

DETECTIVE

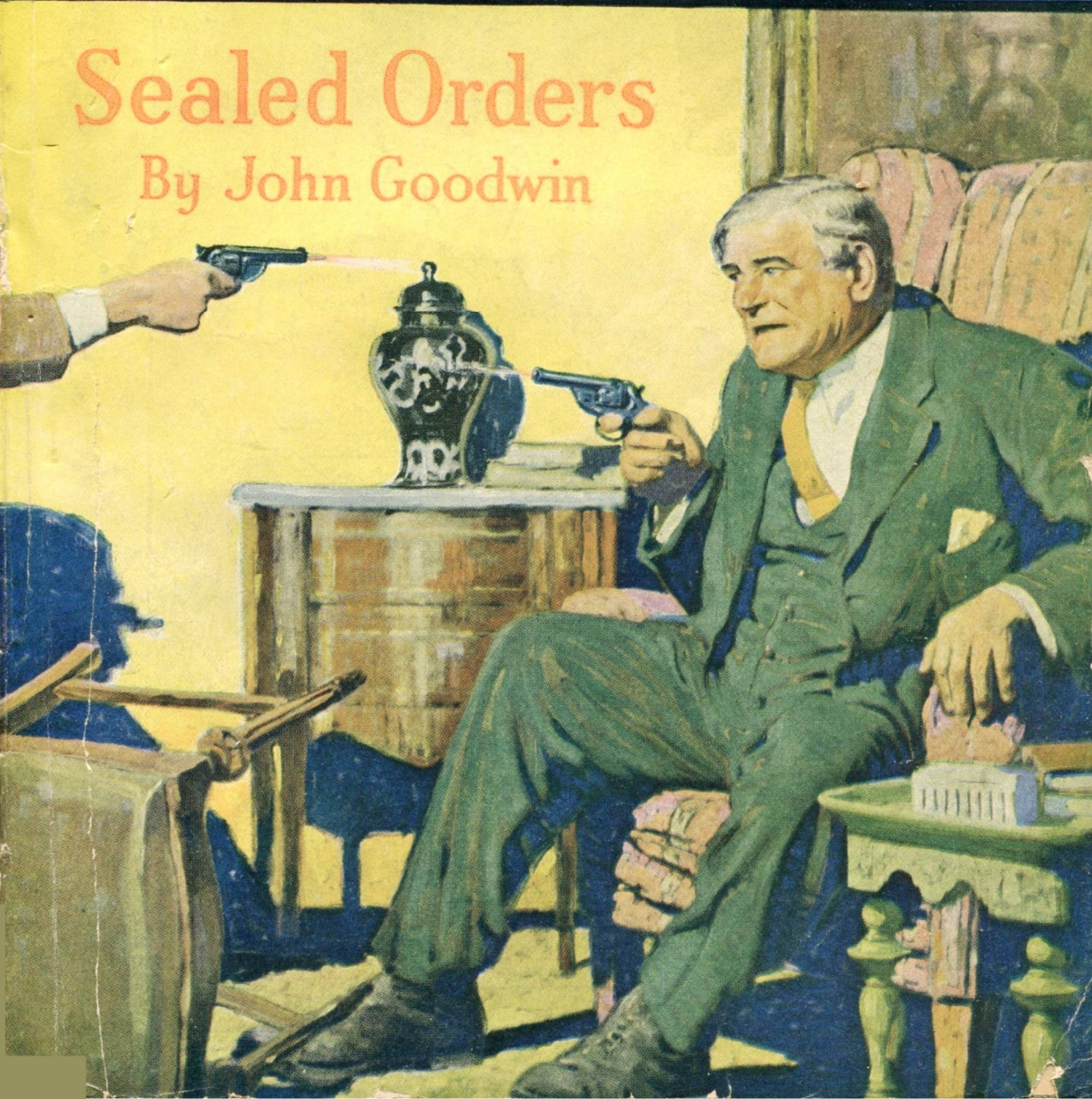
FICTION WEEKLY



With Thrilling True Stories
FORMERLY FLYNN'S

Sealed Orders

By John Goodwin



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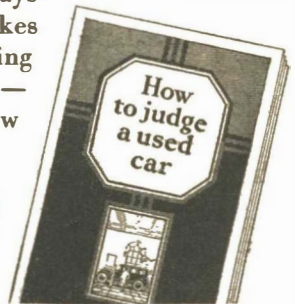
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DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME XLI

Saturday, May 4, 1929

NUMBER 2

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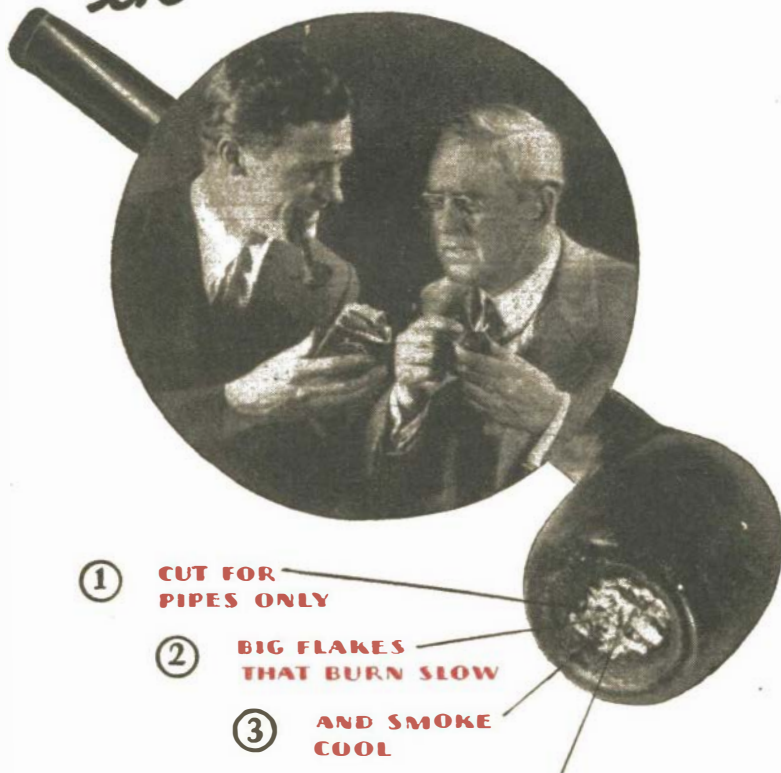
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Rush to me free information telling how I can get a U. S. Government Big Pay Job. Send list of jobs now obtainable.

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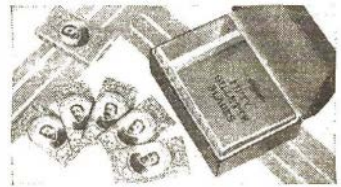
YES, it's the same man shaving on ten different mornings; ten different conditions of water, temperature, and nerves; ten different methods of lathering and stroking.

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the same even temper.*

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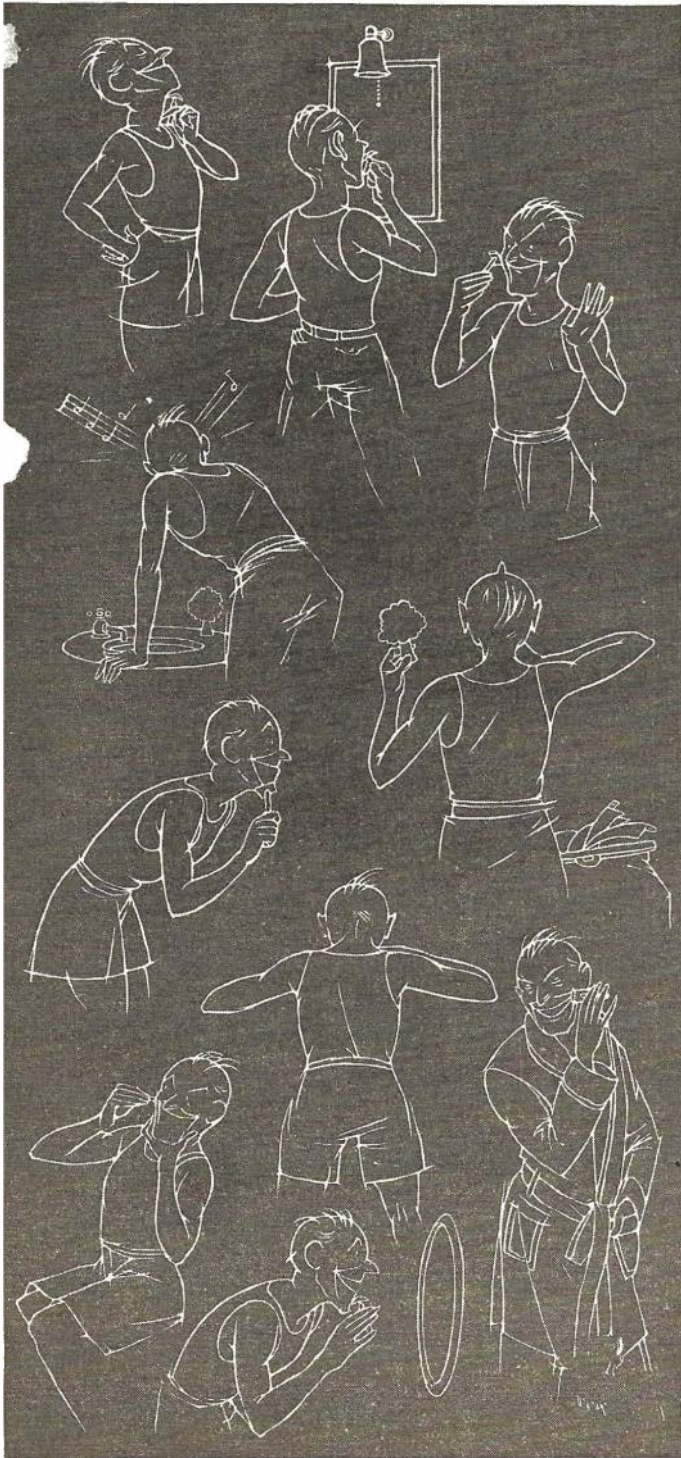
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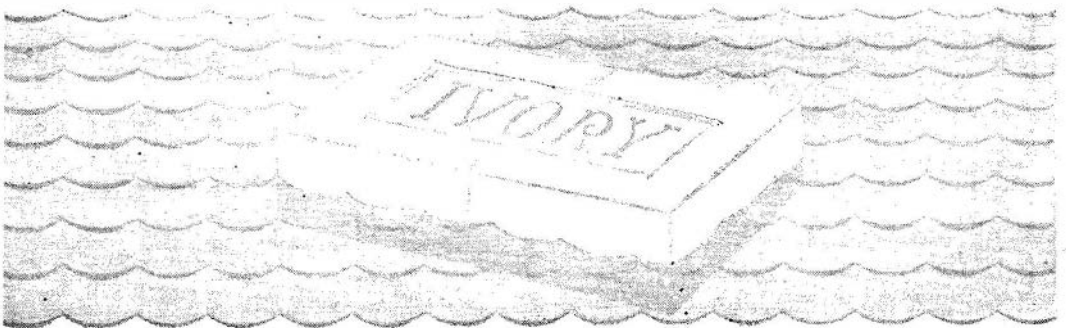
Now—you can stir! And your cake of Ivory Soap comes rollicking over the bathtub waves. Ivory is the buoyant play-

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. . . kind to everything it touches · 99⁴⁴/₁₀₀ % Pure · "It floats"





DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



VOLUME XLI

SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1929

NUMBER 2

Sealed Orders

Rogues Build a Merciless Plot Against the Person and Fortune of the Gay Girl from America

By John Goodwin



She stood still, staring; a dreadful fear at her heart

CHAPTER I

A Fortune Adrift

“**W**HAT do you think of her?” asked Mr. Dan Ricardo.

Mr. Ricardo had settled his big form in a deck chair within sight, but well out of hearing of the lady to whom he directed his companion's attention. Mr. Wright took a careful look before replying. The two men were snugly sheltered from the weather, behind the ventilators on the

upper deck, and the weather was wild, for the Armentic was surging through a heavy beam sea.

Felicia Drew was leaning somewhat dangerously with her back against the outer rails, her feet perched on the lowest and her hands outstretched and resting on the top. Her supple body swayed to the long roll of the ship. She seemed to be enjoying the weather and the wind.

Felicia was worth inspection. She was tall and slim, but certainly not

stately. Her hair was bronze red, her eyes cornflower blue, with a slightly wicked gleam between half closed lids. She had a determined chin, and a shapely nose above a delicious but very willful mouth. The dash of salt spray that wetted her face made its vivid coloring, if anything, more vivid. She wore a silk oilskin half open over a neat but rather cheap brown costume.

Mr. Wright, a man of quick decisions, judged, after his inspection, that there was a craving in Felicia for adventure, and that what she liked best in the world was having her own way.

"So far as looks go, I would put her pretty near the top, Dan," said Mr. Wright. "Prosperous, would you say?"

"At present she hasn't as much as would pay for the clothes she is wearing," replied Ricardo. "But her case is an interesting one. Ever heard of the notorious Miss Honoria Drew?"

"Only that she is rolling in it."

"Was," corrected Mr. Dan Ricardo. "The late Honoria Drew, with whose ideals, I am afraid, you would have little sympathy, departed this life early last year, still leaving trouble behind her. The little lady yonder is due in four months' time to inherit a cold ten million dollars left her by will—provided," added Mr. Ricardo with a chuckle, "that in the meantime she has conducted herself as a perfect little lady should."

"Ah!" said Mr. Wright with interest. "How's that, Dan?"

"I will pack it tight for you," said Ricardo, "only mentioning that Felicia is not yet aware of the details herself; she will learn all about them from the trustees whom she will meet in town some twenty-four hours from now, and from that date the conditions will take effect.

"The late Honoria Drew, one of the wealthiest women of her time, a most formidable lady and a noted temperance reformer, Puritan, and all-round militant of an uncompromising kind,

bequeathed four-fifths of her wealth to those societies which uphold the cause she had at heart. She made only one personal bequest, which is provided for in a remarkable but perfectly-legal will in her niece's favor. Felicia is to inherit, on her twenty-fifth birthday, the legacy held in trust for her—on conditions strictly laid down." Mr. Ricardo paused, and ticked them off on his large white fingers. "That in the meantime she has not:

- "1. Married.
- "2. Borrowed money, or in any way attempted to anticipate her inheritance.
- "3. Been convicted of any felony under the Common Law of England.
- "4. Transgressed the Prohibition Laws of the United States of America.

"Meanwhile, her income paid by the trustees is not to exceed four pounds a week—twenty dollars. Those, my dear Bender, are the provisions on which depend the legacy of two millions sterling."

Mr. "Bender" Wright listened with growing interest. Into his eyes came a thoughtful gleam. He was—or, rather had been, a lawyer, until the day when unsympathetic authority erased his name from the lists.

"She was no fool, that woman," he remarked. "Under either American or British law, if the will's properly drawn, as of course it is, those conditions are sound and would be upheld in the event of a claim. Well—what happens if she breaks them?"

"Then," said Ricardo, "she doesn't get a penny, and the entire bank roll goes to her cousin, our little friend and business asset, Sinclair Brewster."

Mr. Wright gave an almost inaudible whistle of astonishment. A white light dawned upon him. He wondered why Dan had kept this vital and illuminating piece of knowledge to himself during the voyage from New York.

"Sinclair?" he murmured. "whom you've got tied up so tight that he

daren't even stretch himself without sitting up to beg leave; Sinclair, who would be stitching mail bags at Portland if it were not for your kindly forbearance, Dan!"

"Exactly," replied Mr. Ricardo.

Bender reflected.

"Then I take it," said he, "that we need to see that the little lady does break those conditions beyond repair; that she fails to behave herself, and, with anything like efficient management, four months from now ought to see us cutting up the dividends fifty-fifty with that young waster, Sinclair?"

Mr. Ricardo looked at his companion admiringly, almost affectionately.

"You have a quick grasp of business propositions, Bender," he said. "A man doesn't need to spell them out to you."

Bender eyed the girl critically.

"It doesn't look difficult," he said.

"I should say the happy Felicia has devil enough in her for three; she hasn't that mouth and that red hair for nothing. And see the way she's balancing herself against the rail."

Dan Ricardo nodded.

"You have sized her up pretty accurately, Bender," he said. "And here is a young friend of hers coming along. He may be worth a little attention. Watch him."

Approaching along the upper deck was a slim but active figure, well over six feet high, in a nautical uniform. This young man—he did not look more than twenty-four, but was probably some years older—certainly was amazingly good-looking, though on the dark side. His features would have been almost perfect but for rather too much chin—an aggressive, fighting chin—and the vivacity of his black eyes. His eyebrows were black and his short hair jet black, his complexion a clear tan. Mr. Anthony Kirkpatrick, third officer of the Armentic, treading the deck with a decisive step, halted suddenly in front of Felicia.

"Black and red," chuckled Mr. Ricardo appreciatively. "A good combination—the colors of Beelzebub."

"Shouldn't perch on the rail that way, Miss Drew," said Kirkpatrick.

The provocative little smile vanished from Felicia's face and her eyes flashed. She had rather liked Kirkpatrick. But his tone now seemed to her decidedly bossy and dictatorial. She was a first-class passenger, not a deck hand. She cocked her chin at him.

"Why?" she asked.

"Dangerous, with this sea running," said Mr. Kirkpatrick in a tone that suggested it was a thing any fool might have known.

Felicia deliberately hoisted herself on the top of the rail, more perilously still.

"Run away, little sailor boy," she said loftily. "Don't let me keep you from your duties—if you have any."

It was Kirkpatrick's turn to flush. His tan crimsoned; it was evident he had a quick-fire temper.

"It's an officer's duty," he rapped out, "to see that passengers don't give us the trouble of stopping the ship to pick them up—"

"It's an officer's duty," retorted Felicia, "to keep the ship clean and not to annoy passengers who prefer to choose their own acquaintances. I—oh!"

The Armentic, as if in protest, gave a lunging weather roll that overbalanced Felicia and all but shot her on to the deck. Instead, she found herself swinging in the arms of Mr. Kirkpatrick.

He did not seem to enjoy it. He set her down on her feet with a thump, her hat askew and her hair disordered.

"How dare you touch me!" cried Felicia hotly.

"I hadn't the slightest desire to touch you, madam!" said Kirkpatrick through his teeth, and, turning on his heel, strode away. As he turned his back Felicia, restraining a most unlady-

like impulse to put out her tongue at him, climbed back upon the rail and sat there, laughing.

Mr. Dan Ricardo and Mr. Bender Wright were laughing, too, but decorously, behind the shelter of the ventilators. As the fuming Kirkpatrick stalked past, he ran into the stout purser, who had arrived in time to witness the latter part of the encounter, and who at once buttonholed the third officer.

"Kirkpatrick, my boy," said the purser genially, but rather fussily, "let me give you a friendly word of warning. I can see trouble coming your way."

The young officer detached his coat lapel with a jerk, but the purser seized it again.

"I've made fifty voyages on the Armentic to your one, my lad, and, let me tell you, the old man is absolutely death on any of his officers sparking the lady passengers; it breaks every written and unwritten regulation of the ship. He's on the bridge now, and let's hope he didn't see that little show. You're none too popular with him already."

Anthony boiled over.

"Will you mind your own business, purser! Or if that's too much of a strain on your system, stick your fat head into the steward's washing bag and put it through the wringer, but don't give me hints about popularity!"

He swung away to the companion ladder, leaving the purser gasping with indignation.

"Well, well, well," chuckled Mr. Dan Ricardo, "everybody seems darned quarrelsome this morning. Bender, you've seen a small sample of Miss Drew's style. She has already started trouble enough to wreck the ship; but that's nothing to what she can do when she extends herself." The grin left Mr. Ricardo's face; he became serious, and, leaning toward his companion, lowered his voice.

"Bender, I want you to get this accurately. Till now I've said nothing

about this girl and her money, because it wasn't desirable that it should be known till the end of the voyage. Sinclair is not wise to it. All I've told him is that he was to keep out of my way as long as we are on the Armentic. For I don't wish the girl to know, anyway for the present, that Sinclair and I have anything to do with each other."

"Naturally," said Bender.

"I wasn't aware until we sailed that Felicia Drew was crossing by this ship," added Dan. "Though I've got things good and ready, it would have suited me better if I could have come across a week ahead of her. Finding her on board, I instructed Sinclair to make himself civil to his cousin, but nothing more, and I would put him on to the biggest win of a lifetime when we made Southampton. You know Sinclair could never be trusted to handle any kind of a coup himself. Nothing could be more fatal."

"Just so. Very sound."

"But," concluded Ricardo, his eyes narrowing. "I'm not so dead sure Sinclair doesn't know a little more than he assumes to. I doubt if he would do anything so suicidal as to try and double cross me—but I saw something last night that made me a little uneasy. And here he is coming up the stairway now. There's only another hour or two before we dock, and he wants watching. That will be up to you."

Bender smiled dryly.

"Trust me," he said. "I know how to handle Sinclair."

CHAPTER II

The Iron Hand

SINCLAIR BREWSTER stepped on to the upper deck, observed Felicia at the far end, hesitated, and drew back out of sight. He leaned his back against the superstructure and lounged there for a minute in deep thought, attempting to come to a deci-

sion, his lower lip drooping. It was not the kind of lip whose owner makes decisions and sticks to them.

Mr. Brewster was a young man of rather unprepossessing appearance. There was a good deal of him, but his build was somewhat loose, his muscles were slack, and he had an insufficiency of chin. His face was weak and showed signs of dissipation, his eyes were blue but protuberant, and would have looked better if they had not been set quite so closely together.

He appeared to be quite sober; though he had spent the morning according to custom at the smoking room bar, he was not noticeably the worse for it, for Mr. Sinclair Brewster had a high co-efficient of absorption. But this sort of thing did not make for clear thinking, and, drawing a well-thumbed letter from his pocket, he read it for the twentieth time during the voyage, and frowned with perplexity.

DEAR SINCLAIR:

Re your inquiry. As far as I can gather, you don't stand any chance under Honoria Drew's will. Your cousin, Felicia, gets most of it, under conditions, on her twenty-second birthday. That seems the only thing certain at present.

Sorry it's no go. But I don't suppose you expected much from Honoria Drew anyway. If you did they ought to elect you president of the Band of Hope.

Yours,

J. B.

Sinclair stuffed the letter into his breast pocket, and swore.

He had hoped, but never seriously expected anything from such a gorgon as Honoria Drew. He wished he had cultivated her a little more. But it had seemed safer to keep out of her way. She knew very little about him; she had only three relatives in the world, of whom he was the most distant. And the more distant he could keep her the better Sinclair was pleased. Contiguity would certainly spoil any chance he might have. And now, the worst was known.

It was a devastating thought that his cousin Felicia, at present a pauper, should come into such a legacy as this. It might run into millions. And he was a poor man. Sinclair regarded himself as poor. Nominally he had a safe income of two thousand pounds a year. Actually, a thousand of it had to be paid annually to Mr. Daniel Ricardo, who never took more and never accepted less. And there was no way out of this. To increase his own bank roll, and to be freed from Dan Ricardo was his chief ambition. But he was naturally timorous. He liked certainties.

Sinclair swore again, and then groaned. The letter was most unsatisfactory. It was indefinite; there was no certainty about it. Yet if he waited till he reached London and verified it, the opportunity might vanish forever. Clearly, Felicia as yet knew little or nothing of the legacy, for he had already pumped her tactfully about Aunt Honoria, without effect. If she had known she would not have been able to keep the knowledge to herself; that was not her way.

Dan Ricardo probably knew something; but how much? He had not confided in Sinclair, but had instructed him to make himself reasonably civil to Felicia on the voyage, but on no account to go beyond that. Well, Sinclair had made himself reasonably civil—and a good deal more. He had, he told himself, gone out of his way to make the best of impressions, and he was, beyond doubt, a most fascinating fellow when he chose to take the trouble; he had proved that to his own satisfaction on a good many occasions.

Marriage, of course, was a gruesome sort of business; it tied a man down so—at any rate in theory. But marriage to a million or so in cold cash was the sort of sacrifice that only a lunatic would fail to jump at, even if it involved a partnership with the dull-est and most tiresome woman. And Felicia was far from that. She was

extraordinarily attractive. Her prettiness and piquancy, that figure of hers—she was exactly his sort. True, she had the devil's own temper when she was roused, but if it came to rough stuff he could beat her at that every time. And she would think it uncommonly generous of him to offer himself and two thousand a year, when she had not a penny. It *was* generous.

The five whisky and seltzers that Sinclair had absorbed in the smoking room had melted him to a state of almost tearful sentimentality—tears came to him very easily at a certain stage. He suddenly made up his mind and started off in the direction of Felicia, wiping his eyes hurriedly with a primrose-colored handkerchief that matched his tie.

As Sinclair pulled the handkerchief from his breast pocket, the crumpled letter came out with it, unnoticed, and took wings to itself. The wind whirled it aft along the deck like an autumn leaf and pinned it fluttering against the wall of the upper deck saloon.

In another moment the letter would have been away into the foam of the ship's wake, if the hand of the watchful Mr. Bender Wright had not retrieved it neatly, just in time. Mr. Wright was a man who seldom let anything get by him.

Fate was certainly on Sinclair's side, for Felicia had left her windy perch on the rail, and he found her in a snug retreat between two deck houses, where there was just room for a pair of chairs. Felicia lay back in one of them, peacefully reading. Into this little paradise came Sinclair, like the serpent of old, and halted in front of her.

"Felicia!" he said tenderly.

Felicia laid down her book.

"Hello, Sinclair! 'Journey's end in lovers' meetings, every wise man's son doth know.' It's on the page here. Just got it by heart. What do you think of it?"

This was encouraging. Sinclair

subsided gracefully but a trifle unsteady into the other deck chair, and leaned toward her.

"Just what I was thinking," he murmured. "For I am a wise man's son."

"Pity you don't take after your dad. But if it's yourself you're thinking of, we're due to part at Southampton."

"I know," said Sinclair sadly. "That's why I'm feeling so rotten."

Felicia looked at him in surprise. She was not particularly pleased to see Sinclair; it was two years since they had met, and he had been rather a nuisance on the voyage, though she had shrunk from telling him so. She had a pretty accurate opinion of Sinclair, but she kept it to herself. Felicia was a girl of generous impulses, and she was sorry for him. After all, they were cousins. It seemed to her there was something pathetic about Sinclair. And Sinclair had decided that pathos was his strongest card.

"The reason you're feeling rotten," said Felicia, without severity, but as one stating a fact, "is the number of mixed drinks you collected yesterday, and the series you've probably had this morning in the smoking room. It's a weak kind of occupation. Why don't you cut it out?"

"So I will. It's only that no one seems to care what I do, and I'd got to not caring myself, somehow. Felicia, I know mine's an aimless sort of life—I've two thousand a year, and I'm twenty-five—and—and what am I? If only anybody cared—I want to *make* something of my life, Felicia."

"Bright scheme. Why not start now?"

Sinclair leaned forward and possessed himself of both her hands.

"Will you help me?" he said with a quiver in his voice. "What it all comes to is just this—I love you, Felicia; there isn't anything or any one else on earth I care for, and if you care for me enough to marry me,

there's nothing I won't do to make you happy."

Felicia was too amazed to reply; she was unable even to withdraw her hands from his, so distressed was she. She had not expected anything like this. She was sure it wasn't her fault.

A tear trickled down the side of Sinclair's nose. He could produce tears easily.

"Dearest in the world," he murmured, pressing her hand, "if you're sorry for me, that's something. You do care, don't you? When a man's as down and unhappy as I am it's only an angel who—what the devil—!"

Sinclair started as if he had been shot, for the figure of Mr. Wright, suddenly appearing at the entrance of the recess, loomed over them both.

"Ah—sorry," murmured Mr. Wright. But he did not move. Felicia was the only one who moved. While the two men were staring at each other she slipped quietly and unobtrusively away through the opposite exit, glad to escape. She had found Sinclair embarrassing.

Sinclair turned upon the intruder wrathfully. But Bender took him by the arm with a grip that felt like the bite of a horse.

"You crooked little skunk!" said Bender between his teeth. "Stacking the deck, are you? You're wanted! Dan wants you."

"Eh!"

"Dan's waiting for you in the cabin," said Bender grimly.

The stiffening went out of Sinclair. He looked seriously frightened.

"I suppose I'd better go," he said feebly.

CHAPTER III

Dan Dictates Terms

SINCLAIR was ushered into Ricardo's luxurious little private cabin on the main deck. The window ports on both sides were closed. Mr. Ricardo was standing erect in the

middle of the room, his hands clasped behind him.

"Shut the door, Bender," he said quietly. Then he turned his eyes upon Sinclair with a steely-gray glare that made the younger man shrink.

"So I need to show you who is boss, Sinclair?" he said icily.

Usually Mr. Ricardo's manner to Sinclair was bland and even friendly: the iron hand, perhaps, but well swathed in the velvet glove. Now the velvet was gone, and nothing but the iron remained. His normally benevolent face was positively devilish, in fact he looked about as benevolent as a cobra. His eyes bored into Sinclair and set the culprit's nerves jangling.

"You have ignored my instructions," said Ricardo, "and thought you could sidetrack me by offering your useless little self to Felicia Drew."

"Well, but why not, Dan?" pleaded Sinclair. "I never thought of sidetracking you. I—" He stopped short in blank consternation. "Great Godfrey! There's no mistake about the money, is there? Have I been making a fool of myself?"

"You have made a monumental fool of yourself, as was only to be expected. Or rather you would have if Bender hadn't been watching you," replied Mr. Ricardo grimly.

"Well, I didn't know. You never told me a word about it, Dan," protested Sinclair.

Mr. Ricardo inspected him in silence. Then the look of ferocity faded from Dan's face like vapor from a steel blade; he became suave and almost genial again.

"That's so," he said quietly. "The time wasn't ripe for telling you; you were safer knowing nothing. And I guess you were not fool enough to think you could side-step me. Sit down there, Sinclair, we may as well put you next the facts."

Sinclair seated himself, greatly relieved, and Ricardo explained to him

succinctly the terms of the Drew will and the conditions under which Felicia qualified for the inheritance. Sinclair's excitement became almost painful.

"Two millions!" he said blankly.

"And free of death duty."

"But, Dan," pleaded Sinclair, "I don't see where I was wrong! Suppose it came off? If I marry Felicia, she loses under the terms. The whole lot comes to me. How can you beat that?"

"You poor fish," said Dan contemptuously, "you haven't seen the will. There's a further clause by which, if you marry your cousin, you *both* lose. Neither of you can then inherit.

"Your late Aunt Honoria Drew was no fool," added Dan. "Likely she foresaw the chance of some such situation as this. She put that in for the protection of her niece. Or she may have had some objection to cousins marrying. That's the only condition that binds *you*. My own opinion is that she never reckoned on your getting a cent anyway, though maybe she didn't care to leave you out altogether. But I should say she had a down on you. She expected Felicia would fulfill the provisions of the will, which, though strict, are not difficult, and inherit in due course—after which she will be her own mistress."

Sinclair groaned aloud.

"That's what she'll do," he said. "The whole thing has been fixed up so that my chance amounts to just nothing."

"Exactly. It looks that way to you, doesn't it?" said Mr. Ricardo dryly. "Now answer me one question, Sinclair. Does the skilly which occupies the space in your skull where other men keep their brains, suggest any way out of this? In other words, do you imagine that you could oblige Felicia Drew to break any or all of those conditions that bind her—felony, the prohibition laws, or the others—within three months, and steer those two millions into your own hands?"

Sinclair reflected.

"No," he said humbly. "I'm dashed sure I couldn't bring that off. Not to make a success of it. The difficulties would be awful, and the risk—"

"Yes. It's not a job where there's any room for bungling," said Mr. Ricardo dryly. "Very well. I guarantee that I will put that proposition through, well within the time limit. Have you ever known me fail to fulfill a contract, Sinclair?"

"No. Sometimes I've wished you did. You certainly deliver the goods. Great Moses! Do you mean to tell me you can—"

"Wait," said Dan, "it hasn't escaped your memory, Sinclair, that I hold forged bills of exchange of yours which, but for my tact and forbearance, would land you in a penal establishment for at least five years?"

"I'm not likely to forget it," said Sinclair gloomily, "considering you bleed me of a thousand a year for what was, after all, only a little mistake."

"We all have to pay for our little mistakes," rejoined Mr. Ricardo blandly, "for a young man of your capacity to make an excursion into forgery, or, indeed, any crime requiring intelligence, was rash—extremely rash. Always remember that I've got you set. I fixed your annuity to me very reasonably at one thousand. Any one else in my place would have bled you, as you rather coarsely put it, till you were whiter than veal."

"Yes. I suppose because you got the tip that the calf was going to get a lot fatter presently and would be worth keeping in the killing pen," said Sinclair with a flash of inspiration.

"Come, come!" smiled Mr. Ricardo, gently rubbing his hands together. "Your perceptions are growing; even the densest of us learn by experience; perhaps it is as you say. But let us drop the stockyard metaphor and the question of killing—you at least are not in any danger, Sinclair. Apart

from our affection for you we regard you as a business asset which in four months' time will yield a very handsome dividend. You will receive under the late excellent Honoria Drew's testament the legacy which Felicia will—lose.

"You will leave the engineering of this little coup entirely to me and my associates; you will not even be a figurehead. It is the chance of a lifetime, and I am going to work it my own way."

Sinclair wriggled in his chair with excitement. His eyes bulged.

"If you say you can do it, Dan—"

"I guarantee success. The difficulties are not great; in fact, I have the whole thing neatly laid out already. The preparations have been made this month past."

"What do you want of me?" exclaimed Sinclair. "What do I—"

"The settlement will be very simple," said Mr. Ricardo genially. "Observe my benevolence. I could strip you if I chose. It will be a strict fifty-fifty division between us two; out of my share I shall settle with my colleagues. One should never muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. You yourself will have the privilege of splitting the two millions with me."

"A million each!" said Sinclair dazedly.

"Just that. And when the division is effected," concluded Mr. Ricardo, beaming upon him, "I shall return to you those unlucky documents which you have so happily described as your little mistake. My account with you will be closed; I may even retire from business. With a million I shall be content."

"Content!" murmured Sinclair, regarding him with swimming eyes. "And so will I. There's nothing of the hog about me, Dan."

"No," said Mr. Ricardo, rising; "the hog, after all, is an animal with occasional gleams of acumen, or at least an instinct which guides him

when he is rooting for trifles. And even a hog, Sinclair, however patient, would pine sadly if confined for five years in the same sty. And now, my dear fellow, you may leave us. All you have to do is to sit pretty and avoid full interferences which embarrass the executive; don't let me have to tell you again. That's the way out."

Sinclair left the cabin joyously. Mr. Bender Wright dropped into the chair next his companion, and smiled a sharp-toothed smile.

"This is a big thing, Dan!" he said. "You've got the pipes laid?"

"Sure," said Dan; "all waiting for her. When Felicia hits London she will see the lawyers. Then she will push along to her Uncle Halahan's place. He has a swell flat in Pont Street, Mayfair. Though how he pays for it the devil only knows."

Bender glanced up.

"Halahan? Is that Mark Desmond Halahan—he's her uncle, is he?"

Dan nodded.

"Yes. A queer card, Halahan. A genial old Irish rip. I haven't quite made up my mind about Halahan. But that's no odds. Now I'll put you next the move, Bender."

"Surely the reasonable move is to make a certainty of it and put the girl out, Dan, then Sinclair clicks automatically, so to speak. I am all for the quick way, when the stakes are as big as this."

Mr. Ricardo sighed.

"It is not business," he said; "and you don't see beyond your nose. With so large a fortune at stake, the death of Felicia would be far too convenient, and would at once concentrate the interest of the police and public upon Sinclair. Now Sinclair is not to be trusted for a moment, he has neither wit nor backbone. Once cornered, he would be sure to lose his head, and end by giving away both himself and his friends. A killing is always the worst of policy when no killing is necessary.

"We hope," concluded Mr. Ricardo, with the benign expression that sat so well on him; "we hope that no such extreme measures will be required, and I will give you any odds, Bender, that I will bring home the freight without resorting to any rough stuff."

CHAPTER IV

Quick Work

"ANOTHER," said Sinclair briefly, and the barman pushed it across. It was the fourth of the series.

Sinclair felt that the occasion needed celebrating, and the smoking room bar was the obvious place for it. The world had suddenly become radiant and wonderful. Not only was a solid million coming to him in four months' time, but he would also clear accounts once and for all with Mr. Daniel Ricardo. For as Sinclair knew by experience, that ingenious and dangerous individual, unlike some others of his kidney, could be relied upon to fulfill the letter of his contracts. He exacted an equal fulfillment from the unfortunate people with whom he dealt. To this rule Mr. Ricardo attributed his unvarying success. With the average crook, reflected Sinclair, one never knew where one was. With Dan Ricardo, one knew only too well. Nor did he doubt for a moment Dan's ability to steer this coup to a triumphant issue, though he had not the faintest idea how it could be done. Dan's resources were unfathomable.

So alluring was the prospect of an unexpected million, that he felt no keen resentment even at the price that Dan was exacting; half such a loaf was vastly better than no bread, and after all there was ample for two. What Sinclair did feel, in the midst of his elation, was a shock of dismay at the thought that, through sheer ignorance, he had very nearly wrecked the whole scheme at the very commencement. If Felicia had accepted him—

At this point Sinclair broke into a cold perspiration. Apprehension shook him. Had she accepted him, or not?

Sinclair's faculties at the moment of reflection were not at their brightest, but he had a hazily definite impression that she did. True, the love scene had been interrupted, but he had certainly offered her his heart, hand, and two thousand a year: the girl was not likely to have been such a fool as to refuse. She would have accepted him with nothing for that matter: it was unwise of him to stress the money question.

He was not the first man who had proposed to a girl he did not want; history is full of such tragedies. Here was a terribly awkward situation. It was the sort of thread that was easily cut; but Felicia was an uncertain quantity. She had a queer temperament. And she hadn't a cent. It was quite likely she would want to sue him for breach of promise—girls are so unprincipled—especially if some lawyer in search of a case persuaded her. That might even upset the will, for all he knew, unless he paid a lot of money to hush it up. Worst of all, there would be another painful row with Dan. She was quite possibly putting it all over the ship that they were engaged. And he did not even know whether he was engaged or not.

This uncertainty was dreadful. He felt that he must clear it up at once, at any cost. Action, and tact, would save him. He was strong on tact. He left the smoking room and set out in pursuit.

The strong air blowing along the upper deck bemused him still further. But his luck held. Just beyond the domed roof of the smoking room was a small deck usually reserved for games, but in this weather deserted. And here he found the object of his search.

"F'licia!" he said, and stopped, tongue-tied.

Felicia had been hoping she would

see no more of Sinclair. She wished she had gone below. But here he was, and he waited for her to begin, knowing that it is safest to let the other party do the talking. She did not begin, however. Sinclair smiled at her weakly. He strove to arrange his thoughts.

"Er—about what we were talking about—" he said.

"Well, what about what we were talking about?"

Sinclair blinked. This did not seem to him to make sense. Still, it did not sound dangerous. He smiled again.

"Er—we're very young, F'licia," he murmured.

"We're getting older all the time."

"Thought you might like to think it over. Bit sudden. I mean—there's no hurry."

Felicia looked at him in amazement. One large, black fact was plain. Sinclair was trying to back out of it. A gleam of violet fire shone in her eyes.

"Why should I think it over, Sinclair?" she said softly.

Sinclair stared at her more owlishly than ever. She was extraordinarily pretty and seductive. It was rather a pity she was not included with the two millions. Then a hazy thought struck him. If anything went wrong with Dan's plan, she would get them, and he would be left in the cart. It might be safer to hedge.

"F'licia, I thought perhaps you might feel that in four or five months—say six months—"

"I see," said Felicia meekly. And she did see. She saw with crystal clearness. "You think it might be better for me to wait six months?"

"Well, four, anyhow," he said, much relieved to find her so reasonable. "You see, F'licia—"

"But, Sinclair, I won't wait."

Sinclair frowned. If the girl was trying to hustle him, the sooner she learned her mistake the better. It suddenly struck him that she was looking very queer indeed.

"Do you want to know why I won't wait?" said Felicia evenly. "It's not only because I've no use for a man who drinks too much, or even an unpleasant boy, who is stupid and vicious—for that's really all you are. And it's not that I am at all insulted because you are trying to cancel your offer for some reason of your own, and doing it very clumsily. The insult was your suggestion that I might marry you, though I didn't tell you so at the time because I felt a little sorry for you. But I have got over that. I will tell you exactly what I think of you, in the hope that it may do you good."

And she did. She gave Sinclair her opinion of him in terms that would have startled her Aunt Honoria. Sinclair had never heard himself described so accurately, even by Dan Ricardo. But he was not the sort of man to accept this sort of thing from a woman. He grew red to the ears and stared at her, his eyes bulging with fury.

"You pink-faced, goggling rabbit!" concluded Felicia. "Will you understand that I've no intention of marrying anybody, but if I did I should choose a man? Now go away, and never dare to speak to me again."

She certainly looked magnificent when she was angry. Some girls do. He came a step nearer. Sinclair, like many weak men, had a sharp streak of cruelty in him. He looked at her and laughed unpleasantly.

"So that's all right. Now we know where we stand. You don't want to marry me, F'licia? And you think I'm not a man? I'll show you. Just a kiss by way of a stamp on the bargain. You might change your mind, you know."

He caught her wrists suddenly and pulled her to him with a wrench that made her cry out.

"Let me go, Sinclair!"

It is extremely probable that Sinclair would have got the worst of it, for Felicia was the quicker and more supple of the two. And Sinclair did find

himself getting the worst of it with extreme speed, though how it happened he had only the vaguest idea.

He found himself yanked bodily backward by a tall young man in a dark blue uniform, spun round, and shaken till the teeth rattled in his head. Sinclair yelped, kicked and struck out wildly, his knuckles getting home on somebody's chin. And Anthony Kirkpatrick, who was already seething with indignation, took a fresh grip of Sinclair's collar and propelled him past the ventilators and toward the starboard side, just as the Armentic gave a long beam-sea roll in the same direction.

The slope of the deck made no difference to Kirkpatrick, who had perfect sea-legs and was master of the situation however much the ship might roll, though it did accelerate his pace somewhat. But to the astonished eyes of Mr. Dan Ricardo, who was strolling along the deck and saw the pair suddenly shoot past, it looked as though some violent lunatic was in the very act of trying to heave Dan's chief business asset, worth a cold two millions, over the rail and into the sea. He rushed forward with a cry of alarm and wrath.

"What are you doing, you fool? Hi—Bender!"

Bender, always a man of action, was, if anything, the quicker of the two, though they both sprang upon Kirkpatrick almost simultaneously in an effort to wrench him from his prey. It seemed no time for half measures.

Kirkpatrick found himself half throttled by Bender's grip on his collar, just as Dan bumped into him from the other side. But neither of the partners quite realized what they were up against. Sinclair collapsed to leeward as Anthony flung him away and brought his right fist up under Bender's chin with a shock that lifted that gentleman from his feet. Spinning round he tore his coat-lapel free from the clutching hand of Dan and hit him in almost exactly the same place that he had hit Bender, only not quite so hard.

"Honk!" said Mr. Ricardo, staggering back and coming forward again in practically one movement, full of fight and fury. His blood was up. But Anthony's blood had been up for some time, and was now at boiling heat. The whole affair was over in a matter of seconds, including the intervention of the scandalized purser, who witnessed the dreadful spectacle of a ship's officer fighting with first-class passengers and strewing the deck with them.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" cried the purser, springing between the pair.

It is always perilous to interfere rashly in a fight. If the combatants are dogs the peace-maker is apt to get bitten, and if they are men he is almost certain to be punched. The purser was just in time to intercept a left swing intended for Dan, which hit him on the upper half of his abundant waistcoat. He doubled up and sat down ungracefully on the deck, while Anthony, blocking a right hook from Dan, countered with a left-hander that caused Mr. Ricardo to trip over the purser and hit the planking with the back of his head.

At the same moment the Armentic, as if to make a thorough job of it, gave a long leeward roll that canted all four casualties down against the rails in a heap, Mr. Ricardo uppermost, the purser and Bender next, and Sinclair, bleating like a sheep, underneath. It was Sinclair's usual position in emergencies physical or spiritual, to be underneath.

Anthony was the only combatant left standing. And to him came Captain Holt, master of the Armentic, striding along the deck, a tremendous presence.

"What the devil is this, Mr. Kirkpatrick?"

Anthony said nothing. The fallen passengers were already sorting themselves out, and Sinclair scrambled to his feet.

"That ruffian was mauling the life out of me!" he gasped. "If you hadn't come—"

"He'd have been over the rail in another minute," groaned Ricardo, holding his head between his hands.

"New idea, making liner officers of thugs," said Mr. Wright thickly, for his jaw was nearly dislocated. Captain Holt, disregarding them all, turned to the purser, but that official was clasping his waistcoat and wheezing faintly, incapable of speech.

"What have you to say, Mr. Kirkpatrick?"

Anthony looked round him and saw Felicia with a horrified face coming forward from behind the ventilators. His teeth clicked together.

"Nothing, sir!"

"You are under close arrest," said the captain grimly. "Get to your room!"

Anthony saluted and marched to the companionway without replying.

CHAPTER V

The Message

FELICIA walked straight up to the captain, her eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Mr. Kirkpatrick wasn't to blame at all!" she said. "He was only defending himself."

"Why," spluttered Sinclair, "he—"

"You little beast, Sinclair," she said, stamping her foot, "he did nothing but give you a shaking and you deserved it—"

"Darned nearly shook him into the sea," interrupted Mr. Ricardo. "I believe my head's split. I want you to understand, captain, that as far as I'm concerned—"

"Stop, sir. One at a time. Madam, I will hear what you have to say presently," said the captain briefly. "I shall be glad to see all who are here in my cabin—separately. You first, Mr. Simmons."

"Yes, sir," wheezed the purser, and followed Captain Holt to his cabin on the bridge deck.

Anthony Kirkpatrick, striding

through the alleyway to his room with a face like thunder, ran into the fourth officer, Tom Shaw, a cheerful young man with an observant eye.

"Hello, Tony! What's the trouble?"

"Close arrest," snapped Anthony.

"Arrest! What on earth for?"

"For kicking a cad, and beating up a couple of crooks," said Anthony without halting.

"Crooks! Why, what—"

"If they're not crooks, I never saw any on a boat before. From what I happened to overhear 'em discussing the other night"—Kirkpatrick broke off suddenly—"Here, quit! I'm not supposed to be talking to you; I'm under arrest. Expect I've smashed my slate this time."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"No!"

"Well, the old man's a holy terror," said Shaw, "and," he added, "if you ever get a ship of your own, Tony, you'll be a holier terror than the old man. There's no holding you."

Anthony strode into his room and slammed the door. He saw the hope of a ship of his own vanishing in smoke.

Felicia was finding things much more difficult than she expected. The whole business annoyed her. At any other time she might have seen the humorous side of it. She felt she must do whatever she could for Anthony. But Captain Holt was a formidable figure, with his mahogany face and penetrating eye. He was courteous enough, but he looked about as genial as a rat-trap.

"I don't gather, Miss Drew, what your complaint against Mr. Brewster is," he said briefly.

"I'm not making *any* complaint against Mr. Brewster," replied Felicia with some exasperation. "What I want to do is to excuse Mr. Kirkpatrick. Do please understand, captain, that it's merely because I don't want him to get into any trouble on

my account, and that's the only reason I'm here. If you want it plainly, Mr. Brewster tried to kiss me, and was rather rough and insistent about it. Mr. Kirkpatrick interfered."

Captain Holt looked at the girl curiously. She was amazingly pretty, she certainly had charm, but she was as direct as a bayonet.

"Were you in any sort of danger?" he said. "Were you afraid of Mr. Brewster?"

This was more than Felicia could stand. She had been quite ready to sacrifice Sinclair on Kirkpatrick's account, for he deserved it, and the young officer was in a tight place.

"Afraid of Sinclair!" she exclaimed. "In another moment he'd have got a box on the ear that would have made his head sing for weeks!"

"Will you tell me in what relationship you stand to Mr. Brewster? Is he a friend of yours?"

"He is my cousin. And he's a nuisance."

"There was no urgent reason then for Mr. Kirkpatrick to interfere?" said the captain. "You did not request him to?"

Felicia had an uncomfortable feeling that she was making things worse. She had meant well.

"Well, I think it's what any decent man would have done, as things were. I—I'm sure Mr. Kirkpatrick was justified. Those other two men got quite a wrong idea about it, and they were rough. I do hope, captain, that you won't be hard on him. If it becomes necessary I'd like to repeat my version of what happened."

"It's an awkward business, madam, and as no blame attaches to you I shall probably prefer to keep your name out of it," said the captain shortly, and closed the interview by opening the door for her. No monarch or president is so supreme as the master of a ship.

Felicia Drew went out feeling as though she were twelve years old.

When she had gone he recalled the purser.

"Facts are clear enough, Mr. Simmons. But there's more in this than meets the eye. That girl Miss Drew, though it's not generally known, is an heiress. She will come into a great deal of money next year."

"I know that, sir," said the purser.

"You generally know all that's to be known about the passengers. Pretty clear Kirkpatrick's aware of it, too." The captain paused. "Know anything against that big fellow—Mr. Ricardo?"

The purser shook his head.

"No, sir. Wealthy man. Said to have wide business interests. Often traveled with us. Books one of the best cabins on the upper deck every time. Bad business—but I hope you won't be too rough on Mr. Kirkpatrick, sir," added the purser, who was a good fellow, though all his finest feelings were outraged. "Accident, in a way—and that punch wasn't meant for me."

The captain's mahogany face was as grim as an Easter Island idol.

"I saw Mr. Kirkpatrick fooling with the girl this morning. And as for that disgraceful fracas just now, which I witnessed myself, I don't expect my officers to behave like the mate of a tramp. That will do for the present, purser."

Mr. Simmons left the dread presence, and was almost immediately waylaid by Felicia, who questioned him anxiously.

"I said all I could for him," said the purser with gloom. "Very decent young fellow, Mr. Kirkpatrick—in his way. Gentleman, too, when he isn't roughed up. But I'm afraid his number's up, on this ship. Couldn't expect anything else."

Felicia felt stunned. She had had no idea it was as bad as this. In real distress she retired to her cabin to think it over. Looking into the mirror, she was amazed to find that a tear was pearly its way down her cheek. She

abolished it quickly with a little frilled handkerchief.

She had no interest in Kirkpatrick. He had been rather dictatorial to her, and annoyed her intensely. And her difference with Sinclair was no business of his. But he had really been wonderful, the way he dealt with those four men at once. Like Achilles single-handed, strewing the plain of Ilium with Trojan bodies. He ought not to have done it, but in that moment he had been superb; and now he was down and out, awaiting sentence. And all on her account. She felt personally responsible for the disaster.

There seemed to be nothing she could do. But in another minute Felicia came to a decision.

She sought out the fourth officer, Mr. Shaw, who assured her he had heard all about the case. He looked at Felicia admiringly.

"But will Mr. Kirkpatrick lose his berth?" exclaimed Felicia. "The purser seemed to think he will."

"Oh, no," said the young man cheerfully, "I shouldn't think it's as bad as that. The old purser's a pessimist. There'll be an inquiry after the ship's docked and the passengers cleared. The skipper's a bit of a Hun, but Kirkpatrick should get off with a wiggling."

Felicia felt immensely relieved. But she was not satisfied. She had to make sure. She asked if it was possible for any one to see Kirkpatrick. Mr. Shaw shook his head.

"No. Close arrest, you know. Strict as a strait-jacket. Serious business. Only make things worse."

"Can you tell me where Mr. Kirkpatrick's cabin is?"

The young officer described its position. Felicia thanked him and departed, after asking him to say nothing about her inquiry. She was anxious not to bring Mr. Shaw into it; she did not want to raise any more trouble. There was plenty already. ■

Felicia went to the writing room, took a sheet of the Armentic's note-

paper and put at the head of it the London address which she expected to reach.

DEAR MR. KIRKPATRICK:

I am so sorry about this unlucky affair. I want to testify on your behalf. If there is anything I can do to help, do please send a note by a servant you can trust, and give me instructions. It is distressing me very much.

Yours sincerely,

FELICIA DREW.

She closed the note carefully, and made her way down to a lower deck alleyway on the starboard side. Luckily the coast was clear at that hour. She took as many precautions as a Red Indian to avoid being seen by any of the attendants. The number of Kirkpatrick's room was easily found.

She halted in a lamp room at the end of the corridor till a passing steward was out of the way. Then she hurried forward and slid the letter under the prisoner's door.

Felicia had barely accomplished her errand and turned her back when the head of a stewardess protruded cautiously from a cabin nearly opposite Kirkpatrick's room and watched her out of sight.

As soon as she had gone the stewardess emerged, holding a long-handled buttonhook borrowed from the cabin dressing table. She stooped and raked swiftly under Kirkpatrick's door with the buttonhook. Fortune was on her side; at the first rake she retrieved the note, and darted quickly back into the opposite cabin, in case of untoward developments.

No sound came from Kirkpatrick's room however, and his door did not open. After waiting a few moments the stewardess slipped out and went up to the main deck by the side companionway. She was a silent mover, even for a stewardess; a good-looking young woman. She tapped at the door of Mr. Dan Ricardo's private cabin and entered.

Mr. Ricardo, his eye somewhat

swollen, was soothing himself with a cigar, in conference with Mr. Wright.

"Come in, Maggie," he said. "Close the door, girl." He swung to the port just over his head and drew the curtain. "Anything fresh?"

The stewardess handed him the letter.

"Girl's been asking half the ship what's coming to that boy Tony. Fallen for him, I guess. Anyway I kept an eye along his way the same as you said. She sneaked down and shot this note under his door. Don't think he was on to it—anyway there it is."

