WALTER F. RIPPERGER presents SEVEN MEANT DEATH

MYSTERY

NRA CODE

OCT. 10¢ 15¢ in Canada

THE ONLY MAGAZINE OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD

Was She a Girl of Too Many Thrills—

MURDER IN THE GARDEN · A COMPLETE NOVEL

And stories by **FERRIN FRASER · ELLERY QUEEN**
HENRY LACOSSITT · STUART PALMER

Norma Shearer won this award for "Smilin' Through", Fredric March for "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"... Chas. Laughton for "Henry the Eighth".

THREE "BEST" STARS IN A STAR PICTURE

Romance...tuned to the beat of your heart...as three winners of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences "Best Performance" awards... are teamed in a romance greater than "Smilin' Through." As a stage play, "The Barretts of Wimpole Street" scored a three year triumph. As a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer presentation it brilliantly dominates the 1934 cinema scene!

NORMA SHEARER

FREDRIC MARCH

CHARLES LAUGHTON

in *The* **BARRETTS** *of* **WIMPOLE STREET**

with

MAUREEN O'SULLIVAN
KATHARINE ALEXANDER

From the play by . . . . Rudolph Besier
Directed by . . . . . Sidney Franklin

A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture

Isn't It A Shame!

SHE'S TERRIBLY IMPORTANT AT THE BANK!—BUT OH, HER TERRIBLE TEETH!

Helen's eyes are brilliant—and her hair lies in soft, natural waves. She's charming to look at, and invaluable at the bank. But—there's a "but" about Helen.

And Helen's contract is so marvelous that she could go into tournaments if she didn't work in a bank! But—the "but" about Helen gives her many a bad moment.

Men like Helen—they like to play bridge with her. But they don't like to dance with her—and they never propose. For the "but" about Helen is her teeth!

When Helen touches up her pretty lips with lipstick—can't she see that her teeth look dreadful? They're dingy. "Pink tooth brush" could easily be the cause of that!

Helen's dentist would soon explain that tender, bleeding gums need massage with Ipana. With Ipana and daily massage—her gums would soon improve.

Once Helen's teeth were bright and attractive again—there'd be plenty of young men asking her out to dinner and to dance! Romance would come running her way!

Avoid "Pink Tooth Brush" with Ipana and Massage!

IF YOU—like Helen—have allowed your teeth to become dingy and ugly because you have allowed "pink tooth brush" to go on and on—get a tube of Ipana Tooth Paste.

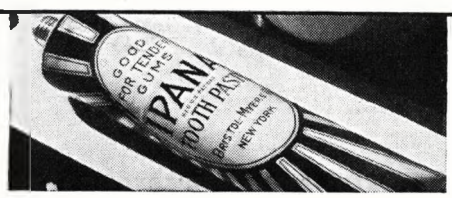
Clean your teeth twice a day with Ipana. It is a splendid modern tooth paste which cleans not only the surfaces of the teeth—but deep into every tiny crevice. It really *cleans* your teeth. Then—because Ipana contains *ziratol*, which aids in stimulating and toning tender gums—massage a *little extra Ipana directly into your gums.*

Today's foods are neither crunchy nor coarse enough to exercise your gums properly. That is why gums today tend to become flabby and tender—and to leave a trace of "pink" upon your tooth brush. "Pink tooth brush" may be the first step toward gum troubles as serious as gingivitis and Vincent's disease. It not only may *dull* your teeth—but may *endanger* your teeth.

But with Ipana and massage, the dangers from "pink tooth brush" are minimized—and your teeth shine out when you talk and smile!

TUNE IN THE "HOUR OF SMILES" AND HEAR THE IPANA TROUBADOURS WEDNESDAY EVENINGS - WEAF AND ASSOCIATED N. B. C. STATIONS

IPANA
TOOTH PASTE



NRA CODE **VISIT**

"A CENTURY OF PROGRESS"

SEE IPANA MADE FROM START TO FINISH

See the Ipana Electrical Man. General Exhibits Group Building No. 4—Chicago, June—October, 1934.

MYSTERY

ONE OF THE TOWER MAGAZINES

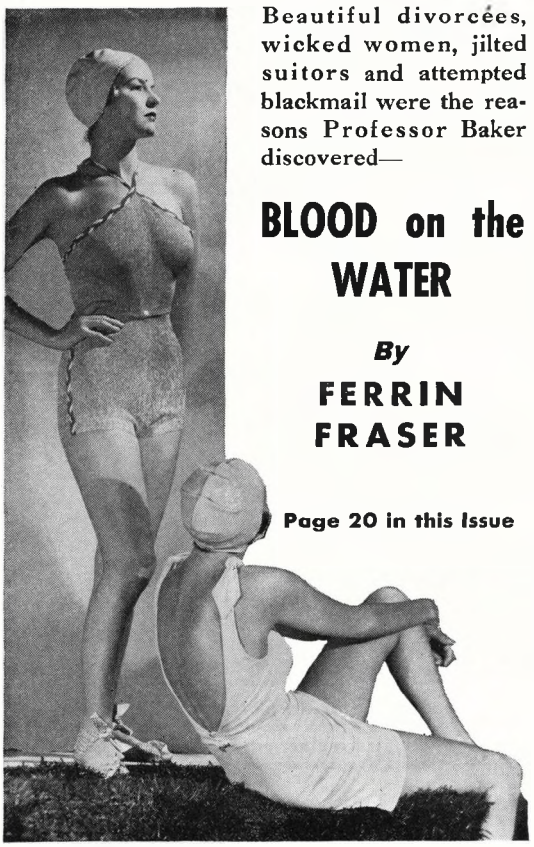
Catherine McNelis—*Publisher*

DURBIN LEE HORNER
Managing Editor

HUGH RYAN
Art Director

MARY MARSHALL
Director of Home Service

VOL. X, NO. 4 | *Cover Design by Harold Woolridge* | OCTOBER, 1934



Beautiful divorcées, wicked women, jilted suitors and attempted blackmail were the reasons Professor Baker discovered—

BLOOD on the WATER

By

FERRIN FRASER

Page 20 in this Issue

SPECIAL FEATURES

THE WORLD'S BEST MYSTERY FICTION

GOSSIP FROM WASHINGTON

STARTLING REAL LIFE MYSTERIES

EXCITING DEPARTMENTS

Besides these outstanding features, there is another new, complete, book-length novel in this issue—

MURDER IN THE GARDEN • By Roger East (page 100)

Published Monthly by TOWER MAGAZINES, Inc., 4600 Diversey Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

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ON SALE AT WOOLWORTH STORES AND NEWSSTANDS THE FIRST OF EVERY MONTH

Sally's pretty and Sally's *smart!*

MIRIAM HOPKINS STAR OF PARAMOUNT'S "SHE LOVES ME NOT"

She uses cosmetics as she always has but removes them thoroughly the Hollywood way—guards against unattractive Cosmetic Skin!

SCREEN STARS are wise in the ways of loveliness! And thousands of clever girls all over the country are adopting Hollywood's beauty care to guard against unattractive Cosmetic Skin—keep their complexions exquisite.

Have *you* seen warning signals of this distressing modern complexion trouble—enlarged pores, tiny blemishes, dullness—blackheads, perhaps?

Cosmetics need not harm even delicate skin unless they are allowed to *choke the pores*. Many a girl who *thinks* she removes cosmetics thoroughly actually leaves bits of stale rouge and powder in the pores day after day. Then the pores become clogged, distended —Cosmetic Skin develops.

Cosmetics Harmless if removed this way

Lux Toilet Soap removes cosmetics *thoroughly*. Its ACTIVE lather sinks deeply into the pores, carries away *every vestige* of dust, dirt, stale cosmetics. Before you apply fresh make-up—ALWAYS before you go to bed at night, use this gentle white soap!

I Go Sleuthing

A new kind of department for new writers. Do you know any true, unsolved, "unwritten mysteries"? This magazine will pay $100 apiece for the best solution submitted each month! Below is this month's prize winner! How about you? See page 90 for contest rules.

Decorations by Robert Fawcett

"I GO SLEUTHING" WINNER FOR OCTOBER

•

BARBARA COLLYER

Forest Hills, Long Island, New York

•

TAKE two hair-brained college girls; add a warm, balmy evening, and mix well with a lack of occupation. The result is a trip to Syracuse.

At least that's what my roommate and I decided to do on the evening in question.

"I hear they're having a night football game at the University of Syracuse," she suggested.

"Fine. Let's go!" I assented.

Coaxing Lizzie from the garage, we made the fifty-mile trip in an hour and a half, watched twenty-two men push each other around under the glare of ten spotlights, and in the middle of the third round of chocolate sodas, discovered that we had barely an hour to get back to the campus, if we wished to sign in before the feminine equivalent of taps.

Well, what with the hurry and the scurry, and the uncertainty, as to the efficacy of the car's starting mechanism, the problem of gas was completely overlooked. Those of you who know Northern New York will remember sadly the infrequency of open-for-business gas stations after eleven o'clock at night. I, as driver, kept one eagle eye on the gas gauge, while my roommate anxiously scanned both sides of the road for a night owl garage owner. As a result, we eventually found ourselves on a wide, uninteresting concrete road, lined by vast, deserted fields, with the indicator hovering around zero. I, at least, have never felt so lonely. The trip-meter told us that we must be within five miles of the campus—but five miles which way? Up, down, back or across? With teeth chattering, we continued the mad rush, and then, at the top of a small hill, the motor gave a comforting splutter, and died. Then it suddenly started to rain—cats and dogs!

"Any ideas?" I asked.

"There should be a farmhouse around here somewhere," said my roommate, peering into the wet. "Try coasting down the hill. We'll be a little further along, anyway."

"We ought to save that until later," I objected. But I obediently let off the brake, and the car slithered downward.

"There!" said the roommate. "There's some sort of a house. Turn in this lane."

The car barely made it before it gave up the ghost completely. With reckless abandon, we dashed out into the storm, and made the porch steps in two bounds.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Complete silence. Pound! Pound! Pound! More silence. Finally, after alternating between knocking and pounding, we were rewarded by the faint gleam of a candle within the cavernous depths of the house. The owner was evidently torn between the immediate prospect of thieves and the possibility of a telegram, announcing that his horse had won the Grand National. Finally, realizing that opportunity had already knocked six times, he opened the door a crack, and peered suspiciously.

"Have you any gasoline?" we chorused.

"No."

"Wait!" I said, inserting my foot deftly in the door. "The car's stalled, and we have nowhere to go. Could you put us up for the night? We'd be glad to pay you."

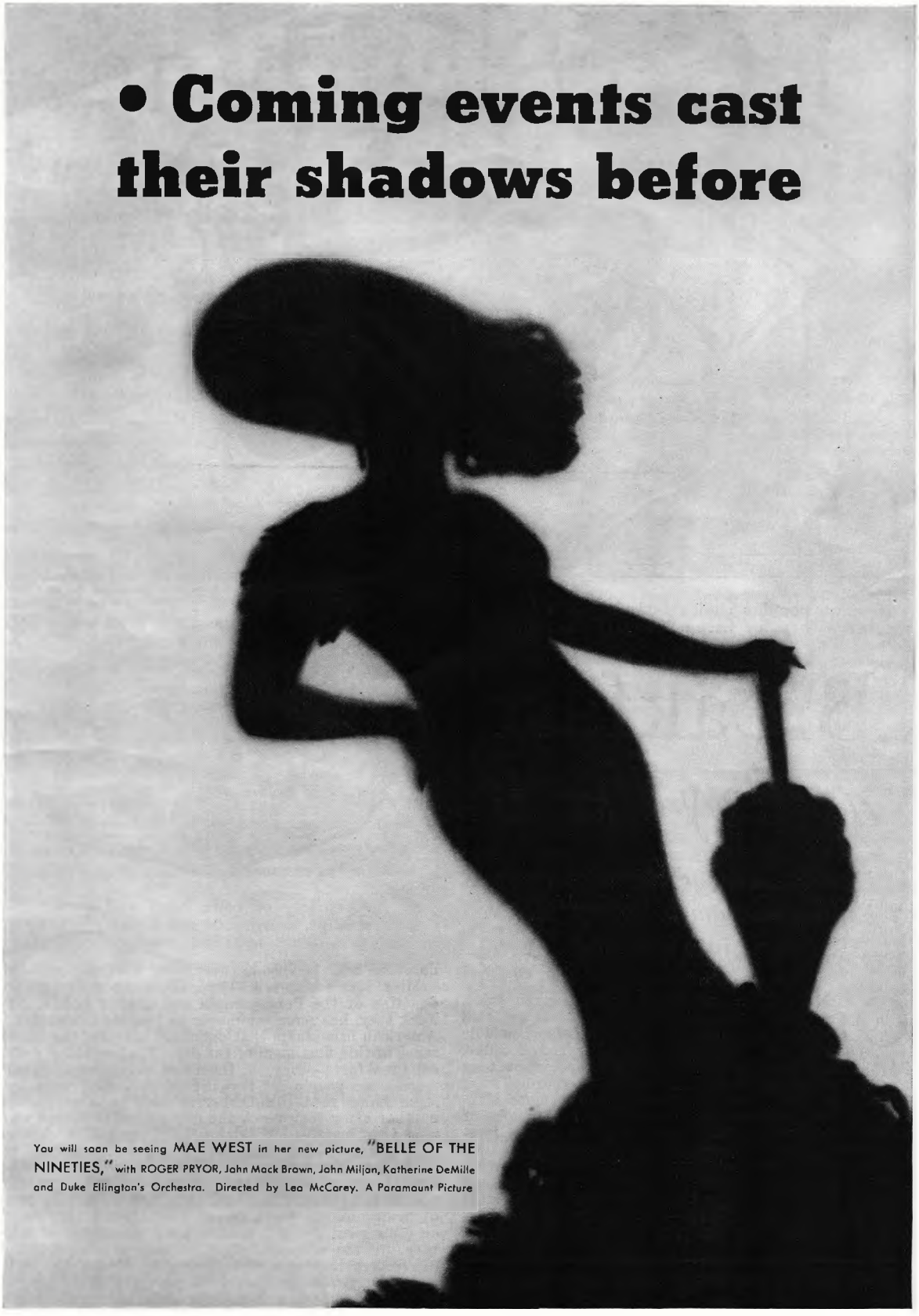
"No!"

"Well, then, could you tell us the way to the next farmhouse?"

"It's too far," said the man shaking his head, and squinting at the sky. "Too far on a night like this. My wife's sick upstairs, but I'll ask her if she minds your staying."

Too relieved to give the conventional "we shouldn't dream of bothering you" answer, we waited patiently while the owner and his candle disappeared into the house. I had just made the interesting discovery that standing on one foot kept the (*Please turn to page* 90)

• Coming events cast their shadows before



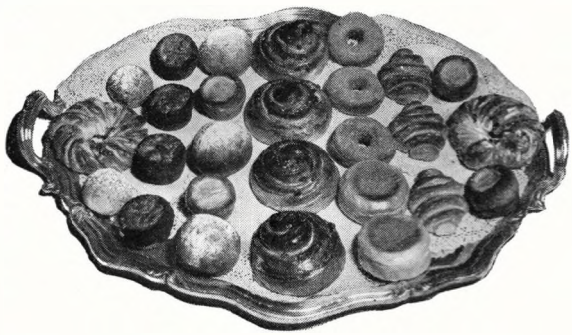
You will soon be seeing MAE WEST in her new picture, "BELLE OF THE NINETIES," with ROGER PRYOR, John Mack Brown, John Miljan, Katherine DeMille and Duke Ellington's Orchestra. Directed by Leo McCarey. A Paramount Picture

Photos from Main Dining Room, Hotel Pennsylvania, New York City, by Tower Studios

The popular choice includes fruit juice, eggs with ham or bacon, assorted rolls and coffee.

Breakfast *as they like it*

Here's help for the American housewife from breakfast selections in a big hotel



A variety of rolls, bran and corn muffins, doughnuts and coffee rings.

ORANGE juice, pineapple juice, prune juice, grapefruit juice; soft boiled, poached or fried eggs, bacon or ham; cereal with cream; griddle cakes; evenly browned toast or rolls and coffee. That's what men like best for breakfast when they are away from home, and it is what they order most often even when the bill of fare offers a more elaborate choice. But remember the fruit juice must be of the best—properly chilled—the eggs must be irreproachable, perfectly fresh and cooked precisely as they like them, the toast or griddle cakes must be freshly made, and the coffee must be fresh and strong and scalding hot. That's how the hotel restaurant directors have and hold their clients—and who knows but it is one of the best ways for Mrs. Everyman to hold the devotion and loyalty of her hard working husband?

Miss Marie Casteen, Home Economics expert and dietitian of the Pennsylvania and Statler hotels, New York City, has some comments on present tendencies in American breakfasts that definitely indicate the importance of this first meal of the day. For one thing people eat breakfasts—they eat them and enjoy them. What's more some people eat two breakfasts, one before they leave home in the suburbs, at half past seven, and another after they reach the city and have fifteen minutes to spare before getting to their offices at nine. Railroad commuters stop at the sandwich bar in the hotel and sit down to refresh themselves with another cup of coffee accompanied by a jelly roll, cinnamon bun or doughnut. Men who have had a friendly game of bridge on the train thresh over their bridge hands or girls meet for a pre-office hour discussion of what they did the evening before. There are hundreds of drugstores in the business sections of the big cities where office workers, having come to work on subways or buses, stop for a bite of breakfast before going to work, or possibly report at the (*Please turn to page* 52)

If you are interested in this month's recipe and menu circulars please turn to page 75.

The warmth of Sten! The brilliance of March! The genius of Tolstoy!
The vision of Mamoulian! The wizardry of Samuel Goldwyn!
. . . here truly is a romance of unforgettable beauty!

ANNA STEN and FREDRIC MARCH

in

SAMUEL GOLDWYN'S PRESENTATION OF

We Live Again

a ROUBEN MAMOULIAN PRODUCTION

From the novel, "Resurrection" by Leo Tolstoy • Released thru UNITED ARTISTS

All for Ten Dollars

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page. The Episode of the Casual Interrogation!

IN the Summer and early Autumn of 1932 hundreds of bogus $10 Federal Reserve Bank of New York notes flooded the eastern part of the United States, and Alan G. Straight, well-named head of the New York Bureau of the United States Secret Service had a problem on his hands.

They were counterfeits so perfect that even gimlet-eyed bank tellers could not detect the notes as spurious unless they memorized the series number.

Nemesis of hundreds of counterfeiters, Straight realized he was not dealing with a lone wolf, like the much-publicized Jim the Penman, who needed only pen and inks to make the money to supply his sundry needs, or his contemporary, the infamous William Brockway, who could forge a well-nigh perfect $100 bill whenever his legitimate finances ran short. Instead, he was up against an organized gang that operated on the mass production basis of big business.

Definitely and permanently to put an end to the easy money racket of the mob, he knew he must seize the finely etched plates from which the bills were printed. Otherwise, raids and arrests . . . even if he knew where to raid, which he didn't at the time . . . would be futile. New presses could be obtained and new hands employed to operate them and start again the flood of bogus money.

To halt counterfeiters the United States Secret Service has built up many safeguards, but in the case of the Federal Reserve Bank mob they appeared to be of no avail.

Manufacturers of certain types of presses that usually are used for counterfeiting place their books at the disposal of government agents. Straight checked these books, and failed to find the clue he sought.

Purchase of lots of paper similar to that used by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, with or without silk threads, is another clue counterfeiters often leave behind, but the gang Straight sought had not.

Inks necessary for the accurate reproduction of notes are not easily procured, and the purchase of a suspicious combination of such inks by any one group always leads to an immediate investigation by Secret Service operatives. There had not been any such purchases, however, as far as could be ascertained.

Straight was up against a stone wall, but he was not discouraged. Whoever the engraver of the spurious plates might be, he realized that he was an expert; realized, too, that such skilled craftsmen are usually employes or former employes of the United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing at Washington.

The realization gave him an idea . . . a clue to the whole perplexing and costly problem. He secured the names of all former engravers of the Bureau living in New York or vicinity, and had them brought in to him.

One by one he questioned them. It was a casual sort of an interrogation. No reference was made to the counterfeit notes. But before each man left, Straight said to him:

"Better leave us your card. We may want to get in touch with you again some time."

It was not because of their addresses that he wanted their cards. He already had them. It was because the cards were engraved.

Each card he examined thoroughly; then compared it with one of the spurious bank notes. One by one he cast them aside until only one card remained—that of Harry Mills, an engraver who had drunk himself out of a job in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Then he summoned experts and had them compare the engraving on the card with that on the counterfeit notes. They, too, saw what Straight had seen, and the arrest of Mills followed.

From him the Secret Service secured a 32-page confession. Lured by the promise of easy money with which he could buy unlimited drinks, he had fashioned the finely etched plates from which the bogus bills were printed. But he could not lead Straight and his men to the counterfeiter's plant. The mob had been foresighted. They had blindfolded him whenever they had taken him there. But he believed it was somewhere in Ozone Park, Long Island. That was enough for Straight. He would find it, and he did.

Day after day and night after night Straight kept the place under surveillance, and all the while the presses were whirring inside, turning out a great flood of spurious notes. No effort was made to raid the place. It was because, when Straight raided, he wanted to be certain he seized the finely etched plates. No man emerging felt the stern hand of Uncle Sam clamp down upon his shoulder. But he was followed. Everyone was.

Finally, on the night of October 1, Straight and a handful of picked men descended—not upon the place in Ozone Park, but upon a Brooklyn boarding house. There they found what they sought, for they had traced them there—the plates Mills had engraved—and the flow of counterfeit Federal Reserve Bank notes was stemmed at its source.

But the bogus $10 notes might still have continued to flood the country had not Straight known, as all United States Secret Service operatives do, that all engravers have individual characteristics easily identified with their work, and detected that the engraving on Mills' card and that of the counterfeit bills were identical.

The U. S. Bureau of Engraving at Washington, D. C.

Publishers Photo

"The Summer left My Hair Streaky and Dull —but I've Made it EVEN and LUSTROUS again with Marchand's Golden Hair Wash . .

Maybe too much summer sun has streaked or dulled your pretty blonde hair. Now you, too, can EVEN-UP the shade, make it look NATURALLY EVEN, without dark and light spots, with Marchand's Golden Hair Wash. By diluting Marchand's and rinsing the entire head, you can bring out a thousand tiny highlights in your hair—giving a soft golden gleam.

Refined girls like the skillful, NATURAL way that Marchand's restores normal brightness to blonde hair. The blonde who is proud of her hair—the girl who is sensitive about what people think she is doing to her hair—they always prefer Marchand's Golden Hair Wash.

REMEMBER—when diluted with warm water, Marchand's gives blonde hair a lovely NATURAL brightness. Do it at home yourself. Simple directions on the label. To be sure of beautiful results be sure you get the genuine.

The same reliable Marchand's makes dark excess hair INVISIBLE—like the light unnoticeable down on the blonde's skin. This avoids shaving and coarse re-growths. Makes limbs dainty and attractive.

MARCHAND'S GOLDEN HAIR WASH

Makes Streaky Blonde Hair EVEN and LUSTROUS

Ask your Druggist or Get By Mail—Use Coupon

C. Marchand Co., 251 W. 19th St., N. Y. C.
45c enclosed (send coins or stamps). Please send me a regular bottle of Marchand's Golden Hair Wash. T.M.-1034

Name.....

Address.....City.....State....

FREE TRIPS

AWARDS FOR SALESPEOPLE

for the best letters about friendly, helpful service

Receipt in our office of 5 ballots (see opposite page), bearing your name, admits you to membership in the 1934 TOWER Retail Sales Honor Roll. You will be presented with an attractive bronze HONOR badge of identification. 10 ballots, similarly received, entitle you to membership and a silver HONOR badge. 25 ballots, similarly received, give you membership and a gold HONOR badge—highest recognition of all.

10 FREE TRIPS to New York

Each 1934 TOWER Retail Sales Honor Roll winner will be provided an opportunity to obtain still greater reward. A FREE trip to New York—FAME—as one of the nation's best salespersons. This is the final goal for each of these best retail Salesmen or Saleswomen ... 10 in Grocery Stores, 10 in Department Stores ... who write the best short statements about what constitutes *Friendly, Helpful* Service. Be the store salesperson from *your* city to earn this glorious visit to the center of retail activities. Civic and merchandising leaders will be here to acclaim you for your achievement!

STORE SALESPEOPLE:

Earn One of these 20 FREE TRIPS to New York—*National* FAME—in the 1934 Tower Retail Sales Honor Roll

Grocery salespeople: closing date for your entry—September 15

Department store salespeople: closing date for your entry—Oct. 15

Beautiful Display Seals for Stores

***Dealers*—Beautiful *Friendly, Helpful* Service Window Seals are yours for the asking. They identify you as co-operating in this tremendous, nation-wide movement to improve retail store SALES and SERVICE. Write Ben Irvin Butler, TOWER MAGAZINES, 55 Fifth Avenue, N. Y. C.**

HOME • MYSTERY • SERENADE
TOWER RADIO • NEW MOVIE

TOWER

$2,000 IN CASH

AWARDS FOR TOWER READERS

for the best letters about enjoyable shopping experiences

Think of that joyous vacation trip of which you've often dreamed . . . Of those smart new housefurnishings you want to buy . . . Or the extras in clothing and incidentals a little additional money would provide for your family . . .

All these—many more—of your personal desires can be *easily* and *quickly* realized. Yes, indeed! All you need do is write us an interesting, short letter telling of an *enjoyable shopping* experience. Mention some item you bought in a Grocery or Department Store. Put the name of the store salesperson on the ballot below and attach it to your letter. That's all. It takes but a few minutes—so jot down your thoughts *now* and enter this program in plenty of time to WIN!

You need not buy anything to compete. Letters will be judged on their merits: value of salesperson's service to *you*—manner in which Department Store experience is told—its *simplicity,* its *clarity.* (Entries may be used by publisher in any manner desired and will not be returned.) Duplicate awards in case of tie. Decision of judges final. TOWER employees and their families are excluded. Only *one* statement per person for each of the monthly cash offers in this series.

•

FRIENDLY, HELPFUL SERVICE PROGRAM

for Grocery Stores . . . closes Sept. 15, 1934

for Department Stores . . closes Oct. 15, 1934

Get your letters in before midnight, these dates!

MAGAZINES

If you wish to write a separate letter about both a grocery store and department store shopping experience, you can use this ballot for one vote and make a facsimile of it for the other vote.

Friendly HELPFUL Service — TOWER MAGAZINES HONOR ROLL

82 CASH AWARDS:

(1) First Prize for the best letter . . . $250.00
(1) Second Prize for the 2nd best letter . 100.00
(1) Third Prize for the 3rd best letter . . 50.00
(4) Fourth Prizes for the 4 next best letters, ea. 25.00
(25) Fifth Prizes for the 25 next best letters, ea. 10.00
(50) Sixth Prizes for the 50 next best letters, ea. 5.00

(Awards given ONLY in accordance with rules stated in left-hand page of this announcement)

MAIL THIS OFFICIAL BALLOT TO SHOPPING EDITOR, TOWER MAGAZINES, 55 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.

Write, clearly, in this space, name of your most *helpful* Retail Store Salesman or Saleswoman, together with name of store in which *he* or *she* is employed. Mail this official ballot (or facsimile) completely filled, to Shopping Editor, TOWER MAGAZINES, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

.....CHECK
(Store Salesperson's Name) (Man?) (Woman?) WHICH

.....
(Name of Store in which employed) (Department of Store)

.....
(Address of Store)

.....
(Check which Contest) (Grocery Store?) (Dept. Store?)

.....CHECK
(Your Name) (Married?) (Single?) WHICH

.....
(Your Address—Street, City, State)

.....
(No. of children in your family) (Occupation of head of family)

Do you OWN?....or RENT?....(apartment?).....(house?).....
CHECK WHICH

A real department for MYSTERY readers! Write your opinions and suggestions for MYSTERY MAGAZINE every month. Tell us what story you like best—who your favorite mystery writer is. For every letter published we will pay one dollar. And, remember, if you don't like this magazine, be frank and say so! Write to the MYSTERY Editor, Tower Magazines, Inc., 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

The

To Start With

BISBEE, ARIZONA—Having read your magazine for a long time I have plenty of things to tell you about it that I don't like. Here they are:

I don't like the way the stories are so simple that even a two-year-old can solve them. Why don't you put more mystery and excitement to the stories and make them live up to the title of the magazine. Your women detectives are the "bunk." All the detectives are always solving the murders too soon. Most of your stories end when they get to the stage where more excitement and mystery seem about to start. Even if some of your stories are short there is still a chance of making them interesting.

Now here are some articles I do like:

I like your book-length novel. In fact, I like it the best. It is so long that there isn't a chance of it being dull. I also like the article "I Go Sleuthing," "Line-Up," and your "Almanac."

Let's have more excitement and mystery in the future. *Miss Draga Bolch*

We Call Attention to the First and Third Letters

BROOKLYN, N. Y.—I have only recently completed my second issue of MYSTERY and like so many of your other readers, have become a firm MYSTERY addict.

However, there is one feature in your otherwise commendable magazine to which I object, namely, your custom of illustrating your stories with photographs. It somehow spoils a story for me to see photographs of models posing as the various characters. It smacks too much for the real-life story type of magazine.

Why not make your magazine a strictly fiction magazine by using only illustrations by artists? Give us more of Gustavson, of Bensing. Get someone like Alexander Raymond.

It is only an idea, of course, from a mere reader but you might be able to make something of it. Why not take up this matter with your readers, make an issue of it, a sort of contest.

To me, the best part of the magazine is the book-length novel. This month's "House of Sleep" is great. I like the idea of putting the novel at the very end of the magazine.

And aren't there any readers who dislike MYSTERY? "The Line-Up" seems to contain nothing but rave notices. *A. J. Astarbi*

How Do You Like This?

WHITE PLAINS, N. Y.—The last two editions of MYSTERY MAGAZINE have been awful and disappointing. The book-length novel "The House of Sleep" was awful and sleepy reading.

"Matinee Murder" was really murdered when it was written. "Terrible Vengeance" is all that the title implies, terrible; and "Before Dawn" must have been written before sun-up as the story is not very sparkling. Only "Stained Rubies" was fair and unless a marked improvement is shown in your September issue you are going to lose a cash customer.

Philip Diamant

And Some Feel Like This!

CHICAGO, ILL.—Wouldn't it be possible to publish an article written by a person who during his "perfect" attendance at school has acquired a less limited vocabulary?

Mr. Harrison's account of the escapades of the "unworthy" Mr. Dillinger is a composition of hackneyed expressions sprinkled with too much editorial comment. He has attributed the fact that Mr. Dillinger held the position as mechanic successfully, to some strange act of Providence.

The hypothesis of the story is undoubtedly accurate, but few other than the author's friends and relatives are interested in his personal opinion.

An individual endowed with the average amount of intelligence will not accuse another of insincere grief over the death of a loved one; that, in itself, is a display of ignorance.

In case Mr. Harrison cares to offer assistance to modern parents, he should write an autobiography. So far, since the Crucifixion, there has been no "perfect" example of manhood set before us.

Psychologists would be interested in such a phenomenon. *Cecelia Harbeck*

Will This Never End?

NEWARK, N. J.—I, like many other people, just love to find mistakes in the drawings and photographic pictures illustrating the various stories in magazines, and although it is a minor trifle, everything about a magazine should be perfected, so here goes.

In the August issue of MYSTERY, appeared the story,

Line-Up

"The Sinister Beard"—By Ellery Queen. There was a picture illustrating the following excerpt:

"A little man was kneeling beside the outstretched figure of the dead doctor—a long brittle figure frozen in death, capped with curiously lambent silver hair. The wound was frank and deep; the delicately chased hilt of a stiletto protruded from the man's heart. There was much blood."

Well, naturally, I looked at the picture more closely to see if it was as stated, and for the life of me, I couldn't see the stiletto "protruding from the man's heart," and his heart was facing me! (literally). Not only that, but he was supposed to have an abundance of "curiously lambent silver hair," and what do I see, but an almost totally bald head! And then, again, the young nurse in the picture had on evening slippers with very high heels! How do you like that?

Then in the picture illustrating "Murders That Couldn't Happen"—by Ferrin Fraser, the one where the young lady is sitting in the chair and is supposed to be dead—the young lady's head is very erectly held; certainly something is wrong, because when one is dead, one's head cannot support itself, you know! Before her death she is supposed to have been reading and eating chocolates. Now I'm sure that if I were sitting in a nice comfortable chair and reading a good book, I wouldn't have my candy a mile away from my reach, as it was in that picture!

Enough of this dilly dallying! Coming to a much more serious vein, I think MYSTERY is one of the best thrillers for the price and better than many other more expensive ones.

In closing, all I have to say is, don't give me the satisfaction of finding fault with your future illustrations. *H. Fivenson*

Saluta!

DENTON, TEXAS—In glancing over "The Line-Up" for the last few months I have failed to find a letter from my home state. So I am writing you to let you know that we (like so many others) read and enjoy the greatest magazine of its kind ever published.

I have just finished the August number and I think "The House of Sleep" is the grandest story I have ever read. I missed an adventure with Hildegarde Withers, but I surely enjoyed "Murders That Couldn't Happen" by Ferrin Fraser and "The Sinister Beard" by Ellery Queen. "Terrible Vengeance" was very interesting. "Are You Responsible for Dillinger" really gives us something to think about.

I have been reading MYSTERY for many months and I can scarcely wait from one month until another to get a new magazine. I read a great many magazines, and take it from one who knows, MYSTERY is the best of all. And may I whisper a word to those whom Old Man Depression has hit? It is the cheapest, too! Only ten cents for page after page of thrilling mystery.

Join the throng who say: Give us more mysteries, please! *Mrs. J. W. Brown*

"Make New Friends, but—"

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA—Yesterday, I purchased another MYSTERY MAGAZINE and hurried home with the intention of assisting Hildegarde Withers to solve another mystery and am I disappointed? She herself had disappeared. I think something should be done about it. So put your best sleuthers on the job to locate her. I have never enjoyed reading anything so much as Stuart Palmer's entertaining mysteries.

I also enjoyed very much the stories by Colver Harris. I hope we will see more of this writer's works.

I first began reading MYSTERY MAGAZINE three and a half years ago and up to date have not missed an issue, nor will I in the future as long as I have the say-so.

The idea of the new book-length novel in each issue is a feather in its hat for MYSTERY MAGAZINE.

I hope we will have another "Simeon Graves" story soon and "Judy and Jerry." I know they must be anxious to get to work on another crime. So give them a chance.

I know I am going to like "Hattie Bickerton," one of the new detective characters. But don't crowd out too many of the old characters. Some of them are very dear friends of mine.

Here are best wishes and a long life for MYSTERY. The best magazine published.

Mrs. Elsie Stevenson

Five Reasons

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA—I have long wished I could publish a magazine of crime stories just to suit myself. I would be very particular about:

1. Well-written, intelligently conceived stories; varied and unusually good.
2. First-class, atmosphere- (*Please turn to page* 95)

HOME BUILDERS' *Question Box*

T. W. DAVIS, *Architect*

A helpful department for home owners and home builders conducted by Theodore Whitehead Davis, architect.

ANNOUNCING

The Home Builders' Question Box, a new department for readers of MYSTERY MAGAZINE. Every home builder has a problem which a few words of expert advice will often solve. If you would like to ask any questions on home building problems, write to Tower House Editor, MYSTERY MAGAZINE, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y., and the answers to your questions will appear in a future issue of this magazine.

WE are planning to build a Cape Cod cottage. Could we use brick instead of shingles for the exterior walls?

A. Although brick is not historically correct, it harmonizes with the simple lines of the Cape Cod cottage. People who wish to minimize the upkeep cost of their new house repeatedly ask this question. Generally speaking, brick can be substituted for wood exteriors if care is taken in selecting proper texture and color. For example, if the original finish of the design was rough shingles, a rough common brick should be selected, preferably a second-hand brick because of its irregular size and more pleasing color. If, on the other hand, the design of the house was formal, or finished in clapboards select a smooth hard brick and whitewash it.

Q. During the designing of my new home the question has come up as to the material to be used on the jambs of the fireplace in the living room. The house is a rather formal Georgian design. Could you give us an opinion on this question?

A. (Editor's note: .The jambs of the fireplace are the strips of masonry surrounding the fireplace opening). Any polished material such as marble, stone, or tile is correct for the fireplace jambs in a formal type of house. The smooth polished surface is selected because of the delicate mantles that are generally usd in a Georgian house.

Q. Four years ago when I bought my house the builder told me that I had a very good plumbing system because the water piping was all of brass. Now I find that I shall have to put in a whole new system because the pipes are all leaking. Was I sold an inferior grade of brass piping?

A. Very likely your trouble is caused by the corrosive action of the water supply in your community. There are many sections of the country where brass piping is not used because of this action. Wrought iron piping of good quality is generally selected in these communities. It is possible, however, that the quality of your piping is inferior or that the plumber may have been somewhat careless when he threaded the joints.

Q. We have a shingle house, shingles stained brown. The roof is also wood shingles but is in very bad repair. We feel that the brown shingles look best but are quite expensive now. What kind of roofing would you suggest. The house is all shingles with white trim and a long sloping roof.

A. No doubt the most inexpensive way to repair the roof and make it tight is to apply asphalt paper strip shingles right over the old wood shingles. This is a very simple operation as only the badly curled shingles need to be cut down on the present roof. If a good color is selected in the paper shingle line the result will harmonize fairly well with the house.

Q. Each Winter when the ground gets frozen hard I have a terrible time with my garage doors. The concrete ramp in front of them seems to come up. How can I fix this nuisance?

A. The cause of the trouble is the action of frost under the concrete. A quick remedy is often taken by cutting a thin strip off the bottom of the garage doors, but this is not getting at the cause of the trouble. The proper thing to do is to tear up the concrete, and dig away enough of the earth under it to lay a bed of sand or cinders about 6 inches deep and then pour a good heavy concrete ramp on this.

Q. We have a Colonial house in New England style painted white with green shutters on the front windows. It is badly in need of painting. For a change we would like to have the blinds painted a soft blue, but we have been told that that isn't as appropriate for the style of house as the green blinds. Would you please help us decide?

A. If you are going to keep the body of the house white, the color of the shutters is a matter of taste more than style. The general idea is to have the shutters of a darker tone than the rest of the house. Blue would be very attractive for the shutters if it is not too faded in appearance. Of course the blue must harmonize with the roof; a green roof and blue shutters might not look so well.

Q. We have an attractive small house, three rooms on the ground floor and two above, which we bought at a reasonable price ten years ago. The only drawback with the house is that there is only a small excavation under the house; just large enough to provide a room for the coal furnace. It has been hard to heat the house and we are wondering whether the house would be warmer if it was completely excavated. Also whether the cost of excavating now would be more than it is worth. Can you help us out?

A. A house with a fully excavated cellar is always warmer than one only partially excavated. A fully excavated cellar allows the furnace heat in the cellar to warm all of the first floorboards and naturally the rooms above. Engineers have run tests on the heat losses due to cold floors and part of the expense of building a full cellar would be saved each year on the fuel bill. Even if the cellar is only partly excavated with openings into the main cellar so that the warm air can circulate it will make a big difference for the better in heating the house. As to the expense, it is naturally more expensive, but not out of reason to excavate and build a cellar under a house, as the soil may contain large rocks, springs or quicksand.

The HAT *Fit—*

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page. The Episode of the Necessary Wild Goose Chase in the Snow!

Publishers Photo

Could there be any connection between the blood-stained cap and the crushed-in skull?

THE cap was found along the snow-packed trail east of Ponoka, in the Northwest Territory, in 1907. The blood-stains upon it immediately conjured up in the minds of the Mounties visions of some sinister happening along the trail—some sort of crime, possibly murder.

And so, methodically, as is their custom, they began an exhaustive investigation. It availed them nothing, however. The owner of the cap could not be located. No indication of a crime was unearthed. No one was reported missing, and no one could be found who had suffered an injury which might explain the blood-stains on the torn headgear. The search was ordered abandoned, the hat shipped to headquarters at Edmonton, where, after a time, it would be destroyed, and the Mounties turned their attention to more urgent matters.

Time passed. Another Autumn came to the Dominion's great Northwest. And then Sergeant Nicholson "got his man"—and lost him. He was bringing a horse thief south to Edmonton when it happened. The thief, a stocky, bow-legged ruffian, who called himself William Oscar Koenig, was in ill-humor. His two *criminal* companions had escaped the clutches of the law, and he wanted revenge.

As they rode on, he grumbled to Nicholson that he could lead him to evidence that would bring far more serious charges against the two than simply that of horse stealing. The Sergeant listened, and finally became convinced that there was a ring of sincerity to what his prisoner said.

"All right," he told him. "Show me."

Koenig led him to a cabin, not a great distance from Ponoka, and bade him sift the ashes in the iron stove that stood in one corner of the single room. The sifting produced the bones of a human hand and a human skull, with the top crushed in.

"Who was he?" the Mountie asked.

Koenig said he didn't know. All he knew, he said, was what he had chanced to hear his two companions say one night when they thought he was asleep. From their conversation he had gathered that they had waylaid someone on the lonely trail near the shack, killed him, and burned the body in the stove.

Nicholson needed more evidence. He needed a clue to the identity of the murdered man. And so, while his prisoner slept, he made a careful search of the cabin. He found nothing to cast any light upon the crime. And then he came to a storeroom. It was a spacious place, and pitch black inside. Resting his rifle against the wall, he struck a match. As the light flared, the stout door of the storeroom slammed shut and he heard the lock slapped into place. Then the sound of hurrying, retreating footsteps came to his ears; a bit later the receding beat of horses' hoofs, two of them, for Koenig had taken both horses. He had not been asleep. It was the Mountie who had been caught napping.

Then he thought of the torn, blood-stained muskrat cap, which had been found so long ago on the snow-packed trail near Ponoka. Could there be any connection between it and the crushed-in skull? He determined to find out.

The hat was found, thick with dust, on a beam in the basement of headquarters, and when it was fitted over the skull a surprising discovery was made—the torn part, its edges ruffled with dried blood, corresponded exactly with the break in the skull.

The man who owned the hat was the man who had been murdered. But his identity remained as much of a mystery as before.

To Ponoka Nicholson went, and there he learned that two days before the blood-stained hat was found, Joe Hindahl, a settler, had left town for Bemidji, Minnesota, where he had inherited a farm. Alone it meant nothing. But when someone recalled that he had left with a stocky, bow-legged stranger, his departure became an all-important matter to Nicholson. He had grave doubts that Hindahl had ever reached Bemidji.

There was just one way to make certain—go to the Minnesota town. It might be a wild goose chase, a waste of valuable time, but it had to be done.

In Bemidji, he was informed that Hindahl lived on a farm outside of town.

"Know him very well?" the Mountie asked.

"Only slightly. He's only been here two months.

Nicholson frowned. It had now been more than two years since Hindahl had left Ponoka. Then he asked, "He's a stocky, bow-legged fellow, isn't he?"

"That's him," the informant acknowledged.

The Mountie was satisfied. It had not been a wild goose chase after all. At the farm he found Koenig, the bow-legged horse thief and murderer, posing as Hindahl, whom he had killed on the snow-packed trail and whose body he had burned in the stove of the lonely cabin.

He was returned to Canada and there, early in 1910, he swung from the gallows.

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Flattering New Powder Shades

Natural brightens fair skin. Excellent shade with graying hair.

Rose Cream gives a "bloom" to blonde and fair brunette skin.

Light Cream makes lily-pale blonde or brunette skin look clear and velvet-smooth.

Brunette (Rachel) gives glow and radiance to brunette skin. Does away with paleness.

Rose Brunette . . . a *warmer* shade . . . makes sallow skin sparkle. And it modifies ruddiness.

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Mrs. Manuel J. Bon de Sousa
ivory-skinned and light-haired, says, "Pond's is the smoothest powder. The Brunette shade brightens my skin."

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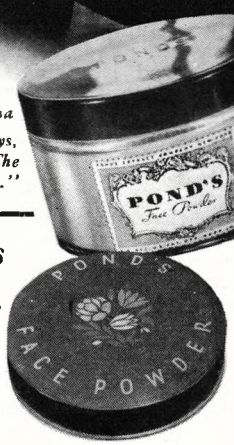

10¢ ¼ the actual size

HIDDEN TINTS *in these New Powder Shades make blonde skin radiant, brunette skin clear . . .*

SCIENCE has discovered that the clear, creamy skin of the perfect blonde owes its loveliness to a faint hint of *brilliant blue* that lingers in it.

That the clear, olive tone of the perfect brunette skin is due to a note of *bright green* that echoes through it.

This amazing discovery was made by an optical machine which can *read* the skin. With the aid of this machine, you can actually see tints in the skin which the eye cannot detect—tints which make the complexion "perfect," or too pale, too sallow, too florid.

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When this sensational discovery was made, Pond's examined the skin of hundreds of girls. Girls with radiant "movie-star" complexions—girls with skin that was dull, tarnished, flushed, dark.

That's how Pond's learned the exact colors needed to make blonde and brunette skin beautiful.

They mixed into each of their new face powders just a tinge of blue and green. You cannot detect these tints in the powder, but you recognize their glamorous effect.

New powder shades flatter all complexions

Pond's powder shades are different from any others. The moment you smooth them on, blonde skin becomes transparent, pearly . . . brunette skin becomes clear, magnolia-like.

Best of all . . . Pond's Powder clings and clings. Yet never cakes—never streaks—never clogs the pores. Its texture is superfine. And its perfume lasts to the very depths of the jar.

Yet Pond's Face Powder jar for 55¢ contains as much as many $1.00 boxes. The extra-big jar is $1.10. Five-and-tens and variety stores carry 10¢ and 25¢ sizes

Send the coupon below for your samples at once. You'll be amazed to see how these new face powder shades will make your complexion clear—radiant—breath-taking.

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I prefer 3 different *Light* shades ☐
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If you like them so well, why not get acquainted?

On this page, each month, there will be presented a short sketch of one of your favorite authors, so that you may get to know the men who bring you the world's best mystery fiction. For Walter F. Ripperger's latest contribution to MYSTERY Magazine, turn to page 24 for his thrilling serial, "Seven Meant Death."

WALTER F. RIPPERGER, (above) his stories (right) himself.

EVERY so often a new writer without professional training appears on the horizon and becomes a popular favorite almost overnight. Walter F. Ripperger published his first story in MYSTERY in 1932 with "The Severed Hand." This story not only marked the introduction of a new author to the world but also served to introduce his lovable hero, Simeon Graves, a round-faced, jovial old gentleman, by profession a criminal lawyer, a detective by choice. The kindly Simeon Graves further endeared himself to his followers through the medium of a series, "The Weird Murders of Mr. Carn" and later in a serial, "The Murder Men of Molokai." These followed in quick succession after Ripperger's initial success.

Ripperger had had no previous experience at writing for money. He was a natural. He never took any courses in writing. Nobody taught him a formula which is said to be so essential to success in short stories. He learned how to write in one way, namely, by writing. And he believes it is the only way. A product of the New York public schools, he began to write for fun as a youngster, and at De Witt Clinton High School he edited the school paper, and the stories in the "Magpie" are to this day hauled out of the files by other school boys and exhibited as examples of ingenious plot construction.

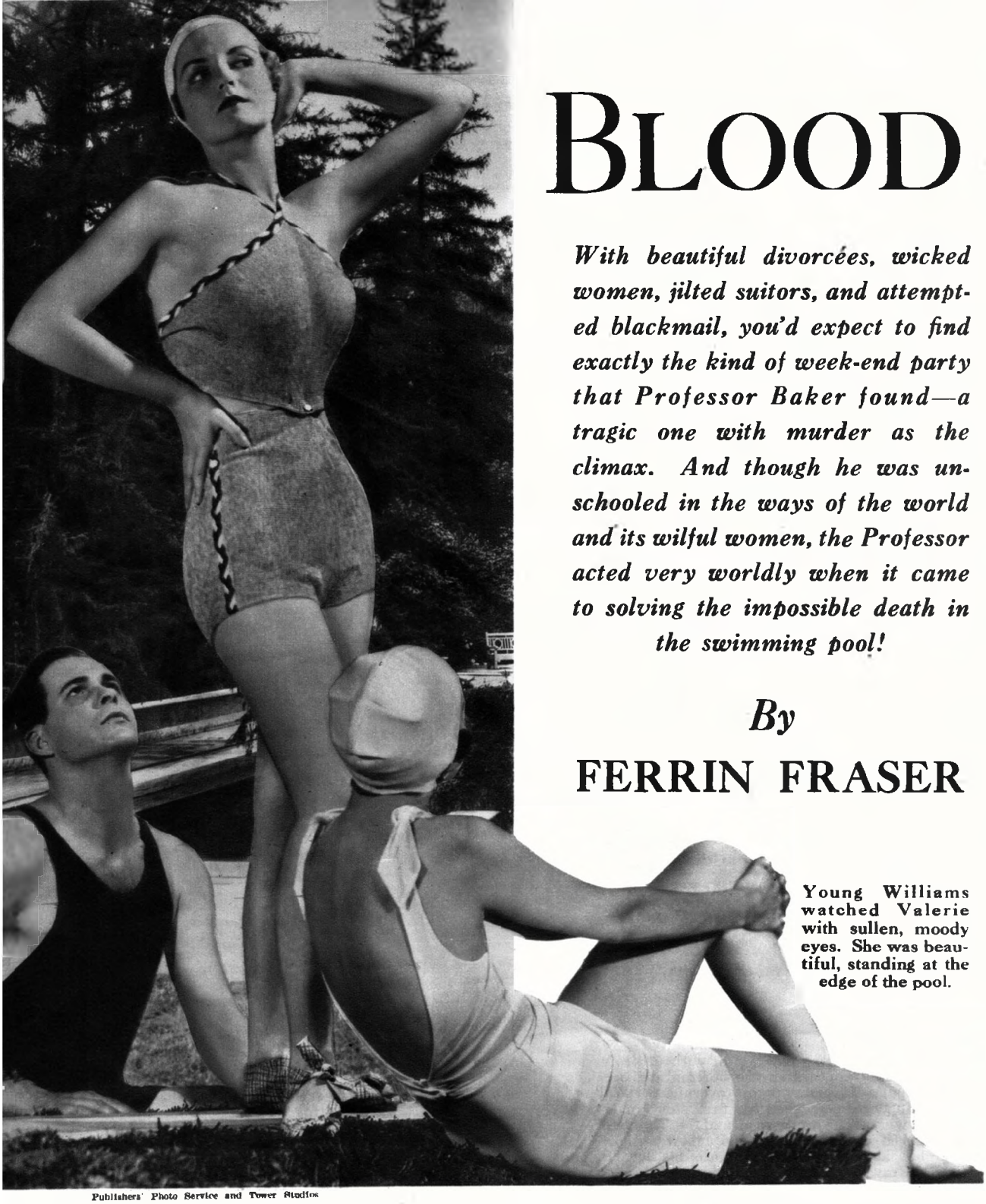
In his school days he drew on memories of life abroad. At sixteen he had made a bicycle tour of France with a priest, stopping at monasteries for overnight shelter. He continued his education at Columbia, but the years there had little to do with evolving a literary career, although he took time off to act as co-author of a play. He studied industrial chemistry and at night went to law school where he acquired the knowledge of law and of lawyers on which he frequently draws in his writings. At twenty he left college and entered business. It was a fascinating and unusual enterprise—the detinning business, a unique industry of considerable magnitude. At the time of Ripperger's employment, (*Please turn to page* 60)

BLOOD

With beautiful divorcées, wicked women, jilted suitors, and attempted blackmail, you'd expect to find exactly the kind of week-end party that Professor Baker found—a tragic one with murder as the climax. And though he was unschooled in the ways of the world and its wilful women, the Professor acted very worldly when it came to solving the impossible death in the swimming pool!

By

FERRIN FRASER



Young Williams watched Valerie with sullen, moody eyes. She was beautiful, standing at the edge of the pool.

Publishers' Photo Service and Tower Studios

WHEN the invitation came to spend a week-end at Randolph Browne's Hudson Valley estate, there was very little Professor Baker could do to avoid accepting it. In the first place, it was more of a command than an invitation. Browne was one of the trustees of Baker's college, and a man whose wishes were invariably carried out by the faculty members—if they valued their jobs.

In the second place, the Professor had just flunked Browne's son, Bob, who was an excellent halfback but whose talents did not run to the Fine Arts; he knew that an explanation must be forthcoming, and it might be easier to make it on the trustee's broad, shady terrace than in his grim and business-like Wall Street office.

And in the third place, there was Mary. Mary was the Professor's sweet and ample wife, the one love of his life outside of the art responsible for the Italian Renaissance. Normally placid and contented as a fat, woolly sheep, Mary became strangely excited over the

on the WATER

Brown invitation and the prospect of entering society—if only for one week-end.

"We *must* go, George!" she said eagerly.

Baker frowned behind his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"We'd be bored to death, Mary. There'll be a lot of fast, racy people there who don't know a Holbein from a barnyard animal. They'll sit around, and talk nonsense, and drink cocktails—"

"Even I," said Mary, "might drink *one* cocktail—*once!* Anyhow, *we're going*, George!"

Which was how Professor Baker and his wife happened to descend one sunny Saturday afternoon from a train at Hudson Valley. And although they didn't know it, every step they took across the warm, planked station platform carried them closer to death.

Their immediate steps, however, took them toward a long, blue car with the initials "R. B." interwoven in silver on the door. The liveried chauffeur came to meet them. There was a slight delay before they started the three-mile drive to Browne's house.

"I have also to meet another lady," the chauffeur explained. "A Miss Valerie Duncan. I believe this is she coming now——"

He moved off down the platform toward a slim, blond woman with singularly red lips. Mary gasped.

"Valerie Duncan! George, do you know who *she* is?"

Professor Baker shook a modest head.

"I don't, my dear. But if this is she, I'd say Miss Duncan was a remarkably beautiful woman."

"A remarkably wicked one!" whispered Mary. "And it isn't Miss—it's Mrs. She's been *married five times*——"

"That seems to be more fashionable than wicked now-a-days," said the Professor tolerantly.

"And *divorced* five times! The newspapers say young Roger Williams tried to commit suicide over her!—only last week!"

"Even at my age," said Baker, "I can easily imagine it. She is extremely striking."

THE blond woman, her slightly hard blue eyes bright in the sun, came up with a faint smile on her curved, painted lips.

"Mr. Browne regrets that he couldn't meet you himself," the chauffeur said. "Miss Duncan, this is Professor and Mrs. Baker. If you're quite ready——"

Valerie Duncan signified that she was quite ready by getting in the big car and smiling coyly at Baker. The Professor could feel Mary stiffen seeing that the smile was only for him. Evidently Valerie wasted little time on other women.

"Are you a *real* professor?" she asked brightly.

"Sometimes I doubt it," Baker said, "when I see the results of my teaching."

"I never went to college," Miss Duncan mused, half regretfully. "You see, I was married very young——"

"I doubt," said the Professor gallantly, "if college could have added anything to your charm, Miss Duncan."

He felt Mary's sharp kick on his ankle at the same time Valerie flashed him a smile. There was real friendliness in it this time, and the Professor felt himself blushing.

"I'm sure you'd be more comfortable," he said, "if you let me put that bag you're holding on the floor."

The woman was holding a green, leather overnight bag on her lap. He saw her ringed fingers stiffen on its corners.

"No—thank you," she said firmly. "I'll hold it."

The Professor could not blame Browne for being in love with Miss Whitney.

Professor Baker smiled to himself. In the newspapers women as beautiful as this, when married five times, invariably collected sizable collections of jewelry. But he had never read that they clung to it so tightly, or that their overnight bags were *made of steel.* Through a chipped place in the leather he could catch the gleam of polished metal. And he noticed that the bag was closed by a sturdy lock that looked as formidable as it did strong.

THEY arrived presently at Browne's estate through a wrought-iron gate and a wide, sweeping drive that wandered over low-hanging oak trees. To the right Baker caught a glimpse of a long, marble swimming pool, with gay laughter echoing from it across a green lawn. And ahead rose the house—gray, granite, a little forbidding beneath its dark ivy, but very expensive.

Browne met them on the veranda. He was a tall, lean man, brown with golf and sun, younger-looking than the forty-five years the social register accorded him.

"Sorry not to have come to the station," he said. "How do you do, Professor? This is Mrs. Baker?"

"My wife, Mary," Baker said. "Our host, Mr. Browne."

Mary blushed slightly but was saved the necessity of replying to this man-of-affairs whom she evidently held in awe. Valerie Duncan stepped from the car.

"Hello, Rand!" she said.

The Professor noticed a slight frown across Browne's face.

"Oh, hello, Valerie. You came, did you?"

"You bet I came!" said Miss Duncan. "I wouldn't miss one of your parties for—a diamond bracelet, Rand."

"Higgins will show you your room, Valerie."

"No need. I can find it. I've been there often enough."

With a hard little smile flung over one shoulder, Valerie Duncan disappeared into the dim hall. Browne shook himself slightly and turned to the Professor and Mary.

"Won't you come in?" he said. "I am very glad you could come."

He led the way into the hall to where a great, white staircase wound upward into gray dimness.

"Would you like to go up, Mrs. Baker? I'll have Higgins take you."

Higgins, a somber-faced automaton, appeared from the shadows and led Mary upward on soundless carpets. The Professor was about to follow when Browne stopped him.

"Oh, Baker? I wonder if I could have a word with you?"

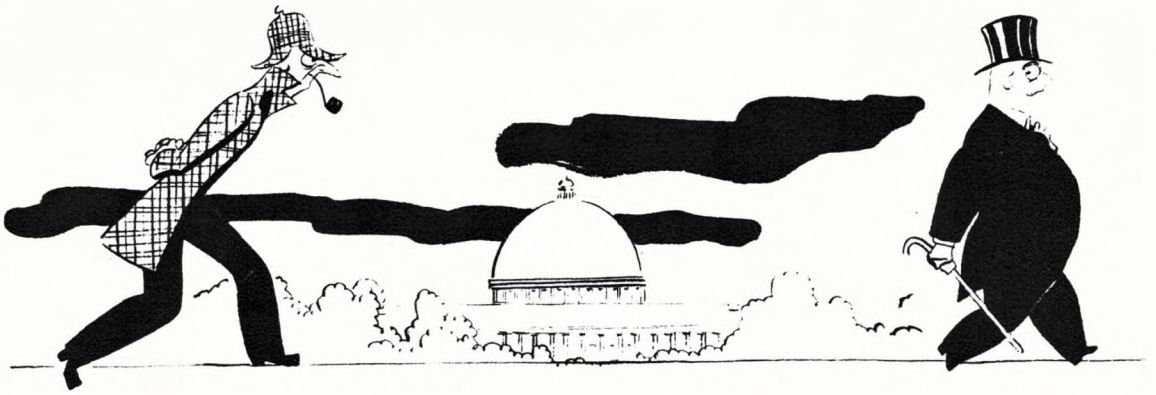
The Professor felt his heart sink. He had not expected the matter of Bob Browne's flunking his Fine Arts course to come up so soon. But he straightened his thin shoulders, determined to give no ground in his duties as a professor, and said in a small voice:

"Of course, Mr. Browne."

"Let's go into the library. We won't be disturbed there."

Browne led the way to a great oak door that swung open on silent hinges. The room beyond was cool and dark, book-lined, and through the long windows Baker could see the green sweep (*Please turn to page* 54)

"There's no two ways about this," the lieutenant snapped. "The girl was stabbed, and it could only have been done by one of you in the pool with her."



OFF *the* RECORD

A department where every month you may read of the ridiculous and amusing things that happen to America's law-makers. A rib-tickler hot off the political griddle in Washington

Uncle Sam, Flour Miller

THE Federal government now finds itself entangled in the flour milling business.

Honest Harold Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior and man of many titles, is responsible. As Public Works Administrator, he's the man who is spending $3,000,000,000 as quickly as possible to give citizens jobs. He is building bridges, sewer plants, roads, public buildings, irrigation layouts and dams from one end of the country to the other.

The Pierce Mill tea house, in Washington's Rock Creek Park, is one of his projects. Ickes is spending $19,250 to restore the ancient house and water-wheel into a grist mill which will operate exactly as it did in 1794, when Isaac Pierce and his son, Abner, first built it.

It is a dandy mill. In a few more weeks motorists in stream-lined cars may park beside it and watch it turn wheat into flour.

The grain for Ickes' mill will, of course, have to be shipped into Washington by train, bagged and trundled to the park in motor trucks. The mill then will grind the wheat, turning it into flour. What to do with the flour is the next question. Ickes hasn't figured that one out yet. Neither has the National Parks Service, who thought of the idea in the first place.

Virgin Islands rum is another one of Ickes projects. The Virgin Islands Company, a government corporation of which he is an officer and for which he has furnished most of the money, soon will be shipping rum from St. Croix to the United States. It will be potent liquor, smooth, inexpensive, and plentiful. Moreover it will bear the label of Uncle Sam, distiller. The prohibitionists are gritting their teeth over that.

The experts figure that the Virgin Islands must be made self-supporting. The only way they can support themselves is by manufacture of rum, as they used to do before prohibition. Thirteen years of legal drought, however, caused all the rum making machinery to rust. The Islanders haven't any money to buy more.

So the Virgin Islands Company is furnishing the capital, managing the business—and taking the profits. When enough rum makes enough profit to pay off the loan Ickes will turn the distilleries back to the natives.

Okay Now, Herr Hitler!

EVERYTHING'S okay now, Mr. Hitler, you won't have to pay for irrigating a large portion of Idaho, after all.

For a while though, Mr. Hitler, it looked as though you were going to be stuck with the bill. Herr Hans Luther, your ambassador, thought so, anyway, until he called up the Senior Senator from Idaho to discover what was what, if anything.

It seems that Ambasador Luther is not familiar with the mysterious quirks of the American legislative system, whereby some things look like what they aren't—and sometimes vice versa.

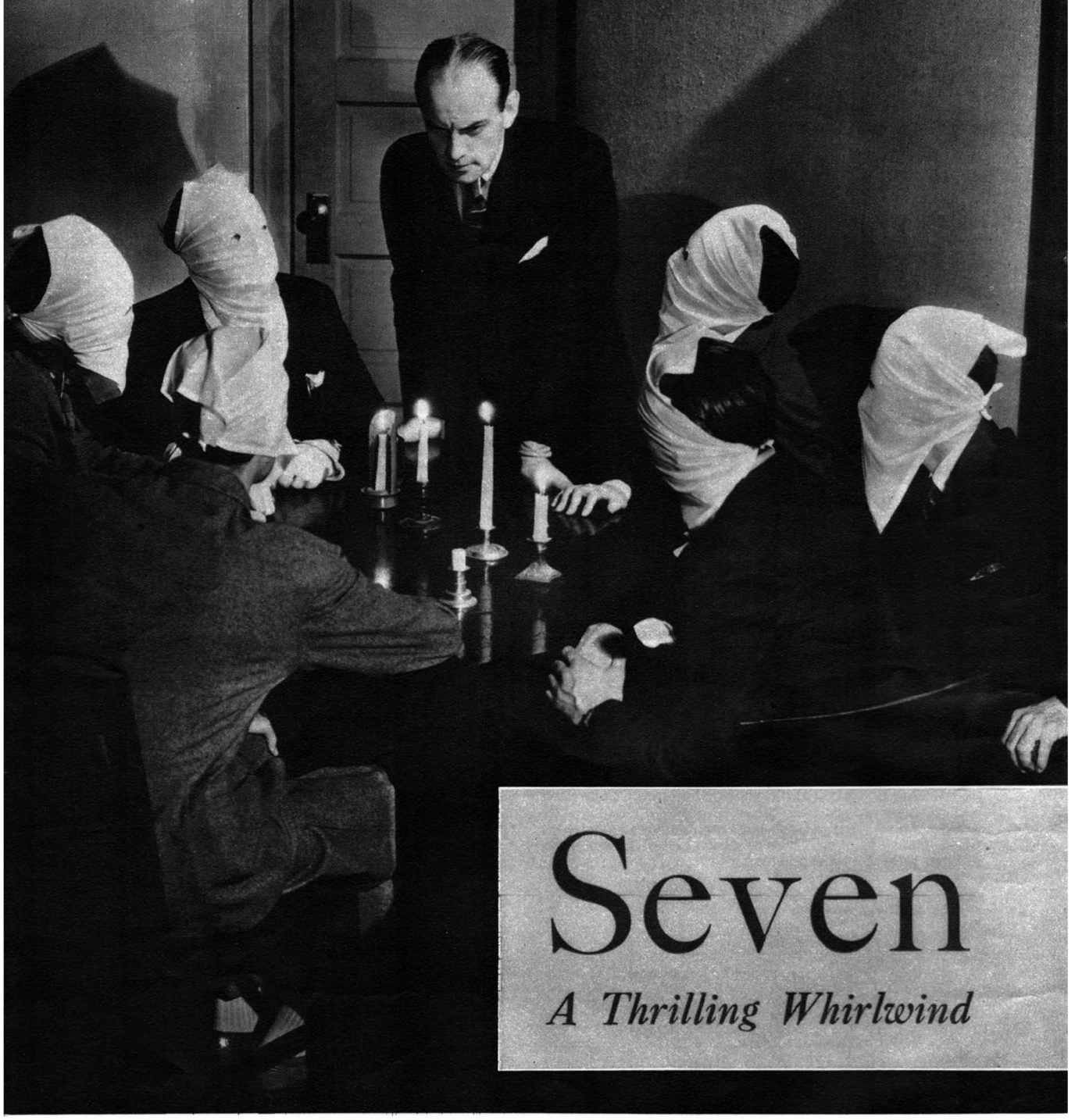
This little international drama, which just now is coming to light, had its start several weeks ago during the dying days of the last Congress when Senator William E. Borah, the man who isn't a Democrat nor a Republican either, was insisting upon legislation to untangle a little irrigation dispute which came up in his native Idaho.

Borah couldn't get the Senate to do anything about it, so he resorted to one of that august body's celebrated stratagems. He got his irrigation measure included as a rider to a bill providing—of all things—for a suspension of further mixed claims awards to German national until Germany gives (*Please turn to page* 82)

SPECIAL!

Have you any questions, serious or otherwise, to ask about your government? John Alexander MYSTERY MAGAZINE'S special correspondent in Washington, will answer the most interesting questions sent in by MYSTERY readers every month. If you want to know how your government works; if you wish information on any subject of national importance; or if you just want to gossip; address your queries to this expert on political happenings—John Alexander, Reporter of Capitol Comics, care of Tower Magazines, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Questions and answers will be printed each month in this magazine.

By JOHN ALEXANDER



Seven

A Thrilling Whirlwind

Lorrimer gazed at the masked figures. "I wish to know," he said, "with whom I am dealing."

THE train was about to get under way—and still the tall man hesitated. His foot was on the lower step; he was looking away from the train, back toward the town, trying to get a final view of the prison buildings. They weren't visible from where he stood, but he knew how they looked—cold, gray, gloomy edifices—that he would remember as long as he lived. They had held him fast, shut him off from the rest of the world for seven years. He shrugged and slowly got on board.

For a moment he stood uncertain in the vestibule as the train gathered speed. He had a curious sensation of having been cut adrift, an odd feeling that someone should tell him what to do next. Seven years of incarceration had taught him to expect that his every move, almost his every thought, would be directed by someone else. Men in uniform stood over you to tell you what to do and what not to do. The effects of that seven-year nightmare couldn't be shaken off in a few minutes of freedom.

He took a deep breath, made his way through three cars and found the smoker. There were plenty of empty seats so that he could have one to himself. A boy came by with magazines, candy and cigars. The man bought a newspaper and a handful of cigars. He lit one and pulled at it avidly. He had been allowed to smoke in prison, but this was different. It wasn't necessary for him to nurse the cigar along. There would be another after this one, and another and another—dozens of them if he wanted them.

Do You Want Serials in Mystery?

HERE is a chance for MYSTERY readers to vote on a much-debated question—shall a monthly magazine carry a continued story, or devote its pages to complete, short stories? Write to us, and tell us your choice. If you like this newest serial by one of your favorite authors, say so; if you don't like it, say so. The editors wish to publish the kind of magazine you like to read, and by giving you this excellent four-part story on which to cast your vote, we feel confident that the results will be an accurate gauge of MYSTERY readers' tastes. What is your choice?

meant Death

Serial By WALTER F. RIPPERGER

For a time he stared idly out of the window into the approaching dusk. His lean face was intensely bitter, his thin lips were set in a tight line, his eyes burning. He was no longer No. 26735. He once more had a name—Warren Lorrimer.

He turned from the window. A short middle-aged man, with a round expressionless face and bulbous eyes, came and took the seat directly beside him. That annoyed Warren Lorrimer. He wanted to be alone with his thoughts, unpleasant though they were, and he saw no reason why the short man should crowd himself into his seat when there were dozens of vacant ones.

"Pardon me——"

Lorrimer's paper had slid off his knees to the floor. The man with the bulbous eyes had picked it up and was passing it to him.

Warren Lorrimer nodded his thanks ungraciously and took it. As he turned to the front page, he had an odd feeling that the man was studying him. The man had a queer look in his eyes, malicious and yet not unkindly. He understood that his presence was unwelcome without resenting it.

Warren Lorrimer centered his interest on his paper. In the second column in large type his own name stared him in the face.

WARREN LORRIMER EXONERATED BY DEATH-BED CONFESSION

GOVERNOR EXTENDS FULL PARDON TO MILLIONAIRE SPORTSMAN WHO SERVED SEVEN YEARS FOR CRIME OF WHICH HE WAS INNOCENT

The report was long and detailed. It gave the history of the case; the girl discovered beaten to death in a hotel room; Warren Lorrimer's subsequent indictment; and told of the long, hopeless battle waged by prominent attorneys in his defense. It recounted how Norman Greffer, then an assistant district attorney, had made his reputation by doing what everyone considered impossible—securing the conviction of the young millionaire. That had been front-page stuff, and Norman Greffer had made the most of it. The account made much of the final few minutes in court how Lorrimer had faced an uneasy jury and had cried in ringing tones:

"Gentlemen, you have made a mistake—I am innocent!" and how he had swung around to the assistant district attorney and, pointing an accusing finger at Norman Greffer, had shouted, "I'm innocent—and you know it!"

Warren Lorrimer's face twitched as he read that. He remembered the scene so well, the ill-concealed triumph on Greffer's face and the way Greffer had smiled disdainfully and his not too audible "They all say that."

"It certainly was an outrage," the man at his side said softly.

WARREN LORRIMER turned slowly, his eyes dark and forbidding, but he said nothing.

"I understand," the man went on with a certain insinuating significance, "that Greffer is being groomed for the governorship." He stopped, then with quiet emphasis he added, "Norman Greffer got his start at your expense, Mr. Lorrimer. . . ."

Warren Lorrimer drew back.

"How do you know my name?" he demanded.

A smile twisted the other's lips.

"It is our business to know things like that. We think we may be of use to you."

"We?"

The short man nodded.

"The Tribunal," he explained in a low but matter-of-fact tone.

Lorrimer stared broodingly at the man beside him. He had heard of organizations for the rehabilitation of ex-convicts, but he had no need of them.

"I'm not interested," he replied shortly, and turned abruptly away to stare out of the window.

For a long time after that Lorrimer continued to look out at the grayish landscape with unseeing eyes. The man who had spoken to him was forgotten—

Tower Studios

Lorrimer felt his pulses racing. Greffer ask. Greyfield Platt "Do you mind if I

Lorrimer was lost in thought. He would have to begin life all over again. Either that, or gather up the ends of the broken threads. He winced at the thought of that; it struck him like a fearful ordeal. The mere thought of meeting old friends, long forgotten acquaintances, was almost more than he could bear. They would sympathize with him, would congratulate him, and probably make a big fuss over him. Most of them had professed a belief in his innocence, and those who had thought him guilty had maintained that the girl had been treated the way she deserved. A look of something akin to pain crossed Lorrimer's face at the thought of having to face all that, and yet he'd have to, if he were ever to shake off the shadow of those frightful years. He'd have to meet his old friends, visit his old haunts, and resume his life just as if there had been no interruption. He'd have to . . . a set look came into his face . . . he'd begin this very night!

"My name is Bracker—Lyman Bracker," the voice beside him broke in on his thoughts.

Lorrimer continued to gaze out of the window.

"There is a meeting of the Tribunal tonight," the voice continued. "I am authorized to invite you to this meeting. Your presence there will commit you to nothing, but you will learn much."

Warren Lorrimer faced around.

"Why do you intrude yourself on me in this way?" he demanded fiercely. "I have no desire to learn anything. I do not wish to meet your Tribunal. And I don't want to know you."

Lyman Bracker, unabashed, inclined his head several times. He managed to convey that he understood perfectly and sympathized as well.

"All inside of you is raw," he said gently. "Your nerves are a quiver with the injustice of your experience. All that can be altered. Your wounds can be healed. Your self-respect can be restored. And the thing that you need most at this moment can be given you—an interest in life—a vital interest."

For a second a tense light leapt into the man's eyes, then they grew once more veiled. From his pocket he extracted a card that was blank except for a telephone number scribbled in pencil. He passed it to Lorrimer. "If you decide to come, telephone me here, before eight, tonight."

Warren Lorrimer stared moodily at the card. For some inexplicable reason the man's words, and even more so, his manner, had impressed him deeply. He looked up after a few seconds and asked an irrelevant question.

"Is the Cavalier Club still in existence?"

Lyman Bracker was mystified.

"Why, yes," he said, at last. "It was one of the first to get a license after repeal."

Lorrimer gazed off into space.

"I plan to dine there tonight," he said, as though speaking to himself. "I want to resume just where I left off."

"I see," said the man slowly. "You had dinner with the girl there the night before——"

Lorrimer nodded.

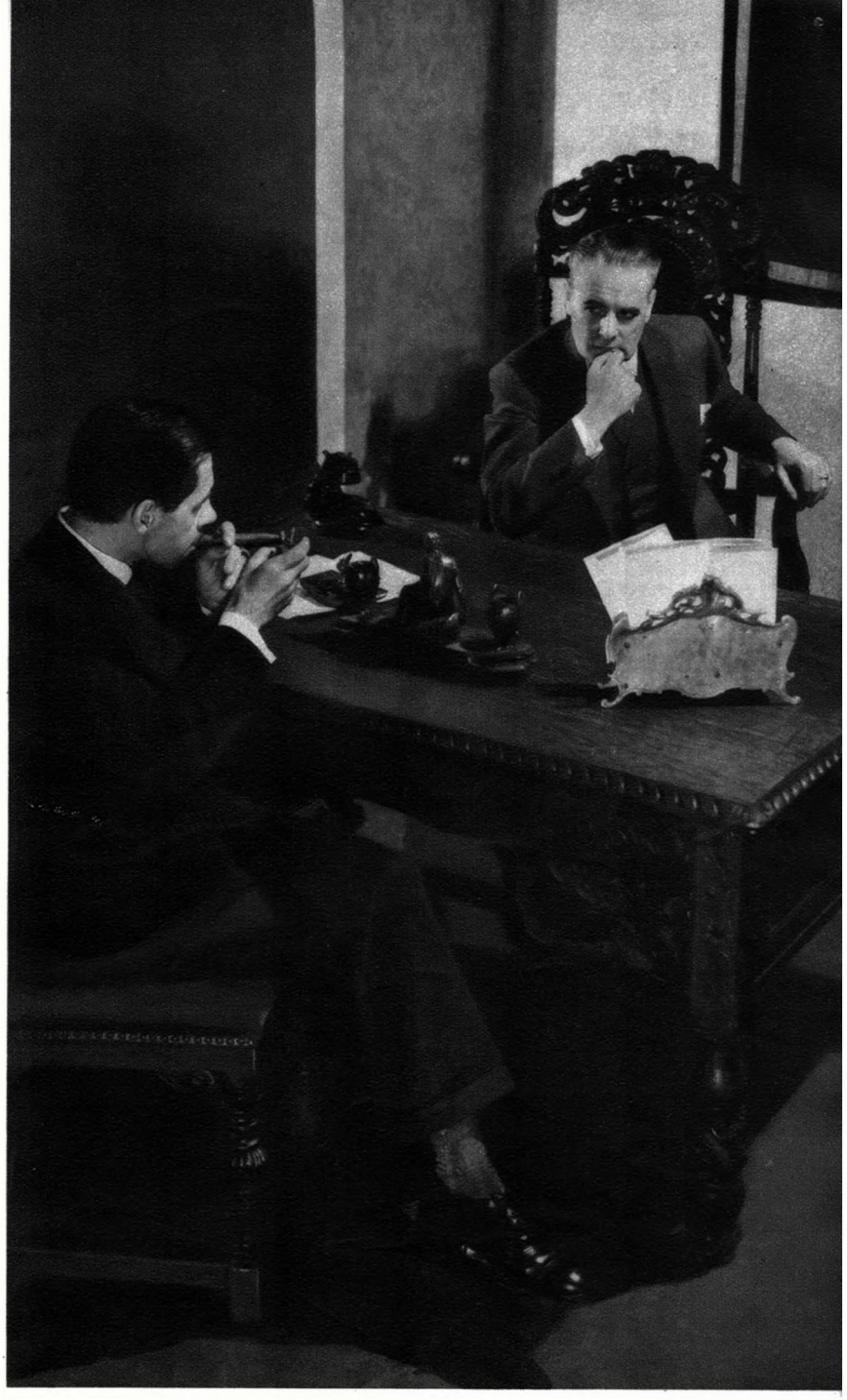
"The night before she was found murdered," he said.

A silence fell between them. Then Lyman Bracker got to his feet.

"Good-bye, Mr. Lorrimer. Something tells me that we'll see more of each other."

By the time the train got into the Grand Central Station, Warren Lorrimer had almost forgotten the man—but not quite.

An hour later Warren Lorrimer arrived at the Cavalier Club. He wasn't like most of the men there, in evening dress, but the new blue suit, which his



"Did Lorrimer join?" he heard seemed fidgety and nervous. smoke?" he evaded.

attorney had caused to be sent to the prison, fitted him passably well, and he had plenty of money in his pocket.

As he entered the garishly lighted room, some of the old assurance, that had been his in the days when he had been a well-known figure on Broadway, came back to him. He surveyed his surroundings calmly, though the lights seemed to bother his eyes and the chatter of voices coupled with the blare of the orchestra offended his ears.

The head waiter approached and pointed out a table in a secluded spot. Warren Lorrimer shook his head. He wanted to be down front, near the dance floor, right in the heart of things. The head waiter led the way to another table and Lorrimer followed. Suddenly he stopped. Someone was calling him by name:

"Warren! Warren Lorrimer!"

He turned. A large genial-faced figure, perfectly groomed, came bustling toward him. It was Larry Holman, an old acquaintance. As he came up he seized Lorrimer by the hand.

"Why, bless my soul!" he boomed. "To think of seeing you here—the first night—" he stopped, a little confused, then added heartily, "Congratulations, old man. A damned shame, but I knew it all the time."

He was unaffectedly delighted to see Lorrimer, yet despite the warmth of his greeting there was no answering smile in the latter's eyes. The misery of those seven years still held him firmly in its grip, leaving him with a hatred not only for those whom he held directly responsible for the injustice that had been meted out to him, but embittered toward all society in general. His reason told him that he would have to rid himself of that feeling, but it would take time.

"You never answered my letters," Holman said with good-natured reproach. He was still holding Lorrimer's hand in a firm grip.

"I didn't wish to write to anyone and I didn't care to see anyone," Warren Lorrimer said coldly.

"Well, it doesn't matter. Come and join me. I've got a friend——"

"Sorry," said Lorrimer frigidly. "I would rather dine alone." He managed to free his hand.

"Not on your life." The big man took him by the arm and urged him gently along.

Warren Lorrimer frowned. He remembered Holman well enough of old. A blustering, boisterous sort of chap but kind-hearted. To resist further might mean a small scene. Besides, what did it matter? He'd have to meet people some time.

At the table to which Holman conducted him there sat a remarkable girl. She had an air of being contained almost to the point of arrogance. His cool blue eyes looked up briefly at Lorrimer, appraisingly but without any particular interest. The hand that toyed with the champagne glass was like the rest of her, exquisitely shaped and proudly poised.

