank himself to death, eh? Well, the family is much better off without him. What are you doing this morning?"

"I'm letting things ride easy for a few days while I gather up some loose ends of evidence we need. It'll take 'em some time to digest yesterday's attack."

"I see. That's why this affidavit gathering to-day."

Presley smiled his little nervous smile and nodded.

"Very well. You have full charge. You can consult me on any point at our general offices. We'll be organized this week. Well, Mr. Barbington?"

"Colter will be right over to go with you. Brentwood doesn't seem to object to your establishing your point at all."

"Certainly not. But we'll see how he reacts to what we learn about those mysterious footprints. That'll hurt the prosecution."

"Is there anything further this morning?"

"Not until to-night. We'll hold a conference at the Wright home then. And I'll expect you, Presley."

The busy editor nodded and waved a hand as he was called away.

In company with Colter, armed with the proper legal writ, Hardy proceeded to the mortuary. Obtaining the watch, he led the way to the jeweler's. Here he shook hands with Miles Hinton, who seemed quite genuine in his profession of welcome. Fifteen minutes elapsed while the watchmaker Hinton called examined Fosdick's timepiece.

Colter, a more or less silent man who had learned that he got farther by keeping his mouth shut, eyed the proceedings and his hard-featured companion with interest. He remembered John Hardy and, privately, he had a wholesome respect for the broad-shouldered, hard-fighting gentleman.

CHAPTER XXXVI

WHAT MR. WHALEN TOLD

"THE only thing wrong with this watch is that the balance staff is broken," announced Bennett, the watch repairer, at length. "It was dropped or knocked against something?"

"There is nothing the matter with the mainspring or any other part?" queried Hardy. "Be sure of what you say. Could that dropping or knocking about have moved the hands when the balance staff broke?"

Bennett glanced at the speaker from the eye which was not blinded by his glass.

"The hands could have been moved by an accident, but they weren't moved by this one," he stated. "If they've been moved some one has done it since. Like this."

"Whoa!" shot out Hardy quickly. "Don't touch them! They haven't been touched and I don't want them touched. What time would you say the watch stopped?"

"If the hands haven't been touched," said Bennett, a trifle shortly, "the watch stopped at seven thirty-six."

"Thank you. Now if I assure you that the watch wasn't knocked about, can you tell me whether or not the balance staff could have been broken by being in the fob pocket of a man who fell to the ground?"

"Yes, easily. A man might fall on his watch a hundred times in that manner without injuring it, and then again he might put it out of commission the first time."

"I see. But I didn't mean that the wearer fell on his face and therefore on his watch. Suppose he fell on his back?"

Bennett frowned.

"With his body as a cushion between his watch and the sidewalk?" questioned Miles Hinton. "That would hardly be possible," he added at Hardy's nod of acquiescence.

"Nevertheless, that is what happened," stated the latter. "And it wasn't a sidewalk, either. It was more or less soft ground."

"Then he must have had an awful fall," stated Bennett positively.

"Otherwise such an accident to his watch would not be possible?" queried Hardy.

"I won't say that," decided Bennett slowly. "Watches are delicate instruments. We got a bad batch of mainsprings a few months ago and I had to put three in one watch before the job stayed fixed. And the wearer is a bookkeeper who doesn't take exercise. It doesn't sound reasonable, though, for such a simple fall to break the balance staff."

"All right," agreed Hardy. "However, you can state that this broken balance staff is due to a blow or a severe shock, can you not?"

"Yes."

"Good enough. Kindly put that in writing, giving the number and make of this watch. I want both of you to sign the statement, Hinton, and then tell me what I owe you."

This business concluded, Hardy sealed the watch in an envelope and handed it to his companion.

"I'll take charge of this paper, Colter," he said easily. "You take this watch to Brentwood to be preserved as evidence in the trial. That is all you can do for me for the present. And thanks."

Colter saluted and parted from him at the corner.

In the early afternoon Hardy strolled along Wilson Avenue with a small bundle under one arm. He glanced at the different signs and names of the stores as he walked along. While there had been a number of changes, he recognized more business houses than he did faces on the street. As for himself, he went unrecognized.

Very few people remembered the appearance of the youth, John Hardy, who had gone away ten years previous, and even these couldn't have recognized him now unless they had ample reason for recalling. No one associated this calm stroller with the man who had been instrumental in turning West Fork upside down almost overnight.

The Whalen Shoe Company proved to be a very neat establishment with a ten-thousand-dollar stock of shoes. There were two clerks and Mr. Whalen himself in the house. Business was quiet this Monday afternoon and Hardy found Whalen unengaged.

"Mr. Whalen," he greeted, "I see by the gold-leaf sign on your windows that this is a corporation. 'George Whalen, Incorporated.' May I ask why?"

George Whalen took the time to make a face at a passing child he recognized and then waved gayly at the little one's response before answering. He studied his visitor curiously.

"Before I answer such a question," he said mildly, "would you mind telling me who in the hell you are?"

Hardy's eyes twinkled.

"My name is John Hardy," he answered. "I'm afraid I have the reputation of a trouble maker."

"John Hardy? The *Morning Blade?*" demanded Whalen, instantly alert.

Hardy nodded.

"Shake," declared Whalen solemnly. "I'm glad to know you."

"My main reason for coming in is to ask you about a certain pair of shoes," smiled Hardy, unwrapping his package. "You sold these shoes to a certain man in West Fork recently. I understand that it is a fairly new style. I don't expect you to name the man who bought these shoes, but can you tell me how many pairs of this exact style and size you have sold this season?"

Whalen examined the interior of the shoe in an expert manner. He shot a keen glance at his customer.

"You'll be surprised at the extent of my information," he remarked. "I'd make a guess that these shoes belong to Howard

Wright, judging from last night's and this morning's papers. However, I can tell you in half a minute whose shoes these are."

Without comment Hardy followed the dealer back to his office. Here Whalen flipped through a card index and drew forth a card. He glanced at it and looked up.

"This shoe was sold to Howard K. Wright the 11th of last month, for ten dollars, by Hudson, the clerk you saw trimming the window," he announced.

"You keep a complete record?" asked Hardy in surprise.

"Yes. It is easy, because each pair of Alltree shoes is numbered. We keep a record of the date of purchase so that we can send a couple of follow-up letters inquiring as to whether the shoe is giving satisfaction. Just an advertising stunt to prove to the buyer that our interest doesn't cease with the sale of the shoe."

Hardy studied the pleasant-faced speaker.

"You seem to be conscientious, certainly," he murmured.

"We try to be. Of course, we have the selfish motive of wanting repeat business."

"Naturally. That is permissible. Is it possible to tell me how many pairs of this same shoe you have sold?"

"It is. Nine, B," said Whalen, opening a small ledger. "Would you like the names and occupations of the purchasers?"

"If you will be so kind."

After a space Hardy looked with interest at the list of names.

Howard K. Wright, editor of *Blade*.

James S. Nealson, salesman for Central Grocery Company.

Carl Sneider, engineer on Valley-Mountain Railroad.

William Beedle, real estate and building loan.

Charles Morris, idler and insurance man.

CHAPTER XXXVII

CALLAHAN'S COMMISSION

"HOW do you happen to have such a complete record of sizes?" he asked.

"That answers the first question you asked when you came in," replied Whalen with a wry smile. "My capital is entirely too small to carry more than one pair of shoes of each size, when I have to carry so many different styles as well as different lines to meet different priced trade. So, as fast as a pair of shoes is taken out of those fancy wall boxes and sold, the salesman enters all data on a little ticket and files it here at the office so that we can record it each night and duplicate the shoe.

"I can't get any backing here, so I have been forced to incorporate and sell stock to small investors in order to get enough money to grow on. You've heard of doing too much business for one's capital, haven't you? Well, that has been my trouble. And I can't get help from these cursed banks."

"If you make a success of your venture, the banks will be glad to lend you money," suggested Hardy.

Whalen bared his teeth.

"Yes—then. So they can squeeze me out and get the grapes. But I'm watching that."

"They don't squeeze everybody out."

"No, but they own the souls of those they leave. Look at your newspaper, for instance. You are doing the biggest thing for West Fork that has ever been done. But if you are depending on advertising to support you, you are going flatter than a pancake."

"How do you figure that? Won't small merchants and men like you line up with the *Blade?*" demanded Hardy curiously.

"I will," responded Whalen promptly. "But mighty few of the others will. They will want to mighty bad, but they can't; the banks have them sewed up."

"Then I can't expect to win the merchants of West Fork to my banner, even if they believe in what I say and do?"

"You cannot," declared Whalen positively. "It's an unbeatable game. I just hope you have enough money to carry on."

"To carry on would be foolish unless I win adherents. What good does it do to arouse a city of sleepers if they won't or can't get out of bed?"

"There's one way you can get open indorsement and solid support behind you," said Whalen thoughtfully.

"And that, in your opinion?"

"Is impossible, unless you can get the

business men out of the clutches of the banks so they won't be afraid to think and act for themselves. And you can't afford to finance every business on Wilson Avenue."

Hardy looked speculative.

"No-o-o, not privately," he agreed. "You've opened my eyes to a phase of the matter I hadn't considered. You seem to be pretty firm in your thoughts and opinions. Tell me, what do you think of West Fork?"

"Well, I'll tell you," Whalen said deliberately. "It's a mighty fine town to live in, but it's a damn poor town to make a living in."

Hardy laughed.

"Then why do you stay here?" he asked.

"There could be a great future for the place," went on Whalen. "Why do *I* stay here? Because I'm crazy, I guess. I'm going to marry a West Fork girl—Dr. Harper's daughter. I'm afraid I'm one of the lost souls; Isobel doesn't want to leave the town. But why these local boys stay here I can't see. They can't get anywhere. If they try to float a new idea or branch out in business that requires aid from the banks, they can't get it.

"They go to one of the bankers, and he nods and smirks and listens to their story, and turns them down. 'Yes, Billy, sure, sure, you're a fine boy. I've known you all your life. You used to play with my little Rosalie. I remember when you had the measles, *et cetera, et cetera,* but we just can't see our way clear to putting any money in this proposition of yours. Sure, you're a good boy and honest, but we can't help you.'

"And some flashy young stranger from another town comes in and sells them a gold brick every now and then. You are not a smart man or a hero at home."

Hardy laughed heartily at Whalen's imitation of a fatherly banker turning down a local son. Suddenly he ceased and looked at Whalen with wide eyes.

"Man, you've given me the idea," he cried keenly. "By Hester! There is a way to free the retailers from bondage."

"How?" demanded Whalen curiously.

"Open an honest bank," replied Hardy, as calmly as though such a matter were the easiest thing in the world. "By the way, you seem to be interested in West Fork. Are you interested enough to serve where your service can do some good?"

"Show me the way," Whalen remarked promptly.

"Will you serve on the new Board of Industry when we put it through?"

"I'll give you all I've got," declared the shoe man solemnly.

"And, Whalen, if you will drop in to see me the latter part of this week and tell me the details of your business, you needn't try to sell any more of your stock."

"Why not?"

"Because I want all the stock that you have for sale myself. You've found a business partner if you want one."

"I'll be up to see you," promised Whalen.

Later in the day Hardy handed a list of four names to Callahan.

"Terry," he said, "without stirring up any commotion, I want you to find out exactly where each one of these men was between the hours of six and eight last Friday morning, and what he was doing."

"Why, Johnny," queried Callahan in surprise as he noted the names given him, "how come ye to pick these men outa all th' rest o' the population o' West Fork for investigation?"

"Because they are the only men besides Mr. Wright who have shoes which exactly fit the footprints found in the woods near Bigby Lane. We may be following a blind trail, but get the information if it takes you a week or more to do it."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE REVOLUTION GOES ON

THE week that followed was a very busy one for the Hardy forces. The work of organizing a machine to fight the arbiters of West Fork went forward carefully. That Sam Kimball had taken Hardy's advice about looking before he leaped was obvious in the fact that no action was taken over Sunday's paper. How

Kimball pacified Major Sims and Joe Morris was not known, but that a private meeting had been held and a course decided on was apparent.

After that first vivid flash of Sunday's *Blade* nothing occurred. Presley was not ready to launch the rest of his attacks, and the opposition didn't seem inclined to take up the gauge after learning the financial worth of the man they had to fight. Things settled into the humdrum. Everybody seemed to be marking time. It was the calm which precedes the storm.

The *Evening Planet* published a statement Monday evening to the effect that the *Morning Blade* would be involved in a series of lawsuits because of Sunday's edition. Then there were two or three sly comments in the editorials. To all of which the *Morning Blade* presented the uncommunicative face of silence.

While the danger of personal violence to Hardy was an ever present possibility, it was not likely that the issue would be met in this fashion. He walked the streets with impunity, renewing old acquaintanceships and reviving old memories, occasionally running across a real friend. He studied the town and the changes ten years had wrought, striving with all of his might to get back in touch with the many people and things he had known and formerly thought about.

During the week he made two social calls at night, once to dine at the home of Eva Bailey, a girl he had known in his youth. But most of the time he was at home with Wright and Zoe Ann, scheming and planning for the real betterment of West Fork.

The game had ceased to be a game to him. It had become a matter of grim earnestness. Whether or not he lived to be thanked for what he did he intended benefiting his home town. Freak circumstances had chosen his course for him, and he intended to follow it to a finish. The peril which overhung Howard Wright but lent zest to the entire adventure; it held before his eyes the terrible cost of failure.

There was nothing Wright could do to help himself save protest his innocence. The evidence as it stood was enough to convict him, and he could add nothing. Hence, he plunged heartily into the unique and unusual task of rejuvenating a stagnant town, while Hardy divided his time between this work and the more lethal mystery.

Wright's trial was set for some time the following month. There was little he could do about unraveling the mystery, beyond going over and over the established facts, except to wait until Callahan finished his investigations. This the ex-police officer did Thursday. He came to Hardy with a concise but thorough report on the four men he had been sent to trace.

"Takin' th' names in th' order ye give 'em to me, Johnny," he reported, consulting his notes, "I'll begin wid James Nealson. He's a fat, easy goin' sort o' duck who travels for th' Central Grocery house. He's married an' he lives here in West Fork. He was out on his territory last week an' he didn't get home until Friday afternoon, havin' drove his flivver up from Middleton. It's an all-day trip with fast drivin' to get here, ye know.

"Well, I learnt that he spent th' night at Middleton an' started for home about seven o'clock Friday mornin'. He bought them fancy shoes because he goes in for sporty clothes. He don't play golf. He bought th' shoes 'cause he liked 'em. An' he was wearin' 'em last week out on th' road."

"I see," nodded Hardy, running a line through the name on his own list. "There can be no question that that lets Mr. Nealson out. Next?"

"Th' next one is Carl Sneider. I don't reckon ye know Carl. He's a fine, big, red-faced lad from th' farm. He's a bigger man than yerself. I guess he weighs all o' two hundred an' fifty pounds. He's been an engineer or motorman, whatever ye call it, on th' gasoline motor train thot runs between West Fork an' Piney Grove for five or six years. He's married, too, an' lives at Piney Grove now. He makes th' run every other day, changin' wid a lad named Henderson, who also lives in Piney Grove.

"Th' Friday o' th' murder was Sneider's day on. His train left Piney Grove at six-forty, gettin' to West Fork at twelve-thirty, noon. He didn't get here before noon, ye see. An' th' train went back at two-thirty, gettin' him home in time for

supper. His golf shoes were left at home. He bought 'em because he plays golf on th' municipal links at Piney Grove."

"That lets Sneider out. And Piney Grove is two hundred miles away, isn't it? So I guess that lets his shoes out, too."

"Next comes William Beedle," went on Callahan, consulting his notes. "Ye should remember Beedle, Johnny. He's a real estate dealer thot's made himself obnoxious in West Fork for years. He plays golf, an' thot's why he bought them shoes. I had to see him direct about his movements. He said he was at home in bed. I couldn't prove or disprove it. They's no one at his house right now but him. His family's away for th' summer."

"Not so good," remarked Hardy thoughtfully. "We'll make a note of this and see if there was any connection between Beedle and Fosdick. And now, Terry, how about Morris?"

"That's Charlie Morris, th' nephew o' old Joe Morris. He's a loafer, an' he lives at th' Eland Club. He's supposed to work in th' insurance office o' his uncle, but he spends half his time gamblin'. He plays golf when he can find a good-lookin' gal to play with. He was on a drinkin' party Thursday night until three o'clock, out on th' south side. I lost track of 'im then until he showed up at th' club for breakfast at nine o'clock. I couldn't learn whether he was wearin' his sport shoes or not. Thot's all."

"Fine work, Terry," approved Hardy. "You haven't been a policeman all your life for nothing—even in West Fork. What do you think about Mr. Morris?"

"I dunno," Callahan replied dubiously. "I don't think he's got spunk enough to kill anything, but I'd investigate his gamblin' debts jes' th' same."

"That's exactly what we are going to do. There are three lines of investigation to follow. Beedle and young Morris constitute one. The second, if we cannot link them up inseparably with their shoes, there is the possibility that somebody borrowed and used one of the pairs. And the third point, while beyond the bounds of probability, will, if gone into, open up a field calling for the service of a couple of detective agencies. That is that some stranger bought a pair of Alltree golf shoes in another town in the United States and wore them in the woods near Bigby Lane."

"Shure an' thot's right," agreed Callahan. "But, Johnny, th' lad who committed this deed was no stranger. He had a reason an' I'm bettin' thot th' reason is right here in West Fork."

"You're right, and we'll leave that third theory until the last. I want you to think of Beedle and Morris now, Terry, and tell me if they seem to you to be big enough men to have mutilated Fosdick the way he was found. I don't remember them well enough to know."

"Nayther one o' them," stated Callahan positively. "For thot matter not a one o' th' four was big enough for th' job except Carl Sneider, to my way o' thinkin'. An' not one o' them had so much as a scratch on 'em so far as I could see an' learn while investigatin'."

"That's what I thought," Hardy said. "The farther we get into this the more mysterious it becomes. And the prosecution can't see anything unusual about the case at all except its brutality. You go ahead and see if you can find out whether or not another person could have borrowed Beedle's or Morris's shoes, while I look into the personal affairs of the two gentlemen in question."

Thus matters stood Friday, when a small news item Presley pointed out in the *Planet* brought John Hardy up against the second patient, but ruthless revolution of the wheels of power in West Fork.

"I suppose you anticipated this?" commented Presley, making a circle about the article with his blue pencil and handing it to his employer.

Hardy read:

CHANGE IN SCHOOL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

In preparing new contracts for the teachers to sign for the coming school year, Mr. M. H. Marlowe, superintendent of schools, announced that there is to be a different head to the science department. Professor Thomas Walker, who has headed this branch of learning for the past seventeen years, will be succeeded by a younger man from one of the Eastern colleges. West Fork will be sorry

to see Professor Walker go, although we wish him well in the school to which he goes.

CHAPTER XXXIX

ANOTHER RECRUIT

"AND this means just what?" asked Hardy, to be sure that he did not misinterpret the item.

"Just that Walker got the jug for doing that analysis work for you," shrugged Presley. "Can't you read between the lines?"

"But—but the work he did didn't hurt the case for the prosecution," protested Hardy. "And even if it had proved Wright innocent I fail to see how it should react on Walker."

"You don't know as much about your own town as you thought," Presley remarked. "Walker did some work for you—you are opposed to Sam Kimball—Kimball dominates the school board—Walker was a man they had the power to hurt. There you are."

"I don't know enough about petty dirtiness, you mean," gritted Hardy. "What a lowdown, rotten way to fight. I begin to see exactly what Whalen meant when he said folks wouldn't dare take sides with us. What far-reaching villainy I have to fight."

"Friday seems to be an unlucky day in West Fork," said Presley laconically. "Shall I send a man out to interview Walker?"

"No. I'll go myself. When is the next election of the school board?"

"Next spring."

"Walker will be superintendent of schools next fall, then," promised Hardy grimly.

"Good enough," nodded Presley. "I'll unearth all the data on school affairs I can find. Shall I hold a form open for any statement of Walker's for the morning's paper?"

"Yes. If your suspicions are right Walker hasn't another job to go to. In that case he stays here in West Fork."

To his surprise Hardy found the professor calmly reading a scientific pamphlet on the porch of his boarding house. Walker's eyes widened at his visitor's identity. He invited Hardy to be seated.

"Professor Walker, the first edition of to-day's *Planet* is out," Hardy began. "Have you seen it?"

Walker politely shook his head.

"There was a brief article in it about you that I want to ask you about," pursued Hardy.

"There was?" Walker's dark eyes almost twinkled.

"Yes. About your not teaching here this fall. What can you tell me about the matter?"

"Nothing more than you read."

"Did you know it was to be in the paper?"

"I strongly suspected it," Walker commented dryly. "I was told this morning that my usual contract would not be offered me this fall."

"You take it calmly enough," said Hardy, frowning. "Were you expecting such a blow?"

"No, I can't say that I was, but I wasn't surprised in the least."

"Do you know why it happened?"

"Of course."

"And you didn't try to get in touch with me to let me know?"

"Why should I? While it was on your account, it was not your fault. I do not blame you, John Hardy."

"You speak as though you have made plans already. I realize that you are too good a scientist for West Fork, all right, but I had come to think of you as a permanent citizen."

"I have made no plans," admitted Walker. "Why?"

"Then you are not worried about finances?"

Walker shrugged.

"I am not worried with finances," he corrected. "I have nothing beyond sixty or ninety days' expenses. Fifteen hundred dollars a year does not allow one to accumulate a large bank account. My sister was sick three years ago and I went in debt so heavily then that I have not had any money to spare. Otherwise I could live comfortably on my salary."

"Do you mean to tell me that, as head

of the science department, you get only fifteen hundred a year?"

"Got fifteen hundred a year. One hundred and sixty dollars per month for nine months."

"Why, that's ridiculous. The taxes are high enough to support the schools, surely."

"We tried to raise the school tax to twelve mills last year. It failed. They need the money for graft," explained the professor.

"Twelve mills? When it ought to be twenty-five per cent of the total tax assessment. Well, we'll have to dig into that later. Our present affair concerns you. As you haven't made any plans, professor, I am not too late to ask you to accept a position on my staff as chemist at five thousand a year. I need you. Will you accept?"

Walker was amazed. His black eyes were piercing as he stared into the younger man's face. Slowly he got to his feet and confronted Hardy, a touch of color brushing his high cheek bones.

"You offer me a position at five thousand dollars a year?" he echoed. "No. I am not an object of pity, sir. I—"

"Pity be damned!" cut in Hardy crisply. "You are too good a man to lose from this town. I said I needed you, and I mean it. And next year we're going to need you worse. We're going to need a superintendent of schools in this town. You are the man I want. I am begging you to accept my offer."

Walker turned away and walked toward the edge of the porch. For a long space he stared across the lawn at the sunset. Otherwise he expressed no emotion. And when he turned back his face was perfectly blank.

"I hadn't intended staying in West Fork more than another week or two," he said calmly. "In fact, I didn't know just where I was going. It's rather too late to seek an opening in other schools, you know. As far as you are concerned, my boy, you may find that you have bitten off considerably more than you can chew.

"If this comes to pass, and you will promise to tell me when it does and let me go, I'll accept your position but not your price for the coming year. Fifteen hundred is all I have been receiving and therefore fifteen hundred is all I can accept."

"You'll draw five thousand a year from here on," reiterated Hardy firmly. "Just because the school board badly underpaid you is no excuse for me doing the same."

"It wasn't me alone," Walker hastened to explain. "It's every instructor in our public school system. The salary is paltry. That is why West Fork cannot keep good teachers here; they are called to other places where the remuneration is greater. That's why we see notices in the paper such as: 'Miss Wilma Thedford comes to West Fork from Greenton to teach in the high school this fall,' and 'Mr. Smith comes up from Huntingwood to take over the mathematics of West Fork.'

"Isn't that a terrible state of affairs, John Hardy? When West Fork has to recruit its teachers from the little hamlets around here instead of reaching out and drawing educated people who already know how to teach? We teach these teachers for a couple of years, and they pass on to higher jobs, while we go back to the sticks for newer lumber. What in the world can West Fork expect of its youth when it won't pay to educate them?"

"I see that I've found the right superintendent of schools," declared Hardy with pleasure. "There's hope for West Fork yet when I can find such men as you in town. If you are through with the high school and ready to turn over your key you might begin to work for me to-morrow morning. Come down to our offices in the National Building. You shall be put in charge of the tax and school investigation."

Walker's eyes were suspiciously bright as he shook hands.

CHAPTER XL

THE BAGS OF DIRT

MAGICAL sesame—money! In an incredibly short time the left hand half of the top floor of the National Building facing Wilson Avenue and overlooking North Eighth Street at the juncture of the two thoroughfares had been done

over. Resplendent in new wallpaper, gleaming enamel, and glistening varnish, this long suite of rooms paralleling Eighth Street had been turned over to the Hardy forces to be furnished and equipped in such a lavish manner as to make a motion picture millionaire gasp in envy.

Duly incorporated under the necessary State laws, the neat goldleaf sign on the glass part of the main entrance door informed all and sundry that these luxurious offices housed the activities of "Hardy Enterprises, Inc."

Before giving himself heart and soul to the revolutionists, Irving Barbington had held a long conversation with John Hardy. He was satisfied with the results of that interview and firmly burned his bridges behind him. The legal and financial loss he sustained by pledging himself to John Hardy had been amply compensated. Henceforth Hardy's interests were Barbington's interests.

The hand that controlled West Fork no longer had the power to intimidate the lawyer in even the slightest fashion. While he continued with his private practice and retained the work he had been interested in before the advent of Hardy, still Barbington realized that it was only a matter of time until Kimball would see that he was cut off from everything except John Hardy. People paid for their insubordination to Sam Kimball.

"What, in your opinion," Hardy asked him one day, "is the meaning of the silence on Kimball's part?"

"Unless he can prove your statements in that issue of the *Blade* libelous he is powerless to touch you." Barbington smiled thinly. "So he is merely waiting until some hapless citizen lines up with you, like Walker did, and then he'll crush him like a bug."

"In other words, he's playing the spider. And every time I befriend a man or win an adherent to our cause I must be able to protect that person immediately."

"Exactly. And, in the meantime, the days are passing rapidly," added the lawyer, nodding toward the door upon which was the legend, "Howard K. Wright, Manager."

"Meaning that the trial of Wright is drawing nearer every hour? That our manager is to be the first victim if we don't provide another?"

Barbington did not see the need of replying.

"I'm working on that myself," continued Hardy. "I hope to present you with something before long."

That Howard Wright possessed an iron nerve and implicit faith in Hardy was evident in the fact that he threw himself utterly into the work of making a live city out of an overgrown town. He never mentioned the matter of his approaching trial or the sleepless hours of anxiety he must have experienced, unless Hardy brought up the subject first.

And that his interest in his work was whole-souled was obvious in the daily strides he made toward organization and control. It was the day following Hardy's talk with Barbington that Wright came to his employer in the latter's small office in the front corner of the building.

"You haven't been to church since you've been home, have you?" he asked, seating himself and leaning forward across the desk.

Hardy pushed back the meager personal correspondence he was reading and gave his manager complete attention.

"No," he admitted. "I've been too busy to go listen to Sam Kimball's idea of heaven."

"Then you haven't met Rev. David Harris," pursued Wright. "They are letting him out of the church on Lintel Boulevard right away. He's a little too radical for the mossbacks. He's a Christian, but he's too broadminded. He's the sort of man they would run out of Tennessee."

"Yes?"

"I've talked with him. He hasn't decided which of two calls to accept. We send two representatives to the State Legislature next year," concluded Wright significally. "I thought I should bring the matter to your notice."

"Have you felt him out?"

"And convinced him that he can do his God and his people a lot of good by forsaking the ministry for a few years."

"A godsend to this county," Hardy

agreed. "Organize a campaign program and turn him loose in the rural districts with all the facts you deem it best to give him, along with his own ideas. We'll finance him and bring him to West Fork when the time is ripe for him to win votes —and be able to hold them."

"I think we can put him over."

"And I think you are a smart man."

"I am realizing a lifelong ambition, John," replied Wright, as he rose to leave, his eyes shining. "And I have you to thank for it."

Among other things, Hardy found time to study the congestion along Wilson Avenue. He enjoyed driving up and down the street in his new roadster with Zoe Ann Wright at his side. The almost constant companionship with the girl was drawing Hardy more than he knew. Her alert mind and bright, far-seeing observations were things that he was beginning to rely on.

And while the evenings at the Wright home were not altogether given to social amenities, he learned that she could play the piano and sing. That she had acquired many of the other social virtues he well understood. And that she had a level business head he saw demonstrated each day. She took to the work in which her father found delight as naturally as Hardy took to fighting.

"The trouble with traffic on Wilson Avenue, especially on Saturday," Hardy observed, "is that they have a fool ordinance of a ten-mile limit and they try to enforce it. You're in a funeral procession when you get on this street. They ought to pass an ordinance calling for bumpers on the rear of cars only. That's where they are needed. I've seen traffic congestion right here that can compare to that of a much larger city."

"That's because West Fork has only one main street," Zoe Ann responded. "And we are large enough to have more. I can't see why the business district doesn't spread out."

Hardy glanced at her alluring profile. The faint breeze caused by their motion fanned some loose strands of her silken hair across her delicately rouged cheek. His eyes, as he looked toward the radiator cap, approved of the graceful curves of her figure and the slender little feet planted so primly against the footboard near his own.

"There are a number of businesses on the side streets just off Wilson Avenue," went on Zoe Ann thoughtfully. "And Elm Street has a number of wholesale houses farther down. I think Elm Street on the south and Birch Street on the north side of Wilson Avenue would make good business streets. They're nice and wide, too."

"And Greedy Morris doesn't own the property, either," remarked Hardy suddenly. "Let's drive up and down those streets and plan a business section."

Zoe Ann laughed with pleasure at the new game. Losing herself in her day dream she chatted and planned and suggested buildings and enterprises, while Hardy listened silently and watched the play of expression on her features.

And the next week a stranger came to town and began to take options on the property one hundred feet deep on both sides of Elm and Birch Streets for a matter of ten blocks.

A few days after taking up his second task of tracing the golfing shoes of Charles Morris and William Beedle, there presented himself at the offices of the Hardy Enterprises, Inc., one Terry Callahan. He asked for neither Howard Wright nor John Hardy at first. Instead he sought the office which had been fitted up for Professor Walker. He was taking a leaf from John Hardy's notebook.

He found that Walker's office consisted of a desk and two or three chairs; the rest of the sunny room was given over to laboratory equipment. This was Callahan's first visit to the sanctum of the former high school professor. He gazed around with admiring awe. The scientist himself was busy at a table with an assortment of chemicals and test tubes. He looked up and nodded cordially to his visitor.

"Shure an' it's a chemical laboratory ye have as an office, professor," greeted Callahan. "How did ye manage to fix it up so quick?"

"Part of this paraphernalia belonged to me," explained the professor. "Part of it John was able to get at the wholesale drug

house. He insisted on fitting up this room as a laboratory, although I am positive it is more or less a bluff to make me think he needs my assistance as a chemist."

"Ye seem to be at some sort o' work at th' present moment," pointed out Callahan.

"You have me there," smiled Walker, placing a test tube in a rack and picking up a nearly empty bottle which bore the label "New Finish." He held up the vial to gauge the remainder of its contents and then toyed with it as he spoke:

"I'm just finishing up a little analysis I started two or three weeks ago at the high school. When Mr. Kimball was so kind as to see that I was let out, I had this business still to finish for young Charles Morris."

"Charlie Morris?" queried Callahan, at once interested. "An' what might be th' nature o' th' analysis, can I be askin'?"

Walker shrugged.

"Nothing important. The boy is under the impression that a dollar per ounce is too much to pay for this golf ball enamel. He wants an analysis of the stuff so he can try to make his own."

"I see," Callahan replied casually. "'Tis like his uncle thot he is in some ways. Shure an' it must be a change to be workin' wid a man like Johnny Hardy."

"It is. John Hardy is a gentleman as well as a fighter."

"He is thot," Callahan agreed heartily. "An' th' other feller had better watch out. But, Professor Walker, he's up against a tough proposition in th' matter o' Mr. Wright. 'Tis thot thot I've come to see you about. 'Tis one devil a matter to prove him innocent."

A faint expression of pain crossed the scientist's face like a brief shadow.

"God knows I hope not, Callahan," he murmured fervently. "Wright is innocent. I know. Why, why, the father of such a girl as Zoe Ann wouldn't risk his life and honor to kill his most deadly enemy. No, he's not that sort of a man."

Callahan's eyes flicked and he scratched his head to cover his silence. The tone of Walker's voice had been almost tender. Walker was old enough to be Zoe Ann's father. But he was a single man, and then he was associated with the girl every day now. This was a worrisome thought.

While John Hardy had never shown by the least act that he was in love with Wright's daughter, the old policeman had taken the answer for granted. Slowly he nodded his head in agreement with Walker. This wasn't what he had come to discuss.

"Shure an' I know thot, professor. But 'tis likely thot those footprints found between th' spot o' th' murder an' Bigby Lane will be playin' an important part, if we don't scare up th' lad who did th' job. An' before I report to Johnny Hardy, ye can help me if ye please."

"Gladly, Callahan. What can I do?"

"I have here samples o' dirt from three places thot I want ye to peek at, stir up in solution, mix wid chemicals and whatnot an' tell me how much alike or unlike they be."

Walker laid down his pencil and put a couple of paperweights on his papers. Gravely he accepted two small envelopes and a paper twist containing rich soil mixed with leaf-mold. He adjusted a pair of glasses and carried the three little packages over to the half of his fairly large room that served as a research laboratory.

Callahan seated himself and patiently awaited the chemist's results, watching the various actions of the scientist with interested but uncomprehending eyes.

CHAPTER XLI

THE DYING OAK

"THERE is no question but that all three specimens are alike," stated the professor at length, turning to face the sitting man. "Of course, there are bits of oak leaves and a twig and an acorn cap in the larger package you brought that I didn't find in the envelopes. Do you want the exact composition of the soil given you?"

"Thanks, but 'tisn't necessary, professor. Shure an' I don't know whether I know more or less than I did before. I'll be takin' th' specimens wid me if ye please. An' if it hadn't been for Johnny Hardy shure an' I wouldn't of bothered ye."

Going from the office of Walker, which was the rearmost room, so that the chemist could have light from the alley windows as well as from the side, Callahan traversed the distance to the front office of Hardy.

"Johnny, shure an' I've been on th' trail o' those sport shoes all this time," he stated without preamble. "I don't know whether I've much to tell ye or not. I couldn't learn any more about th' movements o' young Morris or Beedle, but I found out thot nobody has been wearin' their shoes but themselves. It was impossible. An' jes' a minute ago Professor Walker looked over these dirt samples for me and said thot they're alike."

Callahan spread his specimens out on Hardy's desk. The latter eyed them without touching.

"And where did you get these samples?" he inquired.

"Thot in envelope number one came from Bill Beedle's golf shoes. Thot in envelope number two from Charlie Morris's golf shoes. An' thot in th' paper poke came from th' spot where Preston an' Colter found those footprints over in th' woods. Morris an' Beedle was either in them woods or on ground almost identical wid th' same. I can't find any record o' their movements. An' between th' pair o' them they could of done th' job, I'm thinkin'."

Hardy frowned.

"Perhaps so, Terry. But wouldn't it be a long stretch of coincidence for two men whose movements you cannot trace to be the wearers of the same sized shoe and to have had the same style shoe on the same morning and to have been at the same spot?"

"Shure—unless they were there for a purpose."

"But didn't the clubhouse attendant say that no one was playing golf that Friday morning save Wright and Fosdick? How would this account for the presence of Morris and Beedle?"

"How did they account for th' presence o' Mr. Wright at thot spot?" countered Terry ironically. "Understand, Johnny, I'm not sayin' thot these two men are guilty o' anything. They might be a hundred places on th' golf course where they could of picked up dirt like this, but I'm carryin' out yer instructions. Ain't ye learned anything yerself?"

"Yes, I have," admitted Hardy. "I know that Fosdick and Kimball disagreed not so long ago over insurance matters—you know that the First National Bank writes insurance, Terry, as one of the side lines. And since then young Morris has been writing insurance and getting thick with Kimball.

"I also learned that there is no love between the Fosdicks and young Morris. Fosdick objected to Morris's attentions to his daughter. I learned that Beedle and Fosdick have been speculating in real estate together and that there was some hard feeling between them. When you let two crooks associate too closely, Terry, there's bound to be friction.

"And with all this I've gathered here and there about town, I'm not satisfied that Morris and Beedle had anything to do with the matter. You know what gossip is like in towns like this. There might be a lot in it and then there probably is nothing in it. And I can't get away from the mystery of how the assassin killed Fosdick in such a bloody affair without getting a scratch himself. There's something queer about the whole damned affair, Terry, and it's worrying me."

"Shure an' I'm doin' th' best I can," declared Callahan gloomily.

Hardy arose and gripped the older man's shoulder encouragingly.

"I know that you are, Terry," he smiled. "You're doing exactly what I ask you to do. Nobody can do more than that."

"An' what will ye be wantin' me to do now?"

"Morris and Beedle are a long way from being cleared of suspicion. In fact, it is just my private idea that the murderer must have had a club six feet long and have been a physical giant that keeps me from jumping to the conclusion that we have found the culprits. What I want you to do is to keep on digging after the details of their movements that fateful morning and also learn if there is a bond of any sort between the two of them."

Callahan departed and Hardy continued

to frown and turn the matter over and over in his mind. The more he thought about it the more eager he was to have a look at the golf course again. Of course, there would be nothing to discover now. Doubtless the turf had long since been replaced and the spot trampled over by numerous players since that morning many days ago. Nevertheless, he felt like refreshening his mind on the matter.

Taking out the chart that Jenkins, the club attendant, had given him, he studied it.

"As I remember it, that is an open expanse along there, which is visible from the road, paralleling the course from hole six to seven," he mused. "True, Bigby Lane turns off of that road. But what a glaringly open spot for a murder. There are fifty better places where a victim could have been attacked."

He closed his desk abruptly and sought Zoe Ann.

This efficient young person, looking cool and intensely desirable in her simple linen dress, was dictating a letter to a nimble-fingered stenographer. She smiled up at him as he paused at her desk.

"Just a moment," she said, and he nodded.

He turned to stare out upon the sweltering street below. He was almost startled to feel a soft touch on his shoulder and to find her at his elbow.

"You are worried, John," she said, looking frankly into his eyes. "You want to talk with me about something. What is it?"

"It's about your father's case," he admitted. "Terry and I are making some headway I think, but I'll swear there is a mystery about it that puzzles me. I just can't put it into words, but first one thing and then another nags at my mind until I have a hunch that the answer isn't as simple as any of us think. I want to go out there and look over the spot again. Maybe I'll have a fresher viewpoint. Will you go with me?"

Zoe Ann's eyes widened and as Hardy looked into them they darkened with apprehension.

"Certainly I'll go," she said. "Right now?"

"Yes," he almost growled.

On the way out to the grounds Hardy explained his new idea about it being such an open spot for a murderer to select, even though it was close to the shrubbery and trees that intervened before one came to Bigby Lane.

"And then Fosdick was found on his back in the shrubbery and there were no indications that he had been dragged there or turned over," he concluded. "Why did his watch stop then? And why didn't they look carefully for footprints as soon as they found the body?

"Jenkins told me that the ground was as torn up when they found the body as it was when I looked over the spot more than a day later, but you know that's impossible. They just botched up matters."

"But what difference does it make now that they have found footprints farther in the foods?" Zoe Ann pointed out.

"I don't know," admitted Hardy.

They tramped out across the links in silence, the beauty of the surrounding scenery lost on them in the contemplation of the mystery which clouded Howard Wright's life. When they reached the spot Hardy briefly outlined the details for her. The turf had been fixed, but the dangling and withered branches of the shrubbery still showed the place where the banker's body had crashed through to the earth.

"The actual fight took place some fifteen or twenty feet out from the tree line," explained Hardy, indicating a rough circle. "You can note how open and visible this spot is. Isn't that the road over there?"

Zoe Ann nodded.

"Why didn't they decoy him back into the woods or drag him down into the ravine? Why this particular spot?" continued Hardy.

"That's queer," said the girl suddenly, glancing up and down the fairway.

"What is?"

"I've often watched Mr. Fosdick play, as we met on the course more than once," she explained. "He used to have a penchant for dropping his ball into the ravine in driving off from the tee at the fifth hole. He had a bad slice to his ball."

"Whatever that means," commented Hardy.

"He sliced his ball on the side and drove it in a bad curve," she said, making a motion with her hands, as though swinging a golf club. "I've heard him say that this particular hole was his Waterloo. The way he corrected his drive here was to drive toward the woods on the other side. He generally drove from one hundred and fifty to two hundred yards from the tee."

"I see," said Hardy as patiently as possible. "And what has all that to do with his death?"

"I don't know. But he got into the habit of driving right to the edge of the rough, in his anxiety to stay away from the ravine. *And right along here is where his ball always came to rest.*"

"You mean that he would have walked here from the tee to make his second shot?" questioned the man in interest.

"Yes, invariably."

"Well, that explains how he happened to be slain here. They must have known his game and waited in concealment until he came this close to the woods. But what became of his golf ball then?"

"They must have struck him just after he drove it on toward the sixth hole," shuddered Zoe Ann. "Doubtless it was found by a caddy afterward."

"Let's scour the bushes along here again then," suggested Hardy. "We may find something overlooked before."

They turned to enter the shrubbery near the spot where the murdered man had been found, and both of them stopped at the same instant. They stared.

A young oak tree stood within a foot of the spot where the banker's head had rested. The bole was hardly four inches in diameter at the base. However, it was not the youth of the tree which was unusual; it was the condition of the leaves.

While every other tree and bush within sight was still green with summer life, every bit of the foliage of this oak had turned a sickly brown. From the topmost twig to the branch near John Hardy's hand, every single leaf drooped like lifeless hands dangling toward the ground. The contrast between this young tree and the others was startling. The tree was dying.

TO BE CONTINUED

BLUEBEARD IN REAL LIFE

"THERE was once a man who had fine houses, both in town and country, a deal of silver and gold plate, embroidered furniture, and coaches gilded all over with gold. But this man was so unlucky as to have a blue beard which made him so ugly that all the women and girls ran away from him."

