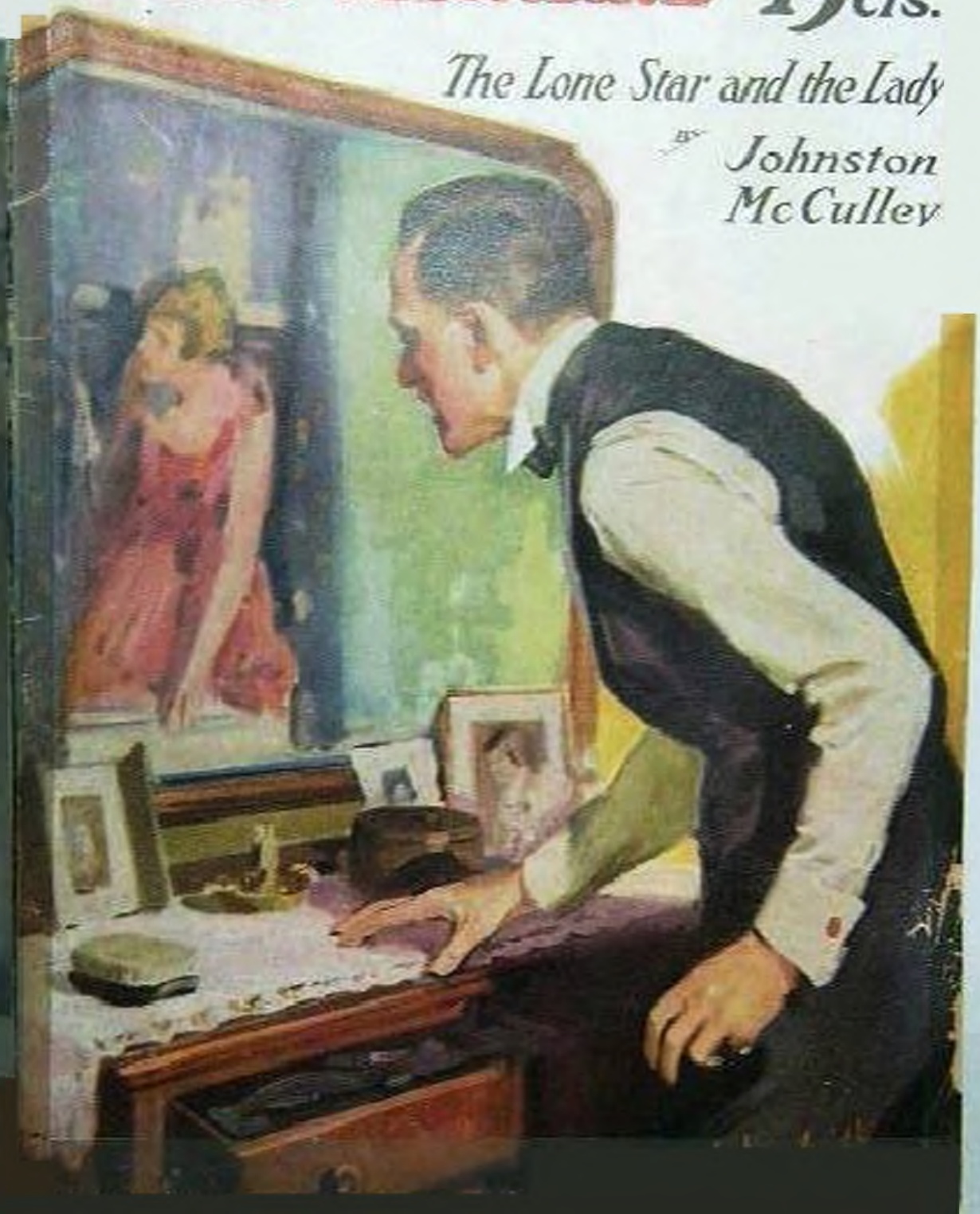
EVERY WEEK JULY 19, 1924

DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

15 CTS.

The Lone Star and the Lady

By Johnston McCulley



DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXVIII Contents for July 19, 1924 No. 1

TWO SERIALS

NOVELETTE AND SHORT STORIES

ONE ARTICLE

DEPARTMENTS

When Cherry McBride fished Jim Travis out of the North River, she did not know that he had a wound in his shoulder and a price on his head. She saw only a fellow creature in danger. But Bill McBride, her worthless uncle, saw in the wounded man a chance for easy money. Read the first installment of a new four-part serial in next week's issue:

$10,000 REWARD

By John Jay Chichester

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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXVIII July 19, 1924 No. 1

Mad Minds

By Adele Luehrmann

Author of "Superfluous Wives," "Bad Doctors," etc.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE WINDOW.

FRIDAY, November 29, was a date that Louis Pierson was destined to remember as long as he lived. It was the day after Thanksgiving, and he had stayed as his office in town until late. Work that the holiday had interrupted, had detained him, and he had had a late dinner with his mother. Immediately afterward he had gone to his brother's house, where he had remained, talking business until nearly midnight, until Amy, his sister-in-law, had insisted upon his going home. Elliot, she said, had had enough of him, and she added, with a smile and a wide yawn, that she had had too much. She wanted to put Elliot to bed and go herself without further delay. Elliot, who was his brother's partner in the law firm of Pierson & Pierson, was convalescing from pneumonia.

Louis collected his papers into his brief case, while he and Elliot continued to talk, and while Amy leaned wearily against the door which she was holding open. When the brief case was finally strapped, and Louis still lingered, she took a step toward him, as if with the intention of using something more persuasive than her tongue; then she stopped, deciding to rely, after all, on woman's best weapon.

"By the way, Louis," she said, an impish gleam in her black eyes, "did you know Ronald Lydborough is back?"

If her purpose was to check her brother-in-law's flow of conversation, she achieved it. Louis stopped talking instantly, and there was a noticeable pause—noticeable to himself and, he feared, also to her—before he answered, "Yes."

"Seen him?"

Louis turned toward the door, and, to avoid her eyes, which was not easy, as she was directly in front of him, he looked at his watch. "I dropped in for a moment yesterday," he said in a tone that was as careless as he could make it, "just to say how do you do."

"Well, how does he do?" said Amy.

"All right, I guess."

"I'm glad to hear it. I thought he was looking very seedy. Didn't you think so?"

Again Louis was conscious that he hesitated. "I didn't see him. He wasn't there," he replied. To avoid her glance now he turned back to Elliot. "Good night," he said. "See you to-morrow evening."

"All right," Elliot replied, adding some remark about the business they had been discussing. To prevent anything more on the subject his wife interrupted.

"Was Harry there?" she asked Louis.

He braced himself and looked straight at her. "No."

"Who was?"

"Nobody." He went by her and out of the room, feeling that he could cheerfully wring her neck. He hadn't missed that glint in her eye.

"Nobody?" she repeated, following him.

"Nobody but Mrs. Lydborough, I meant."

"Oh, I see."

"Good night."

"Good night."

He turned homeward. The night was clear and cold, the sky a gorgeous spectacle of stars. However, in his annoyance, he thought neither of the heavenly dome above him nor of the bracing air that filled his lungs. He had long thought that Amy suspected that he was more interested in Mrs. Lydborough than a man should be in another man's wife, but he had never been quite sure about it until now. And, by the same token, he had never been sure until now that he was more interested in Mrs. Lydborough than he had a right to be. His annoyance with his sister-in-law and his embarrassment under her questions had shown him unmistakably where he stood.

The revelation was not pleasant. As long as he had been able to deceive himself into imagining that he admired Mrs. Lydborough, as he had admired dozens of attractive women before her, he could conscientiously go on admiring her. Now discretion, not to mention decency, seemed to call for abstinence on his part—partial, if not total.

Not that she suspected anything. No one did, with the exception of Amy. And Amy, he was sure, had told no one—not even Elliot. Elliot, he was confident, had no suspicion whatsoever. And he could trust Amy. She could be a veritable fiend when it suited some purpose of her own, as to-night, but she was not a cat.

That part was all right. And it was all right as far as Mrs. Lydborough herself was concerned. This was his funeral—distinctively and exclusively his. There would be no mourners, thank Heaven!

It was not much to thank Heaven for, he reflected gloomily. Unrequited love was a serious ailment, likely to run a long and hard course. He'd get over it, but life wouldn't be worth much to him in the meantime. The best he could hope for was that this second attack of the disease would not be as bad as the other he had had. Then he had been

twenty-six; now he was thirty-nine. He didn't know whether that made things better for him or worse.

What he did know was that it was damnable how he always fell in love with a woman he couldn't marry. Other men didn't. There was Elliot, for instance. Amy was the only girl he had ever looked at twice, and all he had to do was say "Will you?" to start the wedding bells.

His way home did not necessarily take him past the Lydborough house; in fact, he had to make a detour to pass it, but he made the detour. It was foolish of him, he told himself, but he did it just the same. There was no reason why he shouldn't. Nobody would see him. He hadn't met a soul since he had left Elliot's. The houses he passed were dark, and everybody was asleep—she, too, no doubt.

No, he was wrong there. She was not asleep. There was a light in her room, the corner room in front. He knew that was hers, because she had told him once that they had bought the house because she liked the view from that bay window; it gave her such a wide sweep of country to look at, and she loved space. She would have liked, she said, to live on the top of a mountain. The reason they had come to Eastham to live was because it was high, and the country about was open. She couldn't live in New York; she felt shut in all the time by the tall buildings; it had made her ill.

As he came nearer the house, Louis saw that there was a light downstairs, too—in Lydborough's study, it seemed to be, but he wasn't sure, on account of the high evergreen hedge that surrounded the house. That hedge was an innovation in Eastham. Lydborough had had it planted as soon as possible after buying the property, not sharing his wife's love of open spaces. Privacy was what his soul craved. The American custom of having no hedges, no fences—of living, as it appeared to him, in the full gaze of the world, horrified him. He was an Englishman, and he proposed to live like one, in whatever country he might choose to honor with his presence.

To accomplish this end many alterations had been necessary in the house, one being the addition of the room on the ground floor which was called the "study." It was on the same side of the house as Mrs. Lydborough's room, but at the back, behind the drawing-room. The Lydboroughs had the only drawing-room, as well as the only study, in Eastham.

Looking about to make sure no one was coming along either of the intersecting streets, Louis stopped, and, hidden from the observation of any one in the house by the hedge, which was over his own height, he looked up at Mrs. Lydborough's windows. What he expected or hoped for, he did not ask himself. If he had he would doubtless have answered nothing—nothing but to see her light go out presently. And, perhaps, after the light was out, to see or hear her raise a window for ventilation before she went to bed.

The light downstairs, he now saw, was, as he had supposed, in the study. Lydborough was up still, too. Perhaps they were there together. Was she happy? Did she really care for him? She had been so young when she married him, eighteen, and that was fourteen years ago. Still, whether she loved her husband or didn't, she loved her boy Harry. A more devoted mother couldn't be imagined. No good wondering whether or not she loved Lydborough. Either way it made no difference. Even if she didn't love him, if she loved some other man, it would make no difference whatever. No good thinking about that. No good thinking at all—if one could only help it!

Turning again to the upper windows, after assuring himself that there was

still no one in sight on the street, Louis waited. It was sheer folly, he knew that, but he did not leave. Afterward, thinking of those minutes by the hedge, it seemed to him that he could easily have left and thereby saved himself knowing what he would then have given every dollar he had in the world not to know, but at the time something held him there. At any rate, he stayed.

The house across the way was unoccupied, the owners having moved to the city for the winter months. Those farther down the street were all dark, too. No danger of his being seen there and recognized, staring like a love-sick Romeo at the Lydborough windows. If he had heard a car coming he would have walked on instantly, but he heard nothing. There was no sound near to hear, and no wind to bring any from a distance.

She was probably in bed reading, and Lydborough was probably working, as he called it, at a book he was writing on socialism—the history of socialism, or something of the sort. Like many Englishmen of independent means, he had no profession nor business, and he had to invent soemthing to occupy his time—the time he didn't spend at golf. Why he lived in America, nobody knew. There had been a good deal of speculation about it in Eastham.

Suddenly a broad shaft of light fell across the lawn. Turning quickly, Louis saw, to his surprise, Mrs. Lydborough at the study window, between the two brown curtains which she had evidently just drawn apart. He could not see her face, because the light was behind her, but the tall figure could be no other than hers. She had on a loose robe, and her hair was down; she was ready for bed.

Her right arm was raised. She was feeling for the window latch, to fasten it or to make sure it was already fastened. In a moment she stepped back, drew the curtains together again, then slightly apart. That was the last he saw of her. From where he stood, at a thin place in the hedge, he could not follow her movements. A few seconds later the light in the study went out.

He waited, watching her room now. Apparently she had gone downstairs to urge her husband to stop his work and go to bed. Now they were going upstairs together. In a moment doubtless his light would go on. His room was next to hers, on the front. Harry's adjoined hers on the side. It was now dark, as were the servants' rooms in the third half story.

Louis waited a few minutes, and, when her light still burned, he walked on, glancing, as he turned the corner, at the windows of her husband's room. They were dark.

CHAPTER II.

THE TELEPHONE CALL.

"LOUIS! Louis!"

It was his mother's voice, calling from downstairs, and some unusual quality in her tone caused him to put down his razor instantly and hurry to the door. What in the world was the matter?

She was coming up, breathless with haste. "Oh, Louis!" she gasped out when she saw him in his doorway.

"What's happened?" he asked her anxiously, for it was plain that something had, something serious. He had heard the telephone bell a moment before. Could Elliot be worse again?

"Oh, Louis!" She finished the climb and stood at the top of the steps, panting, seemingly unable to say anything else for the moment. Her face was white, and she looked frightened.

"What is it? Elliot?"

She shook her head. "Go down to the phone," she managed to bring out. "Mrs. Lydborough's waiting."

"Mrs. Lydborough!" He stared. "Mrs. Lydborough?"

"She wants to speak to you. Something terrible has happened. Her husband——" But Mrs. Pierson could not go on for a moment; she had to stop again for breath. "Her husband's dead."

"Dead!"

"Somebody killed him."

"What?" Louis did not believe her. "When? How?"

"Go on down. She wants you to tell her what to do. She said you'd know because you're a lawyer. Go on—she's waiting."

With his face as it was, half clean and half in lather, he ran downstairs and caught up the receiver. But it was not Mrs. Lydborough's voice that answered; it was her butler's.

"Mrs. Lydborough asked me to speak to you, sir," said Forbes, his tone as calm as Louis had ever heard it. "Mr. Lydborough's been shot, sir, and he's dead—quite, sir. Mrs. Lydborough is somewhat at a loss as to what is customary in the circumstances. She thought, sir, you would be the one to tell her what is usual."

Under any other conditions Louis would have smiled. Forbes had always amused him. The butler was more solemn and imperturbable than any judge he had ever seen. If he had been born in America, Louis had always thought that Forbes would inevitably have made his mark by the sheer weight of his personal dignity. However Louis did not smile now. For once he encountered Forbes without thinking about him at all.

"He was shot, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who shot him?"

"I really couldn't say, sir."

"When?"

"I couldn't say, sir. I found him in his study this morning."

"His study?"

"Yes, sir."

"Dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sure he didn't shoot himself.'

"It would seem not, sir. There's no weapon about, and he appears to have been robbed."

"Robbed?"

"It would appear so, sir."

Louis thought for a moment. The county authorities would have to be notified. He could tell Forbes to do that. Instead, he said: "Please tell Mrs. Lydborough I'll come right over. I'll be there in five minutes."

He ran upstairs, threw a hurried word to his mother in passing, slammed his door, finished shaving and dressed. It was more than five minutes before he reached the Lydborough house, but it was not ten.

Forbes opened the door for him, looking no different than usual. And the house was quiet. Nobody was visible in the hall but the butler.

"Good morning, sir," he said. "Would you like to go to the study at once?"

Supposing Mrs. Lydborough to be in the study, Louis nodded.

"Mrs. Lydborough will be down presently, sir," continued the servant. "She's upstairs with Master Harry."

Louis nodded again. He felt as if he could not speak. It had all been so sudden, so astonishing, and he had hurried so that he wanted a little time to recover his wind and pull himself together. It was a relief to hear that he was not to see Mrs. Lydborough right away.

"Master Harry's taking it 'ard, sir—very 'ard," added Forbes, and Louis looked at him, struck by the dropped aitches. He could not recall ever having the butler make such a slip before. Evidently he was not as unmoved by what had occurred as his manner seemed to indicate. Louis' only reply was another nod, after which Forbes led him back to the study.

The room had only one door, that into the hall, and the fact—unusual in

an American house—gave an effect of privacy and seclusion that Americans rarely demand in their homes. The door was closed—locked, in fact. Forbes unlocked it with a key that he took from his pocket.

"In England," he explained, "it's customary to lock a room in these circumstances, and I thought it best to do it, sir, not knowing anything to the contrary as to the law over here."

"Things are supposed to be left as they are until the authorities take charge," answered Louis, feeling that some reply was expected.

"So I thought, sir." As he spoke, Forbes pushed the door open, then stepped back to make way for Louis to enter ahead of him.

The body was on the floor. It lay on one side in a huddled position, knees bent, the head over the chest. In the right temple, which lay upward, was a bullet hole from which a quantity of blood had escaped and run down the right cheek and onto the shoulder and sleeve of a gray smoking jacket, into which it had soaked and later dried. It looked now quite dry and dark.

Louis turned from the body and looked about the room. It was familiar to him, and he saw nothing out of the ordinary except the condition of the desk, near which the dead man lay, and the overturned desk chair. Papers were scattered on the floor in front of the desk as well as on it, as though a search had been made for something which might or might not have been found.

Then he noticed suddenly that the small safe beside the desk was also open, the door of it a few inches ajar. Forbes, observing the direction of his glance, said quietly:

"We looked inside, sir, then closed the door, as we found it. Things there are in a muddle, too, the same as the desk."

"Is anything missing?"

"I couldn't say as to that, sir."

Louis went over and opened the safe. It was true that things inside were in confusion. Somebody appeared to have gone through the compartments in haste, pulling papers out and stuffing them back regardless of afterappearances. But he saw nothing that offered a clew as to what had been the object of the search. Leaving the safe door as it had been, he turned to the butler.

"Didn't anybody hear anything?"

"It appears not, sir."

"There was a shot."

"Quite so, sir."

Louis' glance moved around the room again, this time pausing at the window at which he had seen Mrs. Lydborough for a moment the night before. It had been nearly midnight then, he reflected. The shooting had been done after midnight. Lydborough had not gone upstairs, it seemed——

But wait!—he must have gone. The study had been dark, Louis recalled, when he left the house. Lydborough must have gone up and come down again.

"That window was unbolted this morning." Forbes had again followed Louis' glance and seen it stop at the window.

"Unbolted?" repeated Louis, surprised by the statement.

"Yes, sir. And the curtains were open—not drawn apart, but pulled open, by somebody going through, or so it appears, sir."

Louis was silent. He was thinking. Why should the murderer have left the house by a window, when he could have walked out of a door? Unless——

"Was the door locked?" he asked suddenly.

"The door?" It was Forbes' turn for surprise. "No, sir, the door was not locked."

"I merely wondered."

That window, thought Louis, was doubtless the one Lydborough had been in the habit of opening for air, which

explained his wife's inspection of the bolt. Coming down later he had probably opened it again. He might, in fact, have been shot from the window. A man standing on the ground——

But no, he had not been shot from the window—not, that is, if he had been seated at his desk at the time. And, judging from the location and position of the body, he had been sitting at the desk, and he had fallen out of the chair onto the floor after being shot. At the desk his left side was toward the window, his right toward the door. He had been shot from the door apparently.

Here Louis' speculations were interrupted by the turning of the doorknob. He wheeled at the sound, expecting to see Mrs. Lydborough come in; but, instead, the housemaid appeared. Mrs. Lydborough had come down, she said, and was in the drawing-room, if Mr. Pierson would be so good as to go there.

Louis went at once. He was relieved not to have to see her in the study, and he thought it was very natural that she had not wished to see any one there. She was standing, when he joined her, waiting for him, looking calm, though very pale.

She was so sorry, she said, to have troubled him, but she hadn't known in the least what to do. What did one do? Whom did one notify?

"I'll attend to all that," he said. "The coroner will have to be notified and the sheriff. There's nothing you can do until they come." It struck him that it was very English of her to be so calm. An American woman would have been in collapse under such conditions. Being English, she had been trained from childhood to control her emotions, to show nothing of what she felt. In the face of her composure it was difficult to offer condolences. Still, it seemed only decent, so he said:

"This is very terrible. I hope you'll let me do all I can."

"You're very kind," she returned quietly. "I'm afraid I shall have to take advantage of it. You see, I don't know at all what to do or to—expect." She became a little hesitant. "I suppose they'll do what they call—investigate?"

"Yes, they'll investigate, of course, to find out who did it."

She went on looking at him without speaking, the faintest possible frown between her blond eyebrows. She seemed not to be thinking of him at all, conscious though he was of her.

"Just what will they do—exactly?" she asked then.

"Why, make a thorough examination of the room and so on." He had been about to say "and the body," but he checked his words in time, reminding himself that, self-possessed as she appeared, she must be profoundly shocked by her husband's death, and she was only controlling her natural feelings by force of will.

"And—ask questions of—every one in the house?" she faltered.

"Yes, of course."

Her frown deepened, and her blue eyes showed sudden concern. "Not of Harry, surely—a child of his age?"

"Oh, no, I suppose not."

She looked relieved. Then, as if thinking some explanation of her concern were called for, she said: "He's in such a state, poor darling, and about such a trifle. His father asked him to go for a walk with him after dinner last night, and he refused. Now he's heartbroken about it. I can't find any way to comfort him. You see, he's so high-strung—so sensitive, poor boy." A sudden sigh broke from her. "So like Ronald himself!" she finished.

Then, before Louis could repeat his opinion that the boy would probably not be questioned, she said abruptly, with a complete change of tone:

"There *is* something you can do for me, Mr. Pierson."

He assured her that he waited only to be commanded.

"If Henry doesn't have to be here, I'd like to send him away somewhere. I wonder if your mother——" She broke off for an instant, then continued before Louis could reply: "He'd be no trouble, I'm sure, and I can't bear to have him stay here and go through it all. He'll be ill, I'm afraid, if he doesn't get away."

"Of course my mother will look after him," Louis replied. "She'll be very glad to, and——"

"Could you take him away now—before they come?"

"Why—yes, if you'd like me to."

"Oh, yes, yes, if you only will!" Her palms came together in a sudden, instinctive gesture of appeal, which touched him deeply because he felt it was unconscious.

"Then I must take him right away," he answered, "because we mustn't delay any longer about notifying the authorities. Suppose you go up and get him, while I telephone. Then, after I've left him with my mother, I'll come back, to be here when they are—that is, if you'd like me to be here."

"Oh, yes, I should, if you can spare the time."

He waved that consideration away without even replying to it in words. All his time and everything else he possessed was hers, though he could not tell her so. She told him where he'd find the telephone, then hurried upstairs to her son.

When he had called the coroner and sheriff, Louis hesitated, then took off the telephone receiver for the third time. The district attorney, he reflected, would come as soon as he heard what had occurred, so it might be as well to notify him at once. Better, in fact, as it might save Mrs. Lydborough from being questioned twice that morning. For, no matter what had been done before his arrival, Timoney would insist on beginning all over again with himself in command. He would be sure to make a nuisance of himself, but it couldn't be helped.

Having finished telephoning, Louis returned to the drawing-room to wait for Mrs. Lydborough and Harry. The room was more familiar to him than the study, and it was a room he had always liked. It had seemed to him a suitable frame for Mrs. Lydborough. There was a restfulness, a harmony about it that was like her. Most of the furnishings had come from England, and they had the unobstrusive beauty of old, fine things. They had come out of Lydborough's home in England, it was understood, sent over to him when he had decided to settle in America.

Why he had so decided, Louis had never understood; nor had anybody else in Eastham. It was supposed to have been because of the English climate, but Lydborough's health, though obviously not robust, had not appeared to demand such a sacrifice. For, to a man with ample means and no business to tie him to any particular spot—to an Englishman, especially—it must have been a sacrifice to give up a home among other leisured people like himself and settle down among busy American suburbanites, with whom he couldn't have much in common except golf and bridge.

In a few minutes Mrs. Lydborough appeared with her son. The boy's eyes showed that he had been crying, but he was dry-eyed now and apparently calm. He had on his overcoat and was carrying his hat. Tall for his thirteen years, and with his mother's fair hair and blue eyes, he was in features and manner like his father. He held out his hand to Louis, as they met, but he said nothing. And Louis found nothing to say, either.

"You'll be back, you say?" Mrs. Lydborough asked, looking at Louis with a hint of appeal in her glance.

"Right away," he answered.

"It's too bad to take your time," she began apologetically.

"That's all right. It's Saturday, you know. I should only be in town half a day, anyhow. As it is, I won't go in at all. I'll come right back here. I've notified everybody, including the district attorney, so that you won't have to go through the whole thing twice."

"The district attorney? That's Martin Timoney, isn't it?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

She shook her head. "I've heard of him, that's all."

The walk to his home with Harry was made in silence. Somehow, much as Louis would have liked to say something comforting to the unhappy boy, he could not think of anything suitable Besides, his mind was full of other things. Lydborough had been murdered; there was no doubt about that. There would be an investigation and a lot of publicity. It would all be very unpleasant for Mrs. Lydborough; but there was nothing he could do except stand by and see that she was not subjected to any avoidable annoyances.

The prospect ahead was not encouraging, however. This robbery and murder at the Lydboroughs' was the third or fourth case of the kind in the county since the Grehan gang had got control of things. Public sentiment was already aroused about the outbreak of lawlessness and the fact that nothing was done about it. The time was ripe for the county officials to make a show of activity, if nothing more—especially Timoney. He didn't care any more for the opinion of the better element in the county than Grehan or the rest; he knew as well as they did that the better element had not elected him; but he was new in office and ambitious to shine there, and, to shine as a prosecutor, he needed criminals to prosecute. It was likely that a genuine effort would be made this time to discover and arrest the murderer. The Lydboroughs were prominent enough socially to make the case worth Timoney's while.

Mrs. Pierson received Harry Lydborough with open arms, as her son had known she would, and he did not wait to do anything more than deliver the boy into her care before hurrying off to his telephone to call up his New York office and let his staff know that he would not be in. That took some time, because he had various directions to give various persons about various things, and he had to listen to several important letters that had arrived in the morning's mail. He finally got away by ordering his secretary to come to Eastham.

When he got back to the Lydborough house a car was just drawing up at the curb, and in the car was Martin Timoney.

"I knew he'd lose no time getting on the job," Louis thought.

CHAPTER III.

PIERSON REPLIES.

"GOOD morning, Timoney," said Louis, as the district attorney stepped onto the sidewalk.

"Morning, Pierson." Timoney's tone very cheerful, and there was a gleam of expectancy in his sharp blue eyes. He was rather above medium height, thin, and with flat cheeks and a prominent nose. His overthick eyebrows were black like his hair. Stepping beside his car, he faced Louis.

"It was you that phoned me, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"How'd that happen?"

"Mrs. Lydborough called me up and asked me what to do."

"I see. You're their attorney, are you?"

"No, just a friend and neighbor."

"Not very near neighbors," commented Timoney, then asked: "Who is their lawyer?'

"I have no idea."

"Don't know them so very well then?"

"No, not very."

"When did this thing happen?"

"Some time last night. That's all anybody knows. The butler found the body this morning."

"What time this morning?"

"I don't know exactly. He can tell you that."

Timoney seemed about to continue his questions, but changed his mind, and, without further speech, they went through the gate and up the walk to the house. Forbes admitted them a moment later.

It was obviously the first time Timoney had ever been inside the Lydborough door. His glance darted swiftly about the hall, into the drawing-room and up the stairs with undisguised interest, as he followed Forbes back to the study.

"Got it locked up, eh?" he remarked, as the butler inserted a key into the study door.

"It's customary in England in the circumstances," replied Forbes with his usual dignity.

"I see, and what's right in dear old England's right everywhere—or ought to be, I suppose?"

Forbes ignored the pleasantry, which he doubtless considered ill-timed and unsuitable in the circumstances. He pushed the door open and stood back. Timoney passed in, followed by Louis. Forbes entered then, took his stand near the door, and waited for further orders. If things were not conducted in a dignified manner, it would be through no fault of his.

After a glance about the room the district attorney went over and knelt beside the body for a closer view of the bullet hole in the temple, which was caked up with coagulated blood.

Ronald Lydborough had not been handsome at any time in his forty-four years of life, but he had had a look of distinction which remained in death, even with his lower jaw hanging and his eyes wide open and glassy. Noticing the face now more attentively than he had done when in the room before, Louis was shocked to see how thin it was. It recalled to him his sister-in-law's remark of the night before about Lydborough's looking seedy. He must have looked so. His face had a shrunken look that death alone could not have given it. The man must have lost twenty pounds since Louis had last seen him alive. And his brown hair was noticeably grayer than it had been two months before. Timoney stood up and turned his attention to the disordered desk and safe. Then he questioned Forbes.

"It was about half past seven, I should say, sir," said the butler, "when I came in to air the room and set things to rights. I always did it myself. You couldn't trust a maid. They would set his papers to rights, no matter what you said. You couldn't stop them, no matter what. So I always came in myself first thing every morning. He couldn't bear his papers touched, sir, and I was always careful to have them just as he'd left them."

"I see. Go on," said Timoney, becoming impatient at these needless details. "And you found him dead—lying just as he is now? Nothing's been changed here, has it?"

"No, sir. It was just as you see it now, except for the windows. I drew the curtains for light, of course. They were closed, except at that window there. Those were pulled open a bit, and the window was unbolted, though I didn't notice that at first. It was Mrs. Lydborough who noticed it. You can see for yourself, sir."

Forbes went over to the window in question, Timoney following him. "Look out!" the latter cautioned before the butler had reached the window. "Don't touch anything. There may be finger prints on the window. Be careful. Don't touch anything in the room."

"I thought of that, sir. Nothing has been touched, sir, by any one."

"Good. Now who saw Mr. Lydborough last—alive?"

"Mrs. Lydborough, sir. None of the servants saw him after dinner."

"What was stolen?"

"I couldn't say as to that, sir."

"Anything missing anywhere else in the house?"

"No, sir."

Timoney glanced at the safe. "What did he keep in there?"

"I couldn't say, sir."

"Find any footprints outside the house, by that window?"

"No, sir."

"Did you look?"

"Yes, sir. But the grass grows close up to the window, and it's very dry at present. I doubt whether footprints would show."

"Probably not." Timoney thought a minute. "Seen any suspicious-looking characters loitering around here lately?"

"None to notice, sir."

"House ever been robbed before?"

"Not since I've been here, sir."

"How long is that?"

"Two years about, sir."

"All right. Go and bring in the other servants."

The other servants, two women, cook and housemaid, appeared in a few minutes, and the district attorney put them through a similar series of questions. But it seemed plain that neither of them had any information of value to contribute, and Timoney was about to dismiss them when other county officials arrived, the sheriff, Waters, and Ryerson, the county detective. With the sheriff came several other men, and in a moment the house was literally in the hands of the law. Everything had to be gone over again, the inspection of the room of the dead man and the questioning of the servants. After which nothing remained but to question Mrs. Lydborough.

Louis, who had stood aside, silently looking on and listening, now ventured the suggestion that it would be easier for Mrs. Lydborough to see them somewhere else, where she would not be forced to look at the dead body of her husband. As this impressed the others as reasonable, they adjourned to the drawing-room, Waters, the sheriff, taking charge of the key to the study which was again locked.

Certainly, thought Louis, when they were all in the drawing-room, and Forbes had gone up for Mrs. Lydborough, that room could never have held a group so alien to it. No one spoke. The visitors were busy looking about them, seemingly a little awed by the unobstrusive elegance of their surroundings.

Mrs. Lydborough followed Forbes downstairs immediately, and the attention of all present was transferred from the room to her. Her dress, Louis now noticed for the first time, was black, the best makeshift for mourning probably that she had. But there was no suggestion of mourning about it, nor was she in face or bearing the usual conception of a tragically bereaved widow. Whatever her feelings were, she showed nothing.

Louis introduced Timoney and Waters, and they all sat down.

"We're sorry, Mrs. Lydborough," Timoney began, "to have to trouble you at such a time as this, but I guess you understand that it's necessary." She nodded, and he went on. "It's a terrible thing that's happened, and, as representatives of the law, we've got to do our duty and see that the law is avenged. And the first thing is to find out who committed this murder. There have been too many cases like this in the county. This sort of defiance of law can't be allowed to go on. I'd like to ask you a few questions."

"Certainly," she replied. She sat with her hands clasped loosely in her

lap, in a large armchair which her slender figure only half filled. Her blue eyes looked attentively at Timoney. What she thought of him Louis could only imagine. But then he had never been able, he remembered, to do more than imagine what she thought about anybody.

"What time do you figure this thing happened?"

"I don't know."

"You must have some idea about it."

"Only the vaguest."

"You were the last in the house to see him alive, weren't you?"

"Was I?" She looked at Timoney, as if this question had not before occurred to her.

"Well, that's what the butler says."

"Oh, then I was, I suppose."

"What time was that?'

There was a slight pause before she answered: "I'm not sure. He went for a walk after dinner. I don't know just how long he was gone. Harry went up to his room, and I——" She stopped. She seemed to be trying to recall in detail the events of the previous evening. "I went upstairs, too, I think. I know Harry came to my room for a while. Harry's my young son," she interrupted herself to explain. "He's been away at school and is here only for the Thanksgiving holidays."

"I see," said Timoney. "Well, go on, now."

"He went to bed early. He'd been outdoors most of the day and was sleepy. That was why he didn't go out to walk with his father; he was too tired. He went off to bed early, and I went to bed rather early, too, though I didn't go to sleep. I read. That's why I didn't know that I was the last to see my husband——"

She stopped again, and Timoney nodded and said: "I see. Then you didn't see him when he came back from his walk?"

"No, and I didn't hear him come in. Didn't Forbes see him after he came back?"

"The butler? No, he says none of the servants saw him after dinner."

"Oh, then I suppose I was the last to see him. I remember that Harry went upstairs before his father went out. But I don't understand just why this is important—I mean that I don't see what difference it makes who saw him last."

"I'm trying to get at the time the murder took place."

"Why is that important?"

"Well——" Timoney had to stop; he himself couldn't think just why the time was a matter of importance in this case. "I'm trying to get at the facts," he answered then, more curtly than he had spoken before, adding in a tone of finality: "The time of the commission of any crime is important to the investigators, Mrs. Lydborough."

"Of course," she agreed quietly.

"Time's important on account of alibis," Waters contributed. "If we know when a murder was committed, and a fellow we've got under suspicion proves he was somewhere else at that time, that lets him out."

"Of course," she said again. "But I'm afraid nobody knows in this case. My husband must have let himself in with his key when he came in from his walk, since Forbes didn't see him. And he must have gone straight to his study. He didn't come upstairs, I'm sure, or I should have heard him—that is, if he had come up before I went to sleep."

"And if there'd been a shot fired anywhere in the house before you went to sleep, I guess you'd have heard it, wouldn't you?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so."

"All right, then. Now what time did you go to sleep?"

"I don't know exactly. I didn't look at the time. It must have been late—midnight, perhaps, when I turned out my light."

"Midnight, eh?"

"Yes, or about that time—and that's all I know. I was still sleeping this morning when Forbes knocked to tell me what had happened."

"I see."

Timoney paused to consider his next question, and she waited, her hands still lightly clasped across her lap, her clear blue eyes meeting his squarely, quietly. Louis Pierson was thankful that it was not at him she was looking. He was thankful, too, that no one was looking at him. In the shock her statements had given him he could not think. He could only stare at her and ask himself dazedly why she had lied.

"Have you looked through the desk and safe to find out what's missing?" Timoney went on.

"No; Forbes said we ought not to touch anything."

"What was there in the safe to steal?"

"Nothing; but whoever shot my husband must have thought there was. You saw how the safe looked and the desk, too, as if somebody had searched frantically for something of value—money or bonds, I suppose."

"What are all the papers in the safe?"

"My husband's manuscripts. He was writing a book, one that required research and a great deal of time. He's been working on it for several years—just for an occupation for his spare time. He usually worked in the evenings and often late into the night. The safe was for protection against fire. There was nothing in it for any one to steal; but somebody must have thought there was."

"It doesn't look as if it had been broken open."

"No, it was probably standing open. It may have been that that tempted some person. Of course, that's merely a conjecture. I don't know anything about it."

"Nothing missing anywhere else in the house?"

"Not that we know of."

"You've got silver in the dining room, haven't you, that was worth stealing."

"Yes, some things."

"And you've got jewelry, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Nothing missing, eh?"

"No."

"The murderer seems to have confined himself to your husband's study. What's your idea about it, Mrs. Lydborough? Doesn't it strike you as a little queer for a burglar to go into the one lighted room in a house, and while there was somebody in there?"

She was silent for a few seconds before she answered calmly: "I suppose it was the safe that attracted him."

"How do you think he got into the house?"

"Through the study window, of course. We found one of the windows unbolted this morning, and the curtains pulled apart. It's the window that was usually opened for ventilation. It was open last night, I suppose, and the curtains were open, too. The light may have attracted attention first. If you stand close to the hedge you can see into the window from the sidewalk. You can see the safe. I've noticed it myself in the daytime. Somebody passing must have noticed the safe and taken for granted that it contained valuables. At any rate," she finished in a tone that was almost indifferent, "that's the only explanation I can think of, Mr. Timoney. What is your idea?"

"Too early to form a theory," the district attorney answered.

"There have been so many burglaries—murders, too—in this vicinity—I naturally supposed this was merely another of the same kind," she continued in the same careless tone. "No one ever seems to be punished, or even arrested. It's not much wonder, it seems to me, that such things go on. The law seems to give people very little protection in this country."

"It's natural for you to look at it that way, Mrs. Lydborough," the sheriff interposed here before Timoney could reply. "It's natural for anybody to look at it that way who don't understand the situation. Take this case, for instance. What have we got to go on? Not much, you'll admit. You say yourself that what happened most likely was that somebody passing was tempted by the open window and the safe. No motive but robbery—the murder was incidental. Well, right there we're up against it. Most people have got a motive for wanting money. With murder it's different. When a murder's committed, just a straight out-and-out murder, you look first thing for a motive. Who had a motive? That's the first question you ask? Motive's the important thing in a murder case. But in a burglary you're up against it—especially in a case like this, where nothing was stolen that you know of. You haven't even got the stolen goods to go by. All you know here is that this guy didn't want silver or jewelry—or, maybe, he thought if there wasn't anything valuable in the safe, there wasn't in the house. And he might have been some fellow that never committed a crime before, just a passer-by, so to speak. Maybe he left some clew behind, like finger prints, and maybe he didn't. And his finger prints wouldn't help much unless he was somebody whose finger prints we had some reason for taking, don't you see?"

In response to this long defense of himself and his companions, Waters received a quiet nod from Mrs. Lydborough, nothing more.

"I guess," commented Timoney, "Mrs. Lydborough understands that it's to our own interest to do everything in our power to bring her husband's murderer to justice." He stood up, indicating that, so far as he was concerned, the interview was over. But at this point Ryerson, the county detective, spoke up.

"I'd like a little information on one or two points," he said, rising too and approaching Mrs. Lydborough, "I won't have to trouble you later then," he added, speaking directly to her.

"Certainly," she said, getting up and turning to him.

"Ryerson's our county detective," the sheriff said by way of introduction. "Don't believe you've met him."

Mrs. Lydborough stared at Ryerson, an insignificant-looking man who had been sitting back with a couple of the sheriff's assistants, lost in the crowd, so to speak, until now. He had come forward, with a slouching walk that characterized him, and now stood, thin, flat-chested, his scrawny neck fully displayed above his low, blue-striped collar, and topped by a small, pale face, possessed of no striking features.

The detective put his hands in his pockets, slumped into an easy-standing pose, and began:

"How many persons were in the house at the time of the crime?"

"Myself, my son, and the three servants," said Mrs. Lydborough.

"Where do you all sleep?"

"The servants sleep on the top floor. We have a half story on the third floor, with two rooms. The butler and cook, who are married, occupy one room, the housemaid the other. My bedroom is the one with the bay window; the one behind it is my son's, and my husband occupied the room next mine on the front."

"Been living in this house long?"

"Nearly three years."

"How long have you had this bunch of servants?"

"We've had Forbes and Mary, the butler and cook, for five years. They were with us in New York, where we lived before coming here."

"And the other woman?"

"Rose we've had about seven or eight months, since last spring."

"She came well recommended, I take it?"

"She had excellent references, of course."

"No reason to suspect any of the help of being implicated in your husband's death?"

"Certainly not!" Mrs. Lydborough looked startled at the suggestion. "I have no reason to suspect any one," she added with more vehemence than she had yet shown. "And the servants knew it, at any rate. Besides, I have entire confidence in all three of them."

"Where's the son you spoke of? I haven't seen him around anywhere?" Ryerson asked with an abrupt change of subject.

"He's not here. He's at Mr. Pierson's house. I didn't think it necessary for him to be here—nor good for him."

"I see. What was your husband's business—or profession?"

"He had none. He had an income sufficient for his needs, which came from England. He had no interests of any kind in this country. He was here for his health's sake. He has no relatives over here, nor have I." Mrs. Lydborough added these unasked-for items in a calm, level tone and as if with the hope of satisfying her interrogator and getting through with him quickly.

He took the hint. "Sorry to trouble you," he said, "if there's anybody you can refer me to that can give me the facts I need I won't have to trouble you." And when she hesitated, as though not fully understanding, he asked: "Who's your lawyer? You say you've got no relations in this country. Who's representing you?"

"Representing me?" she echoed, puzzled by the phrase.

"Looking after your interests, I mean—your business—that sort of thing?"

Her glance sought Louis, and, even before it found him, he spoke. In his ears his voice sounded strained and unnatural, though he saw with relief that no one appeared to notice anything unusual about it.

"I'm acting for Mrs. Lydborough," he said.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT DID SHE WANT TO SAY?

IT was well for Louis Pierson that he did not foresee how far those words of his were destined to take him. Sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof.

As soon as he had spoken, Ryerson told Mrs. Lydborough that she need not stay any longer if she preferred to go, and she went upstairs, leaving Louis to look after her interests, as the detective had expressed it. The minute she was out of earshot Timoney said jestingly, addressing the room:

"Ryerson always suspects the victim's wife on principle."

"Well, it's a darned good principle," returned the detective seriously. "Waters was talking about motive just now. Well, who's likely to have a stronger motive for wanting a man dead than his wife? It's easier to collect life insurance than it is alimony."

The other county officials present exchanged grins; they were evidently familiar with their colleague's cynicism.

"And it's a darned good law that won't let a wife testify against her husband." continued Ryerson. "It's all that keeps most of you married fellows out of jail."

Another appreciative grin from his audience, and Ryerson got back to the business in hand.

"I guess you understand, Mr. Pierson," he said to Louis, "that Mrs. Lydborough is not under suspicion. But I've got to get the hang of things here. These Lydboroughs are strangers to me. I'm new in my job here. I've heard the name Lydborough, knew the folks were English and lived in this house with the hedge around it, but that's all I knew about them. Now this case may be just what it appears to be to the naked eye, and it may not. It's not my business to judge by appear-

ances. That's not what I'm paid for, you understand?"

"Of course," said Louis.

"And, anyhow, opinions are likely to differ about appearances. Nothing ever looks the same to two people—everybody knows that. But about the Lydboroughs, where did he bank? Here in Eastham? Or in New York?"

"Here, I think. He had no interests in New York, I believe."

"You *think* he banked here, and you *believe* he had no interests in New York. Just what do you *know* about him?"

"What do we ever know about anybody?" Louis retorted, taking the other's tone. "I knew Lydborough as well as anybody else in Eastham. That is to say, I knew him socially, which was the only way anybody here knew him, since he had no business. I've played golf with him often, talked with him by the hour about all sorts of things, dined at his table, played bridge with him, and so on."

"And the same with his wife, I suppose?"

"Naturally."

"Seen much of them lately?"

"No, he's been away—in England, I understand. I hadn't seen him since his return."

"When was that?"

"He got back Tuesday, I believe."

"Tuesday of this week?"

"Yes."

"What was he doing in England?"

"He went over on account of some investments, I believe."

"You believe?"

Louis answered this query with a slight impatience. "That's a mere form of speech, of course. He said when he left that that was why he was going. Nobody questioned it, as far as I know. I certainly had no reason to."

"What was his age?"

"Forty-four."

"Considerably older than his wife then?"

"I don't know Mrs. Lydborough's age. The boy is thirteen."

"Devoted to her husband, of course, was she?"

"I never saw anything indicating the contrary."

Ryerson had his hands in his pockets again, and his pose, as he stood before Louis, was his usual slouch. "Is that a mere form of speech," he asked dryly, "or are you being cautious?"

Louis maintained his equanimity because he was determined not to lose it, outwardly at least, no matter what happened; but he resented the detective's tone, and it required an effort to keep his own from betraying the fact.

"It was a form of speech," he answered, as though the question had been put seriously. "Mr. Lydborough and his wife were devoted to each other."

"She seems to be bearing up pretty well now."

"She isn't showing what she feels, that's all. Women of her kind usually feel more deeply than those that show all they feel. I should say that this is an instance where your rule of not judging by appearances applies."

Ryerson nodded, as though admitting the point to be well taken. "How long was her husband away?"

"About a month."

The detective took his hands out of his pockets. "All right," he said curtly and went over to pick up his hat from the chair where he had left it. "I'll get busy," he said then, addressing the sheriff. "Better give me that key if you're going to stay here."

"I'll go back there with you," Waters answered, and they went off without any more ado about it.

Seeing that Timoney was following them, Louis went also, and after him trailed the other men who had been waiting for orders in the hall. But at the study door Ryerson objected to the crowd.

"I can't work with you fellows in the

way," he said. "And I've got to get down to business."

Waters got rid of his men, sending one of them to telephone to the coroner and hurry him up, and Timoney, after another glance about the room, decided to go home to his breakfast, which he had left when he got Louis' phone call. This left Ryerson, the sheriff, and Louis in the study.

"What's directly over this room?" the detective asked.

"Nothing," said Louis. "The room was built on when the Lydboroughs bought the house three years ago."

"Then there was no one above to hear the shot?"

"No."

"Still, it must have been something of a noise at that time of night and in a quiet place like this," remarked Ryerson.

Louis said nothing. Ryerson's glance traveled slowly around the room, the walls of which were lined with open bookcases, crammed with books. Above them were framed etchings and a few Japanese prints, and here and there on the ledge above the books a small bronze or a bit of pottery. The floor was covered with a brown carpet; there were brown curtains at the windows, and the three or four chairs were upholstered in brown. In an open fireplace were some charred logs and a heap of wood ashes. On a low stand near the fireplace lay a big brier pipe, a leather tobacco pouch, and an ash tray.

Except for the confusion in and about the desk and the safe, the room looked undisturbed. Ryerson picked up the pipe, turned the bowl of it toward the light, and laid it down again.

"He'd finished smoking and knocked out his pipe," he observed in a careless tone, though he remained for a moment longer, contemplating the heaped up tobacco ashes on the ash tray. "He'd gone back to his desk to work, looks like."

"Looks to me as if he had been sitting in that chair there." Waters pointed, as he spoke, to a chair near the desk. "Looks as if he'd been shot while he was sitting in that chair and fell out of it afterwards."

"He couldn't have been right at the desk then," objected Ryerson, "or he couldn't have fallen out of the chair. He'd have fallen over the desk. Unless he started up, and pushed the chair back at the same time. That might have been." He glanced around at Louis, who had been looking on in silence from a position he had taken near the door, so as to be as little in the way of the investigators as possible. "This is how everything was found, I take it?"

"So the butler assured me," Louis answered. "It was he who discovered the body when he came in to put things to rights. The only difference is that the curtains were drawn together. He of course opened them for light."

Ryerson turned and looked at the curtains. The room had three windows, two looking toward the rear of the grounds, which were laid out in a garden, now for the most part dead, the third toward the side street. This was the window at which Louis had seen Mrs. Lydborough standing the night before. It was also the window that had been found unbolted that morning.

Aware of the latter fact, Ryerson walked over to it now. He looked at the bolt, looked closer, then took out a magnifying glass from his pocket and looked at the bolt through that. Slowly then he moved the glass over the wood around the bolt and after that the length of the window frame. Next he examined the whole window frame, down one side, back to the bolt. He also inspected carefully the glass on the lower sash.

The sheriff, who at the beginning of this performance had gone closer to the window to watch it, seemed on the point now of asking a question, but he closed his mouth again without speaking. Apparently he had remembered Louis' presence.

Turning from the window, Ryerson played his glass here and there, on the polished wood of a chair back, on the tops of the book shelves, until he came at last to the desk. Here he proceeded more deliberately, neglecting not a square inch of its surface. The safe received the same minute scrutiny, inside and out. Then the chair near the dead man, the one from which it seemed probable that he had fallen after being shot.

From the chair the detective turned to the door, but passed it by with a scowl and a shrug. So many hands had touched the door this morning that any record it might bear was of no value.

"I'll take a look outside, I guess," he announced then. "Get one of your boys in here, sheriff, to see that nothing's touched while we're outside. When the coroner comes we'll tackle the body. I just want to get the hang of things outdoors first."

Waters summoned two of his men, gave them orders to lock the study door on the inside and admit no one, and he and Ryerson went outdoors. Louis went with them.

Around to the study window they walked. It was about five feet above the ground. A man of ordinary height, standing on the ground, could look into it, or climb in. Forbes, being summoned for the purpose, brought a stepladder, and Ryerson examined the window glass and frame on the outside, as he had within. The ground beneath the window had been carefully scrutinized for footprints, but none was found there, or anywhere else on the wintry lawn.

They went around on the outside of the hedge then to verify Mrs. Lydborough's statement that a passer-by could look into the window, after which they returned to the house, for the coroner was arriving.

The inspection of the body made by Doctor Bates added nothing to the sum total of their knowledge at that time. The pockets of Lydborough's gray smoking jacket contained nothing but a handkerchief, and a box of safety matches. His trousers contained only some loose money. Doctor Bates expressed the opinion that death had been instantaneous, the bullet having evidently lodged somewhere in the bony structure of the head. There would, of course, he said, have to be an autopsy, but he expected that it would do no more than confirm his opinion that the weapon had been very close to Lydborough's head when it was fired. He found, he said, signs of powder burns, although the caked blood in and around the wound made it impossible for him to be sure as to that.

An examination of the papers in the desk and safe revealed nothing of importance. The papers were nearly all manuscripts of the dead man's, parts of the book he had been writing. There were a few letters, but a cursory inspection of them showed them to be of no importance.

His immediate duties completed, the coroner left to make arrangements for removing the body to the county morgue for the autopsy. The sheriff also went away to put the machinery of his office into operation. Ryerson was left in command of the premises and of the sheriff's men who were there. He busied himself taking impressions of the fingerprints he had found.

Louis waited for a time, reluctant to leave, yet feeling himself useless, his state of mind anxious and confused. Then a telephone message came from his mother: his secretary had arrived from New York. He sent Forbes up to tell Mrs. Lydborough that he was going home, if she had no further need of him at the moment.

She came down to him at once. She had been composing cables to be sent to England, she said, and trying to think what to do—about the funeral and about her own future. He noticed signs now

of nervous strain, but they were merely signs. She was paler and spoke somewhat hurriedly, but she still had herself well in hand.

She asked no questions about what had been going on. Apparently she took no interest in the investigation of her husband's death, or had no confidence in the ability of the investigators. Her mind seemed to be absorbed by the responsibilities that had suddenly fallen upon herself. She consulted him about the funeral. The body must eventually be taken back to England to be buried in the family plot there, but in the meantime, until she could dispose of the house and make ready to go home herself, it could be placed in a receiving vault. That was what one usually did, was it not, in such a case?

Louis assented, offering to make the arrangements for her with the undertaker. She thanked him, but said she could do that herself and wouldn't think of bothering him about it. She had already taken too much of his time. He would never know how grateful she was for his kindness.

He told her about the autopsy. The body would have to be taken away, but would be brought back afterward.

She nodded. She seemed to have expected that there would be an autopsy. "I know," she said. "It's a matter of regular procedure in case of violent death, isn't it?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Do you think the funeral services can be held on Monday?"

"I suppose so."