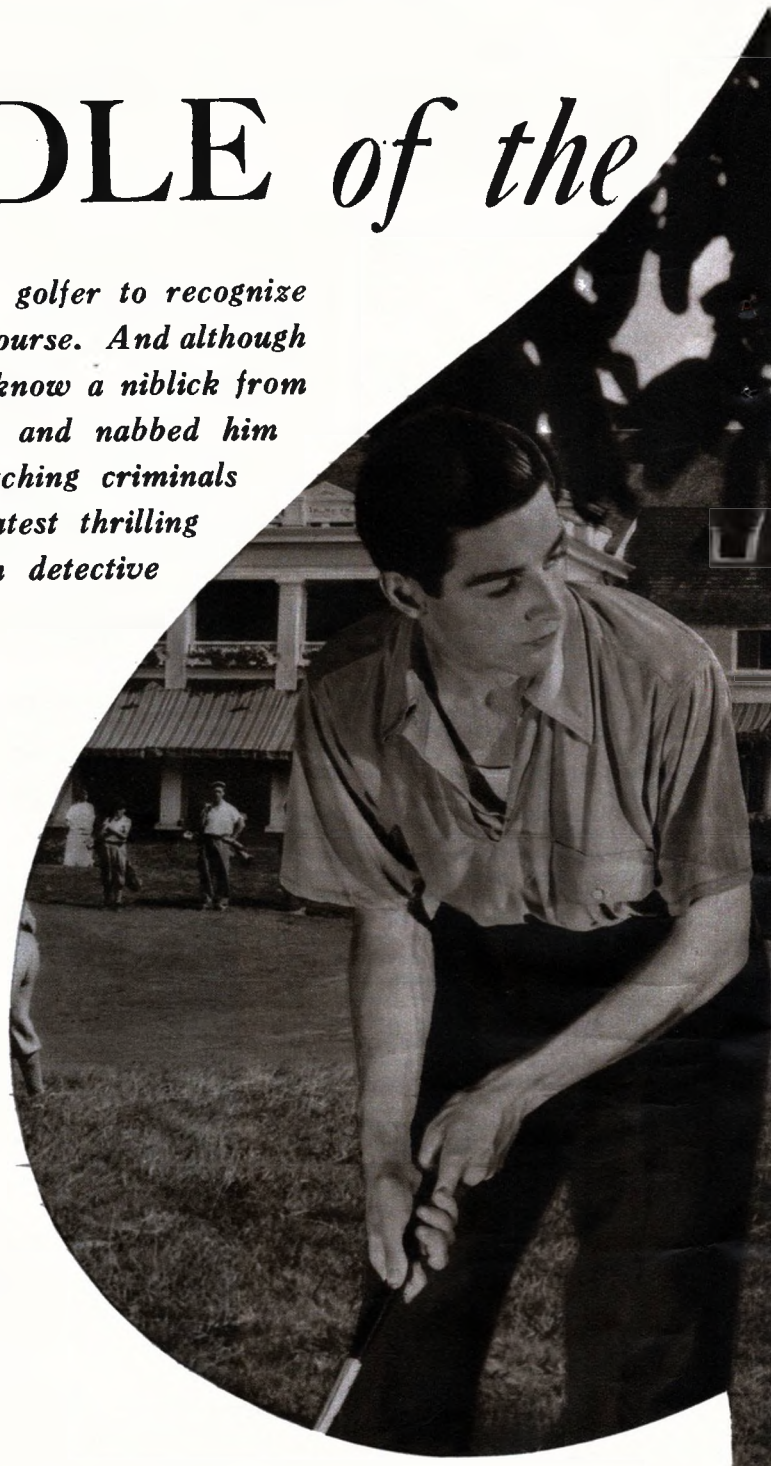
Larry Holman was about to introduce Lorrimer, opened his lips, then closed them without uttering a word. He looked dismayed. It only now dawned on him what an asinine thing he had done. He should not have brought Warren Lorrimer over. He and this girl should never have met—certainly not on this night, the very first night that Lorrimer was out of prison. Larry braced himself for the introduction. He did it rather well, for as he glanced from one to the other he was positive that neither had understood the other's name. He breathed a sigh of relief.

They sat down with the girl between them. Larry ordered more champagne and instructed the waiter to bring the menu so that Lorrimer could order his dinner. Then he set himself out to be entertaining.

Warren Lorrimer ate and drank sparingly in silence. He never once looked at the girl at his side, but his eyes roved about (*Please turn to page* 47)

THE RIDDLE *of the*

You don't have to be an expert golfer to recognize murder when you see it on a golf course. And although Miss Hildegarde Withers didn't know a niblick from a mashie, she spotted the killer and nabbed him so neatly that her score for catching criminals went away below par in this latest thrilling adventure with the schoolma'am detective



UNINVITED and unannounced, a determined feminine figure marched into the sacrosanct precincts of the New York Homicide Bureau, with an afternoon paper under one arm.

Inspector Oscar Piper looked up from the little mountain of official memoranda which covered his scarred oak desk, and leaned back wearily in his chair. "Oh, it's you!" was his greeting.

But Miss Withers was undaunted. "Busy or not busy, Oscar Piper, you ought to be out on Long Island this afternoon instead of sitting here befouling the air with cigar smoke."

She opened the paper with a snap. A two-column head topped a box in the middle of page one, evidently the result of a last-minute change in make-up.

"'STATESMAN DIES IN 'FREAK ACCIDENT,'" she read. Then—"'David E. Farling, former state senator and present Manhattan attorney, was struck by a golf ball and instantly killed at about ten o'clock this morning. The accident happened at the small public course known as Meadowland, located near Forestlawn in Queensborough.

"'Farling was discovered by fellow golfers lying face down near a large pool which forms one of the water hazards of the course. Beside him lay the golf ball which had struck his skull with a terrific impact, although the person who inadvertently drove it has not yet been identified . . .!'"

"Yes, Hildegarde," the Inspector broke in testily. "I know all that."

"Well, do you know this?" she continued caustically. "The newspaper story goes on to remark that while there have been records of six or seven such accidents every year in the New York area, this is the first time that it resulted fatally!" She tossed the paper to him. Now do you see what I'm talking about? Do you?"

"There has to be a first time for everything," Piper reminded her. "But if it makes you any happier, Hildegarde, you might as well know that I sent one of our best men out to help the Queensborough boys on the case. Dave Farling is too prominent a man to pass over easily, and there are too many people whose toes he has stepped on. But all the same——"

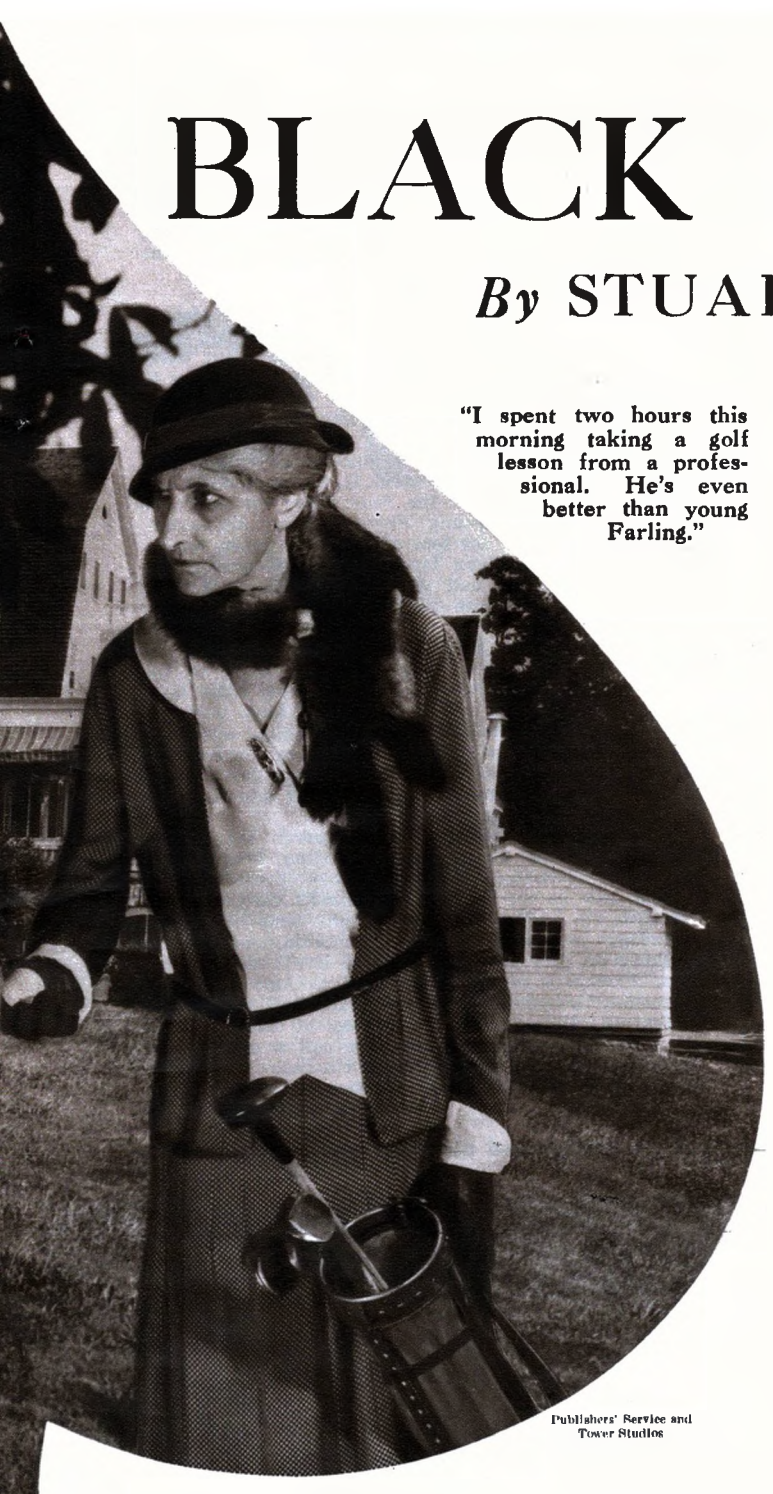
"All the same, you don't believe this could be murder?" Miss Withers sniffed. "There's something fishy about this business, Oscar. Just because it happened out in the bright October sunshine instead of in a locked room, and just because the weapon was a golf ball instead of a pistol, you leap to conclusions."

She drew a long breath. "Oscar, who was the person who found Farling's body?"

"Person? There was a whole raft of 'em. He was playing with Sam Firth, his partner, John T. Sullivan, 'the golden-tongued orator,' and his son, young Ronald Farling. They missed Farling when he didn't show up at the green, and after waiting for him a while to give him time to find a lost ball or get out of a sand trap, they started back to look for him. They got the Swiss who runs the place to help, and the whole party found Farling lying face down in the mud at the edge of the pool."

BLACK SPADE

By STUART PALMER



"I spent two hours this morning taking a golf lesson from a professional. He's even better than young Farling."

Publishers' Service and Tower Studios

"Giving each other a perfect alibi, or something," put in Miss Withers. "Go on."

"That's all I know, so far," said the Inspector. "I'm only a cop, not a crystal-gazer."

Miss Withers stood up. "Well, what are we waiting for? Let's go out there."

"Donovan knows his business," opposed the Inspector. "And the precinct boys out in Queens aren't likely to welcome too much meddling. Besides, there's no use to try to make anything except a freak accident out of this case unless——"

His telephone shrilled, and he barked an answer. "Well, Donovan? What? Listen, is the body still there? Well, leave it. Hang onto the guy—wait for me at the course."

He put down the phone, and his voice was full of amazement. "Hildegarde, you're right. It's murder—and they've nabbed the dead man's son!"

SHE went through the door ahead of him, jamming her Queen Maryish hat a bit lower on her head. The thrill of the chase widened her nostrils, but as they sped through Manhattan's traffic in a long black squad car, heading toward Queensboro Bridge, she grasped the Inspector's arm and shook her head.

"I don't believe it," she announced. "I don't believe it was the son that did it."

"Such things have happened, and worse," Piper reminded her. "And don't think that Donovan doesn't know what he's doing. If he's made a pinch he's sure of his ground."

Miss Withers had a retort ready, but the sudden screaming of the siren drowned her out. They cut through red light after red light, raced over the bridge, and then on a long straightaway past mile upon mile of used-car lots, garages, hot-dog stands, grocery stores . . . far into the vastness of Queens, which enjoys the reputation of being the largest and most unlovely borough of New York.

The day had been warm for October, but now as the sun set behind the towers of Manhattan to the westward, a chill wind began to sweep down from the Sound. Miss Withers could not help shivering as the fast car swung off the boulevard and shot south over a narrow macadam road. There was a faded sign "Meadowland Golf Club—Greens Fee 50c" . . .

On the right they could see a rolling green expanse of what had once been a succulent cow pasture. Now it bore signs of a sketchy landscaping and here and there a rain-streaked flag fluttered over a clipped green square of grass.

Far ahead of them they saw a small white building surrounded by autos, but at that moment their precipitous course was interrupted by a blue-clad figure which stepped out into the road ahead of them, waving its arms.

Brakes screamed. "The Sergeant says I was to tell you that if you cut across the fence right here you'll find him where the body is. . . ."

"Okay," said Piper. He helped Miss Withers out of the car, which was simple, and over the barbed wire fence, which was fraught with difficulty and peril.

"Right straight toward the trees," their guide advised. They went onward over a little hill, and came down upon another fairway. Ahead of them, from the depths of a narrow ravine which cut across the open fairway in a wide diagonal, rose the tops of a cluster of elms. But there was no sign of human presence.

"Under the trees, Inspector," their guide insisted.

They came suddenly above the ravine, looking down upon a wide, leaf-choked pool near the elms. Smaller trees and bushes filled the canyon-like cut at the left, but ahead of them it lay open around the pool. Here were gathered an official little circle around a

body which still lay face downward near the water's edge.

Photographers were taking their last shots in the fading light. Sergeant Donovan, red-faced and perspiring, came up the slope to greet his chief.

"Open and shut," he announced. "I washed it up pronto, Inspector. But you may as well have a look around." He noticed Miss Withers, and greeted her without enthusiasm. "Afternoon, ma'am."

"Open and shut," she repeated blankly. "Hmmmm."

They looked at the body—a sprawled, plumpish man of fifty dressed in plus fours and bright yellow sweater and stockings, and with a small circular indentation in the back of the skull. Then a tarpaulin was drawn over the grim exhibit.

"Right here was where they found the golf ball that did it," the Sergeant was saying. "About two feet from the corpse."

From his pocket he took a wadded handkerchief, in the center of which reposed a bright new golf ball, bearing on one side a tiny trademark consisting of a black spade—and on the other a dull reddish smear. "Exhibit A, Inspector!"

Piper nodded. "Seems to be clear enough. We may as well go on to the clubhouse, eh, Hildegarde?"

Miss Withers had discovered a dead branch nearby, with which she was poking dubiously at the deep leaf-choked pool. Its murky waters were reflecting the last glow of the sunset.

"But we've found the body, Hildegarde!" he said jokingly. "Or do you think the murderer is lurking under water?"

She sniffed, and tossed aside the branch.

It was a good stiff walk back to the clubhouse, a small building of rattletrap structure. In the rear was a three-room apartment sacred to the gnarled Swiss who leased the land and operated the course. In the front was an office furnished with a cash register, a counter displaying sun-hats, golf balls, patent tees, and the like, and a screened porch boasting half a dozen tables with chairs and a dispensing machine for soda pop.

It was on this porch that young Ronald Farling waited, with a plainclothes detective on either side and a burly captain in charge. That worthy hurried down to meet the Inspector on the lawn.

"Greetings," said Piper. "Miss Withers—Captain Mike Platt, Queens Division. Congratulations, Captain."

The captain grinned. "Glad you agree that we've broken the case so early, sir. Just the same, I kept the young rat here so you could talk to him on the ground, so to speak. . . ."

"Give us the picture, quick," ordered Piper.

"Well," said Platt slowly, "it's not a nice picture at all. Farling and his son Ronald, together with Mister Sullivan and Mister Firth all came out early this morning for a round of golf. They often come to this little course because it's never crowded and because it's ten miles closer to the city than the nearest full-size course.

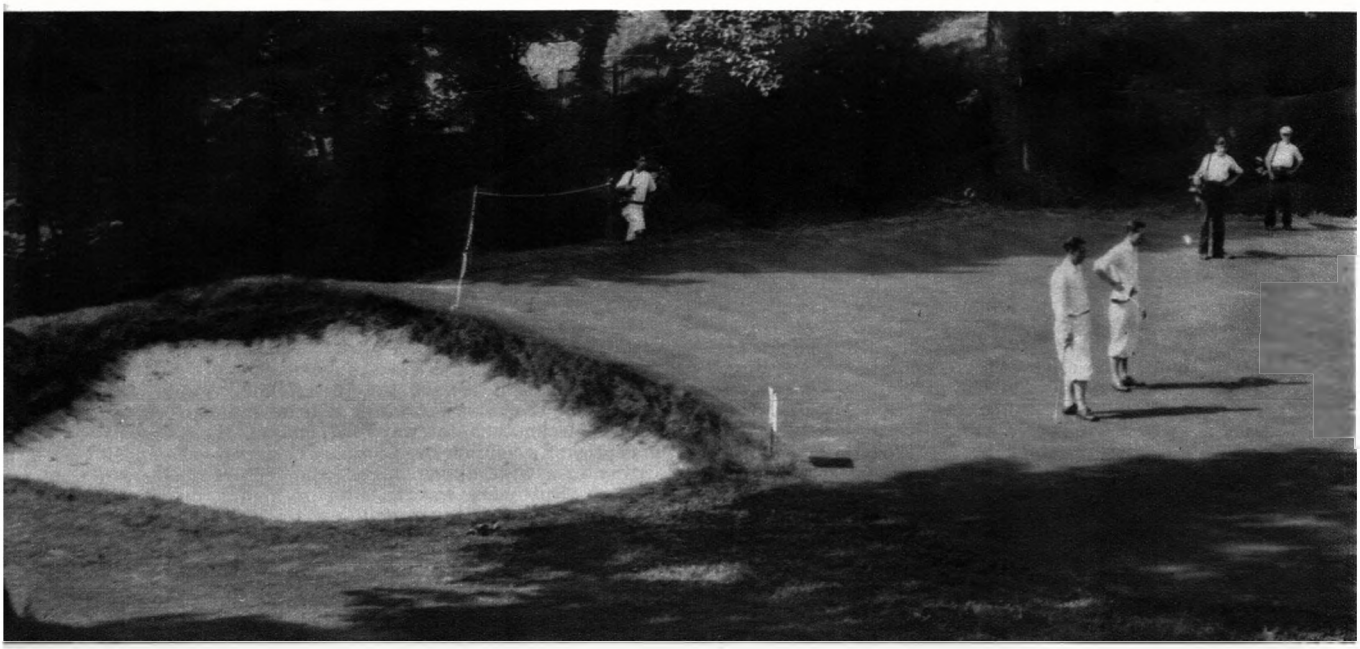
"Or so they say. We got statements from Firth and Sullivan and let them go. It seems that on the seventh tee each one of the four drove his ball into trouble—except for young Farling, who's an expert. He drove right over the tops of those elm trees, almost to the green. Sullivan landed in the woods at the left, Firth saw his ball roll into the rough ground near the hill, and Dave Farling topped his a measly twenty feet or so.

"The others left him there and went on, for he was an unlucky golfer usually. From there to the green, where they knock the ball into the little hole, Inspector, each man was separate and busy with his own affairs. But though nobody saw him—excepting the murderer—Dave Farling must have knocked his second shot into the pool. And while he was down trying to find his ball, somebody knocked a ball into the back of his head, smashing his skull. . . ."

Miss Withers could see on the porch the drawn, handsome face of young Ronald Farling, between the two cops. "Somebody, you say, but——"

"But how do we know it was him?" Platt laughed. "Because he had a whale of a fight with his father yesterday in the office, over something his father wouldn't let him do. 'Not while I live!' said the old man. Firth, the partner, overheard it. And he told us. Moreover, the young lad is what they call a 'scratch' golfer. He likes to give exhibitions of driving a ball off a watch, or taking what they call a mashie and chipping balls twenty feet into a tin pail. He's probably one of the few men in these parts who could

Why should Molly Gargan have been so concerned about what happened on



be perfectly sure of hitting just what he aimed at!"

The captain was beaming. "Well, when Farling didn't show up at the green, the others figured he was looking for a lost ball. But then he didn't come and he kept a didn't coming as the saying goes, and finally the three of them started back. They saw old Chris Thorr on the other fairway raking away at the Autumn leaves, and called him to help. So the four of them came over the edge of the gully and saw Farling lying there, dead as a herring."

"And the boy admits the crime?" asked Miss Withers.

Platt shook his head. "Not him. He's a smooth one. But we'll make him talk before he sleeps or——"

"All right, Captain," said Piper quickly. "Medical examiner gone?"

Platt nodded. "Doc Farnsworth it was—and he didn't like the looks of things. It was him refused us a certificate of death by misadventure. Wouldn't give his final opinion until the autopsy. But Donovan and I figured we didn't need to wait for that before getting young Farling safe behind bars."

"Okay," said Piper. "Let's have a look at the lad."

They went up the steps and through a screen door. The young man was very pale, and seemed chilled through in his light blue sports shirt and dark flannels. He leaped to his feet impulsively.

"How long are you going to hold me here? I tell you, I had nothing to do with what happened. Do you think I'd kill my own father?"

"Father—by adoption, wasn't it?" Miss Withers put in softly. "Didn't I read something about it, some years back?"

Ronald Farling stopped short. His eyes clouded for a moment. Then— "Yes, by adoption. David Farling and his wife adopted me nine years ago, when I was twelve. It was just after my own father. . . ."

"Yes? Go on!" Piper pressed forward.

The boy gulped. "Just after my real father was—was executed for murder! Dan Farling as his lawyer couldn't get him off, though it happened in a pitched battle between union men and company scabs. So he promised to take me, and bring me up as his own son. And he did. . . ."

The boy stopped short, realizing too late what he had said. His fists clenched, and then opened helplessly. "Like father like son, eh? I suppose that's what you're saying?"

"You had a fight with your foster-father in his office yesterday?"

Ronald nodded. "Well, an argument. But not——"

"What was it about?"

"He didn't want me to get married," confessed Ronald Farling simply. He drew a deep breath. "And if you want the name of the girl you can rot in hell before I'll tell you and drag her through this!"

He subsided sullenly into his chair. During the latter course of the questioning Miss Hildegarde Withers had been doing a little quiet snooping nearby. She reappeared with a leather golf bag full of sticks in one hand. The initials on the bag were "R. F."

"This is yours?" she asked the prisoner.

He nodded. Miss Withers opened the zipper pocket and brought out half a dozen golf balls. Three were old and battered. The other three were almost new, showing only a few nicks. Each bore a tiny red heart as a trademark.

"Could I see the one you have?" she asked the Sergeant. She took it gingerly. "Just as I thought. They don't match." On an impulse she showed Ronald Farling the ball with the smear of blood. "Recognize this ball, young man?"

He stared, and frowned. Then his eyes widened. "Why, that's my father's!"

The cops gathered instantly. "What?"

"It is! You see, when we started out this morning each member of the foursome bought three new balls. Ask the girl inside at the counter—and of course we each got a different color and mark so we could tell them apart easily. Most makes of balls are designed in sets of four that way. Firth chose clubs, Sullivan diamonds, my father—I mean my foster-father chose spades, so that left me hearts. They were kidding me about it. . . ."

"So David Farling was killed with one of his own golf balls!" said Miss Withers slowly. "Can we prove that by comparing this with other balls in his bag?"

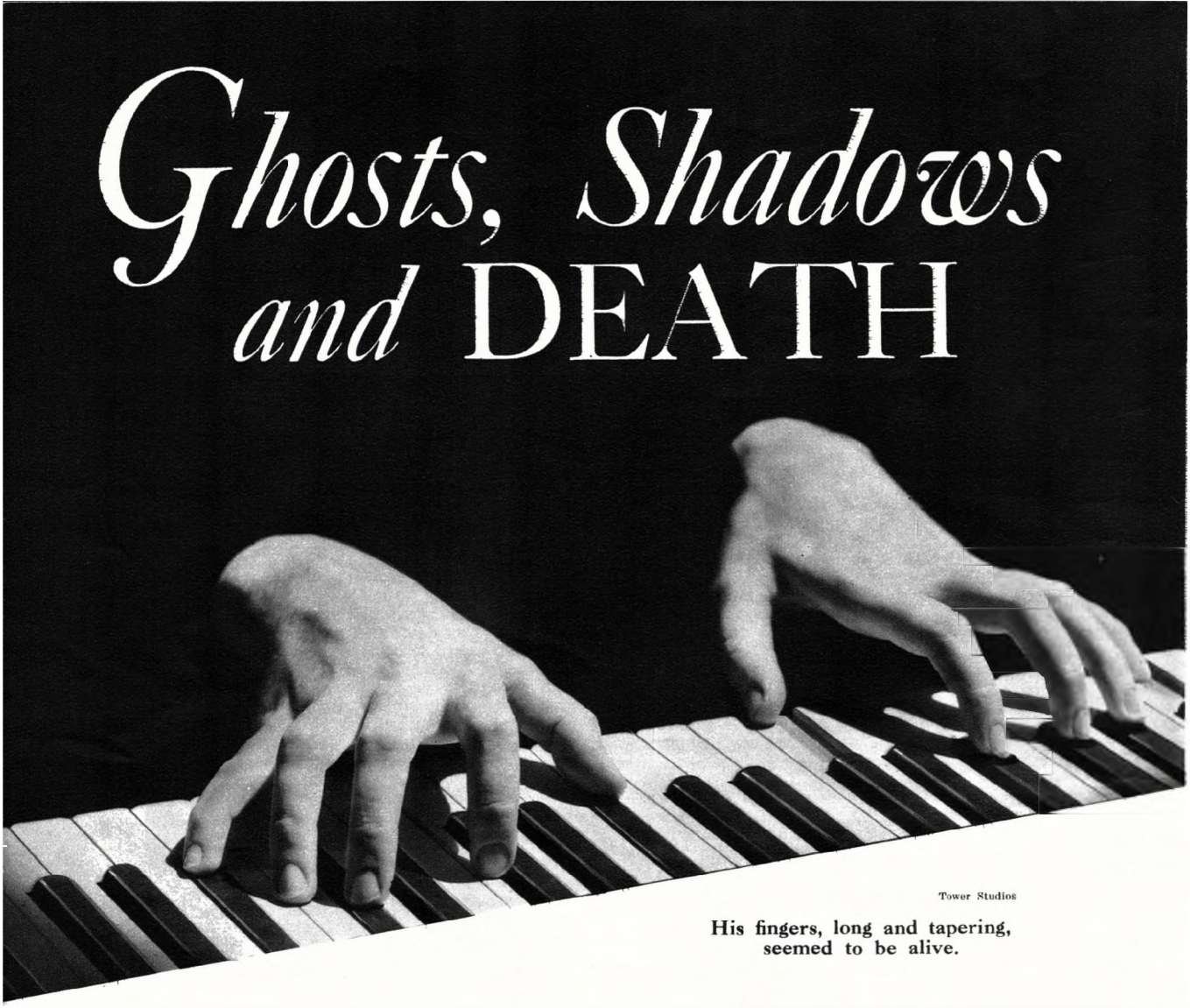
But the dead man's bag was empty of balls.

"This isn't getting us anywheres," Captain Platt finally objected. "Okay for me to take young Farling away, Inspector?"

Piper looked at Miss Withers, rubbed his jaw, and nodded. "Keep him safe and sound," he said. "And don't yell at (*Please turn to page* 91)

the golf course that day?

Ghosts, Shadows and DEATH



Tower Studios

His fingers, long and tapering, seemed to be alive.

IT was a room of many promises—even of death. It was a room of many promises because it was a room of many memories, and it was a room of shadows; a room where, perhaps, ghosts dwelt. It was a huge room, at least forty feet long and over twenty wide and it was old and wise with its promises and its memories and its shadows, and, perhaps, its ghosts.

It was an astonishing room.

There were Duncan Phyfe tables and chairs; there were Empire mirrors and sofas; there were Chippendales and Georgians and Queen Annes. Here, a Philadelphia highboy stood illuminated in mother-of-pearl with scenes out of La Fontaine's Fables; there, in the corner, a giant William Claggett tall clock ticked stealthily, as if it were the ghostly heartbeat of the room; here, again, stood a block-front secretary of Dominican mahogany, while on the walls old portraits hung side by side—portraits by Charles Peale, by John Wollaston, by Jeremiah Theus.

On the floor, flush with the walls—the walls were eighteen feet high—lay a deep Brussells carpet, made especially for the room. And at one end, huge windows, arched, across which heavy red velvet draperies were hung, looked out upon Fifth Avenue, where New York and the twentieth century swirled by.

A strange room.

At the rear, in a corner, almost against the wall—there was a bookcase against the wall filled with rare editions—the piano stood. It was of mahogany, with a fret-sawed rack and baroque lyre; with legs that curved and which were surmounted by dragons' heads, the bodies of the dragons winding down in the curves to end in claws and balls on the Brussells carpet. The sides of the instrument, a concert grand, were inlaid with lapis-lazuli and carved into scroll work and it was a perfect specimen of Victorian design. Perfect, also, of tone, for Queen Victoria herself had presented it to the owner of the room.

Directly across from the piano in the other corner at the rear, sat the bronze chair. It was like a throne. Its back was high and surmounted by carved cupids who flew together, holding wreaths; its arms each ended in the head of a goddess, whose hair, flowing backwards as if against the wind, formed the arms themselves.

This chair was, in fact, a throne, for it was from this chair that the owner of the room held court. This chair had been given to the owner of the room by one who had held court herself; by one who had given Europe an era and a label; by the Empress of France, Spanish Eugenie.

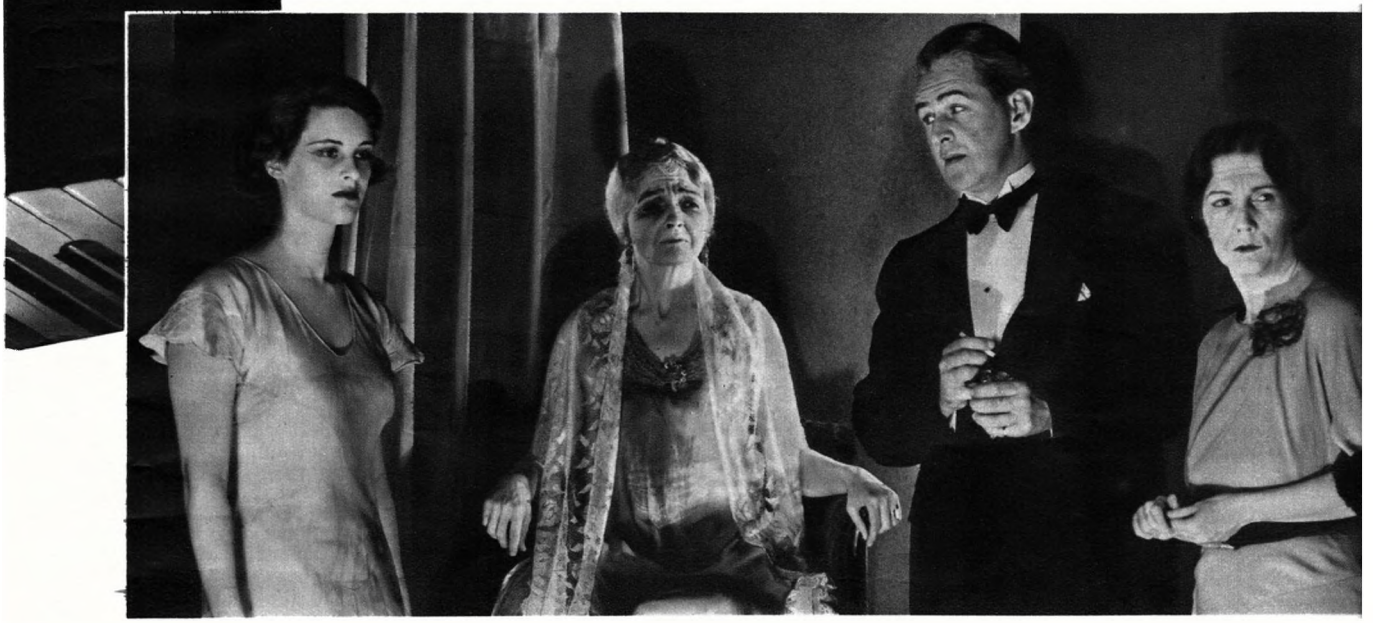
Thus the room. And nothing in it ever was shifted; nothing in it ever was changed, for the owner would not permit that. And so the ghosts and the shadows and the memories and the promises persisted and the portraits kept stationary vigil in the whispering silences of the room's many nights.

Now the owner of the room, the owner of the house, was Nancy Gray.

It was she who really gave the room unity, for it was, in a manner of speaking, her kingdom.

In the old room where an old lady lived with her memories, there should have been no place for violence and death; yet a grim killer stalked through the shadows; friends and relatives suddenly became sinister murder suspects; and Ashel Mayhew was called on his weirdest case by the phantom telephone call!

By HENRY LACOSSITT



Eleanor was oddly like her great-aunt, Nancy; Robert Proctor, like his father, was Nancy's lawyer; meek Miss Lake, Nancy's companion for thirty years.

Nancy Gray was old. She would be eighty-nine her next birthday. But if Nancy Gray's body had aged, her mind had not. Nancy Gray remained as keen as when she had been an intimate of Victoria and Eugenie; as when she had set both Europe and America afire with her flaming flirtations; as when, indeed, she had startled and delighted Paris by rushing to the stage after a recital by Liszt, throwing her arms about the bewildered old virtuoso and kissing him from sheer delight at his great performance.

And even in aging, her body had retained something of the beauty that had made her famous. The eyes were still a startling blue, a blue that was like the Aegean at sunset, and they still sparkled; her hair was as white as sea-foam and waved gracefully over her high, handsome forhead. Once, her hair had been golden. Her nose was high and proud; her mouth still perfectly shaped and firm; her hands still exquisite, though wrinkled. And about her face there still lingered the expression of ironic good humor, full of that zest for life and good living that had characterized her long career.

But Nancy Gray was approaching her ninetieth birthday unmarried.

"Nevertheless," she might tell you, if you knew her at all well, and would tell you with a knowing twinkle in her splendid blue eyes, "not as an old maid."

Only one thing ever seemed to trouble her and this was her heart. Now and then her heart refused to carry out completely the bidding of Nancy Gray.

"It is a rebellious organ," she said, "but then—" and again her eyes would twinkle—why not?" She would sigh reminiscently then. "It has had so many strains."

And she would laugh.

THERE came a gray Autumn day when the rain fell softly and the muffled noises of the twentieth century and New York reached the room faintly. In the room the shadows were deeper that day and, perhaps, the promises were stronger. For upstairs Nancy Gray lay ill because of her heart. Not too seriously ill, said the doctor, but she must still be careful—very careful.

About Nancy hovered her companion, Roberta Lake, forty years her junior, a woman with faded black eyes and tired face; with hair streaked with gray and with long, capable hands. She had been Nancy Gray's companion for thirty years, and that was strange. For Miss Lake was meek, colorless; Miss Lake was easily outraged; Miss Lake was as devoid of personality as Nancy was imbued with it. But, then, Miss Lake had one passion in common with Nancy Gray.

Miss Lake knew and understood music and she could

share with Nancy the thrilling joys of listening to it.

"Music," said Nancy Gray—but not wistfully, mind you—"is all I have left, now—except memories."

Nearby, in the bedroom, there was also Martin, the butler, a man in his late sixties, silent, submissive, dark eyes inscrutable, thin mouth compressed. Martin was a silent man. He said very little. He puttered about the bedroom.

"He always putters," said Nancy Gray. "Putter. Putter. Putter. It's why I've kept him. He can do anything, that Martin."

Martin was skilful with his hands.

The day wore away and the shadows in the house grew deeper, deeper, almost perceptibly, as if alive, and Nancy said:

"Bertie, lay out my blue satin."

Miss Lake, who was knitting by the bed—she was always knitting—looked up startled.

"You are not going to get up!" said Miss Lake timidly.

"Bertie, lay out my blue satin."

"But, Nancy!" Miss Lake was outraged. "With your heart?"

"With all my heart! All that's left of it, at least. Do you think I would miss that young man's playing?"

Miss Lake looked at the butler as if for support, but Martin only shrugged. Miss Lake obediently laid out the blue satin.

And that night, in the strange, vast room—where nothing ever was shifted—Nancy Gray held court again. She was resplendent in her blue satin—none of your stuffy black for her!—seated in her throne-like bronze chair, her exquisite hands resting on the heads of the twin goddesses.

Nearby sat Miss Lake, still knitting, and looking anxiously at her mistress now and then. But Nancy paid her companion no heed.

There were three other people, other than Martin, who shuffled stealthily across the great carpet with the coffee, in the room.

One of these was a tall, fine-featured man with graying hair who sat at the fringe of the light—only the end of the room, where the piano and the chair were, was lighted this night—the tips of his fingers pressed together, looking absently at Nancy Gray. This man was Robert Proctor, Nancy Gray's lawyer. Robert Proctor's father also had been Nancy's lawyer—some said her lover also. As for Robert Proctor himself, he adored Nancy Gray.

"Nancy," he said—she granted him the liberty of calling her by her first name—"you are really amazing. You look like a young girl tonight."

"You do, Auntie. Mr. Proctor's right."

The girl who spoke was oddly like Nancy Gray. She sat a little distance from Robert Proctor toward the piano. She was in her twenties, her hair was golden brown, her eyes darkly blue, and her mouth perfect. Her nose was high and proud; her hands were exquisite, like those of Nancy Gray. This was Eleanor Gray, Nancy's great-niece, and a favorite of Nancy's. She was the last of Nancy Gray's relationship.

As she spoke, Miss Lake raised her eyes from her knitting and looked disapprovingly, but Eleanor did not notice. Miss Lake also looked disapprovingly at the young man who sat across from Eleanor, his back to the bookcase. But the young man was looking raptly at Eleanor Gray.

His head was large and covered with a mass of curly hair that always seemed tousled. His eyes were large and black and smoky and burned slumbrously with something hidden in their depths. His face, with its high cheek-bones and delicate mouth was not exactly handsome, but very striking. There was power in his face.

But in his hands there was more than power. There was something tremendous in his hands. The fingers, long and tapering, seemed living entities in themselves; the wrists, so very lean, were like flexible steel.

This man was Rajaloff, the young pianist, whose playing had electrified the musical world. He looked from Eleanor to Nancy.

"Miss Gray," he said, with a sibilant accent, "if I may be allowed—I thoroughly concur."

Nancy smiled. "Allowed?" she said. "I love it." She paused, her eyes on something not in the room. "I am an old lady now, but I am still vain. I've always been vain. Eugenie said I was; so did Victoria, but they both—" she laughed, as if amused at herself—"said I had good reason to be." Again she paused and her matchless eyes were serious as she looked about the room. "Thank you," she continued. "You are very sweet. You see—" something in Nancy Gray's voice was unfamiliar—"you will not have a chance to be sweet to me much longer. Tonight—I feel strangely tonight. I feel as if my room might be speaking to me, as if the memories might be alive. Tonight is not like other nights."

"Nancy!" Miss Lake dropped her knitting and looked uneasily at her mistress. "I told you—"

"Never mind, Bertie," said Nancy. She looked at her guests and smiled. "Pardon me . . . There are cigars and cigarettes in the card room, you men. And tell Martin to give you some port. But don't be too long. You see—" she smiled at Rajaloff with peculiar intensity—"I have looked forward to this . . . Run along, now."

They ran along. The three women sat alone in the strange, huge room. Far off, they heard the sounds of the street; against the windows the rain pattered softly; on the walls, the people of the portraits looked down with their queerly animated eyes.

Eleanor suddenly left her chair and crossed hurriedly to her aunt. She knelt before Nancy.

"Auntie," she said, "what is it?"

"What is it!" said Miss Lake peevishly. "What is it!" She looked timidly at Nancy, but then, doggedly, went on: "It's that your aunt has been ill with her heart all day and it's that she insisted on coming down tonight to hear that young man of yours play. That young man—"

"Don't you like him?"

"Well," said Miss Lake, "it's not a question of that, really, although I don't particularly care—" Miss Lake seemed righteous—"for him. He comes around here too much. And every time he comes he excites her . . . Young girl, you said? Why, sometimes I believe Nancy really thinks she's a young girl again with that Rajaloff. Sometimes I think she's actually in love with him. I—"

Miss Lake stopped her prating, horrified at the realization of her forwardness. But Nancy laughed.

"Bertie," she said, "you're priceless. Love indeed? What do you know of love?" She turned and looked at her companion, but one of her hands caressed Eleanor's head. "But at that, you're right, Bertie. I am in love with that young man. Perhaps that is why I look young tonight. If I were really younger—" She smiled at her niece. "He does love you, doesn't he?"

"He said so, Auntie."

"Then he does," said Nancy. "I know the type. Humorless, but oh so wonderful. So very (*Please turn to page* 83)

LITTLE BOOK OF STRANGE CRIMES

Truth is stranger than fiction! And this regular diary of odd occurrences will acquaint you each month with the most peculiar events of the day! A monthly record of strange things that happen to strange people!

Victims of Insomnia

EAST TAWAS, Mich., is a quiet town. There isn't much going on there. The citizens enjoy, consequently, undisturbed rest at night. That is, they usually enjoy it.

But one Saturday night at the home of Arthur Janson, of the younger set, there was a party. The usual party. There were laughter and loud talk and general hilarity. It was a noisy party.

Nearby, lived A. J. Wood, Janson's father-in-law, and he couldn't sleep. The noise was too much. Wood rolled and tossed and grew angry. He didn't in the least care for insomnia, especially when superinduced by a noisy party in which he had no interest.

Finally, his anger grew unbearable. He rose. He procured his shotgun. He stalked across to the home of his son-in-law and rang the bell. When the door was answered, there were words. Violent words. Then Wood, with the memory of sleepless hours goading him, raised his shotgun and fired.

Stanley Somers, a thirty-one-year-old physician, fell dead. During the ensuing confusion, in which the neighbors as well as the guests at the party joined, Sheriff Charles C. Miller was summoned. He hurried to the scene, only to be felled by another discharge of Wood's shotgun.

As the sheriff lay mortally wounded, Wood calmly took his two grandchildren from their father's house and deposited them at the home of a neighbor. Then he returned.

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Hayes, also guests at the Janson house, were the next to draw his wrath. Two more discharges and they fell dead. Beside them fell Roy Hickey, another guest, but he was not killed.

Wood surveyed the shambles he had made, then calmly walked to the county jail and gave himself up. He said he wasn't sorry and that he only hoped there would not be mob violence.

When arraigned, he pleaded guilty without hesitation to four first-degree murder charges. He was sentenced to life imprisonment at the Michigan State Penitentiary.

Judge Herman Dehnke, who, apparently, has no use for sympathy extended to convicted criminals, in order to make sure that no Parole Board would commute Wood's sentence, imposed a second sentence of from forty to fifty years on an additional count.

Said an editor:

"The gentleman will have undisturbed rest from now on. At nights, that is."

Incorrigible

YOUNG Harry Shay, of Miami, who is fifteen years old, is, by his own admission, probably the most incorrigible son in the world.

Harry, who was not very good in his English during the recent school term, failed to pass and was compelled to make up the deficiency in the summer months. That irked him.

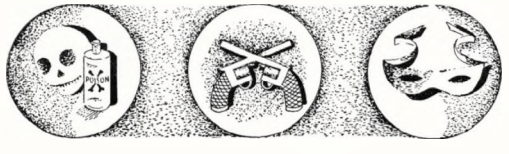
Irking him also, was the fact that his mother insisted on his studying during the Summer. He brooded.

One day when he was supposed to be studying, his mother found him idle.

"Why aren't you studying?" she demanded.

It was too much for Harry.

He killed his mother with a shotgun, after which he confessed to the police.



Pickets Charged

THE month of June saw an unusual situation in that pickets who patrolled places of business, factories, public centers and other places in the interests of their causes, were, in many cases arrested and regarded, technically, as criminals.

In Jersey City, Alfred M. Bingham, scholarly and liberal son of Hiram Bingham, scholarly, ultra-conservative, Yale graduate and United States Senator from Connecticut, was arrested together with Corliss Lamont, liberal son of conservative Thomas Lamont, partner in J. P. Morgan and Co., for picketing an alleged open shop factory. The young men were there in connection with the struggle of the Civil Liberties Union and the Furniture Workers Industrial Union to establish the right of peaceful picketing.

It was said that John W. Davis, Democratic candidate for president in 1924 and friend of the elder Lamont, would defend Corliss Lamont, while Arthur Garfield Hayes, liberal lawyer, was mentioned as a probable attorney for young Bingham and others arrested.

On trial, Bingham, who edits the magazine, *Common Sense*, was accused of drawing a crowd and therefore obstructing passage and normal pedestrian traffic. This, Bingham vehemently denied.

Arresting Officer Daniel Sullivan said that Bingham had helped to draw a crowd by talking to a passerby. Bingham admitted talking to a passerby and Sullivan was asked if he knew who the person was.

"Yes," he said. "Now, I know."

The man to whom Bingham had talked was attorney for the Civil Liberties Union, who had stopped to have a few words with his co-worker.

Bingham was sentenced to thirty days in jail for disorderly conduct. Appeal has been made.

Said Liberal Columnist Heywood Broun, in the *World-Telegram*, in commenting on the case:

"The prosecutor . . . asserted that the arrest was made not for picketing but because Bingham had drawn a crowd. If this is to be a law I strongly

(*Please turn to page* 89)

MR. EDWARD L. GREENE,

Don't let

Tower Studios

The United States is infested with a multitude of crooks who, in the guise of honest business, prey upon the public and collect untold millions of dollars annually. Unfortunately, the particularly favored prey of the swindler during the depression has been those people who can least afford to be gypped and who are drawn into nefarious schemes because of their desperate grabbing at any straw that might help them to get back on their feet financially.

I believe the most practical way to combat these crooks is to expose them. For this reason I am glad to recommend these articles, hoping that as a result of them much suffering and tragedy may be averted.

Edward L. Greene

Tragedy and despair have followed in the wake of the most vicious system of domestic racketeering that has ever existed in this country. In order to inform the American people of the illegitimate practices that flourish under the guise of honest business, this magazine presents the second article of a series of cold-blooded facts, which the editors hope will aid in stamping out the insidious and malignant growth of "gyp" racketeers in the home!

By D. E. WHEELER

FIVE dollars, please," said the jolly fellow smoking on the fat black cigar, the very picture of the typical 'mine host' who was going to open the new tavern across the way.

"What for?" asked the little girl in the cheap but saucy pancake hat. "I thought——"

"The necessary deposit on uniforms, Miss Ellis," said he.

"But I have mine," she said, "and they're practically new."

"Yes? And what color are they?"

"The regular black, with the usual white cuffs, collar and apron."

"Ah, they won't do for us, Miss Ellis, I'm sorry to say." The restaurant employer smiled deprecatingly. "You see, we are going to have navy blue uniforms trimmed with red—something distinctive. Our tavern is going to be 'different'. Besides the tips, you know, we are going to give our girls a nice little percentage on their weekly intake in addition to the salary of six dollars. Our girls will make twenty-five a week easily."

Annie Ellis hesitated, looked into his merry blue eyes, and paid over the fee requested. That five dollars was her room rent for next week, as well as dinner money for the rest of this week. But of course she would tell her landlady, Mrs. Gallagher, about this grand job, and she would trust her until her first pay. The girl needed some evidence though to back up the fact.

"You will give me a receipt?" she asked her future employer.

"Why, certainly!" he assured her.

He gave her one. But it was all Miss Ellis was to get for her five dollars—her last five dollars, more's the pity! For work was stopped on the furnishing of the new tavern in eight days and its jolly proprietor had vanished to parts unknown, with a fat little bundle of five-dollar uniform fees from trusting waitresses, which would enable him to "open" another tavern in another town, with something over for his trouble.

Just such a "uniform racket" artist was Jack G. Edwards, who for about seven years dug his vulture talons into the unemployed poor, and on May 1, 1934 was sentenced to two years and six months in the Federal Reformatory at El Reno, Oklahoma. His first role on the bunco stage was that of "president" of an alleged National Hotel and Restaurant Employes As-

OF THE NATIONAL BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU, SAYS:

them ROB YOU!

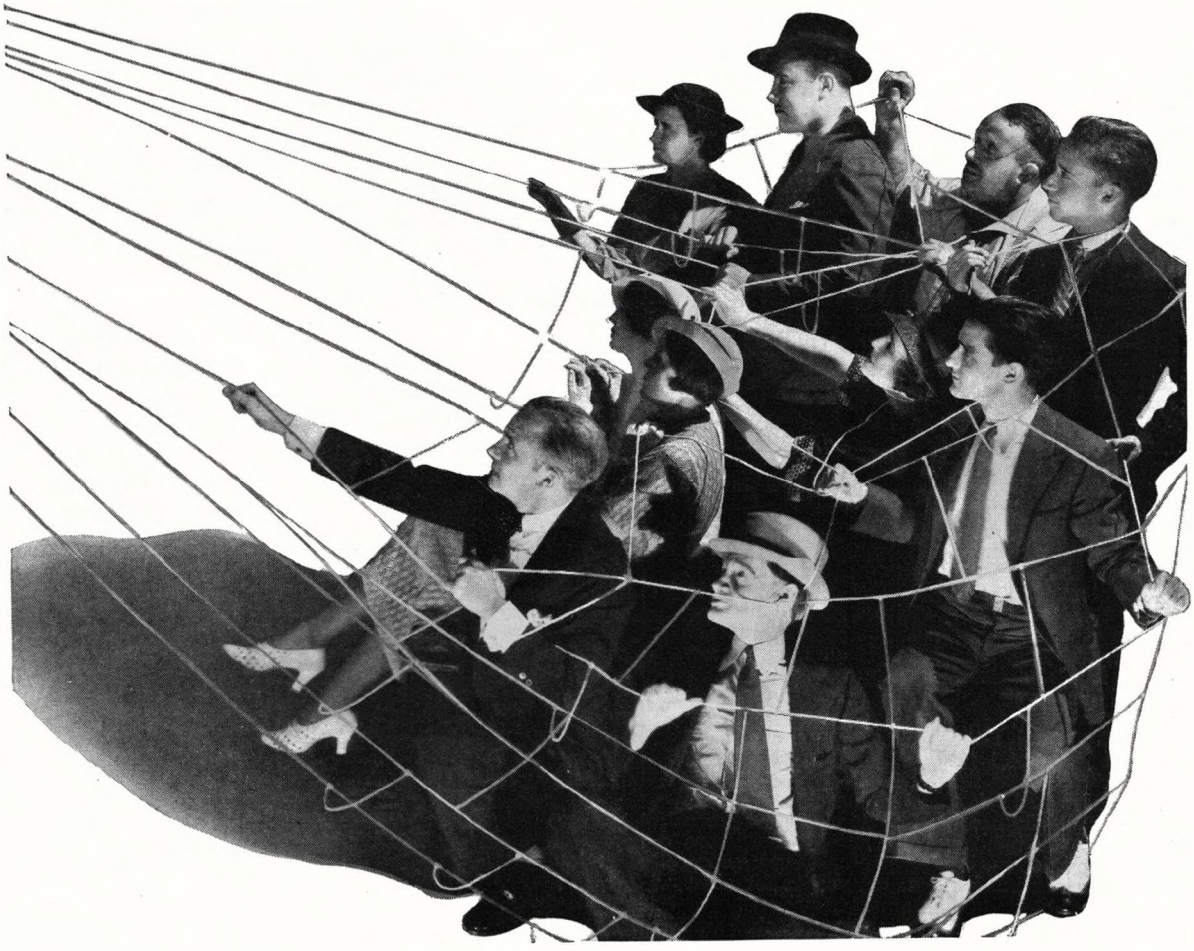
sociation, in 1927, and he charged a five-dollar initiation fee and fifty cents a month dues, promising employment to his members. Nobody was too poor and wretched not to contribute their bit to his swindle-box. Many men and women over seventy gave Edwards their last cent in the hope of obtaining a dish-washing job or peeling vegetables. To Edwards, last cents were as good as any.

Then, in 1931, he took about $2,000 from young men in cash deposits on jobs with a "Windmill Bakeries" which he was supposedly organizing. He even gave them "wages" in post-dated checks which, when they fell due, were not worth the paper they were written on. Later, he changed his role to that of ostensible restaurant proprietor about to open a new place and wanting a small army of waitresses, as well as cashiers —with cash!

Big swindles and swindlers are front-page news and become widely known to the reading public, but the fifty thousand small-timers like Edwards who prey unceasingly on the population and probably cheat Americans out of a hundred times more money than the top-notchers of the gyp gentry, are too little known. And, as a rule, these small-time thieves rob those who can least afford it, and who are helpless to combat their dastardly tricks.

Their victims are often the humblest workers looking for a bare means of earning a livelihood and this has been especially true during the depression. The position of cashier or waitress in a cheap restaurant will appeal to many girls who, having lost their clerical jobs or those of secretary or stenographer, and hopeless about finding similar berths, will turn to any decent occupation to make ends meet. Naturally, not having been cashiers or waitresses before opens them to the smooth lies of the gyp. But even if they have had experience in that field of service, they are likely to fall for a new set-up that some clever crook has evolved.

FOR instance, let us see the refined and crocodile-kindly Mrs. Annabelle Johnson in action. Because the uniform racket has been worked so much, and many girls were wary, Mrs. Johnson felt that a more definitely alluring bait had to be found than the setting of a swanky hotel room in which to catch her suckers. Waitresses, chambermaids, (*Please turn to page* 77)



He Gave a *Chump*

"Things are seldom what they seem," and the man who had never heard that logic before lived to be much wiser and sadder when he discovered it for himself. A thrilling story that races along to a surprising, whirlwind finish

I TRIED to pitch my voice just below the hum of the machinery. "Nick," I said, "I sent you a reader."

He shut off his machine and stood back, taking off his cap, as the prison regulations instruct. There was something reptilian about the scrubby nakedness of his close-cropped head and his teeth were queerly small, and yellow like a squirrel's. His eyes were the most evil black wells I have ever seen in a human head. He stood slack-shouldered and subservient, but in spite of that he managed to appear insolent.

"What did you say, sir?" he asked.

"Nuts!" I said softly enough. "I'm Eddie McCabe from St. Louis. Don't be a chump and waste the few minutes we have. Cotton had me fixing a ladder for you when the uh—accident happened to him. You heard he got a bath?"

His eyes never blinked. They seemed to be lidless. "Yeah," he said, "I read in the paper where Cotton got sprayed. Sixty-five Tommy-gun slugs in him, the paper said. Too bad. Cotton was a good guy—if he could see a profit in it."

I nodded. "Profit. That's the word I'm interested in. Now, you've already wasted too much time. Did you get the letter?"

He seemed to make a big decision. "Uh-huh," he nodded, "the reader came in all right."

"Swell," I said, "Cotton wrote it just before he got rubbed out. I just attached my note and had both smuggled in together. You were willing to go fifty-fifty with Cotton if he put you over the wall. Will you give me the same split?"

Wariness gleamed in his eyes while he studied me. "You're the politician Cotton had working on the thing?"

"Yes," I said, "and . . . Here's the screw."

The guards came walking along the line of shoe machines. Nick said, "As the sole comes in here, this tool moves along and makes a groove . . . mortising they call it. . . ."

"Pardon, sir," the guard said, speaking to me. "The rest of the visitors are going over to the chair factory. Will you go with them?"

I shook my head. "This is all I was interested in. I've seen chair factories."

"I'll pass you out," he said. "Right this way."

As I passed Nick he looked up and said, convict fashion, practically without sound, "Okay."

I nodded and followed the guard to the door. When I shook hands with him there was a twenty-dollar bill folded in my palm. "Hope you enjoyed your visit, sir," he said cheerfully, putting his hand in his pocket for some reason or other. "Come any time."

"Thanks," I smiled. "By the way, that was

a Break

By
JAMES EDWARD GRANT

Illustrated
by
JOHN ROGERS

"I ran into her in a little hick hamlet in Ohio. She was working in a soda fountain, and couldn't get enough dough to get out of the terrible place."

an odd duck I was speaking to. What's he in for?"

He looked reproachful, but that twenty got the best of him. "We're not allowed to talk about inmates, sir. His was a funny case. He got clean away with more than a million and a half dollars. They caught him within forty-eight hours and he had only a few thousand on him. Imagine that! A million and a half! He has it hid somewhere."

I almost laughed in his face. He was telling me! But I looked properly amazed. "He'll be fixed for life when he gets out."

The guard chuckled. "He's fixed now. He's doing natural life."

"He's welcome to the money," I said virtuously. "Me for the straight and narrow. So long."

I went out the visitors' gate and around to the side wall where my car was parked under some trees. I sat in the car and smoked three cigarettes before the side door of the Administration offices opened and a man came out. He was a little fellow with practically no hair whatever and he walked up and stood with one foot on the running board of my car.

"Well," he said nervously. "Well?"

Before I could answer he looked up at the blank prison wall as if it had eyes. "I don't want to be seen talking to you," he complained. "A pen is a hell-hole for gossip. If I'm seen it would be all over the place in five minutes."

"Everything's going to be all right," I soothed him. "You just handle your end and sit tight."

He took his glasses off and put them on four times in as many seconds. "All right," he said, "but I don't like this. I might get in one hell of a batch of trouble. See that I don't, you Irish hellion."

I just smiled and drove away. I knew he would have liked to squirm out of the deal but I had him hooked in good and solid. The world looked like a pretty fair place, being I was all set to cut myself in on a million and a half dollars.

Wednesday morning was rainy, which was just my dish. I parked on a dirt road and waited. That was nervous business. Not that I could see where a slip-up could possibly occur. The whole thing looked perfect.

But I breathed a sigh of relief when Nick scuttled out of the cornfield and trotted up to the car. His face was pale from exertion or fear and his eyes were even nastier than usual.

"Burn it up," he rasped, jumping into the car.

I laughed at him. "Don't be nervous, fella. There's a suit of clothes in that grip. Put it on and read the identification papers in the pocket. They say your name is William Baker and you're a shoe salesman from Chicago. I picked shoes because I figure you're familiar with them."

But he had no time for jokes. He shed his clothes like a chorus girl in a strip-show and put on the suit. I told him to chuck the prison stuff in the ditch. He did and then he popped in the car and whined, "Couldn't you get a faster heap than this?"

I started the rattle-trap old coupe and drove out on the hard road. "This junk is just the ticket," I said. "It won't draw any attention. We'll change down the road a bit. Here, maybe this will make you feel better."

I laid a .45 automatic in his lap. He slid back the ejector and looked at the shiny brass of the cartridge jackets. "I feel better already," he admitted, showing his little teeth. "I always feel better with iron in my pocket. If somebody stops us they're sure going to lose their health."

"Save it," I said. "I fixed us for an eight-hour start. We won't have any trouble. Want a drink?"

He grabbed the bottle I offered him and hit it a three-base wallop and then another. Almost immediately he stopped shaking. It's funny how the combination of alcohol (*Please turn to page* 71)

Once there was an old lady named Tarkle who bought a black tomcat with green eyes every week—and she hated cats! Queer, you say—and so said Ellery Queen; but the ghoulish adventure that befell the scholarly sleuth sounded like a Hallowe'en nightmare before he finally solved the weird case of the ghastly murders in the empty apartment!

Tower Studios

By
ELLERY QUEEN

The BLACK

THE tinkly bell quavered over the door of Miss Curleigh's Pet Shoppe on Amsterdam Avenue, and Mr. Ellery Queen wrinkled his nose and went in. The instant he crossed the threshold he was thankful it was not a large nose, and that he had taken the elementary precaution of wrinkling it. The extent and variety of the little shop's odors would not have shamed the New York Zoological Park itself. And yet it housed only creatures, he was amazed to find, of the puniest proportions; who, upon the micrometrically split second of his entrance, set up such a chorus of howls, yelps, snarls, yawps, grunts, squeaks, caterwauls, croaks, screeches, chirrups, hisses, and growls that it was a miracle the roof did not come down.

"Good afternoon," said a crisp voice. "I'm Miss Curleigh. What can I do for you, please?"

In the midst of raging bedlam Mr. Ellery Queen found himself gazing into a pair of mercurial eyes. There were other details—she was a trim young piece, for example, with masses of Titian hair and curves and at least one dimple—but for the moment her eyes engaged his earnest attention. Miss Curleigh, blushing, repeated herself.

"I beg your pardon," said Ellery hastily, returning to the matter at hand. "Apparently in the animal kingdom there is no decent ratio between lung-power and—ah—aroma on the one hand and size on the other. We live and learn! Miss Curleigh, would it be possible to purchase a comparatively noiseless and sweet-smelling canine with frizzy brown hair, inquisitive ears at the half-cock, and crooked hind legs?"

Miss Curleigh frowned. Unfortunately, she was out of Irish terriers. The last litter had been gobbled up. Perhaps a Scottie—?

Mr. Queen frowned. No, he had been specifically enjoined by Djuna, the martinet, to procure an Irish terrier; no doleful-looking, sawed-off substitute, he was sure, would do.

"I expect," said Miss Curleigh professionally, "to hear from our Long Island kennels tomorrow. If you'll leave your name and address?"

Mr. Queen, gazing into the young woman's eyes, would be delighted to. Mr. Queen, provided with pencil and pad, hastened to indulge his delight.

As Miss Curleigh read what he had written the mask of business fell away. "You're not Mr. *Ellery* Queen!" she exclaimed with animation. "Well, I declare. I've heard *so* much about you, Mr. Queen. And you live practically around the corner, on Eighty-seventh Street! This is really thrilling. I never expected to meet——"

CATS *Vanished*

"Nor I," murmured Mr. Queen. "Nor I."

Miss Curleigh blushed again and automatically prodded her hair. "One of my best customers lives right across the street from you, Mr. Queen. I should say one of my most frequent customers. Perhaps you know her? A Miss Tarkle—Euphemia Tarkle? She's in that large apartment house, you know."

"I've never had the pleasure," said Mr. Queen absently. "What extraordinary eyes you have! I mean—Euphemia Tarkle? Dear, dear, this is a world of sudden wonders. Is she as improbable as her name?"

"That's unkind," said Miss Curleigh severely, "although she *is* something of a character, the poor creature. A squirrelly-faced old lady, *and* an invalid. Paralytic, you know. The queerest, frailest, tiniest little thing. Really, she's quite mad."

"Somebody's grandmother, no doubt," said Mr. Queen whimsically, picking up his stick from the counter. "Cats?"

"Why, Mr. Queen, however did you guess?"

"It always is," he said in a gloomy voice, "cats."

"You'd find her interesting, I'm sure," said Miss Curleigh with eagerness.

"And why I, Diana?"

"The name," said Miss Curleigh shyly, "is Marie. Well, she's so strange, Mr. Queen. And I've always understood that strange people interest you."

"At present," said Mr. Queen hurriedly, taking a firmer grip on his stick, "I am enjoying the fruits of idleness."

"BUT do you know what Miss Tarkle's been doing, the mad thing?"

"I haven't the ghost of a notion," said Mr. Queen with truth.

"She's been buying cats from me at the rate of about one a week for weeks now!"

Mr. Queen sighed. "I see no special cause for suspicion. An ancient and invalid lady, a passion for cats—oh, they go together, I assure you. I once had an aunt like that."

"That's what's so strange about it," said Miss Curleigh triumphantly. "She doesn't like cats!"

Mr. Queen blinked twice. He looked at Miss Curleigh's pleasant little nose. Then he rather absently set his stick on the counter again. "And how do you know that, pray?"

Miss Curleigh beamed. "Her sister told me. Hush, Ginger! You see, Miss Tarkle is absolutely helpless with her paralysis and all, and her sister Sarah-Ann keeps house for her; they're both of an age, I should say, and they look so much alike. Dried-up little apples of old ladies, with the same tiny features and faces like squirrels. Well, Mr. Queen, about a year ago Miss Sarah-Ann came into my shop and bought a black male cat—she hadn't much money, she said, couldn't buy a really expensive one; so I got just a—well, just a cat for her, you see."

"Did she ask for a black tomcat?" asked Mr. Queen intently.

"No. Any kind at all, she said; she liked them all. Then only a few days later she came back. She wanted to know if she could return him and get her money back. Because, she said, her sister Euphemia couldn't stand having a cat about her; Euphemia just detested cats, she said with a sigh, and since she was more or less living off Euphemia's bounty she couldn't very well cross her, you see. I felt a little sorry for her and told her I'd take the cat back; but I suppose she changed her mind, or else her sister changed her mind, because Sarah-Ann Tarkle never came back. Anyway, that's how I know Miss Euphemia doesn't like cats."

Mr. Queen gnawed a fingernail. "Odd," he muttered. "A veritable saga of oddness. You say this Euphemia creature has been buying 'em at the rate

of one a week? What kind of cats, Miss Curleigh?"

Miss Curleigh sighed. "Not very good ones. Of course, since she has pots of money—that's what her sister Sarah-Ann said, anyway—I tried to sell her an Angora—I had a beauty—and a Maltese that took a ribbon at one of the shows. But she wanted just cats, she said, like the one I sold her sister. Black ones."

"Black. . . . It's possible that——"

"Oh, she's not at all superstitious, Mr. Queen. In some ways she's a very weird old lady. Black tomcats with green eyes, all the same size. I thought it very queer."

Mr. Ellery Queen's nostrils quivered a little, and not from the racy odor in Miss Curleigh's Pet Shoppe, either. An old invalid lady named Tarkle who bought a black tomcat with green eyes every week!

"Very queer indeed," he murmured; and his gray eyes narrowed. "And how long has this remarkable business been going on?"

"You are interested! Five weeks now, Mr. Queen. I delivered the sixth one myself only the other day."

"Yourself? Is she totally paralyzed?"

"Oh, yes. She never leaves her bed; can't walk a step. It's been that way, she told me, for ten years now. She and Sarah-Ann hadn't lived together up to the time she had her stroke. Now she's absolutely dependent on her sister for everything—meals, baths, bed . . . all sorts of attention."

"Then why," demanded Ellery, "hasn't she sent her sister for the cats?"

Miss Curleigh's mercurial eyes wavered. "I don't know," she said slowly. "Sometimes I get the shivers. You see, she's always telephoned me—she has a phone by her bed and can use her arms sufficiently to reach for it—the day she wanted the cat. It would always be the same order—black, male, green eyes, the same size as before, and as cheap as possible." Miss Curleigh's pleasant features hardened. "She's something of a haggler, Miss Euphemia Tarkle is."

"Fantastic," said Ellery thoughtfully. "Utterly fantastic. There's something in the basic situation that smacks of lavenderish tragedy. Tell me; how has her sister acted on the occasions when you've delivered the cats?"

"Hush, Ginger! I can't tell you, Mr. Queen, because she hasn't been there."

Ellery started. "Hasn't been there! What do you mean? I thought you said the Euphemia woman is helpless——"

"She is, but Sarah-Ann goes out every afternoon for some air, I suppose, or to a movie, and her sister is left alone for a few hours. It's been at such times, I think, that she's called me. Then, too, she always warned me to come at a certain time, and since I've never seen Sarah-Ann when I made the delivery I imagine she's planned to keep her purchases a secret from her sister. I've been able to get in because Sarah-Ann leaves the door unlocked when she goes out. Euphemia has told me time and time again not to breathe a word about the cats to anyone."

Ellery took his pince-nez off his nose and began to polish the shining lenses—an unfailing sign of emotion. "More and more muddled," he muttered. "Miss Curleigh, you've stumbled on something—well, morbid."

Miss Curleigh blanched. "You don't think——"

"Insults already? I do think; and that's why I'm disturbed. For instance, how on earth could she have hoped to keep knowledge of the cats she's bought from her sister? Sarah-Ann isn't blind, is she?"

"Blind? Why, of course not. And Euphemia's sight is all right, too."

"I was only joking. It doesn't make sense, Miss Curleigh."

"Well," said Miss Curleigh brightly, "at least I've given the great Mr. Queen something to think about. . . . I'll call you the moment an Ir——"

Mr. Ellery Queen replaced the glasses on his nose, threw back his square shoulders, and picked up the stick again. "Miss Curleigh, I'm an incurable meddler in the affairs of others. How would you like to help me meddle in the affairs of the mysterious Tarkle sisters?"

Scarlet spots appeared in Miss Curleigh's cheeks. "You're not serious?" (*Please turn to page* 62)

"Whoever it is got away by this room, I'm afraid," Ellery muttered.

The Hand *in the* River

Publishers' Photo

The town of Les Andelys in Normandie, from the castle of Richard Cœur de Lion.

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page. The Episode of the Methodical Murderer!

RENE DESPRES disappeared suddenly one day in 1927, and there were those with malicious tongues who did not hesitate to infer by their utterances that he had found the lure of illicit francs too strong a temptation to resist. For Despres was a Paris bank collector, and on the day of his vanishing had had a large sum of the institution's funds on his person.

But the Marne proved that those who spoke ill of him spoke hastily as well, for it gave up his body. Two fishermen found it one night. They saw a bundle floating in the water, and when they trained their flashlights upon it, they were shocked to see a human hand emerging grotesquely from it.

Despres had been murdered. There was no doubt about that. The fishermen knew it as soon as they opened the bundle and saw the ghastly remains it contained. And so did Chief Moreux of the Judicial Police, when he viewed the body. Drawn tight about the victim's neck and tied securely under his chin was a strand of ordinary electric wire. Around his head and falling down over his face, so that it covered his eyes and nose, was a cheap, red bandana.

On the day of his tragic disappearance, Despres had been scheduled to make thirty-five different collections. And so . . . in an effort to trace the murderer . . . Moreux obtained the names of these clients and set about interviewing them.

The first twenty-two of these persons all told him that Despres had visited them and made his collections. But the twenty-third, a farmer named Arnau, shook his head sadly, and said:

"He did not stop here, Monsieur. I was waiting for him. The interest was due on the mortgage and . . ."

Moreux nodded. If what Arnau told him was the truth, and he had no reason to doubt the man's word, then Despres had been murdered some time after making his twenty-second collection—at the home of Henri Nourric.

He retraced his steps to the Nourric place. He felt that either Nourric or his wife would be able to tell him in what direction Despres had gone after leaving their home. The information was essentially important to him.

Nourric appeared surprised at the detective's return.

"Monsieur does not doubt what I told him before?" he inquired. "Despres was here. Yes. I will show you the receipt he gave me—for 250 francs."

He hastened across the room to a desk and drew a slip of paper from a pigeonhole.

"Ah, here it is, Monsieur," he exclaimed. "I am a methodical person. Everything must be just so; in its place."

Moreux glanced about the room and saw that obviously Nourric was, as he had just stated, a methodical man, for everything about the place was the last word in systematic orderliness.

He examined the receipt, saw that it was authentic, secured the information he sought, and took his departure. There was no reason why he should be suspicious of Nourric. Not then.

But outside of the house Moreux's keen eyes saw a strand of copper wire in the dirt. He picked it up and took it back to the Prefecture of Police with him. There he discovered that it was precisely the same kind as that which had been tied around Despres' neck. In itself it meant nothing for the wire was of a very common variety.

And then Moreux recalled Nourric's remark about being a methodical man, made an experiment with the two strands of wire, and decided that the twenty-second client needed to be investigated further.

One of his detectives, posing as a sanitary inspector, gained admittance to the Nourric home and searched it. In a bureau drawer, he found five other red bandanas, identical in design to that which had covered the murdered man's face. Not only were the designs the same, but the scientists of the police laboratory brought out the fact that the same factory imperfections appeared in all six of the bandanas—missing threads and smeared dyes.

Meanwhile, another detective learned that Nourric and his brother-in-law had been seen pushing a heavily-ladened wheelbarrow toward the Marne on the afternoon of Despres' disappearance. The wheelbarrow was examined and blood-stains were found upon it.

The jury accepted the circumstantial evidence as overwhelming proof of the guilt of Nourric, his wife, and his brother-in-law. The two men were sent to jail for life, while the woman received a 20-year sentence.

Moreux smiled grimly, as the trio were led out of the courtroom.

"It might have been a perfect crime," he said. "But, you see, I measured the two strands of wire and found them both the same length. The average person would not have bothered. He would have cut off any length to strangle Despres with. But Nourric, he was too methodical, too systematic. He had to cut his wire exactly in half."

Tell-tale LIPS

By PAMELA PINKERTON

A GIRL may think she can keep things to herself if she keeps her lips closed. But she can't. The lips tell a story, even when they are silent, that everyone can understand.

John, for instance, loves Mary for herself alone. But Mary loves John for his money. If he is wise and she is incautious, he can tell by the calculating set of her lips when she says "yes" just what is in her mind.

Or John and Mary are married. John telephones home from the office that he's had a telegram from his sister. She'll be in town that afternoon. How about bringing her and the children out for a visit? The corners of Mary's lovely lips droop in tired dismay as she thinks of the guest room to be put in order, extra cooking to be done, and some sort of entertainment to be provided for the guests. Or the horrid little wrinkles of a sneer tighten up her lips as she reflects that two or three days will probably stretch out to a week or two. Mary's voice can say blithely, "Oh, John, how nice. Bring them along—for as long as they can stay." And John will believe the words, if he can't see the lips. Thank fortune for the telephone in a case like that.

Our lips are our most telltale feature. They are the only feature whose expression we can change at will. To be sure, we can open our eyelids wide in amazement, drop them in modesty or screw them close together when we want to ferret out the truth from somebody or be severe. We can roll the eyeballs up and down and sidewise to express various feelings. And the expression of our eyes reflects our emotions. But we can't change our eyes at will as we can our lips.

Often the pretty mouth of a young girl turns into an ugly mouth in middle age. The petulant pout that spoils so many faces of women past forty may have been rather beguiling in youth—and quite probably was the means for getting what it wanted. The little girl who is granted forbidden sweets when she pouts and stamps her foot, pouts and stamps her foot again. If the trick works when she is married, she just goes on pouting. And when youthful freshness is gone, the pout remains, and the lips seem unable to portray any other expression.

It's the same way with the sneer. The tiny wrinkles made when the muscles pull the lips into a sneer grow stronger and stronger, until finally they are ingrained and permanent. The mouth that often expresses boredom and ennui, too, takes on a permanent look that is quite unattractive. No amount of smiling then can undo the harm that's been done by years of unattractive lip pose. So it's all honor to the pretty lips that are kept in pleasant lines. By and by the pleasant lines become so much a matter of habit, the lip muscles get so used to holding them, that they are there to stay, whether their owner feels sad or gay.

The lips are supposed to show all sorts of things about our tastes and character, quite aside from the habits we form of holding them this way or that.

For instance, lips that turn up at the corners, even in repose, suggest a love of fun to all of us. They are mirthful lips. A deep groove in the upper lip is supposed to indicate modesty and refinement. Long upper lips show independence and self-respect. Short upper lips show a great desire to please others, and the ability to imitate, and are usual among actors.

Lips of the Cupid's bow variety ought to be a pretty good choice in a wife. For the various curves that make them up are supposed to indicate an affectionate nature and a love of children.

Tower Studios

All the world loves a joyous, unaffected smile. It is a beauty trait that every woman should strive to attain and to maintain all the days of her life.

There is the belief that full, red lips show an ardent nature, and certainly they indicate good health. That is the reason for lip make-up. We use it to make our lips look healthy.

Fashions in lipstick change, like all other fashions in make-up. Just at the moment an exaggerated use of lipstick is out of vogue. Enough of it is used to give attractive color to the lips. It is used in such a way that it accentuates the charming natural curves. But it is not laid on in heavy layers, and the outlines of the lips are followed when it is applied.

Lip make-up begins before the lipstick stage. It begins with creams and lotions devised, and applied, to

Beautiful thoughts make beautiful lips and good cosmetics enhance their charm

Hold your lips in this tense position and see how it changes your entire expression.

Here is the petulant pout that detracts from the charm of many otherwise lovely faces.

This prunes and prisms expression covers the lips with numerous fine wrinkles.

keep the skin of the lips soft and fine. And now, with Winter coming, this problem of keeping the lips soft and silky is very important.

If lipstick is used carefully and regularly the lips seldom chap. But sometimes winter winds or other harsh weather conditions do get under the lipstick. The use of cold cream, which should be softly but thoroughly rubbed into every part of the lips, helps cure and prevent this drying out of the skin that is called chapping. Lips subject to it should be creamed carefully, and then wiped off, before lipstick is applied. The lips may be washed, at least once a day, with soap and water as a matter of foundation cleanliness, but the lipstick itself should be taken off with cold cream.

Perhaps there is nothing better than the little finger to shape the lipstick to the proper outline. To be sure, the lipstick itself can be kept shaped to a nice point if it is carefully used. It should be applied directly to the lips. Then the little finger should be used to

We may not all have a perfectly proportioned mouth like this, but we can make very wise use of our lipsticks and do our best to cultivate the habit of a pleasant expression.

remove any coloring from the white part of the lips. Lipstick isn't blended like cheek rouge—the edge of the rouge being softened off until it shades and fades into the regular color of the skin. The right line at the edge of the lipstick is clearcut, just as the natural line at the edge of red lips is vivid. If the lipstick is not extended to the corners of the lips or to the edges, then it is blended off into the natural color of the lips.

Lipstick is put on carefully, with every effort to make it stay on. For it isn't considered very smart, nowadays, to bring out the lipstick every hour for repairs. Our lips and our lipstick are supposed to make good enough connections so that frequent repairs are unnecessary. That's the bright idea in all cosmetics now, anyway.

A very little widening of naturally thin lips is usually better than more generous widening. For they must not look too artificial. Heavily made-up lips just aren't the thing any more.

SCHOOLDAY HATS

Here are scarfs and hats that you will like to make and the schoolgirls will like to wear

By FRANCES COWLES

Hats and scarfs designed by Helen Schadd

Oc. 332. The Scotch plaid hat has come back into favor for the younger girls. It is trimmed with a black feather and ribbon. Oc. 333. The scarf of plaid wool to match the Scotch cap is held in place by a steel ring or belt buckle.

Oc. 334. Schoolgirls of any age will find this new style beret becoming and appropriate for autumn and winter days. Oc. 335. A close-fitting scarf is made of woolen material to match the new beret.

Oc. 336. This jaunty little bonnet turned up at the front and with a peak at the back is suitable for little girls and girls in their early teens.

Oc. 337. The matching scarf gives a smart cozy note to the autumn or winter coat.

If you would like to obtain patterns and directions for making these hats and scarfs, please turn to page 90.

Seven Meant Death

(Continued from page 27)

the room frostily, dispassionately. Once in a while he heard the girl speak to Holman in cool incisive tones. Larry tried to keep his new guest included in the conversation but the monosyllabic replies that rewarded his efforts made his task difficult.

Once the girl stole a glance at Lorrimer. His silence piqued her. She wasn't accustomed to this sort of treatment. Men generally did their utmost to attract her attention and please her. Near the end of the meal she turned to him with such suddenness that he couldn't help but notice her.

"Why do you come to a place like this?" she asked, fixing him with her level eyes. "You don't enjoy it."

"I wanted to see what it was like," he answered slowly. "I've been away for a long time."

"Away?"

There followed a moment's silence while his somber eyes dug into hers. Then the shadow of a wintry smile crossed his features.

"In prison," he answered simply.

Her eyes widened a trifle, but she did not draw back. Over her shoulder she heard Larry Holman say, "In what are you two so engrossed?" but paid no attention to him. She said:

"I didn't get your name."

"Warren Lorrimer."

FOR a reason that he did not comprehend, she was startled, but she instantly recovered her poise and seemed to grow more distant, more aloof. There was an almost imperceptible lift to her proud shoulders.

"So that's it," she said, a little disdainfully.

"I don't understand."

He appeared puzzled, and she realized that he didn't know who she was. For a moment the look in her eyes grew uncertain, and then quite calmly she told him.

"I'm Monica Greffer. It was my father who sent you to prison."

To Warren Lorrimer all sound in the room seemed suddenly to have died down. It was as if the room had been magically emptied, leaving only this girl and himself. His burning eyes fixed on hers angrily.

Norman Greffer had been a struggling assistant district attorney. He had risen rapidly after his conviction of Lorrimer, had grown wealthy. His daughter—manicured, coiffured, and expensively gowned—was the product of the success her father had made at Lorrimer's expense.

"I hope he's proud of what he did," he said harshly.

"Why not? It's the duty of a district attorney to prosecute and convict, if he can—"

"Innocent men?"

"How could he have known you were innocent?" She did not raise her voice but it was plain that she, too, was now angry.

"I have no wish to discuss it," he said from the depth of his bitterness.

"Is there anything to discuss? I'm sure no one regrets what's happened more than my father, but I don't see how he is to blame. There have been many cases like yours—miscarriages of justice."

His face darkened. The misery of those seven years rose overwhelmingly before him. Her words goaded him beyond himself.

"Your father had no case against me! He manufactured it out of whole cloth, did it to enhance his own reputation, to get the publicity my conviction would give him . . ."

Warren Lorrimer's hand shook a little. He rose and bowed stiffly.