So begins the fairy tale of *Bluebeard*, first given to the nursery in 1697 by Charles Perrault, son of a Parisian lawyer. Included were also the originals of such classics as *Cinderella, Red Riding Hood, Sleeping Beauty, Puss in Boots,* and *Tom Thumb.*

We all know the story, which, strangely enough, in illustration is always given an Oriental setting. The monster marries a lovely girl, and, after a month, leaves her to go on a journey. He gives her his keys, and tells her she may open all doors of the castle but one. Curiosity proves too much, and she unlocks the forbidden door, to discover the bodies of his seven previous wives, and is only saved from sharing their fate by the arrival of her gallant brothers, who promptly dispose of the wife killer.

But the story is more than a fairy tale. *Bluebeard* existed in real life, and the number of his victims were not seven, but two hundred and forty, young women and children. To this day there may be seen a monument in the neighborhood of Nantes, France, erected by the daughter of the monster on the site of his execution.

Gilles de Rais was of noble family, related to that of the kings of France, and the inheritor of great renown. He was born

in 1404 in the castle of Machecoul, whose lofty battlemented towers overlook the grassy banks of the Falleron.

As a relative of the warrior Du Guesclin he was destined to carry arms, and by the age of eighteen he was a knight skilled in horsemanship and the use of sword and lance. He was only sixteen when he married a blond girlish beauty, Catherine de Thouars.

France was then thrilling to the heroic voice of Joan of Arc, and Gilles de Rais was among the first to rally to her standard. He aided her to take provisions into besieged Orleans, and distinguished himself so nobly that when Charles was crowned king in Rheims Cathedral that day saw the young soldier made Marshal of France.

The Study of Black Art

He was also counselor and chamberlain to the king, and served against the English until 1433. His lands were the widest in all France. His enormous income rivaled that of his sovereign. He maintained a personal guard of two hundred and fifty knights, each with grooms, troopers, and pages. He was attended by chaplains, musicians, squires, and unnumbered lackeys. His chapel—for he professed great religious fervor—was hung with cloth of gold and silk; the sacred vessels were of gold and jeweled, and his four chaplains wore fur-trimmed robes of scarlet.

His residences, as the fairy tale records, were many. He had castles here and castles there, and his mansion in Nantes was a palace. He kept open house. For his own entertainment and that of any one who cared to come, he had an almost continuous performance by singers, dancers, jugglers, acrobats, horse riders.

There were long "free lunch" tables groaning with monstrous roasts, whole boars, geese, fowl of all kinds, meat pies, desserts, while wines and every variety of drinkables flowed like water.

No fortune could long withstand such assaults. The marshal began to sell off his estates, until his family, in alarm, seeing the dissipation of this wealth in which they had an interest, obtained a decree from the Parliament of Paris forbidding any further sale.

A chance encounter turned the young spendthrift's mind to a method of restoring his fortune by methods not approved by the church. Visiting the prison of Angers to give alms to the prisoners, he saw a soldier reading a book on alchemy and the art of raising demons. He borrowed the book, and betook himself to the study of black art.

He hoped now to have at his command the power to turn the baser metals into gold, and enlisted the aid of some of his closest adherents. He summoned alchemists from Paris, Germany, and Italy; and in his castle of Tiffauges the great halls were transformed into laboratories with retorts and furnaces, and decorated with the usual stuffed crocodiles, serpents, and other creatures which were part and parcel of the surroundings of the medieval experimenter in science. But though the furnaces flamed night and day, none of the visiting chemists could turn the trick.

At this point a new wizard arrived. This was Prelati, a young Florentine, an expert in the dark arts, who set about invoking the Prince of Darkness. The marshal was ready to make a compact with Satan, and in return for boundless wealth to give everything except his own life and soul.

His Victims Forgive

In the great hall of Tiffauges one summer night an attempt was made to summon Satan. Torches and candles shed a dim light on the stone floor under the vaulted roof. The company consisted of the marshal, his intimate Blanchet, two faithful squires—Henriet and Poitou—and Prelati. This last, master of the ceremony, with a sword drew a protective circle around them all, inscribed with magic symbols. Herbs were thrown on braziers. Prelati opened his magic books, pronounced the required incantations and formulas. The wind stirred the hangings and whispered strangely about them, but though the rites were long continued, no dark figure showed itself.

It was concluded, after several vain attempts, that more luring bait must be offered to the devil. What it was was soon revealed.

One day Henriet and Poitou, who came

and went in the castle pretty much as they pleased, entered their master's room thinking it unoccupied. They were startled to find their master there, and absorbed in the ghastly task of draining the blood from a baby's body into a receptacle. On the table lay the heart, eyes, and hand of his victim which he wrapped in a napkin.

He told the two servants to lock the door and admit no one, and that night carried the hideous package and vessel to the laboratory of Prelati. What went on that night was apparently not even then of sufficient potency to induce Satan to lend his aid. Further victims had to be sought.

Henriet and Poitou were informed that the marshal could not succeed in his schemes unless he offered the demon the blood and portions of the bodies of female children put to death. These faithful servants were soon scouring the country, aided and abetted by a middle-aged woman called Perrine Martin. This miserable creature, who was later to receive the nickname of La Meffraye, or the Bogy Woman, went around the country luring children to follow her with promises and sweetmeats.

She was followed by men with sacks, into which the wretched children were packed and transported to either Tiffauges or Machecoul. Girls and young women vanished as mysteriously, and the country for many miles around was reduced to unspeakable terror.

At night Gilles de Rais stretched on his couch, attended by those who ministered to his vileness, gloated over the dying agonies of children, girls, and young women, impaled upon hooks, over vessels which received their blood. Fires blazed in the huge fireplaces, and when the victims had ceased to struggle their bodies were cast into the flames.

For eight years the countryside was the prey of this ravening wolf. The people were distraught. Gradually, however, it began to be whispered that these disappearances coincided with the visits of the marshal to his several residences. But though many whispered, there were none bold enough to incur the wrath of the all-powerful overlord who held power of life and death in his hands.

The hour of reckoning was at hand, however. The blood of the victims cried aloud for vengeance. A bold prelate took up the cause of mourning mothers. The Bishop of Nantes lodged complaint with the Duke of Brittany, who gave orders for the arrest of the accused, which was carried out by surprise.

The charge was double—by the church for sacrilege and heresy, by the state for abductions and murders. Brought before the judges, Gilles de Rais refused to make answer. The court thereupon pronounced sentence of excommunication from the church.

The marshal, whom the dying agonies of countless victims nor the terror of the law had been able to shake, saw the gates of heaven shut in his face. He cast himself at the feet of the bishop and, with streaming eyes, begged him to remove the ban. He confessed his incredible cruelties in accents of such seemingly sincere repentance that all were moved. His accomplices in turn made full confession.

Sentence was pronounced on October 25, 1440. Death for Gilles de Rais, Henriet, and Poitu.

The marshal turned to the crowd of witnesses—fathers, mothers, lovers of his victims—and asked them to pardon him. There was a terrible silence in the court, and the condemned turned an anguished and beseeching look upon those whom he implored. All at once there was a murmur which swelled into a quavering chorus of "Yes, we pardon you."

Next morning the execution was carried out. An extraordinary thing is reported to have happened after it. For three days the relatives of the victims were mourning and fasted, not for their own dead, but for the monster, so that he might not be deprived of divine forgiveness.

The name of *Bluebeard*, attached to Gilles de Rais, from some physical peculiarity, received a new lease of detestation during the late trial of the bearded Frenchman Landru. Landru, though he killed and consumed by fire the bodies of many women, is but a pale shadow of his predecessor. Gilles de Rais remains for all time the arch-monster.

At eight o'clock Lally entered the library, carrying the white Persian in his arms

BAD LUCK

By Edward Parrish Ware

THEY SAY IT'S BAD LUCK TO KILL A CAT, AND IT CERTAINLY WAS FOR THE MURDERER OF MYRON CANNON

DESK SERGEANT TOMLINSON hung up the receiver, and spoke in tones as unemotional as though he were announcing the theft of some small article from a citizen's back porch.

"Myron T. Cannon has just been found dead in a bedroom at his place in the Country Club district," he said, reaching for the blotter. "Caretaker discovered it half an hour ago. Dr. Reid, reporting it, says he was shot to death. Guess that calls for you, Lally."

Detective Sergeant Kirk Lally, sitting in a chair back of the railing, got to his feet instantly. The name, Myron T. Cannon, bound up as it was with the development of Kansas City, meant something to him, and the abrupt announcement of his death by violence was startling. Myron T. Cannon was one of the city's wealthiest and most valued citizens.

"Old Tomlinson has been on the job so long, and has grown so calloused, I believe he'd announce the murder of the chief himself, in that same unconcerned voice!" he thought, as he opened his office door and called to his assistant, Jimmie Briggs.

The clock on the tower of City Hall marked the hour of three, as Lally cut through the heavy afternoon traffic on Main Street, headed for Broadway and turned south. Jimmie Briggs, hunched down behind the windshield, for the swift flight to the outskirts of the city, kept the car's siren going at an ear-torturing pitch, clearing the way with its magic.

The Country Club district is Kansas City's most aristocratic residential section, and when the car left Broadway and turned south along Pennsylvania Avenue it

reached that portion devoted to what may be termed large estates. There the houses are spaced far apart, sitting in stately isolation amid spacious grounds. The Cannon home proved to be a huge brick pile in the center of a fifteen acre tract. It had a lonely, forsaken look, in spite of its fine surroundings.

"The usual thing," Lally said, as he and Briggs ascended the steps from the terrace to the porch. "Rich man killed mysteriously; caretaker discovers him dead on the bedroom floor; summons family physician, nearest policeman, and nearest kin; admits everybody to the death-chamber, where they tramp around, fingering this, that, and the other, and effectively obliterate any trail the criminal may have left.

"Detective from headquarters, summoned as an afterthought, arrives; examines room, and finds nothing; questions relatives—and above all, grills the servants, all of whom are under suspicion, and all of whom prove to be absolutely innocent. Male member of the family, not too closely related, then comes under the gun; bad habits, chorus girls, motor cars and unfortunate speculations. Looks bad for him. But—he's as innocent as a babe-in-arms, as it turns out.

"Usual ending: John Yegg, interrupted at his work; croaks the disturber and gets away; pawns some of the loot and is caught, Hell! Always the same old thing! No new complications, and no startling dénouements—"

Lally's plaint was interrupted by the opening of the front door, revealing the person of Dr. Reid, the Cannon physician.

"Good afternoon, sergeant," he greeted. "We have kept everything undisturbed against your arrival. Captain Blake is upstairs, on guard. Go right up, please.'

They mounted the stairway in the physician's wake and followed him down a corridor in the east wing. The doctor pushed open a door, and stood back for the detectives to enter.

Lally paused in the opening, surveying the scene before him, Briggs looking over his shoulder.

The room was large. In the righthand corner stood an ornate brass bed, the covers in disarray; a dressing-table, a small desk, a table, and four chairs completed the furnishings. On the floor, near a window in the southeast corner, lay the body of the millionaire. There were five persons in the room. Captain Blake, from the Country Club station; a policeman in uniform; Dr. Randle, Reid's associate; a stockily built man of middle age dressed as a laborer and, finally, a tall young man whom Lally recognized as Cannon's son-in-law, George Maxted.

"Everybody here—but the servants," he said in an aside to Briggs as they passed into the room. "Good day, Blake," he greeted the captain, nodding to the others, most of whom he knew. "A bad business—yes, bad indeed!"

He walked to where the body of Cannon lay, and stood for a moment looking down at it.

"Trousers; bedroom slippers, without socks; undershirt; dressing-gown," he mentally registered. "Evidently had not been up long." Bending down, he inspected a hole in the victim's left breast. "Small caliber gun—automatic, most likely. Bled a lot inside, and not much outside. Room in pretty good order. No evidence of a struggle."

"How long dead?" he asked, turning to Dr. Reid.

"Not over two hours," the latter assured him. "Dr. Randle concurs in that opinion."

Randle nodded. "Two hours—not more," he affirmed.

"Humph! A daylight job. Who found him?"

"Coontz, the caretaker," Captain Blake informed him. "Come forward, Coontz!"

The stockily built man whom Lally had noticed, but who was unknown to him, approached respectfully and waited while the detective looked him over.

"Tell us about it, Coontz," he ordered. "How you came to find him, and anything else you may happen to know that bears on what occurred in this room."

"Well, sir, I wouldn't have known anything at all about it, most likely, if it hadn't been for Peter. He came mewing around the back door of the lodge at the

west gate, where I live, and I thought that was queer. So I investigated."

"Peter?" Lally queried. "Just who, or what, is Peter?"

"The cat, sir. A mate to Paul, yonder."

The caretaker pointed to an object near a desk against the north wall of the room; something over which some one had thrown a velvet spread taken from a table. Lally crossed to it, removed the spread, and looked down at the blood-streaked body of a huge white cat—a Persian, and evidently an aristocrat of his breed. A bullet had passed clear through the animal's body. Without comment, he turned to Coontz again.

"Go on," he directed.

II

"I HEARD Peter mewing. That was about half past one o'clock this afternoon," the caretaker resumed. "At that hour Peter and Paul both should have been at Dr. Bruen's Hospital. That's where the master always boarded his pets when he meant to be away for the summer. Always, before he left, he would take the cats to the hospital himself. He loved them better—"

Coontz broke off, his face flushing, and glancing apologetically at Maxted, the son-in-law, who had been standing beside a window since Lally came in. The young man turned a pair of blue eyes, showing signs of strain upon the speaker.

"Don't mind me, Coontz," he said quietly. "It is quite well known, gentlemen," he went on, addressing the group, "that Mr. Cannon thought a great deal of his pets—and some say he placed them first in his affections."

Lally studied the speaker for a moment in silence. "Go ahead, Coontz," he said. "Never mind who is here, or who isn't; give us your story."

"Mr. Cannon was due to leave for Minnesota on an afternoon train," Coontz went on, "and the cats should have been at the hospital by then. Peter, being here, disturbed me, and I went to the house, opened the basement door and called to Paul, his mate. He didn't answer, which he would have done if he'd heard. Now Paul had been ailing a bit the last few days and the master had allowed him to sleep in his own bedroom. I went up there, opened the door, and found the master and Paul both dead on the floor. That's all, sir, except that I telephoned to the police station, then called Dr. Reid and Dr. Randle. After they came I called Mr. Maxted at his office, when Dr. Reid told me to."

"Did you touch anything inside the room when you entered it?" Lally asked.

"No. I went over to where Mr. Cannon lay, saw that he was dead, and went right down to the phone. I didn't come in here again until the doctors came."

"Any other servants about the place?"

It was Maxted who answered.

"The butler, Fordham, and a cook and housemaid were dismissed for the summer yesterday," he supplied. "A chauffeur and a nursemaid are with my wife and our two children in Minnesota. Coontz is the only other servant."

"Who was in the house last night, besides Mr. Cannon?" Lally asked.

"I was," Maxted told him.

"When did you see him last—alive?"

"At eleven o'clock last night. We dined together down town, and he drove me home shortly after eight. I spent some time at the office—Mr. Cannon and I were associated in the real estate business, as you may know. There were some small matters to attend to, and, as we were to leave for his place in Minnesota to-day, I had not much time to spare. At eleven I returned home."

"Where was Mr. Cannon when you saw him, and what was he doing?"

"He had just come up from the kitchen-pantry to the second floor, when I came in, and was carrying a saucer of milk.

"'Paul whines like he might be hungry,' he told me. 'He hasn't been very well lately; maybe a little milk will quiet him.'

"I followed him upstairs and into his room. Paul was lying on the foot of the bed, which was rumpled. I knew by the condition of the bed that father had retired and that Paul had disturbed him. He was clothed about as he is now. We talked for perhaps ten minutes, then I went to my room farther down the corridor."

" Did you see him this morning?"

" No. I left for the office at eight thirty, and did not wake father. He wanted a quiet day at home before undertaking a long railroad journey. Had requested me not to disturb him, saying that he would have something sent in for lunch, and would join me at the office about four. Our train left at five."

" You were to join your wife?"

" Yes."

" How many children had Mr. Cannon?"

" Only one—Amy, my wife."

" What detained you here, while Mrs. Maxted and the children were away?"

" An important lease on some business property. Mr. Cannon and I alone could handle it. The business was successfully terminated, and we were to leave to-day."

" You did not see him again, then?"

Maxted hesitated for the briefest moment, then said:

" I did not see him again, but I talked with him. A private phone connects our office with the house. The postman, on his second round, brought me a letter from my wife, and I called father up and read parts of it to him. About the children, mostly, as he was quite fond of them."

" What time was that?" Lally asked.

" About a quarter of eleven. The postman reaches our office at half past ten sharp, and I had just finished reading the letter when I called."

" That fixes the hour of the crime at sometime between eleven in the morning and two in the afternoon," Captain Blake asserted positively.

The physicians nodded in agreement.

" That would accord with the state of the body when I first viewed it," Reid affirmed.

Lally nodded. " Has anybody sent for the servants who were dismissed yesterday?" he asked.

" Yes," Blake answered. " I sent a man to the address of Fordham, who knows the whereabouts of the others. They are merely laid off for the present. They should be here soon."

" Now, Mr. Maxted," said Lally, turning his attention again to the young man, " you are in position to know what, if anything, is missing from the house. From the look of things, this was a prowler's job. What was taken?"

" A diamond ring, stud, watch, and several valuable pieces of jewelry from the dressing table," was the answer. " All the property of Mr. Cannon. He had a weakness for expensive ornaments, and always kept them about. His purse, containing upward of a thousand dollars, I think, was also taken. That is all, I believe. The butler's pantry and the linen closet show signs of having been rummaged, but the plate and other silver had been taken away a few days before."

Lally was about to address another question to Maxted, when there came a loud wail from the corridor, accompanied by the sound of something clawing at the door.

" It's Peter!" Coontz exclaimed, getting up. " He wants to come in. Used to come up here when—"

" Let him in!" Lally bade him sharply.

Briggs, standing near the door, opened it, and a huge Persian walked majestically into the room; a white animal, a dead match for the one on the floor. In the center of the room he paused, hair roaching on his back.

" Come, Peter!" Lally spoke, his voice holding that which all animals recognize and heed—a gift to some fortunate human beings.

The cat eyed him for an instant, then went over and rubbed his magnificent body against the officer's leg. The detective took him up and placed him on his knee, carrying on a low-voiced jabbering all the while. The cat settled down, eyes fixed upon Lally's face.

" Any signs of a forced entrance?" the detective asked Blake, while one hand continued to stroke Peter's soft fur.

" I couldn't find any," the officer replied. " Not likely to be any. It would be a bold thief who sneaked around prying windows or doors open in the daytime," he added.

" Quite true," Lally agreed. " A key job, probably. These prowlers have a knack of knowing when a dwelling is vacant, or supposed to be so, and most any skeleton key will open the ordinary house door lock. As for the cat, a stray bullet accounts for him, likely."

At that moment a policeman entered, followed by Fordham, the butler, and two red-eyed, weeping women.

"Here's the butler," the officer announced. "Found him at the address, sleeping off a whiz. He got the women. Here's something I found in his room."

He offered a paper-wrapped parcel which proved to contain two quart bottles of whisky of a well known make. At prices in vogue since prohibition, the two bottles represented about twenty-five dollars in value.

"From Mr. Cannon's cellar!" exclaimed Maxted, giving Fordham a glance of surprise. "How did you come by them, Fordham?"

The butler was red-eyed from loss of sleep, and his face was pale and drawn.

"I'm going to tell the truth, Mr. George," he cried. "I didn't have anything to do with killing the poor master—I wouldn't have harmed him for the world! This is what I done, sir. I, being free until Mr. Cannon returned in the fall, drank a little liquor last night. When morning came I was, well, sir, pretty drunk. I wanted some more whisky, and the kind I had a taste for was out of my reach to buy.

"So I slipped in the back way about noon to-day, thinking the master gone, of course, let myself into the cellar entrance and took four bottles of whisky. I had kept my key. I knew, if I was seen about the place, I could say that I had forgotten something I meant to take away. No one saw me, and I saw no one. I didn't even hear a noise in the house. That is the truth, sir, so help me God!"

"It won't do, Fordham!" Captain Blake spoke harshly. "You might as well own up to everything. I suspected you from the first, and now you admit being here at about the time Mr. Cannon must have been killed. Come! What did you do with the swag?"

"Before God, captain—" Fordham broke down, crying aloud his innocence.

"Take him away," Lally instructed. "If he did it, he'll come through, after a bit."

Captain Blake and the patrolman left immediately for headquarters, taking Fordham with them. The women were ordered to go to the apartments they were accustomed to occupy, and remain there until further notice.

"You doubtless desire to be free, Mr. Maxted," Lally suggested. "You will want to let your family know, and there is no further need of you staying in the room."

Maxted bowed his thanks. "I should never have believed Fordham to be that sort," he told the detective. "The poor devil must have been sorely tempted, else mighty drunk, to commit the crime. Still—just what do you think, sergeant?"

III

"FORDHAM was, by his own admission, on the premises to-day," Lally replied. "If he came to steal whisky, might not he have yielded to the lure of greater booty, on finding his employer alone in the house?"

"I'm afraid that is just what happened," Maxted replied, as he went out.

"You gentlemen can go, too, if you wish," Lally told Reid and Randle. "Guess there isn't much to do now, except remove the body. I'll have that attended to."

"Now, Coontz," Lally demanded, when all but the gardener had gone, "why did you notify everybody else under the sun you could think of, about Mr. Cannon's death, and have to be reminded to tell the one you should have called first—after the doctors, of course?"

"You mean Mr. George?" queried the gardener startled.

"I do!"

"Well, sir, I don't know exactly why I didn't call him. I don't exactly know, unless it was that I don't like him, and—"

"Isn't that dislike just a reflection of the attitude of some one else—Mr. Cannon, for instance?" Lally interrupted.

"Well, yes. I guess so. It's a fact, and no denying it, that the master was not any too fond of Mr. George. I guess that's the reason I didn't telephone to him until Dr. Reid told me to."

"I think that is right," Lally replied. "Now, anything special—any recent disagreement between Mr. Cannon and Maxted, that you know of?"

"None. I have just known, for some time, that they was at outs with one another. That's all. I know it, but I don't know why."

"Hum! How about the daughter?"

"She's—well, sir, she's kind of hard and unfeeling, and no mistake. Likes her own way, and never did seem to be very fond of her father, even when she was a girl. Since she married they kind of drew more apart. The truth is, sir, this household wasn't any too happy, and that's a fact! Except the cats," he added, as an afterthought. "They was always happy. At least, they was when they kept out of Mr. George's and Miss Amy's way."

"They didn't like the cats, eh?"

"No; and the cats didn't like them."

"Anything else to offer, Coontz?" Lally queried. "Anything at all?"

"Not a thing, sir," he replied. "I've said all I know."

"Get a box, put Paul in it, and bury him somewhere," the detective instructed. "Then stay around until I want you again."

Coontz went out on his errand, leaving Lally and Briggs alone."

Peter, who had remained quietly upon Lally's knee, now jumped down, and presently a loud yowl betrayed his presence beside his dead mate. He began clawing furiously at the velvet spread which covered the dead animal, exhibiting signs of fierce anger.

"Come, Peter!" Lally approached, speaking soothingly, and took the cat up, standing in silence for a moment, staring down at the dead carcass which Peter's onslaught had exposed. The entrance of Coontz, box in hand, brought him out of what appeared to be a deep reverie. He turned to Briggs.

"Ever see such pretty eyes?" he queried, indicating Peter's amber orbs. "Not a blemish. The only contrasting bit of color is the iris, long and narrow. Looks like a light stroke of an artist's crayon across an amber background. Fine cat, Peter."

Briggs glanced at the eyes in question, nodded, then looked at his chief in puzzlement. Was he about to launch forth into a lecture on cats?

Coontz, having placed the body of Paul in the box, straightened up and started toward the door.

"Coontz!" Lally spoke sharply, and the man turned back. "On second thought, do not bury Paul. Put the box back on the floor and cover it up."

His instructions were obeyed, and Coontz departed.

Immediately he was gone Lally took up the phone, touched the button which transformed it from a private connection into one having access to the public system, and gave the operator a number.

"Doc Reynolds?" he queried after a moment. "Lally. Want you to make an autopsy here in the house—Cannon's place. You've probably heard of his death. Yes, as soon as you can. Right away? Good!" He hung up.

"Well, Kirk," Jimmie Briggs demanded, they being alone, "what do you make of it? Think the old soak done it?"

"No more than I did," Lally replied. "The poor boob is so innocent he didn't think that his tale—the truth, by the way—would even be questioned. Why, if he'd killed the old man, he'd never have admitted being here to-day. Couldn't he have said he carried that whisky away yesterday, just as well? He was telling the truth."

"Well—who, then?"

"Find the bullet that went through the cat, Jimmie!" Lally ordered sharply, paying no attention to the assistant's question. "If it can't be found, then we'll know where it is!" he finished enigmatically and, as Briggs considered, foolishly.

A change had suddenly been wrought in Lally. He no longer regarded his investigation as a purely perfunctory piece of business.

His eyes were wide open and held a cold glint in their depths—a transformation which told Jimmie Briggs that his chief's interest was intense. Briggs set to work in search of the bullet which had caused the death of Paul.

Lally took up the phone again, after finding a number in the book which hung near by.

"Dr. Bruen?" he queried, after a bit. "This is Sergeant Lally talking. Heard

about the death of Myron T. Cannon? Yes, it's true enough. Well, I would like you to come here to the Cannon place at eight o'clock sharp to-night. Can you do so? Good! Don't fail."

He hung up, and helped Briggs with his search. Fifteen minutes later it was clear that the bullet was nowhere in the room. The windows were unbroken, and the screens on the lower sashes were without injury.

"What do you make of it?" Briggs asked.

"That Paul was in his master's arms when the shot was fired," Lally answered. "The bullet that killed the animal is in the body of its master. Proving this: the cat was shot an instant before Cannon was struck down. And that's important, Jimmie—damned important!"

"I don't get—"

"You don't need to," Lally interrupted. "Get down to the Federal Reserve Building and find out all you can about Maxted's whereabouts since eight thirty this morning. Let me know by telephone, when you have dug him out. And, by the way, Jimmie," he added, as the young detective swung the door open, "I take back what I said about this case just before we came into the house. It begins to look as though it's going to develop something unusual—interesting and new, I may say. Yes, decidedly so. Now off with you!"

Briggs darted away, but was back instantly.

"Maxted has just let in an old chap whom he took into the second room on the right of the lower hall!" he imparted, then was gone again.

Lally got up and went downstairs. Pushing the door of the second room open, he entered.

IV

"GOOD evening, Masters," he greeted the tall, gray-headed man who sat across a table from Maxted. "I thought it likely you'd be getting out soon."

"Ah, sergeant, this is a terrible affair!" Masters mourned. "I have been Mr. Cannon's attorney for twenty years—and his loss is a sore thing to me!"

"Indeed it must be," Lally said sympathetically. "I do not mean to intrude," he went on, glancing toward Maxted. "Just wanted to make sure you were here, Masters, and that you will give me a few minutes later on."

"Certainly, sergeant. I am sure George will excuse me—"

"No. Later will do. When you're free, call me."

The detective went into the hall in time to admit Dr. Reynolds, the police surgeon whom he had summoned a short while before.

"Cannon died at about twelve o'clock to-day, Reid and Randle say—and of course I don't doubt them," he told Reynolds when they were in the death chamber. "I want you to make a thorough investigation—find the bullet particularly. I've got an idea, and your report will either verify it or blow it up. Go to it."

He left the room and encountered the attorney on the stairs. Drawing him into a vacant room, he closed the door.

"Who gets Cannon's property, and what was the trouble between him and his son-in-law?" Lally asked, sitting down.

Masters considered him for a moment in silence.

"Well," he said, "I might as well tell you—ought to do so, in fact. Two days ago Myron made a new will. By the terms of the old one, most of his property—about three million dollars' worth—went to his daughter, Amy. There were substantial bequests to all the servants, of course, and a considerable sum set aside for charitable purposes. Amy, though, was to have the bulk.

"Two days ago, however, I drew a new will, and he signed it. By the terms of the new will, Amy and the children were the beneficiaries of a trust fund, they to have the income from it so long as they lived. That fund amounted to one million dollars. The rest of the property, with the exception of the small legacies mentioned, was left to colleges and charitable institutions."

"Now, the second question?"

"That trouble you spoke of explains the

making of the new will," Masters told him. "The truth is, George Maxted has been appropriating large sums of his firm's money to his own use. That practice has been going on, in a small way, for several years. When, lately, he increased his speculations, Myron decided to put a stop to it. For that reason he remained in the city after his daughter departed, and kept George with him.

"They went over the books, and Myron checked his thefts up to him in such a manner as to leave him no way out whatever. Then he made the new will. Had to, he said, in order to protect his daughter and grandchildren."

"Did Maxted know about the new will?"

"No. Myron had threatened to make it some time ago, and he knew of that. I am sure, however, that Cannon told him nothing about its having been done. He remarked to me that even Amy should not know.

"'Time enough for 'em to find it out after I'm gone,' was the way he put it."

"Thanks," said Lally, getting up. "I guess that's all. You might be on hand tonight at eight o'clock. I'm having a little gathering at that hour," he invited as they passed into the hall.

"Lally!"

Reynolds called from the open door of Cannon's room, and the detective entered it, closing the door behind. He had not been inside for more than five minutes when a phone rang below, and Maxted, having answered it, called him.

"You can talk from where you are, if you wish," he was informed.

Lally, however, went to the phone in the lower hall. Jimmie Briggs was talking.

"Maxted's theory—if it was one—is blown sky-high!" came the words of the assistant. "He reached the office at nine o'clock this morning, and did not leave it until summoned home at two! Even had lunch sent in! No doubt about it, because the office manager and a steno I found here are absolutely certain of it! What next?"

"Come out here," Lally returned. "I'll have something for you to do, pretty soon."

When he hung up and sought the out-of-doors there was a singularly satisfied expression on his face.

V

AT eight o'clock Detective Sergeant Lally entered the Cannon library, carrying Peter, the white Persian, in his arms. The cat seemed to have formed a great attachment for the detective, and was quite content to be with him. He nodded to the persons assembled there, while he made sure that all were present.

Reid, Randle and Masters sat in one group, chatting. Briggs engaged Maxted in conversation, while a short, fat man, having a foreign look, held Coontz in a corner while he explained, in tones loud enough to be heard by all, certain theories concerning the care of high-bred cats. It was Dr. Bruen, from the animal hospital. Reynolds, the police surgeon, entered directly after Lally, and sat down near the door.

When the sergeant came into the room all conversation ceased, all eyes were turned upon him. He walked to a table at the end of the library, deposited Peter upon it, then stood stroking his fur.

"Cats are curious animals," Lally said in a conversational tone, as though merely making a passing comment. "They arouse dislike in the minds of some people, and are liked by others. All my life I have heard it said that it's bad luck to kill a cat," he went on, straightening suddenly and holding the crowd with his eyes. "That may or may not be simply a superstitious belief, and I'm not passing judgment on it. I do know, however, that in the killing of Paul, mate to Peter here, the saying holds good. I am about to prove it."

The speaker's eyes sought Jimmie Briggs, and he made a scarcely perceptible motion with his head.

Briggs, already beside Maxted, bent forward suddenly and snapped a pair of handcuffs about his wrists.

"Sit down, Maxted!" Lally spoke coldly, and the young man, who had essayed to leap to his feet when the steel touched him, dropped back into his chair. With an obvious effort he composed his features, and when he spoke his voice was calm.

"I do not understand the reason for this outrage!" he declared evenly. "Perhaps you will explain?"

"You are under arrest for the murder of Myron T. Cannon," Lally replied. "Now, gentlemen," he addressed the others in the room, most of whom were on their feet and staring blankly at each other, "sit down and listen to what I have to say. No interruptions, please. You, Maxted, will remain silent, or measures will be employed to insure your being so."

He paused while his hearers resumed their chairs. Then, when absolute quiet was obtained, he began speaking again.

"First, I will assign the motive for the crime. The same old thing, gentlemen—money. Myron Cannon discovered that his son-in-law, husband of his only daughter, was a spendthrift and a thief as well. He did not expose Maxted, for reasons that are obvious, but he did take precautions to safeguard his daughter's financial future. Some time ago he threatened to make a new will, providing Mrs. Maxted and her children with an income only, and bequeathing the bulk of his property elsewhere. He did not want the son-in-law to have the handling of his wealth after he was dead. He did make such a will."

Lally paused abruptly, eyes upon the son-in-law's face, when he made the latter statement. In spite of the control Maxted had exhibited after the first shock of his arrest had passed his face turned pasty white, and a look of incredulity was depicted there. It was gone instantly—but Lally had seen.

"Ah, Maxted," he said, "you did not know that! The truth is, gentlemen, if Myron Cannon had told his son-in-law about the execution of that new will he would be alive to-day. It was to anticipate the execution of the will that Maxted killed him."

"You've got that statement to prove!" George Maxted told him during the slight pause that followed. "You'll regret this thing, Sergeant Lally—as sure as my name is what it is!"

"That will be all—absolutely all, understand, from you!" Lally's voice was hard, and his eyes flamed warningly. "I am about to offer the most conclusive proof of what I say," he went on, addressing the others. "George Maxted entered his father-in-law's bedroom last night, some time between eleven and daylight, a small-caliber automatic pistol in hand—it was probably equipped with a silencer. Whether it was is of no moment. Mr. Cannon was not in bed, as Maxted thought likely he would be. He was standing up, and his pet cat, Paul, was in his arms. The animal had been ill, and he had a great affection for it. Maxted fired one shot from the pistol, and the bullet passed through the cat and entered the breast of Cannon. The cat leaped to the floor, ran a few paces and dropped dead. Cannon collapsed by the window near which his corpse was found to-day."

"But—"

It was Dr. Reid who started to object. Thinking better of it he subsided.

"I know what you were going to say, Reid," Lally told him. "You were about to say that Cannon was killed in the daytime—about noon. The fact is, he died about noon— but he received his death wound during the preceding night. Dr. Reynolds will tell you what the autopsy developed."

Reynolds spoke from where he sat near the door. "A small-bore bullet entered Mr. Cannon's left breast, missed the heart by a fraction, and lodged against his spine. I do not say that the shock did cause instant paralysis, but I do say that it may well have done so. In my opinion, the victim was instantly paralyzed. In effect, he was a dead man from the time the bullet entered, but actual death did not occur until about the hour mentioned by Dr. Reid."

There was silence for a moment, then Lally asked:

"Is there anything in your medical experience, Dr. Reid, or yours, Dr. Randle, which will refute Reynolds's statement?"

"It would be possible, certainly," Reid replied. "It would be exceedingly difficult to establish such a condition beyond dispute, but there is no denying that it may have occurred."

Randle contented himself with nodding.

"I am going to establish its truth—beyond peradventure of doubt," Lally asserted. "I know that Paul, the cat, was killed by the same bullet that ended Mr. Cannon's life. Know it because there is no trace of a second bullet to be found—and the search was thorough. First let me call your attention to Peter—to his eyes." He placed the cat so his eyes would be visible to all. "You will note that the iris is almost round, that it is dead black and that it nearly obscures the amber of the rest of the eye. Cats, gentlemen, all cats—wild or tame—are night-prowling animals; it is their nature.

"Because the eye is practically all pupil at night the vision is enlarged and intensified. I will say that the human eye, expanded by an application of belladonna, has a much stronger and more comprehensive vision than when normal—but only after sundown. In the daylight a human being would be much disturbed as to vision, should belladonna be applied. Why? Because the enlarged pupil would admit too strong a flood of daylight.

"Nature, in forming the eyes of the night-prowling cat family, took that into account. When day dawns a cat's eyeballs begin to contract. At noon, whether the sun shines or is obscured by clouds, the iris resembles a narrow slit. As the forenoon advances those balls gradually enlarge, and at nightfall they are normal again—like Peter's are now."

Lally singled out Dr. Bruen.

"You, doctor, know all there is to know about cats. Have I spoken the truth or not?"

"You are correct, sergeant," came the answer.

"Now, if I should kill Peter, here and now, what would be the condition of his eyeballs after death?"

"They would remain precisely as they are now," Bruen asserted.

"If I should wait until noon, say, and kill him. What then?"

"The pupil would be, after death, exactly what it was at the time of death," was the response.

"Bring the box over, Coontz," Lally directed.

The caretaker brought the box containing Paul's body and placed it on the table. Lally lifted the carcass out and pointed to the wide open eyes.

"The pupils, gentlemen," he said simply, "are large, just as Peter's now are—proving conclusively that the cat died before daylight. That being true, I consider it established that Mr. Cannon received his death wound during the night."

Reid and Randle both nodded agreement. "There is no disputing your premises, sergeant," said the latter. "If the same bullet that killed the cat also slew Mr. Cannon—then it was fired into his body before daylight. That is certain."

"But—but what does that prove?" Maxted broke forth. "How does that establish guilt on my part?" He had become excessively nervous now, and his eyes were wild.

"It doesn't," Lally replied. "There is not one thing in what I have said that points to you as the murderer. It merely shows that you could have done it, since you were here. You did do it, of course, and you figured that while you might be suspected, nothing could be proven. But you killed a cat—and that's bad luck.

"Even so, you might have gotten away with it, probably would have, but for one thing. You overplayed your hand. You had a telephone conversation with a man, at eleven o'clock in the morning, who had been practically dead since about that time the night before! That's where you slipped up, Maxted—and that's what's going to send you to the chair!"

Maxted dropped back in his seat, wide eyes glued to the face of his accuser.

"You were in the room and heard Reid say that Mr. Cannon had been killed at about noon. That was news to you, who thought he had died when your bullet struck him. You saw what you thought to be a perfect alibi—and you went a little too far.

"That mythical telephone conversation—but what might one expect?" he queried, glancing around. "All of them do it—make mistakes, I mean. It remains for somebody to find them. Take him away, Jimmie," he ordered his assistant.

The Chinese was carrying a tray such as I saw on the bunks of those still smoking

SECRET SERVICE MEMORIES

By Captain Matthew F. Griffin

HAVING CLEANED ONE GANG OUT, I GO, A MARKED MAN, TO ROPE ANOTHER GROUP OF DESPERATE COUNTERFEITERS

A Story of Fact

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

LAST week we learned of Matthew Griffin's initial step in detective work while he was a mere boy in Boston. We followed him to New York to see the Eighth Wonder of the World. We watched his entry into the Secret Service as a roper. At present he is a member of the Astoria counterfeiting gang. At the invitation of Joe Raffone, a sinister Italian, he has gone off at night for a "surprise." Half a dozen Secret Service men have been detailed to shadow him when he meets Raffone at the ferry.

CHAPTER III—(*Continued*)

TRACKING THE ASTORIA GANG

AT five minutes to eleven Raffone, unknown to me, had crept up beside me. I was standing outside the ferry, near the passenger entrance. Conscious that some one was near, I turned around.

"Me scare you?" asked Joe with a pleased grin.

"A little bit," I confessed.

Joe laughed.

"We must catch boat quick," said Joe.

There was a boat ready to pull out. Joe had the exact change in his hand for our two fares, and presently we were in midstream, standing in the bow of the boat, watching the lights on the opposite shore.

"Where are we going, Joe?" I asked.

"This one grand big surprise," evaded Joe with a chuckle. "You like much. Wait. You find out soon."

This feature began in FLYNN'S for February 13

"What sort of surprise?"

"You 'fraid of me?" asked Joe with the same queer little chuckle.

Perhaps my voice showed a trace of apprehension, for I had looked around the boat and failed to see any of the Secret Service on board. But that they were not visible did not mean they were not around. There were several trucks and farm wagons on the boat. For all I knew, our men might be disguised as farmers.

Received As a Brother

I did not know many of the Secret Service operatives—in fact, less than half a dozen by sight. Those two quiet workmen, who stood a few feet away might be Secret service operatives. But it would have been consoling to have known.

"Why should I fear a friend?" I replied to Joe. "I'm just curious to know where we are going."

"We are going to one grand big surprise," responded my laughing companion in his painstaking English.

The crunching of the huge timbers that formed the ferry slip and the thundering clang of chains and winches as the platform was lowered to meet the level of the ferry's deck, shut off our conversation.

"This way, please," said Joe, as we stepped on shore.

He was highly amused at the mystery he had thrown around the undertaking, but at that moment I would have been much happier if I could only get a glimpse of some one I knew, one of our own men, especially my shadow—the regimental revolver shot from Governor's Island.

We walked for more than a mile through dimly lit streets and country roads until we came to a large farm. Here Joe struck across some unplanted fields that had been ploughed the previous spring.

"Have one grand care," warned Joe. "This field is like little mountains to make you fall."

It was treacherous ground. There was no moon. It was pitch dark save for the rays from an oil lamp in one of the windows of the little farmhouse toward which we were heading.

Suddenly Joe took my wrist and led me away from the light, steering toward one of the outbuildings from whence issued the sound of many voices. As we approached, those within evidently heard us coming. Immediately all was silence until my companion called out something in Italian. He was answered in the same tongue by two men who appeared in a doorway, of what turned out to be a disused barn.

There must have been a light somewhere far behind them, for their forms silhouetted against a dim yellow haze.

The two men in the doorway made way for us, and shook my hand as I entered ahead of Joe.

In one corner of the barn, which was floored, were at least a dozen men seated around a big table. Two farm lanterns threw a dim light on the scene. Bottles and glasses were the principal embellishments of the board. All rose as Joe, in his own language, said something. It was evidently an announcement that I had come along.

There were cries of "Bravo!" mingled with other words I did not understand, and presently I found myself the center of a group of delighted Italians, none of whom spoke much English, but all making it clear in their own way, chiefly pantomime, that they looked upon me as a brother, and that I must share their food and wine.

Returned Intact

Effusive and genuine as the welcome seemed, I was hoping that some of the Secret Service operatives were not far away. I had my revolver. But that would be of little service if the fourteen or more men in this barn, distant from any other place of human occupancy, except the little farmhouse a hundred feet or so away, and without doubt occupied by other members of the gang, took it into their heads to make away with me.

But no harm of any sort was offered me during the hour or so I was their guest. I hugely enjoyed the Italian dishes, then strange to me, and drinking heavy red wine, so dry that I wished I could have sugared it.

The feast was in full blast when Raffone accompanied me back to the ferry. He was

the only one in the gang who could use more than a dozen words of English. And his vocabulary was very limited.