"I'm anxious to get it over, you see—on Harry's account. And that reminds me, I mustn't trouble your mother with him any longer, now that the house is quiet again. I'll send Forbes for him—or perhaps Rose would be better. Forbes had better stay here. I'll send Rose over for Harry."

"There's no hurry, unless you want him back," said Louis.

"Oh, there's no reason why he shouldn't be at home now. It was only that I thought—— He's so sensitive. I'll send Rose for him at once."

Taking this as a signal that she had no more to say to him, Louis left and went home. He had had no breakfast and felt the need of his coffee. At any rate, it was so he explained to himself his feeling of depression. Letting himself into the house he went back to the kitchen, and there unexpectedly he found his mother, whom he had imagined to be upstairs somewhere consoling Harry Lydborough. She followed him into the dining room, anxious to hear all he would tell her. But he was in no mood to satisfy her curiosity.

"Where's the boy?" he asked.

"Upstairs, poor child, bathing his eyes. He's cried until they're all red and swollen. He must have been devoted to his father. But he wouldn't talk about him."

"He's suffering from remorse," Louis explained. "His father asked him to go for a walk with him after dinner last night, and he didn't go. That's what's the matter—and the shock, of course. Mrs. Lydborough's sending the maid over for him. She'll be here in a few minutes. Perhaps you'd better go and tell him."

Mrs. Pierson agreed with this suggestion and went upstairs. Louis dropped into a chair and covered his face with his hands. It was a relief to be alone for a moment. But the moment was brief. A step in the hall made him sit up sharply and compose his features, and he had hardly done so when his secretary, Miss Hughes, a plain, but pleasant-faced, young woman appeared in the hall doorway. At the same instant the front doorbell rang.

Miss Hughes turned. "I'll go," she said. Her joy in life was to be useful, and Louis, accustomed to that trait in her, made no objection. As he expected, the new arrival was Rose, the Lyd-

borough maid, and he sent Miss Hughes upstairs to tell his mother. Then, leaving Rose to wait alone in the hall, he himself walked back to the dining room, hopeful that his coffee had come in. As he reached the dining room door, he heard steps behind him and turned. Rose was following him.

He stopped. It was plain from her manner that she was going to speak to him. But she did not do so until she was close to him, and then she had only time to say in a low tone, "Mr. Pierson," when the pantry door opened on the other side of the dining room, and the cook came in with Louis' coffee on a tray.

Instantly Rose drew back. "Well?" said Louis. "What is it?"

"Nothing, sir." She turned away, and he repeated his question. Then he heard his mother's voice at the top of the stairs and saw her coming down with Harry, Miss Hughes following them.

"Never mind it now, sir," Rose said hastily. "It's no matter." She went to the foot of the steps to wait for Harry to join her, and in a few seconds they had gone. Louis returned to the dining room for his coffee, wondering what Mrs. Lydborough's housemaid could have wanted to say to him. Rather a good-looking girl, tall, and with a good figure and pretty hair and complexion. He had never really noticed her before, though he had seen her a number of times. She had occasionally opened the door for him, but he could hardly have looked at her. Another proof of his state of mind concerning Mrs. Lydborough.

His mother came in with her questions, and he told her briefly what was known about Lydborough's death. Then, his coffee and roll finished, he was soon absorbed in the mail that Miss Hughes had brought up, and he thought no more about Mrs. Lydborough's housemaid.

To be continued in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

"BUCKETEERS OF SCENARIOS"

A SCENARIO bucketshop recently came to grief in New York, and a story of bitter disillusionment for about two thousand unrecognized scenario writers, scattered in small towns throughout the country, was unfolded in the United States district court by two post office inspectors. The officers charged the directors of the Bristol Photoplay Studios, 500 Fifth Avenue, with using the mails to defraud by means of what the Federal officers characterize as a "scenario bucketshop."

Visions of fame and fortune were inspired, the complaint indicates, by circulars sent to small towns in the Middle West, which caused the embryo writers to dream of success, if they disposed of their scenarios through the Bristol Studios. The circulars offered to revise and to correct as well as sell the wares submitted to the studios. Fees ranging from twelve dollars to thirty-six were charged for these services, and the victims were assurred that while some of the writers realized as little as three hundred dollars on their stories, the big producing companies, with whom the Bristol Studios dealt, thought nothing of paying thirteen thousand for a plot that pleased them.

It was shown that more than two thousand persons had submitted their scenarios to the Bristol Studios, but not one manuscript was ever corrected, revised, or sold. The books of the company showed that a fee for services was charged against every manuscript received. The agency's revenues for one year aggregated more than fifty-one thousand dollars, but the entire amount was distributed in salaries to the directors, after the rent was paid.

Fastidious Wilfred

By Roland Krebs

Author of "Hell's Fine Fellows," "All Stuck Up," etc.

IT was a stubborn cowlick. Charley Abbott held his pocket comb under the tap again and applied it to the wisp of hair that insisted upon holding itself erect on top of his head. As fast as he combed it down, it sprang up. More water was applied, and at length he succeeded with the comb and with the flat of his palm in pasting it down.

"There, darn you," he said and stepped back a pace, the better to see his image in the cracked mirror over the washstand. He cocked his head first at one angle, then at another, as his vanity dictated. A finishing tug at the frayed tie under the collar of his gray-flannel shirt, and he considered his toilet made. He turned about and faced Alf Cole, slumped into a tilted chair, his hat awry, and a look of disgust on his unshaven face.

"You make me sick," Alf growled.

"Why?"

"Standing there and primping yourself that way. Do you think you're a chorus moll, or just a halfway good box man, like myself?"

"Oh, it pays to be well dressed," Charley countered.

"Not in this business, buddy. You'll never do yourself no good by wasting time primping and fussing. What you better do is pay more attention to the way you handle nitro. Why do you have to be good looking to crack a safe?"

"I used to think like you do," Charley persisted, "until I got next to myself. It may not ever do me no good, friend, but it won't ever do me no harm, neither. I learned my lesson from Wilfred Martin. Ever hear of him?"

"No."

"Then I'll tell you about it, and I bet you go right out and get shaved after you've heard about him." But, before dipping into his story, Charley Abbott walked over once more to look into the glass and be certain the cowlick was in place. Convinced that he had broken its stubborn spirit, he resumed:

"Alf, this bird Martin was a safe blower, just like you and me; but to look at him you'd say he was the leading man in a girl show. He was naturally good looking."

"Well, you ain't," Alf interrupted disagreeably, "so I don't see why you should follow after him."

"Get calm. He wasn't no collar advertisement. I meant he wasn't unpleasant looking. He was nuts about clothes, Alf. Where you or me might spend a whole night on a job, because we wanted the dough to back a long shot, nine times out of ten he'd soap a drum just because he had took a fancy to a checkered vest, or something that he wanted to wear.

"It got to be common talk among the guns, Alf, the way that guy fussed over hisself. They used to say to one another what you just said to me—that there wouldn't never any good come from such primping.

"No matter how tired he was in the morning, he always spent twenty or thirty minutes at his setting-up exercises to keep his figure trim. I lived

with him for a while, Alf, until he got away out of my class. I never could figure out why he didn't take to penny-weighting, or paper hanging, or something like that, where a fellow would have to meet up with jewelers and bank cashiers who would notice his appearance.

"But Wilfred Martin never paid all this attention to hisself because he figured it would help him in his work. He was just naturally fussy. He used to get electric treatments for his scalp, Alf, so help me Hannah. And, besides the massages he'd get in barber shops, he used to smear cold cream into his mug every night when he turned in, so it would drive away wrinkles and pouches and what all not.

" 'Never rub with a wrinkle, Charley,' he used to say to me, 'always rub criss-cross. That takes them away.' He wouldn't shave like you or me do it, when we do shave, Alf. It was a regular operation with that bozo.

"First he'd soak his face a long time in hot water. Then he'd give the phiz a good lather and rub the soap in to soften his beard. Then he'd wash off that soap and put on some fresh, a little more watery this time. Then he'd start his shaving. Say, Alf, is that cowlick of mine laying down?"

"Yes, darling," said Alf ironically, "you look sweet enough to kiss. Go on with your story. You fascinate me strangely."

"Oh, yes. He'd go over his pan once with the razor. More lather. Go over it again. Then he'd wet it all over and draw the razor over a third time to make it a smooth, neat job.

"Many was the times I seen him do this, Alf. He would rub cold cream all over his face. 'First soak it in hot water,' he used to tell me, Alf, 'to get the pores open, so the cream will get in and get the dirt. Then rub it off with a hot, dry towel. Then rinse it in cold water to close the pores, Charley,' he always told me; 'and finally sprinkle it with a little dash of this alcoholic lotion. That seals the pores up tight as a drum.' "

"I suppose," Alf commented, spilling cigarette ashes all over himself, but not troubling to brush them away, "that after that he'd get out an atomizer and spray hisself with perfume."

"No, he never," Charley said loyally. "He wasn't no sis, even if he did take a lot of care of his looks. He did use a little powder on his face, though. Not this ordinary talcum you souse on babies when they have prickly heat, but some stuff he bought extra in small tins. I think he paid a dollar and a half for that powder. 'Never use cheap face powder, Charley,' he used to advise me. 'It ruins the skin.' I never used none, anyhow."

"No, I guess not," Alf observed with just the right note of nastiness in his voice. "You're a he-man—a red-blooded guy, you are. I guess you put quicklime on your face after you shave to take away the smart."

"Well, I don't use powder yet. I do use a little witch hazel, though."

Charley was apologetic, for Alf, he could see, thought even this mild indulgence in cosmetics effeminate.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" Alf demanded. "Go on and tell me about how he done his fancy work and baked angel cakes."

"I tell you he wasn't no sis," Charley said hotly. "He could wallop the sap out of you, without getting out of his chair. Anyway, he used to take good care of his finger nails, too. 'Don't cut your nails with a scissors or a knife,' was what he always told me. 'It makes them brittle. File them down, crescent shape.' "

"Personally, I've always bit mine," Alf said, and, having asserted his virility, he let Charley go on.

"He'd shove the cuticle back with an orange wood stick, Alf, and then use

a dab of cotton to put some funny liquid on. I don't know what for. After his nails were dry, he would sift some white powder on them and polish them with the palms of his hand. After that was all done, he put some white paste under the tips to make them look extra clean."

"Yeah," Alf said deprecatingly. "That's the way a lot of show girls takes their bath—plenty of perfume."

"Wilfred was darned particular about his hair, too, Alf. He let the barber snip about two minutes, then he'd have to look in a hand mirror to see how the back of his conk looked in the big mirror. That reminds me—Alf, is that cowlick of mine still laying down?"

"No, it's up again. Leave it there."

Charley Abbott refused. He returned to the mirror and the tap, and, after several minutes of combing and swearing, got his hair back in position. He resumed:

"Wilfred used some brilliantine that was imported out of France, too, Alf. He told me once that he had half killed a barber for putting bandoline on his hair. Wilfred always was prejudiced against bandoline. He said it hurt the roots. It did something, too—I forget what—to the epidermis."

"That sounds like a Greek. What is it, Charley?"

"I think it means hide. Wilfred always trimmed his eyebrows with a tweezers, Alf. I did think that was going a little bit too far, but then his eyebrows was naturally bushy, and I guess if he neglected them they would have got like a walrus'."

"Did this tramp wear lingerie or red flannel, Charley?"

"I tell you he wasn't no cake, Alf. He was one of the two-fistedest ginks you ever met He'd 'a' socked you for what you just said, if you said it to his face."

"Well, I heard enough about his perfumed baths and permanent waves. What's the point of your story, if any?"

"I'm getting to it, Alf. Just let me tell you one thing more. Wilfred had another peculiarity. It was his meals. They had to be just so, or he wouldn't eat them. He'd look at a steak like he was going to operate on it before he ate it, Alf; and nine times out of ten he'd send it back to be broiled a little more, or something like that.

"But here's what I've been leading up to, friend. A float full of dicks overtook Wilfred in his car one night when he was on his way to do a job. If they had had a ounce of sense and wanted to hang a package on him, they would have waited until he cracked the particular box he was after and then got him red-handed. But, as it was, they tumbled him on the spot, and he got a three-month stretch in the workhouse for having burglars' tools in his possession.

"Now you and me knows as well as Wilfred did that any time you spend in the stir, Alf, is as good as wasted. So Wilfred hadn't been there twenty-four hours before he took a keen dislike to the place and figured he'd like to be out in the open spaces again."

"I've often thought the same thing, Charley," Alf admitted.

"Sure you have, and you know what a swell chance you have of getting out of the workhouse. That place was not put up by no war contractor, Alf. It was made to stand wear and tear from the inside as well as the outside. Things looked pretty darned black for Wilfred, as far as a crush-out was concerned.

"Another thing that bothered him was the food. The cervelat sausage they give you there is rotten, and—well, you know the cuisine, Alf. You've been there."

"You said a forkful, Charley."

"And another thing that bothered Wilfred, Alf, was the fact that he couldn't keep up appearances. His nails got stubby and cracked, and his hair wasn't trimmed the way he liked it. All

the things he had to pretty up with was the razor and soap and comb and face powder that the Civic Charities gives all the prisoners, like you know.

"The guards and every one sympathized with Wilfred, because they knew how he liked to spruce up. One day Wilfred looked particularly worried, and he told one of the screws that his hair was falling out because he wasn't getting the right kind of stuff for it."

"Gee, how tragic!" Alf remarked.

"That's just what it was to Wilfred—tragic. He pleaded with the warden to let a friend bring him some hair tonic, Alf. The warden said sure, but he was suspicious. He thought Wilfred wanted a drink, him not knowing that Wilfred Martin was not a drinking man. When the tonic came, the warden took a drink of it before he sent it in to Wilfred, and he nearly died that night. It was hair tonic, all right, but not the kind that makes cocktails.

"Wilfred had peace for a day or two, and then he began to notice that that cheap shaving soap and face powder from the Civic Charities was making his skin dry and causing it to peal in spots. He asked for some cold cream. The warden got it for him.

"The next day Wilfred complained that his skin was being ruined, and he insisted that the warden have some one get him some *'poudre de fleur de lys,'* or something like that, which me or the warden never heard about.

"'I ain't no beauty specialist,' the warden told Wilfred. 'Get that pal that visits you to get it for you. Tell the turnkey I said it was all right.'

"Wilfred was as pleased as a kid with a new velocipede, Alf. He could have kissed the warden."

"Yeah," said Alf, "a guy that pretties up like he done is just the kind you would expect to kiss the warden of a workhouse. Then what happened?"

"Well, Wilfred's friend—I think it was Davey Cobb, if I ain't mistaken—come up on the next visitor's day with enough cold cream and powder and brilliantine to keep a burlesque show chorus on the road for thirty weeks solid. The turnkeys went all through it, just like they do everything sent to a guy serving a stretch there, but they couldn't find no blasting powder, cocaine, saws, drills, or nothing.

"Wilfred spent about an hour getting his skin softened up again and smoothed out. I believe he must have shaved six times that evening, chuckling and laughing like a kid. 'I guess we'll dress for dinner,' he said to the turnkey. Personally, I myself don't think a fellow needs to dress up to eat frankfurters and potato salad, like they serve up in the works, Alf, but then that was Wilfred's little joke.

"He was in a darned good humor until they brung him his grub. About five minutes after his plate was shoved into his cell, Wilfred lets out a terrible squawk for the turnkey. 'What's the matter?' that guy asks him.

"'Matter? Matter enough,' Wilfred snaps. 'That sausage isn't fit to eat. Try it and see.'

"The screw took a bite or two of the frankfurter, Alf, and that's about all there is to my story."

"Why?"

"Well, he rolled over and turned up his toes, as pretty as you please."

"Indigestion?"

"No, you dumb bell. Wilfred's pal sent him some kind of knock-out powder in that can of *poudre de fleur de lys.*

"You see, the turnkeys never suspected it was anything, excepting the funny face powder that Wilfred said he wanted. Wilfred put a good stiff shot of it in the frankfurter and fed it to this turnkey. When that gent'mun rolled over, Wilfred Martin calmly reaches through the door, got his keys, let himself out, sneaked down the cor-

ridor, went down the automatic freight elevator, and took a train for Chicago."

Alf no longer belittled the qualities of Mr. Martin.

"Gosh, that was sure enough slick," he said. "I can see that if you or me got any funny face powders in the workhouse, everybody would be suspicious of it."

"Exactly," Charley agreed, "and that's what I mean when I say that maybe it don't do me no good to be neat, but it don't do me no harm, either."

He walked over to the mirror again and found that the cowlick had sprung back once more. While he was striving with comb and water and palm to get it back into place, Alf pushed him rudely away from the washstand.

"Get away," Alf said.

"Why?"

"I want to shave."

THE CHINESE WAY

LAST spring, when Shantung bandits held twenty foreign captives at Paotzukou, China, the name of Sun Mei-yao, the youthful bandit chieftain and brigadier general in the Chinese Army, was cabled around the world. Recently a cable announced that he had been put to death. The story was told by a journalist who returned from the interior of the country.

The official announcement of Sun Mei-yao's death stated that he had been executed because his troops were plotting to become bandits again. According to the journalist, however, the bandit troops of General Sun Mei-yao were doing a good work in cleaning up banditry. In most cases the general and his troops dealt summarily with their captured bandits. In the case of men of importance, however, General Sun sent them to a certain Colonel Wu, who had been detailed by the governor of the province to look after the cleaning-up force.

It so happened that General Sun captured one of his own uncles, and he sent him on to Colonel Wu, with a message that Sun would follow promptly to report on the man. When General Sun arrived, he found that his uncle had been executed. Then jealousy between the two officers further complicated their relations.

Some weeks later General Sun was ordered to Tsaochuang. Before his departure he was invited by Colonel Wu to a luncheon. At the end of the meal Sun was seized and blindfolded, while Wu savagely taunted him. Then General Sun was led out and executed.

THE LOOT FOR FOUR MONTHS

THE police records show that New York City proved a veritable treasure trove to hundreds of crooks, who took loot to the amount of eight hundred thousand dollars in the period from January 1 to April 20, 1924. Several persons were slain or sent to the hospitals by the raiders, and two men dropped dead after their visits. The plunderers, evading a score of detectives by day or by night, carried on their work by many new and daring tricks. Detectives admit that there are so many robberies recorded throughout the city that the work of investigation will occupy two or three years.

Jewelers, trucking firms, restaurant owners, and manufacturers in the loft districts, have been the heaviest losers. Cracksmen operated openly below the police dead line in downtown Manhattan, ripping open ten safes in one building in a single night.

The Lone Star and the Lady

by Johnston McCulley

Author of the "Thubway Tham" stories, "The Avenging Twins," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A FAIR INTRUDER.

IN the living room a clock chimed the half hour—half past seven in the evening—but the single melodious stroke of the gong was half drowned by the sounds of revelry that floated up through the court of the building and into the open windows of the suite occupied by Gregory Balren.

Bedlamlike strains from a jazz orchestra, that made up in noise what it lacked in harmony; the constant shuffling of dancing feet, the tinkling of ice in glasses, voices of men, the shrill laughter of women! A party!

Ordinarily there would have been something incongruous and almost mysterious about a party that had reached its height at half past seven o'clock in the evening, especially in this section of the city, where such parties generally commenced around eleven and continued until the yawning milkman was making his rounds. But this was a birthday party given by Martin Dratner, a wealthy and eccentric bachelor who had a great host of friends and acquaintances, and by his command it had commenced at two in the afternoon.

The guests had been arriving in relays since that hour, some to remain, others to go on later to other affairs. It was an informal, hilarious party, at which everybody was supposed to do pretty much as he or she pleased, so long as they had a good time. The evening was warm, and windows were open, hence the sounds of the revelry penetrated to all parts of the big apartment house. Some of the tenants smiled at it. Others left home in disgust to find some place where they could escape the racket, thankful that such things did not occur often in that particular apartment building.

Gregory Balren was one of those who smiled, as he smiled at most things that happened. Balren had a peculiar philosophy, all his own, and he seldom let things bother him. The music and the laughter seemed to pour up the court and into his suite, but little he cared.

It had interfered with his work, of course. For Gregory Balren had his work. At the age of forty he found himself quite a personage. His wealth and social standing alone would have made him that, but Gregory Balren went further. He actually improved his time and tried to do things of value. He had not married; hence he had a hobby with which to play when time hung heavy on his hands, and he felt the need of companionship.

Gregory Balren's hobby was history. His library was composed almost entirely of historical works. He could have qualified as professor of history in almost any university. He had sev-

eral historical volumes of his own to his credit and had been elected to several societies; historians of standing greeted him as an equal. Just now he was engaged on a monumental work having to do with Central America. The workbench in his study was covered with books, maps, and sheets of paper, upon which important notes had been scribbled.

He had been working enthusiastically at two o'clock in the afternoon when the party had commenced. By four o'clock he had closed the door of his study, preferring the absence of breeze to the presence of noise. At six o'clock he had dined alone in the café in the basement of the building. At seven he had decided that he might as well don evening dress and do something else, since it was impossible to work. The party was entirely too much for him; it was destructive to concentration of mind.

It must not be taken for granted, from all this, that Gregory Balren was a dry, musty, absent-minded pedant. Far from it! He was tall, athletic, good looking in a manly way, and strictly conventional in dress and deportment and in his daily association with other human beings. There was nothing of the stoop-shouldered scholar about him. He was a living proof of the fact that a man can possess brains and yet be thoroughly alive in every other particular.

Gregory Balren liked parties himself, and he often attended them. He also liked to travel. He played golf and tennis and was not unknown on the polo field. He could whip a trout stream, and he did every season. He indulged in polite small talk whenever it seemed necessary. And no woman ever had accused him of being a poor dancer. In fact Gregory Balren was a peculiar mixture of society man and savant. He thirsted for knowledge, but he also loved adventure; and he had enough good sense to mix the two in the proper proportions. He was acquainted with persons in all walks of life. He was simply trying to get all that he could out of an enforced terrestrial existence.

Another burst of raucous sounds, and the jazz orchestra ceased for a moment. A gust of applause came up the court. Standing before the mirror in his dressing room, Gregory Balren struggled with a dress tie. The thing refused utterly to behave as it should. Balren had a valet, but as he had given him the evening off he was compelled to adjust the tie himself.

But he did not allow even a refractory dress tie to perturb him to any great extent. He tossed it aside and took another out of a drawer, whistling a merry tune, as he prepared to tie it. Another burst of laughter came up the court.

He had received an invitation to Martin Dratner's party, and he decided now that he would drop in for a while and then go on to his club. Since Martin Dratner's party had ruined his evening's work, it would be no more than justice if he went to the party and ruined a cocktail and a couple of sandwiches, he told himself. He might even dance a couple of times before he went on to his quiet club and sought out some victim for a game of chess.

From the mirror he turned to pick up his waistcoat. Holding it in one hand, he stopped abruptly, his whistle ceased, and he remained standing like a man suddenly frozen stiff. Above the laughter that rolled up from below there had come another sound. It resembled the sound made by the explosion of a cartridge in an automatic pistol. But it was followed by no chorus of shrieks and cries, by nothing that seemed to indicate an accident or a tragic crime. Gregory Balren shook his head, gave a little grunt of astonishment, and put on his waistcoat.

"Must be getting nervous!" he told

himself. "Working too hard lately. Need exercise. Certainly it was not a shot. Bottle with a loud cork, probably —Dratner would have that kind—or else an auto back-firing down in the street!"

The jazz orchestra struck up again, mutilating a popular fox trot. Gregory Balren found himself whistling the air and shuffling his feet. The scholar had disappeared for the evening; the young adventurer was about to reign for a time.

He buttoned the waistcoat and reached for the coat. Getting into it swiftly, he stood before the big mirror again and looked himself over. He appeared to be all right. There was nothing wrong with his attire. Even the refractory tie seemed to be behaving itself now.

The rooms of the suite were brilliantly lighted, for Gregory Balren was a man who loved light. The door of the living room was open, and the reflection of its interior was in the mirror. Balren was proud of that living room. Everything in it had been selected for the spot that it occupied. Everything was in harmony. That living room reflected more than wealth—it demonstrated good taste.

Balren straightened the lapels of his coat, as he glanced into the mirror again. He threw back his shoulders and gave himself a final inspection. And suddenly he was motionless, almost holding his breath. From where he was standing he could see, reflected in the mirror, the open living room window. Outside that window there was a fire escape that ran down to the bottom of the court, with a landing at every floor. And now Gregory Balren saw a white hand reach up from below and clutch at the edge of the fire escape landing. Light from the living room struck upon the hand squarely. Balren could see it as easily and as clearly as though it had been but four feet in front of his eyes.

At first he saw nothing but the hand. Then it was extended and clutched the next rung of the fire escape ladder. Then a bare arm appeared—a beautifully molded white arm, upon which there was a bracelet studded with flashing gems. The person on the fire escape was a woman!

Gregory Balren wondered a bit at that. As a rule, women did not go around climbing fire escapes after dark, especially women with beautiful bare arms upon which jewels gleamed. But anything might happen, he told himself quickly, with a party like Martin Dratner's going on in the building. Here was some society bud, undoubtedly, out on a lark, or doing something foolish to win a bet.

Another hand came into view, and then a head and gleaming white shoulders appeared. As Balren had expected, she was a woman in fashionable evening dress. Slowly she made her way up the ladder until she was standing on the landing of the fire escape before the open window; and then she turned. Gregory Balren drew in his breath sharply at the picture she presented. She was not quite thirty, he judged at the first glance. She was a woman he did not know, a person he had never seen before. Her features were regular, and her face attractive. She had beautiful hair, and it was elaborately dressed in a stylish and becoming coiffure.

She turned more toward the light, bent closer to the window, and peered inside. And now Balren caught a better view of her face. Her eyes were wide; her bosom rose and fell with labored breathing; her countenance at the moment was a canvas upon which terror was depicted.

Standing almost breathless, Balren watched her closely in the mirror, afraid that she would disappear if he turned. He remembered suddenly that he had heard something that had sounded sus-

piciously like a shot. His right hand dropped slowly to a little drawer on the side of his dresser. He opened the drawer noiselessly and took from it an automatic pistol. Whatever was scheduled to happen, Gregory Balren was going to be prepared.

Now the woman was climbing through the window, entering the living room of Balren's suite. Once safely inside, she crouched against the wall for a moment, as though in terror, evidently listening. She put out her head again and glanced down into the court, then quickly drew her head back. Then she darted to the middle of the room.

Balren expected at every moment that she would glance through the door and see him, but she did not. She was looking quickly around the living room. The expression of terror was still in her face. She clutched at her breast with both hands, as though in an effort to still her pounding heart. Once more she glanced quickly around the living room, as though searching for something. In one corner there was a huge divan with rare tapestries draped over it. She ran noiselessly to this, pulled aside some of the tapestries, and dropped behind the divan. Balren watched her hands, as they tried to pull the tapestries back into place.

"An adventure!" Gregory Balren muttered to himself. "History is no more than a series of adventures, and I am an historian. I suppose we'll have to look into this."

He began whistling softly again, and he acted in a manner perfectly natural, as though he had not the slightest idea that there was a fair intruder in the apartment. Clasping his hands behind his back, but retaining the automatic in one of them, he walked slowly into the living room.

Not once did he glance toward the divan in the corner. He walked slowly across to the open window, put out his head, and peered down. There was nobody in sight, no sign of a pursuit. He turned back into the living room again and stepped across it. Before the divan he took up a commanding position, his hands still behind his back.

"Good evening!" he said, in a low, pleasant voice. "Your entrance was rather unconventional, my dear young lady, but possibly we may be able to overlook that. However, I feel quite sure that you'll find it much more comfortable if you'll come from behind that divan."

Gregory Balren waited, but he waited in vain for an answer. The tapestries did not stir; no white hand appeared to throw them aside; no fair, frightened face peered over them at him. Not a sound reached his ears, not even so much as a gasp of surprise or fright. Balren walked closer.

"Really!" he said. "Are you playing at hide and seek, or something like that? I saw you come through the window, you know, and watched you hide. The mirror in my dressing room is an excellent one. Please come out, and we'll get acquainted. It must be rather hot and stuffy back there. No? Of course, if you want me to move the divan, why then——"

That brought an immediate result. The tapestries were hurled aside at once. She put up her head, and her eyes met his. She appeared to be badly frightened still. She moved her lips, as though to speak, but no sound came from between them. Gregory Balren extended a hand, as though to help her over the divan, but she gave it no attention. She scrambled across the couch and stood before him.

And suddenly, before he could think of something else to say, she swayed toward him, as though about to fall, and held out her hands to him imploringly.

"Save me!" she begged in whispers. "Hide me! Be quick! I—I have just killed a man!"

CHAPTER II.

IN HIDING.

HE did not recoil in horror, utter a terrified exclamation, or do anything like that. It took a great deal to disconcert Gregory Balren. And this thing did not seem exactly real, somehow. Though the woman before him appeared to be honestly frightened, she might be only an excellent actress, he told himself; and Martin Dratner, especially under the influence of a hilarious party, was not above playing a practical joke.

So Gregory Balren smiled, stepped to one side, and indicated that she was to be seated on the end of the divan; but she only went closer to him and continued to hold out her hands, begging him to aid her.

"Are you doing it on a bet?" Balren wanted to know, smiling at her. "Did Martin Dratner put you up to it?"

"I—I have just killed a man!" she repeated. "They'll be after me! Please hide me!"

There was either genuine terror in her whispers, or the perfect semblance of it. Balren did not know which. He looked at her sharply, trying to read the truth in her face.

"You actually mean it?" he asked.

"Yes! And they'll be after me——"

"Where did you come from?" he demanded.

"From the dressing room of Mr. Dratner's apartment. I—I was at the party," she replied. "And after it happened, I crawled through the window and came up the fire escape."

"Huh! Why didn't you go down the fire-escape and so get away?"

"Because there were a couple of men down in the court, walking about. But they didn't see me. I came up the ladder quickly. Your window was open, and I didn't see anybody when I looked inside. I thought that this would be a good place to hide."

Gregory Balren remembered again that he had heard something that had sounded like a shot.

"How did you kill him?" he asked.

"I—I shot him."

"Then where is the gun?"

"I dropped it—left it there."

"That was a very silly thing to do," Balren commented. "You are not a very cautious criminal, to say the least. You haven't gloves on, so you probably left your finger prints on the weapon. Why did you shoot him?"

"It—it really was an accident," she replied. "I didn't mean to shoot, really. I was just going to—to bluff him."

"Never try to bluff a man with a loaded gun," Gregory Balren told her gravely. "And, if it really was an accident, why get so fussed up about it? Why didn't you call the other guests and tell about the accident?"

"Because—oh, I can't explain it all now! There isn't time! But it would have looked peculiar and not like an accident—that is why."

"Maybe he isn't dead," Balren suggested. "Did you just shoot him and then drop the gun and run?"

"Yes! Oh, I know that he is dead! And somebody was coming. It—it happened in the dressing room, right by the open window. I was frantic. I thought only of getting away. So I got out and came up the fire escape."

Gregory Balren looked at her sharply again. If she was acting, then she was a consummate actress, he told himself. He began to think that possibly it was not just a lark, after all—that this might be serious. But he stepped forward swiftly, grasped her by the shoulders, and compelled her to look him straight in the eyes.

"No more of this nonsense!" he exclaimed. "Are you telling me the truth, or is this merely one of Martin Dratner's little practical jokes?"

"It is the truth! I—I shot him—killed him!"

"Why?"

"Oh, I cannot explain that now!" she gasped. "I don't want them to catch me. Please hide me. If you'll not, then please let me slip out into the hall and go."

"My dear young woman, do you realize that you are asking me to shield a criminal?" Balren demanded. "It is no light thing to help a murderer make an escape."

"Then, if you'll not help me——" she began. She seemed to be on the verge of collapse. Balren, watching her closely still, decided that she was not acting.

"Here! Buck up!" he snapped. "I thought that it was all a joke, a trick of Dratner's. You don't look like a bloodthirsty woman. I've never met you before, have I?"

"No; but I have seen you often, and I know your name," she replied. "You are Gregory Balren. My name is Sally Sallwer."

"It doesn't sound much like the name of a criminal," he suggested.

"Do you still doubt my story?" she asked. "Do you still think that it is a joke? Oh, I must get away at once—get out of the building!"

"What's the man's name?" he asked quickly. "What man did you shoot?"

"Burton Frenge!"

"What?" Balren cried. "You—you shot Burton Frenge?"

"Yes!" she gasped. Again she reeled and would have fallen, had he not been quick to support her. Then she seemed to rally, to regain her strength.

Balren knew Burton Frenge and also his reputation. Frenge was a man of wealth, and he retained social position, despite his bad reputation in certain lines. Balren often had told himself that Burton Frenge would be killed some day. For Frenge was always making enemies, both male and female.

Why, Balren himself had quarreled with Frenge only the day before at the club! Frenge had dared ridicule a paragraph in one of Balren's books. He had so angered Balren that the historian had almost forgotten that he was a gentleman and in a club for gentlemen. He had been on the point of dropping the historian's cloak and becoming an angry man inclined to fisticuffs, when other members had interfered.

So she had shot Burton Frenge!

"You'd better explain," he said.

"I haven't time!" she answered. "If you won't hide me, I must try to get away. They'll be after me, I tell you! And there is a detective down there and——"

"At the party?"

"Yes; he is supposed to be a guest, but he is there to guard jewels, I suppose. Mr. Dratner seems to have invited almost everybody, and there are many jewels being worn."

"Know the detective?"

"By sight. His name is Jack Crady."

"Huh! know him, too!" Balren told her. "He's about the smoothest man on the force. Did a bit of work for me once. I know him well. He's a man not easily fooled."

"I—I know. I must get away!" she said. "I'll slip into the hall——"

"One moment, please! I'm not quite sure that I should let you go."

"You'd keep me here?" she cried, her eyes wide again, as she looked at him.

"You have confessed to murder," he told her. "It seems to me that I might be in for it if I don't keep you here until the officers come."

"So that is the kind of man you are!" There was scorn in her voice, as she spoke. "Afraid that you'll be implicated, are you?"

"Not frightened in the least, Miss Sallwer. I only want to do the right thing."

"It was an accident, I tell you! I did not intend to shoot him."

"Yet you held the weapon in your hand, and you undoubtedly pressed the

trigger. The intent follows the bullet, as the law has it."

"Please—please——" she begged.

"If it really was an accident, you can clear yourself. You are just frightened. I'll go down there with you——"

"No, no!" she cried. "You—you do not understand. It would come out—everything would come out—and they'd think that I had done it purposely."

"Oh, I see!" Balren told her. And he believed that he did see. The notorious Burton Frenge had wrecked the heart of one woman too many, he judged, and had paid the penalty.

She seemed to read his thoughts. "It—perhaps it isn't as you think," she told him. "I—I was not quarreling with him, or anything like that. He has not been interested in me to any great extent. I met him less than two weeks ago."

"Then——" Balren began.

"I can't explain now. I must get away!" she cried.

She started toward the hall door, but Gregory Balren sprang in front of her and stopped her. She recoiled from him, as though she had received a blow, her hands at her breast again, her eyes wide with terror once more, her breath coming in little gasps.

"Let me go!" she begged.

Gregory Balren stood between her and the door and looked at her searchingly. He was endeavoring to make up his mind to a course of action. Here was a hint of mystery and also a promise of adventure.

"You want me to help you?" he snapped at her suddenly, stepping up beside her again.

"Yes, please!"

"You'll explain later?"

"Yes! I'll tell you everything."

"Wait!" he commanded.

He left her, rushed back across the living room, and peered down from the window cautiously. Almost immediately he was back at her side.

"There's a man coming up the fire escape," he reported. "I'm not quite sure, but think it is Detective Jack Crady. Keep your nerve now! You'll need it!"

"I—I'll try!"

"Listen! The noise downstairs has stopped. That means that the crime has been discovered, and everybody knows about it. Hear those cries?"

"I—I must get away!"

"Not by the front door!" he whispered. "They'll be rushing into the hall, guarding the stairs and elevators. They'll surround the building, maybe. They'll be checking up all Dratner's guests, gathering alibis. They'll investigate everything and everybody. Burton Frenge was a rotter, but he was a wealthy and prominent man, and his death will cause a fuss. Is there any real reason for them to suspect that you might have done it?"

"Yes, if they investigate," she replied quickly. "And I—I was the last person alone with him. They'll know that. At least a dozen persons saw him follow me into the dressing room and close the door. They were laughing at us—laughing because I acted as though I was trying to keep him from catching me."

"And were you?" Balren asked.

"No. I—I was working to get him in there alone, so I could talk to him without anybody overhearing. But I can't explain it now. There isn't time."

Once more terror seemed to seize upon her. And Gregory Balren knew now that it was genuine terror, that she was not acting, and he hesitated no longer. Something seemed to tell him that here was a young woman who needed and deserved his help. Also, it was an adventure; and, come to think of it, he had not enjoyed an adventure for some time. He had been entirely too busy with his books. He felt that he needed to get away from them for a time—that he needed the human touch.

He whirled toward her suddenly, grasped her by the hand, and pulled her along with him.

"Come with me!" he commanded.

She made no effort to resist him; she seemed to put herself entirely in his hands. It was as though she gathered needed strength from his abrupt action. He rushed her into the dressing room, opened the door of a large closet there, and thrust her inside it.

"Get down there in the corner!" he ordered. "Be quick about it! That's it! Now I'll toss these old coats over you. Keep quiet, whatever you do; and do not move until I come for you. I'll handle this affair!"

Gregory Balren closed the door of the closet upon her. Then he stepped quickly back to the dresser, opened the little drawer, slipped his automatic pistol into it, and closed the drawer again. He worked swiftly, but he did not have the appearance of a man who was unusually excited. And then he took up his position before the long mirror again, whistling a lively air once more, and pretended to be adjusting his evening tie—the tie that was behaving itself perfectly and needed no adjusting.

CHAPTER III.

A WISE OLD SLEUTH.

AS Gregory Balren watched closely in the mirror, watched the reflection of the window in the living room, he pretended not to do so. He did not have to watch long before he saw a man's hand clutch at the landing of the fire escape; and, an instant later, the man himself stood upon the landing and looked into the living room.

The first glance told Gregory Balren that he had been correct in his surmise; the man standing upon the landing and looking into the suite was Detective Jack Crady.

Detective Crady was a headquarters man. He was an officer who had been with the municipal police department for years. He had worked up from a common patrolman's beat, had made his way slowly up the ladder by his ability and hard work, and without benefiting by political pull. Now, after his years of service, Detective Jack Crady had the reputation of being the best man in the detective department. He did not use peculiar and unique methods in investigating a crime; he used only common sense. He had studied the human animal to a great extent, and, whenever he found himself on an unusual case, he merely did his best to read the men and women implicated and reach conclusions.

Detective Jack Crady was a man who had his eyes and ears open always. He was not the vindictive type of officer; he wanted to put no man behind the bars unless that man was guilty. But he did love to run down a guilty one.

Crady betrayed no haste in his movements now. He stood on the fire escape landing and looked down into the court, looked on up the fire escape to the roof of the building, and glanced this way and that, like a man on a tour of inspection. Then he stooped and flashed an electric torch and examined the landing of the fire escape and the window casement, also the ladder above his head. He snapped the torch out, took a match from his pocket, and calmly ignited the business end of a cigar.

Gregory Balren, continuing his whistling, watched the detective in the mirror, watched him closely and carefully, missed no move that he made, and tried to read him, as he knew Crady would try to read Gregory Balren later. This was to be a duel of wits. Balren welcomed it, and he doubted not that Detective Jack Crady would welcome it, also. Balren had known the detective for years, and each man respected the other. Their acquaintance had begun while Crady was investigating a robbery at a certain fashionable club, at

which time Gregory Balren had been instrumental in giving an important clew. Talking with the officer afterward, Balren had discovered that Crady was a man educating himself, and that he was a student of history. Balren had given him books.

Now Detective Jack Crady put his head through the window, glanced quickly around the interior of the living room, and then through the door. He could see Balren now as well as Balren could see him.

"Hello, there!" the detective called.

Gregory Balren whirled around quickly, pretending that he was surprised. He left the mirror and hurried through the door and into the living room.

"Well, well!" he ejaculated. "If it isn't the wise old sleuth! What brings you to my humble home at this hour? Wouldn't the hall boys let you in the front door? Out on the fire escape taking the air?"

"You might show your hospitality and ask me in," the detective said.

"Enter by all means!" Balren told him. "Make yourself at home. What means this peculiar visitation? Am I suspected of being a modern Raffles? Looking for loot? Is this visit personal or professional?"

"Both—perhaps," Detective Crady replied. He crawled through the window and held his hat in his hand. "Some place you've got here!" he added. "You don't mind my smoke?"

"Certainly not! I'll light up and join you."

"But, if you were intending to go out——"

"There is no particular rush," Balren replied. "That party downstairs has been making so much noise that I found it impossible to work. So I decided that I'd dress and go down to the blamed thing."

"Um!" the detective grunted. "I've been down there, watching for jewel thieves. Mr. Dratner invites a mixed crowd to his parties."

"So I understand. Dratner has his little eccentricities," Balren replied.

"You still writing histories?"

"Oh, I am fussing around with one," Balren admitted, "but it has been slow going recently."

The detective advanced further into the room and looked around it casually, even allowing his glance to penetrate the dressing room beyond.

"There doesn't seem to be much noise downstairs now," he observed.

"But they were staging a shriek chorus down there a few minutes ago," Balren said. "What was it all about? Did Martin Dratner have some sort of a silly surprise for the crowd?"

"There was a surprise, all right, but it wasn't exactly silly, and I don't think that Dratner planned it," Detective Crady replied. "They've had a little murder down there."

"Murder?" Balren gasped.

"Yeh! Burton Frenge!" Detective Crady watched Balren closely, as he spoke.

"Frenge!" Balren exclaimed. "Burton Frenge? Killed? Who killed him?"

"I haven't quite decided yet, but the supposition is that a woman did it."

"A woman!" Balren gasped.

"What fools me is that some woman hasn't done it long ago," the detective went on. "However, a crime is a crime. It is not for me to decide the merits of motives. If a woman did it, I want the woman!"

"Naturally," said Balren.

"A woman went into the dressing room with Frenge. They were cutting up, and he was chasing her. He closed the door. A few minutes later somebody opened the door and found Burton Frenge dead on the floor, and the woman gone."

"Know the woman?"

"I know her name—Sally Sallwer. I know her by sight—saw her to-night for

the first time. Happened to watch her for a few minutes. She was acting peculiarly, I thought, and she was a new one on me. I understand that nobody seems to know much about her."

"That's peculiar," Balren said.

"Of course I am not saying that she did it. She might have slipped out of the dressing room through another door—might be with the crowd now. I've got a man looking for her there, and a couple more are planted in the hall. There were four of us from headquarters at the party. Dratner asked for us—said some of his guests would be wearing valuable jewels. Of course I've telephoned. The building is surrounded. We'll get the woman, if she is inside.

"I suppose so," Balren said.

"She hasn't visited you, I take it?"

Balren managed a laugh. "How dare you, sir!" he said, with mock severity. "Would I entertain a woman in my apartment without a chaperon, especially a murderess? Think that I want her to start gunning for me? Seriously, though, this is terrible! Any motive?"

"I haven't found one yet—really haven't been looking for one," Detective Crady replied. "I'm looking for the woman just now. It'll be the same old story, I suppose—the woman scorned, love turned to hate, and all that. Burton Frenge was a heart breaker, I understand. Wasn't he?"

"He had that reputation," Balren replied.

"That is, of course, if the woman killed him. Somebody else might have done it. You didn't like Frenge, did you?"

"I did not!" Balren replied frankly. "As a matter of fact, we had a little quarrel at the club last evening."

"So I understood!"

"Yes? I didn't know that the affair was public."

"Dratner happened to mention it to me."

"Oh, yes! He was in the club at the time, I believe," Gregory Balren said. But he looked thoughtful, as he said it. It appeared to him that Martin Dratner had gone out of his way to say such a thing.

Detective Jack Crady sniffed the air. "I didn't know," said he, "that gentlemen used perfume."

"So far as I know, they don't," Balren said, laughing a little.

"Oh! Thought you might have been spraying yourself. This is a pretty rank cigar I am smoking, but I can detect a subtle perfume even above its odor."

"I hadn't noticed it before," Balren replied. "I gave my valet the evening off. Possibly he sprayed himself, as you put it, before calling upon the lady of his choice, or something like that. I detect the odor now."

And he did, too. It was distinctly a feminine perfume. Of course, he told himself, Sally Sallwer had used the scent. Now it seemed to linger in the living room, to cling to everything. Gregory Balren had a moment of panic. But, to his delight, Detective Jack Crady said nothing more about the perfume then.

"You have been here for the last half hour?" he asked.

"Yes, for longer than that."

"Could a woman have entered your suite without you knowing it?"

"Why, I scarcely believe so!" Balren replied. "I have been in the dressing room, but I think the door was open all the time. Of course it is possible that a woman might have been here and gone away again."

"Um!" the detective grunted. "Of course it is possible. She might have got in, seen that the place was occupied, and got out again."

"But the hall door has a catch on it," Balren said. "She could not have entered there, you see."

"I was referring to the window."

"The window?"

"Yes; this woman I am after could have come up the fire escape to your window from Dratner's dressing room, as I did a few minutes ago."

"Oh! You think that she escaped that way—got through the window, crossed the living room, and slipped out the hall door?"

"I thought so at first, but I am doubtful now," Detective Crady said. "If she had come through that window, you would have seen her, of course. Standing in front of that mirror, you could see me. I noticed that."

Crady did not look at him, as he spoke. Gregory Balren shivered a bit. There was no fooling Crady, he thought.

"She might have slipped through while my back was turned," Balren said.

"Yes, she might. But you didn't hear the hall door open?"

"No!"

"Um! Perhaps she came in and is still here."

"And perhaps she didn't come in at all," Balren said.

"Oh, there is no doubt of that!" the detective declared. "The prints of her tiny shoes are in the dust on the fire escape landing. I found them with the aid of my torch. Also, if you'll step across and look, you'll find the prints of her hands in the film of dust on the window casement."

Gregory Balren fought to keep from betraying his astonishment and chagrin. He realized that Detective Jack Crady was a worthy foe, a man it would be hard to fool. To cover his confusion, Balren went across to the window and looked at the telltale prints.

"So she came in," the detective said. "Maybe she went out, and maybe she didn't."

"Must have got out through the hall," Balren said. "Or, she may be hiding behind the divan."

Detective Crady looked behind the divan and under it. He also looked into every corner of the room.

"Not here!" he said. "You were in the dressing room, of course?"

"Yes."

"And you'd have seen her if she had gone in there to hide?"

"Of course!" Balren said, laughing. "She couldn't very well have entered the dressing room without me knowing it."

"How about the other rooms?"

"There is my study, my bedchamber beyond, and the kitchenette."

Detective Crady made his examination quickly. There was no woman in the study, the bedchamber, or the kitchenette. Gregory Balren had regained his composure now. All his faculties were alert. Detective Crady was not easily outwitted, but Balren determined to outwit him.

They returned to the living room.

"Peculiar!" Crady said. "She must have gone out into the hall. If she did, she didn't have time to get out of the building. Oh, we'll pick her up somewhere! But I'd rather have done it right after the crime. It's just a possibility that she didn't shoot Frenge, of course. Did I tell you that he was shot?"

"No!" Balren had dodged that trap.

"There were a couple of doctors at the party, and they are trying to get the bullet now. The coroner will have his men here soon, of course. I found an automatic pistol on the floor beside the body. Possibly there are finger prints on it."

"That will help you, won't it?"

"Yep! I might say, Balren, that you are under suspicion, in a way."

"I?" Gregory Balren exclaimed.

"Yes. You had a pretty hot quarrel with Burton Frenge at the club, didn't you?" the detective asked. "And it would have been an easy matter for you to descend the fire escape, watch your chance, and shoot him through the open window."

"But you said that the woman—— Oh, the idea is preposterous!" Balren

cried. "If the woman was in there with Frenge, she would have seen me."

"She might have slipped out through the other door. Frenge may have been alone for an instant. The shot was not heard—the orchestra was making so much noise."

"Are you serious, Crady?"

"I always try to look at a crime from every angle, Balren," the detective declared. "It is mighty bad police work for an officer to make up his mind too quick about how a crime has been committed. Sometimes the solution that seems to be the easiest isn't the proper solution at all."

"Do you really think——" Balren began again, a trace of anger in his voice.

"Have you an automatic or revolver?" Detective Crady interrupted.

"I have an automatic," Balren answered.

"It isn't the one that I found beside the body of Burton Frenge, is it?"

"Certainly not!" Balren exclaimed, his face flushing. "Are you really serious, Crady? My automatic pistol happens to be in my dressing room."

"Do you mind letting me take a look at it? No hard feelings, I hope."

"Come along! I've nothing to hide!" Balren said. "Only you are wasting time!"

"It's just a matter of form—must view the thing from every angle," the detective said. "You are a clever man, and if you wanted to commit such a crime you'd probably do it in some clever manner. You'd possibly toss the pistol down beside the body, and you'd be sure not to leave finger prints upon it."

"Then that lets me out! I'm sure that my pistol is in the dressing room, and you are welcome to search the one you found for my finger prints."

"Many a man owns two pistols!" the detective observed.

Balren opened the little drawer of the dresser and took out the automatic.

"I always keep a gun around the place," Balren said. "But I haven't fired that one for more than a year. Occasionally I clean and oil it and make sure that there is a full clip of cartridges in it. Just a habit."

Detective Jack Crady examined the weapon carefully. He put the muzzle of it to his nostrils. He took out the cartridge clip. He looked at the barrel. Then he turned and faced Balren.

"You haven't fired this recently?" he asked.

"Not for a year or more."

"Always keep a full clip in it?"

"Yes! Why?"

"Because," Detective Jack Crady said, "there isn't a full clip in it now. One cartridge is missing. And the gun has been fired recently, and it hasn't been cleaned since. Take a look at it!"

CHAPTER IV.

SOME DISCOVERIES.

FOR a moment Balren experienced something like panic, but he did not betray that fact in his countenance. He looked at Detective Crady, as though he did not believe him. He stepped forward, took the automatic, and examined it. He found that Crady had spoken the truth.

"I can't understand it," Balren said. "I know that I haven't fired that gun for a year or more!"

"Anybody else fire it?"

"Not with my knowledge."

"Well, it has been fired," the detective declared. "We can't get around that fact. You haven't lent the gun to anybody recently, have you?"

"I have not. See here, Crady, are you trying to fasten the murder of Burton Frenge on me?" Balren demanded. "When you first came in here, you said you were hot on the trail of some woman."

"Ah, yes, the woman!" Crady exclaimed. "What have you done with her, Balren?"

"What's that?"

"Where have you hidden the woman?"

"Confound it, you seem to be accusing me of everything!"

"That woman came up the fire escape from the dressing room of Dratner's apartment."

"But that isn't saying that she came in here," Balren told him. "She may have gone on up, possibly to the roof."

"Her tracks are in the dust on the landing," the detective replied. "The prints of her hands were on the dust of the ladder; and those prints and tracks, Mr. Balren, do not go above this floor. So she stopped here."

"But——" Balren began.

"And do not forget the delicious perfume!" Crady went on. "I dare say you use nothing of the sort. It isn't a gentlemanly perfume at all. It strikes me as being the sort a beautiful woman would use."

"Confound the perfume! Possibly my valet——"

"My dear Mr. Balren! Do you mean to inform me that you would employ a valet who knew no better, who had no better taste? Who is your valet?"

"His name is Lemms. He has been with me five years."

"What sort of a chap?"

"English—and a perfect valet," Balren admitted.

"You see? No perfect English valet would drench himself with perfume. He would not allow his employer to do it. He'd probably give notice and look for another job if you did."

"I don't know anything about the perfume!" Balren exclaimed, half in anger.

But he curbed his anger immediately. He knew that there would be nothing gained by giving way to it. This was a duel of wits, and he wanted to keep cool, calm, collected. Detective Jack Crady was no mean antagonist.

"We have looked into the living room, the bedchamber, study, and even your kitchenette." Detective Crady went on, "and we have found no woman."

"If she came into this suite, she probably hurried across the living room, went through that little hall, and got out into the corridor of the building," Balren declared. "She could have done so easily."

"I agree with you. She could have done so; but did she?" Detective Crady puffed at his cigar for a moment and glanced around the dressing room. "Not much chance to hide here," he added. "What is that door over there?"

