

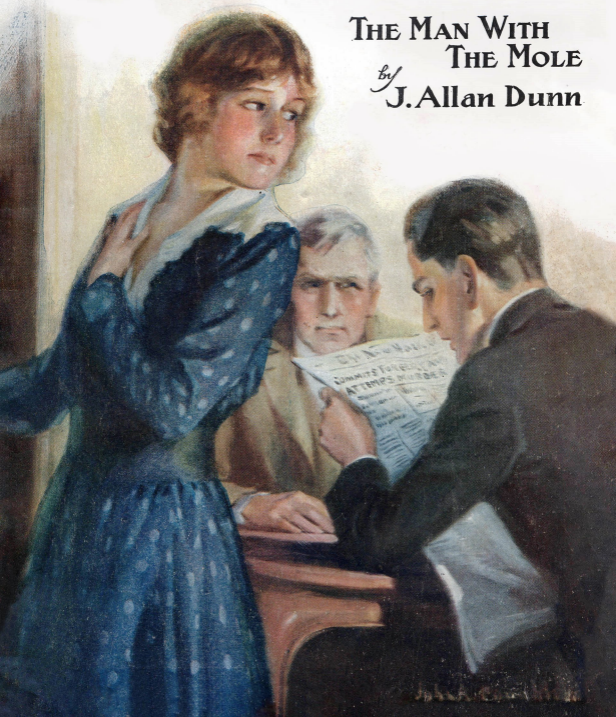
DEC. 10, 1918

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# DETECTIVE STORY

## MAGAZINE *EVERY TUESDAY*

THE MAN WITH  
THE MOLE  
*by*  
J. Allan Dunn



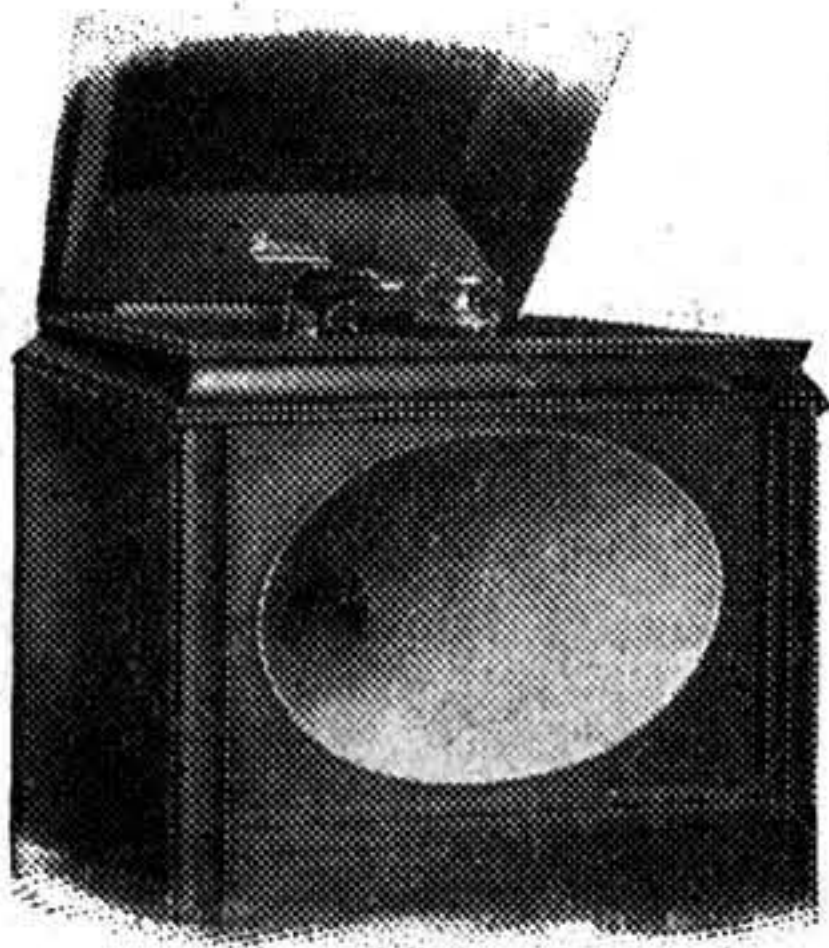
# "Why I Chose a Brunswick"

By BURTON WYNNE

## Adventures in Seeking the Super-Phonograph

FOR years my family has wanted a phonograph. Yet we hesitated. We were on the verge of buying often, but delayed.

We love music. And we value the phonograph for the wealth of world-wide talent it brings to the home.



But frankly, we waited during the last few years, hearing the different phonographs and weighing their different advantages—never quite satisfied.

We felt that sooner or later a better phonograph would come, overcoming all the current handicaps and setting new standards.

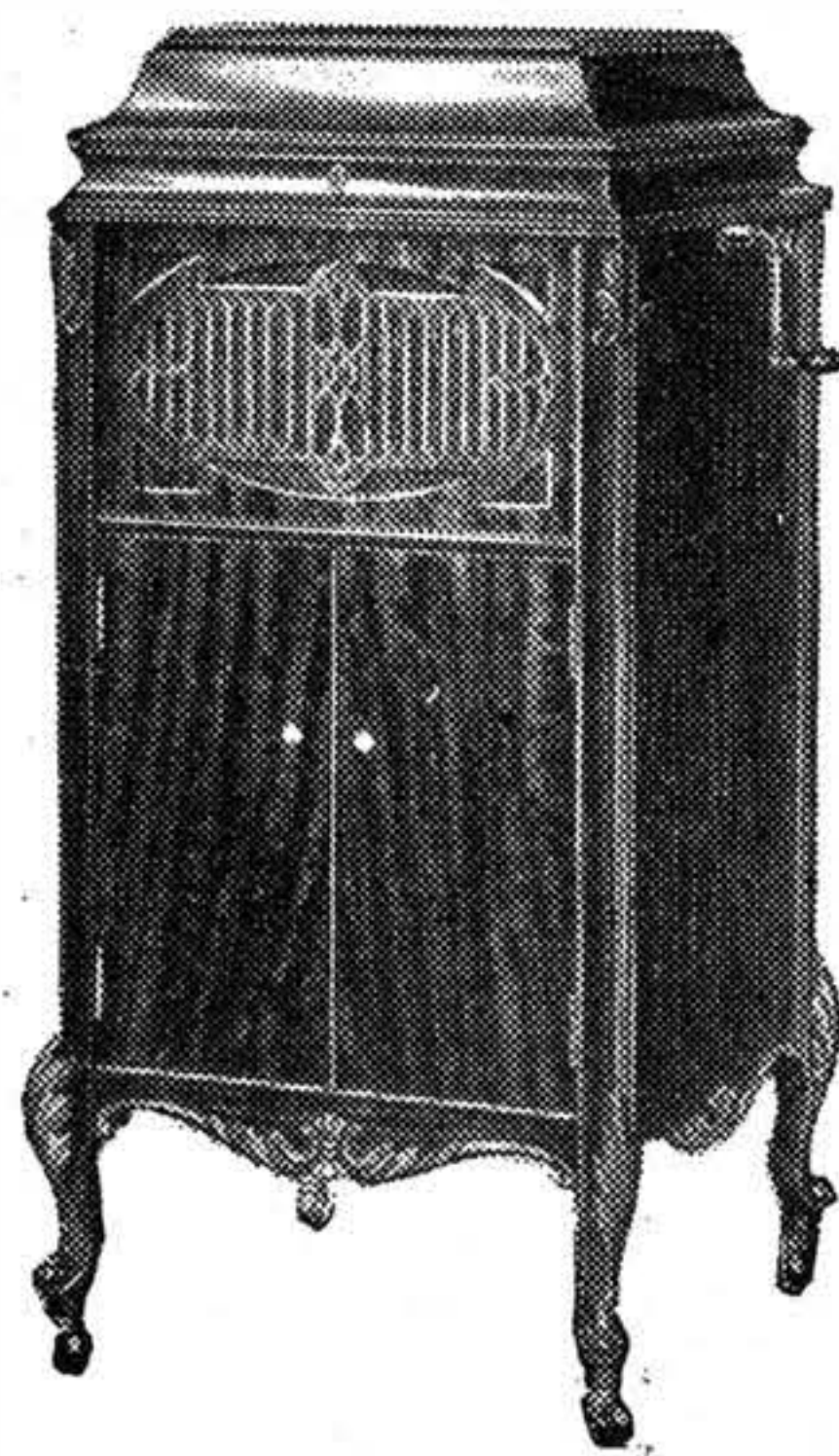
We never liked the idea of a phonograph which would play only its own make of records. No one catalog contained all our favorites. Each line of records offered its attractions.

Another thing we quarrelled with was tone. We were repelled at the strident tones of some. And others seemed to be nearly perfect, but not quite.

I realize that all this sounds like we were too critical and that we set ourselves above the thousands who were content with the phonographs we hesitated to buy.

But we wanted to be sure before we bought, so as to avoid regrets.

In our determination to find the super-phonograph, we came upon the new Brunswick. It was announced as something different, something advanced.



We read and heard of the Brunswick Method of Reproduction, which included the Ultona and an improved amplifier.

And so we investigated. We were somewhat skeptical—but we came away as proud owners.

For here, at last, was our ideal instrument—one which played all records at their best, one with incomparable tone.

This remarkable instrument ended our search. We found in the Brunswick Method of Reproduction all we had looked for and more.

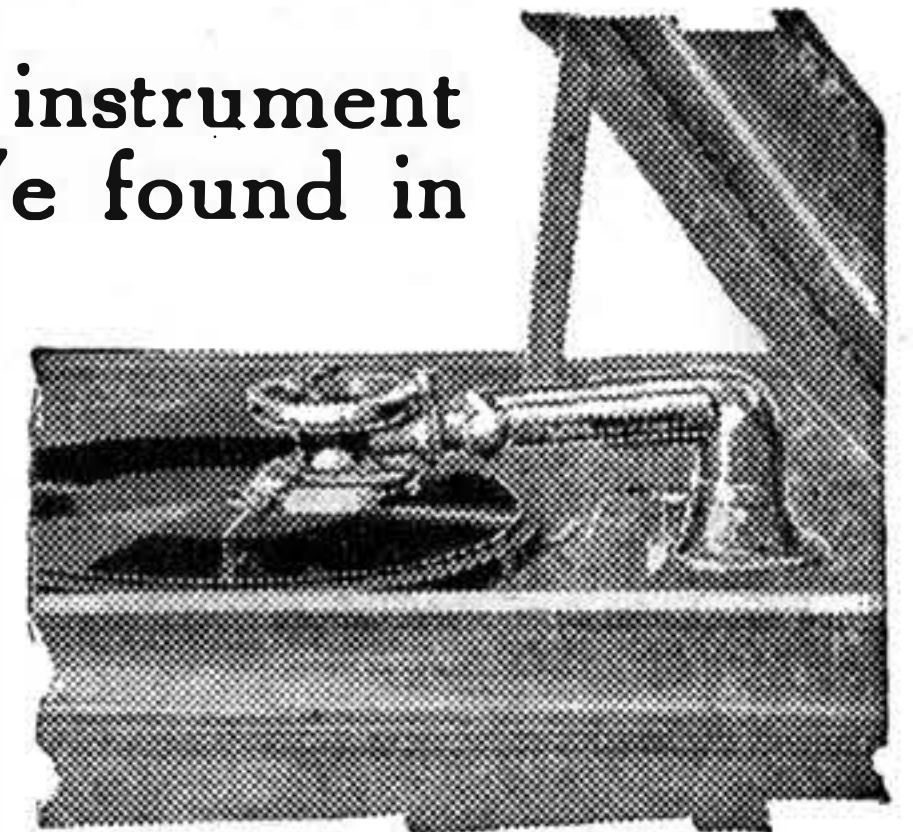
The Ultona is a simple, convenient, all-record player, adjustable to any type of record at a turn of the hand. And now we buy our records according to artists rather than make. Thus we overcome the old-time limitations.

I am convinced that the tone of The Brunswick is far superior, and due chiefly to the strict observance of acoustic laws.

The tone amplifier is built entirely of wood, molded so as to give the sound waves full opportunity to develop. No metal is used in this amplifier, so there are no stunted, metallic sounds.

My advice to every music lover is to hear The Brunswick before deciding. One's ear immediately appreciates the difference. And old conceptions of the phonograph are changed.

Brunswick dealers everywhere are delighted to play the new Brunswick for you and to explain its betterments.



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ALL PHONOGRAPHS IN ONE

# DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

E V E R Y T U E S D A Y

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# DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY TUESDAY

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Vol. XIX

December 10, 1918

No. 5

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## *The Man with the Mole* by J. Allan Dunn

*Author of "The Shred of Serge," "The Malay Creese,"  
"Treasure for Treasure," etc.*

### CHAPTER I.

#### FORGERY.

**D**AZEDLY JACK SPERRY stared at the pink slip in his hand. He turned it from the front, where his stepfather's clear signature—Simeon Cairns—appeared as drafter of a check for ten thousand dollars, to the back, where showed the endorsement of John J. Sperry in handwriting so like his own that it staggered him. The check was payable to the same John J. Sperry.

The three men grouped on the side of the desk opposite to him gazed at him uncompromisingly. The one in the central chair, Simeon Cairns himself, spoke.

"That is your signature on the back of the check, is it not?"

The aggressiveness of the tone brought Sperry a little to his senses.

"It looks very much like my writing, sir. But it cannot be. I have not endorsed any check of yours for any such amount; none at all since the last payment of my allowance."

"Indeed? This is a check bearing my name, bearing a number considerably in advance of the last issued by me. I find it has been torn from the back pages of my check book, kept by me in the drawer of this desk, as you are well aware. You know this gentleman, Mr. Hilliard, president of the Agricultural National, of Longfield, and Mr. Burnside, cashier of the same

institution." The speaker looked expectantly at the bank president.

"This check," said Hilliard in a dry, commercial voice, "was presented to our junior paying teller, Mr. Remington, yesterday morning by this young man. He is well known to Remington and to the rest of us, as your stepson. No question was raised of identity, or of the authenticity of your signature, or of the amount of the check. Your stepson intimated to Remington that he was going into business on his own account, and that this sum had been advanced, or presented to him, as his working capital. A majority portion of it was to go toward a partnership, I understand."

Sperry gasped and then broke into expostulation. Cairns interrupted him.

"You shall have your say in a moment. Go on, Mr. Hillard."

"There is little more to say. The cash was paid out, as desired. Ordinarily the irregularity would not have been noticed for another twenty-four hours had you not requested the exact amount of your balance early this afternoon, Mr. Cairns. Upon your declaration that this check must be a forgery, we came up to see you immediately after closing hours. I understand you do repudiate this signature?"

"It is cleverly done, but it is not mine," said Cairns.

"Naturally the bank does not feel inclined to sustain this loss. We are compelled to protect ourselves, to guard ourselves against such attacks. We are, however, inclined to view the matter with an leniency equal to your own, Mr. Cairns, providing, of course, the money is restored."

"Do you hear that, Jack?" demanded his stepfather. "Restore this money, and, for your mother's sake, as well as for your own——"

"But I did not cash that check," said Sperry. "I——"

The cashier's voice struck in, coldly metallic.

"You did cash a check in the bank yesterday?"

"I did. But it was one of my own. I have a balance of two hundred and fifty odd. Wait." He produced his own pocket check book while the others looked on cynically. "My balance is two hundred and sixty-three dollars. I drew a check for twenty-five dollars. There is the stub. Remington gave me two tens and a five. Look for yourselves." He flung the check book on the big library desk. No attempt was made to pick it up.

Burnside went on:

"Your balance is exactly two hundred and eighty-eight dollars. Remington states that you presented only the one check, this signed by Mr. Cairns, and took the money in five one-thousand-dollar bills and ten five-hundred-dollar bills. I am sorry for you, Sperry, but the evidence is overwhelmingly against you."

Sperry's eyes flashed and he pounded the desk with his fist.

"Do you mean to insinuate that I forged the name of Simeon Cairns and tried to appropriate ten thousand dollars? Why, there is a hundred thousand dollars held for me in trust by my mother under my father's will."

"And not available until you are thirty, five years from now. Unless, in the meantime, your mother and her advisers become convinced that you are capable of successfully applying the sum to business methods," spoke up Cairns. "And, unfortunately, she is not so convinced. You have been sowing wild oats, Jack, and this is the harvest, my lad. Why didn't you come to me frankly and own up to your entanglement?"

"All that is a lie," cried Sperry. "I am in no entanglement. You have attempted to prejudice my mother against me. You have magnified little things

into wild escapades. And you would have been the last person for me to apply to for aid."

"There is no use talking that way, Jack," said Cairns with a shrug of his shoulders. "I am glad your mother is away for the present. The issue is, are you going to restore that money? If so, I will say nothing more of it. Mr. Hilliard has expressed his will toward leniency. If you will not do the honest, repentant thing——" He shrugged his shoulders once again.

"I haven't got it!" exclaimed Jack. "I never had it!"

Hilliard got up, Burnside with him.

"We cannot waste time in this matter," said the president. "We are still willing to give twenty-four hours for the return of the ten thousand dollars. If not, we shall be compelled to adopt the usual course. One way or another, the penalty must be paid. Aside from the financial loss we have no real right to countenance crime."

Jack Sperry, feeling like an animal that has suddenly found itself in a trap, looked at the three men. They were utterly aloof from him, unsympathetic. It was evident they believed him guilty, that he was in peril of arrest.

"For the sake of Mrs. Cairns, the unhappy boy's mother," Cairns said, "I will make good the loss to the bank. I do not wish a prosecution. If other means fail, I shall send you my check the first thing in the morning."

"Very well," said Hilliard coldly. "That closes the incident. Remington, of course, has been discharged. He should have detected the forgery."

"That hardly seems fair," said Cairns. "It is excellently done. But I suppose discipline must be maintained. I shall see what I can do for the young man. He should not suffer from another's crime."

Hilliard and Burnside took their leave formally, Cairns seeing them to the door of his library, while Sperry, boil-

ing with resentment, awaited his return to the desk.

The Cairn's household was a divided one. Jack Sperry's mother had remarried, and Jack had not approved the match, though he did not voice his opinion openly, understanding somewhat of his mother's nature, essentially feminine, demanding some one upon whom to lean. He had tried his best to get along with his new relation, but he resented the dominant aggressiveness of Simeon Cairns, disbelieved in his easily assumed suavity, and objected to his assumption of parental authority, his complete reorganization of the household.

Jack Sperry was twenty-five, and his own master; or he would be when fairly launched on his own career. After college he had taken up civil engineering in earnest, serving an apprenticeship with such success that he had been offered a partnership. The capital for this he had looked to, under the terms of his father's will, as mentioned by Hilliard, from his mother. The hundred thousand dollars was his rightful heritage, leaving ample for his mother during her lifetime; an equal sum, in fact, that would supposedly revert to Sperry on her death, being meanwhile excellently invested.

Since Mrs. Sperry had married Cairns, the latter's masterful ways had, by devious methods, blocked Jack's ambitions, or so the latter fully believed. Cairns affected to treat him as a headstrong boy, using a *bonhomie* that Jack merely believed a cover to his true personality. And his mother, somewhat an invalid of late, seemed more and more inclined to accept as infallible her second husband's wisdom.

More, Cairns had made the most of certain affairs, particularly one in which Jack had aided a fraternity brother to get out of a serious scrape. He had managed to imbue Mrs. Cairns with the idea that her son was still unsuited for

the responsibilities of business and the handling of capital. All in all, the two rubbed together no more smoothly than do a coarse file and a rough casting. Jack's mother was wintering in Florida, and the friction between the two had been more open of late. Now had come this astounding accusation, leaving Jack gasping, like a fish in a net, at the meshes of evidence surrounding him.

Cairns came back to the desk with a frown on his face.

"Don't be obstinate, Jack," he said. "If you can't get the money, if you've applied it elsewhere, confess it to me and I'll advance it temporarily."

"You've always hated me," said Sperry. "You have tried to estrange me from my mother; you have tried to run my affairs as well as hers. This thing is a lie, a trick, and you know it. Somewhere or other you are back of this infernal business!"

"Are you accusing the president and cashier of the Agricultural Bank, together with the paying teller, who has been forced to give up his position; together with myself, of trying to fasten a crime upon you that will, I sadly fear, break your mother's heart if not jeopardize her health?"

"You leave her name out of it," said Sperry fiercely.

"You forget that she is my wife, the woman I love," said Cairns with a certain dignity. "She cannot be left out of it. If you persist in your denial of this thing I shall restore the money but, after that, I shall wash my hands of it. It is not to be expected that this young—er—Remington will accept his forced loss of a job quietly. There will undoubtedly be publicity. I shall see your mother immediately in order to break the news to her as softly as possible."

"I shall see her first," broke in Sperry.

"I think not," said Cairns softly. "I had a letter from her this morning. She has left the Royal Poinciana and gone

—elsewhere. Under the circumstances I do not feel justified in letting you know where that is. I shall wire her tonight of my departure, and I shall see," he went on blandly, "that whatever mail comes for you from her is, temporarily at least, withheld. Since you are resolved to stay hardened, I also remind you that your presence in this house, from this moment, is not to be tolerated."

Sperry glared at him. He believed that his stepfather's eyes were full of mockery and malice.

"You have no right," he cried hotly, "no right to hold my mail! You have no right to throw me out of my mother's house!"

"I think I should not be considered an usurper," answered Cairns. "As for yourself, you have no rights. A felon forfeits such things. Your appeal to the law might prove unfortunate. This is my house. Your mother has made it over to me in exchange for other matters."

A glaring light seemed to break through Sperry's brain, still confused from the charges, the crushing evidence against him.

"And you seek to have me disinherited," he said. "I am on to your crafty game now. It is you who are a criminal, a sneaking——"

Simeon Cairn's usually pallid face flamed crimson. He struck Sperry with his open hand, a resounding blow that left the mark of livid fingers on the latter's cheek.

Beside himself, reeling back, Sperry clutched a heavy inkstand of glass and hurled it at his stepfather. He saw it strike, saw the ink cover Cairn's face and, as the latter fell to the rug, saw crimson well out and mingle with the black of the ink. Cairns lay prone, his eyes staring. Sperry heard footsteps in the hall and realized that their voices had mounted in the rapidly culminating quarrel. "*Felon!*" The word surged



in his brain. Now he was fairly in the mesh of circumstances.

He sprang to the door and encountered Peters, the butler with whom Cairns had supplanted the former functionary, as he had all the original servants. Peters, heavy, inclined to stoutness, grasped for Sperry and the latter drove home a blow with all his weight to the butler's stomach and floored him, breathless, agonized. Snatching his hat and coat from the rack, Sperry raced out into the gloom of the early evening.

## CHAPTER II.

### FLIGHT.

THE Sperry house was in the Berkshires. They had an apartment in New York also, but the Berkshire place, at Swiftbrook Bowl, was kept open usually until Christmas, though Mrs. Cairns had gone South with the first approach of fall. A street railway connected with the manufacturing town of Longfield, which was four hours from New York by the express trains.

As Sperry sped through the dusk, out of the grounds and down the road toward the car line, he saw, clear through the almost naked trees, the headlight of an approaching trolley, and raced to make connection with it, barely accomplishing his end.

In his pocket was the slim remnant of the twenty-five dollars he had drawn from the bank, some six dollars in all. His first intention of seeking his mother and attempting to establish with her his innocence, died away in hopelessness. He could raise a little money on the jewelry he wore, but not nearly enough, even if he knew where she was. His balance in the bank would undoubtedly be appropriated; at any rate checks would not be honored, and, if he dared to go where he could cash a check, he was in no mind to have them returned "No Funds." It would only add to his apparent dishonesty. Also, it would

help them to trace him. By now the butler would have roused the police at Longfield; they would be on the alert, stations would be watched, the very trolley he was on would be searched as soon as the telephones got working!

To-morrow the threatened publicity would contain the additional news that he had murdered his stepfather. He was an outcast, a fugitive. There would be a reward on his head. One faint hope lingered, that he had not killed Cairns. He would know that by the papers. And, if that crime was spared him, he was not going to be caught, already condemned, and be put away without an attempt to establish his innocence.

Remington, the paying teller, had lied. To what end? He had been discharged. And how could he prove the man a liar, how discredit the rest of the damning evidence? Sperry burned to find Remington, to choke the truth out of him. That would mean his own immediate arrest. But there were others back of Remington. Hilliard and Burnside had been taken in by the evidence. It was Cairns who was at the bottom of all this! Yet Cairns had, undeniably, plenty of money. His balance at the bank was large. Sperry was helpless—practically penniless. And he was an outlaw.

Sperry groaned. Some one, a man he knew, leaned over from the seat back of him and asked him if he was ill.

This would not do. He forced a smile. "Ulcerated tooth," he said. "Got to have it fixed to-morrow."

The man said something commiserating and sat back again.

Sperry forced his wits to work coherently, dispassionately. The attack on Cairns, the forgery, his mother's attitude—he could not help those for the time. He had to get away or he would be irretrievably condemned, branded. If he had only taken his own roadster! But there would not have been time for

that. They could have cut him off or traced him.

Swiftbrook Bowl, that fashionable resort, lay closer to New York than Longfield. And there was another station between the Bowl and Longfield. A plan formed itself.

He swung off at a corner, about a quarter of a mile from this station, Langley Dale, and struck up an unlit side road as the trolley sped away. In half a mile he hit the railroad near a siding and dodged into a thicket. Night had practically fallen and he was safe for the present. Twenty minutes later the express for New York, ignoring Langley Dale, roared past him. Thirty minutes after that a local chugged through, bound in the opposite direction. It reached the station and stayed there for what seemed to Sperry a long time as he watched from his concealment the red tail light.

Perhaps they were searching it for him? Then the red light began to back toward him with much snorting of the engine. He crouched low, shivering. The train came to a standstill opposite him and he could see the people through the lighted windows, carefree, save for their delay, eager to get home. And he was homeless! A sense of despair seemed to numb him and he shook it off.

There was the sound of a train panting up the grade the other side of the Dale. No other passenger was due for two hours. This must be the freight he had hoped for. Probably a long line of empties going back to New York, great coal trucks, a car or two. Hope revived. It would come in between him and the local that had been backed on to the siding to let it pass.

He lay low till the searching headlight lifted over the crest of the grade, flared down the right of way, and passed him. The freight was gathering speed now but Sperry would have tried for it had it been going twice as fast.

Better to trip, to fall and be mangled, than caught, arrested, prosecuted, and condemned—a swift sequence that would inevitably follow.

Steel coal trucks were passing him, punt-shaped. The train seemed slowing down a little. He jumped and found a footing and a grip for his hands on the cold rim of a truck as he flung himself upward. In a moment he had scuttled over the edge and slid down the sloping end into a rubble of coal dust.

For the present he was safe. Hobos at this time were rarities. There would be no search of the train as it lumbered on through the darkness. Somewhere in the yards of upper Manhattan he could get off, round about midnight. He would find a subway and get far downtown in New York. There his plans ceased, save that vaguely he resolved on smothering his identity, and—if Cairns was only still alive—somehow hanging on until, by hook or crook—for surely fortune must turn some time—he could reinstate himself. If Cairns were dead? He would wait till morning for that, he tried to tell himself, huddled in the empty truck, jolted unmercifully, bruised, flung headlong with the changing motions of the train, grimed, cold, and, as the night wore on, hungry.

The vision of Cairns lying in the rug with the crimson and the ink streaking the pale face in fantastic patterns, would not leave him.

At two in the morning he found himself far downtown in Manhattan. He had bought himself two drinks of whisky and two sandwiches in a saloon on the East Side, near the river, and stopped the numbness that had begun to turn to a poignant ache between his shoulders. He could not afford to risk pneumonia from exposure. That meant a hospital and recognition, when the dirt had been cleansed from him. As soon as he could find a cheap lodging house and get some sleep, he realized

that he must change his clothes. Filthy as they were from his trip, their cut and the quality of their cloth had already made him an object of suspicion. In this neighborhood they were shrewd of eye, and Sperry already felt that he had been sized up for what he was, a defaulter from his caste, a gentleman gone wrong; not a master crook, but an amateur, one to whom a reward might be attached. He managed to get some of the muck from his face and hands in the lavatory of the saloon, thankful for the sanitary paper towel. Then he went out into the streets to look for a bed.

It was bitterly cold. The searching wind blew off the river, and Sperry was glad now of the good texture of his clothes. But he ached intolerably and he longed for some shelter where he could rest and think. His thoughts would not co-ordinate. They were a jumble of what had happened, and wild conjectures as to what had led up to his entanglement. Silent, furtive figures slunk by him, slid into nauseous alleys or into such side-doors of protected saloons as he had found his own way. Some of them staggered into the uninviting doorway of rooming houses advertising "Beds for Men Only. 25c and up."

Fastidious, more from habit than present consciousness, Sperry hesitated to enter these caravanseries of the poor. His imagination, far too vivid to ease his present plight, conjured up horrors above stairs. Further, he could not shake off the idea that he was being trailed.

"It's absurd," he told himself again and again. "If they had managed in some manner to spread the net so far already, they would not hesitate to draw in the folds." But he was out of place here, a palpable misfit, and therefore to be suspected, to be watched, to be exploited for what there might be in it. To hide successfully in such a neigh-

borhood he must be one of those who dwelt here and dodged the law and defied it, knowing the manners and the codes of the underworld. Yet he must have some place to hide away, to sleep, to wait the coming of the morning and the announcement of the newspapers.

A vicious gust of wind, flung down a side street, pierced him as a spear might have stabbed him to the vitals. He suddenly felt sick in mind and body. "What's the use?" he asked himself bitterly, his overstrung nerves reacting. Then came the rebound. He must brace up, put on a bold front, and accept the conditions of his surroundings; he must assume a toughness and demand a bed with a swagger and a tone that would deceive any one who might want to pry into his identity. He still had most of his six dollars, and he could pay for a room to himself. Another drink would bolster his courage. The reek of it on his breath would give him, as it were, a local color.

Down an alley he saw a figure come out from a door near a distant corner, a door above which a light burned dimly. Another entered. Here was traffic, a saloon. He hurried down the alley. Close to the door was piled a clutter of empty boxes, an array of refuse and ash cans. Some one was groping among these as Sperry passed, but that person did not look at him.

"Some penniless devil looking for cast-off food," thought Sperry, and the impulse came to ask the man in for a drink and some food. But he could not do that, he told himself. He must look out for his own safety first. The man might be inquisitive. As he reached the door a burly figure came out, lurching a little as if intoxicated. Sperry saw the face under the lamp.

The upper part was shaded with the brim of a derby hat. The lower showed a firm chin and a thin-lipped mouth under a prominent nose. To the right of the lips was a prominent mole, al-

most black in that light, curiously, distinctively shaped. Sperry stood aside as the man passed in the direction he himself had come. Casually he watched him as he went, wondering idly if he would safely avoid the cans and boxes. The man with the mole almost brushed Sperry, and Jack was aware of a shaded glitter of searching eyes upon him, that, somehow, did not accord with the drunken gait.

Then a figure leaped from the medley of ash and refuse containers, leaped swiftly, and silently, just as the burly man went by. And, by the lamp, Sperry saw the hand of the bum he had thought of inviting to a drink, shift to a hip pocket, saw a glint of nickel, and, in sheer instinct, he flung himself upon the would-be killer, gripping the wrist of the hand that was freeing the pistol, and cruelly twisting it as he flung his forearm round the man's neck, forcing back his chin.

The gun clattered to the cobbles of the alley. The burly man with the mole had turned with a swift precision that belied intoxication and instantly shot a short, hard punch to the projecting jaw. The killer crumpled in Sperry's grasp and slid to the ground. The other coolly picked up the gun and put it into his pocket, nodding to Sperry.

"Thanks," he said. "I owe you something for that, pal."

### CHAPTER III.

BALDY BROWN.

THE killer had fallen face downward on the slimy stones. The man with the mole turned him over with one foot and a hand and surveyed him keenly. The killer showed faint signs of returning consciousness, and the other picked him up easily, much as if he was a half-stuffed sack of bran, and jammed him into a sitting posture on top of one of the ash cans, propped against the wall of the saloon. To

Sperry he said nothing until he had completed this process unaided, and had satisfactorily balanced his late opponent. Then he turned to Sperry, surveying him with a comprehensive glance.

"What were you doing in this dumping ground at this time of night?" he asked. His voice was gruff but friendly, and there was a compelling quality in it that somehow gave Sperry a hazy impression that, even if he had not grasped the killer's wrist, the burly one would have found a means to take care of himself.

"I was going to get a drink," he said. "Then I was going to find a bed somewhere."

"A shot and a flop?" said the other. "We'll fix that. Hello, you!"

The killer was coming sullenly, viciously out of his trance, glaring at the man he would have shot in the back. Then Sperry saw the hate in his eyes change to uncertainty. The man with the mole had taken off his hat, displaying a skull practically bald, and he was grinning at the killer. Front teeth liberally filled with gold shone under the lamp.

"Just why were you tryin' to bump me off, pal?" he was saying. "What's the reason? Who did you take me for, a dick? An' who're you? I'll know you next time, but I'll swear this is the first."

The perplexity in the little rat eyes of the killer deepened. He mumbled uncertainly and tried to get down from the ash can. The man with the mole set him back with a firm hand.

"What's your moniker, pard?" he persisted. "An', if there's any reason why I shouldn't bash your dial in and send you to the slab, you'd better come across with it—*now!*" he cried, with a sudden ferocity and a snarl of his gold-filled teeth that made the killer shrink in terror.

"I'm Curly," the latter managed to

articulate. "Curly Luke Conklin. I—say, I was in wrong, cull. I just got out of stir, see? The dick who sent me up was Jim Farrell, the low-livered crook. I swore I'd get him w'en I come down the river, an' I see you in at Dumpy's there takin' a drink, an'——"

"You thought I was what's-his-name Farrell, a dick, did you? You must be full of hop. I never met the flat-foot. I'm Baldy Brown of Chi', and I struck town three weeks ago. I ain't met with your dick pals—yet. And I don't consider it over and above easy bein' taken for one, either. Sit up, you, and take a good look at me. Do you think I look like a dick? Do you?"

His face was so venomous that even Sperry, disinterested in the controversy, drew back, but Baldy Brown suddenly put out an arm and held him with a grip of steel. Curly Conklin stuttered a denial, an absolute disclaimer.

"If I'd seen you wit your dicer off," he said; "or, if I'd piped that beauty mark——"

"Never mind the beauty spot," gruffly put in Baldy. "I ain't stuck on it. Some day I'm goin' to get needled. You didn't take a good look, and, but for my young pal here, you'd have bumped me off. I've got a good mind to——" He broke into a hearty laugh and shoved out a hand for Curly to grasp. "It's a good one on me after all," he said. "I'll tell the boys. Took me for a dick! Oh, Lord! We'll call it off, Curly, if you promise to wear glasses. And I'll buy three drinks of Dumpy's best right now. Come on in, both of you."

Still held by the arm, Sperry followed, willy-nilly, into the unsavory drinking shop. Perhaps a dozen men were there, at tables or at the bar. Baldy advanced to the latter between the two.

"Drinks for the house on me," he said. "No rotgut, Dumpy; open a bottle of case goods. Drinks on me. Here's Curly Conklin, just out of stir, and

takes me for a dick! Oh, Lord! He was goin' to bump me off with a gat when my pal here jumps him."

The little audience, Dumpy included, roared at the jest. Evidently Baldy was popular. Curly wisely said nothing. A blear-eyed individual shuffled up close to Sperry, and the latter recognized him as one of those at the first saloon he had gone into, a man who had openly appraised him.

"This guy your pal, Baldy?" he asked.

"I said so, didn't I?" asked Baldy coldly. "And a good one. Gentleman Manning, known back in Chi as The Duke. That right, Manning?"

Sperry nodded, playing up to the rôle. He had to change his name. Manning was as good as any. Something told him that Baldy was a good man to tie to, a bad one to cross. The blear-eyed man undoubtedly was of that opinion. He wilted.

"Just in from Chi, pal?" he queried ingratiatingly. "I seen youse over at The Badger's, an' I knew youse was new to the Village. Couldn't size you?"

"I was looking for Baldy," said Sperry. The man with the mole—it was shaped like a dumb-bell, Sperry noticed in the light, and it had several hairs growing from it—flashed him a look of appreciation. Sperry realized how apt was the moniker that Baldy had given him. As The Duke, his manners, his accent, would all pass unchallenged. Already what had happened that afternoon seemed far off as if in another life. Now he was Gentleman Manning of Chicago, an accepted consort of crooks, hobnobbing with them in a boozing ken. And he had shown himself a good man by defending Baldy, whom they all looked up to.

The round was soon finished and Sperry felt in his pockets to buy another, but Baldy jogged his elbow.

"That's enough," he said. "I want a

talk with you, Duke. Dumpy, is the back room empty?"

"If it ain't, I'll clear it," said Dumpy with alacrity.

When they were seated and the door shut, Baldy looked quizzically at Sperry. Sperry felt the glance summing up mercilessly every line of his drawn face. He knew it was drawn and haggard. He could feel almost the hollows under his eyes. The glance took in his hands, his tie, every detail.

"Well," said Baldy at last, "what was it? Robbery or murder? Or both?" A light from his gray eyes seemed to illumine every secret of Sperry's brain. He tried to speak, to lick his lips. To his relief his inquisitor nodded and smiled.

"Tell me about it to-morrow, pal," he said. "You've had your drink, now I'll give you a bed. Better one than you would have found. And a bath. I said I owed you something."

"But," objected Sperry, "I haven't told you. You don't know—I won't know till morning just what——"

"Then we won't worry about it till morning. I don't care what you've done. You're safe with me. And we'll talk it over after we chew in the morning. Will you come?" He held out his hand and Sperry, lost for words, gripped it and found something emanating from the grip, a magnetic, inspiring something that gave him heart to say "Thank you."

They walked out together, west and north for several blocks. Then Baldy picked up a night-hawk of a taxicab, disreputable enough in paint and cushions, but with a good engine, a roving pirate of those purlieus where speed was often necessary and well paid for.

Uptown they sped until Prince Street and Broadway was reached. Then Baldy paid and tipped his man and once more they went west, to Macdougall Street, north to Washington Square, across it, and so to one of a row of brick

houses in a quiet part of Greenwich Village. Baldy let himself in with a latch-key and Sperry followed, obeying his host's gesture for silence. On the next floor Baldy opened the door of a cosy bedroom and motioned to Sperry to enter, leaving him.

Within the minute he was back again with a big towel and a suit of pajamas.

"You can make out with these," he said. "Bath is next room, to your right. Plenty of hot water. Sleep as late as you like. I'll tip you off when to get up. And don't worry, pal. It don't do a bit of good, and half the time you worry over nothing. You get a souse in hot water and turn in."

Sperry obeyed orders willingly, and, his nerves and weary body relaxed by the hot water of the bath, he subsided between the sheets upon a springy, yielding mattress and fell asleep. Nightmares assailed him, but he slept on for half a dozen restful hours. When he awoke, the wintry sun was streaming through the window of his room. For a few moments his brain remained sluggish and he lay inert, conscious of the odors of coffee and of bacon and, somewhere, a girl's fresh voice singing cheerily and sweetly in an undertone, as a girl will when she sings at her work.

Sperry listened and smelled with languid delight—and then in a flash the whole phantasmagoria of what had happened came rushing over him, the forged check; his stepfather lying on the floor; the escape in the freight train; Baldy whom he had saved from the killer. He was in Baldy's house, guest of a notorious crook to whom the underworld looked up. Sperry had heard of honor among thieves. Could it be possible that gratitude was so strong a virtue among criminals? He had seen little sidelights of Baldy's character the night before—earlier that morning, rather—that spoke of a man callous and desperate. Why should Baldy have taken him into his own house, have

given him a moniker, have proclaimed him a pal from Chicago?

Wide awake now, he sat up in bed and prepared to dress. His clothes were gone! Nothing that he had worn the day before remained, not even his socks or his underwear. He was as completely a prisoner as if he had been manacled. Baldy had asked him whether it had been robbery or murder or both? The master crook had appraised him inside and out and now—now what? Holding him for a reward? Holding him to turn over to the police and so curry favor for himself?

The door opened and Baldy came in, a pile of clothing over his arm that he put down on a chair while he grinned at Sperry with his gold-filled teeth.

"Didn't think you'd be awake so soon," he said. "Your stomach was the alarm clock, I guess. Bess tells me breakfast is close to ready, so you'd better slide into these togs. I've got you a complete outfit; traded off the old stuff after it was brushed up a bit, and I swapped it for this and four dollars to boot. Nearly broke Uncle David's heart, but he came through. Here it is with five-thirty-five you had, and here's your studs and links and the rest of your junk. If I was you I wouldn't wear any of it, 'cept the collar buttons."

Sperry gathered up his links, pin, tie-clip, watch, and chain and the little litter of bills in amazement, not daring to look up at the host he had so misjudged, aware that Baldy's grin held something quizzical. He slipped swiftly into his new clothes—a tweed suit of fair quality and of a fair fit, tan shoes instead of his black ones; and, coming back from the bathroom where he had found a brush and comb, announced himself to Baldy who still sat upon his bed.

"I want to thank you," he began.

"Nix on that stuff," answered Baldy. "If you owe me anything I'll give you a chance to square up later."

"You've been out this morning," said Sperry. "Did you get a paper?"

"Son," said Baldy, "outside of going in swimming, always tackle a job on a full stomach. First we eat."

There was rough kindness in his words, but nevertheless they constituted a command; Sperry followed Baldy to the dining-room. This communicated with the kitchen whence came the fragrance of the food for which, despite his mental anxiety, Sperry's digestive system clamored.

The door opened between the two rooms and the trim figure of a girl came in, a girl so fresh, so utterly at variance with the profession and occupation of Baldy Brown, that Sperry forgot his manners. This girl, with golden hair and blue eyes, with a rounded figure lithe in fresh calico, with a merry yet tender mouth, this girl—woman of eighteen or nineteen, seemed to have walked straight out of some inspired play or operetta where she was cast for the rôle of a sublimated shepherdess or dairy maid. Only, the divine freshness of her complexion was all her own.

Sperry did not know why Elizabeth suggested the open country, apple blossoms, hay fields, an old-fashioned garden, and a church spire back of clustering elms. But she did, she invested that little New York room with all the atmosphere of the fields and orchards, all their fragrance, with a touch of sanctity. And it all fitted in with her voice, that Sperry had heard singing and now heard talking. This girl a crook's daughter? As she slipped a slim cool hand into his when he rose to the introduction, he was conscious of Baldy's eyes twinkling genially, proudly.

"Are you hungry?" asked the girl. "I am ravenous," and she showed a row of pearly teeth in a mouth pink as a kitten's. There was surely some magic about her, for Sperry ate and forgot his

troubles while the girl passed him food, simple enough, but cooked in a way that he had not tasted for many a day, for all the craft of Cairn's chef. She said little, neither did her father talk much; and so, with the meal ended at last, they sat silent for a little while, until the girl started to clear the table.

"Can't I help?" Sperry asked, but she shook her head at him merrily and Baldy spoke.

"Bess can handle it," he said. "You and me'll have a little talk."

Instantly the atmosphere changed as if a malicious wizard had dissipated a fairy spell. Sperry's troubles crowded upon him, and the sunshine left the room as Baldy took some newspapers from a drawer in the sideboard.

"It wasn't very hard for me to pick you out, son," he said to Sperry. "John J. Sperry?" He nodded as his eyes told him he had hit the mark. "All right; it's Manning now. There ain't such a lot about you in the news, you may be a bit disappointed," he added, with a slight grin, tossing the papers across to Sperry.

And, by some quirk, Sperry was conscious of a faint disappointment. It took him a minute to find the item. It was captioned, but far from being headlined. He knew with sudden relief that he was not a murderer. Evidently some correspondent from Longfield had covered the case for nearly all the New York press and the Associated News, for the items were practically identical. The heads included: "Commits Forgery and Attempts Murder. Scion of Well-known Family Presents False Check and Tries to Kill Stepfather." The article read:

Longfield, Massachusetts.—John J. Sperry, of Swiftbrook Bowl, the aristocratic resort of the Berkshire Hills, made a desperate attempt to take the life of his stepfather, Simeon Cairns, the millionaire who recently married Mrs. Caroline Sperry, mother of the wayward young man who bears the same

name as his late father, a well-known one in exclusive Berkshire circles.

It is alleged by the officers of the Agricultural National Bank of Longfield that young Sperry presented a check for ten thousand dollars, made out to and indorsed by himself, and purporting to be signed by Simeon Cairns. This check was taken from the back pages of Mr. Cairns' private check book, and the signature declared a forgery by Mr. Cairns to President Hilliard and Cashier Burnside, of the bank, in an interview at which young Sperry was present.

A quarrel ensued between Sperry and his stepfather. The Cairns' butler heard high words in the library, and, attempting to enter, was struck down by Sperry. Recovering from the blow, the butler entered the room, to find Mr. Cairns unconscious with a deep cut in his temple from an inkstand that Sperry had flung at him before escaping from the house.

Late this evening Mr. Cairns made a brief statement in which he said that he regretted the publicity necessary, as Mrs. Cairns, who was wintering in Florida, was in delicate health. As soon as he is able to travel, he will break the news to her personally of her son's derelictions.

"It is the reaping of the wild oats," said Mr. Cairns. "I agreed to make the money good to the bank, but this deliberate attack upon my life removes from me any false pity. I have placed the matter in the hands of the police. I believe that such viciousness should be corrected by the methods of the law." Up to a late hour no trace of Sperry has been discovered.

As Sperry set down the papers, Baldy produced another from his coat pocket.

"You see, this isn't strictly a New York matter," he said. "They ain't apt to worry about the troubles of another State until they are requested to by that State's police. But they've played you up in Boston, and also, I imagine, in your local paper, though of course I didn't know what that was when I was buying these this morning, and I probably couldn't have got one, anyway. But here's the *Boston Nation*, with all the publicity any one could hope for, even Baldy Brown of Chicago," he ended, with a laugh.

The story was played clear across the



front of the *Nation*, with pictures of Sperry's mother, of Cairns, and two of Sperry himself. He, with all due caution for fear of possible libel, was excoriated unmercifully. A reward was out for him. The Massachusetts State Detectives were scouring the countryside to arrest him. He had last been seen leaving the trolley close to Langley Dale, and it was supposed he had boarded a train, though so far no direct clew had been unearthed. But the police were confident of finding him, said the article. Supposedly he had much of the ten thousand dollars with him, and undoubtedly he would try to leave the State by land or sea. If he did, he would find his journey abruptly checked. Descriptions of him were being sent broadcast. The bank was joining in the prosecution. There was the usual flub-dub about society in general, and the many friends of Mrs. Cairns being shocked, and the fears for the effect the news of her son's crime might have upon the mother.

Interviews with President Hilliard and Cairns and Peters, the butler, were lengthened out, and the general opinion disseminated that the events were not a sudden outbreak, but the result of a constantly growing depravity.

Sperry put down the paper with a hardened face. How rottenly unfair it was, he thought. Not a friend to speak for him! None to offset the lying insinuations of his criminal intentions, his sowing of wild oats! Well, they hadn't got him, and they shouldn't.

"Papers," broke in Baldy's voice, "slam at you, and you've got no comeback unless it's a libel suit; and that's hard shooting. Suppose you tell me your end of it?"

"What's the use?" asked Sperry sullenly. Baldy must believe him a criminal; he had helped him out because he thought so. He might have nothing more to do with him if he convinced

him differently. And how could he convince anyone?

"A whole lot of use just to get it off your chest to some one," said Baldy. "I'll tell you this much; I savvied last night this was your first job. It's a cinch you plugged this stepfather of yours. It's a cinch they've got a reward out for you. If he's a millionaire and got it in for you, he'll have New York all stirred up inside of twenty-four hours, soon as they know things are really doing. You'll have to stay Manning. And you're new to the game, they may nab you. Tell me the whole mess, and I can give you some expert advice, anyway."

Sperry hesitated and then plunged into the whole yarn. Baldy listened non-committally.

"To a jury that would sound fishy," he said. "You've got to own up to that."

"I do," said Sperry.

"I know you ain't brought along ten thousand dollars. Whether you pulled that check or not, you've still got ninety thousand in the pot if you can ever get a chance to sit back in the game. Right now you're in wrong, in like a burglar, as they say. You're fairly safe in New York, as you are, for a day or two. I'll make a proposition to you. You can help me, as it happens. If you'll do it, I'll do what I can for you. I ain't promising you much, mind you, but I'll keep you clear of the bulls, reward or no reward. What do you say?"

Sperry hung between thoughts. He did not want to get himself deeper into the clutches of the law by joining forces with Baldy on the shady side. He did want to prove his innocence. But that seemed impossible. He was bound by ties of hospitality and friendship to Baldy. What if the latter did want some repayment? He had promised to keep him free of the police, and that was vital. And Sperry was desperate. The world had turned against

him. He was helpless, save for this new friend. The sound of the girl's voice humming as she washed the last of the dishes came to him. She was an enigma. Girls could mean little in his life, yet he wanted to see more of this one, miserable as his plight was. Though he did not realize it, youth, that had been accused but not bismirched, called to youth. And the girl, after all, decided him.

"If I can do anything to help you out," he said to Baldy, "just tell me what it is."

"Good. There's something I want you to do this morning. I can't let you into everything at once. Safer for you not to know it all. By the way, can you drive a car?"

"Almost any kind on the market."

"Know the Berkshires pretty well, I suppose?"

"Yes," answered Sperry wonderingly. "From Longfield south, very well."

Baldy only nodded. Sperry had noticed that Baldy's speech held variations. When he conversed with Sperry, it was fairly grammatical and well chosen. At times it was exceedingly so. Very different from his talk at Dumpy's. Baldy was evidently no ordinary crook. All things pointed to this. The game he was engaged in would be no minor play. He was a big man, determined, clever, resourceful. There would be thrills in any enterprise he tackled. Sperry wondered what his daughter thought of him. Such a girl could not consider her father a criminal. Yet Baldy had not warned him against any special trend of talk.

"I am going to the corner to do some telephoning," said Baldy. "I'll be back in ten minutes. Then we'll go out together."

Left alone, Sperry reread the papers. Presently the girl came in and he rose. She smiled at him and told him to sit down again.

"You mustn't treat me like a girl in a play," she said. "I'm not used to it, even if I like it. Go on with your papers."

"I'm through with them," said Sperry moodily.

Infinitely milder, there was yet some of her father's penetrating quality in the glance of her blue eyes. She seemed to hesitate a moment, then spoke softly, sympathetically.

"Daddy said something to me about your trouble," she said. "We don't have any secrets between us. I heard something of what you told him just now. I couldn't help it," she added with a rising color, "though I sang. And—and I want to tell you that I believe in you."

Sperry stared at the slender fingers before he took them. She and her father had few secrets, and she believed him innocent! What sort of contradiction, what kind of paradox was she? Her flush held as he kept possession of her hand, and her eyelids drooped over her eyes. Here surely was virtue and innocence! Sperry read the riddle. Baldy was shrewd enough to let his daughter think she shared his secrets, but, hardened as he might be, the father in him wished to keep the girl in ignorance of the crimes he committed, the risks he ran. With a man of Baldy's caliber, that would not be difficult. And he had trusted to Sperry's breeding not to give him away. Though, after all, Sperry knew nothing, and the girl would not believe hearsay or even proof. She was no weakling.

"Thank you," he said. "Thank you. That helps."

She raised her eyes again.

"I am glad," she said. "And you must believe in my Daddy, too. Sometimes he does things that seem strange, but I believe in him. I know him, you see, and you don't, so I am telling you beforehand."

Sperry's chivalry couched its lance.

If he could help to keep the girl's belief in her father, he would do so.

"Why wouldn't I believe in him?" he asked. "He has been very good to me." And the entrance of the man with the mole spared him any more direct statement as to his lurking belief in the latter's irregularities.

They took the subway and went downtown again. But not this time into the crime belt. First they went into a well-known café and sat in a leather-padded recess while Baldy gave his instructions.

"We are going to walk past a big jeweler's," he said. "I'll nudge you when we pass it. Then you are to saunter back, go in to the third counter on the right, and ask the clerk to look at some tie-clips. If the red-headed clerk is not on duty and does not attend to you, do not buy anything. If he is busy, try to gauge it so he can wait on you without making it too obvious. You can say you are expecting some one. If it goes all right, look over six clips, pick up six and handle them, no more no less. Then ask to look again at the third one. Say to him, 'I think I like the one you showed me third the best. How much is it?' He will put it in a box which you will bring back to me here. Here is money for the clip. Now repeat my directions."

All this was said in a way that smacked of big business behind the purchase of the clip. The roll that Baldy peeled a ten from was of considerable magnitude. Sperry went over his instructions.

They strolled along for some time, until they passed a jeweler's. At the corner they parted company, and Sperry sauntered back again. It was a large place with four aisles made up by lengthy display cases of plate glass. At the back was a mezzanine gallery on which some desks showed and glass doors apparently opening back to the

offices. Not many people were purchasing. The third counter was vacant in front. Back of it a red-haired clerk was arranging a tray of small jewelry. His heart beating a trifle fast, Sperry walked up the aisle toward the red-haired clerk. And then he felt a premonition. Some one was watching him.

He had believed implicitly in Baldy's assurance that he was safe in New York for a day or so; it was impossible not to have confidence in what the man with the mole did say. But now panic seized him. He tried to master it, to force himself to look up. At last he did. Standing by the rail of the mezzanine gallery and staring down at him, a little uncertainly, was Remington, the paying teller of the bank at Longfield; the man who had said he paid him ten thousand dollars, the man who had been discharged for doing so.

Fury surged over Sperry. He saw that recognition was not yet mutual on account of his clothes and their style, but soon it would become definite. He longed to rush up to the gallery and confront Remington. But that would mean arrest. What was Remington doing here? He had been discharged, but how had he obtained this position so soon?

Then he became conscious that others were staring at him, that he was standing in a defiant attitude, glaring at Remington. He saw the spark of recognition come into Remington's eyes, a smile of triumph begin to come on his face. The ex-paying teller leaned forward.

Sperry whirled abruptly and made for the entrance. He heard Remington saying something as the doors swung behind him, knew there was a stir in the shop; and then he threaded his way swiftly through the crowd, shutting hurriedly to a subway entrance down which he raced, just managing to catch an express. It was a close shave. Rem-

ington held all the cards. In another moment he would have been held, and Remington would have got the reward.

For one moment the thought of treachery mastered him. Could Baldy have deliberately trapped him? But that was impossible. It did not hold water. And he was ashamed of himself for the suspicion. He got out at the next stop and made his way to the café, not without some fear of being tapped on the shoulder. He was no longer safe in New York. Whatever was back of Remington's lying about the check and the money was a powerful force, and he had no defence, save a vague feeling that Baldy might aid him. But he got to the padded recess and told his tale. The man with the mole listened seriously.

"Never mind about the tie-clip," he said. "We'll manage that some other way. It is a good thing this Remington chap spotted you as soon as he did. I wouldn't have wanted them to find that box on you, or on any one. Your stepfather said he was going to get this young chap a job, didn't he? He doesn't seem to have wasted any time about it. But you must change your description if you are going to be useful to me. I am going to send you home in a taxi. Get out at Washington Square and walk over. Stay there till I come."

Sperry waited two hours before Baldy appeared. The face of the man with the mole was serious. He brought in some small packages.

"Where is Bess?" he asked.

"She went out shopping," said Sperry. "Said she'd be back soon." He had spent a delightful hour with the girl. She was surprisingly well informed, he found, and of a rare intelligence and gracious instinct. Baldy had seen to her education. When she went on her marketing tour, Sperry continued his wonderment of her in such surroundings, and then his

thoughts centered on what Baldy had said about the box.

"I shouldn't have wanted them to find that box on you, or on any one." Evidently the red-haired clerk was to have put something in it beside the tie-clip. What? Information of some kind? Perhaps the numbers of a safe combination? Was Baldy planning to rob the jeweler's?

But Baldy evinced no desire to give him information. The incident of the tie-clip was closed. From his packages he produced what looked like dried leaves and some dark crystals that Sperry recognized as permanganate of potash.

"Lucky your eyes are hazel," said Baldy. "I am going to change your hair-cut and then dye it—also your complexion. I am going to make a brunet out of you, young man, as soon as Bess comes in. She'll be the barber."

An hour later, after applications to his face, hands, and forearms of a solution of permanganate, after dippings of his clipped and trimmed hair into a bath of henna, with careful dabbings of the borders, Sperry looked at himself with amazement. His light brown hair was almost black, with a suggestion of dull red. And it formed a pompadour. His face was a weird purplish tint.

The girl laughed at him.

"That'll tone down to a nice even brown," said Baldy. "And it'll stand washing for a while. Now then, remember you are Gentleman Manning of Chicago, The Duke. A swell-mob worker, specialty, ladies' jewelry. Tonight I am going to introduce you to some of the gang. They'll use you as outside man."

Sperry heard, amazed, looking at the still laughing face of the girl. Yet her eyes held the same appeal as when she had asked him to believe in her father. How could she be innocent? She must be an accomplice to listen to this talk of

the underworld, to help transform him to The Duke, "swell-mob worker."

But one thing was certain, paramount. He was entirely in the power of Baldy Brown.

"Let me look at your hands," said Baldy. Sperry held them out for inspection. Baldy laid his forefinger on the corresponding digit of Sperry's left hand. The first joint was distorted, out of place.

"Baseball finger?" queried Baldy. "You had better wear gloves all you can. When you're driving, for instance. That's a give-away I can't remedy. Got to be covered up. Outside of that you are pretty well camouflaged."

The accent of the French word was excellent. Certain links between the refinement of Elizabeth and her father were apparent. Sperry wondered what the history of Baldy Brown contained, what sordid chapters had led up to his present capacity. That his name was Brown he hardly believed. But, if he had changed it for frequent aliases, the girl must have acquiesced, must have acknowledged them. It was a riddle that Sperry had to put aside. Meanwhile, at Elizabeth's suggestion—she seemed to take an artistic pride in his disguise—he applied himself with materials she provided to cleanse his nails of the telltale stain that had tinged them too darkly for nature.

All three went to a moving-picture show that afternoon. Baldy laughed heartily at the pictured triumph of a detective. Sperry went back with them.

"You'll stay with us for the present," said Baldy, "until the big job is through. It's a good cover, and Bess has taken a fancy to you."

The last sentence Sperry appreciated, but he wondered what the big job was, and what part he would take in it. Perhaps he would find out when he met the gang.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DUKE MEETS THE GANG.

SOME day New York will be purged of the huddled-up buildings, the hidden alleys, the cellars, and the underground ways that make up the warren of the underworld. And many things will be revealed, perhaps, that no one has suspected. As long as drugs are peddled and liquor can be distilled, with or without the sanction of the government, so long will these things last, so long will they be populated by the dregs of humanity, twisted in mind and body alike, dominated by some master minds that defy the law.

