

EVERY WEEK

SEPT. 5, 1925

DETECTIVE

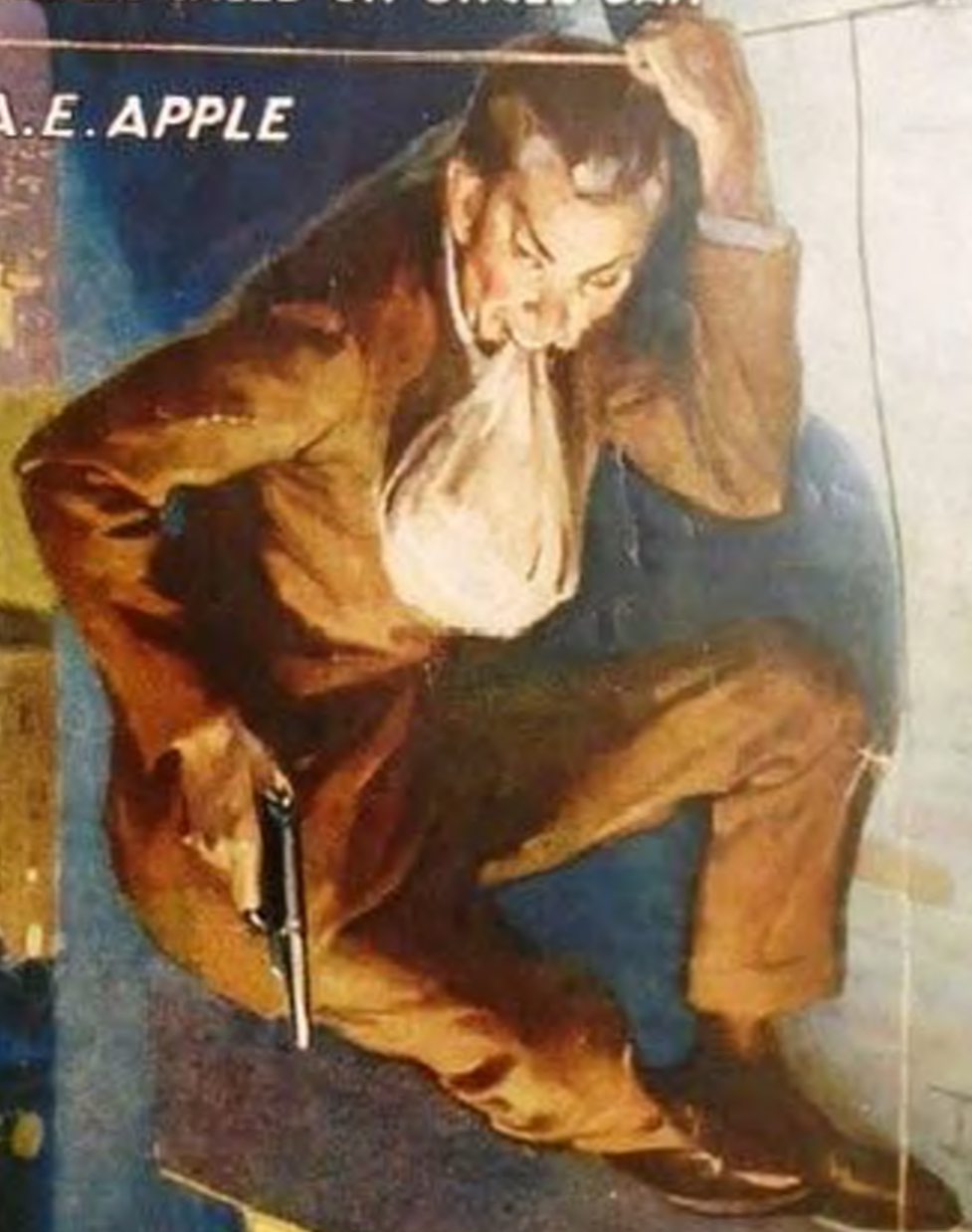
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BY A. E. APPLE



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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

E V E R Y W E E K

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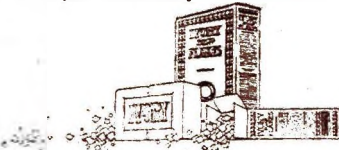
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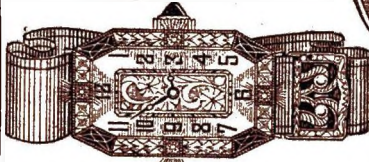


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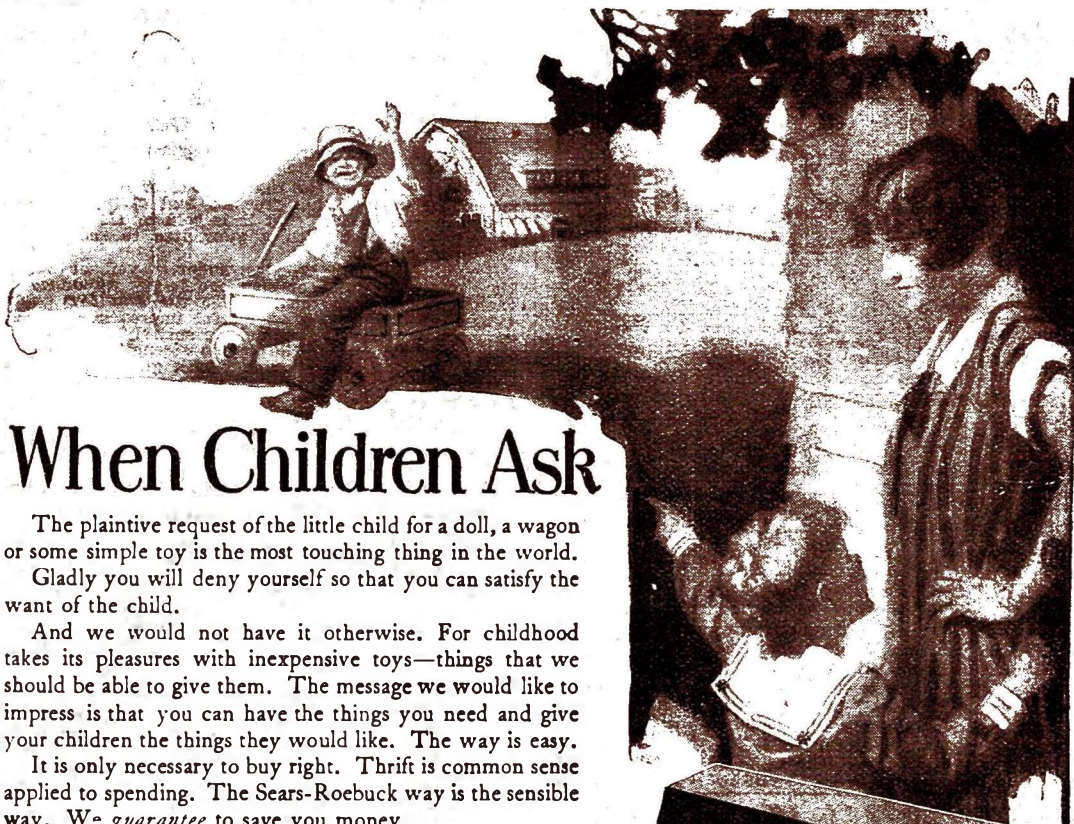
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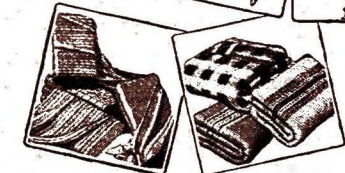
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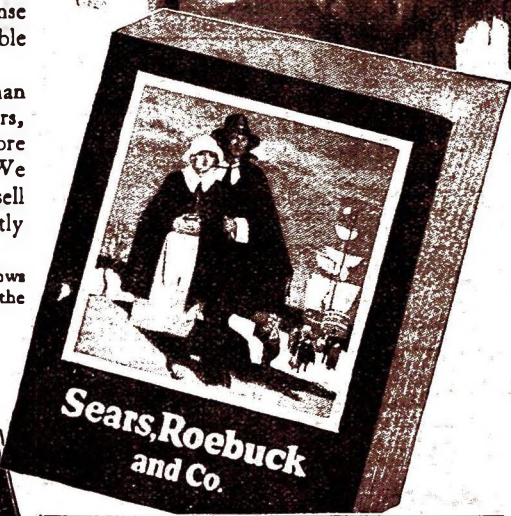
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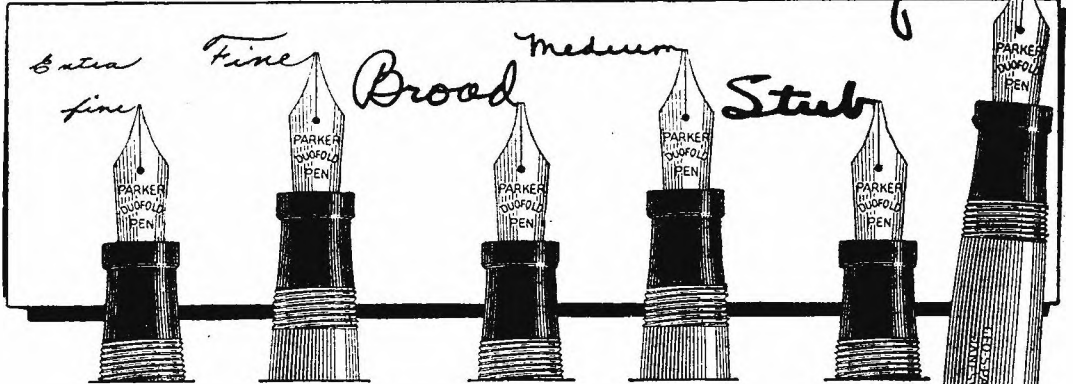
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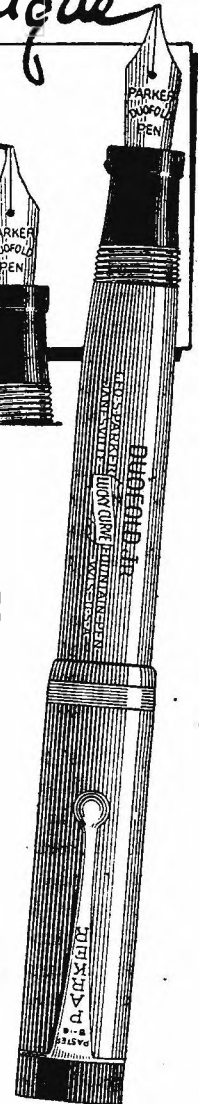
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Duofold *OVER-SIZE*
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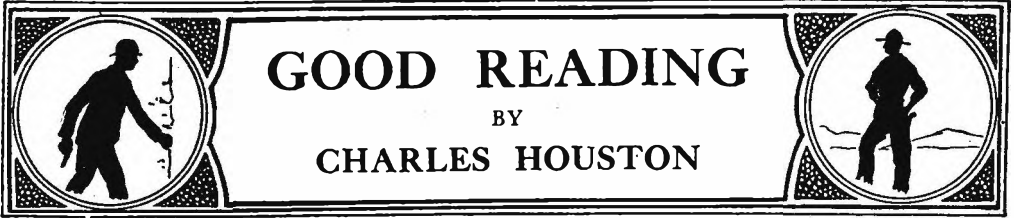
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Hard to put your fingers on it, isn't it?—this fascination that good fiction throws over you. There's something almost abnormal about the man or the woman who can't sink back in an easy-chair when the day's work is done, and become lost in the spell of a swift-moving adventure story.

It is a fine and comforting thing to know that we Americans have never lost the love for romance. We would have become a dull, drab people otherwise. Romance is in our blood, breath of our very breath. We are still an adventuring, pioneering people, despite our bathtubs and radios and telephones and "all modern conveniences," as the real-estate ads say.

It is true of all walks of American life, of all sorts and conditions of our people. Down in the parched flatlands of Oklahoma I have seen cow-punchers waiting eagerly for the trains that bring the latest copies of their favorite fiction magazines and books. And then I have seen New York business men enter Pullmans at the Grand Central with copies of these same books under their arms.

"Tell me a story," is one of the first requests of childhood, and the child's love for story-telling has never grown out of most of us, for which we may thank our lucky stars.

