

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

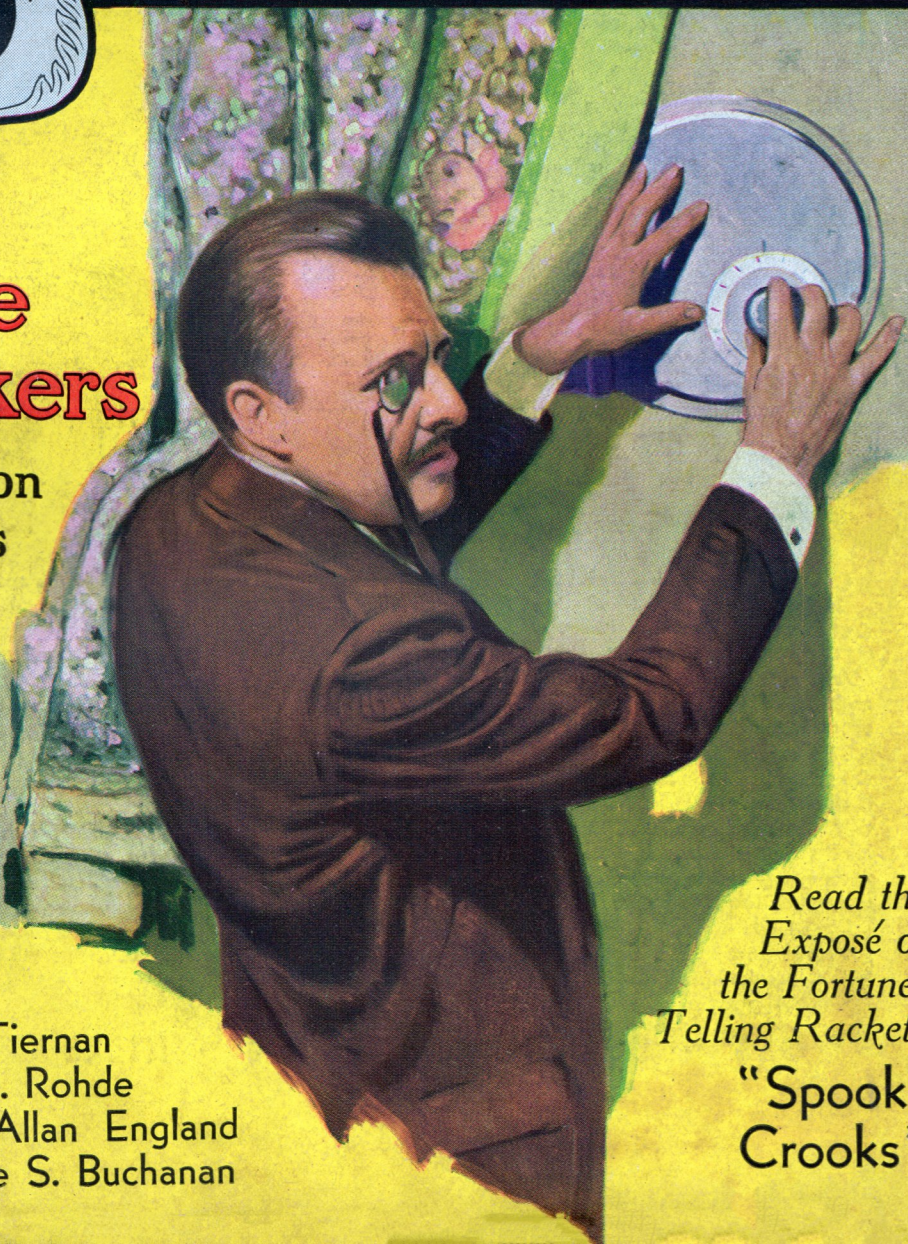
Formerly Flynn's

With Thrilling True Stories



The Crime Breakers

by Judson
P. Philips



John L. Tiernan
Robert H. Rohde
George Allan England
Madeleine S. Buchanan

Read the
Exposé of
the Fortune-
Telling Racket!
"Spook
Crooks"



Feel well *and* keep well

use LISTERINE

AFTER SHAVING

The safe antiseptic exhilarates the skin and guards against infection

DO you want your face to feel cool, refreshed, and exhilarated after shaving? Do you want to get rid of that hot, burning sensation, that raw feeling, that so often follows a shave?

And, more important, do you want to feel sure that no dangerous infection from a razor scratch will threaten your health and possibly your life?

Then use Listerine, full strength, after shaving. Pour this golden liquid into the cup of your hand and douse it on the face. Immediately you will feel your skin tingle—which tells you that the tiny nerve centers and blood vessels have been stimulated. Soon after, there steals over your face, the coolest sensation you have ever known. The skin feels like a baby's, soft and satiny.

Don't forget that when you use Listerine this way you are automatically taking care of the danger of infection. Because Listerine used full strength is a deadly

enemy of germs. Though safe to use and healing to tissue, it kills germs—all types of germs—within 15 seconds.

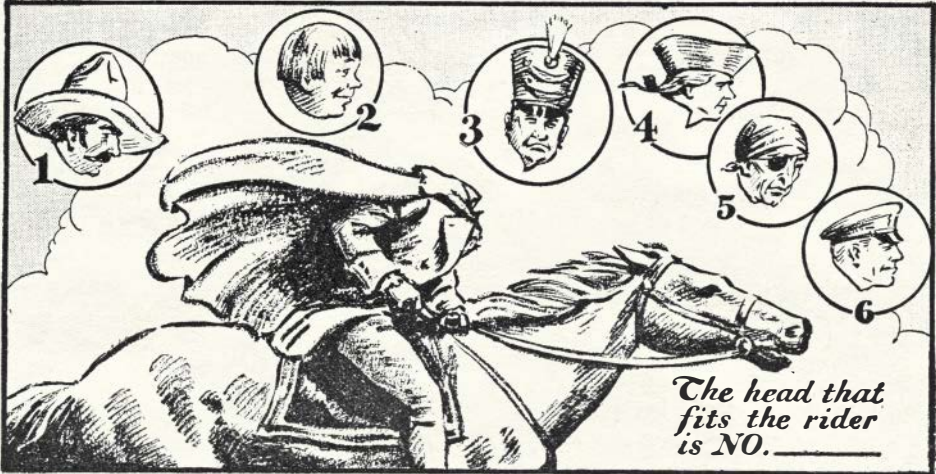
Germs are uncertain things. On some people they seem to have little effect. On others they develop infection, which, running a swift course, results in sickness and sometimes death. *And these tiny germs often gain entrance through small wounds left by the razor.*

Why run the risk of infection? Why not apply Listerine after every shave? It is worth using solely for the protection it gives, and it is doubly worth using when you realize how fresh, clean, and exhilarated it leaves your skin. If you haven't tried it, do so the next time you shave. And while you're making your toilette don't forget to gargle a little Listerine. As you know, it puts your breath beyond reproach. Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, Mo.

COOLS ~ SOOTHES THE SKIN ~ KILLS GERMS

Win \$3,700⁰⁰

OR BUICK 8 SEDAN AND \$2,500 IN CASH



Solve this Old Mystery

Find the Head of the Mysterious Headless Horseman. Six heads are shown. Only one of them belongs to the Mysterious Headless Horseman who for years struck terror to the heart of a peaceful village. No one ever saw his head. Can you now solve this age-old mystery? Here is your chance to qualify to win \$3,700.00 cash or Buick 8 Cylinder Sedan and \$2,500 cash besides. You must look

carefully. See that the head you pick fits the collar of the mysterious night rider. Rush your answer at once to qualify in this gigantic distribution of \$12,960 or 4 Buick Sedans and \$8,160.00 in Cash Prizes.

This sensational, easy money making opportunity is just our way of advertising. Someone who solves our puzzle is going to win \$3,700.00. Many other big cash prizes. Anyone may win—why not you? This big fortune in cash and automobiles must be given away. Find the Headless Horseman's Head. Get your share of this easy money.

Easy to Win \$12,960⁰⁰ in 103 Cash Prizes

We will give away \$12,960 in cash. You are sure to profit if you take an active part. In case of ties duplicate prizes will be given. You get \$3,700 if you win grand first prize. In addition there are 102 other wonderful cash prizes. The winner of the grand second prize may win \$2,200, and winner of the grand third prize may win \$1,700. Also four other prizes of \$500.00 each and many others. All told \$12,960 in cash. Money to pay you is already on

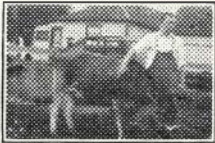
deposit in the Mercantile Trust and Savings Bank, a big Chicago Bank.

\$1,000⁰⁰ for Promptness

Send your answer at once. Make sure to qualify for \$1,000 extra given for promptness if you win the Buick Sedan—a total of \$3,700 if you prefer all cash.

Send No Money The main thing is—send in your answer today. You can share in this advertising cash distribution. Hurry! and take no chance of losing the extra reward of \$1,000 for promptness if you win grand first prize. Act now! You don't need to send a penny of your money to win! Just find the Headless Horseman's head—mail with coupon or write me a letter at once for particulars.

Indiana Farmer Wins \$3,500!



This is a picture of Mr. C. H. Essig, Argos, Ind., taken on his farm. He writes: "Wish to acknowledge receipt of your \$3,500 prize check. Oh, boy! This is the biggest sum of money I ever had in my hands. It is indeed a fortune to me."



► Mrs. Kate Needham, of Oregon, won \$4,705.00. Miss Serena Burbach, of Wisconsin, won \$1,125. ► M. D. Reidman of Minnesota, won \$2,560. Hundreds of men, women, boys and girls have been rewarded in our past advertising campaigns.



Send Coupon Today

ROGER SCOTT, Mgr.,
427 W. Randolph, Dept. 96
Chicago, Illinois

The head that fits the rider is No. I am anxious to win \$3,700. Please tell me how I stand.

Name

Address

City State

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME LXII

Saturday, October 3, 1931

NUMBER 2

NOVELETTE AND SHORT STORIES

Crime Breakers Novelette	Judson P. Philips	146
<i>The Case of the \$450,000 Necklace</i>		
Radway's Rocket	Robert H. Rohde	174
<i>Taken for a Boat Ride</i>		
Dumb	John L. Tiernan	194
<i>Louise the Stenographer</i>		
"Show Me the Gun!"	J. Lane Linklater	227
<i>The Evidence That Postponed Death</i>		
Murderer on Board!	Lieut. John Hopper	244
<i>Three Red-Headed Men</i>		

SERIAL

Drums of Death Five Parts—4	Madeleine Sharps Buchanan	205
<i>An Amazing Revelation</i>		

TRUE STORIES

Spook Crooks	Julien J. Proskauer	185
<i>The Gilt-Edged Business of Star Gazing</i>		
Arson in the Jungle	George Allan England	237
<i>\$200,000 Gone</i>		
The Most Dangerous Man	Everett B. Holles	260
<i>Fred Burke, Gangdom's Monster</i>		

FEATURES AND FACTS

Narrative Cross-Word Puzzle	Richard Hoadley Tingley	282
Flashes From Readers		284
Solving Cipher Secrets	M. E. Ohaver	286

This Magazine is on sale every Wednesday 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 Reaumur

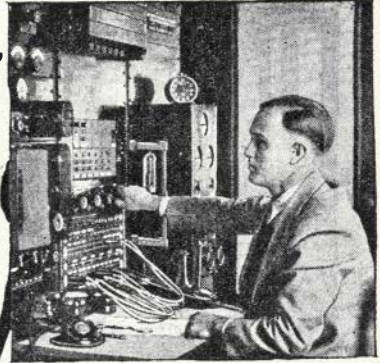
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I will train you at home to fill a **BIG PAY** Radio Job!



Here's Proof



I will give you my new 8 OUTFITS of RADIO PARTS for practical Home Experiments

If you are earning a penny less than \$50 a week, send for my book of information on the opportunities in Radio. It is free. Clip the coupon NOW. Why be satisfied with \$25, \$30 or \$40 a week for longer than the short time it takes to get ready for Radio?

Radio's growth opening hundreds of \$50, \$75, \$100 a week jobs every year

In about ten years Radio has grown from a \$2,000,000 to a \$1,000,000,000 industry. Over 300,000 jobs have been created. Hundreds more are being opened every year by its continued growth. Many men and young men with the right training—the kind of training I give you—are stepping into Radio at two and three times their former salaries.

You have many jobs to choose from

Broadcasting stations use engineers, operators, station managers and pay \$1,200 to \$5,000 a year. Manufacturers continually need testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, service men, buyers, for jobs paying up to \$7,500 a year. Shipping companies use hundreds of Radio operators, give them world-wide travel with board and lodging free and a salary of \$80 to \$150 a month. Dealers and jobbers employ service men, salesmen, buyers, managers, and pay \$30 to \$100 a week. There are many other opportunities too.

So many opportunities many N. R. I. men make \$200 to \$1,000 while learning

The day you enroll with me I'll show you how to do 28 jobs, common in most every neighborhood, for spare time money. Throughout your course I send you information on servicing popular makes of sets; I give you the plans and ideas that are making \$200 to \$1,000 for hundreds of N. R. I. students in their spare time while studying. My course is famous as the course that pays for itself.

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Special training in Talking Movies, Television and Home Television experiments, Radio's use in Aviation, Servicing and Merchandising Sets, Broadcasting, Commercial and Ship Stations are included. I am so sure that I can train you satisfactorily that I will agree in writing to refund every penny of your tuition if you are not satisfied with my Lessons and Instruction Service upon completing.

64-page book of information FREE

Get your copy today. It tells you where Radio's good jobs are, what they pay, tells you about my course, what others who have taken it are doing and making. Find out what Radio offers you, without the slightest obligation. ACT NOW!

**J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute Dept. 1 KK
Washington, D. C.**



\$100 a week

"My earnings in Radio are many times greater than I ever expected they would be when I enrolled. They seldom fall under \$100 a week."
E. E. WINBORNE,
1207 W. 48th St.,
Norfolk, Va.



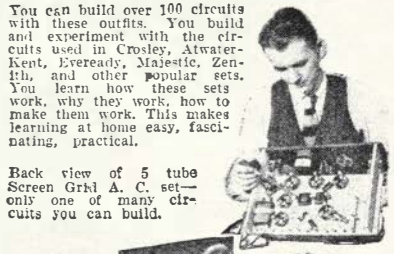
Jumped from \$35 to \$100 a week

"Before I entered Radio I was making \$35 a week. Last week I earned \$110 servicing and selling Radios. I owe my success to N. R. I."
J. A. VAUGHN
3107 S. Grand Blvd.,
St. Louis, Mo.

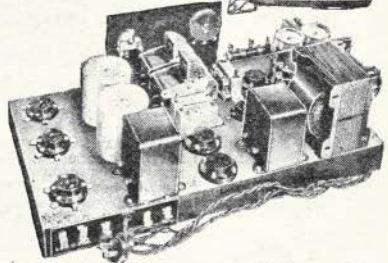


\$500 extra in 6 months

"I find I made \$500 from January to May in my spare time. My best week brought me \$167. I should have taken it long ago."
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10 Day Trial
 You save over \$60 by quick action. These genuine guaranteed Underwoods now only \$39.90 (cash) while limited supply lasts. Only \$1 down brings the Underwood for 10 days' trial. If you keep it—only 10c a day soon pays for your Underwood on our new low price and easiest terms. Send at once before this special offer is withdrawn. Remember every machine fully guaranteed and sent on 10 day trial.

International Typewriter Exch.
 231 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Dept. 1008
 I enclose \$1 deposit. Send Underwood No. 5 (F.O.B. Chicago) at once for 10 days' trial. If I am not perfectly satisfied I can return it express collect and get my deposit back. If I keep it I will pay \$3 a month until I have paid \$44.90 (term price) in full.

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32x4	2.95 1.15	30x4.75	2.95 1.35
33x4	3.50 1.35	30x5.25	2.95 1.35
32x4 1/2	3.20 1.45	31x5.25	3.10 1.35
34x4	3.20 1.45	30x5.75	3.10 1.40
34x4 1/2	3.45 1.45	32x6.00	3.20 1.45
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Occupation.....

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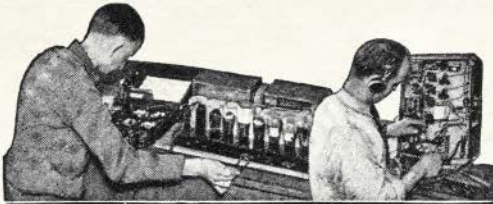
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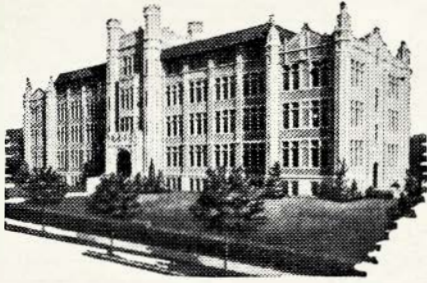
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VOLUME LXII

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1931

NUMBER 2

Crime Breakers

A Novelette

By Judson P. Philips



He covered the plush box containing the diamonds with ashes

Mr. Hewes Wasn't Grasping, but He Figured Gems Worth \$450,000 to a Maharajah Might Be Valuable to Him Also

CHAPTER I

The Release of Jim Garth

THE warden looked with an undisguised expression of curiosity in his eyes at the young man who sat in the chair opposite him. It was not often that he had men of the

upper classes, men who belonged definitely under the classification of gentlemen, either incoming or outgoing. He had seen and talked to this young man just a year ago when he had first come into the prison to serve a sentence for embezzlement: he had encountered him only once or twice

during that year. To-day he was signing the papers which would release him.

Prison leaves its mark on most men, but it does not as a rule make such a startling change in a man as it had in this instance. Jim Garth had come into prison ruddy, tanned from an athletic life, a clear, humorous light in his eyes. His hair had been black and wavy, and worn rather long. His face had been unlined and carefree.

The man who sat opposite the warden was so changed it took an effort of memory for the latter to recall his first impressions. Jim Garth's eyes were somber and brooding. His dark brows were drawn together and deep lines had formed in his forehead. His lips were tightly closed with a bitter little quirk in the corners. His hair was close-cropped and salted with a sprinkling of gray. But the somber eyes met the warden's steadily, unwaveringly.

"Well, Mr. Garth," said the warden cheerfully, "I am as glad to release you to-day as you are to be released, I'm sure."

"Thank you," said Garth. His tone was unemotional.

"It isn't often that we have a man of your caliber in here, Garth, and I have tried to make it as easy for you as possible."

Garth's head went back and he laughed shortly, bitterly. "I'm grateful for your thoughtfulness, warden. I'm afraid there isn't much any man can do to make a stay in jail pleasant."

The warden passed a box of cigarettes and Garth accepted one and lit it from the match the warden held. "I have always believed your story, Garth," continued the warden. "I think you held the bag for the men who

were really guilty. I think if you hadn't been an honest man you would never have served this term."

"I am sure," said Garth, ironically, "that is a great consolation."

"You mustn't be bitter, Mr. Garth. The thing is passed and over now."

Garth gave the warden a sharp look. "Passed and over, eh? Do you honestly think that, warden? Because if you do you are less worldly than I should have thought. Do you think I can ever go back to the friends who knew me or move in the same strata of society? Do you think I will ever be able to shake the stigma of having been a jail-bird? Do you think any one in the business world will ever give me a job when my name has been plastered over every newspaper in the country as the guilty seller of fraudulent oil stocks? My dear man, everything that ever meant anything at all to me is shut away forever!"

"But you are a wealthy man, Mr. Garth. You will be able to live where you wish and how you wish. The possession of wealth makes it easy for people to forget the past."

Garth studied the ends of his fingers. "Every cent I ever had or am likely to have, warden, went into making good to those people who were caught in the trap I unwittingly set for them. No one lost by that oil deal—except myself. I have lost everything—money, position, friends."

"You are young, Mr. Garth. You can make a fresh start." The warden knew he was just talking clap-trap phrases. He knew that the scar on this man's soul was too deep to be healed by words.

Garth inhaled deeply on his cigarette and then crushed it out in an ash tray on the warden's desk.

"You forget, warden, that I was

a prominent person. People all over the world read the story of my disgrace. Wherever I turn it will be remembered. No, warden, there is just one thing in life left for me." The warden shifted uneasily in his chair, for he guessed what was coming. Garth continued: "There is just one thing left for me, warden, and that is to square accounts with the man who was responsible for sending me here. When I have done that, nothing else will matter."

"Revenge," said the warden, mechanically, "is never as sweet as most people think it will be."

Garth laughed, and the sound of his laughter was not pleasant. "I want to turn the screws on him as he turned them on me, warden. I want to trap him as he trapped me. I want to see him suffer as I have suffered—over a long period of time. I want him to know what it is to sit hour after hour in a two-by-four cell with nothing but bitterness in his heart. I want him to know what torture it has been for me . . . here." Garth's voice had risen in passionate anger.

The warden rose. "Remember, Mr. Garth," he said, gravely, "that your thirst for revenge may result only in bringing you back here. You have a black mark against you on the books that will count against you in life."

Garth also rose. "I am painfully aware of that, warden, but I promise you that I will gladly spend the rest of my life here if I can just balance my account. That's all I ask for, warden."

"I wish you luck, Mr. Garth. I hope that when you are free you will lose some of your bitterness. It will never bring you happiness."

"Happiness!" The departing prisoner laughed. "Happiness! Your

sense of humor, warden, is nothing short of extraordinary."

CHAPTER II

The \$450,000 Plot

IT was a restaurant which specialized in food, an extraordinary thing in this day of the speakeasy. It was one of the last places in the city where the gourmet could still satisfy his delicate tastes, and because the American palate has been paralyzed by bad gin it was patronized only by a few customers who still ate food for the joy of eating and sipped rare wines for their flavor rather than for their alcoholic effect.

The fat man at the corner table was obviously having a delightful time. He had ordered with care and was eating with relish. The white linen napkin was tucked into a middle waistcoat button, but despite this precaution there was a fresh stain on the expensive necktie he wore—a fresh stain to join the others which were already old friends. His clothes were wrinkled and unbrushed, yet if one knew about cloth it was apparent that this suit had come from one of the best tailors. Now and then the fat man removed his gold-rimmed spectacles to wipe away the mist which befogged them as he leaned over the steaming casserole of quail, cooked in a ravishing wine sauce. He seemed entirely oblivious of the other two men who sat at an adjoining table, yet these two men were attracting curious glances from the other patrons. Martin Hewes had no curiosity, at the moment, except about the next mouthful of quail.

It was not remarkable that the other two men attracted attention. One of them wore a turban, and had the dark skin and aquiline features of the East

Indian. Glittering black eyes were fixed intently on the man who sat opposite him, eyes that seemed to be boring through the strange, mask-like face of his companion. The other man, an Englishman, was immaculately clad in striped gray trousers, black coat, wing collar, bow tie, spats. The one outstanding thing about his appearance, however, was that in his right eye he wore a monocle of opaque green glass. Close scrutiny would have shown the observer that this was not altogether an affectation, for behind that green glass was no eye at all. Some accident had left nothing but a seared socket which the man cleverly hid by the wearing of a monocle. He had thin, bloodless lips, which seemed to be twisted into a perpetual ironic smile. The one good eye, pale green in color, was cold and heartless as splintered ice. He toyed idly with the caviar which the waiter had brought him.

"Well, Mr. Singh," he said, "let's hear your proposition," his voice was suave, oily, but with a decidedly unpleasant edge to it. He spoke in a normal, conversational tone with no attempt to keep any one from hearing. It wouldn't have done much good if any one had heard him, for he spoke in Arabic.

Mr. Singh leaned forward, ignoring his canape, to the pained horror of the waiter. "Shall we come directly to the point, Mr. Sheringham?" he asked, also in Arabic.

"By all means," said the man with the green eyeglass. "I don't think we need beat around the bush. I know who you are, Mr. Singh, and you know who I am and what my business is."

Mr. Singh rubbed his hands together enthusiastically. "Precisely. It is gratifying to me to be able to place my cards face up on the table. I represent a prince of my land, Mr. Sheringham—

a man whose wealth is so fabulous that even he himself does not know how much he has."

"The Maharajahs are noted for their riches," said Mr. Sheringham, an acquisitive gleam in his one eye.

"My master," said Mr. Singh, "is a collector of precious gems. Whenever he hears of some jewel which would augment his collection he acquires it, regardless of expense or effort. There is a piece of jewelry here in your city which he wishes. I have been commissioned to get it and I must have it."

"All things are possible," said Mr. Sheringham. "Go on."

"It is a necklace," said Mr. Singh, "a necklace of matchless diamonds which was brought to New York by James Carrington, the millionaire, for his wife. Word spread from the diamond market in Amsterdam that this was the most beautifully matched string of diamonds in the world. My master will not be happy until it is in his possession. Carrington will not sell at any price, so it must be acquired in some other fashion."

Mr. Sheringham regarded the prongs of his fork thoughtfully. "But if your master did get possession of this necklace he would never be able to show it, Mr. Singh. I know of the Carrington string, and if it were—er—shall we say removed, every one would be on the lookout for it and it would be promptly identified and your master prosecuted."

The East Indian laughed softly. "You do not understand the collector's lust for possession, Mr. Sheringham. He would not be fool enough to show the finest string of diamonds in the world. Now to put matters quite frankly, I am led to believe that you have the organization and the skill to

steal this necklace. I am here to buy your services."

Sheringham regarded his companion, the sardonic twist to his lips tightening. "How is it that you would trust me to turn the necklace over to you after I have stolen it?" he said.

Mr. Singh shrugged. "My dear Mr. Sheringham, what could you do with the necklace after you had it? You are not a collector. These diamonds are of such a distinctive tint that even though they were re-cut they would still be distinguishable. You couldn't sell them, Mr. Sheringham. That is why I trust you." And it was Mr. Singh's turn to indulge in a grim smile.

"Sound enough," agreed Sheringham. "At what figure do you value the necklace?"

"Four hundred and fifty thousand dollars," said Mr. Singh, impressively.

"In that case," said Sheringham, grimly, "it will cost you just that amount in cash if I am to get the string for you." Mr. Singh gasped. "Furthermore," Sheringham continued, "you will pay that to me in advance and I will retain it whether I succeed or fail."

"My dear sir!" Mr. Singh was overcome.

"It's a highly precarious venture," said Sheringham, "and the risk of being detected is so great that I would not take it for anything less than the sum I mention. If I fail and some of my men are caught, I shall need funds to get them out of trouble. So you see, I must have the money, win or lose."

Mr. Singh's dark skin seemed to grow darker. "I'm not sure that I should object to the sum you mention if you succeed. But to pay it to you in case of failure seems—well, staggering!"

Mr. Sheringham's lips tightened.

"That's my proposition—take it or leave it. There is no point in argument, Mr. Singh, because I am not a flexible person." He looked steadily at Mr. Singh. "I might add, that I am not expecting failure, Mr. Singh. But I must be prepared for it. This is a business with me and I do not run it on a speculative basis."

"What it means," said Mr. Singh, "is that if you are close pressed you will not care about the necklace. You will be already paid."

Mr. Sheringham smiled. "Failure means an end of my prestige, Mr. Singh. Believe me, we will stop at nothing to succeed. It is only because we have stopped at nothing in the past that my reputation is known to you."

Mr. Singh sighed. "I must risk it," he said dolefully, "because I dare not return to my master without the diamonds. Come to my room at the Ritz to-morrow morning at eleven and I will have the money."

Mr. Martin Hewes, the fat man at the next table, regarded a piece of cold quail on his plate with the light of tragedy in his eyes. His attention had been distracted from his lunch and it was spoiled. Mr. Hewes spoke and understood Arabic fluently, and the conversation at the next table had been too interesting for him to concentrate both on it and quail.

CHAPTER III

Martin Hewes Stumbles

MR. HEWES walked from the restaurant toward his apartment, which faced on the park. Walking was something Mr. Hewes almost never did, and only when it was forced on him. On this occasion Mr. Hewes wanted to think, and he knew there would be no chance for thinking in a

taxicab. What one needed was leisure and a cigarette in the comfortable arm chair he knew was waiting for him, but he couldn't wait to do his thinking. So he walked and thought.

So deeply did Mr. Hewes think that he took no notice of his surroundings. Thus it was that he failed to see the shadowy figure of a ragged man slunk down on a park bench with his tattered shoes stretched out across the pavement, thus it was that Mr. Hewes tripped over those feet and nearly fell flat. It was only by the most heroic effort that he regained his equilibrium. He turned back angrily, his chain of thought broken. The ragged man was standing up.

"I say, old man, I'm most frightfully sorry," he said. "It was damned careless of me to have my feet sprawled all over the sidewalk. I hope you didn't hurt yourself."

Mr. Hewes, who had been about to indulge in the luxury of some good old Anglo-Saxon expletives, checked himself and the anger died out of him. Mr. Hewes was perhaps the most curious person in the world, and already the problem of the man with the green eyeglass and his Indian friend was banished from his mind. This tramp—this ragged bum was a gentleman! His words and the intonation of his voice were a dead give-away.

"It's quite all right," said Martin Hewes, absently. He stared at the young man in rags. As he stared the young man swayed unsteadily on his feet and sat down rather abruptly on the park bench.

"Drunk?" asked Martin Hewes. There was no censure in his voice. Just curiosity. The man in rags laughed and it wasn't a pleasant sound. Martin Hewes took a cigarette from his case, tapped it on the back of his hand and

lit it. Then without a word he turned away from the young man and hailed a passing cab. When the driver had pulled up at the curb, Martin Hewes turned back. "Come on," he said, shortly. The young man on the bench looked at him curiously, but he didn't move. "Come on," repeated Martin Hewes.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," said the young man. He was trying to put a stiffly formal note in his voice, but somehow he failed. His voice cracked a little, spoiling the effect.

"Don't be a damned idiot," said Martin Hewes, calmly. "We're going to eat." He said it almost eagerly, his manner belying the fact that he had just completed an enormous dinner.

"You're awfully kind, old man," said the ragged one, "but I've just had something."

"That," said Martin Hewes, "is a damned lie. Come on, I don't care to stand here all night. Please don't make it necessary for me to call on the taxi driver to lift you into the cab. You know you're so hungry you can't stand on your feet."

Very slowly the young man rose to his feet and walked unsteadily toward the cab. "I don't know who you are," he said, "but you're right. I'm as hungry as hell!"

He got into the cab and Hewes joined him after giving an address to the driver. They rode only a few short blocks in silence and then the cab drew up before the old brownstone house where Martin Hewes lived. They got out and after Hewes had paid the driver they mounted the stairs and the fat man opened the door with a latch-key and switched on a light.

"My housekeeper's gone home," he said, "but there's always a cold bird or a bit of ham in the ice box. Cheese.

beer, bread and butter! How does that sound?"

The ragged young man moistened his lips. "It sounds swell!" he said, and grinned.

"Follow me," said Martin Hewes.

Cold partridge, thick slices of ham, bread and butter, ice cold beer and a Stilton cheese all came out of the ice box and were spread on the kitchen table by the host. He said nothing but waved the young man to a chair. With a grateful glance the young man attacked the food with an ardor that left no question as to his appetite. Martin Hewes sat down on a kitchen chair and lit a cigarette. He watched the young man, his eyes twinkling benevolently behind his gold-rimmed spectacles. He liked to see people enjoy food. He hoped the young man wasn't too ravenous to appreciate the really fine flavor of that cheese.

At last the young man leaned back in his chair with a satisfied sigh. Hewes passed his cigarette case and the young man took one, lit it, and drew the smoke hungrily into his lungs. This chap has suffered, thought Martin Hewes. He was young, yet there was a sprinkling of gray in his close-cropped hair, and the lines about his eyes and mouth betrayed tragedy.

"I don't know how to thank you, sir," said the young man, in a low voice. "If there is any way I can pay you for this I'll gladly—"

"What's your name?" cut in Martin Hewes.

The young man hesitated noticeably. Then he spoke. "Garth," he said quietly. "Jim Garth."

Martin Hewes gazed reflectively at the ceiling. "Former international polo player, former amateur trap-shooting champion, former millionaire, and—er—former convict," he said.

Jim Garth smiled bitterly. "You seem to have me down to a T, Mr.—er—"

"Hewes. Martin Hewes."

"Everything about me is 'former,' Mr. Hewes."

"Just released?" asked Martin Hewes, casually.

"Ten days ago."

"No job, eh? Friends not too cordial?"

"Precisely."

Martin Hewes watched the ash drop from his cigarette onto his vest unmoved. "You turned your whole fortune over to the people who were caught in that oil fraud, didn't you, Mr. Garth?"

"I did."

"Quixotic but admirable," said Martin Hewes. "I gather you are what is known in modern parlance as a 'fall guy.'"

"I believe that's the term."

"I take it," said Martin Hewes, "that under the circumstances your are open to a business proposition."

"I told you," said Jim Garth, "that I would do anything to square myself for that meal I've eaten. It saved my life."

"Anything?" asked Martin Hewes, slowly.

"Anything."

"Come up to my study," said the fat man.

CHAPTER IV

Garth Accepts a Proposition

MARTIN HEWES'S study was something to see, and Jim Garth stared at it in undisguised amazement. To begin with, Martin Hewes never allowed his housekeeper to clean it but once once a year, and it was heavy with dust and cigarette

ashes. Papers were littered helter-skelter over everything while the desk and tables were the repositories for the strangest collection of odds and ends. Guns, pieces of pottery, pipes, fish-hooks, empty liquor bottles and pieces of string. In one corner a chessboard stood on a littered taboret, an unfinished game set up on it. Pictures of considerable value hung crookedly on the walls, coated with dust. The room was lighted by a soot-darkened skylight and every inch of wall space not occupied by pictures was covered with shelves of books.

Martin Hewes seemed unaware of anything unusual about the room and he pointed out a battered chair to Garth. He placed a box of cigarettes at the young man's disposal and leaned back in his own plush arm chair with the comfortable sigh of a man who is content. For a moment or two he studied Garth's face, the tips of his fingers together.

"I'll tell you, Mr. Garth," he said abruptly. "I'm a sort of detective. That is to say I'm interested in crime, and when something turns up that interests me I work on it whether I'm hired or not. When I'm not hired I keep my findings to myself. It doesn't matter much to me one way or another. It's just that I love the game."

"I see," said Garth. He was instinctively drawn to the sloppy Hewes, drawn by the magnetic twinkle in his eyes, and by the kindness of his voice.

"I've knocked around the world a good deal," said Hewes, "and I've picked up a thing or two that stand me in good stead. To-night I was sitting in a restaurant having dinner, and at the next table two men were planning a colossal crime. They discussed it quite openly because they didn't think anyone would understand them. They

spoke in Arabic. Now there probably aren't more than four people in all of New York who can speak Arabic fluently, but I happen to be one of them."

"Extraordinary," said Garth. "What were they plotting?"

"One of them is going to steal the famous Carrington necklace."

"Why, that's nonsense!" cried Garth. "It can't be done."

"Just the same," said Hewes, "the other man thought so highly of his ability that he is going to pay him four hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the attempt—win or lose!"

"Good God!"

"Precisely. You see the purchaser has ample confidence in the other man to accomplish the theft."

"Aren't you going to Carrington and warn him?" demanded Garth.

Mr. Hewes looked at his guest, a faint smile flitting over his lips. "I'm not interested in the moral aspects of crime, Mr. Garth. It's a game with me, a game I play and from which I exact as much recompense—financial recompense—as possible. I see an opportunity for the making of a tidy little sum of money in this deal and if you see fit to join me I think we can manage."

"Join you?"

"Yes. The fact is, Mr. Garth, I am about to offer you a partnership in my business. Fifty-fifty on all profits, and I'll stake you to clothes and money until there are profits."

For a moment Jim Garth wondered if this ineffectual looking fat man was day-dreaming. But something about those mild eyes behind the glasses made Jim Garth realize that he was in earnest, and that he was capable.

"It's a generous offer, Mr. Hewes. What is your plan in regard to the Carrington necklace?"

Martin Hewes brushed the cigarette ash from his expanse of waistcoat. "If we go to Carrington and warn him," he said slowly, "we will probably get laughed at for our pains. But, if we wait until the necklace is stolen, and then *steal it back*—well, Carrington might be willing to part with a tidy little sum to regain his treasure. Twenty-five—fifty thousand dollars, Who knows?"

"But how do we steal it back?" asked Jim Garth.

A far-away, whimsical look came into Martin Hewes's eyes. "My dear Garth," he said slowly. "I have been nosing around in the field of crime for a great many years and there aren't many tricks of the trade I don't know. But physically, my dear fellow, I am a very lazy man. With your energy, your ability to shoot and fight, and my brains, I should be willing to stack myself up against that gentleman with the green eyeglass and think I had better than an even chance."

"Man with the green eyeglass!" cried Jim. His hands tightened spasmodically over the arms of his chair, "You don't mean Basil Sheringham, the explorer?"

"Quite so," said Hewes. "Mr. Sheringham, socially prominent explorer, big game hunter, and what have you, is in reality one of the slickest international crooks in the business. A man has to be good, Garth, to get four hundred and fifty thousand dollars in a down payment, win or lose." Hewes lit another cigarette. "Your social position will be a help in dealing with Sheringham, too. What do you say, Garth? Will you take a share in my humble business? Before you know it you will be independent financially again. Twenty-five thousand on this deal for you would be a good start."

There was an excited glint in Jim Garth's eyes, and the knuckles of his hands showed white, so tightly was he gripping the arms of his chair. "There is just one person in the world, Mr. Hewes, with whom I have a score to settle. I suspect you know who that person is, but in case you don't, I'll tell you. If there is any way I can make Basil Sheringham suffer; if there is any way I can smash him—crush him down into the dirt, I'll do it. Basil Sheringham is the man who sent me to jail, deprived me of my friends, my fortune, my happiness."

Martin Hewes smiled faintly. "I knew that, Garth."

"Then," said Jim Garth, "you know that I'm with you . . . one hundred per cent!"

CHAPTER V

The Necklace

MR. BASIL SHERINGHAM stood on the doorstep of the Carrington mansion, stick under arm, gloves in hand, hat at just the right angle, and that faint, sardonic smile on his lips which seemed always to hover there. A stolid-faced butler admitted him and relieved him of hat, stick and gloves.

"Miss Carrington, please," said the man with the green eyeglass.

The butler disappeared and returned, walking with the noiseless step of a cat. "This way, sir."

Peg Carrington was an extraordinarily popular young woman, and it was not due entirely to the fortune which was hers. She had real charm of personality and people liked her for herself. She came to the door of the livingroom to greet the explorer.

"This is grand, Basil," she said. "You're just in time for tea, spelled

h-i-g-h-b-a-l-l. Dad's back from an exhausting day at the office watching the money roll in."

"He's lucky," said Sheringham. "It's rolling out for most people. I had your invitation to the reception you're giving Thursday, so I thought I'd drop in and accept in person."

"Glad you can come," said Peg. "It'll be an awful bore. Hundreds of people you don't want to see but have to, if you follow me. Dad, here's Basil Sheringham."

James Carrington did not look like the moving picture conception of a millionaire. He didn't wear wing collars or spats or any of the other expected trappings. Instead he had on a baggy tweed suit, was smoking a foul-smelling pipe, and sipping a highball. He waved casually to Sheringham.

"Hello. Make yourself a drink. I'm too damned lazy. How's the exploring business?"

"All right, only there's nothing to explore now except the homes of millionaires."

"Help yourself," said Carrington.

"Dad's in an awful stew over the reception," explained Peg. "He's trying to pretend he has a date to play ping-pong with somebody."

Carrington made a wry face. "Why the—well why any one should open his house to a couple of hundred sight-seeing friends is over my head. We don't owe anybody anything, at least not to my way of thinking. Nice quiet dinner with fifteen or twenty guests is all right. But hundreds of dancing, gin-drinking nincompoops is almost too much to bear."

"Most people would think fifteen dinner guests was quite a party," said Sheringham, pouring a stiff measure of Irish whisky into his glass.

Carrington grinned sourly. "Must

be at least fifteen people. I expect to be bored by each person in at least ten minutes. That allows me two hours and a half. After that I go to bed."

Sheringham glanced at his wrist watch. "My time is almost up."

"Don't be an ass," said Carrington. "Sit down and be as dull as you like."

Sheringham sat down and took several tentative sips at his drink. "Excellent," he pronounced it. "I suppose," he said, "that you have to bring in a lot of extra servants for a function of this sort." His tone was utterly casual.

"Sure. Detectives and servants and what have you."

"Detectives?" Sheringham's one eye was fixed on his amber-colored drink.

"Our dear friends," said Carrington, his voice heavy with sarcasm, "are apt to be a little light-fingered unless we have an ostentatious watch set. Souvenirs, they call 'em. Just a little something to remember me by. But it's damned annoying all the same."

"Still, I don't suppose you keep anything of great value in the house. I mean jewelry and that sort of thing."

"Not much!" said Peg. "Why, can you believe that he has that diamond necklace of mother's right here in a safe that could be opened with a sardine key!"

Not a muscle of Sheringham's face moved. Carrington groaned.

"Will you tell me, Sheringham, what the good of owning jewelry is if you keep it down town in a safe deposit vault and wear paste imitations? As far as that necklace goes, it would be just as safe if I hung it on a chandelier. Nobody would take it."

Sheringham watched the smoke curl up from his cigarette. "I'm afraid I'm a little stupid," he said slowly. "Why not?"

Carrington's eyes sparkled. The necklace was his pet toy. "Did you ever see it, Sheringham?"

"No-o." Still watching the blue smoke curling upward.

Carrington rose. "Well, when you do, you'll see how useless it would be for a thief to take it." He crossed to the bookcase, pushed aside a piece of Florentine tapestry and disclosed an old-fashioned wall safe. Sheringham's one eye was cold as steel as he watched. A couple of turns of the dial and Carrington opened the safe. He brought out a blue plush box and took it over to Sheringham.

"Cast your eyes on that piece of glass," he said, with a delighted chuckle.

Sheringham's hands were steady as rock when he opened the lid of the box and stared at its contents. The most remarkable gems his skilled eye had ever encountered twinkled up at him. He felt a slight acceleration of his heart-beats. No doubt the Maharajah coveted this exquisite string. Sheringham thought it the most beautiful thing he had ever seen in his life.

"Nice, eh? Pretty lovely, eh?" Carrington was like a child.

Sheringham looked up at him. "It's the most marvelous thing I ever saw," he said earnestly. "I should think you would have an armed platoon to guard it."

Carrington laughed. "Worth half a million to me," he said, "but not one cent to a crook. He couldn't dispose of it, see? The color of those stones is so unique that even if they were recut they would be recognizable. No, Sheringham, it's just as I said. I could hang it up on the chandelier and it would be perfectly safe."

Sheringham closed the lid of the box. "There are collectors," he said,

casually, "who would covet that even though they couldn't show it to the world at large. Personally I almost feel as though you should give me a receipt for its return right now."

Carrington took the box, laughing, dropped it back into the safe and re-joined them. "It's a kick to know that you own the finest diamonds in the world," he said. "You've traveled all over the world, Sheringham, but I'll bet that's unsurpassed. Right here in little old New York!"

"In spite of what you say," said Sheringham, "it would give me the willies to have it in that safe. As Peg said, you could open that safe with a sardine key."

"Nonsense," said Carrington.

Sheringham rubbed tips of his fingers together thoughtfully. "I'll bet you a ten spot against another highball that I can open it while you're mixing a drink."

"Done!" laughed Carrington.

Sheringham rose and went over to the safe, rubbing the ends of his fingers on the rough surface of his coat. "I once took a course in safe-cracking from a convict I knew," he said. "I used to be pretty good at it." His slender fingers manipulated the dial, caressingly, gently. The millionaire and his daughter watched him interestedly. It took Sheringham about a minute and a half. He turned away from the open safe door nonchalantly and crossed to the cellarette to pour himself another drink. "Almost easier without the sardine key," he said.

"I'll be damned," said Carrington.

"You see," said the explorer, "it might just as well be hung on the chandelier. That thing is pie for a clever safe man."

Carrington was unperturbed. "All I can say is that it's a fortunate thing

that you're an honest man, Sheringham."

"It is most fortunate," agreed Sheringham, taking a deep swallow from his glass.

CHAPTER VI

The Plan of Crime

MR. SHERINGHAM strolled down the avenue till he came to a lofty office building. His lips were twisted into an even broader smile than usual as he entered the elevator and asked to be let out at the fourth floor. One of the plate-glass doors bore the legend "Paradise Gardens. Walk in." Mr. Sheringham walked in to what was a small, but very complete barroom. There were several tables about, at one of which sat a man. He was a thin, wiry individual, dressed in a dark suit and wearing a tweed cap pulled well down over his eyes. He was playing solitaire. A cigarette with an inch-long ash hung between rather flabby lips. Now and then he inhaled and then blew the smoke out through his nostrils.

Sheringham nodded to the bartender. "Manhattan for me, Joe," he said and crossed to the table where the card player sat. He took the chair opposite him. The card player looked up. His black eyes were set too closely together and there was an unpleasant, almost mad look in them.

"Hello," he said, the cigarette still between his lips. Then he went back to his card playing. There was a bulge under his left arm-pit which meant to the skilled observer that he was armed.

Sheringham waited in silence until the barman brought his cocktail. He sipped it for a moment or two, and then put it down.

"Well, Kid," he said slowly, "the

set-up is complete. It's going to be easy."

Kid Cronin continued to study the cards without looking up. The cigarette had burned down so close between his lips that he seemed in imminent danger of being scorched. Presently he took a fresh one from a package in his pocket and lit it from the finished stub.

"Spill it," he said. His voice was a harsh, croaking discord. His eyes were still riveted on the cards. Sheringham was undisturbed by the apparent lack of interest on Cronin's part.

"Things have turned out better than we could have hoped," he said. "The Carringtons have unwittingly collaborated with us by giving a large reception to which I am invited. You and Macfee will be present in the guise of additional waiters or footmen or some such thing. We will set the time for the robbery at a quarter to twelve. At that time you will be stationed near the front door. Macfee will be in the cellar. He will handle the lights."

"Yeah?"

"Yes. Our luck was stretched a little further. Carrington showed me where he kept the necklace. He even let me open the safe and leave my fingerprints all over it."

Cronin looked up sharply, his black eyes narrowed to pin-points. "What's the idea?"

"I told him the necklace would be easy to steal. He is just stubborn enough to leave it where it is now that I've demonstrated how simply it could be done. Moreover I can open the safe on Thursday night and leave as many prints as I want to. Carrington and his daughter will both swear that I left them to-day. It's really a break."

Cronin grunted. "If you had the

necklace in your hands why didn't you make a break for it and save all this rigmarole?"

"Simply because I don't care to spend the rest of my days on the dodge. You forget, Kid, that it is my social standing that has made this racket possible. No, I shall be on hand after the theft on Thursday, ready to offer my help and experience in the capture of the thief."

Kid Cronin shuffled the cards. When he spoke the cigarette bobbed erratically between his lips. "Get down to the details," he rapped.

Sheringham sipped his cocktail. "At the given moment, after Macfee has done his bit, I open the safe which, now that I know the combination, will take about fifteen seconds. I slip to the door and pass the necklace to you."

"Yeah? And then what?"

Sheringham drummed with his fingers on the edge of the table. "Kid, I want you to get the most conspicuous automobile you can find. Bright colors—something that will be easily identified. I want you to delay your getaway until you are sure that the car has been seen by several people. Then you drive away like mad."

"Yeah? And then what?"

"Well, then, Kid, the truck will be waiting about two blocks away and before the chase is organized you will disappear from the face of the earth."

"I get you," said the Kid, without looking up.

"You slip away at once and go to the usual place," concluded Sheringham, "and the thing is done."

Very gently the Kid caressed the bulge under his arm. Sheringham's lips smiled, but his eyes were steely. "Yes, Kid," he said softly, "if you have to."

