

The INSIDE STORY of MELVIN PURVIS

DETECTIVE

FICTION

WEEKLY



Formerly Flynn's



**"Bring Him
Back Alive"**

*A Thrilling New Book
by a New Author*

Donald Ross



SPY!

*The Case of the Man
in the Shroud*

by



NOAH WEBSTER *thought that COLDS were caused by COMETS*

Master scholar, compiler of the great dictionary, Webster was among the first to inquire into the baffling causes of that private and public menace—the common cold.

His conclusion that colds were due to the fearful plunge of meteors through the sky was far from the truth, but no less distant than that of other savants who assigned colds to the bite of bedbugs, and to "sitting in cold, damp churches." (Dr. Thomas Haynes, 1789.)

For centuries, hundreds of absurd theories as to the cause of colds were advanced only to be sharply exploded. But now one has been presented that Science has generally accepted. This is the filtrable virus theory.

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At the first sign of a cold

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DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY



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VOLUME XCI

Saturday, February 9, 1935

NUMBER 2

SERIAL

Bring Him Back Alive! (Five Parts—1) Donald Ross 6
Jack Laurence Hunts the World's Most Dangerous Man

NOVELETTE AND SHORT STORIES

Spy! (Novelette) Max Brand 28
The Case of the Man in the Shroud

Liar by the Sun Emory Black 77
A Gambler's Crooked Wheel Was Spinning Death and a Strange Alibi

After the Murder Ray Cummings 99
The Case of the Suave Townie and the Bloody Scissors

Stopping All Cars J. Lane Linklater 109
Jimmie Was Being Forced into a Terrible Crime

Wife Deserter Evelyn Murray Campbell 122
The Mysterious Case of the Vanished Bridegroom

TRUE STORIES

Bandit Buster The Inside Story of Melvin Purvis (3 Parts—1) Dugal O'Liam 65
The Timmonsville, Ga., Soda Squirter Who Became the Ace of Manhunters

The Lady from Hell Eugene Thomas 87
The Episode of the Secret Service Blackmail

Illustrated Crimes Paul Berdanier 120
The Murder of Editor Mellett

FEATURES AND FACTS

Flashes From Readers 136

How Faces Reveal Character William E. Benton 139

Solving Cipher Secrets M. E. Ohaver 140

Jujutsu for Self-Defense John Yamado 142

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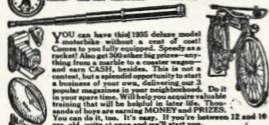
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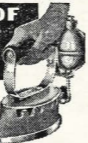
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Dr. T. J. Eastell, famous Doctor, Surgeon, and Scientist of London, says: "Cystex is one of the finest remedies I have ever known in my medical practice. Any doctor will recommend it for its definite benefits in the treatment of many functional Kidney and Bladder disorders. It is safe and harmless."

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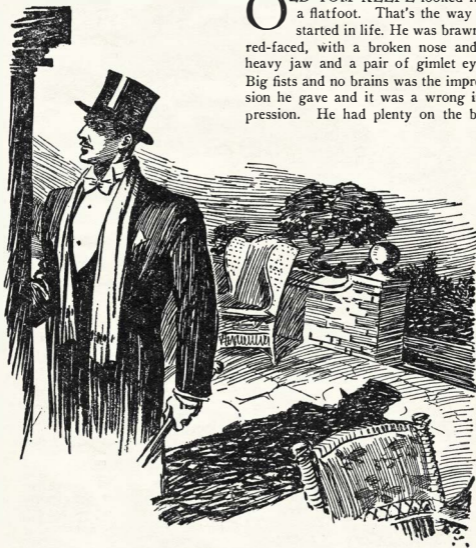
BRING HIM

By Donald Ross

CHAPTER I

Foreign Assignment

OLD TOM KEEFE looked like a flatfoot. That's the way he started in life. He was brawny, red-faced, with a broken nose and a heavy jaw and a pair of gimlet eyes. Big fists and no brains was the impression he gave and it was a wrong impression. He had plenty on the ball



"Rioting and Rebellion in America . . . One Sinister Man Is Behind It All. Find Enescro," Washington Ordered Laurence, "and Bring Him Back Alive!"

BACK ALIVE!

and thought of things that would astonish you.

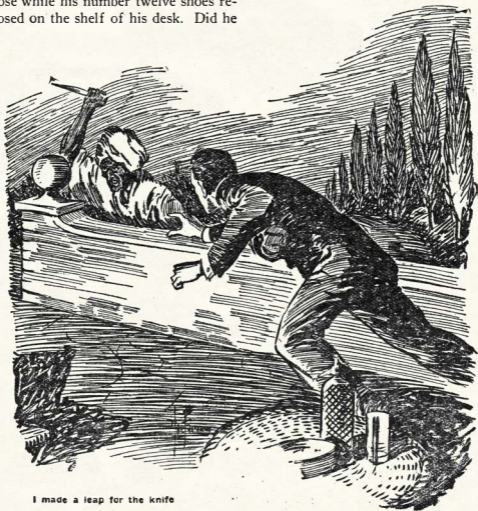
In an old residence in Washington which few knew housed an unofficial government service, he gave instructions to men who didn't look like flat-feet, and he delivered the goods and then some.

When I entered Tom's office, he had his hat on and it was tilted forward, so its brim practically rested on his nose while his number twelve shoes reposed on the shelf of his desk. Did he

straighten up when I came in? Certainly not. After all, I was working for him.

"How the heck are yer?" he said, with a cordial grin. "Park yourself."

He lighted a big, black cigar, made the gesture of offering me one, and looked relieved when I refused—Tom paid sixty cents for his Havanas and was Scotch about them.



I made a leap for the knife

"Jack," he said, "you done good work in Dakota. For a Harvard man you're all right. Got any Irish in you?"

"Not that I know of."

"Too bad. Did you hear about you? You're sailing for England tomorrow on the Majestic—here, don't faint and muss up my floor."

"Why?"

"Because you're the only lad on my staff who can wear a top hat and a monkey coat and not make people break down and cry. You're going to live in London for a while, and I hope you like pea soup."

"I sort of like it. Why London?"

"You are supposed to be one of them so-and-so's that live over there on coin made over here."

"That ought not to be hard to take," I said, with a grin. "Why are you so good to me?"

"I'll tell you, kid. You done good work on the Frisco general strike. You brought home the bacon in South Dakota. You got a pair of big fists and you know why they put bullets in guns and you got one of them Harvard accents."

I laughed. "Anti-climax," I remarked.

"What we require is a tough boy that talks pretty," he informed me. "We think we located the cause of the trouble that's been keeping us on the jump in the U.S.A. You know how to use the old bean; you got a society standing and you look like the best bet on my staff to get the goods on a certain party over in dear ole England."

"Who?" I asked curiously.

"You hop a plane to New York and call on Calvin Cameron in Wall Street. He's expecting you. Scram."

"Can't you give me an inkling?" I asked anxiously.

"Listen, feller," said Tom. "This country is flat on its back and there are people across the water who think it's a good idea to keep us there. I don't have to tell you that things like the general strike in Frisco was fomented by Reds. You got the goods on them and convinced the union leaders out there. That's why you get this job. You know that millions have been spent in this country for sabotage, rioting and rebellion. Who's putting up the dough? You're wrong. Not Russia. Russia sends them booklets and, since recognition by this country, she ain't even doing that."

"Well—"

"Calvin Cameron will tell you who and why. On your way."

As I rose he got up and threw a big arm over my shoulder.

"You're a smart kid," he said. "But this is a new line for you. London is full of secret agents representing every nation and every movement. If they get on to you, you'll turn up missing."

"I won't talk out of turn. Just now I don't know anything to talk about."

"Cameron will put you wise. Now, Jack, you keep away from dames. Especially French, German and Russian ones. And that goes for English, Eytelians, Spaniards and Americans."

"How about Japs and Chinese?" I asked.

"Any kind of dames. Give my regards to Cal."

THREE hours later I dropped in on Calvin Cameron. Mr. Cameron was one New York banker who was an ardent supporter of the administration. He was a man of sixty with great personal charm and an amazing knowledge of international affairs. Cameron had per-

sonally financed the Security Service, of which Tom Keefe was the chief, since there was no congressional appropriation for such an organization. He made an appointment with me at his club and we dined in a private room.

"Laurence," he said, when the coffee arrived—he had until that time told me nothing, only asked searching questions regarding my experiences since taking service under Tom Keefe—"know anything about Sir Ronald Enescro?"

"I know the name. He's the British rubber king, isn't he?"

"Rubber and many other things. He is one of the richest men in England and one of whom little is known, strange as it may seem. Enescro is supposed to be a Roumanian who turned up in England during the war and made a fortune which he has augmented greatly since. He was about twenty-eight years old when he appeared on the British scene, but he's a big shot over there now."

"Has my mission anything to do with him, sir?"

Mr. Cameron gazed at me whimsically and made the most astonishing statement I'd ever heard in my life.

"Bring him back alive," he requested.

"But—but—"

"Sir Ronald Enescro is the arch enemy of the United States. I hope to be able to prove that he's a Mexican named Ramon Alvarez, who was sentenced to be hanged in California twenty years ago for the murder of his sweetheart."

"If he's a Mexican how can he pass for a Roumanian? They're Slavs, aren't they? No racial resemblance."

He laughed. "The Roumanians boast that they are descendants of a

Roman colony. Their official language is a romance tongue. The upper classes bear out their claim by being of a modified Latin type. If some of these Romans have high cheek bones, so have the Aztecs."

"Why not have him extradited?"

"Because we have no proofs. It's a hunch of old Tom Keefe's. Tom has a memory like an elephant's. He helped to convict Alvarez in California twenty years ago.

"Our agents feel certain that vast sums have been flowing into Red coffers from England and they are sure that Sir Ronald Enescro has been putting up the money.

"They have no legal proof of it; even if they had, there is no law against a man contributing to a political party in another country. The British government would try to stop it if we could show them evidence that Enescro was supplying funds for sabotage and revolution, but the transfers are so cleverly masked we can't trace them to their source. He's a big wig over there and our evidence must be overwhelming.

IT happened about six weeks ago that Tom Keefe saw a picture of Enescro and it looked very much like the escaped murderer, Alvarez. To make sure, Tom took a trip to England and hung around over there until he got into a place where Enescro was and gave him the once-over. He identified him positively in his mind. Unfortunately, there are no distinguishing marks of identification on Alvarez's body. Tom would have been laughed out of England if he accused Enescro of being Alvarez.

"Enescro is in solid, no way of getting at him. Tom Keefe was spotted, of course, by the British Secret Serv-

ice as soon as he landed. Nothing for him to do but come home."

"You realize that it's practically impossible to get a person across the Atlantic against his will?"

He nodded. "Of course. I was speaking figuratively. We have the finger-prints of Alvarez. If we could get Enescro's finger-prints and they proved identical, we could extradite him. The British government wouldn't hesitate to turn a murderer over to us, no matter how rich and prominent he might be."

"Now you're talking," I said, much relieved.

"Of course we'd prefer him in our hands, whether Roumanian or Mexican. You'll have all the money you want, a million if necessary, but you'll be entirely on your own in England. Your Security Service has no official standing in Washington and in this case you're working for me. I pay the freight.

"I know you to be a young man of unusual daring and resourcefulness. You go over there and do the best you can for your country. I don't suppose Enescro would give you his finger-prints on request."

We both laughed.

"He's a man with no scruples—his business career proves that. You run a terrible risk. I suggest that you pose as a youth of large income who is fed up with things over here. If you can gain his confidence—well, use your own judgment."

I sailed for London on the Majestic the following morning. Being a fellow who can dismiss the future and get fun out of the present, I enjoyed myself hugely during the voyage on a great ship upon which I had *de luxe* accommodations. And, when I had been a week in London and had ac-

complished nothing, I encountered Arthur Ainsworth in the Savoy bar.

CHAPTER II

The Wonderful Girl

AINSWORTH had been in my class at Harvard, but I had never had much use for him because he was a snob. I don't think that his father's name had been Ainsworth. It was probably unpronounceable.

Old man Ainsworth had made a big fortune out of a nickel candy bar which was the biggest nickel's worth of candy in the world, according to the wrapper. I ate one, once, and decided it was also the nastiest. Anyway, he sent his son to Harvard, and Arthur, not being sure of his own standing, ran after the fellows in the class whose social connections were well known and snubbed the honest youths who came for football and an education, and whose fathers were blacksmiths or factory owners.

Three or four years back I had read that Arthur Ainsworth had inherited the candy business, disposed of it for a large sum, married a wealthy St. Louis girl, also that the pair of them had determined to reside in England.

He was a small, slender man with black eyes and very little hair on his head. He was exceptionally well groomed and a fine horseman and all that sort of thing. I supposed he fancied himself riding to hounds in a red coat and hobnobbing with Lord This and the Earl of That. Anyhow Arthur Ainsworth fell on my neck in the Savoy bar.

"Jack Laurence," he exclaimed. "Well, well, I'm deuced glad to see you." His accent was as thick as a London fog.

"Hello, Arthur," I said coldly,



JACK LAURENCE

"You're looking very fit. I heard somewhere that you were living in this country."

"It's the only country for a civilized man, Jack," he said, earnestly. "I've become a British subject. I'm standing for Parliament at the next election."

I looked properly impressed at this.

"I have an estate in Cornwall," he added. "Have a B. & S., eh?"

"Scotch and soda, please."

"Have you been in England long?" he demanded, as we sipped our drinks.

"A couple of weeks. I expect to remain indefinitely."

He slapped me on the back. I hate people who slap backs.

"Things are pretty bad over there, eh? Too much radicalism. You've discovered that this is the only free country left in the world?"

"There is something in what you say."

"Positively. Can you imagine, they have forced a code on the candy business. Shorter hours and more pay, despite the fact that we are running in the red and paying no dividends."

"I'd heard that you had sold out, Arthur."

"I did, but I had to take a huge block of stock. It's abominable."

"Well, I take it you're not starving to death."

"On the contrary. Why not hop down to my place for a week-end, eh?"

"Well, I—"

"I want you to see my establishment," he persisted. "An old-fashioned country estate. And wonderful neighbors. Why, Sir Ronald Enescro has the castle only five miles from my manor house."

A flunky entered and addressed Arthur respectfully.

"Awsking yer pardon, Mr. Ainsworth," he said. "The ladies are waiting yer pleasure in the lobby."

"My wife and my sister," exclaimed Arthur. "Come, Jack, I want you to meet them."

TAKING my arm, he half dragged me from the bar and into the ladies' lobby. The fellow's cordiality surprised and perplexed me. He had not improved since college days; he had grown a little greasy, I thought, and he was a worse snob. Getting his income from America and swearing allegiance to the English King! Despising the country which had made it possible for his father to accumulate a great fortune, and standing for Parliament over here! Well, I knew the English pretty well. They would snow him under at the election.

One of the things for which I admire the English is their loyalty to their own land. I've met a good many Britishers in America, men who were forced to live in the United States for business reasons, but very very few of them had become American citizens. I had never blamed them. For an American to change his allegiance I considered despicable and that's the way the

right kind of Englishmen felt on the subject.

However, there were two ladies in the lobby and one of them was amazing.

"My wife, Mrs. Arthur Ainsworth," he said pompously. "And my sister, Theodora."

Mrs. Ainsworth was a good-looking, haughty blonde who was getting a bit too stout. It was the sister who was amazing. She was very dark, with coal-black hair parted in the middle. She had very large, very lovely black eyes and a clear olive skin and her features were about as perfect as features can be.

There should have been a law against her smile. It was so brilliant that it was perilous to life and limb. And she was not too tall and slender as a young tree and she wore some close-fitting, woolly stuff the color of the Harvard crimson.

MRS. AINSWORTH had lifted a lorgnette and was staring at me through pale blue, short-sighted eyes but I paid no attention to her. I was drowning, going down for the third time in those jet-black, lustrous orbs which belonged to sister Theodora.

"Laurence was in my class at Harvard," Arthur was saying. "A member of the Laurence family, Jane."

"Well, really," exclaimed Mrs. Ainsworth. "This is a pleasure, Mr. Laurence."

Theodora was smiling at me.

"Hello, Mr. Laurence," she said cordially.

"And I've invited him down for the week-end," declared Arthur. "I want him to see an Englishman's home."

"Arthur," said Theodora, "I hope you are not giving Mr. Laurence the

same kind of pain you give me when you talk like that. I advise you not to come, Mr. Laurence. Unless you've decided that a king is better than a president."

I grinned at her.

"Can I suspend my decision?" I inquired.

"Indefinitely, so far as I'm concerned."

"Tomorrow at four my car will call for you," Arthur informed me. "Theodora hasn't lived over here long enough to appreciate it, Jack. She still thinks Chicago is attractive. I'm depending on you to make her realize that she is mistaken."

I caught an impish gleam in the black eyes of the girl.

"If I fail this time will you give me another chance, Arthur?" I inquired.

Mrs. Ainsworth decided apparently that I would pass muster.

"I am sure you will be welcome to visit us at any time, Mr. Laurence," she said cordially. "Come, Theodora. Come, Arthur. Good afternoon, Mr. Laurence."

AFTER the Ainsworth girl had departed, the lobby looked dimly English to me, and I went up to my rooms, which looked out on the Embankment. It was a dull day and the Embankment also seemed dismal.

I began to rearrange my ideas about Arthur Ainsworth. A fellow who had a sister like that couldn't be the complete wash-out I had always considered him. But, if he had been, I would have accepted that week-end invitation.

During the week I had been in London I had found things pretty dull. Londoners have never been noted for being over cordial to tourists. We have somewhat the same slant over here.

Just now it appeared to me that the

general attitude was rather unfriendly. The man in the street seemed to take it as a personal affront that the American government wouldn't call off the debt payments. Bus conductors and taxi drivers took time and trouble to tell me that we ought to be jolly well glad to pay a few dollars to the country that had saved America from a German invasion.

While Tom Keefe had a notion that I could pass for an Englishman, any Londoner with a casual glance spotted me as an American. And it wasn't my hat or my clothes or my boots, because I had outfitted myself in London immediately upon arrival. An American, even a Boston American, can't possibly be mistaken for an Englishman and that's all there is to it.

My instructions were to keep away from Americans, especially from official Americans. Though I knew a couple of attachés to our embassy, I had to steer clear of them. I had been supplied with letters to half a dozen Englishmen but not one of them happened to be in London. So I had to amuse myself. A lot of the shows were New York hits. Nearly all the good films were American importations, most of which I had seen.

My job was, in one way or another, to make the acquaintance of Enescro. My act was to be a rich and disgruntled American. My hope was to persuade Sir Ronald to think I might be useful to him in one way or another.

Being a fellow who loves excitement, I had been bored to death when I encountered Ainsworth. If he hadn't happened to be a neighbor of the English-Roumanian, I might have accepted his invitation. Having met Theodora, it was a cinch I would.

Anyhow, I was mooning in my quarters when there came a tap on the

door. I shouted to the tapper to come in and there walked into my sitting-room Ray Bronson, the jewel thief.

CHAPTER III

Master Thief

"HELLO, Jack," Ray said impudently. "Saw you down below. Thought you might like a chin-chin. You looking for me, by any chance?"

While I should have thrown him out, I was lonesome as the deuce and Ray was better than no company at all.

"Hello! you dirty crook," I said to him. "Now that you're here, help yourself to a drink. After the crown jewels?"

"They're phony," he replied. "I mean those in the Tower of London. It would be a cinch to crack the Tower and the king knows it. The real jewels are in the vaults of the Bank of England."

He poured himself a drink, lifted his glass, and parked himself.

After leaving college I had a tough time landing a decent job but I finally became assistant secretary to an insurance company in New York and my department was recouping losses from insured gems. I held down that job for three or four years. I met most of the clever detectives and a number of the most prominent thieves in New York, including Ray Bronson. Incidentally it was on that job that I met Tom Keefe.

When the depression pushed me out into the street I did a little work for Tom, who was at the time chief of a private detective agency. And when the government took Tom over he gave me my chance in the Special Service which he organized.

Ray was a likeable criminal. He was a funny looking little bird, with a huge nose, a gash of a mouth and the smallest eyes the Lord ever gave a man. He could talk excellent English when he felt like it, and when he did not, he had an East Side dialect that was side-splitting. Clever? Well, he had never done time. We knew he had a finger in every big jewel robbery in New York, but nobody could pin anything onto him.

Once or twice, out of friendliness to me, he had tipped the company to a fake jewel robbery. During the early part of the depression, a lot of people hid or sold their own gems and tried to collect the insurance on them.

"Did anybody see you come up here?" I asked him.

"Leave that to me," replied Ray, with a comical grin. "Though I never pulled anything off over here. I got a clean record. Scotland Yard ain't interested in me at all, Jack. What's your game?"

"I'm just loafing," I replied.

"On what?"

"I've saved up a little money," I said uneasily.

"Don't kid papa," replied Ray. "You're working for Tom Keefe. You ain't got a thin dime outside the lousy salary the government pays you. Something doin' in dear ole Lunnon, eh?"

"You ought to be in jail for being smart," I said disgustedly. "I'm on a vacation. Take it or leave it."

"Oh, I'll leave it. Listen, Jack, if you're on leave of absence, I might put something in your way. I could use a bimbo with your front. Ten thousand dollars, eh?"

"So you're not over here for your health?" I said laughing. "Sure I could use ten thousand dollars, honestly come by. You see, my parents

brought me up wrong. I couldn't steal without having trouble with my conscience."

"The reason I called on you," said Ray, "was that I seen you talking to Ainsworth down in the bar. I heard him asking you to pay him a visit down at his country place."

"Eavesdropping, eh?" I was beginning to get indignant.

"All in the way of business," said Ray. "I got a job that's strictly on the up and up. No comeback."

"IF you're thinking of hiring me to rob the Ainsworths, I swear I'll call Scotland Yard and see that they take an interest in you, crook," I said angrily.

Ray spread out his hands protestingly. "Hey," he groaned, "I thought you was a friend of mine. Nothing like that, Jack. You can take my word."

"Your word!"

"It's good," he said, earnestly. And come to think of it, it was. If Ray Bronson gave you his word, it was good.

"Well, what's the game?"

"If you go in or don't, you keep your mouth shut, eh?"

"Unless it's a crooked proposition."

"It ain't. Unless stealing from a thief is crooked."

My curiosity was awakened. "Well, I won't say anything. Spill it."

He eyed me dubiously. "I'm taking an awful chance to chatter to a Federal man. But I need you to do something for me, Jack. You don't get mixed up in the job at all. In a few weeks you get a package delivered and out falls ten thousand pounds in Bank of England notes. No comeback."

I stuck out my under lip. "Sounds too good to be true. What is this little thing I can do for you?"

"Take me down to Devon as your valet."

I pounced on Ray, grabbed him by the collar and shook him like the rat he was.

"You slimy crook!" I growled. "So you've descended to that, have you? All I have to do is to take you along as my valet and keep my mouth shut while you rob my friends."

"I swear to God, Jack, you got me wrong. Ainsworth hasn't anything I want," he protested. "Awk, you're chokin' me. Leggo."

I released him. He grinned at me. "Noble as hell, ain't you? Am I a second-story worker or a dip all of a sudden, I ask you?"

"Just why do you want to go to Ainsworth's as my valet?"

He hesitated. "You said you wouldn't squeal. It's like I told you, Jack. Practically a straight job. I got to be in that part of Cornwall without nobody wondering what I'm doing there. Ainsworth ain't got anything that's up my street."

I eyed him speculatively. I began to have an inkling.

"Have a cigar?" inquired Ray. I shook my head. He lighted a dollar Havana.

"Maybe you heard sometime of the Moon of Monabar?" he inquired.

I laughed. "A great jewel, eh? Don't pull a Wilkie Collins on me, Bronson. You're about to spin a romance. Save your breath."

"Smart guy, huh! Wise cop."

"You know darn well I'm not a cop. I'm a Federal agent on a vacation."

"Cop, that's what it comes to," he sneered. "The Moon of Monabar is the largest diamond in the world aside from one or two. It's the most perfect stone in the world. It's worth millions. Three months ago it was

swiped from the strong box of the Rajah of Monabar, which is in India. The Rajah is raising hell. He's going to declare his independence if the British government don't get it back for him. If one of them Rajahs starts a revolution, a dozen of 'em will and England is in terrible trouble out there without that. Well, I know who has it and I'm going to get it."

"Who has it?" I asked, without much interest. Ray was just a picturesque liar in my opinion.

"A guy by the name of Sir Ronald Enescro—what's the matter, Jack? You're supposed to have a poker face."

I COMPOSED myself. "Enescro lives near the Ainsworths, in Devon," I remarked. "That's why you want to go down as my valet. To rob one of my friend's neighbors."

"This Enescro ain't a Britisher, Jack," Ray declared. "He's a Roumanian who come here about twenty years ago and cheated himself a few million English pounds. He has a mania for jewels, not for what they are worth but because he loves 'em. His agents robbed the Rajah of Monabar. He has the Moon, but he has to keep it hidden. He don't give a damn if England loses India so long as he can look at the Moon when he happens to feel like it."

"So what?"

"If Scotland Yard could catch him with it, he'd go to prison, no matter how much jack he has. You can't bribe judges and juries over here. They haven't any big criminal lawyers like we have in New York and Chicago. These English would send the criminal lawyers up along with their clients. That's one reason why I never pulled off anything in England. It ain't safe."

"Yet you are considering—"

"This is safe," he declared enthusiastically. "Enescro can't let a yip out of him if the Moon vanishes. He has to grin and bear it. If he called the police they'd jail him for admitting that he had it, get me?"

"And how do you happen to know that he has it, Ray?" I asked, as casually as I could. I was tremendously excited.

Ray grinned. "I know where every



RAY BRONSON

big jewel in the world is laid away. Enescro hired slick English crooks to steal it from the Rajah and a Dutch expert to go along with them and make sure they got the Moon and not an imitation. And whatever is known in Amsterdam gets relayed to me."

WHAT makes you think you can get it away from him?"

"Well, I never failed yet,"

Ray said with pardonable pride.

"You think he has it down in Devonshire?"

"I know it. He likes to have his jewels where he can look at them."

"Do you know him personally?"

Ray shook his head. "I've sold him stuff. He has the Madison pearl necklace—you remember that robbery? The pearls weren't insured in your company, but you were in the game at the time."

I nodded. "The Orient Company was stuck three hundred and fifty thousand."

"Sure. I swiped them pearls on order for Enescro."

"Then the man is as big a crook as you are."

"Ain't I tellin' you?" demanded Ray, not at all offended.

"What are you going to do with the Moon of Monabar if you get it?"

"Sell it back to the Rajah for about three millions," said Ray. "And no questions asked."

I scratched my head.

"I can use ten thousand dollars, Ray," I said. "Do you know anything about valeting?"

He chuckled. "I used to be a barber."

"I'll shave myself, thanks. I'm leaving day after tomorrow at three. Let's see, your name will be—"

"Murphy," he said.

"You couldn't carry that off. We'll call you Green."

He looked at me uncertainly. "You got anything up your sleeve, Jack? I wouldn't have made a book you'd come in with me."

"Ten thousand is a lot of money," I said. "I'll advertise for a valet in the *Times* tomorrow morning. I'll hire you. If you get caught, I claim that I didn't know you were a thief."

"Sure, I only tipped my hand. Why don't you ask for a bigger cut?"

"Would I get it?" I demanded. "I'm a poor business man."

"Terrible," he admitted. "I make it three thousand pounds. I don't ask you to lift a finger. The government don't pay you much. Why not, eh?"

"Suspend the sales talk. I'm sold."

After he took himself off, I paced the room excitedly. In making a deal with Bronson I was accessory before the fact in a felony. If things went wrong I'd land in a British jail.

While Cameron had said, "Bring him back alive," he had not been serious. The capture and execution of an escaped Mexican murderer did not interest him, except that it would put a stop to the flow of money used to foment revolution in America. I actually had *carte blanche* regarding my methods of preventing this. If Enescro was exposed as a receiver of stolen goods, an instigator of crime against a state of British India, England would put him where he would make no more trouble.

To expose Enescro, of course, I must double-cross Ray Bronson, who had always been on the level with me. Ray had to be sacrificed in the interests of the United States. If I trimmed Ray, I stood an excellent chance of being murdered.

If we failed to secure the jewel and escaped arrest, I could go back to the business of getting his finger-prints. Tom Keefe didn't make mistakes. With the finger-prints in hand the United States government would attend to the rest.

CHAPTER IV

Murder in Eden

THE largest and most resplendent motor car I had ever seen was waiting for Ray and myself Friday afternoon. There was a liveried chauffeur in front and a coat of arms

painted on the doors. Arthur being what he was, one of the first things he would do would be to acquire a coat of arms. As I knew that his father had appropriated the name Ainsworth—as one takes another man's hat from a rack in a restaurant—I smiled at the design upon the door of the Bentley. There was a coronet over crossed spears and a crouching lion.

Ray and I entered, our bags were disposed of up back by the chauffeur and we started at a snail's pace through London's exasperating traffic.

One of the decent things about Bronson was that he only talked when he found it necessary to get something he wanted, such as inducing me to take him down to Devonshire.

He leaned back with his eyes closed, probably hard at work upon the problem of stealing the Moon of Monabar and I closed my eyes and devoted myself to the prospect of getting well acquainted with Theodora Ainsworth.

I wondered whether Arthur had acquired a feudal castle with a moat. Probably not, as he referred to the place as a manor. Arthur was too shrewd to be laughed at, and an American with a moat would probably cause the countryside to rock with mirth.

No doubt, however, that there would be suits of armor standing round and a picture gallery full of quaintly costumed ancestors—of the former owner of the place.

AN hour passed and we were still stopping and starting and crawling along through London traffic. The suburbs were almost as traffic-ridden as the city. We moved through narrow lanes lined with ugly blocks of houses—dismal looking, depressing, and inhabited no doubt by mouselike people who lived doleful lives.

Ray spoke. "This town is the greatest hideaway in the world," he said.

"Not since the police regulations."

"They don't make no difference. It's a cinch to duck around them. The English are easy going. Did you ever read them detective novels by this guy What's-his-Name?"

"Wallace?"

"That's him. They're the bunk. A country where the cops have no guns hasn't got any real crime. That guy just set New York down in London and the English read him the way they read fairy tales.

"They don't have a tenth as many murderers in London as they do in New York, and they convict about ten times as many murderers. No matter how touch a guy may be back home, he knows he has to behave himself over here."

"You know London well?"

"I'll say I do. I've laid low over here a dozen times. I been all over the place. I never even met a dip in London. You can leave a shilling lying in the street and a hundred Cockneys will walk around it, they're so honest."

"That's hard to believe, Ray."

He chuckled. "Well, you don't have to believe it."

"The police, at least, are very efficient."

"Look at the kind of people they have to do business with. Why wouldn't they be?"

"Have you figured out how you're going to pull this business off?" I asked with assumed indifference.

"I need to be in the vicinity with a good excuse like being your valet. You don't have to bother about me."

"I might have some helpful suggestions."

"I've got my fingers crossed on your suggestions," he said, shortly.

"How would you like to go to the devil?" I asked angrily.

Ray grinned cheerfully.

"How would you like to mind yer own business?" he inquired.

BY and by we came out of London, just as I was beginning to think that we never should emerge.

Now we saw detached houses with gardens. And the sky, which had been overcast, showed blue patches and presently we saw the sun.

Ray was deep in thought. I studied his profile. He was certainly an ugly little man. There was something of the parrot in his beak, and something of the wolf in his mouth, but he had a high forehead and a lot of back to his head, and I knew that his skull contained a remarkable brain. He had been a successful thief for years. In all probability he had a fortune salted away, yet he continued to risk his life and liberty for illicit gain.

"Are you married, Ray?" I asked curiously. "Have you any children?"

He turned on me with a furious scowl.

"None of your damn business," he snarled. I saw pain in his black eyes and excused his rudeness. Little men like Bronson usually buy themselves very beautiful blond women, who almost invariably give them a raw deal. While they should expect something like that, they are usually heartbroken when they are betrayed.

Looking him over, I wondered what there was about this crooked, crude, little crook which made me like him. Five years back, when I was with the insurance company, he had done a very decent thing—no use going into details. I had found that you could depend upon him if he made you a proposition. If he gave you his word you could be

certain of fair dealing. We ardently hoped that his foot would slip and that we could send him to jail. Business depended upon his elimination. Yet I wasn't the only insurance man who would have felt a little sorry if Ray had gone up the river.

Two hours had passed and we were held up by a cart in a picturesque village street. At the left was an inn with a couple of tables visible in an open court.

"Look!" ejaculated Ray. His claw-like hand squeezed my wrist.

Seated at the table were two men dressed in English tweeds. They had very dark skins and twisted around their heads were white sashes which formed turbans.

"Hindoos, eh?"

"No, Mohammedan East Indians. Damn them!"

"Why?"

"It's going to make it tough if they have a suspicion of Enescro."

"We're a long way from Devon yet."

Ray, who had been tense and had leaned forward, sank back on the cushions.

"Sure," he agreed. "I forgot there are thousands of the pea green snakes wandering over England."

THE Bentley sped on along perfect roads through green pastures, over rolling hills through smiling valleys. As the sun was finally sinking out of sight, we turned through an open gateway and with very slightly diminished speed, ran along a narrow driveway through a beautiful oak grove for at least half a mile. We debouched suddenly into a wide open space; a vast expanse of perfect lawn, at the end of which was a house as big as a hotel, a vast structure whose myr-

riad of small windowpanes hurled back the level rays of the blood-red sun into our faces.

It was the manor house. Oswald Abbey was its name, though it had never been an abbey, but was built on the site of a twelfth century monastery.

It was of red brick, Georgian in style. It had dignity, graciousness, permanence. It fitted the landscape. It had been there so long that it was an integral part of the countryside, as fit to be there as the great oaks which stood on parade at its right and left:

England is full of such houses. Some of them are six or seven hundred years old, some comparatively modern, but all are seasoned by time.

Many of them are inhabited by foreigners—exiled kings and princes, Argentine cattle barons and American millionaires like Arthur Ainsworth. Looking at the manor, I could understand why Arthur had become infatuated with the English country. Here was the last stand of aristocracy. In these houses had lived people of leisure for many centuries. Great wealth in America brings no social rewards, no titles, no recognition. There is nobody for the American of leisure to play with.

We rolled up to a beautiful Georgian entrance. The door was flung open and two blue liveried footmen descended the steps. The chauffeur leaped from his box and stood at attention. Well-trained servants. They must bring joy to the soul of Arthur Ainsworth.

We entered a fine vaulted hallway, at the rear of which a curving staircase ascended to the second floor. A person of girth and dignity advanced to meet us. Evening clothes in the daytime. He had iron gray hair and sideboards. Arthur wouldn't have hired a butler without sideboards.

Where was Arthur? Where especially was Theodora?

AINSWORTH came down the broad staircase, waving his hand cordially to me as I stood expectantly in the hall.

"By jove, I'm glad to see you, old chap," he declared. "You'll pardon my not being on hand. A damn curious thing has happened."

My eyes were searching for Theodora and were disappointed because she wasn't visible.

"Really?" I asked absently.

Arthur was shaking hands with an exuberance not justified by our degree of friendship.

"About an hour ago," he declared, "the village constable was found dead in a dell about a half mile from here. Strangled to death. We've had the body brought here and placed in a room upstairs."

"I was marveling what a paradise this was," I commented. "And right away I run into a murder."

"There hasn't been a killing in this country for fifty years," he said, defensively. "It's incomprehensible. I've been on the phone for Scotland Yard. The local authorities are worthless and we can't have this sort of thing."

"How long had he been dead?"

"Quite a while. The body was cold and stiff."

"Then how could you tell he had been strangled?"

"There's a white ring around his neck, as though he had been strangled by a cord."

Arthur was white and much agitated.

"That's curious. I presume it will put a damper on your house-party."

"Oh," he said, slightly embarrassed, "we're not having many people. We

don't go in for it. A chosen few, close friends. Ha, ha. I suppose you'd like to go to your room. I'm glad you brought a man with you, though we could have supplied a valet."

"Why, yes, I guess I would like to go to my room," I said reluctantly. She had been so cordial the least she could have done was to be around when I arrived.

"The ladies have only just found out about the murder. They're prostrated," he explained.

"Why? They didn't know this constable, did they?"

"Of course. Henry Dobbs was a decent sort, and Theodora, especially, stopped for a chat with him when she went to the village. And Mrs. Ainsworth visits his wife and family. We own the village, you know. We keep up the old traditions of visiting our tenants."

He said this so smugly that I had trouble not to laugh in his face. "Suppose I sort of wash up. Do you dress for dinner?"

"Naturally," he said, with lifted eyebrows. "One does, you know, in England."

"Don't be alarmed. I brought my evening things. Tails or Tux?"

"Oh, tails, of course. Waterson, show Mr. Laurence to his room."

CHAPTER V

The Man of Mystery

IN my chamber I found Ray was hanging up my clothes and making a good job of it.

"Hear the news?" he demanded.

"Meaning the murder?"

"Sure. The footman who brought me up here told me about it. Somebody strangled a cop. That hands me a laugh."

"It's a curious sort of crime, Ray. The man was garrotted."

"Eh? How do you mean?"

"Mr. Ainsworth says that there was a white line around his neck, which means he was choked by a cord."

Ray dropped a blue blazer to the floor and didn't bother to pick it up.

"Thugged!" he exclaimed. "Damn them, they're on the scent!"

"Who?"

"The East Indians. Remember the pair we saw in that village?"

"Thirty miles away?"

"That's an Indian stunt, Jack. It means they're watching Enescro and this cop got in their way."

"Well," I said smiling, "it looks as though I were going to lose three thousand pounds."

Ray shrugged his thin shoulders. "It just makes it harder. I don't think they have a line on Enescro. They may be prowling around the homes of a lot of Englishmen who buy jewels in a big way."

"Well, lay out my tail coat. It seems we dress for dinner."

He waved his hand at the bed. "You telling me what these kind of people do?"

My evening things were spread out on the bed.

"You're quite a valet, Green," I assured him. "Wonder what time they have dinner?"

"At eight-thirty. Cocktails anytime. I'm going down to the servants' hangout and get some info if you don't need me."

"Go to the devil," I said airily.

ABOUT half an hour later I sauntered down the broad carpeted staircase into the hallway below, which was done in gold and white and didn't have a jarring note. I sort of

felt I should be in knee breeches with a velvet coat, but evening dress was the next best thing.

"Hello," called somebody. Theodora should have had a powdered white pompadour and a flowered brocade with panniers; instead she stood slim and straight in a black satin gown, cut low; her black hair shining like polished jet, her white teeth gleaming in the light from the big cut glass chandelier. She stood in the broad entrance to the drawing room. I went down the remainder of the stairs two steps at a time.

"Am I glad to see you!" I declared, as I grasped both her hands and shook them enthusiastically.

"What do you think of it all?" she inquired, pulling away her hands.

"I think you are the most beautiful girl—"

"I admit it. I mean our establishment."

"I'm disappointed. I wanted a moat to fall into."

Her laugh tinkled like golden bells.

"We could have had one. Feudal castles are a drug on the market. Arthur, however, has excellent taste. He has always adored Georgian architecture and furnishings."

I glanced over the drawing room with kindling eyes. There was a snow white carpet. The tables, chairs, cabinets and couches were museum pieces. A modern concert grand piano with a walnut case did not mar the perfection of the place.

"Could you do with a cocktail?" she demanded, smiling with satisfaction at my obvious admiration of the room.

As she spoke the butler entered with a tray and a cocktail shaker and gravely filled two glasses.

"Where is everybody?" I demanded.

"Arthur and Jane will be down in

a minute. Lord Hosmer is dressing. Lady Eleanor Lynn is always late. That's all we are."

Theodora lifted her glass.

"Here's to Greenwich Village," she said, to my astonishment.

"You mean—"

"I have a studio there. I love it. I love this place, too—for a visit."

"Don't you live here permanently?" She shook her head.

"The people over here get me down," she said, "and it breaks my heart to see Arthur and Jane getting snubbed."

"Snubbed?"

"All dressed up and nowhere to go," she said, laughing. "Why do you suppose Arthur dragged you down here? Because we need guests. He admitted to me that you and he had never been pals in your college days."

"But he's running for Parliament."

"It's a free country. Anybody can stand for Parliament. In case you expected to meet the élite over the weekend, I'm warning you. Socially we're duds."

"I can understand. The English are exclusive."

"And resentful. Do you suppose they like aliens moving into their fine houses and trying to butt into their family circles? Nobody in the county has called on us except Sir Ronald Enescro."

"Then you know him," I said, with satisfaction. "He is a great man."

"Another social outcast despite his title. He and Arthur naturally came together. He's coming over tonight for bridge. He gets down from town too late for dinner."

"You're a remarkable girl," I said. "Your candor is perfectly delightful."

She laughed. "You're tickled that my brother is on the outside looking

in. Well, he exasperates me. He and Jane are such fools. If they wanted to break in over here they went the wrong way about it. They should have lived in hotels, made acquaintances by giving huge parties and broke the ice that way before they bought themselves an estate. Oh, yes, Mr. Laurence, we find English country life perfectly adorable."

PEOPLE were coming down the stairs. Mr. and Mrs. Ainsworth and two English people. Mrs. Ainsworth, who looked especially well in evening clothes, introduced me to Lady Eleanor as a member of one of our most aristocratic American families. I saw Lady Eleanor arch her rather shaggy eyebrows as she offered me a large fat hand. It was obvious that the titled Englishwoman didn't believe there were any aristocratic American families and I agreed with her. We're Democrats, my branch of the Laurence family.

