DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

AUG. 13
10¢
Formerly Flynn's

Trooper Bradley
Novelette
by Robert H. Rohde

KONG GAI *Novelette*
by Sidney Herschel Small

A Fluffy McGoff *Story*

I'll Start You in Business

On My New 'CHAIN STORE' Plan of Personal Service to the Home

No Investment Required—I put up the Capital and Give You Credit

UP TO $15 A DAY AS OWNER-MANAGER OF

Home 'CHAIN STORE' Service

How would you like to be owner of a Chain Store right in your town and get *all the profits for yourself?*

IF you want to get established as manager of a fine, big-pay business of your own, just let me know. If you are honest and a person I can trust I'll put up the necessary capital and give you liberal credit. *You don't have to invest any of your money.*

This is not like any plan you've ever heard of before. It is a bona fide opportunity to make up to $15 a day in a business of your own that is just like running two chain stores—yet you may work either full time or spare time. Right now I need about 150 more honest, ambitious men and women that I can trust in these responsible positions. I have good openings in every locality for those who have the necessary qualifications.

Big Money Waiting

Men and women who have accepted my offer are called "lucky" because they make so much money. But there's no luck about it. I show you how and furnish everything you need to start. *I don't want you to invest your money.* Sol Korenblit, New York, has made $110 a week taking care of the business I helped him establish. W. A. Marek, 21-year-old Connecticut boy, has often cleared over $100 a week. Mrs. Frank Young, Minnesota, is a widow with 2 children. She says, "I have made as high as $10 in two hours and up to $20 in one day." These are just a few. Others are doing as well or better. This shows the wonderful possibilities.

30 Calls—$15 For You!

You may wonder at making such big money as this even in the face of hard times. But my plan of operation, the Home Service "Chain Store" System, is proving a sensation. Housewives are "wild" about it, because it's just like bringing two "chain stores" right into the home. Saves time, trouble and money. You simply call on regular customers once every two weeks on appointment, set up my "Chain Drug Store" and my "Chain Grocery Store", write down the order, handle the money and deliver the goods. You get a big part of every dollar we take in as your pay. And with an established Home Chain System, requiring only 30 calls a day, your pay can easily be $15 a day, regular and steady.

No Capital—No Experience Needed

I don't want your money. All I want is a chance to lay the facts before you so you can decide for yourself. If you want a sure, steady chance to make $15 a day—with an old, reliable, million-dollar manufacturing company—then mail the coupon and see how easy it is to start on my Home "Chain Store" System. You invest no money in stock of goods. Earnings start at once. Don't miss this chance. It doesn't cost a penny to investigate. You can't lose by mailing the coupon, so do it today—right away—before some neighbor gets in ahead of you!

ALBERT MILLS, President,
204 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

Albert Mills, President,
204 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me about the business opportunity now open in my town. I understand no store experience is required to get established and that I don't have to invest any money.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

(State whether Mr., Mrs. or Miss. Write plainly.)

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME LXIX — *Saturday, August 13, 1932* — NUMBER 5

NOVELETTES AND SHORT STORIES

SERIAL

TRUE STORIES

FEATURES AND FACTS

This Magazine is on sale every Tuesday throughout the United States and Canada

THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY - 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N. Y.,

C. T. DIXON, President THEODORE PROEHL, Treasurer RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE
3, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.,
111 Rue Réaumur

Published weekly and copyright, 1932, by The Red Star News Company. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico, and Cuba; in Canada, $7.00; $7.00 to other Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order, or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Entered as Second Class Matter September 4, 1924, at the post office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Title Registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyright in Great Britain.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

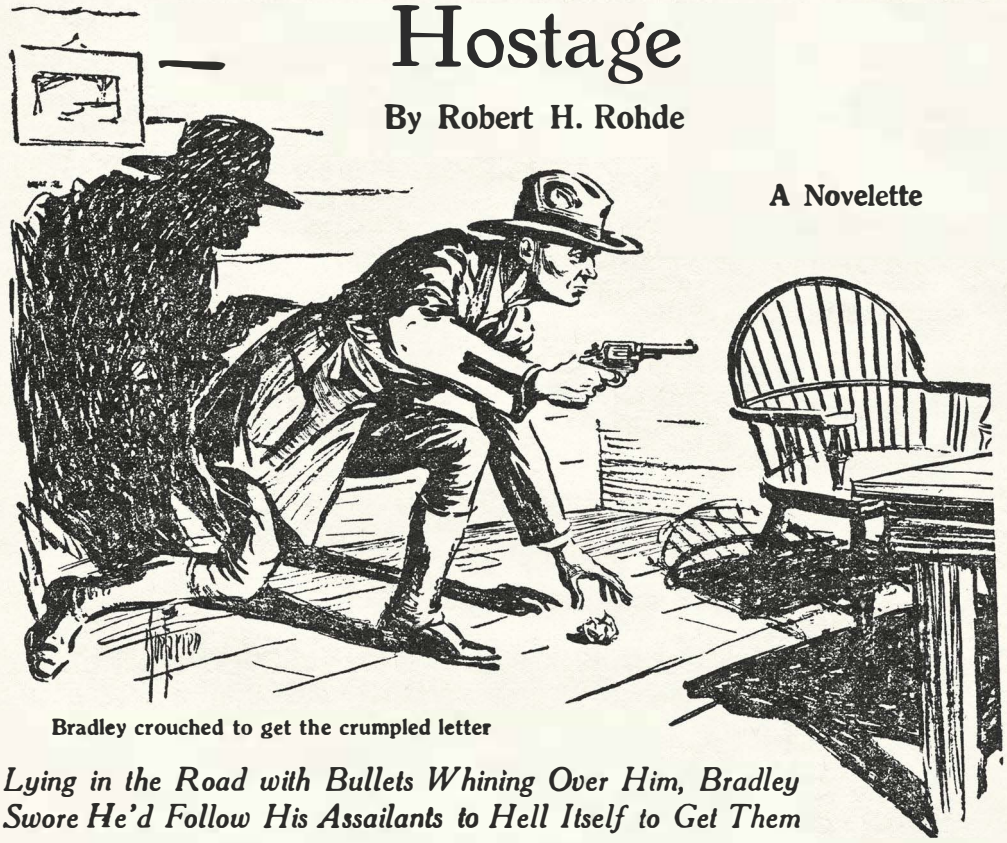
"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME LXIX | SATURDAY, AUGUST 13, 1932 | NUMBER 5

Hostage

By Robert H. Rohde

A Novelette



Bradley crouched to get the crumpled letter

Lying in the Road with Bullets Whining Over Him, Bradley Swore He'd Follow His Assailants to Hell Itself to Get Them

CHAPTER I

Sinister Cargo

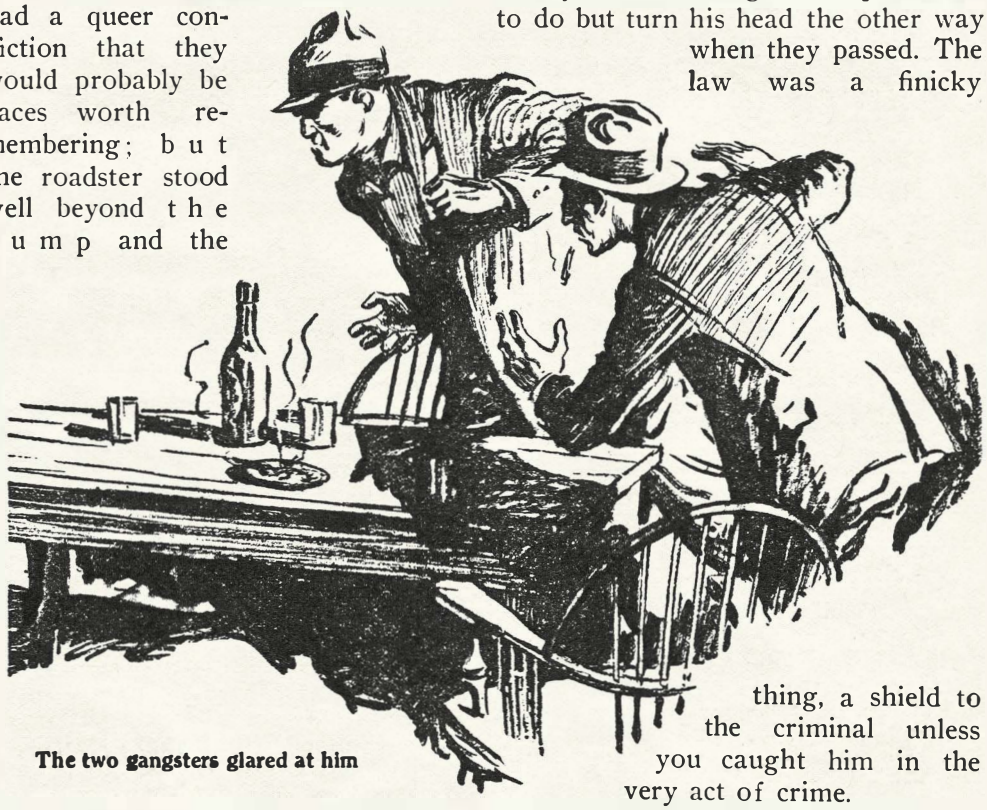
THERE were three men in the low-slung red roadster with the New York license plates, grim-mouthed men who took the state trooper's measure with hard eyes as his motorcycle came coughing into Sam Witherspoon's filling station below Barlows with hardly a gill of gas left in the tank.

Old Sam had been afraid of them. That showed in his face when the light over the pump fell upon the gray uniform behind him. Relief was in his voice, too. He called over his shoulder:

"'Lo, Bradley. Be with you in a minute."

Trooper Bradley, one foot on the ground, the other long putteed leg dangling over the saddle, was returning the stares from the roadster with interest. From his angle of vision, the light wasn't so good. It didn't give him as clear a look at the faces of the three in the New York car as he could have wished.

Even then he had a queer conviction that they would probably be faces worth remembering; but the roadster stood well beyond the pump and the passengers were outside the shine of the single bulb burning above it. When they had tossed a crumpled bill to Sam Witherspoon and pulled away, they left with Bradley only an impression of hard-bitten mouths, rocky jaws and alert, metallic eyes glinting out of the shadows of low-drawn hat brims.



The two gangsters glared at him

He shook his head after them. They had looked like thugs on quick appraisal, and probably were. The roads were full of their kind nowadays, particularly up in these border counties where so many gangsters from the big towns had bought up great tracts of wild acreage and established camps. Crooks, racketeers, city scum, rolling around in high-priced cars that not one honest man in a thousand could afford to buy or run, lording it with their pockets stuffed with blood-stained money—and nothing for a policeman to do but turn his head the other way when they passed. The law was a finicky thing, a shield to the criminal unless you caught him in the very act of crime.

Up by the pump, Witherspoon was chuckling.

"Diggety-dog! Well, if *them's* hijackers, I could sure stand more of their kind o' trade." He came to Bradley smoothing and patting a grimy green bill. "Five simoleons for eleven gallons of the regular is what they left—and dodburn me if I wasn't scared that they aimed to stick me up."

Five dollars was more than twice the price of eleven gallons of gas. Bradley, wondering whether the tip would have been so lavish if the hard-boiled New Yorkers hadn't found a sudden cause for haste in his appearance, put the question into words.

"Dunno about that," Witherspoon said, still a little green around the gills. "But I'll tell you the truth, trooper, they had my hair standing straight on end until you buzzed along. Maybe I shouldn't be saying it after they treated me so good, but—well, they're totin' a piece of freight that's fit to give any peaceable citizen the jim-jams."

Bradley, bent over the cap of his gas tank, looked up quickly. "Yes? What was it, Sam?"

WITHERSPOON shifted his cud, cocked an apprehensive eye toward the diminishing red dot that was the roadster's tail light, and started a shrug that ended in a shudder.

"Now, that's something, trooper," he said, "that I wouldn't want to answer straight out. Matter o' fact, I couldn't, not bein' familiar with that kind of hardware. But it wasn't no sewing machine and it wasn't no shotgun, either."

Bradley had straightened. "You mean—a machine gun?"

"Just on guesswork, yes," Witherspoon nodded. "It was on the floor in back of the car, covered with a robe. In the rumble. The fellow sittin' there happened to kick the robe just while I was leading the gas-hose back to the tank and I couldn't help but see that mean-looking snout poking out from under it. The fellow in the rumble seat give me just about the dirtiest look I ever had out of human eyes. One of the men in the front turned around and cussed him hot and heavy, and then yelled at me to mind my own damn business and fill that tank fast."

Bradley looked eastward up the road, caught a last glimpse of the tail light as it whipped around a curve and judged that the roadster must be traveling now with the throttle wide open.

"Mine's the same order, Sam," he snapped. "Fill her fast!" A moment after that, tank brimming and capped and engine roaring, he shot a glance at his wrist-watch. "Exactly quarter to nine, Sam," he said and held the dial to the light for verification. "Be sure to remember; maybe I'll have to call you as a witness."

That was over Sam Witherspoon's head, a mystery that he still was considering open-mouthed when Bradley had melted noisily and rapidly into the night, bound east.

On roads as good as this one, seventy miles an hour was what Trooper Bradley considered just about a good cruising speed. Now, with a moving objective ahead of him as fleet as that big-engined roadster, he bore on the gas until the needle of his speedometer was flickering past "eighty."

Five miles east of Sam Witherspoon's filling station, siren shrieking a demand for right of way, he crossed Canada Pike at a dizzy speed that turned the broad ribbon of cement into a mere chalk mark beneath his streaming eyes. Beyond the Pike, he had ripped through seven more miles of crisp October night before his spotlight, whitening a New York license plate ahead, vindicated his judgment in keeping on the straightaway.

He was well up into the hill country then, in the most desolate part of his wide-flung and sparsely settled bailiwick. The nearest town, Holtsville, was more than twenty miles away. Within a range of half a dozen miles there

wasn't even so much as an occupied dwelling, nothing but deserted farmhouses, forlorn and falling into decay.

The single spotlight on their trail evidently had told its story to the men in the roadster. It had been their strategy not to make a race of it, but to slacken speed. Bradley himself slowed down and a grin came to his lips when he had "clocked" them for a quarter mile. They were jogging along at thirty-five miles an hour now, law-abiding citizens so far as speed regulations were concerned.

That was all right as far as it went, but Bradley had a trump to play—an ace that, if not up his sleeve, was at least in plain sight on his wrist.

He eased his holster forward, loosened the heavy service pistol in it and sped to overtake the suspected car.

CHAPTER II

Machine-Gunned

NOTHING was left of Bradley's smile when he had swung alongside the roadster. His shouted, "Pull over!" was strictly and briskly official.

Armaments and odds regardless, the New Yorkers were not hunting trouble just then. The driver obediently stepped on his brake and threw out his clutch. As he looked inquiringly at the trooper, the glimmer of the dashlight showed an expression of exaggeratedly innocent surprise on his face.

"What's wrong, officer?" he wanted to know.

"Thirty-five an hour is legal up here, ain't it?" asked the flat-nosed man beside him, his voice dulcet.

"That's as high as we've been hittin' it, trooper," chimed in the passenger in the rumble seat. "Thirty-five. Never an inch more. We don't know these roads so good, anyway—see?"

They hadn't recognized Bradley in the darkness; that was plain enough to him.

"Then my speedometer must be wrong," he said mildly. "Closer to sixty-five is how *I* clock it. Come on, Barney Oldfield. Let's see the license!"

That was routine, as familiar to the men in the roadster as to Bradley. He thought it brought an easing of the tension which he had sensed beneath their outward show of docility. So much the better. If he could persuade them to follow him along to Holtsville without fireworks by letting them believe they were in for nothing worse than a brief delay and a fine for speeding, well and good.

With Law on the short end of a three to one bet, a lonely spot like that was certainly no place to start searching for the machine-gun which old Sam Witherspoon might or might not have seen. Bradley, for more reasons than one willing to let well enough alone, put an iron clamp on his impulse to reach into the rumble and jerk out the robe. He reached instead, and reached casually, for the license card extended over the wheel.

The driver had fished out a New York motor vehicle registration form along with the card. Bradley held them in the beam of the near headlight and made a show of comparing names and registration numbers. He wasn't looking for information; registration and driving license blanks were easily come by, and any one could fill them in. It was only in further effort to lull suspicion that he questioned a discrepancy.

"You don't own the car?" he asked the man at the wheel.

"No. It belongs to my cousin. He

gave me the loan of it for a little vacation trip to Canada. And listen—he's particular as hell, because it ain't hardly broke in yet. I wouldn't drive it faster than thirty-five on a bet."

Bradley shook his head. "You're on the wrong road for Canada," he said. "Should have turned right, miles back. I don't wonder you missed Canada Pike, passing it at better than sixty."

The driver showed a flash of dental gold and a mirthless and confident grin. "Sure it was sixty, trooper?"

"Sure enough to stop you."

"That's a joke. You wasn't behind us then—not near enough to clock us. Suppose we *had* been stepping on it; wouldn't we of been watching for a motorcycle light?"

"Probably." Bradley admitted. "But I'm making this particular speeding case on a point of elapsed time. You stopped for gas a while ago, didn't you? Well, it was exactly seventeen minutes to nine by my watch when you pulled away from the filling station. That's allowing you two minutes before I left. When I came up with you the watch said three minutes to nine—and right on this spot where you're standing, you're fourteen and six-tenths miles from the pump. Get it? I'll lend you a pencil if you can't figure it out in your head."

THE driver leaned over the side of the car, peering. "Hell's bells!" he grunted. "You're the cop we seen up the line!"

"Same one," Bradley corroborated. "Just your hard luck, that's all, that I happened to be coming this way, coming fast. It's been a dull day. You're my first collar. Holtsville is right ahead on this road, so we'll go along together and tell it to the judge."

In the roadster there had been a swift exchange of glances. The man in the rumble seat started to stoop, and straightened again when he saw the trooper's hand at his holster and a pair of speculative steady eyes fixed upon him. The passenger beside the driver had caught the movement, and automatically had ducked forward. Bradley didn't miss that, either. He was playing with dynamite that might be exploding in his face any instant.

The byplay had been lost on the driver. He grinned again and shrugged.

"Oh, what t'hell!" he exclaimed. "Maybe I did let her out on a couple of wide-open stretches. But have a heart, trooper. We're past our turn already; you just said so. Why can't we hold court right here, friendly, and—"

"Nothing doing, brother!" Bradley cut in curtly. "I'm not the kind of cop who tries his own cases on the road."

"I know. Sure. I can see *you're* on the level, officer." The driver's voice was soothing as he fished out a wallet. "But you can tell just about what the fine would be. We'll leave it with you, hey? Here's a ten spot. That cover it?"

"No go," said Bradley. "It could cost me my job. How do I know who you people are? You might be working under cover for the state, yourselves. I'm playing safe. Holtsville it is."

He had made up his mind then that Holtsville was as far as the roadster would get that night. It was the biggest town of his territory, a county seat with a modern jail—half a dozen armed sheriff's deputies there to lend a hand if it came to a gunplay when he started to search that rumble.

Direct action here and now would have suited him better, personally. He still itched to drag out the robe and bring the real issue into the open. But lately there had been state-wide agitation in the press, hard criticism by editors blind to conditions, because troopers had been allegedly too quick on the trigger. In the pocket of his tunic at that moment was a bulletin from State Police Headquarters cautioning all troopers to use their pistols only as a last resort.

The flat-nosed man had reached an arm behind the driver's shoulder and a yellowish ball fell from his fingers to the running board. It rolled off and landed at Bradley's feet.

"I think you dropped something, trooper," the New Yorker said, pointing. "Looks like a hundred dollar bill from here. You ought to be careful of money like that."

The roadster, in gear, had edged forward a foot or two. The yellow ball lay where it caught enough of the beam of the motorcycle headlight to show Bradley what it was—a wadded bill, with a dazzling "100" in the corner.

"Not mine," he said, surer than ever that he had made a prize catch. "What's more, I don't want any part of it." He looked hard at the flat-nosed man. "*You* dropped it, didn't you?" That method of offering backsheesh was a standard trick among rum-runners; it had been tried on Bradley before.

A crooked smile answered his frown. "Me? Oh, well—maybe I did. Anyway, if you don't want it, I'll take it."

BRADLEY bent over to pick up and throw back the scorned bribe and kept on bending when his fingers had touched it. A consultation of eyes, this one unnoticed by him, had preceded the dropping of the hundred dollar note. The man in the rumble seat, directly over him as he stooped, had whipped a gun out of a shoulder belt under his coat and brought it crashing down on his head.

The roadster took wing as Bradley pitched forward, his right hand automatically closing on the grip of his pistol and then going limp there. Over the retreating rear end came sputtering flashes of red that lengthened out into a yard-long finger of flame. A staccato rattle sounded raucously over the smooth thrum of the motor; sparks sprang from the cement where the trooper lay.

A hundred yards up the road the red car came to a squealing, skidding halt.

"What the hell are you stopping for?" demanded the man with the flat nose. "Don't be a damn fool, Mac. Tony got him all right."

"Got him plenty," confirmed the machine gunner in the rumble seat, looking back. "Look at him!"

The motorcycle had gone one way as Bradley went the other. It lay on its side, its headlights still going and shining full on a sprawled and motionless gray figure by the ditch.

"We ain't going to leave him there, are we?" growled the driver. "We ought to chuck him in the brush, Scudder. That motorcycle, too."

"Yeah?" snarled the flat-nosed Scudder. "And get ourselves all smeared up? That's out, Mac. He'll lay there for hours, most likely, before any other car comes along. This ain't Forty-second and Broadway. Use your foot, fella. We're overdue, now. Let's get along to Dutch's, fast!"

Scudder was the boss. That wasn't a suggestion, but a command. The driver shrugged and depressed the clutch. Gears softly meshing, the red

roadster fled guiltily upward into the dark hills.

CHAPTER III

The Death House "Kite"

A HUSKY wind out of the northeast had been clubbing at the cloud rack, whipping it to lace, hustling it off in ragged streamers over the hills. Spangles of gold glinted from dancing water while the rout was on; then a yellow moon looked clear at itself in a little lake and gilded the roof of a bungalow on the shore.

The bungalow, log-walled, pressed to the grassy bank by the forest, belonged precisely to its setting. An artist, finding that lake and surveying its shore, would have chosen no other spot for it. But "Dutch" Gompert, owner of the bungalow and lord of the lake was no artist. Sport-shirted, heavy-shouldered, hairy-armed, he stood at the end of the broad veranda toward the water and turned a scowl upward to the sky.

"Damn the moon!" he exploded. "This ain't going to help things any!"

In the doorway behind him, nicotine-stained fingers cupped themselves like yellow claws around a match that flared brightly between inhalations on a vulture face. The match, snapped out, described a glowing arc.

"Nature's grand," said the spindly man, squinting at the bright sky and then staring back along the road that curled down the hillside to the lake. "What the hell do you suppose has happened to them birds, anyway?"

Dutch Gompert directed a last glare at the unwelcome moon and turned his back on it."

"They'll get here, all right," he said. "It's a case of got to. They know it, Crow."

Corroboration, neatly timed, appeared at the hilltop above them. The headlights of an automobile climbing the far side of the rise whitened the sky.

"That's service!" grinned the man called "Crow." "Glad I didn't have a bet up. Here they come now."

"Maybe," Gompert said, "it ain't them yet. Maybe it's Gwen. I told her to get here at ten o'clock, but she *could* be ahead of time for once in her life."

The approaching car had shot over the hump and was coasting to them—a long, low roadster, top down. A door was opening as it stopped in front of the bungalow, and one of the three passengers jumped out.

"Okay, Lafayette!" he cried. "Here we are!"

Gompert withheld congratulation. His voice was sour. "Not any too soon," he said "Duncan's folding his tent tomorrow. Going back to town. If the trick ain't turned tonight, we're outta luck What slowed you, Scudder? Lose your way?"

"Wait till you hear," the flat-nosed traveler grunted. "We just got a traffic pinch, Dutch. In the dark of the moon, on the open road, miles from nowhere—up pops a cop, and we're grabbed for speeding!"

"Jeez!" breathed Gompert. He stared, open-mouthed. "And you guys with a tommy-gun in the car!"

SCUDDER nodded. "Sure, with a tommy-gun in the car. And do you s'pose that we were standing for the collar?"

The Crow moved forward across the veranda, craning his scrawny neck, his beads of eyes incredulous.

"Cut the kidding," he advised. "It ain't funny."

Scudder's close-set eyes smouldered

on him. " This'd be a swell time to kid, wouldn't it? I'm telling you, a cop got on our tail and we had to blow him off of it."

" That's what happened," confirmed the machine gunner in the rumble seat. " It was just a few miles down that cement crossroad. If you'd been outdoors, you could almost have heard the typewriter going when I sprayed him."

The Crow had to believe it then. He whistled. " You left him there?" he demanded.

" Left him flat on the cement. Scudder said to."

Dutch Gompert moistened his lips. " What kind of cop?"

" One of them fancy birds," Scudder said. " State trooper."

The Crow's eyes glittered as they swung to Gompert. " Trooper!" he cawed. " Get that baby, did you? Then you can have the best in the house. Ask Dutch!"

The newcomers looked toward Gompert, waited for him to speak while he stared over the lake, brows drawn, abstractedly jingling coins in his pocket.

" If you birds croaked a state trooper," he told them after a space, " you just saved me that much trouble. There's only been one trooper in this district since I came up. Fella named Bradley—poison. Sooner or later it would have been a case of bump him off or get out. But—this certainly wasn't a good night for it." He shook his head. " Well, it's done, anyhow. Just what happened, Scudder?"

In swift sentences, a verbal shorthand filled in by eager contributions from the roadster's other passengers, the flat-nosed man described the chase.

" That old guy at the filling station has got me worried," he said. " Him and your pal, the cop, might have got their heads together."

" It's pretty near a cinch they did," nodded Dutch Gompert. " *There* would be the tip-off. Looks to me like you fellas better use my car on the Duncan trip and say good-bye to this one."

" What do you mean, good-bye?" came sharply from the driver of the roadster.

" Good-bye—forever!"

" Yeah? Ditch four grand?"

" Drown it!" Gompert's gaze traveled again to the water. " That lake's better than five hundred feet deep in places—and I know some of the places. That ain't all. I've sunk jobs as new and shiny as this out there. Hot ones, o' course. Borrowed buggies that wise-aleck trooper thought he had a line on."

Scudder reinforced him. " Dutch is right, Mac," he said, looking regretfully at the roadster and then resignedly at the lake. " It ain't the car you ought to be thinking about as much as the jam it might get us into. There ain't a machine on the road—or in the showroom, either—that *I'd* take a chance on the hot seat for."

With Gompert, the incident closed. " Down she goes, and that's that," he he said. " My sedan will be better for the job at Duncan's, anyway. Come in and I'll give you the program."

INSIDE the bungalow a four-foot log was blazing in a huge stone fireplace. Rubbing chilled hands over it, Scudder said savagely:

" Fat lot of good Veronalli's going to do for himself, forcing this job on us. Suppose we do manage to spring him out of the death house—how long does he think we'll let him walk the streets before he gets his?"

Gompert spat at the log. " That'll come in its turn," he growled. " Right now, it's Joe Veronalli that has *us* on

the spot. That dirty little rat ain't running any bluff, Scudder. He's all set to squeal on the mob if we don't put the finger on Duncan for him. And he's getting impatient. There was another kite from him in the mail this morning. The way he manages to swing out correspondence, you'd think he was in the Biltmore instead of in the pen. Here's the latest, Scud. Read it yourself."

Gompert picked a sheet of soiled paper from the long plank table in the center of the room and Scudder, after a quick glance, nodded. "It's Veronalli's fist, all right," he conceded. Then he held the scrawl close to a hissing gasoline lantern suspended from a rough-hewn beam and read aloud:

"FRIEND DUTCH:

"Twict I have wrote to you before, since they deny me that new trial, and tell you boys how you can pull me off the fire. My plan is O. K. and Big Boss Duncan will sure fall.

Listen, Dutch, you got to act quick. They burn two men here last night and my nerve ain't so good any more. The D. A. says he would get me off if I play some ball with him. Don't make me do that, boys. Remember, it is the only other way to beat the toaster, so hurry.

"J. V."

Scudder returned the "kite" to the table, weighted it with a whiskey glass and stood staring at it.

"Well, he sure doped out a fast one," he admitted with a grudging admiration. "If Duncan is anywhere near human, it ought to work just the way Joe figures it—and that's all we've got to worry about right now. Everything's set at your end, Dutch?"

"All set," Gompert said. He cleared a space on the table and spread out a road map. "The first thing is to get the lay of the land fixed in your mind." A thick thumb hovered over the map and descended. "This is where you are now, Scudder—the puddle outside is what they call Little Moose Lake. This road here is the one where you left Bradley; hope he rots there. Gwen's shack is about ten miles up this other pike, but you don't need to bother your head about that; just bring the package back here, see? Gwen's coming over and she'll take care of it. That hide-away of hers is perfect."

"And what's the blue cross-mark there?" Scudder asked, looking over Gompert's shoulder. "Duncan's place?"

"That's the mansion. It sits back a good half mile from the road. They say there's more than six thousand acres to the whole estate—miles of it. But you'll find the main house easy enough. You keep going around the lake on this same road you came over. Then you turn left on the next cement and that leads you straight to it. I metered off the distance today, and it's just a shade over sixteen miles to Duncan's gate. You'll know the place when you come to it. After that, it's a crash-in."

"Crash-in is right," assented Scudder. "My idea, Duncan's got to know what it's all about before we leave. That's the only way to play it—cards on the table with Duncan himself. No foolishness with notes later on, but cold turkey at the jump. He'll keep his trap shut then—and like it."

"Yeah! And he'll manage to keep his people quiet. If you only make it strong enough, there'll never be a squawk to the cops—never a line in the papers. That's up to you."

SCUDDER took a last glance at the map and walked to the door.

"I feel sorry for you, Mac," he said. "Come on, say good-bye to four

grand's worth of roadster. Maybe the bus won't be here when we get back."

"It won't—not where you can see it," promised Gompert. "Better switch that typewriter over to the sedan. Tony—just in case!"

The sedan, as rangy and powerful as the roadster, stood in the open beside the bungalow, its bright metal work sparkling in the moonlight. The moon struck a duller gleam from the barrel of the machine gun as the swarthy artilleryman transferred it from the rumble of the red car.

"Looks like an even swap at that," grinned the New York party's chauffeur, settling himself behind the wheel of the sedan. He listened appreciatively to the purr of the motor, instantly alive as his foot touched the starter. "This'll do fine."

A moment later the sedan slid away. It skirted the lake, struck off through the hills on the continuation of the dirt road which the roadster had followed to Dutch Gompert's poetic retreat and, after a few minutes, was on smooth concrete.

Far to the west, where tall stone posts rose beside the highway and closed gates of iron barred the entrance to a private road, the sleek machine halted. Close behind the posts stood a vine draped cottage, obviously a gate-keeper's lodge.

The man with the flat nose, again sitting with the driver, reached across the wheel. "Let's start it in style," he said, and under the light pressure of his hand the sedan's horn sounded a muted trumpet call. Almost immediately a stoop-shouldered old man appeared from the lodge in answer to the summons and swung open the gates.

Scudder had slipped from the car after sounding the horn. He was behind the nearer pillar, ready for a spring, as the gate-keeper stood blinking in a blaze of headlights that hid everything behind them.

"Are you folks expected?" the old man called out, shambling forward.

Masked now, Scudder leaped at him. A blackjack rose and fell. The gate-keeper's knees sagged. He dropped in a heap.

"Expected?" the flat-nosed man rasped, driving a toe into the ribs of his crumpled victim. "Was *that?*"

CHAPTER IV

Bradley Hits the Road Again

DOWN, but not out. Almost, not quite. Flat on his face, cheek to the icy cement, Bradley snapped out of his daze as the escaping gunmen's car darted ahead.

What a chump! The trio in the roadster had been TNT on wheels, and he'd known it. Letting down his guard, giving them that chance at him, had been just about the equivalent of suicide. Except that the stiff brim of his campaign hat had broken the blow, a fractured skull would certainly have been the reward of his lapse.

He started to get up, then went flat again. Fire suddenly was spouting from the back of the roadster to the accompaniment of a throaty rattle. The flame and the roar vindicated old Sam Witherspoon's eyesight. They did have a machine gun in the New York car and they were using it. A bee-swarm of slugs from it passed over him with a strident buzzing.

The angle of fire had been depressed when another burst came; bouncing bullets struck fire from the concrete all about him. One bit of lead scored a hit on the motorcycle out there in the middle of the road. He heard the hard

ping and saw the front wheel spinning.

When the firing ceased he saw that the roadster was at a standstill. By rising then he would have courted another burst from the machine gun, so he lay quiet and made no further movement after he had cleared his automatic of the holster.

He didn't open fire. That would have been one more sucker play. At a hundred yards—the distance between him and the roadster must have been all of that—his pistol wouldn't be much good. They could rip him up with the machine gun before he got fairly into action with it.

He thought they'd be coming back, one or two of them at least, to make sure that the tommy-gun had done its work. That would be the time to use the pistol; to shoot fast and straight, drop whoever came and make a sprint for the car before the rapid-fire gun opened up again. But none of them came. He heard their voices, hot in argument, and then the tail light was receding.

In a few seconds it was at the crest of the next rise; up, over—gone!

Bradley was up as the tail light vanished, weaving to the motorcycle. The lump on his head seemed to be the size of his fist. He was giddy now, but that would pass after the breeze had been slapping his face for a while. With their machine gun those murderous New Yorkers might keep him out of pistol range; nothing on earth, he grimly promised himself, would keep him off their trail. And he was going to get them! No matter where they went, he'd get them even though he had to follow them to the gates of hell itself.

He had to amend that vow no sooner than it had been made. The miracle that had saved him when the bullets were flying thick had not spared the motorcycle. A bullet had passed through the front tire and that left him with a tricky repair job to do before he went anywhere.

It took time to get the wheel off, more time to patch the two holes in the tube, and a long ten minutes beyond all that to inflate the tire with the small hand pump after the blow-out patch was in.

Haste hadn't made for speed, and when the motorcycle was ready to go he could no longer hope to overtake the gunmen, even had there been any way of telling which branch of the road they had taken at the fork a few miles beyond. It would have to be a case, now, of getting to a telephone and spreading an alarm; at least he knew the license number and could describe the car and its passengers, and there was a reasonable chance that they would be picked up.

The nearest telephone? Was there one nearer than Sam Witherspoon's? Offhand, he couldn't think of one. He made a quick calculation and decided that he could get to the little crossroads inn where he was billeted, on ahead, in no more time than a return to the starting point of the chase would require.

So deciding, he made the inn at a trifling speed of sixty miles an hour, a mere jog for him, sparing the sketchily repaired tire in momentary expectation of a blowout.

EXPECTING it, he didn't get the blowout. The tire took him home, and in precisely three-quarters of an hour after he had seen the last of the New York roadster his description of it was flashing to trooper barracks and billets and country and city police

stations through not only his own, but all neighboring states.

While he was setting that machinery in motion, one of the three faces was vivid to Bradley—reminiscently vivid. The man with the flat nose was some one he had seen before; that had been his impression, and an instant impression, when he had overtaken and halted the roadster; an impression that had strengthened as he raced for the telephone. Now he was sure of it.

He desperately raked his memory. Where had he seen Flat Nose, and when?

A sudden hunch came. Upstairs, where he had methodically filed away every police bulletin received in that territory since he had been assigned there, he played it straight across the files.

There were hundreds of the bulletins, from detective bureaus all over the country and with every government department of criminal investigation represented as well—and it turned out, finally, that it was in one of the Federal broadsides he had previously seen the unforgettable face of the flat-nosed New Yorker. The particular bulletin which bore the likeness was more than a year old, but there was no mistaking that the man pictured and the man who had sat beside the driver in the roadster were one and the same.

Halfway through the files when he at last came to the photograph, Bradley snatched it out with a whoop of exultation. Thomas Scudder, alias Stevens, alias MacManus, once or still a fugitive under an indictment charging conspiracy to withdraw liquor illegally from a bonded warehouse—*that* was his man!

At the moment of discovery Bradley had eyes only for the one face, although the bulletin called for the apprehension of two fugitives and carried also a stiffly posed front-and-side camera study of Thomas Scudder's companion in crime. He wasn't interested in the second man just then, but when he presently gave a casual glance to the Rogues' Gallery photograph to the left of the scowling Scudder, the glance froze into a petrified stare.

Another acquaintance! And more than an acquaintance, the bullet-headed and bull-necked party of the second part was now a neighbor!

"Dutch Gompert!" breathed Bradley. "What a break!"

Ten-point type under the Rogues' Gallery picture spelled out confirmation. "Fritz (Dutch) Gompert" it was, according to the caption—and Bradley, who had intended to put a dressing on his head wound and turn in, swiftly changed his plans. He slipped out of his crimson stained tunic and into another just dry-cleaned; and then, back in the garage, he made quick work of shedding the bullet-broken tire and replacing it with a sound one.

As he felt now, he was good for all night, wide awake, ready to dash out again on the chase he had been forced to abandon as hopeless an hour ago. Rest was out of the question for him, at least until he had gone to Dutch Gompert's place on Little Moose Lake and investigated the possibility that Dutch was entertaining company from New York.

It was a good bet that Dutch did have guests. If Gompert and Scudder had been team-mates in crookedness a year or two ago, why not now? In that case it would most likely have been for Little Moose Lake that the roadster was heading, and the fact that the trio in the car had left a pre-

sumably dead state policeman on a lonely road behind them would hardly have caused them to alter their objective. On the contrary, Dutch Gompert would harbor and advise them—click in with an alibi in case of need.

IT was eighteen miles to Little Moose by the shortest route, and the black clouds were piling up again as the motorcycle, wide open, zoomed through the hills. The wind was up to almost half a gale; crashing through the brown woods, wrenching the crisp leaves from their dying grip on the branches, it swallowed the thunder of Bradley's dash through the night. It covered the motorcycle's roar so utterly that he had approached to within a quarter mile of Dutch Gompert's place before he thought it better to leave the machine behind.

Where he dismounted the crest of the last sharp hill gave him what amounted to a bird's eye view of Little Moose Lake and the bungalow nestling on its shore. Under the stormy sky the lake was a blob of ink, a blob that would have been invisible except for light from the bungalow that reflected on the sable waters.

Down in the lighted house there might be two enemies or there might be five. Dutch Gompert might be alone, as he usually was, with the Man Friday he called "Crow," that scrawny bravo whose wasted body and dead eyes showed him far gone in drug addiction. Would he find just those two—or would Scudder and his machine gun crew be with them? At the showdown, would he face two or would he face five?

Bradley, boiling, nursed a hot hope that the answer would be five. Some day, sooner or later, he would either be throwing Dutch Gompert into a cell or running him out of the country. But he could wait to deal with Dutch. What he badly wanted tonight was just to come up with Thomas Scudder and his two fellow tourists.

Five to one wouldn't really be bad odds, not when surprise went with the attack. If there were five men in the bungalow now, they wouldn't be sitting around with guns on their knees. More likely they'd have glasses in their hands, and it would require no more than the kicking in of a window and a finger on the trigger of a formidable police positive to master them.

So Bradley, proceeding down hill afoot, carried with him full confidence of his ability to make a clean job of it single-handed whether the bungalow held two or held more. Had reinforcements been available, he could have wished them for only one reason—to guard his back while, after disarming them, he laced into Scudder and his big town pals with his fists.

The wind still was rising. No need, with all that racket, to pussyfoot. Even when he had reached the bungalow and was on the veranda, Bradley knew he could have brought his heels down hard without betraying his presence. There was not only noise from straining, brittle branches and scurrying leaves now; the wind, sweeping down the four-mile length of Little Moose, was crashing in a surf that drummed heavily along the shingle.

Listening at the door, Bradley could catch no sound within. The window nearer the door was curtained, and he went to another at the lakeside end of the long veranda. His view of the interior was unobstructed there. A huge log was flaming in a fireplace beyond a big table with a top of rough planks, but the chairs drawn to the

hearth were empty. There weren't five men in the bungalow, and there weren't two. Lighted, warm, doubly inviting on so raw a night, the single big room with the curtained bunks built into its wall was deserted.

That was strange, but stranger still was the sight which met Bradley's eyes as he turned from the window. Little Moose Lake, as he very well knew, had a stretch of a shade more than four miles from head to foot, and was nowhere less than half a mile in width. And now, suddenly, an automobile was coming straight at him across the water, brilliant headlights boring close down across the lathered surface.

BRADLEY rubbed his eyes. There had never been a bridge across Little Moose, and never would be. What was he seeing—or did he just think he saw it? Had that crack on the head knocked something loose in his brain, perhaps, and made him a victim of delusions?

He still saw the headlights, though, after the eye-rubbing and the question. The only difference was that they had changed direction. They no longer came toward him but were casting their beam down the lake. The white shaft kept on turning until it was lighting the woods across Little Moose and another light was facing him, a light not nearly so bright; a red light, this one.

Straining his eyes, Bradley could just make out two letters on the metal plate on which the red light shone. The letters were "N Y," and that was enough for him. He was sane, and the water-voyaging automobile out there wasn't even an optical illusion. It was an explainable fact. As he congratulated himself on that heartening assurance, the headlights were snuffed out.

Bradley drew a deep breath. Thanks to his brief glimpse of the license plate, he knew now what was doing.

He went back along the veranda and tried the door. It was unlocked. A swift glance around the big room revealed half a dozen likely hiding places; the best of all would be one of those curtained alcoves into which the bunks were built.

His strategy would be different now, bagging his men a lot easier. He'd have no window-sill to negotiate after he'd revealed himself, but could have his quarry under observation from the instant of their entrance and pick his moment for making his presence known.

The hard gasp of a struggling motorboat engine reached him above the clatter of the gathering storm when he had made his survey and his decision. He peered out a window that looked on the lake, cautiously parting the dark curtains that would show no shadow on the far side. A launch was slowly fighting its way to the little dock below the bungalow, towing what looked like a big bathing raft.

Bradley saw the launch tie up at the dock, saw then that there were only two men in it. They set the raft adrift, for a space watched it until it had been carried close onto the shingle, and then started up toward the bungalow.

When they opened the door, Bradley was out of sight in his alcove. Dutch Gompert and the Crow—nobody else.

He gave them time to throw off their mackinaws; time beyond that to pour and down a drink from the whiskey bottle on the long table. Then the little metal rings tinkled along the suspending wire as he swept back the curtain. Gompert and the Crow wheeled at the sound. They stood rooted, silent, Dutch

frozen with amazement, his bony satellite livid with terror.

"Oh, my God!" screamed the Crow. "Look, Dutch, look! Do *you* see it?"

Bradley hadn't drawn his pistol. Against men paralyzed, as these men were, he didn't have to.

"Hello, Dutch!" he greeted calmly. "What's happened to your friends from New York?"

CHAPTER V

The Kite's Tail

A WHEEZY gasp of relief came from the dope-soaked Crow when Bradley's voice had revealed him to be a living man and not an avenging spirit. Beside him, Dutch Gompert mopped a face suddenly moist and plumped his weight down at the edge of the home-built table. Neither spoke.

"This must be quite a surprise," Bradley suggested. "You hear, one minute, that I've got a lily in my hand. Next minute, here I am!"

Gompert's bewilderment was evolving into rage. His face reddened.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" he snarled. "You've got your nerve, breaking into a place like this!"

"Didn't *break* in—I walked in," Bradley countered, placid. "Walked in to get a little information. You had some visitors here a short time ago, Gompert. I want to find out where they are."

"Visitors? Here?" Gompert swiveled. "Hear that, Crow? Remember seeing any visitors?"

"That's a laugh," said the Crow. "There ain't been nobody here but us."

"I mean," Bradley said, "the people who came up in that red roadster."

"What red roadster?"

"The one you just got rid of."

That brought guilty eyes furtively together.

"You're talking Choctaw," Dutch Gompert complained.

"I've been here quite a while—and I've got eyes," Bradley told him. "I saw you take an automobile out on the lake, on a raft. You towed back the raft, but not the automobile. Now I've got an idea where a few other cars went just when I was ready to grab them—and you."

Gompert burst out with a too loud laugh. "Say, grayback, you didn't see as much as you think you did! What car do you suppose that was? I dumped one, sure. I'm not denying that. There ain't any reason why I should. It was a piece of old junk that's been standing around here until I got tired of looking at it."

Bradley grinned. "Yes? Well, the car you took out in the lake and didn't bring back had this year's license plates on it—New York license plates. Isn't that a fact?"

"You're telling *me*," Gompert came back after a pause.

"You bet I am," agreed Bradley. "And I'll tell you something else, Gompert. That car was the same red roadster that Scudder came here in!"

The cigarette which the Crow had just lighted dropped from his fingers to the floor.

"*Scudder!*" he cried.

The side glance that Gompert darted at him was freighted with a promise of future reprisal for that slip. He did what he could to cover it.

"Who's Scudder?" he demanded.

"Tom Scudder," Bradley said. This was the time to put it on thick and he proceeded to. "Scudder, alias Stevens, alias a few other things. The Scudder who was indicted with you in New York in that whiskey withdrawal

game. The Scudder who came in the red roadster a while ago and told you he and his friends had just shot up a state trooper with that machine gun they carried in the rumble. *That's* the Scudder I'm looking for—and when I get my hands on him, you can lay your bottom dollar, Gompert, that he's going to be a resident of this commonwealth for a good long stretch. Now, where is he?"

Dutch's eyes blazed. "You go to hell, Bradley!" he grated. "Even if I *could* tell you anything, do you think I would? Be your age!"

"You will," Bradley promised. He jerked out the police positive. "Get your hands up, both of you! First I'm going to frisk you and then I'm going to work on you."

EVEN up there, Dutch and the Crow were wearing the familiar harness of the city gunman. Each had a shoulder belt under his coat, and a moment later the side pockets of Bradley's gray tunic were weighted with the snub-nosed pistols he had taken from them.

"The investigating committee is just about to sit, Gompert—and sit hard!" he announced grimly. "Are you going to tell me where Scudder went with those two other mugs, or am I going to bruise the information out of you? Take your choice."

Dutch Gompert delayed answer. While Bradley was disarming him, his eye had fallen on that tell-tale scrap of paper that might give the whole game away if Bradley got hold of it—Joe Veronalli's "kite." Now he had begun inching toward it along the edge of the table. The Crow saw what he was up to and attempted to cover the maneuver by diverting attention to himself.

"Mind if I take a drink, Bradley?" he asked.

He was reaching for the uncorked bottle as he spoke, and with calculated clumsiness tipped it over when his shaking hand touched it.

That by-play had a reverse effect on Bradley from the one intended. It warned him that something was afoot.

"Set 'em up in the other alley," he jeered at the Crow, but out of the corner of his eyes he was watching Gompert.

Dutch, all innocence, had started to talk. "All right, Bradley; you win," he said, changing his tone. "Scudder *was* here. That's the truth. But he didn't say nothing about any gun play and he went away in the same car he came in. You're wrong about the machine I dumped, see? It was just an old heap, like I told you. As for where's Scudder's going, all I can tell you is what he told me. He's on a little pleasure trip to Canada, get me? If *I* was looking for him, I'd hit for Montreal."

Very slowly, Gompert had continued his progress along the table. Bradley, seeming not to notice that, pounced upon him when he had pushed over a soiled whiskey glass and was crumpling in a big palm a sheet of paper that had lain beneath it. His left hand closed like a steel trap on the gangster's wrist.