"Good girl. Wait there a minute," said Dan. Followed by Mr. Wright, he passed into his sleeping compartment, turned on the hot water tap, warmed the blade of a penknife, deftly ungummed the envelope and opened the note. Mr. Wright read it over his shoulder.

"Couldn't be better. Let it march!" said Dan, grinning. "Never neglect these chances, Bender; they pan out as rich as any." He produced a fountain pen, carefully inscribed six crosses under Felicia's signature, and gummed up the note again.

"That's ten bucks more to you," he said to the bearer, whom he found inspecting some documents on his desk. "You've done better for me this voyage than you did last time. Now get away from that desk, my girl. I didn't get you this ship job to have you practising your spiels on me. Maggie, are you dead sure there's nothing in Miss Drew's cabin that I don't know about?"

"Sure," said the stewardess indifferently. "Only that letter I showed you and the cablegram signed Halahan—that's all the papers. I went through her baggage agen's morning while she was on the upper deck. But I'll tell you what she has got—one o' them little automatic pistols. It's in the bottom of her hand bag."

"Pistol!" exclaimed Dan. "Do you mean to say she—"

"Funny sort of thing for a swell jane like her to own, isn't it? Maybe she's lived in a country where a girl might as well pack one of those as not, if she has to go around much at night. But I should say she got the idea from the movies."

"What sort of a pistol is it?" said Bender with interest.

"Well, I don't know. There's 'Colt S. A.' on the barrel. And there's some loose shells in a box in her trunk. I took one of them," added Maggie, tilting into Mr. Wright's outstretched palm a tiny nickel-pointed cartridge.

"Yes, that fits a thirty-three Colt," said Bender. "The girl's a fool to own such a thing."

Mr. Ricardo nodded. His eyes were absent and thoughtful as he took the shell from Bender's palm and slipped it into his vest pocket.

"Sure," he said.

"You didn't want me to bring away the little gun, did you?" asked Maggie. "I could get it for you. Though I don't like meddling with them sort of things."

"Of course I didn't. No, no. Let it be," said Mr. Ricardo. "It's of no importance. But you've done very well, Maggie; you don't miss anything. Just slide along and put this letter back where you found it."

Maggie nodded carelessly and departed. When she had gone, Mr. Ricardo looked at his friend and smiled.

"This job won't take long, Bender," he said. "It's going better than I hoped it would. Owing one of those things without a permit is an offense in this country, but it isn't a felony."

Mr. Wright's eyes shone with quick appreciation.

"No," he said, "but using it is. This thing's right in my line. Just let me fix it up, Dan. We've got her."

Meantime Maggie, passing through the lower alleyway, slid the letter under Anthony Kirkpatrick's door and

left it at that. She was always reliable at carrying out instructions.

CHAPTER VI

Mark Halahan

FELICIA, tapping her shoe fretfully on the carriage floor, watched the county of Hampshire flying past the windows of the London express. She was feeling perplexed and annoyed and rather snubbed.

She had put herself out to no purpose. Mr. Anthony Kirkpatrick had sent no message in answer to her letter offering him help. She had satisfied herself that he could have replied easily enough if he wanted to. But he had kept silence, and ignored her.

Well, she had done all she could. The man would have to put up with the wiggling, or whatever it was, that Mr. Shaw had prophesied for him. She hoped it wouldn't be more serious than that. After all, he had brought it on himself. She did not ask him to interfere between Sinclair and herself, and embroil himself with passengers and strew the deck with them. He was evidently rather a hurricane of a man, and much too masterful and bossy. It was small wonder he got into trouble. And he was not even civil enough to send her an answer.

If he had done so she would have remained behind to see it through—though the captain had told her pretty plainly that it would make no difference if she did—and in spite of this message from London which had been brought to her immediately the Armentic berthed alongside the quay.

She opened it and read it again. She had been expecting something of the kind, though she did not know it was so urgent.

Pelham, Weeks & Pelham,
300 Mecklenburg Square.

Miss Felicia Drew,
S. S. Armentic.

DEAR MADAM:

It is extremely important that we

should confer with you without delay in your interest in the estate of the late Miss Honoria Drew. We hope you will make it convenient to call immediately on arrival.

STUART PELHAM.

What did it mean? If anything, it surely meant money. Yet she felt it difficult to believe that Aunt Honoria had left her anything. Aunt Honoria had never approved of her.

Pelham, Weeks & Pelham would know. They were evidently Honoria Drew's lawyers. But it was not in answer to the summons that she had made this journey to England. It was that astonishing wire from Uncle Mark Halahan, cabling her sixty pounds and bidding her catch the first available boat, that had brought her hurrying across the Atlantic.

She did not even know that Pelham and Weeks wanted her till, passing through New York, she chanced on an advertisement urging Miss Felicia Drew, wherever she might be, to communicate with them. It was not her fault that she had been buried in the wilds for three years.

Felicia leaned back and briefly reviewed in her mind those three years, with a touch of regret. A wonderful time. Moved by the spirit of adventure, she had gone out to America with her elder brother Dick. Dick had died in Kentucky—the first tragedy that had touched her life—and she was alone in the world with a hundred dollars.

A kindly neighbor had got her a post as secretary on a cotton estate in Georgia, and to Georgia she had gone. It was a good enough life, though there was nothing in it but a bare living. She had been too independent to apply to Aunt Honoria, from whom she had parted on doubtful terms, and she had only lately heard of that lady's death. Barely a month ago she had written to Uncle Mark, the only relative for whom she had a real affection, and the resulting cablegram

had startled her. It had explained nothing. It merely called her home with an urgency that there was no mistaking.

Then, the surprise of finding Cousin Sinclair as a shipmate on the *Armenitic*. She had noticed, too, a large stout man called Ricardo, whom she remembered having seen in Georgia, though she had never had any dealings with him, until that volcanic young officer Kirkpatrick used him to wipe the boat deck. In fact there had been a series of mysterious surprises from the day when she threw up her secretaryship and started for England. And here she was, evidently on the threshold of further wonders.

London: A thrill shot from the roots of Felicia's auburn hair down to the soles of her near-silk stockings as the taxi shot down the slope of Waterloo exit and over the Thames into the Strand. A vast, vague, rumbling city, but a world of romance to the traveler.

She had given the driver Uncle Mark's address, from the cablegram. Had she obeyed instructions she would have gone first to Pelham, Weeks & Pelham. But they could wait till she had seen Uncle Mark. But for him, she would not be here at all.

The taxi pulled up in front of a luxurious block of flats in Pont Street, Mayfair. Stepping out, Felicia looked up at the building and was impressed. Uncle Mark was evidently doing himself well. He was passing through one of his recurrent phases of prosperity.

Felicia had her baggage parked in the hall—she knew Uncle Mark, the soul of hospitality, would be hurt if she suggested staying anywhere but with him. And for that matter she had scarcely any money left. As the elevator shot her up to the third floor she reflected that she had lit upon good quarters. But she would willingly have shared a garret with Uncle Mark if necessary.

She pressed the bell beside an

opulent-looking front door, which was opened by a neat maidservant.

"Mr. Halahan in?" asked Felicia, and added, "I am his niece."

For a moment the maid looked at Felicia in silence. She was a capable-looking maid, but her neatness did not extend to her eyes. One of them was fixed piercingly on Felicia, while the other appeared to be more interested in the ceiling. Altogether she was hardly an ornament to the flat, though doubtless her appearance concealed a heart of gold.

"This way, miss," she said, and opened the door of the sitting room. As it closed there was a startled exclamation, almost a shout, and Felicia found herself clasped in Uncle Mark's embrace.

Felicia kissed him with a rush of affection, and laughed through a sparkle of tears as she held him at arm's length with her hands on his shoulders and looked at him. He was good to look upon.

Mark Desmond Halahan was over sixty, but had the eyes of a boy. Fourteen stone of muscle, close-cropped white hair, a broad, handsome face and laughing, devil-may-care mouth. A born adventurer, but popular with everybody. He had some means, but was always skating on the edge of disaster and miraculously recovering.

"What a brick you were to send me that money!" said Felicia.

"I'm ashamed it was so little! But just at the time I couldn't raise any more. And see what you've grown into, girl! You're as pretty as a harebell on the banks of Lough Neagh. Well, let that be—you'll have a great time presently. I'm sorry for you, too."

"For me? Why!"

"I call it a heartless plan to knock all the fun out of a healthy young girl's life," said Uncle Mark.

"I'll defy any one to knock the fun out of my life!" said Felicia. "What's it all about, uncle?"

"Do you mean to say you don't know?" said he, staring at her. "Well, I couldn't explain it all by cable—'twas too expensive at the time. But I thought—"

"This reached me on the ship," she said, and handed him the Pelham letter. He read it, and growled.

"Honorias's lawyers! The devil mend them, for me. They're all on the side of her trustees—a sour, hard crowd. It's after six, their office will be shut. Still, you'd best do as they say, maybe. You could get Pelham at his own house."

"Oh, they can wait till morning—you can tell me all about it, can't you? I can't sleep another night without knowing!"

"Of course I can. I've a copy of the will here," he said, opening a desk. "Pelhams have been advertising for you these four months past. Sit there, Felicia, it's the news of a lifetime I'm giving you!"

Felicia sat more and more upright, and her eyes grew wider and wider, as she heard the terms and value of her heritage. That until the age of twenty-two years was past, marriage, the borrowing of money, the breaking of the law, particularly the Volstead law of the United States, were barred to her under the penalty of losing two millions sterling.

When he had finished she sat dumb, in a whirl of conflicting emotions. Her first comment startled him.

"Sinclair! So that accounts for it!"

"Sinclair Brewster?" surprised.

"Why, what about the little yahoo?"

"Ah, nothing. Never mind!" Felicia sprang up and danced round the room wildly. Then she threw herself on the arm of Halahan's chair and kissed him.

"Uncle, isn't it wonderful! Isn't it glorious! And I've been working like a nigger for four pounds a week. Can you imagine me with two millions!"

"You haven't got it yet," said Halahan. "If—"

He broke off, as a step sounded outside and the door opened.

CHAPTER VII

The Red Light

IT was only the cross-eyed maid, who approached Halahan demurely and gave him an unstamped letter on a tray. Felicia watched her as she went out.

"That's a queer-looking maid of yours, uncle."

"Yes, you wouldn't back her in a beauty contest," said Halahan, opening the note, "but she's quiet, and I like them quiet."

"Have you had her long?"

"About a month." Halahan tossed the note aside. "I'm bound to say I haven't had much luck since she's been here. Couldn't expect it with a pair of eyes like that about the place. She sees as much with them as most people. Cross-eyes are unlucky; still it would be rather heartless to fire her on that account."

"Very," agreed Felicia. "I'd hate to seem uncharitable, but I hope they didn't grow that way by looking through keyholes!"

"Eh! Why?"

"Well, I fancied I heard something rustling at the door just now."

"Oh, nonsense!" laughed Halahan, but he rose as he said it and snapped the door open. The hall was empty.

"I was wrong. I beg Ida's pardon," said Felicia. "Oh, never mind that—what does it matter anyway, there's no secret about this thing! Shut the door; I feel as if I want to rush out into the street and sing. Money! Money! Money! You don't know how I love money. And I've never had any! How long do you say I've got to wait for it?"

"When will you be twenty-two?"

"To-day's the twelfth. Four months from to-morrow! Uncle, what would have happened if I hadn't been found till then?"

"Why, you'd have had to take oath that you've never done any of these forbidden things, and if it could be proved you had, down you'd go. So it was vital you should be warned as soon as possible. You've *not* done any of them, have you?" He stopped short, detecting a shade of doubt in Felicia's eyes. "Merciful powers, girl!" he gasped in consternation. "You're not married?"

"Good heavens, no! Nothing so exciting. And I can't remember any felonies I've committed. I've not borrowed against the legacy, and as for the prohibition laws, drink is one thing that doesn't interest me."

"Honorias was a tartar," said Mark, mixing himself a stiff whisky and soda at the sideboard. "But she was a good woman, though she never left me a cent. She had no use for me."

"You've always been a brick to me," said Felicia warmly. "No one shall say a word against you to me. Nor against Aunt Honorias. She may have been right about this drink business, you know, Marco dear. I don't mean you, of course," she added hastily.

"Of course, not."

She faced him, laughing.

"Uncle, why did you suggest I can't have a good time? There are a host of deadly sins Aunt Honorias has forgotten, that I can commit if I feel like it. And when I'm twenty-two and have the money I can break them all and get away with it. Nobody can say a word to me then!"

Halahan nodded.

"Yes, and by then you probably won't want to. It's the time between, Felicia. It's these coming three months; while those last you've got to be careful! You've got to be kept outside the remotest risk of coming to grief."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"You don't know what you may be up against. With a stake like this to come, it's foolishness to take chances. And you've just that amount of devil in your composition, that will lead you

to take chances. If you even borrow money, you're done. You should go into seclusion—I'll look after you—and sit pretty till the prize falls into your lap. If it's a bit dull you must stick it out; it's only twelve weeks. Run no risks—not even the smallest."

"Is it your idea that I should live like a sort of nun for all that time, and be afraid of my own shadow, in case I do something I oughtn't?"

"It's the only safe thing to do. You never know. Life's full of surprises."

"Then give me life! Listen, uncle—I won't do it. I don't see any necessity for it. Freedom for me. I'm not a cabbage. I *must* have a good time! And you don't always slip danger by sitting still. As for adventures, I like them; they're the only thing that make life worth living. I've taken a few chances and can look after myself—I'm not quite a chicken."

Felicia's eyes sparkled.

"Taking shelter, and watching my step all the while—the thing is I won't humiliate myself like that. I can't. I'm going to be what I am. Of course, I'll take reasonable care—these little rocks round the inheritance are easy enough to steer through; there's nothing to them. Don't make any mistakes, uncle—I'm going to have that two millions."

Halahan's expression had changed. There was a wistful melancholy in his eyes, a sadness even, as he sat back and watched her.

"I've a presentiment you will never get it, Felicia," he said quietly.

She looked at him in surprise.

"Why do you say that?"

"I don't know. But I feel it strongly."

Felicia laughed.

"But why? Is it because you're Irish, Marco, dear? You're not claiming the second sight, like that little blind turf-boy of yours at Kilronan?"

"You're more than half Irish yourself," he said. "Don't you feel it, too? That you're not going to win?"

Felicia met his eyes, and an odd little tingling sensation disturbed her nerves; a sense of uneasiness. Before she could answer he sprang to his feet with a laugh.

"Ah, don't let's be talking—we're getting gloomy," he said lightly. "Either way, you'll not be left in the lurch. I've a plan ready in my head—meantime forget it all and I'll take you out to a dinner and a show." Mark's blue eyes suddenly brimmed as he looked at her. "Felicia, it's great having you back again! You're the only living thing I care about."

Her baggage had been brought up and unstrapped by the cross-eyed maid. The flat was not large, but a dainty little bedroom, luxuriously fitted and in admirable taste, was all ready for her. Evidently it had been specially furnished on her account. Mark Halahan's credit was usually good, and no man knew what ravens fed him.

Felicia changed into her best frock—it was a poor best—and a taxi carried them both to the Ritz. In an atmosphere of shaded lights, flowers, and music they had the merriest meal that Felicia ever remembered. Uncle Mark was a delightful companion. She learned many things that night, and she told him of her life in Georgia. Of the happening on the Armentic, for some reason that she could not have explained, she said nothing; merely that she had had a rough passage, but enjoyed it.

"You like the sea then?" said Mark.

"Like it? I love it! It's the road to romance. And the men you meet at sea are real men."

"Natural you should think so. Half your ancestors—and mine—were seamen, the other half were horsemen. Two clean things, the sea and horses. Pity that men sometimes use 'em both to play the devil. Still, when the devil drives—I'm glad you like the sea. The Arrow will please you."

"What's the Arrow?"

"Tell you later. Nothing to do with

present affairs. If we're going on to that show we'd better move."

They went to the brightest revue in town. It pleased Felicia, but Halahan was a little silent and distraught. As they returned to the flat in a taxi he apologized.

"You ought to be out with a youngster, not an old has-been like me, Felicia. But that's another rock; when this thing gets known you'll have every adventurer and man-on-the-make after you, trying to get you cornered and marry you when you touch that legacy."

"I don't think so," laughed Felicia. "I've had one offer and turned it down. And I don't know any other young men—yet."

He let her into the flat with his latch-key, clicked on the lights in the sitting room, and lit a cigar.

"Before you go to roost, Felicia," he said, "there's something I'd like to tell you. You'll be seeing Honoria's lawyers to-morrow, and I shall see mine. To do something I ought to have done before, and it mustn't wait another day. To make my will, and I'm electing you sole legatee of everything I've got—without any conditions!" he added with a chuckle.

Felicia was too astonished to reply.

"I'm afraid there won't be much. But I'm flush just now, and there should be some assets, worth a thousand or two, I hope. Maybe quite a lot—it depends."

She came straight over to his chair and slid an arm round his neck.

"What nonsense this is, Marco, darling! I won't have you making wills for me—it hurts. I'm the heiress, not you, and when I arrive you're going to share my kingdom! As for wills, why, you're the youngest man I know, you'll be a fighter for thirty years yet!"

Halahan smiled. He did not contradict her. He had passed on to no one a confidential piece of information that a great man in Harley Street had given him not long since in exchange

for three guineas. That his span was short; perhaps a year or two, perhaps a good deal less. Mark Halahan had received this news without any deep concern. Death had seemed closer to him many a time. He would face it as he had faced life, with a laugh and a jest.

"Quite likely, my dear girl," he said gently. "Still you never know. I shall attend to it first thing to-morrow. As long as I'm here you're all right, and if not, there'll be something for you to fall back on if the Drew fortune doesn't happen to click. You've no resources of your own, have you? What have you got?"

"Five pounds left from what you cabled me," said Felicia, who refused to take the suggestion seriously. "Three cheap frocks, a manicure set, and let's see—yes, a little Colt pistol." "A what?" exclaimed Halahan sharply.

Felicia laughed. His concerned face amused her.

"A pistol. Cost me fifteen dollars."

"In the name of sense, what for? It's an offense against the law in this country to own one without a special permit. What's a girl like you want with a pistol? More of this silly adventure notion? Or just plain swank?"

Felicia was piqued.

"I've practiced a bit, and I'm pretty useful with it, let me tell you, Marco, dear. As for needing it, perhaps I didn't. But there were some queer folk around when I lived in the South. I always found them quiet enough, but I often had to go around at night alone, and liked to feel I could look after myself. When I came away I kept it, as I've a prejudice against letting anything go that belongs to me. Still, as you say, it's rather in the way here."

"Go and get it," said Halahan. Felicia went to her room and returned with the pistol.

"It's charged," she said. "The safety catch is on. *That's* the safety catch."

Halahan chuckled, and took the little weapon from her. He fingered it like a man well used to the feel of it.

"I'll keep this toy. You're better without it," he said. "Pistols and red hair don't go too well together."

Felicia laughed.

"I can't refuse you anything, Marco. Keep it if you like. Perhaps it fits you better than it does me."

CHAPTER VIII

The First Shot

AFTER breakfast next morning Felicia rang up Pelham & Weeks, who seemed glad to hear from her and fixed an appointment for eleven. Uncle Mark took her to Mecklenburg Square in a taxi, and passed on to his own affairs. He did not get back to the flat till past three, when he found her waiting for him, and looking a little rebellious and ruffled.

"Ah! What happened in the lawyers' den?" asked Mark.

"Oh, they told me much the same news as you, and a few more things besides. But, uncle, they're the driest bunch of sticks you ever saw. And there was a man called Henacres, as solemn as an elderly crow, who is Aunt Honoria's chief trustee; it seemed to me he would feel just as pleased if all that money didn't come to me or to Sinclair either, but to found and endow two more Churches of Theosophy, or whatever it is that the will provides for if we don't get it. There are a whole lot of provisions about what should be done with it, and I can't remember them very well. Aunt Honoria, it seems, had become an enthusiast about Theosophy, and as far as I can gather this old fellow Henacres is, too.

"Now I'm not interested in theosophy: I believe in everybody being free to keep to the kind of faith that they're convinced about, and personally I'm going to hold by the one I was brought up in. It seems to me there's plenty

of aunt's money going already to this new idea; I don't see any reason why I shouldn't get the share she's tied up for me, and I mean to have it. However, we didn't hear much about that. I signed a declaration that I'm not married and all the rest of it, and old Mr. Pelham was very nice and made me a sort of speech, and gave me a lot of advice which is no use to me."

Halahan smiled.

"Did they tell you, by any chance, that you would be wise to keep clear of me?"

Felicia flushed, and her eyes sparkled.

"They did hint something of the kind. And I told them what I thought about it. You're worth the lot of them put together, Marco, dear. Nobody is going to say a word against you to me. We're sharing now and we shall share when I come into my own."

Halahan sighed, then gave a quiet chuckle.

"Maybe they were right from their point of view. I suppose I've a queerish reputation. Still, there are two things I've never done. I haven't ever let a friend down, or run a horse crookedly. It isn't much to brag of. I should think you'll be all right, but, Felicia, I've seen my lawyers, too, and I've made that will in your favor, leaving you everything I have. I want that to be a certainty for you anyway. And it's done."

He was so eager and earnest about it that Felicia did not interrupt, though she felt uncomfortable.

"As I said, there isn't a lot, at present. But I have a business venture in hand, which if it turns out well, will mean a great deal of money. I'm very confident about it."

"What is it?" said Felicia with interest.

"Well, it's a pearling venture; out Thursday Island way. But that's nothing to do with you; it will be over in two or three months—long before you need concern yourself. Business isn't

in your line. There's just one thing, though, that I do want to ask you."

He handed her a photograph, from his desk, of a smart-looking little white steam yacht of about a hundred and sixty tons, with a raked fore-mast and a schooner bow.

"That's my yacht, the Arrow."

"She's a beauty!"

"She is. I'm generally too broke to run her; as a rule she's let out on charter, or laid up. If by any chance she became yours before you come into your money, of course, you'd have to sell her. She's not a new craft, I've had her fourteen years. I love her better than anything I've owned; you wouldn't believe what she means to me. I've never brought myself to part with her.

"During the war the admiralty took her over for the Yacht Patrol; they gave me a commission and I commanded her. The gun-mounting is on her foredeck yet. For that matter there's a gun below; I bought one in after the peace for a souvenir. A Yankee gun, a dandy, one of the Bethlehem twelve-pounders, same pattern we used to carry. War's a fool business—but I'd be a hypocrite to say I didn't enjoy it. We had several scraps; and once we bagged a U-Boat." He checked himself suddenly.

"But never mind that—the thing is, Felicia, that if the Arrow should come to you after you get your money, I'm hoping you'd keep her for yourself. I'd hate her to go out of the family—rather she was broken up."

"Why, of course, I will!" She slid an arm round his neck. "But, Marco, you'll live longer than the Arrow herself! Don't you see how absurd is all this idea about dying?"

"Well, perhaps so. We've done with the lawyers, let's get to cheerier topics. You're due for a good time and you'll want to get yourself some kit, I expect. Did they shell out any money?"

"Four pounds! Four more due every

week. They wouldn't pay arrears—it dates from the time I reported to them. They say they mustn't go beyond the strict letter of instructions."

"What can you expect of lawyers!"

Uncle Mark took out his pocketbook and handed her fourteen bright, crackling five-pound notes. "I drew these for you this morning."

"Uncle," she gasped. "I can't take this from you."

"Certainly you can. And, mind you, it's not a loan—it's the repayment of a loan. Your dad once lent me a hundred and thirty pounds when I was in a tight place, and I never saw him again to pay him. And I'm flush now. That's yours."

She looked at him suspiciously. It would be just like him to invent this story, solely to still her conscience.

"Are you sure, Marco?"

"On my honor," said Halahan.

"You're a darling!" She took the notes, and her eyes sparkled. "I do want some clothes frightfully."

"Of course you do. Every right-thinking girl does."

She kissed him impulsively, but he would not be thanked, and in two minutes she was out of the flat. The elevator had struck work, and she had to walk down the stairs. In fact, she ran down. It was an age since she had been able to buy such clothes as her soul craved. And every milliner's and hosier's window in London called to her.

She spent three hours over the quest. It was too good a thing to hurry; she dwelled on it and let the delight soak in. It was surprising how short a distance even seventy pounds went if you wanted the right things, and she had somehow got the two-million complex into her mind. But she did very well. A tolerable array of boxes were dispatched to Pont Street.

Felicia left the choosing of the evening frock till the daylight was nearly gone, and at a brilliantly lit counter in Oxford Street she was considering

a dream in beige chiffon that was exactly what she wanted, when suddenly her attention was distracted. The frock was forgotten, she turned and stared into the street. A tall, unmistakable figure in blue was passing by the long window with determined strides, gazing coldly in front of him.

It was Anthony Kirkpatrick.

The surprised assistant saw Felicia run to the revolving door, which was turned for her by a commissionaire, she hurried into the street calling to Kirkpatrick by name before she realized that he had passed out of reach. Then she saw him down the roadway, swinging himself on to a motor bus that was passing at twenty miles an hour, and he was borne away into the night.

Felicia returned slowly to the shop, bought the beige frock, and walked back to Pont Street.

She reflected, though not very convincingly, that it was just as well she had missed him. He had snubbed her pretty badly already, and she never allowed any one to snub her twice. Still, she would have liked to know what happened at the inquiry into the fight on the Armentic.

Apparently all was well. His arrest was over, and probably he was up on leave. Nothing very tragic had happened to him. And the frocks waiting for her at Pont Street were more important than a dozen violent young sailors. She would have a wonderful evening trying them all on.

It took her some time to reach the flat, she lost her way and wished she had taken a taxi. The lift elevator was still out of action and she hurried up the stairs. She was in the highest spirits again now. The rustle of her skirt against all-silk stockings delighted her. At Snelgrove's she had donned in the change rooms a knitted costume in golden russet that was the last word, and sent the old Armentic traveling kit home.

She opened the door with the latch-key Halahan had given her. She felt

she must show herself to him at once, and she called to him from the hall:

"Marco, dear!"

There was no answer.

The lights were on in the sitting room, the door was ajar. She pushed it open, and, entering, stumbled upon something that lay on the floor. It was a pistol. Her own pistol.

She stood still, rigid, staring, a dreadful fear at her heart.

Mark Halahan sat in the deep arm-chair at the farther side. His arms hung limply over the sides; his head lay back, his handsome face, death-white now, was turned toward the ceiling, the eyes closed as if in sleep. A deep crimson stain was spreading over the breast of his jacket.

CHAPTER IX

The Inspector

THE first stunning shock of dismay and horror lasted barely a moment. But her heart was strangled with pity as she bent over the silent figure, her fingers trembling as she felt the pendent hands. They were warm.

She knew that she was in the presence of death, but with a hope that would not be stilled she ran out into the hall. As she did so, the latch rattled, the door opened, and the maid Ida came in, almost unrecognizable, smart and a little flashy in her off-duty costume and fox skin necklet.

"A doctor—get a doctor quick!" cried Felicia.

"Doctor? Why, what—"

The maid looked through the open door of the sitting room into which she could see from where she stood, took three steps forward, stared, and gave a choking gasp. She turned so white that Felicia feared she would faint. Then she recovered surprisingly. Her feet struck against the pistol on the floor. She gazed at the silent figure in the chair, and, turning, fixed Felicia with her single direct brown eye.

"Doctor?" she said huskily. "Yes—"

She darted out of the room and ran down the stairs.

Felicia stayed by the chair. She opened Halahan's jacket and tried desperately to find if there was any chance of stanching the wound. But the dead white face told its own tale. He was beyond human aid.

She moved away blindly, and suddenly dropping on to the sofa, buried her face in her hands and broke down altogether. Mark Halahan had passed out. For only twenty-four hours she had been with him, and her world seemed to have collapsed. All she had or might have she would have given to bring him back.

Everything went black. How long she remained there she did not know; it could not have been long, for, hearing steps outside, she recovered control of herself and hurried into the hall. The maid Ida had returned, and with her an immense policeman who loomed through the doorway like a colossus.

"Doctor coming," he said briefly, and looked at Felicia with hard, stolid eyes. "Which room? Show me, please."

He glanced at the pistol, stepped over it, inspected Halahan, and took a businesslike survey of the room, asking no questions as yet, till a doctor, carrying a black bag, was shown into the room by Ida, and at once made an examination.

"Dead," said the doctor gently.

"Yes, sir. Can you tell me how long?"

"Not twenty minutes, I should say, or maybe ten."

Felicia, who was standing by the doorway, swayed a little, and the policeman caught her by the arm and supported her.

"Come outside, miss," he said and led her out, asking the doctor over his shoulder to remain. He brought Felicia to the bench in the hall, kindly enough.

"You sit there," he said, and to Ida:

"Don't you leave. Wait in the kitchen till I call for you."

He clicked the latch of the front door. There was a telephone on the hall table, he took down the receiver, called a number, and was soon talking rapidly. Felicia was scarcely conscious of what he said.

"Now"—he pushed the instrument away—"I'll take your statement. You got here first—is that so?"

Felicia heard herself describing, in a mechanical voice, as though it had been some one else speaking, her arrival at the flat, and as much as she knew. He asked her a number of questions, and took down her answers; she replied clearly enough, though she still felt stunned; the whole thing seemed unreal, like some black dream from which she hoped to awake. It was broken by a ring at the bell, the constable unlatched the door and admitted an inspector in uniform. The constable conferred briefly with him in an undertone, and showed his notebook. The inspector glanced at Felicia.

"Right," he said, "you stay here, Collins."

Inspector Cardew made a much more thorough survey of the room and its contents than his subordinate had done; a very thorough one indeed.

"That wound couldn't have been self-inflicted, doctor?" he asked.

"No. Quite impossible. Some one shot him deliberately—see where the pistol lies, fifteen feet away."

The inspector measured the distance and found it sixteen feet four. Then he drew on his gloves—in order to avoid any confusion of finger-prints, which will stay on polished steel for days—picked up the pistol and examined it.

"One shell fired only." He laid it down again in the same place.

"Bullet's gone right through—deflected from the scapular bone—lodged in the chair back," said the doctor.

"Yes," said the inspector, taking out his penknife. "Good penetration these

Colts have at point-blank range." He slit the cloth at the back of the chair, where the nickel bullet had lodged just beneath, and extracted it. "I'd like you to stay for a bit, doctor." He took up the table cover, and draped it over all that remained of Mark Halahan. Then he moved to the door.

"Will you come in, Miss Drew. There are some questions I must ask you."

Felicia walked in. She was very quiet and composed, but very pale.

"When you came in and saw your uncle lying in the chair, did you notice this pistol?"

"Yes."

"Was it lying there, where it is now?"

"Yes."

"Have you touched it since you came in?"

"No."

The notebook that the constable had given him was open on the table at the inspector's side.

"Have you ever seen that pistol before?"

"Yes. It belongs to me. I gave it to my uncle last night. He asked me to give it him."

"He asked you for it? Why?"

Felicia explained in a few words. She had brought the pistol with her from America. Halahan had thought it unwise of her to have it. As she answered the inspector's questions she began vaguely to realize that she was in some danger. This did not shake her. Any danger that she could be in was a far less poignant tragedy to her than the fact of Mark Halahan's death.

Her senses were alert enough now. But—it is strange how, in tense situations, the attention is caught and held by some trifling thing. She did not look at the inspector as she answered him, nor at the pistol, after the first glance. Nor at the armchair and its now hidden burden. She was staring blindly straight before her, and her eyes were fixed on a portrait hanging

just to the left of the door, which seemed to stare back at her cynically.

It was the portrait of a man of a by-gone age, in a full-bottomed Jacobean wig, dark-eyed and a trifle sinister; there was almost a living malice in the eye that was fixed on Felicia, reminding her somehow of the maid Ida. It was the portrait of an ancestor of Uncle Mark's, a barrister, known in his day as Counselor Halahan. She turned away from it and faced the inspector.

"The pistol was yours. Do you know of anybody who might have a motive for killing Mr. Halahan?"

"No. I have only been here since yesterday. But I don't believe any one would; he was the kindest man I ever knew."

"When did you last see him alive? At three this afternoon? What was the last thing he said to you? Will you tell me what passed between you?"

"He said— He was talking about private things. He told me he had been to his lawyers—" Felicia stopped, confused.

"To his lawyers? You may as well tell me. We can find out from the lawyers. We shall have to find out everything, you know."

"Of course I'll tell you. I have nothing to keep back. He told me he had made a will, leaving me what he had. That it wasn't much—and I told him there was no need. I have a great deal of money coming to me in three months from now."

"In three months. Have you any money now? You need not answer that unless you wish to."

"Why shouldn't I answer it. I have four pounds a week. Pelham & Weeks, Mecklenburg Square, can tell you all about that."

"It may not be necessary to trouble them, if you will answer my questions. Did you ask your uncle for any money? I ask you that, because here is his note case, with twenty pounds in it, from his breast pocket."

"No! But he gave me money; seventy pounds that he owed me. He gave it me before I went out."

"You have it still?"

Felicia's nerves were nearly at the breaking point.

"I've spent most of it."

"Since three o'clock? Well, never mind that, Miss Drew. There had not been any difference, any dispute between you and Mr. Halahan? No? And you came in—you found him lying there? You met the maid coming in at the door, when you went for help? Did you, on your way up, hear any sound that might have been a shot?"

"No."

"Sure of that? See anybody leaving the house, as you came in—or pass any one on the stairs?"

"No. The place was empty."

"Very well. Wait, please."

Inspector Cardew went to the door, and spoke to the constable. The maid Ida was shown into the room. She fixed Felicia with the more mobile of her two eyes, then turned it on the inspector and stood waiting.

CHAPTER X

The Arrest

"NAME?" said Cardew. "Ida Jevons? In service here one month. Other servants live out. Very well. When did you leave the flat this evening?"

"At two o'clock. My afternoon off. Mr. Halahan never took any meals here except breakfast. But I was due back at six, and got here at two minutes past."

"Can anybody answer for where you were in the meantime?"

"Yes, my young man. I can give you his name. And I was talking to him at the corner of the street when it was striking six, just before he left me, and I saw Miss Drew go past on the other side, and turn into the building. I said good-by to James—that's my young man—and went in after her."

"How long after?"

"I should think about two minutes."

"Did you notice any one leaving the building, either before or after Miss Drew went in?"

"No. I don't see how I could have helped noticing it, if they had."

"Did you, on your way upstairs, see or hear anything unusual?"

"Only that the elevator wasn't working. But it often isn't. There's no hall porter here, and tenants operate the elevator themselves; it works with a button-press. But it wasn't in order, so I walked up, and when I got to the second floor I heard a noise, from the floor above."

"What sort of noise?"

"Well, it was a bang—a report. I thought it was somebody slamming a door."

"Did you hear it more than once? Was it repeated?"

"No. Only once."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"And then?"

"I went on up and let myself into the flat—I've a latchkey of course, because there's nobody to let me in when Mr. Halahan is out. And Miss Drew came running out into the hall and saw me, and told me to go for a doctor. The sitting room door was open, and there was Mr. Halahan lying in the chair with his head right back"—the maid gulped, trembled, and continued with an effort—"and I saw that pistol on the floor."

"Where was it lying?"

"Just there by the door—where it is now. Then I ran down into the street and told the policeman at the corner of the square—he called up a doctor, because I didn't know where there was one—and brought me back with him."

Inspector Cardew picked up the pistol again.

"Have you ever seen this before?"

"I've never seen it before, but I heard Miss Drew talking about it."

"You heard her talking about it? How, and when?"

"It was last night, just before I went to bed. I was tidying up the hall, and put the mat straight that was all rucked up outside the sitting room door. She and Mr. Halahan were talking, rather loud; you couldn't help hearing them. Mr. Halahan said: 'What's a girl like you want with a pistol? It's foolishness.' And she said: 'Well, I've always had it; it cost me fifteen dollars. I feel safer with it.' He said: 'You'd better give it to me.'

"I heard her say, 'No, I'm going to keep it myself. I don't let go of anything that belongs to me.' And Mr. Halahan said, sort of laughing, 'Well, if you won't you won't, but you'll be getting into trouble over it some time; you're not the sort of girl who ought to own a pistol. Get along to bed.'

"I went along to bed myself, and I heard Miss Drew come out directly—it wasn't any business of mine, but I couldn't help thinking it was queer."

Felicia was staring at Ida in blank amazement that turned to wrath. Then she spoke.

"This girl is lying!" said Felicia.

The maid blazed out at her:

"Me lying! What call have I to lie about it? You know it's the truth, you—you— Oh! the best master ever I had—and he'd tell them it's the truth if he could speak!"

The inspector was watching them both. He cut short the girl's bitter outbreak—she was losing all control of herself.

"That's enough. Ida Jevons, go back to your room."

The maid went out, in a storm of hysterical sobbing. When she had gone the inspector turned to Felicia.

"Miss Drew, you are arrested."

Felicia looked at him dumbly. It all seemed to her like some incredible nightmare; even the pain had given way to a sense of deadly peril. She tried to speak.

"And I warn you that anything you say may be used in evidence against you. Collins?"

The constable came in.

"Take Miss Drew to the station. I'll enter the charge as soon as I get back. Tell the superintendent I'll ring him."

Felicia went out in charge of the policeman. The doctor, who had been sitting silent by the table, stood up. He was not a man easily impressed, but he looked white and shaken.

"You won't want me any longer, Cardew?" he said.

"Just a moment, sir. Had to keep you till I was through."

"Amazingly pretty girl," muttered the doctor. "One wouldn't have thought—"

"Yes, sir. But that doesn't count with a jury so much as it's supposed to—in this country."

"Dreadful business. Not premeditated, I should think. Impulse. Not at all as a natural criminal would have planned it. Yet she's a cool hand, too. The way she faced you. And if she hadn't been taken all but re-handled she might have got away with it. You don't think that maid—"

"No. What motive has the maid got? And her account of her movements can easily be checked. Little enough difficulty in this case—too dead clear."

"Yes, the girl's hemmed in. If that pistol hadn't been dropped where it was—" He glanced at it. "One shot fired, and quite enough. But, Cardew, there's something rather remarkable here that I haven't pointed out to you."

"What's that, sir?"

"The man's dead; but this wound should not have been a fatal one; severe, but hardly dangerous. One would not expect it to cause death."

"Yes—it looked that way to me, sir, though I'm no doctor. Very strange, as you say. What then was the cause?"

"Impossible to state offhand—but I should say at a guess that this man had

advanced heart trouble. Cause of death, shock."

"Well, sir, that makes little difference from the standpoint of the law," said Cardew. "The wound, directly or indirectly, killed him. Whoever fired that shot is answerable for his death."

The doctor nodded.

"Murder or manslaughter. You'll notice, Cardew, that he died facing his assailant. Somehow that's the way I would have expected that man to die. Well, I'll leave the rest of it to you."

He gathered up his little black bag and left the flat.

CHAPTER XI

At Headquarters

MR. DAN RICARDO sat before a bright fire pulling thoughtfully at a brier pipe. He looked sedate enough, but inwardly he was feeling uneasy and a little impatient.

The room was cozy, even attractive. It suggested a blend between a comfortable parlor and an attorney's office. There was a roll-top desk, a case of law books and a number of files, sideboard with a spirit stand, and around the fire four deep armchairs. Dan turned his head quickly as the door opened and a well-dressed visitor of professional appearance with a neat brown beard and pince-nez glasses came in.

"Boughey!" said Dan. "Anything doing in Pont Street?"

Mr. Boughey closed the door carefully, and took off his hat and overcoat.

"The Drew girl is arrested," said he. "She came down out of the flat in charge of a bull, and is now at Marlborough Street Station."

Dan drew a deep breath of relief. He went to the sideboard and mixed two whiskies and soda.

"Here's a round of applause to Bender," he said appreciatively. "In his own line he really has genius. A most reliable fellow. I confess I have been a little anxious about this affair;

I allowed Bender to entice me into it against my convictions. But he has made good. I expected he would get here before you. You haven't seen him?"

"I have seen nothing of Bender."

"And Ida?"

"She brought the police in. My car was parked at the end of the street. I saw her go up with a constable; then a doctor turned up, and an inspector. Thirty minutes later a taxi took the Drew girl to the station, and when I'd made sure of that I came straight along."

"The girl's arrested," said Dan. "Halahan, we may take it, is finished. That means, of course, that he must have refused to come across."

"I don't quite get you. See here, Dan, put me a little closer to this thing. I don't want to make any mistakes."

Dan nodded.

"Sit there; I'll give you the facts briefly while we're waiting for Bender."

"Halahan, as you know, is the girl's uncle, and I've had a plan nicely framed up for some time past, between our friend Hick and Halahan. Now, Halahan wasn't allowed to know just what the game is, because I can't be sure of him. He's an adventurer, and usually hard up; if not a crook he's pretty near it. My plan was a dandy, it couldn't fail, but I didn't know how far he'd go on with it if he were put wise. So I sat tight, and waited. The girl Ida has been in his service a month past, keeping us in touch.

"When Bender and I got back here the other day, we found things had panned out so well that there was a short cut to success. It was a bit risky, but Bender urged that it would be criminal to let such a chance slip. If Halahan wouldn't come across he was to be bumped off; the way things were, the Drew girl would be left up to the neck in it. That would suit our book from every possible angle. A clean sweep made of the whole job. And Bender

has clicked! What beats me," added Ricardo irritably, "is why he's so long getting here. One can't help worrying. If he made good he was to come right through and report."

"Here? Isn't that a little dangerous?"

There was a step outside, somebody was fumbling at the door. As it opened both men rose quickly, and Mr. Bender Wright stepped in.

His lips were tight set in a smile, his air was almost jaunty, but his face as colorless as chalk. He tossed his hat onto the table and nodded at Ricardo.

"Evenin', Dan," he said jerkily. "I just dropped in to announce complete success accordin' to orders. You'll allow I'm the real baby. Did they get the girl yet?"

"Sure. They had to take her."

"That's fine!" said Bender. "That's—"

Boughey sprang forward and caught him. The astonished Ricardo helped, and they lowered Bender into an arm-chair. Dan became aware that his own hands were red and wet.

"Why he's hit! Where'd it get you, Bender?"

Bender had collapsed. His lips moved, but emitted no audible speech, his eyelids drooped. Boughey, after a swift examination, took out a sharp penknife and slit the coat from back to front, bringing jacket and sleeve away. The shirt he treated the same. A faint whistle escaped him.

"Hot water—sponge—iodine!" he said sharply to Dan, who hurried to bring what was needed. There were lint and dressings in a lower drawer of the desk. Boughey tended the injured man with remarkable deftness. He was, or rather had been, a qualified surgeon before that autocratic body, the Medical Council, ran a pen through his name and very properly removed him from an honorable profession.

"Bullet," he said briefly, "glanced and raked upward—missed vital organs and arteries—but severe, very.

Must have been a close shot. I'll give him a testimony as the toughest patient I ever treated. It's amazing he should have been able to hold up and come along here."

"Bender's as tough as hickory," said Dan. "Not dangerous, is it?"

The patient raised his head.

"Dan, get me a drink. A steep one. That's all I need. Then I can talk."

"No spirits for you," said Boughey abruptly. "Bed and quiet, or I won't answer for you."

The patient glared at him indomitably.

"Who in thunder asked you to? I've had it plenty worse than this. I'm answering to Dan—give me that drink or I'll get it myself. We've got to know where we stand."

Ricardo brought him the drink. It revived Mr. Wright surprisingly; usually he was an abstemious man.

"That's better. Now, I'll pack it tight. When Ida gave me the office yesterday about Halahan leaving what he'd got to the girl by will—which you always reckoned he would do—the thing was simply sticking out for me. He lost no time about it. My idea was, he meant getting the right side of her so he could skin her bank roll when she touched the Drew money. Only I wasn't sure of him.

"He had a long start. If we could only get him to come in with us, that was the safest way. We had to put it to him straight: If he wouldn't come across he had to go.

"I went round there this morning when they were out. Ida told me about that fool pistol the girl had, and how Halahan had made her give it up to him. I didn't like that at first—then, of course, I saw how good it was. Couldn't beat it. I asked her where was the pistol? Not in Halahan's room, she said, having searched. She reckoned he was carrying it on him. Well, I wouldn't ask for anything better'n that! In our job a man has to think quick.

"I looked round for an easier way out of the house. Ida had one for me—trust that kid. Always two ways out of those blocks, if you look. I'd only use it if I had to. So I left her an' stood by for the first clear chance.

"This evening I had a ring and went along, packing a thirty-three Colt—here it is, by the way; you'd better stick to it. There was Ida talking to her steady on the corner of the street, and she signaled me all clear as I went by. I got up to Halahan's place and rang the bell; he was alone in the flat. I knew him by sight, of course. I said I'd come on some urgent news about Felicia Drew's legacy.

"He seemed very willing to listen. He sat in the armchair in his parlor, and I sat in a chair nearer the door. I could tell pretty well by the way he sat that he'd got that rod on him, and it made me careful.

"There wasn't time for beating around the wood. I put it to him straight. Would he come in with us on a share-out, for if so we'd got the girl's two millions nailed down for a certainty. I gave him the griffin; I hadn't got very far when he broke in. He said, quite quietly:

"'You swivel-eyed little thief, what do you mean by coming with a proposition like that to an Irish gentleman?"

"That was that. I pulled, and he pulled too. I got him, but he got me. The clip of the bullet spun me round, and for a minute I was out. When I got hold of myself again, I saw Halahan was finished.

"I have to hand it him; I never saw a man pull quicker. If anything, he was a bit ahead of me." Bender sighed. "They're rotten little things, those automatics; give me a forty-five Wesson every time. However, there wasn't any choice. It got there."

Ricardo interrupted.

"You're quite sure—dead sure Halahan was out?"

"Do you think I don't know a stiff

when I see one? Just the two shots fired, his and mine. When I was able to see what was doing, there was the Colt dropped by his feet. It was the same rod the Drew girl had, I guess there's no doubt about that. I took it up careful and laid it down over by the door, and then I lit out. When clear away I came along here, and it was no easy job doing that, believe me. Couldn't go to a doctor. Was afraid I might double up on the street, and that would have spilled the beans.

"Well, it's all right, Dan. They've got the Drew girl good and tight; there isn't a chink she can get out by. Ida's part was simple enough—you can always rely on Ida." Mr. Wright chuckled faintly. "Yes, Ida the Slider is the best thing of her kind in all London. I don't mind boosting her; you'll agree that I, too, stand in a class by myself."

Dan drew a deep breath of thankfulness.

"It was damned risky, Bender! But

you've got away with it—the coup of a lifetime."

"Yes, such things don't offer every day. Wouldn't I have been a mutt not to take it? That shot was worth a hundred thousand cold—to me," said Bender abruptly. "Eh, Dan!"

Ricardo nodded.

"Certainly. Did you ever know me to fail to complete my contracts? Ben, you're a little wonder! You're right, there's no possible way out of it for her."

"I'm feeling—pretty queer. Safe? Yes, it looks safe enough. But I'll get out of this, and keep clear of you from now on. Give me another drink. And the sooner I get this bullet out of me the better."

"Bullet!" said Boughey, looking at him in surprise. "There's none to get. Clean traverse. Here's where it came out at the back of your jacket."

Bender stared blindly at the speaker. Then he sank back into the chair, and consciousness left him.

TO BE CONTINUED



It Wasn't A Bottle

A CASE of miscarriage of justice came up recently in Baltimore when Dorsey Thomas, nineteen-year-old colored boy, was haled into police court by unsympathetic officers, and charged with striking Edward Ross, another negro, with a bottle.

Thomas smiled when the charge was made, and pleaded "not guilty." The judge asked him why he smiled.

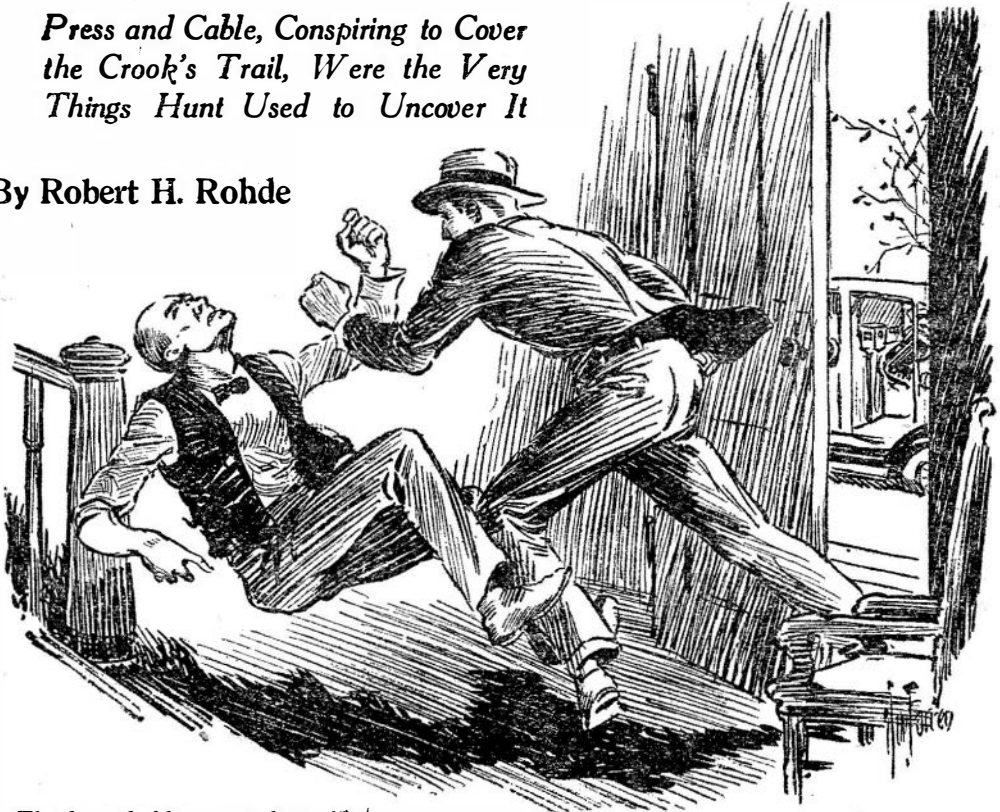
"I didn't hit him with no bottle, judge," Thomas replied. "It was a brick."

Thomas was locked up—but he didn't think the police had any right to do it!

Between Wires

Press and Cable, Conspiring to Cover the Crook's Trail, Were the Very Things Hunt Used to Uncover It

By Robert H. Rohde



The householder went down like a target rabbit in a rifle range

CHAPTER I

Flying Pearls

ON a simple basis of cost, without any "plus," the painful incident had entailed a loss of forty-eight thousand dollars. But Darcy & Son calculated, and legitimately enough, that they were out even more; for the necklace had been as good as sold, and sixty thousand dollars was what it would have brought if the right man had been waiting uptown to receive it.

Rushing up from police headquarters to the gilded *Maison Darcy* in Fifth Avenue, a few steps below the Waldorf-Astoria, Detective Sergeant George Hunt already knew that much.

He knew also that Darcy the younger, undertaking to deliver the sixty-thousand-dollar trifle in person, had passed through the door of a hotel apartment to find entirely the wrong customer on the other side of it—and at the other end of a swiftly-descending blackjack.

Those facts had been contained in the first bulletin relayed on to the detective bureau from the West Sixty-Eighth Street station—a matter-of-fact summary of one more neat routine jewelry job neatly put over.

The junior Darcy, M. Etienne, had returned to the store a few minutes before Hunt got there. With a bandage on his head and woe in his heart, he was waiting in the private office back of the gleaming show cases that

held what was generally conceded the finest display of gems west of the Rue de la Paix.

Sitting there with him, an unlighted cigarette between his fingers, Hunt left it to the jeweler to tell his own story; leaned back with his legs crossed and his mild blue eyes on the toe of one of his good-looking, not at all bulldoggy tan oxfords, and panned an agitated stream of narrative for the glint of pay-dirt.

It was a straight story, barring a certain and understandable amount of circling 'round Robin Hood's barn, and one that in substance Hunt had heard a good many times before. When he broke silence it was only to give M. Etienne assurance of his continuing attention. At intervals he contributed a "Yep," or a "Yeah," or an "Uh-huh." Or, again, without raising his eyes, he slowly nodded.

Mentally, he was tabulating: "The old army game. One pretty new angle, maybe; but in the main, the old stuff. Strictly professional job. *Who?* Any one of a couple of hundred crooks I know all about—any one of ten thousand I don't!"

Then, at last—gold in the pan!

Hunt's eyes flashed up from the polished and mesmeric tip of the oxford.

"Come again with that, please!" he snapped.

His variation of formula, the new, sharp note in his voice, startled M. Etienne.

"I—I say that with the first blow I have not lose the conscious," he repeated. "It is as I have told you. I am too daze to cry out; but not, m'sieu', to make fight. Throwing the necklace from me as I lie upon the floor, I—"

"Sure! Good enough! I got you! You made a grab for his legs. He leaned over to bang you another, and you saw— Say, tell me that again!"

The jeweler found this rising vehemence yet more amazing. Was there an imputation in it?

"It is the truth," he insisted, meet-

ing Hunt's eyes with a light of challenge in his own. "From the hand in which the *apache* holds his weapon there is one whole finger gone, and the half of another. Of his face I can tell you nothing, or whether he was of my own height, or greater or less. But in the matter of the hand—*mon Dieu!* How could I mistake that hand?"

The man from headquarters drew a deep breath. Settling back, he now finally lighted the cigarette which he had taken from M. Etienne Darcy's mechanically-extended case a full half hour before.

"You've got," he said softly, "one doggone valuable pair of eyes, monseer!"

"Pardon?"

"Grand eyes!" reiterated Hunt. "I wouldn't want to say, yet, that they've saved you sixty thousand dollars. But, anyhow—I guess I know who to look for!"

For an instant blank, the jeweler's wan face lighted.