For seconds she held him with her glance. Her expression was inscrutable, enigmatic.

"I must go," he said gruffly. "I have an appointment which I had forgotten."

He nodded carelessly to his bewildered host and strode out of the room. Out in the foyer he looked back for an instant. What a damn fool Larry Holman was . . . to have taken him over to meet that girl. He ought to have known better; he ought to have known that he, Lorrimer, would hate her if only because she was Norman Greffer's daughter. But he would have hated her anyway—no matter whose daughter she was; she was so assured, so superior, so damned certain of her own point of view. "It's the duty of a district attorney to prosecute and convict . . ." she had said. She was callous—just like her father. Well, Norman Greffer would rue the day when he had sent him to prison; he'd get even . . . if it took him the rest of his life . . .

FOR some reason Warren Lorrimer's mind switched to the man who had spoken to him on the train, Lyman Bracker. He had said something about a Tribunal. But he had done more than that, he had mentioned the name of Norman Greffer in such a way as to make Lorrimer think that through this Tribunal—whatever it was—he could strike back at Norman Greffer. For a time Lorrimer stared thoughtfully into space. Maybe there was something in it; besides what harm could it do . . .

He took the card that Lyman Bracker had given him from his pocket and made his way to a telephone booth.

At a quarter to nine Warren Lorrimer stood at the corner of Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue. It was starting to rain and there was the rumble of distant thunder. Lorrimer scarcely noticed the rain; his mind was on the man who had accosted him on the train—Lyman Bracker, for whom he was waiting.

A smart black coupe drew up to the curb. Lyman Bracker emerged and with surprising agility covered the short space that intervened between him and Lorrimer. He seized the latter by the arm and guided him to his era, climbed in on the other side, under the wheel, and the next instant they shot away.

"I'm very glad that you have decided to accept our invitation," said Lyman Bracker gravely.

When eventually the car came to a stop, Warren Lorrimer had only a vague idea as to where they were. It was far downtown, somewhere on Water or Front Street, he imagined. The street was lined on each side with warehouses and gloomy lofts. The rain lashed down, fiercely obscuring the street signs and the numbers on the buildings. Lyman Bracker led his companion up two steps to the door of a particularly dilapidated three-story building. It showed no lights because the windows were covered with iron shutters. With his gold-headed cane he rapped sharply twice on the stout door, waited, then gave three additional sharp taps. The door opened a few inches, held so by a chain on the inside. An aged wrinkled face peered at them through the crack. Lyman Bracker mumbled a few words. There was a rattling sound as the chain was being removed. The door opened wider and they were admitted.

The place was dimly lighted and, judging by the number of barrels, packing cases and sacks that cluttered up the floor, was used as a warehouse. The atmosphere was close and musty. The aged man who had admitted them vanished in the darkness.

"Have you a watch with you?" asked Bracker.

Warren Lorrimer nodded.

"Look at it now and wait here five minutes. After that follow me up those stairs. You will find a door at the top. It opens into the room where we meet. You may enter without knocking."

Lyman Bracker started for the stairs. At the bottom step he paused.

"There is nothing to fear," he said.

"I'm not afraid," Warren Lorrimer said shortly.

As the sound of the other's hollow footsteps died out above, he took out his watch. Instead of five, he waited six minutes. Then he made his way up the stairs. Despite his iron nerves his pulse beat faster and he was conscious of a feeling of excitement.

The door was directly in front of him. He seized the handle, hesitated, then threw it open.

A weird tableau confronted him. What struck him first was the nature of the room. A huge bare loft, the floor uncarpeted, the ceilings lined with heavy calsimined beams. A plain wooden table stood in the center. Candles sputtered, giving a feeble light. There were seven men seated at the table, seven shadowy figures—and they were masked.

IN the crazy light it all seemed like a mad piece of mummery, absurd and fantastic. But one thing saved it from appearing purely melodramatic—it was the nature of the masks worn by the men. If they had worn long cowls or red hoods, Warren Lorrimer might have thought it ridiculous. But they didn't. Each man's face was covered by an ordinary handkerchief into which two holes had been crudely cut out for the eyes. There was something grim and business-like about those hastily prepared coverings, something that indicated that these men were in deadly earnest and had neither time nor inclination for play-acting.

Lorrimer's eyes wandered around the circle. The man in the center was a huge hulk of a man, his head towered over those of his fellows, and it was he who now spoke.

"Please come in, Mr. Lorrimer," he said in a deep resonant tone, "and be seated." He indicated a chair that was on the other side of the stable, directly across from his own. "Let me say, to begin with, that this seemingly theatrical reception which we are forced to accord you was not arranged with any desire to impress you. It is a measure we have taken solely for own own protection. If what we are about to tell you does not fit in with your views, if you decide to go your way while we go ours, our identities must remain absolutely a secret."

(Please turn to page 49)

GOOD WIFE!

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page.
The Episode of the Abominable Letter!

THE strangest case in all the professional career of M. Goron, ace of the Paris Surete de Police, began with the arrival at his office one fine morning of a fat and frightened commercial traveler.

"I am Claude Bernay," he announced breathlessly. He presented passports and other data. "This morning I called at the Post Restante of the Theater Francais. It is there, you see, that I receive my mail when I arrive in Paris after a trip."

This was 1894 before post offices were as common as today.

"This letter—this abominable letter—it was in my box! It is most certainly a bad joke—and yet one must be certain——"

M. Goron read the letter. "My darling," it began, "I have seen your husband, and I am glad to notice that his illness is increasing. His lips are quite white, his eyes hollow, and his face pale. I think we may hope to be rid of him within a month." The note was unsigned but there was a brief postscript—"I will bring another little packet tomorrow."

The letter had been sealed, and addressed in a fashionably illegible hand to someone with a name which appeared to be "Clair Bierny." The name resembled Bernay's closely enough to account for the mistake of the clerk.

M. Goron did not take the affair to be a joke, not even a bad joke. Within half an hour he had an operative, disguised as an old blind vendor of matches, loitering in the corridor outside the Post Restante. Peering over his dark glasses, the man saw a coach drawn by four fine brown horses roll up to the door.

A lady, tall and lovely in green velvet, stepped out. She came up to the window and asked if there was a letter for Madame Bierny.

At that moment a heavy hand was laid upon her green velvet sleeve. "Madame will be so kind as to accompany me?"

"Most certainly," said the vision. Her voice was icy-calm.

A few moments later she was ushered into the presence of the great detective. M. Goron went on writing at his desk, while the beautiful woman stood with eyes flashing, breasts heaving. She was biting her carmine lips. . . .

Suddenly, with the flair for drama which only the French detective knows, Goron flung to her across his desk the fatal letter. The tall and defiant lady of marble and ice now became warm, suppliant. . . .

"Mercy!" she begged. "I am a poisoner, monsieur. But I, I only, am to blame. He has only obeyed me, my lover. I hate my husband, I cannot bear the touch of his hands. They burn me like red-hot pokers. At any price I had to end such a hell upon earth. But I swear to you that my lover is innocent. . . ."

It was but the work of a few minutes to identify her as Madame Claire Destin, wife of one of the most prominent lawyers in Paris. And almost immediately afterward the lover was discovered—for she had been seen with him openly at every theater and restaurant in the city. His name was Lieutenant Leon Marny, and he was dapper, lean, and smiling.

He refused to answer the questions of the detective, but his attitude was not that of a guilty man. Indeed, he seemed to take it all as a great joke, even when he was detained in an ante-room.

"Search my rooms," he said. "Here is the key."

His rooms were searched with a fine-tooth comb. while still other detectives sought out the husband of the beautiful woman and made guarded inquiries. Monsieur Destin seemed in the pink of health, in spite of the white lips and hollow eyes of the lover's note. Yet in the flat of Marny detectives came upon twenty-four packets of white powder—powder tasteless and odorless. . . .

The two lovers faced each other in Goron's office.

"Lieutenant," said M. Goron, "why did you bring poison to this woman? Did you lack courage to challenge M. Destin to a duel?"

The handsome young man shrugged. "But I have no quarrel with M. Destin."

"Leon!" breathed the woman in green velvet.

"What is the content of those packets that we found in your cupboard?" thundered Goron.

"They are harmless," insisted the young man. "I purchased them simply to improve the digestion of my friend M. Destin."

"Liar!" cried Goron and the woman, in one breath. But at that moment a police doctor broke into the room. He had tested the twenty-four packets—and each contained only a small dose of bicarbonate of soda!

"You are very lovely," Marny addressed the beauty. "I could not do what you asked. But I made you happy by telling you that the powder you gave your husband was arsenic—while it was really only soda. You see, I would not risk Madame La Guillotine for all your kisses, my dear."

"You would not? Fool, I loved you because you seemed willing to lose everything for me. . . ." She advanced upon the man with clenched hands, fingernails flashing—and Goron had to step between them.

She had adored the man while she thought him a murderer—and hated him with a deadly hatred now that that she found he had tricked her.

French law punishes acts, and not intentions, so Goron was forced to free the lover. Then he talked with a fatherly firmness to the woman.

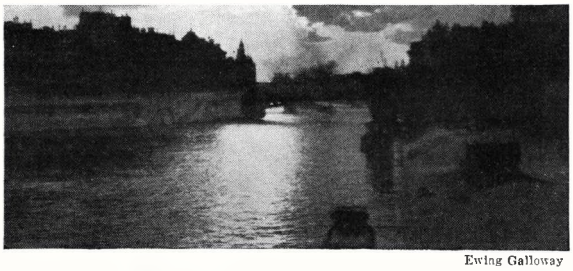
"Madame, you have tried to commit a great crime. In your search for a new sensation you have put yourself——"

She clutched his knees, sobbing. "Oh, do not tell my husband! I love him. I will be a good wife."

Goron helped her to her feet. "Go back to your husband," he told her. "I shall keep your secret. But if—if your husband meets any accident in the future, I promise you that the guillotine will kiss your white neck!"

Strange as it may seem, Monsieur and Madame Destin became the happiest of married couples and they lived to celebrate their silver wedding.

Sunset in Paris, on the River Seine.



Ewing Galloway

Seven Meant Death

(*Continued from page 47*)

Warren Lorrimer drew back the chair and seated himself.

"Why have you invited me here?"

"That is quickly explained," the huge man answered. "Everyone of us here was once unjustly imprisoned, not because of an honest mistake but because of a deliberate act on the part of some person or persons who had something to gain by fastening on us a crime of which we were innocent. The circumstances attending each of our cases were, of course, different, but the result was the same—years of indescribable misery, not only for ourselves but for our families, while those who were responsible for our unhappy lot, prospered. In your own case, for instance, Norman Greffer—"

"He may have been convinced of my guilt, simply carrying out what was his duty," Warren Lorrimer broke in, but his tone lacked conviction.

"YOU do not believe that," the other contradicted him calmly. "Besides, we have investigated. Norman Greffer, at the time of your trial, had in his possession incontrovertible evidence that you were innocent, but he convicted you just the same. He knew perfectly well that your case would be the making of himself. You were a polo player of international fame, a very rich man, a prominent figure, and Norman Greffer was ambitious and greedy for wealth."

The man stopped in order that this might sink in. The silence grew oppressive till finally it was broken by Warren Lorrimer.

"Well," he said.

"The purpose of the Tribunal," the big man resumed, "is to deal out justice—call it revenge if you want to. Our aim is to punish those who broke us. We have a secondary aim . . . to help, before it is too late, those who might suffer as we have done."

Again the man's powerful voice died down. Through the slits in his mask, his eyes looked steadily at Lorrimer.

"Why have I been invited here?"

"To join us, of course. It's hardly conceivable that after what you must have gone through, that you would not want to see Norman Greffer ground in the dust, that you would not be interested in helping others—"

"I don't want to help anyone," Lorrimer interrupted raspingly. "But Norman Greffer . . ." His hands tensed on the arms of the chair.

"Just so," said the man. "For the moment the lust for revenge is strongest in you. That is understandable. Sympathy for others will come. That can wait. But before you decide if you wish to become a member of the Tribunal, I must tell you, in all fairness, one other thing. The mere fact that you were unjustly imprisoned would in itself not have induced us to approach you. There are many men with that qualification who, however, lack the essential that you possess—money! You're a very wealthy man, Mr. Lorrimer—we all are men of means—and if you join us we shall expect you to devote the bulk of your fortune to our cause."

Warren Lorrimer made no reply.

"You are being asked to do only what all of us are doing," the other proceeded sternly. It seemed to Lorrimer that the three men on each side of the speaker were leaning forward watching him with grim intensity.

"Do you wish to become one of us?"

Lorrimer gazed at the enormous figure opposite and wondered what sort of a man was concealed behind that scrap of linen. Then slowly he rose to his feet, bent forward with knuckles resting on the table, his eyes traveling along that ring of silent men.

"I wish to know with whom I am dealing," he said shortly.

With one accord, as though awaiting his decision, six heads turned to the man in the center. He was obviously their leader.

"You must decide first," he said.

"Who are you? Let me see your faces."

"After you have decided," the huge man countered inexorably.

That was final and Warren Lorrimer knew it. His mind went back to Monica Greffer and then still further back—seven years further—to the days when he had been convicted and Norman Greffer, with a gleam of triumph in his eyes, had watched him being led away, branded a felon. A silence that seemed interminable followed. At last it was brought to an end by Warren Lorrimer.

"I will join you," his tone was clear and decisive.

A short man at the end of the table rose. From his inner pocket he took two papers and a fountain pen. Removing the cap from the pen he passed that and the documents to Warren Lorrimer. The six others each brought forth a similar paper and handed it to Lorrimer.

"They are identical—one is for you to keep. Please read carefully and then sign them all," the short man instructed. "It is for your own protection as much as ours." Lorrimer thought he recognized the voice of Lyman Bracker.

He took up one of the papers and read. It was a brief terse statement, such as he would have expected these men to have drawn up. It set forth the aims of the Tribunal as they had already been explained by the huge man in the center. There was a closing paragraph to the effect that each member would abide by the decision of the majority and that all of the members considered themselves responsible for the acts of any one, providing that such an act was authorized by the Tribunal.

Warren Lorrimer glanced swiftly at the remaining papers; they were all worded alike and all signed by seven names. The purpose of this procedure was plain enough; it was as the man, whom Lorrimer suspected of being Lyman Bracker, had said: for their mutual protection. If for example, one of the members at the behest of the Tribunal, committed an act which brought him into conflict with the authorities, the others could not disclaim responsibility. They were forced to stick together; each man had in his possession written evidence that the others were implicated in whatever took place. There was a measure of safety in that and Lorrimer could see its practical value; yet it gave him pause. It suggested something ominous. How far would this strange band of men go to carry out their avowed purpose? He looked along the line appraisingly; though he could not see their faces he nevertheless had a distinct impression of being in the midst of serious minded sober business men, men of means. Besides they had all been in prison, and having once had that experience they surely would not engage in anything that might again jeopardize their liberty. And what if they did? . . . It was worth it to bring about the ruin of Norman Greffer. . . .!

Warren Lorrimer raised the pen.

"One minute, before you sign," the man at the end arrested him. "You must realize that once a member of the Tribunal you cannot withdraw except by the unanimous consent of all the members. It is necessary for our safety—you can see that—"

Warren Lorrimer nodded in understanding. Again he lifted the pen preparatory to signing, when the gigantic figure directly opposite made an observation.

"Any betrayal," he said softly, "would result in the gravest consequences . . . disastrous consequences to the traitor." The gentleness of his tone only emphasized the menace in that warning. "Now sign."

Lorrimer signed. The names of the others already appended meant nothing to him, though it struck him that while six names were signed in full there was one man who had simply signed his given name—Paul. That was odd but if it were satisfactory to the rest why should he question it. His task completed he folded his own agreement and handed the rest back.

Then six men rose, only the bulky figure in the center remaining seated, and when the handkerchiefs of the others came off, he alone retained his mask.

WARREN LORRIMER gazed quickly around him. He had been right, the man who had given him the pen was Lyman Bracker. The man next to him was slightly taller but much thinner than Bracker. His eyes were pale and the lids had a drooping quality.

"Grender is my name—Morris Grender," he said.

"I'm Mr. Anaropulos," said the next man. His tone was formal, low and mellow. He was olive skinned, a Greek or of Greek origin, with tiny dark eyes that looked fixedly at Warren Lorrimer.

Lorrimer's gaze shifted to the next—that immense figure in the center that sat there, still masked, rigid immobile, with all the qualities of a statue. Of all there, this man interested him most. Before he could frame the question that came to his mind, the man on the other side spoke. He was a tall heavy-set person with a cleft in his chin and blue eyes that looked as if once they might have laughed.

"Denis O'Mara."

Beside him stood a man with spectacles with a broad almost bulging forehead and an intensely preoccupied mien. A scientist, if ever there was one.

"I'm Dr. Tolger," he said.

With a feeling of impatience, Warren Lorrimer turned to the last. He wanted to have this over with, to turn back to the masked figure, who interested him far above the rest.

"My name is Platt—Greyfield Platt," the man at the other end introduced himself. He was the most unprepossessing of them all. His manner was nervous, his eyes evasive, and the weak mouth was constantly working. Lorrimer looked at him and frowned. Platt reminded him of a cornered rat.

(*Please turn to page 50*)

Seven Meant Death

(*Continued from page 49*)

"And you?" Warren Lorrimer's glance rested on the gargantuan leader.

"There are reasons why my identity must remain concealed," the big man answered placidly.

"That was not explained to me," said Lorrimer with a touch of anger.

"I'm sorry—it should have been," the other conceded, and then in tones surprisingly gentle, added—"If you knew why I am obliged to retain my incognito, you would not object."

Warren Lorrimer scowled. The day's events had proved a great strain on his nerves.

"You are Paul . . . I suppose!" he said, his voice hard.

The other assented calmly.

"And now, gentlemen, if you will be seated, I have an announcement to make. Something has transpired that I'm afraid will be a shock to you—"

There was a timid knock on the door. The figures facing Lorrimer seemed suddenly to grow tense. It was only when the man who called himself Paul spoke that they relaxed.

"It is only Angelus," he said.

He rose and Lorrimer saw that he was even taller than he had imagined. With great strides he went to the door and threw it open.

The aged man who had admitted Bracker and Lorrimer stood there.

"There is a lady outside," he quavered.

"A lady?" Even Paul was startled.

The other man nodded.

"She says her name is Greffer and she wants to see a Mr. Lorrimer."

THERE was a rumble of voices. Suspicious eyes fastened themselves on Warren Lorrimer. Denis O'Mara, the tall Irishman, his face dark with anger, advanced on him.

"Just a minute, Denis," said Lyman Bracker sharply. "Mr. Lorrimer can't be at fault. I brought him here. He knew nothing of this place beforehand, so he could not have communicated the information to anyone else."

Denis O'Mara paused uncertainly. He turned to Paul.

"What do you think?"

"Bracker is right," said Paul dispassionately. "I know who's to blame." Slowly his eyes went from one to the other. They stirred uneasily.

Dennis O'Mara mumbled an apology to Lorrimer. Greyfield Platt, his face white, paced to and fro. He took out a cigar and nervously bit off the end. Paul turned to Lorrimer.

"I wish you to see her," he said. "Find out what she wants. In there," he said to the others. He pointed toward a door at the farther end. Instantly they obeyed his command. Only Greyfield Platt seemed reluctant. His shifty glance took in the exit where the aged Angelus still stood, but Paul stood there, too. "In there," he said peremptorily to Greyfield. Then he asked Lorrimer, "Do you know her?"

"I met her tonight by accident at the Cavalier Club just before I telephoned Mr. Bracker."

Paul nodded.

"An act of Providence, perhaps," he said cryptically, and Lorrimer fancied that beneath the mask the man was smiling. "Let her in," Paul instructed Angelus, "and bring her up here." With that he strode off through the door which closed on the others, and Warren Lorrimer found himself alone.

A few minutes later Monica Greffer entered. Her pale green raincoat was dripping, her hat was soaked and yet somehow she appeared far lovelier than when he had seen her before. Arrayed in her glittering evening gown, there had been something artificial about her, something unapproachable, but now with her color high, drops of rain clinging to her long lashes, and her lips slightly parted she was alive. She swept the room with her glance.

"Am I too late?" she asked.

"Too late for what?" He looked at her intently. Her cool composure threw him off.

She made a gesture of impatience.

"You have been brought here to join some sort of a secret society—a society organized to revenge itself on all those who have wronged its members—my father knows about it. What these men contemplate is sheer madness. It will end in disaster for them and—for you." Her tone was matter-of-fact, her manner detached. Warren Lorrimer was puzzled. Her interest in him was plainly impersonal, so why had she come?

"I know of no secret society," he declared stonily. "I am interested in business; this is one of our warehouses and I came here to discuss various matters with my associates."

She scorned to point out the obvious absurdities of his explanation.

"One of their members has betrayed them," she said slowly. "He has disclosed a good deal to my father who has so far refrained from notifying the police; but he will shortly; he is only waiting for some concrete evidence and for one other thing . . ."

"What?"

"To discover the identity of their leader." She stared at him searchingly for a minute. "You do not believe that you've been betrayed," she said, after a time. "How do you suppose I knew of this place? How did I discover that you would be here?"

"Did your father tell you all this?" He moved closer to her and bored into her with stormy eyes. Was he in a trap? Was this some intricate scheme to get him back to prison?

She shook her head.

"He doesn't know I'm here. He has no idea that I know. By accident I overheard one of the interviews between him and the man who is betraying the society. He told father that they expected to enroll you the minute you were released—this very night. Don't ask me his name—I don't know it."

Warren Lorrimer was for the moment incapable of coherent thought. Of all the incredible things that had happened to him since he had left prison, her presence here seemed the most inexplicable. He could hear the storm raging outside with increased fury; the howl of the wind, the swish of the rain and the occasional growl of thunder.

"What brought you here? What do you care what happens to me?"

"In a sense, I don't care." She looked him straight in the eye. Her body, her glance, her words, everything about her was straight. "I realize perfectly that it was foolish of me to come here, something that might be considered disloyal to my father . . . but I did it largely for his sake. At the Cavalier Club I saw the mood you were in; you were capable of anything—"

"So that's it," he interrupted her rudely. "You were afraid of what I might do to Norman Greffer . . . what I might do to him to make up for what he did to me . . ."

She saw the hard look in his eyes, the implacable hatred, the relentless purpose, and the contempt. She knew the contempt was for her.

"I am never afraid for myself," she said, proudly. "Sometimes for others I am afraid. I thought, tonight, of what you must have suffered all those years . . . and what it would mean to you if you were sent back . . ."

He turned on her furiously. He wasn't going to be pitied by anyone, least of all her.

"Don't worry about what is going to happen to me," he sneered. "Your father never did!"

His outburst left her unmoved. She looked at him contemplatively. For an instant her expression softened. She said:

"Even if you've already joined this society—whatever it is—it's not too late. My car is outside; come with me; talk to my father; you will find him more understanding than you think."

He came closer to her. His face was distorted with such rage that involuntarily she stopped.

"What do you suppose I'd do to your father if I saw him?" he said savagely.

She was unafraid; her chin came up.

"I think my father can take care of himself," she informed him haughtily. "It was you I was thinking of—principally." Suddenly her expression again softened. "Think it over," she said gently. "What harm can there be in what I suggest. If you find I am wrong, you can still attempt whatever you have in mind."

"No!" he shot back. "Now please go. I'm sorry that I can't thank you for coming here."

With cool thoughtful eyes she surveyed him for a minute or two, then turned and without another word left the room.

"WELL done, Mr. Lorrimer." It was the booming voice of Paul. The door at the other end was open and he was coming toward Lorrimer followed by the others.

"You needn't tell me what happened," Paul continued, "we overheard it all."

For seconds the eyes of the men who stood in back of Paul rested with approval on Lorrimer; then they faced one another uneasily and suspiciously. There was no doubt from what they had overheard that there was a traitor in their midst.

A sudden hush enveloped them all. Paul was standing a little apart, his arms folded across his chest, and despite his mask, it was plain that his eyes were fastened on one man, and one man alone.

"Just before the interruption," he said, "I told you that I had an announcement to make that would prove a shock. You have since learned what that announcement was." His voice was free from passion but strangely ominous. "I have known for some time," he continued, "that we were being betrayed. I have had the man whom I suspected watched and followed, and my suspicions verified. What you heard tonight came as no surprise to me."

Lyman Bracker was the first to understand. He had been following the line of Paul's gaze. Now he beckoned

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Seven Meant Death

to Denis O'Mara, and Denis came forward. Together they strode over until they came to Greyfield Platt. The little man's face was ashen, his lips quivered with terror. Lyman Bracker and Denis O'Mara without uttering a word ranged themselves one on each side of Greyfield Platt. He started away but they placed restraining hands on his shoulders.

"Let go of me," he screamed. "Don't you dare touch me. Tell them to let me be," he appealed to Paul.

"You have betrayed us," said Paul pitilessly. "You know the penalty."

"It's a lie!" Greyfield Platt shrieked. "It's a damned lie!"

He struggled frantically, but in vain, to free himself. The grip of Denis O'Mara alone would have been sufficient to restrain him.

Warren Lorrimer watched with lowering brows. He had half a mind to interfere. Was this ratty little Platt to be murdered in cold blood? This was more than Lorrimer had bargained for. He was ready to aid the Tribunal in avenging the wrongs of its members but not to the extent of committing murder, particularly the murder of one of their own members. But before he could voice the protest he had in mind, Paul had spoken again.

"Search him," he commanded sternly.

While Bracker and O'Mara held him firmly by the wrists, deft fingers went through Greyfield Platt's garments. What they found they placed on the table before Paul. A watch and chain, two handkerchiefs, a bunch of keys, some matches, three cigars, his wallet, and some letters, and the agreement Lorrimer had just signed.

With his back toward the others, Paul examined the things. He did it leisurely and apparently without any great interest. When he had finished picking up each of the articles in turn, he said:

"Release him."

Paul lit a match and applied it to Greyfield Platt's copy of the Tribunal's creed.

A little uncertainly, Denis O'Mara and Lyman Bracker let go of their captive.

"You may take these things," said Paul.

A look of relief came into the little man's face. Hastily he stuffed his belongings back into his pockets. Then he turned to Paul, and with a fair assumption of dignity, said:

"After your unwarranted suspicion of me, gentlemen, you can appreciate that I can no longer remain a member of the Tribunal. You have subjected me to the grossest indignity—"

Paul silenced him with a gesture of his hand.

"You say you are innocent?" Paul asked, smoothly.

"Absolutely. I swear it!" Greyfield Platt's voice rose to a trembling shriek.

Paul nodded his head several times meditatively. Greyfield Platt was watching him. Some color had come back into his face, but the look of terror and apprehension was still there.

Then to the surprise of everyone, Paul went to the door, opened it, and motioned Greyfield Platt to leave.

From among the others who had been listening spellbound, angry mutterings now rose.

"Why did you let him get away?" Denis O'Mara asked rather fiercely.

"He will go to the police," Mr. Anaropulos declared darkly.

"Was it wise, Paul?" Lyman Bracker asked in more measured tones.

"He can tell no more than he has already told," said Paul solemnly. "The fact that our names are perhaps known has its unpleasant features, but remember, so far there is no evidence against us. What can they do to us?"

"Just the same, he oughtn't to go free," said Morris Grender, obstinately.

Paul did not argue the matter further. He had seated himself in his chair and with his huge fingers was drumming softly on the table. Then he said something that appeared totally irrelevant.

"When I was in Western Africa," he began slowly, "I came across some tribes who practised trial by ordeal. They had a preparation known as muavi which is made by scraping the bark off certain poisonous trees. The scrapings are mixed with water, and the draught so prepared is given to the accused. If he is innocent, nothing happens. If he is guilty, he dies a very prompt and most unpleasant death. Muavi is an interesting concoction. Its action is extremely rapid and results in convulsions followed by immediate death. It's a little awkward to administer in the manner of the West African tribes. Now if they knew how to distil the bark, less than a drop would be necessary . . . much less. Gentlemen, the meeting is adjourned."

TEN minutes later, Warren Lorrimer, seated beside Bracker, was speeding uptown bound for the residence of the man he hated most in the world—Norman Greffer. Those had been Paul's instructions. "Go there," he had said. "Hear what Greffer has to say. It may be of interest and, if I'm not mistaken, something unexpected may transpire. I will await your report."

Paul would not amplify this statement despite Lorrimer's questions. The latter was puzzled and had no taste for his mission. Yet there was something about the colossal Paul that inspired confidence. He gave the impression that there was a definite and carefully considered purpose behind his slightest suggestion. So Warren Lorrimer had started off without demurring further.

It was a little after ten when they drew up in front of Norman Greffer's house at East Sixty-first Street. Lights were still shining in most of the windows; the occupants of the house were presumably awake.

Warren Lorrimer got out.

"I'll wait for you down the block," said Lyman Bracker. "It might be hard for you to find a taxicab on a night like this."

Warren Lorrimer nodded and walked up the few steps that led to the entrance. In response to his ring, the door presently opened. A very correctly attired butler confronted him.

"I should like to see Miss Greffer; tell her that Mr. Lorrimer is calling."

The butler surveyed him sharply, then stood to one side so that he might enter. From here he was conducted into a small drawing-room. At the rear of this room there were French doors that gave on to a second room. The doors were curtained and closed but the murmur of voices was audible.

In a few minutes Monica Greffer appeared. She came in not through the French doors but by the same door through which Warren Lorrimer had entered. She wore a simple dress, the severe lines of which somehow accentuated her extreme femininity. She evinced no surprise at his presence there.

"You've come after all," she said with that direct look of hers.

"Against my better judgment," he said unbendingly. "There can be no truth in what you have told me."

"You think that I deliberately lied to you?" She appeared to be not offended, only curious.

"I have lost the art of polite conversation," he said stiffly.

"That means you think I lied."

She stood for a moment irresolute; then suddenly she went to the French doors and listened. She shook her head, and came away.

"Follow me," she said. "I'll convince you. Under the circumstances, I hope you do not mind a little eavesdropping."

She guided him out into the hall, to the rear where another door obviously led into the same room which lay beyond the French doors. She leaned and whispered in his ear:

"I will convince you. The man who is betraying your society is in there now."

She placed the tip of her finger across her lips, warning him to silence. Then she took hold of the door knob. Very gently she turned it. The door opened outwards. A pair of heavy portieres hid the room from view, but the voices were now plainly audible. Yet the words at first meant nothing to him. She stood very close to him and he was conscious of her proximity, of her soft breathing, and the subtle perfume that suddenly seemed to cloud his brain. Then of a sudden he came to. He heard a strong voice—

"You're not double-crossing me, Platt?"

"Why would I do that, Mr. Greffer?" Warren Lorrimer recognized the high quavering tones of Greyfield Platt.

"I don't know why you should," said Norman Greffer. "Just the same I don't understand how that bunch of yours found out you have been coming here. How can you explain that?"

THERE was a brief pause. Warren Lorrimer half turned to look at the girl at his side. She had caught her breath in anticipation that her visit earlier in the evening would now be disclosed. Evidently, however, Greyfield Platt thought it best not to mention the matter to the girl's father.

"I don't know how they found out," he said petulantly. "But I do know that my life isn't worth two cents unless you or the police act at once."

"What is there to go on?" Norman Greffer asked irritably. "All you've given me so far are hints and suspicions. You don't even know the name of the leader. I can't go around arresting people whose names are Paul on the pretext that they are going to commit murder. Tell me, did Warren Lorrimer join?"

Warren Lorrimer felt his pulses racing. No matter what happened, he had to get a look into that room. He had to see the expression on Norman Greffer's face when he learned that he, Lorrimer, was a member of the Trib-

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Seven Meant Death

(*Continued from page 51*)

unal. Slowly his hand went up. He reached to where the portieres met.

"Careful," he heard Monica Greffer whisper.

He took hold of a fold in the portieres and cautiously moved it sidewise until a slit of light appeared. With his eyes glued to that, he could peer into the room. He saw Norman Greffer seated at a library table, the very picture of a successful banker or judge, his face a little heavier than he had remembered it but still handsome, his black hair streaked with gray.

"Did Warren Lorrimer join?" Greffer repeated.

Greyfield Platt was seated at the edge of his chair, fidgety and nervous.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he said.

"Certainly not," said Norman Greffer politely. "Sorry, I should have asked you. Have a cigarette?"

"No, thanks," said Platt. "I'll smoke one of these."

From his pocket he extracted a long thin cigar. He bit off the end, reached for a match, looked at the cigar a little doubtfully, almost with a grimace of distaste, then with a shrug began to light it. He took a few puffs, started to speak but not a word crossed his lips, only a strange inarticulate cry. He half rose in his chair, then sank back. The cigar dropped from his limp fingers.

"What ails you?" said Norman Greffer sharply.

Greyfield Platt began to writhe in his chair. His face was ghastly, twisted beyond recognition by lines of agony.

"Here—drink this," Greffer shouted. He poured out a glass of water from a decanter on his table and tried to force it between the chattering teeth of Greyfield Platt.

It lasted only a few seconds more. Then the little man lurched forward onto the floor—dead!

"What the hell—!" Norman Greffer pressed a button on his desk, shouting at the same time for the butler. Then he stooped over to lift Greyfield Platt off the floor.

Warren Lorrimer, his eyes dark and brooding, turned to Monica Greffer.

"Greyfield Platt is dead," he murmured.

With her hand she stifled the involuntary cry that rose to her lips.

"Quick!" she said, and seizing him by the wrist dragged him after her. The sound of the butler's steps coming from the floor reached them. There was no chance to get to the front door unobserved, but the back stairs were available. She conducted him down into the kitchen. There was no one there. He stared at her, nonplussed.

"That secret society of yours has murdered him!" she whispered with quick intensity. "Murdered him because I revealed that he was betraying them!"

"You're mad! How could they have—?"

"Don't ask me how. I just know it . . . I feel it. You must go. If you're discovered here, you'll be implicated . . . I won't have that on my conscience . . . you only came because I asked you to."

She still held him by the wrist, and with a show of obstinacy he wrenched himself free.

"Why should I go?" he demanded brutally. "I haven't done anything."

"You must," she insisted.

She led him to the basement door, opened it and pointed out to the street.

He looked at her for a moment uncertainly. He felt oddly stirred.

"Go," she said again, more peremptorily this time; and as the door closed softly behind him, he heard her murmur, "At least you saw that I didn't lie to you."

WARREN LORRIMER got into the car.

"I don't know what happened," he explained to Lyman Bracker. "Greyfield Platt was there. He seemed perfectly well, then he took out a cigar, bit off the end. The next minute he was dead."

Lyman Bracker's features were visible in the driving mirror of the car, and Lorrimer saw him smile, an odd significant sort of a smile.

"The muavi test," said Lyman Bracker softly as he threw the car into gear.

Warren Lorrimer started.

"You will remember," Bracker went on, "that Paul mentioned that an infinitesimal amount of the poison, if properly distilled, would be sufficient."

"But how—"

"Paul is a marvelous man for details," said Lyman Bracker. "He notices everything. He must have noticed that Greyfield Platt was a great cigar smoker, and that he had the habit of biting off the ends of his cigars. Mind you, I don't say that Paul had anything to do with this, but if by chance he had some cigars already prepared, and of the same brand that Platt smoked, and if when we took all that stuff out of Greyfield Platt's pockets and placed it on the table, Paul had substituted his prepared cigars for the ones we took from Platt . . ."

Warren Lorrimer remembered that momentary look of surprised distaste on Greyfield Platt's face when he had placed the cigar in his mouth. With a look of horror he turned and stared at Lyman Bracker.

"Who is Paul? And why does he alone remain masked?"

It was some time before Lyman Bracker gave him his answer and then it was only a partial one.

"The executioner is always masked," he said with impressive solemnity.

"I can't—I can't stand that sort of thing," Lorrimer cried, with a shudder. "You'll have to let me resign—"

"I'm afraid it's too late now," said Lyman Bracker, not unkindly. "We've only started—you'll get used to it."

(*To be continued next month*)

Breakfast as They Like It

(*Continued from page 8*)

office first and then go downstairs to the nearest drugstore to get another cup of coffee, orange juice, toasted English muffin or two buttered bran muffins.

What the American man or woman orders for breakfast depends on how much he has to spend. At lunch counters and sandwich bars where one goes to save time or money or both, the most usual choice is just a cup of coffee with rolls, muffins, coffee cake or doughnut.

In the lunch room where breakfasts cost a trifle more it is a little different because here one has more leisure—leisure enough to enjoy something in the way of griddle cakes with Vermont maple syrup; cereal with bacon or sausages; or wheat cakes with syrup or honey.

Going up in the price scale to the dining room where club breakfasts are priced at sixty or seventy cents, you get a wider variety of tempting dishes. Strawberries and cream or cantaloup in season, oranges any way you like them, sliced bananas, preserved figs, stewed rhubarb—but here again the great American public prefers to take their fruit vitamins in liquid form. It's orange juice, pineapple juice, grapefruit juice, tomato juice, prune juice if you please.

Then come cereal and cream—any cereal you choose—and after that take your choice of broiled bacon or ham with eggs—poached, scrambled or fried, with French fried potatoes if you like.

More elaborate breakfast dishes ordered from the card include such things as pork chops, lamb chops, creamed chipped beef, calves liver, veal chops, beef steak or chicken hash.

Ten or fifteen years ago it was the general regret of the large American hotels that only a small minority of room guests availed themselves of the hotel's breakfast service. Presumably they went elsewhere. The club breakfast came into existence, and when carefully planned and prepared, proved immensely popular. While an elaborately served breakfast in the main dining room of the hotel might still be fairly expensive, excellent breakfasts might be obtained in lunch rooms, and tea rooms connected with the hotel at most reasonable rates.

Hotel restaurant managers with an understanding nature realized that breakfast is to many persons the most difficult meal of the day. For one reason or another appetite is at a low ebb. The only way to induce many persons to eat breakfasts was, and is, to give them what they like precisely as they like it. Here, according to the experience of the hotel restaurant manager, are the most important rules:

Coffee must be beyond reproach—freshly made, strong and always piping hot.

Fruit juice must be of finest quality, carefully chilled.

Toast must be perfect—freshly made for each customer.

Eggs must be first class. There is an increasing demand for boiled eggs and arrangements must be made to time the boiling accurately so that customers who order a two-and-a-half, a three-minute or four-minute-egg will get exactly what he orders.

Following out these rules have done wonders in popularizing the hotel breakfast. The same rules will work wonders in making the home breakfast something to look forward to.

Bottled Health

One quart of milk supplies about the same amount of bodily energy as 9 eggs, or ¾ lb. beefsteak, or 4/5 lb. chicken, or 6½ oranges, or 2 lb. potatoes, or 3 lb. string beans.

All of these foods build health and are important in the diet. The comparison merely brings out the essential part milk plays in contributing fuel or energy to the diet.

MILK, as an all-round food, is one of the most essential of our everyday foods. Milk gives you much for little. In choosing your foods, be sure that milk is among the first on the list.

For health, milk is conceded to be the almost perfect food. It contains practically all the elements that the human body needs: minerals, vitamins, proteins, sugars and fats —all necessary for building a healthy body and for warding off disease.

The form in which milk is taken is not important. Some persons like it cold. Others take it when they are ready for sleep and prefer it hot. Still others like it better when it is flavored with cocoa or chocolate or used in soups, sauces or desserts.

Milk should not be regarded as a beverage; it is a food. Sip it slowly; get the flavor out of it. Don't use it merely to quench thirst, and don't drink it rapidly. The gastric juice of the stomach causes milk to curdle shortly after you swallow it. If milk is drunk rapidly digestion is likely to be slow and difficult.

Children especially need plenty of milk. Rest has no charm for them. No healthy child will stay parked while awake. He waits a minute or two perhaps, and then he is an acrobat again. An active, growing child must have fuel and building material for his body. Give him good, fresh milk—a quart a day if you can. And give the grown-ups a pint a day. For underweights and convalescents, a quart. For expectant or nursing mothers, a quart.

Milk has unsurpassed food value. To take milk regularly is the surest and easiest way of making certain that you give your body the variety of food materials it needs to keep you in good physical condition.

To know milk as you should know it, ask for a free copy of the Metropolitan booklet "Milk—An All-Round Food." Address Booklet Department 1034 B.

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Blood on the Water

(*Continued from page 22*)

of water in the swimming pool. A yellow-clad body cut the air and disappeared into the pool with a soundless splash.

He was startled when Browne spoke.

"A drink, Professor?"

A decanter rattled against glasses on a mahogany desk and Baker looked up.

"No—thank you. A little—er—sherry is my limit, and then only in the evening."

"I'll have one, if you don't mind. Sit down, Baker. I want to talk to you."

The Professor seated himself on the edge of a chair and rested his small hands tightly on his knees. It was coming now—the accounting he knew he must give for flunking the trustee's son. But Baker nearly fell off the chair when Browne's voice snapped at him across the desk.

"Baker—I'm being blackmailed!"

The Professor heard his own gasp, and then his voice weakly in the silence.

"B-blackmailed?"

"The reason I asked you up here was to talk to you about it. I've heard of some of the things you've done, Baker. The way you discovered who hung the man on the derrick of that skyscraper was downright ingenious. And the Thorndyke case—and that man found dead in the Public Library—well, all I can say is you must be cleverer than you look!"

Baker protested mildly.

"I just happened to be there," he said. "I didn't do anything. I just observed things the police had missed—"

"I can't have the police in on this; and I'd like *your* advice, Professor—if you'll give it to me."

"You mean you want me to find out who is blackmailing you?"

"No. I know that. It's Valerie Duncan!"

"Oh!"

THE Professor regretted the "Oh." It sounded not at all like a man-of-the-world, and he was being called on for worldly advice by a trustee of his college—who might forget his son had flunked in Fine Arts.

"I want you to tell me what to do about it," Browne said. "You see, she has some letters of mine that are—well, compromising."

Baker had read enough newspapers to be on fairly familiar grounds now.

"And she wants you to buy them back?"

"That's it—or she threatens to publish them."

The Professor hunched his thin shoulders.

"Why not let her publish them?" he asked.

"I can't. You see, I—well, I may as well be frank with you. I'm in love with another woman, Baker—a marvelous woman. No breath of scandal has ever touched her. You needn't look surprised. My wife has been dead for ten years. I'm only forty-five. Why shouldn't I be in love?"

The Professor felt this was a question that required no answer. There was no reason why Browne shouldn't be in love, no reason why he shouldn't have admired Valerie Duncan's charms. He was still young, attractive, lean and strong, with a bank account that could well afford his whims and desires.

"Her picture is there on the desk. You'll probably recognize it from the society pages of the newspapers—Alice Whitney."

Professor Baker looked at the picture. It was of a lovely woman, about thirty-five, with fine, clean features, and a glorious wealth of hair that the photographer had rimmed with light.

"She's very beautiful," he said.

"She's more than beautiful," said Browne. "She's the finest woman on earth. It's because of Alice, Baker, that I can't have a scandal."

"In that case," said Baker, "since you've asked my advice, I'd say the best plan would be to buy the letters from Miss Duncan."

Browne spread his lean hands flat on the desk.

"I can't," he said.

"Can't?"

"She wants two hundred thousand dollars for them! I can't raise that much money in this depression. My stocks are all tied up, and no one can get credit in these times. Yesterday I thought I'd raised it—that's why Valerie Duncan's here today, to deliver the letters in exchange for the money. But, Baker, I couldn't get the money. And until I get those letters I can't possibly marry Alice Whitney!"

Professor Baker took up a sharp steel paper knife from the desk and tapped it gently against his palm. A shadow passed the open window and he saw sunshine in a wealth of auburn hair, with a little aureole about it the same as in the picture on Browne's desk.

"Miss Duncan *thinks* you have the money?" he asked.

"I suppose so. Yes—she must. I haven't told her yet that I haven't."

"Then she probably has the letters in that steel overnight bag she held on her lap in the automobile."

"Steel bag?"

"I wondered at the time what it contained that was so valuable—fireproof—certainly burglar-proof unless one had the key or carried off the whole bag."

Baker discovered that the paper knife had sharp edges, and he hastily put it down. He wiped his hands on a generous silk handkerchief Mary had given him his last birthday.

"I hardly know how to advise you, Mr. Browne," he said slowly. "Needless to say I have little sympathy with women of the Duncan type. I find their exploits in the newspapers have a shockingly bad effect on some of the co-eds in my classes. Young girls—especially the pretty ones—often find fascinating the idea of romance and something for nothing. No, I'm afraid I can't advise you. I can only point out that the letters that stand between you and your happiness are probably here under your roof. I think you might be justified in—er—well, in what the police call harmless 'strong-armed methods' of—er—perhaps obtaining them."

The Professor stood up and smoothed down the lapels of his black coat. The decanter clicked once more against a glass on Browne's desk.

"Thank you, Professor. I think I get what you mean."

Browne drained his glass and stood up. As he did so there was a sudden movement in a tall, winged chair by the dark fireplace and Browne started violently.

"Bob!" he exclaimed, his face darkening into a frown. "How long have you been there?"

Browne's son, Bob, stood up, a tight smile on his sun-tanned face.

"Hello, Professor," he said. "Sorry Dad. I've been here all along. I was asleep when you came in. Your talking woke me. And what you were saying was so interesting I thought I ought to listen."

Browne looked at his clenched hands, then at his son.

"I'm sorry you heard," he said in a low voice.

"I'm not." Bob walked over, six feet of strong youth, and rested a hand on his father's shoulder. "Don't worry, Dad. I'll help you in this thing."

"I want you to stay out of it, Bob."

"No—I'm your son. I've as much interest in it as you have—"

Professor Baker thought it a propitious moment to leave father and son alone. Very softly he walked to the door and let himself into the hall. Rich men, it seemed, had their troubles the same as poor ones. Different in nature, but equally serious. Thinking deeply, Baker went upstairs and found the room where Mary was waiting. His wife seemed peculiarly excited about something, and he wondered at the power of society in shaking her out of her normal placidity.

"George!" she announced as he closed the door. "Who do you think is in this house?"

"I'm sure I don't know, my dear," said the Professor gently.

"Roger Williams!"

"Somehow the name conveys nothing to me."

"Don't you remember? He's the young man who tried to commit suicide last week over the Duncan woman! They stopped him just in time! And *she's* here too! George—I'm afraid."

"Afraid of what, Mary?"

"Of—I don't know. I have a feeling something is going to happen. I heard Williams and that woman talking in the next room. He sounded desperate. He—he threatened her, George!"

"I imagine she's been threatened before, my dear. Don't you worry your pretty head over such things. Let's stroll out in the garden, shall we? The delphinium looks extremely lovely from this window."

FOR a time Baker and his wife walked along the grass paths of Browne's old-fashioned garden. The bright petunias and hollyhocks, after the bare pavements of New York, seemed like gifts from the gods. And the warm sunshine and the unaccustomed fresh air set the Professor's narrow shoulders back and his thin chest out. Gay laughter came to them from behind the hollyhock hedge and they wandered in that direction.

The great marble swimming pool lay green as a shimmering emerald on the lawn. Orange and white umbrellas and chairs bordered it, and in its waters bright-colored swimming suits flashed in the sun. Browne, lean and well-built, climbed dripping from the water to meet them.

"I can give you a suit, Professor, if you'd like to take a dip."

Professor Baker smiled.

"I'm afraid Mary and I are a trifle old for 'dipping.' If you don't mind we'll just sit here and watch."

"The beautiful mermaid in yellow," said Browne, "is Perce Aylesworth's wife. That skinny specimen with the bald head is Perce."

(*Please turn to page 56*)

He rated their skin 10 years younger than their age

Dermatologist's Examination proves Society Beauties' Skin flawless as they were ten years ago

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"Mrs. Cleveland has a fine, delicate skin. No defects are patent. Her skin looks ten years younger than her age."—*Dermatologist's Report.* Mrs. Cleveland says: "I wouldn't be without Pond's Cold Cream for a day."

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SKIN YOUTH, dermatologists say, depends upon the activity of the skin's circulation . . . its tone or elasticity . . . the virility of its oil glands.

From 16 to 20, they report, the skin is at the height of its loveliness. Then it is thin—smooth—transparent—line-free—radiantly fresh. Blemishes are unknown.

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You'll be amazed to see how evenly powder and make-up go on. Delighted to find it still fresh after hours and hours.

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Laughter lines — Little blemishes

FIGHTS OFF THESE AGE SIGNS *after 30*

Crepy skin — Worry lines — Sallowness

Sagging tissues — Discolorations

Blood on the Water

(*Continued from page 54*)

Aylesworth's thin arm splashed water so that Browne laughed and dodged.

A girl in a white suit, with a white bathing cap framing a lovely face, came toward them along the edge of the pool. She was slim as a willow bending in a wind, and the Professor, recognizing her features from her picture, could not blame Browne for being deeply in love with her.

"Miss Whitney, Professor and Mrs. Baker," Browne said, taking her hand.

"How do you do?" she nodded, green eyes smiling from under the thick rubber cap that hid her auburn hair.

A ringing laugh from the diving tower turned her. Valerie Duncan was there, tall in a rubber bathing suit against the sky. With the grace of a gull she launched herself into the air and cut the water with scarcely a splash. Young Williams, his tanned face dark against the marble edge of the pool, watched her with sullen, moody eyes.

"A grand dive," Miss Whitney said. "I wish I could do as well."

The Professor leaned lazily back in his chair. For a time he watched the younger people in the pool. He envied Bob Browne his strong young body. He admired the boy's father's trimness at forty-five. For the first time in many years the Professor regretted his own advancing years. The Aylesworths had climbed out the far side of the pool and were lazying in deck chairs. But the five others were all swimming with swift, sure strokes that churned the green water to a foam—something he and Mary could never hope to do again.

Suddenly Professor Baker came forward in his chair. Something was wrong in the pool. A figure floated without motion on the surface. The arms hung slightly under the water. The head hung down so that the whole face was under. But what nearly stopped the Professor's heart from beating was the thin trail of red that followed the body on the top of the pool.

In a second he was on his feet.

"Bob!" he called. "Browne! There's something wrong!"

Faces looked up bewilderedly in the water in the sunshine. He caught the eyes of the two Brownes, the green ones of Alice Whitney, and the dark gaze of Roger Williams. Then Mary's terrified scream came from behind him.

"There's blood on the water! There's blood on the water!"

Three quick strokes took Bob Browne to Valerie Duncan's side, for it was she. Williams was but a stroke behind him. They turned her in the water and the Professor saw the red stain on the side of her rubber bathing suit.

"Get her to the rail!" Browne called, and swung himself up on the marble edge beside Baker.

The younger men swam with the motionless body between them. The Professor and Browne lifted it from the water. One glance showed that life had gone from that vibrant young body.

"She's dead," Browne said solemnly.

William's low gasp was muffled by the water that surged in his opened mouth. Alice Whitney, her hands clenched, pulled herself from the pool. Bob Browne and Williams followed as the Aylesworths came hurrying around from the other side. Six people in wet bathing suits stood shivering in the warm sunshine.

The Professor heard Mary's low moans from behind, but he paid no attention. He was bending incredulously over the body at the edge of the pool. When he looked up his thin face was pale as marble.

"She's been *stabbed!*" he said in a low voice. . . .

THE library, in which Professor Baker had had his quiet talk with Browne two hours previously, was filled with people. The Aylesworths, a little white and greatly sobered, sat beside the fireplace. Bob Browne stood with one elbow resting uneasily on its mantel. Alice Whitney sat in a low chair, one small foot tapping the floor. Browne stood behind her, his hands on the back of the chair, looking down. Roger Williams, dark and somber, paced slowly back and forth on the thick rug. Mary sat close to the Professor on the lounge and he could feel her body trembling against him.

But grimmest of all was the Hudson Valley coroner sitting behind Browne's desk, and Lieutenant Gargan, of the State Police, who loomed huge and gray beside him. Gargan was a young man, keen, alert, with a lean, intelligent face. It was Gargan who was talking.

"Now as I get this, Valerie Duncan was killed while swimming in your pool, Mr. Browne. According to the coroner she was stabbed, the blade of a knife being driven upward from below. You eight people were all present at the time. Did any of you see this thing happen?"

There was a moment of silence, then Perce Aylesworth spoke, timidly but defiantly.

"My wife and I were not in the water," he said in self defense. "There were only four people in the pool with Valerie Duncan at the time this occurred."

"Who were they?"

Aylesworth looked slant-eyed at Browne before he answered.

"Mr. Browne and his son, Alice Whitney, and Mr. Williams."

"Then it must have been one of those four who—!"

"Just a minute, Lieutenant!" Browne spoke sharply, his voice hard. "If you're intimating that—"

"I'm *stating!*" Gargan shot back. "There's no two ways about this, Mr. Browne. The girl was stabbed through the heart. It could only have been done by one of the people in the pool with her!"

The coroner, a meek little man with long sideburns, looked up timidly.

"Let's not have any words about this, gentlemen," he said.

"No words," said Gargan. "Facts. She was stabbed—somebody must have stabbed her. I'll ask you all again: did any of you see this thing happen? No? Well, does anyone know why it *should* have happened?"

Before the Professor could stop her Mary had spoken.

"I heard Mr. Williams threaten her!" she blurted out, and then bit her tongue as she became the focus of every eye in the room.

"Who is Mr. Williams?" Gargan asked.

Mary, her plump cheeks flushed, went on regretfully.

"He's the young man there by the window. The newspapers said he tried to commit suicide over the Duncan woman last week. And today I heard him threaten her. He said if *he* couldn't have her . . . *no one else should!*"

"How about this, Williams?" Gargan asked.

Williams looked up defiantly.

"It's true," he said. "Or rather, half true. That suicide business was a fake. I never intended to kill myself. I merely wanted to frighten Valerie into marrying me. But the newspapers got hold of it and played it up."

"And this threat?"

"Oh, I made it right enough. But I was still trying to frighten her. I've been mad about her for months, but she wouldn't have me—not rich enough, I guess. I thought—"

"If *you* couldn't have her—no one else should! So you killed her!"

Williams put out a hand that trembled slightly.

"No," he said, "I didn't. I admit I thought of it—but I didn't do it."

Gargan hooked his thumbs in his uniform belt. "We'll see about that!" he said sharply. "We'll—"

He was about to say more when the coroner spoke.

The mark on the deceased woman's neck puzzles me," the official said in a small voice.

Evidently the coroner, a naturally timid little man, wanted to make as little trouble as possible over the case. He realized he was in an influential citizen's home, and evidently was worried as to what Browne might do to him in the next county election.

"What about the mark?" Gargan demanded.

"It's a thin, red mark—as if a cord had been pulled tightly about her throat."

"Did it have anything to do with her death?"

"No. There are no signs of strangulation. She was stabbed."

"Then what difference does the mark make?"

PROFESSOR BAKER, sitting very quietly on the lounge, said nothing. But he thought the mark might make a great difference in who killed Valerie Duncan. He was thinking of that steel overnight bag with the strong lock, and of how unlikely it was the woman would have let the key out of her possession even for a moment. Had she worn it on a thin chain around her neck, it was quite possible a mark of the kind found could be made if the key was torn away from her in the water.

He looked across the room at Browne. The trustee caught his eyes and lowered his own. Quite possibly, Baker reasoned, Browne was also thinking of that key. For upstairs in that steel bag rested all that kept him from Alice Whitney—and happiness.

Professor Baker leaned forward on the lounge. Obviously this Lieutenant of State Police, for all his apparent keenness, was just as slow and short-sighted as his brothers in the city. For there was one question of the utmost importance that from the first had arisen in the Professor's mind, and must, he thought, have been apparent to everyone.

"The question of the knife that killed Miss Duncan, Lieutenant," he said meekly, "is easily settled, I think. Two

(*Please turn to page 58*)

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Blood on the Water

(*Continued from page 56*)

hours ago, on that desk, there was a sharp-bladed steel paper knife. It is not there now."

Gargan looked first at the Professor, then at the desk, and finally at Browne.

"Was there such a knife, Mr. Browne?" he asked.

Browne nodded slowly.

"Could this knife have been the instrument used to kill Valerie Duncan?"

"It could—yes. It was very strong and sharp."

"Do you know where it is now?"

"No."

"Did anyone have access to it besides yourself?"

"Certainly. It lay there on the desk. Anyone in the house could have taken it."

Professor Baker interrupted, half apologetically.

"I'm afraid, Lieutenant, you didn't get my point about the knife," he said mildly.

Gargan turned on him, a frown between his sharp eyes.

"Well—what is the point?"

"Simply that Valerie Duncan was killed while swimming Lieutenant. And obviously by someone, who was also swimming."

"I know that."

"By a stab wound. But, Lieutenant, have you asked yourself—*how could anyone in a bathing suit conceal a knife?*"

THERE was a moment of silence and the Professor wondered at it. To him this had been the main question from the first, and he couldn't see how anyone could overlook a point so obvious.

"You see, Lieutenant, bathing suits today—both men and women's—aren't designed to conceal anything. In fact, they—er—rather reveal everything! And a knife large enough to kill a person simply couldn't have been carried by anyone dressed in a bathing suit."

Lieutenant Gargan scratched a curly black head as his eyes expressed admiration.

"I see!" he exclaimed. "You think the knife must have been hidden in the pool ahead of time!"

Baker spread his hands on his knees.

"No, no, Lieutenant. If the paper knife was used, that would have been impossible. It was on this desk two hours ago. If that was the knife, it must have been carried to the pool by the person who used it."

"But they *couldn't* have carried it—not one of the swimmers! Someone would have seen it."

"Exactly. And if they had carried it *out* of the pool, dressed in a bathing suit, I should certainly have seen it. Lieutenant, I saw no one bring a knife *out* of the pool—yet Miss Duncan was certainly killed *in* the pool."

"Then it must still be there!"

"Reason would say so," Baker said quietly.

Lieutenant Gargan, who had been all talk, now swung onto more familiar ground—action.

"If it's there," he said, "I'll find it! I'll drain the pool! It must be somewhere on the bottom. Mr. Browne, I want to draw the water out of that pool."

Browne answered a bit reluctantly.

"My gardener will help you," he said.

"And in the meantime, no one is to leave these grounds. I have my men at the gates, and they have strict instructions. Is this understood?"

Heads bowed silently around the circle, and Lieutenant George Gargan, bristling with importance, strode from the room. . . .

THREE hours later Professor Baker walked slowly on Browne's cool lawn and into the Hudson Valley moonlight. Mary was upstairs in her room—not sleeping, probably, but in bed. When he had left her she had been whispering to herself: "I never thought when we walked across that station platform we'd walk into *this!*"

He had had a time getting her to her room, had a harder time getting her to bed.

"I won't stay in this house, George!" she had wailed. "It's evil—bad!"

He had pointed out that the police would not permit her—or anyone—to leave, and had finally prevailed on her to retire. But he had had to help her get undressed, even to the point of withdrawing the long, gray hairpins from her thinning hair.

But finally he had been able to leave, and now he walked on the quiet lawn, thinking deeply. He was thinking of Browne, with his lean, grim face, and of what the man had told him that afternoon. And he remembered that Bob Browne had been there and heard it all—Bob Browne who had said: "Don't you worry, Dad. I'll help you in this thing!"

For the first time Professor Baker began to feel a bit guilty. He remembered that he had pointed out the fact that Browne's letters were undoubtedly in Valerie Duncan's overnight bag. It was he who had mildly suggested "strong-armed methods." He felt no sorrow over Valerie Duncan's death. The woman had nothing to give to the world, and had taken much from it. But he had never thought for one moment that either of the Brownes would resort to that steel-edged paper knife!

Voices came to him from the left, and Baker walked in that direction. Flashlights played in the dark, and he saw Gargan's tall figure silhouetted at the edge of the pool.

"Well, Lieutenant, what luck?" he asked.

Gargan turned a puzzled face in the light-cut night.

"The pool's drained," he said, motioning with an arm.

"I see it is. And the knife?"

"Wasn't there."

Professor Baker let his spectacles drop on his nose as his forehead wrinkled into an involuntary frown.

"Wasn't there? But it *must* be there!"

"My men have searched the bottom," Gargan said shortly. "I've searched it myself. The drain is too small to let any knife out, and it's nowhere in the shrubbery if anyone tossed it away. Whoever used that knife took it away with him in the same way he brought it!"

"But he couldn't!" Baker said bewilderedly. "I was there, Lieutenant. No one came out of that pool with a knife. And you can't hide a knife in a bathing suit!"

"Someone did," Gargan growled. "And anybody *that* smart—we'll never get!"

"If it was some kind of a folding knife," Baker mused, "it might have been done. But that knife wasn't. I had it in my own hands. It was solid, thin, and at least four or five inches long!"

Professor Baker walked slowly away. He shivered slightly in the cold night air. For the first time he had encountered something on which his reason failed him. A woman of bad character had been killed by a knife in a swimming pool before eight pairs of eyes. This was possible: there were five people swimming at the time, and anyone who swam underwater could have done the thing with one swift stroke. But how could the person who did it carry a sharp, steel knife into—and out of!—the pool while dressed in a bathing suit.

He paused on the lawn and wiped his forehead with Mary's birthday handkerchief. The house loomed ahead of him, dark under its covering ivy. He saw the open window of Mary's room and wondered vaguely if she slept yet. Suddenly a dim light appeared in the next window. It flickered a moment, moved away, then came back again.

PROFESSOR BAKER felt a cold little pull at his heart. That afternoon Mary had heard Valerie Duncan and Roger Williams talking in the next room. That room—the room where the light flickered—must have been Duncan's!

Someone was there now—silent, with a candle in the night—to open the steel bag that contained Browne's letters! And that person, whoever it was, had undoubtedly pulled the key to the bag from Valerie Duncan's neck while she lay in the water of the pool!

There was very little fear in the Professor. If he had been asked he could have recalled no more than once in his life when he had felt fear. But he felt a touch of it now as he stood on the damp grass in the dark knowing what that light meant. For one tiny moment he debated calling Lieutenant Gargan with his gray uniform and his comforting automatic. Then, with resolute steps, Professor Baker started toward the house alone. He felt a certain responsibility for the whole affair because of the thoughtless advice he had given that afternoon in the library. If he wanted the police later, perhaps he could still call them. But he shivered slightly at the thought of that "perhaps!"

He let himself silently into the house, and as soundlessly mounted the thickly carpeted stairs to the upper hall. A clock ticked on the landing; it seemed deafening in the stillness.

The upper hall stretched long and deserted. Carefully the Professor counted white doors. One—two—the third one was his and Mary's—and the one beyond—!

He stopped before it, breathing heavily. For once he wished he had been endowed with brawn rather than brain. A knowledge of the Italian Renaissance and "the grandeur that was Greece" seemed rather useless now! Holding his breath, Baker stretched out a hand toward the glass doorknob.

It turned *before* his hand reached it!

Fascinated, he watched it move. Silently he saw the door swing open—knowing that a murderer was just inside!

Suddenly he saw a candle held in a lean hand—and looked into the startled, boyish eyes of Bob Browne!

"Professor!"

Baker licked thin lips.

(*Please turn to page 60*)

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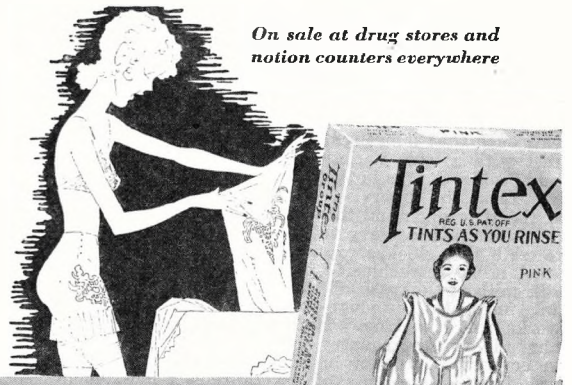

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Blood on the Water

(*Continued from page 58*)

"It's only me, Bob," he managed.

"I didn't expect to find you here."

"And I didn't expect to find *you*, Bob!"

The boy shifted the candle to his left hand.

"I imagine you know why I came?" he asked.

"Yes. To get your father's letters."

"That's right. But Professor—they were gone!"

"Gone!"

Baker felt a strange exultation.

"Yes. The steel case was open—and except for a few clothes, *empty!*"

"You didn't have the key, Bob?"

"No. I just hoped to get it open somehow, or carry the whole thing off—to help Dad. I love him, Professor. He's the best friend a fellow ever had."

Professor Baker licked lips that were very dry.

"I see," he said.

"Some one got there ahead of me—someone who *had* the key."

"Yes."

"And I'm glad they're gone—glad! She was a bad woman, Professor—a bad woman. She'd caused sorrow all her life. Mr. Williams wasn't the first one who thought of suicide over her. There were others who *did* it!"

Professor Baker remembered the dignity of his years. This boy was young, still in college, innocent, really, of the world and its affairs.

"You'd better blow out that candle, Bob," he said gently, "and go to bed. Everything will be all right. Don't you worry about anything except that Fine Arts course you flunked! Good night."

He watched Bob Browne down the hall, then reached out a hand to close the door of Valerie Duncan's room. As he did so he saw something on the floor just inside the threshold. Stooping, the Professor picked it up. It was a hairpin!

Quietly Professor Baker closed the door. He went to the next one—his own room—and opened it. Mary was breathing softly on the bed, very quiet, very still. He looked at her a moment, then tip-toed to the window. Stars were hanging low over the Hudson, blue in a black, velvety sky.

FOR a time he listened to Mary's breathing, this plump, contented woman who loved him. He wondered what Mary would do for him if pressed—if she thought she might lose him and his love. Would she—kill?

In the moonlight Baker looked at the hairpin he had picked up from the floor of the next room. It was exactly like the ones he had taken that night from Mary's hair, only instead of gray a deep, brown, auburn color—a color to match a wealth of hair that a photographer had rimmed with light—hair that had passed beneath the library window when Browne had said, "Until I get those letters I can't possibly marry Alice Whitney."

Baker looked down across the garden at the swimming pool. Lights still flashed there, and he faintly heard Gargan's voice in the night. Gargan, with his unimaginative mind, would never be able to figure out how anyone in a bathing suit had carried a knife in and out of that pool. Only Baker would know that hair that held these long hairpins like Mary's—and Alice Whitney's—could also *hold a slim four-inch knife under a thick rubber bathing cap.*

Gargan wouldn't have noticed how dark Alice Whitney's auburn hair had become later in the library. Only Baker would have noticed and known the reason that hair was darker was *because it was wet.* And only Baker would know that it had become wet when a quick hand had reached under a green cap for a knife—and replaced it a second later while still swimming underwater.

What was just?—what unjust? Did the rule "a life for a life" hold, if one of those lives was bad and the other good? The Professor decided that here was a problem of which he could not be judge. If man-made justice in the guise of the police could solve it—well and good. If not, God Himself would later be the judge and there would be that absolute justice of which man can only dream.

Calmly, and quite at peace with himself and the world, Professor Baker put an auburn hairpin into his vest pocket, smiled gently at his slumbering wife—and prepared for bed.

What Your Favorite Authors are Like

(*Continued from page 19*)

the company was just starting in. It had as yet no factories, and young Ripperger, who was ostensibly engaged because of his engineering knowledge as draftsman to help with the plans from which the factories were to be built, discovered that this was only a part of his duties. He had in addition to take charge of such records as there were, keep the books, and run errands. When there was no one else in the office, which was frequently, he was in full charge. All for the munificent sum of six dollars a week! But eventually the construction was completed; the factories were up; and the wheels began to turn.

THE nature of the business and Ripperger's position with the company was such that it brought him into contact with a wide variety of industries and people. It was in the course of time his task to supervise the purchase of the thousands and thousands of tons of tin scrap necessary to his company, to sell the steel scrap back to the steel mills, tetrachloride of tin to the silk mills, to dispose of the chlorine—an incidental product—to the dye works for bleaching. His work took him all over the country, brought him in contact with men in all walks of life, from presidents of corporations down to the lowliest workmen; it showed him the insides of the great steel plants, the process of making silk, and the workings of various other industries. He claims he is never at a loss for a good character for one of his stories. He can always draw on the past and is sure to find from real life one who suits the part he requires. Some of his most interesting characters he met on the New York waterfronts.

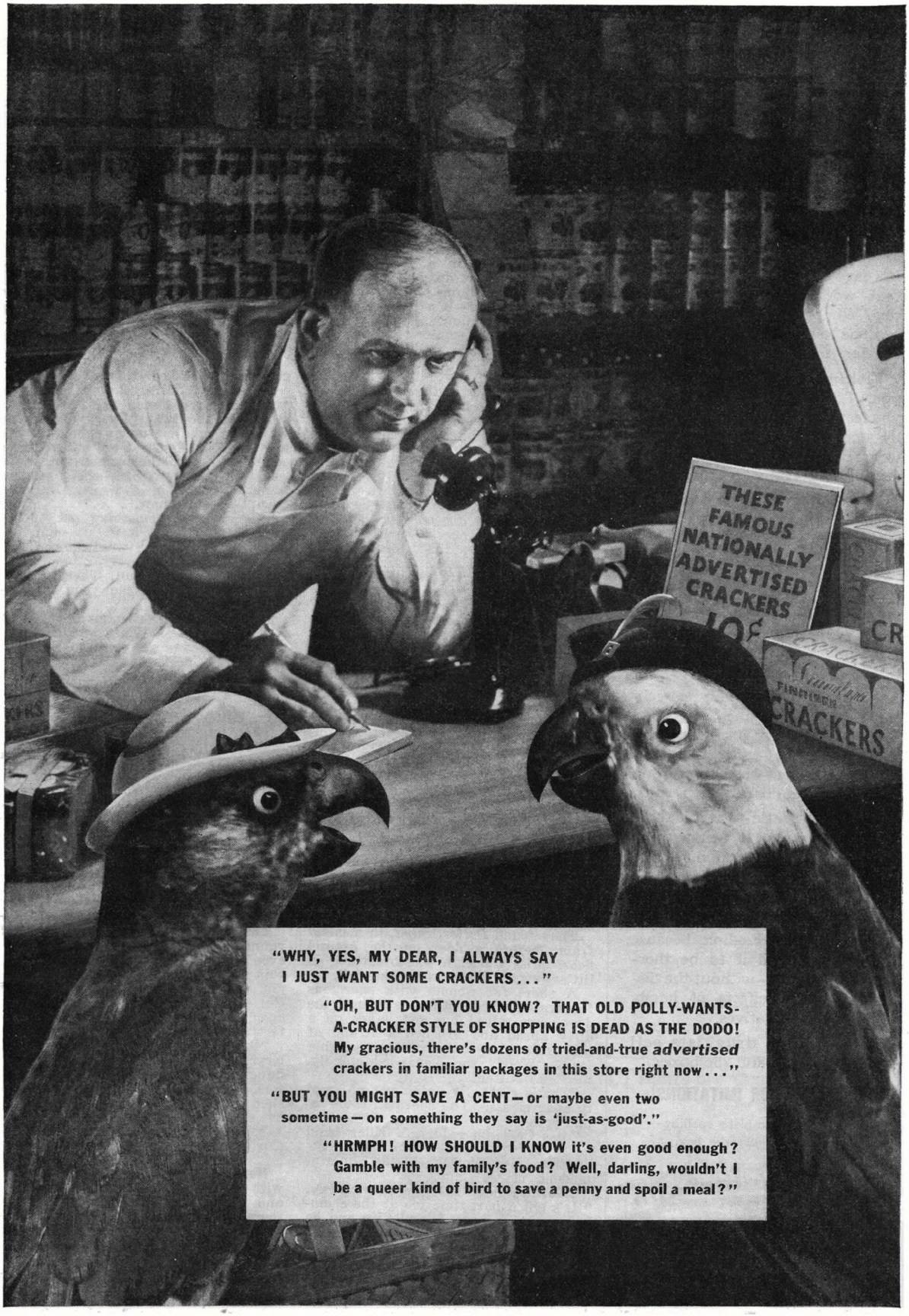
During the War, Ripperger divided his time between New York and Washington. One of the products of his company was essential to the War Department. He came into contact with a new atmosphere, an atmosphere of feverish excitement, an atmosphere that was tense and strained. Failure to keep up production, delays in shipments, might mean a difference between life and death to hundreds and thousands. Conferences were frequent and hectic. It was then that he got to know the really big men in the American business world, the type which he often introduces into his stories based on business.

In the years after the War, he went into business for himself, and there he learned to know every inch of the old factory and warehouse district in lower New York between Broadway and the East River. It is a region given over to import and export houses, such as coffee and sugar, and all sorts of small independent businesses. It is a picturesque part of New York, including Front Street, Water Street, Pearl Street from the foot of Manhattan to Coenties Slip. It is a section that means little to most men whose business lies around Wall Street, and there are thousands of them to whom it might as well be a foreign city. But Ripperger got to know it intimately, its little alleys; its strange smells; its crumbling warehouses; and he uses it frequently as a setting for his stories.

With the depression there came less business and more time. Sufficient time in fact for Ripperger to do something he had been wanting to do right along—to write a mystery story. "The Severed Hand" was the result of this desire.

RIPPERGER still keeps his hand in business, but devotes as much time as possible to writing, which he finds far more interesting than making money by buying and selling. His hobbies are his library and his chess. There is a theory that the same type of mind that likes chess likes detective stories, and it is certainly true in his case. Often a single game lasts a couple of hours, hours as exhausting, he says, as a day's hard work. His library is extensive. The shelves of one bookcase alone are filled with volumes on black magic, witchcraft, Tong wars, Chinese ghouls and goblins, prison procedure, and the like. He has a decided preference for unusual plots, bizarre events, Oriental circumstances, and macabre touches. His favorite authors are Edgar Wallace, E. Phillips Oppenheim, and Sax Rohmer. He is a tireless reader, and has acquired a vast knowledge of all sorts of queer and unusual facts, some of which are deftly woven into his stories.

He knows good food, and is an excellent judge of wine and liquors. He enjoys, more than anything else, good conversation over a good dinner, and is a familiar figure at two or three particular places in lower New York. He has two children. His wife, Henrietta Ripperger, is a feature writer whose name is familiar to the readers of many leading magazines. Ripperger thinks that constructing a detective story is the most exciting and absorbing game in the world.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THE CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE

The Black Cats Vanished

(*Continued from page* 42)

she cried, excitement in her voice.

"Quite."

"I'd love to! What am I to do?"

"Suppose you take me up to the Tarkle apartment and introduce me as a customer. Let's say that the cat you sold Miss Tarkle the other day had really been promised to me, that as a stubborn fancier of felines I won't take any other, and that you'll have to have hers back and give her another. Anything to permit me to see and talk to her. It's mid-afternoon, so Sarah-Ann is probably in a movie theater somewhere. What do you say?"

Miss Curleigh flung him a ravishing smile. "I say it's—it's too magnificent for words. One minute while I powder my nose and get someone to tend the shop, Mr. Queen. I wouldn't miss this for anything!"

* * *

TEN minutes later they stood before the front door to Apartment 5-C of the Amsterdam Arms, a rather faded building, gazing in silence at two full quart-bottles of milk on the corridor floor. Miss Curleigh looked troubled, and Mr. Queen stooped. When he straightened he looked troubled, too.

"Yesterday's and today's," he muttered, and he put his hand on the doorknob and turned. The door was locked. "I thought you said her sister leaves the door unlocked when she goes out?"

"Perhaps she's in," said Miss Curleigh uncertainly. "Or, if she's out, that she's forgotten to take the latch off."

Ellery pressed the bell-button. There was no reply. He rang again. Then he called loudly: "Miss Tarkle, are you there?"

"I can't understand it," said Miss Curleigh with a nervous laugh. "She really should hear you. It's only a three-room apartment, and both the bedroom and the living-room are directly off the sides of a little foyer on the other side of the door. The kitchen's straight ahead."

Ellery called again, shouting. After a while he put his ear to the door. The rather dilapidated hall, the ill-painted door. . . .

Miss Curleigh's extraordinary eyes were frightened silver lamps. She said in the queerest voice: "Oh, Mr. Queen. Something dreadful's happened."

"Let's hunt up the superintendent," said Ellery quietly.

They found *Potter, Sup't,* in a metal frame before a door on the ground floor. Miss Curleigh was breathing in little gusts. Ellery rang the bell.

A short fat woman with enormous forearms flecked with suds opened the door. She wiped her red hands on a dirty apron and brushed a strand of bedraggled gray hair from her sagging face. "Well?" she demanded stolidly.

"Mrs. Potter?"

"That's right. We ain't got no empty apartments. The doorman could 'a' told you—"

Miss Curleigh reddened. Ellery said hastily: "Oh, we're not apartment-hunting, Mrs. Potter. Is the superintendent in?"

"No, he's not," she said suspiciously. "He's got a part-time job at the chemical works in Long Island City and he never gets home till ha'-past three. What you want?"

"I'm sure you'll do nicely, Mrs. Potter. This young lady and I can't seem to get an answer from Apartment 5-C. We're calling on Miss Tarkle, you see."

The fat woman scowled. "Ain't the door open? Generally is this time o' day. The spry one's out, but the paralyzed one—"

"It's locked, Mrs. Potter, and there's no answer to the bell or to our cries."

"Now ain't that funny," shrilled the fat woman, staring at Miss Curleigh. "I can't see—Miss Euphemia's a cripple; she never goes out. Maybe the poor thing's threw a fit!"

"I trust not. When did you see Miss Sarah-Ann last?"

"The spry one? Let's see, now. Why, two days ago. And, come to think of it, I ain't seen the cripple for two days, neither."

"Heavens," whispered Miss Curleigh, thinking of the two milk-bottles. "Two days!"

"Oh, you do see Miss Euphemia occasionally?" asked Ellery grimly.

"Yes, sir." Mrs. Potter began to wring her red hands as if she were still over the tub. "Every once in a while she calls me up by 'phone in the afternoon if her sister's out to take somethin' out to the incinerator, or do somethin' for her. She—she gives me somethin' once in a while. But it's been two days now. . . ."

Ellery pulled something out of his pocket and cupped it in his palm before the fat woman's tired eyes. "Mrs. Potter," he said sternly, "I want to get into that apartment. There's something wrong. Give me your master-key."

"P-p-police!" she stammered, staring at the shield. Then suddenly she fluttered off and returned to thrust a key into Ellery's hand. "Oh, I wish Mr. Potter was home!" she wailed. "You won't—"

"Not a word about this to anyone, Mrs. Potter."

They left the woman gaping loose-tongued and frightened after them, and took the self-service elevator back to the fifth floor. Miss Curleigh was white to the lips; she looked a little sick.

"Perhaps," said Ellery kindly, inserting the key into the lock, "you had better not come in with me, Miss Curleigh. It might be unpleasant. I—" He stopped abruptly, his figure crouching.

Somebody was on the other side of the door.

There was the unmistakable sound of running feet, accompanied by an uneven scraping, as if something were being dragged. Ellery twisted the key and turned the knob in a flash, Miss Curleigh panting at his shoulder. The door moved a half-inch and stuck. The feet retreated.

"Barricaded the door," growled Ellery. "Stand back, Miss Curleigh." He flung himself sidewise at the door. There was a splintering crash and the door shot inward, a broken chair toppling over backward. "Too late—"

"The fire-escape!" screamed Miss Curleigh. "In the bedroom. To the left!"

He darted into a large narrow room with twin beds and an air of disorder and made for an open window. But there was no one to be seen on the fire-escape. He looked up: an iron ladder curved and vanished a few feet overhead.

"Whoever it is got away by this room, I'm afraid," he muttered, pulling his head back and lighting a cigarette.

The Black Cats Vanished

"Smoke? Now, then, let's have a look about. No bloodshed, apparently. This may be a pig-in-the-poke after all. See anything interesting?"

Miss Curleigh pointed a shaking finger. "That's her—her bed. The messy one. But where is she?"

The other bed was neatly made up, its lace spread undisturbed. But Miss Euphemia Tarkle's was in a state of turmoil. The sheets had been ripped away and its mattress slashed open; some of the ticking was on the floor. The pillows had been torn to pieces. A depression in the center of the mattress indicated where the missing invalid had lain.

Ellery stood still, studying the bed. Then he made the rounds of the closets, opening doors, poking about, and closing them again. Followed closely by Miss Curleigh, who had developed an alarming habit of looking over her right shoulder, he glanced briefly into the living-room, the kitchen, and the bathroom. But there was no one in the apartment. And, except for Miss Tarkle's bed, nothing apparently had been disturbed. The place was ghastly, somehow. It was as if violence had visited it in the midst of a cloistered silence; a tray full of dishes, cutlery, and half-finished food lay on the floor, almost under the bed.

Miss Curleigh shivered and edged closer to Ellery. "It's so—so deserted here," she said, moistening her lips. "Where's Miss Euphemia? And her sister? And who was that—that creature who barred the door?"

"What's more to the point," murmured Ellery, gazing at the tray of food, "where are the seven black cats?"