"Something interesting, is it?" he snapped. "Well, I'll take a look at it, Gompert, just so long as you've been good enough to call my attention to it. Drop it, now, or I'll have to cripple your arm for you."

With that grip he could have broken the captive arm, and when he had given Dutch a painful demonstration of his ability the clenched hand relaxed and the crumpled paper fell to the floor.

Bradley wasn't repeating his earlier

mistake. He didn't stoop to pick up the paper then, but kicked it across the room. Nor did he turn his back on Gompert and the Crow when he went after it. After a dozen steps to the rear had brought him to the ball of paper, he got it by crouching rather than by stooping, his eyes on the glaring pair during every instant of the recovery and his pistol menacing them.

But here he had the upper hand firmly. Dutch and the Crow were momentarily cowed beyond any thought of rushing him and risking the deadly police positive. While he held them at a distance he could safely see what it was that Gompert had been so anxious to get out of sight. He backed into a corner, where he also could watch the door, and smoothed out the paper.

In the corner, the light was not so good. He found the pencilled message hard to decipher and made slow work of it. Only when he came to the name of Duncan—"Big Boss" Duncan—did he get anything from the scrawl.

The name gave him a hot lead. Duncan was a big name up in this country, a big name all through the state. Yes, in these last ten years the biggest name of all.

Thorne Duncan, as famous for his philanthropies as for his wealth, was a legendary figure. Equally a power in industry and in politics, Duncan divided his time between his magnificent city home and an estate in these upcountry hills that took in thousands of acres.

By all odds, Thorne Duncan must be the Duncan mentioned in the letter, and almost certainly Dutch Gompert's effort to destroy the scrawl meant that it was a prospective raid on the Duncan estate that had brought the three machine gunners up from New York. Probably they were on their way there now—on their way, or already arrived!

"THANKS, Dutch," said Bradley. "You're a great help, old-timer. So Scudder is visiting Thorne Duncan, is he? Snap it, now! How long ago did he leave?"

"He went to Canada," Gompert insisted stonily.

"Maybe. But by way of Duncan's, I'll gamble. Got a telephone here, Gompert?"

"No."

That was a lie, Bradley thought. He stood by the unshaded window and when he had glanced out he was sure of it. He could see a line of poles along the roadside; not light poles, certainly, or else Gompert wouldn't be using that gasoline lantern.

Bradley swept the big room with exploring eyes and spotted a telephone in a far corner, standing on the floor and half hidden by a chair.

"What's that?" he snapped. "No phone, Gompert? I'm surprised at you!"

"Same thing. It's been shut off."

"Sure? I'll just check on that, if you don't mind."

Gompert shot a meaning glance at the Crow as Bradley crossed the room—and the Crow, sidling away, kicked a little switch set close above the floorboards in the wall by the fireplace.

Bradley had the receiver off the hook then. There was a promising jingle, but that first sign of life was also the last one on the wire. He swore and hung up.

Tough luck! With miles of dirt road to negotiate before he got onto the concrete, it would take him at least twenty minutes to reach High Acres, the Thorne Duncan estate, and time was precious. If the Scudder party

really had started for High Acres he could not hope to get there ahead of them, couldn't hope now even to put Duncan on his guard.

"All right, Gompert," he said. "That's once you've told the truth, anyhow. Maybe I'd better take a run over to Duncan's and see what's doing. What do you think?"

Gompert followed his retreat to the door with baleful eyes.

"You can take a jump in the lake," he declared.

"Thanks," said Bradley. "Next July I will. In the meantime—don't forget I'll be seeing you!"

The door slammed and he was gone.

Gompert turned a cold grin on the Crow. "Well, if that guy Bradley ain't a hard clock to stop!" he blurted.

"Jeez! What a mess!" The Crow shuddered. "He'll gum the deal, sure. Have all the cops in the state dashing in here."

Dutch Gompert shook his big head. "No he won't. There's a good chance he'll run into the sedan—and Tony won't miss him again."

"Suppose he don't?"

"It'll be hush-hush for him at Duncan's, that's what. Scudder will see to that."

The Crow was unconvinced, shaky. "Just the same," he insisted, "we're going to have that bird Bradley on our neck. I feel it in my bones."

"Yeah?" Gompert mocked him. "Not if I know my vegetables, Crow. Say, I was figuring out a fast one on Bradley even before he finished reading Joe's kite. That guy ain't indestructible, you know. Maybe he's proof against machine gun bullets, but he can be got other ways. Listen while I make a call and you'll find out what one of 'em is. Boot that switch, will you?"

The switch on the wall was a cut-off. Closed again, it restored communication between Little Moose Lake and the outside world. When Gompert had lifted the receiver a prompt "Number, please," came over the wire from a rural switchboard many miles away.

"Four — one — three," Gompert spoke into the transmitter.

"Gwen?" said the Crow. "Has she had time to get back there?"

"She's a driving fool, ain't she?" asked Gompert. He whistled softly between his teeth while he waited for an answer; then, the answer being slow, he threw an aside to the Crow: "Maybe it works, maybe it don't. It's worth a shot, anyway—and if it *does* work, Mister State Trooper Bradley is going to wake up tomorrow mornin' sitting under five hundred foot of fresh water in Mac's four-grand roadster!"

CHAPTER VI

Crashed In!

TWO men, gray-haired, dinner-coated, host and guest, sat together before a hospitable fire in the oak-panelled library of the manor house at High Acres, fragrant smoke curling lazily from their cigars.

They were old friends. That could have been taken from their very silence as they stared into the glowing embers. More tangible evidence than that of their long friendship was there behind them—a photograph of the guest, framed in gold, on the desk of the host.

The guest had been yawning; thirty-six holes of golf was more than he was used to these days. He caught himself nodding in the wing chair, not for the first time, and arose.

"I'm tuckered, Thorne," he said.

"If I don't turn in now under my own power, I'll have to be packed to bed. Good night."

Thorne Duncan walked with him to the hall door.

"Too early for me; I'll read for an hour or two," he said. "Good night, Morton."

A plump man in dark livery, also graying, opened the library door a few minutes after Duncan had returned to his chair and switched on the reading light beside it.

"Anything more, sir?"

"Nothing, thank you." The master of High Acres shook his head. "You may call it a day, Ludlow—and a night."

He opened the book he had selected after seeing his guest up the stairway, adjusted his glasses, and lost himself in the text. For half an hour the novel held him and then he closed it. Again he looked into the fire and dreamed—and out of the dreaming arose an impulse that presently lifted him to his feet. He went out into the broad, dim hall and softly climbed the staircase that had been brought to him overseas, entire, from an Old World palace.

In the upper hall he opened a door and tip-toed into a room where a night light burned. It was a very large room and in it, head to a wall along which painted sprites spread their wings and painted clowns cavorted, was a very small bed.

Thorne Duncan leaned over the sleeping figure in the bed—a little girl, brown curls all helter-skelter on the pillow, hugging close to her a battered, cherished doll with one eye gone and only half a nose remaining.

For Thorne Duncan, this was no rare expedition. In the two years since High Acres had been left without a mistress, the nightly pilgrimage to the nursery had become fixed habit with him. The small bed held everything that made his life worth living now.

He had made no sound since entering, but the child stirred. Her eyes opened and blinked sleepily. She released the doll, and the soft little arms that had held it reached up to Duncan. A pet name she had for him, her own nursery invention, shaped drowsily on her lips. He bent lower and kissed them, closed her eyes with gentle fingertips and stole away.

When he had returned to the library he found himself after a time in the grip of an unaccountable restlessness. Ordinarily, he would sit for hours by the fire; tonight it irked him to sit for minutes. He was wakeful and at the same time strangely uneasy, found himself regretting that his guest had not remained below with him.

He poked the log vigorously, trying to arouse a more cheerful blaze. Failing, he rid the lofty room of shadows by switching on the lights in the wall-brackets. When he had done that, he stopped on the way back to his chair and his book to listen.

Queer hour for visitors, but a car was coming up the main drive. Near now, it continued past the dark main door of the mansion and stopped beside the terrace outside the lighted library. In another moment some one was rapping at the library door which opened from the terrace. Thorne Duncan hesitated, then opened it.

A masked man who held a pistol confronted him.

"Don't yelp!" he advised.

DUNCAN'S jaw tightened. He had lost color, but his voice was steady.

"I suppose," he said, "you wish me to ask you in?"

"We're coming," the masked man confirmed briefly.

Two others, also masked, had climbed upon the terrace. Thorne Duncan could see behind them the car from which they had come—a big sedan. Unarmed and with the bell cord out of reach, he bowed to force. He stood aside as the intruders shouldered in. One of them crossed the room, opened the hall door and looked out. He turned to ask:

"Anybody else up, Duncan?"

"No one."

"All right, then. Sit down," said the masked leader. "You and me will have a little talk while my friends do their stuff."

"Thanks for the invitation," Thorne Duncan said dryly, "but I'm quite comfortable standing." He nodded toward a square bulk covered with a tapestry. "There's my safe—open. I hope you won't find the contents disappointing."

At a nod from the spokesman, the two shorter and slenderer men had started toward the hall door. Duncan called after them sharply:

"Where are you going?"

They kept on, ignoring the question.

"They're going after what we came for. It's nothing in your safe, Duncan. You've got something in this house that's worth more to you than that safe chock full of thousand-dollar notes would be. I mean—that kid of yours!"

Duncan caught his breath. "No, no!" he cried. "You'll have to kill me before you take her!"

He would have sprung for the gun then, but the masked man took a swift step backward.

"Don't try anything like that, Duncan," he cautioned. "It wouldn't get you anywheres. I'd give you the flat of the gun alongside your ear—which'd be plenty without any shooting."

Duncan's legs suddenly were weak under him. He dropped into a chair. "You can't do this! he groaned. "*Can't* do it!" He steadied himself with a heroic effort. "For God's sake, don't go through with it. You don't have to. Whatever the ransom you mean to demand, you can have it now. I'll write you my check for the money—pledge you my word of honor that I won't stop payment and won't ever make a move against you."

The masked leader shook his head. "We don't want your check, Duncan. Don't want a cent of your money."

"What, then?"

"Your power. Your influence. You've got plenty of it, and to spare. We want it swung a certain way."

Thorne Duncan pulled himself up straight in the wing chair and stared. "I don't understand you."

"You will. Listen here. You're the big finger in politics in this state, ain't you, Duncan? You put the Governor where he is—ain't it so? And you and him are pals, besides. If I'm wrong, stop me."

DUNCAN moistened his lips. "Part of what you say is true. What then?"

"It's up to you to pull some wires—and we keep your kid until they're pulled, see? There don't need to be any rumpus raised. The girl will be all right with us—unless you get a brainstorm and put the cops after us. In that case, we'll just call everything off and get rid of the kid. You'll never see her again. But if you keep quiet about this, use your noodle, use your influence the way we want you to use it, the kid comes back to you safe and sound. And nobody'll try to squeeze any dough out of you, understand?"

"As far as you've gone, I under-

stand. You want me to get something from the Governor. What?"

"A pardon for a friend of ours. A full pardon for Joe Veronalli. Get that name set in your mind, Duncan, because if you forget it—if you don't make good for us—your kid's a goner. Joseph Veronalli. He's in the death-house at the state pen now, poor Joe is, and *you're* the one who's going to spring him. Savvy?"

Thorne Duncan sat in thought, his chin on his chest. "What," he asked after a space, "if my influence with the Governor is not as great as you believe it to be?"

"Then it's just too bad. But don't be that way, Duncan. The Governor will do anything you say. That's what we're banking on."

Joe Veronalli's masked champion evidently had intended to say more, but he broke off with the speech unfinished, Some sound outdoors had caught his ear and as he listened for it to repeat Thorne Duncan listened with him.

When the sound came again the chief of the kidnaper band leaped to his feet. "Motorcycle!" he blared. "Damn you, Duncan, have you got some secret button around here that calls cops? Remember, one word about this to the police or the papers and it's—good-bye, kid! We'll kill her, sure, if you squawk!"

He sprang for the hall door. Duncan followed him to see the other masked men racing down the stairs. A sob of protest escaped him. They had found the nursery. One of them was carrying a blanketed armful.

"Motorcycle!" he called over the stair-rail.

"Just in time to be too late!" the leader said. "Quick! Out the same way we came in!"

It had to be quick. Already the great knocker at the front of the house was thundering a heavy-fisted demand for entrance.

CHAPTER VII

Hands Off!

ON the run from Little Moose Lake to High Acres, Bradley beat the twenty minutes he had allowed himself by two minutes and a fraction. At this time of year there was little or no night traffic on local roads and once he had hit the concrete he had it to himself. When he arrived at the High Acres lodge he had covered the sixteen-mile stretch of it without passing or meeting a single car.

The estate gate stood open, a circumstance which he marked at once as unusual. He had passed the High Acres entrance times without number, and the gate had always been closed except when automobiles were entering the estate or leaving it.

Turning in, he slapped on his brakes, jerked the motorcycle back on its stand and ran up on the porch of the lodge to find out just what visitors might have come to High Acres within the last hour or so. Scudder and his tommy-gun artists were of course no longer traveling in the red roadster. His guess was that Dutch Gompert, who always had two or three suspiciously fancy automobiles around, had lent them a replacement car. On that car, assuming that they had come to High Acres and already had gone on their way, he wanted to get a line.

His first knock at the lodge door brought no response. He knocked again and harder, and that evoked a sound within that sent a chill through him—a heavy groan. The door yielded

when he tried it and in the dark hall he played his pocket flash along the walls until he had located the light switch. The groan was repeated as the hall lamp came on, and he traced it to a room at the rear of the cottage.

Mylan, the gate-keeper, lay on the floor there, his head a welter of blood, his wrists and his ankles bound with wire and a handkerchief stuffed into his mouth as a gag.

Swiftly on his knees beside him, Bradley relieved him of the gag.

"What happened? Quick!" he asked as he went to work on the wire.

Mylan's eyes were open and had showed a flicker of recognition.

"Big sedan," he whispered. "Something—something hit me."

Bradley knew that questioning would bring nothing more. Also, there was nothing much he could do for the old man after freeing him, and there was a possibility that he still might be in time to walk in on something at the manor house.

"You'll be all right, Mylan," he said, "so I'm going to push on. Lock that front door and keep it locked until I get back. That ought to be soon."

He raced out, made his saddle with a flying jump and went scooting up the broad poplar-lined road. One minute later he was staring at the dark façade of the mansion. All seemed to be peaceful within. If there had been a burglary, the household evidently had slept right through it and by now the burglars had gone with their loot—gone out through that open gate.

HE had no indecision, though, concerning his present course. Without question, there had been a robbery, and Thorne Duncan had better learn about it at once. Making the stone loggia at a jump, Bradley snatched at the bronze knocker and began a lusty thumping.

He had only a short wait. A lock clicked and the door opened. Thorne Duncan himself stood there, his face as white as his starched shirt front. Somewhere remotely behind him a door slammed. Pistol instantly out, Bradley started forward.

Duncan blocked him with outspread arms.

"Don't—go back there! I beg you not to!"

And that presented to Trooper Bradley both the weirdest mystery of his experience and the knottiest problem of conduct. As he hesitated over the problem, the answer to the mystery was taking wing. Outside the house an automobile that he had failed to see was thundering away with the cut-out open. He started back to the door to give chase—and Thorne Duncan, springing ahead of him, shot a bolt.

"You can't pass!" he panted. "I—I forbid it!"

Bradley squared his shoulders and his teeth clicked together hard. "Do you think you can, Mr. Duncan?" he asked. "I'm a police officer with a duty to perform—don't forget that."

Duncan still stood with his back to the door.

"You have no duty here," he said. "Not here."

"Wherever there has been crime, I have," said Bradley; "and to my certain knowledge a crime has been committed at High Acres tonight. You are interfering, Mr. Duncan, though I don't know why—interfering when the people going away in that car are the criminals, to my best present knowledge and belief."

"You're wrong, trooper," Thorne Duncan said. "There has been no crime at High Acres—no crime so far

as you're concerned. You may consider anything that has happened here my own personal and private affair."

Bradley shook his head. "Afraid I can't. You've made it impossible, now, Mr. Duncan, for me to overhaul men who were already due for arrest and certain conviction to a long imprisonment before they came here. That puts you in a mighty bad position, if you will look at it squarely. And when you say there has been no crime tonight on this estate—well, I know different. Or wouldn't you call felonious assault a crime?"

Duncan stared. "What's this?"

"I'm talking about Mylan, down at your lodge. He was slugged—might have been killed. I found him tied up, just coming to his senses."

"Great God! Mylan's been hurt?"

"Go take a look at him, Mr. Duncan, and then tell me what you think of the men you're protecting."

The millionaire's eyes were desperate, his voice strained. "God, if I could only tell you! If I could—" He broke off, wheeling.

A startling, blood chilling-interruption had come from above. Somewhere upstairs a woman suddenly was screaming. Then bare feet, or slippered feet, were racing along the upper hall, and the voice that had screamed was calling shrilly down the stairway.

"Mr. Duncan! Mr. Duncan! Lord have mercy on the baby—they've taken her away!"

THORNE DUNCAN caught Bradley by an arm. "Now you know, trooper," he whispered. "Your men were kidnapers. I couldn't let you go after them—start shooting—when they had my daughter with them. Does it all come clear to you?"

The shrill voice rose again.

"Do you hear me, Mr. Duncan? The baby's been stolen! The men tied me up and I just got free."

"Letty's nurse," the father said. "She sleeps in a room off the nursery." He raised his voice. "Go back, Anna!" he commanded sharply. "I know. I know everything that's necessary to know right now."

Bradley, looking about for a telephone, had discovered one on a hall table and was moving toward it. Thorne Duncan, still a persistent obstacle, snatched it from his hand as he was raising the receiver.

"What are you trying to do?" he demanded, in panic.

"What's most necessary to do right now," Bradley told him. "Shoot out an alarm."

"You mustn't!"

Bradley stared. "Do you really mean that, Mr. Duncan? Why not?"

"I've told you that this is my private affair. I must be left free to handle it in my own way. I don't want any police action taken—nor even a police report made. You must forget everything you have heard here."

Bradley straightened. Rich and powerful as he was, Thorne Duncan was still a civilian. Whole-heartedly sympathizing with him was one thing; taking orders from him to suppress a criminal report quite another. That would have gone against the grain of any seasoned trooper with a decent respect for his service.

"On the question of hushing up the crime that I've learned about in the course of duty," he said stiffly, "I'll have to refer you to my superior."

Thorne Duncan's eventual nod of agreement surprised him, and so did the new, cool note in Duncan's voice.

"Let me assure you, trooper," he

said, " that I appreciate both your position and your readiness to take on heavy odds, here tonight. You've no objection to an appeal to a superior?"

" None at all. I'm not exactly thick-headed, Mr. Duncan. You've certainly some mighty good reason for wanting to suppress the report. But, frankly, I doubt if Lieutenant Howard—"

" Who is Lieutenant Howard?"

" My immediate boss. The officer I report directly to. His headquarters are a couple of counties down state. In the barracks at Princetown."

Thorne Duncan looked long at Bradley, a peculiar light in his eyes.

" Suppose you had orders from the commander-in-chief of the state police to erase all this from your memory? Would that be sufficient?" he asked quietly.

" From Major Anderson? Naturally."

As Duncan slowly shook his head, Bradley was aware that others awakened by the nurse's scream were hurrying down the broad stairway. A plump man in a flapping bathrobe was in the lead. Bradley, taking hasty stock of him, placed him as an upper servant. Then Thorne Duncan reclaimed his attention.

" No, I didn't have Major Anderson in mind," he was saying in the same quiet voice. " Is there no one above *him?* How about the Governor, trooper?"

Bradley wore the faintest of smiles as he nodded. " The Governor, of course," he said. " He's boss of everything in the state—all departments."

The plump man in the oversized bathrobe had joined them then, eyes popping at sight of Bradley's uniform. Behind him was a taller and slimmer man in a padded dressing-gown, gray-haired, shrewd-eyed, erect of carriage. His was another face that Bradley thought he had seen somewhere before.

" Of course, the Governor," repeated Thorne Duncan. " Tonight, trooper, it happens that I have the honor of having him under my roof." His eyes went to the straight, gray man in the dressing-gown and Bradley's eyes followed. " You are looking at him now," said the master of High Acres — " Governor Morton Wendover!"

CHAPTER VIII

The Lady Who Phoned

THE terrifically flustered plump man was Ludlow, the Duncan butler. Bradley, under personal orders from the Governor to stand by, was left with him to parry frantic questions while Thorne Duncan and Morton Wendover went into conference in the library.

A quarter hour had passed when a call from them rescued Bradley from the inquisition in the front hall.

" We have come to the conclusion," Duncan said, " to take you fully into our confidence, trooper. To begin with, you will understand that nothing you now know of what has happened here tonight and nothing you will hear shall be repeated. Not only is the case not to be reported, it is not to be whispered."

" Orders," nodded the Governor. " Observe them strictly, please."

Briefly, then, pacing the priceless rug as he talked, Thorne Duncan described the kidnaper's raid and informed Bradley of their demands.

" I tell you all this," he concluded, " so that you may keep silent with a clear conscience. So you will realize that police activity and newspaper no-

toriety could work only harm in this particular case."

"The orders of the Governor," Bradley said, "would have been enough. What's all right with his conscience will always be all right with mine."

His eyes, ever since Duncan had stated the kidnaper's price, had been fixed upon Morton Wendover. Joe Veronalli's name he had known; mention of it had caused him a start. It was a name familiar to every law enforcement officer in half a dozen states. Racketeer, hi-jacker, wanton killer, Veronalli was awaiting execution of the death sentence for a singularly atrocious gang murder in the metropolis of the commonwealth—a murder which he had been imported from New York to do.

If ever a man deserved the chair, Joe Veronalli did. No voice save that of his high-priced counsel had ever been lifted in his defense. Even the women's clubs, solid against capital punishment, had neglected to make their usual protest when he was convicted and sentenced to death. The newspapers, the public, for once the pulpit, too, had agreed that here no lesser avengement by organized society would fit the crime and the criminal. It would be, certainly, the equivalent of political suicide for Morton Wendover to pardon Veronalli.

The Governor, it seemed, could read eyes. At least, he saw the question in Bradley's, and calmly he proceeded to answer it when Duncan had finished.

"There are bigger things in life, trooper," he said, looking steadily back at Bradley now, "than even the highest public office. One is friendship and another is heart. Poor Duncan's child—his world—is in the hands of desperate men. There is no question but that they will execute their threat against her if there is no surrender by us. Quoting at random, but quoting from a wisdom profound—'it is better that a hundred who are guilty shall walk free than that one who is innocent shall suffer.' Yes, I shall sign a pardon for Joseph Veronalli tomorrow, a full and free pardon, and so keep peace with my conscience. And you two, God help me, are the only mortals who will ever know from me why the pardon was granted!"

A GREAT man, Bradley told himself, as presently he went trundling back to his billet at a low-pressured and moody sixty-five. A greater man, this Morton Wendover, than the state had ever suspected; the sort of man who really should be down in Washington. As a New England favorite son he had been heading in that direction. Now, because he was what he was, he was through. There weren't any two ways about it. Thumbs would be down on him from the moment he signed the Veronalli pardon.

In general the last man to become a hero-worshiper, Trooper Bradley was bowing at a worthy idol's feet tonight. Homeward bound, pledged to silence but to nothing else, he swore an everlasting blood feud against the ghoulish crew who would own the responsibility for bringing that idol down. Some day, somewhere, Thomas Scudder and his tommy-gun twins would cross his path again. When that day came, there would be no quarter, none asked by State Trooper Bradley and none given. Meanwhile, as he had solemnly promised at Little Moose Lake, he'd be seeing Dutch Gompert and that bird of ill-omen called the Crow.

It was well after midnight when Bradley got back to his quarters, to

discover there that the turn of twelve hadn't meant the end of one day's work for him, but just the starting of another. A few minutes before his arrival there had been a hurry call for him. A woman who said she was alone in her home—a Mrs. Liggett, who lived, according to the memorandum on Bradley's slate above the telephone, far out on that same road where he had been the target of the New York tommy-gun—wanted help, and wanted it quick.

Bradley, dog-tired and suffering a reaction from the blow of the pistol butt, got the Liggett number from the information operator and immediately called back. Devoutly he hoped that the emergency, whatever it had been, was a thing of the past; but apparently it was not. The woman's voice that answered was tight with terror.

"Please come up—*please* come!—and come as fast as you possibly can," she begged him. "I'm miles from my nearest neighbor and a rough-looking man is lurking in the woods across the road. My husband's in Boston tonight and I'm absolutely defenseless. Right this minute I'm half crazy."

It was a must. Bradley, who had traveled further at later hours on smaller cause, tarried just long enough to replenish his fuel tank before hitting the road again.

The trip was a twenty-miler, over concrete—sixteen minutes and some odd seconds from gas pump to the rescue. Starting, Bradley had known exactly where he was going. He knew the house well. It was the homestead on the old Ketchum place, a farm long deserted and recently rented to people who were new to the hill counties.

The homestead, built close to the road in a day when farm dwellers looked to passing couriers for news of the world beyond their narrow horizon, was blazing with light. That was symptomatic in itself of panic within, and when Bradley had stepped onto the veranda a frightened voice challenged him from the far side of a closed door.

"If—if you try to get in, I'll shoot! I've got a rifle here!"

"Then please put it away," Bradley urged. "This is the state trooper you talked to on the telephone."

A BOLT creaked and the door opened then—opened on a vision of blond beauty for which Bradley had been totally unprepared. Femininity in these hills didn't come generally in pink and fluffy packages like this; in the main, it ran to angles, the coiffure perennially in vogue was a tight combination of topknot and comb, and the favored material for negligees was gingham.

Blond and svelte, Mrs. Liggett could have been recognized as "city folks" at any distance under a mile. Her hair was bobbed and wavy, she wore a soft and shimmering something of silk, and she smelled of sweeter things than good yellow soap. On Bradley she had something like the effect of the pistol butt wielded from that rumble seat. She stunned him.

There were red glints in her hair, red glints in the shimmer of her wrap—and more than a trace of Little Red Riding Hood in her speech.

"I—I can't believe that you're here so soon!" she gasped in a voice not quite grown-up, it seemed to Bradley. "Didn't you say you had twenty miles to come?"

"Motorcycles move," he rather unnecessarily assured her. Then he snapped to business. "Been annoyed any more since you phoned?"

"N-no!" she said. "But I've been scared out of my wits. I—I'm afraid I won't want to live here any more after tonight." Her perfect lips, cherry red, trembled to a sigh. "Oh, and I've *loved* it so!"

Bradley, not wholly at ease, was fishing for his flashlight. "I'll take a look around," he said.

"Please don't!" she cried. The cherry lips parted in swift alarm. "He may have a gun."

Bradley grinned cheerfully. "Well, so have I," he said and hopped down from the veranda. "Where did you see him last? Across the road, wasn't it?"

He jumped one ditch and then another and with the flashlight boring a hole in the night ahead of him went beating through the brush. A few minutes of that was enough. The prowler, if he hadn't already gone on his way, was a needle in a hay-stack. Bradley went back to the refurbished farm house and made a report to that effect.

"This probably will never happen again as long as you're here," he reassured his dazzling client. "But you really ought to keep a gun in the house, Mrs. Liggett—just for your own peace of mind, I mean."

Her reply to that was a timid confession. "Guns frighten me. I am really a terrible little coward." She looked appealingly at Bradley. "You —you don't have to leave me right away? Couldn't you stay until Mr. Liggett gets here? He should be home almost any minute now, you see."

That, somehow, didn't quite click.

"I thought you said," Bradley told her, "that he was staying in Boston tonight?"

She smiled. "Did it sound like that? What I was trying to say was that he's on his way home from Boston—but I might have said anything, being in such a state of nerves. *Won't* you stay?"

In mind's eye Bradley could see a hobo hitting the grit after one glimpse of the gray uniform, a hurrying hobo, a mile away by now and wishing he were further. But it would be impossible, he knew, to convince a lone and badly frightened woman that the picture was authentic. He didn't even try.

"I'll sit out here," he promised, resigned, "until your husband comes or until—"

"Out here?" She seemed to see something humorous in the proposal. "Don't be foolish! Whatever kind of husband do you think I've got? He'll laugh when I tell him. No, no; you come right on in and wait until he's here to thank you. I've got hot water on for tea. It was going to be a case of tea for nerves; now—please?—can't it be tea for two?"

Bradley just at that moment was looking down at the garage—seeing something that suddenly interested him.

"I don't know," he demurred. "Don't you think it might be better for you to leave a note and drive over to Holtsville and stay at a hotel?"

"But how can I? Mr. Liggett has the car."

Her eyes had widened; Bradley's for an instant narrowed. Here was something else that didn't quite click. Light from a nearby window had showed him a closed padlock on the garage door, and no one-car family of his acquaintance ever had made a practice of locking the garage when the car was out.

He rubbed the back of his head, sore as a boil and getting sorer. And that hurt, and what it brought back had

something to do with his irresolution. As he stood debating, she held the door open and continued to urge him in. Hers wasn't the only voice urging.

"Go ahead; see what happens!" a reckless inner voice insisted.

He looked her in the eye and smiled.

"Why not?" he said.

CHAPTER IX

A Trap Springs

SHE left him in a living room that seemed to him a little garish, a room no more suggesting a farm parlor than she suggested a farm wife. While she was in the kitchen he was thinking fast. There was something queer about this invitation, something in her eagerness to get him into the house that held him on his guard. Something offside about the whole business, phone call and all. What? And why? Well, at least he had put himself now on the road to find out.

She came back first with an ornate cream and sugar service, teaspoons and a sliced lemon. Next she brought a steaming earthenware pot, and finally two cups she had filled in the kitchen.

"Cream or lemon?" she wanted to know, slim and beautifully kept hands hovering after she had seated herself across from Bradley at the cozy table. "And for Heaven's sakes, take off that belt and hang it up somewhere. You do look so awfully uncomfortable."

"I'm used to the belt—just as comfortable as I can be," he said, and as he spoke he shifted his chair a trifle so that both doors at the rear of the room would be in his range of vision.

She had baby-blue eyes—but they were not, under the light, baby soft.

She repeated, "Cream or lemon?"

"Neither. I take mine straight." How could he get her out of the room again? Simple! "I—I hate to bother you," he said, "but a sandwich would go fine. I missed dinner."

He thought that her eyes clouded, but she was quickly on her feet. "Oh, you poor famished thing! Of course!"

When he heard her rattling in the refrigerator, Bradley lifted his teacup—not to his lips, but to his nose. It smelled like tea, and also it smelled like something else. He said to himself, lifting the cup again: "Here goes, anyway!" The cup was empty when a cold roast and bread and butter came on another tray, and it brought a stare and an exclamation.

"You've drunk your tea! How—how did you like it?"

"Can't begin to tell you," Bradley said.

Truth again. He honestly could not begin to. He hadn't drunk, hadn't even tasted, what had been in the cup. Instead, he had spattered it along the rug under the table, not enough in any one spot to make the smallest puddle, and he was ardently wishing the dry fiber would hurry and absorb it.

That had been the beginning of an experiment; an experiment, Bradley had to admit to himself, that he might be feeling more than a little foolish about later on. But over-confidence in company not formally introduced had just missed netting him a headstone once that night, and he couldn't help seeing something just a bit bizarre in people who carefully locked their garage when the car was touring.

A drumfire of gay chatter came at him across the table, but despite it his eyelids began to droop a little after a time. That was a continuation of the experiment, and a notable success. It wasn't hard for him to look sleepy, because he was sleepy. When the roast had come his attack on it was feeble.

"You're dog-tired," he stood accused through that failure. "Too tired to eat."

BRADLEY indignantly denied it, eyes half closed but not yet losing sight of those doors at the rear. A sixth sense told him that his danger, if there really was danger for him here and he wasn't the victim of an addled imagination, lay behind one of them.

In the face of raillery, his eyelids drooped lower and his head sank. He answered with a mumble to another invitation to remove his gun-belt. Then he slumped sleepily in his chair.

She apparently had been expecting that. Her chatter ceased. Silence spun out long. He heard chair legs scrape and then a hand was at his belt and a whisper at his ear.

"You're not comfortable. Do you hear me? Do let me get that belt off —there's a dear."

But the hand on the belt was not at the buckle; it was moving to the holster. Bradley was breathing heavily and the blond woman's own breath was coming fast now.

"Can't you hear, honey? I'm trying to help you," she softly insisted.

Bradley had the holster safely pinned under the chair arm, his whole weight anchoring it, when her hand reached it. In another instant, tugging, she had disclosed the true source of her solicitude—and it exactly confirmed the suspicion on which Bradley had undertaken the test. He couldn't want any better proof than this that the tea he had sprinkled on the rug instead of drinking had actually been doped. His imagination hadn't gone haywire, but had simply proved itself in good working order. Her whole aim had been to get him separated from his pistol. How, without help, did she think she was going to accomplish the separation now?

While she pulled at the holster, less careful when she was sure he was too far gone to know what was happening, Bradley's mind was busy.

If he had been brought out here to drink drugged tea and to be disarmed, that certainly clinched it that the telephone call had been bait in a trap for him. But whose trap? Why all this elaborate stage setting when he was traveling daily through the hills alone and a stray bullet through the back would finish him any old time?

While he was in this position the blond Lorelei couldn't get the gun and she couldn't budge him. She soon found that out.

Through slitted eyes he saw her cross the room and open that second door at the rear—the door which until then had stood closed. Beyond it, she whispered to somebody hidden there in a big closet. A man's whisper replied.

In a moment the man had appeared. Bradley had thought a lot of things out by then and was less surprised than exultant. The man was Dutch Gompert!

"And *that,*" said Gompert, looking toward the table, "is the dumbbell that's had these hick hill-counties buffaloed! The wise guy! Couldn't he be grabbed off easy, though? Wasn't I right?"

"He's got the gun wedged there, somehow," the woman complained in the querulous voice of Red Riding Hood.

"Hell of a lot of good the gun is to him!" scoffed Gompert. He stood scratching his chin. "Just about ready to roll up and sink," he added with a flat laugh. "It's a lot neater this way, Gwen. When the water's deep enough, it's a swell way to get rid of a guy you

don't like around. No blood, no dirt—just, *plop!*—and he's gone for good."

The woman moved closer to Bradley.

"I don't like the idea of him having that gun on him," she murmured. "*You* get it, why don't you? If he comes out of it—"

"He won't," Dutch said. "Not a chance. The Crow knows more about dope than half the doctors. This boy friend'll be in the drink before he's due to rise and chirp." He walked to the wall phone. "The first thing to do is call Little Moose and take a load off Scudder's mind."

Directly after that the wall phone tinkled. Gompert called for a number and got it.

"Scudder?" he asked. "Everything's jake at Gwen's, Scud. Yeah, he came and he fell. I mean it. He's here, dead to the world. I'll be bringing him over."

Gompert hung up and turned from the phone.

"Now I'll unharness your prize bull," he said.

He took one step toward Bradley and stopped short with a strangled oath. The blond screamed. The gray figure was no longer slumping, but erect in the chair and the police positive was out of its holster leveled at the end of a steady gray arm.

"Be careful how you take hold of the pistol, Gompert," recommended Bradley, eyes wide open. "The end aimed your way is hot!"

CHAPTER X

Road Closed!

SOMEWHERE or other, Dutch Gompert had got another gun to replace the one Bradley had taken from him at the lakeside bungalow. It was in his shoulder holster now—but it was Bradley who drew it, his own pistol jabbing hard into Gompert's ribs.

Then his handcuffs flashed out. A moment later he shoved Dutch back into the closet, the blond woman safely manacled to him and passionately accusing him of responsibility for the upset. He turned a key on their vitriolic quarrel and pocketed it. The door was a heavy one. They'd stay put.

Now what? Ahead of him lay the chance of a single-handed capture out at Little Moose Lake, a spectacular grab, the walloping thrill of a big job done without help. Scudder being there meant that Thorne Duncan's little girl was there. Capture, rescue and the salvaging of Morton Wendover's career in politics—a one-man accomplishment!

But he couldn't chance it. He didn't have the right to. They'd certainly put up a fight against one lone trooper, might get him before he got them. Against a big posse, though, they'd see they didn't have a show. What was he to consider—glory for himself or safety for the kid?

No argument there. To hell with glory!

When he called High Acres on Gwen's telephone and exploded his bombshell of news, he was throwing glory out the window. Duncan, wildly excited, called the Governor into consultation while Bradley held the wire. Then Wendover was on the line, his voice crisp.

"Good work, Bradley! Damned good work! I've got a road map in front of me, and if the kidnapers are at Little Moose lake we can bottle 'em up. One posse going in from Holtsville and another coming west from

Fairchild will do it. I'm phoning both places at once. You pick up the Holtsville posse at the crossroad and take charge. Duncan and I will be with the other one."

Bradley didn't have to go to the crossroad to pick up the Holtsville posse. They had to come by the Ketchum homestead, and when they did he sent his two handcuffed prisoners back to the Holtsville jail in one of the half dozen cars.

The storm had broken then and a driving sleet stung his face as he led his score of armed special deputies over the hill road. At half past one he was looking down for the second time that night at Little Moose Lake and a lighted bungalow. Now a big sedan stood outside the house.

He had halted the posse behind the brow of the last hill. The people from Fairchild, who were to come in around the lake from the west, weren't in sight yet.

He waited until he saw the first pair of headlights on the shore road before he signaled his drivers and kicked the motorcycle into action.

Down in the bungalow the approaching headlights caused a sudden flurry. Speeding down the hill, Bradley saw dark figures piling into the sedan. That didn't worry him then; the sedan wasn't going anywhere.

But it did go somewhere. Blocked from both directions as he started his engine, the driver had made a wild sweep and plunged wildly into a narrow wood-road that came in near the bungalow. That was a road too obscure to be marked on the map, so little used that even Bradley had forgotten its existence.

Desperate, he swung into it after the fleeing machine, his posse stringing out behind him. The sedan had a lead of a couple of hundred yards and held it. That road had never been built for a motorcycle speedway. The best Bradley could do was hang on.

A MILE north of the lake the machine gun opened on him. He gave himself up as the branches began to snap about him, but the gun went silent after the first burst. Jammed, he hoped. If it wasn't, he'd be riding to his finish. He was on that sedan's tail to stay until the bitter end.

That narrow, winding road had to go somewhere, and eventually, just as the machine gun started spouting lead again, it got there—got there so suddenly that the sedan went crazily sliding on the sleety cement of the highway into which it poured itself.

Bradley thought for a horrified instant that the big car was going to turn over with Duncan's baby in it. He had a flash of her white face and scared eyes as he whizzed past the rocking car.

At that speed and on such pavement he couldn't stop, once he had shot into the highway.

The sedan, righting itself, had made a complete turn. It was behind him as he braked down—behind him, and coming. Back of it the lights of the first of the fleet of pursuit cars racing through the wood-road shone bright on the wet concrete.

Bradley opened his throttle, warned to get going by the renewed rattle of the machine gun. It had been cleared somewhere along the wood-road and now he was being peppered from the rear.

When he dared look back, he had put a quarter mile between him and the sedan. Another quarter mile back he could see first one car and then another

of the pursuing fleet skid into the highway and straighten out to the chase.

He knew this road, knew exactly where he was on it. It was a straightaway cut, just opened this year, between Barlows and the village of Lansdowne in the next county. Barlows lay twenty-odd miles ahead, and there was nothing else ahead short of Barlows but a railroad crossing and an invisible county line.

Bradley did some lightning calculating while he was pulling out of machine-gun range. There was an all-night garage at Barlows, a favorite stop with truckmen. If there were several trucks there tonight, could he possibly get to Barlows far enough ahead of the kidnapers so there'd be time for him to swing out the trucks across their path and block them at the edge of town?

Holding them for just a couple of minutes would be enough to cook their goose, for some of the pursuit cars were almost as speedy as the sedan. They weren't being left behind fast now, and they'd certainly keep plugging along.

His motorcycle, hands down, was faster than anything on four wheels not built for the race-track. He could cover five miles to the sedan's four. How much time would that give him in Barlows to organize his blockade? Enough? And would enough trucks be there?

They'd *have* to be, he grimly told himself. Beyond Barlows lay the big woods—safety for the kidnapers, and either death for the child or political ruin for the Governor. Once the sedan had plunged into that maze of forest extending deep into Canada, police alarms would mean nothing. And short of the big woods the posse would be hopelessly outdistanced and he himself out of gas and out of the chase.

IT was a slim chance, but the best chance—the only chance he could see then. A few minutes after he had let out his final notch of speed, though, he was debating another chance that flashed to his mind as the hoot of a distant whistle came to him over the hills. That was the night train, Canada-bound, whistling at the Canada Pike crossing five miles east. In just five minutes that long string of Pullmans would be reaching this road.

The crossing was still several miles ahead, he didn't know exactly how many. But if he could get there in time, could in any way manage to flag the flyer—what a barricade!

He threw another glance over his shoulder from the top of the long hill. The sedan was far behind him now, and the pursuit still gamely coming along in the remoter distance.

A long chance, but worth a try! It was a time for long chances and for desperate ones. Splashing, mud-covered, sleet-beaten, Bradley made for the crossing. Squarely in the middle of it, he stopped the motorcycle and kicked it up on its stand, back to the panting locomotive just letting go another blast at the whistle post for this crossing. The train was a quarter mile away. Exactly a quarter mile. That was always the distance from whistle post to crossing.

Yes—or no? Would the flyer stop, or wouldn't it? That tail light of his, thought of at the last moment, wasn't a very bright light. But it was a red light—and didn't red mean, "*Stop?*"

It did. Or else the engineer had seen the motorcycle, apparently stalled on the tracks, at the same time he saw the tail light on rounding the curve.

Behind Bradley as the great spotlight hit him, powerful air-brakes were screeching.

But the Limited kept coming. He stayed where he was, engine racing, until it was no more than a hundred yards away, still plowing on. Then it was time to move. He did move, but he didn't get off the track. Suddenly he had realized what would probably happen if he did. The engineer would curse him out of the cab window and pick up speed, and the flyer would go on.

He didn't mean to let it go on. Not now. Not when another grip of the brakes would halt it.

Not when that big sedan racing down at the crossing was *this* close to being stopped!

Jaw set, motorcycle crazily bouncing, Bradley went up the track over the ties. Ten yards. Twenty yards. Thirty. And the Limited, brakes again grinding, was blowing its hot breath down his neck, traveling faster than he could.

He knew it would stop then. His job was done. Desperately he jerked his handlebar at the precise instant when he felt his rear wheel lifting on that triangle of death jutting out from the locomotive's prow, and he and the motorcycle went plunging down the embankment together.

Half way down it, something hard hit his head and the world went black.

He was chewing a mouthful of cinders when he opened his eyes a few minutes later. Duncan and the Governor were on their knees beside him, and many others were crowding behind them.

"We got them, trooper, thanks to you!" Wendover said. "Got all three of them—and the baby—without firing a shot."

Bradley sat up. His head hurt like sin, but nothing seemed to be broken. Duncan seized his hand, tried to say something and couldn't. A man in overalls then bent over him.

"I'm the engineer, trooper," he said. "I wanted to tell yuh that when I see that red light, first off, I—"

Bradley spat out some cinders.

"Well, anyway," he said, "it's a green light now!"

The Terror of Marseilles

ONE of the most notorious and picturesque of French criminals was the monster, Jean Cavaillac. Richard Wilmer Rowan, author of the Kurt Zorn spy series, tells Cavaillac's astounding story in next week's DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. Read "The Scourge of 'The Terror.'"

The Headless Idol

A Novelette

By Sidney Herschel Small

A Dying Man, a Headless Idol and the Flight of a Bee Tell Wentworth a Tale of Frightful Crime and — Kong Gail

Someone drove a knife into the high-binder's throat

CHAPTER I

The Missing Children

"AND what I don't know, I can't tell you," said Captain Dunand, attempting honestly to answer the shrewd queries of the reporters as he sat behind his desk in San Francisco's Hall of Justice. He went on doggedly, "You boys seem to think I'm trying to get out of making an arrest. That ought to make you happy, because as long as the Whitcomb case remains unsolved, your papers can keep on calling me a doddering old fool—"

"Then you refuse to admit that Whitcomb and his three children are victims of a gang outrage?" demanded the *News-Call* reporter. "You refuse to admit that they are being held for ransom? You refuse to admit—"

"I'm not admitting what I don't know," persisted the gray-haired captain of detectives. "Not if you keep after me all day, boys."

The *Enquirer* man drawled, "We've been after you six days, cap, and you haven't come across with one printable line. You play with us, and we'll play with you. The public have a right to know what's being done to clear up Whitcomb's disappearance. They're pretty worked up about it, too. A man and three youngsters can't vanish without leaving some sort of clew—"

Captain Dunand stared out of the window, and blinked as the last rays

of sun glinted off the roofs of Chinatown and were reflected into his eyes. He said finally, "I agree with you, Haynes. I don't want to fool anybody, except the criminals involved in the case. The department had one clew, and gave it to you."

"The fellow who came to Whitcomb's office and threatened him?"

"That's the man. Martin Cravens."

"Well," insisted Haynes, "how about finding him in time for my next edition?"

Dunand said wearily, "I told you boys that if you plastered his name all over the front pages he'd go into hiding."

"Well, how 'bout the chauffeur of Whitcomb's machine, cap? He'd do to keep our jobs for us."

Dunand was about to reply that the department was making every effort to find the missing chauffeur when he heard a whisper, followed by a laugh. He asked abruptly, "What's funny, Haynes? Let us in on it."

"I just said it was too bad it wasn't a couple of elephants your dicks were looking for, cap. They could probably find a pair of elephants, provided the animals stayed on Market Street—"

Leaning back in his chair, Dunand said, "Let's go over this thing, boys. And"—solemnly—"anything I may say isn't for publication. Right?"

The oldest reporters pledged their words with a quiet, "Shoot, captain."

"Six days ago," Dunand began, "Ronald Whitcomb left his house and went to his office. He arrived at nine o'clock, about. A few minutes later the man Martin Cravens, a clerk at the Consolidated Oil, came to see him. There was an argument. It seems that Cravens had bought stock on Whitcomb's say so, and lost his shirt. Cravens said some dangerous words; he was heard to say them by people in the outer office."

"We know all this, cap!"

"Wait. Let me finish, Haynes. Cravens leaves, promising to get even. At a few minutes past ten, Whitcomb's own car takes him away.

"Then we learn that somebody telephoned his home, ordering the three children to come to Maginn-Duane's, the department store, and meet their father. The children are taken there in a taxi—"

"What taxi, cap?"

"Not the one phoned for," said Dunand, "because the maid at the house said a second cab came, a few minutes after the first one. Let me go ahead, boys, will you? You know all this, anyhow.

"THE cab didn't go to the department store, so far as we can learn. Whitcomb is gone. His three children are gone. It looks like the work of a number of men, but there's been no demand yet for ransom. Martin Cravens couldn't do it by himself. He's only a clerk, and, as you boys've found out, a fellow with a good reputation.

"Whitcomb's chauffeur is also an honest man; been with him eleven years. So I tell you that it looks to me like the work of a gang of men, just as you fellows have been trying to get me to say, but"—his big finger waving at the listeners—"I want it to appear as if all suspicion is on this man Cravens! If he's in with a gang, I want 'em to push him forward when the time comes for dickerin'. In other words, boys, I want the department to appear dumb, and according to you fellows that ought to be easy."