"You have one grand big surprise, eh?" said Joe as we parted at the ferry house.

I had to acknowledge I had, and again thanked him for the unexpected hospitality.

On the boat I noticed my shadow—the soldier on furlough who was his regimental revolver champion.

CHAPTER IV

"BURGLARS" ROUND UP THE ASTORIA GANG

TOWARD the end of the month, or early in August, Joe gave me quite a shock. It was not long after I had been presented in the barn at Astoria for the critical appraisal of those members of the gang who were curious as to what their star shover looked like. I had just asked Joe for ten dollars' worth of counterfeit cartwheels.

"No more silver," replied Joe, spreading his palms outward. "Me throw all in river."

"Why, Joe?"

"No want to see no more."

"Scared?"

"No. Steamship she come in to-day. People get off ship to-night or to-morrow morning. I see some one. You see me Sunday morning. Me have something better than silver."

"Gold?"

"No. Me have five-dollar bills."

"I wish I could get more of the silver," I replied, trying to appear disinterested in his startling information, for there had not been any counterfeit notes in circulation in some time. And what Joe was referring to was undoubtedly a new plate that the gang was preparing to shove.

"Me no got more silver," insisted Joe. "All thrown in the river."

I could scarcely wait to report what Raffone had told me. But instead of being received like a prodigal son, when I appeared at Secret Service headquarters, I was given the merry laugh.

"Why," said one of the Secret Service experts on counterfeit notes, "there isn't an engraver at large who is known to be dishonest who isn't under constant vigilance. Anybody can make a mold for coins as these Italians have done. That's all they can do."

"But Raffone hadn't any occasion to lie to me," I protested. "He has perfect confidence in me. So has all the gang."

"Don't bank too much on that or they may get you when we are not covering you and slash your throat. They have you under suspicion."

"Why do you say that?"

"They have refused to do further business with you."

"But I am to meet Raffone on Sunday and get the new five-dollar notes they have made."

"He wouldn't sell you any silver dollars, would he?"

"He has thrown them in the river."

"Rats! I hope you don't believe that."

"But I am convinced of Raffone's sincerity."

"Italians are good actors. I think you've gone as far as you can with the gang. I don't know how Brooks feels. I think you had better take it up with him."

I told my chief that I hadn't any misgivings as to the truth of Raffone's promise to sell me five-dollar notes the following Sunday.

"Keep the appointment with him, my boy," said Brooks, "and let us hope that your faith is well founded."

Raffone met me on Sunday morning at the appointed time.

"How much you buy?" said Raffone, when we had walked to a secluded spot.

Here he pulled out a roll of bills that he could hardly hold in his hand.

"I haven't much money to-day," I answered. "I was out last night. How much are they?"

"Two dollars fifty cents for one," replied my friend Joe.

"I'll take one," I replied, "and if I have luck with it I'll buy more to-morrow."

"Very good money," said Joe. "No better in whole country."

Within two hours I was at Secret Service headquarters with the new Grant head five-dollar counterfeit.

It was as perfect an imitation of the real thing as could be produced.

Brooks was not in the office. This was proof that he, along with the rest, doubted the existence of such a bill. Further proof of this lay in the fact that no operative had been sent up to cover me, so that, in the event that that was the only contact we could make with the gang on this matter, we could not have corroboration in court.

At the suggestion of one of the operatives at headquarters I telephoned to Brooks at his home in Newark, New Jersey.

"Stay there until I get in," said Brooks when I guardedly referred to what had happened.

I Have Reason for Pride

Brooks arrived at the Post Office Building within an hour.

"This is a mighty dangerous note," he said, after he had examined it.

He lost no time in ordering every available man in New York to report to the office at once. At the same time he sent messages in code to the Treasury Department informing them of the existence of the new counterfeit. Before nightfall every Secret Service man in the country who could be reached, was in possession of a complete description of the new Grant head counterfeit, and private information concerning it was dispatched to financial institutions throughout the country.

Secret Service men from all parts of the country, who could be spared from their work, were brought in to help run down the source of the Grant head counterfeits.

I doubt if a more perfect counterfeit of an American note had been seen before.

Within forty-eight hours we had received word from banks in all parts of the East that their patrons had been victimized by new counterfeits.

The gang had lost no time in putting the counterfeits into circulation. In no instance had the genuineness of the notes been questioned until they arrived at the banks. And even some banks—those who had not received the description of the bill in time—had been victimized.

Up to that time, a larger force of Secret Service men had not been used in a counterfeiting case. The number of men thrown out on every possible clew taxed the full capacity of the service. All our stool pigeons were at work, as well as seasoned operatives, and men like myself who were in the service on probation.

Thousands of the notes were put into circulation in New York City in the first week that the note was in existence.

I found it hard not to feel proud. I was told that it was the first time in the history of the service that a Secret Service operative had learned in advance of the issuing of a new counterfeit. Stools had brought such information into the office, but never an operative.

Needless to say, I was not disturbed in my work. I still posed as an undesirable living in a cheap furnished room near Thirteenth Street and Avenue C. I still hung out with Trainor and Walker and their gang, rushing the growler with them, and occasionally playing the rôle of a pickpocket for their edification.

Two days after I made my first purchase of the Grant head note from Raffone, I saw him again and bought several.

"Much better than the silver, eh?" queried Raffone.

More News Is Broken

I truthfully agreed they were.

After leaving my friend Joe, who told me that reports from all over were that there was no trouble being experienced by the shovers of the notes, I rode down to Third Avenue and Thirty-Fourth Street to Charles Soles's barber shop.

Soles, I learned after a short conversation, had not been made a distributor of the Grant head counterfeits. But he had some of the silver dollars on hand, and I bought ten from him.

"Better get rid of those quickly," said Soles. "I will have something better next week."

"What is it?" I inquired.

"The best money you ever saw," replied the barber, like a true salesman.

"A five-dollar note?"

"No, a one-dollar note."

To be certain that I had not misunderstood him I repeated:

"A one-dollar note?"

"Yes," answered Soles.

"Have you seen it?"

"No, it isn't ready yet. But next week there will be plenty. Come here Monday."

Things were breaking my way fast. And quite chipper I broke the news of the new one dollar counterfeit that was to be put in circulation the following week.

"Where did you get that information?" asked Brooks.

"From the barber, Charles Soles," I answered.

"Barbers are great talkers," put in one of the operatives.

"Some of you fellows laughed when I brought in the advance information about the Grant head counterfeit," I returned.

Made by an Italian

"They're all jealous," laughed Brooks, patting me on the back. "If you keep it up they'll think that you have a counterfeit tree in your back yard. But don't let them pull your leg."

I was at Charles Soles's barber shop at the appointed hour the following Monday. He took me into a rear room and bending over to open a trunk said:

"Wait till you see these."

Recovering from his stooping position he exhibited a wad of crisp counterfeits of the Martha Washington one dollar note.

"What do you think of them?" he said with a pleased smile, as he handed me one.

"Fine! Fine! Fine!" I kept repeating.

"How many do you want?" he asked.

"I'll take ten," I said. "How much are they?"

"Fifty cents each."

I paid him the money in two two-dollar bills, and a one-dollar bill. I held out the latter, a genuine Martha Washington note, to compare it with the counterfeit.

"You couldn't tell them apart if your bill were new," observed the barber.

I agreed with him that it would be somewhat difficult. Then a bright thought possessed me. I resolved to put it into execution.

"Charles," I said, "the Americans are the cleverest people in the world."

"The greatest artists all the time," said Soles, who despite his name was an Italian, "are the Italians."

"An Italian made this?" I asked.

"Sure," replied Soles with pardonable pride.

This was important information. I did not want to press him. He was not ready to volunteer the name of the engraver, for he made no attempt to say anything further as he took the five dollars and I put the ten counterfeit Martha Washington notes in my pocket.

Brooks was sitting at his desk when I walked into the office and laid the ten Martha Washington counterfeits before him.

"Where did you get these?" he asked.

"I shook that counterfeit tree in my back yard," I laughed.

"I had for a moment forgotten that you told me that they were coming out this week," he said. "They are already in circulation, for we received a complaint only half an hour ago.

"Have you any idea as to where they are being printed?"

"My only information is that the plates were made by an Italian."

Russo, the Ringleader

"If that is correct then they are being printed abroad, for there is not an Italian engraver in the country capable of this work. While working on the five-dollar Grant head note I learned that not only through our own men, but through the Italian government."

"So they are being smuggled into this country?"

"In all probability. But from where, I don't know, and neither does any one else, just now."

The arrest and conviction of counterfeiters is not the principal aim of the Secret Service. Highly desirable as this is, the purpose of this world famous organization would fail if it did not stop the circulation of the spurious tokens. This can best be done by getting the engraver of the plate from which the notes are struck and by obtaining possession of the plate itself.

There was little sleep for any of us for many days. Eventually we learned that one

of the most influential leaders among the Italian criminal element, Gaetano Russo, was the ringleader of the gang. Russo was a name to conjure with among many thousands of his countrymen. At that time the American branch of the dread Mafia was split into two factions. Russo was the head of one of them.

Russo lived with his wife, Rosa, in a house not far from Soles's barber shop, in a quiet street, No. 335 East Thirty-Fifth Street.

"Hands Up"

We had his wife under surveillance from the early part of August. But we were not yet ready to spring the trap. On the night of August 27, 1888, seven of us appeared at the Astoria Ferry House. It was midnight. All of us wore our most disreputable looking clothes. None recognized the other. We took seats in different parts of the last boat leaving for the Long Island shore so that no attention would be directed toward us.

We had a rendezvous on the other side of the river, and by agreement we took roundabout and varying ways to reach it. Our meeting place was also to be our place of concealment. It was an old grocer's delivery wagon that had long since been abandoned and allowed to remain in a vacant lot near where some of the counterfeiters lived.

The vehicle, of the closed variety, looked so decrepit that at first glance one would assume that two heavy men in it would cause it to crash to the ground. But the seven of us piled into it, one after another, without any ill effects either to ourselves or the wagon.

In our party were the present able and highly efficient Chief of the United States Secret Service, then a very young operative, W. H. Moran, and Operators McManus, Bagg, Volk, Condon and Hall. Although it was an August night—or, rather, an August morning—it was quite chilly. We had our coat collars turned up around our necks, which added to our sinister appearance. I am positive that had we started down the road together any lone pedestrian who saw us coming would have fled for his life.

It was about one o'clock when the last of us clambered into the wagon. Our plan was to raid the farmhouse and two other houses where some of the gang lived. We were not certain as to the addresses of one or two, but as they all went to New York every day to sell the counterfeits to the shovers, we knew we could get them at the ferry house.

Astoria in those days was a part of Long Island City, which has since lost its municipal identity when it was merged with Brooklyn and Staten Island and old New York City into the present Greater New York.

How many policemen were on the Long Island City force I do not know; but some of them, I am confident, were roused from their beds that night, for at about two o'clock in the morning, after we had shivered for an hour in the grocer's wagon, at least twenty policemen suddenly emerged from the surrounding darkness and, with drawn revolvers, closed in on us. The first we knew of the unexpected raid was when we heard from all sides the cry of "Hands up!"

Instinctively we drew our revolvers. On seeing the gleaming brass buttons of the bluecoats on all sides, and the pale glint of light among the stubby, sinister barrels of their revolvers, all pointing at us, we made no untoward move.

Off in Handcuffs

One of the older Secret Service men announced who we were. Up to this time we had not spoken a word.

The commander of the force of raiding police was evidently not impressed with this information, for in answer to our announcement of our identity we heard a commanding voice shout:

"Men, keep them covered! If they fail to obey me, riddle them with bullets!"

The same voice, which now approached the tail end of the wagon, said in the same commanding tone:

"Now I want you fellows in that wagon, when I give the word, to jump out of the wagon from the tail end. I want each of you, as you jump, to jump with your hands up. Any one who disobeys will be shot in-

stantly. And mind you, don't jump until I give the word. If two jump at one time, my men will shoot. When I say 'Jump!' I want the man I indicate to jump as I have ordered."

One of us began to expostulate that such precautions might end disastrously.

"Silence!" commanded the same voice. "I'm running things here."

He was, in truth.

"Now," he added, "I want the man nearest me to jump. Jump!"

I was that man. I jumped with my hands above my head. My revolver I had replaced in my pocket when I realized we were surrounded by policemen. As I landed on the ground, two policemen who had been detailed for that purpose, caught me and handcuffed me.

An Awkward Situation

I was now taken to the outer edge of the ring of bluecoats.

This proceeding was gone through until the last of us were handcuffed.

We were marched down a few streets to where a patrol wagon was waiting for us. Now that we were handcuffed and deprived of our revolvers—some of us had two, and all fully loaded—we continued to protest that we were Secret Service operatives. But the policemen refused to believe us. We certainly looked the gang of burglars that the police thought we were; but we felt that we would be turned loose when we arrived at the police station.

When we were arraigned before the sergeant at the desk, we told him who we were; but he wouldn't believe us.

"What were you doing here at one o'clock in the morning in an abandoned grocer's wagon? Why seven of you?" demanded the sergeant at the desk when we said we were Secret Service operatives.

"We came here on business," replied one of us—which, I've forgotten.

"But why seven of you?"

"Seven were necessary," replied our spokesman.

We couldn't reveal the nature of our work, and this, together with our sinister-looking appearance, our old clothes, peak caps, and battered hats, outweighed our declarations. And to cap it all, we had no credentials. But what, we all believed, was responsible for his failure to free us immediately was the fact that we had not notified the Long Island City police of our intended visit.

And argue as we did that our work precluded that sort of thing on many occasions, and that this was one, and that moreover we were Federal agents and not responsible to the local authorities, we failed to make any impression on him.

"You'll have to remain here prisoners until my commanding officer comes here," said the desk sergeant with finality.

"When will that be?" asked our spokesman.

"I don't know," replied the sergeant.

"It may spoil our plans," we answered.

"If you are Secret Service men, you will be let out when my commanding officer comes here. You are now under arrest. I have no authority to free you. Is there any one in this community who knows any of you?"

Here was a ray of hope.

But we were once more plunged into gloom, when, after mentally canvassing the people we knew, we could think of no one living in Astoria or any other part of Long Island City except Mayor Gleason. One of us had a speaking acquaintance with this famous pedagogue and politician. We suggested he send for the mayor.

Our Temper Changes

"Do you expect me to wake up the mayor at this hour of the night for seven prisoners who may be desperate burglars?" asked the sergeant in horrified tones. "Not on your tintype!"

"Will you send a policeman to your commanding officer?" we asked.

"I've done that already," he replied. "Why didn't you bring your credentials?"

"We only use them on open cases," we informed him.

We took the situation in the only way possible—philosophically. An hour passed and no sign of the commanding officer. He was not at his home, and where he was no one could say.

At four o'clock, after we had been held

prisoners for two hours, we began to demand vehemently that we be liberated. But we might as well have talked to the stone deaf. But talk we did, and in no uncertain tones.

We had ceased to be philosophers; we were seven intensely angry men.

Five o'clock came, and we began to fear that we would lose our men. We knew that it would be the talk of the town, as soon as it awakened, that seven Secret Service operatives had been arrested. The news, once it reached the gang, would send them all running to cover.

What a situation!

The Case Goes to Trial

It was not until half past five that the commanding officer arrived, and after a brief examination he apologized for the unfortunate error and gave us our freedom.

We were not turned loose a minute too soon, for our Italians were leaving their homes, some of them, as we were hurrying out of the station house. They were heading for the first ferry to New York. We captured all that we had set out to apprehend in Astoria, and within the next forty-eight hours all the gang in New York were taken into custody. Our total bag was seventeen prisoners.

The plates for the Martha Washington and the Grant head counterfeit notes were made in France, the notes printed there, and smuggled into the country by the Mafia chief, Gaetano Russo. The notes were cleverly concealed in the lining of the clothes of Russo and his wife, chiefly in the skirts and dresses of Mrs. Russo. Of the five-dollar Grant-head counterfeits, the Russos brought ten thousand into the country; and of the one-dollar Martha Washington notes, twenty thousand—a face value of fifty thousand dollars in five-dollar certificates, and twenty thousand dollars of the spurious one-dollar notes.

Russo, accompanied by his wife, went to France and engaged the engraver to make the plates. Then he took them to a printer, and when the necessary number had been struck Russo destroyed the plates. But whether the engraver was an Italian, as Soles boasted, we never learned.

The trial, held in the old Post Office Building, was one of the longest cases on record. The exact number of days I do not recall, but its unusual length may be imagined from the time I was on the witness stand—a full seven days. The cross-examination of all the government witnesses was searching. Much was made of my youth and the fact that this was my first case by the counsel for the defense.

In their desperate efforts to obtain an acquittal, the defense called seasoned veterans of the Secret Service to testify that they had been on the trail of the Astoria gang before I was assigned to the case, and had not been able to obtain any evidence. From which it was inferred that I had not obtained any worth-while evidence against the defendants.

But the jury thought otherwise. Trainor and Walker escaped with the lightest sentence. They were given two years' imprisonment. The other members of the gang —every one of the seventeen was convicted —received prison terms ranging from two to twelve years. Charles Soles, the barber, was given five years; his wife escaped with four. Bettina, the Astoria barber, was given six years. My friend Joe Raffone was given a like sentence.

The Brains of the Gang

The heaviest sentence was imposed on Gaetano Russo, the head of the gang and leader of one of the two Mafia factions in the United States. He was given twelve years. Rosa, his wife, who smuggled in the counterfeit one-dollar Martha Washington and the five-dollar Grant head which were printed in France, escaped with four years.

Russo was then fifty-one years of age. He had a kindly face, a gentle voice, and one liquid brown eye. The other—the left —he had lost in a fight. In its place he wore a glass substitute. Yet to describe him as sinister-looking would not be in accord with the truth.

That he would stop at nothing was writ in large characters on his record as the chief of one of the rival factions of the blood-stained Mafia. Yet withal he was what the Italians call *sympatico;* and our own equiv-

alent, amiable, falls far short of the mark achieved by the original.

Little did I dream when I heard the sentence of twelve years imposed on the Mafia chief that when I next saw Russo he would be on the sunny side of threescore years and ten, and that the circumstances of the meeting would be one of the most dramatic incidents in my career. But the work of a Secret Service operative is a series of such incidents, and the dramatic qualities of my second encounter with Russo, twenty-five years later, might have escaped my attention—as it was all in the day's work—were it not for the great ado made of it at the time by the newspapers of New Orleans.

But I shall speak of my subsequent meeting with Russo in another chapter.

CHAPTER V

I BECOME A MARKED MAN

LL during the progress of the trial of Russo, Raffone, and other members of the Astoria gang there was one cry continually dinned in my ears by my fellow Secret Service men. All admitted that I had made good, and made good in a big way. But all were of the opinion —from the head of the New York office down—that I was a marked man in New York, and that my value as a roper of counterfeiters in the metropolis was at an end.

My brother-in-law, Operative McManus, always my friend and most severe critic, said to me after I finished my seven solid days of testifying on the witness stand:

"Every counterfeiter in these parts knows your face. They have been sitting here throughout the trial. Some of them we know and are trailing. Others, the petty shovers, whom we do not know as yet, have also found it to their interest to come here daily to fix a picture of you in their minds. From now on you will be valueless in this part of the East."

I consoled myself with the knowledge that the New York office of the Secret Service was but one of many, and that men were being shifted around all the time. I knew it would be my fate sooner or later to be transferred to some other part of the country. I didn't care much, one way or the other. I was getting fed up with New York and looked forward with pleasure to a shifting of the scene.

At noon on the last day of the trial, when my services as a witness were no longer in demand, my chief whispered that until other arrangements could be made I was to remain in New York.

The trial at this moment was in progress, and we were sitting in the court room.

"There's a counterfeiter here," said Brooks, "whose address we would like to get. He is sitting in the third bench on the north side of the room. A woman in a dark brown velvet dress is sitting on his right. He is a swarthy-faced chap in a navy blue suit. He is of Italian descent. Frank DeLanza is his name. Make a quick change. Put nothing in the old duds save some money. This is a roping case, maybe. Leave your revolver and credentials behind."

"I'll not leave the court until recess, eh?" I inquired.

"It would be just as well if you didn't," replied Brooks.

To have gone out then, only a few minutes before the noon adjournment, would have invited DeLanza's attention to me, and as the afternoon was to see the case in the hands of the jury, it was a million to one that DeLanza would return. This was the view of Brooks. He informed me that DeLanza, who had just finished a term for counterfeiting, had called on him and told him that he was going straight.

"But he was very careful," added Brooks, "not to say where he was living. Look after him."

Recess came, and I melted into the crowd as it streamed through the door into the high-ceilinged corridor which extends unbroken on all four sides of the building. DeLanza headed for the east corridor. I made for the west, bounded up the stairs and into the Secret Service headquarters overhead, where I had a very dilapidated old suit, ill fitting, patched a bit, and open to the four winds in places.

I had a cap to match. The cardboard

stiffening in the peak had been through many a rain and snow storm, and it had lumped inside the cloth. I had a collarless shirt, torn, and much in need of a washing, and shoes that were down at the heel. These I donned and, with eleven dollars in my pocket, sauntered downstairs and into the street, and up Park Row, where I had a bite of luncheon in a cheap beanery. I returned to the Post Office Building at twenty-five past one. Two o'clock was the hour of the resumption of court.

I Spot My Subject

When I reëntered the court room I no longer took my place inside the rail in the space reserved for the judge, jury, lawyers, prisoners, Secret Service men, and reporters. I took a seat on a rear bench. I knew that a seat would be at a premium half an hour before court opened, and, once filled, no more spectators would be admitted. Hence my haste in returning early.

Until I sat down I kept my eyes straight in front of me. The benches were then about three-quarters filled. I looked around and noticed that DeLanza was also determined on having a seat, for he was on the same third bench; but this time he was snug on the end of the seat.

DeLanza was not concerned in what was going on around him. His gaze was directed through the open window which looked out on City Hall Park. He had a short, thick neck and stubby ears, the upper portions of which were hidden by shiny black hair.

DeLanza was American born and scorned the use of olive oil. Before he had turned counterfeiter he had been a barber—as I had sorry reason to know not long after. And on that particular occasion I cursed the unwritten law of the Secret Service which provides that an operative, when working among criminals, playing the part of a member of the gang, shall not carry a revolver or weapon of any sort. Of course, the exception is sometimes true, especially where the gang goes armed, and where it is the thing to be a gunman or handy with the knife.

On these cases—roping, we describe this work—we never carry the slightest evidence of our identity. Our badges and credentials are strictly taboo.

The secret of the success of a roper is playing the part of those he is after. Dress as they dress, walk as they walk, talk as they talk, and act in every other respect as they act. Don't overplay your part, above all.

DeLanza was poorly dressed. His hair was bear-greased, a habit he acquired when he had been a barber. Had we been seen walking together, we would have been taken for pals. That was the secret of my success—I played my part.

When court had been adjourned for the day, and the telegraph wires began to click the news of the conviction of the Astoria gang to papers all over the country, DeLanza slinked out of the court room. I trailed him, keeping his thick neck ever in sight.

He crossed Park Row and up on the east side of the street for about a dozen blocks, entering a saloon at the corner of Catherine Street. This was Doyle's place, a favorite haunt for the Chinatown habitués and for other underworld denizens who made this part of town their stamping ground. I did not follow DeLanza into the saloon. I crossed the street and waited for him to come out.

A Hangout of Crooks

He did not remain in there long—staying, I should judge, just long enough to have a drink and start in motion the underworld grapevine whose tendrils reached into every dark nook and cranny of the city's seamy side of life. Within an hour all who would have any interest in the fate of any member of the gang would know it. He wouldn't have to wait for the newspapers.

DeLanza, on leaving Doyle's, continued northward. Up the Bowery to Houston Street he strolled until he came to the Capitol, then one of the most notorious crooks' hangouts in the city. A stranger wandering in there with a roll and who asked for a drink of whisky would generally wake up in some near-by hallway with his money gone, and probably his clothes as well.

I followed DeLanza into the saloon. Knowing the Bowery gin mills, I reasoned that if a crook would walk the distance from the Post Office Building to Catherine Street, and drink in Doyle's, and then walk another long stretch to the Capitol, passing up scores of saloons in the meantime, that these were his regular hangouts.

I ordered a beer. DeLanza did not drink. He was engaged in earnest conversation with others in the place. And by the time I finished a second beer, DeLanza was leaving.

"Keep On His Trail"

I trailed him to a restaurant on Grand Street, where I also had a meal, as it was now dark, and I had had only a very small luncheon, and that some hours ago. DeLanza next swung to the Bowery. It was eight o'clock then, and the painted ladies who plied their calling on the Bowery were out in full force.

DeLanza waited on the corner until a rather pretty blonde hove in sight. He gave a shrill whistle. It was an understood signal, for she looked around, and, seeing DeLanza, smiled and hurried to him. Both started north on the Bowery, all the while conversing animatedly, until Rivington Street was reached. Here they parted with friendly waves of the hand, DeLanza swinging east on the cross street.

I kept close behind, following him to Chrystie Street, and a few doors away from Rivington he pulled out a latchkey and admitted himself.

I had performed my mission; I had DeLanza's address.

I reported my success the following morning to Brooks.

"Keep on his trail," said Brooks. "Perhaps you can rope him. Try, anyway, as we have no other good ropers available just now."

I had anticipated a speedy transfer to some other part of the country. As Brooks gave me this command to carry on, I must have betrayed, in some way, my astonishment, or else Brooks knew what was flashing through my mind.

"I don't know," he added hastily, "whether you are any longer valuable in these parts on these roping cases. However, we will soon find out. Good luck to you!"

Accordingly I headed for Chatham Square, into which empty two of the three narrow streets which form Chinatown, and many other old thoroughfares. Here Park Row ends and the Bowery begins. And here, too, is the Alpha and Omega of many sordid tragedies.

Doyle's saloon was my objective. It was not yet noon, and when I entered the barroom, a V-shaped affair, always crowded with the derelicts of many nations. I paid no attention to the score or more who were lined up against the bar, or many others who were leaning against the walls. I planked down a quarter on the bar, called for a beer, drank it, pocketed the twenty cents change, and went out.

After wandering around the neighborhood a bit, I decided it was time to get myself a furnished room. I found one to my liking—it was not fastidious—in Broome Street, for one dollar a week. I told the woman who kept the house that I was from the West, paid her a week's rent in advance, and walked back to Doyle's saloon.

DeLanza Nods

That afternoon DeLanza came into the place. He joined two others who had been drinking by themselves at one end of the bar long before I entered, judging from their appearance.

Four meaner looking customers I never encountered. And all had on them the hallmark of the East Side thug. I observed that they spoke earnestly together for a while before ordering a drink for DeLanza.

I was at this time ordering my third beer, and was sipping it slowly when DeLanza looked in my direction and nodded. I returned the nod, which was rather curt, and the knowing smile that accompanied it.

Did he know or suspect who I was? Or did he think that I, too, was a crook? I could not say. But I knew, from the gossip of my Secret Service colleagues, that it

was not unusual for one of them to have to drop a case because the counterfeiters were on to them.

On one occasion McManus, while on a roping case, had the counterfeiter he was trailing say to him: "How much would you pay me if I acted as stool pigeon for you?" Another said: "Tell the chief he is wasting your time, as I am going straight."

Intuition plays a considerable part in detective work. And somehow I sensed that DeLanza nodded to me as one crook to another. If I were right, then things would run smoothly and it would be only a matter of a few days before I would be admitted to the secrets of the gang.

Shadowed By the Mob

But to have done anything more than return the nod just then, unless I were acting the part of a drunken man, might have spoiled whatever chances I had of worming myself into their confidence. And as three beers were always my limit, unless it was a case of having to take more, I left the saloon when I finished the glass. I was certain I would be shadowed. It was what I most desired just then.

I walked up the Bowery to Grand Street, and east on Grand, then the heart of the lower East Side's business district. Not far from the Bowery was one of the city's first department stores—Ridley's. Here I stopped. There was always a crowd outside the windows. It was a good hunting ground for pickpockets. I became one of the window gazers, keeping a sharp eye out for detectives, as I did not want to be picked up for jostling, a risk I invited by my appearance.

Presently I disappeared in the crowd. When I left the crowd I returned to the Bowery, and, stopping in at a pawnshop, borrowed three dollars on a woman's gold watch—my wife's. This was one of my stage props.

A few doors away was a restaurant where one could get excellent steaks at a price far below that which would be charged for a side order of French fried potatoes in the more pretentious eating places. Here the French fried was thrown in free, along with a side dish of some seasonable vegetables.

As I was paying my check I observed at a table near the door a man whose face looked familiar. I spotted him out of the corner of my eye. Following my lifelong custom, when on a roping case, I did not turn around to get a better look. I had seen enough of him to get a fair idea of his features, and, as I stepped outside, it suddenly dawned on me who he was. He was one of the three men who had been drinking at Doyle's when I entered there about an hour before, and who were later joined by DeLanza.

He was easily half seas over, yet I suspected that in spite of his condition he had been detailed to shadow me by DeLanza. This suspicion I later confirmed. They wanted to be certain of me before making any overtures.

I decided my next best move was to take a Third Avenue car north. I gave my shadower a chance to catch up with me had he been so inclined, but he did not avail himself of the opportunity. He had undoubtedly seen me mingle with the crowd in front of Ridley's, leave it, go immediately to a pawnshop, and then to a restaurant. These actions would readily stamp me as a pickpocket.

We Cement Friendship

The next day I played the Capitol. DeLanza was there when I entered. He was alone, at the other end of the bar. It was early, and less than half a dozen were in the place. He greeted me with the same nod and smile he favored me with the day before. While I was drinking my first glass of beer DeLanza sidled up to me and, without any preliminaries, asked:

"What are you doing?"

"Taking a drink," I smiled, without offering to buy him one.

"What's your graft?" he followed up.

His voice was pitched very low, lower than a whisper. There was an ingratiating note in it.

"I take a chance on anything," I replied.

"Finish up and have one on me."

I did, and then returned the treat.

The ice was broken.

It was not long before DeLanza and I became fast friends. The following day he introduced me to the three men I had seen him with in Doyle's. They were three of the most noted counterfeiters and all around crooks of their day. But their principal graft was counterfeiting.

To one of them, Harry Haywood, I was indebted for my first view of an opium den. Harry hit the pipe, and his favorite joint was in the cellar of No. 9 Doyers Street. The other two were Harry Williams, a colorless crook, and Jeff Davis, brother of the notorious Diamond Annie, and equally famed in criminal annals. It was Jeff who had shadowed me.

I Buy Some Queer

Jeff was one of the most adept pickpockets I have known. It was his report to DeLanza, who was the chief of the gang, that caused the latter to make up to me in the Capitol. Jeff, he confided, had seen me enter the crowd which was gazing in Ridley's department store window on Grand Street. He watched me make a furtive departure and enter a pawnshop with the loot. Of course I never disillusioned him.

On the contrary, I would frequently stage a scene for him, coming out of a crowd with a woman's leather purse. In those days my wife was always begging old purses from her friends. They proved wonderful aids.

DeLanza was at this time shoving silver halves and cartwheels. But when I got on the job he had abandoned the smaller denomination and dealt only in the silver dollars. He himself never did any of the shoving, using Williams, Haywood, and Davis for that work. DeLanza was the padrone. But who was DeLanza's padrone?

It was not until he had known me a couple of weeks that DeLanza suggested I shove the queer. We were in the Capitol at the time, and alone. He passed me a counterfeit cartwheel as we stood in front of the bar, saying:

"What do you think of that?"

I examined it carefully and made sincere reply that I thought it was quite good.

"Want some?" he asked.

"What are you asking?" I shot back.

"Fifty cents," he replied.

"I imagined as much," I said. "But how much will you take?"

"Bed rock is forty cents."

"I'll try six as a starter. I'm a little strapped to-day."

"All right," said DeLanza. "come with me."

We went to his home on Chrystie Street. The blonde I had seen him talking to on the Bowery the night I trailed him admitted us. But she looked anything but attractive without her cosmetics and tawdry finery. It was only three o'clock in the afternoon, and far too early for her to be abroad. She had just risen and was breakfasting in a loose wrapper. Save for a trained smile, she ignored my presence.

DeLanza did not introduce me. He left me standing in the room where the woman was breakfasting, and returned with the six counterfeits. Small pieces of tissue paper were between each, a device resorted to by all counterfeiters. This is to prevent the thin silver wash—few counterfeits are plated—from tarnishing, and also to prevent the pieces from rubbing against one another and scraping through to the baser metal.

As DeLanza started to wrap them up I turned to him and exclaimed:

Aging New Coins

"Wait a moment! Those are new!"

"Hell!" snorted DeLanza. "Of course they are! I'll fix that in the shake of a lamb's tail!"

DeLanza dove under the kitchen table and took out a big cigar box, one such as holds two hundred stogies. He put this on the table where the blonde was eating. He next spread out a newspaper on one end of the table. On this he laid out, in a row, the six silver counterfeits I had bought.

The counterfeits looked as if they had just come from one of the United States mints. They were bright and shiny. But even a perfectly new genuine silver coin is apt to arouse suspicion. It would never do to attempt to pass a mint-state counterfeit, as the best of them are considerably lighter than the real thing."

But it took only a second to age them. I watched DeLanza put the counterfeits through the aging process. It was simplicity itself.

First he drew a piece of rag from the cigar box. Next he produced a box of shoe blacking, the old-fashioned kind, made of soot and molasses. Wetting the rag, he dabbed it into the shoe blacking, and then smeared the six counterfeiters with the mixture. Then he turned them over and repeated the aging process.

This done, he gave each coin a deft touch on either side with the palm of his hand. This wiped off all surplus blacking, leaving only enough to fill the lines. But quickly as this was done, six months' constant handling of the genuine article would not have created a better effect.

"Now do they satisfy you?" queried DeLanza, with the air of one who knows he has done an artistic job.

"Couldn't be better," I responded. "I'd never seen them aged before, and always wondered how it was done."

DeLanza then put the tissue paper between each one, and, wrapping the lot in a piece of paper, handed them to me.

"If you'll wait a couple of minutes I'll go with you," said DeLanza. "I've a couple of packages to deliver."

The packages consisted of two bundles of the silver counterfeits.

One, I noticed, was made up of fifty, and another, like mine, was a small order. The second consisted of ten. I counted them while DeLanza was aging them.

DeLanza left me at the Bowery as I was going down town and he uptown.

"I've got to get back to the Capitol," said DeLanza. "So long."

Brooks was at his desk when I arrived at headquarters to make my report.

"What luck?" he greeted me, as he knew of my daily progress.

"I've bought my first lot from DeLanza," I replied, showing him the counterfeits.

"That's splendid," he replied when he completed his examination. "Going to write your report now?"

"I think I'll work to-night," I answered.

"How late?"

"I don't know."

"Is it necessary that you work *after* eight o'clock?"

This question was put to me with considerable emphasis on the word *after*.

"I think so," I replied.

"All right," sighed Brooks mournfully. "Only don't get the habit."

Brooks, who was always talking economy, disliked to see a man turn in a report wherein was written that he had worked after eight o'clock, even though he knew that the work was imperative. It wasn't that he objected to our working late. What he disliked was our expense item of seventy-five cents for supper money.

Even though we were working where the price of the meal was above that figure, we wouldn't dare set down the true amount, as Brooks would simply rave if we dared put down anything in excess of seventy-five cents for a meal.

This economizing was not entirely his fault, as it was an annual fight to get anything resembling an adequate appropriation for the Secret Service. In those days the Secret Service was run on a shoe-string. And this economizing spirit of Brooks, which was sometimes carried to inexcusable extremes, nearly cost me my life before I got through with DeLanza and his gang.

And here it should be noted that any man who turned in a report that he had worked after eight o'clock could not fake it, as he would have to account for every minute of his time in writing, and as these reports were used on the witness stands to refresh our memories they had to be painstakingly exact.

CHAPTER VI

THE LADY OF THE LAMP

THAT night I arrived at Doyle's saloon at eight o'clock. I recognized no one at the bar. I drank a couple of beers slowly. When none of the gang put in an appearance as I emptied the second I took my departure.

As I was crossing the street in the direction of Mott Street, the southern boundary of Chinatown then, as it is to-day, I espied

Haywood, who was proceeding briskly up Park Row.

"Hey, Harry!" I called after him.

"So it's you," he answered, waiting until I joined him on the corner of Mott Street and Park Row. "Have you anything on to-night?"

"No, nothing in particular," I replied.

"Know Number Nine?" he asked.

"Number Nine what?" I returned.

"Haven't you been at Number Nine Doyers Street?"

"No; what's there?"

"A good smoke. Ever try it?"

"No, I never hit it up."

"Want to come along and try it?"

"No, I never had the desire."

I Visit Chinatown

"Well, I need a pipe just now, and need it badly. My nerves are going. Come along and wait till I get through, if you've nothing else to do. I'm not going to sleep, so you won't have long to wait."

I had suspected, from the first time I met him, that Haywood was a hop head. He had a pasty, greasy face, and his eyes had that queer look of a drug fiend. Just now he was trembling as if some great fear possessed and overmastered him.

"Let's hurry," he said. "I must get it quick."

Doyers Street is one of the three streets which comprise Chinatown, the other two being Mott and Pell Streets. It is one of the most crooked streets in New York, in more ways than one. It is a very short street, one of the shortest in New York, being little more than two hundred feet in length, yet in spite of its small size it has a long record of crime.

The rival hatchet men of the warring tongs have settled scores on this short, serpentine street. Into its dark hallways and across its flat roofs the killers have darted in making their escape from the police.

Doyers Street begins at the Bowery, and describes a tortuous, crooked segment of a circle before it ends at Pell Street. It is so narrow that a good jumper could leap from one sidewalk to another. Tenement houses, some of them with shops on the ground floor, filled with strange products of China, line the street on either side. Signs in Chinese characters are painted on the windows or over the doors. These tenements have, in truth, been breeding places of vice and misery.

As we turned into this tortuous little thoroughfare the weird, mysterious odors of Chinese cooking and other strange products of the Orient assailed our nostrils. Furtive, slinking, pig-tailed figures in colorful raiment shuffled out of the hallways, their thick-soled slippers clattering on the sidewalks as they waddled past.

It must be remembered that this was long before the dawn of the Chinese Republic, when it was a disgrace for a Chinese to be without his pigtail—one of the punishments in China was to deprive a criminal of his long braid of straight black hair—and before any of them would deign to put their feet in Western shoes.

Small boys in those days knew that a Chinese could not run after him across the cobble-paved streets, and by zig-zagging from one side of the road to the other would quickly outdistance the slipper-handicapped Chinese that he had been pestering, who, in his haste to catch the urchin, was bound to lose a slipper.

The Secret Signals

We no sooner turned into the hallway of Number Nine than the heavy, drowsy pervading smell of opium enveloped us. There is no other odor like it in the world. To me it was sickening. The unfortunate Haywood took a deep, audible breath of the opium-laden air with evident gusto.

"That's good!" he exclaimed. "I'll be all right in a minute."

A Chinese with his hands buried in his sleeves stood at the head of the stairs leading to the cellar.

"Hello, Mong Chow!" said Haywood. "This is a friend."

"'Lo," mumbled the Chinese, moving to one side to let us pass.

As I climbed down the narrow stairs, barely discernible in the light of a flickering oil lamp, I pictured the scene in the cellar below—the silk-clad Chinese flitting about among the strange furniture, painted with dragons and dancing girls and whatnot, at-

tending the opium smokers reclining on richly decorated divans of quaint design.

There was a door at the bottom of the stairs. Haywood, who was beginning to look quite happy at the prospect of a smoke, as he called it, turned to me quite proudly and boasted:

"If you were to get past the Chink at the head of the stairs you'd never get in through this door. In a minute you'll see why."

This said, Haywood rapped loudly once.

"Now notice what happens," he exulted. "And mind you, be perfectly quiet. Quiet is absolutely necessary."

When he rapped he suddenly stiffened and cupped his ear. In this position he remained for a full minute. Meanwhile all was silent.

Surrounded By Smokers

At the end of that time Haywood's knock was answered by a light rap from within.

"One, two, three," slowly counted Haywood in an audible voice.

Then he rapped twice on the door. I noticed that there was a long pause between each knock.

"One, two, three," he counted again.

This time he rapped thrice on the door. This was answered by three knocks.

Again Haywood rapped three times.

Now a small sliding panel was opened and a voice, unmistakably Chinese, asked:

"What have you?"

Haywood replied: "Three lichee nuts in one cup."

The panel closed noisily. I could hear the rumbling of a chain and the clicking of bolts.

The door opened quickly.

In a moment it had been closed and barred behind us.

I was in an opium den.

Dimly lighted as had been the hallway and stairs of Number Nine, dimmer still was the room in which I found myself.

"Number One," said Haywood. "Number One mind you. Savvy? No yen shee."

"No yen shee fol flend," said the Chinese who admitted us. "You good flend. Two Numbel One?"

"No," replied Haywood. "My friend no smoke. Bimeby."

"All light. Come 'long," said the attendant, leading the way to a bunk on the opposite side of the wall.

Haywood climbed into the bunk.

In the middle of the room were two plain kitchen chairs, such as one finds in every American home. The Chinese motioned me to one. I sat down. I was facing the side in which Haywood was lying.

My eyes were now accustomed to the dim light of the place. Our Chinese friend suddenly disappeared. Haywood was stretched full length on the bunk. His head rested on a small pad. He waved his hand at me. He was already beginning to relax.

Haywood was lying in a lower bunk. There were six on his side of the room, three rows of two each. All the lower ones were occupied, and one on top. Two of them were occupied by women. All, men and women, were white. Both women were sleeping in adjoining lower bunks. I noticed that they were well dressed.

In an upper bunk, over one of them, a man with a brown beard, stretched out the full length of the bunk, was smoking. His head rested on his right hand, the elbow of which was fixed on the small mat. Through narrowed drowsy lids he peered at me as he inhaled the fumes through the club-like pipe. On the bunk, near his head, was a red-lacquered tray on which stood a diminutive, open flame oil lamp. It was burning.

A Typical Opium Den

I observed that, save for these head mats, the bunks were devoid of any furnishings. There were bunks on all four sides of the room, which was about twenty feet square. The bunks at either end were all filled. In one of the lower bunks on the wall at my left was a pig-tailed Chinese, still awake and smoking. In the bunk over him lay a white girl. She was sleeping.