"That is a clothes closet," Gregory Balren told him, his heart sinking.

"Mind if I look into it?"

"Go right ahead. It is your privilege," Balren replied. "I'm not going to insist that you get a search warrant. But you are wasting valuable time."

Detective Jack Crady made no reply to that. He put Balren's automatic down upon the dresser, walked slowly to the door of the closet, and pulled it open. He stepped inside and looked around, and then stepped out again.

Balren almost gave an audible sigh of relief, but he checked himself in time. He did not see how Crady could have missed her, though she was covered by the coats. For the perfume had been strong when the door was opened. He thought that possibly it was because of the cigar, and he was glad that Crady happened to be smoking.

"Of course, it is possible that she managed to get out into the corridor," Crady said, as though speaking to himself. "But she can't get away. Men are watching the building, and I'll have more men here in a few minutes. Nobody can get out without being stopped and questioned. If she hasn't escaped already, we'll nab her!"

"Then you think that she did it?" Balren asked.

"Oh, I haven't decided yet. I'm not making any definite statements, you see. I still remember that you had a quarrel with Burton Frenge."

"And you really have an idea that I may have done it?" Balren asked.

"It is possible," Detective Crady answered frankly. "We'll know all about it later, of course. I am going to ask you to step along with me now, however. We'll go down to the Dratner apartment and see whether there are any developments."

"Very well!" Balren said. "I am willing."

Detective Crady walked into the living room. Gregory Balren remained behind.

"Wait until I get a hat!" he called.

He opened the door of the closet, stepped inside, and got a hat. And, while he was getting it, he hissed a warning to the girl hidden there.

"Don't try to get out now. They are watching!"

That was all; and he felt sure that she had heard it and would understand and act accordingly, and that Crady did not know she had been warned. He hurried out into the other room and joined the detective.

"You might put that window down and lock it," Crady told him.

Balren did not reply, as he hurried across the room. He pulled the window down and made a pretense of turning the catch, but he did not. Then he whirled around and hurried to Detective Crady's side again. They went out into the corridor, and Gregory Balren pulled the door shut and heard the lock click into place.

"Got a man watching here, in case that woman puts in an appearance," the detective said.

He beckoned to a man who was standing near the elevator cages, whispered something to him, and then led the way swiftly toward the stairs.

"Elevators not running—my orders," he told Balren. "But it's only a couple of flights."

They went quickly down the stairs, with Detective Jack Crady leading the way. News of the tragedy already had been noised through the big building. Tenants were in the halls, asking questions of one another, learning that they could not leave the building until they had been questioned. Detective Crady did not care who would be late for dinner engagements or the theater.

Presently they came to the floor where Martin Dratner had his apartment. There were people in the corridor here, too, and a couple of men from police headquarters. Crady held whispered speech with them, gave his orders, and nodded for Balren to accompany him. They opened a door and went into Martin Dratner's suite.

Dratner's guests had been sobered by the tragedy. Men and women huddled together in little groups, talking in whispers, their faces showing their fright. They disliked being questioned, and they feared scandal.

Dratner himself hurried forward. His face was white, and he seemed to be highly nervous. Gregory Balren did not wonder at it, since the tragedy had occurred in the man's apartment and during a party that he was giving.

"The coroner's men are here, Mr. Crady," Dratner reported. "Also some men from police headquarters. Will it be possible for my guests to leave soon? I am afraid that some of the ladies are on the verge of hysterics."

"As soon as the investigation is concluded, Mr. Dratner," the detective replied.

Dratner seemed to see Balren for the first time. "This is a terrible thing, Balren!" he whispered hoarsely. "Imagine it! Poor Frenge! Shot down like that!"

"Who did it?" Balren asked.

"Some woman, they are saying. Her name is Sally Sallwer, and that is all that I know about her."

"Yet you invited her?"

"Yes, I made up a long list of guests. A lady friend of mine asked me to include Miss Sallwer—said that she knew her. I never had seen the woman be-

fore. Why she should shoot Frenge, I do not know."

"Peculiar!" Balren said.

"She seemed to be trying to vamp him, as the saying is. And Frenge undoubtedly was attracted to her. They were cutting up, playing children's games with the rest. Frenge was trying to catch her, and she ran into the dressing room. Frenge followed and closed the door. Everybody supposed he was claiming a forfeit of a kiss for catching her."

"I understand," Balren said.

"But they didn't come out, and somebody opened the door. Frenge was on the floor, dead, a pistol beside him. And the Sallwer woman was gone. Everybody screamed, and Mr. Crady took charge."

"Didn't all of you hear the shot?"

"No, Balren, nobody seems to have heard it. The orchestra was playing, and everybody was laughing and shouting. Oh, this is terrible! To happen in my apartment——"

"We'll keep the body in the dressing room until all the guests have gone," Detective Cray put in. "And we'll let them go as soon as possible. My men are at work now, questioning them."

"You didn't find the woman?" Dratner asked.

"I haven't put my hands on her yet."

"I know nothing about her—don't even know where she lives," Martin Dratner declared. "Miss Mary Cladwick told me to invite her. Miss Cladwick had met her somewhere and said she was lively."

"Is Miss Cladwick here?" the detective asked.

"No; she is out of the city, I understand."

Crady turned to Gregory Balren. "You will kindly remain in this room, Mr. Balren," he said. "I'll want to speak to you a little later."

Balren nodded his head; he was thankful that Crady put it that way instead of intimating to everybody that he was under suspicion. Detective Crady disappeared into the dressing room. He went at once to the coroner's representative.

"Killed almost instantly," the coroner's man reported. "Hit in the heart, Crady."

"Powder stains on his clothing?"

"None. He wasn't shot at close range, Crady. His shirt front would have been spotted with burns."

"So the shot must have been fired from a distance of—say ten feet or more?"

"That is my belief, Crady."

"Did the doctors get the bullet?"

"Yes, it is .38 caliber."

Crady bent over the body and presently arose, startled.

"In the back?" he snapped.

"Yes, Crady, in the back! Hit in the heart, but not from the front. His back was turned to his murderer."

CHAPTER V.

THE OPEN WINDOW.

THE detective went to the dresser and picked up the automatic he had found on the floor beside the body, and which he had wrapped in a handkerchief. He unwrapped it carefully and examined it once more.

"Um!" he grunted, when he had finished. Once more he wrapped the pistol carefully, and now he gave it to one of the men from headquarters, with orders to take it to the finger print expert.

"Shot in the back—through the heart—no powder burns—.38 caliber," he muttered, as though trying to impress those facts upon his mind.

He left the dressing room abruptly, entered the living room, stood for a moment looking over Martin Dratner's guests, and then beckoned Gregory Balren to him. He took Balren aside, where they could talk without being overheard.

"Balren, I'm going to ask you some questions, and I want you to answer them," he said.

"Very well, Crady."

"Did you ever see this Sallwer woman before to-night?"

"Why, I didn't say that I had seen her to-night!" Balren said, looking astonished. He had evaded that trap, he told himself. Clever of Detective Crady, but not clever enough.

"Don't talk nonsense!" Crady said. "That woman went up the fire escape and into your apartment. She couldn't have got into your dressing room without your seeing her, could she?"

"No, she could not."

"Then you saw her, Balren, because she is in the closet of your dressing room now—at least she was when we left your apartment!"

"What?" Balren cried.

"No use in pretending, Balren. I knew she was there. Those prints in the dust, that perfume! The tapestries on the divan were mussed up, too. And when I looked into your closet I saw the edge of an evening gown beneath that pile of coats in the corner. You didn't fool me for an instant, Balren!"

"Why, I—I——" Gregory Balren was disconcerted for a moment. "If that is the case, why didn't you haul her out?"

"Because I wanted to watch you," said Cady. "I knew that she couldn't get away. My men are watching the corridor and the court of the building. I wanted to see, Balren, whether you and that woman were in a deal together! It commences to look like it."

"Nonsense!"

"Then why did you hide her and try to make me think that you hadn't seen her?" the detective demanded.

"I'll come clean with you, Crady. I saw her come through the window and get behind the divan. I hauled her out, and she told me that she had killed a man. She begged me to hide her. I can't explain it, Crady. I'm not the man to shield criminals. But there was something about her——"

"Yes, she's a pretty woman!"

"It wasn't that, confound it! Am I a titwit to jump when a pretty woman snaps her fingers? Haven't I seen a few score pretty women in my time? Has any of them ever hooked me and led me to the altar? Don't be an ass!"

"Explain, then!"

"I scarcely can, Crady. I told her at first that I could not shield her. Then, on the spur of the moment, I did. She told me that it was an accident, and I believed her."

"If it was an accident, why didn't she merely say so?"

"That is what I asked her, Crady. She told me that she was afraid everybody would think it had not been an accident."

"I dare say!" the detective snorted.

"I can't explain any more, Crady. I took pity on her and put her into the closet. She said it was an accident, and that she had dropped the gun and hurried up the fire escape."

"So you were trying to help her escape?"

"I suppose so."

"And she admitted that she had shot Frenge?"

"Yes, but said it was an accident."

"Then the automatic I found beside the body was the one she used!"

"I suppose so."

"Do nice young ladies run around these days packing automatic pistols?"

"Don't ask me, Crady! I know nothing more than I have told you."

"How about your own gun?" Crady demanded. "How about that one cartridge that has been fired recently?"

"I don't know anything about that, either. I told you that I hadn't fired the gun for a year or more."

"Don't you appreciate the fact that your statements make a mighty thin story when they are tied together?"

"What do you mean?" Balren demanded.

"First, have you told me all that you know?"

"Yes, I have!"

"About this Sally Sallwer?"

"Yes, Crady! I never saw the woman until this evening, when she crawled through the window and into my apartment."

"Balren, I am going to tell you a few things. Frenge was shot in the back, possibly as he was walking away. It was a cowardly murder. He was shot with a .38 caliber gun, too. Your automatic is .32 caliber, and so is the pistol I found on the floor beside the body."

"What?" Balren exclaimed.

"Exactly!" said Detective Jack Crady. "So Frenge wasn't killed with your automatic, nor with that other. Yet your automatic has one shot fired, and so has the one I found beside the body. I don't doubt that the latter will have that woman's finger prints all over it, either."

"Then——" Balren began.

"It is very clever, Balren, but I am afraid that it won't do. Are you quite sure that you don't care to tell me anything more about Sally Sallwer?"

"I have told you all that I know, confound it! What are you getting at?"

"You had a quarrel with Burton Frenge, Balren! I happen to know that you are sensitive, and Frenge, so I am given to understand, had criticized a statement in one of your books."

"You—you mean that I killed him?" Balren gasped.

"Or had him killed!"

"Why, what do you mean, Crady?"

"Nobody seems to know much about this Sally Sallwer. She impressed me as the sort of woman who needed money and would take part in a plot to get it."

"Do you mean to insinuate——" Balren began.

"I'm just making statements. We'll suppose that Miss Sallwer, as she calls herself, had instructions to coax Burton Frenge into the dressing room for a moment. We'll suppose that she did it. And then, Mr. Balren, we'll suppose that somebody on the fire escape landing outside fired the fatal shot. After which, Miss Sallwer dropped the .32 caliber pistol, to cause confusion, and scampered up the fire escape and into your suite to hide."

"But——"

"One moment!" Crady said. "We'll suppose all that. And we'll go further and suppose that you scampered up right after her and stood in front of your dresser, whistling and fastening your tie. Your pistol with one cartridge discharged, too—a chance for more confusion. Very pretty, Mr. Balren."

"Crady! Are you an utter imbecile?"

"So much of one, Mr. Balren, that I am going to put you under arrest on suspicion of homicide and hold you for investigation. You need talk of this case no longer. It is my duty to warn you that anything you say may be used against you."

"Use this against me—I say you are a confounded fool!" Gregory Balren exploded. "I don't understand you, Crady! You are supposed to be about the smoothest man on the force!"

"Uh-huh! Hard words don't hurt me, Mr. Balren!" the detective declared. "We'll take you and the woman to headquarters, and we'll see if we can't make one of you talk. So you don't know anything about her, eh? Well, Mr. Balren, we'll see if she knows anything about you!"

"Crady, are you actually putting me under arrest?"

"Surest thing you know, Mr. Balren!"

Gregory Balren drew himself up. "Very well, Crady!" he said. "I'll step right along with you! But don't blame me when you are the laughingstock of the whole city!"

"I'll take a chance on that!"

"I think you have gone insane!" Bal-

ren said. "I suppose you'll give me a chance to put on a business suit and get a coat?"

"Naturally. I'll go right along with you. But you'll not have a chance to talk to that woman."

Gregory Balren's face flushed. He was fighting to hold back the anger that surged within him. For once he was bewildered. Had he faced the consequences of having made an effort to shield Miss Sally Sallwer and help her to escape, it would not have been so bad, and he felt that he would have deserved it. But to be held on suspicion of homicide was quite another matter.

"Come along, Mr. Balren!" the detective commanded.

Gregory Balren followed him out into the corridor and along it, putting on his hat and walking with his head held high and his eyes to the front. At first he was angry with Detective Jack Crady, and he told himself that here was where friendship ceased; and then he decided to play a game of wits and let the best man win!

They ascended the first flight of stairs. On the floor above, the majority of the tenants had returned to their apartments; the excitement was dying down.

"Crady, I'll want to use the telephone for a few minutes," Balren said.

"Going to call up your attorney? All right, but you'll get no bail this night!"

"I am not going to call my attorney. I am going to talk to the Lone Star Detective Agency. I'll speak to Mr. Rollberg, the manager."

"Huh!" Detective Jack Crady sniffed, looking at his prisoner peculiarly. "What's the idea?"

"I'm going to have the Lone Star people solve this riddle—that is the idea!" Gregory Balren replied. "They have solved several recently, according to the newspapers. I am going to have the Lone Start people clear me of this absurd charge, Crady, by finding the guilty man!"

"Go as far as you like, Mr. Balren. The Lone Star people probably will welcome your fee," Detective Jack Crady told him, sniffing again.

Detective Crady was a bit angry, as he spoke. He did not like the Lone Star Detective Agency. It was a private affair, properly licensed, and it did the usual private business—supplied watchmen, furnished guards, investigated private affairs, watched men under bond, and all that. But the Lone Star people had been doing some other things, too. They had been engaged, on several occasions recently, to investigate crimes where persons under arrest asserted their innocence and wanted evidence to prove it. And there was something peculiar, too, about the agency.

Nobody seemed to know the identity of the Lone Star, the man who headed the organization, with the exception of Rollberg, the agency's manager, and he would not reveal it. But it was common report that an unusually clever operative headed the agency and worked always in the dark, turning his evidence over to Manager Rollberg when he had concluded a case. So the Lone Star could do his work without everybody knowing that he was a detective.

Detective Jack Crady was a fair-minded man, but there was a trace of professional jealousy in him, and he was unable at times to keep from betraying it.

"Go right ahead and hire your Lone Star folks!" he told Balren now. "But you make that telephone talk a quick one. I want to get you down to headquarters."

"Five minutes—or less," Balren replied. "And I can change my clothes in a few minutes. I have an aversion to going to police headquarters in evening dress."

"The perfect gentleman is dressed correctly at all times, even in jail," the detective observed.

Balren glared at him, and they hur-

ried on. They came after a time to the door of Gregory Balren's apartment, and Balren unlocked it, and they entered. Just inside the door, however, they came to an abrupt stop, as though some gigantic hand had pressed suddenly against their breasts.

It was the hand of astonishment. Detective Jack Crady gave an exclamation of mingled surprise and fear. Gregory Balren could not prevent a gasp. The window by the fire escape landing, which Balren had closed before leaving the apartment with the detective, was now open its full width!

Detective Crady hesitated for an instant, as though this was the last thing that he had expected. Then he gave an exclamation of rage and rushed into the dressing room. His sudden fear proved to have a substantial foundation.

The door of the dressing room stood open, and Miss Sally Sallwer was gone!

CHAPTER VI.

TRAPPED!

FOR a moment Detective Jack Crady stood silent, his countenance working with rage; and then he brushed Gregory Balren aside and ran quickly across the living room and to the open window. He called down into the court and ordered one of the men on guard there to ascend the fire escape immediately. Then he rushed into the corridor and summoned the man stationed near the elevator cages.

But all of it availed him nothing. The detective who had been in the hall declared emphatically that he had not taken his eyes off the door of the Balren suite for an instant, and that nobody had left it. The man who ascended the fire escape was as firm in his declaration that nobody had descended it and made an escape.

After spreading the alarm and putting all the officers on guard, Detective Crady rushed to the window again. He flashed his electric torch and searched for prints in the thin film of dust with which the landing and ladder of the fire escape was covered.

He had not the slightest difficulty in finding plenty of tracks. A short investigation revealed to him that they ascended toward the roof from the Balren fire escape landing.

"Change your clothes, Balren, and do your telephoning!" Crady ordered. "Your word of honor that you'll remain in this apartment until I return!"

"Certainly, if you are back before breakfast," Balren replied.

Putting a man who is under arrest for suspicion of homicide on his honor is not the usual method, but this was a bit different. Detective Crady had known Gregory Balren for years. He knew that Balren was a well-known man, socially prominent, almost famous in one line at least, and not the sort of man who would run away and hide.

Balren, facing such a charge, would be compelled to remain and fight. He would summon attorneys, give bail, use his wealth to delay proceedings, would make a man-to-man war of it instead of a running combat. Trying to escape would be about the last thing that Balren would do, Crady judged. And he had a great deal of faith in Balren's word of honor—especially since the apartment house was still surrounded, and nobody was allowed to leave.

As for Gregory Balren, he smiled and went into his dressing room. He had given Crady his word of honor to remain in the apartment until the detective returned, and he would keep his word. He began to change from his evening things into a dark, inconspicuous business suit, and he appeared to be in no hurry about it. He even whistled a bit. But Balren was one of those men who can whistle and think at the same time. He wondered where Sally Sallwer had gone, how she had managed to get away without being seen.

Had she hoodwinked him? Was it possible that she was guilty of murder? She had told him that it had been an accident, but she might not have been telling the truth. However, there remained the fact, as Crady had stated, that the pistol she had dropped was of .32 caliber, and the bullet taken from the body of Burton Frenge had been a .38.

Regarding his own predicament, Gregory Balren did not worry at all. If there was publicity, he would dislike it, since it would border on notoriety. But he was not worrying about the outcome. He knew that he was innocent, and it was a firm conviction of his that an innocent person would be found so in the end.

Detective Crady went on up the fire escape, investigating as he went along, flashing his electric torch and inspecting the ladder and the landings. It was only three floors to the roof. Every window along the way was closed and locked.

He reached the roof finally, went over the parapet cautiously, and came to a stop. There was no moon, but the starlight was bright, and he saw at a glance that there was nobody upon the roof, unless she was hiding behind one of the two big chimneys.

It did not take him long to convince himself that nobody was hiding there. Yet the prints in the film of dust had show him that some woman had ascended that fire escape to the roof. As to the roof itself, it was of such substance that a person walking across it would not leave footprints, at least no prints that Crady could locate by aid of the electric torch.

"Came up and went down again!" he told himself.

But he was far from being convinced of it. He followed the edge of the roof entirely around the building. There were half a dozen fire escapes, but he could not find where she had descended one of them. There was an adjoining building, too, and she might have reached the roof of that, since it was only a few feet below the roof of the apartment house. It was a jump that almost any frightened woman would have taken without hesitation. From this adjoining building she might have descended to the street—a side street which was in semidarkness, and where she possibly would have been able to get away without being seen. Crady became almost convinced that such was the case.

He returned to the Balren apartment as speedily as possible, hurried to the telephone, and called headquarters to give the alarm. Within a short time, Crady knew, detectives would learn everything possible about Sally Sallwer—where she lived, her relatives and friends, the condition of her finances—everything. And they would catch her! It would be difficult for her to escape.

Gregory Balren had finished changing his clothes. After telephoning, Detective Crady turned to confront him.

"From your conversation, I take it that you did not find the lady," Balren said.

"No, but we'll get her. She can't run around the streets in an evening gown without attracting attention."

"It wouldn't take her long to find a taxicab." Balren told him.

"Glad that she got away, are you?" The detective's speech was almost a snarl.

"Not even interested," Balren said. "Don't let it get on your nerves, Crady."

"My nerves are all right," Crady informed him.

"Get over the roof?"

"I suppose so," Crady replied. "She went up the fire escape, and all the windows on the floors above are closed and locked. But it is possible she got through an unlocked one and then locked it after getting inside. I'll catch her if she did. I'll have the three apartments above searched. If she got in

one of them, she's there yet. I have a man in every hall above."

"Nothing like being thorough," Balren observed, turning aside to hide a smile.

Detective Jack Crady did not observe the smile. He went to the corridor door, called a man, and gave his orders. Then he went back into the living room again.

"Do your telephoning, Balren, and then we'll go to headquarters," he commanded.

Gregory Balren went to the telephone, took down the receiver, and called a number.

"That isn't the number of the Lone Star Agency," Crady protested.

"Certainly not!" Balren replied. "It is the number of the residence of Rollberg, the manager. He'll be at home at this hour, you see."

"How does it come you know his number? Is your mind a telephone directory?"

"Oh, he has done work for me before!" Balren said.

He got his connection.

"Rollberg?" he demanded. "This is Gregory Balren! Balren—yes! Listen carefully, please. Burton Frenge was killed to-night while attending a party at Martin Dratner's apartment. There is some woman mixed up in it. Detective Crady has arrested me on suspicion. . . . What's that? . . . Of course I am innocent! Don't be an utter ass! I want you to get busy and collect evidence, land the guilty party, clear me—and all that! . . . Yes, certainly!"

For a moment after that it was quiet on Gregory Balren's end of the line. Evidently the distant Mr. Rollberg was doing some talking himself. Detective Crady wondered what he was saying; and he might have been interested could he have overheard it.

"Yes!" Balren said, after a time. "All right, then! I intend to do that, naturally. . . . Oh, I'll manage! But you go ahead and get busy."

He replaced the receiver on its hook and turned to Detective Crady.

"Now I feel better!" he declared. "I am quite sure that the Lone Star people will prove my innocence."

"I'd like to know who this Lone Star is!" Detective Crady exploded. "He has stuck his fingers in several cases of mine recently. The department has tried to find out, but hasn't. He isn't Rollberg—we know that much. Rollberg is only the head office man, a sort of glorified office boy."

"You'll probably meet the Lone Star one of these days," Balren told him. "What do you care? Let the Lone Star do his work! The more the merrier. You don't want to jail me if I'm innocent, do you?"

"Certainly not! I have arrested you merely on suspicion—want to question you. I don't think you have told me all you know. No hard feelings now! We have been good friends for years. But duty is duty!" Crady said.

"I'm not complaining."

"That woman's escape may cause you to remain in jail until we locate her, though."

"That is very ungrateful of her, after I tried my best to shield her," Balren replied.

"Well, we may as well start toward headquarters."

"Then you are determined to take me there?" Balren asked.

"Absolutely!"

"Have your own way. I only hope they won't laugh at you too much. Are you sure that you haven't overlooked anything?"

"What do you mean?"

"Crady, I am afraid that you are slowing up. You're getting old."

"What's that?"

"About the escape of that woman, for instance. You rushed to the fire escape and the roof—all that. But did you investigate the closet of the dressing room carefully?"

"What do you mean?" the detective demanded.

"You were in a hurry, of course, and a little fussed up," Balren continued. "But I was not. When I was changing my clothes—— Oh, confound it, come along and see for yourself, Crady!"

Gregory Balren turned back into the dressing room, and Detective Crady followed at his heels, half fearing that he had made some grave mistake. Balren opened the closet door.

"I picked up the coats and put them on hangers," Balren explained. "And on the floor in the corner——"

He did not get a chance to say more. Detective Jack Crady had his fears aroused now. He thrust Gregory Balren gently to one side and stepped through the door.

At the same instant Balren shoved against him, and not so gently. Before Detective Jack Crady could regain his balance, the door of the closet had been slammed shut, and he heard the key turned in the lock!

CHAPTER VII.

INTO THIN AIR.

SEVERAL ideas flashed through the mind of Detective Jack Crady, as he brought up sharply against the wall of the closet, his knuckles rasping against it, his forehead bumping it in such a manner that the darkness of the tiny room seemed filled with shooting stars.

The first thought was that he had been both fooled and trapped. Gregory Balren's word of honor had expired, of course, when Crady returned to the apartment. Balren had done the one thing that Crady had judged he would not do.

The final conclusion of the detective, in that half moment of time, was that there must be some fundamental, important reason for Gregory Balren acting in such a manner. Detective Crady had not for an instant believed Balren guilty of the murder of Burton Frenge. But he had believed that Sally Sallwer had something to do with it, despite the difference in bullet calibers, and that Balren knew more than he had told. His half-hearted detention of Gregory Balren had been in an effort to make either the historian or the woman talk.

But this was a different thing! Would any except a guilty man act in such a manner? Would prominent and dignified Gregory Balren attempt an escape, unless guilt was heavy upon his soul, and blood not dripping from his hands? Had Balren's usual poise deserted him because of a fleeting vision of the electric chair?

But Detective Jack Crady did not ask himself questions long. He was not inclined to waste his time in that manner. Indeed, these thoughts had flashed through his mind in a sort of jumble, even as he whirled back from the wall and crashed against the closed and locked door.

Gregory Balren had trapped him and now was attempting to make his escape! So the detective's estimate of Balren was changed instantly. No longer was Gregory Balren a man to be handled with kid gloves, so to speak. Now he was to Detective Jack Crady as any other man would have been under similar circumstances. Balren was a fugitive —a man to be run to earth! Moreover there was a personal note in it—Crady did not take kindly to any man who outwitted him.

Hurling himself forward, the detective crashed against the door of the closet a second time, and this time with his shoulder held low. But the lock did not snap; the wood around it did not splinter and give way. This particular apartment house had been constructed honestly and from good materials. It housed important men and women; and the locks were good ones, intended to guard expensive articles.

Detective Crady shouted, though he doubted very much that his man in the hall, who was the nearest, could even hear him, not to speak of understanding the words that he howled. So he rested for a moment and then commenced a systematic assault upon the door.

Detective Crady was a large man and a strong one. No ordinary door could stand long before his onslaught. Finally the wood around lock and hinges cracked and splintered. Once more Grady hurled his bulk at the obstacle, and the door crashed open. The detective sprawled into the dressing room.

He was across the room in an instant, to find himself confronted by another locked door. But he had room for action here. He backed away, hurled himself forward, and the second door crashed out, and he was in the living room. One glance was enough to show him that everything there was as it had been before. He ran to the corridor door, hurled it open, and called the detective by the elevator cages. In a few words he informed the man that Balren was wanted, and that he had made a get-away.

"Never came through this door, Crady!" the man in the hall declared.

"Spread the alarm!" Crady commanded. "Pick Balren up! But don't leave this post. Don't let anybody in or out of this apartment!"

Crady rushed back and to the open window. In an instant he was out upon the fire escape and calling to the men in the court below.

"Didn't see anybody," was the answer he got.

Crady did not hesitate; he could sputter his rage as well while in action as while standing still. He went up the fire escape ladder swiftly, like an acrobat, determination in his manner, and wrath in his soul.

"Show him how to play tricks on me!" Detective Crady was promising himself.

It did not take him long to reach the roof. A glance showed him that Balren was not there. Crady flashed his torch and looked at all the fire escapes. He sprang to the roof of the adjoining building and made an investigation there. But he was telling himself that it was a waste of time. Balren had had time to get away. Undoubtedly he had planned the entire thing. He could have crossed the roof of that other building and descended into the semidark side street. It would be no trick at all for a man like Gregory Balren, who always kept himself fit physically.

Crady hurried back to the Balren suite. Once more he called police headquarters, and, though he spoke rapidly, he spoke to some purpose. Gregory Balren was to be found and arrested for the murder of Burton Frenge. The dragnet was to be put in operation at once. Every effort was to be made, and Sally Sallwer was not to be forgotten, either.

Then Detective Crady left the Balren apartment, after closing and locking the window by the fire escape and snapping off the lights. He placed his man on guard before the corridor door, which he locked.

"That's one apartment," said Crady, "that we don't need to search. But we'll search the remainder of the house from basement to roof. I think they got out, but I'm not sure."

Detective Crady was like a hound on a trail now. He posted his men well. He led a group of searchers himself, and he started in the basement. Every exit was closed; every room and closet and niche in the wall was searched.

Up they went, from floor to floor, arousing the tenants, unlocking apartments that happened to be empty, invading those where nobody was at home. The search was a methodical one, and Detective Jack Crady's rage increased, as it remained futile.

The last floor and then the roof! Nothing! Crady led his men down to

Martin Dratner's apartment again. Dratner's guests had been questioned, and now they were allowed to go. The body of Burton Frenge was removed. Detective Jack Crady gave orders for all his men except two to return to headquarters. He was convinced now that Balren and Sally Sallwer had managed to leave the building—that the trail would be picked up somewhere outside.

For a moment Crady regarded Martin Dratner gravely. "Got anything more to tell me about that row between Balren and Frenge?" he demanded.

"I believe not," Dratner replied.

"Was Balren pretty mad?"

"At Frenge? Yes, indeed! And you scarcely can blame him. Frenge was a man who could speak a commonplace and make an insult out of it. He seemed to believe that he had an inalienable right to insult everybody."

"Hear Balren make any threats?"

"I believe he did threaten to smash Frenge, but some of the club members interfered. He threatened nothing else."

"In your estimation, is Balren a man to nurse a grudge, to let his anger grow? Or, does he get over such a thing quickly?"

"I'd rather not say, under the circumstances."

"You've said it!" Crady snapped. "You mean by that remark that Balren is that sort of man. All right! Now, about this Sallwer woman!"

"I know nothing at all about her. Miss Mary Cladwick told me Miss Sallwer was all right, that she had few friends in the city, and asked me to invite her. I do not believe that Miss Cladwick had known her long, either."

"The Sallwer girl tried to vamp Frenge, did she?"

"It looked that way to me. But you know how a party is. Everybody was cutting up—drinking, singing, dancing, laughing. There may have been no special meaning to it. They did not act as though they had known each other for a long time. I do not think that Frenge was particularly interested in her. As a matter of fact, he was rather interested in another woman, who was invited to the party, but had not yet arrived when the tragedy occurred."

"All right!" Crady snapped. "You'll remain here in your apartment, I presume?"

"Yes. A couple of my friends may call later and remain with me."

"That's all right. Can you leave the dressing room exactly as it is now until I return later? I want to get on the trail of Balren and that woman."

"We can get along without the dressing room. You may lock the door, if you allow me to get out some clothes first."

Detective Crady waited until Dratner took out what clothes he needed and carried them into his bedchamber. Then the two doors of the dressing room were locked, and Crady took the keys.

"The fire escape window, the door opening into the bedchamber, and the door opening into the living room," he mused. "The shot came from one of those three, from inside the room, or from the fire escape landing outside."

A sudden thought came to him, and he whirled toward Martin Dratner once again.

"When the crime occurred, was the window of the dressing room open?" he asked.

"I am not sure. It may have been open a few inches at the bottom."

"Tell me again, Mr. Dratner, what you saw as far as Frenge and the woman were concerned."

"I was not noticing them particularly. My guests were dropping in, and that kept me busy. But they were dancing together and cutting up. She said something to Frenge, I believe, laughing at him, as she spoke. He started to chase her, and she ran from him. Everybody laughed at them. Everybody sup-

posed that Frenge was merely trying to catch and kiss her."

"I understand."

"She eluded him and darted into the dressing room. He ran after her and slammed the door. The orchestra started just then, and everybody commenced dancing. After the dance somebody noticed that the door of the dressing room remained closed. One of the ladies, I believe, wished to get something from her hand bag—powder her nose or something like that. Wraps and coats were in the dressing room, you see. She opened the door and screamed. Frenge's body was on the floor, and the woman was gone."

"That's all!" Crady said. "I may see you a few hours later, Mr. Dratner. Hate to disturb you, but under the circumstances——"

"It will be perfectly all right," Martin Dratner told him. "Anything that I can do to aid you will be done cheerfully. It is a terrible thing, but of course it must be cleared up. I hate the notoriety, and I'd like to run away until it blows over, but I'll remain until you tell me I may go."

"Very well, sir."

Detective Crady left the apartment and hurried toward the elevator. Things had calmed down. The big apartment house was running as usual.

Detective Crady descended to the ground floor and was quick to avoid the superintendent, who was almost weeping and talking about the reputation of the place being ruined. He spoke a few words to one of the men whom he left to loiter around the building, and then he rushed out to the street. He hailed a passing taxicab and told the chauffeur to reach police headquarters as speedily as possible. Detective Jack Crady was going to take the trail in earnest, and he was not going to be slow about it.

"Sometimes it may look like a man has vanished into thin air," he told himself, "but a man never really does. I'll get Gregory Balren, and I'll get that woman, too!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A HIDING PLACE.

CROUCHING beneath the heap of coats in Gregory Balren's closet, her heart pounding at her ribs, Sally Sallwer heard Balren greet Detective Jack Crady and listened to the conversation that followed. She could hear every word of it easily. It made her nervous. It seemed to her that there was a note in the detective's voice that hinted at a deep knowledge on his part of exactly what had happened.

She knew, a few minutes later, that the detective was making a search of the apartment, and she tried to steel herself against discovery. She sensed that Jack Crady believed her to be there. Capture was imminent, she believed.

But it was when Detective Crady and Balren entered the dressing room and the detective questioned about the closet, that her heart seemed to cease pounding at her ribs and almost stand still. It was suffocating beneath the heap of coats, yet she endured it, hoping that discovery would not come. She did not make a move; she almost held her breath.

She heard the door of the closet opened, and she knew that Detective Jack Crady was inside it. Now was the moment of discovery, she told herself. She expected every instant to have those coats removed, to hear the detective give a gasp of delight at her capture. She scarcely could believe it when he turned and left the closet without making her a prisoner. Her breathing returned to normal. She removed some of the coats so that she could get more air.

And then Balren returned to the closet for his hat and whispered the warning to her—that she should keep quiet and remain there for the time being. But Sally Sallwer could not do that, she found. After they left the apartment,

the very silence seemed oppressive. Fear clutched at her again. She visioned jail, trial, a verdict of guilty, sentence, long years behind prison bars—perhaps even the electric chair.

Removing more of the coats, she sat up on the floor of the closet and listened. Not a sound reached her ears from the apartment beyond. After a time she stood up, stretched her limbs to restore circulation, and crept across the closet to the door. It was at least a minute before she could nerve herself to open it. She tried to tell herself that it was certain capture later if she remained; that it would be better to be caught while trying to make an escape than to be found in hiding. And there was always a chance that an escape could be made. Finally she turned the knob and opened the door for a space of half a dozen inches. She could see across the dressing room and through the open door and into the living room. The lights were still burning; Gregory Balren had neglected to snap them off.

For a moment she hesitated, and then she opened the door wider and stepped from the closet. But the fear she felt did not prevent her using common sense. The only way of escape, she saw, was up the fire escape. Her dress was a light one, and it could be seen easily by anybody down in the court. She whirled back to the closet, found a long black overcoat of Balren's, slipped into it, and turned up the collar. Then she darted to the door of the living room.

No sounds came from the corridor; none came from the court. She hurried to the window by the fire escape landing and raised the window slowly and carefully, making not the slightest sound. Again she listened for a moment, then put out her head.

Above her the windows were dark. Below, two men were in the court, smoking and talking. Sally Sallwer crawled out upon the landing of the fire escape, then started to climb.

Every instant she expected to hear shouts that would announce her discovery. She went up as swiftly as she could, passing landing after landing. And finally she was upon the roof.

For a moment she leaned against the parapet there, hesitating which way to go, letting her breathing return to normal. Then she darted across the roof and began inspecting the other fire escapes.

None of them suited her purpose. All seemed to be bathed in light. She dropped to the roof of the building adjoining the apartment house and rushed to the fire escape there. It was in partial gloom, in a corner where no light from the streets struck it squarely, but a patrolman in uniform was standing at the bottom of it.

She did not know that the patrolman was the regular man on the beat and would move on in a moment. She believed that he had been stationed there to watch for her. Now she felt like a rat in a trap. If they searched the roof, they surely would find her. For there was no place here to hide. She went back to the roof of the apartment house and to the ladder by which she had ascended. The men in the court far below looked like dots. She wondered if she could descend without being seen and get into some other apartment.

Sally Sallwer told herself that there was nothing else to be done. And so she started down the ladder, going carefully. But every window was locked. And finally she came to Gregory Balren's apartment again. She stopped, crouching in the shadows, and glanced down. Below her was an open window, but somebody was just inside it, talking. There was no escape in that direction.

She dared not hesitate longer, she knew. Detective Crady might return at any moment. So she got swiftly into Gregory Balren's living room again and stood there with her hands clutching at her breast. Something seemed to

tell her that it would be dangerous to go back into the closet. She glanced wildly around the room and saw the big divan again.

That was it—the divan! She had hidden there once, and she could do so again. Perhaps they would not look there. It would be better to attempt it, at least, than to sit down and wait for them to come and make her prisoner.

She got behind the divan swiftly, pulled the tapestries back into place, and then slowly and carefully crawled under as far as she could. It was hot and stuffy and uncomfortable, but she could breathe better than in the closet, and she did not think of heat and discomfort now. It seemed an age to her before she heard somebody at the door. She wished that she could see who had entered. But she was not kept in ignorance long. She heard Detective Crady's cry, as he saw the open window, heard Balren gasp his surprise.

Sally Sallwer did not lose a word of their conversation. The discovery by Crady that she had gone, his cries to his men, their answers, his alarm—she heard them all. Then she realized that Crady had gone up the fire escape to make his search, and that Balren remained in the dressing room to change his clothes. She had been puzzled by Crady's words, but she sensed that Balren was under arrest, perhaps for aiding her.

She decided to remain under the divan. Disclosing herself to Balren would gain her nothing now, and Crady might return at any instant. So she remained there until he did return, and she heard Balren call the Lone Star Detective Agency!

That telephone message seemed to have a peculiar effect upon her. She listened carefully to every word. Then she heard Balren suggest that Crady had missed something in the closet. And a few seconds later she heard the door of the closet slam, heard the door of the dressing room closed and locked, and realized that Gregory Balren himself was making an attempt to escape, and that he had trapped Detective Crady first.

Balren had planned that escape during Detective Crady's absence from the apartment, and he had decided on it for some peculiar reasons of his own. In addition to those particular reasons, he did not care to be placed in a detention cell and afterward interrogated by a lot of police officials.

He did not relish the notoriety that would come. Escape would be better, he told himself. To hide somewhere until the truth about the killing of Burton Frenge was ascertained—that was his object. And he even had planned a hiding place, which had been rather difficult under the circumstances.

Gregory Balren realized that it would avail him nothing to win his way to the roof of the apartment house. He probably would not be able to descend any of the fire escapes and get away without being seen. He expected Detective Crady to get out of the closet soon and spread an alarm, and it would take some time to climb the fire escape.

And to attempt to escape by way of the corridor would be as bad or worse. It would mean a fight with the officer on guard there, a chase to the ground floor or basement, with other officers joining in, and certain capture, else a bullet that would bring him down. Gregory Balren wished to be neither captured nor shot.

It would make no difference whether he ascended the fire escape or not, as far as tracks were concerned. Crady himself had gone up and down, and his hands and feet had made so many tracks in the thin film of dust that the detective would be unable to say whether another man had gone that way.

But he had selected his hiding place. It was upon the laps of the gods whether he would be discovered there later. It was a bit of psychology that he was try-

ing. To hide in the very place where nobody would expect him to hide—that was the system! To hide right under the noses of the hounds!

Locking the door of the dressing room quickly behind him, Gregory Balren rushed across the living room to the window by the fire escape landing and unlocked and raised it. That would make Crady think that he had ascended to the roof. Then he turned and hurried across the living room again, noiselessly this time, and sprang down behind the divan.

He, too, put the tapestries carefully back into place, so they would look as though they never had been disturbed. He also intended to crawl beneath the big couch as far as possible and take a chance on not being discovered in such a place so near at hand.

But he met with an obstacle! His groping hands touched cloth, and then he felt the warmth of a human body that moved slightly beneath his touch. A thrill ran through him at the unexpected encounter. This was the last thing that he had anticipated. A sense of danger flashed upon him for an instant. But a soft whisper reassured him.

"Mr. Balren?" it asked.

"Yes!" Balren whispered in reply.

"I—this is Sally Sallwer."

"Hush! Listen!" Balren commanded.

The whispering ceased immediately. From the near distance came the hoarse bellowings of Detective Jack Crady, and then the door of the closet crashed down!

CHAPTER IX.

MISS SALLWER'S STORY.

STRETCHED out upon the floor beneath the divan, scarcely daring to breathe, they listened while Detective Jack Crady made his successful attack upon the second door and won through it and into the living room.

The detective's shrieked alarms, his shouted commands, his orders to his subordinates—they heard them all. They knew when he finally closed the corridor door, and when he went through the window and up the fire escape.

"He thinks that I have gone to the roof," Gregory Balren whispered.

"Why did you do it?" she questioned. "Why did you lock him in and try to escape? He will try to cause you trouble now surely."

"Detective Crady wanted to take me to police headquarters and ask me a lot of fool questions—imagine that!" Balren whispered in reply. "He thinks that I know a lot that I haven't told him about this affair."

"I got you into all this trouble, just because you were kind enough to help me."

"For which I thank you!" Balren interrupted. "I was getting a bit rusty, if you gather my meaning—too many books and no adventure. Glad of this chance to stir around a bit. It'll be good for me!"

"But——" she began.

"You are not to worry about it, Miss Sallwer!" Balren commanded. "Perhaps we'd better consider the situation fully. I have an idea that they'll not think of searching here, but we may as well get things straight, in case we are caught and separated later. I have learned a lot that possibly you do not know. But I'd like to have you tell me your story before I talk—that is, if you care to tell it."

"Of course," she replied. "I—I was so frightened. I just couldn't remain in that closet."

"It is a fortunate thing that you did not," Balren told her. "Detective Crady knew that you were there. He was coming back to get you. But tell me the story of to-night. Talk in whispers and be prepared to stop instantly."

"I must go back further than to-night, if I am to explain," she replied. "I—I was rather startled when I heard you

talking over the telephone to the Lone Star Detective Agency's manager. You see, I—I work for the Lone Star!"

"You?" he gasped.

"Yes, I am one of their operatives. And that is why I am in this trouble to-night."

"I cannot imagine you being a human bloodhound," Balren said. "Tell me about it."

"I had to have some sort of position, you see—had to make my own living. My family was wealthy one day and poor the next, as the saying is. I was reared in the lap of luxury and all that. Then my mother died, and my father followed her quickly, and I was left alone. I soon discovered that the estate amounted to about nothing."

"I understand."

"It is the same old story, of course—the ones I had thought were my friends dropped me when they discovered that I was almost penniless. I had no training, except to be a society parasite. I left home, came to this city, and tried to get employment. I had my pride, you see. And by accident more than anything else I went to the Lone Star Agency. Mr. Rollberg said that he could use me in his work because I knew the ways of society and could go to places where some of the other women operatives could not."

"Rollberg had some sense," Balren told her.

"So he gave me a chance to do some work on a couple of little cases, and I pleased him. Then I was assigned to this. But perhaps I should not speak of it."

"Under the circumstances, I think you may. I'll keep what you tell me confidential."

"Thank you. The case had to do with Burton Frenge. A foolish girl had become infatuated with him, and she was doubly foolish in that she wrote him letters."

"Not the first foolish girl to do so," Balren commented. "I know a lot about Burton Frenge, and none of it reflects much credit on him."

"She might have met with disaster, considering the sort of man Burton Frenge was," Sally Sallwer continued. "But Frenge did not care for a love affair with her. He had another scheme. He held her foolish letters over her head and tried to blackmail her."

"Burton Frenge playing a blackmail game?" Balren gasped. "Why, he was wealthy!"

"It wasn't money that he was after," she explained. "He hated the girl's brother, for some reason, and wanted to ruin him. It seems that her brother handles the family estate. So Burton Frenge held the letters over the girl's head and threatened to make them public unless she coaxed her brother to buy certain stocks. The stocks were worthless, of course. Burton Frenge intended to strip her brother of all the family fortune, perhaps get him to use funds that did not belong to him, and so disgrace him."

"I understand," Balren said. "That sort of thing has been done often."

"The girl is not a bad girl, but the letters would have made her appear so to some people. And she belongs to a proud family. She was frightened, because she knew Frenge now for what he was. So she went to the Lone Star Agency, meanwhile holding Frenge off. Mr. Rollberg put me on the case."

"I see."

"Frenge was almost a maniac in his determination to wreck the man he hated. The only way he could strike was through the girl. The agency ascertained that Frenge carried the letters on him always. His one thought was to ruin the man he hated. I may as well tell you that the girl is Mary Cladwick."

"I suspected as much," Gregory Balren said. "She is a sweet girl, but inclined to be romantic. Just the sort to

be victimized by a man like Burton Frenge."

"Miss Cladwick introduced me around, and finally I managed to meet Burton Frenge. I tried to get him interested in me. I had understood that he was unusually susceptible. But he would pay little attention to me."

"He happened to be interested somewhere else at the moment," Balren explained.

"Through Miss Cladwick I obtained an invitation to Martin Dratner's party. I knew that Burton Frenge would be there, and I wanted to get the letters. Mr. Rollberg told me to carry a pistol, and gave me one. He explained a course of action to me. And I—I tried to carry it out—and failed!"

She stopped whispering for a moment, and they listened, but they could hear nothing to indicate the presence of danger. Detective Crady evidently was still prowling around the roof.

"I started flirting with Burton Frenge as soon as he came to the party," she continued. "I managed to get him chasing me, and I led the way into the dressing room. When he closed the door and tried to kiss me, I backed away and whirled upon him, drawing the pistol from a pocket concealed in the folds of my dress.

"I demanded that he hand me the letters. You should have seen the look in his face! You should have heard the things that he said in a low voice! He looked like a beast and talked like one. I began to feel my courage leaving me. And suddenly he snarled and rushed straight at me.

"I whirled and darted to the window. There I turned to face him again. I had dodged him, but once more he came at me. I was suddenly afraid. His face had murder in it. I threw up the pistol and told him to stop, but he came on. And I—I don't know how I happened to fire. I did not intend to do it. I don't remember taking off the safety catch or pulling the trigger. I was only trying to bluff him into giving me the letters.

"But the pistol was fired. The report of it seemed to crash into my brain. My eyes were closed for an instant, I think. And when I opened them he was tottering, falling, clutching at his breast. I—I saw the blood. Then he fell.

"I shuddered and threw the pistol on the floor. Please understand that I was desperately afraid. But I remembered my business even then. I hurried across to him and felt in his coat pocket and got the letters. There are only four of them, but enough to wreck a good girl's reputation.

"I staggered away from him. Something suddenly seemed to tell me that he was dead, and that I had killed him. I was in a panic then. I whirled toward the window again. It was raised about a foot from the bottom. I opened it wider and crawled out upon the fire escape landing.

"Once I looked back into the room. Burton Frenge was stretched out upon the floor, and his eyes were open and fixed. The room seemed to be half filled with smoke. Then I grew terror-stricken. I started up the fire escape, wanting only to get away. I came to your open window and entered your living room. And you know the rest!"

"I understand it all," Balren told her.

"I didn't mean to shoot. Please believe me when I say that! Now I'll be arrested, and everything will come out. The Lone Star Agency can't protect me, of course. If I am caught, and the letters found on me—letters addressed to Burton Frenge—it will mean prison—or worse."

"Hush!" Gregory Balren commanded suddenly, for her whispers were almost loud words now. He found her wrist and gripped it, and she grew quiet. He was afraid that she was upon the verge of an outbreak, that she soon would be sobbing hysterically.

"It—it is peculiar how I met you—what has happened," she said. "You tried to help me, and now you are in trouble yourself."

"It is merely the forefinger of fate pointing at us," Gregory Balren told her. "You see, we sometimes think that we live our own lives, but we do not. When old Mrs. Fate thinks that it is time to have a little excitement, she looks around, picks out a couple of persons, and points her old, bony forefinger at them. After that they are helpless. Old Mrs. Fate gets us into some predicament and then sits back, chuckles, and watches us try to get out of it. So, in this particular case, it is strictly up to us to get out of it."

"But how can we?" she whispered. "They will be looking for us everywhere. Even if they do not find us here where we are hiding, how can we escape?"

"Possibly we can think up some plan," Balren told her. "We'll make a fight of it, at any rate."

"Yet nothing can change the fact that I have taken a human life," she whispered. "Some time, somewhere, I'll have to pay for that!"

Gregory Balren reached out and patted her on the shoulder to reassure her. He waited for a moment before he spoke again—waited until she was calmer and in the proper condition to regard his words carefully.

"Calm yourself and listen to me closely!" he said. "Detective Crady will be coming back, and I want to tell you some things first, so you'll know if we get separated later. You did not kill Burton Frenge!"

CHAPTER X.

DOWN THE FIRE ESCAPE.

BALREN wished that he could have seen her face, as he spoke. He heard her give a little gasp of surprise. Then there was nothing but silence for a moment; and then she gripped him by the shoulder.

"Say that again!" she said. "You are not fooling me? What do you mean?"

"You did not kill Burton Frenge!" he repeated. "I feel quite sure of it."

"But I shot at him."

"You had only the one weapon—that automatic pistol?" Balren asked.

"That was all."

"And Mr. Rollberg gave it to you?"

"Yes; he told me what to do—said to bluff with the pistol, frighten Frenge and——"

"Ordinarily the bluff might have worked in such a place and under such circumstances, but not with Burton Frenge. Miss Sallwer, Frenge was killed with a single shot, the bullet piercing his heart. The surgeons got the bullet. It is of .38 caliber, and the pistol that you used is of .32 caliber. Do you understand what that means, Miss Sallwer?"

"Then—then I didn't——"

"You did not!" Balren said. "Careful now! No hysterics, please! There must have been a second shot fired. Crady intimated to me that he thought we were in a plot to get Frenge, and that your pistol was dropped there purposely to fool him and to back up any story you might tell. We are not out of the woods yet, as the saying is. But you may be sure of one thing—there is no blood on your hands!"

"Thank Heaven for that!" she gasped. "But what are we to do now?"

"First we must regain our liberty, if such a thing is possible; then we must work on this case ourselves. You are connected with the Lone Star Agency; Rollberg is at work already; and I'll play detective myself."

"Another shot!" she mused.

"It either came from outside the window, or from the other door to the dressing room," Balren explained. "Had it come from outside the window, you undoubtedly would have heard the bul-

let whistle past your head. Still, you were frightened and agitated. It is possible that you did not hear it.

"Detective Crady, I imagine, has made a better investigation than we think. Crady is a clever man. He knows about the differences in calibers. I'll bet that he already has found where your .32 caliber shot landed. And I'll bet that his men have searched well for a .38 caliber weapon—and have not found it.

"So, unless they unearth us here soon, we'll just handle this case and clear ourselves of all suspicion. The way to do that is to find the guilty person. Rollberg and his people will be at work helping us, of course. The Lone Star himself will be on the case."

"Oh, they say that he is wonderful!"

"Ever meet him?"

"No," she replied. "Nobody connected with the agency knows him except Mr. Rollberg."

"Possibly we can communicate with Rollberg now and then and learn whether there are any developments. He told me that he would go to his office immediately and remain there. We'll have to be very careful, of course. As soon as things quiet down, we'll start. If they should find us, you tell the police the truth, just as you have told it to me. Omit the fact that you got the letters, unless you are compelled to show them to save yourself. That will save Mary Cladwick and keep you standing right with the agency."

"So I didn't kill him!" she gasped again. That seemed to be the sole thought in her mind.

"You didn't!" he assured her. "Old Mrs. Fate pointed her forefinger at more than two persons in this particular deal, it appears. If we work it right, possibly we can get out of this affair without any nasty publicity."

"Oh, I hope so!" she said.

"If we can get proper evidence, Crady will listen to reason. I don't think that he really believes that I had anything to do with it. But he does think, I imagine, that I have not told him all that I know—especially about you. Buck up now and try to imagine that we are merely playing a game. It'll be excitement and fun!"

"But——" she began.

"That is the best way to look at it," he told her. Hush! Crady is coming back!"

Detective Jack Crady crawled through the window from the fire escape landing. Not a sound did the two beneath the divan make. They almost stopped breathing. They heard the detective go to the telephone to call police headquarters and order the dragnet out to catch Gregory Balren and the woman. They heard him close and lock the window by the fire escape, snap out the lights, and heard him command the officer in the hall to stand guard outside the door.