If Lady Eleanor hadn't so much assurance, she would have looked like a washwoman dressed in clothes which didn't fit her very well. She had a long homely face, big teeth and big muscular bare arms. She had what might be called a strawberry and cream complexion except that the strawberry coloring was laid on in blotches, for example, on the end of her nose.

I sized her up as a grafter and that is what she turned out to be. She had good connections and was getting a salary for introducing the Ainsworths around. Her connections didn't like the idea and refused to be introduced. She was on her way out when I met her.

Lord Harold Hosmer was a horse of a different color. He was a big, broad-shouldered young fellow with curling

blond hair and blue eyes and large but not disagreeable features. His eyes had a blank look in them, as though he didn't know what everything was about. He was the eldest son of an early who had no money, and Lady Eleanor had brought him down to see about getting Theodora as a wife for him.

To my grief I sat between Lady Eleanor and Mrs. Ainsworth at dinner; however, as we were a small party, I could hear what was going on between Theodora and Lord Harold. She was razzing him and he had no notion of it. As I was completely sunk by Theodora, I was tickled that the future earl was getting the berry.

There was a lot of chatter about Dobbs, the murdered coristable, and Arthur won applause by stating he would give the officer's family an annuity and offer five hundred pounds reward for the conviction of the murderer. Nobody could figure out why anybody wanted to strangle the inoffensive village cop. Lady Eleanor got a laugh when she said quite seriously that it was a "crime of passion, no doubt."

Arthur put on a lot of dog at dinner. There were as many servants getting in one another's way as there were guests. The food was delicious. Mrs. Ainsworth explained to me that she and her husband admired everything English except the cooking, so they had engaged a French chef.

Lord Harold insisted that the dishes were spiced up too much, but nobody paid any attention to him.

It took fully an hour and a half to serve that dinner for six, and then we moved to the drawing room for coffee and cordials. I grabbed a seat near Theodora and was just about to get really acquainted with her when Sir

Ronald Enescro was announced and a Mr. Villiard.

I stiffened and waited expectantly. Without a move on my part, without being called upon for the slightest ingenuity, I was going to make the acquaintance of the man I had been sent from America to ruin.

CHAPTER VI

The Brown Turban

HAVING seen pictures of Enescro, I expected quite a personality, but I had no notion that I was going to see the handsomest man in Europe, bar none.

I'm six feet tall. Sir Ronald topped me by an inch and a half. I was a good guard in my college days. His shoulders must have been an inch broader than mine. He was without a pound of excess fat. He had a chest that was magnificent, narrow hips and long legs. On his slender neck was set a head that might have come off Apollo.

That he wasn't English was obvious by the classic perfection of his features, his complexion, and his brown curling hair, in which were a few flecks of snow. He had a tricky little mustache. His face was oval, his chin slightly pointed. His eyes were large, brown and luminous. He had a dazzling smile. I stole a glance at Theodora and saw to my dismay that her eyes were fixed on him.

And the brute had eyes only for her. He was more than forty-five, by his own account, but he didn't look his age; he was in the pink. And he was the richest man in England, one of the most influential in the world and he wouldn't be visiting a boulder like Arthur Ainsworth if he hadn't designs on Theodora.

He was faultlessly dressed. Though

Ray had informed me that he was insane about jewels, he didn't even wear a ring and he had a small black pearl, no more costly than the one I wore, in his shirtfront.

Having looked him up, I knew he was a widower. His first wife had been the daughter of a British brewer, who had brought him a lot of money. She had been dead for ten years. So he was going to marry Theodora Ainsworth, was he? Over my dead body.

A second look at the alleged Mexican murderer convinced me that a dead body wouldn't worry this fellow. He was ruthless and horribly competent. If I hadn't turned up, he would have turned Theodora's head and married her in a jiffy. Maybe he would, anyway. I felt so low I could have bumped the top of my head against a protruding sidewalk brick.

"And this is a compatriot of ours, a classmate of my husband's at Harvard, Mr. John Laurence," Mrs. Ainsworth was saying to my enemy.

He beat me to the grip, and almost crushed my hand in his grasp. The brown eyes rested on me and went through me. It seemed to me that he must see that I was a Federal agent sent over here to drag him to the gallows. That's the kind of an impression this financier made on me.

There was no question whatever that Sir Ronald had everything and, with his amazing charm, what chance would any woman have if he happened to want her?

Without appearing to, he took charge of things. Having rashly admitted that I played bridge, I found myself at a table with the two English people, and the foxy looking Villiard, and I found out, too late, that the stakes were twopence a point.

Lady Eleanor, my partner, reminded

me of it rather roughly because I misplayed the first hand, watching Enescro cutting Theodora out of the party and the drawing room. I could see moonlight through the windows and presently I saw the pair standing on the terrace in the moonlight. I trumped my partner's ace.

"It seems to me that you boasted you played bridge," Lady Eleanor sneered.

In the course of two hours I lost sixty dollars and then Theodora and Enescro, who had been dancing in the hall to radio music, came in. Theodora insisted upon taking a bridge hand. Her brother relieved me and Lady Eleanor said she was going to bed. I glanced fearfully at Theodora, who smiled brightly at me. She didn't look like a girl who had just become engaged to the richest and most beautiful man in Europe, but you can't tell about girls.

ENESCRO descended upon me and invited me into the library. He wanted to talk about conditions in the United States, he said. Now this was why I had an unlimited expense account, why I had crossed the Atlantic. I was justifying old Tom Keefe for choosing me for the assignment. While Enescro was the essence of cordiality and consideration, I had to fight to be polite. There was something sinister about him, I thought. Of course my point of view was influenced by jealousy, but I was right enough. Enescro was plenty sinister.

He offered me a cigar and lighted one himself. I choose a cigarette.

"Great occurrences across the water," he remarked. I should say that he hadn't a trace of accent, but spoke English without the excessive modulation of most natives of the island.

"Conditions are very bad," I replied.

"And they will be worse," he said, with apparent satisfaction. "Ainsworth tells me that you come of an old conservative family. You must be annoyed by the socialistic experiments underway at home."

"That's why I've decided to live in England," I replied. "I'm fed up."

"Unless we want another Russia on our hands," he stated, "we must discourage the American trend. I understand that the upper classes are in revolt against the notion that a government may rob them to support the mob in idleness."

"There's already a strong reaction."

"Have you many correspondents in America?"

"I've friends who write to me regularly."

He nodded. "I am in touch with many influential Americans. Capitalism, my young friend, built civilization and maintains it. Consider the effect upon Europe if your President chokes completely the enterprises of wealth. There is no way to progress, save through capital investment. Wealth uninvested is speedily exhausted. Exces-

sive taxation, vast government expenditure, depletes wealth. When it is gone, governments fall and chaos follows."

"You put it as I've heard several very rich Americans express it, sir."

"It is the only way. The continent of Europe is hamstrung by radicalism. England and America must stand together for the rights of capital. What do you think are the prospects of the defeat of this administration?"

"Unfortunately, the government policies are very popular. I don't think it will be defeated."

"I disagree with you," he said. "Your people will come to their senses. Strong men will take charge. Already the Red outbreaks are showing intelligent Americans where their country is headed. Well, well, I think I shall take a hand in the bridge game."

With a curt nod, he rose and left me. I was excited at first over our conversation, but when I considered what he had said, it didn't amount to anything. Our bankers at home talked like that all the time. Of course the rich people hated to be taxed and hated even more to see their taxes being paid to keep the masses from starving. Old Tom Keefe would snort with disgust if I wrote him the gist of my first interview with Enesco.

Of course I had no right to expect important revelations from Enesco to a stranger. My job was to make a good impression on him and get on friendly terms. I had to be the discontented expatriate until he decided to make use of me as a tool, assuming he didn't already have all the tools he wanted.

Enesco was playing bridge with Theodora as his partner when I strolled back into the drawing room. I got drawn into a corner by Arthur and had



SIR RONALD ENESCO

to listen to his bitter comments on the way things were going in America.

"Listen, fellow," I said at last, "living in this manor of yours in a quiet corner of England, you don't know what's going on at home. F. D. R. is the reason you're still getting money from America. Aside from a few grouches, the country is with him three to one. Why don't you go back and run for Congress if you're so concerned about the U. S. A.?"

"Because I'm an Englishman," he said smugly.

"Well, do a little thinking about the welfare of England. I don't believe things over here are so hot."

He left me flat and, as nobody else appeared to be aware that I was alive, I strolled out on the terrace and sat down in a huge chair with a high back shaped like a peacock's tail. Suddenly I realized that I had been bored into deep fatigue. And the next thing I knew, I was asleep.

I WOKE when I heard voices at the door. Enescro was leaving. I was about to rise to say good-by—it was my business to impress my personality—if any—upon the fellow, when I noticed something brown move slightly on the terrace wall.

I should explain that on either side of the house entrance was a broad terrace with a floor of brick and a two foot brick wall—two feet on the inside, four feet on the outside. At first I thought there was a cat on the wall, and then I saw it wasn't on the wall and it wasn't a cat. The brown stuff was cloth wound round a man's head. It moved a few feet in the direction of the house exit. It was shadowy on the terrace, save at the door, where an electric globe spread a circle of radiance. Enescro stepped out ahead of

his companion. His car was approaching from the garages at the other side of the house.

From the position of the man with the turban to the doorway, which the huge figure of Enescro partly filled, was about twenty feet.

I saw an arm lift above the wall. I saw a knife in it.

"Look out, Enescro," I shouted and I made a leap for the wall. Arm, knife and turban vanished. I went over the wall in close pursuit of a shadowy figure which sped across the lawn.

Behind me I heard shouting. Suddenly I tripped over a rope stretched taut a few inches above the ground and sprawled on my face. When I got to my feet the shadow had merged with that cast by the shrubbery toward which it had headed.

Hardly was I up before Enescro and Villiard were beside me.

"What was it? What happened?" demanded the baronet anxiously.

"A fellow wearing a brown turban was hiding under the terrace wall. When I shouted, he had reared up and was about to throw a knife."

"At me?" he demanded.

"You were the most conspicuous target," I said, with a smile.

"Hurnph. An East Indian, no doubt, if he really wore a turban."

"He did," I assured him.

"Apparently I owe you my life, if you really saw such a person."

"Take a look at what tripped me," I said, sourly.

Ainsworth joined us as we inspected the cause of my downfall.

Attached to pegs set twenty feet apart was a fishline. I had pulled out one of the pegs when I struck the contraption.

"That proves it," said Enescro. "He had prepared this obstacle in case

of pursuit, led you to it, leaped over it and you ran into it."

"This is an outrage! You mean an attempt was actually made on Sir Ronald's life in the grounds of my estate?" cried Arthur.

"There would have been an attempt if this young gentleman hadn't frightened the assassin. It was an East Indian, judging by Laurence's description."

"An East Indian! Why, Dobbs, the constable, was strangled by an East In-

dian! What are the police about?" demanded the furious lord of the manor.

Enescro had my hand in his crushing grip.

"I'm tremendously grateful," he exclaimed. "It was fortunate for me that you happened to be outside and noticed the fellow. Don't be distressed, Ainsworth, I'm sure you had no complicity in this."

I chuckled. The fellow had a sense of humor, which was more than Arthur had.

CONTINUE THIS STORY NEXT WEEK.

NOVEMBER CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB

(Continued from Last Week)

Twenty-two—Engineer,* Fort Defiance, Ariz.; The 14th,* Charlotte, N. C.; Bernard McGee,* Bloomfield, N. J.; Plantagenet,* Paterson, N. J.; Rep,* Archbold, Ohio; Romeo,* Waynesboro, Pa.; Ty, N. Twist,* London, Ont., Can.; W. R. W.,* Chicago, Ill.; Ike N. Wynne,* Nada, Utah.

Twenty-one—R. L. Blaha,* Newark, N. J.; Gold Bug,* Newburgh, N. Y.; H. H.,* Coventry, Ohio; Mason,* Cleveland, Ohio; F. P. Moore,* East Gardner, Mass.; Gustav Weiss,* Brooklyn, N. Y.

Twenty—Alice,* Arlington, Calif.; Farmer Dot,* Perry, N. Y.; Effokes,* Brooklyn, N. Y.; Hitch,* Boonton, N. J.; B. I. Lane,* Winter Haven, Fla.; Jesse C. Leach,* Bradenton, Fla.; Leonel Mathieu,* Springfield, Mass.; S. C. McConnell,* Tampa, Fla.; J. G. Meerdink,* Jersey City, N. J.; Porthos,* Fall River, Mass.; Fannie M. Price,* Albany, N. Y.; B. P.,* Miami, Fla.; R. M. Ross,* Arnold, Pa.; C. Y. Rust,* Cambridge, Mass.; O. I. See,* Caroleen, N. C.

Nineteen—Aunt A.,* Baltimore, Md.; George S. Muir, Gilby, N. D.; Rengaw,* Chicago, Ill.; Flo

Rogoway,* San Diego, Calif.; Mrs. Laura Smith,* Los Angeles, Calif.

Eighteen—Aachen,* Hollywood, Calif.; Francis M. Ball,* Los Angeles, Calif.; Alfred E. A. Bronson,* Hulmeville, Pa.; Lillian Callan,* Los Angeles, Calif.; Black Diamond, Billings, Mont.; Gunga Din,* Dallas, Tex.; F. A. Gauntt,* Oklahoma City, Okla.; Roland Hufschmid,* Paterson, N. J.; B. Kallman,* Brooklyn, N. Y.; O. Kiefer,* Orange, N. J.; Lewis Newkirk,* Huntington, N. Y.; Hard Boiled One,* San Francisco, Calif.; Pangram,* Lakewood, Ohio; Mrs. Augusta Pope,* Van Dyke, Mich.; The Gray Seal,* Bronx, N. Y.; Albert G. Winn,* Hollywood, Calif.; James T. Young,* Rockwood, Tenn.

Seventeen—Aristocratic,* Chicago, Ill.; Bluebonnet,* Bourneville, Mass.; Cliff II,* Nashville, Mich.; E. Atlanta, Ga.; O. D. Roberson,* Augusta, Ga.; Wilbur G. Valentine,* New York, N. Y.

Sixteen—Dr. Edw. L. Kopriva,* Chicago, Ill.; Kenneth H. Riggs,* Wollaston, Mass.

(Continued on Page 86)

HELPS PREVENT COLDS
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SPY!

The Case of the Man in the Shroud

*In a Sinister Cabaret the Dancing Feet of Anthony Hamilton
Tap Out a Message of Life or Death for an Uncrowned Czar*

A Novelette

By Max Brand

CHAPTER I

The Cat's-Paw of Japan

HARRISON VICTOR, besides his name of Louis Desaix in the French Sûreté, carried such shining wax on his long mustaches and such wine-red in his cheeks

that he looked the very spirit of the militant Latin. He was so far inside his rôle of French detective that it was hard for him to step out of it even when he was reporting to his eminent chief. He had been in the American





"If he should come to, you have your two hands, Karol," de Graulcher instructed

counter-espionage service half his life, but he could not speak English without the taint of a French accent. Now he came into the room of Anthony Hamilton, chief of American counter-espionage, with a brisk, military step.

"Harrison," said Anthony Hamilton, "why do you keep yourself sweating in an outfit three times too heavy for the Riviera climate?"

"All good Frenchmen always dress

till they're in a sweat," answered Harrison Victor. "The great thing to do about a chill is to prevent it. But never mind that. There's something for you to sweat about. I've trailed Koledinski, the Cossack hetman the Japanese secret service brought here to meet the Czarevitch, and who was to go back and start a revolt against the Soviets.

He's left Monte Carlo, and taken the Blue Train for Paris.

"I'm glad he's gone. He wasn't alone, though, was he?"

"Do you think the Gay Pay Oo would let the old Cossack travel around entirely alone? The Soviet secret service is not so stupid. No, there was a handsome young Greek along with the Russian. That Greek is an agent of the Gay Pay Oo, of course."

Hamilton closed his eyes while he counted results.

"That means Koledinski has been to the Russian consulate with his faked-up story, and the consulate has handed him over to the Gay Pay Oo. They swallowed his story. He told it exactly as I suggested, and the Russians are convinced that he is the devoted patriot, ready to die for the Soviet Union."

"I had him tailed to the Russian consulate," agreed Harrison Victor. "Go on. Tell me what else happened."

"When he told them that he had

seen the son and heir of Nicholas II alive—that Ivan Petrolich was really the Czarevitch—they were not quite as shocked as he expected them to be. Because, of course, they knew it already. But if they've taken Koledinski into their midst it means that the Czarevitch is still alive, Harrison. It means that instead of cutting his throat, the Gay Pay Oo reserved him for some other purpose. And they want near him just such devoted Bolos as Koledinski."

"It means all of those things," agreed Harrison Victor. "What else does it mean?"

"It means that while the Czarevitch lives, Japan still has a chance of carrying out her plan of putting him back on the throne of the Russias. That would mean a revolt in Russia, and while Europe was burning up with war, the Japanese could gobble up China."

"It means that, all right," agreed Victor. He polished and pulled his

SPY!

ANTHONY HAMILTON, head of the U. S. counter-espionage service, flew to Monte Carlo when it was rumored that the Number One secret service agent of Japan, Henri de Graulchier, was planning a coup that would bring on another World War.

At the Villa Mon Sourir, de Graulchier sheltered the Czarevitch of All the Russias, who had miraculously survived the massacre of his family by the Soviets. A hetman of the Cossacks was being brought to Monte Carlo to convince himself that his Czarevitch was still alive. He would go back and start a revolt in Russia. That would give Japan a free hand in the Far East.

Hamilton could enter Mon Sourir by pretending to be a playboy and fool, hopelessly in love with Mary Michelson, the beautiful agent of de Graulchier. Thus the American agent managed to kidnap the Cossack hetman, and to turn the Czarevitch himself over to the grim agents of the "Gay Pay Oo," the Soviet secret police. He had saved Russia from revolution and Europe from another World War.

But he is determined that neither the hetman nor the Czarevitch shall pay for his success with their lives. He releases the hetman, and shows him how to win a pardon from the Russians. And Hamilton is now trying to rescue the Czarevitch.

mustaches with delicate finger tips.

"Then the Japanese—I mean, that devil de Graulchier, Japan's Number One secret service agent—must not know that the Czarevitch is alive, and that Koledinski is heading straight for him."

"Unfortunately," said Harrison Victor, "as the train pulled out I saw in the crowd that pretty-faced snake of a Rumanian—that Matthias Radu. He was watching Koledinski. Which means that de Graulchier will know at once that the old hetman is on his way to Paris to join the Czarevitch. Which means that de Graulchier will certainly be in Paris himself before long. Which means you have reason to sweat."

Hamilton lay back in his chair and began to sing softly.

He kept on smiling, though smiles were not what he felt like.

"I thought of that," he said at last. "I knew there was some danger, but I couldn't imagine that de Graulchier would be so omniscient."

"He probably has a spy in the office of the Russian consulate."

"He may. And now the whole dance starts all over again."

"THERE'S one good point," said Harrison Victor. "De Graulchier himself can't mix into the investigation too deeply. He can't show himself too much, I mean, because by this time the Gay Pay Oo knows what he is. Most of the other men at Villa Mon Sourir are known, too. If they come too close to the Gay Pay Oo they'll be spotted."

"De Graulchier has a thousand agents," said Hamilton.

"But his best men are at Mon Sourir."

"That's perfectly true, and the Rus-

sians have spotted the lot. Disguises are not a great deal of good in these days with agents trained to remember the look of the *back* of a head, or the angle of the neck, or even the contours inside an ear. A disguised man is usually just uncomfortable, not useful."

Harrison Victor nodded. "It looks as though de Graulchier will have to work with second-hand brains on this job," he said. "His first-class outfit is no use to him. But what do *we* do?"

"Get to Paris ahead of the Blue Train and trace Koledinski to whatever place the Gay Pay Oo takes him. My bet is that the Czarevitch is already safely hidden away at the same destination."

"That poor devil of a Romanoff!" murmured Harrison Victor. "I pity him, Anthony."

"If we can get him free from this danger," said Hamilton, "he'll probably be thoroughly shot in every nerve and willing to drop back into oblivion, like a stone into dark water."

The telephone rang. He answered, made a sign to Harrison Victor. Then was saying: "Certainly, de Graulchier. My dear vicomte, why not come right up to my room with Mary?"

A moment later he hung up the instrument.

"Not de Graulchier and Mary Michelson! Not coming up to your room, here?" exclaimed Victor.

"A little unconventional," said Hamilton, "but why not? I wish to God that I played the game as de Graulchier plays it. He'd never walk out of this room again alive, and Japan's secret service would be crippled for years, at least."

"Listen!" exclaimed Victor. "Why not play the game along de Graulchier's lines? Murder is his

trump card. I've got May and Drew at hand. They can be ready in two minutes. There are twenty other ways of working the trick. Something in de Graulchier's drink that will drop him in his tracks an hour later—"

"Steady, old fellow!"



ANTHONY HAMILTON

"After the torture he gave Bessel? After the murder of poor young Carney that he ordered? I'd kill him like a rat! Anthony, be reasonable!"

"Be reasonable, even if I hang for it, eh? I feel as you do, Harrison. But not murder! He's coming here freely, and he's going to leave freely."

"I know," sighed Harrison Victor. "You won't play it the other way. But one of these days being honorable among thieves is going to do you in. I'll get out of here, and let you handle them. But—"

He went towards the door, but Hamilton halted him.

"They won't be here for another minute. Look me over." He had been throwing off his sack coat and donning a very costly Japanese kimono of black silk figured over with an exquisite arabesquing of gold. Now, sleeking his hair back and fitting a monode into his eye, he did a dance step, and faced Victor. "How do I look?"

"Like a rich young jackass of almost any nation, with an empty head and educated feet," said Harrison Victor. "Anthony, how do you do it? Even your face is new!"

He went out of the room hastily. Hamilton tossed a polo magazine onto the couch, opened a detective story and laid it face down on the desk, and then heard the rap on the door. He opened it for them, and saw Mary Michelson against the dimness of the hall, like a jewel against velvet.

She came in with her best smile, and not an assumed one, he was sure. The chiefest of all mysteries to him was how she could be genuinely fond of him, when he had showed her nothing but the feather-brains of a witless young spendthrift.

De Graulchier's swarthy face was at its most amiable, but even at the best there was always a hint of a sneer in his expression. He had a way of striking straight into the heart of an idea. He struck now, before there was even a chance to sit down.

"Anthony," he said, "here's Mary in an agony because a tenth cousin of hers has been made to disappear by some sort of a conjuring trick. Every man at Mon Sourir is at her service, but she stops crying long enough to say that there is only one man who really can do the work: Anthony Hamilton! So here we are."

"Did you say that, Mary? Did you

mean it?" exclaimed Hamilton. "Why, of course you're right! Anything—I'd do anything for you. But who is it? Disappeared, did you say? A cousin?"

"Ivan Petrolich," said the girl. She looked wistfully at Hamilton. "Right out of our garden the other day. You know, when we found that poor fellow out of his head in the cellar room at Mon Sourir? When we came up stairs Ivan was gone—vanished—and the big fellow with him was gone, too. And there isn't a trace! Not a trace!"

"I'll go out and look about," said Hamilton. "You know, I've read about such things. You look for finger-marks on doorknobs and things. You hunt everywhere for foot-prints—always find something—"

"Yes, in books," said de Graulchier. "But this is not quite a story. In a word, Hamilton, the Gay Pay Oo has snaked Ivan Petrolich away!"

"Hello! That's the Russian outfit that cuts your throat while you're laughing at their last joke? What jolly rotten luck for poor Ivan Petrolich! Look here, Mary. I'm hideously sorry. Dø let me come out and take a look around—"

She said with a queer abruptness:

"Anthony, doesn't it turn your blood cold to think of working against the Gay Pay Oo?"

"Blood cold? Of course, of course! But I'd rather face the Gay Pay Oo than an audience all settled back in its seats ready to sneer at you before you sing your first song. I remember once I had a really hot number; brand new dance and a song called—"

"You're going to work with Mary?" demanded de Graulchier. "Even if the trail goes as far as the moon?"

"Ah, a trail?" said Hamilton. "Of course! Regular hunt I hope it'll be."

"Anthony," said the girl, "I think the first step is from here to Paris. The vicomte has managed to get hold of a plane for us. Will you make the trip in the air?"

"Why, that's where I live!" cried Hamilton. "When do we start? I mean—it'll be the two of us only?"

"Yes. I'll be ready to go inside an hour."

"I'll be there, then! Give the directions. I'll be there, flying suit and all. And wrap up warm. It's going to be cold above the mountains. I'm sorry Petrolich disappeared, but this means more to me than a trip to the moon!"

THEY were hardly gone before he had Harrison Victor back in the room.

"De Graulchier was tied in a knot, exactly as we thought," said Hamilton. "And the result is that he's turning me loose on the trail of Ivan Petrolich, so-called. Turning me loose with a brain to go along and tell me what to do. And that brain is to be Mary Michelson!"

He laughed, but Harrison Victor said:

"He thinks you're a fool, but a cool-headed fool. But how long will you be cool-headed if you have Mary Michelson along with you? You'll step out of the song-and-dance into your own character, one day; you won't be able to keep it up, Anthony."

Hamilton merely said:

"Think of the calculation of that fellow de Graulchier. What a brain, Harrison! What a beautiful brain! But if I can act my part, we're going to tie the hands of the vicomte behind his back, before long; and then I think that the Gay Pay Oo will do the throat-cutting."

"What do I do while you're gone?"

"Watch Mon Sourir. See how many of them leave. De Graulchier will go to Paris, of course, and lie low. Some of the others may follow him. Send me word. You know where to address me there. Tell May and Drew to fly up today. I may have use for them."

"Old son, how do you feel about trailing the Russian bear with a girl to slow up your steps?" said Harrison Victor with anxiety.

"Slow it up?" Hamilton laughed, Harrison, Mary and I are going to dance through this whole number!"

CHAPTER II

The Red Cab

IT was a fast little monoplane with a little too much engine for its spread, so that there was a good deal of vibration and a lot of roar from the motor, but the speed was the thing that Hamilton knew and loved in the air. Mary and he rose out of the golden warmth of the Riviera, shot over the mountains, and then slid up the valley of the Rhone into the twilight of January and the cold. The electrically warmed suits kept them comfortable enough, but a low ceiling formed overhead and he had to fly in a narrowing wedge of clear air, coming closer and closer to the ground as they neared Paris. Snow began to fall, throwing dangerous shadows down from the clouds, but the girl paid no heed to trouble.

She herself was an aviator, he knew, and every bit of the danger must have been apparent to her. But she lay back in the padded seat with a perfect indifference, and such a smile as she might have worn while sunning herself on a beach.

He was beginning to understand her better with every mile he flew. She liked him. That was one small part of her pleasure. She was assigned a task great enough to shake the political world of Europe, and that was another part of her enjoyment. But most of all she was basking in the delight of all adventurers—danger itself, and for its own sake.

Their conversation was limited chiefly to smiles and gestures until they shot down onto the field of Le Bourget. A little later they were in a taxicab bound for Paris. She was as quiet as when the roar of the motor had stifled talk, but now it was thought that kept her silent. Hamilton watched her, smiling, but taciturn for once, despite his rôle of playboy.

"Where will you stay?" she asked.

"The Crillon, I suppose," said he.

"I'll go there too, then. We ought to keep fairly close."

"Ought we? I'm so happy, Mary, that I'm apt to break. It's exploding in me"

"Do you know that we may both be dead before we're a day older?"

But she kept smiling a little, watching him; and then smiling more and more.

"But what a lot of killing we'll take!" said Hamilton. "And what a day it's going to be! If we're not called back for an encore—well, anyway we'll enjoy the parts we play."

Then the dullness of Paris suburbs finished flowing about them. The lights increased; the people thickened in numbers. Snow was slanting down in a brisk wind. It whirled in brilliant circles about the street lights and made the pedestrians walk with their heads awry. But that strange quickening of the blood which always means Paris was beginning in Hamilton. Only the

girl remained withdrawn a little from the moment, as though there were a glass pane between them.

When they got to the hotel she said:

"There's going to be a bit of time before the Blue Train gets in. Can you meet me half an hour earlier than we arranged?"

"At the station?"

"No. Just two blocks down the Rue St. Honoré you'll find a taxi pulled up at a corner, waiting. A green car. I'll be inside it."

He got a room and living room in the hotel and went up. Then through the snow-streaked windows he looked out on the great circling lights of the Place de la Concorde and watched the rush of traffic which pours day and night into the throat of the Champs Elysée. History was rushing about him in the same way, new and vital history in the current of which he was being carried ahead. The past is always so clear, he thought, but every new moment is dark—and may be the last. Mary's moves were planned in detail. His must depend on inspiration.

He had a sandwich, rested flat on his back for an hour, then got into a fur-lined overcoat, slipped an automatic into an inside pocket, and went out to keep his appointment with Mary Michelson. He had a queer certainty that she would not be there, and the thought filled him with a hollow panic. He found himself hurrying, straining his eyes.

Then he sighted a car at the right corner. Yes, it was green. He began to walk more slowly, breathing deep. Now the driver was opening the door for him—a typical pirate of a French taxi driver. They have driven cabs to the Battle of the Marne, and they all look the part. And they still drive through the crowded streets of

Paris as though on the way to another battle.

He had to look twice before he recognized Mary. It seemed to be nothing but the make of the black hat she was wearing that made the difference—that and the angle at which the hat was worn. But she was made up in



MARY MICHELSON

such a way, he saw as he settled down beside her, that her mouth and eyes were much altered. She looked older; she looked keener and gayer; she looked like Paris. Perfect Paris. The kind that never stops wearing an air. The kind that flashes a new facet at every moment.

The driver, without waiting for an order, started the car.

"What have you done to yourself, Mary?" asked Hamilton.

"Just made myself a little more at home in the strange city," she answered. "Do you hate it?"

"I hate it," he admitted.

"We have to be with the crowd," she said.

"I know it," said Hamilton. "But

you know how it is. The old familiar faces, what?"

THEY reached a small, winding street. The car stopped by the curb. The driver, getting out, tossed off his overcoat and cap and put them through the door into the back of the cab—in Hamilton's very lap. With a soft hat on his head, wearing a raincoat, the fellow walked away. He had not spoken.

"You put on the overcoat and cap," explained the girl. "And then you become taxicab driver number—well, I've forgotten the number. It's rather a queer little taxi, Anthony. It has a quiet motor, you notice—hardly makes a whisper unless you let it out. And when you let it out, it will do just an even hundred miles an hour."

He felt as though the ghost of de Graulchier were leering in at them through the glass of the car's windows.

Obediently, he made the change.

"You know Paris, or shall I tell you the way?" she asked.

"I know spots of it. You've been here a lot, Mary?"

"I've learned it by heart," she answered.

She was folding his cast-off coat as he stepped out. He felt the cold of the air soaking through his clothes like icy water. The overcoat he was in now was too big, and the material was hard as canvas. It would keep out the snow, but not the gale.

"Have you a gun?" asked this new Mary Michelson.

"Forty-five caliber," he said, turning and speaking over his shoulder, "and seven slugs that don't know how to miss. Nobody asks that old gun for an encore."

"Good!" she said. "Shall we start along, Anthony?"

As she had said, the car was unlike the usual taxi. Under the hood lay a flood of power. He took the cab delicately through the traffic. A touch on the accelerator made it leap like a horse under the spur. He went like the wind to the Gare de Lyon, turning in from the Quai Henri IV towards the sooty, pretentious building. Other taxis were speeding towards the station.

"Slowly! Slowly!" called the girl. "We're a little too early. Up the Avenue Ledru and then around by the station again."

He did that, and came past the Gare de Lyon just as a river of travelers poured out. Mary Michelson told him to pull over to the curb, but he had hardly reached it when a man on the sidewalk drew a handkerchief and mopped his face with it. Very strange that he should be perspiring at such a rate in the cold of the night; strange, also, that the movements of the handkerchief were regularly irregular, so that it might have served as a wig-wag message.

Mary Michelson called out at once: "Ahead, Anthony! A red cab! There—you see the number? Get up beside it at the first traffic stop, if you can! Hurry! Hurry!"

He was beside that red cab almost at once. And seated in the back of it he saw a straight-backed young fellow, and the unforgettable face of the Cossack, Koledinski. The white eyebrows gleamed in the light of a street lamp like two streaks of silver.

De Graulchier, then, was following Koledinski in the hope of being led to the Czarevitch? It must definitely be for this reason. He and de Graulchier, therefore, became for the moment allies. The winner would be he who could trick the other at the last mo-

ment. The brains of the chief of the United States' counter-espionage matched against the wits of the Number One of Japan's secret service.

The traffic went on, with a rush.

"Follow the red cab—not too closely—but *don't* lose sight of it!" called Mary Michelson. "It means *everything!*"

CHAPTER III

The Finger of Gay Pay Oo

UP to the Place de la Bastille. Snow kept slanting down, turning to slush that defined the tracks of the whirling tires. Of the great column, only the lower part was easily visible and the statue above walked like a shadow through twilight. Then the Place de la République and along the Boulevard Magenta. They were in Montmartre with the misty towers of the great church rising far above; they passed into the whirling round of the Place de Clichy. The red cab turned left, slowed in a jam of many other cars, went on.

An instinct made Hamilton bring up his machine close to his leader. And the other cab he found empty!

"The two have gone!" cried Mary Michelson in despair. "*What* shall we do, Anthony? How could they have gotten out in that jam of machines?"

Then she added:

"We'll stop over there at the right. The two of them might be in that last block. They might be in this one. I'll take this and walk around it. You take the one back there. Be at the cab in ten minutes, five minutes. Look, look, look for either of the two faces. But don't seem to be looking. Anthony, can you do that?"

He was standing on the curb beside her, now.

"Why, of course I can do it!" he said. He sang:

"It isn't your size,
But the use of your eyes—"

"Please, Anthony!" And he was still, as she laid a hand on his arm and looked earnestly at him. "If anything happens to you—Anthony will you be careful?"

He sang:

"My dear, whenever you take the air,
Handle yourself with a great deal of
care—"

She laughed, and left him suddenly. He, glancing after her, saw men stop and lift their hats—and then turn to watch her as she went past them while they were still speaking. A slight nausea pulled at the face of Hamilton as he went back to the next block. A flare of lights spelled the name of a large cabaret: "Le Moskovite." Beside it he found a telephone booth and rang Drew, one of his agents.

"Any news?" he asked.

"Harrison Victor and Louise Curran have just blown in," said Drew. "Nearly everybody in the villa of Mon Sourir vanished—and they disappeared in the direction of Paris. So Victor came along with Louise. He thought you might need him."

"I do, and now. Take May and Harrison Victor. Leave Louise at headquarters to gather the reports. Come down here to Montmartre. Find 'Le Moulin Noir.' In front of that dive Koledinski and his Gay Pay Oo escort disappeared. Not inside it. They wouldn't do anything as patent as that. They're somewhere in the neighborhood, I imagine. That means that Ivan Petrolich is somewhere around here, also. De Graulchier's

system is functioning. I think he has men all over Paris. Search everywhere for Koledinski or his companion a straight-backed young fellow with pale hair that has a shine to it, and his head carried a little to the right. About six feet; a hundred and seventy; age twenty-five; smile crooked on the left side. I'm here with Mary Michelson, searching the streets, but we may not cut deep enough. That's all."

He got around the block on the double-quick, watching faces; and returned to the cab just as Mary reached it.

"No luck!" said he.

"Quick!" she answered. "Jump in and start. There's a man in the next block—no, not the ones we've been following—"

She was inside the cab and he started away at once.

"There on the left. You see the big man with the fur collar?" called Mary Michelson. "Follow him—watch him, Anthony!"

He drove very slowly. The fellow in the furred overcoat was stepping with a long stride. Something about his shoulders and the carriage of his head was familiar to Hamilton. And now, as he drew level, he recognized the features of the Grand Duke Boris, who had come so far in order to serve the last Romanoff and who had fallen under the terror of the Gay Pay Oo. He was their man, now.

"Watch him!" murmured the girl from the darkness of the cab. "There—you see him taking the taxi at the corner? Follow that!"

"Did everybody in Paris have a hand in snaking your cousin away, Mary?" Hamilton asked.

"Follow! Follow! Follow!" she pleaded. "Watch carefully, Anthony. Please be careful."

It was harder to follow the trail of

that cab than it was to keep at the tail of a flying snipe. A every corner there was a turn, until the car drew up in a narrow lane full of windings.

It was stopped by the time Hamilton came in sight, and he had come around the corner so quickly and with such an impetus that he could not stop behind the other car without a great noise of brakes. Therefore he drove slowly past and saw, inside the other machine, no driver at all—but only Boris himself, his massive head fallen as if in sleep.

"Having a sleep for himself," said Hamilton over his shoulder. But it was not sleep; he knew that.

"STOP here," she commanded. "Now go back and ask the man in that car for a match. Speak to him in some way—look at him, Anthony."

He went down the pavement, his feet slipping at every step in the newly-fallen snow. And when he came to the halted cab, he tapped on the window glass.

The Grand Duke Boris did not stir.

Hamilton opened the door and leaned inside.

"Pardon, *monsieur!*" he said.

Boris of Russia did not move. Hamilton heard a very light sound of dripping. He flashed his electric torch on the floor of the car and saw the slow drops falling into a pool of red. One gloved hand, fallen from Boris's lap, seemed reaching down towards the blood; but he would never complete the gesture.

"Gay Pay Oo!" murmured Hamilton to himself, and closed the door as he stepped back.

He returned to the girl and told her:

"That trail's finished, I'm afraid."

"Anthony, is he dead?"

"Yes. Stabbed in the throat and breast."

She lay back against the seat.

"The Crillon!" she directed, breathlessly.

He had plenty to think about as he made the return journey.

"No, the Rue St. Honoré first," she said. "Stop at the corner where we took the car."

The Gay Pay Oo, Hamilton decided, had accomplished some very definite and important step. Their need of Boris was less, now, than their fear of his knowledge; and Hamilton wondered if that knowledge concerned the death of the Czarevitch.

At the appointed corner he stopped. A man stepped out from a doorway at once.

"I take the driver's place, *monsieur*," he said. It was the same fellow who had turned over the car to Hamilton. He resumed his cap and overcoat while Hamilton, in the back of the taxi, donned his own things.

"It's a little thick for you, Mary," said Hamilton. "You know what you ought to do. Tell the police and let them work for you. Let me get that gendarme—"

"No, Anthony. For heaven's sake, don't think of the police!"

"I won't, then. But let me go ahead with the thing for you, please."

"Alone? No, not alone." She added, in a murmur, "They've killed him!"

"Did you know him?" asked Hamilton.

"Just a little," she said. "He was a man," she added, "who should have been rich and one who should have lived like a king with thousands of people to serve him. And instead, they've murdered him—"

"Look, Mary, I don't understand.

But aren't you afraid that they may serve your friend Petrolich out of the same dish?"

"They may. Perhaps they have already!"

"Well, I'll stop trying to think. You do my thinking for me, Mary, and then tell me what to try for you. Is that a go?"

She shook his hand.

"Your heart is as steady as a metronome. If you had lived in a time of war, what a hero you would have been, Anthony!"

"No wars, I hope," he answered. "Too much mud, Mary. And I hate canned food, don't you? You know that song:

"Julia, isn't it rather thin
To seal yourself like beef in a tin?
Julia, Julia, please be nice:
Flowers aren't preserved in ice."

"Can you sing even *now*?" she murmured.

They reached the hotel and he took her up to her room. She had recovered her liveliness of manner by a sudden effort, but she was already drooping when she passed through her door. She clung to the knob as she tried to smile back at him.

"You were wonderful, Anthony," she said. "I never saw such good driving. I never saw anyone so perfectly without fear of anything!"

BACK in his room, he rang his headquarters. "Hello!" called the voice of Louise Curran.

"This is 1815," said he.

"As if I couldn't spot your voice!" she said.

"Is anyone there?"

"Slocum has just come in."

"Tell him to watch the telephone and take messages. I need you."

"That's good news," Louise said.

"There's a vacancy among the chambermaids at the Crillon. Or a vacancy is going to be arranged. Get yourself up in the right sort of clothes. Come over here. Ask for Monsieur Giverny. Tell him that you're applying from an agency. He won't ask you what agency. He'll put you on the job and assign you to the floor where you'll find the rooms of Mary Michelson. After that, you turn into a shadow."

"To watch her?"

"Yes, and everybody who comes near her. Disguises are thin stuff when a man is working against the eyes of the Gay Pay Oo, but I've an idea that de Graulchier will put on a new face and call on Mary before long. You be on hand to report."

CHAPTER IV

The Executioner

ROOMS and furnishings didn't usually make a great deal of difference to Stenka Koledinski. But he disliked this room for two reasons. First because it gave on a court so narrow that the adjoining wall was not ten feet away; and second because a distinct and stale odor of perfume hung in the air. Every sign indicated that this room had once been occupied by a woman.

The little Russian who was interviewing Koledinski had reclaimed for himself, so far, only a table in a corner, on which there were cigarettes, some writing paper, a heavy fountain pen, and some books. He clasped his thin, dry hands together and smiled above them at Koledinski.

Koledinski disliked that smile. War never had frightened him so much, because he knew that opposite him sat

Dmitri Berezov, who was, almost beyond a doubt, the keenest intelligence in the Gay Pay Oo. He possessed the impulses of a hungry wolf and the manners of a hunting cat. Men on whom Berezov smiled were usually very close to death, no matter how well they were feeling at the moment.