"You say!" he cried. "Then your prefecture has knowledge of a criminal with such—should I say, per'aps, *without* such fingers?"

The detective nodded.

"Yep; I happen to be acquainted with one myself. But"—he hedged with conservative afterthought—"but that's a long way from having his arm in mine, now or very soon. You understand, monseer? We're not likely to find him picking his teeth on the steps at headquarters."

M. Etienne understood, and yet was jubilant.

"Ah! But to know the man!"

Hunt regarded him soberly.

"It wouldn't be so good," he pointed out, "if *he* knew that we knew. Get me? That'd be his signal to scuff the dust—travel. Otherwise he might sit around, and play percentage. You've got to keep this business about his game hand to yourself, monseer. It's *tres-tres*—important." His eyes narrowed at

the jeweler's change of expression, and darkened with a rise of doubt. "Say! You haven't told anybody else about—"

"Only one," protested M. Etienne.

"Hell!" grunted the detective. "When? Who was it?"

"The one who first questioned me when I returned to the conscious. An official, I think, of some private police of the Hotel Grand Park."

Hunt sighed.

"Well—you're sure it wasn't a newspaper reporter? Couldn't be? Then maybe it isn't so bad. But don't you forget to keep your tongue between your teeth, monseer, when the boys do come buzzing you. I mean, you can tell 'em all you want about the necklace, and how you came to get shocked loose from it. But not a word about the crippled mitt—the hand with the fingers off. If they want descriptions tell 'em there ain't any. It might have been Santa Claus that beaned you, for all you had a chance to see. Now—don't slip!"

Hunt was already rising as the door of the private office opened and one of the Messrs. Darcys' very elegant clerks looked in. Directly back of the clerk were two soft-hatted young men with folded newspapers in their pockets; and one of them caught at the detective's elbow as he brushed past.

"Hey, Georgie! Wait a second!"

"Can't," said Hunt, though for an instant he hesitated. "If you want a tip, maybe it was an inside job. All I can say, folks. I'm shooting down to headquarters, express!"

But, outside, he appeared to be a little mixed in his directions. Police headquarters was south—and the taxi that Hunt jumped into, by his own specific directions, swung around to the west in Thirty-Fourth Street.

Beyond Herald Square, while the cab waited below, he climbed a long, narrow stairway, and pressed a buzzer-button set into the frame of a heavy door. The stairs, the buzzer and the

peephole slide in the door all registered "Speakeasy," but Hunt's face proved good with the guardian of the gate. A dropped chain slapped against a metal-faced panel within, and a bolt slid back.

Ten minutes of "waiting time" were on the taxi's clock when its fare climbed back into the cab.

"Over to Ninth Avenue," he directed. "Then north." And headquarters still lay to the south.

In the upper Nineties, Hunt stopped the machine and dismissed it. A half block further north he overtook and halted a uniformed policeman—offered a glimpse of a gold shield in his half closed hand.

"Headquarters," he said. "I'm paging a party in No. 43, next block. Mine'll be a front door call. You go in back and nail anybody trying to make a get-away through the yards. And don't be slow with your gun unless you want a name on the pension roll!"

No. 43, in the next block north, was a neat but old-fashioned apartment house—what the real estate people would describe as a "high class five-story walkup." Hunt, consulting the double row of mail-boxes in the lower hall, noted with satisfaction the lack of switchboard, elevator and ebony "service." That simplified matters; forestalled a tip-off.

He made a mental memorandum—"Three C"—and started up the stairs. Making the first turn, he drew his service pistol from its holster and transferred it to his right coat pocket. His hand was on the grip, his finger on the trigger, when he pressed the button outside a third floor rear apartment. Within, a high-pitched electric bell chirped peremptorily.

That was the only sound—the bell's querulous *cr-r-rnk* and a fading echo. After a space, Hunt rang again. He held his breath as he listened, but he caught no whisper, no tiptoeing step. It was a fair assumption, he thought,

that the flat was untenanted just now. If it wasn't— His right hand tightened on the gun. Well, what was he paid for?

He bent to examine the lock, then went to work on it with all the assurance of a seasoned housebreaker. It wasn't much of a problem—not to a man with a set of keys such as Hunt carried. They were mostly blanks, these keys; blanks of varying lengths and thicknesses; blanks made of some soft metal that fairly melted under the touch of a file when he had caught the impression of the lock's tumblers on a sliver of wax.

No one appeared to question or interrupt. Hunt had the hall to himself. Three minutes were enough for him. He had a key then—with pistol drawn let himself into Apartment 3-C.

A moment after he had entered, he dropped the pistol back into his pocket. There wasn't anybody in the place; hadn't been, he could be sure, when he first rang the bell. The two rear windows, opening on a fire escape, were not only closed, but locked. And except for the door through which he had come, there was no other way out.

There were evidences, nevertheless, of hasty and probably recent flight—dresser drawers standing half open; a man's handkerchief, fresh-laundered and still in fold, left where it had fallen at the foot of a bed.

From a table in the kitchen, after he had gone through the flat a second time, and more carefully, Hunt picked up a newspaper. It was of that day's date—an early edition of one of those theoretically "evening" dailies whose presses begin turning at daybreak. A headline flashed before his eyes, and he groaned.

"*What a bust!*"

He couldn't see any use sticking around after that. It wasn't any fault of his. He hadn't lost a minute's time; but quick as he'd been in finding his way here, he hadn't been quick enough.

Before he let himself out he peered

into the hall, looked upstairs and down, stood for a little listening to be sure the way was clear. Then he slipped through the door, and it closed with a click behind him. That was that. The man who had stolen Darcy & Son's sixty-thousand-dollar pearl necklace, he of the mutilated, but heavy hand, had received his warning in time. He was in flight, and the pearls were certainly flying with him.

Hunt's reflections were bitter as he walked slowly down to the street. Who got the breaks, anyhow, in this world? Wasn't it the crooks, nine times out of ten? Where was the justice of it?

He turned into the narrow alley into which his uniformed aid had disappeared. It led into a paved court, overhung with a network of clotheslines. In the court, with his back against a fence and a stub of contraband cigar in his mouth, the "harness" man still faithfully stood watch.

"Hey!" Hunt called to him. "You can go back on the pavement, old timer. It's a washout upstairs."

But a moment later, at the mouth of the alley, he was clutching the blue-coat's arm.

"Oh, I don't know about the breaks!" he said softly. "See that jane?"

He might have said "Juno," for the woman walking across the street toward them ran notably to the statuesque. Her hair was of a very bright yellow and elaborately marceled, her proportions and her carriage Amazonian.

"Who," asked the uniformed man, "could help seein' her? Sure; I see her around a lot. She belongs in th' neighborhood."

"In No. 43," said Hunt. He cast a quick glance out of the alley. "And that's where she's going now."

"Yeah? You mean it's *her* you want?"

Hunt shook his head.

"Nope; but she's sure a sight for tearful eyes, and I certainly don't want

to lose her. Say, you do something else for me, will you? Stand up by the corner, over the way, and keep your eye on 43. If she comes out again before I'm through telephoning, grab her— But I'm hoping that she don't!"

The genius of the beat poked a finger under the visor of his helmet.

"Hell! What's it all about?" said he.

Hunt stared him down.

"Pay a call at the bureau, when you've got a minute," he advised, "and Inspector Clancy'll be delighted to give you the dope. In the meantime, just do what I say. I'm going to call up your precinct to shoot a plainclothes man over. When he gets here we'll all three of us have an understanding together."

CHAPTER II

Follow My Lady

ON Inspector Thomas Clancy's desk, at a spot discreetly remote from Inspector Clancy's elevated and imposing feet, Detective Sergeant George Hunt in due course was depositing a light, excellently styled felt hat—the crowning touch to an ensemble as ambiguous as had ever been worn out of headquarters.

"The newspapers," said Clancy severely, "has been pestering hell out of me. They want to know how was this Darcy case an inside job. And how in the name of Gawd could I tell 'em—me not having a word from you since ten o'clock this mornin'?"

The dapper sergeant grinned.

"You can blame me, boss," he said. "It was a little custard I dropped 'em."

Clancy returned the grin with a scowl.

"And *was* it," he demanded, "an inside job? Where was the earmarks?"

"I didn't see any. Didn't I say it was custard? Yep; horse-radish, sirup—the old apple, get me?"

"It was an honest stick-up?"

"A knock-down. The Darcy peo-

ple haven't got any insurance they could draw on for a case like this. And you know how high up they stand, anyhow. That's out."

"How about this bird Klumann? Where does he get off at to be buyin' pearl necklaces? I never heard of him!"

"He's out, too. Darcy & Son have done a lot of business with him, dating back over years. He's a big pickle and preserve man from Cincinnati. Every so often he comes to New York and gives the white lights a play. You know? And every time he hits a live one, he's game to go for anything her little heart desires."

The inspector wagged his head.

"Yeah; but sixty thousand smack-ers! That ain't reasonable!"

"You might call it high," conceded Hunt. "It would be for you or me. But Papa Klumann ain't under civil service. He puts up chow-chow. And this last one is a real crush. If you want to know—but Darcy begged me not to let it get to the newspapers—it's Betty Sampson Spooner hurling the harpoon. Remember, the poor gal's still a princess until she gets her new divorce, and she ain't for bargain-hunters ever!"

"Oh," said Clancy. "Oh!" And that was all.

Hunt assumed the privilege of lighting a cigarette.

"Anything inside," he averred, reaching for his hat and transferring it to his knees as the inspector shifted his feet, "is at the Klumann end. It must have been a night club tip-off."

"It wouldn't be the first," nodded Clancy.

"And won't be the last. But, anyhow, there's a tip that Peter Klumann is taking it on the chin for a pearl necklace. Somebody knows he's been dickering with Darcy & Son, and that the deal's just about closed. All right; the firm gets a phone call this morning, and it sounds enough like Klumann to get by.

"The story is that he's at the Hotel Grand Park for a change, and has got the little lady right with him. He wants the necklace rushed up for a breakfast surprise; and if she says as much as 'Ah!' when she sees it, out'll come the old fountain pen. For a sale it looks like a pushover.

"But young Darcy, Ethan Darcy, or whatever his name is, thinks that maybe a little polite conversation might be needed. He packs the necklace up the line himself. Mind you, he hasn't got a suspicion in the world; or the old man, either. Everything's hotsy-totsy with them.

"At the Grand Park they don't exactly know Peter Klummann, but he's registered, anyway. They phone from the desk, and young Darcy is invited right on up. He finds the suite, the door opens, and—*socko!*"

Clancy blew out a gust of cigar smoke.

"Gawd!" he grunted devoutly. "Ain't it easy?"

Young Sergeant Hunt let his chest out an extra inch or two.

"I guess," he announced confidently, "that you haven't seen the *Evening Blade?*"

"Evening—*hell!*" snorted Clancy. "Why, it's hardly noon now. What the devil are they ever out with this time o' day but a rehash of the mornin' papers?"

"Plenty, sometimes," said Hunt. "Damn 'em! But let me go ahead, boss. All this time, see, Klummann's sleeping off a big night at the Trans-continental Hotel. But young Darcy goes looking for him in the Grand Park, and opens a door, and gets it."

"And," supplemented Clancy sorrowfully, "a wise guy gets the pearls."

Hunt grinned again.

"He gets the use of 'em for a little while. See what I mean? He's wise, but he doesn't get all the breaks. The first crack doesn't put Darcy out. And before he's rocked to sleep with a second one he's kind enough to himself

and us to notice that the fake Klummann is short a finger and a half on his right hand. *Now!*"

Inspector Clancy's extravagant feet struck the floor with a mighty thud as he came upright in his chair.

"The hell you say!" he boomed. "And it was Diamond Ed Larkin! As Gawd's me judge, I'll have him in an hour's time!"

Sergeant Hunt flipped the stub of his cigarette into a distant cuspidor.

"No," said he; "you won't. Not in an hour, boss."

"Why not? He'll be stayin' in town. And what have we stools for?"

Hunt's eyes lost their light of triumph and went dismal.

"Do you think that I'd be here without trying for the grab myself?" he wanted to know. "No; I made a contact uptown and got a line on Larkin. But the *Evening Blade* had beat me to him, smeared with headlines that told about the Darcy blackjacking and said the police were looking for a man with half a hand."

"Huh!" ejaculated the inspector. "Where'd they get that at?"

"From a house dick at the Grand Park. That's the only place it could have come from. But, anyhow, the flash must have fitted in nice with the *Blade's* presstime. Larkin couldn't have much more than got home with his haul when the paper was up in his neighborhood. He read it—and dusted."

Clancy looked earnestly down his nose.

"In that case," said he, "maybe I take it back about bagging Ed inside the hour. He could be a hard man to find, him knowing we was lookin' for him."

"A lot harder, except that he—left something behind."

"Yeah? But not a full forwarding address, I don't s'pose?"

"Almost as good, if we watch it: a great big, lovin', yellow-haired mamma is what. And it's hands down that

if she don't follow him, one of these days Diamond Ed is coming back to her. I guess you remember the Meany sisters, boss?"

Inspector Clancy removed his cigar from his mouth.

"Maybe I don't!" said he. "If there was ever a pair of hunters and trappers in all the Hudson Bay country to match 'em, I dunno. Let's see. Wasn't Evangeline—"

"Yep; she was collared playing solo and she's doing a stretch out on the Coast. It's Maggie Meany that Larkin's doubling with—and only half an hour ago I could have reached out and touched her with my own right hand."

"You could? And you—didn't?"

Hunt answered with a question:

"Now, where's our best chance of getting a lead from Maggie? By throwing her in the coop or leaving her on the roam?"

The inspector still stared.

"Sure. I know. But—"

"Hell!" protested Hunt. "You don't think I left the lady entirely loose? Not me, boss! I put a precinct man on the lookout while I came down. Now I'm going back myself and relieve him, if it's all right with you."

Clancy nodded.

"Fair enough, George," said he. "And—and you haven't done so bad." With the air of a general bestowing a medal, he took a cigar from his vest-pocket and reached it across the desk. "When'll I be hearing from you?"

"If it's by the clock or the calendar," said Hunt, "I wouldn't want to have to tell you. Otherwise, it'll be when I've got my line on Larkin—or when I'm dropping dead for sleep!"

CHAPTER III

Crossed Wires

IT was about thirty hours after that—at four o'clock on the afternoon of the next day, to be accurate—when Inspector Clancy next saw Detective Sergeant George Hunt.

Hunt wasn't dead for sleep. Not exactly. But his eyes were shadowed and tired, and he could have done with a shave.

At first glance Clancy recognized the out-all-night look; but he'd stood by jobs day and night many a time himself, and his heart wasn't broken.

"All alone?" he asked crisply. His gaze wasn't flattering.

"Like you see me," said Hunt.

"You were a dam' fool to tackle it without relief," stated Clancy. "But it was your own choice. How come you lost her?"

Hunt's heavy eyelids fluttered.

"Who said I lost her? I dropped her. I got my steer, and I gave her the air."

The inspector, hewing with an envelope-opener at the end of a fresh cigar, grunted and bestowed praise in his own peculiar way.

"Then it ain't so bad. What's it that you want me to do? Can't you go through with it by yourself, son?"

"I might. But I think you'd weigh better with the telegraph company than me. I want to get hold of a certain wire that was sent out of the Flatiron Building half an hour ago—just get the address off it. Me, I'm kind of blocked. The manager of the office wouldn't give me a look-in on the strength of my shield."

Clancy fumbled for a match and drew it slowly along one of his tremendous flat soles.

"Yeah? What about the wire?"

"Maggie Meany just shot it."

"Hell! I'd never of guessed!" observed Clancy, heavily sarcastic. "But tell me more."

Hunt's sleepy eyes showed sparks of irritation.

"Is it a detailed report you want, inspector? Well, then, I relieved Detective Garvin of the West One Hundredth Street precinct across from Maggie Meany's flat at one forty yesterday afternoon. I stood there the whole rest of the day and all the night,

and all I got was sore feet for my pains. Maggie didn't come out until this morning, and then it was only to walk to the news-stand on the corner and fetch back an armful of papers."

Inspector Clancy snorted indignantly.

"Get her," he directed, "to the Flatiron Building."

"In one single jump, I can. In again, Maggie stayed in. It was only about an hour since that she came out. I tailed her over to the Drive. She got on a Washington Square bus, and went up onto the top of it for the breeze. I sat downstairs."

"You've a great head. She never made you?"

"There wasn't a lot of chance. She'd never seen me in her life. The only way I pegged her was from her picture in the gallery. Anyhow, we were still strangers—on her side—when she got off the bus at Twentieth Street. I guess maybe that she'd been looking for a telegraph office away from the home neighborhood, and the one in the Flatiron Building was the first one she spotted.

"It don't make any difference whether I'm right or wrong in that. The thing is that she went on past the office and walked back. I went right along with her—walked in right after her. I stood alongside her, with a pad of blanks in front of me, and wrote a nice long telegram to the King of England.

"But I couldn't get an eye onto what Maggie was writing. She was cagy, all right. She kept looking around and covering up, and it's only by the accident of her rotten handwriting that I'm able to tell you that where Diamond Ed Larkin is hiding out is—*Sharpsburg!*"

Inspector Clancy lost an intermediate chin as the one uppermost suddenly lifted.

"Well?" he demanded. "Was it Sharpsburg, New Jersey, or the New York Sharpsburg—up-State?"

"That," said Hunt. "is what the bird behind the desk asked her. And the only way I've got any line on Larkin at all.

"I was standing only a few feet away at the time, by the counter, still trying for a look at the wire—figuring it'd be easy enough, if I missed out, to show my shield and read the whole business after Maggie had gone. I was close enough, anyway, to hear the clerk say to her: 'Is this a "Y" or a "J," madam? Which Sharpsburg does your telegram go to?'

"Maggie gave him a hard eye. 'You'd better get glasses, young man,' says she. 'It's New York, of course!'"

Clancy looped a massive finger through an equally massive watch chain.

"Too bad," said he, "it wasn't New Jersey. That's only a little Sharpsburg. Under five thousand, it must be. Then what?"

"That," Hunt told him, "is where the lady and me parted company. She went along out, and she went alone. I said to the clerk: 'Say, let me see that telegram a minute.'

"'Why?' says he.

"'I want to make sure of something,' says I. 'What do you want to be holding out for? Wasn't I with the lady?'

"'Not,' says the clerk, 'so that I could notice it. You'd better talk to the manager.'"

Inspector Clancy smiled grimly.

"I bet you got fat talking to the manager!"

"Take everything, winner," said Hunt. "I did. Why, you'd thought that I had asked him for his roll. The shield didn't mean a thing to him.

"'It's against company rules,' he says. 'I wouldn't dare show you a telegram, or a copy of a telegram, if I wanted to. That's the orders—and they go for everybody. The best I can advise you is to go talk to the general superintendent at the main office, down town.'"

Clancy's cigar rolled across his mouth.

"Um! Well, the super and me used to bowl together before he moved out to Montclair—but, I don't know. The telegraph company's been fussy as hell since they took a licking in that Murchison case. I'll try, anyhow."

He pulled his desk telephone to him and lifted the receiver. When he hung it up again, a couple of minutes afterward, he was scowling.

"What did I tell you?" he rumbled. "Mike Laughlin says he can't do a thing himself; and he's a friend of mine for years. I remember him when he was a common operator and I was in harness. Why, he used to hang out in a gin mill on me post!"

Hunt swore softly.

"Is it off, then?"

"Unless you're a better persuader than I am. Can you beat it, George? Here's the inspector in charge of the detective bureau, and a buddy to boot, and he can't get the superintendent of the telegraph company to slip him a quiet little piece of information. All he says is that I'll have to go higher than him."

"And what's higher?" Hunt asked.

"The president of the company, no less. Old man Gantley himself!"

Hunt shrugged.

"Well? Is *he* so high he can't be talked to?"

"It'd be wastin' breath," said Clancy. "Didn't the Murchison dame collect a hundred thousand off of 'em for letting a private dick get copies of the wires that starred in her divorce case?"

"But you can try if you want. Laughlin said that if I'd send somebody over he'd see he got to the big boss direct and quick."

"Brodie took a chance," remarked Sergeant Hunt.

Fifteen minutes later he had ocular demonstration of the bond that had been between Inspector Thomas Clancy and Superintendent Michael Laughlin.

As one bowler to another, Laughlin kept his word. Hunt, announcing himself at the executive offices of the telegraph company, was taken at once into the presence of the president.

Gantley, a ruddy-faced man with pleasant eyes belying the stubborn set of his jaw, evidently had been expecting the visit.

"I'm afraid," he said, before Hunt had had a chance to explain himself, "that we can't make any exception to the rule."

The man from headquarters spoke his mind directly.

"If you'd stop to think, Mr. Gantley, the company puts itself in a funny kind of position, refusing to help us. I guess you've heard what it's all about from your superintendent. But let me tell you again. The man that this particular telegram was sent to is a known crook. We want him for a big job that he pulled only yesterday. If the telegraph company shields him, it's making itself something pretty much like a party to a crime."

Gantley's lips twisted in an abortive smile.

"Sorry," he said, "if it seems that way."

"Don't you believe in the law—upholding it?" Hunt asked him.

"In general, most certainly."

"People are funny," said Hunt. "I don't know what's in most of them that makes them take sides against the police every time. Maybe it's because they've never had any trouble with crooks themselves. I don't suppose you've ever happened to meet one, Mr. Gantley—knowing it?"

"Two," Gantley said calmly. "Burglars in my home at Scarsdale. They gave my wife and me a few hours that we'll never forget. There was quite a little in the newspapers at the time—a couple of years ago, if you remember. The robbers had us roped in chairs from midnight to 4 A.M. while they searched the house for jewelry which Mrs. Gantley had very fortunately put

back in her safety deposit box after the opera opening."

"Then you know what it is," admitted Hunt. "But they didn't hurt you?"

"They threatened us. That was all."

"This man I'm after," Hunt said, "did worse than threaten. It wasn't his fault he didn't kill. So I think it just comes down, to put it plain, Mr. Gantley, to a question of how good a citizen you are."

Gantley's mouth straightened.

"You're mistaken," he said crisply. "In this matter I'm not acting as an individual. Personally, I'd like to help you. Yes; I'd go far out of my way to help you. I'd consider it a duty.

"I don't question that the man you're seeking is a criminal, a menace to society. I'd prefer to see him caught and punished. I'm on the side of the law, always. That should go without saying.

"But it's the president of the Consolidated Telegraph Company that you've come to, and that's a different proposition. My first duty, in my official position, is not to the public at large, but to one particular and special section of the public. I mean to say, to the holders of Consolidated Telegraph stock.

"I'm paid to earn dividends for them, to conduct the company in their interest, to work for the biggest possible volume of business."

Hunt interposed: "I know, Mr. Gantley. But—"

Gantley shook his head.

"You listen, please. I'm talking to you as I'd talk to the police commissioner, and I'd like to have an accurate report made to him of what I've said. Dividends for my stockholders depend on volume of traffic. You can understand that. You can also understand that, in a general way, we are competing with the United States Post Office. We're both messenger boys for the public.

"The post office has a tremendous advantage over us in rate, and the air mail is daily cutting into our advantage in the matter of speed. The time is coming when the telegraph company will have to fight for its very life. That being true, and the fact recognized, we must make a stand where we can.

"Get my point of view, if you please. People who patronize the telegraph company provide our income. We've got to give them the ultimate in service, and we haven't closed the transaction when we've delivered the message. We're under an implied obligation to our customers to see that every one of our employees through whom the message passes holds it confidential.

"That's the one thing exclusive in our service—confidence, secrecy. If a man sending a telegram, or receiving one, happens to be a lawbreaker, that does not alter the fact that he is a party to a transaction from which the company has drawn a profit. He is entitled to our protection—and it will be our policy to fight to a finish to afford it to him!"

Gantley slapped the desk with his palm.

"That's our position," he said. "If the police department can't see the validity of it—I'm sorry."

Hunt was picking up his Park Avenue fedora.

"Diamond Ed Larkin certainly should shake your hand some day, Mr. Gantley," said he. "But if he ever comes to do it, look out for the club behind his back." At the door he turned. "I guess there's no use of me doing any more talking."

"Not a bit," agreed Gantley.

"Then maybe the corporation counsel of New York City might—"

Gantley smiled grimly.

"I dare say we may have a formal demand from him. But so far as concerns this telegram to—er—Mr. Diamond Larkin, you may tell your superiors that the Consolidated Tele-

graph Company is prepared to spend a million dollars to keep it from them!"

CHAPTER IV

In the Haystack

"I'LL take it up with the Commish," said Inspector Clancy aridly.

"He'll take it up with the mayor. The mayor'll take it up with the corporation counsel, and—oh, hell!"

"And in the meantime," said Hunt, just back from the main office of the Consolidated Telegraph Company with the bad news, "Larkin will be disappearing off the map with the Darcy pearls."

"*We* should stop him!" snorted Clancy. "I haven't got enough men in the bureau that I should be sparin' them to hunt for needles in haystacks."

Hunt drew from his breast pocket the stalwart cigar that had been yesterday's reward of merit. It was considerably frayed, but repairable.

"But Sharpsburg," he submitted, and put his tongue to the loosened leaves of the wrapper. "Sharpsburg ain't the haystack that New York City is."

"It's all of fifty thousand population."

"Which wouldn't be a corner of the Bronx."

Clancy looked at Sergeant Hunt obliquely.

"It's a reckless extravagance," he said. "Good taxpayer money after pearls that Darcy & Son won't ever be seein' again!"

But he was reaching for a voucher pad as he spoke; and that night Sergeant George Hunt caught up his lost sleep on a train.

At nine o'clock next morning he was in Sharpsburg, and at ten minutes after nine he was introducing himself to the Sharpsburg chief of police.

"I'm after a gun," said he, "that cracked a jeweler over the head in New York the other day, and vamosed in this direction with a pretty pearl neck-

lace. Ever heard tell of Diamond Ed Larkin, chief? It's him."

"No friend of mine."

"Well, he's in Sharpsburg—under cover. I know that much. I thought you ought to have a pretty good idea where."

The up-Stater elevated a thin shoulder.

"To a feller from New York," he said, "this maybe don't look like much of a town. But it's a big one. We got streets and numbers here, just like you have."

"A dam' lively town Sharpsburg looks to be, too," Hunt put in enthusiastically. "And that kind of town draws crooks every time. Now, I was thinking that if you'd give me a line on the hang outs—particularly, say, the ones where a tony bird like Larkin would be likely to lay up—"

The Sharpsburg chief—his name was Perkins, and he was of an antiquity leading Hunt to believe he might have been the city's first constable—entered a quick protest.

"There's where you're wrong, son! We keep Sharpsburg clean's a whistle. They don't any criminals roost around here. If they come in on one train, they get out on the next. That's my job, and you bet I see to it."

Inwardly Hunt groaned; coöperation of the kind he'd hoped for wasn't going to be.

"That's fine," he said. "Makes the chore a lot simpler. If there's only one or two joints—"

"There ain't two, there ain't one, and there ain't none. Everything is clean's a whistle. That's what I said, that's what I mean. I don't tolerate no joints."

"Good enough!" applauded the New Yorker, though faintly. "You don't let crooks linger—crooks you know. But Diamond Ed Larkin's a new one on you; and take my word for it, he's in Sharpsburg. Now the question is—where?"

Perkins just then was performing an

exceedingly delicate operation with a quill toothpick. He completed it before he replied.

"Sergeant," said he, "that's a stumper. Here's Sharpsburg—look 'er over. Forty-seven thousand, our population was, last census. The Commercial Club claims fifty-seven thousand now, and I shouldn't be surprised that was about right."

"Okay. But most of the people are in private homes, aren't they—homes that wouldn't be apt to take in strangers? That means that Larkin's got to be in a hotel, or a lodging house, or hived up with some pal that probably isn't a lily himself."

Chief Perkins emitted a shrill cackle.

"Mister," he said, "you don't know Sharpsburg! You think strangers are such a novelty up here that we got 'em all marked. That's good! By golly, it's pretty good! Lodgin' houses? Oh, my!"

"Got plenty of 'em?"

"'Bout half the town takes roomers, and the other half is roomin' houses straight through from the parlor to th' roof!"

"Come again," Hunt invited.

"Yessiree," reiterated Perkins. "Half and half it is. And strangers! My land, son, Sharpsburg ain't made up of much else but! Why, our mills have got the biggest per cent of labor turnover but one in the whole darn United States. Know what it is, in figgers? Six thousand last year—*six thousand!* That many new folks in town that wasn't here twelve months ago. They're pilin' in every day o' the week, comin' and goin'. If you're lookin' for somebody, son, that hasn't registered by his right name at the Commercial Club office or one of the hotels—well, a house to house canvass is what you've got ahead of you, I reckon."

Sergeant Hunt chewed that over.

"And how long'd *that* take? Holy smoke! I'm not expectin' Larkin to hole up here forever." He made

another of his expert shots with the end of a burned-down cigarette; stood scratching his head. "Say, chief," he asked presently, "how many telegraph offices have you got in Sharpsburg? I mean, Consolidated Telegraph offices."

"Used to have two," said Perkins; "but the branch out to the West End's been closed, seems to me. Not that the city's shrinkin' any, see—but 'most everybody's got a phone nowadays, and d'ruther shoot their telegrams in direct than wait for a messenger. Yep; telegraph offices is about all we got less of than used to be." He cackled again. "Why, ain't one enough for you?"

"Plenty."

"Well—anything we can do to help you—anything in reason—"

"I guess there isn't much," said Hunt. He started to ask a question, thought better of it, and compromised with: "Only one thing, chief. I guess maybe my best chance is to hang around your main stem and see if I can't catch Larkin out strolling—but I certainly won't if he gets wind I'm in town. So I'd appreciate it a lot if you wouldn't have anything to say about me being here. Don't even let it out that you've had a whisper about a man wanted in New York having come this way."

Chief Perkins winked.

"There won't be a word out o' me," he promised. "The newspaper boys think they're pretty smart with their highfalutin' airs and their trick questions. But they don't get nothin' out o' me that I ain't a mind to tell 'em, you bet you!"

Outside his door, Hunt added softly:

"If they do, I'm licked—I bet *me!*"

CHAPTER V

A Girl and a Pencil

TOWARD the end of that devastating interview with the Sharpsburg chief, it had occurred to Sergeant Hunt as a hopeful possibility that company rules so rigidly adhered

to in New York might not count for so much in this distant up-State city.

If it were part of the system to file away copies of telegrams received; if there should be here in Sharpsburg another type of manager than that rule-bound bird in New York—then the laugh might switch over, after all.

Hunt found a hotel, registered, and left his suitcase. Then he found the Consolidated Telegraph Company's office, and found it without having had to ask a question. On the main street, halfway between the hotel and the B. & A. station, its blue-and-white enameled sign beckoned to him.

The telegraph office occupied a double store. Crossing to it, Hunt saw through the wide plate-glass window that it had a staff of at least a half dozen. That wasn't so good, he thought. What he was after called for *finesse*. It was a proposition to be presented figuratively in a whisper, certainly in privacy; the crowd in there seemed to demand an open covenant, to be openly arrived at.

But when he had walked into the office, it somehow suddenly ceased to be a crowd. There was just one that Hunt could see.

She was up front, just behind the long counter of bright oak—a reasonably tall and yet reasonably small slip of a girl with bobbed brown hair and very nice eyes.

Hunt was supremely conscious of the niceness of the eyes when they lifted from a rate book and looked him over. Down in New York a man didn't often see their like. New York eyes were, in the main, bold or studiously impersonal; these were neither. New York eyes invited. "Why don't you say hello?" or menaced, "You'd better not!" But these brown up-State eyes merely said: "You're somebody new, and that makes you interesting where we don't see many strangers. But—what can I do for you?"

Far back in the office, telegraph keys were clicking a katydid tarantelle.

Nearer, a ticker machine was alternately thumping out and panting out an endless threnody on a diminishing roll of tape.

Hunt had seen such things before. There were tickers of about the same sort in the police telegraph room at headquarters back home, but this particular instrument, for some abstruse reason, demanded remark.

"There's always something new coming out, isn't there?" he observed diffidently to the girl of the brown bob. "I suppose that thing's saving a couple of operators' pay—taking down messages."

"Yes," she said, without flurry. "You want to send one?"

Her gaze was still direct, still had that quality of a frank though faint curiosity, and her voice was soft and without edge. Nevertheless, Hunt had a distinct sensation of having been put neatly in his place.

"Why—sure," he said; and, fishing for a pencil, he fished also for a thought. Who the dickens was he going to send a message to? And what was he going to say?

He stared hard at the block of yellow blanks which the girl had slid in front of him; conscious of her continued calm scrutiny, and conscious—acutely—of an unaccustomed warmth in his cheeks that could have only meant he was blushing.

The ringing of a telephone at a desk behind the counter rescued him. The girl turned to answer it. Hunt breathed a sign of relief. How the hell could a man think with a girl looking at him—that kind of girl looking at him *that* way? Now he could get somewhere.

But he didn't. His eyes had followed her, and his thoughts followed his eyes. She had slipped into a limber-backed chair behind the desk; sat facing him as she lifted the receiver. And still she was looking at him.

Was there something funny about him? he wondered. No; he'd looked all right in the Pullman mirror after he'd

shaved that morning—as all right as he ever did. The face he'd seen there wasn't what he'd have called handsome. But it was passable, anyhow, and at least it didn't have "cop" written all over it.

Then, without any conscious effort whatever, he was smiling. The girl, evidently wanting a pencil, had made a gesture toward her hair; and it was the significance of the gesture that brought his smile. She colored a little, then she picked up a fat blue pencil from the desk, said "Your name, address and telephone number, please?" into the transmitter, and smiled ever so fleetingly herself.

With interest Hunt watched her, and with interest he listened. Her voice was low, clear and no less than inspiring when presently, after a space given to writing, she began to speak again into the telephone.

"I guess you're used," he said, when she came back to him, "to wearing your hair long."

Her slight constraint was gone after that exchange of smiles.

"I would," she said. "And you'd catch me, wouldn't you? Yes; I just had it cut a couple of days ago. I suppose I'll be hunting pencils in it the rest of my life." Once more the fugitive smiled, and then routine recaptured her. "No hurry," she said. "I know how hard it is to tell anything much in ten words."

It dawned on Hunt compellingly that he was going to have to write something: people didn't go into telegraph offices just to look around. One minute it struck him as an impossibility; the next, his pencil was sliding smoothly over the yellow blank:

G. Hunt,
240 Center Street,
New York, N. Y.

Congratulations. She's a grand little person, and a wonderful bet.

GEORGE.

The girl with the new bob turned the pad to her, and made a rapid count.

"The signature counts as a word," she said, deprecation in her lifting eyes.

"Sure," assented Sergeant Hunt. "I know."

"But it makes the count eleven—one over. Isn't there a word you could cut out?"

"There's not. Let it go as it stands," said Hunt, and he smiled at her again.

CHAPTER VI

Publicity

CENTRAL AVENUE appeared to be Sharpsburg's Broadway, and Hunt walked the length of it. Then he debouched off into Shailer Boulevard, which was quite obviously the chief intersecting street, and walked the length of that. In the course of the stroll he scanned a thousand faces, but Diamond Ed Larkin's wasn't one of them.

The exercise, at any rate, did something for his appetite. Returning to the hotel, he demolished a husky *table d'hôte* luncheon. After that he smoked a couple of cigarétes in the lobby and went into consultation with the clerk.

"What kind of newspapers you got here?" he first wanted to know.

"Dumb as the average," said the clerk.

"I mean, how many?"

"Why, there's the *Eagle* and the *Argus*. They're the only two."

"That all? When do they come out?"

"Morning it's the *Argus*. They print the *Eagle* in the afternoon."

"How many times? Is it one of those continuous performances like we have in New York?"

The clerk grinned.

"Hell, no! Where do you think you are? The *Eagle* comes out around four o'clock, and if you want it you wait for it. If you want something fresher than the four o'clock edition of the *Eagle*, you wait for the *Argus*. That's the news in Sharpsburg."

"Thanks," said Hunt. "Know a

good movie in town—one you'd want to recommend?"

The clerk did. Sergeant Hunt went. He enjoyed the picture immensely. It was a comedy; and since he laughed almost continuously from the beginning to the end it might be fairly safe to assume he was laughing at that precise moment when, back in New York, Inspector Thomas Clancy was saying to a group of reporters: "Yeah, and about the Darcy case. Well, I'm expectin' to have the pearls and the man that took 'em—inside of twenty-four hours!"

Coincidentally, the theater and the *Eagle* were out at about the same time. Sergeant Hunt bought a copy of the paper and carefully studied the headlines clear through to the want ad pages. He didn't see his own name anywhere, nor Larkin's. So far as the *Eagle* advised its constituency, there wasn't any local angle on the theft of the Darcy pearls.

"Fine!" Hunt congratulated himself. "We'll have to send Papa Perkins a can of Shinem for his star!"

And then, walking across the street, he played a low-down trick on the Sharpsburg *Eagle*.

Just over the way from the theater from which he had just come was the office of the *Morning Argus*. Hunt walked into the building, climbed a flight of stairs at the direction of an arrow labeled "Editorial Department," and entered a room with grimy windows and a floor littered ankle deep with papers not only of yesterday, but certainly of yesteryear.

"You the city editor?" he asked a young man busy with a pair of vast shears. "I'm Sergeant Hunt of the New York Detective Bureau—up here chasing sixty thousand dollars' worth of pearl necklace. The man that stole it is hiding in Sharpsburg. He's an international crook, and this necklace job was probably as slick a one as was ever pulled. One of the biggest jewelers in the country came within an

ace of being killed—and if you think there's a story in it for the *Argus*, all you've got to do is ask questions. You think so? Well, let me tell you first—"

Then and there, Sergeant Hunt "spilled." To the *Argus* he told all that Chief Perkins could have told to the *Eagle*, had he not kept the faith. He told more, indeed, for he knew more to tell.

The youthful city editor solemnly wrung his hand at the end of their interview.

"Sergeant Hunt," he said, "if all cops were as white as you; if on the force here in Sharpsburg we had men big enough to come out with the facts—"

He couldn't go on. Emotion overwhelmed him.

But conscience failed to overwhelm Sergeant Hunt. He slept as soundly as if he could have numbered himself among the just, and awoke to a new day with no holdover of regret.

It was a little before seven when he turned out. The cigar stand had just opened for business as he came down into the lobby, and from the top of the pile of newspapers on the display case he picked up a *Morning Argus*. Strung across the front page in stud-horse type, the evidence of his guilt confronted him:

SEEK SUPER-RAFFLES HERE!

But Sergeant Hunt's reliable appetite was not spoiled. Along with fruit and cereal and beefsteak and eggs, he was even up to digesting, without qualm, two solid columns of type vividly narrating the misfortune of M. Etienne Darcy, the flight of Diamond Ed Larkin to Sharpsburg and his own later arrival in the rôle of Long Arm of the Law.

At five minutes before eight, he was standing in front of the Consolidated Telegraph Office in South Central Avenue. Some three minutes later, with the expensive-looking fedora in his hand, he was saying good morning

to a brown-eyed, bobbed-haired acquaintance of the day before.

And now he descended another step in ignominy—passed from what might have been taken as a practice of deception to what could by no chance be taken for anything else.

For instance, he was probably well within the truth when he remarked: "You certainly have some scandalous poker players in Sharpsburg." That naturally would be a fact. It would be a strange sort of American city which, with a population of fifty thousand or thereabouts, didn't have.

Again, he told no falsehood when he added: "Here's where I send a wire to New York and ask for a new bank-roll."

He did exactly that a few minutes afterward; sent off an urgent appeal addressed, like his congratulatory message of the day previous, to "G. Hunt, 240 Center Street, New York." He signed it, "George." The Consolidated Telegraph girl was sympathetic.

"I'm so sorry. I hope it's not going to—to spoil your stay."

"It's all in the game," said Hunt.

"I'll rush your wire," the girl promised. "The minute there's an answer, I'll call you up. You're at the Hotel Shailer, aren't you?"

Hunt was, but he didn't say so. Instead, he told her:

"If you don't mind, I think I'll wait."

Apparently, she didn't mind. After she had sent off the specious, supplicating telegram—"Race up two hundred and save a life," it read—she entered without large show of reluctance into a discussion of the new movie comedy at the Bijou. She, it seemed, had seen it, too.

"Harold," she agreed, "is always a scream. Did you see him in—"

At which, with the telephone jingling behind her, she begged Sergeant Hunt's pardon; reached up to her bob for the pencil that wasn't there, discovered it elsewhere and murmured in-

to the phone: "Your name, address and number, please?"

She was silent for a little after that, but when her pencil had ceased its race across the yellow blank she spoke once more into the telephone, and at greater length; and Hunt, thrilling to the voice, hung as one enchanted upon her words.

An hour passed. The comedy thoroughly reviewed, title for title and laugh for laugh, the topic took a geographical turn. Miss Mollie Shannon—oh, Hunt had *that* out of her in the first reel—had made a trip to New York once. She'd liked it fine, what she'd had a chance to see of it. Was it such a terrible place to live as people—

Then the telephone rang again, as it had kept ringing every couple of minutes; and Miss Shannon's hand went of habit to her hair, and the color to her cheeks and the smile to her lips.

"This must be terrible for you," she said.

And Hunt told her—which was, for a change, the unadulterated truth:

"Don't mention it, Miss Shannon. I like to hear you talk on the phone."

"Tell me," the girl said, when that interruption was done with, "more about New York."

Sergeant Hunt told her more. He waxed lyric. All the poetry, all the passion of an Iowan with a piece of Los Angeles real estate to sell was his. The Lord Jehovah, said he, had carved New York out of the greatest block of his best material. All other places were fabricated out of whittlings.

A second hour passed, and Hunt continued on his subject.

"There isn't a better place in the world to live," he avowed. "Take a young couple, now, just married and not with a millionaire's income. They're just as well off in New York as a king and queen. The flats you can get for next to nothing—"

Reluctantly, Miss Shannon permitted her attention to be diverted. A boy had come from the rear of the

office, and was speaking to her. Commiseration was in her eyes when they returned to Hunt's.

"Maybe," she said, "you'd better go back to the hotel and wait."

"Why?" he asked.

"It—it might be a long wait."

"How's that?"

"I've had New York serviced, to see what had happened to your message. We've got a delivery on it, more than an hour ago. But there's been no answer filed."

"I've got plenty of patience," asserted Hunt. "Now, as I was saying, even out where the rents are cheap you'll get fine theaters—"

"Oh, good heavens!" exclaimed Miss Shannon.

It was her telephone, of course. She went to it.

"Name, please," she said mechanically. "Address? Phone number?"

Hunt watched her pencil gliding smoothly and swiftly over the telegraph blank.

A minute later, after her smooth voice had flowed back over the wire, she missed him at the counter. He was leaving, it seemed—had already reached the door. She was aghast at the little quiver at the corner of her mouth.

"Oh!" she called. "Then—then I'll phone the Shailer."

He was out before she realized that she knew no other name for him but "George."

A taxicab at that moment was rumbling along back from the railroad station, empty. She didn't see Hunt hail it.

"Know where Hammer Street is?" he asked briskly. "No. 61 is where I want to go. Let's be snappy!"

The cab, having traveled a fast mile, drew up in front of a narrow house in a two-story frame row. Hunt ran up the front steps and tugged gently at a porcelain-handled bell. The door opened a grudging inch. Hunt put his shoulder to it, and then it opened wider. The man who had put his eye to the

crack was a stranger—after the violence of the entrance a belligerent one. Hunt saw a fist coming, and moved his head out of its way. His own left fist shot out. The householder went down like a target rabbit in a rifle range.

From the floor above came a startled voice.

"Jerry! What is it?"

"Just a caller," Hunt sang back, "from police headquarters, New York." He started up the stairs, his pistol ahead of him. "If you won't be nice, Larkin, it's going to be you or me!"

CHAPTER VII

The Gap

"LARKIN'S downstairs, is he, then?" said Inspector Clancy. "It wasn't so bad, George." He reached a cigar across the desk and made a further amazing concession. "No; now I'll tell ye, it wasn't bad at all."

"I enjoyed the trip," said Sergeant Hunt. He put the prize cigar in one pocket and from another drew a tangle of softly shimmering opalescent beads. "What's become of the original package I don't know, boss; but, anyhow, these are the Darcy pearls."

The inspector stared, not in awe, but in wonder.

"For the love of Mike!" he ejaculated. "Sixty thousand they ask for it—and them no more than appendixes out of unhealthy oysters? Not out of my pocket they wouldn't get it; not if I owned all the pickles in the world!"

Hunt grinned.

"Yeah?" said he. "But what about Betty Simpson Spooner — if *she* thought she'd like 'em?"

"Hush!" warned the inspector. "I'm expectin' Mrs. Clancy this mornin', and any minute. Let's talk of other things. For instance, me boy, by what means did you lay your hand on Diamond Ed Larkin? Was it perhaps a

little bird whispered to you — a pigeon—”

“Nope. The one stool that helped me was the one put me wise to Larkin’s hook-up with Maggie Meany. The truth of it is that I got my tip off the Consolidated Telegraph Company. And I didn’t have to match a million dollars, either.”

“The hell you did! In Sharpsburg? And has the company different rules for different counties?”

“Not that I could tell you about.”

“Then what?”

Hunt lighted a cigarette and enjoyed his moment.

“By chance,” said he. “I discovered a hole in the Consolidated fence that you could drive elephants through. It was in their Sharpsburg office I found it out.”

“Describe to me,” commanded Inspector Clancy, “this hole.”

Sherlock Holmes at his artistic humblest could not have outmodestled Sergeant George Hunt.

“Nothing to it,” said he. “Now answer me this, inspector: once in awhile you send telegrams from home, don’t you?”

“I do.”

“And do you ring for a messenger when you want to get a wire off?”

“I do not. Devil with a messenger! I call up the telegraph company.”

“Sure. So does almost everybody these times. But how do you know they get your message right?”

“Don’t they read it back to me?”

“There you are! And when they read it back, they start with your own name and address, the way you gave it to them. Is it so?”

“You’re right.”

“So,” said Hunt, “was my hunch in Sharpsburg. After I discovered how easy it was to listen in on telegrams, I thought up a way of bluffing Larkin into sending one. I went into a newspaper office up there—broke down and confessed what I was in town for.”

Clancy’s eyebrows lifted.

“You don’t mean it!”

“It’s what I did. And yesterday morning half of the front page was full of Darcy and Larkin and me. It was bait for Diamond Ed, see? I figured to blast him loose. With the New York Bureau so close onto him I knew he’d get an itch in his foot; and my bet was that before he hauled freight he’d shoot a wire to Maggie, wising her.”

The inspector nodded.

“It stood to reason.”

“It was a good play, anyhow. Then, as soon as the telegraph office opened, I planted myself there with an alibi for sticking around that was good for all day. It was a telegram addressed to headquarters, asking myself for a loan. About noon it was when I heard a wire to Margaret Meany, New York, being repeated back over the telephone. On the repeat, I caught the address of the place where Larkin was dug in.”

Inspector Clancy nodded.

“Not bad,” said he. “Not bad, not bad! It’s too bad I’ve made you a first grade sergeant already, Georgie, or I give you me promise I’d be making you one now.”

Hunt was studying the toe of his oxford.

“If you did want to do something, if you insisted,” he mused aloud, “what would you say to a couple of days furlough and a trip back to Sharpsburg?”

Inspector Clancy found the idea a bit breath-taking.

He puffed over it.

“It could be done,” said he. “At your wish, George, it *will* be done. But what wildness of your blood is it that craves to be riding alone on trains over the face of the land?”

Sergeant Hunt was gazing out the window at a cloudless spring sky.

“This trip,” he said purposefully, “I aim to be riding back with better company than Larkin!”



With a weapon drawn in a flash, he menaced the others beyond

The Accidental Sheriff

A Blue Poker Chip Carved With the Number Thirteen Lay on the Chest of the Murdered Man

By Edward Parrish Ware

IF Clay Sloane had not been well aware of the true proportions of the job he was bidding for when he ran for the office of sheriff of Pawnee County, Oklahoma, he would have realized it in full directly after he was elected.

"The toughest county in Oklahoma!" Jed Allen, a rancher, declared on the morning Sloane took office. "The sheriff's job has to be handled kind of careful, son, I'm advising you. How come a youngster like you to git it is something I can't noways figger out. A sort of accident, on account no older and smarter men would risk holding the job. Anyhow, you better jist be satisfied to draw your county-warrants when due, and kind of let things rock along like they will. Noth-

ing unusual in a sheriff of this county doing that. All of 'em has, and, account of that, some of 'em air still alive and pursuing happiness. Take my advice, son, and go easy."

Others advised Clay in the same strain, and the advice was well meant. It made a distinct impression on the young sheriff, but the impression was not at all what the advisers hoped for.

"If Pawnee County has been run along such lines as that," Clay decided, "it's time somebody took a chance and tried to straighten things out. There's always got to be a pioneer in new things, and I reckon I'd as well be that pioneer."

Nothing unusual happened during the first month of his administration. No rustling, robbing, killing or lynch-

ing was reported. Just routine work. Very quiet. But Sloane was not misled by it. Pawnee County was inhabited to a large extent by turbulent, law-scorning men, and they would not have reformed any to speak of.

Day was just breaking, on a morning early in the second month of his tenure of office, when a pounding on the door of his room aroused Sloane from slumber. He sat up, yawned a time or two, then opened the door.

Bart Lowell, a rancher from the Dry Creek Basin neighborhood, stood in the hall, his manner betraying excitement.

"There's been hell broke loose, Clay!" he exclaimed. "Jase Strayer was waylaid an' kilt some time last night, an' there's a bunch of fellers, led by Jase's pardner, Hack Benson, after Dave Barlow. They 'low he done it!"

Sloane, taken by surprise for an instant, recovered quickly.

"How long since the fellows rode out after Barlow?" he queried, dressing with speed.

"They was at my place an hour ago," was the answer. "Come by fur me, but I told 'em I'd have nothin' to do with a lynchin'. Soon as they was gone, ridin' fur Dave's place, I rid here, hell-fur-leather."

Bart Lowell, counted among the more prosperous ranchers in the district, was tall, dark, middle-aged. Sloane knew little about him, save that he always attended strictly to his own business when in town, never got drunk or sat in a game of poker, but was, in spite of that, rather well liked by his fellow citizens.

"Glad you came," Clay told him. "I swore when I took office in this county," he went on, as they headed for the corral where he kept his horse, "that I'd not stand for lynching. Seems like Benson and his crowd don't take that seriously. They're going to lynch a man. Well, we'll see about that."

Five minutes later the two were rid-

ing toward the south, with ten miles between them and Dave Barlow's ranch-house. They did not spare their mounts.

"What gave them the notion that Dave did it?" Clay called across to Lowell.

"Don't know, unless it was because ever'body knows that Dave needs money, an' that he lost a wad to Jase in a poker game last night," was the reply. "They found Jase in that little dry gulch on th' north of his pasture fence—shot through th' head. His cayuse come up to th' house some time before day, an' Hack Benson heard it. Jase didn't come in, so he went out. Th' reins was over th' saddle-horn, an' that started Hack huntin' fur his pardner. He found him in th' draw, right by th' trail frum Buffalo Lick."

They rode on, the miles falling swiftly behind. At length they came to the boundary line of the Barlow place, and, shortly after crossing it, both men dug in their spurs and rode hotly toward a clump of cottonwoods a quarter-mile off and just below the house.

A grim, sinister group, probably a dozen men, stood under one of the trees. In their midst, mounted, was a man with his arms bound behind him, a rope round his neck.

"They got him!" Sloane gritted.

The next moment he brought his broncho up skidding, leaped down, and confronted the crowd.

"I had a foolish notion that Judge Lynch was dead," he drawled, glance holding fast upon the face of Hack Benson. "Seems like you fellows have resurrected him. How come you try to pull a lynching in this county? Don't you know there's a sheriff, a jail, and a court of law doing business in Buffalo Lick?"

"Better keep out of this, Clay!"

Benson, a tall, shifty-eyed man, rasped out the warning, and the others—Ross Kilgore, Tip Runyon and Buck

Stamper, all punchers and neighbors, among them—scowled disapprovingly at the sheriff.

"Reckin yuh kain't do much to help, Clay," Dave Barlow, his young face defiant, told him hoarsely. "These damned coyotes aim to string me up, whether or no, an' I figger they will. But I didn't kill Jase Strayer, as they'll probably find out later. Don't git yoreself all shotten up, when there ain't no chance to help!"

"Shut up!" Sloane snapped. "I'll use my own judgment about that! Benson," he went on, addressing the dead man's partner, "you seem to be in th' lead here. Take that rope off Dave's neck—pronto!"

Benson eyed him defiantly, his right hand sliding down to his belt.

"Barlow waylaid my pardner an' kilt him!" he declared. "Then he robbed him! He's goin' to swing fur it! Jist whut does yuh aim to do about it?"

"Never mind that!" Clay told him. "You say Dave killed Jase. How do you know that?"

"Fur one thing, Dave needs money mighty bad," Benson replied. "You wasn't at that poker game in Shane's place last night, so yuh probably ain't in th' know about Dave losin' them five hundred dollars he got fur th' bunch of calves he sold last week, 'stead of payin' some of his debts with th' money. Anyhow, he lose th' five hundred to Jase.

"Shane was devlin' Dave about losin' twelve straight hands, an' bein' down to his last blue chip. Th' next hand would be th' thirteenth. Dave laughed, and said thirteen was his lucky number. He took that last blue chip and cut th' number, 13, on it with his pocket-knife.

"Well, th' thirteen-chip win that hand fur Dave. It kept right on winnin' fur awhile, then turned ag'in' him. Fact is, Dave went broke. But when he won th' first pot, he took that thirteen-chip an' dropped it into a pocket

of his vest. Said he aimed to keep it fur a luck-piece."