The other four bunks on this side of the wall were occupied by white men. They, too, had succumbed to the drowsy, druggy fumes of the poppy.

My back was to the door through which we had entered. I glanced over my shoulder. There were four bunks behind me, in double

tier as elsewhere. These bunks flanked the door on either side. These were all occupied by Chinese, three of them still hitting up the pipe. Beside them were the same diminutive lamps with the open flames.

The dim light for the room came from a hanging oil lamp which was suspended almost directly over my head. The lamp was concealed by a specially made silk lantern, whose panels were painted with birds and flowers. But why not dragons? Where were they?

Cooking the Pill

Where were the strange Chinese furniture and furnishings I had always associated with the place? Save for the two chairs, one on which I sat, the plain, unpainted wooden bunks, and the lantern-hidden lamp overhead, the room was bare. Nowhere even a piece of matting on the bare wooden floors.

The tragic sordidness of the scene, the silence of the sepulchre, and the sickening opium fumes were already beginning to get on my nerves. Suddenly my attention was arrested by a shuffling, silk-clad figure hurrying past me.

It was the Chinese attendant who had admitted us. He was carrying before him a tray such as I saw on the bunks of those who were still smoking. On it was the same diminutive lamp, unlighted. There was also a thick pipe, made of bamboo, such as those who were still awake were puffing.

The Chinese placed the tray near Haywood's head.

I could hear an exchange of words in muted voice.

The Chinese now lit the lamp, and presently he was holding a long tweezer-like contrivance, which held something small and round, over the flame. There now floated through the air a more penetrating odor than I had noticed hitherto. It was the opium "cooking."

When it had been "cooked" it was dropped in the bowl of the pipe, and in another second Haywood's trembling fingers had taken the pipe from the Chinese, and he was taking in deep draughts of the dream-conjuring fumes.

From the Chinese in a bunk on my left, he who was smoking beneath the bunk occupied by the white girl, came a series of falsetto sounds. The Chinese attendant answered in like fashion. I was presently to learn where the attendant disappeared when Haywood clambered into his bunk.

The Chinese shuffled past me and just before he reached the bunks on my right, made a turn, and slid behind the two bunks flanking the far side of the door which we entered.

There was a door beyond those bunks leading into another room. In a moment he was again shuffling across the floor of the opium den, and making straight for the bunk of the Chinese who had called to him when he had finished with Haywood.

The Chinese attendant did not cook the opium for his fellow Celestial. The latter held the pill of opium over the flame of the lamp with the skill of an old hand. When it had been cooked to his liking, he dropped the hot mass into the metal bowl of his bamboo pipe.

How I loathed it all! And how I had to hold my feelings in leash! Had I obeyed my impulses I would have crashed a chair on the head of that yellow slant-eyed attendant, unbarred the door, and shouted at the top of my voice for help.

Back to Fresh Air

But had I dared to do anything so foolhardy, I would have probably paid the price of my heroics with my life.

After all, I was not concerned with opium smoking. So far as the Secret Service is concerned, a million pounds of opium might be smoked daily in the United States. The Secret Service has two duties to perform: to guard the President and to prevent and detect crimes against the integrity of the country's currency. In certain emergencies, there have been departures from these statute-established duties of the Secret Service.

After what seemed an age, Haywood finished his pipe, and he signaled to the Chinese, who came to his bunk. But fortunately for me, Haywood did not call for a second pipe. I was beginning to feel nauseated from having to endure—not the fumes—but the sight of degraded white

men and women and yellow men sleeping in one room where there was not even the slightest attempt at privacy. It was horrifying.

When we got into the outer air Haywood said he had to meet DeLanza at Doyle's.

"Come with me unless you have something better to do," he added.

Before I could answer he continued:

"Of course you have nothing on. You told me so only a little while ago."

"Why don't you take the smoke at home if you have to smoke?" I asked as we headed for Doyle's.

"Say, bo, try it in your own home some time and see what will happen," he answered.

"What will happen?" I inquired.

"Why, before you had put the cooked opium in the pipe the smell of it would be all over the neighborhood. Some wise cop would get a whiff. And then—"

I did not remain long in Doyle's. DeLanza had not shown up. I excused myself, saying I was feeling drowsy from the fumes—which was partly true—and leaving the saloon, started up the Bowery. I kept on until I reached Broome Street. There I paused, debating whether I would turn in at my furnished room or go up to Yorkville where my home was. I decided on the latter, and took an "L" train north.

"Where have you been?" said my wife as she opened the door of our apartment. "What is that peculiar odor?"

I wasn't conscious of it. It was the smell of the opium. Although I never saw the inside of an opium joint for many years after that night, or been where the drug was smoked, I could get a faint suggestion of the reeking odor of the fumes from those clothes for many months.

CHAPTER VII

PENNY WISE AND POUND FOOLISH

I HAVE referred to the inordinate streak of economizing that possessed the head of the New York branch of the Secret Service, and hinted that it came near costing me my life.

This is how it came about. For the first two weeks I had been with De Lanza and his gang, I had been buying counterfeit silver dollars from him. In all I bought probably about twenty-five dollars worth. I didn't buy any more, I explained to him, because I preferred to work my own graft as a regular thing—picking pockets.

I had gone around with Davis and Williams and Haywood shoving the queer, and had bought it from De Lanza. But I had yet to get evidence on the other members of the gang, especially, to find out who made the counterfeits De Lanza supplied us with.

Toward the end of my second week with the gang, Frank invited me around to his house one day. His girl was there. In the meantime she had been formally introduced to me as his wife. But low as I knew him to be, I have always tried to think that she was not his wife, for I loathe the thought of having associated with one who would descend to such depths as he descended if the unfortunate woman bore his name.

"How much money have you?" asked Frank when we were inside the house.

"A couple of dollars," I replied. "But I hope to have some more before the day is over. Why?"

"Well, I'm getting rid of this stuff," he explained. "I mean these cartwheels. I've something better coming along soon. Wait till you see it, and if you can tell it from a real two dollar bill, I'll jump in the East River. I saw a sample yesterday."

Without another word he went into his bedroom, for it was there he kept the counterfeits, and returned with a package.

"There are twenty-five in here," he said. "You can pay me the ten dollars when you get it. Better take them now, as I'm going to get rid of them to the last one this week."

I took them, promising to pay for them within a couple of days.

That night when I turned in my report along with the twenty-five counterfeits, Brooks said to me:

"Don't put those down on your expense account. They are just as good as evidence whether you pay for them or not."

"But I have to work with the gang, and I can't afford either to get De Lanza down on me as a dead beat, or pay for it out of my own pocket," I answered. "I needn't

tell you that a Secret Service man's pay is small enough."

I think I was getting three dollars a day at the time.

"Don't pay him, stave him off," said Brooks.

"But there's a new counterfeit two dollar bill coming out and I have to work with him for a little while yet," I pleaded. "I must pay him."

Brooks was obdurate. I must not pay him, or at least, which was to amount to that, I must not put the charge on my expense account.

A New Counterfeit Two

A week later, I came down town earlier than usual one morning after spending the night home. It was too early to report to headquarters, being about eight o'clock. I decided to get off at the Houston Street station and drop in at the Capitol, which stood on the corner.

As I was descending the steps of the Elevated, I saw De Lanza standing on the corner. It had been raining during the night, and the sky was still overcast. De Lanza was carrying an umbrella under his arm.

"Hello, Frank!" I called out as I stole up on him.

"Out early, eh?" said Frank. "What's up?"

"Oh, you know the old story of the early bird catching the worm?" I parried.

"Come inside," said Frank, "and I'll show you something worth looking at."

We went into the saloon, and back into the wash room. Here Frank pulled out a roll of the counterfeit two dollar bills he had informed me were coming out. He handed me one for examination.

"How much?" I asked.

"One dollar each, and not a cent cheaper," he replied. "How many do you want?"

"I'll take five," I said, handing him a five dollar bill, which was about all I had.

He peeled off five of the counterfeits.

"How about that ten dollars you owe me for the other stuff?" he asked, as he handed me the notes.

"I'll pay you later," I answered.

"All right," said Frank. "Pay when you like, only don't forget it. I had to pay for those things myself."

"I know, Frank," I replied. "I know you had to. Never fear, I'll make good on that little matter."

"It's all right," said Frank, "but just between you and me, I've been up against some unexpected expenses recently, and I'm very hard up. A church mouse is richer."

I knew he had been hard hit. I had heard about it from Haywood. A friend of his wife, another unfortunate woman, had robbed a man, and it had cost quite a pretty penny to square things up. Haywood told me that De Lanza and his girl, as Haywood referred to her, had drained themselves of almost their last cent to get the woman out of the scrape.

As I was leaving De Lanza the rain began to fall in torrents.

"Going to be long?" asked Frank as I opened the door, and stood in its shelter from the rain. I had no umbrella.

"No," I answered. "I will try these out in a couple of places. I think I'll call it a day then. It's too wet to move around."

"Better take my umbrella if you're not going to be very long," he offered, thrusting the umbrella in my hand.

DeLanza Becomes Murderous

I grabbed it by the knob. All umbrellas carried by men in those days had big, heavy metal knobs. But this was unusually heavy. It almost filled my hand. What a murderous weapon it would make.

"No, thanks," returning the umbrella. "I think I'll go home and take a snooze after I shove a couple of these."

"Just as you say," said Frank.

Brooks was as enthusiastic about the success of one of his operatives as though he himself had done the work. And when I planked down on his desk the five new two dollar counterfeit notes I had received from De Lanza less than an hour before his face glowed with pride.

"Splendid! Splendid! Splendid!" he kept repeating as he examined them. And when he had fingered the last of them after an expert's scrutiny of the workmanship, he added: "Good work! Good work!

Keep after the gang. Get the maker of the plates above all! We simply must get those plates."

I turned to leave the office when I was arrested by Brooks calling after me.

"By the way," he added, "we will need at least one hundred more of these notes, can you get them?"

"Yes, I think so. Give me the cash now and I'll go after them."

But Brooks, who hated to part with a dollar for expense money, was horrified at the thought of paying out one hundred dollars.

"Can you get them cheaper than one dollar each?" he asked.

"No," I answered. "De Lanza said one dollar is the bed rock price."

"Well, first see if you can get them. You needn't try to-night. Make it to-morrow morning. If he has them, come down and I'll give you the money."

We were having a spell of rainy weather, for the following morning found the skies again overcast. A light drizzle was falling. Immediately after breakfast I set out for the Capitol, De Lanza's headquarters.

As on the previous morning De Lanza was standing outside, close up against the window, his heavy knobbed umbrella under his arm, scorning to use it to protect himself from the fine drizzle.

"How's business?" I began.

"Fair," replied Frank. "And I suppose you want some more of what you got yesterday?"

"I do," I answered. "I could use one hundred of them."

"A hundred? They will cost you a cold hundred dollars," returned Frank, astonished at the size of my order.

"I know it. Can you let me have a hundred of them to-day?"

"Sure," replied Frank. "Have you got the money?"

"No, but I can get it."

"You can get one hundred dollars to-day?"

"Sure."

"Well, if you can get one hundred dollars so easy why haven't you paid me the ten dollars you owe me? You know I need the money, don't you?"

"I'll settle up everything at the same time. I'll give you one hundred and ten dollars when you give me the hundred notes."

De Lanza at once grew furious.

"Pay me that ten dollars you owe me and I'll talk other business with you then!" he exclaimed, his eyes glaring.

His anger was intense. His left arm was rigid, and the knuckles of his clenched fist showed through the skin.

"I can't pay you now," I answered softly, trying to mollify him.

"You can, you skinny little dead beat!" he shouted. "Pay me the ten spot now!"

As he raised his voice two of his cronies came from the saloon. They had evidently been watching us.

"I haven't got it!" I protested. "You can search me."

"Search, hell! Give me the ten dollars!" he cried, grabbing his metal-knobbed umbrella by the ferrule end.

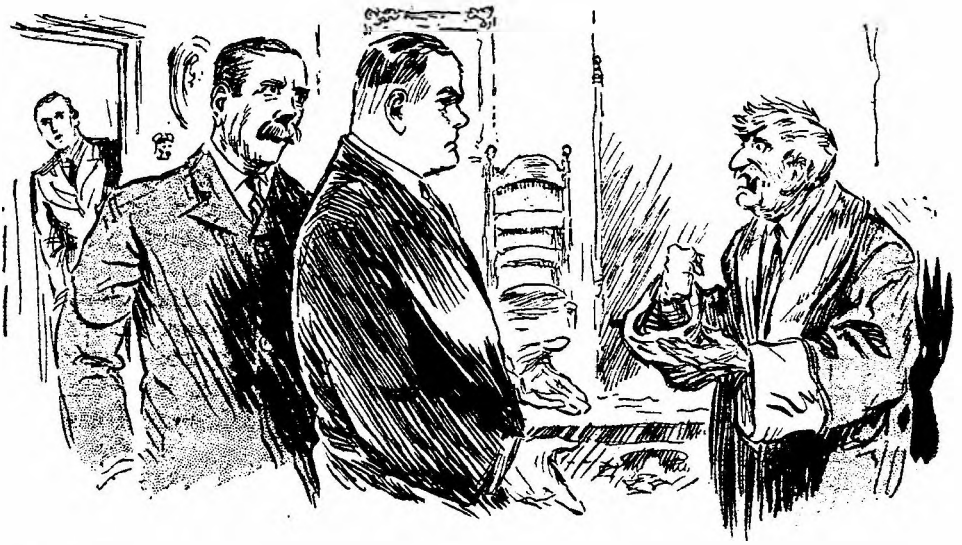
"Honest, Frank, I haven't got it now. To tell you the truth I've been done out of it myself. That's why I've been unable to pay you."

But instead of appeasing him, I only angered him the more.

"You're a liar!" he shouted, swinging his umbrella over his head and aiming the murderous metal knob at my skull.

I dodged and closed in on him.

TO BE CONTINUED



"Damned outrage—unbelievable stupidity—bunch of nit wits—!" Tabor was spluttering

THE INCONSPICUOUS THIEF

By Judson Philips

"IT'S JUST A FAIRY STORY, AN ATTEMPT TO PIN SOMETHING ON THE POLICE," CONROY SAID, AND THE CHIEF BELIEVED HIM

HOW often it happens that a man achieves recognition in one field when all his inclinations and desires for success lie in another. That is what had happened to Bellamy. The more he determined to earn fame as a writer the more persistently did circumstances seem to force him to win recognition as a great detective.

He blamed it pretty largely on me, and in a sense I deserve the blame, but as I always point out to him, it is his own talents that have brought him the unsought palm. It is true that if I had not been a police reporter and we had not shared an apartment at Gramercy Park, this fact of Bellamy's talents might never have been discovered. But the world is made up of "ifs."

Bellamy's genius as a detective lay not in any great knowledge of criminology or psychology, not in any great storehouse of experience, but rather in a mind which was so constructed that it was never deceived by complexities. It has been my experience that the average policeman or detective will never accept the obvious. When something seems to point away from a solution, they will invariably follow that pointer instead of ignoring it and boring into the truth.

Bellamy, on the other hand, could sit in his easy chair at our apartment and, with no other aid than an ounce of tobacco and a charred pipe, reach the very core of the situation. He knew that to every puzzle there is a solution and that the quickest way to solve a crime of any sort is to dig down into the motives and sort out all the probabilities till there is left only the one possibility.

In addition to this, Bellamy was not unaware of the frailties of man. His con-

stant warning to the police and to me, as a reporter, was not to rely on anything but the mind.

"Don't trust anything but your own reason and logic, old bean," he has said over and over again. "Don't trust your own eyes or any one else's. Don't trust ears, don't trust smells, don't trust clews. Only reason and logic are to be trusted." Then he would grunt disgustedly: "But why the devil do I tell you this, for you will go on believing what you see and hear and smell till you die?"

Perhaps of all the cases with which Bellamy was connected, the affair of the Tabor opal was the one in which his unusual powers of reason showed to best advantage. It was a great triumph for him, for he was able to set his hands on the criminal after the police had reached a complete impasse. But I am putting the cart before the horse.

I was enjoying one of my infrequent evenings at home. Since my association with Bellamy I had gained a considerable reputation myself as an investigator for the *Republican*. As a matter of fact, I deserved none of the credit for the fact that I was generally able to give my paper a solution to mysteries before the other papers had an inkling of the truth. It was simply that I was Bellamy's friend and got my information first hand. But having gained a reputation, I was kept pretty continuously on the hop. This evening, however, I was spending at home.

I was stretched out on the couch before our open fireplace, a luxury for a New Yorker, and Bellamy was in his easy chair, his pipe clenched between his teeth, and his writing board on his knee, plugging away at a novel which the activities of the city's criminal class had kept from completion for many months, when the doorbell rang. I heard Bellamy's pencil point snap and he swore softly.

"Be a good fellow and see who that is," he asked a trifle petulant, "and for God's sake send them away. I don't want to see any one. I'm trying to work, and if your silly murderers and thieves will give me half a chance, I'll finish this novel before I die."

"Right-o. I'm not anxious for company either. It's the first chance I've had to enjoy our fireplace for a month."

I went to the door. When I saw who our visitor was I knew that we were in for it. Inspector Gerridge was not an intimate of ours and I knew that a call from him meant some new problem for Bellamy.

"Hello, Renshaw," he said cheerily. "Is Bellamy in?"

"Yes," I admitted reluctantly, "but he won't be glad to see you. He's working."

"I won't keep him long—that is, if he's as quick as usual with his ideas. I have rather a queer problem and I need his advice."

"I won't guarantee that he'll help you, but you can try," I told him.

Gerridge left his coat and hat in the hall and followed me into the living room. Bellamy looked up, frowning blackly.

"Inspector Gerridge to see you, Bellamy."

Bellamy groaned audibly. Gerridge was radiating good feeling.

"Ah, nice diggings you fellows have here," he said. "Still working at that novel I see, Bellamy. Better give it up. Brilliant future for you on the detective force, if you'd devote all your time to it."

"Yes, but who the devil wants to be a detective?" snapped Bellamy.

Gerridge sat down, making himself completely at home by taking a cigar from his waistcoat pocket and lighting it.

"Hate to break in on you like this, but I need your help," he said between puffs. "This time it's not a solution I want, but a preventative."

"That is entirely out of my line. It's up to you coppers to prevent crime, though I must say you're damned bad at it. Take Renshaw in the bedroom and talk to him, if you must, but let me work."

"But I won't keep you long," insisted the inspector. "And in a way this is a kind of solution I want. You see, I've laid plans to prevent a crime. I covered every conceivable loophole. I don't see how anything can happen. I want you to tell me how it can. I want to be sure I haven't overlooked a trick."

With a sigh Bellamy put down his writing block and reached for his tobacco jar.

"I give up," he said. "What's it all about, inspector?"

Bellamy had always pretended reluctance to participate in any of the affairs that I or the police brought him, but I had noticed that of late he gave in much more quickly. He was beginning to enjoy the work in spite of himself. Gerridge smiled contentedly.

"I knew you wouldn't refuse me," he said.

"How can I?" asked Bellamy. "You're in here and you'll talk. I can't stop you and I can't work while you talk, so I might as well help you and get rid of you as quickly as possible! Please, my dear fellow, don't ramble or add any frills. Just give me all the facts as briefly and concisely as you can."

"It's not the kind of thing we usually get mixed up in," began Gerridge, studying the end of his cigar thoughtfully. "Usually we are notified of a murder or a robbery after it happens and have to find the murderer or thief. In this instance it's a thief and as yet he hasn't stolen anything that we know of. But he threatens to steal a very valuable opal from a fellow named Richard Tabor. This chap Tabor lives in an apartment in the East Eighties. He's an odd old duck.

"He's traveled everywhere and seen everything worth seeing, I guess. Of course, he's picked up a lot of things in his travels, and the most valuable of them is an opal. Like most beautiful stones it has a history, but I won't bore you with that now, for it has nothing to do with the business at hand. But what is of importance is that we, the police, have been urging Tabor for months to put his opal in a safety deposit somewhere. It is altogether too valuable a thing to leave lying about in an apartment.

"He tells us to chase ourselves. The stone is something that he keeps for his own enjoyment, and he says, not without reason, that it wouldn't do him a bit of good if he were forced to keep it in a safety vault. He also says that it is the business of the police to see to it that he isn't robbed. That is true, but he places an undue responsibility on our shoulders by having such a valuable thing in his possession.

"Now we come to the unusual feature of the case. About a month ago Tabor received a letter from some one, telling him that a month from that day his opal would be stolen. Tabor scoffed at the letter and paid no attention to it. The next week he got another letter saying that in three weeks the opal would be stolen. The next week he got another saying that in two weeks he would no longer have his opal. A week ago to-morrow he got a fourth letter warning him that he would have his opal but a week longer. At this point Tabor communicated with us.

"We urged him to be on the safe side and take the thing to a bank, but he refused. Every day since then he has got a letter. This morning the letter told him that between two and four to-morrow the opal would be stolen. Of course it sounds ridiculous, but it has me worried. Tabor insists on keeping it in his apartment and tells us that if we can't prevent a robbery which we have been warned will take place, he'll have us all out of a job. He has some influence in politics here, and I believe he could carry out that threat.

"I have set a cordon of plainclothes men around the house. I have positioned a man at every entrance and every exit in the building; I have put men in the halls. The place is a perfect arsenal of armed men. Yet to-night Tabor got a phone call from his correspondent. The man told him he knew of the preparations made by the police and that it didn't faze him in the least, and that he would relieve Tabor of his opal to-morrow as he had promised.

"Quite naturally I want to catch the fellow, but I am more anxious to prevent the robbery than anything else. As I have planned it, I don't see how any one can get into the building, yet the whole business has got my nerves on the jump."

II

BELLAMY threw back his head and indulged in one of his infrequent fits of laughter.

"Good Lord, Gerridge, you're a case," he said, weak with mirth. "You're worse than an old woman. Haven't you been in the game

long enough to be sure of your ability to prevent a crime that you know is contemplated? Good Heavens, if the police force has reached that stage of incompetency, we won't be able to go out on the streets in safety soon."

Gerridge flushed crimson. "Of course, I know what I'm doing," he snapped. "All I wanted to ask you was how the crime can be committed after every precaution has been taken. Put yourself in the case of the crook, Bellamy. How would you go about it?"

"Don't get huffy, old thing," said Bellamy still smiling. "It is funny, you must admit. One apparently lunatic crook has the whole police force on its ear! Oh, joy!" Bellamy puffed on his pipe thoughtfully for a minute.

"There may be a method in the fellow's madness, though. On the face of it, all these warnings which could lead to nothing else than a most careful protection of the opal, would seem like an idiotic procedure on the part of the criminal. Yet mark this one thing, Gerridge. When a man looks for trouble he usually finds it. Your criminal friend has evidently a purpose in getting you all there to protect Tabor. It may be just sheer braggadocio on his part. It may be for a much subtler reason. If it's just a swollen ego, you'll catch him. If he is damned clever, he'll steal the opal from under your noses. Just how I don't know, but there may be a way."

"But how?" demanded Gerridge.

"You've got me there," admitted Bellamy. "You've also interested me. I shall be somewhere in the neighborhood to-morrow and watch for some sign of our friend. Write the address on this slip of paper. In the meantime I'll puzzle over a way it might be done. Personally it appears to me that your jobs are all safe, Gerridge. However, I'll be on hand to help if you need help."

Gerridge wrote the address on the paper Bellamy had given him and then got up to go.

"Thanks ever so much," he said. "I feel a bit ashamed to have bothered you with this business. It sounds so idiotic. I feel better having heard you say so, though."

I went to the door with Gerridge and helped him on with his coat.

"There's been nothing about this in the papers yet," I said. "Have you any objection to my running a story for the morning edition?"

"Not a bit. A little publicity may help to scare our friend away."

When I had seen Gerridge off, I returned to the living room. Bellamy was stretched out in his chair blowing clouds of smoke toward the ceiling. There was a curious smile on his lips.

"This will make a good story," I said, "but I'm afraid our friend the crook won't have a chance."

"On the contrary," said Bellamy, "I will bet you the best dinner that can be bought in New York that he will get away with it."

"But Bellamy—"

"Look here, old bean, a man with a bumper on his automobile is less careful about how close he drives to the car ahead of him. A man with a burglar alarm on his safe sleeps more soundly and, therefore, is more apt to be robbed than the man without it. A man with a great store of knowledge is more apt to be tricked into showing his ignorance than a man who pretends to no knowledge at all. And it follows that a man who has prepared himself against a theft as carefully as Tabor has, will not believe theft possible and may, therefore, be the more easily robbed."

"But how, Bellamy, how? The crook can't walk by a squad of healthy, normal cops and rob a guarded man under their very eyes."

"They won't see him," said Bellamy cryptically.

"Won't see him? The police aren't blind, Bellamy!"

"Don't trust your eyes, don't trust your ears, don't trust your nose, don't trust your fingers," chanted Bellamy.

"But, my gosh," I cried exasperatedly, "a man is made of flesh and blood and solid matter. He can't pass through doors and windows without being seen. The days of black magic are past!"

"Bet you the best dinner in New York," repeated Bellamy, smiling maliciously.

"Done," I said. "Now I've got to do a story and take it up to the office."

"Well, pound your bally typewriter in the next room, because I want to work," said Bellamy, putting his writing block across his knees once more and refilling his pipe.

III

TO the casual passers-by on East Eighty-Third Street the next afternoon nothing unusual would have met the eye, but to me, pacing up and down in front of a certain building, a great deal that was unusual was visible. A perfect hornet's nest of plainclothes men was inside and outside the building. At the door was the regular doorman in uniform. When any one entered the building he signaled to the men inside that the person was known to him, a tenant in the building. For a stranger to enter that building would have been a complete impossibility.

At about one o'clock I had met Gerridge on the sidewalk outside. He seemed quite cheerful.

"That bird hasn't a chance," he told me. "I have men at the bottom of the fire escape and men on each floor. I have men in the front hall, a man on the elevator, men at the foot of the stairway and men in the basement. All I hope is that he doesn't get cold feet and fail to put in an appearance. If he does come, we'll get him as sure as shooting."

I didn't tell him what Bellamy had said, for I frankly didn't care to put him in a ridiculous light in Gerridge's eyes. That any man could get by that cordon of policemen was a physical impossibility.

"Tabor's up in his apartment writing letters," Gerridge added. "He's satisfied we have blocked any possibility of the thing happening. And so am I. Is Bellamy around?"

"I haven't seen him," I said. "He said he would be here when I saw him at breakfast. If he doesn't get too absorbed in his novel, he probably will."

"Well, I guess there'll be nothing for him to do," chuckled Gerridge, and he left me and went into the building.

For the next two hours I paced the street opposite the house. There was no sign of Bellamy and no sign of any disturbance in the house itself. Of course I knew that if the thief came, he would not use the front door. That was too well guarded. My own mind told me that robbery was impossible, yet I had an uncanny confidence in Bellamy and he said it was possible. In fact he had bet a dinner that it would happen.

And then at about a quarter to four Gerridge came running out of the building. He saw me and waved frantically. I hurried over to him.

"For God's sake, find Bellamy," he shouted. "It's happened!"

"What!"

"It's happened—about three o'clock. Fellow rang Tabor's doorbell. Tabor thought it was me and opened up. There was a tall fellow in a black overcoat, a cap, and a black mask. He stuck a gun in Tabor's face and demanded the opal. Tabor stalled, but he soon saw the fellow meant business so he handed over the jewel. Then the fellow beat it."

"How did he get in?" I asked excitedly.

"God knows!"

"Why didn't Tabor notify you immediately?"

"He couldn't. The fellow tied him to a chair and gagged him. Tabor's been three-quarters of an hour getting free. He's raising hell and we'll all lose our jobs unless we locate the crook at once."

"But see here Gerridge, how, in the name of common sense did he get in?"

"You've got me. We searched the building from top to bottom this morning, so he couldn't have been in the building, and since we got here no one has come in that we couldn't account for. Why, damn it, he didn't come up the fire escape, he didn't come in the front way, he didn't go up the stairway or in the elevator. Now how did it happen? For Heaven's sake, get Bellamy! He's the only man I know who's got the noodle to solve this."

"I'll phone him," I said; "but if he isn't at home, I won't know where to find him."

I couldn't locate Bellamy when I phoned him from a store on Madison Avenue, so I hurried back to the building. Gerridge

was in the hallway talking to a plainclothes man as I came in.

"This is Sergeant Conroy," he told me.

"Look here, chief," Conroy said, "use your head on this business; what do you say? You and I know that it was just about impossible for any one to get into this building, don't we?"

"That's right," agreed Gerridge. "It *was* impossible."

"All right then," continued Conroy, a shrewd gleam in his eyes; "if no one could get in, no one did!"

"Yes, but the old boy was robbed, just the same."

"Aw, hell, I don't believe it. It's just a fairy story if you ask me. Tabor is a crank, you and I know that. He just wants to pin something on the police. All this bunk about a tall guy in a black mask sticking him up! Why, damn it, we *know* no such fellow ever got into the building. It's a frame-up, chief, take it from me."

Gerridge emitted a low whistle.

"By jove, that sounds plausible, Conroy. What do you think?" He turned to me.

I confessed that it was the only logical explanation.

"Furthermore," persisted Conroy, "he says he was bound and gagged. It's the bunk, take it from me."

Gerridge smiled grimly.

"Come on, we'll pin it on the old sucker right now."

He and Conroy went up to Tabor's apartment and I went to try to locate Bellamy. This time I was successful, for he answered the phone.

"Where have you been?" I asked. "I tried to get you about ten minutes ago."

"I've just returned from the scene of the crime," he said, a chuckle in his voice. "I think you owe me a dinner, old bean."

"The devil I do," I said. "Gerridge has discovered that it was all a frame-up. Tabor was trying to pin something on the police and planned a fake robbery. It's the bunk!"

"What!" Bellamy was incredulous.

"Straight dope," I said.

Bellamy laughed uproariously at the other end.

"Why, the damned fools," he cried. "A fake roobery! Why, I have Tabor's opal here in my pocket!"

It was my turn to express unbelief.

IV

"IT'S a fact, old bean. I relieved our clever crook of his prize about an hour ago. In fact, just as he came out of the house. Yep, out of the front door, that's where I got him."

"But, Bellamy, he couldn't have. You're kidding me."

"The best proof of that is to come down here and feast your eyes on this opal. And you'd better bring Gerridge with you before he gets himself in trouble. Perhaps old Tabor will forgive him if he returns the jewel."

Now I believe anything Bellamy says implicitly, so I hung up and hurried back to the apartment house and was taken to Tabor's apartment. Inside, Gerridge and Conroy was attemping to force a confession from Tabor, a nervous, energetic, little fellow who was boiling over with rage.

"Damned outrage—unbelievable stupidity—bunch of nit wits—fools—idiots—!" Tabor was spluttering.

Rather sheepishly I told Gerridge what Bellamy had said.

Gerridge looked at me sternly.

"Say, young man, is your friend trying to kid me?"

"It's not like him," I said.

"Well, we'll go down and see about this."

"And I'm going with you!" snapped Tabor. "If any one turned that opal over to you, you'd be likely to try to accuse the president of the robbery. Fools!"

Gerridge and Conroy were very silent during the taxi ride to the apartment, but Tabor kept muttering imprecations under his breath. The crestfallen air of the two detectives was uncommonly funny. The three men followed me silently into the apartment.

Bellamy was standing before the fire, clad in his long blue dressing gown.

"Ah, gentlemen, come in. This is, I presume, Mr. Tabor. I have good news for you, Mr. Tabor." He reached down into

the pocket of his dressing gown. "Allow me, sir, to return to you your rightful property."

We all stared in amazement as Bellamy handed a dazzlingly beautiful opal to Tabor.

"I congratulate you upon owning such a rarely beautiful gem," Bellamy said. There was a suggestion of a smile playing about his lips. The two detectives were completely nonplused.

"No thanks to the police that I still own it," Tabor growled.

"The police were not as stupid as you think," said Bellamy. "If it had not been for them, I should never have been able to locate this so quickly. The man who robbed you, Mr. Tabor, had this in his possession less than five minutes. If you will all sit down I should be glad to explain the whole affair."

"I wish you would," said Gerridge ruefully.

The men took chairs and Bellamy continued to stand before the fire.

"Gerridge," Bellamy began, "you surrounded that house both outside and in so thoroughly that no criminal could possibly have entered. At least you thought not. Yet one did, and, moreover, he walked in the front door, rode up in the elevator, stole the jewel, rode down in the elevator, and walked out the front door."

"The hell he did," cried Conroy hotly. "I was on the elevator all afternoon and no crook went up in that elevator, I'll tell the world."

"You are mistaken," said Bellamy softly, "for not only did he go up in the elevator, but he also went down in it with the jewel in his pocket."

"But that's impossible," Gerridge blurted out. "Absolutely no one came into the building or went up in the elevator."

"No one?" asked Bellamy.

"I mean no one who could possibly have been the crook."

"Ah, that's different," said Bellamy. "No one who could possibly have been the crook. But you slipped up, Gerridge, for he did do exactly what I have told you. Let me explain. Suppose you go to a reception and I ask you afterward who was there. You will give me the names of all the prominent people, but won't mention the servants, will you? You may call on a friend and tell me later that there was no one at home, but in reality there may have been ten domestics in the house.

"You go to your office and ask your stenographer if any one has been in. She'll say no, but in reality the cleaning woman, a telegraph boy, a messenger, and no end of people may have been in. What your stenographer means is that no one whom you could possibly mean has been in. You just said that no one who could possibly be the crook went into that building. I was watching for just such a person, Gerridge.

"I knew we had to deal with a very clever man. He had arranged to have the police there so that there would be absolutely no clews. You see you have all sworn that nobody *who could possibly be the crook* was there. That's what he wanted. Yet he was there, Gerridge, and right under your noses. But I saw him go in and when he came out I met him on the corner and held him up, as it were."

Gerridge groaned. "But who was it?"

"Well, you see I was watching for some one who would be able to pass right by you without being noticed. It might be a telegraph boy, it might be a delivery clerk from some big department store, it might be any number of types. But, my dear Gerridge, when a mail carrier entered the building I knew it was our man."

"But it wasn't a mail carrier who held me up," said Tabor.

"Of course not. You see, instead of letters, he carried in that leather bag of his a black overcoat, a cap, and a mask. As soon as our friend Conroy here, all unsuspecting, let him off at your floor, he put on the coat and cap and mask and rang your doorbell. Then when you answered, he held you up, tied you to a chair, and took your jewel. Then he put his coat and cap back into the bag and went out and Conroy took him back down in the elevator. It was a very daring and a very brilliant piece of work."

"Well, I'm damned," muttered Conroy.

"And now, old bean," said Bellamy, turning to me, "I think you owe me a dinner. Where shall it be? The Ritz?"

The burial place was three rods up a slight slope from the house

AT A. T. STEWART'S TOMB

By Captain Patrick D. Tyrrell

HERE IS PRESENTED A SECOND HIGHLY INTERESTING VERSION OF THE THEFT OF THE BODY OF NEW YORK'S MERCHANT PRINCE

A Story of Fact

LAST week FLYNN'S offered the facts of this story as they were published at the time. This week we publish what purports to be an inside story.

The actual truth probably never will be known. The late Captain Tyrrell firmly believed what he says here. It is printed here for such pleasure as you may find in the reading. The tale is interesting. That is its chief defense from a criminological standpoint. The police handling of the case was unquestionably bungling.

CONVICT No. 2807, penitentiary for northern Illinois, told me the story. He was an old acquaintance of mine, and as "square" a thief as I ever knew in forty years of dealing with and study of his kind. He had an old mother living in a State east of Illinois, and it had been my pleasure to forward his letters to her while he was in prison.

He also had a sweetheart in the East to whom, through me, he wrote letters breathing the highest sentiment, although she had been a partner in at least one of his crimes and had intimate knowledge of many others.

No. 2807 was serving a twelve-year term for a robbery at Cairo, Illinois, but they never would have caught him for that offense if he had not had one drink too many and gone to sleep in the boat in which the escape was to be made.

He was not accustomed to the use of liquor, and that slight overplus of it at a critical moment delivered him into the hands of the authorities.

The name under which No. 2807 had been convicted was James K. McClaughrey. Of course, that was not his father's name, but one he used to keep his mother from knowing she had a son who was a felon. I doubt if there was any officer of the law who knew his right name except myself and, for the sake of the mother, I shall not reveal it, even at this late day.

My Friend, McClaughrey

Like nearly every other " crook " of consequence in the Middle West, McClaughrey had made his headquarters in Chicago. It was here he met a man, who, for the purpose of this narrative, I will call John A. Colbert, an English ticket-of-leave man living on the North Side during the late seventies and making his living by indiscriminate stealing, burglary preferred.

Colbert had a daughter, Emma, possessing no special beauty, but of uncommon intelligence and " nerve," and, as afterward was shown, a vast amount of that doglike devotion which the women of criminal families display toward the men they love.

Through the father, McClaughrey met the daughter and fell in love with her, the Englishman bestowing his approval, for McClaughrey was good looking, educated to a degree and thoroughly trustworthy. He was also smarter than Colbert in the larger affairs of crime, and in every way a desirable partner, so the two joined interests, with the daughter as a strong additional tie between them. They did several " jobs " in Chicago, but they were of the minor class of crimes and did not attract unusual attention from the authorities.

I first met No. 2807 in 1876 in Chicago while I was trailing counterfeiters. He had become rather closely associated with the " coniackers " that held forth in the saloon at 294 West Madison Street, owned by James Kinealy and Terrence Mullen, both of whom were known to the underworld of bogus money men from New York to San Francisco.

Those who read my description of the operations of the Boyd-Driggs counterfeiters, leading up to the attempt to steal the body of Abraham Lincoln, will recall the West Side saloon in question as the one in which the plot to steal the Lincoln body was hatched.

McClaughrey had frequented the place till he had become a recognized member of the informal criminal club at 294, and he was cunning enough to keep in close touch with the operations and plans of his associates, even in matters in which he did not intend to participate actively himself. It does not matter how I first enlisted the good offices of McClaughrey; suffice it to say that he had given valuable information on more than one occasion.

He knew every step made by the criminals in the Lincoln tomb robbing plot, although he was not active in that affair, and in my dealings with him he had always told me the exact truth, as demonstrated by subsequent events. In 1876 I lost track of McClaughrey, as his " business " took him to other parts of the country.

A Temporary Interment

On the morning of November 8, 1878, the newspapers of the country contained the sensational news of the theft of the body of A. T. Stewart from its temporary resting place in St. Mark's churchyard in New York. The crime had been committed some time between the hours of two and seven o'clock on the morning of the 7th of November, two years, almost to the hour, after the attempt was made to steal the body of Abraham Lincoln.

The remarkable career of the millionaire merchant prince, his vast wealth, as wealth was calculated thirty years ago, and the originality and daring of the crime itself combined to render it one of the sensations of the decade. The features of the robbery essential to the proper understanding of the circumstances I am about to relate I herewith give as briefly as possible:

A. T. Stewart died and was buried in April, 1876. The interment took place in St. Mark's, in the Stewart family vault, but it was not intended that the body should find its final resting place there. At her husband's death Mrs. Stewart commenced the erection of a one-hundred-thousand-dollar crypt at Garden City, intending to transfer her husband's body to it as soon as it was completed. There was no apparent cause for hurry, and work on the new edifice dragged.

Rewards Fill the Air

On October 7, 1878, the sexton of St. Mark's found the earth around the Stewart vault had been disturbed, and immediately reported his discovery to Henry Hilton, who was in charge of the affairs of the Stewart estate. Judge Hilton took the precaution to employ a private watchman and to move the memorial slab that marked the Stewart vault to another part of the cemetery, in order to deceive any one who might make a second attempt.

Nothing of a suspicious nature happened for a month, and on November 5 the private watchman was discharged, the slab being allowed to remain in its false position.

St. Mark's churchyard was a terrace about five feet above the level of the street. It was located with peculiar prominence, being exposed to Eleventh Street, Second Avenue, and Stuyvesant Street. The near-by street lamps cast bright light into the cemetery, and the yard was in full view from rows of windows in the buildings opposite.

The Stewart vault was a subterranean chamber, reached by a flight of eight granite steps. When Francis Parker, the assistant sexton, reached the churchyard at seven o'clock on the morning of November 7 he found the earth around the entrance to the vault removed. On the ground lay a dark lantern and a fire shovel. Descending to the vault he found the lid of the outer wooden casket containing the Stewart body removed, the lead second casket ripped open and the body removed from the innermost coffin.

Instantly the news reached the police headquarters the city was thrown into wild excitement, and scores of detectives were set to work on the mystery. The most generally accepted theory was that the body had been stolen for ransom, and Judge Hilton announced that he would spend one hundred thousand dollars to capture and punish the thieves, but would not pay one cent for the return of the body. This statement was modified the next day at the instance of Mrs. Stewart, and the following reward was offered:

$25,000 REWARD!

Whereas, in the early morning of November 7, 1878, the vault of the late A. T. Stewart in St. Mark's churchyard in this city was broken into and his remains removed therefrom.

By direction of Mrs. A. T. Stewart the above reward is offered and will be paid for the return of the body and information which will convict the parties who were engaged in the outrage.

Or a liberal reward will be paid for information which will lead to either of these results.

HENRY HILTON,
Broadway and Chambers Street.
New York, November 8, 1878.

The city was in a fever of excitement and the frenzied search was continued for twelve days, when Judge Hilton offered a reward of fifty thousand dollars for the arrest and conviction of the "five persons believed to have been engaged in the robbery, or ten thousand dollars for the arrest and conviction of any one of them." This reward was based on the best information obtainable that five men had done the work.

Where the "Stiff" Was Buried

In this the New York police were correct, and it was the only feature of the entire case in which the eastern detectives were correct. Alleged clews by the score reached police headquarters and private detective agencies. Cranks throughout the country forwarded their theories and dishonest persons sought to claim part of the reward in advance for information they claimed to possess.

A Washington, District of Columbia, resurrectionist known as "Dr." Curtis was placed under surveillance on general principles. Two "crooks," "Hank" Whalen

and William Burke, were arrested, and, under stress of sweat-box methods, confessed they had buried a "stiff" in New Jersey. Hot on the supposed Stewart trail, the New York police took the pair to Jersey, to find they had buried a kit of burglar's tools, known to the craft as a "stiff."