It was by devious ways that Baldy and Sperry reached the rendezvous that evening. Sperry knew that he could never retrace the route. As it was, he did not penetrate to the actual meeting. As "outside-man," he remained outside the council. They passed through a fence of boards, a portion of which swung horizontally on a pivot to Baldy's touch; they traversed deep cellars, littered with debris that exuded all kinds of musty odors, lit dimly by some light to which Baldy always found a hidden switch. Once, Sperry felt certain, they passed underneath a street, slanting deep down an earthy tunnel propped by beams, traversing a level section where the smell of sewerage was abominable, then up and through another cellar to brick stairs, at the head of which a stout door showed a peephole of light in response to certain knockings of Baldy, checked by other knocks within.

On the other side squatted a man without legs, the type of cripple that infests the streets and captures from sympathetic workers more in a day than they could hard-earn in ten. He worked the opening of the door with a leather strap. Round his stumped body was a belt holstered with two automatics. He challenged the appearance of Sperry, now Manning.

"I don't know this guy," he said, in guttural tones.

"I'm vouching for him," said Baldy. "He's with me."

The dwarf hesitated, shifting a holster to the front. Baldy boiled over with sudden ferocity.

"You cut that gun bluff out with me, Squatty," he said. "Get me? I gave the signals an' you answered them. That's where you quit."

Squatty visibly cowered, yet dared to touch a button back of him. Three faint rings sounded.

"I'll have a talk with you later," said Baldy. But he stayed where he was until the figure of a man appeared coming down the passage.

"What's up?" said the newcomer, a man with beetle brows, his repellent countenance stained from cheek-bones to jaw on the left side with a port-wine mark.

"I come here with a pal," said Baldy, his voice quietly ominous, "and this remnant holds us up after I've vouched for him. This sort of stuff don't go with me, Blackberry; it don't go!"

The newcomer spread out deprecating hands.

"Chief's orders, Baldy," he said. "Any new guy's got to be passed on reg'lar."

"I'm gettin' tired of this 'chief' stuff," said Baldy. "If we're good enough to pull stuff for a man, we're good enough to see him. This game is too much under cover to suit me. My dope was straight enough to suit the gang, wasn't it? Then, when I bring in a pal that I vouch for, the very man we're needing, I'm not goin' to have him held up when it's touch and go whether we can hold him at all. What you got to say about it, Duke?" He turned to Sperry.

"I'm not over interested in this business," said Sperry, playing up. "I don't know what there is in it for me, and I don't like working for any mysterious chiefs. I'd just as soon quit

right now." In which statement he spoke the truth. But he knew he had served Baldy's purpose.

"And if he quits, I quit with him," said Baldy. "That's where I stand, chief or no chief! And, anyway, I don't go no further in the dark. I want to know where I get off. I'm goin' to have a pow-wow with the chief before I run my neck into trouble any deeper. You heard me, Blackberry."

The man with the stain whirled on the cripple.

"What Baldy says is straight, Squatty!" he exclaimed. "You got to use some discretion. Get me?"

"I will when you tell me what that word means," said Squatty.

"It means common sense, that's what. Don't you touch that push button without good reason, or you'll get the grand razzoo! Come on, gents."

Up the passage and into a room, barren of furniture and walled with rough planks, they went at last; it showed no door, no means of egress. One dingy electric, the bulb spotted with flies, barely showed the dimensions of the place. But Blackberry, at the far end, trod on a plank, and a section of the walling rose, through which they passed on, up a flight of stairs, and so to what was evidently the back room of the basement floor of a tenement house. Sperry glimpsed a cemented furnace room through the opening door by which Blackberry disappeared.

"Let me do the talking," said Baldy, and Sperry was content.

The place was furnished with a pallet bed covered with greasy blankets, a table, and three broken-down chairs. Soon they heard footsteps returning. Blackberry came back again with a black-mustached, stout, prosperous-looking man. The latter went to the point.

"Who's the new guy, Baldy?" he asked; "and what's this kick about the chief?"

"The last can wait," said Baldy. "You know my kick, and I ain't the only one kicking. I'll take that up inside. This is The Duke, Gentleman Manning of Chi. He's a chauffeur, and a good one. I'm vouching for him. Chi ain't healthy for him just now, on account of the wind off the lake front and him having weak lungs."

The other grinned and surveyed Sperry.

"You'll find New York a healthy coop for a lively bird," he said. "Ever live here?"

"He ran a car for a family up in Lenox," said Baldy. "They missed some ice and accused him of hiding it in the gasoline tank. He didn't. Point is, he knows the Berkshires. Savvy? Blake's got pinched, as you told me. Well, this lad can take his place."

"I guess it's all right. I'll take your word for it. You'll get a five per cent divvy, Duke, of what stacks up from tonight. Does that go?"

Sperry, borne on the tide of events, nodded.

"Then come on, Baldy," said the man. "We're waiting to hear your spiel. Did you pull it off? You wait here, Duke."

They left him, and Sperry lit a cigarette and then another, wondering to what he was committed. He didn't much care. His own case seemed helpless, and he was conscious of a growing exhilaration in the dark enterprise on hand. And, holding his promise to the girl, he tried to believe in Baldy as she would have him believe. Only, not quite certain of what she did wish him to subscribe to, he made hard work of it.

He had no watch with him, and it seemed hours before Baldy came back, alone. What happened beyond the furnace room remained a mystery to Sperry.

"Come on," said Baldy. They retraced their tortuous way, by the watchful Squatty, who still sulked from his

calling-down, and presently they were seated in another padded niche in a café, not the same one they had been in before.

"It's for to-morrow night," said Baldy. "The car's Speedwell. Know it?"

"Yes," answered Sperry truthfully.

"We'll see," said Baldy. "Taking no chances. Come along."

This time they took the subway far uptown, and walked to a garage where Baldy seemed to be well known. The Speedwell was in, and, at Baldy's suggestion, they took it out and Sperry drove into the Park. He demonstrated that he knew its mechanism as well as a Swiss watchmaker might understand the interior economy of a dollar pocket timepiece. Baldy stated himself satisfied.

"Put on those two new rear tires, Tom," he said to the attendant. "My friend will be here to take the car out to-morrow night, about nine."

"The tires seem perfectly good," said Sperry as they left the garage.

"Taking no chances," reiterated Baldy. "Come on, we'll get a snack somewhere. Bess will have gone to bed."

Not till they were back in Greenwich Village did Baldy give him further instructions.

"Get the car there at nine to-morrow," he said, "pick me up in Washington Square, where the buses stop, at ten sharp. Be driving slowly along. I'll be there. I'll not be home to-morrow. You take Bess out to Bronx Park. She wants to see the animals. Crazy about them. I've promised to take her, and haven't had time, though I'm fond of poking round there myself."

To-morrow would be a day well spent, decided Sperry—up till nine o'clock in the evening, at all events. After that, he committed himself to the unknown, and to Baldy. He felt pretty

confident of Baldy's being able to protect himself and any protégé.

"By the way," said Baldy, yawning, "what does this Remington look like?"

Sperry described him as best he could. "Why?" he asked when he concluded.

"Thought I saw him to-day," said Baldy. "I was in the jeweler's."

With that he went to bed and left Sperry to follow his example. Sleep did not come easily. Why did Baldy want to change two perfectly good tires for new ones? What kind of man was he who loved animals, who trusted his daughter to a new acquaintance, who consorted with the worst types of criminals, and who, Sperry was assured, was going to join in some big robbery the next night, in which affair he, Sperry, was bound by many ties of recklessness and obligation? And what about Remington? Baldy, he had found out by this time, asked no questions idly. And who was "the chief?"

He went to sleep to dream that he and Baldy were cracking a giant safe, with Elizabeth holding a hair-clipper that, somehow, served as a brilliant electric torch. And, when the safe was opened, Cairns stepped out of the shadows and arrested all three of them.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FAMILY VAULT.

SPERRY had a brief chat with Baldy in the morning before the latter went away on his own business, and Sperry and Elizabeth, with a lunch packed for themselves, and another for certain special friends of the girl's at the zoo, took the subway for Bronx Park. There were not many visitors on this chilly day, but they had a rare time. Elizabeth appeared to know the keepers well, and they were given certain privileges such as standing inside the rail when the big cats were fed, and scratching the warty back of the blind

hippopotamus. Sperry seemed to be living in another world of strange happenings, and he pledged himself to the present. His own trouble-time seemed very hazy, and the haze was permeated with a rosy glow born of the happenings of the moment. He and the girl became very chummy, and he told her all about his own thwarted ambitions. He told her of the exploits of his chosen profession; how they could bridge vast chasms and make trails over great ranges; how they could dam waters that would make deserts blossom like the rose, and advance the cause of progress.

"It's a fine profession," she said enthusiastically. "If I were a man that's what I'd like to be. Pioneers of progress, that's what you are."

"Do you think you'd like the life?" asked Sperry. He knew he was talking nonsense, speaking like this to the daughter of a master crook, himself a fugitive from justice, or at least from the law; disinherited, disgraced, about to plunge further into lawlessness. But all things seemed but the figments of a pleasant dream, and he was in no mind to wake up when he had this girl as dream-mate, this enthusiastic girl that was so wonderful a pal. He had never dreamed a girl could be like this; never met a girl who could so understand a chap, so enter into his thoughts, have the same ideas, the same hopes.

They had come to the cage of the bears and he halted.

"I wish," he said, and stopped. The bears doubtless had their dreams. And the bars were the limit of their reality. Caged!

"What?" she asked, a little shyly.

"Nothing," answered Sperry. "I was just getting broody over my luck, that's all."

"Don't do that," she said. "You trust to daddy. He—he likes you. I know it."

Sperry flung his bitter mood aside.

"Why?" he challenged her with a



direct glance. She did not evade it, though her face changed slowly to the transparent hue of the petals of an American Beauty rose.

"He let you take me out to-day," she said slowly. "He has never let any other man do that." Sperry wanted to take her in his arms. There was no one in sight but the gobbling bears, busy over the buns they had brought them. The girl knew it, and he saw her eyes thank him as he refrained and kept the faith that Baldy Brown of Chi, master crook, had reposed in him. But the want remained.

"Daddy is going to help you," she said. "Perhaps it will come true, after all, your building dams and bridges."

"I hope it will *all* come true," said Sperry. And he saw her cheeks bloom again.

It was all wild nonsense they were talking. He realized that as they went homeward. To-night he was to play chauffeur to a band of desperadoes. And she, was she juggling, too? Playing at make-believe, despite her surroundings, her fate, as a crippled child may pretend that it has wings?

The strangeness of the whole affair was emphasized in the preparation of dinner. Baldy himself took a hand, mashing the potatoes while Sperry concocted the salad dressing and Elizabeth broiled the thick steak and handled the rest of the concomitants. It was like a picnic, Sperry felt; the informal meals that attend great happenings. At eight o'clock they were through.

"You know my motto, son," said Baldy. "Nothing like a full meal." And, while Elizabeth was clearing and cleaning up, he gave Sperry final instructions.

"We'll pick up a man on Bleeker Street," he said. "I'll show you where. He's an outside man, like you. But not an active one. Now, when we arrive, I'll show you where to park. You hang on there till some one comes up and

says: 'All right Duke.' You come back with, 'Duke Who?' If he says 'Manning,' it's all right. If any one comes up with a broken line of talk, you beat it. If a bull comes by and asks you what you are hanging around for you tell him you are chauffeur for Mr. Gamwell of the Marine Insurance Association, and you point right across the road to the fifth floor of the opposite building. Gamwell won't be there, but the lights will be on in his suite. And there'll be some one there to answer if the bull gets fresh. It'll all go straight enough."

Sperry did not doubt the smoothness of the operations from the care with which the preliminaries had been arranged. And he could, in some measure, understand the joy of the outlaw, the pitting of brain against brain, the risk, the thrill of it all.

"You take your orders from whoever gets on the front seat," said Baldy. "There'll likely be two men, perhaps three; depends on the load. I won't be with you. When you are through with the job, beat it back to the garage and make the trip home by subway and walking. Here's a key to the door."

As the cool steel met his palm, Sperry felt assured of his position with Baldy. He was surely trusted.

"You can depend on me," he said. Elizabeth came in at the moment, through with the dishes, and the talk switched. Baldy left, and presently Sperry departed for the garage. The new tires were on, he noticed, before he sped downtown.

At Washington Square, on the south side, he picked up Baldy, and on Bleeker, the second man. At ten-thirty they parked the car on a street well downtown in the financial district. Sperry recognized the locality, strange as it was at this deserted time. The car had stopped around the corner from the jeweler's shop where he had seen Remington. There both Baldy and the other

outside man got out. The latter walked up the street, but Baldy stayed to point out the lights in the fifth floor of a tall building across from where the Speedwell stood beside the curb. Then he, too, left, melted mysteriously in the shadows.

Sperry had always associated robberies with the small hours, but now he recognized that downtown life practically ceased after six-thirty. The "gang" was now at work, and he had no longer any doubt that their object was the pilfering of the vaults of the jewelry store, or that the red-haired clerk was involved as he was, in a minor capacity. He pondered over what he was to do. Baldy had asked him if he knew the Berkshires. Was he to drive the loot to some treasure-trove in the hills, there to await the disposition of the chief? He filled in the time with cigarettes and conjectures, and finally, warm in his coat and the fur robe with which the Speedwell was provided, leaned back half drowsily. No policeman broke his reverie, though one passed twice. He heard Old Trinity chime the quarters and knew that it was close to midnight before a figure came to the side of the car.

"All right, Duke?"

The voice seemed dimly familiar, though he could not place it. The man's face was muffled both with a beard and the high collar of his coat upturned, and a scarf which circled his neck. A soft-brimmed hat was pulled low down over his brows.

"Duke Who?" parried Sperry.

"Manning," replied the man and clambered to the front seat without further ado. "Round the block," he said, "slowly."

Sperry obeyed orders, conscious that the bearded man kept a sharp lookout. They met no one. Three quarters around he got the word to halt, close to an alley dividing the big block. A shadow drifted along in the obscurity

of the other side of the street. The bearded man noted it.

"It's all right," he whispered. "That's our lookout. If he whistles, beat it, and stop at the corner of Broadway and Chambers."

The speaker slipped out and down and disappeared in the murky alley. He was back again in an instant. Following him came a procession of dim shapes, each bearing a heavy package that they stowed quickly in the tonneau of the car. At last two men climbed in after the bundles and pulled a rug over the loot and themselves. The bearded man got in again beside Sperry.

"Slick and quick!" he said, with a chuckle. "North, and go it."

North they went and still north, climbing up where reservoirs gleamed among the pines, quickening their pace, plunging, lunging on to the urging of the man at Sperry's side, until, above Lake Mahopac, a front tire exploded and nearly threw them into a ditch.

No one helped him. The two men in the tonneau stood about with the third until Sperry ordered one of them to hold an electric torch on his repairing. The bearded man did as requested, throwing the ray where Sperry ordered. Once he delayed to shift it, and Sperry, sweating with his work, despite the crisp night, spoke to him sharply. The man looked at him queerly, but said nothing. At last the job was finished, and Sperry put on his gloves and started the car once more. The going was hard and the roads here and there marked for detours, so that it was after five by the clock in the front of the car before they began to climb hills with which Sperry was familiar, the hills on the other side of the ridge from Swiftbrook Bowl. But it was still dark, still far from sunrise. He had been brusquely asked if he knew the way to Galton, and had answered in the affirmative. Now they were approaching that town.

"Straight through," said the bearded man in his husky voice. "Don't turn off to Ironton. Keep on up the mountain."

Sperry obeyed. They struck a bad road, deep-rutted, slippery with mud, and the car made slow progress. One of the men behind spoke for the first time.

"Open her up, can't you? We got to get through before daylight." They passed by sleepy hamlets and hit the windy ridge at the watershed, then pitched down between wooded ravines. A clearing came, a suggestion of highland meadow strips, the sound of a foaming torrent, the outline of a steeple against a blackish sky.

"Is this Darlington?" asked the bearded man. "Then the first road to the left past the village."

They made it as the first hint of dawn showed. There was a faint difference in the quality of the light. Trees began to separate themselves. On a slope irregular ranks of tombstones developed, gray and ghastly.

The guide put a hand on Sperry's arm.

"Into the graveyard," he said.

There were no gates, only a gravel road, crisp under the tires. To the right rose a high bank in which tombs had been dug like caves, and sealed with iron doors. Their tops were rounded and turfed above the level of the bank. Here they halted. The two men got out and one of them busied himself with a skeleton key, while the second held the electric torch.

Sperry read in its arc the graven lettering in the stonework about the iron doors: "Family Tomb of Alvin Allen. 1843."

The ghouls were going to deposit the loot in the ancient monument. Doubtless all the Allens were dead, their crumbled remnants in the vault.

"Come on," said the bearded man from the ground, "lend a hand here.

It's lightening strong. Want us to get nipped?"

The three of them were bearing in their packages with frantic haste. Daylight was coming. There was no time to spare lest some chore-seeking villager might see them and give an alarm. Sperry lent a hand, bearing a heavy parcel into the musty burial place, and coming out gratefully into the fresh air for another. At last they were through. He started to mount the car.

"Confound it!" said the bearded man. "We've left the keys back there. Duke, you've got the torch. Go get them, will you, while I light up? And hurry."

Sperry went back into the charnel-house reluctantly, but loath to suggest that he was not willing to do his share. He had held a feeling ever since they left New York that he was on probation with his passengers, that they sensed somehow that he was not an accepted and qualified member of their craft, but was tolerated only on Baldy's say-so. He could not see the keys and threw about the circle of his light. Suddenly he felt quick fanning of the close air, heard a grating sound, then the noise of the outer bar swinging into place with a dull clang, followed by the click of locks.

The ray of his lamp shone on the closed doors of the vault. He flung himself at them, pounding, kicking, without result, with hardly noise enough to reach to the road. He could barely hear the explosion of the engine as it broke into life and left him there, deliberately abandoned among the loot and the coffins of the moldering dead!

## CHAPTER VI.

### SKELETONS AND JEWELS.

**A**FTER the first rage and sense of horror had passed, Sperry forced himself to sum up the situation calmly. He deliberately shut off the light of the electric lamp, knowing he might need it

badly later. The place seemed to fill with phantoms, indignant at this outrage of their last rest. It was cold and damp. Somewhere water percolated through and dropped on the rough cement of the floor, like the tick of a clock counting his last minutes.

For he could not last very long, deliberately abandoned as he had been without hope of rescue. The air was limited, and, if any came through the door cracks or an unseen crevice, it was only enough to prolong life a short time. The place seemed to put a coating on his tongue, to choke his laboring lungs.

In the absolute silence, save for the "tock-tock" of the dripping water, Sperry could hear his heart beating as he strove for control. His burial had been preconceived by the bearded man whose voice was dimly familiar, though he had seen little of the man's face, muffled as it had been by the collar of his coat, a slouch hat, and a woolen scarf. Was it just a general suspicion based on some slip he had made that showed him up plainly as not one of them—as a possible spy?

If the voice of the bearded man had been dimly familiar to him, why, in like degree, in stronger degree, for he had not attempted any disguise of it, his own might have been familiar to this man. And he had shown his baseball finger while working on the blowout. Had he been recognized? Would they come back for him or send some one to make his arrest and claim the reward?

That was not likely, since they had left all the loot with him. He had been deliberately left to die of hunger, thirst, and lack of air.

Once more he switched on his torch and flashed it about his jail. It was bricked, the roof in the shape of a low arch, above which he had noticed, outside, that earth, turfed at the top, was piled thick. The ray faltered and he noticed, to his horror, that the battery was fast losing strength. And, to his

imagination, perhaps, but none the less real, the air seemed heavier, more vitiated. He swept the place for some tool with which to attack the bricks and dig through the dirt, at least to air, if not to freedom. He wondered whether the packages they had brought might not hold some safe-breakers' tools. While the light rapidly waned in the torch, he opened them. Most were cases made of heavy fiber, such as travelers use, strapped. Two were grips. These he handled first. One of them was full of smaller cases, which presumably contained articles of jewelry. These he did not touch. The second held a mass of gold chains and watches stripped from trays.

The battery gave only a flickering glimmer now as he attacked the sample cases. The first was a jumble of velvet-covered boxes, many of which had been opened and uncertainly closed. Among them strings of jewels, brooches, necklaces, and rings shot out streaks of many-colored light. And then the torch failed utterly. By sense of touch he went through the rest of the loot and found no tools. Mechanically he re-strapped the sample cases as his mind sought some way out.

A coffin handle?

Stumbling across the boxes, he groped his way to the stone slabs on which the caskets rested. He reached up and felt along the side of one of the grim receptacles, his fingers clutching a handle that felt as if it were made of iron, though it was pitted with rust. Apparently it had been wrought in the early days when the trappings of the dead were less elaborate in these hillside communities. It might make a good weapon with which to pick a way through the bricks and mortar if he could only get it free from the wood. That he might do with his pocket-knife.

Something moved in the mausoleum, something that sounded like the pat of a naked foot. Sperry's hair bristled,

though his reasoning told him it must be made by a material thing. What was it? He listened, holding to the handle of the casket. It came again and halted. He cautiously shifted a foot and touched something, small, yielding, alive. Instantly the truth flashed upon him. It was a toad. He moved again in his relief and set his foot fair upon the creature. He slipped, clinging to the iron handle. The wood, set there almost a century ago, perhaps, exposed to damp from without and within, gave way with a soft, shuddering crash under Sperry's weight. One end of the handle still clung for a moment and then, before he could recover his balance, the whole hideous thing was upon him, rotted wood and shreds of something that once had been quick and human. Dust and crumbling shreds of cerements, blinding, choking, appalling, descended on him with a soft rush as if intent upon a smothering vengeance!

Sperry fell, half paralyzed by the horror of it, and his head struck upon some dull edge. Light flashed before his inner sight, and then—oblivion!

When he came to, his head was aching dully but persistently. There was a great weight upon his chest and he could barely breathe. He could only move his extremities feebly. How long he had been there he knew not, but his returning consciousness told him that the air was nearly exhausted and that lack of it, with the blow, with want of food and a frightful, torturing thirst, had chained him too effectually for him to think of another attempt to break through the chamber that held the long dead and the barely living. How long he had been there he had no way of telling. This was the end, or very close to it.

Tock, tock! The drip on the floor sounded on his sensitive nerves and brain cells, congested by blood sluggish and poisoned for lack of oxygen, like

the blows of a sledge upon some mighty brazen gong, tolling off his last seconds. A swift vision came to him of the figures on Trinity's clock in New York, pounding the hours.

The weight on his chest turned to a pain within, an agony at each laboring breath. He was breathing carbonic gases and he longed for their complete anesthesia. He no longer wished for life nor thought coherently.

The pains ceased and a blessed ease encompassed him. He had passed the Rubicon. Light was in his eyes, a brilliant, dazzling light! Sweet air greeted his lungs. Vaguely he felt himself moving, slowly—slowly! Something was between his lips, something that burned and choked him, but trickled down his throat and started a fire of life within him. He looked up and saw the stars. Then they were obscured by a shape and he heard a voice calling his name—his own name "Jack! Jack!"

He tried to meet the summons, sounding like the hail of some one far down a tunnel, some one he loved. The stars again! More of that life-giving fluid! And then came the light, not so dazzling. And, above it, radiant, imploring, anxious, was the face of Elizabeth.

Youth and hope and love now brought him swiftly back to life. A strong arm was about him and he sat up. Another voice blended with the girl's in low tones. It was Baldy's.

"Give him some of the soup, Bess. Here's the thermos. We'll get him into the car. I'll close up this place."

He supped the broth and tried to get to his feet. Baldy's strength supporting him on one side, the girl's hand under one elbow, he climbed up into the tonneau of a car and sank on its padded cushions with the girl beside him, rapidly recovering. Baldy was closing the tomb once more. But this time, thank Heaven, he was on the outside.

"How did you find me?" he asked.

"Don't talk until we get out of this," said Baldy. "Bess, you'll have to back out of here. I'm not an expert on these machines. Here, Jack, put away this sandwich and take another drink."

Sperry took the bread and meat and the flask and obeyed orders as the girl left him and took the front seat, her father edging over. The car reversed down the little ascent to the tomb, through the entrance of the cemetery to the main road, sped along it for perhaps a quarter of a mile, and turned into a steep lane up which it plugged through stiff mud to the hill top, turned in between the remnants of a gate, and struggled through what had once been a farmway to a standstill beside a crudely constructed cabin. A broken chimney jagged on the skyline; the windows were boarded, the door still intact.

The man with the mole got out and worked on the closed door. Sperry, almost himself again, got into the front seat with Elizabeth.

"How did you ever find me?" he asked.

"Daddy will tell you. I told you to believe in him, you know."

Seeing that her father was implicated with him in the deliberate robbery of a jewelry establishment, Sperry made no audible answer. But he took the girl's hand and pressed it. They exchanged a glance, a look that ignored all circumstance and set them on a bridge of their own, a mutual platform of appreciation and sincerity. And Sperry found himself glowing with an added resolve to protect this pure-eyed girl from all knowledge of her father's crookedness, a renewal of his desire to prove his own integrity. Something passed between them, as of a current between two wires that touch in a magnetic field, and Sperry felt a tingle that mounted to his heart and stayed there. Just then it was Elizabeth whom he

credited with his rescue. Her father did not count.

Baldy came back from the open door of the shack, got a lantern from the car, and a roll of blankets, asking Sperry to bring a box packed full with papered parcels, if he was able. The girl followed them inside the cabin that held some inexpensive furniture, including a rough bed and a rusty stove.

"Sperry," said the man with the mole, "I want you to camp out here for a day or two. Here is enough to make you fairly comfortable. There is wood outside, but I would rather you did not light any fire unless you must have it. This place is just above the cemetery. I want you to watch for the man or men who come to remove the loot, and to follow them. It is barely possible you may recognize one of them. But follow them, somewhere, to where they take the stuff. Then come back to New York and let me know as fast as you can travel. Here is money."

Sperry took it somewhat confusedly. Was Baldy seeking to double cross the others? But in that case he would simply have taken the loot.

"Won't they suspect something when they find I am not there?" he asked.

"There is nothing to suspect. We are not going to interfere with the removal of the stuff. It will not be the crowd that you brought here and who left you inside. In any event, the men who come would not be astonished to find you there dead, or taken away. They do not bother themselves about any details other than those laid out for them to handle. The chief attends to the finer points and all the links. The point is, Jack, the gang is getting a bit tired of working in the dark. They want to get in touch with the chief. I am at the head of that idea. I want to have a straight talk with him myself. Hitherto he issued all orders through Blackberry and one or two others. I am no cat's-paw, and the rest follow

me. I believe this stuff in the tomb will go direct to the chief. I want to trace it. The tomb has been used before for a receiving house for the stuff. It is none of it sold to fences. The chief finances the whole proposition, and bides his time in disposing of the loot through channels known only to himself. He gets more for it that way, but the rest of us don't—not enough of the difference. Now, if they won't let me see the chief, I'm going to find out for myself who he is, and get to him. And you can help me. Will you?"

He spoke in a low voice. The girl was trying to make the shack less comfortable. Sperry gave her a glance and then answered Baldy.

"Considering you have just literally picked me out of the jaws of death, I should be worse than ungrateful not to help you. I owe you a lot."

"We'll come to a just settlement, some day, my son," said Baldy. "You'll have to sleep days and watch nights. They'll come some time after dark. I wouldn't be surprised if they bring a team of horses, as being less noticeable. I've a notion they won't go very far. That will make it all the easier for you. The gang is uneasy. There are hints that the police are closing in and they think, with me, it is time for a final divvy. Of course, I haven't so much coming as some of them, but I am, in a way, the leader in this. As it stands, if anything breaks, the chief has got the goods and we stand for the conviction. He is too well covered.

"He is a bit uneasy, too, I think. Anyway, he has ordered one last haul—I'll tell you about that when you come back to town—and then we may all split up. But there is going to be a personal talk and a regular accounting first, with the chief in person. I don't think you'll have to stick round here long. Sorry for the accommodations, but it wouldn't do for you to be seen. Now we've got to be off."

"Won't you tell me how you found me?" asked Sperry.

Baldy smiled. "I wanted to find out where this cache was. I like to have two strings to my bow. You were one of them. The other? You remember my having those two tires changed at the garage? Well, I supplied the car, and I also supplied two tires that are so marked as to make a very plain trail in the mud for any one used to following them. When the car came back without you—they left it at a downtown garage and let me know in the regular way—when they came back with a yarn about you having got cold feet and given them the slip, I suspected that they had figured you out wrong in some way. They didn't like my bringing you in the way. I did, and I imagined a grudge—and perhaps something else. Anyhow, I knew the destination was somewhere in the Berkshires. On the main road I picked up the tire marks, and I didn't lose them. Now tell me just how it all happened."

He and the girl listened while Sperry summed up the incidents briefly.

"It was the chap with the beard who did it, then?" asked Baldy. "I didn't see much of him. I was inside, and he showed only once. But we'll attend to him later. You had better lay low for a bit with the gang. And now we must be going."

He went outside to the car. Sperry looked at the girl. He seemed fairly launched in criminality, and yet this girl, daughter of Baldy Brown, appeared a thing apart from such affairs, mixed up in them as she undoubtedly was. She held out both her hands and he took them. Again the thrill mounted and took possession of him. She seemed to sway a little toward him, and the next instant her lips had met his.

They stepped apart as Baldy returned. How much he had seen, Sperry could not guess, did not think of until

the car had left and he was preparing to go on watch. But he was very fully conscious of a strange, a welcome exhilaration that not all his troubles, all his desperation could modify. Elizabeth and he were living in a world apart, and that world was lit by the unquenchable hope of love.

Baldy had left him an automatic pistol, and he slipped it into his pocket, before, fortified with food and drink, braced still by the touch of the girl's lips, he put out his lantern, closed the door, and crept down the hill through leafless brush and a little grove of spectral white birches in the verge of which he crouched, amid the dried ferns, just above the mound of the vault, keeping his lonely vigil.

## CHAPTER VII.

### TEMPTATION.

FOR the balance of that night and for the two nights following, Sperry watched in the birch grove above the tomb, eating and sleeping by day, holed up in the deserted farm cabin. They were long vigils with the shortening days, thirteen hours at a stretch in the darkness, with one night continual rain that forced him to light a fire the next morning and dry out his sodden clothes. But he stuck to it and was confident that no one had approached the cemetery as no one came near his cabin. What he suffered from most was the fact that he dared not smoke while on guard, and found the lonely hours drag interminably. His great consolation was that, long before this, he would have become one of the silent occupants of the tomb, uncoffined and unepitaphed, but most effectually out of the world. And he was very far from wishing to have done with worldly affairs. His love of Elizabeth undoubtedly did much to give him a sane grip on events and furnish him with hope of ultimate rehabilitation.

Time and time again he went over everything and tried to patch things together into some kind of sequence that he could trace back, in order to discover some clew, some loophole he might use as the commencement of his own vindication. Remington! Everything came back to Remington! He was the one who had deliberately lied about the check's presentation. Cairns had stated that it was torn from the back of his check book, and Sperry suspected Cairns of furnishing this bit of the evidence. This pointed inevitably to collusion between Cairns and Remington. Moreover, Cairns had interested himself in getting Remington a fresh situation. And the bank's funds had been depleted ten thousand dollars, which Cairns had at first promised to restore with altogether too much equanimity, Sperry concluded, reviewing his stepfather's demeanor.

Supposing that Remington had shared that ten thousand. Five thousand would not be much for Cairns to pay as the price of getting Sperry out of grace with his mother, of accomplishing his final disinheritance, and giving Cairns full control of it, if not ultimate possession. But there might be a third man, the one who had so wonderfully imitated the signatures. Who was he?

Out in the blackness he revolved these thoughts, his mind like a squirrel in its turning-cage, and arrived at but one resolution, to seek Baldy's help to run down Remington, and, trapping him, if that were necessary, force the facts from him.

He thought of his mother, none too strong, and of what insidious poison against him Cairns by this time had succeeded in implanting in her confiding nature. There, too, he was powerless; he did not even know her address. So his heart grew bitter and hard against his transgressors. The girl was his only leaven of sweetness, and she



was not of his own world, as society apportioned it. She dwelt in the tents of the wicked, and, if crime had not besmirched her, it was because she was of pure gold that may be hidden, but remains intrinsically perfect.

Baldy, too, was a man who had his qualities. Environment might have forced him into his career, as indeed it had forced Sperry. The man was one who would have made good in any surroundings, have stood out head and shoulders above his fellows. His strength was misapplied, but his virtues were still unspoiled. As friend or enemy, he would go on to the end, and Sperry felt that Baldy was his friend.

So the nights passed, and the days, and the fourth night brought action.

There was a sharp frost, the temperature dropping with the sun, until, at midnight, nested in the blankets he had been forced to bring from the cabin, Sperry was hard put to it to keep warm. He was about to get up and walk about on patrol to restore his congealing circulation, when certain noises arrested him. They were not loud—the clink of a horse's hoofs on frosty road metal, the squeak of an axle. A team was coming on toward the cemetery. This was not the main road; all the farmers of the vicinity were long ago abed.

Excitement gripped him as the sounds grew closer and turned in to the cemetery enclosure. Sperry had wriggled forward until he lay prone on the top of the curving mound that formed the roof of the tomb. The wagon stopped and two dim shapes got down. There was no moon, but the sky was clear with the frost, and the steely stars gave sufficient light to observe movement. The two men, without a word, advanced to the doors and opened them. Then the light from an electric torch sprayed out, and they went into the vault. For fifteen minutes they worked, taking out the cases and grips, and stowing them carefully

in the light farm wagon. They worked in silence. If they had expected to find a recently dead body inside, they made no comment at the lack of it.

Sperry wondered why the bearded man and his two helpers had not said something about their attempt to dispose of him, or had not themselves tried to remove the supposed corpse. Was it true, as Baldy had hinted, that the type of men entrusted by the mysterious chief to handle his loot were surprised at nothing, asked no questions beyond the scope of their own directions?

While these conjectures ran through his mind, he had other things to do; to see if he could recognize these men—as Baldy had suggested he might—and to trail the wagon to its destination.

They wielded their torch skillfully and sparsely. Sperry was unable to get a glimpse of their features. One thing he noticed with satisfaction: they had a big tarpaulin in the wagon-bed which they threw over their load. It was plain that one of them, at least, knew the locality, for he led the horses up the cemetery road to where he could swing them around a loop, not wishing to attempt to back them or turn them in the narrow space, for fear of noise or mishap in the gloom. Sperry swiftly tucked away his blankets among the bracken and slipped like a lizard from the top of the tomb, gliding down to the road, and, hidden behind a big elm, waited the coming out of the wagon.

It went cautiously on down the steep pitch, the brakes set. Behind it, at a safe distance, strode Sperry. At the bottom of the hill the wagon turned north across the valley on a fairly level road, the horses put to a jog-trot. Sperry changed his pace and kept fifty yards behind without difficulty. Thus for a mile they went, and then came the long climb up the northern ridge.

Sperry knew the country well, and knew that the team would be stopped for necessary breathing half-way up the hill. He slowly closed in, and, when the wagon halted on the midway bench of the ascent, he was less than ten yards away.

He saw the striking of a match, the passing of it from one man to the other, the glow of a cigar and a pipe, and caught the scent of tobacco. He saw more—the face of one of the men, and the ruddy outline caused him to stop with a little gasp. He had not seen enough to be sure of identity, but the suggestion put his brain in a turmoil.

The two men were talking in low tones; the heavy breathing of the winded horses was plain on the cold night air. Foot by foot, bent double, Sperry crept up to the wagon. He meant to climb over its tail board, cover himself with the tarpaulin, and get a ride to wherever it was going. This he must do, he decided, at the moment of starting up, so that whatever he might make of noise or disturbance would be covered by the natural noise of the horses and wagon in getting into action.

The driver released his foot brake, and Sperry, with a little jump, glided over the tail-board and pulled the edge of the tarpaulin over himself without attracting attention. The wagon went on up the hill and down the other side. Once again the horses broke into a trot which they kept up for mile after mile with little slackenings on minor hills. Sperry no longer felt the cold; he was tingling with excitement. He was beginning to see a way out of his troubles—not an easy path, but a possible one.

The team slowed up and turned off the main road to a smoother one. Sperry stuck his head out from the tarpaulin. They were now in the private grounds of a well-kept estate, driving between lawns set with shrubs and groups of trees. A house showed, gray-white, no lights visible, a country place

of wealth. The wagon drove on round to the back, and Sperry, his eyes constantly on the driver and his companion, got clear of the tarpaulin and edged over the tail board. Despite his care, his feet scuffed the gravel of the drive, and he instantly darted for the nearest cover, a clump of evergreens, crackly with the frost. The driver, pulling up his horses at the moment, paid no attention, but the other man swung about in his seat.

"What was that?" he demanded.

"What?"

"Something in the bushes back there!" As he spoke the man flung the ray of the torch upon the laurels. Sperry lay *perdu* like a rabbit, fearful that the shaking boughs would give him away. Just then a door opened, ruddy in the night.

"You've got the jumps," said the driver. "There's the boss, waiting for us. Get down and help out with the stuff."

The other obeyed, though he walked over to the evergreens and deliberately examined them. But Sperry had writhed out on the other side and chosen a fresh hiding place. The distraction of the opening door had given time for the stiff branches to cease their motion, and the man gave up his idea and proceeded to help the driver with the packages.

Sperry dodged around to one side of the big house. It was dark, save for a narrow strip of orange light where a blind had not been pulled completely down. Shrubbery grew close to the wall. The frost in the ground was hard enough to bear him without telltale footprints, he decided, and he badly wanted to have a look inside that room. He made his trip in safety, and, gripping the stone sill of the telltale window, drew himself up until his eyes were on a level with the crack. The window faced a door that was just opening. A man appeared and advanced toward a mas-

sive center table. Behind him appeared the driver and his fellow, carrying the packages which they set on the table at the indication of the first man, who started to unstrap the packages as the two others turned toward the doors.

Sperry was forced to lower himself to ease the pull on his muscles. He had seen enough, yet he wanted to see more. There was plenty of time ahead of him before he could get the early train to New York. The cabin door was closed properly; the blankets well hidden, and he did not intend to go back to the cemetery.

Six times, at intervals, he hoisted himself and peered through the inch of vision space at the foot of the blind. He saw the man finally dismiss the others, heard the wagon rattle off to some stable, saw the principal open the packages, and gloat for a while over the contents. These he separated entirely from their velvet covered boxes, and placed them within a big safe that was not at first sight apparent, being covered with sliding panels made to conform with the woodwork of the walls. Then he touched a bell and the driver once again appeared, devoid of his outer clothes, addressing the first man with respect, and starting to take away the now emptied cases, grips, and jeweler's boxes.

Now Sperry was through. He could imagine the bulky stuff being burned in a furnace, but he knew where the jewels were stored, and he knew now the mysterious chief's identity. For the man who had put the loot in his safe was his stepfather, Cairns; the driver was Peters, and the helper a footman.

Here was cause for elation, yet how was he to make use of it? He himself was still an outlaw, and must act through others. Baldy was his only friend, and he was bound to Baldy by many ties. But for the Chicago crook he would be dead in the vault.

His mind, spurred by what he had seen, worked clearly now. The half-familiar voice of the bearded man was plainly recognizable in the light of all events. It had been Remington. His own voice and his injured finger, displayed when he had fixed the tires, had given him away, despite his disguise. Just why Remington had not later removed his body he could not figure, but he did not bother with it. Evidently neither Peters nor Cairns had known of his joining the gang of which Cairns was chief. That, too, he set aside for the time.

Other parts of the pattern were forming swiftly. Cairns was a master crook, greater even than Baldy Brown, controller of a band, few of whom knew his identity. Cairns planned the robberies. His own case had been but a side issue in Cairns' campaign, though the fortune the man hoped to control was worth having. Aside from that had been the mutual dislike between Sperry and his stepfather, and the objection of the latter to having any one close to him who might suspect or clog his operations.

Remington, dismissed from the bank, had been placed in the jeweler's with a view to the robbery. The red-haired clerk was in it, too. Remington may have furnished the combination which was to have been put by the redhead into the box containing the tie-clip. That was why Remington had been on the balcony that morning—to watch for the man who would buy the tie-clip. Doubtless Remington, for his own reasons, wanted to link up all he could of Cairns' chain of operatives. Naturally he had become suspicious of Sperry's appearance in the store. Once started, he had been on the watch, and had recognized him as the driver of the Speedwell car.

That would link him up with Baldy, who had furnished the car and vouched for Sperry with the gang.

Baldy must know all this. Sperry

found himself in a quandary. If he accomplished the arrest of Cairns, if he could find some one who would listen to him and act, it meant the arrest of Baldy, or at least his pursuit, and Baldy would know that Sperry, whom he had befriended, had double crossed him. He had a good excuse, his own vindication, but—he had eaten Baldy's salt! More, he was himself mixed up with the gang.

Baldy's friendship might have been only the ruse to use him as a tool, to procure the driver they needed, to act as outside man—a mere matter of business. But it would not have been necessary for the man with the mole to have taken him into his own house, to have brought him into close contact with his daughter. He knew what Sperry was charged with; that was whip enough, had he wanted to use it.

Instead, he had left Sperry alone with Elizabeth, had sent them off on a jaunt.

Walking along the lonely roads, Sperry thrashed it out, and found himself at last between two questions, both concerning a woman. There was his mother to be considered, to be rescued from Cairns, to have her faith in her own son restored. And there was Elizabeth, whom he loved—a crook's daughter, but infinitely sweet. How could the two situations be reconciled?

He did not attain the solution until he boarded the early train to New York, at a station ten miles from his own home, trusting to his disguise, keeping his baseball finger well gloved.

He was going to tell Baldy everything that occurred. Crook though he was, the man was square, and he would see both sides of the case. That Baldy would double cross Cairns, having once entered his gang, he could not imagine. Baldy, sore at not meeting his principal, at being used as a cat's-paw, and Baldy playing traitor, were two very different things. But he felt sure that Baldy would find some way to help him out of his dilemma, and he was very

certain that his present duty was to warn Baldy, who might be even now proclaimed as traitor to the gang by Remington. If they had not hesitated to leave him in the tomb, what might they not do to Baldy? And to Baldy's daughter? He remembered that they had merely told Baldy that he, Sperry, had given them the slip with cold feet. Were they giving the man with the mole the benefit of the doubt until the last job was pulled, needing his aid? Remington, recognizing Sperry, knew that Baldy lied when he called him Gentleman Manning, the Duke, from Chi.

There were a lot of tangles in the skein that all his cogitation failed to unravel; it failed to anything but merge them into a greater snarl. Arrived at New York in midmorning, he hurried to the house in Greenwich Village, taking especial care to break the direct journey, fearful that something had gone wrong.

Elizabeth met him, smiling. Her daddy, she said, would be back at noon.

"You look worried," said the girl, "and you look—have you seen yourself in a mirror lately? You need repairs."

Sperry regarded himself. The nights in the open had made his false complexion patchy; the dye in his hair was blotched, and a suggestion of blondness showed plainly at the roots.

"You also look hungry," said Elizabeth. "When did you eat last?"

It had been many hours since Sperry had tasted warm food, and he had forgotten breakfast in his hurry. The girl soon remedied that, and presently she was sitting across from him while he devoured ham and eggs and wonderful coffee, with still more wonderful biscuits.

What a paradox she was, he thought; fresh with that indescribable suggestion of the open country. How could it be possible that Baldy was her father? A happy solution presented itself. Like himself, she might have only a step-

father. But he hesitated to talk to her about it.

As he finished his meal she brought him a box of her father's cigars and an envelope addressed to him.

"Daddy said to give you these if you got back while he was away," she said, and left him to open the communication while she went humming off to get rid of the dishes.

Inside the envelope were two clippings from newspapers, one long, one short. Sperry took the latter first. It read:

Mrs. Simeon Cairns is now staying at the Isle of Pines, and is reported much improved in health. In connection with recent unfortunate family events, Mrs. Cairns stated to our correspondent that she had every reason to believe that these would terminate satisfactorily, particularly with regard to the status of her son, John J. Sperry, though she declared that she had no knowledge of his whereabouts, nor had he personally communicated with her.

Mr. Cairns is not expected to join her this winter. The capitalist is at present in the Berkshires at the family residence.

Here was more bewilderment! What miracle had happened to stiffen his mother's mental backbone in behalf of her son? Had nature proven more powerful than Cairns' suggestions, and had the mother risen in defense of her own flesh and blood? It seemed so. And Sperry thought he could read between the lines of the diplomatic correspondent the prophesy of a disagreement between Mr. and Mrs. Cairns, already brewing. It was good news and it heartened him. The other was not so reassuring. It was a semi-editorial from a New York daily. It was:

It has long been evident that the series of robberies that the police have been so singularly unable to prevent or follow up are being committed by the same operatives. Each crime bears the distinct marks of inside work, coupled to skillful burglary. The police can find no trace of any endeavor to dispose of the valuables acquired, much less any clew as to who may be the criminals.

They hint vaguely at a master mind, at a powerful organization run upon strictly business principles, if crime may be styled business or allowed any principles. There, having established a hypothesis that bears some claim to being logical, they stop.

It is high time that this reign of terror be ended. Our merchants are not to be left thus unprotected. It must be admitted that some one with a fine mind for details has planned these depredations so successfully carried out. The robbery of Marshall & Co., the jewelers, is a case in point. But four days have passed, and the police acknowledge themselves helpless by their inactivity.

The *Comet* has before this taken a conspicuous hand in the unraveling of mysteries, as its readers will well remember. We have no desire to usurp the duties of the police, but, if they are unable to secure the services of competent detectives, the *Comet* stands ready, as heretofore, to volunteer the aid of their own representatives, who have already performed notably in the running down of crime.

The police have no information to give out—or will give none—which is tantamount to admitting that they lack even the clews they so often mention. To convince the public, if they need such conviction, that the *Comet* is zealous only for the common weal, and is not acting on unadvised impulse, we will state information that has already been unearthed by us to this effect. At least a part of this band of criminals has recently been recruited from Chicago, and it should not be supremely difficult for the commissioner to make inquiries along these lines. If the police department breaks into action that gives promise of success or, at least, of progress, the *Comet* will gladly remain in its preferred position as recorder of events. Otherwise its readers may expect in its columns the news of a vigorous campaign to uncover the identity of this gang of arch criminals, and bring them to justice. What further information the *Comet* now has, held back for obvious reasons, is at the service of the commissioner, if he wants it. If not, we will act upon it and—there will be speedy developments.

Sperry felt enmeshed in puzzles. What did this leader in the *Comet* mean? Baldy had seen it, of course, since he had clipped it. It looked like more danger for the man with the mole and for himself. He also was supposed to be from Chicago. Was it a subtle plan of Remington to get rid of Baldy?

That hardly seemed plausible. The *Comet*, Sperry knew, had boosted its circulation enormously by previous brilliant detective work. If it gave out such clues that, as Sperry knew, were true ones, how much more did it have up the managerial sleeves?

When Baldy arrived, he did not do much to enlighten him.

"I thought you would like to see that news about your mother," he said. "So did Bess. She found the item. As for the other, don't worry about it. I don't. Now give me your news."

To Sperry's chagrin, his information did not seem to impress Baldy overwhelmingly. He laid stress only upon one part of the discovery, that Sperry had seen the jewels stowed in the safe that Cairns had installed in the library since he had assumed mastership at Swiftbrook Bowl.

"Your affairs and mine seem to run together, son," he said whimsically. "And we'll straighten out the whole mix before we get through with it, take it from me. Meantime, don't worry about Remington. I've looked out for that. You are back just in time. This trip you will be an inside man. The last job is to be pulled to-night. It is the Agricultural Bank at Longfield, and, of course, your esteemed stepfather and Remington worked out the details of this some time ago, in all probability. Also, Chief Cairns announces this as the final wind-up. He has undoubtedly seen the *Comet*, and read the writing on the wall. He has agreed to see certain of us as a committee after the job is done. We are to go over from Longfield to Swiftbrook Bowl by motor. You will be with the committee, and maybe you'll have a chance to tell your stepfather what you think of him, and come to some agreement."

"But I'm mixed up in this," said Sperry. "Look at this disguise."

"It needs fixing," said Baldy. "Bess will do it. Remember, there are more

ways than one of killing a goose and of cooking it. I'm leaving for Longfield on the one-thirty train. You come on the three-thirty. That brings you there well after dark. You know the Olympic Theater?"

"Of course. But it's closed."

"For alterations and repairs. Those repairs are being pushed just now. Night work, decorators and stage carpenters from New York. Get the idea?"

"No," said Sperry; "I'm afraid I don't."

"The Olympic Theater is five doors from the bank. Its opening runs between two stores. These have been closed out under the new lease. I fancy your stepfather is back of that lease, cleverly covered. The repairs give a fine opportunity for what has been going on; a tunnel, starting underneath the stage, runs up and under the main vault of the bank."

"But that vault is at the end of the safety-deposit department," said Sperry. "There is only a heavy rail across, and the bank is lighted at night so that any one passing can see clear down to the end of the vault."

Baldy smiled.

"Wait and see," he said. "Everything is timed for to-night. There is a grip in your room with painters' tools inside of it. Just a precaution. But you take that along and breeze right up to the theater. There's a watchman on there, one of the gang. He'll ask you 'Why didn't you show up at six o'clock?' When you answer, 'I mislaid my card and lost the train,' he'll let you through. Go up back of the stage. The curtain'll be down. There'll be a man or so working on the stage. You stick around; they won't bother you. If they do, tell 'em you are waiting for Blackberry. When they go under the stage, you go with 'em. That'll be to bring out the stuff. It'll be shipped through the back door. But—here is your job.

Don't be the last man out of the vaults or up on the stage. As soon as there is any indication of the truck being outside, and before they open the stage doors at the back—the double scenery doors—you send up that curtain. It's automatic-hydraulic; works on the right-hand side of the stage. There's a labeled button."

He looked at Sperry keenly.

"Don't bother yourself as to why I'm asking you to do this. It's vital to my affairs and yours. I've picked you for the job. I won't put it on the grounds of gratitude for what I've done. I'm asking you to do it because no one else can handle this. It's a favor to me. If you don't believe in me, call it off right now. There may be a chance of danger in it. But if you do it nicely, that's minimized. I'll be there. Will you do it?"

With the eyes of the man with the mole boring into him, Sperry tried to retain some self judgment, and at the same time to be fair to Baldy. He came to the conclusion that Baldy smelled a trap set for him at the last instant after his usefulness was ended in connection with the job. And Elizabeth's request was plain in his ears.

"I believe in you. Won't you believe in my daddy?" Baldy was his only friend, save the girl. And gratitude *did* enter into it.

"I'll do it," he said. They gripped hands.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE END OF BALDY.

**S**PERRY swung down the main street of Longfield at nine o'clock, bag in hand, his disguise retouched, and enlarged upon, so that he felt confident of not being recognized. He passed the bank and glanced in. Back of the main floor he could see the wide corridor behind the bronze grating where the safety-deposit boxes and the door of the great vault were clearly visible night and day. All looked as usual. He

passed the watchman and went back to the stage. Two men were pottering about with saw and hammer, making a noise but doing nothing definite. One of them challenged him. It was Curly Conklin, the killer who had tried to pistol Baldy. He did not recognize Sperry, and was satisfied with his answers.

"They're prit' nigh ready for us," he said. "They was right under the floor last night. Truck's to be here at eleven sharp. And, let me tell you, it'll be some haul. They say this is the last trick for a while, and it'll be a good one."

Sperry wondered how they could expect to get away with the loot inside of two hours, with no present signs of disturbance in the bank's interior.

"Are they going through the vault floor?" he asked Curly.

"Not much. It's a foot of steel and concrete. Couldn't make a hole big enough to work through there without giving the snap away. They're coming up in front of the door and torching that. Didn't you twig the picture? Say, that's some job of painting, I'll say. The guy that did it used to be wit' a high-class opery company. You could stand a foot in front of it an' not git wise. These hicks'll stare when they git on termorrer."

Sperry nodded.

"Good work," he said. He knew now what it was. A canvas screen, painted to represent the perspective of the last few feet of the deposit box corridor and an exact representation of the vault door, was set a few feet in advance of the vault, and gave the safe-crackers ample room to work undisturbed while the occasional patrol passed and peered in, sure that all was well. There was no premises watchman in the bank. The utter publicity was relied on. And there had been inside work again to place the screen in position, he supposed.

He leaned up against the side of the

curtain, smoking, till Curly admonished him to make some noise.

"Some guys might be rubberin' an' wonderin' why they couldn't hear nuttin'," said the crook. "I'm tellin' you this gang works down to the fine points. It's a shame to bust it up. But the cops is gettin' hep, they tell me."

Presently a man appeared at the open trap in the stage and beckoned to them. Sperry followed the others down wooden steps, and then a ladder, to an earthen tunnel shored with timber, and so on up into the bank and back of the canvas screen, unpainted on that side, deftly fitted to the space. There was a smell of gas, acrid and choking, and Sperry smothered a cough. There was no sign of Baldy or of Remington, with or without his beard. The vault door was swung back, and he had no time to look for signs of the work of the oxy-acetylene torches that had been used. Some one gave a crisp command in a low whisper, and they began to carry out bags of coin and packages of bills.

Up on the stage two men started to place these in old lime barrels, stuffing the tops with excelsior. These were to be placed in the truck, Sperry gathered, together with odds and ends of scenery. There was a clock on the proscenium wall. The hands marked fifteen minutes of eleven.

Sperry looked at the great curtain, blank, unresponsive. What lay behind it? As he started for his second trip to the bank, a man stopped him.

"You ain't needed," he said. "It's all on the way, Duke. Help with them barrels. The truck'll be here any minute."

Sperry fussed around with excelsior, watching the hands of the clock creep to ten and then to five minutes of the hour. There was a sound of wheels outside. He slipped over to the proscenium and touched the button.

Up went the big canvas silently.

Some one shouted at him. "Here, what're you doin'?" Then the voice died away.

In the stage boxes were men, covering the gang with revolvers; more in the orchestra, the muzzles of their guns showing in the border lights of the stage. A man was walking down the center aisle, a big man, with authority in his manner and in the two guns he aimed.

"Up with your hands, the lot of you!" he said. "Up with them, boys! No use trying the back door. There's a truck there, but not the kind you were expecting."

More men were behind him. They swarmed over the footlights and herded up the safe-crackers, taking charge of the barrels. The backdoors were opened and more detectives stood revealed, also a patrol wagon.

"Lord!" said the snarling voice of Curly Conkling, as he glared at the big man who was in charge of the raid. "It's Jim Farrell."

Sperry gave a second look at the detective who had once sent Curly up the river, and whom Curly had mistaken Baldy for, on that night in the alley. Farrell nodded at him curtly.

"You come with us," he said.

Sperry found himself set on one side with two others. The rest were packed into the patrol wagon. The money was being taken back into the bank. Where was Baldy? What had gone wrong at the last moment?

One thing was certain. Sperry himself was in custody. To his surprise no one handcuffed him, though they wrist-manacled the two others, who, with him, were placed in two motor cars with the big man and his assistants. A third car, filled with plain-clothes men, followed them as they sped through Longfield out into the country. Sperry recognized the direction, and was soon sure that they were on the way to Swiftbrook Bowl.



They were going to apprehend Cairns! He felt a vicious delight in the thought. Why was he taken along? The others were doubtless members of the committee Baldy had spoken of. They must know his identity, and they wanted to use him in connection with his stepfather's arrest! To that he was willing to subscribe, but he worried about Baldy, principally about Elizabeth.

The third car with the plain-clothes men went ahead of them as they reached the Cairns' house, and the officers jumped from the vehicle and spread themselves about the residence. The big man got out at the front door with two other prisoners and two detectives. Those in Sperry's car joined the group. Farrell spoke.

"I'm going to take off the cuffs, Slim, and off you, Jerry. But don't try any monkey business. When Peters answers the door, you tell him everything's O. K., and that you're the committee, see? Once the door's open, we'll do the rest." He turned to Sperry and caught him by the arm, pressing him out of sight. The detectives stood in the shadows as Slim rang the bell, conscious of automatics covering him, and gave his message to Peters, attired as a butler.

Then there was a swift rush, with Peters knocked down as he tried to pull a gun, a glimpse of Cairns stepping haughtily into the hall and turning ghastly pale under the electric lights as Farrell called on him to throw up his hands. Sperry went with the rest into the library.

"The jig's up, Cairns," said Farrell. "We've got the goods on you. If you'll slide back those wall panels so we can get the stuff from Marshall's out of your safe, with a lot of other loot you've got there, you'll save trouble for us all. Don't lower your hands. We want you, not your corpse. Just tell us the combination; that'll do."

Cairns obeyed, trembling, but with rage. He wheeled on Slim and Jerry, his eyes blazing.

"You dirty stool pigeons!" he cried. "I'll get you yet for this."

"They are not the stool pigeons, Cairns," said Farrell. "I'm the only original stool pigeon in this case, if you want to call me one—although your pal Remington was pretty nearly ready to squeal last night. We've had him tucked away safe for a few days, with Gallagher and Martin."

He suddenly took off his hat, and with it came a wig of grayish hair, smiling as he did so. Sperry looked at him open-mouthed. Farrell's head was nearly bald. But the teeth were dazzlingly white, and there was no mole. And yet?

Farrell smiled directly at him.

"I'm Baldy Brown, all right," he said. "Cairns, let me introduce you to your stepson, Jack Sperry. He's been on your payroll lately as Gentleman Manning, of Chi, also called The Duke."

## CHAPTER IX.

JIM FARRELL.

I HAD to keep you out of the know, Sperry," said Farrell later, now thoroughly identified as the head of a famous agency. "You might have tipped the thing off. As for the disguise—or the camouflage, that was easy, though Curly would have bumped me on general resemblance if you hadn't been Johnny on the spot. I've got a bald head, which is handy for wigs fitting properly. As Farrell I wear one. My front teeth are bad, and when I had one bridge made, long ago, I had some others finished up in various style. The mole was easy, letting the whiskers sprout to make it more natural.

"You've helped a lot without knowing it. Of course Bess was wise. We have few secrets between us." He grinned knowingly at Sperry.

"Now everything will be straightened out. I don't think your stepfather damaged your mother's property, and as for her, I took occasion to let her know by way of headquarters that her boy was no rascal, if her second husband was. Also I had the *Comet* tipped off to smooth matters for the climax. I fancy, from the reports, that your mother was rather relieved to have Cairns uncovered. She wants you to go to her, though I'm afraid your appearance will startle her. But I suppose you'll not wait for a little thing like that to stop you."