"Do you realize, cap, that you've not told us a single new fact?"

"I've never lied to you, boys, and I'm not starting to do it now!"

The *News-Call* man said thoughtfully, "We've all printed stories that it looks like a gang outrage, captain."

"Sure. But the department hasn't backed up your statements."

Haynes said suddenly, "We're not blaming you, cap, but our city editors are all riding us to get some sort of story. Here's an idea. Why don't you put Wentworth on the case? It would let us print a lot of hooey, and we'd get by with it, and in the meantime put the real gang clear off any notion that they're suspected. Let us cook up a tale about the trail leading to Chinatown! We can use Wentworth's photograph, and rehash some of the stories about arrests he's made. Be a good guy, cap. All you got to say is 'Sergeant Wentworth has been assigned to the Whitcomb case' and we'll do all the necessary fiction writing."

"Wentworth's only the patrolman on the Chinatown beat," said Dunand.

"I'll leave it to the boys."

"You said it," agreed the newspaper men in chorus.

Dunand instantly attempted to retreat behind his last line of defense: "Then I wasn't talking for publication," he growled.

"No go," the veteran police reporter decided fairly. "You're protected in anything you said about the Whitcomb case, but this came later. If Haynes wishes to use it, he can. We all can, and we all probably will, because we haven't anything else to turn in. It makes a good yarn, and can't do any harm."

"If I assign Wentworth to the case for one day, does that satisfy you?"

"One minute'll satisfy me," grunted Haynes. "Now, call Wentworth up here, and let us talk to him."

Dunand was trapped, and knew it. He reached for his desk telephone, and said into the transmitter, "Chinatown squadron. Manning? Dunand. Is Sergeant Wentworth in? He is? Tell him I want him. Eh? Yes, I'll speak to him on the phone first—"

There was a pause, and then the captain of detectives said, "Hullo, sergeant. I want . . . hullo . . . oh, it's you, Manning? What? Busy? Well, let me talk to him on the phone. There're some newspaper men here, and they want a word about the Whitcomb case."

Silence again; when Dunand said, "I'm listening, Manning. He said . . . what? Oh, he said that, did he? Hmm, well, well, well." A slow grin was spreading over the gray-haired captain's stolid face. "Very well, Manning," he concluded. "Just say to the sergeant that I'll wait for him here."

HAYNES was looking at his watch. "Have him make it snappy," he said, as Dunand replaced the telephone. "I've got a suburban edition to make, cap."

"Sergeant Wentworth said he was busy," said Dunand placidly.

"Say, who's in charge of the bureau? You, or Wentworth? How long've I got to wait?"

"It takes a long time for boiling water to freeze," Dunand told him calmly.

"Meaning Wentworth said I could wait until hell froze over?"

The gray-haired captain of detectives said softly, "Something like that."

"Put into words, Wentworth isn't coming up to let us talk to him, and you are not assigning him to this case!"

"Something like that," repeated Dunand, smiling broadly. He watched

Haynes scrawl a few words on paper, and then said, "And that isn't news, is it?"

"Want to hear what I'm phoning to my office? 'Dunand refuses to assign Detective-Sergeant James Wentworth to Whitcomb case. Detective bureau apathetic.' And what will the Police Commission say to that, cap?"

"I haven't refused to assign Wentworth to this case, have I?"

The oldest of the police reporters took charge.

"Captain," he said, "we aren't getting anywhere. We aren't getting any news, and you aren't getting the abductors of Whitcomb and his youngsters—"

"Who said we weren't?" demanded the captain.

Every reporter put two and two together. Several of them stood up.

"Where're you going now?" Dunand asked.

"To telephone our papers that Wentworth has uncovered a clew!"

Dunand said urgently, "Boys, he . . . he hasn't uncovered anything. Be reasonable!" The honest eyes of the captain clouded, and then he went on glibly, "Wentworth's only checking on some data just brought in—"

"What data?"

And so the wise chief of the detective bureau began to lie for one of the few times in his life: "We picked up a vag, just a little while ago, boys. I'll give you his name in a minute. He was standing outside the Whitcomb Building, and he saw a big green touring car with the side curtains all on, and while the machine was in front of the building he thought he heard a child cry, and then Whitcomb came down, very excited, and got in the green touring car, and . . ."

Three full minutes it took the captain to complete his fairy story. When he had finished, and the reporters had hurried out to get in touch with their various city desks, Dunand lifted the telephone again.

He was connected with the Chinatown squad room, and said to his sergeant of detectives in charge of the Chinatown detail:

"I've done more lying this evening than I've ever done before, Jimmy. It's safe for you to come up now, boy. And if you haven't picked up a real clew—which is why I lied, to keep you and whatever you've found out away from the papers until we get a chance to act—I'm going to send you out to the Sunset district where you can pick buttercups!"

CHAPTER II

Wentworth's Clew

IT was only a few minutes before a lean young man in the uniform of a patrolman stepped quietly into the captain's office. It was only a few minutes, but in that time Dunand had firmly denied the pleas of two city editors, who wanted pictures of the "vagrant" who was supposed to have seen the abduction, and who promised all sort of influence being brought to bear on the captain's gray head when the requests were refused.

The Whitcomb case had been on the front page for just a day short of a week. The city was aroused, not only because of the disappearance of the wealthy Whitcomb, head of the brokerage house bearing his name, but also because of the obvious abduction of the small Whitcomb children. Rumors—terrible rumors—were on every lip. In the meantime the police were not able to produce the man Cravens, who had threatened Whitcomb the morning of

the disappearance, nor to find the Whitcomb automobile and its chauffeur. There was flaming talk, aided and abetted by the newspapers, which the administration did not find pleasing. Coals were constantly being dropped on Dunand's head—and he could do nothing about it save keep after his men. Almost the entire department was on the Ronald Whitcomb case, but not a man had learned a single essential fact, nor picked up the trail of the clerk Cravens.

It was freely admitted that Cravens had just cause for anger against Whitcomb. The millionaire broker had advised Cravens to buy several varieties of stocks—or Whitcomb's office had advised it, which was the same thing—and Cravens had lost his savings. But that was not unusual. Many others were in the same fix, and through no real fault of Whitcomb's. Had Cravens taken a good punch at the broker, San Francisco would have said, "Served him right!" and laughed about it. But kidnapping three children, as well as Whitcomb himself, was a different matter.

The department was baffled. Here was what appeared an obvious crime, with the criminal known, and yet they were unable to produce the man.

All of this was in Dunand's mind as he said, "Sit down, Jimmy. I've lied hot and heavy to give you time, lad. Now, let's hear what you've picked up."

Wentworth said soberly, "Yes, sir. It isn't much, but it's a clew—"

"It'd better be," Dunand snapped. "Or the department'll be in a fine mess. I'll be the judge. What is it?"

The youthful sergeant of detectives reached into his trousers pocket, and as he withdrew his hand said gravely. "I'm afraid I'll have to be the judge, sir. It's in my line . . . this is it."

"That? What's that?"

Dunand stared at the object in Wentworth's hand.

It was small, no larger than an apple, which, at first glance, it resembled. A closer look showed that it was the body of an idol of some strange god, with the arms folded, and the legs drawn up. The image was of carved wood, and very old; so old that the surface was smooth, brown, and polished.

WENTWORTH slowly turned the curious little talisman between his fingers, so Dunand could see where the head had been. Here the wood was much lighter in color, as if it had not been exposed long to the air, nor been handled much. And where the head of the idol had been severed, there was painted three tiny white flowers, no larger than the heads of matches, but delicately, beautifully done.

"That's your clew?" Dunand said wearily. "That's why I lied for you?"

Wentworth said swiftly, "That's it, chief."

"I suppose," the captain went on bitterly, "you found it in Chinatown, rolling along the gutter? Or—"

"I took it away from a *bo' how doy* who was hop-crazy, sir. If you'd seen him fight when I found it—"

"You mean fight because he was full of hop!"

"—you'd have known yourself that it was important," Wentworth finished.

The captain stared at him, and then laughed shortly.

"I'll get you a radio job, Jimmy," he said. "Bed-time stories. But tell it to me. Maybe I can give it to the reporters! It's a wilder yarn than I gave 'em, and I didn't think that was possible."

Wentworth stroked the image.

"An idol is beheaded only when a kidnapping has been accomplished," Jimmy said softly. "The kidnapper himself does it, for several reasons. It prevents the god of Life from seeing where the kidnapped person is taken. It prevents the gods of evil from enacting vengeance on the kidnappers. And, lastly, it's supposed to protect the kidnappers from capture, which, in China means they'll be beheaded with dull knives, because everyone in China wants to see kidnappers h a r s h l y and painfully treated—"

"And because of this you want me to believe that Whitcomb was abducted by Chinese!"

"I don't know about Whitcomb," said the sergeant of detectives who had spent his youth in China, "but I'll swear anywhere that the three little white flowers painted on the neck of the idol represent three children, and three white children at that."

For a long moment Dunand stared at the curious, outlandish headless idol in Jimmy Wentworth's hands, and then he snapped to action:

"What's the Chink say?" he roared. Forgetting that he knew no word of Chinese, and that only Wentworth spoke the dialects like a native, Dunand shouted, "Bring him up here! I'll talk to him! I'll find out where the Whitcomb children are! I'll . . . I'll . . . what'd he say?"

"He's dead, chief," Wentworth said.

"What? Did he talk?"

"You'd better let me explain, sir. I was finishing my beat, with an eye on Number Eighteen Eleven Waverley, because there's been hop sold there, when I heard a racket. Some Chinese were attempting to persuade another Chinaman—this one I found—not to go somewhere. He was so full of dope—that is, he wasn't past the dream stage, and wasn't out cold—that they couldn't do anything with him. He rushed out, and I thought I'd have a look-see just why they didn't want him going places.

"I stopped him—and it took a gun in his belly to do it . . ."

Dunand could see what had happened. Wentworth in a dark doorway. The 'binder, drug-crazed, leaping down a rickety stairway and into the street, murderous, deadly, to anyone who would confront him. Wentworth stepping before the Asiatic, gun out. A few sharp words, the flash of a knife . . .

"You shot him, Jim?"

"No," Wentworth said quietly. "I took his knife away from him, and intended to book him as disorderly, just as an example to the hop-joints to keep their customers inside until they'd slept it off, when some other Chino slipped up, and before I had a chance to shift my grip, he drove a knife into my man's throat . . . and that's hatchet-man-way of saying 'Nobody talk!'"

"Get the murderer?"

Jimmy Wentworth said. "He was gone before I could get blood out of my eyes."

INTO Dunand's eyes crept momentarily a look of fear, the fear of the unknown, of the mysteries of Chinatown, which only his youthful sergeant fully understood.

"Ah," said the captain. And next, "The dead man, Jimmy . . . was he . . ."

"One of Kong Gai's hatchetmen? No! That's the curious part of it. My guess is that he's a new *bo' how doy*, earning his spurs, and not considered bad enough to be a brother of the snake. Some real Cobra knifed him, to make sure he didn't talk . . . and there's my clew."

"Put in simple words, you're trying

to tell me that Kong Gai has a hand in the Ronald Whitcomb case?"

Wentworth said, "I'm telling you, chief, that the dead man had a hand in kidnapping three white children."

"Rubbish! If Kong Gai were kidnapping for money, he wouldn't take the father, too!"

Jimmy Wentworth looked out of the window. He said thoughtfully. "Not in America. But in China, chief, when ransom is demanded, one of the favorite ways of getting it is to take two people—a man and his father, for example, and . . . I hate to say it! . . . and torture the father until . . . the son is willing to pay any amount. And . . . well, you can see how this might be . . ."

Shivering, Dunand said, "You mean they'd torture Whitcomb's children until the father, Ronald Whitcomb, would pay? I . . . of course you mean it. Kong Gai! It's the sort of thing he'd do! But why should he pick Whitcomb? There are wealthier men in the city. Whitcomb's rich, but there're others with more money. Why Whitcomb, Jimmy?"

"I thought about that," Jimmy Wentworth admitted. "The only answer I can give is that shown in Whitcomb's list of customers. You had a copy of that, sir, and I looked it over. There are a few Chinese names on that list. Kong Gai might have had Whitcomb's house invest money, and have lost it in the crash, and this is Kong Gai's way of getting both money and revenge . . ."

"I'll tear C h i n a t o w n apart," Dunand growled.

"And scare 'em somewhere else," Wentworth said. "Not that I have anything to suggest, chief. All I can do is to keep my eyes open. And I'm grateful that you kept the newspaper boys away. One hint that Kong Gai is involved, and the lives of the four, father and children, won't be worth the price of a flower like those painted on the idol's neck . . ."

While Dunand's brows drew together, as the keen old captain fought to find some plan, Wentworth held the headless idol under the light on Dunand's desk.

"Look at the little tiny lines painted on the petals of the flowers, sir," he said. "The Chinese are marvelous artists, aren't they?"

"I don't give a damn what kind of artists they are! And neither should you, Jimmy Wentworth!"

"I was just wondering—"

The telephone rang sharply; Dunand answered it with his customary: "Dunand. Who's this?" and then listened.

If Wentworth had not been bent over his strange wooden idol, he would have seen his chief's face change from inattention to surprise, to astonishment, and then to fierce satisfaction. Dunand listened intently, and then said, "We'll be right there. Nobody's to see him. We're on our way."

Dunand stood up happily.

"Kong Gai," he chuckled. "Kidnapping. Baloney. Here's the end of the Whitcomb case! Ronald Whitcomb's in the Forest Park Hospital, Jimmy. Mulloy phoned. Found him 'dazed.' Blah! I'll bet his accounts are all wet, and he's been usin' customers' money. We got Whitcomb, and I'll bet he took his three children with him and intended to run off and then got cold feet about taking a trip to Peru. Dazed! Hooey! And you, Jimmy Wentworth, and your three flowers!"

Wentworth looked up, almost as if he hadn't heard the gleeful speech.

"Now, what's the matter?" demanded his chief.

"I was wondering why the petals of the flowers are marked, veined, the wrong way. When you look closely, the tiny black lines, the veins, are painted like those on . . . well, on a bee's wing."

"A bee's left ear," suggested the jubilant captain of detectives. "You been taking hop, too, Jimmy? Come along with me. A breath of air'll do you good. Maybe it'll make you stop dreaming about Kong Gai."

CHAPTER III

The Man the Bees Stung

OFFICER MULLOY was standing on the fourth floor of the hospital, trying to appear as if he didn't realize that the nurse at the desk was red-headed, pretty, and Irish, and as if he had forgotten that at home there were seven little Mulloys, and Nora herself, who would stand for no nonsense.

He saluted briskly as Dunand and Wentworth stepped from the noiseless elevator, hoping that the nurse could see the breadth of his shoulders.

"Found him wanderin' on Forest Parkway, sir," he said. "Red in the face he was, and that's no lie, but whether it's drinking he was I couldn't say. He was goin' this way and that, and I says, 'Think shame to yourself, man, out on a street where th' children is playin'. But he only looks at me. At first I thinks he's far gone in a drunken spree, and then I see his eyes. And like no human eyes was they, sir! And—"

"And you brought him here," said Dunand crisply.

"No other way could he have come, sir. For he fell right down before me eyes, he did, and I stop the first machine I see, and—"

"Good work, officer. Which room is Whitcomb in?"

"The one behind me, sir. But a nurse says he's a very sick man, sir, or I'd have verified me suspicions—"

Dunand said sharply, "You aren't positive it's Whitcomb?"

Officer Mulloy drew himself up.

"And don't he live on this beat, sir? Many's the time I see him being drove home from work. I meant me suspicions about th' drink an' all—"

Dunand nodded, looking about. He said, "There's a nurse, officer. Please ask her to go into Whitcomb's room and tell the doctor I'm here, and that I want to see Whitcomb immediately."

Nothing loath, Mulloy marched to the little alcoved desk and delivered the captain's request. The nurse first telephoned her superintendent for permission to enter the sick room for the police, and, being given this, hurried across the hall. She reappeared in a moment and spoke briefly to Mulloy, who trudged back to his superiors.

"She says will you come with her to th' room," said Mulloy. "An' she says he's a sick man, is Mr. Whitcomb. And"—grinning broadly—"she wants to know if th' young felly, bein' you, sarge, is a college boy workin' on th' force for experience, an' I didn't have th' heart t' tell her what a tough felly you are."

Jimmy Wentworth glanced swiftly at the pretty nurse, and her heightened color told him that she knew Mulloy had repeated what she had said.

The two detectives followed her into the sick room.

On the bed lay a man in middle years. His face was gray, what little the men from Headquarters could see. Most of it, and the entire fore-

head, was covered with what appeared to be thick towels, but were ice bags.

One hand was visible, and Wentworth's first impression was that the skin must have been immersed in water, for drops stood out on it.

It was obvious that Whitcomb was indeed a man in peril of death.

A DOCTOR and interne were drawing blood from the exposed arm, with several nurses assisting. The operation was completed, and the bandaging finished, before the house doctor had one of the girls strip off his rubber gloves. He said, "Have fresh ones ready. One of these broke," and then came to the detectives.

"From what the officer said, I understand this is Ronald Whitcomb," Dr. Lyle said quietly. "The hospital has already put in a call for his personal physician, but we didn't dare wait for his arrival. Whitcomb is in bad shape, sir."

"My name's Dunand," said the grim captain. "This is one of my sergeants. First thing; Whitcomb will recover?"

"Probably. Thanks to your officer, captain. By bringing him here promptly, he undoubtedly saved his life."

Wentworth asked, "What is wrong with him?"

"Heat apoplexy, I believe. You call it sunstroke, sergeant. Whitcomb's a heavy, full blooded man. They are most susceptible. Especially if they've been subjected to any kind of physical or mental strain."

"Never heard of anyone in San Francisco being sun struck," Dunand muttered.

"It isn't entirely a matter of heat, captain. He may have been wandering aimlessly about without a hat, you know—"

"Had he been drinking?"

"I shouldn't say so."

"You are positive of your diagnosis?" Wentworth questioned.

The doctor smiled. "Just about as positive as is ever possible," he countered. "The man is unconscious. Spasmodic, jerky breathing. Hands and face cold to the touch, but, as you can see, covered with excessive perspiration. Flickering pulse. Dr. Jaynes finds faint heart beats, about a hundred and thirty to the minute. Pupils insensitive to the light. All the signs of heat apoplexy. We've bled him, and packed his head in ice. In my opinion, he ought to recover."

Dunand said briefly, "Sounds logical. You ought to know."

"Has he been conscious at all?" Wentworth asked.

"No, sergeant. Nor will he be for a day or so. He will lie there without movement whatsoever. That's typical of sunstroke."

"Do any harm if I looked carefully through his clothes?" Wentworth asked in the same level tone.

"Not the slightest. I'll have Dr. Jaynes and a nurse see that his arm is not disturbed. Help yourself, sergeant."

Dunand understood what his subordinate was after; some shred of clew which might indicate that Whitcomb had been abducted, or had not been abducted. Something to tell of the whereabouts of the children. He nodded agreement to Wentworth's unasked question, feeling that the matter should be cleared up immediately.

Jimmy Wentworth stepped to the side of the high metal bed on which Whitcomb lay, covered only with a rubber sheet, which was drawn down. The broker still wore his shirt, so hastily had the hospital people applied

first aid for sunstroke, and before Wentworth began his investigation he looked about for coat and vest.

"In the closet," a nurse told him.

"Please get it," Wentworth requested. No sense in disturbing the unconscious man at all if the upper garment would reveal what he sought.

The youthful sergeant of the Chinatown squad had his hand in the inner coat pocket when he heard a strangled cry, terrible in the silent room, followed instantly by an ejaculation of surprise from one of the doctors. Wentworth turned round instantly to look.

Whitcomb's mouth was open now. His eyes were open also. A horrible rigidity had straightened his arms and legs.

THE sick man groaned deeply, and before Dr. Lyle could take the hypodermic which an attentive nurse was handing him, Whitcomb began to shout incoherently, to rave and toss his arms and shoulders about on the bed. Nurses and doctors hastened to hold him down as he struggled, and then Dr. Lyle shot the needle home. For a full minute more Whitcomb struggled furiously, crying out a jumble of meaningless words which ended in a shriek:

"No more!"

And then complete silence, as the powerful drug stopped the raving.

Whitcomb's face now was as gray as ever, and the man lay as if dead.

"Well," said Dr. Lyle. "Well. Another diagnosis gone to the devil." He growled a long string of orders, and the room became very active as the interne and nurses hurried to put them into effect.

Wentworth said quietly, "So it isn't sunstroke, doctor?"

"It is not," Dr. Lyle told him soberly. "Not when he acts in such a manner." He looked at his watch. "I wish Dr. Henderson—Whitcomb's physician—would hurry and get here. Because—"

"Because you think the man is not going to recover?" broke in Dunand shrewdly.

Dr. Lyle shrugged.

"I've done enough guessing," he said briefly.

"Will you guess what is wrong?" Jimmy Wentworth suggested.

"Don't need to guess—now," said the physician. "Not about that. I know. It's a rare case, gentlemen, and between ourselves there isn't much we can do about it. To put it plainly, Whitcomb is going to die from insect stings."

"What?" grunted Dunand. "First you said sunstroke, and now you talk about bugs!"

"Not bugs. Wasps."

"Or bees?" Jimmy Wentworth said softly.

"Or bees," agreed the medical man. "Either one. The early symptoms are exactly the same as heat apoplexy. Exactly, when there are no swellings, and that's often the case. Now you'll excuse me, please. There are a lot of things we can try, and we'll try them all, but Ronald Whitcomb is going to die without recovering consciousness just the same."

Captain Dunand stared at the dying man, and from him to Wentworth. No word was passed, but both were thinking the selfsame thing. That the petals of the little white flowers painted on the headless idol were veined in black like the wings of bees—and the image had been found on the body of a *bo' how doy*—a Chinese 'binder, a killer, a hatchetman, who had himself been

murdered before he could say a word to anyone.

CHAPTER IV

The Charge Is—Murder

THE first extras were out by the time Dunand and Wentworth returned to the Hall of Justice, after having left word at the hospital to be informed of Whitcomb's death, or any change in his condition. Dr. Henderson, Whitcomb's own physician, had agreed with the second diagnosis of the hospital medical men, and agreed also that chance for recovery was almost impossible. All the physicians were positive that Whitcomb would not recover consciousness, but just the same Dunand had not left until two men from the department were in the room, ready to take down any word, and, if possible, to ask the questions Wentworth had told them to ask.

The headlines just about told the story:

WHITCOMB FOUND; CHILDREN STILL MISSING

MILLIONAIRE IN DAZE AT LOCAL HOSPITAL

POLICE REFUSE TO ALLOW WEALTHY BROKER TO TALK

Which Ronald Whitcomb, at death's door, couldn't possibly have done, but which held off the newspapers as to the manner of the broker's dying for a few hours.

Down in Captain Dunand's office, gray haired chief and black haired sergeant sat staring at the envelope they had taken from Whitcomb's pocket. They had already read the letter a dozen times. It was typewritten on fine paper, with the sheet cut in half to remove a letterhead or address, and said:

> The enclosed check, signed by myself, is to be honored when presented for payment by any official of the Whitcomb Investment Company. The check is to be cashed in five and ten dollar bills, and these are to be taken to whichever place is designated at a later date. If the police accompany the person bringing the ransom money, when he is told where to bring it, my children will be put to death. It is my order and wish that these requirements be exactly carried out.

The communication was signed by Whitcomb. The check, attached to the letter, was for one hundred thousand dollars.

Dunand said slowly, "Not much to go on, Jimmy. We'll have men at the Whitcomb Company tomorrow. And tap their phones. Only . . ."

"Only you're a man," said Wentworth, "and you don't want the children hurt."

"No. I don't want them hurt, lad. You . . . you still think this means Kong Gai?"

"I do, chief. Now more than ever. No one save a fiend like that Chinese would send a father with the ransom note for his children, knowing full well that he would not be able to tell where the youngsters were. And what has been done to Whitcomb will make anyone anxious to get the children out of the hands of such monsters."

"I don't understand it," muttered the head of the detective bureau.

"According to the doctors, Whitcomb was stung and stung until he became almost unconscious. Somewhere along the line he signed the demand for ransom and the letter. Then the devils allowed him to partially recover consciousness, put him in a machine, let him off somewhere near his home while—according to the doctors—he could just stagger about, but was to all intents already a dead man."

"And if he hadn't raved, everyone would have thought he'd died from apoplexy!"

"There is no perfect crime," Wentworth said slowly. "At least, not yet. Given time, Kong Gai the Venomous One may find it. Through his opium sales, he has his coils about some renegade physician. That's sure. That's where he must've picked up the bee sting idea. He has his slimy coils everywhere, captain! He—"

THE telephone rang briskly, and Dunand said, "Damn reporters. Or a city editor. I hate to answer it."

He spoke gruffly into the receiver: "Dunand. Well?" and then said excitedly, "Splendid! Congratulations, sheriff! Bring him right up here!" As he hung up, he said to Wentworth, "Cravens's caught! Down in San Bernardino county! The sheriff's office kept it under cover, and they've got him downstairs now."

"And what good is that going to do?" Jimmy Wentworth demanded. "I suppose you think Cravens tortured Ronald Whitcomb?"

"No, but he might be a tool of a gang. Perhaps"—magnanimously—"Kong Gai's tool."

"If he were, you'd find him in the bay with his throat slit."

This time Wentworth reached for the telephone, for Dunand was snapping off the desk light, and pressing another button which would cause all the brightness in the room to fall on Cravens when he was brought in for examination; the Chinatown detective sergeant answered the ring with a voice so like his chief's that Dunand was forced to smile.

"Dunand," said Wentworth. "Well? Oh, hello, Williams . . . you did, eh? And it checks? Thanks. I'll tell the captain."

As the door opened, Wentworth said curtly, "Williams reports that the sample of ransom letter paper we gave him coincides with paper used by the people where Cravens worked, sir."

"Very good, sergeant," said Dunand.

The captain nodded to the three deputies and the under-sheriff who shoved a thin young man into the room. Not until the four, prisoner and captors, were in the spot of light did Dunand speak. He said, "I think it's safe to take off the handcuffs, boys."

"We took no chances, cap," said Undersheriff Egan. "Not with this boy."

"Tough, is he?"

"Say! He wouldn't come across with a word! We says, 'The sooner you tell us where Whitcomb and his kids is, the better it'll be, bud,' but the punk won't open his head."

"Why were you in San Bernardino?" Dunand asked quietly of the prisoner.

Cravens lifted his head. The eyes were circled with black, with fatigue, and the young man's face was very pale.

"You wouldn't believe me," he said at last.

Dunand looked out of the window. It was black outside now. High on a roof in Chinatown a lantern glowed, like the single eye of a five-legged dragon. Dunand carefully drew open a drawer of his desk, took out a box of cigars, and handed them about to the deputies. He selected one for himself, cut the end, was about to put it in his mouth, when he roared suddenly:

"Where are the children, Cravens?"

The prisoner shivered, but his eyes met the fierce gaze of the captain.

"I don't know," he said.

Dunand waved the ransom letter in front of Cravens.

"When did you write this?" he asked.

"I didn't write it."

"It is on paper from the company you worked for!"

Cravens bowed his head, but remained silent.

A third time the telephone rang, and again Wentworth answered it. He spoke now for the first time, gently; "The charge had better be changed, captain. From kidnapping to murder. Whitcomb is dead."

Dunand shifted ground subtly.

"You can be cleared of murder," he said to the frightened prisoner. "If you will give us the names of the gang, and tell where the Whitcomb children are, I will do my best with the District Attorney."

"I didn't kill Whitcomb," said the exhausted man, "and I didn't kidnap his children—"

"Give an account of your actions for the past six days."

"You won't believe it," repeated Cravens.

"Tell us anyhow," said Jimmy Wentworth.

THE accused man looked at him, seeing only a fellow no older than himself, in a patrolman's uniform.

"What's the use?" the prisoner muttered.

"Because I might believe you," Wentworth told him gravely.

Cravens' head was hanging; he looked so guilty that Dunand was about to roar at him again, and then the prisoner began to speak jerkily.

"I went to Whitcomb. I admit it. I'd given him three thousand dollars to invest. He put it in speculative stocks. I wanted bonds. I told him I'd . . . I'd . . ."

"You can leave out what you told him," said Jimmy Wentworth. "Because anything you say can be used against you. Tell us why you left the city."

"I didn't leave the city," blurted Cravens. "I was taken away! In a machine. I've been kept doped. You can see"—he pulled up a sleeve—"you can see where I've been doped!"

Wentworth did not intend asking who did it, lest the prisoner say, "Chinese," and the deputies repeat it outside the Hall of Justice. So he said, "And you came to in San Bernardino county?"

"I woke up on the side of a road, and that's all I know. I never even knew who took me away! I never heard them speak. I was blindfolded after they slugged me—"

"Where?"

"Just as I came out of the Whitcomb Building! I had walked to the curb, and turned around and shook my fist at the building. I wanted to tell the world what I thought of them all! I said something . . . crooks, you know . . . not very loudly, perhaps . . . and then just as I stopped, because there was a car at the curb, somebody said something I didn't catch, and I was banged over the head. That's all I remember, although I must have been yanked into the car—"

"Bull," growled one of the deputies. "Trying to tell us you were kidnapped yourself, on a downtown street!"

Wearily, Cravens said, "I knew nobody'd believe me. I remember, too, that when I shook my fist toward the building there didn't seem to be many people in sight; a couple of men and women walking the other way, with their backs in my direction, but no one saw me shake my fist—"

"One person saw you," said Jimmy

Wentworth. "A person I'm looking for myself."

"You mean—you know—who hit me? Who carried me out of the city? Who got me in this terrible mess?"

"When we find him, we'll find the same man who killed Whitcomb and stole the children."

THE deputies stared at the lithe, youthful figure in patrolman's blue. Finally Undersheriff Egan blurted, "You can't talk us out of th' reward for th' kids' recovery like that, off'cer! Cravens is guilty as hell. He threatened Whitcomb, didn't he? He wrote th' ransom note on his company's stationery, didn't he? He ran away, didn't he? We caught him, and there's a five thousand dollar reward for doin' it—and it's goin' to be ours!"

"You're wrong," Wentworth said.

"We'll see what the newspapers say about it! I kept the capture quiet to give you city bulls a chance to make some more arrests, maybe, but now I'll tell what I know. Then see where you get off if you let Cravens go!"

"We aren't letting him go," the Chinatown detective-sergeant said soothingly. "We're keeping him for his good, and for our own. If you tell the newspapers, you will excite public opinion so greatly that Cravens, an innocent man, will be hanged. You don't want that, do you, sheriff?"

"No," said Undersheriff Egan, after a long pause. "But I don't want to see the boys done out of a just reward, neither! I want some kind of assurance that you got another clew—"

"I give you my word," Jimmy said simply.

Again the deputies all looked over the slim figure in blue.

"Yeah," said Egan. "Your word. And who might you be, officer?"

"My name's Wentworth," said Jimmy.

A third time the men from the southern end of the state stared, this time in utter astonishment. Then one of the deputies ejaculated, "Wentworth! A kid like you! I don't believe it!"

Captain Dunand said soberly, "He's Wentworth, boys. Rated as sergeant of detectives—"

"Wentworth of the Chinatown Squad," muttered Egan. "Well, well, well . . . I'd like to shake your hand, sergeant! If the case is in your hands, I won't say a word! When'll you make your arrests, sergeant?"

Jimmy Wentworth's heart beat more rapidly. He knew on what a slim chance he based his conclusions—little more than flowers painted on the neck of a headless idol, and what common knowledge he possessed about bees—but was convinced that he was on the right trail. At all events, he was convinced of Cravens' innocence, and that was sufficient to make him say quietly:

"Perhaps tomorrow, boys, if all goes well."

CHAPTER V

The Bee's Flight

WENTWORTH had little sleep that night. Bees! He had to learn about bees, and with that thought in mind routed out an expert at the state university across the bay. To him Wentworth listened carefully, making notes again and again; he left with the scientist's assurance that his original conclusions, if faulty in detail, were correct in all major analysis.

These were simple. Bees were hungry little things. Bees didn't like smoke. Bees died if they did not receive adequate fresh air. Bees became

angry when cooped up. Bees could get out of any crevice, and would if they had the chance. Lastly, bees would always return to their hive, or wherever they were being kept, if they had been brought a considerable distance from their original hive . . .

And Whitcomb had died from many bee stings, died under torture.

Only Kong Gai the Deadly would have thought of sending a man to deliver the ransom demand for his children. Only Kong Gai's mind would consider such a thing a joke, and something to be proud about.

Wentworth believed that the little black lines, like the markings on a bee's wing, had been made on the headless idol to further protect the 'binder carrying it from vengeance of a god or devil not even Jimmy knew—some awful being of the underworld who, in addition to riding on a dragon, in addition to breathing fire and bearing ten swords in ten hands, also could kill by stinging men to death . . . that must be the reason why the white flowers—representing the kidnapped children—were so painted. To propitiate the god.

At eight-ten in the morning Wentworth marched into the bowl shop of the Wangs, who had more than once assisted the department. He found old Wang Yü behind his counter, and, after bowing and hoping that the ancient's health was good, asked for the son, Wang Chen-po.

Old Wang clapped his hands thrice, and a Chinese dressed in American clothing instantly appeared. Without a word or look toward Wentworth, Wang Chen-po said, "And what are my honorable father's commands?"

"Here is our friend," said old Wang, indicating Wentworth. "I have none, except to have demanded your presence."

"Hi, Jimmy," grinned Chen-po, without apology, since he knew that his friend understood the Conduct-Toward-One's-Father. "What do you want now? Everything is quiet on the Eastern Front, so far as I know—"

"How many youngsters are there in the Wang family?"

"Thinking of adopting one of them, Jimmy?"

"It's Saturday," said Wentworth, "and I thought maybe some of them might want to earn money to buy duck's-egg cake."

"They all have the Yankee spirit," laughed Chen-po. "What do they do in order to make enough to get good and sick? They're ravenous little devils, Jimmy. They can eat you into the hospital. Shoot!"

Jimmy said lightly, "They hang around their windows, Chen-po, where the lily-pots are, and when they see a bee, they catch it and put it in a box. One bee, one dollar."

"Bees in Chinatown? Say, these youngsters aren't dumb, Jimmy! They know better than to try such a game."

"I think some of them may catch a bee or so, old man."

Wang Chen-po scratched his chin, and before he had finished his father cackled in Cantonese:

"You waste time, my son. Inform the grandchildren of Wang Yü that bees are desired, in the shortest time possible. Our white friend does not joke."

"That's right," Jimmy said, after bowing to old Wang. "And if the kids'll catch bees, maybe I'll catch . . ."

HE became silent. Both Chinese knew what he meant, but neither blinked an eye. Kong Gai! Every decent Chinese hated the terrible leader of the Snake Brotherhood. No

man's life was safe while the King Cobra lived.

"I'll see what can be done," Chen-po said quietly. "The kids are to be careful that they aren't seen, eh? And to say nothing about it?"

"That's it," agreed Detective-Sergeant Wentworth. "I'll go around my beat, and drop in just before lunch."

It was almost noon when Jimmy Wentworth leaned against the old bricks of the cathedral on the southerly boundary of the Asiatic district, and pulled from his rear pocket a thick newspaper. He stood there, apparently reading, but his right hand was shrewdly busy inside the paper. For Wentworth was attempting to put into practice what the bee expert had told him . . . would it work?

Inside the paper was a thin box, in which was a bit of honeycomb. The end of the box, fashioned that morning, very early, in the basement of the Hall of Justice, could be slid up or down, enough to permit a bee to escape. And in the box were five bees, collected by the grandchildren of old Wang as the little insects had sought pollen from the white and yellow china lilies . . .

Five bees!

Would the little winged workers lead the way to the venomous Kong Gai?

Wentworth felt something soft crawl along his finger, inside the paper, and a moment later a bee crept out, remained motionless an instant, and then flew up. The detective-sergeant tried to follow the bee's eccentric circles and oscillations. Each time, as the bee swung above the newspaper concealing the honey in the box, it seemed to sway to one side, so that the honey was at the edge of its circle instead of the center, as if the bee were throwing a loop about the sweet to make positive of its exact location. Then, in a straight line, it darted northeast.

Wentworth's eyes instantly sought the clock on the old cathedral. Four minutes to twelve. He stood there quietly, reading his newspaper, as if waiting until twelve to go for his lunch.

A moment before the clock boomed the hour, a bee hovered over Wentworth's head, and, after one swoop, again crawled to the concealed box in the newspaper. Wentworth could hear its excited humming and buzzing as it tried to enter the box, but he did not open the slide, lest another bee escape. Instead, he again glanced at the clock; one minute to twelve!

The bee had been gone three minutes. The bee expert said that a minute and a half was consumed by a bee delivering the pollen at the hive. That meant the bee had spent less than a minute going to . . . where? . . . and less than a minute returning. A bee could fly a mile in five minutes. Therefore the place where it went could be no more than a block or two away . . . in a northeasterly direction!

The captive bees, laden with honey, buzzed in the little box as Wentworth marched along his beat, as if he had decided to make one more round, and, as he often did, go to his lunch at one instead of twelve.

Wentworth paused the second time before the basket shop belonging to a member of the Wang family, where no questions would be asked, and repeated his performance. Again he timed the greedy bee, which, like its fellow, had difficulty in obtaining food in the city where it had been brought. Again he checked the direction of flight. Twice more he did this, until he had but one bee left.

Then he walked calmly along the

street where the lines had crossed; where the bees seemed to be going. Even allowing a half minute leeway, it seemed probable to the detective that the location of the hive must be in the middle of the block somewhere, and as he reached it he let the last bee escape.

Again the bee circled, but this time darted straight up. Wentworth looked with an air of disinterest, and saw that the windows of the third story were boarded up. As if, according to Chinese custom, someone had died and the body had not yet been shipped to China. No unusual occurrence—except because of the flight of the bee! And as his eyes lowered, and he shoved his newspaper into his hip pocket again, he caught an opened wicket in a basement door across the street . . . 'binders, watching! Kong Gai's men.

As if he had not seen them, Wentworth crossed the street, entered a drug shop, and, by pointing, was sold a packet of cigarettes. He put these in his pocket, and then strode leisurely up the street. When he turned the corner, he pulled out his watch—in case he was being spied upon—and then walked slowly up the long hill, out of the district, as if now going for food.

HE waited until he was two blocks from the district, and then entered the first apartment house.

"A telephone, quick," he told the switchboard operator in the lobby. "No, not one here. In an apartment. And if anybody comes in, or you see anyone looking in, you haven't seen a cop come in Get that!"

The operator took Wentworth to a ground-floor apartment, and the sergeant called Headquarters immediately. He was given Dunand at once.

"It's Number Ninety-one Ninety-two Fish Alley, sir," said Wentworth eagerly. "No mistake about it. Three boarded-up windows, third story. Which makes the bee expert correct. He said the bees wouldn't be active, nor sting, if they were kept in any cold dark basement . . ."

"We're ready," snapped Dunand.

"Tell 'em to go along Stockton street, chief. To Sacramento. Down two blocks. Left turn to Fish Alley. The seventh house. That's the one. Middle of block, right hand side. I'll swing on when they turn off Stockton."

"Better get goin'," ordered the gray haired captain. "I'm givin' th' order to start, boy!"

CHAPTER VI

Kong Gai Laughs

THE blue-clad patrolman making his regular beat on Nob Hill saw the hurrying figure of a fellow officer, and ran to meet him; when he saw who it was he said:

"What's up, sergeant?"

"Plenty," said Jimmy swiftly. "When you hear a racket—you'll hear it—come along and see!"

With that he hastened back toward Chinatown. At the corner of Stockton and Sacramento, near the mouth of the tunnel where he had once found a murdered flower girl killed by Kong Gai, he paused, and then turned northward, walking slowly along the pavement, stopping to play with a Chinese urchin in pink jacket and red pantaloons; he did this until he heard a sudden roar, coming from the tunnel.

A moment later hook-and-ladder Number Fifteen roared out of the tunnel, siren wailing and engine humming a high tune. Behind it Wentworth saw a red-and-gold hose wagon,

with men in fireman's blue hanging to the sides . . .

Chinatown gaped, wondering where the Fire God was striking. As the hook-and-ladder slowed, and swung around the corner, barely missing the lamp-post on the sidewalk, Wentworth leaped to the side.

Nobody would think anything of that. It was a policeman's duty to get to a fire as rapidly as possible.

Wentworth heard someone next to him shout, "Nice goin', sarge!"

The deep voice was that of Officer Reilly, holder of the department's record for marksmanship, and no fireman at all. Only the driver, and the rear wheel-man, were from the fire department. Every other person in slicker, or in blue uniform, was a member of the riot squad . . .

Down one street! Left turn! The scream and squeal of brakes and tires, and a sudden noiseless operation that shot the first length of mechanically operated ladder into the air, in front of the windows of the house Wentworth had told about.

A spying 'binder popped his head out from the basement across the street. Officer Reilly waited until he saw the flash of metal, and the raising gun, before he drew trigger. The sound of explosion was covered by the roar of the hose wagon's engine as it drew up beside the hook-and-ladder.

Men were already running up the ladder. The first two were axe-armed, and the raising ladder took them to one of the windows. As an axe crashed against the barrier, Wentworth, followed by other men, swung to the building-side of the ladder, and continued frantically up to the roof.

Wentworth's head cleared the coping first, and almost the same instant his gun roared. He saw a 'binder leap high in the air; saw others turn and level drawn weapons, and then the riot squadman behind him had shoved the nose of the deadly chopper across the coping, and the rat-tat-tat of the little gun sprayed death over the Chinese.

Wentworth knew there was not a moment to be lost. While some of the *bo' how doy* were still trying to get a bullet into the slim target afforded by one eye and a bit of forehead of the man operating the chopper, Wentworth pulled himself to the roof. He felt the sting of hot metal in his shoulder, and the impact half swung him about.

Nothing better could have happened. Had he continued straight forward, he would have been riddled with bullets.

Jimmy Wentworth, the smiling young detective-sergeant of the Chinatown squad, had gone berserk. Here was a chance to get his hands on Kong Gai! He made one leap, notwithstanding the pain in his shoulder, and fell through what had been a skylight, but had been changed to a row of light slats, to give the bees air at times. The stairway to the roof was ten feet further along the roof. For a fraction of time something seemed to stay Wentworth's fall—a black curtain of heavy silk, which had been used to cover the opening most of the time—and during it he managed to squirm about . . .

The silk ripped, and Wentworth fell, landing on hands and knees. His gun was up at the very time of impact, up, and blazing at a black-clad figure.

A shrill, sweet voice screamed, "*Hola!* Get him, snake-brothers! It is the white fool himself! Get him for Kong Gai!"

WENTWORTH'S heart stopped as his eyes and gun flashed up. He expected to die now, but if only he could get one shot at the King

Cobra, and end his reign of terror! Then, so swift that it bit into Kong Gai's last words, he heard the tapping sound of the chopper at work, searching out corners of the room in a vain effort to get the Venomous One.

Jimmy's head began to work sanely again. He yelled, "Look out! The kids are somewhere here—"

"They're behind you, sarge," shouted the machine gun officer. "All's O. K.," and he alertly kept the muzzle of the chopper moving, ready to fire.

Despite this assurance, Wentworth waited. Would Kong Gai, from some clever point of concealment, kill him now? It could easily be done . . .

The sweet voice droned on, "Your eyes, oh white fool, I will tear out with my fingers! Your mouth I shall sew together, so you cannot destroy my sleep with your screams when we cut your body apart, inch by inch, and put little serpents to feed on you while you are still alive! The day will come soon! I could kill you now, but that is not my way of killing!"

A storm of bullets from the chopper ended the terrible promise. Then all was silent, save the hammering of axes and the stamping of feet.

For the three closed windows had not shown the room in which the kidnapped white children had been found, and when the officers smashed inside they found only a place of awful worship, with a great naked headless idol surrounded with crushed white flowers and many impaled dead bees, killed as sacrifices after they had served Kong Gai's horrible torture of Whitcomb.

And a row of the little insects which, maddened, had stung Whitcomb to his curious death, was found about a sheet of paper before the idol. On the paper was a statement of the account of one Sam Gee Quong, who had lost several thousands of dollars in the stock market. And it was easy to guess that Quong was only another name for Kong Gai, and why the Venomous One had picked Whitcomb to kill, and his children to be held for ransom . . .

Jimmy Wentworth's shrewd deductions had been close enough, and had led the riot squad to the building itself, if not to the inner room. The other room must have been the chamber in which the bees had been kept, and a search at once found a small, makeshift hive, with a volume of instructions on bee-keeping beside it. The constant burning of incense in the other room made it impossible to keep the bees there, save when it was intended to let them sting someone . . . Whitcomb.

Kong Gai had lost the children, and seven hatchetmen to boot. Four more were caught alive, but wounded. The remainder of the Brotherhood had escaped along some secret passage.

Captain Dunand felt that only Wentworth's mad promptness in leaping to the roof in face of the 'binders' bullets had prevented the Cobra Men from rushing off with the children. Apparently it had been Kong Gai's command that the children be carried to the roof, and to some secret hiding place. That would be Kong Gai's way, too—not taking any chance that the police might follow the children along his own secret tunnel deep into the dark places of Chinatown. He cared for his hide, did Kong Gai, and took no chances.

"If we'd nabbed Kong Gai, this would have been perfect," commented the gray haired captain, as he surveyed the strange, terrible headless idol, supposed by the Chinese to protect those

who kidnap children, and before which the Snake Brotherhood had bowed low.

"He was here," said Wentworth quietly.

"See him?"

"No. Heard him."

Captain Dunand said thoughtfully, "Say things, did he?"

"Some day," Jimmy answered, "we're coming face to face. Then . . . we'll see."

Kong Gai's horrible laugh shrilled in the room.

"We'll see!" screamed Kong Gai in English. "Yes! We'll see!"

Try as they might, the riot squad could not find from what vantage point the fiendish Kong Gai had spoken. Once more the Evil One laughed, and then the room of the Headless Idol, with its crushed white blossoms and dead bees and streaming incense bowls, was as silent as death.

Robbed Playing Samaritan

DR. JOHN COLSON, of Brooklyn, went to the aid of a Negress whom he found in a fainting condition in the street. When he picked her up, she appeared to be unconscious, and he folded his coat under her head for a pillow and hurried to a drug store for smelling salts.

He came out of the drug store just in time to see the woman staggering away. He ran after her and recovered his coat, which she was carrying off, and went on home.

Then suddenly, with a premonition of disaster, he looked in his coat pocket. He had had $200. It was gone.

Detective Bonano, at Headquarters, heard Dr. Colson's story and remembered that a Negress had been arrested a few days before for putting on a fainting act in a hallway. He and Dr. Colson went around to her rooms. It was the same one who had received Dr. Colson's ministrations.