The Kid looked up and for the first

time he took the cigarette from between his lips. He smiled broadly, and in those close-set eyes was an expression of delighted cunning. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue.

"O. K.," he croaked.

CHAPTER VII

The Carrington Party

JIM GARTH'S fingers trembled slightly as he carefully adjusted the black dinner tie he was wearing. To-night! To-night might be the first step in his promised squaring of accounts with Basil Sheringham. Hewes was certain that the man with the green eye-glass would take this opportunity of the reception to pull off his little stunt. Garth's dark eyes were burning as he gazed at his own reflection. All the bitterness and anguish that had been his for the last year welled up within him at the prospect of coming face to face with Sheringham once more. Perhaps this was to be *his* hour.

Martin Hewes, who sat languidly in an arm chair watching his young partner put the finishing touches to his evening attire, indulged in a troubled smile. He studied the ash of his cigarette for a moment or two.

"I know what this night means to you, Jim," he said slowly. "But remember, for our purposes, restraint and finesse are essential. You can't act too quickly, Jim, or the fat will be in the fire."

Garth's lips tightened. "I've waited a year, Martin. I guess I'll be able to keep myself in check for a few hours. Of course Sheringham won't pull this alone. Dollars to doughnuts his man, Macfee, will be there in some capacity or other."

"There's a worse danger than that,"

Hewes said. "I've been scouting around a bit for the last few days and my long ears have picked up some things here and there. Sheringham has a henchman named Cronin who is a bad boy with a gun. You've got to watch out for him because he's sure to be around somewhere to shoot Sheringham out of any jam he may get into, and if they find out that you are onto their little game, I'm afraid that white shirt-front will be punctured by a few well-placed holes!"

Jim Garth's hand strayed around to a bulge on his hip pocket. "It takes two to make a really artistic gun fight," he said.

The Carrington butler stared at Jim Garth with an impassive, expressionless face. "Your card of invitation, sir."

"I misplaced it," said Garth placidly.

"Well, if you'll give me your name, sir, we have a list of the invited guests here to check against." Standing behind the butler was a man, who for all his dress clothes, was a ludicrously obvious detective. He was looking at Garth with an air of professional suspicion.

"If you don't mind," said Garth, "I will not give my name, but if you call Miss Carrington I'm sure she will set matters straight."

"Miss Carrington is in the receiving line, sir, and unable to see you. If you will just give me your name . . ."

Jim fixed him with a baleful glare. *I must see Miss Carrington,* he said sternly. "It is a matter of—of life and death."

The butler was silent for a moment. He had seen these gate crashers before and he knew Miss Carrington would be very annoyed if she was called out to face some unwelcome caller. That was why he was stationed at the door

—to keep this sort of person out. This man, however, was obviously a gentleman, and something in the intensity of his look made the butler waver.

"I'll ask Miss Carrington if she'll see you," he said.

As he moved away the detective shifted his position so that he stood directly in front of Jim, blocking his entrance. "No tricks, brother," he said, out of the corner of his mouth.

Jim smiled, took out a cigarette case, offered one to the detective, who refused with a grunt, and lit one for himself.

After two or three minutes the butler returned with Peg Carrington. She was dressed in a stunning, low cut gown, with a long, sweeping, graceful skirt. The butler nodded toward Jim and she looked at him, puzzled. Then her mouth opened in a little exclamation of surprise.

"Jim!" she cried softly. "Jim Garth."

He felt a sudden tightening of the muscles in his throat. There had been a time when Peg Carrington had figured very definitely in his plans for the future, and the sight of her brought back all the old longing for her with disturbing force. She held out both her hands to him and he took them in his, struggling to keep his voice steady when he spoke.

"Can I see you for just a minute, Peg—alone?" he asked.

"You can see me, Jim Garth, for as long as you like." She drew him across the hall to a little reception room, closed the door behind him, and they were alone. She looked at him expectantly for a moment and then squeezed his hand tightly in her. "When did you . . ." she hesitated.

"Get out?" he concluded for her dryly. "About three weeks ago, Peg."

"Jim! And you haven't been here to see me before!"

His lips were set in a tight, hard smile. "Would you have wanted to see an—an ex-convict, Peg?"

"Jim!" She moved disconcertingly close to him. "You know how I felt about that whole business. You know I've always believed in you—believed that you were duped in that deal—believed that you've paid the price for some one else. I wrote you that, Jim, in—in prison. But you never answered."

Jim turned away. He couldn't bear to look into those soft, understanding eyes.

She was something that might have been his, but that was gone for ever now.

"I've burned all my bridges, Peg," he said. "I had to. God knows that having you believe in me is the one and only thing I have to cling to. That and the prospect of squaring my account with the man who smashed everything for me." He paused. "But somehow, Peg, I had to come here to-night. I just wanted a glimpse of you and of the people that were once my friends. No one will spot me in this crowd. I—I've changed."

"Oh, Jim!" There was a catch in her voice. "The fun has gone out of your eyes, Jim, and the smile that was always on your lips has grown hard. Let me help, somehow."

"Just seeing you has helped," he said hoarsely. Then he took a deep breath. He hadn't come here to open old wounds, but to take the first step in balancing the ledger. Right now he should be out of here, watching for Sheringham and his men. He hated to deceive Peg as to the real reason for his presence, but there was no way out of it. He must play the game as

Martin Hewes wished it played, for Hewes had given him his chance.

"You must go back to your guests, Peg. Just let me wander around for a bit and then I'll slip away."

"But you'll come back, Jim? Sometime when we can really talk?"

"If you want me to, Peg," he said, simply.

"Of course, I want you to!"

When he was alone Jim glanced at his watch. It was eleven thirty. He guessed that if Sheringham was going to do anything it would be soon, while the whole crowd of guests were still milling about. Jim crossed the hall to the door of the big room where the reception line stood, his head lowered to avoid being recognized. He didn't wish to be hailed by some old friend at this moment when all his attention and wits must be focused on Sheringham.

Standing in the door he looked around the room. He saw Mrs. Carrington in the reception line with her husband and realized that she was not wearing the diamond necklace. Probably this occasion was too public for a display of the famous stones. Then his eyes, roving about the room, picked up Sheringham and he felt every muscle in his body go tense and hard as he stared at the man with the green eyeglass . . . the man who had ruined his life.

Sheringham was standing over by a gorgeous Florentine tapestry, chatting with a woman whom Jim did not know. Jim had spent a year in jail while that man had moved about freely among Jim's friends . . . that man who was a scoundrelly thief and a murderer. Little beads of perspiration stood out on Jim's forehead. If he could just turn primitive for a moment . . . If he could just inflict some bodily punishment, some torture, on that suave, cool charlatan.

And then as Jim stood there, seething with anger, the entire house was suddenly plunged into blackness.

CHAPTER VIII

Get-away

APANDEMONIUM of excited shouts and hysterical women's screaming resulted almost at once. At first nearly every one thought it was some part of a scheme of entertainment planned by the Carringtons, but the millionaire himself had raised his voice reassuringly. Probably some fuse had blown out, he told them. Here and there a match flickered in the darkness, or the tiny flame of a cigarette lighter. People were laughing and bumping into each other.

Aside from those who understood the cause for the sudden darkness, Jim Garth was the only one who came close to guessing the truth. This was Sheringham's doing. Some one had thrown off the switch in the basement and before light was restored the explorer would have accomplished his plans.

Jim hesitated in the door, debating what he would do. He had strict orders from Hewes not to raise an alarm. Sheringham was to be allowed to succeed temporarily. But if he got away without Jim's being able to trail him they might fumble the whole affair. Should he wait here in the door, or should he try to work his way across the room in the darkness to the spot where Sheringham had stood when the light went out? Sheringham had of course been prepared for this and had probably made his way to the hiding-place of the necklace without any hesitation. Jim decided to stay where he was. When the lights came on he would have a full view not only of the room in which the guests had been received,

but also the hall and the front door. In the darkness he pulled the revolver from his hip and dropped it into the pocket of his dinner jacket, where his right hand remained closed over it.

People were still laughing and shouting to each other in the gloom. Some one bumped into Jim and muttered an apology. Already the butler had acquired sufficient presence of mind to find some candles. He came out of the dining room with them set in a candelabra, holding them high above his head. They cast an eerie light in the big rooms. Some one started a mock cheer.

Then as the light bearer approached Jim saw that standing not three feet from him across the doorway was Basil Sheringham. Somehow, in the darkness, the explorer had made his way across the room and was now leaning nonchalantly against the doorjamb. Jim's first impulse was to speak to him, and his second and wiser one was to shrink back into the darkness. At the same moment he saw the front door open, a shadowy figure slip through it, and the door close silently. Was that chance, or had Sheringham already accomplished his purpose and was the person who had just departed in possession of the necklace?

It was a moment of rather desperate decision for him. Hewes had told him to use his own judgment, and he felt certain that Sheringham himself would not try to take the necklace out of the house. To disappear would be to attract suspicion and that would be the last thing Sheringham would want. No, the necklace was probably now in the hands of Macfee, or Cronin, Sheringham's two aides. It was on this thought that Jim determined to run the risk of losing sight of Sheringham and making certain that the person who had

just left the house was one who had a legitimate reason for going. He slipped away in the candle light to the door and out into the night.

It seemed much longer, but it was probably only three or four minutes before one of Carrington's servants reached the control box in the basement and discovered that some one had thrown off the main switch. The house was flooded with light again when the switch was thrown in and at once every one began to babble excitedly. For a moment it seemed that there was no harm done . . . a moment that was abruptly ended when Basil Sheringham shouted across the room to James Carrington:

"My God, Carrington! That wall safe!"

James Carrington swung around toward the Florentine tapestry and saw something that sent a chill of fear into his veins. The tapestry was pushed aside and the wall safe stood open. He reached it in four quick strides, fumbled desperately in the interior of the safe with his hand, and then turned away, white and shaken.

"The necklace," he said dully. "Gone!"

Sheringham was at his side. "I knew that was no blown fuse!" he said, sharply. "Some one monkeyed with the light switch. It gave them time to remove the necklace, but it seems hardly credible that they could have made a get-away. If I were you, I'd have the doors locked and have every one searched before they leave."

"Good God!" said Carrington. "I can't subject my friends to that sort of thing."

"One of your friends has subjected you to a half million dollar robbery," said Sheringham, dryly.

The detective who had been stationed

at the front door joined them. Very concisely Sheringham explained what had happened and the detective hurried off to give orders that no one should leave the house.

"Better have a look out on the street," Sheringham called after him. "If any one *has* left he would scarcely be out of sight."

The detective took this to be good advice and he ran to the front door and out onto the steps. Just as he opened the door he saw a machine pulling out of the line of parked cars. It was a garish, canary yellow Rolls-Royce, and the man at the wheel had a tweed cap pulled down over his face and a cigarette dangling between his flabby lips.

"Hey, you!" shouted the detective. "Where are you going?"

Cronin leaned low over the wheel of the Rolls and it started forward with a lurch.

"Stop him!" shouted the detective to a group of chauffeurs. "Stop thief!"

Several of the men moved forward but it was too late. The Rolls was tearing down the block at a dizzy rate of speed. At the same moment a taxi shot past the door. Leaning forward and speaking to the driver was a hatless and coatless young man in dinner clothes.

CHAPTER IX

The Only Man Missing

THE detective held a hurried conference with the chauffeurs. Several of them had noticed the yellow Rolls because of the startlingly bright color. Better yet, at least three men had noticed the license number and remembered it because it was such a small one, N. Y. 42. They had seen the man in the tweed cap come down the steps from the house and get into the

car, but there had been no reason to think there was anything out of the way in that. Then they had seen the second man in dinner clothes, with no hat or coat, however, come out of the house, hurriedly, look about, and then make off down the street as though he was looking for some one.

This was no time for lazy methods. A patrolman had joined the excited group, and the detective gave him the description and number of the yellow Rolls with orders to circulate it and have the driver arrested if they could catch him. Meanwhile he was to make a canvas of all the traffic officers within a radius of five blocks to make absolutely certain which direction the escaping thief had taken. No one would fail to notice the big yellow touring car.

Back in the house the detective joined Carrington and Sheringham with a long face.

"I'm afraid the thief has got away," he said glumly. "He must have passed me in the dark as I was standing by the front door. I think we may catch him, though, because he drove off in such a conspicuous car."

Carrington was gnawing his under lip. That necklace, besides its immense value, was his most beloved possession. Mrs. Carrington and Peg had joined them and they held a hurried consultation. Mrs. Carrington made a practical suggestion.

"If you know the thief is gone there is an unembarrassing method of finding out who he is. There is a list of every person here and each person was checked off as they came in. If you announce to the guests what has happened and then call the roll, you'll find out who is missing."

"That's a splendid idea, Mrs. Carrington," said Sheringham. "I sug-

gest it be carried out at once." Carrington and the detective agreed and Carrington called for silence. The guests waited for him to speak.

"My friends, a very regrettable thing has occurred. During those few minutes of darkness the wall safe here in this room which contained a priceless string of diamonds of which most of you have heard, was opened and the necklace taken." There was an excited murmur.

"The thief has escaped," Carrington continued, "and while we know this we do not know who he is. It has been suggested that we call off the names of the people we know to be present, and if there are any absentees it will aid us in narrowing our investigation into the identity of the thief. I have here the list of those people who came to-night. As I call off your name will you answer and show yourself?"

He began to read from the list. As he called off the names each person answered and raised his or her hand to show where he was. The detective checked off the list as Carrington read. At the end of about ten minutes it was completed, but there was not a single absentee. While this had been going on the butler had checked up on the regular servants and the extra help. No one was missing.

For a moment Carrington and the detective stared blankly at each other. Sheringham's face was expressionless. The more delay the better for his cause. Suddenly the detective's face lightened and he turned to Peg Carrington.

"I have it, Miss Carrington! The man who came and asked to see you. His name wasn't on the list and naturally he hasn't answered to the roll. Where is he?"

"I—I don't know," said Peg. She

had been looking diligently for a view of Jim's face ever since the lights had come on.

"Who was it, Peg?" her father asked.

She hesitated. "I'd rather not say, dad. Quite obviously it would incriminate him, and I *know* that he had nothing to do with this."

"But if you know that, Peg, what harm can there be in telling me?" the millionaire asked.

"I'd rather not, dad."

"I remember his name right enough," said the detective bluntly. "I heard you speak to him. It was Jim Garth."

There was one of those moments of electric silence. Carrington looked rather reproachfully at Peg, who was biting her lip. Sheringham, his face impassive, took out his handkerchief and wiped his mouth.

"Jim Garth, eh?" he said, quietly. "I thought he had another month to serve."

"Month off for good behavior," said Carrington, absently. He was upset by this disclosure. He knew something of what his daughter had felt for Jim, and he himself had always liked the boy. He couldn't believe that Jim would descend to common burglary.

"I should think," said Sheringham, acidly, "that our little problem is solved. An ex-convict—a man who has just served a term for embezzlement—is the one person known to have disappeared from the house."

"You're not accusing Jim of stealing the necklace, are you?" demanded Peg, hotly.

Sheringham shrugged. "Circumstantial evidence, my dear Peg. I was just as shocked as you were a year ago to learn that Garth was a crook. But we must look facts in the face, and this looks pretty bad for him."

Peg was white and shaking with anger. "Jim Garth is no more a crook than I am, Basil, and you know it. He paid the price for some one else, and you know it as well as I do. He was left holding the bag."

Sheringham knew it much better than she did, but nothing in his manner suggested it. "Loyalty is a splendid quality, Peg. It's too bad that yours is misplaced."

The detective was uninterested in personal loyalties. "Suppose you give us a description of this Garth," he said. "I only got a brief look at him. Tell me all you know about him."

"I can describe him readily enough," said Sheringham, "as for the details of his career, you will find them in the criminal records."

While Sheringham was talking to the detective the front door was opened to two men who at first glance appeared to be policemen. One of them, a sharp-eyed, gray-haired man with a lean, hard body, introduced himself to Carrington as Inspector Ives from police headquarters. He was promptly apprised of the facts by the detective.

"You pulled a boner on that car, Corliss," said Inspector Ives. "No yellow Rolls-Royce has left this district."

"It was the yellowest car I ever saw," said the detective. "If you'll question the chauffeurs out there you'll know that there was no mistake about that."

"Perhaps you can explain where it went then," said Ives. "Did you notice whether it was equipped with flying apparatus? Because that's the only way the car you describe could have got out of this neighborhood. We've questioned every traffic cop for blocks around and not a single damned one of them laid eyes on such a car."

There are extra men on, too, because of this reception. I tell you no yellow Rolls-Royce left this neighborhood."

"And I tell you, inspector, I saw it go with my own eyes," insisted Corliss.

Inspector Ives shrugged. "In that case it has just been swallowed up."

The faintest of ironic smiles twisted Basil Sheringham's lips. How could the inspector guess that his attempt at sarcasm was almost the literal truth?

CHAPTER X

Garth Follows the Diamonds

WHEN Jim Garth ran out of the Carrington house on the trail of the shadowy figure who had preceded him, he at first saw no one except the group of chauffeurs on the sidewalk, but just as he was about to turn back he glimpsed Cronin climbing in behind the wheel of the yellow Rolls. It was not a moment when he could debate his course of action. Either he must assume that this man was flying with the necklace or he must go back and keep his eye on Sheringham. One thing decided him. When the lights had gone out Sheringham had been standing way across the room by the Florentine tapestry, yet when the butler appeared with candles, Sheringham was out in the entrance hall. The assumption was that he had passed the necklace to his confederate under the curtain of darkness.

Cronin had already backed the yellow car out of line and Jim saw that there was no chance of stopping him. The only hope was to find some means of following him, so he ran down the block waving frantically at a taxi which had drawn up at the corner.

"If you stick on the trail of that yellow Rolls it will be worth twenty-five dollars to me," said Jim sharply.

"O. K., boss!"

Jim nearly smashed in the back of his head as the taxi started forward with a jerk that threw him against the seat. Cronin was already under way and the taxi driver, in order not to miss him at the next corner, was burning up the pavement. Jim leaned forward and spoke.

"If he stops and leaves that car anywhere I've got to follow him, so here's your money now." He slipped some bills into the driver's pocket, and the man nodded, grimly intent on keeping the Rolls in sight.

Cronin swung the yellow car around the corner at a perilous rate of speed, and Jim offered up a silent prayer as the taxi lurched dangerously in pursuit. There could be no doubt now that Cronin was attempting to make a getaway, which argued that he was in possession of the diamonds. The Rolls raced through a red traffic light without slackening speed, and Jim's taxi nearly ended its career and the careers of its occupants as it narrowly missed colliding with another car which came across their path on the green light. Jim mopped the perspiration from his forehead with a silk handkerchief.

Down the block, drawn up at the curb, was a huge moving van, the back open and a sort of runway incline sloping down from the tail board. Two men stood idly on the pavement smoking cigarettes. With a startling abruptness the Rolls brakes screamed out in protest and the big yellow car slowed down and then with a precision that spoke worlds for the skill of the driver, ran up the runway and into the body of the moving van. The two men on the sidewalk were suddenly all action. The runway was shipped into the van and the big rear doors were closed. Almost before the time it takes to tell

it, the Rolls, as Inspector Ives had innocently remarked, was swallowed up.

Jim's taxi, unprepared for any such maneuver had narrowly missed crashing into the back of the Rolls as it slowed down, swerved around it and sped past the van. Jim had a brief glimpse of the disappearing act, but enough to know what had happened.

"Keep going," he ordered the driver, tensely. "I don't want them to think we're following. We'll pick up the van in a minute."

The taxi man's eyes were popping out of his head. The vision of the big car driving up into the van was one of the strangest things he had ever seen. He slowed down gradually and presently drew in to the curb. He was gambling on the chance that Cronin had been too intent upon his driving to notice the fact that he was trailed, and in this gamble Jim was correct. The van came lumbering along the street now, being very careful to observe the traffic signals . . . a very innocent looking vehicle. Looking up and down the street Jim saw no one who might have observed the strange maneuver of the Rolls. Either luck was with Sheringham or this has been carefully arranged.

For ten or fifteen blocks the truck continued its leisurely way, with Jim's taxi trailing as unobtrusively as possible. At last, halted by a traffic light, the truck pulled in near the pavement and a man climbed down from the front seat. Jim recognized the tweed cap and hunched shoulders of Cronin. Jim opened the door of the taxi.

"Here's a fifty-dollar bill," he said to the driver. "You go somewhere else and forget all about what you've seen to-night."

The driver grinned broadly. "O. K., chief!"

Jim slipped across the pavement and into the shadow of the buildings, for he realized that he was decidedly conspicuous in his dinner clothes without either hat or coat. Cronin was walking along in front of him, unconcernedly, his hands stuffed into his trousers pockets, a cigarette dangling between his lips. This side street was deserted, for it was after midnight and they were well away from the theater district.

Jim quickened his pace and drew closer to the gunman. He must act quickly if he was to get the necklace. He remembered that Hewes had told him Cronin was one of the quickest men with a gun in the city and Jim's hand closed over the butt of the pistol in his own pocket. He was only ten yards back of Cronin when the gunman turned into an alley between two buildings. Jim's muscles tightened. Had Cronin guessed that he was being followed or was he taking a short cut? If it was the former reason, Jim knew that the minute he turned into the alley he would in all probability breathe his last. But there was no choice. The success of the whole venture hinged on his getting the necklace from Cronin before he reached a place of safety. Jim drew his gun and turned into the alley.

He had steeled himself for an attack, but it did not come. Instead he saw Cronin far down the alley, still walking unconcernedly, the red point of his cigarette showing in the darkness. Jim crouched and ran noiselessly after him. Now was the time.

Cronin did not hear his pursuer until Jim was almost on top of him. Then he turned, snarling, his hand going like lightning for the gun under his right arm-pit. Jim wanted no gun shots if he could avoid it. He did not dare have attention attracted to him until he had

delivered the necklace to Martin Hewes. He sent himself hurtling through the air in a magnificent flying tackle that crushed the little gunman under its ferocity before he could draw the gun from its holster.

But that was not the end. Jim was bigger and heavier than Cronin, but the wiry little gunman fought with a maniacal fury that more than evened things. There was very little noise. Each man was fighting for his life and Cronin, writhing and twisting, was trying to get a free hand at his gun. In the darkness there was no opportunity to aim a decisive blow and Jim was slugging blindly at the smaller man, hoping by the grace of Providence that he could keep Cronin from his weapon. In the narrow confines of the alley there was little room for movement, and Jim was bruised and gasping for breath as they repeatedly crashed against the brick walls of the overhanging buildings.

When the fight ended, it was so sudden that Jim found himself leaning against one of the walls, dazed. They had half struggled to their feet and with a desperate lurch Cronin freed himself from Jim's grasp. Jim knew it was his finish unless the fates were with him. He struck out in the blackness with every last ounce of strength in his weary arm . . . and the blow landed. Cronin was catapulted backward and his head struck with a sickening thud against the bricks. He crumpled down to the pavement and lay still.

Jim, sucking in his breath in agonized gulps, knelt down and felt for his victim. The year in prison had left him out of condition and he felt weak and dizzy. His first move was to take the gun from Cronin's holster and slip it into his own pocket. Then in a side

pocket he found the plush box which contained the diamonds. He rose slowly to his feet. Once that box was in Martin Hewes's hands he would have struck the first blow at Sheringham.

He walked unsteadily down the alley to the street and hailed a cab.

CHAPTER XI

Caught!

INSPECTOR IVES was not a genius, but when it came to applying the resources of the police department to his ends he was unbeatable. In matters of routine detection he never missed a trick. Thus, when he learned that Jim Garth, ex-convict, had been among those present when the lights went out and that he was now missing, he made immediate steps in the direction of locating this man.

Garth's little scene with the warden in which he had rather unwisely said that the only thing he had left to live for was to square himself with the man who had betrayed him had led that official to notify the police that it might be worth their while to keep an eye on the former society man. This had been done in a stolid, matter-of-fact way, and so when Ives got in touch with headquarters he learned that Jim was living with Martin Hewes, the private detective.

Ives repaired at once to Hewes's home with several plain-clothes men, only to find there was no one at home. At least their repeated ringing of the door bell brought no response and there were no lights visible anywhere in the house. He was a little at a loss to know how to interpret the fact of Garth's residence with Hewes. To the best of his knowledge Hewes was a law abiding citizen, and it was a little incredible to the inspector that he

would harbor a thief, if for no other reason than it would have a damaging effect on his reputation as a detective. But Ives was not one to go off half-cocked, and he settled down stolidly with his men to wait for Hewes or Garth to show up.

Meanwhile Jim Garth, ragged and disheveled from his encounter with Cronin, had emerged from the alley and engaged a taxi to bring him home. He sat back in the cab trying to get back some of the strength that had been sapped in his exhausting struggle. When the cab drew up before Hewes's house he got out, paid his fare, and turned toward the steps. It was only then that he saw Ives and his men waiting. He stopped abruptly, every nerve tense.

A dozen thoughts flashed through his mind. If Ives were to arrest him now the consequences would be grave indeed, for not only was the necklace in his possession, a fact that would be hard to explain away, but also he was carrying two guns in direct violation of the Sullivan Act, and as an ex-convict he would be liable to a severe sentence. Whatever happened he must not fall into Ives's hands at the moment.

In a very leisurely manner he turned and began to stroll along the sidewalk away from the house. The inspector and his men hesitated for a moment, wondering if after all this was not their man. Then as Jim passed a street lamp and the disheveled condition of his clothing became apparent to them, Ives called out.

"Garth! Wait!"

The inspector's staccato hail only made Jim take to his heels like a scared rabbit. Some one fired a shot after him but it went wild and he ducked into an alley between two houses and sprinted

for safety. He could hear the policemen shouting to each other and he guessed some of them had been dispatched around the block to meet him when he emerged from the other end of the alley. He hesitated for just a minute, panting for breath. He was in a maze of back yards, walled in by low wooden fences, and he scaled one of these walls and dropped into the yard beyond. Ives and two of his men were clattering down the alley.

Jim's first move was to get rid of the two guns he was carrying. He might be able to explain away the necklace with Hewes's assistance, but never the guns. He stumbled across the yard, littered with trash, to the next fence and pulled himself up. A shout rose behind him and the top of the fence a foot from him was splintered by a bullet. One of the detectives had mounted the wall behind to have a look around and had spotted him.

Jim literally fell over the wall into the next yard and then paused to take stock of the situation. It would be too hazardous to climb again, for they would be waiting, and his chances of escaping another bullet would be unpleasantly slim. The dim light from an upper window gave him a faint glimpse of his surroundings. He was in the back yard of a rather modern apartment building, and just to the right of it was a service passage leading to the street. This must be his avenue of escape and he started on the run down it. At the exit to the street he paused and looked cautiously out, only to withdraw hurriedly. Two of Ives's men were patrolling the sidewalk. Behind him he could hear the shouts of the rest of the party. He was trapped.

Jim looked frantically about him. If he was to be caught he must dispose of

the necklace in some place where Martin Hewes could recover it even if he himself were to land in prison. Voices were drawing nearer and whatever he did must be done quickly. There was a row of ash cans standing in the alley waiting for the collector to come for them in the morning, and it was into one of these that Jim pushed the plush box containing the diamonds and covered it over with ashes. He moved along down the alley so that he would not be near the cans when the police closed in, thus attracting attention to them. It was then that he noticed the open cellar window.

With an agility he had not believed possible he squeezed his way through this narrow opening and dropped down into a coal bin. He lay still, praying that the coals would stop their rattling avalanche before the policemen drew abreast of the window. He could hear them now, talking excitedly. They hurried on past the window to the street where they were joined by the others. Here a council of war was held, the men from the street swearing that Jim had not come out. Ives returned down the alley and Jim could hear him giving orders for every house and basement to be searched. Inspector Ives was a thorough man.

An hour of painful waiting ensued. At last the most crucial moment arrived when the detectives came into the very cellar where Jim was hiding, buried now under the coal so that unless they shoveled the stuff out of the bin they would not find him. Ives was not in this particular search party or else that very thing might have been done, but once more fate was with him and after an exhaustive search the detectives left him unmolested.

At last Jim pulled himself out of the bin, dirty and tired almost to the break-

ing point. There was no sound in the alley and with care Jim wriggled his way out through the cellar window and into the open. The only thing to do now was to retrieve the necklace and phone Martin Hewes for advice. It would be impossible to return to his friend's house, for that would be watched. He started slowly down the alley toward the ash cans when something was suddenly rammed sharply into the small of his back.

"Put up your hands, Garth! Quick!"

The order was given in a hoarse whisper. Slowly, discouraged, Jim raised his hands. There was a clanking of metal and a pair of handcuffs were snapped over his wrists. Slowly he turned to face his captor, and as he saw him in the glimmer of light from that upper window a cry escaped him. The man before him, pistol in hand, was Basil Sheringham.

CHAPTER XII

Trial by Fire

SHERINGHAM'S lips twisted in a characteristic sardonic grin. The light reflected from the green glass in his eye gave him a definitely sinister look.

"Well, Garth, I hadn't expected a reunion with you so soon," he said, a faint chuckle in his voice. "When I heard you had been at the party tonight and disappeared at the same time that my friend Cronin made his get-away I guessed that somehow you were onto the play. Where's the necklace?"

Jim was collecting his equilibrium rapidly. There hadn't been time for Cronin to recover and report to his master, so that it was apparent that Sheringham was guessing.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Sheringham," he said.

Sheringham sighed. "Ah, well, we can't discuss it here. Just precede me up the alley, Garth, and don't make any attempt at a get-away because I'm not in the mood to hold my trigger finger."

Jim knew that Sheringham was dangerous and he was in no position to argue. He turned and walked slowly out the alley to the street, and Sheringham, walking behind, kept the muzzle of his pistol pressed into the small of Jim's back. When they reached the street a curtained limousine pulled up at the curb, and Sheringham ushered his prisoner into the back of the car and took the seat beside him. The driver pulled away without waiting for orders. Sheringham leaned back on the cushions and lit a cigarette. He spoke in a bantering tone, but Jim recognized that underneath it was a decidedly menacing note.

"I overheard Inspector Ives's plans for your capture," said the man with the green eyeglass, "and I thought I would be present. I wanted to know whether you had managed to get the necklace from Cronin. I'm certain now that you did, else why should you run from the police?"

"I don't know what it's all about," said Jim stolidly.

Sheringham laughed unpleasantly. "You'll talk, my dear fellow. I'm not in the mood to let you stand in my way to-night. Did you kill Cronin?"

"Who's Cronin?" asked Jim Garth blankly.

The drive was a short one and when the car stopped before a large private house on lower Park Avenue, Sheringham got out, and with the revolver hidden in the folds of his overcoat, kept Jim covered while he followed. There was nothing to be gained by resistance. The chauffeur opened the door of the house and followed the explorer and his

prisoner in. Sheringham dropped his coat and hat in the hall and walked behind Jim into a sort of trophy room where he kept mementoes of the days when he had really been a big game hunter. Jim knew the house well, for in the days of his unfortunate association with Sheringham he had been in it often. The chauffeur came along as well. Sheringham nodded to him.

"Search him, Macfee."

Roughly and thoroughly Macfee went over Jim's clothes, but in the end he turned to Sheringham with a shrug.

"Nothing doing, chief."

Sheringham stared thoughtfully at his prisoner, who was looking down into the flames of the fire which burned hotly on the hearth. He knew something of Garth's mettle and he wondered to just what lengths it would be necessary to go in order to force him to talk. As he meditated on the best procedure the door to the trophy room opened and Kid Cronin came in. He was a sadly battered and dilapidated looking specimen. The ever present cigarette hung between bruised and puffed lips. His cheek was cut, his clothes torn, and one of his close-set eyes was almost closed. At the sight of Garth an expression of murderous hatred flashed across his face. He reached under his left arm-pit, forgetting for the moment that his gun was missing. Then he pointed at Jim.

"That bird has the necklace, chief," he said hoarsely.

Sheringham nodded. "I thought as much, Kid." He smiled. "Still in a complete fog as to what it's all about, Garth?"

"Complete," said Jim, blandly.

Sheringham's fist clenched suddenly, and his lips tightened. "Tie him to that straight-backed chair," he ordered Macfee and Cronin abruptly.

Jim was pushed roughly into a chair and Macfee went to a closet in the corner, produced a length of rope and lashed Jim so tightly that he couldn't move. Sheringham moved over to the fire and threw on a white birch log. The firelight cast grotesque shadows across his evil face. Macfee and Cronin lifted the chair in which Jim was tied over to a place on the hearth, directly in front of the fire. Jim turned away, the heat from the flames unpleasantly hot against his face.

"Where," said Sheringham in a purring voice, "is the necklace?"

Jim shook his head slowly. "I don't know what you're talking about, Sheringham, and if I did you ought to know that I wouldn't tell you. You're wasting time."

Cronin and Macfee, standing on either side of Jim's chair, at a signal from Sheringham tilted it slightly forward toward the fire. Sheringham lit a fresh cigarette. "That fire, Garth, will get warmer and warmer the closer you get to it," he said. "I think before it becomes necessary to bury your face in the flames you may develop a streak of memory. I'm not going to waste much time, I warn you. Where is the necklace?"

"You won't go through with this, Sheringham," said Jim steadily, "because it will do you no good to kill me. You won't know anything then."

"Oh, I have no intention of killing you," said Sheringham. "Of course if you are permanently mutilated or blinded by the flames it will be most tragic, I'm sure. I urge you to avoid it. Where is the necklace?"

"I pass," said Jim.

Cronin and Macfee tilted the chair closer to the flames. The sweat was running down Jim's face, and in his heart was horrible fear. Nothing would

make him talk, but already his eyebrows and hair were scorched and the heat on his face was almost unbearable. He had no doubt that Sheringham would carry out his threat. He moistened his scorched lips with the tip of his tongue.

"I don't know how you got onto the game to-night, Garth," said Sheringham, calmly, "but it was unfortunate for you that you did. I think you will wish to God that you had never heard of me unless you tell me at once what you've done with that necklace."

"No soap, Sheringham."

Again the chair was tilted forward. The flames were only an inch away from his eyes now. Jim clenched his teeth and prayed quietly for courage to endure whatever happened with no outward show of what he felt. Better not to give them that satisfaction.

"This is the last time, Garth," said Sheringham deliberately. "What have you done with the necklace?"

"Don't you think," said a mild voice from the doorway behind them, "that this has gone far enough?"

The chair was dropped back on its legs. Sheringham, Macfee and Cronin turned quickly. Jim twisted his head painfully to see who had saved him for the moment. Standing in the doorway, a benevolent twinkle in his gentle blue eyes, was Martin Hewes. Jim groaned. The fat man was apparently unarmed.

CHAPTER XIII

Martin Hewes' Little Bottle

SHERINGHAM whipped the gun out of his pocket and covered the little detective with it. "So," he said, "the light begins to break! You are behind this, eh, Hewes? Is it possible that you speak Arabic?"

"I list it," said Martin Hewes, walking calmly into the room despite the menacing revolver, "under my accomplishments."

"Stand where you are," Sheringham rapped, "and put your hands as high in the direction of the ceiling as you can."

Hewes stood still and slowly raised his hands above his head. Sheringham laughed. "You are a fool, Hewes. You've just walked into a trap yourself. Neither of you will leave this house until I know where that necklace is. If I can't make that young idiot talk perhaps you will be easier! Especially when you see what I've got in store for him."

"There seems to be some slight misapprehension as to just who is in control of this situation," said Martin Hewes calmly. "Apparently, my dear Sheringham, you have not noticed the little glass bottle I am holding in my right hand."

The others looked, and Martin Hewes wiggled a little bottle he was holding between his fingertips for them to see. "You see," continued Hewes, "it just happens that this little bottle contains enough high explosive to blow this house and every one in it into the East River. I'm not such a fool, Sheringham, as to think that if we told you where the necklace is you'd let us out alive, so I don't see that there's any compromise. Unless you untie Garth and let us out of here in about one minute I shall cook everybody's goose to a lovely brown turn."

"You wouldn't dare!" said Sheringham.

"I can just see the set-up," continued Martin Hewes. "After we tell you where the necklace is you shoot us in cold blood and tell the police we were house-breakers. No, Sheringham, I much prefer to blow us all up in grand

style than to die so insignificantly. Quick; untie Garth before my hand gets paralyzed from holding it up over my head."

Sheringham hesitated. Martin Hewes was just enough of a quixotic fool to carry out the threat he was making. It was, in short, a Mexican stand-off. After all he had Mr. Singh's money and he had done his best to get the necklace. That little bottle in Hewes's hand made him nervous. Nitro-glycerine or some such stuff, in all probability.

"Untie him," he ordered Cronin and Macfee.

The two released Jim with alacrity. They had heard of Martin Hewes and they knew that behind his mild exterior he was a man of his word. Jim got up from the chair stiffly and moved over beside Hewes.

"Just stand behind me, Jim," said Martin Hewes. "Then if Sheringham's trigger finger gets nervous he'll hit me . . . and if he hits me I will of course be unable to hold on to this bottle any longer . . . and when I can no longer hold on to it . . . poof!"

Jim stepped behind him, smiling grimly. The mild, little fat man was all he had believed him to be when he joined forces with him. Very slowly they backed out of the room. Martin Hewes deliberately closed the door, and locked it.

"I'm leaving the key on the outside," he called to Sheringham. "Pleasant dreams."

They hurried out onto the street. A taxi pulled up beside them and Hewes explained that he had it waiting. They got in and Jim leaned back against the seat with a sigh. "That," he said, "was an unpleasantly close shave."

Martin Hewes chuckled. "I would not have delayed so long, my dear

fellow, but I had the devil's own time finding the money."

Jim looked puzzled. "The money?"

Hewes nodded. "Mr. Singh's four hundred and fifty thousand dollars." He patted his breast pocket. "Every cent of it!"

"Oh, my aunt!" Jim laughed. "Martin, you're worth your weight in gold."

"I am, literally, at the moment," said Hewes. "By the way, where *is* the necklace?"

"In an ash can," said Jim, still laughing. "We'd better hurry before the ash man comes on his rounds."

"We seem," said Martin Hewes, "to have done rather well." He was juggling the little glass bottle back and forth from one hand to the other.

"If you don't mind," said Jim. "my nerves have stood enough strain tonight. Just put that bottle somewhere that you're not apt to drop it."

"This?" Martin Hewes looked surprised. "Did you fall for that too, Jim? Why, there's nothing in here but good Croton reservoir water. It is true that I had a gun in my hip pocket. But a gun, while it might have killed one or even two of them, would hardly have cowed that gang enough for our purposes. It was necessary to bluff them entirely, or be prepared to try a fight to our mutual deaths. I naturally preferred to bluff—an accomplishment of mine which I have sometimes. I flatter myself, raised to a high art. It worked, as it happens—for which I am really quite thankful."



Politeness Pays

POLICE politeness pays. Witness what happened when Mayor Anton J. Cermak of Chicago ordered Chicago's police to give polite service.

Sergeant John T. Coughlin, of that city, saw two men laboring vainly to start the engine of their truck. All their efforts were useless. The motor would not go, and they cursed long and loudly. Sergeant Coughlin strolled over to aid if possible.

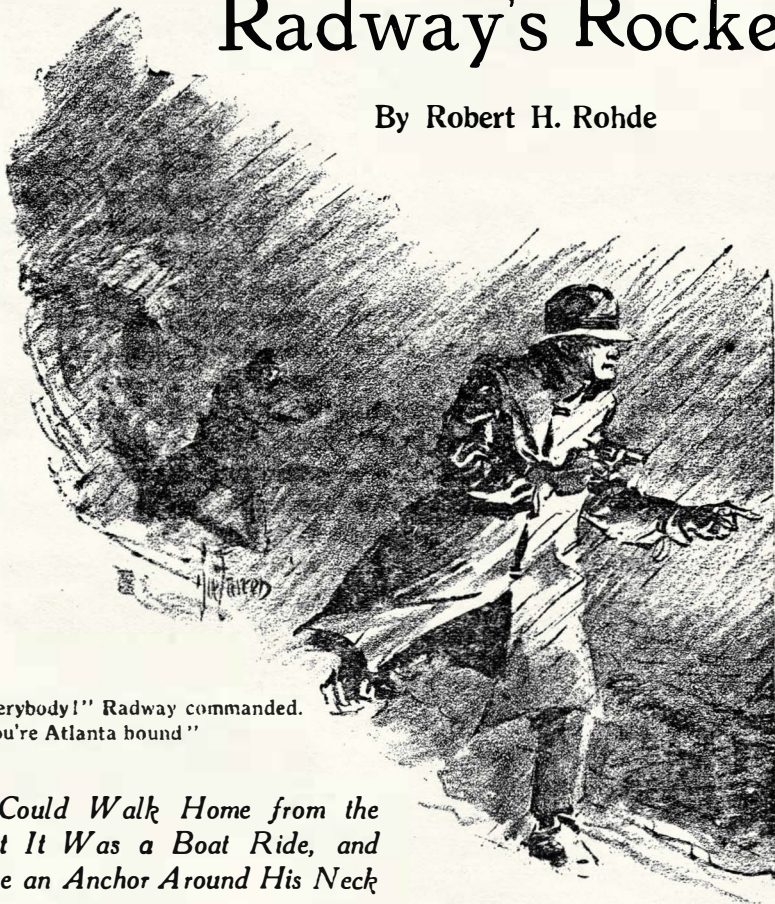
"Need any help?" he asked politely.

"No," he was told. "We'll get this boiler going in a minute."

"Well, I'll see what I can do anyway," the sergeant politely answered, and walked around to the rear of the machine. There he saw a barrel of something—real beer, he declared—protruding. There were nineteen more on the truck. The sergeant took the two men and the barrels into custody.

Radway's Rocket

By Robert H. Rohde



"Hands up, everybody!" Radway commanded.
"You're Atlanta bound"

Radway Could Walk Home from the Ride—but It Was a Boat Ride, and He'd Have an Anchor Around His Neck

THE man coming up the lonely beach behind Radway evidently preferred to stay behind. He had been walking swiftly along the hard sand close to the sluggish surf when Radway first glimpsed him, but at sight of the stranger his pace had lagged. A moment later, changing direction, he vanished among the dunes.

Radway was curious about him—professionally curious about everybody on that beach. A hundred yards above the point where he had come to the shore after his long, hot hike from the village five miles inland, he stopped to gather a handful of pebbles and shells

and shy them over the dispirited breakers. A little further along, he stopped again for a long stare at the schooner that lay becalmed in the far northeast.

Then the rusty, listing shell of a wrecked freighter left high and dry by the retreating tide gave him another excuse to loiter. He unlimbered the kodak hanging from his shoulder and took his time getting a focus on the wreck. The camera took no picture when he clicked the shutter. It was unloaded—like the flannels he had changed into a couple of hours ago, just "scenery."

The delay at the wreck accomplished

his purpose. The man who had been playing hide-and-seek with him among the dunes came into view again, close by. He rounded a sandy rise and cut back to the beach. Passing Radway, he eyed him hard.

The tone didn't invite a further exchange, but Radway was not to be discouraged.

"Isn't there a life-saving station somewhere along here?" he asked.

"Yep."

"You belong there?"

"Yep. Ought to be there now."

That had been meant to close the



"Hot enough for you?" hailed Radway.

The man in the flapping ducks halted and turned. The question appeared to call for consideration. The beach walker's sullen black eyes traveled slowly upward from Radway's white canvas shoes to his jaunty panama. When the answer finally came it was a clipped monosyllable.

"Yep!"

conversation, but as the beach patrolman started off, Radway fell into step with him.

"No objection to visitors, I hope," he said diffidently. "At that, I bet you don't get many. It's certainly a tough drill over from Norport."

"Stopping in Norport, are you, mister?" asked the other with a veiled side glance that found only blank innocence on Radway's bronzed face. "Nope.

we don't see many summer people over on that part of the beach. They let us alone and we let them alone."

Radway was cheerfully unconscious of the hint.

"Kind of funny, isn't it? I should think you'd be overrun with company. A Coast Guard station ought to be a pretty interesting place. I've always wanted to have a look at one."

"Yeah?" queried the Coast Guard without enthusiasm. He pointed with a tattooed hand toward a bank of leaden clouds massing behind the motionless schooner. "Well, you picked a bad day for the trip, mister. See that sky? That's a rain squall making up. You'd better start back for Norport, if you don't want them ice cream clothes spoiled for you."

Radway thoughtfully inspected the muggy horizon.

"Guess you're right," he said. "But could I get to the village ahead of the rain? That white building up the beach—that's your station, isn't it? Maybe I'd better stick around there until the storm's over."

The beach patrolman shrugged a heavy shoulder and quickened his stride.

"It's public property," he grunted, his eyes fixed stonily before him. "Suit yourself."

II

ON the veranda of the Coast Guard station, an elderly man with a spare wiry figure and a square-cut spade of graying beard was looking seaward through binoculars. He lowered the glasses as Radway parted company with his taciturn companion and plowed through the broiling sand toward him.

"I'll be dinged!" he ejaculated. "A visitor! Glad to see you. New faces

are sights for sore eyes around Sandy Point nowadays. Come up and have a chair. Came all the way from Norport, did you?"

"Farther than that," said Radway, mounting the veranda. "You're Captain Docksee?"

"That's my name."

"Mine's Radway, captain." The visitor's hand opened to reveal a small gold shield hidden in the palm. "I'm in the Government service, too—but mine's another branch. May I have a private word with you? Suppose you go through the motions of showing me the apparatus. If your men get the impression that I'm just summer folks, that will be fine."

Docksee tugged at his beard and stared.

"You're here—*official*?"

Radway nodded.

"But keep it to yourself, please. I'd like to spend the night as your guest. Do you suppose that could be arranged without arousing too much curiosity?"

Before he replied, Docksee raised his binoculars again and trained them on the little schooner offshore.

"I reckon," he said slowly. "There's a storm cooking out there. It'll probably blow great guns for a while by and by, and then rain all night. If I was to ask you to stay to dinner, it'd be my own business; and it would be natural enough for you to bunk in here if the rain was to catch you."

Docksee caught a look of warning from Radway, who lifted his voice to a higher pitch and asked a question about the station's life-saving equipment. The man with the tattooed hand had just appeared at the end of the veranda. Puzzled for an instant, the Sandy Point skipper took Radway's cue.

"No, mister," he said, "we don't

use the beach-gun once in a blue moon. Ain't had it in action since that old tramp down yonder came ashore two winters ago. But I'll show it to you—*sure!*"

He hopped spryly over the railing and marched off toward an outbuilding a couple of hundred yards below the main house.

"Don't look back," Radway whispered, catching up with him. "But I'm sort of wondering about that fellow back there. What do you know about him?"

"The man you walked to the station with—Lazzaro? How do you mean?"

"Do you trust him?"

Docksee debated as he flung open a wide door to reveal a cradled lifeboat and the wheeled beach-gun with its caisson of coiled rope.

"Dunno as I do, dunno as I don't," he said judicially. "He ain't been here long enough for me to form any special opinion of him. What makes you ask?"

Postponing answer, Radway asked another question.

"How many men have you got here all told?"

"There's eight in the regular crew. But this is a slack season and four of them is off on leave. With Lazzaro and another summer fill-in, Karger, I've got six now." He glanced back toward the big house. "Looks like that's Karger that just came out on the porch—that big man talking to Lazzaro. They kind of chum together, being both new in the service."

"How about the rest?"

"All old-timers. Been with me ten years and up—and I've been here going on twenty-four years myself."

"Men you'd swear by, eh?"

"I'd stake everything I've got on them."

"Good enough. We'll need men we can count on before the night's over."

Docksee fingered his beard.

"You ain't told me yet, mister," he reminded Radway, "what all this is about."

"It won't take me long to tell you when I get started," promised Radway. "You've got a man in your crew that's taking money from smugglers—big money. If my information is straight, a very large proportion of the dope entering the country lately has been finding its way across this beach of yours."