"Sev—"

"Sarah-Ann's lone beauty, and Euphemia's six. Where are they?"

"Perhaps," said Miss Curleigh hopefully, "they jumped out the window when that man—"

"Perhaps. And don't say 'man.' We just don't know." He looked irritably about. "If they did, it was a moment ago, because the catch on the window has been forced indicating that the window has been closed and consequently that the cats might have—" He stopped short. "Who's there?" he called sharply, whirling.

"It's me," said a timid voice, and Mrs. Potter appeared hesitantly in the foyer. Her tired eyes were luminous with fear and curiosity. "Where's—"

"Gone." He stared at the slovenly woman. "Nothing to worry about. You're sure you didn't see Miss Euphemia or her sister today?"

"Nor yesterday. I—"

"There was no ambulance in this neighborhood within the past two days?"

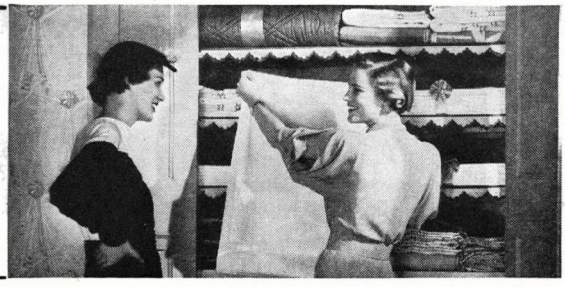
Mrs. Potter went chalky. "Oh, no, sir! I can't understand how she got out. She couldn't walk a step. If she'd been carried, someone would have noticed. The doorman, sure. I just asked him. But nobody did. I know everythin' goes on—"

"Is it possible your husband may have seen one or both of them within the past two days?"

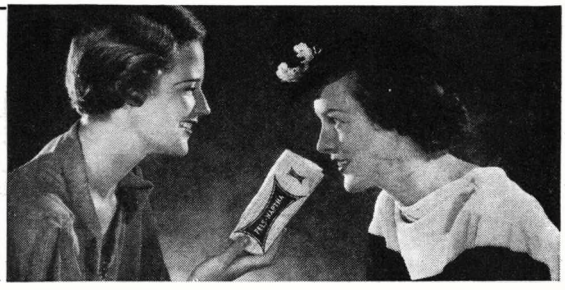
"Not Potter. He saw 'em night before last. Harry's been makin' a little side-money, sort of, see, Sir. Miss Euphemia wanted the landlord to do some decoratin' and paperin', and a little carpentry, and they wouldn't do it. So,

(*Please turn to page* 64)

Ann Prescott: "Tickled?...you bet! My clothes aren't gray any more—they're *white,* Betty. They're gorgeous! And I found out what was wrong . . . That *'trick'* soap I used to wash with wasn't getting all the dirt out of my clothes. Then..."



Ann Prescott: "I bought a few bars of Fels-Naptha Soap—and I never saw the beat of it for hurrying out dirt. Here, smell the reason yourself—there's *lots of naptha* in that golden bar!"



M-M-M!...Linens so white they fairly gleam! Clothes that are fresh as a breeze! Washes that make you pop with pride!

Here's the *easier* way to get them—*change to Fels-Naptha Soap!* You'll like the way it loosens grimiest dirt. You'll like the way it makes *suds that stay sudsy—nice and creamy and rich.* You'll like the way it hustles along the wash.

What is Fels-Naptha's secret? . . . It is two lively cleaners instead of one. *Golden* soap that's richer—and *plenty* of dirt-loosening naptha in every bar.

Fels-Naptha Soap is so gentle, you can use it for daintiest things—lingerie, silk stockings, woolens. It's kind to hands, for there's soothing glycerine in every bar. It's a willing worker in tub or machine—in hot, lukewarm or cool water—whether you soak or boil clothes.

And more happy news—Fels-Naptha now sells at the lowest price in almost twenty years! Get a few bars today! . . . Fels & Co., Philadelphia, Pa.

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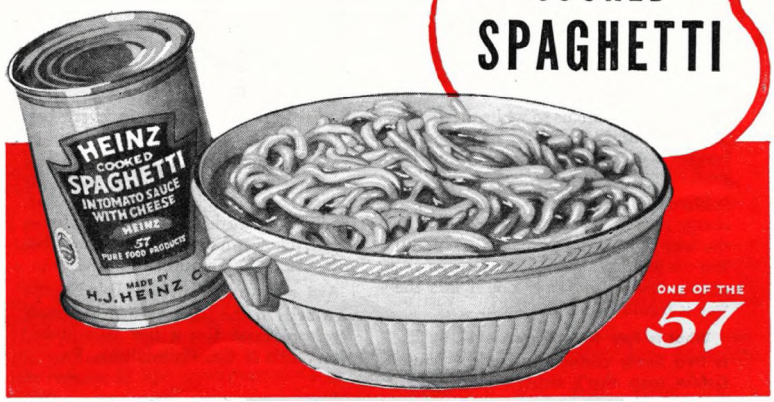
"MAN···I LOVE THIS ITALIAN SPAGHETTI"

EVERY man relishes Heinz Cooked Spaghetti because it's the genuine Italian kind—cooked and blended after the recipe of a famous Italian chef. The spaghetti is meltingly tender and wholesome—made by Heinz from choicest Durum wheat—dried in washed air. And what a savory, flavory sauce is cooked *through* every delicate strand! You taste the tang of snappy imported cheese—and the rich, juicy goodness of red-ripe Heinz tomatoes, zestfully spiced! Keep a liberal supply of Heinz Cooked Spaghetti on your emergency shelf. Use it frequently for delicious, energy-making home meals.

HEINZ COOKED SPAGHETTI



The Black Cats Vanished

(*Continued from page 63*)

more'n a month ago, she asked Harry if he wouldn't do it on the sly, and she said she'd pay him, although less than if a reg'lar decorator did it. So he's been doin' it spare time, mostly late afternoons and nights—he's handy, Potter is. He's most done with the job. It's pretty paper, ain't it? So he saw Miss Euphemia night before last." A calamitous thought struck her, apparently, for her eyes rolled and she uttered a faint shriek. "I just thought . . . If—if anythin's happened to the cripple, we won't get paid! All that work . . . And the landlord—"

"Yes, yes," said Ellery impatiently. "Mrs. Potter, are there mice or rats in this house?"

Both women looked blank. "Why, not a one of 'em," began Mrs. Potter slowly. "The exterminator comes—" when they all spun about at a sound from the foyer. Someone was opening the door.

"Come in," snapped Ellery, and strode forward; only to halt in his tracks as an anxious face poked timidly into the bedroom.

"Excuse me," said the newcomer nervously, starting at sight of Ellery and the two women. "I guess I must be in the wrong apartment. Does Miss Euphemia Tarkle live here?" He was a tall, needle-thin young man with a scared, horsy face and stiff tan hair. He wore a rather rusty suit of old-fashioned cut and carried a small handbag.

"Yes indeed," said Ellery with a friendly smile. "Come in, come in. May I ask who you are?"

The young man blinked. "But where's Aunt Euphemia? I'm Elias Morton, Junior. Isn't she here?" His reddish little eyes blinked from Ellery to Miss Curleigh in a puzzled, worried way.

"Did you say 'Aunt' Euphemia, Mr. Morton?"

"I'm her nephew. I come from out of town—Albany. Where—"

Ellery murmured. "An unexpected visit, Mr. Morton?"

The young man blinked again; he was still holding his bag. Then he dumped it on the floor and eagerly fumbled in his pockets until he produced a much-soiled and wrinkled letter. "I—I got this only a few days ago," he faltered. "I'd have come sooner, only my father went off somewhere on a—I don't understand this."

Ellery snatched the letter from his lax fingers. It was scrawled painfully on a piece of ordinary brown wrapping paper; the envelope was a cheap one. The penciled scribble, in the crabbed hand of age, said:

> "Dear Elias:—You have not heard from your Auntie for so many years, but now I need you, Elias, for you are my only blood kin to whom I can turn in my Dire Distress! I am in great danger, my dear boy. You must help your poor Invalid Aunt who is so helpless. Come at once. Do not tell your Father or anyone, Elias! When you get here make believe you have come just for a visit. Remember. Please, please do not fail me. Help me, please! Your Loving Aunt—Euphemia Tarkle.

"Remarkable missive," frowned Ellery. "Written under stress, Miss Cur-

The Black Cats Vanished

leigh. Genuine enough. Don't tell anyone, eh? Well, Mr. Morton, I'm afraid you're too late."

"Too—but—" The young man's horse-face whitened. "I tried to come right off, b-but my father had gone off somewhere on a—on one of his drunken spells and I couldn't find him. I didn't know what to do. Then I came. T-t-to think—" His buck teeth were chattering.

"This is your aunt's handwriting?"

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes."

"Your father, I gather, is not a brother of the Tarkle sisters?"

"No, sir. My dear mother w-was their sister, God rest her." Morton groped for a chair-back. "Is Aunt Euphemia—d-dead? And where's Aunt Sarah?"

"They're both gone." Ellery related tersely what he had found. The young visitor from Albany looked as if he might faint. "I'm—er—unofficially investigating this business, Mr. Morton. Tell me all you know about your two aunts."

"I don't know m-much," mumbled Morton. "Haven't seen them for about fifteen years, since I was a kid. I heard from my Aunt Sarah-Ann once in a while, and only twice from Aunt Euphemia. They never—I never expected—I do know that Aunt Euphemia since her stroke became . . . funny. Aunt Sarah wrote me that. She had some money—I don't know how much—left her by my grandfather, and Aunt Sarah said she was a real miser about it. Aunt Sarah didn't have anything; she had to live with Aunt Euphemia and take care of her. She wouldn't trust banks, Aunt Sarah said, and had hidden the money somewhere about her, Aunt Sarah didn't know where. She wouldn't even have doctors after her stroke, she was—is so stingy. They didn't get along; they were always fighting, Aunt Sarah wrote me, and Aunt Euphemia was always accusing her of trying to steal her money, and she didn't know how she stood it. That—that's about all I know, sir."

"The poor things," murmured Miss Curleigh with moist eyes. "What a wretched existence! Miss Tarkle can't be responsible for—"

"Tell me, Mr. Morton," drawled Ellery. "It's true that your Aunt Euphemia detested cats?"

The lantern-jaw dropped. "Why, how'd you know? She hates them. Aunt Sarah wrote me that many times. It hurt her a lot, because she's so crazy about them she treats her own like a child, you see, and that makes Aunt Euphemia jealous, or angry, or something. I guess they just didn't—don't get along."

"We seem to be having a pardonable difficulty with our tenses," said Ellery. "After all, Mr. Morton, there's no evidence to show that your aunts aren't merely off somewhere on a vacation, or a visit, perhaps." But the glint in his eyes remained. "Why don't you stop at a hotel somewhere nearby? I'll keep you informed." He scribbled the name and address of a hotel in the Seventies on the page of a notebook, and thrust it into Morton's damp palm. "Don't worry. You'll hear from me." And he hustled the bewildered young man out of the apartment. They heard the click of the elevator-door a moment later.

(*Please turn to page* 66)

"AND I LIKE THE HOME KITCHEN FLAVOR OF HEINZ KETCHUP"

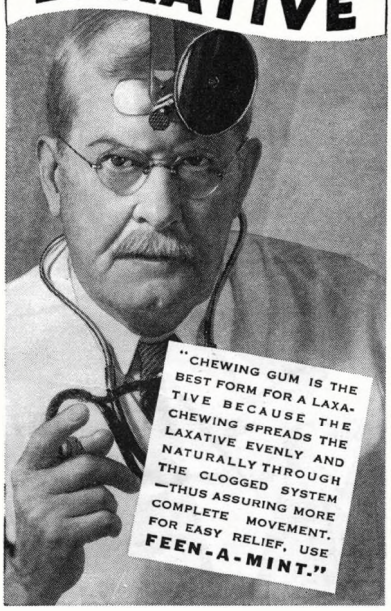
HEINZ TOMATO KETCHUP

WHAT wonders Heinz Tomato Ketchup works with even the simplest foods! How its spicy fragrance reminds you of simmering tomatoes and seasonings in the old home kitchens of long ago! That's because Heinz uses only the finest ingredients in making this rich condiment—the choicest, juiciest ripe tomatoes grown from Heinz seed in favored regions, where they are picked in full freshness, cooked and bottled *hot* from the kettle. Rare, Oriental spices bought by Heinz own representatives in the Far East, first grade cane sugar and mellow Heinz vinegar blend in their own distinctive flavors, too. Use Heinz Ketchup generously in your everyday cooking—for sauces and gravies. You'll soon discover why it outsells all others—regardless of price.

ONE OF THE 57

for effective relief from Constipation

CHEW YOUR LAXATIVE



Headaches — dizzy spells — sleeplessness — these are often caused by constipation. If constipation troubles you relieve it with FEEN-A-MINT.

FEEN-A-MINT is a thoroughly effective laxative in chewing-gum form. It works better because when you chew it the laxative is spread smoothly and evenly right down to where it does its work. That's why over 15 million people already know about and use FEEN-A-MINT. It's pleasant to take, too — a great point, especially in caring for children.

Whenever you suffer from constipation take the doctor's advice — chew FEEN-A-MINT. It's inexpensive, too, 15¢ and 25¢ at your drug store.

The Black Cats Vanished

(*Continued from page* 51)

Ellery said slowly: "The country cousin in full panoply. Miss Curleigh, let me look at your refreshing loveliness. People with faces like that should be legislated against." He patted her cheek with a frown, hesitated, and then made for the bathroom. Miss Curleigh blushed once more and followed him quickly, casting another apprehensive glance over her shoulder.

"What's this?" she heard Ellery say sharply. "Mrs. Potter, come out of that—By George!"

"What's the matter now?" cried Miss Curleigh, dashing into the bathroom behind him.

Mrs. Potter, the flesh of her powerful forearms crawling with gooseplmples, her tired eyes stricken, was glaring with open mouth into the tub. The woman made a few inarticulate sounds, rolled her eyes alarmingly, and then fled from the apartment.

Miss Curleigh said: "Oh, my God," and put her hand to her breast. "Isn't that—isn't that horrible!"

"Horrible," said Ellery grimly and slowly, "and illuminating. I didn't see it when I glanced in here before. I think. . . ." he stopped and bent over the tub. There was no humor in his eyes or voice now; only a sick watchfulness. They were both very quiet. Death lay over them.

A black tomcat, limp and stiff and boneless, lay in a welter and smear of blood in the tub. He was large, glossy black, green-eyed, and indubitably dead. His head was smashed in and his body seemed broken in several places. His blood had clotted in splashes on the porcelain sides of the tub. The weapon, hurled by a callous hand, lay beside him: a blood-splattered bath-brush with a heavy handle.

"That solves the mystery of the disappearance of at least one of the seven," murmured Ellery, straightening. "Battered to death with the brush. He hasn't been dead more than a day or so, either, from the looks of him. Miss Curleigh, we're engaged in a tragic business."

But Miss Curleigh, her first shock of horror swept away by rage, was crying: "Anyone who would kill a puss so brutally is—is a monster!" Her silvery eyes were blazing. "That terrible old woman—"

"Don't forget," sighed Ellery," she can't walk."

* * *

"NOW this," said Mr. Ellery Queen some time later, putting away his cunning and compact little pocket-kit, "is growing more and more curious, Miss Curleigh. Have you any notion what I've found here?"

They were back in the bedroom again, stooped over the bedtray which he had picked up from the floor and deposited on the night-table between the missing sisters' beds. Miss Curleigh had recalled that on all her previous visits she had found the tray on Miss Tarkle's bed or on the table, the invalid explaining with a tightening of her pale lips that she had taken to eating alone of late, implying that she and the long-suffering Sarah-Ann had reached a tragic parting of the ways.

"I saw you mess about with powder and things, but—"

"Fingerprint test." Ellery stared enigmatically down at the knife, fork, and spoon lying awry in the tray. "My kit's a handy gadget at times. You saw me test this cutlery, Miss Curleigh. You would say that these implements had been used by Euphemia in the process of eating her last meal here?"

"Why, of course," frowned Miss Curleigh. "You can still see the dried food clinging to the knife and fork."

"Exactly. The handles of knife, fork, and spoon are not engraved as you see—simple silver surfaces. They should bear fingerprints." He shrugged. "But they don't."

"What do you mean, Mr. Queen? How is that possible?"

"I mean that someone has wiped this cutlery free of prints. Odd, eh?" Ellery lit a cigarette absently. "Examine it, however. This is Euphemia Tarkle's bedtray, her food, her dishes, her cutlery. She is known to eat, and alone. But if only Euphemia handled the cutlery, who wiped off the prints? She? Why should she? Someone else? But surely there would be no sense in someone else's wiping off Euphemia's prints. Her fingerprints have a right to be there. Then, while Euphemia's prints were probably on these implements, someone else's prints were also on them, which accounts for their having been wiped off. Someone else, therefore, handled Euphemia's cutlery. Why? I begin," said Ellery in the grimmest of voices, "to see daylight. Miss Curleigh, would you like to serve as handmaiden to Justice?" Miss Curleigh, overwhelmed, could only nod. Ellery began to wrap the cold food left-overs from the invalid's tray. "Take this truck down to Dr. Samuel Prouty—here's his address—and ask him to analyze it for me. Wait there, get his report, and meet me back here. Try to get in here without being observed."

"The food?"

"The food."

"Then you think it's been—"

"The time for thinking," said Ellery Queen evenly, "is almost over."

When Miss Curleigh had gone, he took a final look around, even to the extent of examining some empty cupboards which had a look of newness about them, set his lips firmly, locked the front door behind him—pocketing the master-key which Mrs. Potter had given him—took the elevator to the ground floor, and rang the bell of the Potter apartment.

A short thickset man with heavy, coarse features opened the door; his hat was pushed back on his head. Ellery saw the agitated figure of Mrs. Potter hovering in the background.

"That's the policeman!" shrilled Mrs. Potter. "Harry, don't get mixed up in—"

"Oh, so you're the dick," growled the thickset man, ignoring the fat woman. "I'm the super here—Harry Potter. I just get home from the plant and my wife tells me there's somethin' wrong up in the Tarkle flat. What's up, for God's sake?"

"Now, now, there's no cause for panic, Potter," murmured Ellery. "Glad you're home, though; I'm in dire need of information which you can probably provide. Has either of you found anywhere on the premises recently—any dead cats?"

Potter's jaw dropped, and his wife gurgled with surprise. "Now that's damn' funny. We sure have. Mrs. Potter says one of 'em's dead up in 5-C

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now—I never thought those two old dames might be the ones—"

"Where did you find them, and how many?" snapped Ellery.

"Why, down in the incinerator. Basement."

Ellery smacked his thigh. "Of course! What a stupid idiot I am. I see it all now. The incinerator, eh? There were six, Potter, weren't there?"

Mrs. Potter gasped: "How'd you know that, for mercy's sake?"

"Incinerator," muttered Ellery, sucking his lower lip. "The bones, I suppose—the skulls?"

"That's right," exclaimed Potter; he seemed distressed. "I found 'em myself. Empty out the incinerator every mornin' for ash-removal. Six cats' skulls and a mess o' little bones. I raised hell around here with the tenants, lookin' for the damn' fool who threw 'em down the chute, but they all played dumb. Didn't all come down the same time. It's been goin' on now maybe four-five weeks. One a week, almost. The damn' fools. I'd like to get my paws on—"

"You're certain you found six?"

"Sure."

"And nothing else of a suspicious nature?"

"No, sir."

"Thanks. I don't believe there will be any more trouble. Just forget the whole business." And Ellery pressed a bill into the man's hand and strolled out of the lobby.

He did not stroll far. He strolled, in fact, only to the sidewalk steps leading down into the basement and cellar. Five minutes later he quietly let himself into Apartment 5-C again.

WHEN Miss Curleigh stopped before the door to Apartment 5-C in late afternoon, she found it locked. She could hear Ellery's voice murmuring inside and a moment later the click of a telephone receiver. Reassured, she pressed the bell-button; he appeared instantly, pulled her inside, noiselessly shut the door again, and led her to the bedroom, where she slumped into a rosewood chair, an expression of bitter disappointment on her pleasant little face.

"Back from the wars, I see," he grinned. "Well, sister, what luck?"

"You'll be dreadfully put out," said Miss Curleigh with a scowl. "I'm sorry I haven't been more helpful—"

"What did good Dr. Prouty say?"

"Nothing encouraging. I like your Dr. Prouty, even if he is the Medical Examiner or something and wears a horrible little peaked hat in the presence of a lady; but I can't say I'm keen about his reports. He says there's not a thing wrong with that food you sent by me! It's a little putrefied from standing, but otherwise it's pure enough."

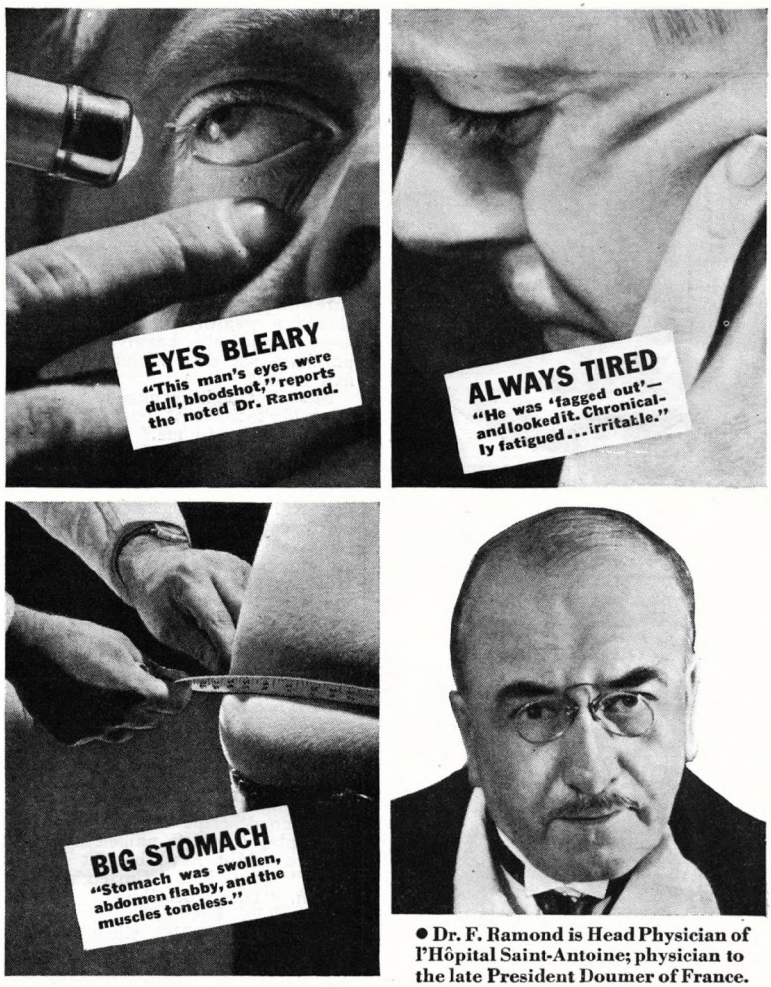
"Now isn't that too bad?" said Ellery cheerfully. "Come, come, Diana, perk up. It's the best news you could have brought me."

"Best n—" began Miss Curleigh with a gasp.

"It substitutes fact for theory very nicely. Fits, lassie, like a brassiere. We have," and he pulled over a chair and sat down facing her, "arrived. By the way, did anyone see you enter this apartment?"

"I slipped in by the basement and

(*Please turn to page* 68)



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says Dr. RAMOND, great French stomach specialist.

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"The X-ray," he adds, "showed his digestive system was 'lazy.' He was constipated—his digestion slow.

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The Black Cats Vanished

(*Continued from page 67*)

took the elevator from there. No one saw me, I'm sure. But I don't understand——"

"Commendable efficiency. I believe we have some time for expatiation. I've had an hour or so here alone for thought, and it's been a satisfactory if morbid business." Ellery lit a cigarette and crossed his legs lazily. "Miss Curleigh, you have sense, plus the advantage of an innate feminine shrewdness, I'm sure. Tell me: why should a wealthy old lady who is almost completely paralyzed stealthily purchase six cats within a period of five weeks?"

Miss Curleigh shrugged. "I told you I couldn't make it out. It's a deep, dark mystery to me." Her eyes were fixed on his lips.

"Pshaw, it can't be as completely baffling as all that. Very well, I'll give you a rough idea. For example, so many cats purchased by an eccentric in so short a period suggests—vivisection. But neither of the Tarkle ladies is anything like a scientist. So that's out. You see?"

"Oh, yes," said Miss Curleigh breathlessly. "I see now what you mean. Euphemia couldn't have wanted them for companionship, either, because she hates cats!"

"Precisely. Let's wander. For extermination of mice? No, this is from Mrs. Potter's report a pest-free building. For mating? Scarcely; Sarah-Ann's cat was a male, and Euphemia also bought only males. Besides, they were nondescript tabbies, and people don't play Cupid to nameless animals."

"She might have bought them for gifts," said Miss Curleigh with a frown. "That's possible."

"Possible, but I think not," said Ellery dryly. "Not when you know the facts. The superintendent found the skeletal remains of six cats in the ashes of the incinerator downstairs, and the other one lies, a very dead pussy, in the bathtub yonder." Miss Curleigh stared at him, speechless. "We seem to have covered the more plausible theories. Can you think of some wilder ones?"

Miss Curleigh paled. "Not—not for their fur?"

"Bravo," said Ellery with a laugh. "There's a wild one among wild ones. No, not for their fur; I haven't found any fur in the apartment. And besides, no matter who killed Master Tom in the tub, he remains bloody but unskinned. To frighten Sister Sarah-Ann? Hardly; Sarah is used to cats and loves them. To scratch Sarah-Ann to death? That suggests poisoned claws. But in that case there would be as much danger to Euphemia as to Sarah-Ann; and why six cats? As—er—guides in eternal dark? But Euphemia is not blind, and besides she never leaves her bed. Can you think of any others?"

"But those things are ridiculous!"

"Don't call my logical meanderings names. Ridiculous, perhaps, but you can't ignore even apparent nonsense in an elimination."

"Well, I've got one that isn't nonsense," said Miss Curleigh suddenly. "Pure hatred. Euphemia loathed cats. So, since she's cracked, I suppose, she's bought them just for the pleasure of exterminating them."

"All black tomcats with green eyes and identical dimensions?" Ellery shook his head. "Her mania could scarcely have been so exclusive. Besides, she loathed cats even before Sarah-Ann bought her distinctive tom from you. No, there's only one left that I can think of, Miss Curleigh." He sprang from the chair and began to pace the floor. "It's not only the sole remaining possibility, but it's confirmed by several things. . . . Protection."

"Protection!" Miss Curleigh's devastating eyes widened. "Why, Mr. Queen. How could that be? People buy dogs for protection, not cats."

"I don't mean that kind of protection," said Ellery impatiently. "I'm referring to a compound of desire to remain alive and an incidental hatred for felines that makes them the ideal instruments toward that end. This is a truly horrifying business, Marie. From every angle. Euphemia Tarkle was afraid. Of what? Of being murdered for her money. That's borne out amply by the letter she wrote to Morton, her nephew; and it's bolstered by her reputed miserliness, her distrust of banks, and her dislike for her own sister. How would a cat be protection against intended murder?"

"Poison!" cried Miss Curleigh.

"Exactly. As a food-taster. There's a reversion to mediævalism for you! Are there confirming data? A-plenty. Euphemia had taken to eating alone of late; that suggests some secret activity. Then she re-ordered cats five times within a short period. Why? Obviously, because each time her cat, purchased from you, had acted in his official capacity, tasted her food, and gone the way of all enslaved flesh. The cats were poisoned, poisoned by food intended for Euphemia. So she had to re-order. Final confirmation; the six feline skeletons in the incinerator."

"But she can't walk," protested Miss Curleigh. "So how could she dispose of the bodies?"

"I fancy Mrs. Potter innocently disposed of them for her. You'll recall that Mrs. Potter said she was often called here to take garbage to the incinerator for Euphemia when Sarah-Ann was out. The 'garbage,' wrapped up, I suppose, was a cat's dead body."

"But why all the black, green-eyed tomcats of the same size?"

"Self-evident. Why? Obviously, again, to fool Sarah-Ann. Because Sarah-Ann had a black tomcat of a certain size with green eyes. Euphemia purchased from you identical animals. Her only reason for this could have been, then, to fool Sarah-Ann into believing that the black tom she saw about the apartment at any given time was her own, the original one. That suggests, of course, that Euphemia used Sarah-Ann's cat to foil the first attempt, and Sarah-Ann's cat was the first poison-victim. When he died, Euphemia bought another from you—without her sister's knowledge. How Euphemia suspected she was slated to be poisoned, of course, at the very time in which the poisoner got busy, we'll never know. It was probably the merest coincidence, something psychic—you never know about slightly mad old ladies."

"But if she was trying to fool Sarah-Ann about the cats," whispered Miss Curleigh, aghast, "then she suspected—I mean, she thought—"

The Black Cats Vanished

"Precisely. She suspected her sister of trying to poison her."

Miss Curleigh bit her lip. "Would you mind giving me a—a cigarette? I'm—" Ellery silently complied. "It's the most terrible thing I've ever heard of. Two old women, sisters, practically alone in the world, one dependent on the other for attention, the other for subsistence, living at cross-purposes—the invalid helpless to defend herself against attacks . . ." She shuddered. "What's happened to those poor creatures, Mr. Queen?"

"Well, let's see. Euphemia is missing. We know that there were at least six attempts to poison her, all unsuccessful. It's logical to assume that there was a seventh attempt, then, and that—since Euphemia is gone under mysterious circumstances—the seventh attempt was successful."

"But how can you know she's—she's dead?"

"Where is she?" asked Ellery dryly. "The only other possibility is that she fled. But she's helpless, can't walk, can't stir from bed without assistance. Who can assist her? Only Sarah-Ann, the very one she suspects of trying to poison her. The letter to her nephew shows that she wouldn't turn to Sarah-Ann. So flight is out and, since she's missing, she must be dead. Now, follow. Euphemia knew she was the target of poisoning attacks via her food, and took precautions against them; then how did the poisoner finally penetrate her defenses—the seventh cat? Well, we may assume that Euphemia made the seventh cat taste the food we found on the tray. We know that food was not poisoned, from Dr. Prouty's report. The cat, then, didn't die of poisoning from the food itself—confirmed by the fact that he was beaten to death. But if the cat didn't die of poisoned food, neither did Euphemia. Yet all the indications are that she must have died of poisoning. Then there's only one answer: she died of poisoning not in eating but in the process of eating."

"I don't understand," said Miss Curleigh intently.

"The cutlery!" cried Ellery. "I showed you earlier this afternoon that someone other than Euphemia had handled her knife, spoon, and fork. Doesn't this suggest that the poisoner had poisoned the cutlery on his seventh attempt? If, for example, the fork had been coated with a colorless, odorless poison which dried, Euphemia would have been fooled. The cat flung bits of food by hand—for no one feeds an animal with cutlery—would live; Euphemia, eating the food with the poisoned cutlery, would die. Psychologically, too, it rings true. It stood to reason that the poisoner, after six unsuccessful attempts one way, should in desperation try a seventh with a variation. The variation worked and Euphemia, my dear, is dead."

"But her body—where—"

Ellery's face changed as he whirled noiselessly toward the door. He stood in an attitude of tense attention for an instant and then, without a word, laid violent hands upon the petrified figure of Miss Curleigh and thrust her rudely into one of the bedroom closets, shutting the door behind her. Miss Curleigh, half-smothered by a soft sea of musty-smelling feminine garments,

(*Please turn to page* 70)

TAKE YOUR MIND OFF YOUR NOSE!

Any Face Powder

THAT NEEDS REPLACEMENT IN LESS THAN 4 HOURS ISN'T WORTHY OF THE NAME!

By *Lady Esther*

I get over ten thousand letters a week. Among them are not a few from men. And most of them have the same thing to say—or rather, the same kick to make.

It's this nefarious habit women have of constantly daubing at their noses in public and in private.

In a radio talk a few weeks ago, I said I wondered what young men think when a perfectly lovely girl takes out her powder puff and starts to dab at her face and here is the letter that answers my question from a young man of Detroit, Michigan, who signs himself simply "Dave."

"Dear Lady Esther: Your radio talk last night hit the nail squarely on the head. I know many of us would like to voice our opinion but can't. I hope you will repeat your message to the women of the world so often that not one will miss hearing you. What can be worse than seeing a woman using her make-up box in public, on the street, in the stores, at the table where she dines. Please, Lady Esther, I hope you will be the means of putting a stop to this."

Shiny Nose, No Longer a Bugaboo

There is no question that it is annoying, if not a wee bit disgusting, to see a woman constantly peeking into her mirror or daubing at her nose. It suggests artificiality! But to be perfectly fair to women there *was* a time when they were justified in worrying about their noses. The only face powder they could get did not cling or hold. It was no sooner put on than it was whisked off, leaving the nose to shine before the whole world.

But when I brought out Lady Esther Face Powder, I ended the bugaboo of shiny nose. Lady Esther Face Powder is distinctive for many things, not the least being that it *clings!* By actual timing under all conditions it clings perfectly for at least four hours, not needing replacement once in that time. Yet, as adhering as it is, it does not clog the pores. It goes *onto* the skin, but *not* into it.

In other words, while this face powder forms a veil of delicate beauty over the skin, it lets the skin breathe. This not only permits the skin to function, which is essential to true beauty, but it also helps keep the powder intact. This is one reason why Lady Esther Face Powder does not cake or streak on the face.

All 5 Shades FREE

You may have tried all kinds of face powders, but none like Lady Esther. None so soft and smooth. None so adhering. None so flattering. But I don't expect you to accept my word for this. I expect you to prove it to yourself *at my expense!* So I say: Accept a generous supply of all the five shades in which I make Lady Esther Face Powder. Let your mirror prove which one is the most becoming to you. Let your clock prove to you that this powder stays on for four hours or longer and still looks fresh. Mail coupon today. Lady Esther, Evanston, Ill.

(You can paste this on a penny postcard)
LADY ESTHER
2020 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Ill.

FREE

Please send me by return mail a trial supply of all five shades of Lady Esther Face Powder. (7)

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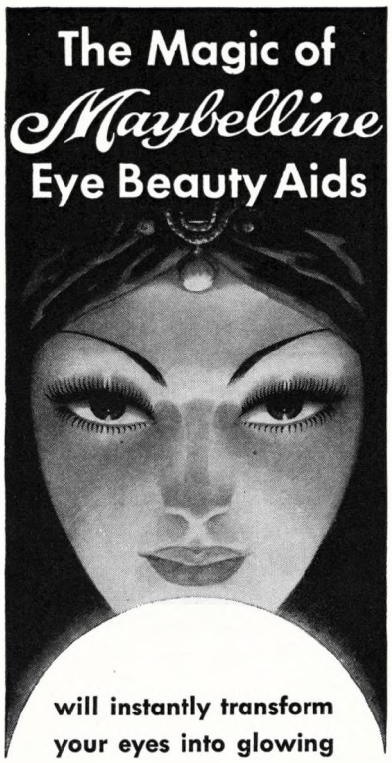

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Just blend a soft, colorful shadow on your eyelids with Maybelline Eye Shadow and see how the color of your eyes is instantly intensified. Now form graceful, expressive eyebrows with the smooth-marking Maybelline Eyebrow Pencil. Finish your eye make-up with a few, simple brush strokes of harmless Maybelline Mascara to make your lashes appear *naturally* long, dark, and luxuriant, and behold—your eyes become twin jewels, expressing a new, more beautiful YOU!

Keep your lashes soft and silky with the pure Maybelline Eyelash Tonic Cream, and be sure to brush and train your eyebrows with the dainty, specially designed Maybelline Eyebrow Brush. All Maybelline eye beauty aids may be had in purse sizes at all leading 10c stores. Accept only genuine Maybelline products to be assured of highest quality and absolute harmlessness.

BLACK AND BROWN

BLACK AND BROWN

BLUE, BROWN, BLUE-GREY, VIOLET AND GREEN

COLORLESS

The Black Cats Vanished

(*Continued from page* 69)

held her breath. She had heard that faint scratching of metal upon metal at the front door. It must be—if Mr. Queen acted so quickly—the poisoner. Why had he come back? she thought wildly. The key he was using—easy—a duplicate. Earlier, when they had surprised him and he had barricaded the door, he must have entered the apartment by the roof and fire-escape window because he couldn't use the key . . . someone must have been standing in the hall. . . .

She choked back a scream, her thought snapping off as if a switch had been turned. A hoarse, harsh voice—the sounds of a struggle—a crash . . . they were fighting!

Miss Curleigh saw red. She flung open the door of the closet and plunged out. Ellery was on the floor in a tangle of threshing arms and legs. A hand came up with a knife . . . Miss Curleigh sprang and kicked in an instantaneous reflex action. Something snapped sharply, and she fell back, sickened, as the knife dropped from a broken hand.

"Miss Curleigh—the door!" panted Ellery, pressing his knee viciously downward. Through a dim roaring in her ears Miss Curleigh heard pounding on the door, and tottered toward it. The last thing she remembered before she fainted was a weird boiling of blue-clad bodies as police poured past her to fall upon the struggling figures.

"IT'S all right now," said a faraway voice, and Miss Curleigh opened her eyes to find Mr. Ellery Queen, cool and immaculate, stooping over her. She moved her head dazedly. The fireplace, the crossed swords on the wall. . . . "Don't be alarmed, Marie," grinned Ellery; "this isn't an abduction. You have achieved Valhalla. It's all over, and you're reclining on the divan in my apartment."

"Oh," said Miss Curleigh, and she swung her feet unsteadily to the floor. "I—I must look a sight. What happened?"

"We caught the bogey very satisfactorily. Now you rest, young lady, while I rustle a dish of tea—"

"Nonsense!" said Miss Curleigh with asperity. "I want to know how you performed that miracle. Come on, now, don't be irritating!"

"Yours to command. Just what do you want to know?"

"Did you know that awful creature was coming back?"

Ellery shrugged. "It was a likely possibility. Euphemia had been poisoned, patently, for her hidden money. She must have been murdered at the very latest yesterday—you recall yesterday's milk-bottle—perhaps the night before last. Had the murderer found the money after killing her? Then who was the prowler whom we surprised this afternoon and who made his escape out the window after barricading the door? It must have been the murderer. But if he came back after the crime, then he had not found the money when he committed the crime. Perhaps he had so much to do immediately after the commission of the crime that he had no time to search. At any rate, on his return we surprised him—probably just after he had made a mess of the bed. It was quite possible that he had still not found the money. If he had not, I knew he would come back—after all, he had committed the crime for it. So I took the chance that he would return when he thought the coast was clear, and he did. I 'phoned for police assistance while you were out seeing Dr. Prouty."

"Did you know who it was?"

"Oh, yes. It was demonstrable. The first qualification of the poisoner was availability; that is, in order to make those repeated poisoning attempts, the poisoner had to be near Euphemia or near her food at least since the attempts began, which was presumably five weeks ago. The obvious suspect was her sister. Sarah-Ann had motive—hatred and possibly cupidity; and certainly opportunity, since she prepared the food herself. But Sarah-Ann I eliminated on the soundest basis in the world.

"For who had brutally beaten to death the seventh black tomcat? Palpably, either the victim or the murderer in a general sense. But it couldn't have been Euphemia, since the cat was killed in the bathroom and Euphemia lay paralyzed in the bedroom, unable to walk. Then it must have been the murderer who killed the cat. But if Sarah-Ann were the murderer, would she have clubbed to death a cat—she, who loved cats? Utterly inconceivable. Therefore Sarah-Ann was not the murderer."

"Then what—"

"I know. What happened to Sarah-Ann?" Ellery grimaced. "Sarah-Ann, it is to be feared, went the way of the cat and her sister. It must have been the poisoner's plan to kill Euphemia and have it appear that Sarah-Ann had killed her—the obvious suspect. Sarah-Ann, then, should be on the scene. But she isn't. Well, her disappearance tends to show—I think the confession will bear me out—that she was accidentally a witness to the murder and was killed by the poisoner on the spot to eliminate a witness to the crime."

"Did you find the money?"

"Yes. Lying quite loosely," shrugged Ellery, "between the pages of a Bible Euphemia always kept in her bed."

"And," quavered Miss Curleigh, "the bodies . . ."

"Surely," drawled Ellery, "the incinerator? It would have been the most logical means of disposal."

"But that means—Who was that fiend on the floor? I never saw him before. It couldn't have been Mr. Morton's f-father . . . ?"

"No, indeed. Fiend, Miss Curleigh?" Ellery raised his eyebrows. "There's only a thin wall between sanity and—"

"You called me," said Miss Curleigh, "Marie, before."

Ellery said hastily: "No one but Sarah-Ann and Euphemia lived in the apartment, yet the poisoner had access to the invalid's food for over a month—apparently without suspicion. Who could have had such access? Only one person: the man who had been decorating the apartment in late afternoons and evenings—around dinner-time—for over a month; the man who worked in a chemical plant and therefore, better than anyone, had knowledge of and access to poisons; the man who tended the incinerator and therefore could dispose of the bones of his human victims without danger to himself. In a word," said Ellery, "the superintendent of the building, Harry Potter."

He Gave a Chump a Break

(*Continued from page* 39)

and gun seem to work. Take the yellowest clown in the world, get him ginned-up and mopped-up and he begins to act like a combination of Gerald Chapman and Sandow.

"Everything work out O. K.?" I asked.

"Swell," he said grudgingly, "just like you told me. Right after you left, a messenger from the Administration Building came for me. I was transferred to the Honor Farm. I knew that meant you were putting in the fix because a con isn't supposed to get on the Farm until he has served half his sentence. I worked there Tuesday. Then, this morning, they gave me a plow and a mule and told me to make some furrows in the north forty. I ditched the mule and ran over here. That's all."

I mocked him. "That's all! It cost me thirty-five thousand and you say that's all. But I'm not kicking."

"You shouldn't," he sneered. "For coffee and cake money like that you get yourself over seven hundred grand."

"If you think you've made a bad bargain," I needled him, "you can go back."

His eyes narrowed. "I'm satisfied," he growled, "I'm never going back . . . unless on a slab."

"All right," I said. "Now let's understand each other. I'm on the level with you and I want you to understand that. When we change cars I want you to drive. I don't know where your plant is, so I couldn't have anybody waiting to take your share away from you. Right?"

He pinned his eyes on my face for a long time. "Right," he said finally, "I'll drive."

"I just wanted to make it plain that there was no way for me to double-cross you and take it all."

He thought that over. Then he put his gun in his pocket and said, "I guess you're all right, McCabe. Don't worry about having any trouble with me."

I felt better.

ABOUT forty miles from the prison we switched cars, ditching the coupe and wheeling out a long baby with plenty of horses under her hood. The attendants in the garage paid no attention. They had been paid not to, and there's no gag intended in that.

Nick took the wheel and started blasting up the road to Chi. Occasionally, as he drove, he tilted the bottle and had a charge. Finally the whisky loosened his tongue a little.

He looked sideways at me and said: "Let's lay over in Chi this afternoon and tonight. I know a couple of frills that will hide us out. I could stand a party."

That's why all the half-smart hoodlums like Nick wind up behind the grating. I never mix business and pleasure.

"Not a chance," I said. "The money first. Then you can merry-go-round for the rest of your life if you want to. But I think it's dumb. Wasn't there a doll mixed up in your tumble?"

He cursed bitterly. "I'll say there was a doll mixed up in it. I guess you're right. We'll grab that plant and then we're set."

He drove a few miles in silence. "Her!" he rasped. "Poison I'd like to give her. Do you know what that doll did to me?"

(*Please turn to page* 72)

Charm him tonight...

with a complexion that stays

MIRROR FRESH

all evening long

New face powder stays on from 4 to 6 hours...*thanks to newest discovery of* RICHARD HUDNUT

WIN his compliments all evening long with a complexion as fresh and smooth as the moment you left your mirror. You can, you know, because Richard Hudnut has perfected a new kind of face powder.

This powder, rightly enough, is called *Marvelous*. It clings as you've always wanted powder to cling—and never thought it could. It actually stays on from four to six hours by the clock.

Marvelous, indeed, is a different kind of powder, a different blend, developed by the Richard Hudnut laboratories after years of searching for a new, longer-clinging powder. The Marvelous blend contains a substance entirely new to face powder—with a remarkable power to cling to your skin. In a sense, it becomes part of your own skin texture.

Marvelous Face Powder, therefore, never looks *powdery* on your skin. It looks like a new, more freshly tinted, softer complexion *of your own!* And think of it—this flattering effect remains from four to six hours. What's more, Marvelous Face Powder stays on without clogging the pores. Its purity is guaranteed by the fifty-year reputation of Richard Hudnut.

Put Marvelous Face Powder to *any* test. So sure are we of the results that we will send you free trial packages of Marvelous in four new, popular shades—so you may select your own shade and compare Marvelous Face Powder with any face powder you wish. (Note coupon.)

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SAVE COUPONS *for* HANDSOME MERCHANDISE

Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., Louisville, Ky.

He Gave a Chump a Break

(*Continued from page* 71)

I said, "No. I haven't an idea."

"She was hungry when I found her," he said. "And as soon as I fattened her up, she hangs a cross on me. The only good thing about it is that she drew five years for herself." He took a long drink out of the bottle and passed it to me. "Here's the way it was," he growled, "I run into her in a little hick-hamlet down in Ohio. She's working in a soda fountain there and can't get enough dough to get out of the place. Then I come along, see?"

I looked at him out of the corner of my eye. I'll bet that was one event she regretted.

"I got to chewing the rag with her, see? Her old man once owned the bank there. Her mother was dead and the girl and her old man were head people in the whistle-stop. Then when there was all them runs on the banks, the old boy's jug folds up with all the townies' dough in it. The old man knocks himself off. Cut his throat with a razor."

"Ugh!" I grunted. "What an out!"

"Yeah," he said carelessly, "and he leaves the doll—Rosemary her name was—without a dime. Creditors snatch the house and cars and even her clothes, except what she's got on. So she goes to work slinging sodas. Well, just about the time I hit town, she's going to get fired out of the job because everybody in town is sore at her on account of losing their dough in the old man's bank."

"Taking it out on her," I said. "Sounds dumb."

"Sure," he admitted, "but people are dumb, ain't they? Anyway, I gave her a play and she beat it with me. She's a hot-looking frill and I aimed to use her on the badger."

He drank and tossed the empty bottle out on the road with plenty of disregard for other people's tires. "We worked it in Cleveland and St. Louis and one place and another. She looked so damned innocent that the chumps never got suspicious until they were up in the room with her and I come busting in with a roscoe in my hand and start howling, 'My wife! Good God!'"

I said, "I thought that one was dead."

"Nuh-uh," he denied, "we took plenty. But she was always sniveling and crying and wanting to quit and I knew it wouldn't be long before she'd take a run-out powder on me. So I figured to use her in one big score and then blow her off. I took her to Chi, maneuvered around to fix her up with all kinds of references and what not. We used her regular name this time, see? So they could check back on her schools and her background and everything would come out O. K. Then I sprinkled a little dough around an employment agency and got her a job with Willoughby and Son Co."

"Pretty smart operating," I admitted.

"You said it," he agreed modestly. "The guy I was aiming at was young Harry Willoughby. I'd been reading about him in the papers and he looked like a perfect target. He was always getting stewed and getting jammed up in something. And his old man had half the money in the world. It was a honey. I couldn't miss."

"You did," I reminded him.

"Hell," he said, "That was the doll's fault, not mine. And anyway we didn't play it out the way I plotted it. I figured to have her start chasing around with young Willoughby, get him crocked and wangle him up into the apartment. Then I'd bust in with a couple of witnesses and give him the badger for plenty sugar."

He stopped and licked his lips. "Let's get another bottle," he coaxed.

"I've got one," I said and took it out from under the seat. "I think of everything."

WE went around Chicago by way of La Grange and some other small towns and picked up Waukegan Road just north of the city. He headed the car north and hit it up at a good clip.

Also, he kept talking: "Well, she got this chump to take her out a couple of times. But she wouldn't put him on the spot for me. She kept making excuses and whining around about she didn't want to do it. So I got suspicious. I figured maybe she was getting soft for the guy."

Looking at Nick I could understand that.

"I tailed them," he said, "and found out that they always ate lunch in a little joint on LaSalle Street. And they always had the same booth. So I planted myself in the next booth one day and tipped an ear to what they were saying. Well, you could have blown me over with your breath. The chump was asking her to marry him!"

"No," I said.

Nick bobbed his ratty head vigorously. "Just that! Now, any other guy would have gone off his chump and slugged the both of them. But I didn't. Instead I started nosing around Willoughby and Son's. They're brokers, see, and plenty of customers trot in there with securities and money just after the market's close. Guys that have to put up more collateral, see? I got a bright idea."

"Go ahead," I urged.

"I put her on the pump," he continued, "until I found out everything I needed to know. Young Willoughby had charge of the collateral cage and Rosemary used to go in there around three in the afternoon and help him with the accounts. Then he'd stack all the dough in a steel case, put the case in the vault and lock up. They generally wouldn't leave until around six o'clock . . . I got my own idea about that, too! . . . and the joint would be empty except for them. So I went up there one evening and picked up a million and a half dollars and walked out."

"Whee!" I said. "Tell me more."

He slowed down to go through Mundeline and then turned west on a little country road. "It was smart," he applauded himself. "I got an iron box just like Willoughby used and put it in a big suitcase. Then I grabbed the suit-case and waltzed into the office just before six o'clock. She nearly fainted when she seen me. I told her I wanted to talk to young Willoughby. Well, she turned white but she took me into his cage and the three of us had a little talk."

"I'll bet," I said. "What did you talk about."

He twisted his thin lips. "Love!" he said scornfully. "We talked about love. And did I put it on! I talked mainly to this Willoughby punk though I had a hard time keeping my eyes on him be-

He Gave a Chump a Break

cause that case was laying there on the floor and it sure looked handsome. I told them that I had found out that they were in love with each other. And that I knew I was nothing but a heel and I didn't want to stand in her way. So I had packed up my clothes . . . I gave the suitcase a little kick when I said that . . . and I was going away so they could be happy together."

He snorted explosively. "They fell for it. She started to bawl to beat hell and he was sniffling all over the joint and shaking my hand. So then I stood up and told her to get out of the room; that I had something to say to Willoughby and it had to be said private."

"I'll bet that worried her," I interrupted.

"You said it," he grinned. "But she went out just the same. Then I stood up and put on a swell act. I told Willoughby that if he didn't treat her right I'd come back and break his back. Well, you'd 'a' died laughing. He slobbered like a baby and swore on a stack of Bibles that he'd take care of her like she was money in the bank." He broke off and looked at me out of slitted eyes. "See the catch now?"

"No," I said truthfully. "It don't make heads or tails to me."

He gloated. "Here's where the bite comes in. While I'm talking to the chump I hold my breath until my face gets real red. Then I grab my heart and fall on the floor moaning, 'Water, water!' Well, he skipped out of the cage and over to the water stand."

I said, "I get it."

"Certainly," he cheered. "I swap the cases, shut the full one up in my grip and leave him the empty one. When he comes back I drink the water and refuse to let him get a croaker for me. Then, I scram with my head hanging down like my heart is broken."

He stopped and guffawed loudly. "Is that a laugh? It was air-tight. Naturally the kid was going to take the fall. I figured nobody would believe him when he recited his goofy yarn. And it seemed a sure-shot cinch that the girl would duck out on him when she saw the trouble. If she had any sense she would have because he never opened his mouth about her when he got nailed."

"Chivalry?" I suggested.

"Whatever that is," Nick said carelessly. "On top of that, I thought the kid's old man would pony up the dough and squash the whole thing. But he didn't. Seems to be a stormy old buzzard and he let the kid take the fall. To make it sure, I weeded about sixty-thousand dollars worth of hard-to-push bonds out of the take and planted them under the seat cushions of his car. That cinched him. Then I planted the rest of it . . . except for a few grand for expense money and decided to lay low."

"It sounds perfect," I said. "How'd you tumble?"

"The goofy doll," he snarled. "She goes to the D. A. and tells him the whole story. Imagine it! Putting herself right in the bag for a long sentence. They picked me up in a horse-joint on Wabash Avenue and identified some of the grand notes in my pocket. I just dummied up and said nothing. We were all tried together and all the stories were so silly that the jury couldn't figure anything out. I guess they decided we were all in on it and

(*Please turn to page* 74)

Fudge that is Fudge!

Eagle Brand

CHOCOLATE FUDGE

2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup water
1 cup Eagle Brand Sweetened Condensed Milk
3 squares unsweetened chocolate
1 cup nut meats (optional)

Mix sugar and water in large saucepan and bring to boil. Add Eagle Brand Sweetened Condensed Milk and boil over low flame until mixture will form firm ball when tested in cold water (235° F.—240° F.) Stir mixture constantly to prevent burning. Remove from fire, add chocolate cut in small pieces. Chop nut meats and add. Beat until thick and creamy. Pour into buttered pan. When cool, cut in squares.

● Even beginners will get a marvelous result with *this* recipe. A melt-in-your-mouth smoothness, a glorious creaminess! ● But remember—this recipe calls for *Sweetened Condensed Milk*. Don't confuse it with Evaporated. Just ask for Eagle Brand.

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He Gave a Chump a Break

(*Continued from page 73*)

were trying to frame each other. So we drew a dime each."

"Ten years?" I said. "How come you were doing natural life?"

"Another lousy break," he barked. "After the trial, the state's attorney digs up some old felony charges and drags me through the key-hole on the habitual criminal act. I forgot to mention I was a two-time loser when all this happened. I did one at Chester and one at Stateville. That's how I drew the natural."

"Interesting yarn," I said.

HE turned onto a road with a sign that said: "Diamond Lake Subdivision," and followed the road around a tiny lake, passing a lot of small Summer cottages. It was a few weeks before the season opened and they were mostly unoccupied. He stopped the car and parked behind one of the cottages.

"I'll show you something more interesting," he said, climbing out of the car. "Wait a minute."

He circled the house and came back grinning. "Empty," he said, "which is lucky for the owners. You take some of the tools out of the hack and pry open the back door."

I did as he said and had the hinges off the door by the time he came back, carrying a spade. "Prowled a boathouse next door," he grinned. "Got the gate open? Good! Let's go."

We went inside. It was the usual jerry-built type of Summer home. I followed him back to the kitchen. He squatted on the floor and began prying up the boards. "This was a smart stunt," he said, between grunts. "After I got the cash I drove up here. It was Winter and all these places were empty. I beat the lock on the back door, skipped inside and buried the dough, then I cleaned up and put everything back where it was. That was smart, wasn't it?"

"You said it," I cheered.

He was quite a lad for patting his own back. "Every copper in the country was running around in circles trying to find my plant. But nobody ever thought I'd pick a total stranger's house and put it under the floor."

He flung the floor-boards in a heap and began digging in the center of the dirt square. Before long he was breathing hard and he stood up and held the spade out to me. "Here," he said, "you give it a whirl and . . ."

Something went Bing, bing, bing, like a tommy-gun fire.

He snarled, whirled on the balls of his feet and went to the window, the gun in his hand. Then he shrugged and came back, looking sheepish.

I asked, "What was it?"

"Some early bird," he said, "batting around the lake in one of those outboard motorboats. Make a hell of a racket, don't they?"

"Especially when a guy's nervous," I admitted and went to work with the shovel.

HE had certainly done a good job of burying that money. I was down five feet when my shovel hit something hard. Just then that motorboat started up again and scared me half to death. It started and died at least a dozen times before I finally uncovered a three foot section of drain pipe about eighteen inches in diameter. It was concreted at both ends but a couple of raps with the edge of the shovel fixed that. Inside was a huge roll of oil-skin. I unwrapped it there on the floor of the hole and looked at more money than I've ever seen in my life. There were three packages of currency and the size of the figures on the bills would take your breath away. And then there were some of the niftiest unregistered Libertys that ever made life easy for an investor.

All of a sudden something was wrong. I can't describe it. Maybe it was the silence. Maybe it was the fact that Nick hadn't jumped down into the hole to gloat over the money. Without turning I lit a cigarette. Then I stood up slowly and turned to face him.

I looked into the muzzle of the pistol. He was squatting on the edge of the hole, pointing the heat right between my eyes.

"What the hell," I said.

His small yellow teeth gleamed at me. "I just decided, Eddie," he said, "that I don't want to cut this nice money in half. So as soon as that motorboat starts up again, I'm going to rub you out and play a one-way hand from here in."

I looked him squarely in the eye and laughed at him. "Why, punk," I said cheerfully, "you certainly are a twenty-four-carat heel. Here I put you over the wall and far away and you hand me a cross."

He said: "Never give a chump a break, that's my rule."

"Nikky, my boy," I grinned, "you make me feel much better. My conscience was hurting me because of the dirty trick I was playing on you. Now that I know you're a complete heel I feel better. Allow me to introduce myself."

"You're Eddie McCabe," he smiled evilly. "A smart pol out of St. Louis. And pols like to talk. So you just talk —until that motorboat makes some noise to drown out the sound of this roscoe."

"Here's the opera, Nikky," I continued, talking fast. "When Cotton was killed there were some papers in his pockets. Never mind how I got hold of them. But they told me that Cotton had a politician named McCabe conniving to put you over the ladder. Also there was a code-letter for you among those papers. So I sent the letter through to you and then I came to see you. With an Irish map like mine who could tell my name wasn't McCabe?"

His face was ghastly but the gun never quivered. "You ought to write a book," he rasped. "I wish that chump would start his boat."

"Just to keep from getting any wires crossed," I went on, "some friends of mine invited McCabe to take a little trip on a river-boat—I think they had to put some pleats in his skull, but after that he went willingly enough. It's a racket, my boy, with you for the target. And you fell, smart guy."

The motorboat blatted into action out on the lake. Nick pulled the trigger. I couldn't hear the click of the firing pin as it fell on the dead cartridges but I could see his hand closing convulsively three or four times.

I raised my voice so he could hear me above the noise. "No go, Nikky," I laughed, "I went to quite some trouble to fix up those phony cartridges. They're harmless."

He Gave a Chump a Break

He screamed once, on high shrill notes like an animal and leaped at me, clubbing the gun. I didn't want to shoot him and he gave me a tussle before I rapped him behind the ear and made a Christian out of him. Then I went out to my car and brought back a roll of adhesive tape and wrapped his wrists and ankles up nice and tidy.

I packed the money back in the pipe and heaved it and Nikky into the car. Then I started burning rubber south.

THE people I passed on the road must have thought it was a comet going by because I just put the pedal on the floor and let her ramble. Finally I came to a little cross-road near the prison and stopped. There was a blue official prison car with a husky young fellow sitting on the running board.

He got up and walked over to our car and smiled at me. "Mr. O'Neil, I believe," he said mockingly, "the famous thief-catcher. And the luckiest guy in the world. How much money was there?"

"Just short of a million and a half," I said.

He whistled and his eyes got round. "And you get the ten per cent reward from the insurance company! Wham! That's real money even if you say it fast." He looked at Nick out of the corner of his eye. "By the way, Mr. O'Neil, one of our trusties walked away from the Honor Farm this morning. Have you seen anything of him?"

"Yes," I laughed. "I found him. I said to myself, now where would a rat go? I went there, and there was little Nikky, the bad man."

He reached in a hand like a scoop shovel and plucked Nick out of the car without troubling to open the door. Just dragged him through the open window. Then he stood there, holding Nick like a dirty mop. "O'Neil," he advised, "you better go up and soothe the warden. He's taken at least a barrel of bicarb since you've been gone. You've got him jittery."

"Right," I said. "I want to do a lot of phoning in his office anyway. I've got to call the Governor and let him know everything came out all right. He's probably worried as hell. Then I want to tip the insurance company that everything's even. And I want to tell young Willoughby that the Governor will probably give him and the girl a pardon." That reminded me of something. "Hey, Nick," I called. "Got any message for Rosemary and her boy friend?"

You'd be surprised what he told me!

DELICIOUS BREAKFASTS

This month's food circulars have been planned to help you get the breakfast. If you follow the recipes and suggestions they contain you will be able to give your family breakfasts that are tempting, wholesome and easy to prepare for as much or as little as you choose to spend. Here are the subjects:

1. Breakfast menus
2. How to prepare fruit for breakfast
3. Fruit juices for breakfast
4. Ways with cereal
5. Muffins and other small breakfast breads
6. Breakfast breads in larger forms
7. Eggs for breakfast
8. More hearty breakfast breads

If you would like copies of these circulars, send ten cents to Rita Calhoun, care of MYSTERY magazine, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Remember they are printed on loose leaves, so that you can keep them in a loose-leaf binder.

BE LIKE A PARISIENNE

PURSUED..ADORED...

Irresistible

YES, French women are known the world over for their irresistible lure and their secret is that no matter how smart their Paris gowns are, they always complete their toilettes with a touch of exciting, seductive perfume...such is Irresistible Perfume. Mysteriously exotic...this perfume glorifies your personality and gives you a strange new power over hearts.

New loveliness awaits you in the other Irresistible Beauty Aids, too. They protect and improve your skin because they are guaranteed to be as pure and fine as the most expensive cosmetics you can buy. Irresistible Lip Lure, so new, so different ...has a cream base that melts into your skin. Not a trace of paste, not even transparent film remains...Just soft, warm, ripe, red color that makes your lips beg for kisses. Four glorious, new shades to choose from. Irresistible Face Powder, so creamy-fine, so clinging, gives you a peachbloom skin that invites caresses.

Be irresistible tonight...Buy Irresistible Beauty Aids today...big, full size packages only 10¢ each at your 5 and 10¢ store.

PERFUME
LIP LURE
FACE POWDER
VANISHING...
LIQUEFYING..
COLD CREAM
COLOGNE
BRILLIANTINE
TALCUM POWDER

Irresistible Beauty Aids ..... FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

LIPS THAT MAKE A MAN SAY "will you?"

Colorful, yet never coated with paint

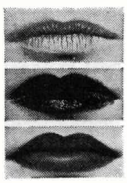
THESE are the lips that men long to kiss. *Soft, natural lips.* Never coated with red paint. Simply alluring with natural-looking color . . . color that you, too, can have by using the lipstick which isn't paint.

Tangee contains a color-change principle which makes it intensify the natural coloring in your lips . . . so much so, that men think Tangee color is your own!

LOOKS ORANGE—ACTS ROSE

In the stick, Tangee looks orange. But on your lips, it changes to rose—the one shade of blush-rose most natural for your type!

Moreover, Tangee's special cream base soothes and softens dry, peeling lips. Stays on all day. Get Tangee—39¢ and $1.10 sizes. Also in Theatrical, a deeper shade for professional use. (See coupon offer below.)



UNTOUCHED — Lips left untouched are apt to have a faded look..make the face seem older.

PAINTED — Don't risk that painted look. It's coarsening and men don't like it.

TANGEE — Intensifies natural color, restores youthful appeal, ends that painted look.

Cheeks mustn't look painted, either. So use Tangee Rouge. Gives same natural color as the lipstick. Now in refillable gun-metal case. Tangee Refills save money.

Don't be switched! Insist upon Tangee. And patronize the store that gives you what you ask for.

World's Most Famous Lipstick

TANGEE

ENDS THAT PAINTED LOOK

★ **4-PIECE MIRACLE MAKE-UP SET**

THE GEORGE W. LUFT COMPANY TG104
417 Fifth Avenue, New York City
Rush Miracle Make-Up Set of miniature **Tangee Lipstick, Rouge Compact, Creme Rouge, Face Powder.** I enclose 10¢ (stamps or coin).

Check Shade ☐ Flesh ☐ Rachel ☐ Light Rachel

Name_____ (Please Print)

Address_____

City_____ State_____

MAKE-UP BOX

BLEACHES AND BRUSHES AND A TONIC FOR TIRED TRESSES IN THIS MONTH'S BEAUTY NOTES

Cucumbers Versus Freckles

IT'S been a grand Summer, hasn't it, but did you bask heedlessly in the sun for long hours, wearing as little clothing as the law permits? We did, and are we sorry! A terrific coat of tan and a very generous sprinkling of freckles was the result. Now that a Fall wardrobe is a primary consideration, tan and those horrid freckles give complexions a sallow, unbecoming look. Obviously the thing to do is to hasten the bleaching process and cucumber emulsion cream is the very thing! Remember that you cannot hope to change from golden tan to lily white overnight, but applications of this mild bleaching cream for a few weeks will fade the freckles and Summer tan and give your skin the milky-white tone you desire. The cucumber emulsion cream in its May apple-green and white jar is refreshingly cool and pleasant.

We Pry Into the Drys

MORE people have dry scalp and hair than have oily or normal scalps and hair . . . that is, if mail received in the Beauty Department at Tower Magazines is any indication. Long lazy days in the hot sun, sticky salt water, too many finger waves baked by hot dryers . . . all result in streaked, dry, brittle hair instead of soft, gleaming well-cared-for tresses. We did a little scouting around and learned all about the new home treatment kit . . . a gay red box containing the essentials for remedying this condition. It consists of a good size bottle of tonic and a jar of scalp pomade. A few treatments make the hair gleam with highlights as the natural oils are restored. There are also two other packages—one for oily hair and the other for normal hair. A dollar will buy this whole kit and we think that's good news, too.

If you would like further information about the articles described, and other beauty news, write to the Beauty Editor, Make-up Box, Tower Magazines, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Scrubbing off Pounds

YOU know how it is with reducing—you diet and exercise like a Spartan for perhaps a week, then everything goes haywire and those unwanted pounds sneak up on you. Waistline a bit thick? Arms a little plump? Unpleasant "girdle bulge?" Now is the time to get to work on your figure. A well-known beauty expert whose massage treatments in her famous salon have become enormously popular, has created a Home Reducing and Massage Treatment. It consists of two large cakes of reducing soap and a special circulatory brush with long bristles designed to give as nearly as possible the same effect as hand manipulation. The friction of the brush and the soap work away the subsurface fat and increase circulation. One particularly good feature about this novel method of reducing is that you can lose weight exactly where it is most necessary. So scrub, scrub, scrub away those extra pounds in a sane, sensible and invigorating way. Try it!

Don't Let Them Rob You

(*Continued from page 37*)

and domestic servants in general were Mrs. Johnson's pet dupes.

So, last June she rented a couple of modest rooms, for a change, installed several second-hand sewing-machines in one of them, put Italian women to work on running up garments, and advertised for waitresses who wanted jobs in first-class summer resort hotels.

When the applicants registered with Mrs. Johnson, she astonished them and won their confidence by saying that she demanded no fee whatever, nor even the customary per cent on wages.

"Poor girls should not have to pay so much," she told them, "and I make my hotels pay me for getting them the right type of help! But in return I am responsible for everything. As these hotels are very particular and exclusive, I first see to it that the girls I engage have uniforms in perfect condition and well-fitting. Usually, I find it is best to start out with fresh ones. In fact, I have women working on uniforms in the other room, which in this way I am able to produce at cost for my girls! Isn't that a splendid idea?

"How many do you think you will need?" she would ask a girl. "None! "Dear me, how many have you? Only three! My dear child, you will need six at the Swathmore Gables!"

Keeping up the act to the right tempo of reality, and choosing the psychological moment, Mrs. Johnson had one of her Italian seamstresses take the applicant's measurements, while she herself took the small cash deposit (from three to five dollars only) and added it to her growing capital.

After three weeks of the farce, during which time the glib Mrs. Johnson collected approximately $1,000 and the date was close at hand for delivery of goods and the opening of the hotels on her list, she didn't appear at her busy two-room establishment.

Investigation proved that the poor Italian women had been working on only a half dozen uniforms in that time—Mrs. Johnson being most particular and finicky and having them ripped apart and made over and over! She also owed them a week's wages. Even the second-hand sewing-machines were found to be bought on the installment plan. All calculations showed that Mrs. Johnson had spent about $100 to get a thousand in three weeks.

THERE are other variations of this "uniform racket." Probably the one pursued by Donley Pierce, a negro of Chicago, will illustrate a type of the game as directed against unemployed chauffeurs. Pierce is now serving a sentence in the Illinois State Penitentiary, but there are others, black men and white, who are plying his trade today.

Saving himself even the expense of advertising to get victims, Donley Pierce made it a practice to reply to ads inserted by chauffeurs wanting jobs. With practically ninety per cent of them he made appointments, and with probably fifty per cent of them he was successful in putting over his story.

He represented himself to be a driver for some prominent doctor or business man who wanted a second

(*Please turn to page 78*)

Does Your Face Wear "Dirty Underclothes"?

Horrible, but True!

A Blackhead is Dirt that is 3 and 4 Months Old!

By *Lady Esther*

Is your skin guilty of "dirty underclothes"?

In other words, dirty underneath? You may not know it, but Blackheads, Whiteheads, Enlarged Pores and Muddy and Sallow Skin, are signs of concealed dirt.

Yes—shrink as you will—a blackhead is dirt *that is three and four months old!*

You may be the most fastidious woman in the world and still have blackheads. Why? Not through any carelessness on your part, but simply because you're an innocent victim of inadequate cleansing methods. You think you are reaching the dirt in your skin, but you are not. You are only reaching the outer and not the under layer of dirt.

Make This Test!

If you want to see how a real face cream works, make this test.

First, cleanse your skin as you now do it. If you use soap and water, use plenty of it. If you use cream, use three or four applications. Keep cleaning your skin until you think it absolutely immaculate.

Now, take Lady Esther Face Cream and clean it. Just smooth or pat on the cream and leave it there a few minutes. Now take a clean cloth or tissue and wipe off the cream. Look at the cloth! That skin you thought absolutely clean has left it streaked and smudged.

It Reaches Pore-deep Dirt

Ordinary face creams stop at the top layer of dirt. Lady Esther Face Cream penetrates to the bottom of the pores and dissolves the underneath layer of dirt. It gives your skin a complete pore-deep cleansing. Lady Esther Face Cream reaches the bottom of your pores because it is a unique, readily liquefying cream. It melts the instant it touches the skin. Thus, without the necessity of being rubbed in and without stretching the pores, it penetrates the little openings all the way to their depths. There it dissolves the accumulated dirt and grime and floats it to the surface where it is easily wiped off.

When you get through cleansing your skin with Lady Esther Face Cream, you KNOW it is clean because your cloth will show no sign of soil.

Also Lubricates the Skin

As Lady Esther Face Cream cleans your skin, it *also* lubricates it. It resupplies it with a fine oil that ends dryness and keeps your skin soft, smooth and supple.

There is no face cream you ever tried that is at once so thoroughly cleansing and delicately lubricating as Lady Esther Face Cream. One trial will show you an amazing difference in your skin.

At My Expense!

Write today for the liberal 7-day trial tube I offer and see for yourself how thoroughly clean and how exquisitely soft Lady Esther Face Cream leaves your skin. There is no cost for this 7-day tube. Your name and address on the coupon below or on a penny postcard bring it to you free and postpaid.

Pass your fingertips all over your face. Does your skin feel satin smooth? Or do you feel little bumps? If you do, then be sure your skin is suffering from "dirty underclothes."

(You can paste this on a penny postcard) **FREE**

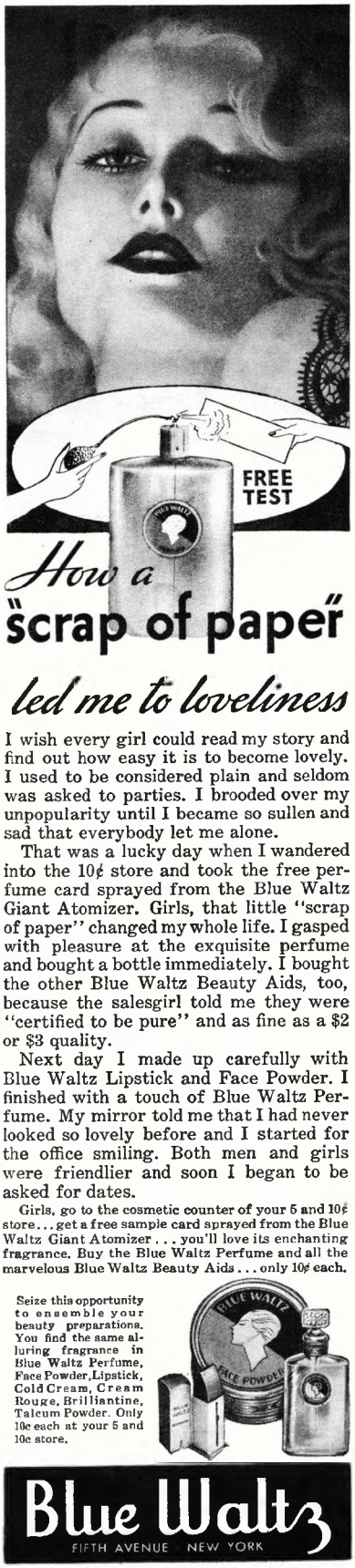
LADY ESTHER
2020 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Illinois (7)

Please send me by return mail your 7-day tube of Lady Esther Four-Purpose Face Cream.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... *State* .....



I wish every girl could read my story and find out how easy it is to become lovely. I used to be considered plain and seldom was asked to parties. I brooded over my unpopularity until I became so sullen and sad that everybody let me alone.

That was a lucky day when I wandered into the 10¢ store and took the free perfume card sprayed from the Blue Waltz Giant Atomizer. Girls, that little "scrap of paper" changed my whole life. I gasped with pleasure at the exquisite perfume and bought a bottle immediately. I bought the other Blue Waltz Beauty Aids, too, because the salesgirl told me they were "certified to be pure" and as fine as a $2 or $3 quality.

Next day I made up carefully with Blue Waltz Lipstick and Face Powder. I finished with a touch of Blue Waltz Perfume. My mirror told me that I had never looked so lovely before and I started for the office smiling. Both men and girls were friendlier and soon I began to be asked for dates.

Girls, go to the cosmetic counter of your 5 and 10¢ store... get a free sample card sprayed from the Blue Waltz Giant Atomizer . . . you'll love its enchanting fragrance. Buy the Blue Waltz Perfume and all the marvelous Blue Waltz Beauty Aids . . . only 10¢ each.

Seize this opportunity to ensemble your beauty preparations. You find the same alluring fragrance in Blue Waltz Perfume, Face Powder, Lipstick, Cold Cream, Cream Rouge, Brilliantine, Talcum Powder. Only 10c each at your 5 and 10c store.

Blue Waltz
FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK

Don't Let Them Rob You

(*Continued from page 77*)

chauffeur for his wife. Oh, it was an easy job. And lovely people, too! But the applicant had to wear a certain kind of uniform which Pierce said he would have to get him. The colored con man would then milk his victim of as much as he could get—generally from $35 to $80—and vanish like smoke.

Though he was imprisoned once before on the same count, Pierce went back to his "easy money" on being released. Now he is serving a longer term. But for two years Pierce successfully eluded the Chicago police and the Better Business Bureau agents of that city. It is worthy of note that most gyps when released from jail go back to their "line."

"Some of the most commonly used and obviously fraudulent schemes find the readiest victims," says Mr. Edward L. Greene, head of the National Better Business Bureau, "and all the laws in creation cannot prevent people from giving their money to crooks. It is astonishing how gullible humanity is, by and large. If the average person would only remember one thing—just one thing—it might save countless headaches and heartaches, as well as millions of dollars otherwise lost yearly. That one thing is: Never take the word of a stranger in a business deal of any kind and suspect him of the worst, and act accordingly, when he asks for money on any pretense."

WAITRESSES, cashiers and chauffeurs are not any more gullible than school-teachers when the latter are approached in a way that appeals to their desire for betterment. Consider this artful scheme against the intelligentsia.

Out in Denver, Colorado, there was a gentleman named J. U. Hardell who set himself the task of helping school-teachers in a large and generous fashion until the U. S. Post Office put an end to his activities last April by issuing a fraud order against his Continental Teachers Agency, Inc. It is significant that this organization was the successor to Mr. Hardell's National Educational Service, Inc., also of Denver, which four years ago was stopped by a similar fraud order!

Adopting the new names of Continental Teachers Agency, Inc., Mr. Hardell tried to continue the old racket of enrolling school-teachers at $10.00 per enrollment on a national scale, promising them good positions if they hadn't any (mostly the case), better positions than those they held, and lucrative work during the summer months if they desired to add to their income.

Under his old and discredited corporation name of National Educational Service, Inc., the Government had found that Mr. Hardell and his associates furnished their enrolled "members" with a list of vacancies in teaching positions throughout the United States but it was left to their individual efforts to secure a position! None, it is safe to say, expected to be treated in such an impersonal way, where luck was more of a factor than influence or guidance.

Also, it was disclosed that the "summer employment" held out to teachers and others who were unemployed and enrolled, consisted of a list of jobs such as house-to-house canvassing, traveling salesmen and similar employment. All of which could be easily found by anybody who took the trouble to read the classified ads of a large daily newspaper at the cost of a few cents. These were not the kind of jobs the "members" were led to expect they would receive.

Furthermore, it was found that refunds were promised to dissatisfied "members" provided all of the terms of the "contract" entered into were complied with, but—and here's the joker—the contract was so adroitly worded that Mr. Hardell, under its terms, was required to pay very few refunds. That is, he himself admitted that during the period of his National Educational Service operations he had taken in a total of about $185,000 and refunded only about $4500. No doubt a sort of "conscience money" disbursement in the face of thousands of complaints received from dissatisfied "members." The lucky ones who got their money back probably had complied with all clauses in the contract and could have brought suit.

As the National Educational Service, Inc., this Mr. Hardell did business on an impressive scale, advertising in educational magazines and sending out multigraphed form letters to literally hundreds of thousands of names obtained from state teachers' directories and other publications of interest to teachers. He got lists of vacancies from school boards, county superintendents of schools and other officials charged with employment of teachers. But by the time his list was compiled and mailed out to his "members" the jobs might be filled—he didn't know. To show how his list of vacancies might line up with his enrolled "members" it is only necessary to point out that in a year Mr. Hardell might sign up 2800 applicants and have less than 1000 vacancies to offer them, yet he had promised them all positions!

Becoming the "Continental Teachers Agency, Inc.," in March, 1934, Mr. Hardell sent a proposed advertisement to some 10,000 newspapers (no less!) throughout the country instructing them to insert it and accept a 90-day post-dated check enclosed with it! Cool as you please, he explained he hadn't the money at the moment to cover the checks, but he expected to receive sufficient money from remittance in reply to his ad to honor the checks on the date due!

Optimistic Mr. Hardell informed the newspapers he approached with this advertisement that, as a result of it, he expected to enroll 8,000 teachers, and felt sure he could obtain positions for 20 per cent or 1600 of that number. What was to become of the other 6400 who were to pay their $10.00 each? But the following letter was received by all who answered the Western Piper of rosy dreams:

Dear Friend:

The enclosed information tells you how you can earn several hundred dollars this summer, and it also tells you how you can secure a better position and a larger salary. It will pay you to read it carefully.

We are now engaged in the biggest nation-wide advertising campaign for vacancies we have ever undertaken. This advertising reaches tens of thousands of superintendents and school boards and employers of

Don't Let Them Rob You

all kinds, and costs thousands of dollars every month.

You can get the full benefit of ALL THIS ADVERTISING, and of ALL OUR VACANCIES, if you enroll now. Our big agency covers the entire United States, and our service is available to teachers, librarians, students and college graduates in every section of the country.

"My guardian angel must have prompted me to enroll with you. You sent me more good vacancies the first week than I ever received from any other agency in a year." "Thanks for sending me so many good positions to apply for, over 30 during the first five days I was enrolled."

RIGHT NOW is the time to enroll. Good positions are available now in every state in the Union. If you want one of them, fill out our enrollment blank, AND MAIL IT TODAY. We will begin working for you immediately and you may receive a telegram in less than ten days, stating that you have been elected to a good position. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose, because we guarantee to secure a good position for you, or we will refund your enrollment fee in full.