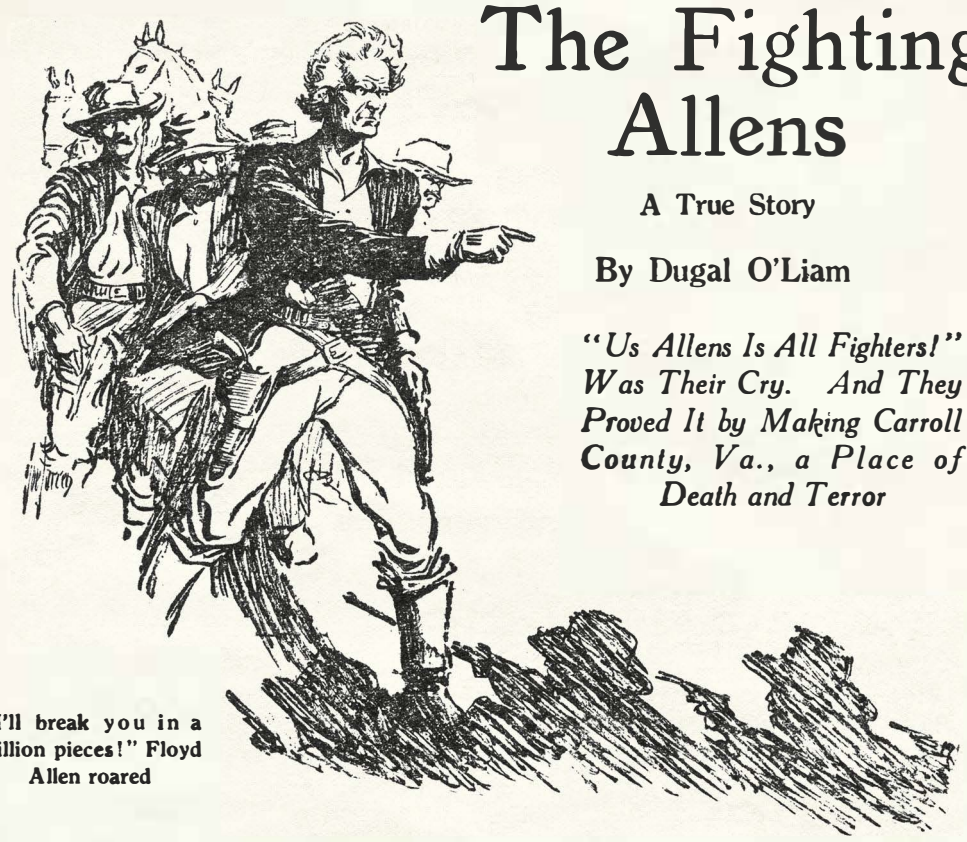
The detective and the doctor searched her room for the $200, but without avail until Detective Bonano, on a hunch, looked out of the window. On an adjoining roof a few feet below was a wad of bills tied up with a string. There was $180 of it. The other $20 was never found. She didn't let Detective Bonano carry off her loot without a struggle. She tore off *his* coat before he could subdue her and bring her in under arrest.

The Fighting Allens

A True Story

By Dugal O'Liam

"Us Allens Is All Fighters!" Was Their Cry. And They Proved It by Making Carroll County, Va., a Place of Death and Terror



"I'll break you in a million pieces!" Floyd Allen roared

BACK in 1911, before the greatest conflict in the world's history had begun, Carroll County, Virginia, was peaceful, contented and, after its serene fashion, prosperous.

The wealthy people, and there were few of great wealth, lived among simple pleasures and the poor always were cared for by these rich to whom richness was a goodness for the less fortunate.

The county was a remote one and there were few of the irksome laws of a more enlightened community to chafe the proud souls of the meek and the mighty, alike. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you was law enough for the Carroll country.

Mightiest in this pastoral Utopia were the Allens. The Allens ruled the county, but they ruled it justly and, having amassed more than their share of the wealth of the country, used it to do good among others. None suffered in want so long as the Allens knew of it. Masterful and dominating they might have been, but they were the soul of charity and helpfulness.

The Allens were strictly products of Carroll County. Jeremiah Allen, a crusty fighter for the south in the Civil War, had founded the feudal chain. Now Floyd Allen, his son, a giant of a man, with a shaggy, snow white mane, carried it on.

It would be wrong to say the Allens were a power in Carroll County. They *were* Carroll County. Floyd Allen, with his great head and hulking shoulders and beady eyes set deep in a furrowed, weatherbeaten face, led. Jasper and Sidna and Garland, his

brothers, and their sons and his sister's sons, the Edwardses, followed.

They even went into the professions. There was a minister among them. He was Garland Allen. He was a fire-belching, hell-and-damnation soldier of the Cross, reviling sinners and scourging Beelzebub with a blacksnake whip technic. He battered his flock into line and kept them there because he was a fierce orator—and an Allen.

There was a lawyer, too. His name was Walter Allen, son of Jasper Allen. He went to the University of Virginia. Then he came back and did as his kinsmen did. He looked out for the Allens, then for the poor, then for the negroes, then for the Allens some more. He furnished the advice to the family, Big Floyd the leadership.

It is about these two, Garland and Walter, that this greatest of American social tragedies revolves. Without them and their leanings for the professions, there would be no story. But without the shibboleth of Big Floyd Allen, they wouldn't have been driven into the story. It was a proud cry, and the giant patriarch, with his booming voice and his blazing eyes, never neglected to shout it when he felt the Allens were about to be forgotten, the battle cry of:

"The Allens is all fighters!"

MOST of the Allens were farmers. They raised cotton and corn and tended the forests for pine and other woods. But they had another trade. It was a common trade among the rich and poor alike. To the Allens it meant money—ultimately death. But that's another story.

They were moonshiners. They operated on a big scale. They had giant stills, hidden in the mountain fastnesses. Many men tended them. They produced white mule one year, buried it and dug it up ten years later, mellow and potent and marketable. They sold the finest moonshine in Virginia. Thousands of satisfied customers carried on a direct business with them. Allen moonshine was unexcelled and they prospered.

Floyd Allen owned the greatest house in Carroll County, or all that part of Virginia. Sidna owned the next finest house. Jasper's home was beautiful. Even Garland Allen's house was clean and well appointed and large and his church was a showplace among rural churches. All these things tended to add to the omnipotent legend of the Allens. People thought they respected them. Actually they feared them.

Then came the break. The beginning of the succession of events, that followed each other with staggering swiftness, until they fetched up against a blood red wall of tragedy and catastrophe. Until they spilled blood over one of the most peaceful of all American rural communities, spilled it from Hillsville to Richmond and splashed it over a dozen homes.

The yoke of the Allens had, somehow, become onerous to certain men of the town. They regarded the Allens as a menace to law and order. They distrusted their domination of the mountain people. Yet, because the Allens were charitable and kindly to the helpless, they had no means of fighting them, their wealth being what it was. Until some one devised a means, rattled the sword of political warfare and touched off the bombshell.

The Allens were Democrats. Their enemies in Hillsville announced that there would be a Republican ticket in the county elections of 1911. They announced that William Foster, a fiery non-Allenite of Hillsville would run for district attorney. That was the

office the patriarch of the Allens had selected for Walter Allen, newly out of the university.

The patriarch and his clan gave scant attention to Foster. They electioneered in their own way. They passed out the best moonshine, instructed the hill men on what to do and waited for election day.

To their amazement, William Foster was elected prosecutor and his entire slate, including Thornton Massie as county judge and Louis Webb as sheriff, was swept in with him.

The patriarch raged and thundered. He charged misconduct at the polls. He sent the Allens out to canvass the county. They went directly to the voters, asked them point blank if they had voted Republican or Democratic.

THE statistics thus compiled might have been valuable had they been compiled in the regular way. But the Allen canvassers carried shotguns or revolvers with them and fingered them suggestively as they asked about the ballots. The voters, with a nervous eye on the ordnance, declared for a straight Democratic ticket.

That convinced Floyd Allen that he had been bilked. He announced that he would not recognize the law at Hillsville and that those who swore allegiance to the Allens would be governed from his palatial home, eight miles out of Hillsville.

Foster saw the handwriting on the wall. He saw the portent of disaster, red and menacing, in the actions of the Allens. He heard the ominous rumblings of rebellion, sensed the hatred of the clan. He knew his position was untenable, but he was a fighter, too. A little reckless, perhaps, a little too determined to break the Allen grip on the county.

Almost immediately after taking office, he arrested Sidna Allen on a charge of illegally making liquor and selling it.

This was an unheard of usurpation of power. While the Virginia law does not countenance moonshining, the Virginia law machinery did. Only the Federal revenue men sought to stamp it out and they were foolish men who were regarded as the poorest insurance risks, barring aviators and human flies, of the time.

To make a very bad matter worse, Judge Massie upheld Foster and sentenced Sidna Allen to jail.

Sidna Allen didn't remain long in jail. But he didn't like it as long as he remained. He emerged embittered and filled with the lust for revenge, and found Floyd Allen grimly planning the extinction of his baiters.

"The Allens is all fighters," the giant bellowed, again and again. "The Allens won't stand for this high-handed domineering. The Allens won't stand for political spitework."

Suddenly, in the midst of these disturbances, a new blow fell upon the patriarch. Garland Allen announced from his pulpit that the law, having been duly constituted, must be obeyed. He charged his flock with obeying it. If moonshine was to be outlawed, it must be outlawed.

He even closed his own still as an example to the righteous.

II

ON the following Sunday, as the Rev. Mr. Allen arose from his knees following the invocation, he looked squarely into the barrels of a pair of shotguns!

Behind the guns were two youths. They were Sidna and Wesley Edwards, his nephews, sons of his sister. The

shotguns were aimed, as he got to his feet, squarely at the huge gold chain that stretched across the Rev. Mr. Allen's gaunt middle.

The Rev. Mr. Allen knew that the boys meant business. He knew that he had violated the family creed. He knew that Floyd Allen would not submit to one of his own family bowing before the yoke of the hated Republicans.

In other words, he knew that he was in for it.

The congregation sat, spellbound. Someone moved as if to aid the beleaguered minister. Wesley Edwards left the preacher to his brother and swept the congregation with his shotgun. Then Sidna Edwards declaimed sonorously, from the pulpit.

"He ain't gonna preach to you no more—he's too danged ornery to preach t' other folks."

The nephews prodded the godly man down the aisle. The congregation muttered threateningly. Wesley Edwards swung the gun around again. Worshippers dived under pews. The muttering was replaced by the hysterical screams of women, the bleating of children.

The community was outraged. The churchgoers demanded that the law do something. One parishioner suggested that Floyd Allen would attend to the kids. He cited their action as a prank of two boys that would be attended to by Floyd Allen and attended to properly.

But Floyd Allen refused to punish the boys. They had done just right, he said. The fighting Allens wanted no milksop preachers among them, milksop preachers who would bend the humble knee before the mongrels who sought to destroy Carroll County's then greatest industry and to defy the law and order that had been.

"The Allens is *all* fighters!" he bellowed, louder than before, and his bellowings detonated the most spectacular community feud of all time and resulted in one of the greatest political calamities in the history of rural America.

THE Foster clique leaped at the outrage as offering a new opportunity to humiliate the Allens. Childish as it seemed, this prank of two youths, one of whom wasn't yet seventeen, the other slightly under twenty, the Republicans were ready to make a mountain of it. They promptly ordered the two youths arrested.

They would show Floyd Allen who was running Carroll County. They would show him when the clans ruled and when they did not. They would show him whether or not the will of the people could be coerced by armed men demanding, at the point of guns, to know what candidate each citizen voted for.

They would destroy this Frankenstein monster now. If they didn't it would destroy them.

When Floyd Allen heard of the arrest of his nephews, his rage was boundless. He raised his clan cry until it was heard on every farm in the county, until it echoed from Carolina to Richmond. And while he waited for the clans to gather, he planned to act and act with brutal finality. He would break the invaders for once and for all and restore Carroll County to the Democrats—and to the Allens.

There is no question but what the man suffered from delusions of grandeur, from dreams of dictatorship over all Virginia. Often he had said that the Allens should run Virginia, that they could better care for the unfortunate and administer the laws that currently

catered to wealth, than the men then in power.

He had come to believe in a certain omnipotence. His kinsmen had encouraged it, had driven him, by their unquestioning obedience to his every whim, to regard himself as a ruler by divine right. The defection of Garland Allen, who was a younger brother, had been the first break in the clan's complete subjugation. The defeat of Walter Allen by Foster had been the first intimation that there was mutiny in the county.

Now Foster had bearded him again. And he was not ready to take it He was not willing to have his hold on the people who had licked his boots and those of his father, Jeremiah Allen, for fifty years, loosened.

As a means of saving the boys from jail until the clans could gather, Floyd Allen offered Foster a real estate bond for the release of the pair. Foster refused it point blank and Floyd Allen decided to wait no longer. In fact he was incapable of waiting longer. The anger that had been burning higher each hour had totally consumed his reason. He was like a sorefooted lion, bearded to an uncontrollable pitch of fury by a lesser enemy, an enemy the lion might have ignored if not already mad with annoyance.

The giant mountaineer mounted his best horse and started toward Hillsville. He had heard that Deputy Sheriff Pinky Samuels and another deputy had gone to the Edwards home and arrested the boys and were taking them toward Hillsville in a buggy.

III

A FEW miles out of Hillsville, the giant came upon the quartet. The youths were manacled to the buggy. Samuels and another deputy rode on either side of them. Both the boys were exhausted from their struggles. Their arms bled from injuries caused by the relentless steel handcuffs.

Floyd Allen rodedown upon the deputies, swung his horse across the road in front of the buggy and grabbed the deputy's horse by the bit. No one ever will know why Samuels didn't shoot the giant then and there, but he didn't. Instead, he waited calmly until Floyd Allen dismounted and then demanded to know what the patriarch wanted.

" I want them kids and I want them damned quick," the big man roared. " If you don't let them loose now, there's gonna be blood let in this county before night."

Samuels, an easy going mountaineer until aroused, sneered at the giant.

" Listen, Allen," he said, " these kids are going to jail and there's no Allen in this or any other county that can scare me out of doing my duty. Get to hell outa the way and let me pass."

Floyd Allen emitted one bellow and rushed the buggy. Samuels, a big man himself, but far from a match for the behemothic Allen, kicked savagely at the giant.

Floyd Allen grabbed the kicking foot and whirled Samuels from the buggy like a rag cat. He slammed him to the ground with a berserk fury and beat him into complete insensibility. So wild was he with the fury of his attack on Samuels that he did not see that the other deputy was speeding away with the nephews, who screamed at the uncle, but to no avail.

When Floyd Allen had beaten Samuels to within a hair's breadth of death, he arose and looked about for the other deputy. He fully intended to beat him into unconsciousness and then release the beleaguered nephews.

He'd settle the question of what the law meant to the Allens for once and for all. He'd put Carroll County back where it belonged—on a plane fit to be inhabited by Virginia moonshiners with pride in their family line.

But the deputy was gone. Only a gray swirl of dust, fast rolling into Hillsville, a mile away, told him the story.

The two horses drawing the carriage were galloping furiously and the deputy was alternately plying them with the whip and using the butt of it to subdue the two youthful members of the fighting Allens, who tugged at his coat tails and kicked viciously at him with their free feet.

Big Floyd leaped to his mount and rode furiously after the flying carriage. Through the flying dust he charged, bellowing on high as he rode, so that other mountaineers, thinking there was a kidnapping, or fearing to do otherwise under the spell of the Allen chief's awful voice, joined pursuit.

Into Hillsville the steaming horses of the deputy thundered. Down the main street and into the courthouse yard.

The deputy was quavering with fear, but he delivered the prisoners to tight-lipped and steely-eyed Sheriff Webb, and the sheriff immediately clamped them into the strongest and most remote cell in the Carroll County jail, gathered his guns about him and awaited the oncharging Allens.

He had no more than reached the front of the combination courthouse and jail than Floyd Allen galloped up to the door, leaped from his horse and charged Webb. It was an ill timed charge. Webb, not a big man, but a game one and an old enemy of Allen's, leveled his rifle at the onrushing giant, sighted beadily down the barrel and wriggled his right forefinger menacingly.

FLOYD ALLEN saw the sheriff's stern and white face. He saw the barrel of the rifle, that bulked as big as the mouth of a water hose.

He saw the quivering finger on the trigger, saw the steel blue eyes looking unflinchingly down the barrel, and—

He stopped in his tracks.

Suddenly behind Sheriff Webb appeared Foster and the two deputies, including the one who saved the prisoners.

They carried revolvers, two revolvers each. They held them on Floyd Allen and the half dozen men lined up behind him, men who had joined the chase willy-nilly.

The sheriff continued to glare down the barrel of the rifle. The barrel was on a dead level with the giant Floyd Allen's heart. The sheriff spoke no words.

Floyd Allen pulled himself together. He hunched his huge shoulders as if to charge. The finger on the trigger became more and more restive. The men behind the giant slunk away, edged toward their horses and rigs.

But Floyd Allen wasn't beaten yet, even if his cohorts were.

He raised a huge fist above his head, shaking it violently. The sheriff never retreated an inch, nor did the barrel of the rifle waver one iota from the line of the patriarch's heart.

"You little weasel-faced rat," Floyd Allen shouted, "you let them young 'uns out in two minutes or I'll break you in a million pieces."

"You get out of this jail yard in thirty seconds, or I'll blow you in two," Sheriff Webb snapped back, without hesitation.

Foster and the deputy advanced

menacingly. Sheriff Webb suddenly stepped forward and placed the muzzle of the rifle squarely over Big Floyd Allen's heart.

The patriarch of all the Fighting Allens looked about for his confederates. He saw none. He began to back away. He sidled toward his horse. He did it with a tremendous dignity and with his fierce, black eyes riveted on Sheriff Webb

He reached his horse, swung into the saddle. Sheriff Webb still kept the rifle raised. Foster and the deputy kept the big man covered with their pistols.

"All right, you yellow pups," snarled Big Floyd Allen, "you've got me now, but I'm warning you, Lou Webb, and you, too, Foster, you stealing pig, you'll pay for this with your—"

"What's that?" rasped Foster, fiercely.

"You'll pay for this, you pigs," Allen bellowed, so that the entire town of Hillsville could hear him. "You'll be lucky if the Allens just run you out of Carroll County."

With that he wheeled his horse and rode out of the town, leaving dynamite and fury in every hitherto peaceful home in Hillsville, or Carroll County for that matter, leaving the imprint of death on half a dozen houses.

HE left the little town of Hillsville in an uproar. People swarmed up and down the streets, demanding that the Allens be jailed. Others took issue with them. They were pro-Allenites and they seemed to be in the majority. At least, inspired by the example of the full lunged Floyd Allen, they shouted loudest and threatened most and succeeded in awing, temporarily, the anti-Allenites.

Then, out of the dust of the road that led southward toward the Carolinas, came the bleeding and broken figure of Pinky Samuels. His eyes were blackened, his mouth was cut and his teeth were strewn over the dusty highway. There were cuts and bruises on his face and body and he staggered like a drunken man as he picked his precarious way to the courthouse, to collapse, in view of the outraged townsmen, on the courthouse steps.

This ignited the spark all over again. The anti-Allenites ran riot. They swept through the town, demanding vengeance. Many shouted that their lives weren't safe with the ruthless patriarch of the mountaineers at large. They called him the gray peril and demanded that Sheriff Webb do something.

One citizen, more excited than the others, telephoned to Richmond. He reached the governor's office. The governor was not available, but his secretary referred the indignant citizen to the attorney general. The attorney general called Hillsville back, seeking to get in touch with Foster.

He found Foster in conference with Judge Massie. The bitter partisan, Massie, took the telephone and shouted angrily back at the attorney general that he would lock every damned one of the Allens behind bars. The attorney general agreed that, for the sake of peace and the dignity of the commonwealth, this should be done, at once.

Foster leaped into the prosecution of the two boys with fierce diligence. To the amazement of the Allens, the boys were convicted and sentenced to six months in a county jail.

Floyd Allen delivered a new ultimatum. Somehow, he conceived the idea that the town people had combined against the mountain people, that they

were determined to rule the county and stamp out the Allen clan. He professed a great dread of this. He began mustering his forces again. He armed the Allens and the Edwardses and the others.

Foster anticipated him. He issued a warrant for Floyd Allen's arrest, on a charge of assault and battery, growing out of the beating of Samuels. He gave the warrant to a deputy, or a pair of deputies, to serve. They demurred at first, but then set out to run Floyd Allen down or supposedly to run him down.

But they returned and said they could not find him. Other deputies were sent out. They came back with the same report. One returned badly beaten. Another limped from a flesh wound. They reported the mountains alive with enemies.

Then Louis Webb, with three men, went out to hunt for Floyd Allen.

All this time, Floyd Allen had been seen in his usual haunts. Once he had even dared to visit Hillsville, and had stood before the courthouse guffawing and daring the courthouse force to to come out and arrest him. Later he learned that Webb was not in the courthouse on that occasion and that Samuels still was unable to be about because of the beating on the road.

It was after this gesture of defiance that Webb personally went out to serve the warrant. Foster and Massie insisted upon accompanying him. Political and official zealots, they wanted to be in at the kill. Webb refused to permit it. In his capacity of sheriff, he could.

Foster demanded to know why Webb refused.

"Because," said the little man, "I want you and the judge here to clap him into jail when he comes in."

He rode away before the judge and Foster could figure out just what he meant.

Fortunately, they didn't have long to remain in ignorance.

IV

FOUR hours after the word got around that Sheriff Louis Webb personally had gone out to get him, Floyd Allen walked into the courthouse and surrendered.

Then they knew, Judge Massie and Foster, what the steely-eyed sheriff had meant. Allen was willing to defy them by putting himself in their power.

"All right, lock me up, you pups," Floyd Allen roared, seeing no sign of Webb. "Go ahead—and see what it brings you to."

They didn't lock him up. The Allens waited for him outside, brothers and sons and nephews, ugly customers, armed to the teeth.

They paraded before the courthouse and Walter and Claude Allen entered with him. Walter was the lawyer. He demanded bail, and got it, so that Floyd Allen did not have to undergo the indignity of spending a night behind the bars. They gave him his liberty, so that he could go out and foment new trouble and make new terrors for the distressed county.

Something told Floyd Allen that he was heading into trouble. He saw, and his brothers and sons saw, the handwriting on the wall. The clan gathered nightly in conclave, waiting for the day when Floyd Allen was to stand trial.

There began a series of terroristic raids. No one knew who committed the raids. They defied the sheriff and Foster. But they were directed at the Republican voters, or those who were suspected of being Republican voters.

Men were taken out and horsewhipped. Many were stripped of their clothing and left on the mountains, in the deathly fogs and cold.

Those who rode into Hillsville behind Floyd Allen the day he was halted before the courthouse and who had slunk away when Sheriff Webb confronted him with a rifle, flanked by Foster and the deputy, were victims of night riders. Citizens flocked into Hillsville for protection.

A reign of terror, that could be traced to no one, not even by the zealous Foster or the grim Webb, made a place of horror and dread of the county.

Judge Massie ordered Floyd Allen brought to trial at once. In this way, and this alone, he reasoned, could he fling the defy of elected law and order to the terrorists.

Floyd Allen, boasting of his immunity, appeared in court, smiling a sinister smile. The Allens clustered behind him. Sheriff Webb suddenly ordered all but Walter Allen and Claude, the son, out of the courtroom. Walter beat the order. The Allens, and everyone else who wished to, were permitted to remain.

The trial was a brief one. The Allens, still believing in their superiority to constituted authority, declined even to bother about presenting witnesses. The experience of the two youths had not taught them that these despised enemies were not to be scoffed at.

Pinky Samuels took the stand. Reluctantly, with the fierce eyes of Floyd Allen and his sons and brothers upon him, he told his story. Foster and Webb, together, aided by Judge Massie, had to drag it from him. Ominous rumblings filled the room.

When the hearing was completed, Floyd Allen and the Allenites arose to leave the courtroom. They declined to wait until Judge Massie had left, or had made disposition of the case. The court, controlling the rage that welled up, ordered them to take their seats.

Floyd Allen contemptuously refused. He stood, with his hat on, looking grimly at Judge Massie. His son, Claude, stood beside him. Jasper, Walter, Sidna, and the others, were grouped about him, in a sort of semicircle, a phalanx that looked capable of sweeping through the court.

"I will not decide this case until I have considered every angle of it," said Judge Massie. "In this consideration, the attitude of this defendant will be weighed heavily, I assure you. I will give my decision and pass sentence on March 14."

Floyd Allen threw his shaggy white head back and laughed boisterously. The other Allens joined him. There came from their vicinity noises that sounded like what the English call the bird. Then court, anxious to avoid trouble at the time, withdrew with as much dignity as possible. Floyd Allen and his clan, with the henchmen that had gathered about him like rats when they saw that the court seemed intimidated, went out into the street, shouting their defiance of the court and the authorities.

THE Allens celebrated that night. The clan met at the home of Floyd Allen and the Allenites gathered with them. They drank deeply. It was like a night of victory in old Rome. Until far into the morning the carousing continued. The Allens were in the saddle. Carroll County was at their feet.

For days Floyd Allen paraded before those who had dared to question his omnipotence. He glowered at the

renegades, then took them back under his wing magnificently. He sent his sons and brothers to see to it that all the poor were provided for. He distributed food among the negroes, and generally outdid himself.

To add to the joy of the clan, Wesley Edwards and Sidna Edwards came home from the county jail. They had served their terms and left Hillsville flinging taunts over their shoulders at the commonwealth. They were going back to the realm of the Allens. They were answering only to their patriarch, to the fierce, beady-eyed, bulging-shouldered, white-haired Floyd Allen, chief of the Fighting Allens.

Whether the Allen celebration was an ill-timed thing or not is more or less conjecture. But it did add fuel to the flaming hate of the anti-Allenites and it brought a new social element into the troubled affairs of Carroll County, an element that might well have been known, to maintain the literary standards set by Floyd Allen, as The Fighting Anti-Allens.

The county became one great arena, hedged about by dynamite. Men went around with guns strapped to their hips. Neighbor suspected and hated neighbor. Neighbors' wives suspected neighbors' wives. Children no longer were children, seeking their schooling in the crude hill schools. They were Allenites or Anti-Allenites.

The Allens tried to camouflage the schism. They tried to make it an issue of Democrats, or Allenites, and Republicans, or anti-Allenites. They fomented political hatred, branded the Foster-Massie-Webb group as interlopers who were bowing at the feet of northern masters.

They went further. They proclaimed widely that the Republicans were trying to establish a foothold so that they might deliver Carroll County into the hands of the northern industrialists. They professed to see ideal factory sites in Carroll County, with its mountain streams and fair valleys. They pictured the agony of the Carolina towns that had been caught in the coils of the cruel northern monster of industrialization. They told the people their homes would be taken away.

Carroll County was a country in the midst of civil war. The mountain men were armed against the townsmen. Hillsville and Galaxy, the two principal towns of the county, became the strongholds of an enemy common to hill men. Those of the hills and valleys who were not avowed Allenites flocked into the town, believing that there lay protection.

Cool heads, who wished their businesses preserved, sought state intervention. They advised Foster or Webb to call for the military. They pictured the hill country as swarming with Allenites, desperate men, armed to the teeth. They feared that the town might be sacked and burned to the ground.

But Webb and Foster and Massie were of sturdier stuff. They stood by their guns, scorned the threats of the Allenites and virtually dared the patriarch to lead his forces into the town. They didn't even bother to prepare themselves against such an invasion and Sheriff Webb publicly challenged the bellowing Floyd Allen to show his hand.

March 14 approached. The tension in the county and in the town mounted. Men sat at their doors with shotguns across their knees, bolted themselves in at night or stood guard, in relays, over their property. No women or children ventured out after sunset, few during the day. The town of Hillsville was an armed camp.

On the day before the judgment, the mountains became strangely quiet.

It was the calm before the storm.

V

THE morning of the judgment broke. The day was misty. The mist came down from the hills and settled like a blanket of dire prophecy over the little courthouse.

Hillsville had not slept that night. Webb and Foster and Massie had not slept. They had paced their quarters, or sat about Webb's office, waiting for the fateful tomorrow.

Dawn came ominously through the clouds, a red dawn, with blood on the foothills, blood on the sun. The men of the town went about their business guardedly. They were armed, stealthily armed.

Sheriff Webb ordered all places where firearms and ammunition might be dispensed closed for the day. He swore in extra deputies. They were difficult to get, these deputies. They feared the retribution of the Fighting Allens.

Families began to come out of the mountains early. They gathered about the courthouse, silent and fearful. They hitched their rigs in convenient places and left their horses in the harness. No path to flight was barred. The hill men were brave men, but they had brought their families. They didn't know what odds the townspeople held against them. All they knew was that the Allens would make a fight for it if Judge Massie dared to defy them.

As the morning wore on toward 9 o'clock, the tension became more and more fearful. Men spoke in whispers. Women stood about, holding their children close to them, or remained inside the stores, watching through cluttered windows.

Presently hill men began to appear in the crowds. They went silently from group to group, dropping a few words here, a few there. They were grim-faced men, with heavy revolvers strapped to their hips and shotguns over their arms.

The men began to move toward the courthouse. Sheriff Webb stood on the steps. No one was to enter until Judge Massie arrived. His deputies stood a little back of him. Foster waited in the sheriff's office.

The sun began to break through the mist. It was spring in the mountain town, with the vague quietude that spring brings to the hills. The trees were budding and the sun goaded them to new spawning.

Suddenly, out of the south, came a cataract of voices. It was a wild, fierce song, a song of bravado and recklessness, the song of men drunk with the feel of adventure.

A cloud of dust appeared. The figures of men, and horses, materialized from the cloud of dust. The song of the fighting Allens arose from the cloud.

Then the dust cloud was on the edge of the city. It swept into the main street. The battle song of the hill men rose above the beat of the hoofs of a score or more horses.

A giant man, with gray hair and a huge head and great, hulking shoulders thrown back, rode at the head of a troop of giants.

The Fighting Allens had come to judgment, with a song on their lips and scorn in their eyes.

THE crowds in the street fell back. The women pulled their children nearer to them, slunk away from the cluttered windows of the few stores.

Big Floyd sat his horse like Attila. The gleam of unconquered scorn shone in his beady black eyes.

The cavalcade swept down the street to the courthouse. They swung off their horses, threw the reins over hitching posts.

Floyd Allen strode toward the courthouse steps. Sheriff Webb waited for him. As the big man approached, Judge Massie appeared. Without a glance at the Allens, he stalked into the courthouse and on into his chambers.

Sheriff Webb and his deputies stepped aside and permitted the Allens to pass in. Behind them trooped the more daring of the Hillsville men and women, and those of the hill men who had taken no definite sides, but had kept their convictions to themselves as best they could.

Floyd Allen strode into the prisoner's bay. Claude, his son, was at his heels, Sidna, his brother, at his side.

The three took chairs. They sat down, with the patriarch in the middle, Claude on the left and Sidna on the right. Judge Massie still was in his chambers. Sheriff Webb was aligning his special deputies about the courtroom.

The rest of the Allens, the twenty who had ridden into town behind the patriarch, ranged themselves in the front seats of the spectator's bay. They were not all Allens, but they were Allenites, many of them blood relatives of the man awaiting judgment.

Among them were Sidna and Wesley Edwards, but recently released from the county jail for the Garland Allen kidnaping.

The Hillsville people filed in. They took seats about the courtroom. Those who could not find seats stood around the walls.

Sitting in one of the seats, near the front, was Nancy Elizabeth Ayres, a pretty woman who had testified for Floyd Allen at his hearing.

Half a dozen deputies ranged themselves about the Allenites, standing back of them, watching them intently.

Dexter Goad, clerk of the court, a grim, uncompromising fighter against the Allen rule of the county, came in. He wore a pistol strapped to his waist, leaned a shotgun against his desk.

He looked at Floyd Allen with the calm scorn of a fanatical enemy. His blue eyes blazed a challenge that was backed up adequately by the pistol and the shotgun. He sat down and began calmly riffling his papers, his face stern, his jaw set. He was known as one of the bravest men in Carroll County, a berserk fighter who had lived through a dozen threatened feuds.

Floyd Allen looked back at him, curling his crooked, heavy lip in scorn. Claude Allen kept his eyes on Goad and Sidna Allen watched him covertly.

Sheriff Webb stepped through a door in the rear of the courtroom. He reappeared, almost instantly, and Judge Massie followed.

Goad, with his eyes fastened on Floyd Allen and his hand caressing the butt of his revolver, banged a gavel on his table and announced the court, at the same time getting to his feet.

The spectators arose. The Allenites in the spectators' bay arose.

VI

FLOYD ALLEN sat adamant, glowering contemptuously at Judge Massie. Sidna and Claude Allen sat with him, their grim faces riveted on their leader.

Dexter Goad tugged at his revolver. Floyd Allen saw him. A pair of deputies stepped into the bay.

Floyd Allen got up slowly. A forced

smile overspread his dark face. Claude and Sidna Allen got up and stood, surly and scowling, beside him.

"I wouldn't 'a' done that, paw," said Claude Allen, aloud, "who's he that we have to get up when he comes in?"

The giant patriarch said nothing. He continued to curl his lip in that contemptuous smile until Judge Massie was seated. Then he sat down as Dexter Goad resumed his seat and picked up his papers.

Dexter Goad rapped for order. The courtroom was silent as a tomb. Floyd Allen leaned back in his chair, crossed one leg over the other and waited with supreme confidence.

The Allenites in the front rows of the spectators' bay sat immobile. The deputies shifted from one foot to the other, keeping an alert eye on the men. Walter Tipton, one of Floyd Allen's lawyers, coughed spasmodically. His hand shook noticeably as he wiped his mouth with his handkerchief.

Dexter Goad arose and handed a sheaf of papers to Judge Massie. A low hum ran over the courtroom. Dexter Goad rapped sharply. The deputies deployed toward the seat of the disturbance. Silence fell again.

Foster walked to the bench, before Judge Massie. Goad continued to stand. Walter Tipton took his place at the other end of the bench. He wet his lips with his tongue. Foster wet his lips. Goad's hard eyes were upon Floyd Allen.

Judge Massie studied the papers. It was unnecessary. What he wanted was time for the tension to ease. His face was white, but stern. His fighting jaw was outthrust and the veins showed in his strong hands.

He looked up from the papers, out over the courtroom. He looked at Floyd Allen and the Allenites in the front row of seats. A contemptuous smile came to his lips as he swept the courtroom.

His eyes were blazing with the bitterness of his resentment against the show the Allens had staged.

In an even, dispassionate voice, he began his pronouncement.

"We are confronted here, not with the case of the Commonwealth of Virginia versus Floyd Allen, but with the case of Law and Order versus feudalism," he began. "Unfortunately, we are authorized only to deal with the case of the Commonwealth of Virginia versus Floyd Allen, charged with assault and battery and interfering with an officer in performance of his duty.

"The defendant in this case has seen fit to defy this court and to create a situation in this county that is inimical to the proper functioning of justice and intolerable to duly constituted authorities. He has seen fit to attempt to set up a dictatorship, to place himself and those of his family without the law or, if you please, above the law.

"The proceedings in this case do not, as I have pointed out before, permit us to deal with outlawry and rebellion, since this defendant is not charged with these crimes. But it does permit us to show to this defendant and those who have encouraged and applauded him in his course and to those whom we are charged with protecting through the duly constituted law, that law does and will prevail, despite threats of violence and attempted coercion.

"Therefore, in full consideration of the evidence as it has been presented to me, I shall render my judgment and sentence in the case of the Common-

wealth of Virginia versus Floyd Allen—"

WALTER TIPTON wet his lips again. Dexter Goad watched Floyd Allen like a cat. Sidna and Claude Allen leaned forward. They sensed the voice of calamity in Judge Massie's opening remarks.

Floyd Allen was unmoved. He sat back in his chair, glaring at Massie. His hand rested on his side, significantly. The leer still creased his heavy face.

Now Judge Massie, looking directly at Floyd Allen, resumed his pronouncement.

"I pronounce the defendant guilty as charged and sentence him to one year in prison—"

A sibilant, rasping sound escaped Floyd Allen's lips. Sidna and Claude Allen were on their feet. The Allenites in the spectators' bay were on their feet. A dull roar that mounted to a storm of voices ran over the courtroom.

Dexter Goad banged his table fiercely. Walter Tipton was shouting to the court:

"I move that the judgment be set aside and a new trial granted."

Now Judge Massie banged his gavel.

"Motion denied," he said. "Sheriff Webb, take this prisoner to jail."

"I ain't a-goin' t' go, I ain't a-goin' t' go," bellowed the giant patriarch.

Dexter Goad was running to Sheriff Webb's side. Floyd Allen whispered quickly to Sidna and Claude.

Then, in a flash, the giant whipped his revolver from his belt. He fired point blank at Sheriff Webb.

Webb staggered back, wrenched his own pistol from its holster.

Another shot sounded. Sidna Allen's revolver spat fire.

Judge Massie started to his feet, clutched at his heart, coughed harshly and then slumped in his chair, slowly sinking from sight behind the bench.

Claude Allen leveled his gun at District Attorney Foster. Foster saw it and grabbed for his own weapon. Claude Allen's gun barked. Foster whirled, threw his head back, cried insanely once, and then dropped heavily across a chair and slipped to the floor.

Now Sheriff Webb and Floyd Allen were shooting it out. Three spots of blood showed on the courageous little sheriff's white shirt, but he kept advancing.

Now he was within two feet of the giant. Floyd Allen reeled, but fired again and again.

Webb's eyes were glassy. His legs were buckling. But he continued to fire.

Then his knees gave way. He sank down. His last shot, fired from bloodless hands, went into the floor. He was beaten down, but he was still firing.

Floyd Allen turned, staggered. He tripped over the body of Webb, plunged to the floor and lay still.

Dexter Goad was firing at Sidna Allen. Sidna Allen and Claude bolted for the door, firing back as they ran.

Nancy Elizabeth Ayres attempted to run after them. In the aisle she staggered, screamed hideously, clutched at her abdomen, and slumped down. As she slumped her head jerked back. A second bullet had struck her in the temple.

THE Allens were running toward the exit. Both were firing at Goad. Another took up the fusillade, firing point blank at the little

gamecock. No one ever knew definitely whether it was Friel Allen, youngest of the clan, or Wesley or Sidna Edwards.

Sidna and Claude Allen ran onto the porch. Goad still followed them. Friel Allen raised his gun, pointed it at Goad's head, from behind. Something whisked him off the porch, left him kicking and struggling in a flower bed. The high school daughter of Dexter Goad had saved her father's life.

Goad fell on the porch, still tugging at the trigger of his empty gun. He pulled himself to a sitting posture and hurled the empty weapon after the fleeing Allens. Then he tumbled over.

They found eight bullet wounds in his body. But, iron of soul and iron of body, he lived.

Sidna Allen ran across the street to an ammunition store, seeking more cartridges. The store was closed. Seeing this, Sidna Allen ran, shouting for his relatives, to his horse. Although badly wounded, he managed to flee the town with the remnants of the clan at his heels.

The patriarch was abandoned. He lay in a pool of blood half over the body of Sheriff Webb, his leg broken and two other bullet wounds in his giant form.

Massie and Foster were dead. Elizabeth Ayres was dead. Goad was near death. Five jurors, who had been called to hear the decision and sentencing, were wounded. Three spectators were in hospitals with bullets in their bodies. Fifteen casualties.

VII

ENSUED now the hunt for the fugitives. Governor William Mann of Virginia took a hand. He ordered the militia into Hillsville. He sent twenty plainclothes men from Roanoke, sent Judge Staples of Roanoke to take charge, ordered Attorney General Williams to the scene.

These reinforcements went by train to Galaxy. Then, because no one knew they were coming, they had to walk through nine miles of mud and slime to Hillsville. There is no railroad in Hillsville.

The hunt spread over Carroll County. Then word came that one of the Allens had robbed an ammunition store in Mount Airy, North Carolina. Floyd Allen, hearing of this while flat on his back with his broken leg, exclaimed:

"Good. Us Allens is all fighters!"

A week later Sidna Edwards was captured while asleep in an abandoned hut sixteen miles from Hillsville. Five days later the seventeen-year-old Friel Allen was taken in a carriage shed near his father's home. He was sick and whimpering. The bravado of the fighting Allens had been drowned in the homesickness of a scared boy.

Sidna Allen and Wesley Edwards still were at large. In spite of this, the state insisted upon bringing the captured four to trial, Floyd Allen, his son, Claude, and his nephews, Friel and Sidna Edwards.

Carroll County was in a state of chaos. Every citizen was an armed man, a self constituted avenger of a wrong, either against the commonwealth or the Allens. Thought of conducting the trial there was madness.

The hearings were transferred to Wytheville, county seat of a neighboring county. Militiamen were thrown about the courthouse. Plainclothes men from Richmond and Roanoke and Norfolk guarded the courtroom, watched everyone who came in.

No one was admitted to the hearings

without first being searched for weapons. No known Allenites, not witnesses in the trial, were permitted in the town. Extra policemen from half a dozen towns patrolled the streets. Militiamen in their stuffy uniforms patrolled the main streets and checked up the hotels and train arrivals.

The county line of Carroll County was patrolled like an international border in war time.

No single juryman who ever had heard of the Allens was accepted.

Thus the trial started and thus it ended, in spectacular time. Friel Allen and Sidna Edwards pleaded guilty and were sentenced to fifteen and eighteen years, respectively.

Claude Allen and his father were found guilty of murder and sentenced to hang.

THEN Wesley Edwards and Sidna Allen were captured in Des Moines. Sidna Allen charged that Wesley Edwards' sweetheart, with whom they were living in the Des Moines town, had betrayed them for a reward.

They were given prison sentences, Sidna's totalling thirty-five years, Wesley's twenty-seven.

Then they took Floyd Allen and Claude to the state penitentiary. Half a dozen deputies rode with them. Militiamen guarded the procession. Plainclothes men moved among those who watched the start of the hegira. But there was no disturbance in Wytheville. Only in incendiary Carroll County, where Allenites burned farmhouses and some houses in the city in protest against the sentence.

Then began the appeals for mercy. There were more than a dozen of them. Finally, as a last hope, the case went to the United States supreme court. The plea was denied.

On the night of March 27, 1913, one year after the tragedy of Hillsville courthouse, the warden of the state penitentiary pushed his way into Floyd Allen's cell.

The great, gray mane was unbowed. The huge head was held erect and the beady eyes were as fierce and defiant as ever.

"Your last appeal has been denied," said the warden, gravely. "This means that we must execute sentence on you and your son at sunrise. Are you prepared?"

The giant patriarch stood up. He looked the warden square in the eye.

"The Allens is fighters," he said. "They know how to die—if they have to die."

The last was said with a startling significance. The warden looked apprehensive, then quickly left the cell to take the news to Claude Allen.

The warden called for a military guard. It was thrown about the prison walls that night. Every guard was ordered to be on duty throughout the night.

The next morning, amid an ominous silence outside the walls, the old man walked from his cell with his head high and a smile on his face. His shaggy mane looked whiter than ever in the spring sunlight.

He mounted the steps quickly. He seemed to be looking about him. There was hope, some trust in an omnipotence he still believed, in his fiery eyes.

Even as they placed the hood over his gray locks, he asked, in a firm voice:

"Do you really mean to hang an Allen?"

No one replied. The warden reached

for the trigger. Just before the rattle of the trap broke the words, the giant patriarch bellowed, as he had bellowed two years before, to his eternal tragedy:

"Thank God, the Allens is all fighters!"

Then the rope muffled his cry into a crackling scream.

Claude Allen died without a word. Ten years later Governor Trinkle pardoned Friel Allen and Sidna Edwards. Then, in 1926, Governor Harry Byrd, brother of the noted polar explorer, pardoned Sidna Allen and Wesley Edwards.

The four of them live today, in Virginia, quiet, law abiding, industrious citizens, saddened and broken by their experience.

And no longer there echoes through the beautiful hills of matchless Carroll County the fateful war cry:

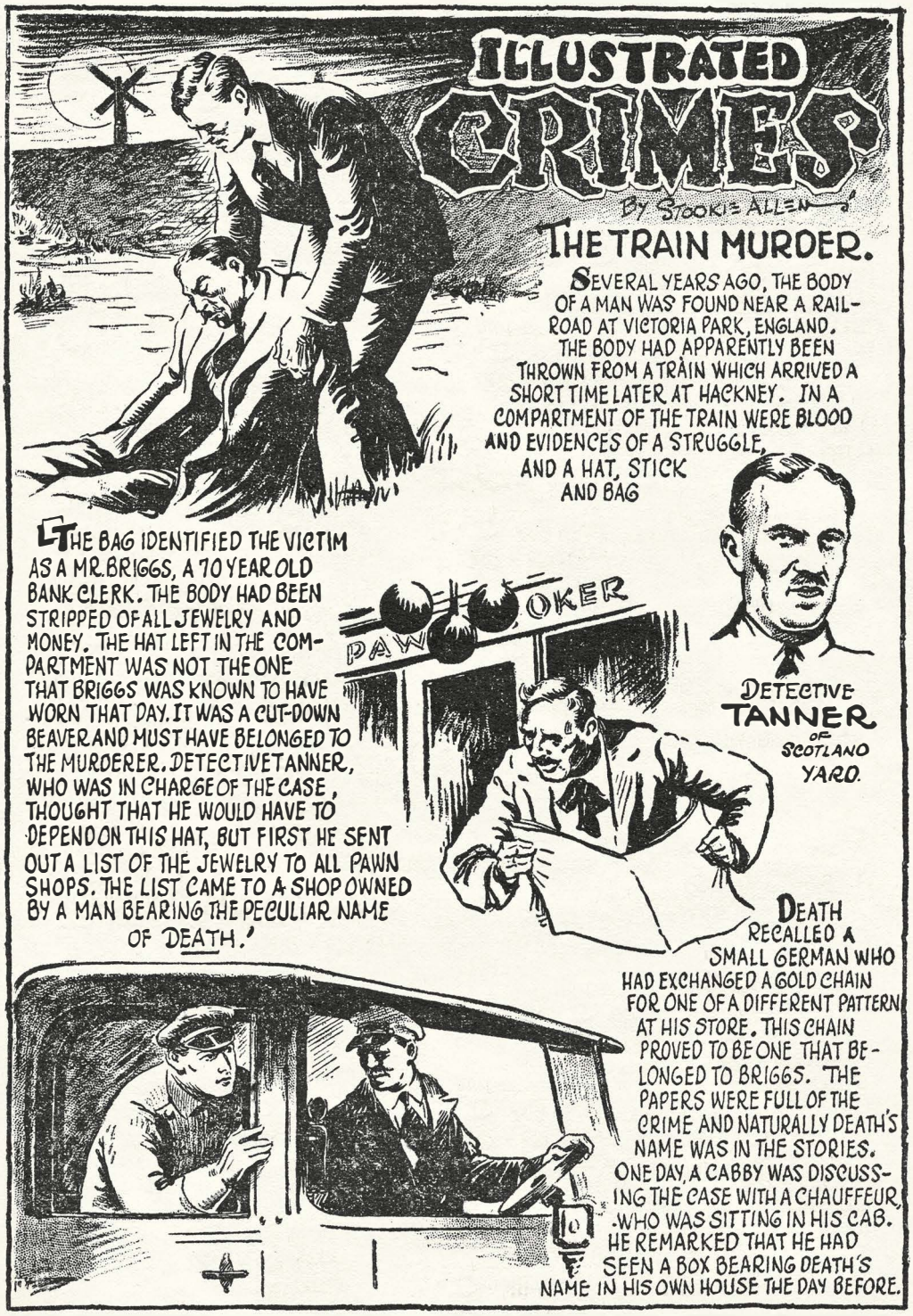
"The Allens Is All Fighters!"

His Library Outgrows His Cell

PRISONERS take up various hobbies and collect many things—stamps, screen star photographs, and so on. In San Quentin, a man serving a life term for murder is collecting books and autographs of authors.

His collection has become so large that there isn't room in his cell for it all. He asked the warden to find him another cell, but there isn't a larger one in San Quentin.