"I'm glad she knows about things," said Sperry. "I want to see her badly, but there's some one else I'd like to see first, if you don't mind."

"Who's that?" asked Farrell, no

longer the Man with the Mole, lighting a cigar.

"You're not such a good detective, after all," said Sperry. "It's Elizabeth."

"Lord bless my soul, you don't say so?" There was a twinkle in Farrell's eyes. "I rather fancy she's expecting both of us to dinner. You can't go to the Isle of Pines by railroad, Sperry, and the next steamer doesn't sail for a couple of days. I've got some details to attend to. Perhaps you had better go ahead. No need to take anything but short cuts this trip, my boy."

But Sperry was gone and Farrell laid down his cigar with a laugh.

"Not such a good detective after all!" he said softly. "Does he think I'm blind?"

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## WHAT CONVICTS' FOOD COSTS

AN authority on prison reform, writing on the subject of what it costs to provide food for convicts, makes the statement that "a convict's food is whatever the warden thinks sufficient to supply out of an appropriation originally inadequate." The following table, compiled before food prices soared to their present high altitudes, is an accurate average of the cost of food per man per day in some of the larger institutions: Connecticut State Prison, Wethersfield, \$.0775; Indiana State Prison, Michigan City, \$.099; Indiana Reformatory, Jeffersonville, \$.1164; Iowa Reformatory, Anamosa, \$.137; Iowa State Prison, Fort Madison, \$.1733; Kentucky Penitentiary, Frankfort, \$.1087; Maine State Prison, Thomaston, \$.0997; Maryland Penitentiary, Baltimore, \$.085; Michigan State Prison, Jackson, \$.1282; Michigan Branch Prison, Marquette, \$.124; Michigan Reformatory, Ionia, \$.095; Minnesota State Prison, Stillwater, \$.1172; Missouri Penitentiary, Jefferson City, \$.141; New Jersey Reformatory, Rahway, \$.094; New Jersey State Prison, Trenton, \$.1265; New York State Prison, Sing Sing, \$.103; Ohio Penitentiary, Columbus, \$.17; Virginia Penitentiary, Richmond, \$.156; Tennessee Penitentiary, Nashville, \$.087.

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## ETHICS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

ONE of the principles upon which the procedure regarding juvenile delinquents is based is that violence, even the use of weapons, is easier to cure than other forms of delinquency, because it is the actuating impulse, the question of whether it is an act of habitual settled moral obliquity or that of a sudden impulse, which makes all the difference.

# On the Inside

by Frederick J. Jackson

Author of "For Business Reasons," "Time and Tide," etc.

**L**ESTER COFFMAN was an adept at the gentle art of four-flushing. Incidentally, he was a clerk in the safety-deposit vaults of a certain Los Angeles bank. His weekly salary was twenty dollars, and he managed to make quite a showing on this. Living in an eight-dollar-a-month room in the residence of a poor widow, he had his mail addressed to the Bachelor Club. His breakfasts and lunches were eaten in the cheapest of dairy lunches; his dinners, at the club—whenever he was not invited out. Usually, however, he was a "filler-in" at dinner parties, for, through family connections, he had gained entry into fairly exclusive society circles in Los Angeles, and had become much in demand as a handy dancing man.

When society staged an amateur theatrical performance, it was Coffman who ran away with the honors. As an actor he possessed much talent. Only one thing kept him out of the motion picture game and the large salaries attached thereto—he did not photograph well. As one director put it, he screened like a piece of cheese. But he had the other attributes of the average actor; his tailor pointed to him as a model customer—a model of those to be kept off his books in the future.

Outside of like incidents, Coffman had never done anything dishonest; that is, he had never been caught at it. But he had neither conscience nor scruples; at heart he was a petty sneak thief, not being above transferring to his pockets the contents of some indul-

gent host's humidor—when he was certain that he would not be detected.

Once, in a cloak room at a ball, he had brushed against a heavy weight in the overcoat hanging next to his. No one being in sight, he had investigated, drawing forth from the pocket of the other coat a heavy, black automatic pistol. For this lethal weapon he really had no use, but pocketed it on the impulse of the moment, and went home early. He still had the gun in his room, intending to pawn it some day when he needed the money.

To the petty, empty world of society, Coffman was an exemplary young man, polite, polished and pleasingly entertaining. Even though the money-making men of their families thought him a bit frivolous, he stood well with numerous matrons. They liked him. Would one of them let him marry her daughter? Oh, dear, no! But at the same time many of them were willing to lend a hand, should he be in need of it, in advancing his matrimonial campaign in other fields.

The society game to Coffman was a direct means to an end. He frankly intended to marry money. But he was particular. The girl who would become his wife, in addition to possessing wealth, must be more than passing fair. Any young woman with these qualifications would do. Love? He laughed at the word. Love to him was a mere stage rôle. Should occasion demand, he could act it to perfection; could give a better imitation of the thing that makes the world go 'round than the real thing itself.

Biding his time, he at last met a girl who came up to his worldly specifications. Her name was Marcelle Huntington. She liked Coffman, but was a bit worldly, too. The man she married must show more evidence of wealth than Coffman had ever done.

From her seat on high, Destiny carefully scanned the situation, then stuck her tongue in her cheek as she impelled Coffman to fall desperately in love with Marcelle Huntington. It was a selfish love, however, for he was incapable of any other kind. No matter what agency or trick he employed to win her, the end would justify the means. Thus he reasoned.

To Coffman's warped, shriveled soul the sin of a crime did not lie in its commission but in its perpetrator's being caught. Discovery meant punishment. And the latter he construed not so much as meaning a term in the penitentiary as the inevitable social ostracism that would follow—the downfall from his precarious foothold in society, the loss of his chance to marry Marcelle Huntington and her wealth.

Coffman's hours in the bank were from nine to four-thirty. As he worked on the day following the evening that Marcelle Huntington had made it clear to him that money was an essential possession of a man who would marry her, Coffman's brain was stirred to unwonted activity. A scheme began to dawn on him.

Two keys were necessary to open a rent-box in the vault. One was the key possessed by the renter of the box, the other a pass-key, a duplicate of which was carried by each clerk in the department. The common practice was for the patron to hand his or her key to the clerk. The latter would then unlock the box, using the master key as well as the patron's. The box would then be removed from its compartment and given into the hands of the renter. Sometimes the lid of the box would be

opened right there and the contents removed or added to. Often, however, the patron would carry the box to a private room before opening it. Then, upon returning to the vault, the renter would hand the box back to the clerk, who would lock it into its compartment and return the patron's key.

Mr. Cunningham, a fat and prosperous broker, returned his extra-large deposit box to Coffman early that morning. Coffman locked the box into place, turning both keys; then removed Cunningham's key to give it back into his possession. But the broker had disappeared. His mind occupied by business affairs, he had forgotten his key. Coffman ran after him.

"Oh, Mr. Cunningham," he said, "you forgot your key."

"Bless me if I didn't!" exclaimed the other. "Let's see—that's about the sixth time I've forgotten it, isn't it? Good thing you're honest, young man, or I'd be a few thousand short some of these days through my carelessness."

Coffman smiled, too, as he walked back down the steps to the vault. But the smile was sardonic. Cunningham had called him honest. Cunningham was right—up to a certain point.

Coffman was too wise to loot a single box, when the robbery would inevitably be traced to him. But Coffman was thinking. Several times a day people forgot their keys—or, at least, the keys were out of their possession for a minute or so.

During his lunch hour that day, Coffman walked over to the east side of Main Street. He sought the place of business of a certain Mr. Isaacs. The latter was a locksmith, on the second floor of a dilapidated building. If the reputation of Mr. Isaacs was compared to a corkscrew, the cork-remover would show up like a plumb-line.

"Can you make keys from an impression?" inquired Coffman.

"That depends," returned Mr. Isaacs craftily.

"Upon what?"

"Upon the vax, mine boy, upon the vax you use."

"What kind of wax is the best?"

"Mine own special preparation. And ven you use it I tell no segrets." Mr. Isaacs winked knowingly.

"How much?"

"Fife dollars, in a special box." He showed the box to Coffman—a small, flat affair of tin, the lid working on a spring. It could easily be concealed in the palm of the hand, and the lid opened conveniently at a certain pressure.

"I'll take it," said Coffman, handing over the money. "And how much to make keys?"

"Vun dollar each, from the vax. Twenty-fife cents, if you bring the key. No segrets told on the vun-dollar kind."

As he walked back to the bank, Coffman surreptitiously practiced manipulating the box. An hour later he made two impressions of a key, when an old lady turned away to speak to a friend. It took him but a moment to press one side of the key into the plastic wax, then turn the key over and record its other side. As he locked the deposit box with his right hand, he dropped the small tin box into his breast pocket with his left. No one had seen him make the slightest suspicious movement. He made a mental note of the box number, repeating over and over again to himself, "Five nine four seven! Five nine four seven!"

Outwardly he was calm as he returned the key to the owner; inwardly his heart was thumping at an unaccustomed pace.

After work that afternoon he again called upon Mr. Isaacs. Arriving at his home some time later, he affixed a small tag to the new key he had with him. Upon this tag he wrote 5947. Searching for a place to hide this incriminating key, he hit upon the scheme of tying it to a string and lowering it down

a boarded-up flue in his room. Whistling to himself he entered the bathroom. That night he was to dine at the home of Marcelle Huntington.

Two days later Cunningham again visited the vault, and Coffman seized an opportunity to press the broker's key in the wax. He had a duplicate key to Cunningham's box when he reached his room that evening. Stepping on a chair, he threaded the string through the hole in the key, and allowed the latter to drop down into the flue. The upper end of the cord was attached to a nail. The process reminded him of his boyhood days when he had strung fish through their gills with a string and then dropped them back into the water.

A month passed. Seventeen keys now hung down the flue, each key bearing a tag on which was written the number of the box it would open. In the meantime Coffman had still been ardently pursuing the heiress. But he was no closer to winning her than before.

Then one evening when he dropped in at the club, he found a letter from a firm of eastern attorneys. They notified him that upon the proper proofs of his identity he would be forwarded his share of the large estate left by one of his mother's sisters.

The next day he met a reporter with whom he was on friendly terms. He allowed the newspaper man to read the letter from the attorneys, and casually mentioned that his share of the estate would be over one hundred thousand dollars. Coffman full well knew the value of publicity given to his inheritance. It was better that Marcelle should read of it, than for him to inform her personally of his good fortune.

He builded better than he knew, for the newspaper obtained his picture from a local photographer and ran it with a half-column article. The following week there was a noticeable in-

crease in the amount of mail that he received at the club, said increase being mostly due to invitations extended to him from mothers with marriageable daughters.

Fifteen hundred dollars was the size of the check he at last received from the east. Disappointed, he deposited it in an obscure bank in the northern outskirts of the business district. Judiciously spent, it might be enough to enable him to marry Miss Huntington. Then again, it might not, for Marcelle was an expensive young woman. With the double purpose of saving taxi fare and of impressing the girl, he invested in a second-hand roadster. For nine hundred dollars in cash he received a car that looked as though it must have cost twice the money.

The surplus melted rapidly away, like so much snow, under the sunshine of Marcelle Huntington's smile. Coffman began to worry. He easily saw that the money would not last long enough to accomplish his aim. Cannily, however, he had held onto his position in the bank.

For some weeks he had neglected making any more impressions of keys, having abandoned the plan for the contemplated robbery. For one thing, he would undoubtedly need an accomplice in order to keep his own reputation unspotted. And accomplices were dangerous; to be classed with edged tools and dynamite.

In order to obtain a proper garment for a masquerade ball, he paid a visit to a theatrical costumer. Running his eye over the list of available costumes, he rejected them. All of them were too hackneyed, an old story to him; he had used every costume from Harlequin's to that of a foreign naval officer.

"Tell you what you might do," he suggested to the costumer. "How good an imitation of an old, dignified man can you turn me into?"

"Pretty near the real thing," was the

reply. "Of course, you understand, this wig and diplomat's beard would look false under anything like close inspection in the daylight, but at night—I defy any one to tell this beard from a real one under the electric lights, unless some one tried to snatch it off."

"Fine!" said Coffman. "I'll go in evening dress as a diplomat; red band aslant across my shirt front, pointed mustache and all that. I'll get a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, too. But, say, how can I disguise my voice? That'll give me away."

"Try this." The costumer extended something wrapped in waxed paper.

Coffman unwrapped a small solid ball of soft rubber. Two holes ran through it at bisecting angles.

"What do I do with it? Eat it?"

"No. Keep it in your mouth during the masquerade, and it will change your voice so that your own mother wouldn't recognize it when you talk."

"All right. Thank you!"

After the costumer had shown him how to adjust the wig, beard and mustache, Coffman paid a deposit on them and drove home.

Two hours he remained at the masquerade the following evening, conversing gravely with several of his friends whom he was able to recognize despite their masks and costumes. None recognized him, however; not even Marcelle Huntington, who had attended the ball with another cavalier.

The startling thought of being his own accomplice in robbing the safe-deposit boxes suddenly occurred to him, and he retired to the veranda to work out the scheme in his mind. A little later he looked at his watch. It was exactly eleven o'clock. The safety-deposit department remained open until midnight every week day; this convenience being a special feature of the institution. He would begin the details of his campaign this very night.

His identity at the ball was unknown

even to his hostess, each invited guest having been mailed an engraved card with no name on it, which was taken up at the door by the butler when each masquerader arrived. The guests were to unmask at midnight. Going upstairs to the cloak room, he obtained his coat and hat. Then he drove home and gained his room unobserved by any one. Critically he examined his make-up in a mirror, after turning on all the lights. It was excellent, he reassured himself, and would pass inspection anywhere at night—with the exception of the waxed mustache ends, which were slightly exaggerated. With a pair of scissors he soon adjusted this. Then he removed the crimson ribbon from his bosom.

Taking two large envelopes and stuffing them with blank paper he slipped them into his pocket with a small black leatherette box, the original container of a one-dollar safety razor, then went out to his roadster. When he arrived at the bank it was exactly eleven thirty-five. The vaults would close in twenty-five minutes. He went in through the outer door and down the stairs to the waiting room. This room was separated from the vault office by a row of inch thick polished steel bars. Stepping up to the grilled wicket opening onto a desk behind the bars, he stated that he wished to lease a deposit box. To add verisimilitude to his request, he brought the two thick envelopes and the black leatherette box into view.

Two clerks were behind the desk, the others having gone off duty as the slack hours toward midnight drew near. One of them extended an application blank, with the request that it be filled in.

Coffman seated himself at a desk outside the bars, dipped a pen in an inkwell and started to write. Then he caught himself hastily; he had started to use the pen with his right hand. He glanced up; neither of the clerks was watching him. Shifting the pen to his

left hand, he filled in the blank. The writing was an awful scrawl, but it was effectually disguised. He signed the name of Mortimer Dawson, with an out-of-town address. With money representing the price of a year's rental, he slid the paper back through the grill. Both clerks scrutinized it. One of them finally pulled the lever that swung open the gate in the bars.

Coffman passed through the gate. It clicked shut behind him.

"This way, sir," spoke a clerk, leading the way through the huge circular, tunnel-like doorway into the immense electric-lighted inner vault itself.

Coffman was forced to restrain himself, to call upon his gift as an actor to prevent himself from laughing. Scores, hundreds of times each week day he himself led patrons into this vault.

The clerk used two keys to unlock a box, pulled it down from its steel compartment, and stood holding it.

Coffman lifted the covers of the box and gravely dropped into it the two trash-filled envelopes and the empty leatherette case.

The box was then slipped back into place by the clerk, who turned both keys and handed one of them to Coffman.

"Thank you! Good night!" said the new patron, secure in the knowledge that his voice was unrecognizable. The rubber ball in his mouth caused his tones to be throaty and guttural.

During the noon hour the next day he walked around to the costumer's.

"I'm sorry," he informed the dealer, "that the wig and beard were stolen from me last night. After the dance I wrapped them into a parcel, which I left in my automobile when we entered a café. Coming out again an hour later, I found that some one had taken the lap robe and the parcel from the machine."

"In that case," replied the costumer,

"your deposit is forfeited. I'm really sorry, too, that you lost the beard. It was a masterpiece that I cannot duplicate. And the deposit represented only the wholesale price."

"I'll put a want ad in the paper, offering a reward for the return of the articles taken with no questions asked," said Coffman. Which he proceeded to do, as a last touch to convince the costumer. This expenditure of forty cents was wise, he thought; although he could not help grinning when he looked at the automobile robe and beard reposing safely in the closet of his room.

Six weeks later the cord down the flue in his room had exactly forty-two keys strung on it. At least twice a week during this time he had visited the safe deposit vaults in the guise of Mortimer Dawson, invariably showing up between eleven o'clock and midnight. This was for the purpose of getting the vault clerks accustomed to his appearing late at night.

Then he learned that Marcelle Huntington and her mother were to spend a month in the mountains, at Twin Buttes Inn, some thirty miles from Los Angeles. His annual vacation of one week was near at hand, and he arranged his plans accordingly. He would pass this week at Twin Buttes. Miss Huntington had accepted him as a very dear friend, nothing more; but with one week with her in the mountains he thought he could make better progress in his suit than in the city, where most of her time was taken up with a multitude of social obligations.

In the bank was a balance of one hundred and ninety dollars, the remainder of his legacy. He drew it all out. For one hundred and ten dollars he purchased a second-hand motor cycle, twin-cylinder and with a free engine. An expert bicycle rider, with a knowledge of motors gained from experience with his roadster, he soon mastered the little two-wheeled machine. In fact,

he left the roadster in a garage for nearly a month prior to his vacation, and devoted his leisure time to riding the motor cycle.

Marcelle Huntington had been at Twin Buttes for a fortnight when Coffman arrived there late on a Saturday afternoon. He drove up in his roadster; the motor cycle arrived by express the following Monday morning. The latter he stored in a barn about sixty yards behind the Inn. There was method in this.

Four delightful days were spent in the company of Marcelle. She was nicer to him than she had ever been before, and unfeignedly glad to explore the mountain roads in his motor car. Cavaliers were scarce at Twin Buttes; it was too quiet. For the latter reason her mother had selected it, thinking that Marcelle needed a month of absolute rest.

But all the time, Coffman's brain was seething with the details of the coup he had planned for Thursday night. Locked in one of his suit cases were the forty-two duplicate keys to the vault boxes, the wig and beard, an old suit of clothes, discarded years before, and the automatic pistol he had stolen from the overcoat in the cloak room.

On Thursday afternoon, while chatting to Marcelle Huntington and her mother, he began to complain of a headache. He intended this alleged illness to be a part of his alibi, should one be necessary. After dinner that evening he did an admirable bit of acting, pretending to be so ill that Mrs. Huntington suggested that he retire early. This was what Coffman wanted. Apparently swayed by her solicitation, he went to his room at nine o'clock. Before leaving his friends, he stated that he was certain he would be able to sleep soundly.

Carefully locking the door of his room, and hanging his hat on the door-knob lest some one attempt to peer



through the keyhole, he proceeded to don the old suit of clothes. Next he gummed on the beard and mustache, then slicked back his hair and adjusted the wig. This done, and making certain that the keys and pistol were in his pockets, he turned out the light and noiselessly raised the window.

His room was on the ground floor, at the rear. After looking out through the darkness for several minutes to allow his eyes to become accustomed to the gloom and to be certain that no one was in the garden to witness his clandestine departure, he swung over the sill and dropped to the ground.

Silently he made his way to the barn. Opening the door with much care, lest it creak on its hinges and cause a stable hand to investigate, he entered. Nothing was discernible in the intense blackness within the building. To his nostrils came the sweet scent of the hay in the loft above him, mingled with odors from the cows and horses. He listened for a while, then hearing nothing but the low crunch-crunch of animals feeding and the occasional stamp of a horse, he pressed the button of his flash light.

His motor cycle stood leaning against the wall. He had placed it in the barn, where he could get it out at night without being seen. If he had left it in the garage with his roadster the night attendant would be a damning witness against his alibi. Besides, he thought with a chuckle, the garage man would not have allowed him to take the machine out at all, for Mortimer Dawson was unknown at Twin Buttes.

The clutch was disengaged on the motor cycle. Silently he wheeled it out into the paved back yard of the Inn, then closed the door of the barn. A quarter of a mile down the road he pushed the machine, then up to the brow of a little hill. At the top he mounted and coasted down the slope. Near the bottom he let in the clutch; the engine

started, and he chugged away in the direction of Los Angeles.

At eleven o'clock Coffman dismounted in an alley half a block from the bank. Around the corner, on Main Street, shone the bright front of a pawnbroker's establishment. Walking over to Main Street, he entered at the sign of three golden balls and purchased a dilapidated but stout suit case. With this in his hand he strolled up the street to the Pacific Electric depot, where he lounged until the station clock announced eleven-thirty. Then he made his way directly to the bank, arriving there less than two minutes later.

The night watchman of the bank was in the habit of slipping across the street to a chop house at eleven-thirty each night. To consume a meal that would stay his appetite until morning took about twenty minutes of his time. Thus he would usually return about ten minutes before the clerks on duty in the safe-deposit vaults quit their work for the night.

There was no risk in his leaving, for he would lock the inner doors behind him. The door from the street opened into a small lobby. At the left-hand side of this were the stairs that descended to the deposit vaults. No one could enter the main lobby of the bank during the watchman's brief absence, and the safe-deposit vault was protected from robbers by the wall of heavy steel bars that separated it from the waiting room in the basement. Granted that some one managed to gain admittance to the vault itself, what could he do? Nothing. The deposit boxes were safe—absolutely. And the space behind the desk, where at least one person always remained, was studded with alarm buttons and levers. A slight movement of hand or foot would suffice to bring police reserves on a hurry-up call.

Lester Coffman knew all this, and it was his intimate knowledge that en-

abled him to carry out his plans successfully. A glance through the window of the chop house as he passed showed him the watchman just climbing onto a high stool before the lunch counter. Crossing the street, he entered the outer doors of the bank, snapped the latch so it would lock behind him, and descended to the basement.

The clerks knew Mortimer Dawson as a jovial, dignified old gentleman who was in the habit of coming late at night and who occasionally presented them with exceptionally good cigars. His hurried scrawl of identification was a mere matter of form; the gate was opened for him even before he finished penning his signature. To-night he carried a suit case, which was unusual, but they thought nothing of it. He had an out-of-town address and was probably on his way home.

Placing the suit case on the floor about eight feet in front of the desk counter, he reached into his inside coat pocket and drew forth an envelope. From this he carefully removed a ball of cotton.

"I have here," he said to the clerks, "the famous black diamond of the Danube. You have doubtless heard of it and its bloody history in Vienna. I picked it up at a bargain—forty thousand dollars. Would you care to see it before I place it in my box?"

The prospect of gazing at a forty-thousand-dollar gem was such a lure that the clerk came from behind the counter. The other was already standing beside Mr. Dawson.

To him the latter passed the roll of cotton.

"Unwrap it," he said.

Heads close together, the clerks grinned feebly when the unrolled cotton exposed nothing more than a dried prune. Mr. Dawson was not grinning, however, when they looked at him. Instead, he was regarding them coldly

from behind a wicked-looking black automatic, held waist high.

"Raise your hands!" he ordered melodramatically. "That's fine! Now turn around and walk to the door of room six."

This private room for the use of patrons in going over the contents of their deposit boxes was, perhaps, six feet by eight in size. Inside of it were two chairs and an electric-light globe on the wall, and a small table. Nothing more except the stationery, pens and ink on the table.

"Both of you get inside!" requested Mr. Dawson, turning the request into a command with a menacing forward movement of the gun.

The desk clerk and the vault clerk stepped within the doorway.

"Hand over your pass-key!" was the order to the vault clerk.

"Sure, here it is," replied the latter, with a nervous laugh; "but what do you expect to do with it? If you think you can get into the deposit boxes, you're crazy!"

"That's it! I'm as crazy as a loon," admitted Mr. Dawson cheerfully. "Keep that in mind in case you should feel like raising an alarm. One yell from either of you, or any disturbance, and I'll start shooting through the door. Understand?"

They did. But they were comforted by the thought that this marauder would not get any loot.

Outside the closed door of the private room, the thief himself, who will again be known as Coffman, was losing no time. Bracing a chair beneath the doorknob of room number six, he ran to his suit case, grabbed it up and hurried into the vault, where he spread the traveling bag wide open on the floor. Swiftly he worked fitting keys to the boxes. As he knew the location of each box in the vault as well as a telephone operator knows each number on a call board, he was able to work fast.

It was simply a matter of reading the number attached to a key, running to the box and opening it. Long practice had made him perfect at rapidly inserting and turning keys.

The contents of each deposit box were dumped out and given a hasty sorting. Money, bonds, jewelry were dropped into the suit case. All jewel boxes were emptied of their valuables—the boxes themselves would take up too much room. The suit case was full when he had used all but seven of the duplicate keys. He looked at his watch. It was eleven-forty-six. He would have to hurry away before the watchman returned.

Throwing the keys in on top of the valuables, he locked the suit case, snatched it up and hastened from the vault. From behind the counter he worked the lever that opened the gateway in the steel barrier, then hurried out and slammed the gate back onto its automatic lock. Racing up the stairs, he opened the door to the street.

A man stood on the sidewalk, looking directly into the doorway as Coffman stepped out.

"Vault closed?" asked the stranger. "It isn't twelve yet."

"It's closed," Coffman replied casually, losing his momentary qualm of fear as he swung the door shut behind him and heard the latch snap into place. "Too bad you were late," he continued, "but they generally close a little before midnight."

"Thank you," said the other, and started walking away.

Coffman took the opposite direction, heading for the alley in which he had left his motor cycle. Over his shoulder, as he turned the corner, he saw the watchman come out of the chop house and step off the curb toward the bank.

This had the effect of making Coffman quicken his steps. Reaching the machine, he hastily strapped the suit case on the luggage rack over the rear

wheel, then started the engine. Riding the length of the alley, he turned into a street and started west. Half a block in this direction, and he headed the motor cycle north.

Broadway, in Los Angeles, is probably the most deserted main thoroughfare of any city of its size in the United States at midnight. The only bright spot Coffman saw was at First Street, across from the office of a morning newspaper. Half a block west from this lay the police station. Taking the most logical and direct way out of town, Coffman was heading for the Broadway tunnel. An officer stood on the bright corner. Coffman rode slowly and looked straight ahead. The patrolman paid no attention to him. Once across First Street, however, Coffman sped up a little, to mount the slope leading up past the Hall of Records and the Court House to the tunnel.

Halfway up the hill, he heard the clamor of an automobile gong behind him. He looked back. A large machine, filled with men, was turning out of First Street and heading south on Broadway. Coffman smiled to himself, as the big car roared away in the opposite direction. The alarm had already been turned in; the detectives were hurrying to the scene of the robbery.

As he passed through the tunnel, Coffman began to review the plans he had so thoroughly worked out in advance. The sickening realization dawned on him that he had neglected one small thing; namely, to disguise with mud the license number of his motor cycle. Almost in a panic he bumped across the car tracks on Temple Street and opened the throttle. At this time of night there would be no speed cops in Sonoratown. The warm night air was just enough to arouse his faculties to the full as he rode at a thirty-five-mile clip. Suppose the policeman had noted the license number of

the motor cycle? Some one else, too, might have noticed the suit case strapped on behind the seat; it was big enough to attract attention. To Coffman's fearful imagination it suddenly loomed up as large as a bale of hay. And the license number was woefully easy to remember. A simple sequence of three figures: six-seven-eight.

On the level boulevards of San Fernando Valley, he regained control of himself and began to figure out a way to destroy every bit of evidence that might be against him. When he had reached the isolation of a mountain road, he stopped to dispose of the automatic pistol by throwing it far into a gulley filled with poison oaks. Likewise the duplicate keys, which he opened the suit case to obtain.

Half a mile from Twin Buttes Inn he stopped again, this time at a spot where the stony mountain road lay directly above a riotous creek. Below this particular place the bed of the creek dropped suddenly to a great depth. In the driest of seasons this pool was a refuge for big trout. Never was there less than twenty feet of water in it.

Removing the suit case from the motor cycle, Coffman wheeled the machine to the edge of the road and let it topple over. A huge splash, and it sank into the unfathomable water. Later he would report to the owner of the Inn that the motor cycle had been stolen from the barn. With a feeling of security he picked up the suit case and walked toward the Inn.

He had walked half the distance when he turned off the road and struck through the brush, using his flash light to enable him to pick a path. In a group of rocks at the far end of the extensive orchard belonging to the Inn, he stopped. Secure from interruption, he opened the suit case, flashed the light into it and gloatingly made a partial mental inventory of the plunder. A little later he hid the case by burying it

among the rocks and earth. Then he cut through the orchard and climbed in the window of his room unseen.

Closing the window behind him and pulling down the shade, he switched on the light. Of his wig, beard and old clothes he made a bundle, wrapping them in a newspaper. After rumpling his hair to give the appearance of a person just awakened from a sound sleep, he donned a bath robe and walked down the hall to the office. There he chatted for a moment with the night clerk, saying that he had been feeling ill before retiring, but had awakened to find his headache gone. Then he left a call for seven o'clock and went to bed to snatch what sleep he could.

When he was dressing, after a hasty shave and bath later in the morning, he noticed a large fire in the back yard of the Inn. A huge pile of leaves, straw and old papers was being burned. With the newspaper package under his arm, he went out through the rear entrance. As he walked past the fire he dropped the old clothes and false hair into the heart of the flames.

Relieved, he returned to the Inn and entered the dining room, where he found Mrs. Huntington and Marcelle giving their breakfast order to the waiter. At Mrs. Huntington's invitation, he joined them.

"I trust that you are feeling better this morning?" she inquired, when he had taken a seat.

"Yes, thank you, I am. Slept like a top until about two this morning, when I awoke feeling fine. Went out and left a call with the night clerk before going back to sleep. Poor accommodations here; no telephones in the rooms."

"When are you expected back at the bank?" she asked. "With your fine inheritance I should think that you would go into business for yourself."

"Yes, I'm thinking of doing that. But I like the banking business and will stay

in it until I decide what to do. I am returning Sunday night."

"I'm sorry," murmured Marcelle. "That gives you only two more days. I've enjoyed my delightful drives with you."

"I'll run up for the week-ends until you return to town," he promised, suddenly exhilarated by the look he had caught in her eyes.

But the light in Marcelle's eyes was a false one, the kind that experienced flirts since the world began have been able to command at will to the undoing of their admirers. Marcelle had no love for Coffman, but his reputed one hundred thousand dollars was something that appealed to her callous heart. It seemed that Coffman was the best match in sight. Then, too, she was climbing up under the eaves of thirty, and was beginning to lose out to the *débutantes*.

However, it was all in the scheme of things, and Coffman was deliriously happy when he started to drive back to the city on Sunday night with Marcelle's kisses still warm on his lips, and the measure of her ring finger in his pocket.

The details of the vault robbery had been spread broadcast in the press of the land. Coffman felt secure; the authorities were looking for a much older man. The mystery of how he had been able to unlock the boxes was still unsolved. Eastern detectives were working on the theory that some employee of the firm that had manufactured the deposit boxes had been able to make numbered duplicate keys, and had gone west after a lapse of years, to accomplish the theft.

Coffman had reason to feel secure. He resumed his duties in the vault as though nothing had happened, and speculated with the rest of the clerks as to how deeply laid the plan had been. He agreed with them that the numerous visits of Mortimer Dawson to the

vault had been for the purpose of ascertaining the exact position of each box he intended to rifle, in order to work according to a fixed program. Thus he had evidently been able to work fast in the limited time at his disposal.

At noon on Monday Coffman went to an exclusive jewelry store and purchased for ten dollars a plain gold signet ring to grace his own little finger, which was the same ring-size as Marcelle's third finger. The engraving was done during the afternoon, and the ring was ready for him when he called for it at four-thirty. The jewelry salesman, perhaps thinking that Coffman wished to wear the ring immediately, brought it to him without a box. Coffman asked for one.

"Certainly, sir," the salesman answered.

"A pink one, please," said Coffman. "This is a present to one of my sisters," he added boldly.

Pink was Marcelle's favorite color.

The clerk brought a small pink-velvet box, lined with white satin. He placed the ring in it.

"Thank you," said Coffman, and went out of the store.

Before going to work on the following Saturday morning, Coffman packed his suit case for the week-end and took it downtown with him, leaving it in the machine when he parked the roadster for the day in a near-by auto station. After finishing work at the bank, all departments of which closed at noon on Saturday, he motored directly to Twin Buttes Inn.

The afternoon was spent with Marcelle. In the evening he dined with her and Mrs. Huntington. Later, when the tables had been cleared from the dining room, there would be a dance.

When both women retired to their room for a time after dinner, Coffman welcomed the opportunity. Obtaining his flash light from his suit case, he departed from the Inn by the rear en-

trance and hastened through the orchard to where he had hidden the loot.

From among the valuables he selected a diamond solitaire, with a conventional engagement-ring setting. The stone was a magnificent one, and the ring would be a perfect fit for Marcelle's finger. Rich, effulgent, the splendor of the diamond burned in the light of the electric torch as he turned the ring at various angles to catch the scintillation from each facet. Entirely worthy of Marcelle, he thought in satisfaction as he pocketed the gem and prepared to return to the Inn.

Back again in his room, he washed his hands and brushed all traces of soil from his shoes and apparel, then smiled as he fitted the ring into the pink velvet box.

It would be the last necessary touch, he fancied—this costly solitaire in a box from Cragen's. Cragen's! A name to conjure with. In the west it represented everything that a certain name stands for in the east.

Two hours later, when she returned with Coffman from the veranda, Marcelle announced the engagement, showing the ring to her mother with an air that seemed to say "I told you so!"

They breakfasted at ten, all three of them. Marcelle held up her left hand to show the ring to the best advantage.

"Do you know," she said, "I haven't taken it off since you placed it on my finger."

Nor did she remove it during the day, which she passed with Coffman in a long ride over the mountains.

Late that night he returned to Los Angeles. Marcelle and her mother were to leave Twin Buttes the next day.

On the following afternoon, when he left the bank, Coffman telephoned to his fiancée. To his surprise she announced that she had an engagement for the evening and would be unable to see him.

"To-morrow night, then?" he inquired.

"No, I think not." There was a hint of chill in her voice.

Troubled, he determined to drive to Twin Buttes that night and bring the stolen valuables into the city. His intention, after that, was to lock the suit case into a small trunk and place the latter in storage.

Leaving the city a little after seven-thirty, he arrived in the vicinity of the Inn before nine o'clock. A quarter of a mile from the hostelry he ran the machine off to one side of the road. Killing the engine, he locked the magneto and made his way through the brush to where he had hidden the plunder among the rocks. Fifteen minutes later he returned to the roadster and dropped the suit case onto the front seat.

Then he lit a cigarette. His mind was not clear as to the best course of action regarding the motor cycle, which he had neglected to inform the proprietor of the Inn had been stolen from the barn. He had slipped up also in forgetting to disguise the license number. It still troubled him. If suspicion were directed toward him, he was certain it would be through his carelessness about that one small part of his plan on the night of the robbery.

Nearly all criminals are caught, he knew, through some forgotten part of a carefully worked-out program. But the more he thought it over the easier he began to feel in his mind. The motor cycle, pshaw! He would immediately return to Los Angeles, and from there write to the inn, giving instructions for the machine supposed to be in the barn to be shipped to him by express. The proprietor would inform him that the motor cycle was not in the barn. Perhaps the hotel man would settle with him, perhaps not. In any event he was safe from detection.

As he motored back to Los Angeles

his mind was free, except for the fact that he could not account for Marcellé's sudden coldness toward him. But he comforted himself with the thought that she was taken up with previous social engagements.

At ten forty-five he left his roadster in the garage across the street from the place he called home. Suit case in hand, he walked over to the house, inserted his latchkey and opened the front door. As he mounted the stairs to the second floor he felt a premonition that something was wrong. But he shook off the feeling with an inward laugh.

His room was dark as he opened the door. While he reached along the wall, feeling for the light switch, he heard the door close behind him. For a moment he fancied it must have been caused by the draft from the open window. Then he turned on the light.

Two men were in the room—big, burly men whom he instinctively disliked and feared. One stood behind him. It was he who had closed the door. The other sat on the edge of the bed. He arose to his feet as the light went on.

"What are you doing in my room?" demanded Coffman heatedly. He

knew, though, all too well the purpose of the visit.

One of them pulled a paper from his pocket. A search warrant, he carefully explained.

Coffman tried to bluff, but knew it was useless.

The suit case was opened by the detectives.

"I'm caught; all right," admitted Coffman, white-lipped. "But how? The motor cycle!"

"Motor cycle? Rats!" exclaimed one of the officers. "We know nothing about a motor cycle. But you pulled a boner in presenting stolen jewelry to a woman—even if the ring seemed like any other expensive engagement ring. I guess you didn't take a good look at the inside of it before you gave it to her."

"What? No, I guess I didn't look inside," muttered Coffman dazedly. "I examined it with a flash light."

"Oh, you flash light!" The other chuckled. "There was some fine engraving inside the ring. It belonged to Miss Huntington's aunt, given that lady long ago by her fiancé. The girl took it off to show it to her relative, and that spilled the beans."

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## FEARFUL ELIZA

**A**MONG the many terrible punishments inflicted on criminals during the Middle Ages, one of the most dreaded and diabolical was the stretching gallows to which the Germans of the period, with characteristically grim humor, gave the name of "Fearful Eliza."

The modern criminal, who considers himself fearfully ill-treated when put to some form of manual labor, has cause for being fervently thankful that he did not live and ply his trade four or five centuries ago. The peculiar thing about these cruel old-time punishments is that they did not seem to stamp out crime as effectively as our modern scientific, humanitarian penological methods.

At the foot of the stretching gallows were strong iron rings, into which the victim's feet were placed. His hands were then fastened to a triangle, which was raised by means of ropes and pulleys until he was stretched beyond endurance. As if this did not suffice to impress on the medieval criminal's mind the enormity of his offense against the majesty of the law, it was the custom, after he was thus stretched, for the public executioner to whip or flay him at stated periods.

# The Man Who Awoke

by  
Mary Inlay Taylor

## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

WAKING in a strange room and finding his appearance greatly changed and his memory imperfect, John Richieson, an automobile salesman, doubts his identity. His uncertainty is increased when he is told by Giles, a valet, and by Doctor Wallace, a physician, that he is Horace Barney, a millionaire, who has lost his memory. The doctor informs Richieson that he is in Barney's house in a Boston suburb; that Hester Townsend, a neighbor, is his cousin; and Maurice Claypoole, a lifelong friend, is trustee of his estate. Richieson falls in love with Hester. In a struggle, Richieson and Giles tumble into a private reservoir on the estate, but both manage to climb out. Richieson is having lunch in a Boston restaurant, when a brilliantly gowned woman faints upon catching sight of a ring he is wearing. Determined to prove his identity, Richieson goes to his aunt's home in Yonkers. But she fails to recognize him, declaring that her nephew is selling automobiles in South America. On his return to Boston, Richieson notices that he is being followed by a foreign-looking man. When he enters his room in Barney's house that evening, Richieson finds there the woman who had fainted in the restaurant.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ANOTHER DISAPPEARANCE.

**A**FTER a moment of speechless amazement Richieson's sense of humor asserted itself.

"This honor's a little unexpected, madam; and, pardon me, may I inquire which way you came?"

She was fairly caught. He was standing between the two doors of his room; she could reach neither of them without passing close to him. She hesitated. There was no rouge on her face tonight, and it was very pale; but she didn't lose her wits. She was equal to the occasion, a match for him, he thought.

"You're Mr. Barney, aren't you?" she asked quietly. "I know you are, I saw you yesterday! Then—I'm sure you'll say nothing. You'll pardon my intrusion, and let me go—by the front stairs, please!"

Richieson laughed grimly. "Am I Mr. Barney? If you can tell me that—I'll—I'll see that you get something handsome, something better than the contents of that little black box there, for instance."

She cast a startled glance over her shoulder. A small black box on the table by the bed was open, its contents, principally papers, rather suggestively spilled out. She blushed crimson, and the blush made her look younger, less dangerous.

"Do you mean you won't let me go?" she said in a low voice.

He nodded, still smiling. "Not until you explain why you came."

"And if I refuse?" Her hands were moving under her purple mantle.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Claypoole's coming, and Doctor Wallace. Perhaps you know them? You may prefer general explanations, eh?"

But she had whipped a small pistol from under her cloak, and she leveled it at him.

"Hold up your hands," she commanded sharply.

Richieson obeyed, still smiling.

"If you fire you'll bring the whole hive about your ears," he said calmly; "Claypoole and Doctor Wallace and Giles—the charming and watchful Giles. I'd strongly advise that you didn't."

She hesitated, and he saw her swift



glance toward the windows. There were three in the room, one opening on a little iron balcony that overlooked the garden—a mere perch for the neighboring pigeons; the others were too high and too difficult. Then she threw another glance, less composed, toward the two doors.

“That one’s locked,” she said, indicating the one nearest the bed; “you needn’t try to guard that. It won’t open; I tried it. I’m going by the one you used just now.”

“You’ll meet Claypoole and Wallace and the butler and—probably the cook.”

She bit her lip, still covering him with her pistol.

“I shan’t tell them why I came, Mr. Barney!”

“Perhaps they won’t ask,” he suggested; “they might be a little difficult, you know. Besides, there’s the telephone. Suppose, instead of threatening me, you let me offer a chair. We might talk things over.”

She lowered her weapon a little, her dark eyes fixed on his face, searching it eagerly.

“Talk to you? Oh, how willingly, if you’ll tell me about him! About that ring of his. What have they done with him?”

“You mean Horace Barney?”

“Horace Barney? What do I care for you? You’re Horace Barney, aren’t you?”

He shook his head. “Blessed if I know!”

She stamped her foot furiously. “You’re playing with me! Of course you know! You had his ring. Have”—she came nearer; she forgot her pistol; she was panting for breath—“have they killed him?”

It was Richieson’s chance. With a swift, swinging movement, he got her wrist and wrenched the weapon away from her. Then he led her to a chair.

“Now—sit down and tell me about it,” he commanded sharply.

She obeyed. She was shaking all over and her lips were white, but there was still fight left in her.

“Dead game!” he thought grimly, pocketing her revolver.

“Now, madam, why did you come here? You’re no common thief. You’ve been searching my room and you’ve asked about a ring that I’ve got, at this minute, safe in my pocket. No, you can’t have it until you prove ownership. You seem to have some inside knowledge. Perhaps you can tell me who I am. On my word, I’m not Horace Barney.”

“I don’t know anything about you,” she replied stubbornly. “You look like Horace Barney and you’re living in his house. That’s enough for me. If you—if you’ve got any humanity you’ll tell me about that ring! It’s not yours, and you know it!”

“Is it yours?” asked Richieson gravely.

“No—yes! I’ve a good right to it. Give it to me.”

He shook his head. “I think not. Not until I find out more about it, anyway. You didn’t come here for that!”

She was a brave woman, a daring woman, but her nerves were under a strain; she could not endure much more.

“That ring belongs to a man who— who’s disappeared,” she said, “a man who’s dear to me. If you’ve any feeling you’ll tell me how you came by it.”

“A man who has disappeared?” he repeated. “And not Horace Barney, and not Richieson? Then three men have disappeared.”

“Oh!” she cried. “I believe you’ve killed him!”

“I’ve killed nobody,” replied Richieson slowly; “I’m not fond of killing, as a rule. And I’ll tell you how I came by this ring. I awoke one morning and found it on my finger.”

She flashed her scorn at him. “Do you expect me to believe that?”

"It's the truth. It happened here in this room."

She gazed at him, her face white and drawn—either with suffering or with fear, he couldn't tell which.

"If you had any heart you'd tell me," she said again. "I—it's terrible; this suspense, I mean! You must know; you have the ring!"

"I've told you the truth about the ring," he persisted, watching her, remembering how she had fainted. "Did you come here to find some one you've lost? It's a queer place—as far as I know; but it seems safe. Only I think not safe for—housebreaking."

She rose unsteadily to her feet. "I'm going! If you're a gentleman you won't try to keep me here!"

"I tell you what I'll do," Richieson replied with exasperation, "I'll help you get out and be in your debt, besides, if you'll tell me what it's all about. What's happened? Who's lost? And how did they get me mixed up in it all? That's what I want to know."

She made an impatient gesture. "You're intolerable!" she exclaimed. "You know you have Maritski's ring, and yet you—you mock me! I——" quite suddenly she burst into stormy tears.

Richieson, who hated tears, turned pink. Then he remembered the scene in the café. She was that sort of woman, of course! It was her way of working on him. She had tried threats! she had even tried a revolver! and, failing in these, she resorted to tears. He watched her critically, unmoved. But she was shaken like a reed in the wind. He saw, too, how slight she was—almost too thin for beauty, yet not quite. She had a wonderful grace, and the delicate hollows in her cheeks only made her eyes seem larger and darker and more appealing. He noticed that her hands, ungloved and beautiful, were covered with rings. The loss of one was not a great matter, he reflected

grimly. Then something about her touched him in spite of himself. These tears were real; she was caught and she was mortified. Perhaps, he reflected, too, she was really frightened. He didn't think her a professional thief; he fancied some mystery as perplexing as his own, and, in that case, she was to be pitied. At any rate, her tears were intolerable. He walked over to her and touched her shoulder lightly. She started, recoiled with horror, and then looked up pitifully.

"Come," he said briefly. "I'll get you out—only don't do it again!"

She struggled, choking back her sobs. She had been leaning forward, her face in her hands, but she straightened herself now and looked at him with tear-dimmed eyes.

"I—Will you give me the ring?" she begged, still shaking.

He shook his head. "Come! You may be able to get out without meeting the others; we'll try. This way."

She followed him like a child. All her spirit seemed to have vanished; her face looked white and small and woe-begone. She had failed, evidently she had failed altogether, in her errand.

By this time they were at the door, and he pushed it open. As he did so they both heard a step coming up the stairs. It was a light step, soft as a cat's; but they heard it. He turned to her with a grim smile.

"It's only Giles, I think."

But she caught at his arm. "Hide me!" she whispered. "Quick!"

She was close to him and their eyes met. Hers were dark with terror. Some one was coming, no doubt of that; and there was not a moment to lose. He turned quickly and pointed to the French window.

"The balcony," he whispered.

Without a word she stepped out; he saw her crouch against the wall. He had barely time to close the window and draw the heavy curtains across it.

But it was not Giles, after all; it was Claypoole who appeared at the threshold. It gave Richieson a shock; the man was so large and he had come up so lightly!

"Pussy-foot!" he thought and smiled inwardly. He was sure Claypoole had seen him pull that curtain across the window.

But Claypoole gave no sign of it.

"My dear boy, you were so long coming down that I came up after you. Wallace is here, and we thought you might want some supper."

"Not a bit, dined on the car," Richieson replied coolly. "I'm rather tired. I think I'll smoke here and then turn in. I've decided to wait until morning before I"—he smiled broadly—"report my experiences."

As he spoke he turned to a box of cigarettes on the mantel and began to hunt for the matches.

Claypoole looked thoughtful. "I think Wallace wants to talk to you. Shall I bring him up here?"

Richieson, engaged in lighting a cigarette, was wondering how he could get the woman out. If he left the room and went downstairs Giles would probably arrive in his absence and find her. Giles, he felt sure, was the spy.

"I'm not in need of a doctor," he said after a moment. "Got an idea of a lunacy commission?"

"I can't understand your new attitude, Horace," Claypoole said, with a note of feeling in his voice; "you seem so suddenly hostile. Meanwhile, Wallace and I stand ready to do anything for you. It's our duty! I see a change in you since yesterday. I hope, when you went to Yonkers, you realized your curious mistake. I hope, Wallace hopes it will bring you back to us—that you'll be convinced. Suppose you let Wallace come up. The next room here, is your library. It was your father's study. We can smoke and talk in here."

As he spoke he went to the door that

had refused to yield to the female intruder. Richieson, still standing with his back to the mantel, watched him. Claypoole turned the handle and the door opened easily. The room beyond was lighted. Richieson glimpsed a luxurious and cozy interior. But Claypoole stopped short.

"Who's been here?" he asked harshly.

Richieson, mindful of his curtained window, moved to the open door in a leisurely fashion, still smoking his cigarette. The room—which he had not seen before—was lined with bookshelves, and had two large windows and another door, a small one, nearly opposite. Like the rest of the house, it was handsomely furnished; and a big reading-lamp hung low over the center table. But there were signs of confusion that were a little surprising. One of the heavy window draperies had been wrenched from its rings and lay in a heap on the floor; the chairs were overturned, and the papers on the table had been tossed in every direction. A light wind was rising, suggesting a coming thunderstorm; it added to the litter of papers, blowing them about on the floor. Claypoole looked about him with a disturbed face, then he glanced questioningly at Richieson.

"My dear boy, why in the world do——?"

Richieson shook his head with a dry laugh.

"Not guilty," he said.

He was really thinking of the woman. She had said it was locked, that door! Of course she had lied. What a fool he had been! He glanced about curiously.

"What was there in here," he asked quietly, "anything valuable?"

Claypoole, who was still looking troubled, answered at once.

"Not a thing. Some one must have been in here while we were coming out from the city. I'll call Giles. This won't do."

"Suppose you don't call Giles," returned Richieson coolly.

Claypoole looked up, rather surprised; and then he smiled broadly. "You've got it in for Giles, eh? You mustn't blame him; he's a little zealous. He was with me when you met with your accident, poor old fellow, and he can't get over it; he can't think you're well."

"So he smashes up my den, I suppose." Richieson glanced back at his own room. He heard the patter of the rain on the leaves outside. "The lady will get a ducking," he thought grimly. But aloud, he said, "See here, Mr. Claypoole! I believe I'm boss in these rooms. If I am I'll run them myself. I may as well tell you that that door was locked when I came in."

"I think you're mistaken," Claypoole replied gently, "the key's on your side."

It was. Richieson saw that now, and suppressed an impulse to laugh at himself.

"Where does the other door lead?" he asked, indicating the door opposite.

"Have you forgotten?" Claypoole shook his head regretfully.

Then he opened the door and revealed a staircase.

"It's a short cut to the dining room. Your father always used it. I remember you sliding down the banisters when you were a youngster. We're looking forward to the day when you'll remember all this, Horace."

Richieson, watching the man, was impressed with his composure. It was evident that the littered room disturbed him, yet he gave little sign of it. He was struck, too, for the second time, with the quite apparent fact that Claypoole was a handsome man. He had, besides, that ease of bearing and simplicity of manner that men attain who have traveled widely and mingled in foreign society. He was, perhaps, a little un-American. But his face and head were both so fine, and his expres-

sion so candid, that they disarmed his adversaries. You cannot strike a smiling man in the face, especially when he holds out the hand of fellowship.

Richieson, without replying, walked slowly to the open window and tossed his cigarette into the night. It was intensely dark outside until a flash of lightning illumined the scene. In it he saw the great trees outlined against the sky and heard the rush of the rising wind. He felt a sudden twinge of pity. Suppose, like some other women, she was afraid of lightning. He turned back and met Claypoole's questioning glance.

"You're quite right about my visit to Yonkers," he said calmly, "it's had an illuminating effect. If you can postpone your investigation of this litter here, I'll go downstairs with you. On second thought, I'll have a glass of wine with you and Doctor Wallace before I turn in."

"Good!" Claypoole looked relieved. "And a game of chess, eh? You always loved chess, Horace."

They eyed each other a moment, and Richieson laughed.

"Of course," he said carelessly. He had never played chess in his life that he could remember, but perhaps, after all, he was an expert!

"Suppose we take the short cut?"

"It seemed to him that Claypoole hesitated for an instant, then he shrugged his big shoulders.

"Those stairs are for you, Horace; they're too narrow for me. I'll go back the way I came."

As he spoke he turned back into the bedroom. Richieson saw that he had made a mistake to go into the other room at all; it put Claypoole ahead of him now. But, fortunately, the woman had not tried to come in from the balcony. The curtains hung undisturbed. She was braving even the lightning, he reflected with an inward smile.

"The storm's right over us, Horace," Claypoole remarked; "perhaps I'd better close this window securely."

Richieson swung around. "It's closed!" he exclaimed sharply. "Don't you see?"

But Claypoole, with that peculiar lightness of movement that characterizes some stout people, suddenly swept the curtains aside and unlocked the long French window. Richieson's first impulse had been to stop him, to stop him at any cost; but why? What was the woman to him? Besides, she must have lied about the other door. He stopped, instead, and stood waiting, a queer smile on his face. He suspected that Claypoole or Giles had discovered that she was in the house, for Claypoole, who had proclaimed his intention of securing the window against the wind, opened it and looked out eagerly, expectantly.

There was almost a perceptible shock of surprise as he drew back with a blank face—a surprise that was fully shared by Richieson.

The balcony was empty.

## CHAPTER X.

### A PROPOSAL.

COMING down rather late for breakfast, Hester found her mother busily discussing the dinner menu for the following day with the cook. Mrs. Townsend, unlike her daughter, was a large, placid woman who did not allow things to trouble her deeply, outside of her own ménage; but she was very particular about her eating. It was a theory of hers that there was terrible waste in the kitchen, and that she only saved the family finances by holding tight onto the spigot—and letting the money run out of the bunghole. She had decided upon fish for to-morrow's dinner, and found that the least expensive kinds were out of season.

"I don't like black bass," she said decidedly, "it's too bony."

"There's nothing else but salmon, ma'am," replied the cook grimly, "and that's forty-two cents a pound for the tail."

Hester, who had been called to the telephone, intervened.

"Mamma, Cousin Horace wants us to go to the opera with him to-morrow night and then have a late supper over there."

Mrs. Townsend looked relieved. "You can have the bass downstairs, Jane, and brown bread, then. We'll dine lightly on account of the supper."

"Yes, ma'am," said Jane, and retired hastily.

Hester, who had taken her seat at the table, laughed.

"Mamma, she won't eat black bass. They'll have canned salmon and cucumbers and ice cream. It will probably kill them."

"They'll have nothing of the kind," retorted her mother sharply. "I think I know how to manage my own servants. How is Horace coming along? Still queer?"

Hester, who had dismissed the maid, was pouring out her own coffee. She filled in the cream and set the cup down before she answered.

"I don't think he's queer at all," she observed. "He seems to me quite natural; only——"

"Yes, only—I should think so! He imagines first that he's somebody else, then he insists that he's sane. Then he lets a thief into the house!"

Hester suspended her cup on the way to her lips. "Just what do you mean, mamma?"

"Maurice told me." Mrs. Townsend sat down in her usual seat at the head of the table, though she had finished her breakfast. "It seems that day Horace came back from New York with you he acted strangely. He went upstairs and stayed so long that Maurice was alarmed. No wonder, too, after the way he ducked poor Giles!"

Well, Maurice went up and found that a thief had been in the house, and he's positive that Horace helped him escape."

"But why should Horace let a thief escape?" Hester argued, losing her appetite. "I can't see any sense in that. It's nonsense! Maurice Claypoole is dreadfully down on poor Horace."

Her mother looked at her severely.

"I don't see how you can say that! Why, Hester, that man's devotion to Horace has been simply beautiful! Do you think it can have been a pleasant thing for a fine man like that to devote himself to that poor, befogged boy?"

"I think he's made ten thousand a year out of it, mamma."

There was something in Hester's tone that was new; it was almost defiant. Her mother's quick ear caught it. She turned a scrutinizing look on her daughter.

"I hope you're not getting foolish about Horace because he's so—so different! I wish he was sane; I wish you could have married him and united the Barney millions. But I'll never believe he's right in his mind, and I'm sorry to see that he seems suddenly in love with you. It's a kind of infatuation, I suppose. Does he say anything?"

Hester crimsoned. "Suppose we don't discuss Horace; mamma. I can't help feeling for him—and you always take Claypoole's view, and the doctor's. Poor Horace!"

"If he'd died out there in Japan instead of living to be an idiot——"

"He isn't an idiot!" protested Hester hotly.

"He might as well be! And you would have had all that money! Dear! It's strange how things happen."

"I don't want the money. I've got all I need," her daughter replied, still flushed and unhappy. "Besides, it's bad enough as it is—poor Horace! You all jump at everything he says and does.

He's really more himself than he has been for months."

"Is he?" Her mother spoke dryly. "That's the reason, then, that he insisted he was called Richardson—or Robinson, is it?"

Hester, who had scarcely tasted her breakfast, rose and walked over to the window.

"Suppose he was Richieson," she said calmly; "would you like it better?"

Mrs. Townsend gave it up. "I never saw such a girl!" she exclaimed impatiently. "I should think you were falling in love with a lunatic!"

Hester laughed a little wavering laugh. "I'm not in love with any one," she declared.

Mrs. Townsend, who had views of her own for Hester, smiled grimly. She was not a matchmaker, in the strictest sense of the word, but she wanted to get Hester out of Horace Barney's way. Horace was not mentally sound; he had never been sound since his accident; but Hester had always shown sympathy and interest. Her mother had hitherto regarded Hester's attitude as merely cousinly, but lately—in the last few days, in fact—Mrs. Townsend had taken alarm. Of course Hester could not—and would not—marry a mental weakling. Not even if Horace "came back" would Mrs. Townsend feel safe. She wanted to get the girl away from any tender regrets. She had a sore spot, too, back of it all. If only poor Horace—as long as he was to be incapacitated—had died, Hester would have been the greatest heiress in Boston. Of course, she didn't really want this, but—well, it was too bad! Mrs. Townsend sighed.

"It's a pity," she said, a great pity, "that poor Horace doesn't get better—that's all!"

Hester hesitated, thinking. She had begun to lean toward her cousins' ideas about his identity. She felt vaguely that there was a difference between the

cousin she had known, and this man, but she could not be certain about it. Besides, the very force of his personality, the rush of his feeling for her, were affecting her strangely. Her nerves were taut. She began to be afraid that she was really in love with him—mad as that would be if he turned out to be crazy. And he must be crazy, or else something strange and inexplicable had happened! But how could anything happen? Men could not change themselves, could not project their souls into familiar shapes! It was madness, yet he did not seem mad at all.

"I think he's better," she said after a moment, answering her mother in a dreamy way. "In fact, I think he's so much better that I'm willing to believe he isn't Horace at all—if he wants me to!"

Mrs. Townsend looked shocked. "My dear Hester, what can you mean?"

"Just what I say. I have a feeling that it isn't Horace, that it's somebody else who is talking to me. Do you remember that curious superstition the Japanese told us about? How their priests can project their souls into other people and learn all their secrets? I feel as if some one's soul had been projected into poor Horace's body. I suppose it's a crazy notion, but I can't help it. He—well, he isn't Horace at all."

Mrs. Townsend rose impatiently. She was a busy woman and she always had a dozen errands in the morning. But she looked keenly at her daughter.

"I didn't know you cared so much about Horace," she said sharply.