"He is going to search the entire house," Balren whispered, after the detective had closed the corridor door. "That will take considerable time. And we can't make a move, I suppose, until he has finished the search. So make yourself as comfortable as possible."

Time seemed to drag. They were hot, uncomfortable, but they did not want to crawl from beneath the divan. Crady might return at any moment, they thought. They could hear, now and then, sounds that told them the search was in progress. They heard the officers on their floor and on the floor above.

"This thing is getting monotonous," Balren said. "I'd like to be in some sort of action."

"What are we going to do first? Escape from the building?" Sally Sallwer asked.

"That would be the worst possible thing to do." Balren told her. "Once outside the building, they'd be liable to catch us. They'll never suspect that we are inside it. And in the building is where the crime was committed. We'll work here."

"What can we do?" she asked.

"And you are a detective!"

"I am not!" she declared. "I never wanted to be. But I—I wanted some sort of a position. I think that it is dreadful work."

"Not going to desert me, are you?" Balren asked.

"Certainly not!"

"Then you are a detective," he told her, chuckling. "As soon as it is possible and half way safe, we'll descend the fire escape to the apartment of Mr. Martin Dratner."

"Go back there?" she gasped. "Oh, I—I couldn't!"

"The criminal, they say, hates to look at the scene of his crime, yet something pulls him back to it."

"I—I'd imagine that I saw his body there on the floor."

"What do you care? Can't you remember that you didn't kill him? Your shot must have gone wild. Burton Frenge was killed with a .38 bullet. Please remember that."

"I—I'll try!"

"I'll leave you here, if you'd rather stay. Perhaps that would be best. I'll slip down there alone first and reconnoiter. You remain here in hiding."

"If somebody should come and find me——"

"Crady evidently has decided we are not here. Nobody will come unless it is my valet, Lemms. Possibly the officer in the hall will not allow him to enter the apartment. Lemms has a room on the top floor, in the servants' quarters, but he may feel inclined to come in and lay out my clothes for to-morrow."

"If he finds me here——"

"He'll not, if you keep hidden. Lemms isn't a particularly inquisitive individual. There are times when I think that he is about half blind."

"Perhaps I'd better go with you," she said.

"Suit yourself, Miss Sallwer. There isn't much that you can do down there, I suppose. And one will be safer than two."

"I understand," she said. "Then I'll stay here beneath the divan."

"That's a good girl! I'll let you know as soon as I have discovered anything of importance."

"Have you any idea, any suspicion?" she asked.

"Nothing very definite. Frenge was killed by some person who wanted him out of the way, since there is no question of robbery or anything like that. A great many persons wanted him out of the way, but not all of them would stoop to murder. It was either somebody who was at the party, or else the shot came from outside."

"But from where?" she asked.

"It could have come from the fire escape landing, or it could have come from some darkened window across the court—say on the same floor. The assassin could have waited and watched, and then, catching Frenge in the dressing room, fired the shot. If that is the case, that person had a wonderful chance to be rid of the weapon he used."

"And if the shot came from inside ——" she questioned.

"In that case, it must have come from the door of the bedroom," Balren declared. "If you were standing near the window when you fired, you would not have been able to see the door of the bedroom. Somebody could have opened it, fired, and closed the door quickly again. You were agitated—you would not have noticed it."

"That is true," she said. "It is possible, of course."

"Quiet now!" Balren commanded. "I am going to strike a match and glance at my watch."

He took watch and match from his pockets. The report of the match sounded like the explosion of a high-powered rifle. The bit of illumination lasted only for an instant.

"A couple of minutes past midnight,"

he whispered to her. "By this time Crady has completed his search and is gone. Undoubtedly he has left a few officers on guard. I think that it is time for me to make a move."

"You'll be careful?" she asked.

"Surely! You'd better remain here until I return. Do not be alarmed if Lemms comes in. He'll not remain long if he does."

He pressed her hand and then crawled slowly from beneath the divan. He gulped in the air with relief. He moved the tapestries, working in the darkness, and crawled over the couch and stretched his cramped limbs. For a moment he stood there, listening. Then he stepped back to the divan again.

"Here I go!" he said. "Good luck!"

He heard the reply she whispered, and then he moved swiftly and silently across the room and to the window by the fire escape. He unlocked it and raised it, working slowly, making no noise. A moment later he was out on the landing. He wished that he could leave the window open, but he did not dare. Crady might accidentally return, and Crady had left that window closed. He would be suspicious instantly if he found it open again.

Closing the window, Balren crouched on the fire escape in the darkness. There were no lights in the windows below him. The fire escape was in darkness. Nobody seemed to be below in the court, but Balren could not be certain of that.

Down the ladder he went, noiselessly, slowly, stopping every few steps to listen. Not an unusual sound reached his ears. And finally he reached the fire escape landing outside the window of Martin Dratner's dressing room, the room in which Burton Frenge had died.

For a time he remained crouching there, his ear close to the window casement. He peered in. The dressing room was dark, but a tiny pencil of light came from beneath the door of the connecting living room. Somebody was in there, possibly Dratner, possibly an officer.

Balren tried the window. It was closed, but not locked. Detective Crady had overlooked that when he had locked the two doors and had taken the keys. Gregory Balren raised the window an inch at a time, using the utmost caution. He was on thin ice, and he knew it. The slightest sound might cause an investigation, especially if an officer happened to be with Dratner in the living room beyond.

He opened the window only for a distance of a couple of feet and then crawled through. He did not close the window behind him, for he did not know at what instant he would want to make a quick get-away. Again he listened. He heard a low voice in the living room, but could not make out the words. Dratner was talking to somebody there, Balren supposed. He would have to investigate, make sure what he faced.

Silently he went across the dressing room, careful not to strike against any article of furniture. He knelt before the door of the living room and peered through the keyhole.

He could see almost all the interior of the room, all except a couple of corners. The room was ablaze with lights. Party litter was scattered on the tables, furniture was misplaced, cushions were on the floor.

Martin Dratner was pacing back and forth across the room. He did not seem to be addressing anybody in particular. And then Balren realized that the man was only muttering, not speaking distinctly at all. Martin Dratner was talking to himself!

CHAPTER XI.

OUT IN THE OPEN.

LEMMS, who had been with Gregory Balren for some time, was a jewel of a valet. He had been trained for the post, had come from a family of per-

sonal servants. Lemms took a great interest in the welfare and prosperity of his employer. He felt that he was one of the family, in a manner of speaking.

Yet he always kept his place. He was a gentleman's gentleman in every sense of the word. Balren trusted him, and Lemms was worthy of the trust. He believed in property rights. He was no sneak thief of a valet. Lemms would not have taken as much as one cent of Gregory Balren's money, nor was he the sort to appropriate for his own uses his employer's haberdashery.

Lemms had the evening off, and he made the most of it. He had gone down the avenue for several blocks, enjoying the fine evening, the lights, the crowds, the metropolitan atmosphere. He had purchased a ticket at a cinema palace and had viewed the pictures and listened to the orchestra. It is an index to the character of Lemms to say that the theater he picked had, as a headliner, a film depicting life in the wild West.

For Lemms, the valet, like many another man, took his rousing adventures secondhand. He longed to be what he was not. At times he dreamed. He fancied himself a soldier leading a forlorn hope. He was a mighty hunter stopping the charge of a bull elephant with a well-placed shot and saving the lives of his native beaters. He was a tall, lanky cow-puncher, shooting divers and sundry villains in an effort to rescue some maiden in distress.

But, perfect valet though he was declared to be, he had allowed himself to be led astray. He had touched the property of his employer. Not money, mind you! Lemms would not have stolen even to keep from death by starvation. But, in one of his romantic moments, he had done wrong.

The week before, on his night off, he had attended a picture show, picking, as usual, one that depicted a stirring romance of the West. He had been rather disgusted with it. The cinema star was a hard-riding and straight-shooting hero, but he handled a gun in a peculiar manner in one scene, and Lemms told himself that a gun could not be handled that way.

The more he thought about it, the more convinced he became that the cinema star had made a mistake for once. Lemms was eager to prove himself either right or wrong. He had some vagrant idea of writing to the star about it, correcting the actor's technic, so to speak, but he wanted to be sure that he was right first.

However Lemms did not possess a gun with which to make the experiment. Mr. Balren, however, did have a gun. It was not a six-gun such as real Westerners use, but it was a gun. So Lemms, in an unguarded moment, had taken Gregory Balren's automatic from the drawer of the dresser and had carried it to the roof of the apartment house with him.

There, with nobody to observe him, he practiced a swift draw, as he had seen the cinema star do it. He began romancing. No longer was he Lemms the valet. For the moment he was a hardy cow-puncher about to do violence to his enemies.

You have heard of shadow boxing? Very well! Lemms shadow shot. He whirled; he fired from the hip; he darted this way and that and laid his enemies low, as it were. In his excitement he slipped the safety catch on the automatic. The next instant a shot rang out and a bullet went screaming up toward the sky, to fall blocks away.

Lemms was terrified at what he had done. He hurried back to Balren's apartment and let himself in. He slipped the pistol back where it belonged, intending to clean it later. But Nemesis overtook him. He never got a chance to clean it. Gregory Balren had a fit of history writing, and he was in the apartment all the time, even sending out for his meals. Moreover Lemms

could find nothing with which to clean the gun. He decided that he would wait until his next night off and purchase supplies.

He had purchased them this night. But his conscience was bothering him. It would be no more than right, he told himself, after a mental struggle, to confess everything to Mr. Balren and ask forgiveness. Perhaps Mr. Balren would be kind enough to grant it.

Lemms was worrying about it, as he made his way homeward. He had not enjoyed the show to any great extent. He dropped into a little restaurant and ate some supper, and then he walked on up the avenue to the apartment house. In the lobby he was informed by a thrilled elevator boy that there had been a tragedy during his absence.

"And they're lookin' for your boss, Mr. Balren," the boy declared. "The cops say as how him and some skirt done it. They found Mr. Balren's gun with one shot gone. Him and the woman both escaped. They searched the house and didn't find 'em. They're lookin' all over town for 'em now!"

"Dear me!" Lemms ejaculated.

A moment of horror came to him. Charging Gregory Balren with such a crime was ridiculous, of course. But there was the damning evidence of the exploded cartridge. Lemms knew what he must do now; he must confess to save his employer.

He went up in the elevator and hurried along the hall. An officer was on guard there a short distance from the door of the suite. He stopped Lemms.

"I am Mr. Balren's valet!" Lemms announced. "I have heard what has taken place. Mr. Balren is innocent, of course. The charge is ridiculous!"

"Maybe so," the policeman replied. "I'm only on guard. Crady is handlin' the homicide case."

"I wish to enter the apartment."

"Got orders not to let anybody in."

"But I work there!" Lemms persisted. "I must lay out Mr. Balren's things for morning."

"He ain't here, and he won't be here to use them," said the policeman.

"But it is my duty!" Lemms persisted. "And the shot from Mr. Balren's pistol—I can explain that. I fired the weapon a few days ago. I was up on the roof——"

"You're talkin' circles as far as I am concerned," the officer interrupted. "Tell it to Detective Crady. He'll be back here in an hour or so, I think."

"And do I understand that you refuse to let me go into the apartment?" Lemms demanded.

"Just what do you want to do in there?"

"Lay out Mr. Balren's clothes for morning," the valet replied. "When he is writing he sometimes rises early and draws his own bath and is dressed before I come down."

"He won't be in any hurry to bathe and dress in the mornin'," said the policeman. "But if you think you've got to do it, I'll go in there with you. And I'll keep my eyes on you, too!"

Lemms sniffed. He did not relish the attitude of this member of the city police. But he inclined his head, to show that he agreed, and took a key from his pocket. Side by side with the officer, he went down the corridor to the door of Gregory Balren's suite.

All this happened about twenty minutes after Balren had crept from beneath the divan and gone down the fire escape. Sally Sallwer, left alone again, found that the time passed slowly. Alone in the darkness, she became the prey of a hundred mingled emotions.

If Gregory Balren did not succeed in doing something, she would remain a fugitive. Sooner or later she would be captured. She was in evening dress, and it would be daylight in a few hours. She could not hope to remain in Balren's apartment indefinitely, for surely it would be searched again.

Rollberg would be at his office, Balren had said, and she remembered that she was working for Rollberg. She wanted to talk to him, explain her predicament, and ask his advice. And there was a telephone in one corner of the living room!

It would be an easy matter, she decided, to use that telephone to call Rollberg. She could talk in low tones, and the officer in the corridor would not hear her.

But she hesitated for a time. She did not want to be caught out in the room if somebody happened to come to the apartment. However the inaction was making her nervous. She felt that she wanted to scream. Finally she made up her mind. She crawled from beneath the divan, got over it, listened a moment, and then hurried across the room. She had noticed the telephone and knew well where it was located.

Again she listened and heard nothing to cause alarm. She removed the receiver, put it to her ear, waited impatiently for the sleepy question of the "central" girl. When it came, she gave the number.

"Hello!" a man's voice said.

"Mr. Rollberg?"

"Yes."

"This is Miss Sallwer."

"Ha!" Rollberg grunted. "What has been going on? I've got people working, even the Lone Star himself, but you might be able to tell me something of value. How did it happen? Did you shoot Frenge?"

"No," she whispered in reply. "I fired by accident, but I didn't hit him. Mr. Balren helped me escape afterward. I am in his apartment now. He has gone down to Dratner's apartment to see if he can learn anything."

"Listen to me carefully, Miss Sallwer!" Rollberg commanded. "I want you to——"

What it was that he wanted her to do, she did not learn at the moment. For the corridor door was opened suddenly, somebody snapped on all the lights, and she whirled from the telephone to find a policeman and another man standing just inside the door regarding her.

Sally Sallwer gave a little shriek of fright and dropped the receiver. She crouched back against the wall for an instant, her eyes wide with terror again, her hands clutching at her breast. Then she remembered suddenly what Balren had told her—that she had not killed Burton Frenge. She was innocent! The electric chair was not waiting for her.

The policeman and Lemms walked slowly into the room, the former first closing the hall door. That little instant of time gave Sally Sallwer an opportunity to collect herself, to regain a portion of her usual composure.

"Who are you?" she demanded harshly. "What do you mean by coming into the apartment like this and frightening me?"

"Who are you, if it comes to that?" the policeman demanded in turn.

"I am Mr. Gregory Balren's guest."

"Yeh? That's funny! Mr. Balren happens to be on the run just now, with the police after him."

"What did you say?"

"Oh, you heard me!" the officer declared. "This apartment of his is supposed to be empty, as far as folks are concerned. What are you doing here?"

But she had regained her composure fully by this time. Her eyes flashed, as she regarded him.

"That tone is not necessary!" she said. "Kindly be more courteous when you speak to me."

"I asked what you're doing here," the policeman said. "This isn't your apartment, you know. I come in and find you telephoning to somebody——"

"It is quite all right, officer," she interrupted. "Mr. Balren asked me to remain here until his valet returned. I have a message for the valet."

She said it on the spur of the moment, believing that she could handle Lemms if she could get the policeman away. She never had seen Lemms before, but something seemed to tell her that he was the valet, and he looked the part.

"Why didn't you have the lights turned on, if everything is all right?" the policeman demanded. He remained suspicious, it was evident. "Why were you telephoning in the dark? Why have you got a man's overcoat on over your dress? Sounds fishy! You're the woman who got away from Crady, aren't you? That's what! You're the one everybody is looking for now. You and this Mr. Balren made a clever getaway, all right. Balren may be gone, but I've got you!"

"If you dare insult me more——" she began.

"Nobody is supposed to be in this apartment!" the policeman told her.

"If you dare touch me——"

The policeman laughed at her. He drew his revolver, motioned for Lemms to stand to one side against the wall, and then advanced toward her.

"I'll just put the bracelets on you and then telephone to headquarters!" the policeman declared. "You can explain everything to Detective Crady—only I guess that you won't be able to explain much. I've got an idea that Crady will be mighty glad to see you. Come here!"

CHAPTER XII.

LEMMS PLAYS HERO.

AT this juncture old Mrs. Fate chuckled again, hesitated a moment, and then pointed her bony forefinger at Lemms. Here was pure romance, as Lemms often had wished to meet it. Here was something more tangible than could be seen upon a motion-picture screen. Here was a pretty maiden in distress, a policeman flourishing a gun, a chunk out of a drama. The thing thrilled Lemms greatly.

Lemms had not been away from the cinema palace long enough to lose its atmosphere entirely. He was still living in the world of make-believe. He remembered that a true man always helped a lady, and that at times minions of the law should be mistrusted and repulsed. He also remembered about the automatic that he had discharged, and he felt that he should do something by way of repaying Mr. Balren. Lemms was not quite sure what had happened, of course. But it seemed peculiar to him that this woman was here in the apartment unless by Mr. Balren's request. It had been intimated to him that she was associated with Gregory Balren in some manner. And she had said that she had a message for the valet!

All these things flashed through the mind of Lemms in an instant. He did not have time to analyze the situation and consider it soundly, because the policeman did not give him time. The policeman was advancing upon Sally Sallwer. In his left hand he held the revolver, as though the woman had been a desperate criminal, and with his right hand he fumbled for his handcuffs.

Sally Salwer was badly frightened again, and the sight of her face tore at Lemms' heartstrings. He did not like this particular policeman, either. He did not stop to think of the possible consequences of his act. He merely lunged forward unexpectedly, quickly, violently, surprising everybody, including himself.

The officer was caught at a disadvantage. Lemms had a surprising amount of strength in his body. The gun clattered to the floor, and the policeman was sent sprawling. His hand came forth with the handcuffs. But, before he realized what had happened, Lemms had torn the handcuffs from his grasp and had rapped the policeman on the side of the head with them.

Half stunned, the policeman started

to fight. The surprise and the fall had done more to disconcert him than the blow upon his head. They rolled over once, and Lemms, being on top for an instant, reached out and grasped the heavy police revolver. He crashed it downward. It struck the policeman behind the ear, and he groaned and was still.

Sally Sallwer had covered her eyes with her hands for a moment, but she dropped her hands now and viewed the scene before her.

"What—what have you done?" she gasped.

"You—you are a friend of Mr. Balren—and this policeman would have put handcuffs on you!" said Lemms. "I—really, miss, I could not stand by and witness it!"

"But now——"

Lemms had no reply ready. There flashed into his mind full knowledge of what he had done. Crimes galore could be charged up against him. He had interfered with an officer in the performance of his duty! He had committed assault and battery upon that officer's person! He had disturbed the peace, and he had been guilty of disorderly conduct.

Terror immediately seized upon Lemms, but it was the sort of terror that causes a man to go into action, instead of standing white-faced and waiting to be stricken down. Lemms slipped the policeman's revolver into his own pocket, not realizing what he was doing. Then he tugged and pulled the unconscious officer into the dressing room.

He acted mechanically. Far back in his brain there were little memory cells, perhaps, that had stamped upon them scenes that Lemms had witnessed in the cinema. Lemms enacted a few of them now.

He gave Sally Sallwer not the slightest attention. He stripped a sheet from Gregory Balren's bed and tore it into strips. He bound and gagged the officer of the law speedily and deftly, as though he had done such a thing times without number. When he had finished, he rolled the policeman into the closet and closed the door. Then he ran back into the living room.

"What—what have you done?" Sally Sallwer asked him again.

"The message!" Lemms gasped. "The message!"

"What message?"

"The one that Mr. Balren told you to give me. I am Lemms, his valet."

"There was no message. I—I lied—did not know what else to say to him."

"But—here in this room——"

"Mr. Balren asked me to remain here until he returned. I was hiding beneath the divan. I crawled out to telephone."

"You'd best hide again," Lemms said. "He's in the closet—can't see——"

"But possibly he is conscious again and has heard. I—I must get away!" she said.

"Command me, madam!" said Lemms. He had read a film title like that.

"Mr. Balren is trying to get evidence to show that neither he nor I had anything to do with the killing of Mr. Frenge," she told him swiftly. "I do not know exactly where he is, or what he is doing. I must hide until he is done. But you—you'll be in trouble, too, after this! You struck that officer!"

Lemms knew it. He did not have to be told. He shivered a bit, put a moist hand against a moist forehead, and seemed to be coming out of a dream.

"Oh, my hat!" he gasped.

Visions of prison seemed to float before his eyes. He saw himself wearing prison garb and a number. He, too, felt like making an immediate escape.

"I must get away!" Sally Sallwer was gasping. "Are the halls guarded?"

"I do not think so," Lemms replied. "There is an officer down in the lobby, though."

"What are you going to do?"

"I—I scarcely know," Lemms replied. "I merely tried to be of service to you. Mr. Balren, I fancy, will aid me if there is any trouble."

"But just now Mr. Balren must aid himself," she told him. "You, too, had better hide. I'll slip out into the hall and manage to get away. You wait a bit and then leave."

Lemms seemed incapable of thinking of a better plan. He licked at his dry lips and blinked his eyes rapidly. "No message! No message!" he kept repeating, as though there had been any sense in that.

Sally Sallwer hurried across the room to the hall door and opened it cautiously and slowly. She peered out, to find that there was nobody in the hall. Without another word to Lemms, she slipped through the door and was gone.

Lemms closed the door softly after her. He stood in the middle of the living room for a moment, rubbing at his chin thoughtfully. He seemed to realize that he should help his employer—that he and Gregory Balren and the young woman were in the same boat and drifting on the same current. But Lemms did not know how to help Mr. Balren, did not know his whereabouts. However, he must get away immediately. He did not want to remain there. Groans were coming from the closet. and Lemms knew that the policeman had returned to consciousness. Yes, Lemms was eager to get away! He was not certain that the sheet was an extra strong one. If the policeman managed to get free, there might be violence.

Lemms hurried across the room to the window by the fire escape and opened it. He ran back and snapped off the lights. He crossed to the window again and got out upon the landing; then he closed the window behind him.

Now he had a moment of indecision. Up, or down? To the roof of the building, or to the court below? Mr. Lemms was a man who did not like dizzy heights. He did not care to be chased across roofs. He decided to descend.

The reaction had set in now. Lemms was trembling. He did not feel sure-footed. So he went down the ladder slowly to the landing below, and there he paused for a moment to rest. Then he went on down the ladder. And so he came to the fire escape landing just outside the dressing room of Martin Dratner's apartment. There he paused once more.

He noticed that the window was open, but he thought nothing of that. He would rest for a moment there in the cool darkness, he told himself, and then he would go on down into the court and eventually make his way to the alley. He would hurry to some quiet hotel and obtain lodging for the night. He imagined that he heard somebody move inside the Dratner dressing room, and he crouched against the wall of the building, with his heart pounding at his ribs. Terror was upon him again. He was afraid to go back up the ladder, afraid to pass that dark window and descend.

"Confound the woman!" Mr. Lemms mused. "She is the cause of all this!"

Since Eve, the woman always has been blamed! But the woman, had Lemms only known it, was having troubles of her own. Fright had taken possession of her once more. Out in the corridor it seemed to her that she was in the open, where everybody in the city could see her, could point her out to officers of the law.

She hurried to the stairs and descended a flight. She saw nobody, and she descended another flight of stairs. Nobody was in the hall there. It was in her mind to go to the rear stairs and on down to the ground floor; she would try to get out through the tradesmen's entrance which she knew must be somewhere in the rear.

Slipping along the hall like a shadow, she made no more noise than one. Ahead

of her she could see the door of Martin Dratner's apartment. The sight of it made her shudder. She had entered that door some hours before, without a thought of danger or even trouble. She had expected that Burton Frenge would hand over the letters the moment she exhibited the pistol Rollberg had given her.

And now she was a fugitive, suspected of a crime. Gregory Balren had assured her that she was not guilty, but that did not change her status as a fugitive. Others must be compelled to believe in her innocence; until they did, she must run and hide and shake with fear.

For a moment she stopped, pressing against the wall, looking behind her, ahead of her, once more at the door, at sight of which she shuddered. She had not killed Burton Frenge! Who had done it, then? Who had fired the fatal shot? Had it come through the window or from the bedroom?

And so Martin Dratner paced back and forth across his living room, muttering to himself; Gregory Balren watched him from the dark dressing room; Lemms crouched on the landing of the fire escape; and Sally Sallwer crept slowly along the hall toward the door of the Dratner apartment, trying to reach the rear stairs.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLOSE QUARTERS.

CROUCHING in the dark dressing room, Gregory Balren watched through the keyhole. Martin Dratner was acting in a peculiar fashion. Balren knew Dratner rather well. They belonged to the same clubs. They had played golf and bridge together. Balren never had liked Dratner particularly, but he had nothing against the man.

One thing he remembered, however. Martin Dratner had been rather quick and eager to tell Detective Crady about Balren's little quarrel with Burton Frenge at the club. He wondered a bit at that. It looked as though Dratner had gone out of his way to throw suspicion upon him.

Dratner continued to pace back and forth across the living room within Balren's vision; and he also continued his mutterings. Once he came to a stop near the door of the dressing room, and Balren prepared to hurry quickly into the closet, should Dratner start to enter.

But Martin Dratner did not try to enter the dressing room. He stood just outside the door, looking at it. His fists were clenched. When he stepped back, Balren could see his face. It was a terrible countenance now, in which were mingled rage, fear and other emotions which Balren could not analyze. And Dratner was muttering once more.

"Must keep cool," he was saying. "Everythnig—all right! Saved from ruin! Double-cross nobody else——"

Gregory Balren had a sudden suspicion, but he knew that he needed more than a suspicion. Was it possible that Dratner had had trouble with Burton Frenge, also? Had Dratner killed the man or plotted his death? If so, how had the thing been accomplished? From where had the fatal shot been fired? And where was the weapon from which it had come?

On the other hand, it was possible that Martin Dratner had nothing at all to do with the crime, yet was rather glad that it had occurred. Balren knew there were many who would not shed tears over Burton Frenge's passing. Dratner might have been muttering about somebody else who had been saved from ruin. A few mumbled words meant nothing under the circumstances; but they gave Gregory Balren food for thought.

Dratner started pacing the floor again. Balren carefully tried the door before him and found that it was locked. He slipped quietly across the room and tried the door of the bedchamber, and he found that locked, also. Balren had a

bunch of keys in his pocket. He tried them on the door of the bedchamber, which had only an ordinary lock, and one of them did the work.

Gregory Balren opened the door softly. The bedchamber had a single small light burning in it. The door between the bedroom and the living room was closed. Gregory Balren took a handkerchief from his pocket and tied it across his face just under the eyes. He pulled his hat down low. Dratner might recognize him if he came upon him, but there was a chance that he might not. And then, stopping now and then to listen, Gregory Balren commenced a swift search of the bedchamber. He ransacked it much as a burglar might have done. He tumbled things out of drawers and left them where they fell. He examined the bed thoroughly.

A commotion in the living room took him to the door, and once more he peered through a keyhole. A buzzer had sounded, and Martin Dratner had opened the hall door. Detective Jack Crady walked into the room. He had Sally Sallwer by the arm.

Balren gasped when he saw that. Had Crady searched his apartment and found the girl? Had she disobeyed him and left the suite, only to be captured? What would happen now?

He felt that it was dangerous in the bedroom, and he could see better through the keyhole of the dressing room. So he hurried back into it and locked the door behind him. He darted across and knelt before the keyhole again.

Sally Sallwer had met with misfortune. About to slip past the door of the Dratner apartment, she had heard the elevator ascending. She knew that she would not have time to get past the cage before the elevator reached the floor. So she whirled around, intending to run back to the front stairs and ascend them. But the elevator stopped, and Detective Crady stepped out of it. He was just in time to see her. He shouted and dashed forward. Sally Sallwer felt herself suddenly grow weak. She was unable to run, and she knew that it would avail her nothing. She could not hope to outdistance Crady.

"Got you!" Crady said. "Now, young woman, we'll have a little show-down. You come along with me!"

He led her back to the door of Dratner's apartment and rang. Dratner admitted them, but recoiled when he saw Crady with the prisoner. The detective forced her into the living room and compelled her to sit on a couch. He waved Dratner to a chair near by. Then he stood in front of Sally Sallwer and glared down at her.

"Did you kill Burton Frenge?" he demanded.

"No—no!"

"You shot at him?"

"It was an accident," she cried. "I didn't kill him!"

"Why did you shoot at him?"

"He—he was rushing toward me," she gasped. "I thought that he meant to hurt me."

"That part may be all right," Crady told her. "But how does it happen that you had a pistol on you? Do you generally go to swell parties with a pistol ready to use?"

"I—I can explain," she cried. "I never killed him."

"Not with the pistol you dropped on the floor, that I know," Detective Crady said. "But how about another weapon?"

"I didn't have one!"

"What do you know about Balren?"

"I never spoke to him until to-night."

"You expect me to believe that—when he tried to hide you, when he helped you escape?"

"He was just being kind. I told him that I never meant to shoot at Mr. Frenge, and he believed me."

"Where is Balren now?"

"I do not know."

"When did you see him last?"

"An hour or so ago. We—we were

hiding under the divan in his apartment."

Crady's face grew purple with wrath for an instant. "Where did he go?" the detective demanded.

"He said that he was going out to gather evidence to show that neither of us had anything to do with killing Mr. Frenge."

Detective Crady looked at her searchingly for a moment. Crady was a man who did not always speak his thoughts. He had been quite busy since leaving the apartment house, and he had gathered some facts. But there were some things about Sally Sallwer that he did not know.

"Why did you have that pistol?" he demanded now, snapping the words at her.

"I—I work for a detective agency," she said.

"You?"

"Yes, for the Lone Star Agency."

"I can find out soon whether that is true," Crady said. "What about you and Frenge?"

"I was trying to get some letters that he had, letters that compromised a girl. He—he found out my object and grew angry. He rushed at me. I threatened with with the pistol. It—it was discharged. I don't really know how it happpened. I never killed him. Mr. Balren has told me that he was killed with a .38 caliber bullet."

"That is true," said Crady. "If you killed him, it wasn't with the gun you dropped. But why did you make a getaway, if it was an accident?"

"Because I thought at first that I had killed him," she said. "I—I was terrified. I was so frightened that I did not realize what I was doing. I went up the fire escape and into Mr. Balren's suite."

"You come into the dressing room with me and show me just what happened in there!" Detective Crady commanded. "You come along, too, Mr. Dratner. I may want to ask you some questions."

"This is terrible—terrible!" Martin Dratner moaned. "I'll never be able to continue living in this apartment. The thing has shaken my nerves!"

Detective Crady led the way to the door of the dressing room, taking the key from his pocket.

Gregory Balren just had time to slip inside the closet and close the door.

CHAPTER XIV.

BALREN TAKES CHARGE.

CRADY unlocked the door and threw it open; then he snapped on the lights. He stood back and motioned for Sally Sallwer and Dratner to enter ahead of him. They did so, standing against the wall, shuddering, looking at the place where the body of Burton Frenge had been stretched a short time before. A dark spot on the rug spoke eloquently of what had occurred.

The detective did not speak at once. He was looking around the room. He glanced at the open window and at the door of the closet, likewise at the door of the bedchamber. If he noticed that anything had been disturbed since the last time he had seen the room, he did not mention the fact.

"Tell me!" he commanded.

"Mr. Frenge was running after me, and I ran in here," Sally Sallwer told him. "He closed the door and pretended that he was going to kiss me. I stopped him, told him that I was working for a detective agency, and that I wanted the letters."

"Written by some girl, were they?"

"Yes. I do not care to tell more about them unless Mr. Rollberg, the manager, instructs me to do so. They had nothing to do with the crime."

"I'm not so sure about that," Crady said. "A person who will engage a detective agency to get back compromising letters might plan a murder to close a

man's mouth forever. But we can go into that later. Go ahead!"

"Mr. Frenge turned furious. He rushed at me, and I felt sure that he intended to hurt me. He looked like a maniac. I got out the pistol, but he did not stop. I don't know how I happened to fire it. I was so frightened that——"

"That's enough for now!" Detective Crady informed her. "Just stand where you are!"

He removed his own weapon from his pocket, glanced around the room again, then crossed swiftly to the door of the closet. He put out a hand, grasped the knob, turned it, and jerked the door open, holding his revolver in readiness. Gregory Balren had no time to hide.

"So!" Crady said. "Come out of there—you! Got a handkerchief over your face, have you? We'll soon take a look at your mug! Step out here!"

Gregory Balren obeyed. He had no weapon on him. There was nothing else that he could do. Detective Crady looked him over swiftly. He recognized the clothes Balren was wearing. But he did not speak Balren's name.

"Who is this man?" Martin Dratner gasped. He, it appears, did not recognize Balren. Perhaps he never had seen Balren wearing those clothes before. And Balren was of ordinary size; there were a thousand men in the city his physical counterpart, as far as size was concerned.

"Do you know him, Dratner?" Crady asked.

"No!"

"You didn't hide him in there?"

"Heavens, no! I haven't been in the room since you locked it. I did not know anybody was there."

"He is a very careless fellow," Crady observed. "The window is open twice as wide as when I saw it last. I thought that we might find somebody in the closet. What have you to say for yourself?"

He addressed the last remark to Balren. And Gregory Balren answered him by raising his hands and removing the handkerchief.

"Balren!" Dratner cried. "What does this mean?"

"I thought it was you, Balren," observed the detective. "Now I have you and the girl both. Why are you here, Balren? Come to remove evidence, or something like that? If you did, you made a fatal mistake. Want to tell me about it? Anything that you may say, of course——"

"You needn't go into that," Gregory Balren interrupted. "I was looking over the scene of the crime, if you want to know. I hoped to find something that would prove my innocence and that of Miss Sallwer."

"Did you find it?" Crady demanded.

"I was interrupted," Balren said. "I might be able to do it yet, if I had a chance. But now——"

"Now," said Crady, "you'll go to jail, and we'll have a nice little session and get at the truth. You and this woman both!"

Lemms, be it remembered, was crouching on the landing of the fire escape. When Detective Crady entered the dressing room with the others and snapped on the lights, those lights flooded the landing. Lemms was unable to cross it and continue on down the ladder to the floor of the court.

Terror claimed him again. He was afraid to ascend, too. So he remained crouching in the corner of the landing, listening and watching. Once more the impulse to be a cinema actor in real life came to him. There was a tangible reason for it. He felt that his safety lay in joining forces with his employer. And he had in one of his pockets the revolver that he had taken from the policeman.

He heard Gregory Balren state that he might yet get the evidence he wished if he had a chance. He heard Crady

threaten to take Balren to jail. Lemms, deep in the mire already, as he considered himself to be, judged that it would not hurt him much if he sank another inch or so. He removed the revolver from his pocket and suddenly presented himself at the open window.

"Put 'em up!" Lemms commanded. It flashed through his mind that no screen star could have done it better.

"Drop that gun!"

At the first command, Detective Jack Crady whirled around with surprise in his face. At the second the surprise turned to rage, but he dropped his revolver, as he had been commanded. Lemms looked more ferocious than he was really, but Crady did not know that. He saw only a man framed in the window, a man who looked as though he would be delighted to shoot. Crady was no fool; he knew when another man had the "drop" on him.

Lemms crawled through the window, still holding his weapon in readiness. He glared at Detective Crady.

"You go right ahead, Mr. Balren, and get that evidence," Lemms said. "I'll see that you aren't bothered, sir."

To say that Gregory Balren was surprised would be inadequate. He never had suspected Lemms of heroic tendencies. He did not attempt to explain to himself why Lemms was here. It was enough that the tables had been turned for a moment.

"Then we'll step into the living room, please!" Balren said.

They went into the living room. Lemms watched Detective Crady closely. He seemed to realize that, now he had gone this far, his one hope was in keeping the detective covered and at bay.

Gregory Balren motioned for all except Lemms to be seated. He remained standing and looked them over. Then he spoke.

"It is nonsensical to think that I killed Burton Frenge, or that Miss Sallwer had anything to do with it!" he said. "But the thing, of course, is to find the person who did kill him. Because Crady felt that I was under suspicion, I took measures to protect myself. It was rather a lark with me, Crady. I did not want to go to police headquarters and get a lot of notoriety. I believed in Miss Sallwer's innocence, so I wished to aid her. I feel quite sure, Crady, that there'll be no hard feelings on your part when you are convinced of our innocence."

"Maybe not!" Crady said.

"I called the Lone Star Agency, as you know," Balren continued. "The Lone Star himself is working on the case. So are half a hundred men and women who labor for the agency. You probably do not know considerable about the Lone Star outfit, Crady. It is a far-reaching one. I know Rollberg well, and he has told me a lot about it.

"The Lone Star himself is a wealthy man who likes a little excitement now and then. So he gets out once in a while and works on a case. The others work continually, of course, looking aftef the regular business of such an agency. You have heard a lot about the Lone Star. So have you, Dratner! He always gets at the truth, it seems; he always lands the guilty man. He has aided the police a score of times, and they do not even know his identity."

"That's true enough!" Crady answered immediately.

"As I said, The Lone Star has been working on this case, and by this time they should have found out something. Lemms, you keep Mr. Crady quiet, while I telephone."

"I'll do it, sir!" Lemms said.

Gregory Balren smiled at Crady, at Sally Sallwer, and last of all at Martin Dratner. Then he walked to the telephone and called the agency's number.

"That you, Rollberg?" he asked. "This is Gregory Balren. Have you anything of interest to report to me yet? Very well, I'll listen!"

He listened for some time, while the others in the room waited.

"That so?" Balren said finally. "Trouble with him, you say? Squeezing him on a business deal, eh? There may be something in that, of course. Thanks, Rollberg! Yes, I'll call again later!"

Balren turned away from the telephone and faced them again.

"Well, did you get any important information?" Detective Jack Crady demanded. "Has The Lone Star solved the case?"

Gregory Balren grinned at him.

"Let us go into Mr. Dratner's bedchamber!" he said.

CHAPTER XV.

A DINNER ENGAGEMENT.

QUICKLY Martin Dratner got to his feet.

"Into the bedroom?" he asked. "What on earth do you expect to find in there? Do you imagine that the murderer is still hiding in there? Preposterous!"

"Oh, we'll humor him!" Detective Crady said. "A man has the right to clear himself, if it is possible. I'll unlock the door."

They got up and moved across the room. For an instant the eyes of Detective Jack Crady met those of Gregory Balren, and it was as though a message flashed between them.

Crady unlocked the door.

"Let Mr. Dratner go in first," Balren suggested.

Dratner threw the door open and stepped inside. Balren was watching him carefully. Martin Dratner gave a cry of surprise. He had seen that the room had been ransacked.

"Thieves!" Dratner shrieked. "Somebody has been going through my things!"

He looked around the room wildly, but first of all he glanced swiftly at the foot of the bed. Balren grinned.

"Place ransacked," Crady grunted.

"Oh, I did that while I was looking for evidence!" Balren said. "You'll find nothing missing, Dratner. I was interrupted and did not have time to put your things back."

"But, why—what——" Martin Dratner gasped. "How dare you, Balren? It is for the police to do such things!"

"Pardon me a moment!" Gregory Balren said. "It is for the police to do things now. Lemms, return that revolver to your pocket, please. Detective Crady, if you'll look in the foot of the bed, possibly beneath the mattress, I imagine that you'll find a weapon of .38 caliber."

Detective Jack Crady gave a gasp of amazement and sprang forward. An instant later he whirled around, a revolver in his hand.

"Correct!" he cried. "But what——"

"How did it get there?" Martin Dratner demanded. "Who could have put the thing there?"

"Why, you did it!" Gregory Balren declared.

"What's that?"

"You put it there—certainly!—after you had shot and killed Burton Frenge!"

"What's that? You—you——" Dratner shrieked.

"It is very simple," Balren continued. "I was not exactly sure, of course. But the moment you looked into the room, Dratner, and saw that it had been ransacked, your eyes flew to the foot of the bed. That is why I told Detective Crady to look there for the weapon. I think, Crady, that you'll find Dratner's finger prints on it and those of nobody else except perhaps yourself, since you are handling the gun now. And one cartridge exploded!"

"You—you——" Dratner shrieked again, his face white.

"I was in your dressing room, Dratner, while you were pacing the floor and muttering to yourself!" Balren said. "Remember what you were saying?"

Dratner could not be sure. What man, under stress of emotion and muttering to himself, can be sure afterward exactly what words he had used? Had he said something to establish his guilt?

Gregory Balren did not give him a chance to think up a story.

"Dratner, you had been having trouble with Frenge!" he said. "Frenge double-crossed you in a business deal. He was in a position to strip you of almost all your fortune. He did it because you attracted the attention of a certain woman in whom he was much interested."

"I——" Dratner started to speak.

"Listen to me!" Balren commanded. "You wanted Frenge out of the way. You are one of those men who think life not worth the living without ample funds. So you plotted to get him. You watched your chance. You saw Frenge follow Miss Sallwer into the dressing room. You darted into the bedroom and opened the door a crack. You saw the scene between Frenge and Miss Sallwer.

"It was a great chance for you, and you raised the revolver and fired. The orchestra covered the noise of the shot. Miss Sallwer fired accidentally at the same time. She was so frightened that she did not notice things. She could not see the door of the bedroom from where she was standing.

"She fired at Frenge from the front, with a .32 caliber weapon. You fired into his back with a .38. Then you closed the door, thrust the weapon under the mattress at the foot of the bed, and went back into the living room to your guests. There you waited for the crime to be discovered."

"You devil!" Dratner shrieked.

"And that's the truth!" Balren cried.

Martin Dratner seemed to wilt. "Yes, it is the truth!" he admitted. "He—he double-crossed me. He would have ruined me in another few days. I—I did it!"

He broke down—collapsed on the side of the bed. Gregory Balren looked at Detective Crady.

"There's your man, Crady," he said. "It was about three fourths guesswork on my part, of course, but it worked to perfection this time. Not much of a case for The Lone Star. He didn't have a chance to show his ability; we were too quick for him. I suppose I'll have to send the agency a fat fee, however."

Handcuffs clicked. Then Detective Crady turned to face Gregory Balren again.

"Mighty good work!" he commented. "But you may be interested to know that I was on the right trail, myself. I was waiting only to locate the weapon. My men searched once, but not well enough."

"Dratner showed me where the weapon was. I thought he would be worried, when he saw the room ransacked, and would look in the right place for it. I didn't have a chance to complete the search. Well, Crady, do you forgive me for escaping you?"

"Sure thing, Mr. Balren! I never thought you killed Frenge, but I did think, at first, that Miss Sallwer had something to do with it, and that you knew more than you would tell me. You're the sort of romantic cuss to aid a woman, no matter what it was she had done."

"And am I forgiven for escaping, too?" Sally Sallwer asked.

"Surely!" said Crady, grinning at her. "You are one of the profession."

"Not after this. It is not the sort of work for me!" she declared.

Mr. Lemms stepped forward. "Pardon, sir!" he said. "But a short time ago, in a moment of excitement, I—er—was compelled to overcome a police officer and bind and gag him, so that this young lady would not be taken into custody."

"You?" Balren cried. "You've turned hero, Lemms?"

"I trust that there will be no serious trouble over it," Lemms said. "The policeman is in your dressing-room closet, Mr. Balren. Perhaps you will liberate him? If he sees me——"

Balren laughed. "I'll not only liberate him, but I'll give him a present that will make him forget everything about it," Gregory Balren declared. "And now I am going to escort Miss Sallwer to her home. She has had enough excitement for one night. It will be daylight within an hour, and she is in evening dress."

The policeman upstairs was liberated and compensated, and he was told by Crady to forget it, which he was glad to do under the circumstances. Lemms put out Mr. Balren's morning things and retired to his own room. Detective Jack Crady conducted Martin Dratner to the nearest precinct jail. And Gregory Balren called a taxicab and drove slowly through the streets, with Miss Sally Sallwer beside him.

"The forefinger of fate!" said he. "It pointed out the way, as it does generally. Really, Miss Sallwer, I must see you again, since we have been companions in all this excitement. You'll dine with me this evening?"

"Gladly." she said.

"And so you contemplate giving up detective work?"

"I certainly do."

"They say that a woman cannot keep a secret, but I believe that you can."

"Try me!" she said.

"I am The Lone Star!"

She looked at him in amazement.

"I must have a little adventure now and then," he explained. "I write histories, depict stirring events, and so I feel like going out and living them once in a while."

"And you—you were on a case to save yourself?"

"Myself—and you," he reminded her. "Keep my secret, please. I put up the money, and Rollberg did the rest. It gives me a chance for a bit of adventure now and then. Nobody knows the identity of The Lone Star except Rollberg —and you!"

"But why have you trusted me?" she asked.

"Something tells me," he replied, "that you may be trusted. Remember the dinner this evening—dinner and a show—some show in which there is nothing more violent than a song and dance number."

"I'll remember," she said softly.

They reached the house where she lived, and Gregory Balren conducted her to the door.

"The greatest touch of mystery in the whole affair is Lemms," he said. "Still I am not surprised much at the change in him. He would be a poor man who would not rush in to aid you, if you were in peril!"

Sally Sallwer retired with that remark ringing in her ears. She told herself that it would not be so very long until time for dinner.

POLICEMAN KILLS YOUTH

PATROLMAN MICHAEL O'HARA of the West Sixty-eighth Street Station, New York, recently shot a young man on the street, when he heard a noise which he declares sounded like a pistol shot. It was afterward found to have been the back fire from an automobile. Seeing three men walking up the street, O'Hara went after them, bringing his nightstick down between two of them, not hitting either. Then he drew his pistol and shot one of them, a young man named Barlow, who later died in a hospital. O'Hara was later arrested and is to be tried for the slaying of the youth.

Why "One-leg" Laughed

by

Oscar Schisgall

Author of "The Denver Tornado," "The Irish in the Polish," etc.

OLD PIERRE RABAT—"One-leg" Rabat, they called him—came hobbling down the village street on his crutch. He moved swiftly, his single leg swinging out before him in long strides. Not once did he glance to a side. His deeply lined face was set in forbidding grimness; his narrow eyes were flaming in a struggle to crush back tears.

Rabat shunned the sidewalks. He walked in the gutter, far out in the middle, where no one would interrupt his progress with an untimely greeting. Apparently he was oblivious to the whispering crowds which formed lines on either side of him, as though he were a parade marching for their entertainment. Women were there, leaning against fences and hedges, murmuring, shaking their heads sympathetically and clinging tightly to their children's hands. Men were there—frowning, silent men, who watched Rabat, as he passed.

With his gaze fixed steadily before him, Rabat saw nothing. He wore no hat, so that his thick, white hair fluttered in the warm breeze. About him a loose, ragged jacket flapped listlessly. He made no effort to button it, but hobbled on rapidly. Had those spectators not been staring at him, he might have forgotten his pride long enough to shriek his anguish to the skies. But he was under relentless scrutiny, and he limped on in desperate silence.

For this was an awesome day in the most peaceful village of all Brittainy—Passemont. Less than an hour ago Jules, the son of One-leg Rabat, had been sentenced to execution on the guillotine. Murder was the charge—willful, passionate murder. And Jules Rabat must atone by yielding his head to the greedy knife.

One-leg continued between the lines of gaping villagers. Of the colorful dresses and the full-flown flowers in gardens and low houses crouching behind hedges, he was unconscious. He knew only that eyes were piercing him. He saw no faces, no bodies—only lines of curious, sympatehtic eyes.

Yet he went on with a certain pride. When he had left the village street, his pace slackened slightly. There was a dirt road here, with no spectators at its sides. His misty gaze roamed without seeing over rolling fields of green. And of them he was not afraid. He permitted his shoulders to droop.

Presently he arrived at his home—a wooden house whose boards were much in need of paint. A yellow sign had been nailed over the door: "Pierre Rabat, Carpenter and Cabinet Maker." One-leg entered, after glancing back toward the village for the last time. Far up the road he saw clusters of houses drenched in brilliant sunlight; and beside them were people, all of them facing his own dwelling.

He closed the door quietly and moved forward to a deep, cushioned chair. For a while he paused, gazing blankly at the wall. Then of a sudden his crutch clattered to the floor. He sank into the chair. His bony hands twined themselves in his white hair. He swayed from side to side, and great, quivering sobs burst from his tortured being.

A half hour later, when Monsieur Lanelle, the *maire* of Passemont, came to him, he was still moaning and swaying. Monsieur Lanelle did not knock; no one who knew One-leg Rabat ever knocked at his door. Rather than cause him to seek his crutch and hobble to answer the summons, his friends brushed aside formality and stepped into his house freely.

The *maire* stood silent. He was a big man, almost corpulent, and his gray beard was trimmed in a severe oblong, not unlike the beards of Egyptian pharoahs. Hands clasped under the tails of his Prince Albert coat, he stared down upon the harassed cripple. Then he came forward and placed stubby fingers upon Rabat's shoulders.

"It is a very sad affair," he said softly. "I am sorry for you, Rabat—very sorry."

One-leg raised his head from his hands. Into his eyes came a strange fervor, shining through the mistiness of tears.

"Sorry for me?" he cried bitterly. "Monsieur, your sympathy is misplaced. Think of Jules!"

"Jules?" repeated the *maire,* shrugging, as though the fate of Rabat's son had been decided once and for all, beyond redemption.

"Yes!" exclaimed One-leg, lifting a trembling hand. "Jules—my Jules! *Nom de Dieu,* you waste sympathy on me when an innocent boy is giving his head to the guillotine!"

"Well, now," said Monsieur Lanelle, clearing his throat, "his innocence is something you and I ought not to debate, Rabat. That has been settled."

"Settled? Settled? Bah! Settled for the judge and for the town! But do you think it is settled for me or for justice? Monsieur, if all France calls him guilty, I shall still believe him innocent! Jules never killed the man. I *know* he didn't!"

"How do you know?"

"Jules told me!"

Evidently Monsieur Lanelle was neither impressed by this reason nor eager to continue the discussion of Jules' probable guilt. The boy had been convicted; there all uncertainty ought to end. The good man had come to offer condolence, and he was received, not with gratitude, but with opposition.

"Jules told me he was innocent—he swore to me," went on One-leg Rabat, determined to pursue his defense. "And, monsieur, my son would not lie to me. I believe him. In spite of all verdicts, in spite of everything, I believe him!"

"But, Rabat, be reasonable. There was an eye-witness."

"Eye witness!" One-leg actually yelled the words in scorn and rage. "Paul Dosset an eye-witness? Do you think I believe that canaille in preference to my son?"

From Monsieur Lanelle issued a long sigh. He stroked his well-trimmed beard and strolled to a window. He gazed out over flat, green fields stretching away to a horizon pink under a falling sun. At the moment the *maire* preferred not to speak.

But One-leg Rabat was emotionally turbulent. He wanted to talk, to shout his faith in his son. And so, when Monsieur Lanelle turned back from the window, he saw a cripple standing on his one leg, supporting himself by clinging to the back of his chair and declaring with vehemence, which was almost hysterical:

"Paul Dosset lied on the witness

chair! If he says he saw Jules kill Brochard, then he lies, I tell you! Jules did not do it. He could not have done it. Imagine my Jules picking up a stake and striking Brochard with it! What reason could he have had?"

"I don't know," said Monsieur Lanelle. "Sit down, Rabat. You are not yourself."

"Do you think I can sit and be quiet when my boy is going to the guillotine for a crime which he did not commit? He won't go—he can't—he can't——"

Then, suddenly realizing the futility of his assertions, old Rabat stopped and gulped. His hand moved across his haggard, damp features, and limply he sagged back into his chair. Tears welled in his eyes. His lined countenance was pallid.

Immediately Monsieur Lanelle came to his side.

"Now, now, Rabat," he murmured, "you must be stronger than that. We are sorry for you, all of us. But what can one do? Law is law."

One-leg did not reply. Indeed, he did not utter another word until the good *maire* had departed. Then, staring at the floor, he curled his fingers over the arms of his chair, swallowed loudly, and whispered to himself:

"Paul Dosset lied! He could not have been an eye-witness to a thing which Jules did not do. His lies won't send my boy to the guillotine. No! *Nom de Dieu*—no! Not if I can——"

He stopped, baffled. After all, what could he do? Justice had passed sentence. Jules must die.

II.

Late that evening One-leg Rabat went through the trapdoor in his kitchen into his cellar. It was a difficult task for him to descend the ten steps to the ground, but long practice had taught him a convenient manner of going down sidewards. Instinct and habit led him to a swinging oil lamp, which he lit with unsteady fingers. A yellow glow suffused the underground chamber.