Bloodhounds were taken to St. Mark's, and they immediately took up the scent of decomposed human flesh, traced it to the point where the body had been hoisted over the tall iron fence and then lost it. From Shamong and Port Monmouth, New Jersey, came alleged clews that evaporated quickly. One of the smartest New York detectives advanced the theory that the body had not been removed from the churchyard at all, but had been buried in another vault. This caused a thorough search of the burying ground.

Marking the Grave

The most absurd theories were worked out to failure and impossible clews followed, but not a single tangible trace of the body or of the men who had stolen it was found.

During this time I was in the Secret Service, working in the Middle West, but I read with avidity all that the papers published concerning the Stewart case. There was no question in my mind that the robbery was the work of accomplished criminals, as they had shown much cleverness in the details of their work. For instance, a small tag bearing the letter "B" was found tied to a picket of the fence, and directly opposite was a similar tag. A straight line from tag to tag crossed the Stewart vault.

The same arrangement was found to have been used to fix a line intersecting the first, and the point of intersection was directly over the Stewart vault, showing the thieves probably had an intimation of the removal of the memorial slab and in daylight had provided for the locating of the Stewart vault without reference to the location of the slab. False keys had been made to fit the lock in the big iron gate; in short, the task had been undertaken with thorough preparedness.

In the months preceding the attempt to steal the body of President Lincoln I had been in close communication with two men who were deep in the councils of the resurrectionists and had heard from them the full discussion of plans for the Lincoln job. Some of the suggestions made in these councils were not adopted at Springfield, but they had impressed themselves on my mind.

On my first reading of the Stewart case in the Chicago newspapers my mind naturally reverted to the Lincoln plot, and as the details of the New York crime became more definite and reliable I studied them carefully in the light of the information I had concerning that plot. Gradually I began to see, as I thought, indications of the application to the New York crime of methods used or discussed in the Springfield case.

The more information I gleaned and the deeper I delved into comparison the more strongly I became convinced that the New York conspiracy had been hatched by my acquaintances in the West. It was a line of research along which an ambitious detective naturally would grow enthusiastic; but I tried hard to keep my imagination from taking command of my judgment and not to find a parallel where no parallel existed.

I Go to Joliet

But, try as I might, I could not escape the conclusion that if I could find certain men I would have made a beginning in unraveling the deep New York mystery. Besides the tangible considerations that drove me to that conclusion there was a strong intangible, indescribable feeling that I was on the right track. But, as I said, I was in the Secret Service, and the Stewart crime had no connection with the Government, my study of the robbery was made without interference with my Secret Service duties and because it was a fascinating puzzle for a student of crime.

For weeks and months the country-wide search for the Stewart body and the men that stole it was prosecuted, but, like all sensational events, it began to lose savor to the public. It soon became plain that the New York police were beating the air in their efforts. The newspapers of New York, once eager in the search on their own account, produced no results.

Without developments to infuse life into it, the case died a natural death so far as the public was concerned, and, while occasionally recalled since by events of a similar character or some echo of the life of A. T. Stewart, it has about passed from the memory of the public.

About a year after Stewart's body was stolen—September 10, 1879, to be exact—business called me to the Joliet penitentiary. I had been trying to find convincing evidence against Fred Biebush, the St. Louis counterfeiter, and had been told that William Bridges, alias Hoosier Bill, a convict in Joliet, could, if he would, furnish valuable information. That story has been told.

"I Will Tell the Whole Story"

After finishing my mission with Bridges I was sauntering through the prison with John McDonald, who had worked for me more than once in rounding up counterfeiters, when a convict working in the marble yard attracted my attention. For a moment I could not give him his proper place in the gallery of rogues I carried in my memory. Closely cropped hair, beardless face and striped clothes sometimes work almost a total transformation in a man's appearance and render him practically immune from recognition by former acquaintances. My delay in recalling his identity, however, was but momentary, and I recognized my erstwhile friend, James K. McClaughrey, now No. 2807.

"McDonald," I said, indicating the object of my attention, "do you know that man?"

My companion eyed him narrowly.

"I don't remember him," he said.

"You know him?"

"I may have known him at one time, but I cannot place him."

Then I whispered to McDonald:

"You're right," he said; "I recognize him now."

I asked Deputy Warden Sleeper to have No. 2807 brought into the office, explaining that I wanted an undisturbed chat with him. I also requested that no one else be allowed in the room. No. 2807 was brought in and we soon found ourselves alone.

"What brought you here?" I asked.

"A little job down in Cairo. There wouldn't have been any trouble if I had not drunk too much whisky."

I asked him for any information he could give me concerning the counterfeiters of his acquaintance, and he confided to me the location of a plant for making Mexican money in New Orleans. We changed from one topic to another rapidly, as our time was limited, and at last I broached the Stewart case.

"Do you know how the Stewart job was done?" I asked.

"Do I?" he smiled. "Well, I was in the vicinity."

I knew in an instant that my surmise was correct. Long and close acquaintance with this man had taught me that he had never lied to me, and now, under a twelve-year sentence, with no one to aid him, he had the most powerful incentive for telling the truth, even if he had not been "square."

"I want to know all about it," said I.

"Tyrrell," he replied, "you've always played fair with me, and I believe you always will. I know all about it and will tell you the whole story, but I want you to do me a favor in return. First, I want you to mail my letters to my mother and help me to get word to Emma Colbert.

No. 2807 Comes Clean

"I haven't been able to write to her for some time, and she may think I have gone back on her. She's a true girl, and I don't want her to think I have lost faith in her or ceased to care for her as I did. And I want to find out if she still has faith in me. Then, I want you to give me your word that you will do all you can to have my term here made as short as possible."

So far as doing as he desired about the correspondence, that was easy to promise and easy to perform. To intercede for him to the extent of having his term shortened—that was another matter. I had never done this for any criminal and it was contrary to that which I believed right, unless the emergency were great. I at last promised to look into his case and see how far I consistently could go in his behalf.

He then gave me a very brief account

of his connection with the theft of the body of A. T. Stewart, the understanding being that he was to write the confession in full and mail it to me. Before I left the prison I arranged with the warden that such communications as No. 2807 wished to send to me could be sent without their being examined by any of the prison officials, and in this way his statement reached me without having been seen by any man, and at this day the written confession of No. 2807 is in my possession. During the long period that has elapsed no one has read it, and the information contained in it was never used, for reasons that will soon appear.

Silence from New York

After my interview with McClaughrey I hastened back to St. Louis to pursue investigations along other lines. Two days later I wired Chief Brooks of the Secret Service, suggesting that I be allowed to meet him in New York or Washington for other matters. He evidently misconstrued this telegram, as he wired in answer that he could not allow the use of Government time or money in work on the Stewart case.

I had not intended to convey the impression that this was the most important matter on which I wanted a conference, knowing full well that it was not a Secret Service affair, but I had intended to tell him what I knew of it so he could give Mrs. Stewart or Henry Hilton the benefit of that information.

Such a conference being out of the question, I decided to write to Judge Hilton, which I did on September 16, 1879. I informed him briefly who I was and assured him there was every probability, from information in my possession, of securing the body and convicting all the men who had participated in its theft. I explained that I had tried to secure leave of absence, but had been unable to do so. The reward for my services, I wrote, was a secondary consideration, which I was perfectly willing to have adjusted in accordance with the results of work on the lines suggested by me after such work had been done.

I referred him to Chief Brooks of the Secret Service, ex-Chief Washburn of the same division, Robert T. Lincoln of Chicago, and prominent officials of eastern railroads who had known me for many years. I furnished these references in the knowledge that Judge Hilton had received hundreds of letters since November 7, 1878, from irresponsible persons who possessed no knowledge of the case, and I wished to have my communication receive such consideration as I knew it to be worth. To this letter I received no reply.

In the meantime McClaughrey's statement reached me, as I felt certain it would, and I was thereby put in possession of many details. Still, no answer came from Judge Hilton to my letter. I thought this strange, and confess I was somewhat piqued at what seemed indifference to so important a matter.

Some time after writing this letter I was called to New York on business connected with the Missouri land frauds, and found the men I wanted temporarily out of the city. It occurred to me that I would be doing an indisputably proper act if I were to call on Mrs. Stewart and advise her of the facts I had learned touching the desecration of her husband's grave.

Mrs. Stewart Cannot See Me

So on a bright forenoon I made my way up Fifth Avenue to the Stewart residence —a palace, judged by the standards of that day. I was prepared to witness a display of grandeur if I succeeded in gaining entrance to the house, for the lavish beauty of the interior had been heralded in newspapers far and wide. A liveried footman received me, and asked for my card. I professed to have none with me, and the flunky accepted the explanation, for he ushered me into a drawing-room of what seemed to me then dazzling magnificence. The ceiling, painted to represent a sky, was studded with gold and silver stars, and the appointments had drawn on every part of the world in their splendor. Then a tall young man strode rapidly toward me.

"You wish to see Mrs. Stewart?" he asked with cold politeness.

I bowed assent.

"May I ask the character of your business with her?"

"It is purely personal, but of great importance to her."

"I will ask if she will receive you."

He returned in a few moments.

"It will be necessary for you to state your business before Mrs. Stewart will receive you," he said.

"Very well," I said, recognizing some reason in a woman of such great prominence declining to receive callers who declined to state the nature of their business. "I am P. D. Tyrrell of the United States Secret Service, and I called to see Mrs. Stewart on matters pertaining to the theft of her husband's body."

The polite young man bowed himself out of the room again, and soon returned with this answer:

"Mrs. Stewart has been much broken in health since the body of Mr. Stewart was stolen, and she begs me to say that you will please transact your business touching that matter with Judge Hilton."

"I must decline to discuss the information in my possession with any one but Mrs. Stewart," I said, taking my leave, and as I passed down the marble steps I uttered aloud a prayer that I might never be rich. I was doubtful if my message ever had reached Mrs. Stewart, who, old and friendless despite her wealth, was practically a prisoner in this fairy palace she called her home. I afterward learned that the young man who received me was a son of Judge Hilton.

I Question Myself

My readers, without doubt, will regard the course of Judge Hilton in ignoring my letter and that of Mrs. Stewart in declining to receive me as most extraordinary. Had my position not been sufficient guarantee that I was not one of the innumerable cranks who had tried to gain money or notoriety out of the case. the actions of the principals would have been easily explicable; as it was, I asked myself some interesting questions.

Was it possible that my letter never had reached Judge Hilton? Had Judge Hilton's son really told Mrs. Stewart who I was and the nature of my mission? Could it be possible that Judge Hilton deemed the fifty thousand dollars offered as a reward of more value to the estate, of which he had charge, than the body of the founder of that estate? Had Judge Hilton determined, from a sense of public service, not to prosecute the search in order to teach resurrectionists generally that their vocation would produce no fabulous returns from wealthy families, and thereby forestall the spread of this class of crime?

What I Wrote Hilton

All these questions occurred to me, and from them I chose a solution that seemed the most plausible. I determined, however, to do no one an injustice, and determined, at the right time, to make one more effort to get in direct communication with Judge Hilton. This opportunity presented itself in August, 1881, when I read in the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* a dispatch from New York stating that Judge Hilton was still anxious to recover the Stewart body and was prosecuting the search for it along all promising lines. I therefore sent to him the following letter and took the precaution to register it:

HON. HENRY HILTON,
Administrator of A. T. Stewart Estate, New York City:

Dear Sir—On the 16th of September, 1879, I wrote you in reference to the remains of the late A. T. Stewart, to which I received no reply. I subsequently called at the Stewart residence for the purpose of having a conversation with Mrs. A. T. Stewart on the facts then in my possession, but, being a stranger, was denied an interview by a young gentleman in attendance.

From the fact that my letter was treated with silence on your part and that afterward I was denied an interview with the person whom I considered the most interested party, I concluded either the remains had been recovered or that all interest or hope was lost for their recovery, or that the facts and information then in my possession were not correct.

As to the latter, I was determined to ascertain the truth of the matter that seemed to be in such uncertainty, and still kept on collecting such points as would present themselves in this important case. An article appearing in the *Globe-Democrat* of the twenty-fourth instant, which I inclose, clearly shows, first, that the remains have not been recovered and, second, that you have not lost all interest in the case.

This article has called up all the past facts formerly collected in the case and from which I am confident that I know the parties, their names, descriptions and present residence of some of them, and the rest can be found. I have full confidence that I can point out the party who now knows where the remains are buried. My information, of course, comes from criminals, but the facts, the information in all its details, with the letters now in my possession, remove all doubt that I have heretofore entertained and I am confident of good results in the end.

One word of a personal character. I am not a private detective and will not treat with any, even though employed by you. I have been in public police life since 1856, and for seven years have been special agent of the United States Treasury Department and have worked up some of the most important cases in the West, as Chief Brooks will certify.

Hoping the facts submitted in this communication will be of sufficient importance as to interest you further, I will be pleased to confer with you personally or otherwise at your earliest convenience.

Very respectfully yours,

P. D. TYRRELL.

The registry receipt showed this letter to have been received at Judge Hilton's office, but no answer was made to it.

The Five Men Concerned

This third rebuff convinced me I was wasting time in even writing letters to the New York principals. I probably could have forced them to take cognizance of the facts in my possession by going to the newspapers with them, but, it must be remembered, I was in the employ of the Government and not at liberty to neglect my duties in the Secret Service division for outside matters.

In popular parlance, it was not my funeral. I believed I had done everything my duty as a citizen dictated. I filed away the information and make its contents public herewith for the first time. The names of the five men who stole the body I do not make public, for the reason they have not been convicted for this crime, nor even known as parties to it, and for aught I know may now be leading lives of honesty.

At that time, however, they were all known to certain detectives as thieves. Two of them claimed New York as their home and three lived in Philadelphia. I have minute information concerning them, and this information is available for any legitimate purpose. McClaughrey's story, divested of tiresome detail, was substantially as follows:

"The body of A. T. Stewart was stolen for reward. Although the attempt to steal Lincoln's body had been foiled by the detectives, the idea of making money in this way was considered good. Stewart's wealth had been so widely talked about that it was thought his family would pay a large sum for his body. The vault had been located and the place 'piped' for weeks before the body was taken.

The Trunk of Zinc

"Very early in the morning of November seventh five men entered the churchyard by means of false keys. They carried a shovel, a dark lantern, and a canvas bag, which had been made by Emma Colbert. I was not among the five, but I was very close by. Outside of the churchyard there was an express wagon containing a zinc trunk. The men worked fast and without being disturbed. The body was placed in the bag and hoisted over the fence at the point nearest the wagon. I saw in the papers afterward that this spot was located by the bloodhounds and police by the odor clinging to the fence where the bag touched it.

"The outfit was driven toward Central Park and turned westward toward the Hudson. At the foot of a street running west from the lower end of the park a Whitehall boat was tied up and into it the zinc trunk was loaded. Wind and tide were in our favor, and the run was made in good time. A landing was made just below the town of Cresskill, on the Jersey shore, twenty or twenty-two miles from Jersey City. A light wagon was in readiness and the trunk was loaded into it. The boat was taken back to New York the same day.

"In the spring wagon also was a bale of hay and an old hay-cutting machine, which were partly to hide the trunk and partly to make the outfit look like a farmer's rig. This was driven out toward Paterson until nearly dark, when we doubled on the trail and drove back to Passaic Creek nearly opposite Yonkers, New York, about fifteen

miles from the city. Here the trunk was planted on the bank of the creek in a spot agreed upon.

"John and Emma Colbert and I 'sprung' this 'plant.' The Colberts had moved from Chicago to Ridgewood, New Jersey, Bergen County. I believed that too many knew of the first 'plant' and had a suspicion that some of them intended to 'spring' the 'plant' themselves and leave the others out in the cold. I made up my mind no one should outwit me at that game. I had a light spring wagon and a good pacing horse. We drove twelve miles back into the country from the first burial place and here we left John Colbert, Emma and I taking the trunk to a point between four and five miles west of Allendale, a small town about twelve miles north of Paterson.

Where the Body Is

"The Erie railroad crosses the Paterson road at the Allendale depot, and if you follow the Erie tracks from Allendale, away from Paterson, about two miles, till it intersects a wagon road, and then, turning to your right, follow the wagon road two and one-half miles farther, you come to a small, deserted frame house.

"Before reaching this house you pass two small hills, the house standing between the second and third hill, or mounds. Turning to your right at this house and going three rods up a slight slope covered with scrub trees, you will find the final burial place of the body of A. T. Stewart, for at this point we buried the body.

"Emma and I took breakfast at Ramsey, four miles north of Allendale, that morning after burying the trunk, and then she went home to Ridgewood by rail and I drove back to Paterson. The reason we used John Colbert to help spring the first 'plant' and then did not let him in on the second was that I trusted the girl, but I did not trust her father.

"He was a cabinetmaker by trade, and made the box in which the Stewart body was placed. After I had the situation safely in my own hands I opened correspondence with Judge Hilton from Montreal; but, while the papers were filled with the letters of cranks, Hilton did not seem to be any too anxious to close negotiations with a party who knew what he was talking about.

"I came West and ran afoul of trouble at Cairo. If Emma has not turned traitor to me and tipped off to her father or some one else the location of the body she and I are the only two human beings who know where it is. I don't believe she would tell her father where it is, because she knew I did not trust him, and I believe in a matter like this she would stick to me."

McClaughrey's statement was embellished with a wealth of corroborative detail with which it is unnecessary to burden this narrative. I forwarded his letters to Emma Colbert, at Ridgewood, New Jersey, and received her letters in reply. From facts connected with this correspondence I am satisfied that McClaughrey's faith in the woman was fully justified, and that she had guarded well the secret of the last burial place.

While McClaughrey did not tell me so, I was always fully convinced that he was the one who planned the vault robbery in the Stewart case. The idea was suggested to him by the Lincoln attempt. It was a task requiring the services of several men, and these he enlisted from the ranks of his criminal acquaintances in the East.

Somewhere Near Allendale

The fact that he stole the body from the ones who had stolen it in the first place was additional evidence that he was the originator of the plan, as a similar second theft had been planned by some of the men involved in the theft of the Lincoln body, and with this inner plot McClaughrey was fully acquainted.

Concerning the truth of his statement there was not the slightest doubt, and neither is there the slightest doubt that, if Judge Hilton had seen fit to respond to my overtures, the body of A. T. Stewart would have been recovered within a year of the time it was stolen and the culprits apprehended and convicted.

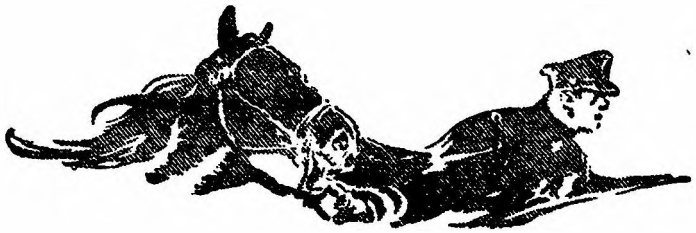
You ask if the body is still buried at the place designated by McClaughrey. I do not know. McClaughrey's sentence was shortened somewhat, and on his release he

came to Chicago, where he repaired at once to the saloon of "Larry" Gavin, a rendezvous for thieves in those days. Soon after he and Gavin went to New Jersey together, ostensibly for the purpose of satisfying themselves that Emma Colbert had kept her secret, and that the body was where McClaughrey and she had left it.

What they discovered on that trip I do not know. If McClaughrey was satisfied that the girl had kept the secret it is probable that what is left of the body is buried in the spot near Allendale. If he had reason to believe the girl had fallen under the influence of some one else while he was in Joliet he probably would have taken the risk of moving the body again.

After he went East with Gavin I lost track of him, and have not seen him since. For all his evil ways he was a man that elicited your interest, because you could not escape the feeling that he was not intended for a thief.

Why did not Judge Hilton answer my letters? This I never learned, and my readers must answer it for themselves.



IN addition to the opening installment of "Cabaret Crooks," which has been announced elsewhere in this issue, next week's FLYNN'S will contain:

"Jack Sheppard's Escapes," by Robert W. Sneddon. This is another short article in the series Mr. Sneddon has been doing of important historical escapes.

"Lawson's Tip-off," by Louis Lacy Stevenson. Bill Lawson, the detective who has such a passion for a shine on his shoes, sees through another case that is beyond the powers of the rest of the department.

"The Fete Noir," by Florence Crewe-Jones. Here is a fact article dealing with the underworld of Paris.

"A Jeweler's Reputation," by Victor Maxwell. Brady and Riordan are the heroes of a splendid novelette. Everybody likes Brady and Riordan.

"What Time Is It?" by Jack Bechdolt. A boy from the country runs into a gang of city crooks. They aren't much cleverer than he is, after all.

"By the Scientific Facts," by Don H. Thompson. This is a short story wherein a scientific criminologist clashes with a small-town sheriff. You will have to read the story to know who wins.

In addition there will be three or four other stories and articles fully as good as those I have named.

William J. Flynn

A terrific detonation rang out; the district attorney swayed and fell

ON DEMAND

By Frank Blighton

A FASCINATING MYSTERY THAT CANNOT BE SOLVED UNTIL A CARDBOARD CAT YIELDS UP ITS NINE IMITATION LIVES

CHAPTER XXXVII

MORE IRON NERVE

ATTORNEY JOSHUA MILLERAND arose and strode to the jury rail. His tall, erect figure, his keen, beardless, almost ascetic face and his air of grave concern all spoke for him before he began to speak. Behind him lay many years of practice in which his prestige as "a winning lawyer," with acumen equal to any occasion, had made him renowned. Behind him also sat a client who was either as innocent as a new-born babe or as guilty as the blackest fiend in the bottomless pit.

Millerand's mien did not exhibit the sturdy confidence, the resolute sprightliness of his former cases. He seemed apologetic if not dubious; but Perry Dubois, his face enigmatic and imperturbable as ever, did not appear to share the attorney's trepidation when he began:

"Your honor and gentlemen of the jury: In all my life, notwithstanding this apparent train of diabolically convincing evidence to which you have listened, in which circumstances have been welded to oral testimony in a way to justify the learned district attorney's presenting to my client during his opening address by far the largest portion of that section known by such names as Gehenna, Hades or Hell, I wish to assure you, here and now, that I have never before met a more artless, unsophisticated and thoroughly cultured young man than Perry Dubois.

"Gentlemen, I do not wonder that disbelief is written on your faces. I have never met a more baffling character. He eludes my orthodox conduct of a trial with

This story began in FLYNN'S for January 30

the same uncanny facility that his famous cardboard cat has eluded the intent aim of the expert shots of the police department. I accept, without reserve, the alternatives which the learned district attorney has presented for you—that either my client is wholly and utterly innocent of all of these charges, including the crime for which he is being tried, or else he is a man lost to all moral sense, a callous, depraved, conscienceless creature, a menace to society, whose life is justly forfeit to the State—on demand.

"I believe him innocent. I'll tell you why. Time after time during this trial, he has turned to me after the witnesses have testified and said: 'That is the truth!' Now, no guilty man would freely admit the truth of evidence which pointed to his certain conviction. Therefore, because he is not only innocent, but is keenly conscious of his innocence, my client will now take the stand in his own behalf."

Perry Dubois was sworn. He gave his age as twenty-four, and his residences in the city and country. Under the attorney's questions he admitted the invitation to attend the week-end at Sans Souci, stating that until he was invited he had no idea of being there at all. He swore that he had never seen Malcolm Dowd, alive or dead, until the moment the tennis ball had bounded from the court. He admitted the presence of the pistol and necklace in his bag; that he had sent Glenn to the gate with a note; his lighting of the matches; his giving Joseph Traviata a ten dollar bill for gasoline and then admitted giving Abraham Glotz the check for one hundred and fifty dollars.

The district attorney could hardly believe his ears; the court's face expressed astonishment, for regarding none of these circumstances was any explanation or excuse offered; the breathless spectators, including "Carrots" Fogarty, were petrified with amazement.

"He's still there—wit' th' old nerve!" muttered the prisoner's former cellmate.

"Did you hear the testimony of the ten police officers, regarding their inability to hit your cardboard cat with the crossbow?"

"I did."

"Is it true?"

"It is not true that the cat cannot be hit. It is true that the cat cannot be missed!" replied the amazing prisoner. "I can hit it, the foreman or any of the jurors can hit it, if I'm allowed to have the experiment shown."

The foreman of the jury spoke for the first time: "If your honor please, I must admit more than a reasonable doubt that this cat can be hit in view of the testimony offered. May the experiment be made?"

"It may," said Justice Watkins. "I presume, Mr. Millerand, your client will desire to conduct it?"

"Since he is testifying, yes. It can be made here."

"You may proceed," said the judge.

Perry Dubois removed his witness chair from the dais, after a court attendant had aided in fastening the magnets to the wall almost as high as the ceiling. Briefly, the prisoner explained the method by which the electric circuit released the cat. The cat was rehung, and Dubois beckoned to the foreman of the jury, who left the box and came to the prisoner, who held the crossbow. Detective Beckwith, frowning, moved over to the chair Dubois had occupied next his counsel for a better view, picking up the prisoner's fedora hat by the crown to avoid sitting on it.

Dubois said something in a low tone to the foreman as the latter raised the crossbow. The bow twanged as the cat fell. The bolt struck the cat before it had fallen six inches and pinned it to the court room wall. The foreman's second shot from thirty feet also caught the cat squarely; the third from the full length of the two wires and two-thirds of the distance across the court room pinned the falling cat to the wall a little less than the height of the witness chair and directly back of where the chair usually sat.

The astonishment deepened. The foreman seemed as dazed as the court and spectators. The prisoner nonchalantly replaced the cardboard cat on the desk and resumed his seat.

"The jury will notice," jocularly remarked Joshua Millerand, "that its foreman also has 'an iron nerve,' when shooting at

the cardboard cat. Mr. District Attorney, you may take the witness!"

Ruth Barrett, now sitting at the reporter's table with Toby Hicks, managing editor of the *Post-Courier,* looked at Toby's perplexed countenance with a faint smile as "Big Bill" Wright arose groggily from his seat, after a whisper with Detective Beckwith.

"Now," quoth Ruth to Toby, "I understand a little of that Maeterlinck quotation. Remember? The one about 'every act allows of as many interpretations as there are diverse forces in our intelligence.' How's *your* intelligence, Mr. Hicks, and will you please interpret that cardboard cat for me for to-morrow's issue?"

Managing editor Hicks scowled at the baffling Perry Dubois.

"He's a bird," he growled. "I should say he's a specimen of the dodo, although they're supposed to be extinct. Either that, or he's sitting on a mare's nest full of these new-found Chinese dinosaur eggs and is about to hatch them all and eat 'Big Bill' on their half-shells. Bill looks as loco as if he saw a dinosaur instead of a defendant, in that witness chair."

"Yes," sweetly agreed Miss Barrett, "but that's only the prisoner's innocence that Mr. Wright sees. Can't you see it, too?"

"You must be as crazy as old Millerand, and he's senile. Why didn't he have his client explain the rest of it, beside the cardboard cat?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," said Ruth, "I retained Mr. Millerand to defend Mr. Dubois—with some of your money. Hush! I think the district attorney is about to lift the weeds from Mr. Dubois and try to show us the violets, beneath."

"If he doesn't do something," muttered Mr. Hicks, "I'm going to sing: 'Ah, Moon of My Delight,' right here. Gag me, will you?"

At this instant a voice was heard: "He shoot at cat, again, and never once is he mistaken. I must see honorable employer." Then Tako, the little Japanese, neatly jujutsued an officer at the court room door, ran down the aisle and to the prisoner, exclaiming: "In Chicago, I hear of your troubling, so return. Why does cat make troubling?"

Millerand arose. "Your honor, may we recess for five minutes? I wish to speak to this servant of Mr. Dubois, who was on his way to Japan where his relatives perished in the recent disaster. It is most important for the defense."

The court granted the request.

Beckwith ran to Wright. "Listen, Bill, I've got that bird nailed for this murder faster than the cat was pinned to the wall. Never mind his damned cardboard cat. Come over into your office a minute. I got something when he was showin' off that trick cat that fits in with what I found in his bungalow, better'n them steel bolts into the barrel of that home-made crossbow of his!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

TAKO TESTIFIES

TAKO was called to the stand for the defense when the recess ended, as Millerand informed the court that the faithful little fellow, if permitted to testify and be immediately excused, could catch an overland train and still be in time at San Francisco to board his steamer for his native land.

Wright asked the diminutive Japanese his religion.

"I am Plesbeterian Sunday School," said he, "and since my first name is not pronouncing in English, my teacher she call me Hiram, making meaning of 'Most Noble.'"

He was sworn and identified the photograph of the dead man. Tako also confirmed Mailcarrier Quinn's story about the whistle and descending the hill for the letter. "Only one letter in box," said he. "That for me from Japan. But this dead man make following of me to house to see Honorable Dubois. I make obliging since Honorable Dubois is in city. This man leave note. Then I read Japan letter of recounting that my family evaporate in shaking earth and blazings. I have great sadding. I make forgetting this man's note to give honorable employer. So, I come back and

leave at Sans Souci with girl servant Friday night and make leaving again by train."

"No cross-examination," said Wright.

Millerand seemed surprised and disappointed.

"I'd rather you would," said he, "for since Tako swears that the Glotz letter was not in the mailbox when he went to it, and since Bates has already sworn Malcolm Dowd was near the same mailbox when he drove Mrs. Green up there, it must be plain to the jury that Mr. Dubois never got the Glotz letter, at all. What, then, becomes of your theory that my client killed Dowd at Sans Souci, because Dowd had the Glotz letter and was about to expose Mr. Dubois for a cheat?"

"The district attorney," said Wright, almost affably, "is not infallible. I believe this Japanese servant has told the truth. He has also stated that he delivered the note to Avis Glenn, as Dixon has also already testified. We do not know where Avis Glenn is. Nor did you produce the note Glenn gave to Mr. Dubois. Hiram, otherwise, 'Most Noble' Tako may therefore be excused, if you wish, and take his steamer if he can catch it. I will proceed with my cross-examination of Mr. Dubois."

Tako hurried away and Dubois returned to the witness stand.

"Detective Beckwith tells me," began Wright, "that you whispered something to the foreman of the jury when you handed him the cross-bow before he first shot at your cat. Is that true?"

"It is," said Dubois.

"What did you say to him?"

"I would rather you asked him, since I am supposed to be so entirely beyond the boundaries of belief by my fellow human beings."

"I'd rather you answer, Mr. Dubois."

"Very well. I said: 'Always aim right at the cat. Natural law does the rest. The bolt from the cross-bow falls as fast as the cat falls. It is a natural law—the law of falling bodies. You cannot miss the cat for that reason. Galileo discovered this law and Newton confirmed it.'"

"Is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

Wright seemed momentarily discomfited.

The simplicity of the explanation, after the exhibition of "iron nerve" by the doddering foreman of the jury now completely demolished his previous theory of how Dubois had killed Dowd by expert pistol shooting, since it was clear from Tako's uncontradicted statement that Dubois had never seen the Glotz letter demanding payment for the dishonored check of one hundred and fifty dollars, hence the prisoner was without *that* motive to kill any one.

"The first violet!" trimphantly whispered Ruth to Toby Hicks.

"I smell more weeds," facetiously returned the sapient young editor who had hired the girl by his side and thus "scooped the town" on this amazing news story. "Wright's hatching a dinosaur's egg himself!"

The district attorney, however, was very mild. He took Dubois over some conversation at Sans Souci about Maeterlinck and other authors. He mentioned their influence on the prisoner during the "formative period" of his mind.

"You are fond of rare or old paintings, ceramics, jewels, works of art in general, gorgeous flowers, exquisite music and good literature?"

"I am," replied the prisoner.

"You have read rather widely?"

"Somewhat. My father left me quite a collection of books."

"You still have them?"

"All of them."

"Now, it has been testified that Mrs. Green's diamond necklace was in your bag when you were first arrested. Do you wish to explain that to the jury, since you did not do it on your direct examination?"

"Not at this time," said Dubois.

"Why?"

"Because it might prematurely disclose my defense as to that incident."

He gave similar replies regarding the dishonored check, the ten-dollar bill, the presence of the pistol and the absence of Glenn, as well as lighting the matches. To the last the prisoner said that he had told all of the guests at the week-end party, on his second return from seeking the cause of the shot, that he had been lighting matches to look for footprints.

"Did you puncture the extra tank of gasoline?"

"I did not."

"Mr. Dubois," said Wright very affably, as he picked up the triggerless pistol, "can you say if a bullet also follows a natural law, the same as the bolt from your splendid little crossbow?"

"It does."

"Does it fall as fast as anything else after leaving the muzzle?"

"It does. But, owing to its higher muzzle velocity, the bullet is not affected by gravity at the same distance from the muzzle as the bolt from the crossbow."

"Thank you," replied Wright, flashing a glance at Beckwith, who leaned forward, forgetting his aching hand where the broken bones were knitting.

Beckwith did not mind the pain. In fact, it was a sort of a negative pleasure, for he knew what was coming next, although no one else did—not even Ruth Barrett or the astute Toby Hicks.

"Carrots" Fogarty was also mystified. The district attorney's question about a "rod" like that seemed singularly out of place to the released rum-runner and highjacker, who was still sitting in the court room as much enthralled as any one else with the trial.

"Truth," blandly continued the district attorney, "is also a—er—matter of natural law?"

"A manifestation, I should say," replied Dubois.

"You heard what your counsel said you had told him about these various witnesses against you, telling the truth?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will show you an envelope, addressed to you, in writing," said Wright smiling. "Have you ever seen that before?"

Dubois looked down at it. For the first time during the trial he hesitated. Then he said firmly:

"Yes, sir."

"And this," said Wright, drawing out the torn page of a memorandum book from the envelope, "have you ever seen it before?"

The prisoner retained his uncanny calmness.

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you. Mr. Clerk, will you please mark these papers for identification?"

"Let me see them," said Joshua Millerand rising.

"Not now, sir," said Wright. "You may see them before I offer them in evidence—but not now."

"Why not?" demanded counsel for the prisoner. "It is customary."

"Because, while your distinguished given namesake may have made the sun and moon to stand still, Mr. Millerand, you cannot force me to try this case your way. I will try it my way—at the risk of appearing eccentric, for a few moments."

"Here come the weeds," sepulchrally whispered Toby to Ruth. "You were wrong. They aren't violets. I wonder what Bill's dinosaur will look like?"

CHAPTER XXXIX

A PRECEDENT OF GUILT

THIS baffling incident set the court room agog with more tense interest than ever before during the trial. Millerand looked as chagrined as the ten policemen who had heard the ridiculously simple explanation of the cardboard cat's elusiveness.

"Have you ever seen this book?" next asked Wright, handing Dubois a volume.

"Yes."

"Is it yours?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have read it all?"

"Yes, about ten years ago."

"During the 'formative period of your mind,' I take it," suavely asked the district attorney, "as you told the guests about some of your other reading at the Sans Souci week end affair?"

"I was fourteen years old at the time," said the prisoner.

"Look at this book," said Wright, handing it to him. "Where did you last see it?"

"At my bungalow."

"This book has some underscored passages and some numerals opposite them in the margin. Did you mark these passages, Mr. Dubois—when you read this book?"

"Yes, sir. Ten years ago."

"I offer this book, an essay, entitled, 'Pen, Pencil and Poison,' in evidence," said the district attorney.

"It is received said the court," after Joshua Millerand had examined it without objection. "Proceed."

"This book, gentlemen of the jury," said Wright, turning to them and holding it aloft, "contains many marked passages. The prisoner has admitted these markings are his. The book itself is an account of the life, deeds and character—in brief, the career—of one Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, a man born in Chiswick, England, in 1794. This was a little too early to meet the prisoner and view his cardboard cat experiment.

"Mr. Wainewright, according to this book," continued Wright, "was like Mr. Dubois—also fond of good literature and wrote many wonderful things, some of which are quoted in this essay. One of the most touching and solemn passages in this book is a quotation from Mr. Wainewright's description of a picture by Rembrandt. The writer, like Mr. Dubois, also loved gems, ceramics, rare paintings. He was also, according to this book, an expert forger, poisoner and murderer. I will read the first seven paragraphs which the prisoner has marked:

1. Like most artificial persons, he—meaning Wainewright—had a great love of nature.

2. A few months after the murder of Helen Abercrombie, he—meaning Wainewright—had been actually arrested for debt, in the streets of London, while he was serenading the pretty daughter of one of his friends.

3. In 1837, he returned to England, privately. Some strange, mad fascination brought him back. He followed a woman, whom he loved.

4. It was said that the woman was very beautiful. Besides, she did not love him.

5. When a friend reproached Wainewright with the murder of Helen Abercrombie he shrugged his shoulders and said: "Yes; it was a dreadful thing to do, but she had very thick ankles."

6. His crimes seemed to have an important effect upon his art. They gave a strong personality to his style, a quality that his early work certainly lacked.

7. One can fancy an intense personality being created out of sin.

Wright laid down the book, drew back and glared at the prisoner.

"You marked all those passages I just read, didn't you, when you read the book?"

Dubois nodded affirmatively. He maintained his inscrutable air, although amazement and loathing alternated upon the faces of the twelve men in the jury box.

"This note," Wright again picked it up. "Is this envelope the one that your Japanese servant left for you with Glenn, Mrs. Duncan Green's maid, at Sans Souci, as Dixon testified and as Tako testified?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is this writing on the envelope: 'Honorable Sir: Forgive. I make forgetting,' the notation made by your servant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you open this envelope, as Dixon testified, and read this note?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you told Glenn, *before you opened it,* that you might want her to do a little favor for you, didn't you?"

"I did."

"You read the note, looked around to see that none of the guests observed where you went and then you walked under that old elm tree and remained for about ten minutes, did you not?"

"I did."

"It's all true—natural law—just as your counsel told this jury you told him, isn't it, as far as I've gone?" taunted Wright.

"It is."

"Now, Mr. Dubois, when you first received that note, did you recognize the handwriting?"

"I did not. I had never seen it before."

Disbelief was written on the countenances of the jury even plainer than words; disgust alternated with it.

"Have you ever met Duncan Green, the husband of Mrs. Green, your hostess at Sans Souci?"

"Never."

"How many times had you met Mrs. Green, before she and Miss Poynter asked you to this week-end affair?"

Dubois said three times; once at Mrs. Sanderson's hall, where he danced with Mrs. Green and took her in to supper; once at a reception to a sculptor and once, by

chance, in the office of Peter Cowan, president of the Iroquois Trust Company. He detailed the aid he had given her on the last occasion in procuring an insurance policy for the diamond necklace.

He admitted Mr. Cowan was also at Sans Souci; he admitted Mrs. Green had told him the necklace was taken; he admitted he knew its value and that he had not told Mr. Cowan about its theft. "Mr. Cowan asked me not to talk business with him until Monday," said he, "and on Monday he was taken ill."

"Did you ask any one if Mr. Duncan Green would be at the week-end?"

"I asked Miss Poynter. She said that Mr. Green was abroad."

"Did you know it until then?"

"No, sir."

"When did you ask her this?"

"After the garage fire."

"And the garage fire took place after the shot was heard, which you investigated, I believe, at Mr. Lloyd's suggestion?"

"Yes, sir."

Wright picked up the envelope and note.

"You may look at these now, Mr. Millerand," said he, "as I am about to offer them in evidence."

"No objection," said the attorney, walking back to his seat.

"You may read or show them to the jury," said the court, "for they are admitted in evidence." Wright read the note:

August 27.

PERRY DUBOIS:

You contemptible little dead-beat and shrimp. What do you mean by flirting with my wife, when you think I'm overseas? Meet me under the old elm east of my house, without fail, at eight o'clock Friday night or it will be the worse for you.

(Signed) DUNCAN GREEN.

Here was the motive for Dowd's murder. He had tried to trick Dubois by impersonating Green—and Dubois had killed him.

"He's gone. The dinosaur has swallowed him," whispered Toby to Ruth.

Ruth looked at the jury. "Oh, maybe. I wouldn't give the tail of his cardboard cat for his chances, just here. But, maybe—"

Wright dropped his suave mask and thundered:

"Did you have that note in your possession, when arrested, Mr. Dubois?"

"I did."

"Did you know that Detective Beckwith accidentally happened to find that note, carefully folded astride the crease in your fedora hat beneath the lining, while you were exhibiting your trick cardboard cat to the jury?"

"No, sir."

"Did you hide that note there in your hat?"

"Yes, sir."

"When and why?"

"When first arrested, lest unmerited odium might attach to the name of my hostess or that of her absent husband."

"Pardon my detective for unearthing it," sneered his tormentor. "The solicitude you exhibited for your hostess does you credit. I'm afraid I have been guilty of a grave breach of etiquette in putting that cleverly secreted note before the jury; but until it was discovered and I had read it in connection with those passages from 'Pen, Pencil and Poison,' I did not realize just what kind of gentleman all this evidence indicates you really are. The undisputed evidence pointed to you before then, merely as a common thief and murderer, camouflaged behind this curious cardboard cat."

He dangled the imitation animal before the hapless witness.

Dubois regarded him imperturbably. "I esteem Mrs. Green very highly," he replied, "but that is all. Rather than disclose that note—if I could have chosen—I should have preferred, although entirely innocent of this charge, to have paid the extreme penalty for it."

CHAPTER XL

MISS POYNTER SCORES

IOLETS!" triumphantly exclaimed Ruth Barrett to Toby Hicks. Her explosive undertone carried clearly to the jury. Judge Watkins rapped sharply for order.

Fogarty stared at his former cellmate

with undisguised admiration. Something akin to that rare moment when Hazel Poynter's seraphic voice permeated the jail again swept over the rum-runner.

"I wuz wrong," Fogarty told himself. "He's still dere, wit' th' old nerve, but *he* never killed Starlight. I wonder who did?"

He peered around the court room, fixing various spectators or witnesses in new horror with his ghastly glass eye.

District Attorney Wright took the note signed "Duncan Green," and fitted it to the torn page in the memorandum book taken from the dead body of Malcolm Dowd, holding it aloft.

"You will see, gentlemen of the jury," he suavely remarked, "that even natural law operates in a torn paper. This fragment fits exactly."

They nodded. Dubois watched them with composure.

"So that was why," resumed Wright, facing his hapless victim, "that you went out under the old elm tree. You went to meet the man who you thought had written that note."

"Yes, sir."

"And you did not find any one there?"

"No one was there, no one came while I was there and I left there about ten minutes after eight."

"Which, according to the undisputed testimony, was about an hour before you heard the shot?"