Again Hester blushed. This time it was almost a painful blush.

"I—I was very fond of him once, mamma," she confessed with an effort. She had been nerving herself to speak out, but now suddenly she couldn't. Her secret must be her secret still, unless he remembered. Would he remember?

Mrs. Townsend paused on her way to the door. "Do you mean—are you trying to confess at this late day—that you used to be in love with him, Hester?"

"Yes, I was. I thought I was, anyway."

"You were a mere baby! He's been this way eight years. For Heaven's sake, don't be silly about a man who isn't quite right in his head!" Mrs. Townsend exclaimed.

"I'm not a bit silly. I simply feel that he isn't Horace at all."

"Perhaps," her mother remarked ironically, "you prefer this new person to the old Horace?"

Hester laughed weakly. "I'm not sure; that's the trouble!"

"Hester!" Her mother cast a wild look out of the window. "There's Maurice Claypoole now. I'm glad of it. I've got to go, but I'll tell him to talk sense to you."

Hester started. It seemed as if she almost intended to run after her mother, that a confession of some kind was on the end of her tongue; but she checked herself. Mrs. Townsend had, in fact, opened a window door on the terrace and beckoned to Claypoole.

"Maurice," she said, "I'm going out. Please talk sense to this child. She thinks Horace is better."

Hester drew a quick breath. She did not want to talk of Horace now, but she forced a smile a moment later when Claypoole came up, large and cheerful.

"I've brought you some of my new roses," he said. "They're just in bloom. The ones we planted, Hester."

The girl took them almost reluctantly, turning them around in the light. "They're a beautiful color," she said without enthusiasm, "and fragrant, too."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Townsend declared that she could not stay a moment—she was late now for her engagements.

"You tell Hester what you think

about Horace," she said. "I can't make her see it. He talks in a rational way, I know, but I think he's worse than ever."

"Don't ask me to talk about Horace," Claypoole replied easily. "Hester can see for herself. He's better and—he's worse!"

"That's what I say! You better go into the library. That's in order, anyway, and this room looks all topsyturvy. Hester was late for breakfast."

"I'm a delinquent to-day," said Hester, smiling, as her mother departed. "Shall we go into the library?"

He followed her in silence, a silence that made her strangely uneasy. She had always thought of Claypoole as a man of large and charitable purposes, devoted to his old friend's son, and—well, nearing middle age. But lately she knew that Claypoole had been gradually enveloping her in a new atmosphere, an atmosphere of roses and little attentions, a subtle atmosphere that reached her always, that made her feel as if she could not quite evade it or escape him. She felt it strongly to-day, and she struggled against it. In the library she threw open the big window that looked toward the Barney house; and perched on the broad sill, framed by the sunlight and the tendrils of the wistaria vine which clung to that side of the house, she made a very charming picture.

"Have you caught your burglar?" she asked carelessly.

"You mean Horace's burglar?" He smiled indulgently. "No—only I'd like to know how he jumped from the balcony."

"Did he?" Hester questioned it sagely. "Have you noticed the fir tree—the one that Mr. Barney loved so much? It touches the balcony."

He considered this a moment, with an odd expression; but dismissed it easily.

"He must have been something of an acrobat then," he said. "Anyway, he

didn't take Horace's things, only a few of mine. A small matter, as it turns out—a smaller matter than some other things."

She turned around a little, looking back into the room, and saw the expression in his eyes. It made her heart beat quicker. Strangely enough, too, she felt a little afraid.

"Mr. Claypoole, I'm going to ask you a question. Perhaps you'll think I'm queer to ask it. But you know the wing of the house, the old wing that you don't use? It's locked up, isn't it?"

He smiled. "Why, yes. It's got to be repaired. I've been waiting in hopes Horace would get well and decide about it himself. It's been shut up ever since Mr. Barney died."

"Well, there's a light in it—yes, every night, up there"—she pointed—"the window under the roof."

He stooped slightly forward in his chair to follow the direction of her finger. "Oh, I see! That's not part of it, Hester. That little room opens into Giles' bedroom. Like as not he's up late. He's a queer case, anyway."

"I don't see how you can trust him so much. He's—well, he's so dark and soft and sly," said Hester.

"And faithful. Don't leave that out, Hester! He's so faithful that he's forgiven Horace for ducking him." At the thought Claypoole laughed.

"I don't think I should," she replied quietly, "and I don't really believe he has."

"Don't you like him, Hester?"

She looked around again, surprised. "I think—— He makes me creep, Mr. Claypoole," she answered with a rueful little laugh; "but I know you think he's a treasure."

"I wouldn't keep him a minute if I thought you didn't want me to," he replied, leaning toward her again, his eyes on her face. "Hester, do you know why I came to-day?"



She hesitated, raising her eyes reluctantly to his face.

"Hester, will you marry me?" he asked in a low voice, after a long time, it seemed to her.

She shook her head. "I'm so sorry, Mr. Claypoole. I've—I've tried to make you understand."

"That you didn't love me?"

She blushed. "Just that I—I can't marry you." She was a little less embarrassed now, more like herself.

He was silent for a while, and she was aware of him, large and handsome and unmoved, watching her. She knew that he had not given up, that he would never give up. She had suddenly a hunted feeling. She wanted to escape and she dared not; his eyes, his handsome, brooding eyes, seemed to hold her against her will.

"I—I'm sorry," she murmured, and then was angry with herself for saying it. It gave him his chance.

"I don't want you sorry for a moment, Hester—not on my account, at least," he rejoined softly. "I suppose I'm too old, eh? Too much of an old foggy for a young girl like you? But I must love you, Hester; and I can't give up. That's it, you see; I can't give up. I'm going to keep on trying."

"Oh, let's try to think it's just the same—as it was before you spoke!" she exclaimed, struggling to stifle the fear of him—a fear that seemed to be growing—that he would make her do just as he pleased. "I—I don't want to marry any one!" she declared willfully.

He smiled. He had risen and was standing over her. She felt the power of his eyes again.

"Hester," he said softly, "I've no right to ask, but I—I can't help feeling a fear, an uneasiness. It isn't Horace, is it?"

She started to her feet, too, flushing crimson. Then something in his look, its unconsciousness, perhaps, reassured her. She felt suddenly drawn to him.

"No," she said unsteadily, "if you mean—am I in love with him. No, it can't be Horace."

As she spoke she saw a change in his face. He was looking past her, out of the window, and his eyes seemed to concentrate and darken. She turned, too, and saw Richieson coming toward them. He had seen Hester at the window and was ascending the terrace, bareheaded and smiling. Something in his look sent a thrill of hope through her heart. He was a sane man—of that she was sure. A sane man, but not Horace! Ah, that was the question! A moment before she had risked her declaration on her belief that this man was not Horace, but now—seeing again the elusive likeness—she was shaken. And Claypoole, watching her keenly, knew that she was shaken.

## CHAPTER XI.

### UNDER THE OAK TREE.

THERE was something of elation in Richieson's glance as he entered the room and looked at Claypoole. A certain pallor and weariness that had been hanging about him had vanished. He was the picture of health.

"Hello, Friend Claypoole," he said, with delightful impertinence in his tone. "I thought you'd gone into Boston to set another detective after our burglar."

Claypoole, secretly annoyed both at the interruption and at the younger man's manner, controlled an impulse of resentment.

"Oh, that's in the hands of the police," he replied carelessly. "But it's true that I'm on my way into the city. I've got to speak at the Barney Orphanage. It's your place to go along, Horace; suppose you come. I've been letting you off because of your illness."

Richieson smiled. "Can't possibly do it, old man. You mustn't ask too much of a dotty patient. I've been giving him no end of anxiety, Hester; he thinks I'm crazy as a June-bug. Oh, yes, it's

a fact; don't deny it! He thinks I let in the burglar the other night."

Claypoole, who had drawn his chair nearer to Hester's window seat, smiled enigmatically. He had recovered his admirable self-control and he only moved his hands slowly along the arms of his chair, caressing them as some men caress a tame cat. It was a sleek, smoothing movement, as smooth as his smile.

"You're mistaken, Horace," he said good-naturedly. "I don't think you let him in—I think you helped him out."

Hester looked up, startled. She realized that the two men were measuring swords, but Richieson's face was full of amusement. Leaning his elbow on the mantel, he looked down on the two from a position of relative vantage.

"You've hit on it in one way," he retorted with a deepening of his tantalizing young smile; "I did let your burglar out on the balcony, Claypoole, but—when you opened the window—the balcony was empty. It seems a bit queer, but, on my word, she was there when I closed that window."

"She!" Hester exclaimed.

He nodded, still smiling. "Yes, 'she.' It was a woman, Hester."

They both stared at him, Hester a little incredulous and startled again with strange doubts of his sanity; Claypoole with ill-concealed annoyances. For the first time he reddened.

"Why didn't you tell us this before, Horace?" he asked rather sharply, in the tone of a guardian to an exasperating charge.

Richieson laughed. He had turned and was idly moving some small objects of bric-a-brac about on the mantel. "I wanted you to find out. At first, I confess that her disappearance rather bowled me over. I thought she'd jumped from the balcony, but she didn't."

"No, I know! It was the fir tree," Hester said excitedly. "I thought of

that this morning; but, of course, I supposed the intruder was a man."

He nodded. "Yes, the fir tree. She left a bit of her cloak in the branches. Your precious detectives never saw it. I salvaged it this morning."

"I'd like to have it," said Claypoole; "it might be a clew. Perhaps, though, you can tell us the lady's name," he added dryly.

Richieson shook his head, and then:

"Not yet! By the way, Hester, may I smoke? Have one?" He offered his cigarette case to Claypoole.

The elder man refused impatiently, and Richieson lit his cigarette deliberately, enjoying himself. He wanted to annoy Claypoole, to shake his intolerable calm, and at last he was doing it.

"At least, you can tell us about her," said Hester watching him, noticing little tricks of speech and gesture that were like, and yet unlike, her cousin. What a perplexing thing it was! How it tormented and teased her! And what was this about a woman? What kind of mystery was he hinting at now? Something—for he was teasing Claypoole. "Was she pretty? Did she wear boy's clothes? Did she carry a jimmy?"

"She's rather prettier at night than in the daylight. She doesn't wear boy's clothes, and she has a wonderful voice. It's got tone to it. I knew it at once. You see, I'd seen her before."

Claypoole rose and pushed back his chair. "Oh, if this is one of the ladies of your foreign travels," he said with a suggestion of a sneer in his voice and manner, "we won't press the question, Horace."

Something hardened in Richieson's eyes. "We'll discuss the subject—when I'm ready," he replied coolly; "just as we'll discuss several other things, Mr. Claypoole. As a matter of fact," he added, turning to Hester with his usual manner, "I saw the woman once before—in a café in Boston—and

I don't know who she is. But there was one thing she wanted of mine—which she didn't get—this sard ring on my finger now." As he spoke he held it out and the light caught it and glowed red on it.

For a moment they were both aware of a change in Claypoole. It was almost indefinable, but it was there. He eyed the ring coldly.

"I don't remember that, Horace. Where did you get it?" he asked slowly.

Richieson turned it around on his finger and regarded it fondly.

"Rather a good ring, isn't it? You see, I found it on my finger. I think it may belong to the fellow who upset the furniture in the library, Claypoole. Perhaps he was looking for it, too."

"I thought that was your burglar," Hester interposed. She had a strange feeling of alarm. It seemed to her that the two men were thrusting at each other over her head, and she was powerless to prevent a clash.

But Claypoole was calm. "I don't know what you mean, Horace," he said coldly. "I thought you just described the burglar as a lady burglar. Now you speak of 'the fellow' who upset the furniture. Aren't you a little—well, just a little confused, my dear boy?" he added significantly.

Richieson flung an amused look at Hester.

"He still thinks I'm dotty," he said good-humoredly. "By the way, Friend Claypoole, isn't it time to open that orphanage? Don't neglect your Christian duties on my account. I'm safe; I've no doubt your good Giles is watching over me like a father."

Claypoole regarded him with sad forbearance.

"My dear boy, the thing that hurts worse is your new attitude toward me. You seem to regard me as an arch enemy. We have only labored to take care of a sick man—your father's son. But I see I'm in the way," he added,

turning to Hester; "Horace is anxious to get rid of me, and I've no good excuse for staying away from my engagement. You and your mother are going to dine with us to-morrow night, Hester?"

"No; it's the opera first and then supper, I believe," replied Hester, with a glance at Richieson.

Claypoole looked from one to the other, surprised.

"Changed the order of the day," explained Richieson calmly; "did it by telephone. It's my party, you know."

"Ah, I see!" Claypoole moved slowly to the door.

There he stopped a moment, wrote a line on his card and handed it to Hester. "There's that address I promised you," he said meaningly.

She colored. "Mother will want to see you when she comes back, Mr. Claypoole." She was trying lamely to bridge things over.

"I'll phone to her," he replied, and then he waved his hand to Richieson. "Be a good boy, Horace, and try to remember about our burglar. We mustn't let the lady escape; she got some of your father's papers."

Hester, who had crushed Claypoole's card in her hand, blushed as she caught Richieson's amused blue eyes.

"I'll phone the lady when I find her," he retorted maliciously. "Meanwhile, don't miss that engagement, Claypoole."

Claypoole shot an annoyed look at him, pressed Hester's hand and left, not too hurriedly.

As he disappeared Richieson tossed his cigarette out of the window.

"Do you think me mad, Hester, or an intolerable brute?" he asked her, with his whimsical smile.

"I think you hate Maurice Claypoole," she replied promptly, "and——" She hesitated, then she raised her eyes steadily to his face. "Horace, I don't think you're crazy, and I want you to be careful. You make them think

a fact; don't deny it! He thinks I let in the burglar the other night."

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They both stared at him, Hester a little incredulous and startled again with strange doubts of his sanity; Claypoole with ill-concealed annoyances. For the first time he reddened.

"Why didn't you tell us this before, Horace?" he asked rather sharply, in the tone of a guardian to an exasperating charge.

Richieson laughed. He had turned and was idly moving some small objects of bric-a-brac about on the mantel. "I wanted you to find out. At first, I confess that her disappearance rather bowled me over. I thought she'd jumped from the balcony, but she didn't."

"No, I know! It was the fir tree," Hester said excitedly. "I thought of

that this morning; but, of course, I supposed the intruder was a man."

He nodded. "Yes, the fir tree. She left a bit of her cloak in the branches. Your precious detectives never saw it. I salvaged it this morning."

"I'd like to have it," said Claypoole; "it might be a clew. Perhaps, though, you can tell us the lady's name," he added dryly.

Richieson shook his head, and then:

"Not yet! By the way, Hester, may I smoke? Have one?" He offered his cigarette case to Claypoole.

The elder man refused impatiently, and Richieson lit his cigarette deliberately, enjoying himself. He wanted to annoy Claypoole, to shake his intolerable calm, and at last he was doing it.

"At least, you can tell us about her," said Hester watching him, noticing little tricks of speech and gesture that were like, and yet unlike, her cousin. What a perplexing thing it was! How it tormented and teased her! And what was this about a woman? What kind of mystery was he hinting at now? Something—for he was teasing Claypoole. "Was she pretty? Did she wear boy's clothes? Did she carry a jimmy?"

"She's rather prettier at night than in the daylight. She doesn't wear boy's clothes, and she has a wonderful voice. It's got tone to it. I knew it at once. You see, I'd seen her before."

Claypoole rose and pushed back his chair. "Oh, if this is one of the ladies of your foreign travels," he said with a suggestion of a sneer in his voice and manner, "we won't press the question, Horace."

Something hardened in Richieson's eyes. "We'll discuss the subject—when I'm ready," he replied coolly; "just as we'll discuss several other things, Mr. Claypoole. As a matter of fact," he added, turning to Hester with his usual manner, "I saw the woman once before—in a café in Boston—and

breath. "I couldn't stand it; they'd drive me crazy!"

"It's not pleasant. But it's worse to feel as I do at times, that I can't be quite right in my head. You see, I know that I'm John Richieson. I'm only bluffing when I pretend to believe I'm Horace Barney. Bluffing to make them show their hands. I haven't been bluffing you, Hester; but I've had to let you hear me play the game with the others. Let's make a bargain. If this man—the man I'm going to show you—is your cousin, then you'll believe me, won't you? Believe that I am John Richieson?"

"Yes," she replied slowly, still looking at him questioningly. "I'll be sure of it then. But— isn't there anything else? Any other test? Couldn't you remember—well, something that happened long ago, for instance—if I recalled it to your mind?"

They were skirting the trees now, on their way to the Barney house, and he looked around at her quickly.

"Hester, what is it? You've got something up your sleeve, as the saying is! There's something—I know it—some test that you could apply if you would, some jolt of memory. What is it? Try it!"

She shook her head obstinately. "If you can't remember—no, I can't help you," she said. "Don't ask me, Horace."

"But if I'm not Horace?"

"Then you couldn't remember, could you?"

They both laughed, almost happily. When they were alone together he seemed so unlike Horace that Hester always returned to her bewildering doubts. Yet, all the while, she felt that he was more to her than poor Horace had ever been; she felt the difference, the force and will power that her cousin had never shown. This man showed both, but then her cousin had been a boy when he was sane. This might be,

after all, only maturity. Yet, as she looked at him, she felt that indefinable personality that was new and strange.

By this time they had come to the edge of the trees and were under the old wall that inclosed the court of the wing. Part of it had been a stable yard and, long disused, it was closed and the hinges of the old gate were covered with rust. Against it an old oak tree leaned its branches. Below the oak, a fallen tree was partly cut for the large logs that Claypoole liked for his den fireplace. The stump of the tree made a half way step to the wide-branching heart of the oak. Richieson stooped suddenly and lifted Hester to the stump. She was small and he swung her up like a child.

"Stand still," he whispered, "until I can help you."

As he spoke, he stripped off his coat, climbed into the oak and held down his hand to her.

"Come," he said, "and don't speak. He's here."

She was all excitement now. She clambered up and stood beside him on the oak tree. The deep green foliage cloaked them and he steadied her with his arm around her waist. For an instant Hester thought of the chance that this man was really her cousin and still mentally unsound. The next, she felt the same strange confidence in him that she had felt at the first moment of their meeting in the Barney house. He was sane and he was honest; she knew it.

He swept aside the foliage with a cautious hand and gave her a loophole.

"Look!" he whispered. "He's in the courtyard of the old stable."

Hester, holding her breath, peered out. Suppose it was Horace; suppose—

The man was wandering aimlessly up and down. He was a tall man, dressed in black, rather slender and stooping a little. As he turned and

came toward them she saw his face plainly and drew back.

"Is it?" questioned Richieson eagerly.

She shook her head and looked up, a strange relief in her face.

"No," she said, "it's not Horace Barney at all!"

His eyes questioned hers. "And you're glad?" he asked with an odd catch in his voice.

Their faces were close together and hers answered unconsciously.

"Yes," she said, and then added a little wildly, "I was afraid it might be Horace. I—I want you to be Horace. I know it now—I do, indeed!"

His arm held her steadily, but he felt that she was trembling. He drew a long breath. "Hester," he whispered, "I love you. Heaven knows I hope I'm not Horace Barney, for—if I am—I'm crazy, and, crazy or not, I love you!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE UNLOCKED DOOR.

**B**EFORE he overtook her, Hester was halfway back to her own house. She had been running, but she stopped now and faced him, a little breathless, but pale and lovely.

"Hester!" His tone was full of regret, of protest. "I beg your pardon! I know I had no right. I was a brute. But I loved you so much that—well, I had to kiss you. I suppose you're sure now that I'm mad?"

She blushed. She had been so pale that the sudden rush of color made her look as if the sun shone in her face.

"It—it wasn't altogether that," she replied in a low voice. "I—oh, you see, it was because I know now that you're not Horace Barney!"

He was blushing, too, in a boyish way, carried away by that moment of emotion when he had lifted her out of the tree and kissed her! He had dared it and he couldn't be altogether sorry for it.

"How do you know it, Hester?" He was eager, glad to feel that she knew it at last, that she believed him.

"I can't tell you how I know it," she said falteringly, "but I do. I feel it. You're yourself, not any one else! You must be John Richieson."

"I am John Richieson. I was so in hopes that poor dazed fellow back there in the Barney house was Horace. Then the muddle might be cleared up in some way. But he isn't. It doesn't matter so much, though, if I've made you believe in me."

"Yes," she admitted a little weakly, "you've made me believe in you. You're not my cousin."

"Did I behave like such a monster?"

She did not answer. They were walking on together, and, after a moment, he spoke again in a troubled voice.

"Does it make so much difference, then? Can't you think a little of John Richieson, too?"

She lifted her eyes slowly to his; she had no words apparently. There was an eloquence, though, in her face, a tenderness. She was not angry with him then, but— His head swam. Was it possible that that look was for him, for John Richieson?

"Hester!" he caught both her hands in his and held them. "Hester, do you love me, too?"

She did not withdraw her hands, but she held herself back, tears in her eyes.

"Don't—don't kiss me again, John! Not now. I must tell you—I've got a long story to tell you. But I can't—to-day."

But he held her hands. "You haven't answered my question, Hester. Your eyes tell me one thing and your lips another! Hester, answer me!"

She slipped away from him and stood looking at him, her eyes still beautiful and tender.

"I love you," she answered simply at last. "No, don't come any nearer—"

wait! I've got my own story to tell you. I—I thought, at first, that you were my cousin. Now I know you're not. I can't see my way to explain it, I can't imagine how you came in his place, but I—I love you, John Richieson—if that's your name—and—I can't marry you!"

"If you love me I'll make you marry me!" he exclaimed joyfully, taking a step toward her.

But she backed farther away. "Don't!" she pleaded. "Please don't say another word now. I can't bear it! I've got a reason. It's been almost a shock to find it out, to know that you're not Horace! I—I hoped you were, and—and I didn't!"

She was getting hopelessly confused, but there was no confusion in the beautiful look in her eyes. That was love. He had never seen it before, and it was like looking off across the world into a bit of heaven! That was the way he thought of it. But it checked him, too; he must not make her feel that he couldn't wait until she gave it to him of her own free will. He could wait for a love like that!

"Hester," he said in a low voice, "you're cousin loved you. Was there anything, any reason why you were glad that he wasn't there in the old court?"

"Yes," she replied in a low voice, "there was! I'm going to tell you—I will tell you all about it—but I can't now. You see"—she looked up at him and smiled through her tears—"I didn't know how I should feel until—until I knew that you were some one else."

He did not answer that—perhaps, because he, too, had a lump in his throat. There was something about her that moved him, something besides her beauty and charm—a kind of simplicity, a faith in him. She didn't think he was an impostor with her silences and her rebuffs. She should never put him off. He meant to win her and he could afford to wait. He knew he had been

headlong. He was half ashamed of his own rashness, but he was desperately happy, too.

"Hester, you're coming to-morrow night?"

She nodded, smiling a little and dabbing at tears in her eyes with a cobweb of a handkerchief.

"I'm going to be strange; I've got a scheme. But you won't think I'm mad?" He looked at her anxiously.

She blushed deeply. "If I didn't think you mad when you kissed me, I shan't to-morrow night. You see"—something like mischief danced in her eyes—"I can expect anything. You're an amazing person."

"And you won't give me away? Let them think you still believe I'm Horace, eh?"

"I'll let them believe anything you want. I——" She gave a little gasp. "There's Doctor Wallace! Do you suppose he saw us?"

Richieson scowled at the figure coming through the trees.

"No; he couldn't. He's coming the other way. Claypoole has sent him to secure the lunatic. What is he like, Hester—I mean this doctor?"

"Why, he's a nice man, I think," she answered quickly. "He's our doctor, too. His wife is dead and his daughter married last year. She's in Montana. He's always been most kind; I—why, I'm so bewildered! I've trusted these people all my life; I still trust them. I do really! It's only that I know now that you're not Horace, and I can't explain it!"

"Suppose I trust the doctor, then?" Richieson smiled down on her perplexity, but he was thinking, thinking hard. Could he trust the doctor?

Meanwhile, Wallace came up smiling.

"Too good a day to stay indoors, eh, Hester? I'm glad to see you outside. We can't make much of an invalid out of Horace, can we? He's looking pretty fit."

As he spoke the doctor shook hands laughingly, patting Richieson lightly and affectionately on the back.

"I'm glad you think so," said Richieson promptly. "I was on my way to your office for an examination. It's about time for a well man to get out of the leading strings. Don't you think so, doctor?"

Wallace laughed again, looking sharply from one to the other. He could make nothing of the man's face except a kind of grim resolution that shone in it. There was something else that he didn't understand—that is, until he found the clew to it in Hester's look. She was flushed and there was a tenderness in her eyes that he had never seen there before.

"By Jove, he's been making love to her!" the doctor thought inwardly. "And she's fond of him. What'll old Claypoole say to that?"

The situation amused him more than it amazed him. He had felt it coming, as some people feel electricity in the air. He gave another quick look at Hester. The thing was taking an extraordinary turn.

"I'm on my way back to my office now," he said good-humoredly. "Afterward I'm going to have lunch. Suppose you and Hester lunch with me, Horace. Bachelor's fare, to be sure; but pretty good, I think. Will you come?"

"I will," replied Richieson. "How about it, Hester?"

His tone conveyed subtly an understanding between them. The doctor's eyes twinkled as he waited.

But Hester shook her head. "I'm going home. Yes, I must, really!" She pretended to look at her watch. "I hadn't any idea it was so late."

Wallace noticed that the young man did not urge her to come. He seemed willing to go alone to his luncheon, and the doctor fancied a previous understanding.

"You'll be sure to come to-morrow night?" Richieson said to her as they parted at the steps.

"I've got a box at the opera and I'm going to give a supper afterward," he explained to the doctor as they walked over to the latter's office. "I hope you're going to come, too?"

Wallace cogitated; he wasn't thinking of the opera. But he answered casually, "I'm not much of an opera man, but I may show up at the supper. It's not formal, is it?"

"Rather not!" Richieson laughed happily. "Just Claypoole, my cousin and her mother. It's—well, it's a celebration."

"Of what?" The doctor was aware of an inward start. That girl couldn't have been silly enough to engage herself to this crazy boy?

"Of my coming to myself." Richieson's blue eyes were humorous when they met the doctor's; he divined the other man's thought. "You see, I know now who I am."

"The deuce you do!" The doctor laughed, thrusting his latchkey now in his own door, for they had reached the house after a five-minute walk. "It's more than a good many of us do," he added dryly, as he threw open his office door.

Contrary to Richieson's expectation, the room was empty. The doctor moved about it, sending the shades up to the top to get a better light on his patient.

Richieson stripped off his coat and stood, smiling, in his shirt sleeves. He looked a young giant. That queer ash-blond hair did not seem to blend with his ruddy color.

"Suppose you go through me physically and mentally, doctor," he said briskly. "I want a report. See?"

Wallace eyed him critically. "What for, my boy?"

Richieson returned his look steadily for a moment before he answered.



"Because I'm a sane man and you know it. I want you to come out for me fair and square, or go the other way. I've no intention of playing second fiddle, here, doctor. Either I'm sane and I get my property in my own hands, or I'm a lunatic and Claypoole keeps it."

The doctor looked grave for a moment.

"You've got a not unnatural prejudice against Claypoole. You've been ill so long you look upon him as a jailor, I suspect. Well, come on. I'll examine you—if that's what you want."

It was a long examination, as it turned out, taking the better part of an hour. While it lasted the two men did not talk of anything but the matter in hand. Richieson answered the doctor's terse questions tersely, and submitted to a long cross-examination. He fancied that Wallace was using some elaborate system of sanity tests. It was irksome, but he kept well on his guard. However, he was aware that he had made slips, and bad ones. He couldn't remember things that had obviously never happened to him but had happened to Horace Barney. However, he had determined, for the present, to be Horace Barney.

It was over at last. The doctor arose, thrust aside his notes and opened the door into the dining room.

"I'm famished," he said. "Let's have a bite and then I've got to get out on a case in the city. We'll talk this over at luncheon."

But they had been at table some time—the servant had placed the luncheon and withdrawn—before the doctor gave his verdict.

"You're sound as a dollar," he said between mouthfuls, "even that place on your head is as good as new. I always thought that chap in Paris had made a bad job, but I beg his pardon, it's all right. Your nerves, too, have got over the shock. I believe you're quite sane,

Horace, only——" He paused significantly.

"Only what?" Richieson who had been finishing a chop, looked up keenly.

The doctor reddened. "I can't give you a clean bill, because you've lost your memory. That's where the cog is loose still, Horace. We've got to have patience."

"Oh, I see!" replied Richieson, with a short laugh. "It's the old story. You think I'm too 'off' to manage my own money? I suppose I failed to remember something that happened when I was a kid?"

"Not quite. You don't remember anything at all, back of what you've picked up in the last few weeks. Your mind's clear enough, but you're only bluffing when you try to recall things. I know; I was in those bygone years myself."

Richieson lifted a glass of water to his lips and drank it slowly. He had been very shy of anything but water since he had found himself in this strange situation.

"I suppose a man can go on through life, though, without a memory. At any rate, I don't intend to stay tied up in leading strings. I think I can convince any fair-minded judge of my sanity."

"I think you might convince him that you were sure that you were somebody else." The doctor smiled.

Richieson gave him a quick look. "What?"

"That's the trouble, my boy. You're only bluffing when you try to make me believe that you think you're Horace Barney. You don't."

Richieson pushed back his chair and rose from the table without ceremony.

"I see how it is," he said harshly; "you're on Claypoole's side. I'm going to convince you of something presently, or"—he smiled grimly—"I'll accept your theory and dawdle about all day with a watch set on my footsetps."

"As far as that goes," returned Wallace frankly, accompanying him to the door, "I think you'll admit that we've had to watch a millionaire who was a little forgetful of—well, of everything."

Richieson made no reply to this. He was angry because he could not get the doctor on his side. He waved him a good-by and went off briskly. Very briskly, indeed, for he was testing his liberty. He boarded a car and rode into the city. He wanted to know if he was being followed. He could not discover that he was. He had a plan in his head; a plan for asserting himself. But now he began to give way to the doctor's reasoning. After all, was he wrong? Was he really a mental weakling, imagining things? In that case, his love-making to Hester was a farce. It was worse than a farce, it was brutal. But she had believed in him. Beset as he was, at intervals, with these curious doubts of himself, he found the open air and the crowded city streets a refuge. He went farther and stayed longer than he had intended. He had begun to fear that, perhaps, his food had been drugged, for his mind refused to go farther than the beginning of the journey to Springfield to sell automobiles to Overbeck. He had even refused to take morning coffee from Giles. He drank no wine and ate with caution. But to-day, with the thought of Hester coming back to him again and again, he stayed downtown and dined at the same café where he had first met the woman in the purple cloak. He knew more of her now, more than he chose to tell; but he ate his dinner watchfully, looking for some one on his track. However, no one appeared and his nerves steadied themselves.

It was late, near eleven o'clock, when he went back to the Barney house. He had had a full day and he had his plans laid. For all that, he was startled by unreality. Whenever he glimpsed him-

self in a mirror or the glass of some shop window, he was startled. John Richieson became a phantom and Horace Barney was flesh and blood beside him. He clung, at such moments, to Hester's recognition of him. She knew he was not Barney. He was carried away then by the memory of her in his arms, her soft cheek against his lips. If it hadn't been for Hester he should have left them in the lurch, gone away. Love kept him playing the game. He knew that Claypogle should not have her! He did not know what she meant, what she had to tell to him, but he could wait. He did not believe that there was any reason why she could not marry him except a doubt of his sanity. He would prove that and then——

Giles let him in. When the valet opened the door for him, Richieson glimpsed his face in the light. It was not a pleasant face; hatred leaped up in his long eyes. Richieson remembered how he had ducked the man, and grinned sardonically.

"Feeling well to-night, Giles?" he asked gayly. "By the way, you needn't bring anything to my room. I dined in town."

As he said it he caught Giles' eye with an inward start. He knew in a moment, that the man had followed him. Giles knew just where he had been! It filled him with a futile rage. He turned to go upstairs and Claypoole appeared promptly at the library door. They had staged their scenes, then!

"Where have you been, Horace?" he called out genially. "Come in and have a smoke."

"Thanks, no!" Richieson called back, and went upstairs.

He knew that Claypoole stared after him, and he thought he heard the man speak to Giles. Of course the valet would bring in the usual wine and cigars to the library. Claypoole was a man who drank much without being a

drunkard. He and Giles performed the late supper act with all the solemnity of a rite. Richieson was sure of being alone for a while. He went to his room, locked the door behind him and put on his dressing gown. Then he carefully concealed the pistol he had taken from the woman. He had an idea that Giles would steal it if he got a chance. Consequently Richieson carried it about with him all day.

Secure of solitude, he sat down and began to figure. He was testing himself. Slowly and surely he recalled the whole sales of the year; even the dates came back. He found he could name places and people. But when he got to the train leaving for Springfield he failed. His memory would not go any

further. Something had happened there. But what? If he only knew, he could get it all linked together. He might have been knocked senseless. But how about Barney? He had found a solution in the man in the wing, but now he knew that that man was not Barney. It was still a lane without a turning.

Feeling mentally worn out, he sank back in his chair. A glance at the clock told him that it was a quarter to one. He stared about the room angrily, aware of the silence of the house.

Then his eye fell on the door opposite, the one he had not locked. As he looked at it the knob turned slowly without a sound, as though a stealthy hand had grasped it.

**To be continued in the next issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, out Tuesday, December 17th. Do not forget that, as the magazine comes out every week, you will not have long to wait for the continuation of this fascinating story.**



## GENEROUS CONVICTS

**I**NTERESTING statistics were collected recently by Henry F. Vogt, a prison worker living in Oakland, California, upon the activity of the prisoners of San Quentin Penitentiary, one of the two State's prisons of California. Vogt found that the prisoners had donated \$656.65 to the Red Cross and, in addition, had pledged themselves to give small amounts, for a total of \$213 a month. They had purchased \$1,200 worth of Liberty Bonds and \$2,000 worth of War Savings Stamps.

Most significant of all was their generosity in contributing to the soldiers' tobacco fund. It must be considered that the biggest treat a convict has is his tobacco ration. And yet these men have already donated four large barrels of tobacco and are now filling a fifth barrel. This can be accomplished in only one way; that is, by the prisoners going without their own tobacco rations.

Vogt always takes a chance on a discharged prisoner. His generosity is widely known, and it is a common occurrence for a man just discharged from the penitentiary to come to him for a loan. He explains when he lends cash, that he is trusting to the man's honesty, because if the money is not returned he will lose faith in the good intentions of the other prisoners. He declares that the released men's debts to him have always been repaid. "Kindness," Vogt says, "if properly applied, will accomplish miracles."

# "Fools Rush in--"

by *Dahlia Graham*

Author of "Not So Green," "Grease Paint and Violets," etc.

**W**ITH a rustling flirt of her skirts and a sharp upward tilt to her chin, Mavis Pickering flounced out of the dressing room.

"I'm done—through—finished," she announced with emphatic finality; and, in affirmation of her resolve, she took a firmer grip on the battered cash box that was tucked under her arm. This box, the high sign of the profession, contained no loose change and bank notes, but a mixed, untidy collection of grease paints, rouge, powder, eyebrow pencils, lip salve, and other things required for the beautifying of a chorus girl. And if Mavis had not become angry at the stage manager and described him to his face as a sawed-off monkey, and if she had not grabbed her make-up box and left the theater in a rage and a hurry, there would have been no confusion, fuss, or happening out of the ordinary.

"By, Sammy," said Mavis as she passed through the narrow cubby-hole occupied by the stage doorkeeper. "I'm on my way."

The girl accompanied this farewell with a smile and a light laugh. Although her surface appearance of freedom from all cares and responsibilities endured until she had left the vicinity of the theater, Mavis soon found her anger cooling to an uncomfortable and chill sensation of fear. By the time she reached Thirty-second Street, there was an expression of anxiety in her large gray eyes, and a pathetic droop to her undeniably pretty mouth.

Assertion of independence some-

times carries with it a penalty, and, conscious that she had acted without forethought, Mavis entered a lunch room. She placed her make-up box on a chair and ordered coffee and pie, but the coffee grew lukewarm before she reached any decision regarding future means of providing herself with the cash necessary to pay for her room and board.

She had in her purse three dollars and ninety cents, and she wore on her fingers and wrists some glittering rings and bracelets. The jewelry, alas, was only nearly real. It looked all right, but the hardhearted Shylock who lives at the sign of the three balls is not taken in by a thin wash of gold on base metal. A pawnbroker has no use either for synthetic diamonds and rubies. He wants, and gets, full and adequate security for every cent he doles out.

"Yet," reflected Mavis, with tardy sorrow, "to-day is Wednesday, and on Saturday I'll have to pay nine dollars for my room. I've had my say-so, thrown up my job. Now——"

At this distressing point the girl looked up and her wandering gaze met the eyes of a smirking, pimply complexioned youth seated at an adjacent table. He leered and showed a row of grinning fangs; then he favored Mavis with a repulsive appraising look of approval.

"Fresh beast he is," was the girl's mental comment. Launching a parting glare of disapproving, haughty contempt at the would-be masher, she paid for her pie and coffee and left the lunch room without her make-up box.

He of the poor complexion was in no-

wise perturbed by the girl's rejection of his wordless invitation to become acquainted, but when his sidelong glance assured him that she was indeed gone and out of sight, he stepped nimbly across the floor. His acquisition of the cash box was an easy matter, and he started for the door with an impudent swagger of proprietary right to Mavis' make-up box. He started, but——

“Slick—but a low-down, yaller-dog, mean trick,” said a voice. “Thought nobody was watchin' you gogglin' at that girl, eh? Well, next time you try to pull off any mashin' and sneak-thief tricks, make sure there ain't somebody around reading a newspaper with a hole in it. Which is it to be, a bash on that thing you call a nose, or a hand over of that box?”

Spotty-face backed away from this rough-spoken, interfering stranger, but before he did so he thrust out the cash box.

“I was going to run after her with it,” he said, with quick cunning.

“And I'll save you the trouble,” retorted the other. Grabbing the box, he left Spotty-face cursing in futile viciousness.

With commendable intentions, the new guardian of the girl's property started after her in haste, but before he had gone three blocks in the direction she had taken downtown, the unexpected developed and put a temporary check on the stranger's intentions. Mavis Pickering had pleased his sense of beauty, and the unsavory youth's behavior had roused his chivalry, but even for a pretty girl there are limits to what a man will do.

“Dashing Dick! Whadder you doing with that cash box?”

These actual, challenging words were unheard by the stranger; but he saw a square-shouldered, hard-jawed man crossing the street. In that one glimpse he read a determined purpose and a large query expressed in the man's keen

and cold gray eyes. He saw that he was recognized and suspected of having committed a daring robbery.

There are some men who cannot show themselves without being given the “double O,” when spotted by a detective, and Dashing Dick had a past that rendered it an awkward matter to contemplate explaining his possession of that box. He didn't know what it contained, and didn't believe it held anything of value; but knowing that his tale of the manner and reason he had taken charge of the box would be scoffed at, Dick decided to let its fair owner wait, and look after his own skin.

He darted for the doorway of a nearby office building, and was fortunate enough to reach the elevator before the figure of the detective darkened the entrance. It was Dick's first intention to go up to the tenth or eleventh floor, traverse the long corridor that he knew ran the whole length of the building, and then descend by another elevator. But it was his habit to foresee the actions of others ere they were consummated, and before the elevator reached the third floor Dick did some quick thinking.

“Bradley is on my trail. Isn't it the most likely and probable thing that he will make a bee line for the other exit?”

While weighing this problematic point, Dashing Dick looked down at the box, and for one brief instant he thought of abandoning it and pursuing his way unhampered; but a sporting, stubborn streak urged him to take a chance. Besides, he wanted the opportunity to get a closer look at the girl's eyes. Were they blue or gray? She was tall, slender, graceful. She was—well, she was a girl decidedly worth while rendering a service to.

“I've got her coin-box, and I don't know her name or anything,” thought Dick. “Third floor,” he snapped.

Dick caught a descending elevator almost at once. His hunch that the de-

detective was watching the other exit proved a winner.

At the corner of the block Dick bought a newspaper, rolled it carelessly round the cash box, and chartered a taxi. He drove to a hotel and sought the seclusion of a room that he had hired for no other purpose but to open the box and see if he could find the name and address of the girl. The lock yielded to the persuasion of a little tool that Dick was an adept at manipulating, and he raised the battered lid.

"Grease paint! So she's a stage girl! What's this?"

From a conglomerate mass of broken sticks of make-up, tubes, and rouge-stained powder puffs and hairpins, Dick disentangled a roll of crumpled paper.

"Heavy," he muttered as he shook it open, and stared in amazement at what fell out.

One by one he picked up a number of rings. He examined them with the eye of an expert.

"The genuine thing," he said, with a gasp. "Seven of 'em. This beats all. Five thousand bucks' worth of diamond and ruby rings. Gee, what a scoop that guy in the lunch room would have made! And what a chance I took when I butted in! Bradley would have nailed me for unlawful possession, an' I'd have gone up for pullin' a stunt that I never knew I was onto. Seven beauts, hid away in a lot of female junk. That night have been a good looker, but I'm sure the stuff she had on in the jewelry line was all phony. What's the answer?"

A host of questions to which he could find no answer buzzed in Dashing Dick's brain, and the more he considered his position, the less he liked it. Hitherto Dick had always planned his affairs. Accident, chance, and a reliance on good fortune had never played a part in his way of acquiring a living. Here, laying in the palm of his hand, was a small fortune. Were the rings

the girl's property, or had she stolen them! Was that the reason for her worried air? Was the pimply-faced youth a confederate?

Questions without answers—a mystery without a key! Dick searched again for some clew to the girl's identity; then, finding nothing, he pocketed the rings, shut the box, and decided to spend the night in the hotel and let events take their course for awhile. He scented danger, but couldn't see where and how it was coming to him.

## II.

For half an hour following Mavis Pickering's abrupt departure from the theater, there was the usual period of bustle that follows the final drop of the matinee curtain. Then came an unrehearsed sensation. The star toe dancer came out of her private dressing room with a jump and a succession of shrieks of bereaved dismay. Hubbub and confusion ensued. There was a hasty search for the seven rings that the star asserted had been stolen and were valued at twenty thousand dollars. The management was faced with the loss of half a season's profits, and the police were notified of the robbery.

In the subsequent inquiry that followed, the stage manager remembered that Mavis Pickering had quit before the last act. The inference was obvious, damning, Mavis had faked the quarrel for the purpose of getting at the star's property when all hands were on the stage. Mavis was the thief. A detective hurried hot-foot to her boarding house. Of course he didn't expect to find the girl there, but he might be able to pick up her tracks.

The detective found his first surprise when he met the placid, unruffled gaze of Mavis as she came into the sitting room. Apart from her attitude, the mere fact of the girl being there at all argued that she was either innocent or

a mighty clever crook. On the basis of never believing a person innocent until they are proved not guilty, the detective cross-examined the girl respecting her movements since she had left the theater. From smiling, amused interest Mavis passed to a condition of outraged dignity.

“Evidently,” she observed, following the detective’s meticulous and searching catechism, “you have made up your mind I have those rings. Why don’t you arrest me, put on the bracelets, as you call them, and take me off to a cell? I’m willing. Wrongful accusation will give me a good case for damages. I’m out of a job, and a few thousand dollars will come in very handy to see me through the winter.”

“I have made no accusation that you have taken the rings,” said the detective, “but if I may, I’ll search your room.”

“Go as far as you like. I’ll wait here,” said the girl.

The detective’s search was nothing but a formality. He returned to the sitting room after a short absence. Then, however, he posed an awkward, pertinent question, and all of his suspicions returned with redoubled force.

“I did not see your make-up box,” he remarked. “You brought it from the theater.”

“Yes.”

“Where is it?”

“I don’t know.”

Mavis Pickering’s statement was followed by a flush that the sleuth interpreted as evidence that she was concealing something. When she told him that she had left the box in the lunch room, and had gone back and failed to find it, the detective smiled meaningly.

“A good story,” he remarked dryly. “Who’s your friend?”

Tears of mortification trembled on the girl’s lashes.

“I tell you,” she protested, “I didn’t go near the star’s dressing room. My

make-up box was stolen, but there was nothing in it of any value.”

“That may be,” said the detective, “but all the same I must ask you to come with me to the station. It is possible that we may have a photograph of the young man you mentioned. Even if we can’t find the jewels, we can at least try to get your box back. There’s no reason why a nice young lady like yourself should lose her make-up.”

The man’s words and tone were suave enough, but there was a nasty suggestion about his manner that he disbelieved her. Mavis bit her lip and surrendered to the compulsion of circumstance.

When they reached the street, Mavis discovered that the robbery had already become a matter of public interest. She saw the headlines on the first news stand she passed. Under one pretext and another, Mavis was kept at the station for over two hours, and, during her stay, another and very thorough search of her room and an investigation of her antecedents were made. At the fag end of this fruitless inquiry, Detective Bradley came in. Although his story conflicted with the girl’s description of the youth who had annoyed her, it substantiated the belief that she had been acting with a confederate.

“Depend upon it,” declared Bradley, “she passed that box on to Dashing Dick—though for the life of me I can’t figure it out, him being such a dub as to carry it on the street with him. It beats me the fool slips some crooks will make. Get him, and we’ll get the rings.”

In this advance opinion, the detective overstepped the bounds of good prophecy. For three days they hunted high and low for Dashing Dick, and for the same period of time a close but unobtrusive watch was kept on Mavis. Then came another surprise that knocked the bottom out of the theory that Mavis was a thief. The real culprit confessed. It was the star’s personal maid, and she

had placed the rings in Mavis Pickering's box in case her mistress discovered her loss before she had a chance to leave the theater.

Naturally enough the maid had not anticipated that Mavis would leave before the usual hour and carry off the hidden booty. Hence the miscarriage of her plans and the complications introduced by Spotty-face.

On the evening of the third day a reward of a thousand dollars was announced, and within half an hour of this inducement Mavis received a parcel by special messenger. She phoned the police immediately that her make-up box had been returned.

The rings were not in it.

At half past nine the same evening Dashing Dick showed himself at the stage door and demanded admittance.

"No 'phonin' or yelpin' for the cops," he warned the doorkeeper. "Just you pass me along to the dame that put up the thousand simoleons for the recovery of her rings. I may know where they can be found, and if she comes across on the level there's a ten-spot in it for you. Do I go in?"

Dick did, and when he gave over the rings, he held out the other hand for the money. When he returned to the doorkeeper's cubby-hole, there was present a cold-eyed individual.

"'Low Brad," said Dick amiably. "Have a smoke. No? Well, come an' have a drink. I'll stand anythin' you like from a soda to a quart of wine."

Following his genial invitation, Dick pulled out his bulky wad of bank notes and flicked a ten across to Sammy the doorkeeper.

"Say," grunted Detective Bradley, "how'd you get hold of that box?"

"Took it away from a low-down sneak thief," said Dick virtuously.

"And the rings?"

"Rings?" repeated Dick vaguely. "Oh, I found 'em. Picked 'em up in the street. Bit of luck, eh? Well, s'long, ole top."

With a regretful glance, Detective Bradley watched the going of the man that he had never been able to nail.

"That's over," he said, with a sigh. "Dick'll have a high old time for a month or so an' blow the lot in."

Again was the detective wide of the mark, for Mavis Pickering was visited that night by another special messenger and a load of financial worry dropped from her mind.

The thick envelope contained five hundred dollars and a short note. The bold, clear writing was expressive of Dashing Dick."

I like your style. You're on the level. So am I—sometimes. Best of luck.—D. D.

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## INEBRIATES IN NEW YORK

**A**BOUT ten thousand persons are admitted every year into Bellevue Hospital for treatment for alcoholism. They are regarded as diseased, and capable of individual diagnosis and treatment, and it is an acknowledged fact that the habit leads to violation of the law and makes otherwise orderly citizens into dangerous delinquents.

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## EXCESSIVE CASES OF INSANITY

**I**T is said that while, as a general rule, the proportion of insanity among criminals is not any greater than among other people, in the case of women who are convicted of cruelty to children the proportion of insanity is greatly in excess.



# Through the Dragon's Valley

By Anna Alice Chapin

Author of "In the Shadow of the Bat," "Burning Steel,"  
"The Celestial Sphinx," etc.

**T**RY as she would, Lois could not move. She tried to look about her, and it was quite dark. And then, motionless, unseeing, she made a supreme effort to think, to remember.

At first this failed, too. She did not know where she was, or what had happened. The most active achievement of which the brain seemed capable was a dim and confused impression of something overwhelmingly distressing—worse, agonizing. Nothing was concrete, nothing clear.

Then, apparently without her own volition or effort, her right leg moved a little, convulsively. And with the movement came a stab of pain so poignant that she gasped out a cry that was cracked and harsh in her own ears.

The pain roused her. Like a dagger thrust it reached her numb and sluggish brain and lashed it into consciousness. The sensation was as horrible as the sudden blaze of light in the eyes of a person who has been blind for years. It was clarifying, but it meant anguish.

She remembered it all now: the little dinner for six at the most popular restaurant in town; then the spin out to the Joybell Amusement Park in Harry Crawford's big machine; the ridiculous things they had done, each having solemnly vowed at starting to do everything once! She remembered it with

growing clearness, and the physical pain grew with her returning faculties, until she seemed to be only one great hurt from head to foot.

She remembered Wanda Herron, Wanda in her pale blue frock like a Botticelli angel. How pretty and gentle she had looked! No wonder her fiancé, Dick Maynard, adored her; she was essentially the type that he would adore—and all other men, doubtless. She was very small and very fair, with a mouth like a flower and eyes like a child's; and an atmosphere about her suggested something wonderfully fragile and precious which had always been, and must always be, kept safe from the rough and rude jostling of this indubitably rough and rude old world. Lois, who had had to battle with life since early girlhood, and who at twenty-eight was entirely self-reliant, and, outwardly, a little prosaic, had been obliged to crush a good many queer half-sad, half-synical thoughts anent the difference between her and Wanda.

And Lois was not an envious woman. She did not envy Wanda her sheltered existence, or the comfortable income which kept her exquisitely dressed, exquisitely cared for, and exquisitely protected from all sordid struggle; she would not have envied her if she had owned a crown and throne among her other trinkets; she did not really

envy her her beauty, save insomuch as it chanced to be a type more pleasing to Dick Maynard than her own dark and vivid good looks.

There was the whole thing in a nutshell. Lois envied Wanda the possession of Dick's love. She herself had cared for him for so long now that the caring had become part of her: she worked and ate and moved about with it, lay down with it at night, and rose up with it in the morning. Sometimes she smiled a little secret smile in thinking how amazed people would be if they knew that the conviction inside Lois Cranmer's well-balanced brain was that there was nothing on earth the least bit important but Dick Maynard!

Her thoughts, and the increasing pain that racked her body with returning life and circulation, became jumbled up together, and a merciful blankness wrapped her once more.

This too passed, after what seemed a century or two. The pain was sharp and steady now, but she was stronger. Her mind was entirely clear and working normally, save that it insisted on flinging recollections at her spasmodically, in detached scraps. The absence of continuity worried her, for she had a strong, and—save in regard to Dick!—a logical mentality.

She remembered with a sudden flash Ella Minton, the rich widow with the cherubic proportions and the ornate jewels, who had chaperoned them. She had a round pink face and a giggle, and she was wearing diamonds—diamonds at an Amusement Park! And then, hot upon the flashing picture of Mrs. Minton, came another, sudden, startling, a tense, ugly moment balanced on the theme of—what was it that glittered so? Diamonds! That was it—diamonds! They were all at a little table having iced drinks, and Ella Minton was talking:

"I tell you I laid both those pins down on the table while I was fixing my

veil after the chutes! Someone has them—I don't care! Someone." That memory was going now, she must try very hard to capture it, to fix it before it disappeared perhaps forever. "They are very valuable—my husband gave them to me——" Then came Harry Crawford's soothing voice: "We'll go and report it at the police station, Mrs. Minton. Jerry, you'll stay with the girls, won't you? We'll meet you at Anderson's beer garden in half an hour." And Jerry Barlow had said: "Sure. Come on, girls, we'll go and try the prize thriller of the place. It's called 'Through the Dragon's Valley,' and they say it is a peach."

All clear now. She and Wanda and Jerry had gone to try the scenic railway known as "Through the Dragon's Valley." On the thick black darkness that now surrounded her, Lois could still see mentally the high garish archway with the name in brilliant red letters flaring above it; could see the white ticket-cage with the smiling girl in the gold-braided cap; could see the waiting crowds, the glimpses of huge, cheap scenery that masked the dizzy curves and dips of the railway, the incoming car with its load of screaming, shouting, laughing people, bent on demonstrating how close the extremes of sensation, pleasurable and the reverse, can come to actually meeting. And then the getting in the car herself, with Wanda. Only room for two on the front seat, and they wanted to go there. Jerry Barlow had to squeeze in at the very rear of the car.

Then followed the gliding rush into the first tunnel, the sickening, fascinating plunge downward, the leap up to the crest of that hill of wooden scaffolding, with the stars overhead, a million lights around and beneath them, a silver glimmer of the sea not far away. She recalled that Wanda had clung to her and cried, gasping: "Oh, this is the worst yet. I'm frightened, Lois!" and

that at the moment she had been thinking: "It's got all the excitement of dying! That's why we like it!"

Then—something had happened to the universe. The sky had cracked asunder, the stars crashed into fragments, there was no more world at all. Only a monstrous, roaring confusion of all things, a return, thunderous and cataclysmic, to the cosmic chaos.

Then nothing more till the pain.

It appeared that she was not the only one in pain. A faint, ceaseless moaning finally made itself heard by her hitherto unheeding ears. When she noticed it at last she knew that she had been hearing it subconsciously for some time. She moistened her lips and tried to call out, but it was only after several vain attempts that she was able to croak harshly: "Who is it?"

A low, sobbing cry—half of pain and half of relief answered her. Then Wanda's voice, weak and tremulous, came to her from close by: "Oh, Lois—thank Heaven! I thought everyone in the world was dead but me, and that I'd have to die here alone in the dark!"

Lois smiled faintly and a little sardonically. It was so like Wanda to see the situation only as it affected herself! But, still in the painful, hoarse tone which was all her bruised lungs seemed able to emit, she said: "I can't go to you, Wanda. There's something big and heavy—part of the car, I think—lying across me. Are you badly hurt?"

"I ache all over," wailed Wanda. "And my arm——"

"Yes, I know," interrupted the older girl with as much impatience as she had strength for. "The only wonder is that we weren't both killed instantly. I'm afraid most of the others were, poor souls! I meant are you—crushed, or anything like that? Can you move, do you think?"

"Ye-es—but it hurts."

"Never mind. Crawl over here, and

we'll see if together we can get this thing off me."

Wanda crept to her side, stopping often to moan and declare she couldn't do it. And by the time she had reached Lois, what little nerve and strength she may have had to begin with were gone. She cast herself on the other's shoulder—causing Lois to wince with shut lips—and gave herself up to pure hysteria.

Sobbing frantically, she clung to Lois and gasped out over and over again: "Oh, Lois—I'm going to die—here in this awful place! I'm going to die—die—die! Oh, I can't die, I shan't die—Lois, what shall we do if they don't get us out?"

"You've been saying it over several times," said Lois laconically. "We'll die. But they'll get us out; they'll get you out, anyway. I've an idea that my own particular clock has run down."

Wanda hardly noticed the last words. She was listening eagerly, and her hand closed upon Lois' arm in a convulsive grip. Through the ruins of the scenic railway they could hear men's voices shouting and calling excitedly, and there was the sound of heavy blows as though they had begun to clear away the wreckage.

"They're going to save us!" cried Wanda. "Oh, Lois, Lois! Do you suppose we'll live till then?"

Lois was feeling rather faint. She had been making repeated efforts to rid herself of the weight that lay upon her, but she knew that her strength must be inadequate and, for that matter, probably Wanda's, too, even if she had cared to try.

"Lois!" whispered Wanda, close to her ear. "I—I've been terribly wicked! It would be awful to die without telling some one how wicked I'd been. Lois, maybe we'll both be dead in a little while. Anyway——" she hesitated.

"Anyway I probably shall," said Lois, in a queer, faraway tone. "So I'm quite safe. Tell me!"

"Lois, you know every one thinks we're so awfully rich, but we aren't, not really, any longer. We keep up appearances, but for ages it's been just that with dreadfully little back of it. Mother helps 'social climbers' on the quiet for considerations and I—I play bridge, and—nearly always—win."

Her sad voice dropped till it was nearly inaudible at the last word.

"You mean you cheat?"

"I—yes." A pause long enough for a breath; then: "But—Lois—that isn't the worst. I—well, you know people in our set have been—losing things lately."

"You stole them? Well——"

All at once it came over Lois that in a situation like theirs—waiting there in the darkness, so close to death that they could touch its garments as it stood irresolute beside them—such things as stealing jewelry and cheating at cards were unimportant and uninteresting. Surely there was, out there in eternity, some court of law more nearly sublime than the regulations and standards of earth. Lois knew that stealing and cheating were both wrong, but in this strange and indefinitely solemn hour poor Wanda's confession sounded somehow ridiculous.

"It's like worrying about what sort of coffin you'll have," she murmured aloud. Then: "Don't mind me, Wanda. I think I'm a little light-headed. Don't worry; you can give Ella Minton back her diamond pins—for of course you took them—and I'm sure she won't prosecute or do anything beastly."

"No, but she'll talk, in confidence, to every one she knows, or I know, and Dick will hear it—and you know what Dick is about honesty, and all that!" She broke down and wept more heart-brokenly than ever.

Lois felt her whole being whirl with her swift mental adjustment to this new thought. Little Wanda's sins had become important at last since they affected, or would affect, Dick. No

longer were they unimportant or uninteresting. Not death himself could claim the attention of Lois Cranmer when Dick Maynard was involved.

She knew Dick well. They had been faithful friends for many years; and the tie had never been frayed by a suspicion on his part that she loved him. She knew him, and she knew that Wanda was right. Kindly and generous in most of the relations of life, he would have no mercy on dishonesty. He would never marry a girl whom he knew to have been a thief, even if he loved her. And it was more than probable that the knowledge of the fact would kill his love outright. Lois knew that things like that do kill love in a man. Not in a woman—in fact, as she reflected without bitterness, there are few things that will kill love in women—except, occasionally, starvation! "And usually not even that, poor idiots!" she thought, remembering her own lean but loyal years.

And so to Lois—lying crushed, broken, suffering, and helpless in a darkness that might at any moment merge into that greater and more mysterious darkness which is called the shadow of death—came the great temptation of her life. It was a real temptation even though it was an unworthy one. She could, always granted that she was allowed to live until the rescuers reached them, tell the truth, brand Wanda as a thief—the diamonds would be sure to be upon her person somewhere—and could have the fierce joy of knowing that whether she herself lived or died, Wanda would be out of Dick's life forever.