Benson fished in a pocket and brought out a blue disk, holding it up for Sloane's inspection.

"This here is that thirteen-chip!" he exclaimed. "When I found Jase, afore daylight this mornin', an' lifted him up, this here chip rolled offen him onto th' ground. So I figgers that Barlow dropped it outten his vest pocket while he was prowlin' Jase fur his wad. It accuses Dave of th' killin', just like it had a tongue! Now, Mr. Sheriff, whut you got to say to that?"

Sloane said nothing. His eyes sought those of the man on the horse.

"What about that chip, Dave?" he asked.

"I didn't have it when I rode outa Buffalo Lick!" came the denial. "So I couldn't have lost it there by th' draw, even if I'd done th' killin'!"

"Yeah!" Ross Kilgore exclaimed derisively. "Reckon yuh lost th' chip, Dave? Huh? That th' way of it? Lost it afore yuh rid fur th' draw to way-lay Jase?"

"If I was down off this broncho, an' had th' rope off my hands, yuh wouldn't say that to me!" Barlow gritted. "Yuh're brave enough, yuh damned buzzard, long as I'm helpless!"

"Hold on!" Sloane commanded. "This ain't getting anywhere! Listen, Benson—I told you to take that rope off Dave's neck, and I meant it!"

Before Benson could draw, and before any of his group could interfere, Sloane leaped beside him and jammed a gun against his middle. With a weapon, drawn in a flash, in his left hand, he menaced the others beyond.

"I'm not saying that Dave Barlow did kill Jase, or that he didn't!" he declared sharply. "I'm saying, though, that he's going to have a trial in the matter—and not be hung up here and now! Take that rope off, and untie his hands—quick!"

There was muttering, and a disposition to rebel.

"Better do whut Clay says, men!"

Bart Lowell, known as a dead shot and a game man, ranged himself beside the sheriff, both guns drawn.

"Yeah," Sloane drawled. "For I aim to shoot hell outa Hack, bad as I'd hate to do it, if you try any monkey-business! Better tell 'em to get at it, Hack. I mean business!"

"Ontie th' damned killer, men!" Benson called, or rather, choked. "This damned accidental sheriff done got me dead to rights!"

Since there seemed to be no help for it, Kilgore and Runyon obeyed the orders of their leader, and presently Dave Barlow was, for the time at least, out of jeopardy.

"You ride for Buffalo Lick, Barlow!" Sloane ordered. "I'll hold these fellows here. When you get there, turn yourself over to Kinney, the jailer. I'll be along pretty soon."

Barlow leaped to his saddle and rode. After he had gained a sufficient lead, Sloane holstered his guns.

"Now, that poker-chip," he said. "It's evidence. Hand it over."

Benson did so reluctantly.

"Remember," he warned, "all us fellers knows about th' chip—an' yuh're mighty right it's evidence! That poker-chip is enough to hang Barlow on, an' it will!"

Clay stood holding the blue disk, on one side of which the number 13 had been deeply cut. He said nothing. Finally he put the chip in his pocket, and turned toward his horse.

"Where were you, Hack," he asked, pausing with hand on pommel, "that you didn't ride out of Buffalo Lick with Jase last night?"

"I rid fur home two full hours afore he did," Benson explained. "Jase stayed to celebrate a little, an' I didn't keer to keep him company. Does that answer yore question?"

"It answers it," Clay said, mounting. "Maybe you can prove your whereabouts, if called on to do it?"

"Don't know that I kin," was the

reply. "Jase an' me batched, yuh know, an' we ain't keepin' any hands right now. Reckin I'd have a hard time provin' where I was—if I had to. But, by God, I won't have to! That poker-chip lets ever'body out in this killin', except th' one that done it! Git away frum that, Mr. Sheriff!"

There was a chorus of agreement from the others.

"You left somebody there with Jase, I reckon?" Clay asked.

"Shore. Nat Gowdy," Benson replied.

"I'm riding that way. Suppose you show me where the body is."

Benson nodded surlily, but mounted and rode off. He was followed by Clay and Lowell.

The rest of the crowd, now that the sheriff was present, seemed to have got over their lust for a lynching. Most of them were law-abiding, ordinarily, but the evidence had been strong against Barlow and their ire had, quite naturally, risen hotly.

Arrived at the spot where Strayer had been attacked, as shown by the blood-splotched soil, Sloane asked everybody but Benson to remain at a distance. Dismounting, he followed the rancher down into the draw where Nat Gowdy stood guard over the body.

"Looks like that hole might have been made by a forty-five," he agreed, when Benson pointed out the wound. "As you say, Barlow carries one. So do a lot of men hereabouts. You pack a forty-four, I notice."

"Yeah. Always favored that size."

Clay stood near where the body lay, eyes searching the ground around it. After a bit he said:

"The body was hauled down here, not thrown. You can see where it was dragged down into the draw, and across to where it now is."

"Well, whut of that?" Benson demanded.

"Nothing much," Sloane told him. "Just pointing out that the killer dragged his victim down here."

"Th' killer, huh? 'Tryin' to figger Dave outa th' play?"

"I'm not trying to," Clay answered. "Maybe Dave did the killing. It looks a lot like it, I'll agree. But on the other hand, maybe he didn't. I'm trying to find out. In the meantime, he's safe in jail, where he'll stay until he's condemned or acquitted. That goes as it lays, Benson, and you had better think it over, in case you get a lynching fever again."

What the cowman said in reply did not register with Sloane, it being a muttered remark about Clay's alleged accidental election. His eyes were intent upon an object about ten feet from where he stood—a small, round bit of wood, lying on the trail the body had made when it was dragged into the draw.

He picked the bit of wood up, stared at it for an instant, then dropped it into a pocket.

"Whut did yuh find?" Benson demanded.

"Nothing important," Clay replied. "Guess I'm done here."

He started away, then turned.

"Are your boots half-soled, Benson?" he asked suddenly.

"Hell, no!" the cowman exclaimed, a bit surprised. "How come you ask that?"

"Let me see," Clay ordered.

Wonderingly, Benson exhibited both boot soles. They were not half-soled. He asked Gowdy the same question, and the puncher, sitting down, raised both boots for inspection. They showed no evidence of a cobbler's attention.

"Who, beside you and Gowdy, came into the draw after you discovered Jase?" Clay asked.

"Nobody. I made th' fellers stay out, figurin' th' coroner would raise hell if th' place was to git all tromped over."

"Good!" Sloane applauded. "I'll send the coroner out. Maybe you'd better stick around until he comes."

The sheriff mounted, and headed for Buffalo Lick, Bart Lowell riding with him.

"Looks kind of bad fur Dave, I'm thinkin'," the cowman opined, shaking his head lugubriously. "That damned poker chip! How else could it of got there, unless it was dropped by Dave?"

"It 'll take a lot of explaining, that unlucky chip," Clay agreed. "Wonder why Dave kept it? Were you in the game, Bart? Maybe you can explain it."

"I never played poker in my life," Lowell told him, "so wasn't in th' game. But I seen whut passed, standin' there by th' table. After th' 13-chip turned against Dave, th' crowd all begun joshin' of him. But he jist laughed, sayin' he aimed to keep it, because he still believed in it. An' he left th' saloon with th' cussed thing in his pocket."

"And it turns up on the scene of a murder," Clay added.

"I'd like to help Dave, any way I can," Bart said. "I'm right sorry fur th' boy. Reckin maybe—Damn it all, Sloane! I might of been responsible, in a way, fur him pullin' that robbery, if he did pull it!"

Clay gave him a questioning glance.

"Yuh see, Dave owes me two thousand, borried money," the rancher explained. "Loaned it to him two years ago. Extended payment once, makin' it fall due about two weeks frum now. Last night I got sorta sore, seein' Dave lose a fourth of th' amount due me, an' knowin', too, that he'd be askin' fur another extension. So when I seen him in front of th' Horseshoe Restaurant, after th' game was over, I told him I'd be unable to renew th' note again. Maybe, now, I hadn't ought to of said that, jist when he'd had some hard luck."

"Speaking of that mortgage, and what you told him last night, it looks more than ever like Dave might have gone after that roll he knew Jase car-

ried," Clay said. "I like the boy, but I'm not playing any favorites in this business. If he's guilty, I aim to know it—and the same goes in case he isn't."

"You're plumb right, Clay!" Bart approved. "But tell Dave, when yuh see him, that I don't aim to push him on that mortgage."

Sloane went directly to the jail, after notifying the coroner, and found Dave seated on a cot in a single cell.

"Tell me something. What became of that poker-chip?" Clay demanded of him.

"I'm bettin' yuh won't believe me, when I tell yuh," Dave said hopelessly, "but here's th' facts: After I left th' game last night, I got to cussin' myself somethin' awful about losin' money that wasn't really mine. Maybe it was because I'd jist lost a lot an' was feelin' sorta sore, but anyhow I swore off playin' poker. Shore did, Clay!

"I shoved a finger in my vest pocket after a match, an' felt that damned poker-chip in it. Th' feel of it made me plumb mad. I took it out an' sailed it into Buffalo Creek, me bein' right handy to it. An' that's th' truth, so help me!"

"Sounds damned fishy, if you ask me," Sloane told him. "A jury would laugh at you if you asked it to believe that tale. I'm not saying it ain't true, understand. Maybe it is. Where were you standing when you threw the chip away?"

"In front of the Horseshoe Restaurant."

"Anybody with you?"

"No. By muhself."

"You had a talk with Bart Lowell," Clay reminded. "Maybe he saw you throw it away?"

"If Bart seen me do it, he didn't say nothin'. Told me he wouldn't renew my note, so I reckon I'll lose my place. That's whut Jase an' that shifty-eyed pardner of his has been wantin' to see me do all along, seein' that I've got th' only livin' water in th' Dry Basin country. But Bart'll beat

'em to it, I'm glad to say! He's got th' inside!"

"Yeah," Clay agreed absently. "When did you leave town last night?"

"About ten o'clock."

"Ride straight to the ranch?"

"Yeah. Went to bed right after I got there. Had jist been up about an hour when that gang rid in on me this mornin'. Had I knowed whut they was after, they'd never 'a' got me. I don't trust that yaller-haired, shifty-eyed, heavy-jawed Benson. Not a little bit! He'd crook his own brother!"

"Are you certain that chip went into the creek?" Clay queried, paying no attention to Dave's outburst.

"I thought so," was the answer. "But it seems not. How could it of gone in th' water, then show up among Jase's clothes? Answer me that!"

"Maybe I will. Say, the half sole on one of your boots is kind of loose, ain't it?" Clay queried abruptly, eyes on Barlow's feet.

"Why—why, darned if I know," Dave said, puzzled. "I ain't noticed it."

He sat down on the cot, elevated first one foot and then the other, looking searchingly at each. The half soles were perfectly firm.

"Yuh're off yore nut, Clay," he said, getting up. "My soles is all tight."

"My mistake," Sloane apologized. "Well, I'll be going. Sit tight, Dave, and I'll see what I can turn up. If you killed Jase, you'll hang—and good riddance. If you're innocent, I aim to see what can be done to prove it. So long."

Sloane went to Shane's saloon, sat down at the table that had been used the night before for the now famous poker game, called for a drink, and for all the poker chips the house had on hand. Wonderingly, Buck Shane, the proprietor, complied.

The sheriff examined all the chips, a frown wrinkling his brow. After a bit he got up, forgetting to drink his whisky, and went out. He paid a visit

to the local drug store, then went across to his office, where he took the poker-chip 13 out and examined it with care. Five minutes later he was riding for Big Boulder, the railway town three miles away.

Sloane's business in Big Boulder did not occupy him long, and late afternoon found him riding south and west, in the direction of the Strayer and Benson ranch. Skirting the ranch, he rode slowly onward until, at nightfall, he reached Bart Lowell's spread.

Lowell grazed what was, for that part of the country, a big bunch of cattle, employing three punchers most of the year. Bart's was a bachelor establishment, but he had sleeping quarters in a small house which had been built by the former owner. His meals were eaten with his men, in a kitchen adjoining the bunk house. Supper was in progress when Clay arrived, and he was invited to sit down and have at it.

There were three punchers at the table, and one of them was Ross Kilgore, who had been one of the lynching party that morning.

"Howdy, Ross," Sloane greeted. "Thought you were riding for Tom Alcox, over on Walnut Creek."

"Yeah, I been ridin' fur Tom," Ross replied. "But reckon I'll put in with Bart frum now on."

"Ross used to work fur me, Sloane," Lowell explained, "down in Texas. He's a top-hand, an' I need one right now."

"Couldn't have a better one, I reckon," Clay said absently, as he tackled a slab of beef. "Right good chuck, Bart," he complimented. "Your waddies are lucky."

Supper over, Sloane and Lowell retired to a room in the rancher's quarters used as an office. Lowell sat down at his desk, swung his feet to the top, leaned back and lit a smoke. Clay took a chair against the wall opposite.

"There's some points in this Barlow matter that I wanted to talk to you

about," he said, lighting a smoke. "Some right queer features. You're a dang good listener, Bart, so I'd like just to run things off for you, then get your opinion."

"Go to it!" the rancher exclaimed heartily. "I'd like to help yuh, any way I can."

"Sure," agreed Sloane. "So here goes: One thing in particular I can't understand," he said quietly, steady eyes upon those of the cowman, "is how you overlooked a bet in what would otherwise have been a cinch case against Dave Barlow. How you, a smart fellow enough, Bart, made such a big mistake in the matter of poker chips."

Lowell ceased smoking, let his feet gently down to the floor, and stared unbelievably at the speaker. It required a second effort before he could command his tongue in speech.

"What's that, Sloane?" he asked. "I didn't catch yore remarks."

"Yes, you caught what I said, Bart," Clay replied. "And all the stalling you can do will not help your situation any. Incidentally, keep both your hands where I can see 'em. Understand?"

"Why—why, hell, Sloane!" Lowell blurted stammeringly. "Yuh must of gone off yore nut entirely! Whut in hell yuh mean, handin' me that kind of talk?"

"Easy, Bart!" Clay cautioned. "Don't get all het up. Here's the way I doped things out—and how I came to know positively that you killed Jase Strayer:

"Dave Barlow swore off playing poker last night," he stated, "and, in witness of the pact with himself, threw that poker-chip 13 into Buffalo Creek. You happened to see him do it. That gave you an idea, and you proceeded to act on it.

"Dave's piece is valuable to stockmen because it's got an everlasting flow of water from a big spring on it. Dave, knowing his stuff, has refused to sell

He hoped for big money later. You are not so well situated, nor is the Strayer-Benson outfit. Both of you lease rights to water from Dave. Both of you coveted the water hole, and both set out to get it. Strayer and Benson figured to keep Dave broke, if they could, and found it fairly easy to do, on account of Dave's liking for poker. Dave would have to sell to save his place, and they figured to buy. You figured to get it under foreclosure of a mortgage.

"But you knew that Dave would sell to Strayer and Benson, rather than see you get it under foreclosure. He'd get more that way. You wanted the ranch badly. When you saw Dave throw that chip away you figured a way to get the water hole, get Dave hung, and at the same time get two thousand easy dollars. Jase's roll.

"You never played a game of poker in your life, according to your own words. Poker chips all being the same size and general appearance, you had no other thought than that they are all composed of the same material. You thought wrong. There is a difference in poker chips.

"There's the older kind, made of a plaster of Paris composition, and the newer kind, made of pressed paper. It is difficult to distinguish between them—for an onlooker, I mean. One who handles chips often would be able to detect the difference in weight, also he would note that the paper ones are almost noiseless. But, knowing nothing about chips, you took a lot for granted.

"A poker chip is a poker chip, you thought. A blue one would naturally be exactly like any other blue one, anywhere on earth. So, seeing a certain blue one tossed into the creek, you decided to duplicate it for purposes of your own. You were cagy enough not to apply at the drug store in Buffalo Lick for a box of poker chips, but got them at Big Boulder instead. I learned that to-day.

"You bought a box of the *paper kind* there last night!

"With your box of chips in hand, you set out for a point by which you knew Jase would pass, somewhat the worse for his celebration in town. You took out a blue chip and carved the number, 13, on one side. Reproduced the one you had seen Dave carve that afternoon.

"If Jase is found killed, out here on the trail, and that poker chip discovered on the scene, Dave will be accused, and nothing can save him. To make myself strong, I'll play friendly to Dave, and nobody will ever so much as suspect me.'

"So ran your thoughts, Bart. You killed Jase, robbed him, dragged his body into the draw, planted the poker chip, and beat it for home. To your astonishment, Benson and his bunch called on you to help lynch Dave—and that wasn't what you wanted. A lynching is never final—except to the party lynched. There is always room for doubt. You wanted Dave hung legally, and the matter closed forever. The evidence was so strong there could be no escaping the legal noose. So you sent your man Kilgore along to delay the game until you could get me.

"The minute I laid eyes on that chip which Benson gave me," Clay went on, "I knew there had been a hitch somewhere. Benson, who had guarded it like it was gold, had not noticed the difference. Too worked up to notice anything but that 13.

"All the chips used at Shane's are the old type, so the one Dave had must have been the same. Somebody who had never handled Shane's chips had pulled that killing. My mind leaped to you, Bart, a man who never plays poker.

"That wasn't enough. But I had something else. The insteps of a puncher's boots are usually reënforced with wooden pegs. Sometimes a peg is lost—just as there is one gone from your left boot now. I noticed it when

you elevated your feet to the desk, so didn't have to ask you if your boots were half-soled, or some other stall," he added, grinning. "You lost the peg, Bart, when you were dragging Jase in to the draw. I found it.

"So, Lowell, the use of a pressed-paper poker-chip instead of a composition one, and the loss of a shoe-peg, seems to indicate— Drop it!"

Sloane suddenly broke off, slapped a gun out of a holster and covered Lowell, who had made a dive for his weapon.

"Put your hands on top of the table!" the sheriff commanded.

Lowell obeyed, and Clay stepped over and removed his guns.

"Shove yourself back from the desk!" he ordered sharply.

The cowman obeyed, and Clay, a moment later, produced a box of paper poker chips from a drawer—new ones, with one blue chip missing.

"Reckon you'd better get up and come along with me," the sheriff said, his voice coldly contemptuous. "I don't like to have young Barlow warming that cell for you any longer than absolutely necessary. Get up, and hold out your hands!"

"Some other time, Sloane, maybe—but not right now!"

The voice, brittle with threat, grimly exultant, came from behind, and Clay stiffened in his tracks. He waited.

"Now, drop that gun!"

Sloane obeyed, then faced the speaker in obedience to a command.

Ross Kilgore stood in the doorway, six-gun in hand. Back of him, grinning in enjoyment of the occasion, were the two punchers the sheriff had seen at the supper table. One of them, Ben Chase, crossed over and took Sloane's second gun.

"Yuh turned that trick pretty damned neat!" Lowell cried in relief. "Jist when I was beginnin' to think, Ross, that yuh was goin' to fail me! Well, Mr. Accidental Sheriff, whut do think about things now?"

"Looks like that poker-chip is still carrying a jinx," Clay replied. "What puzzles me, though, is how you hombres expect to get away with this play. Now you've got me dead to rights, what are you aiming to do with me?"

"We know yuh, Sloane," Lowell answered, grinning. "Know yuh'r a secretive sorta cuss, never tellin' nobody whut's on yore mind, until yuh'r ready to shoot, so to speak. Chances is nobody knows that yuh suspected me. Anyhow, I'm goin' to figger thataway. Now listen, yuh damned wiseheimer, while I tells yuh whut th' rest of th' play is!

"I figgered when yuh showed up this afternoon that yuh might have got somethin' on me, so I wised my bunch up to keep tabs on yuh. That's how-come Ross an' th' rest got th' drop on yuh. They ain't got no more love fur a damned sheriff than they has fur a rattler, so what we aims to do to yuh will come plumb easy to 'em.

"We aims to trail yuh along with us, Sloane, until we gits a certain bunch of steers clean to whereat we aims to take 'em, then soak yuh good an' plenty with a gun-bar'l an' leave yuh in some outa th' way place whereat nothin' but th' buzzards and coyotes 'll find yuh. Yuh ain't wuth wastin' ca'tridge on. Now, is that plumb clear to yuh?"

"Sure is," Clay replied. "You fellows have been doing a bit of rustling on the side, huh? Right interesting. Now, listen to me a minute. You're dead wrong when you think that I came out here alone. Does that kind of surprise you?"

Sloane paused, glancing from one to another of the group. He did not expect to put his stall over. What he wanted was to get them to concentrate on what he was saying, instead of on him. He succeeded.

"Won't work, Sloane!" Ross Kilgore declared, laughing skeptically. "Yuh're playin' a lone hand in this, an' yore stall won't help yuh any!"

Clay thought it might. While he was talking he had edged nearer to the open window by which he had been standing when Kilgore and the others appeared. The window offered a slim chance. But a slim chance was better than the certainty awaiting him a trifle farther along the trail.

"Yeah, that's what you fellows think," he said, laughing grimly. "But this time I played it a bit different. Left my posse in th' timber, with instructions to come on here if I failed to get back—"

At that juncture Kilgore, evidently impressed, shot a glance toward Lowell—and Clay acted.

Feet first, he hurled himself through the window. A gun cracked behind him, but the bullet missed—and he came to earth solidly on his feet.

Guns roared spitefully in the room, their reports mixed with yells and oaths.

"Out an' after him!" Lowell bawled.

Against just such an emergency as had befallen, Sloane had prepared. In the pockets of his saddle were a pair of six-guns, and he made for them.

From the house they poured, Lowell in the lead.

"Go fur his broncho!" he yelled. "Cut him off frum th' stable an' corral! If he gits away now we're all done fur!"

Clay reached his horse, leaped to the saddle and snatched his guns out of the pockets. There was moonlight enough to make objects distinguishable.

Lowell's men scattered, two running toward the corral to make sure the sheriff could not get himself a mount there, while a third ran swiftly toward where his horse had been left.

Sloane waited.

The moonlight revealed Ross Kilgore coming on the run. A moment, and the puncher was beside him, swinging his gun up.

"Here he is!" he yelled. "I got him, fellers! Put them paws up, Sloane—"

A gun in Clay's hand roared, and Kilgore crumpled up on the ground. Lowell, under the impression that Ross must have done the shooting, yelled:

"Did yuh git him?"

Leaping his horse over the prostrate body, Clay sent him straight for Lowell. A gun roared behind him, and a slug bit into the flesh of his right hip. The men at the corral were opening up.

Lowell darted for cover behind a tree, reached it, and sent a stream of lead toward Sloane. One slug caught his mount in a vital spot, and he went down with a suddenness that sent Clay over his head. In a flash he was up, his guns turned on two shadowy forms near the corral. One dropped in a heap, cursing savagely. The other disappeared in the shadows back of him.

"You're done, Lowell!" Clay called. "Two of your men are down, and the other has hightailed it! What about it? Ready to give up?"

"Not yet!"

The answer came from behind—and Sloane wheeled to face Lowell who, in the darkness, had changed his position and come up in the rear.

Two guns roared, flame from their muzzles leaping like orange streamers in the night. A yell of agony blended with the racket of gunfire, and Lowell, gun-hand limply at his side, stumbled a few steps toward Sloane, then crashed forward on his face, twitched and lay still.

He was dead when Clay reached him.

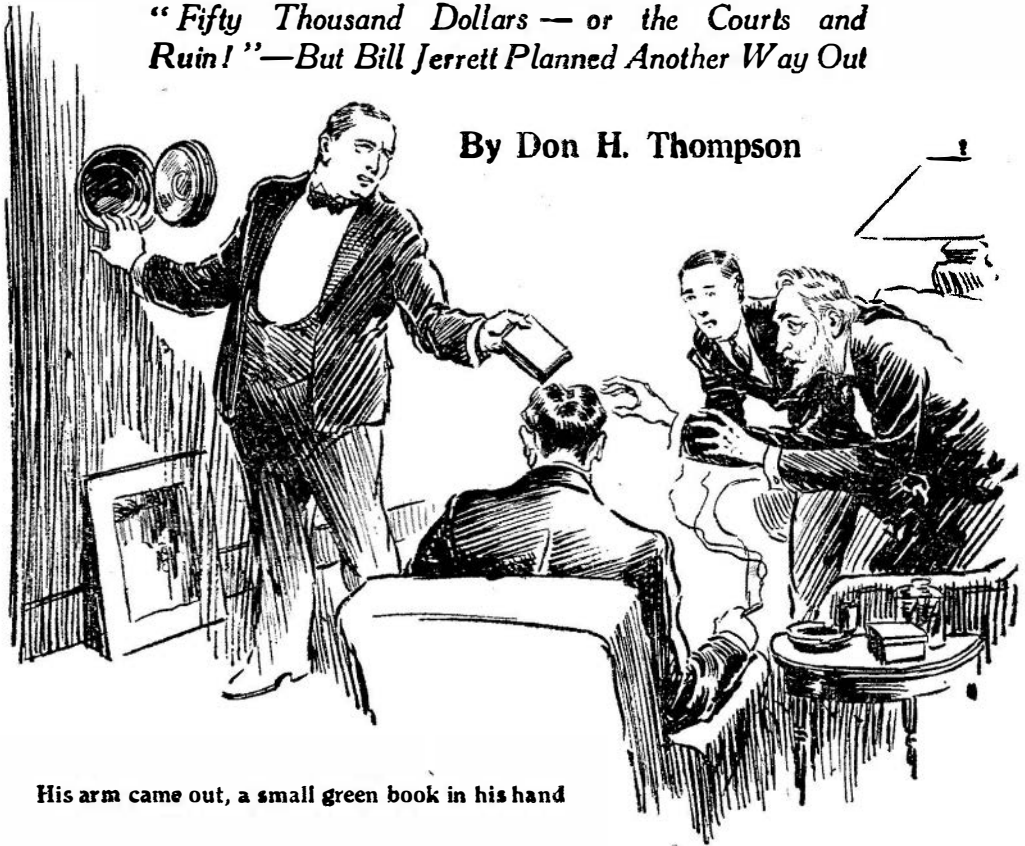
"I reckon," said Hack Benson, a few days later, "that we called th' turn when some of us allowed that Clay's election was plumb accidental. But there ain't nothin' accidental about th' way he's done dug in on th' job. Not by a blame sight! He's about th' most intentional sheriff I ever seed or heered of!"

And if anybody in Buck Shane's saloon, where Hack made the declaration, disagreed with him, he kept his objections to himself.

The Quest of the Green Book

"Fifty Thousand Dollars — or the Courts and Ruin!" — But Bill Jerrett Planned Another Way Out

By Don H. Thompson



His arm came out, a small green book in his hand

ON a raw February day, Bill Jerrett sprawled in a leather chair behind his littered desk, his smoke wreaths drifting in the muggy air. Melancholy twilight had smothered down outside, and a few flakes of vagrant snow drifted past the window. The huge office building was deathly still. Jerrett did not know why he stayed on. He had no stomach for the legal business which was spread out before him, yet he seemed to lack the energy to struggle into his coat and make his way to the club for a solitary dinner.

"Bored," he muttered to his cigarette. "Must snap out of it."

He heard the outer door open and close. A moment later a man stood on the threshold of the inner office. He

was an old man, but tall and straight, with an aquiline nose and thin, tight lips above a pointed white beard. His dark eyes were bloodshot, as though he had been sleeping badly for some time.

"Are you Mr. Jerrett?"

"I am." Jerrett did not change his position in the chair. "Come in and sit down."

The old man deposited his hat and stick upon the desk and sat facing the young lawyer, staring at him strangely.

"My name is Hayward Carpenter," he said in a voice which vibrated with excitement. "I was sent here by Judge Huxley, my attorney, to enlist your services in an extremely delicate matter which I am praying you will be able to adjust."

Jerrett smiled wryly. He had heard

much of Hayward Carpenter. Wall Street. Many millions. Conservative society. Dull as ditchwater. His delicate matter was probably some difficult legal question.

"I was just thinking," said Jerrett, "of going to Palm Beach for a short vacation. I need a rest."

"You must not, sir!" exclaimed Carpenter. There was a note of despair in his voice which caught and held the younger man's attention. "Really, you must stay here and help me. You are my last hope in a terrible affair which threatens the life and happiness of an innocent woman and the good name of a respectable family."

Jerrett sat up. His gray eyes had that brilliancy which always lighted them at the hint of a mystery.

"Tell me about it," he said.

The old man took a spare pinch of snuff from a silver box. For a moment he sat, snuffing over its bite; then he restored the box to a waistcoat pocket and began to talk in a low, even voice.

"No doubt you have heard of my daughter, Dorothy. Perhaps you remember the accounts of her wedding, some three years ago, to Gifford Bowen and the subsequent sudden and tragic death of her young husband. He passed away quite suddenly and—"

"I remember," said Jerrett nodding.

Hayward Carpenter inserted a finger between his throat and his collar—puling at it as though it choked him.

"As far as the world knew," he went on, "it was a happy marriage; but beneath the surface was a terrible tragedy. Bowen was a sick man mentally, a man quite mad. His most persistent delusion was that his wife was untrue to him, and he made her life miserable with his petty persecutions.

"Dorothy confided in me. We decided that the marriage was a failure, a great mistake, and we decided to institute proceedings for a divorce. It was then that Bowen played the trump card which he had been holding for

just such a contingency. He informed my daughter that he had been keeping a diary in which he had written all the fantastic imaginings of his disordered mind, and he threatened to make it public when the suit was filed. He even read some of the passages to me, terrible accounts of how he had trailed his wife when she went to meet other men. I knew that these ravings were ridiculous, but I was also aware of the fact that Bowen had contrived to make them sound very real.

"Dorothy insisted upon dropping the case, rather than drag me through the courts. You can imagine, Mr. Jerrett, what the newspapers would do to me."

"I can imagine," said Jerrett gravely. "Go on."

"Six months later," the old man resumed, "Bowen was told that he was headed for the grave. It was then that this fiend wrote into that diary the sentences which have haunted me day and night. God, I'll never forget them. He tortured me by reading them to me. He wrote: 'My wife Dorothy is plotting my death. I am convinced that she is slowly poisoning me with some insidious drug.' A few weeks later he died.

"I made every effort to find that diary after his death, but it was no use. The green book had disappeared. For a year we lived in fear. Nothing happened and we began to hope, began to make ourselves believe that the diary had been destroyed by Bowen before his death.

"Three days ago I got this through the mail."

He reached into an inside pocket of his frock coat, withdrew a letter and passed it to Jerrett. It read:

DEAR MR. CARPENTER:

One of my clients has in his possession a small green book which he believes you will be glad to purchase for a reasonable sum. You can open negotiations by calling me on the telephone at my office. Yours sincerely,

HAMILTON BROWNE.

Jerrett dropped the letter to the desk and whistled in amazement. Interest glowed in his eyes.

"Browne again!" he exclaimed. "I know this man, Mr. Carpenter. In fact, I've had one or two brushes with him. He is an attorney, once highly respected, who turned crooked and made a fortune through blackmail. He is a dangerous antagonist. By George, I'd like to clip his wings for him. He made me look rather foolish the last time I was retained to frustrate one of his little schemes."

Hayward Carpenter groaned and mopped his face with a handkerchief.

"How can it be done?" he demanded.

Jerrett grinned. He was on his feet now, alive, vibrant and eager.

"I confess I don't know," he said, "but we will certainly make an effort. You haven't been near this fellow?"

Carpenter shook his head.

"No. I didn't know what to do, so I did nothing for two days. Then I went to Judge Huxley and he sent me to you."

"Describe this book to me. What is it like?"

"It's a small book, about six by four inches, covered with green silk. It has, I should judge, about two hundred pages, and most of them have been written on with blue ink. I could easily identify it."

"You would be willing to pay almost any sum to recover it?"

Carpenter smiled bleakly.

"Of course, but I want some assurance that I will not be hounded forever by this jackal."

Jerrett considered.

"That," he said, "is the hitch. If you bought this book from Browne you would have to buy photostatic copies of it for the next twenty years. Now tell me, how did this diary find its way into the hands of the most unscrupulous blackmailer in the city? Who sold it to him?"

"I don't know," replied Carpenter.

"Can you guess?"

"Yes. Grayson is a possibility. He was Bowen's confidential secretary. Perhaps he knew of the existence of the book and took it as soon as he heard of Bowen's death. I believe the book was kept in the safe in Bowen's office."

"Good," said Jerrett. "That's a starting point. We'll start looking for Grayson to-night. I'll put some detectives on his trail. In the meantime I will arrange for a meeting with Browne, get his terms and see if I can worm anything out of him as to the whereabouts of the book. That's all we can do for the present. I'll keep you informed as the case progresses. Mr. Carpenter, and rest assured that I will do everything that can be done to defeat this man."

Hayward Carpenter trembled as he got out of his chair.

"I hope so," he said simply.

When he had closed the door behind his client, Jerrett seized a telephone directory and began searching for the home number of Mr. Hamilton Browne.

II

ON the carved and gilded balcony of Wong Foo's café, Bill Jerrett ate preserved fruits and drank Mandarin tea, his eyes upon the imitation teak door which led to Market Street. On the floor below Wong Foo's native orchestra struggled desperately with a jazz tune, and its product was good enough to lure one or two couples to the tiny dancing space. Jerrett watched them without interest.

Presently a short, dumpy man came in and spoke to the moon-faced head waiter, who pointed to the steps leading to the balcony. The man climbed the stairs and came over to Jerrett's table. It was Browne. He was a man of sixty, perhaps, smoothly shaved, carefully dressed. His features were round and almost expressionless, except the eyes, which were a deep

blue and were shaded by long, curling lashes.

He bowed cautiously to Jerrett.

"Good evening," he said softly. He got out of his overcoat and sat down at the table. "It is better that we meet here, for the present. We can talk and we won't be seen."

"Suits me," said Jerrett grimly.

"Did you bring the book?"

Browne chuckled low in his throat.

"Come, Jerrett," he said gently.

"Do you think I am that kind of a fool? That book is locked away." He rubbed his small, pudgy hands together, and a diamond sparkled in the dry light. "Money will bring it out, Jerrett, money, and nothing else. Don't try any of your tricks. You have a reputation for tricks."

"Very well," retorted Jerrett. "How much money do you want for the green book?"

"Fifty thousand dollars in cash."

"Umm. Quite a lot of money, isn't it?"

Browne smiled his oily smile.

"A trifle to Hayward Carpenter, a mere trifle."

"And if we don't pay?"

"Ah," breathed Browne, "then your client is going to have a very bad time of it, a very bad time indeed. Let me make this situation clear to you, Jerrett. There are certain persons in this city who have no reason to love old Carpenter, in fact, they have every reason in the world to hate him. It happens that these persons own a newspaper. It also happens that they were instrumental in electing the new district attorney. Does that show you where you stand?"

"In other words," said Jerrett bluntly, "you will turn the book over to these persons if we do not pay, and Mrs. Bowen and her father will be exposed in the newspapers?"

Browne struck the table with his fist.

"And Mrs. Bowen will be prosecuted for the murder of her husband!"

"That would hardly stand up,

Browne," protested Jerrett. "The evidence would be rather slim, you know."

"Slim, yes, but good enough to make a trial and the trial would ruin her. Think, man, what the newspapers could do with a case like that! It has everything, love, mystery, money!" Browne's eyes glittered at the thought.

Jerrett chose to ignore the idea.

"How much time do we get?" he demanded.

Browne frowned. He was afraid that too much time might be dangerous, for he was fully aware of Jerrett's ability to cope with seemingly hopeless situations.

"Five days," he said. "Telephone me your decision and I will tell you what I want done."

"Right." Jerrett lit a cigarette. "Rather a risky business you are in now, Browne. Fine chance to wind up in some nice penitentiary, what?"

Browne's round face reddened.

"You'll never put me there, Jerrett," he said calmly. "You're a pretty foxy little fellow, but you're out of your depth this time. And I'm warning you that one crooked move from you and all negotiations are off. I knew damned well Huxley would ring you in on this case. When I started out with it I told myself that Huxley was Carpenter's lawyer, and Huxley believes you are quite a fellow, so I knew I would have you to deal with. I've been careful, Jerrett, and this scheme is bomb-proof. The best thing you can do is to pay and forget it."

"Perhaps it is," agreed Jerrett. "But look here, Browne, suppose we pay, will that be an end to the matter?"

"Why wouldn't it be?"

"Why? Because you probably have plenty of copies and you will be around in thirty days to sell them. Isn't that correct?"

"That's my business," growled Browne, "and I've said all I've got to say to you. The next move is yours."

"Correct," said Jerrett, getting up from the table.

They parted on the sidewalk in front of the restaurant.

"Call me when you're ready to pay," said Browne.

"I'll call you," Jerrett promised.

The next four days were busy ones for Jerrett. His work lay neglected in his office while he combed the city for Grayson, the former secretary to Gifford Bowen. But not a sign of the man did he find. At a place where Grayson had lodged the landlady said that he had packed his bags with considerable haste and had departed, declaring that he was going to South America. The detectives hired by Jerrett had no better luck. They, too, returned empty handed.

It was then that Jerrett went to see Dorothy Carpenter Bowen and found her to be a pale, frail little woman who told her story in a halting voice. Her face was lined by the nervous strain which she had been under. She knew of no person other than Grayson who might have come into possession of the little green book which threatened to wreck her life.

"Then Grayson must be the man," said Jerrett. "We must stake our case on that."

So he went back to the job in hand and tried desperately to discover where Browne kept his treasure, but to no avail. He even considered burglary, but gave it up as too dangerous.

"Browne would like nothing better than to get a shot at me," he told himself.

He had the blackmailer followed, watched every move he made, dogged his associates and found nothing.

At noon on the fifth day he had to confess himself beaten. He went, with a heavy heart, to the office of Carpenter and informed his client that it would be necessary to pay the money.

"Is there no chance for us?" asked the old man.

"One," replied Jerrett, "and we are

going to take it. I will call Browne on the telephone, make an appointment with him for to-night, and we will try an experiment. If it works, we may come out in the clear. If it doesn't we will have to find some new method of heading him off."

Carpenter bowed slightly.

"I am in your hands," he said.

Jerrett picked up the telephone and called Browne's number.

"Hello, Browne? This is Jerrett. Yes. We are ready to pay your price. Yes. When will we see you? Seven o'clock? All right. I want to bring Mr. Carpenter and two members of the family along to identify the book. No, no tricks. Just a business precaution. Understand? Yes, we'll be there."

He replaced the receiver and turned to Carpenter.

"We are to meet him at his home at seven o'clock to-night," he said. "Bring fifty thousand dollars in large bills."

III

SEVEN o'clock. The poker-faced butler in Mr. Browne's ornate home in an exclusive suburb opened the door for Jerrett, Carpenter and two young men and led them into the huge living room. They walked over the thick, rich carpet to the farther end, where Browne stood warming his little hands before an open fire. He turned quickly at their approach.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said in his soft voice.

Jerrett greeted him cordially. Carpenter and the other two men were silently aloof.

Browne's manner was urbane as he arranged chairs before the fireplace and waved his guest to them.

"Shall we proceed to business?" he inquired blandly.

"The sooner the better," said Jerrett. "The first thing, of course, is the production of the book."

The blackmailer smirked.

"Beg pardon, Jerrett. The first thing

is the—ah—payment of the money. That is first, my slick friend."

Jerrett nodded to Carpenter, who flipped a roll of bills from his pocket and tossed it to Browne. The blackmailer counted the money carefully.

"Right," he said. "Now for the document." He stood up and faced his four guests. "I've warned you before, Jerrett, not to try force with me, but perhaps it would be well to warn you again. I am armed and I will not hesitate to defend myself. It will be much the worse for you if you try to balk my plans."

"I have enough sense to realize that I am beaten," said Jerrett.

Browne stepped quickly to the wall, lifted a picture which hung there and exposed the combination of a small safe. His fingers twirled the dial, his arm went into the recess and came out, a small green book in his hand. Standing at a safe distance from the four men he tossed the volume to Carpenter, who caught it deftly. The old man examined the document eagerly, passed it to the other two men, and all three of them pored over it. Then Carpenter, a queer, wild look in his eyes, leaned forward and whispered something to Jerrett.

The lawyer leaped to his feet.

"It's as I thought, Browne!" he snapped. "This book is a rank forgery! What are you trying to put over on us? We refuse to pay fifty thousand dollars for a fake! Take it!" He threw the book upon the floor at the blackmailer's feet.

Browne's eyes narrowed.

"You lie!" he cried. "The police will show you whether this book is a forgery! I'll make you regret this move, you fool!"

Jerrett laughed.

"Not a chance, Browne. I've been after you for a long time, and now I've got you, and got you good. Understand? This book is a forgery. That money you have in your hand is marked. These two men here are de-

tective sergeants from headquarters. You are under arrest, Browne, charged with blackmail and forgery. We'll put you where you belong, and do it damned quickly!"

Browne's amazed eyes went to the two young men. Silently they turned back their coats and exposed their shields.

"What can you prove?" demanded the blackmailer in a queer, choked voice. "What can you prove?"

"Plenty," sneered Jerrett. "It's the pen for you, Browne. We've got Grayson. He admits the whole deal. He forged the book, knowing something of the Bowen case, and when Bowen died he sold it to you. He's sick of the whole business, anxious to turn State's evidence, and when he does that your name is mud."

For a moment Browne leaned against the wall, as though he had suddenly been struck upon the chin. He was thinking, quickly, desperately. The clock on the mantel ticked loudly.

"Come," said Carpenter to the detectives. "Take him and let's get this dirty business over with."

The words galvanized the little blackmailer into action. There was a flash of dark coat sleeve and Browne was pointing a snub-nosed automatic at the four men in front of him.

"Hands up, you fellows! Quick! I mean business. Now you, Jerrett, hand me that book." Jerrett obeyed the order, his eyes upon the menacing weapon.

Browne sidled to the fireplace and threw the book upon the flames. Keeping his guests covered, he moved to the safe, removed a package of films and a dozen sheets of paper. These he also tossed into the blaze. When they were burned to a crisp he lowered the pistol. He was his suave, urbane self once more.

"Sorry," he said, "but it was necessary. Your detectives are now welcome to search the place."

"Not a bad idea," assented Jerrett.

He made a sign to the two men and they began ransacking the safe, the desk and poked about in other places where Browne might have concealed duplicate plates of the little green book. After thirty minutes of work they gave up and departed from the house with the smiling Carpenter, leaving Jerrett and Browne smoking before the fire.

"Well," said Browne cheerfully, "I'm out fifty thousand and you're out the satisfaction of seeing me in jail. After all, I guess I can't kick. I got the best of the bargain." And he smiled his oily smile as he looked at the young lawyer.

"Oh, I don't know," said Jerrett. "It's queer how some of these things work out, Browne. The first time I ever met you I concluded that you were a coward, that you would run like a rat if you ever got in a tight corner, and I decided to-night to give you a little test. Psychology is a great study, Browne. You really ought to take it up. It would help you in your work."

He broke off and blew smoke rings toward the raftered ceiling.

"What the hell do you mean?" Browne demanded.

"I mean," said Jerrett, "that I never saw a crook yet who did not perform true to type. If you can classify them, you've got them. I classified you as a rat. You are a rat. I win, you lose."

"Talk sense," growled the black-mailer.

"Very well, I will. I conclude that you are a coward. I rig up a little scene for your benefit. I scare you. Your fear gets the best of your judgment. You act on the impulse of the moment. In that moment you do what I want you to do. Understand?"

Browne's face was a study in cold fury. He turned upon Bill Jerrett savagely.

"Do you mean to say that I was hoaxed into burning that book?"

"Exactly. The book was genuine and easily worth fifty thousand dollars."

"But Grayson?"

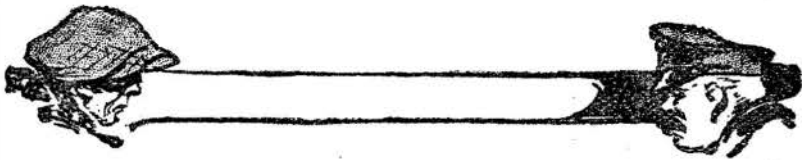
"A guess, a shot in the dark."

"The detectives?"

"Hired for the evening."

Browne sank back in his chair and smoked in silence. Presently he took the cigar out of his mouth and said:

"By God, Jerrett, you're good!"



Detective Sergeant Conscience

IT took seventeen years, but conscience finally got its man. And an unknown thief sent back fifty dollars he had stolen from Joseph Rotolo and restored Rotolo's faith in human nature.

Rotolo lives in Covington, Louisiana. He recently received by mail the fifty dollars and a note explaining that the anonymous donor had stolen it from him seventeen years ago when Rotolo and his family were living at Rose-land, Louisiana.

The Red Yacht Sails

By Madeleine Sharps Buchanan



*Three Fall Foul of the Terror That
Stalks the Decks of the Mystery Ship*

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

FORD BROOMALL, society crook, and his pal, Bert Hughes, make the acquaintance of Horace Lowell, a millionaire. The thieves were on the trail of a beautiful emerald, and knew that its owner, Mrs. Evans-Smyth, would be at a house party and yachting trip Lowell was planning in his Red yacht.

Lowell, believing the crooks were respectable young men, invited them to go on the trip. Hughes went ahead to look over the ground. When Broomall arrived late at night he found the natives of Leesport upset over a startling occurrence. The revolving ray of the Bangcroft Lighthouse had stopped without the interference of any known

agency, and was shining full on Lowell's Red yacht, anchored in the bay.

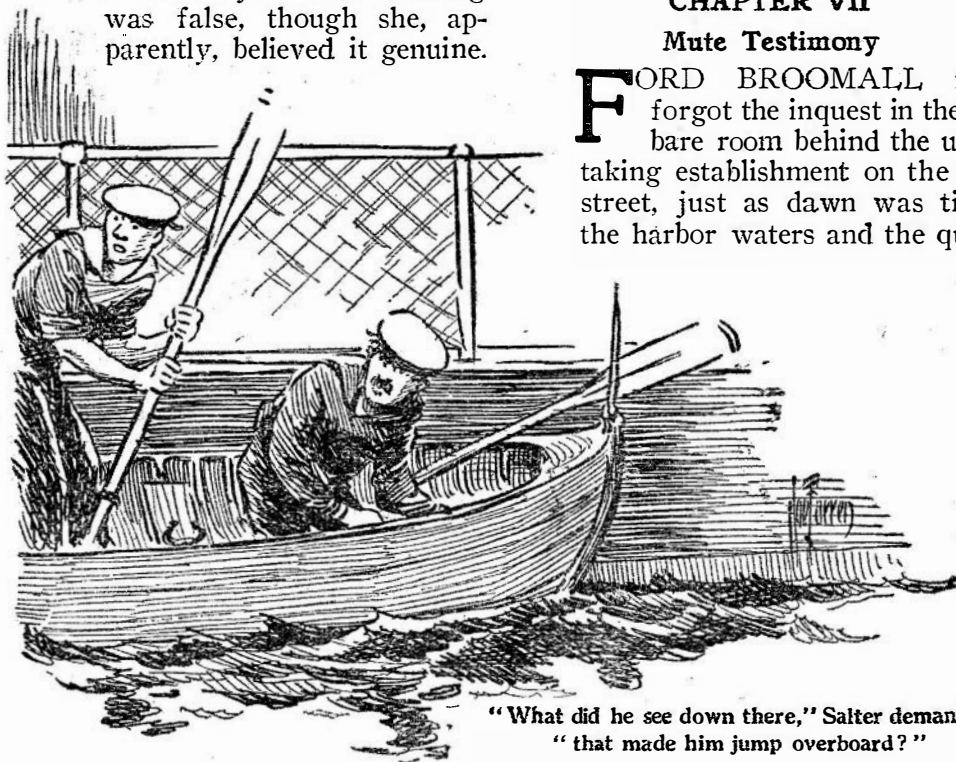
Broomall learned that this had happened twice before. The first time, Mrs. Curtis Red, wife of the former owner of the yacht, had been found aboard lashed to a chair and strangled to death. The second time, Eddie Allison, cashier of Mr. Lowell's bank, was escaping with fifty thousand dollars' worth of bonds; police were pursuing him along the beach when the light rested suddenly on Eddie making his get-away in a boat. The bonds were never found. Eddie died in

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prison without revealing where he had hidden them.

At Lowell's house, Broomall found Mr. and Mrs. Evans-Smyth, Neal Galbraith, Flossie Kearson, Pierce Colgate, a wealthy idler, Dr. Hunter, a psychiatrist, Lowell himself, and his niece Nancy. But Hughes had disappeared, called away suddenly, Lowell told Broomall, by a message from out of town. Broomall was puzzled. Then he found a note from Hughes addressed to him. Deciphered, it read, "SOS."

One other alarming discovery Broomall made. The emerald Mrs. Evans-Smyth was wearing was false, though she, apparently, believed it genuine.



"What did he see down there," Salter demanded, "that made him jump overboard?"

Broomall, wondering if the halting of the Bangcroft Light on the Red yacht was associated in any way with his pal, resolved that night to examine the boat after every one had gone to bed. He rowed out to her and went aboard. In the chart room he discovered Dorothy Green, a one-time associate, lashed to a chair and strangled

to death. As Broomall was turning away he saw a huge hairy hand rise out of the sea, grasp the boat's rail, and vanish.

Broomall notified the police, and an alarmed company gathered aboard. It was decided that they would start the next day on the cruise as planned. Pete Salter, detective, arranged to go with them. He believed that was the only way he could solve the Red yacht's mystery.

Before they sailed they held an inquest. No one admitted knowing the murdered woman.

CHAPTER VII

Mute Testimony

FORD BROOMALL never forgot the inquest in the long bare room behind the undertaking establishment on the main street, just as dawn was tinting the harbor waters and the quaint,

pretty town of Leesport a delicate pink.

He was not conscious of not having slept, and his entire body was keyed with horror, tense with excitement. His eyes followed eagerly the men, Lowell's guests, who went, one by one, to glance at the body of the murdered woman, which lay upon a table at one

end of the room, but upon no face could he find a trace of recognition, or anything but shock.

Evans-Smyth, a short, stout man of perhaps fifty-five, with a dark, smooth shaved face that was inclined to be puffy, and graying hair that was plastered down with something that made it look like black oilcloth, was frankly disgusted and let everybody know it. He merely glanced at the dead woman.

"Outrageous, Lowell," he kept muttering to his host. "Having a crime on your yacht just before she sails. If the women get onto this before sailing time our cruise is off!"

"They won't get onto it," snapped Lowell, "unless you tell 'em."

Pierce Colgate interested Broomall, and he studied keenly the men who were to be his companions upon a journey that he felt would be momentous. At his side, Dr. Hunter kept drayling his strange remarks.

"Colgate is a good study, Mr. Broomall. Powerful athlete, with the eyes of a hypnotist. Be a skilled chap with mental therapeutics. Any man with any psychological knowledge would see that. When you get a chance to look at Colgate closely note the wide space between the upper lid of his eye and the pupil."

Broomall glanced again at the tall, broad young man, who was turning away from the body on the table. He noted Colgate's splendid build, his big wrists and hands, his slightly protruding jaw.

"Clever at surf boarding, is Colgate," Hunter was drawling. "Golf, t-c-o. Nice chap, but interesting. A monomind. Thinks of nothing but himself."

Surf boarding. That meant Colgate must be a good swimmer. And what was that hypnotism stuff? Was there really anything in the rubbish this doctor kept talking? If so, what had he thought of Bert? What was he thinking of him, Broomall?

"Nobody seems to know the poor

girl," said Hunter, producing a silver cigarette case. "Yet you say you saw her at the Lowell house last night. Extraordinary."

"I certainly did," snapped Broomall. "She must have gone to see somebody."

"Yet the butler has denied admitting her, or ever seeing her," reminded the doctor. "Ah, here comes the local sleuth. Most amazingly interesting type. The born trailer. If I were a criminal I should fight shy of Pete Salter. Only his eyes save him from being a sadist."

Broomall glanced sidewise at Dr. Hunter. Had the man meant that as a warning for him? But he had committed no crime. He probably would not commit one now, since poor Bert was so mysteriously out of the picture. All his wits, if he had any, must be used to rescue his pal, not to obtain the Green Pool emerald, which already, he did not doubt, the crook at the bottom of all this devilment had in his possession.

"Things will cut loose here after the yacht gets away," chuckled Hunter. "The servants up at the Lowell place will be put through their steps, the lighthouse keepers and the watchman. The idea is, I believe, isn't it, Broomall, to permit us to sail as quickly as possible?"

"I believe it is," said Broomall shortly.

Pete Salter, on his way to them, had been halted by one of the hastily assembled jury. The room was growing brighter with the morning sunshine. They would have a good sailing day!

Suppose he stood up and told what he knew, about the girl on the table, about Bert, about himself, about the Green Pool emerald, which had already been taken from Mrs. Evans-Smyth? He could fancy the excitement that would cause. Even the clever Salter did not guess any of that, Broomall felt reasonably sure. How could he?

And in that well-bred group of Lowell's guests, Smethers and his jury, even Doc Hastings, the pleasant non-descript little coroner, who endeavored to handle the matter properly, were helpless and handicapped. With Tom Hagan and his wife, and the light-house keepers they were more at home.

As he listened to Hastings questioning Lowell and his guests, Broomall decided that Salter was right. The only thing to do was to sail the Red yacht. For there was no doubt that one of those men lied when he denied ever having seen the murdered woman. And Dorothy Green was not the sort to go to the Lowell house after midnight to see a *woman*. Just what her call had to do with the Green Pool emerald, Broomall would have given a good bit to know. Her room at the Hagans' hotel had, of course, long since been gone over by Salter and his men. Again he seemed to see that dreadful hand creeping up over the gleaming brass rail of the yacht.

Suppose Dorothy had got the emerald and taken it to the boat for some obscure reason. Suppose it was still on the boat, for Dorothy Green was a clever one! There was that scrap of material he had picked off the chair to which the girl was bound. Bert's suit. That was not so good. Bert Hughes would not kill any woman to get any gem. Of that Broomall was certain. And the woman who called herself Dorothy Green would not share with any one. She was all for herself. No loot that she had ever got her hand on, so far as Broomall knew, had she ever split with a pal.