"The hell you say!"

"It's fact."

Docksee's thin shoulders lifted and his beard jutted belligerently as his jaw squared.

"Name the man!" he challenged.

"Point him out to me and watch me handle him!"

Radway shook his head.

"I know how you feel, skipper," he said, "but this is a case where Uncle Sam will do the handling. The first job is to catch our man—get him dead to rights. I've got a sneaking suspicion right now that I know who he is. But that isn't evidence by a long shot."

"Lazzaro?"

"He's the man I'm thinking of," admitted Radway. "Does he have a trick of beach patrol duty again to-night?"

"Let's see. Yes. Midnight to four."

"The dog watch, eh? That pretty near clinches it, captain. It will most likely be some time between twelve and four when the stuff is landed. There'll be a couple of tough boys—quick-on-the-trigger gunmen—aboard the boat that brings it in. Maybe we'll have to do some shooting."

"You won't find my regulars running if there is," Docksee remarked

grimly. "You're sure your information is on the level, though, mister?"

"Absolutely. It came from one of the best under-cover men in the service. He wasn't able to learn the name of the Coast Guardsman who was fixed, but I'm expecting to meet an old acquaintance of mine in charge of the load. He's a fellow I had the pleasure of sending to Atlanta a few years ago — 'Dopey Moe' Buxbaum. This time he'll go away for a real stretch."

A splatter of rain was falling as Docksee and Radway started back toward the station and a red sun was dipping back of the dunes. Off in the northeast, the small schooner still lay in the same position, her slatting sails dots of white on the oily sea. The clouds behind her were piling up blacker. Docksee threw an anxious glance toward them.

"The dudes on that yacht are going to have their hands full before they're much older," he predicted. "They were a bunch of dumb fools to take their women out, with the glass falling and not a practical sailor on the ship. If they had a grain of sense among 'em, they'd be getting their canvas in now and heaving to. When that squall smacks she's going to smack hard, mister."

III

RADWAY blessed the squall. It might have been made to order to suit his purpose. The rain was coming down faster before he and Docksee were halfway to the station, and they finished the trip running. Manifestly, it was no time for a summer tripper in "ice cream" clothes to be starting on a five-mile hike. It was perfectly natural that Docksee should invite the visitor to dinner and equally natural that Radway should accept.

At table, the old-timers of the Sandy Point crew were easy to pick out. They were a grizzled and weather-beaten quartet, none exactly loquacious, but all friendly enough. Silent among them, Lazzaro bolted his food. He pushed back his chair before the others had risen and went clumping up the stairs to the attic dormitory. The other new man, Karger, bull-necked, heavy jowled and moody, followed in Lazzaro's wake a moment later.

Docksee walked to the ascending stairway and carefully closed the door at its foot. He called back two of his four dependables as they were starting out in oilskins, one for the lookout tower and the other on beach patrol. Re-introducing Radway to them and to the other pair under his own name, he informed them in a hurried whisper of their guest's real errand.

Black night had fallen then, and the first gust of the rising squall was tearing at the heavy shutters.

"Keep an eye to the nor'east for signs of trouble," was Docksee's last admonition to the departing guards. "There ain't nothing but a crowd of rocking chair sailors on that schooner out there."

The squall struck full force as he spoke. Its impact shook the sturdy building, and Docksee had to put his back to the seaward door to close it after his men. A vivid flare of lightning ripped across the sky, whitening the windows, and the station shook again to a mighty thunderclap. When Docksee turned on the radio, the program he got was mostly static.

Under cover of the racket, Radway crept up the stairs that led to the dormitory. Lazzaro and Karger hadn't turned in. He could hear them talking, but their voices were so low that he could make out their words.

"Maybe," he said to Docksee, returning, "you've got two crooks in your outfit instead of one. Anyhow, I don't like Karger's looks any more than I liked Lazzaro's. Where are you going to bunk me? I'm dog tired after that long haul up from New York. If I could snatch a couple of hours sleep now I'd be that much wider awake at midnight."

There was a cot in Docksee's little office. Radway parked on it, but his nap didn't last until midnight. It was only a little after eleven when he was awakened. Through the open door he could see a dripping figure in oilskins. It was the coast guardsman who had been on duty in the watch tower. He was making an excited report to Docksee, interrupting the rummy game that had started when Radway lay down.

"The yacht weathered the squall all right, cap, but she's in distress now, for sure. They're shootin' rockets out there."

The three card players were on their feet as Radway joined them.

"Here's a howdy-do, mister!" exclaimed Docksee. "Them dude sailors have messed up the deck for you for fair. I know that tub they're in. She's no boat for heavy weather. She's probably leaking like a sieve after the pounding she got. Nothing for me to do but go out to her."

"Of course, you've got to go," agreed Radway.

"But that'll leave you in a fix, mister. If there's a chance of saving the schooner, I'll have to put a crew aboard her. That means I'll need all hands."

Radway glanced at the clock.

"Eleven twenty," he said. "How soon could you be back?"

"No telling! We'll go in the power dory that's moored back in the inlet, and she's good for thirty miles an hour.

But if the people on the schooner have used up all their rockets, we may have a time finding 'em. It's as black out as the inside of an undertaker's hat. We'll have to trust to lightning flashes to show the yacht to us."

"You've got to take the *whole* crew?"

"My four regular men, anyhow. Karger and Lazzaro don't count so much in a pinch like this, being all the same as landlubbers. I'd as soon leave 'em on the beach."

Radway's relief showed in his smile.

"That's all right, then," he said, patting the little bulge under his left arm where a police positive hung in a shoulder belt. "If the weather hasn't caused any change of plans, I'll probably have more company for you when you get back."

IV

THE wind was down and the rain had settled to a steady drizzle as Docksee, yellow slickered, started with his three experienced hands toward the speed dory riding in the inlet. They were to pick up the fourth man of the regular Sandy Point crew on their way along the beach.

Routed out ahead of their time, Lazzaro and Karger pulled on oilskins and sea boots and came clumping down from the dormitory directly afterward. They walked together in the direction of the lookout tower. Looking after them from the veranda, Radway saw an arching streak of red drawn across the inky sky as another rocket went up far at sea. Then a lightning flare showed him the storm-beaten schooner yacht under bare poles, hull down on the horizon.

Thanks to the yellow oilskins they wore, he could make out the pair who had been left behind as they stood talk-

ing down by the tower. When they separated it was easy enough for him to stalk the blob of yellow moving along the beach.

About midway between the station and the inlet his quarry came to a halt and stood looking out to sea. Not fifty yards away, hidden back of a dune, Radway plopped down in the wet sand to wait developments. In the distance, he heard the coughing of the Coast Guard dory's powerful motor as the rescue party tuned it up. The coughing resolved into a steady hum, and then he saw the green of the dory's starboard running light as it streaked out of the inlet and went bouncing over the bar.

Time dragged after the sound of the engine had been lost back of the crashing surf. The radium-tipped minute hand made a complete circuit of the dial on Radway's wrist watch and was well along on another when a light showed at sea—not a steady light, but one that blinked on and off in half a dozen quick flashes.

Evidently that was a signal to the watcher farther down the beach. He answered with a pocket flash whose strong white beam sparkled intermittently across the surf as he moved toward the inlet.

Keeping in the shelter of the dunes, Radway followed—unaware of a shadow flitting stealthily along his own trail. When a keel grated the inlet shore well in the lee of the point, he drew his pistol and quickened his pace, his steps muffled in the sand. He recognized Lazzaro's voice ahead of him.

"Okay, Buxie! Everything's jake. How did ya like the breeze?"

The voice that replied—a rasping one—was another that Radway had heard before.

"You always pick a soft spot for

yourself, Tony. If you'd been out in that cyclone you'd have come closer to earning your cut."

"I'm taking plenty of risks, don't worry," growled Lazzaro. "There's a snooper on the beach to-night that's got me worried."

"Yeah? Well, if he snoops around here he gets taken for a boat ride. What's the matter with you, Tony—turning yellow? Beginning to think everybody you see has got a ticket for you?"

"I know when a guy looks like the law."

Radway, invisible in the long coat of black rubber he had borrowed from Docksee, was close enough then to see two other figures behind "Dopey Moe" Buxbaum in the beached speed boat. A voice sharp with alarm came from one of them.

"Is it on the square, Tony? Hell! Let's put the stuff ashore and get away fast. I don't want to see the inside of Atlanta again."

That provided Radway with a dramatic entrance cue. Pistol up, he advanced into the dim circle of radiance thrown by the light in the speed boat's bow.

"Hands up, everybody!" he commanded. "You're all Atlanta bound!" He moved farther into the light and invited: "Take a good look at the snooper, Buxbaum! Remember—"

Right there he chopped off. Close behind him a voice husky with menace snarled:

"Drop that gun!"

Wheeling, Radway found himself looking into the barrel of a revolver in the hands of the bull-necked Karger.

"I came pretty near doing this when I seen you start after Tony," Lazzaro's running mate grunted. "Thought I'd have to be looking out to sea just be-

cause I was up in the watch tower, did you?"

Radway's decision to shoot it out against odds came an instant too late. As he recovered from his paralysis of surprise, Lazzaro leaped upon him and wrenched the pistol from his grip.

"Atlanta bound, are we?" he grated. "Well, you're going farther—and faster!"

Buxbaum jumped forward as the gun lifted.

"Hold it, you dumb-bell!" he shrieked. "Do you want to bring the whole gang down from the house?"

"Nobody home. They're all out in the boat. Who does that make the dumb-bell?" growled Lazzaro.

Buxbaum, open mouthed, was staring at Radway. He stepped closer to him and his overbright eyes flared with exultation.

"This guy is all mine, Tony!" he cried. "I saw him first. Believe it or not, it's the dick that nailed me in Baltimore. I spent twenty solid months wishing that I'd meet up with him again—and here he is. Ain't it a small world?"

"You bet it's small, Buxbaum!" snapped Radway. "A man doesn't realize how small it's become until he tries hiding away from a murder rap. Just get it into your head that I'm not here by accident. Plenty of people know where I am to-night—and know I expected to run into you. It would be your tough luck if anything happened to me."

"Oh, yeah?" jeered the dope runner. "But a lot depends on *where* it happens, don't it? Think I'd leave you on the beach when we've got plenty of room in the boat for you?" He turned from Radway with a jarring laugh and began to spout orders. "Keep the gumshoe covered, Tony. Let him have

it if he makes a move. Get that stuff ashore, the rest of you. We'll bury it right here in the sand and pick it up later. Sure! We'll let Johnny Law see right where we hide it. It'd be kind of neat to bury him alongside it, but he can come back and haunt the beach, anyway."

Helpless before the threatening gun, Radway followed the course of a distant dot of light that represented life itself slipping away from him. The light, already miles away, was growing steadily dimmer. It was no longer green, but red, telling him that the Coast Guard dory had changed her course toward the east. The red light was on her port side; he was familiar enough with boats to know that.

Equally well, he knew that Moe Buxbaum, drug mad, couldn't be reasoned out of his deadly purpose. In the underworld, he had had for years the reputation of a cold-blooded murderer.

In five minutes, a deep hole had been scooped in the beach, the cargo of narcotics cached in it and covered with sand.

"All aboard!" called Buxbaum from the bow of the speed boat. "Bring the passenger, Tony. Better come along yourself, you and Karger. Might be healthier for you."

"No use sticking around *now*, anyway," grunted Lazzaro. "Trade over this beach is all washed up."

Radway conquered an impulse to grab for the gun as Lazzaro jabbed it against his back. That would have been suicide, and while he lived he could still hope.

The lights of the Coast Guard dory had been lost in the distance, but it was out there somewhere; however slim the possibility, it represented a chance that the dope runners might be intercepted. If that didn't happen, an op-

portunity might come when the speed boat was out of the inlet and the vigilance of his captors relaxed. At least, he could jump overboard—take a desperate gamble on eluding the bullets that would come after him, and perhaps beat the treacherous currents in a hard pull for shore.

"All right, Moe, I'm with you," he sang out, climbing into the boat ahead of Lazzaro. "Hope you've got a good navigator with you."

A cackle of crazy laughter answered that.

"You should worry!"

v

WITH Karger shoving at her nose, the speed boat slid off into deep water. The starter whirred.

Karger, jumping onto the deck as the engine purred into action, switched off the bow lights. Radway was grateful to him for that. Immediately, he untied a shoe lace and loosened it. With Lazzaro beside him on the thwart he had to work cautiously, but before the dope runner was fairly out of the inlet he had slipped off his shoes. But the time for the jump wasn't yet; Lazzaro still held the pistol to his ribs.

When the point had been rounded, Radway's heart gave a leap. Above the pounding of the surf, above the thrum of the speed boat's engine, he could hear another motor and he knew that Docksee's dory must be on the way back. A moment later he could make out her running lights. Both the red and the green were visible, and that clinched it. The Coast Guardsmen were returning.

Lazzaro saw the lights at the same instant.

"We just got away in time!" he ejaculated. "That's the Sandy Point

dory comin' in, and they just got a new rum-chaser engine in her. She's good for thirty miles an hour."

Out of the darkness of the open cockpit came Dopey Moe Buxbaum's raspy voice, jeering again.

"What's thirty? We do close to forty."

"We better," said Lazzaro. "The dory mounts a gun."

"They've got a swell chance of hitting anything to-night. Don't they have to see us first?"

Buxbaum had come forward. Radway could make out his thin stooping figure alongside the box that housed the engine.

"Where's the snoop?" he demanded.

"Right here next to me—sittin' at the wrong end of his own gat."

"Pretty near time to get rid of him, hey?"

"Bum time to risk a shot."

"Who said anything about shooting?"

"Then what?"

Buxbaum came closer, chuckling crazily, and Radway surmised he had been getting fresh inspiration from the needle. When he spoke again that was a certainty.

"We get rid of him pirate style, see? When we get out a little farther, we tie the spare anchor to him and he walks the plank."

"Get sensible!" snapped Lazzaro. "That's the coke talking. Hey, Burke! Shut off that engine before them birds in the dory hear it."

Somebody aft obeyed him. A switch snapped and the engine died. But Dopey Moe Buxbaum wasn't giving up his fantastic idea.

"I know my stuff," he insisted. "Got the old plank right ready here. It'll be the first official plank-walking since Captain Kidd went to live on a

farm. Then he can walk on home if he wants—and if he can!”

He was down on his hands and knees then, pulling at a loose floor board. As it came up, heavy fumes billowed out of the bilge and started Radway coughing. Some one on the other side of the cockpit struck a match and held it under cupped hands to a cigarette.

“Douse that light, Karger!” barked Lazzaro. “Want a pound of lead landing on your neck?”

It seemed to Radway miraculous that the tiny flame, no sooner kindled than extinguished, should have been visible across a couple of miles of water. But evidently those in the dory had seen it, for at once a searchlight flashed into action and swept the sea with an exploring white finger that finally found and hovered on the speed boat.

For a moment Radway had a clear view of the grim, tense group surrounding him; then the engine roared and the dope-runner leaped forward out of the searchlight's beam. The light swung in a new arc and again located the fugitive craft. Far astern, there was a thump like the pounding of a base drum and a warning shot went skipping across the speed boat's bow.

The dory had changed her course. Her searchlight bounced on the quartering seas as she squared away to the stern chase. The dope-runner was traveling wide open in a lather of spray. Radway had ridden in racing automobiles, but the speed boat seemed to be faster than any of them. She had a heartbreaking edge on the dory. That was evident within a couple of minutes. Another shot came from the Coast Guard gun and flopped astern; already the dory had been left out of range.

Radway figured then that his moment had come to take the long chance. He unbuttoned the rubber coat and started to inch forward along the thwart. Instantly the muzzle of the police positive poked him again.

“Don't jump now,” snarled Lazzaro. “*We'll* tell you when.”

“It won't be long,” said Buxbaum.

He had the floor board up and was laying it across the narrow deck, wedging one end under the heavy hinged cover of the engine box.

“Where are you, Burke?” he called. “Bring me that folding anchor and a coil of rope. I'm ready to drop the pilot.”

Radway had managed to wriggle one arm out of the borrowed waterproof. Choked by the vapor from the gasoline floating thickly on the splashing water in the open bilge, he cast despairing eyes astern.

Something had gone wrong with the dory's searchlight. It had blinked out, and when it failed to come on again it was as if his last friend had passed from the world. It only increased his horror to observe that the dory kept plunging on a straight course, while the dope-runner's helmsman had taken swift advantage of the situation by swerving sharply to the westward.

That cooked Radway's goose; he had no illusions to the contrary. Inwardly he cursed the light that had failed—and Fate responded to the cursing with a final gibe. As the dory raced blindly out to sea, the speed boat's engine sputtered and died. A foot came down on the electric starter while the smuggling craft was losing way, but the dead motor refused to start.

The man who had started forward at Buxbaum's command ripped out an oath. Profanely he announced the

discovery that some blistering half-wit had opened a valve in the fuel line, and Radway dully realized then how all that gasoline had got into the bilge.

His eyes still strained after the running lights of the dory. It seemed that those aboard her already suspected the dope-runner's trick. He saw first her green light on the starboard thwart, and then the red light to port as she circled aimlessly in a futile effort to pick up the lost trail.

If he only had a rocket, like those makeshift sailors on the schooner yacht! If he had even a little flash lamp like Lazzaro's to show Docksee and his deep-water men where he was!

Then Radway's hand, in the pocket of his suit coat, closed on a wooden box of safety matches. Suddenly he was thinking of Karger—of that miracle of a scant quarter-hour ago. Could it possibly be repeated? Would another flame so small—the mere flicker of a burning match—be seen for a second time across that black expanse dividing him from salvation?

Was it worth trying? Well, what could he lose?

His hand came out of the pocket, bringing the matches. He opened the box, drew out a fragile stick, held it poised against the striking surface. Then, hesitant, his nostrils assailed again by the stifling fumes of that deadly free gasoline, he heard himself bursting out in laughter as wild as Dopey Moe Buxbaum's.

What a rocket he had there under his hand—*what* a rocket!

A startled yell escaped Lazzaro.

"The guy's gone nuts on us!"

There didn't appear to be any doubt of that. Radway was shouting:

"Can you fellows swim? Then get ready to jump! Here goes!"

He leaned forward. The match-

head scraped the side of the box. Flaring brightly, the tindery stick dropped in a descending arc into the exposed bilge.

Radway, overboard before his neighbor with the gun knew what was happening, had just struck the water as the loose gasoline ignited. A vivid pillar of flame leaped skyward. It showed him the dope-crew diving in all directions out of the blazing cockpit.

In a twinkling the fire had reached the reserve fuel tank. It let go with a terrific explosion. The speed boat jumped clear of the roller she was riding. In mid-air she went into a thousand pieces, which fell back in a flaming tangle of wreckage that lighted the sea for miles around.

Radway, never too certain of himself in the water at best, had made sure of having a support. He had in fact carried his own improvised life-preserver overside with him; and paddling behind it, he lost no time in getting clear both of the spreading gasoline fire and his recent shipmates.

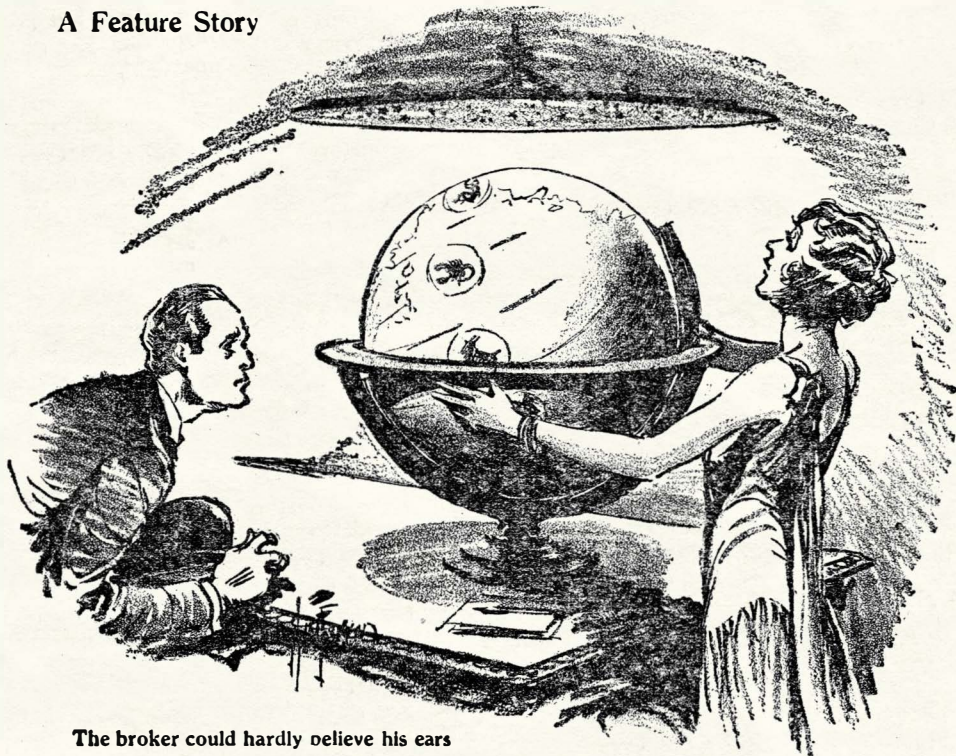
By the light of the blazing oil he could see the five heads bobbing closer in to the wreck—could see the Coast Guard dory rushing toward them. Presently he saw them picked up one by one: Buxbaum, Lazzaro, Karger, the engineer Burke and finally the speed boat's swarthy helmsman.

Before the threat of his heavy service revolver, Docksee was herding them all into the bow when eventually Radway came splashing to the dory. He was still clinging to the support that had served him so well during the wait for Docksee's arrival, and from the water he hailed Buxbaum.

"Thanks, Moe!" he called. "It was a great little idea of yours—digging up this plank for me to ride. You know, I've never been much of a swimmer!"

Spook Crooks

A Feature Story



The broker could hardly believe his ears

Charging \$100 a Consultation or Selling 3c Horoscopes for a Dollar Are Some of the Ways the Star Gazers Eke Out a Living

By Julien J. Proskauer

Trustee of the Society of American Magicians*

ON a floor of a great skyscraper in New York City is a vast organization, with hundreds of employees flung to the four corners of the United States. Its ramifications extend to Canada and Europe. It's a million-dollar business.

Presiding over it all is a high priestess whose name is known wherever people congregate. She is a great accumulator of wealth. Let us call her Portentia Smith. Miss Smith is neither young nor old, and neither modest in her fees nor in her state-

*All the events narrated in "Spook Crooks" are true, and their details appear on police blotters and in the records of investigations made by the Society of American Magicians cooperating with police and prosecutors. Names and places are disguised, to spare the feelings of the victims. DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, now aiding in the exposure of fortune tellers and fake mediums, wants readers who have been victimized by these charlatans to write to this magazine and describe their experiences. Your name will be held in strictest confidence, and the powerful Society of American Magicians will privately investigate.

ments. For Portentia is a soothsayer to whom all come.

"Star Gazer" is one name for her business. Reading the future through positions of the stars. Doing all the things the bearded, cone-hatted diviners of the Middle Ages did before her, yet doing them so efficiently and gracefully money flows in streams into her coffers.

Fully in keeping with the building which houses her establishment, her outer office is a model of the interior decorator's art. It impresses even the wealthy stock brokers who patronize her. Here comes a client. The slim, beautifully gowned young lady at the reception desk glides forward. She is certainly charming.

"I am a broker," he introduces himself. "I have some inside information on a certain stock, but I might be double crossed in a stock market as uncertain as this. Some men want me to come into a pool with them. I am anxious to go in, and also anxious to stay out. It may be that Miss Smith can help me come to a decision."

"Certainly," replies the reception girl with a smile that is charming. "She can do that by reading the stars, by finding out if the planets are in a favorable position for you. Simply let me have your name and address and I'll arrange an appointment with Miss Smith.

"The fee for a single service is only one hundred dollars, for a consultation. The monthly fee is two hundred dollars, or two thousand four hundred dollars yearly, for which Miss Smith will mail you a complete monthly forecast on the first of every month."

"Let me see how much Miss Smith tells me on this first visit and I'll discuss the monthly arrangement later," the broker visitor smilingly agrees.

"Very well," the girl says as she picks up a beautiful gold appointment book and runs her blue eyes down the page. "You are lucky. It's now about nine forty-five and I see Miss Smith has an opening at ten forty-five. If you'll wait for her, I'll put your name down."

The broker agrees to wait and pays over two crisp fifty-dollar bills from a well-filled wallet. He is taken to another office, small, yet luxuriously furnished, is given a comfortable chair and some copies of financial magazines to read. The reception girl returns at the moment of ten forty-five, and ushers the broker into one of the most striking offices he has ever seen.

It is a room almost forty feet long and twenty-five feet wide, with walls magnificently paneled and hand carved. In the center is a table, massive and impressive. On one end of it is a giant globe on a huge swivel. Painted on this globe are the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Suspended over it is a disk on which are arranged planets and stars which can be moved at will.

As the broker enters the room a stately woman of uncertain age rises to greet him. He is introduced to Portentia Smith. He is frankly skeptical. He is asked the month of his birth. He gives it, and Miss Smith arranges her globe and disk. She says, with eyes that never leave his, and in words which never falter:

"According to the stars you are married to a woman named Elizabeth. She is slightly younger than you. Your children are seven and ten, the younger being a boy and the elder a girl. Their names are Harold and Betty. You own a Packard automobile."

The broker can hardly believe his ears. Every word is true. Miss Smith says that she is now ready for any

question he cares to ask, that she has given these facts about himself merely to show she possesses the power to make the stars reveal facts to her.

"Miss Smith," he commences, "I'd heard a great deal about you, but your reputation does not even do you justice. Before we go any further, let me give you a retainer for the monthly service your assistant suggested."

Raising her left hand on which reposes a remarkable emerald held in place by a platinum band engraved with the planets, in each of which are inserted star-shaped diamonds of richest blue white brilliance, Miss Smith smilingly rejects his offer, advising him that business matters involving money are not of interest to her and that he should see the cashier on the way out. This further impresses the visitor, who asks:

"Miss Smith, I have a chance to get in a pool by buying five thousand shares of Blank stock three points below the market. I like the stock, but frankly I am afraid of the crowd in the pool with me. I want your advice."

The star gazer takes a piece of paper on which are drawn stars, makes astronomical designs on it, compares the signs of the Zodiac governing his birth month, and the present month, arranges the planets on the overhanging disk, does what seems to her visitor some higher mathematical problems, and then gives her decision.

"This deal is a bad one for you. The overhanging dark clouds obscure the brighter ones for you just now. The stars are not right for your immediate success, and generally I advise you to leave the deal alone."

Miss Smith arises, signifying the interview is over.

The pool in which the broker had been invited to participate is formed

without him, the European situation grows worse, the market falls and Miss Smith has a "client" who firmly believes her advice because she saved him at least \$100,000.

Any one reading the true incident above might have his faith in fortune tellers strengthened or revived, but, wait!

The day prior to the visit of our lucky stock broker friend, Miss Smith had been consulted by another broker. This broker had the same story to tell. He wanted to go in the pool to buy Blank stock, but he, too, was afraid of a double cross.

After her usual rigmarole Miss Smith advised him to *go* into the pool. One broker had to win—one had to lose!

She would get one steadfast client out of it, no matter what happened.

II

THE believer in fortune tellers may say:

"All right; we'll admit Miss Smith made a mistake on the advice she gave the first broker—but *she* didn't make the error. She simply read the stars, and if *they* gave her the wrong information, and the first broker's 'control stars' indicated success when it didn't come, you can't blame Miss Smith. Also, if Miss Smith is not genuinely able to read the stars, how did she know the name of the broker's wife and children, and their ages?"

Here the believer grins all over. He certainly has the skeptic stopped now.

Let's ask our friend, John Mulholland, former college professor, who took up magic as a profession and who, as a vice president of the Society of American Magicians, has spent all his spare time in the last ten years investi-

gating fortune tellers, soothsayers, star gazers, and fake mediums.

"Easy," said Mulholland. "The method Miss Smith used to obtain her information is one that has been in use by fortune tellers since telephones were invented.

"What happened was this. When the broker gave his name to the reception girl he started a chain of investigation into his whole life. The first step the girl took after putting him in a private office was to telephone the broker's office, explain that she was with such and such a newspaper and wanted Mrs. Broker's home telephone number. The unsuspecting operator at the other end promptly gave the number.

"The reception girl then phoned Mrs. Blank and stated that she was the such and such photographic studio and that the rotogravure section of a newspaper had requested her to make an appointment to photograph her with her children. She then asked and obtained Mrs. Broker's maiden name, her children's names and ages.

"Then she asked Mrs. Broker if she could have the photographer picture them in the family automobile. Obviously the next question brought out the name of the car. This information the assistant gave Miss Smith, who was then ready for the 'consultation.'

"The following day probably pictures were taken, to avoid the possibility of Mr. Broker even suspecting anything. If he hadn't signed up for the year's service, no photographer would call. Miss Smith had the hundred dollar fee, and it wouldn't make much difference whether Mr. Broker suspected or not.

"There's another ramification of the picture-making angle. Suppose one of Mr. Broker's children, or wife, died

within a year or two, or while he was a client of the soothsayer. It would be a simple matter to give a fake medium one of the pictures taken (no proof of which was ever shown the family), and later have a "spirit photo" reproduced for Mr. Broker at some huge price."

III

ANN TARBELL was a pretty widow of twenty-six. She had some money—about six thousand dollars, and was undecided whether she should continue work as a clerk in a Wall Street specialty shop, or marry Charlie Burns, who said he was a cashier of a fairly large printing corporation. While walking in the Bowling Green section of New York on her way to work one morning, she was attracted by an odd sign—neat, dignified, which read: "The Swami knows all. Consultation invited."

On an impulse she went in.

A long, poorly lighted hall led to an equally dimly lit anteroom. Ann nervously wondered what had possessed her to come, but it was too late to back out, for a well-dressed and dapper young man was greeting her with a cheery "Good morning."

Ann explained that she'd like a consultation. Without asking her name, or any questions, he requested Ann to give him a glove, a handkerchief, or other piece of wearing apparel, as "the Swami gets the answers from the touch of your personality contained in something personal."

She gave him a handkerchief and he left the room. Returning a few moments later, he stated that the Swami would see her. He paused to warn her that "the Swami is controlled by the Unknown and Unseen," and must be permitted to talk without inter-

ruption after the consultation has started.

He led her into a chamber fitted up as an Oriental temple, or at least what Ann thought an Oriental temple would be.

A huge bronze brazier in one corner of the room, Joss sticks burning at the feet of a prodigious Buddha, an oil-cloth roll on which were painted the signs of the Zodiac, a great chart of a nude form, and a picture of a ghost made up the decorations.

In the center of the room was the table without which no seer or fortune teller operates. There were but two chairs in the room, and the assistant waved Ann into one while the Swami took the other.

"Let me have your hand," he said, as he sat down.

Ann felt repelled at the touch of his fingers, for his hand was dirty, flabby, moist, almost deathlike in its limpness. She was glad when he dropped her fingers after giving them a tight squeeze.

"He that knows all will now speak," the assistant intoned. "You say nothing." He left the room.

Alone with this soothsayer with dirty hands, shabby, kimono-like gown and weird manner, Ann doubly regretted coming to see him, but as he began to talk the fear dropped from her, for his deep monotone was soothing, almost hypnotizing.

"My child," he commenced, "you come to me in doubt about something. You are uncertain about a love affair. You are wondering if you should marry. I receive from this handkerchief of yours certain impulses that tell me to advise you to wed.

"You were married. You are a widow. You should marry again, and soon.

"I see the shoulders of a man who is neither large nor small, neither stout nor thin. He is not over thirty. You have met him only recently, yet he sways your emotions. Take him for your husband. Your own late husband. From the Other World tells me to bid you do this.

"Bring the boy to me if you still doubt. But that is up to you. You, at least, should return for more advice. The fee is five dollars for this reading. Longer readings are ten dollars. No more now, come again."

As Ann hesitated, stunned by this apparent power of the seer, the assistant came in the room as though called, although Ann did not see the Swami make a move. He ushered Ann from the Swami's presence, and before she knew it, had collected the five-dollar fee and had escorted her to the outer door.

Ann could hardly wait to reach a pay station to phone Charlie. She was so unnerved that she tried three times before she got the right number. Ann almost shouted into the phone:

"Charlie! I've been to a great fortune teller. He says I should marry you and I never said a word about you. He's wonderful. Get some time off this lunch hour. I will too, and we can meet. I want you to go to him with me."

Ann didn't give Charlie time to think. An engagement was made to meet in front of the Swami's office. Came noon. As Ann saw him come swinging down the street, she ran to greet him. Her eyes gleamed as she told him of her experiences.

Charlie wanted to have lunch before they went to the Swami, but Ann emphatically stated she "just couldn't eat" now. So they went at once to the seer's parlors.

Ann told the assistant that they wanted a ten-dollar reading each. Would the Swami receive them together, telling their fortunes together? This couldn't be done, the assistant replied. "The control only takes each mind and body separately."

They arranged for Charlie to enter the Swami's salon first.

When he came out, obviously amazed, Ann threw her arms about him and kissed him.

"Did he say you should marry?" she excitedly asked.

"He sure did, honey," Charlie replied. "And better than that he described you to a 'T.' He must be guided by spirits or something. Now, you go in and see what happens."

Ann was ushered back into the office. Dirty and queer looking as the Swami was, Ann could have kissed him, she was so happy. Her consultation was a repetition of his earlier advice, but more elaborate. The Swami even predicted that her first child would be a boy.

So Ann and Charlie were married the following week.

IV

IMMEDIATELY following the wedding, they went to Atlantic City for a week's honeymoon. All seemed wonderful until the third day, when Charlie's money ran out. "Hadn't had time to go to the bank," he said.

Ann gave him a three-hundred-dollar draft on her savings bank, and her bank book so the Atlantic City bank could arrange the transfer of the funds. And they had a glorious time.

Back in New York they picked out an ideal little apartment and furnished it on the installment plan. Things seemed to be moving along nicely. Ann blessed the Swami daily.

One evening after they had been married less than a month, Charlie told Ann he didn't believe in a wife having money in her own name. He pointed out that it should be in their joint names, "so if either died, the other could draw."

Ann agreed and gave Charlie her bank book to open the joint account.

Once or twice afterwards she mentioned money matters to Charlie, but he kissed her and told her "not to worry her pretty head about money." Ann worried a little about this, as the collectors from the installment furniture house were calling to tell her that the last two installments were due, but when she mentioned the visits to Charlie, he flew in a rage and left the house.

He never returned!

Ann went to the firm where he was employed as a "cashier" and found that Charlie had been a shipping department clerk. She went to the bank to see about the "joint account," and found Charlie had never opened one, and that he'd withdrawn all her balance in cash. She went to the office of the Swami with her story, saying she'd never have married unless he'd advised her. The Swami had even forgotten he'd ever talked to her. He wasn't interested in her.

A child was to be born. Absolutely penniless, heartbroken, and unable to work now, she tried suicide by leaping from Spuyten Duyvil Bridge. The attempt failed. While recovering, Ann told her story to an attorney, who brought the story to the attention of the Society of American Magicians.

Mulholland investigated the Swami's method of fortune telling. He gave the result to the proper authorities, and the Swami was arrested and fined. He left New York, but probably is back in

his nefarious trade in some other city under some other name.

v

LET us learn from Mulholland how the Swami knew that Ann was a widow, that she was in love, and that she had come to him for aid in solving her problems. She had spoken not a word in his presence, or in front of his attendant; she had given no hint of her past.

Mulholland pointed out that all the Swami had to do was rely on his wits when Ann appeared, and he says almost all fortune tellers' wits are exceedingly sharp.

"When Ann came in," Mulholland explained, "her costume consisted of a dark dress, a hat of last year's style, and new shoes. She wore a string of beads and a wedding ring, no other jewelry. From this, the soothsayer told her 'fortune.'

"The wedding ring showed that she had been married. It was a better kind than the dress or hat she wore. The dress looked as though it was the type worn for 'second mourning.' He deduced she was probably a widow in reduced circumstances.

"Her shoes were of a brand widely advertised to help foot troubles; hence she was working at a position that kept her on her feet, obviously something she never had to do when her husband was alive. The beads looked like a gift, they were so new. Naturally he figured a gift of that type had come from a man.

"She would not have come to him if she had not been in doubt about something. What else could it be that worried her than the question, 'Should I remarry?' Figuring and partially correct in his surmise, that the widow did want to remarry, he told her to.

Why not tell her what she wanted to hear, he reasoned.

"He had no interest in whether she did remarry or not, all he wanted was to tell her something that would convince her he was a marvel. It is in these ways of making deductions and giving advice that the fortune teller, intent on nothing but making money, is a menace to society.

"Even men carry marks of identification that give the seer a chance to make deductions and make statements that puzzle the smartest people.

"Men do not need to wear fraternal order buttons to furnish the fortune teller with clues. Their rings, watch chains, cut of their hair, clothes, shoes, even speech or mannerisms are sufficient to tell him a number of obvious things, which, when translated into his flowery and strange words, make it all seem very impressive. And on these reputations are built his fortune, for as his fame spreads so do his fees go up."

vi

HELEN NOLAN was a rabid radio fan. She listened in every spare moment. She was in her early thirties, unmarried, a school-teacher with much time to herself as she rarely went out, and lived in Los Angeles.

Early in 1930 she heard a certain astrologer give a talk on the radio about the stars and their positions. He invited the listeners to give the date of their births, and mail them to him for a "free reading." Miss Nolan sent for everything offered on the air, whether it was baby food or literature on the latest automobile. She wrote the astrologer, giving her birthday.

A few days later she received a reply which was most vague, although it did give certain characteristics that Miss

Nolan felt were hers. Inclosed with the letter from the astrologer was an offer to send a complete horoscope to her for one dollar. It would give a complete history of all those born on the same day, as well as a complete analysis of a character. As an added inducement, a dream book would be sent free, which would explain in detail anything that the reader ever dreamed.

Miss Nolan hastened to send the dollar. Within a short time the dream book and the horoscope came. Miss Nolan carefully studied it, and found that, according to the book, she was totally unfitted for teaching school. And even though she had been in the school system for thirteen years, because the horoscope told her that she was cut out to be an actress, she resigned her position within a month after receiving the book!

She registered at the casting office which supplies Hollywood motion picture studios as a "type," and waited over four months before she was even called for a test. Elated at what she called her "success," she made an appointment to see the astrologist personally. After paying a fee of one hundred dollars she was ushered into his presence.

After studying the signs of the Zodiac, and deliberating for some time, he asked her if she had any inclination to act. Miss Nolan earnestly assured him that she had. The stars were right and the seer began to outline her great future.

Although Miss Nolan did not hear from her screen test she kept going back faithfully to the astrologer for private readings. He continued to tell her that she would be successful, and to have patience.

Several months had passed from the time she had resigned her position as a

teacher. The constant drain on her resources had practically beggared her, and the constant strain on her mentality had gradually broken down her health. The principal of her former school saw her on the street one day. Aghast at her apparent ill health, the principal stopped and questioned Miss Nolan.

She poured out the story of her attempt to become an actress and the part the astrologist had played. The principal immediately took action. He reported the case to the district attorney of Los Angeles County, but it brought no action, because astrologists asserted that their predictions are based on absolute science, quoting the fact that the United States Government employs astronomers and that "the work is similar"—a ridiculous claim.

The principal, however, took such an aggressive stand against the broadcasting station that the station banned the astrologer.

Miss Nolan left for the back hills of California, where she stayed several months recuperating. On her return to the city she started a campaign against all seers and soothsayers which proved most successful.

It is a known fact that in the movie settlements on the West Coast fortune tellers find a most fertile field. Cases are being reported to the Society of American Magicians constantly involving film players, and were the names to be made public movie goers would be shocked and amazed.

The author of these stories and Mulholland were talking recently about the broadcasting methods of seers, and the case of Miss Nolan came up. Mulholland stated that there were hundreds of such cases yearly, some worse, in which the victim actually lost all sense of judgment.

"The horoscope 'racket'," the magician stated, "is a most profitable source of revenue for the fakers. One astrologer of whom I am thinking, it may not be the one Miss Nolan heard, received over one hundred thousand letters in response to his radio 'free reading' offer. To all he sent the same letter referring to the one dollar horoscope book, with the dream book thrown in. Out of this one hundred thousand more than thirty-one thousand letters were received inclosing the dollar! Think of it, thirty per cent of his listeners fell for the proposition!

"The horoscopes for which he gets a dollar cost him in Chicago, at a fortune tellers' supply house, the huge sum of three cents each. The dream book costs but one cent. As the one who asks for the 'free reading' must inclose a self-addressed envelope, it costs nothing for addressing or mailing the dollar offer. The mailing of the dream book and

horoscope costs three cents. So for the dollar he receives he has only seven cents expenses. It's a nice business!

"I saw in this Chicago supply house a list of one thousand fortune tellers who use from fifty to one hundred thousand horoscopes regularly. This dealer handles so-called occult literature and apparatus. Here I learned that fashions in fortune telling change like fashions in hats, but the principle of it all is just the same—'Kid the public and get the money.'

"Some clients demand the involved, pseudo-astronomical phraseology of the astrologer, or the pseudo-mathematics and fantastic palaver about 'name vibrations' of the numerologist. Others are satisfied with just a lot of blah from the seer. But whatever method is used, the 'predictions' are the same bunk, just plain bunk, and many times cause death, misery and poverty!"

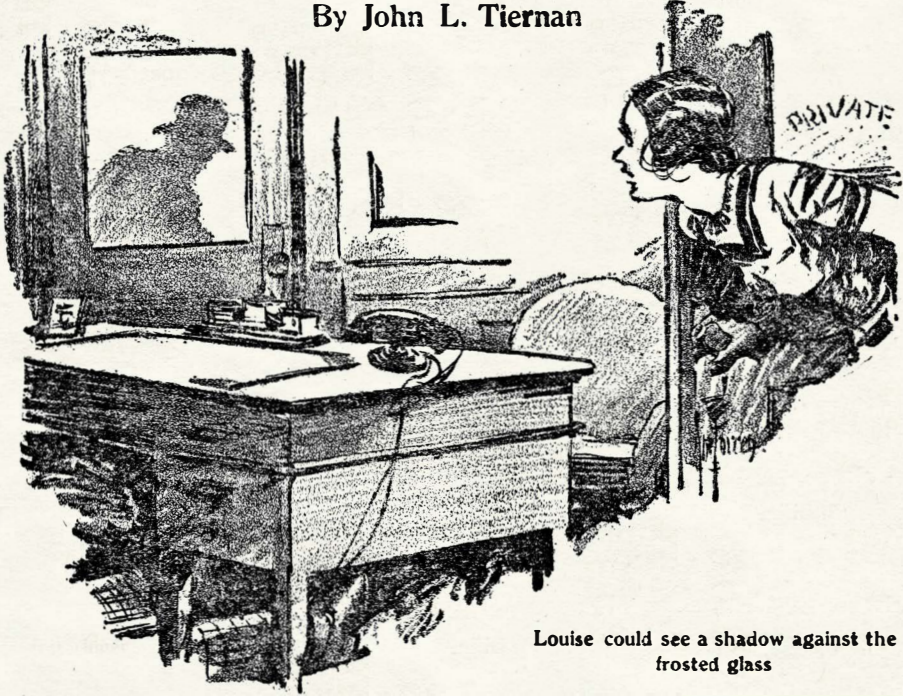


WHAT is the uncanny power which enables some men and women to read the human brain? What is the power by which they read messages unseen and unheard almost as soon as they are formed in the mind? Mr. Proskauer is going to tell you what that "power" is. Next week, he is going to expose the fortune tellers who parade as "mind readers," whether they are rajahs who gaze into crystals or whatever guise they assume.

Reserve your copy of *DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY* at your news dealers ahead of time. It has been reported to us that fortune tellers in some places, acting out a threat they made, have been buying up all copies of the magazines in an effort to suppress the exposure.

Dumb

By John L. Tiernan



Louise could see a shadow against the frosted glass

Schuyler Didn't Really Expect His Partner to Hit Him With an Ax, Even if He Had Tried to Steal \$1,000,000

SCHUYLER was just about ready to leave. He gazed across the room admiringly at the pigskin bag. It was a good-looking bag—neat, but not gaudy. And it was built along lines that gave it the pleasant illusion of bulging. Of course it wasn't actually bulging. But there was plenty in the bag—plenty of good old United States currency. There was more than a million dollars that Schuyler and his partners had taken away from shop girls, clerks, soda jerkers, garage workers, saps in all walks of life.

Schuyler thought of his partners—and he grinned. He had to admit that it was going to be kind of tough on

them. That is, the shock of it would be tough—at first. But men as smart as Pope and Taibott shouldn't remain broke for long. Their ideas were too good.

Schuyler looked down at the elaborately engraved ticket on his desk. It was salmon-colored—a beautiful thing. Schuyler's lips twisted as he read:

ROYAL CALEDONIAN SWEEPSTAKES, LTD.

ONE MILLION POUNDS STERLING

PRICE PER TICKET—ONE POUND

Schuyler read the ticket slowly. Then he inspected the engraving on the back. Then he chuckled.

"I might have bought one myself," he said.

He fanned himself with the ticket for a moment. It was very hot—much too hot for comfort. Outside, the streets of New York were baking. But it wouldn't be long before Schuyler would be far away from all this heat—out on the ocean, bound for South America.

Schuyler suddenly thought that it would be only fitting that he should leave a note. He examined his watch—still a few minutes left. He took out his pen and selecting a piece of expensive stationery from a drawer, wrote rapidly for a moment:

DEAR POPE:

Sorry, but I have found it necessary to leave town. My absence may cause you some financial embarrassment. But cheer up. Here's a free ticket on the Caledonian Sweepstakes. You might win it.

S.

Schuyler studied the letter. He found it very funny. And he knew how funny Pope would find the idea of himself, or anybody else for that matter, winning the Caledonian Sweepstakes.

Schuyler sealed the note with the ticket and placed it in a prominent position on Pope's desk—where he was certain to find it the first thing Monday morning. Schuyler knew it was going to be a shock to Pope—and to Talbott, too.

But he would be a long way off, on Monday.

He glanced at his watch. Twenty to twelve—half an hour to boat time. It was time to leave—to fade out. He listened and he could hear the typewriter clicking in the front office. He decided to say good-by to the stenographer—the dumb one. Even dumb stenographers got suspicious at times.

And he didn't want any suspicions today. He wanted to get a good start on Pope and on Talbott.

He pressed the buzzer on his desk and he composed himself while he waited the response. When Louise, the dumb girl called Louise, answered he looked very businesslike, very dignified.

He cleared his throat.

"Miss Long," he said, "I'm off now for the week-end. To all callers I'll be back Monday morning—bright and early.

The girl nodded. Schuyler wondered if she were suspicious. She was awfully dumb, but sometimes even the dumb ones get suspicious. However, Schuyler wasn't going to worry particularly about *her*. He wondered at times if she knew what it was all about. He liked them dumb.

"All right, sir," said Louise.

She turned and closed the door behind her. Schuyler grinned. He had got away with that. He was in a hurry now. He grasped his imported Panama, strode across the room and picked up the pigskin bag. It gave him a thrill to lift that bag. It would give any one a thrill to lift a million dollars—in good old greenbacks.

Schuyler had to hurry. He was going directly to the pier and he was going to lock himself in his state room on the Empress Xenia, New York to Buenos Aires. He would emerge at sea as Dr. Jerome, pleasure-bound to the Argentine.

Schuyler was a pretty smart fellow. He thought so himself.

He walked toward the private doorway to the hall. He intended to duck out without again seeing the stenographer.