Some one has called the big brick building at 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, "Story-teller's headquarters." It shelters one of the oldest and best-established publishing concerns in America—Chelsea House Publishers. There come the leading fiction writers of the country with their best work, hot from the type-writers. There are editors with their fingers always on the pulse of the public, who know what you and I like to read and see that we get it. Whether the book that comes from

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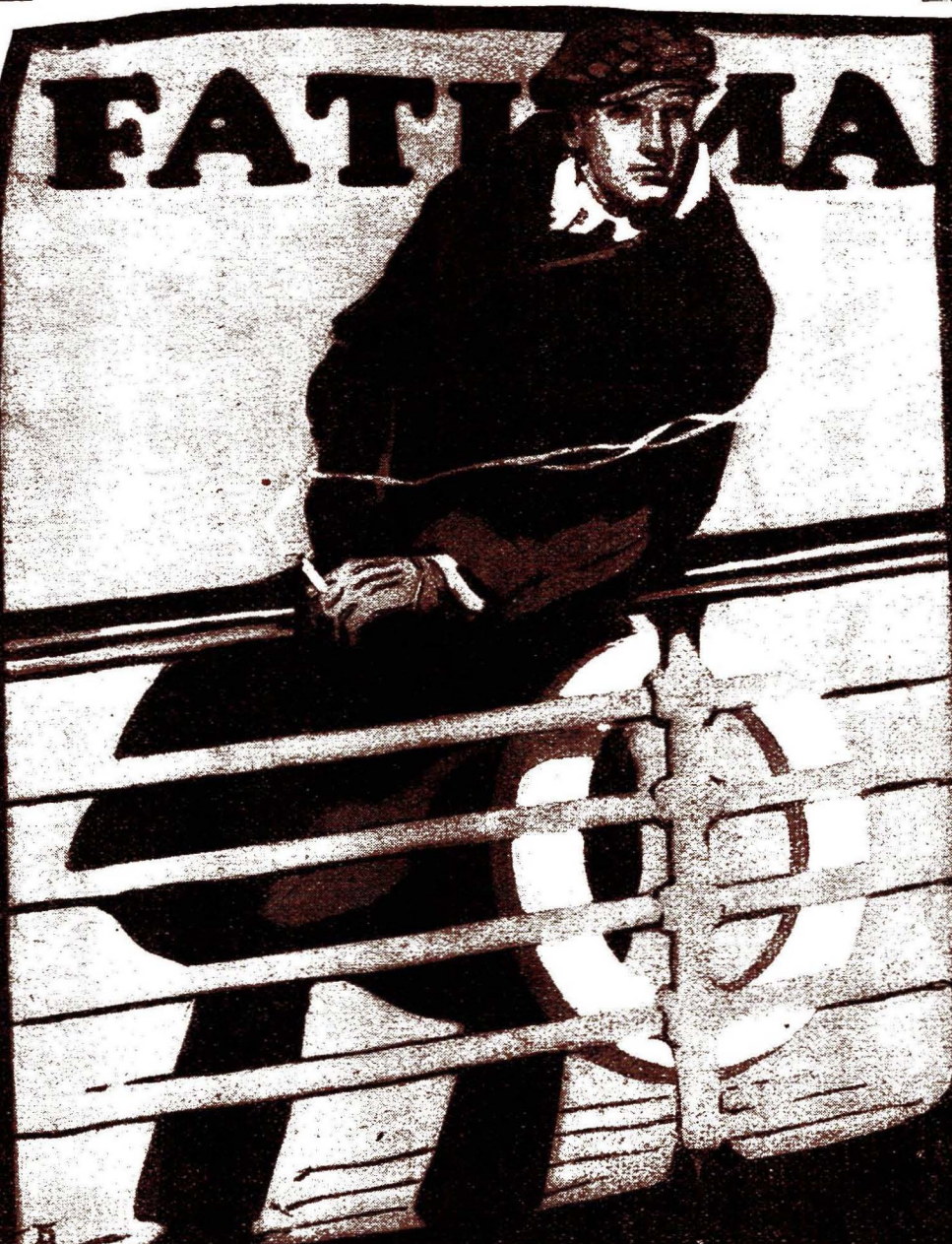
ANNE AGAINST THE WORLD, by Victor Thorne, published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, Price 75c.

Victor Thorne tells a beautiful love story

(Continued on 2nd page following.)

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in this book with enough adventure in it to satisfy the most ardent thrill hunter. Anne faces the problem that confronts every one of us—what is really worth while in this world? She leaves her humble little home to enter the bizarre life of a manicuring establishment. Her wistful beauty brings many men to her, some good, some bad, but at length she finds true love. It is a clean, well-written love story that Mr. Thorne tells, one that you will read through to the very end with the keenest interest.



THE BOSS OF CAMP FOUR, by Emart Kinsburn, published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, Price 75c.

Mr. Kinsburn is rapidly coming to the forefront of the few who can write convincingly of the great West. Here he paints unforgettable scenes against a New Mexican background. His hero is Chet Fanning, and he's the sort of hero that makes you want to cheer as he fights the battles of "Spookmule" Paxton, who bought twenty thousand acres and then found a lot of trouble on his hands. There's an adventure in a tunnel in this book which makes one of the big thrills of modern fiction.



WATCHED OUT, by Eugene A. Clancy, published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, Price 75c.

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THE HUSKS OF LIFE, by Mary Douglas, published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, Price 75c.

Many a modern author has chosen as a fic-

tion theme the colorful, bohemian life of the artists' studios of New York's Greenwich Village. Few have presented this life as faithfully as does the author of "The Husks of Life." Mary Douglas depicts for us the adventures of Jennie Joyce, who is forced to leave the factory because of the unwelcome attentions of her boss and becomes a model to one of the city's best-known artists. Jennie meets many types of men, but finally finds that one alone is worthy of love. The story marches to its triumphant conclusion in stirring manner.



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When the doctor told old Hank Peyton that he was about to die, Hank took another drink and called for his son, Jerry. To him he handed over his most precious treasure, the revolver, known and feared by Mexicans as "The Voice of La Paloma." That was Jerry's inheritance, his commission to a free life, and the way he used it makes an exceptionally interesting Western story, told as Mr. Manning knows how to tell these rousing yarns.



THE BIGAMIST, by John Jay Chichester, published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, 320 pages, Price \$2.

Some of the foremost literary reviews of the country, among them that of the *New York Times*, have been loud in their praises of this most remarkable book. Mr. Chichester, author of "The Porcelain Mask," knows how to tell a most complicated story and still hold the attention of his readers every moment. This time he introduces us to one "Wiggly" Price, lovable newspaper reporter, who takes up a murder trail where the detective leaves off and covers himself and his paper with glory. There is action aplenty in this story, mystery and enough romance to please every one.

DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXXVII

September 5, 1925

No. 6

WARNING! Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but we feel sorry for the reader who buys an imitation. Do not be deceived; insist upon having the original DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

Mr. Chang Calls on Uncle Sam

By A. E. Apple

Author of "The Murderer's Graveyard," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE RADIO MADMAN.

A WAGON collecting inmates for the madhouse would most certainly have picked him up. He admitted as much, did this gauntly thin young man whom radio was fast turning into a nervous wreck, in a big American city on the Great Lakes.

"I'm half bughouse already," he muttered, "and I soon will be entirely if I

don't get into another business. This job of having to wire-up two new radio sets a day for customers sure is getting my goat. I'm going cuckoo."

He had reasons for apprehension, as any insanity specialist would have testified after watching him for ten minutes. To begin with, though he was alone in the workshop at the rear of the wireless store, he was talking aloud—carrying on a conversation with himself. That was a bad sign, particularly in view of the cuss words he kept calling himself, and

his quickly voiced resentment at the self-slander.

"You blankety-blank ass!" he exclaimed. "How can a man go nuts if he hasn't any brains? If you had any, you wouldn't be in this game."

A silence followed, during which he ground his teeth. "Is that so?" he said with a sneer. "Well, I'll be ding-dong-danged if I haven't more sense than the babies that figured out some of these hook-ups." He grunted in disdain. "How do you like that—huh?"

Apparently convinced that he had emerged victor over himself, he bent over his task and traced the wiring with a trembling finger.

"Let's see, now, old sport!" he muttered shakily. "From the grid of the first audio transformer to the grid of the first amplifier tube; plate of the detector tube socket to terminal number three of the counterplex aerial transformer at the second top; that's all jake. Now, from prong three of the horn jack to— Ow-w-w! Have I got to rip all that out and solder it over again? It's cramped in there so it's like picking up a pin with boxing gloves on."

And now his derangement manifested itself in violence. Stamping first one foot, then the other, he picked up a pair of pliers and hurled them to the floor with all his strength. Quite overcome with passion at having to undo and rebuild a tedious labor, he seized a B battery and raised it aloft as though to smash the radio set to smithereens.

But with the missile of destruction poised ready to hurl, he paused, conscious that he was no longer alone. No betraying sound of an intruder had reached his ears. No mirror was on the wall to reveal what might be behind him. Whoever had entered had arrived cat-footedly, with silence so complete that it suddenly struck him as uncanny.

He was aware of a human presence, in that indescribable way by which one senses that he is under scrutiny in a

crowd. This presence, whoever it might be, was powerful and electric. The very air felt charged. The highly strung nervous system of the radio man was an ideal receiving apparatus for such psychic currents. He felt his breath catch in his throat as he placed the battery softly back on the bench and slowly turned.

On a box within six feet of him, a man was sitting.

He was a stranger. Aye, and impressive to behold. His eyes—black and as hard as agate—were calm. But in their distant depths smoldered a peculiar fire. It suggested all that was menacing and relentless this side of the grave. The eyes were all that seemed to be alive in this unique individual, save that the motionless body inside his smartly tailored suit had the lithe posture of a jungle ape prepared to come into action at an instant's notice.

The radio man stared. In particular, he stared at the newcomer's expressionless countenance. It was the yellow of aged ivory.

And then, as he gaped, the parchment cheeks wrinkled. The mouth opened, baring long and glistening white teeth in a mirthless smile.

This was followed by a brisk spitting of hands. Their fingers were long—strangler's fingers—and the nails shone with the careful manicure of one who lives by his wits and never deigns to do an honest menial task.

"Excellent!" said the stranger. His voice was soft, yet throaty, as only an Oriental's can be. "Are you charging admission for your entrancing play of emotions? If so, I shall pay any price gladly."

The radio man gulped and swallowed. "A Chinaman, as sure as my name is Hector Plenn!" he murmured. "White customers are bad enough. I bet you've got a super-het with a lot of new kinks for me to wire." He paused and groaned. "Oh, well, the foolish factory

is in sight and I might as well travel to it on the canter as go slow."

Hector's tired, distracted eyes viewed Mr. Chang suspiciously. His body, as he looked, had a tension that suggested that he was on the verge of reaching for a monkey wrench to brain the visitor.

"Cheer up!" said Mr. Chang. "I am not a radio bug."

Hector's nostrils twitched. "Say what you doing here, then? Ah! I have it. I bet you're selling books. If you are——"

"Calm yourself," the Chinaman rejoined tranquilly. "I am a customer."

"Thought you said you weren't a radio bug."

"So I did. My mind is rarely idle enough to waste precious night hours listening to musical hash. To me, radio is a mildly interesting phenomenon. But why should I gape at being able to hear anything through the air? I do that naturally when I listen to near-by sounds. Radio is only a magnification of that power. For a real marvel, consider talking by long distance phone from New York to San Francisco, by which the human voice travels through seven hundred tons of solid copper. Bah!"

"How come you're a customer, eh?"

Mr. Chang contemplated the other. "I am a gentleman of kindness of heart," he said piously. "I thought I would drop in and purchase a receiving set for the old blind man who sells newspapers on the corner up the street."

This did not seem implausible to Hector, for he did not know the heartless nature of the Chinese arch-criminal.

"Fine!" he said thankfully. "Gosh, I'm glad you haven't got a super for me to wire. That's the best news I've heard since a bus wire factory burned down. Come on out front and I'll show you some sets. We've got a wide selection in this store."

"You gave quite an interesting exhi-

bition back there," Mr. Chang commented as he followed. "It is rarely my good fortune to hear a Caucasian express himself truthfully about how he loves his job. No other race provides such submissive slaves."

"Say!" Hector exclaimed. "I'd rather fuss with radio than eat. Else I wouldn't be in this game. But it sure gets on the nerves now and then, putting these things together, especially when they won't work and you have the devil's own job to figure out why. Hate radio? I was talking through my hat. I've got nine sets of my own at home—table hook-ups, of course."

Mr. Chang deftly rolled a wheat-paper cigarette with one hand, and with the other clicked match into flame on a thumb nail. "So?" he queried. "It sounded otherwise. Ah, well, that is characteristically Caucasian—your loyalty to your servitude. The slave endeavors to make sweet music by rattling his chains."

Hector did not reply. He wanted to. But the yellow-skinned patron had him awed. Nobody's fool, was Hector Plenn. He appraised Mr. Chang's intelligence as something not to be encountered more than once in a month of Sundays. Accordingly, he felt a bit embarrassed, fearful of making a dunce of himself if he essayed any wise cracks.

Obligingly he lifted numerous radio sets from shelves and placed them on a counter. "How about a nice reflex?" he asked glibly. "I could sell you a regenerative set cheaper. But that stuff re-broadcasts. It sends out so many squawks and howls that the old blind man's neighbors might butcher him in his sleep."

"Price is immaterial," Mr. Chang assured placidly. He eyed Hector keenly. "You work all alone here?"

"No, there's another bird. He's out to lunch."

"Listen!" the Chinaman suggested sagely. "If I were you, I'd soft-pedal

at my work. In all sincerity, the way you were carrying on back there in the workshop, your enemies could make out a good case for having you incarcerated where the dogs could not bite you."

Hector leaned wearily on the counter. His fingers nervously drummed on the surface underneath. "You said a mouthful," he agreed. "Lots of 'em get locked up in the foolish house that aren't any more bugs'n me. I suppose you've heard of the visitor at the asylum who saw an inmate pushing a wheelbarrow upside down, and asked him why he didn't turn it over. The bug said, 'I did yesterday and they filled it full of bricks.'"

Mr. Chang nodded with the manner of one who never laughs. "That bit of humor," he said, "has a deep basis of psychology. It is typical of how the white man sugar-coats his hated work by making light of it. I suppose you do a thriving business here. The store has a good location."

"I'll tell the world," Hector answered. "Why, so far to-day we've sold three super-hets, along with some small stuff."

"Three super-hets," the Chinaman repeated. "And how much do they bring you apiece?"

"Two hundred iron men per."

"Six hundred dollars—very nice!" said Mr. Chang smoothly. "Doing business like that, you must run to the bank after every sale, in view of these despised bandits who are staging so many holdups in the mercantile district."

His tone was quite disarming. "Yes," Hector agreed, "it does throw a scare into us occasionally. Of course, a man can't hop to the bank after every sale, as you suggest. No, we take the chance on a stick-up. Let the jack accumulate and tote it to the bank just before closing time in the afternoon."

The Chinaman's eyes narrowed.

Six hundred dollars was a mere bag of shells in his life. But at the moment

he was badly in need of ready cash. And here was a juicy ripe plum that could be easily picked.

Hector emerged from his lethargy with a sigh. He began, droning voice, his customary line of sales talk. "Now, sir, let me recommend this ninety-dollar reflex, complete with batteries, both A and B, head-set, antenna and Screecho loud speaker. Simple to operate, having three controls that a child can master. Furthermore, it—it—it——"

His patter trailed away into a stammer, then to complete silence.