There was a deep, Indianlike streak of vengefulness in Lois Cranmer; it is just such natures, with their hard and savage traits, which are often weakest in matters of love. Lois had a heart full of tenderness, but it was all for one person. To the rest of the world she was merely kind and fair.

But Wanda!

All at once the name of this horrible scenic railway flashed across her mind once more. "Through the Dragon's Valley!" Her brain, half delirious now from long strain and this unexpected crisis, painted the blackness before her with horrors and distortions, visualized the Dragon as her monstrous temptation, the thing she must fight and conquer if she wanted to die clean.

The perspiration poured down her face, not merely from weakness, not merely from pain, not even merely from death. It was her soul's sweat of agony, the sweat of a big fight against an enemy without mercy.

The fantastic vision of the Dragon filled the stuffy darkness—how appallingly close it was getting!—as the noises made by the rescuing party drew nearer.

"What shall I do, Lois?" moaned Wanda, and Lois felt her tremble as she pressed closer. Her own body did not shake; it felt strangely still—almost rigid, in fact. And she was very cold, and found it increasingly difficult to breathe.

The Dragon loomed vast, awful, inconceivably cruel. And then she found she could move her hand, though with difficulty, until it touched the younger girl's.

"Give me the diamonds—quick!" she said, and at the same moment they saw a glimmer of light as the débris began to be heaved aside. She grasped two cold, corrugated objects which Wanda's shaking fingers pressed into her palm. There was no time for any further action, nor for any words. In another moment the men had shouldered and wormed and dug their way down to them. The first was Dick, and by an electric torch the man next him carried, he was ghastly. When he seized Wanda in his arms he could not speak for a minute.

"Thank Heaven!" he said brokenly.

"I thought you were dead—my own love! The structure broke, in the deepest tunnel, and two cars— Oh, it's too horrible. Poor Jerry Barlow! Ghastly!—I say, where's Lois? Is she all right?"

"Very fit, thanks, Dicky," said Lois calmly; "or will be when I am excavated. If you would just——"

When they moved her, she fainted, but she did not die as soon as she had hoped. In fact, after they had gotten her out, and she lay under the glaring festoons of the park lights, the hastily summoned surgeon rather frightened her by telling her she had a chance.

Wanda hung about her, looking terribly frightened. She was not sure, even yet, what Lois meant to do about the diamond pins. Ella Minton, to do her justice, had dismissed the subject, and was really helpful and sympathetic, but Lois knew that the plump widow's cupidity would reawaken just as soon as this emergency should be past. She lay with closed eyes, holding the pins concealed.

At last Wanda could bear the suspense no longer, and, leaning over her, whispered desperately:

"Lois, *are* you going to tell?"

Lois opened her eyes and looked at her, then shook her head. Then, in a voice heard only by Wanda, she began to speak.

"I suppose," she said slowly, "that it would be harder to have to give something up after you've had it, than never to have it at all. Yes, I know it would. That ought to be reason enough for me to save you and let you keep—Dick. But that isn't the reason, not really. I'm a very one-ideaed person, you know. Dick wants you, and he shall have you; that's all. Nothing and nobody could possibly count for anything with me compared to Dick. And in case I don't stand the next move so well as the last—I hope you'll be happy."

And she meant it, chiefly because

with a woman like Wanda, that would mean that Dick would be happy too!

How queer everything was beginning to look! People, and houses, and the stars overhead, all mixed up together, and all out of proportion! There was a barker from one of the side shows, a fat man in yellow livery. He seemed to grow bigger and bigger, till he was as big as the moon!

Then she looked at Dick, let her tired eyes cling to the clean, comely vigor of him, the race-horse build, the cleanly modeled mouth and chin, the steady eyes, grave and sorrowful now. She looked—a long look, then pulled together every last ounce of strength and courage that she had and spoke in a clear steady voice which made the surgeon start, and watch her closely, for so do dying folk sometimes speak just before the end.

"Mrs. Minton," she said, "I am pretty badly broken up, and perhaps I shan't get over it. I want to clear something up, first. You diamond pins——"

"Yes?" Even the imminent prospect of Lois' death could not keep Mrs. Minton from being concerned about her jewels.

"I stole them," said Lois, without emotion. "I have been hard up lately, and it was so easy to take them when you laid them down on the table, and every one was looking at the procession of camels. I stole them—that's all!"

Dick Maynard started forward, his face white and shocked.

"Lois!" he exclaimed. "You are wandering; you can't be speaking the

truth. Why, it's as impossible as that——"

For answer Lois slowly unclenched the stiffening fingers of her right hand. In the multicolored glow of the electric lights that were still turned on, the diamonds glittered coldly and maliciously.

Mrs. Minton moved forward with a suppressed cry, then paused, half ashamed of her eagerness at such a time.

"Take them," said Lois.

And the widow did so.

Dick Maynard turned without a word, put his arm about Wanda, and drew her away. She looked back, crying silently, but Lois would not meet her eyes.

"Come, dear," Dick said gently. "I must take you home to your mother. You need rest."

In a moment they were gone.

Ella Minton suddenly began to cry, her plump white hands spread before her face, and her round shoulders heaving with distress.

"Oh, Lois!" she sobbed, hunting for a handkerchief, while the tears ran frankly down her cheeks. "Why did you do such a dreadful thing? And think of its happening just before you—just before you are going to——"

She found the handkerchief and sobbed again. "I've always been so fond of you, Lois,—and—and to *steal*—Why, it doesn't seem *like* you, Lois, somehow!"

Lois smiled somewhat grimly.

"Thanks!" she said, and closed her eyes.

## AN UNUSUAL ROMAN CUSTOM

IN Rome, if a master was murdered by one of his slaves, the law authorized that every slave belonging to the murdered man be put to death. In Athens, if a man was murdered, three members of his household could be held until the murderer was discovered, and if he were not found, these three people could be judged guilty in his stead.

# The Shrieking Pit

by Arthur J. Rees

Author of "The Mystery of the Downs," "The Hamstead Mystery," etc.

## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

AFTER a loss of consciousness resembling an epileptic fit, a young man, registered as Mr. Ronald, leaves the Grand Hotel at Durrington. The next day, David Colwyn, an American detective, and Sir Henry Durwood, an eminent London physician, who had observed Ronald's seizure, hear that he is wanted for the robbery and murder of Roger Glenthorpe, an aged archæologist, the preceding night. With Police Superintendent Galloway they go to the scene of the crime, an inn some miles away. They find that the only persons known to be in The Golden Anchor at the time of the murder were Mr. Glenthorpe; Benson, the innkeeper; his insane mother; Peggy, his daughter; Charles Lynn, a deaf waiter; Ann, the maid; and Ronald, who has disappeared. Marks from the inn to the pit where Glenthorpe's body had been thrown are identified as Ronald's shoe prints. Peggy, whom Colwyn had been watching, tells the detective that, requested by Glenthorpe, she had destroyed the dead man's private papers. Informed by villagers that they have heard shrieks from the pit and have seen a man near it, Colwyn and a constable conduct a search. They find and arrest Ronald. Later it is discovered that he is James Ronald Penreath, engaged to Constance Willoughby, and heir to a baronetcy.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MR. OAKHAM'S REQUEST.

**W**HEN Colwyn went into lunch the following day, after a walk on the shore at Durrington, he found Sir Henry Durwood awaiting him in the lounge of the Grand Hotel, with a visitor whose identity the detective guessed before Sir Henry introduced him.

"This is Mr. Oakham, Penreath's lawyer," said Sir Henry. "I have told him of your investigation into this painful case which has brought him to Norfolk."

"I am returning to London by the afternoon express, Mr. Colwyn," said the lawyer. "I should be glad if you could spare me a little of your time before I go."

"Certainly," replied Colwyn courteously.

"Mr. Oakham saw Penreath this morning before coming over," said Sir Henry. "He is quite mad, and refuses to say anything. Therefore, we have come to the conclusion——"

"Really, Sir Henry, you shouldn't

have said that." Mr. Oakham's tone was both shocked and expostulatory.

"Why not?" retorted Sir Henry innocently. "Mr. Colwyn knows all about it—I told him myself. I thought you wanted him to help you."

"I am aware of that, but, my dear sir, this is an extremely delicate and difficult business. As Mr. Penreath's professional adviser, I must beg of you to exercise more reticence."

"Then I had better go and have my lunch while you two have a chat," said Sir Henry urbanely, "or I shall only be putting my foot in it again. Mr. Oakham, I shall see you before you go." Sir Henry moved off in the direction of the luncheon room.

"Perhaps you will come to my sitting room," said Colwyn to Mr. Oakham. "We can talk quietly there."

"Thank you," responded Mr. Oakham, and he went with the detective upstairs.

Mr. Oakham, of Oakham and Pendules, Temple Gardens, was a little white-haired man of seventy, attired in the somber black of the Victorian era, with a polished, reticent manner befit-

ting the senior partner of a firm of solicitors owning the most aristocratic practice in England; a firm so eminently respectable that they never rendered a bill of costs to a client until he was dead, when the amount of legal expenses incurred during his lifetime was treated as a charge upon the family estate and deducted from the moneys accruing to the next heir, who, in his turn, was allowed to run his allotted course without a bill from Oakham and Pendules. They were a discreet and dignified firm, as ancient as some of the names whose family secrets were locked away in their office deed boxes, and reputed to know more of the inner history of the gentry in Burke's "Peerage" than all the rest of the legal profession put together.

The arrest of the only son of Sir James Penreath, of Twelvetrees, Berkshire, on a charge of murder, had shocked Mr. Oakham deeply. The crime of murder was a thing hitherto outside his professional experience, and he believed that no gentleman would commit a murder unless he were mad.

Since his arrival in Norfolk he had come to the conclusion that young Penreath was not only mad, but that he had committed the murder with which he stood charged. Sir Henry Durwood had been responsible for the first opinion, and the police had helped him to form the second. Two interviews he had had with his client since the latter's arrest had strengthened and deepened both convictions.

It was in this frame of mind that Mr. Oakham seated himself in the detective's sitting room. He accepted a cigar from Colwyn's case and looked amiably at his companion, who waited for him to speak.

"This is a very unfortunate case, Mr. Colwyn," the lawyer remarked.

"Yes; it seems so," replied Colwyn.

"I am afraid there is not the slight-

est doubt that this unhappy young man has committed this murder."

"You have arrived at that conclusion?" asked the detective.

"It is impossible to arrive at any other conclusion, in view of the evidence."

"Which is purely circumstantial," interposed Colwyn. "I thought that perhaps Penreath would have some statement to make which would throw a different light on the case."

"I will be frank with you, Mr. Colwyn," said the lawyer. "You are acquainted with all the facts of the case, and I hope you will be able to help us. Penreath's attitude is a very strange one. Apparently he does not apprehend the grave position in which he stands. I am forced to the conclusion that he is suffering from an unhappy aberration of the intellect, which has led to his committing this crime. His conduct since coming to Norfolk has not been that of a sane man. He has hidden himself away from his friends and stayed here under a partially false name. I understand that he behaved in an eccentric and violent way in the breakfast room of this hotel a few days ago, before leaving for the place where the murder was subsequently committed."

"You have learned this from Sir Henry, I presume?"

"Yes. Sir Henry has conveyed to me his opinion, based on his observation of Mr. Penreath's eccentricity at the breakfast table the last morning of his stay here, that Mr. Penreath is an epileptic, liable to attacks of *furor epilepticus*—a phase of the disease which sometimes leads to outbreaks of terrible violence. He thought it advisable that I should know this at once, in view of what has happened since. Sir Henry informed me that he confided a similar opinion to you, as you were present at the time and assisted him to convey Penreath upstairs. May I ask what



opinion you formed of his behavior at the breakfast table, Mr. Colwyn?"

"I thought he was excited—nothing more."

"But the violence, Mr. Colwyn. Sir Henry Durwood says Penreath was about to commit a violent assault on the people at the next table when you both interfered."

"The violence was not apparent—to me," returned the detective, who did not feel called upon to disclose his secret belief that Sir Henry had acted hastily. "Apart from the excitement he displayed on this particular morning, Penreath seemed to me a normal and average young Englishman of his class. I certainly saw no signs of insanity about him. It occurred to me at the time that his excitement might be the result of bad nerves. Has Penreath ever shown any previous signs of epilepsy?"

"Not so far as I am aware; but his mother developed the disease in later years and ultimately died from it. Her illness was a source of great worry and anxiety to Sir James. Epilepsy, you know, is hereditary."

"Pathologists differ on that point. I know something of the disease, and I doubt whether Penreath is an epileptic. He showed none of the symptoms which I have always associated with epilepsy."

"An eminent specialist like Sir Henry is hardly likely to be mistaken. The fact that Penreath seemed a sane and collected individual to your eye proves nothing. Epileptic attacks are intermittent, and the sufferer may appear quite sane between the attacks. Epilepsy is a remarkable disease. A latent tendency to it may exist for years without those nearest and dearest to the sufferer suspecting it, so Henry says. Penreath's case is a very strange and sad one."

"It is a strange case in every way," said Colwyn earnestly. "Why should a young man like Ronald go over to this remote Norfolk village, where he had

never been before, and murder an old man whom he had never seen previously? The police theory that this murder was committed for the sake of three hundred pounds, which the victim had drawn out of the bank that day, seems incredible to me, in the case of a young man like Penreath."

"The only way of accounting for the whole unhappy business is on Sir Henry hypothesis that Penreath is mad. In acute epileptic mania there are cases in which there is a seeming calmness of conduct, and these are the most dangerous of all. The patient walks about like a man in a dream, impelled by a force which he cannot resist, and does all sorts of things without conscious purpose. He will take long walks to places he has never seen, will steal money or valuables, and commit murder or suicide with apparent coolness and cunning. Sir Henry describes this as automatic action, and he says that it is a notable characteristic of the form of epileptic mania from which Penreath is suffering. You will observe that these symptoms fit in with all the facts of the case against Penreath. The facts, unfortunately, are so clear that there is no controverting them."

"It seems so now," said Colwyn thoughtfully. "Yet, when I was investigating the facts yesterday, I came across several points which suggested the possibility of an alternative theory to the police theory."

"I should like to know what those points are."

"I will tell you."

The detective proceeded to set forth the result of his visit to the inn, and the lawyer listened to him with close attention. When he had finished Mr. Oakham remarked:

"I am afraid there is not much in these points, Mr. Colwyn. Your suggestion that there were two persons in the murdered man's room is interesting, but you have no evidence to support it.

The girl's explanation of her visit to the room is probably the true one. Far be it from me, as Penreath's legal adviser, to throw away the slightest straw of hope, but your conjectures—for, to my mind, they are nothing more—do not weigh against the array of facts and suspicious circumstances which have been collected by the police. And even if the police case were less strong, there is another grave fact."

"You mean that Penreath refuses to say anything?" said Colwyn.

"He appears to be somewhat indifferent to the outcome," returned the lawyer guardedly.

"It is his silence which baffles me," said Colwyn. "I saw him alone after his arrest, and said I was willing to help him if he could tell me anything which would assist me to establish his innocence—if he were innocent. He replied that he had nothing to say."

"What you tell me deepens my convictions that Penreath does not realize the position in which he is placed, and cannot be held accountable for his actions."

"Is it your intention to plead mental incapacity at the trial?"

"Sir Henry has offered to give evidence that, in his opinion, Penreath is suffering from acute epileptic insanity and is not responsible for his actions. And that is the reason for my coming over here to see you this morning, Mr. Colwyn. You were present at the breakfast table scene; you witnessed this young man's eccentricity and violence. The Penreath family is already under a debt of gratitude to you—will you increase the obligation? In other words, will you give evidence in support of the defence at the trial?"

"You want me to assist you in convincing the jury that Penreath is a criminal lunatic," said Colwyn; "that is what your defense amounts to. It is a grave responsibility. Doctors and specialists are sometimes mistaken, you know."

"I am afraid there is very little doubt in this case," replied the lawyer. "Here is a young man of birth and breeding, who hides from his friends under an assumed name, behaves in public in an eccentric manner, is turned out of his hotel, goes to a remote inn, and disappears before anybody is up. The body of a gentleman who occupied the room next to him is subsequently discovered in a pit close by, and the footprints leading to the pit are those of our friend. The young man is subsequently arrested close to the place where the body was thrown, and not then, or since, has he offered his friends any explanation of his actions. In the circumstances, therefore, I shall avail myself of Sir Henry's evidence. In my own mind—from my own observation and conversation with Penreath—I am convinced that he cannot be held responsible for his actions. In view of the tremendously strong case against him, in view of his peculiar attitude to you—and others—in the face of accusation, and in view of his previous eccentric behavior, I shall take the only possible course to save the son of Penreath of Twelvetrees from the gallows. I had hoped, Mr. Colwyn, that you, who witnessed the scene at this hotel and subsequently helped Sir Henry convey this unhappy young man upstairs, would see your way clear to support Sir Henry's expert opinion that Penreath is insane. Your reputation and renown would carry weight with the jury."

"I am sorry, but I am afraid you must do without me," replied Colwyn. "In view of Penreath's silence I can come to no other conclusion, though against my better judgment, than that he is guilty, but I cannot take upon myself the responsibility of declaring that he is insane. In spite of Sir Henry Durwood's opinion, I cannot believe that he is, or was, in a condition of epileptic or post-epileptic automatism."

It will be a difficult defense to establish in the case of Penreath. If you wish the jury to say that Penreath is the victim of a form of epilepsy in which an outbreak of brutal or homicidal violence takes the place of an epileptic fit, with a similar break in the continuity of consciousness, you will first have to convince the judge that Penreath's preceding fits were so slight as to permit the possibility of their being overlooked, and you will also have to establish beyond doubt that the break in his consciousness existed from the time of the scene in the hotel breakfast room until the time the murder was committed. The test of that state is the unintelligent character of some of the acts of the sufferer. In my opinion, a defense of insanity is not likely to be successful. Personally I shall go no further in the case, but I cannot give up my original opinion that the whole of the facts have not been brought to light. Probably they never will be—now."

## CHAPTER XV.

### FOR THE DEFENSE.

**A**LTHOUGH no hint of the defense was supposed to transpire, the magic words "No precedent" were whispered about in legal circles as the day for Penreath's trial approached, and invested the case with more than ordinary interest in professional eyes. Editors of London legal journals endeavored to extract something definite from Mr. Oakham when he returned to the metropolis to prepare the defense, but the lunches they lavished on him in pursuit of information might have been spent with equal profit on the Sphinx.

The editors had to content themselves with sending shorthand writers to Norwich to report the case fully for the benefit of their circle of readers, whose appetite for a legal quibble was never satiated by repetition.

On the other hand, the case aroused

but languid interest in the breasts of the ordinary public. The newspapers had not given the story of the murder much prominence in their columns, because this particular case was not sufficiently sensational to appeal to the mass of newspaper readers.

Nevertheless, because of the perennial interest which attaches to all murder trials, the Norwich assizes court was filled with spectators on the dull, drizzling November day when the case was heard, and the fact that the accused was young and good looking and of gentle birth probably accounted for the sprinkling of well dressed women among the audience. The younger ones eyed him with sympathy as he was brought into the courtroom. His good looks, his blue eyes, his air of breeding, his well-cut clothes appealed to their sensibilities, and, if they had been given the opportunity, they would have acquitted him, without the formality of a trial, as far "too nice a boy" to have committed murder.

To the array of legal talent assembled together, the figure of the accused man had no personal significance; he was merely a pawn in the great legal game, of which the lawyers were the players and the judge the referee, and the side which won the pawn won the game. As this particular game represented an attack on the sacred tradition of "precedent," both sides had secured the strongest professional intellects possible to contest the match.

The leader for the prosecution was Sir Herbert Templewood, a political barrister, with a society wife, a polished manner, and a deadly gift of cross-examination. With him was Mr. Grover Braecroft, a dour Scotch lawyer of fifty-five, who was currently believed to know the law from A to Z. He was a cunning and crafty lawyer, picked in the present case to supply the brains to Sir Herbert Templewood's brilliance. They were supported by a crown solici-

tor well versed in precedents—a little gray figure of a man, who sat with so many volumes of judicial decisions and reports of test cases piled in front of him that only the upper portion of his gray head was visible above the books.

The defense relied mainly upon Mr. Reginald Middleheath, the eminent criminal counsel, who depended as much upon his imposing stage presence to bluff juries into an acquittal, as upon his legal attainments, which were also considerable. Mr. Middleheath's cardinal article of legal faith was that all juries were fools and should be treated as such, because if they once got the idea into their heads that they knew something about the case they were trying, they were bound to convict in order to sustain their reputation for intelligence. One of Mr. Middleheath's favorite tricks for disabusing a jury of the belief that it possessed any common sense was, before addressing them, to stare each jurymen in the face for half a minute or so with his piercing, penetrative eyes, accompanying the look with a pitying, contemptuous smile—the gaze and the smile implying that counsel for the opposite side may have flattered them into believing that their intelligences were fit to try such an intricate case, but they couldn't deceive him.

Having robbed the jury of their self-esteem by this means, Mr. Middleheath would proceed to put them on good terms with themselves again by insinuating in persuasive tones that the case was one calculated to perplex the most astute legal brain. He frankly confessed that it had perplexed him at first, but as he had mastered its intricacies the jury were welcome to his laboriously acquired knowledge in order to help them in arriving at a right decision. Mr. Middleheath's junior was Mr. Garden Greyson, a thin, ascetic-looking lawyer, whose knowledge of medical jurisprudence had brought him

into the case. Mr. Oakman sat beside Mr. Greyson, with various big books in front of him.

The judge was Mr. Justice Redington, whose presence on the bench was always considered a strengthening factor for the prosecution. Judges differ as much as ordinary human beings, and are as human in their peculiarities as the juries they direct and the prisoners they try. There are good-tempered and bad-tempered judges, harsh and tender judges, learned and foolish judges, there are even judges with an eye to self-advertisement, and a few wise ones. Mr. Justice Redington belonged to that class of judges who, while endeavoring to hold the balance fairly between the government and the defense, see to it that the accused does not get overweight from the scales of justice. Such judges take advantage of their judicial office by cross-examining witnesses for the defense after the crown prosecutor has finished with them, in the effort to bring to light some damaging fact or contradiction which the previous examination has failed to elicit. In other respects Mr. Justice Redington was a very fair judge, and he worked as industriously as any newspaper reporter, taking extensive notes of all his cases.

There were the usual preliminaries. First there was the lengthy process of empanelling a jury, with the inevitable accompaniment of challenges and objections, until the most unintelligent-looking dozen of the panel finally found themselves in the jury box. Then the clerk of arraigns gabbled over the charges: wilful murder of Roger Glenthorpe and feloniously stealing from the said Roger Glenthorpe the sum of three hundred pounds. To these charges the accused man pleaded "not guilty" in a low voice. The jury were directed on the first indictment only, and Sir Herbert Templewood stood up to address the jury.

Sir Herbert knew very little about the case when he did get up, but his junior did, and what Mr. Braecroft didn't know he got from the crown solicitor, who sat behind the barristers' table, ready to lean forward at the slightest indication and supply any points which were required. So assisted, Sir Herbert ambled comfortably along, reserving his showy paces for the cross-examination of witnesses for the defense.

Sir Herbert commenced by describing the case as a straightforward one which would offer no difficulty to an intelligent jury. It was true that it rested on circumstantial evidence, but that evidence was of the strongest nature and pointed so clearly in the one direction, that the jury could come to no other conclusion than that the prisoner at the bar had committed the murder with which he stood charged.

With this preamble, the crown prosecutor proceeded to relate the circumstantial evidence against the accused, with the deliberate logic of the legal brain, piecing together incidents, interpreting clues, probing motives, and fashioning the whole tremendous apparatus of circumstantial evidence with the intent air of a man building an unbreakable cage for a wild beast. As Colwyn had anticipated, the incident at the breakfast table of the Durrington hotel was dropped from the prosecution's case.

That part of the presentment was confined to the statement that Penreath had registered at the hotel under a wrong name, and had left without paying his bill. The first fact suggested that the accused had something to hide; the second established a motive for the subsequent murder.

Sir Herbert Templewood concluded his address in less than an hour, and proceeded to call evidence for the prosecution. There were nine witnesses: that strangely assorted pair, the inn-keeper and Charles, the deaf waiter;

Ann, the servant; the two men who had recovered Mr. Glenthorpe's body from the pit; the Heathfield doctor, who testified as to the cause of death; Superintendent Galloway, who gave the court the result of the joint investigations of the chief constable and himself at the inn; Police Constable Queensmead, who described the arrest; and Inspector Fredericks, of Norwich, who was in charge of the Norwich station when the accused was taken there from Flegne. In order to save another witness being called, counsel for the defense admitted that the accused man had registered at the Grand Hotel, Durrington, under a wrong name, and left without paying his bill.

Mr. Middleheath cross-examined none of the witnesses for the prosecution except the last one. Counsel's cross-examination of Inspector Fredericks consisted of two questions, intended to throw light on the accused's state of mind after his arrest. Inspector Frederick declared that, in his opinion, Penreath was quite calm and rational.

Mr. Middleheath's opening address to the jury for the defense was brief and, to sharp legal ears, vague and unconvincing. Although he pointed out that the evidence was purely circumstantial and that, in the absence of direct testimony, the accused was entitled to the benefit of any reasonable doubt, he did not attempt to controvert the statements of the crown witnesses or suggest that the prosecution had not established its case. His address, combined with the fact that he had not cross-examined any of the crown witnesses, suggested to the listening lawyers that he either had a very strong defense or none at all. The point was left in suspense for the time being by Mr. Justice Redington suggesting that, in view of the lateness of the hour, counsel should defer calling evidence for the defense until the following day. As a judicial suggestion is a command,

the court was adjourned accordingly, the judge first warning the jury not to try to come to any conclusion or form an opinion as to what their verdict should be, until they had heard the evidence for the prisoner.

When the case was continued next day the first witness called for the defense was Doctor Robert Greydon, an elderly country practitioner, who stated that he practised at Twelvetrees, Berkshire, and was the family doctor of the Penreath family. In reply to Mr. Middleheath he stated that he had frequently attended the late Lady Penreath, the mother of the accused, for fits or seizures from which she suffered periodically, and that the London specialist who had been called into consultation on the occasion had agreed with him that the seizures were epileptic.

"I want to give every latitude to the defense," said Sir Herbert Templewood, rising in dignified protest, "but I am afraid I cannot permit this conversation to go in. My learned friend must call the London specialist if he wants to get it in."

"I will waive the point, as my learned friend objects," said Mr. Middleheath, satisfied that he had "got it in" the jury's ears. "I will content myself with asking Doctor Greydon whether, from his own knowledge, Lady Penreath suffered from epilepsy."

"Undoubtedly," replied the witness.

"One moment," said the judge, looking up from his notes. "Where is this evidence tending, Mr. Middleheath?"

"My lord," replied Mr. Middleheath solemnly, "I wish the court to know all the facts on which we rely."

The judge bowed his head and waved his gold fountain pen as an indication that the examination might proceed. The witness said that Lady Penreath was undoubtedly an epileptic and suffered from attacks extending over twenty years, commencing when her only son was five years old, and con-

tinuing till her death ten years ago. For some years the attacks were slight, without convulsions, but gradually the disease became well developed, and several attacks in rapid succession ultimately caused her death. In the witness's opinion epilepsy was a hereditary disease, frequently transmitted to the offspring if either or both parents suffered from it.

"Have you ever seen any signs of epilepsy in Lady Penreath's son—the prisoner at the bar?" asked Sir Herbert, who began to divine the direction of the defense.

"Never," replied the witness.

"Was he under your care in his infancy and boyhood? I mean, were you called in to attend to his youthful ailments?"

"Yes, until he went to school."

"And was he a normal and healthy boy?"

"Quite."

"Have you seen him lately?" asked Mr. Middleheath, rising to reexamine.

"Yes."

"And did you then notice a marked change in him?"

"Very marked indeed. He struck me as odd and forgetful at times, and occasionally he seemed momentarily to lose touch with his surroundings. He used to be very bright and good-tempered, but recently he has been irritable and moody, nervous, and very silent."

The little doctor was then permitted to leave the box and depart for his native obscurity of Twelvetrees. He had served his purpose, so far as Mr. Middleheath was concerned.

Sir Herbert and every other lawyer in court were by now aware that the counsels for the defense were unable to refute the evidence of the Crown, but were going to fight for a verdict of insanity. Such a defense usually resolves itself into a battle between medical experts and the counsel engaged, the prosecutor endeavoring to upset the

medical evidence for the defense with medical evidence in rebuttal.

The lawyers in court settled back with a new enjoyment at the prospect of the legal and medical hair-splitting and quibbling which invariably accompanies an encounter of this kind, and crown counsel and solicitors displayed sudden activity. Sir Herbert Templewood and Mr. Braecroft held a whispered consultation, and then Mr. Braecroft passed a note to the crown solicitor, who hurried from the court and presently returned carrying a formidable pile of dusty volumes, which he placed in front of junior counsel. The most uninterested person in court seemed the man in the dock, who sat looking into vacancy with a bored expression on his handsome face, as if he were indifferent to the fight on which his existence depended.

The next witness was Miss Constance Willoughby, who gave her testimony in low, clear tones and with perfect self-possession. It was observed by the feminine element in court that she did not look at her fiancé, but kept her eyes steadily fixed on Mr. Middleheath. Her story was a straightforward and simple one. She had seen Mr. Penreath, to whom she was engaged, several weeks before the date of the murder. He had then been moody and depressed, and had had lapses into absent-mindedness and periods of intense nervousness. She did not question him about his illness, as she thought he did not want to talk about it. He told her he intended to go away for a change until he felt well again. He had not made up his mind where to go, but he thought somewhere on the east coast, where it was cool and bracing, would suit him best. He would write to her, he said, as soon as he settled anywhere. She did not see him again and did not hear from him or know anything of his movements till she read his description in a London paper as that of a man

wanted by the Norfolk police for murder. Her aunt, who showed her the paper, communicated with the Penreaths' solicitor, Mr. Oakham. The following day she and her aunt were taken to Heathfield and identified the accused.

"Your aunt took action to allay your anxiety, I understand?" said Mr. Heathfield, whose watchful eye had noted the unfavorable effect of this statement on the jury.

The witness bowed.

"Yes," she replied. "I was terribly anxious, as I had not heard from Mr. Penreath since he went away. Anything was better than the suspense."

"You say accused was moody and depressed when you saw him?" asked Sir Herbert.

"Yes."

"May I take it that there was nothing terrifying in his behavior—nothing to indicate that he was not in his right mind?"

"No," replied the witness slowly. "He did not frighten me, but I was concerned about him. He certainly looked ill, and I thought he seemed a little strange."

"As though he had something on his mind?" suggested Sir Herbert.

"Yes," said the witness.

"Were you aware that the accused, when you saw him before he departed for Norfolk, was very short of money?"

"I was not. If I had known——"

"You would have helped him—is that what you were going to say?" asked Mr. Middleheath, as Sir Herbert resumed his seat without pursuing the point.

"My aunt would have helped Mr. Penreath if she had known he was in monetary difficulties."

"Thank you." Mr. Middleheath sat down, pulling his gown over his shoulders.

The witness left the stand.

The appearance of Sir Henry Dur-

wood as the next witness indicated to crown counsel that the principal card for the defense was about to be played. Sir Henry represented the highest trump in Mr. Middleheath's hand, and if he could not score with him the game was lost.

Sir Henry seemed not unconscious of his importance to the case, as he stepped into the stand and bowed to the judge with bland professional equality. His evidence was short but to the point, and amounted to a recapitulation of the statement he had made to Colwyn in Penreath's bedroom on the morning of the episode in the breakfast room of the Grand Hotel, Durrington. Sir Henry related the events of that morning for the benefit of the jury, and in sonorous tones expressed his professional opinion that the accused's strange behavior on that occasion was the result of an attack of epilepsy—*petit mal*, combined with *furor epilepticus*.

The witness defined epilepsy as a disease of the nervous system, marked by attacks of unconsciousness, with or without convulsions. The loss of consciousness, with severe convulsive seizures, was known as *grand mal*; the transient loss of consciousness, without convulsive seizures, was called *petit mal*. Attacks of *petit mal* might come off at any time, and were usually accompanied by a feeling of faintness and vertigo. The general symptoms were sudden jerkings of the limbs, sudden tremors, giddiness, and unconsciousness. The eyes became fixed, the face slightly pale, sometimes very red, and there was frequently some almost automatic action. In *grand mal* there was always warning of an attack; in *petit mal* there was no warning, as a rule, but sometimes premonitory giddiness and restlessness. *Furor epilepticus* was a medical term applied to the violence displayed during attacks of *petit mal*, a violence which was much greater than that of extreme anger, and under its

influence the subject was capable of committing the most violent outrages, even murder, without being conscious of the act.

"There is no doubt in your mind that the accused man had an attack of *petit mal* in the breakfast room of the Durrington hotel the morning before the murder?" asked Mr. Middleheath.

"None whatever. All the symptoms pointed to it. He was sitting at the breakfast table when he suddenly ceased eating and his eyes grew fixed. The knife which he held in his hand was dropped, but as the attack increased he picked it up again and thrust it into the table in front of him—a purely automatic action, in my opinion. When he sprang up from the table a little while afterward, he was under the influence of the epileptic fury and would have made a violent attack on the people sitting at the next table if I had not seized him. Unconsciousness then supervened, and, with the aid of another of the hotel guests, I carried him to his room. It was there I noticed foam on his lips. When he returned to consciousness he had no recollection of what had occurred, which is consistent with an epileptic seizure. I saw that his condition was dangerous, and urged him to send for his friends, but he refused to do so."

"It would have been better if he had followed your advice. You say that it is consistent with epilepsy for him to have had no recollection of what occurred during this seizure in the hotel breakfast room. What would a man's condition of mind be if, during an attack of *petit mal*, he committed an act of violence, say murder, for example?"

"The mind is generally a complete blank. Sometimes there is a confused sense of something, but the patient has no recollection of what has occurred, in my experience."

"In this case the prisoner is charged with murder. Could he have committed



this offense during another attack of *furor epilepticus* and recollect nothing about it afterward? Is that consistent?"

"Yes, quite consistent," replied the witness.

"Is epilepsy a hereditary disease?"

"Yes."

"And if both parents, or one of them, suffered from epilepsy, would there be a great risk of the children suffering from it?"

"Every risk in the case of both persons being affected; some probability in the case of one."

"Thank you, Sir Henry."

Mr. Middleheath resumed his seat, and Sir Herbert Templewood got up to cross-examine.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE END OF THE TRIAL.

NOT only did Sir Henry Templewood disbelieve the evidence of the specialist, but he did not think the witness believed in it either. Sir Herbert did not think any the worse of the witness on that account. It was one of the recognized rules of the game to allow witnesses to stretch a point or two in favor of the defense, where the social honor of highly respectable families was involved.

Sir Herbert saw in the present defense the fact that the hand of his venerable friend, Mr. Oakham, had not lost its cunning. Mr. Oakham was a very respectable solicitor, acting for a very respectable client, and he had called a very respectable Harley Street specialist—who, by a most fortuitous circumstance had been staying at the same hotel as the accused, shortly before the murder was committed—to convince the jury that the young man was insane, and that his form of insanity was epilepsy, a disease which had prolonged lucid intervals.

Sir Herbert made one mistake in his analysis of the defense. Sir Henry

Durwood, at least, believed in his own evidence, and took himself very seriously as a specialist. Like most stupid men who have got somewhere in life, Sir Henry became self-assertive under the least semblance of contradiction, and he grew violent and red-faced under cross-examination. He would not hear of the possibility of a mistake in his diagnosis of the accused's symptoms, but insisted that the accused, when the witness saw him at the Durrington hotel, was suffering from an epileptic seizure, combined with *furor epilepticus*, and was in a state of mind which made him a menace to his fellow creatures. It was true Sir Henry qualified his statements with the words "so far as my observation goes," but the qualification was given in a manner which suggested to the jury that five minutes of Sir Henry Durwood's observation were worth a month's of a dozen ordinary medical men.

Sir Henry's vehement insistence on his infallibility struck Sir Herbert as a flagrant violation of the rules of the game. He did not accept the protestations as genuine; he thought Sir Henry was overdoing his part and playing to the gallery. He grew nettled also, and with a sudden access of vigor in his tone, said:

"You told my learned friend that it is quite consistent with the prisoner's malady that he could have committed the crime with which he stands charged, and remember nothing about it afterwards. Is that a fact?"

"Certainly."

"In that case, will you kindly explain how the prisoner came to leave the inn hurriedly, before anybody was up, the morning after the murder was committed? Why should he run away if he had no recollection of his act?"

"I must object to my learned friend describing the accused's departure from the inn as 'running away,'" said Mr. Middleheath, with a bland smile of pro-

test. "It is highly improper, as nobody knows better than the crown prosecutor, and calculated to convey an altogether erroneous impression on the minds of the jury. There is not the slightest evidence to support such a statement. The evidence is that he saw the servant and paid his bill before departure. That is not running away."

"Very well; I will say hastened away," replied Sir Herbert impatiently. "Why should the accused hasten away from the inn if he retained no recollection of the events of the night?"

"He may have had a hazy recollection," replied Sir Henry. "Not of the act itself, but of strange events happening to him in the night—something like a bad dream, but more vivid. He may have found something unusual—such as wet clothes or muddy boots—for which he could not account. Then he would begin to wonder, and then, perhaps, there would come a hazy recollection of some trivial detail. Then, as he came to himself, he would begin to grow alarmed, and his impulse, as his normal mind returned to him, would be to leave the place where he was, as soon as he could. This restlessness is a characteristic of epilepsy. In my opinion, it was this vague alarm, on finding himself in a position for which he could not account, which was the cause of the accused's leaving the Durrington hotel. His last recollection, as he told me at the time, was entering the breakfast room; he came to his senses in his bedroom, with strangers about him."

"Does not recollection return completely in attacks of *petit mal*?"

"Sometimes it does; sometimes not. I remember a case in my student days where an epileptic violently assaulted a man in the street—almost murdered him, in fact—then assaulted a man who tried to detain him, ran away, and remembered nothing about it afterwards."

"Is it consistent with *petit mal*, com-

bined with *furor epilepticus*, for a man to commit murder, conceal the body of his victim, and remember nothing about it afterwards?"

"Quite consistent, though the probability is, as I said before, for him to have some hazy recollection when he came to his senses, which would lead to his leaving that place as quickly as he could."

"Would it be consistent with *petit mal* for a man to take a weapon away beforehand, and then, during a sudden fit of *petit mal*, use it upon the unfortunate victim?"

"If he took the weapon for another purpose, it is quite possible that he might use it afterwards."

"I should like to have that a little clearer," said the judge, interposing. "Do you mean, to get the weapon for another, possibly quite innocent purpose, and then use it for an act of violence?"

"Yes, my lord," replied Sir Henry. "That is quite consistent with an attack of *petit mal*."

"When a man has periodical attacks of *petit mal*, would it not be possible, by observation of him between the attacks, or when he was suffering from the attacks, to tell whether he had a tendency to them?"

"No, only in a very few and exceptional cases."

"In your opinion epilepsy is a hereditary disease?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Are you aware that certain eminent French specialists are of the opinion that hereditary influences play a very small part in epilepsy?"

"That may be." Sir Henry dismissed the views of the French physicians with a condescending wave of his fat white hand.

"That does not alter your own opinion?"

"Certainly not."

"And do you say that because this

man's mother suffered from epilepsy the chances are that he is suffering from it?"

"Pardon me, I said nothing of the kind. I think the chances are that he would have a highly organized nervous system, and would probably suffer from some nervous disease."

"How often do attacks of *petit mal* occur?" asked Sir Herbert.

"They vary considerably, according to the patient—sometimes once a week, sometimes monthly; and there have been cases in which the attacks are separated by months."

"Are not two attacks in twenty-four hours unprecedented?"

"Unusual, but not unprecedented. The excitement of going from one place to another and walking miles to get there would be a predisposing factor. Prisoner would have been suffering from the effects of the first attack when he left the Durrington hotel, and the excitement of the change and the fatigue of walking all day would have been very prejudicial to him, and account for the second and more violent attack."

"How long do the after-effects last—of an attack of *petit mal*, I mean?"

"It depends on the violence of the attack. Sometimes as long as five or six hours. The recovery is generally attended with general lassitude."

"There is no evidence to show that the prisoner displayed any symptoms of epilepsy before the attack which you witnessed at the Durrington hotel. Is it not unusual for a person to reach the age of twenty-eight or thereabouts without showing any previous signs of a disease like epilepsy?"

"There must be a first attack—that goes without saying," interposed the judge, testily.

That concluded the cross-examination. Mr. Middleheath, in re-examination, asked Sir Henry whether foam at

the lips was a distinguishing mark of epilepsy.

"It generally indicates an epileptic tendency," replied Sir Henry.

Sir Herbert Templewood, on behalf of the Crown, proceeded to call rebutting medical evidence to support the Crown contention that the accused was sane and aware of the nature of his acts. The first witness was Doctor Henry Manton, of Heathfield, who said he saw the accused when he was brought into the station from Flegne by Police Constable Queensmead. He seemed perfectly rational, though disinclined to talk.

"Did you find any symptom upon him which pointed to his having recently suffered from epilepsy of any kind?" asked Sir Herbert.

"No."

"Do you agree with Sir Henry Durrington that between attacks of epilepsy, the patient would exhibit no signs of the disease?" asked Mr. Middleheath.

"What do you mean by 'between the attacks?'"

"I mean when he had completely recovered from one fit and before the next came on," explained counsel.

"I quite agree with that," replied the witness.

"How long does it usually take for a man to recover from an attack of epilepsy?"

"It depends on the severity of the attack."

"Well, take an attack serious enough to cause a man to commit murder."

"It may take hours—five or six hours. He would certainly be drowsy and heavy for three or four hours afterward."

"But not longer—he would not show symptoms for thirty-six hours?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, may I take it from you, doctor, that, after the five or six hours' recovery after a bad attack, an epileptic might show no signs of the disease

—not even to medical eyes—till the next attack?”

“I should say so,” replied the witness. “But I am not an authority on mental diseases.”

“Thank you.”

The next witness was Doctor Gilbert Horbury, who described himself as medical officer of His Majesty's prison, Norwich, and formerly medical officer of the London detention prison. In reply to Sir Herbert Templewood, he said he had had much experience in cases of insanity and alleged insanity. He had had the accused in the present case under observation since the time he had been brought to the jail. He was very taciturn, but quiet and gentlemanly in his behavior. His temperature and pulse were normal, but he slept badly, and twice he complained of pains in the head. Witness had seen no signs which suggested, to his mind, that prisoner was an epileptic. In reply to a direct question by Sir Herbert Templewood, he expressed his deliberate professional opinion that accused was not suffering from epilepsy in any form. Epilepsy did not start off with a bad attack ending in violence—or murder. There were first premonitory symptoms and slight attacks extending over a considerable period.

From this point of view the witness, a dour, gray man, refused to be driven by cross-examination. He contrived, too, to convey the impression that his own observation of accused, covering a period of nine days, was a better guide for the jury in arriving at a conclusion as to the accused's state of mind than Sir Henry's opinion, formed after a single and limited opportunity of diagnosing the case. He also managed to infer, in a gentlemanly professional way, that Sir Henry Durwood was deservedly eminent in the medical world as a nerve specialist rather than as a mental specialist, whereas witness' own experience in mental cases had been

very wide. He talked learnedly of the difficulty of diagnosing epilepsy except after prolonged observation, and cited lengthily from big books—which a court constable brought into court one by one—on symptoms, reflex causes, auras, *grand mal*, *petit mal*, Jacksonian epilepsy, and the like.

The only admission of any value that Mr. Middleheath could extract from Doctor Horbury was a statement that while he had seen no symptoms in the prisoner to suggest that the latter was an epileptic, epileptics did not, as a rule, show symptoms of the disease between attacks.

“Therefore, assuming the fact that Penreath is subject to epilepsy, you would not expect to find any symptoms of the disease during the time he was awaiting trial?” asked Mr. Middleheath, eagerly following up the opening.

“Possibly nothing that one could swear to,” rejoined the witness, in an exceedingly dry tone.

Mr. Middleheath essayed no more questions but got the witness out of the box as quickly as possible, trusting to his own address to remove the effect of the evidence on the mind of the jury. At the outset of that address he pointed out that the case for the Crown rested upon purely circumstantial evidence, and that nobody had seen prisoner commit the murder with which he was charged. The main portion of his remarks was directed to convincing the jury that the prisoner was the unhappy victim of epileptic attacks, in which he was not responsible for his actions. Mr. Middleheath scouted the theory of motive, as put forward by the Crown. It was not fair to suggest that the treasury note which the accused paid to the servant at the inn was necessarily part of the dead man's money which had disappeared on the night of the murder and had not since been recovered. The fact that accused had been turned out of the Grand Hotel, Durrington, for not

paying his hotel bill, was put forward by the Crown, as demonstrating that he was in a penniless condition, but that assumption went too far. It might well be that a man of accused's social standing would have a pound or two in his pocket, although he might not be able to meet a hotel bill of thirty pounds.

"Can you conceive of this young man, this heir to an old and honorable name, with everything in life to look forward to, committing an atrocious murder for three hundred pounds?" continued Mr. Middleheath. "The traditions of his name and race, his upbringing forbid the sordid possibility. Moreover, he had no need to commit a crime to obtain money. His father, his friends, or the woman who was to be his wife, would have instantly supplied him with the money he needed, if they had known he was in want. To a young man in his station of life three hundred pounds is a comparatively small sum. Is it likely that he would have committed murder to obtain it?"

"On the other hand, the prisoner's recent actions strongly suggest that his mind has been giving way for some time past. The fatal taint of inherited epilepsy, which was in his blood, has begun to manifest itself. His family doctor and his fiancée have told you that his behavior was strange before he left for Norfolk; since coming to Norfolk it has been unmistakably that of a man who is no longer sane. Was it the conduct of a sane man to conceal his whereabouts from his friends and stay at a hotel, without money, till he was turned out, when he might have had plenty of money, or at all events saved himself the humiliation of being turned out of the hotel, at the cost of a telegram? And why did he subsequently go miles across country to a remote and wretched inn, where he had never been before, and beg for a bed for the night? Were these the acts of a sane man?"

In his peroration Mr. Middleheath

laid particular emphasis on the evidence of Sir Henry Durwood, whose name was known throughout England as one of the most eminent specialists of his day. Sir Henry, Mr. Middleheath pointed out, had seen the prisoner in a fit at the Durrington hotel, and he had emphatically declared that the accused was an epileptic, with homicidal tendencies. Such an opinion, coming from such a quarter, was, to Mr. Middleheath's mind, incontrovertible proof of the prisoner's insanity, and he did not see how the jury could go behind it in coming to a decision.

Sir Herbert Templewood's address consisted of a dry marshaling of the facts for and against the theory of insanity. Sir Herbert contended that the defense had failed to establish their contention that the accused man was not in his right mind. He impressed upon the jury the decided opinion of Doctor Horbury, who, as physician of the metropolitan receiving jail, had probably a wider experience of epilepsy and insanity than any specialist in the world. Doctor Horbury, after nine days' close observation of the accused, had come to the conclusion that he was perfectly sane and responsible for his actions.

Mr. Justice Redington commenced his summing up by informing the jury that in the first place they must be satisfied that the prisoner was the person who killed Mr. Glenthrope. He did not think they would have much difficulty on that head, because, although the evidence was purely circumstantial, it pointed strongly to the accused, and the defense had not seriously contested the charge. Therefore, if they were satisfied that the accused did cause the death of Mr. Glenthrope, the only question that remained for them to decide was the state of the prisoner's mind at the time. If they were satisfied that he was not, however, insane at the time, they must find him guilty of murder. If they came to the conclusion that he was

insane at the time he committed the act, they would return a verdict that he was guilty of the act charged against him, but that he was insane at the time.

His lordship painstakingly defined the difference between sanity and insanity in the eyes of the law; but, though his precise and legal definition called forth appreciative glances from the lawyers below him, it is doubtful whether the jury were much wiser for the explanation. After reviewing the evidence for the prosecution at considerable length, his lordship then proceeded, with judicial impartiality, to state the case for the defense. The case for the prisoner, he said, was that he had been strange or eccentric for some time previous, that his eccentricity deepened into homicidal insanity, and that he committed the act of which he stood charged, while suffering under an attack of epilepsy, which produced a state of mind that led the sufferer to commit an act of violence without understanding what he was doing. In view of the nature of this defense the jury were bound to look into the prisoner's family and hereditary history, and into his own acts before the murder, before coming to a conclusion as to his state of mind.

The defense, he thought, had proved sufficient to enable the jury to draw the conclusion that Lady Penreath, the mother of the prisoner, was an epileptic. The assertion that the prisoner himself was an epileptic rested upon the evidence of Sir Henry Durwood, for the evidence of Miss Willoughby and the family doctor went no further than to suggest a slight strangeness or departure from the prisoner's usual demeanor. Sir Henry Durwood, by reason of his professional standing, was entitled to be received with respect, but he had himself admitted that he had had no previous opportunity of diagnosing the case of the accused, and that it was difficult to form an exact opinion in

a disease like epilepsy. Doctor Horbury, on the other hand, had declared that the prisoner showed nothing symptomatic of epilepsy while awaiting remand. In Doctor Horbury's opinion, he was not an epileptic. Therefore the case resolved itself into a direct conflict of medical testimony.

"The contention for the defense," continued his lordship, leaning forward and punctuating his words with sharp taps of his fountain pen on the desk in front of him, is this: 'Look at this case fairly and clearly and you are bound to come to the conclusion that this man is not in a sound frame of mind.' The prosecution, on the other hand, say: 'The facts of this case do not point to insanity at all, but to deliberate murder for gain.' The defense urge further: 'You have got to look at the probabilities. No man in the prisoner's position, a gentleman by birth and upbringing, the heir of an old and proud name, with a hitherto unblemished reputation and the prospects of a long and not inconspicuous career in front of him, would, if in his senses, have murdered this old man.' That is a matter for you to consider, because we do know that brutal crimes are committed by the most unlikely persons. But the prosecution also allege motive, and you must consider the question of motive. It is suggested—and it is for you to consider whether rightly or wrongly suggested—that there was a motive in killing this man, because the prisoner was absolutely penniless and wanted to get money.

"Gentlemen, you will first apply your minds to considering all the evidence, and you will next consider whether you are satisfied that the prisoner knew the difference between right and wrong so far as the act with which he is charged is concerned. You must decide whether he knew the nature and quality of the act, and whether he knew the difference between that act being right,

and that act being wrong. The law presumes him to be of sane mind and able to distinguish between right and wrong, and it is for him to satisfy you, if he is to escape responsibility for this act, that he could not tell whether it was right or wrong. If you are satisfied of that, you ought to say that he is guilty of the act alleged but insane at the time it was committed. If you are not satisfied on that point, then it is your duty to find him guilty of murder. Gentlemen, you will kindly retire and consider your verdict."

The jury retired, and there ensued a period of tension, which the lawyers employed in discussing the technicalities of the case and the probabilities of an acquittal. Mr. Oakman thought an acquittal was a certainty, but Mr. Middleheath, with a deeper knowledge of the ways of provincial juries, declared that the defense would have stood a better chance of success before a London jury, because Londoners had more imagination than other Englishmen.

"You never can tell how a muddle-headed country jury will decide a highly technical case like this," said Sir Herbert peevishly. "I've lost stronger cases than this before a Norfolk jury. Norfolk men are clannish, and Horbury's evidence carried weight. He is a Norfolk man, though he has worked in

London. One never knows, of course. If the jury remain out over an hour I think we will pull it off."

But the jury returned into court after an absence of forty minutes. The judge, who was waiting in his private room, was informed, and he entered the court and resumed his seat. The jury answered to their names, and then the clerk of arraigns, in a sing-song voice, said:

"Gentlemen, have you agreed upon your verdict? Do you find the prisoner guilty or-not guilty of willful murder?"

"Guilty!" answered the foreman, in a loud, clear voice.

"You say that he is guilty of murder, and that is the verdict of you all?"

"That is the verdict of us all," was the response.

"James Ronald Penreath," continued the clerk, turning to the accused man, and speaking in the same sing-song tones of one who repeated a formula by rote, "you stand convicted of the crime of willful murder. Have you anything to say for yourself, why the court should not give you judgment of death according to law?"

The man in the dock, who had turned very pale, merely shook his head.

The judge, with expressionless face and in an expressionless voice, pronounced sentence of death.

**To be continued in the next issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, out next Tuesday, December 17th. Do not forget that, as the magazine comes out every week, you will not have long to wait for further chapters of this exceptional serial.**

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## LAW VERSUS WEALTH

**WE** sometimes hear it said that justice at the present time is such that it favors always the rich, and that if a man has sufficient money, he can generally have sentence for almost any offense which he commits, at least lightened, if not suspended. If such be the case—we will not attempt to discuss it here—there is a certain similarity to former times, for, according to old Roman law, a citizen was inviolable. Before he could receive corporal punishment he must be reduced to the rank of a slave; while in France, during the Middle Ages, a noble could not be punished until he had been reduced from his rank.

# *Without Influence*

*& Harry M. Dean*

**A** LITTLE bell tinkled very softly and Stanlaw, sitting in his cozy den, reading, promptly came to attention. He knew a window was being raised somewhere below stairs. He was sure he was to have a visitor. He had expected, even hoped for, this man to put in his appearance for the past several nights. Now he had come. Stanlaw knew that, just as he knew the exact reason for his coming.

Herbert Stanlaw was a man a little past thirty years of age—a tall, straight, athletic individual, with a rather handsome face, tanned to a rich brown by much living in the open; a broad forehead, black hair, and keen, dark eyes. He had about him the air of a man who enjoys life immensely—of one who was in the habit of extracting a large amount of enjoyment from the little, everyday things, as well as from the ones of greater proportions.

He was wealthy, educated, and had traveled much, often pushing his way to some little-known spot of the earth, seeking rare curios and studying the language and customs of some almost-extinct people. He still was a student and spent much of his time in investigation—anything which offered a new angle of research. This work often led him along strange lines and brought to him many amusing experiences.

Stanlaw now had laid aside his book and sat tensely listening. From somewhere below stairs he caught a faint, almost imperceptible sound—like the tread of a cat that stalks a mouse.

He snapped off the switch of his reading lamp, leaving the room in dark-

ness. Some one was creeping softly up the stairs. Then the waiting man heard the sluff-sluff of soft-soled shoes along the hall.

Now Stanlaw knew the intruder must pass his door before entering any one of the second-floor rooms. He waited, breathing softly, as he listened to the man making his almost noiseless way along the hall.

Suddenly Stanlaw saw a denser blur in the darkness that choked the doorway leading to the hall. Once more his hand found the switch, gave this a turn, and the room suddenly was flooded with a blinding white light.

There, framed in the doorway, stood a man. The lower part of his face was covered by a black mask, his cap was pulled low over his eyes, but he was blinking in the sudden, staggering glare.

Stanlaw still sat in his chair beside his reading table, his right arm outstretched, a heavy automatic pistol in his hand, carefully covering the man before him.

"Come in," he said pleasantly.

The burglar stumbled forward and Stanlaw motioned him to a chair. When he was seated, Stanlaw continued:

"No doubt, my friend, you know something about guns. If you do, you will recognize the one which I have trained on you at present as being of a very fast, very deadly type. I dislike to pay myself the compliment but I will say that I know how to use it. Last year I won first honors in the tri-State revolver shoot. Now, may I trouble you for any weapons which you may happen to have concealed about



your person? Remember, no tricks, either."

For a moment the burglar looked steadily into Stanlaw's eyes. He evidently saw in the calm, cool man before him one with whom it would be folly to trifle, for he brought forth from his coat pockets a blackjack and a pistol, the latter almost identical with that which Stanlaw was holding. He threw the blackjack on the table, then extended the pistol, butt first, to Stanlaw, making a mock bow as he did so.

Stanlaw took the gun and placed it on the table, his own close beside it.

"That is better," said he. "I think we can talk now without danger of interruption."

"Well, since you have me at your mercy," the stranger began, "I suppose the next thing for you to do is to call in the police."

"Oh, no," Stanlaw assured him, "the next thing for me to do is to ask you to remove your cap and mask."

His fingers toyed with the butt of the heavy automatic.

Without a moment's hesitation the man removed his cap and took away the piece of black cloth which had concealed the lower part of his face.

Stanlaw noted, with a little thrill of satisfaction, that this was not the ordinary type of burglar. The fellow was well dressed and he had about him an unmistakable air of refinement. His face was rather sharp and he had a thin, straight nose, reddish-brown hair, and bold, brown eyes. His lips were thin, almost colorless, and his mouth drooped slightly at the corners. His well-kept hands, with their long, slender fingers, were as white and shapely as those of a woman. They were the hands of an artist almost.

"And now, my friend," Stanlaw was saying, "I can tell you that, in so far as you are concerned, I have no business with the police. I shall deal with you alone."

"What! Don't you mean to turn 'em loose on me?"

Genuine amazement expressed itself in the man's words.

"That is exactly the meaning I tried to convey," Stanlaw replied. "You see, I rather welcome your coming. I took your gun simply as a matter of precaution. I know exactly what you have come for, but I cannot know to what means you might resort in order to achieve your ends."

"I fail to get you exactly," the burglar confessed.

"You know, do you not, that I have in my possession a very valuable ruby—a stone that has quite a history—and one that you would, no doubt, prize very highly?"

"I do."

"And you've come for that ruby?"

"Frankly speaking, I have."

"And, just as frankly speaking, it is yours."

"What!"

Again amazement was written large in the burglar's face.

"I said the ruby was yours. It now rests in that cabinet over there in the corner, third drawer from the top, right-hand side. Remember the location. I shall ask you to go for it in a little while."

The man sat speechless. He plainly showed that this was something he had not expected.

"But," Stanlaw continued, "before you go for the ruby I wish to tell you a little story. I assure you it will not take a great while, and, as you still have the greater part of the night before you, need have no fear of the police, and—I trust—are quite comfortable, I can see no reason why you should object to listening.

"You see, I wish to make this thing perfectly clear to you; and, as this story, which I am about to relate, has to do with this same ruby, it is one which you should know, since you in-

tend to have the stone in your possession when you leave this room."

The man settled himself more comfortably in his chair and smiled, saying: "Go to it."

Stanlaw pushed matches and a pack of cigarettes across the table toward the burglar, at the same time lighting one himself. He then went on:

"A good many years ago, when my great-grandfather was a young man, he, in company with three others of an equally adventurous nature, were traveling in the interior of China, and while there they heard of a mandarin in one of the upper provinces who possessed what was said to be the finest ruby in the whole world.