"Yes, sir."

"You thought Duncan Green had written the note?"

"I had no time to ponder that, for I went to the tree at once."

"Didn't you hear Miss Poynter testify that you were not in her sight, when the shot was fired, and might have stepped into the dining room and fired it?"

"I did."

"You admit the truth of her testimony?"

"Most certainly."

District Attorney Wright recoiled. There was no feigning in his pose. He felt that in some uncanny way which he didn't understand at all, Dubois was slipping out of the net.

"So *that* was why," he screeched, "you shot through that dining room window, at the dim form of the man in the moonlight outlined under the old elm tree—thinking that it was the figure of Duncan Green, the angered husband of your hostess—who had failed to keep his own rendezvous one hour before?"

"The only shot I fired was at my cardboard cat and from my crossbow," said Dubois, in the most matter-of-fact manner. "I have never possessed a pistol in my entire life until I picked up that triggerless weapon, just as Dixon testified he saw me pick it up."

"You admit Dixon told the truth?"

"I certainly picked up the pistol and leaped into the dining room through the open window, just as he testified."

"Dixon is subpœnaed for your defense?"

"He is."

"Is there any other explanation that you personally wish to make about any of the evidence the State has produced against you on this trial?"

"None."

"That is all," said the district attorney.

"That is all, Mr. Dubois," said Attorney Millerand. He, too, now seemed to share the prisoner's sang-froid as the astounding young man resumed his seat.

"Have you any other witnesses?" asked Justice Watkins.

"Several, your honor, but their testimony will be brief. I think we can submit the case to the jury to-night, and avoid the annoyance of their being confined over the week-end," said Millerand. "Call Miss Hazel Poynter."

Fogarty's good eye roved toward the winsome star of "Hey, Towser!" but his glass optic remained firmly fixed on Alonzo Dixon, who was sitting next to him. Mr. Dixon seemed uncomfortable under that unwinking, deliberate and long-continued stare.

"You were asked, on your examination by the district attorney, Miss Poynter, whether it was possible for Mr. Dubois, when out of your view, to have walked into the dining room and shot through this window." Millerand indicated it on the blackboard. "You said that it was. I now

ask you if it was possible for Mr. Dubois to shoot through that window, while standing on the floor of the dining room at Sans Souci, and strike a man more than six feet tall with a bullet in the head, inflicting a wound such as this?"

He picked up the skull and handed it to her. Miss Poynter looked at it critically.

"Mr. Dubois could do it with perfect ease during the time he was out of my view," said she; "that is, *providing he had an arm at least eighteen feet long!*"

"What do you mean?" asked Millerand.

She handed back the skull before replying.

"This drawing on the blackboard is a little misleading," said the girl. "Has it another side?"

"Yes," said Wright. "What do you want to do with it?"

"If you'll give me a piece of chalk and an eraser, I can answer Mr. Millerand's last question more satisfactorily for the jury—perhaps," she replied.

An attendant reversed the blackboard which swung on a central pivot at each side. Miss Poynter stood up and drew the same outline of the house and sketched in the old elm, with bushes, quite expertly.

"You will notice," said she, "that unless the man were a tall man, and was shot down while standing where the body was found, that the intervening bushes here, which are five feet and a half high, would have completely screened him from view. Assuming that his head was in plain view from the dining room window, you will see, as well, that the base of this elm tree is about two feet higher than the dining room floor."

She laid down the eraser and pointed to the skull.

"The bullet entered the left temple and ranged downward at an angle of fifty degrees. A bullet travels in a straight line for so short a distance, following, of course, natural law. Hence, at that angle of fifty degrees, to enter the head *above* and range downward, the bullet must have traveled from a much higher point than this dining room window."

Her limpid voice, her grace and loveliness, all carried the jury with her.

"I will allow for an error of five degrees in the bullet's path," went on the girl, after another quick glance at the skull. "Let us say it entered this unfortunate man's head at an angle of forty-five degrees. As the house is fifty feet from the old elm and as the murdered man was at least six feet tall, this vertical line near the base of the tree and a circle for his head will represent him as he stood there.

"A line with a forty-five degree angle, which is necessary to continue the bullet's course from the point it entered the temple *back* to the point where the pistol must have been fired, will bring the pistol's location at this third story window, instead of the dining room window."

She sketched it with a series of dots amid profoundest silence on the part of the judge, district attorney, jury and spectators.

Dixon arose, breathing heavily. He could no longer endure the accusatory stare of Fogarty's glass eye. The rum-runner suddenly turned the other baleful optic upon the butler, reached out, gripped him with a brawny hand and growled:

"Sit down! Don't y' know yer a witness for th' *defense?*"

CHAPTER XLI

"DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS LOADED!"

DISTRICT Attorney Wright arose to cross-examine Hazel Poynter, who had followed Perry Dubois as a witness for the defense. He knew only too well the effect of the adorable personality of the little *ingénue* upon the jury.

Heretofore they had sat rigid, like men intent only upon a painful, distasteful but solemn duty. Now they were exhibiting that subtle power of detachment which comes from the invigorating play of forces, cool, refreshing, bubbling up from sources unimaginably deep.

"Big Bill" was annoyed. Hitherto these same twelve men had been receptive to the suggestions of infamous guilt he had launched against Dubois. Now they were swayed by Miss Poynter's brilliant vision of the prisoner's innocence of murder.

If the girl had done nothing more than

inject a " reasonable doubt " into the minds of those twelve men, it was quite bad enough and must be eradicated without delay, lest it persist.

He looked down at the cardboard cat whose potentialities had lured Dubois to Sans Souci, owing to the invitation of the girl now on the witness stand. It lay inert on the table, its body eloquent with holes that proved the unalterable law of falling bodies. Worse than that, it suggested that his case was falling apart and Big Bill had set his heart on a speedy conviction for Perry Dubois, for reasons which were both private and sufficient unto himself and his select coterie of political friends.

" You were a witness for the State?" he asked gently.

" Yes."

" Before the grand jury and here, in court?"

" I was."

" You were sworn on both occasions to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?"

" I was."

" Did you ever intimate to the district attorney that Dubois might not be guilty, owing to the explanation and diagram you have just made?"

" I did not."

" But it is the truth?"

" Yes."

" Why did you not?"

" For two reasons."

" State them, please."

" Before you took me to the grand jury room, you bullied me. You said Dubois was guilty. You told me to answer such questions as you asked and nothing more."

" But here in court, did I bully you?"

" Oh, no."

" Why did you not then disclose this information—or what you may think is information?"

" My thought did not come to me until I had looked at that skull," the girl pointed at it, " while I was testifying here first. Afterward, when I remembered how Coroner Crownshield described the bullet's angle through the head, and also remembered how the house and old elm tree stand, it all came to me clearly."

" So it is only your theory and you have made no actual measurements?"

" I did not need to make them. The measurements are here in evidence and Coroner Crownshield testified regarding them when the case began," replied Hazel.

" Quite so," agreed Wright affably. " Now, since you are so candid, will you continue to be so while we test out your theory, here and now?"

" I will endeavor to be. But why not take the jury to Sans Souci and test it out there with a dummy man?"

" I will play the part of the dummy," said Wright grimly, " and you may enact the rôle of Mr. Dubois, shooting through the window, while I stand beneath an invisible elm tree."

He directed the witness to leave the stand and to place herself where he was standing, and hold the triggerless pistol. Then Wright ascended to the witness stand, removing the chair and placed himself against the wall.

" Am I now at least the height of the dead man?" he asked the witness.

" About the same, I should say."

" Am I standing as high above the court room floor as the old elm is above the dining room floor at Sans Souci?"

" A little higher, I should say."

He swung the highbacked chair in front of him. " Are these impromptu bushes tall enough?"

" Quite tall enough," said the girl.

" Now, suppose I bend forward a little like this and turn my head a little sidewise, like this," continued Wright gently. " Can you aim at my left temple clearly?"

" I can."

" Just pull back the hammer and then release it, aiming carefully at the temple, and then tell the jury, candidly, whether or not that bullet could not range downward through my head, as it did through the head of that dead man."

Miss Poynter raised the pistol, took careful aim, pulled back the hammer and released it.

A terrific detonation rang through the room. The district attorney swayed and fell. The girl stood looking stupidly at the weapon as confusion arose to chaos.

"Carrots" Fogarty again dragged down the man sitting by him—Dixon.

"Set down, bo," he said. "That's only the same rod whangin' away as it did down to Sans Souci. Y' hain't scared of that, for y' didn't say y' wuz while testifyin' for the State, didja?"

CHAPTER XLII

THE INNOCENT BYSTANDER

CORONER CROWNSHIELD was among the first to reach Big Bill, who muttered: "I'm all right," as they laid him down. The physician's quick eye caught the trickle of blood on the temple and then the red trail across Wright's scalp and to the punctured wall beyond.

"He is not badly injured, sir," cried the coroner to Justice Watkins. That official rapped for order. Bailiffs promptly calmed the spectators.

"'Ah! Moon of My Delight!'" facetiously muttered Toby Hicks to Ruth Barrett, "why do you insist on putting gunpowder in those violets you promised Bill would show us?"

Miss Poynter had laid down the smoking weapon.

"I never dreamed it was loaded," said she, facing the jury, "any more than I could foresee what test would be made of my theory."

Beckwith and Crownshield raised Wright to his feet. He was able to walk to the judge's chambers. The trial was resumed after a brief recess, during which an ambulance arrived to take District Attorney Wright to the hospital. Assistant District Attorney Marsh assured his stricken chief that the case would go on and that he would see to it that nothing was left undone to obtain a conviction.

During all of this tumult and interruption, Perry Dubois still sat as if an unwilling witness to a keleidoscopic nightmare, leaving him untouched in his strangely innocent isolation. He seemed as incapable of reacting to the first shift of the tide in his favor as he had remained unmoved within the cell of the jail, when the girl now testifying had sung her soul out to comfort him.

Attorney Millerand arose when Justice Watkins directed that the trial proceed.

"If it please the court," said he, "I wish to keep the official record correct. Mr. Wright's last question to Miss Poynter was to inform the jury whether or not the imaginary bullet she was to fire would travel upward or downward in his head. It is obvious that the witness has no way of answering that question, owing to the unexpected explosion of that pistol. Therefore, it seems to me that whatever evidence there is must be given from the lips of Coroner Crownshield, since he has had an opportunity to observe the bullet's course."

Marsh strenuously objected. He said it was an effort by the defense to "capitalize an accident that might have resulted in the loss of a distinguished public servant."

"It is a part of the legal record of this case," insisted Millerand. "The defense was not conducting the cross-examination of Miss Poynter, nor has the defense had the weapon with which it is charged Mr. Dubois killed Dowd, in its possession, since long before this trial was begun. The onus of that accident must rest upon the district attorney or members of his own staff."

Again Marsh fought against allowing the course of the bullet to be shown, declaring that the "escape from physical jeopardy" of the district attorney, being in the nature of an unforeseen event, could not properly be taken as an answer in reply to the question which Mr. Wright had asked.

"My answer to that," retorted Millerand, "is this: The district attorney, possibly through over-zeal, sustained a temporary jeopardy. My client is not yet out of acute legal jeopardy in which his life may be forfeit. If the State was willing to submit a question of such supreme importance to my client's life in the way it was done—without my objection—the State is now precluded from objecting to a submission of the result of its own proposal."

"The coroner is at the hospital," said Justice Watkins. "When he returns, I will rule on the objection. Judgment on the objection is reserved. Have you other witnesses, Mr. Millerand?"

"Yes. Call Mrs. Duncan Green."

If the young matron had felt any embarrassment at Wright's clever innuendoes regarding the quotations from "Pen, Pencil and Poison," and her chance social relations with the accused young man, she showed no trace of it as she again took the stand.

Her vivid face was quite composed, her innate culture as apparent as the bloom on the small cluster of flowers in her corsage. Millerand directed her attention to a large galvanized container, which Chauffeur Bates brought from the rear of the court room.

Mrs. Green identified it as the container containing the spare gasoline which Bates had testified stood outside the garage for replenishing the tanks of her guests.

"I show you this long, almost imperceptible hole, near the can's lowest rim," said the attorney. "Can you say, of your own knowledge, how that came to be made?"

"Yes."

"Do so, please."

"It was made by my last shot from the crossbow at the cardboard cat of Mr. Dubois. I remembered the incident after hearing my chauffeur testify." She picked one of the steel bolts from the table and illustrated the flight of the missile, adding: "The gas leaked through this hole, spread on the grass and Mr. Dubois accidentally ignited it when lighting matches to find footprints."

Marsh's effort to overcome this resulted in ignominious failure. Mrs. Green insisted that the incident had been overlooked in the excitement of the "baffling cat" experiment. When she left the stand, Mr. Dubois was cleared of all onus of actual or attempted arson, as well as suspicion of striking Bates on the head.

Marsh looked down on the cardboard cat with a perplexed gaze. There were no more holes in it than there had been when his chief was shot, but there was a great rent in the case against the prisoner. Another came with the reappearance of Detective John Dexter.

Dexter said that while Joseph Traviata had been testifying for the State that he had searched his gas station and accessory store.

"I rapped on a lot of cans supposed to contain lubricating oil and one of them echoed so different from the rest that I opened it. Here was what was in it—all counterfeit ten-dollar bills."

The jurymen gasped.

"I arrested Traviata when he came back," said Dexter. "I searched his house and found a lot of good money. Traviata gave me this ten-dollar bill, which is the one he said Dubois actually gave him. It is a genuine bill."

Marsh had a sinking sensation. The State's own evidence was now veering to the prisoner's favor, in spite of the monstrous look it had formerly worn regarding his unquestioned guilt.

Another rift appeared when Robert Swan, vice-president of the Iroquois Trust Company, was sworn for the defense. He had with him the books of that bank and checks of the prisoner drawn both before and after the one for a hundred and fifty dollars given to Abraham Glotz. It took Mr. Swan just ten minutes to convince the jury that Mr. Dubois was at no fault, whatever, and that a clerk, unfamiliar with the Dubois estate, from which the prisoner's deposits were received, had failed to credit the account with some four thousand dollars collected during July.

Millerand refused to stop there. He insisted, owing to the aspersions in the opening speech of the district attorney, regarding his client's willingness to defraud a deformed tailor with ten children, that the last check previous to the one given Glotz be also shown.

It was a canceled check for one thousand dollars, drawn to the order of trustees for a home harboring aged and infirm people. Then and there the lesser hoofs and horns fell from Perry Dubois and some of the older jurors even regarded him in a rather kind manner.

"Set your violets up in the other alley," implored Toby Hicks of Ruth Barrett in a hoarse whisper, "and roll a real dinosaur down the one in which they're bowling Marsh over."

"The jury," said Ruth judicially, "looks

as if almost ready to be Maeterlinck-ed. 'Every act,' you know, 'is capable of as many different interpretations as—'"

"Call Bruce Vane," said Mr. Millerand.

"He's a new egg," said Mr. Hicks. "What will he hatch?"

CHAPTER XLIII

A LEGALIZED KIDNAPING

BRUCE VANE was sworn. He was a "clubby" looking young man with keen blue eyes, a very pleasing face, tall, well-set up and might have leaped from a subway collar-advertisement to face the jury.

He said that he was employed by the United States Immigration Department, with a special detail to prevent undesirable aliens entering America. He knew Mr. Dubois and they frequently met at the same club. He last saw the prisoner about July 15.

"Did you have a conversation with him about that time?"

"I did."

"You may state it to the jury," directed Millerand.

Marsh objected unless its "materiality" was first shown. Millerand stated that it would clear Mr. Dubois of the charge by the district attorney that Dubois had been a party to the "abduction" of Avis Glenn.

A dim idea of the strategy of the defense in allowing all explanations of that young man's mystifying acts to be made by others than himself, aside from the cardboard cat enigma, appeared to dawn in the mind of Messrs. Marsh and Beckwith. They consulted together fervently, Beckwith pointing to the skull and then to the photographs of Malcolm Dowd. Marsh's face lighted up and he nodded.

Meanwhile, Bruce Vane launched into a story as snappy as his personal manner. He said that he had been sent "advices" from Liverpool that a steamship westward bound for the port of New York, was carrying two undesirable immigrants; but that owing to a delay in receiving the "advices," he missed intercepting the ship and turning back or detaining either.

"One was a girl, named Phoebe Markham," said Vane, "who had been convicted in England for theft of some jewels while working as a lady's maid. The other was a man named Dowd, who was her sweetheart and accomplice. He was on the same ship as an electrician. I could afterward find no trace of either, and was at my wit's end.

"Seeing Mr. Dubois, I told him of my dilemma; and suggested that inasmuch as he moved around in society quite a bit, that if he saw such a girl employed as a lady's maid he might advise me. He laughed and said it was very improbable, and he had no way of recognizing her, even if he saw her. I told him I would send him photographs of both fugitives. I sent them on August 24 to him, in care of the Iroquois Trust Company."

"Did you afterward hear from Mr. Dubois?"

"Yes, about eighteen minutes after eight, the evening of August 28. He told me he was telephoning from the villa Sans Souci; that he thought he had recognized this girl, but was not sure; that he did know his hostess possessed some very valuable jewels, but did not know whether they were in the house. He said if I would run down in my car, he would send the girl to meet me at the gate with a note and if she was the girl who had slipped past the government barrier, I could take such action as I saw fit."

"You met the girl calling herself Avis Glenn at the gate of Sans Souci?"

"I was the villain in the car," said Vane. "I immediately recognized her as Phœbe Markham and told her she was under arrest when she handed me the note from Mr. Dubois. She screamed and tried to elude me. I grasped her by the wrist, took her in my machine, and she has since been confined awaiting deportation. When the matron searched her, we found she had in her possession a very valuable necklace of diamonds, in a case, bearing the name of Mrs. Duncan Green. I immediately phoned this information back to Mr. Dubois. He said I could communicate with the Iroquois Trust Company, as that concern had issued an insurance policy on the jewels.

"I went there Saturday and encountered

Mr. Dubois, who said Mr. Cowan had sent him into town to see Mr. Swan on the same errand. This was just after the trust company closed at noon, for I had forgotten it was Saturday. So, I took a receipt for the jewels, gave them to Mr. Dubois, and he promised me to give them to Mr. Cowan to make a formal and legal return to his hostess, as the company was technically liable for the theft."

Mr. Marsh decided that cross-examination of Mr. Vane would not be necessary, and he left the stand.

"Call Helen Overbrook," said Mr. Millerand.

"Did you ever see this—by the way, are you sure this triggerless pistol is not still loaded?" asked the attorney. "I don't care to shoot you, Mr. Marsh, you know—at least, not until I've cleared my client."

Detective Beckwith showed the weapon quite empty.

"Miss Overbrook, did you ever see this pistol before the State exhibited it here, after finding it in the bag of Mr. Dubois?" she was asked.

"Yes, sir."

"When and where?"

"About eight o'clock the evening of Friday, August 28, at Villa Sans Souci."

"Before or after the shot was fired?"

"Perhaps not quite an hour before, although I did not hear that, for I had fainted in the garden."

"Where were you at the time? Just tell the jury the circumstances as briefly as you can."

"I was at the cardboard cat experiment," said the girl, "when I was seized with a severe headache. I went back to the veranda, left the others and went to my room on the second floor, near the rear of the house. I had just taken some smelling salts and was sitting in my chair without a light, for it hurt my eyes. My door was open. I saw a man coming up the servants' stairway and he was carrying this pistol."

"Openly?"

"Yes. He did not know I was in the room and the others were on the floor below and at the front of the house."

"Did you see his face clearly?"

"Yes, and the weapon also."

"Who was he?"

"It was Dixon, the butler. He kept on up the stairs after turning around the landing on the second floor, and I did not see him again."

"Is Dixon here?" asked Millerand.

Fogarty gave a ferocious growl. Dixon arose and tottered down the aisle where Miss Overbrook formally identified him. Detective Beckwith placed a chair for the butler near his own.

Marsh, in cross-examining, asked Miss Overbrook if she could say that the pistol was not another weapon.

"I saw the blue barrel and the bone handle. I think it is the same weapon that is here," said she.

"Can you say, of your own knowledge, that Dubois may not have procured it, unknown to you, even although it is the same, and had it in his possession, before the shot was fired?"

"I left the house soon after for a stroll in the garden. I did not see Mr. Dubois until the next morning."

She was excused.

"It strikes me," said Toby Hicks to Miss Barrett, "that Big Bill just stuck this cardboard cat in one eye and the crossbow in the other and then started out to build fences for his governor boom without waiting to see where kitty would fall. It's a mercy he was shot when he was, for he never could have survived this debacle, after that opening speech."

"I think the real dinosaur is not yet hatched," replied Ruth. "That reminds me. If Mr. Dubois is acquitted, I can give him an autographed copy of my first book and beg permission of him to put his character into the next. Well, of all things—here comes Avis Glenn, the maid!"

CHAPTER XLIV

A VITAL QUESTION

BRUCE VANE escorted the young woman to the inclosure for witnesses. Millerand addressed the court:

"On reflection, your honor, I have determined not to insist upon the reply which the explosion of that pistol made

to the district attorney's final question to Miss Poynter. If Mr. Marsh is willing I am ready to stipulate that my demand and his objection be expunged from the record and that the stenographer merely note that the pistol's untimely discharge made no reply necessary."

Marsh drew his brows together in a suspicious frown. So many reversals of his chief's convincing theories had already occurred that he was downright disturbed. If Dubois went free, "Big Bill" would never forgive the "miscarriage of justice." Marsh was also ambitious to succeed his chief, although handicapped by marked individual caprices and petty vanity. These now prompted him to pop up from his seat and declare:

"The State will enter into no compromises with the attorney for the defendant. He may withdraw his request, if he chooses, and the State will not object."

"The request is withdrawn," said Millerand, with simple dignity. "But only out of respect to an absent officer of this court. Now, your honor, one more request. The defense is about to call a witness, Phœbe Markham, who has once been convicted of a felony. Will your honor give the usual instructions to the jury regarding the limitations of credence to be given her testimony, unless supported by other competent evidence?"

Justice Watkins complied.

Phœbe Markham, otherwise Avis Glenn, was then sworn.

She admitted her conviction in England and serving six months in jail for stealing jewels. The light sentence, she explained, was imposed because it appeared that her *fiancé* and accomplice, Malcolm Dowd, had prevailed upon her to steal the jewels to enable them to be married. Dowd had served one year.

"I determined to leave England," said the girl, "for Malcolm took to drink and refused to marry me, settle down and work at his trade. I saved a little money and started for America, third class. I was nearly here when I found Malcolm was olso on board, working as an electrician and wireless operator. He had deliberately followed me."

She told of using references obtained before her trouble to get the position with Mrs. Green; of Dowd's coming there and demanding money, at intervals, and of her giving him most of her wages. Sometimes Dowd was in funds, she said, but at such times he was almost always very much intoxicated.

"Did you see him the night of August 28, last?"

"No, sir. But he came very late to Sans Souci the night before after every one had retired. He put a ladder against the house, ascended to my window and pounded on the casement until I wakened. He demanded money and also that I should steal some jewels from my mistress and then we would bolt. I gave him ten dollars, all of my wages that I had, and begged him to go away, get a job and let me go straight. He said that I had better do as he said or he would write my mistress and I would be deported. Then he went away."

"Did you tell any one of this?"

"Yes. I told Dixon. He had been very kind to me and always respectful. He said that Malcolm should be given in charge, but I said that would never do; that he was a very desperate man when in his cups and would afterward seek me out and, besides, murder Dixon. Then Dixon said I should leave and start afresh. I had no money."

The girl told of her day and evening of terror, momentarily expecting Dowd to arrive, and perhaps expose her to the guests or create some scene which would lead to her dismissal and scandalize her mistress. She was in this state of mind, she said, when she took the jewel case, intending to give it to Dowd, as she knew the necklace was insured, and if she remained after turning it over to him, she was sure Dowd would leave that section and her mistress "would not lose much, if anything."

She told of her fresh terror when Hiram Tako arrived with the note to Mr. Dubois and she recognized Dowd's handwriting and of how this influenced her determination to leave, if she could. The ten dollars the prisoner gave her seemed like "salvation" when she had received it; and she would have left the necklace behind, but she feared

that Dowd would " beat her " if he followed her and found she did not have it.

She conferred with Dixon, she said, and while she did not tell him she did have the necklace, she implored his aid while she delivered the note to the man at the gate. Dixon had said that he had a pistol, and would watch from his window while she went down the path, past the garden.

" He wanted to come with me," said she, " but I was afraid of Malcolm in a rage. I did not want to see Dixon murdered. So, he went upstairs to mount guard over me, while I went down and came back. If I had come back, without meeting Malcolm, I would have put the jewels back in Mrs. Duncan Green's room. I think you know the rest."

" Did you hear the sound of a pistol shot?"

" No, sir. I was apprehended at the gate and taken away. I only heard that Mr. Dubois was charged with murder yesterday and asked Mr. Vane to bring me to court, for I feared that an innocent man might be convicted and I know how cruel and hard a prison is—I do, indeed."

Mr. Marsh took one look at the jury and said that he would not cross-examine the witness. She was led out, weeping.

" Call Alonzo Dixon," said Attorney Millerand.

Dixon walked to the stand.

" Mr. Dixon," said the attorney, " I want to ask you if you told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, when you testified for the State against Mr. Dubois to-day."

It was a daring card to play. The defense was bound by the reply. If Dixon said he had, Millerand could not " impeach his own witness." If he said he had not and admitted his own connection with the shot, now implicitly but not explicitly proved, it would mean the acquittal of the prisoner.

In spite of all that had gone before, the supreme moment of the judicial drama had arrived, at last; and out of this tangled web, beginning with the experiment of a cardboard cat, would emerge justice—the ideal of all human beings—or perhaps a divided sentiment among the jury and a cloud over the prisoner at the bar that would follow him all his life.

CHAPTER XLV

WITHOUT PREMEDITATION

DIXON did not immediately reply.

He was not looking at Millerand, at the jury or at the spectators. Fogarty's glassy eye focused on him from where the rum-runner sat next to Hazel Poynter; next to the bewitching little *ingénue* sat Mrs. Green and next beyond sat Helen Overbrook.

That omniscient glass eye sent a thrill of dread into Dixon's already overcharged soul. He feared the orthodox hand of the law, but he feared Fogarty far, far more, since that uncouth young man was, all too evidently, a law unto himself.

Dixon had perused the account of Fogarty's exploits in routing a bevy of rum-runners, single-handed, of acquiring three trucks of illicit liquor and of requiring an entire troop of State constabulary to apprehend him.

Dixon was between the two horns of a dilemma altogether unprecedented in the career of a butler hitherto deemed irreproachable. If he evaded Millerand's question, that baleful eye of Fogarty typified a relentless Nemesis. Wherever he went, its owner would seek him out and execute summary vengeance upon him. He could never go back to Sans Souci, and the red-haired man who had proclaimed " Starlight was me pal " from this same witness stand would find him, even if he had to go to the ends of the earth.

On the other hand, right at his left elbow was that dotted line, drawn by Hazel Poynter's deft, artistic hand, from the little circle on the top of the straight line personifying Malcolm Dowd's position under the old elm, straight to his own window. If he denied the truth, he might elude imprisonment or electrocution by the law, for the sentiment against Dubois had been so terrible that it might create a " reasonable doubt " in his own case.

It was not much of a hope, but it was

something amid the awful chaos of his steaming thoughts, racing deliriously through his half-numbed brain.

Dixon decided to "stand pat." He licked his lips to speak, but his voice died in his throat in an inarticulate gurgle as he looked down upon the gruesome skull, and then at the cardboard cat lying beside it on the table.

The skull did not worry Dixon, but that cat sent a newer and more overpowering sense of awe through his fear-chilled heart. He had not seen it exhibited at Sans Souci, but he had heard the testimony of ten expert marksmen from the police department, each of whom had sworn that the cat had baffled their best skill with the cross-bow; and then Dixon had seen the foreman of the jury, who didn't believe the cat could be hit, hit it thrice from different distances, in spite of everything the police had testified to the contrary.

The cardboard cat suddenly personified an Inscrutable Power. Dixon had been taught in boyhood that this Power was all-present, all-wise, all-powerful. The cardboard cat was a manifestation of that Inscrutable Power, permeating the whole Universe, and nothing could escape its operations, for they were both inevitable and immutable.

"I'm waiting, Dixon," said Mr. Millerand very gently.

Dixon braced himself for a great adventure. Presently he would be manacled and led away to jail. But as he threw back his head there swept over him a consciousness of a new manliness, an experience so wonderful that he marveled why he had hesitated at all.

"I did not tell the whole truth, sir," said the witness clearly, "and I very much regret that I refrained. I am willing to do so now."

"You may tell it to the jury," said Millerand, "in your own way."

"What Markham—Glenn, as she was known—has said is quite true, sir. I did take the pistol to my room. My only desire then was to prevent the ruffian, who we both felt was lurking somewhere around, from maltreating her; and I would not have armed myself had it not been that Markham had told me Dowd always went armed, a fact which is confirmed by the other pistol.

"When Mr. Dubois opened that note and hurried away to the old elm tree, Markham—or Glenn—was terrified; for she was sure she was on the verge of being exposed and discharged, because she told Dowd the night before she intended to 'go straight' and would not steal from her mistress. When Mr. Dubois looked at the note, which Markham recognized as in Dowd's handwriting, and then looked at the maid so sharply, we both felt there was something in the wind; but when he gave her the ten dollars and sent her to the gate we were both relieved.

"Her only fear, then, was lest Dowd pounce on her, either in going to or in coming from the gate. She said to me she was sure that Dowd was just outside in the bushes or around the old elm, somewhere; and she dreaded to do the errand.

"I told her I would mount guard over her from my room. I sat in a chair by the window and watched her by looking out of it, until she was safely at the gate. I saw the machine stop at the gate, and then I looked down at the old elm. A bit of a cloud was over the face of the moon. It passed.

"Then I saw a man step forward from the trunk of the tree. I rested my pistol on the window sill. It had no trigger, and I drew back the hammer with my thumb, but did not fire. I only wanted to guard Glenn as she came back to the rear of the house, for I was sure Dowd was lying in wait for her.

"Then it happened. I do not know just how or why, for Glenn—I mean Markham—did not come back and was in no danger. Perhaps it was because my thumb tired from the strain of holding back the hammer of the pistol against the heavy spring, for I am not so young as I once was. I had held it quite rigid, resting the barrel on the window sill.

"My thumb slipped off that hammer without my intending anything of the sort at all. The explosion numbed my arm. The weapon fairly leaped from my hand and fell to the gravel path, just under the dining room window, below, while the sound

was still echoing and reëchoing against the hills.

"I looked down once toward the old elm tree. Dowd was crouching slowly down and I was glad I had missed him, but terrified at the premature discharge of the weapon and its effect upon my mistress and her guests. I thought to myself that Dowd would at least be so frightened that he would skulk away, lest he should be shot. The voices of the alarmed guests came up to me. I could hear them plainly.

"I next saw Mr. Dubois leap over the end of the veranda rail, run like a deer along the path, stop and pick up my pistol, then vault in through the window, as I testified before. This is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, sir.

"May God have mercy upon me, for I did not dream that I had killed Malcolm Dowd until next forenoon, when Mr. Dubois accidentally stumbled on his body when pursuing that tennis ball. When Glenn did not return I inferred she had met Dowd and they had left together."

Dixon descended from the stand and sat down next to Detective Beckwith. Justice Watkins directed the jury to return a verdict of not guilty in the case of the People against Perry Dubois. He then thanked and discharged them from duty for the balance of the term.

CHAPTER XLVI

FREEDOM

JUSTICE WATKINS did not leave the bench. Instead, he beckoned Mr. Marsh and Mr. Millerand to his side and held a whispered conference.

"Order!" shouted the bailiffs.

Marsh addressed the court. "If your honor will sit as a committing magistrate," said he, "I desire immediately to arraign Alonzo Dixon for the murder of Malcolm Dowd, in lieu of Mr. Dubois."

"The court will appoint Mr. Millerand to defend the prisoner," he replied. "But this court suggests to the district attorney that the evidence does not warrant a charge of a premeditated killing. I will entertain a charge of involuntary manslaughter."

"I accept the court's suggestion," said Marsh. A half loaf or even a biscuit was better than no political bread.

"The defendant requests the usual ten days before entering a plea," said Millerand, without speaking to Dixon. "Will your honor allow bail?"

"I see no good reason why bail should not be allowed. I will fix it at one thousand dollars, Mr. Millerand. As the hour is late and you may not be able to procure bail for your client to-night, I will allow you until Monday to do so, and, meanwhile, parole the prisoner in your custody, for I assume you will produce him any time the district attorney desires on demand."

"I will," Millerand replied.

"This court now stands adjourned," said Justice Watkins. He arose and retired to his chambers.

There was a concerted rush toward the discharged prisoner and the newly arrested one. Things were a little incoherent. Flash lights were exploding, cameras clicking, Mrs. Green, Hazel, Helen and Ruth all talking at once. Dubois thanked each of them.

"Oh, dear," wailed the journalist, "I'm out of a job after to-morrow, but to-night I've got to write all this up. Imagine! Weeds and violets—and Dixon. Wasn't he splendid, when he found himself?"

"He was," said Dubois, and for the first time his uncanny complacence dropped from him as he stepped over to shake the dazed butler's hand.

"I told Mr. Millerand I didn't think you would fail me," he declared, "and you did not."

"I am very sorry I did not come forward at first," said Dixon, contritely. "But you may know how confusing it all was, sir, and I've always been a servant."

Dubois nodded. "I have read," said he, gently, "a saying: 'He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant.' Dixon, I'm very sorry for Miss Markham. My desire to oblige a friend has taught me a lesson. I will never judge people, again."

"Pagan, old dear," said Hazel, slipping her hand shyly through his arm, "this has been a wonderful and a terrible week—but more wonderful than terrible. Manny Blum

is waiting to take me to a dress rehearsal. We open a week from Monday night. I hope you'll be in your usual box, for he has set his heart upon it—and so have I. We have a surprise for you."

"I hope we'll meet again, before then," said Dubois, shyly. "Yes, it is very strange. Only a week ago to-night I met Fogarty. By the way, where is he?"

"Here I am, kid. I jest wanted to eat all dem harsh t'ings I said. Yer dere, wit' the ol' nerve. Now, I'm goin' to lam outa yere, before dese half dead bulls 'nd job-lot district attorneys remember I'm still alive. I thought I'd die when Beckwith give Wright dat big bone-handled rod, and den Wright got plugged, becuz de bone part of dat handle musta been took from Beckwith's bean."

"How in the world did that happen, Mr. Fogarty?" asked Miss Poynter.

"Aw, it wuz a pipe. Dey showed de rod with five loaded shells and one empty one. Of course, de hammer was on de empty one. Den, when you pulls back de hammer, of course, another shell wit' a load comes under it. When you let go de hammer, as he tells you to, of course de next shell goes off, and if he hadn't been tryin' dis whole case like he wuz dat cardboard cat he'd had a skull like dat other one afore now."

"Wait for me, Fogarty," whispered Dubois. "I want to see you."

"Do you want your cardboard cat and crossbow, sir?" asked a court attendant. "District Attorney Marsh said if you did not I was to throw them into a refuse can."

"Please wrap up all of the apparatus securely," said Dubois, "and I'll take it with me."

Mrs. Green and Miss Overbrook lingered when Hazel and Ruth had gone.

"I think I'll take Dixon back to Sans Souci with me," said the young matron, "for Mr. Millerand suggests that he keep on with his work. He says Dixon need not worry, because his own story will exonerate him, and that he does not think he will ever be indicted.

"Mr. Dubois, I'm so sorry all our week-end went to smash. I don't suppose you'll be eager to look at Sans Souci again; but if you care to come down a week from to-morrow, with Mr. Cowan and a friend or two, Ruth and Hazel will join us, and Helen is still staying with me."

"I am most grateful. I will not bring the cat this time. By the way, how is Mr. Cowan progressing? I've been very concerned about his illness."

"He was more concerned about you," smiled Helen. "He's not ill. He's been very busy. He visited us at Sans Souci three times since your arrest, when he was supposed to be in bed; he hunted up Mr. Vane and talked with Glenn and—oh, ever so many other things."

"Carrots" Fogarty lingered near the door. Dubois gathered up his precious cardboard cat and other paraphernalia, and the red-haired rum-runner helped him carry it down to a waiting taxi.

"Come along with me," said Dubois, "and we'll have an anniversary dinner, down at my bungalow. No one will annoy you, and if they do I'll see that you get a bond. Can you cook? My Japanese boy is gone."

"Kin I cook? Kid, if you've got de stuff after one meal of mine you'll fergit you ever was eatin' in a pogie. De only t'ing I do better than cook is sing; 'nd de only t'ing I do better than sing is shoot. But dat cat, boss, has got me faded. Sweet cider! What a jam it got you inta.

"But, I t'ink it got you out agen, fer I seen Dixon eyin' it up before he come clean. I don't wanta knock a dead pal, but Starlight 'd never traveled wit' me if I'd knowed he was a moll chaser, robbin' a poor girl outa her wages between wild parties w'en he was loaded to de muzzle wit' booze 'nd jack."

CHAPTER XLVII

HAVEN

"CARROTS" FOGARTY drew a long breath as the taxi mounted the crest of the hill and the silvery sheen of the moon threw a mantle of beauty across the sea and the little valley. Dubois paid the taxi driver, unlocked the door and went into the tiny house.

It was in great confusion. Beckwith had

tossed things here and there and had not come back to restore even a semblance of order. It was the only reminder, besides the missing book, of the vengeful quest for something or anything upon which to base circumstances and distort them to convict its owner of a hideous crime.

Dubois rearranged things while Fogarty cooked. They sat down to a meal that was delicious, although "founded," as Fogarty observed, chiefly on ham and eggs.

They finished, washed the dishes, and then went outside and sat down to smoke. Fogarty's hard eyes grew almost dreamy as he contemplated the witchery of the night. At last he said:

"Kid—y' don't mind my callin' y' Kid, do ya?"

"No, Fogarty, not in the least. I guess I am a kid, in some ways."

"Well, I dunno. Yer hard to figger out. For instance: I never could get through my nut how it was dat you could sit in dat cell, wit' Miss Poynter singin' her heart out to youse on a handcuffed ghost, as you called it, 'nd den say to me: 'It's your lead, Mr. Fogarty.' I ain't been able to figger it out since; nor your face, so quiet and calm. I was watchin' yer hands and yer feet too. Dey never twitched, neither. How do you do it?"

Dubois smiled, reminiscently. "About the song? Well, Fogarty, you didn't understand what was back of that. Of course, I was very much affected. As much as yourself, inside, I think. But, just then, I was like a man of whom you've probably never heard but of whom I have read."

"What wuz his name?"

"Alberigo. He is a mythical character. A great poet named Dante once wrote an imaginary account about another great poet's visit to Inferno—meaning hell. The other poet's name was Virgil. While going through there Virgil met this man named Alberigo, and Alberigo prayed to Virgil to break the ice on his face so that he might weep a little. You see, Fogarty, hell isn't always hot nor are its tortures always those of fire.

"Everyone selects his own punishment, according to Dante, and Alberigo could not weep for that reason. I think I was something like him when I heard Miss Poynter sing; and I know I was more like him when the district attorney took that book and read those passages and then read the note I had hidden in my hat. In that I was as foolish as Dixon. We both made grievous mistakes by concealing part of the truth. It can't be done."

"I getcha. You knew you didn't knock off Starlight 'nd wasn't worrying. Not for yerself. I knowed you didn't when you cracked back to 'Big Bill' dat you'd rather fry than hurt a good woman's name. You meant dat, too.

"But you woulda fried, I guess, if it hadn't been for Miss Poynter. She started the tide to turnin'. Say, I swelled up like a poisoned pup when she called me 'Mr. Fogarty' and ast me how dat rod come to blow off in court. Dis woild will never be the same to me, agin, since I heard her sing 'nd clapped my good lamp on her."

"Nor to me, Fogarty. Well suppose we take a good sleep? I'm glad you're here. We can take it easy tomorrow. Next week, what do you say to a little fishing? We can hire a boat."

"We'll fish, fer I know where Starlight's speed boat is. It's right down at de foot of dis yere hill, but de bulls wouldn't find it in a million years. De last load of rum we run ashore a revenue cutter chased us. They opened up on us with swifty-gats—I mean a machine gun. Dey hit dat boat more'n two hundred times; but we kept on goin'. One shot hit Starlight in de arm and raked the hull length of it. But he was game—then. I'll never fergit that last trip."

The two men swept out to sea the following week and for three days enjoyed the delights of aimless voyages and the catching of mackerel. Dubois replenished their stock of food, and they were both smoking after breakfast Thursday morning when Peter Cowan drove up. Ruth Barrett was with him.

"Hello, Perry," said the old banker. "How's the cat?"

"The cat still lingers, sir, despite many wounds. Will you come in?"

"No. Just wanted you to know that Mrs. Green says her husband will arrive

Friday and she wants you and any of your friends to come down for dinner Sunday. Can you believe it, my boy, Duncan sat over in Tangiers and heard every word of that trial by radio? He took a plane and flew to Paris, took another and flew to London, and just caught a ship for home. Mrs. Green has a radiogram and is tickled pink."

"Present my compliments to her, and say that I'll come and bring a friend."

Ruth smiled and nodded to Fogarty with the camaraderie of a real journalist. "I see you two are taking a vacation," said she. "I don't blame you. Mr. Dubois, I haven't been able to get a copy of my book. Going into the third printing, but I'll try to have a fresh copy, all autographed for you, by Sunday."

"Well, kid, I'll be lonesome until you git home agin," said Fogarty wistfully when the others were gone. "I ain't a week-ender—not a Sans Souci week-ender—myself. But I'm keepin' away from de rum gang. I usta didn't care if I got jammed up, but dat cat of yourn has made me cagey. I'm off de rum game."

"Oh, that reminds me, Fogarty. We're going to town. I want you to go to Sans Souci and have dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Green. We'll need to replenish our wardrobes somewhat for the occasion."

"Me!" gasped Fogarty.

"My cardboard cat is taboo," smiled Dubois, "but my friends are welcome."

They were so welcome that Fogarty speedily lost all of his first "cardboard-catty feelin'." Duncan Green and his charming wife, he quickly decided, were "a pair to glue to." He sat down at dinner almost as much at ease with Ruth Barrett, who had taken him under her wing, as if it were a poker game.