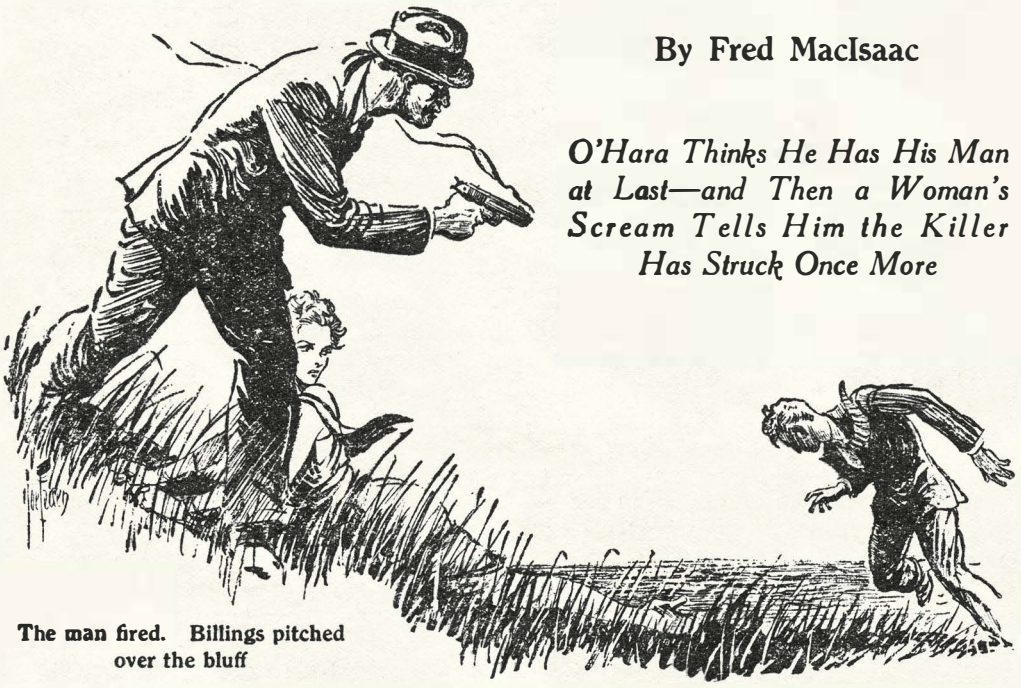
The prisoner has first editions and editions signed by the authors, among whom are John Galsworthy, Theodore Dreiser, Booth Tarkington. He has also received letters from authors which many a bibliophile would give his right arm to own. He specializes in modern writers. Incidentally, he does not care for murder stories.



A Regular Pictorial Feature

Next Week: UNDER THE FINGERNAILS

The Man Without a Face



The man fired. Billings pitched over the bluff

By Fred MacIsaac

O'Hara Thinks He Has His Man at Last—and Then a Woman's Scream Tells Him the Killer Has Struck Once More

BEGIN THIS STORY HERE

CYNTHIA SIMPSON, desk clerk in the Sippiconsett House, Siasconset, Nantucket Island, falls in a bad fog close to a house in which a "John Smith" is supposed to be hiding. She is helped by a young man whom she does not see.

That night "John Smith" is murdered, and his face so beaten that he is unrecognizable.

His three servants have completely vanished.

Next day Cynthia is astounded when a young man registers at the hotel, signs himself John Smith—and she recognizes him from his voice as the man she had met in the fog near the murdered man's house.

Dan O'Hara, a state detective, is on the case. He is called at night to the house of a Mrs. Conlin, whose husband has disappeared.

O'Hara thinks the murdered man may be Conlin. The dead man's three servants have been found—dead also, at the bottom of a pool. The four bodies have been taken to an undertaking establishment. O'Hara goes to check up his guess that the murdered "Smith" is Conlin—and finds the body gone.

Mrs. Conlin comes to the Sippiconsett House and meets the "John Smith" registered there—really Jack Billings, former football star, tried and acquitted for a murder in Chicago several years before. It was Mrs. Conlin's former husband whom Billings was accused of murdering. Billings charges Mrs. Conlin with that murder,

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for July 30

in collaboration with her present husband, Conlin.

CHAPTER XII

The Trail of R. J. Conlin

ARRIVING in New Bedford shortly after noon, state officer O'Hara went first to police headquarters, where he was well and favorably known, and sat down with Chief of Police Flynn. He told him in full detail everything which had happened in Nantucket, including his theory regarding R. J. Conlin—the theory which had been blasted by the discovery that Conlin had arrived in New Bedford with a blond woman some hours after Dan had calculated that he had been murdered and mutilated. Dan admitted he still clung to the hope that it was a false Conlin who had passed Thursday night at the New Bedford Hotel.

The police chief, who was a little gray man with sharp, foxy eyes, a pointed nose and a wisp of a gray mustache, chewed reflectively upon an unlighted cigar for several minutes before he expressed an opinion.

"The Nantucket call, at six Friday morning," he said, "was made from a drug store opposite the New Bedford Hotel. The clerk on duty remembers the woman. She was above medium height. She wore a gray coat with a collar turned up and a straw hat with a brim on it so he didn't get a good look at her face. He thinks her hair was either blond or brown—he is sure it wasn't black. He only remembers her because he had just opened up and was rather surprised to have a woman patron so early.

"Looks as though she might have come across from the hotel," said Dan hopefully. "I got a photograph of Conlin. Somebody in the hotel, the clerk or one of the bellboys or a chambermaid ought to remember what the man looked like, and maybe someone got a good look at the dame. What time did they check in?"

"Between twelve and one," replied the chief. "They gave New York as their address. Want me to stroll down there with you?"

"Don't bother, chief," replied O'Hara. "I can do this job myself. What do you make out of this mess?"

"Well, it's a sure thing that the face was smashed in to prevent identification of the victim. It was hoped he would pass for John Smith. They fell down in not showing a John Smith in 'Sconset who would be the same coloring and height and weight as the man they intended to murder. If they had done that, you'd have made a few inquiries, you'd have got no line on the past and associations of this Smith and it would have gone into history as an unsolved mystery. Another mistake was killing the servants and leaving the bodies where they could be found. If he had a plane and they were going to escape in it, he could have killed them when over the ocean and dropped them overboard.

"Then it would be assumed that Smith was killed and robbed by the servants. Of course it would take a big plane able to carry four of five passengers and crew, and such planes are hard to get.

"Crooks can get hold of a two-seater easy enough, but a bigger plane could be traced. Probably kidded the servants that he would carry them away by air and, not being able to make good, this murderer bumped them off. Cold blooded cuss."

"And he came back and carried off the dead body. Don't forget that."

"Yeah. Wonder if he knew you might think the corpse was Conlin?"

Dan shook his head. "Pretty far fetched. I never thought it myself until I had left the Conlin house. In half an hour after that I was at the undertaking rooms."

"It sure is a puzzle," said Chief Flynn. "Look here, a man who had a wife on Nantucket and faked an excuse to go to New York so he could meet another woman, wouldn't be fool enough to go to a hotel right at the end of the Nantucket boat line and sign his own name on a hotel register. Of course it's a crime in this state to sign a fake name, but nobody pays any attention to the law, and a big business man like Conlin would be the last to bother about that."

DAN nodded. "That's why I came over," he stated.

"They want to establish as a fact that Conlin left Nantucket," said Flynn excitedly. "He certainly went on the bus to the boat landing, unless this bus driver is lying."

"No. He don't know enough to lie."

"But it doesn't follow that he took the boat. He could have been nabbed before he went on board the steamer and taken back to 'Sconset. A fake message from his wife might do it."

"And I thought of that," declared Dan.

"So, in case of inquiry, they registered at the hotel here. It's going to be damned hard to prove that he didn't leave Nantucket, Dan."

"Unless his wife swears the signature on the register is a forgery and unless the hotel people testify that the R. J. Conlin who registered there doesn't look like the photograph."

"If this is a frame, they would have a fellow who bears a general resemblance to Conlin and they would be familiar with his signature and make a fair forgery."

"They made a couple of mistakes," replied O'Hara. "Maybe they made another at the hotel here."

"If they didn't, you can't ever prove that Conlin was murdered in 'Sconset. There is apparently conclusive evidence that he was in New Bedford many hours after the killing of Smith. Since the corpse has disappeared, you can't possibly establish his identity with that of Conlin. That notion that there is a slight protuberance of the ears of both Conlin and Smith doesn't go far enough."

"And suppose Conlin is never heard of again?"

"Well, you have got a plausible theory, which isn't evidence. You know that."

Dan nodded. "O. K.," he said. "There wasn't any Smith, so it must have been Conlin that was killed."

A SERGEANT knocked at the chief's door and entered.

"A New York telegram for Mr. O'Hara, relayed from Nantucket," he said. "Here you are, Mr. O'Hara."

Dan tore it open with thick fingers, ran his eye over the contents and grinned wryly.

"Either I'm a sucker or they're smarter than I gave 'em credit for," he said. "It's from New York police headquarters. 'Man named R. J. Conlin put up Friday night at the Hotel Pennsylvania,' he read. 'Signature card has been shown to Miss Duncan, Conlin's secretary, who says it looks like his writing. He was unaccompanied.'"

"Heigh ho," said Flynn. "Dan, you better go back to Nantucket and find somebody else that has disappeared."

O'Hara looked stubborn.

"No," he said. "It all fits too nice. He's got a house in New York and a regular hotel where he always stays and where he is known. I forgot to ask his wife which it is because it didn't seem important at the time. Instead he goes to one of the largest hotels in the world, where everything runs almost by machinery. No clerk or bellboy will remember what he looks like. Conlin is a common name so the hotel people wouldn't take interest in him because he was a big banker. And it would be a swell hide-out if he had a jane with him, but he was alone. So I just don't believe it."

"Unless you can prove different it means that Conlin will be assumed to have been alive twenty-four hours after the killing in 'Sconset. And his disappearance, if he has disappeared, begins when he left the Pennsylvania."

"You're so damn right I'd like to sock you," said O'Hara, grinning. "I'm going up to the New Bedford Hotel and then I'll hop a train for New York."

"You say yourself you can't check up anything at the Hotel Pennsylvania."

"I'm going to try and then I'm going to go into one of them newspaper morgues over there and find out everything that was published about R. J. Conlin."

"Meantime whoever stole that body is roaming round Nantucket Island."

"Can't help it. Either that's the body of R. J. Conlin or—"

"Yeah?"

"Or there was a Smith, and R. J. Conlin killed him and laid out this swell alibi for himself."

The chief laughed heartily. "Never can tell by appearances," he declared. "Why, Dan, you got a great imagination. You ought to be one of these detective fiction writers."

"Them? They ain't got no imagination," replied O'Hara, unperturbed. "See you sometime, chief. Dig me up this Mrs. Conlin of the New Bedford Hotel while I'm gone, will you?"

"We'll try to trace her. I forgot to tell you that the pair checked out of the hotel at eight Friday morning and went off in a sedan. Nobody noticed the license number."

"Much obliged. So long, chief."

CHAPTER XIII

O'Hara Learns Things

CONLIN AND COMPANY was a firm of investment brokers on lower Broadway. It had been a conservative house which had come successfully through the panic and preserved an appearance of prosperity through the three years of sagging security markets. It still occupied large and ornate offices, and only one familiar with the appearance of these offices in boom days would realize that there were only one third as many employees about the place.

On Monday morning after the Thursday night when R. J. Conlin left his home in 'Sconset there was a conference in the directors' room of Conlin and Company, was presided over by William H. Good, junior partner, and attended by two young men who were, in theory, partners, though their interest in the profits were negligible. There was present the first auditor and a high official of the Stock Exchange.

"I wired Conlin on Thursday that the Republic of Paragonia had repudiated its bonds," stated Mr. Good, "and that we would go under unless he could find a way to prevent it. He failed to put in an appearance on Fri-

day. On Saturday, as you know, the papers carried the story of his disappearance, which they elaborated on Sunday.

"In times like these a scandal is fatal. I knew by the demands from clients up to closing time Saturday that we would be swamped by this morning. I am afraid that Conlin, who handled our Paragonian interests exclusively, was aware of the situation a week ago and laid his plans. I regret, gentlemen, to state that this firm appears to be insolvent and we shall have to make an assignment.

"I have been connected with the firm for twenty years. I am losing my personal fortune in the crash." He stopped because his voice had broken, and he blew his nose in order to cover his emotion with a display of white linen handkerchief.

"How much did Conlin steal?" asked one of the very junior partners angrily.

"So far as I am able to discover his accounts are in good shape," replied the auditor. "Our error was in underwriting the issue of Paragonian bonds. We might have scratched through their repudiation had the head of the firm been on the job, but his disappearance alarmed all our clients. There is no doubt that Conlin and Co. must go into a receiver's hands."

"You can bet he feathered his own nest," said the second very junior partner.

"It is possible that our chief has met with foul play," protested the acting head of the firm.

"Boloney," commented the first very junior partner.

"He either flew the coop or committed suicide," declared his colleague.

"In any event, sir," stated Mr. Good to the official of the Stock Exchange, "I am filing a voluntary petition in bankruptcy."

The Stock Exchange man nodded sympathetically. "We might have helped you out as we have helped out so many good houses in this trying period," he said, "but the scandal of Conlin's disappearance makes it impossible. He has a wife in Nantucket, but he turned up in New Bedford with a woman whom he registered as his wife. He slipped into New York and went to the Pennsylvania Hotel without communicating with this office, though he knew the seriousness of the situation. We can't do anything for Conlin and Company, Mr. Good."

"I didn't suppose you could," answered Mr. Good with a sigh. "That is all, gentlemen."

THE meeting broke up just as a solidly built, granite-faced, slovenly dressed man entered the outer office and asked for one of the partners.

"Please state your business," said the smart information clerk superciliously.

The visitor produced a slightly greasy card which stated that its bearer was Daniel O'Hara of the Massachusetts State Police.

"In connection with the disappearance of Mr. Conlin," he added.

"I'll find out if Mr. Good will see you," she replied.

A moment later she conducted Dan O'Hara into a perfectly appointed office where a gray-haired man with a clean shaven, pink face and faultless attire was seated.

"What can I do for you, Mr. O'Hara?" asked the junior partner of Conlin and Company politely but without much interest.

"I'd like to get a line on Mr. Conlin,

sir," replied the detective. "I'm trying to find out if he had any enemies that might have put him on the spot."

"You think he has been killed?"

"Well, I've got kind of a hunch that he has, sir."

"I disagree with you. In my opinion his disappearance is voluntary. This firm has gone into a receiver's hands, Mr. O'Hara."

"Oh, ho! He swiped the assets, eh?"

"I have no reason to suppose so, but knowing our financial condition, I think he lacked courage to face the music."

Dan scratched his head in perplexity. Having accepted the general impression that Conlin was a man of great wealth, it had not occurred to him that the banker's disappearance might be due to money trouble.

"It is possible that he committed suicide," added Good.

Dan shook his head. "He has either been murdered or he is still alive," he replied. "If he left Nantucket Island at all he came to New York and was at the Pennsylvania on Friday night."

"But we know he left Nantucket. The Saturday papers traced him to the Hotel Pennsylvania."

"There was a name on a register," replied Dan. He dug an envelope from his pocket and produced a tracing.

"Is this his signature?" he demanded.

Good looked at the slip of tissue. "It seems to be," he replied. "It is a little more legibly written than his usual signature, but I supposed he wanted them to get his name right in case of phone calls."

Dan looked disappointed. "Just the same I'd like to find out about him."

"I can refer you to the volume entitled 'Men Who Have Made New York,'" replied Good. "You may go into our library and read the article about Mr. Conlin."

Dan grinned. "That won't help me much. I want to find out who he done dirt to that might have scragged him."

Good stiffened. "Mr. Conlin was a just, fair man who never injured anybody," he replied haughtily.

"That's what the preacher would say at the funeral services. I want the low down."

"Well," replied Good. "I am not feeling very well, sir, and this conversation affects me disagreeably. I'll refer you to his secretary, Miss June Duncan, who knows more about his private affairs than I."

A MOMENT later Dan was in the presence of a reasonably good looking young woman who wore glasses and a prim expression. His efforts to become confidential with her were received glacially. Evidently she respected her employer highly and proposed to divulge no secrets. He learned that Mr. Conlin was a man of impeccable life who belonged to all the best clubs and who was most happily married.

"What was his wife's name before she was married?" he inquired.

"I'm sorry. I never heard it. I have only been with Mr. Conlin two years."

Shaking the dust, figuratively speaking, of Conlin and Company from his shoes, Dan took a taxi to the editorial rooms of a sensational afternoon newspaper. His card admitted him at once to the presence of the city editor, a nervous, bespectacled, old young man who gazed at him hopefully.

"What can we do for the Massachusetts State Police?" he demanded.

"I'd like to look through your

obituary envelope about this R. J. Conlin," he said.

"Ah!" exclaimed the city editor. "The absconding broker!"

"I ain't heard he absconded. He disappeared from Nantucket Island and his wife suspected foul play. I come over to get a line on him."

"Didn't you read our paper on Sunday? He vamoosed with a blonde. I'd be much obliged if you would give me the name and picture of the blonde, Mr. O'Hara."

Dan chuckled. "I could use that blonde myself. How about a look-see at the envelope, eh?"

"I'll send for it and you can look it over right here. And if you find anything we have overlooked—did you read our story yesterday?"

"I'm a Republican and I don't very often read Democratic papers," stated O'Hara.

The city editor sent a boy for a Sunday paper, opened it and showed Dan a story on the third page which was headed by a picture of Conlin and of Mrs. Conlin. As the shaky condition of Conlin and Co. was not known to the newspapers on Saturday when the story was concocted out of an item from the police headquarters reporter, it was cautiously written and only intimated that, while Mrs. Conlin, in Nantucket, was broadcasting her fear of foul play, the gay broker was traveling with another woman.

"What's this Mrs. Conlin's maiden name?" asked the detective.

"Stella Crane," replied the city editor. "A widow when she married him, I believe."

"Got an envelope on her?"

"No. We don't bother much about the wives of business men."

"Well, this lady was on the stage before she was married. She told me she was in one of those Ziegfeld Follies."

"Wow!" exclaimed the city editor. "I'll slay that rewrite man."

"What's eating you?"

The city editor laughed. "We can usually get a swell story on an ex-Follies girl. Of course Crane wasn't her stage name; that was the name of her first husband. Hey, Jones, run into the dramatic editor's room and drag him out, will you? Stick around, Mister Detective, you're a positive inspiration."

IN a few minutes there appeared a bald-headed man with nose glasses which were connected to his right ear by a broad band of black ribbon.

"Take a look at this gal," requested the city editor, "and tell me who she used to be."

The dramatic editor looked at the newspaper picture and grinned. "What's the matter with your own eyes?" he demanded. "That's Stella Starr who was mixed up in a breach of promise suit against somebody big ten years ago. You're a hell of a city editor."

"You see, her name when she married Conlin was Crane. That's why we didn't identify her."

"Crane. Now what does that remind me of! Good Lord, she married James Crane of Chicago. He was murdered by some fellow who got all heated up because he gave Stella a black eye—a big football star did it and Stella went on the witness stand and wept an acquittal out of the jury."

"Wow!" repeated the city editor. "Dickson, you're my darling! I remember, and the big football star was —was—"

"Guy by the name of Jack Billings," supplied Dan O'Hara.

The city editor emitted a howl like a wolf who was very hungry. The outcry did not attract the slightest attention in the busy city room, whose occupants seemed to be accustomed to outbursts of temperament by the city editor.

The dramatic editor turned to the detective and grinned sardonically.

"Trouble with this rag," he said, "is that they take ignorant reporters and make them city editors and they fire them before they've been on the job long enough to learn anything. An old-time city editor could have told the history of that vampire by one look at her picture. Can I be of further service?"

"Sure," replied the city editor unaggrieved. "Go through your files and dig out all the photos you've got of her. The less clothes she has on the more our readers will enjoy seeing her. Much obliged, O'Hara."

"Don't mention it," answered Dan. "Now, how would you be having this murder case filed away?"

"Under the name of the defendant," said the editor. "I'll dig it right out. Jones, see what they have in the morgue files concerning John or Jack Billings."

A very fat envelope was produced in a couple of minutes and Olsen dragged out the contents and strewed them over his desk, making funny little moans which, with him, indicated the acme of mental enjoyment.

"Boy, what a follow-up on the Conlin story!" he declared. "And no other rag in town has an idea that this broker's wife was the woman in the Billings murder case. Oh, me, oh, my, I can't understand why it didn't break when Conlin married her. I guess the old boy covered everything up neatly. There was only a paragraph about his marriage in his envelope, and not a word about who the dame was."

As soon as the city editor had run his eye over a clipping, Dan took it and read it slowly and methodically.

By the time Dan had gone through the clippings, the city editor had finished dictating a long and lurid story to two rewrite men and was poring over five or six gorgeous pictures of Stella Starr as she had been in her early twenties, sent in by the dramatic editor.

Unlike Olsen, Dan had read every word of the clippings in the envelope and it had taken him an hour and a half. What perplexed him was that the name of R. J. Conlin did not occur once in the mass of material dealing with the Billings case.

When he rose to depart, Olsen shook him gratefully by the hand, assured him of his everlasting esteem and invited him to come in any time. If he had known the story which Dan O'Hara was concealing, he would have slain him, for Olsen, as befitted the city editor of a very sensational paper, was not entirely sane.

CHAPTER XIV

Too Many Trails

DAN went across to City Hall Park and seated himself on a bench. He had things to think about.

It began to look to Dan very much as though Jack Billings, a couple of whose Corona Corona cigars the detective had not yet smoked, had slain R. J. Conlin. He was far from being able to prove it. He couldn't produce the body and there was evidence that he could not yet controvert that Conlin had been in New York on Friday night, while Dan happened to know that Billings was on Nantucket Island

on Friday night. The collapse of Conlin and Company, coinciding with the disappearance of Conlin and the signatures on two hotel registers made it very evident that the banker had skipped, like so many captains of industry who couldn't stand the gaff.

Dan pulled out his dudeen, filled it and lighted it. If it wasn't for the hotel registers and the failure of Conlin's firm he could make out a fair case against Jack Billings. The ex-football star had murdered one of Stella Starr's husbands and he might have murdered the other. Dan had the police complex of believing that innocent persons are never brought to trial and the acquittal of an accused individual is usually a miscarriage of justice.

Jack Billings was in Nantucket. He claimed to have arrived the day after the murder, but he might be lying. He called himself John Smith. He might have been the John Smith who rented the Rapidan-Sears house. He had assumed that he was safe after he had destroyed the features of R. J. Conlin, but when he was recognized by Dan O'Hara, he was probably terrified and had decided that the dead body might be identified after all, so he had stolen it from the undertaker's shop and gotten rid of it.

It would take a man of great force of character to carry off the corpse of somebody he had murdered and mutilated, but Dan had seen Billings on the football field, and he knew he had been tried for the murder of one of Stella Starr's husbands, so it seemed he was capable of it. Dan hesitated to convict Jack in his mind, of slaying the three servants. He rather liked Billings, wished him well, certainly had no wish to accuse him unjustly. However, any man who has slain one person might kill by wholesale if he thought his safety demanded it.

What did Billings have against Conlin? Well, a man who is in love with another man's wife doesn't have to have a special enmity to her husband. The fact that he keeps the lovers apart is sufficient reason to kill him.

The point was that here was a very deep mystery. By following up a wild theory Dan had not only identified the murdered person, but had found an individual who was on the ground, who had a strong motive for murder, who had already killed the first husband of the wife of R. J. Conlin, who could easily have stolen the dead body from the undertaking rooms in Nantucket town, and the mystery was almost solved.

On the other hand, the presumption was that the corpse was that of John Smith, since it had been found lying on the bed in his home. Jack Billings claimed to have landed in Nantucket upon the day following the murder. If he were the killer he would have made sure that his presence on steamship and bus on Friday were noted.

There was a bus driver to swear that Conlin had been landed at the steamship pier on Friday night. There was the evidence of the register at the New Bedford Hotel which indicated that Conlin had arrived there with a blond woman. And Dan had questioned the hotel people and displayed Conlin's photo and found nobody willing to declare that its original had not been the companion of the blond woman. Of course Mrs. Conlin was in with Billings —she was always sympathetic to her husbands' murderers and she, probably, would insist that the signature upon the New Bedford and the New York registers were those of her husband.

There was no longer a chance of

identifying the murdered man as Conlin, since the body had vanished. And there was a failure of Conlin and Company to supply the motive for the disappearance of the head of the firm.

DAN knew too much to suppose he could arrest Jack Billings for the murder of R. J. Conlin. He knew that he couldn't get a grand jury indictment. He even found it difficult to believe that a person like Billings could commit four such atrocious murders as had taken place on Nantucket. He jumped to the conclusion that the Conlin woman and Billings were still lovers, an assumption that the reader is aware is false. He didn't see what he could do except go back to Nantucket and keep his eyes open.

He went over to the Western Union office and wrote a telegram to Chief Plympton of Nantucket.

"Make sure that Mrs. Conlin does not leave the island and if necessary arrest John Smith at the Sippiconsett House if he tries to leave before I get there."

Police Headquarters in New York had some information for the Massachusetts officer after he had smoked his pipe in the park and dropped in upon his Gotham colleagues.

It appeared that the servants had been engaged from the Universal Agency by a woman who gave the name of Mrs. John Smith and whose address was the Biltmore Hotel.

She had personally selected all three from a host of applicants. The Negro was George Washington Cook, who had a wife and four children in the Lenox Avenue district, and who had excellent recommendations. The Englishman, Robert Dover by name, had served as a butler for several Park Avenue families and had excellent recommendations, and the maid was a Roumanian who spoke almost no English but who understood German and French.

The manager of the agency insisted that the three were not acquainted with one another so far as he knew; that each had worked for good people in New York and was well spoken of. The police had investigated the references and found them all authentic. There had been a swarm of applicants for employment at the agency upon the day the three unfortunate servants were engaged and the woman who had hired them had picked them out of a score or more.

The police had a fair description of the alleged Mrs. Smith. She was about thirty or thirty-five, tall, solidly built, rather good looking, very pale and with straight features. She had worn a blue knitted dress and a blue turban. She spoke with a refined accent and appeared to be a lady. They had a copy of her signature in the agency book, a tracing of which the police presented to O'Hara.

The Negro's family wanted his body. The other two servants had no relatives so far as was known.

From police headquarters O'Hara went to Grand Central Station and bought a through ticket to Nantucket.

The New York authorities would do their best to locate the blond woman who passed as Mrs. Smith and who answered in a general way the description of the woman who had spent the night at New Bedford with R. J. Conlin.

If Jack Billings had killed Conlin, it was evident that the plan had been made long in advance and he had had the assistance of this blond woman, and that worried Dan O'Hara.

A man with murder in his mind does

not pick up a woman accomplice very easily. If the blonde had worked with Billings, it ought to be because she was in love with him, and if she and he were lovers where did Mrs. Conlin come in? If Dan's theory that Billings had killed Conlin because he was insanely in love with Mrs. Conlin were correct, would Mrs. Conlin have stood for the other woman?

And the fact that the servants were reputable people, strangers to one another, and highly recommended made it hard to believe that they had entered a conspiracy to murder anyone. But, if they were innocent, it made the task of the killer very much more difficult. First he must have killed Smith or Conlin, then rounded up the servants, forced them into the car at the point of a gun, taken them out on the moors and shot them down.

All the way along the New England shore Dan pondered over the refusal of the various pieces of this jig saw puzzle to get into the right places.

In despair he went back to the alternative theory he had suggested to the chief of police of New Bedford, that Conlin might have killed the mysterious John Smith. Suppose he had had an intrigue with Mrs. Smith; suppose he and Mrs. Smith did the killing and fled together. That would account for the blond woman in New Bedford who had phoned to the Nantucket police the news of the murder.

But that presupposed that there actually had been a John Smith living in that house on the bluff, and all the circumstances united to make it exceedingly doubtful.

In the end Dan decided that he would have to do what many a criminal investigator has to do, lay aside his pet theory and watch and wait and poke about until he stumbled on something which would put him back on the trail again.

CHAPTER XV

Big Tim Moriaty

WHEN the Nantucket steamer bearing the sorely perplexed Dan O'Hara moved across Nantucket Harbor the following forenoon she passed close to a motor yacht. It was a long, low, knife-bowed craft built with a streamline effect which was not broken by the rake of her two short masts and the broad, squat funnel amidships. She flew the flag of the New York Yacht Club and the pennant that indicated that her owner was on board. So perfectly proportioned was she that she gave the impression of being small and dainty despite the fact that she was a hundred and twenty feet on her waterline, had a beam of twenty feet and could cruise all over the seven seas as safely as a twenty-thousand ton ocean liner.

Nor would the average observer dream that this lovely craft could travel through the water with the speed of the fastest torpedo destroyer in any navy in the world. Her twin Diesel engines could drive her at thirty-five knots an hour and occasionally had been called upon to do so.

The name of this vessel was the Huelva and her owner was listed as J. Parsons Peabody, son of General Elisha Peabody, who at one time owned a large part of the public utilities of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. As the Peabody fortune had dwindled to almost nothing during the depression New York society often wondered how J. Parsons was able to buy fuel for his million dollar speedster. There was a guest on board in Nantucket Harbor who could have explained all this,

though it was his habit to explain nothing.

The guest was lounging in a huge chair under an awning at the stern sipping mineral water. J. Parsons was sleeping off a drunk in his cabin. Several of the young lady guests were also dead to the world this beautiful morning, and the young woman who was sitting at the stern with the drinker of mineral water didn't feel so good.

As he never drank anything but mineral water, the guest was in fine shape. He wore a costume of white drill with gold buttons, a white yachting cap with a lot of gold braid on it, and on his feet were white shoes so large that he had to have them made to order. If Dan O'Hara, who gazed at the yacht lying at anchor a hundred yards from the course of the steamer, had been near enough to get a look at the face of the person in yachting costume he would have recognized him as Public Enemy number two, who had been promoted to Public Enemy number one since Al Capone was languishing in a Federal jail. And he would have understood why the gentleman was in Nantucket Harbor. Big Tim Moriaty was making a tour of inspection.

Fifteen years ago, Tim Moriaty had been a brawny young New York Irishman who earned a living on the docks of the North River by tossing bales of cotton and boxes of machinery around. He stood six feet two in his socks, he had a forty-eight inch chest and a forty inch waist; his biceps were bigger than those of Jack Dempsey, and he could carry a hogshead weighing three hundred pounds on his back. He earned an honest living by the sweat of his brow and he made about sixty or seventy dollars a week. Tim Moriaty had promised his old mother that he would never drink strong liquor, which had caused his father to die in his prime, and he had faithfully kept that promise. Unfortunately it had not occurred to his mother to make him promise not to rob, fight or kill because, being a good Christian woman, it never occurred to her that her big boy would be tempted to commit crimes.

In those days there were plenty of squabbles on the waterfront and Tim being barred from the harmless pleasure which comes from drinking beer and whiskey, got his fun in fighting. He was such a magnificent scrapper that he had an opportunity to join a little organization formed by two or three strong-armed and clear-headed stevedores who afterwards broke into fame as Public Enemies, the purpose of which was to protect shippers and slop shop men from waterfront crooks, drunken mobs, strikes and that sort of thing. And along about that time prohibition came into being.

If it hadn't been for prohibition, Tim Moriaty might have been a great heavyweight pugilist, but prohibition gave the Protective Association its great opportunity. During the next ten years Tim Moriaty and three or four of his fellow members of the Waterfront Protective Association gained fame and fortune. Thanks to them, New York was saved from going dry during the early and serious efforts to enforce prohibition.

From the small business of carrying bottles off the ocean liners to saloon keepers on the waterfront, Tim and his friends rose to coöperation with huge fleets of rum ships, and when the three-mile limit was extended by treaty with England to twelve miles, they chartered their own fleets of rum ships, met them with swift motor boats and sent huge caravans of trucks rumbling

through the night from Long Island and New Jersey beaches.

Probably because Tim was a teetotaler and his associates drank too much of their own poison, he gradually won the leadership, and because he was by nature a monopolist, he realized that the retailers made a greater profit with less effort than the runners and wholesalers. So, he began opening night clubs where liquor which cost him seventy-five cents a quart at the ship was sold for eight and ten dollars a quart to society folks, and thus he secured the wholesalers, the jobbers, and the retailers' profits.

By and by he had a string of night clubs where cover charges ranged as high as five dollars per person. He prided himself upon selling good liquor and he waged war upon those who sold poison and reduced the consuming population. Guns barked. Men were killed. Gangsters warred. The reign of terror was on.

BIG TIM came through it all triumphant. He had millions in safe deposit vaults. Tribute came from a hundred quarters. His former associates were either his lieutenants or they were dead. He sat in his office and studied charts of the Atlantic coast and gave orders which moved rum ships here, there and everywhere. The whole Coast Guard was employed to interfere with Big Tim's business and hardly a night went by when machine guns were not popping and men were dying. And yet Tim loved children and cats and was very good to little girls who worked in night clubs. And his word was his bond. He never double crossed anybody. He was a jolly, generous host and a big contributor to charity. As for his personal enemies, he never sent his gunmen after them. He put on his own gun and shot them himself. He had twice been tried for murder during his career and each time had been released because there was insufficient evidence.

His age was thirty-five. He had a big, broad, heavy face, a slow, rather agreeable grin and a natural sense of humor. He had learned to talk English without relapsing into "dese, dem and dose" and he could wear a dinner jacket, a boiled shirt and a high starched collar without causing too much suffering to his thick red neck.

J. Parsons Peabody was working for him. The fast yacht Huelva was his property, though it was still listed in the name of the ex-millionaire. Occasionally he combined business with pleasure and made a cruise in her.

The girl who was lying on a divan lifted her head. She was an exceedingly pretty girl with great masses of chestnut hair, glowing brown eyes, a round, doll like face and a figure so sumptuous that even the loose sailor's costume she wore could not conceal the fact.

"When's he coming?" she demanded. "I'm crazy about that guy, Tim."

"He'll be along pretty soon if he knows what's good for him," said Mr. Moriaty grimly.

"You ain't going to do anything to him, are you, Tim?"

Mr. Moriaty bent heavy brows. "You stuck on this mug?" he demanded.

"Course I ain't. You're my man, Tim."

"Yeah. These college goofs always make a hit with you dolls. Damned if I know why. I could kill any one of them I ever met with my bare hands."

"He's a swell boy and he got a raw deal."

"What he's had ain't nothing to what he's going to get if he don't do what I tell him. There's a launch coming out. Wait a minute."

He picked up a pair of binoculars and turned them on the approaching launch.

"It's him," he said.

The girl rolled off the divan and toddled toward the cabin entrance.

"Where you going?" he demanded in his rumbling bass.

"I'll be back presently. I'm going to put on something good looking," she replied.

Tim laughed ironically. "Take off, you mean," he jeered. "I'm talking private to this egg. You keep away until I send for you."

She laughed cheerfully. "O. K., Tim."

When the launch ran alongside a few minutes later, sailors appeared at the accommodation ladder.

"Who do you want to see?" one of them demanded of the young man who presented himself.

"All right," shouted Moriaty. "Let him aboard."

Tim lighted a cigar at least nine inches long. Especially made for him in Havana, they cost him a dollar apiece.

"Hello, Billings," he said hoarsely, "Give an account of yourself and make it snappy."

"That's what I'm here for, Mr. Moriaty," replied the man whom Cynthia knew as John Smith.

"How did it happen? Who done it?"

"I don't know how it happened and I don't know who killed him."

"He had twenty grand in his clothes. Who got it?"

"I don't know anything about it, Tim."

Moriaty looked at the young man balefully. "Nobody ever double crossed me and lived long," he declared. "I'm giving you a chance to come clean."

Billings seated himself. He was pale and worried "I'll tell you what I know and all I know," he said. "I landed the plane on the moor with Haywood according to orders. We waited until it got a little darker and the fog came rolling in and then we walked across the fields and came up behind what I thought was the Sears house. In the fog I came out on the bluff about a hundred feet beyond it and I walked down the path with Haywood. Just in front of the house I heard a woman scream—it sounded as though she had fallen over the cliff.

"I had a flashlight in my pocket and, on impulse, I slid over the edge and down to the bottom. Haywood came along with me. I found a girl, who had been knocked unconscious, and I told Haywood to meet me in front of the house. I helped her to her feet when she came to after a minute and got her up a long staircase to the path again and sent her on her way."

"And she got a look at you, of course," said Moriaty contemptuously.

"No. The fog was too thick. She didn't see me. I was careful of that. Then I went back to the Rapidan-Sears place, found Haywood, took him into the house and introduced him as Mr. Smith to the butler. We said good night. I went back and boarded the plane and landed in New Bedford. That's all I know about it."

"Go on," said Moriaty scornfully.

"I heard about the murder in New Bedford and realized that there were

things to be done so I returned to Nantucket on the morning boat."

"Listen," said Moriaty in cold, menacing tones. "Harry Haywood isn't in that house more than an hour or two when he is murdered. These servants had nothing against him. They didn't know him. You're the only one on this island that knew that Haywood was in that house. Now, if you didn't kill him, who did?"

"I didn't kill him," replied Billings stoutly. "I had one or two theories. Want to hear them?"

"You bet your life I do."

"JOHN SMITH was an island mystery. He was supposed to be a man of wealth. He was a recluse. There are plenty of bad characters on the island. A lot of those Portuguese squatters are untrustworthy and there are tough eggs working in your mob. They might have picked that night to break in and kill the tenant of that house. That's one theory. The other is that he was killed by somebody who did know that it was Harry Haywood who would be in the house that night, who had good reason for wanting him out of the way, and who destroyed his features so that he could not be recognized and the killing traced back to its instigator."

"You mean me," said Moriaty. "Why should I bump him off after all the trouble I had fixing a break for him out of Atlanta penitentiary?"

"I thought of that," said Billings, meeting the big man's eye without hesitation. "Haywood took the rap for you. He has enough on you to make a lot of trouble for you. In stir he might have decided to squeal, so you had to get him out. And you might have decided he knew too much to be at large."

Moriaty frowned but did not explode as Billings had expected.

"I ain't that kind of a guy," he said slowly. "It ain't a bad theory, Billings, and I know fellers that would have done just as you say. But I happen to like Harry. I'm not afraid of him. He took the rap on the income tax business because I promised to get him out in a few weeks. I put you and Daisy to work to rig up this Smith business to have a safe hideaway for him. You see, if he was living in Nantucket for six weeks before the break at Atlanta, they couldn't very well suspect this Mr. Smith of being Harry Haywood. I don't have to make any explanations to you, but I'm doing it. That theory of yours is screwy."

Billings smiled and looked greatly relieved.

"I believe you," he said. "Frankly, Tim, I can't be a party to murder. I've done a few things I'm ashamed of. I was ashamed to have to help in the escape of a notorious gangster like Haywood. I only did it because you said that you'd let me quit the game after this job."

"With your record you talk like that," said Moriaty contemptuously. "Now my theory was that you scragged him for the twenty grand I slipped him in New York, but I believe you when you say you didn't do it. I'll believe you till I get proof to the contrary."

"Haywood spent a couple of nights in New York," said Billings. "Whom did he see and talk to. There are plenty who have it in for him."

"That's an idea. I'll find out. What I can't understand is how a two fisted guy like Haywood would lie in bed and let somebody bash in his face with a club."

"And who stole his body from the undertaking rooms in Nantucket?"

"Yeah."

"And who was the woman who telephoned to the Nantucket police from New Bedford next morning?" demanded Billings.

"That's right. I forgot there was a dame in it."

"And somebody got away with the twenty grand. No money was found in his clothes or in the house."

Moriaty bit savagely at his cigar. "There's a Massachusetts state dick that sent me an impudent message," he declared. "If I don't dig up this murderer, he'll blame it on the bootleggers. His name is O'Hara. Know him?"

"I had a chat with him the other night."

"I'd do something about him," Tim observed, "except that nobody can kill a friend of mine and get away with it, and it's bad for business to have Nantucket in all the newspapers. I was using this island to land the best champagnes. I've passed the word along in New York to listen in everywhere and I may get some dope that way."

"I apologize to you for my suspicions," said Billings. "By the way, who made the arrangements in New York to hire the house down here and who engaged the servants?"

"The feller who told about 'Sconset as a hide-away," said Tim. "This broker, R. J. Conlin. He had a dame make all the arrangements so that they couldn't be traced to me, see."

"Conlin?" exclaimed Billings. "You know he has disappeared, don't you?"

"No. When?"

"He left Nantucket the night of the murder and his wife hasn't heard from him since. The newspapers traced him to New York and lost him."

"I ain't seen a paper for a few days. What name are you using on the island?"

"John Smith," replied Billings.

MORIATY emitted a snort.

"You damn fool!" he exclaimed. "That's the name Haywood was supposed to have; we rented the house under that name."

"It's the commonest name in the world," replied Billings. Now the fact was that Billings had entered the Sippiconsett House with quite another alias in his mind, and the sight of the lovely face of Cynthia Simpson had driven it and everything else away. And when Cynthia opened the register and handed him the pen, the only name that occurred to him was the name she had mentioned to him on the beach the previous night which he had scribbled before he recovered his equanimity. But he couldn't tell that to Tim Moriaty.

"I s'pose so," said Tim. "Supposing this dame who met you on the beach in front of this Sears house did get a squint at you. That plants you in Nantucket about the time the crime was committed. And, being as you was tried for murder once before, you'll be in a hell of a hole, Mr. Smith."

"But she didn't," insisted Jack Billings untruthfully.

"Well, you better stick round and see what you can find out. That's all. I'll be in the harbor for a day or two. This is as good a place to loaf as any."

"Mr. Moriaty," said Billings firmly. "I want to quit the game. I've saved some money. I'm not cut out for this sort of thing."

Moriaty nodded. "O. K.," he said. "You dig up this killer and you and me will shake hands and say good-by."

"I'll find him," said Jack grimly.

A beautiful young woman in a vivid sport costume which consisted of an orange sweater and a green pleated skirt and a coquettish little green cap came out of the cabin and bore down upon the two business men.

"If it isn't Jack Billings!" she exclaimed in great surprise.

Moriaty laughed good naturedly. "She seen you coming and ran below to doll up," he declared. "Jack's on his way, Vera."

"Oh, make him stay to lunch," she pleaded. "Come on, Jack. I invite you."

"Sorry, Vera," replied the young man. "I've just got my orders."

"Hardly worth while to put on the glad rags, eh, Vera?" jeered Tim Moriaty.

"You're just hateful," she said resentfully. Her accent was strongly southern. According to her own statement Miss Vera Lee had come from a grand old Virginia home to dance in New York night clubs. As a result of strict attention to business she now owned several diamond bracelets and she was hostess upon one of the finest yachts which flew the flag of the N. Y. Yacht Club. Billings had met her in one of Tim's gay resorts, danced with her and forgotten her.

He shook her hand heartily, nodded to Moriaty and went over the side into his launch.

CHAPTER XVI

The Man on the Bluff

FOR the first time since the murders Cynthia Simpson walked up the bluff path after she had turned over the desk at the Sippiconsett House to the night clerk at five o'clock. It was a gorgeous 'Sconset evening, peaceful and serene.

Being a New Englander with a long line of New England ancestors, Cynthia had a New England conscience and she had suffered for several days from a sense of duty undone. By great ingenuity she had avoided tête-à-têtes with John Smith since the morning that Mrs. Conlin had arrived at the Sippiconsett House. Smith, who had sublime impudence, had taken advantage of every opportunity to exchange a few words with her while she was on duty, and the burden of his remarks was his need for a walk and a private talk with her.

While Cynthia resented his impudence she was a woman, so she liked it. It was obvious that Smith was interested in her, despite his intimacy with the very beautiful Mrs. Conlin.

And the horrid thought that Smith and Mrs. Conlin might have made away with R. J. Conlin, which had been inspired by jealous fury the day of the woman's arrival, had been driven away by the news that Mr. Conlin had been traced to New York.

Mrs. Conlin had assured her that the only reason she was remaining in 'Sconset instead of hastening to New York to help in the hunt for her husband was a police summons for fast driving, which was an outrage, as she had never driven fast and had never been arrested. That didn't fool Cynthia. She was certain that the woman was at the hotel to be near John Smith but she wasn't so sure, now, that Smith wanted to be near Mrs. Conlin.

Smith was such a likeable person that Cynthia could not possibly believe that he was a criminal, yet the fact remained that he was close to the scene of the murder somewhere near the time that the murder had occurred, and that he claimed not to have reached Nantucket until the day after. As the police

were hunting high and low for persons who were in that vicinity, was she doing her duty in withholding this information? While, actually, wild horses would not have dragged the information from her, Cynthia's conscience was raising hob about it.

She walked swiftly along the bluff path and noted absently how many of the recently tenanted cottages were vacant. She neared the lighthouse as shadows gathered, waved her hand to the light keeper, who was an old acquaintance of hers, and turned to retrace her steps. She had walked about an eighth of a mile and was approaching a hedge which marked the boundary of the house occupied by the Folsoms of Boston, who had left in a hurry two days after the murder, when a man, who was lying on the grass close to the hedge and whom she had not observed up to that second, sat up and said:

"Good evening, miss."

Cynthia glanced at him nervously. He was a big man, dark complected and his countenance was rather unpleasant.

"Good evening," she replied, and quickened her steps.

"I say," he called after her with a pronounced English accent, "what's your hurry, miss?"

Cynthia did not answer. In a second she heard footfalls behind her. She glanced nervously along the path and to the right. Nobody was in sight. Cynthia's heart began to thump. Never in her life had she been accosted on the bluff path before. The man was alongside her and made to take her arm. She pulled it away.

"How dare you!" she exclaimed in a voice that was loud but shaky.

"Can't you pass the time of day with a chap?" he demanded. "There ayn't no 'arm in me."

"No, I can't," she replied desperately. "Let me go. Let me go, I tell you!"

HE had her fast by the right arm. He was grinning and there was a terrifying expression in his pale blue eyes.

"Yell your head off," he sneered. "No one can hear you. Let's you and me sit down and have a little chat."

Cynthia struggled, but he forced her down upon the grass beside him and held her by the waist.

"You're a sight for sore eyes, you are. What's your name?" he demanded.

Cynthia tried to drive her clenched right fist into his face, but he caught her wrist.

"I'll have a kiss for that," he declared. His vicious mouth approached hers. The girl emitted a piercing shriek and the response was a blow in the face which hurt her but did not prevent her screaming even more loudly. The man shifted his hands to her throat and hesitated, for a male voice was lifted in answer to the scream and somebody could be discerned in the gathering darkness, running up the path.

With an oath, the fellow dropped Cynthia, thrust his hand into his back pocket, pulled out a gun and fired a shot at the approaching figure. It took effect, for the man staggered, stepped off the path and vanished. And at the same instant Cynthia Simpson rolled over and fearlessly precipitated herself over the edge.

There was no pursuit. The assailant peered fearsomely over the cliff into the shadows below, swore forcefully and vanished toward the back road.

Cynthia rolled for a second, righted herself and slid down the steep incline accompanied by a load of sand. This

time she did not strike her head on a rock and she arrived at the bottom without the slightest injury. Immediately she rose and started in search of the person who had come to her rescue and who had drawn a bullet.

She was not aware of his proximity until she stumbled over him, pitched headlong and caused him to sit up.

"What the deuce?" said the voice of John Smith.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "It's you. Are you hurt, Mr. Smith?"