"Now I am going to be entirely frank with you, and while one always should speak reverently of the dead, I am going to tell you that my great-grandfather was a bad sort. He was a man who, when he really wanted a thing, would stop at nothing which would aid him to carry out his desire.

"Well, as I said, my great-grandfather and his companions heard of this wonderful ruby. Of course my ancestor wanted it, as did each of the others. But they pooled their interests and started out to get the stone, my great-grandfather trusting that, by fair means or foul, it would come into his hands in the end.

"When the four adventurers reached the city wherein lived the mandarin who owned the wonderful ruby, they found that it was going to be a difficult task to obtain an audience with the old gentleman, to say nothing of getting a glimpse of the famous ruby.

"The mandarin was a very old man. He had come to be looked upon as a prophet by his people, and thus was held in great esteem.

"At last, however, by some method known only to themselves, the adventurers obtained an audience with the mandarin. Arriving at his house, a

servant showed them into an almost bare room where, on a low divan, reclined a man of incalculable age. His yellow skin was dry and seamed and cracked like leather that has been exposed to the elements for a long period of time. His hair was gone and his hands, with their thin, bony fingers and long, pointed nails, were like the talons of some bird of prey. His legs were withered and he could not walk, but in his eyes there burned an unquenchable fire, and his tongue still retained its powers. A great book lay open on the floor at his side, while the pungent odor of incense, burning in a tall censer, filled the room.

"My great-grandfather, who spent some little time in China and who knew a bit of the language, carried on the conversation with the old man. He told the mandarin they had heard of the wonderful ruby which he had in his possession, and asked that they be allowed to look upon the priceless stone.

"At this the old man became very much agitated. He replied that none but the faithful servants of his own gods had ever looked upon the sacred fire which burned in the heart of the ruby and which had been there since the beginning of the world.

"The ruby, so the old man said, had been given to the first man of his family, when the world was still young and the race but beginning, by the daughter of a great Chinese deity, who had found it one day while walking by the sea. There was not in the world enough money to buy it, and my great-grandfather, still insisting that he must see the ruby, was ordered from the place.

"At first he refused to go but suddenly something caused him to turn and glance to the rear. What he saw there seems to have brought about a swift decision. A curtain had parted in what before had appeared to be a portion of the wall of the room, and in that space there stood a man who was tall and

powerfully built—a giant almost—with a long, naked blade in his hand. The four adventurers, realizing that the moment for their departure had arrived, hastily left the room.

“Having the story of the wonderful ruby confirmed by the old mandarin himself only made them more determined to possess the stone, so they at once set about perfecting their plans for securing it.

“First they must arrange to get safely away. This they accomplished by securing the services of several natives of an adjoining province, who happened to be in the city at the time and who agreed, for a certain sum in gold, to guide them safely across the border.

“Then came the real problem of securing the ruby. How were they to enter the mandarin’s house? And how were they to find the stone, once they had forced an entrance, not knowing where it was concealed?

“Then it was that my great-grandfather, who seems to have possessed the brains of the party, decided that the only way to secure the stone would be to enter forcibly the mandarin’s room, slay the guard, if there was a guard, and then compel the old man to reveal the whereabouts of the ruby.

“Well, they succeeded in getting into the room. The big man again was there, but was surprised before he could defend himself. He went down at the first blow from the butt of a revolver in the hands of my great-grandfather. The old man, who still was on the divan, was quickly seized by one of the party, who clapped a heavy hand over his mouth, thus preventing any outcry.

“They then demanded the ruby, and the old mandarin, of course, refused to make known its whereabouts.

“Then, their anger running wild because they had been foiled at this point in the game, they began a system of torture calculated to make a man give up anything which he might possess, if by

so doing he would be able to allay the terrible agony which was being inflicted upon his body.

“First they stood the old man on his head for long periods of time, always demanding the ruby. When they found this was of no avail they tied his hands behind him, twisting his arms until they were almost torn from their sockets. Notwithstanding that the old man had told them such dogs as they could not inflict pain upon one protected by the gods as he was, his old, mummy-like face twisted itself into the most horrible grimaces, and it seemed that his eyeballs were being forced from their cavities.

“This also failed. Then they placed their victim in a chair; one of the men sat before him with a leveled revolver and counted off the time, swearing that at the tenth count he would fire.

“Several times they tried this, but it brought no results. They were growing tired, as well as desperate, so my great-grandfather told the old mandarin he should have but one more chance. He still refused to reveal the whereabouts of the stone, you see, and the adventurers well knew if they killed him they would never discover it. That was the only reason they had spared his life so long.

“This time they stretched the old man on the floor; my great-grandfather took a long, keen knife, held it directly over the heart and began to press down. The sharp point sank into the old mandarin’s flesh and blood began to flow from the wound, but still he would not speak.

“Then it was that my great-grandfather, becoming terribly angry, said with an oath that the old man should never speak again. With this he seized the mandarin’s tongue, drew it out to its full length, then severed it.

“And as he did so something fell from the old man’s mouth and rolled upon the floor. One of the party bent

down and picked up this thing. It was the great ruby, all wet and sticky!

"Then, though there were in the room only the four adventurers, the unconscious guard, and the old mandarin, who seemed to be breathing his last, there came a voice in their midst, and this voice, thin and high-pitched as had been that of the old man, put upon that stone a curse so terrible that the faces of all four of the men blanched with fear, though but one among them could understand the awful significance of the words uttered.

"Death, violent, hideous, damnable, he invoked upon whosoever should undertake to keep in his possession that stone. Upon some would death fall instantaneously; upon some would it come like a lingering, withering blight, causing them to pray for the release which would be for many, many days denied them.

"The man who had picked up the ruby suddenly crumpled in a heap on the floor. He died without a word. Then another of the adventurers, with an oath, tore the stone from the dead man's hand, wrapped it in a bit of oiled silk and concealed it about his person. With that he and the two others left hurriedly.

"On the way to the coast this man was bitten by a viper. He lived several days, tormented by an intense suffering, finally dying in great agony. This left but my great-grandfather and one other of the original quartet. This other man had taken the ruby from his dying companion.

"A few days later he was stricken with a slow fever, deserted and left to die in the jungle by my ancestor and the native guides. My great-grandfather had, of course, lifted the ruby, and he swore that he would get safely out of China with the precious stone—that no heathen curse could have power to bring harm to him.

"Well, he finally reached the United

States and went to his old home to live. Shortly after arriving there he died a very singular and painful death. His body appeared to have been burned from head to foot. The ruby then went to my grandfather. He took the stone to the river, intending to dispose of it by tossing it into the water. He was found some time later, drowned, and the ruby was picked up on the shore near the point where he was last seen alive. After this the stone went to an uncle of mine, then in succession to two of his sons. All have died sudden, and, in most cases, violent deaths. The stone now has come into my possession, and I am confident something of the sort will in a short time happen to me, unless I can dispose of the ill-fated thing."

There was silence in the room, save for the little clock on the mantel, that ticked out its monotonous measures of time.

"I think," Stanlaw said at last, "that is about all. If you are ready to do so, you may now get the ruby."

The man hesitated, looking at Stanlaw in a startled sort of way. Seeing this, Stanlaw took both guns from the table, dropped them into a coat pocket, then went to the cabinet in the corner of the room. He pulled out one of the small drawers and returned with it to the table. From this drawer he took a leather case, opened it, and there, wrapped in many folds of oiled silk, was the great ruby. He unwound the covering, exposing the stone to view.

"Take it up," he told the man.

The fellow did so, then dropped it quickly. His thumb and index finger, where they had come in contact with the stone, were stained the color of blood!

"Ugh!" He shivered, wiping his fingers on a handkerchief, which he then threw upon the floor. "You couldn't hire me to take that thing."

Without another word Stanlaw re-

wound the silken covering about the ruby, replaced it in its leather case, then dropped it back into the cabinet drawer.

"I think I'll be going," suddenly announced the burglar. "Since I've thought of it, I didn't come for your ruby, anyway. I merely thought I did. I wonder if you'd let me have my gun. Rather costly things now, you know."

"Certainly; take it along," Stanlaw told him, handing over the gun. "It looks like a good one, and you may have need of it some time. You can go out by way of the front door, as it is not fastened. Sorry you will not take the ruby. Good night."

The burglar immediately went through the doorway, and Stanlaw heard him hurrying along the hall and down the stairs. A little later the closing of the front door told him the man had gone.

Once more Stanlaw seated himself in his big armchair beside his reading table and lighted another cigarette.

"Well," he mused, "my friend, Jimmy Steele, certainly did an excellent job on that story he wrote for the *Sunday Courier*, in which he described the fabulous ruby which I was supposed to keep lying around as though it were a bit of colored glass.

"I was sure the story would bring some one, and it did—a fine specimen. The old ruby has practically no value but the story I told the man so impregnated him with a sense of fear that he would not have taken the thing for worlds. That was a brilliant idea of Steele's—putting the heavy, red ink on the stone. The fellow really believed it was blood.

"Anyway, to-morrow I must write my old friend, Professor Cosgrove, the result of my experiment, as this will be another link in the long chain of evidence which he already has gathered, and will add weight to his claim that

fear, especially fear of the supernatural, is the ruling element of the world."

Midnight came and Stanlaw decided he had best make the rounds of his lower floor before retiring. The window whereby the would-be burglar had entered must be attended to and the front door fastened.

With these things in mind he went down the stairs to the lower floor. First he entered his dining room, and the sight which fell upon his eyes there caused him to halt with a sharp gasp of astonishment.

Stanlaw always had been rather proud of his collection of old silver, cut glass, and rare and beautiful china, owning many pieces of value.

Practically everything worth taking was gone. A small safe, built into the wall and which had been concealed behind the buffet—wherein the more valuable pieces were kept—now stood open and empty.

Then it was that Stanlaw saw a note spread out on the dining table. It had been hastily scrawled with a lead pencil. Taking it up, he read:

DEAR FRIEND: I feel that I should not leave your house without first expressing a few words in appreciation of your kindness. That was a bully good story you told me about the old ruby. Of course I did not believe a word of it but it had a convincing ring, all right. Just as soon as I saw the ruby I knew it was worthless. It has a flaw in it a blind man ought to be able to discover. But, as you will have learned by this time, our little expedition has not been altogether without profit. While I was being so well entertained in your room, my partner was very busy below stairs. Thanks for giving him plenty of time. We both wish you better luck in the future.

Slowly the tense muscles relaxed and a smile spread itself over Stanlaw's face.

"Well," he said thoughtfully, "I guess I'll not write Cosgrove, after all. The joke seems to be on me!"

# The Winning Clew

by  
James Hay, Jr.

## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

IN the bungalow she occupies at Furmville with Maria Fulton, her sister, Mrs. George Withers is murdered and her jewels stolen. Lawrence Bristow, also a member of the Furmville resort for consumptives, is appointed by Chief of Police Greenleaf to investigate the crime. Sam Braceway, a famous Southern detective, in love with Miss Fulton, also takes up the case. His suspicions fasten upon Henry Morley, teller in a Washington bank, while Bristow is determined to convict Perry Carpenter, a negro. A statement from Lucy Thomas, Mrs. Withers' maid, and bits of white skin found under Perry's finger nails support Bristow's case against the negro. Roddy, a bell boy, tells Braceway that Morley entered the Brevord Hotel twice the night of the murder, once with a beard and once clean-shaven. However, Abrahamson, a pawnbroker, believes that George Withers, husband of the murdered woman, pawned some of the missing jewels. Morley, Bristow, and Braceway go to Washington, where, after being shadowed by assistants of Braceway, Morley is arrested. His story of the night of the murder contradicts Withers' statement. Bristow, having returned to Furmville, receives a cryptic telegram from Braceway.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### FOR A CONFERENCE.

**T**HE next morning was the crowded beginning of the biggest day in Bristow's life, and the trip to the library to consult the "Encyclopædia Britannica" to find out the meaning of Braceway's telegram, was delayed. The hired automobile was waiting in front of Number Nine when a second telegram came, a bulky dispatch, scrawled with a pen across several pages.

Dated from New Orleans, it read:

Reward of five thousand dollars for discovery of my seven-year-old son within next six days. Kidnaped last Friday night. No clew so far. Am most anxious for your help. Will pay you two thousand dollars and expenses and, in addition to that, will pay you the reward money if you are successful. Will pay the two thousand whether you succeed or not. City and State authorities will give you all the help needed. Come at once if possible. Wire answer. EMILE LOUTOIS.

It was characteristic of Bristow that he was not particularly surprised or elated by the request for his services. It was the kind of thing he had foreseen

as a result of the advertising he had received.

He made his decision at once. For the past two days the Loutois kidnaping had commanded big space in the newspapers, and he was familiar with the story. Emile Loutois, junior, young son of the wealthiest sugar planter in Louisiana, had been spirited away from the pavement in front of his home. It had been done at twilight with striking boldness, and no dependable trace of the kidnapers had been found.

The messenger boy was waiting on the porch. Bristow typewrote his reply on a sheet of note paper:

Terms accepted. Starting for New Orleans at once.

On his way to the door, he stopped and reflected. He went back to the typewriter and sat down. He had not yet found out the real meaning of the Braceway message; and he did not propose to leave Furmville until he was assured that nothing could be done to blur the brightness of his work on the Withers case.

He realized, and at the same time repented, the tribute he paid Braceway

through his hesitancy. The man was a clever detective and, if left to dominate Greenleaf unopposed, might easily focus attention on a new theory of the crime—not that this could result in the acquittal of the negro; but it might deprive him, Bristow, of the credit he was now given.

Wouldn't it be well for him to stay in Furrville another twenty-four hours? There was Fulton, the murdered woman's father—Bristow wanted to learn how fully he approved of Braceway's refusal to accept the case against Perry Carpenter. Moreover, it seemed essential now that he discover the whereabouts of Withers. And twenty-four hours could hardly change anything in the kidnaping case.

He tore up what he had written, and rattled off:

Held here twenty-four hours longer by Withers case. Start to New Orleans to-morrow morning. Terms accepted.

As he handed it to the boy, he saw Mr. Fulton coming up the steps. He greeted the old gentleman with easy, smiling cordiality and pushed forward a chair for him, giving no sign of impatience at being delayed in his trip to the library.

The simple dignity and strength of Fulton's bearing was even more impressive than it had been during their first talk. The lines were still deep in his face, but his eyes glowed splendidly, and this time, when he rested his hands on the chair arms, they were steady.

"I've come to beg news," he announced, his apologetic smile very winning.

"Just what news?" asked Bristow. "I'll be glad to give you anything I can."

"The real results of your trip; that's what I'd like to know about. I got no letter or telegram from Sam Braceway this morning, no report at all."

Bristow told him the story in gener-

ous detail, concluding with his conviction that Morley, although a thorough scoundrel, was innocent of any hand in the murder.

"I wish I could agree with you," said the old man. "I wish we all could satisfy our minds and take the evidence against the negro as final. But we can't. At least, I can't. I can't believe anything but that the disguised man, the one with the beard, is the one we've got to find."

"You still think that man is Morley?"

"I do—which reminds me I came up here to tell you something I got from Maria, my daughter. She told me she had talked with you quite frankly. Well, she recalls that once she and this Morley were discussing the wearing of beards and mustaches; and he made this remark: 'One thing about a beard, it's the best disguise possible.'"

"That is interesting, Mr. Fulton. Anything else?"

"Yes. He had a good deal to say to that general effect. He said even a mustache, cleverly worn, changed a man's whole expression. That struck me at once, remembering that the jewels were pawned in Baltimore by a man who wore a mustache. Then, too, Morley said something about the value of eyebrows in a disguise, substituting bushy ones for thin ones, or vice versa. He had the whole business at his tongue's end."

"He said all that, in what connection—crime?"

"She can't recall that. She merely remembers he said it. I thought you'd like to know of it."

"Of course. We can't have too many facts; that's always true. By the way, sir, can you tell me where Mr. Withers is?"

The reply was confident. "In Atlanta."

Seeing that he knew nothing of his son-in-law's disappearance, Bristow dropped the subject, and asked:

"What is Miss Fulton's belief now? She still thinks Morley is the man?"

The old man hitched his chair closer to Bristow's and lowered his voice.

"She says a curious thing, Mr. Bristow. She declares that, if Morley isn't guilty, George Withers is."

"And you?"

"Oh, the talk about George is absurd!"

"But," urged Bristow, his smile persuasive, "for the sake of argument, if circumstances pointed to him as——"

"I'd spend every dollar I have, use the last atom of my strength, to send him to the chair!" Fulton interrupted with surprising heat. "No suffering, no torture, would be too much for him—if that's what you mean to ask me. If I even suspected him, I'd subject him to an inquiry more relentless, more searching, more merciless than I'd use with anybody else!"

His nostrils expanded curiously. His eyes flamed.

"Mr. Bristow," he said, menace in his low tone, "no punishment ever devised by man could be sufficient to pay for, to atone for, the horror, the enormity, of the destruction of such a woman as my daughter was. Mercy? I'd show him no mercy if he lived a thousand years!"

"I understand your feeling," Bristow said with striking sympathy. "You're perfectly right, of course. And what I was leading up to is this: Although we know that the idea of Withers' guilt is absurd, he's being made to suffer. You've seen intimations, almost direct statements, in the newspapers. People are talking disagreeably.

"They're saying that Braceway, employed by you and Withers, is persecuting this bank thief in the hope of building up the murder charge, so that, if the case against Carpenter falls down, Morley will be the logical man to be put on trial. You see?"

"No," Fulton said; "I don't. What do you mean?"

"That you, Withers and Praceway are afraid Withers may be accused, directly accused, of the murder of his wife."

"Ah! They're saying that, are they?" The old man struggled for self-control. "And you were going to say—what?"

"Simply this: The negro's the guilty man. There can't be any question of it, Mr. Fulton. The facts speak for themselves, and facts are incontrovertible. As surely as the sun shines, Carpenter killed your daughter. Why, then, continue this gossip, slander which besmirches Withers and is bound to attack your daughter's name?"

"What do you mean?" returned Fulton, little wrinkles multiplying about his eyes. "Be a little more specific, please."

"I mean, what do you and Withers gain by letting Braceway keep this thing before the public?"

Fulton leaned far forward in his chair, his lower lip thrust out, his eyes blazing.

"No, sir!" he exclaimed. "I'll never call Braceway off! They're gossiping, are they? They can gossip until they're blue in the face. What do I care for public opinion, for gossip, for their leers and whispers? Nothing—not a snap of the finger! What I want is vengeance and I make no secret of it. I want vengeance for my daughter's suffering and death! And I'll have it! Call Braceway off? Sneak away into retirement and quit hunting for the man? Not while there's breath in me!"

"I'm going to see this thing through. Make no mistake about that, Mr. Bristow. And it will be through when we get the man who robbed and killed her—just then, and no sooner!"

He paused and bit on his lips.

"Understand me, Mr. Bristow," he continued, his tone more moderate, "I



meant no criticism of you; I know how faithfully you've worked. I realize even that you have proved your case. But I can't accept it, can't accept it—that's all. You'll forgive an old man's temper."

Bristow carried the argument no further. He saw that Fulton, and Withers, too, would follow Braceway's lead. Consequently, he was confronted with the necessity of keeping up the idiotic duel with the Atlanta detective.

Moreover, he sensed the viewpoint of the dead woman's family. They were averse to believing she had been the victim of an ordinary agent, a negro burglar. Remembering her beauty and charm, her cleverness and lovable qualities, they preferred to think that some great emotion, or a terrific gift for crime, had ended her life, cut short her brilliant existence.

People, he meditated, find foolish and bizarre means of comforting themselves when overwhelmed by great tragedy. Very well, then; let it go at that. After all, it was not his funeral. If they preferred to crucify themselves still further and for nothing, it was their own lookout. He would make no more attempts to simplify things.

Accompanying Fulton to the sidewalk, he climbed into the automobile and, in a few minutes, was in the library asking for the first volume of the last edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica." His limp proclaimed his identity, and the young woman at the desk, recognizing him, got the book for him with surprising promptness.

His habits of thought were such that he had not wasted energy during the morning in idle speculation as to what he would find. In fact, he attached but little importance to Braceway's message. He had dismissed it the night before as a queer dodge on the other's part to bolster up his view of the case.

He went to a desk in a remote part of the reading room. Under any cir-

cumstances, he would not have cared for the intense and interested scrutiny with which the girl at the desk favored him. The attitude he took gave her ample opportunity for a study of the back of his head.

Opening the volume, he turned to the first reference, page 506, column 2, line 15 to line 17. At the first word he drew a quick breath; it was sharp enough to sound like a low whistle. He read:

Albino, a biological term (Lat. *albus*, white), in the usual acceptation, for a pigmentless individual of a normally pigmented race.

Putting his finger on the top of the second column, page 506, he counted down to line 17, and read:

Albinism occurs in all races of mankind, among mountainous as well as lowland dwellers. And, with man, as with other animals, it may be complete or partial. Instances of the latter condition are very common among the negroes of the United States and of South America, and in them assumes a piebald character, irregular white patches being scattered over the general black surface of the body.

Before he began to think, he read the passages carefully a second time. Then he continued to hold the book open, staring at it as if he still read.

The importance of the words struck him immediately. He grasped their meaning as quickly and as fully as he would have done if Braceway had stood beside him and explained it. The skin of a white person and that of an albino show up the same under a microscope—white. If a man had under his finger nails particles of white skin, he could have collected them there by scratching an albino as well as by scratching a Caucasian, a white woman.

Lucy Thomas was an albino. He was certain of that, did not question it for a moment. Braceway had assured himself of that before sending the telegram.

Perry Carpenter had had a fight or a tussle with her in securing the key to

Number Five the night of the murder, and in the scuffling he had scratched her. That, at least, would be Perry's story and Lucy's. Braceway had been certain of that also before wiring to him.

As a matter of fact, Braceway had known all this before they had started for Washington and had kept it back, laughing up his sleeve. The thought nettled him, finally made him thoroughly angry. He compelled himself to weigh the new situation carefully.

Well, what of it, even if Lucy were an albino and Perry had scratched her? Did that affect materially the case against Perry? There was still evidence to prove that he had been to the Withers' bungalow. He had confessed it himself. And the lavalière incidents and the blouse buttons substantiated it still further.

The albino argument was by no means final, could not be made definite. The fact remained that there had been scratches on the murdered woman's hand and that particles of a white person's skin had been found under Perry's finger nails. That was not to be denied. Of course, the negro's attorney could argue that these particles had come from Lucy Thomas, not, from Mrs. Withers.

But it would be only an argument. The jury would pass judgment on it—and he was willing to leave it to the jury. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would laugh at the Lucy Thomas idea.

He closed the book, took it back to the desk and thanked the young woman. There was nothing in his appearance to indicate disappointment. In fact, he felt none. By the time he reached home he had gone over the whole thing once more and dismissed it as of no real consequence. Braceway's discovery, or his making the discovery known, had come too late.

If it had been brought out ahead of

Perry's confession—yes; it would have made a difference then.

"Let the heathen rage!" he thought, remembering the bitter stubbornness with which Braceway and Fulton denied the negro's guilt.

Braceway's withholding the albino information, playing him for a fool, recurred to him, and the accustomed flush on his cheeks grew deeper. He would not forget that; he would pay it back—with interest.

He turned to the Loutois case. Going to his typewriter, he made a list of New Orleans, Atlanta, and New York newspapers.

"Mattie," he called, "I want you to go down to a news stand, the big one; I think it's at the corner of Haywood and Patton."

He handed her money.

"And here's a list of the papers you're to get. Ask for all of them published since last Friday. Be as quick as you can. I'm in a hurry."

When she came back, she brought also the early edition of the Furfville afternoon paper. He glanced at it, looking for Washington or Baltimore news of Braceway's activities. He found it on the front page. The headlines, written with that journalistic cleverness which says a great deal by intimation without definitely stating anything, read:

**FINDS NEW EVIDENCE ON WITHERS MURDER. MORLEY GUILTY, OR—WHO?**

**Whereabouts of Murdered Woman's Husband Not Known—Braceway Predicts New and Amazing Disclosure.**

The dispatch itself was:

Washington, D. C., May 14.—That an entirely new light will soon be thrown on the brutal murder of Mrs. Enid Fulton Withers, beauty and society favorite of Atlanta and Washington, became known here to-day.

Samuel S. Braceway, probably the ablest private detective in this country, left this city yesterday afternoon for Furfville, North Carolina, the scene of the crime, after

he had completed an exhaustive investigation here and in Baltimore of more or less obscure matters related to the murder. Police officials here state that the negro, Perry Carpenter, now held in the Furmville jail for the crime, will never go to trial.

This, they claim, will be but one result of the work Braceway did here and in Baltimore. The detective himself was reticent when interviewed just before he caught his train, but, as he stood on the platform, nobly dressed and twirling his walking stick, he was the picture of confidence.

"I think you're safe in saying," he admitted, "that the Withers' case hasn't yet been settled. We're due for some surprising disclosures, unless I miss my guess."

"Can you tell us anything about the suspicions directed against Henry Morley?" he was asked, reference being made to the Washington bank clerk who is already under charges of embezzlement here.

"It's Morley or—somebody else," Braceway said smilingly. "Anybody can study the facts and satisfy himself on that point."

"Who's the somebody else?"

"We'll know pretty soon. In fact, things should develop in less than a week, considerably less than a week."

One of the interesting side lights on this mysterious murder case, it was learned this morning, is that the whereabouts of her husband, George S. Withers, of Atlanta, is at present unknown. Dispatches from Atlanta say he disappeared from there the morning his wife's funeral took place. Advices from Furmville are that he is not there with his father-in-law and sister-in-law. Braceway said yesterday he knew nothing of Withers' whereabouts.

Beneath the Washington dispatch was one from Atlanta:

Inquiry made here to-day failed to disclose where George S. Withers, husband of the victim of the brutal crime at Furmville, North Carolina, is now. He left this city the morning Mrs. Withers was buried, according to his friends, but said nothing as to his destination or the probable length of time he would be away.

The Atlanta authorities were asked by the Washington police to locate him if possible. No reason for the request was given.

There was a smile on Bristow's lips when he tossed the paper to one side. Braceway, he deduced from the article, was having his troubles making the Morley theory hang together. And

why should he hurry back to Furmville? There was nothing new here.

He shrugged his shoulders and unwrapped the bundle of out-of-town papers.

"It's like 'button, button, who's got the button?'" he thought. "Morley or Perry? Perry or Morley? And they'll all get back to where I started; they'll indict Perry, try Perry, condemn Perry, electrocute Perry."

Remembering how late he had received the albino message the night before, he concluded that Braceway had filed it in Washington during the afternoon, with instructions that it be sent as a night message. His resentment against Braceway flared up again.

"Amazing disclosure," he mentally quoted the headlines. "We shall see what we shall see. Perhaps it will come as an amazing disclosure to him that I've been on the sound side of this question all along."

He began the work of cutting from the papers the accounts of the Loutois kidnaping. As he read them, he built up a tentative outline showing who the kidnapers were and where they probably had secreted the boy. He grew absorbed, whistling in a low key.

So far as he was concerned, the Withers case was a closed incident.

Early in the afternoon he called Greenleaf on the telephone, and announced:

"I'm leaving town for a few days tomorrow morning."

"Again! What for?" the chief asked.

"They've asked me to work out that kidnaping case in New Orleans—the Loutois child."

"Good! I'm glad to hear it; I congratulate you."

Greenleaf was sincerely pleased. He felt that he had sponsored and developed the lame man as a detective.

"Thanks. Before I go, I want to have a talk with you. We might as well go over everything before——"

"That reminds me. I was just about to call you up, but your news made me forget. I've a wire from Braceway; just got it. He filed it at Salisbury, on his way here. Let me read it to you:

"'Have all the stuff I can get on Withers case. Can not go further before conferring with you, Bristow, Fulton, and Abrahamson. Please arrange meeting of all these at Bristow's bungalow eight to-night. Withers not with me.'"

"That fits in," Bristow commented; "lets me start for New Orleans on the late night train."

"Wonder what he's got," the chief said. "Do you know?"

"No. And I don't believe it amounts to anything. Still, if he wants to talk, we might as well hear it."

"Sure! You can count on me. I'll be there."

"All right," said Bristow. "I'll see you at eight, then."

He went to the sleeping porch and lay down.

"'Withers not with me.'"

The last words of the telegram lingered in his mind. "Why did he add that? What's that to do with a conference here to-night?"

Suddenly the answer occurred to him.

"It's Withers!" he thought, at first only half credulous. "He's going to put it on Withers—he's going to try to put it on Withers."

He paused, thinking "wild" for a moment, so great was his surprise.

"It was Withers he was after from the start—was it?"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A STARTLING ACCUSATION.

ON the faces of Braceway and Maria Fulton was the expression that announces a happy and perfect understanding between lovers. The light of surrender was in her eyes, contented surrender to the man who, because of his love, had asserted his mastery of

her. And his voice, as he spoke to her, was all a vibrant tenderness. He realized that he had found and finally made certain his happiness, had done so at the very moment of making public his greatest professional triumph.

For his visit to her he had stolen a half hour from the rush of work that had devolved upon him since reaching Furmville a few hours ago. He found her as he had expected; she had fulfilled his prophecy that, in following her own ideals, she would take her place in the world as a fascinating personality, a lovable woman.

But, while he studied and praised her new charm, he was conscious—more keenly so than ever before—that his success would affect her greatly, would challenge all her strength and courage. And yet, even if it hurt her, it had to be done. It was his duty, and the consequences would have to take care of themselves.

Although, in her turn, she studied him with the fine intuition of the woman who loves, she got no intimation of his worry. He had determined not to burden her with the details in advance. If what he was about to do should link her dead sister with a pitiless and published scandal, she would meet it bravely.

Unless he had been confident of that, he could not have loved her. His task was to hand over to justice the guilty man, and not even his concern for the woman he would marry could interfere with his seeing the thing through.

After it was all over, he would come back to comfort her. Their new happiness would counterbalance all unpleasantness.

A glance through the window showed him Greenleaf and Abrahamson coming slowly up Manniston Road. It was eight o'clock. A few moments later he and Mr. Fulton joined them on the sidewalk. They went at once to Number Nine.

Bristow received them in his living room, the table still littered with newspaper clippings on the Loutois kidnaping.

"If the rest of you don't mind," Braceway suggested, "we'd better close the windows. We've a lot of talking to do, and we might as well keep things to ourselves."

The effect of alertness which he always produced was more evident now than ever. He kept his cane in continual motion. While the four other men seated themselves, he remained standing, facing them, his back to the empty fireplace.

"Each of you," he said, "is vitally interested in what I've come here to say—my solution of the so-called Withers mystery. I asked you to have this conference because it affects each of us directly."

His eyes shone; his chin was thrust forward; every ligament in his body was strung taut. And yet there was nothing of the theatric about him. If he felt excitement, it was suppressed. Determination was the only emotion of which he gave any sign.

"First, however," he said in his light conversational tone, "how about you?" He indicated with a look Greenleaf and Bristow. "Have you anything new, anything additional?"

With the windows shut, it was noticeably warm and close in the room. Taking off his coat, he tossed it to the chair which had been meant for him. In his white shirt, with dark trousers belted tightly over his slender hips, he looked almost boyish.

"No." Bristow answered the question. "The chief and I went over everything yesterday. We couldn't find a single reason for changing our minds."

"About Carpenter?"

"Yes—his guilt, of course."

"You mean that's your position, yours and the chief's," Braceway said

seriously. "As a matter of fact, the negro's not guilty."

"You mean that's your position," Bristow quoted back to him, his smile indulgent.

"Yes. Carpenter's not guilty, and Morley's not guilty."

Mr. Fulton, who had the chair immediately on the lame man's left, was frankly curious and anxious.

"Before you go any further, Braceway", he interrupted testily, "can you tell us where George Withers is?"

"I can say this much," replied Braceway after a pause. "For reasons best known to himself, Withers refused to join us here. He could have done so if he had wished."

What he said sounded a direct accusation of Withers. Fulton eyed him incredulously. Bristow took off his coat and settled himself more comfortably in his chair; he was in for a long story, and, as he had expected last night, the dead woman's husband, not Morley, was to be incriminated.

Greenleaf, lolling back in a rocker near the folding doors of the dining room, gazed at the ceiling, making a show of his lack of interest.

Abrahamson, nearest the porch door, was the only auditor thoroughly absorbed in the detective's story and at the same time unreservedly credulous.

"But you know where he is?" Fulton persisted.

"Yes; approximately."

The Jew's sparkling eyes darted from the speaker to the faces of the others. A pleased smile lifted the corners of his mouth toward the great, hooked nose. He had the air of a man who anticipates unusually pleasant entertainment.

"But I don't want to waste your time," Braceway continued, taking peculiar care in his choice of words. "When I began work on this case, I thought either the negro or Morley might be the murderer. I changed my mind when I came to think about the

mysterious fellow, the man with the brown beard and the gold tooth, the individual who was clever enough to appear and disappear at will—at will and without leaving a trace—so long as he operated at night or in the dusk of early evening.

“I soon agreed with Mr. Fulton that he was the murderer. Not only that, but he had remarkable ability, which he employed for the lowest and most criminal purposes. I first suspected his identity right after my interviews with Roddy, the colored bell boy, and Mr. Abrahamson, the pawnbroker.”

“Excuse me,” Bristow interposed; “but wasn’t it Abrahamson who told you the bearded man looked like Withers?”

Greenleaf grinned, appreciating the lame man’s intention to take the wind out of Braceway’s sails by giving credit to Abrahamson for the information.

“Yes, he told me that,” Braceway answered, nettled by the interruption; and added, “Let me finish my statement, Bristow. You can discuss it all you please later on. But I’d prefer to get through with it now.”

“Having suspected the identity of the disguised man, I was confronted with two jobs. One was to prove the identity beyond question; the other was to show, by irrefutable evidence, that the disguised man committed the murder. As I said, my theory took shape in my mind that afternoon in my room in the Brevord hotel. Everything I’ve done since then, has been for the purpose of getting the necessary facts. I have those facts now.”

He looked at Greenleaf and Bristow, making it plain that he expected their hostility to anything he had to say.

“My suspicion grew out of my belief—really my conviction—that I must find the man who had blackmailed Mrs. Withers in Atlantic City and Washington and, for the third time, here in

Furmvile. The blackmailer was the only one who had had access to the victim on the three different occasions of which we know; the work was all by the same hand. Find the blackmailer, and I would have the murderer.

“I know now who he is.

“Five years ago there was a striking sort of individuality that had impressed itself on the minds of a good many men in Wall Street, New York city. Although penniless at the outset of his career and, in fact, never really rich, he had made a good deal of money now and then; and had spent it as fast as he got it.

“He was brilliant, thoroughly unscrupulous, absolutely without honor. He did the ‘Great White Way’ stunt—the restaurants, the roof gardens, pretty actresses, and jewels and champagne. Because of his uncertain habits, he never had an office of his own. He always operated through others. His earning power was a gift for judging the market and knowing often when to ‘bear’ and when to ‘bull.’

“This gift was no fabulous thing. It was real a majority of the times he tried to use it, and because of it he was able to live high and put up a good front without working. This was the situation up to five years ago. Observe the man’s character and the pleasure he took in running crooked.

“With a little study and the usual amount of industry and concentration, he could have been a power in the financial world. That, however, did not appeal to him. He liked the excitement of crime, the perverted pleasure of playing the crook.

“Early in nineteen-thirteen, a little more than five years ago, the crash came. He was arrested, charged with the embezzlement of thirty-three hundred dollars from the firm which employed him. The name of the firm was Blanchard & Sebastian. He had stolen more than the amount mentioned, but

the specific charge on which action was taken was the theft of the thirty-three hundred dollars.

"This man's name was Splain.

"There was a delay of a few hours in arranging for his bail so that he wouldn't have to spend the night in a cell. While in his cell, he remarked:

"'This kind of a place doesn't suit me. It's as cold as charity. I'll be out of here in an hour or so, and, if they ever get me into a cell again, they'll have to kill me first. Once is enough.'

"He made good on his boast. They didn't get him into one again. He jumped his bail ten days before the date set for his trial. Since then the police have, so far as they know, never laid eyes on him. They had a photograph of him and, of course, an adequate description: high aquiline nose; firm, compressed mouth; black and unusually piercing eyes; black hair; all his features sharp-cut; broad shoulders and slender, athletic figure. Those are some of the details I recall. In——"

Fulton cried out—the sound of it was not so much a groan as it was the shrill, indefinite protest of a child against pain—and put the fingers of his right hand to his forehead, shielding his face. The description of the fugitive had brought instantly to his mind the face of George Withers.

"Indulge me for just a few moments more, Mr. Fulton," Braceway said. "Splain eluded the pursuit. His flight and disappearance were perfectly planned and carried out. As I said just now, he was a brilliant, a very brilliant man and——"

Bristow again interrupted the recital. On his face was a smile which did not reach to his eyes. For the past few minutes he had been thinking faster than he had ever thought in his life, and had made a decision.

"What you've told us," he said calmly, his gaze taking notice of no one but the detective, "is, in effect, a

rather flattering sketch of a part of my own life."

Greenleaf, with jaw dropped and thinking powers paralyzed, stared at him. Old man Fulton, many wrinkles about his eyes, leaned forward as if to spring.

Only Abrahamson, his smile broadening, his cavernous eyes alight, was free from surprise. He had now the air of greatly enjoying the performance he had been invited to see.

Braceway, his shoulders flung back, his figure straight as a poplar, watching Bristow with intense caution, grew suddenly into heroic mold. The red glow from the setting sun streamed through the window to his face, emphasizing the ardor in his eyes. He took a step forward, became dominant, menacing.

His white-clad arm shot out so that he pointed with accusing finger to the imperturbable Bristow.

"That man there," he declared, contempt in his stern voice, "is the thief—and the murderer!"

For a moment the incredible accusation stunned the entire group.

"Mr. Braceway," said Bristow, looking now at Fulton and Greenleaf, "is suffering a delusion."

The two men, however, afforded him no support. They kept their eyes on Braceway. They gave the effect of falling away from some evil contagion.

"Because," Bristow continued, "I have been the innocent victim of trumped-up charges of embezzlement by the crookedest men in a crooked business, he accuses me of murder when——"

"Shut up!" commanded Braceway, dropping his hand to his side.

He flashed the pawnbroker a quick glance.

Abrahamson leaned over and rapped with his knuckles on the door to the porch. It opened, admitting two policemen in uniform.

"I took the liberty, chief," Braceway apologized, "of requesting them to be here. I knew you'd want them to do the right thing, and promptly."

Greenleaf gulped and nodded acquiescence. Stunned as he was, the detective's manner forced him into believing the charge.

Bristow's smile had faded. But, save for a pallor that wiped from his cheeks their usual flush, there was no evidence of the conflict within him. So far as any notice from him went, the policemen did not exist.

One of them stepped forward and laid a hand on his shoulder.

He ignored it.

"Perhaps," he said, sarcasm in his voice, his eyes again on Braceway, "it will occur to you that I've a right to know why this outrage is committed." Once more he commanded Greenleaf with his gaze. "The chief of police will hardly sanction it without some excuse, without a shadow of evidence."

The man's self-control was marvelous. He seemed the only one in the room able to grasp and play upon the situation.

"Yes." Greenleaf complied waveringly. "Er—that is—er—I suppose you're certain about this, Mr. Braceway?"

"Let's have it! Let's have it all!" demanded Fulton, articulate at last, his clenched hands shaken by a palsy of rage.

Bristow, with a careless motion, brushed away the policeman's hand.

"By all means," he said, imperturbable still; "I demand it. I'm not guilty of murder. Not by the wildest flight of the craziest fancy can any such charge be substantiated."

Greenleaf, noting his iron nerve, his freedom from the slightest sign of panic, was dumfounded, and believed in his innocence again.

"I have the proofs." Braceway spoke

to the chief. "Do you want them here, and now?"

"It might be—er—as well, and fair, you know. Yes."

Abrahamson swung the porch door shut. The two policemen stood back of Bristow's chair. Greenleaf, still bewildered himself, laid a calming hand on Fulton's shoulder. The old man was shaking like a leaf.

"All right," agreed Braceway. "I can give you the important points in a very few minutes."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### AT BAY.

RELAXED, swinging his cane slowly in his right hand, Braceway leaned against the mantel. He addressed himself to Fulton and Greenleaf, an occasional glance including Abrahamson in the circle of those for whose benefit he spoke.

Bristow listened now in unfeigned absorption, estimating every statement, weighing each detail. The tenseness of his pale face showed how he forced his brain to concentration.

"Having decided that the bearded man and the murderer were the same," Braceway began, "I asked myself this question: 'Who, of all those in Fumville, is so connected with the case now that I am warranted in thinking he did the previous blackmailing and the more recent murder?' And I eliminated in my own mind everybody but Lawrence Bristow. He was the one, the only one, who could have annoyed Mrs. Withers one and four years ago, respectively, and also could have murdered her.

"Morley was at once out of the reckoning; he had known the Fultons for only the past three years. To consider the negro, Perry Carpenter, would have been absurd. Withers, of course, was beyond suspicion. Everything pointed to Bristow.

"With that decision, last Wednesday afternoon I went to Number Five and



got all the finger prints visible on the polished surfaces of the chair which was handled, overturned, in the living room the night of the murder. Fortunately this polish was inferior enough to have been made gummy by the rain and dampness that night; and, in the stress of the few days following, had been neither dusted nor wiped off.

"Bristow did not touch this chair the morning the murder was discovered. In fact, he cautioned everybody not to touch it.

"Reliable witnesses say he didn't touch it between then and the time I got the finger prints. He declares he was never in the bungalow before he entered it in response to Miss Fulton's cry for help.

"I found on the chair the finger prints of five different persons, four afterward identified: Miss Fulton, the coroner, Miss Killy, the nurse, and Lucy Thomas, Mrs. Withers' maid. The fifth I was unable to check up then.

"I did so later, in Washington.

"It was identical with the print of Bristow's fingers on the glass top of a table in his hotel room there. I didn't depend on my own judgment for that. I had with me an expert on finger prints. And finger prints, as you all know, never lie.

"All this established the fact, beyond question, that Bristow had been secretly in the living room of Number Five before, or at the time of, the commission of the crime."

He paused, giving them time to appreciate the full import of that chain of facts.

For the space of half a minute, the room was a study in still life. The sound of Fulton's grating teeth was distinctly audible. Bristow made a quick move, as if to speak, but checked the impulse.

"In Washington," Braceway resumed, "he had a hemorrhage. It was a fake—a red-ink hemorrhage. Before

the arrival of the physician who was summoned, Bristow had ordered a bell boy to wrap the 'blood-stained' handkerchief and towel in a larger and thicker towel and to have the whole bundle burned at once. This, he explained to the boy, was because of his desire that nobody be put in danger of contracting tuberculosis.

"By bribing the porter who had been directed to do the burning, I got a look at both the handkerchief and the towel. They were soaked right enough, thoroughly soaked—in red ink.

"The physician was easily deceived because, when he came in, all traces of the so-called blood had been obliterated. Altogether, it was a clever trick on Bristow's part.

"His motive for staging it and for arranging for a long and uninterrupted sleep was clear enough. There was something he wanted to do unobserved, something so vital to him that he was willing to take an immense amount of trouble with it. Golson's detective bureau let me have the best trailer, the smoothest 'shadow,' in the business—Tom Ricketts.

"At my direction he followed Bristow from the Willard Hotel to the electric car leaving Washington for Baltimore at one o'clock. Reaching Baltimore at two-thirty, Bristow pawned the emeralds and diamonds at two pawnshops. He caught the four o'clock electric car back to Washington, and was in his room long before six, the hour at which his nurse, Miss Martin, was to wake him.

"On the Baltimore trip he had a left leg as sound as mine and wore no brace of any kind. He did wear a mustache and bushy eyebrows, which changed his appearance tremendously. Also, he had changed the outline of his face and the shape of his lips.

"While he was in Baltimore, I searched the bedroom in which he was supposed to be asleep.

"Miss Martin, in whom I had been obliged to confide, helped me. We found in the two-inch sole of the left shoe, which of course he did not take with him, a hollow place, a very serviceable receptacle. In it was the bulk of the missing Withers' jewelry, the stones unset, pried from their gold and platinum settings.

"They are, I dare say, there now."

The two policemen stared wide-eyed at Bristow. He was, they decided, the "slickest" man they had ever seen.

"You see why he executed the trick? It was to establish forever, beyond the possibility of question, his innocence. Plainly, if an unknown man pawned the Withers' jewelry in Baltimore while Bristow slept, exhausted by a copious hemorrhage, in Washington, his case was made good, his alibi perfect.

"You can appreciate now how he built up his fake case against Perry Carpenter, his use of the buttons, his creeping about at night, like a villain in cheap melodrama, dropping pieces of the jewelry where they would incriminate the negro most surely, and his exploitation of the 'winning clew,' the finger-nail evidence.

"Furthermore, he gave Lucy Thomas a frightful beating to force from her the statement against Perry. In this, he was brutal beyond belief. I saw that same afternoon the marks of his blows on her shoulders. They were sufficient proofs of his capacity for unbridled rage, for inhuman treatment of a weaker person. The sight of them strengthened my conviction that, in a similar mood, he had murdered Mrs. Withers."

"The negro lied!" Bristow spoke at last, his words a little hurried despite his surface equanimity. "I subjected her to no ill treatment whatever. Anyway"—he dismissed it with a wave of his hand—"it's a minor detail."

Braceway, without so much as a glance at him, continued:

"And that gave me my knowledge of her being a partial albino. She has patches of white skin across her shoulders, and Perry, in struggling with her for possession of the key to Number Five, had scratched her there badly. That, I think, disposes of the finger-nail evidence against Carpenter.

"The rest followed as a matter of course. An examination of Major Ross' collection of circulars describing those 'wanted' by the police of the various cities for the past six years revealed the photograph of Splain. Bristow has changed his appearance somewhat—enough, perhaps, to deceive the casual glance—but the identification was easy.

"I then ran over to New York and got the Splain story. I knew he was so dead sure of having eluded everybody that he would stay here in Fumville. But, to make it absolutely sure, I sent him yesterday a telegram to keep him assured that I was working with him and ready to share discoveries with him. And I confess it afforded me a little pleasure, the sending of that wire—I was playing a kind of cat-and-mouse game."

Bristow put up his hand, demanding attention. When Braceway ignored the gesture, he leaned back, smiling, derisive.

"Morley's embezzlement and its consequences gave me a happy excuse for keeping on this fellow's trail while he was busy perfecting the machinery for Perry's destruction. The man's self-assurance, his conceit——"

"I've had enough of this!" Bristow interrupted violently, exhibiting his first deep emotion. "Wait one minute!" he insisted harshly, seeing that Braceway was about to speak again. "Wait!" He slid forward to the edge of his chair and turned to Greenleaf. "Haven't you had enough of this drool? What's the man trying to establish, anyhow? He talks in one breath about my having changed the outline of my face

and the shape of my mouth, and in the next second about recognizing as me a photograph which he admits was taken at least six years ago!

"It's an alibi for himself—an excuse for not being able to prove that I'm the man who pawned the jewelry in Baltimore! It's thinner than air—wild!"

But Greenleaf's defection was now complete. "Go on," he said to Braceway. The more he thought of the full extent to which the embezzler had gulled him for the past week, the more he raged.

"Not for me! I don't want any more of the drivel!" Bristow objected again, his voice raucous and still directed to Greenleaf. "What's *your* idea? I admit I'm wanted in New York on a trumped-up charge of embezzlement. This detective, by a stroke of blind luck, ran into that—and, as I say, I admit it.

"You can deal with that as you see fit; that is, if you want to deal with it after what I've done for law and order and for you, in this murder case.

"But you can't be crazy enough to take any stock in this nonsense about my having been connected with the crime. Exercise your own intelligence, man! Do you mean to say you're going to let him cram this into you?"

He got himself more in hand.

"Think a minute. You know me well, chief. And you, Mr. Fulton, you're no child to be bamboozled and turned into a laughingstock by a detective who finds himself without a case—a pseudoexpert on crime, who tries to work the age-old trick of railroading a man guilty of a less offense!"

Seeing them unmoved, he voiced his last, desperate point.

"If I had been guilty, if I had murdered and robbed, if I had had the jewelry on me, would I have been insane enough to waste a moment here? And would I have taken up detective work as a career?"

"This is no place for an argument of the case." Braceway cut him short crisply, and turned to the pawnbroker. "Mr. Abrahamson, tell us what you know about this man."

"It is not much, Mr. Braceway," the Jew replied; "not as much as I would like. I've seen him several times; once in my place when he was fixed up with a mustache and so forth, and twice when he was fixed up with a beard and a gold tooth; once again when he was sitting out here on his porch."

Abrahamson talked rapidly, punctuating his phrases with quick gestures, enjoying the importance of his rôle.

"Mr. Braceway," he explained smilingly to Greenleaf, "talked to me about the man with the beard—talked more than you did, chief. You know Mr. Braceway, how quick he is. He talked and asked me to try to remember where and when I had seen this man with the gold tooth. I had my ideas and my association of ideas. I remembered—remembered hard. That afternoon I took a holiday—I don't take many of those—and I walked past here. 'I bet you,' I said to myself—not out real loud, you understand—'I bet you I know that man.' And I won my bet. I did know him.

"This Mr. Splain and the man with the beard are the same, exactly the same."

"Bristow's smile was tolerant, as if he dealt with a child. But Fulton, his angry eyes boring into him, saw that, for the first time, there were tired lines tugging at the corners of his mouth. It was an expression that heralded defeat, the first faint shadow of despair.

"You have my story, and I've the facts to prove it a hundred times over," Braceway announced. "Why waste more time?"

"For the simple reason," Bristow said, "that I'm entitled to a fair deal, an honest——"

On the word "honest" Braceway

turned with his electric quickness to Greenleaf, and, as he did so, Bristow leaned back in his chair, as if determined not to argue further. His face assumed its hard, bleak calm; his cold self-control returned.

"Now, get this!" Braceway's incisive tone whipped Greenleaf to closer attention. "You've an embezzler and murderer in your hands. He admits one crime; I've proved the other. The rest is up to you. Put the irons on him. Throw him into a cell! You'll be proud of it the rest of your life. Here's the warrant."

He drew the paper from his hip pocket and tossed it to the chief.

"Get busy," he insisted. "This man's the worst type of criminal I've ever encountered. Not content with blackmailing and robbing a woman, he murdered her; not satisfied with that he deliberately planned the death of an innocent man. A coward himself, he was afraid to take the ordinary chances of escaping detection.

"He never wanted anything except that which was rotten!" Braceway went on with the heat and in the style that had characterized him as a speaker when he practiced law. "He regarded his study of crime as a means of self-perfection; his highest ambition was to achieve the lowest form of vileness; the most profound of all his regrets was for a lost opportunity to make more hideous the ugliness of evil; the height of his envy was for any one who added to treachery a new and unsuspected terror!"

Bristow gave the face of every man in the room a keen, brief examination, even craning his neck to note the expressions of the two policemen behind him. His own face became a shade more dreary; he had not found, in his scrutiny, the thing he sought.

"Without exaggeration"—the detective poured out his accumulated con-

tempt—"he's the king of all the crooks known to my experience. By openly parading his pursuit of breakers of the law, he secured secretly his opportunity to excel their basest actions. By publicly defending the honest, he was all the more successful in the practice of his own perfidy. And he made of his fine devotion to innocence a fantastic screen to hide his guilt.

"As a liar, he was superb. Deception was his greatest talent. He disguised his face so as to unmask his soul in safety; he hobbled his body that he might unleash more easily the festering children of his brain; he simulated disease to spread abroad more surely the pestilence of his true self."

Bristow drew a long breath audibly. He was like a man who reaches an important decision—reluctantly. He had not heard all of Braceway's words.

"He sank so low," the denunciation continued, "that he tried to make the father of Mrs. Withers his accomplice, advising him to put a stop to my pursuit of the criminal. To the effrontery of trying to win the confidence of his victim's sister, he added the arrogance of seeking to counsel the father of her whom he had destroyed. It was his rule to use the privileges of friendship as tools for betrayal. He mimicked love in order to gratify his avarice; and he aped decency to promote depravity. He——"

Quicker than thought, Braceway lunged forward with his cane and struck the hand Bristow had lifted swiftly to his throat. The blow sent a pocket knife clattering to the floor. A policeman, picking it up, saw that the opened blade worked on a spring.

The lame man sank back in his chair. The gray immobility of his face had broken up. The features worked curiously, forming themselves for a second to a pattern of mean vindictiveness. His right hand still numbed by the blow, he took his handkerchief with the left and

flicked from his neck, close to the ear, a single red bead.

The interference had been barely in time.

Bristow had himself in hand again instantaneously, although his lips moved grotesquely in an attempted smile.

"Search him," Braceway ordered one of the officers.

He submitted to that. When he looked at Braceway, his face was bleak.

"You've got me," he said in a tone thoroughly matter-of-fact. "I'm through—I'll give you a statement."

"You mean a confession?"

"It amounts to that."

"Not here." Braceway refused curtly. "We've no stenographer."

"I'd prefer to write it myself, anyway," Bristow insisted. "It won't take me fifteen minutes on the typewriter." Seeing Braceway hesitate, he added: "You'll get it this way, or not at all. Suit yourself."

The detective did not underestimate the man's stubborn nerve.

"I'm agreeable, chief," he said to Greenleaf, "if you are."

"Yes," the chief agreed. "It's as good here as anywhere else."

Darkness had grown in the room. Abrahamson and the policemen pulled down the window shades. Greenleaf turned on the lights.

Bristow limped to the typewriter and sat down, the detective on his right, Fulton at his left. The others, Greenleaf in the foreground, formed a group facing him across the machine. Braceway opened the drawer of the typewriter stand and saw that it contained nothing but sheets of yellow "copy" paper cut to one-half the size of ordinary letter paper.

"This document," said Bristow, evil looking and cool, "will be a classic in police annals for many years."

Every trace of agitation had left him. Color crept back into his cheeks.

Braceway and Greenleaf watched him closely. They had the idea that he still contemplated suicide, that he sought to divert their attention from himself by interesting them in what he wrote. They remembered the boast he had made in the cell in New York.

If he should try to break from the room or make a move toward self-destruction, they would be ready for him.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE CONFESSION.

WITH surprising rapidity Bristow worked, tearing from the machine and passing to Braceway each half-page as he finished it. He wrote triple-space, breaking the story into many paragraphs, never hesitating for a choice of words.

"My name is Thomas F. Splain.

"I am forty years old.

"I am 'wanted' in New York for embezzlement.

"Fear is an unknown quantity to me. I have always had ample self-confidence. The world belongs to the impudent.

"There are two classes of men: those who make mistakes and call them experience; and those who make greater mistakes and are called criminals. My classification is obvious.

"I learned long ago that no man is at heart either grateful, or honest, or unselfish."

With a turn of the roller, he flicked that off the machine and, without raising his head, passed it to Braceway. The detective, still vigilant, glanced at it long enough to get its meaning and handed it to Fulton. When it was offered to Greenleaf, he shook his head.

The chief's rage had reached its high point. To his realization of how perfectly he had been duped, there was added the humiliation of having two members of his force as witnesses of its revelation.

"If he makes a move," he thought savagely, fingering the revolver in the side pocket of his coat, "I'll kill him, kill him certain."

The man at the machine wrote on, apparently unconscious that the father of his victim stood at his side, accumulating in a trembling hand the written proofs of the murder. The murderer, although he raised his eyes to none of them, bared his feelings by the expression of his face.

The curl of his lip lampooned normal humanity. His features were an arabesque of hate. And yet he conveyed also the impression of calmness, inscrutability.

"I have enjoyed life," he wrote. "I am enjoying it now."

"The 'pursuit' by the police has never annoyed me. Policemen are incredibly stupid. I have invariably acted on that theory—successfully.

"Cleverness never reaches its perfect flower on top of bull necks. Square toes never indicate piercing wit.

"Pardon a brief excursion into my private history. After leaving New York, I was caught in a street accident in Chicago, suffering a broken nose. Thanks to my physicians—an incompetent lot, these doctors—I emerged with a crooked nose.

"That was a help. I then had all my teeth extracted. Knowing dentistry, I saw the possibilities of disguise by wearing differently shaped sets of teeth.

"Note my heavily protruding lower lip—and, at rare intervals, my hollow cheeks.

"Also, there's your gold tooth mystery—solved!"

Braceway, reading the page, resented its flippancy.

"Suppose," he said, "you cut out the funny business and confine yourself to facts."

"I'm in dead earnest," Bristow answered, not lifting his head, and wrote:

"As a disguise, the gold tooth is ad-

mirable. I mean a solid, complete tooth of gold, garish in the front part of the mouth. It unfailingly changes the expression; frequently it degrades and brutalizes the face. Try it.

"Using my crooked nose as an everyday precaution, I always straightened it for night work. Forestier taught me that—great man, Forestier; marvelous with noses. I cannot forbear this brief tribute to him. He is now piling up a fortune as make-up specialist for motion pictures in Los Angeles—has a secret preparation with which he 'builds' new noses. A great man.

"Changing the color of my eyes was something beyond the police imagination.

"I got the trick from a man in Cincinnati—another great character. Homatropine is the basic element of his preparation. Some day women will hear of it and make him rich. He deserves it."

Fulton, after he had read that, looked at Braceway out of tortured eyes. This turning of his tragedy into jest defied his strength.

"That's enough of that." Braceway raised his voice above the clatter of the typewriter. "Get down to the crime, or stop!"

"By all means," Bristow assented.

Flicking from the roller the page he had already begun, he tore it up and inserted another. His face, by the slightest of changes, emphasized his ferocity.

"I met Enid Fulton six years ago at Hot Springs, Virginia. She fell in love with me.

"She had the highest ideals and no experience; and ideals and ignorance light the primrose path to folly.

"I had always known that a rich woman's indiscretions could be made to yield big dividends. She was a victim of her——"

Braceway's grasp caught the writer's hands.

"Eliminate that!" he ordered sternly. "It's not necessary."

Bristow, imperturbable, his motions quick and sure, tore up that page also, and started afresh:

"Later she believed I had embezzled in order to assure her ease and luxury from the date of our marriage.

"Her exaggerated sense of fair play, of obligation, was an aid to my representations of the situation. My statements were logical—consequently, irresistible.

"Although she no longer loved me and did love Withers, my hold on her—rather, on her purse—could not be broken.

"She gave me the money in Atlantic City and Washington. You ask, perhaps, what I did with it. I played the market, and lost. I no longer had my cunning and judgment in dealing with stocks.

"To some, that may seem retribution. I regarded it as an example of how the brain is affected by a change of environment.

"I came here as soon as I had learned of her presence in Furmville. At first, she was reasonable. Abrahamson knows that. I pawned several little things with him.