Enclosed with this high-powered letter was a circular describing the great institution and its successful administration, and a contract, a part reading:

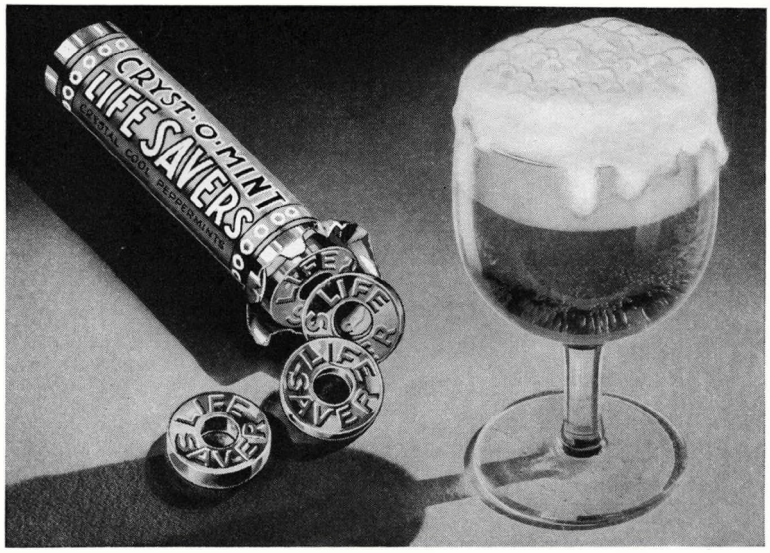
> The CTA agrees that if it fails to secure a good position for the candidate, it will, if the candidate requests a refund, refund all the money the candidate paid the CTA., including all the money the candidate paid the CTA for photos. The candidate agrees to supply the CTA with at least six good copies of his or her photo. *Failure to do so within one week* from the date of this enrollment will relieve the CTA from *all obligations* to make a refund to the candidate.

Please note the nine words we have italicized, for they held one of the pitfalls for the "members" who were about to sign and hadn't read the fine-print contract very carefully. Likely enough, human nature being what it is, these photographs would not be taken and sent to the CTA within the short period specified, and thus Mr. Hardell would be legally relieved of obligation to make the refund when, and if, demanded. Also, there was another loophole for the CTA in the contract which contained a provision that a sum of $20,000 was to be set aside for its "annual expenses" out of enrollment fees before any refund whatsoever could be considered. So, if Mr. Hardell obtained only 2000 memberships in a season he was not obligated to make refunds.

Imagine the hopes raised by such an advertising and circularizing campaign in the breasts of thousands of school-teachers out of jobs or on part-time in this year of retrenchment and bankruptcy in many municipalities! Even the optimistic Mr. Hardell admitted the dark aspect of the picture he was doing his best to gild, in a letter to a complaining "member." He wrote:

(*Please turn to page* 80)

LINGERING LAGER LICKED BY LITTLE LIFE SAVERS!



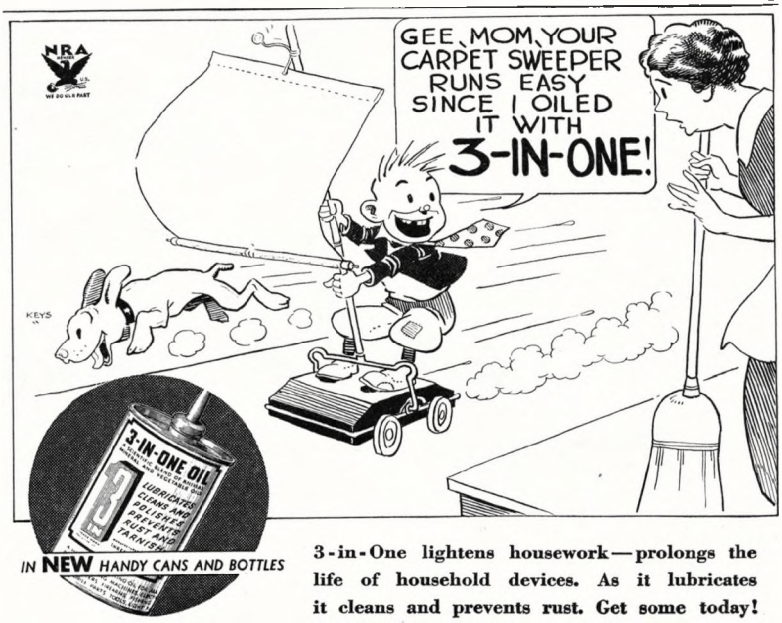
When the Stein Song is over... that's the time for a Life Saver. No breath of lager lingers with a Life Saver on the tongue.

IF IT HASN'T A HOLE . . . IT ISN'T A LIFE SAVER!

Don't Miss Out!

$2000 in Cash Prizes for the Best Shopping Experience Letters . . .

See pages 12 and 13 of this magazine for full details.



IN **NEW** HANDY CANS AND BOTTLES

3-in-One lightens housework—prolongs the life of household devices. As it lubricates it cleans and prevents rust. Get some today!

Good heavens!
those pots and pans again

THAT'S WHERE
S.O.S SHINES
—in double-quick time

Yes—the meanest task of the whole day! But that's just the time to put S. O. S. on the job.

Simple. Wet the edge of an S. O. S. pad—scour—rinse. Those messy utensils will be shining—and you'll be smiling again—before you realize it.

Get another package today. Your grocer, department, hardware or five and ten cent store has it. Or the coupon below will bring you a generous free trial package.

FREE Mail this coupon or a post-card to The S. O. S. Company, 6204 W. 65th Street, Chicago, Ill., for a free trial package of S. O. S. You'll like it!

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ B

Don't Let Them Rob You

(*Continued from page 79*)

"This is, however, a very exceptional year, due to the depression. Millions of people are out of employment everywhere. All of them are looking for work, and almost all of them are willing to accept any kind of position at almost any salary.

"Everywhere cities are reducing salaries and giving preference to their own unemployed residents. That is why it is so hard for agencies to secure positions for outsiders this year."

This letter admitting his inability to keep his rosy promises helped to convict him of false pretenses and fraudulent promises.

SAYING good-by to Mr. Hardell, let us take a peek at the phony partnership racket that is a prime favorite with gyps.

Because jobs have been so scarce during the past four years, these swindlers have flourished like the proverbial green bay tree, and their set-ups have been of the widest imaginable variety, from hole-in-the-wall shops to big business ventures. The principle of this game is always the same under all its manifestations, and that is to get as much of the sucker's money as possible before he or she finds out the truth of the situation, and fades away.

Often, the poor victim having tried to get a regular job in vain for months, maybe a year, has to borrow this "partnership" money as a last resort to stage a come-back, and involves some relative or friend who is also unable to bear such a loss.

This was the experience of Miss Browning, of Louisville, Ky., who read an ad—a modest little ad—for women to solicit merchandise which was to be listed for trading. Only a refined, ladylike person need apply, this ad stated. Interested, she called at the office address, where she was received courteously by a nice Miss Weinstein and a nicer Mr. Hickman.

Representing their business as a state-wide commercial organization, the pair of polite jackals warmed up their gentle victim with visions of immediate expansion and profits. Insidiously, they persuaded Miss Browning to try to get $200 to invest in a half-partnership—a marvelous opportunity!

"I could only ask my widowed sister," said Miss Browning.

"Why, she ought to be glad to do it!" exclaimed Mr. Hickman. "You can pay her back with interest inside a month!"

"I should say!" murmured Miss Weinstein.

Well, Miss Browning got the cash from her widowed sister and turned it over to Partner Hickman.

Next morning, Miss Browning found the office closed. Soon after that she discovered the furniture in the place was rented, and that the rent had been paid for only one week. Two days later, she received a post-card:

"Dear Miss Browning:

I had some trouble and have to go to Philadelphia. I am giving you my half interest in the business and you can take a partner and sell him half interest in the business for $200.00, and keep it, as I don't know just exactly when I'll get back. Answer soon.

A. L. Hickman,
Gen. Del., Phila., Pa.

That "answer soon" is a rich touch to the picture considering that he and his lady friend didn't want their whereabouts to be known to anybody, and were probably going to set up another "office" in an entirely different city from Philadelphia. As a matter of fact, they were next heard from in Indianapolis. It is also worth remarking the unusual generosity of Mr. Hickman is giving up his share of the business and suggesting that Miss Browning follow his example in hooking a partner—a free lesson in bunco!

Brother to Hickman is a middle-aged man named Quimmer, which, of course, he may change on occasion, who speaks with a slight foreign accent, and persistently seeks for a partner in his upholstery shop. Before looking for a partner, however, Mr. Quimmer settles in an empty store and solicits upholstery work and repairs. Usually, with any luck at all, he soon has a stock, some of which is junk belonging to him, and pieces sent him to refurbish.

Calling himself the "Washington Upholstery Company" or some other equally high-sounding name, he advertises for a partner who will take a third interest for $300. But if he can't get that much he will take less, or the $300 in three installments. Mr. Quimmer is not one to expect blood out of stone. *Ach Gott.* No!

Even a hundred-dollar cash payment may satisfy him, and he will quit his new "partner" at once, perhaps writing him a letter in which he makes over the entire business to him in consideration of the sum of $1.00, which of course he has already paid a hundred times.

Looking for assets, the crooked "partner" finds liabilities or nothing save small repair jobs, furniture work, the scrap-heap, and perhaps a month's rent due on the premises!

Last April, a Mr. Myron H. Caldwell was arrested and sentenced in Chicago for his long-established habit of forming partnerships with unemployed men in a furniture polish business called the Jiff-o Chemical Corporation. His ordinary procedure was to sell a half interest for $750, but he'd accept as little as $250 down, which would clinch the bargain.

Unlike most "partnership" artists of the kind, Mr. Caldwell was not the vanishing kind. Not at all! He'd stick to his new "partner" even when that deluded gentleman discovered there was no business to speak of, and complained of being foxed. Quarrels would naturally follow. If the "partner" didn't bring Caldwell to time for fraud, Caldwell would likely enough obtain a warrant for his "partner's" arrest on a charge of assault and battery. It was pleasant for Caldwell to be the "injured" party.

At any rate, these "partners" and Mr. Caldwell never got on together for long, the period being two or three months, and even during that time Caldwell would advertise for a new "partner" on the grounds that he couldn't get along with his present associate who, in the last analysis, owed him considerable money on the partnership, anyway!

FUNNY faces will hide happy faces! Every boy and girl who has the fun of making the Hallowe'en masks and costumes in the October Tiny Tower is certainly going to wear a happy face beneath a cat mask or behind a witch's nose. In fact, there are so many amusing things to make in this issue that they alone are worth several times the price of the magazine.

ADD to these fun-makers the rhyme page about Walt Disney's Wise Little Hen . . . Jack and Jill's adventures among the pumpkin people . . . Hallowe'en magic . . . stories, comics, puzzles and color pages . . . and you have a magazine to delight every young child.

THERE'S no chance for the children to miss a single issue of this delightful magazine if they have a year's subscription to Tiny Tower. Send today for a twelve months' supply of fun . . . only $1.00 a year.

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and Newsstands
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TINY TOWER

•

55 Fifth Avenue New York, N. Y.

Don't Let Them Rob You

But Messrs. Hickman, Quimmer and Caldwell are merely three little spiders among hundreds in the web of "partnership" rackets that stretches from coast to coast, and includes everything from brokerage firms to humble paint shops, from pig ranches to the A and B Rope Holder clothesline device, from pop-corn wagons to breweries. The persons, young and old, poor and well-to-do, male and female, that get caught in this vast web are without number, for while thousands protest at being dupes, other thousands shut their mouths and take their medicine in silence.

Nothing is too absurd, apparently, for the "partnership" gyps to try to put over. Just think, for instance, of your being asked to become a "partner" in a 600-foot shark net, taking, say, a 60-foot section of it for $150!

Don't laugh! It was done. Right in New York, too.

Solemnly, the promoters of the enterprise assured their investors that at least 100 sharks would be caught in a net of that size each month for eight or nine months a year. It was estimated that a 12-foot shark was worth $12.00 to $16.00. Multiply that, dear friend, by 100 and you get a month's return on a 600-foot net! Yes, the promotors had to have their rake-off for their fishing services, naturally, and that would be 50 per cent of the catch. But that left a tidy profit to the investors of each $150 in the big net.

Risk? Even at the worst, if the shark fishing was bad, which was fantastic to suppose in the face of the Bureau of Fisheries statistics, the promoters promised to allow each $150 investor a minimum of three sharks a quarter, or $18.00 in cash, which in a year would amount to $72.00, an excellent return on the amount invested. But they did not tell you that very little was known of actual shark-fishing as a commercial project, and that the nets used were subject to all kinds of hazards of weather and deep-sea, and might be destroyed in a short time.

If, as a prospective sucker, you wondered what possible commercial use a shark could be put to, the promoters waxed eloquent: Salted white shark meat sold for $145 a ton, the dark meat for $75 a ton, while the oil brought 90 cents a gallon. The fins, a Chinese delicacy—surely you knew of that—brought as much as $2.00 a pound! Why, simply as fertilizer, a dried and pulverized shark brought $65 a ton. To slay you further for your ignorance of shark facts, they told you that——

"There are also the eyes, used for jewelry and buttons, the backbone for walking sticks. The teeth, of which there are several hundred, in a full grown shark, are often sold in curio shops at 25 cents a pair."

And that didn't take in the sale of the skin of the creature, which was used for a fine leather—shagreen. Nor did it take in (we hope) many suckers. But we can't help feeling that more suckers were caught in those nets than sharks!

Don't miss next month's issue of this magazine for the third sensational article exposing the gyp rackets of the depression period, and the human vultures who prey on their fellow-men! These articles should be known to every MYSTERY ***reader —get next month's copy!***

Beautiful Hair

IS YOURS FOR THE ASKING

Have the lure and charm of lovely hair without the expense of a hairdresser. It is now possible to keep your hair in a lovely wave at a very nominal cost to you. Dr. Ellis' Special "Quick—Dry" WAVESET keeps your hair soft and lustrous, and it is so easily applied that today it has become the most popular WAVESET at your cosmetic counter.

Prove to yourself that Dr. Ellis' Special "Quick—Dry" WAVESET will give your hair the alluring wave and sheen so popular among stage and screen stars.

Today, instead of getting an expensive hair dress, try this wonderful discovery. You will be amazed how easy it is to successfully dress your own hair with Dr. Ellis' Special "Quick—Dry" WAVESET. Just use a comb or your fingers and set the waves best suited for your coiffure. In a few minutes your hair is dry and free from flakes. Comb out and you have a beautiful lustrous wave and a sheen that will match the attractiveness of your favorite stage or screen star.

DR. ELLIS' SPECIAL "QUICK—DRY" WAVESET may be purchased in a six-ounce comb dip bottle for 10c at all good cosmetic shops, department and 10c stores.

Dr. Ellis' Lemon-Oil Concentrate SHAMPOO. 1¾ oz. size, 10c.

Dr. Ellis' Original Skin BALM. 1¾ oz. size, 10c.

Dr. Ellis' Special "Quick—Dry" Wave Fluid CONCENTRATE. Makes 1 quart. 10c.

Dr. Ellis' Special "Quick—Dry" Waveset POWDER. Makes 1 quart. 10c.

Written by Dr. Ellis enroute to Chicago, 8000 feet in the air in his Stinson Plane, piloted by Captain J. B. Franklin, President of the Franklin Airways Advertising Corp., Pittsburgh, Penna.

Dr. Ellis Sales Co., Pittsburgh, Pa. Toronto, Canada

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You'll never realize the power of beautiful eyes until you try Winx—my perfected formula of mascara that keeps lashes soft, alluring. Your eyes—framed with Winx lashes—will have new mystery, new charm, I promise you.

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Millions of women prefer Winx to ordinary mascara. New friends are adopting Winx every day. Without delay, you, too, should learn the easy art of having lustrous Winx lashes. Just go to any toilet counter and buy Winx. Darken your lashes—note the instant improvement.

To introduce Winx to new friends, note my trial offer below. Note, too, my Free Booklet offer, "Lovely Eyes—How to Have Them". I not only tell of the care of lashes, but also what to do for eyebrows, how to use the proper eye-shadow, how to treat "crow's feet", wrinkles, etc. . . . LOUISE ROSS.

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If you also want a generous trial package of Winx Mascara, enclose 10c, checking whether you wish ☐ Black or ☐ Brown.

Off The Record

(*Continued from page* 23)

assurance that she will pay her share of all the claims due to American citizens.

The German claims measure, in other words, carried an amendment authorizing Reconstruction Finance Corporation loans for western water districts!

That was all in the day's business for the Senate, which went home and forgot about it. Finally, however, the bill reached the red brick building on Massachusetts avenue which houses the German Embassy.

The ambassador read the first part of the bill. It was exactly what he had expected. He read on and ran into phrases concerning "purchase of storage reservoirs of dams or additional water rights, or canals, ditches or right-of-way for the conduct of water." That was too much for Herr Luther.

"Was Germany supposed to pay for irrigating Idaho?"

Herr Luther didn't know. Neither did his attorney. So they telephoned Borah, who laughed and told them to skip it. Herr Luther sailed shortly thereafter for Berlin, muttering to himself over the strange ways of what is called the most powerful legislative body in the world.

Bloom in the Summer Time

REPRESENTATIVE SOL BLOOM of New York, who rediscovered George Washington for America, has been doing some exploring down at the cavernous headquarters of the Blue Eagle. What he found made him so mad he engaged in a knock-down, drag-out fight (by mail) with General Hugh S. Johnson, greatest of the New Deal battlers.

Bloom strolled into the Department of Commerce, the largest governmental building on earth, seeking the Department's export division. He hoofed through endless corridors, rode in countless bronze elevators and somehow wound up in the mail division of the National Recovery Administration.

"I found no one working, but everybody smoking and talking," Bloom said. "They didn't know I was a member of Congress. I tried to find out where I was and how to get where I wanted to go.

"They didn't know anything and I got insolent replies. About that time Representative Beedy (Republican, Maine) came in. He was misdirected to the same room. He stood there looking at those people—smoking and talking—and getting madder because we couldn't get a civil answer.

"The attitude of the employees was typical of the NRA—insolent. The air was full of cigarette smoke, but no work was being done."

Bloom had hardly returned to his office before he received a sizzling letter from Johnson. It said:

"Dear Congressman Bloom:

"I am informed that you entered the mail division of the NRA Saturday and proceeded, noisily, to reprimand various employees for permitting 'smoking and idling,' and threatening to make a speech about it to 'wipe out the whole of NRA.'"

After saying that he permitted smoking by his help and praising the patriotism of his employees for working long hours, Johnson concluded his letter thus:

"This administration has the strictest orders to show all Congressmen the courtesy and respect due their rank and reponsibilities and you were shown both, but I regard your action in the matter as discourteous to me and unwarranted. It is not your business to discipline or reprimand an executive organization. If you have any complaint to make about employes here, the place to make it is to me and my door will always be found open to Congressmen."

Bloom hasn't yet opened Johnson's door, but when and if he does, the results will be chronicled in these columns. The fray should be worth watching.

The Representative from New York is one of the most colorful of Congressmen. His Washington Bicentennial celebration is his chief claim to fame. In memory of it he has just written and published an elaborately printed brochure of questions and answers concerning the father of his country. The book tells about the zither that Washington presented to his daughter-in-law, about the false teeth that Washington wore and goes into detail concerning such questions as the kind of wine he used, the color of his eyes and whether he was gentle with his slaves.

When pressed Bloom also will admit that he used to be a song publisher and that his biggest hit number was the "Streets of Cairo," written for the first Chicago World's Fair. It was the tune to which Little Egypt wriggled. Remember how it went?

"Ta-de-dum-dum-dum—ta-da-dum—"

Gandhi in the Gallery

AROUND the Senate chamber is a gallery, in which citizens may sit until they become bored watching their legislators at work. The gallery is well guarded by eagle-eyed sleuths, but every once in a while they are caught napping.

The last time that happened a man dressed in the costume of the Mahatma Gandhi slipped by them.

The senators were so busy making speeches at each other that they didn't notice him until a clerk shouted: "There's a man in the Senate with no clothes on."

That woke everybody up, all right, including Sergeant-at-Arms Chesley Jurney.

With the tails of his frock coat flying, Jurney dashed up to the gallery with half a dozen policemen and ejected the white Gandhi. He wore sandals, a loin cloth and a white cape which was about as modest as Sally Rand's fan. The effect was, to say the least, startling.

Previously another unwelcome visitor turned up in the House gallery. He listened to the oratory as long as he could stand it, then stood up in his chair, pointed a gun at the Congressmen and said:

"Now you listen to me."

They listened—attentively—until the faithful police were able to sneak up on the intruder and spirit him away. All of which indicates that the life of a Congressman is pretty exciting, all other reports to the contrary.

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Also delicious meals in the Salon Madrid, and the outdoor Café with luncheon eighty-five cents . . . dinners $1.00 and $1.50.

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Ghosts, Shadows and Death

(*Continued from page* 34)

wonderful!" Again her eyes were far away. She was silent for a moment. "You know," she continued, "this night is strange. I feel strange stirrings tonight." She looked about her strange room, looked deep into the shadows. "I feel as I did over sixty years ago. Eager. Like something was to happen. Something strange or terrible or wonderful, but something new and exciting." She sighed. "Well, that is as it should be, I suppose. He is to play Chopin. My beautiful Chopin. The 'Fantasy in F Minor.' The greatest of Chopin. And how he will play it!" Fire leaped to Nancy Gray's eyes. "I have heard Rubenstein play it. I have heard Taussig, Essipowa, Paderewski, de Pachmann, Josseffy, Rosenthal, Liszt, a score more, but none like Rajaloff. None like him! He has the fingers of an Olympian and his heart must be that of a god's. He is the best. But that is not unusual. Only the slavs and Magyars know how to interpret Chopin. Only they understand him. And besides that, he is young—like Chopin was young . . . young . . ."

Nancy Gray closed her eyes. Her hand soothed Eleanor's brow. They were silent. In the corner, the tall clock ticked stealthily; in the reaches of the room the shadows seemed deeper.

"Young artists," said Nancy suddenly, "who are great, should not have to think of money. They should be taken care of."

She smiled, looking down at Eleanor, and then she started, as Miss Lake and Eleanor started. Nearby, there was the thud of a falling object and a soft shatter.

Martin, who had come in noiselessly, had dropped a demi-tasse cup of egg shell thickness. It lay in pieces on the carpet.

"That is unusual of you, Martin," said Nancy.

Miss Lake flashed the butler a look of outraged disapproval.

"I'm sorry," said Martin. He gathered up the pieces.

"Never mind," said Nancy. "Everything is strange this night. Ah," she continued, "now it comes."

Rajaloff, followed by Robert Proctor, had returned. Eleanor rose and returned to her chair as Robert Proctor took his seat. Rajaloff walked to Nancy Gray and stood above her smiling. Nancy's eyes twinkled as she looked him up and down.

"You have not changed your mind, Miss Gray?"

"About the Fantasy?" She laughed. "My dear boy, could anyone change his mind about that? Could you?"

"No," said Rajaloff. "I shall play it then."

He turned and walked to the piano.

"He is well built," Nancy murmured to Miss Lake. "I imagine his legs would be very pretty."

She chuckled; Miss Lake sniffed.

"I suppose that is something you know nothing about, Bertie?"

"Nor care to."

"Well, there's not much danger now, Bertie."

Again Nancy chuckled. The companion looked sidewise at her mistress and was severely disapproving.

But Rajaloff had begun.

(*Please turn to page* 84)

A TRUE STORY

By A MOTHER

who found the "only thing" good enough for her children

A MOTHER will go to any length to get something which her children need. To her, their welfare is the only thing that matters. That's why this letter from Mrs. Ralph W. Michael, of Lakeville, Indiana, is worth reading. But let her tell her own story.

"Six years ago, before my daughter Marilyn was born, I was a very sick woman. I suffered terribly, and I was sure an operation was the only way out to end my suffering.

"Then my doctor prescribed Nujol. I used it daily for over a year, and from the start found improvement from the constipation which was the main source of my trouble. Because Nujol is a 'natural regulator' and not a 'habit former,' I found I could gradually decrease the amount taken, and at the beginning of my second year I needed only a little every other day.

"My two lovely little daughters, Marilyn, six, and Prudence, who is four, are being brought up on this same safe Nujol which was such a godsend to me. I would not think of trusting their delicate little organs to anything but Nujol. I have had them on Nujol since they were tiny babies and, just as in my own case, I find that it has trained them to daily regularity.

"Yes, indeed, I am always glad to say a good word for my dear old friend, Nujol, and you may publish this letter. It may help Nujol to do for other people the same good that it has done for me."

Follow Mrs. Michael's example. Use Nujol yourself—bring up your children on it to be regular as clockwork. You can get Nujol at any drug store—now in two forms—plain, and Cream of Nujol, the latter flavored and often preferred by children.

What is your Nujol story? If you have been using Nujol for ten years or more, if you are bringing up your children on it, tell us. Address Stanco Incorporated, 2 Park Avenue, Dept. (19T), New York City.

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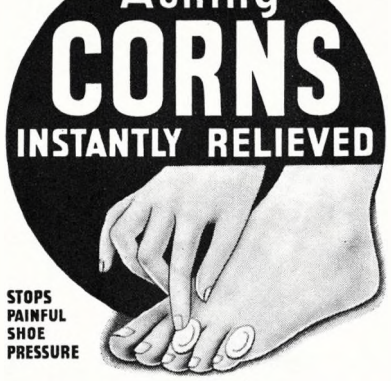

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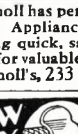

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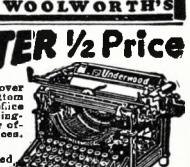

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Ghosts, Shadows and Death

(*Continued from page* 83)

Nancy leaned back in her great bronze chair, her hands on the heads of the twin goddesses. The others sat rigidly. Even the shadows were tranquil; even the people of the portraits seemed to look with a little less intensity, as if charmed.

The macabre march, filled with the dangerous dissonances ended and the triplets climbed, but then the music plunged to the very depths of the piano. This was followed by the flat episode, the heroic love chant, and beneath Rajaloff's fingers it soared three times in triumph, before the triplets again arched to the great thrilling song in C minor. Then the octaves that seemed to rive the earth.

Nancy Gray sat with her eyes closed, her hands clutching the heads of the goddesses tightly. Miss Lake sat as if in suspended animation, her eyes riveted on Rajaloff. Behind her, Martin, his lips parted, looked at the pianist fixedly. Robert Proctor sat very still in his chair, his eyes closed as were those of the woman he served. Eleanor looked at the man she loved and there were tears of sheer wonder in her eyes.

There were thunderous vibrations of chords and after that a retreat of sound and then once again the rolling triplets. . . . Rolling to what seemed inaccessible heights and impossible grandeur, and then came the first theme sounds in C minor. From there the modulation shifted to G flat, only to drop again to abysmal depths.

There was desperation there; there were might and terror and grandeur and then there was a pause.

The figures of those in the room were motionless, as if their bodies were mere shells from which the soul had fled to those impossible heights.

AND then, after the desperation, after the might and the terror and the grandeur and after the fateful pause, there was peace . . . peace in the majestic B major chord that rang like a celestial chime in the strange room. It was at once a fact and a promise, that chord; it was an event that presaged more events to come. But it was peace . . . strange, perhaps terrible, certainly wonderful.

The pianist held it for two beats and there was a soft humming sound, as if the resonance of that marvelous instrument evoked by the great chord had electrified the very atmosphere.

And Nancy Grey, as the majestic chord sounded, stiffened, jerking forward in her bronze chair. She gasped, and her eyes flew open to shine in strange, awful beauty. Her hands clutched the heads of the twin goddesses convulsively.

Then she relaxed in her chair, as if the peace that was so wonderful had overwhelmed her.

Rajaloff played on, and he was starting the next phrase when Robert Proctor rose suddenly from his chair.

"Stop!"

Robert Proctor's voice was sharp. The mighty music died as the fingers of Rajaloff suspended above the keyboard. The pianist looked up, startled, his smoky eyes furious. Eleanor looked with fright at the lawyer. Miss Lake, her dark eyes widened, stared at the lawyer fearfully, as did Martin, who stood behind her.

Robert Proctor crossed to where Nancy Gray sat enthroned in the bronze chair that an empress had given her. For a moment he stood above her, the silence of the room oppressive in his ears; with only the stealthy ticking of the tall clock to disturb the silence, and then he said in a voice of fear:

"Nancy!"

But Nancy Gray did not answer.

"Nancy!" said the lawyer again, but still Nancy Gray did not answer. Robert Proctor did not turn, did not look at anyone. He simply said brokenly, as his body seemed to sag:

"I'm afraid she's dead."

For a moment even the ticking of the tall clock seemed stilled. Then Miss Lake's wail filled the room.

"It's her heart!" screamed Miss Lake. "I told her not to come down! I told her! The excitement was too much for her!"

MISS LAKE'S wailing seemed to startle the shadows, seemed to awaken strange things in the room. It seemed no longer a unit, a cohesive whole, now that Nancy Gray was dead. It had been, as it were, Nancy Gray's little kingdom and with her death it seemed to disintegrate. It seemed populated with the phantoms of the people of the portraits; it seemed a sinister place, a place that had promised death and had fulfilled the promise.

Eleanor stood staring at Nancy Gray.

She ran to her aunt and, trembling, knelt before the thin, strangely beautiful body, buried her head in the blue satin lap and wept.

Martin came slowly around and looked at his former mistress with wide, staring, dry eyes, as if trying to rationalize this monstrous thing. Rajaloff, his powerful face broken with the emotions that tore him, walked like a somnambulist to where Nancy Gray sat, his smoky eyes streaming. He muttered something in Polish.

Robert Proctor raised Eleanor to her feet and held her as she wept.

Miss Lake, wringing her hands, moaned:

"Why didn't she listen to me? Why didn't she? I told her it would be too much!"

"But what a beautiful death," said Rajaloff. He was looking with infinite tenderness at Nancy Gray. "To die as she lived—how beautiful. With her eyes to the sun, strong to the last."

Miss Lake looked maliciously at the pianist, started to say something, but thought better of it.

"Well," said Robert Proctor, "we must do something." He sighed heavily. "Martin, you report the death to the authorities. I'll call the doctor on the other phone. I'll also—" he faltered a little—"call the undertaker." He looked from Miss Lake to Eleanor. "Perhaps," he continued, "you ladies had better see about her clothes."

Miss Lake and Eleanor stared at him a moment, then silently left the room. Martin followed them. The lawyer, with a backward glance at Rajaloff, followed, too. The musician rushed from the room. There was brandy in the card room. . . .

By the William Claggett clock it was ten-thirty. Fifteen minutes had elapsed since Rajaloff had struck the chord, since Nancy Gray had died.

Fifteen minutes more and again it

Ghosts, Shadows and Death

chimed and in another part of the city another clock sounded the three-quarter-hour as the William Claggett clock struck. This clock was in the modest living-room of Ashel Mayhew over by the East River.

Ashel Mayhew—sheriff-like, wrinkled, gray eyes thoughtful beneath grizzled brows as they looked through steel-rimmed spectacles at the newspaper he was reading from the weather forecast to the last want ad—sighed contentedly as he puffed a foul cigar that smelt like a smoldering bath towel.

Nearby sat Caroline, his daughter, sewing, and in another corner of the room, Detective Sergeant Vincent Graney, Caroline's husband, was playing solitaire. Caroline looked at her father and grinned.

"The great detective at home," said Caroline.

Ashel, as everyone knows, was the gentleman from Missouri, whose amazing, if unorthodox, sleuthing had caused the Police Commissioner of New York to assign him to a permanent post on the Homicide Squad. And his success since his appointment had been nothing short of phenomenal.

Ashel heard his daughter and grinned, but made no comment. In the corner Graney said:

"I need a black jack. . . .Where the devil is that black jack?"

"Peter Rajaloff," Ashel read aloud. "House guestin', it says, at Nancy Gray's."

"House guestin' at the morgue," said Graney absently. "I'd just as soon . . . Black jack. . . ."

The phone rang. Caroline laid aside her sewing and went to answer it. In a few minutes she returned.

"For you, pop," she said, resuming her sewing.

"If it's work," said Graney, "I ain't here. . . . There's that black jack."

Ashel went to the phone.

"Hello," he said.

"Mr. Mayhew?"

"Yes."

"Then listen well, Mr. Mayhew," said the voice. It was strange, this voice. It whispered. Ashel, startled into keenness by the timbre of the voice, debated whether it was masculine or feminine. "Listen carefully: Nancy Gray is dead, and you'd better see about it!"

"Why?"

"I can't tell you that and I can't discuss it. But you'd better come to Nancy Gray's house immediately. Do you hear? Immediately!"

"Who is this?"

"I can't tell you that, either."

"But who'll I say sent me?"

"Anyone you like!"

The phone went dead. Ashel stood for a moment, frowning, but the voice had stirred him. He hurried back to the living-room.

"Mistuh Graney—" always he called his son-in-law formally, which was characteristic—"get on your things. We got work."

"What?"

But Ashel was in the hallway getting into his raincoat.

"Coffee when we get home, daughter. Remember."

"O.K.," said Caroline.

"Well what—" began Graney.

The outside door slammed.

"You heard him, stupid," said Caroline sweetly. "Scram!"

Graney jumped up, hurried into his slicker and rushed after his father-in-law. He caught up with him at a taxicab.

"Now what in hell?" said Graney.

"It's at Nancy Gray's" said Ashel. "She's dead."

"So what?"

"So a voice calls an' says to hi-tail over'n see 'bout it."

"Whose voice?"

"Don't know."

"But what for? She's older'n God anyway."

"The voice didn't give details, Mistuh Graney. Maybe we can."

They lapsed into silence. Presently the cab drew up before the huge Gray mansion.

Martin answered their ring, his dark eyes staring, deep circles beneath them.

"Howdy," said Ashel.

Martin was puzzled. "Who, may I ask, are you?"

"Ashel Mayhew of the Homicide Squad an' this is Sergt. Graney o' the same outfit," said Ashel. "We heard Miss Gray died."

"She did," said Martin, "but its hardly necessary—"

"Now, now," said Ashel, "this is only formal, you might say."

He stepped past the angry butler into the hall, followed by Graney. Within, he threw his slicker and hat on the hall table, on which were trays filled with cards and keys, and walked on.

"But—" Martin was striving to keep pace with Ashel, but Ashel had come to the entrance of the room of many promises and memories. He stopped before the entrance, staring.

"Jeehosefat!" said Ashel, looking into the shadows; looking at the queer assortment of furniture and for a moment he did not notice that Robert Proctor and Miss Lake and Eleanor Gray and Peter Rajaloff were within the room. Behind him, Graney gasped, and then Martin hurried past them into the room.

"They are detectives!" he said shrilly.

They started at the announcement. Robert Proctor asked coldly: "What does this mean? An old lady with a weak heart has died—that is all."

Ashel looked long at the lawyer before he spoke.

"Just formal, you might say," he said. "Matter o' form."

"This," said Miss Lake, "is outrageous!"

As for Eleanor and the pianist, they simply stared.

"Well," said Ashel, "as long's we're here we better look around, just the same. I gotta report."

"But what is there to report?" asked Proctor.

"Don't know," said Ashel drily. "That's what we come to find out."

He was standing now before the bookcase, his eyes darting about the room. He looked at the portraits; he looked at the strange furniture; he looked from the piano to the bronze chair.

"Now just what happened?" he asked.

Miss Lake, standing rigidly before the chair in which she had sat when Nancy Gray died, drew herself up. There was something curiously courageous about Miss Lake now. Perhaps it was her outraged feelings that gave her courage; perhaps it was that her mistress, who had dominated her for

(*Please turn to page* 86)

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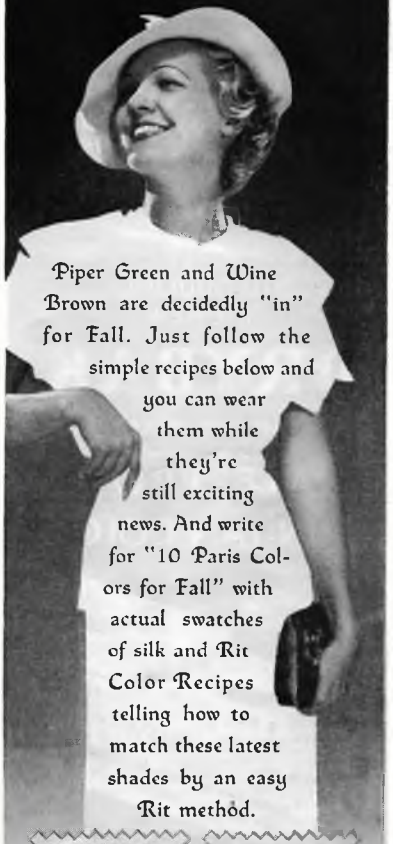

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Ghosts, Shadows and Death

(*Continued from page* 85)

so many years, was dead, but she said:

"That, I think, is none of your—"

"Wait, Miss Lake," said Proctor, "As long as he's here, we might as well tell him. That'll get rid of him the quicker, but tomorrow I'll investigate this." He paused, glaring angrily at Ashel, then continued:

"Well, for your information, we were gathered to hear Mr. Rajaloff play. We were seated here and—"

"How?"

Proctor stifled his annoyance. "Miss Gray was in the bronze chair where she always sits. This room has never been changed—since it seems to interest you—except to add new pieces, in fifty years, and Miss Gray always sat in the bronze chair. Miss Lake sat next to her there; then I was here, and Miss Eleanor Gray there. Mr. Rajaloff, naturally, was at the piano."

"What did he play?"

"The 'Fantasy in F Minor,' — Chopin," said Rajaloff. He glared at the detective. "I suppose that means a lot to you."

"It does," said Ashel. "Y' see I'm sort o' fond o' music an' I heard you at Carnegie a couple o' weeks ago, Mr. Rajaloff."

He turned to the lawyer. "Go on, Mistuh Proctor," he said.

The lawyer looked curiously at Ashel before answering.

"Mr. Rajaloff played," he said, "and we listened. It held us spell-bound—something you'll understand, since you seem to know music—but at a certain point I noticed Miss Gray move convulsively and then she dropped back into her chair. She had died, we found. Probably the excitement was too much for her heart, since she was passionately fond of Chopin—especially the Fantasy."

"At what point in the Fantasy, Mistuh Proctor?"

The lawyer frowned. He turned to Rajaloff.

"Perhaps you'd better explain that," he said.

"Why," said the musician. "About halfway through, but I don't see—"

Ashel looked keenly at the pianist, but Eleanor Gray said: "I heard a strange humming."

Ashel looked narrowly at the girl over his spectacles, then tugged his long moustache thoughtfully. "I suppose," he said absently, "Miss Gray's body's been sent away."

"It has," said Miss Lake.

"And," continued Ashel with an irrelevancy that surprised them, "you are all heirs, I suppose?"

"That's pretty personal," said Proctor coldly, "but I'll answer it. We are —all except Mr. Rajaloff and Miss Gray was considering making him an heir. Miss Eleanor Gray is the principal heir, then Miss Lake, then Martin, then myself."

"I see," said Ashel. For a moment he was silent again, before he said: "I suppose it's too much to act the thing over, but I'd like to—"

Miss Lake, horrified, started to speak, but Eleanor cried:

"Oh no! Why do you ask that? Why do you harp on this? Can't you see it's terrible enough without—I couldn't stand that! I—"

She turned to Rajaloff, sobbing. The musician looked fiercely at Ashel. But Ashel did not see the musician. His eyes were on the sobbing girl and they flashed. But he turned, as Proctor spoke. The lawyer's voice was weary.

"Perhaps you had better go now, if you're through," he said. "Don't you think you've gone far enough?"

Ashel did not answer immediately. He walked about the piano, shaking his head as if in wonder at such an instrument. Then he turned to the chair, and then his eyes darted about the room until they came to a radiator against the wall not far from the chair. Then, shrugging, he said:

"I guess I had better go, an' I want you all to know, I'm mighty sorry. I'm apologizin' for us bustin' in like this. I don't know why we was sent. . . . Come on, Mistuh Graney."

Ashel bowed, but they did not move. They watched him icily as, with Graney he strode from the room. At the table he paused, fumbling with his hat and slicker, and then Martin opened the door. Ashel and Graney went down the steps to the sidewalk as the door slammed with finality behind them. They turned and walked down Fifth Avenue.

"Now lissen, pop!" said Graney, when they had gone a short distance. Graney even stopped and faced his father-in-law. "Fun's fun, but what the hell? Here we go bustin' in on a private house when an old lady's died an' you get official. Anybody can see she died natural. What the hell? She had a bad pump, didn't she? An' I s'pose you know we'll catch hell tomorrow. We'll got a goin' over that'll be a lulu! Just what the hell?"

"We're goin' back, Mistuh Graney," said Ashel quietly.

"Back! Where? You're nuts! Why?"

"Mistuh Graney, somethin's wrong there. Did you notice anybody tryin' to tell me anything?"

"God, no! They all looked like they wanted to cut our throats!"

"Yuh hunh, but somebody did tell me somethin'."

"Who?"

"Proctor."

Graney's language was sulphurous. "Yeah?" he said. "Well, he's the cove that's gonna get us that goin' over."

"Maybe, Mistuh Graney, but he told me everything I asked him. He didn't have to, you know. An' I think that means somethin'."

They started back toward the Gray mansion.

"I s'pose," said Graney with sarcasm, "it was Proctor called you up on the phone."

"Mistuh Graney, if I knew that. . . ."

He did not finish. They were at the Gray house.

"Cross the street, Mistuh Graney, an' watch. When the lights go out, lemme know. Then we'll go in."

"How the hell will we get in?"

Ashel drew a key from his pocket. "Maybe you didn't notice 'em on the hall table, Mistuh Graney," said Ashel. He smiled. "But I did. I'm an uncommon noticer. They keep keys there like everybody does, for guests an' such. So I just took one, quiet-like, so to speak."

Graney stared, but he was not through doubting.

"S'pose the lights don't go out."

"Mistuh Graney, I think the lights'll go out downstairs, at least."

Graney shrugged. Muttering, he crossed the street, where he took his station in the darkened doorway of

Ghosts, Shadows and Death

an office building. Ashel, drawing his slicker close about him, huddled against a building near the mansion. The minutes went by and the traffic of Fifth Avenue went by in the pattering rain. Pedestrians were not numerous this night, but they were usual. They paid no attention to the gaunt figure huddled against the building there. They paid no attention to the great stone mansion crowded between the modern buildings of the avenue.

Ashel, watching Graney, started. The sergeant left his post and came across the street.

"Dark, pop," he said.

Ashel nodded. "We'll wait a little longer," he said.

They waited for perhaps fifteen minutes, then walked to the mansion, ascended the steps.

"Mistuh Graney," whispered Ashel, "unlimber your gun. I already got mine handy."

Awed, the sergeant obeyed.

"An' listen, Mistuh Graney, no matter what happens, don't move 'til I do. Then, if you got to, move like hell!"

They were within the storm door, now, and Ashel eased his stolen key into the Yale lock. He turned it twice, since the door had been doublelocked, swung open the door swiftly and, with Graney, slipped in. Noiselessly, he shut the door.

Within the house there was silence, save for the ticking of the tall clock that reached them from the great room. And within the house, downstairs, at least, there was complete darkness.

Slowly, their footsteps painfully cautious, their ears straining for the slightest sound, they made their way down the hall to the entrance to the great room. For an instant they paused there, then Ashel, his hand on Graney's arm, went in. He drew Graney close.

"On that side," he said, "next to the big sec'y'tary. I'll be over here by the chest."

They took their places, Graney to the left, as you went in, Ashel to the right. To their right was the end of the room where stood the piano and the bronze chair; to their left were the arched windows and the heavy draperies. A little light seeped between the draperies from the avenue outside.

They settled to their dark vigil in the strange room with the deep shadows and the portraits and the stealthily ticking clock. Faintly, the sounds of the avenue reached them; faintly, the rain, coming in gusts according to the autumn wind, pattered against the windows.

And the room creaked now and then as if weary with its memories and its death.

The minutes grew and the tall clock chimed, startling them, startling, as it were, the room. Sound seemed to disturb that blackness so that it bulged against their eyes in strange shapes, and then there came another sound, tiny, but thrilling.

It came from the hall outside, and then again there was only the ticking of the tall clock, the patter of the gusty rain, the faint, stealthy creaks of the room. But it was repeated.

It was a rustle. Again it came and again, and then they knew that someone was in the room. They knew it, although they could not see the figure, but they held their breath, for the figure was just within the entrance.

It had paused, they knew, but then it continued. It crossed the room to where the William Claggett clock stood, submerged in the deep blackness. Also, in the deep silence, for there were no more rustles now; there was no more movement. It was as if the room had swallowed the visitor.

Again, they waited, until the ticking of the tall clock grew almost deafening and then, just as it again sounded its ghostly chime, there came another sound.

This, also, was a rustle, tiny, but definite. And it came from the hall. It was repeated, as the rustle had been repeated before. But then it moved more rapidly and again Graney and Ashel knew that there was someone just within the entrance.

But then this figure moved, boldly, walking towards the piano, where it finally halted, and they heard the lid of the piano's keyboard raised softly.

Then silence again, with the ticking of the clock and the rain and the stealthy creaks. Again, the weird minutes went on, but it was not so long, this time. There came again the rustle from the hallway. And with it there could be heard, also, the soft, sleazy sound of feminine garments. The rustle came closer, came within the entrance and a voice called in a whisper:

"Are you there, dear?"

The answer came from the piano.

"Yes," it said, "Hurry!"

There was a quick movement across the deep carpet.

"God, that hum! I almost died myself. Do they suspect?"

"I don't know. We'll have to hurry, though. Hold the light."

A thin, sharp ray broke across the darkness, falling on the piano. Beneath its glow, long, strong hands removed the wooden facing before the keyboard. Long, strong hands pulled the keyboard from its bed, until the bottoms of the keys were accessible. Then a voice again.

"Take the radiator; I think I can manage this in the dark."

The light moved until it came to the radiator. And now slender hands reached out, behind the radiator and presently drew back and there was a wire in them.

"All right, dear," said a voice by the radiator.

"Come back, I need the light after all. I—"

In the corner by the William Claggett clock a floor lamp's radiance suddenly startled the room. A voice said:

"Perhaps this will help you, then."

The radiance of the lamp was faint because of the vastness of the room, but it revealed the figure at the piano; showed who was at the radiator. It also revealed Ashel and Graney, but those in the room were too absorbed, for the moment, to notice.

The figure at the piano whirled; the woman at the radiator stifled a scream.

"That's very ingenious," said the figure at the clock.

The man at the piano snarled, his eyes wild with rage. He drew from his bathrobe pocket an automatic.

"You'll never live to tell it!" he said. He sprang towards the figure at the clock.

It was then that Ashel moved. There was another floor lamp nearby and he pulled its cord. Its sudden illumination stopped the springing figure.

(*Please turn to page* 88)

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Ghosts, Shadows and Death

(*Continued from page 87*)

"You're wrong," said Ashel. "He'll live all right!"

The figure at the clock uttered a throaty exclamation. The man who had been by the piano turned, his mouth sagging, even his gun sagging and Graney, "moving like hell," was on him. He struck the man's strong wrists with his revolver, knocking the automatic to the floor and picked it up as the woman at the radiator screamed.

"Robert!" she screamed. "Oh, my darling!"

Miss Lake left the radiator and rushed to the lawyer's side. She turned on Graney with fury. Martin, the butler, shaken, walked slowly from his position by the clock.

"You sha'n't!" screamed Miss Lake. "You sha'n't!"

She clung to the lawyer, who nursed his injured wrist, who cursed savagely and she went on, her voice wildly shrill:

"She would have taken from us to give to that Rajaloff! She would have given him an endowment! She told Robert. And that meant we should suffer! We had to do it! We had to! We've earned it! Thirty years and more we've served her and we've earned it! And it was to go—go, after all these years. . . ."

Miss Lake began to whimper. . . .

"YES," the butler was saying, "I was he one who called." He spoke with a certain shyness, as if embarrassed at having to talk so much. "I knew Proctor and Miss Lake were angry because Miss Gray had announced she meant to endow Mr. Rajaloff. They didn't say much, but I could tell. And I knew as well as Proctor that, with securities declining as they have been, Mr. Rajaloff's bequest would probably prevent his receiving anything. Also it would eat into Miss Lake's. And I suspected that they were lover and mistress as they said they were.

"And tonight when she died, I heard that hum, too, as Miss Eleanor heard it, but I didn't believe my ears until she corroborated it. Of course Proctor and Miss Lake heard it, but they figured we'd be too absorbed in the music to notice. Almost, they were right." He looked at Ashel. "And I was as surprised as they when you showed up again. Thankful, too. Proctor was desperate. How'd you happen to come back, Mr. Mayhew?"

"Oh," said Ashel, "when a man like Proctor talks much 's he did, it means somethin'. He's either bein' frank because he wants to help or he's bein' frank to be disarmin'. In either case I had to get back, since I'd figured the possibilities of that contraption they'd rigged up."

"But," put in Rajaloff, "I don't yet see how it was done."

Ashel rose and walked to the piano. The keyboard was still out of its bed.

"Come here, Mistuh Rajaloff," he said. The pianist rose and walked to the great instrument that had become a machine of death. "Y'see these?" Ashel pointed to five keys. They were, for the left hand, a B octave, and for the right hand, an F sharp octave with a D sharp for the middle finger.

"The great chord!" said Rajaloff. "The B major."

"Yeah," said Ashel, "an' no other combination'd do it. You had to strike those notes at the same time to set the current. Those notes make five switches in series. Now look—On the bottom o' each o' these five keys there's a little coil o' wire. On the top o' the little pegs the keys rest on when you strike 'em, instead o' the usual felt there's been put a pad o' steel wool. That's the contact. The wire is one continuous wire runnin' up each o' the five keys to its fulcrum, an' then down the line o' the fulcrum to the next key an' so on, until it's brought through this little hole." Ashel stooped, as did Rajaloff, and pointed to a small hole bored in the keybed through which a double wire ran. "One o' these goes to the lowest B, the other to the highest F sharp. So when the chord's struck, the intervenin' keys along with those two close the circuit. That's what caused the hum. Any sudden increase in the number of outlets, or a new series on a house current, causes a slight momentary hum or buzz to occur, like a neon light hum. Now watch."

The Brussells carpet had been thrown back; the bookcase had been pulled out, revealing an outlet in the wall. The wires had been run down the leg of the piano next the wall and through a hole in the carpet made with an auger. They had then run under the rug and the bookcase to the outlet.

"Y' see," continued Ashel, "that's for the piano. Now come here."

He walked to the bronze chair. From the outlet another double wire had been run under the rug to the two front legs of the chair and attached there, through two little holes in the carpet also made by the auger.

"That," said Ashel, "is for the chair, an' then they run another wire to the radiator for a groundin' wire. . . . When'd you clean the room last, Martin?"

"Yesterday," said the butler.

"Huh huh," said Ashel. "An' nothin' in this room's ever shifted an' Miss Lake knows music as does Proctor, an' they knew you was to play tonight an' what, Mr. Rajaloff, so it was simple. They probably rigged it up last night. So all you gotta do is strike the chord an' Miss Gray, havin' a very weak heart like she did is gonna be killed. Or leastways there's a fifty-to-one chance of it, even with just house current, 'cause o' her heart. As was the case." Ashel sighed wearily. "Why'n't you tell me who you was when you phoned, Martin?"

"Mr. Mayhew," said the butler, "you should know the answer. Even if I found out how, it wouldn't make any difference unless I found out who. You see you couldn't prove who had done it very well and I wanted help. As for concealing my identity, you know yourself how valuable it is not to let people suspect you know something's wrong and they'd have known if I had told you. So when you left I still was going on alone. But fortunately you came back."

It was on the way home in the cold autumn dawn that Ashel said:

"Bright fella, that Martin." And then: "But I must be gettin' old. Should 'a' known why he didn't tell me who he was." He frowned. "Old Age must be creepin' up on me."

"Yeah?" said Graney. "From the way it affects you, maybe it'd be swell if it'd do a little creepin' on me, too."

Little Book of Strange Crimes

(*Continued from page* 35)

advise Max Baer, Babe Ruth and Mae West to stay away from Jersey City."

Aroused

IN Dallas, Texas, Hugh Davis killed his former wife, her son by a former marriage and her mother with a shotgun and then turned the gun on himself, taking his own life.

Said the police:

"Davis probably was aroused over the failure of his former wife to visit him at his fishing camp . . . as he had wished."

"I Ought to Know"

SHE is a former Follies beauty and still lovely. Recently, clad smartly, and carrying her baby, she entered the offices of a New York lawyer and demanded to see the lawyer. Her demand was refused and she was ordered to leave. This, she refused to do. A special policeman was called. He was no more persuasive than the office employes. Then a real policeman was called.

Meanwhile, with calm indifference, she was changing and feeding her baby. When the policeman arrived she was arrested.

She was tried and convicted of disorderly conduct, and although she accused the lawyer in whose office she had changed and fed her baby, of being the father of the child, she lost there, too. In court he was acquitted.

That, however, does not change her attitude.

"I think I ought to know," she says.

Recent Oddities, Attitudes, and Other Things

A LONDON man, released from a hospital, went home, cut his wife's throat and killed her. He cut his own throat, then, but failed to kill himself and returned to the hospital. When arrested, he said with supreme poise:

"I understand."

IN New York the cops took off their coats due to a new ruling by the Commissioner for the summer months. "To go to work," said the unfeeling wags. Coincidentally, Mayor La Guardia said: "Never mind Poderjay. How about Dutch Schultz?"

IN Tokyo the slayer of Premier Hara was pardoned. He emigrated immediately to Manchukuo. "To forgive and forget," he is reported to have said.

THE suicide rate for the United States declined in 1933 as compared to 1932. "The lessening effects of financial and industrial depression," say the insurance statisticians. Americans, it seems, are only average self-slayers, as the country stands halfway down the list, Chile having the lowest rate, Austria the highest. As in 1932, Davenport, Iowa, led the country in suicides.

IN Pittsfield, Mass., a country club was disconcerted because of the mysterious theft of golf balls in play. Close watch discovered that the greatest kleptomaniacs in the world were responsible—the crows.

IN Montreal, Timothy I. Burdick, called on to pay a $300 note to M. D. Lyanoff, a baker, obtained the document and ate it. Burdick denied this, saying he didn't owe Lyanoff anyway. The court decided otherwise, even though admiring Burdick's digestion.

IN Paris, the French government, after nineteen years, acquitted five men shot for mutiny in the World War. Said it wasn't so, that they hadn't mutinied. The widows of two were awarded, besides the innocence of their dead husbands, seven cents apiece.

IN Oklahoma City a woman was arrested for calling a traffic policeman "a big ox." The case was dismissed, the court finding that it merely was an "expression of personal opinion."

A BROOKLYN man was fined $250. for counterfeiting Swiss cheese.

A PITTSBURGH woman, with scarcely enough food in the house to feed herself and children was arrested for stealing five cents worth of meal for her thirty-eight goldfish.

IN New York, four cracksman worked three hours in a safe and obtained three safety pins—and a prison stretch.

A WILMINGTON, Delaware, man batted his wife over the head because she trumped his ace in a bridge game. For "dealing the slam," he was fined five dollars.

A SENECA, Kansas, woman revealed that she had kept the dismembered body of her mother in a trunk for two years, keeping the death a secret, in order to collect her mother's Civil War pension of $40.00 a month from the government. As the mother's natural death seems unquestionable, the authorities are perplexed. There's no charge unless the government prosecutes because of fraud.

IN Lancashire (England), a farmer was slain with a home-made bullet obviously shot from a sling-shot. Said the coroner: "Probably the victim of a full-blooded joke." Said the jury, with rare insight: "Death was caused by bullet, but there is no evidence to show how bullet was fired."

IN New York, Joe Armano, bootblack in an East Side social club, was shot and fatally wounded because he stopped a group of youths from throwing firecrackers in the windows of the club, July 4th. The youths escaped.

AND in New York, Herman Meyer, police detective of fame, to the exquisite relief of many crooks, hung up his shield and gum shoes and retired. His record, for thirty-one years, shows 4,105 arrests and 3,080 convictions. His fame was gained by his practice of treating his quarry to immense beef-steak dinners and dulling them into confession or carelessness. He retired, he said, because his wife wanted him at home.

A GRAY HAIR OR TWO
Spoils Your Whole Day

ARE YOU RESIGNED to settle down to humdrum middle age because your hair begins to show a little off color? It costs so little effort and expense to keep it natural, youthful looking, lustrous, soft and fluffy.

FARR'S FOR GRAY HAIR will keep you younger looking than your years; easy to use without instruction in hygienic privacy AT HOME. Odorless, greaseless, will not rub off nor interfere with curling. Once you've got the shade you wish a few occasional touches keep a uniform color. $1.35. For sale everywhere.

FREE SAMPLE

BROOKLINE CHEMICAL CO., T.M.22
79 Sudbury Street, Boston, Mass.
Send for FREE SAMPLE in plain wrapping.
Name.....
Street.....
City.....State.....
STATE ORIGINAL COLOR OF HAIR

Be a Nurse

MAKE $25-$35 A WEEK

You can learn at home in spare time. Course endorsed by physicians. Thousands of graduates. Est. 35 years. One graduate has charge of 10-bed hospital. Another saved $400 while learning. Equipment included. Men and women 18 to 60. High school not required. Easy tuition payments. Write us now.

CHICAGO SCHOOL OF NURSING
Dept. 2010, 26 N. Ashland Blvd., Chicago, Ill.
Please send free booklet and 32 sample lesson pages.
Name.....
City.....State.....Age.....

Your Iron Fairly Glides!

ELASTIC STARCH

This modern way to hot starch offers you advantages worth knowing. Simply add boiling water to dissolved Quick Elastic—no mixing, no cooking, no bother as with lump starch. Ends sticking and scorching. Restores elasticity and that soft charm of newness.

TRY THIS FREE

THANK YOU

THE HUBINGER CO., No. 795, Keokuk, Iowa.
Your free sample of QUICK ELASTIC, please, and "That Wonderful Way to Hot Starch."
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Change Now!
Betty Lou
TROPIC TAN
FACE POWDER
to enhance the beauty of your
SUMMERTIME COMPLEXION
TRY IT.... YOU'LL LOVE IT
CANADA 15c


10c
SOLD EXCLUSIVELY AT ALL
F. W. WOOLWORTH CO. STORES
FREE CHARACTER READING CHART
•A "get acquainted" gift from REJUVIA, the favorite lipstick of more than a million women. A complete 17 x 22" scientific character reading chart absolutely FREE to you.
Study your sweetheart's character • Analyze your friends • Learn what you are, and why you are • You will be amazed with the mysteries that this chart will reveal to you.
Mail your name and address on penny post card. No cost. No obligation. SEND NOW TO Rejuvia Beauty Labs., Inc., Dept. K-40, 295 Broadway, N. Y.
Try REJUVIA Lipstick today, velvet smooth, permanent waterproof, indelible, in correct shade for your individual complexion. A tested quality full size lipstick for only ...10 cents at most F. W. WOOLWORTH Co Stores. ...

SALTY, REFRESHING
LIKE SEA AIR

Your doctor prescribes salt as a gargle, your dentist prescribes salt as a mouth wash, and that is exactly why salt forms the base of this new Worcester Salt Toothpaste. It heals tender gums, it cleanses your teeth beautifully and safely, and its salty, tangy, exhilarating taste leaves your mouth delightfully refreshed. See for yourself. Large tube, 35c; guest size, 10c. Worcester Salt Co., *America's oldest refiners of pure salt*, 40 Worth St., New York, U. S. A.

I Go Sleuthing

(*Continued from page 6*)

other one dry, when he reappeared.

"Maria says all right," he grunted. "Come in."

Shaking ourselves like two Newfoundland dogs, we sloshed into the parlor.

"I kin give you some blankets, but that's about all. We h'ain't got much money."

"That's all right," I said kindly. "Suppose I pay you now for the rooms. Would two dollars be enough?"

He accepted the bills greedily enough.

"Suppose you'll be wanting to go to bed," he continued. "Your room's this way."

Fortunately the flickering candlelight hid most of the room's bad features. Our host had not exaggerated his poverty. The bed was a wreck, and the mattress seemed positively mildewed. After a private discussion, we decided to sleep on the floor; and I assure you that the back to nature movement was not a howling success. Every once in a while during the long night, we comforted each other with the reflection that anything was better than a night in the open.

Finally the welcome morning dawned, and we hoisted ourselves wearily off the floor. In cold daylight, the room looked even more unprepossessing than before. A large spider regarded us truculently from a corner, and having a natural aversion to spiders, both of us hurried outside.

"Shh!" my roommate remonstrated, as I clattered noisily into a wall. "You'll wake the sick lady."

"I wonder who'll get our breakfast?" I whispered back. "Personally, I could eat a horse with a little salt and pepper."

"Nobody's going to get anybody any breakfast on that stove," said my roommate darkly, as we entered the kitchen. "It would take a master mind to light it."

There was no sign of our host of the night before. After waiting politely for fifteen minutes, we wandered out into the yard. Here the evidences of neglect and disrepair were even more evident. The barn and outhouses proved as empty as the kitchen.

"He's probably gone to get us some gas," I said. "Perhaps we'd better go back, and see his wife."

A fruitless investigation of the upstairs rooms ensued. The house was absolutely deserted! And, to all appearances, it had been deserted for some time.

Faithful old Lizzie was still waiting patiently, but as long as she was a victim of the evil that cars are heir to, we had to resort to Nature's first method of locomotion. Three blisters later, we reached the next farmhouse —a charming place, full of gasoline and food. The farmer's wife was quite sympathetic, but when we told her where we had spent the night, her face blanched.

"My heavens!" she gasped. "That's the old Turner place. Nobody's lived there for years since Mr. Turner and his wife were found murdered in their beds. She was an invalid too, poor woman."

* * * *

I absolutely refuse to believe in ghosts. My roommate, who constantly talks about the gypsy in her, however, was positive that we were the victims of a psychic phenomenon. Being somewhat of a Sherlock, I discovered the solution by a very simple procedure—the purchase of an afternoon paper. On the front page was a striking likeness of our host of the night before, with the following headlines:

BANK ROBBER BREAKS JAIL
WHILE AWAITING SENTENCE

BELIEVED TO BE HIDING OUT
IN NEIGHBORHOOD

At that, he had an alert, inventive mind. Why he ever opened the door is a mystery, but once having taken that step, he could hardly afford to let us go on to the next farmhouse, where a suspicious local resident might choose to investigate the presence of a stranger in "the old Turner place."

Write Your Own Mystery

Do you know any actual events that have happened either to yourself or to your friends that you think constitute a real mystery problem? If so, try to solve it. MYSTERY MAGAZINE ***will pay $100 apiece for the best true "unwritten mystery stories" and their solutions submitted each month. All manuscripts should be no more than 1500 words in length, no less than 500 words, preferably typewritten, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only. Each month*** MYSTERY MAGAZINE ***will print one or more real mystery problems, told by*** MYSTERY ***readers, and their solutions. And remember—it will pay $100 for each of the best contributions published! Address your manuscript to the "I Go Sleuthing" Editor,*** MYSTERY MAGAZINE, ***55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.***

The November issue of

• MYSTERY •

will be on sale September 28. Get your copy early. The supply won't last all month.

The Riddle of the Black Spade

(*Continued from page* 31)

him all night," he added firmly.

The young man was half-led, half-dragged, to a waiting police runabout, and Miss Withers had a last glimpse of his white, drawn, frightened face.

There was a brief interlude during which a gray ambulance lumbered out into the gathering darkness of the little golf course, its lights shining like two glaring tiger-eyes . . . at last David Farling was to be removed from the edge of the muddy pool. It was high time, thought Miss Withers.

The Inspector had left her to make a telephone call, and she wandered out through the littered yard in the rear. Here were old auto tires, sand boxes, broken greens, flags, and an ancient piano box—souvenirs of dead days. For the first time in her life she wished that she had taken up music and games and golf in her youth. A knowledge of what the Inspector called "pasture pool" would be a great help to her now. She had a feeling that an essential clue was eluding her—and the police. Perhaps it was a clue that would cry out like a trumpet to a more experienced devotee of golf.

She sank down on a convenient bench overlooking the fairway, and rested her chin in her hand. Far ahead she could see the lights of the morgue wagon swing across the sky and then beam back toward the club house, its silent passenger safely aboard.

"A ride that each of us must take—and some before our time," she was musing to herself.

At that moment a guttural torrent broke out almost in her ear. She turned suddenly, and realized that the speaker did not see her on the bench. He stood not far from the doorway of the living quarters, a gnarled, bitter figure leaning upon a long rake.

"*Ach, der Schwein. . . .*"

Miss Withers had a vague knowledge of German and of French left over from her schooldays, and after a moment she realized that this endless torrent was a combination of both which must be Swiss. Yet most of the words were, luckily, unfamiliar to her. Here and there she caught one which made the back of her neck turn bright red.

She made ready. There was always something to be said for the power of a surprise attack. She jumped up like a jack-in-the-box.

"Who are you?" she demanded, raising her umbrella threateningly.

"Who am I? She asks me, who am I?" The harsh voice rose shrill and high. "Me, I'm poor Chris Thorr. Me, I'm the slave who must work week in and week out to make all smooth the grass where those *verdammte* pigs go joyriding with their unspeakable ambulance. . . ."

His voice was full of great sobs. Suddenly Miss Withers felt a certain sympathy for him, especially now that the ambulance came lurching back toward the club house, leaving dark deep furrows in the soft turf, wheels spinning erratically right and left. . . .

She tried to make some properly sympathetic remark. But Chris Thorr turned back toward his lighted doorway, shoulders slumped despondently. "*Es ist nicht der Muhe Wert!*" was his parting shot.

Miss Withers turned to see the Inspector beside her. "I don't like that old buzzard," he observed. "What was that last crack?"

"Something about life being a bowl of cherries," Miss Withers translated freely. "I'm afraid Thorr is a pessimist."

"Maybe," said Piper, as they walked back toward the shack. "From what I hear he's got reasons. This place barely pays expenses, next Spring they're going to condemn most of it for the new Parkway, and his wife ran off with a traveling man or somebody last August."

"But didn't I see a girl in the office?" Miss Withers asked.

Piper nodded. "That's Molly Gargan, a neighborhood girl that he hires to take care of the office and sell tickets to the players. Which reminds me, I'd better tell the boys it's okay to let her go home. We've been holding everybody. . . ."

"Hold her a while longer," Miss Withers decided. "I want to see Molly."

MOLLY GARGAN was something to see, beyond a doubt. Miss Hildegarde Withers was prone to attach more importance to feminine brains than to beauty, but the black-haired girl with the bright blue eyes and full sculptured body was positively breath-taking.

She sat at a stool behind the counter, staring out of the window at the darkness of the golf course. Oddly enough, her blue eyes were raining tears down an utterly calm and lovely face. She wore a modest pink dress that was obviously homemade, and as Miss Withers came through the doorway she noticed that Molly Gargan had torn that dress in five or six places along the collar. Now, as if no part of herself, her long fingers were busily tearing yet another place. . . .

Miss Withers cleared her throat. "Whatever happened out on the course, it can't affect you, young woman, can it?"

Molly started, and then her lips tightened. "Of course not. . . ."

Miss Withers tried a rather mean trick. "The young man whom they arrested," she said casually, "insists that this morning, when the foursome started to play, they all purchased balls here."

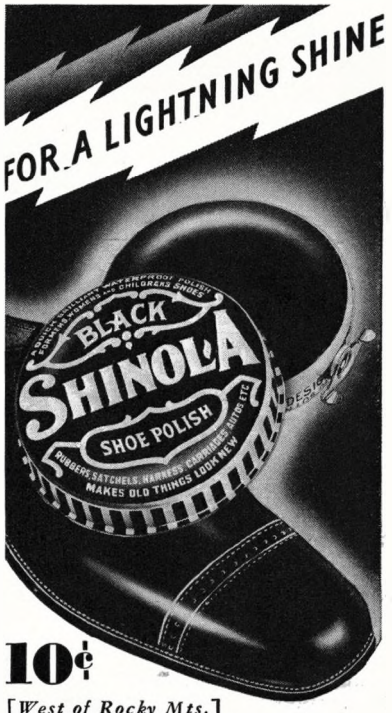
Molly nodded her lovely dark head. "And he claims that all four of them bought balls with a red diamond on them—is that true?"

"Why, no! They—" suddenly Molly stopped short. "Yes, that's right," she said evenly. "I remember now."

"Like fun you do," Miss Withers said under her breath. "Where do you live, Molly?"

(*Please turn to page* 92)

To obtain circulars described on page 46 write to Miss Frances Cowles, care of MYSTERY MAGAZINE, enclosing four cents for any one circular, ten cents for three circulars, or fifteen cents for all six. Be sure to indicate which circulars you want by the numbers given in the accompanying descriptions.



10¢

West of Rocky Mts. two sizes—10¢ and 15¢

Send 25¢ in stamps or coin for Home Shoe Shine Kit, consisting of bristle dauber, genuine lamb's wool polisher, and tin of Shinola. Address Shinola, Dept. F-10, 88 Lexington Avenue, New York City.

Mercolized Wax

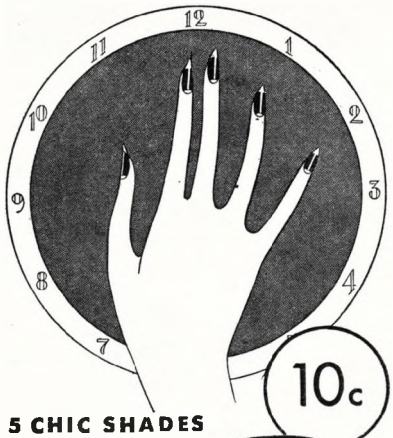
Keeps Skin Young

Absorb blemishes and discolorations using Mercolized Wax daily as directed. Invisible particles of aged skin are freed and all defects such as blackheads, tan, freckles and large pores disappear. Skin is then beautifully clear, velvety and so soft—face looks years younger. Mercolized Wax brings out your hidden beauty. At all leading druggists.

Powdered Saxolite

Reduces wrinkles and other age-signs. Simply dissolve one ounce Saxolite in half-pint witch hazel and use daily as face lotion.

CHIC at all times!



10c

5 CHIC SHADES

CLEAR
PINK
CORAL
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You will agree... a truly fine polish . . . at a great saving . . . also

Chic Creme Polish
Chic Cuticle Remover
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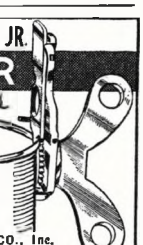

Nothing like it! Works like magic! Opens all cans with ease. Prevents cut fingers. Over ten million in use. Get your modern can opener—Safety Roll Jr., (also wall model stationary can opening machine) at your dealers. For sale everywhere.
VAUGHAN NOVELTY MFG. CO., Inc.
World's Largest Mfgr. of Can Openers
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RADIO GIRL
PERFUME
and FACE POWDER

Beckon to Love

If you would possess the "come hither" of the popular girl . . . bewitching fragrance, plus the subtle charm of an alluring complexion . . . use RADIO GIRL Perfume and RADIO GIRL Face Powder.

Use this COUPON for FREE SAMPLES

"RADIO GIRL", St. Paul, Minn. T-10
Send me FREE Regular Size RADIO GIRL Perfume and Trial Size RADIO GIRL Face Powder. I am enclosing 10c (coin or stamps) for cost of mailing. (Offer in U. S. only)

Name.....

Address.....

The Riddle of the Black Spade

(*Continued from page* 91)

Through the window Molly Gargan pointed to a white house perhaps a mile away, where the lights of the boulevard were glaring. "My father runs a filling station," she confessed.

"Very well, Molly," Miss Withers advised. "The police asked me to tell you that you may go home now."

"Thanks!" said Molly Gargan fervently. With one quick motion she pulled a sweater over her dress, slapped a tam-o-shanter over her dark hair, and was out of the door.

Miss Withers watched the girl as she took a short cut across the darkened golf course in the direction of that dim white blotch in the distance which was home. Then she was aware that someone watched beside her.

It was Chris Thorr, shaking his head. "They are all alike," he observed gutturally. "Women!"

He crossed to the cash register, pressed the "no sale" key and scooped out the day's takings, a sorry morsel. Then he ostentatiously locked the showcase, as if Miss Withers would have been likely to go in for shoplifting golf balls and wooden tees.

"You can't blame her for hurrying away on a day like this," Miss Withers reminded him. "What if she did forget to close up? She's a very pretty girl."

Chris Thorr didn't seem interested in pretty girls. "Bah!" said he. "The prettier they are the less they know. I hope soon she gets married, and I hire a good sober girl homely as a mud fence, *ja!*"

He moved around, turning out electric lights. "You go home now—everybody go home, *ja?* I go to bed."

Everybody went home—except for one chilled and unhappy cop who was assigned, according to regulations, to cover the scene of the crime. Patrolman Walter Fogle spread out a newspaper on the damp grass under the elms, and prepared for a long and lonely vigil above the dark and leaf-choked pool. . . .

THE wind howled eerily in the treetops that night, and the pale October moon was hidden behind ragged wisps of cloud. Patrolman Fogle realized that it lacked but a night or two of being All-hallow Eve, and toward morning he dozed off into a nightmare of witches and goblins and howling, dancing wraiths. . . .

He awoke with a jerk to see a spectral white figure moving near the edge of the pond. Fogle blinked, pinched himself, and blinked again. But the figure remained.

"Hey!" he mouthed, through dry and trembling lips.

The white figure became a statue. "What the hell are you doing there?" demanded the patrolman. "Stop or I'll fire!"

The apparition dissolved in the direction of the clump of trees and brush further down the gully.

"Stop!" yelled Fogle. His gun came out, and he blazed away furiously. But to no avail.

Next morning, shame-faced, he made his report. "Maybe it was a dead ghost and maybe it wasn't," he insisted to Captain Platt. "But I know for one thing that it could run like a rabbit. And it wasn't old Chris Thorr nosing around, because I went back to the club-house and dragged him out of bed."

"Look at his shoes?" asked the captain. "Heavy dew, wasn't there?"

The cop nodded. "His shoes were dry, and he was sound asleep."

"Okay," said his chief. "Go home and grab some sleep. We may want you this afternoon."

At that moment Miss Withers and the Inspector were in deep conference. "It's funny about the medical examiner's report," Piper was saying. "The doc insists that Farling's skull was of normal thickness and that a golf ball would have to be traveling with the speed of a bullet to make such a wound."

"Oscar," suggested the school-teacher, "isn't that an idea? I mean, couldn't you shoot a golf ball out of a gun?"

He shrugged. "Certainly not without leaving powder marks, even if you could get a gun barrel improvised out of a pipe or something. And as for that, Max Van Donnen just reported to me that while that golf ball bears traces of blood which check with Farling's, it has never been struck with a golf club! The waxy covering is intact, under the microscope! So there goes your gun theory."

Miss Withers nodded. "I suggested the gun because, you see, Oscar, I spent two hours this morning taking a golf lesson from a professional at the Lakewood Country Club. He's a better golfer than even young Farling, and he can drive a ball four hundred yards or lift one neatly into a tin pail twenty feet away. But not both at the same time, Oscar! By that I mean you can't combine speed with absolute accuracy in golf!"

"Which means that we're right back where we started," said Piper.

She shook her head. "We know that Ronald Farling didn't kill his foster father—at least not by driving a ball at him. Oscar, I think we're making this case too complicated. Did you get the report from the telephone company?"

He shook his head. "Takes them time to trace those calls," he pointed out. "But I don't see why you think we'd learn anything if we knew how many phone calls, if any, have been made from the club house to Farling's office on Broadway, and vice versa. You don't think—"

She nodded. "When there's a girl as startlingly beautiful as Molly Gargan in a case, you can take it for granted that she is somehow a part of the picture. Suppose the dead man had been playing regularly on that little course just to see the fair Molly, had become involved with her somehow, and then cast her adrift? And suppose the odd little Mr. Thorr secretly nursed a love for his pretty clerk, and wanted to avenge the slight?"

She stopped, and shook her head. "Thorr doesn't love the girl. On the contrary. And besides, Farling would not have brought his friends and son to play golf at the course after he was through with the girl. . . ." She sank into a chair. "I'm afraid we've drawn another blank. . . ."

JUST then the telephone rang, and Piper listened eagerly. He made notes on a piece of paper. "Well!" he said. "In the past three months there have been fourteen phone calls from the golf course office to Farling's office—twenty-three from Farling's office to

The Riddle of the Black Spade

the course, and seven from the Farling home on Fifth Avenue to the course!"

"Which means that your case against young Farling is blown higher than a kite," Miss Withers reminded him. "Besides, he couldn't have been the midnight prowler who frightened Patrolman Fogle out of his alleged wits last night." She frowned. "Oscar, you ought to drain that pool!"

Piper laughed. "So you are looking for another body!"

"Another body—or another golf ball," she reminded him. "A golf ball with specks of powder burns on the cover, and a trademark which might be anything but a black spade."

"Draining that pool seems like something of an engineering problem," Piper objected. "Besides—"

"And I think you ought to turn Ronald Farling loose," she went on. "There may be more to discover from him if he's free than if he's in the lockup."

"The more we discover the worse off we are," Piper objected. "I naturally have had the other two members of that foursome investigated. Sullivan has been talking over the radio in behalf of the Citizens Committee, and naturally has been panning some of Farling's friends in politics. But the two men were personal pals. As for the partner, Sam Firth, he didn't gain anything from Farling's death, and he's probably lost a good share of his law business. Neither of them—"

"Business!" Miss Withers snapped. "We're missing the whole key to this affair. I wish I knew more about pretty Molly Gargan. I still believe that she's the catalytic agent—"

Piper shook his head. "Doesn't look like she'd throw a fit, to me."

"I said catalytic, not epileptic," Miss Withers snapped. "Don't you remember your chemistry? Well, with a girl as beautiful as she around, anything that happens involves her somehow. Oscar, I'm going to telephone her, and arrange for a quiet little talk—"

She asked for information, and then was connected with Gargan's Gas Station on Queens Boulevard. It was a worried Irish voice which answered her.

"Molly? This is her father speakin'. No, she's not here. She went out early this mornin', without giving me my breakfast. What? No, she didn't pack a suitcase. She was wearing a pink dress, I suppose."

Miss Withers put down the phone. "Oscar, doesn't pink look white at night?"

She gave him no time to answer. "Come on!" she insisted. "I think we're on the trail of something, and I don't like the scent."

"Now listen!" objected her old crony. "Good heavens, woman, I've got a Bureau to run. . . ."

"It'll run by itself," she came back. And the Inspector followed, for he knew her of old.

"We'll first have a talk with young Farling," she decided. "Tell the man to drive us to the Queens lockup."

But when they had reached that outlying station they found that the talk with young Ronald Farling would have to be postponed indefinitely.

"He's flew the coop!" was the way Captain Platt put it. "About half an hour ago Sam Firth, his father's partner, came out here with a writ of habeas corpus. They'd got wind of the medical examiner's report which cast doubt on the golf ball angle, so it was up to me to book the kid for murder or let him go. And we didn't have enough on him—"

"We can get him again if we need him," said Piper. "Well, Hildegarde?"

"We need him now," she said shortly. "Find out for me just what is the situation out at the golf course, will you? Anybody there?"

Captain Platt reported that Fogle was due to go back on duty at the course within the next few minutes, having had a short relief. "We always keep a cop around the scene of the crime for a couple of days," he informed her. "Otherwise the place is closed up."

Miss Withers then realized that Molly Gargan couldn't possibly be on duty. There would be no need to have her sitting on the stool behind that counter in the club house . . . yet where was she?

"Oscar," she insisted, "will you take me over to the course? But for heaven's sake let's have no blaring of sirens this time."

THEY approached Meadowland very quietly indeed, and at Miss Withers' instigation the squad car was parked far down the macadam road.

Then, leaving the uniformed driver at the wheel, the Inspector followed Miss Withers over the wire fence and across the turf. "Good Lord, woman, are you still harping on that pool?"

She sniffed, and led the way. "I want a description from Patrolman Fogle of that ghost he saw," she admitted.

But Fogle was not on duty above the pool. Another uniformed man approached after a moment, crashing through the underbrush down the gully. He snapped to salute.

"Where's Fogle?" asked Piper sharply.

"Hasn't relieved me yet, sir. I guess last night was too much for him, because he was due at two o'clock and it's nearly half past."

"What were you doing off your post? Looking for him?"

The cop reddened. "No, sir. I—I thought I seen something moving down there. . . ."

Piper shook his head. "I guess all you men out here believe in fairies," he growled. "Was it a grinning skull or a snake with wings?"

"No, sir," said the patrolman seriously. "It was a young guy in golf clothes, and he could run like a deer."

"Yeah!" said Piper.

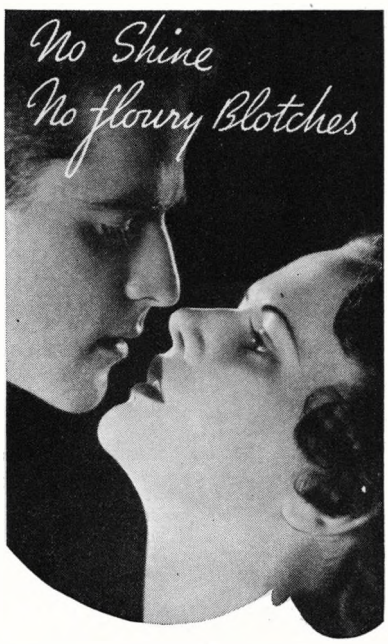
But Miss Withers, who had climbed back to the edge of the gully, was staring out over the course. "He still is," she remarked. "Running like a deer, I mean. And if he doesn't look out. . . ."