He turned to find Dr. Hunter regarding him with sleepy amusement. Obeying a defiant impulse he spoke.

"If you can read people so well, doctor, what do you think of the murdered woman?"

Hunter grinned. "I think she was a crook," he said simply.

Pete Salter brought up at last beside Broomall and, leaning against the

wall, lighted his pipe. The jury had filed out to find its verdict.

"Fidler is still down and out," imparted the detective. "But I don't fancy we'll get anything from him. I found the coffee in his thermos had been drugged, and he probably drank it, fell asleep and was dumped on shore by some one he never laid eyes on. The keepers of the Bangcroft Light swear they saw nothing and heard nothing unusual last night or any other night."

"If that big light was stopped and started again, one of them must be telling a lie!" flared Broomall, whom Hunter's reply had startled and agitated. "And I suppose these people are also telling the truth," he added disgustedly, "when they all deny knowing the dead girl?"

"I kind of guessed they would deny it," grinned Salter.

As Salter spoke there was a soft patter of feet at the door, a strange little whine, and the great dog that had sprung at Broomall's throat when he entered the Lowell house the night before, trotted into the room.

It gave Ford Broomall a sick feeling to look at him. Speed was an enormous brute, like a wolf, gray as the dawn, with a long wicked muzzle. As he stood for a moment, poised with horrible grace, his lips curled back in a soundless snarl and Broomall saw the red glare in his eyes. And into Broomall's mind flashed the question even then: "*What could have stopped such a beast in the midst of his rush?*"

No one said anything. The thing happened in a moment. Across the room to the body of the girl on the table sprang the huge dog, laid his nose on the cold hand and lifted his muzzle and whined!

It was horrible. The dog had been the only one to admit that he knew the murdered woman! That he did, not a man who witnessed his action would have doubted!

Lowell's voice came then, sharp, taut with fear and anger.

"Speed! Come here, Speed!"

But Speed withdrew from the body, sat back on his haunches, and, with his magnificent head uptilted, continued that throaty whine!

Pete Salter dropped his hand on Broomall's tense shoulder.

"Mute testimony!" he said with a satisfied little nod. "I rather doubted your story for a time, Mr. Broomall, but I apologize."

CHAPTER VIII

Nancy's Fear

AT noon that day the Nancy Lowell sailed, the August sunshine gleaming on her brass rails, her gay awnings, her brilliantly painted sides. Her cabin was filled with flowers, and every luxury that might contribute to the comfort of his guests Lowell had crowded aboard her.

The people of Leesport had gone to the water edge to witness the sailing of the Red yacht, for the story of the Bangcroft Light halting across her the night before had crept out. That the murder of the woman who, so far, was a stranger to the little town, was still a secret, Broomall did not doubt, for he had heard every man who had been present at that hideous inquest at dawn solemnly sworn to silence. They were alarmed and impressed by the crime, and alive to the fact that Pete Salter must be given his way, if they would not wake some morning to find Leesport in the grip of a horror no man could control, and overrun with reporters, daubed with publicity.

The Nancy Lowell, as Broomall preferred to think of the yacht, carried beside Lowell and his guests, Captain Jonas Seal, first mate Tom Hagan, second mate Harry Miller, and six sailors, of whom Pete Salter was one. There was a chef, a maid for the women, and the Lowell butler, who had charge of the deck amusements, the drinks and did valet duty for the men. When Broomall arrived at the

Lowell house, and just after the attack of the huge dog, he had regarded this short, stout butler, Carlin by name, as a stupid, harmless creature. During his brief testimony at the inquest that early morning he had seen no reason to alter his opinion. But on the decks of the old Red yacht he somehow was not so sure about Carlin. Possibly that was because he had come upon the scene just after Speed had been mysteriously halted in his furious rush at the newcomer, because he was Lowell's man, and because the great dog had told them as plainly as possible that Dorothy Green was no stranger to him.

Broomall was bewildered and upset as the yacht slipped out of the harbor and almost curtsied past the snowy shaft of the Bangcroft Lighthouse. He had been unable to learn how Bert Hughes had left Leesport, although he had questioned Carlin and the men at the garage. If Bert had really gone, which he did not believe for a moment, then he had walked, carrying the two fashionable bags which he had taken to the Lowell house party. And that was not at all like Bert.

Which of these men knew the secret of his pal's disappearance? He glanced at Hunter, Lowell, Colgate, Evans-Smyth, and Galbraith. A more immaculately attired group of gentlemen off for a lazy, luxurious cruise it would be hard to find. But that meant nothing to Ford Broomall, or perhaps to Pete Salter, working somewhere in the fore-castle with the crew. Somewhere under this exterior of wealth, ease, good nature and breeding, there crawled a hideous thing, the heart of the picturesque yacht, that no amount of remodeling, of fresh paint and shining brass could turn into a lady!

The fresh breeze was rioting through the rose-hued cabin where, the night before, Dorothy Green had been strapped to the gayly upholstered chair! If the women knew that—

From where he stood on deck, Broomall could see the rail where, just

a few hours previous, he had glimpsed the dreadful hand clinging! There was something else there now, Tom Hagan's fingers, as the first mate bent thoughtfully over the brass and rubbed it with his calloused palm. He looked up, caught Broomall's eye, shrugged and walked away.

"I am so sorry your friend Mr. Hughes did not get back in time to come with us," said a sweet voice at Broomall's shoulder, and he swung about to confront Nancy Lowell, a picture in a dainty blue costume, honest regret in her pretty face.

Beside her, however, stood the great dog Speed, and the red glare in his unblinking eyes told Broomall that he was not yet ready to make friends with him.

"Do you know why he went, Miss Lowell?" asked Broomall bluntly. "It wasn't like Bert. I've been a bit worried about him."

Nancy Lowell drew closer to him, and the dog took a stiff step forward, keeping against her side.

"I've been a bit worried myself," she said simply.

Broomall started and looked keenly into her lifted eyes. Then he saw that she was more than pretty, that there were depths to her eyes, lines to her soft lovely lips, a tilt to her charming head that spoke of the unusual, of character, of unguessed strength and common sense beneath all her dainty femininity. Utterly unlike the other two women, who were already busy with bridge, cocktails, cigarettes, she stood beside him looking back at shore, her brows drawn together, and following her gaze Broomall saw that she was looking at the fast receding Bangcroft Lighthouse.

"Why have you been worried about Bert?" he asked gently.

"Because I don't know when he went away or—how," she whispered. "It just seemed strange to me. We had been out to look at the Bangcroft Lighthouse, and he had just

said that nothing on earth could drag him away from here before this cruise or until he had seen you. There are stories about that light, you know. About it stopping now and then as they say it did last night, and about—but that would spoil your cruise if I told you that. Bert was interested in the light. He asked all sorts of questions and he stopped up at the lantern for so long after we went on down the stairs. I don't know why I tell you this. You'll think me silly."

"Not at all," said Broomall eagerly, his hands fastening tensely on the rail, his thoughts busy with Bert's note and the bit of cloth he had picked up the night before from that dreadful chair in the gay lounge.

Why had Bert lingered in the lantern of that mysterious light? *What had he learned about it?* Was that why he had been put out of the way before he, Broomall, arrived? Had Bert stumbled upon something even bigger than the Green Pool emerald?

"I couldn't find out how he got the message or how he went," the girl was going on softly. "I just can't seem to get it. Carlin brought us his explanation and his apologies."

She had, then, made inquiries. Broomall glanced at her firm profile. He wondered how Hunter would class Nancy Lowell. And he knew that she had reason to feel anxious about Bert. There was more than she was telling him.

"Just a silly idea, perhaps nerves," she said with a shrug. "But I loathe this boat. I lay awake nights dreading this cruise. To give the Red yacht my name seems like branding me."

"Why, Miss Lowell!" cried Broomall, shocked.

"It doesn't make her, the boat, any more respectable," said the girl, trembling slightly. "Nothing could do that. It only taints—me."

Broomall glanced at the shining decks, the August sunshine, the smooth sea, the rapidly receding beauty of

Leesport. Through it all Nancy's words struck with the chill of winter.

Yet what could be wrong with the boat, now that it had left shore? No man or thing could swim after them. No hand could reach up out of the sea and cling to her polluted rails, *there*. And there would be no stowaway, nothing hidden aboard that Pete Salter would miss. If crime and horror sailed with them, it would be found among the guests.

Broomall's hand touched something soft and furry and a deep growl warned him that he had moved too close to Speed. Looking down he met the dog's watchful eyes, filled with the red glare of antagonism.

It had not been so that he had looked at the body of Dorothy Green!

Night found the Nancy Lowell moving serenely through a satin smooth sea, a clear sky above her and nothing but gayety, apparently, aboard her.

Ford Broomall, with his mind filled with thoughts of Bert and the woman who had been murdered in the rose cabin the night before, made no effort to throw off his depression. It seemed like tempting the horror that he somehow felt was sailing with them, to laugh or dance aboard the Red yacht. Of course the women knew no reason why they should not have a good time. Only Nancy Lowell was apprehensive and uneasy, but even she knew nothing of that final crime and the hasty inquest in the gray light of dawning day, nothing of the evidence the huge dog who followed her about had given.

In the forecabin, however, there was muttered talk among the men. They were not contented aboard the old Jezebel. To them a boat was a live thing with a soul. And that of the Red yacht was steeped in evil. Captain Jonas Seal, who had brought the yacht so often into port, from whom nothing had been kept a secret, exchanged uncomfortable glances with Tom Hagan. If Pete Salter had not been working

with the crew he would have been seriously alarmed. One unexplainable occurrence on the ill-fated craft, and there would be mutiny.

Broomall was not so sure that the truth would be discovered during that cruise, and he *was* sure that Bert Hughes was not on board the yacht.

That first evening as he dressed for dinner, however, he had an experience that caused him to doubt this, despite the fact that Pete Salter, during a stolen moment shortly after the yacht left Leesport, had assured him that he had again gone completely over her with a fine tooth comb, Hagan assisting.

It was twilight, for dinner aboard was never to be served until late, Lowell had informed his guests. He had the desire to sit in the candle-lit main cabin and look over the night seas while he ate. Both portholes opening into the small compartment allotted to Broomall were open and a fresh salt breeze was blowing through as he completed his toilet. His thoughts busy with the possible fate of his pal, with the amazing occurrences that had crowded upon each other since he had started to walk from the station to the Lowell house along the sands, he again took Bert's note from his pocket and stood staring wretchedly at the SOS that by that time was the plainest thing to be seen about it. Where was Bert, and where was the Green Pool emerald? It was agony to think that the unscrupulous crook who had done away with Bert had that stone, which they had come to Leesport to get.

If he knew what Nancy Lowell and the dog knew. If—

And then he had heard it, the tapping, and had stood very quiet, Bert's note crushed in his hand, his blood turning to ice.

Bert Hughes had his own peculiar fashion of tapping out his pipe before he filled it with fresh tobacco. Broomall had often spoken of it, and more

than once Bert had used it to warn his friend or to draw Broomall's attention to him when a third party was present. Tap-tap, tap, tap, tap. Tap-tap, tap.

And from outside the portholes in his stateroom, there came at that moment the distinct tapping of Bert's pipe! The yacht was sliding through the quiet waters easily. From a distance came the faint music of the radio. A sweet high laugh. The scrape of a chair on deck. And plainly, unmistakably, the well known tapping of Bert's pipe!

Tap-tap, tap, tap, tap. Tap-tap, tap. Over and over.

Coming to life at last, Broomall dashed to the open portholes and looked out—out upon a twilight sea, calm and beautiful, and down upon the painted smooth sides of the old Jezebel! Not a thing in sight—nothing. A more placid scene could not be imagined, and yet through it all sounded the familiar tapping of Bert Hughes's pipe!

There was no place for the sound to come from. He was *looking* at the spot where it seemed to be. And there was nothing there.

What was below his compartment? Broomall tried to recall. He was shocked and sickened by the sound of that tapping. Bert calling to him for help, perhaps imprisoned in some secret room on that devil ship! Bert guilty of strangling Dorothy Green—of fastening her to the chair in the rose cabin! But that could not be. If he had committed that crime to get possession of the Green Pool emerald, he would have faded permanently from the scene before Broomall arrived. For Bert would know that he would not permit murder, and such a murder as that one had been! He shuddered.

The tapping had ceased. The Red yacht was mincing along over the quiet sea. He might have imagined the thing. Like that hideous hand on the brass rail. Save that he knew he had not.

Could he endure this call of Bert's for help? Calls that left him unable

to move? What could he do? How could he learn what Nancy Lowell and the great dog, Speed, knew?

Galbraith and Colgate shared the small compartment next to Broomall's and there was an infinitesimal bath between. Both men had dressed and gone on deck, apparently, for Carlin was laying away their white suits and save for him the compartment was empty.

"Did you wish something, sir?" asked the butler as Broomall darted into the room.

"Did you hear a strange tapping just now, Carlin?" asked Broomall uneasily, glancing about.

"A tapping, sir?" Carlin lifted his brows.

"Yes. Like this."

Broomall picked up a brush and struck the wall with it lightly, tap-tap, tap, tap, tap. Tap-tap, tap.

"No, sir, I did not," Carlin pursed his lips in disapproval. "And if I might say, sir, I think it would be wise not to mention such things where any of the crew might hear. They're—well, scared to death already, Mr. Lowell says."

"Scared of what?" asked Broomall eyeing the man suspiciously.

"I couldn't say, sir. But this boat hasn't the best of reputations, and after what has happened, it does seem—"

"No one knows what has happened, Carlin," said Broomall sharply.

"Well, no, sir, of course, not," Carlin shook his head and turned to the door. "But you can't shed a thing like that, Mr. Broomall, so easy like. Horrid murder only the early hours of this past day, right in the lounge where they've been laughing and playing bridge this afternoon—it's dangerous, sir."

"Carlin," said Broomall lowering his voice, "when did my friend Mr. Hughes give you the message to take to Mr. Lowell and his guests?"

"Just before dinner, sir, yesterday afternoon," said Carlin carefully. "He

rang for me, and when I went to his door he was all packed up. He just said to tell Mr. Lowell he had to run away, for he had had a message from a man in town he had to see and it was most important. That was all. He tipped me and I left him. Oh, yes, sir, he did say I needn't bother about getting him a car."

"How would he get to the station then?" snapped Broomall.

"Well, I couldn't say, sir," frowned Carlin. "He walked, I fancy. The gentlemen are always coming and going and I thought nothing of it."

"Of course, not," said Broomall absently. "What time was this, Carlin?"

"Oh, I should say about six o'clock."

"Could he get a train then?"

"Yes, sir. Several of them stop at Leesport at that time. We have a fine summer schedule."

Broomall left the compartment then, followed by the gaze of the butler. If Carlin had done the tapping to tell him that his friend needed help, he had given the man plenty of chance to say so, even if something made him fear to speak out. A wink, a glance, anything would have put him wise. But there had been nothing and the horrid fear that Carlin was not responsible for that eerie tapping against the smooth side of the bewitched yacht, was riding him as he went on deck.

Sheer luck showed him Pete Salter down near the fore-castle, from which direction came the appetizing odor of a cooking meal, and without delay Broomall made for the detective, disregarding the fact that Salter had told him to keep away from him as much as possible.

CHAPTER IX

The Bargain

"I CAN tell you, Mr. Broomall, there's no earthly use your hunting for the source of that tapping," Salter assured Broomall when he had heard his story. "Your friend

isn't aboard here. 'And there isn't a secret compartment on the old Jezebel. I know every inch of her. I haunted her myself after Mrs. Curtis Red was killed. That case was a fright to me. I never got anywhere. You needn't look for any stowaways or hidden chambers or secret corridors on this craft. I know what they did to her when she was made over from a coasting vessel into a sailing yacht, and there hasn't been any change made in her since, except new paint and fixings."

"Then you think—" Broomall hesitated, biting his lip, and fighting the desire to go again into the dirty evil smelling hold and explore every foot of it.

Pete Salter flung him a significant glance as he moved away.

"Somebody is trying to tell you something," he shrugged. "But don't ask me to explain anything that happens aboard this devil ship—yet."

"Do you think there will be more—horror?" asked Broomall with tight lips.

"You said it," nodded Salter, "and I don't want to make you feel bad, Mr. Broomall, but a couple of people assured me before we sailed that they'd seen your friend walking with Dorothy Green on the beach early yesterday morning before she registered at the Hagans' hotel. So if you don't know her, I reckon your friend does."

Broomall strode after Salter recklessly, careless of watching eyes. He felt a net tightening—tightening somewhere, about Bert or him—he could not be sure which.

"Who told you that?" he grated, seizing the sleeve of the rough sweater the detective wore.

"One person was Riley, one of the keepers of the Bangcroft Light," said Salter simply, "and the other was one of the jury, chap who fishes all the time along the shore not far from the lighthouse."

Broomall was left standing alone on

the deck. The music of the radio drifted to him faintly.

Bert had been seen with the murdered woman. They had, then, met! Thank the gods he had found that scrap of Bert's suit before Salter had! But though Dorothy Green had been killed, Bert, too, was in trouble! He was not the killer, making successfully away with whatever loot he had committed the crime to get. How much did that narrow-eyed Pete Salter know? Broomall feared him, but it was a comfort to have him aboard.

The soft pat-pat of huge feet near by roused him and he turned to find the great dog, Speed, standing on the deck looking at him quizzically with his magnificent head on one side. A moment, and Nancy Lowell, in a soft white gown that accented her charm, joined the dog and called to him:

"Dinner, Mr. Broomall! We're waiting for you!"

The main cabin was beautiful with its flowers and candles, its snowy table and its gay little tufted chairs when Broomall and the girl and the dog entered. The radio, bringing in dance music from somewhere, was throttled down to a croon, and Lowell and his guests in perfect dinner clothes and riotously good humors added to the cheer and charm of the scene.

Broomall, keeping his eyes from the green gem at Mrs. Evans-Smyth's white throat, endeavored to shake off his desperate depression and join in. But the horror was there, in the air, in the laughter, close beside him. The girl strapped to the chair in the cabin, the hand creeping up over the rail. Bert's insistent calls for help! The food choked him, although he did his best to make himself agreeable.

It was when the meal was half over and while the young widow Flossie Kearson was dancing with Galbraith, that Pierce Colgate did his bit toward the hideous drama that was to be enacted upon the corrupt decks of the Red yacht. Bending toward Mrs.

Evans-Smyth across the flower wreathed table he shook a well manicured finger at the green gem that glowed at her throat.

"Mrs. Evans-Smyth, perhaps you are not aware that I am a collector of gems," he said. "It is a hobby with me. My father made it the study of his life. I know a good jewel when I see one, and the emerald you are wearing is magnificent. Will you sell it to me at your own price?"

Helen Evans-Smyth put her hand to her throat with a silly little laugh and a sidelong glance at her husband beneath her touched up lashes.

"Oh, good gracious, of course, I couldn't!" she said in an embarrassed fashion. "Why, my husband gave me this. Mercy, he'd slay me!"

Henry Evans-Smyth glance up from his wine with a grunt.

"I certainly would," he snapped. "Helen, you positively don't value anything. That gem is worth one hundred and fifty thousand if it is worth a cent. And it has a history."

"I will give you two hundred thousand for it," said Colgate quietly.

Broomall studied the man's dark, interesting face. This was the chap who was so good at surf boarding, at golf. Who would make a good hypnotist, according to Dr. Hunter! What on earth was his game, offering two hundred thousand for a fake stone?

"It isn't for sale," growled Evans-Smyth. "I advised Helen not to wear it on this cruise, but she never listens to me."

"This time I did, darling," said Mrs. Evans-Smyth a trifle acidly. "I can't sell this stone to Mr. Colgate even if I would. For it isn't the Green Pool emerald. That is safe in my vault in the bank in New York. This stone is one I had made by a man who copies famous gems. So you see, Henry, I was good and obeyed you."

"May I see it?" asked Colgate courteously, and Mrs. Evans-Smyth laid the glowing beauty in his palm.

Broomall sat back, his salad untouched, his eyes on the man and the woman; on the man's keen dark face bent above the exquisite jewel, on the woman's blond doll-like countenance, bent toward him. His brain was working rapidly. Helen Evans-Smyth admitted the gem was a fake. He knew it was a fake because he himself had examined it the night before, but not many people would ever guess it. Then Hunter had not done anything crooked when he found the gem and returned it to the lady! The real Green Pool emerald had never been at the Lowell house at all. That was one on Bert and one on him.

But what had taken Dorothy Green to the Lowell house? Only loot of some sort would do that, he felt sure. And she had walked and talked with Bert.

"My dear lady," said Colgate with a touch of impatience, "are you playing with me? This is no fake I hold. It is the Green Pool itself."

Mrs. Evans-Smyth sighed, opening her vanity case and touching up her pretty face.

"Yes, my man does those things well, doesn't he?" she asked. "I've had him make copies of several jewels Henry has given me. Henry thinks I am careless, but I'm really not at all."

Colgate was frowning. He still held the glowing scintillating gem in his palm and Broomall's eyes were held by the beauty of it. It was indeed a green pool of glory.

"I beg your pardon, but there is some mistake," he said quietly. "This jewel is the genuine Russian stone, the famed Green Pool emerald itself."

"Man, you're crazy," chuckled Evans-Smyth gazing at his wife with adoration. "If Helen says it isn't, then it isn't. Very clever and cautious of you, my dear, very."

"May I see the gem?" asked Broomall very politely, bending over Colgate.

"Certainly," said Colgate without giving up the stone.

Broomall, however, looking down upon it, bending close above it, felt a slight shock pass along his nerves. For the stone Pierce Colgate was holding was indeed the Green Pool, the lure that had brought his pal and himself to the Lowell house! Since the night before the fake stone had vanished and the real one taken its place. What sort of game was afoot?

"Do I understand that you are offering me two hundred thousand dollars for the *stone you have in your hand this minute?*" asked Mrs. Evans-Smyth with a little shrill laugh of excitement.

"Helen, I—" began her husband sharply.

"Now, Henry, you be still!" she flashed. "This is perfectly legitimate. I have told Mr. Colgate the stone he holds is a fake. He says it is not. Will you pay me for *that* stone, Mr. Colgate?"

Colgate looked up with a grin. He still toyed with the jewel he held.

"I certainly will, in a minute," he said flatly.

"Even though I tell you it is not the one you think it is, the Green Pool emerald?" asked Helen Evans-Smyth with a plaintive glance around. "Hear the man, everybody! He insists upon buying the imitation for the real thing!"

Broomall saw a crafty expression sweep Colgate's face.

"All right, then, have it your way," he laughed. "I'll give you my check for two hundred thousand dollars for the stone I hold, which you assure me is *not* the Green Pool emerald."

"Which I am telling you is a fake, manufactured for me by this man in town who has done several other jobs like this," said Mrs. Evans-Smyth earnestly. "Truly, Mr. Colgate, I cannot take your check."

"You will do me a kindness if you accept it," said Colgate dryly. "Is it a bargain?"

"What on earth do you wish to buy

a fake stone for, and at such a tremendous price, Colgate?" asked Lowell impatiently.

"I know that it is not a fake stone," said Colgate, gazing down at the heap of glowing green light in his palm.

Broomall saw a passionate admiration in his face, and Dr. Hunter touched his arm.

"The monomind," he said in a low voice. "Humors himself at any cost. The gem is hypnotizing him. Look at him. Same effect he might have upon an unstable will if he knew it. Interesting to learn whether or not he does know it."

"Oh, sell it to him, Helen!" said Mrs. Kearson with a little laugh. "Let's go out on deck. Fancy any one hesitating a moment about accepting two hundred thousand dollars!"

Broomall did not care for Flossie Kearson. She was a snaky Japanesy-looking person with a mouth like a scarlet wound and eyes he would not trust.

"It isn't honest, that's all," said Helen Evans-Smyth, gazing around the table. "Make him give it back to me, everybody. It's just clever glass."

But Colgate had no intention of relinquishing the Green Pool. He closed his fingers upon it and produced his checkbook.

"Come," he said, his eyes upon Mrs. Evans-Smyth's excited face. "Is it a bargain?"

"Oh, let him have it, if he insists upon being done," grunted Evans-Smyth disgustedly. "So long as the real gem is safe in your box in town. Colgate can afford it, I guess."

Pierce Colgate was already writing his check. Broomall, fascinated, watched his long, brown fingers, the firm strokes of his pen. The fine platinum chain, attached to the dazzling beauty he still grasped in his left hand, trailed over the table.

Helen Evans-Smyth took the check with a little breathless laugh, glancing about the table at the amused faces.

"I ask you all to witness that I have sold to Mr. Colgate only a copy of the Green Pool emerald!" she said in trembling tones. "I feel just awful taking this, but I'll admit it's a big temptation!"

As they all rose from the table, laughing, Colgate looked at the silent Broomall with a grin.

"Little fool!" he shrugged. "I bought the Green Pool all right. Reckon she got them mixed up. It's mine now, however. I've been crazy to get it ever since I heard of it being in circulation."

Broomall could have said the same, but somehow, he had lost the desire to lay hands upon the gem. It seemed as tainted as the yacht herself. And he was not so sure that Hunter's classification of Helen Evans-Smyth, "a body, and not much else," was correct.

CHAPTER X

The Devil Ship

HOW that evening passed, Broomall never exactly knew. The atmosphere of gayety, of good fellowship, of harmlessness did not deceive him in the least. He played bridge, and he danced. He held the slight, charming form of Nancy Lowell in his arms as they circled the smooth decks to the music of the radio, and he did his best to put away his misgiving and the thought that Pete Salter was sailing with them, on watch for—what? Whenever he passed the section of the brass rail where he had seen upon two occasions, that horrible clinging hand, he shudderingly looked away.

The scene connected with the Green Pool emerald baffled and interested him. It smacked of some of the tricks that had been worked by poor Bert and himself. He didn't quite get it yet, for any one could see that Colgate was no fool, and he knew himself that the stone he had bought had really been the Green Pool emerald. There was only one reason for Helen Evans-Smyth in-

sisting that it was a fake, unless Colgate was right and she had mixed the stones herself and banked the wrong one. Only one reason, but he scarcely believed the little blonde capable of it. Still, one could never tell.

The men seemed to be doing their best to forget the hideous thing that had happened in the main cabin the night before and to follow the wishes of the police and enjoy the luxurious cruise as though no second crime had occurred on the Red yacht. But Broomall was positive that the criminal was in their midst and he felt that Pete Salter knew it also.

While Carlin was carrying drinks and sandwiches about the decks when it was getting along to midnight, Ford Broomall slipped away and stepped inside the rose lounge where he had made his terrible discovery such a short time before.

The lounge was deserted, but the lamps were lighted and the scent of the flowers that filled the various vases perfumed the air. The carved chair to which the body of Dorothy Green had been strapped had been placed in a corner behind a tufted divan where no one would be likely to sit upon it. That had probably been Salter's work, but why the horrible chair had not been left ashore Broomall could not see.

He turned at a touch on his arm to find Nancy Lowell looking over his shoulder into the cabin.

"Mr. Broomall," she asked quietly, "what happened here before the yacht sailed to-day? Can you tell me?"

"Happened here?" stammered Broomall.

"Yes, here. In this lounge. Something did, I know. I've sensed it and then—Speed has been telling me."

Broomall looked into her charming face helplessly. Salter would slay him if he told her! And yet—

"I feel it in the air," went on the girl with a slight shudder. "A hideous appalling thing. It—lingers. *What was it?*"

"Why—I don't know," hesitated Broomall.

Nancy Lowell stamped her foot.

"You do know!" she flared. "All you men know! And you are keeping us in the dark! Look at the dog."

Broomall watched the great brute, fascinated, as he walked with stiff legs straight toward the divan behind which the murder chair had been placed. The bristles on his back lifted in a long, dark line and his lips curled back in a soundless snarl. Placing his great forefeet on the seat of the divan he bent toward the carved chair, sniffed it, growled deep in his throat, and lifted his long, punishing muzzle with the thin whine he had made at the inquest that morning.

"Now will you tell me?" asked Nancy Lowell.

Broomall passed his hand over his forehead, brushing back his hair. His eyes clung to the huge dog.

"Yes," he said quietly. "A woman was found in this room not so long after midnight, murdered as Mrs. Red had been, and strapped to that chair. Apparently Speed knows it. We sailed under police orders, and we have a detective aboard—in the crew. Now you know it all. I'll rely upon you, Miss Lowell, to be silent. There is danger of mutiny among the crew. The yacht had a bad reputation before this."

"Oh, I knew it!" moaned Nancy Lowell, covering her eyes with her hands. "I felt it! It is a devil ship! It should never have sailed! Who was the woman, Mr. Broomall? Did any one know?"

"No one but Speed," replied Broomall grimly, and proceeded to tell her about the inquest that morning.

"She was at our house! You saw her! And she had talked with Bert Hughes!" she repeated in amazement. "But Speed never makes mistakes. If he did what you say, he knew her."

"He knew her, all right," said Broomall, still watching the dog. "And some man at that inquest knew her."

"You think the beast who—strapped her to that chair is aboard this boat with us?" whispered the girl, her eyes wide with apprehension.

"I think the police have that idea," replied Broomall evasively.

Nancy Lowell was silent for a moment, and then she stepped close to Broomall and fixed flashing eyes on him.

"It is not my uncle," she said very low, "for he is kindness itself! No matter what any one thinks, it is not he! He is all I have in the world, and he is very good to me."

Was Nancy right about Lowell? Broomall was certainly not very strong for the man. He remembered what Tom Hagan had said to him on the beach when he suggested telling Lowell about his watchman being drugged. "He'll fire Marsh and say he was drunk, and Marsh needs the job."

Nancy was watching him curiously. She looked over her shoulder and came a step closer to him.

"Have you heard about the Bangcroft light halting once before on this boat?" she whispered.

"Oh, just a hint of it, no details." He tried to smile at her cheerfully.

"It stopped the first time the night Mrs. Curtis Red was found dead in this lounge," shivered the girl. "Strapped to a chair. And the next time it halted it rested upon the fleeing figure of Eddie Allison, who was cashier in uncle's bank and who had just taken fifty thousand dollars' worth of bonds. They caught him because the light showed them where he was, but they never got the bonds."

Broomall started. Bonds stolen from Lowell's bank! Eddie Allison! Had Dorothy Green known—

"He wouldn't tell what he had done with them," went on Nancy earnestly. "It caused tremendous excitement. But the watchman was a man uncle trusted, and so did everybody else. His evidence proved that Eddie was guilty, and nobody doubted what

Marsh Fidler told. And so Eddie Allison died in jail refusing to say where he had hidden the bonds. He did admit that he took them at the last."

"Who was Marsh Fidler?" asked Broomall.

"Why, the night watchman at the bank."

Broomall frowned, staring out the open door at the placid sea.

Marsh Fidler, the drugged figure he had seen on the beach the night before, former watchman at Lowell's bank, was now night watchman on this strange boat! Where was the connection? *Where?* While the girl watched him, he made mental efforts to grasp the dangling threads.

"I thought a man by that name was watchman on this yacht," he ventured at last.

"Oh, yes, Marsh took to drink after the bond affair and uncle took him out of the bank," said Nancy. "He did not wish to turn him adrift, for he is fond of him, and so he gave him the Nancy Lowell to watch."

Galbraith suddenly appeared at the door, looking eagerly into the lounge, which he apparently did not care to enter.

"There you are!" he said with a sickly grin. "I'm claiming my dance, Nancy."

"Coming," nodded Nancy, thrusting her hand into the collar of the great dog. "Aren't you joining us, Mr. Broomall?"

And her finger-tips were laid across her lips in promise and warning as she left the lounge.

Broomall had not slept the night before, and he was conscious of a desire to be alone, to rest and think. And so, without a word to the gay crowd on deck, he stole away to his stateroom and threw himself into bed.

What was coming to them all, sailing so placidly upon a satin smooth sea? That something was, he did not doubt, something that Bert, or some one else, was trying to tell him.

It was long before Broomall drifted off on a dream of hairy hands which held in their palms a flashing green fire fixed to a thin chain which was winding itself about the white throat of Helen Evans-Smyth, and he struggled back to consciousness upon the fancy that he again heard the tapping of Bert's old pipe.

Waking suddenly, he learned that the tapping was a persistent knocking at the door that joined his compartment to the bath used by Galbraith and Colgate, and upon opening the door he found Galbraith standing there in purple pyjamas.

"Pierce sleeps like the dead," he told Broomall with a shamefaced grin. "Maybe you'll laugh at me, Broomall, but if this boat hasn't turned around in her tracks, I'm a shad! I've sailed a lot of 'em myself, and I know a good bit about the sea."

"But why would we go back?" asked Broomall sleepily.

"Ask me another. It was flying in the face of something or other to try to sail this yacht at all—after what happened last night. Now somebody has taken a hand. We've heaved to. Look out that porthole! They're throwing out life buoys!"

Ford Broomall seized dressing gown and slippers and followed Galbraith on deck and along it to the raised platform where the wheel stood. From this platform, through a little window, the helmsman could look into the lounge.

As Galbraith and Broomall appeared Tom Hagan, Pete Salter and the captain were grouped upon this platform. A boat was being lowered upon the smooth, moonlit sea.

"What's wrong?" asked Broomall, touching Salter's arm.

The detective turned a grim, pallid face.

"The devil ship turned herself about and made for home," he replied tersely, "and when we came up here to see why, the wheel was unguarded,

Ivan Orsgaard, the helmsman, gone. He isn't on the yacht. Just vanished. That's all."

Broomall glanced at the shining white and brass wheel, now in the capable hands of a tight-lipped Hagan, at the little boat riding about on the quiet sea, and down into the main cabin, the lounge, through the little window beside the wheel.

"Yes," said Salter at his elbow, "what did he see down there that made him jump overboard, the poor fool? A nice time we'll have now, with the men! It only needed this to start them off! They've been scared to death ever since we sailed."

Broomall said nothing. He leaned against the rail, sick with horror. He did not believe the helmsman had seen anything in the lounge below. All that he could vision himself was a huge inhuman hand reaching up out of the sea and dragging the man from his post by the wheel to his doom beneath the waves!

That was ridiculous, of course, for the platform which held the wheel was above the deck. But suppose somebody *else* vanished like that?

CHAPTER XI

The Creeping Fate

FORD BROOMALL was dressing the next morning and the sun was shining brightly in at the portholes when Pete Salter entered his compartment and sat down on the edge of a chair.

"I've been working all night," announced the detective, looking ruefully at his greasy hands and clothing. "Captain had us searching the boat. That is, ever since that poor chap vanished from the wheel. Of course I had to pitch in with the crew. If they ever get onto the fact that I'm a detective—good-by! They're pretty bad now!"

"Did you find out anything?" asked Broomall eagerly.

"No. Orsgaard was a decent, steady chap, unmarried, dependable. I should say not the type to be frightened to the verge of panic or self-destruction. I think myself he was thrown overboard after he was hit a wallop on the head. Quite an unghostlike proceeding."

"What makes you think that?" demanded Broomall.

"Well, the wheel had been tied in place to hold the boat to her homeward course," mused Salter. "You didn't know that. We've done our best to keep things quiet. And on the deck where you saw that hand I found some spots of blood. Orsgaard was a strong swimmer, and he would have caught one of our buoys or seen the boat had he been alive when we stopped."

"You may have gone on for some time after he was thrown," said Broomall. "The wheel tied in place! I never heard—"

"Not a chance," said Salter. "Hagan was on the job, and you can't turn this boat around without him knowing it. It happened quick and slick."

As he spoke Salter passed his hand over his hair with a weary gesture.

"If that was all," he said with a glance over his shoulder. "But we've lost the second man, Broomall."

"The second!" cried Broomall, sitting down on the edge of his bunk. "You mean—"

Salter nodded. "Yes. You must have slept soundly for we made a big time about it. Just before dawn, Dick Richards was polishing the rails about the deck. That's all. He was simply gone. No explanation and nothing to say—*why*. It was getting Cap Seal's goat. Richards was a decent sort, they all say. Saved his money and used to pal around some with poor Orsgaard. I believe they were good friends on shore."

Ford Broomall bent forward and laid his hand on the detective's knee. His face was white and tense.

"Salter, it may be ridiculous, but I keep seeing this hand creeping over the rail!" he said. "I'm not a coward usually, but you can't imagine how it looked. And do you see what this may mean? Why, we may all go! One by one! And this ship of evil be left, alone, to sail the seas until she falls apart!"

"Now you're talking nonsense," said Salter grimly. "The sort of stuff the crew is mouthing about. Suppose they heard about that girl killed in the lounge just before we sailed? About your enormous hairy hand on the rail? We'd be a ship left alone all right! But I didn't come down here to tell you all this. I'm a busy man just now and likely to be busier if the crew gets out of hand. They're on the verge of it now. Do you recognize this?"

Before Ford Broomall's astounded eyes the detective held a strip of linen, torn from a handkerchief. The initials in the corner were plain enough, "A. H."

"Your friend Hughes own any such handkerchief as this?" asked Salter, watching Broomall keenly.

"Yes," said Broomall with an effort. "This is one of Bert's handkerchiefs. But where did you get it? Where's the rest of it?"

"I figure in poor Richards's dead hand, wherever he is," replied Salter grimly. "I found this on the spot on the deck where he was last seen."

Broomall merely sat staring at the strip of torn linen dangling in the detective's fingers. Bert. Alternately asking him for help and thrusting himself upon the scenes of crime! And if it kept up, this small town detective would pry into his life and Bert's and he'd find himself under arrest for past offenses! But they couldn't prove that a single jewel theft had been committed by them. Still, it wasn't exactly comfortable.

"I have no idea what this means or how it got there," said Broomall at last wearily. "I don't mind telling you

I'm worried about Bert, for it wasn't like him to go away as he did. But he certainly is not on this boat."

"You bet he isn't," said Salter, looking at his soiled hands as he placed the strip of handkerchief in his pocket. "And nothing and nobody else is save the crew and the Lowell guests. But I tell you frankly, this cussed boat showed her sense when she turned around last night and started home!"

"What does Lowell say? He wishes to go on?" asked Broomall.

"Sure he does. You don't know him. Nothing stands in his way. What he wants he thinks ought to happen."

Broomall recalled Dr. Hunter's remarks about his host.

"You've got a lot of responsibility, Salter," he said dully. "I feel myself that there is a creeping fate aboard this boat that will eventually engulf us all. Persuade Lowell to turn back if you can. We have women aboard, and a sweeter girl than Miss Lowell I never met."

"All the men will be watched tonight," nodded Salter. "I know what sort of thing to look out for now."

In the wee pale hours between midnight and dawn, Ford Broomall recalled that remark of Pete Salter's.

After Pete Salter left him, Broomall sat on in his compartment, trying to clear his mind of ghostly cobwebs, shake off the horror that seemed crawling upon his usually clear senses, and look at the entire matter sanely.

To begin with, Bert was *not* on the confounded yacht. Let him hold fast to that. Then whatever proofs he had of Bert's presence were being arranged by some one else. The pipe tapping, and this bit of torn handkerchief which Salter had just shown him. If the handkerchief could be planted on the boat when Bert was not aboard, then so could the shred of cloth from Bert's suit which he himself had found stuck on the chair to which Dorothy Green had been bound. There was relief in that idea.

But who had had possession of that shred of cloth, and the linen handkerchief? And who had known just the way Bert tapped out his pipe? And then he came up against the *why* of it. Why on earth would any one keep Bert before his eyes and in his ears like that? Why unless this person knew what had happened to Bert, and wished to rouse his pal to action in the matter?

Somehow, Broomall saw the same hand that stopped the big Bangcroft light, that had turned the devil ship back on her fatal course, that had sent him from his room in the Lowell house, to the anchored yacht to discover the murder of Dorothy Green. And no matter how he or she worked for good it was done behind a veil. For the person who brought these mysteries about, held the secret.

Taking out his notebook and pencil, Broomall began to set down the names of the persons in the Lowell party.

"Horace Lowell. Pleasant type, but rather ruthless. Hard to understand. Hunter says a megalomaniac. Everything possible to him. Owns dog that recognized body of Dorothy Green. Owns yacht upon which Dorothy Green was murdered. Owns bank from which cashier took fifty thousand dollars in bonds. Took night watchman of bank from his job there and moved him to the yacht.

"Dr. Hunter. One of Lowell's guests. Psychiatrist. Thinks everybody is queer but himself. Clever chap, however. Sizes everybody up. Found Mrs. Evans-Smyth's emerald after she had lost it behind divan.

"Neal Galbraith. Nice-looking chap. Likable. Hunter says he drinks to excess, and when in that state doesn't know what he does. Has what he calls a mal-adjustment. Large fleshy hands.

"Pierce Colgate. Another of Lowell's guests. Wealthy idler who collects and knows gems. Expert at surf boarding and golf. Just paid two hundred thousand dollars for the Green

Pool emerald. Also a nice chap, but will bear watching. Hunter says he could hypnotize.

"Helen Evans-Smyth. Pretty, blond, either empty-headed fool or extremely clever. Owns Green Pool emerald, or did until she sold it to Pierce Colgate for two hundred thousand dollars. Hunter says she could be hypnotized.

"Evans-Smyth. Her husband. Stout, uninteresting type. Crazy about Helen. Gives her anything she wants.

"Flossie Kearson. Young widow. Dark, vampish and treacherous. Not a type Bert would look at. Don't know what Hunter thinks of her. No reason to think she knows anything.

"Nancy Lowell. Sweet and wholesome, very attractive. But knows more than any of them. Afraid for Bert. Might warn me if she cared to. Plenty of nerve, but holds back for some reason. Dog Speed adores her."

His list completed, Ford Broomall sat staring down at it, and frowning. It looked so foolish. So unimportant. And yet, somewhere in it, there lurked the secret of Bert's disappearance, of all this crime and mystery!

It seemed ridiculous to consider the crew, or old Captain Jonas Seal, or Tom Hagan, or Carlin the butler. Carlin might know or suspect something, but he was not the prime mover in the horrid drama. Lowell seemed to be that, as near as Broomall could come. And when he thought of him he remembered Nancy's defense of him, and that he was *her* uncle. Even for Bert he would hate to bring disgrace and sorrow to that girl. She was a straight, honest sort that he admired.

But even seated there in the morning sunshine, conscious of the easy movement of the yacht, Broomall shrank with every sense he possessed from the coming night. Hideous—men vanishing from the decks of that accursed craft! And in his heart he knew that nothing could come up out of the sea and drag them over the rail. He was aware that the menace sailed

with them, and there *among* them, unpleasant as that was to admit.

If one of the women went out on deck that night for a breath of air—if one of them wandered to the rail and leaned there, gazing at the moon! But Pete Salter would watch out for that. Now that he knew what form the horror was to take. If none of them went about alone, after nightfall, then perhaps no other tragedy would occur!

Neal Galbraith was pacing about the deck when Broomall reached it. He was alone, and he seemed much agitated.

"I guess the crew is out of hand," he blurted, turning to Broomall with obvious relief. "Gosh, I'm afraid to be alone anywhere on this boat, and I'm not ashamed to say it! Hagan and the captain are having a big time with the men. Since that poor chap went over this morning they've gone crazy with fear. If Lowell doesn't turn about and make for home they say they won't do a stroke of work."

"Well, I think myself it would be wise to turn back," said Broomall gravely. "I'm not looking forward to another night, are you?"

Galbraith mopped his brow, gazing out over a sea that was calm as glass and beautiful as the sky above.

"I'm sure not," he shrugged. "but Lowell seems bent on this cruise. Of course we needn't let the crew bother us. There's only three of them, for one chap is for going on, he says. Of course the second mate has lost his head, they say, and the chef is white with panic. He's absolutely good for nothing. But Carlin is an excellent cook, and Maud, the ladies' maid, can wait on the table."

"Have there been no developments? No discoveries?" asked Broomall a bit disgustedly. It did seem rather thick for a man who set up to be a detective to permit two men to vanish like that, right under his nose. His opinion of Salter was falling.

"Well, Captain Seal says that Orsgaard, who must have been a very silent sort of bird, told the men this boat was a treasure ship. What he meant nobody knows, and you can get out of that what you like."

A treasure ship. The vanished helmsman had said that. It was Greek to Ford Broomall, though he believed it quite possible that Orsgaard and Richards had signed for the cruise with some definite object, known apparently to the criminal. His determination to penetrate the mystery surrounding the Red yacht remained, but he as yet saw no gleam of light.

"The men are afraid to see another night come," went on Galbraith. "And they're afraid to be alone a minute. They say no one's life is safe, and that Lowell has no right to keep us all here."

"Can't hardly blame them," said Broomall absently. "A fine time we'd have if they knew anything about the crime in the lounge just before we sailed."

"Seal also told me they'd found finger-prints on the wheel where it had been tied in place early this morning," went on Galbraith. "I ask you, who is capable of taking finger-prints on board this boat?"

Broomall's heart gave a bound. Finger-prints on the wheel! Would they be found to be those of the man who was trying to tell him about Bert? The man who *knew*?

He glanced sharply at Neal Galbraith. Why, he might be the criminal for all he knew! And the horror of their situation dawned more fully upon him. Were they to be cooped up together on this placid sea, each one suspecting the other, not knowing where death lurked?

Galbraith, noting his glance, nodded.

"A fine state of affairs, isn't it?" he shrugged. "You may be the criminal for all I know. Another night and we'll all be mentally unbalanced, as

Hunter says we are anyhow. Can you picture what this yacht will be if Lowell keeps going on? If a breath about that crime in the lounge gets out—good night!"

Broomall, thinking of Bert, of his own strange experiences ever since he encountered Hagan on the beach, of the sale of the Green Pool emerald the night before, stared grimly out to sea and was silent.

"Here comes the captain and Hagan now," said Galbraith presently. "Wonder what's up?"

Captain Jonas Seal was the sort of man one might expect to sail his ship through any storm and bring it into port unscathed. Big and broad and genial, with his sunburned face, gray mustache, and keen, humorous eyes, he inspired confidence and respect.

"We came to ask you gentlemen to step into the lounge with us," he announced pleasantly. "We've got a few finger-prints off the wheel, and we're going to ask every one to allow themselves to be finger-printed."

"Who's smart enough to take finger-prints on this boat?" Galbraith wanted to know a trifle resentfully.

Seal and Tom Hagan exchanged helpless glances.

"The chief of police head detective, Pete Salter, shipped with us as one of the crew," said the captain then. "We didn't want anybody to know it, but it's got to come out now, for somebody has to take charge. Three of the crew, the chef and the second mate, have openly mutinied, and we've locked them in an empty storeroom. Carlin has prepared breakfast. And Mr. Lowell has given me permission to turn the yacht about and head toward home."

"At that we've got another night before us," groaned Galbraith. "Do you mean to say that the police think the man who murdered that girl in the lounge is aboard here with us?"

Captain Seal lifted his great shoulders in a helpless shrug.

"I fancy they do," he replied. "That is why they let the yacht sail as had been planned. It's a long swim to shore from here."

"Salter has taken the prints of the crew," put in Hagan. "Of everybody but Mr. Lowell and his guests."

"No luck?" asked Broomall, trying to speak lightly.

"No. The person who tied the wheel into place early this morning after poor Orsgaard went overboard, is not among the help," said the captain uncomfortably. "Neither was it Hagan or Salter or myself."

"That narrows it down," said Galbraith with an uneasy laugh.

"Well, let's get it over with," said Broomall impatiently, and turned to follow Galbraith and the captain.

A touch on his arm detained him, and he swung about to meet Tom Hagan's haggard eyes. In one calloused hand the first mate held a crimson satin ribbon.

"Do you see this, Mr. Broomall?" he asked. "I found it on the floor of the Bangcroft light the night before we sailed. I had just been up questioning Erick Woods about the light haltin' like it did across this bedeviled boat, and there in front of me laid this ribbon, just like the one we found around the neck of poor little Mrs. Curtis Red, and like the one—"

"I know," cut in Broomall, making no effort to touch the thing in Hagan's hand. "But I don't understand—"

"Reckon you don't," said Hagan grimly. "But I want to say that the person who turned this here boat around last night so quick and so slick, is the same one as halted the big light three times. And there's a mighty close connection between that person and the murderer. On the visitors' book in the lighthouse I also come across the name of this girl who put up at my wife's hotel—the one we found here strapped to the chair—Dorothy Green. She'd been to the light only that afternoon. I thought

maybe an educated man like you could make something out of all this."

Both Dorothy Green and Bert had been to the Bangcroft light. And Salter said they had met. Again the dangling threads eluded Broomall.

"Better show that to Salter," he nodded toward the ribbon he would not touch.

Hagan laid it carefully in his pocket.

"I did, but you can't tell what that lad is thinking," he sighed. "He never says a word. There's something aboard here, Mr. Broomall, none of us knows about. Which is why poor Orsgaard and Richards went overboard."

CHAPTER XII

The Prints

THE lounge was brilliant with the morning sunshine when Broomall entered it. The three women, in dainty costumes, were seated beside a table which had been drawn from the wall and placed in the center of the floor, and the men walked about uncomfortably.

At first glance it seemed to be an exceptionally smart, decidedly exclusive yachting party, but at a second look the undercurrent of fear and suspicion was apparent.

The dog Speed, prone at Nancy Lowell's feet, looked up with a soundless snarl as Broomall passed too close to him.

Pete Salter, having discarded his soiled sailor's clothes, wore decent flannels and stood at the table, busy with paper, roller and ink.

Both Mrs. Kearson and Helen Evans-Smyth were smoking and endeavoring to throw off the unpleasantness of the moment with an assumed gayety, but Nancy, with a strained expression on her charming face, sat forward, watching Pete Salter intently. Again Broomall got the impression that she knew something of vast im-

portance, and he wondered if Salter were aware of it.

"I'm sorry to have to ask you all to submit to this," the detective was saying. "But I feel it is necessary. The prints on the wheel are the only clew we have. And out here at sea, after what happened in the early hours of this morning, I feel we should do all we can to clear up the disappearance of those two unfortunate men. It is not likely that they both committed suicide."

"I think that the steersman, or whatever you call him, ended his life, and before he did so, tied the wheel so that we would be headed back for the home port," said Mrs. Kearson languidly. "It is ridiculous to try to make a mystery out of that."

"And the prints on the wheel are, of course, his own, the man Orsgaard's," added Mrs. Evans-Smyth with a little nod. "Rather obvious, I think that. Surely, Mr. Salter, you do not think that Nancy or Flossie or I went up there on that iron platform and tied that enormous wheel so that we'd go home again? Do you, now?"

"Gracious, that would take a thorough knowledge of the sea and the boat!" said Mrs. Kearson with a tinkling laugh. "But I do think it is all so thrilling! A detective hiding himself among the crew!"

Broomall did not listen to their chatter. He was watching Salter as the men submitted sullenly enough to having their finger-prints taken.

"This smacks too much of police procedure to suit me," said Colgate.

"What I want to know is," said Mrs. Kearson, "why we had a detective hidden in the crew! Horace Lowell, why did you bring Mr. Salter on this cruise?"

"A silly idea of the local police, my dear," replied Lowell disagreeably. "I believe the beam from the Bangcroft light halted across this yacht the night before we sailed. The police chief fancied we might need protection."

"How utterly delicious!" cried Mrs. Evans-Smyth. "I simply adored that old lighthouse! And Mr. Woods was so nice about showing it to us! You remember, Nancy? Mr. Hughes was along. The light worked all right when we were there, Mr. Lowell."

"You'll release the crew and the chef, now, Lowell, since we've started back?" asked Dr. Hunter, regarding his stained finger-tips with disgust. "That was all they wanted, wasn't it?"

"They refuse to be released," said Salter. "They are panic-stricken, and insist that they will do no more work on board the yacht. They insist upon keeping together, and they're scared to death of the decks. You can hardly blame them."

"How are we going to manage?" stormed Lowell, pacing about. "We can't wander about the seas with things in this condition. If we're so shorthanded, what will Captain Seal do?"

"I think you'll find we'll get you in all right," said Salter dryly. "Hagan is a good man, and I'm one of the crew, you know."

Hunter looked at Broomall and smiled, jerking his head toward his host.

"The megalomaniac," he said significantly. "Everything is possible to him. He is rather dangerously put out at present."

Pete Salter had been comparing and examining the finger-prints. He lifted his head at last and looked across the table at Lowell.

"Sorry, Mr. Lowell," he said apologetically, "but your prints seem to be the ones. Guess you'll have to explain to us how they got on the wheel, *over* those of poor Orsgaard."

"My prints!" cried Lowell, striding forward and bending over the table, while Nancy rose to her feet with one hand at her throat.

Broomall got the idea that she had choked off a scream.

"Yes, yours," nodded Salter. "See here for yourself. Compare the two. Mr. Lowell, did you tie that wheel in the early hours of this morning?"

"I did not!" snapped Lowell, glaring about the circle. "I never heard of such rot. I was sound asleep in my bed. And what do you mean, Salter, by saying that my finger-prints are on the wheel *over* those of Orsgaard?"

"That's where we found them," said Salter pleasantly. "And we always read that to mean that your hand was on the wheel *after* Orsgaard's! It would have to be. After the man disappeared, you handled the wheel, Mr. Lowell. Or after Orsgaard ceased to handle it. We can put it that way."

"You are insinuating that I flung the poor chap overboard?" asked Lowell with an ugly laugh.

"Oh, certainly not!" Salter looked shocked. "I have no proof that you or any one else had a thing to do with Orsgaard. I am interested in the person who tied that wheel."

"Then I am sorry you have had your work for nothing," said Lowell after a slight pause. "I was in bed, as I told you, at the time Orsgaard vanished. But before I retired, somewhere around midnight, I had the wheel for a while. Orsgaard was standing beside me. We had a few words, and I gave him a cigar. He seemed well and cheerful enough then. I fancy after I left Orsgaard simply laid his hands on another part of the wheel, and so left my prints overlapping his. That is the only explanation I can give at any rate."