"Speaking of those old days, Stenka Koledinski," Dmitri Berezov was saying. "You were with the Romanoff family just before they were executed at Ekaterinburg?"

"I was with them until just before. That was the pity," said Koledinski. It was hard to face the eyes and the smile of Berezov, but Koledinski had faced cannon.

"Pity?" echoed Berezov.

"I played my part too well," said Koledinski. "The Romanoffs believed in me. The trouble was that other people believed in me, also."

He lighted a cigarette.

"What did the people think?" asked Berezov.

"That I was the good, faithful slave, the dog that served the Romanoffs. A true Cossack of the old sort."

"And yet you were not?"

"Not? Why, I had waited for thirty years to find my day!"

"What day, Stenka Koledinski?"

Koledinski wrenched the collar of his shirt open.

"You see," he asked.

Berezov leaned and looked closely at a series of white marks, some of them very ragged, along the base of the Cossack's neck.

"Those are old scars," said Berezov.

"I was eight years old," said the hetman. "And I was playing by myself with my pony; and the Prince Alexis and his sons came by, with their wolfhounds."

"Alexis was a Romanoff."

"They had found no wolves. So they started to chase me. My pony ran like a devil. I was frightened. My legs were short. At the first jump I sailed off into the air. Prince Alexis and his boys were laughing too much to call off the dogs right away. One of them got me by the throat."

"And you were eight years old?"

"Yes, but I always carried a knife and I ripped up the belly of the hound."

"Ah!" said Berezov.

"It was a valuable dog. The prince screamed when he saw the beast run in a circle with its entrails falling out. His boys held me, each by an arm. They beat me with their whips. And the blood was running down from my torn throat."

"Ah, good!" said Berezov. "So you had a chance to think, while they held you?"

"I had time enough to think. Enough thoughts to fill a long life. Afterwards I waited. Alexis died. The war stole his two sons from me. There was nothing left for me but the Little Father!"

He paused, and then added, "Afterwards I made them love me. There was no one like that faithful old fool, that Stenka Koledinski. But I did a little too much. I was not trusted to be near at Ekaterinburg. That was how I overplayed my part."

He was buttoning up his shirt again at the throat.

"Why did you never tell that story before?" asked Berezov.

"After I grew older, I was ashamed to tell it. Men would say, 'And you let the three of them live?' Because of the shame I never spoke."

"And now?"

"If there is a Romanoff that should be worried by the throat, or to have

his tongue torn out so that he can only bubble blood—like a good friend of mine as I once saw him—"

"Stenka Koledinski, what a pity that we have not known you better, and for a long time!" Berezov murmured.

"Well, I shall not mind the waiting, if there is a chance to do what I wish to do."

"Perhaps you may have your chance before the day ends," said Berezov. "Georg!" he called.

Here a fat, comfortable-looking blond fellow appeared.

"Talk to our friend Stenka Koledinski," said Berezov, and left the room. At the door across the hall he rapped in a certain odd rhythm.

"Who is there?" asked a voice inside.

"Berezov," said he.

The door opened, but the man behind it held a sub-machine gun under his arm. "All right," he said, and stepped aside.

ON the bed at the farther end lay a tall man with a face that looked green-gray under the electric light, which hung by a cord from the center of the ceiling. It was a bare, horrible room with two iron beds. The white paint had turned gray or was chipped down to the black of the metal. Pictures of lechery on the walls mocked this squalor. Berezov kicked the rumped and worn rug from his way as he crossed the room. The man on the bed had his hands folded across his breast and a pair of bright little steel manacles held the wrists together. He opened his eyes and looked up without interest at Berezov.

"Sit up," commanded the agent. "Sit up, Ivan Petrolich."

The tall figure raised, hunching with a painful effort.

"Do you hear me?" said Berezov. "I have finished arguing. You will give me your final answer now. Do you return of your own free will to Russia with us, to live there by choice the life of a simple villager, admitting the beauty and the glory of the Soviet ideal, or do you die here and now?"

The head of Petrolich rolled back on his shoulders. He looked not at Berezov, but above him, at the glare of the light.

"I die here and now," he said.

"Swine!" said Berezov. He raised his hand, resisted the temptation, and then struck. Petrolich, with perfect indifference, watched the blow coming. The flat of his hand spat against his cheek and knocked his head against his shoulder, tipped his whole body aslant.

Then Berezov went to Koledinski.

"There was a hope that the man could be frightened into accepting the life of a peasant in the country his father ruled," he said. "What a tribute that would have been in the eyes of the country, in the eyes of the entire world, to the truth and power of the Soviet plan! That hope is gone. Stenka Koledinski, perhaps you are to be luckier than you think. You may be the executioner of the last of the Romanoffs. Their dogs pulled you down; now you may pull down the last of their blood. Come!"

He took Koledinski across the hall, saying briefly to the guard:

"You may go, now. This man will take your place. You, Petrolich—here is the Cossack who fought for your damned father. This is Koledinski, the hetman, who will show you how well he can guard you! Koledinski, I leave you in charge."

He went from the room, and Kole-

dinski went slowly towards the slender, awkward figure which sat on the edge of the bed. Ivan Petrolich stood up.

"I am ready!" he said.

But Koledinski sank to his knees, saying:

"Little Father, I come to die with you or save you."

"You cannot save me, Stenka," said the Czarevitch. "You are a kind fellow and very brave, but you cannot save me. Stand up, my friend."

The Cossack rose.

"I thought they had sent me an executioner, and they have sent me a friend. Stenka, I know that you are a frightful danger here. There is nothing you can do for me, and therefore you must slip away. Listen to me—I am no longer afraid. For sixteen years I have been breathing the taint of death. I am already nearly dead; half a step and I complete the journey. Believe what I say. I am not hungry for life. I don't like the taste of it. Now go quickly, Stenka, before they have learned to suspect you."

"It is the first command you have given me," the Cossack answered. "God witness that it is the only one I shall disobey."

"You can see," said Ivan Petrolich, "that there is no way of escaping. The windows open on nothing. The courtyard below is watched day and night. There is no way of leaving this room except through the door, and who could pass through the guards who are placed below."

"It would be very hard," agreed Koledinski.

"It is the headquarters of the Gay Pay Oo in France. A dancing, singing, drinking place! Who would imagine that such cruel people could be so very clever and gay, Stenka? But

unless you escape at once, you will be lost, my dear friend."

"Look at me!" said Koledinski, suddenly. "Do you see what happiness is in me?"

"Ah?" said Ivan Petrolich. "Yes, I see it. And now I understand. It makes me proud."

He began to smile, then he added: "My father had all the Russias. Well, I am no less an emperor. I have Koledinski!"

The hetman began to tremble.

"You have more than me. You have faith, Little Father!" he said.

"Have I faith? Yes—that it will all end."

"There is God who watches you," said Koledinski. "You will be saved!"

"Do you believe it?" Then I shall believe it also," said Ivan Petrolich.

He glanced away from the hetman. The wind now leaped out of the distance with a howl and began to shake the entire building in which "Le Moskovite" was lodged.

CHAPTER V

Sightseers in Hell

AT the Hotel Crillon, there was a tap at the door of Hamilton's room. When he called out, a chambermaid appeared, in crisp white, with a supply of face towels draped over her arm. The fluff of cap on her hair blew in the sudden draught as she closed the door behind her. And Hamilton cried:

"Ah, Louise! You've brought news?"

He took the towels and laid them aside. "You always ought to be dressed like this," he said. "Except that it makes you too young to be true. How old are you, Louise?"

"I'm old enough to listen behind a closed door," Louise Curran said. "Particularly if there's a Mary Michelson and de Graulchier on the other side of it. Are you wild with happiness—after a whole day with Mary?"

"I've been treated like a whiting. We've seen Koledinski and trailed him; we've spotted Boris after we lost the Cossack; we found Boris stabbed to death in his taxicab."

She closed her eyes. "That's Gay Pay Oo," she said.

"Now we're waiting," he went on. "What did de Graulchier and Mary talk about?"

"Everything. I saw something, too. De Graulchier has turned himself into a gray-headed professional man of some sort. Lawyer, advocate, doctor, I don't know which. He's changed his voice, too, and his walk. He steps bigger on those short legs. His head is canted a little to the right. He has shoes that give him an extra inch or so of leg-stretch. He makes plenty of gestures, and uses a flashing smile through his mustaches."

"Is he very good?"

"Anthony, he's marvelous."

"He's a great agent," said Hamilton. "He's a very great secret service man. I'd rather have him on my side than any man in the world."

"You have him on your side—for today and tonight."

"We're fighting for the same thing, and I think we'll win," said Hamilton. "Somehow, between us, we'll get the Czarevitch away from the Gay Pay Oo. Afterwards will come the tug-of-war, to see which of us two walks off with the prize."

"Anthony, wouldn't it be better for you if the Gay Pay Oo actually murdered poor Ivan Petrolich?"

"Better for me as a counter-espionage agent; a lot worse for me as a human being."

"Do you try to mix both things into your work?"

"I have to."

"That's why you're killing yourself," said the girl.



HENRI DE GRAULCHIER

"Tell me about de Graulchier's talk."

He walked about, pausing as she made important points.

"Mary made her report. I learned about Boris from her. De Graulchier cried out something about the Gay Pay Oo being ready for anything if they were willing to murder Boris. He said that if he could ever find such agents and such a spirit in them as the Gay Pay Oo found in its men, he'd be able to change the mind of the entire world in twenty-four hours. He said that the only man he'd ever had of that perfect type was Pierre, and that the Americans had killed that perfect man for him."

"Well, go on."

"Mary said that you had been as

cool as steel—and as silly as an idiot all day long. She said that you flew an airplane and drove a car like a wizard; she told how steady you were about finding Boris."

"All right," murmured Hamilton.

"De Graulchier asked her if she thought you suspected anything. She said that she thought you had not. She said that you were blind with love, Anthony."

She made this bit of her report with a slight lift of her head, challenging him, but Hamilton gave no sign. "She's perfectly sure of you," added Louise Curran, to pour salt in the wound. "De Graulchier said that your character was clear to him. Your nerves were steel and your hand always steady simply because you never used your brain—you had no brain to use. Of course it's amazing that he could have missed you so completely. He was paying you the greatest compliment that you'll ever receive."

"What's next on the program?"

"De Graulchier is wild with anxiety. He's scattered his agents through Montmartre. Mary Michelson was almost crying when she talked about Ivan Petrolich. She declares that if anything happens to him it will be her fault, because it was she who persuaded him to try to win back Russia as Czar, after de Graulchier had located him. She's willing to do anything in the world to undo that mischief."

"Is that all?"

"Yes. They're simply waiting."

"I'm doing the same thing," said Hamilton. "If de Graulchier has sent a number of his men into the district, I'll not be surprised if the Gay Pay Oo spots one or two of them. If that happens, we may find the Czarevitch, but we'll find him dead."

He threw himself down on a couch and stared at the ceiling.

"De Graulchier ought not to use numbers. There's bad tactics in that. The Russians have eyes and they can—"

HERE the telephone rang. Over the wire came the familiar voice of Harrison Victor. "We've spotted Dmitri Berezov entering 'Le Moskovite'," he said.

"Thank God!" cried Hamilton. "It means that we've located the spot. Do you know anything more about the place?"

"A good deal. The lower part, the big cellar room and all that, are for the drinking and dancing. But upstairs are some rooms let out to lodgers. The rooms seem to be full most of the time. I sent around two men, but they couldn't manage to get in. No vacancies. No vacancies in prospect. The idea is this: it is a Russian hangout where the émigrés collect. You understand? Gay Pay Oo men, nearly all of them."

"I understand," agreed Hamilton. "The Russians always believe in numbers."

"What shall I do?"

"I don't know. Keep at hand, but don't show yourself too much. What one of our men are the Gay Pay Oo least likely to have seen?"

"Slocum, I suppose."

"He speaks perfect French, doesn't he?"

"Yes. Plus Paris slang."

"Have Slocum change and dress in his best dinner jacket. Louise Curran will show up in a short time. Slocum will take her down to 'Le Moskovite.' The Russians have never seen Louise, except for a flash."

"Is that all?"

"Keep in touch with headquarters. I may leave messages for you there. I'm going to try to get down to 'Le Moskovite' myself tonight. Good-by." He rang off.

"I heard the orders," said the girl. "What's my part?"

"You won't have to make up. Be the wide-eyed little American girl who is seeing the deeps of Parisian night life, a good deal shocked by it all, and almost afraid of the big Frenchman who's taking you around. But whatever you do, keep out of sight. Don't let Mary Michelson see you. Because she remembers people pretty exactly, I'm afraid."

"I won't let her see me. I'm going, now. But tell me one thing: does the old heart still ache a good deal?"

"So-so," said he.

"Do you know that she's already half in love with you? Do you know that if you showed yourself as you really are she'd be mad about you, Anthony?"

"What a silly girl she'd be, then," said Hamilton.

"Well," said Louise, slowly, "I hope that the Gay Pay Oo get her. Listen to me, Anthony. She's not a right sort. She's the bait they held in front of Ivan Petrolich to make him come out of retirement and fight for his father's throne. She's tried—"

"It's no good talking to me," said Hamilton.

"Do you mean that she's right when she laughs and tells de Graulchier that you're blind with love of her?"

"Yes," said Hamilton. "She's right. So blind that nobody but Mary can open my eyes."

Louise Curran went out of the room without a word. She seemed in a fury. Not a moment later, Mary Michelson had him on the wire.

"Anthony, I'm going back to Montmartre this night," she said.

"Oh, hold on!" he called. "What part of the mountain?"

"Where Koledinski disappeared."

"You can't go, Mary. There's a lot of red-handed trouble down there, I'm afraid. You know. The sort of game where a fellow that's tagged stays 'it' forever. You didn't see that fellow in the cab. I did."

"I *have* to go down there. Anthony, will you take me?" she answered.

CHAPTER VI

Hamilton—Is Serious

IT was bitterly cold. The wind came with a screaming edge and cut deep. The snow flurries flew as high as the housetops.

"Which one?" asked Mary Michelson, waving towards the many electric names.

"Why not that one? It looks warmer than the rest," said Hamilton. "'Le Moskovite.' Why not that one?"

"It's as good as any, I suppose," she murmured. She ducked her head against the wind, and they ran in a swift stagger across the street. Steps led them down well underground to a dingy window where Hamilton bought two entrance tickets. A hollow-cheeked fellow with his chin lost in a muffler looked them over with the truly shameless eye of the French, and then they went into the main room.

It was amazingly large, with tables arranged closely around a dance floor and little curtained recesses giving back at the sides. They were led to a place luckily vacant in a corner. On the way to it, half the audience began to shout:

"Guillaume and Nicolette! Guillaume and Nicolette!"

Up on the stage at the end of the room a dancer vainly attempted for a moment to continue his routine, but the orchestra was drowned by the uproar. The dancer faltered, stopped, fled from the stage. A yell of triumph rang through the room. Men stamped and shouted with a vicious pleasure.

It was in the midst of this tumult that Hamilton, as he led Mary to their table, felt her start suddenly. He was able to catch only the direction of her glance, but it showed him the unmistakable narrow back of Berezov, moving away through the crowd.

"Do you know what I've done?" she said as they came to their table. "I've forgotten my compact! How could I be so perfectly silly? Will you find a telephone for me? I can talk to the maid on my floor and have her send what I need in a taxi."

Of course it would be Berezov's name that she would send over the wire to de Graulchier. Hamilton took her at once to the telephone and, from a distance, listened to the obscure sweetness of her voice. She came back to him, smiling. Her perfect ease and poise sickened his heart. She would, he felt, be able to face any situation, accomplish any treachery, and smile through it.

Well, the clans had gathered, now. The best brains in the espionage services of Russia, Japan and America were assembling in and around "Le Moskovite."

When the girl had slipped off her fur cloak he could not help exclaiming:

"Why, you're real Paris, Mary! Absolutely real Paris! Nobody but a French girl would have worn a high-necked dress like that. And only the

French know how to make up the eyes that way. How did you manage it so easily and quickly? And out of the one case you brought from Monte Carlo? And that little soft silk hat on your head—and by Jove, Mary your evening bag is made of exactly the same stuff, isn't it?"

She listened to the babble of his admiration with rather far-distant eyes. But in fact he felt that the turnout was perfect for such an evening. French women are apt to appear publicly in black, and therefore the color note was right. There was some brightness, too. A big square-headed emerald in the pin at the side of her collar, and the twin brother of that jewel in the single ring she wore—why, the value of those two gems might make anyone's evening in Montmartre a little dangerous.

She had made herself at home. She was no more like the girl he had known in Monte Carlo than night is like day. She seemed a lady, but a lady of Paris; the sort of flower that blooms by night. The men stared at her beauty with small, evil eyes.

His heart sickened a little. If this were acting, it was too well done to suit him.

They had a bottle of dry champagne. She used the little wooden spoon to stir the bubbles out of hers, while he told her that it was a sacrilege.

They danced. The modesty of high neck and hat and long sleeves were quite outbalanced by the extremely French subtlety and close molding of the dress.

She was perfect on the floor, he thought, because she kept that balance which enabled her to move without weight or effort at his will.

Something rustled. Not with his eye, but with an extra sense he knew

that she had gathered into her hand, as they walked through the dancers, a little wisp of paper. Already de Graulchier was in communication with her. Very quick work indeed, thought Hamilton.

They went back to their table.

Things would begin to happen, now, and very rapidly. How much information would be given to him?

A pair of singers appeared on the stage, but they had hardly commenced their song when babel rose once more, and the cry:

"Guillaume and Nicollette! Guillaume and Nicolette!"

The shouting swept the unlucky two from the stage. A big, fat man ran out from the wings and raised his arms for silence.

He got it, and a few groaning curses as well.

"My dear friends, permit me," he said. "You ask for Guillaume and Nicolette. I am desolate that I cannot offer them to you. It is a grief to me that of their own will they left me, though I implored—"

"Liar!" shouted a voice from a corner.

"Liar! Liar! Liar!" shouted a great part of the audience.

Of course there were people of most sorts in the cabaret, from the top almost to the bottom, but even the gentry, in France, give way to their enthusiasms. A good many of them were giving way now, shouting, "Liar!" at the proprietor of the place.

He stood before them calling down the witness of the gods with both hands and inviting with his gestures a heavenly inspection of the truth that was in his heart. But the crowd roared him down. He fled in an agony from the stage. A derisive applause followed his exit.

Hamilton asked the waiter the reason for the excitement.

"IN this Monsieur Raoul was a fool," said the waiter, with the Gallic candor which the world cannot match. "Guillaume and Nicolette were dancers who cost him very little; but he thought that he could get them still more cheaply. She was pretty—with the footlights in front of her face. She had quite good legs, except for the knees.

"But you know how it is, *monsieur*, French girls are not blessed in the matter of legs. In other ways, yes. In other ways, yes, indeed! But in legs, no. The knees will not be right. It is a pity, but it is true. Why should sensible men close their eyes to the truth? And now Monsieur Raoul, in other things intelligent, has sent away Guillaume and Nicolette. Guillaume had a light manner. His feet were like a whirl of feathers when you blow at a torn pillow. Besides, he could sing American songs, and you know that they are popular."

"Hello! American songs?"

"It is truth, *monsieur*. Not in all places, but at 'Le Moskovite,' yes; the American songs are popular. Now Monsieur Raoul offends his patrons every time he offers them another bit of entertainment. He loses trade. Soon there may be a riot. He sees money dripping away. He has begged Guillaume and Nicolette to return to him. But they have found another place—far away in Bordeaux. About these things I have informed myself, because I happen to be the brother of Nicolette."

More dance music.

"Will you dance, Mary?"

She had read her note, he had observed, while the waiter was talking.

Now she sipped her champagne and shook her head:

"Do you mind sitting?" she asked.

"Mind it? No, love it," said he.

He noted that when she smiled at him, he could not help having faith in her smile. It was true that he was blind. Doubt could not live in him when she was near.

A fellow with a lumbering step and a girl in a flash of pink satin came in and found a place in one of the curtained recesses. Hamilton decided that Louise Curran had rather overdone the girlishness he had asked for by that pink dress, with her gold slippers and her hair braided in a coronet. The curtains of the recess were drawn wide, so that from Hamilton's table the swarthy face and heavy profile of Slocum were visible. But Louise was out of sight. That was the right sort of planning. A good fighting sort of a man was Slocum, and this was the night and the place where he might be more useful than his weight in gold.

"Stand up—get in front of me—pretend to be pulling my cloak about my shoulders," Mary said. "That's it, Anthony—stay right there in front of me—all right, now."

He sat down as she said:

"That was one of them, Anthony."

"But one of what?" he asked.

"The Gay Pay Oo."

"The jolly old Russian murderers?" he asked.

"Hush. Don't whisper it, even. They may be all about us. The men at the next table—or the women—the waiters—anyone or everyone! Anthony, listen to me!"

He leaned across the table a little.

"I love you, Mary!"

"Poor Ivan Petrolich I've just had word that he's in this place, almost certainly. You're not listening!"

"Mary, I can't listen. You're so beautiful that there's a hole knocked in my old brain. When you picked me out to be of use—you thought that I might be quick on my feet, or something—but tell me, didn't you care a small spot about me, also?"

A woman's voice began to rise in shrill, unmusical laughter that wavered up and down the scale.

"I couldn't have asked you to come if I hadn't cared a great deal for you," said the girl. "I couldn't have asked any one to go into such a danger unless he had been very close to me. Does that sound frightfully selfish and strange?"

"Wait a minute," answered Hamilton. He tossed back his head so that the light would flash on his monocle. He could not help telling her that he loved her; but he dared not show her his real self. He had to remain the perfect ass throughout. "Now have I got it, Mary? A thing we like a lot—we have a right to chuck it in the fire?"

"Not truly a right. But—I can't let myself think about it. I have to ask you to listen to me, Anthony."

"I shall," he said. "It's just a kind of a craziness to sit here across the table from you; and some of the craziness bubbles up—bubbles into my throat and I can't talk, into my eyes and I can't see a blinking thing, Mary. But I'm better, now. I can listen, all right."

Even after he had assured her of that, she kept watching him for a moment, seriously, so seriously that the make-up seemed to be rubbed from her face. He could see the truth of her. A great soul was behind her eyes.

"Ivan Petrolich is surely here," she said. "There are others on the lookout for—well, for any of Ivan's

friends. If they see me—steadily, I mean, and enough to recognize the girl who runs the villa of Mon Sourir—why, Anthony, they're such people that they would do to me—and you—just what they did to that other man, tonight. I've—well, I've seen another friend in this place. He'll sit with me here. Anthony, I want you to go home."

HE could feel his face turn cold and his shoulders stiffen against the back of his chair.

"If you wish me to, certainly," he said.

"I wish you would go," she answered, but she looked suddenly down at his glass of champagne.

"Is it because the other fellow would do better?" he asked. "Or you think that I'll let you walk out sort of onto the edge of things?"

He found her staring suddenly at him.

"You *can* be serious," she said. "With all your heart and soul! Well—I'd rather be with you through what's to come than with any other person in the world. But if anything happens to you—"

"Hush," said Hamilton. "I don't think we need to talk any more about it, do we?"

"No," he heard her breathe. "Not when you're this way. No—we understand without having to talk."

CHAPTER VII

De Graulchier Strikes

IT was in the moment when Hamilton was feeling that he might have made incalculable progress in the esteem of Mary Michelson, and also that he might have opened her eyes, fatally, to an appreciation of his true

quality, that a voice groaned loudly from the dance floor. Two or three women screamed out in fear or cried in disgust, and then there was the sound of a heavy fall.

The crowd of dancers separated. Hamilton saw a tall, thin fellow stretched on his back in the middle of the empty space. In spite of his slenderness, he had quite a paunch, for time and good living had managed to create a beard on his chin and a swelling about his midriff. A pair of bouncers strode immediately for the spot, but Monsieur Raoul was already bending over the fallen man. Next his panic-stricken voice was calling for a doctor.

At once there arose and strode across the floor a man that Hamilton had not noticed before. He had a brisk walk, with something odd in the way his heels hit the floor. His head and shoulders were a shade too big for the rest of him, and the long tails of his coat exaggerated this aspect. He wore a bristling pair of mustaches and a stiff little beard to match.

It was the description given by Louise Curran that enabled Hamilton to recognize de Graulchier. And his heart suddenly went out to the courage and the brains of the Number One agent of Japan. It was as though a king had ventured into the heart of the enemy's camp. That was what de Graulchier was to the Gay Pay Oo. The king of all their dangers. If they could snuff him out, they had obliterated the greater part of their troubles. How great a part, perhaps even they did not realize. It would be a simple thing to betray de Graulchier to them now. But Hamilton could not do it. He wanted the liberty of poor Ivan Petrolich. He wanted, above all, to give de Graulchier a fighting chance worthy of his valor.

He watched the Japanese-Frenchman kneel by the limp body. He saw de Graulchier make reassuring signs, suddenly jump up and call in a loud voice:

"Don't disturb yourselves, gentlemen, ladies! A simple affair. Very simple. Too much brandy, perhaps."

A moment later, de Graulchier was giving orders to the waiters who picked up the fallen man and carried him from the floor. It was noticeable that no female partner of the sick man appeared. Perhaps she was already scurrying out of the place and hunting for a refuge.

For this was no "very simple affair." The very fact that de Graulchier had been on hand so suddenly proved that he must have had something to do with the fall of the man who had been overcome. De Graulchier was at work. There was this to be observed: that de Graulchier would now, for some time, be behind the scenes of "Le Moskovite," working over the body of the victim. If he had poisoned the man, of course he would know the proper antidotes. Already, by his little speech of assurance to the audience, he had stopped a sudden exodus from the place; and that would put him in a good accord with Monsieur Raoul.

The customers of "Le Moskovite," in fact, soon checked their first impulse. There was a bit of high pitched gabbling. Then people resumed their seats. Instead of freezing conversation, the audience began to look and smile at neighbors. Everyone seemed to feel more chummy and at ease because, perhaps, a man had just fallen dead, or dying, in the cabaret.

The orchestra struck up a lively jazz tune.

"Rum lot of beggars," said Hamil-

ton. "They rather like this sort of thing."

"Animals!" said Mary Michelson, in appropriate French.

Here a heavily built man who reminded Hamilton more than vaguely of Hans Friedberg from *Mon Sourir*, went by the table and quite openly dropped on it a little pill of paper. Mary Michelson unraveled the thing at once. She leaned to read aloud to Hamilton:

Make a disturbance. Anything that will give me ten or fifteen minutes of uninterrupted quiet back of the stage. All goes well but I need your help!

"Who needs it?" asked Hamilton, naturally enough.

But he recognized de Graulchier in that note. A disturbance had to be made that would occupy all eyes and ears while de Graulchier carried on his plans. What plans could they be?

"I could start a fight with somebody," said Hamilton, hopefully.

She was not shocked. She simply measured and weighed him with a glance.

"They have men here who understand how to take care of such interruptions," she said. "You couldn't make a ten or fifteen minute disturbance, Anthony."

THAT was all. No care for the security of his skin. He began to recover rapidly from the rosy haze into which he had passed the few moments before. If this were romantic love, it bore a strange face indeed.

"What else could we do? You want to make the disturbance, Mary?"

"Oh, of course."

"Your friend, whoever he is, couldn't be wrong?"

"Wrong? He's never wrong!"

Hamilton thought of de Graulchier, and could have nodded agreement. That fellow would seldom be in error. And, at the same time, his respect for Mary Michelson rose. She could be trusted to make enough of a disturbance to occupy a tough Parisian cabaret for a quarter of an hour. How?

She was beckoning to Monsieur Raoul, who was walking through his hall placating his guests, smiling and beaming from side to side. The fat man came at once.

"Monsieur Raoul," said the girl, "my friend is a very famous dancer and singer. I dance and sing a little, also. Shall we go on the stage and try to amuse the people?"

Monsieur Raoul stared; it seemed that the green light of the two emeralds alone filled his eyes.

"Madame — pardon, *mademoiselle* — if you take pity on me—your beauty on my stage, *mademoiselle*—the undoubted talents of *monsieur*—come in the name of heaven—there is no other entertainment—nothing but fools falling dead—or almost dead—

"Go back stage," said the girl. "Tell the orchestra that something is going to happen. We will be there immediately."

"God bless you!" groaned Monsieur Raoul, watching with an eye of agony a pair of obviously rich and obviously American people about to walk from his place. He rushed away.

"Mary, what have you been saying?" murmured Hamilton.

"Do you remember?" asked the girl. "Once you said that we might be able to try a turn on the stage? Well, there's the stage, Anthony! Will you try with me?"

"Mary, if I have any brains at all, they are in my feet. What can you do?"

"I can sing a bit," she answered.

"Anything new?"

"Everything new!" she said.

"My howling word!" said Hamilton. "Shall we go?"

They found their way out through the side door. They were in the desired place, the interior of "Le Moskovite," where perhaps the Czarevitch of all the Russias was held by the secret police of his country. Where both de Graulchier and Hamilton sought the solution of their problem—in opposite ways.

A back stairway climbed in a dingy arc. The inevitable draught and chill of the back stage whistled in the air. From the wings, the sweating face of Monsieur Raoul turned to the girl.

"*Mademoiselle*, if you can see with your own eyes—the rich man, the great man from Pittsburgh who owns all the steel in the world—he has honored me by coming and now he leaves—in the name of God, dear *mademoiselle*, do something! Let them see your face and the green of your emeralds—"

"What can you do?" she asked Hamilton quietly.

"Anything you say," he answered.

"In a Ship on the Way to Paris," she suggested. "You are what? I sing off stage, and you are what?"

"Seasick on the stage," he answered at once.

"Give them that," she replied.

He stood straight, trying to think what his feet would have to do. Monsieur Raoul was groaning to a lad at his side, a boy in a brilliant uniform: "Tell Pierre—quickly, quickly—that we must have, 'A Ship on the Way to Paris.' First a roll of the drums, very loud. Then a shout from all the orchestra—and then the tune."

The vamp came before Hamilton had finished thinking out his steps. He

had used dancing to fill out his rôle of the fool. He would have to use it in earnest, now.

"*Mademoiselle, mademoiselle!*" moaned Monsieur Raoul. "Now do something! They are waiting!"

And out of the throat of the girl suddenly streamed a light voice, exquisitely pure and clear, which seemed to fight against and spread through the noise in the outer room, carrying those harum-scarum words:

"When you and I were on the sea
And hand in hand with liberty,
When you were making me at home
How far was home away from me?"

CHAPTER VIII

Help for de Graulchier

SOMEWHERE behind Hamilton, off the stage, he heard a voice say, "The doctor is calling an ambulance to take away—"

To take away that fellow who had fallen on the dance floor? Well, perhaps; but also there would be in the ambulance one Ivan Petrolich, who by some scores of millions was considered the true ruler of Russia. The beauty, the daring of the scheme of de Graulchier filled the mind of Hamilton.

Then he was out on the stage, dancing, with his collar turned up and his opera hat on the back of his head. He seemed to be proceeding straight across the stage; but his progress was slow, although his feet were working hard. As though he were caught by a rising incline which he had to climb, he sometimes leaned forward, and again he was staggering with his body bent back until it seemed as though the stage were the heeling, swaying deck of a liner.

The crowd was not appeased. It began yelling in fury:

"Guillaume and Nicolette! Guillaume and Nicolette!"

But the feet of Hamilton were beating out, as he danced, the code for "L.C." over and over again.

Louise Curran was back in the audience. If only she could hear the sound through the tumult!

And then Hamilton saw her, a flash of radiant pink at the entrance to the recess; the big, dark form of Slocum behind her. She was applauding vigorously, her hands well-raised. She even waved applause — and in the movement of her arm he read that she had heard his call!

It was much easier for everyone in the place to hear, by this time, for though there were still a number of rebellious ones who bawled out for "Guillaume and Nicolette," those in front were beginning to turn and glower at those in the rear who still rebelled.

As far as the sweet influence of the voice of Mary Michelson extended, the silence reached, and increased, until suddenly the rebels saw that the big majority of the audience was against them. After that, instantly, the cabaret was perfectly still and absolutely orderly.

A little whisper went up; Hamilton knew that Mary had appeared at last from the wings. At his next gyration he could see her standing there, singing with few gestures, smiling only barely enough, rushing not a step or a whirl closer to her audience, but commanding its approval very haughtily.

Such an air is not to be seen in Montmartre, and the crowd was enchanted. They could hear better voices, but they could not find such a manner, or a Mary Michelson smiling as she confided to her audience the follies of those silly songs.

They gave her a roar of applause as she came to the chorus. Hamilton sang it through with her. They wanted the second verse, too, and roared and thundered for it when the pair of them slipped off the stage.

Monsieur Raoul, in the wings, had tears of joy in his eyes. He hovered



LOUISE CURRAN

about them. He peered out, exulting in the expectant enthusiasm of his clients. "It is to me a year of happiness, a year of happy life!" he cried.

They went out to do the second stanza. Hamilton's dancing feet rapped a message in plain Morse code. There was no other way. He could not leave Mary Michelson while all of this was going on. So he spelled out the words:

Watch for arriving ambulance and inform me when it comes.

He had to repeat the sentence three times before he got the "received" signal from Louise Curran. At once she disappeared, and Slocum with her.

In the meantime, the attention of everyone was being held to the perfect

satisfaction of even a de Gaulchier. The ticket men from the front of the place were now leaning at the door to watch and to listen; the mechanics, the very waiters were agape, drinking in the delight of all Parisians—a new sensation. A fat man with a greasy face appeared in a distance. Hamilton was satisfied.

If even the cook appeared, it meant that the mind of "Le Moskovite" was occupied thoroughly.

He was ready to leave—but there was little prospect of the crowd giving them up.

Hamilton was panting from the work of the dance as he stood with the girl in the wings.

"'Nancy.' Do you know 'Nancy'?" she asked.

"I know it, but it hasn't the spice they want out there," said Hamilton. "Mary, we're going to do this stuff on the Big Time, one of these days. You're wonderful. Give them something better than 'Nancy', though."

"I think they'll like it," said the girl.

Monsieur Raoul was entreating with extended hands, with sagging knees. "They will go mad if you leave them after one song!" he declared.

"Play 'Nancy,'" said the girl.

And a moment later the silly strains of the song were in the air.

"You sing it and I dance it," she ordered, firmly, so Hamilton went out on the stage and sang:

"Nancy has eyes that can't go right;
Nancy has feet that can't go wrong;
They climb the ladder of the song
And then run into your heart so light.
But if you seven times denied her,
Like Robert Bruce she learned from the
spider."

He could see Mary Michelson dancing, quite slowly, around him; they did

the chorus dancing together and she came into his arms just before the last note.

There was pandemonium all through the house; and as they went out to take their bow, in the back of the big room Hamilton saw tall Slocum applauding with all his might—and slapping out the signal repeatedly, "Arrived!"

THE ambulance had come. And, upstairs, leaning over the drugged victim, what was excellent Doctor de Gaulchier contriving? It was time to be gone, but how could he leave Mary Michelson abruptly? She was holding him there, now, while de Gaulchier completed his part of the strange division of work. She was a perfect agent.

"Is it fun, Anthony?" laughed the girl.

"How did you learn all those little drifting steps?" he asked her.

She kept on laughing. "Oh, I've had one of those all-around educations," she said.

The uproar in the audience was filling the house; they had to go out a third time before a crowd which now had enthroned them as favorites, so that they could not do wrong.

They sang that prime bit of idiocy:

"He's always the same and he couldn't
be samer;
He's not a lion, but then I'm no
tamer . . ."

They were almost at the end when Hamilton heard a sound both short and muffled, like the slamming of a door. And yet there was a difference which his expert ear detected—a little unexpected depth and resonance to the noise. And he knew that a gun had been fired, somewhere, in a closed room.

The song and dance ended. The applause roared and re-echoed through the cabaret. Hamilton, looking carefully into the wings, made sure that no one else seemed to have detected what his ear had caught.

Monsieur Raoul was pressing them to sing again. One more song . . . another dance . . .

"*Monsieur*," said the girl, "we sang to please your people, not to become professionals. Forgive us if we stop now?"

Monsieur Raoul was overwhelmed. If they would come again, if they would come regularly, he would put their names outside his place in the largest electric lights he could find—

She murmured to Hamilton:

"Will you do a great thing for me, Anthony?"

"Anything in the world that I can do," said he.

"Leave me, take a taxi, go straight back to the Crillon. Will you do that, please?"

"And leave you here alone?" he exclaimed.

Her anxious glance went past him into the shadows of the wings. He knew what was in her mind.

"I won't be alone," she answered. "I know ways of taking care of myself. And besides, Anthony, I've told you already that I've seen an old friend here. Will you go? Quickly? And forgive me? I'll try to explain another time—"

He could not rush his departure, but he was himself on tiptoe with eagerness to be off. "Later tonight? Tomorrow, Mary?" he pleaded.

"Yes—yes! I'll ring your room, Anthony!"

He left her, and as he went he could hear the loud voice of Monsieur Raoul shouting against the protests of

the crowd, who wanted more of the two new singers.

CHAPTER IX

The Wolf of the Gay Pay Oo

HERE had remained with "Doctor" de Graulchier a chambermaid and a porter of the cabaret whom he would as soon have done without. Particularly after he telephoned for the ambulance, and returning, found the drugged man on the verge of regaining his senses. De Graulchier had been in touch with Friedberg and he knew that the German would appear with an ambulance perfect in outward appointments, manned besides with agents who could be trusted to the finish.

But the poor drugged fellow who was stretched on the bed was now beginning to part his lips and groan.

"Now he'll soon be well," said the maid. "As soon as a man begins to groan it is a sign; as soon as he swears, he's certain to be on his feet in another moment."

"We'll have him perfectly fit in a moment," said de Graulchier. Taking a little phial from his pocket he poured on the hemmed edge of a handkerchief a few drops of a colorless, almost odorless liquid. As soon as he had pressed the wet cloth under the nostrils of the senseless man, the fellow took a breath, an audibly deeper one, and then became perfectly quiet.

"You've given him the wrong thing!" cried the maid.

"Don't be a fool," the porter corrected her. "The doctor knows his own business. Yours is to hold your tongue."

"The slow way is the sure way," said de Graulchier. "The doctors who drag their patients out of bed today,

drop them into the grave tomorrow."

Here a steady vibration and a distant humming noise began. A door opened and let noise flood through the building; shut and closed the sound out once more.

"There is an ovation in the cabaret!" exclaimed the porter, starting out of his chair.



DMITRI BEREZOV

"Go to see what is happening, my friends," said de Graulchier. "I shall not need you here. The ambulance will soon come."

They were out of the room in a moment. De Graulchier looked carefully at his patient, became interested, lifted the lid of the left eye and peered into the pupil. Then he sat back and shrugged his shoulders. It might be one way, it might be another. At least the man would not waken till the late morning. Of that, de Graulchier could be sure.

He went to the door and stepped into the hall. The thin moan and whistle of the wind mingled with the noise of distant music. If there was an ovation in the cabaret, sufficient to draw

all the people in the place to one focus, he could guess without difficulty that Mary Michelson was in some manner the cause of it. He smiled a little. Of all the women he had used in the cause of Japan she was the greatest and the most involuntary helper.

He noted the doors along the hall, and the stairs at the end of it. It was hardly safe to leave the sick man, in case some emissary of Monsieur Raoul should arrive to make inquiries, but it was necessary to look into the floor above. He walked briskly down the hall, climbed the stairs, and found himself in another corridor which exactly duplicated the one on the floor below. Four doors on one side, five on the other. The heir to the throne of the Russias might be in any of them, or in none! His dead body might be held by weights at the bottom of the Seine by this time.

He tried the door at the right. The room was unoccupied.

He stepped back into the hall, realizing that he could not open each of these rooms in turn. He walked forward, slowly and noiselessly, as a man will often do when he is in the deepest thought. That was how he happened to hear, on his right, a voice which stopped him. It was no more than a murmur, but he made out the accents of Stenka Koledinski.

That was at least the door where he would first bring the stretcher-bearers.

He turned hastily and went back to the room where his patient lay on his back, mouth slightly open, a brightness of sweat on the upper lip. He pushed up the eyelid and looked again into the pupil. The man was a bad color. The heart-beat stirred uncertainly. The pulse was now almost imperceptible.

De Graulchier pursed his lips and then opened the window wider to get better air into the room. He was not greatly concerned about this matter of life or death because there was not a chance in a million that it would ever be traced home to him.

Several feet tramped down the hall, marching in step. At his room the march halted. The door pushed open.

HERE was the porter back again, saying:

"Well, the stretcher and the bearers from the ambulance are here, doctor." Behind the man loomed the uniformed shoulders and the uniform cap of Hans Friedberg.

"Go down and have the way cleared for us," said de Graulchier. "We have a very sick man here! There's no time to lose."

"No, he looks finished," the porter answered. "I've seen that color before. During the war."

He went off, while Friedberg and the big Czech, Karol Menzel, started to carry the stretcher into the room.

"Not here!" commanded de Graulchier. "Up the stairs after me. I've located Koledinski, and I hope that means we're not far from Petrolich."

"And when we find him?" asked Friedberg, following de Graulchier down the hall. "It won't be such an easy thing to get him out of the place, even on a stretcher. They have apaches around here who long to cut throats."

"You forget," said de Graulchier calmly, "that I am something above the law. I am Medicine; I am the Spirit of Mercy, Friedberg."

He had closed and locked behind him the door to that room where his victim of the night lay somewhere between life and death. That part of his concern was ended.