A man carrying a million dollars, a stolen million dollars, can look

pretty suspicious—even to a dumb stenographer.

II

HE was almost to the door, his hand was extended to grab the knob, when he stopped suddenly. There was a shadow outside the door. The shadow was Talbot's. Schuyler quickly tiptoed back to his desk, took off his hat and sat down.

Schuyler waited, rigid, while Talbott let himself in with a key. Talbott looked very slick in a light herringbone suit—almost cool for a day of such terrific heat. He nodded to Schuyler, stared about the room searchingly with his cold gray eyes.

There was a tense moment which Schuyler wished had not occurred. He had to struggle to get control of himself. It was quite a shock—seeing Talbott.

"Back from Chicago, eh," said Schuyler.

Talbott looked him over, grinning.

"Yeah, just in. You intending to go away?"

He was looking at the pigskin bag resting beside Schuyler.

"Yes, and I got to go pretty quick," said Schuyler. "Just about can make my train for Lake Dorrance."

"Ah!" said Talbott. "A lovely place. Especially in this infernally hot weather. It's quiet, cool, peaceful and nice crowd—a lot of dumb ones."

Talbott wiped his pink neck with a silk handkerchief and slumped into a chair opposite Schuyler. He was smiling affably. And although Schuyler said he had to hurry, Talbott wasn't urging him to be gone.

"It is awfully hot," agreed Schuyler.

"And I guess some people feel it more than others," said Talbott.

Still holding his silk handkerchief in his hand, he lifted a handbag he had brought with him and placed it on the desk. Schuyler noticed for the first time that it was a pigskin bag—very similar to his. Talbott, too, noticed the similarity, grinned.

"Just alike, eh," he said. "Good week-end bags?"

Schuyler didn't like the way Talbott laughed.

"I've got to run, Jim," he said.

Talbott was still looking around searchingly. For quite a while his eyes rested on Schuyler's bag. Then they wandered over to where the note lay so prominently on Pope's desk. Schuyler felt a colder chill. He wished he hadn't written that note.

"Ah, what made you decide to go away so suddenly?" asked Talbott.

"Well, you know, the heat's hell on one," said Schuyler. "And everybody else was out of town. Pope's away until Monday and—and I wasn't expecting you."

"I know you weren't expecting me," said Talbott, "and I guess the heat is giving you trouble right now. You look hot."

His eyes were wandering from Schuyler's bag to the note on Pope's desk.

"Well, I guess I got to run along, Jim," said Schuyler. "Got to make that train."

Talbott's gaze was now concentrated on that note—the note that so conspicuously bore the name Al Pope. Talbott put his elbows on the desk and, with his fists supporting his chin, turned slowly from the note to Schuyler.

"I left a note," said Schuyler, "to let Al Pope know where I was—in case he came in."

"A good idea," he said, "to let the

boys know where you are when you go away—*suddenly!*”

He stood up, walked over to Pope's desk, lifted the note, stared at the name on it.

“I got to run along, Jim,” said Schuyler. “Got to make my train.”

Talbott showed his teeth.

“Go ahead and run,” he said, “if you can run fast enough.”

Then he picked up the note and tore it open. Schuyler went pale, lifted the bag with the money and set it in front of him on the table.

“You win, Talbott,” he said, “I'll split—fifty-fifty.”

Talbott read the note—and laughed.

“Jeez, this is funny,” he said. “Jeez, you are a funny guy. We three peddle a million dollars' worth of fake lottery tickets and then you grab the dough and leave poor old Pope and me one of the tickets and hope we win. Jeez, you've got a sense of humor!”

Schuyler's face had gone very white. His eyes narrowed.

“Don't kid me, Talbott,” he said. “You aren't worrying about Pope. Come on . . . we'll cut. Only I want to do it quick. I want to duck.”

Talbott walked back across the room and sat down at the desk. He calmly took a pair of rubber gloves from his pocket and, grinning, his elbows resting on the desk, he slowly pulled them on.

“A hot day for such work as this,” he said, “but it's got to be done . . . No, Schuyler, I'm sorry, but there will be no split. Your idea is the best. One guy ducks with everything—*me!*”

Schuyler watched him incredulously. He laughed hysterically.

“What's the idea?” he said. “You couldn't get away with anything here. I'd—”

Talbott reached over and slowly

opened the bag — the bag he had brought.

Schuyler's expression turned to horror. But he still laughed shrilly.

“You couldn't pull a stunt like that here,” he said, “because I'd— Why, man, you couldn't kill any one in this office, because I'd— You're crazy, Talbott, you couldn't hit me with that hatchet because I'd yell and—”

“I won't, eh?” snarled Talbott. “What do you think I brought this hatchet up here for? Why, you sap, I found out at the bank you'd copped that dough. The only break I got was I got here before you beat it!”

“But you can't do that— You can't hit me—I'll yell, I'll—”

“Yeah?” snarled Talbott as his arms swung across the desk in an arc.

Schuyler fell backwards. Talbott grabbed up the bag with the million dollars in it almost before Schuyler slumped out of the chair onto the floor. And he took the back stairs out of the building.

III

LOUISE didn't like her job with the Schuyler Importing Company. She had only been there four days, but she already was looking for another place. She didn't like Schuyler or the men that visited him. They all had a manner of grinning at her as if she wasn't quite right in her mind.

There was something very mysterious about the business. She couldn't make heads or tails out of it. There were a lot of mysterious phone calls and mysterious accounts that she could not understand. And all the time men were coming in and grinning at her.

At noon on Saturday, a very hot noon, she sat before her typewriter, listening intently for Mr. Schuyler to leave. As soon as he went, Louise her-

self was going to duck. It was too hot to work.

She was very startled to hear voices in Mr. Schuyler's office. She decided that some one had come in the private door. She couldn't make out exactly what they were saying. Of course, she could have gone to the door and listened, but Louise wouldn't do that.

After a short while the voices stopped and Louise ran to the door and listened.

All was absolutely quiet in Mr. Schuyler's office. She decided that Mr. Schuyler and his visitor had probably just stepped out. She opened the door to peek.

The outer door was closing. A man was going out. Louise for a moment could see a shadow against the frosted glass. Nothing but a blurred shadow. Then she saw something else and she felt faint, reeling.

"Oh," she gasped and she closed the door quickly. She found it hard to breathe. The sound of riveting machines across the way were suddenly beating on her brain.

"Oh," she said again and slumped into the chair before her typewriter. She sat there, breathing hard, dazed for probably two or three minutes. Then she jumped up. She felt a sudden desire to get out of that office, to get away from—

Without a hat, without even an idea of where she was going, Louise dashed out into the hall. It was deserted. She shuddered. She felt a sudden overwhelming urge to see some one human—alive!

An elevator shot past the floor. Louise ran to the cage, pressed a button, held to it. In a minute an outraged elevator operator opened the door.

"Say, what's the idear of—" he bellowed.

But something in the look of Louise made him stop.

"There's—there's Mr. Schuyler in there," she stammered, "and I was sitting in the other room."

"Yeah? What of it?" demanded the operator.

"Some one came in and hit him . . . hit him with an ax. And I walked in just as the man that did it was going out the door."

"What did he look like?" demanded the operator.

"I haven't the least idea," said Louise.

She fell to the floor in a faint.

IV

INSPECTOR HOGAN stood in the center of the office of the late Chris Schuyler, importer, surveying the scene of murder. His straw hat was back on his head. His hands were poised at his hips. He shook his head despairingly.

"Bad, bad," he muttered, "a butcher did that one . . . a butcher walked in broad daylight into the Excelsior Building . . . and walked out again."

Hogan's experts were on their knees around the desk. Jenkins was leaning over the body. Cohn was examining the hatchet. Crawford was examining the pigskin bag.

"This is the most amazing thing I've ever heard of," said Jenkins, his voice tinged curiously with admiration.

"Never mind that!" snapped Hogan. "You're paid to find facts . . . stick to them."

Hogan was in a bad mood. It was a terrifically hot afternoon and this was a particularly ugly case. He didn't like it at all.

"There was no struggle," said Jen-

kins. "It seems that the murderer merely came in here and beaned this chap with an ax."

"But before he beaned him," said Cohn, "he put on a pair of rubber gloves. There's not a finger-print mark on this handle."

Hogan groaned.

"Do you expect me to believe that this guy sat back," he demanded indignantly, "and let somebody put on a pair of rubber gloves and crown him with a hatchet!"

"He did exactly that," said Cohn, "or the murderer walked along Broadway at high noon wearing rubber gloves and carrying a hatchet."

Hogan wiped the perspiration from his brow, shook his head for the twentieth time.

"Is that dumb dame outside," he said, "is that dumb dame in fit condition yet to talk?"

"She's still a little hysterical," said Stewart, who was standing between the offices. Hogan could still hear the sobbing Louise.

The elevator operator, who had been standing in a corner, pop-eyed, stepped forward.

"I tell you she's lying," he said. "I never took anybody up to this office this morning."

Hogan laughed harshly.

"Of course you didn't, sap," he said. "The person that killed this fellow walked up the back steps, did his job and walked out again."

The elevator operator muttered stubbornly. Jenkins stood up.

"She's probably lying, chief," he said. "Her story sounds awful fishy."

"Oh, no," said Hogan. "Nobody could be so dumb as to make up a story like that. You'd just have to be born that dumb. It's got to be true."

"I can't understand," said Jenkins,

"how anybody could be within eight feet of a murderer and not run over and open a door and take a good look at him."

"It's a gift," said Hogan. He walked out into the next room and Louise was so entirely dejected that he couldn't find the heart to be stern with her.

"Listen, sister," he said, "you've got to pull yourself together."

There was no doubt that she was badly frightened. She was pitiful.

"I—I don't know anything about it," she said between sobs. "I've only been working here a week and I don't know what it's all about."

Hogan was inclined to believe that she didn't know what it was all about.

"But, the business," asked Hogan. "What did they do here? What did they import?"

She sighed.

"Mr.—Mr.—" she stammered.

"Hogan is the name," said Hogan.

"Mr. Hogan, I haven't got any idea what the business was about. I never could find out. They used to dictate letters to me and I'd answer the phone, but—but I never could understand what it's all about."

Hogan flushed angrily.

"Listen, young lady," he said, "you are not as dumb as all that. Nobody could be."

Jenkins was at his elbow. He shook his arm.

"Aw, you might as well lay off, chief," he said. "She's probably just as dumb as she looks and . . . and I got the whole case cracked, anyway!"

Hogan swung around, a bright light in his eyes.

"What—what's that?" he said.

"Easy," said Jenkins. "This is the headquarters of that gang that's been flooding the country with fake lottery

tickets. And Schuyler tried to run out with a million dollar take on Al Pope. Here's the note and a ticket that Pope found when he came in and surprised Schuyler."

Hogan, hands trembling with excitement, grasped a crumpled note and a ticket on the fake Royal Caledonian Sweepstakes.

"Where did you get this?" demanded Hogan.

"On the floor, chief," said Jenkins, "on the floor on the further side of the desk—where Al Pope dropped it just before he swung the hatchet that killed Schuyler."

Inspector Hogan grinned, looked from one to another of his detectives.

"Tell headquarters," he said, "to get that racketeer Pope—for murder! He's the man!"

Cohn and Crawford nodded and were gone. Hogan, grinning, turned to the girl secretary, who was still weeping.

"Well, sister," he said, "you made an awful botch of this. But just the same we've got this case solved. Al Pope did it."

Inspector Hogan rubbed his hands together. He felt good, despite the oppressive heat.

V

AT nine o'clock that night Al Pope sat in the anteroom of the Schuyler Importing Company. Around him were grouped three burly detectives. Pope was looking them square in the eye.

"Out with it," snarled Hogan. "You might as well come through with it, Pope. We've got you cold!"

Pope looked slowly from one to the other of the detectives and grinned.

"You mean warm, don't you, Hogan?" he said to the inspector. "It's

kind of warm in here." He ran his hand along his wilted collar.

Jenkins stood over him menacingly.

"Aw, let me crack him one, chief!" he said. "This guy thinks it's a joke."

Hogan held up his hand to stay Jenkins.

"Wait!" he said. Then he turned to Pope. "You are just being a fool," he said. "You might as well crack. We could send you to the chair right now. You and Schuyler were in on this crooked lottery deal. You sneaked into Schuyler's office and caught him about to beat it with the dough. The wise-cracking letter he wrote you, the letter he didn't expect you to see until Monday, proves it. The rest of the story tells itself."

Al Pope was looking squarely at the inspector.

"Listen, Hogan," he said calmly, "I admit that I was in on this lottery deal—"

"You bet you were in on the lottery deal," snarled Hogan.

"Yes," said Pope, "but that isn't murder. I haven't been near this office all day.

"I didn't know anything about this until you fellows picked me up at the Centre Hotel. What about Talbott? He was in on it, too."

Hogan laughed dryly.

"That's it," he said. "One rat turns on another. We'll have Talbott in a little while if he's anywhere in New York. But you've got to explain a lot more than Talbott. What about that letter?"

Pope shrugged his shoulders.

"Maybe," he said calmly, "Talbott came here and found Schuyler ready to leave, maybe he smelled a rat and opened the letter, addressed to *me*, and then killed Schuyler."

Hogan groaned, wiped his perspiring

forehead with a big cotton handkerchief. He had to admit, to himself, that there might be logic in Pope's words.

He was sure that one of the partners in the fake lottery killed Schuyler. But—which one?

"If that dumb stenographer," he muttered, "had only run across the room and taken a look out that door we wouldn't have all this stalling."

Again Pope shrugged.

"I can't help it because the stenographer Schuyler hired was dumb," he said. "But I do know that I didn't kill him."

"Yeah?" said Hogan. "Well, you can rest assured that I'm going to find out who did kill him before any one leaves this office to-night."

They could hear Louise, still sobbing, in the other room. She was with a police matron. The body had been removed, but Louise was disturbed by the fact that there had been a body in the room. Hogan listened to her sobs and shook his head despairingly.

At that moment a door opened and a detective rushed in.

"They're bringing in Talbott now!" he announced.

Hogan's face lightened.

"Great!" he said. "Where did they get him?"

"He was at the Hotel Greenway—sound asleep."

There were footsteps in the hall and Hogan motioned for quiet as the door began to open. Then Talbott walked in—with two detectives. There was consternation written on his face.

"Gentlemen," he said. "what's this I hear about poor old—"

"Never mind that grandstand play," snarled Hogan. "Come in here and sit down and answer questions—fast!"

Talbott looked shocked. He looked

searchingly around the room. His eyes met those of Pope for a moment and then he looked away quickly. Pope grinned.

"Hello, Jim," he drawled. "What did you do with the million dollars!"

Talbott, slumping into the chair, looked at his business partner in surprise.

"What do you mean, Al?" he said. "What million dollars?"

Pope laughed.

"Why, the million dollars you copped," he said, "when you came up here and killed Schuyler, you rat!"

"If any one did that job, it's you!" said Talbott.

Hogan was beaming down on them, as upon a couple of erring school boys.

"That's it, boys," he said. "Have it out. But see if you can't get together on this argument and decide which one of you killed Schuyler. Or maybe"—he stroked his chin—"you were both in on it."

"Hogan, I tell you—" said Pope.

"Never mind telling me," said Hogan. "Both of you come into the next room. Maybe that dumb secretary can help us out after all."

Pope and Talbott both looked puzzled. Talbott wet his lips. Then each got up and, escorted by Hogan and the detectives, went into the room where Schuyler had met his death.

"Now, you, Pope," said Hogan, go slowly out that door—the door the murderer went out.

"When you get outside, stand and hold it just a little bit open with your back turned to it."

Pope looked puzzled.

"Why?" he demanded.

"Because," said Hogan, "I want to see if this secretary, this Miss Long, can recognize either of you, from your shadows on the door, as the man who

sneaked out after Schuyler was murdered."

VI

POPE shrugged his shoulders and walked to the door, accompanied by a detective. He went out, the detective leading. Slowly Pope closed the door. A shadow, thrown by an electric light in the hall, was plainly distinguishable upon the glass door. Pope stood still when Hogan yelled to him to do so. Talbott wet his lips as he watched the procedure.

"Now, Miss Long," said Hogan, "can you recognize that shadow. Can you recognize anything familiar about it."

Red-eyed, the girl looked at the door. "What do you mean?" she asked.

Hogan sighed.

"My dear lady," he said. "You saw a man's shadow on that door this afternoon. Is that the shadow you saw? Is there anything familiar about it?"

The girl stared at the shadow of Pope on the door. They all waited in silence—watching her.

"Why," she said finally, "all shadows look alike and . . . and, anyway, I didn't pay much attention to it."

Hogan groaned, called to Pope and the detective to come back. Pope was grinning.

"You might as well try it," said Hogan dejectedly to Talbott.

Talbott was grinning as he went out the door with a detective.

"Now look at him," said Hogan. "Do you make anything out of that shadow?"

"Why, no," said Louise. "Nothing at all."

"Jeez, you're dumb," said Hogan.

He roared to the detectives to bring the two suspects into the other room.

"We'll probably have to knock it out of them," he announced.

Both Talbott and Pope looked at him apprehensively as they marched into the reception room.

Inside the murder room, Louise Long, the secretary, was flushing angrily. She turned to the police matron, her eyes bright with indignation.

"I don't think they should talk about me that way," she said. "You'd think I didn't have any brains at all."

The matron smiled sympathetically.

"You should be more observant, my dear," she said. "If you had been observant and you had thought fast, if you had at least run to the door, this case would have been solved by now."

"Well, I didn't think about it then," said Louise.

She was staring at the brightly polished surface of Schuyler's desk. There was a desk lamp sitting in the middle and the surface of the desk shone like polished glass.

Suddenly Louise, who was sitting in a chair near the wall, bent over until her eyes were almost even with the desk. She frowned. She got up, stepped around to the other side of the desk and bent over until her eyes were again on an angle with the surface.

Still frowning, she straightened and walked to the outer room where Hogan was grilling his two suspects.

"You rats," rasped Hogan, "both came back to town to-day because you suspected Schuyler!"

"I admit I came back," said Pope, "because we were supposed to split Monday. But I had no intention to come to this office until Monday. And, I didn't come!"

"The same goes for me," said Talbott.

"Yeah?" roared Hogan. "Well,

one of you *did* come to this office and one of you smashed in the head of Schuyler. And, so help me God I'm—"

Hogan felt a tug at his elbow. He turned impatiently. The girl secretary was smiling at him.

"Mister Hogan," she said, "maybe I could help you out."

"I doubt it," growled Hogan.

"Well, would it help you if I could tell you that one of these men *was* in here to-day?" asked Louise.

"Would it!" gasped Hogan. "Why, good grief, girl, that's what we've been trying to find out for hours."

The girl was smiling reassuringly.

"Well, I can tell you," she said.

"Well, why didn't you tell us *before*?" roared Hogan.

"Because I just found it out. I just found out that—that—"

"That what?" asked Hogan.

"That Talbott was in here to-day," she said simply.

There was a moment of tense silence as they all stared at her incredulously. It was Talbott who first found words.

"You lie!" he snarled.

"Oh, no," said the girl. "You were in here to-day and I can prove it. You sat at that desk." She turned to Hogan. "Want me to prove it, Mr. Hogan?"

"Lord, yes!"

They followed her into the next room—everyone. The girl walked over to the desk, bent over until her eyes were nearly level with it.

"You see," she said, "there is a smudge on that desk."

Hogan could see a smudge and he said so.

"Well, it wasn't there this morning," said Louise triumphantly.

"But," said Hogan, "what does that prove? That smudge isn't a finger-print!"

The girl grinned.

"I know it isn't a finger-print," she said. "But if you look at that smudge very close you will see that that smudge is a perfect impression of a herring-bone cloth of very nice design—just like the nice suit Mr. Talbott has on."

There was tense silence. The detectives were looking from one to the other.

"The reason I noticed it," said Louise, "is that I always kept Mr. Schuyler's desk very clean. And I know Mr. Talbott left that impression of his elbows on the polished wax to-day because I cleaned that desk this morning and—"

Louise Long was rather rudely pushed aside by Detective Jenkins, who bent over the desk with a magnifying glass.

"You don't need a glass," said Louise, "because if you bend over you can see it—"

"No!" roared Hogan, "He may not need a glass, but what he needs is a new head—the dumb-bell! Why, he's dumber than you are! He missed that one!"

Jenkins, with his glass, straightened up, grasped Talbott's arm, looked at the texture of his suit, bent over the desk again.

"Correct," he said in a monotone. "I mean it is correct that these are perfect impressions of the elbows of Talbott."

"The wax was softened by the heat and took the impressions. He's the guy who sat here—to-day!"

"Outside with him!" roared Hogan. "Outside and—and choke it out of him."

He rushed across the room, held his stubby finger beneath the nose of the quavering Talbott.

"Talbott," he snarled, "you're el-

bow prints are going to send you to the electric chair."

Two detectives grabbed the shoulders of the struggling Talbott. He swung around, almost freed himself and faced Louise Long.

"Do you know what you've done, you little dumb-bell?" he rasped.

"Why—why, no!" stammered Louise.

"Cut it!" snapped Hogan.

The detectives dragged out Talbott. In less than two minutes Jenkins was back in the room—grinning. He walked to a far corner and Hogan joined him. They whispered together.

"Well?" said Hogan.

"Sure," said Jenkins. "What chance did that guy have when he left that pair of elbows on the desk? He came clean."

"And?" said Hogan.

"He told us where he hid the money—in a safe deposit vault. We found the key on him."

"Well," said Hogan, "the great Royal Caledonian Sweepstakes has been drawn and the public gets a break, gets its money back—because a dumb stenographer had more sense than the so-called best minds of the police department."

They walked together to the center of the room.

"Mr. Hogan," said Louise, "have

I done anything I shouldn't have done?"

"Not in the least sweetheart," said Hogan.

A detective broke in on the conversation.

"The newspaper boys in the hallway says a rumor leaked out," said the detective, "that a girl stenographer solved this case."

"How did that get out?" roared Hogan. "If I find the guy that's tipping off newspapermen," he threatened, "I'll have him walking a beat before morning."

Louise was sobbing.

"I don't want any lies about me in the newspapers," she said.

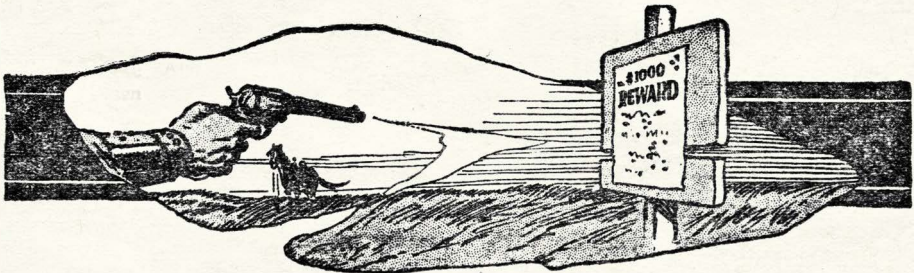
"Your name won't even get in the newspapers if I can help it," said Hogan.

"I'm really sorry that I couldn't have been of some help," sobbed Louise.

"That's all right," said Hogan. "I guess you can go home and—and explain to the newspaper boys on the way out that you weren't any help."

Louise smiled and nodded her head. Quickly she put on her hat and marched out of the room. As the door closed behind her, Hogan solemnly shook his head.

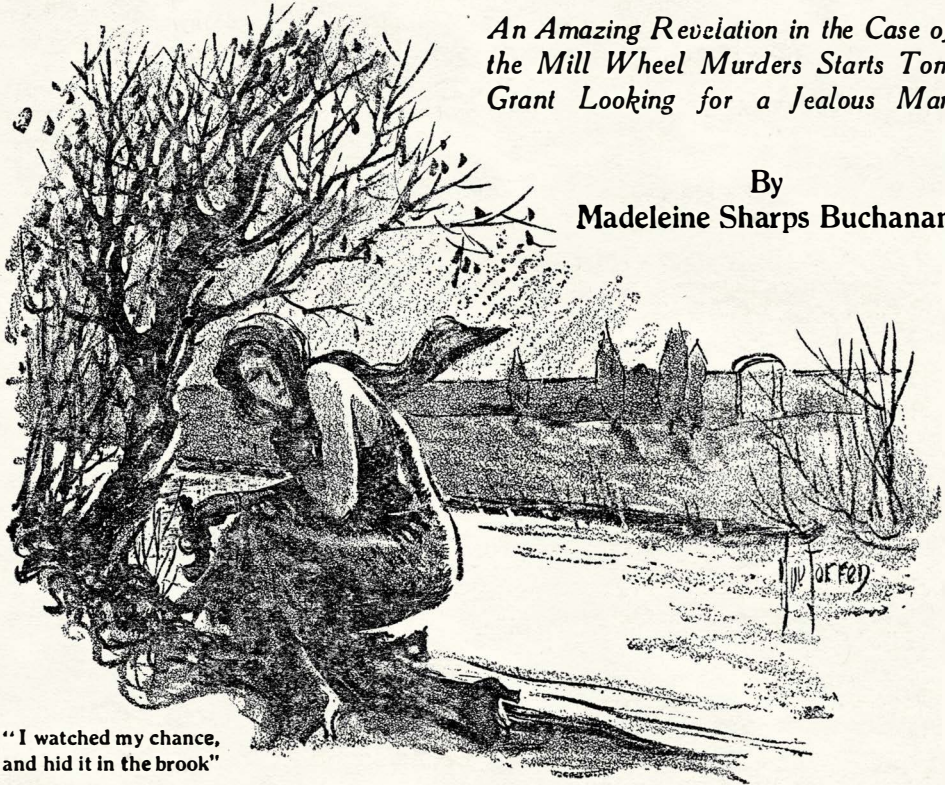
"Jeez, you're dumb," he said to the door.



Drums of Death

An Amazing Revelation in the Case of the Mill Wheel Murders Starts Tom Grant Looking for a Jealous Man

By
Madeleine Sharps Buchanan



"I watched my chance,
and hid it in the brook"

DON'T MISS THIS STORY—BEGIN HERE

IT was the weird roll of the death drums in the old mill that drew Ed Delander to the quaint mill and led to the discovery of Paul Nicolay stabbed to death and lashed to the mill wheel, and a woman believed to be Mrs. Walter Cleet lashed to the under side of the wheel and drowned.

The old mill was being converted into a tea room, and the African war drums were part of its unusual decorations. There were also a number of pieces of pewter there. And on the same night the pair were found murdered, police in a near-by city picked

up Bill Brasson driving a car full of that pewter from the old mill. Brasson admitted to Detective Billy Farrell that his accomplice had been Jack Morse, denied any knowledge of the murders, but said he had heard the death drums mysteriously beating.

Detective Tom Grant went to the home of Paul Nicolay. He found a strange household there composed of Ann Malliett, Nicolay's sister-in-law, Edgar Malliett, her brother, Dorcas Nicolay, the murdered man's daughter, and a distant cousin, Louise Lee, who had strangely fled from the house.

This story began in **DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY** for September 12

Into this complicated drama of love and hate and murder came the revelation that Enid Cleet returned the love of Larry Devore, orchestra leader at the Walnut Club, and that Edgar Malliett was in love with Francine Yocum, pretty hostess at the same place. And while Detective Farrell of the city police was finding that out, Tom Grant was discovering that Edgar Malliett was involved with Braddon and Morse in a burglary racket, and that the headquarters of the gang was in the same farmhouse where Paul Nicolay told Seymour Carson, his attorney, to meet him the night he was murdered.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Malliett's Attempt

FOR a brief moment Firth and Tom Grant looked at each other, too astonished to speak.

That a man like Malliett from such a good family should stoop to this sort of thing seemed impossible. Yet Tom took another look at Malliett's face, at the weak, peering, cunning eyes, the sagging mouth, the cruel possibilities the oddly assorted features seemed to predict, and understood. This man could not only have filled the little cellar at the deserted farm with his loot, but it was not beyond belief that he had killed his brother-in-law and Enid Cleet! He was the sort to tie the two to the wheel; yes, and possibly to beat the death drums as they died!

And here he was doing his best to place blame for those two hideous crimes on his crook associates!

"Come to headquarters now, Malliett," said the chief as he rose. "We'll leave Tom here to guard this stuff until I can send a man out to move it. You realize that we shall have to hold you for robbery, if for nothing else more

serious. That must be determined later. I'll want a list of the places your men broke into."

"Oh, I shan't make you any trouble," grinned Malliett as he rose. "I know when my game is played. But I had a good time. I got a thrill out of life while it lasted. I got out from under Ann's rule. That was enough to live for, even if it was short."

"Nobody else in your gang, Malliett?" asked Tom as he followed the two men up to the garden. "Just Braddon and Morse?"

"That's all," said Malliett. "Just us. Mind telling me how you spotted me to-night?"

"A boy saw you vanish into the earth and thought you were a ghost," said Firth. "Have you got a car here?"

"Yes, out on Willow Road. I never drive in here. None of us ever did. We park and sneak in. It has been a good game. I've enjoyed it. But I never thought those two boys would get themselves into a murder."

For some reason Tom recoiled from Malliett, who was nodding his head and wetting his loose lips. Tom fancied that the man wished his two accomplices to be held for the crimes at the mill, and he looked at Firth significantly.

"Watch yourself," Tom whispered. "And hold this man. He knows more than he's told us."

"Don't worry," said Firth. "This will make a fine stir-up. I'll send some of the boys out right away."

After the chief of police led his prisoner out the lane to the police car, Mugs Sorrel crept from the bushes, and wide-eyed and shaking, sat down at Tom's feet where the latter had seated himself on the upturned flagstone at the opening of the hidden cave . . .

When Tom reached headquarters he

found Malliett closeted with his chief in Firth's private office. The prisoner did not seem to realize his position. He sat there in the stifling heat smoking cigarettes placidly and answering every question Firth put to him.

"We've notified the city police of Mr. Malliett's capture and of the statements he has made regarding their prisoners, Morse and Brasson," the chief told Tom as he entered the office and sank into a chair. "Farrell is coming out here right away. Those boys certainly do not sleep on the job. He says with our permission he will take Malliett back with him to face these two boys. And he didn't talk quite so smart."

Tom grinned wryly.

"They'll respect us before we're through. I want to know one thing, Malliett. Where were you last evening, the hours between eight and midnight?"

"I was at home," said Malliett slowly.

"You were not," said Tom. "Those lads will tell us the straight of it and then we can prove it. You had better be fair with us. Morse stole the Canbeck car at about nine o'clock. If they had nothing to do with the crime at the mill, they stole the pewter before Nicolay and Mrs. Cleet got there. Where were they during the time between nine and the theft? Barbyville is only twenty-five miles from the city and the way those birds drive they would make it in no time at all. Now, what did they do with their spare hours?"

"How do I know?" asked Malliett, but an apprehensive look flashed for a moment into his bulging eyes.

"You know," said Tom. "And you better tell us about it."

Malliett shook his head. "I don't

know anything about the boys last night," he denied.

"And you can't tell us how Morse got a key to the mill?"

Again the cunning look passed over Malliett's dark face.

"Yes. I can tell you that," he admitted. "I had one made myself from the key Walter Cleet had."

"You *what?*"

"Yes. I knew Walter was making a model of the mill and the wheel for that place of Wilthams, and I heard somebody say there was a lot of old silver in the mill. Walter himself showed me the key he had made like the key to the mill. He never knew it when I took its impression in wax. I had done a dozen things like that since we had been in the business. I had entrance to houses that my boys could never enter, except at night through a window. I gave the key to Morse and told him about the silver. That's all I know. I never had a hint that the silver was really pewter, and the boys don't know anything about pewter. They just took it, I guess, because it shone."

Tom shook his head. There was something here, too, which he could not reconcile with common sense. Malliett would, of course, know that the stuff in the old mill was pewter. Why, then, would he send those boys to the mill? And on the murder night?

"Something else," he said after a moment. "If your boys were in the habit of taking their loot to the farmhouse, why were they captured with the pewter in the city?"

"You can ask me another," said Malliett helplessly. "I've told you all I know. I didn't know they were going after pewter."

Tom and the chief got nothing more out of Malliett after that until Farrell

drove up in a cloud of dust, having taken a short cut over a side road.

The city detective looked grim and annoyed. Tom guessed this was because of the big capture the Darbyville police had just made and which the *Darbyville Needle*, local paper, would make much of.

"This was very good work on somebody's part," Farrell said, looking about the office from the chief to Tom Grant. "I want to hand it to you. I was after Mr. Malliett myself to-night to get him to face those lads, and found he had left the house. And this was where he was. About the last place I'd ever think to look!"

"Oh, in a case like this you never know what will turn up," said Tom.

Farrell gave him a suspicious look before he turned to Malliett and demanded his story.

Firth did not interfere while the prisoner again went over his story, but Tom had to admire the incisive way Farrell's questions dug under all Malliett's foundations and brought out the man's guilt, far more guilt than he confessed to.

"A lie, Mr. Malliett!" snapped Farrell when he had got the story. "You knew it was pewter at the mill. You gave the key to those tools of yours and sent them there on the murder night for a purpose—a purpose of your own. You wanted them to be implicated in this crime, which you knew was going to take place. You knew it. How—we will find out. These boys are afraid of you because of that murder. They're scared to death now. They think you planted the double killing on them somehow. You didn't copy that key to the mill and give it to Morse for nothing, Malliett. Come, now, why did you do it? Why did you send those boys to the mill?"

"I've told you all I can," said Malliett stubbornly. "And I'll say nothing more until I see a lawyer."

Farrell looked annoyed. He was about to fire one of his questions at Malliett when Tom broke in.

"Mr. Farrell, did you find a woman's wrist watch set with diamonds on either of these boys, Brason or Morse?"

"A wrist watch? No! Why?"

"Because Enid Cleet was wearing one just before she reached the mill last night."

"She was? But you found two diamond rings on her that had not been touched!"

"Yes. We didn't find any wrist watch, however. And she had worn one."

"How do you know?" Farrell looked at Tom sharply.

Carefully then Tom related to him his work with the car of the murdered man while Firth looked on with a smile twitching at his lips. He was delighted to see his pet detective get a rise out of this smart aleck, as he called Farrell.

"That was clever of you, Grant," said Farrell curtly when Tom finished. "But it doesn't get us anywhere, does it?"

"It gets us two things," said Tom. "First, that Enid Cleet wore a valuable wrist watch which was missing from her body; and second, that Nicolay and Enid had an appointment and were afraid they would be late. That appointment could not have been with Carson at the farmhouse— Oh, I forgot you didn't know about that!"

Tom told Farrell about his discovery of the lawyer's presence at the farmhouse the night before.

Farrell looked frankly bewildered.

"Good heavens, where are we going to get with all this!" he groaned. "Malliett, how much do you know?"

"Only what I told you," insisted the prisoner dully.

"Who is Bill Brasson's high-toned girl?"

Malliett brightened for a moment into sardonic satisfaction.

"Hah! I knew yesterday after I mentioned that that I had made a slip," he nodded. "You were onto me then, Farrell. I don't know who she is. Never heard her name. Never saw her. I know he has a girl he thinks a lot of—some society dame, from what Morse and I could get."

Farrell and Tom noted how Malliett's association with the two crooks had colored his speech.

"When Francine Yocum met you to-night, Malliett, she warned you that I had been to see her?" went on Farrell.

"Yes. Francine was in it with us. She liked nice things and I wanted to give them to her," boasted Malliett. "I couldn't travel with a girl like her without cash, and Ann wouldn't let me have any. Neither would Paul. Francine didn't care what game a man was in just so he spent money on her."

"I can believe that," said Farrell dryly. "And what about this Devore baby, the jazz leader at the Walnut Club?"

"Well, what about him?" asked Malliett sullenly. "I hardly know him."

"He knew Enid Cleet. She used to sneak out there to see him. Don't suppose you were onto that?"

"No. I didn't know about her affairs."

"And Louise Lee—where is she?"

Again the cunning look dropped like a shadow across the man's unpleasant features.

"I don't know," he muttered. "She's away."

As he spoke he suddenly heaved his

body up from his chair and lurched across the chief's desk. Farrell, who had been watching him closely, sprang at the same time. But he was not quick enough to prevent Malliett from gashing his wrist with the paper knife which lay upon the blotter.

Tom Grant grasped the telephone to call Dr. Wilson.

As he waited impatiently for the number, watching the wounded man groaning and falling limply into a chair, the fact that Malliett had suddenly attempted suicide kept pounding at his brain for explanation.

Why had the man done that? Was it because Farrell had just asked him about that mystery girl, Louise Lee, or was it because he knew himself to be in a hot spot, hotter, perhaps, than the police yet realized?

CHAPTER XXIX

An Evil House

EDGAR MALLIETT, fastidious crook and spendthrift, had had no sleep when, two hours later, in the humid atmosphere of Superintendent Merrill's office in the city, he faced Jack Morse and Bill Brasson.

Weak and pallid from loss of blood, his wrist bound, Malliett wore a silly air of bravado which, after his suicide attempt, puzzled Farrell and Tom Grant, who had gone into town with the prisoner.

Merrill, obeying Farrell's request over the telephone, had interviewed Morse and Brasson prior to the arrival of Malliett. He had informed them that their game was up and that Malliett had talked, even that the newly taken prisoner had told the police the name of Bill Brasson's "high-toned girl." This ruse, to the chagrin of the superintendent, had got

nothing at all from the surly young men. Being able to rouse only grunts and frowns from them, he had finally given up and had returned them to their cells to await the coming of Farrell and Malliett.

Rumors of the whereabouts of Louise Lee were pouring in. It was always the case when any one in a murder case was reported missing. Merrill, who had snatched a few hours' sleep early in the previous day, saw no rest for him that night. Farrell was a driver. He knew that as long as anything was breaking in the case the detective would not stop. And the heat was getting the superintendent. When at last Morse and Brasson were confronted with Malliett, Merrill's nerves were on the ragged edge.

Morse and Brasson, glaring at their confederate, maintained their stubborn silence, and Malliett, grinning and mopping his face, insisted upon the police sending for Seymor Carson.

"He was Paul's lawyer, and he's good enough for me," he muttered.

"You're Mr. Grant's prisoner," Farrell told him with a twist of his lip. "You men have all got to be taken out to Darbyville."

"We can't refuse him his lawyer," said Tom mildly. "Send for Carson by all means."

He would get quite a kick out of confronting the clever lawyer summoned on this case. What did he know about the various robberies which had been committed by these men, and the rich loot hidden in the old cellar at the farm which he had visited on the murder night? It would be interesting to see.

"Now, you boys have got to tell us what you did with your time last night," said Merrill sharply, irritated by the continued silence of the pris-

oners. "What did you do with your evening? Come across now. We've been pretty patient with you."

"If they don't tell us, the girl will." Farrell winked at Tom.

"You don't know anything about a girl," growled Bill Brasson, fear in his eyes.

Farrell paid no attention to him.

"Come on, Malliett, you've got brains," he prodded. "You know it is no use holding out any longer. This is a murder case we're investigating."

"I don't see any use, boys, in keeping back anything that has to do with our adventures," grinned Malliett, as he looked from Morse to Brasson. "I'll tell if you won't. The boys stole that car and came to me at the farm. We went down in the cellar, where the police found me, and talked over our campaign for the next week or so. We did that every once in a while. Nobody ever went to Paul's old farm. The boys left the little car on the highway, and we decided on several jobs which looked good."

Here, to the amazement of the officers, Jack Morse sprang to his feet and started toward Malliett, but Tom seized his arms and forced him back in his chair.

"Say, you, you know what we talked over mostly!" he growled. "You sent us to that mill. You were onto something all right. You knew those murders were going to be pulled off and you sent us there to get mixed up in them! You told us there was old silver in the mill and you could get a pretty price on it. You gave me the key to the damn place."

"Of course I did," said Malliett mildly. "I've told the police that. I thought it was silver."

"Yeah, you thought it was silver," growled Brasson, his eyes feverishly

bright, his hands working. "You knew damn well it was pewter! You sent us to the mill for some reason of your own. We've been double crossed, Jack. This guy has ratted on us. We don't know a thing more than we've told you cops. Work it out for yourselves."

"I don't believe you do," said Tom Grant suddenly and with emphasis. He was looking with increasing interest at Malliett. Was it possible that this man had planned those murders and sent these young crooks into the midst of them that suspicion might be drawn from himself? But with the arrest of Morse and Brasson he must have known that his series of robberies would come to light.

"What have you done to my girl?" Brasson demanded of the foolishly smiling Malliett. "If you've touched her I'll—"

"What girl?" asked Malliett, looking squarely into Brasson's face.

There was a moment of silence, during which Brasson's aggressive air slowly vanished and he subsided in his chair.

"We know what girl," said Farrell quietly. "And we are waiting to question her until you birds come across with all the facts you have. You don't realize that you may be held for murder. None of you has an alibi."

As Farrell spoke there swept over Tom Grant a sensation of futility. He knew that in that sweltering little office they were wasting time. They were coming no closer to the solution.

"I shan't say another word until I see Carson," grunted Malliett and slumped into an obstinate heap. "Ann would say that was the thing to do and I shall do it."

As he spoke the telephone on the

superintendent's desk rang and Merrill answered it. He showed small patience with the person he spoke to, and swung about almost immediately from the instrument to glance at Tom Grant.

"Grant, there is a woman on the wire who wants to speak to you," he growled. "She called Darbyville first, she says, and now she insists on talking to you. She won't give her name."

As Tom rose to cross the room to the desk, he sensed a sudden tenseness in the attitude of the three prisoners. What woman would call him at police headquarters at that hour in the early morning? Did those men know? He kept an eye on them as he lifted the receiver.

Maida Malone's sweet, high-pitched voice spoke to him, and it was evident to Tom that the girl labored under great agitation.

"Mr. Grant? I've hunted you everywhere!" she cried. "This is Maida, Maida Malone, the parlor maid at the Nicolay house. Do you remember? I didn't find those gloves, but I am so scared I am afraid to go back to bed. There is somebody in the attic of this house! I know it! I think Hallston knows it. It is an evil house, Mr. Grant! I've got to get out of it! I've been to bed a dozen times to-night, and up again. I keep hearing it, and it is so hot—I can't rest. I'm scared! Can you come here?"

"Oh, this is Maida Malone," repeated Tom, his eyes on the prisoners. "Why, yes, I can come at once. At once. Watch for me and let me in. And don't say anything to anybody."

Replacing the receiver on the hook, Tom felt a vast sense of satisfaction, although the puzzle seemed to grow even deeper.

Bill Brasson's high-toned girl, he

felt certain now, was Maida Malone. Bill Brasson's expression betrayed him.

CHAPTER XXX

In the Attic

ON the way to the Nicolay home through the early morning, along almost entirely deserted avenues, Tom Grant did some heavy thinking.

He was not sure whether or not the manner of the three men in the superintendent's office had told Farrell, as it had told him, that Maida Malone was the girl they were all shielding so carefully. He would rather the men were not questioned about her until he had talked to Maida.

The sense of fatigue was heavily upon him and his eyes drooped as he climbed out of the taxi before the imposing doors of the Nicolay house, yet he was determined to force from this pert, pretty maid all that she knew before he gave in to the sleep his weary mind and body craved.

Somebody in the attic. What could that mean? From the hidden cellar of the old Nicolay farm, to the attic of the exclusive Nicolay mansion! Tom grinned wearily as he climbed the front steps, and said a few words to the officer who emerged from the side lawn at his approach. He was admitted silently to the wide cool hall by Maida Malone herself.

The girl wore a little white dress, and her lovely hair was in attractive disarray, while her big eyes were wide with fright.

"It was good of you to come," she whispered to Tom as she drew him into a small reception room off the hall. "This house is possessed! I think we are safe just now, for everybody is asleep except me and—and the person in the attic."

"Now you tell me about this person," said Tom soothingly. "Isn't it just your nerves?"

"No. Do you know who I think it is?" Maida bent close. "I think it is Louise Lee!"

"In the attic? Are you crazy?" Tom looked at the pretty, determined young face with searching eyes.

"No. I feel sure she is up there, and maybe her little dog with her." Maida shivered slightly. "I have imagined that Hallston, the butler, knows; he takes food there. But I'm not able to catch him. He is pretty clever."

"You mean to say this girl is held a prisoner in the house?" asked Tom sternly.

"Maybe. Maybe not. I don't know. The house is strange," whispered Maida.

"And so are you," said Tom involuntarily. "Have you ever worked as a maid anywhere else?"

"No—I—" Maida caught herself and gave Tom a demurely reproachful glance. "For goodness' sake, don't talk about me! Will you come to the attic with me now? I cannot bear to think of her, if it is Miss Lee, up there in this heat, alone, with nobody knows what horror for company!"

"You would not go to Miss Malliett or Mr. Malliett with your fear?" asked Tom.

"To them? No! They are capable of anything, those people." The girl shuddered. "Have you got a gun?"

"Oh, yes," said Tom, amused. "But why not call to the officer who watches this house?"

"I wanted you to come," said the girl. "And now you waste time in talking. She may be dying up there! Who knows?"

"And Dorcas Nicolay—where is she?"

"In her room, where she has been ever since the murders," whispered Maida. "Do you know what I think? I think she is perfectly well, but that she is afraid to be questioned. She is afraid her prince is mixed up in the thing."

"Good heavens!" gasped Tom, staring at the girl in the dim light of the upper corridor as she hurried him along toward the rear of the house. "Who the devil *are* you?"

Maida did not reply. Her slim fingers in Tom's, she led him to a narrow flight of stairs at the back of the second floor hall, up those in silence to another flight just like them in the third floor hall.

"Come," she said then, looking back with starry eyes from under her mist of hair, "it is at the top of these stairs. My room, you see, is right under the part of the attic where I heard the movements and the steps."

As Tom followed the silent feet ahead of him, he wondered dully how on earth this girl could throw off the character of parlor maid so expertly and become the delightfully pretty young lady she was at that moment. Maida Malone, with her association with the three prisoners then at city hall, was certainly a mystery. And Tom found her an absorbing one.

At the top of the final flight of steps there was an unpainted door, and against it Tom, at the girl's bidding, laid his ear. The scuttle of little feet and a low whine reached him. There was a dog inside that room.

A shiver passed through Tom's weary body. What would they find when they opened that door? Little enough account had been made of the disappearance of the Lee girl.

Without glancing at Maida, Tom tried the door, and it opened noiseless-

ly, admitting him to a long apartment into which the pale light of dawn was creeping through two wide open windows, and in the center of which a small young woman, holding in her arms a Pekingese dog, stood upright, staring at him out of large, defiant eyes.

"Miss Lee—it is you!" cried Maida, hurrying past Tom and seizing the arm of the girl. "How you have worried everybody! I heard some one moving up here and I was afraid."

Tom, in amazement was staring at Louise Lee. Wearing a loose silken bedroom robe, the girl was a charming picture, her light ringlets a mass of gold over her small head.

The little dog, cuddled in her arms, growled deep in its throat.

The room was furnished sparsely with old furniture which looked as though it had been discarded long since from the lower section of the mansion. A tray with sandwiches and a thermos bottle stood on a table beside a couch on which dainty bed coverings had been thrown back.

"Miss Lee, I'm a detective from the Darbyville police department," said Tom. "You probably know about the death of Mr. Nicolay and Mrs. Cleet at Darbyville."

"Yes," said Louise Lee through stiff lips. "Why have you come here to drag me out where people can question me?"

"Did Hallston know you were here?" asked Maida eagerly as she drew the girl to a seat on the couch.

"Yes." Louise nodded dully. "He has always been my friend. I had to have a friend after—after that happened."

"But why did you hide away up here?" asked Tom.

"I hid from the rest of them," said

Louise. "From Dorcas and Ann and Edgar and the prince. They are a fine lot, all of them. I had no chance after Paul went. I hid here for Walter Cleet's sake."

"Walter Cleet!" Tom glanced at Maida and met only her brilliant, knowing gaze in reply.