Dixon served the meal. Fogarty didn't blink although he watched how Dubois manipulated the various edibles and "followed suit" strictly.

During the evening they chatted and strolled about the grounds. Ruth had a mysterious moment with Hazel, then she piloted Fogarty to a secluded nook in the garden and drew from him the story of his experiences with Dubois in "de pogie."

When he described the song Hazel had sung on the radio she was enraptured.

"I didn't know of that until now," she breathed. "What a wonderful scene—you in tears and Mr. Dubois as inscrutable as ever."

"Yep!" he agreed. "But, y' see, he wasn't thinkin' of dat cardboard cat jest then. He was anodder guy, and his name wasn't even Perry. He tol' me afterward how his face was all ice, and he didn't even dast to ask me to break it. But," he smiled, "I was awful near to breakin' it, anyway."

"What *was* his name?" asked the astonished girl.

"I disremember it, but it sounded somethin' like Alley Berjio. Anyway, one monniker's as good as another, w'en you're in hell, ain't it?"

"Just as good," she agreed. "But the song. Tell me about it!"

"Lissen!" Fogarty leaned closer. "I usta be a singin' waiter in a cabaret, before the game went bum. I kin cook. I can sing better than I kin cook. I c'n shoot—that is, I usta could before I met up wit' dat cardboard cat—better'n I kin sing. Do youse wants to hear dat song? I never heard it but wunst. *She* was singin' it. I disremember all but the foist verse."

"Do sing it!" exclaimed Miss Barrett.

In another part of the same garden Perry Dubois and Hazel Poynter were chatting. The subject was "Hey, Towser," which was to open the next evening and—well, many other things, including the "baffling cat."

"I never knew," said the little *ingénue*, "until you explained it, how the law of falling bodies operates. It was simply wonderful."

"We are all falling," said Dubois dreamily. "The earth is falling in space. It falls just as that cardboard cat falls—according to natural law. And I," here he took a long breath, "have fallen—"

"Don't tell me some one has been shooting at you with a crossbow," she flashed.

"With a bow and arrow," said Mr. Dubois, diffidently. "Hazel, I'm hopelessly impaled and I'm afraid—"

"Hark!" she sat erect. "Whose voice is that?"

Across the kingdom of flowering plants in which they sat embowered there floated a rich barytone.

"Ah! Moon of my delight, that knows no wane,
The moon of heaven is rising once again."

She turned her gleaming, misty eyes to his.

"Somebody," said Hazel, "is stealing my stuff! I wanted to sing that song tomorrow night and Manny Blum has interpolated it, although it was in 'The Persian Garden,' years and years ago. What a voice—what a wonderful voice!"

"I think it is Fogarty," said Dubois. "He's been a weed, although an honest one. Now, perhaps he's finding himself. Hazel, dear, I want to say to you that I've abjured my cardboard cat. I was in love with it until I first saw you. I'm dreadfully handicapped. I'm not a business man. I'm half pagan and I'm afraid my ideas of life are more than a little out of joint—but I—er—I—"

"Wait! Ruth told me to give you her book." Hazel began unwrapping the package with feverish haste.

"The book can wait," said Perry Dubois calmly, "until I've said that I want you to marry me, some day. Will you, my dear?"

She handed him the volume silently. He struck a match and the jacket in seven colors blazed up at him.

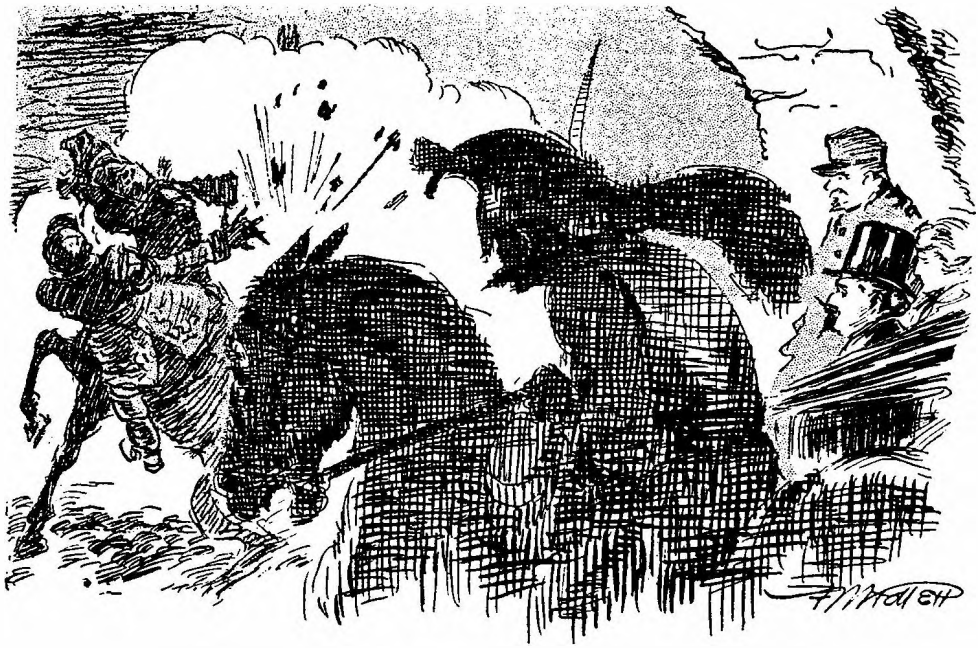
It was very queer.

So queer that this heretofore inscrutable youth—the human enigma with the baffling cardboard cat—stared down at it as nonplused as the court room of spectators had been, when he proved to them that his elusive although artificial feline could *never be missed.*

"On Demand!" He read the title to Ruth Barrett's work with a startled look and then dropped it to the seat as he turned to the girl, her sweet face carved in lines by the greatest of pagan sculptors—Eros!

"'Never mind,'" quoted Fogarty, who was retelling the story of his first night in the cell with Dubois to Ruth Barrett, as they passed unheeding by on the other side of the flowering shrubs. "'Dat's only a glass eye,' de kid says to me, 'and it don't scare me a bit.'"

THE END



With utter unexpectedness, there came an explosion that seemed to rock the very earth

MURDER BY WHOLESALE

By Joseph Gollomb

HIS FANATICAL PATRIOTISM CAME TO AN IGNOBLE END, AND YET ONE PUZZLES WHETHER OR NOT HE LIVED IN VAIN

A Story of Fact

THERE are some stories of real life—one should really call them epics—which leave us fairly gasping at the infinite capacity life has for springing surprises. Suppose, for instance, a man literally with a single movement of his hand should kill fourteen people and wound over a hundred others, all within the space of ten seconds. Would you expect any good to come of that? Suppose, further, that the blow had been aimed at an emperor, one of the vainest in history. Would you expect that emperor to forgive the assassin? And not only to forgive, but to do as the assassin bade him?

These suppositions sound merely wild. And yet so infinitely full of surprises is life that the story of Orsini, the Italian, not only made facts of these wild suppositions, but furnished any number of other climaxes as amazing.

We must begin the story of Felice Orsini by going back to his father. Orsini the elder was an Italian, but he followed Napoleon, the Corsican, all through his vast adventures that tumbled over empires as a child scatters his toy blocks. Then when Napoleon's star sank Captain Orsini turned back to Italy for more fighting.

We all crave food when we are hungry. Some crave strong drink. Others are consumed with ambition to amass riches for

themselves. Such men will often trample on the very bodies of friend and kin that their fingers might grasp the golden fruit beyond their reach.

And some men and women there are who are driven by a lust far stronger than hunger or thirst, ambition or greed. Such men and women will also trample on their nearest and dearest. But they are still more ready to trample, if one may describe it so, on their own bodies to achieve the great ambition that burns within them.

No Time to Waste in Prison

These are the men and women who live and die with the sole aim that millions of others, strangers to them, may live the more happily. The world calls them by strangely contrasting names—saints or assassins, madmen or sages, saviors or super-criminals. Of such were the Orsinis, father and son, especially the son, with whom we are concerned in this tale. I will give the facts and leave to you to call him what names you will.

When Orsini, the father, turned back to Italy he found his country torn by civil war and by foreign tyranny. I shall not go into the mass of history of the situation, but will give the facts that frame the story of the Orsinis. Briefly, the best blood, hearts and minds of Italy dedicated themselves to unite Italians into one strong nation and to drive foreign tyrants off their soil. Mazzini was the George Washington of the movement and Orsini the elder was one of his lieutenants.

Felice Orsini, the youngster, was born, therefore, to a fanatic of a father, cradled in the midst of storms that rocked whole nations, and nurtured daily by the thought that to fight and die for others was the most necessary thing any one could do. He was of middle stature, full of face and body, and had black, burning eyes. Later in life he grew flowing hair and beard, which gave him the look of a lion. For once these features really meant something.

As early as his sixteenth year young Orsini was up to his eyes in conspiracy, fighting, danger, blood and breathless escapes. He was one of Mazzini's most important secret agents. He went on dangerous missions, he slew dangerous enemies when necessary—this boy still in his adolescence—and fomented uprisings.

On one of these missions he was arrested and thrown into prison. His cell in this jail of medieval vileness, a hundred and fifty feet above a deep moat, let in what little air and sun it got through a window eleven feet from the floor.

There was no question of escape by way of the cell door. Day and night there were guards with loaded muskets patrolling the corridors just outside the cell. Yet young Orsini had no other thought but to escape. He had no time to waste in prisons.

But if he wished to leave without the blessing of the Austrians who were his jailers somehow he would have to use that little window eleven feet from the floor, somehow he would have to saw through the thick iron bars that made a gridiron of what sunlight he saw, and somehow he would have to climb down one hundred and fifty feet of sheer wall and cross the deep moat, full of slimy water. Somehow, too, he would have to make his escape over many miles of open enemy country.

"Somehow" was a familiar word which described a situation to young Orsini. From earliest days he was given tasks which he must "somehow" accomplish. So he began telling his jailers of a great Austrian Countess who, he said, was deeply, emotionally interested in him. He named the great lady, and the jailers laughed at the youngster's fairy tale.

The Countess's Messenger

But one day Orsini threw an orange out of his cell window. In the dark of night a young peasant boy—who had been watching for it—picked it up. In the heart of the orange he found a note.

Three days later up to the drawbridge of the old castle which had been turned into a prison there drove a gorgeous carriage drawn by four milk-white horses, luxuriously caparisoned. Two lackeys in maroon rode in front, two others behind. From the carriage descended a beautiful lady in silks and brocades. The governor of the prison, with his staff, came forward to greet the apparently noble visitor.

The beautiful lady accepted the welcome with distant grace.

"I am the lady-in-waiting for Countess ——"

She named the great Austrian lady of the fairy tale young Orsini was so fond of telling the guards. The governor, who, like the guards, did not know the name, but knew how to give homage to gilded coaches and livery, was duly impressed.

"What can I do for you, your highness?" he asked.

"You have a young Italian prisoner here, Orsini. My lady has sent him a birthday cake."

Through Eight Bars

From the coach two lackeys were bringing a basket, from which in the governor's chambers they took out a splendid cake. A Michael Angelo of the bakery must have created it. On a circular foundation rose a miniature castle, gay with frosting in the colors of the Austrian coat-of-arms. Tapering to an apex were eighteen unlit candles.

"My lady begs of you, dear governor, that you permit this little tribute to a youth in whom she is profoundly interested. May I tell her and her many friends at the king's court that you have been gallant enough to accord her this favor?"

The governor bowed low.

"It is I who am favored," he said. "I myself will assume the privilege of handing her highness's gracious gift to the prisoner."

The beautiful lady-in-waiting of the great countess thanked him and at once departed in her gilded coach with its velvet clad lackeys and milk-white horses. The governor, true to his promise, and, as he felt them to his interests, himself handed the birthday cake to the young Italian prisoner with a courteous speech he hoped Orsini would remember *if* he should ever see the great lady again. For the youngster was condemned to die.

The youth carved the splendid cake, kept only a piece for himself, and gave the rest to his keepers to make holiday with. They almost bent double with homage to the youngster they had thought only a liar.

The boy did not eat his cake at once. But in the dead of night he took from it what seemed to be a large candied quince. Instead of the meat of fruit it held a little copper box wherein was coiled a fine steel spring. The edge of the spring had been cut to make a saw.

Orsini found that to reach the bars of his window he had to climb a chair, take a little jump, and only then could he seize a bar with one hand. If he wished to saw through those bars he would have to do it hanging on with one hand and cut away for the few seconds he could thus maintain himself and before the guards should pass his cell door.

It was a task to appall the stoutest heart. But for days and weeks Orsini gnawed away at the inch thick rods of wrought iron; hanging on by one hand, sawing away with the delicate saw with the other; dropping to the floor when his strength gave out or when he heard a guard coming. However, water will wear away stone if drops persist. Orsini finally cut through eight bars. With bread crumbs and rust he so disguised the cuts that the sharp-eyed cell inspector spied nothing wrong.

There was still left the little problem of how, once out of the window, he could make his way down a hundred and fifty feet of smooth wall. Orsini could not afford to break his neck. He had to help make Italy free and united. So he pretended to be ill and remained in bed on the day it was customary to change the prisoner's linen.

The Parting of the Rope

When the guard came with the clean sheets for the cell—remember they now believed the youth's story of the great lady at the royal court—Orsini called out weakly,

"Do you mind leaving the sheets on the bed? I feel so sick! I just simply cannot get up to-day. I'll give you the soiled sheets to-morrow."

It was a small favor to grant a prisoner with influential friends. But guards were changed every day, and when Orsini hid the soiled sheets next day the new guard knew nothing about it.

The youngster now had four sheets. Working in secret he cut them into pieces, plaited them and thus made a rope. Whether it would be strong enough and long enough to let him descend with safety was another

question. But one rainy, moonless night he decided his time had come. He removed the bars he had sawed through, tied his rope to the stumps, and, climbing out of the window, began his descent.

With rain in his face and a storm tearing at him, the youth managed to climb down his hand-made rope for about forty feet. Then more than a hundred feet above the ground the rope parted and Orsini fell. The base of a flying buttress was directly under him. His body struck it and he caromed off into the slimy moat. His head struck the soggy banks, and how he managed to escape a merciful extinction, let the reader explain by whatever agency he chooses.

Cleaning Up the Brigands

But his hands grasped tough undergrowth and he clung with his head out of water. His tough young heart pumped strength back into him and he managed to crawl out on the bank. The moment he tried to rise to his feet he found that both his knees were smashed. So he crawled along in the storm through the night, on all fours.

Toward dawn the rain stopped and frost set in. By early morning he fell unconscious and freezing to death. He was in enemy territory, not a quarter of a mile away from the prison.

Along came a party of hunters talking the language of Orsini's enemies. Their dogs nosed the form on the ground and howled an alarm. The hunters raised Orsini, revived him and began to question. It did not take long to guess who he was.

Whether it was Orsini's fate to go through still greater privations, or whether it was admiration at his indomitable pluck—call the reason what you will—the hunters, instead of turning the escaped prisoner over to their fellow countrymen, gave him the sporting chance they would accord a game quarry. If he could escape other dangers they would not be the ones to stand in his way.

So, incredibly, the youngster made his way back to his chief and friends. Mazzini scarcely gave Orsini's legs time to mend before he sent him off on another and still more arduous mission. One of the greatest obstacles to Mazzini's dream of a united, liberated and peaceful Italy were the bands of brigands which ravaged Italy up and down.

"Clean them up!" Mazzini said to young Orsini.

With a band of glorious young fellow madmen Orsini invaded the strongholds of the leading brigands. The job was too big for him to waste his time on small fry. But his own band was no larger in number than some of the smaller gangs he set out to exterminate. There is a difference, however, between man and man, and Orsini and his youths had that in their hearts which made one of them worth a small company of ordinary people.

A large band of cutthroats dominated one of the choicest provinces in all Italy. They ravaged and robbed at their sweet pleasure. Their leader was planning to invade the next province, and did. He was now dreaming sweetly of passing on from province to province until all Italy was his.

But into the mountain fastness where this leader had his den of dens rode a company of Italian youths wilder in courage than the most reckless ruffian in his band. Chanting patriotic songs they swept like whirling dervishes up the mountainside and into the heart of the brigand stronghold, shrieking, shooting, slashing like some legion out of hell.

Napoleon Forgets His Word

Before such an insane assault mere human flesh could not long endure. Certainly the hearts of plunderers were not equal to the attack of fanatic patriots.

Orsini exterminated that band; wheeled on his horse; led his young madmen to the next province; repeated the exploit there; and kept on purging Italy of its curse of brigandage until his name threw as poignant a fear into the hearts of cutthroats as their names had done to women and children.

It would take a book—and books on him there are—to record his many other exploits, battles and alarums, hazards and achievements. In this article I must skip to the beginning of the last and most sensational chapter of his life.

This takes us to the reign of Emperor Napoleon III of France, nephew of the elder

Orsini's great leader. In his youth the later and lesser Napoleon had fought for Italy and promised that if he should ever rise to power, he would help to set it free from foreign domination. Napoleon III did rise to power. But he did not keep his word. Italy was still under foreign domination, and Napoleon was the gainer thereby.

In the mind of Felice Orsini, brooding on a great dream of liberating Italy, the French emperor loomed up as a figure compounded of treachery and tyranny. He hated the emperor for having turned false to his early vow. He hated all emperors, anyhow, did this passionate republican. And, worst of all, he hated this man in whose hand lay, as Orsini was convinced, the power to liberate Italy, but who refused to exercise it.

Orsini Recruits His Band

For a man like Orsini to contemplate such an obstacle to the happiness of his countrymen, meant he was contemplating how he could remove that obstacle at no matter what cost to himself. Those were the days when fanatics still thought that assassinating this or that individual would make vast difference in the welfare of millions. So Orsini set himself a task just as his leader, Mazzini, set him tasks.

This time, instead of clearing Italy of brigands, Orsini set out to remove from the road to Italy's freedom, a single individual. That this individual was an emperor made not the slightest difference to Orsini. It only made it necessary to work with fewer men and greater secrecy.

So he set about quietly, carefully gathering a few lieutenants. In England, apparently leading the quiet life of a political refugee, Orsini went about studying men, picking candidates for the tremendous adventure. First to be selected was a strange figure for such an enterprise.

He proved to be a little excitable, excessively emotional Italian by the name of Pieri. This Pieri seems to have been an amazing mixture of petty greeds and great courage, laughably vain in the face of picayune accusations and sublimely indifferent to a test even measured by death.

Pieri beat his wife and ran away from her wrath. Then, without a tremor, yes, with enthusiasm, he accepted a proposal to help assassinate an emperor. To buy himself a drink and a meal he stole a watch and an umbrella. When arrested for the petty crimes, he was accused only of stealing the umbrella. He burst out into a rage of denial. "It was a watch I stole, a good gold watch! Not a miserable, second-hand cotton umbrella!" But how he met his fate as an assassin we will see later.

With Pieri as lieutenant, Orsini next recruited another Italian, De Rudio, who came of good family, but had come upon lean days. He was starving as a so-called "professor" of languages in England when Pieri came across him. De Rudio in this condition seemed a likely candidate, so Pieri got his chief in secret to study him. Orsini nodded an affirmative and Pieri went ahead. He promised De Rudio three hundred and thirty-six francs; say, about seventy-five dollars, and a few shillings a week for his wife, if he would go to Paris and do as he was told.

What it was he would be called upon to do in Paris, De Rudio learned later. When he found out, he thought the matter too serious, but also he felt in honor bound to go through with it.

Off to the Opera House

A fourth was added to the little band, Gomez, who looked like a menial, a little man of no particular distinction, and who actually performed for the others something of the functions of a servant. But the little man had served in Algiers in the Foreign Legion and knew what battle, murder and sudden death were.

It appears that the world famous Scotland Yard was not blind to Orsini's presence in England. An unobtrusive eye was kept upon him and his confederates. When finally they set out for France, Scotland Yard sent warning to Paris. But through incompetence the French police lost track of the four conspirators after they had set foot on French soil. Or was it that once in France, Orsini, the wily fox who had escaped so many hunters, also found it easy to elude the French police?

In any event, the four slipped into Paris,

changed their names, took on disguises, and began to study the details of their perilous task. How they acquired, bit by bit, the intimate knoweldge on which they based their preparations; how they built the infernal machinery wherewith to perpetrate their deed; and with what emotions they each went to their individual posts on the fateful day, only they themselves knew. I can only record what has reverberated through history.

It was the evening of the 14th of June, 1858. The king was going to the opera house, which for so long has been the pride of Paris. Empress Eugénie was with him. The streets about the playhouse were jammed for the spectacle of seeing a king ride through them.

The Earth Rocks

In the Rue Lepelletier the crowd was densest, for that was where royalty was to enter the opera house. The gendarmes and troops assigned to clear a path had their hands more than full.

Had the population been hostile, there could not have been taken greater precautions for the protection of the emperor and the empress. First came mounted troops to press back people from the very path of the carriages. Then came a carriage containing officers of the emperor's household.

Followed then an escort of mounted lancers of the Imperial Guard. Only then came the carriage in which rode the emperor, the empress and General Roguet.

To show how extraordinary were the measures to guard the life of the royal couple, I will point out that the body of the imperial carriage was lined with iron plates to protect its royal passengers from bullets and bombs.

Before the entrance to the opera was a great archway. The royal carriage slackened its pace. The spirited but disciplined thoroughbreds had slowed down to a mincing walk, when with the unexpectedness one experiences in nightmares, there came an explosion that seemed to rock the very earth.

By the mere concussion the gas jets in front of the theater and in the neighboring buildings were snuffed out. In the darkness there arose that welter of panic which I shall not attempt to describe. The black night was rent by the flash and roar of another explosion. Then while one held one's breath there came a third.

One of the horses of the royal carriage lay torn and dead. Another threshed about wounded. General Roguet had collapsed by the side of the emperor, a bomb splinter in his neck. Sixty-five of the bullets shot out by the bursting bomb scarred the outside of the carriage, and were it not for the iron armor would have riddled the royal pair.

But, protected by a star of destiny in which the Napoleons, big and small, were fortunate, Napoleon III escaped with only a bullet through his cocked hat. Empress Eugénie's face, though, was streaked with blood from a graze on the temple.

And in the gutter and on the sidewalks lay one hundred and fifty-eight, dead or wounded. Into the sewers of Paris there poured human blood. Cries as from some battlefield arose on the night.

Every window of the vestibule of the opera and in the houses opposite was blown out, and later examination showed that the walls and pavements in the vicinity of the explosion were deeply scarred and pitted.

Murderer Or Saviour?

After the first shock had abated the emperor and empress remembered what it was tradition required of them at such a time. Dignifiedly descending from the wrecked carriage they inquired about the dead and wounded. In the bedlam of confusion the police and soldiers were darting about trying to seek out the guilty and dead and help the injured.

Then the royal pair ascended the opera steps as they would the steps of their throne at some levee in their own palace. With the gesture of a pretense that nothing had happened the emperor and empress took their places in the royal box and the signal was given for the performance to commence.

But in the street outside there was being gathered the terrible harvest of the fiery seed which Orsini had sown.

The one hundred and fifty-eight people struck by the explosion bore five hundred and eleven wounds.

After the first horror and confusion of the crime the police instituted a minute search in the houses in Rue Lepelletier and discovered in Broggie's restaurant, opposite the opera, a young man, apparently a foreigner, who had taken refuge there. He was discovered trying to hide a revolver under a cushion. The man said he was an Englishman, that his name was Swiney, and that he was servant to an English brewer by the name of Allsop. "Swiney" was Gomez, who did not have the stamina of either Pieri or his chief. So he yielded to pressure and took the police to his master.

"Allsop" was found in bed wounded in the head, not seriously, though bleeding profusely. He turned out to be Orsini. Pieri and De Rudio were also captured. On all these men was found considerable money, fulminating shells and revolvers.

With a man of Orsini's historic past the French police found it easy to ferret out finally every last detail that connected the four with their crime. Indeed Orsini, as one might expect of him, made what he described as not a confession, but an explanation, in which he declared in part:

"I will not now detail the reasons which convince me that the emperor has an interest diametrically opposed to the independence of Italy. Once convinced that this was the great stumbling block to our independence, I confess, I resolved to kill him. I should have preferred executing this design alone, but close access to the emperor was not easy, and I was therefore obliged to seek associates. I offer my head as a sacrifice for my country. Before my judges I will occupy myself, not with guilt, but with my character. Let me not be judged by those who accuse me of any crime except for the great one of killing that my country may the better survive."

At the trial Pieri conducted himself like an emotional monkey. Orsini with the calmness and dignity of a judge.

It is a commentary on values in a monarchy that although Orsini and his band had caused the death of fourteen people and wounded one hundred and fifty-eight others the crime for which they were tried was the attempt to kill the emperor. They were, of course, found guilty.

Gomez was condemned to hard labor for life. De Rudio, Pieri and Orsini were sentenced to die the deaths of parricides, on the principle that they had tried to kill the Father of his People.

From his prison awaiting execution as he was, Orsini wrote an amazing letter to the man he had tried to kill. In this he pleaded with his intended victim to bring about the great object which Orsini had tried to accomplish by assassinating him! He petitioned Napoleon III to help deliver Italy from foreign domination.

"I shall submit to my fate on the scaffold without asking your pardon. Death for me will be a relief, but with the close of my career I wish to make a last effort to assist Italy, whose independence has hitherto made me pass through so many perils and submit to every sacrifice." He went on to state the historical situation and the remedy he petitioned. "May your majesty not reject the last prayer of a patriot on the steps of the scaffold! May you deliver my country and the blessings of twenty-five million citizens will follow you to posterity!"

"Prison of Mazas, February 11th, Felice Orsini," he signed his letter. And, strangely enough, it profoundly moved the emperor.

But Orsini did not live to see this hope realized. In the sleety dawn of the 13th of March, 1859, Orsini and Pieri were led out to their death by the guillotine in the Place de la Roquette.

They were clad in black robes and hoods of veil, while their feet were left bare—this was the garb in which were sent to death those who killed their fathers. Pieri joked, laughed, sang patriotic songs. But when the prison barber cut away the hair at the back of his neck that the guillotine might make clean work, at the touch of the cold steel of the scissors Pieri flinched. Then he gulped down strong coffee and spirits and went to his death singing "Mourir pour la patrie."

Orsini remained calm and unmoved till the downstroke of the great triangular knife. And this absence of fear invested him with a dignity of which the grotesque costume of the parricide could not quite deprive him.

Together they pounced for an object that lay midway between them on the floor

THE DUD

By Rufus King

BATTLING BEAUCAIRE, OTHERWISE REGINALD DE PUYSTER, ESQ., TAKES AN IMPOSING PART IN A LIVELY BEDROOM FARCE

IN a cell down at the Tombs a young Irish girl stared through bars at the dawn. If the afternoon found her indicted with attempted murder she determined not to look upon the dawn again. Concealed in the fold between her thumb and forefinger was a tablet she had taken from her mistress's medicine chest before the police had come to arrest her. The bottle had been marked " Poison."

On a bed in a tenement of Second Avenue and the Twenties an Irish woman stared wide-eyed through an open window toward the east. A ship's whistle blew impatiently, shattering the stillness of daybreak. It served to remind her that if anything really dreadful *did* happen to little Margaret there was always the river.

" Hrrumph," announced O'Day with grim decision, and rubbing his vigorous hands still more vigorously together, as his lashes lowered a bit before the sun that streamed lavishly through the windows of his office in the O'Day Detective Agency on lower Broadway. " Hrrrmphaa!"

" Might I inquire whether you got me out of bed at six o'clock in the morning to get me down here for the esoteric purpose of making noises at me?" asked young Reginald de Puyster, gently placing one excellently muscled and immaculately tailored leg across the other.

" Not so much as the tip of my goat's nose could tell," said O'Day briskly, " for

the business on hand is beyond the pale of levity. 'Tis attempted murder."

"So early?" murmured de Puyster.

"Yes," said O'Day, beginning to breathe a bit heavily in spite of himself, and wishing for the thousandth time that the slim, two-fisted creature of more than insulting elegance lounging before him had never come into his life, to say nothing of into his business, where more than once the young millionaire had solved cases for him that he had been on the point of giving up. "And here is the weapon that did it."

"Weapon?" De Puyster, through incurious, sleepy eyes, glanced at the steel phonograph needle cupped in the palm of O'Day's outstretched hand. "I rather imagined that such mementoes were the normal perquisites of the police. Or, perhaps," he added politely, "this was to have been a private murder?"

"It was not," said O'Day, opening wide the fingers of his other hand after finding them clenched too tight for comfort. "For no less a public spot did the attempt take place in than at the corner of Forty-Second Street and Fifth Avenue at five o'clock yesterday afternoon."

"Then my sympathies are with the murderer, especially if he owned a motor and was driving it himself."

"There were two," said O'Day thickly. "The one did and the other didn't."

"This is getting scandalous," said de Puyster. "Might one inquire which one did?"

"The murderer—that little shrimp who is the husband of Mrs. Hamilton Jones, and nothing else."

"That one!" said de Puyster. "It never occurred to me during the fortunately rare and unavoidable instances when we have come into contact that he had even a good murder in him."

"He hasn't," said O'Day. "The murder was a dud; like everything else about him. And if you will make up your mind that there is not so much as one single wrinkle left in the fit of your gloves, I will acquaint you with the details of the case."

With a distinctly pointed smile young de Puyster conveyed the impression that that, after having pulled him out of bed at such a ghastly hour in the morning, was the least that O'Day could do.

II

"THIS would-be Chapman, as you may or may not know, was a second-class singer from a Heaven-alone-knows-what-class family who became a protegé of Mrs. Jones when she was a wealthy widow with no ear for music and the heart of a child, but without the face or figure to go with it. Now, in appearance this silver-plate throated tenor who was and still is a good ten years younger than herself—though she is ever marveling at the fact that their birthdays fell on the same day and in, she minds you, the same year—has the pink-and-white features of a cherub who is a little sick from eating too much cream."

"We need not linger on his description. I have seen him twice. I presume he is now at large and in disguise?"

"He is not," said O'Day. "He is alternately patting his wife on such parts of her hand still left vacant by diamonds and sipping hot chocolate to soothe his nerves at their studio apartment on the roof of a business building on Fifth Avenue in the Fifties."

"The telephone service is becoming impossible," said de Puyster sympathetically. "The police haven't been able to put through a connection with him as yet?"

"No," said O'Day softly, and keeping his eyes riveted by sheer force of will on a photograph depicting the finger-prints of an intelligent gunman who had had, at the moment of his seated demise, a wife and six promising children. "The police have arrested somebody else."

"Of course," said de Puyster. "And while we are, as one might say, in the purlieus of the subject, just whom did Mr. Jones attempt to murder, and why, and of what conceivable interest can it be to me?"

"It was his wife he tried to murder," said O'Day, satisfying himself that he could still work his larynx, "for the silly creature's money, and it will interest you because of Margaret O'Ryan, who is known for business reasons as Margot Orien."

" I believe you still have the advantage of me—unless the lady has a third alias?"

" It is the same name but with a French accent, and no alias at all," said O'Day with excellent distinctness, considering the shrinking effect going on with his collar. " For ever since Maggie became a lady's maid she found that a ' zee ' was worth a healthy five fish more a week to her than a plain, God-fearin', upright ' the.' "

" It was Miss O'Ryan, I gather—rather cleverly—whom the police have arrested?"

" No other, and her mother, Ellen—my second cousin—has been on my neck all night begging for me to save her."

" This Mr. Jones—does he bite?"

" Bite?" said O'Day foolishly.

" If not, why not arrest him, and thus permit me to return to sleep?"

" Because there's no proof," said O'Day, treating a near-by eraser in a manner to which no perfect eraser is accustomed.

" If we were to start at the beginning?" suggested de Puyster mildly.

" I will," said O'Day, balefully watching the eraser pop into the center of the room and wishing it hadn't, " for every instant is of value. Now this Mrs. Jones, being the liar that she is and stingy as only the very rich know how to be when they are, tells such as may be dependent on her that she has put them in her will, thinking by this to get better service from them which—God help the credulous babes!—she does.

" And so when, at five o'clock yesterday afternoon, at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-Second Street, she felt a sudden sharp pain in her right arm and she, being a nervous creature unused to trifles, telling her chauffeur to speed to her doctor, whose office was near by on Park Avenue, had this phonograph needle extracted and learned it was poisoned, she at once accused my cousin Ellen's daughter Maggie of trying to murder her for the legacy she'd promised her in her will."

" Miss O'Ryan was in the motor?" De Puyster's already quite well-lifted eyebrows rose a fraction higher.

" She was; for she was half pet as well as half maid, which is another one of the peculiar ways of Mrs. Jones. And at the instant she felt the pain, so Mrs. Jones told the police, she was having a brooch that had come loose fastened by Maggie. It was then she's supposed to have jabbed the needle into Mrs. Jones's arm."

" And Mr. Jones, during this time—?"

" Had left the car," said O'Day, " while they were blocked by the crosstown traffic. He was standing on the curb saying a few choice words to his wife through the open window. And even Maggie herself admits he was too far away to reach in and touch Mrs. Jones at the moment she felt the jab; nor did his hand raise a blow-pipe to his lips such as the heathens in India use when they wish to say good-by to a friend and not have to repeat it."

" Then why do you presume that it was he who made the attempt?"

" Because he needs the money he hoped to inherit, and because it wasn't Maggie. And unless we can prove so before three this afternoon she'll be arraigned and her mother, whose heart is already bent, will find it broke entirely. Now the case, so far as Mrs. Jones and the police are concerned, is closed and not a bootlegger's chance—she being a teetotaler—would either I or one of my regular ' ops ' have for getting near her. But you can do it in the disguise of a friend."

" The disguise would be complete," agreed de Puyster.

" Nor is it only your ingenuity you will need, nor your plush clothes," said O'Day. " Should there be rough stuff there'll be no help for you but your own two fists."

" Rough stuff—with Jones?"

" Not with Jones, but with his man Wilkins, who is no other than the ' Twin-Punch-Kid ' rigged out as a valet and looking as much like one as I do like the Prince of Wales."

" One might say that the ménage was a bit queer were one to say the least."

" Even more than that," agreed O'Day. " For what hold Jones has on that passé pug I don't know, but it's like a vise. And now then it's up to you to find out how this needle traveled the four odd feet or so between Angel-face and his bigger-and-brighter half, and then to pin the job on him as unescapably as a poppy on tag-day."

" Before three?"

" Before three."

" I'll thank you for the needle," said de Puyster, carefully folding it in a slip of paper and placing it in the pocket where it would least affect the perfection of his clothes. " Just how did you obtain it, inasmuch as officially you have no connection with the case?"

" The janitor in the office building where the doctor—" began O'Day.

" I comprehend perfectly. His name will be O'Rourke and he will be another cousin either with or without the embellishment of a remove."

" He will." An anxious look came into O'Day's eyes. " You'll get busy at once?"

" At once."

" By going to the Jones's?"

" Certainly not," said de Puyster, placing a handkerchief over the knob of the door before turning it, " by going to bed."

Which, with the aid of an Hispaña-Suiza limousine, a chauffeur, a doorman, a private elevator boy, and an enthusiastic valet, he shortly did.

III

THE hour of one-thirty brought —in addition to amber-colored Celestines *à la Maintenon* not badly served with Béchamel sauce, some chicken *Chartreuse*, a dash of Aspic of *Pâté* en Bellevue, and a perfectly stunning Charlotte Princesse de Galles made of rolled *gauffres*—a ring upon the phone.

Mrs. Hamilton Jones mingled a sigh of satiety with one more befitting her rôle of all-but-murdered and hence very interesting invalid, who has been ordered to stay in bed by her doctor, and pointed a jeweled finger toward the Spanish doll whose dress, as a perpetual little surprise, concealed the transmitter.

She sustained the pose while the bell continued to ring with a gentle insistence. The Caroline of Denmark look—" Oh, keep me innocent—make others great "—that lay both from practice and habit in her pallid blue eyes snapped into sterner stuff, and though they still bore a striking resemblance to a fish, as she pivoted them until they rested upon her Hamilton, her look was like that of a tarpon rather than of such species as are popularly supposed to be made up almost exclusively of jellies.

" Hamilton, my love!" Her tone belied the endearment.

" Huh?" muttered Hamilton, caught unawares between a nap and a rather terrible dream.

He sat up sharply, and an observing person, preferably one who moved in police circles, would have noted that he first cast a furtive glance across his shoulder before engaging his eyes with those of his wife.

" That's right—sleep!" she called in a manner made hugely popular by Leslie Carter. " Sleep, while I lay here dying—without being able to lift a finger—and if you don't answer that damned telephone and make it stop ringing I'll scream."

The worst of it was she would, thought Hamilton as he bounced from the chair and lifted the receiver from the hook.

It being always rather difficult for Hamilton's face to convey any expression at all, Mrs. Jones was, one might say, electrically intrigued by the one that vitalized her husband's features for an astonishing instant. His lower jaw, never tight at best, sagged heavily; his eyes lost their natural aptitude toward beadiness and became almost poppy as they glinted with a strange excitement while darting toward her.

" Send them right up," he said in a voice that sounded like nothing so much as a microphone on the B. R. T. announcing any station in Brooklyn.

" Who?" snapped his invalid. " Send up who?"

" Just young Reggie de Puyster," said Hamilton casually, returning the telephone to where it shouldn't belong, " and a friend."

" De Puyster—*the* Reginald de Puyster who almost spoke to you that time you bumped against him at Sadie Bartow's lush for Mestrinov?"

" Yes, dear, yes," said Hamilton with a few motions such as parrots indulge in during the delightful operation of preening. " I met him a coupla times—never knew I'd made such an impression on him. He asked permission to pay his respects, if you would receive him."

"He must have read it in the papers," said Mrs. Jones, snatching her eyes away from the hand mirror, which was reflecting a vigorous process in touching-up, long enough to glance at the pile of dailies clouding a table beside the bed. "Sort of strange his wanting to come up like this, though," she added, plucking a grain of common sense from the chaff of her social knowledge. "He should have just telephoned to inquire—or sent flowers."

"He said he had a mission," mentioned Hamilton, who had transferred his preenings to the close vicinity of a pier glass. "It's in some way connected with his friend."

"Friend—who is his friend?"

"He didn't mention her name."

"*Her* name!"

The puzzle in Mrs. Jones's mind grew blinding. There were rare instances when she was nobody's fool, and this was one of them. That an all but total stranger, and one at that to whom the most obscure of social usages must have been an open book, should call the day following an attempt upon her life and request to see her personally—with a mission—quite obviously a female mission!

Her wonder shifted into third and transcended all bounds. She sidetracked to a fleeting wish that Margot were at hand instead of in the Tombs, and promptly got the shock of her at present not uneventful life when a familiar knock was followed by an opening of the door and Margot Orien, a pale and rather burning-eyed Margot, stood at the threshold.

Mrs. Jones wasted no time in radically changing her belief in fairies. Shocks were in the crescendo, and her first lucid action upon being confronted by her ex-maid and ex-almost-successful-murderess was to produce a masterful shriek, the tail end of which was muffled by the counterpane beneath which, with surprising agility, she dived.

"Take her," she mumbled, "away!"

A curious look came into Hamilton's eyes. If one has ever noticed either in a glass cage in a zoo or in the vaster book of knowledge accurately, if ceaselessly, dubbed all-outdoors, the glint inspired by a sudden and quite deadly determination in a puff adder's glance, one can then picture that look. Mere words, as is their wont, would fail to describe it.

Hamilton reserved it for Margot; lavishly gave it to her for a startled, concentrated moment, then, with astonishing rapidity and all but incredible presence of mind, he did three things.

The first was to press a button set in the paneling of a wall; the second was to insert a fresh cigarette in an amber holder and light it with hands that visibly did not tremble; the third and most important was to turn to the, yes, to the elegant vision of young de Puyster who had supplanted, through the medium of a firm if polite push, that of Margot on the threshold, and say, "Really, my dear chap, isn't this just a bit, well, extraordinary?"

"Quite," said de Puyster, with a metallic but sufficiently affable smile. "It is probably one of the most extraordinary things I have ever done in my life. I trust that upon adequate explanation you will forgive me?"

The smile, among its other qualities, broadened for an extra fraction of an inch to a point where it became disarming. It is rather easy to make a smile disarming if one has behind its enigmatic curves the power of many millions of dollars and a social position firmly gripped in the bedrock of one of the few great cities of the world.

Mrs. Jones, being incurably curious by nature, had emerged from the billow of heliotrope-toned silk that had been serving so inspirationally as her refuge.

"Even for nowadays," she said in the weird, fluty voice she reserved for exceptional occasions, "you must admit, my *dear* Mr. de Puyster, that this is utterly unconventional."

"I must—I do." De Puyster sped the admission on a bow that would have wrenched a nod of approval even from a matron of the eighties.

"Margot—loose—?" continued Mrs. Jones, a note less flutily. "I do not understand—?"

"I can explain it best by admitting that the whole situation is disgracefully illegal and therefore, perhaps, thoroughly under-

standable," said de Puyster, casually noting the entrance through a second door of an amazing person, beneath whose theatrically conservative clothes rolled, he judged, the muscles of the " Twin-Punch-Kid."

" The district attorney and I—but, then, I'm certain you won't ask that I commit myself further, Hamilton "—the name stuck in his throat, but eventually emerged, pleasantly enough—" knows how such things are arranged."

" Quite, quite, my dear Reggie," admitted Hamilton, " quite."

" Just so," said de Puyster, chewing a bit on the " Reggie " and thus getting it down. " And now, Mrs. Jones, if you will further strain the quite charming tenure of your indulgence I will present, much, I must confess in the manner of a prestidigitator producing a final white rabbit from his hat, Mr. Harris Silvestri, the district attorney himself."

IV

DE PUYSTER moved from the doorway and the curious tableau was complete. In his place stood Mr. Silvestri, filling with his figure, which was inclined to bulginess, an afternoon suit of exclusive Scotch cloth, and looking wearily dubious about his brightly intelligent eyes that went from person to person with calm decisiveness, while his mouth remained uncompromisingly rigid in the setting of cruelly shaved blue planes that composed his cheeks and jaw.

At the side of the district attorney, nearest to Hamilton, stood de Puyster, poised with the negligent alertness of the experienced whip while driving with a high hand a fractious coach-and-four. Unobtrusively beyond Hamilton stood the Twin-Punch-Kid, waiting with an attitude of unconvincing servility for the orders to which the ringing of the bell had offered a prelude.