It was a most unusual cellar. One-leg used it as a workshop in which he made cabinets and chairs and tables and all the other things for which he found customers in Passemont. One end of the long, stone-floored excavation was occupied by a bench, a solid working table, and countless tools. Here, under a second lamp, Rabat toiled through the days. There were no windows admitting the sunshine above; always his lamps burned. But he did not mind. Years of labor had calloused him to the unpleasantness of his quarters. He rather liked it now; he could talk to himself without risking the embarrassment of being overheard.

The rest of the cellar resembled the attic of an ancient home. It was littered with every conceivable relic of Rabat's life. Trunks were there and a crib—the crib which had once been used by Jules. But the most startling thing in the whole collection was a cage—not a small, insignificant cage, but one large enough to imprison a lion.

In his younger days One-leg Rabat had been a circus carpenter. During his travels with the show he had received that cage as a token from an animal trainer, whose finest lion had died. It had been a grotesque gift—the jest of all the circus hands. "Now that you've got the thing, what will you do with it?" his companions taunted him. Pierre Rabat, however, accepted the cage without protest. Let people laugh. Its iron would bring a few francs, he had told himself shrewdly at the time.

Then a falling tent pole had cost him his leg and his position with the circus. Back to Passemont he took his broken body and all his earthly possessions, including the cage. It stood there, in his murky cellar, forgotten and nn-

noticed. Some day it might bring a few francs.

One-leg sat on his bench, the crutch leaning against him. He had come down so that he might forget his anguish for a while by forcing his attention upon work. But his hammer lay idle in his lap, and his gaze was fixed dully upon the huge cage. Its bars gleamed like dirty gold in the yellow light of the lamp. Despite him, his thoughts reverted to the sentence his son had suffered, and he considered the evidence of Paul Dosset.

Dosset, once known as Jules' most intimate companion, had mounted the witness chair as a witness for the State —an eye-witness. Both boys had been employed by the same circus which had once counted old One-leg among its retinue. Things happened that way in Passemont; the children followed the fathers, generation after generation.

Before the judge and every one else Paul Dosset swore that he had seen Jules lift a tent stake and swing it to the head of Brochard, the manager. It was early morning; no one else had been present. But many of the performers and workers testified that frequent demonstrations of ill feeling had been evinced by Jules Rabat for Monsieur Brochard. And only that morning, the morning of the murder, a clown had heard the manager inform Jules that this was his last day of employment. He could pack his few clothes, swing his bag over his back, and go. There was no room for chronic protestors against wages and management.

Then Jules himself had been questioned. Colorless, nervous, he tried bravely to prove his innocence. The story of the stake was a lie; he had not done it. To this he swore repeatedly.

"But," objected the astute lawyer, pointing a finger at his nose, "it has been shown that Brochard was killed by a stake. And we have a witness who saw you do it!"

"It's a lie!" insisted Jules heatedly. "It's a lie! I didn't do it! I wouldn't be surprised if he did it himself, the dog!"

At this vague accusation half the people in the courtroom had muttered and scowled and glanced at Dosset, who sat expressionless. But, of course, there was no evidence against the witness. The words were merely a manifestation of the prisoner's desperation, and the trial had proceeded to ultimate conviction.

Afterward, old One-leg Rabat had conversed with his son. They were alone in a cell; and the boy, tears running wildly down his thin cheeks, had grasped his father's arms and declared again and again that he had not murdered Brochard.

One-leg departed, convinced. He encountered Paul Dosset outside the court house, and he stopped before the slender, sallow-faced witness. Distinctly, so that every one near them heard, One-leg said:

"Dosset, you are a liar! You have murdered my Jules with your perjury! If you remain in Passemont, I pray that no decent man will ever stoop even to spit at you!"

Dosset staggered, and his features became quite as white as those of One-leg Rabat. But he managed to control his emotions. He said softly:

"Monsieur, were it not for your age and physical weakness, we would settle things. I cannot fall so low as to fight an old cripple. And about my staying in Passemont, you needn't worry. I am leaving in the morning, not because I am afraid to stay, but because I must go back to the circus. And about what I said on the witness chair against Jules, it hurt me to do t. He was my best frend—once. But honor and law compelled me to tell the truth."

"You're a liar," curtly retorted One-leg Rabat and limped off on his parade through the village street.

And now he sat on his workbench and gazed at the cage and recalled all the happenings of the dreadful day. His face, ashen in the weird glow, was furrowed deeply. Jules would place his head on the guillotine in a month. Paul Dosset would return to his circus in the morning. Thus would justice miscarry, unless One-leg could do something.

In agony he stared at the cage. The hammer slipped unheeded to the stone floor. The minutes dragged by; the hour passed; two hours. Rabat searched his fevered brain for a way of saving his son. The oil lamp began to flicker, its flame wavering between life and death. And then suddenly the old man's eyes opened wide, and he straightened, as a torrent of color rushed to his pinched features.

Tightly his fingers gripped the crutch, though his hand quivered crazily. He was gaping at the cage in strange, horrified fascination. For a moment he held his breath. Then abruptly a hoarse laugh came from his dry throat. It was a queer laugh—the sort of laugh one would expect from a madman.

One-leg stared at the cage, with its wheels and adorned top. Slowly he rose, hobbled to it, examined it carefully, and felt the strength of its bars. Again he laughed, with the same mad intonation. Energy seemed to take hold of him. He hobbled up the steps into his kitchen, his crutch clattering on every board. Rapidly he went into a bedroom, and opened the bottom drawer of an ancient bureau. And there, under discarded clothes, which had become rags, his groping fingers encountered the cold handle of a thing for which he had never found use since the days he had watched the property of the circus—his revolver.

He looked at it, fondled it, and laughed again in satisfaction. He slipped it into the pocket of his loose jacket. Then trembling as though chilled, he stepped out of his house into a warm summer night.

III.

It was after midnight when Rabat reached the home of Paul Dosset. Actually Dosset had no home other than the circus. He merely boarded here during the progress of Jules' trial. The house was lonely, standing like a solitary sentinel on the dirt road leading into Passemont. To One-leg Rabat it offered no mysteries. He knew Madam Gauchet, its owner, and knew exactly what room she reserved for occasional boarders. Several times had he been summoned to mend broken chairs and tables in the house. Now he moved without hesitation to its rear. Here was a porch which Rabat mounted cautiously. Each squeak, as he crossed to a window, sent thrills through him, and he paused a long time between steps.

Out of the summer sky a full moon shone upon him and glittered upon the revolver which he drew from his pocket. The afternoon breeze had died, leaving the night tensely silent. To One-leg Rabat, quivering with excitement, that silence seemed pregnant with menace, like the quiet before a tropical storm.

Standing before the window, Rabat saw that Dosset had left it open to catch whatever air might stir toward him. Crouching, One-leg thrust the upper half of his body into the room and peered at the bed. His heart thumped wildly.

Paul Dosset was there, sleeping serenely, one arm extended behind his head. Old Rabat gathered his courage. He pushed forward the revolver and aimed it directly at the sleeper's head. Then he whispered: "Dosset!"

There was no response. Again he whispered the name, somewhat louder this time, and the man moved.

First the arm descended; then Paul

Dosset opened his eyes. He looked once at the figure in his window—a stooped figure, its white hair flooded by moonlight. With a jerk he sat erect, gaping at the revolver.

"If you raise your voice," warned One-leg Rabat, "I shall kill you. If you hesitate in obeying me, I shall kill you, too."

Dosset made a frantic effort to shake off sleep. He bent forward incredulously, and stared from the threatening revolver to the threatening countenance of the old man.

"What——" he began.

"Keep quiet! Don't say a word. Get up and dress."

Dosset hesitated, but the revolver moved forward in a warning gesture. Stifling a cry, the young man slid out of bed. In nervous haste Paul Dosset threw his clothes about himself. Never, during the process of dressing, did his eyes leave the revolver; and never did the revolver relinquish its steady aim against him. Behind it was an aged face, hard with determination.

When Dosset stood ready, One-leg whispered:

"Have you any more clothes here?"

"A few."

"Where?"

"In that drawer."

"Get them!"

Mechanically Dosset obeyed. His wardrobe was meager, composed of another jacket and a few light garments. Following Rabat's commands, he wrapped them in a bundle.

"Got a valise?" the old man demanded.

"No."

"*Bien!* Now listen." He drew back out of the window, but did not change the aim of his weapon. "You will come out here, Dosset—through the window. You will keep at least six feet away from me. If you make an unnecessary sound or try to approach me, I shall shoot you at once. And I think you know that nothing would please me more."

"Well?" sullenly mumbled Dosset, his bundle under his arm.

"Come out now!"

Still confused and dazed by the unexpectedness with which his slumber had been disturbed, Dosset climbed out on the porch. Six feet from him stood One-leg Rabat, leaning on his crutch. But a revolver is as deadly in the hands of a cripple as in the hands of a Hercules.

"Now," whispered One-leg, "you will walk down the road toward my house. I shall be directly behind you. If you try to run away, or to walk too quickly for me, or to yell, I shall pull the trigger. Be careful when you cross the porch. A board which squeaks too loudly may cost you your life, Dosset. Ready—start!"

Had he been bold, Dosset might have attempted a dash into the neighboring fields. But he did not care to risk the accuracy of Rabat's aim. The old man was too near and yet too far to be attacked before a shot could shatter the night's silence.

"Where are you taking me?"

"To my house, *mon ami;* you are to be my guest for a while. In the morning you will be looked for, I suppose. But the good Madam Gauchet, seeing that you have taken your clothes, will probably think that you did not wait for breakfast, but started off for the circus. You told every one you were leaving this morning."

"But——"

"Keep quiet! Walk on! I don't care to talk now."

When they reached One-leg Rabat's home, the triumphant cripple said:

"The door is open, Dosset. Go in. Remember, I am directly behind you every second. One suspicious move will kill you."

It occurred to the captive that he could slam the door shut in Rabat's

face, as he entered. In truth, he was about to attempt the trick, when One-leg's crutch struck his back and impelled him into the room, so that he stumbled over the deep chair.

"You saw a chance, eh, you *canaille?*" the old man muttered tauntingly. "I thought of that, too." He laughed at the frightened features of Dosset, who stood trying to rub his back. "Back into the kitchen. There is a trapdoor in the floor. You will go down into the cellar. Obey!"

To emphasize the words, the revolver sprang forward. Shaking, Dosset backed into the kitchen, One-leg following him like impending doom. The open trapdoor lay like a square of sickly light. In the cellar the oil lamp was making its final struggle for life and yielding a faint, yellow glow. In a moment Paul Dosset went down the creaking stairs, while Rabat's revolver hung over him like the sword of Damocles. The old man followed him into the murky workshop.

"Back against the wall till I'm ready for you!" commanded Rabat, and Dosset saw no course but to obey. He stood with his back to the wall, his bundle under his arm, his eyes dilated with wonder and amazement, while One-leg moved toward the huge, gilded cage.

Beside a lock on the barred door hung a key—an immense key dangling on a string. Rabat broke the string with his left hand, but the fingers of the right hand never ceased aiming the revolver at Paul Dosset.

A strange grin parted and twisted his lips, as he opened the cage. He chuckled a little. Then his voice sank to a vicious snarl.

"Dosset, get into the cage!"

"I—what——"

"Get into the cage!"

"But, *sacre bleu,* you——"

"Not another word!"

As the long revolver lunged forward, Dosset cringed and shuffled to the open door of the cage.

"Get in!" snapped One-leg Rabat.

A whimper of protest escaped Dosset; yet he stepped into the cage, his countenance reflecting a curious mixture of rage and fear and incredulity. Before he could turn, the barred door clanged. Rabat twisted the key in the lock, moved away victoriously, and dropped the revolver into his pocket.

"There you are, *mon ami!*" he said exultantly. "As safely caged as my Jules in his cell!"

"Wh-what are you doing?" Why are——"

"You are to be my guest, Dosset. I shall keep you with the same kindness I would keep any other dangerous animal. You will receive food—that is all. I shall keep you until the minute you are ready to confess that you lied about the murder of Brochard."

"I didn't lie."

"I think you murdered Brochard, yourself. What other reason could you have for shifting the guilt?"

Dosset gulped, his hands gripping the bars of the cage.

"That is not all I expect to do to you, Dosset. I have a secret. Soon you will learn it. Meanwhile, listen: it is very probable that even if you did yell for help here, no one would hear you. Yet I warn you. If I hear your voice raised once in the time you are to be with me, I shall come down and shoot you. Do you understand?"

"Ye-es," the prisoner faltered in a faint voice.

As he spoke, the oil lamp flickered, and the light died. Dense blackness filled the cellar.

From One-leg Rabat came soft laughter—that same mad laughter which had caught him earlier in the evening. A moment later Paul Dosset heard his crutch tapping the steps, as he climbed up to the kitchen. Then the trapdoor slammed down, and there was silence.

IV.

In the morning Rabat opened the trapdoor and called down:

"Dosset!"

There was a pause; then wearily came the question:

"Well?"

"For the next hour or so I shall be busy up here. I expect to hear no sounds. When I have finished, I shall bring you food."

He dropped the door back to the floor and turned away, smiling enigmatically. In calling to Dosset he had entertained but one purpose, and that was to assure himself that the prisoner would be silent for the coming hour. Rabat wished to leave the house.

He hobbled along the road, damp with dew, toward the home of Madam Gauchet. He found her in her garden, carrying eggs to the kitchen door. She was a stout, bouncing woman, whose voice rang loudly on the morning air:

"*Bon jour,* Monsieur Rabat. What brings you out so early?"

"Walking," he mumbled—"walking—just walking. I feel as if I want to walk on forever! It cools my head. It——"

Madam Gauchet clucked her tongue sympathetically. It was quite obvious that the trial had been a terrible blow for old One-leg; here he was, wandering aimlessly through the countryside, struggling to recover from the shock.

Rabat started on, but stopped hesitantly. He frowned, as if uncertain of whether to speak. At last, however, he decided.

"I met Dosset up the road."

"So?" exclaimed Madam Gauchet, coming forward. "He was not in his room. I wondered——"

"He's gone to catch the early train so he can join the circus before noon."

"I'm glad you told me," she said, in evident relief. "I didn't know what could have happened to him."

One-leg muttered something and moved on. When he had advanced far enough not to be seen from the Gauchet house, he smiled shrewdly and walked homeward. His work was done. An hour had been devoted to precaution. Now he could continue with actions more serious.

At ten o'clock he hobbled down into the cellar with two sausages and a slice of buttered bread. To Paul Dosset, who sat in his cage, like some grotesque animal, he did not speak at once. Instead, he filled and lit his oil lamps. Then he went to the cage and grinned upon its haggard occupant.

"*Bon matin,*" he said cordially. "I have brought you food. Two sausages, done as only an excellent chef can cook them, and bread. Here, catch them."

He threw them as one throws meat to a lion.

"I advise you to eat sparingly now," said One-leg tolerantly. "It is all you will get to-day. In fact, I have decided to give you just one meal every day."

Dosset stared, as though he were eying a menacing phantom.

"One meal——"

"Exactly. Enough to keep life in your body until I choose to relieve you of that life." He turned on his crutch and started up the steps. "I shall be upstairs for a while. But I'll soon come down again. Au revoir."

Paul Dosset gazed at the sausages. He tasted one, but his appetite had deserted him. Listless, he sat disconsolately eying the food which Rabat had brought. But before long his solitude was disturbed in an extraordinary manner. He heard in the kitchen above him loud, scraping sounds, as if some heavy object were being dragged across the floor. A minute later there was thunder in the cellar, as a long board clattered down the stairs to the stone floor. He glanced up to the trapdoor and waited expectantly. Not One-leg

came down, but a second board—rattling on the stairs, stirring dust, and finally settling upon its predecessor.

And at last One-leg Rabat, smiling in satisfaction, descended. To Dosset he nodded, but said nothing. He went to his bench, selected several tools, and came to the boards.

"From now on you will be entertained by watching me work," he promised.

"Dieu!" cried Dosset, pressing forward to the bars. "How long are you going to keep me here, you devil?"

"Who knows? Perhaps a month—perhaps three weeks. I cannot say."

"You're crazy, Rabat! You're insane!"

One-leg did not deny the accusation. Then, without venturing further conversation, he began his labors. Gazing at him through the bars of his prison, Dosset desperately attempted to question the old man; after a while, however, he ceased. Apparently, One-leg had become oblivious of his presence. He had immersed himself in his work, and it was most unusual work.

First he propped one of the boards in a vertical position between the floor and the ceiling. It required careful measuring and sawing before the thing would fit its designated post, and for Rabat the task was arduous. He was compelled to stand on a chair with his crutch; reaching to the ceiling, he dropped a long tape measure to the floor. Then he sawed and perspired and breathed hard. But his eyes were merry—inhumanly merry, and obviously he was enjoying his work.

So the morning passed and part of the afternoon. Rabat toiled slowly, pausing often to rest and to stare at the man in the cage, as if he were watching some unique manifestation of human emotions. Yet he never spoke, entirely ignoring Dosset's questions. A dozen times the prisoner asked:

"What are you making? What do you want of me?"

But Rabat worked on. It was almost evening when he began sawing the second board. He stopped long enough to go into the kitchen for supper, but then he came down and resumed his puzzling task. When finally he dropped his tools for the day, he came to the cage and said:

"I am going up to bed. Sleep if you can, Dosset. In the morning I will bring more food. Bon soir."

Dosset hurled a hundred pleas and questions at him, as he went up the rickety steps. He seemed not to hear. The trapdoor banged against the floor. The first day of imprisonment had ended.

Left in the impenetrable blackness—for Rabat had blown out the lamps as a final rite—Dosset sat motionless for a while. Then of a sudden his thoughts reverted to the time when he sat on the witness chair and testified against Jules Rabat. He had sent Jules to death—sent him to the guillotine—with lies. He shuddered. Even now Jules was waiting in a barred cell.

Dosset's hands groped forward and touched the bars of his cage. A convulsive moan escaped him. He lowered his head, grasped it in his palms, and sat trembling. What, he wondered frantically, was the insane notion which had conquered One-leg Rabat's fancy? What crazed idea of vengeance had the old man conceived?

V.

Every morning old One-leg Rabat hobbled down the creaking cellar steps, some disgusting morsels of food in his hands, which he threw into the cage with a contemptuous gesture. He seldom spoke, but devoted himself indefatigably to his labors.

Fortunately for Rabat, his neighbors respected his grief and did not trouble him with work. Every one knew that Jules would be guillotined by the State

within a month; this was no time to ask One-leg to mend chairs. The poor man doubtlessly was too deeply harassed to think of toil.

Occasionally, however, some one called at the house of Rabat with expressions of sympathy. Monsieur Lanelle, the *maire*, came more frequently than any one else. But One-leg had taken the precaution of keeping his door locked. If a caller wished to see him, he must knock—a procedure which afforded Rabat time to go up into the kitchen. Had he not done so, some one might have seen the man in the cage. Invariably, however, when there was a knock upstairs, One-leg would glare into the cage and whisper fiercely:

"Not one sound, Dosset! If I hear so much as a scratch upstairs, you will suffer the consequences."

And, because Paul Dosset was something of a coward, he whimpered a little and obeyed. In Passemont the news spread that he had returned to the circus; people spoke of him over supper tables and wondered and forgot. The consideration which eclipsed the memory of him was the impending execution of Jules Rabat.

Meanwhile One-leg Rabat continued his work with the boards. Before the mystified stare of Dosset, both planks had been propped against the ceiling. They stood perhaps three feet from each other. And often, as he contemplated them, One-leg would rub his hands and chuckle a little and mutter to himself.

A hundred times the prisoner asked what it was the old man intended to construct. One-leg did not answer. In silence he hammered and sawed and nailed. But from the corners of his eyes he watched Paul Dosset.

A noticeable change had swept over the man. Paucity of nutrition, imprisonment, the murky cellar, the strain of uncertainty—all had joined to shatter his health. His sallow cheeks appeared emaciated. Under his burning eyes lay blue circles. His lips twitched constantly. Old One-leg smiled queerly and resumed his toil.

Finally came the time when he attempted a difficult task. From a far, dark corner of the cellar he pushed a heavy block of wood toward the boards. With his crutch he pushed and with his hands and with his single leg. He perspired and cursed a little, but at last moved it close to the boards. Because it was too long to be squeezed between the props, Rabat began sawing it.

And, while the screech of the saw filled the cellar, Paul Dosset gripped the bars of his cage and tried to break out.

"For God's sake, what are you making?"

One-leg straightened, the saw hanging in his hand. Narrowly, with an inscrutable smile on his aged features, he surveyed his captive. Then he murmured:

"Can't you guess?"

"It looks like—like——"

"Exactly," whispered Rabat. "I am making a guillotine—my own guillotine for you. Your lies sent my Jules to the guillotine. I cannot save him, but I can avenge him! On the day that the State executes my boy, I shall execute you, Dosset, on my own guillotine!"

For an instant Dosset was stiff, paralyzed, as he sat in the cage. His wide eyes were glazed. Then he seemed to crumple abruptly and fell back, his fingers clutching at his throat. Rabat nodded slowly and turned again to his work. The saw squeaked and screeched, as it sank through the block.

And so the caged Dosset was forced to watch day after day, while the instrument of his destruction was erected by the old carpenter. His body began to wilt, as the guillotine grew. His cheeks were sunken, not only with fright, but with lack of food. Whatever morsels Rabat gave him, he devoured fiendishly.

Thus the ordeal continued until One-leg Rabat was ready to place the knife in its proper place. Then he encountered a difficulty. He scratched his white hair, frowned at Dosset, and said, as though he were seeking advice:

"Frankly, I am puzzled. Where can I get a blade large and strong and heavy enough?"

Dosset cursed and moaned.

"I don't know," went on Rabat. "I don't know——"

A whole morning he spent in conjecture before he slapped his thigh and cried happily:

"Ah, I do know! How stupid I was not to think of it before! Wait, Dosset, wait! I shall be back with an excellent knife in a few minutes."

Joyously he clattered up the steps. Dosset waited, groaning, to see what new atrocity had occurred to the old man. His curiosity did not endure long. Rabat threw a scythe through the trapdoor.

After it he hobbled down and grinned at the caged Dosset. Shaking a finger almost playfully, he chuckled:

"I don't remember when I used this last. You know, Dosset, I never was much of a farmer—no, not I. But I kept the scythe, together with harness, which I can't use because I have no horse, and the plow, which I don't use because I am too lazy and not strong enough. I think the blade is dull, but that can be mended easily. See, that knife, is at least three feet long! Oh, it will serve excellently!"

He was still chuckling, while he drew the scythe with its long, curved blade to his workbench. Dosset gaped in horror, his knuckles white, as he grasped the gilt bars. He squatted in his cage, like some small gorilla, his features distorted with agony. As for Rabat, he worked calmly. With great patience he unscrewed the knife from its handle—even humming, as he did so; he was in no hurry to finish.

"Rabat, you're mad!" screamed Dosset. "You're mad!"

One-leg shrugged. "That is very unfortunate for you—*very* unfortunate."

And he continued to bend over the scythe without glancing up at the tormented face under the oil lamp.

Fortunately no one visited One-leg during those few days in which he struggled with the knife; so desperate and frantic had Dosset become that he might have defied the revolver long enough to scream for help. But no one came, and the work went on.

The morning after he had thought of his scythe, Rabat came into the cellar with a sharpening stone. He threw Dosset's allotment of food into the cage, sat on his bench, drew the scimitarlike blade between his knees, and began sharpening its edge. All day he sat there, rubbing the stone over the steel. All day the monotonous scratch persisted. And each scratch, it seemed, tore into Dosset's being, stabbing him, inflicting agonizing pain.

He spoke, pleaded, even risked death once in a yell; but quite complacently One-leg continued his sharpening, pausing occasionally to test the edge with his thumb.

At supper time he finished. Rising, he announced:

"*Voila,* it is sharp enough to cut the thickest neck! You shall not suffer long, Dosset."

He started up the steps. Halfway to the top he stopped, leaning on his crutch and turned:

"The day Jules dies because of your lies, Dosset, you die in the same manner. You will be very weak by that time—both physically and mentally. Yet I shall not risk your escaping punishment. I expect to open your cage and hit your head with a stick, as you come out. Oh, you will not be able to avoid it! When you are unconscious, I will fix your head on the block. You see, Dosset, I am an old man. I fear

I might not be able to place you on the guillotine unless I hit you into unconsciousness first. Besides, it is a merciful way. You understand, I hope."

He nodded pleasantly, then mounted to the kitchen. Looking down through the trapdoor, he added:

"Of course I shall have my revolver in one hand, in case you attempt to fight. It will be an eventful day, Dosset."

He pushed the trapdoor down with his crutch. Out of the cellar rose an anguished wail. Hearing it, One-leg Rabat suddenly changed. He swayed a little, while his forehead was creased with pain. He closed his eyes. For a while he seemed lost in a trance. But at last he whispered to himself:

"It is the only way—the only way!"

VI.

Finally there was a day when One-leg Rabat, glancing out of his kitchen window, saw the figure of Monsieur Lanelle coming down the road. The *maire* was walking slowly. His head was bowed, so that his oblong beard pressed against his chest. Under the flapping Prince Albert coat his hands were clasped.

One-leg hastened to the door. He did not wish any one to enter his house these days. The famished, weakened Dosset might be bold enough to yell. And so One-leg hurried up the road to meet the *maire*.

They met at a safe distance from the house; there they halted, facing each other.

"Rabat," solemnly said Monsieur Lanelle, "I have come with bad news."

"Bad news?" Rabat sneered queerly. "Nothing could be worse than the news which came out of the courtroom."

"The day of execution has been definitely decided."

One-leg staggered slightly and paled. Then he asked, "When?"

"Two weeks from Monday—in the morning."

Rabat closed his eyes and nodded. "*Merci*," he whispered. "You were kind to come."

Then he turned, leaving the *maire* abruptly, and went back alone to his house. He trembled, as he walked, but kept his head raised. His features were white.

Monsieur Lanelle stood motionless for a long time. At last, however, he shook his head sadly. In deep thought he returned to the village.

When he entered the kitchen, One-leg discarded the stupor which had threatened him. He shook himself, like a huge dog after a bath, and descended to the cellar.

"Dosset," he snapped, his tones ringing in wild exultation, "you have four days to live! I have learned that in four days Jules is to be executed. Prepare yourself! Four days!" Monsieur Lanelle, he remembered, had said two weeks from Monday. But old One-leg had his little scheme.

Those days were ages of torture for the caged Dosset. Already gray tinges had appeared in his hair. His eyes were actually feverish and frantic. The bones jutted out of his face. About him his clothes hung like rags on a scarecrow.

Yet Rabat was merciless. On the third day he went into the cellar and examined his guillotine. It was finished, its shadow falling across the stone floor. Near the ceiling hung the curved knife between the two posts. From its end a cord was stretched taughtly to the floor. He eyed his prisoner triumphantly.

"To-morrow is your day, Dosset. Do you know how this instrument works? Have you ever seen one?"

Dosset moaned.

"You devil, you lunatic!"

"Watch," said Rabat and launched into a demonstration, as calmly as a

lecturer. "See, your head will be there on the block. It is, you will notice, directly under the knife. Then I cut this cord—like this." He searched for a sharp instrument among his tools and returned to the cord.

"Look, Dosset, like this!"

With a quick sweep of his hand he severed the tight cord. At once the curved knife dropped upon the block and sank its edge deeply into the wood. From Paul Dosset came a gasp; then limply he sagged to the floor of the cage and lay there, motionless, breathing hard. Old Rabat bit his lips in pain. But he forced the strange smile to his face again, tugged mightily on the blade, and readjusted his guillotine.

"To-morrow morning," he said, as he left the cellar, almost an hour later. "To-morrow morning!"

During that whole night the house was disturbed by the ceaseless moaning of Paul Dosset. He was half crazed with terror and starvation. That Rabat was mad, he had long ago decided. And now the madness was to attain its horrible climax.

One-leg did not sleep. He listened all night, as he sat on the edge of his bed. His face was drawn, pale, strained. But he knew exactly what he wished to do; sentiment would not interfere. Patiently he waited for morning; with the first beam of sunlight in his window came energy in his body. He rose.

He was not wearing his jacket this morning, but there was a breast pocket in his flannel shirt. Into the pocket he put paper and pencil, his eyes sparkling strangely. The revolver was clutched in his right hand. Ready and armed, he straightened on his crutch. Then he went down into the murky cellar.

As soon as the trapdoor opened, Dosset screamed. Far back in his cage he huddled, cringing, as if he could avoid the wrath of Rabat. He was a skeleton imbued with life. Only his eyes held a feverish light.

"Dosset," soberly said One-leg, "it is time."

"Time! Time!" shrieked the terrified prisoner.

"Yes, two hours from now the State will execute Jules. But you shall go first, for your lies sent him to his death."

Without further preamble, One-leg searched for a stick. In a corner he found a suitable cudgel which had once been the leg of a table. His revolver clutched in the hand at his crutch, the stick in the other hand, he approached the cage.

"I am ready," he said quietly.

Dosset rose as far as it was possible in his cage.

"Dieu!" he screamed. "Don't—don't! Rabat, don't!"

"I must, Dosset. You have earned it. You shall die within the next few minutes, so control yourself. Die like a man."

It was useless to urge this wreck of what had been Paul Dosset to conduct himself more courageously. Yet Rabat had his reasons.

"I am ready," he repeated.

"Oh, *Dieu, Dieu!*" groaned Dosset, staring at the ceiling in impotent wretchedness.

And then One-leg Rabat uttered the words to which he had been leading for weeks. He uttered them calmly, though his whole body was throbbing with anxiety and hope. Upon their result he was basing the entire success of his scheme.

"Dosset, there is only one way to save yourself."

"Eh?" The wailing ceased.

"There is one way to save yourself, I said."

"Sacre bleu!" The ejaculation was whispered with a thrilling birth of new hope. Apparently the man was prepared to do anything for life. "What is it? What?"

From his pocket Rabat clumsily took

his paper and pencil and threw it into the cage.

"You have five minutes to decide. I want you to write the truth about the Brochard murder. I want you to confess that you lied on the witness stand. I will not argue, Dosset. That is my only condition. You must write the truth on that paper."

"No!"

"I said I will not argue. The choice is yours. If you confess, you will go free from here. The police will arrest you, of course. What will happen then, I cannot say. But you must confess. You killed Brochard yourself."

"He tried to kill *me!*" shrieked Dosset helplessly. But he checked himself with a gasp, suddenly realizing that he had committed himself.

One-leg smiled.

"I knew it. Now you write the truth on that paper, and I let you go. Otherwise—well, five minutes, Dosset."

Still Paul Dosset hesitated. He was glaring stupidly at the paper and pencil beside him on the floor of the cage. Not until One-leg extracted a long key from his pocket did he stir. He recognized that key. It would open the cage door, and permit him to step out—to death.

His fingers tore at his throat. He gazed at the gloomy guillotine. It personified immediate destruction. And, because he was a coward, Dosset cringed from it. He preferred to preserve himself, to risk the malice or mercy of the State. Anything was better than certain annihilation on that dreadful machine. Convulsively he snatched up the pencil.

"All right," he gasped hoarsely, "all right! *You* won't kill me, Rabat!"

"The truth, remember," sternly admonished One-leg.

Breathing laboriously, yet tingling with the excitement of his accomplishment, Rabat watched the fingers of Dosset scribble frantically, furiously. When the man had finished, he said:

"Sign it."

"I did!"

"Then throw it out here. I want it, Dosset, before you change your mind."

He lifted the paper from the floor after Dosset had hurled it to him. Avidly he read its contents under the oil lamp. Yes, Dosset was guilty. To save himself, he had shifted the blame to Jules Rabat. Yes, yes! A great wave of relief and happiness surged over the raised features of Rabat.

"I knew it!" he whispered ardently. Then he started up the steps.

"Let me out! You promised! You promised!" yelled Dosset.

Rabat smiled back upon him.

"I am no fool, my friend. I shall give this paper to Monsieur Lanelle first. I shall give the key to his men. The police will let you out, Dosset, not I! You see, I had to break you so badly to get this paper, that I do not care to take any risks now of losing it. I can't very well rely on my revolver. I haven't tried it in so many years. But don't be too impatient. The police will be here very soon, with the key. Au revoir, Dosset!"

The trapdoor slammed down into place. And through the house resounded old One-leg Rabat's hysterical laughter.

DUCKS EXPOSE LIQUOR CARGO

A FLOCK of ducks waddling across the road at Croton, New York, a short time ago, threw William Mayer, of Syracuse, into the hands of the law on a charge of violating the prohibition law. A State trooper said that Mayer, in an effort to avoid the ducks, ran his truck into a ditch, wrecking it and revealing a load of bootleg liquor. He was held by the Federal authorities.

Mysteries of the Missing

THE VANISHED ARCHDUKE

by Edward H. Smith

ONE of the most engrossing of modern historic mysteries is that which hides the final destination of Archduke Johann Salvatore, of Austria, known to a generation of newspaper readers as John Orth. In the dawn of July 13, 1890, the bark *Santa Margarita*, flying the flag of an Austrian merchantman, though her owner and skipper was none other than this wandering scion of the imperial Hapsburgs, set sail from Ensenada, on the southern shore of the great estuary of the Plata, below Buenos Aires, and forthwith vanished from the earth. With her went Johann Salvatore, his variety-girl wife and a crew of twenty-six. Though search has been made in every thinkable port, through the distant archipelagoes of the Pacific, in ten thousand outcast towns, and though emissaries have visited all the fabled refuges of missing men, from time to time, over a period of more than thirty years, no sight or rumor of any one connected with the lost ship has ever been got, and no man knows with any certainty what fate befell her and her princely master.

The enigma of his finality is not the only circumstance of curious doubt and romantic coloration that hedges the career of this prince. His story, from the beginning, is one marked with dramatic incidents. As much of it as bears upon the final episode will have to be related.

The Archduke Johann Salvatore was born at Florence on the twenty-fifth day of November, 1852, the youngest son of Grand Duke Leopold II., of Tuscany, and Maria Antonia of the Two Sicilies. He was, accordingly, a second cousin of the late Emperor Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary. At the baptismal fount young Johann received enough names to carry any man blissfully through life, his full array having been Johann Salvator Marie Josef Jean Ferdinand Balthazer Louis Gonzaga Peter Alexander Zenobius Antonin.

Archduke Johann was still a child when the Italian revolutionists drove out his father and later united Tuscany to the growing kingdom of Victor Emanuel. So the hero of this account was reared in Austria, educated for the army, and commissioned as a stripling. He rose rapidly in rank for reasons quite other than his family connections. The young prince was endowed with a good mind and notable for independence of thought. He felt, as he expressed it, that he ought to earn his pay, an opinion which led to indefatigable military studies and some well-intentioned, but ill-advised writings. First, the young archduke discovered what he

considered faults in the artillery, and he wrote a brochure on the subject. The older heads didn't like it and had him disciplined. Later on, Johann made a study of military organization and wrote a well-known pamphlet called "Education or Drill," wherein he attacked the old method of training soldiers as automatons and advised the mental develpment of the rank and file, in line with policies now generally adopted. But such advanced ideas struck the military masters of forty years ago as bits of heresy and anarchy. Archduke Johann was disciplined by removal from the army and the withdrawal of his commission. At thirty-five he had reached next to the highest possible rank and been cashiered from it. This was in 1887.

Archduke Johann Salvatore had, however, been much more than a progressive soldier man. He was an accomplished musician, composer of popular waltzes and an oratorio. He was a historian and publicist, of eminent official standing at least, having collaborated with Crown Prince Rudolf in the widely distributed work, "The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Word and Picture," which was published in 1886. He was also a distinguished investigator of psychic phenomena, his library on this subject having been the most complete in Europe.

Personally the man was both handsome and charming. He was, in spite of imperial rank and military habitude, democratic, simple, friendly, and unaffected. He liked to live the life of a gentleman, with diverse interests in life, now playing the gallant in Vienna to the high world of the court and the half world of the theater by turns, again retiring to his library and his studies, sometimes vegetating at his country estates and working on his farms. Official trammels and the rigid etiquette of the ancient court seemed to irk him. Still, he seems to have suffered keen chagrin over his dismissal from the army.

Johann Salvator had, from adolescence, been a close personal friend of the Austrian crown prince. This intimacy had extended even to participation in some of the personal and sentimental escapades for which the ill-starred Rudolf was remarkable. Apparrently the two men hardly held an opinion apart, and it was accepted that, with the death of the aging emperor and the accession of his son, Johann Salavtor would be a most powerful personage.

Suddenly, in 1889, all these high hopes and promises came to earth. After some rumblings and rumorings at Schoenbrunn, it was announced that Johann Salvator had petitioned the emperor for permission to resign all rank and title, sever his official connection with the royal house, and even give up his knighthood in the Order of the Golden Fleece. The petitioner also asked for the right to call himself Johann Orth, after the estate and castle of the Gmundensee, which was the favorite abode of the prince and of his aged mother. All these requests were officially granted and confirmed by the emperor, and so the man John Orth came into being.

The first of the two Orth mysteries lies concealed behind the official records of this strange resignation from rank and honor. Even to-day, after Orth has been missing thirty-four years, after all those who might have been concerned in keeping secret the motives and measures of those times have been gathered to the dust, and after the empire itself has been dissolved into its defeated components, the facts in the matter cannot be stated with any confidence. There are two principal versions of the affair, and both will have to be given so that the reader may make his own choice. The popular or romantic account of the affair deserves to be considered first.

In the eighties the stage of Vienna was graced by several handsome young women of the name Stubel. One of them, Lori, achieved a considerable operatic distinction. Another sailed to New York with her brother and appeared in operetta and in musical comedy at the old Casino. The youngest of these sisters was Ludmilla Stubel, commonly called Millie, and on that account sometimes set down erroneously as Emilie.

This daring and charming girl began her career in a Viennese operetta chorus and rose to the rank of principal. She was not, so far as I can gather from the contemporary newspapers, remarkable for voice or dramatic ability, but her "surpassingly voluptuous beauty and piquant manners" won her almost limitless attention and gave her a popularity that reached across the Atlantic. In the middle eighties Fraulein Stubel appeared at the Thalia Theater in the Bowery, New York, then the shrine of German comic opera in the United States, creating the rôles of *Bettina* in "The Mascotte" and *Violette* in "The Merry War."

The New York *Herald,* reviewing her American career a few years later, said: "In New York she became somewhat notorious for her risque costumes. On one occasion Fraulein Stubel attended the Arion Ball in male costume, and created a scene when ejected. This conduct seems to have ended her career in the United States."

This beautiful and spirited plebian swam into the ken of Johann Salvatore, of Austria, in the fall of 1888, when that impetuous prince had already been dismissed from the army and his other affairs were gathering to the storm that broke some months afterward. Catastrophic events followed rapidly.

In January, 1889, Prince Rudolf was found dead in the hunting lodge at Meyerling, with the Baroness Marie Vetsera, to whom the heir of a hundred kings is said to have been passionately devoted, and with whom he may have died in a suicide pact, though it has always been said that the crown prince and his sweetheart were murdered by persons whose identity has never been revealed. This mysterious fatality robbed the dispirited Johann Salvator of his closest and most powerful friend. It may have had a good deal to do with what followed.

A few months later Johann Salvator married morganatically his stage beauty. Again, after the elapse of a few months, he resigned all rank, title, and privileges, left Austria with his wife, and married her civilly in London.

Naturally enough, it has generally been held that the death of the crown prince and the romance with the singer explained everything. The archduke, in disgrace with the army, bereft of his truest and most illustrious friend, and deeply infatuated with a girl whom he could not fully legitimate as his wife, so long as he wore the purple of his birth, had decided to "surrender all for love" and seek solace in foreign lands with the lady of his choice. This interpretation has all the elements of color and sweetness needed for conviction in the minds of the sentimental. Unfortunately, it does not seem to bear skeptical examination.

Even granting that Archduke Johann Salvator was a man of independent mind and quixotic temperament, that he was embittered by his demotion from military rank, and that he must have been greatly depressed by the death of Rudolf, who was both his bosom friend and his most powerful intercessor at court, no such extreme proceeding as the renunciation of all rank and the severing of family ties was called for.

It is true, too, that the loss of his only son, through an affair with a woman of inferior rank, had embittered Emperor Franz Josef and probably caused the monarch to look with uncom-

mon harshness upon similar liaisons among the members of the Hapsburg family. Undoubtedly the morganatic marriage of his second cousin with the shining moth of the theater district displeased the old monarch and widened the breach between him and his kinsman; but it must be remembered that Johann Salvator was only a distant cousin; that he was not even remotely in line for succession to the throne; that he had already been deprived of military or other official connection with the government; and that affairs of this kind have been by no means rare among Hapsburg scions.

Dour and tyrannical as the old emperor may have been, he was not an Anglo-Saxon, no moralist. His own life had not been quite free of sentimental episodes, and he was, after all, the heir to the proudest tradition in all Europe, head of the world's oldest reigning house, and a believer in the sacredness of royal rank. He must have looked upon a morganatic union as something not uncommon or specially disgraceful, whereas a renunciation of rank and privilige can only have struck him as a precedent of the gravest kind.

Thus, Johann Salvator did not need to take any extreme step because of his histrionic wife. He might have remained in Austria happily enough, aside from a few snubs and the exclusion from further official participation in politics. He might have gone to any country in Europe and become the center of a distinguished society. His children would probably have been ennobled, and even his wife eventually given the same sort of recognition that was accorded the consorts of other grand dukes in similar case, notably the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, whose assassination at Sarajevo precipitated the world war. Instead, Johann Salvatore made the most complete and unprecedented severance from all that seemed most inalienably his. Historians have had to interpret this action in another light, and their explanation forms the second version of the incident, probably the true one.

In 1887, as a result of one of the interminable struggles for hegemony in the Balkans, Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha had been elected Prince of Bulgaria, but Russia had refused to recognize this sovereign, and the other powers, out of deference to the czar, had likewise refrained from giving their approval. Austria was in a specialy delicate position as regards this matter. She was the natural rival of Russia for dominance in the Balkans, but her statesmen did not feel strong enough to openly oppose the Russian course. Besides, they had their eyes fixed on Bosnia and Herzogovina. Ferdinand had been an officer in the Austrian army. He was well liked at Franz Josef's court, and stood high in the regard of Crown Prince Rudolf. What is most germane to the present question is that he was the friend of Johann Salvator.

In 1887, and for a number of years following, Russia attempted to drive the unwelcome German princeling from the Bulgarian throne by various military cabals, acts of brigandage, diplomatic intrigues, and the like. Naturally the young ruler's friends in other countries rallied to his aid. Among them was Johann Salvatore. It is known that he interceded with Rudolf for Ferdinand, and he may have approached the emperor. Failing to get action at Vienna, he is said to have formed a plan of a military character which was calculated to force the hands of Austria, Germany, and England, bringing them into the field against Russia, to the end that Ferdinand might be recognized and more firmly seated. The plot was discovered in time, according to those who hold this theory of the incident, and Johann Salvator came under the most severe displeasure of the emperor.

It is asserted by those who have studied the case dispassionately, that Johann Salvator's rash course was one that came very near involving Austria in a Russian war, and that the most emphatic exhibitions of the emperor's reprehension and anger were necessary. Accordingly, it is said, Franz Josef demanded the surrender of all rank and priviliges by his cousin and exiled him from the empire for life. Here, at least, is a story of a more probable character, inasmuch as it presents provocation for the unprecendented harshness with which Archduke Johann Salvatore was treated. No doubt his morganatic marriage and his other conflicts with higher authority were seized upon as disguises under which to hide the secret diplomatic motive.

In any event, Johann Salvatore, archduke of Austria, and Prince of Tuscany, became John Orth, left Austria in the winter of 1889, purchased and refitted the bark *Santa Margarita,* had her taken to England, and there joined her with his chorus-girl wife. They sailed for Buenos Aires in the early spring, with a cargo of cement, and reached the Rio de la Plata in May.

In the Argentine Captain John Orth found a lethora of merchant shipping, and had some trouble locating a profitable cargo. Being familiar with military and agricultural needs in Europe, he soon decided to make the trip to the west coast for a cargo of Chilean nitrates. The vessel was accordingly made ready at Ensenada, and on July 12, 1890, John Orth wrote what proved to be the last communication ever sent by him. It was addressed to his attorney in Vienna and said that he was leaving to join his ship for a trip to Valparaiso, which might consume fifty or sixty days. His captain, Orth wrote, had been taken ill, and his first officer had proved incompetent, so that it had been necessary to discharge him. Accordingly Orth was personally in command of his vessel, aided by the second officer, who was an experienced seaman.

The apparent intention of the renegade archduke at this time was to follow the sea. He had caused the *Santa Margarita* to be elaborately refitted inside, had insured her for two hundred and thirty thousand marks with the Hamburg Marine Insurance Company, and he had written his aged mother at Lake Gmunden of his determination to follow the sea for a time and make his living as an honest man, instead of existing like an idler on his comfortable private means. There is nothing in the record to indicate that the archduke intended to go into hiding.

The *Santa Margarita* accordingly sailed on the thirteenth of July. With good fortune she should have been in the Straits of Magellan the first week in August, and her arrival at Valparaiso was to be expected not later than the first of September. But the ship did not reach port. The middle of September passed without word of her. When she had still not been reported by the first week in October the alarm was given.

As the result of diplomatic representations given from the Austrian ambassador, the Argentine government soon made elaborate arrangements for a search. On December the second the gunboat, *Bermejo,* Captain Don Mensilla, put out from Buenos Aires and made a four months' cruise of the Argentine coast, visiting every conceivable anchorage where a vessel of the *Santa Margarita's* size might possibly have found refuge. Don Mensilla found that, beginning the night of July 20, and continuing intermittently for nearly a month there had been storms of the greatest violence in the region of Cape Blanco and the southern extremity of Tierra del Fuego. More than forty vessels which had been in the vicinity in this period reported that the disturbances had been of unusual character

and duration, more than sufficient to overwhelm a sailing bark in the tortuous and treacherous Magellan Straits.

Continuing his search, Don Mensilla found that a vessel answering to the general description of the *Santa Margarita* had been wrecked off the little island of Nuevo Ano, in the Beagle Canal, in the course of a hurricane which lasted from August 3 to August 5, at which dates the *Santa Margarita* was very likely in this vicinity. The Argentine commander could find no trace of the wreck and no clew to any survivors. He continued his search for more than two months longer and then returned to base with his melancholy report.

At the same time the Chilean government had sent out the small steamer *Toro* to search the Pacific coast from Cape Sunday to Cape Penas. Her captain returned after several months with no word of the archduke or any member of his crew.

These investigations, plus the study of logs and reports at the Hamburg maritime observatory, soon convinced most authorities that John Orth and his vessel were at the bottom of the Straits. But in this case, as in that of Roger Tichborne, an old mother's fond devotion refused to accept the bitter arbitrament of chance. The Grand Duchess Maria Antonia could not bring herself to believe that winds and waves had swallowed up her beloved son. She stormed the court at Vienna with her entreaties, with the result that Franz Josef finally sent out the corvette, *Saida,* with instructions to make a fresh search, including the islands of the South Seas, whither, according to a fanciful report, John Orth had made his way.

At the same time the grand duchess appealed to Pope Leo, and the pontiff requested Catholic missionaries in South America and all over the world to search for John Orth and send immediate news of his presence to the Holy See.

The *Saida* returned to Fiume at the end of a year without having been able to accomplish anything beyond confirming the report of Don Mensilla. And in response to the pope's letter many reports came back, but none of them resulted in the finding of John Orth.

Shortly after the return of the *Saida* the Austrian heirs of John Orth moved for the payment of his insurance, and the Hamburg Marine Insurance Company, after going through the formality of a court proceeding, paid the claim. In 1896 a demand was made on two banks, one in Freiburg and the other in St. Gallen, Switzerland, for moneys deposited with them by the archduke after his departure from Austria in 1889. One of these banks raised the question of the death proof, claiming that thirty years must elapse in the case of an unproved death. The courts decided against the bank, thereby tacitly confirming the contention that the end of the archduke had been sufficiently demonstrated. About two million crowns were accordingly paid over to the Austrian custodians.

In 1909 the court marshal in Vienna was asked to hand over the property of John Orth to his nephew and heir, and this high authority then declared that the missing archduke had been dead since the hurricane of August 3-5, 1890. He, however, asked the supreme court of Austria to pass finally upon the matter, and a decision was handed down on May 9, 1911, in which the archduke was declared dead as of July 21, 1890, the day on which the heavy storms about the Patagonian coasts began. His property was ordered distributed, and his goods and chattels were sold. The books, instruments, art goods and furniture, which had long been preserved in the various villas and castles of the absent prince, were accordingly sold at auction in Berlin, during the months of October and November, 1912.

In spite of the great care that was taken to discover the facts in this case, and in the face of the various official reports and court decisions, a great romantic tradition grew up about John Orth and his mysterious destiny. The episodes of his demotion, his marriage, his abandonment of rank, and his exile had undoubtedly much to do with the birth of the legend. Be that as it may, the world has for more than thirty years been feasted with rumors of the survival of John Orth and his actress wife. In the course of the Russo-Japanese war the story was widely printed that Marshal Yamagato was in reality the missing archduke. The story was credited by many, but there proved to be no foundation for it beyond the fact that the Japanese were using their heavy artillery in a manner originally suggested by the archduke in that old monograph which once got him disciplined.

The missing John Orth has likewise been reported alive from many other unlikely parts of the world and under the most incredible circumstances. Austrian, German, British, French, and American newspapers have been full of such stories every few years. The much sought man has been "found" ranching in the Argentine, mining in Canada, running a pearl fishery in the Paumotus, working in a factory in Ohio, fighting with the Boers in South Africa, prospecting in Rhodesia, running a grocery store in Texas—what not and where not?

The most recent apparition of John Orth happened in New York. On the last day of March a death certificate was filed with the Department of Health formally attesting that Archduke Johann Salvator, of Austria, the missing archduke, had died early that morning of heart disease in Columbus Hospital, one of the smaller semi-public institutions. Doctor John Grimley, chief surgeon of the hospital, signed the certificate and said he had been convinced of the man's identity by his "inside knowledge of European diplomacy."

Mrs. Charles H. Fairchild, a well-known society photographer, confirmed the story, and said she had discovered the identity of the man the year before and admitted some of her friends to the secret. He had lately been receiving some code cables from Europe which came collect, and his friends had obligingly supplied the money with which to pay for these mysterious messages. The dead man, said Mrs. Fairchild, had been living as O. N. Orlow, a doctor of philosophy, a lecturer in Sanscrit and general scholar.

"He was a marvelous astrologer and even lectured on Sanscrit," she recounted. "In his delirium he talked Sanscrit, and it was very beautiful."

According to the same friend of the "missing archduke," he had furnished her with the true version of his irruption from the Austrian court in 1889. The emperor Franz Josef had applied a vile name to John Salvator's mother, whereupon the archduke had drawn his sword, broken it, cast it at his ruler's feet, ripped off his decorations and medals, flung them into the imperial face and finally blacked the emperor's eye. Striding from the palace to the barracks, the archduke had found his own cavalry regiment turned out to cry "Hoch!" and offer him its loyalty. He could have dethroned the emperor then and there, he said, but he elected to quit the country and have done with the social life which disgusted him.

This is the kind of story to appeal to romantics the world over. Aside from the preposterousness of the yarn as a whole, one needs only to remember that Johann Salvator was an artillery officer and never held either an active or honorary cavalry command; that he was at the time of the final events in Austria, long dismissed from the army and without military rank, and that striking the emperor would have

been an offense that must have landed him in prison forthwith. Also, it is obvious that the "missing archduke" was pulling the legs of his friends a bit in the matter of the collect telegrams. Except in cases where special prearrangements have been made, as in the instances of great newspapers, large business houses, banks, and the departments of government, cablegrams are never sent unless prepaid. The imposture is thus apparent.

On the day after the death of the supposed archduke, however, a note of real drama was injected into the case. Mrs. Grace E. Wakefield, who was said to have been the ward, since her fourteenth birthday, of the dead "archduke," was found dead in her apartment on East Fifty-ninth Street that afternoon. She had drowned her two parrots and her dog. Then she had got into the bath tub, turned on the water, slashed the arteries of both wrists with a razor, and bled to death. Despondency over "John Orth's" death was given as the explanation.