"Yes." Louise sank back wearily on the couch. "Walter and I are in love with each other. We have been for over a year. If I had not held him back he would have divorced Enid long ago, Enid with her sordid affair with that jazz leader out at the Walnut Club! Walter had no alibi for last night. He left that Wiltham house out in the country and came back here to see me. We were together until terribly late, until almost morning, riding about in his car—it was so very warm. And when he brought me back here and Hallston let me in, sneaked me in as he often did, he told me about the murders. The police had just called the house. I knew the woman was Enid Cleet, for Paul had taken her with him the night before."

"But why didn't you stay and swear to Cleet's alibi?" asked Tom in amazement.

"I didn't dare." Louise shook her head. "Walter told me when he left the Wiltham house he bribed the chauffeur at the garage not to tell any one he took his car out. The chauffeur sleeps over the garage and he couldn't get away and return without him knowing it. He just didn't know then that those terrible murders would be committed while he was with me. It was just a precaution like he always took when we were together. Not a soul suspected our affair. And it was a perfectly innocent one. It was for me that Walter wanted Paul's farm. Not for Enid."

Tom was too amazed to put in a question, and the girl's sweet, slightly petulant voice went on:

"You must see that if I told the police and reporters that Walter had been with me and they found out that he had bribed the Wiltham chauffeur and that we were in love, it would give him a powerful motive!" said Louise sharply. "The only thing to do, Hallston and I decided, was for me to disappear until the truth about the murders came out."

"Good heavens!" groaned Tom helplessly, wiping his perspiring face.

Enid Cleet and this handsome Devore fellow at the night club—Louise Lee and Enid Cleet's artist husband. This little Maida and those three prisoners at the city hall—a maze, all of it. And where did Paul Nicolay enter the thing?

"You speak of Enid Cleet and her lover at the night club," said Tom at last. "Where does Paul Nicolay enter into the affair? He was interested in her, wasn't he?"

"I don't know," said Louise with a frown. "I never understood that. He took her out now and then and I didn't want him to. I liked Paul. He was kind to me. I've been starving and crying up here alone ever since he died."

Her beautiful eyes overflowed as she spoke, and she sobbed.

"Now I have ruined Walter!" she cried. "And he had nothing to do with it. If Paul had only listened to me last night. I knew he was going out with Enid again and I asked him not to. I was afraid."

Tom sat up with renewed interest.

"Why were you afraid?" he asked quietly.

"Afraid that Edgar would fly off the handle and do something wild," was the astounding reply.

"Edgar Malliett?"

"Yes. He didn't want Paul to pay much attention to Enid, for some reason. I never understood that, either, for he wasn't in love with Enid. Edgar couldn't love any one. He isn't responsible entirely. He has what you would call a criminal streak. None of us trusted him. Ann watched him as much as she could. I was always afraid of Edgar. For the past month he has been furious whenever Paul paid any attention to Enid."

"But I don't see why Nicolay should pay her attention," said Tom, frowning. They were so different. And if she was in love with this Larry Devore, this—"

"That's it, I never understood it, but Paul was crazy about Enid," sighed Louise. "I don't know why. They were together a lot."

"Well, Miss Lee, you must come down to your room now," said Tom sternly. "You can do your lover no good by this sort of thing. The police are looking for you, too. Carson got them all worked up about you. He's worried."

"Carson?" Louise lifted her brows. "The lawyer? Why would he worry?"

"I don't know, but he does," replied Tom. "Now you come down to your room and be comfortable. And tell a straight story to any one who asks for it. The truth can't harm any one and if Cleet is innocent it will all come out right."

"I loathe this house," said Louise. "I hate the people in it. And I don't trust that prince. He is after Dorcas's money. If I were you, I'd be interested in the prince."

"Why?" asked Tom.

"Because he never brought Dorcas in this morning until after three," said Louise. "I heard that from Hallston.

You could find out if they were at that Bartell swimming party at Myron until that hour. It was close to four when I came in myself."

"My gosh!" groaned Tom. "Doesn't anybody ever go to bed?"

"I don't," smiled Maida. "That is, I don't—often. I was up myself most of last night. I heard Dorcas come in and I heard you, Miss Lee."

"But you didn't tell—" began Tom.

"No." Maida shook her head, smiling strangely. "Now, Miss Lee, if you will just go down to your own bed—I want to talk to Mr. Grant a little while."

After a little more persuasion Tom and Maida succeeded in installing Louise Lee and her dog in her own cool, capacious room on the second floor of the house, and Tom waited impatiently for Maida Malone.

CHAPTER XXXI

Maida Helps

"I WANT to know how you can shed your character of maid so quickly," smiled Tom when the girl came to him through the cool shadows of the reception room.

"I am not a maid at all," said the girl gravely. "I work for the Atwood Detective Agency, and Mr. Nicolay engaged me a month ago to keep an eye on Edgar Malliett. That is why I am in this house."

"Paul Nicolay!" Tom gasped. "Well, I'll be damned!"

Maida nodded and sat down by Tom on a small divan.

"My name is Maida Strathwyn," she told him. "And I've been fairly successful since I've been with the Atwood Agency. That's been about ten years now. I'm thirty."

"You?" Tom looked his amaze-

ment. "You can't be. Why, I'm thirty myself, and look at you, and then look at me!"

"A waste of time," smiled Maida. "And now here is the case as far as I know it. Mr. Nicolay came to us and said he fancied that Edgar was playing some crooked game. He had seen him with a couple of young men several times whom he knew to be crooks and loafers. Just youths beside Edgar. Well, I came here as maid, with no one knowing except Mr. Nicolay. I looked up these two young men and found that one worked in the Underwood grocery store. By offering to run errands for the cook, I got acquainted with Bill Branson. I led him on and tried to pump him. I finally got everything out of him that I wanted to know. But that was not until recently. I found out—"

"I guess I know," said Tom, and in as few words as possible he gave Maida the events of that night.

The girl nodded when he finished, her lovely eyes intent and eager.

"Yes, that is what I learned from Bill," she said. "And I think Edgar got onto the fact that I knew Bill. He was making himself very unpleasant. I was about to report to Mr. Nicolay and drop the job, when—this terrible thing happened. By the way, I had the telephone call traced, the call that came from the woman just before Nicolay went out last night. It was Enid Cleet who called, or at any rate, it was from her home."

"Well, you are good," said Tom warmly. "And it was swell of you to let me in on this instead of Farrell or one of the city police."

Maida colored.

"Oh — well —" She tossed her charming head.

"You knew Louise was in the house, I suppose," Tom asked.

"No, I didn't. I knew when she came in this morning, and I guessed that Hallston was helping her in some sort of stunt. Of course I knew of her affair with Cleet. But I never did think of her staying right here in the house. The silly little thing! She may have done him a lot of harm by that act."

"Do you think Cleet is a murderer?"

"No. But you never can tell. I think his wife was a clever little vamp, and out for a good time. I never understood her at all or the interest of Mr. Nicolay in her."

"That has got me from the first," agreed Tom. "It just won't gee somehow. And Malliett. What about him?"

"I don't know," Maida frowned. "He is a strange person, not just normal, and yet cunning and smart. He did this wild thing because he felt that he was restrained, and he had no spending money. It never occurred to him to work. I dare say he can't."

"Farrell tells me that Miss Ann slipped out last night to the garden. Did you see her do that?"

"Why, no. I must have missed that," smiled Maida. "I was never much interested in Ann. Before this crime, I didn't care what anybody, except Edgar, was doing."

"Could you tell me anything about Enid Cleet? Her past or anything at all that I could work on to-morrow?" asked Tom as he rose. "I hate to go away from here, but Hallston will be coming down and we've got to get some rest. I've been up for a couple of nights now."

"I know little about her. As I said, I didn't bother with her. I did know that Ann didn't like her, and one day I heard her say to Edgar that for a girl who had graduated from Miss Emerson's School, Enid Cleet was a

mighty careless young woman! I don't think this family, outside of Mr. Nicolay, knew a lot about her at all."

"But that'll be a great help," said Tom excitedly. "Miss Emerson's School! That's the fashionable place on the river, isn't it?"

"Of course. Oh, ever since this murder broke I've been wild to dig into it! Now that Louise has been found and Edgar and the boys locked up, I can leave here. Maybe my agency will let me work on the case a little—"

"Do you know where Jake's restaurant is?" Tom asked.

She nodded.

"How about meeting me there at one o'clock?"

"O. K.," smiled Maida.

CHAPTER XXXII

Why Nicolay Paid

THE head mistress of Miss Emerson's School for Young Ladies took her platinum rimmed glasses from her aristocratic nose and looked at Tom Grant as though she felt tried beyond her refined endurance.

"This is a matter which I had hoped would not come up, Mr. Grant," she sighed. "When we saw this horrible thing in the papers, we feared that the investigation would work back to Enid Clark's girlhood here with us. We have never had the police at Emerson, Mr. Grant. It is not easy for a girl to find admittance here. And when she does—"

Tom glanced about the handsome study into which, after great effort and patience, he had been admitted. He did his best to curb the boyish eagerness and excitement he was feeling.

"You understand, of course, Miss Waldmar, that the matter is a gravely important one," he said quietly. "And

everything you tell me, unless it cannot be helped, will be regarded as confidential. You would wish to avenge this poor girl's death. If you had seen her slender body strapped to that wheel—"

Miss Walmar flung up shocked hands.

"Mr. Grant—I beg of you!" She shuddered. "I knew Enid Clark well. I assure you that the entire faculty has been grieved and horrified by this thing. I also knew Mr. Nicolay very well."

"You did?"

"Why, yes. Mr. Nicolay paid for Enid's schooling here."

"He—he *what?*"

"Certainly. He entered Enid at our school when she was ten. She boarded here until her graduation, when she was eighteen. During her summers she was at our summer camp. Naturally we knew her well. She was a girl of great charm and ability. When she left, I believe, she took a position as French instructress in the Harbison School. She was only there for one season, when she married Walter Cleet. That is all that I can tell you about Enid."

"But—but why did Nicolay pay for her?" asked Tom, stunned.

"He told us simply that she was a child of a dear friend of his, and that she came from a splendid family," said Miss Waldmar stiffly. "Of course, Mr. Nicolay himself was enough reference for any one. No one questions the standing of the Nicolays. Years past his wife, Mabel Malliett, graduated from this school."

"I see," said Tom slowly. "And when he put Enid here, it was how many years ago?"

"The child was ten. She graduated when she was eighteen, that is, in 1925. Fourteen years ago, Mr. Grant, Paul

Nicolay brought the little girl to us. Enid must have been twenty-four at the time of her death."

"Yes," said Tom, still feeling dazed. "Of course, Mr. Nicolay did not tell you the child was any relative of his family?"

"Not at all. He said she was an orphan, the daughter of his best friend, and that he had been left in charge of her affairs and her. It was quite usual. Those things often happen. We have a girl here now who—"

Tom committed the dreadful blunder of rising while Miss Waldmar was speaking. But he felt that he had no time to waste. He was through with this fishy-eyed, haughty woman, and with a few muttered words of gratitude and apology, he got away.

At the Harbison School, twenty miles away along the river, he learned little more, save that Enid Clark had met Walter Cleet at a dance, and had soon become engaged to him, and that twice Paul Nicolay had driven out to see her while she taught at the school.

Always the shadow of this man across her life. What did it mean? Did Cleet know what it meant? Did any one in that strange Nicolay household know?

"I bet I can talk to a man who does," Tom told himself, as he hurried to his date with Maida Strathwyn.

Maida was waiting for him, sweeter than ever, in a smart little blue suit and little close hat, and Tom brightened at sight of her.

Over a table in a corner of Jake's they talked.

"You haven't a minute to lose," she told him. "Carson is the man. I bet he knows. Make him talk! Don't sit here while I eat this ice cream. I've been to headquarters and I feel like a wreck. If you could have seen Bill

Brasson look at me! But that's all in the work. I've got to rest a while. You go on, Tom. I'm eating my three meals a day right here now, and if you want to see me or we have anything to tell each other, we can meet here."

As Tom went out into the blazing sunshine he thanked the fortune that had brought Maida across his path in this strange case. If he ever got time to stop, he would make love to her as she deserved to be made love to.

Seymour Carson was in his private office when Tom went up in the elevator to the top floor of the towering Wallace Building.

The detective had to wait a short time until a man emerged from the lawyer's office, but he possessed his soul in patience. He felt that Carson and the city police would respect him now, and he was making strides in the case.

"Why, Mr. Grant," said Carson as Tom approached him, "I've been anxious to see you. A horrible scandal, this affair of Malliett's."

"Yes," said Tom casually. "He has retained you?"

"I should say not!" snapped Carson. "I would not take his case, the little crook! He has another lawyer."

"We have a long list of robberies against that bunch," said Tom. "You didn't, by chance, have a suspicion that they were in that underground cellar when you called at the farm last night?"

"Certainly not! I saw no indication of any one else being there." Carson looked indignant. "And they say they never knew that I was there. It is quite possible. None of us made any noise."

"Yeah, I see. Now, I want you to be frank with me. I want to know several things. First, how Paul Nicolay was going to change his will, second, who the witnesses were whom he was going

to take to the farm with him, and third why he paid Enid Clark's way through the Emerson School."

Carson frowned, looking at the detective through narrowed eyes. After a moment the lawyer looked away, tapping on the desk top with polished nails.

"Mr. Grant, I see there is no use trying to keep this thing quiet any longer," he said presently with a sigh. "I hoped that no one would have to know. It cannot help—now."

"I guess I'd better be the judge of that," said Tom gravely.

Carson nodded. "Yes. If I do not tell you, you'll get it from somewhere else. Enid Clark was Paul Nicolay's daughter."

Tom was on his feet, aghast. The man's daughter! Now he understood the seemingly incongruous relationship.

"You mean—"

"Yes," said Carson. "She was his child and the child of a girl he had married years ago. The girl was beneath him in station, in everything. She died and left Enid. No one here in the East knew anything about the thing, for the little wife remained in the West where Paul had met her. She was the one woman he ever loved and it was her own wish that she stay West and not leave the ranch where she was fitted to be. I have heard from Paul that she was even more charming than Enid and far more beautiful. However, Paul took the child and cared for her. That's all. If Mabel Malliett had known of it, she would not have married him, and Paul needed her millions. Mabel thought she was the one and only."

"Then Nicolay was about to change that will and leave Enid his fortune," said Tom slowly.

"I don't know," said Carson harsh-

ly. "He had already settled enough upon her to care for her. She had had it since her graduation. And in his will he leaves her one hundred thousand dollars. I did not tell you that. I feared it would cause plenty of talk as it was."

"He loved her more than he loved Dorcas," said Tom.

"Who wouldn't?" Carson shrugged. "You haven't seen Dorcas? A spoiled, domineering beauty. Like the Mallietts. A rum lot, the Mallietts."

"You were in Nicolay's confidence, Mr. Carson?" asked Tom.

"Yes. I think I knew him better than any one else did."

As he spoke, Carson rose and walked restlessly about the office.

"I fancy you know that that silly girl Louise was found hiding in the attic," he blurted after a moment.

"Rather," grinned Tom. "Did you know of her affair with Cleet?"

"I certainly did not!" denied Carson, frowning. "This is an outrageous thing, Mr. Grant. The Mallietts and the Nicolays are two of our finest families. If they had obeyed me and sent Edgar Malliett away for mental treatment long ago, instead of babying him in that house under Ann's eyes, this entire thing might not have happened."

"Do you mean that you think Malliett capable of killing those two people?" asked Tom, watching the lawyer closely.

"Who knows what he is capable of? you've seen him, haven't you?" flared Carson. "Is he normal? I don't think so. Paul didn't think so. Look at him, a member of such a family consorting with such filthy young crooks as Branson and Morse! It is an unhealthy house. It drove Malliett into crime and Louise Lee into a love affair with

a married man. It has taught Dorcas to sell herself to a mockery of a man with a title! Ann is the only one there now with a keen, healthy mind, and she is a devil."

"Did you know Nicolay had engaged some one from a detective agency to live in his house and watch Malliett?" pursued Tom. He felt that there was more here than Carson was giving him.

"No. He told me several times he was going to. Perhaps he had a more desperate reason than just to keep an eye on his brother-in-law. He may have feared this thing which has happened."

"Do you think he did?"

"I don't know. He never said. I've been frank with you, Mr. Grant. I know no more now than I have told you. And I have one thing to suggest. In your investigation don't overlook this cheap jazz boy whom Enid Cleet loved. This Devore fellow. He came in to see me several weeks ago and I booted him out of the office."

"Devore! the chap at the Walnut Club?"

"Yes," Carson nodded darkly. "He is after cash. He came in here and tried to pump me about Paul Nicolay's interest in Mrs. Cleet. He did his best to find out what it meant and whether or not the girl would be remembered in Nicolay's will. I don't know what he was onto, but he was suspicious."

"I'll pass this on to Farrell," said Tom. "He knows Devore. And now something else, Mr. Carson. Did you ever see Enid Cleet wear a diamond-studded wrist watch?"

"No, but Paul gave her one," said the lawyer quickly. "Last Christmas. I helped him choose it. She was supposed to have bought it for herself."

"Did she know that she was Nicolay's daughter?"

"Certainly. She was quite devoted to Paul. I know that she even wished to move away from the city, but Paul would not hear of it."

"When Mrs. Cleet drove with Nicolay a short time before she was killed, she wore that watch," mused Tom as he rose. "And we did not see it when we found the bodies. Now, I wonder who would take away that watch and leave the diamond rings on her hands?"

Carson walked to the door with the detective, his brows drawn together in deep thought, his head bent.

"I will tell you what I should do if I had the case," he said at last. "I should look for a man who was insanely jealous of Nicolay, who knew that he had given Enid the watch, but not that he was her father!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

Miss Ann Speaks

AS Tom Grant opened the door of Superintendent Merrill's private office a short time after his interview with Seymour Carson, he collided with a nervous young man who was just backing out.

"I hope I haven't done any one any harm, sir," this person was saying unhappily.

Merrill's cheerful voice followed him as he muttered an apology to Tom and vanished: "No, indeed. You've done us an immense service!"

When Tom entered the office where Merrill and Billy Farrell sat alone, the detective greeted him delightedly.

"Hello, Grant! I'm glad to see you. The young man you just passed is a salesman in the Dixie Sporting Goods Store on State Street. We traced the gun which was found in the Nicolay

brook to this store, and Mr. Martin, who just went out of here, sold it. Neat work, eh? And neater still, he identified Edgar Malliett as the man who bought it! Of course he would remember Malliett. That bird doesn't look like any one else out of captivity. But that's good, eh?"

"It's great!" agreed Tom. "But where does it get you? Nobody was shot."

"No, they were not," agreed Farrell. "But they might have been, see? And Ann knew it. And she hid the gun bought by her crook brother. He planned to do away with this girl and Nicolay, and Ann knew it. She looks like the head of the ladies' guild or the missionary sewing society, but she has a lot more than that in her aristocratic bean."

"But you don't think Cleet and Malliett both killed the two?" asked Tom mildly. "They wouldn't agree on anything."

"Maybe not, but Cleet bribed that chauffeur all right, and he won't say where he was last night. We're holding him for further questioning."

"Well, I'll tell you what I think about Malliett," offered Tom. "I think he bought that gun when he decided to be a crook and organize these robberies. That's more like it. I don't think that Malliett is a killer."

"He's a moron, and a moron will do anything," snapped Farrell. "You've done great work so far, Grant, and we have to admit you have. And you certainly won't let us keep that family out of the tabloids. I'm going up to the Nicolay house now and question Ann. It's time she talked."

"Just a moment, I have something to tell you," said Tom, and gave the two an account of his morning's work. The superintendent forgot the heat and

bent forward eagerly, and Farrell forgot that he didn't like Tom and sat listening absorbed as young Grant's level voice went on.

"You're not thinking of leaving Darbyville, are you, Grant?" asked Merrill, when he finished. "Because I sure could use you here."

"No," replied Tom with a broad grin. "Thanks."

"His daughter!" groaned Farrell. "Who would have thought of that?"

"I couldn't see from the start why those two were such friends. I couldn't get it. It didn't seem like a love affair, and yet—well, it had me stopped."

"I'm off to call on Ann," said Farrell grimly, reaching for his straw. "Come in, Grant. I've got to find out why she hid that gun and I still protest that Malliett intended to kill those two. Since I know that Enid was Nicolay's child I bet a dollar Malliett was onto the fact that he was going to change his will! Tying them to the mill wheel and beating heathen drums sounds like brother Edgar to me!"

"That act wasn't idiotic," said Tom as he followed Farrell from the office. "I think it was brilliant. And thereby hangs our case, if we ever solve it!"

Miss Ann Malliett received the two men in her own sitting room. Seated beside a couch upon which reclined Dorcas Nicolay, she glanced up at them with cold disapproval.

It was evident that her brother's arrest had shaken the lady's poise badly, but she still maintained her frigid air and her calm seemed undisturbed.

Dorcas, a petulant, dark-eyed young beauty, made no pretense at courtesy, but stared at the police with flashing, resentful eyes.

"You have been here once before this morning, Mr. Farrell," said Miss Ann acidly, "interviewing Miss Lee."

"Yes," grinned Farrell. "And the reporters are anxious to see her, too. She did a very spectacular thing by getting our department to look for her while she hid in your attic."

"She did a ridiculous, childish thing!" flared Miss Ann. "But what is wrong now? Does Edgar need me?"

"I think not," replied Farrell dryly. "I came to ask you again about the gun which you once denied ever having seen before. That gun you hid in your own brook. Your brother Edgar bought that revolver in the Dixie Sporting Goods Store on State Street a month ago. The man who sold it to him has identified Mr. Malliett. Are you still going to deny that you ever saw it?"

"Oh, for Pete's sake, Aunt Ann, tell them!" pouted Dorcas angrily. "Nobody was shot. Nobody did anything with that gun."

Miss Malliett laid down the knitting which she held in her jeweled fingers and let her cold eyes sweep over Farrell as though he must be looked at, though the sight was disagreeable.

"Very well," she sighed. "The story is not as bad as the one you already have. Edgar could not be in a much worse position. I was afraid, and so was Paul, that he was up to something, and we really should have put him in charge of a specialist, in some sort of nursing home. However, to a family like ours that is a hard step to take. Paul never confided in me to any great extent. I did not know that he had applied to a private agency to send a spy into our home. I did, however, watch Edgar as much as I could, and I kept money away from him. He was not really vicious, not really bad. He—"

"He was a nut," said Miss Dorcas flatly.

"And so you knew he had the gun," prompted Farrell.

"Yes. I found it. But only yesterday. I watched my chance when he was out, and hid it in the brook. Such an idea as the nursemaid of my neighbor spying upon me never occurred to me!"

Miss Ann's cheeks colored angrily.

"Miss Malliett, how long have you and your brother known that Enid Cleet was Paul Nicolay's daughter?" asked Farrell in a pleasant, conversational tone.

All color drained from Miss Ann's face and she sank back in her chair, looking suddenly haggard and spent.

Dorcas lifted herself on her pillows, a young flame of rage and fear.

"How the devil did you police get that?" she wanted to know furiously.

"How long have you known, Miss Malliett?" Farrell asked coolly.

"Since last week," whispered Ann through stiff lips. "Edgar overheard Carson talking here in the study to Paul, and he ran to me with the news. He was shivering and in a dreadful state."

"Why?"

"I think he loved Mrs. Cleet and he was shocked. He isn't just—just what he should be, poor Edgar."

"Loved nothing!" roared Farrell. "He was afraid that meant that he wouldn't get any of Nicolay's money! A daughter and one that Nicolay loved was a pretty serious obstacle."

"How dare you!" cried Miss Ann, flushing furiously.

"Oh, let them rave!" said Dorcas with a yawn, as she subsided on her pillows. "They'll either find the lover of Enid's who did for Dad and Enid, or they'll get tired badgering us after a while."

"You think she had a lover?" asked Farrell.

"Sure she had. She was crazy about that jazz leader at the Walnut Club. And dear knows how many more. Enid was a siren."

"Miss Malliett," said Farrell, turning back to Ann, "after your brother heard of this relationship between Paul and Enid didn't he plan to do something desperate to the woman? Wasn't that why you hid the gun?"

"No, no!" cried Ann. "He bought the gun, you just said, a month ago. That was three weeks before we knew about Enid."

"Did Paul know you knew about Enid?"

"Not that I ever heard of. Paul would have packed us all out most likely."

"He was so fond of her?"

"He was wild about her," sneered Dorcas. "He never cared a rap for me."

"Yet you were prostrated when you heard of his murder," said Farrell slyly.

For a moment Dorcas hesitated.

"Why wouldn't I be? He was my father."

"I don't think you were prostrated," said Farrell evenly. "I think you and your prince were two more folks who had no alibi and that you were just plain scared and stayed in your room, scared as badly as Louise Lee."

"Well, what you think and what you prove are two different things, aren't they?" asked Dorcas insolently.

"Not always," said Farrell, not at all disturbed by her attitude. "Just what time *did* you get home this morning?"

"We came in at midnight."

"I know, that's what you say, but wasn't it a good bit later than that?" asked the detective pleasantly.

"I expect that servant girl spy told you that!" flared Dorcas, sitting erect again. "Idiots in this house and detectives spying on them and us, and unrecognized daughters coming in for part of the inheritance! It is time Carl and I got out."

"Just what time did you come in this morning?" persisted Farrell.

"Tell them, Dorcas; you've done no harm," advised Miss Ann.

"It was after three," said Dorcas defiantly. "I suppose Hallston or the detective or that nuisance Louise Lee told you. Some house this is to live in! Carl and I only drove out to the yacht club and back. It was so darn hot."

As she spoke, Tom wondered if she and her precious prince had any guilty knowledge of the tragedies. Dorcas seemed frankly to hate Enid, her half-sister, and the prince sounded like a bounder. If Nicolay was about to alter his will in favor of the unacknowledged daughter on the eve of Dorcas's brilliant wedding to Prince Carl, what then? Who were the two witnesses Nicolay had told Carson he would bring to the farm? But beating inexorably through the muddle in his mind came the drums. Those death drums! If he could account for them!

And Enid Cleet's body had been turned under on the wheel where she would not hear the drums, but Nicolay had not been tied tightly to the wheel at all. He had died with those drums beating in his ears.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Banes Offers an Alibi

AS Tom Grant and Farrell reached the entrance hall of the Nicolay mansion on their way out, the sedate Hallston approached them.

"Mr. Banes is in the reception room,

gentlemen," he said with a patient look in his harassed eyes. "He came here to see you. At headquarters they told him you were both here."

"Banes!" Tom frowned for a moment and then remembered the handsome man in knickers who had been seated on the porch of the Cleet house after the murders.

In the center of the little reception room, where in the early hours of that day Tom Grant had had his interview with Maida, Roger Banes was standing, his hands thrust in the pockets of his well-fitting coat, his face pale and drawn.

At sight of the two detectives he started forward eagerly.

"Gentlemen, I want a few words with you without delay," he said. "I went to headquarters, but the superintendent was out and neither of you were there. I had to talk to somebody. I just found out a short time ago that you are holding Walter Cleet for questioning in these crimes. That is ruin to a young man with a career like his! The chap is an artist, a man with a future! He can't afford this sort of thing! And to be dragged into it by this little blonde, Louise Lee!"

"But Cleet is in love with Miss Lee," reminded Tom.

Banes made an impatient gesture.

"Love means nothing to him beside his career," he said. "If it had he could not have countenanced Enid's behavior. And now she shan't ruin him!"

Tom and Farrell exchanged glances.

"But at first you spoke mighty well of Mrs. Cleet," reminded Tom.

"Certainly I did," flared Banes, swinging about. "What man wouldn't? But I didn't foresee this. Walter had nothing to do with her death. She is well out of the way. Now, this is what I want to say to you men. I know

where Walter was last night. It had nothing to do with this Lee girl. I was with Walter Cleet myself in his study at his home. He bribed that Wiltham chauffeur to say nothing about his absence, and he drove into town and went home. And the reason he did it was because this old crank of a millionaire, Wiltham, had sprung on him at dinner some new idea about his place in Maine which he thought he had told Walter about, but which he hadn't, see? And Walter knew him so well that he kept mum, and skipped home and altered his plans. If the old fellow had known Walter didn't have them drawn up in that certain fashion—don't ask me what it was, I'm no artist or architect—he would have thrown down the entire contract, swearing that Walt was undependable. That is the kind of gink he is."

Banes mopped his damp brow as he talked and walked about the dainty room.

"But why couldn't Cleet change those plans at the Wiltham house?" asked Tom, amazed.

"I don't know. He said he couldn't. All his stuff was here in his study. He certainly was worked up about it."

"And how did you butt in on his work?"

"I saw him come home. I was smoking on the porch. I just ambled over, that was all. The servants were in bed and we had the study to ourselves. I often used to sit up there with him and watch him work. It didn't bother him and it fascinated me. I watched him make that cursed mill wheel."

"And what time did Cleet get home?" asked Farrell with obvious disbelief.

"About eleven thirty. Old Wiltham goes to bed early and he came away as soon as he could."

"And he left here, when?"

"Oh, it must have been four o'clock," replied Banes. "I waited until he had altered the plans and we went out of the house together."

"You sat up with him all that while?" Farrell voiced his surprise.

"Yes. - It was frightfully hot. I couldn't sleep anyhow."

"Well, Mr. Banes, I fail to understand where Louise Lee comes into this," said Farrell, gravely. "Hallston bears out her story, too."

"Can't help that," shrugged Banes. "Hallston is crazy about that girl. I mean, he will do anything for her because the women in the house are so mean to her."

"But he wouldn't lie to involve her in a murder!" said Tom. "Something funny here, Farrell."

"Funny! It's cock-eyed!" grunted the detective, glaring at Banes. "And I don't believe a damned word of it, what's more! I'll drop down now and talk to Cleet."

"He probably won't say a word," groaned Banes. "He won't involve the girl and he wouldn't admit this about his work for Wiltham. That contract in Maine means a lot to him."

Tom shuddered.

"How he can go on with his work on that old mill after his wife died on the wheel, passes me!" he said.

"You don't understand an artist," said Banes. "His work first, his career before everything else. Walter is all genius."

"Well, Mr. Banes, it is mighty fine of you to wish to get your friend out of a nasty spot," said Farrell as he turned to the door. "And he is in one, all right. He visited the mill and copied the wheel and he made a key to fit the door. He lied about an alibi and bribed a chauffeur to lie for him. His wife

died with another man on the wheel. Yes, it looks bad for Cleet. And worse if he's in love with another woman himself."

"That's why I thought I'd better speak up," said Banes gloomily as he followed the men through the front door, which was gravely held open by the much-tried Hallston.

At the curb Tom Grant touched Farrell's arm.

"Quiet about this daughter business," he said. "Don't let the papers get it, yet. I'm going to get supper and go back to Darbyville. I got a few things I want to do to-night before the inquest in the morning."

Farrell nodded, extending his hand with a touch of warmth.

"All right. We'll be bringing those fellows out to you in time," he promised. "This seems to be your case, after all, Grant, and you're doing good work with it!"

CHAPTER XXXV

The Snake

JAKE'S was not yet filled when Tom Grant entered it, looking about for the little figure which had already become so very attractive to him.

Tom found a corner table and sat down, hoping for the best. Telling a perspiring waiter that he was waiting for some one, he buried himself in the evening paper, relieved to note that the latest and most vital developments in the mill wheel murders had not yet got into print.

He was beginning to fear that Maida would not be in for dinner, when she came, looking sweet in a gray suit.

"You're late," he said, as she joined him.

"I'm glad to be waited for," said

Maida, smiling. "I've been to Darbyville."

"Darbyville! What for?"

"For information." And Maida would say no more until he had ordered supper.

"Tell me." He bent across the table.

"Well, of course I was dying to look at the mill," she said. "Like a few thousand other people. And after telling your chief who I was and that I was an old friend of yours, and so on, I got in. I've been chilled ever since. What a dreadful place to die! And those drums! They're at headquarters, you know. Exhibit B or something like that. They fascinated me."

"They have fascinated me from the start," said Tom gravely. "They're the story. And I'm glad you called me an old friend."

"It was the open sesame," said Maida. "And then I saw the two Delanders."

"Yes? What about them?"

"I don't know." Troubled eyes were lifted to Tom. "Honestly I don't know. They interest me. Young Delander has something to hide—but maybe it's his gambling habits—from the girl he wants to marry."

Tom nodded. "Yes. We've trailed him about for a while and I think that's all that's wrong with him. He plays cards too much. He's in debt everywhere and doesn't want his dad or his girl to know. I think that's all."

"Perhaps," said Maida slowly. "Isn't it rotten that all of us have something to hide? Well, and then I got interested in Papa Delander."

"Jones?" Tom was honestly surprised. "Why, he's all right. He's a bright chap, got money, and educated. Has been to plenty of interesting

places. Lately he has got fat and kind of settled into a rut on his farm. But he knows a lot."

"I wonder?" mused Maida. "Did you ever see the skin of that huge snake he has in his trophy room at the farm? You did? What did he tell you about it?"

"Why, that he caught it himself one day when he was walking in some spot down in Bermuda," said Tom. "I don't remember. He has quite a collection of snakes he has picked up in his travels."

"Yes? He told me the same story. But, they don't have snakes in Bermuda! How about that?"

"They don't?"

"I figured that maybe he didn't get those death drums in Africa," said Maida demurely. "And if he didn't, then it is possible that Enid Cleet got hers where Delander got his. See? A little matter of deduction. And a lot of his antique stuff is phony. I've studied that line. Take it from me, Tom, your local celebrity, Jones Delander, is a bluff. I bet anything that he never saw all these places he talks about and that when he was absent from Darbyville he wasn't so far away."

"But—"

"That snake," went on Maida, "that reptile he showed me, is nothing more or less than a harmless water snake which resembles the moccasin, but isn't even that. I say this because it makes me think he has fooled everybody about other things, principally the drums. If we could find out where Enid Cleet got her drum, and why she bought it—"

"You're a wonder!" said Tom. "By George—that's clever. The drums have it. We'll run them to earth."

CONCLUDE THIS STORY NEXT WEEK



"You're a funny guy—worrying about a horse!"

"Show Me the Gun!"

Quick Death for Holly Seemed Inevitable; There Was Only One Thing That Might Postpone It

By J. Lane Linklater

HOLLY, tall, lean-faced, slouched uncomfortably in the deep chair, should, perhaps, have been pale with the fear of death. But he wasn't; not because he failed to realize the imminence of death, but only because he was the kind of man for whom death held no terrors.

His hands were securely bound. So were his feet. And a strong rope stretched about his middle and around the back of his chair held him fast.

There was a quizzical half smile on his face as he watched the two men who had him prisoner.

Those two men were dissimilar in build—one short and heavy, the other tall and slim—yet seemed brothers in thought. They were both flashily dressed, both furtive, both on edge. And both restlessly waiting.

They were waiting for the death of the man in the chair.

Holly spoke to the short, heavy one.

"Crest," he asked, "how long will I have to wait?"

"How the hell should I know?" retorted Crest irritably. "Until Starke gets here. That's all I know."

Holly turned his head toward the tall, slim one.

"How about you, Stone? Can you give me anything more definite?"

Stone scowled at him.

"I dunno," he said. "When Starke gets here, you get croaked, see? That's all I know. Maybe twenty minutes, maybe thirty, I dunno."

"So we have to wait for Starke?" repeated the man in the chair.

Crest sat down in a chair opposite. The tall man, Stone, continued pacing impatiently up and down the well-furnished room.

"Sure," Crest went on. "Starke said to tie you up good. And he would come over from Shattuck as soon as he could make it and croak you."

"Well," ventured Holly, "he should be here before long, surely. It shouldn't take him long to get here from Shattuck."

"I dunno," growled Crest. "The sooner the better."

"Yeah," put in Stone. "The sooner the better. This dump gives me the willies."

"It is rather a lonely spot," agreed Holly, with a smile. "Three miles off the highway, and four miles along the highway to Shattuck, which is the nearest town."

"Yeah," said Stone again. "It gives me the willies. The bright lights for me!"

"At that," commented Crest, "it's a fine place for bumping a guy off. No one around to butt in, or nothing."

"What did you call Shattuck?" asked Stone derisively. "A town?"

"Well," said Holly, "there's a store

there, and a garage, and a livery stable."

Crest laughed hoarsely. Then there was silence. A very deep silence. Silence seemed to hang about Holly's retreat in the woods like a tangible thing. That was, perhaps, why Holly went there, alone, whenever he could. He was the kind of a man—reflective, whimsical—who appreciated silence.

But the other two didn't like it. They were not reflective, and far from whimsical. They were impatient, irritable, morose, anxious to finish the job and get away. Still, they were watchful. Sitting down or pacing about, their eyes never left Holly, bound as he was, for more than a brief moment.

"I wish we could plug you now," blurted Crest, suddenly, staring at Holly. "And then beat it. I don't like this dump."

"Yeah," muttered Stone. "But Starke said to wait until he got here."

"Too bad you're kept waiting," remarked Holly. "Anyway, there's nothing to worry about, is there?"

"Hell, no," said Crest. "But I don't like this dump."

He paused, shot a suspicious glance at the man in the chair.

"Starke said you'd be all alone. You are, ain't you?"

"Almost," said Holly.

"What do you mean, almost?"

"Well," said Holly, "so far as I know, there's no other human within miles. But I've got a horse out in the stable. His name's Tommy, and I'm very fond of him."

"A horse, huh?" said Crest, visibly relieved.

"Yes. A horse named Tommy. A black horse. I ride him about the hills a good deal."

Holly's tone was gentle as he spoke

of the horse. Evidently he was sentimental about horses, Tommy in particular.

"Yeah," said Crest. "Well, you ain't gonna ride him no more."

He said it savagely. Not that he had anything personal against either Holly or his horse. But he had a job to do. And he was anxious to do it, and get away from there.

"By the way," said Holly, "how will Starke come here from Shattuck?"

Crest laughed.

"Well," he said, "he won't ride no horse. He'll come in his car."

"Then he shouldn't be long."

"Naw." Crest laughed again. "When you hear that car stop outside, you can figure you got about two minutes to go!"

II

THE information seemed to produce no noticeable consternation in Holly. True, he was thoughtful. But he was usually thoughtful.

He studied the rope that was biting into his wrists.

Then he glanced up at the clock on the mantel. It was within three minutes of midnight. Not that it made any difference.

"Did you notice," he asked Crest, "what kind of a night it is, before you came in?"

"I'll say I did," growled Crest. "It's a dirty night. Dark as hell. You ain't expecting no one, huh?"

"No one," said Holly. "No one—except Starke."

"Yeah? Well, he'll be along pretty quick now."

"I might have known he'd try something like this," Holly mused.

"Starke is a tough baby," said Crest, tolerantly enough. "If a guy crosses him, he bumps the guy off."

Holly chuckled. "I crossed him, all right."

Crest looked at him with some interest.

"I dunno," he said. "Starke didn't say nothing much about that. He just said to grab you and hold you until he got here."

"I can understand that," smiled Holly. "He was half expecting me to leave here this evening. And there's no better place to kill a man than right here."

"Yeah," said Crest. "It's a great place for bumping a guy off." Again, he paused and looked at Holly curiously. "Ain't you the guy that's been making trouble for Starke?"

Holly nodded.

"I suppose I have. At least, I've been investigating corruption in city affairs, the police department in particular. And Starke seems to be the moving spirit behind a lot of it. He doesn't seem to like what I've been doing."

"Like it!" Crest cackled. "Why, when a guy does like you been doing, there ain't nothing to do but bump the guy off."

"At that," said Holly, "I suppose it's not so much what I've done already, as what I would probably do in the future."

"Yeah?"

"Of course. There's the Grace Arlen case, in particular."

"Grace Arlen? The broad that got croaked the other day, huh?"

"The girl was to have been an important witness. But she was shot to death a few days ago."

"Why, sure." Crest knew all about that. To him it was clearly a matter of course that she should have been killed. "Yeah, she got plugged."

"And I had evidence," Holly went

on, a trifle grimly, "that Starke was responsible for the killing."

"Yeah?"

Crest grinned at that. The news didn't surprise him in the least.

"Yes," said Holly. "Well, I suppose Starke concluded that it was either him or me."

"Why, sure," said Crest. "It was him or you. And he beat you to it."

The tall man, Stone, stopped his pacing long enough to speak.

"He oughter be here pretty quick now."

Holly looked at the clock. It was ten minutes after midnight.

"Yeah," said Crest. "Starke ought to show up pretty quick now."

"By the way," queried Holly, "how is it that Starke didn't come with you?"

"I dunno," said Crest. "I think he had to see a guy in Shattuck. But he wanted to be sure you didn't beat it, see, so he sent us ahead."

"Wanted to see some one in Shattuck, did he?"

"That's what he said."

Crest, obviously, didn't care about that. It was a matter of no consequence to him what Starke was doing. Crest had a job to do, would get well paid for it, and that was all that concerned him.

Holly's tall form, stretched out in a reclining position, was motionless. To move either hands or legs meant only the cutting of the ropes deeper into his flesh. He stared at the ceiling for a little while.

"One thing worries me," he said presently.

"Yeah?" said Crest, grinning.

"Yes. What will happen to Tommy?"

"Tommy?"

"My horse. There's no one here to take care of him. There probably

wouldn't be any one else around here for days, perhaps weeks. He couldn't get out of the stable. There's some feed near him, but no water."

"Well," said Crest, indulgently, "maybe we could plug him, too."

"Maybe that would be the best," said Holly. "Still it's too bad. Tommy is still young—good for a lot of years, yet."

"Hell," laughed Crest. "You are, too, ain't you?"

"Yes," admitted Holly. "But there doesn't seem to be much chance of my living them out."

"Naw," said Crest. "Not much. Not the way Starke feels. I dunno much about it, but he sure is sore at you."

"I can stand it," said Holly, rather curtly, "but I hate to think of Tommy suffering."

"Well," said Crest, amused, "I dunno. Maybe Starke will stick you on the horse and then plug you both at the same time."

He laughed heartily at his own wit.

"I'm afraid not," Holly said. "Not Starke. He'd be afraid I might get away on a horse."

Stone was still pacing up and down. Occasionally he stopped to shoot a vicious glance at the man in the chair, as if he had half decided not to wait for Starke.

"This dump," he grumbled, "gives me the willies."

III

FOR a few moments there was silence again. Crest, much more talkative than his partner, Stone, was nevertheless uncomfortable, nerves keyed up. This house of Holly's, miles back in the wooded hills, was depressing. Apparently he found chatting with Holly helped to soothe him.

But there was no soothing Stone. The tall man strode up and down, up and down, incessantly.

Holly himself seemed calm, at least on the surface. Death was coming to him, fast. It was on the way from the little town of Shattuck, in the person of the underworld king, Starke. But Holly's nerves were like fine steel; sensitive, yet resilient; yielding, yet unbreakable.

It was Holly, in fact, who kept the conversation going.

"I suppose," he ventured presently, "that Starke had to call on Watson."

"Huh?" said Crest.

"I said, that I suppose Starke stopped to call on Watson."

"Watson, huh?" said Crest. "I dunno that guy."

"Watson has a country place just outside of Shattuck. He's supposed to be a friend of mine."

"A pal, huh?" chuckled Crest. "That pal stuff is sure a lotta hooley."

"Anyway," Holly continued, "Watson was supposed to be a friend of mine. He was working with me on the girl case—the girl who was killed. Apparently, however, he is tied up with Starke."

Crest shook his head, as if pitying Holly for his simplicity.

"Yeah," he said. "Starke's got all kindsa guys working with him. He's a smart mug, Starke is."

Holly continued to stare at the ceiling.

"Yes," he said. "And the question is, why should Starke want to call on Watson to-night?"

"Why, I dunno about that," said Crest.

Holly's glance left the ceiling, rested in grim amusement on the short, heavy man in the chair across from him. Of course Crest wouldn't know about that.

Crest knew only that Holly was to be bumped off, and he was there to help do the job.

But if Crest didn't know, Holly himself knew, and he proceeded to explain.

"Well, you see, Watson was supposed to be a friend of mine. He worked with me collecting the evidence in the girl case. Starke will want that evidence, and he'll presume that Watson may know where it is."

"Evidence, huh?" said Crest, not very much interested.

"Yes. The gun, particularly. The gun that was used to kill the girl. You remember that it couldn't be found at first. But we found it—to-day. Three shots left in it. And it gives us a practically complete case against Starke."

"You found the gun, huh?"

"Yes. And Starke will want to get it. He doubtless went to Watson to find out where it is."

Crest yawned.

Stone again stopped his pacing long enough to speak.

"It's about time Starke was getting here. This place gives me the willies."

"It sure is," agreed Crest. "Any minute now."

Stone resumed his pacing. For a little while no one said anything. But silence was the one thing that disturbed Crest; he was all right as long as there was conversation.

"So you found the gun that croaked the broad, huh?"

"Yes," said Holly. "And Starke will want that."

"Well," laughed Crest. "It's a cinch it ain't on you."

He and Stone had thoroughly frisked Holly.

"No," smiled Holly.

"But maybe you got it around the dump here, somewhere, huh?"

"Maybe."

"But you ain't saying, huh?"

"Not just now."

"Aw, well," Crest said comfortably, "I guess Starke can handle that."

"When he gets here, eh?" added Holly.

"Yeah. Well, he won't be long. Pretty soon you'll hear his car stopping out front here—and that'll be the time."

"I suppose so," said Holly. "But do you think Starke will take care of Tommy?"

"Tommy?"

"Yes. The horse."

"Oh, the nag! Well, I dunno about that. I don't think he cares much about horses."

Holly shook his head, sadly. It was clear that the fate of the horse disturbed him.

"You're a kinda funny guy," Crest went on. "Worrying about a horse! If I was you, I'd be the guy I'd worry about. Not that it'd do much good."

Holly looked at his bound hands and legs, and wryly nodded agreement. The tall man, Stone, pacing up and down, had evidently followed the sea for a while, and knew something about knots.

"No," Holly began, "I don't suppose—"

He stopped abruptly, listened. Stone stopped his pacing, and listened. Crest sat up straight in his chair.

Outside the house there was the sound of an automobile stopping.

IV

CREST grinned cheerfully. Even Stone brightened. Presently there was the tramp of footsteps in the hall. The door opened, and a man came in. He stopped just inside the door and coolly surveyed the scene.

An impressive man, this Starke. He was heavy, yet moved lightly. He wore his expensive clothes carelessly. Sharp features set in a broad face—a face frankly predatory, relentless, cruel.

Even his two men, Crest and Stone, betrayed a certain uneasy alertness in his presence. Holly's face, heretofore quite pleasant, grew rigid and stern.

In dead silence, then, Starke advanced into the room. He paid no attention to his gunmen, beyond a mere glance. He made straight for Holly, stood in front of him, and regarded him without remorse, without pity.

"What about the gun?" he snapped, abruptly.

Holly gazed at him, unwinking.

"What gun?"

"You know what gun," Starke cracked his words out like pistol shots. No wonder his man, Crest—and all the others, for that matter—had full confidence in his ability to get what he wanted.

"Of course I know," said Holly, slowly. "You mean the gun that took the life of young Grace Arlen."

Not a muscle of Starke's face moved.

"You know what gun. Where is it?"

"Didn't you ask Watson?" countered Holly.

"I did. He knows that you have it. But that's all."

The smile that came to Holly's face was almost pleasant again.

"Is that all he could tell you? It took you a long time to find that out. Your men have been waiting impatiently for you. They don't like my place."

"Watson was not at home when I got there. I had to wait until—"

Starke stopped quickly. He was not in the habit of making explanations, and this one had been surprised out of him.

"Never mind that," he said brusquely. "The gun—where is it?"

Holly shrugged. "Why should I tell you?"

Starke looked him over, calmly, derisively.