"Thank you; I suppose that is how it must have happened, then," said Salter, wrapping up his belongings and preparing to depart. "Sorry to have inconvenienced you all."

He was gone, leaving Lowell staring after him, biting his lip and apparently puzzled and uneasy.

Mrs. Kearson gave her tinkling laugh.

"Horace Lowell, you really *didn't*

throw those poor chaps overboard, did you?" she begged.

"Oh, mercy, do hush!" cried Helen Evans - Smyth, looking nervously about. "I haven't the slightest bit of faith in this officious young detective, but the poor men really have *gone*, you know, Flossie!"

"And the yacht headed home in those wee small hours, was a warning," shuddered Nancy.

"Come, now, don't let's copy the crew," said Colgate briskly. "We are a sensible, intelligent group of people, with, I hope, a fair amount of nerve. And we have another night to face aboard this yacht. Let's say no more about this. We have bridge, the radio, good books, good company, and, I hope—good food. What about that, Lowell?"

"By George!" cried Lowell, starting toward the bell with a shamed laugh. "I'd plumb forgotten breakfast! Being accused of murder, and of tying up that confounded wheel, made me lose sight of the fact that I am host! And cheer up, Carlin is a good cook!"

Broomall slipped out of the lounge and followed Salter as he made toward the forward house.

The day was as fine a one as any cruising party could ask for, and the old Jezebel dipped her bowsprit playfully into the quiet sea, heading back at last toward Leesport.

The detective turned as Broomall spoke to him.

"I say, Salter, what did you make of those prints of Lowell's? His explanation was rather glib, I thought."

"Glib, yes, but probably true," replied Pete Salter, frowning. "For there were prints of Orsgaard's fingers all over the rest of the wheel. You know how many places there are to catch hold of. Of course I got Orsgaard's prints from stuff in his compartment. I've checked up on the prints of all the men."

"Whoever tied that wheel and

started us back on our course knows what may happen to us if we persist in this mad cruise," said Broomall.

"I figured that—yes."

"An important person, then, even though it may not be the one who disposed of those two men?"

"Important, yes. I should say so."

"But then, you got no other prints off that wheel."

"No, that is true."

The two men looked at each other for a moment in silence, and then Pete Salter drew close to Broomall and spoke in a very low tone, although there was no one near them.

"You forget that the hand you saw on the rail left no prints, Mr. Broomall."

CHAPTER XIII

Gone

THE rest of that day passed under a veil of horror, masked by laughter and an attempt at light-heartedness. No one, however, could forget the idle crew, what was left of it, ridden by panic, huddled together in the forward house; of the wheel, now in Hagan's hands, or the men who had vanished from the deck without a sound in the gray hours of the early dawn.

They played bridge, and Carlin was constantly appearing with iced drinks. It was very hot under the gay awnings on deck, and the yacht did not make very good time.

While he dressed for dinner, Broomall heard again the familiar tapping of Bert's pipe.

And as he listened, striving to locate it, a chill creeping up his back, the Green Pool emerald flashed into his mind. He had not been thinking much about that gem. Yet it was the thing that had brought them to the Lowell house—Bert and himself. And Colgate had the night before bought what Mrs. Evans-Smyth insisted was a fake, for the enormous sum of two

hundred thousand dollars! He could not get away from the idea that the emerald was mixed up in Bert's fate. Somehow he must get that stone from Colgate! It wouldn't be fair to Bert to fail to get it.

All this while he was walking about his little compartment with his ear to the wall, trying to locate the spot from which that mysterious tapping came. He was sure now that it was not Bert. The hand that swayed the great Bangcroft light, that had tied the wheel of the devil ship in the early morning hours, and turned her back on her course, was signaling to him now that he was not to forget Bert, that Bert was to be helped or avenged. He could not make out which.

If they could worry through the coming night on the Red yacht!

That other time the tapping had seemed to come from outside the portholes. Now he could not tell where it was.

Seizing a shoehorn from the bureau, Broomall stepped to the wall below the porthole and rapped out sharply his reply. "I'm — on — the — job — old — man."

The tapping instantly ceased. It was possible that the person calling to him did not understand the Morse code, but *Bert did*. And wild as it seemed, Broomall fancied the hand doing that tapping was the hand of a wellwisher. At least his reply would say that he got the signal.

The hall, when he opened his door cautiously, showed empty of any prowlers, but cheery with rose hued lights. A breath of cigar smoke and a subdued whistle came from Lowell's compartment opposite.

He had his nerve, the owner of that sinister yacht. But with Broomall's new resolution to stick with this thing until he had the Green Pool emerald and the secret of Bert's disappearance, came added suspicion of Horace Lowell. It must have been Lowell whom Dorothy Green went to see the night

she met her death on the yacht. Speed belonged to Lowell, and he knew the girl well. He could still hear Lowell's sharp shocked voice as he called the dog from her body.

Completing his dressing as hurriedly as possible, Broomall went up on deck. There, under the awnings, the rose lights gemmed the scene, and the Red yacht was running smoothly over a quiet sea. Here and there the lamps struck a gleam from the brass rail where twice he had seen that hideous hand clinging, the brass rail where poor Richards had vanished.

Yet was ever a picture more beautiful? An atmosphere more romantic?

No one was about, and Broomall advanced to the rail and stood looking over. It seemed far fetched and impossible, the sort of thing that he knew had happened.

"I beg pardon, sir, but orders are that no one is on deck alone to-night," said Hagan's voice at his side.

Broomall started and turned, looking with amused eyes into the man's serious white face.

"Hagan, is it possible that you, too, are being touched by the panic of the crew?" he asked.

"There is no getting away from the fact that two men are gone from the yacht, Mr. Broomall," replied Hagan stolidly. "And these are the captain's orders. Cap Jonas has brought in the old Jezebel a many the time with queer doings aboard her. But never this bad."

"All right, Hagan, I'll trot below until some one joins me," said Broomall good-naturedly. "You've not said anything about—er—what I saw on the rail that night?"

"Heavens, no, sir!" Hagan looked horrified. "If we let that out all Hades would cut loose! The men are calm enough now, so long as we are turned back and they're not working and all keeping together like."

Broomall turned to go inside when something in Hagan's manner halted

him as effectually as though the man had spoken.

"You wanted to say something?" he asked.

"I did, yes," replied Hagan bluntly, looking about. "You remember the ribbon I showed you? The one I found at the lighthouse?"

Broomall shuddered. "Great Scott, yes!" he said.

"Well, sir, it's gone."

"Gone! What do you mean, Hagan?"

"I mean it is," said Hagan doggedly. "I put it in my pocket. You saw me do it. And I never give it another thought, it being on me that way and not in my bunk or anywhere else. And awhile ago I wanted to show it again to Mr. Salter and—it wasn't in any of my pockets. Somebody had took it out!"

Broomall stared at Hagan's honest face for a moment. A sick feeling gathered about his heart. He again saw that carved chair in the lounge, the chair with its horrible prisoner!

"Good heavens, Hagan!" he gasped. "I'm afraid that—"

Galbraith and Colgate appeared together, laughing, in the door of the lounge, and Hagan moved away with a significant gesture.

"You see that the women folks are watched careful to-night, Mr. Broomall," he whispered sibilantly. "Since I put that ribbon back in my pocket I haven't been near the crew."

A half hour later every one save Pierce Colgate had assembled around the candle lighted dinner table.

With the freshening breezes of night the Red yacht was running more rapidly toward home, and it was a vast relief to Broomall, especially after that conversation with Hagan on deck, to realize that this was the last night aboard the mysterious craft.

"Where's Colgate?" asked Lowell as they sat down to the delicious meal which had been prepared by the efficient Carlin.

"Yes, where is he?" asked Hunter with an unpleasant laugh. "It behooves us to stick together aboard this boat, Lowell."

"Don't tell me Mr. Colgate has vanished, too!" cried Mrs. Evans-Smyth with her little high laugh. "I should die!"

"Everything seems to be going fairly well," said Galbraith reprovingly. "The crew when I saw them just now were sullen, but not dangerous. The fact that we are going back has quieted them."

"But the night isn't over yet," said Hunter in Broomall's ear.

As he spoke Pierce Colgate entered. In his hand he held the Green Pool emerald fast to its dangling platinum chain, and his face was a picture of anger and humiliation. Straight to Mrs. Evans-Smyth he went and laid the jewel on the white cloth before her.

"What is the game?" he asked, staring into her startled eyes. "This stone is a fake. Look at it. It is not the gem I bought here last night for two hundred thousand dollars!"

"Now, Mr. Colgate, of course, it's a fake!" cried Mrs. Evans-Smyth plaintively. "I *told* you that! Everybody heard me!"

"Rubbish!" snapped Colgate still holding her gaze with his. "The stone I bought last night was the real Green Pool and you know it. This one—which some one since put in its place, is nothing but glass!"

"Now, look here, Colgate—" began Lowell sharply.

"Really, Colgate—" blustered Evans-Smyth.

"Oh, I just knew you would say this when you looked at that emerald in the daylight!" cried Mrs. Evans-Smyth. "You wouldn't listen last night. I told you over and over the stone you were buying was a copy of the Green Pool which is in my safe deposit box in New York!"

"The Green Pool was in my hand in this room last night," said Colgate

very low. "No one can fool me on a gem. I've made them a life study. And since then, the real emerald has been taken from me and this piece of glass put in its place."

"Are you trying to accuse my wife of something, Colgate?" flared Evans-Smyth, purple with anger.

"I don't know whom I'm accusing!" sneered Colgate turning around upon him. "What is the game? I tell you all here and now that I shall stop payment on the check I gave Mrs. Evans-Smyth the moment we reach port!"

"Of course, you must!" cried Evans-Smyth furiously. "Do you think we'd touch your money after this? Helen told you last night before us all that the stone was an imitation and you insisted upon buying it. With that understanding you gave her that check. And now you want your money back. Well, you can have it, you bet! We don't want it!"

"Oh, not so fast, Henry!" said the sweet voice of his wife. "The emerald was mine, and the check was given to me. I was perfectly frank with Mr. Colgate. So far as I know the Green Pool emerald is still in my safe deposit box in the bank in New York. I told him that and you all heard me. I refuse to permit him to stop payment on the check I hold. If he does, I shall take the case to court."

"Oh, Helen!" said Nancy Lowell with an embarrassed little laugh.

"Helen, give Colgate his check immediately!" grated Evans-Smyth.

"I shall never give it to him!" said Mrs. Evans-Smyth with her small blond head held very high. "The idea! The thing was fair and square and everybody heard it. I didn't want to sell him that fake stone. But since he insisted, knowing he has piles of money, I couldn't resist that check. I said so. And now he shan't have it back. Just try to stop payment on it, Mr. Colgate! It will cost you more than two hundred thousand before you are through!"

Broomall, who had been a startled listener to this argument, rose and walked to the table. Once more he took the green stone in his fingers and bent his head above it. And then astonishment gripped him. For the gem he looked at was the one he had seen the night he arrived at the Lowell house, and not the blazing pool of glory Colgate had bought the night before! Colgate had certainly been cleverly done. And again, who was responsible for the substitution? Where was the Green Pool? Did Mrs. Evans-Smyth know the real from the fake, or was she actually what she seemed? Just a common grasping little ignoramus, being played with by the crook?

"Mrs. Evans-Smyth, you shall never have that money," said Colgate very low. "I am the wrong man to try that game with. A clever one, I will admit."

"Lowell, I protest!" cried Evans-Smyth, rising. "Do you permit your women guests to be insulted like this?"

Lowell made a gesture of helplessness.

"I have nothing to do with this situation," he said ruefully. "Colgate, have a little sense. You were told you were buying a fake stone. Now take your medicine, no matter how expensive. In the daylight the stone probably looked—"

"I never looked at it all day," said Colgate. "I just chanced to do so before I came in here a few minutes ago. You don't seem to understand. I am a jewel expert. I have a marvelous collection."

Lowell glanced about the table.

"Is there no one else who can judge this stone?" he asked. "I dare say that's too much to hope."

Broomall said nothing. How could he speak? With every bit of him he longed at that moment to learn the hiding place of the real Green Pool, which he knew was aboard the yacht. Only last night it had flashed and rippled up at him from Colgate's palm.

"Where did you keep the thing after you bought it, Pierce?" asked Dr. Hunter.

"Oh, I didn't lock it up in a dozen safes," shrugged Colgate. "I just wrapped it carefully and kept it in my pocket. At night I laid it under my pillow and this morning I put it back in my pocket. The person who took it and put in its place this bit of glass, must have picked my pocket."

Broomall felt himself growing rather chilly, and he devoted himself to the soup which was cooling at his place.

Tom Hagan had had a crimson ribbon taken from his pocket. And now Colgate had been robbed in the same way of the Green Pool!

Then Galbraith spoke, with an embarrassed laugh.

"You forget we are at sea. We are on a yacht. No one has broken in and escaped by a window. If Colgate tells the truth, the real emerald is among us, on the boat somewhere. I suggest that we search every one and every compartment. I insist upon submitting to this myself, for I room with Colgate."

"That's a disgrace to my boat—I—" began Lowell excitedly.

"Man, your boat is already disgraced," said Hunter dryly. "I agree with Galbraith. Let's start the search at once."

"There will be no result gained if the Evans-Smyths refuse to submit," said Colgate darkly.

"Helen, you can't refuse!" said Nancy Lowell swiftly. "When you know the real emerald is in your bank in New York!"

"Oh, no," smiled Mrs. Evans-Smyth with her eyes glittering with rage. "I shall not refuse. Do anything you like, Mr. Colgate."

"Colgate," said Hunter, "you are a fool. We were witnesses to that sale last night. You insisted upon buying what you were told by the owner was a fake stone, a copy of the famous

original. Now, after you are convinced yourself that she told you the truth, you want your money back. I fear that in any court the case would go against you. You knew what you were buying."

"I bought the Green Pool emerald," said Colgate steadily. "And since then, it has been taken from me and this imitation put in its place."

Broomall sat frowning at the table. He could not as yet see daylight or decide which person around that handsome board on the ill-fated yacht, was the crook, the criminal. But he was fairly sure that Hunter had been wrong about Mrs. Evans-Smyth.

"At least, my friends, let us eat," said Lowell then pleasantly. "We can start the search afterward, if every one wishes. It may assist us to pass this final evening on my unfortunate yacht."

CHAPTER XIV

In the Lounge

AS the uncomfortable meal progressed Broomall fought the desire to go to his compartment, securely lock both its doors and remain there until the devilish boat got into Leesport. Not for a moment did he undervalue the horrible happenings on board the strange Red yacht.

But Bert's fate was too closely interwoven with the affair. He could not step out of it all like that, for sake of his own safety. And no one could be sure that even in a locked compartment, would there be security that night on the old Jezebel.

The Evans-Smyths and Colgate ignored each other pointedly until the delicious meal had dragged to a close, and then Horace Lowell glanced about the table with a forced smile.

"Well, is every one willing to proceed with this absurd search?" he asked. "I suggest we have Salter in first. He is familiar with matters like this."

"It is so crazy," sighed Helen Evans-Smyth. "Why, that gem is carefully locked away in New York! I never heard of anything so idiotic."

"I, for one, shall not permit it!" snorted Evans-Smyth.

"My dear, you certainly will!" snapped his pretty wife. "If you don't, Mr. Colgate will think we are both crooks! He'll think you took that emerald out of his pocket!"

"Exactly, so I will," agreed Colgate in an ugly tone.

Broomall could scarcely blame him. He alone knew that Pierce Colgate had been cleverly done. And he knew how he felt.

Lowell pressed a bell.

"I'll send for Salter," he nodded, but scarcely had he spoken before Pete Salter stood in the doorway.

"I beg pardon, but I've a little speech to make," he said glancing about the circle.

"I was just about to send for you," said Lowell. "But what we want can wait. Go ahead."

"It is my request and the captain's that no one, man or woman, go upon the decks to-night alone," said Salter. "We have no idea as yet what caused those two seamen to vanish. They were burly strong men, without nerves, and good swimmers. I rely upon the gentlemen to care for the ladies. This is not a laughing matter. There is a distinct danger aboard this yacht. Hagan, Captain Seal and myself are in charge. We must have your help. The men are locked in the forecabin where they can do no harm. They begged to be locked in there and we need have no fear of them."

As he spoke, Broomall saw Salter's eyes roving keenly from one face to another in the softly lighted cabin. He felt sure that Tom Hagan had told him about the crimson ribbon, and he felt with the detective that the danger, whatever it was, was not locked in the forecabin.

"Oh, how delicious!" cried Mrs.

Kearson with a little shiver. "I wouldn't have missed this trip for anything!"

"My advice is to stick together in here or the lounge," went on Salter grimly. "Leave the decks alone to-night. And go to bed early and lock your doors. To-morrow, with good luck, we shall be back in Leesport."

"But, man, if the crew is locked up and we all stay together in here, that only leaves yourself, Hagan, the captain, Carlin and the maid at large!" said Hunter amusedly. "In which direction do you fancy the menace lies?"

"I can't tell you that, Dr. Hunter," replied Salter steadily, looking the doctor in the eyes. "And nobody else can. I only know it exists. The fault is mine for fixing it so that this cursed boat left port with you all. I'm going to do my best to get you back in safety."

"But nothing has happened except two sailors jumping overboard!" pouted Helen Evans-Smyth. "Such silly things to make such a fuss about!"

"You'd make a fuss if it was your husband who vanished like that, wouldn't you?" flared Salter.

"Indeed she wouldn't!" Flossie Kearson whispered to Broomall. "She wouldn't give a button!"

"We shall do our best to obey you, Salter, after we attend to an unpleasant little matter which has come up," said Lowell then with a sigh. "I was just ringing for you to assist us. It seems that last night Mr. Colgate bought a valuable emerald from Mrs. Evans-Smyth which she insisted was only a fake stone, a copy of the original which he wanted. He did not believe her and gave her a check. Now he says she sold him the real stone, but later took it away and left the fake in its place. He has placed the imitation there on the table. He wants his check and the lady refuses to give it up. If he stops payment she says she will take it to court. We had all insisted that we be searched, and also our compart-

ments, for the true emerald which Colgate says was stolen from him. Will you take charge, Salter? And get it over quickly, please."

"It seems to me that there won't be a chance of finding the stone," observed Galbraith. "Any crook clever enough to get it from Colgate and place the imitation one in its stead would be clever enough to hide it well."

A strange smile drifted across Salter's tight lips and he nodded abruptly.

"I agree with you, Mr. Galbraith," he said. "A search for the stone, provided Mr. Colgate is correct and it was ever on the yacht, would be a farce."

Broomall's heart sank. *He* knew that the Green Pool emerald was on the yacht.

"Fudge!" snapped Colgate, white with rage. "You will not need to look beyond the belongings of the Evans-Smyths. They played a clever trick on me."

Pete Salter lifted his hand as Evans-Smyth, as white as Colgate, started forward.

"Let us get it over with, then," he said. "I guess nobody will be satisfied until you have it. I don't blame Mr. Evans-Smyth, but I don't blame Mr. Colgate either, if he bought the real stone last night. If Miss Lowell could search the ladies in her own compartment, I will do the same with the gentlemen in here. Then I'll go through the various compartments myself. Don't suppose you'll be afraid to trust me?"

His cheerful grin was faintly responded to here and there.

"Get done with it, Salter," growled Horace Lowell. "I can't get head or tail of the thing myself."

A half hour later Pete Salter had again left them to themselves, and the Green Pool emerald had not been found.

Pierce Colgate strode across the room to the corner where the Evans-Smyths sat, very erect with what

seemed to be a righteous indignation. His hands were clenched and his slightly protruding jaw set dangerously.

"Mrs. Evans-Smyth," he said, very low, "you won't get away with this. Remember what I say."

Broomall, with Evans-Smyth's angry voice and Lowell's instant indignant protest in his ears, left the lounge and, disregarding orders, crossed the deck and stood by the rail, looking out upon the placid sea.

He was bewildered in the maze of strange occurrences about him. That they were all connected, probably the work of one mind, he did not doubt. Were the Evans-Smyths really the crooks? Did that pretty helpless-looking little blonde know what had become of Bert? Why would a splendid honest girl like Nancy Lowell protect a weak, silly thing like Helen Evans-Smyth? And Henry Evans-Smyth. He was the last type of man to be a clever crook. But then, Broomall put no trust in appearances.

Despite himself, his eyes wandered down the deck to the spot where he had seen that dreadful hand clinging to the rail. There was nothing there now. And what could be more cheerful or more luxurious than the deck?

The yacht was dipping along joyously, as though eager to get home. Music hummed from the radio. Yet in the fore-castle these men, huddled in fear, were locked in, and out at sea, somewhere, were the bodies of Orsgaard and Richards.

What was the secret of that boat? Orsgaard had said she was a treasure ship. What had he meant by that? He could not have been speaking of the Green Pool emerald. That would hardly be likely. Broomall felt that it was because of the treasure the man had spoken of that he had died.

And young Richards. Had he, too, known of the "treasure"? He had been Orsgaard's friend. It was likely enough. And probable that both men

had shipped with Hagan for a definite object.

Broomall's blood began to run rapidly. There was, then, something on that yacht of great value. The thing Dorothy Green had gone to find? Then one of the men at the Lowell house had known of it, for she had gone there just before her death. She had also visited the Bangcroft light.

Unconsciously Broomall had been grasping the polished brass rail while he went over these things, and he started when a strong hand closed over his fingers and, lifting them, drew them through Dr. Hunter's arm.

The psychiatrist was looking at him with an amused smile.

"Come inside, my friend," he said pleasantly. "Have you forgotten orders? How do you know at what moment you might be drawn over the side into the water?"

Ford Broomall made up his mind that he would not sleep that night. That some dreadful thing would happen before the dawn, on those polluted decks, he felt certain. It was not possible to shake off the feeling.

The panic-stricken crew locked in the fore-castle, the strong anger that existed between Colgate and the Evans-Smyths, the nervousness of the women and the uneasiness of Lowell himself, all tended to increase his own fears. And he had as yet had no clew regarding the fate of his pal. He could not even decide which member of the cruising party was the friend who was reminding him so often of Bert. If Nancy Lowell, who had frankly expressed her fears, he was completely in the dark. For how could that sweet girl know anything about the dark mystery Pete Salter was grappling with?

The urge to find the treasure the yacht carried, to possess himself of the Green Pool emerald despite the puzzling drama it seemed to be the center of, was growing. That, indeed, would avenge Bert! *Where was Bert?* The

man who had taken the Green Pool emerald from Colgate certainly knew. Hunter? Lowell? Galbraith? Evans-Smyth?

Knowing Dorothy Green and her cleverness as he did, Broomall could not entirely eliminate Helen Evans-Smyth from his suspicions. He could not believe her to be the fool Dr. Hunter thought her.

Throwing himself, fully dressed, upon his bed, Ford Broomall prepared, with his revolver beside him, for a wearing night.

He was on the borderland of sleep when the strange sound woke him, startled him to a sitting position on the edge of his bed, ears strained.

Plain at first, but dying rapidly away, it came, the sound of running feet on deck, a queer soft little *pat-pat* which Broomall could not immediately understand, but which, as his mind cleared, he recognized as the sound of *bare feet*.

It was gone. Nothing disturbed the deadly quiet. Everything was apparently as it had been, but Broomall was white and shaken.

Where was Pete Salter? Had he heard that sound? Had it roused the great dog that slept on deck? What on earth would be running like that, as though stark fear was at its heels, in bare feet on the deck at that hour? It was three thirty.

Orders or no orders, he could not remain any longer in his compartment. And, opening his door quietly, Broomall slipped into the corridor.

The deck, when he reached it, seemed deserted and peaceful. It had a normal cheery look, with the cards they had played with that day still on the table, Colgate's banjo on a couch, some of the women's books strewn about. Evidently Carlin had had so much to do in the kitchen that he had neglected the decks.

Broomall moved slowly and cautiously along, listening, looking. He

was not anxious to meet the fate of Orsgaard and Richards, or to again see that horror hand clinging to the gleaming rail.

And then suddenly he came to a full stop, having actually stumbled over the body of Speed, stretched out in a shadowy corner of the deck.

When the dog did not move, and as Broomall sprang away from him with his revolver in his hand, he saw that a slim white figure was prone upon the deck beside the dog, one arm across the muscular body.

A sick feeling at his heart, Broomall stooped swiftly and lifted Nancy Lowell in his arms, rejoicing as he felt that her pulse still beat regularly and that she apparently was in a faint.

Holding her close against him, he looked helplessly about. What could Nancy be doing at that hour alone on these dreadful decks? And the dog—

Glancing down at Speed, he saw to his amazement that he was breathing regularly, yet lying stretched out in an unnatural manner which closely resembled death.

Placing Nancy in a cushioned deck chair, Broomall, keeping a watchful eye on the decks, chafed her wrists, and filled a glass with water from a near-by thermos.

With the depressing sensation that this girl knew far more than he did or that she should, about the mysteries that hemmed them in on that hideous yacht, came the realization that he was entirely too fond of her.

Pete Salter was standing not far off, regarding him with brilliant, excited eyes, his face the color of ashes.

"Broomall," he whispered, "I need you, man. Mrs. Evans-Smyth is in the lounge."

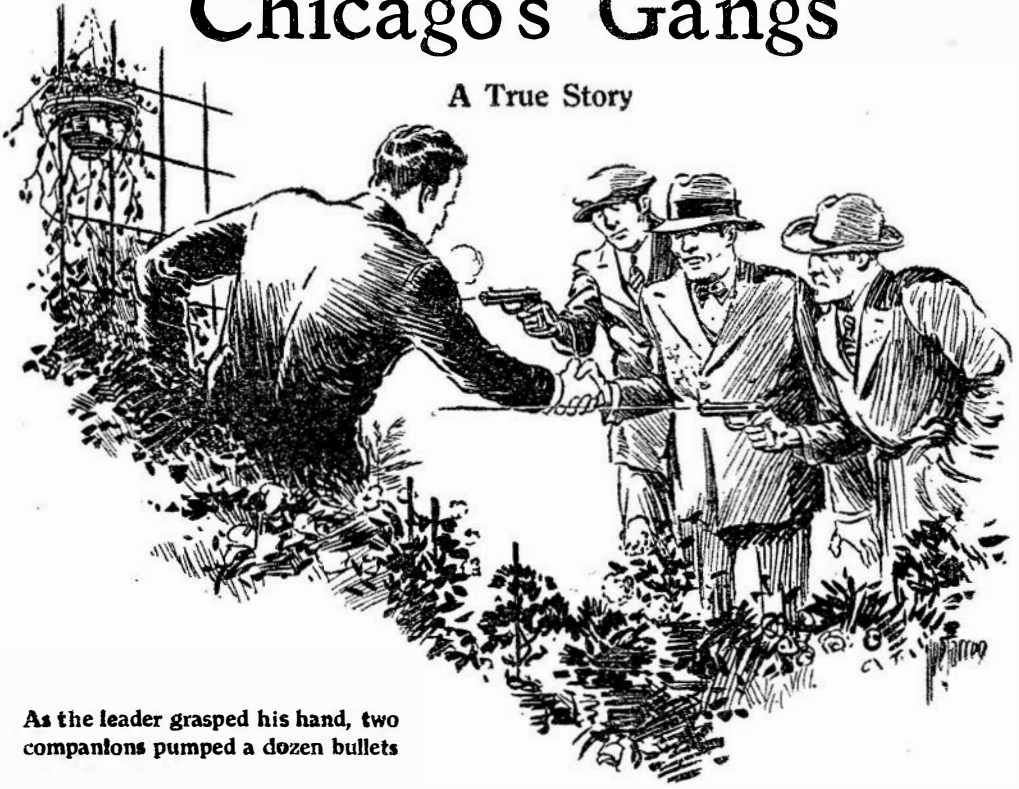
"You mean?" Broomall barely breathed the words.

"Yes," nodded Salter. "Like the others. Good heavens. Broomall, why did I ever let this devil ship sail with these people aboard?"

TO BE CONTINUED

Chicago's Gangs

A True Story



As the leader grasped his hand, two companions pumped a dozen bullets

Seven Men Murdered by a Gangland Firing Squad!—Here Is the Story Behind the Massacre That Shocked the World

By Manly S. Mumford

FOR nearly two decades Chicago has been ridden by an incubus of lawless gangs which has preyed upon its citizenry, flouted its laws, committed innumerable murders, split the silences of the night with its wicked bombs, corrupted its law enforcing agencies, and dragged the name of the city in the dust before the world.

Day after day, on the front pages of the newspapers throughout the country, have been chronicled the savage and relentless killings of gangsters by their fellow outlaws. With abandoned cruelty and wanton viciousness these gangsters have gone about their murderous business, using the most

modern weapons, the fastest automobiles, leaving hundreds of unsolved murders. The machine gun, that deadliest of all instruments of death, the sawed off shotgun, the pistol and the rifle, and the noisome bomb have been and are being used.

Names of men who have lived outside the law, making huge fortunes from illegal business lines—"rackets," they are called in Chicago slang—have swept across the pages of the daily journals, their terrible audacity and viciousness making them internationally known. All but one or two of them have also met spectacular and violent deaths, fitting to their lives. The names of Colosimo, Torrio, Ca-

pone, Drucci, Saltis, Lombardo—to mention just a few—all these have become known, notorious, almost legendary.

Through the years from 1909 to the present day the range and power of gangland has grown, and the number of murders increased in volume and in drama. At times it seemed that the authorities could not cope with the situation, a half dozen murders occurring in a week, bombs being tossed almost daily, sluggings and kidnappings frequent. In all these years the period from 1923 to 1927 was the worst. In these four years the shotgun's bark was often heard and the bodies of men were often found by the roadside, "taken for a ride." It was in this period that the most spectacular slayings occurred, those of O'Banion in his flower shop, Weiss in front of a church, the Genna brothers, three of them in a month, and finally the slaying of an assistant State's attorney, McSwiggin, while riding with gangsters.

Before the War

These years marked the high point of the remorseless gangland wars, but a great deal of history, sanguinary and interesting, came before them. And the bloodiest shooting came after: the Clark Street garage massacre.

The foundations of the present gangland were laid before the war, before prohibition made profitable the illicit liquor trade, from which such fortunes have been reaped. At this time vice was the occupation of the low browed gangster. Houses of ill repute flourished, and many of the present leaders of gangland got their start as panderers in the red light district. Sporadic for a while, the vice business finally took form and became organized, and the head of the ring was Big Jim Colosimo.

Colosimo was well known in the city of Chicago, principally through ownership of his famous night life

restaurant on the near south side of the city. It was a famous place, noted for its good food and its rich Italian wines. It was the fashion of those seeking a little glimpse of the underworld to patronize Colosimo's, as his place was known. Big Jim himself was always in evidence, suave, friendly, genial, furnishing food and entertainment to those who came.

His was one of the first of the cabarets where singers entertained the diners. He had a beautiful girl, Dale Winter, later a musical comedy star, who attracted patrons. Later he married her.

Gentleman Jim

The restaurant, however, was only one of Colosimo's activities, one of his lesser ones. His real business was the operation of dives and houses of ill repute. He was known as "The King of the Levee," the levee being the red light district. In this region all the operators of such immoral places must pay him tribute and be aligned with him. His business grew, and his prominence and wealth increased. He made political connections which made him immune from the law. He was a powerful figure. Originally he had been a day laborer, and was crass and crude. As his power increased he lost some of his ill breeding, and later posed as something of a gentleman.

From the notorious Five Points gang of New York, Colosimo got John Torrio to help him. Torrio was to grow greater in stature in the underworld than his sponsor. He was of a more pleasing personality, more suave, with more of a veneer of respectability, but he was also more remorseless. Also a better organizer.

In 1920, just when the gangs began reaching out for the booze trade, Colosimo was murdered. One pleasant afternoon he left his home and bride of three weeks to go to his restaurant, as had been his custom. He went in, spoke to his secretary, made a tele-

phone call, and started to leave. As he reached the front of his establishment a hand reached out from behind a door and put a bullet into Colosimo's brain. The secretary, rushing from the back, found his boss dead. There were no others in the place at this time of day, and the slayer had fled.

This was the first big gangland murder, and it created a furor in the city, but it was merely the forerunner of hundreds to follow. No one ever found out who killed Big Jim, or if some one did, he never told the authorities. Many people had reason, perhaps, to murder the King of the Levee, for he had been a harsh man, and made many enemies despite his attitude of friendliness.

The Labor Union Racket

Before Colosimo was killed another kind of gang was growing up—the labor gang. Control of a labor union was a valuable asset.

The head of a successful labor union was a man of some importance. He could call strikes and walkouts, crippling an employer's business. If the head of a union were unscrupulous, as many of them were, they used their position to enrich themselves, threatening employers with strikes and violence unless they were bribed. Thus they could grow rich, ride in expensive automobiles, and live in luxurious homes.

Many men, desirous of controlling certain labor unions, began to use violent tactics to gain their ends. They would announce themselves as candidates for president or business agent, and hire a gang of sluggers to help elect them. Broken noses, cracked heads and general sluggings were not rare in fights over the control of a union. There was little murder in this struggle, however. But a group of men was being formed which had become accustomed to lawlessness, and was susceptible to leadership. Many of the old-time labor sluggers and ter-

rorists found their ways into the beer and alcohol gangs founded after Colosimo's murder. Most of the labor sluggers were of Irish descent. The vice ring had largely been Italian. But in the post war bonanza of booze, the two nationalities joined hands and went along with the illegal business.

When Colosimo died, Torrio took up the reins. He proceeded with the vice business, included gambling houses, and struck out in the liquor business. He was easy-going, and a smooth talker, always willing to pay rather than to fight. Under a complaisant city administration he became king of the underworld, and apportioned out the territory in which each gang might operate. Certain sections of the city were assigned to his particular associates, mostly Italians. Another sector was given to the Saltis gang, which owed allegiance to Torrio. Saltis, a huge beer seller of Polish extraction, and Frank McErlane, one of the most murderous of the Irish, joined hands and worked the south side of the city. Torrio and his right-hand man, Capone, held control of the west side, while the gang headed by O'Banion, the toughest of the Irish, ruled the north side. Intermingled with these groups were the Genna brothers, some half dozen of them, who had systematically organized the Italian distillers to turn out thousands of gallons of alcohol daily.

The Beer War

All these groups were under the rule of Torrio. It was not a harsh rule, more or less of a working agreement, and often the traces were kicked over, one group growing restive and trying to break away. But a little summary justice, dealt out with revolvers, and the recalcitrant group was whipped back into line. Murders were not uncommon, but most of them were not spectacular, and seldom concerned a really important figure.

In 1923 another city administration

came into power. It was not disposed to deal so lightly with the bootleggers, beer runners, alcohol peddlers and their ilk. These gentry were now waxing fat, piling up riches, abandoning their old rough ways of living, and pretending to be captains of industry. Instead of the old strong-backed, weak-minded hoodlums, a new group, more tactful, better dressed, better business men were running the racket.

This year ushered in the real beer wars in which so many lost their lives. It also introduced new technique into the business of murder. The sawed off shotgun, which spits out its leaden slugs by the dozen, became the favorite weapon. Murder, wholesale and retail, was the order of the day in the fight between the various groups struggling for control or share in the booze racket. Outsiders began to climb in, and the old gangs themselves began to crack.

Keane "Takes a Ride"

The first of the killings in this series occurred in September, 1923, when a gang, headed by Spike O'Donnell, tried to break into the south side beer business, run by Joe Saltis. Two of O'Donnell's beer runners, George Meegan and "Spot" Bucher, were riding peacefully along in their auto one afternoon. Suddenly another car drew up, shotguns were poked between the curtains, and several blasts were poured into Meegan and Bucher. The attackers sped away, leaving the O'Donnell henchmen dead in their car.

This bold faced murder created considerable excitement among the police and authorities, but the next day there was another murder, that of Tony Raymond, to call their attention. While the police were still working on these three killings, another man of the O'Donnell crew was slain. His name was Keane, and he was a minor figure, but the manner of his death was noteworthy. He was the first of the gangsters to be "taken for a ride."

This new term quickly came into being and the method was often used. It is this. One group of gangsters, having decreed the death of a member of another, entrap him by friendly advances or actual kidnaping into an automobile. Then he is taken for a ride from which he never comes back. The machine is rapidly driven out into the country districts, where a gun is put to the head of the unfortunate prisoner. His body is tossed out by the roadside, where it lies until noticed by some passer-by. Often, if the road is a lonely one, the murderers will carry the body some distance from the road, leaving it in a field, where it may remain without detection for some days.

The south side beer war lasted the remainder of the year of 1923, all of 1924, most of 1925, and sporadic outbreaks were still occurring in 1926. More than twenty gangsters, most of them of the O'Donnell faction, were murdered in this war. A number were shot who did not die, and many saloons were bombed. The authorities could not accomplish anything. Saltis and his hardboiled partner, McErlane, were often arrested, indicted once or twice, and even tried for murder, but witnesses were lacking. It was openly charged that the gangsters intimidated witnesses, bought perjurers to testify for them, and generally flouted the law.

A Police Victory

While the south side beer war was in progress, another was being started on the north and west sides, which was to prove more bloody and spectacular.

It first began in the spring of 1924, when Ralph Capone, brother of the notorious Al, was killed. It had been the custom of the Torrio henchmen to terrorize the village of Cicero on election day, and to insure the success of candidates favorable to the syndicate headed by Torrio. Ralph, the younger brother, was engaged in a little slugging and outlawry when he en-

gaged in battle with the police, who shot him to death. This was one of the cases in which the police came out ahead.

The next month Joe Howard, a Capone gangster who was reputed to have talked to the authorities, was slain. From then on the war began in earnest. Eddie Tancl, a saloonkeeper in the Torrio territory, was murdered in his saloon. For this killing a gangster named Doherty was tried. Doherty's name comes up later in the story, for it was in his automobile that William McSwiggin, the assistant State's attorney, was killed.

O'Banion Goes to War

The war began to break out between the O'Banion gang, growing restive under Torrio domination, and the Genna gang, who were also breaking away from Torrio. O'Banion, harsh and tough, was contemptuous of all the Italian gangsters, and referred to them slightly.

At this time the O'Banion gang was the most prosperous. They were making money faster than the other gangs, and were doing it by stealing liquor owned by the other groups. "Hi-jacking" of liquor trucks was common, and the O'Banion crew were the aggressors. Hi-jacking is the simple expedient of stopping a truck load of liquor, kidnaping the driver, stealing his truck, and throwing the driver out somewhere. The O'Banion mob was in the habit of this practice, which, of course, was profitable, as the liquor cost them nothing, and they could get just as high a price as if they had bought it in the first place. But such a practice could not go on forever. The law could do nothing, and the victims of such thefts could not complain to the police, for the whole business was outside the law. But the gangs themselves settled it with machine guns and rifles to help them.

As the O'Banion gang grew in wealth, power and audacity, it also be-

came more respectable. O'Banion himself bought part interest in a flower shop to use as a blind. Each day he was to be seen in the shop selling orchids and lilies for the funerals of other gangsters.

O'Banion's close friends, members of his gang: George Moran, a Pole with an Irish name; Little Hymie Weiss, another Pole; Vincent Drucci, a sleek, presentable young Italian; and Dapper Dan McCarthy, one of the old-time labor sluggers who had gone into the beer racket; all were doing well. As they became prosperous they moved into expensive hotels, rode in expensive automobiles and affected fine clothes. O'Banion, despite his ferocity, was a fastidious individual, always nattily dressed, having his clothes made by the best tailors. It was quite a job for a tailor to make a suit of clothes for O'Banion, for he demanded two extra pockets in which he could carry his two revolvers, which he never went without.

Swell Crooks

When O'Banion was married it was a grand affair. All the guests came in full dress clothes, for it was an evening wedding, and the gangsters in their swallowtails and white gloves paraded about the lawn of the bride. Occasionally a suspicious bulge was noticed beneath a swallowtail, for, after all, these men were gunmen and gangsters, and they could not afford to go about unprotected.

After O'Banion's marriage he moved into a sumptuous apartment on the Gold Coast of Chicago, where the rich and socially prominent live. Few people in the neighborhood knew the character of their neighbors, and the toughest of the gunmen lived in peace and quiet there. The O'Banion gang were great theatergoers, usually to be seen on the first night openings of the theaters, dressed in tuxedos, with their women correctly attired in ermine wraps. The hotels and cabarets

saw them often, and they were welcomed because of their free spending proclivities. But few people knew the nature of their business.

The "North Side mob," as O'Banion's crew was called, grew arrogant as their wealth and power increased, and it was this that caused their downfall. They terrorized the smaller Italian gangsters, and encroached upon the territory of the Gennas, treating the latter with disdain and contempt. Then the inevitable happened.

The Flower Shop Murder

O'Banion was slain.

In his flower shop one morning he was arranging the flowers, having a large sale for the funeral of a noted Italian who had just died. Three Italians walked in. He apparently was expecting them, perhaps even knew them, for he stretched out his hand in greeting. As the leader grasped O'Banion's hand, his two companions pumped a dozen bullets into O'Banion's body. O'Banion was unable to use his guns, in their specially constructed pockets, and fell to the floor. As he lay there, the leader of the three killers leaned over, placed his pistol to the fallen gangster's temple and fired one more shot, to make sure of the job. The slayer ran from the shop, jumped into a waiting car and sped away. There was only one witness, a colored porter, who rushed up to find his employer dead, lying among the orchids and roses he had been clipping, his blood staining their beauty.

The reins of O'Banion were quickly picked up by his closest associate, Hy-mie Weiss, and he began to carry on.

Two days after his death O'Banion was buried with a funeral that had never been surpassed in the city. He lay in an undertaking chapel, for the Catholic church refused to let him be buried from a place of worship, and thousands of people filed by. He lay in a casket which cost ten thousand dollars. Tons of flowers banked the coffin, filled

the little chapel and overflowed into the street where the throngs pressed and crowded. Gangsters aplenty were there, and judges, police, public officials, who had no business to be mourning for a murdered gangster. But through all the illicit liquor racket runs the slimy thread of politics. Many of the poor people of O'Banion's earlier acquaintance were there, some of them to mourn, for he had always been open-handed to the unfortunate.

After O'Banion was buried, the war started out afresh. The north side gangsters suspected both the Torrio-Capone and Genna outfits of having been mixed up in his slaying. They began to watch for an opportunity to take vengeance and soon one offered. Al Capone was driving in the street one day, accompanied only by his chauffeur, when a group of O'Banion gangsters sped past in a car and fired several shots into Capone's car. Capone himself escaped, but the gangsters missing for once, but his chauffeur was seriously wounded. But the mere fact that the powerful Capone had been shot at put fear into the heart of the Italian gangs and the feud increased in bitterness.

Capone's Star Ascends

Less than two weeks later came the crowning stroke of the O'Banion gang. Some of their members shot Johnny Torrio, the king of the underworld. Torrio lived in a spacious house in a good neighborhood on the south side of the city. One Saturday afternoon as he and his wife drove up to their home in their expensive car, dismissed the chauffeur and started toward the house, three assailants jumped from a parked car near by and began shooting at Torrio. He fell at the first volley and the assailants sped away.

Torrio's wife hysterically called for help and the wounded vice lord was rushed to a hospital where he hovered between life and death for many days with some seven bullets in his body. He

eventually recovered, but his nerve was gone and his spirit broken. At the time he was shot he was a fugitive from the Federal courts, where he was under sentence for dealing in liquor. Upon his recovery he surrendered, was taken to jail and served his sentence. When he was let out he left almost immediately for Italy, surrendering all his power and privileges.

Al Capone, "Scarface Al," took up his reins.

For the next four months the war continued with a few minor characters being shot and the bark of the pistol was often heard in the badlands. So far the north side gang seemed to have the better of the argument, for they had frightened the Italians and stolen their territory.

The Gennas Die

Then the Gennas began to fall. The first to be killed was Angelo, the most hardboiled of the brothers. He was riding in his car when another car pulled up alongside of him, the sawed-off shotguns roared and he was dead. Whether members of the north side gang had killed him, or whether some of the members of his own crew, grown restive under his hand and envious of his wealth, had done away with him, no one knew for certain.

Before the fortnight was out, Mike, another of the Genna brothers was dead. Mike, accompanied by three others of his gang was riding in the business district of Chicago when another car started in pursuit. There was some shooting, and Genna rightfully suspected that the north side gang was after him. He and his companions sped down the street and outdistanced their pursuers. But a police automobile took up the chase and finally overtook the Italians' car when they crashed into a telephone pole. The Italians jumped out and opened fire, believing, they claimed, that the policemen were enemies out to kill them. In the shooting affray, held in broad

daylight on a crowded street corner, Mike Genna was killed, also two of the policemen. Two of Genna's companions, named Scalise and Anselmi, were captured by the police and tried for murder later.

In another three weeks another Genna was murdered. This time it was Tony, the youngest and best educated of the brothers. He received a phone call, ostensibly from one of his henchmen, asking for an appointment at a certain corner. As Genna drew up to the curb in his car his murderer walked casually out of a building and as Tony reached out his hand in greeting, the killer shot him at close range.

These three killings in such quick succession practically broke up the Genna gang and they were no longer to be reckoned with as a big factor in the liquor trade. One of the remaining brothers went back to Italy. The others withdrew from the booze racket and were little heard of afterward.

The High Spot

But the war went on among the Italians. Many men reached out for the power that had been wielded by the dead Gennas and the fugitive Torrio and the slain O'Banion. For some weeks not a gangster would be killed. Then in another week two or three would be found, taken for a ride, slain from ambush, or murdered by hired assassins in their homes.

Many of the relatives of the Genna brothers were either terrorized or killed. Men associated with all the warring Italian factions were done away with while Capone was gradually asserting himself and establishing his overlordship over all the traffic again. Much of it had fallen away under the later years of Torrio's rule, but Capone was gradually getting it back again and was quite successful in subduing the Italians. At this time he had not had much success with O'Banion's old followers, who were still making hay while the sun shone.

In April, 1926 occurred the killing of William McSwiggin, assistant State's attorney. This was the high spot of all the gang murders. Up to this time no person of any prominence outside gangland had been slain in the warfare. But here was an official of the county, a representative of the law, found murdered in company with gangsters.

The Machine Gun Era

The facts were these. McSwiggin had gone home from the prosecutor's office at the usual time. After his supper an automobile drew up before his home and McSwiggin, who was still a comparatively young man, unmarried and living with his father, told the latter that he was going for a ride. He left the house and met Doherty, a well known beer peddler and gangster who had been accused of murdering Eddie Tancil a year or so before. Doherty had been acquitted of this charge, but was known as a tough character. With him in the car was a man named Duffy, also a beer peddler. McSwiggin had known Doherty for many years and was friendly with him.

The three of them made their way toward Cicero, the home town of the Capone gang. For what purpose they went there no one really knows. At any rate a few minutes after they had left the McSwiggin home and were driving through Cicero another car sped up alongside and let loose a rain of machine gun bullets. Still another car came from behind and a machine gun was poked from it. Doherty, Duffy, McSwiggin were all riddled with dozens of slugs. At the time, the car was in front of a saloon and the wicked rat-a-tat-tat of the gun brought patrons running out. When they reached the car containing McSwiggin the other cars had sped away. The front of the saloon looked like a target range where the bullets had spattered against it. Doherty's car was full of holes and even trees in the vicinity were scarred and chipped by the bullets.

This was a killing which rang throughout the country. For one thing it ushered in the machine gun era, which was to be more deadly and remorseless than even the shotgun and pistol days. For another, a great cry was raised on account of the killing of the assistant State's attorney.

The police put on an intensive drive to find the slayers. Special grand juries were called and investigated for months. Hundreds of witnesses were paraded before the officers of the law in the hopes of solving the killings, but all came to naught. The great question of how the prosecutor came to be murdered was never solved. It was not even known whether the assassins had intended to kill him or not, because he was not known to have mixed in the illegal gang activities. A motive for the killing of Doherty and Duffy was easy to find. They had been encroaching on Capone territory, selling beer where only Capone's henchmen were supposed to sell. The best guess of those who knew gangland was that the machine gunners had intended to kill Doherty and Duffy, and that they were unaware of the presence of McSwiggin.

A Mystery Still

The question was never answered, and the murder of the three men went down in police annals as just another of the long line of unsolved killings in the beer war.

The spring passed with a few more desultory killings, with none of the leaders being injured.

In August, however, the Capone gang began to take reprisals for the shooting of Torrio and the attempt on the life of Capone. Vincent Drucci, second in command of the old O'Banion gang, was selected for death.

He was walking in Michigan Avenue, that busy thoroughfare along the lake, when a gang of Italians leaped from a passing car and began shooting at him. They were not quite quick

enough, however, and when he saw them he whipped out his own gun and began returning their fire. The aim of both sides was poor and there were no casualties, but the busy business men were treated to a good gun battle in the heart of the city.

The north side gang enraged by this attempt on the life of one of their leaders, was not long in retaliating. The following month a car loaded with gangsters was driven past the Hawthorne Hotel in Cicero, which was the headquarters of the Capone gang. From this car poured a deadly fire of bullets from one or more machine guns. The windows were broken and the doors shattered by the slugs, but none of the Capone gangsters were shot. A couple of innocent bystanders who happened to be in the hotel received minor wounds.

Wholesale Murder

The Capone gang by this time was determined to get revenge and put out of existence the north side gang, which had been so successful in terrorizing and shooting their members. A most careful and painstaking plot was laid to do away with the leader of the old O'Banion gang, Hymie Weiss. And it was successful.

The consummation of the plot occurred on October 11, 1926, but the groundwork was laid much earlier. Even after the slaying of O'Banion, his followers kept their office above the flower shop of which he had been part owner. Here Weiss, Drucci, Moran and others of the gang would meet to cast up their accounts, transact business and split up their earnings.

The Capone gang and others knew of this hangout. Near the first of October, more than ten days before the killing of Weiss, two quiet Italians rented a room in a ramshackle boarding house next door to the flower shop. The landlord paid little attention to them, for they attended to their own business and were quiet and orderly.

On the fatal 11th of October, a car drew up in front of Holy Name Cathedral, an old and venerable Catholic church, diagonally across from the old O'Banion flower shop. In this car was Hymie Weiss, leader of the north side gang. With him was a member of his gang named Murray. In another car just behind were W. W. O'Brien, a well known criminal lawyer, Sam Peller and Benny Jacobs, both mixed up in the beer business. All the men in the two cars got out and started across the street toward the gang headquarters. As they reached the middle of the street the ominous rattle of a machine gun was heard. Weiss fell, mortally wounded, Murray also. O'Brien, the attorney, was shot, but dodged into a doorway. Peller and Jacobs both ran, filled with bullets.

At this time the street was far from deserted, as this corner is ordinarily quite busy. The fact that none of the bystanders, of whom there were dozens, was hit was a tribute to the marksmanship of the hidden machine gunners. No one on the scene could tell where the fire had come from, but from the sound of the gun, it seemed that it was some little distance away. At first it was thought that some car parked near by had contained it. But a search of the cars failed to disclose any. Then the building next to the flower shop was searched, and it became apparent what had happened.

The Killers Escape

In the room rented some weeks before by the quiet Italians were many machine gun bullets, two shotguns with ammunition for them, traces of food and drink, and hundreds of cigarette butts, attesting to the fact that the two killers had stood a long vigil.

The patience it must have taken for the two slayers to wait so long, day and night on the watch, was mute evidence of the determined desire for revenge.

Immediately after the shooting the

slayers walked quietly down the back way, crept out of the house into an alley, tossed their machine gun away and were never seen again.

This bold piece of plotting and murder, resulting in the death of two and the wounding of three again set the town by the ears. It was inconceivable that such an ambush could take place in such a crowded community, just three blocks away from a police station. The front of the old cathedral was marred by the slugs from the machine gun, little pieces of the stone being chipped away where the missiles had struck.

A Truce Declared

The north side gang, twice left leaderless, now picked Vincent Drucci to lead it. The gang was somewhat chastened and proposed a truce. According to reports seeping out from the underworld the leaders of the various gangs met in a hotel and patched up an armistice, allotting to each gang its particular province in which to sell liquor and control gambling. The old order was established, the north side gang keeping its territory, Capone and his crew taking the far west side, including the territory of the now defunct Genna organization. Saltis and his newly acquired partner, Sheldon, were again supreme on the south side. The O'Donnell gang, which had been nearly annihilated by the Saltis gangsters, were of little force now and practically withdrew.

This truce was kept for awhile, as far as the leaders were concerned, and the big spectacular killings died down, momentarily at least. But gang murders went on just the same. A couple of ex-Genna men were slain within the next few months and every once in awhile a body was found. Upon examination it would be discovered that he was an illicit liquor dealer who had been trying to break in on the territory of one of the big gangs.

Early in 1927, however, another at-

tempt was made on the life of Capone, who was in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He escaped, but it seemed that the war would break out again. No one was certain who had made the attempt, but it was generally supposed that one of O'Banion's old followers had decided to kill Capone, in revenge for the O'Banion and Weiss murders, despite the truce. However no retribution was taken.

A month or so later the north side gang suffered the loss of its third leader, Vincent Drucci. It was not in a gang killing, however. Drucci was always active on election day, driving about in a car, with a load of gangsters, terrorizing election officials and doing all in his power to elect candidates favorable to his gang. On this particular election day he was arrested by the police on general principles. He was first taken to a police station to be questioned concerning his election activities, then was started for the office of the State's attorney for more questioning. In the car while being taken to the latter office he engaged in some altercation with the police who were guarding him. He reached for his gun, but one of the policemen was quicker and shot him to death.

War Roars Again

This blow nearly disorganized the followers of O'Banion. George Moran, who succeeded to leadership, was weak compared to the former heads of the gang, and soon his power was shorn by the Capone gangs. After some months he countered, however, by forming an alliance with another group of Italian brothers, the Aiello's, who were emulating the Gennas. This alliance carried on its warfare with the Capone followers and more were killed. They were principally Italians, little heard of by either the police or the public, so there was not such a great stir about it.