For he found himself looking into the muzzle of a blue-black pistol that had seemingly appeared from nowhere, by magic, in the customer's hand. The weapon dazed him. Though it was not a large revolver, to him it looked like a piece of field artillery. It flashed into his mind, that in numerous holdups of late the bandits had shot their victims down in cold blood.

Hector's stomach felt as though it were sagging. He had the odd sensation of having been suddenly poured full of ice water. Paralyzed by fear, he stood motionless and awaited developments. They came fast.

"While we are on the subject of radio," he heard the Chinaman's voice suggest metallically, "gaze upon this object that I hold. It has only one control, my boy. It is a transmitting set for me, a receiver for you. If I operate the lone control, you will achieve something beyond your wildest ambitions. Distance is what you radio madmen crave. All right, just let a peep out of you, and you will instantly find yourself in touch with something farther than the coast—in short, with that remote region beyond the grave."

Hector struggled for speech. "Don't—don't shoot, mister!" he pleaded jerkily. "I—I'll do whatever you say."

Smoke curled lazily upward from the wheat-paper cigarette that dangled between the Chinaman's cruel lips. The

lips moved. "Open the cash register!" Mr. Chang commanded.

"Oh, yes, sir; right away, sir; at once, sir." Hector's hands instinctively had curved above his head. He walked sidewise toward the register. The bandit followed on the other side of the counter. It required only six steps for the radio man to reach the money tills. But he feared that his legs would collapse under him before he could arrive at his destination.

A second fear had come to him.

It was that the Chinaman, enraged at an impending development that was inevitable, would shoot him dead in rage.

Hector voiced his apprehension. "Oh, please, sir, don't cut loose with that revolver. It isn't my fault. And I'm telling the truth. You can look for yourself. There isn't over twenty dollars in the register. Those three super-hets, at two hundred bucks apiece, were sold on credit—charge accounts."

CHAPTER II.

AHOY! BIG PLUNDER.

CERTAINLY the joke was on Mr. Chang. His raid was to net him only twenty dollars in small bills and silver. He vaulted over the counter to make sure that Hector had told the truth. No chagrin, bitterness or other emotion showed in his countenance, voice or manner. He accepted the situation imperturbably.

"Very well!" he exclaimed, helping himself. "I shall take the chicken feed. Twenty dollars! It is a sewer rat's ransom. But much can be done with it, properly directed. I once bet twenty on the red in 'Creole Frank's' gambling house in New Orleans and, by doubling my bets and retiring at the psychological moment, quit the game fifteen thousand dollars ahead."

The radio man sighed in delight. "Then—then you're not angry, not going to kill me?"

"Not if you behave yourself," Mr. Chang promised. "Though the haul is small, I passed a hunchback a few minutes ago on the street and touched his hump, so possibly luck will be with me yet. My intuition rarely plays me false. I feel that this twenty dollars is merely the advance guard of sizable plunder. Not finding more money in your strong box, I shall take the store."

Hector glanced at the street entrance, expecting to see a moving van waiting, ready to haul away the stock.

"Say, cull!" he urged. "While you're at it, don't fail to tote off that super-hetro-plex set I been wiring out back." He grinned. For, now that the crisis apparently was past, his fear was subsiding, though he was far from being in a cocky mood. The Chinaman still had the pistol trained his way. Hector had served in the drafted army. None had more respect than he for anything that sprayed lead pellets through a steel barrel.

"You keep your mouth shut," Mr. Chang instructed quietly. "I am in no humor to exchange pleasantries with a lunatic. Walk to that rear room where you first saw me. Step lively, or I'll send you to join your ancestors."

Back in the workshop he gagged his captive with a wad of waste. Then he fettered him with flexible wire.

This done, he pattered forward and stood behind the counter as though expecting a visitor. Five minutes passed—ten—a quarter of an hour.

A perspiring fat man ambled in. He glanced about and approached the Chinaman.

"Where's the young fellow?" he asked.

"His day off," Mr. Chang answered solemnly. "Anything I can do for you sir? I am the new clerk."

"Well, maybe you can," the fat man said. "I was in here yesterday looking at a super-het radio. The price, two hundred, was a bit more than I want to

pay. I thought I'd drop in again and see if you people might shade it for cash."

The Chinaman nodded alertly. "Did you bring the cash with you?" he asked. The prospective customer nodded. "How much?"

"I have a hundred and fifty," was the answer, "and I won't pay a cent more."

"Hand over the money and walk out with the set," said Mr. Chang. "Here!" He turned to a shelf. "Allow me to present you with this fine loud speaker." He glanced at the price tag. "Sells for twenty-five dollars."

The plump radio bug could scarcely believe his good luck. He was effusive with gratitude. Mr. Chang waved a graceful hand, with the air of a philanthropist, and bowingly hustled the patron to the door.

He was alone only a few minutes. A gray-haired man, evidently a business wizard, hurried in.

"Wrap me up your best fifty-dollar regenerative set for my son," he ordered.

"Sir," said Mr. Chang blandly. "I have just bought out this establishment and, having notes due at the bank, am making some amazing reductions for cash. Have you a hundred in bank notes on your person?"

The customer extracted his wallet and swiftly counted the bills. "Only ninety," he informed.

"Ninety it is!" Mr. Chang agreed, feigning regret. "Take this super-het with you. Your boy will behave himself for months." He handed the radio set across the counter and pocketed the money. The buyer, doing business in his field in a close market, was delighted with his bargain.

The Chinaman was, indeed, as he had predicted, in a run of luck. In the next twenty minutes he made six sales. In each case he took all the cash his customer had with him, and virtually al-

lowed the other to select his pick of the stock. He was no radio expert, this Oriental, but he had kept his ears and eyes open while Hector had given his sales talk. So he was able to refer to various sets in passably technical phraseology.

Having handled eight patrons, Mr. Chang counted his takings. In all he had over five hundred dollars.

It was a trivial sum to this player for big stakes. But it was not half bad for an hour's work. Then, too, gambling had recently left him with a thin wallet. Possessed of five hundred dollars, he had a grubstake. It had been easily won. He had entered the radio store on sudden impulse. The window display and price cards had indicated that high-priced wares were on sale within.

And now it was time to fold up his tent and depart.

Of course, given a clear coast, he would gladly have remained until he had closed out the store's stock in entirety. But Hector had told him that he had a comrade who was out having lunch. That worthy might not be as easy to subdue as the highly imaginative person with jumpy nerves who now lay fettered in the rear room.

The store was in the very heart of the city's business district. The downtown section was being heavily policed, in response to a recent wave of holdups. Pistol shooting would be dangerous for Mr. Chang. He might find himself cornered and trapped before he could escape.

He decided to leave by the back door, thence via the alley.

On his way he paused to loosen temporarily his captive's gag. "Listen, you!" Mr. Chang said menacingly. "I am on my way now. I want you to tell the police that a young white fellow who looked like a drug fiend held up the place. If you inform them that a Chinese did the job, I'll waylay you at

night and bump you off. Do you promise?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" Hector assured fervently. "That's just what I'll tell them. But maybe those fellows I heard you wait on will turn informer and give you away."

The Chinaman bared his teeth. "Not much!" he predicted. "That's where you're going to learn something about human nature. Those customers of mine got bargains. They'll keep their mouths shut, rather than have to disgorge stolen goods. Wait and see." He picked up the gag to replace it. "As for you, boy, you are lucky to escape with your life. Had I not been in a genial mood, I might have silenced you in the most effectual and permanent way. You were born under a lucky star. A few centuries ago they would have burned you alive for dabbling in black art like this radio stuff."

Hector shivered as his gaze encountered Mr. Chang's eyes. The distant smoldering fire of those black orbs had leaped into ferocious flames during the threat of death.

"I don't care how much you got," Hector assured sullenly. "I'm not the owner. Just a clerk. The boss, old skinflint, doesn't pay me much. I'd have robbed him myself long ago if it had been safe. Gosh, though, I should think a gent with your nerve would go after big game, instead of wasting time on a shoestring job like this."

Mr. Chang, on the verge of replacing the gag, hesitated. So the young chap was a crook at heart, eh? It was one of the theories of this Chinaman that every man at some time or other fancies himself in the rôle of a criminal; wonders whether he could get away with it; and often even figures out a job for the handling of which he lacks courage.

Possibly this Hector Plenn had doped out such a job. If so, he might give Mr. Chang a good lead.

"Usually I do play for big stakes," he

said. "And I get away with them—with loot that would be the envy of a pirate of the Spanish Main. But I needed ready money to-day. I have been playing the ponies, and lost heavily. Lost, in fact, forty thousand dollars."

Hector's eyes bulged. "Forty thousand!" he repeated. "Oh, oh!" The figure staggered his imagination.

"Yes, forty thousand," Mr. Chang repeated nonchalantly. "I should have remembered the wise retort of Wu Ting Fang who, asked if he cared to attend a horse-race, responded that he already was convinced one horse could run faster than another. However, I shall be in neck-deep clover shortly. And you—ah, you will feast there with me, if you have a scheme. Come, lay your cards on the table. I sense that you have something in mind. Hasten, for your boss may come back at any minute."

Hector was suddenly so agitated that he panted. "Mister," he announced jerkily, "I know where there's such a ripe plum that if it was knocked down it'd be as rich and juicy as hitting a rotten pear with a barrel stave. Where can I find you to talk to—to-night?"

Mr. Chang scrutinized him intently. "I'll do the finding," he said. "You go about your regular business this evening and I'll put in an appearance if the game seems worth the candle. How much do you estimate this job you have in mind will yield?"

Hector Plenn spoke with an earnestness that could not be other than sincere. "The plunder," he confided, "will total one hundred thousand dollars—or more."

CHAPTER III.

THE FINE THINGS OF LIFE.

MR. CHANG made his exit from the radio shop, via the rear alley. He strolled leisurely away, turned into a main thoroughfare and blended into the noonday crowd. Chinamen were not an

infrequent sight in this city. So no one paid much attention to him.

Presently he saw a chop suey sign dangling before the windows of a second-floor restaurant. Apparently the eating-house was doing a land office business, judging by the throng that was passing in and out. The Oriental stood motionless for a few seconds, taking stock of his surroundings. He was running imaginary lines through the architecture of near-by buildings, surveying to determine how to enter the chop suey place from its back door. That was the immediate problem.

He shuffled up an alley, turned into a long and narrow courtyard, and invaded it until he reached a high board fence. Here various posters greeted his alert eyes—signs painted with Chinese characters on orange and red firecracker paper. One of these notices announced that brothers of his tong society held forth within. Another heralded attractions in the way of gambling.

Mr. Chang paused to read no longer. He gave the international code knock at the wooden gate. An old Malay from South China, as dried-up as a prune, opened and admitted him. They exchanged a few words of verification such as pass between sentry and stranger. Then down moldy, rotting stairs he went, emerging into a cellar that was dimly lighted by small peanut oil lanterns. The place smelled Chinesey. That is to say, it reeked of dried fish, oakum, tallow, duck fat, strong tea, ginger and other spices. These and kindred commodities were stored in this subterranean chamber which served the upstairs restaurant as a warehouse for its owner's and employee's wants. Mr. Chang pursued a snakelike path. He rounded various boxes and barrels, dodged bundles hanging from the ceiling, and started up a long flight of narrow steps.

Arrived at the top, he found himself in the first of a labyrinth of small

rooms. A clattering of dishes indicated that the main kitchen was not far away.

A fat Chinaman passed him, going out. Mr. Chang made inquiry. Securing information, he shortly was in a cubby-hole by himself, seated at a gorgeously inlaid table, with the four walls expensively tapestried. He rang a dainty silver hand bell that was on the table. It tinkled ever so faintly; but a shuffling of straw sandals betokened that it had been heard by a waiter.

The servant bowed upon entering, for only the richest Chinese patrons sought this room.

"Menial," said Mr. Chang, "I desire nectar of the gods. What is the best tea you offer?"

"Our insignificant establishment," was the servile answer, "is fortunately able to serve you with Bak Woon—the precious White Cloud tea that grows above the snow-line on the highest mountains of the Celestial Empire."

Mr. Chang nodded understandingly. "Your price for this tea is standard, I presume—sixty dollars a pound?"

"Even so, master."

"Good!" the customer approved. "That will be one dollar a cup. Bring me a pot of six cups. Serve, also, broth of the gosling, a portion of raw fish, a salad of bamboo sprouts and grilled baby octopuses to the number of twelve. As a relish I will have a dried oyster with cayenne-pepper sauce."

The waiter almost prostrated himself. Here, indeed, was a patron who knew fine victuals when he saw them, a connoisseur if ever there were one.

Mr. Chang was in no hurry. He was killing time. For an hour or more he toyed with his repast. Then, satisfied, he drank a pint of absinthe. Settling his bill, and tipping liberally, he sought the gambling room.

It was an elaborate and crowded place. Only ten Oriental gamblers were engaged with the three croupiers, but the room was small. The intruder

received casual but swiftly comprehensive glances. Thereafter he was ignored until he made his wants known. That was the Chinese way—every man to his own affairs. Mr. Chang still had five hundred dollars in his pockets, loot from the radio store. None of the gambling games, however, appealed to him—until his eyes rested on a pumpkin.

Promptly he bet his entire wallet, at even money, on the number of seeds in the golden, globular vegetable. His guess came closer than the proprietor's. Tu Chieng Kui, god of gambling, was playing him for a favorite.

"No," he said, declining invitations to try his fortune in other channels. "I merely desired to test my luck. It is important that I know, for I have an important undertaking in store."

Thereupon he pocketed his one thousand dollars, seated himself in a corner and appeared to go into a state of petrification. Mr. Chang was in process of relaxation. His only sign of life was an occasional winking of the lids of his boring black eyes. Those eyes were contemplating an invisible nothing—so it seemed—apparently suspended in mid-air halfway between himself and the gold-leafed ceiling.