"You don't seem to be in a position to refuse anything," he sneered.

"And you," retorted Holly, "are not in a position to demand anything."

"No?"

"No. Now, suppose I refuse to tell you?"

"You know the answer to that."

"I do. You'll kill me. But you intend to do that, anyway. You can't kill me any deader for not telling you."

Starke flushed angrily.

"No. But I can kill you quicker!"

"Not enough quicker to make any difference," said Holly, indifferently.

Starke stared down at him, his black eyes merciless with hate. Then he turned to his gunmen.

"We'll do the job right now," he barked.

"Okay," said Crest.

"Can't be too soon to suit me," growled Stone. "This place gives me the willies."

"You two," Starke went on rapidly, "can plug him as he sits there. We'll untie him then, and take him out and ditch him where they won't find him very easily."

Already Crest and Stone had taken automatics from their pockets. They were ready to fire, waiting for Starke to give the word.

And Starke was about to give it.

"Just a minute, Starke," put in Holly.

But Starke paid no attention to him. He was not the kind to hesitate.

"I'll tell you about the gun," Holly went on quickly.

That was enough to delay Starke, at

least for a moment or two. Starke turned to him again.

"All right. Where is it?"

"I'll tell you," Holly amended with a smile, "on one consideration."

"Name it."

"I've got a good black horse out in the stable. His name's Tommy."

"What about it?"

"Well, there's no one here to take care of him. I don't like to leave him unprovided for."

Starke's lip curled contemptuously.

"Well?"

"Take care of Tommy?" said Holly quietly, "and I'll tell you about the gun."

It didn't take Starke a second to decide that.

"All right. I'll do it. Now, about the gun?"

"You'll need it badly," Holly parleyed.

"Well, where is it?"

"And I want to be sure that you'll take care of your end of the bargain before I'll tell you."

Starke nodded impatiently. He understood. Holly wanted a guarantee.

"If Tommy were turned loose," Holly went on, "he would know where to go."

"We'll turn him loose," said Starke. "Show me the gun."

"I'd have to turn him loose myself. Or, at least, I'd have to be present."

Three seconds of thought and Starke motioned to Crest and Stone.

"This guy," he said, "seems awful anxious to see that horse. Maybe he ain't got a horse. Maybe it's a trick. You boys go out and take a look at that horse, and make sure there ain't nothing phony about it. I'll keep him entertained while you're gone."

Reluctantly, Crest and Stone started toward the door.

"It's in back of the house," Holly said. "You can't miss it. But you better light that lantern there to see by. And don't get too close to Tommy. Tommy doesn't pay any attention to strangers. He doesn't bother about anybody but me. He'd just as soon step on you as not. So don't go too close."

This did not seem to reassure Crest and Stone any. Stone took down the lantern and lit it. Then they closed the door behind them very slowly.

When they were gone, Holly turned to Starke.

"I'm playing straight," he said quietly. "You turn Tommy loose and I'll show you where the gun is hidden. I think a lot of that horse. He's a well trained, valuable horse, and it would be a shame to let him die."

"Yeah," said Starke. "If there really is a horse there we'll turn him loose, don't worry. After that it's up to him what he does with himself. We ain't gonna lose any sleep worryin' over a horse."

"No," Holly agreed. "I guess a horse doesn't mean much in your life—but I like horses."

The door opened and Crest and Stone came in, visibly glad to get back in the house again.

"Well?" demanded Starke.

"There's a horse there, all right," Crest said. "A big horse. We went in and looked at him. But I don't like this fooling around."

"Never mind what you like," Starke said. "Sure there wasn't nothing but a horse there? Nobody hiding or anything like that?"

"Naw," Stone said, a bit disgustedly. "We looked with the lantern. Only a horse. A big horse."

"All right, then," Starke said decisively. "We'll let you turn him

loose. I guess you're on the up and up, all right."

"Thanks," said Holly.

"Unbind his feet," said Starke. "Let him loose from the chair. Keep his wrists tied."

Crest unbound his feet. Stone released him from the chair.

"This place gives me the willies," muttered Stone.

Wrists still tightly bound, Holly got up, stretched. In a few moments they were leaving the house, walking across a cleared space in the woods a distance of about a hundred feet toward the stable.

Crest and Stone pressed close to Holly, covering him with automatics. Starke was near them, carrying a lantern. Low clouds concealed the stars. It was chill and damp.

The door of the small stable was fastened, but not locked. They trailed in. Only one of the three stalls were occupied.

"Steady, Tommy," said Holly.

The horse, aroused by their entrance, rose up from the straw. He looked inky black in the dim, flickering light of the lantern. In obedience to his master's voice, he stood still, a splendid, vibrant animal.

The door through which they had come had been left open.

"You can't get Tommy out?" Holly told Starke, "unless you open both doors."

"Both doors?"

"Yes. We came through the south door. Directly opposite—on the north side—is another door. The passage here runs from one door to the other. You'll have to open the north door, too."

Stone, at a decisive word from Starke, walked down the passage and opened the other door.

Starke spoke sharply to Crest.

"Drive him out!"

Crest was a little bewildered. He didn't know much about horses.

"Come on outer there," he instructed Tommy, presently.

The horse stood perfectly still. Crest swore, got in the stall beside the horse, pushed on him.

"Get the hell outer—"

But he didn't finish. Tommy swept his rear sideways, and Crest was crushed against the side of the stall. Then Tommy swung back into place again, and remained motionless.

Crest got up, painfully, sidled cautiously out of the stall.

"Why not just plug him?" he whined to Starke.

Instead, Starke turned to Stone.

"Drive him out!"

Stone hesitated. He, too, was unfamiliar with horses.

"You'll have to let me do it," put in Holly, with a chuckle.

Starke had evidently preferred to have his own men turn the horse out, in view of the possibility of a trick if Holly did it. However, what Holly might accomplish thereby was not apparent. Too, Starke was in a hurry.

"All right," he agreed.

They all stood back against the wall, to allow the horse room enough to swing out of the stall and down the passage. Holly was between Crest and Stone. The light from the lantern, held by Starke, played most on Holly, clearly outlined his hands held in front of him, his wrists still securely bound.

"Tommy," called Holly, gently.

The horse at once swung about, faced his master. His glowing eyes were fixed upon Holly.

"Tommy, take a canter," said Holly.

The horse obeyed the simple com-

mand at once. With not an instant's hesitation, he turned his nose toward the south door, thumped rhythmically down the passage, out of the door into the darkness beyond, picked up speed rapidly.

For just one brief moment there was silence. A silence that was cut like a knife by the sound of Starke's metallic voice.

"The gun!" he said to Holly. "Where is it?"

"Why, it's right here," Holly said promptly.

"Here?"

"Yes. Here in the stable."

"Show it to me!"

Holly sighed.

"How impetuous you are!" he objected mildly. "Now, I—"

"Show me the gun!" raged Starke. "I could find it, in time, without your help. But you promised—"

"Very well," said Holly.

He stepped across the passage toward the stall, the others watching him warily. As he reached it he turned and faced them.

"You see," he explained, "I wanted to be sure that the gun was safe. There was no place of concealment in the house that Watson didn't know about. I had begun to suspect him, so I—"

"Never mind that," cut in Starke, exasperated. "Get me the gun!"

But Holly went on doggedly.

"And I knew that it would be safe here in Tommy's stall. In the first place, any one looking for it would not be likely to look here. And in the second place, Tommy would not allow—"

Holly broke off abruptly as Starke, with Crest and Stone, stepped away from the wall into the middle of the passage, threateningly.

Without a word, Holly turned about again and went to the far corner of

the straw-covered stall. He knelt in the straw. His wrists were so tightly bound that the blood had almost ceased to flow in his hands. But his fingers, although numb, were free, and with them he raked about in the straw.

Starke put the lantern down in the passage. He, too, drew an automatic. He, Crest and Stone, all waited with weapons drawn.

"I give you ten seconds!" he called briskly to Holly.

"Ten seconds," Holly called back, "is nothing to me. I'm only showing you the gun because I promised—"

From somewhere outside came the clatter of horse's hoofs. Tommy had cantered away out of the south door. These were coming toward the north door.

"This dump gives me the willies," muttered Stone.

"Look out!" yelled Crest, suddenly.

But there was no time to look out.

Through the north door, at a furious speed came Tommy. He swept along the passage like a great, black steaming ghost, wreaking havoc all the way. Along the passage and out of the south door again.

Crest, squealing and cursing in anguish, was trampled under foot. Stone was flung with terrific force against the wall, and lay where he fell, still and silent. Starke was the only one of the three to remain a menace; pushed against the wall, he was kneeling on one knee, a little short of breath, but otherwise unharmed.

The lantern had been bowled over. Even the shadowy outlines of the stalls were blackened out in the darkness.

Holly was crouching in the stall. Starke was across the passage, not a dozen feet away. For a little while, neither moved, neither made a sound.

But it was Starke's move, since he knew best his antagonist's position. His automatic spattered out three sharp flashes.

But he was blazing at the wrong corner.

Holly, waiting for this, answered instantly. One shot.

"Ah!"

And that was all. Starke's form pitched across the passage.

Holly walked out of the stall, and along the passage toward the door. There his fingers found a light switch—Starke had not known that the stable was fitted with electricity—and flooded the place with light.

He walked back toward Starke, stood over him grimly. Dangling from his fingers was a gun.

"Here is the gun, Starke!" he said.

But Starke did not hear him.

Again, there was the pounding of horse's hoofs. Again, Holly spoke to Starke.

"Tommy is taking a canter, Starke. He often does that—out the south door, around the house, and back through the north door—"

But it was a waste of time talking to Starke, so Holly went to the north door to meet Tommy.



Arson in the Jungle

By George Allan England

A True Story



"I'm no mining engineer. I'm a Secret Service man"

When \$200,000 in Big Bills Burned, but Only Charred "Ones" and "Twos" Could be Found—Well, It Looked Funny

THE true story of this crime was given me by Secret Service Investigator "Hartwell," some of whose other adventures I have already recorded. To give his real name would not only endanger his life, but would impair his usefulness to Uncle Sam and would probably lose him his job. Furthermore, as the brother of a former president of a certain Latin-American republic is involved, fictitious names must be used.

Hartwell is a truly extraordinary man, of Franco-American parentage and born in Mexico. He has also lived much among Italians. Thus he speaks French, English, Spanish and Italian

perfectly, without a trace of accent. He passes freely as a citizen of the United States, a Frenchman or an Italian, as well as a Spaniard or a Latin-American; and knows not only many local dialects, but also crook slang in four languages.

Hartwell is the last man in the world you'd suspect of being a Secret Service man. He's not piercing-eyed, lean or in any way like Sherlock Holmes. On the contrary, he's round-faced, stout, good-natured and cheerful, and an easy mixer. He looks like a salesman, business-man or contractor; and this helps him along. The underworld can't believe that such an easy-going, jolly

and friendly chap can be dangerous. This is one prime reason for his long record of brilliant success.

So much, then, for Hartwell. Now his inside story of the famous \$200,000 Pay Roll Arson Case.

IN the fall of 1929, the big insurance concern known as Lloyd's reported a heavy loss by fire. This loss was that of a \$200,000 pay roll, all in American bills, at the little town of San Fulano de Tal, in the banana Republic of Equis Igriega, somewhere to the southward of the U. S. A.—never mind just where.

"All we know," they told me, "is that the pay roll was consigned to the Mengano Sugar Company, about twenty miles from San Fulano, to pay off both the office force and the field hands for a month. The money reached San Fulano, all right. The night of its arrival, before it had been delivered to the *Mengano Central*, or sugar mill, the post office burned up, and the money was lost—or so the Postal Department of the Republic has the honor to report. We aren't making any charge of crime, theft, arson, collusion, or anything, but before we pay the insurance we want to know what it's all about. Now go to it."

I went to it. First of all, I got a list of the bills sent. There were so many fives, so many tens and twenties. No ones or twos. All fives or better.

My trip to San Fulano is of no importance, except to say that the place was far up-country, away beyond the terminus of even such narrow-gauge and jerkwater railroads as that Spig republic boasted. I let it be casually known, all the way, that my name was Señor Alguien, and I looked and dressed and talked the part of a mining engineer from Mexico City, interested

in picking up any good properties that might be lying around loose.

The last seventy-five kilometers I made along jungle trails on horseback in two days, and as I weigh close to two hundred and was pretty soft from lack of roughing it for some time, it was a mighty lame mining expert who one fine afternoon drew rein in front of the Hotel Encanto, at San Fulano de Tal.

I'll waste no time describing the town, except to mention three or four alleged streets, some banana palms and coconut trees, plenty of pigs, poultry and buzzards, and a sufficiency of *mañana* natives in bare feet and dirty white cotton clothes. Also a store, a town hall and a telegraph office, a time-worn church, a few *rurales* in charge of a lieutenant, and a jail that looked like the last hoosegow in the world I'd ever want to see the inside of. San Fulano seemed to be suffering extensively from hookworm and a lack of insomnia. But the rifles of the *rurales* were well oiled, and the lieutenant was a black gentleman with a wicked eye. What you'd call a very bad *hombre*.

As for the Hotel Encanto (which means Enchantment), the least said the most eloquent. I've seen a good many better ones of that type, but none worse. However, it was that or else sleep with the scorpions out under a palm tree, so I hired three beds and got settled the best I could.

II

WHY three beds? Well, I'll tell you. There was just one sleeping room, with eight beds in it, at forty cents American a throw. I didn't want any Spig snoring close to me, on either side, so I took three beds and slept in the middle one, which set me back a dollar twenty a day.

I got cleaned up as well as I could, considering that there was no water except down at a pump in the *patio*, where horses and mules and various other kinds of live stock were quartered. Plenty of live stock in the beds, too, small but ambitious. That sort of thing, however, is all in the game. I figured that if I didn't get punctured by anything bigger than a *chinche*, or B-flat, before I got through, I'd be sitting pretty.

The grub—black beans, tortillas and *empanadas* or meat cooked in dough—was ladeled out to us in an alleged dining room where dogs and pigs wandered round, and chickens pecked on the tiled floor or even hopped on to the chairs and flew up on the tables, if not shoo'd off. The guests were *rancheros*, cattle-men and sugar-hands, and all that sort. But one of them was different, a priest named Padre Ninguno, and he was a good scout if there ever was one.

I introduced myself and chummed up to him right away, and spilled my little tale—how I'd been sent there by the Estrella Mining Company, from Mexico City, to look up abandoned mining properties, especially Indian mines. In a day or two we got as thick as two peas in a pod. Of course my being considered a mining man and O. K. by the padre put me in right with everybody, and for the present nobody had the slightest suspicion of my real character or object.

Well, I had my optics peeled, and sized up things pretty carefully, including the ruins of the burned post office. When Sunday came, I was mighty careful to go to church and contribute liberally. The padre certainly thought I was the goods, and invited me to his house that afternoon.

As I say, the padre was a regular

guy, and we had a few refreshments, native style. Without seeming to steer the conversation, which was, of course, all in Spanish, none the less I managed to get it around to the post office fire. The good padre was glad to have something to gossip about.

"A great calamity, *señor*," he explained. "And what a fatality that so much money should have been in the building when it just happened to burn! All due to a storm, too."

"How so, padre?"

"Well, because of the storm, the steamer that was bringing the money wasn't expected to arrive at Rio Fanguoso that day. Don José Chanchullero, the paymaster at the Mengano sugar-central, had been waiting for the pay roll, but went away without it. The steamer came in unexpectedly, and the registered mail pouch was brought here and put in the post office."

"And then?"

"Then Lieutenant Guataquero in command of the *rurales*, gave a *baile*—a dance—at the town hall. It was his birthday, which he had forgotten about, but remembered just in time to organize the entertainment. Everybody went. Oh, a fine fiesta! *Rurales* and all were there. Plenty of liquors, and roast pork and *dulces*, very fine! It started at ten, that night, and was to last till morning."

"Did the postmaster go, too?"

"No, *señor*. That good man remained away, at the office, to guard the money. Don Mário Tiburón, his name is. He would not attend. Said his first duty was to protect the \$200,000 till he deliver it safely into the hands of the *central* paymaster, in the morning. But alas, *señor*—"

"Well?"

"Alas, what mischance! At two in the morning, when everybody was

dancing and making merry with the wine, the cry of 'Fire! Fire!' was heard. *Ay mi madre!* It was the post office that was burning! The poor postmaster had fallen asleep on his lonely vigil, while smoking a cigarette, and the building had caught fire. He woke up, stifled with smoke, just in time to save his life. Though he got out, he was somewhat burned."

"Too bad!" I commiserated.

"Yes, *señor*," agreed the padre. "We have no firemen, no engine. Nothing we could do availed to save the post office. It was burned flat, *señor*, with all the mail and everything. What a fatality, *verdad?*"

"It surely was. And nothing was saved? None of the money at all?"

"Very little, *señor*. The ashes were searched when they were cool enough, but only a few charred pieces of bills were recovered. A very great misfortune, indeed."

"Ah, well," said I, "no misfortune lasts a hundred years. How much money was recovered, and where is it now?"

"Only a few dollars, *señor*. The postmaster has it all, keeping it for the government inspectors, when they come."

"Haven't they been here yet?"

"Not yet, *señor*. You know how it is, here. Always *mañana*. But some day they will arrive. And when they do, the postmaster has all the recovered money to show them. A very brave, honest man is our postmaster. His burns are now, thank God, quite healed."

I figured I'd got an earful, all right, and didn't want to ride luck any further than it would tote me without arousing suspicion, so I let the talk swing around to other subjects. But next day I drifted into the new post

office—a plain, whitewashed shack near the jail. Americano cigarettes are the best small-change with which to get acquainted in all Latin-America, and I had plenty. It wasn't long before the brave Señor Tiburón, postmaster of San Fulano, was smoking cigarettes that even he, lazy as he looked, might have walked at least a kilometer for. Also, he was talking, showing me where he'd been burned, and everything.

III

THERE was no business, nothing to do but kill time—and mosquitoes and ticks—so we sat on a couple of goatskin chairs, smoking and chewing the rag. My Mexican accent got across, all right, and the postmaster would have taken his bible oath I was a genuine Mexicano. It wasn't long before he was proudly exhibiting the fragments of charred bills that had so fortunately been rescued from the ruins of the post office.

"Here they are, *señor*," said he. "And do you think there is enough left of this money, so the Yanqui government will redeem it?"

"Undoubtedly," I assured him, though I saw at once it would hardly be worth the trouble. The charred pieces could not have represented more than \$150 or \$200, all told. And more interesting still, I saw that every piece was the fragment of either a one-spot or a two!

"Now then," I figured, when I'd got through with the good, honest postmaster of San Fulano, "now then, we're beginning to get somewhere. The mail-pouch with the \$200,000 came in unexpectedly. Friend Lieutenant, the black hombre, got up an impromptu fiesta and served plenty of *aguardiente* to all hands. He had all his rurales at

the shindig. The post officer remained unguarded, except by the postmaster. It caught fire from a 'cigarette.' And the only pieces of bills recovered were ones and twos. *Bueno!*"

The whole case was opening up like a clam in hot water. Why were there no fragments of fives, tens and twenties? That was the big question now!

I followed it up by exploring the country, all around about, for mining properties. On horseback and muleback I trekked hither and yon, sometimes putting up at *fincas* or farms, again at sugar-centrals, or cattle ranches, or what have you. At last in a wretched little village named Pozo Negro I picked up a red-hot clue—an almost new American five-dollar bill.

I saw this bill paid over the counter of a *posada*, or inn. It was passed by a mulatto foreman of a sugar-mill. I offered this man a drink, got acquainted with him, asked him about mines, and next day went to see him at his *central*. There, at a little cantina, I treated him and some others, and paid with an American twenty. In change—among all sorts of queer chicken-feed, I got an American ten-spot!

Now things *were* turning up!

I beat it right back to my good padre, at San Fulano, invited him to dinner and then got down to business. Our table was out in a patio, where nobody could overhear us, and we talked in low tones.

"See here, padre," said I, "I might as well come clean with you. I'm no more a mining engineer than you are, but a detective, a Secret Service man from the United States, down here to trace the big robbery."

"What robbery, *señor*?"

"That \$200,000 pay roll. Now then, don't look surprised! I happen to know

that the fire was only a blind, to cover a robbery. I know all about it, except where the money is—what's left of it. Suppose I were to receive a little useful information, it would not be impossible that a certain church in a certain town not a thousand miles from here might receive a little donation for a new building. A donation of, say, five thousand *pesos*. Well, father?"

The excellent padre considered a moment, then sighed deeply.

"My son," said he, "much sorrow has lain on my heart, because of certain matters that have distressed me. I have been wondering what to do; been *muy triste*—very sad, eh? And why?"

"Yes, why?" I asked, feeling that the trail was getting hot, indeed.

"Ah! Rumors have been circulating, underground, about this affair, and a certain Mariposa. About a possible connection between them, *sabe*? I have felt that an investigation was needed, but by whom? In this unfortunate country whom I could trust? To whom could I communicate my fears?"

"It's a tough job, padre," I admitted, "communicating anything in this republic. But I'm an Americano, and you'll be safe with me. As we say in our lingo, could you not spill a few beans?"

"Beans, *señor*? What do you mean, beans?"

"It is our way of saying, give information."

The padre considered a moment, then made an uncertain gesture with his ancient, corded hand. He shook his head.

"Were I to tell you anything, *señor*, and were it to become—what you call?—spilled beans, that it was I who told, how long do you think it would be before I would be one angel?"

"Four minutes, perhaps. Maybe five, if you had luck. However, whatever you tell me will be as if sealed in the tomb. I, too, want to live."

He looked at me a moment, then remarked:

"More things than bread might be found in the *brazero* of La Mariposa, in Las Pocilgas. To a good listener, few words."

I thanked him, and said no more about it. The trail was getting hot.

IV

I SAT down in the plaza and had a good smoke and think. A *brazero*, I knew, was a sort of brick bake-oven, usually built behind a native house. Las Pocilgas was the name of a small village about nine kilometers east of San Fulano. And how about La Mariposa? That meant a butterfly, of course, but it might mean also an inn, or a woman. Anyhow, I was going to find out.

First thing I did was write to the chief of police at San Pedro—capital of the country—for a couple of Secret Service men to be sent me immediately. While waiting for them I did nothing but keep busy looking up old mining titles and such matters at the town hall. That very effectively killed any suspicion that I wasn't a *bona fide* mining engineer. Anxious days, those! Were any leak to take place, or anybody get wise to me, what then? A shot at night; a dagger in the back; a nameless grave in the jungle!

For once in my life, I confess I felt a bit nervous. But luck stayed with me, and nothing happened. Four days, and the Secret Service men showed up—"mining engineers," like myself. We got acquainted and I told them what was doing. Next day we all three set out for Las Pocilgas on horseback.

The rest of this case is short but lively. We put up at a wretched little posada in Las Pocilgas, and wandered round looking the place over. If possible, it was ten times filthier than San Fulano. Inside of two hours we'd located a lady by the name of La Mariposa. Some butterfly! Black as a spade flush, and sinister-looking, she lived in a thatched hut down by a swamp at the far end of the village.

It took only a few drinks and a little gossip with the keeper of the posada to discover that La Mariposa was one of the sweethearts of the rural lieutenant, Guataquero, back there in San Fulano. That bad hombre, we learned, had several women scattered round in different villages, and this bouncing black butterfly was his favorite. Better and better!

Next day we closed in on La Mariposa. We found she had a brick oven in her back yard, all right, and that was what we wanted to get into. We waltzed right in on her, showed our badges, and started to excavate. About then the butterfly went into action. Tigress would have been a better name for her. She grabbed a machete and went to it. I never hit a woman before in all my life, but I hit that butterfly plenty—with a wine jug that I threw just in time to save one of my companions from becoming devilled ham. I knocked her for a row of goals.

She went down, squawking, and we tied her up and gagged her. If we hadn't, she'd have raised the town about our ears, and the rest would have been just war. We weren't there for war, but to get the money. And we got it, all right!

The way we ripped that *brazero* to pieces was a caution. What we found was plenty—a pottery *olla*, or jar, with

\$185,000 inside it, all in fives, tens and twenties. Reads like fiction, but it's a fact. I never saw so much cash in such a humble pot in all my born days.

Only \$15,000 had been spent, fixing people and paying off, and so on. The charred ones and twos, you see, had all been out of the conspirators' own pockets, and as they'd counted on recovering most of that, their expenses hadn't been heavy. The bills had been burned in such a manner that they could be redeemed, all right; and the fact that the postmaster had "found" them all gave us a pretty good line on him.

Leaving the butterfly's wings still all wound round with a hempen string, we slung the cash into our saddle-bags and beat it, pronto. We didn't stop for anything, you bet. *Adiós!* And no return ticket. If the natives had got wise to us, that would certainly have been one mighty unhealthy jungle. With only three of us, and with that bad black hombre and the rest of them thirsting for our gore—not so hot.

To make it brief, we reached San Fulano in record time, paid our bill at the inn, announced that we had important mining business elsewhere, and kept right on going. Didn't stop—by horse and narrow-gauge railroad—till we reached San Pedro. There we

banked the \$185,000 safely, and I stepped out of the picture. It wasn't up to me to make any arrests. I simply had to unravel the case and get the coin.

The national Secret Service people took up the case, from then on. In two days the bad hombre was pinched. He squealed, implicating the postmaster and the telegraph clerk. Between them, they let a still bigger cat out of the bag—no less a cat than a brother of the president of the republic, who had been the brains and instigator of the affair, and was counting on fifty per cent of the loot.

The three lesser artists got ten years apiece; and that, in a country like the Republic of Equis Igriega, is equivalent to a death sentence.

"And the Big Shot?" I queried, as Hartwell's story came to a close.

"Whitewashed," said Hartwell. "In view of his close relationship to the president, what could they do about it? Some country!"

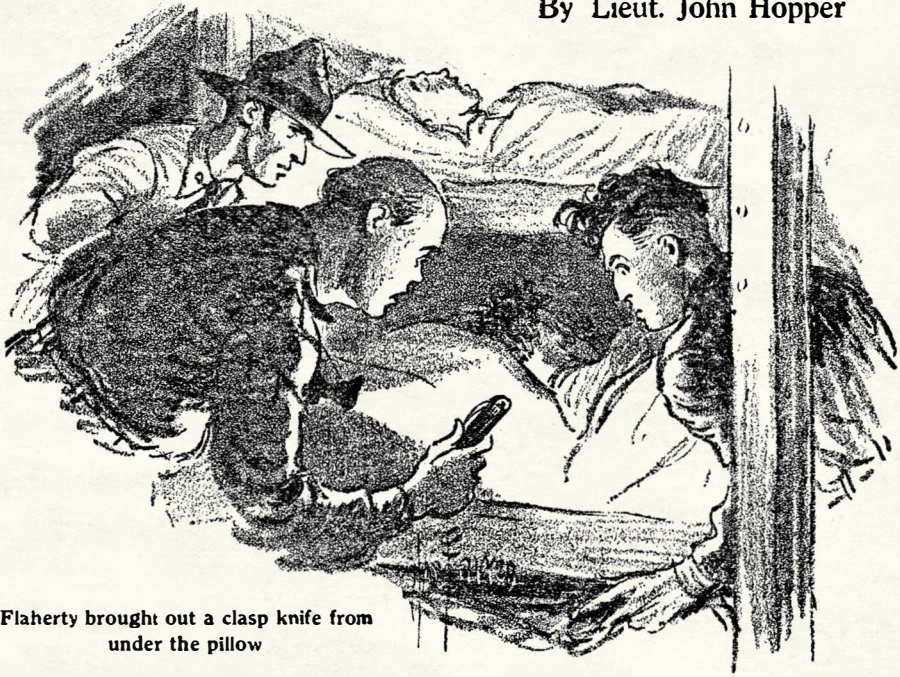
"How about the good Padre Ninguno?" I asked.

"Oh, he got his \$5,000, all right. I've heard, since, that he's built a classy new church at San Fulano. But I've never been back there to see. I don't think it would be just what you might call healthy!"



Murderer on Board!

By Lieut. John Hopper



Flaherty brought out a clasp knife from under the pillow

Three Red-Headed Men on Board, and One a Killer! But One Had Been Murdered, and Another Attacked—

THROUGH the muffled, monotonous beat of the engines, the slow strokes of a deep-toned bell sounded faintly. Midnight, at sea. As the U. S. Army transport *Shiloh* solemnly lifted and dropped in her silent passage through the ebony, tropical waters, silvered and greenish-crested by the high, white moon, three hundred and fifty soldiers slumbered in her hold. Three hundred of them were raw recruits, bound for service in Canal Zone forts. The other fifty were previous service men, soldiers returning to their posts in Panama after having been on leave in the United States.

Aft, where the men were quartered.

the heavy, foul air was oppressive with heat. It was, moreover, pitifully stale, having been taken in and out of many lungs. A small, yellow bulb beside an iron ladder, leading through a hole to the main deck above, cast a little area of sickly radiance. Stretching away on all sides from this splotchy patch of illumination were dim, densely shadowed forests of steel. They were the bunks, tier after tier of them, in which the soldiers slept.

The sounds of midnight possessed the place. Aside from the murmurous rumble of the propeller shaft far down next to the keel of the ship, whose constant noise was more felt than

heard, there were snores, heavy breathings, and restless creakings of springs as men tossed in their sleep.

Recruit Baxter, on the bottom bunk of a tier deep in the blackness of a corner of the hold, wooed sleep vainly. No matter how much he twisted and turned, he found slumber just as distant as ever, the heat just as intense, the air as suffocating, and the mattress as lumpy.

It was agonizing, he thought, to want to sleep so much, and yet not be able to. He stared up into the darkness, and envied the man in the bunk above him. His springs had not creaked in ages.

Baxter resolutely closed his eyes again. This time he would go to sleep. He certainly needed it.

Hardly had he settled himself, however, when a premonition leaped full grown into his mind that some one was close to him, peering down at him, bending over him. With a jerk, his eyes unshuttered themselves. Only blackness above.

He lay quietly for a moment, waiting and listening. Except for the thrust of the propeller and the snorings of sleepers all around him, there was no sound.

Suddenly a grip of steel enclosed his throat. He writhed and twisted, and endeavored to cry out. But the fingers around his windpipe tightened relentlessly. His unborn cry reduced itself to a desperate gasping for breath.

His hands tore furiously at the arms and fingers of the midnight strangler. There was no doubt about the intentions of the unknown assailant. Murder was in his squeezing grip.

Baxter was no weakling. Before enlisting in the army, his muscles had been hardened by years of a man's work. This stood him in good stead now. He discovered that he was stronger than the person whom the

darkness shielded. Desperation, always the best ally of a man fighting for his life, spurred him to supreme effort. Slowly and surely, struggling against the time when his tortured lungs must collapse for want of air, he finally managed to loosen the terrible, constricting grip.

"Help!" he yelled. "Murderer! Catch him!"

Sounds leaped through the hold. Awakened men, startled, sat up in their bunks and called out. Then, after a moment of swiftly increasing disturbance, lights flashed in the ceiling, chasing the shadows to more obscure hiding places. Tousled-headed men, in tiers, blinked at one another.

"What's going on down here?" demanded an authoritative voice gruffly. "Who's making all the disturbance?"

All eyes turned toward the voice and saw the corporal of the guard descending the iron ladder leading into the hold. He was known to the previous service men as Corporal Frank, a soldier who had served three years in Panama, and who now, after a leave in the States, was returning to his regiment for a second three years.

The corporal walked swiftly to Baxter, who had climbed out of his bunk. "Somebody tried to choke me!" cried the recruit, tenderly fingering his throat.

Frank looked at him with suspicion. "You've had a nightmare, Red! Who would want to choke you?" he laughed.

"Nightmare, huh?" Baxter pointed to the harsh marks on his neck.

"Goshamighty!" exclaimed an old soldier, who was leaning interestedly out of a near-by bunk. "Go tell the O. D. about it, recruity! Maybe we got some nut on board! No telling who he'll pick on next!"

The gray-haired old buck shivered despite the heat, and worriedly drew his red face, colored by uncounted thousands of tropical beers, back into his bunk.

II

WHEREVER there are soldiers, there is a guard. Along with inspection, that important military function is never forgotten, whether the soldiers are in their forts, or merely transients on a transport. Each day at sea, usually late in the afternoon, guardmount is held, and a new guard takes over the various posts throughout the ship. There is the refrigerator to be protected from hungry raiding parties; enlisted men must be kept from those parts of the ships reserved for officers. Recruits generally furnish the rank and file of the guard, while previous service men like Corporal Frank make up the noncommissioned personnel. Then, from the commissioned officers on board, one is designated to be the Officer of the Day.

Captain Freeman, neat, despite the sultriness, in his well-pressed blouse and gleaming Sam Browne belt, was the Officer of the Day. The lights in the ceiling of the O. D.'s office up forward on the main deck brightened his silver-gray hair. Little, pleasant wrinkles gathered at the corners of his gray eyes as he talked to Sergeant Flaherty, who sat alongside the desk.

Flaherty was an old noncommissioned officer, with many years of service. He had been back to the United States on leave, and was now returning to his post in Panama.

He was a portly man, and seemed to mind the all-pervading heat terribly. His woolen olive-drab shirt was open at the throat, displaying a little tuft of blond hair which topped his massive

chest. With a huge, khaki bandanna, he kept continuously mopping perspiration from his big, shining bald head.

Captain Freeman went directly to the reason why he had summoned Flaherty from the sergeant's cabins on the stern of the ship.

"Sorry, Flaherty, to haul you out of bed at this hour of the night." Freeman glanced at his watch. "It's after midnight," he added ruefully.

He took a gray sheet of paper from the top of the littered desk and offered it to the sergeant.

"Here. Read this," he said grimly. "We have a murderer on board."

Flaherty stared at the officer and then dropped his blue eyes to the paper.

U. S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS

RADIO MESSAGE No. 91

Received: At Sea, April 29.

To: Commanding Officer, U. S. Army Transport Shiloh

Believe you have, among troops on board, John Horning, wanted for double murder here. Description: Height, five feet seven inches; weight, one hundred forty pounds; red hair, blue eyes; regular features and freckled complexion. German-Irish extraction. Request immediate information.

EDWARD P. DOYLE.

Deputy Commissioner,

Department of Police, New York City.

"It came in early this evening," Captain Freeman explained. "I've been working on it ever since. But," he confessed wearily, "it's got me stumped."

A little twinkle lighted up his gray eyes.

"You know the traditional army procedure, sergeant, when an officer is stumped? He calls in the best sergeant he's got, tells him the problem, and orders him to solve it. And usually

these sergeants manage to make good. Lord knows how they do it, but they do."

Sergeant Flaherty cursed inwardly. He knew what was coming.

"So, Flaherty," concluded the captain, "I'm stuck, and you're it. The old army game, sergeant. You know the problem. There's a murderer on board. Find him."

Flaherty mopped his bald head and blinked.

"Really, though, sergeant," the officer smiled understandingly, "you ought to do better than I. You've been in direct contact with the men. You know them. And whatever investigations you make won't cause as much suspicion, or embarrassment, as mine would."

Captain Freeman's smile faded and his manner became serious again.

"This fellow Horning," he said, "must be a pretty bad customer. Here's an account of what he did. Rotten, and bloody as the devil. I got it out of one of the old newspapers lying around on board."

Flaherty's blue eyes widened as they skimmed through the clipping.

DOUBLE KILLING IN BRONX

Husband and Wife Brutally Slain

Brother-in-Law Vanishes—Money Quarrel Believed Motive

New York, April 20—Early this morning neighbors of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Davega found their bodies sprawled in death on the living room floor of their apartment. Bloody evidences were everywhere of the desperate and futile struggle Roy Davega and his young and beautiful wife put up to save their lives from the unknown assassin. They had been brutally stabbed to death with some sharp weapon, apparently a knife or a dagger.

Neighbors testified that during the night they had heard loud, angry voices issuing from the Davega apartment. They did not, however, attach any more significance to these sounds than usual. They said that Davega frequently quarreled bitterly with his wife's red-headed brother, John Horning, who lived with them.

Horning had not worked in some time, and the police believe that the murders developed from a hot argument over money. Supporting this theory is the fact that a valuable diamond engagement ring was taken from Mrs. Davega's body. From her husband also was taken a heavy gold good luck ring, containing a medium-sized diamond. No cash was found anywhere in the apartment.

The police are now searching for the flaming-haired, befreckled brother, who has mysteriously disappeared. It is believed that it will be only a short time before—

Sergeant Flaherty ceased his reading, and lifted his bald head to stare into Captain Freeman's sober features.

"You expect me to find this man, sir!" he exclaimed.

"I certainly do!" retorted the captain grimly. "He's too dangerous to have around loose. He probably has a mad streak in him."

The captain jerkily dabbed at his face with a handkerchief.

"What if he should go completely mad? Sergeant, can you imagine what a man like that could do in a hold packed with unsuspecting soldiers?"

Flaherty mopped his head nervously, and he emitted a low whistle.

"Phew, captain! An army transport is no place to have a murderer loose. It's too small. Too many opportunities, should he suddenly decide to do some more killing."

"Exactly," agreed Captain Freeman, reaching for the pile of thin, white booklets on his desk.

"In this pile," he continued, "is the service record of every man on the ship. Naturally I didn't run across any labeled "Horning."

The officer selected three booklets and turned back to Flaherty.

"This Horning must have some brains," he commented, "even if he is mad. Not every man having but a little money, and desiring to escape the United States, would think to change his name, enlist in the army, and ask for foreign service. Once out of the country he could desert wherever and whenever he pleased."

Captain Freeman glanced at the service records in his hands.

"If Horning is on board, his record must be one of these three. I've looked through all of them, but only three contain physical descriptions fitting the one we received by radio. All three belong to recruits."

The captain focused his glance to read the names typewritten on the covers.

"The first recruit's name is—"

At that moment the door leading from the deck into the office opened. Corporal of the Guard Frank and Recruit Baxter entered.

Captain Freeman's gaze swept from Corporal Frank to the recruit and lingered. His eyebrows lifted, and he glanced obliquely at Sergeant Flaherty.

"One of the recruits!" he muttered under his breath, tapping the service records at the same time.

Sergeant Flaherty had already judged as much. The soldier beside Corporal Frank had fiery red hair, which had a disordered look as though its owner had just been roused out of bed. An undershirt revealed muscular shoulders plentifully sprinkled with light brown freckles.

"What's the trouble, corporal?" de-

manded the captain, sizing up Recruit Baxter's disheveled appearance.

"This man claims he was choked, sir."

"What!" cried the officer and the sergeant at the same instant. They looked at Baxter and then stared at each other. Murderer on board!

"What happened, man?" cried Freeman, fascinatedly eying the livid finger marks on Baxter's neck.

"I was lying in my bunk, sir. I couldn't sleep, it was so hot and close. All of a sudden these hands came out of the dark and grabbed my throat. If I hadn't been awake they would have choked me to death before I knew what was happening to me. As it was, they nearly got me. But I managed to pull them away. Then they vanished. I hollered for somebody to catch whoever it was, but when Corporal Frank turned on the lights nobody was around. All the men were in bed."

Captain Freeman turned to the corporal. Frank was a short, dark, wiry Italian. His black hair gleamed like patent leather below his campaign hat. His jet eyes, glittering in the lights of the ceiling, returned the officer's gaze.

"What time was this, corporal?"

"Just now, sir. I was going by the hatchway, on my way around to inspect the sentries on post, when I heard a racket down below in the hold. I climbed down the ladder, switched on the lights, and saw this recruit yelling his head off."

Captain Freeman nodded at Flaherty to take charge of the questioning.

"When did your sister get married?" the sergeant shot at Baxter.

Blue eyes met blue eyes, and invisible sparks seemed to generate from the clashing.

"I never had a sister," replied Baxter slowly.

After taking a final piercing stare, Flaherty waved his khaki bandanna.

"All right," he said. "you can go."

III

AFTER Baxter's departure, Captain Freeman stared at the sergeant.

"Whew!" he muttered. "What do you make of it, Flaherty?"

"I don't know," replied the old soldier honestly.

"Good Lord!" breathed the captain, wiping his face again. "This is serious business, sergeant," he added anxiously. "We've got to find that man—and find him quick! Good Lord! My head would be in a basket if there was a murder on board."

"Corporal Frank," he said bitterly, eyeing the noncommissioned officer of the guard, who stood nervously rubbing his hands together, "you're responsible for this!"

Frank's eyes widened, and he fell back in astonishment. A tremor of fear vibrated in his voice.

"I, sir?"

"Yes, you!" accused the officer savagely. "Didn't you bring me that cursed radio from the wireless office?"

Corporal Frank smiled in relief, and ceased rubbing his hands, one against the other.

"Yes, sir," he admitted, "but I was only doing my duty, sir. I was told to take the message to the officer of the day."

"I know it!" answered Freeman. "I was only joking, corporal." The officer frowned furiously.

"By the way," he changed the subject abruptly, as a forgotten detail of duty occurred to him. "Did you inspect the men's luggage, as I told you to?"

"Yes, sir. Right after I delivered the radio to you, sir. I gave each man's

baggage a thorough examination. There isn't a drop of liquor on board, sir."

"Well, that's one good thing, anyway!" grumbled the officer of the day. "If they had had any booze they'd have been foolish not to have drunk it all before now. Silly, prohibition! Must be upheld even on a ship in mid-ocean. Lot of damn' nonsense!"

Sergeant Flaherty had been sitting quietly doing some thinking. He wished Corporal Frank would stop the confounded hand rubbing. It made him nervous.

"Captain," he said, "you mentioned that there were two more men besides Baxter. Who are they?"

"Recruits Shelby and Winters," the officer read from the covers of the service records.

"I'd like to see 'em," said Flaherty. "Something's fishy somewhere. Why should a red-headed murderer pick on another red-head to choke in the middle of the night?"

IV

RECRUIT SHELBY stepped into the office with a frightened, worried air. He had taken time to comb his rusty red hair, which he had plastered down smoothly on the flap top of his lean, cadaverous face. His small, close set, greenish eyes turned, with ratlike caution, from Captain Freeman to Sergeant Flaherty.

The sergeant beetled his sandy eyebrows and hurled a question at him.

"When was your sister born?"

"Well," hesitated Shelby, staring at the sergeant like a hypnotized sparrow returns the gaze of a snake, "one was born in 1900. Jane was born in, let me see—"

"How many sisters have you?" snapped Flaherty.

"Three," replied Shelby sullenly.

"Hump!" grunted the sergeant. "Go back to bed."

"He's a nasty customer," offered the corporal of the guard, when Shelby had gone.

"What's that?" demanded Flaherty sharply. "How?"

Corporal Frank shrugged his shoulders.

"He was in the big crap game we had in the hold this afternoon. He lost all his money and accused Recruit Winters of shooting with loaded dice."

At the mention of Winters's name, Sergeant Flaherty gave the captain a glance from beneath lowered eyebrows.

"Winters was the big winner," the corporal continued. "The game broke up in a slugging match between Shelby and him. The crowd parted them before they got very far. Shelby threatened that he'd get Winters for the crooked dice, and he looked as if he meant it."

"Good night!" groaned Captain Freeman. "These red-heads will drive me crazy! I'll never have another in my outfit again as long as I live!"

Winters appeared next at the door. He was a raw-boned soldier, who ambled rather than walked. He had neglected to brush his hair, which was bushy, and so dark as to be nearly brown. He seemed not at all disturbed by the midnight summons, and smiled familiarly, showing huge, buck teeth. A smear of freckles crossed the bridge of his bulbous nose and ended on his prominent cheek bones.

Flaherty was about to shoot a question at him when Corporal Frank interrupted.

"I shall go around and inspect the guard again, sir," he said to the officer of the day.

Captain Freeman absently waved his hand in permission. His mind was taken up with studying the recruit in front of him. Corporal Frank silently stepped out into the darkness of the deck and carefully closed the screen door behind him.

"When were you in the Bronx last?" demanded Flaherty sullenly, keenly eyeing the none too intelligent face of Recruit Winters.

"Well, sarge"—he showed all his buck teeth in a grin and drawled the answer in a nasal voice—"I didn't hardly ever go near the Bronx. It was kind of out of the way for us New Yorkers who lived on the East Side. I guess the last time I was there was when Al Smith ran for President. That was, now—"

"That's enough!" snorted Flaherty disgustedly. "Al Smith wasn't elected. I guess you know that?"

"I guess I do!" grinned Waters. "I had to beat up a dozen guys on account of it."

"All right! All right! Beat it back to bed."

"Thanks, sarge! Anything more. I can do for you . . .?"

Recruit Winters backed clumsily through the screen door. His hand lingered on the jamb for an instant. Sergeant Flaherty glared at him, so he retreated hastily.

"What do you think, sergeant?" began Captain Freeman.

Flaherty's chair hit the floor with a bang. Before the officer's startled eyes he charged for the door.

"Holy smoke!" he cried over his shoulder. "I must be getting paralysis of the brain, sir. Did you see that good-luck ring on Winters's finger? It had a diamond in it, too! I'll get him back here and find out about that!"

As Flaherty shot through the door

the officer seized the newspaper clippings on his desk. The body of the murdered Roy Davega had been stripped of a good-luck ring containing a diamond! Was the slow-moving, dumb-looking Winters the killer? Was it he who had tried to choke his red-headed fellow recruit, Baxter, in the stealth of night? Why?

Mystified and worried, the officer tried to sit still in his chair as he waited for Flaherty to return with Recruit Winters. Perspiration speckled Captain Freeman's face. If anything serious happened while he was officer of the day, he would be in a tight spot officially.

Sergeant Flaherty found the deck deserted. He hesitated for a moment, somewhat surprised. He had expected to see Winters's figure walking toward the stern of the ship. The recruit had hardly had time to gain the aft hatchway and disappear.

Flaherty paused another moment to drag the khaki bandanna from the hip pocket of his breeches and mop his bald head once again. The tropical night was glorious. Tilted low against the horizon, a pattern of diamonds among the countless star jewels scattered prodigally across the black velvet dome of the sky, was the Southern Cross. A cool sea breeze blew in Flaherty's face.

Except for the steady throb of the propeller shaft, the ship was soothingly quiet. Practically no lights gleamed anywhere on the transport, so the Shiloh passed, gently swishing, through the sea and the night, like some luminous creation through a black, silver-shot void.

Flaherty was tucking away his handkerchief when the thought struck him that Winters, instead of going all the way to the stern, might have left

the deck amidships, where there was a staircase leading down into the hold.

Evidently that was what Winters had done. There might still be time to catch up with him before he reached the maze of bunks in the darkness of the hold.

Hastening amidships, Flaherty found the passageway which led to the stairs descending into the hold. In another moment he was traveling a narrow, dimly illuminated corridor whose red-painted floor, broken occasionally by the high sills of bulkhead doors, stretched to the stern of the ship where the shadows of the soldiers' sleeping quarters finally blotted it out. Recruit Winters was not in sight.

The sergeant was stepping over the sill of the last bulkhead door when his descending foot struck something which brought his heart to his throat. That which his foot had met was soft, and yet not wholly yielding.

Flaherty's fingers trembled as they struck a match. When the flare of light penetrated the bulkhead's shadow the sergeant's blue eyes widened and his lips parted slowly in horror. Stretched out on the floor, face downward, was the body of a soldier. The back of his woolen, olive-drab shirt was drenched with blood which, even as Flaherty watched, continued to ebb slowly from several wounds.

Although the very attitude of the body, its outflung fists clenched in death's hopeless grasp, told the sergeant that the soldier was dead, nevertheless Flaherty bent to turn him over.

A strangled exclamation shot through the old sergeant's lips. Here was the man he was seeking! There was no mistaking the buck teeth, revealed by lips which had frozen parted after writhing in death agony. Across

the bulbous nose, the smear of freckles yellowish now in the pallid face, stood out startlingly.