For more than a year there was not a murder of a well known man in the

beer or alcohol trade, and the citizens were congratulating themselves on the quietude of the situation. Many were shocked that a peace should have been made on such a basis, the town divided between criminals so that they might ply their evil trades, but the fact that open murder was on the decline seemed to be encouraging.

But this tranquillity was specious. The volcano, always ready to erupt, broke out again in the autumn of 1928, this time with a roar. Tony Lombardo was the victim.

The Police Grope

Lombardo was the head of the Sicilian colony in Chicago, at least that part of it which engaged in any kind of illicit business. At various times it was called by one name and at other times by another. The *Unione Siciliane* was its most common name. Not all members of it were criminals by any manner of means, but the head of such an organization, with the tremendous powers that it gave him, was a powerful figure. Lombardo, while at the head of this, had associated himself with Capone. Just what the association was, no one actually knew, as it was always shadowy, but that Lombardo and Capone had some kind of a working agreement was generally known.

Lombardo had an office in a prominent loop building, just a block from State and Madison Streets, said to be the world's busiest corner. One afternoon, accompanied by a bodyguard, he took the elevator from his office to the ground floor and walked out into the crowded street. As always the thoroughfares were jammed with people. Men, women and children were crowded together, all hurrying about their business. Suddenly, as Lombardo started to turn the corner a shot rang out. Lombardo fell, a bullet behind his ear. His bodyguard, Ferrera also dropped, mortally wounded.

Many people must have seen the ac-

tual killing, but no one could find the slayer or slayers, because they had mingled with the crowd and become lost. Lombardo's body lay on the sidewalk with thousands of persons milling around it. Ferrera was picked up and taken to a hospital, where he died.

This was by far the boldest killing attempted in the city and the thought that such an episode could take place in one of the busiest districts in the world shocked the citizenry. The police put on an intensive hunt again and arrested every one who might have been connected with the killing. But they could get nowhere. The wounded Ferrera, before he died, claimed he did not know who had done it, and the witnesses could not identify any of the suspects. Another unsolved murder was put down on the police blotters.

The latest gang killing in Chicago, in which the gangsters graduated from ordinary murder to massacre, has rocked the city as none of the other slayings. In the earlier murders one or two might be killed, or even three, but in the Clark Street massacre the lives of seven gangsters were snuffed out, practically annihilating the remnants of the old O'Banion gang, which had already suffered the loss of three of its leaders through sudden death.

The Garage Massacre

On St. Valentine's day, while the city was in a holiday mood, a group of the O'Banion gangsters, now known as the Moran gang, as Bugs Moran, was the leader, were gathered together in a garage at the edge of Lincoln Park. There were the Gusenberg brothers, Frank and Peter, both old followers of O'Banion. These brothers were noted as two of the toughest of the gangsters in the city, both having been engaged in crime for many years. Peter, especially was notorious. He had been in prison at least three times for robbery, burglary and other offenses, having been released only a few years ago from Leavenworth, where he was serving a

sentence, along with the notorious labor leader, Big Tim Murphy. This time he had been caught robbing the government mail car and justice was severe.

With the Gusenberg brothers in the garage was James Clark, the personal bodyguard of Moran, the leader. It was said of Clark that he was one of the best gunmen in the city, having an unerring aim with a pistol. Al Weinschank, a racketeer, saloon keeper and general crook was there. Also Adam Heyer, owner of the garage. These five were old O'Banion men and had been associated with the gang for some time. With them were two others, Reinhardt Schwimmer, optometrist, and John May, a mechanic. Neither of these was a regular gangster. May was just a useful hand, a truck driver and mechanic, to keep the trucks in order, while Schwimmer was more of a hanger-on. He had treated many of the O'Banion gang for trouble with their eyes and had fitted them with glasses. Later he got to know them well and associated with them more.

Police Uniforms

On this particular morning these seven were gathered in the garage, which was a depot for their liquor trucks. It has been rumored that they had gathered there for a hi-jacking expedition, for the gang had always done hi-jacking, ever since O'Banion taught them how.

Shortly after ten o'clock in the morning five men came in. Two of them, according to witnesses, wore police uniforms and got out of an automobile resembling a police squad car. After a time the five men came out again. Witnesses thought that police were raiding the garage and making an arrest of some kind.

After the supposed policemen had left, one passer-by went into the garage and there were six bodies, lying along the wall. The seventh man, Frank Gusenberg, was staggering toward the

door, blood pouring from his wounds. He was rushed to a hospital, but died within a few hours.

When the police came they found a sight which sickened even them, used to murders and sordidness as they are. The six bodies lay all together, some piled one on top of the other. Blood, in great streams, ran over the floor and mingled with the grease from the trucks. John May, the mechanic, had the top of his head almost blown off. All the others were stone dead, with so many bullet holes in them that they could not count them then. They all lay face up with their feet almost against a wall. As the police reasoned it out, the gangsters must have all been lined up facing the wall, hands above their heads, relieved of their weapons and then shot, with revolvers, shotguns and machine guns.

Capone's Alibi

As they were hit they apparently spun around and fell face upward on the concrete floor. More than eighty machine gun shells were on the floor. The wall back of the men was marked like a target range. Bullet holes were everywhere, even in the trucks where some of the slugs had ricocheted.

When the bodies of the murdered gangsters were examined by physicians it was found that each man had from ten to forty bullets in him, indicating the relentless and absolute determination of the slayers to wipe out the whole gang. Schwimmer and May, although almost unaffiliated with the gang were shot down just as the rest. The killers made sure of a good job and dead men tell no tales.

Immediately, of course, suspicion was directed toward the Capone gang, who had good reason to put the Moran gangsters out of the way. The murder of Lombardo was still unavenged and it was also reported that many truck loads of alcohol belonging to the Italians had been hi-jacked by the north side gangsters. But the presence of

the policemen, or supposed policemen, bothered the investigators. The Capone gang had never been known to use policemen before.

The Moran gangsters must have believed that their assailants were policemen, or they never would have surrendered without a fight. A significant thing was that none of them had guns. Now the Gusenbergs always carried revolvers. So did Clark, the bodyguard, for he was a gunman by trade and it was inconceivable that none of them could have been without weapons. The police reasoned that the gangsters must have believed they were under arrest, so lined up against the wall, surrendered their weapons, and were then mowed down from behind with the precision of a Mexican firing squad.

One theory held out was that policemen might have killed them, real policemen who had been mixed up in the liquor business some way and were afraid of the gangsters. This theory was worked on but nothing has come of it so far. Capone himself was in Florida at the time of the murder and had a perfect alibi. Most of his known gunmen were there with him and none of his others could be found.

The wise police, those accustomed to work on gangland murders, shake their

heads and say that it looks like revenge for Lombardo's murder. If it is that, it is well avenged and the north side mob is almost a thing of the past.

To be sure, Bugs Moran himself is still alive, not having been in the garage by some chance, and one or two others of his gang were not there. But they are in hiding and cannot be found, convinced at last, perhaps, that the racket is too tough.

The citizens of Chicago were shocked beyond measure. The Clark Street massacre came at a time when gangland was supposed to be quiet. There had been no noted killings since that of Lombardo. The new police department heads were functioning well, the lid was on to a certain extent, and peace generally reigned among the gangsters.

But such a massacre as this, seven men at a time, created such a stir that it was world wide in its reverberations.

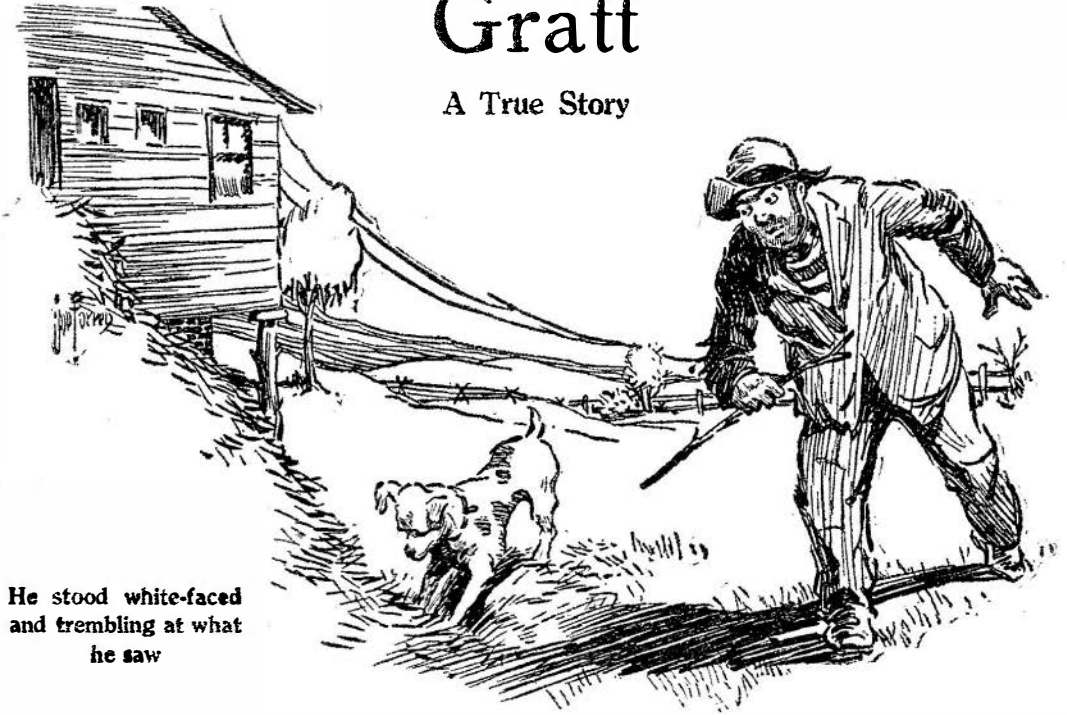
Now the Chicago people are demanding that the gangster menace be wiped out and that the gangs be broken up, for good if possible. This may be done or it may not, and meanwhile the citizens will listen carefully for a further outbreak, as it is thought that the friends of those slain in the latest killing will, sooner or later, get their revenge.



The thrilling true story of the Ashley gang, Florida bandits, will appear in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY next week: "The Killers of the Everglades," by Charles Somerville.

The Strange Case of Miser Gratt

A True Story



He stood white-faced
and trembling at what
he saw

*“What in Hell Is the Matter With You?” the
Chief Wired. “Go After That Girl Wife!”*

By Cyrus Chapin

MISER GRATT had mysteriously disappeared.

“Old Man Gratt” he was called by some, but “Miser Gratt” by ’most all who knew him. When they addressed him that way to his face, he only chuckled. He was of the sort who hoard money and take a delight in so doing. It was, in fact, his chief pleasure in life.

Dime pinching? Worse than that. He was niggardly, stingy, penurious, and naturally mean. If he had a trait that bore the slightest resemblance to what the world calls good, no one who knew him ever discovered it. He was one to laugh at priests and preachers alike.

And he was so cunning the few hired men he was forced at times to employ on his 1280-acre farm near Galesburg, Illinois, who would have stolen odds and ends just because he was so devilishly mean, could get away with nothing but the lowest of wages and the poorest of food. Hence, they remained short periods and went off cursing Miser Gratt.

Particularly did they curse him because of the way he worked his wife. She was both good and wholesome looking, and wanted to be considerate of the help at least to the extent of feeding them enough. How he had managed to maneuver things to marry Mattie Schumacher, the town folk and

the countryside wondered. One time, years back, Gratt had worked a sister of his to death, and she had left an adopted child of another sister to Gratt when she died. This child was Mattie Schumacher, whom some said Gratt had hypnotized into marrying him, because he wanted a work horse to do the drudgery around the big farmhouse.

It would not have been a big house had Gratt built it. It had gone with the place when he bought it, along with some decent though old-fashioned furniture.

A Strange Disappearance

Nevertheless, Miser Gratt was gone. Where? No one knew. For ten days after the young, golden-haired, blue-eyed Mrs. Gratt reported the mystery to the sheriff, he and his deputies scoured every nook and cranny of the county, praying in their own minds that the girl was actually a widow. But this had to be proved; the *corpus delicti* had to be established. They found nothing.

"It's past understanding," roared the newspapers, "that this affair should be relegated to the archives of unsolved mysteries." The hounds for news raised hue and cry which rang from coast to coast, then waned to nothing, until the real story "broke."

It is pertinent to record that Old Man Gratt detested dogs. A dog, next only in intelligence to the elephant, who is tabled by scientists as possessing one-third the intelligence of humans—a dog, as we know, has long been hailed as man's best friend. But he is often quite particular as to whom he extends this friendship; he is a good judge of human nature, and psychic, perhaps, to boot.

Dogs growled and showed their teeth when Gratt approached. He had been known, if opportunity presented, to throw rocks at inoffensive canines, as he would have no doubt enjoyed hurling things at his neighbors.

His personal appearance cuts no particular figure in this story, but it will do no harm to add that Gratt possessed straw-colored hair and greenish gray eyes and a chalky complexion. He was thin to the point of emaciation.

Ten days after Gratt disappeared, a good-natured knight of the road, a full-fledged tramp, with an equally good-natured bob-tailed mongrel dog, knowing nothing of Miser Gratt or his disappearance, and caring less, wandered across the pasture of the farm toward the house in search of a hand-out.

"Now, why," mused the tramp, as he and the dog came near the horse barn, "does Terrapin go digging around that manure pile? Come here, Terrapin—there's nothing to eat there. Let's on to the house—"

He got no farther, but stood, white-faced and trembling, as the paws of the dog revealed nothing more nor less than—a human head!

No Tears Shed

The tramp, for once in his life, moved at more than a snail's speed. He actually ran to the house and banged at the kitchen screen door. Mattie Gratt had summoned her other aunt to come and live with her; and it was she who opened the door and listened to what the tramp had to say. It was she who rushed inside and called to the girl, who calmly phoned for the sheriff. He came at once.

The tramp for the nonce was a hero. The coroner's jury housed and fed him and his dog in style until the verdict of "murdered by an unknown person" was declared. No one was suspected.

Who could have done this? There were plenty of men who could have seen Gratt killed and smiled while watching him fall in the throes of death; but who actually had reason enough to commit the deed?

Surely, the fair-faced Mattie Schu-

macher Gratt would never have done for the man and cut off his head like that, even though he deserved the worst. No, Mattie Schumacher Gratt was not to be considered in the matter at all. She was now well fixed in worldly goods, and it was coming to her.

She had plenty of company at the funeral, where never a tear was shed; it cannot be said she had plenty of friends, because Miser Gratt had seen to it she never had people at the house or went any place on social pleasure bent.

The Chief Wires

On arrival from Chicago as the chief operative on the case, the first thing I did was to see the sheriff. Being an open investigation—that is, an investigation in which the chief operative or detective must be known as a detective—I was, as is usual, the observed of all observers. Had I rented a hall and charged twenty-five cents admission to exhibit myself as a sure-enough detective from Chicago, I presume I could have taken in a hatful of money.

“What kind of an instrument do you believe the killer used?” This was one of my first questions to the sheriff. The body, as a matter of necessity, was buried before I arrived, nor did I intend to have it exhumed for my inspection, for obvious reasons. Furthermore, the coroner was, for a wonder, a real surgeon, and his report to me was sufficient.

In answer to my question, the sheriff replied:

“I dunno. 'Pears to me to have been done with an ax or maybe a hatchet.”

“Find any hatchets or axes that looked suspicious?”

“No. Didn't find but one ax and one hatchet. Both were clean. No blood—nothing.”

“Sharp?”

“No. Dull as all get out.”

“And,” said I, “the cut or cuts where the head had been severed at the neck—was that a clean job?”

“Clean cut as though done by a butcher with his cleaver.”

After a talk with the coroner, and having read the reports of the coroner's jury, I was far at sea as to whom to suspect.

Prejudice was not supposed to sway me, but I must confess public opinion did influence me not to suspect the right party. This is a dangerous thing in the detective profession. I was considerably younger than I am now, and I lacked that remaining ten per cent of judgment which goes to make up the complete hundred.

The general superintendent of our Middle States and Western division at Chicago read my reports himself. These reports were carefully written and drawn down to the most minute detail. The third day I had been on the case I received a message from him which, deciphered, read:

Wake up! What in hell is the matter with you? Go after that girl wife.

That was the boss's way—to be blunt like that. Of course he meant for me to “rope”—gain the confidence of—the girl wife, so she would talk; and apparently he believed her the guilty one.

The Lawyer Denies

The sheriff had told me he suspected—a little only—the attorney whom Gratt employed when he had to. He said they had quarreled over something just before Gratt had disappeared, and did not know whether it was serious or not, but I might take it as a tip if I wanted to.

But the lawyer denied he had quarreled with Gratt. “I never quarrel with anybody,” he snapped.

“But I am told that you and Gratt had a disagreement about a loan he refused to pay the interest on—something like that.”

"You're right," replied the lawyer; "but to an extent only. We did have a disagreement, but not a quarrel. He may have called it that. I didn't."

I felt I was up against a stone wall. That was one reason I was glad to have the wire from the "big eye," because I felt the force of his dynamic personality—or seemed to—even from a distance. Newspaper reporters get this sort of thing from city editors on occasion. After I had his wire, I felt the confidence of his personality behind me, and I went forth, as it were, to battle; in other words, to rope the young widow of Miser Gratt.

"I shall be glad to tell you anything I know," replied the widow in a courteous way.

"Roping" a Widow

Her manner was unaffected and sincere. She was not nervous, but, on the contrary, cool and collected, except for the noticeable way her finger nails scratched occasionally at the arms of the chair in which she was sitting. She did not know she did this.

I had purposely held out my hand when she opened the door to receive me as the detective on the case. Her hand was cold, but this is often a condition with nervous people and does not mean they are guilty of any wrongdoing.

"There's no use wasting time, Mrs. Gratt," said I. "Naturally you are the most interested person in knowing who killed your husband."

Her eyebrows raised slightly, and shoulders rather quivered for an instant, which appeared to denote a lack of interest in who did the deed. She did not answer my remark, in words at least.

I determined to go to the bat at once. I excused myself for speaking plainly.

"Did you like your husband very much?" I inquired, my tone as pleasing as I could make it.

"No," she replied quietly, yet

promptly, "I did not. Nobody liked him."

"Then," I went on, "speaking candidly, between yourself as the man's widow, and myself as an officer of the law, you are relieved that he has departed for a better place."

"Yes," she answered quietly, "I am glad to have him out of my life, but as to his having gone to a better place, that is not true. There is a hell here on earth, yes, but there are worse hells beyond, otherwise the whole scheme of the universe is rotten."

I laughed at this.

"Why do you laugh at me?" she asked. "I always supposed detectives and policemen were fearful creatures. You don't seem to be. But please answer, why did you laugh at me?"

"I wasn't laughing at you. I was laughing because it pleased me to know that you think."

"Think—think?" she almost moaned. "If my thoughts for days and nights, weeks, months and years, could be put in a book—well, it could never appear in print, I'm afraid. Too horrible!"

Heavy Thoughts

"I wish," said I, "that you would tell me what your thoughts have been. Not all of them—just what you feel like telling. I am not saying this as a detective, but as one who understands."

"You speak kindly," replied the girl. "It would be a relief to feel I can talk to somebody who understands. I suppose that's in all of us—the craving to unburden thoughts and feelings. But it would take ages for me to tell all that has rushed through my mind in the hours back of the present. It would take too long, I'm afraid."

"Then," I replied, "supposing you tell me what you want to about the character of this man whom they called Miser Gratt, and about your life with him. You see, all this will help me in my investigation."

She pondered this, and looked at me quizzically from under her lashes. Then:

"This is not a good place to talk. My aunt—"

"I have a car outside," I interrupted. "We can take a ride along the country roads, off the beaten track."

She went as she was dressed, in a blue gingham house dress and low shoes, stopping only long enough to don a sunbonnet. We drove along a road leading through one section of the farm, then crossed a road onto another section, stopping to open a gate and close it after the car passed through. The forestry had changed to the soft browns and reds of autumn.

"A wonderful day," said the girl.

"Gorgeous!" I replied.

"I do not like that word, gorgeous," she answered, laughing. "Everybody says gorgeous, whether it's over mince pie or roses."

A Cruel Man

"Well, then," I laughed, "all I can think of is—splendid."

"A good word—for an all-around description of what's around us."

"Now," said I, "tell me of your life with Mr. Gratt, and something of his character, his idiosyncrasies."

"He was," replied the girl, the lids of her eyes closing slightly, "as mean as hell. And I'm not asking you to excuse the expression. I must have been in some queer state of come—I don't know what I was—to have married him. We never were what you would really call man and wife. He wanted me for a drudge whom he would not have to pay.

"He was, just as I have said, as mean as hell. He wouldn't let me have pets. I had a puppy, and he kicked it, and one day when I was standing on the back porch he picked it up by its little hind legs and dashed out its brains against a stone by the pump. Then beating his rough hands togeth-

er, he stood there grinning like a death's head, and as I started to cry and ran to pick up my poor mangled puppy, he laughed—laughed like a maniac is said to laugh. But he was far from mad—in that sense. He was the meanest man who ever lived. Why, oh, why do they let such things as he was be born to spoil the world?

"He had cats around the farm because they caught rats and mice. The mice got into the granary, and that meant they spoiled and ate the grain which interfered with his getting the best prices at the mill. And so he wanted cats, but they must not be given milk. Never. They must search for their own food. One day I found a beautiful little Maltese kitten out by the barn. It was just at the age when I could take it from its mother. I gave it milk at the house, and I liked to cuddle it. He caught me at it, and snatched the kitten from my arms and threw it as high as he could send it into the air. When it came to earth, it was dead. I cried again, and never said a word to him. I didn't have the courage. I wonder now why I didn't have it. I seemed to be asleep, yet walking, acting, doing my work as a common drudge, like an automaton.

One Question

"I had a bird—just one tiny bird. My aunt, the one who is here now, she came once for a short stay and brought me the bird in a cage. After she went away he strangled it and left it in the cage dead for me to see. I did not see him do this, but when he found me looking at the bird, he laughed in that horrible way he had. I had read somewhere in a book which had been left in the house by the people who owned it before he bought it—I read about a case like that where a husband killed his wife's pets—and finally she killed him. Murder they called it. It was not murder—it was—justice."

"Mrs. Gratt," I began. She stopped me.

"Please do not call me Mrs. Gratt. Call me Jack, John, Mary—anything you like—call me by my maiden name, plain Mattie Schumacher, if you wish—makes no difference."

"Miss Schumacher, then," I continued, "I am going to ask you a plain question. I wonder if you will answer it. Do not answer it if you do not wish to, of course. Between you and myself, for the present at least if it cannot be for the future—I do not know about that—but, did you, wrought up as you must have been by these cruelties of your husband, did you for justice's sake, kill your husband?"

"Nonsense!" laughed the girl in reply, but the laugh rang through the woods as cold as flint striking flint. "I thought you might ask me that. Perhaps I've talked too much." Her next words came slowly. "No—I—did—not—kill—him."

Another from Headquarters

"Thank you," said I, "now for my information and help on the investigation. Please tell me some more about your life with him—and his character."

"There's little else to say. If a thing is black, it is black, is it not? What is more dense in color than black? Well, he was black at heart and in character, black in word and deed. That's all there is to say."

"Mrs.—Gr—I mean, Miss Schumacher," said I, "I presume you'll have no objections to my looking over the barnyard and barns, also your house, for possible clues. You understand, of course, I have to make as close an investigation as I can. That's what I'm here for. It's always possible a detective may fail to find the guilty man, but he must do his duty as he sees it."

"Certainly," replied the girl widow, "you have my permission to delve into anything, everything as far as you wish to go."

My reports, as noted, contained every detail. No report is worth much

in our organization unless it places the officials at district headquarters in a position to practically know as much as if he were on the ground. And, when he thinks it necessary, he does not hesitate to wire cipher instructions or write letters telling an operative what to do. Often an operative is allowed to pursue his own way through an entire investigation without instructions from any district headquarters, but after I had been on this Gratt case a few days I wrote and asked "the big eye" to please cipher me by wire his advice, if he had any to give, on the conduct of the case.

I was relieved to have a telegram from my big boss. It read:

Search streams, ponds, cisterns and wells in vicinity for the weapon. You are still napping. For Lord's sake, throw hay from lofts and dig up the damned barnyards.

He did not need to tell me, whom he had practically raised and brought up in the business, that I must employ help to assist me in the search. The sheriff recommended a few deputies to help me. Within an hour after I had the wire, men were as busy as bees dragging ponds and creeks, going down into cisterns, spading up the barnyards and throwing hay out of the hay lofts. The weapon! That, as any experienced man knows, is the all-important pivot on which success may balance, provided, of course, a killing has been done with a weapon.

During the Search

The girl widow knew of these operations, but from where the house was situated, the horse barn could not be plainly seen, because of a windmill and outhouses standing between. Furthermore, I purposely instructed the men working there to throw the hay out of the rear window of the barn.

I approached the kitchen door of the house, ostensibly for a drink. The girl, slightly more nervous than usual, I thought, came to the door.

"Won't you come in and have some nice, cold buttermilk?" said she. "It's right from the spring-house. I got some for myself. My aunt has gone to the village for the mail. We only have one delivery a day out here, and she—well, no matter about that, let's have some buttermilk and a bite of bread, butter and jam." She laughed. "Oh—I am committing all kinds of extravagances now. I am actually having all the jam I want."

She led me into the dining room and brought the refreshments.

"I should think it rather interesting to be a detective," said the girl, "of course you have all kinds of experiences."

"It is interesting when you first go into it," I replied, "but so many strange and unusual things happen to you in a hurry, and one after another that you get bored with murders, robberies, and things like that. I would much prefer being something like a writer or maybe a musician."

A Discovery

"What are your men doing now?" asked the girl casually.

"Simply fussing around the barnyards, dragging creeks and looking into cisterns and other places. Searching for the weapon. It may be miles from here, may have been utterly destroyed, still I must be fairly thorough with the search. Elimination, that's really what we call it. If the weapon is not one place, it must perforce be in some other place. Simple enough, but it means a lot of work."

There came a knock at the kitchen door. She started to her feet, but I motioned to her and went myself.

"I think that's one of my men," I said, "if it is for you I'll let you know. Be back in a minute."

This did not appear to cause her any extra uneasiness. I went to the door and the deputy, Frederickson it happened to be, had something extremely important and interesting to tell me.

"Call the rest of the men off," I said to him quietly. "And—kindly put it in the granary and stay there with it until I come. I won't be long. Do not touch it any more than you have to."

"I get you," responded the officer.

Back in the dining room I found the girl had apparently not moved from her seat while I was gone. Subsequent events proved she had not overheard the deputy and myself talking.

"This is good buttermilk, and reminds me of my childhood," I said. "On my grandfather's plantation we used to have buttermilk, and we had a spring house, same as you have here. And the bread and butter and jam are all fresh and good."

The Next Move

"Glad you like them," answered the girl, her eyes this time moving from side to side as she spoke. Nervous, no doubt of that.

"I am interested in your work," she said finally, sipping her buttermilk. "For instance—supposing you knew what kind of a weapon this killing was done with—"

"Oh, that part," I answered, pretending more cleverness than I actually possessed, "I would be a frost as a detective if I couldn't tell what Miser Gratt was killed with."

"Mr. Man," said the girl, attempting a laugh, "do you mean to tell me—to sit there in that chair and tell me you actually know what kind of a weapon he was murdered with? I'll bet you don't—bet you don't—bet you don't." She giggled excitedly as a child playing a game.

"I'll take the bet," I said casually, appearing to yawn. "Miser Gratt was murdered with a sharpened spade!"

"A — a — sp-sp-spade!" whispered the girl, her face paling. Then slowly: "How do you know it was a spade?"

"Because," I answered slowly, "I have the spade. It is now in your granary under guard. It is bloody. I shall

have the blood analyzed if necessary. The details would be uninteresting to you, I'm afraid."

"Go ahead—please, go ahead," put in the girl, trembling slightly, all of which might be attributed to mere excitement. One of her hands fluttered over her face and forehead. "What do you do next?" The question was almost a gasp. She was making an attempt to control her emotions and was not very successful at doing so.

"What do I do next?" I repeated. "I am not supposed to tell any one what I do next, but I like you and you have more understanding than the average girl, by far. This is not soft soap. I mean it. The next move will be to see if I can get any finger-prints off the spade handle. It's long past the proper time to take good thumb-prints, but as there are bloody marks on the handle of the spade, it may be possible even now to get some good prints—"

An Unspoken Threat

She started to interrupt, and I held up my hand to forestall this.

"Miss Schumacher," I continued, "I am on the track of the person who hid that spade away down under the hay in the loft of the horse barn. I have to leave this case in a few days, whether I am successful or not because my boss has me scheduled to take up some work in Europe very soon. If I leave here without finding the murderer, another man, and, believe me, he is a hard-boiled one, though an expert on murders, will take up this work where I leave off, and if he fails to find who did for Old Man Gratt it will be because Gratt severed his own head with the spade—which we know is impossible!"

"I killed him!" screamed the girl suddenly, as though the smothered emotions within her breast had given vent in one wild outburst.

She weakened then and her head fell to the table. I said nothing for a moment, then patted her kindly.

"There, there, do not cry," I said, as she made an effort to control her sobbing. "Tell me how you did it. That will be best, for then I will be able, perhaps, to help you somewhat. You have already explained enough about the man for me to understand *why* you did it. I wish you would give me the details of how you committed the act itself."

She raised her head and looked at me, the tears running down her cheeks.

"I will tell you," she said, with an effort, "I'd rather tell you than some other detective. I suppose it has to come out. If they hang me—it will simply have to be, that's all. I took that chance. And I would do the same thing again. That sounds cruel, monstrous, no doubt, to you."

"No," I replied, shaking my head. "And—I do not believe you will hang. You will be punished, yes. Even my own organization would insist you be punished, because laws must be obeyed, otherwise the fabric of our entire republic would go to smash. Now come, tell me how you did it—and remember I will help you all I can."

A Confession

"I understand," she answered, more calmly. "It was this way. I had been turning the grindstone for him to sharpen the spade. He insisted that it must be very sharp. He bore down hard on the spade, so it was very difficult for me to turn the stone. I am not imagining anything when I say he did this purposely just to make me suffer, for that was his way—any one will tell you that. He kept feeling of the edge as though he was sharpening a knife or razor. He would look up at me and grin in that evil way he had. Then he would say something mean, like, 'Turn that grindstone. What's the matter with you? Turn it harder, I say!'"

"Finally the job was finished and he ordered me to go to the house and get his dinner in a hurry. We were

all alone. No one was about. He turned to open the granary door and stooped down to pick up something—a pin perhaps—he was always picking up pins. And—oh—it is so hard to describe such an awful thing—but, as nearly as I can tell it, a great wave of rage swept through me. This is not an excuse. I am not making excuses. I'm simply telling you. No—I did not see red. I saw nothing but the rough, ugly, hairy back of the man's neck—and I saw the spade, and grabbed it quickly.

"I brought it down swiftly, surely seeming to be sure I would strike true. All my nervous strength must have been behind it. The corner of the sharpened edge struck clear through into the spine, and he crumpled up and fell forward in a kneeling position, exactly suited to my purpose. You would have thought he fell that way on purpose to assist me. Then—oh—why must I tell it when it has been in my thoughts again and again—but I know, I understand it must be told. I struck again and again, the blood coming out in thick, black-red spurts. Finally the body fell forward, the face literally mashed down into the gravel.

"At last it was done. The head rolled to one side, and I dragged the body first, then the head, to the manure pile and covered it over, intending to do something else with it later. I hadn't decided what I would do with it. Then I went back to the granary and hoed and raked the cinders and gravel over the spot, so all traces of the blood were gone. I washed and scrubbed at the marks on the granary where the blood had spurted, but there wasn't much blood showing except on the ground. I don't know why I took the spade just as it was, without washing it, and hid it in the hayloft. I expected to get that out later and bury it or throw it in the pond." She sighed. "And—that—that is all. You know—the rest."

"Were you not afraid," I ques-

tioned, "of some one seeing you when you were doing all you have just told me?"

She shook her head sadly. "No—I did not seem to be. After it was all over, I did look around, but there was no one in sight. You see, we have lived mostly so alone, we hardly ever expect any one to come around."

I wrote a simple statement, and she signed it without hesitating. It was her nature to do things on impulse. She had more than the average woman's much vaunted intuition, which is usually overrated.

I took her to town in my car and delivered her to the care of the astonished sheriff and his wife, who would at first hardly believe it.

"Whoever would have thought it?" said the sheriff.

"Don't attribute it to any particular cleverness on my part," said I, "if she had not been possessed of more than ordinary brains she would never have confessed. If she had stuck it out and insisted on her innocence, chances are she would be tried, convicted and hanged. Now, there is a chance for her to get free after serving a justifiable amount of time in prison."

Mattie Schumacher Gratt was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to twenty years in Joliet. Public sentiment was with her. It turned out as I thought. While in Europe two years or more later, I received word she had been paroled.

She returned to the farm with the understanding she must report to the sheriff's office and sign her name in a book for the purpose, once a week. She must not leave the county unless with the consent of the sheriff.

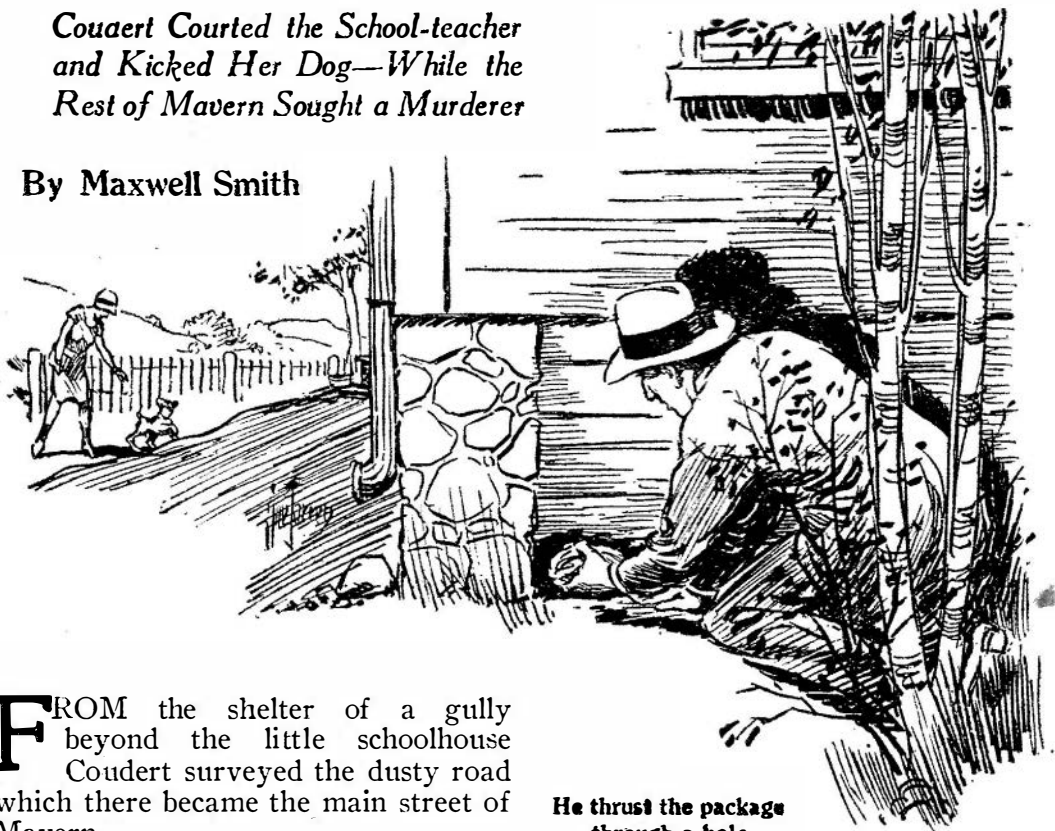
At any rate, she was free and inside a certain number of years will have served out the term of parole and be allowed to go where she wants, any place on earth.

And, as it happened, I introduced her to the man who later became her husband!

"A Woman, A Dog—"

*Coudert Courted the School-teacher
and Kicked Her Dog—While the
Rest of Mavern Sought a Murderer*

By Maxwell Smith



He thrust the package
through a hole

FROM the shelter of a gully beyond the little schoolhouse Coudert surveyed the dusty road which there became the main street of Mavern.

Away from the straggling town the road was empty as far as he could see; some half a mile to where it curled around a hill. Townward, the schoolhouse shut off his view, but he knew that Mavern lay somnolent as usual, baking under the glaring midday sun.

A minute more he watched the bend in the road with narrowed eyes, tensely. The time at his disposal—and his own security—depended upon how long it would be before some one came that way. Or how long before some one became alarmed and set out from the town to see what had happened.

At most he could count upon half an hour; time enough for a revealing search along the eight miles of road between Mavern and the railroad. At least—perhaps no time at all. Some

chance traveler might cut the margin to nothing—with Coudert's life hanging in the balance.

Warily, but with quick steps, he covered the fifty yards of broken ground to the schoolhouse.

At the side of the building facing away from the town he stopped to look again down the road. It still lay bare, a ragged white ribbon fringed with parched grass on a boulder-strewn slope.

Ever watchful, Coudert dropped to his knees and took a cloth-wrapped package from inside his shirt.

The schoolhouse was of frame construction, with a raised foundation of rough stone supporting the corners. The spaces between the masonry were boarded over, but here and there the

boards in contact with the ground were rotted.

He thrust the package through a hole, stretching himself to plant it as far as possible behind a section of the stonework.

Arising, he reached for a window sill and pulled himself up and in.

The single classroom was empty, as he had known. He crossed to the open front door and sat there on the floor, just inside, with his back against the wall.

The first strain over, he breathed deeply as he relaxed. His close-set eyes became steadier, less anxious. His hands were steady as he rolled a cigarette; and he grinned as he drew the smoke gratefully into his lungs. That was better; for twenty pregnant minutes he had been choking for a smoke.

Coudert was a mining engineer of sorts, ordinarily employed as assistant superintendent at one of the silver workings which were the cause of Mavern's being. For the past month he had been, as he put it, resting. Actually he had been preparing for this day—to seize the twenty-five thousand dollars which, wrapped in an old shirt, he had just hidden beneath the schoolhouse.

Ten minutes later a nondescript terrier scampered up the steps and halted abruptly at sight of Coudert. It stood stiff-legged, barking, unfriendly.

Coudert was just as unfriendly.

"Shut up, you damn mutt! Lay down!"

The dog continued barking, bristled.

"Aw—" Coudert glanced out the door to make sure that the terrier's mistress was not looking, then struck at it with his hat.

The dog jumped back, but immediately returned, barking more vigorously.

Coudert mentioned its parentage with accuracy and kicked it, a glancing blow which rolled the dog over and made it yelp.

"Pretty," said a girl's cool voice from the steps, "very pretty, indeed. Here, Bo," she called the dog, "keep away from him."

The dog obeyed, but kept watching Coudert and growling softly.

Coudert got to his feet, unembarrassed.

"I guess," he grinned, "the mutt don't like me much. He don't show much good judgment, does he?"

The schoolma'am stopped on the top step, eyeing him impersonally.

"Some," she remarked in the same cool voice, "might say he shows excellent judgment. If you'll get out of my way, please—" She moved aside to let him pass out.

Ignoring the broad hint, Coudert remained in the doorway.

"I didn't hurt the mutt. I only shoved him to make him shut up and quit snappin' at me."

"He isn't a mutt—and you have a strange idea of what constitutes a shove."

"Sure he is," grinned Coudert, "and a mean one at that. He's always snarlin' and snappin'. A good dog don't act that way."

"He doesn't like you," she retorted, "because you're always kicking him. Besides, he doesn't snap. He only barks."

She glanced at the children gathering for the afternoon session, and added:

"If you don't mind, I'd like to get to work."

Coudert looked at his watch.

"'Tain't one yet—wants five minutes. Say, Helen—"

"I wish," she interrupted, frowning, "you'd stop calling me Helen."

"It's your name, ain't it?"

"To my friends, yes."

"Well"—he pursed his lips quizzically—"ain't I your friend?"

"If you were you'd stop annoying me."

The dog's growling grew louder and it edged nearer to him.

"Annoying you!" He professed astonishment. "You don't mean that, Helen. Me annoy you! I should say not."

Helen Pearson remained unsmiling.

"Your presence annoys me. I've made that clear enough, I think. It annoys me to find you here every day. You're delaying me now—keeping these children from their lessons and out in the hot sun."

"They don't mind the sun," said Coudert, "any more than they do if school's late in starting. And about me being here—"

He broke off, his eyes darting, as an automobile rattled into town, traveling fast and recklessly on the rough road. His jaw clamped tight an instant, his mouth hard. The situation was about to pop.

"About my being here," he resumed, looking at the girl again. "How'm I ever going to get a chance to talk with you if I don't come here and lay for you? Why don't you be sociable, Helen—"

"To a man who kicks a dog!"

"Aw, what the— I mean—"

"You needn't explain," she said disdainfully. "I understand, of course, that he's only a mutt."

"Sure," said Coudert, listening to the raucous horn on the car that had just passed as it brayed continuously, "that's all he is. You wouldn't try to claim he's a champ, would you?"

"And, of course," she said, "like myself, he's unsociable. Why don't you recognize the fact that we're both inclined to be so and let us alone."

She turned to the group of waiting pupils:

"All right, children, let's get to work."

Coudert let the score of pupils pass in, but again barred the teacher's way.

"There's no hurry," he said, seeking to kill time to make his position more secure. The man-hunters would

be starting out in a few minutes. He wanted them to see him talking with Helen Pearson.

"No hurry," he said. "Now about the mutt there—you remember how that old thing goes, don't you?"

'A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree,
The more you beat 'em
The better they be.'

"A darn good lickin' might make your Bo a better dog and stop him snappin' at folks the way he does."

The girl gave him a scornful smile.

"I've heard you recite that dainty piece before, thanks; another time you kicked my dog. Any coward can beat a dog."

"Meaning, maybe, that it takes a brave man to beat a woman? I've seen some women that improved with beatin'. I wouldn't wonder—" He finished by looking her over suggestively and laughing.

She flushed.

"We have no walnut trees around here. You'll have to confine yourself to dogs."

"I'm not so sure about that," he provoked her. "I'll think it over. What I was goin' to say when you started arguin' about the mutt, Helen—"

"Don't call me Helen."

"Then what in time will I call you? How about sweetheart? That suits me okay. All right, sweetheart, if you'll listen—"

She stamped a foot angrily.

"I don't want to hear anything from you. Get out of my way."

Automobiles were coming down the street, driven hard with motors roaring.

Coudert smiled thinly over the commotion while making to the girl a gesture of resignation.

"Oh, very well, I'll get out."

"And I'll thank you to stay out. I'd much prefer not to find you here tomorrow or any other day."

His smile broadened as he stepped

onto the porch. He squatted on his heels and snapped his fingers playfully at the dog. It was a picture for outside consumption; for the men in the approaching cars.

The dog stiffened, barking rejection of his advances.

Coudert got up, looking up at the girl.

"I might even learn to love the mutt," he began.

"Come, Bo," she commanded, and turned away.

He flourished his hat and started down the steps.

The speeding cars were almost abreast of the schoolhouse. The foremost contained the town marshal and three other men.

The marshal waved to Coudert, and the car skidded under a quick application of brakes.

Helen Pearson called from the doorway:

"Mr. Coudert."

At the foot of the steps he turned.

"I've been thinking," she said sweetly, "of a companion piece to your favorite verse. Would you like to hear it?"

Coudert's thoughts were on the marshal, whose car appeared to be about to stop at the end of the path a hundred feet away.

"My favorite what?"

"That delightful little verse about a woman, a dog and a walnut tree. It suggested this to me:

'A man, a rope, and a good tall tree,
The higher you hang him,
The better he be.'

Coudert stared, momentarily stunned by the apt implication. Before he could find voice she disappeared into the schoolroom.

The dog remained in the doorway, jumping about and barking with—it seemed to Coudert—a note of mockery!

Coudert wanted to go in and ask Helen Pearson the precise meaning of

her adaptation, but the marshal was hailing him.

"What's the matter?" he called back. "What do you want?"

"Get in and come on along," said the marshal. "Shake a leg, will you? The bank cashier's been held up and robbed—murdered. Hurry up and let's get going."

Coudert ran to the car and climbed in.

The other machines had gone ahead.

"Catch them," the marshal ordered his driver, "or they'll have everything all messed up. Make 'er go."

Coudert hung on while the car lurched over the bumpy road.

"Bramley murdered," he said. "Where? When?"

"Just down below," said the marshal, "beyond the hill there. Yes, sir, murdered and robbed of twenty-five thousand dollars. Cowan here saw his car off the road and found him with his skull caved in."

"You don't say! How long ago d'you figure it happened?"

"Not much more'n half an hour. I saw Bramley leave town about twenty after twelve. The killer can't be far away. We ought to get him if we move fast."

"Sure, we ought to get him, all right. But"—Coudert seemed puzzled—"twenty-five thousand dollars. What was Bramley doing with that much money? You don't mean to tell me he was running out with it?"

"Hell, no," said the marshal. "He was takin' it down to turn over to the express messenger on the one o'clock. The bank had too much cash on hand. Gets that way every so often and then they ship it to the city. I thought everybody in town knew that."

Coudert nodded. "Now you mention it I guess I've heard it. Didn't think of it, though. Why didn't he have a guard—you, maybe?"

"That's his grief," said the marshal. "He didn't ask me. Never had none and thought he'd never need none,

I suppose. Like a lot of other stubborn folks he didn't put much stock in that story about the pitcher."

They were rounding the hill past which the cashier's body lay.

Coudert spoke: "You say he was going to put the money on the one o'clock?"

The marshal grunted.

"Then," said Coudert thoughtfully, "maybe we haven't such good chance of getting the killer. If he took to the hills we could round him up, all right, but suppose he got the train? That's what he'd do, ain't it?"

"By damn!" ejaculated the marshal, "that's right!"

"I'd think so," said Coudert. "He'd have a car, of course, and had plenty of time to make the railroad. He had as much time as Bramley and that's where Bramley was going. It might be a good idea to go right on and find out who got aboard the train."

The marshal hesitated; let his driver stop beside the cars that had preceded him.

"No," he decided, "I'll look things over here and send somebody else down to the railroad. You might go yourself, Coudert. Sure. Take somebody with you and go ahead. If anybody suspicious got on the train you can wire and have him held."

"I know the hills pretty well," said Coudert, much preferring to remain on the scene and in close contact with the investigation. "I might be of more use if the trail leads up there."

"We all know the country pretty well," said the marshal. "You go ahead into Railburg. Cowan will drive you down and bring back word if you pick up anything."

Coudert, perforce, did as he was told. He dismissed a vague worryment. He'd rather have stayed, but what did it matter? He had left no trail.

And there was a laugh to be got out of the way he had put over the idea that the killer had escaped by

train; and the fact that he himself had been sent to check up on it.

As they proceeded, he questioned Cowan.

"I was drivin' along," Cowan related, "not thinkin' much of anythin' when I just happened to look. You saw where his car is, off the road there back of a big rock. Well, if I hadn't looked I'd never seen it at all, but I just happened to look right then, and there it was, see?"

"Where was Bramley?"

"Right in his car on the front seat where he'd got pushed over after he got slugged."

"Dead?"

"Deader'n hell. He sure was. The top of his head's all mashed in with an iron bar."

"An iron bar? How do you know what hit him?"

"It's lyin' right there. The killer left it."

"Kinda foolish, don't you think?" said Coudert. "Leavin' the iron bar, I mean. It ought to be a clew."

"I guess not," said Cowan. "It's just an iron bar and don't mean nothin'. There's a million like it."

"That's so," agreed Coudert—having taken pains to make certain that there was nothing distinctive about the weapon he had used. "How do you know the money is gone? Did you look for it?"

"Didn't know nothin' about it," replied Cowan, "but I didn't have to look, either. There's a pouch on the seat beside him, you see, all covered with tape and sealin' wax, only it's been cut open with a knife and emptied. So I figured he was takin' some money to the train like he did sometimes and I run right in and got the marshal."

"What time was that?"

"What time did I find him?"

"Yes."

"Five minutes of one. I looked at the time, figurin' it might be important somehow."

"It might be," said Coudert. "You

were coming up from Railburg, weren't you?"

"That's right."

"What time did you leave there?"

"Twelve thirty on the dot. And say! I heard you tell the marshal about the killer likely havin' a car and goin' down and gettin' the train. He couldn't've done that."

Coudert put a needless question: "Why not?"

"Because I'd've met him on the road, wouldn't I? I should've thought of that before, I guess, but it never come to me till this minute."

"He might have heard you coming," said Coudert, "and got off the road till after you passed. The road winds around all the time, you know. He could've heard you and got out of the way before you saw him."

"No, sir," said Cowan, "I don't believe it. I seen Bramley's car, didn't I? Well, I'd've seen this other feller's, too. No, sir, he didn't ride to the railroad and he sure couldn't walk nigh on eight miles in any half hour like he'd have to of done to catch that train. We might's well turn around right here and go tell the marshal there's nothin' doin' on the train business."

"Wait a minute." Coudert kept him from stopping the car. "There's the old trail that loops off this road a couple of miles from Railburg. He could have gone in that way."

"Well," admitted Cowan, "he might, although it seems like I'd've met him before he got that far."

"He'd travel fast," said Coudert. "You weren't rushin', were you?"

"No, just takin' it easy."

"Then we'll go on and check up on the train."

At the railroad station he did what he could to confuse the situation.

The agent said that no one had boarded the train.

"This hombre wouldn't be advertisin' himself," said Coudert. "He would have sneaked aboard the blind

or on the rods. He could have done that without you seein' him."

"He could for all of me," said the agent. "I didn't see anybody hangin' around, though."

"Suppose you wire ahead and have the train searched at the next stop."

"I'll do that." The agent scratched his head and produced a suggestion: "If he came here in a car it must be around somewhere. He couldn't take it on the train with him. Why somewhere? Why don't you locate the car and see what it tells you? He couldn't take it on the train with him and he sure couldn't eat it."

Coudert laughed.

"I don't guess he could. Send the wire anyhow while we look around for the car."

He and Cowan were moving away when the agent had another thought:

"Hey! What's the matter with the killer drivin' right through in his car? He didn't have to stop here."

"No," said Coudert, "he didn't have to, but he'd be likely to. He'd figure he'd soon be spotted if he stuck to his car."

"And how do you know," inquired the agent, "there was only one man?"

Coudert stared at him a moment.

"I don't know a damn thing—whether there was one or ten. What I'm trying to do is find out something. Come on, Cowan, and we'll see can we locate the car."

The sheriff had arrived and was in charge of the investigation when Coudert and Cowan returned to Mavern late in the afternoon.

"The agent phoned about that," he said when they reported that the westbound train had been searched without discovery of a suspect. "He'll see nobody gets aboard the eastbound when she goes through. What else did you do?"

Coudert told him that search in the vicinity of Railburg had failed to reveal an abandoned automobile.

"The killer," he added, "must have gone right on through."

"Not without being seen," interposed Cowan positively, "and the folks in Railburg are dead sure nobody drove through."

"It's possible," said Coudert. "Don't you think so, sheriff?"

"Anything's possible," said the sheriff, turning to Cowan. "You found the body, I understand. Let's hear about it."

He made mental note of Cowan's movements for future checking.

He addressed Coudert casually:

"You were in town here, weren't you, and started out with the marshal?"

"He picked me up at the schoolhouse as he went by."

"At the schoolhouse?"

"Yes."

Chuckling, Cowan explained: "Coudert's sparkin' the schoolma'am. Quit his job to do it, too, he did. A bad case, eh, Coudert?"

"I only drop in to talk with her noontimes," protested Coudert with a laugh. "Nothin' to it, Cowan. I like to talk with her, that's all."

Cowan wagged his head and winked.

"Don't try to tell me, young feller. When a man quits his job to go courtin', it's a bad case all right. You can't tell me any different, no, sir."

"Nothing like that," insisted Coudert. He could feel the sheriff's curious stare—and wished that he might strangle Cowan. "I'm just taking a vacation—felt like loafin' awhile. What do you think of the case, sheriff?"

"Well, havin' known the young woman since she was about so-size, I'd say—"

"I mean this murder case," said Coudert.

"Oh, that." The sheriff's bushy brows went up: "Well, now, it's hard to say one thing or another right now. I got here only an hour ago myself and don't know much about it all yet.

When the marshal and the rest of the boys come in from lookin' around, maybe we'll know some more."

"Bramley," said Coudert, "should have had a guard. Bein' without one was invitin' trouble."

"Looks that way, don't it," nodded the sheriff. "But it's too late to cry over that now."

"He didn't have a chance by himself," said Coudert. "He couldn't drive and put up a fight at the same time. Didn't get a chance to go for his gun at all, I guess."

"So they say."

"Cowan told me," added Coudert unnecessarily, "his gun was in its holster."

"I said," Cowan corrected him, "I didn't see his gun. I didn't see his holster either; he was lying on it."

"That's what I meant," said Coudert. "How'd you reckon they made him stop, sheriff? Blocked the road with their car, most likely."

"Bramley would have got his gun then," put in Cowan, "and given 'em a fight. It couldn't've been that way."

"Or," went on Coudert when the sheriff made no comment, "do you reckon it was somebody Bramley knew and didn't suspect was goin' to rob him?"

"I bet that was it," said Cowan. "Somebody he knew got him to stop and then cracked him with the iron while they were talking. The bar ain't long; a man could have had it up his sleeve. Couldn't he, sheriff?"

The sheriff looked from one to the other, but said nothing.

"What do you think?" pressed Coudert.