So he sat until his Swiss watch indicated that the hour of five in the afternoon was close at hand. Mr. Chang set forth on an adventure.

The audacious brazenness of the robber who had looted the radio shop was a sensation that caught public fancy. The newspapers featured the incident prominently on their front pages. Mr. Chang bought a copy, scanned it swiftly, and was satisfied.

"Apparently the clerk whom I held up is on the level," he contemplated. "No mention is made that the job was engineered by a Chinese. To the contrary, he describes the individual who overpowered him as being a white-faced, tight-lipped young drug fiend."

Now, Hector Plenn, the radio clerk, really had a big crime in mind. He had not been playing vocal chess with Mr. Chang. Plunder totaling at least one hundred thousand dollars was in sight, ready for plucking by an adept hand at the psychological moment.

Hector could understand, readily enough, why the Chinaman had not risked trusting him in the matter of arranging a meeting for conspiracy. The Oriental criminal was, plainly, no fool. And only a fool would have chanced such a reunion by definite appointment. Suppose, for instance, Hector had not been sincere. In that event, Mr. Chang approaching the rendezvous would walk into a trap and be nabbed by the police. Quite natural for him to play safe.

But how would their meeting take place? The Chinaman had promised to appear. When? Where? How? Hector was afire with curiosity. He analyzed the situation and decided that he should make of himself a good target for observation. Accordingly, after quitting work, he exposed himself in public.

He ate dinner in a resaurant where a white-garbed chef flipped pancakes at the windows. Hector sat at a table close to the windows, so that a skulker would be able to see him from outside. Then he strolled up and down the main streets, frequently turning into side thoroughfares where there were few other pedestrians. His purpose was to decoy a shadower into conference.

But, if he were being followed, he observed no sign of it. To the contrary, patrolmen were the only ones who turned upon him an interested eye. They were suspicious, during the crime wave, of all loiterers. The transient public did not recognize him as the young man from the radio store that had been so spectacularly looted. The newspapers had not printed his picture. They might have, if it had not been that his skinflint boss had returned from

lunch later than the girl stenographer. First on the job, she had discovered the gagged and fettered clerk. Being a good-looking girl, her picture appeared in the public prints instead of Hector Plenn's countenance. Newspaper photographers, after all, are shrewd. Hector was too wild-eyed to excite sympathy. Possibly the crafty photographers figured that people, seeing his "mug," would comment: "Gosh! he looks like he deserved all he got—and more."

At any rate, his picture had not been printed. So he was not identified and pointed out by the evening crowd that was patiently wearing out the sidewalk.

At nine o'clock he began to feel discouraged. "Hell's bells!" he muttered disgustedly. "I might have known as much. I've seen the last of him."

He ambled into a movie and settled down to enjoy himself. The comedy was all right. But the romantic feature picture steadily became less entrancing as the jazz orchestra irritated his highly strung nerves. Cursing under his breath, he stumbled through the dark to the aisle, stepping on innumerable feet, thence out into the night.

Straightaway he headed for home. Home! None but Hector could call it that. He lived in a small room high up on the roof of the building that housed the radio shop at its base. Tenants were not permitted to sleep in this skyscraper which had offices above the ground floor. But, in line with a growing custom, Hector had secured permission to build and live in a laboratory erected on the roof. His place resembled a captain's cabin squatted lonely on a wide deck.

Apparently, he liked it. Up there he was far from the distracting racket of the main streets. The noise reached him only as a subdued and rather soothing rumble. Then, too, the air was invigorating at this high altitude, away from the poisonous auto exhaust that clung heavily in the highways.

Arrived at the Buckeye building, Hector found that elevator service had ceased for the night. He rang the night watchman's buzzer in a rear hall. Then, nervously puffing a roll-your-own cigarette, he waited. Presently he heard a steel door slam far overhead. Then came the hum of an electric motor, the soft swish of a cable, the slow creaking as the freight elevator descended.

The watchman was a powerful, raw-boned Irishman named Burke. "Hello, Mr. Plenn!" he greeted eagerly. "Chilly night, eh? Happen to have a nip on your hip?"

"For you—sure, Mike."

The watchman helped himself liberally. He smacked his lips and handed the flask back with a reluctant sigh. Meantime the car was carrying them leisurely upward.

"You got a visitor waiting for you on the roof," Burke informed. "It's that young feller. Jim Dutton, the bond salesman. Sure is slick as velvet. Say, that lad could sell pure alcohol to a bootlegger—an' that's goin' some."

Jim Dutton! Plenn was instantly alert, though lately the bond seller had been visiting him frequently. He hurried up the top stairs and threw open the trapdoor leading out onto the roof. There were no lights up here, but his friend was clearly outlined in the moonlight, restlessly pacing some distance away. He hurried forward.

"What's up?" Plenn asked.

The answer came in a smooth, oily, secretive voice. "The nest is getting fuller and fuller of golden eggs. We've got to be ready to strike soon for the loot. Just a matter of days now, and old Jessup will be making his sneak with the cash. When that time comes, we have to have the job framed to a matter of minutes—else this opportunity of a lifetime will slip through our fingers. Boy, I sure wish we could get a line on a third party, a confederate who would pull off the robbery by himself and split

three ways. Then you and I could feign innocence."

They were walking toward Hector Plenn's workshop and radio headquarters, in the cabinlike room at the edge of the roof.

Plenn sighed. "I thought I had a fellow lined pat to-day for the trick," he confided. "You read about the hold-up, of course."

"Sure; you phoned me earlier in the evening. Forgotten?"

"Darned if it hadn't slipped my mind, I've been so concentrated on the job we have in view. The radio store was looted by a Chinaman that had more brazen nerve than any man I ever encountered. He promised to meet me to-night. He hasn't shown up."

Plenn paused to unlock the door of his cabin. And then he exclaimed in surprise. It was a room about ten by twenty feet. There were numerous windows. Plenn had left the shades drawn. But now one of the curtains was up.

The moonlight streamed through the open window. It revealed, sitting on the sill, the figure of a man. Though he was motionless, his very posture suggested catlike agility. His head was turned to the intruders. The moonbeams illumined in a ghastly way his yellowish face.

"It's the Chinaman!" Plenn said, amazed. "How did you get here?"

"I shadowed you this evening," said Mr. Chang calmly. "Having made a few inquiries, I ascended the staircase and awaited you. It was a long climb from the ground floor."

CHAPTER IV.

MARKED FOR PLUCKING.

EVIL loves darkness. The conspirators, up there on the roof of the skyscraper, did not turn on the electric lights of Plenn's workshop. The radiance of the moon, through the open

window, served their purposes. It disclosed a room that was quite evidently the laboratory of a radio enthusiast and experimenter. The blanket-covered couch, on which Plenn slept, was the only homelike touch to the place. Upon shelves of an open cupboard were his spare clothes. Add to these the two chairs, and the semblance of a home ended. Everything else was radio—storage batteries, mazes of wires and switches, along with innumerable coils, plate condensers and similar wireless trappings.

It was characteristic of Mr. Chang that he was concerned primarily with his location in space and the problem of escape in event of a raid. A price was on his head, and he must have exits clearly outlined in mind.

"You have selected for your living quarters," said the Chinaman, "rather an admirable spot. The air is pure, imparting sufficient oxygen for intensive effort. Here you are secluded from street sounds and interruptions by morons. But I have been wondering why you did not settle farther back from the brick cliff. If you ever toppled out of this window, in which I am now sitting, you would fall—let us see—how far—twenty stories?"

"Eighteen," Plenn corrected. "You missed it by two."

"It is quite a drop," Mr. Chang commented. "Due to the inexorable law of gravitation, distance is a factor that is more potent on the perpendicular than on the horizontal. Although I am not a circus acrobat, I am, nevertheless, concerned with the matter of what might happen if I, for instance, lost my balance. It is quite dark below. But I fancy that I should not alight in a net."

Plenn grunted. "You sure wouldn't," he informed. "Your downward course would land you on a lower roof. It is a heavy glass affair at the bottom of the courtyard, reinforced by steel bars. The architect, apparently, figured on

just such a possibility as a man plunging through the glass and annoying the customers in the bank lobby underneath."

"Eighteen stories!" Mr. Chang murmured. "There could be more desirable means of quick departure."

"I had to build close to the edge of the roof," Plenn explained. "In daytime the bank clerks use the main roof for tennis courts, and my structure would otherwise be in their way. Of course, at night I am alone. It is an admirable location, as you say, for my purposes. A fine spot for radio experimenting, to be sure. Observe, above your right shoulder, my antenna—the aerial wire. It runs out above the courtyard. The far end is fastened to the roof of the building across the way."

Mr. Chang deftly rolled a wheat-paper cigarette with one hand, and with the other clicked match into flame on a thumb nail.

"Quite so," he rejoined, inhaling deeply. "I perceive two exits, barring a suicidal plunge through space—namely, by airplane and the stairs leading to the freight elevator. So much for that. I have familiarized myself with the layout."

He lapsed into silence and turned on Plenn's youthful companion two boring black eyes that were phosphorescent in their intense scrutiny.

Jim Dutton had advanced into the moonlight. He shrank back, under the Chinaman's gaze, which sent an odd chill shivering up his spine, though his voice was normal. "Good evening," he said.

"You," Mr. Chang opined, "are in the financial business. That is evident from your soft pink hands, your glistening and well-manicured nails, your oily voice and the copy of the *Wall Street Journal* that protrudes from your side coat pocket. In particular, I am impressed by your vocal tone. It is the sort that can make a lie seem plausible,

that can impart a sense of secrecy and confiding friendship to the most trivial matter. I picture you selling securities to suckers."

Jim Dutton blinked his bright blue eyes. He ran his tongue around dry lips, and squirmed uncomfortably. "What you say is a correct surmise," he admitted. "I am, indeed, a bond salesman. Now, if you are looking for a gilt-edged investment, I sincerely recommend Bonanza Shoals Mining——"

"Pray, calm yourself!" Mr. Chang interrupted. "It is after business hours. Furthermore, I am not, even by the most extreme stretching of the imagination, a prospective victim of your professional wiles. Mr. Plenn, I fancy that this young man is your accomplice."

Hector faltered nervously before he mastered his voice. "Well," he said, "I'd hardly call Dutton that, in polite circles. However, there's no use making any bones about it. Jim, this is the Chinaman I told you about—the holdup gent whom I have invited to join us."

Dutton lit a tailored cigarette. "In that event," he declared suavely, "I might as well do the talking. May I inquire your name, sir?"

"You may," answered the Chinaman. "Furthermore, I shall answer you truthfully. My name is Mr. Chang. It is quite a common name in China, is Chang—much like Smith in America."

"Chang, eh?" Dutton repeated smoothly. "It is a simpler name than I expected. My acquaintance with Chinese has been limited to laundrymen and chop-suey waiters. Perhaps I have much to learn. That is what we live for. Usually, though, I have found my slant-eyed friends answering to such monstrosities of cognomen as Tom Chin, Harry Dang and Bow Wow."

Mr. Chang rolled a fresh cigarette, having extinguished his former one between tips of fingers that apparently had asbestos skin. "Chinese who come to America," he informed, "do not as a

rule use their real names. Embarking from their own country, they usually consult a white-faced foreigner and request a name that will be appropriate. Some of their informers have a sense of humor. That is why you will find, in the treaty ports of China, where a Mongolian or Malay seeks tourist traffic, a business operating under the firm name of such as John Monk & Son, or Long Chin."

Jim Dutton chuckled. "Now for business," he suggested. "Here's the layout. Hector and I have enough plunder in mind to furnish a king's ransom. I am, as you surmised, a bond salesman. I work for a sharp old fox named Ronald Jessup. At least, that's what we know him as. Probably it's an alias. For he's as crooked as a pretzel, and I wouldn't wonder but what the police of half the continent have him in their rogues' gallery. Jessup is a get-rich-quick swindler. He is feeding out a lot of fake securities. To date he has gotten away with it amazingly, for he masks his crooked enterprises by operating as a legitimate brokerage house."

Mr. Chang was decidedly interested. "Jessup is running a bucket shop, eh?" he commented. "In other words, he bets with his customers on the course of the New York stock market. They think that the transactions really take place. On the side, he floats fake securities."

"Precisely," Jim Dutton agreed, "except that his sales of worthless securities comprise the bulk of his business. The rest, as I said, is all a mask—a smoke screen. Believe me, brother, he sure has a swell layout—fake bonds and stocks so richly engraved that they look as good as paper money."

Mr. Chang nodded. "It is an old game," he said. "Jessup promises big returns to his customers. He keeps them satisfied by paying large rates of interest, as dividends, out of the money he takes in. Finally he will disappear,

and his gullible patrons will be left holding the bag. I know the system."

Dutton whistled softly between his teeth for a moment. "That's the ticket," he rejoined. "Ponzi is a precedent, also Five-Hundred-and-Twenty-Per-Cent Miller and a raft of others. You'd think the investing public would learn its lesson. But, no."

"Of course not," the Chinaman said. "There are hordes of people who were put on earth for the purpose of being swindled, the same as nature hatches out a thousand fish and permits only a few to attain maturity, the rest being food for their cannibal enemies. Tell me, how much has Jessup cleaned up so far?"

Dutton hesitated. "I can't answer that question," he admitted finally. "It's this way. You see, I got in touch with Jessup originally by answering a classified ad in a newspaper. He was looking for personal representatives—salesmen. Well, I gave him a smooth line of talk, and got the job. There are six of us on his payroll. He pays me pretty well, a hundred and fifty a week and a commission. It's a good job, the commissions netting me roughly twice as much as my salary. A job, in fact, that doesn't grow on trees. He knows it. I know it. Naturally, I'm not apt to tip over his apple-cart at the expense of my own wallet. Of course, he thinks he has me bunked into believing that his business is legitimate, that the securities I sell for him are all right."