"I don't quite know," he answered. "There's blood on the top of my head where that scoundrel creased me. I guess the fall didn't hurt me much. Was it you who screamed?"

"Yes," she said. "Let me see."

Soft fingers touched the top of his head and she drew in her breath sharply.

"You have been shot!" she exclaimed. "We must get a doctor."

"Nothing serious. I sort of figured it was you who was in trouble."

"How did you come to be away out here?" she asked quickly.

He chuckled. "I followed you, Miss Simpson. I'm going to keep following you. What happened up there?"

He could not see Cynthia blush. He was contented to lie flat on the sand and have her kneeling beside him, solicituous for his well-being.

"A perfectly horrible man was lying on the grass of the Folsom place," she said rapidly. "He grabbed me. He had a revolver. I never dreamed that there could be such terrible people."

"Some bootlegger taking a few hours off," replied Smith. "This looks like a peaceful community, Miss Simpson, but there are hard characters abroad after dark."

"Oh!" exclaimed Cynthia. "This was an Englishman. I think—it sounded like—he had a voice like that Englishman who was with you the night of the murder."

"Impossible," replied Smith sharply.

"Then it was the butler. You were with Mr. Smith's butler that night."

"Miss Simpson," he said. "Will you believe me when I assure you that I did not commit the quadruple crime the other night and I don't know who did? Are you sure this was the voice of the man who was with me that night?"

"Well, I'm not sure, of course. But he was an Englishman."

"A lot of Cockneys off the rum boats get into the shore gangs," he said thoughtfully. "May I get up now?"

"Do you think you can?"

He laughed and scrambled to his feet. "I have only a scratch on the top of my head," he said. "I was so astonished to have a man firing at me that I lost my footing. The situation of the other night seems to be reversed. How did you manage to get away from him?"

She chuckled. "I rolled over the edge. It's rather fun, though it looks very dangerous. Mr. Smith, I'm rather glad you followed me. I shall never dare walk along the bluff path again."

"You'd better not without an escort. May I be your escort?"

"Do you want to?" she asked coyly.

"*Do I?*"

HE placed his right hand under her elbow and they trudged along through the sand until they came to one of the occasional staircases. They mounted together and took their time about it.

"You and Mrs. Conlin are very good friends, aren't you?" she remarked when they reached the top.

"We are not," he said savagely. Cynthia's heart leaped.

"But you seemed—that first day—"

"I used to know her," he said slowly. "I had a crush on her. She married somebody else."

"Even that doesn't prevent a man from loving a girl," she stated.

He growled in his throat. "There were unusually rotten circumstances in this case," he told her. "I don't care if I never set eyes on Stella again in this life or the next."

"She is very beautiful—" Cynthia said wistfully.

"I prefer blondes," he replied. "Miss Simpson, will you please go down the path? I'll stand here until you've gone quite a distance. I want to catch that Cockney."

The girl grasped his arm. "No, no," she cried. "You mustn't. I'm afraid. I want you to walk back to the hotel with me."

"Please. The brute laid hands on you. He is a menace—"

"He didn't hurt me. He has a gun. He'll kill you. You are wounded, anyway."

"It's nothing but a scratch."

"But you're unarmed."

He drew a revolver from his hip pocket. "Not exactly. Please go along."

"I forbid you."

He laughed. "Sorry. I'm going after him."

"Then I'll go with you."

"You're certainly a brave girl. Every second we talk he is getting away further."

"I hope so. There are police on this island."

"Yes, but I don't think much of them. Come on now. Step along."

"Go," she said sullenly. "But I stay right here."

"All right. I'll be back in a few minutes."

He left her and moved cautiously back toward the place where he and Cynthia had gone over the cliff. He didn't think her assailant could possibly be Haywood. He had more reason than the police to think he knew the identity of the faceless corpse, and if it were Haywood, and somebody else had been slain in the Rapidan-Sears house, he had to run him down and ask him pertinent questions.

He came presently to the place where Cynthia had been struggling with the unknown. He went back and inspected the doors and windows of the empty house at that location and then, fearful of another attack upon the girl, he hastened back.

"Oh, I'm glad to see you!" she exclaimed. "Of course he got away."

"Vanished like smoke," he said regretfully.

Jack Billings felt ten years roll off his shoulders as they walked like lovers down the path towards 'Sconset. It was as though the turgid period since leaving college had been wiped out of his existence. He forgot that, even now, he was a lieutenant of a law violator and one to be despised by Cynthia Simpson if she knew all the facts about him.

Realities began to come back to him when the lights of the village came in sight and he fell from his seventh heaven with the sickening speed of Lucifer when he left Cynthia in the hotel lobby and ascended to his room, pushed open the door and found Dan O'Hara sitting by the window contentedly smoking one of Jack's Corona Coronas.

"You have a hell of a gall," Billings said indignantly. "What do you want?"

O'Hara rose and gazed at him solemnly.

"Want to arrest you for the murder of R. J. Conlin," he said sternly.

CHAPTER XVII

The Federals Shake a Leg

IN Washington, D. C., there is a building which houses the Department of Justice, and in one section of this building is located the Prohibition Unit. The head of the prohibition department was in conference with the director of enforcement in New York and with the commander of the coast guard.

While the business of this unit is to see that the eighteenth amendment to the Constitution as interpreted by the Volstead Act is enforced impartially from Alaska's icy shores to Florida's sunny strands and at all way stations between, its officers are practical men or they would not hold down political jobs.

Being perfectly aware that the task set them is impossible and would be impossible if they had twenty times as large an enforcement appropriation and fifty times as many persons on the payroll, they endeavor to give the presumptive dry majority a run for its money by concentrating their efforts and striking at points where their energies will be reported spectacularly in the newspapers.

Reading of the activities of the prohibition unit as exploited in the papers, the conscientious prohibitionist is lulled into thinking that the law is being enforced and it won't be long before the country will be all dried up.

So now let us listen in on the conference.

"Tim Moriaty is on board Peabody's yacht, the Huelva, in Nantucket Harbor," said the director in New York. "That means that something big is about to happen on Nantucket or Cape Cod and we have a chance to nab the Huelva and Moriaty red-handed."

"I'd like to get Moriaty," said the prohibition head. "He would look well in stripes at the next bench in Atlanta to Al Capone."

He turned to the commander of the coast guard. "How much stuff is run in at Nantucket?" he asked.

"Plenty. You see the waters around Nantucket are very dangerous. There are any number of shoals and reefs, fogs are frequent, transatlantic liners are continually passing and God help the coast guard boat running without lights if she crosses the path of one of them. We do the best we can, of course."

"But conditions must be just as unfavorable for the rum runners."

"They take the same chances, of course, but fog always helps a fugitive more than a pursuer. Besides the island contains scores of inlets which are unguarded and we never know which has been chosen to land the stuff. Once ashore it's up to the prohibition officers, and there aren't enough of them."

"We can hardly assign a big crew to an island with about 2,500 inhabitants."

"Very well. They ship the stuff to the main land practically unmolested. And since Massachusetts repealed her dry law we get no help from state or local police. The game there hasn't been worth the candle."

"That's true," admitted the New York director eagerly, "but at this moment, because of the atrocious murders, Nantucket is very much in the public eye. A Nantucket development will make the front page of any news-

paper. Of course these killings were done by bootleggers; anyway the public thinks they were. The time is ripe for a big demonstration at Nantucket. If we can get the goods on Moriaty, so much the better. Now, I'll be glad to loan half my force. I'll accompany my men in person—"

THE coast guard commander smiled. "I believe there are not fifty thousand speakeasies in New York—only twenty-two thousand by your recent chart."

"It would take a million men to dry up New York. Fifty men will pull this coup on Nantucket," replied the New Yorker, unperturbed.

"The presence of Moriaty on his yacht there indicates something very big," said the Head, thoughtfully. "Admiral, suppose you concentrate the biggest fleet you can collect off the coast of Cape Cod. Strip other stations temporarily. I'll have a band of agents ashore in Nantucket to give you every coöperation. If this yacht Huelva should be discovered in a compromising situation, she ought to be sunk and if Moriaty went down with her, it would be the best thing that could happen to the country. While we can't touch the fellow, he has a criminal career which is a standing reflection upon American police methods."

"I'll send code orders right away."

"I'm afraid they know our code," replied the Head. "Make the mobilization for a couple of days off and send sealed orders to commanders whom you know you can trust. And keep off the radio. They intercept and translate more of our code messages than we do of theirs."

"Very good, sir."

Within the next twenty-four hours more than a score of the swiftest and best armed coast guard cutters and motor craft put to sea with sealed orders, and after opening them turned their prows toward Nantucket and Cape Cod. And the boat from New Bedford and Woods Hole began to land young men in flannels and golf clothes who scattered around to the various hotels in Nantucket and 'Sconset and caused a flutter in those caravansaries where the young women outnumbered the young men from four to ten to one.

Even when the girls saw some of the new arrivals eating with their knives, they were not completely disillusioned. Many a husband has been taught how to eat properly after he was married.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Killer Strikes Again

"YOU must be crazy," said Jack Billings when O'Hara had announced his intention of arresting him for murder.

"No, sir," replied O'Hara. "You had the opportunity and the motive, and that trial of yours in Chicago isn't going to do you any good. You killed R. J. Conlin and you might as well confess it."

Billings laughed angrily and seated himself on the bed.

"You're bluffing, O'Hara," he said. "And you haven't a scrap of evidence. In the first place Conlin isn't dead. I read the story in the New York papers about the failure of his firm and how he vanished Saturday morning from the Pennsylvania Hotel. As I have been on the island since Friday, it's obvious that I didn't kill Mr. Conlin."

"You was on the island Thursday," said O'Hara.

"Friday. I came over on the boat

from Woods Hole which arrived at noon."

"You came over Thursday in an airplane and you went back to the mainland on that plane after you killed Conlin and the three servants," replied Dan.

"You'll have a fine time proving that," retorted Billings contemptuously. "Have you been drinking, O'Hara?"

"I've had a drink, Jack," he replied. "I know where you got the airplane and where it is now. You came here secretly Thursday night."

Billings shrugged his shoulders. "If I did," he answered, "what has that to do with the murder of Conlin—if he has been murdered, which I don't believe."

O'Hara rose and turned on the light. "Don't want you to murder me in the dark," he replied. "Now Jack, Conlin never went to the mainland. He was lured to the Rapidan-Sears house and killed and then his face was smashed to avoid recognition. This woman who was in it with you, and some stooge signed Conlin's name to the register in New Bedford and you got some pal to sign his name to the register at the Pennsylvania the next night. I got a line on the dame. She'll be locked up within twenty-four hours."

"You interest me strangely," said Billings. "Proceed, Philo Vance."

"Where you was up against it," continued O'Hara, "was when Mrs. Conlin got scared on account of the murders and wired New York to tell her husband she was coming home. You didn't expect her to find out he was missing until the body was buried. So you had to swipe the body out of the undertaking shop in Nantucket."

Billings laughed. "I particularly dislike stealing dead bodies, Dan," he said. "What else have you against me?"

"That's plenty. You killed this woman's first husband and you love her so much that you killed her second husband."

"In the first place I didn't kill her first husband. I was acquitted."

"Sure. She cried you loose."

"And far from killing her second husband, I didn't know she was married to Conlin. I never saw the man and don't know what he looks like. And I don't love Mrs. Conlin. I hate the woman. Dan, she used me as a cat's-paw in Chicago. She was having an affair with Conlin all the time she was going around with me. I believe that Conlin killed Jim Crane. I left Chicago right after the trial and she married Conlin."

"That's a better motive for killing him than the one I thought of," said O'Hara enthusiastically. "You killed him because he let you stand the gaff for a crime he committed in Chicago. That motive is good enough to send you to the chair, my boy."

"Well," said Billings slowly. "You can't identify the body as Conlin's because the body has disappeared. And you can't prove that Conlin didn't spend the night in New Bedford and New York. Conlin is alive and in hiding somewhere. So I don't think you're going to arrest me for killing him. Furthermore, you're a shrewd old Mick and it's not like you to tip off a suspect that you have the goods on him, even when you haven't. Exactly what is your purpose in handing me this line, Dan?"

"I WANT to show you where you stand," replied O'Hara. "You're in a bad spot, feller. You've that case in Chicago against

you. Men have been convicted on less evidence than I've mentioned, and it isn't absolutely necessary to produce the dead body. It was seen by the proper officials—"

"But not identified as Conlin."

"When we get the confession of the woman who was supposed to have been with him in New Bedford, we can dispense with that identification. The presumption will be that it was Conlin."

"You couldn't get an indictment against me as things stand," said Billings.

"Maybe not, but I can throw you in jail as a material witness until I get the evidence and I'm going to do that unless you come clean."

"In what respect?"

"Either this was Conlin who was killed or it was somebody else. If it was somebody else, you know who it was. There were two men in your plane when you took off from Plymouth and only one when you landed in New Bedford. The other man was John Smith. And it was John Smith who was killed, if it wasn't Conlin."

"You've got me as murdering somebody whichever way the cat jumps."

"Well now, Jack," said Dan frankly. "You don't impress me as a killer, but I don't set much store on impressions. When I have the goods on a guy, I don't care if he looks as meek as Moses. You got information that the government needs. And you stand an elegant chance of being fried in the chair if you don't explain what you were doing in Nantucket around the time that murder was committed and make it a convincing explanation."

"I do not admit coming here on Thursday by plane or leaving the same night. I doubt that you can prove I did so. I can prove by reliable witnesses exactly where I spent Thursday night."

"Tim Moriaty's witnesses," sneered O'Hara.

"Their testimony will be acceptable to a court."

"Don't you want to help me clear this case up?" asked O'Hara.

Billings laughed. "At one minute you accuse me of murder. At the next you want me to help you. You're not in the least convinced of my guilt, Dan."

"Well," said the detective with a grin, "I'm not sure you did it, but I'll bet my life that it was R. J. Conlin who was killed in that house."

Billings was silent for a moment. "O'Hara," he said, finally. "You want to get this killer. This noon I had a talk with Tim Moriaty on his yacht. He told me that one of his men passed on a request from you for help from him in running down the murderer. He has his own reasons for wanting the murderer caught and he ordered me to do everything I can to get the goods on the killer."

"Did he now? I told George Lake that if he didn't hop to it, I'd pin it on the bootleggers."

"Well, he has passed the word along in New York to turn up any information possible. Moriaty had nothing whatever to do with this crime. I'm still in his employ so that ought to let me out."

"You had it in for Conlin," began O'Hara.

"That's an obsession with you," said Jack impatiently. "Look here, O'Hara. I'm going to tell you something in strictest confidence. If you ever use it I'll call you a liar. We have nobody listening-in to corroborate your statement. And it's a Federal matter which has nothing to do with you."

"I'll keep my mouth shut."

"I'm confiding in you to convince you that the dead man was not Conlin."

"Shoot. Have you got any more of them cigars?"

Jack produced his box of cigars and both men lit up.

"For a couple of years," said Billings, "the Internal Revenue people have been trying to get Tim on concealed income as they did Capone. Six months ago they arrested Harry Haywood, a close friend of Tim's and proved that Haywood had millions of assets which he had not declared in his income tax statement. They sent him to Atlanta for five years and he began serving his sentence less than two months ago."

"It's news to me, and I don't see what it had to do with this case."

"You will. Haywood, of course, was concealing Tim's money and took the rap for him. Tim promised to have him out in six weeks and he kept his word."

DAN nodded. "I remember now. This fellow escaped from Atlanta a week ago or so."

"Six weeks ago the Rapidan-Sears house was hired, servants engaged and a man named John Smith was supposed to have arrived and to be living there. Actually nobody was living there. On last Thursday I met Haywood in Plymouth and took off with him in a plane—I have a pilot's license—landed him on the moor and walked with him to the Rapidan-Sears house. I introduced him to the servants, went back to my plane and landed in New Bedford. So Mr. Smith was at home Thursday night."

"Now you're talking!" said Dan excitedly.

"While government officers would be searching everywhere for the escaped convict, they would not suspect John Smith who had been living in 'Sconset for six weeks before Haywood escaped from Atlanta."

"Damn clever. Then the servants killed Haywood. But who killed the servants?"

"Haywood had twenty thousand in cash in his possession." continued Billings. "Robbery might have been the motive for killing him."

Dan scratched his head. "Let me get this straight," he pleaded. "Haywood was killed within an hour or two after he moved into the house."

"So it seems."

"And it was Haywood, not Conlin?"

"That is my opinion."

"Then why was his face bashed in?"

"I don't know."

"So he couldn't be identified as Haywood, of course."

"That seems likely."

"Then Conlin did leave Nantucket; he did go to New York and he vanished because his firm was busted, and I've been wasting my time."

"It looks like it," said Billings, grinning at O'Hara's discomfiture.

"Some gangsters in New York that didn't like Haywood polished him off."

"He was kept under cover. I don't think anybody knew where he was going to hide except myself and Moriaty—by George—"

"What?"

"R. J. Conlin knew it!" exclaimed Billings. "He had secret relations with Big Tim. It was Conlin who arranged the leasing of this house. He told Tim that 'Sconset was an ideal hideaway, which means that Tim must have told him he wanted to hide Haywood when he succeeded in getting Harry out of

Atlanta. And according to the papers, Conlin's firm was broke, which means that he had very little money himself."

"Whoa! You trying to tell me that Conlin murdered Haywood? That's ridiculous!"

"Why? Suppose he had to have cash and knew Haywood had twenty thousand on his person."

"But Conlin was a big business man. He wouldn't commit a murder."

Billings laughed harshly. "Wouldn't he? Dan, I honestly believe that Conlin killed the man for whose murder I stood trial. Stella Crane was having an affair with Conlin and used me as a cloak. And Conlin married her."

Dan sat silent and stunned. "It's as good a theory as that it was Conlin who was killed," he said at length. "But it's got a lot of holes in it. Let's see. I figured it out that the murderer laid that trail of Conlin's to New York so we would not think it was Conlin that was killed, but he could have done it himself. There was a woman in it—the one who telephoned from New Bedford. And if he and the dame had left the island, who stole the body?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Conlin certainly knew — what's that?"

"That" was a blood curdling scream—the voice of a woman lifted in mortal terror, and it came from a room not far from the chamber in which the two men were sitting.

As Dan threw open the door it was repeated, and ended in a piercing shriek which broke off abruptly.

DOORS flew open. Two women and a man rushed into the hall and stood there turning their heads in alarm and bewilderment.

"Down at the end of the corridor," cried O'Hara. "Come on, Jack."

The two men ran twenty or thirty feet and Dan began to open doors. It was the dinner hour at the hotel and most of the guests were in the dining room. And, as was the custom in this primitive hostelry, most of the doors were unlocked. The fourth door which the detective tried was locked. He laid his head against the panel but heard nothing.

"Try the other doors," he commanded of Billings, who proceeded to glance into the remaining rooms on the corridor. They were all empty.

"It must be in here," said Dan. "I'm going to break down the door."

Meanwhile a dozen persons rushed up from below, among them Cynthia Simpson.

"Whose room is this?" demanded the detective of the hotel clerk.

"It is Mrs. Conlin's," Cynthia replied with an affrighted glance at Jack Billings. "Wait, I'll send for a key."

"Can't wait," replied the detective. He drew back, lunged with his shoulder against the ancient door and immediately the lock gave way and it flew open. The room was dark. Dan fumbled for and found the light switch and turned it on.

Lying on the bed, partially dressed, was the beautiful Mrs. Conlin. Upon her face was an expression of mortal agony, and there was a huge gash across her throat from which blood was pouring.

"Stand back," bellowed O'Hara. "Billings, don't let anybody in here."

He had observed that the window was open and he rushed to it and looked out. Two feet below the windowsill was the piazza roof. From the roof of the porch to the ground was a drop of only fifteen feet. And as he listened he heard the whir of an electric starter and a motor car at the back

of the hotel drove away. O'Hara went through the window and off the edge of the porch roof like a flash. Billings approached the bed and gazed with horror at the horrid spectacle. The wound was wide and deep and the young woman was already dead, though the blood still gushed forcibly from her throat.

"Get a doctor, one of you, quick," he cried. "Out of the room everybody. There may be something here which will help catch the murderer."

He pushed the gaping spectators who had crowded into the room out into the corridor and pulled the broken door to. Immediately the guests rushed downstairs to be in on the pursuit and Cynthia and Jack Billings were alone in the corridor.

"You—you loved her once, didn't you? the girl said softly and sympathetically. Tears were rolling down the young man's cheeks.

"I thought I hated her," he said, "but this—she didn't deserve this. Nobody could."

"I'll make sure they send for a doctor," she said, turning away, her face working with emotion.

"She is dead already," he said.

"Who could have done it? Who—"

"The same fiend who killed the others, I suppose," he said slowly. Billings was ill and shaking and having great difficulty in preserving his composure. "Go, please," he pleaded.

UNDERSTANDINGLY she nodded and hastened downstairs. Billings went into his own room and fell on the bed and lay there for a few moments.

Five minutes later Dr. Blake, who happened to be calling at a house a few rods down the beach, arrived and entered the death chamber. Fifteen minutes later Dan O'Hara returned and joined the doctor.

Shortly afterwards he came into Billings' room and threw himself with a grunt into a chair.

"I wasted a lot of time finding a car that was unlocked," he said. "By the time I got started he was through the village and out on the highroad to Nantucket. I sent the constable after him in the car I had requisitioned and I phoned over to Nantucket to have the police nab him if he drove into town, but there are half a dozen side roads and he probably took one of those. Most likely he will abandon the car and hit across the moors to his hideaway."

"It was the most awful thing I ever heard of," said Jack in a low tone. "We were sitting right here when he was killing her."

"You've a perfect alibi on this one," Dan replied with a sigh. "This has something to do with the other killings, of course. The same man killed 'em all."

"Any evidence in the room?"

"He came in through the window, pushed in the screen, caught her as she was sitting in front of the bureau fixing her face, threw her on the bed and cut her throat. He carried off the weapon with him. A razor, judging by the gash. It muddles everything up just as we were getting somewhere."

"Poor Stella."

"What's it all about?" demanded the bewildered detective.

"By God I'm going to find out! O'Hara, I forgot—the way you greeted me when I came in drove it from my mind. I was fired upon tonight by a man who was assaulting Miss Simpson, the hotel clerk, on the bluff path. She can give you a description of him because she was struggling

in his arms when I came running up. We both went over the bluff and the brute got away."

"Come on, we'll find her. Billings, this is the man who stole the body. He's still on the island. Let me get his description and I'll nab him."

"All right," said Billings with a wan smile. "I feel pretty groggy."

"You got nothing on me, but we can't waste a minute. Come on!"

CHAPTER XIX

O'Hara Finds the Faceless Man

THEY found Cynthia behind her counter and she described her assailant on the bluff as well as she could. O'Hara drew the photograph of Conlin from his pocket and showed it to her.

"Does it look anything like this feller?" he demanded.

"No," she replied. "This man had a horrid face. He is quite different."

"Then it wasn't Conlin," declared the detective

"How could it be?" asked Billings. "We know he wouldn't be loitering on this island."

"The woman upstairs. More women are killed by their husbands than by men they're not married to. Does it sound like Haywood?"

"No. Haywood is an Englishman by birth and Miss Simpson says this scoundrel had an English accent, but Harry's face is rather round and chubby."

"Nothing to do here," said Dan impatiently. "I'm going to get a car and go after this murderer myself. Want to come with me, Billings?"

Billings nodded. "You bet."

Cynthia looked frightened. "Don't go, Mr. Smith," she said and then she turned crimson and dropped her eyes.

Jack gazed at her tenderly, and O'Hara, who saw everything, grinned appreciatively.

"It's my duty to help the officer catch this fiend, Miss Simpson," Jack said in a low tone.

"Of course it is," she responded. "I didn't think."

O'Hara and the man whom so recently he had accused of being the author of a quadruple murder found a hotel guest about to climb into his Ford and immediately deputized him, to his alarm and indignation. A minute's drive brought them into the village, which was teeming with excitement.

A minute later the Ford, whose owner had gladly loaned it to the state detective in exchange for his own release from service, started down the state road.

"Old Amos Plympton and his cops will be blocking the end of this road, and Bide Parker, the constable, is on his tail," said O'Hara. "Ten to one he took a side road, and that's what we'll do."

"There is a road opening off to the left which leads to Tom Nevers Head," Jack informed him.

"What's over there?"

"Nothing much. A small inn and a few cottages and some isolated shacks on the moors."

"This will probably be an all night job. We'll stop at every house and when we've exhausted that possibility we'll come back here and try another by-road."

"I'm just as eager to catch him as you are."

"Now, let's see," commented the detective. "Things are dovetailing on this case. It was Conlin who told Moriaty about 'Sconset and who secured the Rapidan-Sears house as a hideaway for Haywood. Conlin dis-

appeared the night Haywood was murdered. Conlin's firm went broke, which means that he was broke. Haywood had twenty thousand dollars. Aside from you and Moriaty, Conlin was the only person who knew that Haywood would be there Thursday night. And it was Mrs. Conlin who has had her throat cut."

"But Conlin left the island in company with another woman."

"Yeah? Who had any reason for killing Mrs. Conlin?"

"I don't know."

"Didn't this woman have a lot of jewels?"

"Yes. She was wearing three or four diamond bracelets the morning she moved into the hotel."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dan O'Hara. "Well, her jewel case was empty and she didn't have a ring on her finger tonight."

"She was wearing a huge diamond solitaire and several other valuable rings when I saw her early this afternoon."

O'HARA braked the car suddenly, turned around and started back for 'Sconset.

"What's the idea?" demanded Billings.

"If what I think is right," replied O'Hara, "this killer didn't go to Tom Nevers Head. He went to Sankaty."

"But he started toward Nantucket Town."

"He could have turned off."

"Why Sankaty?"

"Because that's where Conlin lives. Jack, it might have been Conlin that killed his wife. If it was, he would make for his house. It's closed up and a perfect hideway."

"Conlin went to New York."

"He could have come back."

"Why should he rob his own wife?"

"Jack, that guy was broke. If he killed Haywood for twenty grand, he might have killed his wife for forty or fifty thousands worth of jewels."

"But she would have given them to him if he was in trouble."

"I only met that dame once, but she don't look like the kind that would give up anything."

Jack nodded. "From what I have seen of Stella, I am inclined to agree with you."

"He had another woman, remember that. Twenty thousand dollars wouldn't last a high flier like Conlin long. This feller knew his firm was going broke. Probably he was half crazy. He might have asked his wife for her jewelry and she wouldn't give up. He knew Haywood, didn't he?"

"I can't tell you that. I didn't know that Conlin was friendly with Moriaty. I only learned that today."

"He could have dropped in on Haywood and Haywood wouldn't have been suspicious."

"You've gone over to my theory bag and baggage," commented Billings.

"I look facts in the face. He left 'Sconset on the bus. He didn't take the boat but he sneaked away from the steamship pier, swiped a car or a motor boat and came back to 'Sconset. He killed Haywood, drove the servants into the car, took them out on the moor and shot them and chucked them in the pool. After that he went to New Bedford by motor boat, met the woman there and spent the night with her in the New Bedford House. That established his alibi.

"On Friday they went on to New York, and then decided to come back and get Mrs. Conlin's jewels. He expected to find her at her cottage, but

she had closed it up and come to the hotel. That made it harder and he had to hang around waiting for a chance to get at her. If we have luck we'll find him at the Conlin House."

"I have no reason to like the man, but I can't believe all that."

Dan chuckled. "Don't know as I do, but it's something to work on."

They had already driven through the village and now swung left upon the road to Sankaty. The fog had come in and their progress had to be slow, but they encountered no cars on the road and in ten or twelve minutes they rumbled over the wooden bridge which Dan had crossed upon his first visit to the Conlin domicile.

After proceeding a short distance along the shore of the inlet, Dan stopped the car.

"We'll walk the rest of the way," he said.

THEY trudged in silence along the dirt road until they came to the gate posts, and then they climbed the steep driveway to Conlin's. The house, of course, was dark, but it hadn't yet been boarded up. O'Hara led his companion around to the rear, produced a diamond glass cutter and proceeded to cut out a pane of glass from one of the windows of the side. He laid it carefully upon the grass, thrust his arm through the opening and slipped the catch upon the sash.

"Give me a boost," he requested. Billings complied and he crawled through the window. He then extended his hands to Billings, who clambered up, and in a few seconds both men were standing in the dining room. O'Hara produced a flash light and guided by it the pair made a careful survey of the ground floor. No effort had been made to cover and pile up the furniture or to protect the rugs for a long period of unoccupancy. Mrs. Conlin, apparently, had walked out the front door and slammed it behind her.

Nor was there any indication that the house had been occupied since. Dan, finally, began to mount the stairs and grunted as he saw an object upon one of the steps.

He picked it up and turned the flash full upon it. It was a small suède glove, a woman's, and it was incredibly dirty. The detective put it in his pocket and continued up the stairs.

Jack sniffed. "Something wrong with the drainage," he commented. "A curious odor."

"Noticed it," said O'Hara.

He led the way into a front bedroom, which was empty.

"Wrong hunch," he said in a low tone. "I've had lots of them."

He pushed open the door of a chamber on the opposite side of the house. The smell, which both had noticed, was almost overpowering and came from that chamber. O'Hara moved his flash around until it rested upon the bed.

"Glory be to God!" he exclaimed.

Lying in the bed was a body without a face, the sheets drawn up to the neck. And it was this body which had been giving off the odor of putrefaction.

"HAYWOOD!" exclaimed Billings. "In Heaven's name, how did he get here?"

O'Hara turned his flash and located the light switch. "See if the lights are still on," he said hoarsely.

Jack turned the switch and the lights flashed on.

"I can't stand this!" exclaimed the young man.

"I got to," replied O'Hara. "You can go downstairs if you like."

Billings went down the staircase at top speed and threw wide the front door and breathed deeply of pure air. Five or six minutes elapsed and the heavy tread of Dan O'Hara was heard on the stairs.

"See if you can get Amos Plympton on the phone," he said harshly. "I'm all in. That body has been dead for a week."

"Why should whoever stole it bring it here?" asked Billings, who moved toward the phone which stood on a table in the hallway.

"Because this is where it belongs," said O'Hara.

"Poor Haywood, they won't even let him rest in peace," commented Jack as he tried the instrument to discover if it were still connected. It clicked. It was alive.

"Billings," said O'Hara, "that isn't Haywood."

"Then who the devil is it?"

"We came here to find Conlin and we found him. That's R. J. Conlin, Mr. Billings."

"It isn't. It can't be."

"Conlin had peculiar ears. So has this corpse. It is the same height, breadth and complexion. It's R. J. Conlin. He was murdered Thursday night in the Rapidan-Sears house and the body was stolen from the undertaker's the next night. Conlin never went to New Bedford and New York. And the reason he was brought here was because it was known that this house had been closed and they didn't expect it would be found for months, or maybe a year."

"Give me the office of Chief Plympton, please," said Billings into the telephone.

"I'll talk to him," declared O'Hara. "And you keep away from that shotgun. I've got you covered."

He laid his revolver on the table in front of him as he took Billings' place at the phone.

"Are you crazy?" asked the astonished young man.

"Kind of. You're under suspicion again, Billings."

Jack laughed harshly.

"You are out of your mind," he asserted. "If that is Conlin upstairs, what has become of Haywood?"

"That's all a cock and bull story. You made it up."

"Well, if this is Conlin, who killed Mrs. Conlin?"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Dan. "How in hell do I know?"

"And who killed the servants?"

O'Hara lifted a pleading, protesting hand.

"Plympton," he said. "O'Hara speaking. You catch that killer? I didn't think you would. Listen. Send a couple of men over to R. J. Conlin's house to watch the place. Right away. The stolen body is here. Yes. And I'll take my Bible oath it's R. J. Conlin. I can't help what you read in the newspapers. I've identified it by the ears. All right. Come yourself, and comb the countryside for the man in the Ford who killed Mrs. Conlin."

He hung up. "And, Mr. John Billings—" he began. "Hey, stick 'em up!"

THROUGH the open door came a swarm of men; two, four, seven of them. Two of them precipitated themselves upon Jack Billings, who had laid aside the shotgun and had only fists to present to the armed marauders. But Jack could use his fists and he floored two men before he was firmly held by two others.

"Drop that gun," bellowed a burly blond man at O'Hara. "Surrender in the name of the law."

O'Hara laughed impatiently. "I represent the law myself," he retorted. "Who in hell are you?"

"Prohibition enforcement officers," replied the blond man. "What are you doing in this unoccupied house?"

"With all my troubles I got to answer questions from a lot of Federal snoopers," said Dan in deep disgust. "I'm Dan O'Hara, of the Massachusetts State Police. I'm hunting a murderer and I don't want to be annoyed by you rum sniffers."

"And who is this fellow?" demanded the leader of the revenue squad.

"My deputy," replied O'Hara. "You guys would have saved yourselves a couple of black eyes if you told the boy who you were."

"Credentials," demanded the Federal man.

Dan flashed his badge and produced his card of identification.

"Glad to know you, Mr. O'Hara," said the revenue officer. "We're laying in wait for a rum shipment in the cove below and when the light went on up here we figured you were signaling the bootleggers. We knew this house was untenanted. What's the funny smell?"

"There's a man upstairs who is very dead," replied O'Hara. "Want to have a look at him? He's the person who was killed in a house on the bluff a week ago. The body was stolen and we've just located it."

"It's not in our line," said the revenue man promptly. "Sorry to have butted in, Mr. O'Hara. And we'll appreciate any assistance you can give us in enforcing the law."

"Listen, sleuth," said Dan contemptuously. "There have been five brutal murders on this island in a week and I haven't any time to bother about stimulant purveyors. Just this minute I could use a swift shot of Scotch myself."

The revenue man produced a flask.

"You come to the right shop," he said. "It's cold lying out on the sands all evening."

O'Hara helped himself to a drink, but Billings refused it. After a minute the rum hunters retrieved their flask and returned to their posts, leaving the original intruders into the Conlin home to themselves.

"Jack," said O'Hara, "I don't like those guys. Now I'm going outside for a minute. Being as you are working for Moriaty, maybe you'd like to call up George Lake across the way and tell him that 'Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight.' Being an officer of the law, I can't do it myself."

Jack grinned. "Think it safe to leave a desperate criminal?"

"Aw hell," replied Dan, "I don't think these are the kind of murders that you would be interested in."

BILLINGS regained the phone and supplied Mr. Lake with some interesting information, after which he joined O'Hara on the porch and they sat down to wait until the local officers relieved them.

"Go see Moriaty tomorrow if he is still on the yacht," said Billings. "Under the circumstances Tim will be as frank with you as I have been. Haywood positively was in that house on Thursday night."

"You think he killed Conlin?"

"In self defense perhaps. It may be that Conlin attacked him."

"But Haywood didn't need money. No call for him to kill Mrs. Conlin. And he wouldn't dare show himself in

New Bedford or New York, even using Conlin's name."

"The mystery is getting deeper every minute," said Billings. "I have been convinced all along that it was Haywood who was murdered and that the motive was the twenty thousand in cash which he carried."

"Mrs. Conlin certainly was robbed," declared Dan. "I'm only a cop, Billings. I got a good two cylinder brain. We need Sherlock Holmes on this job."

"You're sure that thing upstairs is Conlin?"

"I have his photograph," Dan said. "His ears bulge in a funny place. So do this corpse's. The body is the same complexion, same weight, about, and same proportions. It's Conlin all right."

"Somebody went to a lot of trouble to establish the fact that Conlin left Nantucket. Mrs. Conlin, who could identify him positively, has been slain. You've nothing to go on except the bulge in the ears. Not enough, O'Hara."

"Don't forget they stole the body and hid it in Conlin's deserted house."

"And the person who killed Mrs. Conlin a few hours ago is still on the island."

"Yep. Now, Billings, you could have killed Haywood for the twenty thousand dollars and chucked him out of the airplane over the ocean. You had plenty of reason to hate Conlin. You could have lured him to the Rapidan-Sears house and murdered him. You were in Nantucket the night the body was stolen. You knew the house was deserted and you could have parked him here."

"But I couldn't have impersonated him in New York, and I didn't kill Mrs. Conlin. You know that."

"Yes," admitted O'Hara reluctantly. "But you could have had confederates."

Billings laughed.

"You've got blond hair and it's long in front. You could have combed your hair in the Smith house and left those hairs on the comb."

"As a matter of fact, I did," said Billings, smiling. "After introducing Haywood to the servants, I did comb my hair in that bedroom. I went over the bluff without a hat and my hair was disarranged."

"I ought to pinch you on suspicion," said O'Hara irresolutely.

"And permit the real killer to escape, eh?"

"That's the trouble. I can't make myself believe you did it."

"Thanks, old man. I didn't."

They sat in silence for a few minutes and then a motor car came up the drive and Chief Plympton with two officers descended.

"What's happened here?" demanded the chief. O'Hara put him in touch with events as briefly as possible.

"This fiend killed Mrs. Conlin while you were sitting in a room only a short distance away," commented Amos. "I don't call that very smart."

"Never mind what you think," replied O'Hara gruffly. "Put a couple of men on guard here so they can't snitch this body again. Billings and I are going after the killer."

CONTINUE THIS STORY NEXT WEEK

"You'll stick your hands up into the air!"

Ollie Learns Plug Casting

By Harold de Polo

There Was a Red-Headed Crook Ollie Should Have Been Chasing, but Ollie Had a Date to Go Night Casting for Bass

OLLIE BASCOMB, the sheriff of Derby, leaned back in his favorite chair in the lobby of the Derby House and examined the level-winding reel that the city fishermen had just given him.

"My soul an' body, Mr. Murdock, thanks," he said gratefully.

"Don't mention it, Sheriff," laughed the big, ruddy-faced man called Murdock, with the abashed air of one trying to make little of a very nice gift. "Had it in my tackle box a —yep, a good dozen years. I remember I bought it back in nineteen twenty before I went up to the Adirondacks for some bass fishing."

"Gosh, you didn't go wrong when you did buy it," beamed Ollie. "It sure is a beaut', all right. Cripes, looks most new. Twelve year in your kit, eh? Take good care o' your tackle, you do."

"Well, you take just as good care of your own, from what I've seen, Sheriff," the other complimented. "There's just one complaint I have to make against you, though," he added with mock gravity.

"What's that?" asked Ollie.

"You should have taken up plug casting for bass long ago. It's the greatest fishing there is."

"I reckon you can't git Ollie to admit any kind o' fishin' comes nigh to

wadin' a stream an' castin' a fly for brook trout, Mr. Murdock," an onlooker broke in with a chuckle. "Eh, Ollie?"

Ollie flushed. He was famous all over the county for his love of fishing and hunting, but his favorite sport of all was known to be casting for brook trout with a dry fly. Nevertheless, it was plain that he did not want to offend a man who had given him such a valued present.

"Gosh, Mr. Murdock, they's suthin' to be said for *both* them kinds o' fishin'. Wadin' a stream is one o' the noblest ways to spend a day I come to know 'bout, an' this plug castin' for bass after dark is sure a grand way to spend your night hours. Yes, sir, they's a *lot* to be said for both of 'em!"

"And I'm saying right now that even if I think bass casting is the greatest sport in the world, I think *you're* going to make one of the best night casters in the business," insisted Murdock. "I never in my life saw a beginner become an expert so quickly. I—"

"Sheriff, here's something we should look into at once," a crisp and youthful voice interrupted from the doorway. "A message about a crook from the Chief of Police of Portland!"

OLLIE BASCOMB did not always relish hearing the voice of Bert Wells, his deputy.

"What's the trouble, Bert?" he drawled, turning around.

"We're to be on the sharp lookout for a crook travelling around in a green Sunray roadster, robbing summer camps and cottages on lakes. He's been robbing places that have been shut up for the winter—breaking in—before people come up for the summer. He just broke into Senator Brodhead's place, on Sebago Lake, and stole a Landseer oil paint picture valued at about five thousand dollars." Bert glanced at the paper in his hand.

"Hmmm," said Ollie.

"But that's just one of the things this report mentions," went on the deputy. "He's been covering a lot of territory, posing as a fisherman to get the lay of the land. Two places were broken into at Long Lake, after Sebago. Then the Rangeley section has had—oh, five or six camps there were stripped. And remember that we've got Saltash and Upper Saltash Lakes near here, Sheriff, and that it isn't July yet. Some of the bigger camps, with maybe valuable stuff in them, are still closed up. It's your job—*our* job—to watch out. That Merton place must have a lot of worth while things in it, and there's Ellery Gansvoort with his coins. He—"

"He got up early this mornin'," broke in Ollie. "Come 'bout four o'clock. Woke me up, durn him. Drove up alone, 'thout no servants. Hankered to show me some new specimens to his collection. Beauties, they were. Dummed if he didn't have one alone wu'th three thousan' dollar, he said. Whul' collection's wu'th close to a hundred thousan'. He—"

"Sounds to me as if you *ought* to fish Saltash Lake, Sheriff, and keep an eye on things," said Murdock with a chuckle.

"My soul an' body, that's another argument in favor o' your bass castin'. Patrol the lake an' fish at the same time."

"This report goes on to state," said Bert, ignoring the laugh from the crowd in the lobby, "that this crook is big and blustery, about two inches over six feet, with red hair and moustache. He has a distinguishing scar running from his right temple to down

under his cheekbone. I think that covers it, just as I think we should watch the lakes around this whole section. With your permission, I thought of taking Upper Saltash and—"

"Say, I'm telling you boys I'm mighty glad I'm not red-headed," broke in Murdock genially. "Yes, sir, this is *one* time I'm thankful for my blond locks, all right. Otherwise you might think I was this fishing crook and slip me into the hoosegow, eh, Sheriff?"

"That's true," said Ollie gravely. "Was you red-headed a feller *might* think you was that crook, mebbe. You could 'a' shaved off that moustache, o' course."

"Yes, Sheriff," broke in Bert Wells, "and if Mr. Murdock had a scar, and if he wasn't *under* six feet instead of over, and if he didn't drive a black Oakley coupé instead of a green Sunray roadster, and if—"

Even Murdock had to join in the laugh on the sheriff, at that one, but his was a pleasant laugh and he followed it up by clapping Ollie on the knee.

"Well, Sheriff, seeing that you're *not* going to toss me into the hoosegow, how about getting started on some patrol work and bass casting combined. I'd like to hook into that big one I lost the other night up at Saltash Lake."

"Gosh, so 'ud I like to hook into him," said Ollie. "Great night for castin', too, bein' nice an' warm an' black an' calm."

"Well, let's get going, then, Sheriff," suggested the city man.

"Fine," said Ollie. "I'll jest step down an' get my flivver."

"No, we can use my bus," said Murdock.

"All right. Drop me off to the courthouse so I can get me a line for this reel an' that castin' rod I bought me."

"No need," explained Murdock. "I've got a new spool of good hard braided line you can have, and you can use that one-piece bamboo rod I lent you the first time you tried plug casting. Save time that way. Come ahead."

"Let's go," cried Ollie as he eagerly rose.

"Have a good time fishing, Sheriff," said Bert. "Me, I'm going to mosey around the shores of Upper Saltash. Still a few big places unopened, around there, and you never can tell when this crook may hit this vicinity. There's—there's a total of twenty-seven hundred and fifty dollars in rewards for the capture of this criminal," he added.

"Feller could buy a heap o' tackle with that," said Ollie, as he left the lobby.

II

AS they reached the outlet of Saltash Lake, where the sheriff kept a rowboat, Ollie got out his knife, opened it and reached into his pocket for his pipe. When he brought out the ancient corncob, he cried: "My soul an' body," and looked worried.

"What's the trouble?" asked Murdock.

"I—I—my reel! I thought I had it in that there pocket with my pipe! I could 'a' *swore* I put her there 'afore I left the car, so's to have my hands free to help you lug down the tackle. I—I—"

He stuck his knife and pipe back into his pocket and hurriedly started back to the car, parked perhaps a hundred feet away on the road.

"Jest a minute, Mr. Murdock," he called over his shoulder. "Reckon I left that reel on the seat, seems as though." Then, a moment later, he

let out a whoop. "Yep, here she be, all right. I'd left her on the seat, like I said. Here I come, ready an' rarin' to give them bass all Sal Brookes an' the devil."

"Well, let's get your line spooled onto your reel, first," laughed the city man.

"Gosh, I do seem to be all excited up tonight, don't I?" Ollie said with an abashed grin. "You got to excuse a feller, that's all. This night castin' for bass has got me behavin' like a two-year-ol' at the business."

When they stepped into the boat after he had rigged up his tackle, however, Ollie became the cool fisherman that he was.

It was an ideal night for plug casting for bass. It was very dark, there was no moon up as yet, and the surface of Saltash Lake looked like a sheet of black onyx. For the end of June in this county in northern Maine, too, it was extremely warm. On such nights bass are hungry and ready to strike. Now, off in the shallows where the tanlacs grow in sandy bottom, they could be heard breaking water.

Murdock had insisted on taking the first turn at the oars, while Ollie took his place standing up in the stern. It was, in this case, virtually the bow, for Murdock was pushing the boat forward with the oars, so that the sheriff, facing the direction in which they were moving, could more comfortably cast toward the shore.

Plug casting for bass, as Murdock had frequently stated in the lobby of the Derby House, was one of the most difficult as well as the greatest sport in the world. It is hard enough, in daylight, to cast from the reel a wooden or metal lure for a distance of fifty, seventy-five, a hundred feet or more; when it is dark, and the shore line is barely distinguishable, the feat becomes infinitely harder.

Murdock had not exaggerated, however, when he had also said that Ollie Bascomb had become an expert from the start. Now, with the city man pushing him along some seventy feet from the shore, the sheriff was not getting a single backlash, not once overshooting his mark and getting the hooks on his lure entangled in the tree branches that spread out over the water. It was, apparently, born in the man. He had spent all his life handling fishing tackle and firearms, and he handled them with that indefinable something that causes even a casual onlooker instinctively to sense that the rod or gun are almost part of him.

"DAMMIT, man, but you're good," Murdock finally said, after he had pointed out a log in the darkness and suggested that Ollie cast close up to it. "Eighty feet away if it's a foot, that log, and you spanked that plug within two inches of it."

"Aw—aw, I had a good teacher to fu'st show me the ropes, remember," said Ollie, with genuine feeling.

"You sure know your stuff," said Murdock, admiringly. "You—"

Chung!

That, as Murdock had said, was about the only way that you could describe the sound made by a bass hitting a top-water plug on a calm and black night.

"I got him," cried Ollie, as the placid surface of the lake broke into foam close to the log where the sheriff had cast his lure. "He'll go four pound or better," added Ollie, as the white belly of a bass could be detected, through the blackness, in an arching leap into the air.

"Hold him," said Murdock.

"Cal'late to," said Ollie.

The sheriff, for the next seven or eight minutes, played his quarry with the supreme skill of a master. The bass dived, broke water, rushed inward, ran this way and that, tried every trick he knew. Ollie, however, stood there in the boat as coolly as he always did when handling one of his brook trout on a two-ounce rod, meeting every attack and ruse of his finned adversary.

During his fight with the bass, Ollie kept up a steady stream of conversation. It was close to eleven o'clock now, he said, and as he saw three of the four camp lights on the lake go out, within the space of a few moments, he opined that those folks were missing a lot of fun by going to bed when they might be out fishing. The only light left, across the bay, was Mr. Gansvoort's. Stayed up late, he did, fussing with his coins. Stayed up most of the night, sometimes. Nice feller, Gansvoort. He and Ollie were good friends. He—

But the sheriff broke off, as he was about to explain something, and said:

"Net him, Mr. Murdock. Got him tuckered out now, I have."