These tales have all had their charm, much as they have lacked probability. Each and all they rest upon the single fact that the man was never seen dead. There is, of course, no way of being sure that John Orth perished in the hurricane-swept Straits of Magellan, but it is beyond reasonable question that he is no longer alive. Had he been, he would certainly have answered the pitiful appeals of his old mother, to whom he was devoted, and to whom he had written every few days whenever he had been separated from her. He would surely have been found by the papal missionaries in some part of the world, and the three vessels sent upon his final course must surely have found some trace of the man. It must be remembered that, except for letters that were traced back to harmless cranks, nothing that even looked like a communication was ever received from Orth or Ludmilla Strubel, or from any member of the crew of the *Santa Margarita*.

In the light of cold reason this great enigma is not profound. All evidence and all reason point to the probability that Archduke John Salvator and his ship went down to darkness in some wild torment of waters and winds, leaving neither wreck nor flotsam to mark their exit, but only a void in which the idle minds of romantics could spin their fabulations.

AN AMOROUS EYE

ON his plea of guilty to shoplifting, Newton Davidson, of New York, a youth with a bold and amorous eye, was recently sentenced to the penitentiary for the indeterminate term of six months to three years. Detectives of the Stores Mutual Protective Association told the justice that Davidson had a reputation in many cities as a fascinator of salesgirls. He would fix his large, brown eyes on them fascinatingly and then would murmur things that caused them to stare, then duck their heads under the counter to giggle. Thereupon, they say, the charmer would gather up articles on the counter and then pass on.

At one large store on Fifth Avenue, the detectives said they came upon Newton leaning over the leather-goods counter, while the sales maiden, with bewildered amazement in her eyes, was holding her hands to her heart. The detectives waited. The girl flushed and giggled and ducked. Swiftly the handsome youth's hands flicked over the pocketbooks and gathered up four, worth six dollars a piece, and dropped them into his pocket. Then the detectives tapped him on the shoulder and invited him into the manager's office.

The Tiger Lily

by Douglas Grant

Author of "The Unscrupulous Mrs. Leigh," etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

ACCRUING EVIDENCE.

MOTT had left his car in the back road, and the three made their way to it in silence. Then Chief Clark spoke.

"I thought so!" he remarked. "Lucky the Mercers didn't catch us, so long as we didn't get anything! It was just as the nurse said, the poor kid's wandering in her mind."

Mott said nothing, nor did he dare to glance at Rider, as the latter replied indifferently:

"Oh, well, it was worth a trial, and I've got a lot more to do to-day. Chief, could I see Ingred alone for a minute or two late this afternoon—around five, say?"

"Sure you can!" the chief replied promptly. "I got her in the jail, but her room's fixed up real nice. Mrs. Mercer saw to that."

"Mrs. Mercer?" Rider frowned.

"Yes, she came down 'bout an hour after I had Ingred safe under lock and key, and she brought pillows and a quilt and pictures and a big picnic box full of food."

"Did she talk to Ingred?"

"Only for a few minutes." The chief flushed. "I thought it'd be better to stretch a point, especially after the charge I almost brought against her husband. She's terribly upset—for her—because Ingred didn't ask her to help Hans in the first place, but she told me that they'd bail the woman out, when she comes up before the magistrate to-morrow, and take her straight home with them. She's a fine woman, is Mrs. Mercer. Remember how nervy she was about that chloroforming last week? Whoever that thief was, he won't come back, for I've had the place watched every night since."

"Of course he won't come back!" Rider laughed. "You don't mean to tell me you've had men on night duty there for the past three nights? I'll be sorry for you when the truth of this gets out, and I wish I could tell you now, but take my advice and call them off!"

The chief's deepened color turned to a dull brick red.

"Well, so long as you didn't tell me, I did the right thing, Rider!" he protested. "I'll take them off it to-night, though! You'll be down to the jail about five?"

Rider nodded, and he and Mott started homeward, while the official climbed into his own little car.

"That child's talk was almost as much jibberish to me as it was to Clark, but I saw you got something out of it, Dan," Mott remarked when they were out of earshot. "She's buried something that she's afraid to have anybody know about—something that she's got a horror of. We knew that much from the few words she said when we picked her up that day, and it's on her poor little mind now; but what else did her raving mean?"

"A lot," Rider responded succinctly. "Take the single instance of one word: Henry, what floats?"

"Floats?" Mott repeated vaguely. "Cork—wood?"

"Not in water!" his companion exclaimed in disgust. "In the air, you poor boob!"

"Dust?" Mott was too interested to resent the appellation. "Papers? How should I know? Tell me the answer."

"I will before morning," Rider promised, adding: "You've known the family intimately for years, Henry. Did the children ever have any pets?"

"They had a bird, but it died—a canary named Goldie. There are several cats around the garage, but Mrs. Mercer never allows the children to play with them, and she won't have a dog in the house; she thinks it isn't sanitary for them, or something." Mott's tone expressed his surprise at the irrelevancy of the question. "I suppose you know what you're getting at, but I don't! What was that about a pink-bordered handkerchief and violets? There aren't any violets this time of year! Apart from that thing she buried, I think the poor little girl was just plain delirious, if you ask me!"

Rider did not ask, however, and their luncheon was over when Chief Clark called them on the telephone.

"I warned you there'd be the devil to pay!" he reminded them. "Bill's nurse saw the doctor take us into Nancy's room, and she heard her scream that time, and she told Mrs. Mercer. Now Ross and Miss Alstead have both been dismissed from the case, and Mrs. Mercer's taking care of Nancy herself; she's sent to Albany for a nurse and a specialist. The doc tells me, though, that right after we left, the child fell into a deep sleep, and the danger is past."

"Tell Doctor Ross not to worry, nor Miss Alstead, either," Rider replied. "I'm positive I can pursuade Mrs. Mercer to recall them by to-morrow. In the meantime don't let any one—you understand, any one at all!—see Ingred before I do this afternoon."

"I must say I don't blame Mrs. Mercer!" Mott commented. "Ross is a fool! He should have known she isn't the kind of woman to make a scene, and her devotion to those children has been almost idolatry! Where are you going? Want me to come along?"

His tone was so eager that Rider hated to refuse, but he shook his head resolutely.

"Not this time, old scout. I'm going to call on some one who won't talk as freely with a third person present. I'll be home for dinner, though, and I'll tell you what Ingred has to say."

"Take the car," his host said. "I won't need it, and it's a long way down to town, let alone where else you're going."

Rider accepted the suggestion and drove along the ridge road past Hilltop, which appeared now to be deserted in very truth. He was wondering what had become of old Hiram, when, after mounting to the summit of the ridge and starting down the incline on the farther side, he came upon Hiram in the garden of a rambling old yellow house.

"Good afternoon, Hiram." He stopped the car. "I was just wondering where you might have gone."

"I wondered myself, sir, though I've got some money laid by," the old man answered simply. "I didn't like the thought of not working any more, but I didn't expect anybody'd give me another place at my age. Miss Foster did, though; I'm caretaker here now, and when she comes out from her house down in the town she brings her hired girl with her."

Rider caught the flutter of an apron at the kitchen door, and asked:

"Is Miss Foster here now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then open the gate, will you? I want to pay a little call on her."

The "hired girl," a sensible-looking, middle-aged woman, came to the door and showed him into a wide, sunny, old-fashioned parlor, where Jim Foster presently joined him.

"You'll forgive me for the intrusion?" Rider asked, as they shook hands.

"Glad to see you," she responded briefly, wrinkling her short, square-tipped nose at him. "Sit down. You've come for another theoretical discussion, haven't you?"

Rider laughed and seated himself. Then his face grew very sober.

"You've seen Mrs. Mercer recently, haven't you?" he asked.

"Not since I took Nancy home that night. Why?"

"You haven't!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "But you are her most intimate friend—at least everybody says so—and I supposed, of course——"

He broke off in evident confusion, and she eyed him curiously.

"We've been close friends, yes, ever since she came home from school, but our interests lie in exactly opposite directions, and frequently we don't happen to see each other for days or weeks. If she had needed me in this trouble, I knew she'd send for me, and I thought the kindest thing would be to let her alone."

"You didn't think that two weeks ago, did you?" he demanded bluntly.

Jim Foster's mouth set a trifle more firmly.

"I don't believe I quite understand you!"

"You don't want to, just as you don't want to face the suspicion concerning the murder that you can't help fostering." His tone was candidly matter of fact and even friendly, but her gray eyes glinted like steel. "I know this seems unwarrantable, and, of course, you can order me to go if you like, but for the sake of your friends I think you ought to know the case that's being built up against them—a case that is being built on the basis of that talk you had with Mrs. Mercer a little more than a fortnight ago."

"I shan't order you out, Mr. Rider," Jim Foster remarked with ominous quietude. "In fact, I would do my best to prevent you from going, if you wanted to, before you've made yourself quite clear. This is a serious matter, and you've made a very serious statement. Will you explain?"

"Gladly. You went to Mrs. Mercer as a friend and told her how every one was talking about her husband and Miss Warrender, and you advised her to try to play the game with them, didn't you? Perhaps you didn't realize how long it was since she had had any practice, or bothered to make herself attractive; you couldn't foresee that she would follow your suggestions to an extent that would make her ridiculous even in her husband's eyes and complete the work you were too late to stop."

"I certainly didn't, and I don't realize it now!" she retorted. "In fact, I think you're talking nonsense, or worse! No cause for gossip or scandal existed, or could ever exist, except in the minds of the country-club set. Mrs. Mercer was so secure from such petty stuff that it didn't worry her in the least, and she only exerted herself to go about more because she thought she wasn't paying enough attention to her guest! Do you mean to say that some one is trying to implicate the Mercers in the murder of Miss Warrender?"

"Where have you been this past week, Miss Foster?" countered Rider.

"Listening to accusations against the memory of one of my best and oldest friends!" she replied bitterly. "I told you that in the talk that we had the other day."

"That was Tuesday," he reminded her. "You are speaking of Major Hill, aren't you? Public opinion has veered since—public opinion and that of the police."

"You seem remarkably well informed for a mere guest in the neighborhood, Mr. Rider!" Jim Foster smiled grimly. "You thought it strange that I took such an interest in the death of this woman;

I find myself curious now as to your own interest in the investigation."

"It is odd," he admitted coolly. "I don't know why it is, but people seem to single me out for their confidences; perhaps because, as you suggested before, I'm an outsider."

She colored faintly.

"Score one, but you haven't satisfied my curiosity! However, let's get to the point. The police suspect the Mercers of guilty knowledge of this murder, is that it? On what grounds?"

"Jealousy!" Rider answered as directly as she had put the query. "Call it infatuation, or whatever you please; Mercer was mad about Miss Warrender from the first moment he laid eyes on her; it was like a flame applied to dry tinder! Any one who does not deliberately shut their own eyes can see it in the man's face now, hear it in the tones of his voice when he speaks of her, read it in his every action. If there's such a thing as this love-at-first-sight that you read about, it was what hit him, and you warned Mrs. Mercer too late that she was losing him, though only four or five days had passed since the other woman came. That is hardly fair to Miss Warrender, though, for Mrs. Mercer had practically lost her husband long before, through neglect and lack of interest. You were frank enough to tell her this, weren't you?"

The shot told, and Jim Foster's faint color deepened.

"Some one was listening then?" She caught herself up and added defiantly: "What if I did? Some one had to tell her, just to stop the silly gossip, but for no other reason. Stan may have been bored and—and a little lonesome, and this woman was of a type foreign to his experience. I don't say that he wasn't infatuated with her for the time being; but, if she had finished her visit and gone, that would have been the end of it! He'd soon have settled down again, glad enough that he hadn't made a bigger fool of himself, and Mrs. Mercer's eyes were opened; she would have seen to it that such an opportunity didn't occur again. Instead of that, somebody had to come along and murder this woman, and now we're all in a horrible mess!"

"You would like to think it would have ended that way if Miss Warrender had lived to complete her visit; but you can't, can you?" Rider bent slightly toward her. "You don't want to face the fact that you yourself, perhaps, precipitated the tragedy by what you call opening Mrs. Mercer's eyes. In her attempts to follow your advice she only succeeded in arousing a sort of pitying distaste in her husband and forced him to compare her to the woman who innocently had aroused the strongest passion of his life. You're too square with yourself, too honest, to hide the knowledge from your own intelligence that Miss Warrender's departure would not have been the end of it! It would, on her part; that I can assure you, for I know more about her and her character than any one in this community, except one living man and one dead one; but, being a woman yourself, you must naturally blame her."

"I don't!" Jim Foster rose to the taunt. "The whole unfortunate situation was Mrs. Mercer's own fault for not realizing what miserable, weak specimens all men are, and not taking the trouble to hold hers! I don't say that Miss Warrender was to blame in any way; if you and poor Jack and some one else know so much about her—for you mean Jack, of course—and you're certain that when she went away it would have been the end——"

"On her part, I said," Rider interrupted. "It wouldn't have been on his, though. While she lived, that flame would have consumed him, and he knows it; perhaps it will consume him while he himself lives! The pity of it is that, if you had not spoken, his wife might never have known."

"Don't you suppose I realize that!"

The low cry broke from her, and she struck her hands together. "Don't you suppose I know what I've done? Do you think that hasn't been before me day and night since——"

Her voice ended in a gasp, and she caught her throat with both hands, as though to choke back the words rushing unbidden from her lips.

"Since Gloria Warrender was murdered?" Rider finished for her. "Of course I understood; I knew last week, when you stopped me in the road, when you told me you'd never have an hour's peace till the mystery was solved. You didn't know nor care anything about *her,* but you did care very much about who her murderer would prove to be, and you shrank, too, from that knowledge. There wasn't any deadlock between us, Miss Foster, for we both had the same theory, the same suspicion! At that time we agreed!"

"Stop!" she cried. "You—you've misunderstood me! Whatever your theory is, it's running away with you! When I said I knew what I'd done, I meant that Miss Warrender was dead, and it was all over, and if I only hadn't repeated that spiteful gossip to Mrs. Mercer, she need never have known her husband was—was attracted by any one else! I made her unhappy without any reason, any—any necessity, and she is my friend, and she will always remember it! You are absolutely wrong about my suspicions! I have none. I was curious, and I wanted to lead you on, find out what you thought about the murder. Can't you understand? Miss Warrender must have been killed by a stranger—a stranger to us, I mean! Any other thought would be monstrous, impossible!"

"Then why did you tell me an untruth when I first came to-day?" Rider asked qiuetly. "The excuse you gave me for avoiding the Mercers since the tragedy might have been offered by a formal acquaintance, but not an intimate friend of years' standing! You realized how weak it was while you spoke!"

"If that is so, perhaps you will tell me why I have not seen them?" Jim Foster tried to speak coldly, but there was a tremor in her voice, and her flat breast rose and fell with her quickened breathing.

"Because you couldn't face them!" he challenged her. "The thought of five minutes in their presence would have filled you with horror! *You knew the truth!*"

She stared at him for a moment and then suddenly buried her face in her hands.

"I do not know!" she sobbed desperately. "Please go! Oh, I do not know!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE VIOLET GRAVE.

"I TOLD Ingred you were coming to see her," the chief remarked, as he greeted Rider a little later at the jail. "She's a funny woman; don't seem to hold a bit of a grudge against either you or me for finding her out, and, now that she's sure her son will be taken care of, she's as contented at the thought of a long term ahead of her as she would be on a vacation!"

"Has any one else tried to see her?" Rider asked.

"Yes, Mercer himself was here an hour ago, but I told him nothing doing. He said he only wanted her to be assured he'd put up her bail to-morrow, and she'd be home with them again, but he looked pretty anxious, and I calc'late there's something more than that on his mind!"

"What did he say about the doctor's allowing us to see Nancy?"

"Asked me point-blank what my object was, and why I brought you and Mott," the chief replied.

"What did you tell him?" Rider frowned.

"We-ell, the truth, except that I took

it on myself. I said I thought the child might have seen more than just the body in the hammock, and she might talk about it in her delirium, and that I'd brought you two along as witnesses. I don't think that last went down with him very well, but he can't say anything because our being there didn't do her any harm. He asked if Nancy had said anything, and I told him she'd just talked about violets and things floating and then called out: 'Take it away!' That's all I could remember, and it didn't seem to mean anything more to him than it did to me. I guess he thought it was pretty high-handed of us, but he wasn't mad, only anxious on his wife's account."

"All right. Where's Ingred? What cell?"

"I ain't got her in a cell!" the chief admitted. "I know the charge is grand larceny, but she's such a—a *nice* woman, somehow, that I let her spend to-day in the matron's sitting room. We ain't as strict as you folks down to New York."

He led the way, and Rider followed into a pleasant room, bright with chintz and highly colored pictures and the rays of the westering sun through the barred windows, which gave the only sinister note. Ingred was sitting quietly, with folded hands, but she rose respectfully, as they entered, and stood waiting, unsmiling, but serene.

"All right, Ingred?" the chief asked. "Mr. Rider wants to talk to you."

"All right, I tank you, Mister Clark," she replied in her soft, full tones. "I tell to Mister Rider anyt'ing I can."

"I'll come back for you in half an hour," her jailor whispered in an aside to his companion and went out, locking the door behind him.

"Ingred, I'm sorry you did this, and that I was the one who had to go after you," Rider said. "Sit down again. I want to tell you I'm going to help Mr. Mercer all I can to get you off with the minimum sentence."

Ingred shook her head.

"It was wrong," she said simply. "I steal, and it bane right dat I should go to de prison. My Hans shall be vell! He must know dat his mot'er bane a t'ief, but dat also I should have because I bane vicked vomans."

There was a little pause, and then Rider spoke.

"Ingred, I want to ask you some questions that I don't want to trouble the Mercers with, while their little girl is still so ill, but they're things the chief wants to know in connection with the murder of Miss Warrender. What time do the family breakfast in the morning?"

"At eight o'clock, sir."

"Does Mrs. Mercer come down, or have hers sent up?"

"She ain't sick!" Ingred looked her surprise. "Alvays she coom to breakfast."

"Did Miss Warrender come to the table that morning—the morning of the day she was murdered? Did you wait on the table?"

"Yes, dat housemaid, she don't know not'ings! Miss Varrender vas dere, and I mind now I didn't tank she look so goot. She vas very quiet, and she vouldn't go out riding like odder mornings."

"Do you remember any of the conversation?"

Ingred thought for a moment.

"Only she said somet'ing 'bout letters to write, but after she plays vit de children. At loonch she say dat she goes out in de hammock to read, and maybe she vill sleep a little, onless Mrs. Mercer coom out, too; but Mrs. Mercer, she goes to her own room instead." Her voice lowered. "It vas vile dey vere eating de cheese and fruit dat I see de ring bane gone from Miss Varrender's finger, and vat I tank of all de time comes back in my head, like de blood rushing. I make me de excuse to go up de stairs, and dere bane de ring on

de dressing table! I take it, and ven I coom down they are yoost going out of de room. Dat vas de last I see Miss Varrender till I run out to de hammock after Mrs. Mercer cried out for me!"

"What did you do yourself after lunch?"

"I set dat housemaid to clean de silver, and I go to mend linens in de sewing room." Ingred waited for the next question, as though uncertain how to proceed, and Rider prompted her.

"Tell me everything that happened from the moment you finished your own lunch. You went up to mend. Mrs. Mercer was sewing, too, wasn't she?"

"Yes; I go to her room to ask if I should mend a towel dat bane mooch vorn, and Mrs. Mercer bane sewing a feadder fan to vear at de dinner party dat night. I go back and vork, and de house is so quiet and still, and den all at once little Nancy scream out terrible!"

"Does the window of the sewing room look out on the place where the hammock was hung?"

"No, de odder side of de house, sir."

"Did the screams seem to come from outside, or right down in the hall?" Rider bent forward. "Think, Ingred! I want to find out if Nancy started screaming the minute she came on Miss Warrender's body, or waited till she reached the house."

Ingred hesitated.

"I don't tank she scream till she get to de door, maybe yoost outside," she said at last. "I have a scared, because I tank she vas still vit' her modder."

"Oh, she was in Mrs. Mercer's room when you went there?" Rider interrupted.

"Yes, she have not'ing to do—she don't play like odder little girls, and I bane tell har coom vit' me, and I tell har stories vile I sew, but she bane tired vit' de hot veat'er. Ven I hear dat screaming I run down, and she bane all small-like on de floor, as if she try to crawl inside herself, and she shake and cover her face vit' har hands, and all de time de screams dey come qvick as she get de breat'! Den Mrs. Mercer coom, and pretty soon everybody else, even Bill, toombling down de stairs; but Nancy, she scream vorse ven ve touch her, and she bane more vorser vit' har modder as all! At last ve get out of har somet'ing about de hammock—to go look in de hammock."

"Then Mrs. Mercer called, and you went to her?" Rider urged. "Where did you leave Nancy?"

"In de hall. I tank she bane all right vit' de odders to take care of har; she bane stop screaming and wipes de eyes vit' de hands till dey look like two little mud holes, poor little von!"

"Were her hands so dirty?" Rider smiled. "I always thought she was a neat, dainty little youngster! Didn't she have a handkerchief, either?"

"She did have von vit' a little pink border—I see it ven she bane in har modder's room before, but I tank maybe she dropped it ven she bane scared. She ain't got it, anyvays, ven she coom in de house dat time, and her hands dey bane all dirt. Ven I coom back to de house myself, after I see poor Miss Varrender and de awful t'ing dat bane done to har, I bane so troubled in my mind 'bout dat ring, and who should have killed har and all, dat I forget Nancy, and ven I tank of har again she bane gone!"

"Miss Foster brought her back safely, though, at about seven o'clock, didn't she?"

"She bring har back sick, so sick she don't know not'ings! Dere are scratches on har face and hands, and she bane hot vit' fever! De doctor coom and get a nurse right avay because Nancy she bane clear out of har head, and she fight and scream ven har modder coom near har. I tank she maybe die, but ven I coom back from taking Hans to get vell, she bane better."

"When Miss Foster brought her home, did Nancy say one word that you heard distinctly?" Rider asked very slowly. "It doesn't matter whether you understood it or not; did you hear her say one word?"

Ingred shook her head.

"No; it vas like she bane dreaming somet'ing dat vas not goot, and she try to talk, but de vords, dey von't coom, only little, little sobs."

Chief Clark rattled the bolts of the door, and Rider rose.

"Just one more question, Ingred. Who is 'Peggy?'"

"'Peggy?'" Ingred repeated. "Dere bane nobody——"

"Some one or something that Nancy knew," Rider explained. "Didn't she ever have a pet or a little playmate named Peggy?"

Ingred shook her head, but all at once a faint smile came to her lips.

"Nancy had a doll vonce dat she called dat."

"A doll!"

"Yes. Bill dropped it last year, and it vas all broke—a beautiful, big doll, vit yallow hair. Nancy vould not let it be t'rown avay, she said it bane dead, and she bury it in de garden."

"Where?"

"In de spot vot she loves, vere dere are vild violets in spring. It bane by de hadge near vere de hammock vas hung."

Ingred's voice had lowered, and Rider turned, as the chief entered.

"Good-by, Ingred. You'll be home at Hydrangea Walk again by this time tomorrow, Chief Clark tells me. Maybe I'll see you there."

"Did you get anything out of her?" the chief asked anxiously, as he accompanied the visitor to the main entrance and stood for a moment beside him, looking out on the Sabbath quietude of the usually busy main street. "Do you think she knows anything more about the murder than she's told?"

"I didn't ask her," Rider said. "By the way, court opens at ten, doesn't it?"

"Yes; she ought to be free, if Mercer is there with the bail bond, before twelve, anyway," the chief replied.

"All right. I'll call you up late tonight—nearer morning—and, if you'll be ready to do what I ask, I may be able to turn some one over to you that you've been looking for since a week ago yesterday."

"The murderer!" gasped the chief. "Rider, can't you tell me even now? What if you're on the wrong track yourself, whatever it is, and I make a worse fool of myself than ever?"

"You won't," Rider responded gravely. "Unless I'm very badly mistaken, you'll hear a confession first!"

Dusk was falling, as he took leave of the bewildered official, and the lights were just flaring up in the little shops that lined each side of the thoroughfare. At one of these Rider stopped and purchased a small, sharp-edged trowel which he put in his pocket, together with a flash light. Then he drove straight to Hydrangea Walk.

As he entered the gates, Stan Mercer's tall, lithe figure emerged slowly from a mass of shrubbery and came toward him. The buoyancy of his carriage was gone, and he stooped slightly, walking with the dragging, weary steps of a man from whom all youth had gone.

"Hello, Rider." He spoke with an evident constraint. "Anything I can do for you?"

Rider stopped the car midway the drive.

"I came principally to make my apologies for what occurred this morning," he announced, adding mendaciously: "It was quite your chief's fault. I understood you knew we were going to peep in at your daughter when the change in her condition came, but that the doctor didn't wish Mrs. Mercer to know, for he had forbidden her to go near the

child; her presence, so the chief said, seems to make Nancy more restless. I hadn't any more intention of intruding than Mott had, and I'm sincerely sorry."

"That's all right; it's too bad Mrs. Mercer was told, that was all. Come in and have a high ball?"

"No, thanks, but I'll get out here and walk with you for a little, if you don't mind; I'd like to stretch my legs." Rider descended from the car as he spoke, and joined Stan on the path. "All little Nancy said that we could understand was something about wanting some violets. Do you grow any? I thought you had only hydrangeas."

"There's a little patch of wild violets over there." Stan gestured toward the northern hedge, near which stood that semicircle of bushes, with the trees rearing dark branches within it against the darkening sky. "I wanted to root them up, but Nancy pleaded so hard for them that I left them there; they only bloom for a few days in the spring, anyhow."

At his gesture Rider had stepped off the path and drawn his host insensibly across the lawn toward the hedge, and the latter came with obvious reluctance.

"Was it there that Nancy once buried a doll that was broken?" Rider asked with a trace of amusement in his tones. "Mrs. Mercer mentioned something of the sort one day."

"Yes; she's a strange, rarely sensitive child, with the queerest whims and fancies, and sometimes it strikes me that she's far older than her years." Stan was talking absently with palpable effort, his eyes straying, as if fascinated toward the spot where the hammock had hung. "That doll was very real to her, and when it was broken she naturally felt that it was dead. Here's the place she buried it; all this space around here is a mass of purple bloom in May. But, for Heaven's sake, let's go to the house and get a drink! This place gets on my nerves!"

Rider had noted the tiny patch of dark, shiny leaves, and, before turning to follow his host, he marked with his eye the distance to the bordering hedge and the nearest tree which would serve as a landmark. He could well understand how the proximity of the scene of the crime had wrought upon Stan's nerves, and for the next quarter of an hour he tried to erase the thought of it from his host's mind.

"The truth will come out—and sooner than you think, Mercer," he said, as he took his leave. "The chief of police is a shrewd man in spite of the mistake he made in regard to you, which was too absurd, of course, to be taken seriously. If you and Mrs. Mercer will have just a little more patience, I think he'll solve the mystery."

Stan shook his head gloomily.

"I think," he said, "that the mystery will never be solved!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

SLEEPING STRENGTH.

AT ten o'clock the next morning Chief Clark's long, lanky figure rose up from its cramped position behind a clump of trees near the gates of Hydrangea Walk, as Mott and Rider approached in the mud-spattered car, and he leaped upon the running board almost before it had come to a halt.

"What is it?" he demanded. "What did you mean by that message you telephoned at two o'clock this morning, Rider? I'd have come right up then to find out, if you hadn't threatened to leave town if I did!"

"I meant just what I said." Rider replied seriously. "Got that warrant I told you to bring?"

He nodded. "You told me to meet you here and not to stop anybody I saw going in or out; but there's nobody left except Mrs. Mercer and the servants and children, for Mercer himself has gone down to court, I calc'late, to bail Ingred out when she's held; but I fixed it with

the magistrate to delay her case an hour, like you told me. Where're we going to find the murderer? Not here at Hydrangea Court?"

"I have every reason to believe that the murderer will come before we go, but I want to ask Mrs. Mercer a few questions first." Rider turned to Mott. "Go on, Henry. We'll drive straight up to the door."

The little car leaped forward, and the chief protested:

"Look here, ain't you going to tell me even now? I've given you your head for a week, and you let me make a fool of myself! What'll folks think to have their own police chief stand aside and let a stranger that's just supposed to be visiting here run his job for him? I don't want the credit that's your due, but I asked for you to help me, not take this case out of my hands!"

"You're right. That's why I wanted you to meet us first, for I'm not sailing under false colors any longer. I'm Inspector Rider now, loaned to you for special duty on this case." There was no mistaking the earnest ring in his tones. "Mott's kind enough to say he can square himself with his neighbors for keeping the nature of my profession from them, and you can put off any blame on me that you like."

The chief looked slightly dazed.

"All right, if you say so!" he assented. "Who'm I going to arrest then?"

"Miss Warrender's murderer," Rider said tersely. "I tell you flatly that we haven't enough circumstantial evidence to hold any one, and we've got to force a confession. Give me my head once more, and, when I tell you, take in your prisoner. Is that good enough?"

"It'll have to be!" the chief responded, as they drew up before the veranda steps, and he dropped off. "I'll bet you don't ask Mrs. Mercer any questions this morning, though—not after we sneaked in to see Nancy yesterday! She won't even come down!"

It seemed that his prediction was to be verified, for the housemaid, who admitted them, returned from conferring with her mistress to inform them that Mrs. Mercer could not leave her daughter's bedside, and begged to be excused from seeing them.

"Go back and take this to Mrs. Mercer." Rider drew a card from his pocket, scribbled two words on it, and handed it to the astonished maid. "Say to her, please, that if she does not receive us, the chief of police and I will come upstairs."

The maid stared a minute, her eyes starting from her head, and then turned and flew out into the hall, while the three men left in the drawing-room seated themselves.

"That was your departmental card?" the chief asked in a whisper.

Rider nodded.

"Yes, and I wrote upon it 'official business,'" he replied grimly. "No matter how offended Mrs. Mercer is, curiosity, if nothing else, will bring her here."

As if in an echo of his confident words, there came a footfall on the stairs, the curtains at the doorway parted, and Mrs. Mercer stood before them. The pallor was accentuated in her sallow face by a sharp touch of bright color, and her dark eyes gleamed, as she said frigidly:

"I should not have understood your extraordinary message had it not been for the card which accompanied it, Inspector Rider. May I ask who has retained you on this case? I do not think your authority extends beyond the limits of your own city."

She spoke as though he were an utter stranger, and Rider bowed.

"It does when I am detailed elsewhere on special duty—loaned out by my own chief to another, as in this instance. Mr. Mott introduced me here in a purely social capacity, but, when a grave crime took place, and I encountered Chief

Clark, he recognized me and wired my own headquarters for my official aid."

"We knew, of course, that you were something more than the merely intrusive guest of our neighbor, when you followed Ingred and found the ring she had stolen." Olive Mercer's lips curled. "I shall be glad to assist you in any way, but I hope you will be brief, for I must return to my sick child."

"Then I must ask you to listen patiently for just a few minutes." Rider motioned toward a chair, as though he were the host, and Olive sank into it, her eyes fixed upon his face. "Mrs. Mercer, we know every movement of every one under this roof on the day Gloria Warrender was murdered; we know why she was killed, and the identity of the person who took her life! She was your friend; wouldn't you care to hear the truth?"

"Naturally." There was, however, a scornfully incredulous note still in her tones. "I could perhaps receive it with greater faith if the guilty person were already under arrest; but please go on. You insinuate that some one under this roof killed Miss Warrender?"

"You must judge for yourself." Again Rider bowed. "You had been in your friend's company much more during the second week of her visit than the first, Mrs. Mercer; your friends and neighbors all remarked it, and Miss Foster, whom I called upon yesterday afternoon, explained why."

"Jim?" Olive started slightly, and the color reddened on her cheek. "I don't quite understand! Of course I exerted myself to entertain my guest!"

"Of course!" Rider agreed. Mott was staring roundly, and the chief sat with his bony hands clenching and unclenching on his knees. "She was to have left you on the following Monday, I believe. Why did you avoid her on the day of her death—or was it she who avoided you?"

"Inspector, you are impertinent!" Her dark eyes flashed. "Find the murderer! That is your business, isn't it? Why do you catechize me?"

"That, too, is part of my official business," he replied slowly, but courteously. "You left Miss Warrender to her own devices all that Saturday morning; after lunch she asked you to join her out on the lawn, in the hammock, but you preferred to go to your room. You were mending a fan then, weren't you—a black feather fan?"

"Yes, I think so. It was some such trivial thing." Olive nodded, and the bright spot of color began to fade from her cheeks.

"Your little girl came to you while you were mending this fan, and then Ingred appeared to ask you about some linens she was at work upon," Rider continued, his eyes gazing straight into hers. "Ingred went back to the sewing room, and your little girl went out to play. She wandered about the garden for an hour or more—that part of the garden which lies on the side of the house farthest from the spot where the hammock was swung, and she talked to Hans, who was pruning the pergola. Then she recalled that Miss Warrender had said she was going to read in the hammock, and Nancy went to look for her. You know what she found."

"Certainly!" Olive exclaimed hurriedly. "She ran screaming up to the house. But haven't we gone all over that a score of times? What has Nancy to do with it?"

"Everything," Rider replied. "You know that she saw your friend's body lying there, but perhaps you do not know what else Nancy found?"

"What—else?" Olive's face was quite colorless and strained now, and she moistened her lips.

"Something she recognized—something that told her who had been there before her—*who had murdered Gloria Warrender!* Her childish, but psychic, instinct revealed to her the truth; still,

even in her overwhelming fear and horror, her loyalty was steadfast, and she had presence of mind enough to pick up the thing she had found and recognized, wrap it in her little, pink-bordered handkerchief, and hide it in the safest place she knew. Then, her self-control gone, she ran shrieking to the house, the only haven she knew, but she would never have told—never, if delirium hadn't unsealed her lips."

"I thought it would be some such conspiracy as this!" Olive rose. "That was why you induced the doctor to allow you to enter Nancy's room yesterday! Do you think that you can fasten a crime on any one on the mere testimony of a sick and delirious baby?"

"No. She told, however, in the presence of witnesses, what she had found, and where she had buried it, and in the presence of witnesses I unearthed it, still wrapped in its tiny, pink-bordered shroud. She had told Mr. Mott and me about it before, when we found her miles away in a thicket on the evening following the murder, half dead from exhaustion and the horror that had almost crazed her brain, but not until yesterday did we get from her the details that enabled us to complete our case. The object which she had found was only a fragment, but we have the article of which it forms a part. Mrs. Mercer, when you sat mending your fan that Saturday afternoon, after Ingred had left you and then Nancy, what were your thoughts? Can you recall them?"

She shook her head, but seated herself once more.

"How could I, Mr. Rider?" she asked. "I presume I was thinking of the dinner we were to attend that night at the Waterfall Inn; perhaps my mind was engaged with my household duties. How can I remember now?"

"Perhaps they were fixed on something far more vital," he suggested; "something that would not let you rest. How long did you sit there in your room, Mrs. Mercer? How long did you brood over the wrong that had been done you before you got up and went out to the hammock to have it out with the woman who had stolen your husband from you?"

"How dare you!" she cried.

"You went to tell her that he belonged to you, and you would never let him go! That you would hold him, fight for him, keep him at all odds from her—and you found her asleep, her head hanging over the edge of the hammock, her face hidden, her round neck under your hands! The impulse to kill came to you—to kill this creature who had entered your home as a guest and stolen from you your mate, who meant to take him away with her, away from you forever! You went to the opening in that circle of shrubbery, but no one was in sight; no one had seen you enter it. You turned and looked again at that woman helpless before you, and then in a blind fury you seized the rope tied to the tree, jerked it apart, and flung it about her neck, winding it tight around and around, so that her screams would be choked back in her throat. You pulled it tighter and tighter, while she struggled, until at last her struggles ceased! You didn't realize until later that your swollen, abrased hands would betray you, and you cleverly, nervily overturned a burning alcohol lamp on them; you didn't know that you had brought with you and dropped at the scene of your crime an object that would inevitably point to your guilt, the object which Nancy found and buried to shield you—*this!*"

As he spoke Rider drew from his pocket a tiny, earth-stained handkerchief with a narrow, pink border, and, unwrapping it, disclosed a single black feather.

The chief swore a startled oath, Henry Mott choked, and Olive Mercer sprang once more to her feet, her face livid.

"Yes, I killed her!" she cried. "I

throttled her, as I would a snake! It wasn't because she had taken from me the father of my children—because she would break up my home, but because she had stolen my mate! He was mine, mine, and I had a right to kill!"

"Great guns!" The chief rose also and advanced a step toward her. "I've got to tell you, ma'am, that whatever you say's liable to be used against you!"

Olive laughed, with a rising note of hysteria in her harsh, husky tones.

"Do you think that it matters now?" she exclaimed. "That girl shared my bed at school for three years! She was always cleverer than I, brilliant, daring! Everything she wanted, everything worth while, came to her without effort, while the rest of us worked and struggled; and she fascinated all of us—we were her slaves! Years passed, and then I heard of her again and invited her to my home. She came—you saw her, you saw how every one fell under her spell, and how blind I was, how blind!

"A friend came to me and opened my eyes, and I began to watch! I tried to enter into the life she led—she and my husband—to keep up with them in the things I had forgotten for my duties as a wife and mother, but it was too late! I saw my husband's infatuation, but I hoped it was only idle amusement on her part, and that she would go away and leave me in peace with my own. Oh, how I had grown to hate her! How old she made me feel! I knew I was losing my dignity, making myself ridiculous in the eyes of my friends, but I didn't care; I was trying to win back Stan! It was only when I saw with his eyes that I realized how futile it all was—when he pitied me, showed me how distasteful I was to him, and I saw the comparison he must be making between her and me! I didn't blame him—I've never blamed him. It was she!

"He urged me to ask her to stay on, and I did, but with the bitterness of death in my heart! She refused, and then he announced that he was going to New York in a few days, and I saw it all! In despair I said I would go with him, but he refused to take me—put me off with lying excuses when I urged, and finally he told me point-blank that he was going alone. That night——" Olive crouched over the table toward them, her face distorted till her heavy black brows seemed to writhe, and her voice sunk to a hoarse whisper. "That night I saw them in each other's arms! I heard her tell him she loved him; I heard him say that it was the beginning of a new life for them both, and I knew then what I must do! Wherever she went she would call to him, and he would follow! Out of all the men in the world she had chosen him—mine! It wasn't amusement; she wanted him, and she meant to have him, just as she had always taken anything in life that she wanted!

"When I stepped back from the pergola, where I had followed them, and out into the moonlight, so that they should think I had just come from the house, Gloria Warrender was a dead woman! I didn't know how or when the opportunity would come, but I knew she must not leave my home alive to draw my husband after her! All that night I thought, all the next morning, and I could feel something rising in me that I'd never known before—a strength, a power to crush, to destroy! I felt dizzy and yet clear-headed, too, only everything was in a red mist before me! They tried all day to avoid each other in order to deceive me, and I laughed at them—laughed in my heart!

"That afternoon it was hot—the heat seemed beating into my brain, beating in what they had said to each other the night before, and something kept telling me 'Now! Now!' I couldn't stand it any longer! I put down that black feather fan I was mending and went to her! I found her, as you said, asleep, and I killed her!"

The harsh, guttural voice ceased, and she brought her fist down with a dull, heavy thump on the soft cover of the table. The chief was still standing, his lantern jaw dropped, staring at her with blank eyes, and Mott was breathing stertorously, while the perspiration stood out on his forehead. Rider regarded her with a keen, matter-of-fact scrutiny, and when he spoke, it was calmly.

"You broke the swing rope from the tree?"

"I snapped it, as though it were a piece of thread!" Olive cried, with a fierce note of exultation. "I wound it round and round her white neck and held the ends taut, while she whipped about in that hammock, like a fish in a net! I think she tried to cry out, but the sound gurgled away in her throat, and in a little while it was all over! Long, long after she was limp and still, I held her so; then gradually I loosed my hold on the rope ends till they dropped from my hands. She didn't move, and then all at once I began to tremble, and the strange strength which had come to me, which had seemed to awaken inside of me, left me, and everything whirled and grew black!

"I was afraid I should faint, and they would find me there, and I fought off the weakness and got back to my room. I don't know—I only remember finding myself there once more and wondering if it wasn't all a nightmare! I bathed my face in cold water and sat down to take up my fan again, so that I should seem never to have dropped it. And then for the first time I noticed my hands! It wasn't a nightmare, after all, for they were seared, as though I had clung to a rod of fire! I realized then that she was really dead and out of my way—she couldn't take my husband from me!

"I could have shrieked for joy in the thought that he was mine again; but I knew the summons would come at any time, and I planned what I must do, how I would put that hour from my mind and tell my story! I was sure of myself, sure that no one would ever know. Stan would come back to me, and we would go on as though that woman had never come into our lives. What a fool I was! Living, she threatened my happiness; but dead she had taken it with her to the grave! Her memory would always stand between us—Stan would never forget her; she had taken him from me after all!

"When I realized that, nothing seemed to matter. I kept on—instinctively, I suppose—studying myself, guarding my every word and action, but it hardly seemed worth while. Now and then I've had a creeping fear that Stan suspected me! He couldn't have, of course; it was only that I was losing my grip; but, even if he knew, what difference could it make? I don't suppose we could have gone on this way. I don't know what the end would have been, but I'm glad I did it! Glad! Glad!"

"Stop!" The curtains at the doorway were dashed aside, and Stan Mercer flung himself into the room. "I've heard you! I heard what you said, and I thought I was going mad, just as I thought I was going mad all these days past, for I *did* suspect you, though I prayed for forgiveness for the thought! I can't judge you—you're Nancy's mother and Bill's, and I suppose you've been what they call a model wife; but there's one thing you've got to hear! You've got to know what you've done!"

He was breathing, as though he had run a long, exhausting race, and his face worked with emotion. Slowly Olive straightened and faced him, and slowly the words fell from her lips.

"Can you deny that you loved her?"

"No!" He fairly hurled it in her face. "I loved her, and I always shall! Such love as that you don't understand; a woman like you never could! There's no more right nor wrong to it than there is to a man's actions when he's carried

along in a whirlpool, a tornado! What had you given me for years? A single hour of companionship, a moment of tenderness that was really spontaneous, really *you?* I'm not blaming you for that, Heaven knows, but you've got to know what a thing this is that you have done!"

"Stan!" Mott gasped, but the man before them did not hear.

"Gloria Warrender loved me. You heard her say it, but it is a pity you didn't wait to hear more! She was a good woman—good and brave and sweet and true—true even to you, who killed her! We'd never spoken of love until that night. I don't think she even knew what had come to her! I caught her in my arms because I couldn't help myself—because this thing which had come to us was too big for me; but it wasn't too big for her! I pleaded with her and told her that I would never let her go, but she said that I must! She would go away, and that would be the end forever; that moment must never come again! It was because of you, because she would not bring unhappiness to you! Because she *wouldn't* take the love that wasn't rightfully yours! It was the beginning and the end there, that night in the garden—and you killed her!"

He stood panting and staring into her face, and her eyes met his for a moment that seemed interminable to the three watchers. What she saw there must have convinced her of the truth, for all at once she swayed and turned gropingly, blindly toward the chief of police.

"Take me away!" Her hoarse, toneless cry rasped on the silence. "Take me away!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN PERSPECTIVE.

CHICHESTER was pleasantly astir with the market-day bustle of another summer when Rider climbed into Mott's car at the station. It was a new car, with low, rakish lines and sporty lamps, but Henry Mott's rotund form was as shabbily comfortable as ever, and his kindly face was beamingly good-natured.

From the steps of the court house a tall, lanky figure waved ungainly arms and called in defiance of his own rules concerning orderly conduct, and Rider nodded and waved in return.

"The chief seems flourishing," he commented.

"Like the young bay tree," Mott supplemented. "That affair last year made him solid for life. By Godfrey, it seems more than a year! There've been a lot of changes here."

"Town appears the same," observed Rider.

"Not in the town—I mean the folks," Mott explained. "You'll notice one or two landmarks gone, though, out my way. Poor old Jack's place has been made over into a boys' school, and—well, wait."

"Is old Hiram still working for Miss Foster?"

"Working for her? He's running her! You'd think he owned the place, and when she's out there she doesn't dare call her soul her own." He chuckled, and then his face grew grave. "She's one of the folks I meant had changed; she's still rampaging around for votes and doing a mighty lot of good, too, cleaning things up; but she's softer and more gentle—turning out to be a real nice woman! I guess she won't ever take it into her head again to go around telling people how to run their own lives!"

They had left the business streets behind them and turned into the road which Rider remembered so well, leading past the larger estates on the way to the country club, and he found himself looking for, yet dreading to see, a square, solid gray house with wide, red-roofed verandas and massed blue hydrangeas everywhere. He watched and waited and then suddenly gasped:

"Why—where's it gone? Surely that's the place! What on earth has become of Hydrangea Walk?"

Row upon row of flat, glass greenhouses spread before him, shimmering in the sun, like a broad lake, and Mott replied:

"Razed to the ground. Stan wouldn't leave a stick nor stone of it when he took the children and went out to California to live. The place looked like a battlefield when he got through with it, and he sold it to a nurseryman."

"Do you ever hear——" Rider began, but paused.

"Oh, yes. The board keeps in touch with things, you know," Mott responded, reading the other's meaning. His tone was dry, as he added: "She's a model prisoner, I understand; she ought to get quite a little off that twenty-year manslaughter sentence because of good behavior."

"And Ingred?"

"Her pardon's pending, and Hans is getting well fast." Mott's voice was cheerful once more. "How's your golf? The course is a lot improved, and I went around in seventy-eight the other day—not bad for me, eh? We'll run over after lunch to see if we can make up a foursome."

But after lunch they somehow found themselves under the grape arbor, as of old, with chairs comfortably tipped back. For a while they smoked in silence, and then Mott exclaimed:

"Oh, what's the use? We might as well get it talked over and forget it! You promised that when the trial was over you'd tell me how you doped out the case, but, before the jury handed in their verdict, you had to beat it back to New York on that big bank robbery. I know what your memory is, and I haven't forgotten a single detail. What was it that first made you think Olive Mercer killed Miss Warrender?"

"Let me see. It was more a feeling than a thought, as I remember it." Rider watched the smoke wreaths from his cigar retrospectively. "I'd studied her a little more carefully than I do most people I meet in a social way, because there was a certain incongruity about her that interested me. Every line in that full, heavy face of hers denoted passion, a terrific passion that would sweep everything before it and leave wreckage behind, if it were ever roused. Those thick, black brows, too, that almost met over her forehead—I never saw a woman with them yet that wouldn't make a man's life a hell through jealousy, if she ever grew suspicious, whether she had cause or not."

"But, until Gloria Warrender came, she was wrapped up in her home and the children, and she never seemed to give Stan a thought!" Mott protested.

"That's how she had you all fooled—she was placid and contented because she was so sure of him; he belonged to her, and that was all there was to it. It was his home; those were his children; do you see? It wasn't love with her, not the love that sacrifices and renounces—it was the mate instinct, and when that scented danger she took the trail!"

"Like an animal!" Mott shuddered.

His companion smiled.

"What are we, all of us, underneath?" he asked and then went on. "When we got there, after she telephoned that there was trouble, the minute I saw her face I realized that she was roused at last, and I began to study her every word and look and gesture, and she overreached herself! Her announcement of the tragedy was a little too dramatic, and, when you had rushed off to see the body, I asked her to tell me the whole thing over again in detail. Henry, no woman, laboring under such shock and strong emotion, would have been able to tell a connected, concise story like that, unless it had been carefully rehearsed! You've only to contrast it with her own account, verified by the servants, of lit-

tle Nancy's incoherent outburst, to understand. Her eyelids were very red, I remember—too red—but there wasn't a sign of tears; and, carefully as she had planned what she would say and do about her own discovery of the body, she had forgotten one significant detail. She said she looked at it, called for help, and then telephoned to us. She just *looked* at it. Wouldn't it have been natural for her to try to find out whether life was extinct or not, *unless she already knew?*"

"Jumping Christopher! And I never got it!" Mott exclaimed.

"Of course I knew what motive she might have had, from the common gossip about her husband's infatuation, but I tried to discount that. When he came, do you recall how she broke the news to him? She hurled it at him in a sort of triumph that you took for hysterical horror, but she gloried in it! Do you recall, too, how careful she was to impress on us, then and later, how little she had known of her friend's life during those ten past years? That was for an opening to throw suspicion elsewhere, if the scent got too close. You all thought her a marvelous mother, yet she hadn't any thought for Nancy's condition of fright that afternoon; her only desire was to get off to her own room by herself, to think and plan further subterfuge. I went away with you to send my telegrams, morally certain that she herself had murdered her friend."

"Why in the world didn't you tell me?" Mott asked, then stopped suddenly.

"Exactly!" Rider replied to his unspoken thought. "You never would have believed me for a moment. When we returned and sat in that conference between her, the coroner, and the chief of police, she assured them that she didn't know anything about Miss Warrender, but insinuated that Major Hill might. Were you watching her face when the coroner telephoned and found out he'd left town suddenly that afternoon? She saw another possible avenue of escape if she were ever suspected. Do you remember her blank astonishment at the discovery that the opal ring was missing? That was entirely beyond her calculations, a complication utterly unforeseen. When I shook hands with her then and again on Monday after the inquest, I noticed how hot hers was, and I handed her that telegram from my New York operative so that she would have to extend her palm for it; I saw that it was bruised and seared, and she explained she had overturned an alcohol stove. I verified this by Ingred, but I knew it was only a cunning and rather courageous ruse to conceal the effect of the rope!

"Then, when Gildersleeve came, she turned him over to me for interrogation."

"I remember that, all right!" Mott interrupted. "I couldn't understand why, though."

"Because she knew I'd question him later, if not then, and she wanted to hear the replies," Rider responded. "When he said she must know how lovable Gloria Warrender was, she said 'I know!' in a tone that spoke volumes. It was that lovableness that had caused all the tragedy!

"After the inquest I examined the hammock and found a bit of black fluff clinging to it; I didn't know about the black feather fan then, but I put it in my pocket, anyway. The next day—Tuesday—I told you at lunch about Miss Foster's suspicions. You thought I meant that she suspected Stan, but I told you I hadn't any particular man in mind. I hadn't. It was a woman—Olive Mercer. As for Miss Foster, she alone beside myself suspected the truth from the first. Do you wonder that she dreaded to have it proved?"

"You said, too, something about a romance in her life. I've often thought of it, watching her and the change in

her. Do you really think she cared for Stan?" Mott asked, but Rider shook his head.

"No. It's presumptuous of me—of both of us—to pry into a woman's heart, but I think if Miss Foster ever cared for any man, that man is dead."

"You told me, too, that day that you'd have to stop your investigation for a while and wait, and when I asked you 'what for?' the next day, you said simply for the time to pass."

"Yes, I was waiting for Ingred and Hans to go."

"But you didn't follow them for over twenty-four hours!" Mott objected.

Rider laughed and eyed his friend quizzically.

"Yes, but I wasn't waiting to follow them. I wanted to get them out of the house. It meant two less to encounter, and Ingred had an embarrassing habit of being watchful at night."

"By Godfrey!" Mott dropped his pipe, but caught it, as it touched the ground. "So it was you! No wonder that burglary was never solved! You took a long chance when you resorted to chloroform, though, Dan!"

"Had to, or be discovered." Rider shrugged. "I'd searched her room pretty thoroughly before she woke up, looking for the dress she wore on the day of the murder, to see if any bit of trimming or something had dropped from it that Nancy might have picked up and buried, recognizing it. I knew the child must have hit on the truth, for only that would account for her horrified aversion to her mother, which persisted even in delirium, though she was loyal to her instinctively. I found the broken black feather fan, but still I didn't connect it with that bit of fluff I'd picked off the hammock; so I left it there on the shelf in Mrs. Mercer's closet. It was sheer luck that Mercer himself had gone out tramping around in the night with his sorrow and his frightful suspicions! I was more successful the second time."

"The second time!" Mott ejaculated.

"The night before we confronted Mrs. Mercer. We'd learned then from Nancy's own lips that whatever she found was light enough to 'float around,' and she had wrapped it in her handkerchief with the pink border and buried it near Peggy, where there were violets. Ingred told me when I visited her in jail that Peggy was a doll for which Nancy had made a grave in the violet bed, and later Mercer pointed it out to me. That night late I went back with a trowel I'd bought, dug up the bed, found the doll and the black feather wrapped in the dirty little hankerchief. I remembered the fan then, and the whole thing was clear." Rider paused to relight his cigar and then resumed: "I went into the house the same way as before, got that fan for evidence, and this time nobody spotted me, nor ever knew of my presence. You remember the fan when the chief produced it at the trial? It was of uncurled ostrich, and the broken tip that Nancy had found beside the body fitted exactly to the one short feather."