They went up the stairs. They were coming with soft steps towards the door from behind which the voice of Koledinski had been heard.

"Lean the stretcher against the wall. Be ready!" directed de Graulchier. "With guns—but not in your hands."

"Are you going to risk an uproar in this place?" demanded the German.

"Hans," said de Graulchier, "I would risk my immortal soul to get Ivan Petrolich into my hands. Are you ready?"

Friedberg looked anxiously down the hall, but then nodded. Karol Menzel merely raised a great hand and stepped a little forward. Battle was his chief love in life.

So de Graulchier tapped on the door. "Who is there?" demanded a harsh, dry voice.

"The doctor," said de Graulchier.

"Doctor? Doctor? Who sent for a doctor to this room?" demanded the other.

"Pardon, *monsieur*; I was sent to this room."

The door, at this, was unlocked. On the threshold appeared the narrowed body and the long, narrow face of Berezov.

"What is it you have come for?" he asked, staring closely.

He had an automatic in his hand, making a casual pretense of hiding it behind his back. Now a little glitter of recognition brightened in his eyes. He caught his breath. His head and hand lifted at the same moment as he tried to jump back. He might have succeeded, but the massive arm of Karol Menzel leaped out and the heel of a heavy gun thudded on the head of Dmitri Berezov.

He began to fall, not quite unconscious. He made a backward run to recover his balance as the three pushed into the room.

Koledinski, a sub-machine gun across his knees, had been sitting beside the bed on which lay the long, thin body of the Czarevitch. The Cos-sack threw up both hands with a cry of joy as he recognized the voice of de Graulchier. Then Koledinski exclaimed:

"Stop him! Stop Berezov!" and leaped forward to shield the prostrate man on the bed.

For that was Berezov's goal. He was not fighting for his own life, but with a perfect and terrible devotion to his duty, as he collapsed against the wall he leveled his automatic at the Czarevitch. Big Karol Menzel made a second stroke at the kneeling man. The butt of his gun crushed the skull of Berezov, but only as he pulled the trigger of his weapon.

Ivan Petrolich, unharmed, sprang up from the bed. It was Koledinski who staggered under the heavy impact of the slug, and then slipped to his knees.

He got up at once, pulling on the back of a chair.

De Graulchier, hurrying to Ivan Petrolich, caught him by the arm, exclaiming:

"Hurry, your Imperial Majesty! Hurry—hurry—we have much to do to leave—"

"Be silent," said Ivan Petrolich. He caught the arm of Koledinski. "Stenka, how is it with you?" he asked. "Take your hand from your breast, man!"

"Majesty—" said Stenka Koledinski. Then blood gushed from his mouth and choked him. He began to fall. The Czarevitch, catching the heavy body in his arms, vainly tried to support his weight. He was merely dragged to his knees as Koledinski slumped to the floor.

"De Graulchier," said Ivan Petro-

lich, "in the name of God's mercy, save Stenka for me!"

"It is too late. He is a dead man now," said de Graulchier.

Koledinski at that moment lifted a blood-dripping hand and crossed himself. The red dribbled freely down to outline the cross which he drew in the air. He tried to speak, and they could see the effort kill him as instantly and visibly as the impact of a second bullet.

"Ivan Petrolich!" called de Graulchier. "The gunshot will alarm the place. We have only the ghost of a chance. Be quick! Be quick!"

"I shall not go with you," said Ivan Petrolich. "The only reason that would drive me back to Russia lies dead here in my arms."

"Hold him!" commanded de Graulchier.

KAROL MENZEL, with the grip of his vast hands on the Czarevitch, paralyzed him completely. He lifted him to his feet. At the same instant. Koledinski's body turned face down on the floor.

"Persuasion is for afterwards!" exclaimed de Graulchier. He was moistening his handkerchief with a bit of the liquid from the little phial. Now he held the cloth for a mere instant over the nose of Petrolich. There was a very brief struggle before the long body turned limp. They carried it swiftly out to the stretcher in the hall, fastened it in place, drew the sheet over it.

"He has a bad look, de Graulchier," said Friedberg. "You have not given him too much?"

"I almost hope so," said de Graulchier. "My God, in such a cause to have a fool to work with! Quickly, Hans! Karol, step lightly. The saints

are good to us. There seems to have been no ear that heard the shot."

Here, however, a footfall began to run up the stairs. A woman confronted them suddenly.

"Have you done it?" exclaimed Mary Michelson.

"We have him—if only we can get him into the ambulance," said de Graulchier. "What did you do to turn the men of this place all deaf? Tell me that later. When we put him in the ambulance—he's only sleeping now—you'll sit beside him, Mary. The half-wit has lost all heart in his cause again. We need you to make him a man. Menzel, you'll go inside the ambulance with the two of them. If he comes to and makes a commotion that Mary can't control, you have your two hands—"

They went rapidly down the stairs. They turned into a long corridor down which the wind whistled—through a door that was open on the street.

CHAPTER X

The Man in the Shroud

HAMILTON, as he huddled into his overcoat and got up the basement steps from "Le Moskovite," found himself in a dazzle and whirl of snowflakes. The clean air and the cold were a stimulant that he felt at once in body and brain. He turned the corner against the sweep of the wind and saw before him the ambulance, with its rear doors ajar.

Two or three people loitered for a moment to stare, but ambulances are too frequently seen in Montmartre to be causes of great curiosity. The wind and the cold drove the idle away. The big-shouldered man who moved slowly past the ambulance was not one of the idle. By his mustaches and his car-

riage, Hamilton recognized Harrison Victor.

The two shrank back against the building as though to escape from the blast of the wind.

"What happened inside?" asked Victor.

I don't know. A gunshot. Somebody's dead, no doubt. This is the ambulance that ought to carry off Ivan Petrolich, I suppose."

"You think de Graulchier may get clear?"

"I think so. Mary Michelson had danced every soul in the cabaret into a trance when I happened to hear the gun. She heard it, too, and chucked me and left."

"Anthony, we could rush them as they come out of the cabaret and try to get Ivan Petrolich away."

"Three or four of us? No. And I think they'd kill the poor devil rather than let him get out of their hands again."

"What can we do, Anthony?"

"I don't know."

"You've got to know. If they walk off with him, our work is wiped off. We're at the place we started when you first took the case over at Monte Carlo. If we know more about them, they know more about us. We've got to do something now."

"I think I see something to do. There's a double stretcher rack in that ambulance, isn't there?"

"Yes, they could stow away four hurt people at once in the body of the thing."

"Go up there and say something to the fellow who stands by the wheel. Ask him anything. I'll be inside that ambulance before he's finished answering you."

"You? Inside? Anthony—"

"Don't argue. There isn't time for

that. See that you follow the ambulance—because something may stop it suddenly on the way. And after all, you're an agent of the Sûreté—"

Harrison Victor, with a groan, suddenly turned on his heel and walked through the snow smother towards the front of the ambulance. There he paused, gesticulating ahead as he spoke to the driver of the big car. The latter turned his head for a moment to point.

That was the moment Hamilton used for springing up into the ambulance through the rear doors. There was no light inside. He flashed his pocket torch. It was a very large interior, almost like a sleeping compartment in a train. Yes, or larger.

He fumbled across the top of the highest stretcher on the right. Voices just behind the ambulance put springs in his legs. He jumped up and laid himself flat on his face. That would not do, because his shoulder came too close to the stretcher's edge. He rolled over on his back so that he was wedged against the side of the car. And then a light shone with a blinding brightness into his face.

"Have you got it?" asked the voice of Hans Friedberg.

"Ready!" answered big Menzel.

Something slid into place with a slight grating noise just beneath Hamilton. The car springs gave decidedly as men jumped on the car. De Graulchier was saying:

"Friedberg, ride with the driver. I'll go ahead in my car. If anything happens, Hans, sound the signal on the siren and I'll be back beside you in a moment. Ready, Mary? Get in, then. Good-by!"

The doors slammed at the rear of the ambulance. Then the huge head and shoulders of Menzel appeared. He

stared straight into the face of Hamilton.

What idiocy had made Hamilton select that place to hide, he wondered? He lay still. He could not have moved. Panic ran its ice through his blood.

Menzel put a hand before his eyes.

"Turn out the top light. It's too strong," he said. "Here—the sidelamps will be enough."

He stooped. The brilliance of the upper light went out with a snap as the car started; a milder glow came from beneath—and here was Menzel, seated, the top of his huge head just in view.

All the ice melted out of the body of Hamilton. All the other events of the night were good planning, the taking of daring but excellent chances on his part; but this stroke of immense good fortune made him feel that luck was with him. Better to have luck than a race horse!

"How is he, Mary?" asked Karol Menzel.

"Completely unconscious. How did Henri dare to give him so much?"

"You'd sympathize with de Graulchier if you could have seen. Ivan on his knees with his arms under the head of Koledinski. And swearing that he'd lost his last reason for going to Russia since Koledinski had died! As though the old hetman were an empire in himself!"

"In courage he was, Karol. In faith and truth he was," said the girl.

"Ah? Faith and truth? Well, I suppose so."

"How did poor Stenka Koledinski die?"

"QUEER. Damned queer. Bezrezov was a resolved devil. He had a clip over the head that knocked him spinning. Three of us

were coming in on him. But he wouldn't use his gun to defend himself until he'd wiped out our chances with the Czarevitch. He fired straight at Ivan Petrolich and would have downed him, too. But Koledinski saw what was coming and jumped into the path of the gun. What's the matter, Mary?"

"Nothing. I'm all right," she said.

"Don't worry. We attended to Berezov. I tell you, Mary, it's a good, profitable job all around, having Berezov out of the way. If we had nothing else to show for our efforts but the elimination of Berezov, we could be proud of ourselves tonight. The Czarevitch is just the extra gilding on the glory. How is he?"

"Better, much better. I can find his pulse, now. His breathing is deeper, too."

Here the car skidded through a snarling of protesting horns, and straightened away around a corner so sharp that Hamilton was almost thrown from his place. The stretcher creaked under him. Huge Karol Menzel looked up, suddenly. Hamilton shrank back, but could not be sure that he had remained unseen.

There was a pause that robbed him of breath.

Then Menzel was saying:

"How did you swing things in 'Le Moskovite?' We owe everything to you, Mary. The spotting of the place, and then holding every man of the Gay Pay Oo murderers still as mice when a cat is in the room. How did you manage it?"

"Luck—and Anthony Hamilton!" said the girl.

"The chief is a great man," said Menzel. "Who but de Graulchier would have thought of teaming you with a half-wit like the young American?"

"He's other things," said the girl.

"Really? Such as what?"

"Such as a hero, and a gentleman, Karol."

Menzel's booming laughter filled the air.

"Mary, you're serious?"

"I tell you, Karol, he knew every bit of the danger we were in tonight. I watched him, and his color never changed, never once!"

"He's too much in love to be afraid. The poor fellow is mad about you, Mary."

"I think he is, and I wonder if it isn't the greatest thing that ever came into my life!" She answered.

"Do you mean it? That poor, babbling idiot? My dear Mary, you talk as though you—"

"I've promised to meet him at the Crillon. We're almost there now, and I'm going to keep my promise. Karol, you won't have any trouble with Ivan Petrolich. You see? He's sleeping soundly; he's even smiling, poor fellow. Ring the bell for me, and I'll get out here."

A bell clanged, forward; the ambulance slowed and stopped.

"Tell de Graulchier that I'm packing my things at the Crillon, and saying good-by forever to Anthony Hamilton. You only have four more blocks to go. You won't have any trouble with Ivan."

"No. No trouble that will last long, anyway. Good-by, Mary!"

She opened the doors. The street light shone dusty through the fall of snow; and the doors closed to shut her away again.

What would she think when she reached the Crillon and found that Anthony Hamilton was not there waiting for her?

He slipped out his automatic. It

was a heavy, solid weight and he knew how to use that weight with a scientific precision. Just at the base of the skull—not a strong blow, but a tap for fear of crushing the thin bone beneath the flesh.

The ambulance had lurched ahead, swaying big Karol Menzel to the side, out of view. As he straightened again, Hamilton leaned out and struck. Menzel jerked up head and hand as though danger had cast a shadow over his brain with its coming.

But the blow fell true; the huge bulk spilled down towards the floor of the car.

That monstrous form was rising again as Hamilton dropped down from the upper stretcher. A vague groan was coming from the lips of Menzel as Hamilton gingerly, with loathing, struck a second time.

He turned, and saw Ivan Petrolich sitting up, staring with sightless eyes. The ambulance had been checked behind such a thick mass of cars that its siren, though busily at work, could not cut a path through the traffic.

Hamilton turned the lock of the doors, pushed them open, and reached back to Ivan.

"Now, Petrolich!" he said. "This is the place. Briskly for a moment, and we'll have you in a comfortable bed. That's it. Let me help you. Watch the step a little. So!"

He even paused to close the doors behind them, as he stood with Petrolich in the middle of the street.

Someone in an adjoining car stared and pointed—but then the wave of traffic was released and poured away. Only one low and long-built automobile which had been hanging in the rear remained. It swept up and came to a quick stop beside them. Hands thrust open the rear door. The mustaches of

Harrison Victor appeared behind the driver's window. Hands at the rear received the loose body of the Czarevitch of all the Russias and drew him inside.

"You did it!" Harrison Victor was saying. "Don't tell me how!—If you tapped a rock, I'd expect to see the water leap out in a fountain. My God, Anthony, this is the greatest thing that's ever been done by *any* secret service!"

"Never get out of this car," directed Hamilton. "Turn it around and drive straight for Cherbourg. Get on board the first big ship that's sailing for America. There's no more ambition in Ivan Petrolich. He wants to sink out of the sight of the world—out of de Graulchier's sight most of all. And in America he can do as he pleases. You understand me? Send May and Drew back with him. Wireless Washington that you're arriving, but don't say with whom. Our government code is an open book to every nation in the world.

"Do you understand everything, Harrison?"

"Everything. All right. So long, Anthony. Poor de Graulchier! I almost pity the murdering dog! Good-by!"

The car swept on, and Hamilton went quickly back to the Crillon.

He was hardly inside the entrance when Mary Michelson came hurrying towards him, holding out her hands.

"You weren't in your room," she said. "I had a frightful fear."

"I beg your pardon, mademoiselle," said a hurrying man. "A telephone call for you. Will you take it over here?"

"Come with me, Anthony," she said. She put her arm through his. "I don't want to leave you for a mo-

ment. I've been thinking terrible things—but here you are as real as ever!"

CHAPTER XI

The Empty Chair

SHE would not let him go even for a moment; he could not even step back when she was at the telephone.

"Yes," she said. "Yes. It's I, speaking . . . No, de Graulchier! It couldn't have happened! How could the Americans . . . Is he gone, really? No trace? Then—wait just a moment . . ."

She turned to Hamilton.

"Anthony," she whispered, "you've told me that you love me. Do you?" He could not speak.

"Then will you take me away from everything—instantly? Will you marry me and take me away to the end of the world?"

"Ah, God," said Hamilton, "yes! To the end of the world—to the moon! Mary, you're not laughing at me?"

She was back at the phone, saying: "If he's gone, Henri, then I'm gone also . . . I do mean it . . . I've admired you and wondered at you, but I've never stopped trembling . . . You'll never see me again, Henri . . . Good-by! And forgive me, but I have to go. I'm going to marry the greatest man in the world. I'm going to marry Anthony Hamilton!"

She rang off. Now she was standing close to him. Her eyes were luminous; and there was a strange stillness in them also. She was taking possession of him by the divine right of love. He knew his hands were cold and trembling; and his brain was stunned.

"You're going up to your room and pack, quickly. Because every moment you're away I'll be afraid. I'll be a frightful bore as a wife, because for

years and years I'll never be without a dreadful cold agony of fear unless you're close enough for me to touch. So go quickly, Anthony, will you? Tell me once that you love me—and then fly, and come back on wings. Look! I'll be there—you see that chair by the light? I'll be just there, waiting, and my heart growing sick with every second that goes by!"

HE got to his room to find, by the window, the unexpected figure of a maid in puffy, shining white. It was the face of Louise Curran that turned towards him, and she cried out happily.

"I *knew* that you'd come through it," she said. "But I had to come in here to wait. I was sick at the thought—but you *did* get away?"

He was at the dresser, pulling out clothes, flinging them into his suitcase.

"Ivan Petrolich is on the way to America—and peace for him. De Graulchier has captured a sackful of empty air. And Hamilton is going on a vacation. Away from it all."

"Wait. Anthony! You don't mean that! You can't leave us. The whole thing will break to pieces."

"Harrison Victor has a good head. And now that he knows so much about de Graulchier's schemes, he'll be able to go right on checkmating him in every game."

"Harrison Victor is nothing, without your mind behind him," she declared. "Anthony, you have a crazy man's look!"

"I'm going to be married."

"Ah-h!" said the girl, drawing in her breath. "It's Mary Michelson at last, is it?"

"It's Mary," he agreed. "Will you wish me joy, Louise?"

"Anthony, the department won't let you go!"

"Then I'll resign from the department."

"Don't you see?" cried the girl. "It isn't true. She doesn't love you. She's pretending."

"No, she's not pretending."

"You can't tell."

"I think I can."

"No man can tell, when he's as mad about a woman as you are about her. Listen to me! Anthony, of all the men in the world, you've been the cleanest and the straightest and the best. And she's a creature that's tried to betray her country."

"She didn't know that it meant that. And she'll never betray me."

"Anthony, for God's sake, think! All the marvels that you've been doing will end, if you go away—and we'll be a headless lot without you!"

"I can only think one thing. You give the report at headquarters—that I've gone without leave. The department can do what it pleases with Number 1815. But I can't think. She's down there waiting for me now!"

"Where?"

"Down by the entrance. I've got to go."

"Ah, Anthony, don't you see?" said the girl. "Don't you understand that she won't be there?"

"She has to be!" he exclaimed.

"She's gone long before this. Either of her own will, or because they've taken her—"

"My God, do you think so?"

"I know it! Anthony—good-by—"

He was out in the hall. He was there at the elevator, ringing. But it would not come. Yes—here it came—rising, not descending. It would never come. No elevator would ever take him down to the ground floor—and if he wasted time racing along the stairs—Here it came, stopped softly, soundlessly, let him in, closed its doors with insane slowness, dropped gradually. But at last the cage paused, the doors clinked open, and he was rushing forward, bending to make speed. He saw the light first, to his tensed expectation more brilliant than a misty sun. And then the chair—empty!

But it was only because Mary had left the chair and was hurrying to meet him.

Next week—

SATAN HALL in a Complete Short Novel

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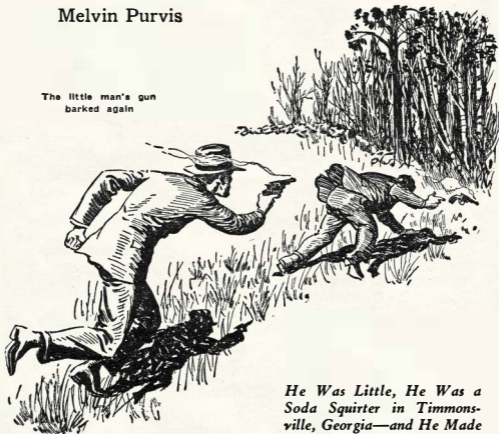
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Bandit Buster

The Inside Story
of
Melvin Purvis

By Dugal O'Liam

The little man's gun
barked again



*He Was Little, He Was a
Soda Squirter in Timmons-
ville, Georgia—and He Made
Himself the Greatest Man-
hunter of Them All*

CHAPTER I

Mel Purvis Scores Again

A LITTLE man leaped from the car that stopped before the ragged farmhouse of Mrs. Ellen Conkle in the hills outside East Liverpool, Ohio. It was October, 1934. Mrs. Conkle came out onto the rickety porch. The little man ran toward her.

He was a strange looking visitor. His eyes were bright and deep-set. Huge knots of muscle showed below

his large ears as he compressed his jaws. Thin lips were drawn into an almost invisible line.

The woman looked at him—looked at the four men who leaped from the car behind him. She started to step into his path; then changed her mind.

The back door of the farmhouse slammed. Footsteps pounded across a stoop, then thudded on rocky turf. The little man looked quickly at the woman, and ran around the house to the rear,

whence came the sounds of flight. Two of the men behind him brushed past the woman and went into the house. The other two ran around the house the opposite way from the little man, to prevent the fugitive from doubling back.

Across a barren field a heavy man was running, zig-zag fashion. He was a professional criminal. He was hatless. His head was round and set squat upon a thick neck. His thick legs made amazing time, propelled by feats of unnatural speed and strength by the terror the man who knows that only in the speed of his legs and the outcome of a gunfight lies longer life for him.

He was shaking an automatic pistol, as if it had stuck, as he ran. Now and then he turned to look over his shoulder. His face was round and not unpleasant. His cheeks were red, and his hair was black and curly. His mouth was open and he breathed heavily, for he was a stout man and the unnatural exertion was taxing him heavily.

Beyond him, across the barren field, lay a thick woods overgrown with underbrush in which a man might hide, or reach some ambushade from which he might shoot his pursuers down.

The little man with the knobs of muscle over his jaw sprinted after the criminal. He looked strangely small. Behind him came the other four. They were larger men, some of them older. None had the speed of the little, wiry man. Rapidly he widened the distance between them, and as rapidly he cut from the lead of the heavy man, now less than fifty yards from the woods.

Suddenly the fleeing criminal stopped, turned around, aimed his heavy pistol quickly, and fired. The

little man never faltered. He ran on. The big man shouted in the terror that possessed him at the sight of this little man, who wouldn't be stayed even by the threat of a gun in the hands of the most desperate living bandit.

"For God's sake, Purvis," he yelled, "why don't you shoot?"

Again he turned to flee. The little man raised his revolver, running forward as he aimed.

Once the revolver barked, and the big man staggered. He steadied himself and lurched again toward the woods. Once more the little man, halting now, took aim. The big man half-turned and raised his pistol again. He fired, but his shot was low. The bullet sprayed dust over the feet of the grim little Nemesis.

Then the little man's gun barked again. The heavy man, who had turned once more to reach the safety of the thick woods, stumbled, caught his balance once; dropped the pistol, stumbled again, and then fell in a groaning heap onto the bare turf, his fingers digging frantically into the hard ground, blood staining the gray dirt beneath his heavy chest.

The little man was over him now. He attempted to rise. The little man's gun was silent, but the four others running up from behind fired. The heavy body jerked as the bullets hit. Slowly the bleeding form turned over. Eyes already hazy with death looked up at the little man. The stricken criminal swallowed hard.

"All right, Purvis," he said, gutturally. "You win—I'm Pretty Boy Floyd, all right."

THEN he settled back, his eyes still on Melvin Purvis, thirty-one-year-old Nemesis of the worst group of bandits developed in America

since the days of Bad Bill Dillon, Jack Dalton and Jesse James.

Purvis said nothing, he merely stood over Pretty Boy Floyd and looked down, without pity, without any visible emotion whatsoever, his jaws still locked until the great lumps of muscle



MELVIN PURVIS

stood out beneath his ears, his lips still making their thin, colorless line cross his lean, intent face.

The heavy man spoke gutturally again, the blood filling his throat as he talked. "All I'd like to know is who squealed—"

He couldn't speak after that. He tried to mumble something. The little man directed one of the others to run quickly for a doctor—and then Pretty Boy Floyd, bank robber, thief, bootlegger and murderer, as unappetizing and dangerous and thoroughly worthless a rogue as ever terrorized a helpless citizenry, died on the bare earth beneath the gaze of the littlest and the deadliest of modern bandit hunters.

Melvin (Little Mel) Purvis, soft-spoken, tight-lipped, eager-eyed, utterly fearless one hundred and twenty-seven pounds of determination, is the most amazing manhunter of his time. He is the destroyer of the most utterly ruthless and desperate gang of criminals that ever scourged the West. He is the one man responsible, above all others, for halting the spread of a racket that has reached proportions so sinister that the life of every man, woman and child in the United States with worldly goods worthy of criminal attention, is in constant danger; namely, the kidnap racket.

When Melvin Purvis became the chief of the Department of Justice office in Chicago, he was laughed at. This little, shy, skinny man, scarcely out of his twenties, with the small hands and the perpetually embarrassed look of a man not sure of himself among other men, could not possibly fill the most important job, at the moment, in the Department of Justice organization.

For when he took over the Chicago office, the wave of Midwestern crime was at its peak. Dillinger, was at large again, the Touhy gang was running wild, Homer Van Meter and Pretty Boy Floyd and Clyde Barrow and Baby Face Nelson were rampant; men were being snatched from their families and either killed or held for ransom. One man even had been kidnaped twice—and his kidnapers were free to prey on others!

All that the department had been able to do had been futile. The pick of the government men were rushed into the area, and still Dillinger plundered and Floyd murdered and the Touhys kidnaped and Van Meter ran dope and killed and ravaged small town banks. Not even in the days when

Jesse James rode up and down the prairies firing the houses of his enemies and robbing the prairie banks, or when Bad Bill Dillon stole stock and murdered its owners, or Jack Dalton rode like a scourge over Texas and Oklahoma and Southern Kansas had lawlessness gone as unchecked and achieved such terrifying proportions.

Now this little man, this five-foot six-inch, one hundred and twenty-seven pound bantam, little more than out of college, with no physical strength and no great experience as a marksman or gun-fighter, had been moved in and told to clean up the great, sprawling West.

He moved in as he always moved; silently, a little shy, carefully and determinedly. He asked questions endlessly, listened as they were answered. He never listened unless he first had asked a question. He had an unbelievable faculty for discarding, or ignoring, useless information. He knew what he wanted to know and he found it out. No one with wild schemes or useless information found his ear available—and many resented this attitude as the attitude of a wise-guy bound to fail.

But the word "fail" wasn't part of Melvin Purvis's equipment. He hadn't been brought up on failure. As a matter of fact, he hadn't been brought up on anything in particular. If ever a background was inconsistent with the product, it was Melvin Purvis's.

CHAPTER II*

A Little Boy in a Little Town

DOWN in Timmonsville, South Carolina, a tiny town given almost wholly to tobacco planting and small retail store businesses, old Melvin Purvis often had wondered

what would become of this shy, painfully thin, tight-lipped son of his. He showed no aptitude for the tobacco plantation, which had made Old Mel well-to-do. He showed no great aptitude for school, and he never spoke of any ambition or plans for the future.

He went into high school a quiet, retiring, nervous boy, too shy to take part in school activities. Someone told him he should go in for football, although he was one of the smallest boys in school. Because he was at sixes and sevens and didn't know how to mix with his fellow students, he took their advice and went out for football—and created the first of a long series of laughs at his expense.

He was given a uniform that had been intended for a youth of some 170 pounds. He weighed somewhere around 117. It bagged down to his heels and the sleeves of the jersey had to be cut off at the elbows and hemmed up. The headguard turned around on his small skull, and the first kicked football he caught almost broke him in two.

Then he was asked to tackle. A huge, thick-legged youth charged at him! He saw the giant—to him—bearing down upon him, and knew that to fail to bring him down would evoke new ridicule.

"If it hadn't been for the heavy pads in the pants," he explains, "my knees knocking together would have sounded like a small boy running a stick along a picket fence. But I knew I had to get him and I didn't back up—I just shut my mouth and eyes and let fly and I'll be jiggered if he didn't come down in a pile. And what do you think—when I got up, he didn't."

As a matter of fact, he was so mad after this effort to show him up, and so surprised at his own ability to bring

down the huge runner that he determined to be a football player out of spite. He became one, and Timmons-ville still talks of the pigmy who used to tear bigger and faster and far sturdier opponents to pieces.

It was in this phase of his career that one of the characteristics that has marked Melvin Purvis ever since began to appear; whatever he did, he did with a fierce intensity.

He was fiercely nervous. He paced the field in his safety position like a caged lion. He ran himself to a wraith trying to be in every play. So long as there was an opponent on his feet, he never stopped charging and tackling.

He says he was a rotten football player.

"I never did get good enough—I never did anything the way I wanted to."

Here is another characteristic that was to drive him ahead in spite of all the handicaps of size and disposition. Never was he satisfied with himself. Never has he considered anything he has done properly done. Always he has striven for improvement. There is no middle ground with him, no plateau of competence, only the peak of the mountain, forever beyond his reach. His present success to him is not success at all, but the culmination of many good breaks and killing perseverance.

There wasn't in his daily life as a boy the obvious determination that marks his present character. As a matter of fact, save when he was aroused, as he was in his football experience, he continued to be quiet, soft-spoken, easy going and a little indolent. He despised farm work and avoided it whenever possible. A brother and his sisters flourished on the farm life. He grew, it seemed, more wizened and thin and self-effacing each day. The others

worked at farm work during vacations. He sought work in the town.

His uncle, a Dr. Mimms, operated a drug store in Timmons-ville and as soon as Little Mel was tall enough to reach the spigots he was given the job as soda squirt. He became a good soda clerk. He sought perfection in his work. Probably he figured that if he perfected himself here he would not have to return to the farm.

WHATEVER it was, he became a famous soda dispenser. Try that on your piano for discords. The greatest manhunter of his time—began as the most famous soda squirt Timmons-ville ever knew!

Business at Dr. Mimms' store began to pick up. In fact, virtually all the soda business came that way. All the town blades and belles congregated there and spilled their gossip. Little Mel, ever on the alert for something that would make it more logical for him to remain away from the farm and avoid tobacco raising as a career, culled a new idea.

He started a high school newspaper. He filled it with the gossip he had heard in Dr. Mimms' store. He became the Walter Winchell and the Little Boy Peep of Timmons-ville. While he did not predict vital statistics, the branch of newspaper reporting that has made Winchell famous and secured him a place in "Who's Who," he did make a success of the school paper.

His predilection for gossip got him into trouble. A distant cousin of his, a big, burly fellow named Bane, moved into Timmons-ville and promptly began paying court to a young lady upon whom Little Mel had cast pleased eyes. The swashbuckling Bane, taller, more handsome, than Little Mel, did very well indeed with the young woman.

Little Mel was displeased. He took it upon himself to get his revenge in his gossip columns—and young Bane forgot the ties of blood and proceeded to go a-gunnin' for Little Mel.

He found him and gave him a sound thrashing. Through it all, Little Mel didn't even attempt to strike back. He didn't run, but he didn't strike back. He took his licking, made it as painless as possible by not fighting back, and went his way. And he continued to publish gossip in his paper.

A few months ago, after Pretty Boy Floyd had fallen before Little Mel's deadly aim and determination, someone asked Bane, now a Carolina farmer, how it felt to be the first man to have whipped the famous man-hunter. Bane turned a little pale.

"Doggone me," he said, "I didn't know how close I was to Kingdom Come. Say, folks, even then that Little Mel could be mighty mean when he got stirred up. All of them Purvises are the same way. I reckon I ought to be thankful I'm living."

Bane sounded the keynote to the Purvis legend in South Carolina then. Melvin Purvis, Senior, is a good-natured, friendly soul, a fine neighbor and given far more to talking than his son. He is amiable and loquacious and he'd rather talk about Little Mel than pitch horseshoes; he's a deacon in the Methodist Episcopal church—but he also is known as a man that it is best not to roil.

There's an uncle of Little Mel who's an even tougher hombre when, as they say around Timmonsville, his feelings are hurt. He has twice been arrested on charges of homicide, but both times he has been found to be justified. Quick on the draw and as determined and unshakable as Little Mel himself when aroused, he is typical of the inde-

pendent, fearless, quick to anger but wholly generous Purvises of that county. From them Little Mel, the Nemesis of Gunmen, got some of his stuff.

There must be somewhere in the background of such a man an ideal by which he can guide his life. Melvin Purvis says it is his mother. A famous beauty, she was more noted, as she became older and raised her family, for her character and determination. Happily, her purposes were all good. She became intensely religious and there grew up within her a sort of phobia against all manner of evil doing. She inculcated this phobia in her son. Within him it developed into a hatred of all those who oppressed or bullied their neighbors.

He grew to despise a wanton killer with a fierce intensity. He felt that any man who made murder a business was worthy only to be killed himself. He felt no twinge of horror when some criminal was hanged for a proven crime.

Afraid of women himself, he hated men who boasted of their conquests over women. This fixation grew upon him. He thought of all women as beautiful, like his mother, and he was afraid of them because their purity made him fearful. It was because of his vaunted conquests of women that Purvis developed a genuine detestation for the swashbuckling Dillinger. He admitted he hated the mention of the name, hated everything Dillinger stood for.

CHAPTER III

The Small Town Lawyer

SOMEWHERE back in Purvis's mind was the "I'll show 'em" ideal. It may be that the scoffings that came his way because of his lack of size in some manner directed him

into the most dangerous calling he could have selected, and carried him on to face death-belching guns of the most ruthless men of his generation.

For it seemed that all things conspired to make life difficult, and a little ludicrous, for him. Nature didn't help him any when she elected to give him his thin frame and his abbreviated stature when others of his family were, if not tall, thick-bodied and powerful. Then there was his baby face. He always looked two or three years younger than he was, until he developed, through years of clenching his teeth and getting his way, that grim, set face with the bulging jaw-muscles.

To make a bad matter worse, the mother whom he adored, heaped ignominy upon him by naming him Melvin Horace. No one who has not gone through life with an obviously sissy name can understand what that meant. The natural thing to expect of a little fellow with pink cheeks and a shy manner and almost a horror of girls and a name like Melvin Horace was that he would be a coward.

"I was a coward," Mel Purvis now freely admits. "I was so much afraid that I was afraid of being afraid. I was such a coward that I would rather have taken a licking than be called a coward.

"I had the orneriest pair of legs a kid ever had. They always kept telling me that they were skinny and quick and could carry me out of trouble faster than you could say 'Scat!' But I wouldn't let them. The first thing I remember doing was threatening my legs. I told them plain out that if they tried to carry me away from any place where there was danger, I'd take them down to the railroad track, stick them under a train and have them cut off."

He is silent after this for a mo-

ment, his eyes narrow and intense, as usual. Then he concludes:

"I always managed to get the best of them and I guess I've never run away yet, but they're still trying to betray me. To this day they keep yelling up my backbone to my brain, whenever there's trouble or danger, 'Come on, fella, I can get you out of this—what's the sense of staying—just let me get going and we'll be away from here in no time.' But I just naturally don't pay any attention to them any more."

There is more courage in this than in the natural, blind courage of the reckless man. It takes more fibre to overcome fear than it does to know no fear. Purvis has overcome fear.

His father bears out his statements! "Well, sir, I guess there ain't nothing in the world that would make that kid of mine run away," he told us. "I used to lam the whey out of him when he was a kid. He always could have run away and I'd have forgot about it by the time he came back, but he never would. He took his whippings and never batted an eye. I never heard him whimper, although there have been times when I know he was hurt plenty. He's got the right kind of stuff in him, all right."

So much for the early background of Melvin Purvis. When he had finished high school he went to the University of South Carolina. Too small for football or even baseball there, he had other marks to his credit now. He had been captain of the Timmonsville Cadets, he had bought a set of drums and traps and learned to play them, and he had made the debating team. Even if athletics should pass him by because of his lack of size, he would not be without some wedge whereby he could force his way into school ac-

tivities. He had his heart set on a law course and his debating experience stood him in good stead.

There was a reason behind his choice of law, and a solid one. It was his mother and that phobia against crime that she had imparted to him.

"Be a lawyer, Melvin," she told him, "and use your gifts and your education to fight wrong and criminals, not to help them."

He became a lawyer, not to help criminals cheat the law, but to prevent them cheating it. His years at the university were calm and workaday. He didn't go out for athletics, he didn't make the debating team, he wasn't a class officer and he wasn't in the band. As a matter of fact, his existence in school was rather humdrum, but he was a good student and because the Purvises had some money and social standing he was invited to join a fraternity and did—the very fraternity he'd set his heart on joining before he had gone to the university. There's something about him that enables him to get what he wants, no matter what it is.

For all his colorless life at the university, he had gleaned something from school. That was his determination never again to be a small town boy. Columbia, where the university is located, seemed a great city to him with its fifty thousand population and its street cars and taxicabs.

After he graduated his father offered him five hundred acres of the finest tobacco land in the south if he would till it himself.

"I AM going to find my way in the cities," he said. "I don't like tobacco, I don't like ploughing, I don't like cotton and I'm not going back to them."

His father looked a bit aghast, but Little Mel set his jaw in that way he had acquired. The knot showed white under his ample ears and his father didn't press the point. All he asked was, "Have you got a job?"

"No, but I'll get a job," he said, "and it'll be in a town, not in the country."

He didn't know where he'd get that job, but he wouldn't admit he didn't know. Luck was with him again, because even as he talked with his father a lawyer from Florence, county seat of Florence county, approached the pair and said:

"Well, Melvin, I was thinking of offering your boy here a place in my offices over at Florence — if it's all right with you."

Old Mel looked at Little Mel. Little Mel studied the problem. He'd announced that he was going to work in a city, not in the country. Florence was a town of 17,000—scarcely a city after Columbia with its 50,000. But the firm of Wilcox and Hardee was a good firm, and at least Florence was larger than Timmonsville, much larger. Besides, there weren't many jobs around and young Purvis had a horror of returning to Timmonsville. He was afraid he would take root there and never get out.

So he said, a little sullenly, "All right, I'll take it, but I've got bigger ideas, Mr. Wilcox, and I may leave after awhile."

"That's fine," Lawyer Wilcox said. "I wouldn't want a boy in my office who didn't have ambition. Start any time you like."

The work in the Florence office was deadly dull. There were few cases that weren't civil cases. Now and then he would be called upon to defend some penniless man who had gotten into a

jam with the law. When the man was innocent, he was well defended. The little lawyer went to almost ludicrous lengths to dig up evidence for his client. But let him get such a client and deem him to be guilty, and he dropped him like a hot potato.

"I didn't come into the law to keep guilty men out of jail," he would say—and nothing the law firm could do would persuade him to resume the case. That teaching of his mother's had taken a deep and everlasting root.

He became known around Florence as a strange little fellow; intent, quiet, afraid of women, although obviously liking them; bitter against criminals of any sort; inclined to be a bit mean, as his cousin, Bane, had said, when he was crossed; and no man to go too far with in the way of familiarity or ridicule. Because of his size and his wariness of women and his strange, squinting eyes, there was an inclination to ridicule him, but when he heard of it once and started out looking for his grossest tormentor with those lumps under his ears, the people of Florence took heed of the dynamite lurking in his small body and treated him with respect.

"It wasn't what he could do all in one lump," a Florentine explained, "but what he could keep on doing until he was dead."

So firmly did he build this reputation for doggedness and determination that the people of Florence and Florence County began to regard him as a highly useful young man. Although he was barely in his majority and not a citizen of the county seat, a movement developed suddenly to make him the district attorney of the county.

Now the office of district attorney is a stepping stone to bigger things for the young lawyer, and an honor even

to the old practitioners. In a small county where the police organization necessarily is not modern and lacks the equipment of city police departments, the county attorney is a man of divergent responsibilities. To him falls the job of tracking criminals as well as prosecuting them, of collecting the information against them as well as conducting the county's case in the courts. He is, in fact, the backbone of the law from the matter of protection to enforcement, and it requires a man with imagination, experience and plenty of friends and ability to fill the place.

Strangely enough, Melvin Purvis hadn't shown any great ability. True, in such cases as he consented to handle he made a good showing, but he wouldn't handle many. True, too, he had become such an inveterate reader of all old law brochures and tomes that he probably was the best informed man on the technicalities of procedure and precedent in all the county. But he hadn't done anything concrete to merit the consideration his backers were giving him.

In spite of this, plans for his candidacy went on apace. No one discussed the matter with Little Mel. They took it for granted that he would leap at the chance to further his career in the best way known to the rural lawyer. They went on about the county selling his name and his prowess, and he, with his customary reticence, kept still and read more law and hid from women, and turned down cases where he knew the defendant was guilty.

Then, when the "Purvis for Prosecutor" boom had reached the proportions of a small tornado, his boosters went to him and announced with much pride that he practically was in the district attorney's chair. Little Mel Purvis listened to them intently, then

looked up with obvious surprise written on his pinched face.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I haven't any desire to be prosecuting attorney here or anywhere else. I think there's something waiting for me in a bigger town. Maybe Washington."

CHAPTER IV

On to Washington

THE committee was astounded—all but one. He was K. W. Wallace, a young lawyer in the same office with Little Mel. He took the rebuff in his stride and half grinned, as if he'd expected it. When the committee had gone, Little Mel looked at Wallace as if expecting a rebuke. He said, defensively, those knots showing beneath his ample ears:

"Well, why not something in Washington for me? Others have done it, haven't they?"

Wallace smiled understandingly. "Why not?" he repeated. "I agree with you."

Expecting an argument, Little Mel was momentarily disconcerted. "Of course," he hedged, "I don't know exactly what there'd be for me there, but there ought to be something."

"I thought you wanted to get into a law office, maybe," Wallace said. "I hadn't any other idea."

"I have," said Little Mel. "What's in law unless you want to defend crooks you know are guilty? No, siree, I'm looking for something with more life and more drive and more possibilities. I've had enough of this sitting and doing nothing. I want adventure."

Wallace was stunned. This little slip of a youth with his pink cheeks and shy manner and half-closed eyes and his way of tightening his lips and clenching his hands, this mild-man-

nered, subdued little fellow who ran from women, wanted adventure! Wallace was inclined to laugh, but he thought better of it. He saw the knots building up under the Purvis ears. So he said, a little resignedly, "I don't blame you—I wish I had the guts to make the break, but I guess I haven't. Good luck."