The strength of the game bronzeback had finally surrendered to the strength of split bamboo and braided silk and human hands. After a last leap into the air, when he landed, he lay supine on the surface, over on his side, fins barely moving.

"Put it under him gentle, Mr. Murdock," said Ollie, as Murdock slipped his net in the water and moved it toward the fish. "There. Now. Lift him easy! . . . Hi, that's the ticket! . . . My soul an' body, but he's a beaut', ain't he?"

The city fisherman had deftly netted the fish and brought him into the bottom of the boat.

Ollie, as deftly, had disentangled the hooks from the mesh of the net and very carefully removed the barbs from the tough cartilage of the upper jaw of his vanquished opponent. For a second or two, he held the bass up for his own loving inspection, and then he slid him softly back into the water.

"There you go, ol' boy," he said. "Thanks for a whoppin' good fight. Meet you ag'in some time, perhaps mebbe. I—"

"You'll stick your hands up into the air, that's what you'll do now," came from Murdock, all the geniality gone from his voice.

Ollie, turning, saw his fishing companion leveling an automatic at his chest. His face was savage and ugly, and he frankly looked like a man who meant what he said.

Obediently, with a sigh, the sheriff of Derby stretched his arms above him. He spoke simply:

"That's as high as they'll go."

Murdock grunted, reached out his left hand, and patted the pockets and armpits and waist of the sheriff.

"All right, you ain't heeled. Put 'em down. Yeah, put 'em down and *sit* down here in this seat an' grab these oars. Then row like hell for your friend Gansvoort's camp. I gotta get them coins an' beat it for Canada!"

III

OLLIE, putting down his arms, silently exchanged places with the city man. He took the oars and began to row.

"Put some steam into that rowing," Murdock ordered from where he was sitting in the stern.

"Judas Priest," said Ollie, as he increased his speed, "then I reckon

you're the feller that robbed all them other camps, eh? Senator Brodhead's place. Them at Long Lake. The bunch at the Rangeleys! . . . I—"

"Bright boy, Sheriff," said the crook. He added, shortly: "Come on, row like your friend all Sal Brookes and the devil. I'll admit it's a hot night and I hate to see you overworked, but I gotta get quick action from now on." He took off his own coat.

Ollie, silently, did as he had been bidden. Peering at Murdock through the darkness, he knew that here was a man who could be classed as dangerous. If crossed in the perpetration of one of his crimes, he would unquestionably shoot. He would shoot to kill, too. Something in his eyes—that were not those of a genial fisherman any more—assured Ollie of that.

Fifteen or twenty minutes later, after Ollie had been steadily pulling across the lake, he nosed the boat up against the wharf in front of the Gansvoort camp:

"Stick that stern around so I can get out first," ordered Murdock curtly, in a whisper. "Don't step out till I say so. When you do get out, keep your trap closed."

He stepped out onto the dock and then motioned for the sheriff to follow suit.

"Tie the boat up. Then walk up to the porch of the camp and call out to your friend Gansvoort. Tell him you were fishing and just thought you'd drop in. I'll be right behind you with this gat, and if you make one false move I'll drill you and him both. Savvy?"

Ollie nodded.

"Get goin'," said Murdock.

Ollie walked to the porch, more sure than ever that he was dealing with a man who would shoot to kill.

"Call out to him now," whispered the crook presently.

"Hi, Mr. Gansvoort. It's me, Ollie Bascomb. I was castin' for bass an' thought I'd drop off an' visit for a spell, seein' that you was prob'ly up fussin' with your coins."

"That's fine, Sheriff. Glad you did. Step right in," a friendly voice answered, coming through the opened window.

Ollie, pulling open the door, did step in. Murdock, right behind him, saw a thin, bespectacled man bending over a table, a magnifying glass in his hand with which he had apparently been examining a scattering of coins spread out on a green baize cloth.

The crook, at this, briskly moved in behind Ollie and waved his weapon threateningly.

"Stick 'em up again, Sheriff. You stick 'em up, too Gansvoort," he commanded.

"Sorry, Mr. Gansvoort, better do like he says," said Ollie, as his own hands went up. "Not my fault. I had to come with him. He'd 'a' got you anyways, an' if he'd surprised you alone there might 'a' been worse trouble."

"You're talkin' sensible, Sheriff," said Murdock. He added: "Go ahead an' lift 'em, Gansvoort."

As the coin collector obeyed instructions, Murdock glanced about the large, comfortably furnished living room. His eye passed by some fine hunting and fishing prints, some superbly mounted moose and deer heads, some equally choice salmon and trout and bass specimens. He saw, only, two ebony cabinets, one on either side of the huge fireplace, on the purple velvet backgrounds of which the collector had started to place some of his coins for permanent display.

"Gansvoort, go over and strip them cabinets. Chuck all the stuff in those two leather cases you carry 'em in I see there on the table. Put all the others on the table in with 'em. Hustle!"

Gansvoort, like his friend the sheriff, apparently decided that the crook was a man who meant business. He walked over to his cabinets and removed the coins he had secured there on metal racks. It was with a slight sigh, though, that he let them trickle through his fingers into the two valises on the table. Finally the job was over and the cases closed, ready for transportation.

"You, Sheriff," said Murdock, sticking his hand into a hip pocket. "Take this roll of picture wire and bind your pal to that straight-backed chair. Do it right, see. Then you're gonna row me back to my car. You won't have to gag him, cause if he lets out one peep while we're on the way I'll drill a hole through *your* bean. Savvy, Gansvoort! One yelp from you in—well, in the next hour, and Bascomb's a dead bird!"

GANSVOORT nodded, not at Murdock, but at Ollie. The latter, knowing that both of them were still completely under the crook's power, went about the task of binding his friend to the chair with the roll of picture wire. He did a thorough piece of work on it, realizing that it would be folly to try anything else.

"All right, Bascomb. Pick up them cases and let's blow," ordered Murdock. "Keep your trap closed, Gansvoort, that's all. The sheriff 'll be back in a couple of hours, perhaps mebbe, like he says!"

Ollie, waved at with the automatic, picked up the valises and went through the door without a word. Gansvoort said nothing, either. Murdock, outside, glanced up at the crescent of moon that was coming over the tops of the trees.

"Shake a leg and get in that boat. I want to be up in Canada before daylight."

The sheriff, once on the dock, untied the rowboat and then placed the coin cases in it.

"Hop in and turn her around stern towards me so I can get into her easy," snapped the crook.

Ollie did hop. As he hopped, however, he seemed somehow to lose his footing. He plunged from the dock, seemed to try desperately to right himself in midair, and landed in the boat feet first, falling backwards into the bottom of it as he did so. The momentum behind him, the weight of his short and stout body, sent the craft shooting out over the calm surface of the water, a good fifty feet or more.

"Damn you, what you tryin' to pull?" snarled Murdock, rushing to the edge of the dock and aiming his weapon. "Come back here, you fat sap, or I'll drill you to hell!"

"Don't shoot, Mr. Murdock! My soul an' body, don't shoot," cried Ollie. "I'm tangled up in this net an' line. I'm jest tryin' to git my bearin's. I'll be at them oars in a minute an' be at the dock for you! *Please* don't shoot, Mr. Murdock!"

"Get them oars and hustle back here," said Murdock.

"I will—I will, Mr. Murdock!"

IV

BUT Ollie, in presumably trying to disentangle himself from the landing net and line, was searching for the bamboo casting rod and secur-

ing the proper grip on it. Finally he succeeded. Then, with the expertness on which the crook had complimented him, he whipped back the rod tip, twisted his body about to face the man on the dock, and made what he knew was to be the most important cast of his life.

Swiftly and silently, with three gangs of treble hooks screwed securely into it, that top-water plug sailed through the air. Ollie, for an agonizing second, thought that he had overshot his mark. Immediately he was reassured, though, for with a relief so great that it literally caused his whole body to tremble, he saw that he had at least won the opening move.

The plug struck the bare right forearm of Murdock, holding the automatic, and as the sheriff yanked with all the strength that he felt the split bamboo could stand, the hooks sank into the crook's flesh. Murdock let out a cry of surprise and pain. The gun went sailing out of his fingers to land in the lake. Simultaneously, the man himself lost his balance, tried to right himself, and pitched forward into the water with a heavy splash.

Ollie began reeling in his line like a madman. It was new line and strong line, he was aware, and it could take powerful punishment. It had to, furthermore, for the sheriff was pulling his boat toward his captive, still struggling in the water. The lake was not more than three feet deep there, and it was not long before Murdock had regained his footing. He stood up, blowing out water and shrieking with pain:

"Damn you, you've dug them hooks clean through my arm! . . . Damn you, lemme loose! . . . I'll—"

"You'll stand quiet an' stick your hands in the air, this time, Mr. Murdock," said Ollie quietly, when only a few feet away from his opponent. "If you don't, I'll jest be c'mpelled to bash your bean in with one o' my oars!"

The crook obeyed.

"Good," drawled Ollie. "Now jest stand there till I git on the dock."

Ollie, then, deftly maneuvered his boat, pushing it along with one oar, until he was able to step onto the wharf. He gave further commands:

"Walk up here to the edge of the dock. That's it. Now, put your arms down, close to your sides. Fine. Keep 'em there an'—no, *keep* 'em there, I said!"

As he spoke, he began whirling the short one-piece bamboo rod in the air and winding the braided silk casting line around Murdock's body, lashing the crook's arms to his sides.

"Jeez, you're cuttin' into me," complained Murdock.

"Had to cut into my friend Mr. Gansvoort a mite, didn't I?" queried Ollie, going on with his job. "There. I cal'late you're what they'd term plumb roped an' hogtied, out in the great open spaces o' the West, Mr. Murdock," he added in a moment.

Murdock was bound quite beautifully, at that, with all but perhaps eight or ten yards of the tough line.

"Step up onto the dock now," said Ollie. "Here. Let me give you a hand. There. That's fine. Now pick up them two valises We'll go in an' free Mr. Gansvoort an' then we'll hike into Derby."

"*Hike* into Derby?" gasped Murdock, as he awkwardly and painfully stooped and picked up the bags that Ollie had placed on the dock.

"Sure we'll hike," said Ollie.

"Can't—can't we row over and get my car?" asked Murdock.

"Shucks, your car ain't fit for travellin'. Not knowin' what 'ud happen, you see, I went an' cut the two rear

tires an' the spare when I made believe to go back for that reel. That's why I had my knife opened. Besides, I got to show the boys to the Derby House what I caught whilst out learnin' plug castin'! . . . Sure, pick up them bags an' let's go let loose Mr. Gansvoort!"

IT was after sunrise when Ollie drove his captive onto the macadam road that led into the county seat. Practically all of Derby, and most of the inhabitants of adjoining Saltash Corners, were on hand to greet him. Ollie had seen to that, for he had to think of his votes in the fall. He had marched the crook two miles to the nearest telephone, after they had freed the coin collector, and had sent in word that Bert Wells was to be located and get ready a cell for him.

Bert had done so, presumably, for the deputy was the first to greet him.

"Got your cell ready, Sheriff," he said, trying to be offhand.

"Right sorry I had to git you out o' bed to do it, Bert, an' that I couldn't 'a' left orders with you *'afore* I went fishin' with Murdock," said Ollie. He went on, slowly and gravely: "I suspicioned *suthin'* were wrong when Murdock were so sot he'd bought that reel in nineteen-twen'y, but I jest couldn't go an' be *sure*.

"Dangerous to act without bein' sure. All I could do were string along with him. I couldn't pos'tive place him for the Sebago and Long Lake crook, although a feller might wear a red wig an' mustache; an' might paint a scar on his face; an' might have shoes made to have him a few inches taller; an' might sell or exchange a green Sunray roadster for a black Oakley coupé; or—"

"Yes, you did an excellent piece of detective work, Sheriff," came from the deputy, who was plainly trying to slide out gracefully.

"The joke o' the whole thing be," chuckled Ollie, "that it were my fishin' hobby that you fellers twit me about that went an' helped me think Murdock might be the crook. Whereas I never were a bass caster 'afore tonight, I do a heap o' readin' in gun an' fishin' tackle cat'logues. I don't mean it boastful, but I can come close to tellin', through this same readin', jest when a gun or a rod or a reel were manufactured. Anyways, when Murdock said he'd bought that reel in nineteen twen'y, I knowed he were a liar. That reel wa'n't manufactured by that pa'tic'lar maker until nineteen twen'y four!"

"Hell," said Mr. Murdock.

"Well, you've earned a nice reward, Sheriff," said Bert.

He looked disgruntled.

"Think I have earned it," conceded Ollie. "Yep, seein' as I wa'n't able to git to the courthouse to git my gun 'thout makin' Murdock think it funny, I were in what you young squirts call a spot where I might 'a' been drilled. Yep, reckon I did earn it. I—"

"You can buy a lot of tackle with it, all right," said the deputy. "I wasn't thinking of the reward myself, when I went up to Upper Saltash," he added.

Ollie smiled, slowly and whimsically, and scratched his bald head and blinked his round turquoise blue eyes. He spoke with a soft drawl:

"I *were* thinkin' o' the reward, allus. You see, seems as though Ken Benson, that were my dep'ty when I fu'st come into office twen'y-odd year ago, left a widder an' three young uns when he died last year. He didn't leave 'em much money, neither . . . Seems as though poor Blaise Guptil, when he lost his left arm on his portable wood saw,

lost a way o' makin' a livin' for him an' his ol' mother . . ."

Ollie broke off.

"Shucks, Bert," he went on, "I reckon they's a heap o' ways o' usin' that reward. I don't need no more tackle . . . Ain't I got a pretty sweet reel right here? Look what it caught me—a twen'y-seven hundred an' fifty dollar fish!"

A Case of Bad Memory

ONE of the most daring daylight train robberies ever staged in California nearly flopped because the "big shot" of the gang had a rotten memory.

The hold-up was planned to occur at Nobel, a little flag station just out of Berkeley, on November 7, 1930, at 7 A.M., when No. 36 fast mail would go crashing by with a dozen payrolls for industrial plants to the north. Charlie Berta, swarthy train bandit from Seattle, was to board the train and bring the big locomotive to a halt at the appointed spot, where the rest of the gang would be waiting with rifles, machine guns and a getaway car.

Berta had the nerve of a brass alligator. He calmly hauled himself up over the tender of No. 36 as she pulled out of Berkeley, and dropped into the cab. He covered Engineer Lemery and Fireman O'Brien with a gun.

"Keep going," Berta growled. "And don't pull anything funny. The gang's waitin' down here wit' a lapful of dynamite."

"Waiting where?" O'Brien wanted to know.

"What's the next station?" the bandit asked.

"Richmond," Lemery said quickly.

"No, that ain't it," Berta muttered, and yelled, "What's the next?"

Lemery named them all down the line, and Berta started swinging the gun around and cussing. He'd forgotten the name of the dinky little station where the gang was lying! O'Brien started to grin, and Berta hit him a crack with the back of his hand, keeping the gun on both of them. "Take it easy," he ordered Lemery, "I gotta pick this damn spot outa the scenery."

So the fast mail crawled along at twenty miles an hour until the rain-stained green water tower at Nobel appeared around the bend. Berta let out a shout. "That's it! Stop her down there."

But when the mail was halted Berta didn't forget any of the rest of his program, for he marshaled his captives out of the cab, around to the doors of the mail car, and then manned a machine gun, covering them and the mail guards, while his pal, Frank Ellis Smith, made a haul of $56,000 from the registered mail packets inside.

They got away in their stolen car, but there was a squeal somewhere, and once on the gang's trail, the Federals had it easy. The whole trail was blazed with the flash of small coins—in rolls! The gang hadn't even bothered to remove the Federal Reserve wrappers from some of the rolls, and handed over 80 or 100 half dollars for the rent, and 200 dimes for the groceries.

Smith was shot trying to escape after his arrest, but all the others are now doing twenty-five-year stretches at McNeil's Island and Leavenworth prisons.

—*M. F. Mattison.*

"My own mother wouldn't know me!" gasps Fluffy McGoff

Slip Ahoy!

By Milo Ray Phelps

Sam Smitz Was Seasick—Anyone Would Be Seasick Watching Dizzy Fluffy McGoff Try to Pull a Hold-Up On an Ocean Liner

I NEVER been one to take much stock in horseshoes, rabbit's feet, and that kinda hooey, but all crooks is a little superstitious at heart, and how I ever come to go sailin' out the Golden Gate on Friday the thirteenth is beyond me. I'd never 'a' done it under ordinary circumstances, bein' the cautious, methodical type that takes account of such details, but the run of good luck I'd been havin' was enough to unbalance any guy.

Landin' in Frisco three weeks before, without a dime in my pocket, Fortune, which has been dealin' me foul of late, suddenly gives me the glad hand. First I finds four bits in the gutter, with which I buys a forty cent meal down in one of them dumps where you can still drop your tip in a slot machine. This I does, wins the jack pot, and starts out with three and a half in nickels. But some guy stops me by the door and suggests a game of stud. I'm agreeable, and departs later with twelve bucks and a Chinese lottery ticket which some guy has put in for a quarter. I keeps this just from sentiment, havin' never won so much as a chop-stick in my life, and knocks over twenty-five hundred cold cash at the drawin'. Boy, it's no wonder I gets

a little giddy and goes in for more'n a few loud neckties.

Well, it may not mean nothin' in your life, but somethin' I always wanted to do was take a trip somewheres—just for the ride. So I gets flirtin' around with a lot of them see-the-world folders, and the first thing I know I'm booked for Hawaii. I can't honestly afford a vacation, but I figgers there must be somethin' over there a good crook can turn his hand to, same as anywhere else.

Anyhow, the trip will do me good, because I ain't been feelin' myself for a long time now.

All dolled up like a trouper I saunters aboard about sailin' time, and it sure is a thrill to be for once mountin' a means of transportation without the law at my heels. I follows the boy down with my bags to the stateroom I'm to share with some other gent, and then hurries back on deck to see the excitements. The band is whoopin' it up and the deck's full of serpentine, bonny voyage baskets and gay parties, and I gets right into the spirit of the thing. All these folks looks like ready money, and it strikes me maybe this ship itself has got possibilities.

So we steams out through the Gate into the path of the settin' sun. I watches the land grow low in the distance and then ambles down some ladders to D deck and hunts up my quarters. All carefree and unsuspectin' I steps over the doorsill into the double stateroom, and starts to spruce up. I ain't seen nothin' of my roommate yet, but his bags is there on his bed. "F. McG." says the fat gilt inscription on one of 'em.

"F. McG." says I, pausin' in my wash, "where have I heard that before?"

"Well for gosh sakes," pipes a high voice from the doorway, "if it ain't my old friend Sam Smitz!"

I TURNS to view Fluffy McGoff, as blank-faced and balmy as ever, bearin' down on me.

"Gee, but I'm glad to see you, Sam," he clutches my drippin' hand. "How did you know I was gonna to be on board?"

"I didn't—it's just one of them coinstances," says I, backin' away like from the edge of a precipice.

You see, me and this guy has met before. In fact, him and the ill health I've been havin' is one and the same thing, and findin' him right here in the same stateroom has knocked me cold.

"Listen," I recovers somewhat, "how come you're on this boat?"

"Oh, I had some good luck with a full pete up in Seattle," he grins, "so I'm goin' to Australia."

"Not by some thousand miles you ain't!" I snorts. "This boat is goin' to Hawaii."

"The devil it is! Now how'd I ever come to do that?" He removes his little Hooligan hat, and stands there blinkin' and scratchin' his wavin' hair. "I did think some of goin' to Hawaii, but then I decided I'd go to Australia, and—"

That's him, Fluffy McGoff, the world's dizziest burglar. Still he thinks me and him is born partners, and keeps turnin' up like a plugged nickel no matter where I lose him. He's goin' to Australia, mind you, but he gets a ticket for Hawaii, and here he is bunked in with me—can you tie that? Yep, me and Fate and this absent-minded bozo is the infernal triangle for fair.

"You seem to be sittin' pretty, yourself, Sam," says he, grinnin' at my shiny new bags. "While we're both

ridin' the crest we'd oughta dope out some real high class job we can pull, huh?"

"Listen," I snarls, at last findin' my tongue, "you and me is roommates and no more. I wouldn't ever 'a' got on this ship if I'd known you was on it, and the only reason I'm stayin' is because I ain't the swimmer I used to be. But that ain't goin' to stop me throwin' you overboard if I hears one word about us pullin' any more jobs together. No hard feelin's, Fluffy, but you and me is quits for all time. Now have you got that straight?"

"Well, for gosh sakes," he complains. "It's nothin' to get sore about. I was only thinkin' there's probably a lotta money aboard, and—"

"Dry up," says I, "and get outa them ice cream pants. On this ship you gotta dress for dinner."

"Okay, Sam," says he. That's the sad part about Fluffy—outside them mental lapses of his he ain't a bad guy. He's generous and good-natured, and fond of me like a puppy. With a patient sigh he gets into his dinner clothes and we goes down to mess.

II

SHE'S a swell ship; a hundred fathoms long and I don't know how much misplacement, with hot and cold water and all kind of built-in features from swimmin' tanks to beauty shops. It's my first voyage, except on ferry boats and lumber scows, and I takes to this palace like a duck to water.

I never went in much for sociabilities on shore, but out here things is different. Of course there's some highbrows that'd start up a social register aboard a desert island, but for the most part everybody is congenial like one big family. I mixes in all the games, gets to callin' guys by their first name, and it's great. In fact, if it wasn't for Fluffy McGoff I'd be havin' the time of my life.

But you should get a load of that lummox. We ain't been afloat twenty-four hours before he broaches me thus:

"Sam," says he, "I don't want to irritate you or nothin', but maybe you ain't noticed everybody has sealed his dough in a envelope and give it to this Mr. Purser, and he's got it in a dinky safe in one of them offices off the big saloon. Now of course I didn't lug nothin' aboard with me that I couldn't explain to the customs officers, but if we could borrow a drill and some stuff from the engine room, why—"

"Yeah, I'm 'way aheada you," I bawls. "We could crack the safe, jump out the window into our high powered car and speed away. You ain't in a hotel you know—you're in the midst of the Pacific Ocean. There's no way to pull anything big on board a ship and get away with it. Now make a note of that somewheres before you winds up in the brig."

"Oh, all right, Sam," he sighs. "Only I can't help observin' things, can I?"

He's correct there. Crooks is as bad that way as the sailors that goes rowin' on shore leave—they can't get outa harness. I been takin' careful stock of all the fellow passengers myself.

There is some interestin' folks aboard, includin' especially Mr. Bart Bodie, a tall, lean-faced gent with black hair, a long, sharp nose, and narrow eyes. He wears a black hat, dark double-breasted suits with the pockets sewed outside, and shaves twice a day. He's got a slow, engagin' smile and one of the parlor suites up top, and invites everybody to drop in on him. Which a lot of the boys does, provin'

a new crop is still comin' up, one a minute.

Then there's Pilsner, the pineapple prince, and Simpson, the sugar baron, besides a scatterin' of bankers, movie people, and just plain idle rich. It's a good mix, and I'm right in the swim, callin' 'em Pete and Joe and Andy. It's in this way I gets drawn up to Bodie's parlor, the second day out.

Beside cocktails, which a friend named Harry keeps mixin' with both hands, there's a perpetual game of poker goin' on there. Mr. Bodie, fulla clever gab and pale from too much shavin' powder, is presidin', and one by one the ship's list is takin' a ride.

Surprised I didn't spot this slicker right off as a member of the clan, my first impulse is to let well enough alone. I got a nice little roll for the first time in many moons, and no wish to gypardize it. "Every crook to his trade," thinks I, and drifts out.

But before dinner time here comes Fluffy behind the silly grin he wears in moments of elation, and pulls me to one side.

"Sam," says he, "you and me is old friends and I gotta let you in on the Christmas party some guy is givin' up in number seven. It's a poker game, and I just walked outa there with two hundred bucks. You'd oughta get in on that, Sam."

"You don't tell me," I sniffs.

But once I've heard that I naturally begins thinkin' of the swell luck I had before comin' aboard, and number seven starts fascinatin' me like a loose plank in a ball park fence. Whichever way I starts walkin', I finds myself fetchin' up outside of Bodie's parlor. I holds out till after lunch next day, and then gives in. If a monkey like McGoff can take this guy for two hundred, so can Sam Smitz.

But, oh baby, I'm wrong! It's the old come-on game in the hands of a expert. Between his sly chatter and Harry's cocktails I runs up a fat surplus, till I gets to thinkin' in round numbers, and then comes down the skid. Time and again I digs into the padded wallet for reserves, till I begins to touch bottom. Wow—nearly a thousand bucks has slid over the felt to this slicker.

"Excuse me, gents, I got a headache," says I, and stumbles out.

WELL, maybe I ain't a good loser or somethin'. Anyhow, my first thought is to avoid Fluffy, so I hides out till he goes to dinner, and then sneaks into our stateroom. Some way I don't seem to feel so good, and it ain't all in the head either. I falls on my bed and goes to sleep.

About four bells I awakes to the tune of one of Fluffy's shoes hittin' the deck. There he sits dreamily unlacin' the other, with a sad, far-away look.

"What's ailing you?" says I.

"Huh? Oh, I just got a idea, that's all."

"Well, close the portholes," I grunts. "It'd be too bad to have it get away on you."

"Every guy should stick to his own game, ain't that right?"

"Sure, but what brings that up?"

"Well—now don't get me wrong, Sam—have you noticed the procession of diamonds that Mrs. Jingleberry has been wearin'? Now you and me had oughta be able to figger out some way—"

"Oh, cripes!" I wakes up. "Sure I noticed 'em; I ain't blind. But neither am I dumb. While you're spottin' the richest dame afloat, I'm also spottin' William O'Mally, the ship's detective."

"Gosh, is he a dick?"

"Sure, and can't I get it into your head that this is a ship? It's like a island, see, with water all around—every man is accounted for, and nobody can get off. So suppose you did steal 'em; how would you get away with it?"

"Uh-huh," he nods, "but you see, Sam, I just lost all my wad up in number seven, and I can't help tryin' to think of some way to recuperate."

"Gosh, that's too bad," I grins. "How much did you drop, Fluffy?"

"About twelve hundred," he sighs. "Oh well, easy come easy go. But you keep thinkin' about them rocks anyhow, will ya? You got a good head."

"Oh, sure," I rolls over. "But in the meantime don't you do nothin' rash—you know them salt water burials is awful clammy."

Well, it's some satisfaction to find him and me is in the same boat, but it don't help out my slumber much. All night I got troubled dreams—me and Fluffy is out repairin' our busted fortunes. He's stickin' up the U. S. Mint with a water pistol while I'm outside tryin' to crank his flivver, which he's forgot to put gas in.

By mornin' I'm all wore out, and wakes to find the day dull and soggy. Also, the sea is rollin', and I gradually identifies my wooziness with the rise and fall of the ship. Maybe if I gets out in the air, thinks I, I'll feel better, so I does.

III

I'M up on the sun deck, which is deserted this time of mornin', pacin' back and forth in the drivin' mist, when some guy falls in beside me.

"Mornin', Smitz," says he. It's MacEwen, the sour-faced camera man with the movie troop, lost deep in his overcoat and blue with the cold.

"Mornin', Mac," says I. "How long since you been a early riser?"

"Couldn't sleep," he grunts; "been up all night. Listen Smitz; wasn't you in jail once in Kansas City?"

"Huh!"

"No offense—I just thought I recognized you, that's all. I was there myself. It was Christmas, and they give us beans. You remember that, don't you Smitz?"

"Hum-m," I eyes him narrow, "seems to me maybe I do. What's the gag, Mac?"

"Well, gettin' right down to crass facts," says he, "you lost some money to this guy Bodie, didn't you?"

"And how!"

"Me too—not much, but all I had in the world. It's a old failin' of mine—drink and cards has been my ruination. But since I give up the stage and took to the technical end I been doin' better. Had a little stake laid by and thought of openin' a photo shop in Honolulu. Then—phooey!—in three days it's gone. I tell you it's got me all broke up."

"That's a fine shame," I'm sympathetic. "But where do I come in?"

"Well, assumin' that you're a crook, Smitz—which I know damn well you are—I imagine you're thinkin' about some way to get back your losses."

"Proceed," says I.

Clutchin' me by the arm he leads me in behind a ventilator, lowers his voice confidential, and slips me the proposition. If I'll stick up Bodie for his roll, he'll manage the job slick as a whistle and get the money safe ashore.

"It's a pipe," he assures me.

"A pipe dream," says I. "If you got it doped out so slick, why don't you pull it yourself?"

"I ain't got the nerve," he admits.

"I been tryin' to get up the courage, but I—I'm too nervous. But it's right up your alley, Smitz, and it's well worth your while. He must have close to ten thousand bucks there, and I know right where it's hid. All you gotta do is pull the stick-up and slip me the jack. I run all the risk after that, and I'll give you two-thirds of the swag when we get ashore. Don't tell me you wouldn't be interested in a haul like that if all the details was planned out safe."

"Sure I would, if they was safe, but—"

"Then listen here: I ain't always been a camera man. I was once a first-rate actor and I'm still right there with the fine art of make-up. Now, while every one on the ship is well known, there's several easily recognized types that ain't on the ship, get me?"

"Say, that's a corker," I grins. "They'd have a heluva time arrestin' somebody that ain't on the ship, wouldn't they?"

"Exactly."

"But how'll you get the money ashore?"

"Packed in my camera—rolled up in the film. They'll never suspect me to begin with, and would never in the world think of lookin' there. It's water-tight, ain't it?"

"It's good enough," I agrees. "Pull it the last thing, huh?"

"That's the idea. We docks tomorrow about noon. We'll pull it durin' breakfast. Drop up to my place this evenin' and we'll go over the details."

"Sure," says I, and we grips on it.

I LINGERS for a minute in the lee of the ventilator, gloatin' over my good fortune. It's a shame to put this over on McGoff, but business is business. As I steps forth the wind nearly bowls me for a loop. The sea is risin', and the ship's millin' around like a chip in a busy wash tub. One look at the heavin' deck and my whole system does a flip-flop and lands bottom-side up. Feebly I staggers to the rail, for support and other matters, and clings there. Boy, I am sick.

Desperate and painfully I finally follows the rail back to the stateroom. A lunge of the boat sends me sprawlin' within, where I lands, face down, on my bed.

"Well, for gosh sakes, Sam," pipes Fluffy, idly completin' his toilet before the swayin' mirror. "You doin' a spring dance?"

"Shut up," I moans, "and get the doctor. I'm dyin'."

"Seasick, eh? She is a little choppy this mornin'."

"Seasick your nanny—I got somethin' tremendous, like scarlet fever or spinal meningitis. Don't stand there grinnin', you ape—get me the doctor."

Well, I'll always contend he had his breakfast first, but I may be wrong, this bein' just before I lost all track of time and everything. Anyhow, at last he shows up with the ship's physician.

"Ah-ha," nods this gleamin' white optimist, feelin' my fevered brow "mal de mer."

"Yeah—I knew it wasn't seasick," I moans.

"Same thing," says he, dealin' me out some powders. "Here, take these and eat oranges, and you'll feel better as soon as the boat lands." And that's all I gets outa him.

Just let me pause here to state that, contrary to popular opinion, there ain't nothin' funny about seasickness. Beside bein' pernicious, it's also contagious (almost half the ship has got it by noon time), and there ain't nothin'

will cure it except a dry climate. Seasickness is a solemn, tragic, and terrible thing, and would never 'a' descended into the flippant category of comic strips and Scotch stories if a few more professional humorists had ever had it theirselves.

As to what happened the next eight or ten hours, your guess is as good as mine. I'm too busy wishin' I could die, and afraid I'm goin' to, to take no notice of anything. I recalls Fluffy comin' in a few times to tell me what a swell meal he's just had, and huntin' feebly for somethin' to throw at him. The rest is all blank misery, till I wakes up with somebody shakin' me.

"Hey, Smitz, what's the idea?"

"Huh?"

"I say, you ain't forgot our proposition have you?"

"Which proposition?"

"Why, about stickin' up this guy Bodie, to get his roll."

"If I sticks up anybody," says I, "it'll be the engineer, to stop the ship. Beat it."

"Look here," he shakes me some more. "Wake up now."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" I blinks. "Hello, Mac, what's on your mind?"

"Why, that agreement we fixed up this mornin'. We was gonna settle the details up in my stateroom tonight. Don't you remember?"

"Oh, yeah," I recalls. "You see, I busted all out with mal der mer right after I seen you," I explains, "and I ain't been myself since."

"That's too bad," he's concerned. "But you'll be able to pull it. You're feelin' all right now, ain't ya?"

"Not by a long ways I ain't," says I. "Nope, you better count me out, Mac. Sorry. It woulda been a nice job, and I appreciate your patronage and all that but—"

"Oh, for Pete's sake," he groans, "don't tell me you're gonna throw me down just for a little seasickness! Why I've staked everything on you." He gives me a wretched look and starts pacin' the floor.

"Say," he halts suddenly, "how about that partner of yours—maybe he'd do it."

"Who, McGoff?"

"Yeah, the blank-lookin' card with the mop of hair."

"He's no partner of mine!"

"No? He said he was. Well, he's in the racket anyhow, ain't he? Why couldn't he do it just as good as you?"

"You'll never know," I explodes, "till you suddenly find he ain't done it. Listen, him and me is old friends, and far be it from me to knock a pal, but I never knew a guy so long onshort-comin's as McGoff."

"Double-crosser, eh?"

"No, nothin' like that. He's honest enough and conscientious, but—well, he's got absent-mindedness, and you never know what he's gonna do with it."

"But man alive, he could pull a simple job like this, couldn't he?"

"You'd think so," I sighs, "but you don't know him like I do."

"But if you rehearsed him on it a little, I don't see what could go wrong. And he's got a swell map to make up."

"Yeah, just like a blank sheet of paper," I admits.

"Sure, see if he'll do it, Smitz. That is if you're sure you won't."

"I'm certain," says I. "If I'm alive I'll be doin' well."

IV

WELL, he's hardly out the door when in breezes McGoff. Neither depression or the weather has dampered his spirits any,

and it sure galls me how he can walk around on this heavin' monster when it's all I can do to stick on my bed. It's a big blow to my pride to have to have him double for me on this job.

"Hello, Sam," he beams. "How you feelin'? Odd how it ain't bothered me none, ain't it?"

"Not at all," I snorts. "A guy as naturally dizzy as you are could ride anything. Sit down and give me your attention. I gotta job I can work you in on."

"Oh, yeah! You been workin' on them diamonds, Sam?"

"No, them diamonds is out. This is a big cash proposition, involving nothin' but a cool stick-up and a quick get-away."

"Hold on now," he protests, "ain't you been dinnin' it into me that nobody on this ship could pull anything like that?"

"Yeah, but this is gonna be pulled by somebody that *ain't* on the ship."

"Huh? Say, you ain't runnin' a fever are you, Sam?"

"Nope, it's like this, Fluffy." I proceeds to give him the layout. "MacEwen picked you as the perfect guy for the job," says I, "and you get one-third of the take, which should be a neat wad if his estimate is correct. What do you say—can you do it?"

"Sure I can do it," he's all aglow. "And how I'll enjoy takin' a fall outa that card sharp! When do we pull it, Sam?"

"To-morrow at breakfast, durin' first call. Bodie'll just be gettin' up—he eats at second table same as us. Mac'll make you up in here.

"Bodie keeps the jack in a money belt on his person. You buckle this under your coat, block him in his bathroom, and then walk along natural up to Mac's. He'll pull off your make-up, and you'll go down to breakfast as usual. Then they'll hunt for the rest of the voyage for a guy like Bodie says stuck him up, but of course they won't find him."

"Sure, I get ya, Sam," he grins. "I knew you'd think up somethin' so's we wouldn't start life in Honolulu with empty pockets. You and me is gonna stick together now, huh, Sam?"

"That all depends," says I, "on how slick you put over this job. Now you know your way around the ship, don't you?"

"Well, I got lost a couple of times a'ready," he admits. "It's a big boat. But there's always somebody around that you can ask."

"Holy smokes!" I moans. "You can't be stoppin' to ask nobody while you're fleein' with this money. You won't be safe till you get that disguise off, and you gotta keep movin'. Get outa here right now and learn the way from Bodie's parlor down to Mac's. Learn two or three ways, and spot a place here and there where you might duck in in case of emergency. Then go up and see Mac."

"Okay, Sam." Eager and obligin' he dons his little round hat and goes out—after four days!—to learn the ship. Thank God there's only one guy like Fluffy.

Well, all this has upset me almost more than the ocean. I thrashes and turns, and finally passes out from complete exhaustion. Mornin' overtakes me in a mess of troubled dreams, and I wakes to find Mac and Fluffy already on the job.

MY would-be partner, in striped flannels and a white sweater, is sittin' in front of the mirror, his cradle-faced countenance in sweet repose. MacEwen is thoughtfully

contemplatin' him, like a sculptor considerin' a block of stone.

"Mornin', Smitz," says he.

"How you feelin', Sam?" says Fluffy.

"Mornin'. I'm feelin' like hell," says I. "I see you guys has got together all right."

"We're doin' fine," says Mac. "If my figures is right there are ninety-seven pairs of striped flannel trousers and one hundred and five white sweaters on board, and no face like this one. Our list is noticeably free of hirsute adornment, and these distinguished gray whiskers will be in a class by themselves."

With that he opens a small box on the dressin' table and starts in on Fluffy with the dangdest display of quick disguise you ever seen in your life. In ten minutes he's grew a Vandyke that any guy would work thirty years on. Then he starts in on lines of thought and other distinguishin' features, and by the time he's powdered it down and carefully adjusted a linen cap over Fluffy's red hair you'd no more think it was him than the man in the moon.

"Meet Herr Von Mussendorfer, eminent scientist from Berlin, in sport attire," says he, steppin' aside.

"Well, for gosh sakes!" astounds Fluffy, droppin' his whiskered jaw. "My own mother wouldn't know me."

"Yeah, that's the best face you ever had in this world," I snorts. "Now, have you got your rod, Fluffy?"

"Uh-huh," says he, still blinkin' at the mirror. "Say, I'm gonna grow somethin' like this as soon as I get a little spare time."

"You sure ain't yourself," I admits, "and you'd oughta put it over slick."

"There won't be a hitch," MacEwen surveys him with pride. "Won't attract no attention; just be somebody no one has noticed before, and that ain't on the ship when they come to look for him. It's a cinch."

"I hope so," I sighs. Sick as I am I feel I gotta get up durin' this climax, and starts strugglin' up outa bed. "You ain't nervous or nothin', are you, Fluffy? You know this Bodie is a tough egg."

"Me? Gosh, no," he's contemptuous. "I ain't like you, Sam. Well, so long, fellas." Casual and unconcerned he ambles out the door. Mac follows him with sparklin' eyes.

"A great guy," says he.

"All of that," says I.

"Now, I may not be seein' you again before we land," says he, "but you know where to get hold of me on location, for the split."

"Yeah, I'll be seein' ya," I mumbles, wrestlin' into my garments, and he departs.

V

AS my head emerges through the tunnel of my shirt my eyes lights on Fluffy's dressin' table—and there lays his revolver. Him and Mac was so elated over that disguise, and me so busy dressin', that he's gone and walked off without it!

"Sufferin' cats!" I yelps. "I knew it—that absent-minded dodo has gotta be watched every minute or he pulls somethin' like this."

Grabbin' my hat and coat I picks up the gun and rushes out, my seasick momentarily forgot. Frantically I rushes up to C deck after Fluffy. If he ever steps into Bodie's joint without a gat, it's curtains. Reachin' one end of the hall, I spots him down at the other. But too late—he's just turned the handle of number seven and stepped within. With a groan I sinks down on

the steps of a companion ladder and takes my head in my hands. If I hadn't been seasick already, I would 'a' been then.

That's the end, thinks I—I may just as well chase up and tell Mac not to wait.

Footfalls. Two guys has turned into the hallway, and blamed if it ain't Bodie himself, with Detective O'Mally.

"Now, what is the meanin' of that combination?" I blinks.

Whatever it is, it's plain somethin' is about to happen that I can't afford to be mixed up in. I rises to go, then sorta weakens and sits down again. Though I can't be no help to Fluffy, still I can't drag myself away.

A minute passes—two—five—what's goin' on in there? Itchin' with anxieties I starts edgin' down the hall. Then the door opens. Here comes McGoff, and even through that disguise I can see his silly, satisfied grin.

"Okay, Sam," he whispers: "forgot my gun, but I held 'em up with a shavin' stick till I got O'Mally's. I've got the jack and they're penned up in the bathroom."

Calm and leisurely, like he's been instructed, he mosies past me, and I never been more surprised in my life. Good old Fluffy, he's managed to put it over after all.

Then, wham!—open flies number seven and out pours Bodie and the dick. One look behind and Fluffy takes the first corner on the lam, these two not fifty paces behind him.

Well, if you want a pinch fit, just put yourself in my boots for them next few minutes. Here I am right on the edge of things while McGoff is dodgin' back and forth, this way and that, with that ten thousand bucks. At first he's got plenty ways to go, but he always picks the wrong turn, and after a minute they're closin' in on him every which way.

At last he makes it to a companion ladder and scrambles down a deck. But they've been expectin' that and takes right after him.

"Cripes!" I moans, followin' after.

Why don't he duck in somewheres like I told him? Here he is riskin' all that jack on a game of tag when, in that disguise, he's safe with anybody on the ship but them two. There's any number of places he can step in till they goes by.

On the deck below, Bodie takes a tack to the left, and O'Mally to the right. I heads down the middle aisle just in time to see Fluffy disappear into a doorway up near the lobby. Good—at last he's usin' his bean. I'll tip him off as soon as these birds has moved on, and then if he can get up to Mac's before there's a general alarm, why—

Bodie appears in the middle aisle—then O'Mally—and my heart stops beatin' as they advances, heads together, toward the hideout. But straight past the doorway they goes; through the lobby, and on up forward. Fluffy has put it over, and I takes back everything I ever said against him!

I rushes forward to give him the high-sign, then suddenly slows up, hesitates, and pulls up with a groan. Before me is a plate glass window entitled: Tonsorial Parlor. Beyond this stands two chairs. In one sits the venerable ship's captain, just finishin' a shave. In the other, a dignified, German-lookin' man of science—with iron gray whiskers and flamin' red hair!

The barber is just approachin' with his white cloth. One good look and he bounces back like he's bit, lets out a whoop, and drops everything. Of all the places on the ship, McGoff has

walked himself into the barber shop and called for a shave!

The sea has calmed, the decks is millin' with life, and the ship's about to land when MacEwen comes poundin' for the third time on my door.

"Heard anything of McGoff yet?" He pokes in his glarin' countenance.

"Not a thing," says I sourly. "Have you?"

"A little," he gives a sour smile. "They caught him. I can't find out how, but they caught him—with all the dough. Then it came out that O'Mally has been takin' protection money on Bodie's racket. McGoff got 'em red-handed while they was checkin' the split from a list of the winnin's, and spilled it all to the captain when he caught him. To avoid a scandal they've turned him loose and are payin' back all losses outa the loot. You can chase up to the captain, Smitz, and get reimbursed.

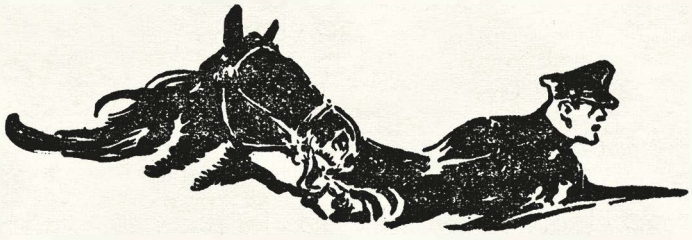
"But, hell!" he grunts disgustedly. "We could just as well had the whole thing. There wasn't nothin' the matter with that disguise. What do you suppose happened to that guy?"

"I got no idea," I shakes my head.

"Well," he growls, "I'd give a lot to know, because it looks damn funny to me. If you ever find out, let me in on it, will you, Smitz?"

"Sure," says I, and he departs, slammin' the door.

"All right, you fuzzy-brained, nitwitted jackass, come on out," I bawls, and from under the bed crawls my aspirin' partner and continues removin' the presence of Herr Mussendorfer from his downcast countenance.



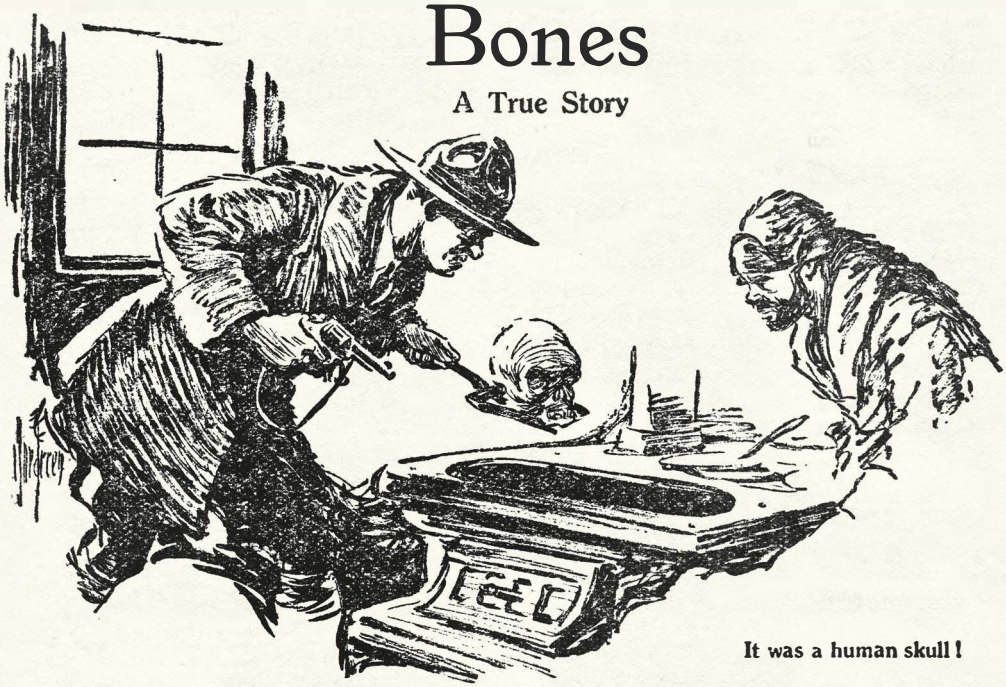
Hat-Tipping and Half-Nelsons

TWENTY-NINE new keepers in Sing Sing were recently enrolled in a new school of courtesy. Wrestling, it was announced, will be one of the major courses of instruction.

The keepers will learn to treat inmates and visitors at the prison in a considerate, polite manner. They will also be taught to handle belligerent and violent cases. The wrestling is considered a necessary adjunct to the deep bow. When the prisoner doesn't respond to the one type of treatment he is subjected to the other.

Bow Legs and Charred Bones

A True Story



It was a human skull!

It Was a Horse Thief Sergeant Nicholson Went to Get. It Was an Unknown Man's Skull and a Sinister Mystery He Brought Back

By James W. Booth

WITH the ease and grace one would expect from so experienced a horseman, Sergeant Nicholson swung into the saddle and a moment later was galloping out of Ponoka across the hard-frozen Alberta prairie.

A member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, he was out to "get his man." Three of them, in fact, for word had been brought to patrol headquarters that three horse thieves had been caught at the Comstock ranch.