"That was the last link needed!" Mott nodded slowly. "Why do you suppose she went out to see old Hiram and ask about the major the day after he killed himself?"

"She was uneasy, getting fearful of herself—call it guilty conscience, if you like," Rider explained dryly. "She had begun to look for suspicion on every hand, and she wanted to see if she couldn't somehow fasten the guilt on his memory, if the need came. We had a pretty slim case against her, even if we put her own child on the stand, but she confessed, as I figured she would."

A little silence fell then between the two friends, and they smoked on, relaxed in the warm sunshine. From a neighboring field came the whirr and droning hum of a mowing machine, and the fragrant scent of new-cut hay lay heavy on the air.

All at once Mott spoke again.

"The only thing I can't understand is how Olive Mercer had the strength to do what she did."

"You heard her explain that as well as she was able. She said that all that day she felt a strength rising within her, a power to crush, to destroy. There's an old French saying—*'le chat qui dort'* —beware of the sleeping cat. You've heard of women, and men, too, for that matter, raised to extraordinary strength to rescue some loved one from danger? Why not to destroy a rival, who Olive Mercer thought had deliberately stolen her mate?" Rider paused, and after a moment added: "I shouldn't wonder if there were a sleeping cat, a hidden strength, in all of us, Henry. Heaven help us if we waken it!"

THE END.

FORMER BANDIT TO WORK AMONG CONVICTS

ABE BUZZARD, for years one of the worst desperadoes of the Welsh Mountain region of Pennsylvania, a man who has spent a total of forty-two years behind prison bars, was recently released from the Eastern State Penitentiary, when his latest sentence of thirteen years expired. The ex-bandit is an old man of seventy-two, but despite his long confinement appears healthier, stronger, and younger than most men of his age. He says he has planned to become a prison evangelist, and to this end he has studied theology and the Scriptures.

"I have many years left in which to undo the wrong I have done," the aged convict declared. "I have made all my plans, so no time will be wasted before I begin my career in the service of the Lord."

Buzzard started his prison career when he was thirteen years old, receiving a sentence for robbery. After his release he and his three brothers headed a gang which terrorized the residents of the Welsh Mountain district for years by their numerous robberies and holdups. The three brothers, Ike, Mart, and John also served long prison terms. Ike is now in the Lancaster County almshouse, while the other two are farmers in the Welsh Mountains and are held in high respect by their neighbors.

FIVE DAPPER THIEVES

FIVE dapper young men, dressed in the smartest of spring finery, each holding an automatic in his hand, recently held up and robbed forty card players in a room in the rear of the cigar store of Harry Turk, in the Bronx. They escaped with more than fifteen thousand dollars in cash and jewelry. The holdup took place at one of the busiest sections of the Bronx, while scores of persons were passing the store, unaware that anything out of the ordinary was going on.

While the thieves were collecting money and valuables from their victims, four other men who entered the store to join in the card games, were welcomed into the room by one of the robbers. After the clerks in the store had been taken into the back room and locked up, the thieves lined the card players against the wall. While two men guarded them, a third watched the door, and the other two went through their victims' pockets.

The Thing He Didn't Know

by R. M. Bemis

Author of "The Whisper in the Well," "The Brute," etc.

A COLD November drizzle was darkening the air, so that the street lights glowed dimly through the murk. It was a good night for revenge, and the judge's house was set apart from the others and screened from the street and from other houses by hedges and clumps of fir trees.

Lurking in the darkness of the shrubbery was the figure of a man. His lips were moving silently, shaping bitter words of hate and passion unrestrained. The chill air made him shiver, as he waited, with his eyes fixed intently on the looming building, with its two windows of light at the front.

Dewar's long face twisted into a vicious grin, as he felt his way across the lawn toward the windows. "Accordin' to the papers," he muttered to himself, "the old boy'll be alone tonight, because his wife an' family has gone out of town for the week-end. No other house within a hundred yards —an' bushes all around. Pretty slick, I calls it. His honor'll be glad to see me—I don't think!"

From behind a bush Dewar peered in a window, craftily concealing himself from view from the street. A gray-haired man of fifty or so, of medium height, a solidly built man, lithe and powerful, was seated at a desk, writing diligently.

"The old duffer is an industrious cuss, ain't he?" grunted Dewar. "Sittin' up till twelve an' after, figuring out how long a stretch he can give some poor devil." He ground his teeth together in savage hate. "I'll fix 'im," he grunted almost aloud.

Then he went around to the back of the building, looking for a place to get in. He found it a simple matter. The back door was not locked. He opened it silently and felt the rush of warm air.

When he was inside, he locked the door behind him and, creeping like a panther on the balls of his feet, went through the darkness of the back hall, through the kitchen, lighted dimly from the glow of the light in the front room, through the dining room into the front hall. With an inaudible grunt of satisfaction he noticed that the curtains of the hall window were drawn, and he stood and peered with his deep-set black eyes at the figure seated at the desk in the front room.

For a long minute the sinister figure, gloating, watched his prey; his spare frame still trembled with the chill of the night air. Presently the pleasant warmth of the house penetrated his damp clothes, but he was mindful of the risk he was taking.

"Might as well take a sneak upstairs and make sure there's no one else in the dump," he thought to himself, and went up the thickly carpeted steps.

Dewar was a professional burglar, and five years in stir had not taken any of his soft-footed skill from him. He moved about with the ease and silence of a ghost. Satisfied that there was no one in the three rooms above, he started down again, but halted at the top step, as there came sounds of some one moving below.

It was the judge. There was a shuffling of papers, the scraping of a chair, and footfalls on the rug. Then the click of a light switch, the opening of a door, and the sound of his feet going down the basement stairs. Thirty seconds later came the clank of the furnace door, and, as Dewar came down the steps to the first floor, the clanking of the shaker bar.

"The old coot's fixing the furnace for the night," I suppose, thought Dewar. "Wonder if I couldn't give him a surprise by going down an' asking him if he wouldn't like a bit of help." He nodded his head in affirmative. "And they wouldn't nobody hear him yelling down there!" His long face grinned and leered evilly.

But at the top of the cellar steps he paused. There might be windows in the basement, though he remembered noticing, as he had gone around the outside of the house, that there was a heavy banking about the wall. Probably the windows had been banked up, too, against the colds of winter.

He descended a couple of steps and leaned over to see what the man below was doing, though he could hear the shaker bar rattling.

Judge Brent was standing in front of the furnace, fifteen feet away, his head partly hidden by a hot-air pipe, vigorously working the shaker bar. Dewar descended cautiously, looking about for windows. It would not do to be seen by some stray person who might take that particular moment to peek in the cellar windows. He was gratified to observe that the windows had been banked up, as he had hoped, and, with the glint of triumph in his eyes, he went down openly into the basement.

"Hello, judge!" said Dewar in a harsh voice.

Judge Brent turned to see Dewar striding across the concrete floor toward him.

The basement was brilliantly lighted, and close beside the judge's head was an electric bulb. It cast his cleanly chiseled features into vivid relief, as he watched his enemy approach.

"Ain't yer glad to see me?" leered Dewar venomously.

The expression on the judge's face turned slowly from puzzlement to recognition, but there was no fear in his eyes.

"What are you doing here, Dewar?" he asked calmly.

"I've come to collect seven years' pay," grunted Dewar.

He lifted his gloved hand. It held a blue automatic.

Judge Brent's strong face grew stern. "Don't be foolish, Dewar," he said coldly. "If you have come here to take what you call revenge, remember that there is a law outside which will get you in the end."

Dewar laughed bitterly. "H'ist yer hands up over yer head and don't let a peep outa you, neither. Back up to that post right behind you. I'll show you what I think of the law right away, I will, Mr. Judge Brent."

But Judge Brent made no move to obey. His lips set in a hard line, while his clear eyes never wavered. "I hardly think you would shoot me, Dewar," he said. "Some one might hear the shot."

"Try me an' see," grated the gunman. "Nobody'd ever hear a shot from down here in the cellar." The gun lowered till it was in line with the judge's foot. "The first one'll be in your shin!" For five seconds he

waited. "Stick 'em up, I ain't here for to quit before I start. Stick 'em up, or I take a shot at you. Then we can talk business."

The judge's hands went slowly into the air. He backed up a few steps, eying the gunman contemptuously.

For a long minute Dewar contemplated his prey. They could hear the moaning of the east wind, driving the misty rain over the house. The two men eyed each other steadily, and the wind seemed to fit into Dewar's mood. It was a great night for revenge! But, if there was any fear at all in the heart of Judge Brent, it did not show in his face.

Dewar listened; then, with the triumph of vicious pleasure shining from between his narrowed eyelids, he laughed softly.

"You remember me, judge?" he flashed. "You know what I've come here for?"

"I remember that I gave you seven years for robbery, some years ago. That was your third sentence, I believe."

The other man's face twisted with malignant savagery. "Yes, you remember, don't you?" he growled. "Right well you remember. You sent me up twice. The first time for three years, and then, when I hadn't been out more'n two months, you gimme seven years more."

"I did only my duty—what any other judge would have done," remonstrated Brent quietly. "You got only what you deserved, both times, Dewar. It was mere coincidence that you were brought before me the second time. As an old offender, you deserved all you got."

"Aw, rats!" snarled Dewar. "You had a grouch that day. Seven years of hell, you gimme. You didn't have to pile it on so. Seven years for gettin' away with fifty dollars' worth of junk!" He spat viciously as he thought of it again. "I told you I'd square with you for that and I'm goin' to!" Then teasingly he added softly: "You better begin to beg, yer honer."

"I don't see any reason why I should beg, Dewar." Brent's square jaw had set in a hard line. "The best thing you can do, Dewar, is to go away before you do something that may send you up for a longer term."

"Ain't you afraid I'll do something! That's a good one. Be too blasted bad if I was to do something wrong now, wouldn't it?" And again he laughed. "Jest back up to that post like I told you to, and I'll tie you up a little bit, so's you won't go off and leave me till we talk it over a bit."

He produced a strong cord from a coat pocket and went behind the judge, who had backed up to the post, quietly remonstrating, unafraid.

"Jest keep your hands up there till I put this rope around your waist and couple you up to this post, so's you'll stand where you're put." He threw the end of the rope about his victim and with a few quick motions had tied him securely under the arms.

"Now you can put your hands down. The rope's well enough tied, so you'll never get it undone—not while you live—cuz yer ain't gonna live long enough, see?" He spoke with a guttural chuckle, as he came around to the front again. "Guess I got everything all fixed now, huh?"

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Dewar," remonstrated the judge again. "You only got what you deserved, I tell you. It was only chance that brought you up before me twice in succession. Any other judge would have given you the same sentence I did."

"Is that so?" He pulled from his hip pocket a long, slender knife. "I ain't gonna hurt yer—much," he declared, leering. "I ain't a cruel, hard-hearted guy, I ain't. Some fellers now, they'd make yer pay good for sendin' a poor devil to that hole for seven years

just after he'd got out. I ain't gonna hurt yer much."

Judge Brent, his hands gripping the tightly wound ropes about his chest, remained cool and unmoved. "Revenge is a poor thing, Dewar," he said. "Revenge will never give you the satisfaction you are looking for. It will only spoil the rest of your life, as you have spoiled the first of it. The law will surely get you in the end."

"Naw, it won't," declared the other. "The law won't know who did this little job. An' I been out four months now, waitin' and waitin'. There's lots of guys would cut your throat for what you've done to 'em. The law'll never pin this onto me. An' I'm goin' West, just as soon as I read about this in the papers. I'm gonna stick you like a pig, judge. I'm going to put a tiny hole in your neck an' let the blood run, while yer think on your past sins." He chuckled again, and the wind whistled through the trees.

"The law will get you in the end," said the judge, his lips paling, as they were pressed tight together. His hands gripped the ropes about him, realizing too late that he had a fiend to deal with.

Dewar thrust the long, slim knife before the other's eyes and waved it dangerously close. There was not the least flicker in the gray orbs that stared at him unfearing.

"Ain't afraid, huh?" He pricked the skin below the chin, but Judge Brent's hands, gripping tightly at the ropes that bound him, made no move while he faced his tormentor bravely.

"Now jest where is the best place to stick a pig, I wonder." He held the knife, as though speculating on just where to make the thrust, but still the judge, calm and unfrightened, eyed him without a tremor.

Then, with a quick thrust, he sent the knife into the bared throat, a lightning-quick stab, low down and slightly to one side, and stepped back, as his victim's arms came up in an instinctive struggle for life.

The point of the slender blade had pricked the juglar vein, and crimson spurted from the wound. With his hands the judge tried to stop the flow, but it was not possible; the wound continued to spurt crimson, though he clenched and struggled, gasping for breath. The wound had not reached his windpipe, and it did not stop him from breathing, but it was evident he was in a desperate way.

Dewar stood and laughed at him, "Your goose is cooked, yer honor," he chuckled. "You can't stop it. You're a dying man!"

For half a minute the trickle of red continued, while the judge's hands alternately struggled to stop the flow and strained futilely to undo the ropes. Once a choking cry came from his lips, and his eyes glared at his persecutor in mad desperation. Then his chin sank on his chest, and his hands dropped to his sides. His eyes closed, and Dewar, gloating, shrugged his shoulders and cocked his head to one side, viewing his work.

"The old cuss has fainted, I guess," he grunted. "And I thought he was a tough old owl." He stepped closer and for a second scanned the inert face. Then he stepped back, frowning slightly, and, with one eye open very wide, slowly winked the other at an imaginary person.

"Guess I'll say good-by, judge; you'll be dead in a coupla minutes, an' I gotta be on my way. So long!" With a heavy tread he crossed the basement floor and went up the stairs. He was grinning evilly, as he crossed the room above, walking heavily, and opened the back door. But he did not go out. Quickly he tiptoed back across the hall and passed through the kitchen to the head of the basement steps again. He went down two steps, then halted to bend

over as he had done the first time. He chuckled softly at what he saw.

The judge, his white face contorted with effort, was writing something with a pencil on a scrap of paper. But his hands moved painfully slow. "Wonder where he got the paper," muttered Dewar, grinning with unholy glee. "The old fox," he grunted again. "He tore it off what was wrapped around the hot-air pipe over his head! The old fox! Goin' to leave a little note to tell who did for him, hey? It's a good thing I'm a wise guy!"

He waited till the judge had finished the note. With fumbling fingers and bleared eyes he pushed it into a pocket and weakly sunk back against the post. The crimson flow was staining his side and dripping to the floor.

With heavy step Dewar crossed the basement floor, and Judge Brent looked up at him. The gray eyes were striving to focus through the haze of weakness, and his features were tense with the struggle. His hands hung limply at his sides, while his head wavered unsteadily.

Dewar stood before him chuckling; his mouth was wide open and his chin was thrust out. Brutally he thrust a gloved hand into the judge's pocket and pulled out the scrap of paper. Brent made a futile attempt to raise his hands to prevent him, but he could not move them higher than his waist. The ebbing life stream had left him helpless. His lips moved, muttering unintelligibly.

As Dewar read the message written on the soft, grayish-white paper—the first words in the judge's bold, strong hand, but the closing sentence halting and lame, because the fingers had refused to do their work—he winked deliberately at the upturned face braced defiantly against the post. "Tryin' to slip one over on your Uncle Dudley? Can't be did, yer honor. See what I'm gonna do with your little message tellin' the cops that it was Dewar done for you. Right into the fire with it! Right into the furnace, where it'll burn nice an' help to keep the house warm!"

With a stride he was at the furnace and had opened the door. He flipped it into the heart of the white-hot coal and, turning, grinned a devilish grin at his victim before he slammed the door. Then, resting his hands on his hips, he stood and watched the life go out of Judge Brent's body.

"It's a good thing I didn't fall for your possum-playing stuff, old codger," he grunted. "Yer die harder'n a cat, don'tcher? You're still alive, even if you can't move a muscle; but in a couple of minutes you'll be through. In the meanwhile, your little note'll go down in the rest of the ashes, without a clew to tell who done it. Maybe they'll think it was an accident, or suicide, but I wish't I could tell 'em it was me."

He took the rope off and threw it in a corner, confident that it held no clew to his identity. The body slumped helplessly to the floor.

"Well, Mr. Judge Brent, I guess you an' me's quits now," he grunted. "I guess you won't send any more poor devils up for seven years right after they've done a three-year stretch."

Presently he sobered and made a careful survey of the basement to make sure that he had left no clews. As he had worn gloves all the time, there would be no finger prints. He felt secure. The law would never know.

He went up the steps to the kitchen and there debated for a minute on whether he should turn off the lights in the basement. He decided to leave them on and slipped out the back door into the chilly dampness of the night. Making a complete circuit of the house, he chuckled softly, as he observed that there was no crack where the light from the basement showed through, positive proof that no prying eye had seen the crime.

"Now to lay low for a while," he thought. "Likely enough the blasted cops'll think it was me; but, if they haven't any proof, they can't do nothin'; and, anyway, there are a lot of guys what would be as good as me to arrest. I ain't the only feller has said he'd get that guy." He grinned evilly. "But I'm the only guy ever made good on it."

II.

The next day Dewar waited impatiently for the early afternoon editions; but, before they were on the street, he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder and turned with a shock of fear and expectation to face Detective Rice.

"Well, well, you got a nerve to be hanging around this town," said Rice cheerfully. "Every man on the force is looking for you! I don't wanta frighten the women and children," he went on, with one hand in his coat pocket shoved out menacingly, "but I'm tellin' you to be good, or you'll be dead awful sudden. You're wanted bad, Dewar. I'm pleased to metcha, you betcha!"

Dewar tried to match the other's banter and smiled wanly. "Whadaya think you've got on me?" he wanted to know. "I ain't done nothing but hunt jobs since I got outa stir. I'm keepin' to the straight an' narrow, like a lady on a tight rope. That's me from now on, you betcha!"

"Yes? Well, it's going to be hard for you to keep outa jail, if you can't prove where you was at about midnight last night, my friend."

"Huh?" gasped Dewar, who had hoped that he was wanted on suspicion for some other charge, so firm was his belief that he had left no clew. "I was in bed last night."

Rice had run a hand over his captive to assure himself that he was unarmed, and now he slipped a handcuff on Dewar's right wrist and on his own left. Dewar grunted an indignant protest. "I'm takin' no chances—positively, not a chance," said Rice. "I tell you, you're wanted bad for killing Judge Brent."

Dewar paled, and his lips were gray. "You always jump on a guy that's just out," he said. "You're framin' me!"

"Frame nothing," retorted the detective, pulling his captive down the street toward the station, four or five blocks away. "They got you dead to rights, Dewar, an' no mistake. You're sure gonna walk the narrow path from now on, an' the other end is the chair."

"I'm being framed," whined Dewar again. And in his own mind he was beginning to believe it, so sure was he that he had left no clew.

"You sure made a terrible mistake when you put Judge Brett's note in the furnace, Dewar. You sure made one awfully horrible mistake there."

Dewar's pale lips tightened. "Whatcha drivin' at? Talk sense." Very clearly Dewar remembered the glowing coals on which he had thrown the judge's death note. But he was trembling now. Whatever had given Rice the idea about the note? Was the man trying to kid him, or bluff him, or what? He was frankly puzzled at the mention of the thing.

"No, Dewar," went on the detective, "if you ever kill anybody again, don't let 'em leave any notes, not even if you burn 'em up. It ain't safe."

Now Dewar was sure that he was being bluffed. He thought that perhaps they had found the charred remains of the note, but that caused him no worry. The settling of the coal, or even the draft of the fire would have broken up the charred remains so that the writing on it would be hopelessly illegible within a very short time.

Rice grinned appreciatively as he turned to gaze at his captive. It was clear that he was enjoying the murderer's mystification. "Don't you think

our experts could read the note after it was burned?" he asked gayly. "Why, man alive, them dicks down to headquarters can take the ashes of a note, sift out part of 'em, put the rest together, and have the writing so plain you could read it ten feet away."

Dewar licked his lips uneasily. The man was joking, of course. But such statements didn't sound altogether right. They had a nasty ring. "You don't get anything out of me that way," he mouthed. "I was safe in bed last night," he declared, but his voice ended in a nervous whine. "You're goin' to be sorry for this. You've got no right to drag a guy in every time some stiff gets bumped off in this town. I'll have the law on you for this, blast you!"

But Rice only poked his captive with his elbow in great good humor. "You know, buddie, I get a cool five hundred for your scalp!"

Dewar's teeth set hard. So there was five hundred on him; was there? There must be something in the wind. The thought of the paper, burned to ashes and being put together by the skill of the experts at headquarters, burned in his soul. He knew it was impossible, but it was too close a shot not to have something back of it.

"Looky here, Rice," he blurted, "what are you blatting about a note for?"

Rice squinted down at him, grinning from ear to ear.

"So you don't think them experts could do that, huh?"

"No!"

"Well, if it's any comfort to you, they didn't. They didn't have to. It was a kind've funny thing," he went on. "When Pete, that was the dick on the job, got there, one of the first things he did was to look in the furnace to see how long since the fire'd been fixed. And it wasn't quite out. And there, right before his face and eyes, right in the middle of the bright red coals, was what looked like a piece of paper. Peter was naturally surprised, and he fished the thing out and saw there was writing on it, faded out, but clear enough to read."

Here Dewar seemed to strangle, and then he swore so savagely that passers-by turned and gazed in astonishment.

"Lay off, lay off," grunted Rice, giving him a shake, "or I'll punch you for disturbing the peace."

"Where did you get all that bull?" demanded Dewar furiously.

"Bull? Bull, nothing! It's the straight goods. Pete found where the judge had torn that paper off the furnace hot-air pipe, right over where he was laying on the basement floor. The scrap of paper fitted the torn-out place right to a dot. And that paper was put on the hot-air pipe to insulate it, to keep the heat in. That paper was made of asbestos. Say, buddie, don't you know that asbestos won't burn?"

And Dewar, remembering the peculiar softness of the scrap of paper, knew that is was the truth.

HE WAS A LOCK EXPERT

"FRENCHY" MENET, hunchback burglar and wizard on locks, recently left Sing Sing after twenty-six years' imprisonment there and in Clinton Prison. He was paroled when he gave Warden Lawes his word that he would sail at once for his native France and never return. Of twenty-seven years in the land of the free, Ernest Menet has spent twenty-six in jail. He was sent up for robbery and jail breaking.

When the Airedale Leaped

& Ruth Aughiltree

Author of "Under False Labels," "The Man in Evening Clothes," etc.

THE judge's Airedale, old "Major," lay in his bed, midway between the fireplace and the French window in the living room, and listened. In that vast blackness in which he had lived since the cannon cracker had taken away his sight years before, his nose and his ears had more than made up to him for his lost eyes. To-night, as he lay, apparently asleep, his whole body seemed to listen.

Outside he could hear the rain beating on the flagged porch; he could hear the swirl of the wind, as it swept past the window; inside he could hear the tiny crash of a log, as it fell from the andirons on the hearth and broke into feathery ashes. He heard his master rustling his papers on the table. And at nine o'clock he heard old Thomas come up the stairs from the kitchen, and then Major pricked up his ears, for the master was speaking.

"Were you able to get the doctor on the phone?" asked the judge.

"No, sir, 'e was out, but I left a call for 'im to come as soon's ever 'e was able. You—you aren't feelin' worse, judge?"

"No; I tell you I'm not sick. I just want to see the doctor on business, that's all."

"Very good, sir."

Old Major could hear Thomas pottering around, making sure the windows were fastened against the storm, trying the lock of the one that was really a door and was nearest the dog's bed; straightening the rug with the sprawling golden dragons that Major had hated when he had eyes to see them. Then he built up the fire a little, and, as he passed the dog's head, stooped down and patted the tawny head. Major stretched amiably. Thomas was a good sort. The old servant lingered a moment by the table where the judge sat.

"Anythin' more you want, sir?"

"No, nothing. Get out! Can't you see I'm busy?"

Old Major heard Thomas' little tiptoeing steps, as he went away down the hall and then down the stairs into the kitchen. He even heard Maria, the cook, speak to Thomas, and then for a time the old Airedale slept. He was roused by a noise outside, a noise that he plainly heard above the voice of the storm—a series of explosions, like a motor cycle, then a sudden crash, then silence. It was far down the road, but old Major could hear it, and for a second he listened. Then he dozed again, but was suddenly awakened by the sound of a key in the lock of the French window nearest him. The window opened; there was a spurt of icy air and a splash of rain that spattered onto the old dog and his bed. He raised his head and

growled a little below his breath, shivering.

The window was open only a bare three minutes; some one stepped softly across to the table and back again; then he stepped out and closed the window. But the dog still felt the chill in his old bones. He thought of the pleasant warmth and the social smell of the kitchen, and at last he got up and hobbled slowly out of the room. As he passed the master, he raised his blind head and sniffed the hand that hung over the chair arm. It was chillier than usual and curiously limp. Old Major sniffed again. Something was not quite right, but he could not figure out what it was.

Major went on downstairs.

"The dog acts as if he was cold," said Maria. "I wonder if any of them windas coulda blowed open in this storm? It's a regular nor'easter, if 'tis most May."

"I looked to them when I was up with the wood, Maria."

The two old servants went on with their game of cribbage

"Most time for Master Jerry, ain't it, Thomas?' asked Maria after a while, glancing at the clock "He comes on the ten forty."

"Yes, 'tis so. Master Jerry don't know half the store the judge sets by him, or he wouldn't never have gone to town to live in that apartment all by himself, would he?"

"No, he wouldn't. But young folks are that way. Have you forgot how you was when you was a young one, Thomas?"

"No, not half. But Master Jerry is so—well, so extry careless, seems like. Maybe 'tis only my fancy."

"It's only his way. Master Jerry is fond of his uncle at heart."

Major slept then, and for a half hour or more there was silence in the kitchen, except for his heavy breathing and the noise of the talkative clock and the click of the cribbage pegs. All at once there came the sound of a motor in the yard, the quick slam of the hall door, and the sound of rapid steps in the room above. Then the quick steps again, and a wild young voice was crying down the stairs: "Thomas! Thomas! Come up here quick! My uncle is dead!"

"It's Master Jerry! My good Lord!" cried Maria, and the two old people scrambled to their feet and up the stairs as fast as they could. Old Major rose stiffly and went to the foot of the flight and listened. He could hear feet running to and fro and a cry from Thomas and then a rapid question from Master Jerry. Then a high-pitched wail rose from Maria, and the dog knew, from what he had seen of her in the days when he could see, that she had her apron over her head, sobbing.

Old Major listened. He was in two minds. The stairs were very long for his rheumatic legs, and the kitchen was warm and cozy. Unless they needed him very much, he would stay down there. Then he heard the jingle of the phone, as some one rang up, then voices and more running to and fro. Clearly they were all very busy and did not in the least need him. So he went back to his corner behind the stove and curled himself up again.

Time passed; then he was roused once more by the sound of another motor outside, and his quick ears detected the arrival of a second car. Then the doorbell rang, and he heard steps overhead and voices, deep and grave. He heard Doctor Barley's voice and the peculiar tones of Lawyer Endicott. The latter always made him think of locusts crying for hot weather in August. Old Major rose for the second time from his bed behind the stove and went to the foot of the stairs and listened. There was much talking, and perhaps it would be best for him to go and find out if his master needed him. He hobbled up the stairs and limped along the hall to the living-room door. Just outside he

hesitated, trying to index the various smells floating in the hall and welling out of the living room. There was young Master Jerry, the doctor, the lawyer, Maria, Thomas, and two new smells —man smells. He would go in and find out what was what.

He walked slowly into the circle of lamplight, and, as he passed one of the group, he growled a little below his breath and shivered, as if he felt an icy wind upon him. He went up to the two strangers unerringly and sniffed them over carefully.

"Old Major'll know you again, chief," said young Jerry.

"Sure he will," put in the lawyer. "And he'll tell you so, too, when you see him next time."

II.

The doctor was examining the judge, whose body lay sprawling out over the table.

"Heart failure, I should say," he said. "But, of course, that covers a lot, and the judge had a heart like a rock."

Endicott came up and softly parted the hair at the base of the dead man's neck.

"Look here," he said.

Doctor Barley looked, peering with his nearsighted eyes.

"Curse these oil lamps," he growled. "I've told the judge a score of times he ought to scrap them and put in electricity. I can hardly see at all, and, to make things worse, I broke my glasses this afternoon."

He bent closer. Thomas went into the hall and produced a flash light. The doctor used it, and, as the thin pencil of light fell on the back of the dead man's neck, the doctor started.

"Hypodermic," he said and whistled between his teeth.

"Yes," said Endicott. "I was called in once on a will case over in Scroonton, and they found that the man had died of some narcotic poison administered to him hypodermically. His face looked like the judge's—the same twisted look to it, somehow. It was that started me looking for the wound."

"You don't suspect *murder?*" flashed young Jerry.

"I do, young man," said the doctor; "I not only suspect it—I'm dead sure of it."

"Jerry," said the lawyer, turning to him very abruptly, "when you came in and found your uncle dead, did you go over to the windows and look out?"

"No, of course not. I came in and found uncle dead, and then ran out again and called down the stairs for Thomas to come. He and Maria came as soon as they could get here."

"Then you haven't been over here at all?" asked the lawyer.

"No, I've told you just what I did."

"Then this," said Endicott, strolling over to the window near the dog's bed, "is the way the murderer entered." He pointed to a little pool of water and a splash of mud on the floor near the window. "The man stood right here for a second or two. See, the floor is quite damp."

The chief started over, but Endicott palmed something from the floor just before he got there.

"You're dead right, Endicott," said the chief; "he did come in this way."

"When did you come upstairs last, Thomas?" asked the lawyer suddenly. "Since dinner?"

Thomas told him in a voice that shook.

"Then the judge was alone from nine till just now when Jerry came home?"

Thomas nodded. He could not trust himself to speak.

"Did you notice, Jerry," said the lawyer, with one of his abrupt turns and his emphatic way, "whether Major was lying in his bed when you came in and found your uncle dead?"

"No, he was not."

"He was downstairs with us," put in Maria from the depths of her apron.

"He came down about half past nine, or a bit after, shiverin' with the cold. He went and laid down behind the stove and went sound asleep."

The lawyer looked at the dog reflectively; then he turned to the chief "You must excuse my butting in," he said, "but I get a theory, and I ride it to death, you know. Just now I am working on a series of pamphlets on 'The Psychology of the Dog,' and I find old Major a splendid subject. I wanted to——"

"Oh, shut up, Endicott," said the doctor impatiently; "the chief wants to find out who killed our dear old friend, not what reactions that blind brute has under certain conditions."

"Exactly," mildly replied the lawyer "I thought so."

III.

Old Major had been standing still all this time on the outskirts of the group, trying to sense what was going on, and at the sound of Doctor Barley's well-known voice, he went over to him and put his nose and sniffed. Then he took the doctor's forefinger softly in his teeth. Barley absently scratched him behind the ears.

The lawyer looked on with vast interest.

"There!" he could not resist saying. "You see that?"

"Yes, but what of it?" asked the doctor testily.

"Plenty of things—to the fellow who knows enough to see them."

Young Jerry meanwhile had been talking earnestly with the chief. The latter now stepped forward and spoke to Thomas. His manner had changed subtly, and he no longer was treating Thomas as the valued old servant of the dead man. Old Major, from his corner near the doctor, felt the difference in the chief's voice at once and stiffened, even as the old servant stiffened.

The chief was asking Thomas certain questions about how he had spent the evening while his master was alone upstairs. Lawyer Endicott did not catch the drift of his inquiries at first, because his mind was so taken up with the reactions of the judge's Airedale, but suddenly he heard Thomas's startled gasp and the short crisp tones of the officer, then a cry of protest from Maria.

"He was downstairs the whole evening," she cried, "after he went up with the wood. We was playin' cribbage, like we always do every evenin', sir. My Thomas never had anythin' to do with the judge's murder. Mr. Endicott," she cried, turning to the lawyer, "tell him you know Thomas didn't have anythin' to do with it. Tell him yourself, you *know* he is innocent!"

Endicott stepped forward, and old Major heard him speak. To the dog his voice seemed to blaze—making him think of the way the cannon cracker had looked when it flashed up and took away his eyes.

"You're dead wrong, chief! Don't you know enough about your job to know that every murder has a motive, unless the murderer is insane? Well, this murder, if you're trying to fasten it on Thomas here, will be unique. It won't have any motive. In that case, you'll have to go through a lot of red tape and time and expense trying to prove that Thomas is crazy, and you know, as well as I do, that there's not a much saner man on God's footstool."

The chief wheeled round on Endicott.

"Motive? What more of a motive do you want than we have here?" he barked.

"What motive?" asked Endicott.

"Why, the old man's money, of course. Haven't Thomas and Maria been with him a good many years now? Of course he has left them a good big slice of his will. What more natural—the old and faithful servants, devoted to him and all that. He was a very

old man, in his eighties, wasn't he? Old men aren't very rugged. And, if he was helped out of this world—especially by any such secret means as this—his death wouldn't be likely to be questioned. We would never have suspected there was anything wrong, I'll venture to say, if you yourself hadn't pointed out this puncture in the skin at the back of his neck."

"Oh, yes, we would," said the doctor, a trifle snappishly.

"I get your point," said the lawyer, still talking to the officer. "You mean that Thomas and Maria had all the opportunity in the world and a sufficient motive to murder their employer. Well, I am here to tell you that they had every motive in the world to keep the judge alive. I drew up his will for him. By rights I'm not bound to disclose it till after the funeral, but if it will keep an innocent old man from going to jail, I'm certainly going to tell you about it."

There was an instant's silence in the room, and old Major could hear the hoarse, excited breathing of the doctor and the quick breathing of young Jerry.

"The judge left Thomas and Maria exactly fifty dollars apiece," said the lawyer, "no more, no less. He called them up here when he made his will, and he said to them——"

"In this very room," put in Maria.

"He said to them that he was leaving them a hundred dollars to be divided equally between the two of them. 'You'll take all the better care of me,' he said, 'if it's clearly understood by you that at my death you lose both home and wages and all expectation of anything more from me.' He was an odd man, the judge, and he did things in his own odd way, but he generally hit the nail on the head. So you may as well give up any idea, chief, that Thomas is the judge's murderer. We'll have to look farther than that to find him. Find some one who had a grudge against him, or——"

"Nobody ever could have that," cried young Jerry. "He was a peppery old man, but everybody loved him, I know!"

"That's right, my boy," said the chief heartily. "I like that kind of talk."

When the men came to take their departure, after the coroner had been there and done his part, young Jerry followed Lawyer Endicott out into the hall. He clearly had something to say, but his voice was broken, and he had hard work getting hold of himself.

"Mr. Endicott," he began, "uncle and I had our little differences and all that; he was an old man, and he thought I spent too much money. But I loved the old man, and I can't just sit down and think that his murderer is getting away for want of our doing something. We ought to be on his track by now."

"Something will be done," said the lawyer. "Something will be done. If you want to employ a detective, I'll be glad to recommend one to you, Jerry. I'm going up to town to-morrow, and I can go see him if you want me to." As he spoke, he got a folder out of his pocket and, going up to the lamp, studied it closely.

"I want to get a train early in the morning," he said, "and I can't seem to puzzle out the figures in this poor light." He handed the younger man the time-table, as he spoke. "Suppose you see if you can make it out. I want to get as early a train as I can. If not from here, I could drive over to the Junction and get one."

Jerry took the time-table. "I left my reading glasses in the suit I took off in town," he apologized, "and, since that eye strain I had in college, I can't do much with fine print. But I'll try. Here," he said, after a moment's examination, "there's a six ten train from the Junction. That suit you?"

"Fine," said the lawyer. "Thanks. And about that detective? Want me to call on him?"

Jerry frowned. "Beter let it rest

over to-morrow to see what the police make out of it, hadn't we?"

"Very well, then," said the lawyer. And old Major heard him close the outside door with his accustomed slam.

IV.

The doctor was sitting in his office the next afternoon when the phone rang.

"This is Endicott," said the voice on the wire. "Something has turned up in regard to the judge's death. I'd like to see you up at his house to-night about nine thirty. Can you make it?"

The doctor scowled, but he replied with no trace of hesitation: "Certainly. I'll be there."

There was a further question in his voice, but the lawyer only replied, "Good. That's all right." and rang off.

The doctor still held the receiver in his hand, and, by some strange freak of the telephone, he still heard Endicott's voice and heard him ask for a number. By some other strange freak, this time of Fate, the doctor knew that number. It was in New York, and it was that of his own optician. The doctor scowled again.

At nine thirty he drove up to the judge's house and rang the bell. He was a little surprised not to see another car there besides the lawyer's. He did not know there were two others parked out back in the drying yard.

Maria let him in and said, "Master Jerry and Mr. Endicott will be with you directly, sir." He walked at once into the living room. All was at it had been on the previous night, except that there was no white-haired figure huddled over the desk. But the judge's dressing gown was hanging over the back of his chair. A fire glowed on the hearth, the old-fashioned oil lamps still cast odd shadows along the time-mellowed walls and upon the old Spanish leather screen over in the far corner. All was very quiet in the room, but outside the pleasant day had given place to rain and wind So that it was all very nearly as it had been the night before.

Barley was surprised at finding no one in the room, but within a moment the lawyer and young Jerry joined him. "I asked you to come here, doctor," began Endicott, "because I wanted to read you the judge's will and tell you how we have progressed in tracking down our dear old friend's murderer."

"You've got him—you've caught him?" asked the doctor.

"He was here in this room with us last night," replied the lawyer. "But first, I will, with your permission, read the judge's will."

"But——" began Doctor Barley.

"I will read the will first," repeated the lawyer.

It was a very short document and a very startling one, in that the judge had left the sum of five hundred dollars to his nephew, Jeremiah, and the bulk of his property to his old and valued friend, Doctor David Barley. The will was accompanied by affidavits sworn to by the two foremost alienists in the country, stating that the judge had been of sound mind when he made his will.

The doctor could not speak. His voice shook. He made several attempts, but each time he had to give it up. But young Jerry could speak and did.

"You mean to tell me that uncle deliberately cut me out of everything, except that miserable five hundred, and left it all to that man? After all he promised—after all he led me to believe?"

"By a previous will," said Endicott, "he left you about everything, but about six months ago he changed his plans and made a new will, destroying the old one. He left you a letter, telling you just why. I will give you that letter presently. He was odd and possibly a bit old-fashioned in his ideas, Jerry, but he was a shrewd business man. You

may try to break this will, if you want to, but I think you'll only have your trouble for your pains."

The doctor had found his tongue by now and burst out: "Endicott—Endicott—I can't take this boy's inheritance! What do I want with it, anyhow?"

"The judge thought you might want to build that hospital you are always dreaming of," he replied. "He foresaw just that situation, doctor, and he added a codical which I didn't read you, nullifying the bequest to you if you should attempt to give it to Jerry." He paused a moment, looking from one to the other of the two frowning faces, and then he went on:

"But after all, it wasn't so much about the will that I got you to come here. I wanted to tell you how we had progressed in the matter of locating the judge's murderer."

At that instant there was a ring at the phone. The lawyer answered it.

"For you, Doctor Barley," he said.

The doctor went at once to the phone and came back almost directly.

"It's a call for me to go over the mountain, an accident case. I'm afraid I'll have to go. I don't want to, just when you—— Can't you tell us in two words how the police are getting on—what they're doing? Of course I'm interested, but—a human life's a human life."

"You can't go," said Endicott a bit peremptorily, "not till I've told you what I want to tell you. I'll try and cut my explanations a bit short. Sit down." Barley took a chair.

"The murderer came here about nine thirty," began the lawyer, stealing a glance at the tall Spanish screen in the shadowy corner of the room; "and entered, as you know, by the French window near old Major's bed. He came here on a motor cycle, or so I should imagine. He went away again upon the machine, after he had done the murder. He went to the Junction and disposed of his cycle—how, I haven't been able to find out, but that's a minor detail, anyhow."

"Get on with your story, can't you, Endicott?" said the doctor, snapping his watch open and shut.

"I will. He got on the train when it came through at the Junction and arrived here at our station at ten forty."

"What are you driving at?" asked the doctor. "I was on that train myself. I was in the city at a clinic, and that was why I couldn't get here when Thomas first phoned for me. I was in the smoker till the train reached the Junction; then I went forward and sat in one of the other coaches. Only one other man got off here, and that was Jerry."

The lawyer hesitated the fraction of a second. "How do you know there was no one else got off here? It was dark, a rainy night, and you probably scrambled for a taxi as soon as you got your foot on the ground. You don't see everything, doctor, with those near-sighted eyes of yours."

"Just so," replied the doctor. "Go on."

"When the man came here first on his motor cycle, he skidded on the road just outside the grounds, and the machine slammed up against a tree. It was one of those cycles with a windshield, I take it, and the jar smashed that. It smashed something else, too—his eyeglasses." Both young Jerry and the doctor drew a long breath.

"He was wearing rubber heels to his shoes—most men do now. Near the window last night, here in the living room, I picked up from the floor a clew that definitely connects up the murderer with that broken pair of glasses."

He held out on his palm a small, dark object.

"It is a bit of rubber," he said, "from the murderer's rubber heel. In it is, as you see, embedded a piece of glass, a very tiny piece. It almost seems as if some power were at work to avenge my

old friend's murder. For this tiny piece of glass is from the very center of a lens. When I took it and the pieces I picked up under the tree out by the wall, where the motor cycle crashed, I tried several opticians in the city. At last I found a man who was a perfect wizard. He took the scraps and pieced them together, and at the end he had a pair of eyeglasses. He had, too, in his files, the very prescription that fitted this lens."

"But you can't prove anything by that," said the doctor; "there must be hundreds of pairs of glasses made like that prescription. You can't get anywhere on that evidence."

"That was what he said. I differ with both of you, but that was why I was so very anxious to have a witness to prove what I had only suspected. I dreaded the final proof, but, for my old friend's sake, I felt I had to go on with it. Gentlemen, I have that witness. He was in the room when the judge was killed."

The doctor made an inarticulate sound, not a word, but more as if a groan had been forced out of him.

"That witness is——" began young Jerry.

"That witness is the old dog, Major."

"Major? *Major?*" cried the doctor. "What under Heaven do you mean? You have fooled long enough, Endicott. If you have any accusations to make, speak out and make them."

"I will," said the lawyer presently. "I was saying last night, Barley, that Major was a wonderful dog. None of you would listen then. You'll have to now. Since he has been blind, he recognizes people and associates them with one particular thing. But sometimes a very powerful influence cuts in and sweeps away his former reaction to a person. Am I getting too scientific, doctor?" Barley shook his head impatiently.

"No, but hurry. I must go."

"I noticed last night that the dog behaved very peculiarly, as he stood here in this room. Apparently he associated one of the men in his mind with the moment when the French window opened to admit the murderer, and the icy wind and rain blew in on his head. The edge of it and the floor around were quite wet, you know, where the rain came in. The dog was so chilled that he got up after a while and went downstairs to the kitchen, where it was warmer. That's how I know just about what time the murder took place. If you'll bear with me, while I try a little experiment, we'll soon be through, gentlemen."

Endicott got up and went into the hall and whistled. "Major! Major! Come here, old boy!" he called. Then he came back and stood in one corner of the room, outside the dog's range when he should come in. He gave a fleeting glance toward the screen in the shadowy corner, as he did so. The other men rose also and stood, tense, waiting for the old dog to come in.

Down in the kitchen, in his bed behind the stove, old Major was sound asleep and snoring. It had been a troubled day for him; he missed his master and had gone about looking for him during the greater part of the day. Now he lay sleeping and jerking his legs about, as if he were running. All at once through his dreams penetrated a voice, harsh, dry, and persistent, like the crying of locusts in hot weather.

He knew that voice. He got up and started up the stairs. Perhaps the master had asked his friend to call him. He went along the hall and limped into the living room. He sniffed his master's dressing gown hanging over the back of the chair. The master was not there after all. His tail lost its jauntiness. He turned listlessly in another direction. Then he caught a familiar odor. It was the master's other friend. He remembered October mornings when in his youth he had raced up and down a beach after birds that the master and this friend had shot; and how this friend

had scratched him behind the ears when he had done well.

The old Airedale went straight as a die to the doctor and reaching up his muzzle, took the man's forefinger in his teeth and softly bit it. Barley scratched him behind the ears with fingers that were cold and trembling. Major stretched with pleasure, and, as he did so, his nose touched the hand of a second man who was standing there, too. Instantly the old dog stiffened, and he shivered slightly, as if he felt a spurt of icy air and a dash of rain, and he growled below his breath.

"Curse that dog!" cried young Jerry. "Curse him, I say!"

The angry threat in that young voice made an instinct flare up in the old dog's brain, and in that instant he leaped—up through his eternal darkness, straight, straight for Jerry's throat. There was a choking cry, a shout; hands tore and pulled at him, but all but old Major knew was the feel of the flesh between his teeth and the taste of the hot salt blood. But at last those frantic hands got him away, and the doctor held him, so that he could not find that warm wet throat again. He heard Endicott call to some one across the room, in the corner where the Spanish screen was.

"Thomas! Thomas! Bring the officers! We have the judge's murderer!"

"CUSSING" TRAPS THREE SUSPECTS

BECAUSE a burglar profanely criticised the manner in which an unarmed chauffeur drove him from the scene of his thefts, the police of New York a short time ago rounded up three men and charged them with repeated visits to a phonograph store on East Seventeenth Street, from which goods to the amount of ten thousand dollars have been taken in a month. A fourth man, Dominick Santarsiero, was charged with receiving the stolen goods.

According to the police, Rocco Leone, formerly porter of the store, John de Louise, present porter of the store, and Thure Ryder, caretaker of the building, chartered a cab to take them from the building to Thompson Street. On the way they abused the taxicab driver for endangering the safety of the phonograph records, and because of this circumstance the man remembered his three unpleasant fares.

JAIL BREAKER RETURNS TO SING SING

REYNOLDS FORSBREY, the most noted jail breaker in America, who made two sensational escapes from the Tombs in New York several years ago, was recently returned to Sing Sing, with two other desperadoes, after an absence of several years. Forsbrey and five others were transferred from Clinton Prison at Dannemora, New York, to Sing Sing. The noted jail breaker, who often had the help of a young woman in making his escapes, is serving twenty years for a murder in Manhattan. He has escaped from both Clinton and Auburn.

Thomas Hyland, another lifer, serving a sentence for murder in New York, was also returned to Sing Sing. He escaped with seven Sing Sing prisoners in an automobile truck in 1916 and all were returned after a gun battle at John D. Rockefeller's country home.

Just a Park Bore

by Hugh Thomason

Author of "Circumstantial Music," "Printed in Oil," etc.

IT was a magnificent day. Great white clouds, having the appearance of huge, fluffy balls of cotton, floated lazily up from the southwest, crossed the zenith, and passed out of view over toward the Atlantic seaboard.

Figured out from every conceivable angle, it was a beautiful, rock-ribbed scheme. Hinkley, sitting on a bench in Centennial Park, chewed the rubber end of a pencil and gloated over the realization of his own ingenuity.

There was Feitel to be considered, of course. He might wake up at an inconvenient moment and cause complications. But Feitel was the sleepiest night watchman who ever guarded a jewelry store. Moreover, Hinkley knew where he kept a bottle of "corn" as a solace for the midnight hours, and there was a sleeping powder in that. From any point of view the risk was infinitesimal. Mrs. Hinkley would never know; the way had been paved to account for Hinkley's sudden prosperity when explanations became necessary.

Hinkley took a half sheet of plain note paper from his pocket and commenced to ply the pencil. But a shadow fell over the writing before he had completed a couple of sentences. "Nice day," said a weary voice.

The unfinished letter descended into Hinkley's pocket, and he nodded impatiently to the man who had intruded on his solitude. Hinkley had not forgone his luncheon for the purpose of conversing with park loungers.

"A nice day," said the weary voice; "nice for those who are free to enjoy it. Imagine being penned up on such a day!"

Hinkley took stock of the speaker, debating in his mind whether it would be advisable to seek a fresh seat. He observed a neatly dressed figure, small, not unattractive features, and a half-timid, half-friendly smile.

"I was thinking of Petrie Lewis," said the man. "Poor devil! A day like this!"

Some people have confidences thrust upon them. If your face is good-natured you can not sit long in any public place without having other people's troubles handed into your keeping. By day and by night human cuckoos seek opportunities to deposit their sad burdens, and you will lead a very busy life if you line your nest with a smile.

"On a day like this it is good to feel yourself alive and free!" The intruder took possession of the vacant seat by Hinkley's side. "It's good to be free. Poor old Lewis."

"What about him?" snapped Hinkley. He was in no mood to hear other people's troubles. With hundreds of idlers parading the park, it was manifestly unfair that *he* should have been singled out by the bore who occupied the seat at his side. The injustice of it rankled.

"Embezzler—due for a long term in prison."

Hinkley's fingers screwed nervously around the half sheet of note paper in his pocket.

"Friend of mine," went on the melan-

choly man. "Friend of everybody, that was Lewis' trouble. Too popular. People liked and trusted him, and he betrayed the trust. It's the old story of a fool and his money. Not that it mattered, so long as it was *his* money, but he took to playing with other people's. That was the end of Lewis."

The speaker broke off abruptly, and Hinkley, glancing in his direction, saw that he was staring into vacancy with eyes dull and unseeing.

"Petrie Lewis was a fool," the monotonous voice droned on. "Don't you think so?"

"I—I don't know anything about it," said Hinkley irritably. Undoubtedly the man was mad, raving mad.

"He was a fool," repeated the other. "I reckon he knows it now. Oh, yes, he knows it now, but it's too late."

There was a long, uncomfortable silence. With difficulty Hinkley controlled an impulse to seize him and shake some sense into him. But, mastering his intention, he said gruffly: "Why do you tell me this?"

"I don't know." The lifeless voice grated every nerve in Hinkley's body. "There's times when you feel you must confide in somebody. You *must,* I reckon. Look! Isn't that fellow over there watching us? That man by the tree, I mean!"

Hinkley sent a startled glance in the direction indicated, and he was reassured to observe a short, thick-set individual whose one object in life appeared to be the study of a couple of swans that swam around in the lake at his feet. In a sudden revulsion of feeling, Hinkley laid angry hands on his companion and shook him viciously.

"What's the matter with you?" he growled. "Nerves, or what? Take my advice and get off home to bed. There's no one watching us."

"Maybe you're right. They say 'conscience makes cowards of us all.' But bed is no good to me. Remember Hood's grim chamberlain? He—but you're wrong about that fellow! You're wrong, I say! Look!"

The last words were uttered in a voice shrill with excitement and fear. Again Hinkley looked across the park, and a hint of impending tragedy flashed to his mind. The short, thick-set man, having completed his ornithological studies, was strolling leisurely across the grass, and his gaze was focused very intently on Hinkley's companion.

"I told you—I told you!" whispered the intrudder.

There was the harsh sound of heavy shoes grating on the gravel. Then:

"Morning," said a curt voice. "You're Mr. Petrie Lewis, I believe."

Hinkley's companion drooped his shoulders in a gesture of weary despair.

"Yes," he faltered. "I'm Lewis."

"I am Detective Russell, and I hold a warrant for your arrest on a charge of embezzlement. I must ask you to come with me. It is my duty to warn you that——"

Hinkley, listening anxiously to the throbbing of his own heart, heard no word of the well-known formula. As in a dream, he watched Lewis sway dizzily toward the inspector.

"Hold up, now!" Lewis would have fallen, but for the restraining hand of the detective. "You won't give any trouble, I can see."

The speaker, supporting Lewis with his right arm, raised his left as a signal, and for the first time Hinkley noticed that two policemen were waiting unobtrusively behind a neighboring tree. One of the policemen now advanced to take charge of the prisoner.

"What's your name?" said Russell suddenly to Hinkley, his sharp eyes scanning the white, anxious face with obvious suspicion.

"Hinkley—Harvey J. Hinkley, but this man is a perfect stranger to me. He——"

"That's quite right, detective," inter-

rupted Lewis. "He doesn't know me at all. I just stopped to talk to him because I *had* to talk to somebody."

"All right," grunted Detective Russell. "I don't suppose we shall have to trouble you, sir, but you'd better give me your address as a matter of formality. Got a card?"

A piece of pasteboard changed hands.