The Chinaman was a good listener. He remained silent, in an expectant, respectful, inviting manner.

"But I've gotten hep to Ronald Jessup," Dutton continued. "I see through his game, from bits of information I've picked up here and there and pieced together. I don't mind telling you that I've pulled off a few crooked jobs myself. Maybe Jessup surmises as much. I've stolen, at odd times, a few bits of jewelry at dinner parties. I've forged

and cashed a check. To date, I haven't been caught. In the main, I've kept within the law—except when I was cornered and needed cash. At any rate, I wasn't born yesterday. Nor do I believe that the moon is made of green cheese. I'm hep to what's going on at the office."

Mr. Chang bared his teeth in the moonlight. His smile was mirthless. "Set a thief to catch a thief," he said languidly. "Well, everything in this three-dimensional existence of ours is subject to definite laws of cause and effect. Jessup is playing an old game. It will run its customary course. When the wheel gets too big to turn, or when he fears that the law is about to swoop down on him with handcuffs, he will fade into the distance—disappear with his cached plunder."

Dutton clucked tongue inside his cheek. "That's the ticket," he agreed. "Our game is to steal his winnings before he can make off with them."

"Certainly!" the Chinaman said blandly. "The customers of this swindler are going to lose their money anyway. We might as well have it as Jessup."

This comment, from the Oriental without scruples, was craftily designed to dull any conscientious hesitation on the part of his two prospective Caucasian confederates.

"That's what appeals to me," Dutton confided. "We'll be stealing from a crook primarily. The real victims, the investors, will suffer from us only second-hand. They'll lose whether we cop the loot or not."

Mr. Chang, contemplative, still was perched languidly on the window sill in the moonlight. Yet it seemed to his companions, who were watching him intently, that his posture was more alert, as of a jungle cat preparing to spring upon its prey.

"Loot!" the Chinaman murmured throatily. "Plunder! Swag! Ah!"

He smacked his lips. "Where is it? Lead me to it."

"Unfortunately," said Dutton, "I cannot do that little thing immediately. Ronald Jessup is nobody's fool. He is the shrewdest fox I have ever run counter of. And I'm here to tell you, sir, that I've seen some smooth babies during my youthful career as a stock-market agent. Jessup keeps his treasure cached in safe-deposit boxes of various banks. He does not risk losing the whole works in event of an unexpected raid by post-office inspectors or the like."

Mr. Chang shrugged. "No easy task lies ahead."

"That's evident, sir. But there's a chance at big stuff, a real clean-up. This fellow Jessup has the intuition of a small boy raiding an orchard at night. He actually scents danger in the air before there is any tangible indication of it. Sixth sense, it is, I suppose. Furthermore, he's probably an old hand at the game, knows all the ropes—including the psychological moment to decamp, before police close in on him. He has a strong-arm pal, fellow named Jenkins, sort of a silent partner. I heard a secret conference between them."

"A secret conference, eh? They were plotting?"

"Yes, sir. It was night before last. I'd hid myself in a wardrobe in Jessup's private office. They didn't discover me, though my heart was in my mouth every minute."

"What did they decide?" the Chinaman queried.

"They've agreed to assemble all the plunder in the office to-morrow night at ten o'clock. There they'll make their divvy. Jessup is to collect the loot from the banks during the day. On the morrow, both will turn up missing."

Mr. Chang was pleased. But he did not show it. His face continued expressionless, his manner calm. "Far

better than a daylight holdup," he commented. "Darkness is our ally. The psychic forces that favor the criminally inclined function best at night. Moreover, flight is easier in the black. But we cannot be too cautious. This man Jessup is a fox—so!"

"Fox is right," Dutton agreed. "Not only that, but he's an expert pistol shot, and quick on the draw. Plenn and I would have stuck them up alone if it hadn't been for that. To be frank, sir, and I don't mind admitting it, we're averse to flirting with the graveyard."

CHAPTER V.

MARKED FOR DEATH.

HECTOR PLENN had kept himself in the background and remained silent during Jim Dutton's confabulation with the Chinaman. But now he emerged from the shadows at the back of the room, and indicated by a nervous clearing of his throat that he considered it time for him to do some talking.

"Listen, Mr. Chang," he said grimly. "You don't want to get any fool notion into your head that you are dealing with a couple of dumb-bells. Nor are we the sort that will let you get away with anything. Jim and I have considered the matter from every side. We know that it is a dangerous venture on which we propose to embark. And we've made up our minds to go the limit if necessary."

"Limit?" the Oriental queried softly. "Just what do you mean by that?"

"You know what I mean," Plenn answered slowly. "If you want it right from the shoulder, here it is: If you try to double-cross us and make off with all the loot for yourself, there'll be a dead Chinaman on some undertaker's cooling board."

"Is that a threat?" Mr. Chang's tone was honeyed, not resentful.

"Not at all," Dutton cut in. "It's just a friendly warning. We aim to play

square with you. And you're going to do the same."

"Of a certainty!" Mr. Chang promised suavely. "Bless my lily-white soul, I wouldn't dream of disloyalty to a partner. It awes me to know that I am doing business with a couple of potential young cutthroats. I presume that we share equally—a three-way split?"

"You bet!" Plenn responded. "Dutton furnishes the opportunity, the prospective victim. You play the leading rôle in the actual commission of the crime. And I, in addition to bringing you two fellows together, also provide the base of operations—this room. The job is equally divided, and so will be the plunder."

"I rejoice at such fairness," Mr. Chang declared. "Tell me, just where is Jessup's office?"

Plenn chuckled. "About fifty feet below where you are standing now; five stories beneath. If Jessup stuck his head out of a window of his private sanctum, I could lean from where you are sitting and drop a brick on his bald pate."

This sounded good to Mr. Chang. But he did not smack his lips or otherwise betray any jubilation. "The layout is all that could be desired," he commented in a businesslike way. His manner and voice were as dispassionate as though he were merely a plumber pondering the shortest way to run a pipe. "A rope is all that is needed to negotiate the distance."

"We already have the rope," Plenn informed. "It is locked yonder in my trunk. Judging by the muscles I noted rippling under your garments, you can go up and down a rope like a monkey. So can Dutton and I. We've been practicing a lot, with the idea that maybe we'd have to pull the job off alone. The rope is not only long enough to reach from here to Jessup's office. It will permit us to lower ourselves in safety to the heavy glass roof that vaults the

bank lobby at the bottom of the courtyard far below us. That will be much safer than the only other exit—namely, the trapdoor and stairs leading to the rear hall and the freight elevator. Something might go wrong and cut our escape off entirely by that route. For instance, suppose the night watchman heard the get-away and tried to stop it. He totes a gat and he's a good shot. Then, too, the floors of this building are cut off from each other at night by locked steel doors."

Dutton had been sniffing the air. "Hector," he asked eagerly, "were you drinking by yourself while you sat in the shadows? I smell prime whisky."

"No."

Dutton approached him and scented like a bloodhound. "You're another!" he charged heatedly. "What do you mean by holding out? Come on, share with me, or I'll pitch you out of the window."

Reluctantly Plenn brought forth his flask. His pal gulped eagerly.

Mr. Chang had followed the incident alertly. "It would not take much to get these two fellows quarreling," he meditated, "especially if they already were full of fire water."

"Join us?" the bond salesman asked.

"No, thank you," the Chinaman declined. "To be frank, I never could understand why you white people are so keen for whisky. It affords such a mild exhilaration. Allow me to offer you my personal flask of *Ng Ka Py*—yellow bark brandy, distilled from wormwood."

His companions accepted eagerly. The potent liquor nearly strangled them. But they both swallowed several drinks. "Go ahead, finish the bottle," Mr. Chang invited. "I carry it for my bosom friends." They needed no second invitation. Straightway something like an electric current flowed through their nerves. The exhilaration was instant. It multiplied swiftly. Nor

would it subside soon. The two young white men glanced at each other in the moonlight, as though comparing sensations by telepathy.

"I thought," said the bond salesman, "that I had tasted every liquor under the sun. But this yellow bark brandy gives me a sensation that I can't place. I feel as if I had been transported to another world. Everything here seems unreal, like a dream."

"You said it," the radio bug rejoined. "Why, I don't feel nervous at all." He turned to the Chinaman and demanded suspiciously: "Say, was that hooch drugged?"

"Of course not," Mr. Chang assured. "It sometimes happens that hasheesh is put into *Ng Ka Py* by the makers. But not enough to drug you. Gentlemen, I am placing myself in your hands. You are the leaders in this venture. Is it not obvious that I would not be imprudent enough to chance drugging you? I am a hunted man, having recently fled from Canada where a Scotland Yard agent and other detectives were too hot on my trail."

This sounded plausible. But the white men were, indeed, under the control of a subtle Oriental narcotic.

Mr. Chang leaned out the window and peered to the depths of the luminous glass lobby roof below. "Quite a fall!" he commented. "An admirable place for a suicide—or, perchance, a murder that would seem like self-extinction. It reminds me of a certain pleasant night in Formosa when I was reluctantly compelled to toss a man over a towering cliff. He was the boss of a camphor company. We had arranged a little robbery. He proved treacherous. I was kind to him, though. I cut his head off with a bolo before I threw him from the precipice."

Dutton shuddered. He reached under the radio workbench, took a small key from a hiding place, and unlocked the trunk.

"Here!" Plenn reminded. "That's my private property. What you aim to do?"

Dutton pulled a long coiled rope from the trunk. He dropped a loop over a powerful hook on the wall under the window. This hook had been previously placed there by the conspirators. "Our slant-eyed friend," he said, "will naturally want to visit old Jessup's office and get the lay of the land in advance of the holdup. I'll go down first and make sure that the coast is clear. Keep a sharp watch. When I stick my head out the window and wave both hands, Mr. Chang, you come down and join me." He vanished over the window ledge.

While they waited, the radio bug busied himself with one of his numerous wireless sets. He clamped a phone over his ear and began tuning-in numerous stations. Immediately he forgot his companion. So engrossed was he in distance reception, in fact, that he was quite unconscious of the Oriental's departure presently, in response to a signal from Dutton.

Mr. Chang went down the rope with the agility of a monkey. He stepped through the open window from which Dutton had signaled, and found himself in a small place, holding only a porcelain washbowl and a steel locker for golf kits. Jessup concocted many of his schemes while chasing a ball around a course.

"Walk on your tiptoes and don't speak above a whisper," Dutton cautioned. "The night watchman might hear us. Above all, beware of striking a match."

Mr. Chang smiled mirthlessly in the darkness. It was ironical, such advice from an amateur criminal to a veteran professional who to date had matched wits with many of the world's foremost detectives—and emerged victor.

In addition to the washroom, the suite had a private office for Jessup and a

reception room where stenographers toiled by day. The bucket shop was on a lower floor, near the street. Mr. Chang was intensely interested in Jessup's lair. He long since had learned that a man expresses his real self in a most graphic manner by the objects with which he surrounds himself. Inspection of this office would tell him more than a long talk with the owner.

The window curtains were up, and the bright moonlight enabled him to examine the place thoroughly. The furniture was of solid mahogany. Now, when it came time to decamp with his illicit winnings, Jessup would have to leave his precious equipment behind. That apparently did not worry him. It was obvious that he enjoyed the fine things of life and was willing to pay the price. The inkwell on the flat-top desk, for instance, was a gigantic affair of hammered silver.

From the furniture, Mr. Chang turned to a perusal of the pictures. There were three expensive oil paintings, also some lithographed prints. These latter were pictures of Ben Franklin, Abraham Lincoln and others who typified honesty and fair dealing. A sly old fox, this Jessup. A visitor, looking at such portraits, in the average case would be deluded into a belief that here were Jessup's heroes—the men he admired and endeavored to copy.

"I am surprised," Mr. Chang murmured, "that your boss has not tacked numerous honesty mottoes on the walls. His failure to do so indicates that he is of quite high intelligence. Such mottoes would be obvious bunk, but few tricksters can resist overstaging their deceptions."

Dutton chuckled. "Jessup," he informed, "is too keen for that. He pulls some nifties, though. When he has a visitor worth fleecing, Jessup looks as pious as a country banker. He eats apples while he talks with the prospective victim, to create an impression that

he is an old-fashioned honest man of simple tastes. Another stunt is to palm a quarter, pretend to pick it up from the visitor's chair upon departure, press it into his guest's hand and insist that it must have dropped from his pocket. That's good psychology. Naturally, a man who wouldn't steal a quarter is not apt to elope with a thousand bucks or so."

"Which isn't the truth," Mr. Chang commented grimly. "However, most Caucasians have the false idea, and I have no doubt but that it brings into your employer's till many a wad of money that otherwise would not come his way. Tell me, how do you like the idea of having this crazy radio maniac, Hector Plenn, as an accomplice?"

The Chinaman's whisper had taken on a sinister tone that intimated he knew something that he was quite reluctant to admit.

Dutton pricked up his ears. "Plenn," he answered, "is an uncertain quantity. One never can be sure how a fellow of his nervous temperament will react in emergency. We've been bosom pals for a long time. But sometimes I feel that I don't know him at all—that he is masquerading to me, holding out. Come, what do you know?"

Mr. Chang staged a silence in which he appeared to meditate. "Alas!" he confided presently. "While we were alone upstairs, and you down here, your supposed pal made me a treacherous proposal."

Dutton gasped. "Eh?" he ejaculated. "Come, now, tell me the whole works. I'll play straight with you—not let him suspect that you tipped me off."

Mr. Chang grasped the bond salesman's hand and gripped it tightly in excellent imitation of gratitude. "It is a profound pleasure to do business with such a high-grade individual as yourself," he declared. "I expected as much, however. I knew I could trust you. It was obvious to me, earlier in the

game, that your intellect and character are vastly superior to Plenn's."

This pleased Dutton's vanity. "You're a pal after my own heart," he said. "Be frank. Tell me about Plenn's treachery."