It was pretty much of a cut and dried matter of routine, as far as Nicholson could figure it. Not much to expect in the way of action, and he was one of those men who craved action. His system required it. It was essential to his well-being.

He had had little of it the past few months. Riding lone patrol far to the North had been a monotonous ordeal, with nothing to break the monotony except occasional visits to lonely woodsmen and now and then petty arguments among the Indians over trap lines.

He would have relished this assignment much more if it had been the task of catching the horse thieves. As it was, they had already been captured. All he was required to do was to take them manacled to Edmonton for trial.

Life in the Mounted was like that! It was all very well for story writers

and the motion pictures to portray the scarlet-coated troopers as engaging in one continual man-hunt, with glamour, romance and gun-fire at every turn. But Nicholson knew it was the bunk. He knew that such cases were very few and very far between in the records of the force. He knew that the average detail drawn by the men in its ranks was drab and dreary and monotonous.

There was the case of the muskrat skin hat, for example. No particular action or glamour or romance there. Yet for nearly two years every member of the force in the region had orders to find the owner of the hat.

It had been found early in 1907, torn and blood-stained, on the snow-packed trail east of Ponoka, and turned in at headquarters.

Who could tell what it might mean —perhaps a murder, some sort of a crime, at least.

But it hadn't. The most exhaustive search had failed to bring to light either the owner of the cap or even the indication of a crime connected with it. No one was reported missing and no one reported an injury which would explain the torn and blood-stained headgear. So in the end the search was ordered abandoned and instructions given to destroy the now dust-covered cap.

It became just one of those things in the life of a Mounty.

It was of drab, bothersome details such as this that Nicholson was thinking as he reined in his horse before the Comstock ranch house that crisp autumn morning of September, 1908.

JOHN COMSTOCK, a big, raw-boned man with a weather-beaten face and usually a good-natured twinkle in his eye, greeted him as he dismounted. Today the twinkle was missing. His face was grave.

"Too bad you didn't get here sooner, Sergeant," he said, after shaking hands with the trooper. "Two of those devils got away early this morning."

"Two, eh?"

"Yes. We've still got the other one. Have him tied up tighter than a drum. He's a tough one, and sore as hell."

"Let's have a look at him."

Together they walked to the wagon shed, where the Mounty found the horse thief securely bound with heavy rope and zealously guarded by an unsympathetic ranch hand.

He was a stocky, bow-legged ruffian, with scowling eyes and a tight-lipped mouth. At first he was sullen and refused to talk. But Nicholson knew how to handle that type, and it wasn't long before the horse thief revealed that his name was William Oscar Koenig.

He also revealed why he was, as Comstock had put it, "sore as hell."

"Them dirty two-timers," he snarled. "Double-crossing me."

"Two-timers! Who?" Nicholson wanted to know.

Koenig looked menacingly up at him.

"Them two buddies of mine, Burke and Skinner, if it will do you any good, which it won't," he sneered. "Buddies! Bah!" and with that he spat vigorously on the hard turf.

So that was it. Koenig's grievance was due to the fact that he had been made the goat of the ill-fated horse thieving expedition.

Nicholson smiled to himself. He'd play this fellow along, humor him a bit, and perhaps . . . well, who could tell? He might get his three men after all. It would not be the first time that

a man who had been double-crossed had earned his revenge by squealing.

"Well, that's your tough luck," he told the horse thief, as he cut the cords that bound his hairy wrists and snapped on the handcuffs. "No use crabbing about it. We got to get moving."

But as they left the Comstock ranch behind and rode south toward Edmonton, Koenig continued his crabbing. His desire for vengeance, instead of lessening to any degree, increased steadily until it dominated him completely. Nicholson did nothing to reduce this sense of grievance. Everything he said, in fact, was said with the object of stirring up the wrath within his prisoner.

Once, when they stopped at a spring to water their horses and refresh themselves, he jokingly told Koenig. "Say, with those bow-legs of yours you'd never gotten away. And if you had—well, there's not another pair like 'em in the Dominion. You'd have been spotted sure."

The horse thief only swore.

Again when they urged their horses forward, he fell to grumbling. Another hour of steady riding over the lonely, wind-swept plains and Nicholson gave his prisoner to understand he had had enough of his continual complaining.

"For God's sake, cut out the chatter," he snapped. "Why not take it with your chin up and stop whining? There's nothing you can do about it."

Koenig turned abruptly in his saddle, his eyes narrowing as he faced the Mounty.

"Is that so?" he snarled.

He said no more. Instead, as they rode on, he relaxed into the sullen attitude he had assumed when Nicholson first saw him. No longer did he complain of his ill-fortune or swear vengeance on the two who had left him to face the law alone. The Mounty could tell that he was deep in thought.

At length, as they reached the top of a knoll overlooking the broad expanse of rolling prairie, he reined in his horse and waited for Nicholson to come abreast of him.

"Nothing I can do about it, eh?" he inquired. "Well, there is."

"Yeah?"

"You don't think I'm going to let those two lice go free while I get sent up for a stretch, do you?"

This was what Nicholson had been hoping for. Koenig's desire for revenge had gotten the better of him. He was going to give the trooper the clew he was waiting for. But the Mounty didn't push him.

Instead, he asked:

"How can you help it? You don't happen by any chance to know where they're heading, do you? It isn't likely they told you, seeing how they double-crossed you."

Koenig glared and uttered an oath.

"No, I don't know where they're heading," he growled. "But I know something else."

"What?" Nicholson inquired.

"Never mind what," the horse thief answered. "But something that'll pin a damn sight more serious charge against them double-crossing rats than hoss thieving ever will."

Nicholson was all attention, but he didn't allow Koenig to see that his words had aroused any particular interest.

"What you doing? Giving me a stall?" he drawled.

"No! It ain't a stall."

"What is it then?"

"If you want to find out, I'll show you," Koenig replied. "I'll lead you to a place where you'll find something worth while to work on."

"It's a go," the sergeant told him. "Let's get moving."

II

TURNING their horses' heads toward the east, they rode off, Koenig in the lead, showing the way, and the Mounty close behind, his gun always in readiness in case the horse thief showed some sign of treachery. But this he did not expect. Koenig seemed too intent upon turning the tables on his two former companions.

For some time now the plain had been gradually dropping away to the left. The broken country encompassed them. They were traveling, Nicholson noticed, along a winding, dry watercourse from which arose, to right and left, low hills, soft and round. The surroundings were not unfamiliar to the trooper. He realized they had been traveling in a wide semicircle and were now somewhere in the vicinity of Ponoka.

Late in the afternoon they came to a weather-beaten but sturdily built shack in a clearing. It was shut off from the trail by a thick growth of foliage. The heavy door, built of logs, was padlocked.

"You'll find the key down there," Koenig said, pointing to a pile of dirt and refuse before the door. "Dig around in it a bit."

While the horse thief looked on with a sneer, Nicholson did so, but with no success.

"Hell, I could find it in no time if you didn't have me handcuffed," Koenig declared. "Heard 'em tell where it was often enough. Can't do it when you have me manacled."

He paused and surveyed the trooper, his eyes wandering maliciously toward the Mounty's rifle.

"Ain't afraid of me, are you?" he jeered. "You got the gun, not me."

There was truth in what he said. Common sense, too. Koenig was unarmed, while Nicholson had both revolver and rifle. Only a fool would attack a man so heavily armed. And the trooper was now firmly convinced that Koenig wasn't that sort of a fool.

He unlocked the handcuffs and carefully stood guard while the horse thief knelt down to search for the key. He found it without difficulty, and a moment later the door was opened and the two men pushed their way into the musty, cold interior of the abandoned shack. Koenig led the way to a large, rusty iron stove.

Without hesitation, he removed all of the stove lids and, as Nicholson followed his actions, he saw that the stove was choked to the top.

"Take a shovel full of that and see what you find," Koenig said, pointing to a small coal shovel that stood propped against the stove.

It did not take the trooper long to discover that it had been a grisly fuel, that had been burned in the stove the last time it was used.

As he took out the ashes and spread them methodically on the floor, he saw among them several partly burned bones, bones from a human hand unless he was greatly mistaken.

Digging deeper into the ashes, he came upon a large, round object, which, as he lifted it from the stove, drove from his mind any doubts that might have existed there. It was a human skull, with the top crushed in!

KOENIG had indeed led him upon something far more serious than horse stealing. Murder!

Placing the skull on the floor, he turned to his captive.

"Who was it?" he asked.

Koenig shook his head negatively. "Don't know," he said somewhat wearily.

Then he told how he had chanced to overhear Burke and Skinner talking one night when they thought he was asleep. From what he had gathered from their conversation they had waylaid someone on the lonely trail near the shack, killed him and taken the body to dispose of it.

He yawned and stretched himself as he finished speaking. The contents of the stove did not seem to interest him in the least. He appeared tired and fatigued.

"Mind if I lay down for a bit?" he asked, at the same time commencing to unbutton his fur coat.

It wasn't surprising he was fatigued. Nicholson was himself, for they had been in the saddle most of the day.

Koenig threw off his coat and rolled it into a pillow before Nicholson had an opportunity to reply to the request.

After all, he figured he might as well let his prisoner lie down. It was at least a humane thing to do. And he wanted to gather together and study the gruesome remains he had taken from the rusty stove, and look about the place for further evidence. Later, he would handcuff his prisoner again and they would push on to Ponoka. There Koenig could be safely lodged at patrol headquarters, and Nicholson could get a good night's rest before renewing the journey to Edmonton."

As he nodded assent, Koenig spoke again. "They talked about the store room, too," he said. "'Bout something being left in there."

With that he sprawled out on the floor, adjusted the coat under his head and closed his eyes.

Nicholson looked toward the store room that led off the main room of the cabin. He'd take a look in there. Not that he hadn't intended to, anyway. Murder had been committed. It was evident that Burke and Skinner were the murderers. But how to catch them? The description of the pair was meager, and their names . . . well, Burke and Skinner were in all probability names they had adopted. If not, they were certainly names that could easily be dropped.

The essential thing was to discover a clew as to the identity of the murdered man. As long as his name remained a mystery, the odds were that it would be some time, if at all, before the murderers were caught.

Koenig's last remark, however, caused Nicholson to stop and ponder. Then a light of keen anticipation came into his eyes. The store room might supply the essential clew!

He stood over his prisoner a moment, saw that he had fallen into a doze, and then crossed the room and pushed open the heavy store room door. It was dark inside. There was only a small window and twilight was gathering outside.

He would need a light before he could do any investigating. A search of the cabin, however, revealed that both of the lamps were dry of oil. He would have to use matches.

Resting his rifle against the store room wall, he struck a match. But just as it flared, the heavy door slammed shut and he heard the lock snap shut on the outside.

Koenig had not been asleep. It was Nicholson who had been napping.

With all the force at his command he threw himself at the door, but it did not budge. He heard Koenig running from the cabin.

Quickly he drew his revolver and

tried to shoot out the lock, but although he emptied the gun into the heavy wood, it was no use.

The lone window in the room was the trooper's only means of escape and pursuit. He rushed to it only to find that it was too small for him to squeeze through.

Even if it had been large enough, there would not have been time, for the horse thief, coat in hand, was running, as fast as his bow legs would carry him, across the clearing in the gathering dusk. As he ran he glanced excitedly back toward the store room window.

There was no time to lose. In another minute or so Koenig would reach the safety of the distant trees, where the horses were tied.

Nicholson didn't wait. He snatched up his rifle, poked the muzzle through the window, took deliberate aim at the fleeing form and fired. It was his only chance.

Koenig dropped the coat, but kept on running. Now he was lost to sight behind the brush. The bullet had lodged in the rolled coat, and he had escaped uninjured.

A moment later Nicholson heard the receding beat of horses' hoofs, two of them, for Koenig had taken both horses.

III

NICHOLSON received the punishment he expected when he returned to headquarters at Edmonton. He had allowed a prisoner to escape. There was no other alternative. He was reduced in rank on November 6. Sergeant Nicholson became Constable Nicholson.

Although his rank was taken from him, the opportunity to "get his man," was not. Aside from the blot of the Koenig affair, his record was perfect, so his plea to be allowed to recapture the horse thief and try to solve the mystery of the charred skull and bones, which he had found in the stove of the abandoned ranch house, did not fall upon deaf ears.

He was detailed to "get Koenig" and to clear up the mystery.

On the surface of things, there wasn't much to work on, but Nicholson had given considerable thought to the murder during his trek back to Edmonton, and the more he thought about it now that he was back, the more definite conclusions stood out.

When Koenig was grumbling about being double-crossed, it seemed logical enough. But now as Constable Nicholson had occasion to view the horse thief's actions from long range, so to speak, it seemed to him that Koenig's desire for vengeance had been somewhat overdone.

Calling upon his long experience as a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, he asked himself:

Would the average criminal act as Koenig had done? Wouldn't he wait and when released from jail seek revenge in his own way?

Nicholson decided he would.

Why then, he asked himself, had Koenig acted as he had if he was not sincere?

In endeavoring to discover a reason, Nicholson went back over the events leading up to the discovery of the human remains in the cabin stove.

The more he thought of them, the more two questions perplexed him.

If Koenig, as he had said, had only heard bits of the conversation that passed between Burke and Skinner regarding the murder, would he have been able to know exactly where to find the key to the cabin and where the remains had been disposed of?

On the second question, Nicholson decided that it was altogether possible. After all, there was only one stove in the shack.

But the key! The murder wasn't a recent one. All the evidence pointed conclusively to that fact. But how much time had elapsed since it was committed, the trooper wasn't certain. From the appearance of the interior of the cabin, however, he judged that it had not been used for at least six months. Perhaps longer. At the minimum though, the murder had been committed six months before.

During the intervening period, autumn had passed into winter and winter into spring. It had rained and it had snowed. Much of the pile of dirt and refuse in which the key had been hidden had undoubtedly been washed away, leaving the pile no larger or any different in appearance from those near it.

Certainly no man could have known just where to look for the key simply by hearing snatches of conversation. It didn't ring true.

When this fact impressed itself upon Nicholson's mind the reason for Koenig's professed bitterness to the two escaped horse thieves stood out in bold relief.

Koenig, and not Burke and Skinner, had committed the murder. He had built up the story of double-crossing so that suspicion would fall on his two former companions and not on himself. He, and not Burke and Skinner, was doing the double-crossing.

It was all supposition, of course, and the Constable knew it. Even if he should arrest Koenig, there was no way of pinning the murder on him. Supposition and direct evidence were two entirely different things.

Why, the identity of the murdered man was still unknown! Even if it was possible to charge Koenig with murder, whom would one charge him with having killed?

Nicholson decided to let suppositions go by the board for the time being and to put all his efforts on trying to learn the identity of the murdered man.

But though he engaged in an exhaustive investigation, it was of no avail. No evidence was brought to light. No one, apparently, was missing from the whole province of Alberta who could not be accounted for.

Then it was that Nicholson had a break—the sort of a break that so often crops up unexpectedly to play an important rôle in the solving of a mysterious crime.

He happened to think of the muskrat skin hat that had been found some two years before on the snow-covered trail east of Ponoka.

The Mounted Police had never learned to whom the hat belonged.

Could it be possible that it had belonged to the man whose crushed-in skull had been found in the rusty stove?

NICHOLSON'S heart beat fast as he rushed from the barrack to seek the trooper who had had charge of the hat.

"Had orders to destroy it," the Mounty told him. "Guess I burned it with the rubbish."

Nicholson's heart sank.

"No—wait a minute," his companion went on. "Seems to me I didn't, though. I think it's down in the basement somewhere."

A search of the barrack basement was undertaken at once. And after a time the headgear was found, thick with dust, lodged in back of one of the overhead beams.

Nicholson's hands trembled ever so slightly as he pulled the cap over the broken skull. Would he discover what he wanted to find? Yes, the torn part of the hat, its edges ruffled with dried blood, corresponded exactly with the break in the skull.

One mystery had been solved.

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

Still, there was something definite to work on now. The hat had been found near Ponoka.

But no one in or around Ponoka had been able to shed any light on the torn, blood-stained headgear when the Mounties had made their investigations there two years before. Was it reasonable to expect that they would now?

However, Constable Nicholson did not go to Ponoka to ask questions about the muskrat skin hat.

He went to pick up the trail of Koenig, for he was convinced that Koenig was the murderer.

It was several weeks before Nicholson picked up the trail he was seeking. In a crowded city it would have been a well-nigh impossible task, but in the sparsely settled regions around Ponoka it was a different matter. In such localities ordinary activities are subjects of common gossip.

So it was that at length the Constable stumbled upon two German settlers who recalled that two years before they had seen two men set out from Ponoka in a sleigh drawn by a team of shaggy bays.

Now it is nothing unusual for one to see sleighs or bay horses, for that matter, in Ponoka in winter time. It is a common sight. Nothing one would be expected to remember for over two years. But in this case the Germans had remembered.

They had remembered one of the men had ugly, scowling eyes, a hostile mouth and bow legs.

What had fixed the instance in their minds was that later they had met the bow-legged man returning alone in the sleigh. He had a bulky object covered with tarpaulin in the bottom of the sleigh.

This was the first definite proof that Nicholson's supposition that Koenig was the murderer was correct. The bow legs cinched the matter.

The next thing was to check up on the team of bay horses and the sleigh. It was not hard for Nicholson to do, because just as one's comings and goings are a matter of general knowledge in sections such as Ponoka, so is the matter of teams and vehicles.

The owner of the horses was found. He had bought them two years before —from a bow-legged man.

He told Nicholson that the man had put up at the Ponoka hotel for the night, had left town the next day and upon his return several days later had sold the team and sleigh.

He did not know the man's name. It was an out-and-out cash transaction.

"It was Joe Hindahl, though, that left town with him. I knew Joe," the farmer offered. "The fellow I bought the team from said Joe went back home to the States."

"Know where he lived?"

"Let's see now. I did know. Yes —Bemidji, Minnesota.

IV

A WEEK or so later Nicholson, posing as a Canadian wheat grower desirous of purchasing a farm in the neighborhood, appeared in Bemidji.

He was working on a hunch—a hunch that told him it was Hindahl who had been murdered on the lonely trail outside of Ponoka and whose crushed skull had been found in the rusty stove.

Furthermore, his hunch told him that through some queer quirk of fate the murderer had succeeded in successfully posing as Hindahl.

A few inquiries and Nicholson learned that the Bemidji Bank was holding overdue mortgages on several farms and was desirous of selling the properties.

He went to the bank and there he had another break. Among the mortgages was one in the name of Joseph Hindahl.

Nicholson feigned interest in the Hindahl farm. But first, he told the bank, he wanted to see the place and talk with the owner. The bank officials agreed that this was only natural, told him he would find Hindahl out at the farm most any time, and assured him that if the place met with his approval they would be glad to close the deal with him.

Nicholson waited until nightfall before he drove out to the Hindahl farm. As he cautiously made his way through the darkness toward the house, he was anxiously wondering whether fate was playing a trick on him or whether his hunch was right.

Well, it wouldn't be long before he knew.

With utmost care not to make any noise he approached a window from which the light of a kerosene lamp cast a pale glow, and looked in.

A man was standing before the stove. Now he turned toward the table. He had a beard, while Koenig had been smooth shaven. But the beard could not disguise the man Nicholson was seeking. Furthermore, he had bow legs.

When Nicholson pushed open the door, Koenig whipped about. Seeing the Mounty, he uttered a snarl of rage, snatched up a butcher knife and swept the kerosene lamp from the table.

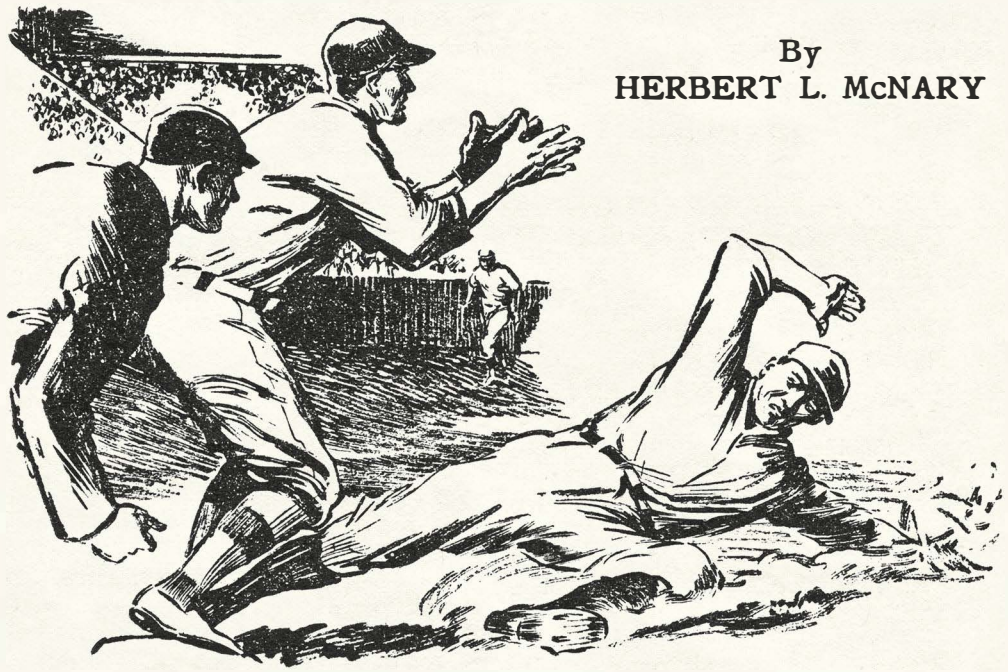
He had the advantage in the darkness because he knew the room, but Nicholson had his revolver and he did not hesitate to use it. His second bullet found Koenig's leg. He dropped the knife as he fell to the floor. A moment later Nicholson had snapped handcuffs on him. This time he did not take them off until Koenig was safely lodged in jail.

Koenig was hanged early in 1910 for the murder of Joe Hindahl, while Nicholson was restored to the rank of sergeant and with the rank went a sergeant's back pay for the time he had spent in clearing up the mystery of the torn and blood-stained muskrat skin cap.

DO YOU READ THE ARGOSY?

The World Series Murders

By
HERBERT L. McNARY



He slid to second in a cloud of dust

Red Kenyon knew that bad blood between the players could lead to the loss of the Series—and worse

CHAPTER I.

BEHIND THE MASK.

RED KENYON had reason to suspect almost from the first inning of the opening game that the World Series was not entirely on the up and up. The Maroons had won, by Butch Hampson's lucky home run in the ninth inning. Nevertheless, Red digested all the newspaper accounts of the game that night, including the ghost-written article carrying Butch's name. He was preparing for bed when Manager McHale burst into the room.

"Quick Red!" he cried, his eyes wide with apprehension. "Something's happened to Butch. I think he's been poisoned!"

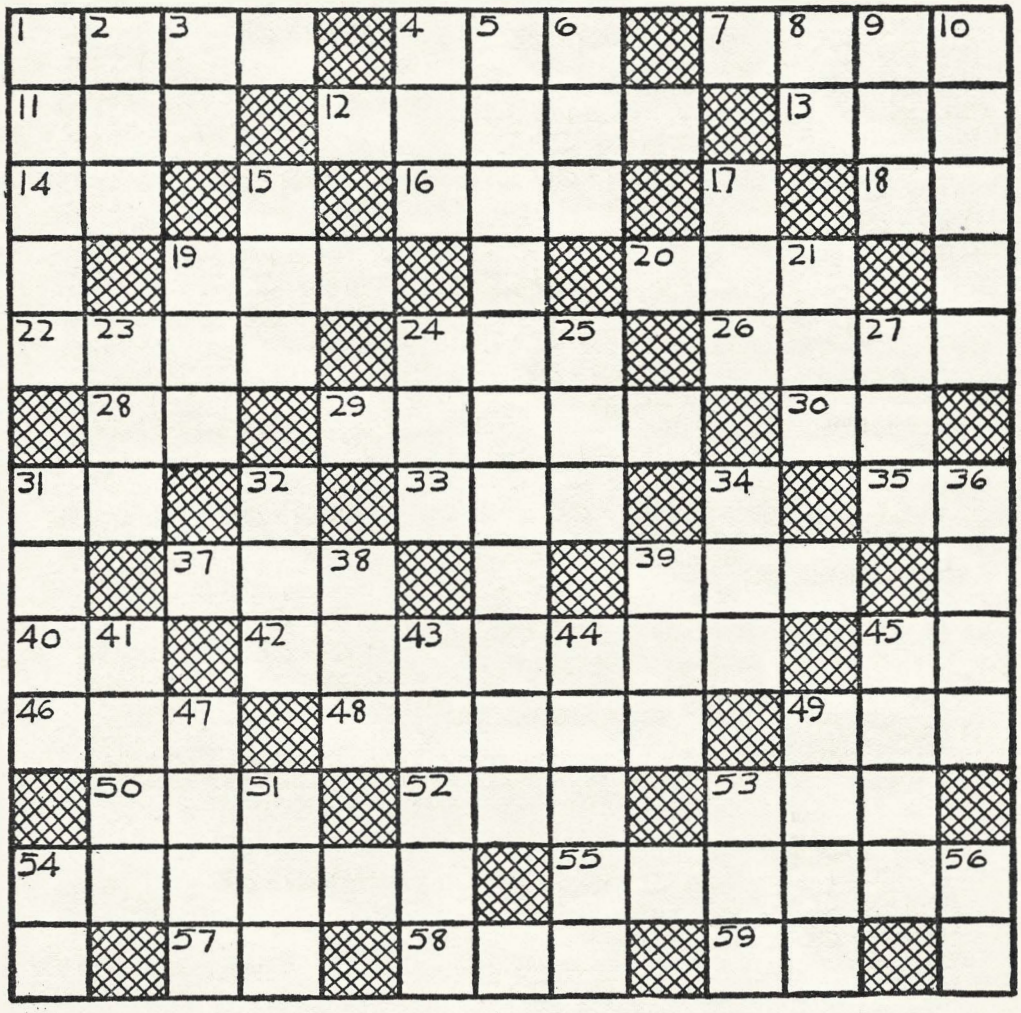
This thrilling story of disastrous murders among a big league ball team begins in next week's ARGOSY—on sale Tuesday, August 16th.

Narrative Cross-Word Puzzle

THIS WALL STREET CLERK DIDN'T SPECULATE

By Richard Hoadley Tingley

PUZZLE NUMBER 76



A—ACROSS **D—DOWN**

The manager of the Stock Exchange house ..... Stevens & Co. was at his ..... end. A ..... drawn by his company ..... the People's National Bank for $75,000 had been returned stamped ..... its face, "Insufficient Funds."

"I cannot ..... how this can be," he said to himself. ..... knew better than he that the firm should have a ..... balance of

A 35 A 26 D 1 A 40 D 31 A 37 D 41 A 50

A 7 $107,000 in ..... in that bank,
D 6 and it was beyond his .....
A 45 what could ..... the matter.
A 30 "Whom ..... you suspect, I
A 4 would .....?" said Mr. Stevens
A 48 from behind his polished .....
A 57 desk. "You know ..... clerks
D 15 better than I do. ..... about
A 1 that bright young ....., Avery,
D 56 who came to us ..... highly
A 42 recommended and ..... by Lee & Co.? He's not much more than
A 39 a ....., but he has plenty of
D 32 D 53 ....., and is quite a ..... with the other clerks, and as honest,
D 27 ....., I believe, as any of
A 14 (cont.) ..... Taken together they
D 47 make a good working ....., and I can hardly believe any of
A 20 them would ..... us. But go
D 19 and ..... Avery. I want to
A 59 talk ..... him."
D 9 "Yes ....." replied the man-
D 54 ager. "I'll ..... and find him, but don't be too sure about
D 2 ..... I don't trust him implicitly."

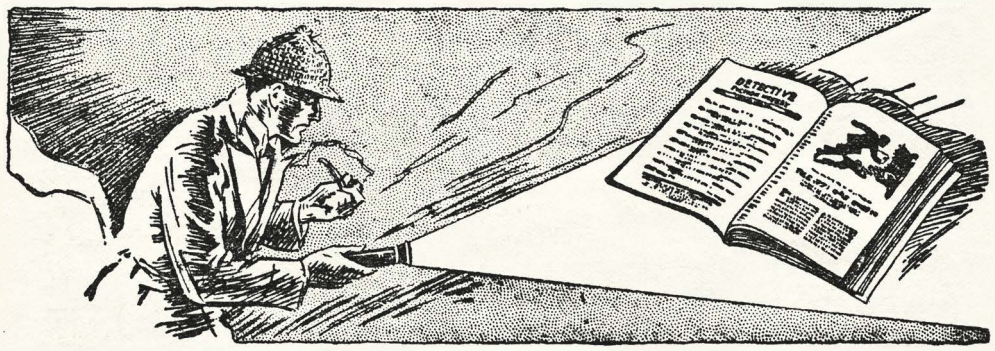
The manager was right, for Avery, scenting trouble, had taken
D 10 D 36 to his ..... and had ..... The guarantee company which
D 45 had written his ..... made good the loss.

D 3 But Avery's ability ..... a
D 44 crook was nothing to ..... at, and his experience in crime was far
A 12 A 52 ..... than ..... might suppose. Unlike most young .....
A 16 of his class, he had ..... lost
A 46 his stolen money in Wall Street
D 5 A 54 ..... Though ..... up to a
D 34 high speed, he ..... not squander all of his loot, for he
A 29 knew the ..... of keeping plenty of it on hand, and it was his
D 4 ..... to do this.

Reaching the street in safety
D 43 he took a taxicab to his ..... There he opened a secret drawer
D 39 with his ....., stuffed an
A 11 enormous wad of bills into ..... pockets, put on a false moustache,
A 13 adjusted his ....., took a
D 23 ..... from a bottle on the
D 21 shelf, ... farewell to his old quarters, sauntered carelessly into
D 38 the street, and ..... he had
A 49 gone a ..... was swallowed
A 31 ..... in the Wall Street crowd.
D 8 Stopping ..... a news stand to
D 25 ..... a paper, he then took a
A 24 (prefix.) ..... way train to the railroad station and bought a ticket for
D 49 ....., Nevada.
A 58 But you ..... if you think
A 19 this young crook ..... away with that plunder, for the ticket
A 22 clerk ..... him and notified the police who intercepted him at Pittsburgh.
A 53 In the ....., to which place the judge sentenced him for a
A 33 year and a ....., Avery is
D 17 D 24 ..... a ..... sight, and
A 28 ..... is to be hoped he
D 51 will ..... to do better, and
A 55 that he ..... his viewpoint be-
A 12 (prefix.) fore he ..... enters society a free man.

ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE

D	■	H	E	A	D	■	M	U	T	E	■	T
R	U	E	■	C	A	P	E	S	■	L	A	W
A	T	■	L	E	V	E	L	E	D	■	B	E
W	E	B	■	S	I	D	E	S	■	M	E	N
E	■	O	F	■	S	E	E	■	W	E	■	T
R	O	W	■	G	■	S	■	A	■	T	R	Y
■	N	■	V	E	N	T	U	R	E	■	E	■
A	L	L	■	T	E	R	S	E	■	C	A	R
■	Y	E	T	■	T	I	E	■	B	A	D	■
D	■	T	H	O	■	A	■	G	U	N	■	T
A	M	■	E	■	I	N	K	■	T	■	A	H
Y	E	S	■	O	N	S	E	T	■	O	N	E
S	■	O	U	R	S	■	N	O	O	N	■	N



FLASHES FROM READERS

Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind

THERE'S nothing as refreshing as an honest opinion. And it's a fact that whenever two persons observe the same thing there will be two opinions about it. Last week we published J. Allan Dunn's answer to a critic who declared it was impossible to transfer finger-print markings. This week one of our readers has a quarrel, or several quarrels, with Donald Barr Chidsey, who wrote that unusual tale of Hawaii, "Tropical Hideaway." Mr. Chidsey lived in Hawaii nearly a year, in a little cottage similar to the one he described in his yarn, and grew the varieties of flowers he wrote about. And he spent much of his time studying native lore, flora and fauna, and taking notes. But James Fallon, who was in Hawaii three years, disagrees with some of Mr. Chidsey's statements.

DEAR MR. EDITOR:

Donald Barr Chidsey who writes "Tropical Hideaway" may have been in Honolulu for a stopover, though he writes like he just bought him a book of Hawaiian songs at the Bergstrom Music Co. and tried to show off.

I don't mean to crab, but I always shy off a guy who uses too many foreign words just to show how smart he thinks he is and, for cripes' sake, when they do use them let them use them properly or not at all. Some of the mistakes in "Tropical Hideaway" may be printer's errors, like the wrong spacing in the Aloha Oe song, but say, he calls a boat Malola and it's Malolo, he uses an *s* and there's no such letter in Hawaiian and he's just plumb faked what he calls okoleoioi, kupaloke and pukinikikini—or else some wahine was kidding him. Also his fish called "alloa"—no such thing as a double *ll* in the language. They don't make gardenia leis, and what in hell is a cigar flower?

I was pay clerk down there at the Naval Station for three years, and that fake kanaka stuff makes me sick. He calls Diamond Head "kindly and smiling." Say, it's a tufa blowout, never was a true volcano, just a big mud blister tossed up and falling in a sort of ring. Just a mudheap, nothing growing there. The Calawaii—I suppose that's a blend of California and Hawaii—could not "steam down the channel as the beach at Waikiki slides past." Waikiki is three miles from Honolulu harbor and any channel. There is no Nuuana Pali, it's Nuuanu.

I'm not the only reader you've got who's been to Honolulu. I can speak Hawaiian and I hate to see it mishandled. Tell Chidsey he's standing on his foot.

JAMES FALLON,
Woodside, N. Y.

MORE SATAN AND SEÑOR

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been reading your magazine for a long time, even when it was *Flynn's*. I have not missed a single copy for over three years. I save the separate issues each year from January till December, then I give the complete set to an institution that I know appreciates them.

Among my favorite authors, Erle Stanley Gardner, J. Allan Dunn, and Sidney Herschel Small rank as the leaders. I cannot remember ever reading a story in D. F. W. that I really didn't like. Of course, *Leith, Wentworth, Manning, Riordan, Dugan, Hackett, The Mongoose, Fluffy McGoff,* and about a hundred others, stand as favorites over some newer characters, but let's have more *Satan Hall* and *Señor Lobo* stories.

"Illustrated Crimes," by Stookie Allen, is the best feature ever published in any magazine, so—all I can say is, "Keep it up!"

A really satisfied reader,
PAUL VAN ETTEN,
Binghamton, N. Y.

A WORD FOR MR. TINGLEY

DEAR EDITOR:

I have always been a great admirer of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY and I wish to express my appreciation for the many hours of pleasure that your magazine has given me. You are giving your readers more and better stories than ever before. "The Shadow Man" was, without a doubt, the greatest serial ever published.

My favorite authors are Erle Stanley Gardner, John Goodwin, Sidney Herschel Small, Johnston McCulley, Ernest M. Poate and Fred MacIsaac.

Now a word of praise for Mr. Richard Hoadley Tingley. His cross-word puzzles receive first attention and I get a great kick working them.

Sincerely yours,
R. H. ZOLLMAN,
Knoxville, Tenn.

SPOTTING THE SHADOW

DEAR EDITOR:

The serial that I liked best was "Men of Prey." The one now running, "The Shadow Man," is real good. I am looking forward for the finish and think that I have the Shadow spotted, but cannot see the reason for all the rumpus he puts up, like clipping a pig, "too much squeal for so little wool."

I only mention those stories I like best; they are all good and the few that don't interest me may be just the ones the next man may like best, so here is to success.

A. W. CEDERSTROM,
Fayette, Mo.

"NIGHT IN MURDER CASTLE"

DEAR SIR:

I have been reading your magazine for some time, and I can truthfully say that it is one of the best of its kind I have ever seen or read. Although I have found a few of the serials that I didn't care to read, I generally go through it from cover to cover. "Night in Murder Castle," however, was, in my opinion, especially good. Also, I enjoyed the serial, "I Looted Broadway." I like all of the Erle Stanley Gardner stories very much.

A reader,
GEORGE LEFEVRE,
Columbia, Mo.

THE MONGOOSE FOR HER

DEAR SIR:

I have been reading DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for a short while and surely enjoy it.

I find most all the stories interesting. I liked *The Mongoose* stories the best and sure have gotten a thrill out of "The Shadow Man" and "Satan Sees Red."

I also like *Jimmy Wentworth* stories.

Yours sincerely,
MRS. C. HOWARD,
Cliffdell, Wash.

MORE OFTEN

DEAR SIR:

I have been a constant reader of D. F. W. for five years, and can well say that it is an excellent magazine. I enjoy immensely stories of *Lester Leith, Señor Lobo, The Mongoose, Sidney Zoom,* and others, but I do wish that more of the above named would appear more frequently.

JAMES LAURENTINO,
New York City.

"HERE'S MY VOTE"

Editor,

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

Name.....

Street.....

City.....*State*.....

Fill out coupons from 10 consecutive issues and get a large DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY drawing.

This coupon not good after Nov. 12, 1932.

8-13

SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

A cipher is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, *are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has used* x *to represent* e, x *will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clews. For instance, affixes* -ing, -ion, -ally *are frequent. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first puzzle each week is the easiest.*

M. E. OHAVER

BERT PINKSTON features three of his favorite DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY authors in the following problem in letter division. Two of the names are in plain view, ROSCOE (Theodore Roscoe) in the divisor, and R. SNEDDON (Robert W. Sneddon) in the dividend. To find the third name you must solve the problem and reconstruct the key, the ten letters of which represent the ten digits in order form *1* to *0*. You will find clews to the identity of S, C, and H in the second subtraction. The equations E x E makes D, and O — D gives D (noting R — A), may then be analyzed.

No. 192—Cryptic Division. By Bert Pinkston.

```
R O S C O E ) R S N E D D O N ( E R
              A C L N L A D
              -------------
              H H H O H D N
              H S C N S S N
              -------------
                    H S E H D S
```

Did the "naturals" in No. 191, last week's Inner Circle cipher by D. V. J., unduly tax you? Three symbols of the kind, L, R, and T, occurred in the cipher. Symbol J provided a short cut to the solution, considered in connection with the compound NDPU-SBSJ and SCJBSJ, with proper attention, of course, to frequency and position.

Notwithstanding its high frequency of 7, symbol J showed up as *y* because of its finality (used 4 times as last letter) and use as second letter (word 13). Frequencies (12-4-12-7) in the second member of the compound NDPU-SBSJ, would then indicate S as probably a vowel, at once suggesting *-away* for -SBSJ and *give-away* for the whole word, and yielding *anyway* for SCJBSJ (*a-yway*).

The solver could then run through the alphabet for the repeated L in LQBLJ (*- -w-y*), which would thus follow as *lowly*, disclosing one of the "naturals," L for *l*. LDYUBDAU (*li-ewi-e*), evidently *likewise*, would be next in order. After which AJGMQL (*sy- -ol*), as *symbol*, would supply the missing letters for GSYUA (*-akes*) and SMLJ (*a-ly*); and so to the answer in full.

The fans are divided on the point brought up in No. 191, but with probably a good majority in favor of indicating proper names with asterisks. Admittedly this tends to simplify solutions. But this the constructor could easily get around by refusing to use proper names in crypts that are in-

tended to be difficult. However, let us have your opinions on the subject.

Apostrophes are a clew of prime importance in the first of the current cryptograms by Plato Zup. SCTS'H may be guessed at sight, leading to LS'H, these two words checking with HLS. Next compare SCN and SR, completing CRS. You will by this time have all but one letter of HSTDS. Continue with words 4 and 9, filling out PNN and PR; and so on.

Comparison of the short words SUY, XUN, XUAKY, and XUYD, noting also AD and ND, will start the ball rolling in Jesse D. Steele's crypt. M and MCY will then lead to words 19 and 31. Corundum's crypt may be attacked by comparison of the beginning of word 6 and the ending of word 3, and the short words FGHI, FIBE, and FIGCB. Words 1 and 6 will then follow.

The pattern groups TKDD and TKDDG, occurring in sequence, are a vulnerable spot in Mart's contribution. Having identified these words, try for the last three words. Mack's Inner Circle puzzle should give you a real work-out!

No. 193—Unwelcome Remark. By Plato Zup.

BCNA VNRVKN HSTDS SNKKLAP XRZ "PNN! LS'H CRS!" SNKK SCNY SR PR BTX FTEW TAG HLS GRBA TAG HCZS ZV. SCTS'H SCN FNHS BTX SR WNNV ERRK.

No. 194—Transportation Test. By Jesse D. Steele.

ONES BACKE MCY UMTTZ AD M BCMZ HNFTY; ONES BACKE HMD KMFBU AD M SMVA; WFS SUY BACK XNCSU XUAKY AE SUY BACK XUN HMD EOAKY XUYD CAGADB ND M SCNKKYZ.

No. 195—There He Goes! By Corundum.

ABCDE FGHI JKLMNHGDE NDOQCBP RHBJCR GEAJEH FIGCB CJST EMURB VDWBR FGHI QDCGNBOJE. WGLEJ-QBU YMGNWCT NJMZIH FIBE DKRB-UXJEH KTRHJELBU RDMELR JCJUO.

No. 196—To the Victor. By Mart.

ABCDEFG DEHBI JEKLJ JIBCM; NBC-DEFG OFPPQ GOEEMKLJ GMICKJOM; NFIQ NFGMDQ NFRJBG SCMB; TKDD TKDDG TKRET TOEDB BGMCMB.

No. 197—No, Sir! By Mack.

KFMRVCD LVPDEDMOJ, MWEFA FVPDED NRSFH, OQRSG FCTQAE KSQLG CUSHD DQBFOMAG KQRLG. KSVEDF LUBHD CMUC "CTME, CM-EUA!" "GAME PVMQRA OVETD," PAQ-OSC PSRB CRVEQA.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

186—DISMISSES (This Miss is) HON-EST. WEAKEN (We can) USER (use her). BEACON (Bee can) TYPEWRITER (type, write, or) TENTATIVE ARIAS (tend to the various) BOOKS. CANOE (Can you) SIMULATOR (see me later)? COMMA POTATO CLOCK (Come up at eight o'clock).

187—Ancient rhyme might solve the difficulty of spelling words with "ie" or "ei." "Should diphthong rhyme with 'key,' 'i' must come before 'e' unless it follows 'c.'"

188—Hundreds of men unable to find employment are now panning abandoned placer diggings—finding gold, too! But no bonanzas yet.

189—Pandemonium reigned throughout America when, during nineteen fifty, after great deliberation, Congress declared prohibition repealed.

190—Alfalfa, excellent forage for ruminants, resembles clover. Emmets, renowned for industrious proclivity, utilize pulverized rock, erecting proportionate skyscrapers.

191—Lowly asterisk demarks capital, likewise makes ably built crypt crumble. Omit give-away symbol—spare final cipher anyway.

Join our August Cipher Solvers' Club by sending us your answers to one or more of this week's puzzles. Answers will be published next week.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

SIDNEY ZOOM turned to survey the back of his car.

Ten minutes ago the girl who called herself Muriel Drake, the girl who had jumped into his car when she had been fleeing wildly down the dark street, had left him, had slipped into the shadows of the night.

He switched on the dome light, leaned over the seat, and picked up an object. It was glittering on the floor. The object was a fine ruby.

Who was the girl called Muriel Drake? From what had she been fleeing in such desperate terror? What was the story of that priceless ruby she had left behind her? Read

THE GREEN DOOR—A Novelette by Erle Stanley Gardner

Detective Dan Burr faced the strangest situation of his career when death rode a phantom elevator. Read

THE MURDER CAGE—By Robert H. Rohde

The author of the great Kurt Zorn spy series has written the true story of one of the most notorious and picturesque of French criminals.

THE SCOURGE OF "THE TERROR"—By Richard W. Rowan

In the same issue, stories by JOHN L. TIERNAN, FRED MacISAAC, ERNEST M. POATE, and others.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—August 20 (on sale August 16)

Read every word of this National Broadcast

THIS IS CARL E. MANDEL SPEAKING
PRESIDENT OF CARLTON MILLS INC. NEW YORK
MY COMPANY IS **GIVING AWAY**
SHIRTS · TIES · HOSE AND UNDERWEAR
AND OFFERS **BIG PAY** TO ITS REPRESENTATIVES
LISTEN TO EVERY WORD OF THIS IMPORTANT MESSAGE

CARLTON

BIG PAY Giving Away

·SHIRTS·UNDERWEAR ·TIES·HOSIERY·

Join the Gold Rush

A Personal Message from
C. E. MANDEL
President, CARLTON MILLS, Inc.

Man! You know that one tiny electric spark will set off dynamite sufficient to wreck a skyscraper building, and that each little invisible atom contains enough explosive energy, if released, to blow up a big city. In that same way you hold within yourself a mighty force waiting to be awakened by the greatest-of-all-time money making plan of merchandising ever given to the selling world—giving away absolutely FREE the Famous Carlton Garments.

This is How You Do It

Imagine for the moment that you are one of my money making representatives. You offer three fine quality shirts at prices lower than fifteen years ago, the latest men's styles, fully guaranteed. *NOW LISTEN* carefully—here is why you are bound to clinch orders easily and quickly. You give your prospect one of these gorgeous shirts *absolutely FREE!* Think of it, man! Four garments for the price of three. It's simple order taking. (The FREE give-away does the SELLING FOR YOU.)

Read all about the big rewards offered for your efforts in the next column. They are indeed rewards worthy only of the finest men. A great contribution to the selling world. A merchandising plan that has built up bank accounts for our men. Yes sir! We grow oak trees where formerly acorns lay.

JOIN THE GOLD RUSH. Stop and think of the tremendous selling force one Carlton garment FREE with every three offers you. Why, man, it's a one call walk-away order every time—no turn downs. The garments are designed on Fifth Avenue, America's style center for finest quality men's apparel, priced lower than at any time in fifteen years. These are advantages over comperition that's got 'em all stopped.

ORDERS and CASH Yours EASY

The FREE give-away has caught the fancy of millions of people. They love it, men! And come back for more. Big cash commissions on original and reorders, besides $25.00 weekly cash bonuses—easy to get; in addition, you automatically become a partner in this great business to the extent of 40% profit sharing. Money coming to you all the time.

Send for Our Gorgeous Fall Outfit Today

This wonderful order-getting Sample Outfit contains the newest creations in Fall Shirtings Hosiery—Underwear—Neckwear—Sheeplined Coats and Leather outer-garments. Join the Carlton money makers—represent the industry's oldest, most reliable institution. *Get started at once!* MAIL IN THAT COUPON—Let Carlton show you an easy road to success.

STAKE YOUR CLAIM Now!

$ $

MR. MANDEL, President 99-N
CARLTON MILLS, Inc., 79—5th Avenue, New York

Dear Mr. Mandel: I know I can earn big pay giving away your Free Shirts, Ties, Underwear and Hosiery. I am anxious to get started at once.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

$ $

Everybody enjoys a milder cigarette ... a cigarette that tastes better!

IN over 80 countries Chesterfield cigarettes are bought and sold . . . smoked and enjoyed. Why is it?

BECAUSE THEY ARE MILDER.
BECAUSE THEY TASTE BETTER.

Their mildness begins with milder, riper tobaccos —the right kinds of Domestic with enough Turkish, blended and *cross-blended* to an even finer taste.

And wherever you go, up and down and across the world, Chesterfield goes too.

Wherever you buy Chesterfields, you get them just as fresh as if you came by our factory door

Hear the Chesterfield Radio Program. Every night except Sunday. Columbia network. See local newspaper for time.