Mrs. Jones, a fantasy in cool enamels against silk, suggested the inertness of a wax mannikin arranged for the partial exposition of lingerie for the rich; for the situation had already vanished beneath horizons far beyond her. The expression in her eyes pendulumed for a faintish moment between tarpon and jelly fish, then came to a semi-glazed point of rest in the neighborhood of a smelt.

And between the bed and all of them stood O'Day's cousin Ellen's Maggie O'Ryan, a helpless slip of fair young womanhood, the delicate grain and texture of whose being lay trapped in the bitter steel of legal circumstance; a helpless sheaf of young Irish sunlight, in spite of her " zees " and " Modomses," with the fires of her heart cold in ash. She wondered and wondered, like a squirrel racing round on the wheel in its cage, whatever at all her Patsy Mulcharchy must be thinking of her as he piloted his huge truck about the intricacies of the city, and what he would do when the tablet, still hot in the fold between her forefinger and thumb, should be popped into her mouth, and such visions as the blessed Mary kept hid behind the glory-mask of her radiance might be vouchsafed to the sight of her dead body's eyes.

Mrs. Jones, with no knowledgable volition of her own, surged into action on the tide of social necessity that dominated so completely the shoals of her existence. " Perhaps, my dear Mr. de Puyster," she said *en treble,* " you will explain the purpose behind this—?" She carefully swallowed the word " intrusion " and supplanted in its stead a period mark, through the simple expedient of closing her carmined lips.

" Willingly," said de Puyster, focusing his eyes upon a bisque figurine presumably posed in ecstatic greeting of the dawn or of the first chill drops from a showerbath, and from which vantage point their vision encompassed in its scope the taut persons of Hamilton and of the Twin-Punch-Kid. " We are gathered here in this curious little assemblage in the cause both of mercy and justice."

A glaze of rigidity tightened the muscles of Mr. and Mrs. Jones's features as the word " mercy " splashed its cool note against the shores of their attentive ears.

" I could never forgive—ever!" There was more of the banjo than of the flute in Mrs. Jones's voice as she sat bolt upright in bed and nervously fingered the rings that glinted their restless fires from the soft

captivity of her hands. "As an example—a protection for others against her—justice demands"—she floundered after platitudes and ended rather lamely with—"that justice be done."

"There is no question as to that, Mrs. Jones," said the clear, incisive voice of the district attorney. "Justice, without the slightest hindrance on our part, will be permitted to run its course to the full."

As for the creamy-tinted Hamilton Jones, he said nothing at all, for a stunning idea had just reached fruition in the fallow soil of his desires. With the presumed murderess at hand—with the district attorney with his unimpeachable official standing there as a witness—with Reginald de Puyster with his equally unimpeachable social position also present as another witness—heaven itself could not have contrived no more opportune an instant for a second attempt to murder his wife.

All of which, either with or without the divine connivance of Heaven, was precisely the bait of the little trap that young de Puyster had devised.

V

WITH a complaisance surprising for a dame so fickle, nature began to do herself rather well along the line of atmosphere as the drama swept smoothly toward its crisis.

Black clouds piled thickly across Manhattan from the sea and a jagged fork of fire brightened momentarily their leaden depths, while a crash of celestial artillery dwarfed the life-thrum of the city into comparative quiet.

De Puyster, with the startled exuberance of a showman unexpectedly receiving a shower of theatrical manna from the gods and from Dionysus in particular, smiled with serene satisfaction. It was a grand day for a murder.

As Mrs. Jones rarely lost an opportunity for screaming, either with or without the incontrovertible excuse of a thunder storm, she added her own not negligible mite to the clamor that had resulted from the last clap.

"My love!" said Hamilton with the spontaneity of an automaton and advancing a step closer to the bed.

But Mrs. Jones, as she had a perfect right to, felt herself becoming efficiently hysterical. The scene had long since been transported beyond the comforting realms of reality—her ex-would-be, and might-at-any-moment-again-be murderess was loose, even though held in tenuous leash by so august a custodian as Mr. Silvestri and her most private of chambers, to wit, her bed chamber, invaded by an audience of two strangers impelled by motives wretchedly fogged as to their clarity!

Having less than none of the large and rich social aplomb of the very late Madame Jeanne François Julie Adélaide Bernard Récamier, whose aptitude for receiving any number of strange gentlemen is, of course, historically notorious, Mrs. Jones just naturally rebelled.

"Go home," she said, "the pack of you!"

"My *love!*" repeated her Hamilton, in the voice for which he was justly famous when engaged in executing the third act of Tosca in very exclusive and equally private performances at the homes of alleged friends.

"At once," said de Puyster, accompanying each step of Hamilton's toward the bed with one of his own. "But first, Mr. Silvestri and I join in begging that you grant a single request, that you permit Mademoiselle Orien"—he chose the French interpretation of O'Day's Ellen's Maggie's name with an eye to past and possibly future additional five fishes—"to assume the precise position she had taken in relation to yourself at the instant when the poisoned needle entered your arm."

Mrs. Jones stalked the idea much in the manner of a hypnotized prey reluctantly drawn toward a cobra. As for her singing half, a faint start of exultation caused the match he was applying to a fresh cigarette to go out. A significant glance sped between Mr. Silvestri and de Puyster. The bait, each knew, was now completely swallowed in its entirety and the jaws of their nimble trap would shortly close.

"Do!" urged Hamilton, with more pep in his tone than had been exhibited as yet, and with the air of an efficiency expert re-

moving a monkey wrench from some balking piece of machinery.

"All right, but I don't see the use in it," said Mrs. Jones petulantly.

"You will," said Mr. Silvestri briefly, and thus going the proverbial countess one better by entering into the conversation for the second time.

Mrs. Jones looked frankly skeptical. She emerged more largely from her inundating seas of silk and pressed jeweled fingers against her breast. "The brooch," she said, "was here—one of the first gifts that Hammy gave me." And, she might have added, the last. "It's a lizard done in diamonds and green emeralds. It belonged to his mother."

"Yes it did," thought de Puyster and Mr. Silvestri with uncanny unanimity.

"Hammy, dear, was standing on the curb and talking to me through the window," continued Mrs. Jones, gaining strength and volume simultaneously as the dramatic fervor of the scene bloomed afresh in the rehearsing. "'My love,' he was saying, 'no matter *what* you may say to the contrary, or how firm a stand you may take, I am convinced, *convinced* that the beige-toned stockings with the appliqué of silver will be divine with your new Drécol *charmeuse*, and that the gold and sand ones would be unspeakably horrid.'

"'Oh, but, my *dear*,' I was saying, starting in, you know, to contradict him, when I noticed the lizard was loose. I motioned to this—this female fiend"—she hurtled her stored up venom toward Margot on a glare—"to fasten it. She leaned across me—so—"

"One moment, Mr. Jones, if you please!" De Puyster added his steps to those of Hamilton until they had all but reached the bedside. "The point of our inquiry will be lost if Mademoiselle Orien—who you have of course noted is near the breaking point—" he added in a discreet whisper charged with words of senseless significance, "does not enact the scene herself. Come closer, *mademoiselle*, approach and touch your mistress as you did when you *pressed the needle into her arm in the motor*."

Three sharp intakes of breath descended rapidly down as many pipes in the respective throats of Mr. and Mrs. Jones and the Twin-Punch-Kid as they realized the hoariness of the trick that de Puyster, apparently, was playing upon the weak and all but fainting Mademoiselle Orien.

If the girl moved a step, one inch toward her reputed victim, it would be a tacit confession of her guilt; certainly a sufficient one, in the hands of a clever lawyer—and Mr. Silvestri was acknowledged to be a very clever lawyer indeed—to obtain a binding conviction against her.

A sense of pleasant reassurance seeped through Mrs. Jones like an anodyne. All was explained. The unconventional enigmas of the situation vanished like mists before the glaring sun of her inward comprehension. With the smug look of a heroine in any drama devised in the nineties by Herne she composed herself for the denouément that must instantly burst.

VI

AND the veriest tyro in explosions could tell that something most decidedly did burst.

Margot had moved her confessional inch and her steps had multiplied sufficiently to transport her to the side of the bed. There was a trancelike quality in her walk, similar to the one highly in favor among Thespian Ophelias during such scenes in which the lady is presumed to be madder than usual.

During a hush as absolute as one evoked by a New Jersey radio fan attempting to catch California they watched her bend slowly down and advance her hands toward her mistress's agitated and theoretically lizarded breast. Her fingers had no sooner touched it than, with a leap made famous by panthers, young de Puyster had hurled himself upon Hamilton Jones and had sent him crashing backward, halfway across the room.

Together they pounced for an object that lay midway between them on the floor. De Puyster reached it first, snatched it from the rug where it lay and swiftly slipped it into a pocket of his coat.

"*Cokey!*" screamed Hamilton in a voice

no opera singer certainly might be supposed to house. " Get it away from him—quick!"

With impassive eyes Mr. Silvestri reviewed the scene as he casually removed the small automatic from his breast pocket, where he habitually carried it, and meticulously tabulated " Cokey " as another alias, hitherto unknown, of the Twin-Punch-Kid.

It became immediately obvious that Hamilton's pseudo valet required no further urging. With a cage full of pet jabs and swings, to say nothing of a refined assortment of haymakers, all ready to loose upon the elegant Charleston-tripper smoothing his pale chamois gloves before him, the Twin-Punch-Kid waded in.

" Give us it!" he demanded, from the lower west corner of his mouth as he hooked his left with what must have been mock affection under de Puyster's arm and then went to work with his right.

" Tut!" said de Puyster, politely breaking the clinch and launching a neat but not gaudy left hook that made a most seamanlike landing in a far from abstract fashion on the point of the Twin-Punch-Kid's jaw.

Mr. Silvestri, with a shrug, returned the automatic to its pocket. He rested a capable hand on either jamb of the doorway and accompanied the gesture with a mean and meaning look toward Hamilton, whose steps, in a fashion in vogue among crabs, were bearing him in that direction. " Drop your mud hook, sister," he advised quietly, " and haul in your sheets."

A worried, puzzled frown added a further crease to the Twin-Punch-Kid's serried brow. Such of his blows as were landing—and the percentage was so slender as to be almost negligible—bore, apparently, no fruit. His footwork, for which in days not so long past he had always been quite famous, began to take on the aspect of an old southern breakdown, which was further accented by his opponent inquiring of him in an irritatingly suave voice just where were his Topsy and his cute Little Eva.

" You go to hell," he advised soulfully as soon as his lips were freed from the sealing knuckles that had just caressed them with the force of an affectionate sledge hammer. Then he lashed out with his right and succeeded in driving home a one-two punch into de Puyster's face that rocked its owner backward upon his heels and into the lap of a marble lady who had been, until then, perpetually engaged in the delicate operation of removing a thorn from her foot.

A timely shriek from Mrs. Jones accompanied the statue's crash. If this was high society, she said to herself with a fervid curse, give her, she implored, the cruder but more staple chivalry of the corn belt. If Vienna, Illinois, didn't see her back home again, and for keeps, before many moons had polished off their rises and their sets she, for one, was going to know the reason why.

De Puyster, during one of the lengthier and more artistic private ballets of his opponent, took a look at his watch. Its hands were closing in upon the hour of two. He made a rapid and rather startled calculation—ten minutes, say, for the return home; half an hour in which to dress; another quarter in which to reach the Ritz—that left him a bare five minutes at best for finishing up the matter at hand.

" Come here," he said, beckoning with a coaxing finger toward the gentleman who was still indulging himself in a *pas seul*.

With a bellow of rage the Twin-Punch-Kid closed in and whipped a wicked left toward de Puyster's lovely face. But the blow never connected, for a cartwheel that started from the ground floor smashed past his guard and he instantly enjoyed the privilege, for a sickening moment, of viewing stars by daylight before such slender consciousness as he ordinarily employed was snuffed out.

" Your evidence, Mr. Silvestri, is here," said de Puyster, taking Hamilton's amber cigarette holder from the pocket where he had placed it after having picked it up from the floor. He held it against the light and carefully noted the dark, slender, pointed shape outlined in its cloudy depths. " Just as I imagined—you will find a needle in its tube similar to the one removed by her doctor yesterday afternoon from Mrs. Jones's arm.

" One can readily understand how neither Mademoiselle Orien nor Mrs. Jones paid the slightest attention as to whether or not your

prisoner held the holder in his mouth while talking from the curb through the motor's window. I dare say the use of such a holder is so commonplace that it would no more be remarked upon or remembered than the fact that one were wearing any customary part of one's attire. It is a perfect example of the invisibility of the obvious.

"Mr. Jones, I might venture, held himself in constant readiness for some time past for an opportune moment for the attempt, and our little ruse this afternoon of supplying him with such an advantageous second one was more than he could resist. As for his connection with that distant relation of Mordkin's on the rug one can only surmise —unless your records down at police headquarters can establish some former affinity between the two."

"I imagine they can," said Silvestri, "though that aspect of the case is of scant importance."

"Quite so," agreed de Puyster, arranging the last misplaced section of his clothing into the perfect alignment from which it had strayed. "And now, my dear Mrs. Jones, permit me to thank you for your very cordial assistance, and to hope that shortly, under more auspicious circumstances, I may have the pleasure of presenting myself again."

"And I hope to God," said Mrs. Jones, with a foretaste of that refreshing Mid-Western frankness to which she expected so swiftly to return, "not."

TOM REYNOLDS'S GHOST

THE law says that a man's life and liberty may be placed in jeopardy but once and if he is acquitted of any crime by a jury, he may never be tried again. This holds good even if later developments prove that he is guilty.

Thus it was that Charles Meyers, a hotel porter, walked out of the criminal court in St. Louis in 1897 a free man. He had just been acquitted of the brutal murder of Tom Reynolds, an aged recluse who lived at the lodging house where Meyers was employed.

"You had the wrong man," Meyers told Detective Keely, who had been in charge of the case. "Some day you'll find the right fellow."

"You are the right man," Keely retorted. "I am as certain of it as I am that my name is Keely."

Meyers laughed and walked away.

The crime of which he had been acquitted was an atrocious one. Reynolds, reputed to be a miser, had been waylaid in the basement of the place and had been killed with a hatchet. His body was buried under a pile of ashes, where it was discovered some days later by a negro. The body had been securely tied with rope and had been covered with cheap perfume.

The evidence against Meyers was purely circumstantial and consisted of the fact that he had bought the rope which was found on the body and had also purchased a bottle of perfume at a near-by drug store.

When Meyers left the court room he was a huge, healthy man with a ready smile and a hearty manner.

Fourteen months later a lean, sunken-eyed individual walked into police headquarters and asked for Keely.

"I am Meyers," he said. "I killed Tom Reynolds. Have me hanged, will you? His ghost has haunted me day and night. He walks with me on the streets and sits beside my bed. I thought I could get away from him, but I can't, so I have returned."

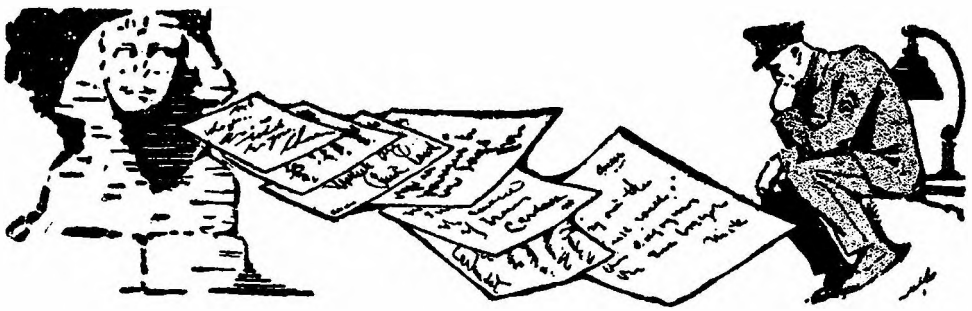
Keely took Meyers to the circuit attorney, where the story was repeated.

"Hang me," pleaded Meyers.

"The law," the circuit attorney said, "decrees that a man can be tried but once and, if acquitted, he is forever free of the charge. You are free. I can take no action against you."

Meyers spent a week trying to force some official to take action against him. Failing, he disappeared from the city.

Three months later he killed himself in Memphis, Tennessee.



SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

Edited by M. E. Ohaver

THE VIGENÈRE CIPHER, AMONG ITS MORE NAMES THAN A CAT HAS LIVES, IS CALLED THE UNDECIPHERABLE CIPHER

IN the annals of cryptography, as in any historical record, some dates stand out more prominently than others in the relative importance or interest of their happenings.

Thus A.D. 1586 marks a high spot in cipher history. For in this year there was published at Paris the first edition of an epoch-making treatise on cryptography, "Traicté des chiffres, ou secrètes manières d'escrire," by Blaise de Vigenère, French physicist.

Vigenère was born in 1523, and lived until 1596, ten years after the appearance of the book just mentioned. He was a scholar of note, and the translator of many scientific works into French from the Greek and Latin.

But had he done nothing but write his book on ciphers, in this alone would he have set an enduring monument to posterity. Indeed, the invention of a single cipher described in this work was sufficient to have made him famous.

The cipher referred to is his celebrated *chiffre carré*—square cipher—a system of far reaching importance, destined for use throughout the civilized world, and long believed absolutely undecipherable without the key.

The cipher consists in the use of a series of cipher alphabets, the identity, number, and order of the alphabets being determined by a literal key, usually in the form of a word.

This cipher of Vigenère's is modeled after, and is a simplification of, a still earlier cipher first published in 1563, the invention of a Neapolitan physician, Battista della Porta.

The Porta cipher is accredited the distinction of being the first cipher ever devised using a variable literal key. Like the Vigenère cipher, it, too, was used by many world celebrities, but somehow it never reached the peak of popularity attained by its derivative system.

Perhaps this was because the Vigenère table, if not at hand, could be more easily reconstructed from memory. Again, the Vigenère cipher may have appeared to offer greater security. For it permits any letter to be represented in cipher by any letter of the alphabet, while the Porta cipher only provides half this number of substitutes.

The Vigenère *chiffre carré*—also *chiffre quarré*—has more names than the proverbial cat has lives. The French called it *chiffre indéchiffrable*—undecipherable cipher—and the Germans named it *multiplikations-chiffre.*

It was used as an official and military cipher by the Confederate States of America during the Civil War, hence the name Confederacy cipher.

The Confederate key had the additional

feature—not shown in the accompanying table—of a column of numbers, *1* to *26*, from *A* to *Z* at the left side of the table; and a row of numbers in descending order, *26* to *1*, from *A* to *Z* across the top. In this way, presumably, the alphabetic square could also be used with a numerical key.

Incidentally, it is said that cipher keys exactly similar to that used by the Confederates were in the possession of John Wilkes Booth and his co-plotters, one copy having been in Booth's waistcoat pocket after he was shot.

It was supposed that these keys were supplied by the Confederate government. But it cannot be assumed from this that the Confederates had any previous knowledge of the plot to assassinate Lincoln.

The Vigenère cipher was profound in its influence upon subsequent systems. The Porta multiple alphabet principle, through it, became tremendously popular. And the *chiffre carré* became the model for numerous ciphers, many of which were identical with it in results, but different in manipulation.

One of these is the Gronsfeld cipher—see FLYNN'S for June 6, 1925—and another is the St. Cyr cipher, said to have been used by both armies in the Franco-Prussian War.

The *chiffre carré* is also variously known as the Russian square, alphabetic square, multiple-alphabet and block-alphabet cipher, Continental cipher, pass-word cipher, and Sphinx cipher.

Vigenère's cipher, as already mentioned, is polyalphabetical, the whole number of cipher alphabets being equal to the number of letters in the alphabet of that language for which the alphabetic-square is constructed.

The table for the English alphabet is given herewith. Each of the twenty-six horizontal cipher alphabets takes the name of its initial letter, also found in the key alphabet at the left of the table.

Message Alphabet

Key Alphabet	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
A	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
B	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A
C	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B
D	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C
E	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D
F	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E
G	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F
H	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
I	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
J	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
K	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
L	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
M	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
N	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
O	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
P	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Q	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
R	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
S	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
T	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
U	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
V	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
W	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
X	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
Y	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
Z	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y

Cipher Alphabets

Thus the cipher alphabet in the first row, beginning with *A*, is the *A*-alphabet; the next one below it, the *B*-alphabet; and so on.

The substitute in any alphabet for a given letter is found at the intersection of the desired alphabet with the column of the desired letter. Thus the substitute for *K* in the *B*-alphabet is *L;* since this letter is found at the intersection of the *B*-row and *K*-column.

In some of the Vigenère alphabets may be recognized previously known single-alphabet ciphers. Thus the Augustus cipher—in FLYNN'S for February 21, 1925—is identical with the Vigenère *B*-alphabet. Julius Cæsar's cipher—in the September 12 issue—is the equivalent of the *D*-alphabet here. And the *Albam* cipher—see the issue of October 10—is the same as the present *N*-alphabet.

From this it will be seen that Vigenère's cipher does not differ in the formation of its individual alphabets from those of simple ciphers already centuries old. Its difference lies in the fact that it uses a series of such alphabets, the identity, order, and number of which is only known to those having the key.

To illustrate the method of using the Vigenère cipher, the short message at *(b)* will now be enciphered with *BASTILLE* as a key:

(*a*) Key: b a s t i l l e b a s t i l l e b a s t i l l e b a s t i l l e b a s t i l l e b a s
(*b*) Message: KING LOUIS AND HIS FAMILY PLOT TO ESCAPE FROM FRANCE.
(*c*) Cipher: LIFZ TZFMT AFW PTD JBMAEG AWSU TG XANLTF FJHU QCEOCW.

First, write a letter of the key above each letter of the message, as at *(a)*, repeating the key as the length of the message requires. Each letter of the message is now enciphered in the alphabet indicated by the key-letter with which it is paired, in the manner already described, the completely enciphered message being shown at *(c)*.

In deciphering with the key, the process is reversed. Thus to decipher the first letter *L* of the above cipher, locate the *B*-alphabet, follow it to the right until *L* is reached, when the letter of the message *K* will be found at the top of the column so located. The novice at this cipher may gain all the necessary practice for its use by enciphering and deciphering the short illustrative example in full.

In the Vigenère cipher it is possible for a given letter to be represented by any letter whatever in cipher; and conversely, any cipher can conceivably be the substitute for any letter whatever in the message.

And this is no doubt responsible for the opinion held by some that this cipher cannot be read without the key. For, it is probably reasoned, how could it be possible to find the meaning of a cipher letter, when that letter can stand for any letter of the alphabet.

A little thought, however, will show that this premise is not altogether true. For in order that a letter in cipher can act as the substitute for all twenty-six letters, would mean also that all twenty-six key-letters would have to be used in enciphering them.

In the case of any single letter in cipher, it is possible that any key-letter may have been used. But this would not hold for a series of letters, for the reason that the key is the one thing in the Vigenère cipher that remains fixed. And any suppositions as to the identities of letters in cipher must be such as would, at least in some instances, result in repetitions of certain key-letters.

As a matter of fact, a number of methods of deciphering this and similar ciphers have been devised. What is probably the earliest method of solving the Vigenère cipher is described by John Falconer in his cipher book, "Cryptomenysis Patefacta," published at London in 1685.

This method, admittedly fundamental, is nevertheless a very necessary tool in the cryptographer's equipment. For there are numerous instances especially in short messages, of which that about to be deciphered is one, where this method is superior to any other.

Falconer instructs the decipherer first to guess at the identity of short words, obtaining in this way short portions of the key. Fragments of the key obtained by suppositions as to several words, may often be combined, forming a larger portion of the key. Or any part of the key so discovered may be further developed by suppositions as to adjoining letters, either in the message, or

in the key itself. The whole number of letters in the key can thus be arrived at, determining the several returns of each alphabet.

To demonstrate this method, it will now be applied to the short illustrative cryptogram just enciphered, which contains one two-letter group, *TG;* two three-letter groups, *AFW* and *PTD;* and three four-letter groups, *LIFZ, AWSU,* and *FJHU.*

According to the word frequency table in FLYNN'S for May 16, the most frequently used words of these lengths are those listed in the lines marked *(b)* of the following tabulation. It is highly probable that one or more of these words, all of them being of high frequency, will occur in the average message. Any additional words desired may also be tried. If some idea is had as to the nature of the message, it is advantageous to try a suspected longer word at the start, since it is often possible to arrive at a large part of the key in this manner immediately.

Each of the cipher groups, in lines *(a),* is repeated as many times as the number of tentative words for it requires. And beneath each word, in lines *(c),* are placed the key-letters necessary for deciphering the cipher group into that word.

Thus, if it is assumed that *TG*=OF, then the key letters used for enciphering the latter must have been *FB.* This is discovered by tracing down the *O*-column to the cipher letter *T,* at the left of which row is found the key-letter *F.* Similarly, the *F*-column followed down to *G,* gives the key-letter *B* at the left. The individual key for every supposition on the table is obtained in a similar manner.

The cipher groups *LIFZ* and *AWSU* have not been included in this tabulation for the reason that they did not produce any probable key sequences with any of the common four-letter words.

Examining these lists for tentative keys having letters in common, *AS, AST,* and *ASTI,* stick out like so many sore thumbs.

If these supposed parts of the key be now placed above the cipher groups they have deciphered, an interval of *16* letters will be found between *AS* and *AST,* and one of *8* letters between *AST* and *ASTI.* If these key suppositions are correct, the number of letters in the key must be evenly divisible into both *8* and *16.* Keys of *1, 2,* or *4* letters are obviously out of the running.

It remains, then, but to try *ASTI* on the supposition that it is a part of an 8-letter key, with the following result:

```
                         Interval=16          Interval=8
Key:     -ast i---- AST i-- --asti ---- AS ti---- ASTI ----as
Cipher:  LIFZ TZFMT AFW PTD JBMAEG AWSU TG XANLTF FJHU QCBOCW.
Message: -ing l---- AND h-- --mily ---- TO es---- FROM ----ce.
```

An examination of the first eight letters of the cipher shows the location of the four discovered key-letters in the whole key—*ASTI*—to which additional fragments of the key may now be added, if any are available.

The first letter of the fourth cipher group, *PTD,* has been enciphered with the key-letter *I.* And the tabulation provides three probable sequences of key-letters for *UTD* beginning with *I,* thus:

Key:	AST ILL	AST ITA	AST ITL
Cipher:	AFW PTD	AFW PTD	AFW PTD
Message:	and his	and had	and has

Of these—*ASTILL*—seems most likely, it being more like an ordinary word, besides *and his* seems preferable by context in the partly deciphered message. By ac-

(a) Cipher:	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	TG	*etc.*
(b) Message:	OF	TO	IN	IT	IS	AS	BE	AT	WE	ON	HE	BY	MY	ME	*etc.*
(c) Key:	FB	*AS*	LT	LN	LO	TO	SC	TN	XC	FT	MC	SI	HI	HC	*etc.*

(a)	AFW	AFW	AFW	AFW	AFW	AFW	AFW	AFW	AFW	AFW	AFW	AFW	*etc.*
(b)	THE	AND	YOU	FOR	WAS	NOT	BUT	HIS	ARE	ALL	HAD	HAS	*etc.*
(c)	HYS	*AST*	CRC	VRF	EFE	NRD	ZLD	TXE	AOS	AUL	TFT	TFE	*etc.*

(a)	PTD	PTD	PTD	PTD	PTD	PTD	PTD	PTD	PTD	PTD	PTD	PTD	*etc.*
(b)	THE	AND	YOU	FOR	WAS	NOT	BUT	HIS	ARE	ALL	HAD	HAS	*etc.*
(c)	WMZ	PGA	RFJ	KFM	TTL	CFK	OZK	*ILL*	PCZ	PIS	ITA	ITL	*etc.*

(a)	FJHU	FJHU	FJHU	FJHU	FJHU	FJHU	FJHU	FJHU	FJHU	FJHU	*etc.*
(b)	THAT	HAVE	WITH	YOUR	THIS	FROM	THEY	WERE	BEEN	WHEN	*etc.*
(c)	MCHB	YJMQ	JBON	HVND	MCZC	*ASTI*	MCDW	JFQQ	EFDH	JCDH	*etc.*

tual trial — *ASTILL* — proves workable throughout:

—ING LOU— — AND HIS — —MILY
PL— — TO ESCA— — FROM FR— —CE.

Here —*ING* is obviously *KING*, giving the additional key-letter *B*, which makes *PL*—— read *PL—T* (clearly *PLOT*); *FR*——*CE* becoming *FR—NCE* (evidently *FRANCE*); thus completing the key, *BASTILLE*, with the resultant decipherment of the entire message.

Having found supposed parts of the key, the problem is now to find the whole number of letters in it. And this is done by applying the tentative group as a key throughout the cryptogram, searching for those points at equal intervals where normal sequences result in the partly deciphered message.

ISW, tried in this way, can be rejected. But *AST* (the key by which AFW=*AND*) fits the lock:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	(10)	11	12	13
Key:	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST
Cipher:	LIF	IFZ	FZT	ZTZ	TZF	ZFM	FMT	MTA	TAF	AFW	FWP	WPT	PTD
Text:	lqm	*ING*	fha	zbg	thm	znt	fua	mbh	tim	*AND*	few	wxa	pbk

	14	15	16	17	18	
	AST	AST	AST	AST	AST	*etc.*
	TDJ	DJB	JBM	BMA	MAE	*etc.*
	tlq	dri	jjt	buh	*MIL*	*etc.*

In this instance the translation of the message has been reached through the discovery of several parts of the key at different points of the message, the latter having been divided normally into words.

By a simple modification of the method, a similar message, continuously written, could readily be deciphered, even with the discovery of only a single key possibility.

In a message normally divided into words, it was necessary to try probable words only with those cipher groups of the requisite number of letters. In the absence of word divisions, the only difference is that such words must be similarly tried throughout the cryptogram.

To illustrate this, take the above cipher continuously written:

LIFZT ZFMTA FWPTD JBMAE
GAWSU TGXAN LTFFJ HUQCE
OCW.

The trial of any word not in the message will result negatively. The following shows the application of *AND*, revealing (2) *ISW*, and (10) *AST*, as possible key fragments.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Text:	and	and	and	and	and	and	and	and	and	and	and	and	*etc.*
Cipher:	LIF	IFZ	FZT	ZTZ	TZF	ZFM	FMT	MTA	TAF	AFW	FWP	WPT	*etc.*
Key:	LVC	ISW	FMQ	ZGW	TMC	ZSI	FZQ	MGX	TNC	*AST*	FJM	WCQ	*etc.*

Here a key of eight letters is indicated, since the normal sequences (2) *ING*, (10) *AND*, (18) *MIL*, occur at intervals of eight.

Applying *AST* as part of the supposed eight-letter key, the cryptogram will now read:

Key: —AST——AST——AST——AST——AST——AS.
Cipher: LIFZTZFMTAFWPTDJBMAEGAWSUTGXANLTFFJHUQCEOCW
Text: —ING——AND——MIL——TOE——FRO——CE

By developing the key and the message in this instance, as before, the whole key and entire message may be obtained.

As already mentioned, the Vigenère cipher was used by the Confederates during the Civil War. They thought, of course, that it was absolutely safe. But such of their messages as were captured were deciphered by the Federal cipher operators by guessing at the meanings of words substantially according to the method outlined by Falconer nearly two centuries previously.

In some instances normal word divisions were retained in their cipher, and in other cases the writing was continuous. Only a few keys seem to have been used, and apparently no need was felt of changing them frequently, for they are known to have been used over long periods of time.

It was a common practice with the Confederates to encipher only the more significant words of their messages, leaving the rest in plain English, as in Cipher No. 1 below. This only made an insecure cipher still less safe, for words in plain text in any cipher often suggest the meanings of those that may have been enciphered.

THE CONFEDERATE CIPHERS

Two of these captured Confederate messages are subjoined. Which will give the reader a chance to match wits with the Federal operators who actually solved them in a time of need.

And this process should be interesting from more than a single point of view.

For not only will the successful decipherer unravel two messages of historic importance, but he will also discover two of the closely guarded keys actually employed by the Confederates.

And besides he will find for himself that this much vaunted *undecipherable cipher* is really decipherable after all!

CIPHER No. 1 (Vigenère *chiffre carré*).

I recommend that the TSYSMEE FN QOUTWP RFATVVMP UBWAQBRTM EXFVXJ and ISWAQJRU KTMTL are not of immediate necessity, UV KPGFMBPGR MPC THNLFL should be LMQHTSP.

CIPHER No. 2 (Vigenère *chiffre carré*).

VVQ ECILMYMPM RVCOG UI LHOMNIDES KFCH KDF WASPTF US TFCFSTO ABXC BJX AZJKHMGJ SIIMIVBCEQ QB NDEL UEISU HT KFG AUHD EGH OPCM MFS UVAJWH XRYMCOCI YU DDDXTMPT IU ICJQKPXT ES VVJAU MVRR/ TWHTC ABXC IU EOIEG O RDCGX EN UCR PV NTIPTYXEC RQVARIYYB RGZQ RSPZ RKSJCPH PTAX RSP EKEZ RAECDSTRZPT MZMSEB ACGG NSFQVVF MC KFG SMHE FTRF WH MVV KKGE PYH FEFM CKFRLI-SYTYXL XJ JTTBX RQ HTXD WBHZ AWVV FD ACGG AVXWZVV YCIAG OE NZY FET LGXA SCUH.

READER TO READER!

That the Vigenère *chiffre carré* still manages to cling to its old reputation of being undecipherable without the key, is no doubt because information about cryptography is neither widely spread nor readily accessible.

This can be no discredit to the individual, however, when even governments, and in comparatively recent times, have seen fit to officially sanction its use.

At any rate, a number of messages in this cipher, a few of which follow, have been submitted to this department by readers who do not hesitate to say that their cryptograms are impossible of solution without the keys.

Nos. 3 and 5 are straight Vigenère ciphers. In No. 4 the method of using the alphabetic square has been slightly modified, but not to an extent that will prevent its being solved by the present method.

No. 6 combines in an ingenious way the Vigenère block alphabet with an early system of filing finger-prints under the Henry classification.

Give these a trial, and send in your own Vigenère ciphers, using your own key, for your fellow readers to ponder over.

DEAR SIR:

I have been reading FLYNN'S for some time, and have also read a few things that have been in your department under the heading of "Solving Cipher Secrets."

About five years ago I met a young fellow who was interested in the woods, and we paired off. We have been pards ever since. It was on one of our trips that he told me about a cipher that he had.

Perk up your ears for this is a good one. Unless you had the key word, and, of course, this is where I want to keep you guessing, it was impossible to solve it.

Any word that you can think of can be a key word. The way he tells me, this is an old cipher, and was used many years ago. Where he got it he doesn't remember. By the way, he is sitting here reading this over my shoulder.

We are both in on this, so we are going to make it as interesting as possible. Even though the message is short it doesn't deal with buried treasure. To us it has been buried treasure saved for the end of our tramps.

F. B. WILLITS.
A. J. LINDSAY.

Harrisburg, Pa.

CIPHER No. 3 (F.B. Willits-A. J. Lindsay).

Here is the message to FLYNN'S from two who have found it to be a boon companion on trips to the mountains:

KWWAAK MLQ ORWS DRBJWI TL BHJ ULAXF SX CCYVYNZSFYQ FD MHE HNACF NFI EMONUHZ.

After you have found the *apparent* key in No. 4, it should be interesting to work from it to the *real* key, thus discovering the modification above mentioned responsible for the difference.

DEAR SIR:

Will you please decipher the following message?

I think it is indecipherable. I hope to find out if I am right or wrong in the near future in FLYNN'S cipher department.

A. J. SIMON.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

CIPHER No. 4 (A. J. Simon).

UZDCB'X XG TCS TU HMT PJHH BTSPAM RPUFOWSTG NC BJL MTGY HXHD.

The next cipher, submitted by Ralph Raphael, Worcester, Massachusetts, may prove a little more difficult of solution by the method described in this issue, for the reason that the key is rather long, and common words rather scarce in the message.

CIPHER No. 5 (Ralph Raphael).

YHRLM	IMKTG	PTEXE
HCNSH	VCAJE	OATSS
TGPUE	OCRPH	UABWJ
SWRFC	ZZKCX	ZXTMP
UWFDH	CTEZI	CSLMB

The key to Cipher No. 6 was designed by W. W. Reeves, F. P. E., of San Francisco, California. Mr. Reeves does not claim any originality in his cipher merely the adaptation of an idea.

CIPHER No. 6 (W. W. Reeves, F. P. E.).

13	5	6	11		4	8		2		15	8	13	14						
8	4	4	9		6	12		26		15	8	18	18						
14	12	9	5	3	6	3	5		7	19	9	6	8						
17	19	11	5	5	9	3	26		9	22	12	3	4						
12	7	17	9	17			18	22	22	11									
23	24	24	10	19			15	14	17	21									

In Cipher No. 7, by M. Walker, Akron, Ohio, the Vigenère table has been used exactly as it was in No. 4 above. Besides, Mr. Walker has used a continuous non-repeating key, thus avoiding the repetition of a single key-word or key-phrase. The first word of Mr. Walker's key is one of the most used words in the English language.

CIPHER No. 7 (M. Walker).

CPTBT	LLNYN	MLENB	TJFNX
RBIUE	CCLFU	WMRZF	UONZN
VHOAF	NSSJD	VFWAZ	TZHRF
BHBSW	XIQPN	TGTOZ	NLGRX
WX.			

If you still have your copy of FLYNN'S for October 31, with the method described in this issue you should be able to solve No. 5 (Wm. E. Bowns)—a straight Vigenère—in short order. It may be said here that any previous issue of FLYNN'S can be had postpaid for ten cents.

The solutions to all of the ciphers in this issue, including No. 5 of October 31 just mentioned, will be given in next Solving Cipher Secrets.

Submit your solutions, and compare your score with that of others.

FMZPW	RECME	WGCEC
ABRVQ	QWUAT	CMIMK
SWEVI	GYBXK	OJOSK
GGMHB	AGPAJ	QGVNB
YYCZY	AAVM.	

ANSWERS TO JANUARY 23 CIPHERS

Cipher No. 1 (W. B. Tyler to E. A. Poe) in the January 23 issue of FLYNN'S, was enciphered in the following simple substitution alphabet of typographical characters:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
(	[illegible]	)	↓	.	•	.	†	¶	[illegible]	:	!	
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
¡	]	¿		?	[	‡	‡	‖	♭	;		

The letters of each word were also transposed by being written in reverse order, thus:

Cipher:	.	†	‡	:	‡	]	[	.	?	‡	)	.	[	*etc.*
Substituting:	E	H	T	L	U	O	S	E	R	U	C	E	S	—	*etc.*
Transposing:	T	h	e		s	o	u	l			s	e	c	u	r	e					—	*etc.*

The text is a quotation from Act V, Scene 1, of Joseph Addison's "Cato": "The soul, secure in her existence," *et cetera.*

In Cipher No. 2 each figure could be the substitute for three different letters, depending on whether it was followed by a

dash, another figure, or a space, according to the following key:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	(dash)
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	(figure)
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	—	(space)

Here is a small section of this message deciphered:

Cipher:	9—5765—1	4—1—7	1—54—5—4 *etc.*
Substituting:	I NPOE S	D A Y	A ND E V *etc.*
Spacing:	In Poe's	day	and ev- *etc.*

The answer to No. 3 (Hobart Hollis), the ten dollar prize cipher, will be printed in the next issue of this department. You can't afford to miss it.

In No. 4 (D. Washburn Hall) any letter is represented in cipher by the sixth letter following it in alphabetical order, *G* being thus used for *A*, *H* for *B*, *et cetera,* the entire message having also been written backward.

The solution to No. 5 (Mrs. A. J. Hyatt) is: " FLYNN'S magazine gives me many hours of enjoyment, and the cipher department is so good that it robs me of my beauty sleep."

To decipher, read the numbers downward by columns, and divide each number by 25, disregarding any remainders. The quotients so obtained will then represent letters from the simple numerical alphabet: (space)=27; A=26; B=25; . . . . Z=1.

No. 6 (William H. B. Woodbury, F. P. E.) employed the following reciprocal key, in which any letter is the substitute for that with which it is paired: A=B; B=A; E=C; C=E; *et cetera.*

A	E	I	O	U	L	M	N	R	W	X	Y	Z
B	C	D	F	G	H	J	K	P	Q	S	T	V

His message was: " What shall it profit a man if he construct ciphers just to have some one solve them before the ink is dry? Have never missed a number of FLYNN'S since first published."

The complete translation to No. 7 (J. W. B.) explains the system used:

> "This cipher is called the D. A. Code, or the Double and Add system. Double the first figure of any pair, and add the second to get the number of the letter in the alphabet. At the end of a word the first figure of the next pair is repeated."

If you will refer to FLYNN'S for January 23 you will note that J. W. B. very cleverly expressed his key in the italicized words of the last paragraph of his letter. This ingenious key uses every combination of two figures from *01* to *98* inclusive, several substitutes thus being available for some of the letters.

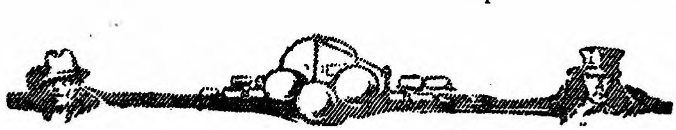
But the simple formula, " double the first figure and add the second," makes it possible to do all the work mentally. Thus 84, the first two figures of the cipher in question, stands for *T*, since 8 doubled, plus 4, equals 20, the position occupied by *T* in the alphabet.

THE ROLL OF HONOR

Charles P. Winsor, of Boston, Massachusetts, leads the list of December 5 cipher solvers, with correct solutions to four ciphers. No solutions were submitted to ciphers Nos. 3, 4, and 7.

Charles P. Winsor, Boston, Massachusetts. (1—2—5—6.)
Arthur Bellamy, Boston, Massachusetts. (1—2.)
G. A. Ferrell, Bessemer, Alabama. (1—2.)
Charles C. Fulton, Omaha, Nebraska. (1—2.)
A. P. Schmutz, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (1—2.)

All of these correspondents accompanied their solutions with interesting explanations of the methods used, which unfortunately cannot be repeated here for lack of space.



CAROLINE: *Why wouldn't you dance with that tall man with the red domino?*

ELIZABETH: *The red domino didn't deceive me, my dear.*