"Your supposed friend," the Chinaman lied glibly, "proposed to me that we double cross you after we have secured the loot. He even suggested that we might frame the affair so that you would be caught and sent to the penitentiary. It could be arranged plausibly. You, working for Jessup, are the logical man to know about the plunder and how to get it. The police would reason that far and stop."

Dutton cursed savagely. He gritted his teeth.

"Here!" Mr. Chang invited smoothly. "I have another flask of yellow bark brandy. Help yourself copiously. You need it. For, of a certainty, the knowledge of such duplicity must be a severe shock to a man of your high ethical principles."

Dutton drank deeply. Again they shook hands. "Oh, the dirty cur!" exclaimed the bond salesman.

"You have not heard the worst of it," said the Chinaman, in the tone of one who can scarcely believe what he knows to be undeniable truth. "I gave you the drink to stimulate you—to prepare you for a real shock. I asked Plenn what we should do in event you got nasty at the showdown. 'Well,' he said, 'I might lose my nerve if I had to do it alone, but as long as the loot is so big, maybe we should take the chance and put Dutton out of the way—silence him forever.'"

Dutton swayed. "Is it as bad as that?" he asked dazedly. "I can hardly believe it. Plenn and I have bummed together for a long time. One hates to believe that a pal would actually bump him off."

"Surely you do not doubt my word," said Mr. Chang with quiet dignity.

"Friendship isn't to be trusted. Look what Cæsar's friends did to him."

"That's so. Oh, I believe you, all right. It's just that the truth came as such a shock to me. What a fool I was, to take Plenn into this venture! And how fortunate I am to have a reliable third partner like yourself."

The Chinaman leaned close to the white man. He stared into his agitated eyes. "Turn about is fair play," he suggested. "A man is justified to go to any extreme for self-preservation. Why not turn the tables on this despicable Plenn?"

Dutton shrank back. "You don't mean to—to——"

"Why not?" Mr. Chang urged. "Dead men tell no tales. And we would have more loot to divide between us."

His voice continued persuasively, hypnotically. And at last Dutton agreed that, if necessary for their ends, Plenn must die. "I'll do it, if you help," he said.

"So speaks a brave man!" Mr. Chang exclaimed. "We may not have to kill him. Now you linger here for ten minutes. That will afford me time to ascend the rope and, pretending to be willing to help double cross you, listen to whatever conspiracy he has. When you join us, be cautious. Pretend you are unsuspecting."

Their hands clasped to bind the bargain. Up the rope went the Chinaman, and into the radio workshop on the roof. Plenn had laid aside his headphones. "Too much static," he grumbled.

"There is more in the air than static to disturb you, if you only knew it," Mr. Chang informed significantly. "How long have you known this fellow Dutton?"

"Why do you ask?" Plenn queried anxiously. "Dutt and I have been pretty thick. But I know he's as slippery as a greased pig. I bet he made you a proposal. Is that it?"

"I regret to confess that you have guessed it. Mr. Plenn, I herewith retire from our venture. Dutton is a double crosser. He would, no doubt, trick me as readily as he is prepared to make away with you."

Plenn was stunned. "Is it as bad as that?" he finally gasped. "I ought to have had more sense, knowing as I do that he packs a gun."

His deceiver plied him with yellow bark brandy. Craftily he led the radio enthusiast on; worked him up to a point of bitterness where he yearned for vengeance. "Two can play at the game of double crossing," said Plenn. "Stick to me."

Mr. Chang feigned reluctance. Plenn implored. He pointed out the magnitude of the loot that was at stake. The Chinaman yielded, at last, hesitantly—or so it seemed to Plenn.

"I don't like the idea of murder," Mr. Chang said in counterfeit regret. "But if Dutton chances to attack you—well, of course, you would have to act in self-defense."

Plenn was very pale. "I'd do it," he admitted. "Yes, I'd defend myself. As for a murder in cold blood, I'd never even contemplate it."

"Your attitude is wiser than you fancy," said the Chinaman quietly. "In all criminal ventures where a participant must trust others as henchmen, there is always the possibility of a murder."

CHAPTER VI.

THE GENTLE GRAFTER.

MR. CHANG was too shrewd to kill any goose that laid golden eggs. Jessup might be just such a bird. Among swindlers, he apparently was a veteran and a master.

"His loot will fall readily into my hands, the stage being favorably set for a clean-up," the Chinaman meditated on the morning following his conferences with Plenn and Dutton. "The plunder

is in the nature of solid gold eggs. But, among Caucasians, the get-rich-quick swindler possesses the highest order of criminal brain. If I can induce this Jessup to ally himself with me, the alliance should lead to winnings that would make the immediate profits look like a bag of rice. I have long sought an able and trustworthy white-skinned confederate. It would be a wise investment of my time to pass up this nestful of golden eggs if, in return, I can secure the goose. In my stock of schemes, I have for some time had one that would clean up a tremendous sum. Give me a million of loot, and I could return to China and live like a mandarin."

Accordingly, Mr. Chang presented himself that afternoon in the reception room of Jessup's suite of offices. The Oriental was as graceful as a cat inside his smartly tailored and well-pressed business suit. His nails glistened.

He had not, however, shaved. That was a ceremony that Mr. Chang never indulged in. Long since, to conserve precious time, he had—Chinese fashion—taken tweezers and pulled his beard out, hair by hair, roots and all.

It developed that Jessup could be gotten to without difficulty. The latch-string was out. There was no "Private" sign stenciled on his door. His environment was craftily arranged so that nothing existed to suggest that he had anything to conceal.

Half a dozen stenographers were busily clicking away at their typewriters in the reception room when Mr. Chang softly pattered in from the hall. Well-trained, they paid no attention to him other than a brief glance. The girl at the switchboard smiled a welcome.

"Fair young lady," the Chinaman asked in his most oily tone, "is the honorable Mr. Jessup in conference?"

"No, sir. Do you wish to see him?"

"Assuredly—on a personal matter."

"Walk right in, sir."

Mr. Chang passed through the gate

and approached the mahogany-finish steel door. He tapped softly.

"Come in, come!" called a soft voice. It was more than soft, being velvety, genial, hospitable, the tone of a kindly old man who has mellowed with age.

The Chinaman accepted the invitation. He closed the door behind him and slowly approached the room's lone occupant.

"No actor," he reflected, "could make up for the part as convincingly as this fellow is by nature."

Ronald Jessup would have inspired confidence even in an income tax-auditor. His calm blue eyes were frank and gentle. His plump pink cheeks had the delicate pink of one in perfect health, one who never dissipates. His head was quite bald, save for a fringe of silky white hair. He wore the plain gray suit of a conservative banker, the sort one feels instinctively he can trust.

No expensive cut flowers were on his desk, to suggest to prospective investors that their funds might be used for ornament. Instead, he had an old-fashioned flower—a geranium. And, as Mr. Chang advanced upon him, the swindler reached out and touched the blossom in a petting way. He did it with the air of a lover of simplicity, did it so naturally that it seemed spontaneous and subconscious.

The Chinaman sensed that this old man—unquestionably a finished actor—was now going through a stock performance that he staged for every visitor. His hand, drawing attention to the geranium, made one forget the price of mahogany furniture, oil paintings and costly silver inkwells. One had the resultant impression that such expensive trappings were tolerated by Jessup only as an inevitable intrusion by a very prosperous and substantial business—one that must be "a good bet" for an investor. So he impressed his dupes.

Mr. Chang, be it noted, was not a dupe. He saw through the stage props.

"Pray, be seated!" Jessup urged. He hurried from behind his desk and drew up an upholstered chair. It was like sitting on a mountain of feathers. Here, too, was psychology, for a sucker is more readily parted from his savings if he is physically comfortable.

Jessup returned to his own chair. He opened a desk drawer and brought forth several apples. With a smile of deep satisfaction, he bit into one and rolled the other toward his guest. "They are delicious," he said. "I am an old-fashioned man, perhaps, to have such tastes. But there is a certain sentiment attached to these apples. They come from the New England farm of my venerable father, a retired clergyman."

Mr. Chang languidly examined the apple, as though it were the most natural thing in the world to drop into his hands. His face was utterly without expression as he inquired in a bland, emotionless tone: "Have you heard lately from this venerable sire of yours?"

Jessup was a bit uncertain how to take this. "Why, yes," he answered slowly. "Why do you ask?"

"I think you had better check up on the location of your parent's farm," the Chinaman suggested. "Apparently some one has played a mean trick on papa and moved the farm. I am in a modest way a student of fruits. This apple is from Oregon."

Jessup sat motionless, trying to fathom his visitor. His efforts were likely to be futile.

"If I were you," Mr. Chang cautioned, "I would cut out either the apples or the reference to a New England source. It is a sour note in your magnificent symphony of bunk. Popcorn is more convincing. Why not munch popcorn?"

A flicker of anxiety appeared in the old swindler's blue eyes. It changed to one of apprehension, of fear—then quickly vanished. "What is your busi-

ness with me, my dear sir?" he asked uneasily. "Have you money to invest?"

"I have," said Mr. Chang grimly, "but not with you. It requires no telepathic ability on my part to sense that you will shortly be buying a railroad ticket a yard long."

Jessup abruptly lost his composure. His plump pink face paled. His fingers trembled as he placed his half-consumed apple on the glass top of his desk.

"I am afraid you have blundered into the wrong office," he said. His tongue ran nervously around suddenly dry lips. "Perhaps you——"

"Nothing of the sort," the Chinaman retorted. "Come, we are birds of a feather, and it is ridiculous for us to waste precious time sparring. Like yourself, I am crooked enough to hide behind a pretzel. Our minds run in similar channels. I can read you like a book. At this instant you are wondering whether I am a detective."

Jessup swallowed. "A Chinese sleuth would be a new one to me."

"You say that with the air of one who has encountered innumerable dicks."

"Really," said Jessup, "it is quite remarkable, your walking in here and announcing that you are a crook. Especially so on account of your race. Not only are the Chinese secretive, but they are famed for their honesty. Of course, there are bound to be exceptions. What's your game?"

"That would be telling," Mr. Chang reminded. "However, I shall take you into my confidence and admit that I am not selling prayer books." He bared his long teeth in a mirthless smile. "How is the smooth violator of the blue-sky laws to-day?"

The swindler frowned. "I do not get what you are driving at," he said. "Come to the point. Why are you here?"

"I am here," the Oriental answered,

"because the time is ripe for our meeting. There is in nature a fine synchronization of seemingly unrelated events. For instance, the Canadian salmon trout in springtime strike best when the wild plums are in bloom. If the plums blossom late, the trout hover deep and delay their rising to the shoals. So with the venture I have in mind. Our paths cross by fate—because our careers have reached the point where we are in tune with each other."

Jessup wagged his head sagely. "You sure have a beautiful flow of language," he said. "I perceive that some Caucasian school of learning has you on its enrollment records of bygone days. That is revealed by your manner and its effect on an observer's eye. If you ever want a job as advertising manager, writing prospectuses for me, welcome."

"It would appeal to me as pastime, but not as a profession," said Mr. Chang. "Like yourself, I am an *entrepreneur*, a promoter who never subordinates himself. I crave to work with you, not for you. How would it strike you, a proposal that we join forces in a partnership to fleece the public? I have some magnificent schemes in mind. With my brain and your front, we could put them across. And I mean no offense therein to your own intellect. For, undoubtedly, judging by my preliminary size-up, you are the slickest Caucasian I ever met."

"I am immune to flattery." Jessup countered. "Yet I do not desire to detract from your own obvious abilities. I gather that you want to float fake stock. So? Then let me be enlightened as regards your psychology of the sucker."

Mr. Chang contemplated the swindler placidly. "I would scarcely call it one hundred-per-cent dishonest to separate a sucker from his wallet," he informed. "The average sucker is dishonest at heart—for he bites the alluring bait in hope of getting something for nothing.

That hope is dishonesty in the raw. Every man who does not give equal value, in service or cash or commodities, for what he receives in return, is a thief. Hence the sucker often is a thief at heart, merely beaten at his own game."

Jessup nodded. He regarded his visitor intently. "You'd make a swell lawyer for the defense," he said with a chuckle. "Of course, even though the sucker is a thief at heart, that doesn't lessen his swindler's guilt."

"Professionals like ourselves," the Chinaman reminded, "are not scrupulous about little matters like that. Now, I would be charmed to ally myself with you. For one thing, you are a veteran. You know the laws and their loopholes. You have, no doubt, in the course of years, acquired a vast familiarity with the machinery of gently parting suckers from their funds. I must confess that get-rick-quick swindling is a field in which I still can learn much. My operations, to date, though intricate, have necessitated the employment of brute force. Your game would be a vacation to me—gentle, following a line of least resistance."

"Quite!" Jessup agreed. "I never employ force. The pistol, blade, black-jack and poison are taboo with me. My wits are my only weapons. I never carry a gun, for instance. In crime, sir, I am an aristocrat."

Mr. Chang's boring black eyes remained riveted to the white man's. "Is it never necessary to shoot your way out?"

"To be sure," Jessup answered easily. "For that purpose, I have a subordinate, in the nature of a guard. I pay him well. In fact, he is a partner though he does not share equally in my dividends. He does the dirty work. He is the watchdog that I sick upon my enemies."

The swindler paused and pondered the Chinaman. A long silence followed,

in which he appeared to ponder the Oriental's possibilities.

"How many men have you killed?" he asked at length.

Mr. Chang yawned. "Bless my lily-white soul!" he said. "I have quite lost count. Years ago, in Java, I took stock of the number of men that I have assisted out of this vale of tears and woe. There were only eight then. Of course, that was long back in the past."

Jessup involuntarily shivered. "Only eight," he repeated. "Only! Br-r-r! And what assurance would I have, that you would not dissolve our partnership by adding me to your list?"