"Heaven protect us!" muttered Flaherty, rising slowly from the body. "Winters!"

He stared up and down the dim, silent corridor in fear. Somehow he almost expected to see a sinister shadow flit among gaunt stanchions and bulkheads and hear a maniacal laugh in the ominous silence. Nothing moved anywhere; there was no sound save the muffled, continuous beat of the propeller shaft and the swishing of water against the side of the ship, coming through an open porthole near by.

Fascinated, awed, full of horror, Flaherty's gaze returned to the body. The murderer had attacked again, not with his hands closing a windpipe, but with a savage knife; not Recruit Baxter, but Recruit Winters—and this time he had been successful.

Flaherty swallowed hard on the lump in his throat. Murderer on board! Baxter choked and Winters slain with a knife. Both red-headed.

Then another thought smashed into the sergeant's brain and sent his gaze swiftly probing across the hands of the dead man. No sparkle, no dull gleam of gold rewarded him. The good-luck ring which Winters had worn on leaving the office was gone.

V

FLAHERTY straightened as his mind, dazed by this last discovery, reeled dizzily through a maze of contradictory facts developed in the past hour of this most eventful night. From the description given in the radio message, the murderer sought by the New York police must be one of three men, Recruits Baxter, Winters, and Shelby. Unknown hands in

the dark had attempted to strangle Baxter to death. Winters had been struck down, evidently by a knife. That left Shelby.

But Winters had been wearing a good-luck ring, similar to the one stolen from Roy Davega's body by John Horning, the brother-in-law. Why did Winters's murderer take that ring from Winters's body? Why was Baxter choked? Only one man of the three, Baxter, Winters, Shelby, could be the murderer, John Horning. Which one was it—the choked Baxter, the murdered Winters, or Shelby? If Winters were Horning, who killed him, and why?

Questions and cross-questions leading to nothing. The more Flaherty thought, the more mystified and completely baffled he became. One thing he knew. Winters's murderer had to be found at once. Two men attacked in the space of an hour, and one of the two killed. A murderer on board, and apparently on a rampage of death. Who would be next?

That question spurred Sergeant Flaherty's wits. He would go into the hold. He wanted to see the sullen-faced Shelby again.

He was turning to go down the corridor when his eye, glancing toward the porthole close at hand, caught a tiny, brilliant flash in the tropical "air catcher," a metal tube made in the shape of a scoop and inserted in a porthole in order to deflect the breeze, made by the ship's passage, into the hold. His groping hand closed on a ring!

With fingers that trembled, he examined it. A diamond scintillated in the center of a raised swastika. By match light the sergeant made out the initials engraved on the inner band. "R. D."—Roy Davega.

As he handled the ring, Flaherty became aware that his fingers slid on its smooth, gold surface. By the light of another match he bent to find the cause and discovered that there was a thin coating of grease-like substance on it. For a second he looked at the ring curiously, and then he put it to his generous, Hibernian nose. His sandy eyebrows knitted perplexedly. From the greasy smear on the ring came a pungent odor, strangely familiar, yet perversely baffling in its refusal to be catalogued.

Finally, Flaherty stowed the ring in his pocket, cast one more look at the corpse, and turned to make his way to the stern where the soldiers slept. As he strode rapidly along, constantly glancing all around, he reached a conclusion about the ring. The murderer of Winters had thrown the ring through the porthole, intending it to lie on the ocean's bed forever. Unknown to him, the ventilator had caught it.

Flaherty found the hold in darkness save for the bulb that glowed dimly beside the iron ladder. Waiting for a moment until his eyes became used to their surroundings, he managed finally to make out the shadowy outlines of the numerous tiers of bunks whereon the men slept. His ears were keenly alive to sound, but all they heard were the normal noises of the night, the breathings of many sleepers and occasionally a brief, restless creak of springs.

Then, suddenly, he caught another sound, the furtive squeak of a door being closed cautiously. It came from the opposite side of the ship, and instantly Flaherty knew its source—the wash room. Some one had either just entered or left it.

With his heart once more pounding

in his massive chest, the sergeant cut swiftly and silently through a black aisle between tiered bunks. Who was the softly stepping unknown, secretly opening doors in the middle of the night?

Only the closed door of the wash room, partially obscured by shadow, met Flaherty's gaze. Stepping inside, he found the place empty. A single, unshaded electric bulb hanging from the middle of the ceiling showed only rows of white wash bowls against a wall, on which mirrors were fastened.

Flaherty stared at his face in a mirror and was startled to find it drawn and strained. It seemed like another's face staring back at him, the blue eyes wide with the horrors and mysteries of the night. He cursed mentally, and wished fervently that mirrors retained their impressions. Then they would reveal the face of the one who had just quitted the wash room and melted so swiftly and silently away.

Flaherty's roving gaze hesitated at a wash bowl. Its top and sides were wet, eloquent signs that the bowl had been used recently. Drawing nearer to it, the sergeant's eyes widened and stared at that which streaked the undrained splashes of water at the bottom of the basin. Blood! Bright red, fresh blood!

With hammering pulses, Flaherty whirled and dashed for the door. He had just missed the murderer, who had undoubtedly visited the wash room to wash from his hands the gory evidences of his crime!

The hold was as unsuspecting as before. Nothing moved, and the only sounds were those made by the sleepers and the propeller shaft.

Flaherty was moving to the wall to throw the switch that would illuminate the place, when a tiny glow, deep in

the wilderness of bunks, appeared momentarily and vanished.

Padding like a big cat now, the sergeant groped his way to the spot. He sucked in his breath at what he saw. The dark bulk of a soldier, apparently on his knees, was bending over a trunk locker. His cupped hands carefully shielded a small flash light, whose beam was directed into the tray of the trunk.

The soldier gasped as Flaherty's big hand dropped on his shoulder. The light went out, and he struggled viciously and silently against the sergeant's hold. But Flaherty's massive body was padded with bands of muscle tough as steel, and hardened by years of regular army service and campaigning.

Gradually he forced the unknown's arm behind his back, the old army hold, learned by Flaherty during the grim, relentless days of the Philippine Insurrection. The soldier moaned in pain as his shoulder bones cracked audibly under the inexorable pressure that would break an arm unless the victim surrendered.

And surrender he finally did, standing motionless and silent in the dark. Still maintaining his punishing grip with one fist, Flaherty groped with his other hand for the light. Finding it, he pressed the button. In the glare was Recruit Baxter!

The recruit's white face was fixed in hard, defiant lines. His blue eyes gleamed steadily and inscrutably. Above his face, his red hair flamed in a disordered mass.

"Baxter!" Flaherty's voice was low and hoarse in his amazement and suspicion. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing," replied the soldier defiantly. "Let go of my arm! You're breakin' it!"

Flaherty directed the beam of the

flash light into the open trunk locker. What he saw on the tray made him start violently. A blood-stained, white handkerchief was wrapped tightly in a small, compact bundle. Beside the handkerchief was a newspaper clipping, an exact duplicate of the one Captain Freeman had. Flaherty's gaze flickered across the black headline: *Double Killing in Bronx.*

As he took up the handkerchief, he received another mental jolt. The blood stains were dry!

Unwinding the cloth, he extracted a black clasp knife, thick with blood.

As he placed the gruesome articles into a pocket, he realized that the knife was surely not the one which had slain Winters. Blood did not dry that fast. But Roy Davega and his wife—

Flaherty now picked up the clipping. A grease spot on a corner of it focused his attention. Impelled almost by instinct, he lifted the paper to his nostrils and smelled the spot. Faint, yet definitely distinguishable, came the same, pungent, exasperatingly familiar odor he had smelled on the ring. Again his memory strove to place it, and again it failed.

"Come on!" he said grimly to Baxter, who had been silently awaiting the sergeant's pleasure, meanwhile watching his every move with tight, calculating gaze.

Flaherty turned the flash light to illuminate their way out of the morass of bunks. Its beam shooting along, picked suddenly out of the darkness the figure of a soldier leaning over a bunk on which another soldier was sleeping.

Flaherty's heart leaped into his throat. Into his mind came a vivid picture of the strangling hands reaching out to choke Baxter earlier in the night.

The soldier straightened in a flash, and whirled full into the light. Flaherty saw the face of Corporal Frank, the corporal of the guard.

"Frank!" he cried. "What are you doing?"

"S-s-sh!" cautioned the corporal, placing a finger to his lips and looking down significantly at the sleeper. "It's Shelby. I was going around on my inspection tour of the guard when I heard the door of the wash room open softly. I saw Shelby come out and look carefully all around him. His actions seemed suspicious, so I follow him. He put something under his pillow and got into bed. I thought I had better wait until after he got asleep to see what it was. I was just about to look, sergeant, when you flashed the light on me."

Corporal Frank rubbed his hands nervously, and stared curiously at Baxter.

Without waking the sleeper, Flaherty's hand slid under the pillow. When it came out it brought with it a clasp knife wet with water.

Flaherty stared at it under the brilliant glare of the flash light. So that was what had been washed in the bowl in the wash room! Flaherty studied it more closely. At the edges of the knife, small drops of water still remained, and under minute inspection, these drops showed flecks of pink.

What drew Flaherty's attention more were the traces of water on the black bone handle of the knife. They had the grained look of water on top of greasy surfaces.

Flaherty bent to smell. Again that faint, pungent, irritatingly familiar odor!

The sergeant's heavy hand fell on the sleeping man's shoulder, and when Shelby's green, close-set eyes popped

open, he commanded, "Come on, Shelby! Get dressed and come with us!"

VI

THE little office of the Officer of the Day was crowded. Captain Freeman sat at his desk, his confused, worried gaze turning from one to the other of the redheaded recruits. They sat side by side against the far wall. Baxter was sober-faced. Much of his defiance had vanished. Shelby dribbled with fear, his ratty eyes jumping wildly about the room. Flaherty himself sat in his former seat beside the captain's desk, while the dark-faced Corporal Frank, grave and awe-struck by the night's developments and the present proceedings, eyed the recruits and their questioners in turn.

The officer of the day shook his gray head dismally, and muttered at the man beside him.

"Lord, Flaherty! What a terrible thing! Murder right here on board a transport! I'll never hear the last of it! Oh," he groaned, "why did it have to happen during *my* tour of guard?"

Flaherty mopped his perspiration-dotted bald head with the khaki bandanna, and replied in undertone.

"I don't know, sir. But we've got the murderer here. I'm sure of that. But," he added lugubriously, "the thing is to pin him down."

"Yes, yes, Flaherty! Get to the bottom of the whole wretched, horrible business! It won't look so bad to Washington if we can clear things up. We've got to do it!" he concluded in desperate earnestness.

Flaherty sighed. In some ways the solution seemed obvious, and in other ways it was wholly baffling. He had found Baxter with a knife clotted with old blood and a newspaper clipping de-

scribing the Davega murders. Surely those were strong evidences for the belief that Baxter was John Horning, the red-haired brother-in-law sought by the New York police. But then, the murdered Winters had had in his possession the good-luck ring of Roy Davega. And, who had attempted to choke Baxter to death in the middle of the night as he lay in his bunk, and why?

That Shelby had murdered Winters over a quarrel arising out of a gambling game seemed fairly logical, but what reason did Shelby have for removing the good-luck ring and throwing it through a porthole, evidently hoping that it would be lost?

Through everything, like the theme of a musical composition, haunting, mysterious, unsolvable, went the unknown, pungent, strangely familiar odor. With links more compelling than steel, it bound the three redheaded recruits together. It was on Winter's ring, on Baxter's newspaper clipping, on the haft of the knife found underneath Shelby's pillow. A sinister, yet homely odor, it loomed in Flaherty's mind as the motif of a crime more strange and twisted than any he had ever heard of, or read. And here he was, a plain, old, regular army sergeant trying to untwist the tangled skeins so that they made a logical pattern.

He turned on Shelby again. The action was sufficient to drive the recruit forward in his chair, his small eyes alive with fear, his lean fists clutching the chair arms until the whites of the knuckles glowed.

"I tell you I didn't do it!" he cried. "I never saw that knife before!"

The same old story. Shelby had repeated it over and over, each time more wildly than the last, as he saw disbelief remain firm in the faces watching him.

Flaherty turned wearily to Baxter, and found the recruit licking dry lips. Sensing that Baxter was struggling with himself to say something important, the sergeant wisely kept silent.

"I am Horning!" he blurted out at last. "Yes, John Horning!"

Captain Freeman stifled an exclamation. Flaherty leaned forward, his blood racing through his veins. Corporal Frank began to rub his hands together as if with nervousness.

"Go on," said Flaherty softly.

"I'm looking for the man who killed my sister and my brother-in-law," he cried fiercely. "He's in the army somewhere. And, by God, I won't stop until I find him!" Baxter, or Horning as he named himself, clenched his fists and a gust of terrible passion contorted his face. Although his teeth were rigidly clamped together, his words pushed between them with deadly emphasis. "*I'll—kill him!*"

The diamond in the good-luck ring flashed white fire as Flaherty drew it from his pocket and silently displayed it to Baxter's gaze.

The recruit leaped to his feet, his face livid, his blue eyes glittering madly.

"Roy's ring!" he cried hoarsely. "Then . . . then . . ."

As he hesitated, he looked as if he were about to hurl himself at the old sergeant. "Then her murderer is . . . *on board this ship!*"

The recruit's wild eyes glared around the room. Shelby forgot his own fears to stare at him in awe. Corporal Frank rubbed his hands, one upon the other, more vigorously, as his black eyes shifted fascinatedly from the ring to Baxter's face, and back to the ring again.

"This ring was on Winters's body," said Flaherty grimly.

"Winters!"

The bitter cry burst from a soul, long harrowed.

"He's dead!" said Baxter dully, sinking dumbly into his chair. "Some one else killed him!"

The eyes he now turned toward Flaherty were flat, lusterless.

"Several years ago," related Baxter, or Horning, in a lifeless voice, "my sister had a love affair with a man. None of us in the family knew him, or his name. Helen never told us. When we learned that this man had got into trouble in New York and had joined the army to escape from the police, we knew why Sis didn't tell us about him. He was no good.

"Then Helen met Roy Davega and married him. This other man had been sent to Panama for service. Sis worried a lot that some day he would come back and kill her for not waiting for him. He was like that.

"About three weeks ago, I came home to find Helen crying into a newspaper. I looked, and saw an item about some soldiers being up from Panama for leaves of absence. Then, when I got home that . . . that night and saw the horrible, terrible thing that had happened, I knew. The soldier had come back.

"If you don't believe me," said the recruit earnestly to Flaherty, "look at that knife. I kept it in my trunk, even getting up nights to look at it, building up the hate and fury in my heart so that when I found the murderer, I could slash him to death as viciously as he slashed my sister."

The longer blade of the knife opened obstinately, the sticky blood in the groove striving to hold it fast. Flaherty's lips tightened as he read the letters etched on the steel blade: "PROPERTY U. S. SIGNAL

CORP." It was a knife that a soldier was apt to carry. The sergeant knew that thousands of such knives were stolen each year by enlisted men.

"So I changed my name and joined the army," Baxter was saying. "I didn't care about the police. I wanted to find the dirty murderer and kill him myself. But now," the recruit concluded, his shoulders drooping wearily, "he is dead."

A thought stole into Flaherty's mind and stuck persistently, disturbing him mightily. According to Baxter, the man who had murdered his sister and brother-in-law was a soldier with several years' army service. Winters had been a recruit, whose total army service was less than two weeks.

Flaherty was still puzzling over these disjointed facts when he looked up to see Shelby standing excitedly beside the desk.

"Look here, sergeant!" he cried, holding up the good-luck ring. "This wasn't Winters's ring. Only this afternoon he won it, with those crooked dice of his, in a crap game we had."

Flaherty was on his feet, shaking Shelby like a bulldog shakes a rat.

"What?" he roared. "Don't lie to me! Who did Winters win that ring off of?"

VII

BEFORE the frightened Shelby could answer, Corporal Frank crossed the room swiftly and took the ring.

"He won it from me, Flaherty," he said, his lean, dark face supporting a serious, anxious expression.

Flaherty released the whimpering Shelby and stared long and hard at the corporal of the guard.

"Why didn't you tell me so before, corporal?"

Every man in the room waited breathlessly for Corporal Frank's next words. Captain Freeman's fingers drummed nervously on his desk. Shelby forgot his whimpering, and Horning, alias Baxter, gripped the arms of his chair, ready to launch himself at the corporal's throat.

"I was not certain," Frank answered steadily, "that it was my ring. A man must be sure in such a serious matter as this. I saw the ring in a pawnshop window near the Army Base in Brooklyn, the day before we sailed. I liked it and bought it, never dreaming it had such a horrible history."

The corporal shuddered.

"During the dice game this afternoon, I went broke," he confessed. "I pledged the ring to Winters, hoping to regain my losses. But I didn't," he smiled faintly. "So poor Winters kept the ring. That's all I know."

Flaherty looked deeply into the corporal's dark eyes, but they never wavered before his keen stare.

The old sergeant turned to Captain Freeman and shrugged.

"Now, sir," he asked hopelessly, "where are we?"

While Captain Freeman gnawed his under lip, and his finger tips beat a savage tattoo on the desk top, Flaherty's thoughts seemed to spin around in circles. What Corporal Frank had said was plausible. The soldier murderer of the Davegas might easily have sold the ring for cash. But . . .

Suddenly Captain Freeman's voice barked irritably.

"Corporal Frank! Stop rubbing those damned paws of yours together all the time! What the hell's the matter with you anyway?"

"Tropical itch, sir," said the corporal of the guard apologetically. "I had a bad case of it on my hands when

I was stationed in Panama. It's come back again since the transport hit tropical waters, sir."

While the captain grunted surlily, a vivid flash seemed to light up Flaherty's brain. His command rang through the room.

"Let's see your hands, corporal!"

Frank extended them wonderingly. All in the room looked on perplexed as the sergeant suddenly bent to smell them. He straightened, and transfixed the corporal with a cold, blue stare.

"That's all, corporal," he said grimly. "Sit down."

He turned to Captain Freeman and said, "I've got to go out for a moment, sir. I won't be gone long. Please do not allow any one to leave this office until I return."

"Right!" breathed the mystified Captain Freeman, staring after the broad back of his sergeant.

A few minutes later, Flaherty was back. He had brought with him two husky guards, pistols belted to their hips, and Captain Edwards, the portly, dignified, transport's surgeon.

Flaherty nodded to the guards.

"All right, men! Take him!"

Frank, corporal of the guard, cursed, and lunged out of his chair. But the guards were upon him, relentlessly holding him between them.

The ship's doctor took one of Frank's dark, sinewy hands and smelled it.

"Yes, sergeant," he said gravely, as he straightened. "That is the ointment I gave him this afternoon when he came to me with a bad case of tropical itch on his hands. He is the only man I have treated on this voyage."

From the pocket of his shirt, Flaherty took a packet of letters, yellowed by age and tropical damp. He thrust them at Horning, alias Baxter, the recruit.

"My sister's letters!" cried Horning, his eyes staring at the faded handwriting. "She must have written them to him when he was in Panama!"

With a mad cry, he hurled himself at Corporal Frank, who cringed back for the protection of his guards. Flaherty stepped between.

"I thought so," said the sergeant dryly. "I found them at the bottom of Frank's trunk locker."

He turned to the bewildered Captain Freeman and jerked his thumb at the captive.

"There's your murderer, sir. He is the one who killed Winters. He is also the man the New York police want."

"But . . . but . . ." stammered the captain. "Sergeant, how . . .?"

Flaherty shrugged his old, thick, sloping shoulders.

"Simple, now, sir. That ointment smell was the key that unlocked the whole problem. I should have recognized it before. But I never had the tropical itch myself, so I never used any of this ointment, although I must have smelled it often on others.

"Frank gambled in the dice game and lost. He pledged the ring, which he took from Roy Davega's body, to Winters for cash, hoping to recoup his losses and redeem the ring. But he only lost that money, too.

"He went on guard late in the afternoon. As corporal of the guard, it was his duty to carry radio messages to you. He read the one from the New York police. He realized then that he had better get the ring back.

"Meanwhile you ordered him to inspect all baggage for liquor. What a shock he must have received when he opened Baxter's trunk and found on the tray the knife he had used to kill Baxter's sister and brother-in-law! It was there that he left his first smear of

the ointment which he was using to grease his hands in order to ease the burning torment of the itch. He left it on the newspaper clipping.

"Now he became frantic with worry and fear. He knew that Baxter was seeking vengeance. The corporal decided to strike first. It was his hands that had reached out of the night to choke Baxter. He failed because Baxter had fortunately been awake, and was too strong for him.

"You will remember, captain, earlier in the night, when Winters came into this office to be examined, Corporal Frank hastily excused himself and left. When Winters left here, Frank followed him and struck him down from behind. He had to get the ring before you, or I, or Baxter, noticed it. He flung it through the porthole, doubtlessly thinking it was gone forever and that he was safe at last. But the ventilator caught the ring, and I found it. On the ring was the second smear of ointment.

"Frank went to the wash room to clean the blood from the knife. Then he probably became aware that I was in the hold. Panic-stricken, he left without thoroughly cleansing the knife. He hit upon the idea of planting it under Shelby's pillow. He knew that Shelby had threatened Winters during the dice game. But the water had not washed off the third smear of ointment."

Flaherty mopped his bald head with the khaki bandanna.

"That's all, sir."

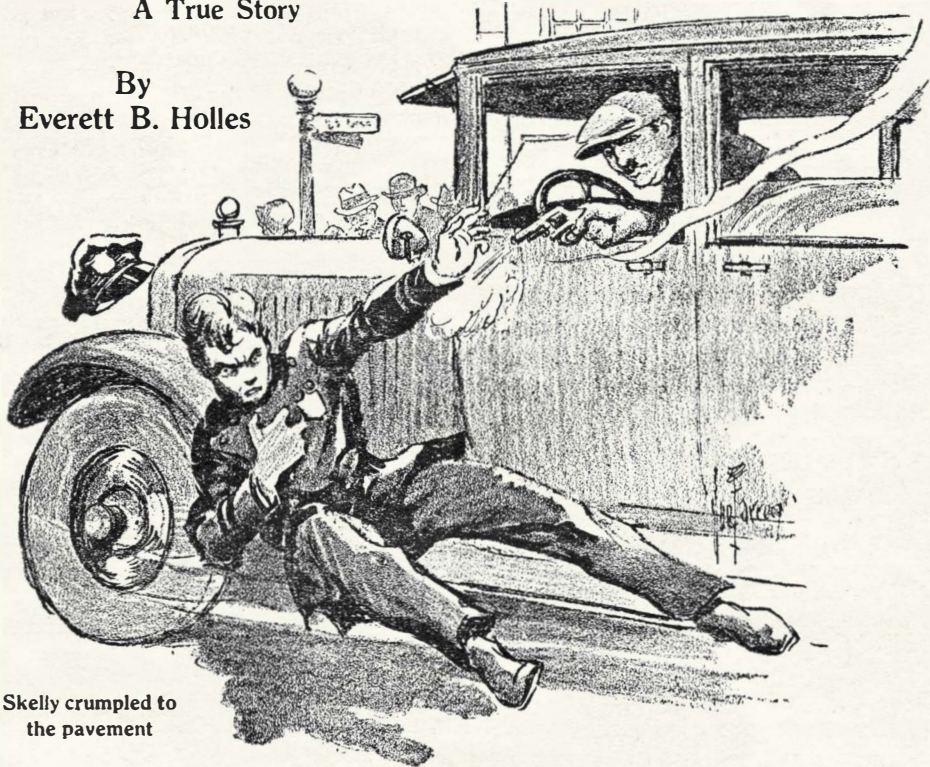
Captain Freeman had been listening open-mouthed to Flaherty's piecing together of the jumbled happenings of the night.

"Flaherty," he remarked at last, "I don't know what the army would do without you old noncoms to solve the officers' problems!"

The Most Dangerous Man

A True Story

By
Everett B. Holles



Skelly crumpled to
the pavement

Without Mercy, Without Reason—the Red Career of Fred Burke, Gangdom’s Monster!

IT was shortly after seven o'clock one Saturday evening in December that Forrest Kool, a young farmer, was driving along the rolling highway fringing the shores of Lake Michigan near the little resort town of St. Joseph, Michigan. A full moon cast a shimmery sheen across the lake, and shed a soft, still splendor over the snow-covered countryside. In the front seat of Kool's light Ford sedan was Mrs. Kool, and in the rear seat were their ten-year-old son and Mrs. Kool's mother, Mrs. Walter Carlson.

of Baroda. Christmas was only ten days away and there was the holiday shopping to be done that evening.

As Kool drove his car along the broad highway, another car, a large blue Hudson coupé, drew abreast, careening wildly from one side of the road to the other.

"That man must be drunk!" exclaimed Mrs. Kool nervously.

As she uttered the words the driver of the big coupé steered madly—deliberately it seemed—into Kool's light sedan, crashing into the side of the

lighter car and hurtling it into a shallow ditch at the side of the road. The coupé continued down the road for about one hundred yards and stopped. The driver got out clumsily, and walked back to where young Kool was examining his shattered fender.

"How much for the damage?" demanded the man. There was an odor of liquor on his breath and his eyes were bloodshot. He was a powerful appearing person, two hundred pounds or more in weight, with a ruddy complexion and a long underlip. One of his upper front teeth was missing. Kool, who spent his days in the fields and came into town only on Saturday nights, was ignorant of the fact that several thousands of detectives and police officers throughout the United States were looking for a man with a missing front tooth . . . a man with a ruddy complexion, a long underlip and weighing two hundred and ten pounds.

"Well, I don't know just how much damage has been done," Kool said. "But we can go into a garage and find out what is needed to put it back into shape."

"No: we settle up now," protested the large man.

The young farmer finally proposed that the stranger pay him twenty-five dollars. The price seemed agreeable to the man and he took a bulky roll of bills from his pocket, peeling off several one-hundred-dollar and fifty-dollar notes. Then he suddenly stuffed the money back into his pocket.

"Say, you can't get away with this," he said sullenly. "You know your whole damned car isn't worth twenty-five dollars."

And then he staggered off down the road.

"Just as you say," Kool called after

him. "We'll let some one else settle for us."

Kool went back to his car. He finally succeeded in prying the damaged fender from off the tire, and drove on. As he passed the blue coupé, which was still standing in the middle of the highway, he saw the stranger slumped over the wheel staring vaguely ahead. A few hundred feet farther on, Kool glanced into the rear view mirror and saw the coupé following, a short distance behind.

As Kool passed a tourist camp about a mile from the city limits, the blue coupé roared alongside, and again the driver steered his car at Kool, who swerved suddenly to the side of the road and narrowly avoided a second collision. Both cars came to a halt and the drivers alighted to renew their argument.

"You're drunk and I won't argue with you," Kool said at last and started back to his car.

"Do you know who I am?" shouted the man.

"No, and I don't care."

If he had known . . . a man with forty-one thousand five hundred dollars on his head . . . the most heartless, most widely hunted, and called by police the most dangerous man in the world!

Kool drove into St. Joseph with the blue coupé still close behind. At State and Broad Streets, in the center of the town, he saw Policeman Charles Skelly standing at the curb, and he pulled over to the side of the street. He called to Skelly. As the officer approached his car, the blue coupé, traveling at a fast clip, shot by on Broad Street.

"There he goes now!" cried Mrs. Kool. "That man struck our car, forced us into the ditch, and then tried to hit us a second time."

The officer jumped onto the running board of Kool's sedan with a terse order, "Follow him!"

At State and Ship Streets, a block farther on, a red traffic light halted both cars, and as Kool drew alongside the blue coupé Officer Skelly called out:

"Say, mister, hadn't you better settle with this man and save yourself a lot of trouble?"

The ruddy-faced man appeared not to hear the officer. Just then the traffic light changed and he sped off, turning south on Main Street. Skelly, on the running board of Kool's car, ordered more speed, and after two blocks the two cars were abreast again. A car drew out of a garage, forcing the blue coupé to slacken its speed, and Skelly took advantage of the opportunity to step from the Kool car to the running board of the coupé. The window on the driver's side was lowered.

With a contemptuous glance at the blue police uniform, the ruddy-faced man reached into the pocket of the door and closed his fist around a forty-five caliber revolver. He fired, the bullet struck Skelly in the chest. The officer swung around dizzily, but gripped the car door. He clutched at his chest.

There was a second shot that imbedded itself in the officer's right side, and as Skelly cried out in pain and swung from the car to the pavement the man with the missing front tooth laughed and fired again.

Skelly, reeling with faintness and crying with pain, was clawing at the revolver holster at his side when the third bullet struck him in the stomach.

As the young officer crumpled to the pavement in a heap, the man in the blue coupé put his car into motion and roared south on Main Street, which

led to the Indiana-Michigan line twenty-five miles away.

A score of men and women saw the ruthless shooting of the young officer, but those who didn't run for cover at the sound of the first shot were too dazed by the suddenness of the crime to intercede. J. J. Theisen, president of the Commercial Bank, was less than twenty-five feet from the blue coupé and within easy range of the mad motorist's bullets.

As the big coupé raced southward from the scene, William Struever, of Benton Harbor, Michigan, a witness to the whole affair, and a cousin of Skelly, ran from the curb to the wounded officer lying in a pool of blood.

"Help me, Bill. I'm shot," gasped Skelly. He was lifted into Struever's automobile and rushed to the St. Joseph Sanitarium.

When the blue coupé with its crazed driver raced away, Kool put his car into gear and started in pursuit, but his wife, shouting hysterically, grabbed the wheel and turned the car off into a side street.

The sound of the shots had hardly died away before Harry R. Ohls, a witness to the shooting, was at a telephone in a grocery store near the scene telling Sheriff Fred G. Bryant that Skelly had been shot and that the man they wanted was speeding southward on Main Street. A minute or two later a car bearing Deputy John Lay and another officer roared over the spot where Skelly had fallen and sped on with siren shrieking.

At a sharp turn leading to the Lake Shore Boulevard, only eight blocks from the scene of the shooting, Deputy Lay came upon a crowd of excited neighbors grouped around an automobile, the front two wheels of which

had been sheared off when it had leaped over a curb and into a telephone pole.

"Where's the driver of this car?"

into the curb," a woman explained. "That wasn't two minutes ago."

"Which way did he go?" questioned the officer.



"Deep gray eyes and a menacing, cold look" . . . Burke's eyes that Hunsaker remembered

demanding the officer who accompanied Deputy Lay.

"I don't know, but I saw a man—a big man—crawl out and run south a second or two after the car crashed

"Through those back yards toward Winchester Avenue," the woman said, pointing.

But a thorough search of the neighborhood by men armed with revolvers,

hunting rifles and clubs discovered no trace of the large, ruddy-faced man with the missing front tooth. The trail appeared to have been lost.

II

ALITTLE sorrowful group waited silently in the operating room at the sanitarium that night as Dr. T. G. Yeomans, who had been elected mayor of St. Joseph a few months before, busied himself with his instruments and prepared to probe for the three bullets that had lodged themselves in Policeman Skelly's rugged body.

Beside the operating table stood Mrs. Olga Moulds, of Benton Harbor, Skelly's sister. She gripped the hand of her brother and tried to smile down on him through her tears. A nurse moved forward with the anæsthetic mask, and the young officer, biting his lip to stifle the pain, spoke.

"You'd better kiss me good-by now, sis." Then, to Dr. Yeomans:

"Get that guy, doc!"

They were his last words. At eleven o'clock he died.

He was a twenty-five-year-old youth who had lived in and around St. Joseph all of his life, driven taxicabs, served as a member of the fire department and then as traffic officer. He was the victim of one of the most cold-blooded, heartless murders ever known. The fact that the killing was so pointless made it all the more ghastly.

Chief of Police Fred Alden, veteran head of the St. Joseph police force, instituted immediately the greatest manhunt ever known to the little resort region along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. City Manager James Crowe stood at the telephone almost constantly from the time of the shooting until six o'clock Sunday morning, broad-

casting the alarm to cities, towns and hamlets through a half dozen States. The headquarters of the State police in East Lansing and Paw Paw were notified, and special patrols were sent out on the highways.

Police departments were notified in Chicago, East Chicago, South Chicago, Gary, Hammond, South Bend, Michigan City, Niles, Valparaiso, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Battle Creek, Jackson, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Toledo, Cleveland, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Louisville, and scores of smaller towns and villages.

In the excitement of the manhunt a half dozen tips on the whereabouts of the hunted man were received and a posse of armed men tracked each one down with breathless frenzy.

First the officers went to a lunch stand at Bridgman, twelve miles away, where a bulky, rosy-faced man was reported. A few minutes later fifteen heavily armed deputies, acting on a telephone tip, rushed into the home of a farmer near Bridgman and routed the farmer and his wife, both of whom were unaware of the murder, out of their bed.

Every police officer for miles around was mustered into service and citizens were mobilized and hurriedly sworn in as deputies by Sheriff Bryant. All trains entering or leaving the county were stopped and searched. A dozen St. Joseph firemen strapped forty-fives onto their hips and demanded a part in tracking down the slayer of their former comrade.

"If you see the man, shoot to kill!" ordered the sheriff as he swore in the groups of special deputies and provided them with weapons. When the supply of guns gave out, bludgeons and blackjacks were distributed.

During these wild scenes in the

county jail, where the men gathered, a farmer living south of town walked into the sheriff's office and stepping meekly up to a deputy said:

"I think I can tell you the name of the man you're looking for. It's Fred Dane, a fellow who lives out on Lake Shore Drive about three miles south of here. He and his wife live out there in a swell little bungalow."

"I know that fellow," spoke one man.

"But he can't be a killer, not that quiet man," said another.

"Well, it was his car that crashed into the curb," insisted the farmer. "I saw it, and Dane's a big fellow with a missing front tooth."

It was less than an hour after the cold-blooded slaying of Officer Skelly that Sheriff Bryant picked up the trail of the killer. A group of picked officers under Deputy Erwin Kubath were strapping guns onto themselves in preparation for an attack on the little bungalow on the shore of Lake Michigan when a wild-eyed man stumbled into the jail.

He was an Israelite, one of the bearded members of the strange House of David religious cult on the outskirts of Benton Harbor, and his long whiskers fairly bristled with excitement.

"I've been held up!" he stammered. "Got here as soon as I could. Man stuck a gun into my ribs—forced me to drive him to Stevensville—tried to—"

"Just a minute," interrupted Sheriff Bryant. "What did this man look like?"

"He was a big man, forty or forty-five, and he must weigh close to two hundred pounds. He wore a cap and a light buff-colored sweater. He had a mustache and I guess he had been drinking."

"That's him!"

"Who?" asked Monroe Wolff, the Israelite.

"The murderer!"

"I didn't know there'd been a murder. And here I've been helping a murderer get away!"

The Israelite then explained that he had been seated in his automobile waiting for his wife, about three blocks from the intersection where Deputy John Lay had found the killer's blue coupé with the two smashed wheels a few minutes before. A man dressed in a cap and buff sweater ran limping across the street and jumped in beside him, Wolff said, sticking a gun into his ribs and ordering:

"Beat it south and be quick about it!"

Wolff started the car, but, feigning that he knew little about driving, managed to have considerable difficulty in shifting the gears. His kidnaper stuffed the gun in his ribs again and threatened to kill him if he didn't drive faster. They sped out Lake Shore drive—past the little bungalow three miles south of town where Fred Dane lived—and through the small villages—just ahead of the telephone alarm.

Beyond Stevensville, at a point about seven miles from town, Dane became violently sick and ordered Wolff to stop the car.

He alighted and backed away from the car, keeping his gun leveled on Wolff. The Israelite put the car into gear, reckless of his danger, and sped away, leaving the man standing in the middle of the road shaking his fist above his head at the disappearing automobile.

Another man came to the jail to provide additional information. The man was Albert Wisheart, a farmer, who said that Dane, who was a neighbor,

had stopped him south of Stevensville and ordered him to drive back to the town, a distance of about two miles. When Wisheart refused to go over an almost impassable dirt road east of town instead of using the concrete highway, Dane leaped from the car with a curse and disappeared in the darkness.

When Wisheart last saw him, Dane was only about three and a half or four miles from the bungalow where he lived.

"He's not far from here, men!" exclaimed Sheriff Bryant. "Get out to that house—and don't take any chances with him!"

III

A GROUP of eight deputies, led by Deputy Kubath and Chief of Police Fred Alden jumped into two large automobiles and sped out the Lake Shore drive. The cars were parked in a lane a short distance from the house and the officers, divided into two groups, crept up to the place. There was no sign of a light.

Kubath knocked at the back door. After a wait that seemed like several minutes a woman's voice called out, "Who's there?"

"Sheriff's men. Open the door!" answered Kubath.

The door was opened and a short, plump woman with bobbed hair peered out. She wore a bathrobe over a nightgown.

"We're looking for Fred Dane—is he here?" demanded Officer Kubath.

"Why, no; I don't know where he is," answered the woman, stammering nervously at the sight of the officer's drawn guns. "I came in from Chicago on the eight o'clock train and he was supposed to meet me at the station in St. Joseph, but he wasn't there, so I

took a taxicab and came home. What's the matter, what—"

"Never mind," interrupted Kubath, adding, "we'll have a look around here, I guess."

The officers stalked cautiously through the well-furnished little home, peering into darkened rooms and closets.

"Who are you?" asked Kubath of the startled woman.

"I'm Mrs. Fred Dane, and I don't like this at all. Busting in on a woman at this time of night."

The house appeared to be empty save for the woman, and the officers were about to give up their search and return to the county jail when Deputy Frank Priebe, rummaging around upstairs, called the others. A half dozen men with gun ready leaped up the stairs.

Priebe stood with arms akimbo before the open door of a clothes closet and there was a puzzled, frightened look on his face.

The officers looked into the small dark closet, which was lighted only by the ray from a flash light, and saw, neatly stacked on the floor and on shelves, all the weapons of a small arsenal—machine guns, rifles, steel vests, ammunition drums, pistols, tear gas bombs!

With murmured exclamations of awe the officers went down on their knees and panned over the deadly instruments— instruments no peaceful gentleman-farmer would have cached away in his country home.

There were two machine guns, one completely assembled and ready for its deadly business and the other knocked down and packed in a black suitcase. There was a case containing six rifles, all high-powered. Ammunition was everywhere, in glass jars, in machine

gun drums and scattered about on the floor.

There were four bullet-proof vests of thin, flexible steel, a sawed-off shotgun with pistol grip, two bags of forty-five caliber ammunition to refill the machine gun drums, and a half dozen tear gas bombs. The machine guns were of Thompson make with nine ammunition drums of one hundred shots each and three twenty-shot clips.

On the shelf was a neatly wrapped and tied bundle, and as Deputy Kubath

She went to dress, returning a few minutes later garbed in an expensive mink coat—a Christmas present from her husband a year before, she explained.

Back at the jail there was wild excitement. The four-party telephone line serving the Dane home had been tapped by City Manager James Crowe while the officers were at the little bungalow, and an intercepted message had landed Steve Kooney, one of the killer's neighbors, in jail.



This looks like a respectable business man's card, but "Herbert Church" was the most dangerous man alive

tore the heavy brown paper from it several green embossed papers fell to the floor. Bonds! Three hundred and nineteen thousand eight hundred and fifty dollars in bonds!

Kubath ordered the woman brought upstairs and as she was led before the gaping closet door and confronted with the exhibit she shrank back with a cry of horror, clasping her hands over her eyes.

"Oh, where did those things come from?" she cried.

"Do you mean to say you didn't know they were in the house?" asked Kubath.

"I never saw them before. I tell you I never saw them before."

"I guess you had better come along with us," the officer told her.

Kooney, who talked in broken English to the officers, had been heard telephoning to a farmer living about two miles away about Dane's escape. Kooney lived in a modest little home less than two hundred rods from the Dane bungalow.

"What do you know about Dane, and where did you see him to-night?" demanded the sheriff.

"Well, Dane is my neighbor and I used to do a lot of odd jobs for him, especially when he was remodeling the bungalow last fall," the man said in his broken English. "He always carried a big roll of bills and boasted to me that he made three thousand dollars a month from some gasoline stations he owned in Gary, Indiana. My wife never liked Dane, but I thought

that was just because he was such a windy fellow. No, I don't know much about his house because I was in it only a few times."

Kooney said that about nine thirty or ten o'clock that evening he and his wife were sitting in the parlor of their home when his wife looked out and saw a man standing in the driveway. Kooney, thinking it might be the chicken thief who had been prowling around the neighborhood, went outside and the man hurried toward him. The man was panting and his hair and clothes were disheveled. Then he recognized the man as Dane, his neighbor.

"I've got to see a man in Coloma right away and you're going to drive me there: my car's broken down," Dane told Kooney, in a voice that carried a command. Kooney, who was ignorant of the slaying of Skelly, saw a revolver in Dane's hand and asked him what the trouble was.

"I'm in a hell of a jam, but it's none of your business," the big man said. "Hurry up and get your car out and drive me out over the Napier Bridge to Coloma."

They got into Kooney's car and drove to Coloma, about fourteen miles north of St. Joseph on the shore of Paw Paw Lake, without being stopped by any of the half dozen officers who must have been patrolling the road. Dane got out of the car on the outskirts of the little town, flung a five-dollar bill at Kooney, and ran into the darkness.

Kooney returned to his home, unaware of the fact that he had aided the escape of a murderer.

When Sheriff Bryant had completed the questioning of Kooney and had ordered him released, Deputy Kubath turned to Police Chief Alden, a stocky man weighing considerably more than

two hundred pounds, and jokingly remarked:

"Fred, I nearly took a shot at you by mistake when we were at that house a short while ago."

"What do you mean?" asked Alden.

"Well," explained Kubath, "I came out of the front door of the house to see that our cars were well hidden and I saw a man crouching near a hedge on the other side of the road. At first I thought it might be Dane and I called out, 'Fred.' The man didn't move, so I decided it was you hiding out there to watch the roadway."

"But I wasn't outdoors. I was down in the basement of the house looking around," said the chief.

"It was Fred, all right, Fred Dane," said the sheriff. "He was doubling back to Kooney's house and you fellows let him slip through your fingers."

With the trail of the slayer lost fourteen miles to the north of St. Joseph, the officers set about checking up on the true identity of this fiendish, daring killer who kept a complete arsenal in his modest little hideout. The three hundred and nineteen thousand eight hundred and fifty dollars in bonds of various denominations, undoubtedly stolen, were the best means of fixing the identity of the slayer, Prosecuting Attorney Wilbur M. Cunningham said, and Sheriff Bryant agreed. George Selfridge, assistant cashier of the Farmers & Merchants National Bank in Benton Harbor, was called in and told to check the origin of the securities as quickly as possible.

IV

FIRST a call was put in for Pontiac, Michigan, where there had been a recent bank holdup, then to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where a robbery had been staged several weeks before.

But these leads were unavailing. The serial numbers on the bonds didn't check with the loot taken in the two cities.

"But you might call the bank of Jeffersonville, Wisconsin," suggested a Milwaukee banker over the telephone. "They had a robbery up there some time ago and some bonds were stolen."

Selfridge communicated with L. H. Smith, president of the Farmers & Merchants National Bank of Jeffersonville.

And there the serial numbers checked. The bonds found in the little bungalow were part of the three hundred and fifty-six thousand dollars carried away by four men who held up the Wisconsin bank six months before. About thirty-five thousand dollars in Liberty Bonds were missing, it was revealed.

"Who were the four men?" asked Sheriff Bryant, taking the telephone from Selfridge.

"Well, one of them was Fred R. Burke, the fellow they want so badly in Chicago," came the reply over the wire.

Fred Burke, called by police the most dangerous man alive!

Could he be the man who had lived quietly as a gentleman-farmer in the little resort town for months?

The officers had known they were searching for a cruel, heartless killer. But now their quarry was revealed as the most vicious slayer of gangland, a man who could line seven men up against a wall and mow them down with a machine gun . . .

Sheriff Bryant went to a file and took from it a long poster with the big black type—\$41,500 Reward—Fred Burke—Wanted For Murder! The poster, containing two photographs of the widely sought killer, was dated

April 1, 1929, and bore the signature of William F. Russell, Chicago commissioner of police.

There were a half dozen aliases—John Burke, Robert Burke, John Thomas, Brooks, Camp, Kempt and Kemper.

And the description: "Forty-three years old, five feet eleven and three-quarter inches tall, weight two hundred pounds, black hair, brown eyes, ruddy complexion and missing upper front tooth."

There was a note in bold face type at the bottom of the poster:

This man is a very dangerous murderer and bank robber. Police officers should use the greatest caution in approaching him.

"Our ticket to this man's hiding place—if he really is Burke—is coming from that woman in the cell upstairs." Prosecutor Cunningham said.

But before they questioned the woman who said she was Mrs. Fred Dane—Viola, she said her first name was—the prosecutor and sheriff dispatched an officer to the homes of several St. Joseph merchants with the police photographs of Burke.

"Sure, I remember that man well," said Edgar Smith, an employee of the American dry cleaners. "He's Fred Dane, a steady customer of ours. I remember he bawled me out just a few days ago for printing identification marks on his clothing in indelible ink."

A half dozen other merchants readily identified the photographs as those of Dane.

Queries were telegraphed to police departments throughout the country asking for information on Viola Dane or a woman meeting her description.

Then the prosecutor and sheriff went to the cell upstairs where the woman

sat calmly looking out through the barred window into the still night. They told her about the murder of Skelly, about her husband's flight, and about the stolen bonds. What did she know about it all?

Throughout the night they questioned her—first Cunningham and then the sheriff.

The woman, who said she was thirty-four years old and formerly operated a beauty parlor in Chicago, explained that she first met Dane in 1927 at a party in Chicago. She was an unwilling talker, and it took constant prodding to draw the story from her. Her eyes shifted constantly away from the glowering gaze of her questioners.

They were married in November, 1927, in Chicago, and went to live in Burnham, a suburb of Hammond, Indiana, she told the officers. Burnham, the officers reflected, was known as the Indiana hideout of Chicago's south side gangsters and for years had enjoyed the reputation of a wide-open town. Its killings had been frequent. It was in October, 1929, that her husband had purchased the Lake Shore Drive home in St. Joseph.

Then she broke down.

"Oh, I can hardly believe it," she sobbed. "But if he's all that you tell me then I hope you capture him. Why couldn't I have known about this. They call women dumb, and I guess they are.

"Shield him? Never; now that I know what he is I hope he gets all that's coming to him. Murder! Anything but that."

They asked her about her husband's relatives, but she knew of none. And he never told her about his friends. Once in a while he would have some visitors from Chicago, but she never became acquainted with them. There

was a woman called "Hon" and a man nicknamed "Prince" who came to St. Joseph several times.

"Do you have any photographs of your husband?" asked the prosecutor.

"No," she replied simply. "He didn't like them and would never have any taken."

"He wouldn't," said the prosecutor.

She knew little about the man to whom she had been married for two years. He never cursed or swore, she said, and even objected to slang. But sometimes he drank more wine than was good for his disposition.

"But when he was sober no woman ever had a better husband," she added, "He always spoke kindly of every one and was always willing to help any one."

"Did he ever talk with you about bank robberies?" asked the sheriff.

"I remember him saying what fools men were to take chances like that. He happened to mention it when we were reading about some bank robberies in the newspapers."

"What are you going to do now, divorce him?" asked Cunningham.

"Do you think I'd live with him now?" she replied with scorn. "Not after he shot a man down in cold blood and run away like a yellow cur."

V

DURING the next twenty-four hours, events moved swiftly in the feverish hunt for the slayer of Officer Charles Skelly.

Sunday afternoon, less than twenty-four hours after the slaying, the St. Joseph city commission convened in special session at the call of Mayor T. G. Yeomans and a ten thousand dollar reward was posted for the killer.

John Stege, deputy commissioner of detectives in Chicago, notified Sheriff

Bryant that it appeared certain that the slayer of Skelly was none other than Burke, whom he described as the most dangerous man ever known with a machine gun.