The next day Little Mel Purvis was on his way to Washington and ultimate fame. He had letters to congressmen and others in Washington, but he hadn't the vaguest idea what he wanted to do.

He knew only that he did *not* want to spend his life poring over law books and defending petty cases and digging up information on torts and precedent and procedure.

Moreover, Washington represented the city. His father, as a wealthy plantation owner, had strong political affiliations. Little Mel would not be totally alone and unsponsored, no matter what he tried.

With this belief firmly fixed in his mind, and the thrill of the big city almost overpowering him, he stepped onto the station platform at Washington, drew a long breath, took a firm grip on his luggage and wondered if he should go call on President Coolidge then or wait until he'd had time to wash up.

If he had expected a turn-out of official Washington when he reached the capital, he was disappointed. As a matter of fact, when he attempted to get in touch with his father's political friends, he met rebuffs on every side. They were in conference, busy, out of the city, having dinner, leaving for appointments or just plain "not in."

He left his name and received no replies. He spent two days looking for answers to his calls and got none. He

looked over the city, visited the Washington Monument seven times, prowled through the Supreme Court's sacrosanct halls—and still no one came.

At last, the congressman from his home district sent word to him that he'd like to see him and say hello, at least.

"When are you going home, Mel?" was the congressman's first greeting. "Glad to have had you drop in for this visit. Come back to Washington often."

This was discouraging, indeed. It brought home to him the fact that Washington apparently had been doing very well without him and hadn't been awaiting his arrival at all. But he wouldn't be licked that easily. He had come to Washington intending to remain and remain he would. At any job he could get.

"I'm not going back—I came here to stay," he announced. The congressman looked worried. He saw what was coming. Congressman get calls like this from sons of influential constituents on the average of three times daily, especially those congressmen who represent districts not overly far from the national capital.

"Well, well, well, that's splendid!" said the law maker. "I suppose you have your place all lined up?"

"No, I haven't," said Little Mel.

The congressman arched his brows and shook his head slowly. "That's too bad," he said. "Things are pretty well filled up here. What did you think you'd like to get into?"

Purvis does not know what prompted his answer. The idea, he says, had never occurred to him before. But he said, haltingly, as the congressman's jaw fell and he caught himself to avoid tumbling from his chair:

"I thought I'd like to get into the diplomatic service."

The congressman sputtered and coughed. Then he looked at Little Mel and in one of those lucid, frank moments that come to congressmen every four years, he said, slowly and positively, leaning back in his chair and eying the young man as he said it:

"Melvin, you would be about as much at home, and as useful, in the diplomatic service as a civet cat at a lawn party. You have about as much diplomacy in you as a Hereford bull. You'd better forget that now."

"ALL right," said Little Mel. "What else have you to offer?"

The congressman cleared his throat. "I didn't know that I was offering you anything," he said.

Little Mel shook hands with the congressman and went away. He was pretty blue and the usual young man might have sat down that night and written a letter back to Florence inquiring about the old job in the law office, or to Timmonsville probing into the possibility that the offer of 500 acres of good tobacco land was still standing.

But it never occurred to Mel Purvis to do that. He wouldn't quit, and having seen a great city and liking it, he wouldn't go back to Carolina and such a hamlet, comparatively, as Columbia.

For two days he waited. He walked the streets and called on people he knew well, people he didn't know so well, and people he scarcely knew at all. Then one day, when his stock of optimism was pretty close to the bottom of the hogshead, he got a telephone call. The congressman from home wanted to see him on a most important matter the following morning at ten. Could Mr. Purvis make it?

Could he make it? He wanted to treat himself to a small laugh at the question.

He was up at six o'clock. He spent an hour before a mirror, transferring the part in his hair from the center to the side, because this made him look a bit older and more worldly.

He was at the congressman's office an hour ahead of the time set for his appointment and waited patiently, rehearsing himself in all that he was to say, catching fitful glances in window panes to see if his hair still was parted in dignity on the side. Then he went inside, not knowing what awaited him, but with the actual opportunity as far from his thoughts, perhaps, as the presidency itself.

The conference was brief. It didn't need to be long. Little Mel had nothing to say after the congressman had announced, in glad tones, that he had found an opening for the Timmonsville bulldog in the legal department of the Department of Justice.

The Department of Justice! Little Mel didn't quite get it. He had to ask the congressman to repeat what he had told him. The congressman repeated. Little Mel's stomach suddenly left him and wandered out into the great world, so that there was only a vague and sickening emptiness in his middle.

It wasn't until he was out in the corridor that he collected his wits and became his calm, resolute self. He went toward the Department of Justice offices—to begin a career that rivals that of Flynn and Burns and Pinkerton for sheer drama and adventure and public acclaim. In fact, even these great names, synonymous with the development of detective work in the United States, never held the spectacular glamour, even in their most scintillant days, that has clustered about the little bulldog from Timmonsville.

A life of adventure without peer was before him, and Little Mel Purvis, in his wildest imaginings, hadn't the vaguest idea how near it was!

CONTINUE THIS TRUE STORY NEXT WEEK

Next Week!

Watch for Major C. E. Russell's great new feature

Major Russell has joined the staff of this magazine and will conduct an invaluable and interesting service for readers of

Detective Fiction Weekly

Don't miss the important announcement on page 136 of this issue.

Liar by the Sun

By Emory Black



"You dirty crook," he said thickly

Square Jack Imray's Crooked Wheel Spun for the Last Time When It Spun a Murder and a Strange Alibi

TORRY BARSDEN took thirty thousand dollars to the track. He laid it on the nose of a four-to-five choice in the second race.

That's how he played 'em—smacked 'em hard for a short price. Gambling other people's money, as commissioner, he shot the works on the nearest he could find to a sure thing and closed his eyes. Percentage being with him, he made a reputation as a winner that held his clients.

The four-to-five shot came through. In the fourth race he collected fifty thousand at even money. The favorite in the sixth at seven-to-nine paid him seventy thousand.

Riding high, he took a stab at what he considered a long shot in the seventh, at five-to-two, and dropped ten thousand without expecting anything better. He left the track with a hundred and sixty-four thousand dollars.

Between ten o'clock and midnight he poured fifty thousand into the slots of the wheel in Square Jack Imray's pent-house.

Swearing inwardly, sweating, Barsden damned himself as a sucker for bucking another man's racket. He knew there wasn't any percentage for him at roulette, that it all went to the house.

But the hypnotic, whirling wheel with its skittering marble made him mad because it had him licked. He threw aside the caution that governed him in betting on a horse. He plugged the Double-O, looking for the longest odds.

Square Jack Imray stopped beside him, watched him lose another ten thousand.

"It isn't breaking your way, Torry," said Imray. "Take time out and have a drink."

Barsden's angry gaze followed the dancing marble. He leaned forward, lips moving, silently urging it.

A flippant player recited: "Round and round the little ball goes, where she'll stop nobody knows!"

Barsden glared at him. He knew where it wouldn't stop—on his money. He was right.

An oath escaped him. Until a week ago he had known enough to keep away from the wheel when he visited Imray's place to make contacts. Then, on his way to cash in after a moderate flutter at baccarat, he tossed a few chips on the roulette table. It cost him five thousand dollars before he quit.

The loss got under his skin. He returned next night to get his money back—and lost fifteen thousand. Thereafter he contributed nightly, in growing amounts, an aggregate of a hundred and thirty thousand dollars.

And now, out seventy thousand in a

couple of hours, he was well on his way to the cleaners. The wheel was more than under his skin—it was taking his entire hide!

Imray touched his arm, motioned him toward the lavish buffet off the gambling room.

"A drink and a bite to eat might warm up your luck," said Imray, softly drawling. "I've seen men turn around a couple of times when the sign was on them and then come right back and burn up the house. Come on and try it."

"Trouble with this joint," said Barsden sourly, "is you can't lay a real bet. When a man's on the nut, what show has he got with a two-and-a-half-grand top? What the hell is two grand and a half!"

The smile wrinkles deepened at the ends of Imray's cold eyes. He gestured carelessly.

"Take the top off if you want to, Torry." He nodded to the dealer: "There's no limit, Tom."

The dealer's eyes flickered. He touched the wheel with a finger-tip, spun it slowly.

"I'll break you," said Barsden meanly, "if I lay fifty grand on the line and hit. You'd owe me a million and a half!"

Still smiling amiably, Imray patted his shoulder.

"You're making your own limit, Torry. If we haven't got the cash I'll give you a mortgage. Go ahead with your fifty grand or whatever you please. The other gentlemen are waiting and you're holding things up."

ACCCEPTANCE of the challenge took Barsden aback. He saw the other players eyeing him, eager for the thrill of seeing a fifty-thousand-dollar bet with a million and

a half at stake on the other side. Imray's smile mocked him.

In a spot of his own making, he couldn't back out without losing face. If he went through with it he'd be a big shot. If he crawled out of it he'd be a big mouth.

Utterly without faith in the outcome, he laughed harshly, pretending good-humor, and hedged on the size of the bet.

"I wouldn't take the roof right off your head in one roll, Jack. I'll give you a break and maybe you can save some of the pieces. Here you are, Tom; let's see you shoot at this."

He put two ten-thousand-dollar bills on the Double-O.

The dealer nodded dispassionately, looked at the others. They held their modest twenties and fifties and hundreds, awed by this breath-taking plunge.

"Let 'er go," drawled Imray.

The wheel flew, its colors a blur. The dealer dropped in the pill. It leaped and chattered through a seemingly eternity before the slowing wheel permitted it to settle down to a murmurous rippling. As it stopped the bystanders relaxed with a combined sigh.

"Black," said the dealer, raking in the bills.

Barsden spat an oath.

Square Jack Imray shrugged.

"The limit is still off," he said and turned away.

The jumble of a dozen voices made Barsden conscious of his audience. Because of it he reined his anger and did the Broadway thing—grinned, grandstanding. Having made his flash, he brightened it by laying another twenty thousand dollars on the Double-O.

"Shoot," he said, "and if I don't take you this time—"

He sucked in his breath while the wheel spun—swore again and slapped down the fifty grand. He might be sunk but, anyhow, he'd be remembered when they talked of plungers!

"Shooting for the million and a half!" he said. "Let it roll!"

The ball clattered and leaped, whispered to a standstill.

"Black," said the dealer. He raked the fifty grand with an exaggerated casual air, turned the wheel with a finger, looked inquiringly.

Barsden buried a curse in a hoarse laugh, exhibiting to the end. He fingered the remaining four thousand dollars in his vest pocket, shook his head.

"That's a hundred and sixty grand tonight," he said at large, "and three hundred grand in a week. I'm running for president of the suckers' club!"

Square Jack Imray came across the room at a sign from the dealer.

"How's my roof, Torry?" he smiled. "Have you taken it yet?"

"Not a shingle," said Barsden, holding a grisly grin. "How's chances of stemmin' the price of some ham and eggs!"

II

ON that note he went out, keeping up his front till he stood alone on the sidewalk. He talked to himself awhile and it would have meant the same in any language. He was worse than broke. He was in the discard, among the rubbish.

Until tonight he had lost none but his own money. Of tonight's losses only thirteen thousand dollars belonged to him—his ten per cent of the day's winnings on the horses. Thirteen from a hundred and sixty-four left a hundred and fifty-one—a hundred and fifty-one thousand dollars that belonged to his five clients.

Broadway would talk about him, all right, as a gyp and double-crosser, a big shot with other people's dough. That spelled finish, for Broadway gossip traveled fast and far. Nobody would ever trust him with a dime.

So he was through—and lucky if he didn't get jailed. In the chute with a lousy four grand to ride on. All because he dropped a few dollars on the wheel and let the damn thing get his goat.

Facing a pay-off in the morning, he went to his hotel and from the racing chart worked out some imaginary plays to show that he had lost the thirty thousand. He could get by with that—until the gossip columns retailed his splurge in Square Jack Imray's penthouse.

The columnists got the tale without delay and twenty-four hours later finished Torry Barsden's career as a betting commissioner. One of them called him up and asked if he was going to let Imray get away with it.

"With what?" asked Barsden.

"With trimming you," said the key-hole specialist. "That Square Jack stuff is a joke. It couldn't fool anybody but the wise guys on Broadway. He's as crooked as a snaky fence and would take his own brother. You're not dumb enough to think his wheel is on the level, are you?"

Barsden gave thought to that for the first time. It was hard to believe. Not because he held Imray in especially great esteem, but because Imray's reputation appeared to be founded on a rock. "The squarest gambler in the country"—and no one ever had arisen to say otherwise. Even Broadway, so ready in its jealousies to wreck a good name, gave him the hallmark of a square-shooter.

"You wouldn't," said Barsden, "tell him that to his face."

"Probably not," said the columnist; "I like my health too well. Let me elaborate the picture a little. Whether you know it or not, Imray put his cash in real estate when times were good—hotels, apartment houses, office buildings—and he's had one hell of a job hanging on to them since everything went lame. A dollar is a dollar to him nowadays, just like it is to you and me; and it takes a lot of dollars to protect his investments. He used to be only half-crooked but now if he lay down beside a pretzel it would seem straight. How well do you know Tom Maley, who runs his wheel?"

"What about him?" asked Barsden.

"Nothing much, except that he was run out of Frisco and Denver and Chicago and several other places for running trick wheels."

"Who says so?" asked Barsden with mounting blood pressure.

"I do," said the columnist, "and I hear things, you know."

"Yeah," said Barsden, "and what are you trying to start?"

"Anything you feel like doing about it," said the trouble-monger cheerfully.

"I haven't forecast a murder in over a month. What did you say?"

"Go to hell!" repeated Barsden and hung up.

BUT the seed was taking root. There was no reason why Imray, if running a crooked game, might have made an exception in his case. There never had been bad blood between them but they were not intimates. More correctly, they were neighbors in a dog-eat-dog world of double-dealing and treachery. Barsden moped in his room, thinking it over.

Within a few hours the seed was fertilized and grew swiftly.

Tom Maley called him up. Dispute

over the size of his slice out of Barsden's losses had parted him from Imray.

"You didn't have a chance," he told Barsden, steaming him up to commit mayhem or murder. "No matter how you bet you didn't have a chance. I fixed that wheel myself and could stop it anywhere."

Barsden absorbed that with comparative calm.

"You wouldn't go with me," he said, "while I tax him with it?"

"I wouldn't," said Maley, "because I wouldn't want to get in range of your gun and get him throwing lead at me if you missed. You don't have to take my word for anything, understand? Go tear the wheel apart and you'll find the wiring. And don't forget, he egged you on considerably when you shot the big roll."

"I'm not forgetting," said Barsden.

"I'd tear him apart along with the wheel," said Maley, "but you know yourself what you want to do. I'm leaving town before the shooting gets too loose. So long and good luck!"

His suggestion bore immediate fruit. Barsden stuck a gun in his pocket and went to Imray's penthouse.

The doorman let him in without question. Imray advanced to greet him.

There was only a scattering of players so early in the night. Someone recognized him and they all turned to stare.

Barsden boiled over prematurely, heedlessly, without regard for the fact that he was in the enemy camp. He jerked out his gun and trained it on Imray's belly.

"You dirty crook," he said thickly. "I'm going to take that crooked wheel apart and then I'm going—"

A soft-footed bodyguard stepped up

behind him and knocked him cold with a blackjack.

Barsden came to in Imray's living quarters. The bodyguard held a gun on him.

"I think," said Imray, "I've heard all I want to hear from you. I'm giving you twenty-four hours to get out of town and stay out. Don't go and I'll put you in the morgue."

Barsden sat up, felt the lump over his ear. He looked at the gun, nodded.

"Another thing," said Imray. "You've been talking with Maley. Forget what he told you or you won't get out of town. Don't broadcast. Forget it after you get out of town or you won't live long. If anybody wants to know, I fired Maley for high-grading. If he isn't already gone, he isn't leaving town. Read tomorrow's papers," he smiled, "and find out."

Barsden kept his mouth shut.

Imray laughed: "You never gave a sucker an even break, did you? Then what did you expect? I ought to send you for a ride—but, hell, you're not big enough to rate that. Take him out, Bill, and throw him in a cab."

III

BARSDEN checked out of his hotel that night but didn't leave town.

He holed up in the Bronx.

Neither did Maley leave town. Bullets stopped him as he got into a taxi to go to the railroad station. With three slugs in his chest, one through the lobe of his left lung, he tarried in a hospital.

The columnists printed the story of Barsden's abortive gunplay as a sequel to his insane attempt to crack the Double-O for a million and a half dollars.

Learning of that incident, the police hunted him for the Maley shooting, on

the theory that after failing to shoot Imray he went after the dealer. Barsden surrendered, established an alibi, and faded into hiding in Brooklyn before Imray's guns could get him.

In obscurity, Barsden bided his time. Imray never moved without a bodyguard and could not be got at in the city. But later on, when he opened his summer place out near Southampton on Long Island, he might be reachable.

In the middle of August Imray's Long Island place was raided and temporarily put out of business. He stayed there trying to make a fix.

Barsden drove out late the following night. He knew the house gambling being suspended, the customary guards would not be in the grounds. He went well equipped for murder, with gun, knife and blackjack!

The night was soggy hot and still after a scorching day. He stripped off his coat and opened his shirt but heat and nerves together soaked him with sweat.

The big rambling bungalow was lighted when he drove past at one o'clock in the morning. He parked his car off the road a quarter of a mile away, put on his coat for better concealment, and walked back.

Taking cover behind shrubs and trees, he circled to the wing occupied by Imray's suite. His assumption that the usual guards would not be on duty appeared to be correct. He saw no one.

Imray's room were dark. Through a window and an open door Barsden saw into the main hall, heard voices from the living room.

His attention was to get in and wait for Imray to retire; now he was compelled to revise that. The window screens were stronger than he had thought, the copper mesh reinforced

with rods, and fastened securely. He could not remove one without making noise that probably would be heard inside.

In doubt, he retreated to the shelter of some trees to devise another means of entry. Time passed quickly without bringing an answer. At three o'clock he was no further advanced.

Going to the front of the house, he stared at the lighted windows while another hour sped. He went to the rear and tried doors and windows without finding a vulnerable spot. His only apparent course was to wait until Imray went to bed and shoot him through a window.

But that was not at all to his liking. With the alarm immediately given he could not get away. His carefully built up alibi would be worthless.

Debating whether to postpone the killing until a more advantageous time, he returned to the front of the house. Among trees a hundred feet from it he stood trying to make up his mind.

A smothered cough behind him made him whirl and draw his gun.

"Stick 'em up!" ordered a wheezy voice. "Stick 'em up and keep still!"

The speaker was only a shape, unrecognizable in the darkness.

SHEER desperation dictated Barsden's instant response. If Imray got him he would die. He acted on that positive knowledge but with it went the thought that if this man was a lone guard on patrol and could be quieted—

Barsden smashed his gun into the gray blur that was the other's face, kicked him savagely in the groin, swarmed on him.

At the first surge of the curious and unexpected attack the man dropped his pistol. The gun, thudding mercilessly

on his face and head, blinded him and made him helpless to defend himself.

Barsden hammered him to the ground, sat on him and pounded him into insensibility.

With that he stopped and peered to see if he knew the man. Even with light the gory, battered face would have been a blurred riddle.

In doubt again, Barsden considered killing him. He hinged that question upon whether he could get through with the killing of Imray. That seemed impossible without overwhelming risk. Besides, daylight was not far off and there was still no sign of those in the bungalow going to bed. He decided to save Imray for another day.

There was, then, no sense in jeopardizing his own life by murdering the unconscious man. It was only necessary to make sure that, when he recovered consciousness, he could not at once raise an alarm. Barsden cut his victim's belt into strips, bound and gagged him, and thrust him into the bushes.

The east paled as Barsden started over Sunrise Highway on his ninety mile trip to Brooklyn. The sun came up fat and red for another scorching day.

He drove fast to get under his alibi in case Imray should put two and two together and charge him with the attack.

IV

WHEN the word came over the teletype at eleven o'clock New York police linked it with the unsolved shooting of Maley. Never wholly satisfied with Barsden's alibi in the Maley case, they knew where to find him.

Condon and Morse of the homicide squad rang the bell of his apartment in Brooklyn at noon.

Barsden, in pajamas, set down a

tall frosted glass and admitted them.

"Get dressed," said Condon. "We're taking you back to Suffolk County."

Barsden backed into the untidy living room. Whisky and gin bottles, dirty glasses, littered it.

"Back to Suffolk county?" he said. "That's the top of Long Island, isn't it? I haven't been there in a couple of years. What are we going for?"

"You wouldn't know," Morse jeered. "Let's hear your alibi for last night."

"I was here," said Barsden. "I haven't been out in days. It's been too damn hot; anyhow, with Imray looking for me I haven't been going out much. I've got three men can prove I was here all night."

"Sure," said Condon, "like you proved you were somewhere in the Bronx when Maley got knocked off. Always got an alibi, haven't you?"

"Well," said Barsden, "I proved I was in the Bronx."

"Maybe you did," said Morse. "Now let's see you prove you were in Brooklyn. Where's all your alibi witnesses this trip? We'll look them over."

Barsden motioned into the apartment.

"Two of them are here. They live here. I'll wake them up."

"Stay here," said Condon, "I'll get them."

Barsden took up his drink and finished it.

"I'll get some ice and make you," he said, heading for the kitchen.

"Come here," said Morse, "don't scatter. Where's your car?"

"I haven't any."

"Your pals in there got one?"

Barsden shook his head. The murder car with fictitious plates was hired

from a man who charged a big price but asked no questions. His cars were orphans, their ownership unprovable, if they fell into the hands of the police.

Condon returned with the awakened witnesses, unprepossessing citizens, one in pajama pants, the other in his underwear, both with an appreciable hang-over.

They were horse-players, they explained, but did not add that Jockey Club detectives had labelled them undesirable touts and barred them from the tracks. Just a coupla fellas, John Lang and Jake Brown, who minded their own business and never did anybody any harm and couldn't see why the cops should bust in and—

"Shut up," said Morse, "and tell us where you were last night."

"We told him," said Brown. "We're right here all the time."

"Except when we run down to the corner a couple of times," amplified Lang, "after liquor."

"And where was Barsden?"

"Right here with us. Eddie can tell you that."

"Who's Eddie?"

"He's a bartender down on the corner," said Brown. "He came over when he got through and was here when I went to sleep."

Barsden spoke: "Eddie left about half an hour ago. He goes to work at noon."

"We'll see him later," said Condon. "What time did you men go to sleep?"

"Oh," said Laig vaguely, "about five, I guess. Five or six. It was too damn hot to sleep."

Brown grinned: "Until we got a skinful. Yeh, I remember it was somewhere around five."

"It was five o'clock," said Barsden.

"How do you know?" fired Condon.

Barsden smiled: "I stuck to rickies and didn't get stewed."

THE detectives looked at each other, shrugged helplessly. With three witnesses to swear that he was not out of Brooklyn, and nothing so far to show that he was in Southampton, ninety miles away, Barsden appeared to be in the clear.

They sat down to await the arrival of a Suffolk county officer, then on his way. As matters stood they couldn't see any use in taking Barsden in.

Barsden offered them drinks and mixed a ricky for himself when they declined. Lang and Brown took jolts of whisky.

"Barsden tells us," said Condon, fumbling around, "he hasn't been out of the house for days. Is that right?"

"Sure," said Lang, and Brown nodded. "Some guy wants to plug him and he's been stayin' close."

Barsden pushed up his pajama sleeves as he folded his arms. He leaned back with nothing to say. The less he said, the less chance there was of tripping him.

Morse looked at him a moment, smiled.

"And," said the detective slowly, "he hasn't been out for days."

"Not for days," said Lang.

"Not since—lemme see," said Brown, "Monday, I guess."

"That's three days ago," said Morse. "Right, Torry?"

"Monday?" said Barsden. "Yes, I guess I was out a while Monday night."

"How about this morning? You're sure you haven't been out?"

"Not since Monday," said Barsden.

"Then how in hell," rapped Morse, "did your left elbow get sunburned? Freshly sunburned! It got that way this morning when you hung your arm

on the door, driving in from Southampton after killing Imray!"

V

BARSDEN raised his elbow and looked at it—at the fiery red of new sunburn. Staring at it as if dazed, he sat up.

"Cripes!" blurted Brown, "what d'you know about that!"

Condon shoved him violently, followed him up.

"You tell us!" he barked, whipping his billy threateningly. "What do you know about it?"

Barsden dived for a gun under a cushion at his side.

Morse dived at him, upset him and the chair, pinned his gun hand to the floor, held him. Barsden became still, listening.

"Don't hit me, chief," pleaded Brown, scared eyes on the menacing billy. "Here's how it is and the God's truth! We get a grand apiece for sayin' he's here but we don't know where he goes or what he does or nothin'. Ain't that right, John?"

"I wouldn't lie!" said Lang, edging out of Condon's reach. "He's tellin' it straight, chief. We get a grand apiece, us and the bartender, and that's all we know, except Barsden's been gone from nine last night till eight this morning."

On top of Barsden, Morse looked him in the eye.

"There's your alibi," he said, "all shot."

Barsden let go of the gun. The detective took it and let him up.

"A liar by the sun!" said Morse, "and that starts you for the chair. If you'd kept your coat on you might've got away with it. Come on, mug, get dressed. It's a murder rap. You other mugs, too."

Lang and Brown volubly protested their innocence. When they were dressed, Condon united them with handcuffs and told them to shut up.

Barsden broke his silence. "They were with me."

"That's the idea," said Morse. "With everybody squealing on everybody else we'll get it right. Go ahead and talk."

"Nuts!" said Lang. "We were down in Eddie's place at four o'clock. There's a dozen people saw us down there."

Barsden abandoned that line.

"Murder?" he said, "is he dead?"

"If they're not lying to us," said Condon. "Surprises you, don't it?"

"But—" Barsden shook his head, asked, "Who is he?"

"Aw," said Morse, "what the hell are you trying to hand us now? Who is he! Who the hell'd you go out there to knock off?"

"But—" Barsden paused again, went on because he was already so completely involved: "But I didn't kill him. I didn't even see him."

"No," said Condon, "no, of course you didn't kill him. But how'd you expect him to breathe with a bathrobe cord tied into his neck?"

"I didn't do that. I only slugged him when he pulled a gun on me—slugged him and tied him up."

"Now you're talking about Maley," said Morse. "He ain't dead, but he's damn near it."

"Maley!" Barsden stared in a fuddled way. "You mean that was Maley—"

"Yeah," said Morse, "yes, indeed, it was Maley. What I can't see is why you didn't knock him off, too. You had it in for him as well as Imray, didn't you?"

"But," sweated Barsden, still resist-

ing the fact that was being forced on him, "I didn't see Imray. I went to see him, but—"

"Nuts!" said Condon. "You cracked his skull with a jack and tied the cord around his neck. Then on the getaway you ran into Maley and cracked his skull, but for some unknown reason didn't finish him."

"No!" Barsden's voice rose hoarsely. "If somebody killed Imray, Maley did it. He owed Imray for that time he got shot. He killed Imray and—"

"Nuts again," said Condon. "He and Imray were pals. He was stopping out there at the house and just stepped out to get some air when you ran into him. Maybe it was after that you knocked Imray off, but that don't matter. You did it, anyhow. That's the story, see, and I bet we make it stick."

THE columnist who fired the fuse when he told Barsden that Imray's wheel was crooked, wrote:

Broadway isn't convinced that Torry Barsden got Square Jack Imray, because Broadway isn't convinced that the make-up between Imray and Tom Maley was a real love match. Others who were in the bungalow recall that when Imray left them to go to bed Maley said he was going for a walk and also left them. They didn't notice how soon he quit the house, but concede the possibility that he used up a couple of minutes tightening the cord on Imray's neck. But Broadway won't try the case, and the way things lie Barsden is going to burn for the double job. Maley's ante-mortem statement drove the final spike, the word of a dying man being gospel to any jury. And, anyhow, Barsden set out that night to give Imray the business, and he certainly did give it to Maley. So what's the odds if there is a bit of a joke on somebody?

NOVEMBER CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB

(Continued from Page 27)

Fifteen—Bloody,* Mt. Vernon, Ill.; Mrs. Robert De Noyelles,* Kew Gardens, L. I., N. Y.; J. A. G., Philadelphia, Pa.; Jonesibus, Austin, Tex.; Frank L. Jund,* Irvington, N. J.; Mary A. Kennedy,* Allston, Mass.; Al. Liston,* Newark, N. J.; Eugene Miller, Petersburg, Ind.

Fourteen—Edna D. Brooks, Attleboro, Mass.; Irene Laun,* Washington, D. C.; Alpha Kappa Phi,* Sheboygan, Wis.; Albert B. Wooldridge, San Antonio, Tex.

Twelve—Mrs. W. C. Bird,* San Francisco, Calif.; George W. Bowesman,* New York, N. Y.; Bunny,* Roxbury Station, Conn.; Geo. A. Cowan,* New Bethlehem, Pa.; Danny Deever,* Dallas, Tex.; J. J. Extel, San Bernardino, Calif.; Gregory, Dawson, N. M.; Kania,* Milwaukee, Wis.; Helen Thomas King,* San Francisco, Calif.; Ksea,* Boston, Mass.; F. J. S.,* Chicago, Ill.; H. B. "Speck" Varley,* Little Rock, Ark.; Waltraw,* Detroit, Mich.; J. L. T. Waltz,* Brooklyn, N. Y.

Eleven—Ajax,* Staples, Minn.; Eibserf,* Fort Monroe, Va.; Siam,* Wichita Falls, Tex.

Ten—Pearl Carol,* Brooklyn, N. Y.; Virginia Freeman,* Akron, Ohio; Pearl Knowler, Wendling, Oreg.; Charles E. Smith, Jersey City, N. J.

Nine—Fred Windham, Atlanta, Ga.

Eight—Phillip R. Nichols,* East Hartford, Conn.; E. Sthar Odilnu, Atchison, Kans.; Mrs. A. E. Wurzbach,* Harlingen, Tex.

Six—Billie,* Seattle, Wash.; Elmer Boskov,* Trenton, N. J.; Wren's Egg,* Duquesne, Pa.;

Gee Eye,* McKeesport, Pa.; Frank Gessner,* Duquesne, Pa.; R. Harte,* Edmond, Kans.; Gracie Jaye,* Gary, Ind.; Jayem,* Bellingham, Wash.; Bellerophon,* Seattle, Wash.; Mrs. George F. Lamb,* Sacramento, Calif.; Fred E. Loepp,* Cleveland, Ohio; Alice H. McDowell,* Chicago, Ill.; Neon,* Rochester, N. Y.; John P. O'Brien, Jr.,* New York, N. Y.; E. H. R.,* Forsyth, Ga.; Isabel Revord,* Cromwell, Conn.; Sarge,* Fort Randolph, C. Z.; J. F. Sivad, New York, N. Y.; James H. Williams,* Beech Grove, Ind.; W. F. Wilson, White Plains, N. Y.

Five—H. M. Chasson,* Gary, Ind.; L. A. Frazier,* Bassett, Neb.; I. Havit,* Aurora, Ill.; William A. Hill,* Flushing, L. I., N. Y.; Mrs. Otis Hobgood,* Meridian, Miss.; Hoosier,* Martinsville, Ind.; Geo. R. Jetmore, Muncie, Ind.; Fae Malon,* Englehart, Ont., Can.; Mrs. B. C. Squires,* Thomaston, Conn.; Mrs. R. B. Tuck,* Akron, Ohio.

Four—John H. Brady, New York, N. Y.; Copper,* Columbus, Ohio; Mortimer Nagan, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Thomas Pyle, Helena, Mont.

Three—Jesse R. Collins, Coahoma, Tex.; Frank Cross, Black Diamond, Wash.

Two—Miss Lillian Omand, Hamilton, Ont., Can. *One*—Hellen Griffin, Niles, Mich.; Rah,* Newburgh, N. Y.; Ned Henderson,* Miami, Fla.; J. L. Mulvane, Ossian, Ind.; Bernard Pike, North Arlington, N. J.

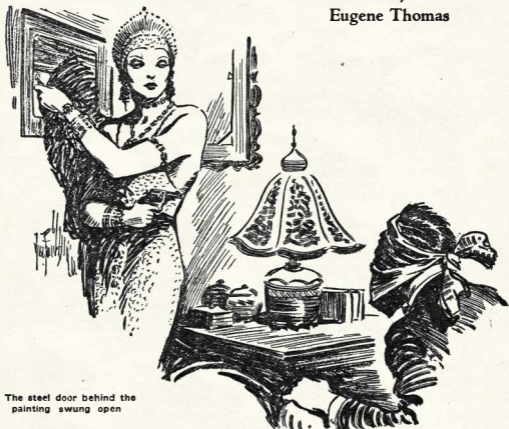
Correction—J. C. K., Gary, Ind., 18* answers for October instead of 6* answers as previously credited.

The LADY from HELL

The Episode of the Secret Service Blackmail

A True Story

By
Eugene Thomas



The steel door behind the painting swung open

From the Fortress of the Bald Doctor with the Yellow Eyes Vivian Legrand Snatches a Letter Worth Three Thousand Pounds

COL. SIR MARK CAYWOOD, Chief of the British Secret Service in the Far East, was an exceedingly worried man on two counts this June night.

The first worry rose from a cablegram in code received that morning from the Viceroy of India giving him to understand, in no uncertain terms, that the Viceroy expected results in the matter that was just then occupying the undivided attention of the secret service as well as causing new wrinkles and gray hair among the higher members of British India officialdom.

The second worry rose from a note

received an hour or so before, signed Mrs. Legrand, and stating that the writer would call at his office at eight that night for an interview of importance. No answer had been requested, and, apparently, none had been expected, the writer taking it for granted that the interview would be granted her.

In his files were several reports on Vivian Legrand, who was wanted in Shanghai in connection with the murder of her father, the notorious Duke Donellan. Under ordinary conditions, Sir Mark would have simply ordered the lady held for the Shanghai police. The matter was not so simple, however. As a matter of fact, Sir Mark did not dare arrest her, for she was present in Rangoon as the guest of a native potentate, the ruling Rajah of Salingar. To arrest his guest would be an offense to the rajah that Sir Mark did not care to commit.

So, as the clock approached eight, he sat alone in his study beneath a madly whirring fan and sweltered and swore. Not once did Sir Mark suspect that there might be a most important connection between that note and the cablegram.

A houseboy appeared like a white wraith. Sir Mark looked up.

"A lady who says that you desire an appointment with her, O Presence."

The colonel stared. The effrontery of the woman, making it appear that the appointment was of his seeking! He did not realize—nor did many another of her victims in later years realize—that Vivian Legrand almost invariably and at once placed the other person on the defensive. It gave her the advantage. The colonel bit his lip, then said slowly, "Show the lady in."

He watched the doorway and presently a figure materialized. He rose—

and came out of the shell. His official reports on Vivian Legrand had not prepared him for what he saw. No man could question her beauty. Her red hair caught the shaded light on the colonel's study table and became a quivering flame above the exquisitely modeled, exotic face. The clinging black gown she wore seemed molded to her shapely form.

"You are Mrs. Legrand?"

"I am Mrs. Legrand," Vi responded in the husky contralto that was one of her charms. The smile she bestowed upon him was completely disarming.

"Since I received your note," the colonel told her, settling behind the desk, "I have, if you will pardon me, been more than a little puzzled. I cannot imagine anything that cannot be taken up with my secretary."

"I told you that I wanted to see you regarding a matter of importance."

SHE paused and smiled. Had Sir Mark known what was in her mind at the moment the smile might not have pleased him as much as it did. Vivian Legrand lay back in silence in the long rattan chair, quite at ease, her hands clasped in her lap, chin tilted, eyes looking upon him as a cat's eyes look upon the mouse it is about to play with.

"What happened on the night of June 14th?" she flung at him.

He glared at her, consternation written on his features.

"You don't mean—"

"But I do," she assured him.

He drummed upon the desk.

"You have not answered me," she reminded him after a moment. "Shall I tell you what happened that night, and what the consequences are likely to be?"

He raised a hand swiftly. "Please.

These things are best not discussed."

She went on relentlessly. "On the night of June 14th a paper was stolen from your safe . . . a letter that had been written to you by a man named Ivan Stavinsky, a prisoner who had been sentenced for life to the penal colony on the Andaman Islands. If that letter falls into the hands of a certain power to the north of India, it might precipitate a war."

The colonel leaned forward tensely. "You know the contents of that letter?"

"What I know is locked away safely until the time is ripe to bring it forth. Meanwhile, I will say this much. That letter has not left Rangoon."

For a moment Sir Mark sat motionless and expressionless. Then he said briefly:

"Unless you are willing to answer my question truthfully, there is no need to continue the interview further."

She dismissed the implication with a shrug. "Frankly, I do not know the contents," she said. "But I do know where it is."

Instantly he was on his feet. "You do?"

She nodded. "How much is it worth to you if I recover that document, Sir Mark?"

He stared at her in amazement.

"You—recover it? But that is impossible!" He stopped, struck by a sudden thought, and she laughed.

"Wrong, Sir Mark. I am not the person who stole that letter. But I repeat that I know who did—know where it is—and if it is worth—shall we say three thousand pounds to you—you may have it back again."

It was with difficulty that Sir Mark suppressed an impulse to smile. He said soberly:

"I'll confess that I do not know how

you learned of this matter. But since you do, won't you be more explicit? To—ah—propose to blackmail the British Secret Service seems rather incredible."

In her turn, Vivian Legrand suppressed an impulse to smile. She wondered what Sir Mark would say were



VIVIAN LEGRAND

she to tell him that the secret service of the Mandarin Hoang Fi Tu, underworld leader of Manila, was fully as good as that of the British; and when it came to gathering information among the underworld occupants of the Far East, much better than the British.

She said swiftly, stabbing each word at him as if it were a weapon.

"I mean, quite simply, Sir Mark, that I can and will do—for the sum of three thousand pounds—what your entire police and secret service have failed to do."

He chewed his lip. "Really, won't

you throw a little more light on the subject?"

"No," she replied curtly. "Either you accept my offer, or you don't."

Sir Mark's forehead wrinkled in an official frown.

"This is most extraordinary. Is that a—er—threat?"

It seemed impossible that a girl as superbly beautiful as this one should be sitting across the desk from him calmly blackmailing him, and through him, the British Empire!

Vivian Legrand laughed, that laugh that rippled low in her throat.

"Dare one threaten the British Secret Service?" she purred.

Sir Mark drummed upon the surface of the desk again. His thoughts at that moment were none too pleasant.

"Well, what are your terms?" came at length from him.

She was aware that she was mistress of the situation and she enjoyed the position.

"I wish, first of all, an invitation for myself and Mr. Adrian Wylie to the Official Ball to be held next Wednesday. I want you to have at that ball three thousand pounds in bank notes, and be prepared to pay them to me that night upon delivery of the letter. And lastly, I wish you to arrange with the municipal police of Shanghai that any charges against me in connection with the death of my father be dropped."

Sir Mark stared at her in amazement.

"You ask the impossible."

She made an impatient gesture.

"You are not dealing with a fool or a child, Sir Mark." I know that the municipal police in Shanghai, upon your request, will wipe out all record of any charge against me."

Their eyes met and there followed a quick duel. The man's smile was a signal of defeat.

"You are a very resourceful woman," he said.

"I have to be," she said. "You accept?"

"I accept," he said. "The charge will be quashed. You shall have your invitations tomorrow. And I shall be prepared to carry out my part of the bargain on the night of the ball. The cash will be ready."

She smiled her approval, gave him her hand and moved to the door; melted into the dusky hallway, leaving Sir Mark seated at his desk with a feeling of bafflement.

II

FOR six weeks Vivian Legrand and her companion in crime had been the guests of the Rajah of Salinger, following her rescue by the rajah from his own brother in the depths of the Malayan jungle. Vivian Legrand and Adrian Wylie had plotted with the Mandarin Hoang Fi Tu to topple the rajah from his throne. Yet when their plot failed Vivian and Wylie had made the rajah believe that they were motion picture people, making pictures in the jungle, Wylie being the director and Vivian Legrand the actress.

The rajah had offered the two of them his hospitality as recompense, in some part, for the injuries she had suffered at the hands of his brother, and Vivian Legrand, still thinking of a ruby mine which the rajah owned, had accepted.

When she returned from her meeting with Colonel Sir Mark Caywood she found Wylie waiting for her on the after deck of the rajah's yacht.

She dropped down into a chair beside him.

"Well," she said briefly, "we are to deliver the letter to him next Wednesday night in return for the payment of three thousand pounds—cash on the nail."

"Very nice," Wylie reflected, a touch of sarcasm in his manner. "Now all we have to do is the thing that the whole British Secret Service in the Far East has failed to do—discover who has the letter, get it away from them, and deliver it. Of course we'll find that quite simple."

Doc Wylie had not yet discovered what would be quite plain to him in later years of their partnership in crime—namely, that Vivian Legrand never took a step in one of their schemes without the next step being clear before her.

"I know who has it, and know how to get it," she assured him.

Wylie sat up, astonishment written on his face.

"You do?" he said incredulously. "I received the mandarin's cablegram only this morning. In less than twelve hours, in a strange port, you've discovered what the British Secret Service failed completely to find a trace of?"

Vivian Legrand bent closer and lowered her voice.

"I reasoned," she said, "that because Russia was involved the secret service would be looking for a Russian angle. And I reasoned that the man clever enough to steal that letter would also be clever enough to make sure that there was no visible thread connecting him with Russia—that it would be someone on whom the breath of suspicion would never fall.