"I play fair," said Mr. Chang, "as long as a confederate does not attempt to double cross me." This falsehood was voiced in a convincing tone. But Jessup was a skeptic. Perceiving which, the Chinaman continued his persuasion. "You, my dear sir, would be too profitable an accomplice to do away with. It would be like letting the blood of a goose that lays golden eggs."

Again a silence, and again the master swindler studied his visitor. "You would make an admirable henchman, no doubt of that," he admitted. "While I am no longer young, I still have vast ambition. My game is my sport. The prospect of bigger ventures quickens my pulse. Well, let me think it over."

Mr. Chang leaned forward. "And when do I get your decision?"

The faintest smile played about Jessup's lips. "Call at this office to-morrow morning," he invited.

This was a throw-down. For, during the approaching night, the swindler was scheduled—according to his own plans—to fade into the distance with his booty. Mr. Chang knew this. But he gave no indication. His face continued expressionless as, rising with a polite bow, he said in counterfeit hopefulness: "I trust that you will soon be sharing your plunder with me."

This parting sentence made Jessup

very thoughtful. He had a queer apprehension that trouble was in the wind.

CHAPTER VII.

SKYSCRAPER PLUNDER.

THE night of the crime was frosty.

With a stiff wind blowing from the northwest, the air was biting cold up on the roof of the skyscraper where Hector Plenn had his radio workshop and bed. No clouds were visible in the sky. Stars twinkled actively. A bright moon clearly illumined the roof. This was unfortunate to the conspirators, for the silvery radiance flooded the deep shaft down which they must climb by rope to reach their intended plunder.

The three looters assembled in Hector's cabin-shop early in the evening.

Both of the white men masqueraded to each other. Plenn falsely believed that Dutton had schemed to double cross him. Dutton had the same delusion as regards his old-time friend. Mr. Chang, by deception, had thus hoodwinked them for two reasons. In the first place, it protected him against any plotting to pool their forces and leave the Chinaman in the lurch. Secondly, it might be to his advantage to be able to pit them against each other in emergency, thereby distracting attention from himself.

They were as putty in his hands. Obeying his orders, each made an effort to act naturally to the other and appear unsuspecting. Yet they were so wrought up that irritation cropped out at the most trivial incidents.

The bond salesman, for instance, nearly precipitated a pitched battle by accidentally knocking one of Plenn's vacuum tubes to the floor where it shattered to smithereens. And Plenn generated dangerous resentment by helping himself, without asking, to one of the perfectos that projected from Dutton's coat pocket. He did this by sheer force of habit. In the old days, Dutton would

have urged him to take all he wanted, and even held a match for him. But not to-night. Mr. Chang had sown the seeds of discord. The young fellows were in fine mood to fly at each other's throats.

The cautious Chinaman had led them, in turn, aside and searched them for weapons. Each, anticipating treachery by his ex-pal, and prepared to commit murder after the robbery, was armed with a pistol and blade. Mr. Chang pocketed the revolvers.

"You keep the knife," he whispered soothingly. "I've taken your pard's blade from him, along with his gat. That leaves him defenseless and with the knife you can finish him off easily—unless I do it ahead of you, as I probably shall."

Plenn swallowed this story; believed that his white rival was disarmed. So did Dutton. Yet each had a piece of steel, designed and intended for murder, without the other's knowing it.

Plenn, sullenly silent, busied himself at his radio. In a few hours, as he foresaw the future, he would be fleeing with the Chinaman. His precious and beloved radio apparatus would have to be left behind. This was agonizing to contemplate. But with his share of the plunder he could buy more and better wireless equipment—buy it, too, in the big quantities for which he had always yearned but never achieved except in dreams.

Around nine o'clock he removed his headset and spat disgustedly. "Rotten luck!" he growled. "The static is coming in something fierce."

Mr. Chang was sitting on a box near the window. "Forget your radio," he advised significantly. "Outside there is something worth worrying about. The moonlight floods the courtyard all the way down to the glass roof of the bank lobby. In fully a dozen windows there are the lights of men working late or staging bootleg parties. That makes it

bad for us. One of them may chance to glance out at the psychological moment, and see us traveling up or down the rope—then spread the alarm."

Plenn spoke up eagerly. "Don't be too sure of that," he informed. "I can tell by the static that a big storm is blowing up. By ten o'clock, when Jessup is scheduled to meet his pal in the office below us, the moon may be clouded over."

His prediction proved correct. Dense clouds presently drifted toward the southeast, and the moon became curtailed fully three fourths of the time.

Sharp on the stroke of ten from a near-by tower clock, the Chinaman high-gear-ed himself for action.

If all went well, within a few minutes he would have a fortune in his hands.

He had taken charge of the situation and issued the orders. The scheme was for him to stage the hold-up unaided. Plenn and Dutton would await his return on the roof.

Of the two white men, Dutton was the faster thinker—and less inclined to overlook any bets. Though he believed that Plenn intended to double cross him, he was not stupid enough to overlook the possibility of treachery by Mr. Chang.

"Listen, chink!" he said quietly as the Chinaman looped the noose over the iron hook and prepared to lower the long rope. "that rope reaches clear to the bottom of the court. It has to, for get-away. Now, don't you get any fickle notion of emerging from old Jessup's office with the plunder and going on down the rope with it instead of back up. If you try any such brilliant scheme, we'll just naturally cut the rope. It's a drop of eighteen stories, and when you complete it you'd be a pancake. Get me?"

Mr. Chang certainly did. This was a development that he had foreseen and accepted as the inevitable. Whatever

the final outcome of this night's dark work, he must return to the roof after securing the loot. There was no other way out—except via the halls. And there the night watchman was on guard. While a fugitive might elude him, escape would be difficult. This bank building had a system of locking steel doors at night so that each floor was cut off by itself. Any one staying late in his office had to ring for the watchman to take him out via the elevators. A stranger would be interrogated. Mr. Chang, in particular, would be. He was not a tenant. And, having come to the roof early, he had not registered on the night book.

"I shall be back, never fear," he promised. "And with me will come such a pot of money as is fabled to exist at the foot of the rainbow.

The moon now was clouded over, and outside all was black. The two white men heard very faint sounds as the Chinaman agilely made his way over the window sill and down the rope.

"Huh!" Plenn grunted, for the moment forgetting his new and bitter hatred of the other. "In darkness like this, how you going to tell whether he goes on down the rope with the swag? You sure can't see when the moon isn't out."

"Keep your mouth shut!" Dutton replied surlily. "I don't need a light. I have ears like a hawk and can hear if he slopes. Not only that, but I have my fingers on the rope, and as soon as he comes out and throws his weight on it again, I'll feel it tremble and quiver. Then I'll give him time to return—no more."

So, hearts in mouth, they waited breathlessly in the black room while Mr. Chang closed in upon the plunder.

Jessup apparently had not changed his plans. He was in his office, all right, for bright lights streamed from the windows. The Chinaman silently left the

rope and stood upon the ledge outside the washroom. Slowly, a fraction of an inch to the second, he raised the sash. Then inside he went and crossed the short expanse of floor as quietly as a cat, after closing the window behind him.

At the door he paused and held his head close to the panel. Through the thin metal, voices reached him clearly though they were low, barely above whispers. Jessup had some one with him. It was a man, all right, no mistaking the gruff tone, quite a contrast to the master swindler's purring, soothing speech.

"Well, Jenkins," Jessup was saying, "there she is—a queen's ransom. We've counted it twice—three hundred and eight thousand dollars in cash and negotiable bonds. That's a bit over a hundred thousand cool for you. I'll make it a hundred and ten, though you were only to get a third."

"Fair exchange is no robbery," Jenkins agreed. He laughed—in a husky way, as though the sight of so much money agitated him. "I'm off for Mexico. You go to Europe, eh?"

"You bet—and then on down to the Near East. Got a fishing tug chartered to take me across the lake into Canada. I'll hang low in a hunting lodge I own up near Lake Nipissing. Then later, when the hue-and-cry dies down, I'll sail from Montreal. Don't try to get in touch with me. Letters and cables are too dangerous. These United States postal inspectors stick to a trail like leeches. They never give up the chase, not when they're after two such birds likes us. Using the mails to defraud is about as dangerous as killing a man in the Royal Mounted's territory."

"I'm to rejoin you in one year, eh?" Jenkins asked.

"To a day! We'll meet at the old hangout in Florida, all primed for another big deal."

Jenkins chuckled. "This sure has

been a juicy game. I have to hand it to you for knowing when to quit. With money flowing in like water from an open tap, few men could resist hanging on and on until too late to make a safe get-away ahead of government raiders. Great guns! Look behind you."

Jessup jumped as if electricity had suddenly been turned into him. He spun on a heel. The door leading to the washroom was open. Framed in the entrance was the Chinaman standing motionless.

Mr. Chang had three pistols on his person, including the one he had taken from Plenn and the other from Dutton. But two of them now reposed in his pockets. One pistol was sufficient for the Oriental. An expert shot, he could kill the swindler and his henchman in such swift succession that they would waken to find themselves in the Inferno without either of them knowing just what had happened.

The pistol was trained directly at Jenkins. He, burly and with hard black eyes, was the gunman of the pair. Jessup had told Mr. Chang that he personally never carried weapons, having a human watchdog to do his dirty work for him. There was no mistaking his truthfulness. One could have told as much, merely by glancing at the contrasted two.

"Hands clasped on top of your heads, and make it snappy!" Mr. Chang ordered. His voice was sharp, harsh—as menacing as his boring black eyes. Relentless, unscrupulous were those eyes. The smoldering fire of their distant depths had leaped into flame. Otherwise he was without expression. His poker player's countenance was rigid, emotionless. His hands were as steady as steel girders. They had noticed an utter lack of excitement in his voice. Mr. Chang was as cool as ice. He was quite at home, in his natural element—looting.

"You silly ass!" Jessup chided his

pal. "Why didn't you get the gun on him?"

"Fat chance I had!" Jenkins retorted. "He had me covered the instant he opened that door. And I knew from his eyes that he'd shoot in a twinkling if I made the least suspicious move."

Jessup's pink cheeks were pale. He realized the Chinaman's mission—knew the magnitude of the catastrophe that impended.

"How long were you hiding in there?" he demanded. His voice sounded wilted. He was suddenly an old man facing poverty.

"How long?" Mr. Chang took his cue. "I let myself into your office with a skeleton key early in the evening, and hid in one of the steel lockers. Unwisely you left them unlocked."

Jessup groaned. "You've been there before," he decided aloud. "Eavesdropping—that must have been how you learned that this was the night and hour for the divvy. I comprehend now, why you called on me this afternoon and offered to become my partner. You said something about the goose laying the golden eggs. You figured that, allied with me, the prize would be bigger than the haul you now expect to make. Ah, I was a poor fool not to take you up."

"No fool like an old fool," said Mr. Chang evenly.

"Is it too late?" Jessup implored. "Listen, I'd split the stake three ways if you'd listen to me now. Give you a third, I would—and gladly take you as a partner as soon as it's safe to start operations again."

"A hundred thousand dollars!" Mr. Chang answered. "It is no sum to be sneezed at. But in view of your intention to flee to the Near East and not work again for a year. I'll just take the whole works. Back up against yon wall, white men. Keep your hands above your heads or you'll join your ancestors."

Still keeping them covered, he approached the treasure.

Three hundred and eight thousand dollars, in cash, and negotiable securities!

It lay invitingly on a long mahogany table near the room's third door—not the one leading to the reception quarters where stenographers by day had been busily typing form letters to prospective suckers, but the door that led directly out into the main hall of the building. Trust Jessup not to conduct his dangerous business in a lair with only one exit!

Mr. Chang held his automatic in his right hand. With his left he flipped a canvas bag from a pocket. Into this cloth sack went the fruits of Jessup's gigantic get-rich-quick fraud. And, watching, Jessup moaned. But he did not protest, did not implore, knowing that he might as well appeal to the moon that now was so heavily veiled by black clouds.

The money was in bank notes of large denomination. Yet the currency and the securities made a big package. They filled the bag to overflowing. The thief rammed them tightly, and drew the puckering string. He had a bundle half as large as a bushel basket.

Meantime, he had kept Jenkins under intent scrutiny. It was a certainty, from that individual's rigidly tense muscles, that, given a matter of two seconds, he would flash a pistol into view and cut loose at the Chinaman.

Mr. Chang bowed mockingly. "I regret," he said ironically, "that I cannot linger to enjoy a cup of tea with you. But pressing business calls me away. Unfortunately, I am compelled to make you two gentlemen a bit uncomfortable for the balance of the night. I must fetter and gag you, with cord that I brought with me for said purpose. Otherwise, you might rouse the watchman and cut off my escape, though it might embarrass you if, having called

in the police, they began inquiring how you happened to have so much loose money on the premises. Turn your faces to the wall, hands still above you."

They obeyed. The Chinaman stood motionless for a moment, surveying them. His attitude was one of interested contemplation rather than triumph.

He placed the bag of money and securities on the table.

Then, relaxing, he lowered his pistol until it hung at his side.

Fate intervened, and interjected that which was not expected. Remarkably keen sense of hearing had Mr. Chang. But he was not superhuman. Intent on his prisoners, he had failed to notice that the reception room door had opened to a crack.

And now it flew wide open. In stepped a man, closely followed by two others—grim-faced intruders with pistols drawn. Through the crack they had taken stock of the situation. So all three pistols were directed at the Chinaman.

They had him covered, had the drop on him. Being prudent and a person of swift decision, he opened his fingers. Mr. Chang's pistol thudded softly to the deep rug.

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH THE TABLES TURNED.

THE three strangers who had burst into the office so unexpectedly were not to be trifled with. That was evident from their very attitude, not to mention the familiarity with which they flourished their pistols. Veteran robbers could not be more at home with revolvers in hand. But they quickly disclosed that they were not bandits.

"United States post-office inspectors!" announced their leader, a wiry, thin man with a big splash of gray in his dark hair just above his eyes. It was striking, that splash of gray, much as though made with a paint brush. "It's a Fed-

eral pinch, boys," he warned, "so don't try any funny business."