"At last, to my utter amazement, she grew obstinate. She argued, as has already——"

In his absorption he let the finished page drop to the floor. Before Braceway picked it up, he was on the next one.

"——been suggested in this inquiry, that, if she pawned any more of her jewels, she would be unable to redeem them. Her father had failed in business and could not produce the required cash.

"That was true, but I had to have funds. Several times I pointed this out to her when I saw her in Number Five, always after midnight—for my own protection as well as hers.

"She loved her husband. That surprised me. It still surprises me.

"Finally my patience was exhausted. Last Monday night, or early Tuesday morning, I told her so quite clearly.

"She objected, argued, pleaded with me. All this was in whispers. The necessity of whispering so long irritated me.

"Her refusal, flat and final, to part with the jewels en——"

For the first time since he had been connected with the Withers case Braceway, reading that, felt anger so intense that his hands trembled and his eyes blurred.

Fulton, reading it in his turn, gave no sign. He was like granite. He was trying to think of a way to inflict upon the murderer a new and prolonged agony.

"——enraged me." The long, white fingers rapped out the words. "It was then that I made the first big mistake of my life.

"I lost my temper. Men who cannot control their tempers under the most trying circumstances should let crime alone. They will fail—inevitably.

"I killed her—a foolish result of the folly of yielding to my rage.

"In the matter of taking a life, restitution is out of the question. One cannot deal in resurrections—an awkward human limitation.

"Self-preservation becomes the main thing; all the voices of the night urge one to it.

"Standing there and looking at her, I thought with all the clarity I could command. In a second, I perceived the advisability of throwing the blame upon some other person."

The faces of Braceway and Fulton mirrored to the others the horror of the stuff they were reading. The scene taxed the emotional balance of all of them. The evil-faced man at the typewriter, the father getting by degrees the description of his daughter's death, the policemen waiting to put the murderer behind bars——

Abrahamson, peculiarly wrought upon by the tenseness of it all, wished he had not come. His back felt creepy. He lit a cigarette, puffed it to a torch and threw it down.

Bristow wrote:

"Mechanically my fingers went to a pocket in my vest and played with two metal buttons I had picked up in my kitchen the day before, Monday.

"I pause to point out that opportunity never tires of befriending the resourceful.

"I knew the buttons had come from the overalls of the negro, Perry Carpenter. It would be easy to drop one there, the other on the floor of my kitchen, where I had originally found them. That would be the beginning of identifying him as the murderer.

"He had been half drunk the day before. His life was of no account. Mine was—naturally.

"The rest was simple. You know about it—dropping the lavallière links back of Number Five, placing the lavallière in the yard of his house, and so on.

"I had one piece of luck which, of course, I did not count on when I first adopted this simple course. That was when Greenleaf asked me to help him in finding the murderer. A confiding soul—your Greenleaf—and insured by nature against brain storms.

"Such a turn was a godsend. I had become the investigator of my own crime. You are familiar with the later details.

"I will mention, however, that I made a second trip to Number Five.

"Having come back here in safety, I perceived I had left there without the jewels she was wearing and without those in her jewel cabinet.

"She had brought this cabinet into the living room to show me how her supply of jewelry had been depleted.

"To murder and not get the fruits of it, is like picking one's own pocket. I

returned immediately and rectified the mistake.

"Before departing this last time, I switched on the lights to assure myself that I had left only the clew to the negro's presence, none to my own."

"That explains Withers' story of his struggle at the foot of the steps. We really had it. He was a weakling; gave me no trouble.

"Morley's story of seeing two men descend the steps was, I have no doubt, also perfectly true. He first saw the negro—who did, as he has since confessed, get as far as the porch—and he then saw me making my first exit.

"In the ordinary course of events, the negro would have gone to the chair, and my plan would not have had a flaw.

"But there were complications I did not foresee.

"Morley's theft and clamor for money from Miss Fulton, Withers' jealousy, and my own extra precaution of appearing with beard and gold tooth in the Brevord Hotel, so as to shift suspicion to a mysterious 'unknown' in case of necessity—all these things left too many clews, presented an embarrassment of riches.

"If I had known of them in advance, either Morley or Withers would have paid the penalty for the crime. The negro would never have received my attention.

"Braceway, too, would have been harmless but for my trying to fortify my defense through the trip to Baltimore.

"Frankly, I underestimated him. He is the first detective or policeman I ever knew to have even the promise of cleverness.

"Here I may mention that my decision to go into detective work was real. My competitors' lack of brains would have insured my success.

"Another personal reference—my health. I have no game leg; never have had. The brace made it easy for me



to transform myself into an agile, powerful man in my 'private' work."

With a quick, unexpected motion, he dropped his hands from the typewriter to the seat of his chair, grasping its edges tightly on each side. His attitude indicated either that he merely intended to draw the chair closer to the machine, or, with equal probability, that he set himself for a leap into the center of the room.

Involuntarily each of them responded to it; their bodies inclined toward him, like stalks of wheat moved by the wind; and, for a moment, they held their forward-leaning positions. They might have been figures woven in a tapestry.

He laughed mirthlessly, his features apparently unmoving, his upper eyelids drawn almost shut by his downward gaze and making his face a waxlike mask unrelieved even by the light of his eyes.

Abrahamson shivered.

"I have no tuberculosis, never have had." Bristow resumed his writing.

"I have a normally flat chest. Slug-gish veins and capillaries in my face, caused by my having suffered pathological blushing for ten years, cause a permanent flush in my cheeks.

"That was enough to fool the physicians.

"I have said my first great mistake was losing my temper with Enid Withers.

"My second was my laughter in the cab the night Braceway and I questioned Morley. I knew he was holding back something, but I never dreamed it was his knowledge of my having done the murder.

"That laugh was suicidal, for it was the disarming of myself by myself.

"Why did I use the same disguise, the beard and the gold tooth, more than once? Put it down to my innocent little craving for the dramatic. To me and those like me, the usual is never interesting, never worth while.

"I have no regrets. Nothing in my life calls for repentance.

"I think, if I had the chance all over again, I would kill Lucy Thomas instead of beating her into panic for her signature to a statement. All harmless women are dead.

"But for the albino discovery by Braceway, my conviction would have been impossible. The case against Perry was too strong.

"Still, it is as well this way as another. I should never have served the time for embezzlement.

"A free life is a fine thing. I suspect that death, perhaps, is even finer.

"A man might be guilty of worse things than murder—regrets, for instance.

"The world and I are quits. Selah!"

He handed the last page to Braceway, leaned back in his chair, put up his arms and yawned. The glance with which he swept the faces of those before him was arrogant. It had a sinister audacity. They saw in the pale composure of his features a hint that, even now, he might inflict upon the world further evil, greater crime.

"The confession's complete," Braceway told Greenleaf, clipping his words short. "Take him away."

The chief turned to the policemen.

"Wait," the detective added, producing a pen.

"Oh, the signature," Bristow said coolly. "I forgot that."

He took the typewritten pages roughly from Fulton, and in a bold, free hand wrote at the bottom of each: "Thomas F. Splain."

"I'm ready," he announced, rising from his chair so that he jostled Fulton unnecessarily.

The old man, his self-control broken at last, struck him with open hand full in the face. His fingers left three red stripes across the murderer's cheek.

Before Braceway could interfere,

Bristow checked his impulse to strike back, and gave Fulton a long, level look.

"You're welcome to it," he said finally, jeering him; "welcome, old man. I guess I still owe you something, at that."

"Put the irons on him," ordered Greenleaf.

"First, though," Bristow said casually, as if going out for an evening at the theater, "I'd like to have a clean collar, some clean linen; and I want to get rid of this brace."

"Never mind what you want!" Greenleaf said, a shade more purple with rage.

Bristow turned to Braceway and said:

"You're right. The stuff's in the sole of this shoe."

"Let's take charge of that now," the detective directed the chief.

The two of them, each grasping one of his arms, hustled him with scant ceremony back to his bedroom. He removed his trousers and unbuckled the belt and straps of the steel brace.

Greenleaf put his hand into the shoe and tugged at the inner sole.

"Opens on the outside," prompted Braceway, "underneath, near the in-step."

The chief, after fumbling with it a moment, got it open. The jewels streamed to the floor, a little cascade of radiance and color. He picked them up, getting down on all fours so as not to miss one.

"Don't be unreasonable," Bristow complained as he slipped on another shoe. "Let me have a clean shirt and collar."

"Be quick about it." Braceway consented, his voice heavy with contempt.

Greenleaf, holding him again by one arm, shoved him toward the bureau. He got out of his shirt, Greenleaf shifting his grasp so as not to let go of him for

a second. In trying to put the front collar button into the fresh shirt, he broke off its head.

"Come on," muttered the chief. "You don't need a collar, anyway."

"Not so fast! I've more than one collar button."

He put his hand into a pin-tray and picked up another. It had a long shank and was easily manipulated because of the catch that permitted the movement of its head, as if on a hinge.

"This is better," he said, fingering it, unhurried as a man with hours to throw away.

"Get a move on! Get a move!" Greenleaf muttered again, tightening his hold until it was painful.

Bristow, apparently bent on throwing off this rough grasp on his left arm, swiftly raised his right hand, with the button, to his mouth.

For the fraction of a second his eyes, bright and defiant, met Braceway's. The detective, reading the elation in them, shouted:

"Look out!"

There was a click. And Bristow flung away the button as Braceway caught at his hand.

"I beat you after——" He tried to boast.

But the poison, quicker than he had thought, cut short his utterance. His eyelids flickered twice. He collapsed against Greenleaf and slid, crumpled, to the floor.

"Cyanide," said Braceway. "He had it in the shank of that collar button."

Greenleaf bent over him.

"It's quick, all right," he announced. "He's dead."

Braceway touched the body with his cane, so that it rolled over, turning the pallid face to the light.

"Too quick," he said, a thriving disgust in the words, "and too easy—too good for him."

# For Pretty Things

By Robert Winton

Author of "Monkey See, Monkey Do," "Hag-ridden," etc.

**ONE**—two—three.” Old Steven Brunt cackled and mumbled to himself as he turned his withered, shaking palm sideways and, one by one, allowed three sparkling gems to fall on the table.

“Three beauties.” He gloated with senile, quivering lips. “Three drops of crystalized light of sun and moon! When I die, you pretties shall go with me into the deep, cool grave. In the darkness, safe from the desire of some grasping stranger, you will stay with me until dust returns to dust.”

The old man’s maudlin monologue spent itself in foolish, vague, and half-crazed mutterings. His rheumy eyes blinked with cunning avariciousness as he sought to feast his gaze with the scintillating glitter of his precious baubles. He grumbled weakly and his shriveled fingers groped uncertainly for his hoard. It seemed to him that the radiance of the stones that had been the comfort of his lonely, selfish hours, was not so brilliant as it had been.

“My eyes must be goin’ back on me,” he muttered. “I shed blood for you, and now you won’t shine for me like you used to do. It ain’t my eyes; it’s you that have grown dull. What’s the matter with you? Sparkle up, pretty things! I murdered a man to get you. Nobody knows that you are in my possession. Shine, little fireflies! You have been bathed in blood, Shine for the old man who has kept you warm on his heart for more than twenty years. Bah! Your light is dim. Steven, a shadow is creeping between you and

your gems. Death is coming near, but they shall not tear you away from me. I will cheat them all.”

Still maundering and apostrophizing himself and his treasures, the old man gathered up his diamonds and reluctantly dropped them into a worn and greasy leather bag. He then tucked the bag inside his dirty gray shirt and patted his thin, bony chest.

“Safe,” he mumbled. “No one knows, no one guesses that poor old Steven is worth a pile of money. Now I wonder if that derved girl has been spying on me. Trying to peek through the keyhole or listenin’ to what I was saying. I ain’t been talkin’ loud, though; an’ Susan’s a fool, anyhow.”

Standing by his table, the old man gnawed nervously at his broken, discolored finger nails. The haunting dread that his secret might be betrayed by some careless act of his own was again upon him. The pleasure that he obtained by contemplating and pawing over his stones was more than counter-balanced by the condition of terror that always came over him with redoubled intensity after he had indulged his weakness. The stolen diamonds were his pride and joy. Also, they were a burden and source of never-ceasing anxiety.

Shuffling over to the bolted door, Steven bent stiffly and peered at the paper that he had rammed into the keyhole.

“It ain’t been touched,” he whispered; and with slow care quietly slipped back the bolt.

There was a crafty, vicious gleam in

his faded eyes as he opened the door with sudden quickness. It was his intention to surprise the girl he constantly suspected of spying on him; but, even had Susan been at the door, the old man would not have caught her. He thought his movements were soundless, that he had given no hint of his approach to the door; but he was greatly mistaken. Deaf to the noise of his own footsteps and blind to the many opportunities he had given the girl for discovering his secret, old Steven lived in a fool's paradise. Going slowly to the top of the stairs, he raised his voice in a querulous call.

"Susan! Is supper ready?"

From the kitchen below came the sound of chair legs scraping on the uncovered boards. The door opened and a shaft of lamplight illumined the figure of a short, thick-set girl. She stuck her hands on her hips and stared up at the crabbed features of her stepfather.

"Don't ask fool questions," she said brusquely. "You know as well as I do that it's been ready this hour an' more. You heard me thump on the ceiling. Come on down. I'm sick of waitin'."

An attack of rage seized the old man, and when he stood in the bare, untidy kitchen he shook a threatening fist in the girl's face.

"Don't you get fresh with me," he said loudly. "Don't I feed you, clothe you? Ain't it my money that pays for your keep? You that is so dumb an' stupid that you can't even get a job at washin' dishes."

"Aw, shut up," retorted Susan, slamming a blackened dish on the table. "Shove some of them beans in yer jaw and chaw on the moldy pork you expect me to eat. But don't chew the rag with me. I'm fed up with your nasty, mean ways. I'm a fool? Sure I am—fer stayin' around when I might——"

"Might what?" asked the old man jeeringly.

"Ride about in a leemousine an' dress in velvet an'——"

A wheezy gust of merriment was old Steven Brunt's greeting of Susan's strange announcement. He cackled and leered at her angry, flushed face and took no heed of the dangerous look in her cold eyes.

"Don't make me laugh," he pleaded with mock concern. "You won't never ride in no gas tank 'cept it be a patrol wagon or a hearse. Shove over the bread an' quit tryin' to be funny."

While he ate his food and gulped the lukewarm coffee that Susan poured in the tin cup that stood at his elbow, old Steven further elaborated on the girl's future. It was part of his evening recreation to taunt Susan and tease her with brutal words, to the point of tears. With the meanness of a diseased nature, the old man delighted to torment Susan; but, although he tried to prod her with stinging words, he failed to bring a flash of rage into her sullen dark eyes.

It takes two to quarrel, and after a while Steven tired of his one-sided argument. Crouched over the stove, his thoughts reverted to the girl's peculiar assertion.

"Lee-mousine," he muttered in puzzled disgust.

Now and again his hand rose stealthily to his chest and he convinced himself by touch that his prized gems were safe in their hiding place.

"Pretty things," he whispered drowsily. "Nobody dreams that old Steven is mighty rich. Nine thousand dollars apiece. Three nines are twenty-seven. Twenty-seven thousand dollars in shining diamonds—safe and warm."

Ignoring the old man's mutterings, Susan stacked the dirty dishes in the sink, and, leaving them to be washed later, she silently went out the back door. Susan had a date, and when she reached the corner of the house, the smell of cigarette smoke acquainted her

with the fact that her friend was waiting for her.

"Old man asleep?" inquired a drink-husky voice.

"As usual," replied the girl. "And as usual you have been boozin'. Keep away from me, Jim; you're a beast."

"I only had a couple of glasses," protested Jim. "That ain't going to hurt a feller none. Say, I pulled off a cinch last night. Listen. I got a wad as big as my fist. Get yer hat an' let's take in a show. Come on, you black-eyed cutie, be a sport!"

"Nothing doin'," retorted the girl. "Tell me about last night. What did you get?"

"A hatful of watches an' rings," boasted Jim. "Got away like a bird."

"Did you hock them?"

"Not on yer life, kid. Say, I ain't such a simp, to take a risk like that."

Jim leaned closer; but although the girl allowed his arm to encircle her ample waist, she proved to be in no mood for lovemaking and light talk. She wanted to know how he disposed of stolen property. Jim talked little, but thought a lot.

"I'll bet a dollar," he reflected, "that ole miser has somethin' hid away that's worth havin' and she wants to get hold of them. Sue was mighty anxious to find out the name of a fence. Do I butt in an' put one over on her, or do I not? I'm sick of her, anyway, an' I may as well get something out of it before I cut loose."

During the next three hours, Jim kept his foot on a brass rail; but, although he drank frequently, he exercised care to keep his head.

"Got another little job on hand," he confided to the bartender. "Good biz, maybe; dunno yet. Gotter take a chance of landin' a lemon once in a while."

Soon after midnight the back door of Steven Brunt's ramshackle frame house creaked slightly and yielded to the

pressure of a skillfully applied jimmy. Silent as a cat, Jim crossed the kitchen, listened for a moment at the door of Susan's room, and climbed the stairs. He had made up his mind that whatever there was worth stealing, would be hidden in the old man's room. The bolt that Steven never failed to push into its socket did not delay Jim's entry more than fifty seconds. Accustomed to forcing an entrance where steel doors and bars blocked his way, Jim found this as easy to accomplish as the opening of a box of candy would be to a child.

The light of Jim's torch flitted about the room and, in its passing, rested momentarily on the bed. Partly covered by a torn quilt, the old man lay on his back, snoring. The light did not rest on him for more than a few seconds, but Jim's darting, searching gaze missed no detail. He saw enough to cause him to snap off his light and step nearer to the bed. Gently feeling, his fingers crept over the old man's chest and closed around the leather bag. He held a knife ready to cut the string that was looped about Steven's scraggy neck. The deed was as good as done, the bag all but in Jim's possession, when a metallic clatter on the floor caused the old man to wake with a shrill scream of alarm. Startled by the accident, Jim stepped back and his heel came down on the cylindrical torch, that had fallen from his pocket and betrayed his presence. He tried to save himself from slipping, but the old man's clutching fingers hampered his efforts to recover his balance. He fell and dragged with him the cursing old man. A furious struggle followed.

Crazed by rage and fear of discovery, Jim let loose all his strength in bestial brutality. He secured a murderous clutch on the old man's throat, and his hold did not relax until he felt his victim become suddenly limp.

Then, when it was too late, Jim let

the body fall and groped for his torch. The bulb glowed and revealed the horror that his hands had done.

"D-dead!" he stutted. The look of victory was wiped from his face as he stared down at the distorted features. He felt no remorse for his deed, but in common with other murderers, he showed the cowardly streak in him and trembled with heart-gripping panic. He jerked himself erect, ready to take instant flight. Then again the leather bag caught his eye and greed nerved him to wrench it free.

"May as well have what I come for," he muttered callously. He was amazed and joyful when he opened the bag and the three stones glittered in his hand.

"I'll bet he stole 'em," muttered Jim; and little knew that he was near the truth, and that fate had chosen him as an instrument of vengeance for the crime that Steven Brunt had committed over twenty years ago. "Me fer the woods," he added, and padded softly to the door. "Must have made a racket. If that derved girl woke up I'll have to do another job. I——"

A door slammed below. Jim heard a quick rush of feet and a woman screaming in abandonment to hysteria.

"Sue!" mumbled Jim. Crouched in the dark, he strove to collect his alarmed thoughts and plan a way of escape. He could frame no idea except the pressing necessity for flight. He blundered down the stairs, frantic to get out.

A man's shout and Susan's accusing, repeated outcries of "Murder! That's him!" rang out simultaneously as Jim tore down the street. As he ran, he glanced over his shoulder.

"She's got a cop!" He gasped, then plunged on, unheeding the policeman's order to stop.

Bullets began to spatter on his trail.

The third shot found lodgment in the murderer's knee. He floundered and sprawled on his face; his race was done.

At the station house, Jim listened bitterly to a mocking story. He had killed a man, pledged his own life to atonement in the electric chair, for—nothing. The gems that Steven had fondled and played with, were only paste duplicates of the diamonds that he had doted on. It was Susan who told the surprising story.

"I stole 'em over a month ago," she confessed. "My stepfather left his bag on his table and I took the real diamonds and put in three imitations that I had picked out of a brooch I bought on purpose fer when my chance should come. Fer years I knew he had 'em. He half starved me an' never give me a moment's peace. I was goin' to sell 'em an' run away. Now——"

"Curse you!" exclaimed Jim. "All along you've been stringin' me. That's why you wanted to find out the name of a fence. That's——"

"Enough!" the lieutenant interrupted sharply. "That'll be all from you now. The rest can wait until the morning. You'll get all that is coming to you, later. Hand over the diamonds, young woman. We'll look up their history and see if we can place them where they belong."

When the real and the false stones were ranged on his desk, the lieutenant summed up Susan's part. "A clever girl," was his comment. "No wonder the old man didn't discover the trick she played on him. They're exactly the same size and his eyes were failing him. I suppose she counted on that. The real ones must be worth a pile of money. I guess we won't have much of a job to trace them back to their rightful owner."

# The Accusing Melody

by Ronald Oliphant

*"When Cats Came Back," "No Luck," etc.*

**W**ITH his deep chest, massive shoulders, fresh, ruddy complexion, conventionally tailored blue suit, and large, well-polished black shoes, Barker, headquarters detective, felt decidedly out of place in the babbling, fashionable crowd that thronged the lobby of the Apollo Theater to hear and witness the *première* of the new operetta, "Lurana."

Edging his way skillfully through the crush of rainbow-hued femininity, immaculately clad officers of army and navy, and a sprinkling of "tombstones" and swallowtails, Barker reached the ticket-taker, presented his pasteboard, and passed into the auditorium. He was not at the theater for the purpose of enjoying himself, but was following up an extremely vague, indefinite clew to a case that had baffled him and his superiors for a year past. In his pocket-book was a half sheet of note paper bearing the following message in hand-printed characters:

If you want to discover the person guilty of the Seagram murder, attend the opening performance of "Lurana" next Monday evening.

The communication was unsigned. The paper was of a standard brand that could be purchased at any one of hundreds of stationery stores throughout the city. The postmark was that of a station in the heart of the business dis-

trict. There was no way of tracing the sender. The envelope was addressed merely to The Inspector in Charge of the Detective Bureau, Police Headquarters, City.

There was only one thing to do; namely, to send a man to investigate on the night designated. Hence the presence of the unpretentiously clad Barker in the midst of the gathering of butterfly pleasure seekers.

"Lurana" was a new operetta composed by the gifted Italian, Signor Giuseppe Miro. A Miro first night was always attended by a crowd of fashionables. The critics waxed enthusiastic over his musicianly scores, and burred and burred about the mantle of Mozart and Offenbach and Sullivan. At the same time they made uncomplimentary references to Broadway's favorite one-finger composers, who were the signor's rivals in the light-opera and musical-comedy fields.

Of these things Barker knew little or nothing, and cared less. The refinement and delicacy of a melodic theme, the nuances of skillful orchestration, the originality and freshness of a musical idea, had no special significance in his practical, square-toed life.

It was nearly curtain time. The chairs were beginning to fill, the musicians to drift into the pit reserved for them. The sound of tuning up and trying out

string, wood, wind, and brass mingled with the hum of small talk, the swish of silken dresses and the dull bang of seats being dropped into place.

Barker was in the fifth row of the orchestra at the extreme right, up against the stage boxes. It was an advantageous position, commanding a view of practically the entire lower floor, a good portion of the first balcony, and even the front rows of the second balcony.

With vision alert for anything of significance, the detective mentally reviewed the Seagram mystery, and wondered how such a crime could in any way be connected with the refined, fashionable gathering in which he was now placed. It had been an odd and thorough inexplicable case, apparently simple, and yet hopelessly baffling.

Seagram was a composer who had had a great deal of success, and was rated as a master of his craft by those who knew. It was while an operatic competition was in progress that the killing had occurred. Seagram had taken a room in the Wellington Hotel in order to secure quiet, and to enable himself to concentrate on the work of writing his offering in the contest. The affair was under the auspices of some musical society. The reward for the winner was a ten-thousand-dollar lump cash prize, a royalty on every performance, assurance of a production at the Metropolitan Opera House, and worldwide fame. The leading composers of the country had entered the lists, but in Seagram's chances for success were very favorably regarded.

It was about six weeks before the date when the manuscripts had to be in the hands of the judges that Seagram was found dead at his piano in his hotel. He had been stabbed in the back. The murderer had apparently entered by means of a fire escape leading over the roof, struck the fatal blow, and got away undetected. The motive did not

seem to be robbery, for nothing was disturbed. The composer's desk contained a number of the rough manuscript pages on which he had been working, but so far as the police could tell, nothing was missing. No one had heard a sound, but this was to have been expected, because Seagram had been assigned a room where he would be entirely unmolested. This room was situated along a corridor with the linen storeroom and a number of unoccupied apartments, so that Seagram could, if he liked, strum away at his piano far into the night without disturbing or being disturbed. This isolation was unfortunate, and it greatly handicapped the police in their investigation. Moreover, it gave the murderer a clean twelve-hour start, at least, as it was not until nearly noon of the following day that a chambermaid, entering to tidy the room, found the unfortunate composer cold in death.

Everything pointed to the theory that he had been attacked from behind. Those who knew him believed that he had been so absorbed in his music that he had not heard the stealthy footsteps at his back, or been aware of the presence of another, until the treacherous blade was thrust into his body. He was in the habit of becoming totally wrapped up in his work, and the chances were that this fact had prevented him from making any struggle or outcry.

The murderer had been clever, and also fortunate. He had left no clew, not even the knife with which the deed was done. During the early morning hours a heavy rainfall had washed away any footprints or other traces that he might have made in his passage over the roof and the fire escape. It had been a simple matter to climb upstairs unseen and reach the roof, then to descend the iron ladder, enter Seagram's room, commit the crime, and go back the same way. The locale was made to order.



The police had been entirely at sea. Other composers who feared Seagram's rivalry in the contest were watched and questioned, but every one could give a satisfactory account of his doings on the night of the tragedy, and there was no evidence against any of them.

By the time Barker had turned these facts over in his mind for the thousandth time, the seats on the lower floor of the theater were about three quarters filled. The musicians were all at their posts. Their final tunings were finished. They were awaiting the arrival of the conductor and the first rap of his baton to call them to order for the opening measures of the overture.

At last a burst of applause announced the presence of Signor Miro in the orchestra pit to conduct the opening performance. He bowed gracefully in acknowledgment of the ovation, brushing aside a wavy black forelock that had strayed on to his forehead. He was of a handsome Latin type, with an extremely sensitive, delicate face, large, expressive eyes, and rather high cheekbones. His figure was slender, but gave the impression of strength and wiriness.

Barker's sharp glance took in every detail of his form, from the mass of dark hair to the vanishing point where the chairs in front cut off the view of his exquisitely creased trousers at about the level of the knees. He had seen Miro before. The composer had been questioned when the murder of Seagram was under investigation. There had been no suspicion against him. The alibi furnished by his valet was convincing. In any event, there was no motive in his case for the deed, as his offering had been about sixth in merit on the judges' list. He was not, therefore, in a position to profit by Seagram's taking off.

With an alert movement, Miro swung around from the audience and faced the musicians. A sharp rap of the baton brought them to attention. Then

he raised his arm, and the overture was begun.

The piece was about half finished when Barker, who had been carefully scanning each addition to the audience, gave a slight start. The cause was a fair-haired, rather good-looking man, probably forty years of age, who was being shown to his seat at the moment by the girl usher. It was Graffan, the winner of the opera contest, from which death had eliminated Seagram as a competitor. He had the aisle seat in the same row as Barker. He had never been suspected because he was a dark horse in the race. No one knew of him, no one expected anything wonderful from him; yet he had turned out a score that unquestionably had been the best submitted to the judges. There was nothing to connect him with the murder, although when his name was announced as winner, the police had devoted a little time to looking over his antecedents, and making him account for his actions on the night of the crime.

To Barker's mind, his presence this evening in conjunction with the mysterious warning note that had come to headquarters was significant; yet in itself it was not. There was every reason why he should be sufficiently interested in Miro's new work to come to the initial performance.

No sooner was Graffan seated than Barker's attention was attracted to a couple just entering a lower-tier box on the opposite side of the house. It was only for a moment that the detective got a glimpse of the newcomers, as the lights were lowered the next instant preparatory to the rise of the curtain. For his quick vision, recognition was instantaneous. The man was George Silver, the dead composer's favorite nephew, who had benefited not a little by his will, and who had, incidentally, been helped out of rather a bad financial hole by the legacy. He was a thin,

dark, dissolute-looking fellow of thirty or so. With him was his wife, an overdressed, fussy little woman of the extremely blond type that some men find irresistibly alluring. Barker was not one of these.

"Lurana" proved to be a conventional operetta of rather more than the average musical pretentiousness. There was the usual chorus of merry villagers, the beautiful heroine, the handsome hero, the brigand, the comedians, the ingénue.

The heroine came on toward the middle of the first act. It struck Barker at once that there was something familiar about her face and figure, in spite of the make-up. He consulted the program by the glare from the stage. Then he remembered. The singer was billed as Ruth Guardia, but Barker's all-embracing mind recollected that this was the stage name of the murdered Seagram's wife.

She was of a compelling style of dark beauty; about her eyes was a dreamy quality; in her voice a velvety languor, and in her every movement was an undulant grace that inevitably thrilled and attracted. She was of medium height, a woman of rarely commanding, magnetic personality.

The house, which had hitherto been a trifle apathetic, came to life at once. This woman held its sympathies, its attention, its interest from the very first note of her opening aria. She sang well; she acted superbly; she was the finished *artiste*. Even Barker, a man of somewhat unrefined, coarse-grained tastes, was not unmoved by her. He sensed the presence of a genius which he could not quite appreciate. He realized the diva's potent charm.

Then he began wondering. This was the fourth person in the theater who, to his certain knowledge, had been enmeshed in the toils of the Seagram case. Truly it was an interesting situation,

and Barker was alert for every possible development.

The first act passed without noteworthy occurrence. There was a tumult of applause when the curtain fell, and it was raised again and again to permit the principals to take their calls. Signor Miro participated in the ovation, coming before the footlights and bowing his acknowledgments of the plaudits of his host of admirers. "Lurana" was a success—at least as far as the first night went. There was a flush in his sallow cheeks. His hair was just the least bit rumpled. There was a gleam in his fine dark eyes. It was Miro's night, and any one could see that he was thrilling with the glory of his triumph. Contrary to usual custom, he came on by himself for his curtain calls after the performers had finished making their bows.

There was nothing to excite suspicion during the intermission. Everybody behaved in an absolutely normal manner. Certainly no one had the aspect of a murderer. The sender of the anonymous note was just as much a mystery as ever. No clew to his or her identity had thus far revealed itself. Barker had to admit to being "stumped," as he expressed it.

He settled himself with a slightly peevish grunt for the second act. The musicians had returned to their places and the curtain was just going up again. This act was as uneventful as its predecessor. The plot of the operetta was developed a little more. Frankly, Barker did not know what it was all about. He was far too deeply engrossed in the real, vital, human problem which he had come to the theater this evening in the hope of solving, lured by the promise of the anonymous missive.

Again the curtain came down. The second act was over. The principals and the composer took a lot more calls. The enthusiasm was unbounded. Barker

was beginning to feel bored—and also skeptical. Perhaps, after all, it was just some fool practical joke one of his brother officers with a depraved sense of humor was playing at his expense.

This time he left his seat during the intermission and mingled with the crowd in foyer, promenade, and smoking room. He had been told that in this sleek, well-fed, prosperous gathering of first-nighters, there lurked a cowardly murderer. His keen eyes scanned a hundred faces. Many of them were shallow, weak, lacking character, firmness, resourcefulness. Yet he could not pick out one as typically criminal. He got a good look at Silver, the nephew, in the smoking room. The man's hand trembled a little as he lit his cigarette, but that was not an abnormal symptom in the case of a high liver such as he knew the man to be.

There was nothing suspicious about Graffan when the detective jostled him slightly at the head of the stairs. The man seemed perfectly placid. Calm-eyed, almost phlegmatic, he suggested anything but the high-strung, temperamental master of music he had shown himself to be.

So absorbed was Barker in his physiological study of the people that he did not notice that the musicians were in their places and the house being darkened for the third act. He was late getting into his seat and had to apologize for stumbling over the knees of a portly dowager, her daughter, and a subdued man in evening clothes, who was probably the daughter's husband.

The first part of the third act showed the fair *Lurana's* sleeping chamber. The stage was darkened, and as the scene drew to a close, the singer retired to sleep, only to arise after a short interval and play on the violin a melody which she was supposed to dream. It was a sort of sleep-walking scene, with the dream melody as the climax.

The white-robed figure came forward toward the footlights, instrument in hand. Her dark hair fell in a loose mass over her shoulders. Her eyes appeared to be closed. With a majestic movement she drew the violin to her chin and commenced to play. The audience leaned forward spellbound. The melody drawn from the strings was soft, pleading, exquisitely tender. The beautifully molded arm that wielded the bow seemed gifted with a rare interpretative power; it seemed to draw the very soul out of the instrument, and to send it vibrating through the auditorium in a flood of sound that caused the listeners to catch their breath and to feel a tightening of the throat, so true and sincere and appealing was its emotional content. Truly it was a dream melody, a piece of the very fabric from which dreams are made. It was little more than a gentle breath, so softly did the player draw the bow across the strings, yet it held the vast gathering entranced with its wistful, ethereal loveliness.

The number was finished. The applause, hushed for a moment, then broke forth in a delirious hurricane, a frenzy of enthusiasm. The curtain fell three times. It would not do. The crowd would not be satisfied with a mere bow from the woman who had rendered the inspired music with such perfect taste. There must be an encore.

The curtain went up and stayed up. The orchestra, at a sign from the leader, played the introductory bars, and the solo was recommenced. It had progressed about half way when there was an unexpected interruption. From somewhere among the shadows of the darkened stage a man's figure crept toward the player, with arms outstretched. His face was invisible. His outlines were indistinguishable in the gloom surrounding the solitary white figure standing prominently out in the spotlight. He entered the illuminated

circle, reached out gently, and took both bow and violin from the woman's unresisting fingers. Still he kept his face averted, but he muttered gruffly. So deftly was the instrument transferred from one pair of hands to the other that there was not more than a moment's break in the continuity of the melody before the intruder had taken it up where the actress had left it off. As soon as he had possessed himself of the violin, he retired into the darkness again. His touch was just as sure and firm, just as soft and tender, just as fervidly eloquent as the woman's had been. There was a moment, as the strains died away almost to a whisper, when those in the front rows of the orchestra could catch his muttered words.

"My melody! My melody!" he kept repeating.

The audience, at first mystified, came to the conclusion that the change of players was part of the plot, and after a momentary gasp of astonishment, settled back to enjoy the strange, haunting melody to the conclusion of its second rendition.

Barker, however, was sitting up in his chair, tensely alert. His instinct told him that the moment for which he had been waiting all evening was at hand. Yet he was puzzled to understand the significance of the occurrence on the stage. If he could only see who the man was!

As if in answer to his wish, the spotlight operator gave his big lamp a turn and sent the glare fully on the player. Every one gave a start of horror, and an exclamation half of amazement, half of fear passed through the audience. One woman gave a little, hysterical giggle. The face of the man on the stage was ghastly. His eyes appeared glazed. A crimson streak marred the white of his shirt-front. A wild, unearthly look rested on his features. Barker recognized him instantly. So did many others in the gathering. It would not have

taken much, at that moment, to start a panic. The people were nervous, high-strung, frightened. They were in the right frame of mind to be stampeded.

Just at the psychologically correct instant the thing happened. It was not a scream, nor was it a groan. It hardly resembled any known sound that the human vocal organs can produce; and yet it was of human origin—a cry wrung from a tortured, overwrought, guilty soul, the wail of a conscience-driven wretch in whom fear of the uncanny and the supernatural had broken down and brought to the verge of confession. At last the voice became articulate:

"Stop it, Seagram! For the love of Heaven, stop it!"

The orchestra trailed off into a discordant murmur, and was silent. Only the violin on the stage continued to play amid the gradually increasing hubbub in the audience, as women pleaded to be taken away, and men growled indignantly and called for the lights. In the confusion the spotlight man apparently lost his head and switched off the one ray that had hitherto furnished the sole illumination for the house. Absolute darkness reigned.

After what seemed a terribly long ten minutes, but was in reality only a few moments, the house electrician turned on the lights, the lone violinist vanished somewhere among the shadows of the stage, and the curtain was brought down.

Behind the scenes the prima donna, Ruth Guardia, lay back in a chair in her dressing room in a half-fainting condition, but there was a gleam of triumph in her splendid dark eyes, and an expression of achievement lay on her finely molded features.

She turned to her maid who was draping a filmy piece of lace over her bodice for the next scene.

"It was wonderful, Marie!" she exclaimed rapturously. "Wonderful! My scheme worked to perfection. The detective has him now!"

At the very moment she spoke, Barker was half lifting, half dragging a moaning, whining, cowering creature into a taxi at the stage door. He got his captive into the car and gave the driver a curt order.

"Police headquarters!"

It did not take long, once the tension had been broken, to secure a complete confession. The apparition of what appeared to be the murdered Seagram—in reality an actor violinist made up for the part, and coached by Ruth Guardia combined with the havoc wrought by a guilty, ever-gnawing conscience, had shattered the prisoner's nerve, and he was like wax in the hands of the detective. The whole truth came out—the ambition to win the operatic contest; the knowledge that Seagram was the better man; the trip over the roof and down the fire escape; the cowardly blow in the back; the stealing of part of Seagram's manuscript, and the manufactured alibi. Finally he told of the loss of his own skill and inspiration after committing the deed, and the fail-

ure of his opera in the contest as a result of his distraught frame of mind. Then there was the melody that had betrayed his secret to Ruth Guardia.

"I knew that it would be my undoing, but I couldn't help myself. It was always singing in my mind, the dream melody in the dark scene of the third act. It was the only thing I took from Seagram's score. I varied it only a little. It forced me, drove me to write it into my new operetta, 'Lurana.' I was haunted by it night and day. Now I feel free of it. It has done its work! It has avenged its creator!"

The final scene of "Lurana" was played through for those of the audience who remained. Few of the spectators grasped the significance of the episode in connection with the playing of the dream melody; in fact, hardly any one in the audience noticed that Signor Miro was missing from the leader's desk, and that another wielded the baton during the second half of the last act. In the morning when they read the papers and learned of the signor's arrest and indictment for the Seagram murder, they remembered—and understood.

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## DENTISTS AS INSANITY EXPERTS

**I**N recent years we have heard much about the testimony given by experts on mental diseases, in numerous cases where the guilty person's plea was that, for some cause or other, he had been temporarily insane at the time the crime was committed. Now a hitherto unsuspected reason for insanity has been brought to light, which may result in the addition of dentists to the corps of experts called upon as witnesses in many murder trials.

Doctor Harvey A. Cotton, medical director of the New Jersey State Hospital for the Insane, at Trenton, has announced, after eleven years' work with the patients in that institution, that the primary cause of many cases of insanity is bad teeth. Poison generated by the unhealthy teeth spreads, after several years, throughout the body, causing insanity, and finally, death.

Doctor Cotton's discovery may, perhaps, influence also the treatment of those convicts who from time to time rebel without warning and commit acts of violence in prison.

# The Last Chapter

by C. C. Andrews

**T**HE river was a weak little stream for most of its length, but it widened and deepened where the bridge spanned it, and, seeming to be fed by fresh springs, foamed over the bowlders which at this point formed its hard, uneven bed. The bridge was probably stronger than it looked, or it would have been swept away long ago; for the river, when the rains swelled it, had been known to overflow so far as to touch the oak palings of the bungalow garden.

On a post against these palings, under a little green wooden gable, hung a life preserver, rope, and boat hook. These, like the bungalow, were the property of Miss Bosanquet. Once a tiny village child, trotting at the side of a hardly larger sister, had slipped upon the bridge, and, falling, had its little life dashed out before her helpless eyes. The life preserver had resulted, as well as the often-renewed white paint upon the handrail, and the half-yard band upon the unprotected side of the planks.

A couple of hamlets lay upon the farther side of the wood, and the bridge being the nearest road to both village and schoolhouse, the small passers were many—so many, and so blood-curdlingly reckless, that Miss Bosanquet, seated at her writing table near an open window of the charming apartment that was drawing-room and study in one, sometimes declared that she had her heart in her mouth twenty times a day.

“The reviewers are rather fond of complaining that I’m spasmodic. If they lived opposite that bridge, and saw the girls hanging on by their hair rib-

bons, the babies by their toes, and the boys by nothing at all, they might be spasmodic, too,” said Miss Bosanquet.

On the present occasion the long summer dusk was so far advanced that the last straggler was probably safe in bed, and Miss Bosanquet was not at her writing table, being engaged with a visitor—with her most frequent visitor, the rector. That he should drop in at the bungalow once or twice a week, was a matter of course. That he should say what he had just said, was not.

“Again! My dear friend! Oh, please——” she expostulated.

She stood looking at him, a woman who possibly had once been more beautiful—who certainly could never have been more charming. Her dress of dark heliotrope, flowing softly over the perfect curves of her tall figure, suited admirably the thick twists of the bright, fair hair that had not a stripe of gray, the pure, blond tints of the strong, sweet face that had hardly a line. It was not, as a rule, a grave face—or, at least, was one that readily grew gay; eyes and lips were alike quickly alert with a delightful humor. They were so now, for all her reproachful tone. The rector—he was a highly personable one, handsome, kindly, portly, as a rector should be—sighed.

“My dear,” he said gently, “you know I shall always go on hoping.”

“I hope not. For I think it is four times— isn’t it? that I have told you I shall never marry,” said Miss Bosanquet.

“Is it impossible that your mind should change? Have you forgotten that when your niece marries——”

"Dahlia? I don't believe she thinks of it. She's so young yet. And there's her voice—she will have her profession," said Miss Bosanquet rather quickly.

"You would be very lonely—miss her——"

"Terribly! You see, I don't deny it. But I have always my work."

"Would that suffice? Suppose——"

"We change the subject? Do! Help me with my last chapter," said Miss Bosanquet brightly.

If the words were abrupt, the manner atoned for them; and the rector, taught by experience, was wise enough to accept the finality of the tone. He changed his own promptly. "Is it troubling you?" he asked.

"As usual." She laughed a little whimsically. "I have my public, you know, and my public expects a certain thing of me—the conventional happy ending. Absolutely absurd in the present case, treating the woman as a human creature and not an impossible simulacrum of perfection. You know the story. Don't you think so?"

"H'm! We are obliged to allow that forgiveness," began the rector, it must be admitted a little pompously.

"Pooh! You are not in the pulpit, my good friend. You know well enough there are some things that no man should be forgiven, and that no woman should forgive. Forgiveness! Can that unmake, remake, obliterate? Women know very well that it can't. And yet it is chiefly women who, if I give it them, will whimper over an unnatural reconciliation and an impossible happiness."

There was a moment's silence. The rector filled it with a little cough—a discreet sound. That the woman he desired to marry was a successful novelist undoubtedly added to his admiration of her. But it was not the reason why he loved her. A modest perception that her brains far bettered his perhaps ex-

plained why he seldom contradicted her, rector though he was. He broke the silence by changing the subject again.

"Miss Dahlia is quite well, I trust?"

"Perfectly, thanks. She is dining at Pinecrest to-night. There is a rather big party of big people—a senator among them, if I'm not mistaken. Mrs. Holroyd sent quite a gushing invitation; the child was delighted. They want her to sing, of course."

"She is an acquisition anywhere," declared the rector gallantly.

"Quite so. But I am not sure that I care to have her made a convenience of. Oh, you are dining there, too. Of course! A pleasant evening. Must you go? Good-by," said Miss Bosanquet pleasantly.

The rector departed, and she sat on alone, her eyes fixed absently upon the blank manuscript page on which "Chapter the Last" was written in her firm, clear hand. Then a burst of music filled the bungalow; Dahlia's glorious young soprano rang out superbly. In a moment she came in.

"Ready at last, Aunt Claudia. I thought Harriett would never finish fussing with my hair. But it looks stunning, I think, don't you? Shall I do?" she asked.

She turned herself slowly around for inspection. Beyond an occasional turn of expression, there was no likeness between the two, for Dahlia was slight and small and dark, with a vivid richness of color and bloom and an eager vivacity of manner. She was very pretty—in a year or two more she would be lovely. Miss Bosanquet adjusted the ribbon that bound her little dark head.

"You look very nice, darling. I rather wish, though, that we had sent for a conveyance from Grant's; I hardly like your walking."

"Just through the wood? Why, it's nothing—no distance, and as dry as a bone. And Mrs. Holroyd will send me

home," returned Dahlia, pulling the long gloves up her slim girl's arms and putting on her cloak. "You might walk with me instead of Harriett, Aunt Claudia. It's a lovely evening. Do, dear," she said affectionately. Then she laughed. "That last chapter will never be finished to-night, anyhow, you know."

"Or begun, either, I guess. Yes, I think I will come," said Miss Bosanquet.

A long scarf of black lace was thrown over a chair; she folded it about her head and shoulders, and the two went out, crossing the bridge. The wood was very quiet; the path wound wide and white between the trees. At the first curve of it the girl checked with a little cry at the sudden appearance of a figure—Randal Holroyd, heir of the Holroyd estate and fortune. He was quite young—not more than four-and-twenty; his handsome, boyish face showed flushed and eager in the dusk. His bow was divided, but his eyes were only for Dahlia.

"I thought you might be walking over, Miss Conroy, and that if so, you would let me look after you. It's a bit lonely if you're nervous. So good of you to come! Wonderful, isn't it? And—and we needn't trouble your aunt to come any further, perhaps," he said.

"There was not the very least need for you to come. I should scarcely be scared of a rabbit or a squirrel. But—but I shall be quite all right, Aunt Claudia, you know," said Dahlia.

The toss of her dark head matched the cool indifference of her tone, but her little face was rosy. Claudia Bosanquet looked from one to the other, and her own face whitened under the shadow of the black lace; an odd little gasp escaped her. She stood quite still, watching the two young figures as they moved away, Randal carefully carrying Dahlia's music, his fair head bent de-

votedly down to the pink hood that moved at his shoulder as daintily graceful as a flower. But when she turned, Claudia Bosanquet almost ran, moving with a most uncharacteristic roughness and haste, not pausing until she dropped, breathless, into the chair by her writing table.

"I might have known!" she said aloud. "Oh, I might have known! Why should she escape?" Her eyes fell upon the blank manuscript page, blank but for its heading. She laughed bitterly. "The last chapter! As though that could be written to the story of any of us by any hand but Death's!"

She sat looking before her, listening to the rush of the river—a melancholy sound in the gathering gloom. It was fully an hour later, and it had grown as dark as the June night would grow, when she roused herself and rang for the lamp. She snatched up her pen when the maid had withdrawn, and began to write, filling page after page at a reckless speed, hardly halting for a word. Then she read it over. It was good! Oh, it was good! She knew that. But, all the same, it was the sort of thing that "her public" wouldn't stand. She tore the sheets across and threw the pieces down—not thus was her last chapter to be written. Then, invaded by a sudden irritation and impatience, she got up.

"I'll go out," she said aloud. "I shall do no good to-night!"

The black lace scarf still lay upon her shoulders; she wrapped it over her head and went out. A thin, faint moon was rising above the trees; the night was utterly quiet. Over the bridge she sauntered on slowly, following the path that she and Dahlia had trodden. Presently, from somewhere in the wood, came a little, piteous, shrill scream of terror and pain, perhaps from a rabbit caught by some night-prowling canine, and, with an involuntary exclamation of distress, she stood still. But for this



check she would probably not have seen the marks in the dust. Doing so now, she felt herself thrill and shiver with an instant premonition of what they were, for the moonlight showed them red. She hardly needed to stoop down, to touch the one—the largest—that was nearest to her foot, to look at her dabbled fingers. Blood!

“Oh!” she cried.

She looked at the marks, trailing obliquely from left to right of the path. Here there was a spot, here more spots, here, where she stood, almost a little pool, and beside them, in the dry dust, was the print of feet. Somebody—man or woman—had dragged themselves across, wounded and bleeding, and but a little time before; witness her stained finger-tips. Here upon the grass was a blot of red. Whoever it was had gone this way.

To do whatever there was to be done with neither fuss nor hesitation had always been a matter of course with Claudia Bosanquet; now the thought that she might encounter tramp or beggar did not for an instant deter her. She was not timid. The fact that here probably help was needed, which she could render, sufficed her.

She hurried along the narrow path that wound in among the bushes, came out upon a little clearing, and gave a cry. For in the center, the moonlight bright upon it, lay a huddled figure. Even before she bent over it she realized that this insensible man was neither tramp nor beggar; his clothing told as much, and the hand that lay palm upward was delicate, long-fingered, hardly less white than her own.

A moment's examination showed what was his injury—one sock, torn away above the ankle, was soaked in crimson, the flesh all mangled and jagged; from the bottom of the trouser leg two triangular pieces of cloth were wrenched clean out. The foot had been caught in a trap. Why had he swooned?

Was there any other hurt? There seemed no signs of any.

A few yards away was a little pool; she wet her handkerchief, and, kneeling down, laid it on his forehead. His thrown-up arm concealed the lower half of his face. She gently removed it, and the sudden gasping intake of her breath left her with lips apart, staring. He stirred, made a moaning sound, and she got slowly upon her feet, while her face, under the shrouding black lace, grew white and stiff. His eyes opened, saw her; he struggled up on his elbow, and she spoke.

“You fainted,” she said, and her voice in its harshness was one that Dahlia would hardly have recognized, although it was so quiet; never had she been prone to outcry. He looked up at her, a vague figure in the moonlight, and glanced about him confusedly as his strayed senses came back. “You fainted and fell here,” she said.

“Fainted?” He struggled up a little more, and in a moment half laughed. “Of course—I remember. Fainted, did I? That was the sight and smell of the blood. I always was a fool in that way—never could stand it. I was—caught in a trap.”

“Yes, I saw. There should be no traps in the wood. They are not allowed; James Holroyd does not permit it. This one must have been exceptionally strong——”

“It was.”

“Your ankle is badly torn——”

“I saw that much. If you would kindly give me your hand——”

Miss Bosanquet gave him her hand. With a struggle he got upon his feet. Then she composedly put back the shrouding lace—it fell down on either side of her colorless face like two folded sable wings—and looked at him. He started, and fell back with a gasp of amazement.

“Claudia! Good Heaven! Is it—is it you?”

"As surely as you are Archer Bradley," said Miss Bosanquet.

"You—recognized me?"

"Yes, I recognized you," said Miss Bosanquet.

"Who would have thought of it?" He scanned her from head to foot—seemed to subdue his astonishment in a shrug and a half-laugh. "Well, if I had been anyone else, you would have bound up my wounds in true Samaritan fashion, no doubt. But I'm afraid I can hardly expect you to do it for me."

"I expected to find a tramp. I should have done what I could in that case. There is no reason why I should not do the same now. I can hardly leave you as you are, more than a mile from the village," said Miss Bosanquet coldly. "If you choose to come to my house with me——"

"You live here, then?"

"Yes, close. Tie this handkerchief round your ankle. You should have done so before; it has bled terribly. And perhaps you had better take my arm," said Miss Bosanquet.

Bradley obeyed. He needed the support, for he limped painfully, and more than once stopped with a wince and sound of pain. But the silence was broken in no other way until they were on the bridge. He looked down at the tumbling water, foaming over its boulder-strewn bed; in the perfect night stillness its noise was loud.

"The river seems deep here," he said involuntarily.

"Very deep, and the current is swift—that is the house."

The light of the lamp shone out with a rosy glow from between the curtains of the long, open window as they went up the path. Bradley paused as they entered, looking at his conductress. They were almost of a height; he was not a tall man.

"I suppose I may as well have the grace to acknowledge," he said, with his former half-laugh and shrug in one,

"that this is a thousand times more than I deserve from you."

"We need not discuss that, I think," said Miss Bosanquet coldly. "You had better sit down. I will get what is necessary."

He sank into the chair to which she pointed, and she went out into the hall. The kitchen was at the other end of the bungalow, and the two maids were shut up there, she knew; their voices were audible as she glanced that way. That was well, she thought, since no one must know that Archer Bradley, of all men, was under roof of hers again. How small the world was—how small! she said to herself wonderingly, as she got water and towels, sponge and bandages, and carried them in.

The stiff whiteness had left her face now; though a little pale, it bore almost its usual sweet, composed serenity. He looked covertly at it, at the luxuriant coils of her bright hair, at her graceful figure, and an odd compound of expressions grew upon his own. It was a handsome face still, curiously attractive, in a sense curiously young, although the lines about the eyes and mouth were deep, and the close-cut dark hair was streaked with gray. He spoke suddenly, but with the touch of hesitation and deprecation more pronounced in his manner.

"You have changed very little," he said, "astonishingly little! And it is twenty years, I think."

"It is twenty-one years. I live a quiet life, that may be the reason," she answered composedly. "Let me see your ankle."

The wound was a bad one; the teeth of the trap had mangled and lacerated the flesh cruelly. She glanced up presently.

"It might have been meant for a man," she said. "It must have been strong enough to hold one."

"It did hold one longer than I liked," said Bradley.

"You must have tried to drag yourself away, surely?"

"Yes. For the first minute—like a fool—I couldn't think of, couldn't remember, the way to free myself."

"The man who set it was probably close by. You should have called for help. You did not?"

"No, I didn't call," said Bradley.

"Whoever he may be, he will get into trouble for setting it in the wood," said Miss Bosanquet.

She fastened the bandage with firm, deft white fingers, carried away the sponge and basin, and came back. He sat looking about the pretty, flower-decked room, every detail of which spoke of the prosperous well-being of its owner. She took up the lace scarf, and threw it round her shoulders and over her head. Nothing could have been more calmly indifferent than her manner and tone.

"It is unfortunate that there is no vehicle of any kind here," she said, "but the distance to the village is not far, and I can show you the path from the garden gate."

"Thank you." He stood up, hesitated. A hint of chagrin in his expression was repeated in his voice. "You—you don't ask me anything about myself, Claudia!"

"No," said Miss Bosanquet simply.

"You don't care to know, I suppose?"

"It is certainly no concern of mine."

"Oh, quite so! Perhaps, however, you may be able to give me credit for being glad to find you so prosperous, as is evidently the case." He hesitated again. "You—did not go back to the—to your profession?"

"No, that remained impossible." She made a gesture as if to forestall further questioning. "I write," she said curtly, "since you are curious."

"Write! Do you?" he glanced round again. "Ah! And you are rich, then, no doubt?"

"Rich? Few who depended upon their

pens are that! I make a livelihood and save a little. It is more than many can say."

"You are—not married?"

"Married!"

The word carried more than denial—a very volume; the whole of the woman's life story was in it. For the first time she looked at him straight and full, as he looked back at her, and the fire in her gray eyes was bright. He saw the woman whom he had desired, pursued, won, tired of, deserted—who, possibly, had been but an episode among episodes. She saw the man, whom, a raw girl, she had worshiped utterly, had learned through anguish to doubt, scorn, despise not less utterly, but who remained the only man who had ever counted with her for good or bad. Her eyes withdrew and turned away in a moment, but his continued upon her; a new expression grew in his face, a lurking satisfaction that he had at last struck this one flash of fire out of her. But his tone was humble.

"I suppose I was a scoundrel, Claudia. No, I know I was. I left you—broke my word—behaved most disgracefully——"

"But naturally," said Miss Bosanquet, and looked at him quietly. "A woman who trusts a man as I trusted you asks him to deceive her, leaves herself to his mercy and his honor. If they chance to be nonexistent, it is of not much use to cry out. I had lost my voice; my hopes of making money and a name were over. Why should you have kept your promise to make me your wife? You were ambitious, and you had the chance of marrying a rich woman. What you did was quite natural."

"At any rate, I didn't marry her," muttered Bradley half sullenly. The calm of her voice was barbed with something keener than mere scorn, and he had reddened under it. "But no doubt you know that?"

"No; it did not concern me. But I am glad, for her sake," said Miss Bosanquet.

"You'll never forgive me, Claudia?"

"No. There are some things one does not forgive," said Miss Bosanquet.

"Well, it serves me right, I suppose!" He gave his half-laugh and shrug. "You cared for me too much, poor girl! And I broke your heart, spoiled your life——" She turned round upon him.

"No!" she said.

"No?" Thrown out, he stared at her.

"No; oh, no!" She almost smiled; there was a gleam of faint, tolerant amusement in her eyes; the irresistible humor that was part of her twitched her lips. "I suppose," she said quietly, "that it flatters a man's vanity as nothing else can do to believe that her love for him must needs be a woman's all. Women know better; they realize that there are other things—many. It sounds like a heresy, doesn't it? But it's true—it's true! You did not break my heart, Archer; it was too strong, as my life, believe me, was too good a thing to be spoiled for such a one as you." She paused, with a little shake of her head, and smiled again. "You have pictured me, I suppose—if you ever thought of me at all—as lying always under the shame you put upon me? Wrong—all wrong! A woman who meekly submits to expiate endlessly a girl's folly is but a poor creature whose suffering is largely self-made. I paid for mine—yes—and having paid I put it away, would have no more of it. I have worked, struggled, succeeded in the past twenty years, won myself a place in the world, a place with those who know me, that I hope I deserve to hold. They have been, take them all in all, happy years. We have both been happy—we are happy. We——"

"We?" Bradley cried.

His attitude of indifference, as he listened, had been plainly a pretense, not at all hiding his involuntary surprise

and mortification. With the word, loudly uttered, there was a change in his look as swift as his movement, and Claudia Bosanquet stopped dead. A woman checked a pace-length from a precipice might have borne such a face, might have made the wild, breathless gesture with which she almost clapped her hand upon her mouth. Her dilated eyes, beyond her control, looked at a table upon which stood a large photograph of Dahlia—the girl wore a white dress, and carried a big rose wreathed hat; a ribbon was twisted through her dark hair. She made a picture of smiling youth, beauty, and sweetness. Bradley saw it, stared at it, pointed to it.

"Who is that?" he asked slowly.

"She is my niece," said Miss Bosanquet. Her clenched hand pressed hard on the table; it seemed that the whole force of her was in the words. "She is my niece!"

"Your niece? Your sister Alice's—your only sister's—daughter?" She nodded dumbly, and he half laughed. "I'm afraid it won't do, Claudia! Do you think it will? Look!"

He moved to stand beside the photograph. No one examining the two faces, thus seen side by side, could have failed to see the resemblance between them; almost feature for feature they were alike. For a moment the woman strove to meet the man's eyes, strove to maintain her steady poise, then, as if all the strength were suddenly smitten out of her, dropped upon a chair and hid her face. He made a movement as if to go to her, checked it, and waited. She raised her head and stood up, her self-control regained. "She has never known," she said. "You understand that she has never known?"