Reports were received, amazing, formidable reports that linked Burke with a score of major crimes—ransom kidnappings in Detroit over a period of eight years, the murder of a patrolman in a Toledo mail truck holdup; a bank robbery at Cadillac, Michigan, where sixty thousand dollars were taken; the robbery of ninety-three thousand dollars from the First National Bank of Peru, Indiana; the slaying of two men in an apartment in Detroit; a St. Louis bank holdup; and another bank robbery in Louisville, Kentucky.

But greater than all of these crimes was the linking of the most horrible crime of modern times to this ruddy-faced man—the St. Valentine's day massacre in Chicago!

On February 14, 1929, ten months to the day before the slaying of Skelly on the streets of St. Joseph, seven men, members of George "Bugs" Moran's liquor dealing mob, were surprised in their garage hangout at 2122 North Clark Street in Chicago by four men. Two of the four carried machine guns and wore police uniforms.

The seven Moran gangsters were lined up against a wall and mowed down by the men who were masquerading in police uniforms. One of the seven men was still alive when police arrived, but he refused to talk.

Theories were advanced by the scores and men arrested by the dozens, only to be released after questioning. Then police officials announced that one of the men in a police uniform had been identified as Burke, known as a henchman of Scarface Al Capone.

Burke, Chicago police said, was one of four men hired by the Capone organization to wipe out the Moran gang in retribution for the murders of Pasqualino Lolordo and Tony Lombardo, of the Capone-Lombardo faction. Two of the other kills were Joseph Lolordo, brother of Pasqualino, and James Ray, of St. Louis, companion of Burke.

As in the killing of Skelly, it was Burke's missing front tooth that led to the linking of his already infamous name to the massacre.

That Sunday afternoon, in St. Joseph, Chief of Police Alden received a telephone message from Officer Richard Anderson of the Des Moines, Iowa, police department, identifying Mrs. Fred Dane as one of the most desperate criminal characters of the west—a murderess and a highway robber! She had served time in the Missouri State Penitentiary for murder and highway robbery, and was known under the aliases of Viola Daniels and Viola Kane, the latter an alias frequently adopted by Burke.

Burke, the Des Moines officer also volunteered, was wanted there for leadership in two bank robberies and was known as James "Cornbread" Burchell. A confederate in one of the holdups had squealed on Burke and was serving time in prison, it was said.

"We'll get the truth out of this woman now," Prosecutor Cunningham announced.

But Viola Dane was sullen. She admitted nothing.

"That's all a lie!" she exclaimed. "I've never been in trouble in my life."

And she hadn't. The next day when photographs and finger-print records of Viola Daniels and Viola Kane were received from Missouri they failed to

correspond with those of the woman held in St. Joseph as Burke's wife.

"Nevertheless, she hasn't told us all she knows about this," Cunningham insisted.

Deputy Police Commissioner Stege of Chicago came to the St. Joseph jail, and was closeted with the woman for more than an hour. When he came out of the cell, wiping the beads of perspiration from his forehead he admitted that he had been unable to extract any helpful information from her. Patrick Roche, chief investigator for the State Attorney's office in Cook County, tried it. And he failed.

Couldn't anything break this woman down? Every attempt had failed, but there remained one strong weapon—jealousy.

On Tuesday afternoon they buried Officer Skelly with all the honors that could be bestowed by a citizenry roused to the white heat of hatred over so ruthless a killing. More than four thousand persons, from the youngsters he used to call to on the streets to high police officials from cities of the Middle West, passed by his bier.

And during the funeral services word came to the county jail that Burke and a woman companion had spent the previous night at a tourist camp near Flint, Michigan. Mrs. S. H. Jarvis, operator of the camp, had identified Burke's picture and said the man had told her he was on his honeymoon.

"He seemed all wrapped up in the girl," Mrs. Jarvis told police. "She was very beautiful, bobbed golden hair and long, curling eyelashes."

So Prosecutor Cunningham and Sheriff Bryant, determined to play what they regarded as a hole card, went upstairs to the women's cell block and faced Viola Dane.

"Well, I guess we're closing in on your husband," the prosecutor said, with a casual smile. "He stayed at a tourist camp near Flint last night with a beautiful young blonde he introduced as his wife."

The woman jumped to her feet.

"It's a lie—a dirty lie!" she cried.

The prosecutor repeated Mrs. Jarvis's report.

"I don't believe it—you're just trying to give me the works," the woman sobbed.

The officers waited for her to recover her composure. And after several minutes of gentle persuasion she broke down and admitted that her story to them had been fictitious. She was really Mrs. Viola Breneman, and she and Dane, as she continued to call him, were not married.

Her maiden name was Viola Ostroski and she had married John Breneman in Kankakee, Illinois, in 1912 and divorced him two years later. Her mother lived in Kankakee, she said.

"I was living in Chicago when Gladys Davidson, a friend of mine, invited me to go to Hammond for a party," she said. "That was in June, 1928. Fred, who lived at Burnham, was at the party and I became acquainted with him. In the summer of 1928 we went to Ladysmith, Wisconsin, and took a log cabin for several weeks and in the fall we went to Hammond to live in an apartment.

"He always told me he would marry me as soon as he could get a divorce from his wife, and so she wouldn't find out about us we lived under the name of Reed in Hammond and later, when we went to Gary to live, he used the name of Herbert Church."

"Did you ever see these business cards before?" the prosecutor inter-

rupted, handing her a card which had been found in the bungalow on Lake Shore Drive. They showed the name of Herbert Church, salesman for the Columbia Commercial Feed Company, 1222 Wrigley Building, Chicago. Cunningham had found out that such a concern never occupied offices in the Wrigley Building, and that Herbert Church was unknown there.

"Yes, I've seen them," she replied. "He told me that was his business, but I never knew much about his affairs."

They moved to St. Joseph in September, 1929, from Gary, she explained, and Dane was never away from home more than two or three hours at a time.

"Do you know where you and Fred were on St. Valentine's Day, last February?" Prosecutor Cunningham asked.

"We were living in Hammond. I remember the day distinctly because he brought me a big bouquet of chrysanthemums," she answered quickly. "He left our home about seven o'clock that morning and did not return until about eleven o'clock. I remember it so well because he came home and I asked him about dinner and he told me to run down to the delicatessen store and buy something. But I persuaded him to go out and get some food for me to cook. I think he ordered the flowers when he went out for the groceries. That afternoon he went out to get some magazines and was gone about a couple of hours."

The St. Valentine's Day massacre in the North Clark Street garage occurred about eleven o'clock on the morning of February 14, 1929.

Viola Brenneman, as she had revealed herself, had thrown up an alibi for Burke, but feminine jealousy, aroused by the story of the beautiful

blonde, had given the officers some new information.

VI

THAT same afternoon the entire town was thrown into an uproar of frenzied excitement when Roche announced to newspaper men that Burke's hideout was surrounded and that he would be in jail before nightfall.

Captain Fred Armstrong of the Michigan State Police said that Burke was hiding in a cottage on the shore of Paw Paw Lake at Coloma, nursing an injury received when his automobile had crashed into the curb as he fled from the scene of the Skelly shooting. That night a squad of heavily armed deputies swooped down on the spotted cottage with machine guns, tear gas bombs and rifles, and were rewarded with the capture of a drunken caretaker.

Four days after the slaying of Skelly, two of Sheriff Bryant's deputies, Charles H. Andrews and Erwin Kubath, went to Chicago carrying with them two cumbersome suitcases containing the machine guns found in the bungalow. They were taken to Chicago at the request of Major Calvin C. Goddard, New York ballistic expert, who had been called to aid in clearing up the St. Valentine's Day slaughter.

And on December 23 Major Goddard went before the Cook County coroner's jury and testified that the bullets which hailed death upon the seven Moran gangsters on that St. Valentine's Day were fired from the two machine guns found cached in the bungalow in St. Joseph.

Fred Burke, the most vicious journeyman killer, was definitely linked with the slaughter—all because he lost his head in a minor traffic mishap in

the little town where he had lived peacefully as a wealthy gentleman farmer!

Major Goddard explained his ballistic findings so convincingly that the jury unhesitatingly ordered Burke arrested for the grim assassination.

Examining the two guns, Major Goddard found that the serial numbering on the barrels had been carefully filed. But the application of a strong acid brought out the markings in their full intensity because of the effect of the stamping on the texture of the steel.

One bore the number 2347 and the other 2580, and it was a simple matter to trace their origins. They had been sold by a New York manufacturer to a Chicago dealer, who had in turn sold one of them to authorities of Marion County, Illinois, and the other to a man who had said he was purchasing it for Elgin, Illinois, police officers.

"Number 2347, and perhaps the other one, was used in the slaying of the seven Moran gangsters," Major Goddard said.

Meanwhile, Viola Brenneman had engaged an attorney and was fighting for her release from jail in St. Joseph. A technical charge of receiving stolen goods had been placed against her by Prosecutor Cunningham, and he demanded ten thousand dollars bond for her release.

If she were released she might lead them to Burke.

After resting in jail for two weeks, she was released and went directly to the home of her mother in Kankakee. Officers trailed her, but their stalking yielded no clew to the killer. Finally they ceased their surveillance.

Reports of Burke, some vague and others apparently well founded, continued to pour in. He was reported seen, usually with blond women—one

of his weaknesses since his first "job" with Egan's Rats in St. Louis—in a half hundred American cities. Chicago's gang hideouts, or at least some of them, were searched. Detroit police reported that he had crossed into Canada. He was reported seen in Springfield, Illinois, again in Gary, Indiana, and in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Then Police Commissioner Grover Whalen of New York announced that Burke's deadly weapons were also responsible for the murder of Frankie Yale, Brooklyn gang chief. Yale's gorillas charged that Burke and James Ray were responsible. Yale had been suspected of having had a hand in the murders of "Big Jim" Colisimo and Dion O'Banion in Chicago in his capacity as the boss of gun handlers for Capone. Shortly before Yale's sudden and inglorious demise, however, Yale and Capone had broken off friendly relations.

When Alfred "Jake" Lingle, the Chicago *Tribune* reporter, was shot last summer, John H. Alcock, now acting commissioner of police, said Burke might have had some part in that slaying.

It was not until mid-summer that the trail of Burke grew really hot. On the evening of July 24 Thomas Bonner, minor racketeer and stool pigeon on Chicago's south side was slain in front of his home by two men who drove by in a Ford sedan and leveled a machine gun upon him. An investigation revealed to the police that only two days before Bonner and a Chicago druggist had driven to Hess Lake, near Newaygo, Michigan, where Burke was rumored to have been hiding out at a small resort.

Police were informed that Bonner had gone to the resort to learn of Burke's hiding place in order that he

might direct the authorities there and cut in on a portion of the ten thousand dollars reward money. Fifteen detectives led by Lieutenant John McGinnis of the homicide squad sped to the resort, to learn that the man they were hunting had left twenty minutes before.

It can be disclosed now that Burke's escape on this occasion was caused by the carelessness of an officer who mentioned the impending raid in the presence of one of Burke's friends.

The widow of Thomas Bonner is certain that Burke killed her husband.

"How do I know?" she says. "Why, didn't they work together as brakemen years ago, and didn't Burke hang around Tom's saloon before prohibition? Don't worry, I know Fred Burke. He was scared because he thought Tom was getting ready to squeal and cut in on the reward for the St. Valentine's Day killings."

Less than a month later a squad of St. Louis police raided a downtown hotel on a tip that Burke was hiding there, but instead they found a gambling house owner and a well-stocked arsenal. A month after the Merchants' Trust Company in Paterson, New Jersey, was held up and robbed of twenty thousand dollars, and half a dozen terrorized girl employees identified Burke's pictures from police files. More leads . . . leads to nowhere.

But there was one agency that continued its relentless scouring of the country for the mad killer. The United States Department of Justice, remembering the two hundred thousand dollar mail truck holdup in Toledo, Ohio, in which a policeman had been slain and Burke's acquittal of a thirty-five thousand dollar railway express robbery in St. Louis in 1925, was determined that this man should be

brought to justice. Operatives had been working continuously and secretly on the manhunt for months, and finally their opportunity came.

VII

IT was late in December of 1930—

a year after the Skelly killing in St. Joseph, Michigan—that Joseph Hunsaker, a lean-faced young truck driver, living in Green City, Missouri, about one hundred and seventy-five miles northeast of St. Joseph, Missouri, became suspicious of a stockily-built, black-haired stranger who visited a farm home three and one-half miles west of Green City frequently.

The stranger flashed a big roll of bills, went around in flashy clothes, and drove an expensive automobile. When he drove into town he never got out of his car, and he avoided the people in Green City.

Hunsaker had seen a picture of Fred Burke, his cold, steely eyes glowering, and over it the caption: "Thousands on His Head!"

There had been something familiar about that face—and those eyes. In the picture Burke was clean-shaven, but there was an unmistakable resemblance between him and the stranger with the big, expensive automobile and roll of bills.

The young driver browsed around the town, learning what he could of the stranger.

Bit by bit he learned that the man was known as White, and that he was supposed to be a big business man in Kansas City. Last summer he had married Bonnie Porter, the tall, slender, blond daughter of Barney Porter, at whose home near Green City he visited.

Hunsaker was satisfied that he had located the widely hunted killer. He

sat down and wrote a letter to the Department of Justice agents in Chicago. Three days later he received an important looking letter warning him to proceed cautiously, keeping an eye on the man until he received further orders. Chief of Police E. M. Matthews of St. Joseph, Missouri, also received a letter. He was asked to investigate the information supplied by the truck driver.

Three times a squad of St. Joseph police went to the little four-room farm house midway between Green City and Milan, making the trip in the middle of the night. But each time they learned from their informant that the man they sought had left shortly before.

It was decided that Hunsaker was to watch the stranger's movements and notify the police the next time the man appeared at the Porter farm. As a double check, officers were dispatched to Kansas City to watch the movements of Burke's wife, who was employed as a nurse in a doctor's office.

It was about three o'clock on the morning of Thursday, March 26, that the call came from Hunsaker. Burke was at the Porter home and his big car was parked outside, he reported. His wife was in Kansas City. Hunsaker understood that her husband was to leave to join her in the morning.

The raiding party, under the command of Captain John Lard, was ready in an instant. Two high-powered cars, ready for just that moment, roared away to the north in the night. With Captain Lard were three detectives, A. W. Thedings, Melvin Swepston and E. R. Kelly, and at their feet were three machine guns, shotguns, and a half dozen tear gas bombs.

At Milan the two cars halted their furious race long enough to pick up Sheriff L. C. Hoover, of Sullivan

County, Deputy Ralph Clubine and Constable A. F. Pickett, of Green City.

Arriving at the Porter home about dawn, the officers found a highly polished, powerful automobile parked alongside the house in a driveway. Captain Lard ordered one of the police automobiles driven in front of it, and the other police car halted behind it to prevent any attempted escape.

Silently the seven men slipped noiselessly up on the porch. They had intended to rush into the house, but Porter, awakened by the sound of the cars, met them at the door. A revolver was pushed into the ribs of the astonished man and he fell back without a word.

The officers rushed down a narrow hall to the bedroom door, on the other side of which Captain Lard had been informed he would come upon the man known as the most ruthless slayer of modern times. The door was flung open, and there on the bed lay a sleeping man with black hair and a mustache. The high-powered car was parked just outside the open window and on a chair close beside the bed was a man's coat with bulging pockets.

Two of the officers stepped between the chair and the bed, and two others stood with machine guns leveled at the man's head. Detective Swepston shouted: "Stick 'em up!"

The man in the bed awoke with a start and sat bolt upright. He gasped in astonishment, and looked into the muzzles of the two machine guns. Then he made a grab for the coat on the chair. But the officer kicked it away. The coat fell to the floor, and a thirty-two caliber automatic revolver fell from the pocket.

The man now was trembling with fear.

"Take it easy," warned Swepston.

"We've got you cold and it won't pay to fight."

"What are you going to do, take me for a ride?" the man stammered. And then he heaved a sigh of relief when the raiders convinced him they were officers of the law and not hired killers who had come to put him on the spot.

While he was dressing the captured man told the officers his name was Richard Franklin White, and that he was a salesman. In the pockets of his clothes was seven hundred and ninety-five dollars in bills of large denomination.

It was not until he was lodged in a special cell in the St. Joseph jail and under the guard of two officers that he revealed his identity. He refused to talk until he was confronted with Bertillon measurements and finger-prints, which checked in detail.

"Well, as long as you know, then I guess there isn't much use in denying it," the prisoner said sullenly. "I'm Burke. Who did you think you were capturing, Jesse James?"

Then he added with a smile:

"And I'm not a damned bit afraid to go back to Chicago."

When Omaha, Nebraska, police telephoned a few minutes later in an attempt to learn from Burke whether he had had any part in a recent bank robbery at Lincoln, he replied curtly:

"Tell them to get a spiritualist and hold hands. Maybe they'll find out."

Burke made it clear that he wasn't going to talk about any of his exploits or lend any help in clearing up the long series of crimes charged to his trigger finger.

"As far as I'm concerned, you might as well go take a walk, because I'm not going to talk," he told Chief Matthews.

But despite his boast that he wasn't

a "damned bit afraid" to go back to Chicago and face the charge that he was the man who had helped mow down the seven Moran gangsters with a hail of machine gun fire, St. Valentine's Day, Burke was pleased at the decision of Governor Henry Caulfield, of Missouri, to turn him over to Michigan authorities instead.

In Michigan, he realized, the maximum penalty for his crime would be life imprisonment, whereas Cook County, Illinois, had been loud in its promises to "burn" Burke in the electric chair if he were ever brought to trial.

"Of course I'd rather go back to Michigan," Burke said. "I don't think much of the hot seat."

VIII

GOVERNOR CAULFIELD signed the extradition papers turning Burke over to Michigan, and the Michigan officers went into conference to agree upon a plan for the five hundred and sixty-eight mile trip back to the scene of Charles Skelly's cold-blooded murder. It was agreed that the utmost secrecy must be used in arranging for the trip, especially since there had been vague rumors that the underworld might attempt to take Burke from the law and put him on the spot before he had an opportunity to turn squealer on the higher-ups who had hired him to do their killings.

At five o'clock on a morning last March, just as the first streaks of cold dawn appeared, Burke was bundled out of his cell and put into an armored car that waited at the curb outside with motor running. The large car seemed to bristle with machine guns. Four officers of the Michigan State Police were seated inside, alert. Their re-

volvers were cocked for any foray that gangland might attempt.

Then began a dash across the Middle West at breakneck speed. At eight twenty-five that night Burke was back in the little Michigan resort town, where for three months, he had hidden out as a peaceful country gentleman . . . until he had got drunk and lost his head over a trivial traffic mishap.

Back in the St. Joseph, Michigan, jail, seven guards grouped about his cell with shotguns slung across their knees and State Troopers patrolling the streets outside night and day, Burke was a sullen, growling prisoner. He chewed savagely on big, black cigars and cursed the newspaper men who came to the bars of his cell to ask him about his crimes.

"You guys never gave me a break and you won't get anything out of me now, you—" he grumbled.

He had been in the jail only two days when I went to his cell accompanied by a deputy sheriff and succeeded in persuading him to talk—but not about his ignoble career. A score of police officers from nearly as many States where he was reputed to have left a trail of terror had questioned him during those two days and to them he had maintained that same stubbornness.

I found him seated on the edge of his iron bunk reading a Western story magazine, and as I talked to him the group of heavily armed officers sat grouped outside the bars, alert to any attempt which might be made to take their captive from them. But Burke seemed unmindful of their glowering watchfulness and the cold steel muzzles of their guns.

He sat in his shirt sleeves. A barber had been to see him a few minutes before, and he was clean-shaved except-

ing for the bristling black mustache he had grown in an attempt to escape the eyes of the law.

But it was his eyes, deep gray eyes with pouchy lids and a menacing cold look, that labeled him as the Fred Burke whose photographs have been emblazoned on thousands of police posters. It was those eyes that had attracted the attention of the young truck driver, Hunsaker, six months before and had finally resulted in the sensational capture.

"How did you happen to kill Skelly?" I asked.

He glanced away and remained silent.

"You must have been pretty drunk, weren't you?"

"Now, listen here," Burke said earnestly, "if you think I'm going to open up and tell you my life history, you're badly mistaken. They've got a tight case against me here and I'm not going to say a word. You can't blame me for that, can you?"

He admitted that he had lived in St. Joseph as Fred Dane, and that Viola Breneman had posed as his wife. But that was all.

"How about the St. Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago?" I persisted.

"Why don't you guys lay off that stuff?" he demanded in a tone of disgust. "I wasn't in Chicago when that happened, and I don't know anything about it. All this talk about me bumping off seven guys for Capone—that's a lot of bunk. I don't even know Capone."

I asked him about a number of other crimes with which he had been directly charged—the slaying of Frankie Yale, the Brooklyn gang leader, and the Milaflores slayings in Detroit—but his answers were a few terse curse words.

The only gangsters he knew were

dead ones, and he was a victim of newspaper sensationalism. That was his story.

I asked him how he had succeeded in slipping through the well organized manhunt on the night of the Skelly killing. But there was no answer.

"Where did you get all of your experience with machine guns, Burke?" I pressed.

"What do you mean 'experience'?"

"You served with the United States forces as a machine gunner in France, didn't you?"

"Another newspaper yarn. I was in the tank corps and that's no training school for killers. That's for suicides."

"How about this plastic surgery operation you had performed on yourself to disguise your features?"

"That plastic surgery, as you call it, happened to be a little automobile accident near Kansas City last summer."

I prepared to leave.

"Well, Burke, you're one gangster that's just as tough as the cops say, aren't you?"

"I used to be, I guess," Burke said, and smiled. It was the first time a smile had been seen on his face since the five police officers with drawn guns had awakened him at daybreak in the little Missouri farm house and placed him under arrest.

Burke remained in the cramped little cell under the constant watchfulness of the armed guard until the end of April, when he was led out by a cordon of fifteen heavily-armed deputies and taken across the street to the court room of Circuit Judge Charles E. White.

A troop of State police officers and special deputies surrounded the courthouse and the same two machine guns

once owned by Burke were mounted in front of the jail as a reminder to the crowd of eight thousand curious townfolk that order must be preserved. When the killer, immaculately dressed in a blue suit, entered the court room, his handcuffs were removed and he was led to a chair between Sheriff Cutler and a State policeman.

Every one who entered the court room was searched and nine guards with sawed-off shotguns stood at the entrances.

Charles W. Gore, of Benton Harbor, who had been hired as attorney for Burke two weeks before, came over and whispered to his client, and when Judge White mounted the bench, the lawyer stepped up and conferred with him and Prosecutor Cunningham for several minutes. Then the bailiff called for quiet.

"The defendant pleads guilty to the State's charge of murder without degree," Gore said.

There was an audible gasp from the craning spectators. Burke appeared unmoved.

After a brief hearing, during which Forrest Kool, the young Buchanan farmer, pointed his finger at Burke from the witness stand and said calmly, "He's the man who killed Skelly," Judge White announced that Burke, as notorious as he was in the field of crime, could not be sentenced for first degree murder inasmuch as no premeditation could be shown in the killing of the officer.

"I, therefore, sentence you to life imprisonment in Marquette prison under the Michigan statute providing the penalty for second degree murder," he said after Burke had been called before him.

"Thank you," Burke said in a low

voice, and turned to hold his hands out to the officers who stood near by with the handcuffs.

On the way back to the jail Burke, apparently relieved, joked with Sheriff Cutler.

"Bring along some fishing tackle when we go up, sheriff," he laughed. "They tell me the trout fishing is good up around Marquette and the season opens May 1. Maybe we can take time out to get a few."

At four thirty-seven o'clock the next morning, Burke was again loaded into that same armored car bristling with machine guns and started on his last trip, a ride into exile.

"This life sentence doesn't bother me much," he said as he stepped into the car.

Before he left the jail, Burke autographed a book, "On the Up and Up," written by Bruce Barton, and handed it to Sheriff Cutler. It was signed: "Optimistically, Fred R. Burke."

"Barton's my favorite author, you know," he told the sheriff.

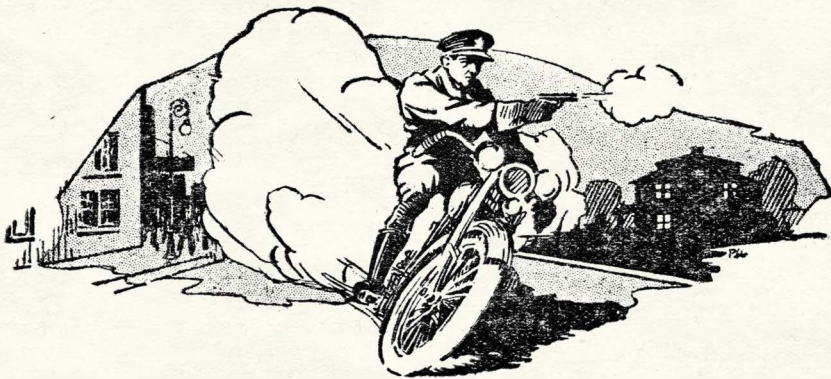
Twelve hours later the great iron gates of Marquette prison, known as

"Siberia" to criminals in Michigan because of its location in the desolate wastes of the upper peninsula, swung open to admit "the most dangerous criminal in the United States." He was the one thousand and first prisoner to enter the penitentiary, and the number 5293 was stenciled in large figures across the left breast of his blue denim shirt.

His remark that the life sentence didn't bother him much took on a real significance the next day when Prosecutor Cunningham admitted that Burke, accused of the most ruthless slaughter of modern times, a dozen or more wanton killings and innumerable other crimes, will be eligible for a parole in twenty-five years, and that good behavior may reduce his term to eighteen or twenty years!

The armored car was almost in sight of the gray stone prison walls when Burke turned to Sheriff Cutler and said suddenly:

"You know, you fellows wouldn't be bringing me up here if I hadn't got drunker than a lord on grape wine that day I shot that copper."





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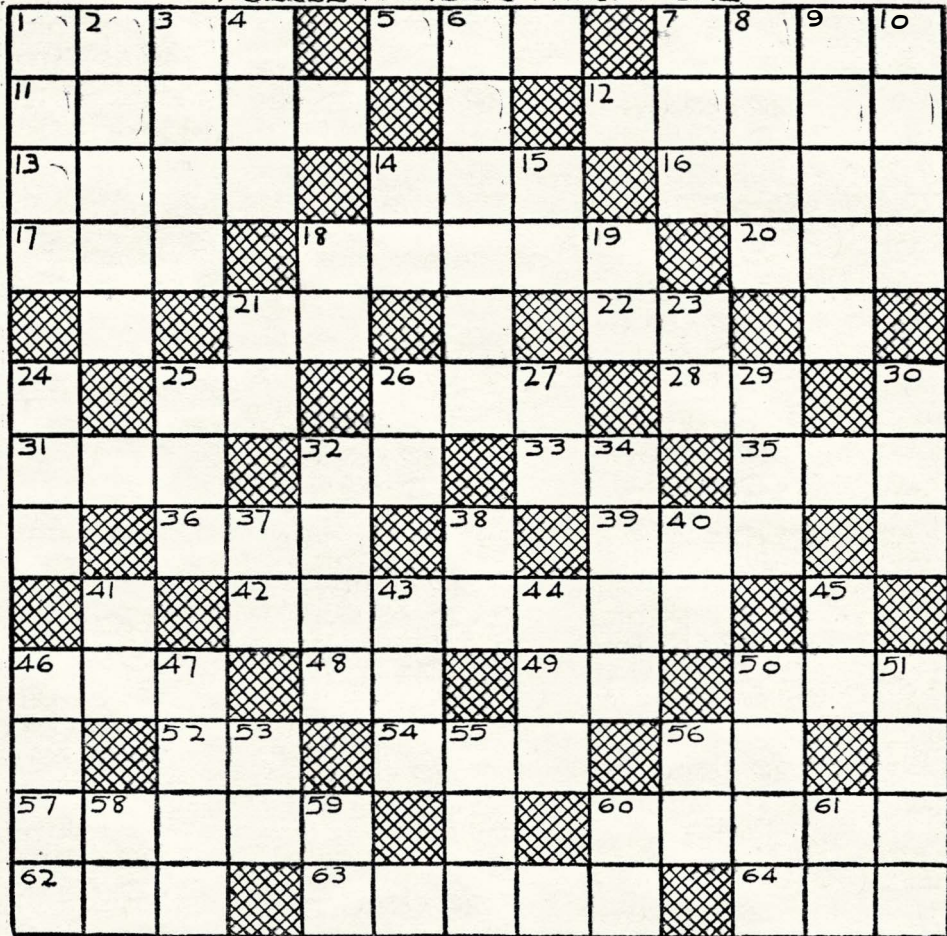
ALL-STORY

Narrative Cross-Word Puzzle

WILL THESE CROOKS REFORM?

By Richard Hoadley Tingley

PUZZLE NUMBER THIRTY-ONE



V—VERTICAL

H—HORIZONTAL

Try This New Puzzle! Correct Answer Next Week

V 8
H 33
V 41
H 14
H 48
V 55

The tale I am going to relate is about two detectives of the Federal Prohibition, Abe Goldman and Cohen, who got had while off duty not long They managed, however, get out again, and to new luster to their names.

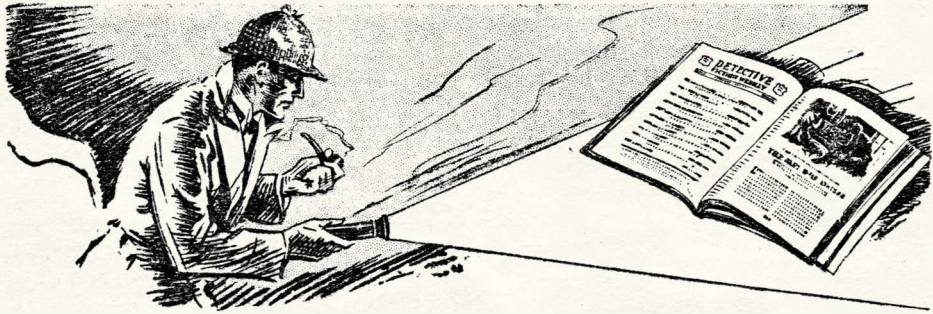
V 4
V 23(Rom. num.) th day of the
H 52 Jewish month of, in
V 40(abbr.) the year 1931, a
V 47 they will long remem-
H 13 ber. These men had
H 42 out to raid an speak-
V 43 easy, a resort, as dirty
H 26 as a pig, about

V 51 miles from the city,
 H 46 were nearing the
 H 17 of their homeward
 H 16 journey when a flat
 H 1 halted them near a
 V 37 ".....!" quoth Abe.
 H 57 I'm hungry. Let's
 H 22 and have a plate of tail
 soup. The chef in there is an
 V 25 expert in the culinary
 and can cook to beat the band.
 V 30 Both were able,
 H 11 thoroughly, and Cohen
 H 50 had the distinction
 V 56 H 63 being a bitter
 V 38 in that never left a
 job half done except for a
 reason. When he and
 V 6 Abe were in the of
 H 5 entering the place something
 happened, you will
 V 18 out before you have
 V 3 very with
 H 13 V 29 this story, and a time
 V 7 they had of
 V 21 H 28 a had fallen from the
 V 32 blue I sure it would
 H 14 have surprised them
 V 58 more than to greeted
 V 53 with the command: "Hands
 H 49!" as a bullet whizzed past
 H 56 (decimal, point in front) within a
 H 39 of an inch of Abe's
 Instantly four hands were raised.
 V 9 Even a could see this
 V 10 was the only thing to
 H 62 would have befallen
 otherwise, for they had stum-
 V 44 bled upon three men
 V 10 of the kind that on
 H 60 H 35 people so in this
 of crime. Before you could say
 H 32 ".....!" the thugs had
 H 46 relieved both Cohen
 Abe of their guns, and while one
 bandit robbed the till behind the
 V 1 cashier's, and another
 V 15 went through the clothes
 H 25 the patrons seated the
 V 34 tables, a third dug into
 the pockets of the detectives and
 extracted what little money they
 H 36 had, it amounted to
 V 60 only five ten dollars,
 all told. There was but one

H 64 woman in the place, and
 was subjected to the same rough
 treatment.
 V 45 "Now into that back
 H 7 room, and yourselves
 about it!" shouted one of the
 V 18 thugs he began again
 H 20 V 44 to with his
 H 12 They say that there is
 among thieves. Don't believe it.
 The trio immediately began
 H 48 quarrel over the loot.
 H 31 the between them rag-
 V 26 ing fiercely that one of
 V 2 the three,, knocked the
 V 24 other almost senseless
 and got all the cash. Keeping
 V 50 H 33 their about them
 Ed and Abe battered down the
 door, surprised the holdup
 V 30, and, helped by the
 patrons, put them in irons. Pale
 H 54 and, the crooks pre-
 V 18 sented a sorry sight
 they were marched off to the
 pen.
 V 24 The judge gave them each
 H 21 years, and it hoped that,
 V 59 (prefix) when they enter society
 H 18 as free men they will
 V 46 their ways and begin life
 as respectable citizens. But
 will they? Answer me,
 V 27 criminologists? Yes
 V 61 or?
 V 58

ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE

Q	U	I	E	T	U	S	S	P	O	T	S
U	S	O	R	R	O	W	U	N	T		
I	T	N	A	G	O	U	T	M	Y		
T	E	N	Y	E	A	R	S	H	E	L	
S	E	E	N	D	I	D	R	E	E		
M	A	I	D	R	G	O	S				
P	E	R	S	O	N	B	E	G	G	E	D
D	A	N	V	T	U	R	N				
F	I	N	L	I	E	E	A	S	T		
A	I	M	L	E	A	V	E	B	E	E	
T	O	S	O	S	E	V	A	D	E		
A	B	E	S	A	N	E	L	Y	N		
L	O	Y	A	L	S	T	R	E	E	T	S



FLASHES FROM READERS

Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind

LIEUT. JOHN HOPPER, who wrote the thrilling story of murder on an army transport, "Murderer on Board!" in this week's issue of **DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY**, has served from Sandy Hook to Panama in the Regular Army.

He was born too late, 1903, to get into the World War, but he tried and might have made it if his parents hadn't objected and removed him from the ranks. A very sad and disappointed youngster, he yet set his heart on a military life, and some time later entered West Point.

Finally, in 1927, he blossomed out as a spick-and-span, brand-new shave-tail with a powerful yen to become a Brigadier

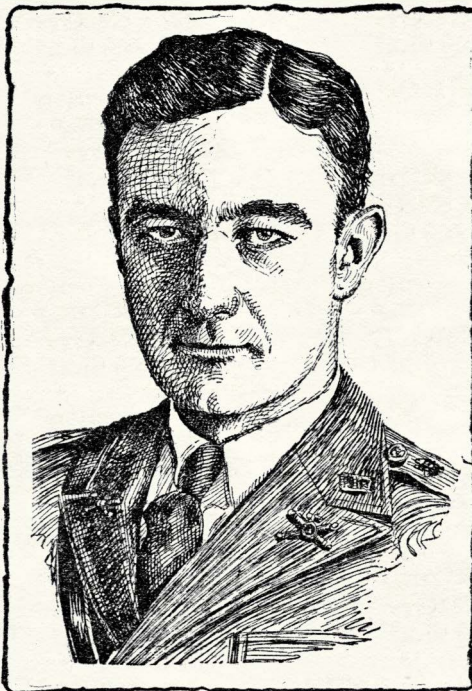
General. But he discovered that the mathematics he had studied in West Point hadn't taught him how to keep up a front to match his responsibilities

on one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month. The army feeds its privates, but not officers: they have to buy their own food. And, as the lieutenant explains, "I found out that my stomach was too darned prosaic. It was not satisfied with being covered by nice uniforms; it had to eat also."

So he resigned his commission in the Regular Army, and has been eating three square meals a

day practically ever since.

He turned to writing and started to describe the romance and the glamour



LIEUT. JOHN HOPPER

of the places he had seen and the life he had led. And has been doing it ever since.

Once in a while, he says, he feels a faint urge to get back in the army, but so far hasn't been powerfully moved to do it. He even turned down a colonel's commission offered him by a Central American faction planning out a rebellion! Lieut. Hopper was holding out for a promise that he would be Secretary of War in the new government, when the rebellion blew up.

FAKE mediums and fortune tellers in the country, alarmed by the exposures now appearing in *DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY*, and unable to get the magazine suppressed, are reported to be taking the only method left them to keep the stories from you. In some cities they are buying *DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLYS* from local news-stands, and destroying them.

Naturally they are not able to make a serious impression with these tactics. And *DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY*, with its wide circulation, will reach a vast number of people.

But we are telling you what some of the fortune tellers are doing so that you will have your news dealer save you a copy.

The threatening letters that we have received from fortune tellers prove how completely they fear the exposure of their crooked game!

A POLICEMAN HIMSELF

DEAR SIR:

On June 11, 1931, I received a post card from you stating that you were starting a true story in your magazine, entitled "Behind the Green Lights," by Police Captain Willemse. I purchased the first copy on June 13 and have just finished reading the end of it now. As I am a member of the New York Police Department I think it is the most interesting and exciting true story I have read yet. I also enjoyed "Wanted!" a

story by Fred MacIsaac. I am going to keep on buying *DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY* from now on.

Yours very truly,

JOSEPH F. BROWN,
Astoria, N. Y.

A NEW SUBSCRIBER

DEAR EDITOR:

I am a new subscriber to your detective magazine. I began reading it about twelve weeks ago when "Behind the Green Lights," by Captain Willemse, caught my eye, and since then I have read each one from cover to cover and it is, in my opinion, the best on the market. I regret Captain Willemse's narrative has come to a conclusion. Next best are the stories of *Riordan*.

Respectfully yours,

ARTHUR SCHAFFNIT,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Send us coupon from ten different issues of *DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY* and get an artist's illustration.

Send only ten coupons, because only one picture can be given to any reader at one time. Then save your coupons, and send for another.

"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.....
- 6.....
- 7.....

Name.....

Street.....

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

(This coupon not good after January 2.)
(Only one picture given at a time.)

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



M. E. OHAVER

used x to represent e, x will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. 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.

THE popularity of the cryptogram has reached such a stage that a national organization, The American Cryptogram Association, is devoting its entire interest to this aristocrat of puzzles. At the first meeting of this organization, held last September, Dr. C. B. Warner, Biloxi, Mississippi, was elected president, and the editor of this department was elected secretary.

The objects of the organization are to formulate rules, hold tournaments, etc. The cryptogram should be as popular as the crossword puzzle, but of much more intellectual value. At present there are no dues, and dues will probably never be over twenty-five cents a year. Every fan should write George C. Lamb, Burton, Ohio, for membership, and do his part to place the cryptogram on a high scientific basis.

No. 227—Mutations. By Hugh B. Rossell.

A ABCD old woman, on DABC bent,
Put on her ADBC, and away she went;
"CDAB," she said, as she went her way,
"How are we going to CBAD to-day?"

As this week's specialty. Hugh B. Rossell offers another of his novel arrangements of classic puzzles in rime.

Observe that the five 4-letter words of the poem given in cipher consist of different arrangements of the same four letters. Let the context suggest the meaning of one of these words. Then transpose the letters to fit the other four words.

Second-letter *h*, and terminal *-ly* betrayed last week's "Inner Circle" cipher, No. 226, by Ernest E. Alden, the answer to which is on page 287. Use of the symbol F in the second position (words 1, 2, 12) was suggestive of *h*. And with the occurrence of the infrequent symbol W mostly as a final indicating *y*, -GW would become good material for *-ly*, the commonest ending in this letter.

Relative frequencies in word 6, VQIIGHX, indicate that V and I signify consonants, thus (with G already labeled as *l*) suggesting *-cs*, *-er*, or *-ed* as probable for the ending -HX. Trying these letters, SFMGXL yields *-h-ls-*, evidently *whilst*. And substituting known letters throughout the cryptogram, GMLHTKLM (*lite-ti*) and WHS-SZZP (*yew w- -*) are apparent as *literati* and *yew-wood*. OFKOM-NGKP (*-ha-i-lad*) then follows as *khaki-clad*; ORMNOORKNO (*k-ickk-ack*), as *knickknack*; etc.

Bob E. Knox opens this week's cryptograms with an original story told in cipher. If you can guess the three-letter word ZPR and the final J of word 9 (note the apostrophe), you will have all but the third letter of the last word, JZNRZR. Context with the last two words, thus deciphered, will then suggest the meaning of LQAE. Next try JQBR and JQBRQER.

Jay Zee waxes poetic about his favorite hero in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. Comparison of U, RUJC, and CQ should get you started. Follow up with QPC and QPY; DPC and DHUC; etc. In O. I. C.'s crypt compare the ending -CXW and the four-letter word CXBY. Then fill in the missing letters in ZYYHCXW. Words 7, 10, 6, etc., will then fall into line.

FH and HGFP are weak links in Philip R. Nichols's cipher. These words provide the first two letters of the last word, which may then be found by running through your pocket dictionary for a 9-letter word with the 2nd and 8th letters alike. Neophyte, author of this week's "Inner Circle" entry, is a "beginner" in name only, as far as crypts are concerned. Try his cipher and judge for yourself!

No. 228—Stop, Thief! By Bob E. Knox.

JXB JBMZP JXA JQBRQER JZRXF
JQTG HNQB JTJMR JDPTFZOJ JRD-
QEL-JZQNU JPQG. JQBR JZRGJ LQAE
ZPR JZNRZR.

No. 220—The Super-Crook! By Jay Zee.

WHICHY WHACK, IQ CYAB, IQ IWHHS,
THE WASH CQ ZYHHC KAB HOHYX
THHS!
TKHJHOHY WHICHVI QPC GOY
"BHUC,"
QPY KHUYCI RUJC KHWV DPC BAI
U DHUC!

No. 230—Aboard the Liner. By O. I. See.

ABCDD-EFGHJK. AFKCABCG-ZYVHC-
XW XVUAJ, FEAVUKZT DUF CZ, KUFWA
SFZFUCFZ RFBCJXB KYQX GYUUCKYU
CXBY GYSRFXCVXQFT.

No. 231—Man, Maid, and Menu. By Philip R. Nichols.

KGBP KRYPK RJOU KRYM RJVUQG
HGBQXO QXAFU PQJR FH RJPE DJMD
VBNDBX MKJTDQNNB KJRJZQ, VDB-
RMN AFCBJR PYMBZBJX ZJAFRQM
JGBJ HGFP AJLL-VFGX FGZDQMNGJ.

No. 232—The Kill! By Neophyte.

CHILD MUST BULK FRAY YORK
FBHUP, WUZAROLU PCVA; IFAK JRIQ.
VOFPHR, ELOMA. LAGP KUC, SHUFF
VHSE JALPSUR KOFB IVHL MAFPUR
QHUSK.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

221—Key: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
P T E R Y G O I D S

222—Shall silly Sally shell peas? She stalls, and spills some! Still, stellar shellers are scarce! For a spell, Sally shall shell! 'S all!

223—The guardian of Hermes watched two happy pilgrims walk slowly down the valley. Thus they went from his sight forever.

224—Transatlantic liners are reducing rates. They don't have to worry about automobile competition, but ocean fliers are getting numerous!

225—Equestrienne thrown headlong; vertebra broken. Obituary column with system employs material extracted from back files.

226—Phlegmatic, khaki-clad hunchbacked dwarf jauntily juggles xiphoid yew-wood saber, haversack, knickknack, whilst literati applaud raucously.

Fans who send us the answers to one or more of this week's puzzles will be enrolled in the October Cipher Solvers' Club! Answers will be published next week.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

THE meeting that was life or death to two men took place in a secluded corner of the high-walled, beautiful country place of the Somersets near Stamwich, Connecticut.

Jason H. B. Somerset, only scion of that illustrious family, tall, robust and bearded, made his way to the meeting in the course of a carefully round-about walk through his grounds. There he met Pitkin, who was everything that Jason H. B. Somerset was not—small, sickly-looking, and meanly dressed.

Pitkin was wary, uneasy and struggling hard to contain himself.

"Have you got it?" Somerset asked.

Pitkin jerked his head in assent and silently drew out of the shrubbery a wicker basket covered with an immaculate damask napkin.

"I have the rest of the necessary ingredients," Somerset said, and drew from his pocket a small two-ounce bottle. He held it for a moment, gazing intently at the innocuous-looking fluid it held.

"Reflect, Pitkin," he said, "that this little bottle holds all that is good in life. For you it holds wealth, happiness, and immunity from the consequences of your little forgery. But remember, Pitkin, if we're caught—it's the electric chair for both of us."

Pitkin's hand shook as he took the bottle.

"You know what to do," Jason Somerset said. "Doctor those sandwiches judiciously and the stuff cannot fail."

Pitkin licked his lips. "I know why you've got to finish Gresham, but why Vicker, too? Poisoning two men is—dangerous."

Jason Somerset shook his big head, stilling Pitkin's uncertain protest. "Poisoning one man would be dangerous," he said. "Poisoning two is not."

"We've got to get rid of Gresham before Monday," Pitkin agreed slowly. "But it's risky as hell."

But Jason Somerset is facing bankruptcy and prison, and with his back to the wall, there is only one way out—double murder! And Jason H. B. Somerset, crook and swindler that he is, is not the man to give up while there is a chance to escape. So he stakes his life on death and gambles for his safety in this tension-filled, gripping serial beginning next week,

Melting Millions

By Richard Howells Watkins

In the same issue there will be short stories by SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL, J. LANE LINKLATER, EDWARD PARRISH WARE and others, including more of the sensational SPOOK CROOKS series which is attracting so much attention all over the country. Next week in

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—October 10

"Say, Bill, did you hear the latest?"

The price of

RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE

beginning with October issue is reduced to



15^c

"That's great—everybody will be buying it now"

"**S**URE! October is a swell number, too. The front cover shows an engine tearing through a forest fire; and the opening story tells about a box car robber who stole a million dollars' worth of merchandise. It's great stuff—his own life story, every word of it true!"



"How about the Fiction?"

"Best serial I ever read—'THE ROAD TO GLORY,' by John Johns—chock full of action and romance. There are a dozen other good stories and illustrations also featured."

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If your dealer is sold out send 15c to THE FRANK A. MUNSEY CO., 280 Broadway, N. Y.



Have you tried Camels?

THE steady increase in the sales of Camel cigarettes proves one fact beyond a doubt.

If you try Camels, the odds are very much against your ever going back to your old brand.

So great is the contrast between the delights of perfectly conditioned Camels fresh from the protection of the new Humidor Pack and the harsh, hot smoke from stale dried-out cigarettes, that your decision will be immediate.

The quality is there in the first place, for Camels are a blend of choice Turkish and mild Domestic tobaccos.

In factory-prime condition, with their rare flavor and their natural moisture still intact, they are a joy to the smoker.

Now this flavor is air-sealed-in by an outer wrapping of moisture-proof Cellophane, so that no matter where you buy Camels, in any land, in any climate, you are always certain to get fresh cigarettes in factory-prime condition.

And there are other advantages as well. For the Humidor Pack also protects the cigarettes within from dust and germs and weather conditions.

Start the day on Camels. See how much milder they are, how much more flavorful they are, how cool they are to the throat.

No peppery dust to irritate delicate membrane. No harsh, hot smoke from dried-out tobacco to burn the tongue or sear the throat.

Switch to Camels for a day, then leave them—if you can.

Tune in CAMEL QUARTER HOUR featuring Morton Downey and Tony Wons
Columbia Broadcasting System—every night except Sunday

CAMELS

Mild . . . NO CIGARETTY AFTER-TASTE

• *It is the mark of a considerate hostess, by means of the Humidor Pack, to "Serve a fresh cigarette." Buy Camels by the carton—this cigarette will remain fresh in your home and office*

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