Piper and the cop joined her in time to get a clear, if distant, view of a young man who looked very much like Ronald Farling, as he vaulted the wire fence into the road and was immediately clasped in the brawny arms of the uniformed man who drove Piper's car.

When the others came up he was arguing furiously with his captor. "Let him go!" ordered Piper.

Ronald Farling, looking a little wild and disheveled from his night in jail, faced them. "I suppose you want to

(*Please turn to page* 94)



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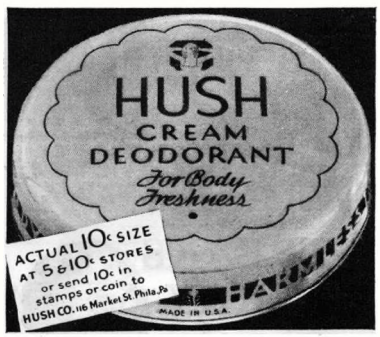

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The Riddle of the Black Spade

(*Continued from page* 93)

know why I'm here?" he demanded.

Miss Withers shook her head. "You're looking for the same thing we are," she advised him. "Come with us, if you wish. In the words of the popular song, we're heading for the last roundup."

They crept toward the club house in silence, keeping always behind the rolling little hills, following gullies and the shadows of scattered trees. "Hildegarde, what are you up to?" Piper begged.

"I haven't the slightest idea!" she admitted. "But I'm going to learn something."

The wind still blew gustily from the north, driving dead leaves into their faces, and bringing the sound of loud voices from somewhere behind the club house. They crept steadily on, and finally reached the vantage point of a hedge.

From here they could get a good view of the club house, and of the littered yard in the rear where Chris Thorr stood, raking at the refuse. Beside him was Patrolman Fogle.

"Say!" broke out Piper. "There's something—"

But Miss Withers hushed him. "Listen!"

"Well, then—I bet you twenty dollars against five that you can't hit it in one out of three tries!"

Thorr's voice came clearly, and it bore an undercurrent of masked excitement. . . .

Fogle scratched the back of his neck, and drew out his service gun. "You talk too loud, fella," he said. "I hate to do it, but I'm going to take your money."

They were standing perhaps twenty feet from the broken-down piano case which Miss Withers had noticed last night. Now she saw with a gasp of surprise that a homemade target of black and white circles had been tacked on the side of the box.

"Okay," Fogle said doggedly. "I've got three tries to put a slug in the center of that target, and if I do it you pay me twenty bucks." He raised his gun. . . .

Miss Withers tried to scream, and found that no sound issued from her throat. She grabbed the Inspector. "Stop him!" she gasped.

"Illegal target practice within city limits of New York, illegal firing of service gun. . . ." mumbled the Inspector. He stood up quickly.

"Hey, there! What the hell do you think you're doing?"

The two in the yard whirled to face them. Miss Withers tottered on after the Inspector, who glared at the patrolman.

Fogle was in a spot, and he knew it. "I—sorry, sir. But he was razzing me about police markmanship, sir. On account of my firing last night at the ghost or whatever it was. Claimed I couldn't hit the piano box, much less the target. So we made a bet—"

Piper was grinning. "Oh, he thinks cops can't shoot, eh?"

Chris Thorr nodded. "Couldn't hit a barn if you were inside with the doors shut. Not like the police in Switzerland, let me tell you. Say—"

Piper rubbed his chin. "Fogle, how come you're stalling around here? Don't you go back on duty?"

"At two p.m., yes sir. But I just looked at the clock inside and it's only one-forty five." He grinned. "So I thought I had time to show this guy. . . ."

"Go ahead and show him," Piper ordered. "Just this once we'll forget regulations. . . ."

Miss Withers could hold herself in no longer. "Forget regulations and forget the common sense you were born with," she screamed. "But first let me get in that piano box. . . ."

She attacked it furiously with tooth and nail, but it was stouter than it seemed. Young Ronald Farling came forward to help her, while Thorr and the cops looked blankly on. Then at last a board was pried away, and another. . . .

"Oh, God!" cried Ronald Farling. "Molly!"

It was Molly Gargan—her soft young body wound with cruel ropes, her red mouth gagged with a twisted rag. Tenderly they took her down from the hook which had held her there, with her heart beating just behind the bull's-eye of the target. . . .

Only a half inch of soft pine lay between Molly Gargan and the leaden death which had hung poised above her. . . .

It all happened in a split second. "Get that man!" screamed Miss Withers.

Gnarled, dried-up Chris Thorr had suddenly come alive. He flung Fogle head over heels, knocked the Inspector to his knees with the ever-present rake which he had snatched from behind him, and was running amok toward the two women.

His mouth was open and frothing, and a shrill endless scream of antic insanity filled the air. . . .

Then Ronald Farling stepped in, dodged the swinging iron teeth of the rake, and brought his fist smartly into the madman's groin. Again—and then a right across to the chin that sent him backwards—

He did not rise. When things had calmed a bit, they found out why. He had fallen upon the tines of his own rusty rake, and three of the iron spikes had pierced his brain.

Farling and the girl leaned against the piano box, touching each other gently, wonderingly . . . they had no eyes or ears for anything else.

But the Inspector fairly gnawed at his cigar.

"Hildegarde! It's a madhouse!"

"Not quite," she said. "Thorr wanted to get Molly put out of the way, and chose this means. Fogle was to have shot her as she stood bound and gagged in the piano box. Then later Thorr would have hidden the body out on the course somewhere—and with one or more bullets from Fogle's gun in the body, he would be the one to be suspected, particularly since he shot wildly at a phantom last night. . . ."

"Yeah, but what phantom?"

"I imagine it was Thorr, in his nightshirt and barefoot," Miss Withers went on. "He didn't know that there'd be a guard at the pool, or at least he wasn't sure. He had some unfinished business there—"

"So you say!" objected Piper. "But why would Thorr want to kill Molly here?"

"Ask her," said Miss Withers. "She knows."

Molly did know. It was because she had feared and suspected Thorr for

The Riddle of the Black Spade

some time, and therefore when her sweetheart was arrested for the murder of his foster-father she had started scouting around. . . .

"And you found what?" Miss Withers asked.

"I found that there were some brown stains on the end of Thorr's rake handle," said Molly Gargan. And suddenly the whole thing was clear to Miss Withers.

"That's why he tied you up when he found you examining his rake! It was the murder weapon—not the golf ball."

Piper shook his head. "You're still crazy. What possible motive would there be—"

"For Thorr to kill Farling? A very good one. Enter the pool once more, Oscar. You see, Farling must have been looking for his lost ball, and have poked at the water with that dead stick, just as I did. And Thorr, lurking nearby, saw him probing the pool and rushed up to hurl his rake like a javelin. The rake handle is just the diameter of a golf ball, Oscar. He thought of that when he had finished the deed, so he took the one remaining ball from his victim's bag, touched it to the wound, and dropped it nearby. He wanted it to appear like an accident, Oscar."

"But why, in the name of heaven, should Thorr object to having Farling poke around in that pool?"

"Your guess is as good as mine," said Miss Hildegarde Withers. "We won't know for sure until you drag the pool, as I've begged you to do, again and again. But I've got a pretty good idea that you'll find the sunken body of the wife who is supposed to have left Chris Thorr last August and run away with a traveling man."

"Well, who'd have suspected that?" exclaimed Piper.

"Who indeed—but I?" Miss Withers flashed back.

The Line-Up

(*Continued from page* 15)

conjuring illustrations, that start the reader right into the story.

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I am sincerely grateful for a magazine of crime stories that I am not ashamed to leave around.

Everett Shepard.

A Household Help

NORTHWOOD, N. DAK.—I have reason to believe that my utter disregard for housework and my withdrawal from outside activities has a just and deep-rooted cause. For who can break loose and tend to business when a fellow like The Owl is running at random, or when Ellery Queen unravels a tangled yarn with his magic pen. But I do not consider the time I spend reading MYSTERY wasted effort. The stories aren't just common fiction remembered only to the end, but a distinct type which is so essential in developing one's reasoning ability. From my own experience with this magazine I must say it has helped me considerably in drawing more accurate conclusions, thereby enhancing my possibilities as a logical detective, myself.

Miss Ivie Hanson.

One Likes This

NEW ORLEANS, LA.—I have been reading MYSTERY MAGAZINE now for over two years and find that each new number surpasses the preceding one. Am also very glad to be able to obtain them sooner now. Having them out twice a month would please me and no doubt thousands of your readers.

I always enjoy your book-length novels and they are worth the price of your magazine alone. How about some more stories by Sax Rohmer? I like the stories by Ellery Queen and Albert Payson Terhune lots. My only complaint—please don't give us so many women detectives. I think a story with one woman detective is enough in one issue. The July issue had a little more than its share of women detectives.

Keep on giving us the good stories that you are, and I'll even take the stories with the women detectives.

With best wishes for your continued success, I am,

Miss Sadye Washofsky.

Another Likes This

LOWELL, MASS.—I have been reading the MYSTERY MAGAZINE since last April and can honestly say that I enjoy it very much. I've only one fault with the August issue. There were no stories with women detectives in them.

I think the "Line-Up" is a great idea and hope you will continue having it. The complete-on-one-page stories are also splendid.

The best stories in the August issue were "Matinee Murder," and "Stained Rubies." Good luck to you.

Miss Kathleen Lepper.

Where's Our Greek Dictionary?

COLUMBUS, OHIO—For the past few months my sister has talked about MYSTERY but I was certain I wouldn't be interested in detective or mystery stories.

Then one Saturday, having nothing special to do—I planned to see a movie, but since it was too early for the first show I decided to "kill" time by reading. MYSTERY was the magazine at hand and I did not go to the movie

(*Please turn to page* 96)

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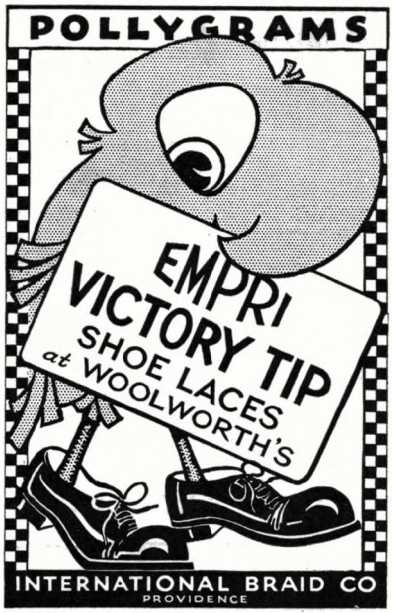

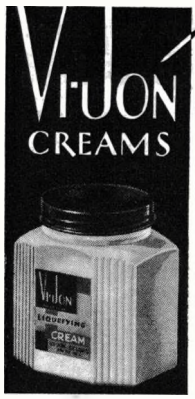

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The Line-Up

(*Continued from page 95*)

that day. In fact—I read far, far into the night.

Imagine my surprise to find that not only is my sister a constant reader, but the head (?) of the family has been buying your magazine on the sly and taking it to the office to read. I'll bet there's a copy of your magazine in the office of every big executive "in conference."

All of MYSTERY authors are really good but my favorites are Ferrin Fraser, Ellery Queen, Sax Rohmer and Stuart Palmer. And whatever you do please don't forget to include some more stories by Guy Endore and Norman Matson.

The articles and beauty suggestions are interesting and helpful and the novels are grand.

Really, I can't find adequate words of praise for MYSTERY but I guess the Greeks would have had a word for it.

Bette Bailey.

Hey!

BALTIMORE, MD.—I'm a regular follower of detective stories but practically a new reader of MYSTERY and it rates high with me.

The idea of a book-length novel in each issue is a good one and I like your judgment in selecting "Going to St. Ives" and the "Imperfect Twins," and "Death's Treasure Hunt."

In "Going to St. Ives" I was glad to see that the mystery was unraveled through the efforts of a police officer, altho imported from New York.

And that prompts me to express a query long withheld—why are nearly all mysteries usually solved by someone who is, in most cases, impeded by some thick-headed cop who has pounced on an innocent person?

Surely our law-enforcing departments not only in large cities but throughout the country are plentifully supplied with intelligent, efficient men; and in the interest of efficiency which many of us admire, let's build up some regard for our law officers. Do not compel them to rely entirely on professors, or hobby-following criminologists, or sharp-eyed females with ferret-like faculties.

This is not a criticism of MYSTERY, as most detective stories follow similar lines and we fans continue to devour them.

Geo. W. Reynolds.

You May

HENRIETTA, N. Y.—May an old fan of MYSTERY join the many in congratulating the editors of this magnificent magazine?

I have been a constant reader of your interesting magazine since it was first sold in Rochester, New York, and that is quite some time.

I have always been more than satisfied with your first-class stories, real-life experiences and novel departments. Like some of your readers, I recall the period during which you published one novelette and many real-life stories. Of these, I think the novelette, "Mystery Island," was the best.

This magazine appealed to me from the start because it was illustrated. To me, clever illustrations make up one of the most important parts of a magazine.

The article, "I Go Sleuthing," is especially enjoyable. It has encouraged me to keep a steady "look-out" for any mysterious occurrence that might happen my way.

Again, may I say that in MYSTERY I find the most enjoyable reading matter and may I wish you continued success in retailing such delightful material for so little a price.

Miss Dorothy E. Cimmind.

At Your Corner Newsstand, Mrs. Milroad

NEWARK, N. J.—Being a great lover of all kinds of mystery stories and books, I read all that I possibly can but I buy only one; that is MYSTERY. I read it from cover to cover and can only find one fault with it; that is I get through too soon to suit me. It may be that I like it so well that I read it too fast.

I have read your magazine steadily for years but this is the first time I have ever written a letter of commendation to you or any other magazine. But in your last issue, "The House of Sleep" is so good that I could not resist writing. It is one of the best mysteries I have ever read. "The Imperfect Twins" and the "Black Fog" were also very good. I like Ellery Queen, and have always liked Edgar Wallace. It is too bad we had to lose such a marvelous author. Why don't you have more stories about "The Man With the Rubber Face" and I notice that someone else has asked about "The Man in the Mirror." Can't we please learn what happened to him?

I would like to know if there is any place other than Woolworth's to get MYSTERY as we have no Woolworth's in the neighborhood and I am sometimes delayed in getting my copy.

Mrs. S. Milroad.

We'll Be Seeing You!

DETROIT, MICHIGAN—Right at the peak of the depression—when money was so scarce—I discovered MYSTERY. Believe me, it was a "find." Not being able to afford many magazines, this $1.00 value for ten cents was indeed welcome.

The stories are all consistently good; occasionally one finds a "dud" story, but that is to be expected. The best story I ever read in MYSTERY was "Terrible Vengeance" by Guy Endore. It fascinated me.

I like your "I Go Sleuthing" department—it gives unknown writers a chance. Your other contents are fine, too.

Oh yes, before I forget. A bouquet to Frank King's novel, "The House of Sleep," in the August issue. I was so completely absorbed in reading it that I forgot to get my husband's supper!

Au revoir, Mr. Editor; I'll be seeing you in next month's issue.

Mrs. Della Osborne.

Never Let It Be Said

IRVINGTON, N. J.—You asked us to be frank in criticizing MYSTERY MAGAZINE. Well, I am! Do you realize that you actually, literarily speaking, drug your readers into buying your magazine? Let me explain this.

Your covers are fascinating and actually act as a salesman on the newsstand. Your makeup is quite unique

The Line-Up

among mystery and detective magazines. Your posed pictures are striking and fascinating. Your various departments are interesting and also unique among horror magazines. Your book-length novel, alone worth $2.50, is presented as a gift from MYSTERY MAGAZINE to its readers with each issue.

All in all, your magazine is perfect! In fact, so perfect that we, as the American consumer, feel that we are gypped if we do not have MYSTERY MAGAZINE in our home each month!

Bertram Shandler.

Very Interesting

STOUTON, WIS.—In the spirit of good fellowship, I once criticized a magazine for its policy of running serials. The editor promptly replied that "the majority of our readers want serial stories!" And not since the Hon. Herbert Hoover contributed that always-to-be-remembered phrase, "It Could Have Been Worse," have I had such a "hearty" laugh.

In direct contradiction to the editor's statement, my magazine dealer says that 75 per cent of all his sales of magazines are for those that carry only complete stories; that many readers are forsaking their favorite periodical for one that has no serials. At the factory a canvass by the writer revealed that 80 per cent of the workers had no use for serial stories, 10 per cent thought daily and weekly serials were all right and 10 per cent liked to read good stories via installments. And remembering that the working class can get along without their movies, sundaes and candies, but not their fiction, I think the editors, especially you of MYSTERY, should give the above figures a thought. I'm thrilled by your stories and enjoy every one of your departments, but get awfully disgusted when I read those three irksome words, "To be continued." Tack the word "complete" on the cover of your magazine and climb the last rung to success.

Rudolph G. Jorgenson.

Whew!

WASHINGTON, D. C.—This is a little tardy and I apologize. I didn't have a chance to read this magazine until last week, and it was at the home of a friend, so I don't know whether the issue was the September 1933 or the October 1933 MYSTERY. At any rate, it WAS the last Judy and Jerry story. The one about the gangster who had a twin who doubled for him.

I thought it exceedingly interesting, but there was one distinct error.

The author spoke of sending to "headquarters" for the finger-prints to establish the identity of the gangster. As I remember, they had his prints on file, and had just obtained another set. They suspected these would be different, thereby proving he had a double, and his alibis were false.

The detective (or was it inspector?) said, in effect, "We will have the prints back in a very short time. The Bertillon system in New York City is one of the best organized in the world."

Doesn't the author know that the Bertillon system is not related in any way whatsoever to finger-prints? The Bertillon system is the complete and detailed description of the body, eyes, hair, ears, etc., and because of the amount of time and experience needed to employ it properly, has gradually fallen into disuse in this country, if not in all countries, in favor of the newer and simpler method of finger-printing.

Mrs. J. C. Van Buskirk.

This Suits Us

DES MOINES, IOWA—My wife and I have bought many magazines since our marriage, and these have been purchased principally for the stories, and we are both of the type who generally read every story in the magazine.

Often we will start to read a story and find that it will not hold our interest and so turn to another in the hope that it will be more appealing to us. Sometimes it will be a month or more before we have read (or attempted to read) all of the stories in a magazine.

Although I had seen MYSTERY MAGAZINE before, I had never purchased an issue of it until day before yesterday, at which time I bought a copy of the August book. As this letter is written this evening, two days later, every story in MYSTERY MAGAZINE has been read and greatly enjoyed by both my wife and myself. As an example, we read the complete book-length novel, "The House of Sleep," from start to finish without an interruption of any nature.

We are both very enthusiastic over the stories we found in MYSTERY MAGAZINE and on August 1st the September issue will be in our home.

M. F. Hubbell.

One to Twelve

NORTH BERWICK, MAINE — I have not missed an issue of your MYSTERY MAGAZINE since "Murder on the Blackboard" was printed. I still like it the best of any of the book-length stories you have printed. I have read that story several times and most likely will read it again. Next best long story is the "Imperfect Twins." Why DID Cobden Claine have to die? He was the whole story and I actually felt bad because of his passing. I didn't like Dick Delchester at all and think that poor Claine should have had happiness at the ending instead of Delchester's having all the breaks.

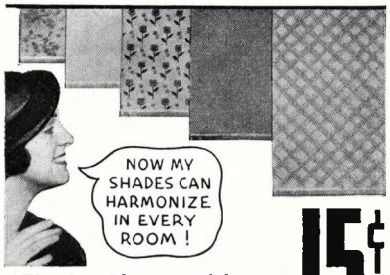
The July issue is the best yet. "Murders that Couldn't Happen" is splendid; "Terrible Vengeance" is very good but impossible, still that doesn't spoil the story. What's the use? I've tried to pick out the best story of the month and they are ALL the best.

Where is Sax Rohmer? He, Ellery Queen, Rodney Blake, Ferrin Fraser, Mignon G. Eberhart and Stuart Palmer are my favorites. Give us more Hildegard Withers stories; they cannot be beaten.

There are twelve persons in my family and all but four can read, so you can imagine what a hubbub an A No. 1. magazine caused in a mystery-loving clan like that. Sometimes all that's left is the cover.

Muriel Phillips.

EVER SEE *Such Smart* WINDOW SHADES?



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There's No Stopping

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page. The Episode of the Beautiful Enigma!

AT eight o'clock on the morning of April 23rd, 1924, a brisk and successful young Chicago advertising man tip-toed out of his country house in Palos Park, anxious not to awaken his young wife Vieva, who was ill with influenza. He paused for a moment in the yard to warn old "Hank" Manning, part-time gardner, not to start mowing the lawn until Mrs. Smith awakened.

Half an hour later a taxicab without license plates drew up a few doors away, with a screaming of brakes. Mrs. Smith sat up in bed and began to comb her hair. Then she stopped, and stared at the apparition which stood in the door of her bedroom. It was the doom which she had secretly feared all these months, and most particularly since receiving a certain wild and threatening telegram from New York.

A woman stood in the doorway, a young woman with a white, frightened face which looked like a beautiful and impossible Benda mask. "Where is Kenley?" came the voice. "Aren't you going to give him to me? You don't really love him—but you won't give him up!"

Mrs. Smith had no time for argument. Her uninvited visitor whipped a revolver from her purse, and fired point blank. The bullet smashed through the window, a few inches from the sick woman.

"Wanda!" she screamed. But there was no talking to the girl who held the gun. Mrs. Smith, sick as she was, took one desperate leap through the window, glass, screen and all, and went flying across the lawn toward the nearest residence, which happened to be that of George Hermanson, Chief of Police of the suburban town.

Two more bullets zipped past her head as she ran, and Mrs. Smith started to scream. The intruder leaned from the window, trying to take more careful aim. She would have succeeded almost certainly, for Mrs. Smith was at the point of collapse when she reached the hedge—but help was to come from an unexpected quarter. Old Hank Manning, whose vocation was being town drunkard and whose avocation was mowing lawns, threw himself with arms outstretched before the would-be murderess. He was resolved to protect his mistress at any cost, and the cost was great. A bullet smashed through his throat, and the sixty-eight-year-old man fell dead on the unmowed lawn.

Half a dozen of the neighbors rushed out on their porches to see Wanda Stopa, a beautiful, vital young woman of not yet twenty-four, go dashing out of the Smith house with a smoking pistol in her hand, saw her climb into the waiting taxi and be whisked away. . . .

Wanda Stopa—beautiful enigma? Who was she? Before the sun had set, Chicago police knew everything. Mrs. Smith talked. Kenley Smith talked. A strange and impossible story unfolded itself. Only a few months before, Wanda Stopa had graduated from law school and been appointed an assistant district attorney of Cook County. Born of a poor Polish family in the tenements, she had aspired to higher things. The brilliance of her mind had won her all collegiate honors, and yet she soon threw aside the career she had marked out in order to plunge into Chicago's art colony, then called "Towertown."

There she had met and married Vladimir Glaskoff, a real Russian and a phony Count, who had passed speedily into the limbo of forgotten things. There she had become a protégée of the Smiths, who kept open house in their studio at 190 East Ohio Street. Wanda wanted to write—not poetry, but murder stories. Smith had sold a few stories. Confident that Wanda was an undiscovered genius, the Smiths gave her a haven at their studio. When Summer came, the Smiths moved to their home in Palos Park, and let Wanda camp out in the studio in town. One night Kenley Smith camped there, too, with results which were to be far-reaching.

But Wanda Stopa was violently in love with him, and wanted with all the fire of her Polish peasant blood to be his wife, mend his socks, and bear his children. She made so much fuss over the evening at the studio and what may or may not have happened there that Smith, with the consent of his wife, sent her on to New York, where she might be closer to the editors of the detective magazines.

Immediately Wanda took the money which she had received for the sale of her first story—a story of murder entitled, "The Woman in the Case"—and caught a train for Chicago. She had already sent a warning telegram, for that was part of her mad scheme.

Of course, the nation's newspapers were now filled with reproductions of her photographs and of a portrait painted of her by a famous artist, all of which showed her with a lovely, passionate face—and oddly arched eyebrows. Yet the days dragged by, and Wanda Stopa escaped the police dragnet while Kenley Smith and his wife cowered in fear of a second attack.

Then Eugene Chloupak of Indianapolis, a traveling salesman whose hobby happened to be murder cases, was walking through the Hotel Statler in Detroit when he noticed that a girl who sat at a nearby writing desk had very remarkable eyebrows—eyebrows which reminded him of somebody he had seen or known. He stared until she blushed, and then went on his way. Chloupak was in his own room before he realized that he had seen those eyebrows pictured in every newspaper for the last few days. He rushed back to the writing desk, but the girl was gone. On the blotter, in reverse, was the address: "Mrs. Inez Stopa, 1506 Augusta Street, Chicago—"

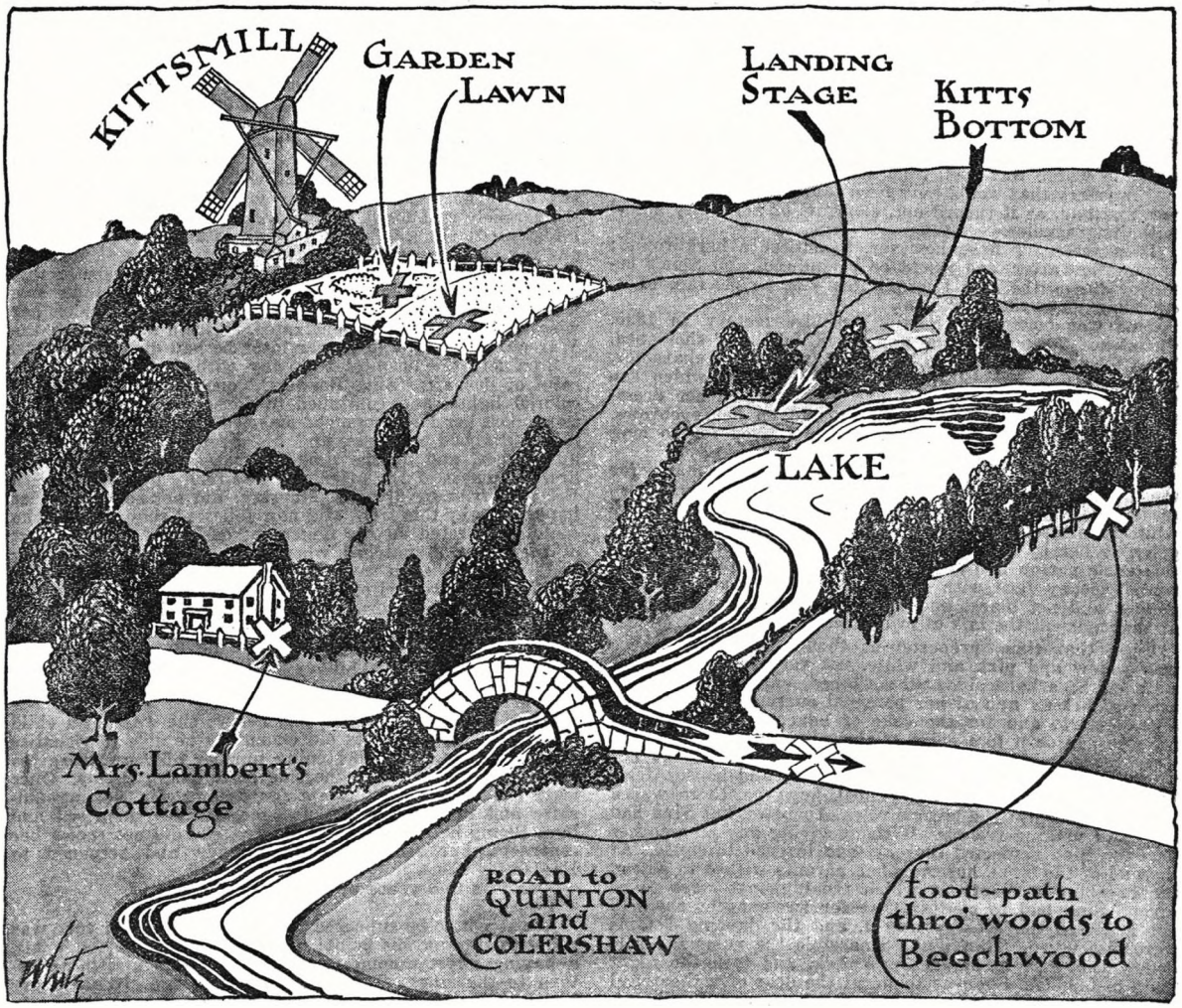
He gave the alarm, but it was too late.

In a room a few floors above his own, a voluptuous girl who had registered quite openly as "Wanda S. Glaskoff, Chicago, Ill.," knocked the receiver from her telephone at almost the identical minute that in far-off Chicago a coroner's jury was naming her as the murderer of poor old Hank Manning. Then she fell lifeless on the floor.

Wanda Stopa tossed off a cocktail made of sweetened water and hydrocyanic acid. Police found that her baggage consisted only of some lingerie, a carbon copy of a second murder story which she had just sent to a New York magazine, and a diary. The diary told of her hopeless love for Kenley Smith.

She was buried from her mother's little flat in the Polish quarter of Chicago, and the street was blocked by so great a crowd that her coffin could be carried out only behind a detachment of police swinging nightsticks.

MURDER *in the* GARDEN



By ROGER EAST

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A NEW BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

Complete in This Issue

Murder in the Garden

CHAPTER I

SINA lay in her bath; that is the natural point of departure for an account of the mystery in which, before the water was cool, Sina was to become involved: a mystery that would have been fantastic but for its horror, and had, as it turned out, elements of absurdity mixed with its tragedies.

It is necessary first, however, to outline a background; explanation afterward would be prejudiced, and Sina's behavior during the next few minutes was, on the face of it, extravagant at the very least.

Sina was born in a Nottinghamshire rectory, in 1895. Christened Thomasina, the name was inevitably shortened. Thus fixed, it was later to have its effect on her character, or at least on her affectation; on the clothes which she wore, the perfumes of which she was fond, on her dressing table fittings, on her pajamas, and on her eyebrows. For the name echoed, for her, who had lived for so long in France, with a Chinese ring.

Of course, at the time when she had to find a name for the stage, (Sina Bosworth had the right sound) there were, in her double-windowed French bedroom with the curly white furniture, a Chinese rug and a vase, which had been given to her by someone with whom she was in love; and this same person had pulled a remote likeness between her round, moony face with the fringe, which was, however, yellow, and not black, and some Chinese dancer who was at that moment the talk of everyone.

Since that time, preposterous though it was, for she was yellow and pink and white, not very tall and rather rounded, Sina had cultivated a Chinese effect in the decoration of herself and of her personal surroundings. It was a trademark, and for the sake of advertisement she had later to pursue it to a point of absurdity.

At the age of fifteen, Sina had been despatched by her father and mother to a school of cookery and housewifery. Next door to the Technical School, however, there was a dancing academy; the lessons were expensive, but Sina had a way of making friends. Without saying anything to her parents, Sina neglected cookery, and learned to dance. At the end of the term, however, her parents wished to attend the breaking-up party at which the diplomas were to be given. Sina had to confess that for two months she had not attended the cookery school, and the dancing lessons were discovered. That night Sina stole the rummage sale money that was in her father's desk, and took the night train to London. She was found at the door of a theatrical agent, taken home, admonished, forgiven, and finally allowed to join a dramatic school at Kensington.

Incurably independent, Sina refused a decorous apprenticeship in a Shakespearean company, and ended up in the chorus of a third-class and questionable musical show. She was so evidently happy, so entirely self-confident, that her parents hadn't a leg to stand on. Naturally indignant, they refused ever to see her again, and did not do so for several years.

Three years after the third-class musical show had left her stranded at Bolton, Sina had become the principal dancer of an important stage spectacle in Paris. Her name was displayed in electric lights; she was in her element, successful and very happy. She was also in love with an Englishman whose business was in Paris, and he was in love with her. Roland Bell, tall, dark and handsome, cultured, slightly remote, often peevish, as often charmingly playful, and of irreproachable family, was glad to know that the Paris dancer was the daughter of an English clergyman, but he would have married her in any case, for he was generous, and she loved him with all her soul. Sina was to have other lovers (who could be counted on the fingers of one hand, for she was not promiscuous) and two other husbands, but she never loved anyone else but the serenely mannered Roland. She was his slave; she was intoxicated; she gladly gave up the stage—it was for her anyway an adventure, not an art—and set to work to learn cookery and to prepare a home. She was still very young, but old enough to know that nothing except Roland's love was or would be of any seriousness in a world which her wise eyes had already penetrated. Within six months the War parted them, and a year later he had died of wounds.

Sina left the hospital that day with firm lips and the calm of despair. 'Sina Bosworth' once more appeared in colored lights, and continued to do so even when, unable to support her loneliness, she married an impatient Frenchman. His bad manners and his French carefulness disgusted her, and by the time she had recovered from the first numbness of her grief, she was ready to arrange with Ercole a friendly divorce. Marriage did not seem of great importance by this time, and now followed those lovers who could be counted on the fingers of one hand, but the last of them was despatched when she woke up one morning and suddenly began to weep at the memory of Roland, of Nottinghamshire and of England.

There was one more attempt at consolation, a guileless American youth persuaded her to give matrimony another chance. Benny was easy-going and he loved her, but loquacious, sentimental and, for Sina at any rate, inexperienced.

SINA had become willful and nervy; she was not a child any longer; she was old enough to be able to visualize the future. The shortening number of years were too valuable to be spent at the side of talkative Benny. Once more she woke up, and wept for Roland, for Nottinghamshire and for England. This time, after a surprised and hurt Benny had agreed to a divorce, she did not renew her contracts, but assembled her savings and returned to England.

This was two years previously.

Two dull years.

It was not to be supposed that Sina's restless nature was going to stop at this point; a visitor to second-class hotels, a paying guest among friends. She did not wish to return to the stage, for she had grown lazy. It no longer had any excitement for her. Shrewd enough to live carefully on her savings, she had made, however, a mistake in thinking that she could settle down and live on the capital of a single memory. She had not yet fully gauged the irritation produced by despair working on a temperament of intense vitality. She was now thirty-eight but often gave her age as forty-two, for, she argued, there is more pleasure in knowing that you are really four years younger than you say you are, and to have people exclaim, "But how young you look!" than to pretend to be only thirty and to know a secret horror at the thought that you are eight years older.

Sina had begun to think of reaching for the sponge. It lay on the wooden bath-tray across the mahogany enclosed bath. The bathroom at Kittsmill was large and old-fashioned. The imitation-tile wallpaper did not convincingly hide the converted bedroom.

Murder in the Garden

Kittsmill stood on a wooded slope in Essex. The two-storied house, once a farm house, nuzzled into a hollow of a hill like a sleeping girl in the armpit of her lover. Sentinel above the house stood the mill, a tarred cone, with a revolving cupola which did not now revolve. Only one of the latticed sweeps remained, and this hung idly. The revolving mechanism was no longer in working order, but the vanes of the driving wheel turned sometimes when the wind was in the right quarter, disturbing the owls which nested in the upper story. From the outside landing, though Sina had not been up, one felt that the sea should have been visible, that at any moment the horizon would clear, and that there would be a gleam of silver.

Sina was alone in the house, where she had been staying for nearly a fortnight. Every day Mrs. Lambert came from the cottage by the road to clean and cook, but from one o'clock onward Sina had the house to herself. This, for a week, had been enjoyable. It was possible to relax, live in a dressing-gown and to eat by the fire. During the last few days, however, she had been growing tired of it. Sign of boredom, she had been going to bed early. Tonight she had started the geyser for her bath at nine o'clock.

The house had been lent her, indefinitely, in their generous, impetuous way, by the Dunkeleys, a large family Sina had met at parties but only knew casually. Bored with a hotel at Frinton, Sina had remembered their invitation; she could make use of the mill at any time she pleased, for the Dunkeleys were seldom there except in the Summer, and it was now still early Spring. Sina had not meant to stay so long, but funds were short at the moment and living at the mill was cheap.

Sina, reaching out for a sponge, noticed, above the bath, a bell. It was a large and impressive bell, old-fashioned in design. It was, in fact, one of the first electric bells in Essex. Sina had not noticed it before. At least, it had not before seemed to stare at her from the wall, with its discolored ivory button, asking, for its impertinence, to be pushed. Sina lifted a dripping hand and placed her forefinger on the button. The impulse was strong and simple, the response automatic. There was not even a rationalized excuse "to see if it works." Something said "bell" and the immediate reaction was to press the button.

From below the bell answered; the intervening floor dulled the sound, which arrived, however, insistent and authoritative. Sina at once dropped her hand. The effect was altogether too startling. She had pressed the bell, of course, and naturally it had replied. But suppose, alone in the house and in her bath, she had heard, without having pressed it, a bell ringing in the dark and deserted kitchen? It would herald, surely, something that was unpleasant.

And Sina remembered that she was alone in the house, that she had been alone in the house for a fortnight, and that the countryside was deserted.

She had rung the bell and it had answered, but the answer did not stop there; you ring a bell, and someone comes. And now somebody was coming.

A LIGHT, quick tread, the tread of a man, could be heard on the uncarpeted boards of the landing. A hand was on the knob of the unlocked door. It had happened too quickly for Sina to react with fear or even with apprehension. Her heart certainly beat faster, but all she did was to stare at the open door, and to hold the sponge motionless in her hand.

Mercifully the door took no very long time in opening. It opened at once and with conviction, and in the doorway stood a young man, tall, with dark hair and graceful limbs. There was a moment while he stood peering through the steam, and then his heels moved automatically together, and a question came with perfect assurance and gravity:

"Did you ring, Madame?"

The young man was wearing a tailed jacket of irreproachable cut, and everything else, the glossy front and white tie, was to match. It was necessary to notice the silver buttons before one was sure that he was a servant, for the voice was cultured and confident.

Sina, for a moment, gaped. This was a scene out of a farce, and she had had much experience with them, good heavens, or else, the bell was a magic bell, and this was the genie.

Not so long as it has taken to read this elapsed before Sina found her voice.

"Certainly!"

Already there was a mischievous twinkle in her eye, an inkling that something had turned up, as it always did turn up, to continue the extravagant series of events that was her life.

"Certainly!"

"And what does Madame require?" The impersonal glance met her own mischievous one and fell away again.

So the genie was a good genie; Sina did not bother her head at that moment as to how the immaculately dressed young man had arrived in a house where she had been alone for a fortnight, and a house of which she had, personally, a couple of hours ago, locked all the doors. She was busy racking her brains for some request that would bring back the entrancing vision which had come to end her loneliness, a request that would be in the mad spirit of the whole astonishing circumstance.

"I want—" she answered, and it was really on the spur of the moment, "Will you bring . . . some champagne!"

CHAPTER II

THE young man, with only a moment's hesitation and with a murmured "Very good, Madame," departed. Sina's wits stole back, and now she did with a vengeance consider her position.

Who was he, what was he doing, and how did he get in? Sina began to wonder if she had not imagined the whole thing. She mentally pinched herself; she was certainly awake. "I have been day-dreaming," she said. "I was thinking about Roland. I have been alone in this house and my nerves are beginning to play tricks."

Thinking about Roland! Yes, there was, and she could see it now, something about the phantom, that young man with the aristocratic distance of a servant, that reminded her of Roland. His carriage, his shoulders, his black hair, his reserve—Roland. But younger, of course.

Suppose the man was, fantastically, to return! How foolish she had been to let him go. There had been in all her life only one year that had been worth living. If the chance offered again she would not let this young man go so easily.

In the meantime, she would have to decide on a course of action supposing the phantom did return. One thing was certain, she must refrain from asking questions, which she had heard caused ghosts to dematerialize.

It was the first time in that house that she had ever pressed a bell. Mrs. Lambert, who wore her hat even when she was washing up or polishing floors, had let it be understood by her bearing, by her "Miss Bosworths," that she did not expect to answer bells.

But had Mrs. Lambert a son, who was in service somewhere, and had in some way arrived at Kittsmill on a visit, and had heard the bell, and had as automatically answered it as Sina had pressed the ivory button?

To think that Mrs. Lambert could have such a son was entirely absurd, and there was only one house within five miles that he could have come from, and Sina knew something about this house, and knew that no men servants were kept there.

It is necessary to explain here that it was not entirely without motive that Sina had borrowed Kittsmill from the Dunkeleys. Below Kittsmill were woods, and below the woods, in Kitts Bottom, a lake and a stream. On the other side the ground rose and there were more woods, and then, a good three miles away, an enlarged and spurious villa, aping, under its name of Beechwood Park, a country mansion. The revelation must now be made that in spite of all that has been said there was staying at Beechwood Park a man who might very possibly become Sina's fourth husband.

Tommy Norman had rather been put out of her mind by the arrival of the phantom. Humble and sincere, Tommy was not a man to compete in her attention with the very un-phantomlike youth and vitality of the stranger with the handsome limbs. Staunch old friend, he aspired to the rank of lover, of husband! At Frinton Sina had received from him six letters; wouldn't she come and stay with him at Beechwood? Or suppose he was to join her at Frinton? Sina had replied lightly that she was busy, that she had other plans, that she was here and there. Later in the Summer perhaps she might see him. She had a feeling that when she *did* see him she would have, in the generosity of her heart, to marry him. It would not be very difficult to live with him. He knew many of her friends of the old days, of whom they could talk, whom they could pull to pieces. He had a little money, but not very much. He was obliging, effacing, pathetic. It would be a good work to take him in hand, to tidy him up, to save his blue and charming eyes from

the wateryness of drink. He knew how to buy tickets, label boxes, to fill up forms, to mix cocktails and to play Polish besique. He even knew, bless him, how to make love in a fashion tender and autumnal. But marriage to Tommy would be a confession; it was the equivalent of a retirement, of settling down.

Three or four times during the fourteen days Sina's hand had been near to the telephone.

But the time for settling down with Tommy had not yet come. Heavens, he would still be waiting for her in a year's time, in two. She might, in the meantime, warn him about the whisky bottle, and about the friends with whom he was mixing. She had not actually touched the telephone on those three or four occasions for the reason that she had remembered those friends of Tommy's, the rest of the party at Beechwood, whom she had no desire to meet. Sina was not squeamish; she had known and liked dope-addicts, persons who had served terms of imprisonment, company directors, confidence tricksters, and others. But the set at Beechwood irritated her; Cecil Brothers, the host, sombre, clever and decadent; Freddy Usher, a too clever undergraduate with an unpleasant mind; a Cuban girl who was underhanded and vindictive. How Tommy could go around with them she did not know. Her own speckled past had the appearance of being positively homely in comparison. For only one of the company had she any regard—Cecil's wife, Pearl. And that girl she had not seen since the marriage rather less than a year previously. It was through Pearl Brothers that Sina had met the Beechwood crowd, through the Dunkeleys that Sina had met Pearl, an artists' model of astonishing beauty and no discretion. Sina had every admiration for Pearl's beauty, which was of a breath-taking quality.

He whose image had effaced that of Tommy in Sina's attention was now again at the door. A discreet knock, not answered, and he came through the door, which he closed in some magical way with his heel, then approaching the bath with the tray on which there was a champagne bottle and two glasses.

Well, he might have found an odd bottle in the Dunkeleys' cellar, but Sina preferred to think that he had conjured it from the air.

He placed the tray on the cork stool, and with a glance for her orders, began to strip the foil.

"But why," Sina asked, "two glasses?"

"Well, I didn't know, Madame, which you'd prefer—the old-fashioned one with the shallow bowl, or the tall one, which I don't think, you know, is of very good quality."

Yes, he had a handsome nose, and hands that were well shaped, tender but firm.

"Very well, then," Sina flattened her knees in the milky pine-scented water, "you shall drink out of that one and I'll have the shallow one. I'm glad you brought two."

This was how it was to be done; she must remember not to ask questions.

The cork flew.

"Drink up!" She clinked glasses, stretching out an arm that was still from shoulder to slender wrist, as lovely as in the days when she had worn ostrich feathers and sung French songs with a brassy midland accent. The drink elated her but it was without a move on her part that the young man filled up the glasses again. He hadn't offered any explanation, and Sina was strictly not making inquiries. He had white teeth, and he moved with grace. Perhaps he was an actor. She didn't now believe that he was seriously a footman.

He picked up the tray.

"And does Madame require anything more tonight?"

Sina challenged him with a look which he did not avoid. She was going to follow it up; she could hardly expect the gods to offer her any further opportunities, and this time the phantom should not be allowed a chance of vanishing. Her answer to his question was quite simple, and it came at once:

"Oh yes, company."

CHAPTER III

AT the time when Sina was getting ready for her bath, shortly before nine o'clock, Tommy, or the Major, or Major Norman, was preparing the end of a cigar and wondering whether it was too chilly for a stroll outside on the terrace. There was a fire in the lounge, there were deep easy chairs, illustrated magazines and a host who would presently unlock a liquor chest of astonishingly handsome proportions. But on the other hand, there was an atmosphere of ill temper and aggravation. Cecil and Pearl had quarreled during the afternoon, that time for quarrels when good temper is at its lowest ebb, and Pearl had started off for a walk from which she had not yet returned. Dinner had been delayed for half an hour, and then they had sat down to food which had been overcooked, served with demonstrative clumsiness by a girl who would be half an hour late for her evening out.

Tommy justly blamed Cecil for the unpleasantness. Cecil, on the verge of forty, with rich and sensual lips and an olive skin, possessed a dominating character masked by a laziness that was only superficial and a wicked intuition; he certainly knew how to make anyone feel small. Tommy himself had been made to feel very small only that morning. There had been some talk about hangers-on and suddenly Cecil's eyes, bland and callous, had swiveled over to the unhappy Tommy. It was to be understood that the Major was something of a hanger-on himself; he didn't fit in with Cecil's group—æsthetes, sensitives, and decadents. The invitation, which came from Cecil, had been casual and without warmth, but Tommy had accepted it like a shot. He was poor, and at Beechwood Park he was certain of many comforts. Certainly he wasn't there as Cecil's friend, and as "friend-of-the-wife" his position, with Cecil and Pearl quarreling, wasn't very happy.

CECIL and Pearl had only been married for six months. It was a wedding which surprised everyone, and the principals more than anyone. Pearl had been snubbed by the husband of one hour's standing at the wedding luncheon in the Mayfair flat. A honeymoon for such sophisticated persons was not to be thought of. The luncheon had spread itself from two o'clock in the afternoon to four the next morning, when it had ended in kippers and a morose silence. Tommy had been there, "friend of the bride."

What a mistake, people said. But Pearl had been fascinated by Cecil's amber eyes, decoyed by his amorous technique, mesmerized by his insolent charm. On the other hand, Pearl had to offer him an empty head, a disposition as kind-hearted as a chorus girl's, a figure that set sculptors chiseling and moulding furiously, and a skin which infuriated artists, squeezing first one tube and then another in a despairing effort to reproduce the unpaintable.

Tommy had met her four years previously when she was just beginning to be known as an artists' model. He had entered the studio of a friend without knocking. He had touched his moustache, felt for his handkerchief, murmured imbecilities, while Pearl, on the throne, with the candor of seventeen, had asked him to shut the door. Natively good-hearted, a little spoiled, she had delighted the Major, humble before her divine beauty, by treating him on terms of equality. In that artistic set into which he seemed to have drifted, the Major was very aware of his mental limitations. Grateful, he had been a staunch friend to her, listened to her troubles, and allowed her to pay her share of the rare outings they took together.

No one could remember whether Pearl had been baptized Pearl or by another name. Many people had never heard her surname. She was Pearl, the most fascinating artists' model in Europe.

There was a theory that she was Scotch, that her real name was Margaret, which, whether it means a pearl or not, was evidently altogether out of her character.

On the way out to the terrace, Tommy stepped over the legs of that vaguely Cuban girl who had been at the bottom of the afternoon's unpleasantness. Gilberte was a match for Cecil in her personality and more than a match for Pearl. The triangle was well developed.

Gilberte, as Tommy stumbled over her feet, glanced up with devastating indifference.

"Don't go out by the glass door, please." She crossed her legs, on which were stenciled, in lieu of stockings, a spray of small flowers.

"No—no, no. I won't forget." Tommy scuttled away, to gain the terrace by a door which would not fan draughts for the woman whose ten painted toenails glittered as she indolently stretched them out.

In the hall a tall young man was hanging up a motor coat.

"Hello, Freddy. Back?"

Tommy was not being very lucky tonight. Freddy Usher stared at him, and then condescended to explain.

"Didn't go after all. The old bus has a flat tire."

The balustrade of the terrace was damp with a chill dew. A waning moon sometimes came out from among the clouds, but it was not bright enough to illuminate the dark hollows of land between the house and the hill which,

fringed with a comb of bare branches, formed the skyline. Tommy turned up the collar of his dinner jacket. With his face and shirt front turned away from the wind, and as it happened, from the moon, and with his hands in his pockets, he was invisible, and before realizing it he was overhearing a private conversation. It was too late to move now, at least he could only reveal himself in that hearty way which would underline the privateness of the conversation, and he didn't want to have to face Freddy's condescension or Cecil's supercilious amusement. He stayed where he was.

They were talking about Pearl.

"The trouble is," Cecil was saying, "she pretends now that she doesn't want a divorce. It's a matter of pride, I think. Six months isn't very long, I suppose, but the girl hasn't any logic or foresight. I tell her that it's silly to prolong what's going to turn out intolerable sooner or later, damn silly. And more intolerable for her than for me."

Freddy sniggered.

"Well, then, why don't *you* divorce *her?*"

Cecil didn't answer at once, and Freddy went on.

"You could, I suppose? The little Pearl's kind-heartedness hasn't been choked by the legal bonds of matrimony?"

Tommy, listening, began to wish that he was a sort of fellow who went around administering socks on the jaw. But he wasn't, and he had to go on listening.

"You heard what she threatened to do this afternoon?" Cecil and Freddy had moved closer to him and now he could hear every word they said, although Cecil was speaking in his confidential and casual manner.

"I've certainly got legal grounds for divorce, but she could make an unholy row, if she chose to kick. She could let out a story to the yellow press that wouldn't do any of us any good."

"It's perfectly absurd!"

"Quite. But that's the British public. I might end up in Maidstone Jail."

Tommy, listening, began to feel more and more uneasy; he began to wish that he had never met Cecil Brothers, and that his knowledge of the artistic world was limited to sporting prints and the Royal Academy. He had a pretty shrewd idea of what had been going on under the surface during the last few months. He stood still in the shadow because it was important for him to know more precisely if a real explosion was to be feared. Very important. But Cecil and Freddy were walking away, and he could not hear any more. When they had reached the far end of the terrace, Tommy circumspectly clambered over the balustrade and descended by means of the stones of the rockery to the lawn. Diving through a shrubbery, he congratulated himself on having reached the summer-house without having been seen. The summer-house, abode of spiders, wasn't likely to be favored by anyone else on a chill spring night.

TOMMY sat down, and attended to his cigar. He wondered after precisely what climax Pearl had, that afternoon just before tea-time, marched out of the house. From what he had overheard, it seemed as if Cecil was seeking a divorce. From whispers and rumors on previous occasions he had come to the conclusion that it was the other way about, that it was Pearl who wanted it, and Cecil who was refusing. Well, no doubt, their positions would shift from day to day as ways and means were discussed, momentary generosities canceled and bitter hurts remembered.

Poor Pearl—she had been wearing only a thin knitted suit of blue wool, and she must have been tramping the roads now for—how many hours? Tommy withdrew his half-hunter from its chamois pocket in order to consult it by the light of his glowing cigar. The watch slipped through his fingers on to the wooden floor. Compunctious for its feelings, for it was a watch that did not deserve such treatment, Tommy stooped, guiding his fingers toward the agitated ticking.

The floor was wet—sticky. The rain must have been getting in, or someone had spilled the mowing machine oil. He found the watch; that, too, was sticky. Aggravated, he laid the watch on the bench beside him and felt for matches. In the flare of the match he saw the blood on his matches, on the floor, and as the match burnt out, he saw the girl of whom he had been thinking.

Pearl was lying on the floor against an old wicker garden chair. He thought that she was ill, and that she had fallen out of the chair, or that she had been trying to reach it. Although not a man who went around administering socks on the jaw, Tommy was handy in emergencies. He could behave, not having a very vivid imagination, in a matter-of-fact way. In the light of further matches he saw, as he stooped beside her, that the blood had flowed from deep wounds in the side of her neck and from her wrist. There was a great deal of it, but she wasn't dead. At least, she was still warm. That decided, Tommy stepped out of the summer-house and began to call. He could see now the two white shirt fronts on the terrace.

"Hullo, what is it?"

Tommy conventionally mitigated his news:

"Pearl's in the summer-house. I think she's hurt."

"Pearl?" Even in that monosyllable Tommy could read the quality of fear.

"You'd better come. . . . I'm going to fetch some sort of a light. . . ."

The light would be needed, but also Tommy did not care to be with Cecil when he came upon his wife. He passed Cecil and Freddy hurrying toward the summer-house, and in the lounge he bumped into Gilberte, who had heard the shouting.

"What is it? What's happened?"

Tommy, rummaging in a drawer for an electric torch, let her have the news; in the emergency he didn't care a damn for Gilberte or for any of them.

"You'd better stay here. It's Pearl—she's in the summer-house, cut all over the place, and lying in a pool of blood."

IN Gilberte's face there was the same sudden shock, the same apprehension, that had been in that first exclamation of Cecil's. But almost at once she had recovered, and she was there, too, in the summer-house when Tommy returned with the torch.

Tommy helped Cecil lift up the form which had seemed so slight but was so heavy now, and they laid her down at the door of the summer-house. Gilberte hovered in the background, hidden in the darkness and silent. The calibre of Freddy's nerves was revealed by the electric torch which he had been given to hold; the beam which quivered and trembled was an electroscope measuring his terror.

"I don't think we can do anything." Cecil had himself well under control. "I'll get hold of a doctor at once—Hussey is the nearest, I think."

It was six miles from Colderstraw to Beechwood Park, and Dr. Hussey would not arrive for nearly half an hour. Cecil and Tommy decided that it would be safer not to move Pearl, as the blood which he had stopped flowing might break out again. It was cold and dark in the summer-house, but they could hardly leave it, except on the legitimate errands of fetching rugs and a stable lamp. Tommy, unasked, told them how he had found her. The others said little. Freddy for a moment had been inclined to be talkative. He wanted everyone to know that he had seen her leaving the house at tea-time, and that he hadn't seen her afterwards. Of what had sent her out, flushed and angry, no one said anything. Tommy couldn't help feeling sorry for Cecil, but the Cuban girl and Freddy he studiously didn't address. Not even when, during a pause, Gilberte suddenly asked:

"What thing did she do it with?"

Tommy started. Then, taking the torch, he searched the floor of the summer-house, and the path outside, throwing the beam over the deck chairs, under the benches and beneath the bushes. The search, so far fruitless, was interrupted by the whine of the doctor's car. Tommy went with Cecil to meet him, leaving Gilberte by the summer-house. Freddy had gone away to be sick.

Dr. Hussey, lean and deft, made his examination.

"You had better ring for an ambulance at once." His tone didn't give anything away. "The nearest one will be the police ambulance at Coldershaw, I think. They'll have to know, too, anyway. Shall I do it, or will you, Mr. Brothers?"

Cecil went off toward the house, and Tommy sat down on an empty bird bath and re-lit his cigar.

CHAPTER IV

SINA awoke gently and with consideration. She came up to the surface of the daylit world with the command of an experienced swimmer who has taken a long and lazy dive. Expert in sleep, and she was fond of it, she resolutely excluded from these waking moments the problems and the exacerbations which managed to visit even her. But this morning she knew that there was some unusual matter awaiting her contemplation. As nearly as she could remember the preceding night, as her vague thoughts began to collect themselves, there should, by all rights, be a young man sleeping in the guest room. Hastily throwing a

negligee about her shoulders, she ran down the hall. Many things had to be accomplished in a short while. She knocked once, twice, received a sleepy "Hello," opened the door.

"So you've decided to wake up at last!" She had it ready to greet him, as he rolled over and opened his eyes. It was a moment before his eyes socially adjusted themselves.

"Hullo? Good Lord!" His coming to life evidently contained a surprise for him. Would he ask what on earth she was doing there? Instead he asked, "Is it awfully late?"

"You slept comfortably?" she asked.

"Like a log. I say—" he had noticed the sun, "it is late. I'm awfully sorry."

"You should be."

"Then another time you mustn't allow it."

Sina had said something in reply to that, but she didn't hear herself speaking because the young man had projected a future, and she was examining it. "Another time—" She looked at him swiftly, and he met her gaze smiling. She mustn't give away her pleasure. She regarded the traveling clock at the bedside.

"It's nine o'clock."

"Nine o'clock?" He was suddenly very alert, and he was almost out of the bed before she had corrected herself.

"Eight o'clock, I mean. It's difficult to see from here, one of the hands fell off and I put it back myself, not very accurately."

She wondered why he should have appeared so relieved. Had he some appointment for nine o'clock? A life going on for him somewhere else? She had begun to think that he had sprung into existence at the ringing of a bell.

"Eight o'clock," she repeated, "and now we have to think about things." Sina went on rapidly, for this getting down to earth might mean the end of everything, but unfortunately it had to be done.

"In about half an hour the woman will be coming to get my—our breakfast. She doesn't come upstairs till afterward; she doesn't think it her duty to wake me up, and the hot-water comes from the geyser."

"I understand." He smiled gaily. "We must concoct a story. Well now, what shall we tell her?"

So he wasn't going to disappear clandestinely. That was all right.

"It will have to be a good story," Sina said, beginning to realize the difficulties. "She's a woman who keeps herself to herself and doesn't ask questions, but naturally I have a face to save—"

"A lovely one!"

"Then it's worth saving."

"And it shall be. I am your brother who arrived suddenly last night without warning."

"But—" Her eyes had traveled toward the chair on which lay his clothes.

"Your brother's luggage has been mislaid. Or better—at what time does this woman leave?"

"After she has set the lunch—at about one o'clock."

"Very well, your brother is lazy and wears a dressing-gown until midday. There is one on the door."

"Quite. But . . ."

"Oh, before the good woman comes—what's her name by the way?"

"Mrs. Lambert. Annie."

"Good! And now, if you'll turn your back I'll attempt to get up."

SINA heard him trying the doors along the passage. Then there was a closing of a door, and she decided that he had found the bathroom. Sounds of rushing water assured her he had. Her eyes went to the clothes on the chair. She had once had the thought that the uniform might be a fancy dress, but it fitted too well for that, unless he had expensively had one made for the purpose. She ran her fingers over the cloth. It was of very good quality. On the seat of the trousers there was the faintest trace of shine, three months of wear, she concluded. The socks were new, and had not yet been laundered; they were of a cheap and brittle wool, and had cost at the most eighteen pence a pair. But the shoes on the other hand, and this interested Sina, had been re-soled once if not twice, and it was evident from their style and their leather that they bespoke shoes from a small and exclusive shop.

The woman detective, as she laid down the shoes, was pleased with herself and with her cunning; the young man had once been wealthy (when he had bought the shoes) but now he was poor (the eighteen-penny socks and their indifferent garters). Hence, she calculated, perhaps, down on his luck, he had become a footman. A leather case, which she could see was of fine morocco, projected from the breast pocket of the coat. She would like to have looked into it. But that, even for a woman, was too unscrupulous, and anyway it wasn't safe, he might be coming back any moment. She contented herself instead with examining the cuff links. They were certainly not valuable, but of undeniable taste; plain and heavy, they were simple discs of gun-metal on which were chased, without fuss, the initials S. C. B.

AT this moment Sina heard his step on the landing. In a panic she dropped the shirt sleeve and looked out the window. But he was going in the other direction, down the stairs.

Sina repeated the initials to herself—S. C. B. She had now something that approached a *name*, that was a step in advance. She tried variations; Samuel Collin Bradshaw; Simon Claude Biggerstaffe; Stephen Christopher Brown.

Pleasantly occupied, she realized with a start that a quarter of an hour had passed. And then once more she heard his step and he came in with a tray of tea and a newspaper.

"Thoughtful boy!"

"I found everything except sugar!" He placed the tray on the bed, and squatted beside it.

"I don't take sugar," Sina cosily smiled.

"Oh, but I do. Remember it, please."

"Certainly I will . . . S. C. B.!"

She looked up at him quickly, asking for some special indication that he appreciated her quickness; perhaps he would volunteer some more personal handle. But he was only looking puzzled.

"S. C. B." she repeated, "that's it, isn't it?"

She nodded in the direction of the cuff links.

"Oh yes!" Light dawned but not quick enough to prevent Sina from having a doubt. Perhaps those weren't his initials. Perhaps he was masquerading. But, she recollected, the clothes fitted too well to have been made for anyone else.

"Shall I call you S. C. B.?" she coyly asked.

"Why not?"

"S. C. B.—but that's awkward. I shall call you—I shall call you SCUB!"

"You shall do as you please. That's what we are both doing, isn't it? That's a bargain?"

He had turned off, then, this question of his identity, and for the moment he had looked so earnestly appealing that not for worlds would Sina have scared him. She took the newspaper and idly opened it. He asked if he could smoke, and took a cigarette from the box on the dressing table. She noted that he didn't have to be told where to look for it.

Reader of headlines, it did not take long for Sina to learn the news of the day. But at one headline, with already a premonition, she paused.

ARTISTS' MODEL BLEEDS TO DEATH

Out of the body of the column glowed the words she was already expecting to find: *Pearl Brothers.* Not till then did she recognize the photograph which she had glanced at even before the headline. Pearl! For a moment she couldn't go on reading.

The young man glanced at her face:

"What is it? Shares gone down?"

"No—no . . . it's somebody I know."

She began to read the column out loud, in an effort to steady herself, in an effort to absorb what it was telling her: that on the previous evening Pearl had been found, bleeding to death, and by her Tommy. She read about the wounds, the absence of a weapon, and of her death a few minutes after she had been admitted to the hospital at Coldershaw.

The young man took the newspaper which she had let fall from her hands. He was reading it again.

"Pearl! Pearl! It's awful. And poor old Tommy." But even at this moment of emotion Sina could not avoid a certain sensation of pride. Once herself greedy of publicity, she automatically found herself calculating the size of the headlines. Her horror and her grief were real, but she had to ask, seeing how very intently he was studying the newspaper:

"Did you know her?"

He might have: so many people did know Pearl—had known her. And those who didn't used to pretend they did. But he shook his head, without raising his eyes from the paper.

Murder in the Garden

Sina arrived downstairs to receive from Mrs. Lambert a grudged good-morning. Sina apologized for being late.

"Oh, Mrs. Lambert . . . my brother turned up unexpectedly last night."

This was not going to be easy.

"So will you please set breakfast for two?"

Mrs. Lambert turned on her with an alarming swiftness.

"He was *sleeping* here?"

"Yes, of course. He turned up unexpectedly. . . ." Sina faltered. "His luggage has been mislaid, but he'll be getting that later. And anyway, like me, he goes in for dressing-gowns, in the mornings, I mean, at least. . . ."

Mrs. Lambert's look was a measure of her failure at telling lies.

"So of course," Sina continued, forced to go on talking, "he'll want some breakfast. There looks to be plenty of porridge."

"Were there enough blankets out?"

Mrs. Lambert's consideration, Sina felt, was not for the unexpected brother, but for the property of her employers. Living in the cottage at the end of the private road to Kittsmill she was caretaker as well as daily woman.

"Oh, everything was quite all right, thank you."

Mrs. Lambert mercifully went off then to lay another place. Sina hung about the kitchen. Pearl and Tommy! Automatically she stuck parsley into the butter pats, turned up the gas under the kettle, and threw an empty sugar bag into the waste basket. Then, crossing to the morning room she was surprised to see the young man, to see Scub, at the telephone in the hall.

"Is Dr. Picard there?" she heard him asking. And then, "Is that you, Harry?"

Much as she would like to have heard more, Sina was afraid that he would see her, and Mrs. Lambert was bearing down upon her, too, with the steaming porridge plates. She retired into the morning room.

But still—she would like to have heard more. "Dr. Picard?" No, she knew of no one of that name—Dr. Picard who was "Harry" to the young man Scub.

Not entirely without designs she emerged once more into the hall, on the excuse of fetching the sugar castor.

"Harry" was speaking, apparently, since for a moment she could hear nothing. And then she heard, quite distinctly:

"No, but I wondered if you had seen Pearl. I thought you might have done . . . Well, it's all over now, at any rate."

Pearl! No, there had been no mistake. He had been talking to a Dr. Picard about Pearl, although he had shaken his head when she asked him if he knew her.

CHAPTER V

INSPECTOR FREER arrived at the Coldershaw Hospital in no very happy frame of mind. Owing to a sick headache he first heard of the events at Beechwood Park from the morning paper. Some hospital orderly or ambulance driver, out to make a few guineas, must have phoned through to London almost immediately. Freer, on arriving at the police station, found that Sergeant Williams had already gone over to Beechwood and, cunning in the politics of the police force, decided not to join Williams there until he had received from Dr. Hussey and from Dr. Tate, the police surgeon, the result of the autopsy. Then, for what Williams had to tell him, he would have something to tell Williams.

Inspector Freer went into the mortuary with the intention of satisfying himself that it was a case of suicide. Williams had already begun to conduct things as if it were a first-class murder case, led astray, probably, by a wild newspaper story, in which the absence of a weapon was made much of. Very well, he grimly begged leave to differ from Sergeant Williams, a satisfactory murder was what he desired above all things, but he would not allow himself that sanguine hope. Williams had taken a lorry load of men up to Beechwood Park to search for the missing weapon. The Inspector wasn't going to be worried even if it didn't turn up. Friends of suicides, he knew, often tampered with the evidence.

Dr. Tate was washing his hands as the Inspector came into the mortuary. Dr. Hussey, who, out of courtesy, had been asked to attend, was already getting into his overcoat.

"Well, Doctor," the Inspector swam into it, "what have you found?"

Dr. Tate raised his bald dome:

"We've found everything there is to be found. It's a very simple case, but it's very puzzling."

"Oh!" The Inspector didn't know how to take that. "Finished?"

"For the moment. We agree, don't we, Dr. Hussey?"

"Oh yes, I think so." Hussey was better at talking to selected patients about fishing and horses than at assisting at a post mortem.

"But you may think," Tate turned to the Inspector, "that we ought to send off the organs for an analysis. You'll no doubt have a chat with the coroner and so forth."

"I thought you said it was a very simple case?" the Inspector objected.

"Well, yes it is. Death due to loss of blood caused by knife wounds. There are two parallel cuts on the left sterno mastoid, and cuts of a less serious character on the left wrist. That's quite clear, in any case. Your men have been taking photographs, but you had better see for yourself."

Dr. Tate drew on again his rubber gloves and moved to the table.

"And you were with the girl when she died?" the Inspector put to Dr. Hussey.

"Yes. She was conscious for a few minutes before death, her husband was there, and she seemed to recognize him. But there was a sudden relapse, and she died a few minutes later without having spoken."

"I SEE." The Inspector turned to the table, where the police surgeon now had things ready for him. He pointed out on the left side of the neck the two parallel cuts, three or four inches long and an inch apart. The wounds were not of very great depth and were made by a cutting, not a stabbing action. The wounds on the left wrist were quite superficial—little more than scratches, two of them, parallel, and about half an inch apart.

"No cuts on the hands," observed the Inspector. "Was there blood on them when she was found?"

"I understand so," Hussey took the question. "Her husband and the others had made some attempt at cleaning her up. She had been moved, you know, and there was a sponge with blood on it near by. But they hadn't done much for fear the bleeding would start again."

"Come over here, Inspector." Dr. Tate mysteriously called from the bench where he was adjusting a slide in a microscope. "There's a rather curious thing here. Have a look."

The Inspector screwed up his eye and uncomfortably squinted. Dr. Tate adjusted the reflector, and suddenly there sprang into view a black jagged edge, which meant very little to the Inspector.

"You see?" Dr. Tate was evidently rather pleased with his peep-show. "That is a section of the severed skin. I'm told you haven't found the weapon yet, and I suggest that you should look for something with a serrated edge. I'm not a specialist, and I think you ought to have a microphoto of this, but I should certainly say, even after this superficial examination, that the implement definitely wasn't a razor."

"Did anyone say it was a razor?" The Inspector picked him up.

"'Dear no. But in nine cases out of ten in a suicide of this sort a razor is used. As I say, I'm not an expert and there may be all sorts of implements that would produce wounds like these, but I do know that a very similar serration is to be observed when flesh has been severed with a surgical saw—a very fine-toothed saw."

Inspector Freer nodded wisely. Dr. Tate must be leading up to something, but he couldn't at the moment see what. There were one or two routine questions to be asked, and as no further peep-shows were offered, he put them immediately.

"Since there was no evidence of assault and as her bracelets and valuable earrings were intact, I suppose we can take it that they were self-inflicted?" The Inspector was forcing for an affirmative, but both doctors were silent for a moment, and then Dr. Tate began cautiously:

"That's the problem, Freer. I'm damned if I know. According to the text books this would be a clear case of suicide; the cuts are on the left side of the neck and on the left wrist; the cuts are parallel; there were no cuts or abrasions or bruises on the hands or any other part of the body, as there would be if the girl had defended herself. All these factors point conclusively to suicide."

"But?" prompted the Inspector.

"But—you haven't found the weapon yet. Of course you

may and I'm not making a point of that yet. But even if you do, I'm sure that it won't be a razor. Yet as I say statistics show that a razor is used nine times out of ten in cases of suicide—one might say that it is the implement of the suicide par excellence. Only when it is impossible to secure a razor or, one must add, a sharp knife approximating it, is another implement used. Prisoners have been known to use sharp nails and pieces of tin. But this girl just isn't the type to make away with herself in this manner. Poison or a gas-oven or a bullet I could understand, but so far as I've been able to find out yet the girl was mentally normal. Even granted a motive I don't believe that she would of her own volition have adopted this method. Taking it by and large, I should say that it was psychologically impossible for this young woman to have killed herself in this way. Why, her sex simply is against it. It requires extraordinary will power, I assure you, Freer, to inflict wounds of this nature on oneself."

Freer was quite ready to agree to that; but desperate people acquire will power of a surprising strength.

"I'm rather more impressed with your other evidence, Freer sniffed. "It looks like a clear case to *me*."

EVEN before the Inspector reached Beechwood Park, there was evidence of the Sergeant's search squad. He explained his maneuvers to the Inspector.

"I came to the conclusion, sir, that the deceased was attacked at some distance from the place where she was found. She may have remained for some time at that location, and then tried to drag herself to the house. Being overcome on the way, she crawled into the summer-house, her strength giving out before she could reach the chair against which she was found. That being so, I considered it important to discover the locale of the attack without delay."

Freer nodded curtly.

"So you haven't found a weapon?"

"Not yet, sir." Williams hesitated. "Perhaps you would like to have a look at the summer-house?"

Freer allowed himself to be conducted in that direction, while Sergeant Williams recited such other steps as had already been taken. Statements had been volunteered by the girl's husband and by Major Norman.

"And what about the rest of the household? I thought there was quite a party of them?"

"Yes, sir, there are two others, not counting the housekeeper and a servant. But I was leaving them for you. I took preliminary statements from the two principals, just enough to know that they hadn't anything much to tell me, and then I went straight on with the search. The witnesses'll keep."

"Yes, perhaps it was just as well you left them for me." This was Freer's reward for the Sergeant's efficiency. "But you may like to know that I've been speaking to Dr. Tate and he thinks that it is a clear case of suicide."

"Then I wish you would come and find the weapon."

"*I've* come to do that."

The Sergeant's glance held a dumb and half-formed reproach, but Freer was smiling, and just whether he was joking or not the Sergeant didn't know. Stubbornly good-tempered, Williams pointed out the details of the summer-house, which they had now reached.

"That is the chair, sir, and that is where Major Norman was sitting. I have checked up on all these spent matches, and I have come to the conclusion that they are all of the variety used up at the house, and they can all be accounted for by the parties who attended the young woman when she was discovered." The Sergeant insisted on knocking in his pins securely. "I haven't gone into fingerprints yet, but I do not think that the summer-house will prove very important. Now here—" he stooped down, to the peril of his seams—"on this path, here, see, we have a trail of blood. I have traced it as far as the shrubbery, and there is a gate through the shrubbery to the field beyond. I've sent most of the men down that way, for it's my opinion that she came up this path——"

"It certainly looks like it."

The Sergeant ignored the interruption.

"—and therefore, most likely, she was coming from the field. There's a track down there to some farm buildings, and then several foot-paths linking up with the main road."

From the direction in which the Sergeant was pointing there now appeared a constable who hastened with the gait of a man who bears important news. Saluting, he said his piece:

"Please, sir, we've found something as we think you ought to see. It's down by the byre, there's a lot more blood. Looks like we've got it, sir."

It never occurred to the honest Sergeant to award the Inspector a triumphant smile. He hastened with joy after his archangel, and Freer followed with more dignity. As he came up the Sergeant was beaming.

"Well, that's the scene of the crime all right," he indicated the trampled grass, "and *that*," he pointed to something lying on the ground just within the open byre which was a few yards away, "is the weapon."

Two or three proud-looking constables were gathered together in a gazing-bee, at a cautious and statutory distance from the object which was, as the sergeant kindly mentioned:

"Found by Constable Boffin, here." As a Sergeant seemed quite content to let it lie there, Freer himself gingerly picked it up. It was a useful-looking pocket knife, six inches long or rather more. The casing was of real ivory which had yellowed with age. Inset in it was a steel plate on which were engraved the initials S. C. B.

Freer glanced at his watch.

"Williams, you carry on down here and I'll go up to the house."

CHAPTER VI

FREER'S peremptory knock on the open front door was answered by a tall girl whose deep red hair and blue eyes were set off brilliantly by the white drill overall which she was wearing. Miss Burne, the lady housekeeper, took him at once to a drawing room where a few minutes later Cecil Brothers joined him. Suave, he impressed Freer by the steadiness of his gaze. Reticent, troubled, unshaved and with the dark eyes of sleeplessness, he was evidently a man who felt grief but did not display it.

"There are some points," Freer apologetically began, "about last night that still aren't clear."

"What can I do for you?"

Freer opened his notebook. He had jotted down a list of questions.

"According to my information at present, Mr. Brothers, you last saw your wife when she left this house at a few minutes after four o'clock yesterday afternoon?"

Cecil Brothers replied levelly:

"That is so."

"Now what were the circumstances of her going out for this walk?"

"The circumstances? Well, we had been rather stewed up all day, and my wife suggested a walk. She asked me to go with her, but I was busy, and the others said they would go if she would wait till after tea. I thought that she had decided to put it off, but then I found she had gone."

"So you don't know if she had any particular objective in mind?" Freer asked almost gently.

"No, I think it was just an objectiveless country walk."

"And when did you begin to get alarmed?"

For the first time Cecil Brothers hadn't an answer ready.

"Oh, well, I don't know. I suppose I never really was alarmed. You see, I was pretty busy right up to dinner time, changed in a hurry, and was a few minutes late myself. Miss Burne, the housekeeper, told me that Mrs. Brothers hadn't come back, but the others were waiting and we sat down at once."

"You didn't delay dinner at all?"

"Only a few minutes."

"And what were all the others doing, between the time Mrs. Brothers left at four o'clock, and dinner time?"

"What were they doing? Oh, just messing about the house."

"None of them went out of the house, to your knowedge?"

"No, I don't think so, Inspector."

Freer wondered whether to press for a more detailed answer, but although suspicion is second nature to a police officer Freer wasn't prepared yet to introduce an atmosphere of unpleasantness. He had, however, before finishing, two other questions:

"Let me see"—he made a show of his notebook—"It's Cecil Brothers, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"That's your full name?"

"Cecil Colyer Brothers."

"Cecil Colyer—I see, thank you, sir. Nothing else?"

"That's all."

"And you don't happen to know of anyone with the

initials S. C. B.?" The Inspector's tone was quite casual.

"S. C. B.? No, I can't think of anyone."

"And have you by any chance lost a pocket knife?"

"A pocket knife? No, I can't remember ever having possessed one."

With a view of following up another trail Freer dismissed Brothers and rang the old-fashioned bell. The housekeeper, Miss Burne, appeared. She struck him as being an eminently truthful person, with no false loyalty to her employer. She admitted, in fact, that she disliked Brothers, and that even before the present tragedy she had decided to leave. But that did not affect the essential truth of her account. She had been, she said, in the employ of Mr. Brothers for two years. He lived in London for the greater part, but spent the Summer and a good many week-ends at Beechwood. She was well paid and not interfered with personally, but she did not care for the people who visited the house; Mr. Brothers usually brought some young woman with him and the freedom of the whole set from conventional morality was declared without shame and even without cynicism. She had been surprised when Mr. Brothers had married Pearl, but pleased. Hoping that the atmosphere would now be more wholesome she had withdrawn the notice she had previously given. A fortnight ago, Mr. and Mrs. Brothers had returned to Beechwood for a long stay, and very soon she had realized that the marriage was a failure. It was not, however, until the previous day that proof had been definite. It had then been impossible to avoid overhearing the gist of a quarrel that had lasted for some hours, ending finally when Pearl stamped out of the house in anger.

"Mr. Brothers," she said in a matter-of-fact voice, "had been making a fuss over Miss Ohlson. Mrs. Brothers resented it. She said she was going to leave him to it, and they would next hear through her solicitors. And then she went out of the house, banging the door."

FREER now felt that everyone was understandably trying to cover up an unsavory scandal. He felt a certain triumph in having ferreted out the truth, which sent him back again to re-consider the theory of suicide—for which there was now a possible motive. He had already dismissed the housekeeper and he thought it a good opportunity while showing himself out to have a sniff round here and there on the way at whatever he might see.

There were two doors to the drawing-room and choosing the further one, and with an excuse ready, the Inspector set out down a passage which he guessed was running parallel to the terrace side of the house. There was a door at the end which opened into a conservatory. Freer was on the point of turning back but when he had once glanced inside, he stood to gaze, too surprised, even, to scratch his head or to feel for his notebook.

The conservatory was bare of flowers and in a dilapidated condition. His first thought was that it must be used as a store-room, but it was certainly a queer kind of store. Over the tiled floor sand, an inch or more thick, had been laid, and in the middle of the sand sat a glossy and powerful-looking sports car. Freer found himself automatically taking the number as he circled round it with the caution of a shying horse. In front of the sports car stood a gilt drawing-room chair and a gilt palm pot containing a palm, which was understandable—but what wasn't so credible was a brand-new check cloth cap which was fixed to one of the leaves with a safety pin. This absorbed, Freer turned to stare at the other end of the conservatory where seven large lumps of white quartz had been arranged, with care apparently, in a semi-circle. On a cushion in the middle lay a round wreath of moss and ivy leaves, rather faded and showing, like dead fish, their pale under-sides. Through the wreath was fixed a billiard cue which blossomed at the end into a small pineapple.

Freer began to feel that the fantastic could overreach itself; astonishment has only one degree and that had already been reached. At that moment out of the corner of his eye he caught sight of something much more sinister—a coffin. That there should be lying on the varnished lid a woman's white opera glove and that the gaudy brass handles should be ornamented with silk bows—yellow with black polka dots—did not make the coffin any the less suggestive.

Freer damped his lips and looked behind him; the greenish sunlight of the conservatory was faintly unreal, but through the glass he could see a world where it was still every-day. With decision he picked up the glove and laid it aside. Methodically he removed one by one, the six screws which had not, luckily, been driven home, but wobbled drunkenly in their sockets. Was it less gruesome to reveal first the head or the feet? In one brave movement Freer had pulled over the heavy lid, and stood breathing heavily. That the coffin was brimfull of hay only meant that another nerve test had to be undergone. Cautiously Freer prodded. His hand reached the bottom planks without having encountered that which he was prepared to find. He began to pull out the hay when suddenly, from somewhere, from inside the coffin, came a plaintive vibration. In a sort of terrified fury Freer took hold of the coffin and tipped out all that it contained. Along with the remainder of the hay there fell out a small violin. It had, as it lay there, still vibrating, the appearance of a dying animal.

A shadow fell across the coffin.

Freer wheeled round with a heart that was late in catching up. Cecil Brothers was the only ghost and rubber-soled shoes the explanation. "Having a look at things, Inspector?" he inquired, with a smile that belonged to another face. "It's only a fiddle, it won't go off bang. These are props we use for amateur theatricals."

"Are they now?" Freer no longer felt inclined to show any respect. He had knowledge which gave him a moral ascendancy and he could be as nasty as he liked. He was piqued that Brothers should have found him poking round in a suspicious and bewildered fashion. Just to show that he had known about the amateur theatricals all along Freer proceeded on his tour of inspection in a silence he hoped would be significant.