"And I reasoned also that a document containing as much political

dynamite as that letter would never be entrusted to a subordinate. It would be delivered by the principal himself to the Russian authorities—to make sure of getting the credit.

"The first thing I did was to check the steamship sailings. There has been no boat sailing from here for a Russian port, or a port where connections could be made for Russia, since June 14th. The first boat is next Saturday. I discovered that three persons had



DOC WYLIE

booked passage through to Harbin, where connections can be made on the Chinese Eastern Railroad for Siberia and St. Petersburg. Two of them were obviously impossible suspects. The third seemed impossible, and yet if my line of reasoning was correct, it had to be he. I went down into the Chinese quarter, managed to get hold of a discharged Chinese servant—and I was right."

"Who is it?" Wylie asked.

"Dr. Basil Orbison," Vivian Legrand responded.

Wylie thought a moment. "Never heard of him."

"HE is a doctor, half Greek, half English who is making an exhaustive study of tropical diseases," she told him. "He lives some seven miles out from the town. He is an exceedingly peculiar individual, yet well liked by the English. A friend of the Governor's, who is often called in by the hospitals here when something beyond their medical experience comes up. Not the slightest breath of suspicion that he might be connected with Russia, and yet his house is surrounded by a high wall and guarded like a fortress. And unless I'm a fool the letter we want is in that house."

Wylie looked at her seriously. "Where it's likely to stay if that house is as well guarded as you say."

"That's why I asked for—and got—invitations to the Official Ball on Wednesday night."

Then she made a swift gesture to Wylie as the tall form of the Rajah of Salingar loomed in the shadows of the deck. The rajah was their anchor to windward, their safeguard. As guests on his yacht they could go almost anywhere, move in circles that otherwise they could not enter. He must not be permitted to suspect, even for a moment, that they were not motion picture people. And then, too, there was the matter of the ruby mine that was a part of the royal properties of Salingar.

Educated at Oxford, the rajah's English was practically flawless, as he stopped beside them in the shadows and greeted his guests warmly. Vivian Legrand leaned back a trifle, so that the glow from a lantern at the companion-way made highlights in the red of her

hair and etched her exotic face in soft relief. Then she patted a cushion beside her and the rajah sank down upon it.

Wylie watched the absorbed face of the Malay ruler for a moment as the man talked with Vivian, and then with a grim smile of satisfaction got to his feet and went below to his cabin.

III

THE orchestra was playing a slow waltz when Vivian Legrand came up the steps of Government House on the arm of the Prince of Salingar, with Doc Wylie following discreetly behind.

A cap of cloth of silver hid her flaming hair, and a flame-like spray of egrets swayed above her head. Gown and hands and throat were shimmering with jewels—some of them given her by the rajah, others that he had loaned her. Pendants dangled beside cheeks that were pale as if all the blood had been drained out of them, but her lips were blood red.

The Governor and his wife greeted them courteously, and if their eyes widened a trifle at the sight of a white woman attending the Official Ball on the arm of a native rajah, it was not noticeable.

Vivian Legrand's greenish eyes, shadowed with lids as purple as grapes, flitted here and there about the long room. She was searching for someone, and presently she caught sight of the man she sought—Basil Orbison.

He was talking to a woman, and for the first time Vivian had a good look at him. His gaunt face was as pale as anything that lives in darkness. A bony, fleshless sort of face, plastered over with lifeless skin; ugly and interesting. The eyes glittered in bony

sockets. Dark hair flowed back from a high forehead.

The woman with him claimed Vivian Legrand's close attention, for she was the key to her plan. Without her, Vivian was helpless. By a coincidence that was no coincidence on Vivian's part the two women wore the same type of headdress—silver cap fitting over the hair, from which rose the flame-like spray of egrets. It had cost Vivian Legrand fifty dollars to find what kind of head dress the woman would wear, and to have the Chinese dressmaker make a duplicate of it for her.

Wylie, walking down the room beside her, was the only one who caught the whisper that came from her lips.

"That's the woman—talking to Orbison—you know what you've got to do—be ready when I get Orbison out on the veranda."

The next moment Vivian Legrand was smiling up into the eyes of the Rajah of Salingar.

With the rajah at her side she moved slowly about the room. Several times she stood close enough to the woman with Orbison, who was addressed as Madame Carpenter, to hear her voice. It was a low-pitched, well-modulated voice, and Vivian Legrand fixed its tones firmly in her mind.

Within an hour she had contrived to meet Dr. Basil Orbison and had steered him deftly to a corner of the veranda. His back was to the clustered shrubbery which bordered the veranda, and even if he had heard a faint rustling in the shrubbery he would have put it down to the passage of a night bird.

They stood there talking for a few minutes. There was not the slightest change in Vivian Legrand's manner or

voice to indicate that she saw the stealthy shape that loomed up in the shrubbery behind the doctor. So cleverly did she hold his attention that he never knew what hit him.

His limp form slumped to the floor, and almost instantly Wylie had vaulted over the railing, still holding the black-jack.

"Get him over the railing, quick," Vivian Legrand said tensely.

Together they raised him and lowered him. While Vivian Legrand stood on the balcony above, Wylie swiftly went through the man's pockets and found the thing for which he was looking—a key ring.

"How long will he be out?" Vivian Legrand asked as he passed the keys up to her.

"Fifteen minutes—maybe twenty," Wylie said.

"It will have to do," she said tersely. She moved swiftly down the veranda and descended the steps to the garden. Wylie met her where the sanded path passed beneath the overhanging branches of a Yiang-ylang tree. She took a silken wrap that he carried and flung it over her dress. She turned up the collar, hiding her face from view.

Side by side they passed through the garden gate and approached the spot where Orbison's powerful car was parked. As they came opposite the spot where the chauffeur sat, Wylie paused and extended his hand.

"So sorry you're not feeling well, Madame Carpenter," he said with just the right touch of concern in his voice. "You're sure you don't want me to go with you?"

"Quite sure," Vivian Legrand answered, making her tones as like that of the woman who was Orbison's companion as she could. It was not the last time that her gift for mimicry

would stand her in good stead. "I shall be quite all right. I am so sorry to leave so early, but Dr. Orbison understands. Good night."

Then, before the chauffeur could get out of the car, she opened the door and slipped into the rear.

"Home," she said quietly. Then, as the big car slid smoothly from the curb she leaned back with a sigh of relief. So far her scheme had worked without a hitch. If only she had a little more luck she would win.

FROM Government House to Orbison's fortress-like home was seven miles, but the car did it in fifteen minutes. The chauffeur let his passenger out of the Rolls and inquired:

"Shall I wait for madame?"

Vivian Legrand gestured a negative, crossed the porch and rang the bell.

The butler opened the door, saw what he deemed to be the woman who had left the house with the doctor standing on the threshold, and flung the door open.

Quite unsuspectingly he closed the door behind him, shot the bolt—found a revolver jammed into his ribs.

"Don't move. And don't speak," Vivian Legrand whispered.

The butler stood with his fingers jammed against the wall, utterly unable to comprehend the turn of events. His face went pale, not so much from fear of the gun as fear of what his master might do when he found that entry had been effected so easily into a house that was guarded like a fortress.

"Now," whispered Vivian Legrand, "where are the other servants?"

"In their quarters," came the surly answer.

"Where does your master keep his safe?" she demanded.

"I don't know," he spat back at her.

"At three I shoot," Vivian Legrand said curtly. "One—two—"

"Upstairs in his study," the man cut in hurriedly. "Take that gun further away. I don't like it so damn close."

"Lead me to the study. And don't try any funny stuff. I'll shoot first and ask questions afterwards. And don't figure that because I'm a woman I won't shoot. I will."

The man started forward, then stopped abruptly. From the rear of the house the sound of voices and the blare of a phonograph had come suddenly as a door was opened. The servants were making merry in their master's absence. Then the door was closed again and the noise cut off as abruptly as it had begun. There were tiny beads of perspiration on the butler's forehead.

"That was lucky for you," Vivian Legrand said grimly. "You'll be the first to get hurt. Go ahead."

Surrendering to the menace behind him, the butler moved forward across the red-tiled floor and slowly ascended the carpeted stairs. At the head of the stairs he indicated a door at the right of the hallway.

"That's the study," he said sullenly. "You won't be able to get in. He keeps it locked all the time."

Vivian Legrand's answer was to take the bunch of keys from her hand bag:

"Unlock the door," she said curtly to the butler. Under the muzzle of the menacing revolver the man tried the keys. The second fitted. The door swung open.

"Inside," she told him curtly. Once the man was inside she touched the light switch on the wall, and then closed the door with her foot. The butler turned and peered at her, again endeavoring to see her face. She checked him.

"No tricks, unless you want to commit suicide," she warned him curtly. "Here!" She touched a big chair with her foot. "Sit here."

Whipping a scarf from the table in the center of the room she effectively blindfolded the man. No sense in leaving a trail that could be followed, she felt—and that was to become one of the cardinal principles of the Legrand ring of blackmailers in later years, one of the things that baffled the police of three continents. There was rarely a trail that led to one of the gang.

Slowly her eyes went from object to object in the room, measuring, identifying. It was unlikely that Dr. Orbison would have a letter as important as was this one lying around loose. It was undoubtedly well hidden. She discarded the big writing desk with one cursory glance. That would be the first place that a searcher would look, and the doctor would realize that.

There was no safe in sight, but a large painting on the far side of the room caught her eye. It was out of harmony with the rest of the room. No reason for it to be there. And no reason either for it to be set into the wall, instead of hanging as a painting normally would.

A quick search and she found a spot on the wall beside it where the wall paper was smudged, as though fingers had been often pressed there. She pressed with her thumb. A click and the painting swung outward, disclosing the steel door of a safe behind it.

Again the key ring that she had taken from Orbison's pocket went into play and the steel door swung open.

There was nothing in it, however, except a small box with a few bills, a package of letters, and a thin rod of steel with a cross piece at one end. A hasty inspection showed that the

letter she sought was not among the bundle lying in the safe.

Glancing at the butler, who was sitting taut in his chair, listening to every movement, Vivian Legrand picked up the T-shaped rod of steel and inserted it in a round opening in the back of the safe. There was a faint click and the door of a hidden compartment swung outward. Lying in the compartment was a long envelope. She opened it swiftly. It held the letter for which she was in search.

IV

VIVIAN LEGRAND knew enough of the political background of the Far East to grasp at the first reading the tremendous import of that document. She knew the importance to England of the Khyber Pass, the only practicable route from the north into India, the route through which every invader of India from the time of Alexander the Great has come, the pass through the mountains that has been so heavily fortified by England that it would be impossible for an invading army to force it.

And here was a letter to the British Secret Service from a Russian agent offering to barter to the English knowledge of a hitherto unknown pass through the mountains for his freedom.

The writer went on to say that he had discovered this pass, and had been mixed up with a riot in the Calcutta bazaars, arrested and sentenced to life in the Andaman Islands before he could report his discovery to his superiors in St. Petersburg.

Vivian Legrand's greenish eyes narrowed thoughtfully as the full import of the thing flashed over her. No wonder Sir Mark Caywood had been willing to pay three thousand pounds for the return of this letter. Knowledge

of this unguarded pass into India from the north, in the hands of Russia, was a constant threat to the security of the British rule in India. And Russia? What would the knowledge be worth to her? Not a single implication of the potential possibilities that the situation held was escaping Vivian Legrand's mind.

So engrossed was she in the contents of the letter that she did not notice the butler's right hand groping for the cord of a bell pull that hung quite near. When she looked up from the letter the man's arms were again resting on the arms of the chair.

She was in the act of folding the letter when the room door flung open, and four of Orbison's men hurled themselves in. For a split second they stared in amazement at finding a woman in jewels and plumes in that place. Vivian Legrand's arm reached the alabaster globe above her head. She turned the lights out.

She was through the group like an eel as they sprang for her. She was down the stairs, across the hall, with the front door open, inserting the key in the outside, before the first of her pursuers reached the bottom of the staircase. And then she stopped short in consternation. Just walking up to the front door was Dr. Basil Orbison.

He looked at Vivian Legrand, and his thin mouth moved in a slow smile. He bowed in exaggerated courtesy.

"So, it is the lovely lady of the Official Ball who honors me with a visit—in my absence. So fortunate that I returned in time! I would have regretted missing you."

His eyes flickered from Vivian Legrand to the armed men who stood in the hallway behind her. Then he took her arm and urged her gently back into the house and into a room on the right.

The butler followed them, a gun poised in readiness.

Vivian Legrand halted just inside the door. She stood beside one of a pair of tall vases of blue pottery, wide of neck and bellying out as they curved toward rounded bases. The vases stood on each side of the doorway.

Dr. Orbison dropped into a chair and peered up at her like an expectant vulture.

"I congratulate the British Secret Service. I really did not credit them with sufficient intelligence to trace this little affair to me."

Vivian Legrand did not move.

"She was looking for a paper of some sort," the butler burst out. "And she got it!"

"Your handbag," demanded Orbison.

Vivian Legrand extended the bag. He went through it rapidly, dropping the small revolver it contained on the table. Then he returned it to her and shot a string of sibilant words that Vivian Legrand took to be Russian to the butler. The latter went to the door and a moment later a Chinese woman appeared at the doorway.

"Chu-Chi will search you," Orbison announced. "I have called her, not from motives of delicacy, but because a woman is more likely to find a woman's hiding place than a man."

He watched in silence as the Chinese woman searched Vivian Legrand swiftly and expertly, overlooking no possible place where a letter could be hidden. She reported in Chinese that there was nothing hidden upon the red-headed woman.

ORBISON'S thin mouth curled up; the vulture's hairless head bobbed up and down as he waved the Chinese woman impatiently

out of the room. His long fingers curved slightly, as if, filled with desire, they tensed to leap at Vivian Legrand's throat. There was strength in those fingers, she knew—enormous strength. Meeting the cold eyes she knew that this man would murder her without a qualm. But she did not flinch from his gaze. Instead she smiled quite calmly. The letter was safe. He did not suspect where it was—would probably never find it unless she revealed its hiding place. And she knew that she held the trump card.

"Where is the letter you took from my safe," he demanded.

"I took no letter," Vivian Legrand answered steadily. "Your butler summoned help before I could find it."

Orbison laughed, a sudden little laugh. Vivian Legrand realized where she had heard the counterpart of that laugh before—the same little laugh over sudden silence that may be heard just before the Chinese executioner raises his sword for the stroke that will sever his victim's head from his shoulders.

"I know that you lie," Orbison said. He stroked the curve of his mouth with his tongue's tip, very much as if tasting blood and liking it. "It would be wise to tell me now where it is. You will eventually."

"I didn't find it," Vivian told him. She put the right trace of impatience into her manner. "Can't you see that for yourself? Your men came while I was searching. I had to run for it. You caught me just as I was about to leave the house. Common sense should tell you that I am not lying."

As she talked a great satisfaction came into her heart. Orbison had made one fatal error. All she needed now was time and luck to win clear.

"I think we can refresh her mem-

ory," Orbison went on, speaking to the butler. He made Vivian Legrand a little bow. "You will excuse me a moment, I am sure."

Opening a door on the further side of the room he disappeared. Vivian Legrand could see that it was a room of gleaming white enamel, with strange instruments and tubes on white tables. Taking her eyes from the door she glided sidewise, crabwise, toward the table in the center of the room. Her movements were almost imperceptible. Her eyes flickered for a second over the safety catch of the butler's gun. It was still locked. Did the man know it? Upon the answer to that question hung life or death.

Then Orbison entered the room again, carrying in one hand a small test tube and in the other a hypodermic syringe.

"You really are an utter fool," Vivian Legrand told the doctor.

"So?" he mumbled softly. He filled the hypodermic. "And what leads you to that conclusion?"

"Because," Vivian Legrand said with superb indifference. "You haven't the ability to distinguish the truth from a lie. I came here to get that letter—yes. But I had no connection with the British Secret Service. My scheme was to steal the letter to show you that I was a better woman to have as an ally than an enemy—and once I had blackmailed you into obtaining me a post in the Russian Secret Service, to return the letter to you."

The doctor laid the hypodermic down carefully; took out a cigarette. His case fell to the floor. Vivian Legrand took a step, picked it up and returned it. Orbison was clever. But even he saw nothing in the movement that brought her a step closer to the table.

"A man of real cleverness would be able to see the advantage of having me as an ally," she went on. "Also, he would realize that I wouldn't come here without c e r t a i n—er—precautions. There will be inquiries if I do not return."

"There will be no inquiries," the doctor returned indifferently.

Again Vivian Legrand took a side-wise step. Again her eyes flickered to the safety catch. It was still down.

The doctor picked up the hypodermic. "Now we will make the injection," he murmured. "It would really be useless to resist."

Vivian Legrand did not reply. She was within reaching distance of the library table now—and on the table lay her own gun, dropped there by Orbison when he searched her bag.

She made a careless step toward the table—and whirled, gun in hand, facing the two men. The butler pulled the trigger of his gun. There was no explosion.

"Hands up! snapped Vivian. Orbison's head turned like that of a startled vulture at the crisp command. "Drop that gun, you!"

V

THE two men stood as if frozen. Then the butler's gun dropped to the floor, and his hands followed Orbison's above his head. Now it was that Vivian Legrand's greenish eyes bit into the vulture features of Orbison. She moved backwards toward the door to the hall. So engrossed was she by the men's upraised hands, and the gun on the floor, that she failed to see the sudden grimness that darkened the face of the doctor.

She felt the high heels of her evening slippers touch the door sill. Her free hand reached out and down into

one of the blue vases, where she had dropped the letter. Then, with the precious document in her hand, she reached for the door knob.

Without warning the doctor's upraised hands darted for a weapon.

Vivian Legrand whipped about with the swiftness of a striking serpent. With a half turn of her body, she shot. Orbison dropped, face down.

Through narrow green eyes she glared at the butler. He glanced once at his dead master. Then his hands reached higher, trembling.

Vivian Legrand opened the front door. A moment later the roar of an automobile told that she was escaping in safety.

TWO hours later Vivian entered the salon of the rajah's yacht and dropped a package of Bank of England notes in front of Wylie.

"Three thousand pounds," she said curtly. "It was worth five."

"You delivered the letter?" Wylie asked.

"I delivered the letter," she said. "But I read it first. And we must sail in an hour."

Wylie sat up alertly. "What's up? Danger?"

She shook her head.

"No. Money. There is a prisoner on the Andaman Islands worth a fortune to whoever reaches him first. And if we can outsail and outwit the Russian and the British secret services, we'll have something they'll pawn their souls to ransom."

"But the ruby mine," Wylie protested.

"That can wait," Vivian Legrand said firmly. "When we have no further use for the rajah as a blind—then will come the time for securing his ruby mine."



Suppose a pedestrian
saw into this room

After the Murder

By Ray Cummings

The Sergeant Knew the Murderer Had Summoned Him—Yet Nothing Linked That Suave Townie to the Bloody Corpse

GEORGE DARNEL had at first no intention of killing old man Greggson. He had pondered the idea of murder. He thought that he had discarded it. Then the thing came on him suddenly—a sudden impulse to strike Greggson, and all at once a wild, murderous frenzy . . .

Darnel was a highstrung, impulsive fellow. He was the delicate, nervous type. He had had to quit smoking, and substitute chewing gum. He was

chewing vigorously to keep himself outwardly calm as he rang the front doorbell of Greggson's small bungalow about midnight. He had come from Philadelphia to spend the night with this rich, eccentric old man who was financing Darnel's business. His silent partner. But Greggson wouldn't be silent any longer. His letters had indicated that he was finished with Darnel.

It was a dark, blustery night, with a

cold, raw drizzle of rain. Darnel wore a cap, a heavy overcoat, and rubbers, because he took cold easily and had to be careful of himself. Through the glass of the front door he saw Greggson coming out of a bedroom. The old man's thin fingers were wrapped in a dressing gown. His wispy white hair was rumpled as though he had already been asleep. Darnel smiled nervously as the old man opened the door. Greggson's greeting was unpleasant.

"You, George! Pretty crazy time to come. Think I'm going to sit up all night for you? Come on in. I went to bed."

"Missed the train," Darnel said. "Sorry, Mr. Greggson."

The old man slammed the front door and surveyed Darnel. "Where's your suitcase?"

"Didn't bring any. Just for one night—shall we talk tonight?"

"Think you're goin' to wear things of mine? Well, you're not."

Darnel was a small, thin fellow, just about old Greggson's size. In the old days, when they had been good friends and Darnel was broke, the old man had given him a couple of suits, and they fitted him perfectly.

Darnel shrugged. "I'm only going to stay overnight, I tell you. Don't want your clothes. Don't want any favors of—"

That wouldn't do. No use of a quarrel. Darnel said placatingly.

"Shall we talk tonight? Or maybe—"

"You go to bed. Take the same room, Good night."

"GOOD night," said Darnel. He saw into the old man's bedroom now. Greggson had evidently been in bed, reading, waiting

for Darnel to arrive. Then he had gotten up, opened a folding card table beside the bed, and played solitaire. The cards were spread now on the little green-topped table. Darnel turned to the guestroom, across the central living room. He was familiar with it. He had spent occasional week-ends here. As he closed the bedroom door, relief swept him. The interview, to say the least, was going to be unpleasant. The old man was exceptionally crotchety tonight. Darnel was glad to postpone talking until tomorrow.

He took off his cap, overcoat and rubbers, and put them in the bedroom clothes closet. There was nothing else in it. His mind was roaming. The future looked black. A vague thought came to him then of how convenient it would be to have the old man die tonight. If in the morning he was dead in his bed—how simple that would make everything! All the future would change for Darnel.

The old man, two years ago when first Darnel had talked him into financing the Philadelphia business, had named Darnel and the prospective business in his will. A nice substantial legacy. Why not? He had no near relatives. His main beneficiary was some orphan asylum.

Nice if the old man would die tonight! But he wouldn't, of course. And by tomorrow—with Greggson alive—Darnel would be in a bad jam. Greggson knew now that Darnel was faking the books, that the business really was a failure. Perhaps he even knew that Darnel had taken several thousand dollars of the capital, speculated with it—and lost.

Tomorrow would be the end of Darnel's bread and butter. The business would close. And then what? The

old man wouldn't die tonight — that was too much to hope for. If only a burglar would come in and murder him as he slept!

Murder him! The abrupt thought froze Darnel. He stood in the center of the room, stricken, pondering the thought. It would solve everything. Murder! Darnel knew then that if he dared, he'd murder old man Greggson.

The old man's voice in the silence of the house struck everything from Darnel's mind, so that he jumped to the door. Then his scattered wits came back. He called nervously.

"W-what is it?"

"Come out here, George."

Darnel opened his door. Across the dark living room the old man's figure was silhouetted against the yellow light in his bedroom. He said, with his high-pitched querulous voice:

"You woke me up an' I can't go to sleep. Come in here—we'll get this over with now. I'll tell you what I got to say, all right. What I'm goin' to do—give you what you deserve—"

A threat. Darnel crossed the living room. He said:

"Sure. I'd just as soon."

He sat nervously on the edge of the old man's bed with his hands clasped and his fingers picking at each other. He was sullen, defensive, but anger was rising in him. How dare the old man threaten!

"Best thing for you's not to talk at all," Greggson was saying grimly. "Want to get this over with." He sat down in a chair beside his bedroom desk and peered at Darnel with his sharp little eyes. "Might's well tell you now, George. I've had a detective onto you. Embezzler — playin' the races—comin' over here with lies to me month after month. Why, all you are's a thief, an' you're goin' to jail—

that's where you're goin'. Think I'll stand for bein' lied to an' stole from by a damn boy I've trusted like a son? Set up in business, an'—"

Darnel hardly heard the end of the tirade. The room whirled around him. Jail! Sending him to jail! He was on his feet. He choked thickly:

"Why you—you damned old buzzard!"

The chewing gum in his mouth choked him as he sucked in his breath. So little a thing to be the immediate cause of a killing! He coughed and spat. There was perhaps no conscious thought of spitting in the old man's face. But even in the chaos of that second Darnel was aware of Greggson's ludicrous anger as the gum comically struck his nose and bounced away. Comedy—so swiftly to be followed by tragedy!

Greggson spluttered, "M-miserable little cur—how dare—"

His lunging movement as he came out of his chair shoved the card table so that it fell sidewise, scattering the cards to the floor. "You miserable—"

Darnel also was on his feet. Rage was sweeping him. His clenched hand cuffed at the old man's face. The blow staggered Greggson. He lurched; he seized Darnel, clawing at him; screaming:

"You—you—how dare you strike me! Get out of my house, you miserable—"

Amazing, how like a puff of gunpowder the thing flamed into murder. Darnel felt the raging old man clawing and pushing at him. He struck his fist violently into Greggson's chest. It brought a scream:

"George! You stop it! George—"

Frightened now. Damned old buzzard, of course he was frightened. Trying to shove Darnel out of the

room. . . . The big pair of scissors lay on the desk. Long thin blades—Greggson had been clipping a newspaper. In the scuffle Darnel was hardly aware that he had reached and seized the scissors; hardly aware at first that he had stabbed, like stabbing with a knife. The old man saw the blade coming. He tried to fend it off with his two hands. He screamed:

"George—don't!"

He knew he was done for, now. Damned old buzzard!

The blood from the old man's shoulder seemed like a crimson flame, setting Darnel on fire. No drawing back from this. Damned old buzzard. Damned old buzzard. It seemed that nothing but those three words rang through the frenzied chaos of Darnel's brain. He was dimly conscious that he was stabbing. Drawing out the scissors—stabbing again—into the face? No, he mustn't do that! Into the chest! The heart! Stab him in the heart—damned old buzzard!

God, why wouldn't he die? He was on the floor now, and Darnel became aware of kneeling—jabbing the scissors . . . Twitching legs. Flailing arms. The voice was a gurgle, choked with blood. Blood all over everything. Wouldn't this thing ever lie still? Couldn't you kill this damned thing?

II

THEN Darnel came back from the red abyss of whirling horror, and found himself sprawled on the floor with the wet red scissors in his hand. The thing that had been the old man lay dead. Darnel shrank away from it; staggered dizzily to his feet, staring with horror at the crimson shambles of the room.

But the frenzy was past. The old man was dead. He couldn't have Dar-

nel arrested now. . . . There would be an ugly time with the detectives. Darnel would have to bluff that through. And then would come the money. Twelve thousand, five hundred dollars. . . .

For a minute perhaps, Darnel stood panting, with a growing triumph in his thoughts. It seemed that the triumph dulled his terror. But the scissors in his hand dripped crimson. He dropped the scissors with a sudden revulsion. But that didn't help. There was blood all over his suit. A dark tweed suit—coat, trousers and vest. All thickly bloodstained.

For a moment the shaking Darnel stood before a bureau mirror. God, what a sight! The police would come—and here was guilt plastered all over him! His suit was wrecked. There was no blood on his collar, or his shirt or necktie. But his coat, vest and trousers were thickly splattered.

A wild panic swept over him. He was standing here in the light—the bedroom shades were up. Suppose a pedestrian saw into this room—

He jumped for the shades. Then thought better of it, and switched off the light. The wrecked room was plunged into a semi-darkness. The lonely street outside was heavily tree-lined. Old Greggson's bungalow was the only house in this block, which was in the far outskirts of the town. No pedestrians. A single street light a few hundred feet away sent its dim sheen into the room. But from outside you couldn't see in now; Darnel was sure of that.

In the dimness he stood fighting the horrible panic of terror. After the murder was when things always went wrong for the murderer. He had to be careful now . . . What must he do? The instinct to run suddenly

overpowered him. He fled to the living room. He started for the front door. Run! Get out of here!

But he'd forgotten even to put on his overcoat and hat. He started for them; but stopped again. And stood shaking, fighting for a little vestige of sanity—for the ability to think. How could he run out, covered with blood like this! He must get rid of the blood. Then get out of here. But that wouldn't do, either. Too many people knew he was here. Frances, the colored girl, would be here in the morning. Old Greggson, of course, had told her that Darnel was coming. And half an hour ago, when he got off the train at the village a mile away, several people had seen him. He had stopped in two stores and said he was going to Greggson's. If he ran away now he'd be hunted, caught. . . .

But he could stay here. Trump up a story. Get rid of this blood on him. Call for the police. That was the thing! He'd just discovered the murder. Why not?

He stood desperately trying to plan it. The old man had had a detective onto him in Philadelphia. That would prove a motive. But he could bluff that through. It wouldn't prove murder.

Standing in the doorway of the old man's bedroom, Darnel stripped off his coat, vest and trousers. The rest of him was all right, but all three garments of his suit were bloodstained. Where could he hide them? The police would search everywhere.

Burn them! The furnace was going, this cold November night. He could burn them in the furnace. He gathered them up; again he started through the living room.

This panic! God, a man couldn't think at all, after a murder! Darnel

stopped, stricken with the realization that he was completely rattled. How could he burn this bloodstained suit and then confront the detectives in his shirt tails? He had no other suit with him.

It sobered Darnel. This panic would trap him, if he wasn't careful. He thought suddenly of the old man's clothes. They were the same size; he had worn them before. The old man had several suits in his bedroom clothes closet. Darnel could burn his own suit, and wear a suit of the old man's. Nobody would get wise to it. Even if something came up, Darnel could say that the old man had given it to him when he was here two weeks ago.

The reasoning gave him confidence. He was calmer now. He went back into Greggson's bedroom. He tossed his bloodstained clothes to a bedroom chair; opened the closet door where Greggson's clothes were ranged neatly on hangers. Any one of these suits would do. He selected a coat, vest and trousers of a dark tweed. He brought them out, and transferred his wallet, cigarettes, and the few other miscellaneous articles from his pockets to the pockets of Greggson's suit. There were no articles of Greggson's here; he made sure of that.

WAS there a noise at the front door? Darnel's heart leaped into his throat. He dashed to the living room. But it was nothing—doubtless only a creak in the walls. But it made him realize how horribly frightened he was. Somebody, just this fatal night, might happen to come. And time was an element in this also. He hadn't been in the house over ten or fifteen minutes; but he must get out of here—go somewhere nearby and tell that he had just discovered the murder.

He hurried back to the old man's bedroom, seized his suit and went through the dark living room, and kitchen, and down to the cellar; opened the furnace door; stuffed the suit onto the glowing bed of coals. And slammed the iron door.

After a moment he opened the door and took a look. The garments had completely burned. With a poker he stirred the ashes until they fluttered upward and were gone. A few buttons were left.

He stirred them away down into the coals with the poker. Nobody would search this furnace, anyway. Why should they? And there wasn't anything large, like a belt buckle. Darnel hadn't burned his belt; he had looked it over and found it hadn't any bloodstains. He had left it upstairs, with the old man's suit. It would be perfectly safe to wear it.

He went up out of the cellar. He was all right now. Relief swept him; he was safe. But he must hurry. The bathroom adjoined the central living room.

In his shorts and dangling shirt tails, he stood in the bathroom with the door closed. He looked himself over carefully now. Dried blood was on his hands. Nowhere else. He washed his hands carefully, and removed every trace of pink from the wash basin. And he was careful to leave no telltale marks on the towel.

Okay now. It had only taken another minute. He switched off the bathroom light; hurried through the dark living room into the old man's bedroom; seized Greggson's suit; picked up his own belt from the floor where he had dropped it. He was dressed in another half minute. What a relief! The suit fitted him so nicely that nobody would ever notice that it

wasn't his own. Then he went to the other bedroom and put on his hat and overcoat.

He was ready to leave now. There would be no evidence that he had been here in the house at all—except that he had just arrived, discovered the murder and run right out again. That's what he'd tell the policemen, and they could never prove anything different. He stood for just a moment, to be sure that he had made no error. The panic seemed to have left him now. His mind was thinking clearly. Had he forgotten anything?

His rubbers! God, how easy to overlook things! There wasn't a single thing in the house—except his rubbers. He had almost left them. He went back into the guest room, seized them from the floor of the closet.

There was nothing else here in the closet—no chance to make a mistake. He put on the rubbers.

Again he was ready. Nothing forgotten now? The rubbers, when he arrived in the drizzling rain, had been wet.

Could he have left footprints, or any water drippings which would show he had been here in the guest-room? Not very reasonable. Nothing to be afraid of in that.

He crossed the dark living room, to the front door. He stopped to alter the catch on the front door. It was a spring lock. He adjusted the catch so that even when the door was closed it would open from the outside simply by turning the knob. He banged the front door shut, and as he jumped from the veranda he was ready to yell his news to anyone in sight.

But the tree-lined street was deserted. Old Greggson had no telephone; but Darnel knew of a little

cigar and stationery store a few blocks away which would be open. He ran there. White-faced and breathless, he arrived and gasped out his news that he had just found old Jared Greggson lying murdered.

III

DARNEL found it easier than he had expected. The police thronged the house. The street had a gathering group of people now, and a stream of arriving vehicles; but all they could do was mill around outside. Darnel, of course, was allowed inside; and he found it very interesting to be a spectator in the midst of all this excitement. He was calm now. But not too calm. Keyed up, and tense as anyone would be who had just discovered a fiendish murder.

He followed the policemen around the bungalow rooms as they poked about for clues.

But there weren't any clues here. How could there be? The dead thing in the bloody shambles of Greggson's room was horribly gruesome. Darnel tried not to look at it.

His story was plausible, and he told it convincingly. "I got here about midnight, Sergeant. Is that your—"

"Sergeant Bullock."

"Right. Well, I guess it was about midnight when I got here. I just sauntered over from town."

He had, in reality, walked fast. And he had arrived at about five or ten minutes of twelve. But nobody could ever check up on that. He said:

"The place here was all dark. I knew Mr. Greggson hadn't waited up for me. I hated to wake him up, but I thought I had to, so I rang the bell. There wasn't any answer, so I rang it again. I guess maybe I was five minutes or so—"

That would account for more time; nobody could possibly check up on this. The sergeant nodded. "Then what did you do?"

"Then I guess I pounded on the door. Then all of a sudden I had the thought I might as well try the knob. I'd just assumed the door was locked. I hadn't tried it. An' it wasn't locked. The catch was up."

"And then?" the sergeant prompted.

Darnel's voice turned tense. But that was normal. He said:

"I walked right in. There wasn't a light in the house. But still, with all these lights out, I could see a little way across the living room—you know, reflection through the windows from that street light outside. I could see that Mr. Greggson's bedroom door was open.

"I was going into the room I always have when I come here." He gestured toward the bedroom behind him. "I didn't bring my suitcase—for one night. I came from Philly just as I am. Well, anyway, I stood an' the place seemed awful silent."

"Mr. Greggson has a servant, hasn't he? Did you expect he was asleep here, alone in the house?"

"Yes, I did. When I first rang the bell I thought Frances, the colored girl, might wake up and answer it. Then I remembered that this was always her night out. She goes to stay with her mother or something. Anyway, when the place seemed so quiet—old Mr. Greggson is a pretty noisy sleeper—the silence seemed unnatural. I went to his opened bedroom door. I just took a look. I saw—well, what you see here now."

Darnel allowed himself just the right note of horror in his tone. He said:

"I didn't—didn't go into the bedroom, Sergeant. I just took a look,

and all I could think of was getting right out of here. It was a shock—that dim room—all that blood—anyway, all I remember is I ran for help as fast as I could.”

Convincing story. No witnesses. How could these policemen ever shake a story like this? One of the policemen said: “The old man evidently left the front door unlocked so you could get in without wakin’ him.”

“Sure,” Darnel agreed. “That’s what I realized. An’ that’s how—”

“That’s how the murderer got in,” somebody said. “An’ out the same way. All the windows are closed and locked.”

“Greggson evidently was playing cards,” the sergeant said. “Card table knocked over an’ the deck of cards scattered all over the room.”

Darnel nodded. “Yes, I noticed that.”

“Playin’ a game of cards with the murderer?” somebody said. “Had a fight, maybe—”

Good theory, all this! All helpful to keep suspicion away from Darnel, for by no chance could there have been time for Darnel to have been here playing a game of cards.

“Wonder if Greggson ever played for money?” the sergeant said.

Darnel was absolutely calm now. And here was a chance for a clever stroke. He shook his head at the sergeant.

“Couldn’t imagine him starting a fight over a card game,” he said. “Or letting the other fellow start it, either. First place, he wouldn’t play cards for money. An’ he was a gentleman. Absolutely kindly an’ gentle. Why, the last thing in the world would be for him to quarrel.”

Clever stuff! Darnel fumbled in his overcoat for his habitual chewing gum.

But it was in the pocket of his inner jacket. He opened his overcoat to reach it. The thought that now, for the first time, this policeman would see the old man’s suit made Darnel’s heart pound. Would there, by some stray chance, be something wrong with the suit so that these officers would spot it? Nonsense! Darnel’s sudden impulse had made him close his coat again. But that was a guilty movement—exactly the wrong thing to do at that time.

He mastered his inner trembling. He had long ago discarded his hat. He stood up now and very calmly took off his overcoat. He said:

“Getting hot in here, Sergeant.” He tossed the overcoat aside, sat down again, got out his package of chewing gum and helped himself to a piece. . . . The suit stood inspection! There was no flicker of anything wrong showing upon the sergeant’s face.

“WE were saying—oh yes, about the old man playing cards for money,” Darnel added. “He wouldn’t do that, sergeant. Fact is, I never knew him to play a game of cards with anybody. Fact is, I once tried to teach him poker. No go at all.”

The sergeant certainly was intensely interested. His eyes never left Darnel’s face. He said:

“But he sure was playing cards—”
“Sure,” Darnel smiled. “He was wild about solitaire. Played it all the time. In his bedroom he wouldn’t set up a table to play with a visitor.”

Clever talk, because this sergeant was no dumb-bell. He could see easily that if Darnel had been guilty he’d never take all this trouble to show that there was no card game with some unknown person!

"Good reasoning," somebody said.
"An' listen, Sarge, I—"

Darnel grew more expansive. "My idea—if you don't mind my advancing a theory—I'm no detective—my idea is he was playing solitaire, got sleepy an' went to bed. His bed is rumped, isn't it? Then the murderer must have—"

One of the policemen said:

"His solitaire dope is right, Sarge. I gathered up those cards a while ago. Some of 'em pretty bloodstained—reg'lar slaughter house in there—but what I mean is that some of 'em slid to the floor but kept their places pretty well like they must have been lyin' on the table. What I mean, I found red king, black queen, red jack together—you know, the way you build 'em for solitaire."

Darnel smiled. "Sure, I thought I was right." They were out in the lighted living room. He could still feel the sergeant's sharp gaze upon him, as though studying him thoughtfully. But what of it?

Then somebody said something about finger-prints. A finger-print man would be here shortly. It gave Darnel a start. He had never thought about finger-prints. On the bloody scissors, for instance.

"I doubt it," the sergeant said. "Don't think those scissors will yield any."

What a relief! One or two of the policemen had moved away. But two others stood beside the sergeant. Their eyes were studying Darnel. He felt suddenly as though he were on the stage. What of it? He was acting just as any innocent man would act. He said:

"Don't suppose there's any way of telling how much of a start the murderer had, Sergeant? If you send out an alarm—"

"If we catch him, there'll be blood on him," somebody said.

Darnel smiled. "I guess that's right enough. Have a piece of chewing gum, Sergeant. Used to be a heavy smoker. Doctor stopped me so now I took to chewing gum."

"No, thanks," said the sergeant. He answered Darnel's smile. It somehow seemed to lessen the tenseness. Darnel said:

"Guess I'll stay a while." He leaned down and took off one of his rubbers. "Can't very well get back to Philly to-night. Or can I, Sergeant? You won't need me here much longer, will you?"

Vital question! Darnel had tried to introduce it casually. What would the sergeant say? Would Darnel be allowed to go?

From the murdered man's bedroom one of the policemen suddenly called:

"Here's a queer thing, Sergeant! I been sortin' out these cards. It's a full deck, exceptin' the ace of spades. Can't find it anywhere. You ain't seen—"

Darnel finished taking off his second rubber. He sat up.

"What's he say, Sergeant?"

Card missing? What of it? Darnel sat wholly at ease. Nothing could frighten him now. He sat with one leg crossed, swinging his foot and calmly chewing his wad of gum.

But what was this? The world suddenly crashed. The sergeant gasped:

"Why—good Lord, look at that!"

And the sergeant bent and gripped Darnel's swinging foot and twisted it sidewise. Thing most horrible! Darnel saw it now. His mind swept back to the murder. He had spat his chewing gum into the old man's face, and it had bounced off and dropped to the floor. His rubbers were off then. He had put them on later, in the dark guestroom. He had been wearing

those rubbers ever since, until just now.

In the reeling chaos of the room he heard the sergeant's voice: "Him givin' us the run-around, an' the guilt plastered on him!"

Darnel sat numbly staring at the sole of his shoe as the sergeant twisted his foot—at the bloodstained ace of spades stuck there with chewing gum mashed under it.

Greece's Ill-Fated Executioners

IT is said, and rightly, too, that the unhappiest man on earth is the public hangman of Greece, whose duty it is to execute the condemned criminals.

Whether he is executioner in fact, or just one of the prisoners who accepts the job in exchange for freedom after ten years of service, he still, nevertheless, faces the same fatal anathema. For he knows that beyond the walls of the prison wherein he dwells awaits quick and certain death.

The explanation lies in an ancient tradition that the body of a murdered man goes dishonored into the grave unless it is followed by the body of his slayer. Therefore, the soul of each man who has been executed demands of its kinsmen that they will send the body of the murderer to wipe out the stain of dishonor. If these relatives fail to carry out this sacred obligation, terrible and possibly disastrous penalties will be visited upon them.