"No use thinkin', I guess," said the sheriff, "until we've got something definite to think over."

Coudert made another effort to draw him out:

"It might be a good idea to find out who's missing from town. A man would run out, wouldn't he, after pullin' a trick like this."

The sheriff remained noncommittal: "He might. We'll know after awhile when we count noses. I'll have to leave you men now—got to talk some more with the president of the bank."

"Anything more we can do?" asked Coudert.

"No," said the sheriff, looking past him. "No, I reckon not. We'll wait and see what the marshal's posse has to tell. All we can do is sit until then."

Coudert grinned inwardly.

"And that," he told himself confidently, "is about all you can do—just sit."

And so it seemed when, with darkness, the searchers came in from the hills. Not the slightest trace of the killer had been found. Nor did the following day produce any sign of him.

Coudert was in no hurry to recover his loot from beneath the schoolhouse. It was as safe there as anywhere. Safer to him personally than if it were in his possession.

On the second day after the holdup he called again at the schoolhouse during the noon hour.

Helen Pearson was there alone, working at her desk. She received him with a frown of displeasure.

"I've been hoping," she said bluntly, "that I'd seen the last of you for some time at least. Why don't you stay away from here when I ask you to? I like to work during the lunch hour. I do wish you'd let me."

Coudert perched on the back of a pupil's bench and grinned.

"I've been wondering," he returned, "whether you've been makin' up any more cute little verses for me. You tossed off a neat one, you remember, something about a rope and a good tall tree."

She regarded him levelly, unsmiling.

"I remember. I still think the idea good."

"For me?"

"If it would relieve me of your presence—" She shrugged.

Coudert laughed.

"That's kind of a rough thing to wish on an admirer."

"One doesn't always stop to be gentle with those who are unwelcome. Why aren't you out helping find the man who killed Mr. Bramley?"

"You figure that'd keep me off your doorstep, don't you? But what's the use? He ain't in these parts any more—not if he's got any sense. He made a clean get-away—caught that train, most likely."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," she said, speaking a persistent thought. "It would be easy for him to hide out in the hills. It would be good tactics for him to remain right here in town until the hunt dies down."

"I guess not," said Coudert shortly. "His cue was to get far-away as quickly as possible. Else," he chuckled, "somebody might go and join him up with the rope and the tall tree you spoke of."

Her lids drooped a little, thoughtfully, as she dwelt on the brutal killing.

"I can contemplate such a union as highly appropriate."

Her manner was quite impersonal, detached, but he regarded it otherwise, conceiving a direct application in her words.

Irritation, meanness, hardened his eye.

"You'd like to see me hanged, wouldn't you?"

She smiled frostily: "I might not protest a great deal. Why are you thinking of getting hanged?"

"I'm not!" he snapped—and realized that she was getting his goat; which, instead of curbing his tongue, angered him. "I'm not!" he snapped again, "and I don't stand for you nor anybody else makin' the crack."

His outburst amused her; that and the fact that she had finally broken through his exasperating, grinning shell.

"I'm sorry," she deviled him, "be-

cause I really had hopes when the sheriff asked me about you."

"When—" Coudert's jaw clamped shut. Getting hold of himself he drew a long, slow breath and smiled, thin-lipped: "When the sheriff asked about me? How do you mean?"

A sudden tingle of menace chilled her spine. Within an instant she was afraid of him.

"Why," she stammered, bewildered by this overwhelming spasm of fright, "why, the day before yesterday. That is—I mean, he asked me—"

She bit her lip and looked about the room, wide-eyed, for her dog. She felt so unutterably alone—

"Asked you what," prompted Coudert crisply. "What did he want to know?"

She called the terrier—"Bo!"—and tried to whistle him to her.

"Never mind the mutt," said Coudert. "Tell me what the sheriff asked."

The dog answered with a muffled bark. It seemed so very far-away and she so very much alone.

"Nothing," she said faintly. "He just wanted to know if you were talking with me at noontime day before yesterday when—when Mr. Bramley was killed? He wanted to know if you were in the habit of visiting me noontimes."

Coudert stood up, nodding slowly, calculating.

"And what did you tell him?"

"I told him yes, you were. I told him—that was all."

"What else?"

She attempted to get up, to run from him, but the frozen mask which his face had become held her. She employed a bold front to hide her fear:

"I told him that I talked with you only a few minutes that day. I told him you had been annoying me and that I stayed away instead of working here as usual at noontime—"

"You told him that?"

Coudert stepped closer, his hand reaching as if to take her by the throat.

"Bo!" she cried desperately. "Here, boy, here!"

The dog barked close by.

Coudert grasped her shoulder, shook her.

"Keep still! And tell that mutt to be still. I want to talk with you."

The terrier pattered into the room and stopped, bristling, growling.

"Shut him up," said Coudert, shaking here again, "or I'll—"

He broke off with an oath as he glanced at the dog—a glance which immediately turned into a horrified stare.

In the terrier's mouth was a bundle wrapped in an old shirt—a bundle half undone, from which a trail of currency had been scattered across the floor!

Helen Pearson gasped as she also looked and understood.

She struggled to break his grasp. Her mouth opened on a scream.

"Be still!"

His hand closed over her face, shutting off the scream. He held her firmly, easily, dragging her to the door to close it.

The dog retreated before him, but did not drop the bundle of money.

Coudert halted, coaxing the animal to come to him.

Bo also halted, but would not approach.

"Call him," Coudert ordered, "call him and keep him quiet, or I'll kill you. Understand? Another killing don't mean anything to me now. You can understand that, can't you?"

She kicked his shins, clawed at his face, fought futilely.

The dog dropped its burden and leaped at him.

He kicked it away, a vicious kick which cast it howling into a corner.

Dragging the girl without regard, Coudert started again for the door.

Two children coming up the steps gaped with astonishment, fright, then bolted screaming.

A hundred yards up the road the sheriff and the marshal turned.

"He's killing teacher!" cried the children. "He's killing teacher!"

Without pausing to ask questions, the two officers ran to the schoolhouse.

Through a window Coudert saw them coming—saw the guns in their hands.

He flung the girl aside, scooped up the bulk of his loot and stuffed it inside his shirt.

The dog, limping, rushed at him and was kicked heels over head, to land beside his mistress, on the floor between two desks.

Cool in the face of death, Coudert drew his gun and made for a side window—the window through which he had entered two days ago after hiding his plunder. If he could reach the gully over there—

Heavy feet thudded on the front steps.

Coudert went out the window.

The sheriff, standing at the corner of the building, shot him before he touched the ground.

Helen Pearson cried hysterically, while her hurt dog nuzzled her hand and whimpered.

"'A woman,'" she said nonsensically as the marshal bent over her, "'a dog, and a walnut tree! A woman, a dog—'" and she laughed crazily: "'A man, a rope, and a good tall tree!'"—and laughed again, and cried.

The sheriff was bending over Coudert, trying to catch his last words.

"'A woman, a dog,'" grinned Coudert feebly. "'Tell her—you don't need the tree!'"



The Biggest Trial

THE greatest trial, in point of size and attendance, that the world has ever seen, was held about a year ago in the unpronounceable little town of Rzeszow, Galicia.

More than ten thousand out of twenty-one thousand railroad men and other state employees, who were defendants in a bankruptcy proceeding, fairly swamped the little town. They arrived in twelve special trains.

The defendants were all members of the Nuza Insurance and Benevolent Society which recently went bankrupt and transgressed certain statutes as well. Under Polish laws, all members must be summoned.

At the trial it was necessary to turn a huge military exercise field into a court room, with grand stands built to hold the defendants. Sixty-two lawyers and one hundred witnesses were present.

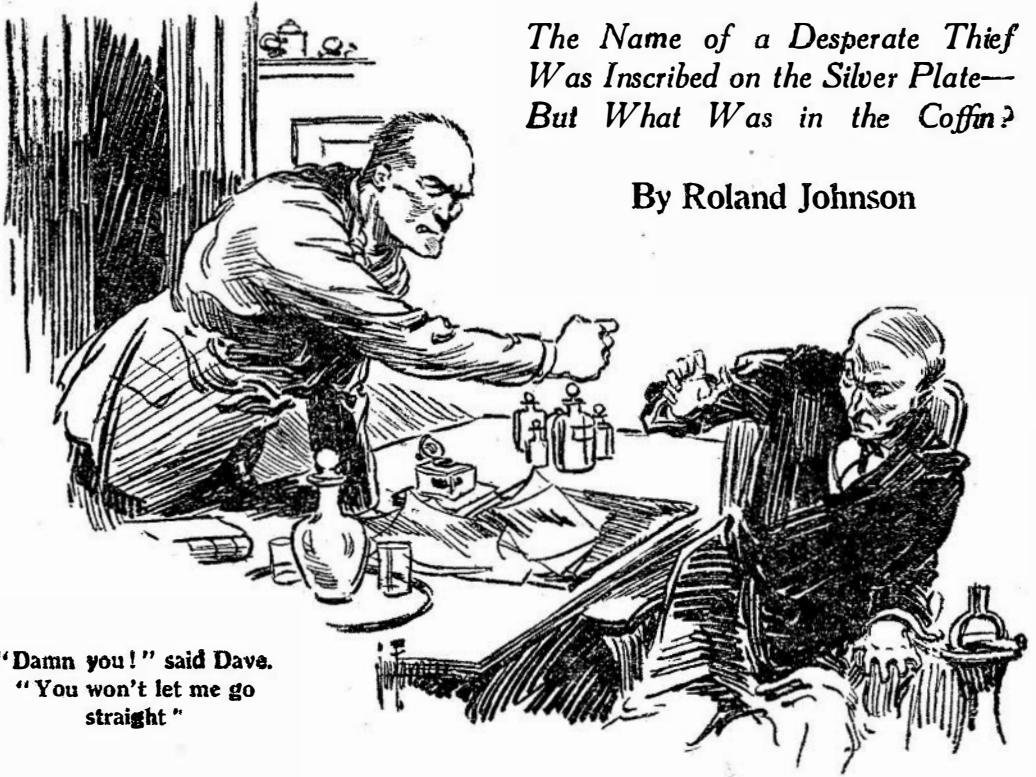
The trial was first called in Lwow, Galicia, in 1927. Then, more than six thousand defendants overflowed the court room and corridors, and blocked the courtyards and streets. The court had to adjourn the case to prevent a riot.

To avoid another jam, the court decided to chose the biggest military parade ground in the region, construct an open air court surrounded by grand stands, and try to accommodate its customers.

The Burial of Dave Pett

*The Name of a Desperate Thief
Was Inscribed on the Silver Plate—
But What Was in the Coffin?*

By Roland Johnson



"Damn you!" said Dave.
"You won't let me go
straight"

IT was just as the men began to file out from the prison concert hall that a little parchment-faced man leaned toward Dave Pett and whispered in his ear:

"You're going out to-morrow, aren't you?"

"Yes," replied Dave.

"Listen. I can tell you something. Ever heard of Dr. Eames? Well—"

Convicts become experts in the art of conversations unheard and unnoticed by outsiders. A guard, ten yards away from the two men, did not realize that they were talking.

The parchment-faced man finished only just before they were separated for their respective cells.

"I'll go," said Dave, "thanks."

Those who have spent most of their lives in prison are apart from the world. Hardened sinners, savages in their lusts without scruple or honor,

usually without any idea of happiness; the sort of men to whom crime is nothing and to whom, in a clouded attitude of thought, everything is nothing and nothing matters.

Such a man was Dave Pett.

He had spent twenty-five of his forty-eight years in jail. He was a man marked down by the police, considered to be dangerous. It was a crime for him to loiter. His movements were under suspicion wherever he went. He was watched in his freedom no less carefully than he was guarded during his terms of imprisonment.

On the day following his conversation with his fellow-prisoner, he slunk out of Holloway. It was a fine December morning. The street was patched with pools of rain, rapidly disappearing under a warm winter sun.

Dave had waited to be the last of

the batch so that the interest of the knot of folk who gathered at the gate would have flagged and he would not be observed.

A man on the curb—quite a young man—followed Dave with an air of indifference as the ex-prisoner slunk up the street.

“Damn him!” muttered Dave.

He knew that he was being followed. He knew what the man on the other side of the road was after. There was the cash from the Jermyn Street robbery which he'd refused to disclose. They would never let him alone. Why not? Hadn't he paid the price for it—for years? It ought to be his now—that was how Dave reasoned.

Dave was in a curious frame of mind. It so happened that but for one thing he wouldn't have in the least minded telling the man who followed him exactly where to find the five thousand dollars which was Dave's sole wealth. The point was, Dave wished to go straight, and that needed cash. Had he intended to follow on the lines of his past history, he might have made another hundred that very night.

The five thousand dollars was the price of his freedom from his murky reputation, and his working capital for the business of being honest. Dave needed it badly. In a hazy, non-imaginative way, he saw himself a cottager, with the country around him; the smile of the clean sun, the sweet freshness of a summer shower. He saw himself as a man one could trust and one who could look a policeman square in the face.

And Dr. Eames could do it.

Dave cast covert glances behind him. The man was maintaining a distance of about fifty yards between them. Dave couldn't blame the police. Only too often he had slouched from jail to crime. But this time he was really worried. He was neither callous nor careless. He had to throw off the entanglement.

He took a bus, and changed from

the bus to the underground railway. Without waiting to see if his follower were behind him, he bounded up the emergency stairs. A taxi outside proved a stroke of luck. He had only four shillings on him, but it was enough to see him to Covent Garden. From Covent Garden it was an easy step to Pa Donaldson and five one-thousand-dollar bills.

“Good!” said Pa, stroking his broken nose. “There's a lot doing, Dave. Now then, I can put you onto a grand.”

But Dave had bolted with his money.

And then for Dr. Eames, 140 Pel-
lington Street.

Dr. Eames greeted him after the manner of a butcher surveying a consignment of meat. He was a tall man, stooping slightly, with narrow shoulders and a lean, leathery face. He listened carefully to Dave's stumbling words. Prison robs a man of clear speech, and the doctor placed “the habitual” with unerring accuracy.

“You'd only drift back,” he murmured softly. “Poor man—I know. The best thing for your personal happiness, Pett, is to get it over quickly and take the shortest route back to prison. What's the use of starting again? You're old—how old, fifty?”

“Forty-five—I think. Maybe forty-six,” muttered Dave anxiously. “But I really want to start again. There's a place in the country I once went to—you don't know—I'm fed up—I'm b—well, haunted, I tell you. I want to get clear. You can start me again. I was *told*. What does it cost, and how's it done?”

“I know an extraordinarily easy little job which would just suit a man like you,” said the doctor, scrutinizing his man. “In Kensington. You can get in with your bare hands—”

“Damn you,” said Dave, losing his patience. “You're as bad as the rest. You won't let me go straight!”

“My dear sir,” the doctor altered his tone, “the alternative is expensive.”

"How much?"

"How much have you got?" asked the doctor carelessly.

"Five hundred. Would that do?" said Dave.

The doctor laughed tolerantly.

"Twenty-five hundred might possibly do it," he replied.

Dave looked at him—or tried to. Habitual criminals lose the knack of looking a man fair and square in the face.

"And cash down," said the doctor softly. "The whole point is, I must have cash down. Have you got the cash to put down?"

"Yes," said Dave boldly. "I have. It'll be worth it. What's the idea?"

"You wish," began the doctor, crossing his slender hands across his neat waistcoat, "to obliterate your past entirely—everything that has ever happened to you—your relations—your friends—your habitual haunts—must be a closed book. You must never run the chance of being recognized by those who know you. The success of the scheme depends largely upon you."

"I haven't any relations that I know of," said Dave, "and I don't believe in having friends that only let you down. And I'm going into the country anyway."

The doctor nodded.

"Good. Then that simplifies matters. My system should prove satisfactory. You will, to put it bluntly, die. You will go into my nursing home this evening, and I will issue a certificate to-morrow. You will be buried in two days' time. Have you no one you wish to be informed?" Dave shook his head. "Well, then, that is all right. You must shave your eyebrows, and dye your hair. I will give you some lotion for the scar on your cheek. It is too much of a landmark. The lotion will hurt. Stick it."

"I can do that," said Dave.

"Of course, you must change your name, and take up a trade. What's your trade?" asked the doctor.

"I was a laborer on a farm," replied Dave. "And I'll take the name of Ford. It was my mother's name and I fancy it. David Ford, I'll be."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"It doesn't matter, so long as you remember it," he said.

So Dave Pett would pass from existence to death. His name would slink into the back-files of life—a list of petty thefts and foolish, ignorant crimes together with his photograph, measurements, description, and fingerprints. Some clerk at headquarters would take his record from the current "P" roll and put it away high up on some dusty shelf to form a part of the literature of criminal history.

"You will go to 180 Nettle Street—Holborn," said the doctor, "in an ambulance, provided by me, from this house. You're suffering from appendicitis. I will arrange everything. My place in Nettle Street is a nursing home. I'll have a nurse there to meet you, and a room ready. But the nurse will leave after the ambulance is out of sight and you'll look after yourself for the rest of the period. There will be food. I suppose you can cook?"

"Yes," said Dave.

"Of course, it is imperative that you keep away from the windows and do not dream of stirring out of doors. I'll look you up in the morning. In the afternoon the undertaker will call to take your measurements." The doctor rose from his chair.

"All right," said Dave dazedly, and paid over the money.

II

TWO men sat opposite one another—men who dealt in life and death—to whom the birth of a child and the clay of the dead were one and the same thing, a stepping stone on the road of evolution.

Dr. Eames sat bolt-upright in his chair. The delicate fingers of his right hand beat a funeral march on the table in front of him. His mouth was half-

open and displayed a row of even white teeth.

The other, Archibald Sanderson, undertaker, of Holborn, sat very still. The seedy waistcoat covering his paunch rested against the edge of the table.

"All right," Sanderson said wearily. "You've got me fixed, I know. Call it five hundred."

"Here's the certificate for burial," said the doctor smoothly. "Dave Pett, you know, has just come out of prison."

"I know," said Sanderson.

"Three o'clock to-morrow afternoon then. About five-foot nine—quite a stock size, I should say. But you can visit him if you like. Good afternoon, Mr. Sanderson!"

Sanderson stumbled to the door.

III

TWO men sat gazing at one another with a coffin between them. The coffin was cheap, being badly finished and made of deal. It was filled with sawdust.

"Well," said Sanderson, "that's it. It's your size. It'll do you fine, Mr. Pett."

"Ford's my name," said Dave, and then, pointing a dirty finger: "Pett's in there, see?"

"All right," Sanderson laughed. "Now then, let's get down to business. I'm to bury you. There'll be a nice service at the cemetery and a nice hearse to take you there. Everything will be smooth an' easy. What I want to know is, where do I come in?"

"Wad yer mean?" asked Dave, who was puzzled.

"Well, you can't expect a funeral for nothing," explained Sanderson. "I want to know what you can pay."

"The doctor's paid you," said Dave.

"Don't tell me that you're not going to shell out," expostulated Sanderson. "I mean, I know better. You've a nice pile tucked away somewhere. What about that Jernyn Street rōb-

bery? Ten thousand? Come now, twenty-five hundred to me is dirt cheap!"

"The papers lied," said Dave. "I only got five thousand—and I gave the doctor half. I need the other half to see me straight."

"Half to Eames!" the undertaker held up his hands in horror. "That's too much! Well, I can't see you stranded and cleaned out. I'll cut my price down to a thousand."

"You get nothing from me," said Dave. "The doctor paid you."

"My dear chap," said Sanderson, "that's all bluff. You know well enough you've got to pay me as well. The doctor does his bit, and I do mine. If you don't pay me, you won't get buried, that's all."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dave, with an intake of breath.

"You can't expect me to do the job for nothing," pleaded Sanderson. "Here am I, taking a devil of a lot of trouble—it's silly. Don't be so stingy."

"The doctor paid you," said Dave.

Sanderson sighed. Had Dave argued or become voluble or violent he would have known how to deal with him. But Dave had said little, and there was something in his eye which Sanderson did not like.

"Well," he said with a change of tone, "I can see that you mean to stick to that twenty-five hundred. I don't blame you. But I must have *something*. Money is easily earned by men like you. You've earned a lot in your time. You may have given it away, or chucked it away, but you know how to make money."

"And I pay for it," said Dave between his teeth. "It's men like you, and the fences, who make the money. Profiteers! I do the work and take the risk—you take the money. I know—I've had some!"

Sanderson ignored the other's increasing rage. Anger left him cold—he was used to it.

"Look here," he said, "you've done pretty well in the past. I can put you on to an easy crib."

"Then why don't you do it yourself?" asked Dave. Sanderson ignored him.

"It's as safe as houses," continued Sanderson, "for a man with your experience. You ought to be grateful to me for putting you onto it. It's a place in Kensington—you can get in with your bare hands. The lady is away, and there's a rotten bolt on the area window and no shutters. A flick of your arm and you're inside. See? I heard about it from the window-cleaner. There's some antique gold ornament stuff in a glass-fronted cabinet in the front room. The metal'll be worth about twenty-five hundred. The whole thing wouldn't take more than five minutes, and the place is deserted. Now, I make you a present of the opportunity. That gold will fetch ready money. If it isn't worth twenty-five hundred from any decent man, I'll give you my hat."

"I know what you're after," began Dave. "The doctor told—"

"You don't understand," said Sanderson volubly. "I must be paid. If you won't give me that twenty-five hundred which you have on you, why not earn another? I'll take that gold off your hands—and you can keep your money. Why not? It's dead safe and you're not to be buried until to-morrow. You can do it to-night."

"The doctor paid you," said Dave monotonously.

"My foreman and a couple of men are coming with the hearse to-morrow at three," said Sanderson. "I've got another job, so I can't come. I brought the coffin, which I'll fasten down. I'll come back to-morrow morning at about ten and collect those gold ornaments. Then the whole thing will be settled. That address is 80 Easton Square. You can't miss it. It's near Gloucester Road station."

There was a pause. Dave, seeming-

ly fascinated, followed the line indicated by the other's hand. The coffin looked innocent compared to his expression.

"And if you don't," said Sanderson "there won't be any burial."

Dave shifted his feet. He could not look the other in the face.

"All—right," he said at length.

"Good!" said Sanderson cheerfully. "It's not much of a price to get buried—a short night's work, that's all. And safe. Dead safe. When you leave Easton Square you'll find a road at the back which leads you to High Road. Turn off up Farley's Road if I were you, and come home by Kensington Street. The busses run late. You've a key for this place? Then leave the door on the latch. You've got sense, Pett. You never know, I might hear of something else in the future. We could go fifty-fifty. The reason why you've seen so much of the inside of a prison is that you've never hit on the right lays. I'll show you!"

But Dave did not reply.

IV

DAVE was trying to think. His furry brain was endeavoring to grapple with the problem in front of him, and it was a difficult task because Dave was not used to grappling with anything except a safe, or a policeman, or a difficult lock.

So the doctor had let him down, based upon cheating him to the last turn. Dave had met the Eames and the Sandersons of the world, men with smiles worse than scowls and devilish of purpose. Suckers.

But Dave Pett was dead to the world already. He realized in a dim way that his death certificate must have already been issued. Already he had begun to pass into the world of the forgotten.

David Ford had slunk into existence a newly born man without a past. Honest worker, clear of conscience. Straight. Never to risk contact with the law. To learn to live.

That country cottage—once he had seen a picture of a cottage with fox-gloves growing almost to the eaves. And the smell of honey and flowers in the air — uniform — discipline — urrggh!

And if he were to achieve his ambition, how was he to enter the house in Easton Square?

Once again he would put the police on his trail. Once again he never could be safe. Once again his description might go round. Once again he might be caught redhanded. Once again he would be surrounded with the fear of the hunted. His methods—the methods of Dave Pett—might open the book of mystery to the sleuths. As sure as fate the limb of the law would stretch out to him and enfold him in the embrace which had strangled the best part of his life.

And if he did not enter the house in Easton Square, he would still be Dave Pett—the hunted and watched and stalked and preyed upon and worried. He would not be buried. Perhaps the doctor had some means of holding back his death certificate—

Dave put a kettle on the gas and made himself a cup of tea. Then he shaved. Having shaved, he dressed himself in a new suit of clothes which he had bought and adjusted a bright and glaring tie. Then he brushed his hair and tied the laces of his new shoes.

He surveyed himself in a mirror. This was David Ford.

Then he undressed, turned out the light, and went to sleep. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. There would be no crime for him that night.

In the morning he awoke to look down upon the coffin-lid.

DAVE PETT

Died December 7th, 1925

He lifted the lid and dragged the coffin to the grate.

He lit the fire, waited until it was burning briskly, and heaped the sawdust onto the blaze. He fed the fire until the coffin was empty.

Two hours later he heard Sanderson's steps on the stairs of the empty house. He knelt down and took the poker in his muscled, brawny hand and found a convenient position behind the door.

Dr. Eames, of Pellington Street, cut out the little, terse, paragraph which announced the death and burial of Dave Pett, notorious criminal, and sighed happily to himself.

Then his eye lit upon another paragraph, rather longer. His face turned gray with horror.

Archibald Sanderson, undertaker, of Holborn, was reported to be missing.

Thus had David Ford passed himself into his new world.



Lester Leith, crook de luxe, has a thrilling adventure with the police next week in "A Hot Tip," by Erle Stanley Gardner.

CHARACTER REVEALED IN YOUR HANDWRITING

EDITOR'S NOTE — *After making character analysis, through handwriting, his hobby for more than a score of years, John Fraser has recently won wide renown in New York City as a popular lecturer on this subject.*

He conducts a thriving business of analyzing character from handwriting; and many notables in this country



JOHN FRASER

and abroad have complimented him on the accuracy of his findings.

By special arrangement his personal analysis is given to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY readers for ten cents, or free with a one-dollar subscription for thirteen issues (in Canada, \$1.75 for subscription). Please fill out the special coupon.

*Please analyze this
sample of my hand-*

M. H. R., Boston, Mass.—You have an unusually quick and nimble brain, with the result that your thinking is very rapid. You rarely need to develop all the steps of a problem logically before arriving at a solution, because your mind leaps over unimportant and irrelevant points. This rapidity of thought probably leads to rapidity of speech, as the tongue must keep time with the thought behind the spoken word.

Another trait which is written large in your penmanship is your habit of keeping your ideas, and your information pretty much to yourself. In other words, you are secretive, and at times you show a marked lack of candor. This may be wise or otherwise, but after all, it is through the sharing of each other's opinions that the world progresses. You are also stiff-necked

and obstinate. A veritable stumbling block when things don't suit you. This is nothing to be proud of. Don't fool yourself any longer that this is backbone. Nothing of the kind. I call it pure cussedness.

Adults who are guilty of that kind of thing are still in their swaddling clothes.

You are a man of artistic predilections. You have a decided fondness for anything that belongs to the arts. You show good judgment when it comes to the æsthetic qualities in an object. You would rather see a beautiful sunset and admire it than spend your time and your money on a cheap moving picture. Music and poetry appeal to you, and your mind gravitates naturally to the higher and better things in life. Though you are far from being a saint, nevertheless, you are a

man much above the average in many ways.

*my. Perhaps you can
the future has in*

E. B., Winnipeg, Canada—You are indeed a candid person who hits straight from the shoulder. There is no "beating about the bush" with you. It's straight stuff all the time. I wouldn't be surprised if your outspokenness got you into trouble now and then. Self-dependence is written all over your disposition and mannerisms. You will require no crutches nor "pull" to get you to your goal. You will go on your own momentum. With all your aggressiveness and self-confidence, however, there are many weak joints in your mental armor.

For instance, no one can teach you anything. You are a Mr. Know-it-all. George Henry Lewes terms egotism "I-am-ity," and this seems to fit you exactly. The one good thing about an egotist is his opinion about himself. The sooner you come to realize that there are millions of people in the world just as good as you, the better it will be for yourself. You are far from perfect, and since perfection is like the horizon, don't be deluded any longer with the idea that you have bumped into it. As a matter of fact, you are still a "long way from Tipperary" in the matter of perfection or sainthood.

Moreover, you have a revengeful and vindictive spirit. You love to "get even" with the other fellow, if he happens to do you an injury. There is nothing forgiving about you. It's an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth with you. Then, lastly, your temper has bituminous qualities. In fact, I would say it resembles gunpowder. My advice to you is give yourself the "once-over," get rid of all this

swell-headedness and be yourself. No man can hope to prosper in the world with such inflated ideas of himself as you have at present.

*seeing specimens of
of for your analysis
and this is now*

Mrs. S. K., Pittsburgh, Pa.—You appear to be a woman who possesses a discriminating nature. One who can judge with care and precision. Careful and fussy over details and somewhat old-maidish in the way you do things. You are a stickler for law and order. Always strict to observe rules and regulations, and very exact in the performance of any duty that you may be intrusted with.

On the other hand, I observe that you show marked sensitivity, which at times leads you to suspicion. You are fearfully frightened that people will injure your reputation. You are thin-skinned and "touchy." Your pride being easily wounded. When it comes to talkativeness, you are a specialist in this direction. I would call you a great "preacher," particularly at home. Your vocabulary may be comparatively small, but with your quick turn-over of words you would be a positive hurricane when you got started in an argument. It is true that many women preach in the United States, but they are not all in the pulpit by any means. You are a shining example of this fact.

You seem to be a woman who is very sure of herself. You are not always so frank and open as you might be. Once your mind is made up on a question nothing on earth will get you to change. And what is more, you are not always right in your decisions, as you have often found to your dismay. In other words, you are not so wise as you think you are. Even in the head of a sage you will find a foolish corner, and you are no exception to the rule. In spite of this, however, you impress me as one who has been en-

dowed with many splendid qualities, and is above the average in intellect and education.

*in the Detective
and I surely am
interested in graph*

Miss A. G. F., Albany, N. Y.—Your restless nature must be a source of worry to your mother. You belong to the type that must be constantly kept interested in new things. You remind me of the Athenians of old who spent their time in nothing else but either telling or hearing some new thing. This lack of concentration is a decided liability to you, and will get you nowhere.

One redeeming characteristic in you, however, is your gay and care-free disposition. By this very fact you keep those around you smiling at their troubles. You have a fun-loving nature, and you like to indulge in practical jokes. This gayety of yours is oftentimes fantastic and fanciful, and you

certainly have a brilliant imagination when it comes to thinking up new pleasures.

As might be expected, you are also flirtatious and wouldn't hesitate to set your cap for any mere man who may happen along.

Looking at you from another angle, I see you love to show off. You believe in keeping your chin up. There's nothing wrong in that, but in your case this anterior part of your lower jaw is a little too high at times. For Heaven's sake be natural, don't stand on your dignity in order to make others see you, otherwise you will resemble the Chinaman who sat on his pigtail to keep his head erect.

Altogether, you are a fine example of the "modern girl" we hear so much about to-day. I have to admit there are many things I admire about your sex. I don't know what it is, but it can't be clothes. My space is exhausted, otherwise I would say a good deal more about you. However, I wish you the best of luck.

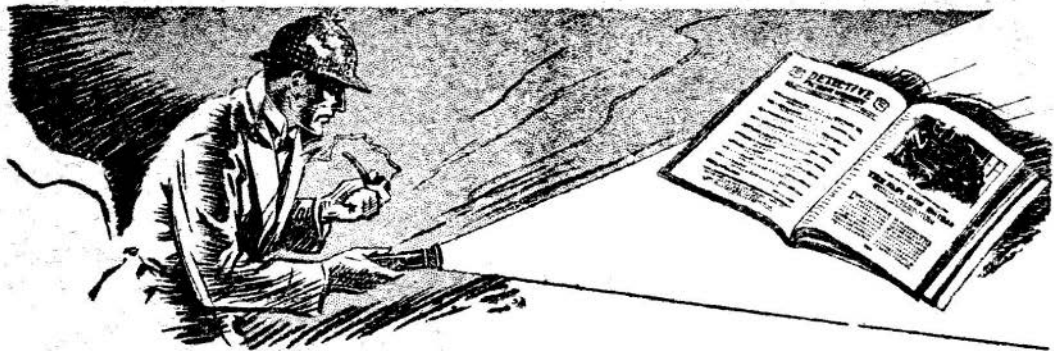
Fill out the coupon with specimen writing and send it with ten cents, or one dollar for a thirteen-weeks' subscription (in Canada, one dollar and seventy-five cents) to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

You will then receive a letter from Mr. Fraser giving his analysis of your character.

To John Fraser, Detective Fiction Weekly, 280 Broadway N. Y. City

Signatur _____

Street _____ City _____



FLASHES FROM READERS

Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind

JOHN HUNTER made a decided hit with thousands of our readers with his thrilling and sinister serial, "The Three Crows."

So it will be good news to William McCarron, who writes the following letter, and all the rest of the DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY family that Mr. Hunter has completed another thriller, "The Secret," which we have scheduled for the early summer.

It's more thrilling than "The Three Crows"!

DEAR SIR:

I have been reading DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for quite awhile, and my favorite characters are *Ranger Calhoun, Under Cover Lane*, and I want another "Three Crows" story soon. That was a fine story, gripping from start to finish, and not written so that any part of it could be improbable.

Please give us soon—more of these stories at an early date—only wish you'd publish this magazine twice a week.

WM. McCARRON,
Baltimore, Md.

THANK YOU, MISS!

DEAR EDITOR:

Inclosed please find coupons from the last five issues of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

Your magazine seems to improve with each number, and I find it a hard matter to find a story which I dislike enough to "black-ball" it.

My last copy had the honor of attending the Indiana State Basket Ball Tournament, and acquired for itself at least four new read-

ers—two from Indianapolis and two from Gary, Indiana.

I always try to be generous with my copy of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—after I've finished it myself—for the stories are too good to keep to one's self.

Sincerely yours,

MISS F. S.
Kokomo, Ind.

NOT TOO BLOODTHIRSTY

DEAR SIR:

I am inclosing ten "Here's My Vote" coupons, for which please send me artist's original drawing of one of your illustrations.

I have been a reader of your magazine ever since it was known as *Plym's*, that is two or three years back, and have missed very few copies.

I used to travel around a lot, and on trains and boats and around country hotels I used to while away the hours by reading all kinds of detective magazines, but I am now anchored to a desk, so I have much less time to read. I therefore cut down on my magazines and have retained but one—guess which?

I fairly devour it from cover to cover and find it all so very interesting. I always look ahead with pleasure when you announce for forthcoming numbers, such authors as Maxwell Smith, Farjeon, Ware, Gardner, and others.

I enjoy stories that, while mystifying and intriguing, are not too bloodthirsty and too much constructed on impossible situations.

I must tell you, though, that I make an exception of stories based on the Chinese underworld.

I have quite an intimate knowledge of Montreal's Chinatown, and any story concerning the Orientals or Celestials can never be beyond fact, though the adventures may be purely imaginative on the author's part.

Though most of the local Chinese are law-

abiding and peace-loving citizens, I can say that still there are here innumerable dives, opium joints and hop houses peopled with Chinese and frequently filled with whites and blacks, no small number of which may be of the gentler sex.

I wish your magazine long life and success, so that your readers may continue to enjoy its many and pleasant features.

With personal regards, I am, sir,

Yours very truly,
P. R. TISON,
Montreal, Canada.

THE "CROOK MIND"

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been reading your magazine for many years. Very glad to note you have added Erle Stanley Gardner to your staff of writers. His *Lester Leith* series is intensely interesting. Something about his style; his unerring accuracy in portraying the "crook mind," and his clever way of leaving certain things to the imagination and intelligence of the reader—just holds me spellbound until his story is finished. Give us more of his stuff. All your stories are well selected and well edited.

Good luck.
JOHN G. FINLEY,
Newark, N. J.

SERIALS FOR HER

DEAR EDITOR:

I am sending the ten choice coupons and will be glad to receive an artist's drawing. I have been reading your magazine for nearly two years. I like the serials best, and liked most all the short stories in these ten magazines. I like "The Wise Guy," "Coming Through With Rye," "The Curious Burglars," and "Mr. Philibus's Christmas Eve" best of all the short stories. And if I was to name the serials I'd name them all.

Yours truly,
MRS. G. L. DAUES,
Pawhuska, Okla.

A CALIFORNIAN BOOSTER

Mr. Odell compliments an editor "for the first time in his life." We are certainly proud to be the recipient of this enthusiastic and complimentary note:

DEAR SIR:

For the first time in my life I am taking this opportunity to compliment an editor on the merits of his publication.

You cover the whole field of detective fiction in a most commendable manner and are deserving of the gratitude of the thousands upon thousands of delighted readers who storm the news-stands each week for their copy of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

I have been a reader of your magazine for many months and have found countless hours of real, genuine pleasure in its pages.

A big point in your favor is the fact that you have placed the cost of your magazine

within the reach of every one, and it is a fact that *no* magazine on the news racks that even compares with DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY can be purchased for less than twice its cost. To me your magazine as a fiction weekly is worth a half dozen of any published to-day at twice its cost, and I feel certain that I am merely echoing the opinions of untold thousands.

With all good wishes for your continued success and looking forward to many, many future years of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY's leading its particular field in the publication of the finest and best magazine of its kind in all the world, I am

A completely satisfied booster,
RICHARD S. ODELL,
Los Angeles, Calif.

PRAISE FOR LESTER

DEAR EDITOR:

I'm not much for serials. Somehow, I like to read the stories at one sitting and don't like stories too long. Right now, my favorite character is *Lester Leith*. You can't help admiring him, even though he's crooked. I hope he will continue his clever hi-jacking for some time to come. After reading several requests for a republication of "Dinners for Two," I also put in a request for it. I have not read it yet, but it seems to be quite a short story, according to the opinions.

Very truly yours,
GENE GRAVES,
Milford, Conn.

"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 _____

I did not like _____
because _____

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____

SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

Edited by M. E. Ohaver

A METHOD of analysis which combines vowel spotting with determination of suffixes is aptly illustrated in a solution submitted by George W. Bowesman to the following cryptogram by H. G. Oehley, published in the February 16 issue:

LMKL-KINGS LTYSVW PBMCSI-
High-grade hotels univer-
WNVVA NGTX Y XTIFSVNMB
sally adopt porcelain
HNYLYPHW-NFFVNMZ DMBF
bathtubs-acclaim zinc
YNHTT.
taboo.

The solution in question hinges upon the ending -NVVA, possibilities for which are found among the common suffixes -*eed*, -*teen*, -*teer*, -*ees*, -*ally*, and -*hood*. In deciding upon this suffix, however, Mr. Bowesman first observed that the FF in NFFVNMZ, because of low frequency, probably represented a doubled consonant; and that the symbol N, preceding this double, was, therefore, probably a vowel.

Armed with this information, our correspondent returned to -NVVA, where, with N as a vowel, VV seemed likely as a doubled consonant. In this event, of course, the ending would have to be -*ally*—or -*ully*—since the other suffixes of this pattern contain doubled vowels.

Substituting for N and V in NFFVNMZ then gave *u--lu--* and *a--la--* as possible outlines for this word. The second of these at once suggested *applaud* and *acclaim*. With the latter, DMBF—*-i-c-*—followed at once as *zinc*. After which, of course, the rest of the decipherment was fairly easy.

This week's crypts also offer some rare opportunities for clever fans. In

No. 1 you might compare BUQ and BS, noting that Q is the predominating symbol. Watch for the "methodized alphabet" as this crypt unravels. Besides the thrice used LUG in No. 2, you also have the two-letter group AR occurring in the suffix -ARS. In No. 3 you are left to your own resources. Watch your step!

No. 1—By Monroe C. Sylvester.

KSOPA GOQ BUQ IGOOVQOA SL
SCO VPOGA MSSP JSIGHCYGOE,
BUOQQLSOQ, VA QAAQRBVGY BS
BUQ GHVYVBE BS QDTOQAA
SRQAQYL.

No. 2—By Louis H. Sander.

LUG WUGZAWEP TOCTLERWGT,
ATBLBXCT (SKGGQ, ZGERARS
"GYOEP XPEWG"), BWWOXV LUG
TEZG XPEWG AR LUG XGKABJAW
TVTLGZ.

No. 3—By "Rover."

AS ZWEERDACVAL CZIOVC, KYSC
DUZRIN UICV YMPMYOX MIOXC,
LYWCASH CIUDVAUDC HODYV
XDYR IK JYAO-ZWRRASH.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

1—From West Peak, located in Meriden, Connecticut, one can view on clear days Long Island Sound with her ships, twenty or more miles distant.

2—Bovines invade my clearing, but "woolies" clutter the landscape. To eat, each ewe can use any yew or nip other youthful shrub.

3—Geography, pictures, travelogues, and magazines are fair substitutes for actual journeys.

We regret that it is not possible to give personal replies to the many letters sent to this department. Every communication, however, is accorded faithful consideration. Keep your crypts, answers, suggestions, *et cetera*, coming, fans! The more, the merrier! Answers to this week's crypts will appear in next week's DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

THERE is one chapter in the story of American banditry that stands for its lurid colorfulness. That is the history of John Ashley's gang. From the dismal labyrinth of the Florida Everglades, John Ashley and his desperadoes swooped down on West Palm Beach County, plundered banks, murdered those who sought to stop them, defied the prisons, laughed at law. For ten years swaggering John Ashley terrorized the State.

In the impenetrable, dank and gloomy swamps where no man dared pursue, "The Killers of the Everglades" made their lair. In that fastness they hid from maddened posses, split their loot, and plotted further depredations.

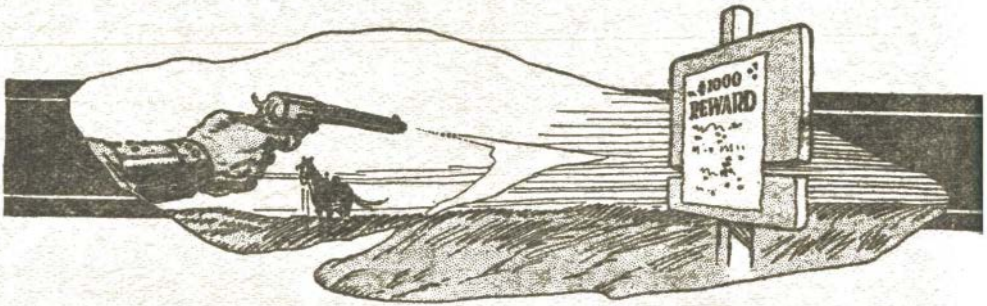
There Ashley, the cold-eyed killer, held sway. There lived Laura Upton—savage as a tigress, cunning as a wolf—"Queen of the Everglades." She was Ashley's lieutenant. There also lived Hanford Mobley, a boy with woman's voice, and beady eyes that glinted like a bird of prey's—and the rest of the murderous, reckless crew.

Here is the story of that ruthless gang. Read:

The Killers of the Everglades

By Charles Somerville

For ten years they jeered at police. For ten years they rode roughshod over Florida, hi-jacked the rum-runners, looted the banks. For ten years they were safe in their jungle stronghold—until Sheriff Bob Baker, young and fearless, set out on their trail!



And stories by MADELEINE SHARPS BUCHANAN, ERL STANLEY GARDNER, EDWARD PARRISH WARE, ROBERT H. ROHDE, JOHN GOODWIN, and others.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—May 11

How I Lost 97 Pounds



Before
279 lbs.

I weighed 279 lbs!

After trying many ways to reduce, a leading insurance medical advisor told me of a natural, pleasant, healthful way. No thyroid or dangerous drugs. It was easy, natural and absolutely safe.

I feel better, look better, have more energy and vitality. No wrinkled or flabby skin.

Send name and address for full particulars FREE, without obligation.



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182 lbs.

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Most Amazing INVENTION in 25 years "Cleans Up" for Agents

**FREE MACHINE
FOR AGENTS**



**\$90
WEEKLY IN
SPARE TIME!**

Men, here is a wonder—the most sensational invention of the age! If you're looking for a rapid fire seller—an item that nets you 100% profit—an item that sells itself to 7 out of 10 men on demonstration—I've got it in Ve-Po-Ad, the amazing new vest pocket adding machine!

Sells for \$2.95—You Make \$1.65

This most remarkable invention does all the work of a \$300 adding machine, yet fits the vest pocket and sells for only \$2.95! It sells on sight to storekeepers, business men, and everyone who uses figures—and makes you over 100% profit on every sale! Ve-Po-Ad does any kind of figuring in a jiffy, yet weighs but 4 oz. Counts up to a billion. Shows total visible at all times. Perfectly accurate, lightning fast. Never makes a mistake or gets out of order. Over 100,000 in daily use!

Get Your Machine FREE

Live wire salesmen are dropping everything else and flocking to Ve-Po-Ad. Ve-Po-Ad brings them quick money and lots of it. Ship out in California made \$875 in one week! You can "clean up" too! Only 10 sales a day in spare time will bring YOU over \$35.00 a week! You need no previous sales experience—Ve-Po-Ad sells itself! If you are really interested in earning a steady, substantial income, write at once for full details of my MONEY-MAKING PLAN and FREE VE-PO-AD given to new Agents. Do it NOW—TODAY!

C. M. CLEARY, Dept. 905

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MAX BRAND

presents

Blood and Iron

A fast riding, quick shooting Western story, full of action, drama, suspense and romance. Max Brand has again succeeded in vividly portraying the true old-time West of frenzied days and feverish nights! Don't miss it!

Other Features:

The May issue of Munsey's Magazine continues a second installment of "The Streets of Shadow," a thrilling detective mystery novel, with the slums of Old Montreal for a background; also several remarkable articles and excellent short stories.

MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

For MAY

NOW ON SALE

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Rexall

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There is one near you. You will recognize it by this sign. Liggitt's are also Rexall Stores.





Looking Ahead!

to next week's all-star issue of
ARGOSY ALL-STORY
which will carry, all under one cover,
this feature line-up:

FRED MacISAAC, RALPH MILNE FARLEY
TALBOT MUNDY, W. WIRT
CHARLES ALDEN SELTZER
WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE, and others
All in **THE ISSUE OF MAY 11th**

The Radio Flyers—by Ralph Milne Farley

Latest Fantastic Novel

is a sequel to "The Radio Man," "The Radio Beasts" and "The Radio Planet"—all popular favorites with ARGOSY readers. A most unusual tale of Arctic and Inner World adventure—which demonstrates why there is no North Pole!

BIG MAN—by FRED MacISAAC

A Complete Novelette

Another of MacIsaac's unusual tales—one that is tense and fascinating from beginning to end, and that packs a real heart-throb. Modern business—and the prospect of facing the world without a job.

Right of Way—by William Merriam Rouse

A Complete Novelette

"Trouble-shooting" in the Adirondacks, with plenty of action, exhilarating adventure, and a nice dash of romance.

FRANK L. PACKARD

in the issue of May 18th

ARGOSY

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

"First In Fiction"

Out Every Wednesday

Help your Digestion when it's good!

MILLIONS have found Beeman's Pepsin Gum a pleasant and wholesome precaution against indigestion. Millions prefer the fresh, keen flavor of Beeman's, its smoothness and fine quality, and the pleasant way it stimulates digestive action after meals. Perfected by Dr. Beeman over 30 years ago, this delicious gum is today the favorite of people who chew gum as an aid to digestion. Help your digestion when it's good—enjoy a stick of Beeman's after meals.



BEEMAN'S
PEPSIN
GUM
aids digestion

IVER JOHNSON

"Gee!"

Dad went the limit
and got me the
Best There Is"



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Bicycle know exactly why it's
"the best there is."

The MOBICYCLE \$45
without extra equipment

The SUPER MOBIKE \$50
completely equipped with the latest and
best of everything, and other models
fully described in our catalog in colors.

Prices range from \$32.50 to \$67.50

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and JUNIORCYCLES**
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are the same high grade as our bicycles.

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show you these famous products.

Dealers should send for proposition B

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VELOCIPEDE

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Pepto-Bismol soothes the delicate membranes of the stomach and digestive tract. It is aromatic and pleasant to take. Gentle and mild in action, it is recommended by physicians for children and infants too.

At your druggist's—50¢, in the distinctive triangular bottle. Also at leading soda fountains. The Norwich Pharmaceutical Co., Norwich, New York.



A teaspoonful every half hour until relieved

Pepto-Bismol

30
x 3 1/2
\$2.28

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SIZE	TIRES	TUBES
30x31-2	\$2.28	\$1.00
31x4	3.00	1.15
32x4	3.00	1.15
33x4	3.00	1.15
32x41-2	3.25	1.45
33x41-2	3.25	1.45
34x41-2	3.50	1.45
30x6	3.65	1.75
33x5	3.65	1.75
29x4.40	2.35	1.10
30x5.25	3.00	1.35
30x5.77	3.25	1.40
31x5.25	3.25	1.35
32x6.00	3.25	1.45
32x6.20	3.25	1.45

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SEND ONLY \$1.00 deposit for each tire wanted—balance C. O. D. State whether clincher or straight side. No risk in buying from us. If not satisfactory upon delivery, return them to us for refund. **ORDER NOW.**

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New Miraculous Fluid—not a paint—not a polish—not a varnish—not a wax. Flows on; dries quickly. Instantly restores original color and luster. Agents and operators for Service Stations wanted.

Write The ReNUZit System, 154 E. Erie St., Dept. 740 H.R., Chicago, Ill., for Free Test Offer.

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PRESENTS

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Play in Half Hour
After you get the four easy motions you play harmonious chords with very little practice. No previous musical knowledge needed.

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EARN UP TO \$250 per mo.



MEN ARE WANTED and they get as high as \$260 per month salary. We'll train you—and upon completion of your training assist you to a position paying at least \$120 per month salary plus expenses, or refund your tuition. It only takes about 3 months of spare time here—study and you're ready to step into a profitable position with rapid salary advances to \$175 and up. It's healthful outdoor work with regular hours—away from city shops and metropolitan desires.

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If you want to give your favorite pipes a fair trial, start them all at scratch with Sir Walter Raleigh's favorite smoking mixture. It's milder than most, it's rich and mellow, and its fragrance is kept fresh by the heavy gold foil that lines the tin. Let Sir Walter show you how good your pipe can be.

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If your favorite tobacconist does not carry Sir Walter Raleigh, send us his name and address. In return for this courtesy, we'll be delighted to send you without charge a full-size tin of this milder pipe mixture.

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SIR WALTER RALEIGH

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Common sense about dandruff and its treatment

LIKE all germ conditions, dandruff should have immediate attention. The penalty of neglect is an unhealthy scalp, falling hair—even baldness.

The foremost dermatologists say that the best means of checking dandruff is the antiseptic shampoo and massage. The antiseptic, to strike at the germ condition and remove the flakes; the massage, to increase blood circulation and thus aid hair roots to regain vigor.

At the first symptom of dandruff, use full strength Listerine, the safe antiseptic. Simply douse it on the head and massage the scalp backward and forward with the fingers. Repeat the treatment often, using a little castor oil if scalp is

excessively dry. Results often seem miraculous.

This is not surprising, however, when you realize that Listerine, though healing in effect, is powerful against germs—so active, in fact, that it destroys 200,000,000 of the stubborn *Staphylococcus Aureus* (pus) and *Bacillus Typhosus* (typhoid) germs in 15 seconds. At the first sign of dandruff, try this pleasant treatment, you'll be delighted by results. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

LISTERINE

The Safe and Soothing Antiseptic

kills 200,000,000 germs in 15 seconds

Have you entered the Eastman \$30,000 PRIZE CONTEST?

One of the 1,223
cash awards can easily be yours

PROBABLY you have already heard of this big event for amateur picture-takers. But have you made any pictures for it yet?

If you have said to yourself, "What's the use of entering? I can't win. I'm no expert with the camera," you're making a big mistake. The winners in this contest are going to be men and women just like yourself, people who, if you asked them, would say they had little or no photographic ability.

Technical skill is a minor factor in this contest. What the judges are looking for are *interesting* pictures—pictures of children and scenes, sports and animals, still life and nature studies, buildings and architectural details, interiors and unusual photographs.

If you live under the flag of the United States or that of the Dominion of Canada, you're eligible to enter and compete—except, of course, if you or some member of your family is connected with the photographic business. And practically any snapshot or time exposure that you may take during March, April or May, this year, is eligible also, provided it is received by us on or before May 31. There are enough classifications to cover



Kodak Film in the familiar yellow box is dependably uniform. Reduces the danger of under- or over-exposure. It gets the picture.

all kinds. When we receive your entries we'll place them in the classes where they'll have the best chance of winning.

Any brand of camera or film may be used, but negatives must not be larger than 3½ x 5½ inches and prints not larger than 7 inches in width or length.

Enter this contest without losing another day! Increase your chance of winning by beginning to take pictures *at once!* There is no limit to the number you are permitted to submit. The more you enter, the more likely you are to capture one of the big cash prizes. Clip or copy the entry blank below and *get your camera out today.* This may prove to be the most profitable advertisement you ever read.

PRIZES

Grand Prize of \$2,500.00
11 prizes of \$500.00 each 11 prizes of \$250.00 each
125 prizes of 100.00 each 275 prizes of 10.00 each
800 prizes of \$5.00 each

Totals, 1,223 \$30,000.00

In the event of a tie, the advertised award will be paid to each of the tying contestants. (57 of the above \$100 prizes were sent to winners April 1. 57 more will be sent May 1. That leaves 1,109 prizes for you to aim at.)

Only pictures made during March, April and May, 1929, are eligible

PRIZE CONTEST ENTRY BLANK

For a program of delightful entertainment, tune in on Kodak Hour each Friday at 10 P. M., New York time, over the Columbia Broadcasting System.

Name.....
(Please Print)
Street Address..... Town and State.....
Make of Camera..... Make of Film.....

Enclose this blank or a copy with your entries and mail to Prize Contest Office, Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N. Y. Do not place your name on either the front or the back of any picture.

While this page tells you practically everything you need to know to enter the contest, further details, including the rules for the Special Enlargement Award, may be secured from your dealer or from the Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N. Y.

"I'D WALK A MILE FOR A CAMEL"

—but
a "MISS"
is as Good
as a
MILE