On the disused plant stages lay a collection of assorted objects, the use of which in theatricals was obscure, to say the least of it. Freer took notice of the withered top of another pineapple, a make-up box containing grease paints (he was aware of Brothers' satisfaction as he opened it), a pair of stocking tabs, a child's toy engine, a slop basin containing black and brown buttons, and a carrot studded all over with copper nails.

The last article—and Freer wasn't going until he had made a demonstration by examining everything—was a book covered in padded morocco and embossed in gilt with the word DIARY; reading which the eyes of the law narrowed, the fingers of the law stretched out. Unexpectedly heavy, the book fell with a crash from fingers that hadn't anticipated its weight. It was as heavy as lead, or anyway and actually, as heavy as iron, for Freer now to his amazement saw that the inside had been replaced by a number of metal sheets; pages which had been cut from a steel carpenter's saw—or from a number of saws, for each leaf was some six inches long and four wide, perforated on the straight edge by three holes through which were threaded brass rings. Freer opened the "book"—for it did have that effect. On the first leaf or blade or whatever one might call it, were stuck in rows of three twelve unused penny-halfpenny postage stamps; the last one was upside down. On the second blade a flap of herring-bone tweed cloth, a tailor's pattern, could be lifted to reveal a small and ancient copper coin which had been soldered on. On the third blade a picture of the Virgin Mary had been painted with minute care in bright colors. The fourth page was perforated and threaded with a criss-cross pattern of boot laces and darning wool. An envelope was glued to the fifth; it contained—and why not?—a lock of blond hair and some grains of rice; and on the sixth—and by this time one was prepared for anything—was painted a horse which seemed to possess legs which had at one time been marble columns. It stood in a field of mushrooms. The seventh blade was painted all over a bright yellow, and the eighth bore in solitary glory the label of a sauce bottle—57 varieties. The last blade was provided with a circular mirror in which Freer saw his own Charlie Chaplin moustache and a pair of astonished eyes.

"And what," he asked portentously, "is this?"

"Oh, that's just a little joke, Inspector." A joke which Cecil Brothers was evidently enjoying.

"Is it? Well, I want to borrow this little joke."

Freer remembered the verdict of Dr. Tate—that Pearl's wounds had been caused by an implement with a serrated edge.

CHAPTER VII

SCUB had lied to Sina about Pearl, and why had he? Sina toyed with the idea of facing him with his lie. But if he didn't tell her, hadn't he some good reason for not telling her? And why shouldn't he be trusted? Sina took stock of him as, still in the old dressing-gown, he

smoked her cigarettes and skimmed a magazine. He wasn't exactly worried, but something of that carefree manner had faded out. That smile, amused and intimate, had deserted him.

Several times during the morning Sina was on the point of ringing up her friend Tommy, to know how he was, for details and for assurance. But Scub in that room which was called the parlor was within hearing distance of the telephone. For a reason she did not particularly analyze Sina did not want him to be listening when she rang up Tommy, and she felt—well, she could argue from her own case—that he would make a point of overhearing. Heavens, once or twice she found herself contemplating the stranger who was no less a stranger for being the image of Roland, with fear and horror. Before lunch she had to remind him to make himself scarce when Mrs. Lambert came to set the table—a dressing-gown couldn't be alibied forever. At the meal itself there was a constrained silence that reminded Sina of nothing so much as of the first day of a honeymoon.

After luncheon Sina made up her mind; she would go and see Tommy. She did not consider it necessary to inform Scub of this; she would leave it to chance and to him whether he was there when she came back. There was also in that something of a girlish test of his affection, and it gave him a chance, a tactful one, of going if he wanted to. Before leaving the house however, she was careful to lock up her jewelry and loose money; her heart and her head managed very well to arrange matters between themselves.

There was first, however, an errand at Mrs. Lambert's cottage—the preoccupations of the morning had put it out of her mind. After which she was just in time to catch the Coldershaw bus at the gate of the cottage.

The bus rattled along, until the hedgerows were replaced by a high brick wall, the boundary of Beechwood Park. Sina, thinking that she had reached her destination, pulled the cord. The conductor looked at her, and rattled his ticket clip and the bus stopped. It had a driver who preferred driving to stopping, and when Sina realized that she had descended too early—the gates were a quarter of a mile on and round the corner—it was too late to get back. In this way, having found a promising wicket in the brick wall, she met, not far from the byre which had occupied the Inspector's morning, Tommy Norman himself.

Sina's own eyes were bright as she watched the surprise and delight which illuminated Tommy's features, which were not as a rule particularly imposing. She had a way of opening her eyes till eyelashes and fringe met, irresistible but unnecessary, for Tommy was already incoherent in his greetings, as he imprisoned both her gloved hands in his.

"Well, Sina, fancy! And where do you spring from?" And then, more soberly, "You've heard?"

Sina nodded.

"Yes—I saw the paper. Poor Pearl. I've been staying at Kittsmill, if you know it. The Dunkeleys have lent it to me."

"You're staying at Kittsmill and you didn't let me know?"

His reproach was homage which Sina did not refuse.

"Ought I to have done, Tommy? You'll have to find a way of forgiving me. But," she added more seriously, "to tell the truth, I wasn't keen on letting Cecil know I was there. I didn't want to have to be sociable, and you know how I feel about that man."

"Yes, yes. . . ." Tommy was silent. He hoped that Sina understood and forgave his own weakness in associating with the objectionable Cecil.

"Now, tell me," Sina felt that the air must be cleared at once. "What really happened to Pearl? Did she—did she—was it suicide? Or was she—murdered?"

TOMMY was quite agitated and bewildered. He could not believe that Pearl had taken her own life, and he couldn't think that she had been murdered. He was thoroughly upset. But he did know the opinion of the police.

"But who," Sina asked, "who could possibly have wanted to kill her?"

"No one, no one at all," Tommy flustered. "It *must* have been a homicidal maniac. And, Sina, dear, I don't like to think of you all alone at that mill. You're not going to go on living there?"

Sina, anxious for information, ignored the question.

"Tommy, you know I never thought that marriage would turn out happily. I shouldn't be terribly surprised if it was suicide."

Tommy then poured out his heart.

"I only wish I could have stopped it," he declared. "I did tell Pearl that Cecil was—well, you know what he is. But she was infatuated—that's the only word. Infatuated. You know how women do go over Cecil—seem to be absolutely mesmerized."

"Not this baby."

"You're special. Pearl was, too, but in a different sort of a way. But she knew what to expect, she wasn't blind, I think she rather liked the idea of the danger."

"Of physical cruelty?"

"Well, you remember the story about the Stacey girl? She knew all about that. The girl told her. And then he didn't do—things like that—unless he knew that it would be—appreciated. But there was something more, it went further. I don't quite know what, Pearl only hinted. Good God, the man's a perfect swine. If Pearl had murdered *him*," Tommy declared wildly, "I wouldn't have blamed her."

SINA wanted details, but either Tommy was chivalrously protecting her from unpleasant details or he didn't really know. Sina, whose curiosity was natural, had to remember that Tommy visualized her as something sweet with blue eyes, to be protected and to be handed into motor cars. But, led on, he did tell her about the divorce: so far as he could clear it up, Pearl and Cecil had arranged to spend a short holiday in Italy at the beginning of February. At the last moment Cecil had contracted influenza and in order not to disappoint friends who were expecting her, Pearl had gone to Florence alone.

"And I don't believe he ever had influenza, for he was out of bed the day after she had left and meeting this girl—Gilberte Ohlson. The Cartwrights saw them. Pearl didn't return till a few weeks ago, and then she must have realized what Cecil had been up to. I only saw them once in London, but I could see there had been trouble. So far as I can see Cecil was quite prepared for a divorce, only Pearl was feeling vindictive—and I don't blame her. She wasn't only going to cite Gilberte—Cecil wouldn't have minded that—she was going to drag in—well, other things."

"What other things?"

Tommy was distressed and vague.

"The—the cruelty. But I don't know exactly what it was—it was something pretty horrible."

Sina had hopes of dragging out the whole murky story, but at this moment she was aware of two policemen who were bearing down upon them, for Tommy had been leading her toward the byre, to which Inspector Freer, after his excursion to the conservatory, had returned.

Tommy made as if to draw Sina aside, but Freer had spotted them.

"Excuse *me*," Inspector Freer keenly looked her over, "are you living up there?" He jerked his thumb toward the house. "One of the guests?"

"No, no, no," Sina was innocent.

"This is a friend of mine," Tommy officially and fussily stated. "There's no objections, I suppose?"

"A neighbor, or have you come specially down?" Freer evidently was suspicious of those gloves, those shoes and of that saucer which only by courtesy could be called a hat.

"I'm staying at Kittsmill."

"I see." He took this in, stroking that moustache which looked as if it had been dabbed on. "And did you know Mrs. Brothers?"

"Yes—I knew her. I hadn't seen her for some time—not since her marriage."

Freer considered for a moment, and then he indicated the way to the house.

"If you're walking that way I'll come along with you. So you knew Mrs. Brothers, did you? And why, if you were a friend of hers, didn't you come over here to see her?"

"Because I haven't a car!" This was partly the truth, anyway. "The buses aren't very convenient. I should have been over sooner or later if this—hadn't happened."

"I see." Freer, apparently, was seeing a lot.

"And do you know anything about—last night?"

"No—nothing."

"Got any ideas?"

"It's all absolutely unbelievable. There's only one explanation——"

"And that is?"

"A homicidal maniac."

"Oh." Freer was disappointed. "And did you know anything about a quarrel? Any reason for Mrs. Brothers to have felt—well, had she any troubles?"

Sina swiftly considered. She felt a warning and despairing wave of scared appeal flow from Tommy. That Tommy wanted things hushed up was sufficient lead.

"No trouble that I know of," she lied easily. But not,

perhaps, quickly enough for Freer. He was fishing out another question, when they were all startled by a sudden blaze of light which appeared at the window of an outhouse —for by this time they were approaching the back premises of the house. A scroll of thick black and yellow smoke coiled through the open window, and the curtains which one moment were flags, were, the next, a macabre dance of cinders in the yellow air.

Freer was sprinting toward the building, and Sina and Tommy hurried after, and, since Tommy knew of a quicker way than Freer, they reached the door of the outhouse at the same time.

In the doorway, as they approached, appeared Cecil Brothers.

"It's all right, don't get alarmed. It's only a little accident."

In spite of the fumes, Freer pushed his way past Cecil into the shed, where they could see him stamping out on the floor a smouldering mass of ash.

Cecil had nodded in recognition to Sina. He was still smiling, but pale as he always was, his pallor now was deathly.

Freer had snatched from the little old-fashioned grate in the corner a confused tangle of celluloid film. It was as clear to Sina as it was to Freer that Cecil Brothers had been burning some old film in the grate of what had once been a wash house but was now fitted up as a photographic dark room. The apparatus was elaborate—a winder for cinematograph film, and big tanks of acid. On the bench was a pile of round flat tins which also contained exposed film.

Freer regarded Cecil with high suspicion:

"What's this? What have you been trying to burn?"

"Trying to?" Cecil was sarcastic. "You don't have to *try* to burn film. It's only too willing. I must have dropped a cigarette end or something."

Freer's eyes traveled from the tangled mass in the grate to the box of matches on the bench.

"All of you get outside, please," he snapped, "I'm going to lock up this shed for the time being, and I'd like to have a chat with you, Mr. Brothers."

He was too busy riddling Brothers with grim significance to notice, as Sina did, that for Tommy Norman, too, the bottom seemed to have dropped out of everything.

CHAPTER VIII

AN hour after Inspector Freer's little chat with Cecil Brothers he was still up at Beechwood Park when he was summoned to the telephone. It was Sergeant Williams speaking. He had returned to headquarters some hours before.

"A message came through at midday, sir, from the Coldershaw Manor Hotel. There's been a robbery there, and one of the staff is missing. I'm going up now, so I thought I would tell you where I should be."

"Couldn't you send someone else, Williams? I've got a lot to discuss with you."

There was a pause, and then the Sergeant revealed his reason for wanting to attend to the case himself.

"The robbery was last night, sir, and the young fellow who is missing did a Johnny Scaparey about seven o'clock p.m."

"Yes, well, what about it?"

"Well, sir, it's only a bare two miles from the Manor Hotel to Beechwood Park. Seems interesting to me."

"I see. Well, please yourself, Sergeant."

Freer's head was full of ideas, and into them a robbery and a missing member of a hotel staff couldn't be fitted. He had wanted, also, to display to Sergeant Williams his own latest discoveries.

"Thank you, sir. Then I'll be going along."

Freer's car was waiting. In it he stowed bulky parcels which contained "the book of saws," and several cans of film. Before reaching the police station, however, he countermanded his orders, and arrived at the hotel not very long after Sergeant Williams. Suspicious of anything going on without him, he was going to take precautions against the long chance of a possible connection between the burglary and the murder.

The Manor Hotel was a large mansion on the outskirts of the market town; possessing its own golf course and swimming pool it was rather a country club than a hotel; there was the effect of a luxurious private residence. In the lounge, as Freer entered, were one or two guests not too blasé to discuss among themselves the burglary, news of which had only, an hour or two before, leaked out. They broke off as Freer passed, ushered through by a supercilious young man who wore the correct but restrained uniform of a private servant, with silver buttons.

In the manager's office Williams was talking to a worried looking man in plus-fours, the manager, and to the secretary, equally worried, equally plus-foured.

Williams introduced:

"This is Mr. Matthews, the manager, and Mr. Finucane, the secretary. Perhaps you'll tell the Inspector what you have been telling me about this man, Fletcher."

WILLIAMS made the suggestion with the air of a man who is going to enjoy the effect of a revelation. But Freer was not going to allow himself to be impressed.

It appeared that one of the staff, a young man named Fletcher, had been missing since about seven o'clock on the previous evening. Officially only a waiter, he had shown himself to have manners and a taste so discreet that he had been given carte blanche to move among the guests as he thought fit, to anticipate their minor requirements, and act almost as a communal valet. This had been in spite of some jealousy on the part of the head waiter.

"But he was an extremely well-spoken young man, Inspector. You seldom get a servant who will do anything except his regulation job. Fletcher would run after the ladies with deck-chairs and do out-of-the-way errands for them. He was particularly good with the ladies."

"And he's vanished?"

"No one's seen or heard of him since about seven o'clock last night."

Mr. Finucane, the secretary, took up the tale:

"He should have reported to Maurice, that's the head waiter, at seven o'clock, to help set the tables for dinner. It was myself that saw him last, and me sitting in the office, you understand. He passed me, going toward the service stairs and I thought nothing of it, and why should I? Presently Maurice comes along, asking if I had seen Fletcher. He had it in for the young man, you see, and he wouldn't have asked me in a general way about one of the waiters, only he was after letting me know that Fletcher was a lazy scamp. I said 'I haven't seen him at all, except that he was just passing toward the service stairs,' and I didn't hear anything more till the night porter was taking over and Maurice was going to bed. Maurice had been up to Fletcher's room more than the once, and he wasn't there. And no one's seen him at all since."

Williams looked covertly toward the Inspector, who was betraying no emotion.

"And what about the robbery?" asked Freer.

"That we didn't discover till this morning," answered the manager. "A collection of articles of no great value is missing from the rooms of one of the guests, a Mrs. Fowkes. She only arrived last night, and that makes it particularly unfortunate. She first missed them, apparently, on going to bed, but, more's the pity, she didn't inform me till this morning. The things were all in a small case, and she thought that one of the maids might have put them in a safe place. She was rather tired and confused after her journey."

"She was missing them when she went to bed," expanded the secretary, "and the chambermaid who put her room straight during dinner can't remember for certain whether the case was there or not at that time. But Mrs. Fowkes was of the opinion that she left it lying on the bed, and if she did, then the maid would have seen it when she was turning down the sheets. So probably it had gone before then."

Mr. Finucane was likely to be prolix, and Freer cut him short.

"I'll see the room, and have a talk with this lady. Have you got an inventory of the missing property?"

"We have," Finucane took up a list from the desk. "But every ten minutes of the day Mrs. Fowkes has been remembering some other thing, and by this time she will have remembered some more, so you had better be seeing her yourself."

"That is what I intend."

The bedroom itself suggested nothing to the Inspector, beyond the fact that it was near the head of the main staircase, and an outsider, looking tolerably like a guest could have slipped up without being noticed. No office or porter's cubby hole intruded on the hall, which remained that of a private house. The door always stood wide open and there would be a time when most of the guests would be in their rooms changing for dinner. Mrs. Fowkes, apparently, had gone up to her room rather late. That lady herself was

presently found—a white haired old lady with an insecure memory but a charming manner. She could be sharp enough, however, at times, and with disconcerting frankness, she placed no hope whatsoever in the activities of the police.

"There was nothing of any great value, but I'm sorry they've gone, though, for there were some little oddments that used to belong to my brother—a cigarette case, and so forth, and his watch, and one or two other little things."

Williams produced a pencil and asked for an exact description.

"I'll do my best, but really I hardly know what I had and what I hadn't. You see, I've been on the move, and all these little things were packed together in a case, and I thought I wouldn't let them go to the storerooms with the other things. I thought," she looked at the unhappy manager with a twinkle in her blue eyes, "I thought they'd be safer with me, at a hotel which Lady Bartleham personally recommended. But probably it was all my fault, I am careless, I know."

Prompted once more, she embarked on the catalogue:

"There was the watch—a gold watch that didn't go, but I suppose it would be worth a few pounds. I really can't think of any distinguishing marks . . . Oh yes, one of the hands was broken, and I remember it was purchased in Switzerland. That was quite a considerable time ago. Before you were born, Inspector."

Freer ignored the look which Sergeant Williams was trying to convey to him.

"And what else, Madame?"

"What else? Why, there was a cairngorm brooch, with a gold pin, a couple of paste buckles I thought would come in useful some time and a rather vulgar looking bracelet I never did care for."

The old lady took her time. A silver pencil, a silver chain with a cab whistle and lorgnette attached, a small trinket box in cloisonné and a traveling inkwell were added to the list.

"And that's all, I think—unless my brother's pen-knife was there too—it may have been, I don't know."

"A pen-knife?" Freer was in time to anticipate Sergeant Williams. "What was it like?"

"Oh, rather nice. Very good quality, I gave it to him myself."

"Do you happen to remember if there were any initials on it?" Freer inquired, on tip-toe.

"Oh yes, it was engraved with his initials."

"And what would these be?"

"S.C.B.—Stephen Callender Banstead."

"Thank you, Madame," Freer ignored the jubilant expression with which the Sergeant was rewarding him. "I'd like to see you again in a little while, if you please. And now," he turned to the manager, "I would like to see the room of this man Fletcher."

Freer on the way upstairs was careful to spike any guns which Williams might be thinking of training on him.

"How was it I didn't hear about this earlier?"

THE attic bedroom was small and plain; an iron bedstead, a plain white bowl and ewer on the painted washstand and a yellow maple chest of drawers. Behind a curtain hung a suit of clothes, of good quality but considerably worn. They were of tweed, and would be worn only when off duty. Freer looked for a tailor's label.

"Look!" He drew the Sergeant's attention to the inside of the breast pocket. "Label removed. See?"

Under the clothes were a pair of brown shoes and a pair of black patent slippers: the brown shoes were old and of good quality, the slippers were new and cheap. There was a cheap fibre suitcase under the bed, empty and unlabeled.

On the dressing table there was a cheap safety razor, some solidified brilliantine, a tuppeny comb, good quality but uninitiated ebony brushes in a pigskin case, and a hollowed out wine cork which contained three dice. In the top drawer of the dressing table there were three pairs of lisle socks, in holes, personal linen and a small leather writing case, which contained, however, only blank paper. There was nothing that gave any clue to his identity, if, as might be supposed by the removal of the tailor's label, Fletcher was an assumed name.

"Well, we haven't learned a great deal," Freer grunted, and then an obvious question occurred to him:

"What about his references, where did he come from?"

Mr. Finucane and Mr. Matthews looked at each other.

"I'm afraid," the manager apologized, "we never asked him for them."

"It was like this, you see," the secretary explained. "He would be asking me for a job and I told him that there wasn't one at all, only a temporary post; one of the staff having had his uncle die on him, had gone away for the funeral. And I said, 'You'll have to ask Mr. Matthews about that, and it would only be for a few days.'"

"He came to me," Matthews continued in a hurt voice, "with a tale that he had seen Mr. Finucane who had said he could have this job while the other man was away. Naturally I thought that Finucane had fixed it all up, knowing I was particularly busy at the time. So I just told him to carry on."

"And back he came to me," the secretary continued, "to say he had fixed it all up with Mr. Matthews and that he was to have the same salary as the young man who was away at the funeral. And that boy never did come back, his Auntie wanting him to live with her and manage the business. So Fletcher stayed on, and there was never any occasion for me or for Mr. Matthews to be asking him any questions."

"And we never compared notes till this morning."

To the parcels which were waiting in Freer's car were now added the possessions of the errant waiter. Freer had no difficulty in forming an equation: that Robert Fletcher stole Mrs. Fowke's valuables, and that the person who stole Mrs. Fowke's valuables was probably the murderer of Pearl Brothers.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN Sina returned to Kittsmill Tommy Norman was in her mind, and the young man Scub was out of it. There had been many views to exchange with Tommy, and much to ask him. But much as she knew he loved her, he was not being, she was certain, quite entirely open. He was scared about something, that was a fact. Particularly had he been scared, it now occurred to her, when Freer had significantly locked up the dark room. Sina had naturally asked for reasons.

"Scared?" Tommy had repeated. "No, why should I be?"

But he certainly was.

The young man Scub was not in Sina's mind; it might have been otherwise had she known about the initialled pen-knife. The young man Scub was not in Sina's mind, but when on her return she encountered the fragrance of tobacco, it was with satisfaction that she recollected everything. The phantom had not evaporated, then. But he had, she noticed, come by a suit of clothes—gray flannel trousers, a tweed jacket and a blue shirt. He had also come by a razor, for he had certainly shaved.

Sina did not tell him where she had been, and he was still maintaining the situation as it had stood before. Things could not go on for very long like this, but for the moment . . . well, in truth she was afraid of what might be precipitated by forcing a disclosure.

Though without the knowledge possessed by Inspector Freer, Sina could not help wondering if Scub was the murderer—how or why, was another matter. Of course he wouldn't be just an ordinary murderer. It might have been a suicide pact, for instance. He might be mad. The murder might have been a ritual of love. Of personal danger to herself it did not occur to Sina to think; she had for so long carried herself intact through adventures as bizarre and even more sinister.

Murderers, it was generally understood, could be very attractive. Charming fellows. If he was going to murder her, well, he would have to. She wasn't going to turn him out, that was certain, and it might be dangerous to try. It might be dangerous even, to show suspicion. And it was surely impossible to ask: 'Did you kill Pearl?' If he did or he didn't, the answer would in any case be 'NO'. Suppose, however, it was 'YES'. What could she do then?

Sina had immediately to busy herself and to prepare supper. With someone to share with her it was going to be more than the sardine on a tray which was all, alone, she had bothered about. Aproned, humming a song, she collected the implements of cooking. A shadow darkened the doorway.

"Can I help?"

"*Can* you? How am I to know? Are you mentally and morally capable of peeling an onion?"

"I don't see why I shouldn't try."

Happily domestic, they set to work. Sina, soon, was flushed with bending over the grill, there was flour on her cheek and her nose was shiny. Scub had cut himself with a tin-opener, and explosions from a damp frying pan had spotted his collar with grease.

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Requiring to concentrate on the last touches, the bread crumbs that meant so much, Sina sent him off to set the table. Presently she went to inspect it.

"Not bad," she acknowledged critically.

"What do you mean, 'Not bad'?" he grunted. "I do know how to set a table. It's very good."

"All right then," she conceded.

"Wait a minute"—he stopped her with a gesture. "Is there anything missing?"

She regarded him with a sly smile, and then the table, but could think of nothing.

"Doesn't Madame require—a bottle of champagne? There are two more bottles in the cellar. We can have one and keep the other to celebrate—something some time."

The Dunkley's champagne, one supposed; but still, it could be made good.

"That would be nice. Go and get it."

Sina hastened to the kitchen, where unwatched pots were overboiling. By the time Scub returned with the champagne she had the supper ready on the table. Putting down the bottle he stood looking at the table appreciatively.

"And is there," he inquired, "anything more that Madame would require?"

"Certainly." Sina looked at him gravely. "Company!"

With convincing authority Scub placed one kiss on her lips and then another. After the restraint of the morning this was the first exhibition of what—and it was that only which could explain everything—Sina recognized as love at first sight. The 'first sight' in this case being of an unusual nature, that was all. The permanence of its quality had to be proved.

* * * * *

Sina awoke to a noise that was familiar and yet could not at once be placed. It sounded as if someone was mowing the lawn. Slight as was her horticultural knowledge she knew that lawns were hardly ever mowed until April. She had never, all the time she had been at Kittsmill, heard of a gardener. The garden, which sloped down to the lake in the valley, was half wild, merging sometimes into woodland or uncared for orchard. But the sound was certainly that of a mowing machine, and to satisfy her curiosity, Sina at last opened her gummy eyes and stumbled out of bed. From the window, the lawn where the mowing was going on was hidden by a tangled pergola. Some of the ramblers still held their small glossy evergreen leaves. The mower was silent, at the end of a turn, and then it started again and presently there came into Sina's view a young man in a pullover and tweeds of a startling pattern. Well, no ordinary gardener would set to work on that shaggy, dew-laden grass at six o'clock in the morning.

Kittsmill had queer visitors.

No, it wasn't Scub with a sudden passion for exercise. That boy would almost certainly not care about exercise, and definitely not at six o'clock. The man was also not so far away as to prevent Sina from seeing that he had reddish hair, and a small moustache, and light blue eyes.

The man was mowing away grimly, red in the face in spite of the chilliness of the morning. Nor could he be improving the lawn, for the mower jammed and slid over the wet grass which had been toughening all the winter.

Was the man simply mad?

AT a reasonable hour Sina dressed and descended. Mrs. Lambert was setting the breakfast and 'her brother' could be heard singing in the bathroom. Before he had joined her Sina had read in the morning paper the latest developments in the Artists' Model Murder. She read that the police were convinced that Pearl Brothers had been murdered with an implement that had a serrated edge: she read of the knife with the initials that were Scub's: she read that the police urgently required 'Robert Fletcher, aged about twenty-three, black hair, brown eyes, five feet eleven', last seen wearing . . . 'a uniform' with which Sina was familiar. The said Robert Fletcher had disappeared from the Coldershaw Manor Hotel on the evening of the murder, following the theft of some valuables, a list of which was given.

Upon hearing Scub's step on the stairs Sina hid the newspaper in a drawer. During breakfast she gave no sign of her furious thinking, and afterwards she went to her room for a full consideration of the situation.

Sina had no doubt that Scub was Robert Fletcher, the missing waiter, and that he had come straight from the hotel to the mill. Well, straight . . .? Had he come to seek refuge? That seemed likely. On top of this, there were the initials of the cuff-links and the initials on the penknife. The stolen penknife, she understood, wasn't regarded as the actual weapon, but the thief must have passed the scene of the murder anyway. Scub knew Pearl, he knew a Dr. Picard with whom he had evidently discussed the murder. Yet he had not behaved in a guilty fashion, she could not for a moment believe that he actually was the murderer. It was simplest to suppose that he was a Raffles, who had taken the job at the hotel for the sake of the opportunities it would afford. Perhaps it could all be explained by supposing that he had been a witness of the murder, but could not give evidence to the police because he had himself broken the law. But there were two things that made even that explanation difficult to hold, one was the triviality of the theft—the value of the trinkets was hardly more than the value of the clothes and other articles left behind by Fletcher—and, secondly, the cuff-links were not mentioned in the list of stolen property. And, for that matter, what thief would wear articles so clearly marked? Had he stopped on the way to change them for his own? That seemed a funny thing to do. And what, then, had he done with his own?

Sina completely gave it up; but she certainly wasn't going to give *him* up. She would do nothing for that day at any rate, and meanwhile she would investigate.

SINA'S first action was to examine that lawn which had recently been mowed. The machine was kept in a little shed, which was unlocked. She looked at it hopelessly. It had no message. Above the house, as she turned, rose the black stump of the mill, and as she saw it she was visited with a sudden idea. The key to everything, perhaps, lay in that mill in which she had never been. Perhaps there was something in the mill which would explain the attraction which the place had for a phantom and a madman. Sina immediately returned to the house, and circumventing both Mrs. Lambert and Scub, who was reading in the parlor, she gained the lowest story of the mill by means of the brick passage which had been built to connect it with the house.

The low circular room was dusty and full of cobwebs. Cluttered with garden furniture, it certainly could not be the hiding out place of a gang, there was hardly a square foot of clear floor space. Sina ascended to the next level. A pleasant odor of meal had not faded out in the fifty or more years that the mill had been idle. In the crevices of the chute there were still fragments of chaff, and flour dust. The chute descended from the stone-floor above, and at the bottom of it the miller would fill his sacks. In this room also the miller had made up his accounts, and there was still, under one of the small, square windows, a big, home-made desk, with many pigeon-holes of varnished deal. There was even still a dried up inkwell and a pen with a corroded nib. On, over and round the desk there was a litter of papers—old newspapers, a bundle of receipts on a hook, and an Illustrated London News, fly-blown, and falling to pieces: an engraving of Dreyfus dated it. There were seed catalogues, a set of fortnightly parts of a popular educator, tied up in string, and a butcher's calendar, a calendar which held Sina's attention, for it was of the previous year and the top sheet was the month of September.

Encouraged, Sina made a more careful search, and soon came upon a bulb catalogue that was only six months old. As she picked it up a flimsy invoice fluttered to the ground. The invoice was made out to H. Picard, Esq., and was for bulbs supplied to the tune of three pounds seven shillings—daffodils, scillas, muscari, crocuses and Spanish iris. 'H. Picard' must be the Dr. Picard, the Harry, whom Scub had spoken to on the telephone.

Half an hour's search revealed nothing further except the envelope of the invoice. This was addressed to the same H. Picard at Kittsmill, Near Coldershaw, Essex. The date of the postmark was September 13th.

There was a positive embarrassment of material, but Sina was searching for more, and she set her foot on the ladder which would lead to the next story. But here she was checked, for the trap door was secured by a large padlock. Sina sat down on the ladder and wished for the cigarette which she did not carry. Had the time come for a show-down? Should she tackle Scub with her suspicions and demand explanations? But if he refused to give them, what on earth could she do, and if he gave one, and she found that he was a thief and a murderer, could she give him up to the police? And if she did not, she would become an accessory after the fact—a position she did not like the sound of. No, investigations must be continued; she must examine the remainder of the mill.

Sina remembered that there was in the kitchen a keyboard with keys. Going there presently she encountered Mrs. Lambert.

"What is it, Miss Bosworth? Can I find anything for you?"

"Only the key for the mill. I've never been up it, and I thought it was time I went."

Sina considered a choice between two rusty keys which looked as if they might fit the padlock.

"You don't need a key," Mrs. Lambert observed, "the door's open."

"Yes, I know. But the trap door to the upper story isn't. Do you know which key it is?"

"It isn't any of them." Mrs. Lambert wasn't out to humor whims. "Mrs. Dunkeley has the key. No one is supposed to go up there."

"Why not?"

"Because of the machinery. It's unsafe."

Sina did not press the point. Later, when she was more suitably dressed, she might find a screwdriver and unscrew the padlock. Already there were sufficient cobwebs and whitewash on a coat which had not been made for exploring.

The same cobwebs were solicitously noticed by Scub.

"Where on earth have you been to?"

"Been to?" Sina placed a side-long glance. "Oh, I've been up the mill."

Scub's reaction, she felt sure, was studied.

"And what have you been there for?"

"Oh, looking round. I'm told there's a grand view from the top."

Yes, he was definitely disconcerted.

"But, I thought—I mean, did you get to the top?"

"No, it's padlocked halfway. I thought perhaps you'd help me get out the screws some time."

"If it's screwed up I don't suppose Mrs. Dunkeley would care about having her property tampered with," Scub remarked primly. "Anyway, I expect it's pretty damp and full of rats."

"Owls."

"Well, owls then. A few feet can't make so much difference to the view."

Not so much as by the quiver of an eyelid did Sina reveal her appreciation of the fact that he knew at any rate the name of the owner of the mill. She was sure that she herself had not mentioned it. It was pretty evident also, that he wasn't going to allow her to visit the upper regions of the mill if he could prevent it.

CHAPTER X

FREER was in it now up to the neck—all out for a murder verdict, and with a murderer already up his sleeve. And as soon as the inquest proceedings were over he hurried Williams and Dr. Tate to the back entrance of the Bijou Cinema, 'Coldershaw's Premier Place of Entertainment.'

The entertainment for this morning was grim enough. Freer had sworn in the operator and the manager to secrecy, and within locked doors an audience of three—Freer, Williams and Dr. Tate—prepared for a private view of the film which Cecil Brothers had been caught in the act of destroying.

The opening sequence had been burned, and the film started abruptly with an expanse of sand—the sand, of course, which had been spread in the converted conservatory. Crisp and oblique lighting picked out the dents and ridges, the crumbling surface of a barren desert. The sand, or the camera, began to move. And now there came into view a withered wreath of ivy leaves, tinder dry. The funeral wreath of hopes—the metaphor of the film was so far, even for Freer, not difficult to follow. Without human agency the wreath, casting its circular shadow, began to smoke; dry flames curled up, and the gray leaves began to blacken; a wind blew, and the ashes danced on the sand, out of which there now appeared a hand, an arm, a living arm which raised itself steadily toward the light, and then sank again. Dancing ashes, curling flames, smoking leaves, and a tinder dry wreath lying on the sand. Abruptly, after that reversal in time, the picture changed; it was a fiddle this time that one moment was not there, and the next moment was. A bow lay beside the fiddle, and the bow lifted itself up and drew itself across the strings. The next moment a small smart sports car had appeared—one Freer had seen—braking to a stop after one of those hollow journeys of the screen. At the wheel was sitting a negro who wore loud checked plus-fours and a golf cap. Then one was allowed to see the sand again, printed this time with the track of the tires. Any constable, and Freer, could have declared their make. The sand between the tracks stirred, began to rise and fall, as if the buried dead were breathing. But with a wrench of the vision once more the car sprang into view, as the negro descended with the poised magnificence of a god from a chariot.

Sand, now, again; covered this time with a drift of leaves, fresh leaves, which stirred and moved. Branches seemed to be coming up out of the sand; the twigs and leaves made screen patterns, magnified on the screen to the size of tropical foliage. Among the leaves there were straighter spears, water reeds and rushes.

WILLIAMS, Freer noticed, had let his pipe go out and was half asleep. Freer smiled grimly to himself. What was coming next he had traced with his own eye, running the film through his fingers; an occupation of tedious slowness that had occupied him until the early hours of the morning. What did come certainly made Dr. Tate sit up, for out of the leaves emerged the coffin which had already given Freer an unpleasant sensation, and out of the coffin there arose in slow motion, and with the blank eyes of a sleepwalker "none other," as Freer would have said, "than Pearl Brothers herself," and as Sergeant Williams did say later to his pals, "in nothing but her Lady-Godiving suit."

Freer hugged himself: what followed gave him, if he thought it necessary, an excuse for the arrest of Cecil Brothers, and possibly of the others of the party if they should prove to be implicated. There was no doubting the verdict of a British jury.

"If the girl lent herself to stuff like that, she deserved to be murdered," Williams was shocked and angry. Freer glanced toward Dr. Tate for a more informed verdict.

"I don't know, I'm sure, Freer, I don't know." Dr. Tate was thoughtful. "They must be a pretty decadent lot up there, and after seeing that film a good deal of what was so —er—exotic in the murder itself admits of explanation. What are you going to do about it?"

Freer explained that he would hold the possibility of arrest as a small trump card to be played later if need be. He would have a great deal to say to Mr. Brothers, and there was a threat which would encourage him to speak.

* * * * *

Cecil Brothers was under no misapprehensions: he knew what sort of a police inspector would be coming to see him.

That sort of police inspector did present himself, an inspector with a nasty look in his eye and a tone of voice from which all deference had faded.

"I want to have a talk with *you*," Freer began curtly and with the promise of menace. "I suppose you know you are liable to a very severe penalty?"

"I don't know that I entirely agree with you, Inspector," Brothers replied coldly. "You have seen an artistic work which was prepared for circulation among a small circle of friends. There was never any question of allowing the general public to see it."

"That doesn't make any difference," Freer snapped.

Brothers didn't seem to have heard him. He continued in the same aloof voice, and with half closed eyes.

"I'm merely one of a group of serious artists, Inspector, interested in experimental art of all kinds. Naturally, in our researches we are—'guilty' would be your word—of things which the general public wouldn't understand. But before you take any proceedings, Inspector, I'd like to tell you that it would be unadvisable to make too much of a fuss. In fact I shouldn't really make any charge if I were you."

The sleeping eyes and the drawling voice had come to life, and Brothers had swivelled round in his chair toward the Inspector, whose jaw had dropped as he found menace opposed to menace.

"You see," Brothers went on, picking his words, "a great many important and influential people happen to be involved. There are quite a number of people, whom the police, I'm sure, wouldn't care to prosecute, who are as interested as I am in experimental art. These films are expensive to make; it requires a co-operative effort. Here—" Brothers picked up a small note-book, "are the names and addresses of the various persons who have supplied the money, at one time or another, for various films, including the one which seems to have shocked you. You see, I'm not keeping anything back. I admit an organization for the preparation and the showing, in private, of course, of films which, I admit, wouldn't be suitable for the

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public. Let me remind you, Inspector, that you know very little about art and although artistic intention isn't, I understand, a valid plea in a case of this sort, it is certainly considered out of court, and before proceedings are taken, if not within. I don't know whether you have consulted your Chief Constable on this matter—Colonel Freshwater, isn't it—he might have something interesting to say. You see, his wife is one of our members."

Freer, bitterly and with dismay, read through the list of names—Lord Jemmington—Sir Eustace Reeves—Lady Mallock—Major Thomas Norman—Frederick Usher—Cecil Brothers himself—Sir Gordon Payne, a Harley Street surgeon who had often been called by the Crown in important cases—Sir Miles Luggard, an ex-police commissioner—Dr. Harold Picard—Evelyn Vight, the famous author—Caroline Lister, M.P.—Barbara Freshwater—Lady this, Dr. that, a professor, a foreign title . . . twenty or thirty names, persons of influence, of irreproachable character. If all these were implicated, Brothers was safe. Freer dare not burn his fingers. There would be uproar, scandal, and reverberations which, whatever the merit of the case, would lift him sky high out of the police force. There are things which have to be forgotten.

"And you mean to tell me," Freer demanded, "all these persons have co-operated in the production of that film?"

"No, not all." Brothers was judicial. "Seventy per cent, shall I say? But if they haven't helped in that, they've helped in others. A dozen or so have been made, you'll find the rest in the homes of one or other of the members of the society. Those who have film projectors are allowed to borrow the films, others have to rely on an occasional showing. The last one, for instance, was at the house of Sir Gordon Payne, in Harley Street. Sir Miles Luggard, who used to be an Assistant Commissioner, I believe, has a copy of another film, I know. You can make inquiries, you can ask them. In the meantime, I've got correspondence from a good many of them—" his hand strayed to a file of letters —"and in London I have even further proof of what I tell you."

FREER was savage. It looked as if he had made a mistake. And yet, remembering what he had seen that morning, he was convinced, morally and as a man, that books more harmless had before now been burned, and pictures almost pure in comparison impounded.

"I'm not satisfied. I must tell you that you are in a very dangerous position, Mr. Brothers. I'm going now to make a very thorough examination of everything in this house. If you insist on a search warrant, I shall get it, but in the meantime I shall remain here and see that nothing is touched. And to begin with—" Freer was suddenly on his feet—"I'd like to see that paper you are just putting into your pocket."

"This?" Brothers offered it up innocently. "Oh, certainly. You're welcome to it."

Freer read the scribbled words without comprehension; when he had finished he was only more certain that something very sinister was a-foot.

> "Small cakes (ran Brothers' careless disjoined handwriting on the half sheet of notepaper) and buns grow wings, so young fools leave home to take up professions. Desire comes with padded hoofs and knocks at every temple. Lord Alvington's flunkey went to bed in his second best trousers, carrying a boat hook. He left the pianola to the young woman, and with a saccharine look she agreed to meet him in the snow for a good old romp outside St. Margaret's church come Tuesday. Will young men always meet their Waterloo in tiny straw hats and bouquets made with so little artistic sensibility? Marzipan cars, candy skyscrapers and little shoes made out of lemon peel assemble at the usual place for a series of talks on the sagging ether."

Freer looked pretty flabbergasted, but the incomprehensible is always feared and suspected. He fixed a now-then-what-is-all-this look upon Cecil Brothers.

"Just something I've been scribbling," Brothers languidly explained, too languidly, thought Freer.

"And what does it mean?"

"Mean? Nothing! I've just been putting down the first thing that came into my head. Don't tell me that the law—which you and I know is an ass—is ass enough to smell out corruption and obscenity in *that*."

"That's as may be." Brothers wasn't going exactly the right way to ingratiate himself with Freer. "But I intend to keep this, and I shouldn't advise you to try and be funny."

CHAPTER XI

FREER, by the time evening had arrived on the day of the inquest, was bristling with discoveries. He was not going to hide his light under a bushel, and a conference would give an opportunity for other people to see how clever he had been. It was a conference of all the talents: there was Sergeant Williams—well, "talents" in his case wasn't exactly the word—Dr. Tate, and a big, high-up expert, Sir Joseph Wykes, from the Home Office. Naturally, the one evening when the visiting expert would be there was the evening for a conference, and Freer had prepared it with the care and pride of a newly married wife giving her first party.

The big table was a museum of exhibits: a book made out of saws, a map of Beechwood Park and environs, a pen-knife, and a suitcase containing the property of Robert Fletcher. To these Freer had added the half sheet of Brother's writing, a large sealed envelope, two pieces of water-reed about fifteen inches long, and the note-book which contained the list of names.

The pen-knife had already been examined for finger prints, which it failed to yield: nor were its blades serrated.

"Now, gentlemen," Freer rapped for silence, "I've got every hope of being able to clear up this case within the next day or two. At any moment now we may have news of Fletcher, and then I think our troubles will be over. But it is possible he may not be found by direct methods, and it may be that after all we shall arrive at a totally different solution. The friends, the surroundings, the husband of Pearl Brothers were as unhealthy as they could be, and we may find our solution in that circumstance."

Freer paused to pull at the lapels of his coat. He thought he was making a pretty good director general of the conference. He certainly held his audience as he recounted his last interview with Cecil Brothers; the address book sent up the eyebrows of more than one of them.

"Now, I wasn't satisfied," he continued, "with the alleged object of this organization. I haven't checked up yet on Brothers' statement, but I don't suppose he'd make it unless it could be substantiated. These people, we might call them 'society people,' are evidently connected together in some way and for some purpose. Brothers says that that purpose is to view films of a scandalous nature, but—thank you, Williams, do you mind passing me that piece of paper—I want you to have a look at this."

Round the table went Brothers' incomprehensible composition, while Freer described how he had come by it.

"Putting down the first thing that came into his head, was he?" observed Sergeant Williams. "Then I think he's balmy."

"What are you suggesting, Inspector?" Sir Joseph looked up blandly, with that blandness which had been a fly-paper for many impetuosities, "You think that this curious work may throw light on the psychology of the author? I dare say it might, but I'm afraid that many of us have very curious complexes which we don't, however, allow to condition our actions. Unless the author imagines that this makes sense, I don't see that he is mad. And I think he never claimed that, didn't you say?"

"No, Sir Joseph, I'm not talking about psychology." Oh, no, Freer could lift his hat to continental methods, but he was a forthright British police officer. "I suggest, Sir Joseph, that that piece of paper *is a very clever code*."

Freer received the conjurer's reward. He then proceeded to show how it was done.

"Now I suggest that Brothers knew that I was going to search his desk, and he couldn't hide or destroy this message. So what does he do? He lets me see that he's got something there, so that he can get over his explanation first—'just something I was scribbling down, the first thing that came into my head'—something quite idle and unimportant, like drawing on blotting paper."

Dr. Tate, who was drawing on a blotting pad, laid down his pencil.

"Now, as soon as I saw this, I thought 'Why is Brothers trying to force this on to me?' My suspicions were aroused. I began to work on the supposition that it was a code, and at once I realized that Brothers had hit on a much more flexible—shall we say 'quarry'—than the usual business or private letter."

The course of Freer's rabid imagination was checked by Sir Joseph's preliminary cough:

"Your theory is very attractive, Inspector, but examined step by step, the links of your logic are definitely weak. Now, Dr. Tate has been telling me about the film which

you saw this morning, and I am going to suggest that this composition, about the buns and the footman and the little shoes made of lemon peel, is of a very comparable genesis. Taken alone, and produced by an unintellectual crook, I should say it might well prove to be a code. But here we have a group of people evidently of high aesthetic accomplishment—however doubtful the tone of the very regrettable film—they are certainly that. We have also to explain an analagous object which I see on the table before me—the book constructed out of saws. I don't think you can convince me that that also is a code."

"Well, sir, what do you suggest?"

"Have you ever heard of Surrealism?" Sir Joseph suddenly inquired.

"Sir who, sir?"

A GROUP or a school, or whatever you like to call it, of art: the logical descendant of dadaism, and the current banner of intellectual modernity in France and Germany. Little as I know about art, Inspector, I make it my business to keep in touch with modern tendencies of thought, and I should say that without a doubt both the bun-and-flunkey and that weird book are products of Surrealism. When Brothers said he was putting down the first thing that came into his head he actually was doing just that. Surrealism has been called a 'technique of inspiration'—the writer sits down with a pad and paper and allows his thought stream to flow without any conscious direction. The resultant gems have a very remarkable character. We are not literary critics, but we can all see that unusual images, and bizarre but interesting word patterns and groups of words may turn up. Genius, we all know, is akin to madness, and this is a method by which every man may be a genius.

"Now, just as in the bun-and-flunkey we receive a number of minor mental and imaginative shocks through the unusual juxtaposition of words, so in Surrealist sculpture a very high value is placed on the sensation of 'shock.' This"—he indicated the book of saws—"is what is called by Surrealists an object—an object, in fact, which sets out to inflict an æsthetic shock. The observer is first of all kidded into believing that here is a conventional diary. He lifts it—it weighs ten times as much as was expected. Inside, surprise follows surprise. You mustn't ask for any explanation of why twelve postage stamps should be stuck in rows on ten inches of saw blade. You mustn't ask for an explanation of the grains of rice and the lock of hair in the envelope. There is no explanation. The more unexpected the combination, the less patient of explanation, the better, from the Surrealist point of view."

"And the same with the film?" Freer inquired, lost but interested.

"As a matter of fact, not quite the same. There are Surrealist elements, but it is not by any means 'pure.'"

Freer was glad that he had not taken any definite steps as regards the film. Wrapped up in high sounding words the dubious began to appear respectable.

Dr. Tate and Sir Joseph were having a little discussion of their own.

"What interested me in the film," Dr. Tate was saying, "was the psychology of a man who could allow his wife to take a part in it."

"It points to the so-called Candaules complex, doesn't it?" Sir Joseph suggested.

"What's that?" Freer wanted to know.

"Candaules," Dr. Tate explained, "was a king of Lydia who exposed his wife to the gaze of his friend Gyges. There are various explanations for the psychology of men who take a perverted delight in doing so. It may not be very important, but it gives us some idea of the background of this case."

"Meaning," Freer darkly hinted, "Cecil Brothers?"

"I think inquiries should be continued in his direction," Dr. Tate stated.

"They will be." Freer was grim.

"Now, there's another thing that may interest you," Sir Joseph judiciously began. "This Surrealism is something more than an artistic clique. It has very definitely a political tendency. It is their avowed purpose, through art, to break up the present civilization, to sow disillusion and discontent, and the charge against them is the same as that brought against Socrates—'corrupting the youth.' Only, they've learned from modern methods of propaganda, and they are out to do it by breaking up present literary and artistic conventions."

"But do they think," Dr. Tate inquired, since Freer was trying to get his feet on the ground, "that art influences social and moral values? Surely art is only an expression of existing society. Surely they're putting the cart before the horse?"

"In France," Sir Joseph observed drily, "art is better thought of. I believe that it is considered to have quite an influence. And what are you thinking about, Inspector?"

Freer assumed an expression of intelligence. He did not care about telling Sir Joseph the direction of his thoughts. He might be laughed at. But, holy Moses, he seemed to have stumbled on a nest of Bolshies. Revolution, corruption, propaganda . . . a very dark idea was beginning to be formulated in his mind. He was dealing with sinister and evil people who would be capable of anything.

But the evening was getting on, and Freer still had an exhibit to declare. He now drew toward him the two sections of reed which had been lying on the table.

"I'd like you to have a look at these, Dr. Tate," Freer modestly began. "You remember that in the film there was a close-up of some reeds coming up out of the sand. Did you notice that those reeds had a serrated edge?" Freer glanced across the table. Williams wasn't to miss this. "Have a look at them too, Sergeant."

Sergeant Williams woke up.

"It occurred to me," Freer continued, "that it might be advisable to examine the original of those reeds, so I had another look round the conservatory, and that is what I found. Now, I want to know whether it would be possible to cut flesh with them?"

Dr. Tate turned the blade over in his hand: fifteen inches long, it was tough and dry, with a double edge of fine serrations. He drew the edge against the palm of his hand, and then against the edge of the table.

"I should have to try it out on the cadaver," he observed cautiously at last. "At first sight it does seem far fetched, but I dare say a considerable wound could be inflicted. It's pretty sharp. I know what can be done with a blade of twitch grass. What do you think, Sir Joseph?"

Freer waited anxiously for the verdict as Sir Joseph adjusted his spectacles.

"I suppose it's quite possible."

"Well, since you haven't ridiculed the idea altogether," Freer went on, "I'd like you to notice that on the other section there are very definite blood stains. Which suggests anyway, that it is capable of drawing blood."

"Yes, but," Dr. Tate objected, "it would hardly be rigid enough for the purpose we have in mind unless grasped in both hands and used with a sawing motion. That the girl should give her murderer an opportunity of doing that seems to me highly unreasonable."

"Sir Joseph nodded:

"I agree. Unless, of course, the girl was a willing party. I mean, she may have allowed herself to be the object of an experiment—an experiment of *what* though, I can't imagine. She hadn't been drugged, or anything like that. had she?"

"No traces whatever."

"WELL"—Sir Joseph pursed his lips. One might consider some sort of ritual wounding, self-inflicted or otherwise. If this thing had taken place among certain black races such a thesis might have been tenable."

Freer was waiting to get a word in:

"I'd like to know if this is human blood. Can that be done?"

"Certainly," agreed Sir Joseph, "there's quite sufficient here for a conclusive test."

"And would it be possible," Freer continued, "to go further—to find out what blood group it belongs to?"

Sir Joseph raised his eyebrows.

"That can be done, but I don't know whether it will help you much. You mean, you want to see if this blood belongs to the same group as the girl's?"

"That's one thing I want to know."

"But even if we find that this is human blood, and that it belongs to the same group as the girl's, the evidence wouldn't mean very much in a law court."

"I understand that," Freer agreed, "but even a negative result might be useful. The blood may not be the girl's but the murderer's. Then if we had two suspects, and the blood group of one of them corresponded to the blood group of this stain, while the other one, together with that of the girl, did not correspond, then we should be able to strike out one of the suspects and concentrate exclusively on the other."

Sir Joseph gravely considered.

"You know, Inspector, you won't be able to use this evidence in court."

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"That's all right," Freer hastened to reassure him. "It wouldn't come out in evidence. I only want to use it for the formation of my own opinion."

"But even that," Sir Joseph observed severely, "is questionable. If once the police make up their mind to hang a fellow—well, I'm not blaming you, I'm blaming human nature—I don't want to give you the material for a prejudiced judgment."

"You've got to trust my conscience," Freer rather snapped. "I'll guarantee to take the responsibility for it."

"Very well then, with that assurance . . ." Sir Joseph gracefully waved. "And how are you going to secure samples of the blood of your suspects?"

For answer Freer drew toward him the last remaining exhibit: the large sealed envelope. Tearing off the bottom corner he shook out on to the table a few inches of celluloid film.

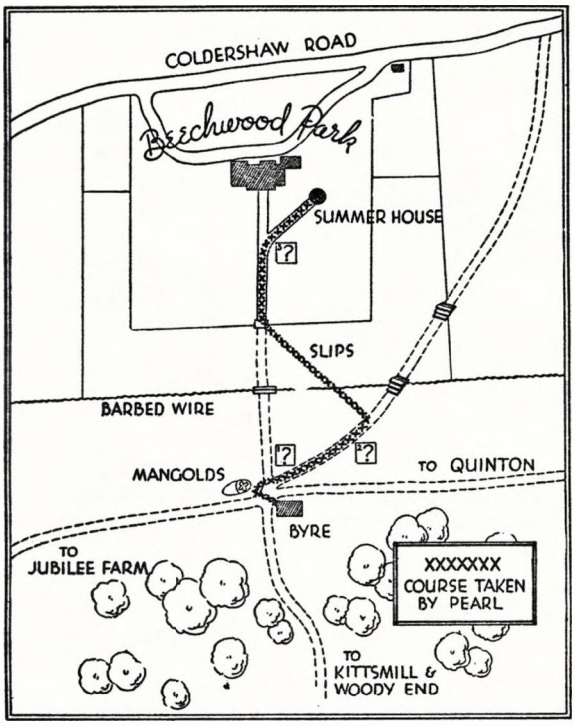
"Now that has nothing to do with it," he said, pleased with the interest he had aroused. "I picked up that bit of film and got Brothers to place it in this envelope and to lick it down. He thought I was crazy, I dare say; the strip of film is perfectly harmless, and I was only using it as an excuse. I understand, Sir Joseph, that the blood group can be determined by the saliva as well as by the blood itself. And there you have a sample of the saliva of Cecil Brothers, whom we shall call our suspect Number One!"

Enough had been done for one night, but Freer took home with him the map which had lain upon the table. Under a bubbling gas mantel and in his shirt sleeves, Freer sat with poised pencil. Passing it over his tongue, he drew at last a vivid violet line which traced Pearl's course from the mangolds to the summer-house. At three points during that journey Pearl must have exercised a conscious choice. Freer drew three question marks.

First, why had Pearl, already wounded and bleeding, started out, not toward her home, but down a path that would bring her to the main road? Was it because danger, not safety, lay at the house? Was she terrified of her husband, of contraband racketeers, of dope sellers, of the makers of obscene films?

Second, why had she only gone a few yards before changing her mind

Third, why had she struck off toward the arbor, rather than continue toward the help and shelter of the house, which was no further away?



CHAPTER XII

THE best part of a week had now passed, and Sina, as she lay in bed, reviewed it. Her investigations had not carried her very far yet; there had been a sort of understanding with Scub, and that had contented her for the time being. She saw now that he had been clever, for it was he after all who had precipitated the inevitable, allowing a certain formula to be reached which had temporarily satisfied her. Otherwise obviously, the situation could not have been continued. It was Scub, then, who, as he held her in his arms, had suddenly become quiet and thoughtful, a state which, between lovers, is not to be tolerated.

"What are you thinking about, Scub?" she had asked, only to wish she hadn't asked it when he laughed and replied:

"Your investigations."

"You're thinking," he went on, "that it's time you knew something more about me. It's unfair that I should know about *you*, isn't it? Oh, yes, I do—I know your name, and I know you borrowed this place from the Dunkeleys. I know that you know that I know—do you get that—that I know the Dunkeleys, and that Pearl Brothers wasn't a name unknown to me, either. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"I don't know what else you've found out. Have you proved yet that I am a thief and possibly a murderer?"

"Oh, Scub!"

"Now, don't pretend you haven't been putting two and two together. Only you've counted wrong, I assure you. I'm not either a thief or a murderer."

"But I never thought that, and even——"

"Even?"

"Even if."

"Even if—you'd still love me? That's sweet of you. But I'd rather you'd believe I'm *not*. Suppose I told you that Scub and Robert Fletcher were one and the same persons?"

"I should believe you."

"Well, they are. So that explains something, doesn't it? And the only crime Robert Fletcher ever committed was to leave his job without notice. In spite of the fact that the police rather want to talk to him, he hasn't done anything else. But I have certain private reasons for not wanting to talk to the police. I probably shan't tell you them even if you ask, and let me remind you that I love you because you are the most intelligent, the most sensible woman I ever met."

Sina had glowed.

"Really! I mean it, Sina. I think only a man would have been capable of the same—acceptance! So that's grand, and I can't ever thank you enough."

"It wasn't difficult, Scub—you reminded me of somebody else. You didn't seem like a stranger at all."

He grimaced, but accepted it. *He* could accept, too.

"All right, then. Now I've promised you I haven't done anything wrong, don't let's waste any more time in chatter—it might spoil the effect of what has been a simply wonderful interlude."

Sina had not corrected that word: she was honest. Nor did she really desire the present situation to last. Scub was twenty-three or four, and she was, without the addition this time, thirty-eight. It wasn't so difficult for her to accept what had been offered to her without too great a concern for the morrow: that was a trick of hers, learned long ago. But his delight in it pleased her.

Well, that conversation had clarified the issue for several days: they had continued on that basis. But it was still part of the game that Sina should keep her eyes open, and she had noticed, on going into the kitchen one day, that the two keys, which had appeared to her likely to fit the padlock in the mill, had vanished. That didn't prove anything. Mrs. Lambert might have removed them; and anyway, Mrs. Lambert had said that they were not the keys. But Sina had the impression that Scub disapproved of her rummaging in the mill. Once she had been on her way there when he had called her for a walk, having a moment previously declared that he was feeling too lazy to go out. He had prolonged the walk, and they had not got back until dark.

These walks, she noticed, were directed by Scub so as to avoid the main road. There were plenty of bridle paths and grassy lanes which could be reached from the garden of the mill.

What else did they do all day long? Sina was not a person who ever did very much. Her complexion, her hair, her nails, required much time every day; she was a person

who dawdled over meals and was hardly ever ready to do the next thing she had to do. As Mrs. Lambert vanished at one o'clock, there was housework to be done. Scub, on his part, was lazy. He lay on his shoulder blades in armchairs smoking Sina's cigarettes. They worked at crossword puzzles together, and sometimes played Polish bezique, which she had taught him. They played for sixpence a game. When Scub lost, he made out an I. O. U. He had no money.

There were the things in which he differed from the beloved and always remembered Roland: he was lazy and he had no money. But there was the same smile, the same set of the shoulders, the same good humored bad temper, or bad tempered good humor, whichever way you liked to look at it, and the same self-sufficiency. It was self-sufficiency of a variety that would always hold a woman, because however much it might on occasions aggravate her, it provided a mystery for her eternal and never satisfied penetration.

It was these thoughts which Sina idly reviewed in the state between sleeping and waking as she lay in bed on the seventh morning. And now she once more became conscious of the sound of mowing.

Firmly, Sina swung her legs over the side of the bed and, shivering, felt for her slippers.

Opening the door she regarded the passage and the door of Scub's room. Burglars, she had read, choose the boards nearest the wall because they creak less, and, with pale lips and hair like hay, she was sidling along when Scub's door opened and he emerged in his pajamas.

Sina began to run.

"Hey—hey!" Scub ran after her, and caught her at the head of the stairs. "Where are you creeping off to?"

For the first time, evil omen, his high handedness aggravated her. No woman of thirty-eight cares to be seen at six o'clock in the morning.

"It's nothing to do with you, please let me go."

The young man gave her a punishing look which promised disagreeableness later, but dropped his hand.

Sina ran across the dew laden grass and down between the pergolas to the hidden lawn. The sound of the mowing machine, however, had stopped even before she had left the house, and now there was no sign of the man with the red moustache. She hurried to the shed—the mowing machine was there—damp and matted with grass. The handles were still warm. Sina paused and looked round her. The plan of the garden was irregular and there were half a dozen tracks, some running through the orchard and some through the mill buildings, and some down to the lake, by which he might have left it. It was useless to search, and she was on the point of returning to the house when she caught sight of the dog—the year old golden Labrador which she had noticed on the previous occasion. Observing her approach, the dog stood intelligently alert, wagging its dew draggled tail and showing her a pink tongue.

She called "Doggie! Hi—Prince—Rover!"

Whatever its name, the dog demonstrated interest, and promised a kindly reception.

It frisked round her in circles, looking—yes, that was it—for the expected stick or stone. Sina picked up a pebble—the dog bounded clumsily into the air and sprinkled her with a shower of dew from its flying legs.

But her hand was on its collar and talking to the dog until it was reasonably docile, Sina was able to read the brass label:

Dr. H. Picard,
Camberley Lodge,
Coldershaw.

So Dr. Picard, who knew Pearl and Scub, and left bills in the old bureau, was the man who so extraordinarily exercised himself with the mowing machine.

CHAPTER XIII

FOR FREER, the next few days were busy, but baffled. There had been certain routine business which gave him no headache but didn't kindle his imagination.

For all over the country came reports that a man, answering the description of Robert Fletcher had been seen; two such men had been detained and had to be viewed by the manager of the hotel before they were allowed to go. In that direction—a blank. House to house questioning in the neighborhood revealed no one who had seen Pearl Brothers on the evening of her death: she must have kept most of the time to the unfrequented footpaths.

An expert had to be sent to prove the assertion of Cecil Brothers, that the saw-grass grew on the banks of the River Kitt, where Freddy Usher had found and picked it—without any ulterior motive—he declared. For his pictorial composition one reed was as good as another.

The past history of the same Freddy Usher, and of all the people at Beechwood, had been checked up, so far without any startling results. Freer had not interfered with the four originals very much, he was waiting for a report from Sir Joseph, and he hoped that it would come before any of them left the locality.

He had, however, inquired about the negro. Brothers had promptly supplied a name and address, but the man was one of the shifting population of the outskirts of Bohemia and so far he had not been found. This had been in the hands of Scotland Yard, and Freer had to wait in patience.

In the hands of Scotland Yard, too, was the whole subject, of the indecent film. In the sober light of next morning, the idea of a revolutionary conspiracy had seemed wild and foolish. Freer, in fact, hadn't communicated it to anyone: he would rather fail in the case than be laughed at. He was forced to think, too, that he had been mistaken about the code.

As regards the film, Freer had been shaken a little by the more sophisticated attitude of Sir Joseph. That was a matter in which he had to go very carefully.

Freer himself couldn't approach the persons named in Brothers' notebook; that would have to be left to the discretion of the Yard, to whom the film had been handed. On the whole he was glad to let the matter out of his hands—it was one of those things which might bring him either a flea in the ear or a bouquet.

The telephone rang.

Freer picked up the receiver and on hearing Sir Joseph's voice, braced himself for the news.

"Oh, is that you, Freer? Well, I'm afraid I haven't very good news for you."

"I'm sorry about that, sir."

"I say, you gave me a pretty stiff job—I hope you don't get these ideas again. I promised you I'd do it, and I have done it, but I should think I'm about the first man in England to carry it through."

"And what is the result, sir?"

"I'm telling you. The blood stain on the rush is undoubtedly human blood, but I think you can reckon that the stain on the reed wasn't made by the blood of either Brothers or his wife."

CHAPTER XIV

SINA had said nothing to Scub about the dog. She did not know whether he had seen her examining the collar, but she knew he was angry. Well, she hadn't promised not to go on trying to find out things. After a day of frosty conversation, of eyes which looked anywhere but into her own, she was miserable enough to risk a real explosion.

"Scub?"

He was going off after a supper that had been silent to enjoy somewhere his own icy company, but he stopped and wheeled round.

"What?"

"Don't go away. I think you ought to apologize first."

Her prim fire, not at all in her character, had the intended result: he paused, with the effect of not believing his own ears. It would have been easier for Sina to have thrown herself at his feet and to have made the apologies herself. Plus is pretty much the same as minus, to lovers, however.

"Apologize! What extraordinary things you say. Are you still annoyed because I tried to stop you from getting your feet wet the other morning?"

"Annoyed!" They were picking up each other's words and using them as battlecocks. "My dear boy, it's you that has been annoyed. But you should have better manners than to show it."

Sina had not failed to notice that he had instantly hit upon the cause of the breach between them.

"Let me remind you," she continued, "that you have been living here at my expense. You can't even buy your own cigarettes. Certainly I was in need of company, but you don't make yourself agreeable, and you don't even try to make conversation. It's quite easy for me to get rid of you, you know."

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The ex-star had been speaking: immediately she realized her mistake. She had stated that in their relationship which made it impossible for any young man of spirit to continue it. Sina had already in that moment imaginatively lived through the next five minutes.

"I'm sorry, but you're quite right. The mysterious stranger shall go as suddenly as he came."

He retired to the door, but at a pace which gave her time to recall him. She did not. He would first have to collect at least an overcoat and a hat, possibly also the few personal belongings which had arrived so mysteriously. She heard him cross the hall and go upstairs.

It was a question, as ever in such situations, as to who could hold out longest. But heavens, she did not want to humble him, really. She was considerate of masculine feelings, and after all an unhumbled male was more desirable than one who had been forced to a surrender. Sina was prepared to admit herself a woman, and to do the surrendering.

Very shortly afterwards, Sina was sitting with Scub on his bed, and tears, which were real, but did also fit the scene, were in her eyes. He had kissed her, and all idea of his going off had been forgotten.

"Happy now?"

She nodded, unhappily.

"Why not?"

"Oh Scub, I don't think you can really love me. If I loved anyone I would want them to know all about me, but you—you won't trust me. Whatever you told me, I'd love you just as much, and it wouldn't make any difference at all."

Her cheek rubbed on the rough shoulder of his jacket, and one of her shoes for some reason or another was at the far side of the room. It really seemed, for a few moments, as if he was going to tell her everything. What was going on in his eyes she was unable to see, but she could guess just what masculine firmness had been there when he gently but with determination refused to confide.

"I haven't anything to tell that would make any difference between us, but if you press me any more you'll spoil everything. You've got to go on being a rare and remarkable woman."

"For how long?" she wanted to ask, but didn't, fearing the answer. Tacitly it had been accepted between them that this was only an interlude in the responsibilities of life—mad, absurd and impermanent. Already she was in danger of engaging a deeper feeling: she was wishing, like any young bride, to construct a background, to fill in the lines of the figure she loved, and in so doing to secure, to imprison, and to possess.

ONCE more, the young man had been able to fix his own terms. But even now, Sina had made no promise—she was all the more eager to discover his "secret". This had nothing, now, to do with Pearl. She only wanted knowledge for the more perfect possession of him. And now there was available a certain source of information—Harry Picard. She knew his address, she could go and see him. He was a doctor and there was a ready excuse—she was suffering from obscure pains, from headaches. Sina, however, never came to the point of doing this, and the days passed, and suddenly she realized that the grass on the lower lawn had grown again. Soon the red-haired fellow would reappear, and this time she would tackle him.

Sina made preparations: a muted alarm clock that Scub would not hear, rubber soled shoes hidden under her bed, and a hat beneath which she could quickly bundle her yellow hair.

On the first morning, she did not awaken to the alarm. Luckily, it didn't matter, the grass was still unmown. On the second morning, Sina did wake. It was a still, dry morning. But as she lay listening, there came no sound of a mowing machine. Soon it was almost too late to expect him—five more minutes she would wait, and then go to sleep again. The five minutes passed in silence. "I'll just have one look out of the window," she thought, "and then I'll give it up." At the window, she thought, "I will count twenty, and then I will get back into bed." It was at the count of nineteen, and almost as she was turning away, that she saw the dog. Delighted, almost shocked by the accuracy of her foresight, she darted for her knickers, her stockings, the dress which would be slipped on, and the old hat. She took the passage at a rush that was, as it happened, more silent than her previous creaking progress. Reaching the garden, she was about to march boldly across the neglected rose lawn near to the house, when she noticed, as she took a quick and circumspect glance, that Mrs. Lambert was already up and about. The garden of her cottage was on the slope above, and Mrs. Lambert was out early, pulling sprouts. Not caring to be seen, or to add to Mrs. Lambert's very understandable suspicions, and Sina had been feeling them lately, she drew back to the shelter of the house, and followed a path that wound down the hill through rough shrubberies. All the time she was listening for the sound of the mower, but it hadn't begun yet.

SINA reached at length that point which gave her a view of the lawn, a damp lawn with fresh worm casts and the spikes of crocuses which had not enjoyed the reckless mower. But there was no one there, the mower was in its shed, and even the dog had vanished now. Had the red-haired doctor seen her approach, and taken fright? Then the leaves of an evergreen shrub rustled and the dog galloped out, with every sign of pleasure at encountering her. Sina patted its head and made noises of encouragement. But the animal was restless, it nosed back into the bushes and reappeared some yards away, again came back to her. It was, Sina now realized, performing the classic trick of faithful dogs, it was asking to be followed.

"All right then, I'm coming." Sina rewarded the dog's efforts, as pleased as it at finding out what it was trying to tell her.

The dog, when it had seen that she was following, set off at a stiff pace; down the hill, among the bent, old apple trees with their cropped branches and split trunks, through a thicket of hazel bushes and across a field in which there were two cows apt to resent intrusion. Sina jammed on her hat and marched past them. At the end of the field there was sedgy ground that provided rough grazing and through it ran a considerable brook, the River Kitt. Sina, no rambler or hiker, had viewed it from a distance, but now, led on by the dog she had to plunge on.

In a few minutes, Sina came into sight of the lake, five acres of shallow water, the fish-pond once of a long vanished monastery which had stood on the hill where now the black stump of the mill jutted up from the sky-line. Scions of the Dunkeley family bathed there and fished, but this early March morning the water was gray with cold and down here the sun had not yet touched the damp, raw air.

Sina had stopped at the edge of the lake, but the dog, running forward into the sedges, splashed and barked energetically. Whatever it was, she had been brought to see was there, among the weeds. Sina bravely followed, treading down the rushes and rank grass, over which, if she delayed a moment too long, the water oozed. A water fowl scurried suddenly from some hiding place, and Sina's heart jumped; but it was not that which the dog had brought her to see: in the shallow water, floated face downwards the body of a man. His head only, entangled in a floating mass of twigs and hay, was above the water level. Sina recognized at once the sandy red hair and broad shoulders of the dog's master—that Harry Picard she had kept vigil to confront.

Regardless now of the excruciating coldness of the water which soaked through her shoes, Sina walked forward until she could grasp the man's arm. It was strange that he should so nearly have reached the bank and safety.

Unless he had drowned himself.

Sina was debating whether she could do more without going for help when she heard a movement behind her, and then Scub's head appeared over the osier thicket. Sina did not think till afterwards that he must have been following her, for now there was the practical question of what was to be done.

The dog sat down on the solid ground and began to lick itself, content with the arrival of two persons who seemed to be managing very well, for presently they had his master safe on dry land. Scub made a brief examination.

"I don't think he's dead. Feel."

Fingers and face were icy cold, but Sina's hand against his shirt felt warmth, and even before Scub could begin the artificial respiration, to prepare for which he was taking off his coat, the fair-haired man began to revive. He sat up retching, lake water dribbled from his blue lips and his shoulders shook.

"We'd better get him up to the hill," Sina began, but Scub cut her short.

"No. We should never be able to carry him up the hill and over the fence. But we might manage the fields as far as the road."

Dr. Picard was now leaning against a willow, spewing

and blowing. Scub turned to him suddenly:

"I suppose you have left your car by the bridge?"

"Yes. Confound this filthy water—I'd have been all right but for the stinking mud."

Sina observed him more closely: she saw that the first impression of youth had been incorrect—Dr. Picard was about her own age—older—certainly, than Scub.

"Do you think you can make it?" Scub asked.

Sina was being left out of the picture completely.

"Yes—got to. Get a beastly cold if we hang about here any longer."

"You will die of pneumonia," Sina thought, "if you don't get to bed as quickly as possible." She again tentatively suggested the mill as Scub began to help his friend toward the road.

"No, thanks all the same. Better get home."

Dr. Picard was still too ill to do more than accept her as part of the scenery. "Come on, Lucy," This was to the dog. "You can swim a damn sight better than I can."

Sina followed behind until they reached the old hump-backed bridge near which a shabby coupe was standing. Scub helped his friend into the car.

"Thanks, I'll drive him home. Don't be alarmed."

Sina was dismissed.

The dog jumped into the open dickey, and Scub climbed into the driver's seat and fumbled for the self-starter.

CHAPTER XV

As Sina came into the breakfast room, Mrs. Lambert greeted her with a suspicion that couldn't be ignored. Of course, she would have found the bedrooms empty and the doors open. She was looking, too, at Sina's soaked shoes and indiscriminate get-up.

"Am I to serve breakfast, Madame?"

Mrs. Lambert's lips were tight and her regard black indeed.

"Certainly," Sina had not been an actress for nothing. She could carry off most situations.

"And Mr. Bosworth?"

"He will be in presently. We have been for a walk across the fields."

Sina sat down serenely; her hair resembled a haystack and puddles dripped from her shoes. Whatever anguish she suffered from her wet feet afterwards, now she had to keep up a show of unconcern. As she ate, Sina pondered a question: What was Dr. Picard doing in the lake? There was an old punt which the Dunkeley children used for fishing and bathing. Evidently Dr. Picard hadn't been trying to swim the lake in his clothes, the world wasn't mad enough for that. He had fallen in, and it was reasonable to suppose that he had fallen in from the punt, for it would be hard to fall in from the rush-fringed bank. And what was he doing in the punt? Crossing the lake, one supposed. Sina now saw a little more clearly what he had been up to; he had, on this, as no doubt on other occasions, parked his car by the bridge and approached the mill and the lawn, which he had so curiously wanted to mow, by the back way. So as not to be seen, one might imagine, from Mrs. Lambert's cottage. Nor, but for the sound of the mowing, would Sina herself ever have noticed him.

Sina wanted to have some background from which she could test Scub's answers to the questions she was going to put. It was necessary to decide if he had made use of the punt; if she found a capsized punt it would be no good Scub telling her that his friend had fallen in off a tree.

After breakfast Sina contrived to give Mrs. Lambert the slip. Once more she made her way to the lake. It was no longer foreboding steel, but golden wax under a sun that was later going to be hot. Not having to follow the dog she approached the water from a different angle, and on this side there was a rotten landing stage and an old rowing boat up-bottomed among weeds. Directly over on the other side, across the lake, was the gravel beach and the post to which the punt was usually fastened. Dr. Picard, she reasoned, cutting across the field from where he had left the car would make for the punt, cross over, moor it to the landing stage, go and see to his business at the mill, return to the punt, and leave it tied up again by the gravel beach.

The skin of sun on the surface of the lake was unfavorable for visibility and it was not until Sina had walked round to one side that she saw the floating paddle. That suggested that her guess was correct; the punt must have gone down under him. She could not see it, but the floating paddle was eloquent.

Sina returned to the landing stage, it would be interesting to see if she could prove it in any way that Dr. Picard had made use of it. What might one find? The imprint of his shoes in the mud—the dottle of his pipe? He was a man surely, who would smoke a pipe, and for preference an old one.

Detective work, Sina soon decided, wasn't so easy as all that; many cows had been down to the water, and odds and ends of matches and cigarette packets and silver paper proved the untidiness of humanity, and nothing else. She was on the point of giving it up when she found, sheltered under a tough clump of grasses, a brightly colored cardboard box; on it was a picture of a girl with dark eyes and lips as red as the rose which was in her mouth. Sina regarded it with excitement—a box of Italian vestas! The damp cardboard opened up in her hand, spilling a shower of tiny wax matches hardly larger than gramophone needles. Confirmation, if any was needed, was supplied by the legend on the other side:

TABBACHIO UMBERTO
Via Porta Rossa,
FIRENZE.

Now matches, Sina argued, are soon used, and therefore, whoever had dropped this box must have not long before been in Italy. True, such matches might be bought in some London shops, but not, in that case, would there be the label of a Florentine tobacconist. Further, the cardboard, though damp, was not entirely soaked, and the box could not have lain there very long. Three weeks ago there had been heavy rain lasting for several days. It had been dropped here since then.

There were two explanations; either Dr. Picard had been in Florence recently, or else Pearl had used the landing stage within a few days of her death, perhaps even on the day of her death. And if Dr. Picard had been in Florence, of course he had been there because Pearl was there too.

Dr. Picard or Pearl?

Well, it didn't matter very much at the moment. Connection between Dr. Picard and Pearl had already been proved. Sina was inclined to the belief that it was Pearl who had dropped the matches. They were of a type Pearl would fancy more than pipe-smoking Dr. Picard. It was in her character to scatter them around, they could drop out of a woman's bag, her shallow pockets, so much more easily than from a man's deep ones. And why had Pearl been using the hidden approach to the mill? For that was the indication. She wouldn't have been fishing or bathing. For the same or a different purpose from Dr. Picard's? And would this pin one end of that walk that had ended in her death? Sina could guess that one of the paths from Kitts Bottom would pass through the wooded hills on the other side and strike across country to the back of Beechwood Park, and it was at the end of such a path precisely that Pearl had been murdered. This would explain why no one, according to the newspapers anyhow, had seen Pearl on the roads. Or was it murder after all? Was there something in the atmosphere of the mill or of the lake or of the whole countryside which drove people to bizarre suicides?

As Sina with excitement built her edifice of reasoning there came from the other side of the bushes the sound of whistling. Scub. So he too was returning to the lake.

Sina considered for a fleeting moment whether or not to hide from him, but her tactics now were to be in the open, and she held her ground and called out, at the same time, however, slipping the Italian matchbox into her pocket and treading the split vestas into the mud.

Scub, thus warned, did not show any surprise on seeing her. His attitude was faintly hostile.

"Oh, so you're here?" He looked at her searchingly. "What are you doing?"

"Looking for things."

"Oh, and what have you found?"

"Nothing—except that paddle."

"Yes." He only briefly regarded it. "The punt's somewhere. It sank."

"I thought that was it. And is—Dr. Picard all right?"

"Quite. He was going to have a hot bath and a dose of quinine. There is nothing wrong really."

"Only," Sina thought, "that he would have been dead if I hadn't been on the look-out and followed the dog. For you, my dear Scub, only followed me, unless you too were on the look-out." She only said, however, and very meekly:

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"I'm glad of that."

That young man would aggravate her soon. He was now, oblivious of her presence, examining the upturned boat.

"What are you going to do?" she asked, moving to his side.

"I'm going to try and float this. It'll probably fill up, and you might be looking round for an old tin to bail it with."

"Scub, you're not going on the lake in that. You'll drown too. It'll sink before you are five yards from the shore."

"Oh no, it won't. It'll last out for a time. The seams aren't so bad, and they'll close up when they get in the water."

"Well, what do you want to go on the lake for?"

"What for? To find the punt, of course. Punts don't sink as easily as all that. This one happened to have a hole bored in it. Dr. Picard didn't notice it until he was half way across and then it was too late to do anything."

"A hole bored in it?"

"Certainly. He tried to swim for it, but he'd got all his clothes on and it was freezingly cold. It wasn't a case of drowning, he simply fainted; the cold was too much for an empty stomach."

"HE shouldn't start out to mow lawns on an empty stomach," Sina couldn't help slyly putting in. Scub refrained from noticing. He now had the boat on its keel, and since he was determined to try it, Sina helped him to drag it toward the water. From the rotten landing stage she watched him drift into the middle of the lake, using as rudder and paddle a piece of broken railing. She might have been with him in the boat. But why should two people drown, and in such cold water? It would be more useful to her to be able to run for help. This, however, she did not have to do, for before the boat was filled he had found what he was searching for, and he reached the shore again with the half submerged punt in tow. Regardless of his trousers, plastered with mud up to his knees, he brought the punt into the shallows and made it fast to a stump. Sina, advancing as far as she could, watched him as he encouraged the punt to float to the surface of the water by means of the broken railing. There was a fleeting glimpse of a round hole in the bottom of the punt before the water swirled over it again. But Scub thrust his arm into the water and when he brought it up again his face was grave.

"Yes," he seemed to be confirming a fear, "that hole was bored in the floor boards, and quite recently—the edges are still sharp."

With an extra effort he beached the punt among the reeds, and Sina, putting her finger into the hole, satisfied herself too that the inch thick mahogany board had been recently pierced; the inside of it was a fresh pale brown and the bit had left a frizz of crisp splinters.

"Didn't he notice it before he started?" she asked.

Scub was not impressed with her intelligence.

"The punt was drawn up on the gravel. It didn't begin to fill until he was well into the middle of the lake. Then—"

"Then?"

"Then it was done on purpose. Somebody bored the hole meaning the punt to sink——"

"—meaning him to drown!"