The ill-fated hangman knows that the kinsmen of his victims will stop at nothing to attain their end, and—what is perhaps hardest of all to bear—he believes as firmly as any of them that what they seek to do is right and just.

Even the man appointed by law to inflict the penalty for capital crimes is not exempt from the workings of this ancient tradition. Thus the man who executes the condemned, by that very act condemns himself to death at the hands of relatives of every man he slays. For each of the many men who have been executed, there are anywhere from one to a dozen male relatives who are seeking to take the executioner's life.

It is of course quite out of the question to hire even the most miserable of the free citizens of Greece to take this perilous office. So, long ago, the government hit upon the expedient of offering the job to condemned convicts as an alternative to the hangman's noose.

Even under these circumstances the prison officials have the greatest difficulty in securing an executioner. With very rare exceptions even criminals condemned to death prefer the gallows, than to live an object of universal scorn, and a target for a manslaughtering competition. And this, too, despite the fact that the executioner is well fed, comfortably clothed, snugly housed, paid what in Greece is a very liberal salary plus a bonus for each execution, and at the end of ten years offered his liberty.

Besides the reluctance of each individual man to accept the office, the authorities have to deal with their equally strong determination not to let any of their fellows accept it—and get away alive. The most delicate engineering is required on the part of the officers in negotiating for a new hangman, and often without success, for not one man who has held the job has lived one day beyond the end of his term in the outside world.

—Kenneth P. Wood.

Stopping All Cars



The girl could neither
move nor speak nor see

*Into the Room Strode a Human Rat to Force Jimmie to Commit the
Most Terrible of Crimes*

By J. Lane Linklater

JIMMIE was *thinking* on his banjo, peacefully, happily. He was even singing a little. The refrain of the song said, *I'll Be Faithful*. Jimmie liked it. That was because of Lucy. When he thought of Lucy, he was glad he had always played the game straight across. He knew some of the worst ruds and hoodlums in the business, but he had always stuck to the orchestra. The good old banjo for him! None of those fiddles that spit out lead.

He was glad of that now. Other-

wise, Lucy wouldn't have given him a tumble—not a little runt like him! As it was, she actually seemed to think he was wonderful.

"I'll be faithful!" warbled Jimmie—and meant it. "I'll be—"

Then the door of his room opened.

The door closed again, quickly. It was closed by the man who came in, the man who was now standing just inside, looking down at Jimmie. He was quite a lot bigger than Jimmie. The brim of his very fine felt hat was pulled down low over small, round eyes that

almost disappeared in their deep, cavernous sockets. The eyes were feverishly bright.

One side of the man's mouth was hitched upwards. The grimace went for a smile.

Jimmie moistened his lips and said: "Hello, Ed."

Jimmie didn't care about seeing Ed at any time. And the way Ed looked now, he would have given a lot never to have seen him at all. Ed had never made a practice of calling on Jimmie. And the fact that he was here looking as he did, meant that something was all out of kilter.

"Have a seat, Ed," Jimmie said.

He said it without enthusiasm. For one thing, Jimmie's young brother, Larry, had been far too much in Ed's company of late to suit Jimmie. And, for another, Jimmie didn't like the way Ed looked at Lucy.

"No time," said Ed shortly.

"In a hurry, huh?" said Jimmie, hopefully. "Well, sorry you can't stay—"

"Neither can you," said Ed, in a rasping, threatening tone.

Jimmie played softly on the banjo as he stared at Ed. But he got the notes mixed up a little.

"I can't stay! I don't see why not. I'm home here, ain't I?"

"Cut it," snapped Ed. His right hand was in his coat pocket. Jimmie could distinctly see the outlines of the front end of a gun. "Get your hat!"

"But I was going to stay home tonight," Jimmie objected.

"Listen, you dumb punk!" Ed rapped at him. "I just croaked a guy!"

Jimmie felt a little cold. He picked at the banjo again, without making anything like music.

"Okay," he said. "Okay. But

this ain't the first time, is it? I mean, no need to—"

"IT'S the first time like this one—the first time I done it with a bunch of witnesses I can't fix! Something went wrong, see? And if the law gets me this time I ain't got a chance! Not a chance!"

Jimmie plunked on the same string three times. Somehow he made it sound like a death march. He had never seen Ed look so desperate. For that matter, he had never seen anybody look so desperate.

He could understand that, too. The coppers hated Ed, and would grab a chance to get him like a baby grabs for jam. And Ed was out of favor with his own mob. They didn't trust him any more. They would just as soon the law took care of him.

So Ed was alone, and in a corner; looking for a hole to dart through, like any other rat. And like any other rat, he'd bite at anyone who got in his way.

Ed took a step forward, slowly.

"Coming?" he said.

One look at Ed made up Jimmie's mind.

"Sure . . . I don't know what you want me for . . . I ain't no good for rod work, and I never—"

"I'll take care of the rod work!" Ed promised.

Jimmie had his hat on. Ed opened the door so that Jimmie could go on ahead. They walked down the flight of stairs to the sidewalk.

It was dark, and there was hardly any traffic. There was a touring car at the curb. Ed motioned Jimmie into it.

"You'll drive," he said. "And you'll drive where I say."

"Oh, all right," mumbled Jimmie.

"Out Trenton Boulevard first. And don't get mixed up with no traffic cops."

Jimmie started the car. It wouldn't take long to get to Trenton Boulevard. He was humming *I'll Be Faithful*, but he didn't know it. In fact, he didn't know anything very clearly.

"Ed, when did you croak this guy?" he asked.

"Two-three hours ago."

"Two-three hours ago, huh?" Where you been since then?"

"Busy," Ed said brusquely. "And we're gonna be even busier from on, me and you!"

Jimmie's fingers were gripping the wheel as if they were glued to it.

"Gee, Ed," he said. "I don't wish you no hard luck, but I ain't ever had anything to do with stuff like this. I wish—"

"Cut it!" Ed said. "You make me nervous."

Jimmie was silent. They were turning into Trenton Boulevard, which ran west, out into the country.

"Road to the right," said Ed. "Turn into it and keep going."

This was a rough road, leading into farm country. It wasn't very far out of town, but for a few miles it was pasture woods and streams.

"Old house to the left," Ed said. "Stop there!"

Jimmie stopped.

There was no light showing. The house was back about a hundred feet from the road, and trees almost concealed it.

"Dark and lonely, huh?" Jimmie said, still clinging to the wheel.

"Plenty dark," said Ed. "And plenty lonely. Get out! We're going in the house."

He was right against Jimmie, and Jimmie knew that if he refused there

was just one answer. He slipped out. Ed was right behind him.

"Don't look like the folks are home," Jimmie said, trying to be conversational. "You know 'em, Ed?"

"Yeah," said Ed. "So do you."

"Me know 'em?" said Jimmie. "I never been here."

"Get in!" Ed jabbed something in the small of Jimmie's back.

Jimmie went ahead. There was a porch in front, and they walked up the steps. Keeping close to Jimmie, Ed unlocked the front door. They went into a pitch-dark hall. Ed guided Jimmie into a room, snapped on a flashlight. The rays of the light played on an old table, upon which was an oil lamp.

"Light the lamp," said Ed.

Jimmie struck a match, and lifted the lamp from the table. As the lamp wick caught it illumined the rest of the room.

"Kind of dirty place, Ed," Jimmie said sociably. "I wouldn't want to live here—"

II

HE stopped very suddenly. There was something on the floor, in the corner. As the light grew stronger, he could see what it was—a girl! She was tied up with ropes, with a rag around her face, so that she could neither move, nor see, nor talk. She was facing the wall.

"My God!" whispered Jimmie. "Who—who—"

"Turn 'er over," said Ed.

Jimmie stepped across the creaking floor, put a hand down and gently pulled against the girl's shoulder until she rolled over on her back. He stared down at her. Her face was almost entirely covered by the rag, but he could see her eyes—very deep blue

eyes—and her hair, a light brown with a glint of gold.

He began to tremble.

"Lucy!" he cried. "Lucy!"

Behind him Ed laughed.

Jimmie turned on him, furiously.

"You—"

"Aw, shut up!" Ed's gun was no longer in his pocket; it was in very plain sight, pointed directly at Jimmie's middle. "She ain't hurt—yet!"

"No! And she better not be, you—"

"She will be if you waste any more of my time. Leave her wrists and legs tied, but take the rest of the stuff off, and sit her on that chair."

Jimmie tore at Lucy's bonds. In a minute, she was sitting on a chair, her eyes blazing. She shook her head to get the blood circulating, gasped a little, presently found her voice.

"Don't worry about me, Jimmie," she said. "I'm not afraid of this dog!"

Jimmie gazed at her. She had never looked prettier. He wanted to take her in his arms. Ed's husky voice brought him round.

"Snap out of it!" Ed was watching them closely, leaning back against the table. "I ain't done all this just to bring you two together. Here's the lay:

"I got to get out of town quick. But I need all the dough I can get. I got ten grand in a room in the Dennis Hotel—Room 413. It's in a small suitcase that has a fake bottom. You go get that dough for me!"

Jimmie's fingers fumbled for Lucy's hand.

"Me go get it!"

"Yeah. It'll be easy for you. Your pal, Butts, is in the next room to mine—412. I can't go near the joint. The coppers'll be watching. But they

won't think nothing of it if you go up and visit your pal Butts. There's a connecting door between the two rooms. Butts don't know that." Ed leered. "Butts thinks the door's locked and there ain't no key. But I got a key. Here it is. I used to go through his room sometimes when he wasn't in. You can fix it so that Butts leaves his room long enough—"

"You go to hell!" Jimmie blurted.

"Sure. But you'll get the dough for me first." The one-sided leer screwed up Ed's face again. "Get it and bring it back here. Take my car, but better park it a couple blocks away from the hotel, so it won't be recognized."

"And leave you here with Lucy?"

"That's the idea. If you come through all right, nothing happens to Lucy. I'll beat it then, and you can take her along home with you. But if anything happens that I don't want to happen—so long, Lucy!"

Ed weaved his gun in the air.

"Me leave you with Lucy!" Jimmie said again. "You're bats! I wouldn't leave her alone with a dirty bum like you for all the—"

"Yes, you will," Ed said comfortably. "Because, if you don't, you both get it right here."

"Why, you—you—"

Jimmie choked. He felt the soft pressure of Lucy's fingers.

"Better do as Ed says, Jimmie," she said gently. "He's got us where he wants us. If you don't go, he'll shoot us both. I don't want to see you get killed, and you don't want to see me get killed. So that's that."

"You—you think I'd better go, Lucy?"

"Yes, Jimmie darling."

"But I hate to leave you with—"

"I'm not afraid of him!" There

was scorn in her voice. "You run along, Jimmie, and get it over with."

Jimmie patted her cheek.

"You're the boss, Lucy. Gee, you're great! You're the swellest—"

"Cut it!" Ed snarled. "And get going! I wanna get out of here inside of an hour. When you get back, knock on the front door three times. And if you tip anyone off, or let anyone get wise, or pull any kind of funny stuff—"

He poked his gun significantly at Lucy.

JIMMIE drove fast and slow by turns on the way into town. Slow when he thought of letting Ed get away with this, fast when he thought of Lucy alone with a punk. He parked his car three blocks from the hotel, near a dark and unfrequented corner. Walking rapidly, he turned into the street upon which the hotel faced. Plenty of light here, and a good deal of traffic.

A news-hawk shouted close to his ear. Jimmie halted suddenly, bought a paper. He thrust the paper in his pocket. A large figure loomed up before him a few steps from the hotel, startling Jimmie, although he shouldn't have been surprised.

It was the plainclothes dick, Porter. Jimmie knew him well.

"Hello, Porter," he said, trying to hold his voice in line.

Porter was staring at Jimmie somberly, as if he expected Jimmie to say something. But Jimmie started past him.

"Be seeing you sometime, Porter—"

"Yeah? I think maybe the boys are looking for you," Porter said.

"Me?" Jimmie felt very low inside. "Looking for me? Well, I ain't hard to find."

D6—9

"Ain't you read that paper you got in your pocket, Jimmie?" said Porter.

Jimmie gazed at him, wonderingly, and fearfully. Porter was looking at him as if he could look right through him, read his thoughts. That wouldn't do. If he stood talking to Porter, he was likely to spring something that would give the show away.

"Not yet, Porter," he said. "Going up to see my pal, Butts. I'll read it when I get up there."

He smiled. There was something ominous in the way Porter was staring at him. Jimmie hurried by, and the big man made no effort to stop him. He almost ran into the hotel, his thoughts as swift—and as uncertain—as his feet.

Read the paper! Well, no doubt there was something he knew about already; about the guy Ed had killed. The elevator could not get him to the fourth floor fast enough. In a few moments he was rapping on Butts' door.

Butts, he knew, always kept his door locked.

He heard feet moving toward the door, and presently it opened. A short and very fat man was looking at him.

"Hello, Butts," said Jimmie.

"Hello, Jimmie," said Butts. "C'me in."

Jimmie went in. But there was something strange about it. Then he noticed Butts. His fat friend was usually jovial, but he looked saddened now. His eyes, usually full of merriment, were fixed on Jimmie curiously.

"What's the matter, Butts, old boy?" said Jimmie.

Butts seemed to be fumbling for words.

"You—you seen the papers yet, Jimmie?" he said.

Jimmie stared at him. Then he

snatched the paper out of his pocket, flung it out so that he could read it. His fingers clutched the paper as if he were going to squeeze the ink out of it; then they loosened, and the paper dropped to the floor.

"Poor Larry!" he whispered. "Poor kid! That—that swine killed my brother Larry!"

III

HE sank into a chair, and sobbed a little. Butts stood over him, a hand on his shoulder. "It's hell, Jimmie, old kid," he said. "But it ain't doing no good for you to bust up like that. You got things to do, Jimmie!"

"Things to do!" Jimmie repeated, vaguely.

"Sure. Larry's around at the morgue. You ought to go there—"

"I can't go now," said Jimmie, feebly. "I—I just couldn't go now!"

"And then you can maybe help the coppers find this guy Ed," Butts went on.

"Sure." But Jimmie didn't move. He was staring at the connecting door. Sure, he wanted to find Ed. That was easy. It was going to be different, though, to *get* him. He couldn't think of letting Ed get away. But on the other hand he couldn't do poor Larry any good now—and there was Lucy.

"Sure, I'll help the coppers," he said to Butts. "But right this minute I'm kind of sick."

"I guess that's right," muttered Butts. "Well, take it easy—"

"Maybe," Jimmie suggested, "you wouldn't mind running down to the drug store and getting me a little something. Something to—"

"Got it right here," Butts said promptly.

"But that won't do," Jimmie said, in

a panic. "I gotta have something strong, to clear my head. Something to do it quick, see? You ask the druggist—"

"Okay, Jimmie," said Butts.

Without waiting for a hat, he walked out, leaving Jimmie alone. Jimmie stared again at that connecting door. He wanted to get Ed! God knew he wanted to get Ed! But there was Lucy—Lucy alone with that punk, out in that God-forsaken house!

Well, he couldn't waste time. It wouldn't take long for Butts to get back from the drug store. Butts would be hurrying. Jimmie got to his feet, but wondered how he was going to stay on them. His legs seemed to want to spread out. He weaved toward the door; found the key that Ed had given him. It fitted the lock, and in a moment he was in the next room.

He switched on the light. There was the closet, and Jimmie made for it. And there was the suitcase—an undersized one. Easy, so far. He seized it—but he couldn't open it! There was something that Ed himself had forgotten—the key to the suitcase.

If he had a knife—a good sharp knife—he could slash it open. But he had none. He wandered around the room aimlessly, yet frantically, looking for a knife.

But there wasn't any knife. His ear caught the sound of footsteps, out in the hall. Butts was back already.

Jimmie grabbed the suitcase and slipped back into Butts' room. He closed the door gently and sat down, with the suitcase close to his chair.

Butts came in. "Here y'are, Jimmie, old kid," he said.

He produced a small dark bottle, poured a little liquid out of it into a glass, handed it to Jimmie. Jimmie gulped it.

"Thanks," he said. "Thanks. I better be going now."

"Take your time—"

"I got to go right away," Jimmie said. He got up, lifted the little suitcase, and started for the door.

Butts followed him to the door, his hand on his back. "Well, good luck, Jimmie. I—I guess everybody's sorry—"

Butts forgot, apparently, what he was sorry for. He was looking down.

"Wh—what's the matter, Butts?" Jimmie jerked out.

"Oh, nothing," Butts said. "But where did you get the suitcase? You didn't bring in a suitcase."

"Sure I did!" Jimmie even laughed a little, discordantly. "I guess you're more jittery than I am. You just didn't notice it. Sure I brought this up with me. Well, s'long!"

He hurried out. He was sure that the elevator was going to be very slow, so he rushed down the winding stairway to the lobby. He was out of breath when he pushed through the street door, started along the street.

The headquarters dick, Porter, was coming toward him, blocking his path.

"I—I'm kind of in a hurry, Porter," said Jimmie.

"Yeah?" Porter hesitated, his eyes busy. "What you got in the suitcase, Jimmie?"

"Suitcase! Oh, that! Why, I—I had some old shirts up in Butts' room; just some old shirts. I'm taking 'em away to the laundry. That's all. Well, I got to be going!"

Porter didn't move. But he didn't try to stop Jimmie from going around him. Jimmie tried hard not to run down the street, but his feet seemed to want to get ahead of him. He stumbled into the car, sat behind the wheel. He put the suitcase on the seat.

Getaway money in that suitcase. Getaway money for the guy that had killed his kid brother.

But then, there was Lucy. And he knew that if any little sight or sound excited the belief in Ed's mind that Jimmie had done anything to hinder his getaway, he would shoot Lucy in cold blood. And it would be very easy indeed to excite such beliefs in Ed's mind just now.

JIMMIE shot the car ahead. He didn't know it, but he was humming. He was humming *I'll Be Faithful*. He hummed it all the way out, still without knowing it. He was hurrying to Lucy. And at the same time, he was hurrying back to Ed—with Ed's getaway money.

Just before he got to Trenton Boulevard he saw a small corner drug store. Impulse struck him. He jammed on the brakes, came to a stop and ran into the store. In a corner of the store was a phone booth. He slipped a coin into the slot. Operator answered.

"Police headquarters!" Jimmie said quickly. "Rush it!"

The connection was made.

"I'm telling you about Ed—about the guy who killed my—who killed Larry Willow!"

"Yes?" snapped a voice.

"I—I can't tell you where he is," Jimmie rushed on. "But there's a road running north from Trenton Boulevard about a half mile west of the city limits. A kind of rough road. I think if you watch the intersection there, you'll see him trying to get away in a black touring car pretty soon."

"How soon?"

"Maybe fifteen minutes. Maybe half an hour."

"Who's speaking?"

Jimmie slammed the receiver on the

hook and ran back out to the car. In a moment he was on his way. At the city limits there were several cars in line, brought to a stop. Jimmie was forced to stop, too.

He knew at once what the trouble was. The coppers were eager for a chance to nab Ed. They were on the job here. They had thrown out their dragnet. They were guarding the ex-ists from the city. They were stopping all cars!

Two officers approached, glared in at him.

"What's your name?" said one.

"Jimmie—Jimmie Mason," he lied quickly. Wouldn't do to say, "Jimmie Willow."

The second officer was eyeing the suitcase. He put a hand in and fingered it.

"Where you going?" the first officer asked.

"Oh, I—I'm just going to see my girl," Jimmie said. "She lives out in the country a ways." He laughed—a high-pitched laugh. "Farmer's daughter!"

Neither of the officers seemed to see any joke in that. The second one opened the door, flashed a light into the tonneau. Jimmie hoped that Ed hadn't left anything in there which might indicate the ownership.

Jimmie wanted to shout at the officers, "Jump right in! I can take you right to the rat that killed my brother—the rat that's holding my girl."

But he didn't dare take a chance on that.

For a few moments the officers were silent. They were just looking at him, looking the car over, inside and out.

"Okay," the first one grumbled presently.

Jimmie was away on the instant. Soon he was out on the boulevard and

had turned into the road to the right. A little later he swung in toward the house.

It was dark; the light in the room inside was not visible anywhere from the outside.

Jimmie knocked on the door three times.

Cautious steps scuffed in the hallway inside.

"Who is it?" It was Ed's voice.

"Jimmie!"

The door was unbolted carefully, opened just a little.

"Throw the suitcase in," ordered Ed, cautiously.

Jimmie flung the suitcase into the pitch-dark hallway. Ed suddenly snuffed on his flashlight, full in Jimmie's eyes. He himself was still invisible.

"Walk in with your hands up!"

Jimmie obeyed. He permitted himself to be marched in through the hallway and into the room with his hands high.

Lucy, still bound, smiled encouragement at him. Ed had booted the suitcase into the room as he followed Jimmie. There was a crazy light in Ed's eyes.

"Open that suitcase and put it on the table," he instructed Jimmie.

Jimmie did as he was told.

"There's a catch in the corner, at the bottom," Ed said. "You can dig in there with your finger and find it. Drag on it!"

Jimmie fumbled in the suitcase, found the catch, pulled on it. The fake bottom split open in the middle, revealing several piles of currency.

"Okay," said Ed, with the calm of the desperate. "Step away!"

Jimmie backed away and stood by Lucy. Ed, his gun still aimed at them, still watching them, stuck his free hand

in the suitcase and took out the currency, putting it in his pockets.

"I guess you're all ready to go now, Ed," Jimmie suggested.

Ed looked at him and grinned. Jimmie didn't like that grin.

"Sure," Ed said. "We're all ready to go now!"

"We!" said Jimmie.

"We!" said Ed. "All three of us!"

IV

JIMMIE stared at him. "I ain't through with you yet," said Ed.

"We drive to the highway, see? Then we turn west, away from the city. Maybe you tipped someone off, and I ain't taking no chances. When we get a few miles up the highway, and all's safe, I'll let you two out—if you're good!"

Jimmie took three steps toward him.

"You're not going to take Lucy—"

"She'll come," Ed snarled, "or else!"

Jimmie recoiled. "For God's sake, Ed, take me! But don't take her! Leave her here and take me—"

"You're both going!" Ed's face was hard, implacable.

"But—"

"I'm going!" Lucy put in. "It's the only way, Jimmie."

At a word from Ed, Jimmie knelt and unfastened the strands about Lucy's legs. Her wrists remained tied. Ed had a gun in each hand now. He was alert, intently watchful.

Slowly, silently, Ed marched them out of the house to the car.

"You're driving," he told Jimmie. "Me and Lucy will sit in back. I got one rod for you, and one for her. If anything goes wrong you both get it."

Jimmie got behind the wheel. If anything went wrong! There would

be coppers—probably a whole regiment of them—out there where the road turned into the boulevard. Nothing could go much more wrong than that.

His hands were feverish-cold against the wheel. If anything went wrong! He started the car. He was humming, humming *I'll Be Faithful*. There was no sense in humming it, but Lucy heard it.

"I—I like that song, too, Jimmie," she said.

"Song!" said Jimmie, bewildered. "Oh, yes. I—"

"Cut the chatter!" There was a horse, maniacal tenseness in the tone of Ed's voice. "And don't stop for anything—or anybody!"

"But suppose," Jimmie complained, "a bunch of people block the road?"

"Drive through 'em!" snarled Ed.

The car was bumping out to the road, and along the road toward the boulevard. Jimmie calculated how long it would take to reach the crossing. Five minutes, perhaps.

And the coppers would be stopping all cars. They were stopping them at the city limits, and now they would certainly be stopping them where the road entered the boulevard. There would be plenty of coppers there, and they just wouldn't let the car through. All three in the car would be blasted full of holes if Jimmie tried to run through without stopping.

But if he stopped, just two of them would get it: himself—and Lucy!

Jimmie wasn't humming now; he was singing. He was singing *I'll Be Faithful*. He was singing it gently. The others couldn't hear him. But he could hear himself, and he came to two words in the chorus about being faithful—two words that struck him with sudden violence. *Unto death. Faithful unto death!*

He stopped singing and thought about it. Thought hard and fast.

Well, all right. Unto death! So what? But it shouldn't be necessary for Lucy to die. It didn't matter so much about him. Larry would be lonesome in the morgue, anyway. Larry always did hate to be alone.

There was a slight turn in the road. It brought the car within sight of the boulevard. Through the thinning trees Jimmie could see the lights of the passing cars. His gaze, accustomed now to the darkness, strained at the mirror. He could see shadowy outlines of Lucy and Ed in the backseat. Ed was sitting just behind him. In his left hand was an automatic which was pointed directly at Jimmie's back. In his right hand was another automatic, within a foot of Lucy's side.

By turning very swiftly, Jimmie might make a successful grab for one of those guns, but not for both of them—certainly and not possibly for both of them.

They were within a hundred yards of the intersection now, and going about twenty, soon to make the turn. Abruptly, figures appeared on each side of the road, close to the boulevard. There were eight or nine of them. They were spreading out into the road.

Jimmie could hear Ed curse lividly. "You double-crossed me!" Ed shouted at Jimmie. "Those are coppers! Drive through 'em, you punk, or I'll drill both of you!"

Jimmie did not slow up. He was almost on the coppers now! In a twinkling he could see some of them, apparently realizing that the car was going through, reaching for their guns.

Two of them who had reached the middle of the road scurried to one side, both tugging at revolvers.

"Turn—and give her all she's got!" Ed yelled.

JIMMIE turned—turned himself, not the car! His hands left the wheel. The car whirled crazily across the intersection. With a terrific lunge, Jimmie hurled himself across at the back seat, both hands going for Ed's right wrist. That would leave the gun in the left hand free to spit lead at him. But Ed couldn't shoot Lucy with the left hand gun.

The car was hurtling at the ditch across the boulevard. Coppers were yelling and shooting. Jimmie was on top of Ed, clamping down on that right wrist. Ed had been leaning forward; now his head was back against the cushion. But he was much bigger, much stronger than Jimmie. He was wrenching his gun away. He was turned it slowly toward Jimmie.

The car struck the ditch, bounced about violently, but it did not turn over. It straddled the ditch, tipped half over on its side, and struck.

Shots tore through the roof and sounded against its sides.

There was an explosion under Jimmie. It seemed to lift him up. Something tore against his side just above the thigh. It made him feel weak. But the gun in Ed's left hand hadn't done anything yet. It was silent. Jimmie couldn't understand that. He had expected that left hand gun to blast the life out of him, but it hadn't fired at all.

He wondered about Lucy. He couldn't see her. He didn't know just where she was. He knew she must be in the car somewhere, because his chin had touched her shoulder once. But that was all. She hadn't cried out.

That made him afraid. The fact that apparently Ed's left hand gun was free. Perhaps he had misjudged after

all. Ed had been able to fire the gun he had meant for Lucy at Jimmie. Perhaps now he would use on Lucy the gun he had intended for Jimmie.

Jimmie worried about that, hazily, still clinging to Ed's right wrist. Everything seemed very distant to him; so distant that he didn't know that a shot slashing through the back of the car had driven into Ed's head.

But, a moment later, he brought himself around with a great effort. Feet were rushing toward the car.

"Lucy!" he cried, frantically.

"I'm here!" said Lucy's voice—a muffled voice. "Here, under Ed!"

A flashlight from outside lit up the interior of the car. Jimmie leaned painfully across Ed.

Lucy was sprawled along the back of the seat, behind Ed. The fingers of both her hands were still clutching Ed's left arm, pressing it down against the seat. The marks of her teeth were in Ed's left wrist.

Jimmie's face was down close to hers. She looked up at him and smiled.

"Thank God!" whispered Jimmie. "But what—"

"I think, Jimmie darling," she said, very softly, "that we both had the same idea!"

Convicts Escape Through Air

ONE of the most original and daring jail breaks in California took place in August, 1908. Alexander Hagen, serving eighteen years for highway robbery, and Michael McKenna, doing a stretch of twelve years for robbery, were working in the Folsom prison quarry, engaged in rigging supporting cables to a hundred and ten feet high derrick pole. One guy wire led six hundred feet to an anchorage across the American River, a swift, turbulent stream flowing alongside the prison grounds, and constituting a natural barrier against escape from that side.

With crudely-fashioned pulleys concealed within their prison blouses, Hagen and McKenna climbed up the derrick pole, supposedly to secure more firmly one of the cables. They were directly under the keen watchful eyes of a half dozen prison guards, some in the rifle towers, the others within the quarry. From their lofty perch the two felons took one look at the thin strand of steel that sloped dizzily to the other shore. To them it spelled freedom or death. They were desperate.

Standing close together, their actions temporarily concealed from view, the pair quickly flung their crude pulley over the cable, each grasped a loop hanging from the hook beneath the wheel, and giving a quick shove with their feet, started like a bullet from their perilous height straight for the other shore.

Like a flash, six rifle towers spilled their leaden messengers of death, but the swaying bodies, hurtling like mad, were poor targets. The anchorage, the one fear of the daring pair, was covered for some distance with underbrush; this served to deaden the impact of their bodies, and beyond a few scratches, they emerged safely.

The effort, however, proved futile. Within ten days they were caught aboard an ocean-going liner where they had stowed away.

—R. W. Francis.

ILLUSTRATED CRIMES

by Paul Berdanier

THE MURDER OF EDITOR MELLETT

All during the Spring of 1926 Don Mellett, crusading editor of the Canton News, fearlessly pilloried vice and gambling conditions in his city, sparing none.

The underworld struck back. On July 16 Mellett wrote of a "key

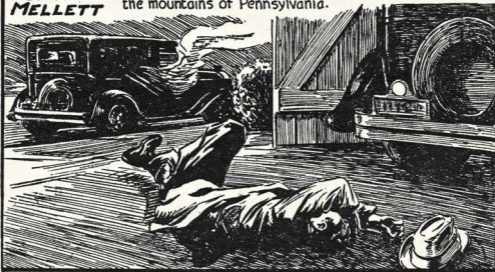
man," accused local police of shielding ringleaders. They were the last words he was ever to write. For that night, ambushed outside his garage, Mellett died under a fusillade of bullets. His wife, rushing out of the house, heard the murder car roar into the night.

Aroused by the killing, and enraged at the failure of Canton police to solve the mystery, rewards were posted totaling over \$25,000. The State took over the case. After two weeks had passed, an informer named an ex-convict, Pat McDermott, as one of the killers. He also involved Louie Mazer, a local underworld leader.

For months McDermott eluded a nationwide dragnet. Just when it was thought he had been killed because he knew too much, he was seized at the sickbed of his mother in the mountains of Pennsylvania.



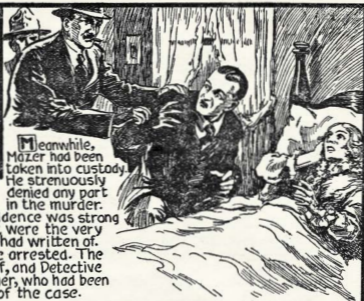
**DON R.
MELLETT**



COMING NEXT WEEK—



**PAT
McDERMOTT**



Meanwhile, Mazer had been taken into custody. He strenuously denied any part in the murder.

But the web of evidence was strong and enmeshed in it were the very "key men" Mellett had written of. Two officers were arrested. The Canton Police Chief, and Detective Floyd Streitenberger, who had been in direct charge of the case.

After a searching inquiry had brought in the name of Ben Rudner, another underworld "big shot" the two officers were indicted for murder along with Rudner, McDermott and Mazer.

All five were convicted and given long prison terms. Two years later, from his cell in Youngstown Prison, McDermott confessed. He said he had been called in when Mazer and Rudner, terrified at Mellett's exposes, had decided to eliminate the editor.

At a retrial in 1928, the former chief was acquitted when Streitenberger sullenly refused to repeat his first trial testimony. McDermott escaped in February 1929 but was recaptured the following day. Mazer, who had turned State's evidence, is now free.

Even in death Don Mellett's flaming words spelled the end of Canton's organized underworld.



THE BLOSSOM MARTIN MURDER

Wife Deserter

By Evelyn Murray Campbell

Can You Spot the One Hidden Key Which Will Unlock This Riddle—the Mysterious Case of the Vanished Bridegroom?

THE call came from a cheap hotel on Sixth—a “missing” call. A woman had been to Headquarters with a story about her husband. Nobody paid much attention to her. With the blotter full of girl cases it's difficult to get steam up about a husband who forgets to come home to dinner.

McGinnis grinned when he put

Crane and MaGraw on the case, “You won't mind consoling the lady,” he said. “She's easy to look at.”

At the hotel the clerk grinned, too. “Sure. Go on up,” he agreed. “You'll find her in 202. If you guys are married, look out for blond hairs on your shoulders, though.”

Crane laughed at this, but MaGraw, who was a bachelor, looked solemn. He was afraid of women.

The door of 202 opened to their knock, and they saw her. She was a good-looking blonde, a big girl not quite so young as she seemed at first glance. She was probably twenty-seven or eight. Her face was nicely touched up but without extravagance of paint or powder. She kept biting her lips while she talked and the blood flowed into them and faded again. Her eyes



“Anybody you know in that bunch of pictures?”

were heavy and red-rimmed; tiny blood veins spoiled their blueness. She was neatly dressed, but no finery, if her feet were excepted. She had nice feet, though large, and she wore new fancy cut-out slippers with spike heels, and stockings fine as cobwebs. All new, too—there are ways of telling that. A detective knows class when he sees it, and Crane looked at this footwear with respect while he compared it to other things.

The room was just a two dollar room—without bath, but probably as good as any in the hotel. There was a pile of luggage in the corner—two suitcases and a trunk; a big trunk; and all of it cheap and new. Under the tumbled bed, strewn with newspapers, was another pair of shoes; but these belonged to a man—rather scuffed, brown and needing polish badly.

"Uh-uh," said Crane, when they were all three sitting down—the men in chairs and the woman on the side of the bed, the only place left. "Now you just tell me a few things, Mrs. Feagan."

She was only too ready to talk. She would have welcomed almost any listener. She was pathetically eager to give any shred of detail that would help. They had been married Wednesday and caught the Owl to Los Angeles on the same evening. Thursday morning they had registered at this hotel—this Stratton House—and got their breakfast at the little coffee-stall downstairs. After that—well, they were in the room—an hour or so, just talking, making plans. They had such a lot to talk about, not having known each other so well . . . and then he said something about seeing a man, and went out. Left her here alone.

After a while she went out, too, to look at the stores and see something

of the town. Not much fun being shut up in a hotel room the day after you get married. She didn't stay out long, though, because they had talked about riding down to one of the beaches. He had promised to find out all about the best places while he was out.

But they never did get to the beach, because he hadn't come back. She'd waited for hours, got her dinner at the same place downstairs, and just kept on waiting. She was getting mighty tired of doughnuts and coffee, but what could she do? He hadn't come back. Every minute she expected to see him coming along the hall or something. . . .

They avoided her eyes, sorry for her.

"LET'S see," Crane calculated. This was Saturday. She had waited two days without making a squawk. That showed nerve, but a certain foolishness too. While he was thinking he asked the conventional questions.

"You say you didn't know each other very well?"

"Not very long." A dull flush came creeping over her cheeks. "He—he—was sort of anxious. He didn't see the sense of wasting time, he said. So we just got married."

Crane peeled a piece of spearmint and put it in his mouth. The air in the room was rather stale, though the window was open. It was that sort of a room—curtains full of fumes of beer and sandwiches.

"I've heard of awful things happening in this town." There was trouble in her voice. "I do hope—my husband is all right."

"He'll be all right," Crane assured her. "Awful things happen in Frisco, too," he added, grinning.

"I mean—somebody might have known about the money...seen it, or something."

Money! "Was he carrying much money?"

She hesitated, looking ashamed and defiant; long strong fingers plaiting a corner of the bedspread.

"He was carrying all my money for me," she said at last. Her head rose on her strong neck, defying them to criticize her. "Seven hundred dollars. My savings. I drew it out of the bank the day we were married, and when we got here I let him have it to keep. I did it Thursday morning when we were in this room."

II

FOR a moment she met their eyes bravely and then the pluck went out of her and she wilted; one word of blame and she would have been crying.

But Crane only whistled and glanced at MaGraw, who hardly ever said anything. The item of seven hundred dollars was interesting. That was a lot of money these days. They thought it over while they studied the layout.

It used to happen every week when money was easy. It still happened now and then, though so many savings accounts were used up. There would always be women who trusted men with their roll, small or large. The only things that didn't fit was the woman. She was too nearly good-looking; she was almost too young; and she had such swell feet.

"What made you wait so long to call the police?" MaGraw asked, unexpectedly. Usually he let his partner do the talking. "Wasn't you worried about the money or anything?"

She looked up at him. Her blue eyes would have been mighty pretty but for

the bloodshot look around them. "I didn't want to hurt his feelings," she said simply. "If he had come back and found policemen here, he might have thought—thought—"

"Probably he would." Crane nodded. He could soothe a woman any time. "A man hates to make trouble. He likes a woman to know he can take care of himself."

She looked grateful at that.

"Uh-uh," she nodded.

She answered his questions freely. She was more and more anxious to help. But what she had to tell added little to the picture.

A working girl adding her savings to a tiny inheritance from hard-working parents. Lonely and trusting—an easy prey. But that was their synopsis, not hers. There wasn't a word of doubt or blame in her whole story.

"He was such a fine, big man," she finished off, "and so good-natured too. I met him at a dancing club—"

"Oh, Lord—another—" sighed Crane, but not aloud.

MaGraw took no part in this. He sat awkwardly in his creaking chair, trying to keep his legs out of the way and his flat gray eyes wandered around the little room. The shoes under the bed interested him. The heels were a bit run over and the knobby toes turned up. The shoes had been large for whoever wore them. They didn't look like a dancing man's shoes.

"We'll do what we can, Mrs. Feagan," said Crane, getting up to go.

She followed them rather timidly to the door.

"I haven't got much money—just a little," she told them. "Do you think I'd better go back to Frisco, where my friends are?"

Crane said, "I suppose you might as well. It might take time, and we'll no-

tify you if he turns up—if we have any news." But he was surprised. A woman doesn't usually give up so easily, and she was an especially anxious woman. He asked another question. "Did he get all your money?"

"He didn't get any of it," she corrected with a flash of temper. "I told you I gave it to him willingly. He was my husband."

"Just form questions . . . we have to ask them, you know . . ."

"I only kept a little—a few dollars. I suppose I'll have to pay the hotel bill."

There was no argument about that.

MaGraw, fingering his hat, had one of his slow ideas.

"You were going on a trip from here?"

Apparently he hadn't seen the wardrobe trunk and the suitcases; but she was conscious that the question meant something more than it was.

"Well, we did think of it, but we had our return trip tickets. We decided to go right back and buy our new furniture—start housekeeping. He didn't know I had that much money until I gave it to him. We both wanted a home—"

Tears came into her eyes.

THE two detectives walked along the corridor and found the stairs; it was that kind of a hotel—easier to walk than to wait for the wheezy elevator.

"Women are certainly fools," Crane complained. "Think of giving all that dough to a stranger because he was big and tall!"

"Oh, I don't know," MaGraw drawled. "I imagine she kept a little. She went shopping and bought herself some things, you know. There was store paper in the waste basket, along

with the shoe box. And those pumps of herself set her back some. What'd she mean, kept a little? A little might mean a grand to some and a buck to another. And I never seen a frail yet that would give up all she had."

Crane agreed to that. "There's the baggage, too. What made 'em change their mind about traveling, and where would they get the dough to travel on unless he knew what she had? Did he have any of his own?"

The clerk gave up what he knew about the Feagans without much coaxing. They discovered right away that Feagan did have some money of his own.

"When'll these guys learn they can't flash a roll and get away with it? This Feagan came in here Thursday and made a play right off—wanted to pay in advance. But with all that baggage—I told him to wait till they were leaving; tots up a better bill, see? Now I wish I hadn't. You reckon she can pay her bill? He must've got hurt somehow. A poor harmless little cuss, dodging street cars like he never saw one before."

"Oh, I guess we'll pick him up somewhere," said Crane, leaning on the counter. "He wasn't the gigolo type, I gather?"

The clerk snickered. "Gigolo? I should say not. More like a book canvasser or maybe a collector."

"You never can tell." Crane shook his head sagely. "These little guys—sometimes they're dynamite with women." It was getting settled in his mind that the big blond girl upstairs had taken on an obligation that had turned and bit her hand.

"Did you notice," MaGraw said when they reached the street, "how the clerk Tom Thumbs this Feagan, while the lady talks about a tall, hand-

some guy—a big he-man? Well, love's wonderful, they say."

"Two days—that gives him a good start." To Crane it was a cold trail, and seven hundred wasn't a stake to call them very far afield. The best thing for the girl to do was to go back to Frisco and set about earning seven hundred more, using this experience for footwork. He was always one to give the benefit of the doubt, though, and added, "Maybe this mark did get into trouble—it won't hurt to routine him."

III

BUT after that had been done the check-up gave no trace of William Feagan. Of all the automobile wrecks, the hit-and-run victims, the slugs, the drunk-dopes had names and addresses—none of them Feagan, or the Stratton House.

"Seven hundred bucks can carry a man a long ways," MaGraw said. "Maybe he went to the beach by himself and took a boat ride from there. He might easy have forgotten her, seeing they didn't know each other too well."

Crane didn't like the way his partner spoke—as if they weren't doing their duty by the case.

"All right," he growled. "Why don't we get a picture of him and go to work right?" Sometimes an unimportant, everyday sort of case gets to be a matter of pride with a man like Crane.

The beginning had been desultory, but when the real fishing began the lines tightened. Smooth water, though, with only a snag showing up here and there. First there was the marriage license, verified without difficulty from the bureau in Frisco.