"Neither have I, for that matter. I never even suspected. If I had——" He broke off, and looked at the photograph again narrowly. "You mean she has always believed herself to be your niece?"

"Always. As she always shall do. As everybody has always done. Not the faintest shadow of the truth has ever touched her, I thank Heaven." She paused, as though searching for sentences that should convey the most in the fewest words. "Alice was an angel to me—I never had from her the reproach of so much as a look. She never held up her head after her husband's death—she was never strong, like me. Even if her child had not followed she would hardly, I think, have made shift to live—as it was—I can't speak of it! Her child died.

"There was a name and place left ownerless and vacant for my child, who had neither. I gave her the name, I put her into the place. It was all quite easy—there was not three months' difference in the ages of the two, and we were abroad. I came back with my niece. No one suspected—nobody ever has done so; least of all the child herself. Sometimes she has envied girls with mothers. Well, I have borne to hear her do that! But that doesn't matter. She is Dahlia Conroy, the daughter of my sister and her husband, with the proof of her birth to show if the need should ever arise. I don't know why I trouble to tell you all this; you have not the slightest claim to hear it. I will show you the path to the village. As I said, it is not far."

Her tone had been growing more and more steady, her manner more and more composed. As she made a gesture that at once put the matter aside, and motioned him to pass out at the window before her, Bradley shook his head.

"Do you mean," he asked slowly, "that you expect me to go—to be dismissed like this?"

"Expect?" She stared at him.

"Don't you think it is taking a great deal for granted, Claudia!"

"What—what do you mean?"

The words came breathlessly; in the

wood she had been no paler. Bradley raised his eyebrows; his half smile had a cool power in it that was a sinister charge.

"I see you understand," he said quietly. "I can't claim, unfortunately, to have been a good father, but perhaps that is not all my fault. If I had known before or after I left you—never mind that. Surely it is only natural that I should wish to see and know my daughter——"

"See her? Know her?"

"Why not?" said Bradley.

"And that she should see and know you?"

"Well, I suppose the one involves the other, does it not?"

"You mean that? You dare mean it? That you will claim her? Tell her the truth? Blast her for life with the disgrace of it? Shame me in her eyes? Ruin all that I have worked for for twenty years and won for her sake? You threaten me with that?"

"Threaten? That's an ugly word. And are you not taking too tragic a view of it?"

"Too tragic? It would kill her, or worse than kill her!" As she stared at him still her wild eyes grew calmer; the extraordinary strength that was in her rallied again. "I will deny it! In a sense I have lied for her all her life, and I will lie again. I will deny it, every word."

"What then? Look at my face as it is before you and her face there, and say—once the thought is put into her head—if you think she will believe you."

He pointed to the photograph. Miss Bosanquet did not glance at it—it had told her enough already. She flung back the shrouding lace from her head as though it suffocated her; blindly she groped for a chair; dumb, she dropped into it. There was silence, broken only by the rushing of the river. Bradley stood watching her. For the moment

she was conquered, and he knew it. Then his face changed and softened with a return of its better look, and he suddenly moved across to her.

"I suppose I'm a scoundrel, Claudia," he said hoarsely. "You have reason to say so, Heaven knows! Scoundrel or not, I'm utterly alone in the world—as I deserve to be, of course, and, I swear to you, as wretched a man as there is in it. You cared for me once—you won't deny that—and the girl's my child as well as yours. You don't want her to know. Keep it from her. Be what you should have been before ever she was. Marry me!"

"Marry you?" She was amazed.

"Why not? For her sake! Oh, I don't ask it for mine! And you can afford to despise it—I see that. We would go abroad—I want to get out of the country. I—I'd keep straight—I swear I would. She need never know a word. She would not suspect if she was told nothing, and——"

"Ah!" cried Miss Bosanquet. "Listen! She is coming!"

The gate clicked; there came a rapid run of light feet upon the path. At the farther end of the room a door opened into another; she had barely time to hurry him through and close it when Dahlia appeared at the window. Breathless and pale, the pink hood fallen back from her head, she stood panting before she could speak. With an ejaculation, a swift movement, Miss Bosanquet caught her by the shoulders.

"Child, what's the matter? Why have you come like this? And alone?"

"No, no!" Dahlia said panting. "The rector and Mr. Holroyd came with me to the bridge. They'll be here directly, I expect. They went back into the wood to—to look." She paused; she was too excited to note the stiff pallor of the face above her, and the light from the shaded lamp did not reach it. "Oh, Aunt Claudia, what do you think? There's been a burglary!"

"A burglary? At Pinecrest?"

"Yes—while we were at dinner. Mr. Holroyd thinks it must have been a planned thing by some gang to get hold of the jewels brought down for the party—you know how enormously valuable they must be. They would have gone, every one of them, but they'd been talking about that wonderful stone, called the Shah's Ruby, which belongs to Mrs. Longstreet, and she sent her maid to bring it down to us to see. She found the door locked, heard somebody moving inside, and screamed—he must have got out by the window; there was a ladder-thing hanging from it. Only one of the servants heard her, and he ran out just in time to see two figures rushing away. He gave chase to one, but lost him in the plantation. The girl came shrieking into the dining room—wasn't it terrifically exciting? Everybody rushed out then, of course, but couldn't see anything of the second man. It was Mr. Holroyd who found that he'd been caught in the trap."

"The trap? Caught in a trap?"

Claudia Bosanquet fell back against the table; no words can paint the horror of her ashen face. Dahlia nodded, unseeing; she was taking off her cloak.

"Yes. Didn't I say that Mr. Holroyd had had some set on the lawn? It seems Mrs. Longstreet joked when she came about being sure she would be robbed one of these days, and you know how awfully nervous he is. Yes, the thief was certainly caught in it—there were scraps of cloth in the teeth. He must have been dreadfully torn in getting away; there was blood on the grass—ugh, horrible! He made off into the wood. We traced the marks right across it to a place this side of the broad path. That is, the rector and Mr. Holroyd did, and I kept with them; Mrs. Holroyd was too upset to think of a motor car for me. They have gone back to see if they can trace them any further. It may help the police; Mr.

Holyrod phoned for them directly, of course. Is that their voices? I'll bring them in to tell you all about it, shall I?"

Miss Bosanquet nodded—it was the jerking motion of a clockwork figure—and the girl, with a little ripple of excited laughter, ran out. In a flash Claudia was across to the inner door and had flung it open. Then she needed to say nothing; his face showed that Bradley had heard. They looked at each other for a moment before the woman spoke.

"It is true?" she asked. "True?"

He nodded. "Yes—it's true."

"You have sunk to this—have——"

She was voiceless. He smiled with a sort of weary bravado.

"Sunk? You had better say—have I chosen? It would be nearer the truth. Plainly, I turned thief because honesty and a pittance were not to my taste. If I am laid by the heels over this, it won't be the first time the key has been turned on me. That's the state of the case, if you want to hear it."

"You have—been in prison?"

"And shall be again in all probability." He half laughed. "Oh, I suppose I was always a scoundrel, Claudia, long before I played the scamp to you; there's a black drop in my blood somewhere, I think. If you had said yes to me just now, if this hadn't come out, I should have meant to run straight and should have failed, most likely. Most likely? Pooh! I know I should!" Some sound outside, real or fancied, made him turn towards the window swiftly and pause to listen. "Enough of that," he resumed hurriedly. "You don't intend to give me away—that's understood; all you want is that I take myself off as quickly as may be. The sooner I do it the better for myself, before those fools of police come along. What did the girl say about the parson coming? If he or the other she was speaking of should see me here——"

"See you here? Randal Holroyd?"

The frozen, staring stillness of her face broke up; she seized him by the arm. "He must not see you!" she whispered vehemently. "He is her love—Dahlia's lover! I knew it only to-night. And she loves him; I saw it in her face. Don't you see. If he knew—— His father is bound up in pride of birth and place as such men are. He may let his son marry my niece; he would die before he would let him marry my daughter. Oh, go, go! I'll hold my tongue—no need to tell you that! This way, or she will see you. Take the path to the right when you are clear of the garden and you will come to the village. Oh, I don't know whether it is of any use to say to you—leave this life—be honest. But do if you can—if you can!"

An outer door opened from the second room; she had hurried across and thrown it open. Bradley paused on the threshold and looked at her.

"No chance of that," he said with a laugh. "Once a scoundrel, always a scoundrel! I shall die one when my time comes, you may be sure. Well, if it were of any use to say I was sorry, I'd say it. As it isn't, good-by, Claudia."

Limping, but swift, he was gone in the shadows. She flung the door to, slipped the bolt, and ran into the other room, dropping breathless into the chair by her writing-table; for a moment her head fell forward upon it; a great shivering took her. Then she sat up hurriedly at the sound of Dahlia's approaching feet. The girl came in flushed and eager.

"They don't seem to be coming, Aunt Claudia. Perhaps they have found him!"

"Him?" said Miss Bosanquet.

"The man who was hurt in the trap. He can't have got so very far—do you think he could? We thought there were more footmarks on the path, you know, but it wasn't light enough to be certain; they seemed to lead this way,

the rector said. You haven't seen any horrid-looking man about, have you, dear?"

"My dear child! I have been writing."

"Oh, your last chapter! Of course," said Dahlia. She came nearer to the light. "Wasn't it most awfully exciting, Aunt Claudia? I wonder if the police are searching the wood yet? Mr. Holroyd thought they'd motor over. I do hope they catch him, don't you? Perhaps he is the one who was actually in the room. I think he must be, because—What's that? Listen!"

An outburst of sounds broke the silence—the voices and feet of men. They came from the rear of the bungalow. One voice, loud and excited, was that of young Holroyd. As the woman started up and the girl turned toward the window, he ran in.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Bosanquet. But Miss Conroy has told you, of course, about the flare-up we've had? They've caught the fellow!"

"Oh!" cried Dahlia. "Really? The police?"

"Rather," said Randal. He looked at her; neither had eyes for the ghastly face behind them. "Dropped upon him not a dozen yards away from the garden gate," he said rapidly; "saw him sneaking off among the trees. Lucky, wasn't it? No doubt about it being the scamp—his ankle's hurt—tied up—been in the trap safe enough. Not a bit the sort of looking fellow you'd—hallo!"

The noise of feet and voices was drawing nearer, plainly approaching through the bungalow garden. The rector's voice suddenly separated itself from the other voices, raised and indignant.

"Preposterous!" he said angrily. "Abominable! An absurd lie on the face of it! You must see that for yourself, lieutenant. Ridiculous! Bring the man in. I insist upon it!" He appeared at the window, his handsome

face flushed and wrathful. Entering, he put Dahlia aside as though she were nothing, approaching the tall figure behind her. "My dear lady, you know, of course, that they have caught this burglar scoundrel? He has the outrageous insolence to declare that you know him!"

"That I know him!" Miss Bosanquet repeated like an echo. Dahlia gave a cry.

"He says so—that it is all a mistake; declares that he is an old friend, and has been spending the evening with you; that if they bring him in you will confirm it."

"That I shall confirm it!" repeated Miss Bosanquet again. She made a blind motion to move to Dahlia and stopped; the police were at the window, were in the room. Bradley was between two detectives, each holding him by an arm. For an instant his eyes met hers—did they threaten or beseech? The man designated as "lieutenant," in charge of the detectives, bowed to her.

"I beg your pardon, madam. As a matter of form, and just to save time, perhaps, you won't mind answering the question. You don't know this party, of course, though it did seem as if he came out of your garden?" He pushed the prisoner forward, and with the other hand coolly tilted up the lampshade. "If you'll have the goodness to take a look at him—hallo! If I didn't think I'd heard the voice, out there! But it was pretty dark, and my eyes are not as they used to be. It's you, is it? Whew!"

He slapped his leg, staring at the figure revealed in the sudden flow of light. Bradley's eyes had gone past him to where Dahlia stood. She gave a little gasp and drew back to young Holroyd's side, returning the look; fright, shrinking, and curiosity were all in her pretty face.

The rector gave an exclamation. "You know him?" he cried.



"Know him, sir?" The lieutenant laughed. "Well, rather! It's precious few of us who don't know Gentleman Jeffcott. Though that's not his right name, I believe. An old hand, and a clever one—that's what he is. Well, that being the case, you're not going to stick to it that you know this lady, eh?" Bradley slowly turned to him.

"I admit I'm beaten," he said composedly. "Wasn't aware that you were in the country these days, Saunders. If I had spotted you out there, I should not have tried my—little ruse. Your memory for voices is better than mine." He paused. "I have not, of course, the honor of knowing the lady."

"Why make so outrageous a statement?" began the rector hotly.

He laughed. "My dear sir, a man will tell almost any lie to save his skin. This means five years, Saunders, I suppose, eh?"

"That's about it," said the lieutenant easily. "Lucky if it's no more, with your record. You're wanted for more than this little shine, you know. And if you take my advice, you won't talk." His hand went to his pocket, pulled something out. "Now I've got a car waiting over the bridge—good thing, too, as you're not in walking trim—and the sooner you come along the better."

With a nod Bradley held out his hands, clasped together. The lieutenant, with cool dexterity, snapped the handcuffs on; without a glance in the direction of the girl or woman he walked out between the detectives. The lieutenant and the rector went out talking, and the two young people in a moment followed, whispering together. Claudia, left alone, did not stir—she stood with a face blank as a sleep-walker's. The tramping steps died away.

Then came a sound like a great splash, a shouting of men's voices, and a scream from Dahlia that rang shrilly over all. Claudia rushed out, darting

down to the gate, and the girl sprang and caught her round the waist.

"He's in the river! He pushed away the detectives and slipped or jumped—I don't know which! Oh, oh!" she shrieked.

There was a wild rush of figures from the bridge, and incoherent cries of this direction and that. The rector shouted for a boat-hook and a rope, and Randal ran and brought them, but clouds had obscured the moon, and there was a delay of many minutes. Though had there been none, it would have availed nothing. Leap or slip, the head had struck a boulder with a blow that had fractured the skull, and the force of it had dislocated the neck; it was a dead man they laid upon the bank.

Claudia Bosanquet stood back while the tumult of question, answer, and exclamation surged about her; she had given only one cry. In a few moments all the men but one had hurried away to bring what was necessary, and the rector with them. Young Holroyd was whispering to Dahlia; he had brought out the pink cloak and wrapped it round her, for the girl was shivering and half crying. The remaining detective stood apart staring across the river, a stolid statue of indifference.

Claudia moved slowly forward to the dripping figure on the grass. She looked down at the face; the moonlight, bright again now, showed it almost undisfigured; it was only a very little wound from which the crimson stream ran thin. She had said she would never forgive, and had meant it; she had no remorse, but the girl would never know, and the dead lay piteous. Of a sudden she bent down, her cheek touching the cheek that had lain on her bosom when she was young; she kissed the lips about which some warmth of life lingered still.

Dahlia, seeing, gave a cry of amazement and remonstrance:

"Aunt Claudia! Why—why——" she exclaimed.

Miss Bosanquet looked up into her daughter's face. "There may be some woman who has loved him or who does love him," she said. "That is why, my dear."

The black fall of lace hid her face as she rose to her feet. Bewildered, touched, excited, Dahlia burst outright into tears, and Randal suddenly put his arms around her.

"Don't, darling!" he whispered eagerly. "You know I love you, Dahlia. Don't, sweetheart!"

He drew the little head to his shoulder and kissed it, and the girl clung to him, sobbing. Doing so, she turned alike from the father she had never known and the mother she was never to recognize.

Claudia Bosanquet stood with veiled face and shrouded head bent down, like a widow of old time.

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## JUNIOR POLICEMEN OF NEW YORK

REALIZING that a healthy, mischievous boy may easily develop into a gangster under evil influence, and thus progress into criminality, Captain Sweeney, of the fifteenth police precinct, New York City, hit upon an excellent plan to instill a love for law and order into a lad's heart. He organized a junior police force to which the boys of his district between eleven and sixteen were admitted, provided they lived up to specifications. The conditions of membership were to accept the ideals of the organization, which are: Be honest; be trustworthy; be loyal; be helpful; be polite; be obedient; be brave. In addition, each member of the force was required to take the following pledge: "I promise on my honor to do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the law; to obey the motto and the rules and regulations of the Junior Police Force of New York; to keep and never to misuse my Junior Police badge, and to surrender it upon demand to the chief of the force."

The duties of the Junior Police were: To prevent swearing and vulgar language in the public streets and public places; to prevent the building of bonfires in the streets; to prevent boys from breaking windows and street lamps and from defacing buildings and sidewalks with chalk; to prevent boys from smoking cigarettes and playing crap; to prevent boys from engaging in dangerous or unlawful playing; to prevent persons placing encumbrances or obstructions on fire escapes; to prevent the mixing of ashes, garbage, and paper; to see the garbage cans are kept covered, and that ash and garbage cans are promptly removed from the sidewalk when emptied; to request persons to keep the sidewalk and areaway in front of their buildings clean, and not to throw refuse into the street; to make special efforts to perform the duties relating to fire escapes, ash cans, and sidewalks at their own homes, and to see that their parents and relatives do not violate the laws and ordinances; not to enter any building for the purpose of carrying out their duties.

The boys of the Sweeney precinct took enthusiastically to the scheme, and more than a hundred joined the Junior Police. They were given uniforms, brass buttons and braid, and all the dazzling insignia of office. Plenty of physical training was also given these "kid cops." They were taught to swim, box, wrestle, and give first aid. Weekly lectures were a part of the system, on subjects of the city's health and general police ordinances.

Altogether, a most excellent plan for boys of crowded cities, and we would wish to see it fostered in every one of our large centers of population.

# Headquarters Chat

**W**HILE it is possible, to a certain extent, to read between the lines of the notices we print in the Missing Department, and to observe there the tragedy, the heart-longing, and the despair that lie behind many of them, no one can appreciate the depth of the emotion experienced by those who have the notices inserted, unless they have read the accompanying letters.

It is hard to say which cases are the most urgent, so great is the range, the diversity of the announcements. It is a long cry from the chap who is seeking his bunkie, the fellow who slept with him on some far-flung expedition in the wilds of a distant land, to the pathetic effort of a mother, who in dire need years ago, having relinquished the legal right to her children, would now, in her old age, give—ah, what would she *not* give to press those children's hands again, to look into their eyes!

Now, friends, Christmas is coming—just a trifle early? Not at all! These are days of expedition, of “do your Christmas shopping early”—and we have a suggestion to make. It is this: Look over the Missing Department in this issue, and see if you can't make the bulkiest Christmas gift that it has ever been your good fortune to present to any one. See if you can't reunite at least two persons who long to be with each other again at this yuletide.

Dressed to the minute, swinging his stick, humming a bit of a song, giving the impression that, as far as he was concerned, this little old world was arranged exactly as he would have it, a handsome young man walked leisurely down the corridor of a fashionable apartment house.

At a turn in the hall an agitated servant stopped him.

“I stepped out to—er—apprehend you before you entered. Mr. Broughton, my master, asked me to telephone you to kindly drop in and see him. Mr. Broughton, sir, has—if I may say so without discourtesy—has been acting in a very peculiar manner. He keeps weapons about, appears to be intensely nervous, whirls around at the slightest sound, talks in his sleep——”

“My word!”

Yes, you have it. John Warwick is dipping gently into another escapade that will soon draw him into the vortex of a most exciting series of adventures.

## **AT THE SPIDER'S COMMAND**

**By JOHNSTON McCULLEY**

the complete novel which will appear in next week's issue, is the latest story of this popular series, and is fully up to any that have so far been published.

As we told you in the last issue, there will be but two serials in **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE** until further notice. This policy was decided upon at the suggestion of a number of our readers.

Among those who will contribute short stories are Grace Bryan, James Edward Hungerford, Arthur P. Hankins, Carl Clausen, and Lucas Mortimer.

## UNDER THE LAMP

The superfluous letters in the following old and true saying spell a word which represents a faculty detectives find of inestimable value. Compare your answer with what you will find in next Tuesday's magazine. Here goes:

No Indian prince hast ton his palacer moire followoers than as thievf tob the galolows.

The answer to last week's puzzle was: "Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold."

### EXPERT DETECTIVE ADVICE

CONDUCTED BY GERARD LUISI

This department is designed to give free aid to any of our readers who may wish to become detectives, and to tell all our readers how to guard themselves and their property against criminals. Letters seeking expert information along these lines should be addressed to the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. These letters will be answered personally by Mr. Luisi, without charge, if stamp for reply is inclosed; they will also be discussed in this department, the names and addresses in all cases to be omitted.

## Wire Tapping

By GERARD LUISI

**W**IRE tapping is a very old game. It takes its name from the instrument which is attached to regular telephone wires and which enables the user to "listen in" on conversations over the regular wire.

Crooks who are acquainted with race tracks are the operators of the wire-tapping game, and such gangs steal hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly. The leader of a band of wire tappers is usually well educated, of suave manner, and a good talker. He may have from one to fifteen helpers. When the gang finds the prospective sucker or easy mark, usually in some hotel or sporting place, one of the gang proceeds to gain his confidence. In many instances the "roper," the one who does this work, is a woman. The victim is then introduced to the leader of the gang, who, he is given to believe, is an influential man, connected either with the telephone company, or himself the owner of a racing stable.

The victim is informed that a fortune can be made by the simple means of tapping the telephone wires and getting the results of the races before pool rooms get them. In this way bets can be placed with a certainty of winning.

He is then taken to a room especially fitted up for the purpose, and induced to place small bets on different horses—which bets, of course, he wins. The money handed him belongs to the gang, for in reality no wires have been tapped. Having won several times, the prospective victim is satisfied that he was lucky in having become acquainted with his new friends.

The gang then tells him that they have a sure tip on a horse. The result is that he places a large bet, turning the money over to a supposed bookmaker, with instructions to place it on a certain horse in a certain race. When the race is over, the victim finds that he has lost all his money. When he goes later to his new friends for sympathy he finds that they have disappeared and the room where the telephones were is closed up.

## ANSWERS TO READERS' QUERIES

I. A. M.—You state that on August 1st last your young sister set out to visit relatives in a town one hundred and seventy-five miles from your home, but that she never reached there, and that on September 2d your mother received a letter from her from another town, saying that she was well. Eleven days later another letter was received, this time from a town two hundred miles distant from the first, saying that she would be home some time, but not stating when.

As those are all the facts you have given me I would like you to answer the following questions before I can advise you how to proceed to locate her:

Was it the first time your sister had ever left home?

Who suggested for her to go to Huntington?

Did she leave home angry or in good humor?

Is she a working girl or a home girl?

Was she engaged to any one?

Is the man missing?

If she was a working girl did she keep company with any man working in the same place with her?

Did any of the family go with her to the

station, and if so, did she meet any one there?

Has she any relatives or friends in the towns from which the two letters were mailed?

JAMES A.—It is claimed that a Japanese in California counterfeited a number of five-cent pieces—the ones which have the buffalo on one side and the Indian head on the other. The counterfeit is a good one, being almost identical with the genuine five-cent piece, the only variation in appearance being a slight difference in the ground under the buffalo's feet. No one is likely to notice this difference unless it is pointed out, although it is easily discernible then.

EVERETT M.—The rogues gallery is a collection of photographs of convicted criminals, which the police of different cities keep for future reference and identification. When an accused person is convicted, he is immediately photographed, finger printed, and his Bertillon measurements taken. The photographs, along with the Bertillon measurements and a list of his crimes, are placed in the rogues gallery. The finger prints are placed in a separate file.



# MISSING

This department is offered free of charge to readers of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE. Its purpose is to aid persons in getting in touch with others of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your own name in the notice, we will print it "blind" if you do not wish the publicity. You can also have the notice "double blind" if you prefer. This can be done by using nicknames or the mention of some odd incident. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward any letters that may come to you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that may seem to us unsuitable. We will forward promptly any mail that is sent us.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" Post Office address, for experience has taught us that advertisers who are not more specific as to their address often have mail that we sent them returned to us marked "not found." Also, when you change your address, please let us know.

Now, readers, help others as you, in your extremity, would like them to help you. The persons who have asked us to print the following notices are very anxious to get in touch with the ones they have mentioned. If you can assist them in doing so, lend a hand.

**When you get in touch with the person you are seeking, please let us know, so we can take your notice out.**

**C**ONNELLY, JOHN, who left Scotland with his wife, Christina, about thirteen years ago, and was last heard of at Buffalo, New York. He was a seaman on board transoceanic liners. If you will communicate with the Missing Department of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE you will learn something interesting concerning one very dear to you.

**E**GAN, WILLIAM, last heard of in Boston some time ago. Please write your friend CHARLEY, in care of this magazine.

**H**UNTER, E., last seen in San Francisco about eight years ago. Your Aunt Minnie, and uncle, and all, are most anxious to hear from you. Dora is married. Write your mother in care of this magazine, and relieve her anxiety.

**B**ARRINGER, MRS. LAVINA MAY (née Saucia), last heard of in Portland, Oregon, in July, 1916. Can any one furnish her present whereabouts to her anxious sister, who wishes to send her funds to return home? Address MRS. F. D. LAHEY, 12 Dun Street, Plainfield, New Jersey.

**S**TONE, MRS. FRANK (née Gutzman), who was last heard of in Jessut, Iowa, in 1914. Any one knowing her whereabouts will confer a favor by addressing the Missing Department.

**B**RUSH, C. S., who left Portland, Oregon, twelve years ago, was last heard of in Washington, D. C.—Please write your son Avery's wife; I am very anxious to know you. (Any information as to his whereabouts will be gratefully received.)

**T**RACY, MRS. MARION, last heard of about fifteen years ago in Seattle, Washington. A close relative is anxious to learn her whereabouts. Any information will be thankfully received.

**W**HITE, JOHN SOMMERVILLE, about forty-six, light complected, around five feet six inches tall, who disappeared from his home in Detroit five years ago. His blind mother would receive most gratefully any news from or concerning him. Address Missing Department in care of this magazine.

**M**ILLER, HENRY D., twenty-eight, who was born in, or he lived in, Bridgeport, Connecticut; was last heard of in Sparks, Nevada. Some one who met you on the boat going from Guatemala to Panama, about four years ago, would like to hear from you. Address the Missing Department for further particulars.

**L**EWIS, WILLIAM L., who left his home in Montgomery, Alabama, to go to Jacksonville, Florida, with a friend, who is sixteen years old, about five feet five inches tall, is dark complected, and has very long black eyelashes. Any information about his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by a close relative who is interested in his welfare. Address Missing Department, in care of this magazine.

**L**AGOTA, NELLIE or ANNIE or MINNIE, the latter now Mrs. Frank Jablonskis; last heard of in Cleveland, Ohio. The son of Sallie Lagota would like to communicate with you. Address ANTHONY PAVELKIS, Box 78, Summit, Illinois.

**GUTTROFF, HERMAN MARTIN**, sixty, who has tattoo marks on his arms, and who was last heard of about twenty years ago, when he worked on ferryboats and lived on Garden Street, Hoboken, New Jersey. His nephew, Robert de Savoie, would like to learn his whereabouts. Address MR. DE SAVOYE, in care of this magazine.

**DELK, H. S.**, fifteen, five feet six inches tall, weighs about one hundred and twenty pounds, has light hair and fair complexion. He disappeared from his home not long ago. Any information regarding his present whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his sister, Mrs. J. J. ABIE, of Goss, Louisiana.

**QUINN, JAMES F.**, who lived in New York City in 1906, and in Taber, Panama, in 1907. He is a plumber by trade.—An old friend is anxious to hear from you. Address L. B., 436, Harriman, New York.

**MIRACLE, GLEN**, who lived somewhere in Illinois. Mr. Miracle is five feet six inches tall, has black hair, brown eyes, and a small scar on the right side of his chin.—Please address "Very, Very Anxious," in care of this magazine.

**NOLAN, VICTOR**, twenty-four, weighs around one hundred and sixty pounds, is dark complected; was last heard of in Minnesota in 1914.—Victor, please write your sister. She has news for you. (Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.)—Mrs. WALLACE MACDONALD, Ardath, Saskatchewan, Canada.

**PRESTON, WILLIAM JEROME**, who was a veteran of the Civil War; belonged to Company A, 36th Regiment, Yates Phalanx; lived in Will County, Illinois. He had two sisters who married Jay and George Green, brothers, and he also had two younger sisters, Orpha and Emma. Mr. Preston's daughter, ELLA PRESTON SCHRUM, of Long Beach, California, is very anxious to hear from any of her father's relatives.

**BAKER, W. F. (BILL)** fifty, five feet seven inches tall, who was last heard of seven years ago at Canton, Illinois. Your daughter "Bert" would like to hear from you. Address Mrs. BERTHA MAY BAKER, 526 Eighteenth Street, Moline, Illinois.

**HOLDEN, NICHOLAS**, brother of James Holden, of Dorwen, Lancashire, England, who was last heard of in San Francisco. He is about seventy or eighty years of age. When last heard of he was working as a master plumber. His nephew, William Charles Holden, would like to hear from him or his children. Address Mr. HOLDEN at 66 S. Sixth Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

**BROWN, EDITH**, who was left in Wayne County, Michigan, by her mother twenty-eight years ago, is anxious to get in touch with any relatives of hers that may be alive. Any help in her search will be appreciated. Please address Missing Department.

**CALHOUN, ANNA**, who married Henry Franklin Ingle at Camden, New Jersey, about twenty-three years ago. Her son, who was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, some time later, and who saw her last at Norwich, Connecticut, when he was three years old, would like to hear from her. Address HENRY F. INGLE, JR., Route 1, Box 36, Ralston, Oklahoma.

**SMITH, NORA MAY**, who has dark hair and brown eyes, and is very slim; last heard of in Salisbury, North Carolina, when she was on her way to Norfolk, Virginia, three years ago. Any information will be appreciated by ANNA SMITH, of No. 865 Marietta Street, Atlanta, Georgia.

**PEARSOLL, JOHN I and NATHANIEL**, whose mother died at 210 West Thirty-first Street, Savannah, Georgia, and who was last heard of in Burrugah, Georgia, with their stepfather's mother.—Your cousin would like to locate you. Write in care of this magazine.

**ADAMS, FRED RUSSELL**, twenty-one, last heard of somewhere in Virginia. Please communicate at once with the Missing Department, in care of this magazine.

**STEVENS, HENRY**, of Faison Depot, North Carolina, who was last heard of in 1904, at No. 904 Counter Street, Portsmouth, Virginia.—Your youngest daughter, Lucy, would like to hear from you. (Any one knowing his whereabouts will do a great service by communicating with the Missing Department of this magazine.)

**FONTLEROY, LEROY**, last heard of at Ada, Oklahoma, shortly after his marriage.—You will find something of interest to you if you communicate with this magazine.

**UNDERWOOD, WALTER BENJAMIN**, twenty-eight, who has brown eyes and very straight brown hair, and who left his home in American Falls, Idaho, six years ago.—Your mother worries about you night and day. Ease her mind by writing to her at No. 9 Corbett Avenue, Binghamp, New York.

**BUMAN, LEON**, who came to the United States about 1900, and who was last heard of in Bisbee, Arizona, in 1906. He had one girl and four boys. His daughter will welcome any word that will help to locate him. Address "MILKA," in care of this magazine.

**STILL, WILLIAM**, or his heirs. He had a brother named John, who came with him from England some years ago. Address any information to Miss LEAH M. STILL, P. O. B. 426, La Porte, Texas.

**DE YOUNG (or DE JONG), RINSE**, was last heard of in 1914, when he wrote from Edmonton, Alberta, that he was going to Peace River County, Canada, with two friends, to look over some land. He intended to return to Edmonton shortly. Letters mailed to his old address were returned to his people in The Netherlands. Please address any information about him to this magazine.

**VAUGHN** (first name unknown), between the ages of twenty and forty, whose mother was separated from his father fifteen or twenty years ago. Any information will be gladly received by RODNEY FAIRBANKS, of No. 201 N. Kenwood Avenue, Austin, Texas.

**JOHNSTON, WILLIAM THOMAS**, whose wife's name was Millie, and who was last heard of in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was a life-insurance agent. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by R. J. OWENS, Star Hotel, Great Falls, Montana.

**SMITH, ROBERT ALEXANDER**, last heard of at No. 500 Pacific Street, San Francisco, California, in 1913, when he was ready to go to Alaska.—Your sister FRANCES would like to hear from you. Address her in care of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, or at No. 2230 Bainbridge Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**PIKE, VICTOR**, seventeen, who left Regina on September 14, 1917, to go with a friend to Williston, North Dakota. Write and let your mother and father know where you are, and relieve their anxiety of mind about you.

**WATSON, R. O.**, who when last heard of was somewhere in Wyoming.—Your brother-in-law, P. J. ADAMS, of No. 404 West Eighteenth St, Anniston, Alabama, is anxious to hear from you.

**SMITH, FRED T.**, who lives in Chicago, and who is an engineer on the railroad. His cousin, Mrs. O. L. HARR, of No. 1008 Rhode Island Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C., will appreciate any information as to his present whereabouts.

**OLIVER, EDGAR**, or **EDD O. HARR**, who lived in Washington, D. C., about eight years ago, when he left his wife and little son. If any one knows his present whereabouts, they will confer a favor by communicating with Mrs. O. L. HARR, of No. 1008 Rhode Island Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C.

**MARSDEN, EVELYN**, adopted February 22, 1905, by a family in Detroit.—Evelyn, write to mother in care of **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE**.

**MITCHELL** (given name unknown), who adopted a girl at Port Huron twenty-six years ago, and who is thought to have moved to Wallaceburg, Ontario, and then to Detroit, Michigan.—Please write Maud's sister, Mrs. R. ROBINSON, in care of **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE**. I would like to hear from her.

**SCHNEIDER, LOTTIE** or **EMMA**, stepsister and half sister of George Brown Bancker, who left Chicago for New York in the seventies, and was last known to be living on Lincoln Avenue, Chicago. Their mother died about 1882. Mr. Bancker's daughters would like to hear from their aunts, if they are still alive. Address them in care of this magazine.

**COXE, REYNOLDS CLEVELAND**, last heard of in 1912 at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where he was stationed there as a sergeant in the marine corps. Any one knowing his whereabouts please communicate with **PRIVATE E. G. COXE**, Company B, 14 Bn. Ordnance Depot, Curtis Bay, Baltimore, Maryland.

**CALVENS, WILBUR**, who left his home in New London, Connecticut, a few months ago.—Mother is very anxious for you. Please write.

**BURCHARD, OSCAR A.**—Will some one who knows the present address of a man by this name please communicate with "Ed." in care of **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE**?

**THOMPSON, FRANK CHARLES**. Any one knowing his whereabouts will confer a favor by writing to his sister, Mrs. **ROBERT SIM**, of Oxford Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia.

**HANKS, MR. and MRS. MILO**, last known to have been living in St. Paul, Minnesota.—An old friend is anxious to hear from you. Please address the Missing Department in care of this magazine.

**CARPENTER, JIM**, who left Georgia when a boy of seventeen. He was last heard of living in Buffalo Gap, Texas. He had one daughter named May and a son who was killed by a horse. He has a scar across his tongue. Any one knowing his present whereabouts please notify his brother, **C. N. CARPENTER**, in care of this magazine.

**BUTLER, MRS. ALICE**, who was last heard of in Longview, Texas. Any information as to her present whereabouts will be appreciated by her brother, **A. B. AVERY**, of No. 1269 Pine Street, Beaumont, Texas.

**CONDON, THOMAS**.—Will you please write to your old college chum, **W. C. VANDEVEN**, at 518 Church Street, Orrville, Ohio?

**YARAS, MRS. ANNA**, and her son **WICK**, formerly of Youngstown, Ohio. Information as to their present whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by Mr. **CHARLES YARAS**, of No. 527 Fourth Street, Parkersburg, West Virginia.

**BOULGER, FRED**, about five feet three inches tall, weighs around one hundred and thirty-five pounds, is of dark complexion, has brown hair and brown eyes. He was last heard of when he left for the West in April, 1903. Any information concerning him will be appreciated by an anxious son. Please address **DONALD E. M. BOULGER**, at No. 12 Florane Avenue, Haverhill, Massachusetts.

**HARMON, MRS. JESSE X.**, née Frank, last heard of five years ago, when living with her grandmother in St. Louis, Missouri. Her mother's name now is Mrs. R. L. Tittle.—Your husband has just returned from France, and wishes to communicate with you. He has insured himself heavily in your favor, and expects to go overseas again soon. He is a sergeant. Address him at Ward 26, Letterman General Hospital, Presidio, of San Francisco, California.

**HANKS, ARTHUR**, last heard of at No. 414 Kansas Avenue, Chickasha, Oklahoma. Please communicate with the son of your business partner, **A. E. HUTCHINS**, in care of this magazine. Father would like to hear from you.

**SHAW, CHARLES H.**, who was last heard from in 1907, when living in Hoosick Falls, New York.—Your son John has settled down. He is married and has a little daughter twenty months old. He would like to hear from you. Address him at No. 222 Natt Terrace, Schenectady, New York.

**PETTILLI, ALBERT**, of Pallsade, New Jersey, twenty-one years of age, who was a pupil of the New England Conservatory of Music, at Boston, Massachusetts, five years ago. He is five feet four inches tall, and has brown eyes and chestnut hair. Your old parents are grieving for you. Please write.

**ADAMS, JAMES B.**, thirty-four, over six feet tall, weighs about two hundred pounds, has brown hair, blue eyes, and broad shoulders; last seen in Lavonia, Georgia, in January, 1918. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by his wife and four little girls, who need his support and care. Address **MRS. ADAMS**, Route 2, Lavonia, Georgia.

**RELYEA, MRS. S. C.** or **GRACE**, who, when last heard of, was living with her mother and daughter in Indianapolis, Indiana. Any information as to her whereabouts will be appreciated by her son, **FLOYD C. RELYEA**, of No. 99 Hunter Avenue, Albany, New York.

**BAKER, WILLIAM**.—Write to me, Bill. Everything will be kept confident.—**HAROLD**, General Delivery, Los Angeles, California.

**HINDMAN, EUGENE**, about five feet seven inches tall, has gray eyes; was last heard of in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1914. Your sister **LOTTA** would like to hear from you.

**COUSIN ED. H. M.**—Your parents are worried. Forget the past. I am very sorry for you, and will be glad to help you in any way. Address me as in your last letter, or in care of this magazine.—**J. M.**

**CAN** any one furnish the whereabouts of the father of a girl who was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Edmundson, of No. 418 Boston Street, Toledo, Ohio, when she was two weeks old? She is now eighteen, and was born on the 12th of May. Her father is thought to have red hair.

**HERRING, DANIEL B.**—Think we can locate Mrs. O. S. Letters do not reach you at the old address. Please advise where we can communicate with you.

**SANBORN, JAMES E.**—Think we have located your father. Letters addressed to Kelly Field do not reach you. Please advise where we can communicate with you.



**SWEENEY, JOHN P.**, about twenty-five, five feet eight inches tall, weighing around one hundred and sixty pounds, has gray eyes and black hair, slightly gray; formerly a resident of Baltimore. Any information concerning him will be greatly appreciated by some one who has an important message for him. Address Missing Department, in care of this magazine.

**ROBBE, PERRY**, nineteen, of medium build, dark complexion, and curly dark hair; is greatly interested in electricity; was last heard of in Chino, California; has not been seen since he left his home in Fort Collins, Colorado. Please communicate with your old friend, **ERNEST**, in care of this magazine.

**BREEDLOVE, LEW**, thirty-four, five feet six inches tall, has brown eyes and black hair, and walks with a slight limp; has not been seen since he left Hutchinson, Kansas, in August, 1913, for Pratt, Kansas, to return in a few days. A very close relative is anxious to learn his present whereabouts. Please address this magazine.

**HOLT, BENJAMIN**, of Thurmond, West Virginia, who was last heard of in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1913.—Your old friend, **RICHARDSON SNEAD**, is anxious to hear from you.—Address any information in care of this magazine.

**CAN** any one furnish the whereabouts of a girl named **MARION**, whose mother died in Lansing, Michigan, when she was an infant, and was taken to Los Angeles, California, by a family named Cheeney? Important news concerning a close relative of hers is being held for her.

**BRACE, NELLIE**, last seen on Market Street, Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1901. An old friend wishes to hear from you. For further information address Missing Department, in care of this magazine.

**RELATIVES** of **ADA RAE**, who was put in St. Vincent's Orphan Home in Milwaukee twenty-four years ago, and who was adopted from there by the family of Maurice Crowe. Any information that will aid this girl in locating her people will be appreciated.

**CAULT, HUGH M.**, fifty-two, who left his home in Milledgville, Illinois, about eleven years ago, and was last heard of in Mendota, Illinois, some time later. Address any information concerning his present whereabouts to this magazine.

**DAVIS, BERNARD ALEXANDER**, who weighs one hundred and fifty pounds, is five feet seven inches tall, has blue eyes and brown hair, and is slightly lame in his left leg, is a native of West Virginia. Any information that will lead to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his wife, whose address is De-ronda, Wisconsin.

**THE** persons whose names appear in the following list have been inquired for at length in past issues of this magazine, and so far have not been located. Further particulars can be learned by addressing Missing Department, in care of **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE**: Michel Achatz, Mrs. Jane Affholder, Conrad Allunerier, Thomas and Manuel Alvarado, John Arn, William Ayres, Marion Aaron, Dwight Franklin Anderson, B. L. Arnold, M. Atlas, Peter Ambrose, James Jack Anthony, Jeff Baggett, Theodore Bair, Patrick and Michael Barry, Otto Berwing, W. M. Blackburn, "Vermont Blackie," W. V. Blackford, "Boals," John Boffard, Gorlich Bossert, Robert L. Boyd, "Bob Brady," Frank A. Brandige, "Chick" Braun, Mr. and Mrs. T. Breeding, Elijah Wellington Brown, Violet and Daisy Buckler, Felix Bue, Roy Burke, Charles M. Burnett, William Burns, Harold Butler, Louis M. Button, Jess Baker, Guy Brittingham, Mrs. William Binns, James Brooks, John A. Burdett, Peter Bent and Rufus D. Jackson, Madison Ben, George N. Bonham, Jesse Beard, W. A. Bartley, Thomas S. Black, James T. Blake, Mrs. L. Billington, Ernest and Clayton Blake, Alec Boyd, John C. C., Joseph Caine, Leona Calmbach, Louise E. Cameron, D. A. Campbell, John W. Campbell, Mrs. Mary Carper (née Woodhall), Mrs. Mary Carter, George

**SUTER, CHARLES A.**, and **JESSIE**, who moved from Kansas City to Seattle, and from there to Oakland, California. Charles is twenty-four, heavily built, light complexioned, and is an electrician and a barber. Jessie is of dark complexion, and is believed to have moved back to Seattle. She was last heard from in 1915. An old and very dear friend is anxious to locate her. Any information will be greatly appreciated.

**THOMAS, GEORGE**, fifteen, five feet four inches tall, weighs one hundred and fifteen pounds, has a dark complexion; is known by the nickname of "Lefty." He left his home in Springfield, Massachusetts, September 13, 1917. His brother is anxious to locate him. Please communicate with this magazine at once.

**HILLEKE, or FILLOCK, FRANZ**, half brother of Clyde Douglas, of Indianapolis, Indiana, was last heard of three years ago somewhere in Michigan. Any information as to where he might be found will be appreciated by his nephew. Please address this magazine.

**P**—Send your address in care of **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE**. F. Y. H. H.—J.

**BURKE, JOSEPH**, who was a policeman in New York City in about 1882, whose father's name was Peter, and his mother's Julia, and who came from Loch Roe, Ireland. He or his heirs will learn something to their interest by addressing the Missing Department, in care of **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE**.

**SHAW, SYLVESTER ELMER**, thirty-five, has light-blue eyes and a happy disposition. He is a railroad man; last heard of in Iowa, in 1910.—Remember the old cabin on the coast of Maine? Write **B. CHAPMAN** at the old address.

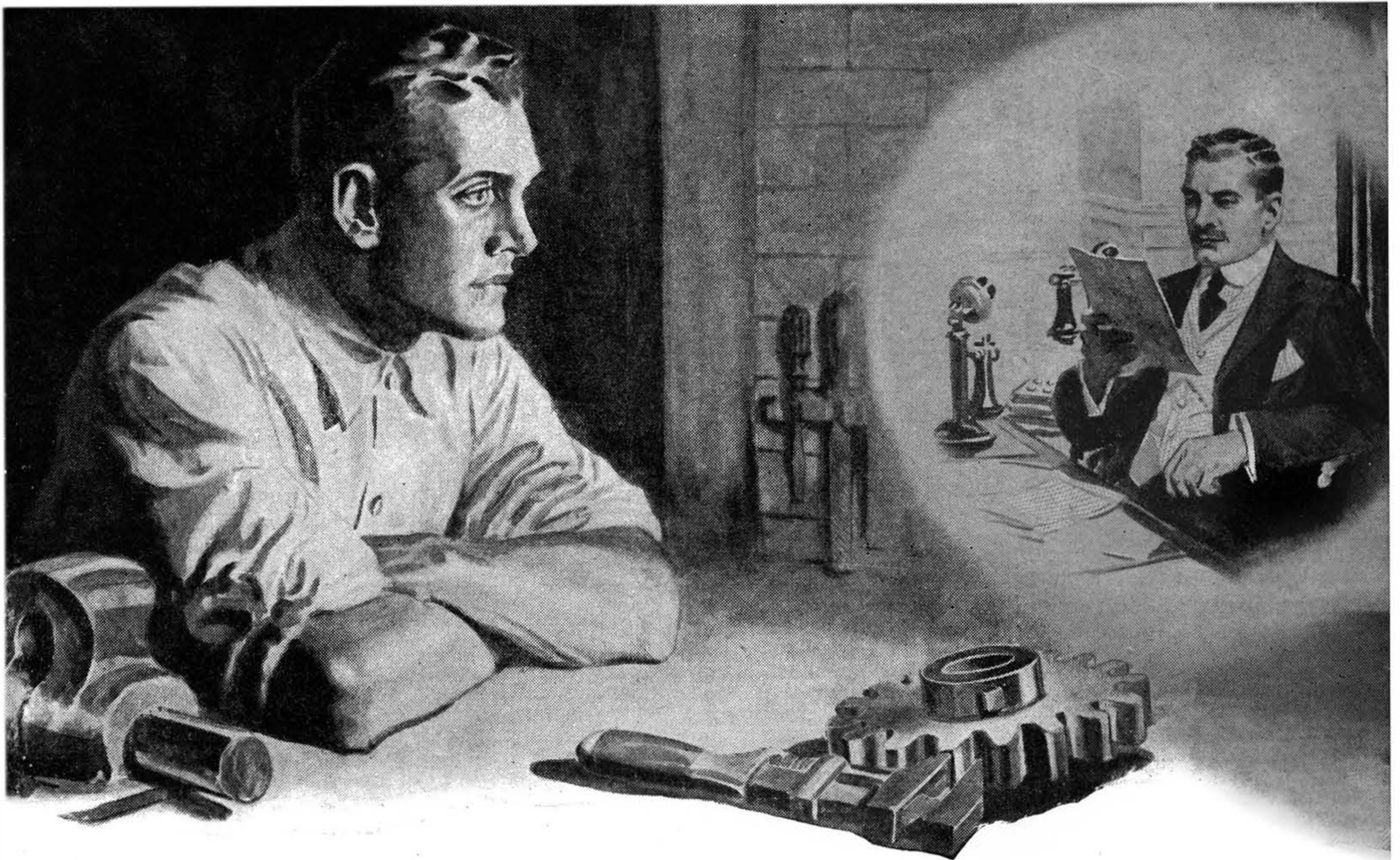
**STACY, MINNIE**, last seen in Argenta, Arkansas, in 1914, when she left for Oklahoma City. Her sister **VIOLA** is anxious to locate her. Please address her in care of this magazine.

**ARNOLD, HOBSON**, last heard of in Topeka, Kansas.—Hob, write your old pal, **JOVETT**, same address.

**WEST, CARRIE**, forty-seven, tall, thin, has dark hair and blue eyes; was last heard from somewhere in Louisiana about eight years ago. Your daughter **EVA** (**MRS. WATKINS**) is anxious to hear from you. Write her in care of this magazine.

**TRACY, THOMAS A.**, thirty-eight, a painter by trade; was last heard of in Reno, Nevada, eighteen months ago. Your brother is anxious to locate you. Write him in care of this magazine.

Chamberlain, Mrs. Marshall Chambers, Thomas Codington, Billy Collier, William—or Wallace—Condra, William Cook, Albert E. Cooke, Frank T. Coolidge, Fred Craemer, Mrs. Ann Crawford, Charles Crawford, Alvin Crowe, Clara Cullison, Mrs. Mary Cummings, Doctor F. George Curtis, Mrs. L. D. Carr, Elizabeth Clark (or Sheeley), Mrs. Cora Coe, Raymond Cruise, Roy Couch, Lenora Cleveland, Rose Clifford, George W. Cavender, Almyr Crim, Edgar S. Crawford, Mrs. William Christian, Ben Roy Davis, Lillian Davis, Calvin J. Davis, Henry E. Day, Harry C. S. de Mare, Mr. and Mrs. John W. Dent, Thomas Dickerson, Clarence T. Doyle, Sarah Dwinnells, Henry Dillard, Ella Marie Davis, C. E. Dodson, Marguerite Derthick, Edward Emrick, C. Melinda Engelhard, Charles Englebrecht, Radcliffe Evans, D. J. Ewing, Duncan Facey, Mrs. Anna Fay, Addis Emmette Ford, John Freeman, James R. Frey, William and Adele Rose Frey, Mrs. Rose Frazer, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Fox, Julius Ferry, Jack and Campbell Foye, C. R. D. Galbraith, George W. Gardner, Samuel Garfield, Wenzel Gill, Edna Adele Glendenin, Hugh Goyt, Florence Griffe, Henry Grogan, Eugene J. Gartley, Leona Gordon, Ruth Grofton, "Rue" Haggerty, Andrew Hamilton, Frank, Charles, Arthur, and Matthew Haskins, William Ernest Haskins, William Heening, Ervin F. Heindel, Fred Henndy, Albert Hoffman, William Hoffman, Mrs. Elizabeth Hogeboom, R. E. Lee Haley, Rae Edmond Hoffman, Oma Helm, Emily Hagen, Mrs. Myrtle Hicks, Milton F. Hampton, Jorgen Hansen, Francis M. Hoffman, William Harrison, George Harris, Roy Lee Hayes, Ernest Howard (Pinkie), Frank Hermoniski, Frank E. Heffernan, John Heine or Haynes, Ben Helland, Henry A. Henkin, Emil Hirt, John and William Jackson, Mrs. H. P. James, A. O. Jamison, Peter A. Jensen, Edward Johnson, James A. Johnson, John Werner Johnson, Samuel A. Johnson, W. E. Johnson, William Sherman Johnson, Benjamin F. Johnston, Stephen Johnston, Merlin Jones, Joseph H. Kelly, Lulu Kersharo, Charles Keslake, E. E. Killon, Howard King, Frank Knowlton, Roy W. Kelsay, Paul L. Kilgo, George H. Knight, David Landow, W. R. Lanning, William Lawscha, Frank le Dane, Claude Lent, Clayton J. Lewis, Edward Albert Libbey, Fred Locks, Harry Looy, Jerome Lord, Howard Lott, James Charles Lowry, Robert H. Loyd, Charles Lockwood, Walter Loveland, Katherine Lawrence, Anton Lewis, Vernon Levy's sister, Frank Lutz, Mrs. A. MacCarty, Mr. and Mrs. William McDonough, Hugh D. McGeary, Mrs. Belle McNew, William D. McCurdy, Lieutenant A. J. McGinley, A. A. McDonald, Edward Malven, T. Masterson, James Douglas Maxwell, "Tijole" McCloskey, Charles Floyde McCoy, George McDaniel, Florence McKay, William H. Mentzer, James Edward Miller, Joe Miller, Tina Mitchell, James Walker Monday, Casey Moran, Harry Morris, Roger Moulton, Jacob M. Mutzer, Clara Manteaze, Jack J. Mulcahy, Willim B. 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## “Think Beyond Your Job!”

“There is not a man in power at the Bethlehem Steel Works today,” says Charles M. Schwab, in the American Magazine, “who did not begin at the bottom and work his way up. These leaders rose from the ranks. They won out by using their normal brains to *think beyond* their manifest daily duty.

“Eight years ago Eugene Grace was switching engines. His ability to *out-think* his job, coupled with his sterling integrity, lifted him to the presidency of our corporation. Last year he earned more than a million dollars.

“Jimmie Ward, one of our vice-presidents, used to be a stenographer. But he kept doing things out of his regular line of duty. He was *thinking beyond his job*, so I gave him a better one. And he has gone up and up. The fifteen men in charge of the plants were selected, not because of some startling stroke of genius, but because day in and day out, they were *thinking beyond their jobs*.”

What about you? Are you satisfied just to hang on where you are? If so, rest assured that's as far as you'll ever get. But if you want to be somebody, to climb to a position of responsibility, *get ready for it*. Do what you are doing *now* better than the men beside you and *train for the job ahead*. You can do it—in spare time—through the International Correspondence Schools.

For 25 years men of ambition with I. C. S. help have been making spare hours the stepping-stones to successful careers. Last year more than 5,000 reported that their studies had won for them advancement and increased salaries. In the Bethlehem Steel Works alone over 100 men right now are putting their spare time on I. C. S. courses and *thinking ahead*, getting ready for the better positions that surely await them. And over 130,000 others in offices, shops, stores, mines and mills and on railroads all over America are preparing in the I. C. S. way to take the next step upward.

Join them! All you need is just ordinary brains, the will to do, and the firm resolve to *think ahead of the job you now hold*. The I. C. S. are ready to make the rest easy. Make your start, take the first step right now. Mark and mail this coupon.

TEAR OUT HERE

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<input type="checkbox"/> MECHANICAL ENGINEER	<input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Trainman
<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman	<input type="checkbox"/> ILLUSTRATING
<input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Present Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Street and No. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

# How One Evening's Study Led to a \$30,000 Job

A Simple Method of Mind Training That Any One Can Follow with Results from the First Day

By a Man Who Made Formerly No More Than a Decent Living

I DO not take the credit to myself at all for attaining what my friends term a phenomenal success. It was all so simple that I believe any man can accomplish practically the same thing if he learns the secret.

It came about in a rather odd manner. I had been worrying along in about the same way as the average man thinking that I was doing my bit for the family by providing them with three square meals a day, when an old chum of mine, Frank Powers, suddenly blossomed out with every evidence of great prosperity.

Naturally the first thing I did when I noticed it was to congratulate him and ask him what had brought the evident change in his finances.

"Bill," he said, "it's all come so quickly. I can hardly account for it myself." But the thing that made such difference in my life lately began with an article I read a short time ago about training the mind.

"It compared the average person's mind to a leaky pail, losing its contents as it went along, which if carried any distance would arrive at its destination practically empty.

"The leak in the pail, the writer demonstrated, was forgetfulness. He showed that when memory fails, experience, the thing we all value most highly, is worthless. He proved to me that a man is only as good as

his memory, and whatever progress he accomplishes can be laid directly to his powers of retaining in his mind the right things—the things that are going to be useful to him as he goes along.

"Well, I was convinced. My mind was a 'leaky pail.' I started in at once to make my memory efficient, taking up a memory training course which claimed to improve a man's memory in one evening. What you call my good fortune to-day I attribute solely to my exchanging a 'leaky pail' for a mind that retains the things I want to remember."

\* \* \* \* \*

Powers' story set me thinking. What kind of a memory did I have? It was much the same as that of other people, I supposed. Certainly it never occurred to me that it was possible or even desirable to improve it as I assumed that a good memory was a sort of natural gift.

But I began to observe myself more closely in my daily work. The frequency with which I had to refer to record or business papers concerning things that at some previous time had come under my particular notice amazed me. The men around me who were going about the same work as myself were no different than I in this regard. And this thought gave new significance to the fact that I had been performing practically the same subordinate duties at exactly the same salary for some three years.

The whole thing hit me pretty hard. I realized that probably hundreds of sales had been lost because the salesman forgot some selling point that would have closed the order. Many decisions involving thousands of dollars had been made unwisely because the man responsible didn't remember all the facts bearing on the situation and thus used poor judgment. There are no greater words in the English language descriptive of business inefficiency than the two little words, "I forgot."

I reached a decision. On the recommendation of Powers, I got in touch at once with the Independent Corporation which shortly before had published the David M. Roth Method of Memory Training. And then came the surprise of my life. Within thirty minutes after I had opened the book the secret that I had been in need of all my life was mine. Mr. Roth has boiled down the principles of perfecting the memory so that the method can almost be grasped at a glance. And the farther you follow the method the more accurate and reliable your memory

becomes. Instead of study the whole thing seemed like a fascinating game.

The rest of my story is not an unusual one among American business men who have realized the value of a reliable trained memory. My income today is close to \$30,000. It will reach that figure at the beginning of our next fiscal year. And two years ago I scarcely made what I now think of as a decent living. I can never be thankful enough that I mended that "leaky pail" and discovered the enormous possibilities of a really good memory.

## Send No Money

Mr. Roth's fee for personal instruction to classes limited to fifty members is \$1,000. But in order to secure nation-wide distribution for the Roth Memory Mail Course in a single season the publishers have put the price at only five dollars, a lower figure than any course of its kind has ever been sold before, and it contains the very same material in permanent form as is given in the personal \$1,000 course.

Don't send any money. Merely mail the coupon or write a letter and the complete course will be sent, all charges prepaid, at once for free examination. If you are not entirely satisfied send it back any time within five days after you receive it and you will owe nothing.

On the other hand, if you are as pleased as are the thousands of other men and women who have used the course, send only \$5.00 in full payment. You take no risk and you have everything to gain, so mail the coupon now before this remarkable offer is withdrawn.

## FREE EXAMINATION COUPON

## Independent Corporation

Division of Business Education,  
Dept. 2912, 119 West 40th St., New York.

*Publishers of The Independent (and Harper's Weekly)*

Please send me the Roth Memory Course of seven lessons. I will either remail the course to you within five days after its receipt or send you \$5.00.

Name .....

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Det.Stor.12-10-18

### David M. Roth

When Mr. Roth first determined to exchange his leaky mind for one that would retain anything he wanted it to, it was because he found his memory to be probably poorer than that of any man he knew. He could not remember a man's name 20 seconds. He forgot so many things that he was convinced he could never succeed until he learned to remember. Today there are over ten thousand people in the United States whom Mr. Roth has met at different times—most of them only once—whom he can instantly name on sight. Mr. Roth can and has hundreds of times at dinners and lectures asked fifty or sixty men he has never met to tell him their names, businesses and telephone numbers and then after turning his back while they changed seats, has picked each one out by name, told him his telephone number and business connection.