"H'm. B. F. Stieff & Company, Goldsmiths and Jewelers, Union Street. I know them all right. Now, Lewis, come along. Hold up, man, do!"

Hinkley stood very still, watching until the drooping figure of Lewis, half led, half carried by his escort, had disappeared behind the trees. Then his right hand, tightly clenched in his coat pocket, withdrew a crumpled sheet of note paper.

"Whew!" he grunted. The day was only pleasantly warm, but Hinkley's face dripped perspiration, and the hands that straightened out the fragment of paper trembled violently.

"Dear Parkerson." The penciled words on the maltreated paper were barely legible. "To-night at eleven is O. K. I have the key, and I'll meet you——"

Hinkley tore the letter across again and again, scattering the fragments all around on the grass. Then he straightened his shoulders and commenced to walk away.

"Hey, there!"

Hinkley wheeled around in a sudden panic to see the second policeman bearing down upon him. What a fool he had been to forget the man's presence.

"What do you mean," grunted the officer severely, "by throwing all that paper on the grass? Don't you know that there's proper receptacles for rubbish?"

"I'm very sorry, officer," said Hinkley meekly.

Headquarters Chat

YES, indeed, the Missing Department, published in DETECTIVE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINES, continues to bring wonderful results. Here are a few of the recent finds:

"DEAR EDITOR: Last fall I sent you an advertisement. I am very glad and happy, for I have just got an answer from that advertisement to-night. My brother enlisted with the boys in Calgary, Canada, 1916, and went 'over there.' He was gassed. He is blind but living. I am so very grateful to you. A buddy saw the advertisement and wrote me from the hospital in Canada for my brother. He is in the Gray Nuns Hospital, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. I can't thank you enough. I wish it were possible for me to show you how grateful I feel, but I can only say thanks and wish you and yours all the good things in the world. Sincerely,

"(Mrs.) E. DE GROSSO.

"Fairmont, West Virginia."

This letter came to us from W. White, 12043 80th Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada:

"DEAR EDITOR: I would like to know if you would print a notice of death in your magazine. We want to hear from a Mr. Proud, who lives in New York City. He had a brother named Percival Eli Proud, who served in the Canadian forces in France. This Percival Eli Proud came to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, from New York about eight months ago. This notice is to let any of his relations know that Percival Eli Proud is dead."

We did not wait to print this notice, but consulted the New York telephone directory. There were only two Prouds in the book. We wrote to them both. Just seven days after we had received the letter from Canada, one of these gentlemen came in to see us. He wept when he found that the dead man was his brother. He said that Percival Eli Proud had served in the war for four years, and had a weak heart. Mr. Proud at once got in touch with Mr. White in Canada.

"DEAR EDITOR," writes Edward O. Dean, of Closter, New Jersey, "I wish to express to you my thanks and appreciation for inserting an advertisement in the Missing Department. It put me in touch with an old comrade of the arctic regions from whom I had not heard in twenty-six years. I have just received a letter from him, written from San Luis Obispo, California. A friend of his in Torrance, California, saw the advertisement and called my friend's attention to it."

Writing from R. F. D. No. 1, Alexandria, Louisiana, Samuel Lazarone, says: "Some time ago I requested you to put an advertisement in the magazine. I wanted to find my brother, Nicholas. I have heard from him. He has written me twice. He is in the United States Navy. The purpose of this letter is to show you my appreciation of your kindness in finding my brother for me. I am most grateful."

"DEAR EDITOR: I am taking this means of expressing my deepest gratitude to you for printing my advertisement in WESTERN and DETECTIVE STORY

MAGAZINES in quest of W. A. Cornelius. Through the advertisement I am now in direct touch with him, and after a lapse of twenty-five years.

"H. T. BRONNON.

"Santo, Texas."

Mrs. Louise M. Fuller, R. F. D. No. 2, Novelty, Ohio, says: "I have heard from my son. I wish to thank you so much for helping me to find him."

Richard Ransom, 1811 West 24th Street, Los Angeles, California, writes: "I sent you a notice to print in the Missing Department, trying to locate my old friend, Charles Wold, of Seattle, Washington. I wish to thank you and say the search has been successful. He wrote me and said that not less than six different persons called his attention to the advertisement."

"I received the letter from my uncle which you sent me, and I don't know how to thank you for your help in finding him for me. It is wonderful! The police failed in their efforts, but you did not." This comes from Mrs. Albert Eddy, of Greenwich, New York.

Jack Littlejohn was engaged to marry Miss Evelyn Bowers. He was stationed on one of Uncle Sam's boats, and one night his vessel was suddenly ordered to sea. Littlejohn did not have time to say good-by to Miss Bowers, nor was he even able to send her any word. He wrote Miss Bowers from the Canal Zone, but she had left town, and his letters were returned. Without success, Littlejohn tried for over a year to locate his fiancée. Then he wrote us for help, and we found Miss Bowers in less than a month from the time the notice was printed.

"You published my advertisement, asking for my sister," writes Miss Geneva Baldwin, of San Pedro, California, "and my sister borrowed some magazines and saw my advertisement. Some say that no good ever comes from borrowing, but just see what happiness has been brought to our family through doing so. I am sure that I, for one, will tell others of the wonderful work your magazines are doing. You cannot realize how much happiness there is now in our family, and it is all through your magazines that this happiness has been brought to us."

Yes, we could go on and on, printing hundreds and hundreds of letters similar to the above. Really, we builded far better than we knew when we started this department. Mostly, in life, things do not turn out as well as we hope for, but the Missing Department has been an exception to this rule.

Remember, there is absolutely no charge for this service. It is free for all readers to use if they have need of it. No, you don't have to be a subscriber to place an advertisement in the Missing Department. We tell you this because so many ask if this is necessary. Then, if any one of you who read this has a missing friend or relative with whom you would like to get in touch, sit right down and write us the particulars. We will do all we can to make your search successful.

Get-Rich-Quick Swindles

Edward H. Smith

Between three billion and four billion dollars are stolen from the American people every year by financial swindlers. These are official figures. The men who take this vast amount of money call themselves brokers, promoters, fiscal agents, trustees, colonizers, inventors, prospectors, builders, organizers, realtors, and many other pleasant names.

For the benefit of the readers of Detective Story Magazine, we have engaged Edward H. Smith, a leading authority on fraudulent financial enterprises and the foremost writer on this subject now before the public, to conduct a weekly department in which the current tricks of swindlers will be exposed.

Questions of readers will be gladly answered. In this part of his work, Mr. Smith is being assisted by the New York Better Business Bureau and the National Vigilance Committee of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World, which organizations have done valuable antifraud work and have the best existing facilities for making investigations.

We cannot assume responsibility for financial advice.

All inquiries to Mr. Smith must be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for personal reply. Address letters to Edward H. Smith, care of Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

What Not to Do With Your Hard-earned Money

THERE are men who do not buy oil stocks. They are rare creatures whom the gods have strangely gifted. The big bankers and capitalists, the amassers of millions, are not of them, as is notorious. Almost every Crœsus who passes over the precipice leaves a couple of strong boxes full of shares in long extinct dreams and swindles. Carnegie, with all his Scotch cunning, was no exception. Russell Sage, for all his penuriousness and shrewdness, left an unusually fine assortment to astound his executors. Still, there are men who do not buy oil shares—ordinarily.

Mr. Simeon Strong was one of these. When oil company circulars came through the mail he tossed them lightly into his wastebasket without more than a glance. When oil salesmen came to his office he buzzed for the bouncer, and if they tried to reach him at his home he unleashed the Airedales. When he heard that his friends and neighbors had bought shares and units in oil concerns, he laughed into his sleeve with silent and superior mirth. Those who knew him and his doings regarded Simeon as a cautious fellow, a wise guy. The con men would never get any of his money—not in this sad world.

I respectfully call my readers' atten-

tion to a saying of Broadway, which probably understands human nature as well as any professor of psychology: "The wise guy is the sucker after all."

The saw is very old among the blithe and hardy brotherhood of bunk and con. Its inwardness is that the man who considers himself armed against fate and foe, usually gets careless and begins to strut, at which time it is easy to slip the spear into his exposed ribs. Operators of confidence games learned all this in the last generation, when they quit tilting against rustics and simpletons and turned their attention to men who ought to know better. Thus, in oil swindles and all other frauds, there are special games to-day which are peculiarly fitted to the frailties of those who may be rated as wise guys. Mr. Simeon Strong fell foul of one of these. I report the matter here with regret, but with the usual purpose of warning.

One day Mr. Strong received a newspaper. It came through the mails and looked like any other small-town journal. He did not know who had sent it to him. Probably it was a marked copy. So Simeon Strong began to leaf through it in quest of something specially interesting to himself. There was no marked passage. Nevertheless he found something that concerned him quite a bit. It was an advertisement, and it told of oil. The thing began: "Twenty-seven producing wells! Not a wildcat company. Not a stock-selling game. Not a wild speculation! We have the wells, pouring out the precious oil. This is your opportunity to share in the wealth of these twenty-seven mighty wells and many more to come. The chance will not come to you twice in this world."

Mr. Strong saw that there was much more to read, and he read on. He discovered that the company, according to the advertisement, had been in existence three or four years; that it had actual oil claims; that it had spent great sums drilling, and that it actually had twenty-seven producing wells. These were not possibilities, but actualities. The wells were actually running oil. The field was "proven." There was no chance of loss. The company stood ready to furnish lawful evidence that it had the twenty-seven wells, and that they were actually producing oil. It would send affidavits and letters from authorities. Owing, however, to the desire to buy surrounding properties, for the purpose of preventing leaks and drains, so that all the profits might accrue to its stockholders, the company was willing to sell a few shares of its treasury stock at five dollars and fifty cents per share, original par value one dollar.

Mr. Strong was interested, even impressed, but not convinced. This did seem something different from the usual oil stock proposition. At least, these people were not asking to put his money into a hole in the ground. They had something to trade on. Still——

A few days later Mr. Strong received another copy of the newspaper. It contained another advertisement of the same oil company. This advertisement announced in big black type: "Four Thousand Barrel Well Brought In!"

With his eyes glued to the advertisement, Mr. Strong read on. He saw that four thousand barrels meant about eight thousand dollars a day, a quarter million every month, three million dollars a year. That was enough to pay twenty per cent dividends on fifteen million dollars of stock! Strong read and reread the advertisement. In doing so he scarcely noticed a single line of very small type tucked away under the big black heading. It read "Only three hundred rods from our claim."

Mr. Strong, like many another man, saw that small, but tremendous, line and he didn't know what it meant. "Only three hundred rods?" He couldn't recall exactly how far a rod was. Evidently, though, it wasn't much.

Mr. Strong had reason to remember that important line of small type later. But at the time of reading, even if he had stopped to figure that three hundred rods are nearly a mile, it would have meant nothing to him. For all his caution and knowingness, Mr. Strong understood nothing about oil fields and oil wells. He did not have the least apprehension of the fact I have already mentioned, and which I must insist on again—that in oil drilling a miss is as good as ten thousand miles, particularly with these stock-selling companies. When their claims are oil-bearing at all, they are usually on the very edge of a pool, where the flow is very slight and can only be got by costly pumping.

Certainly Mr. Strong had never heard of this. Neither had he ever been told that a well which gushes forth four thousand barrels a day, when it first comes in, usually dies down to a steady production of a thousand barrels or less, after the first rush. Had he possessed any of this knowledge, he must have seen through the fraud at once, but he didn't. Instead, fancies and figures began to crowd his brain. If a single well produced three millions of dollars in wealth in one year, what must those twenty-seven mighty wells be turning out. Surely the whole lot of them must be doing more than this one well. Surely, too, if a four-thousand-barrel well had been found so near at hand, another one would be found on "our property." It looked mighty good.

Still it paid to be cautious, and Mr. Strong did not plunge in at once. Instead, he wrote and wanted more information and evidence. Could the company show, beyond peradventure, that it had twenty-seven wells? What were its holdings? What was the extent of its properties? Was it paying dividends?

In response to all these questions, Mr. Strong was immediately bombarded with letters containing many technical and evasive phrases which he did not quite understand. He got sheafs of literature, many pictures and pamphlets, much hurrah stuff from business men and bankers, so-called. But, in the midst of all this bunk, came the affidavits from one who signed himself as a government geologist. He stated under oath that the company had drilled about forty wells on its property and that, at the time of making the affidavit, twenty-seven of these were yielding oil.

That and the urgings of the letter writers were enough for Strong. He invested two thousand dollars that he had been saving toward the purchase of a home. In return he received one nicely printed stock certificate and many other letters, urging him to buy more. Later he received a small dividend check and the most violent urgings to further purchases. He wrote that he had no more money for the present.

No more dividend checks came and few more letters. Mr. Strong began to hear rumors. He investigated and found that he had bought a very sour lemon. While he was making his inquiries, the company went into bankruptcy. He was utterly dumfounded to find that his company had sold stock amounting to eighteen millions of dollars; that it had less than two hundred dollars of cash in the treasury; and that its outstanding debts amounted to about fifteen thousand dollars. This is an actual case which my readers may find on the court records in the large and sovereign State of Texas. The twenty-seven "mighty wells" possessed an average total daily output of about one hundred barrels of oil, and some were already dry.

Of the eighteen millions taken from the people, about one million had been spent in the pretended quest for oil. The rest had gone to stock salesmen and into the jeans of the promoters.

MISSING

This department is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

CROFT, Mrs. I. N. or **MINNIE.**—She is twenty-three years of age, with auburn hair, and is of medium size and height. Please send any helpful information to Russell Ray, 1680 Fourth Street, Santa Monica, California.

FRENCH, MARTIN BURT.—He left Warren, Ohio, in July, 1922. He has brown hair and gray eyes, and is of medium build. He is an expert lumber-yard man or carpenter. The index finger of one hand is missing. He is requested to write to Box 418, Wesleyville, Pennsylvania.

A. R. F.—Please come home. All the bills have been paid. Gene asks for her daddy. We are all heartbroken over your absence. Your wife and parents. A. F., of New Jersey.

KING, EUGENE.—He left his home at 2714 West Monroe Street, Chicago, Illinois, on April 20th. His wife and son are anxious to have him come home. Please send any information to Mrs. Eugene King at the above address.

RISHEL, JOHN.—He left Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, in 1866, and has not been heard from since 1900, when he went to Colorado to hunt for a gold mine. He is fifty-six years old, and is tall and dark. Any information will be appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Rachel Rishel, 8 Marion Avenue, Conshohocken, Pennsylvania.

ADAMS, ELLIS and **MILLS, ARTHUR.**—Their home is in Richmond, Virginia, and they were stationed in Norfolk, Virginia, during the war. Please write A. S., care of this magazine.

SOMERS, HERMAN.—Please write to your brothers and sisters. Mrs. Minnie Aldrich, 5 Putnam Place, Roxbury, Massachusetts.

WOLFORD, JOE.—He is about thirty-eight years of age, five feet ten inches in height, with sandy complexion, and weighs about one hundred and fifty pounds. He is crippled in his right foot and walks with a considerable limp. He is often called "Kentucky Joe," and he was last heard of in California. His mother lived in Oneonta, Kentucky, at one time, and his brother lives in Columbus, Ohio. Any one who can give his present address will confer a great favor by notifying his sister, Mrs. Louis Forcht, 743 McAllister Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.

McDONALD, JOHN IRVING.—He is about fifty years of age, with reddish-brown hair, and is slightly stooped. He has a sandy mustache. He has not been heard from for seven years, when he was in Tacoma, Washington, on his way to Alaska. He is a stenographer and also works at telegraphy. His mother is getting old and would like to hear from him. Send information to his sister, Mrs. A. Hilchey, West Gore, Hants County, Nova Scotia.

THURMAN, HURCHELL.—He left home about eleven o'clock on the morning of March 24, 1924, and has not been heard from since. He is about five feet eight inches in height, with red hair and blue eyes, and fair complexion. He weighs about one hundred and forty-five pounds. He has a picture of "September Morn" tattooed on his arm. When he left home he wore a blue suit, light cap, khaki shirt and army shoes. His wife fears that he has met with some mishap, and any information will be gratefully received. Mrs. Blanche Thurman, Hamilton, Ohio.

STEED, R. O.—He is five feet eight inches in height, with black eyes and hair, and was last heard of in Cleveland, Ohio. His brother is seriously ill, and it is important that his mother hear from him at once. Please help by sending any information to Mrs. H. M. Steed, 209 Scammel Street, Marietta, Ohio.

DUFF, LEON.—He spent most of his life as a leather worker in San Francisco, California. During the war he was taken ill and sent to a hospital. It has been impossible to find any trace of him since. His sister is greatly worried about him. Any one who knows his present address will confer a favor by writing Edna Duff, care of this magazine.

LARSEN, GEORGE WALDO.—He is an ex-soldier, blacksmith, and artist, and a collector of rare paintings and old prints. He was greatly saddened by his war experiences, and left Chicago, Illinois, in 1920, for Washington, with the intention of going to Alaska. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by his broken-hearted sister, Mrs. Muriel McGuckin, Cedar Oak Farm, Benton Harbor, Michigan.

WILSON, LUCY and **FLORENCE.**—They were taken from Minden to St. Louis, Missouri, and placed in an orphans' home about eleven years ago. Their brother George would like to hear from them. George Wilson, Box 13, Neck City, Missouri.

FRITZ.—A man who went by the name of George Fritz died recently in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and his pal, who was with him at the end, is anxious to locate his relatives. He was sixty years of age, five feet eight inches in height, weighed about one hundred and forty, and had blue eyes. He was of Irish and German descent, and it is believed that his mother came from Ireland. It is also believed that his home town was Janesville, Wisconsin, and he had a sister that married an Englishman by the name of Freet, or something similar, who was a civil mining engineer. He was a Catholic. He had a tattoo mark of a woman snake charmer on his right arm. He served in the navy three times, but it is not known under what name he enlisted. This is a very important matter, and any helpful information will be greatly appreciated by Jack Brown, 106 Vine Street, Hot Springs, Arkansas.

SHAFFER, E. C.—Please come home, for we love you and need you. The baby has been very ill, and I have been in the hospital. Mr. Shaffer is twenty-two years of age, brown hair and gray eyes, and is five feet nine inches in height. He was last seen in Los Angeles, California, in March, 1924. Any information will be gratefully received by his wife, Mrs. E. C. Shaffer, 114 East Seventh Street, Pueblo, Colorado.

ROHRER, ROLLIE E.—I would like to hear from some of the men that served in the navy with this boy from March, 1917, to May, 1917. He was sixteen years of age and he died in Portsmouth, Virginia, in May, 1917. We never heard a word from him from the time he enlisted until we received the telegram that he was dead. There are many questions I would like to ask, and it would be greatly appreciated if some of his pals would write to his sister, Mrs. O. P. Clark, 1128 Phillips Avenue North, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

REYNOLDS, SYRENUS, or **CHARLIE.**—I was separated from my brother in 1887 by the death of our father in Elmira, New York. I have been trying to find my brother for thirty-six years, and any helpful information will be greatly appreciated. I understood that he was working for a Mr. Warden, who kept a paper store in Rochester, New York, in 1906 or 1907, but when I reached there he had gone without leaving an address. Elmer Reynolds, 228 Sly Avenue, Corning, New York.

CUTTS, JACK.—He is twenty-two years of age, with dark-brown hair and eyes, and is five feet eleven inches in height. He was formerly a soldier stationed at Camp Pike in 1921. He married Mildred Hale, in 1921, at Little Rock, Arkansas. Any one knowing him at the present time will do a favor by asking him to write to his wife at the old address. Send helpful information to M. B., care of this magazine.

"RUSS."—Please let me hear from you. I love you and would like to come to you. Vivian, Box 195, Carbon.

DENNISON.—I was born on the 5th of May, 1901, in New York City, and was placed in the Foundling Hospital under the name of Raymond Dennison. I was later adopted by a German family by the name of Wolf, and have carried the name ever since. I would be grateful to any one who could give me information about my parents or their relatives. I do not know my father's first name. At the present time I am stationed at the Central Fire Station, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, as I am still in the army. Please send any information to Raymond Wolf, in care of the above address.

KILPATRICK, Mrs. JESSIE.—Please write to F. D., Hotel No. 4, Garfield, Utah.

DOWNEY, MICHAEL.—He was born in Clare, Ireland, and was last heard of in Baltimore in 1903. His brother is very anxious to hear from him, and any information will be gratefully received. John J. Downey, 279 Chestnut Avenue, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

DEWEY, JACK.—Please write to your mother before June 27th. The address is No. 1112, Philadelphia. M. F.

COONEY, BARTON.—Your old pal of Peach Orchard, Arkansas, would like to hear from you. J. E. K., 408 South Sixteenth Street, Columbus, Mississippi.

LAPP, TED and **ALICE.**—Last heard of in Newport, Washington, in April, 1922. Please write Sadie and Harry Banham, 636 Walnut Street, Hastings, Michigan.

HUDSON, EVERETT MOYELL.—She was placed in a home in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1913. She has blue eyes and dark hair, and is nineteen years old. She has a scar on her right arm. Her mother would appreciate any helpful information. Mrs. J. Spikes, 1420 Thirty-seventh Avenue, Gulfport, Mississippi.

WATSON, WILLIAM.—He is also known as Greenburg. He separated from his wife, Lila Jarvis, about thirty-six years ago, in Raymondville, Texas. His wife is dead, and his daughter is anxious to hear from him. Eliza Watson, 721 North Main Street, Sullivan, Indiana.

MASTERS, DANIEL.—I would like to hear from my uncle. I was born in England in March, 1903, and came to this country in August, 1904. My father died when I was five months old. I believe that my uncle is still living in England. Send information to D. E. S., care of this magazine.

REYNOLDS, JOHN, JESSIE, and CHARLEY.—They are fourteen, seventeen, and nineteen years of age, and were last heard of in Canton, Illinois, in 1909. Their sister is anxious to hear from them, and any helpful information will be appreciated. Catherine Kelly, 413 West Main Street, Carbondale, Illinois.

PETEFISH, MILO.—He formerly lived in Colorado, but was last heard of in Seattle, Washington, about seventeen years ago. He is five feet nine inches in height, rather slim, and wears a mustache. Please write to Earl Kent, who is anxious to receive any helpful information. Earl Kent, 1542 Seventh Avenue, Greeley, Colorado.

PETERS, MARY FRY.—She left England about forty years ago and went to Texas. Please write your niece, Mrs. Albert Coleman, 24 Unlacke Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

CARNELL, JOHN.—He is five feet eight inches in height, with light complexion, and was last seen in Nashville, Tennessee, when he enlisted in the navy. His present address is desired by W. B. Jennings, 616 North Main Street, Memphis, Tennessee.

BISENGER, BESSIE EUNICE.—She formerly worked for the Owl Drug Company in Los Angeles, California. Her brother would be happy to secure her present address. Lawrence Phoenix, 118 Nineteenth Street, Huntington Beach, California.

TILFORD, or WEBER, ROSE.—Her last address was Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio. Her daughter is anxious to hear from her, and any information will be greatly appreciated. Mrs. Edna Frank, 1738 Maplewood Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

SIMPSON, ALFORD, of Colorado.—Please write to J. Embrey, Box 276, St. Cloud, Florida.

BRUBAKER, EMERSON.—He is five feet four inches in height, with light complexion and was last heard of in Newport, Rhode Island. His present address is desired by Frank Hamilton, 517 North Third Street, Memphis, Tennessee.

SULLIVAN, LAWRENCE.—He formerly lived in New Orleans, Louisiana, but he was last heard from in Detroit, Michigan, in 1922. He has a large scar on his cheek, and is five feet six inches in height. Please write me in care of this magazine. E. W.

JONES, CLARENCE, of Montreal, Canada.—He was in Detroit, Michigan, in 1920. Please write me in care of this magazine. E. W.

TINSLEY, WILLIE.—He is the son of Doctor Spotswood, who lived in Virginia. He left there about forty years ago, and would now be about sixty-five years of age. His parents and sisters are all dead, with the exception of Alice, who is anxious to hear from her brother. Any information will be appreciated by his niece, Mrs. Daisie B. Rolen, Route 4, Snow Hill, Maryland.

MEHAFFEY, HARRY BLANCO.—He is six feet tall, with gray eyes and dark hair, and a scar on his right arm below the elbow. He is an ex-sailor and served on the U. S. S. "Utah." He left Boston, Massachusetts, in December, 1923, expecting to return to his home, but has never been heard from since. This is a matter of great importance, and any helpful information will be appreciated by Mrs. Ora Mehaffey, Route 1, Waynesville, North Carolina.

SAUNDERS, H. and CLARK.—Last heard of in California and Oregon. Clark Saunders is a physician. Please write to Mrs. A. B. Keith, 904 Gladstone Avenue, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

PATTERSON, ROBERT or GUS.—Please write to your father's niece, Mrs. H. L. Westerman, Box 305, Mount Pleasant, Texas.

MacNULLY, ARTHUR.—He is about twenty-one years of age, and his home was in Maine. Please write your cousin, Helen J. Shaw, 745 North Main Street, Waterbury, Connecticut.

THOMAS, BYRON.—He was last heard of in November, 1921. His cousin is anxious to hear from him. Velma Thomas, Route 5, McDonough, Georgia.

LAPPART, JACK.—Please write to me. Frank J. Nels, 134 Mohr Avenue, Buffalo, New York.

COWELL, Mrs. LOTTIE.—Please write and send your address, for I have lost it. Mrs. Eula Wilkins, 720 East South Street, Galesburg, Illinois.

MOON, I. M. and LILY.—Last heard of in Clear Water, South Carolina. Any one knowing the whereabouts of this man will confer a favor by writing J. Lee, 708 East Air Line Avenue, Gastonia, North Carolina.

HANKEY, EDWARD A.—He was born in New York City on August 8, 1874, and usually worked in the publishing or advertising business. His business addres was Fifth Avenue and Seventeenth Street. He lived at one time on Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio. It has been found that he was in Ohio in 1916, and in the locality of Scranton, Pennsylvania, in 1919. We have very important news for him, and any information will be of utmost value. C. P. K., care of this magazine.

TINKLER, JACK.—He is about thirty-seven years of age, and at one time lived in Kansas City, Missouri. He works as a pressman. Please write your old friend, L. Wales, 3622 Wyandotte Street, Denver, Colorado.

INGRAM, ROBERT LEE.—He is the son of Charles and Etta Ingram. Please write your sister at once. Any one knowing the address of this man will confer a favor by writing Bessie Ingram, Box 693, Idagrove, Iowa.

PERRY, MELVILLE.—Last heard of at Fort Madison, Iowa. Please write to your old pal, Bob, 1610 Sixth Street, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

ATTENTION.—I would like to hear from my pals who served in Battey D One Hundred and Eleventh Field Artillery during the World War. John Cox, 2 Fire Department, Newport News, Virginia.

DUDLEY, CHARLES OTTO.—He was born in January, 1891, in St. Louis, Missouri. He is five feet six inches in height, with blue eyes and auburn hair, and was last heard of in 1920, when he was supposed to be in the roofing business in Macon, Georgia. His family are anxious to hear from him, and any one knowing his present address will confer a favor by writing his sister, Stella Coulter, 212 North Watkins Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri.

MILLER, Mrs. RHINEHART.—Her maiden name was Kate Trallinger. Please write Mrs. S. E. T., 2015 West Park, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

STIFF, ALVIN, or McNEIL, HARRY.—He was last seen in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in July, 1914. He is five feet three inches in height, and is about thirty-two years of age. Please let me hear from you, for my letters to you have been returned. R. L. Montgomery, Box 38, Red Fork, Oklahoma.

ALLEN, E. REED.—Last heard of in Mexico. Please write to your niece, Marguerite McGinnis, Box 53, West Columbia, Texas.

WASHINGTON, RICHARD and ISAAC.—Please write to your sister, Josephine Washington Deas, 438 Hamilton Avenue, Paterson, New Jersey.

HAZELWOOD, NORMAN W.—He has brown hair and eyes, and is twenty-two years of age. He was discharged from the army over a year ago, but has never returned home. His sister is anxious to hear from him, and any helpful information will be appreciated. Ruth Cofer, 3735 Page Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri.

S. P. V.—I did not get your letter until Tuesday. I met R. and E., as you said, but I could not find Mildred. Please write me soon. It takes much longer than you planned on to have a notice published in this magazine. Sister B.

McCOLLISTER, JOHN.—He left his home in Pickaway County, Ohio, in the fall of 1830, in company with his younger brother, Nelson, then twenty-one years of age. They worked for a time in Louisiana. Nelson McCollister returned home early in 1831, leaving his brother John in Louisiana. Later John bought a stock of merchandise and went into the lead-mining district of northern Arkansas to dispose of his wares. He is reported to have died a bachelor in Pennsylvania between 1870 and 1890. Any one having information about his death, or burial place, will confer a great favor by writing the undersigned. Prior to 1906 the records of deaths in Pennsylvania were returned by assessors to the clerk of the orphan's court of the county in which they occurred. The records should disclose the desired information. Please help me in this matter. If it is possible, for it is of utmost importance. J. E. Hall, 1287 Brydeu Road, Columbus, Ohio.

THARP, R. I.—I love and trust you. Please let me hear from you. Please don't let anything stand in the way of your getting in touch with me. Your wife.

M. A. P., SR.—I have been in the hospital and the children have been ill. I have been forced to appeal to charity for help, and by the first of May the case will be reported. This is your last chance. I am not angry at you, but I must have help. Please write at once and arrange a favorable settlement. Flo.

RICHARDSON, HOWARD H.—He was in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1913, but was later heard of in Kentucky. I would like to hear from him. Box 177, Shelby, Ohio.

MANN, JEREMIAH.—He was in Detroit, Michigan, in 1922. Please let me hear from you. Box 177, Shelby, Ohio.

LILLICH, JACK.—He left his home in Hamilton, Montana, a little over a year ago. Please write your uncle, R. Lillich, Box 42, Quincy, Oregon.

KALL, ARTHUR ELLSWORTH.—His home town was Rockford, Illinois, and he has a brother, George Kall. His present address is desired by R. Maris, 4136 Brooklyn Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

RANDLE.—My name is Leona Randle, and I was placed in the Morris Home at Fort Worth, Texas, about 1909 or 1910. I was adopted by C. F. Smith, of Hearne, Texas. I think I had an Aunt Betty and an Uncle Lewis, but I do not know what their last names were. I am now about twenty-three years of age. I have been told that I lived in Decatur before I was taken to the home. I would like to hear from my relatives. Mrs. M. Burts, R. F. D. 1, Elm Mott, Texas.

AVERY, MELVIN.—He is a barber by trade, and formerly lived in Wichita, Kansas. Please write Ellen Anderson, care of the Stonewall Rooms, Sapulpa, Oklahoma.

VANCURA, JERRY and **TUTTLE, FRANK.**—Please write to Frank Vancura, Route 2, Ludell, Kansas.

NELSON, Mrs. CHARLOTTE.—She is a widow with two children, Elden and Clara. They lived in Cadillac, Michigan, for a time, but are believed to have moved to Portland, Oregon, about fifteen years ago. Her brother, Harry Gunderson, is anxious to hear from her at 133 Proctor Street, Port Arthur, Texas.

FOLEY, JAMES WESLEY.—He is twenty-four years of age, and was placed in a home for destitute children about 1904. His home was in Waltham, Massachusetts, and he was adopted by a family by the name of McKinley. His brother and sister are anxious to hear from him. Jack Foley, 13 Summer Street, Watertown, Massachusetts.

SERONSEN, ANTON.—He is about fifty-nine years of age, and was last heard of in Argentina, South America, about thirty-three years ago. His sister Lina, who is married now, is anxious to hear from him. Mrs. M. Kristensen, 421 Victoria Avenue North, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

KRUGGER, WILLIAM.—Last heard of in Illinois. Please write to Alvin Renshaw, Kooskia, Idaho.

JOHNSTON, WALTER M.—Last heard of at Palo Alto, California, at U. S. V. Hospital. His address is desired by V. Hanelson, 5631 Columbia, Dallas, Texas.

ATTENTION.—I would like to hear from the men that served with me in the Second Infantry, Company F, at Camp Dodge, Iowa, and with Three Hundred and Eighteenth Engineers at Camp Grant, Illinois. Harry Palmer, Box 192, Friend, Nebraska.

COLBERT, ARTHUR.—He is thirty-five years of age, and worked in Shiner, Texas, before he went to Colorado. His present address is desired by L. Dolejsi, Route 2, Box 2, Shiner, Texas.

RHONEY, LUETTA WEST.—Last heard of in May, 1923, when she lived at 426 Burlington Street, Fresno, California. Her mother is anxious to hear from her, and any helpful information will be appreciated. Mrs. Ernest West, Route 1, Bovey, Minnesota.

BRADLEY, ED FRANKLIN and **EMILY MAY.**—Ed works as a bricklayer or painter, and was last heard of in Colorado. Emily works as a cook, and was last heard of in Cincinnati, Ohio. Please send any information to Joe Bradley, 110 West Columbia Street, Detroit, Michigan.

NICHOLS, HENRY.—He is sixty-four years old, and is short and stout. He was living in San Francisco. His present address is desired by L. S., care of this magazine.

MORRISON, TOM.—Last heard of in Los Angeles. Please write to your cousin, Lulu, care of this magazine.

WILLIAMS, JAMES.—He is about fifty years of age, and was married in 1899 or 1900. He is asked to write to Gladys Williams Fitchner, 557½ Williams Avenue, Portland, Oregon.

HASKINS.—I would like to hear from my mother's relations. Her father was a minister. She had two sisters, Lily and Ida, and two brothers, Wilbur and Samuel. Information will be appreciated by her daughter, Mrs. Neva Davison, Bandon, Oregon.

MERRITT, WILLETT.—He was in Cincinnati, Ohio, about three years ago, after working in the coal mines of the West. His sister is anxious to hear from him. Mrs. Henrietta Morris, 42 State Street, Stamford, Connecticut.

MacDONALD, MELISSA LEWIS, formerly of Wilksport, Ontario, Canada. She was last heard of in Texas. Your son Bruce, who was adopted by a family named Bailey, is anxious to hear from you. Bruce MacDonald, 1635 Albert Street, Detroit, Michigan.

SMITH, HARRY GARRETT.—He is between fifty and sixty years of age, and is a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge. He has brown hair and eyes and wears glasses. He was in Spokane, Washington, in 1900, but was later heard of in Ontario, Canada. His daughter has valuable news for him. Ruth Smith, now Mrs. George Knoulton, Hannibal, Wisconsin.

FRY, JACK.—Last heard of in Memphis, Tennessee, in April, 1921. Please, daddy, come home. I am ill and we are in trouble. The children cry for you and we need you. I am home again. June.

PRUITT, G. I., ETHEL, and **JOSIE.**—Last heard of in Fort Worth, Texas, about a year ago. Any information will be appreciated by Mrs. M. Smith, Route 1, Ross, Texas.

BROOKS, IDA ELIZABETH PARKES.—She is about twenty-eight years of age, with hazel eyes, blond hair, and is about five feet in height. She was married when she was fourteen years old. Her mother is getting old, and her sister is anxious to get in touch with her. Please send information to Jeannette Park, Box 564, Orillia, Ontario, Canada.

JOHNSON, FRANK, CARL, and **ELSIE.**—They are between sixteen and twenty years of age, and were last heard of in the Owatonna State School in Minnesota in 1914. Any information will be appreciated by Mrs. Hannah Johnson, 313½ First Street, Portland, Oregon.

CECIL S.—Your mother died on April 17, 1924. Father is in the hospital again with the old trouble. I am alone and need you. Please come at once. Muriel S., of British Columbia, Canada.

CRAWFORD, LEE.—Last seen in Moline, Illinois, about four years ago. His present address is desired by B. M. S., care of this magazine.

GOODMAN, CALVIN.—His home was in Lima, Ohio, but he left there about four years ago. Any one knowing his present address will confer a favor by writing his sister, Mrs. Caroline Mayer, Marble, Arkansas.

AUSTIN, JOHN.—It is believed that he is living in Detroit, Michigan. His present address is desired by Eymer Peterson, 1420 Portland Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

WILSON, BESSIE J.—Last heard of in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1904, when she left her month-old baby boy. Any information will be appreciated by Albert Wilson, care of this magazine.

GAINES, Mrs. FLOYD.—Her husband is a fireman, and her last known address was Halsey Street, Portland, Oregon. She has a son by a former marriage named Herbert Ray Danlin. Her present address is desired by her niece, Mrs. Madge Keggs, care of this magazine.

DEAN, MAE.—It is believed that she is living in California. Her old friend, Charles L., is anxious to hear from her. Please address him in care of this magazine.

GANTSHY, GUSTAVE and **MARY.**—They were living in Leadville, Colorado, in 1881. Any information as to their present whereabouts will be appreciated by Mrs. Louisa M. Hagerman, care of this magazine.

KOISTRA, MILLER.—He left his home in May, 1923, and has never been seen since. Any one knowing his address will confer a favor by writing to Mrs. J. Chipalane, 978 East Twenty-sixth Street, Paterson, New Jersey.

ROGERS, Mrs. VIOLA.—I would like to hear from her, or any relatives of Charles Gilbert Williams, who left England about forty-five years ago, when he was fourteen years of age and went to the United States. His son would appreciate any helpful information. P. H. Williams, care of this magazine.

HACKETT, JAMES.—He served in the American Foreign Legion, attached to the Lithuanian army. He was a friend of Lieutenant Sam Harris, who was killed in February, 1920. His old army friend, George Karesa, is anxious to hear from him at 192 Hazelbury Road, New Hyde Estate, Edmonton, London, England.

CARMICHEAL, MERRILL.—He left his home at Oakland, Iowa, about fifteen years ago, and has not been heard from since. He is a barber by trade. His father feels sure that he would come home if he knew how things stood. Merley and Mary are dead, and he is all alone. Please send information to X. Y. Z., care of this magazine.

MORGAN, NEWTON A.—He is sixty-nine years of age, and is a carpenter and general mechanic by trade. He disappeared seven years ago, after traveling from Idaho to Montana. His daughter is anxious to hear from him. R. R. C., care of this magazine.

MELLEN, FRANK.—I would like to hear from my father or his relatives. I was born on July 12, 1889. My mother, Eva Mellen, died when I was just a small baby, and my father arranged my adoption with a family named Rubey. My name on the adoption papers was Lester A. Mellen. Please send any helpful information to Lester Mellen Rubey, Mitchell, South Dakota.

WAITS, LYMAN.—Last heard of in Peabody, Kansas, about twenty years ago. Also his sister, Jennie, whose married name is Bradford. She lived in Guthrie, Oklahoma, about twenty years ago. Their sister, Mrs. Anna Miller, would be happy to hear from them. The address is 38 Poplar Street, Elmwood Place, Ohio.

HARLEY, HAL, and **DAUGHERTY, CLIFFORD.**—Please write to your old buddy, Curlie, care of this magazine.

HEWITT, FRED and **MAUD.**—Also Susie Canady, formerly of Fairfax Avenue, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I have important information for you. Please write at once. Eddie Mortensen, Concessionaire, care "The Billboard," Los Angeles, California.

ATTENTION.—I would like to hear from several of the men who belonged to the volunteer expedition that left the steamer "Florida," and made an attack on the Spanish blockhouse on the south coast of Cuba in June, 1898. Two of the men were wounded and returned home, but the others served during the campaign of General Maximo Gomez. They later returned to the United States on the steamer "Mexico," and landed at Montauk Point, Long Island, in September, 1898. There was Doctor Abbott, an Englishman and ex-African explorer; Doctor Maximilian Lund, who had taken part in thirty-two duels; William Harrington, of Tennessee; John Cowan, of Mississippi; George Gairin and Charles Cooper, of Florida; Hugh Thompson and Lee Harvey. I have good news for these men, and they are asked to write to me at once. Grover McDonald Allen, Box 57, Florence, Arizona.

SMITH, CHRISTOPHER and JAMES.—Christopher is forty-one years of age, five feet six inches in height, with dark-brown hair and eyes, and was last heard of in 1913 in North Dakota. James is thirty-seven years of age, with blue eyes and brown hair, and is five feet nine inches in height. Information will be appreciated by George W. Smith, Route 4, Box 99, Osseo, Wisconsin.

BAKER, WESLEY, and HILL, LESTER D.—Please send me your address. B. B., care of this magazine.

SCHMIDT, CONSOLATA.—Please write your old friend of Broadway, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Julia S., care of this magazine.

WICKENS, ALAN.—Last heard of in San Francisco. Your old buddy is anxious to hear from you. Please write me at 73 Main Street West, North Bay, Ontario, Canada. Vic.

ELSER, ARTHUR.—His last address was in Oklahoma. His aunt is anxious to hear from him. M. M., care of this magazine.

RYAN, GEORGE A.—He was born in Toronto, Canada, and is about forty-two years of age. His sister is anxious to hear from him, and will appreciate any helpful information. Mrs. M., care of this magazine.

RYDER, WILLIAM.—Last heard of in the Canal Zone about sixteen years ago. Send information to M. Mann, P. O. Box 1612, Jacksonville, Florida.

BRAGG, ANNIS BOOTHE.—I was married in Oakland, California, in 1911. I left there in the summer of 1914, and went to work in the harvest fields of South Dakota. In 1915 I went to South America, where I worked in the Argentine mines. I was seriously hurt in an accident and reported dead, but I contradicted this report when I returned to Michigan in 1916. I have lost track of my wife and child, but I believe that they are living in California. I have built a home and am able to take care of them, and am very anxious to locate them. Any information will be gratefully received by a lonesome man. George William Bragg, 2462 Mulkey Street, Detroit, Michigan.

McDERMOTT, FRANK.—He left Charlestown, Massachusetts, in January, 1915. Please come home or let us hear from you, as mother is old and anxious to see you just once more. Your wife is dead and your daughter is married. Mame.

DAVIS, BYRON C.—Please write your brother. Any one knowing the address of this man will confer a favor by writing Ernest L. Davis, 8360 Baltimore Avenue, South Chicago, Illinois.

BURCH, JOHN H.—He is nearly six feet tall, with light hair and blue eyes, and was last heard of in Toyah, Texas. He is twenty-four years old. It has been three years since he was in Toyah. He works as a truck driver, or as a miner. His sister, Ruby, was crushed to death under a rock here in Winslow, and it is important that I get in touch with him at once. Please send any helpful information to a heart-broken mother. Mrs. T. L. Burch, Box 739, Winslow, Arizona.

JACKIE.—Please write to me, for I am heartbroken. L. M., same box number, Kansas.

SINNOTT, MIKE M., of Randalls, Iowa.—He is forty-five years of age, and was last heard of in 1921, when he was sightseeing in New York City. There is very important information for him, and any one knowing his present address will confer a favor by writing to the administrator of the Sinnott estate. P. Sinnott, Route 1, Box 14, Randalls, Iowa.

LOU K.—I am heartbroken. The baby needs you, and I want you back. A. K., care of this magazine.

REED, CLAUDE.—Please come home or write at once. We are so lonesome without you. Dad and mother.

FORD.—Please come home. Mr. Cooley called up and your job is waiting for you. I am very lonely, and you know that I love you. At least you can let me know where you are. Babe.

JACK S.—Please write to me. I am so sorry about everything. I did not mean the things I said. I want you to come home, or I will come to you. No one will know where you are, if you will only write. I have worried so that I am ill. Your wife, Jess, of West Virginia.

GRASHEGE, GEORGE.—On the 15th of May, 1922, he was discharged from Remount Depot, Camp Dix, New Jersey. He wrote that he was going to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but he has not been heard from since. He is thirty-three years old, and weighs about one hundred and sixty pounds. He is about five feet eight inches tall. He has dark-brown hair, gray eyes, and a scar across the back of his right hand. His family are greatly worried about him and will appreciate any information. A. E. Grashege, 4639 Rear—Sacramento Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri.

BURNETT, JAMES THOMAS.—My husband left home in July, 1923, and was last seen in Roanoke, Virginia. He is forty-seven years old, and weighs about one hundred and sixty-five pounds. He is five feet ten inches tall and has brown eyes and black hair. He was a brick mason by trade and belonged to the Odd Fellows. It leaves me with ten children to care for, and I would greatly appreciate any information. Mrs. J. B., care of this magazine.

HAMILTON, HURLEY.—He is sixteen years of age and left home December 29, 1923. You have nearly crazed your mother by your disappearance, and she is ill in a hospital in New York City. She will let you go into the navy, if you still wish it, but begs you to write to her or return home. If you wait, it will be too late. Write me and I will give you her address. Your Aunt Ida.

WILLIAMS.—My husband, Hugh Williams, was separated from his parents and three sisters when he was a small boy. He is now twenty-three years of age. He was given to a family named Majlons, of Helena, Montana. He believed he was their son for many years, until they told him that he was the son of John Williams, and had three sisters, Catherine, Mildred, and Grace. He has in his possession a letter, believed to have been written by his mother, from Wallace, Idaho. It is signed Mrs. Harry Munro. Any information will be appreciated by Mrs. Hugh Williams, care of this magazine.

BRANSCOM, LEON VICTOR.—He was born in Norwalk, Connecticut. In April, 1917, he joined the navy. He was hurt while serving on a submarine chaser and was sent to a hospital in New York. His people have never heard from him since. He is about twenty years of age, with brown eyes and light-brown hair. He has L. V. B. tattooed on one arm, but it is believed that he is going under an assumed name. His grandfather is dead and his mother is living in Long Beach, California. His mother is greatly worried about him, and believes the war has affected his mind. Please send information to his cousin, Mrs. William Rowe, Clovis, California.

ALLAN, ROY F.—Please write to me. I wrote to the Hotel Clunie for a long time, but gave it up when I did not hear from you on your birthday, October 13th. Mother, C. E.

ATTENTION.—I would like to locate my mother. I was born on November 28, 1894, in the city hospital at Minneapolis, Minnesota. In August, 1895, my mother placed me in the Bethany Home. I know my first name was Harry, and I have been told that my last name was Mengue, but all the records of this orphans' home were burned by a demented nurse, so I have been unable to confirm this statement. My father left my mother before I was born, and she paid one dollar and fifty cents a week for a short time for my expenses, but this soon ceased, so the home arranged for a couple by the name of Mr. and Mrs. A. Schmid to adopt me. I lived with them in Lester Prairie, Minnesota, for about twenty years, but they are both dead now, and I am anxious to find my relatives. Please send information to Harry, care of Mrs. Ella Bradford, Maple Plain, Minnesota.

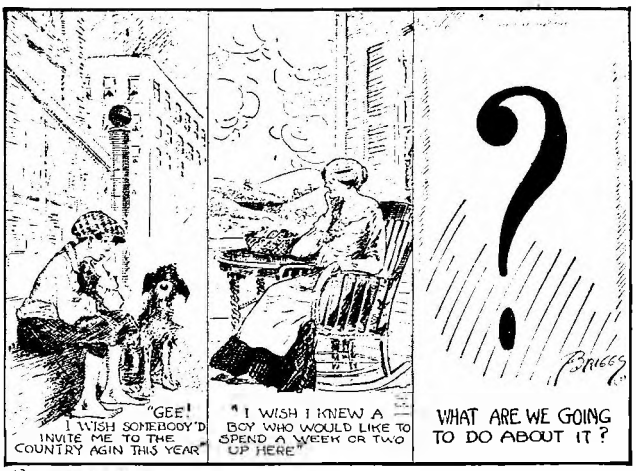
LITTRELL, WALTER.—He enlisted in the army in 1921 under the name of Rusch. He belonged to the Ninth Infantry, and was stationed at San Antonio, Texas, for a time. He has light-brown hair, dark-blue eyes, and is about five feet nine inches in height. It is believed that he is living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His heart-broken mother will be thankful for any information. Mrs. Blanche Littrell, 1758 Pennsylvania Avenue, Denver, Colorado.

Mail for the following people has been returned to this magazine because it has been unclaimed. Please send your correct address at once.

MRS. ELMER MURRAY, formerly of Rochester, New York.
MR. E. STANLEY MORRISON, of Los Angeles, California.
MR. EDDIE MATER, of Elyria, Ohio.
MISS BURNDETTE LOVEDAY, of Dallas, Texas.
MR. W. C. LEE, of Pharr, Texas.
MR. FRED KLUR, of Denver, Colorado.
MISS GEORGIA HERNANDEZ, of Klamath Falls, Oregon.
MRS. A. HOLMES ECK, of Toledo, Ohio.
MR. JACK ANDERSON, of Omaha, Nebraska.
MRS. C. PARKER, of Eureka, Kansas.
MRS. HARRY WEAVER, of Detroit, Michigan.
MRS. WALTER THAYER, of Laurel, Minnesota.
MR. JOE STIBRAN, of Marine Post Office, Detroit, Michigan.
PRIVATE C. C. NEWTON, of Camp Eastham, Texas.
E. SOUTHERN, of Baltimore, Maryland.
MR. CHARLES SANDERS, of LaGrande, Oregon.
MRS. ETHEL SHIELDS, of Brooklyn, New York.
MISS ELIZABETH DOLAN, of Indianapolis, Indiana.
MRS. LETITIA KESSLER, of Baltimore, Maryland.
MISS MARGARET ROSS, of Denver, Colorado.

"... needs a friend"

THE famous cartoons "When a Feller Needs a Friend" are familiar to millions of newspaper readers. You will find *this* "feller" wherever there are children of the poor cooped up in squalid quarters.



The Fresh Air Funds organized by newspapers and other kindly folk are doing a splendid work in getting children out of the city and into the country. They need your help.

Find out what is being done in your community to give these poor, pinched, nature-starved children the happiest time of their lives. If a Fresh Air Fund has been started give it your heartiest support. But if nothing of the kind is under way won't you ask your favorite newspaper to help start a Fresh Air Campaign? They know all about the work that other big newspapers are doing. Don't wait. There is not a precious minute to lose—the Summer will slip away so fast.

If you live in the country will you share your home with some poor child this Summer—even for two weeks? Your own newspaper undoubtedly knows of boys and girls who need just the help that you can give. Poor youngsters—it will be the first time that many of them have seen a green field or brook or real woods. Fire escapes, burning hot side-walks, brick walls—these are the wretched substitutes for trees and flowers that they have known.

The gratitude of the boys and girls who are taken into private homes is pathetic. It is usually their first glimpse of a real home.

If you have children of your own think what it would mean to see them drooping and withering in the stifling heat of dark airless rooms all Summer, playing tag with death in truck-jammed streets.

In memory of your own happy childhood—or perhaps in regret for the fun that you've missed—will you help? If you are in the city, send some needy children to the country. If you are in the country, take them away from the city. It is a splendid thing to do.

One great metropolitan newspaper claims that it can send a child to the country for two weeks for only $7. The same newspaper figures that last year it gave the children of its city more than 500 years of happiness! 14,000 children were given fresh air vacations—two weeks each; 6,000 were placed in the camps maintained by this newspaper and 8,000 were sent to private homes. But there were 35,000 applications for these 14,000 places—less than half were taken care of.

The boys and girls were given a critical physical examination before they were sent off. Careful record was kept of a certain group of these children and it was found that the average gain in weight at the end of a two weeks' stay in the country was nearly five pounds for each child.

No social service is more important than this of building healthy boys and girls. A vacation in the right environment may mean a permanent change in the life of a child.

This is the time of the year when every boy and girl "needs a friend". How many youngsters will you make happy?

HALEY FISKE, *President.*

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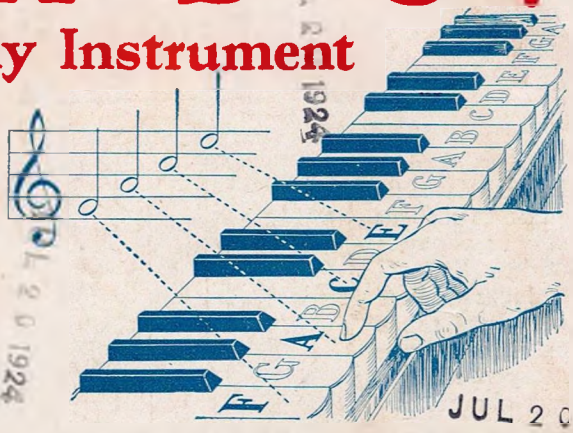

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Do you sit "on the sidelines" at a party? Are you out of it because you can't play? Many, many people are! It's the musician who claims attention. If you play, you are always in demand. Many invitations come to you. Amateur orchestras offer you wonderful afternoons and evenings. And you meet the kind of people you have always wanted to know. So don't miss this exceptional opportunity.

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