They had been married, just as she

said, on Wednesday. His address was William Feagan, Mariposa, California, aged forty-one. Hers was Molly Bevins, aged twenty-four. She was from the Bay City, and her address was completely harmless.

"I knew her name would be something like Molly," MaGraw drawled. "Big blonde softie."

"But twenty-four!" Crane reflected. "Well, I suppose it's natural for women to lie about their ages."

THEY dropped in to see her again late in the day, and found her sitting disconsolate with a small suitcase beside her. The rest of the baggage was gone, and the room had the air of vacancy that departure from a hotel leaves.

"I'm so glad you gentlemen called," she greeted them. "These hotel people act awfully funny. They don't treat me with much sympathy."

"They're hard-boiled," Crane said. "All they want is your money. The world's like that."

She began to cry into a blue-bordered handkerchief with a price tag pasted in the corner. "Don't I know that? But if you're aiming at William, you're wrong. I don't believe he wanted my money. I know he loved me."

Crane apologized.

"We're doing everything we can to help you, ma'am. But it takes a little time and plenty of patience. What I'd like is a picture of Mr. Feagan, if you have one."

Privately he was cursing himself because the baggage was gone. If there was a picture it was probably in the trunk.

But she surprised him by snapping the suitcase open, displaying a neatly packed interior. As she fumbled in

packed pockets she told him innocently: she was afraid she didn't have a real picture—not a photograph. . . “but there's some snapshots, if you can tell about them.” Her hand came out with a lot of curly films and she began to shuffle through them with every sign of her earlier eagerness.

“There's just got to be one somewhere. . . we were all at the beach last summer and—”

There were half a dozen midget films, and one got away from her and fell to the floor without her noticing. MaGraw picked it up and palmed it, seeing at a glance that it was Molly Feagan, rather overpowering in a bathing suit, blond hair blown about broad, laughing face, playing ball with a tall, dark fellow without much chin but plenty of torso. Though the picture was so small, it showed them having a swell time, and MaGraw had the passing thought that her life couldn't have been completely empty before she met Feagan.

At the same time she was saying, “Here he is. My poor William. I'll never forget the day we took this. . . we had steamed clams. . .”

She gave Crane another midget, and this time she and a wizened little chap, were sitting on the sand. Feagan had a sandwich in his hand and seemed to be enjoying it. He looked perfectly harmless, but you never can tell about that. Crane took the snapshot without much enthusiasm. He knew how hard it would be to identify a man in a bathing suit. All this proved but one thing—her description of her missing husband was off-key. By no amount of imagination could William Feagan be described as “tall and handsome,” though he might have been both in the eyes of his bride. It was the hotel clerk who was right.

She dried her eyes and blushed a little as Crane put the snapshot in his pocket, after asking her permission.

“Oh, certainly. . . if it'll help find him. But save it for me. I—I—hope you don't put that picture in the paper, though. It's different being on the beach and having your picture printed—like that.” She was clearly thinking of herself, not Feagan. Yet she showed up well except for the contrast in their sizes.

“We'll cut yours off,” MaGraw offered. “Naturally a lady wouldn't like a picture like that to be all over a newspaper—”

She smiled at him gratefully and locked the suitcase again.

“If you'd really like to help me—well, since people act so funny you might—you might—go to the station with me.” Following this suggestion she became pale and serious, fiddling with her handkerchief and all but tearing it in strips. “I thought—if somebody—some wicked people had it in for William they might want to get a chance at me.”

“Oh,” said Crane. “Oh! Did you know of an enemy, lady? I thought you'd come clean with that stuff. I thought you understood how important it was to know if he had an enemy.”

She shook her head violently. “William hadn't an enemy in the world that I know of. He just had a chicken ranch; he loved chickens and ducks, but he never could make any money out of them.”

“How about yourself?” MaGraw chimed in. Whenever MaGraw asked a question it surprised people so that they stared at him. Now he said, “There might have been somebody in love with you, burnt up at the notion of your marrying this little guy.”

When she laughed she was downright pretty.

"No, no, I never had any fellows after me—not much. I'm too big. They like tricky little women. Why, you boys wouldn't believe how I sat home nights in my room, up to the time I met William."

You can't argue with a lady about the way she spends her evenings.

IV

SHE was putting on her hat before the mirror, when somebody knocked at the door. The porter was asking if there was some baggage to go.

"Why, no," said Mrs. Feagan as if she didn't own any baggage.

The porter looked stubborn. "Room 202 trunk and bags," he intoned monotonously.

Mrs. Feagan smiled brightly. "Oh, of course. I know now. It's a mistake. I thought I'd take an earlier train, and I sent the trunk off hours ago. The other porter came and got it. It's at the station by this time."

The porter went away, looking as if he had been cheated. MaGraw knew how he felt; he had been a porter himself before he was a cop. The man had his truck and his order, and there was no trunk. The porter on duty before one o'clock must have taken it down, but on the other hand there was no midday train to Frisco. What was the sense of sending her baggage away as early as that?

She was looking at them expectantly, her stylish black hat set at just the right angle. Crane grinned.

"I suppose one of us could string along with you, Mrs. Feagan," he said. "How about it, MaGraw?" Crane liked to tease his big, lanky partner. "Won't you escort the lady?"

"Oh," Mrs. Feagan interrupted eagerly, "couldn't you both come along? I—I—don't like to be seen going out with one gentleman. William was—he was terribly jealous."

"I guess we could manage it," Crane agreed. "My wife's jealous, too, but she'll have to get used to some things. It isn't our busy day, and we wouldn't want you to have any more trouble, Mrs. Feagan."

SO they started. She walked between them, and there was just enough distress in her face to make her interesting. As they passed the desk the clerk leaned over to say a cheering word.

"We'll keep a look out for him, Mrs. Feagan... sorry your trip turned out to be so—"

"You see how it is?" she said in an angry whisper. "They think he's run off and left me."

Crane dropped behind and spoke to the grinning clerk.

"That's all right, brother, we know you mean well." He made a fan of three little oblongs of film and thrust it under the man's eyes. "Anybody you know in that bunch of pictures?"

The clerk picked out William Feagan instantly. "That's him. That's the little guy. Say, what d'ye think a fine-looking jane like her would see in him?"

It was only a few blocks to the station, but they took a taxi. Mrs. Feagan insisted on paying. She pointed out that she had invited them to come along. After all, it was a matter of business.

"I've always been independent by nature," she said. "That was what William liked about me. I always pay my way."

The two grinned behind her back. William had liked it seven hundred dollars worth.

They got to the station with her talking on in a not unpleasant strain—about the laundry where she had worked, and her girl friends, and what they would all think of this in Frisco when it came out in the papers that William was gone and had probably deserted her! Newspapers always take the worst view of everything. They walked through the kiosk, and she wanted to buy them both a cigar! Did you ever—a cigar!

She made them take twenty-five-centers when they hung back. "Don't you worry about me, gentlemen." She smiled a little, showing nice white teeth. "I'll be all right for money when I get back to Frisco. You've taken such a load off my mind promising to hunt for William. I've got friends up north, and I can get my old job back. They didn't want me to leave. I was just a little nervous and worried in this strange town, but I'm all right, now I'm going home." She shook hands, a hand to each, big, warm, strong hands that could turn a mangle. "I want to tell you gentlemen that you've been swell. I never will forget how swell you've been, seeing me off and everything."

They helped her on the train. The station in Los Angeles is the good old-fashioned kind, with the coaches drawn up alongside so that people getting off and on at the same time are all mingled in confusion. There was a porter at the steps of every other coach and a lot of passing back and forth of people with hand luggage. It was hard to tell which were passengers and which seeing off friends; they kept coming and going. Train service in Los Angeles is usually

a sociable affair, to say the least.

Crane stepped back and watched her shadowy figure move through the coach and disappear. It was funny the effect she had on him; her big, vital presence confused him so that he could not think in a straight line. Questions kept popping up in his mind; things he hadn't asked about, and she was so ready to talk. The moment she stepped aboard that train he could think of a dozen things.

He turned around, saw a lot of milling strangers. MaGraw was gone; a two-bit cigar smoked on the concrete at his feet. He realized that he had been standing there for two or three minutes waiting for Molly Feagan to wave good-by from a window of the coach.

"Well, I'm damned."

His face turned brick red; he elbowed the porter out of the way, sprang up the steps and rushed through the coach. The door was locked, and Molly Feagan was not in any of the chairs.

V

THE porter stood out of his path respectfully, and in three jumps he was in the baggage room. The trunks for Frisco and points north were being scooted aboard as fast as possible; the train was on the point of leaving. Even his badge couldn't get him much attention, and then they only listened to him. He drew a complete blank. About twenty wardrobe trunks had gone; nothing special about any one of them to be remembered.

"A woman would have checked it," said Crane anxiously. "Some time about the middle of the day. A blonde about—er—twenty-eight. Big girl. Blue eyes, light hair; pretty feet."

The trunk smasher gave him a con-

temptuous look. "Oh, yeah? I got my job because I stop work to look at a broad's footies."

"Anyway, you'd remember a big blonde . . . all the blondes in this town are pint size."

But nobody remembered a big blonde.

The train pulled out. Crane looked after it feeling sickish inside. Where the devil was MaGraw?

He should have stayed with the train and made a quick run through the coaches instead of looking for baggage that wasn't. She could have dodged him, though, unless his partner was waiting outside. What had happened to take MaGraw off like a scared quail? Where had his own eyes been when his partner bolted? He knew, with shame . . . he'd been trying to get a hand flutter from a woman who instead had dodged him.

MaGraw would never have dropped a two-bit cigar unless something pretty important had come before him. Crane began to feel wronged as well as ashamed. This was no way for a partner to act—running out on a man without a word.

He went sadly over to the row of taxicabs.

"Anybody seen a big blonde take a taxi? Big blonde—"

A smart, red-headed young chauffeur nodded briskly.

"Why, sure. How was yours dressed?"

"Blue."

Redhead said no—this broad he was thinking of had on a black satin coat. Might have had a blue dress under it, though.

"Pretty feet? Nice, big feet?"

"Sure." The obliging young driver brightened, "Swell feet, but big."

"You're on."

She'd had a suitcase and she was in a hurry. Crane was in a hurry, too, but he had to wait until her cab came back. Nobody had heard the address she gave.

So he had to stand on the sidewalk and wait, swearing at himself, until a yellow cab rolled around the corner and took its place at the end of the line . . . the red-headed driver gave the signal that that was the one.

The driver was sullen, and it took persuasion to make him talk. He had taken his fare to the Terminal Building, he said. He didn't remember what she looked like; a fare was a fare to him.

THE Terminal Building is a lot like an ant hill. Trains run out of there to almost anywhere. They go to all the beach towns, Santa Monica, Venice, Redondo. Blind alleys. They go north and south and east and west. There wasn't a chance in ten thousand that anyone would remember a big blonde girl in a blue dress under a black satin coat, and there was almost as many chances against it being the right girl after all.

Crane held onto the hope that MaGraw was after her, but what good would that do him if he couldn't contact MaGraw? MaGraw had run out on him. Maybe MaGraw wanted to play this hand by himself—but he discarded this thought immediately. MaGraw never wanted to play by himself. He always said let the married men get the credit if there was any.

He began to check up on memories, and right away struck pay dirt. A girl at the news-stand had sold a blonde in a black satin coat a movie magazine. She remembered because they had talked some about the movies and she thought the customer looked like

Garbo, only heavier, maybe. And she had a nicer smile.

"Smart kid," Crane praised; "and what else did you talk about?"

"She asked if you could see anything by just riding past a studio in the cars."

Crane considered that. He thought: "Movies. Venice Short Line runs past a flock of 'em. You can see MGM if you're on the right side of the train. And Roach's and the old Pathé." He took the next Venice Short Line. Even at that, it was all guesswork. There might not be a thing in it. All he had to go by was his detective's nose and the twitch in his right ear that always warned him.

Beating in his mind was that everlasting tom-tom, "Where in hell is MaGraw?"

VI

VENICE was almost as bad as the Terminal Building and not nearly so lucky. At Venice were cottages and apartments scattered for miles in both directions along the shore. The whole bay district was a labyrinth of cubby-holes, built for a bathing-suited public and capable of hiding an army. There would be whole regiments of blondes, of all weights and sizes.

He dismissed houses and thought of dance halls. She liked dance halls; she had said so herself. She might be looking for her lost William in one of them. There were also the games and the hot dog stands. Even in that mass of sticky, sizzling humanity faces can be remembered.

He walked out on Long Pier. People were doing all the foolish things that piers were made for. The ocean roared in the pilings and the little balls rolled in the alleys with a dull rum-

bling sound, and miserable pigs squealed when they were shot with paper bullets. At the stands were half circles of intent faces watching the wheels spin. The dim sound of music came from cavernous ballrooms, and dreamy couples passed like shadows in the bluish light. He saw an endless rank of women, but he did not see her. He had known that he wouldn't. Not so soon.

At the end of the pier it was lonely and cold. He leaned against the railing and looked down at the black water. It was deep and greasy and the backpull made the pier tremble.

He was here. He had followed the trail of a blond woman to the water's edge, but there wasn't a vestige of proof that Mrs. Molly Feagan wasn't sitting on a train at this moment, heading north or south as the case might be. She wasn't the only big blonde in California. He'd probably get the hell of a calldown for the way he had handled this case—if anything came of it. He didn't specialize on what that "anything" might be. Vaguely and in some dark corner of his mind he called it that. For instance, they might find a dead man floating on the tide one of these days, a little dead man.

The shifting water under the pier made him dizzy. It was a tremendous tide. It would be seven feet when it came in; that would be about eleven o'clock.

A SHOULDER touched his. He turned around and saw MaGraw staring, his mouth a little way open. They were like specters to one another, risen from the dark tide.

"I'll tell you my hunch later on," said MaGraw. "I saw her dip off the train . . . it was just her feet I saw, but that was enough. She made a bee-

line for a taxi, and I lost her . . . I ought to have tipped you off, but there wasn't time. I was sort of knocked silly by the way she acted, and being a slow thinker myself—

"I headed for the P and E, not being able to think of any place else she would go in such a hurry. You remember she said they had planned on going to the beach? Venice is the likely spot for big blondes with dancing pumps."

"I know," said Crane, all bewildered. "This thing has got me. There must be something I missed. I sort of feel it but can't get hold, see? What do you guess about the broad? Does she know anything, or is she just feeling her oats? Wanting a good time before she goes into mourning?"

"It might be that," MaGraw conceded, "and then again it mightn't. Anyway, she strung us along. That's why I don't care for women much. They'll string you. If you can't believe some things they say, how do you believe anything?"

"Poor Blondie," said Crane. "Is she going to get crossed every time she makes a move?"

"I think maybe she is," MaGraw returned mysteriously. "I hope so, at any rate—not that I wish her any harm." He began to walk away, and Crane followed him. "We've got to get busy. This tide is a humdinger. When it goes out it'll go to China."

When they got to the entrance of the pier Crane had to admit that he was stuck.

"Where do we go from here?" he asked against his will.

MaGraw said: "You didn't see her get off the train?"

"No," Crane admitted, sulky. "I don't know either that she did get off. Other women have feet."

"That's so," MaGraw agreed. "It's hell working on a hunch, but something just sort of drives you on."

"It sure does."

It would take a week to make a house canvass and time was one thing they didn't have. The hunch was too strong.

"It wouldn't be an apartment house if she was under cover," Crane hazarded. "Halls full of people day and night—somebody sure to notice a dame like her. You can't make a move in an apartment without everybody being on."

MaGraw shook his head to this theory. Up to date his guessing had been the best.

"But you can rent one without notice. Day or week. It's different with a cottage. There's a landlord and gas and electricity."

"Unless it was all fixed before she came."

They looked at each other. Their faces were hard cop masks but underneath there was a certain feeling. The blonde hadn't treated them right; and there was the matter of the two-bit cigars—like laughing in their faces. They couldn't forgive her that.

They could see the black water lapping up on the sand. It seemed to be laughing at them. It could hold a million secrets and never give one away. They turned back rather helplessly to look at the Ballroom but all the shadows had pretty feet and not one was a big girl. Big girls were an utterly unknown quantity that night.

The concessions were going lively. There were turkey shoots for the chance minded . . . you didn't kill your turkey; you won by throwing a number and dragging him off later in a gunny sack, his bewildered, anguished head lolling, having his last

look at the lost world. They called it a "shoot" for excitement, but the gunny sacks cost a quarter, which was graft; anybody would pay it, though, to carry off a free turkey.

Some of the people had to fairly drag their sacks, stuffed with other winnings as well as live freight. Enormous sacks that could have held almost any loot. The crowd good-naturedly geyed the ones who were carrying off their plunder in quantity.

VII

THE detectives wandered over to the Venice police station.

"How is baggage brought down to this town—no railroad?"

"Um-m-m, trying to be funny?"

There was no idea of being funny. This was deadly serious. It was already half past nine. You could hear the tide like a battle a mile out at sea.

"Well, there's about a million trucks, but most people use the American Express—for convenience; safety, too. It's just as cheap."

Crane and MaGraw exchanged a look. If you were sending a trunk off from a railway station you wouldn't hunt up a free-lance truck; you'd shoot it off by the American. If she had sent the trunk to the station—they didn't know if she had, of course, but she might have made a trip there earlier in the day and come back to the hotel to wait for them. Or to be sure she was not followed.

On the other hand, she might have sent the trunk away straight from the hotel. That was one of the points they had blundered over—because she had kept them busy and made them forget.

MaGraw knew all about the ways of trunks and express. His porter days had taught him that.

There was a dim light in the back room of the express office. The doors were closed, but they opened to a little persuasion. The clerk was just folding up to go home, but he let them look at the order book.

There were plenty of trunks, and Crane jotted down the addresses. It would take leg work to visit all that had come through that day.

"Wait a minute," MaGraw said. "This delivery must've been among the last ones today. Suppose we begin at the end and work back."

"Okey," Crane said. "A good idea." He was for giving a man the credit due him.

The first three numbers were blank. The delivered trunks had gone to a Russian lady of much conversation; a vaudeville team playing the Strand; and a newly married couple, indignant at being disturbed at that hour.

The fourth address turned out to be one of the scaly brown, warped shacks which have survived fire and flood to deface one of the loveliest beaches in the world. The house was one of a huddle, pushed between a tailor shop and a hot dog stand—hardly a house at all so much as a narrow, slitted place with a door and low-browed window or two. There were two feet of evil sand between the concrete strand and the porch; the men stepped across and their movements mingled with the movements of an endless procession of strollers.

Dirt and fog made a satisfactory curtain for the windows, but they could see in the ghastly veranda a few pieces of mildewed wicker furniture. Beyond these was the house wall and a door showing a chink of pale yellow light.

Crane used his key, and they walked in; it was almost too easy. MaGraw

stumbled over a ragged rug and cursed under his breath. Then they got to the door without waiting a second and had it open on a lighted room.

Their hunch had led them to the right place. She was there. She wore the black coat and the blue dress and the light looked pretty on her yellow hair. She did not look big at all, but terribly shriveled and dead white, and her lip lifted when she saw who the intruders were.

There was a man with her—a good-looking fellow, with too much torso and too little chin, but handsome in the way that some women like. He had black, slick hair, and his eyes were black with long lashes. But he, too, was terribly pale, and his chin shook and then his hands.

“Sorry to butt in,” said Crane, trying to grin and failing utterly; “but you went off in such a hurry, Mrs.—er—Feagan. There’s a few more questions I wanted to ask you.”

But after he saw what they were doing he decided that there was little more he needed to know.

The pair had just taken William Feagan from a big wardrobe trunk and were busy putting him into a couple of gunny sacks.

ON the way back to town Crane lit his two-bit cigar. He had everything doped out, he said. Poor Feagan was little and inoffensive and an easy mark for a big woman. He had sold some property and had about two thousand on him—Weak Chin had most of it in his belt; no wonder she had made that crack about the big, handsome fellow taking her dough. It must have been boiling around in her mind that she had taken an awful chance on a man with a chin like that one.

At any rate, little Feagan had been bumped off to get his money, probably in that hotel room—the chances were that he was in the closet or the trunk while they were calling on the blonde! It don’t do to trust a woman with those signs about her when it’s a matter of two thousand bucks.

“The whole thing was a work-up from the beginning,” Crane demonstrated. “This pair spotted Feagan in the dance hall and she went after him. Her boy friend planned it all from the side lines. One or both of them went after him and finished him when the couple went to their room and after Feagan let them see the money on him in cash. It took them a couple days to decide just what to do...”

Crane was proud of his reasoning powers; his chest swelled a little. “I began to get suspicious of the broad soon as I looked her over. First, she lied about the money—even if there had been seven hundred and her story was straight, she had kept out enough to have a good time on. All that tissue paper and string showed that she lied. And when she said they were going right back... and with all that baggage in the room, I had to see daylight. I played it first that it was an insurance fraud somehow. The man was doing the disappearing act and leaving her to carry on. It was right cute of her to get us to see her off on the train, so she’d be sure she wasn’t followed. She even had me fooled for half a minute. But what was your idea, MaGraw? You must have had one.”

“I DIDN’T have an idea,” said MaGraw. “All I had was a hunch. I saw his shoes under the bed, and they looked like they belonged to a man who wore the same pair right

along until they was worn out. Besides, there wasn't anything open—the bags and trunks were locked, and there was no sign of a place to get a new pair from. If a man changes his shoes right after breakfast he's apt to change other things too. I couldn't see that he'd gone out barefoot.

"I don't pretend I thought of all this right at once. It sort of seeped into me slow and I got most of it when I saw her hoofin' it off that train in those pick-me-ups. I guess I lost my head when I got the hunch full force, because I forgot all about you until we run into each other on the pier. All I could think of by that time was finding that trunk."

"A hunch does play the dickens with a man's nerves," Crane agreed, "and in this case we had to work against time."

"We sure did, with that tide coming in. Whatever gets into a tide like that is gone for keeps. I figured out she'd take him for a trip on the water, because she was so willing to let us see his picture...she wanted him to be identified, and she had the snapshot right there in her grip." He fumbled in his own pocket and showed Crane a picture of a chinless man. "She had this one, too. I began to think then

that there might be another sweetie mixed up in it."

MaGraw looked rather wistfully at the two-bit cigar; he had lost his after a bare taste. "Of course I knew five minutes after we got to her room that Feagan was dead, but I didn't know how or when or by who. It wasn't until I saw them gunny sacks loaded up and nobody noticing nothing and the high tide and all, that I knew what they were goin' to do."

"How did you know, wise guy?" Crane asked, disgruntled. If this partner was going to turn out smart, they wouldn't work so well together.

"She told me. Didn't she say right along he *was* jealous or he *loved* her? He *was* a fine man...sure. When a dame gets talking about a guy like he was yesterday, it's time to go looking for the body."

"Nuts," said Crane. He threw the cigar away; it didn't taste so good. "You been going to night school studying grammar, ain't you? I don't see nothing strange about that way of speaking. Lissen, MaGraw, I like you, and I want to advise you not to try to prove your point with the Chief with any such bull as that. He's liable to put you to guarding fashionable weddings. And I wouldn't blame him."

Next Week!

Another thrilling Satan Hall complete novel.

Watch for

"Ready to Burn"

By Carroll John Daly



Flashes From Readers

*Where Readers and Editors Get Together to Gossip
and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind*

MAJOR C. E. RUSSELL, consulting criminologist for the States of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, and for several great corporations and insurance companies, has joined the staff of **DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY**.

Major Russell has written many true stories of his career as an investigator. His name is familiar to all.

He has behind him a record as a criminologist that is impressive. During the War he served on the staff of General Pershing which was organized

for special investigating and secret service in the A. E. F.

He is now going to serve this magazine—as a consulting criminologist.

We get queries from readers who are interested in detective work and from readers who find themselves confronted by problems which require the advice of the trained investigator. We know our limitations. The editor is not a detective. So we sought Major Russell as the logical man to take over this work.

He will endeavor to answer letters

WHAT is *your* idea of the best story (fiction or true story, regardless of length) published in **DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY** since Jan. 1, 1934? For the twelve letters from readers which, in the opinion of **THE CRIME JURY**, give the best reasons why this or that story stands out above all others, we will award twelve full yearly subscriptions. We don't want mere praise; we are interested in finding out exactly what stories you liked best. We don't care about your literary style.

Was there some story printed in this magazine which stood out in your memory above all others? Write and tell us about that story. Tell us why you liked it, what there was about it which made it stick in your mind. It isn't necessary for you to have read every story in every issue. You will have just as good a chance to win one of those twelve subscriptions as someone who has read all the issues from cover to cover. But we must know *why* you liked your favorite story.

Letters selected by the editors will be published from week to week, but not all letters published will receive subscriptions.

Make your comments as brief or as lengthy as you wish. But put down all your reasons. Address your letter to **THE CRIME JURY, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York City**, so that it will reach us not later than **March 9th, 1935**.

involving questions of detective procedure, methods of investigating, questions from readers who find themselves in need of an investigator's service and do not know where to turn. He will give DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY readers such general advice as may effect each particular inquiry.

This does not imply that DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY is setting up a detective bureau or soliciting any work of that character. Neither is this a legal service. Nor will Major Russell answer questions from law-breakers or people seeking to avoid justice.

Are you being molested by racketeers or blackmailers, have you witnessed a crime and want to aid the law but fear retaliation, are you searching for someone but don't know how to proceed? Questions like these the Major will answer with his advice.

From time to time the Major will print some of the most interesting letters and his answers. No names will be used. Your name will be kept strictly confidential, and if your letters appear it will be under a Case Number only. If you designate, the Major will not use your letter in this column under any circumstances. No one but the Major and his assistants will have access to his files, and you can write to him with absolute confidence that you will not be betrayed.

In next week's issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY Major Russell will publish some of the letters we have received and which we turned over to him to analyze and answer.

There will be no charge for this service. Sign your name and fill out the coupon which will appear in next week's issue and every issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, and enclose it with your letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope. We are

not soliciting business. We are trying to help you.

SHORT BUT SWEET

SIR:

You have two of the best characters in fiction in *Satan Hall* and *Riley Dillon*. These *Dillon* stories seem real. He is a swell guy. It is a pleasure to find a character like this instead of the usual ones and the old baloney. You asked for your readers' opinion, so here's mine.

Here's for more *Dillon* stories.

Sincerely,

MAX G. JOHL,
Scarsdale, N. Y.

A POLITICIAN TELLS ALL

DEAR EDITOR:

I just finished reading "Vengeance of Vindex" in the Dec. 29 issue. It is a good yarn with lots of the old suspense and thrilling action.

All of your stories are swell, except those about the *Mongoose*. I haven't seen any for quite a while, for which I am duly thankful. I especially like *Sergeant Riordan* and *Lester Leith*. Let's have them in again some time.

Just a few words about my former job: I used to be a chief deputy tax collector in a small country town. An average day for a rural politician goes something like this—you arrive at 9 and get ready for a day of arduous toil. A few letters and phone calls are answered. Then a friend from a farming district arrives, and you spend considerable time with him ascertaining crop conditions and local news. A few more taxpayers drift in, and you agree with each and sundry that taxes are too high and that expenses could be pared in all directions, except, of course in your own office, which has already been cut to the bone.

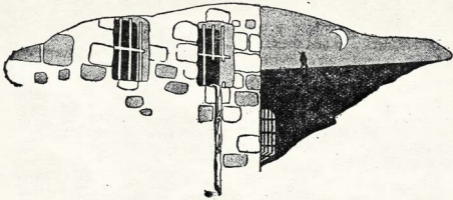
Tearing yourself away to attend the Rotary luncheon, you return at 2 P.M. to find an old prospector friend awaiting. After some discussion you decide to go out with him and look over a promising outcrop on some claims of his. Thus ends a busy day. Of course, in the rush tax collecting time you work 12 hours per day and are glad to hit the hay when it's all over.

Mr. Ohaver's dept. is the most interesting part of the magazine and I spend quite a few hours a month thereon.

Yours sincerely,

WILLIAM C. AVERY,
Los Angeles, Calif.

P.S. Out here in L. A. small time racketeers have started a new game, that of kidnaping pets belonging to the movie stars and holding them for ransom. One star paid a double ransom for the return of his pet, according to a story in a local newspaper.



With Needle and Thread He Cut Cell Bars

JAKE OPPENHEIMER, the "Human Tiger," undoubtedly the most desperate and famous prisoner that ever passed through the grim portals of California's prisons, was tough and he admitted it.

Jake, whose gamut of crime ran from petty larceny to murder, always claimed there were several schools of crime, and that he had graduated with honors from all of them. "The reform school," he stated, "is the kindergarten; the county jail, the grammar school, while the penitentiary is the university."

This honor student, while in the death house awaiting the outcome of an appeal after a sentence of murder, requested needle and thread to repair his clothing. Thinking such items were of no harm to a man in solitary, the authorities granted his request. With scrapings from the concrete floor as an abrasive, Jake used the thread and needle as saws to cut the inch-thick bars of his cell. For three months he worked patiently; then he again asked for needle and thread. The guards, having forgotten that he once had asked for those things, again supplied him.

Five months later Oppenheimer was ready. Two bars were cut completely through, top and bottom, requiring only slight pressure to force them apart. He now bided his time, determined to await an opportunity to get that certain guard. Then one afternoon he heard the voice of his enemy.

With a snarl he tore the weakened bars loose, rushed out, sped silently along the deserted corridors of the cell block, and quickly reached the kitchen. Here several convict helpers were peeling potatoes, and Oppenheimer attempted to wrest a knife from the hands of one, his sole objective being to secure the weapon and then hunt for the guard.

The cries and struggles of the convicts attracted other guards, and rushing up they soon put Oppenheimer *hors de combat* by clubbing him into submission. He was returned to solitary, and when his last appeal to the United States Supreme Court was denied, Jake terminated his activities on the gallows.

—R. W. Francis.

How Faces Reveal Character

By WILLIAM E. BENTON



LEFT
or Subconscious Side

H. BEDFORD-JONES

This is the same man!

To see the actual face, fold the page and bring the right and left sides together



RIGHT
or Conscious Side

H. BEDFORD-JONES, the author of the "Riley Dillon" stories, is the first artist whose face I have analyzed in this series. Notice that in spite of the great duality between the right and left sides, it is a face essentially well-balanced. Eyes like these reveal a character more analytical than credulous. They note movement more than still life. A face of this type is indicative of a many-sided personality, fundamentally quiet and gentlemanly, but rather startling in the way it will change from contemplative inaction to quick and somewhat ruthless action. Mr. Bedford-Jones is positive rather than negative in all his reaction. He finds it rather easy to say "no" and mean it.

The brow is typical of the writer and the actor. It is the mark of a man neither too practical nor too imaginative; of the constructive imagination rather than the pure, useless dreamer. Such a man does not take himself or anyone else too seriously. Achievements of brain interest him more than brawn. He rarely forgets anything that interests him. The sighs that delight this type of face most are things that are sharply defined in color as well as outline. Technicians in many lines all possess this sharply defined brow, with an angle in it.

The mouth and chin reveal a love of law and order. Such a man can lay out a plan and stick to it.

Next Week—Floyd Hamilton

Let William E. Benton Analyze Your Face

FILL out the coupon at the bottom of the page, and mail it to Mr. Benton. Enclose a photograph of yourself and ten cents.

Mr. Benton will tell you what your features reveal of your character. You have qualities and talents that you don't suspect. Your face is your fortune. What is your fortune? You may be following the wrong occupation. You may be in love with the wrong person. You can send in a coupon, with a photograph of anyone you wish. Enclose one dime *with each coupon* to cover mailing and handling costs.

☉ Only photographs less than three by five inches in size can be returned.

MR. WILLIAM E. BENTON,
DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY,
280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Good for one analysis.
Expires 2-23-35.

I enclose a photograph that I want analyzed, and ten cents. Please write me what character this face reveals.

Name.....

Address.....

2-9-35

Solving Cipher Secrets

A cipher is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has



M. E. OHAVER

used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first cryptogram each week is the easiest.

THE cryptogram takes on a new external appearance in Bluebonnet's No. X-10, this week's special puzzle, but with its internal structure unchanged, the numbers merely replacing letters as alphabetical symbols. For entry, look to words 5, 13, 17, and 19, which provide enough letters to unlock word 6. Solutions to this puzzle will not be credited in our Cipher Solvers' Club. But send in your answers, fans, and let us know how you like the numerical arrangement.

No. X-10. No Discrimination. By Bluebonnet.

"*12-5-16-21-3-8-21 12-10-18-14
 *10-8-16-11-8-10-21" 12-24-10-7-
 17-21-3-8-21 16-7 17-7-4-8-10-8-
 21-4-17-7-20 8-6-1-10-8-21-21-17-
 18-7 18-12 1-8-10-21-18-7-16-5
 18-1-17-7-17-18-7, 7-8-24-4-10-
 16-5, 1-10-18, 16-7-11 19-18-7,
 8-11-17-4-18-10-17-16-5-5-25 1-
 10-18-9-17-7-20 4-3-16-4 "9-16-
 10-17-8-4-25-'21 4-3-8 9-8-10-25
 21-1-17-19-8 18-12 5-17-12-8"!

In last week's No. 30, the Inner Circle cipher by Tintype, the ending -KH checked as -es, duly noting the use of symbols K and H in the final positions; and the digraph KX (e-), with X marked as a vowel in group 1, suggested a for symbol X. Further, symbol R, preceded only by probable consonant symbols and followed only by assumed vowels, thus responded as h.

Using these equivalents, RKXPKH (h^oes), as h^eaves, would lead to HRXAORXT (sh^a-h^a-), evidently sh^{an}ghai, checking with HTOR (siph). And the rest of the message would then follow by the usual routine. Thus, RXAYH (h^{an}-s)

and TAVXAY (in-an-) would yield h^{an}ds and inland; and so on. The translation in full is given elsewhere in the department.

The subtractions $U - U = C$ and $R - R = N$ will start you with the current division puzzle by J. Upton Olivier. Next note $S \times S = N$; etc. The 10-letter key word is numbered from 0 up to 9. Entry to Roy C. Weidler's cryptogram may be made through KABK and BK; KADU, DU, and D; UH and BXUH. Then tackle YDLUK and KLS, following up with words 3 and 16.

The two short words LO and OLH, correctly identified, will break the ice in James W. Davidson's contribution, leading to words 9, 18, and 21. Word 20 will come next; also the interesting pair, VGLV and LV. The affixes IUO-, -LOM, and -WLUOZ provide the necessary clues to Irving S. Sherman's cipher, supplying all but one letter in IUOYLIV.

Groups 4 and 14 are vulnerable points in Albert G. Winn's alliterative construction. Symbol X occurs 26 times altogether, 14 times initially, in this 116-letter message. A solution of Romeo's Inner Circle cipher and the answers to all of this week's puzzles will be given next week. The asterisks in No. 36 are prefixed to proper nouns.

No. 31—Cryptic Division. By J. Upton Olivier.

OBS) TCRELU (SLB
 RORN

UNRL
 UTSE

LSOU
 LRUU

LSC

No. 32—Introductory Missive. By Roy C. Weidler.

ABCDEF GHEKLDNOKPR GLSTKDG RDCDUDHE TOVVXPU,
D YPPX KABK D UAHOXR BXUH KLS ZS ABER BK
GLSTKHFLBZU. UH KADU DU ZS YDLUK!

No. 33—Good Publicity. By James W. Davidson.

HGN PUKHG LO PTKVD VGLV EAUUGDTV, TUUAZTVK-
DGN OLH OTHXD DTZG LV OLPPS VTPRD, KNNUGX UKN,
BRL XLAVNX OTHG KUKHZ. HGXDKAHKVD YHLYHTG-
DLH KNZTDX KNFKVDKPGX LO KNNTDTLVKU KNL.

No. 34—Freedom Forestalled. By Irving S. Sherman.

SLAVE RVNSUJZSC KSNOZ VZINKV. WJEOGVC, ZJKVI-
WLOM PUNT, HJVZWLWOZ IUOYLIW, SVNEOZ ZIPQV.
LQKVOXL.OM BNLS FEVNG WPDNEWVX. DNEXVO
IUOMENWJSNWVZ MJNEX.

No. 35—Unpopular Person. By Albert G. Winn.

XEUXKL, XVVFRBFBK, XEUTRBVXFBK XHXVTPGVH
XPMK XPGKRXJYT *XFAGV. XVRTVKTZ XVZXNXZBGY
XVRXHTK XVOBXP. XVOBXXHFP XVSYXRHK
XVRGPRTPGHXFV.

No. 36—Sight Seeing. By Romeo.

*LEGPBRU GUEOE EB *MEVZPSTBRS. LFKVBEU HRNS-
BEPS TNVZPST, QPVGUEKPST BFESVUNLDSB LRURFV,
AEFPDTEBDQ, XDENBPHNU, YETSPHPLDSB, VNXUPYD.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

25—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 L A M B R E Q U I N

26—According to a study in our language, the most frequently used words in telephoning and writing are "I," "you," and "the."

27—Honor, integrity, truthfulness, thrift, sobriety may be old-fashioned virtues, but they are the only rules of life which can lead to real greatness.

28—Jocose bachelor piques debonair host by recital of epigastric symptoms. Host objects to obnoxious "organ recital" with meal

29—Arthur, awkward Abyssinian cannibal, amazed, acts awfully anxious about cyclone, which knocks down shack! Takes aspirin; regains composure.

30—Bacchantic deck hands shanghai stupid Negro roustabout aboard inland freight packet. Thankful spouse heaves sigh, weds another husband.

Answers submitted to current puzzles Nos. 31-36 will be credited to the solver in our February Cipher Solvers' Club. A single solution will enroll you. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Jujutsu for Self-Defense

By JOHN YAMADO
Formerly of the Tokio Police

How to Guard Yourself Against a Knife or Club

IF a man points a pistol at you and tells you to put your hands up, *put them up*. He can crook his finger and shoot you much faster than you can do anything else, and it is doubtful that he would have the gun unless he was ready to use it.

But if all he has is a knife or a club or a blackjack, that is another matter. If you have mastered jujutsu thoroughly, you can disarm him. But you must have practiced it and used it until it is nearly second nature with you.

Do not catch the blow of a descending club on your forearm unless that is the only way of keeping it from striking your head; it may break your arm, which is comparatively rigid. Instead, catch the striker's wrist in your open hand, with your arm a little bent, so that the shock of his blow is absorbed, rather than being suddenly transmitted to you. If you cannot reach his wrist and must grasp the club, take it as near to his hand as possible; you will get less effect from the leverage of the blow in this way.

Better, if you are able to dodge the blow, which you can learn to do by practicing with a friend who uses a club made of cloth rolled tightly—but not too tightly—you can learn to disarm your opponent. Suppose, for example, that he strikes down at your head from in front, using his right hand.

You step to your left, and as the blow moves down past your right shoulder, you snatch the club from

above with your right hand, at the same time thrusting your left hand into his face, or chopping at his neck with the outer edge of your left hand. Be very careful not to hurt him if you are using the chopping blow, for if you hit him too hard on the front of the throat you may bruise or even fracture his larynx, causing him to strangle.

Similarly, if the blow is being struck with a club held in his left hand, you can sidestep to the right, using your left hand to catch and jerk the club while you strike him with your right hand.

Now, too, you will learn some of the further uses of a few of the jujutsu tricks formerly described in this series. Those which guard against and punish straight blows are also used to combat knife thrusts. You have practiced them against an unarmed opponent. Now let your sparring partner hold a roll of cloth in his hand to take the place of a knife, so that you may practice not only blocking but also disarming. Do not use a stick of wood as a practice knife unless you have a fencing mask to protect your face.

I have already told how to guard against a straight blow to the head. The same defense is used for a knife thrust at the throat or upper part of the chest. We have also discussed grips to cause pain, grips for holding an opponent helpless and methods of causing him to drop some object which he may be holding in his hand. These all apply to guarding against knife work.

Next Week the Crime Jury Selects—!

Ready to Burn

A Complete Short Novel

By CARROLL JOHN DALY

HOLLIS DAGGETT, the boss of the underworld, would burn in the electric chair if one of his gunmen squealed. And the rat would squeal—if a jury pronounced him guilty. But Daggett's lawyers were shrewd. Daggett's killers were striking at witnesses. And facing all the power of a vast underworld machine stood Satan Hall!

Here is a desperate, thrilling battle that reaches a climax when Satan Hall, with a smoking gun in his hand, goes flying through the air from the high balcony of the court room itself, down toward the hard stone floor far below! Read this complete short novel next week!

Detour to Murder

A Novelette

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

Vindication—or the chair? Which was waiting for the fugitive at the end of that bullet-swept road?

DUGAL O'LIAM'S "Inside Story of Melvin Purvis," ace manhunter of the Department of Justice, gives the exciting details of the small-town boy who smashed the dreaded outlaws of the Middle West. The "Episode of the Forty Murders," is another highlight in the career of Vivian Legrand, *THE LADY FROM HELL*, by Eugene Thomas.



Also stories by H. H. MATTESON, DONALD ROSS, and others.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, February 16 (on sale February 6)

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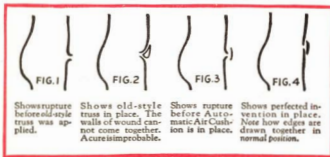
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Shows rupture before old-style truss was applied.

Shows old-style truss in place. The walls of wound cannot come together. A cure is improbable.

Shows rupture before Automatic Air Cushion is in place.

Shows perfected invention in place. Note how edges are drawn together in normal position.

PROOF!

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