"Well," Scub was cautious, "trying to stop him anyway, from using it."

If that had been all, Sina thought, it would have been better to have pushed out the punt to sink of its own accord. There was a very dark complexion to it for Sina.

Scub was wringing out his trousers. His investigations finished, apparently. The time had come for Sina to begin her questions.

"And now, I want to know who is this Dr. Picard?"

She thought for a moment that he wasn't going to answer; then, as if he had come to a decision, he faced her firmly.

"Yes—you'll have to be told. But if I stand about here any longer I'll get chilblains or frost-bites or something, and you will too. I'm not stalling on you—but give me a chance to get into some dry clothes. Then I'll tell you—as much as I know."

Sina accepted that; she saw that he was serious.

"But if," she demanded valiantly, "someone was hoping that Dr. Picard would be drowned, and that's *it*, you can see as well as I can, oughtn't we to do something about it? Oughtn't we to tell the police?"

"The police?" Scub revolved this. "It's precisely because the police mustn't be told—" Sina's ears were stretched, but with one of his disarming smiles he secured one more delay. "But wait till you've heard my end of the story, and now let's run before we get rheumatics and the Lord knows what."

Scub set a pace which left Sina no breath for further questions, and upon reaching the mill he sprinted ahead of her and vanished upstairs to his room.

Sina, with a mere change of shoes and stockings, was waiting for him in the hall. He might after all give her the slip. She could not allow that. She would willingly have hidden Scub from the police, knowing that he could not have been capable of the murder of Pearl, but now she was an actual witness of—well, a crime of some sort; she held a responsibility. It was only by the chance of her looking out and seeing the dog that Dr. Picard was not dead—murdered in effect—murdered on his way to the mill, to prevent, she wondered, his finding out something at the mill? Had Pearl too made the same journey, and been murdered too for some knowledge she had possessed herself of, or to prevent her from securing it?

Once more it came back to a question of the mill. What was in the mill? Sina could no longer wait. Scub was sincere in his promise but she would settle this curiosity first. Why she had not done so before she could not imagine. It only needed a strong screw driver.

There was a household tool-box in the kitchen, and waiting until Mrs. Lambert had gone into the parlor with the carpet sweeper, Sina secured a screw driver and such other tools as seemed to her useful for a house-breaking enterprise. Only an extreme unhandiness with tools had prevented her from trying this before. She marched grimly to the door of the mill; the latch clicked, but the door stood fast. It was locked. Never before had Sina known this door to be locked. Well, it was quicker to find the key than to try and break it down; Sina's shoulders were not built for the classic smashing of door panels. Hiding the tools on a high shelf, Sina returned, ready for anything, to the house. Mrs. Lambert was dismally pushing the carpet sweeper backwards and forwards. Sina had an excuse—frail but face-saving—about deck chairs.

"The key's hanging up in the kitchen. On the board." Mrs. Lambert grudgingly added, "It's the one with the brass label."

But once more someone had anticipated Sina's desire; there was no key on the board with a brass label—there was no key that could possibly fit that lock.

Sina returned to the mill; perhaps the door wasn't locked after all. The screw driver, thrust between the door and the jamb, settled her hopes.

IN despair, Sina stood back and regarded the black stump from which now more than ever she was determined to wring the secret. A woman of resource, it occurred to her that the windows of the ground floor were more easily broken than the lock. The effect of a large stone was grand and satisfying. Drawing up a wheel-barrow beneath the window, Sina reached the catch and swung open the broken frame. With the screwdriver between her teeth she scrambled through, regardless of cobwebs and broken glass. With hair in her eyes and with limbs that trembled with excitement she mounted the stairs to the first floor and the ladder to the second. Now only the padlock barred her way. The screws were obligingly loose and not even a woman could fail to draw them before ruining their slots. Out they came, and the padlock hasp fell away. Sina pushed up the trap door and emerged into the room in which shadows shrouded the old grinding stones and the rusty machinery.

It required courage not to back out and tiptoe away; the strange forms, the silence, the old coat, green with age and dropping to pieces from the nail on which it hung; the shell of the last remaining sweep seen through the window, a comb of broken slats which projected from the thirty-foot whip. Something rustled in a dark corner—rats.

While she still had the courage to go on, Sina firmly set her foot on the ladder which led to the last floor, the bin floor to which the sacks were hoisted, and from which the grain was poured down the wooden chutes. Above it was the domed cap which used to veer in the wind. Somebody had once camped out there, at least there was an old iron bedstead and a broken stove. But the springs had rusted and dropped through, and the owls which lived in the niches above had dropped their feathers and their pellets on to the dusty floor. A wall paper of ribbons and roses was stained with brown patches: why it should ever have been pasted up, heaven only knew.

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The floor was safe enough. Mrs. Lambert's excuse that it was unsafe was evidently fabricated. But so far as Sina could see, there was nothing in that empty compartment that should not have been there—the mill *hadn't* a secret.

Sina crossed to the window, the glass was dirty and one broken pane was stuffed with hay, but it was clear enough to give her a view—that view which ought to have ended in the sea, but didn't. But it was a good enough view—Sina had the idea of trying to see if Beechwood Park was visible. But the woods hid it. Immediately below spread the overgrown garden of the mill, the lawn which Dr. Picard had mown. From this high angle it was not obscured by the pergolas and the bushes. Sina was looking straight down at it, and for this reason she could see now, what would not have been visible from any other place, that the crocus spikes, breaking here and there into yellow, formed lines—formed letters—a word which spread across the lawn, outlined in crocus spears—six, eight, ten deep. The word was PIP.

CHAPTER XVI

THE crocuses spelled the word Pip. In another week it would be spelled out in ten foot letters and in white and purple and gold. Evidently they had been planted by Dr. Picard, evidently he had been living at the mill (there was the bill for the crocuses in the old bureau), evidently he had been trying to remove all signs of the word. But why? The word was innocent enough. Sina wondered if both Scub and his friend had escaped from a mental home; she herself would soon be in one.

Sina wonderingly withdrew, and descended to the ground floor. Exit through the window was not as easy as her entrance and was undignified.

Scub, in dry clothes, was eating a delayed breakfast. He looked up at her cheerfully, and nodded. Sina had framed a question, and she was interested to see how he would take it.

"Scub, will you tell me about the crocuses?"

"All in good time. I can't talk with my mouth full."

Sina was prepared to wait all day, but if she had to do that, she would grimly hang on to his heels. However, as soon as he had finished his breakfast, he pushed back his chair, rose and crossed to the door.

"Come on, then, let's go for a walk." He added in an undertone. "I don't want even Mrs. Lambert to hear."

At last, they were clear of the mill, and following one of the grassy lanes, little used and leading nowhere.

"Now," he was quite amiable, "let's start with Dr. Picard. Or do you know all about him?"

"I don't know anything about him, except that once he must have lived at the mill."

"You are quite right. He did live at the mill last Summer. That was before he bought the practice in Coldershaw."

"He was living with the Dunkeleys?"

"No, he had rented it from them. They were acquaintances both of mine and of his. More than acquaintances of his by the time he had finished. Did you know that he was engaged to be married to Susan Dunkeley?"

"I didn't."

"Well, it's true, although I can't imagine dear Susan the wife of a country doctor."

"Nor can I—" Sina began, and then flashed a look at Scub. So he knew the Dunkeleys and Susan to the extent of a contemptuous 'dear'.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Harry—Dr. Picard—didn't even know her when he rented the mill. The engagement only dates from last Christmas. Did you know that the Dunkeleys wanted to sell the mill?"

"I didn't know. They might as well, they're here so seldom."

"They were wanting to sell it last year at any rate. Harry rented it for three months, and then he decided to buy it. Everything had been arranged, except the actual signature and then he changed his mind—for reasons I will tell you in a minute. Now this, I think, is going to surprise you—when Harry met Susan Dunkeley, he was in love with Pearl Brothers. Only she wasn't Brothers then."

"But Pearl—"

"Yes—exactly. But Pearl! However, it was so. Harry met her at a party and went absolutely off at the deep end, and Pearl, I suppose, was touched and generous. Anyhow, he did really think that she was fond of him—well, she was—"

"She didn't find it difficult to be fond of people."

"No, and I suppose Harry didn't realize that. Anyhow, it was at that time that he thought of buying the mill."

"I suppose because Pearl was staying at Beechwood?"

"Yes. She used to run round with Brothers too, who hadn't then started to feel possessively inclined toward her. I think it was Harry's fondness for Pearl that spurred Cecil on. Anyway, here was Harry ready to buy the mill for himself and Pearl. He was a partner in a London firm of doctors at that time, and the mill was to be for weekends. He thought that Pearl would like it. If you knew Harry, you would understand that he rushes in where even angels like you would fear to tread.

"Oh, yes."

"And that's pretty fast. So that even before he had heard the lady's answer he was building his castles in Spain, and having already decided to buy the mill he started, while the conveyancing was going on, to cultivate the garden ready for the Spring. Among other things he purchased hundreds of crocuses and planted them in the lawn in such a way as to spell out, six months later, the name of his beloved."

"Then Pip—"

"Is Pearl. That was Harry's own special private name for her. For reasons unknown to you and to me. At this point, two things happened; Cecil Brothers began to lay siege to Pearl, Harry realized that he was losing her and he found at the same time that the less exotic but perhaps more eligible Susan was making eyes at him over the lawyer's table. Cecil finally pounced, and Susan caught Harry on the rebound. Naturally the idea of buying the mill was in abeyance. While Harry was living here he had heard of a practice for sale in Coldershaw and as it was likely to be more profitable than his share of the London one, he purchased it. Are you hanging on?"

"Yes, I think so. I didn't think that so much could have happened in the few months I've been out of touch with Pearl and Susan."

"Where have I got to? Oh yes, I had just explained the crocuses." They had reached the end of the lane and Sina's interest was so absorbed that she hardly noticed that he was leading her now across a ploughed field.

"Two days before Pearl died, Scub continued, "Harry rang me up in great trouble. He had heard that Pearl and Cecil had quarreled and there was going to be a divorce."

"And that he was going to be cited," Sina dropped.

"No, the trouble was this; both of them wanted a divorce, but Cecil wouldn't give Pearl the necessary evidence; he said he had proof of *her* infidelity, and he was going to use it. I don't know whether he had or not. Even if he had, I don't blame Pearl. Pearl, however, was thoroughly wrought up and vindictive, and she swore that she was going to file a petition—the grounds being her husband's cruelty."

"Cruelty?"

"Yes—both moral and physical."

"But I don't think that on that she would get more than a separation?"

"Well, I don't know, it hadn't reached the point of lawyers and things. The physical cruelty wasn't very serious anyhow; if Cecil knocked her about I dare say she didn't mind it and anyway it probably did her good."

"Is that what you think?"

"CERTAINLY. And in this case a few bruises would be valuable evidence. The plea she was actually placing her hopes on was the moral cruelty. You see, Brothers having married an artist's model hardly looked upon her as a proper wife, while Pearl, poor lamb, began to feel respectable. Brothers encouraged her to go on sitting for artists and so forth. He got some sort of a kick out of it. That wasn't too bad. Have you ever heard of Cecil's film society?"

"Certainly, something was said about it in the papers." I was there the day the police sealed up the dark room."

"Well, when Harry was going round with Pearl, he took an interest too in the films which were being made. Apparently at that time they were experimental films of a real scientific value; quite a lot of the members were doctors and psychologists and birds of that sort. Now, I believe, all the respectable element has dropped away. Even before they were married Pearl was acting in these films, and Cecil made her go on even when the decent people like Harry had severed all connection. The films were becoming, well—frankly, filthy."

"And Pearl was expected to take part?"

"Cecil made her. Oh yes, even in this civilized country

a husband could make a girl like Pearl go through a pretty good hell. Consider—she had no money, no relatives, and if she left him it would only be to be kept by some other man. In time, she could have earned her living again as an artists' model, and in time, she was prepared to do that—that was when the divorce question came up."

"Poor Pearl."

"Yes, poor Pearl. You can imagine how her eyes were gradually opened, how she came to realize that she had married into a sort of white slavery. Even up to the end, Cecil was always able to influence her, the fiend knew just how far to turn the screw—or at least he thought he did."

"And Harry tried to help her?"

"I don't think he had actually done so. He had found out about it, and he rang me up in great trouble. He knew that if Pearl carried out her threat there would be a big scandal. As soon as the case was aired, the papers would get hold of it, the indecent films would be exposed, and as Harry had been connected with them, there was a chance of his name being brought in; and then he would certainly be struck off the register."

"But hadn't he dropped out before that?" Sina asked.

"He had, but it's very difficult to explain that you are there on certain days and not on others. And I'm not sure, either, that he hadn't taken more of an interest in the later films that he should have done. Anyhow, he wanted to ask my advice, he wanted me to try and persuade Pearl not to make a scandal, but to find some other way out of it. As it happened we didn't meet until after Pearl was dead."

"When she couldn't, luckily, make an unpleasant scandal and ruin your friend?"

Scub looked at her sharply, but he didn't answer her suspicion.

"So you see now," he went on quietly, "it was terribly important for Harry, when Pearl was murdered, not to be linked up with it in any way. And besides, the chance of being thrown out by the B. M. A., he didn't care about Susan getting to know either. Like an idiot he'd forgotten all about the crocuses. When he saw the news that morning he remembered them only too well—he realized that they would soon be coming up for all the world to see that he had been on intimate enough terms to plant them, and to have a private pet name for the girl."

"And so he came once a week to mow them down?"

"Yes. You see, you can't dig them up until they show, and if he let them show, then somebody might see them. So he had to keep on mowing—until the mill was empty."

"Until I'd gone?"

"Yes."

"But if you had told me—"

"My dear lady—there was also Mrs. Lambert, and Harry didn't know your excellence; nor did I, at first. He wasn't inclined to trust you—especially as you must have been, he knew, a friend of the Dunkeleys, and with the best will in the world you'd let out the secret some time."

"I probably would. I couldn't keep to myself a story that made as good telling as this one. But I don't think it would have made any difference to Susan."

"Nor do I—but Harry is rather a fidget. Anyhow, that's why he had to come up and do the mowing very early in the morning. You kept such an acute eye on me that I couldn't do it for him. I even went so far as to try and persuade you not to go up to the mill, for I was afraid that from that height it would be possible to read the name—even if the crocus flowers weren't fully out."

"It is quite possible."

"So it appears. But you wouldn't have noticed it from the level. You have to get up above, and from the bedroom windows the lawn is partly hidden. I know because I tried."

"And so," Sina reproached, "you hid the key, and forced me to break a window and to cut my finger."

"Did you?"

"I broke a window, and I practically cut my finger."

"I didn't go further than gentle discouragement. So don't complain about a cut finger, particularly, as, so far as I can see, it's hardly scratched."

Sina did not follow up the question of the key as she had suddenly realized that Scub—cleverly, was it—shirked that in which she was most interested.

"And how did you," she asked, "come to have any influence with Pearl?"

"I had no particular influence. Harry was clutching at a straw. I just knew both her and Cecil."

"And you never did talk to Pearl about a divorce—it was too late?"

Scub nodded.

"I had arranged to meet Harry without quite knowing what he wanted me to do—it was a general S. O. S. He didn't turn up. When I read about Pearl that morning, I knew very little about the situation—Harry has told me since."

"And yet," Sina stubbornly held on, "you pretended you'd never heard of Pearl. Was it because you were frightened of what Harry might have done?"

Scub answered her quietly:

"Naturally, I considered every possibility. But at that time I was thinking chiefly about myself."

They had come to a stile, and he did not continue until they were once more side by side, crossing the stubble of a barley field.

"Did you ever hear of anyone called Rupert Fowkes?"

"Rupert Fowkes? No."

"Well—Rupert Fowkes, Robert Fletcher, and Scub—are one and the same person. That person—"

"Yourself?"

"Certainly. That person was to meet Harry at Kittsmill on the night that Pearl was murdered. Harry chose the mill as a place we both knew—I'd been here when Harry was the tenant. We thought it was empty, and when I arrived the house was in darkness, I couldn't see the bathroom light, and as the parlor window was ajar, I thought I'd wait inside for Harry."

"And at that moment, the bell rang?"

"And I answered it. And if you want to know why—I can only say that it was because I was feeling a little mad. When you are in what you thought an empty house, and a bell rings—you go and see what it is. Somebody, after all, might be in trouble."

"Well, you do that if you are mad or a hero. There must have been madness in the air, for it was mad of me to press the bell in the first place."

"I've always wondered why you did."

"And then we both acted as if we were drunk."

"It's possible to be drunk on a glass of water if you want to be drunk. And when I looked at you, darling, I was intoxicated."

"I like flattery, but just now I'm burning for an explanation. Was it simply that the joke was so good that you threw up the job at the hotel? And how did you ever come to be a waiter at the hotel?"

"I had already decided not to go back, even before I saw you. You'll laugh at the reason, probably."

"But still I want to hear it."

"Very well. I come of an old and respectable family, I was educated at Winchester and at Cambridge, and my mother wanted me to go into the diplomatic service."

Sina could see that Scub would have been a wonderful ambassador, a man who talked in riddles, wore the air of keeping a secret even when there is no secret to keep, a man whose charm would be worth ten battleships and a brigade.

"My mother is a widow and I am an only son. My career had been planned when I was still in knickerbockers but unfortunately, when I came to years of discretion, I found it impossible to believe in politics, in diplomacy, or in statesmanship. I wanted to be an actor. I became an actor."

"Ah!" Sina's intuition had been right. "I thought so."

"BUT I was a very bad actor. My mother had been very proud of me, that wasn't my fault, I assure you, and when I insisted upon acting she was terribly upset. But when I landed a fairly good part in the West End she was almost ready to forgive me. As she hardly ever left home, we met seldom and it was easy for me, in letters, to pretend that I was getting on marvelously. She's quite simple about anything connected with the stage and I was able to build up a legend. I invented jobs for myself. Actually, after the first spurt, I hardly had any work and the last thing on earth I would do was to write home for money. So, finally, I had to take any sort of a job, and I ended up as a waiter at the Manor Hotel. That was a part I acted all right, anyway. Harry knew all about this, of course. When we arranged to meet here I was going to be off duty at nine, and I could easily get here by ten. That night, as I was crossing the hall with a tray of drinks, I heard a familiar voice; the unlikely had happened—my mother had come to stay at the hotel. Or not so unlikely after all, for it was through a friend of mother's ages ago that I'd heard about it, and it was the first one I thought of trying. My mother hadn't seen me, but I knew that at dinner time all the myth that I had been building up would col-

lapse. I couldn't bear the thought of that. I just had to walk out, and I didn't—" he added, "take my mother's trinkets with me. That's a complete mystery to me. The initials on the pen-knife which the police found were, of course, my uncle's initials, and the cuff links from which you christened me were his, also. But he gave me those years ago."

"And how did you get the change of clothes next day?"

"I rang up Harry and he brought some over when you were away. It was then that we decided for his sake, and for my sake, to keep quiet about everything. I was afraid that if I told you about myself, it would get back sooner or later to mother. And for the same reason I didn't want to talk to the police. I couldn't help them, there was nothing I could say that would bear on the mystery of Pearl."

"And why," Sina asked, rather ashamed of the question which held an obvious suspicion, "didn't Dr. Picard turn up that night?"

"He was called out to a desperate case. I haven't followed his alibi, but—I believe it."

"Then you have no idea who murdered Pearl?"

"None at all. Nor—" he added swiftly, "have I any idea who bored a hole in the punt."

Sina started; she had forgotten about that. So many other mysteries had been cleared up, the events at the mill had turned out to be so innocent and explainable, that it was disconcerting to remember another factor that once more brought back Kittsmill into the center of the mystery.

"Did Dr. Picard and Pearl," she asked, following up a certain line of thought, "ever meet in Italy?"

"No, Harry was never in Italy."

"I see."

She saw, then, that following the clue of the matches, it was reasonable to suppose that at some time shortly before her death, and possibly on the very evening, Pearl had crossed the lake, and recrossed it, Sina hadn't any doubt, in order to reach the mill. She suddenly wondered if Scub had told her everything? Perhaps the whole story was a clever fabrication—all the cleverer because in its chain of coincidences so much more like life than a lie. She was deep in thought when Scub laid a restraining hand on her arm.

"Stop a moment. I think this is where we turn back."

They had reached the main road which was only on the other side of the ragged hedge, and some yards away two or three laborers and a couple of policemen were bending over something which lay on the grass verge at the gate of the churchyard.

CHAPTER XVII

"THERE's someone hurt!"

Sina moved forward impulsively. Scub, she must still call him that, even if his real name was Rupert Fowkes, withdrew into the cover of the hedge.

"You go and see if you like. I'm still not meeting the police, I think."

Sina flashed him a swift look; his pride must be very tender, if it caused him to involve himself so very deeply simply to preserve, for his mother, the myth of his success.

Scub grimaced back.

"All right then," she said, "you wait for me."

"Then don't be long. I'll wait a few minutes and if you cannot find me, you will know that I have returned home."

As Sina drew nearer to the group by the roadside she saw that one of the policemen was the Sergeant whom she had met at Beechwood. At first she did not recognize the crumpled figure that lay on the grass, a lanky person whose head was twisted sideways at an unnatural angle. Then she remembered. It was the half-wit village boy who blew the church organ and was taken care of and coddled by most of the sympathetic townsfolk.

"How did it happen?" she asked one of the laborers.

"'E's a-fallen from the ladder, 'e 'as. 'E 'ad no business to be up it anyways, but a regular nuisance, 'e is."

"Bird's nesting," laconically supplied one of the other laborers.

Sergeant Williams now rose from his inspection. He caught sight of Sina and gave her a curt nod. His "keep back there please" was addressed to her as well as to the laborers.

The laborers, unabashed, stood back a few feet and continued to expatiate on the accident.

"Time Charlie Green came back with the doctor."

Sina moved a little closer.

"Did you see it happen?" she asked the man nearest to her.

"Can't rightly say I saw it *'appen*, exactly. I was round at the back packing up the hand trolley. Heard some sort of a smack, like it might be one of the planks come away. Soon as I saw 'im there by the ladder I thought 'Ah, you've been sky-larking up the tower, my lad.' Didn't think as 'e was hurt serious, you see."

"Naturally not."

"Concussion, that's what it is," I says. Then I saw 'is cap. Holy goodness, it's 'is brains, I thought. Then I see that it's owls' eggs. Not sky-larking, you see, but owling, as you might say."

Sina provided the expected laugh.

"Well, I'm glad it's only concussion."

"And a mucking fright those owls 'ave given me at times. Like as not one of 'em went for 'im, 'e got in a stew and came adrift from the ladder. No need to blame me, I'd fixed it safe enough, and who was to know that the lad was going to swarm up over the place."

SINA, during this, had been observing the church tower in the shadow of which they were standing. Round the northern buttress had been built a light scaffolding. She remembered that a man had come to the door with an envelope for the Church Tower Restoration Fund. The laborers were, evidently, those who were working on the tower. The Sergeant had gone off toward the church. and Sina followed him. She came upon him as he stood thoughtfully staring at the scaffolding poles. On the ground lay a long ladder which in its fall had broken down some bushes and smashed a glass dome containing artificial flowers. Near the ladder lay the boy's dirty cap. It seemed to have held a complete owl's nest, for there was a litter of feathers and twigs, soaked with the yellow and white mucous of the broken eggs.

There had been a time, if one could believe it, when Sina had collected birds' nests. She had been twelve, then, with a double plait and a serious interest in nature study. That time in the Nottinghamshire vicarage was remote and it might have been another little girl who had once glued an owl's egg into a shallow cardboard box which contained also the eggs of a thrush, a blackbird, a duck, a chaffinch, and a woodpecker.

A friendly gardener had brought her the rare, rough-textured egg, and she had written neatly beneath it EGG OF LONG-EARED OWL. The loose rubbish of the owl's nest-feathers and scraps of paper, regurgitated pellets, bones and stalks of hay, had broken the fall. It was possible to count the number of eggs—five and freshly laid. The egg of an owl Sina had seen, but not the nest. She stooped over the slovenly collection. The same kindly gardener had once told her that owls sometimes took over the deserted nests of magpies—and here was a bright strand of red silk, a tuft of horsehair and a shred of rag. A fragment of paper from the nest fluttered against Sina's leg, and she stooped to remove it. It was a dirty scrap of coarse paper, pink and blue.

Sina, with a sudden glance to see if Sergeant Williams was looking, hid the scrap of paper in her handkerchief. How it would fit in, she did not know, but she recognized the pink and blue pattern as that of the wall-paper in the top story of the mill.

The Sergeant seemed to have vanished, but Sina, with caution, stepped into the dark, cold church. There, in a pew, and with the camouflage of an open prayer book on the ledge in front of her, she opened her handkerchief. Yes, this scrap of paper came from the mill. And anyway, there would hardly be wall-paper in a church. She looked at it again, and saw for the first time that it was of two thicknesses: on the other side and easily detachable, for the paste was mouldy, was a similarly torn fragment of thin, tough paper—a white and slightly soapy paper, with the broken curve of a watermark.

Sina sat in the pew, facing the inevitable brass eagle, the rood screen and the thin realism of a Victorian window; she wished to forget the experiences which stood between the girl of twelve with two plaits, and the woman of thirty-eight with a fashionable hat and three rings. She wished to remember the knowledge which the girl of twelve had possessed, which the woman had forgotten. The girl who kept chestnut branches in jam jars and tadpoles in pickle bottles had known also about owls. In her head were half a hundred facts and the fragment of an explanation. If she could only achieve that region in which the explanation was already formed. She had

had a view of it. Everything fitted, everything must fit, naturally, but there were still some things that she must be assured of—a catalytic the addition of which would suddenly crystallize the solution for her.

Sina's mind was still racing as she rose from the pew and moved over the uneven flags to the little oak door by the vestry. She was able at the same time to see a fashionably-dressed woman proceeding across a village church. She had no social conscience, no other motive for wishing to solve the mystery of Pearl's death except curiosity—the irritant dissatisfaction which had been set up by the partial achievement of a vision.

THE stone steps through the oak door led, as she had guessed, to the tower. She mounted the steps. Through arched openings she could see bell ropes and the machinery of the clock. Through a trefoil opening there was a view of the nave, and then there was a small landing and another door. Sina, having paused for breath, turned the wrought iron ring of the old latch. Immediately she stood motionless against the stone wall. There were voices from the landing above her. She recognized them. It was Sergeant Williams, and the Inspector—what was his name?—Freer. They must have entered the tower from the outside by means of the scaffolding, for they had not passed through the church.

"I'm not denying it may have been only some mischieveous boys," Freer was saying, "but that ladder was pulled away from down below. I tried, you tried—we couldn't get it to shift when anyone was standing on it, could we? Not at that angle. And there were the marks in the grass, where it stood. Besides what the stone-mason said."

"You could kick it away, if you held on to the scaffolding with your hands," Williams grudgingly objected.

"I dare say you could. But who would? Not even a half-wit. No, he was up here after birds' nests, and someone came and pulled the ladder away from below. You saw the marks plain, didn't you? If that ladder had slipped there would be long, sliding ruts in the grass. Instead, you can see the two dents where it rested, and then there's not a single blade of grass out of place for six inches. That couldn't happen unless someone had shifted it from below."

"Yes, but I don't see who would," Williams densely objected.

"Who would? Well, I'm not saying it was done with malice aforethought, it may have been some boys, or that mason himself, if he was angry and called at the boy for being on the ladder and got a saucy answer. Suppose he jolts the ladder just to frighten him, and the boy falls—well, there you are. We'll have one more look at the scaffolding, and then I'll go down and show you again."

There was the sound of retreating steps and Sina, with a sigh of relief turned to the door. But the latch had jammed; at least she, in the semi-darkness, and with feminine fingers, could not make it move. Soon the police would return and find her sitting there on the stone steps like an owl.

Owl—that was the word. She had been trying to remember something about owls. From above where the policemen were talking came a sudden sharp sound—the sergeant's studded boot had slipped on the stone floor, and with the echo came a curious angry snore and Freer's startled "My God—what's that?" Sina drew back against the wall as her face was framed by the silently beating wings of the owl which had been disturbed from its perch. The soft, plump body wheeled around in the narrow space, and came to rest again high above her on a stone corbel. It perched there hissing, its white face plainly distinguishable in the daylight it did not love.

Sina was still; she had something to work out—something to remember; there had been five eggs of rough texture.

It was in sudden panic that Sina realized that the policemen were descending. She was trapped there by the door which refused to yield. There was time only to choose a policy; to flatten herself again the wall, and to hope that they would pass without seeing her; or, by declaring her presence at once, make it seem as innocent as possible. There was the girth of Sergeant Williams to consider. That decided her.

"The door seems to have stuck," Sina called out cheerfully, rattling the handle. "I cannot make the handle move at all."

The descending steps stopped. Freer broke the silence: "Who's that?"

"I came up to see where the poor boy fell from. That's Inspector Freer, isn't it?"

By this time, Freer, with Williams behind him, had arrived at the landing and he peered into her face.

"I've seen you before, haven't I?"

"Oh yes—you know me."

"It's Miss Bosworth? What are you doing up here?"

"I happened to be passing, and followed the Sergeant round."

"Interested, I suppose?"

"Well—yes."

"And have you been here all the time?"

"All what time?" Sina asked sweetly, looking up from under the barrage of a blond fringe.

Freer calculated her for a moment, and then turned to the door.

"Well, let's get out of this."

Forcing the ring without much difficulty, he held open the door for Sina to go first—a gesture more ominous than polite. Sina carefully picked her way down the worn and twisting steps. Freer's hand was almost on her arm as they walked across the church in silence.

"And now," he asked when they were outside, "what do you know about this?"

"I don't know anything about it at all—not when you ask me like that. But I can tell you one thing—the boy didn't get those eggs from the church tower."

"The boy didn't get—those eggs—from the church tower?" Freer repeated. Oh. Well, where *did* they come from? Perhaps you can tell me that?"

Sina had it on the tip of her tongue, but she hesitated. She could have told him, she nearly had told him, led on by her own stupid desire to show off a clever deduction, to create an effect. But she had remembered in time; she mustn't get the police interested in Kittsmill, not yet, certainly. She did not know whether she believed Scub's explanation or not, but she had passively at any rate promised to protect him. If Freer went up to the mill he would see Scub, the missing waiter, the man they had searched for everywhere but on the spot. She was convinced now that the clue to the solution of Pearl's death lay at Kittsmill. Scub had cleared up many mysteries but not all. She was inclined to think that he was not even aware of those that were still outstanding. However, now she had begun, she had to satisfy Freer.

"I can't say *where* the nest came from, but it didn't come from the church tower. Perhaps there are some tall trees near, or stables at the vicarage. I don't know."

"I'd like to hear your reasons." Freer was unpleasantly tenacious.

"Well—there were five eggs—weren't there?"

Freer looked to Williams, who nodded.

"And they were round and rough and white?"

"They're just here—we'll go and look."

Freer led all the way round to the other side of the tower. Nothing had been touched.

"Yes, you can see," Sina repeated, "five eggs, round and rough and white."

"Well?"

"Those are the eggs of the long-eared owl."

Freer was suspicious; if the girl was kidding him there was going to be trouble.

THE owls in the church tower," Sina continued confidently, "are barn owls. They have white faces, they snore and hiss and hoot. They lay three and never more than four eggs, and the eggs are not like these. Long-eared owls have tawny faces and they mew and bark. And barn owls don't lay their eggs as early in the year as this."

There was something incongruous in this lecture on owls coming from the fashionably-dressed lady with the sophisticated lips; a lady of bedrooms, of drawing-rooms, of the stage.

"You live at Kittsmill don't you?" Freer suddenly asked. Sina nodded. "Any owls there?"

Sina's reply came without the slightest hesitation.

"No—there are none there, or anywhere near. I'm mildly interested in birds, and I should have noticed."

"Oh, are you? Would you? Well—all right then. We can ask the boy when he recovers his senses."

"I hope I've been useful, Inspector." Sina indicated that she was about to leave. "It was just a thing I noticed, and I thought you might as well know."

Freer watched her go; he was in a state now to pursue any wild suspicion. So far he had made no progress with the case. Not even the thief had been caught, and Scotland Yard was still proceeding very cautiously over the

matters they had concerned themselves with. Catching sight of Sergeant Williams' muttony expression he snapped back to the job in hand.

"That woman knew what she was talking about. But I'd like to know why she was eavesdropping up there in the tower, and I'm going to find out."

CHAPTER XVIII

AS Sina walked off she was uncomfortably aware that she had made a mistake. She had crossed Freer's orbit twice, and if he was anything of a detective he would be thinking thoughts. She herself was thinking thoughts, thoughts that were marked with stars at the places where their trajectories crossed.

With circumspection Sina approached the stile near to which she had left Scub in hiding. A vanity mirror produced for an ostensible smudge showed her that the police hounds weren't following at any rate. Scub wasn't there. He must have returned to the house.

Mrs. Lambert was polishing the banister rail in the hall. She did keep the house polished up to the nines and Sina could admire the strength of arm which could bring a gloss to old and rather spongy oak as well as to the harder surfaces of mahogany and walnut.

"Have you heard about poor Ernie Leake?" Sina conventionally opened.

"No, Madame, and what has he done?" Mrs. Lambert did, dutifully, stop polishing, but she held her rag ready for the next stroke and indicated that these interruptions to house-wifery were not desirable.

"He's fallen from a ladder."

Mrs. Lambert pursed her lips but did not look surprised.

"I always said he would come to grief—birds' nesting and trespassing everywhere. He could never learn anything and no one had the slightest control over him."

Sina was about to pass on but she was stopped by Mrs. Lambert's inquiry if Mr. Bosworth would be in for lunch.

"Mr. Bosworth?" For a moment Sina could not think who that could be. Scub, Robert Fletcher, Rupert Fowkes, it was very confusing. She managed to answer convincingly, "Oh yes, I think so."

Then he wasn't in the house now and he hadn't come straight back.

CHAPTER XIX

AT about the same time, when the shop windows were already lighted although the heavens were still yellow, a man in a gray overcoat was crossing Piccadilly Circus. Scurrying before the buses he gained the pavement outside the Criterion Theatre with an abruptness that almost threw him into the arms of a policeman who did, indeed, put out a majestically paternal hand to steady him. The man in the gray overcoat, an apology dying away on his lips, drew back his hand from the policeman's arm as quickly as if he had touched a red hot iron. As he hurried off the policeman, automatically taking notice, had a clear view of gray eyes, blue jaw, gold spectacles and a thin and hungry expression. The constable pivotted around and began to follow at a leisurely pace, easily keeping up with the fellow in the gray overcoat whose progress down the Haymarket was impeded by the crowd who more quickly made way for the blue uniform. Half way down Haymarket, the man in the gray overcoat turned off to the left. Pausing in front of a window he saw in a mirror that the constable had taken the same turn and was leaning, disinterested in everything, apparently, against a wall. The man in the overcoat hurried down toward Trafalgar Square. He did not see the constable speaking to a sharp-faced, sandy-haired fellow in a mackintosh. When the man in the overcoat, after a moment's troubled hesitation, turned up St. Martin's Lane, the man in the mackintosh was following. When the man in the overcoat turned down one of the slummy side streets, the man in the mackintosh was ten yards behind him. But now the man in the mackintosh stepped forward briskly, drew level and passed. When he was ten yards ahead he paused, hesitated and turning abruptly almost knocked into the man he had overtaken.

"Excuse me—can you direct me to Short's Gardens?"

The man in the overcoat began to furnish the direction, but before he had finished, he was aware of the other's penetrating glance.

"Seen you before, haven't I?" The sandy-haired man with the sharp features was no longer polite. "Wheelwright, isn't it?"

At the same moment there was a familiar movement toward a waistcoat pocket and a gilt-edged warrant card flashed in the light of a street lamp.

"Well, Wheelwright, didn't know you were out. Got a job?"

Wheelwright smiled confidently.

"Oh, yes, I'm doing pretty well." He seemed to thrust forward his new looking overcoat and clean linen as a proof of it. Detective Anderson nodded non-committedly.

"Who are you working for?"

"Well, as it happens, I'm on my own."

The detective edged a little closer.

"And what's the racket?"

"Oh—general agent. Chiefly radio spare parts."

"Hm. Have you got business in this neighborhood?"

"Yes. I'm just going up to a shop in Holburn. On the off-chance."

"Carrying stuff round with you in your pockets, eh?"

The detective suddenly with a swift movement had fluttered his hands down the sides of the nearly new overcoat.

"Come on, let's have a look at it."

"A look at what?"

"Snappy now. Here, come here."

Wheelwright felt a steel grip on his arm as he was drawn into a doorway. For one moment he resisted the invitation and then with a sickly smile on his prison gray features he went like a lamb to the slaughter. A brown paper parcel was produced.

"What's in here?" The detective weighed it in his hands. Wheelwright's "wireless parts," lacked conviction. A moment later he had been obliged to open the parcel and to reveal a gold watch, a cairngorm brooch, a gold pin, two paste buckles, a bracelet, a chatelaine, a trinket box, a silver pencil and a traveling inkwell.

"Well, Wainwright, you know where you're going."

THE telephone on the desk of Inspector Freer buzzed urgently.

"That Inspector Freer? We have a man here who should interest you. Name of Wheelwright—two convictions for larceny and one for false pretences, and we are holding him now for being in possession of stolen property—all the stuff that was taken from the Manor Hotel."

Everything was rosy for Inspector Freer, and five minutes later he was stepping into a police car bound for the Tottenham Court Road Police Station. Later he would be brought to Chelmsford to be charged but Freer wasn't losing any time.

Edward Norbert Wheelwright, described as an agent, had enough sense to see that only a complete willingness to tell the truth would get him out of a mess. He daren't even pretend that he had come by these little trinkets in the course of business, from a friend of a friend. The police would be able to check up on his movements.

"A hell of a lot of good they were to me," he told Freer bitterly. "After this murder scare, no one would touch them. Wouldn't even handle them for putting in the pot. I knew I'd rumbled as soon as I ran into that blasted cop. I was going to dump the parcel into the river, but I thought I was being followed, I'd got a nasty feeling behind the ears. So I was going home. Well, there it is—you can't make it more than larceny, for the hotel door was open, and I walked in and walked out."

"And what," asked Freer coldly, "did you do with the pen-knife?"

"The pen-knife?"

"You know what I mean. There was a pen-knife with the other things. What did you do with that?"

"I didn't know there was a pen-knife. I never saw it."

"Now, look here, my man, you're in a tight corner. On the night you lifted this stuff a murder was committed, and we happen to know that you were on the very spot at approximately the same time. Now just think again. What about the pen-knife?"

Wheelwright's puzzled frown seemed genuine enough.

"All right then," Freer offered, "tell us just what you did after you'd left the hotel."

"After I left the hotel? I walked down the drive."

"Yes, go on."

"And down the road to the station. Then I caught a train to Chelmsford, and met my—my wife, and we had some food together at a restaurant. You can ask her, if you like."

"Was this before or after you were in the cow byre?"

"The cow byre—I never went near it!"

"Let's get this right. What cow byre do you think I'm talking about?"

"Why, the cow byre where—" Wheelwright suddenly stopped, and Freer concluded for him.

"The cow byre near which the girl was murdered!"

"I read about it in the papers," Wheelwright muttered shakily.

"I didn't say you didn't—but I'm still waiting. Was this before or after?"

Wheelwright sighed: "After. I didn't go direct to the station. I cut across the fields. I didn't know anything about the girl, I swear."

"What did you do when you reached the byre?"

"I opened the case to see what I'd got hold of. The case looked pretty useful, but it was only some old junk—not worth a couple of quid to me."

"Did you see any one?"

Wheelwright hesitated a long second. "Yes, one person. I thought it was someone from the hotel who had followed me, but he went on round behind the shed and into the woods."

"What made you think it was someone from the hotel?"

"He looked like a waiter, that's why."

Freer considered: Wheelwright might, or might not have read enough about the missing waiter to invite him here for a purpose. No Times had been published, and Wheelwright would hardly take the chance of saying that he had seen the missing waiter at a time when it might be proved he had not yet absconded.

Further questioning convinced Freer that Wheelwright, hiding in the byre, had seen Robert Fletcher pass the scene of the murder and continue on to Kittsmill. Of course, he might have come back after Wheelwright had left. Pressed, Wheelwright still denied knowledge of the penknife, but he suggested he might have dropped it at his first alarm, and before he had really examined his haul. Wheelwright might, of course, have been surprised by the girl, and have murdered her, but Freer did not feel that he would fit that type of crime. His story would have to be checked.

CHAPTER XX

SINA kept going over in her own mind the data of the problem; Pearl had been murdered after visiting the mill by means of the punt across the lake. An attempt had been made not only to prevent other people using the punt but to cause their death if they tried to—this might have been directly against Dr. Picard in person or he might merely have been a chance victim. The half-wit boy had met with an accident, that was suspicious to say the least of it, after having pillaged Kittsmill of owls' eggs. Each of these premises was weak in itself, but gained strength by its surely not coincidental similarity to the others. The three put together made a pattern of which the node, the omphalos, was that black stump which was now before her eyes.

There were no lighted windows to greet her as she returned from the village, having spent the afternoon with Tommy. Scub had not returned. But even the empty house would be dry and warm, there would be a fire, a drink, a cigarette and slippers for her cold toes. Sina splashed on, bending to avoid the cold arrows of rain; it was only with difficulty that she could see her path. Something wet and cold licked her cheek; Sina stifled a cry, stood long enough to identify the broad leaf of an evergreen, and fled toward the front door. The latch key rattled in the latch as she turned it with shaking fingers, but she went boldly in with an attitude of courage that gave her courage. Turning up all the lights she went through the hall and the parlor and the breakfast room and the drawing-room. No Scub. He might be upstairs or in hiding. She called his name and the sound of her own voice in the empty house alarmed her; the tension of waiting for an answer was an ordeal she forced herself to go through. She ventured once on the other name, calling it softly, for she was unsure of the sound of it, unsure if it would prove too powerful in the raising of ghosts.

"Rupert?"

Sina pulled herself together; sitting down on a stiff-backed chair in the hall, she took off her draggled hat and opened the collar of her coat. These were pegs for her stability. Taking her own case in hand she prescribed food and drink. No sooner had she done so than there arose the image of a glass of champagne—sharp, tinkling bubbles, faintly sour, such a draught as had revived her previously on anxious first-nights, after exhibitions of temperament and the exhaustion of rehearsals. There was one more bottle, she remembered in the cellar. Scub had ear-marked it for an occasion. But to go down into the cellar—that was impossible. She considered that she was being brave enough already. Hot, strong, black coffee, recklessly black, that was an even better stimulant. Food she ought to have, but food her stomach would refuse. Going toward the kitchen she patted a stomach that was empty but intolerant of the idea of supper. She put on the water to boil and lit a cigarette which she did not enjoy, for her mouth was dry and gummy. It occurred to her to find out if Scub's things were still in the house, he might have come back while she was out and packed up and gone away.

SINA mounted the stairs and entered his room. No—his razor was still on the dresser and a shirt on a chair. She turned down the coverlet to reveal his pajamas, with the red and white cadet stripes. There was a knot in the girdle, the knot of which he had complained bitterly.

With the knowledge that, at the most, she would have to wait probably only an hour before Scub was with her, Sina made herself cosy in the parlor in front of the electric fire. She was sitting thus at ease, with the black coffee and a cigarette, crouching with her stockinged toes as close as possible to the imitation flames, the shadows of which wheeled in ruby spokes across the ceiling, when from outside came the sharp sound of a step on the gravel. Sina sat up, her heart thudding. Except for the rain which still rustled through the leaves and splashed from the gable over the window, she could hear nothing. She moved across to the windows but stood for a moment before touching the curtain. It might have been a detective who had taken a false step as he patrolled outside along the grass border. It might be Scub. It was chiefly of Scub that she was thinking, and with a quick movement she opened the casement.

"Scub? Scub? Is that you?" This stage whisper was produced with a technique which would have made it audible at the back of a theater gallery, but still so low that it hardly seemed to break the everlasting background of the rain.

"Rupert?"

She listened again. Behind her, as she stood in the window, was the room with its shaded lamp and flickering fire, a room of shadows. Sina shivered. She realized that the nape of her neck was aching from the strain of keeping constantly on the alert for the sound of a door swinging open behind her or of a person stepping out of a dark corner. With the swiftness of fear rather than of courage, she scrambled into her shoes, switched off the light and ran across the hall to the front door. The reason she gave herself at the moment was the desire to find out who it was that had passed the window. She admitted afterwards that the truer reason was panic; for a moment she had felt an intense horror of that room and of that house. But as the front door closed with a snap and she stood on the gravel in the rain regarding it, the horror was replaced by the sickening realization that the door had locked itself and that her key was inside. There was a chance that a window on the ground floor would be open. Sina set out through the sheets of rain which sluiced down. The soil which she had to cross in order to reach the casements sucked at her shoes. In a moment she was wet through and her dress was clinging to her legs like an old fashioned bathing costume. She tried this window and that, and reached at last the window of the room she had just left. There was only the slightest break in the curtains, but through it she could just see the glowing fire. The window was latched and she was about to go on in despairing haste when she paused; for a moment the glow of the electric fire had been obscured. She pressed her face to the window pane in an effort to see, and as she watched, something dark moved aside and once more revealed the quivering flames. Sina wondered if eyes could start out of one's head, if hair could stand on end; she knew what it was to be rooted to the spot. It could only have been a second that she stood there but when she broke away and stumbled blindly across the grass, it seemed as if she had lived through a nightmare. But the physical discomfort of the rain and the actuality of gravel and bushes helped her to recover. In half an hour or a little longer Tommy would be arriving. She could sit on the doorstep and wait for him. But in the meantime, she would be chilled to the bone, she could not walk round and round in circles to keep warm,

and she knew just how ill she would be if she stayed out in the cold and wet any longer. Then she remembered that she had not always been beaten by a lock; the window of the mill was already broken, and from the mill she could reach the house by the connecting passage.

On the way to the yard Sina met with no worse mishap than to fall headlong in a pool of mud, and that, in the circumstances, made little difference. Bodily discomfort had cured her of fears and fancies she now told herself were imaginary. She was even no longer afraid of the room in which a shaking curtain had so bady scared her. The sinister atmosphere couldn't compete with the promise of neuralgia. She no longer cared. Her teeth chattered, with cold this time, and the electric fire could only warm one limb at a time. Her wet and muddy dress lay in a heap on the carpet but her underclothes too were wet and a sneeze rose in her nostrils and burst irresistibly. Miserably she consigned herself to a chill—one of her chills; the sort which kept her in bed for three days with a splitting headache. There was only one possible salvation; a hot bath. Once before she had taken a hot bath in an empty house—no, that was silly—a dozen times before that occasion she had taken a bath without any untoward happening. At any rate if the devil himself appeared, or ten murderers with gory hands, a bath was what she was going to have. Thank heaven for geysers.

STEAM filled the bathroom; the scent of liberally sprinkled bath salts effaced all the terrors of the night. After one brief excursion to her bedroom for pajamas and the yellow dressing-gown that was almost a mascot, she pulled off her soaked underclothes and lay in water which brought a flush to her skin. Her curls floated out behind her; she would have trouble with them tomorrow but the temptation to lie with nothing but her nose and eyes above water was irresistible. Only the water would not stay hot forever. Why had no one ever invented a bath that would remain at a constant temperature? And Sina was still puritan enough, economical enough to feel that some display of washing should accompany a bath—a little rubbing and sponging. She sat up in the bath, too lazy to begin. Her vacant mind considered the design of the taps, the crack in the wall, the sponge which she had presented to Scub for his private use. Scub—whom she had first met in the bathroom. Where was Scub this late she wondered? Her eyes traveled to the bell. She felt, as she looked at it, a compulsion to put out her hand, a compulsion to press the button. Of course, she wouldn't actually do it. Of course not. One experienced these compulsions sometimes—like wanting to throw a prayer book at the parson in church, or to use a shocking swear word during a tender scene on the stage. One surmounted the temptation. It was quite safe, for instance, to place her finger on the bell push, as she was doing now.

Heavens! It wasn't safe! Or was that the telephone again, or the front door? No—the bell must have pushed itself, or her soapy finger, insensitive, had slipped. She had rung the bell.

Sina waited, listening, in the silly fancy that perhaps once more there would be a step outside, and that a young man, immaculately dressed, would be standing there.

There was a step outside—the boards creaked.

But it was not the step of the faultlessly dressed young man, or of a man at all!

CHAPTER XXI

THE rain was justifying the metaphor and coming down in sheets. Rupert Fowkes (for he was not thinking of himself as Scub at that moment at all) was trying to find his way in the pitch darkness to the front door of Kittsmill. If he hurried in order to get in out of the rain he managed to encounter every over-hanging bough and the loaded branches of every bush along the drive. But no one could be expected to proceed cautiously inch by inch in such cold and bitter rain.

Round the corner of the house was stumbling another man, equally confused by the night and the rain. His collar was turned up and his hat was pulled down over his eyes, and at that moment he was thinking more of his trousers than of anything else. Rupert—for "Scub" had ceased to exist although he still wore the initialled cuff-links and still and forever Sina would have a special place in his existence—Rupert at last felt the rough surface of the brick wall under his outstretched fingers. Only his sense of direction told him that he was not far from the front door now, and he was moving along rapidly in the shelter of the wall when he bumped into the other explorer. Both drew back with exclamations. Suspicion followed the first gasp of surprise. There was a pause while each waited for the other to speak.

It was Tommy who broke the silence.

"Awfully sorry. I'm looking for the confounded door."

"Then we are both looking for it."

Tommy wondered if Rupert was a detective.

Rupert wondered if Tommy was a detective.

"Well, I say—let's find it." Tommy began to edge away. "It should be in this direction."

"On the contrary, you'll find it in this."

Tommy as usual, stumbling after Rupert, made the apologies and explanations.

"It's a terrible night, isn't it? I'm calling on Miss Bosworth. I'm an old friend."

Rupert didn't accept the offered opening, but he did, as they reached the door, observe sardonically:

"And I have a latch key, if that's a credential. I'm afraid I can't say I'm an *old* friend."

TOMMY was left puzzling this out while Rupert unlocked the door. They stepped in together. The hall was in darkness and Rupert was feeling his way toward the switch when from upstairs there came a sudden sharp scream. At the same moment Rupert's hand brushed across the switch and Tommy, blinking in the light, saw him dash toward the stairs. He followed at his best pace, up the stairs and round a corner and down a passage filled with the perfume of bath salts.

Tommy tripped and stumbled and as he righted himself he had a confused vision of two struggling persons at the end of the passage—the man with the latch key and a woman in an old-fashioned hat and chintz apron, and with a knife in her hand. As Tommy reached them Rupert had torn from Mrs. Lambert's hand the knife which fell with a clatter in the doorway of the bathroom. But in the confusion of the moment, in the narrow passage and in the dim light, Mrs. Lambert broke away and fled past Tommy, who did not attempt to stop her. Tommy wasn't sure whether it was the woman or the man who had had the knife, and which was friend and which foe; then, through the steam of the bathroom, he saw Sina; she was standing in the bath with her back to the wall and was still holding the wooden bath tray which she had picked up in self-defense. Rupert, turning to follow Mrs. Lambert, bumped into Tommy, and by the time they had disentangled each other, the lights had been switched off in the hall, which showed that Mrs. Lambert had already reached it. But Rupert boldly started after her in the darkness. Tommy, blinking, stepped tentatively toward the bathroom, embarrassed but anxious.

Sina had wrapped herself in a towel and stepping out of the bath she sat down shakily on the edge.

"That was lucky. Thank heaven you were in the house, Tommy."

Tommy uttered inarticulate cries and questions. Sina calmly pulled out the bath plug.

"Well, I don't suppose I shall finish my bath now. What's happened to—Rupert?"

"The chap you were with. I suppose he's chasing after Mrs. Lambert. By the by, how did you come to be with him?"

"We—we met on the doorstep. But I say—what happened? Who was that woman?"

"Mrs. Lambert? She's the housekeeper. As you observe, she was—" Sina suddenly broke off and gripped the edge of the bath. It was in a totally different voice that she continued, "Well, Tommy, here's your solution."

Tommy hadn't seen the sudden change, for he was stooping to pick up the knife.

"Saw-edged, by George I think I do understand."

The knife was a stainless steel bread knife with fine serrations of an incredible sharpness. Tommy was about to draw it across his thumb, and then he paused.

"I suppose I'd better not touch it."

"No, the police will want to have their fun."

Sina's voice sounded dead. "What's happened to Rupert? You'd better find out."

Tommy hesitated.

"No, perhaps you'd better stay here. I don't think I want to be left alone."

Sina observed through a mist of unreality a knee that was uncontrollably shaky. Tommy did at last spring to the situation. He put the yellow dressing-gown round her

shoulders and half carried her, half led her, to the bedroom.

"I'm all right, Tommy, I'm all right now," Sina bravely assured him as he helped her into a little low armchair.

"Fetch my pajamas from the bed and then go and see what's happening down below."

Tommy was going to disobey this order, both for his own sake and for Sina's, but at that moment Rupert was heard approaching down the passage.

"She's vanished somewhere," he announced, "and I'm not keen about investigating in the dark."

"All right, then go and guard the door while I put on my pajamas."

WHATEVER mad woman was raving downstairs they were safe enough together. Mrs. Lambert could be attended to later. Presently, Sina, awed by her narrow escape, but once more in control of her limbs, and buoyed up by a false show of spirits, had to say her piece.

"It was the maddest thing to do," she admitted. "But that bell simply asked to be pressed. I can't resist it—I shall have to have it taken down. Not that it's likely I shall ever indulge in a bath in this house again."

"Did you expect the magic genie to turn up a second time?" Rupert inquired, with a smile that belonged to Scub.

"Well, perhaps I did. I wanted very much to see you."

"You did?"

"Yes—but you aren't so necessary now for my solution."

"To the mystery of Kittsmill?"

"Yes. And to the murder of Pearl."

They were all silent for a moment, remembering that other woman who had not been as lucky as Sina.

"But, of course, you haven't been introduced. Major Norman, a very old friend, and—and Rupert Fowkes a——"

"A phantom?"

"No—that was Scub. A friend—and I hope he will one day be a very old one."

"Well then," Rupert was a little impatient, "what happened when you rang the bell?"

"I heard footsteps. That pretty nearly knocked me out, but before I had time to get really scared, there was Mrs. Lambert in the doorway. I didn't see the knife at first, but I guessed it would be there, I was looking out for it—curious rather than frightened. And then she must have heard you down below, and when she looked away I grabbed the bath tray and screamed and even if you hadn't turned up—well," Sina finished rather helplessly, "you see, I was forewarned, because I'd guessed about the knife."

"But did you know all this——" began Tommy.

"You knew when you left me this afternoon——" began Rupert.

Sina checked them:

"Don't let's speak all at once. Look here—what ought we to do? The police will have to be in on this, you know." She looked at Rupert. He nodded:

"That's all right. If I hadn't been such an idiot they'd have been in before, and then this wouldn't have happened."

"Believe me—the police would have been in before, if I'd had the proof I have now, but I wasn't ready, and if I'd called them in you would have been in a mess."

"Then you think that Mrs. Lambert murdered Pearl—with the bread knife?" Rupert asked squarely.

Sina did not immediately reply.

"You'd better let me tell you my idea of it all in my own way. Then we shall know where we stand— and I'm really rather proud of my deductions. And why hasn't anyone given me a cigarette?"

Rupert looked round for Sina's own box, but Tommy had a case in his pocket, and a lighter to light them with.

"Now listen. I argued like this. Three persons in this neighborhood had met with, or nearly met with, untimely deaths. Pearl Brothers, Dr. Picard, and Ernie Leake——"

"Dr. Picard—?" This was from Tommy.

Ernie Leake?" This was from Rupert.

Sina gave sufficient explanation, and then continued:

"I argued that the three murders—and I'm convinced she meant Dr. Picard to be drowned and the idiot boy to break his neck—I can't keep calling them 'attempted murders' so for convenience I'll go on saying the three murders—anyway, I argued that the three murders couldn't be quite coincidental. Yet they hadn't any obvious points of contact. The only thing that linked them together was the locality—and the outstanding feature of that locality was Kittsmill. And about Kittsmill there was a definite air of mystery. I wasn't satisfied with your explantation, Rupert, and I'm not sure yet of the true one. But let me take Pearl first. You've read in the papers the theories the police were working on—that the murderer was someone known to Pearl, that the implement had a saw edge, and that the murderer was possibly left-handed."

"Good Lord—" Rupert could not help exclaiming, "Mrs. Lambert had the knife in her left hand just now——"

"Certainly. But I'd noticed that weeks ago. One doesn't notice whether a person is left or right handed unless there is some special reason—like watching cricket or golf, for instance. Well—one day I was playing with the handle of the wringer in Mrs. Lambert's kitchen, and I noticed it was very awkwardly placed. I couldn't get right to it somehow, and then she came along and gave the handle a turn and I realized the reason. The second point was this: Pearl very likely visited the mill when Dr. Picard was staying here, and so of course she must have known Mrs. Lambert well. And the implement—well, you've seen it tonight. I admit I hadn't guessed *that*, although the times I have seen her cutting thin toast with it—and do you remember it was just exactly the morning after the murder that she didn't make any of her special toast—I had to ask her for it."

Sina stretched out her hand for another cigarette: the other had burned away unsmoked, and this one was destined to do the same.

"Quite early I had decided that Kittsmill was the center of things. Dr. Picard's adventure in the lake gave me the idea, for it was obvious that the hole was bored not only in the hopes that the punt would sink with all hands aboard—a frail hope anyway—but almost certainly to stop access from that direction, and the back way by the lake was the only one not definitely guarded by Mrs. Lambert's own cottage. And by the way—early that morning she was in her garden—because I saw her there on my way down when I was following the dog. Not many housewives are hanging about the garden at six o'clock in the morning; picking Brussels sprouts was simply an excuse. She had only just got back from the lake, I guess.

"Dr. Picard—as you told me, Rupert—had been up to the mill itself to prospect for crocuses—don't stop me now, Tommy, to explain that—Pearl, I believe, was on her way to the mill on the night she was murdered, perhaps in order to take refuge there. I deduced that from a box of Italian matches."

"Is that why you asked if Harry had been in Italy?"

"Certainly, though I had other ideas, then, too. I believe that Pearl had actually been right up to the mill, perhaps hoping the Dunkeleys would be here to take her in. Mrs. Lambert meets her, let's imagine, says that the place is empty, and chivvies her away. Then she follows Pearl in the dark, catching her up near the byre, and——"

"Yes, but *why?*" Rupert saved her the conclusion of that sentence.

"WAIT a moment. The motive will find itself when everything else is straightened out. I've got to prove yet that she *did*. Now this afternoon came this episode of the accident to the idiot boy. I thought it *was* only an accident until I noticed the eggs in the cap that I was telling you about. I knew that those eggs belonged to the mill owl and not the church owl. Ergo, the boy had been climbing up the mill. Anyway, to prove about the owls, I went up the church tower and there I overheard Inspector Freer trying to convince the stalwart Sergeant that the ladder must have been pulled away from below, that it couldn't have slipped. There had been, in fact, an attempt on the boy's life. And why again? Because he had been up the mill, and learned something he shouldn't. Of course, that didn't mean that Mrs. Lambert was necessarily guilty. I gave Rupert here a thought——"

"Me?"

"Oh yes. But you were with me at the time it must have happened. So then I had to consider the other person who had tried to prevent me from going up the mill—Mrs. Lambert. I was convinced that her tale of there being no key was a lie: there was one hanging in the kitchen that wasn't there afterwards, someone removed it and if it wasn't you, Rupert, it was she. Naturally, too, I had to ask myself if you might not have been her accomplice. The mill might have been the headquarters for almost anything. And I couldn't help thinking it strange that she didn't ever attempt to murder *you*."

"Well—she didn't have a go at you until tonight," Scub objected in a hurt voice.

"Tonight, do you realize, was the first time I had been

alone in the house since you arrived. She must have been hanging about on the look-out.

Now there isn't very much more. I wonder if you noticed, Rupert, that when the papers were headlining the murder, when the neighborhood was all agog with it, Mrs. Lambert never discussed it, hardly ever referred to it. That from the start argued something fishy, and it was fishy enough that she never questioned *your* presence, as, of course, an innocent person would have done."

"Such as you?"

"We know all about that. I was pretty sharp to observe just how Mrs. Lambert took our other comings and goings, and it was finally clinched for me when I told her about the idiot boy. As soon as I'd mentioned that he had fallen from a ladder, she volunteered a remark about birds' nesting, which I haven't mentioned. If she'd heard about it from a tradesman, why did she receive it from me as if it was news? She couldn't have it both ways."

Sina paused. Both men were rather overwhelmed, rather busy catching up.

"You've got everything now, except motive," Sina continued. "Tommy, do you see that drawer over there? There's something in it I want."

Tommy, with the air of a conjurer's assistant waited with his hand on the deep drawer of the dressing table.

"Open it, and don't turn it all upside down. Under my lingerie you'll find a matchbox—that's what I want."

Tommy produced the matchbox, and automatically shook it.

Sina reached for it, but as she was on the point of satisfying two curiosities there was the sound of a car drawing up on the gravel outside, and before they could reach the window a voice had hailed them.

CHAPTER XXII

AHEAD peered from between the shabby side curtains of the small car on the drive below.

"Who's that?" Sina called, and at the same moment recognized Dr. Picard.

"Harry!" exclaimed Rupert.

"Hullo there, hullo, can I come up?"

"Quickly, quickly," Sina called, "you may be able to supply the missing link."

Dr. Picard was presently faced with three persons who began to explain all together and in patches about a murderous housekeeper, a bath and a bread knife. Tommy he hadn't met before, and Sina he had met in circumstances that did not favor an introduction. When at last the general position had been made clear to him Sina had one eager question:

"Have you ever heard anything about a hoard of money at the top of the mill?"

"And then, as he began to answer, she stopped him with a gesture.

"Wait a moment—let me show you how clever I am first!" From the matchbox which had been in her hand all the time she produced with triumph a fragment of paper, blue and pink paper to which adhered a piece that was thin and tough.

"Has any gentleman a fiver in his pocket? No, I don't want to borrow it, not now, I merely want to compare it with this. All right, no matter, I'm pretty sure that this is a fragment of a five pound note. And it was part of the owls' nest which Ernie Leake took from the mill. Owls don't make much of a nest for themselves, but they use old nests, and gather together any rubbish lying near. But why there should be a torn up five pound note among the rubbish, I don't know—"

"Is it," Rupert inquired, a Surrealist experiment of some sort?"

"The only thing I can think of," Sina continued, "is that Mrs. Lambert had a hoard of money hidden up there. It must be pasted on the wall under the wallpaper, and if so, that gives us our motive: it was because they had found out about it that Pearl, and then Dr. Picard and the Idiot Boy were marked out. But before going to the police—" she looked at Rupert—

"You had to be sure that it wasn't my grisly secret? No, ill-spent though my youth may have been, the mill was not the repository of my ill-gotten gains."

"But I *can* explain," Dr. Picard was shaking tobacco shreds into the palm of his hand with maddening precision.

"Well, then, hurry up!" Sina drummed impatiently with her heels. "What do you know about it?"

"When I was living here, Pearl, who happened to be over from Beechwood, wanted to go up to the top of the mill, to see the view or to explore or just because one does go to the top of the windmills."

"Yes, yes."

"But we found we couldn't get all the way up because the trap door was locked."

"I found letters of yours in the store room," Sina put in."

"Oh, yes, I used that room often. Anyway, when we found the trap door locked I didn't bother any more. Later Pip—Pearl, told me that while I was busy she had been more persistent. She had been hanging around the place when she heard someone moving about in the top story. Up she went, and discovered Mrs. Lambert with a roll of wallpaper in one hand and a bowl of paste in the other."

"Yes, yes. We know—go on."

"That crazy old woman didn't see Pearl at first, and Pearl didn't move for a moment—"

"—while Mrs. Lambert pasted five pound notes on to the wall," chanted Sina jubilantly.

"Well, if you knew that."

"Please go on, we wanted to hear it from you. She was pasting notes on the wall—?"

"Yes, dozens of them, all sorts, and then pasting a sheet of wallpaper on top. Pearl made some sort of an exclamation and Mrs. Lambert spun round looking like death. Naturally she didn't like her secret hiding place being discovered: Pearl took it as a bit of a joke, but the old girl was funny about it, made Pearl promise never to tell anyone.

"But she told you?"

"Naturally; 'anyone' to a woman, means only not to tell rank strangers. Pearl told me not to tell anyone else, and I never did. Mrs. Lambert used to look at me in a searching sort of way, and I dare say she was wondering if I knew. I thought merely she was afraid of being laughed at. When you come to think of it, those notes were a good deal safer there than in anything else except a safe deposit. Even if a burglar did break in, he couldn't get them off without hot water and a sponge. And he wouldn't have those with him unless he knew about it before.'"

"But now you know," Sina gravely insisted, "why Mrs. Lambert murdered Pearl and why you were nearly drowned. You just called her 'that crazy old woman'—it's funny, but I've never thought of her as crazy—not until I began to work things out."

"Oh, I always did. Definitely a screw loose. She had a—what do you call it—a fixed idea, a persecution complex."

"I suppose you would notice, being a doctor."

"I didn't realize she was really batty. She must have thought everyone who came to the mill was after her money—and particularly she must have been afraid of Pearl who knew all about it."

"It looks clear to me," Sina said, "that Pearl set out from Beechwood determined never to go back there. She had neglected in the anger of the moment to take any money with her, and so after walking about for a bit she set out across the fields toward the mill. She knew about the punt, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, we used to bathe from it."

"SO she came that way, it would still be light then, and tried to get in. I may have been out or busy, and when she didn't get an answer, and her temper having died down by this time, she decided to return to Beechwood. All the time Mrs. Lambert has been watching her from the cottage—I expect she keeps an eye on anyone who comes near the mill. Mrs. Lambert follows her, thinking with this fixed idea of hers that Pearl has been after the money. And she takes with her the bread knife—the nearest thing at hand. It is practically dark by this time and quite dark when she catches up with Pearl. Pearl hears someone behind her, she turns and sees Mrs. Lambert and stops, puzzled, thinking she must have brought some message. And then, don't you see," Sina hastened on, "she saw *you*, Dr. Picard, hanging about the mill—"

"I actually went up part of the way early one morning to see how my flowers were blooming."

"Exactly; and she determined to put a stop to that. And then, really crazy by this time, she tries to break the neck of the idiot boy who was climbing round the place after owls' eggs, and then at last, I was alone in the house."

"All the same," Rupert objected, "granted the fixed idea, do you think she is a miser? I mean, she wears quite

reasonable clothes and she isn't like those old women who lock themselves up in houses and leave the money for the milk on the doorstep."

"Quite reasonable clothes, yes, they were once fairly expensive. But once—that's the point. She doesn't wear a thing less than seven years old. They were of good quality to start with and she has taken care of them."

"Seven years old—that gives me an idea." Dr. Picard started to walk up and down. "Seven years ago her husband died—Susan told me. Old Lambert used to own the mill and Mrs. Lambert lived here then. They were quite well-to-do, he was in the corn trade and they had horses and servants and so forth. It's quite a common case for women, when their husbands die, to go queer in the way I can see now Mrs. Lambert must have done. They get scared, afraid of spending any money, frightened of banks, and lawyers and afraid of being robbed, even if they don't always show it on the surface. That's why, though she could well afford to live on here, she retired to the little cottage—"

"Packing it out with furniture and china from this house?" supplied Sina.

"And when Mrs. Dunkeley offered to buy the place she couldn't resist the temptation of getting some solid money into her hands, even though all her savings were pasted up under the wallpaper in the mill."

"Suppose the Dunkeleys had wanted to pull it down or to alter it?" Rupert queried.

"Well, suppose? She was here all the time—in a couple of nights she could have stripped the walls. For all we know, she was intending to do that in any case as soon as she had the place to herself. Only first I was here and then the Dunkeleys themselves again and then you," he looked at Sina, "so she didn't have the opportunity."

"But Pearl told you she was pasting up more?" Rupert wasn't yet satisfied.

"So she did. Well then, she must have thought it was still quite safe. That rather explains why, when she sold the place, she went even further—both to get a little extra money and to keep an eye on her treasures—offering to act as caretaker."

"Did she do that?" Sina inquired.

"So Susan told me. Susan always thought Mrs. Lambert was a bit touched in the head."

"If only," Sina sighed, "you and I could have got together earlier. Your knowledge added to mine—it would have saved a lot of trouble. It was the *motive* that was holding me back."

"It's a frail motive." Rupert was still being difficult.

"Motives *are* frail, often. You must admit, that *now* you can see how it all fits her character—her keeping herself to herself, her scrupulous care over the housekeeping bills—for me as well as for herself, I grant her that—and the very fact that she always wore her hat."

"What has that got to do with it?" Rupert wanted to know.

"IT was just a symbol that she wasn't an ordinary servant. Once she had been mistress of the mill, and she wouldn't answer bells. Only one. And then again, she didn't use her good china, but ate off sixpenny plates, and she even retrieved a sugar bag from the waste basket where I'd thrown it simply because there were a few grains of sugar left in it. And as regards the strength she would need—well, if you had seen her polishing the banisters, you wouldn't doubt that."

"Well anyway," Rupert rose nervously to his feet, "what are we going to do now?"

"It was a problem they had rather forgotten in the exhilaration of the mental jig-saw.

"Tell the police, I suppose," Tommy was already moving toward the door.

"Half a moment," Sina checked him, "*what* do we tell them? It's the hell of a story."

"Well, there's one definite fact—you were nearly murdered tonight," Rupert bluntly stated, "that's enough for them to go on."

Sina nodded:

"All right. Two of you had better go to the telephone, and one of you—you, Tommy—stay and take care of me. Or shall we all four go in a body?"

"Should we just check up on this hoard of notes first?" Rupert suggested. "None of us has actually *seen* that."

Sina shivered.

"*No*, please. You go to the telephone—you Rupert and Dr. Picard."

Sina was facing them as she spoke and the shiver which made her hug her own shoulders wasn't only caused by imagination—there was a cold draught of air and the eyes of the two men were fixed on the door. Sina spun round.

"Wait a moment, please." Inspector Freer and the constable stood in the doorway.

"We were just—" began Sina, but Freer was not looking at her.

"I want to speak to this gentleman." Freer and the constable had closed down upon Rupert; another constable appeared on guard in the doorway. "Robert Fletcher, I must warn you—"

"Wait a moment!" Sina dashed forward. "I know what you're going to do, but listen first."

"Keep back there, please," Freer snapped.

The constable made a motion toward her.

"You won't do any good by interfering."

"But stop, you *must* listen—"

"Madame, you are making it very difficult for me—"

"I know I am. I mean to. You are making a mistake."

"How do you know what I am going to do? What am I going to do?"

"You are going to arrest Mr. Fowkes—"

"Fowkes?"

"That is my name." Rupert spoke for the first time.

Freer hesitated, and Dr. Picard seized the opportunity:

"Mr. Fowkes can explain everything, Inspector. You'll make a very big mistake if you execute that warrant before you have heard what he—what we all—have to say. You are quite right, Mr. Fowkes is the man you know as Robert Fletcher, but the most serious charge you can bring against him is breach of contract, if the Manor Hotel cares to prosecute, and that is a civil offense. He is perfectly willing to answer any questions—later on. But just now, Inspector, there is something much more important to discuss. At the moment you arrived, we were on the point of sending for you."

INSPECTOR Freer listened to a selected account with suspicion and with chagrin. He was left with nothing to do at the end but to fiddle with his notebook—he had soon given up all attempt to write in it. His look traveled from one to the other of the four persons who were all expectant of his approval.

"And where," he asked, "is this woman now?"

Sina looked toward Rupert. He had saved her life, but his image had become solid and of every day proportions. He still had black hair, white teeth, and graceful limbs, but he was no longer mysterious, he was, as he answered the policeman, merely an ordinary efficient young man. And anyway, she was exhausted. The game had long since come to an end. Joke over.

Where Mrs. Lambert might be was still being argued when Sina came out of her reverie.

"I should think," Sina roused herself to say wearily, "she is up the mill. That's where I should look for her."

Lights were burning all over the house and there were policemen with silver buttons and spiked helmets. Sina was able to face with the others the last determined invasion of Kittsmill. Freer, doubtful of the propriety of their accompanying him, was however not anxious to let them out of his sight, and he had no officer to spare.

Sina felt a supporting pressure on her waist. It was Tommy. She looked up with a smile, accepting his help. He alone didn't seem to feel that this was a triumphant procession. It was left to the army officer with the limited intelligence to be sensitive enough to understand.

The electric torches of the police cut lanes into the dark shadows. They waited while a cautious examination of the old lumber on the ground floor was carried out, and then they went up to the room in which Sina had found the invoice for the bulbs. Sina wondered if the police would notice it—it was still there, untouched. They mounted again. The lanterns flashed round. There was no one here.

"There's one more story, I suppose?"

Freer approached the ladder. One more story: the last. What would they find? A raving woman, ready to defend her fantastic treasure to the death, or—nothing. Not a sound came from above. Even the rats and the owls had decided to be still at this moment.

The torch played on the fastened padlock, on the significant bolt heads. But these did not present any difficulty to Freer: with main force he broke off the iron strap at the point where it was weakened by the hinge. He went up.

Freer's sharp command came too late: they had already joined him in that top room where the choice presented itself of examining first the torn wall paper where the rats had eaten it away, revealing full proof of their conjectures,

Murder in the Garden

or the still body of the woman, which lay as if protectingly along under the wall which was stained with damp and with her blood.

Freer stooped suddenly.

"The padlock key." He stood looking at it with—was it? —disappointment. Anyhow, with displeasure. He turned the body over. There was a deep gash in the neck.

Sina felt an old packing case behind her knees. She sat down. The world advanced and receded inside her swimming head; her thighs shivered. She was aware that Freer had produced a lens and was examining the wound: of his verdict "—an incision of the same type—" and of Williams' answer—"the saw edge!" And then suddenly she was perfectly awake, perfectly alert: *the saw-edged bread knife was now in the possession of the police—Mrs. Lambert had left it behind in her flight.* At the same moment Freer jumped at the same discrepancy:

"But where's the weapon?"

There was no weapon: search in that empty room did not take long: cobwebs proved that the window had not been opened. It was no good Freer staring at them, none of them had hidden it.

"No weapon—then it can't be suicide, it must be murder—" began Rupert and stopped suddenly.

"Yes, but the key—the padlock," objected Dr. Picard. "Did the murderer escape through a crack in the floor?"

Freer was already bending over the nuts which fixed the padlock bolts on this side of the boards.

"The person who killed Mrs. Lambert left by the trap door," argued Freer inexorably, "and fixed the bolts afterwards."

"But that's impossible," cried Tommy.

"These nuts," Freer continued, "are simple screw nuts, fitting easily on the thread of the bolts, which you will notice have been greased. You will see too that they are countersunk slightly into the floorboards, so that if they were placed in their depressions the bolts could be inserted from below and screwed upwards until they were finger-tight. It would only take five minutes to prepare them. The only further precaution necessary would be to prevent the nuts from riding upwards out of their sockets while the bolts were screwed in. That difficulty was foreseen, and the edge of a heavy packing case—the one on which Miss Bosworth is sitting now—"

They all looked at her, and at it, as Sina stood up.

"—is sitting now," Freer repeated, "was placed over the nuts, to hold them in place. And that packing case was moved away by Dr. Picard as soon as he entered this place. Yes, you sir. And I further have to tell you that I already have expert opinion that wounds similar to these—the wounds that caused the death of Pearl Brothers—were made by a surgical saw, and—"

But whatever vindictive peroration was to salve Freer's inferiority complex was cut short by the sudden crash as Dr. Picard knocked up the Sergeant's hand, and the electric bull's-eye fell to the floor. Before Freer could reach him he had gained the ladder which led to the outside gallery of the cupola and gave access to the driving vane. There was a burst of cold air and a sprinkle of rain as the little curved door above them was torn open.

* * * * *

Freer raised the broken body from the cobblestones of the yard. In the breast pocket was a leather roll, containing among other instruments a slender knife with an edge of fine serrations.

There was the weapon: he had also the opportunity—that alibi of a serious case had never been queried. He had motive, supposing he had met Pearl that night, and she had refused to give up the divorce proceedings that would ruin him professionally. He had been coming from that case to meet Scub—the instruments in his pocket; he had met Pearl; she had proved sulky and obdurate; he saw his career broken because he had mixed with some of Pearl's friends. That he was quick tempered was known, that coloring and the light blue eyes bore it out. What greater motive, then, for removing all trace of the crocuses. And who knew what angry feelings he had had for Pearl, who had after all jilted him, even if he had solaced himself with the heavy footed Susan. And as for Mrs. Lambert—well, he had had plenty of time to follow her to the mill and then to see in the padlock a way of faking a suicide (if only he had left a knife behind) before he appeared below the window in his car, anxious no doubt, seeing lights and hearing low voices, to find out how much they had discovered. Had he that night been the lurking figure that had scared Sina—Sina who was too inquisitive. Had Mrs. Lambert seen him with the bared knife, and had to pay for the knowledge, or had she witnessed the murder of Pearl? That she had held her tongue was easily explained: if she had given evidence her secret might have been made public. For *that* part of Mrs. Lambert's activities still stood: the childish attempt to prevent access by the punt, the childish pulling away of the ladder—those weak and spiteful actions in keeping with her make-up and motivation, and not at all likely, even if the times hadn't been wrong, to have lain at the door of Dr. Picard.

One more thing remained: on what errand had Mrs. Lambert appeared at the bathroom door, knife in hand, hat on head? It was Freer who remembered the apron.

"The bread-knife and the apron—she must have been cutting up something in her cottage when she left suddenly, in a hurry, with the knife still in her hand, to come up to the mill. Then she heard the bell ringing—she was coming to see what was the matter, or to warn you, when Mr. Fowkes and company pounced on her. Not unnaturally, she ran to guard her property from the invaders, perhaps. But what sent her out in the first place?

A party determined to be in at the death—well, they had been in at two—accompanied the policemen to Mrs. Lambert's cottage. The gaslight blazed: the back door stood wide open: on the table stood a loaf, butter, a cup containing cocoa powder and sugar: a kettle boiled away on the fire. Mrs. Lambert's supper.

As they were standing there wondering what Mrs. Lambert had seen to make her run out, there came from the winged armchair by the fire a little sigh.

"What's that? Who's there?"

Freer turned on his heel.

A little old lady blinked round the protecting wing.

"Mother!" Rupert ran to her.

"Excuse me," she blinked at them. "What is this—a cup final or a talkie film?"

"How did you get here?" Rupert exclaimed.

"By taxi," she replied promptly.

"He means," Sina supplied, "how did you know *he* would be here. Well, I'm the culprit. I told her, this afternoon, on the telephone. And I found her, I assure you, all ready for a reconciliation with her stubborn son."

"You told her?"

"Yes, Rupert, all about you. I thought you had been an idiot for long enough, and so did she."

"I must have fallen asleep," Mrs. Fowkes explained. "The taxi man left me at the gate, and I saw a light in this cottage, and I asked the good woman if I could wait here till the rain stopped."

"And she left suddenly?" Rupert asked.

"Dear me, she *did*. A car drew up on the other side of the road, and she bolted out suddenly without a word of explanation. Twenty minutes later the man who had got out of the car—well, I mean it was the same footsteps —came back, to fetch the car, I suppose, for it was driven up to the house. I did think of asking for a lift, but I thought of it too late."

"And that gentleman *is* your son?"

"Certainly—I hope he hasn't been giving you trouble?"

BUT Inspector Freer was too engrossed wondering why Pearl, mortally wounded, had taken the roundabout way to the summer-house the night of her murder, instead of trying to reach help at her own house.

It was Sergeant Williams who finally suggested that maybe Pearl didn't want help after all; that in her last struggles, she suddenly realized that this was the one way out of her messed-up life.

Inspector Freer wasn't satisfied with this explanation, but as the only other person who really knew what had happened was dead, he let the matter rest.

Tommy was at Sina's side as she watched the departure of Rupert and his mother. A sudden trick of the light brought from Sina an involuntary exclamation.

"There—don't you think he's just like Roland?"

There was a small silence before Tommy's agreement.

"Yes, I can see it. I can quite—understand."

"What can you quite understand?" demanded Sina.

"Well—er—that you are in love with him."

Sina placed her hand on Tommy's arm:

"I'm giving up lovers," she whispered.

Tommy was scared at her intensity.

"Because," Sina continued, "I am going to be a mother!"

"A mother?"

"Yes, a mother to you, Tommy. I think you need one. But I'm certain I'm much too tired to discuss it tonight. Kiss me tomorrow."

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