The outlook for Mr. Chang was black.

But he accepted the situation serenely. No emotion showed in his face. In its utter lack of expression, that countenance appeared to be frozen.

Jessup and Jenkins had turned. Jenkins began cursing. His pal was more composed, though his face was white at the prospect of a long trip to Atlanta.

"Hello, McMahan!" he greeted weakly. "Haven't seen you for years."

"Not since the judge sent you away in Indianapolis," was the answer. "You sure staged a clever escape while they were taking you to the pen."

Jessup's face lighted up proudly. "I bribed that baby who was guarding me," he blurted out. Next instant he bit his lip, as one who realizes that he has thoughtlessly betrayed a friend.

The eyes of the three postal inspectors stared at him in incredulity. For a moment the Chinaman was forgotten. And a moment was all that he needed.

On the wall near the door, and close at hand, was a pushbutton that presumably controlled the room's lights.

Mr. Chang jabbed with a finger. He struck the switch with the precision of a snake hurling itself at a victim.

Click!

The room went black.

This night Tu Chieng Kui, god of gambling, certainly was playing Mr. Chang for a favorite. The hall outside was black. No lights were on, the watchman having turned them off from the switch-box near the distant freight elevator.

Out into the cover of friendly darkness went the Chinaman. And with him went the canvas bag containing three hundred and eight thousand dollars' worth of plunder in the form of bank notes and negotiable securities.

Bedlam broke loose in his wake.

Pistols roared. Bullets buried themselves in the plaster of the corridor. The fugitive escaped death by a matter of inches. The inspectors were after him on the instant. And along with them came the two swindlers.

McMahan had turned on a pocket flash light and located the switch jabbed by Mr. Chang. He pressed; brought the lights into play again. Then hallward they all dashed, so close on each other's heels that they wedged in the doorway. One of the inspectors, with presence of mind, had lingered alertly and, the second the lights flashed on, he covered Jenkins and made him drop his gun. He bellowed a command. Jessup turned back from the corridor. The inspector stood guard. He had two prisoners and they must not escape.

Mr. Chang had to use his wits quickly. He had to think, reason and reach decisions with lightning speed. As he sprang into the hall and slammed the door behind him, he knew the lay of the land, having sized things up during his trip to confer with Jessup that afternoon. This was a side corridor in which he now was. Not more than ten paces away, it turned to the right and jogged along to the main hall. Running, he could round that corner and betake himself far down the adjoining gallery before the inspectors could rush up and spot him with their pocket lights.

But they would surely overtake him before he could reach the steel door that walled off this floor from the others, and pick the lock.

Now, the postal detectives had come upon the scene by way of the reception room of Jessup's suite of offices. How had they gotten into that room? That was easy to answer—they must have entered it from this very hall, using skeleton keys, or possibly a pass-key borrowed from the night watchman. That individual, by the way, might now be waiting in the main hall to shoot down any possible fugitive.

Three leaping bounds brought Mr. Chang to the door of the reception room. Ah! Upon entering, the inspectors had not bothered to close it. It was open a trifle. He slipped inside; softly turned the knob and closed it. Now he was no longer in absolute darkness. Through the open door leading into Jessup's private office, light streamed.

Stealthily Mr. Chang darted forward on the balls of his feet, fortunately being out of line of vision of the inspector who lingered in the private office with his swindler captives.

Mr. Chang made for a window. He opened it as quietly as possible. Still clutching his precious bag of loot, he crawled over the sill. He closed the window behind him. This window was only a few feet from the one opening into the washroom. The Chinaman cautiously moved along the ledge.

He thrust forth a free arm—and grasped the rope.

Out he swung, holding the bag with his teeth, and went roofward like a monkey fleeing from a caged existence.

That was his predicament exactly. For, if he were caught, they would thrust him into prison—until such time as the courts passed through the necessary legal formalities to send him to the gallows or the electric chair. The method of his extermination would depend on what American State or Canadian province obtained his extradition. In this regard, there would be many eager claimants.

A price was on his head.

Capture meant death.

He was in a tight corner, and his chances of escape might be slim, indeed.

It was quite natural for the two pursuing postal inspectors to believe that the fugitive would immediately get as far away as possible. Therefore, it did not at the moment occur to them that he might run back into the suite of offices from which he had escaped by quick judgment and wits.

So along the corridor they dashed, around the corner and ahead. As they ran, they explored with pocket flash lights. Unquestionably they were brave men, else they would be following a different profession. But were they not a bit reckless in their eagerness? It seemed so. True, they did not as yet know the identity of their ferocious quarry. Nor were they aware that he still had two pistols, the ones he had taken from Plenn and Dutton. They had seen him with one pistol. But he had dropped it to the rug when they got the drop on him. In making his hasty exit in the darkness, he had not paused to recoup the weapon. Both had observed it, still lying on the floor, as they set forth on the chase.

At any rate, they ran along the hall as boldly as if they were after an unarmed man. Of course, there were two of them. Many times in the past they had demonstrated that they could give a good account of themselves against a lone enemy or even superior numbers, armed or unarmed. It would not be the first time they had shot it out with cornered desperadoes.

Now, by nature of their detective work, it was frequently necessary to creep silently upon criminals wanted by Uncle Sam on various charges. That was why they wore rubber heels and soles on their shoes. But, even with rubber underfoot, a man makes considerable noise when dashing along a flooring of tiles. Especially so at night, in a virtually deserted building, when the least sound carries far through the stillness.

Ahead they heard a shout: "Hi! Stop or I'll fill you full of lead."

Then the electric lights blazed on. About fifty feet away, standing by the freight elevator, was a man. It was human nature for the postal inspectors to see his drawn pistol before they comprehended his identity.

McMahon raised his revolver to fire.

"Hold on!" the man at the elevator yelled frantically. "It's me—the night watchman."

So it was. McMahon lowered his gun. "Did you see a Chinaman?" he asked quickly.

The watchman shook his head negatively. "No one came this way," he answered. "I've been standing here ever since you left me. And not a sound of footsteps reached me until you two gentlemen rounded the corner up yonder. I've got ears like a hawk, and I'd have heard sure."

McMahon cursed lightly. He turned to retrace his steps. "Must have gone the other way," he said.

"Ain't no other way," the watchman informed. "Jessup's office is near the end of a blind corridor. The Chinaman you mentioned must have run into one of the offices, even near by, though I'm sure I'd have heard."

"Hustle!" McMahon urged impatiently. There was no need to adjure the watchman to hasten, however. Already he was darting along the hall, unlocking door after door with his passkey. McMahon and his companion had been through such things before. They followed the watchman, systematically exploring the offices, one taking rooms at the right, the other at the left.

In a few minutes they had searched all the offices—and were back in Jessup's lair without any results.

The watchman scratched his head "That's funny," he commented. "The Chinaman couldn't have dissolved into thin air. Still, you never can tell what those yellow boys will do."

The two swindlers were quite as disappointed as the postal detectives. They were disarmed, under arrest, and would soon be behind steel bars. A judge, even in Federal court, would be more lenient with them if they could make restitution of the money which they had won from suckers by their get-rich-quick fraud. Restitution depended on

the capture of Mr. Chang. He had their winnings, in his canvas bag.

"Oh, well," said the inspector who had lingered to guard the financial fakers, "we've got our two prisoners, anyway."

McMahon snapped his fingers impatiently. "That isn't all we want," he reminded. "It was obvious, while we peeked through the door just ahead of our raid, that the Chinaman had stuck up Jessup and his pal and taken their loot. He made off with it. How much of a haul was it, Jessup?"

"Three hundred and eight thousand dollars," Jessup answered dismally. He was wretched and looked it.

McMahon whistled. "I didn't know you had taken in that much," he said. "Of course, we struck your trail late in the game."

Jessup smiled wanly. "It was the best graft I ever pulled," he said with dignity and a certain satisfaction that was almost pride. "Matter of fact, I took in more than three hundred and eight. Right around four hundred thousand was the exact figure. The difference is gone. We paid it out as dividends. The old system, you know, paying dividends from takings until we felt it was time to blow."

"You know this building," McMahon said to the watchman. "How could this Chinaman get away?" He paused and his face brightened. "Windows were unlocked in nearly every room we searched. I have a hunch. Let's go up and explore the roof."

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE ROOF.

MR. CHANG, scaling the swaying rope like a monkey, was quite calm despite his desperate predicament. His absolute control of emotions—or perhaps it was an utter lack of the emotional in his make-up—was what made him a successful criminal. Where a

white man would go to pieces in emergency, the Chinaman invariably kept his head. Thereby he was able to handle situations as fast as they arose, barring bad luck.

"I was born a generation too soon," he reflected as he ascended the rope with the canvas bag full of loot held in his long and glistening teeth. "If this affair had been staged by fate twenty years in the future, or even less, I would have a flying machine parked on the roof for my get-away—or even standing motionless outside that window through which I just escaped. The infernal airplane as yet is too noisy for subtle criminal operations. Alighting with a modern plane, I'd have had the watchman upon me before I could turn a trick."

Certainly it was a pity, for him, that he could not have gone on down the rope to freedom below, instead of climbing back to the roof. But Dutton had made any such maneuver impossible. He had warned Mr. Chang that he would be listening and keeping fingers on the rope to detect its use, and that he would cut the rope and drop the Oriental to death in the courtyard eighteen stories below if he discovered treachery.

This time in his career, it seemed that Mr. Chang had passed up a good bet. Now, if he only had had another rope hidden in Jessup's washroom, he could have used it for descent and escape. But the crafty Dutton had anticipated any such strategy. He had brought his dinner in a package to Dutton's office and remained on guard to watch for just such trickery. Furthermore, he had advised Mr. Chang of this in advance and told him that, if he had any such notion, he might as well save his time and energy.

The Chinaman had grinned mirthlessly. He had his plans cunningly worked out in finest detail. They called for his return to the roof with the loot.

That accomplished, he had something prepared in the nature of— He pondered as he climbed; pondered grimly. Fate was against him, all right. The raid on the swindlers' offices, by the United States postal inspectors, had been something that he could not foresee. So he had not provided for it.

He reached the top of the rope and came over the window sill into Plenn's radio workshop like a great jungle cat. They could see him faintly, for the moon was on the verge of breaking through the black clouds.

Mr. Chang's whisper carried through the dark room like a flying knife. It stabbed to the consciousness of his two young white confederates, and sent chills creeping up their spines and out along their shoulder blades.

"Jessup was raided by postal inspectors," he announced. "I escaped with the swag. But the dicks will be up here searching the roof in a jiffy. We can bank on that. Quick! Every second counts. Switch on your lights, Plenn. You and Dutton put on head-sets and listen to the radio. Keep your heads when the inspectors show up."

"Great grief!" Plenn faltered. "Where'll you hide?"

"Leave that to me," Mr. Chang advised.

He was pulling up the long rope, hand over hand, coiling it swiftly at his feet. "Dump that radio junk out of your trunk," he ordered. "Pile this rope at the bottom, then toss the loose wire and other stuff back on top and shut the lid. If the inspectors find the rope and query you about it—"

"Oh, oh, oh!" Plenn moaned. "They'll smell a rat."

"Not if you keep your head," said the Chinaman coolly. "Just tell them that you bought it for bracing a new antenna you're going to put up. That will seem plausible."

Obedying orders, Plenn had switched on the lights. It was dangerous to ex-

pose the Chinaman in bright illumination. But it had to be done. Working in the darkness was too blundering and slow.

Plenn, as in a daze, was automatically twirling the dials of his radio. Dutton, alert, quick in a pinch, carried out Mr. Chang's instructions. There was a lot of the rope, but it was small size, so accordingly it left room in the trunk for odds and ends on top of it.

The Chinaman turned to the radio bug. "How strong is your aerial bracket?" he asked. "Would it hold a man's weight?"

"Easy!" Plenn responded confidently. "I built that antenna myself. It's a one-strand affair. But there's a big porcelain insulator at the lead-in. Other end of that insulator connects by heavy wire to a hinky-dinkus bolted just under the roof."

Mr. Chang sprang to the window sill. He reached up, grasped the "hinky-dinkus" and pulled himself out of sight.

His exit was none too soon.

It was only a matter of seconds until the two young fellows, sitting before the radio in pretended innocence with head-phones over their ears, heard a crash. They recognized the sound, and their hearts leaped in apprehension. Some distance away, on the roof, the trapdoor leading down into the skyscraper had been flung open. They feigned to be so engrossed in a radio concert that they did not hear.

But through a window at the left they saw, in a brief period of moonlight, two men come dashing up through the trapdoor opening. These were followed by the night watchman, so they knew that the first two must be postal inspectors.

"Let me do the talking," Dutton whispered. "You'll gum things up, you dumb-bell."

"Shut up, you fool," Plenn whispered back. "I'm the tenant of this place. They'll look to me for information."

The intruders made directly for the

lighted cabin. As they walked through the open doorway, Plenn looked up with mild interest. The desperation of his predicament had suddenly calmed his nerves.

"Hello, Burke!" he greeted the raw-boned Irish night watchman. "Bringing some friends with you to hear my new set? It's a darb."

McMahon did the answering. "Take off those things from your ears," he commanded. "We're Federal officers. Looking for a fugitive Chinaman. Have you heard any one up here on the roof?"

Plenn shook his head. "Not a sound," he informed. "Maybe you'd better look around, though. We might not have heard a prowler with these head-phones on and KDKA coming in loud enough to wake the dead. Say, gents, you ought to listen in for a minute. Sit down and hear my latest radio hook-up—the Plenn Super Inverse Simplex. I can tune in the coast in broad daylight with it. It gives me twelve tubes out of five, and the regeneration——"

"Dry up!" McMahon growled. He turned to Burke. "This is the radio nut you told me about?" The watchman nodded. "How about his pal?" McMahon asked. "Is it in order for him to be here at this late hour?"

Burke grinned. "Sure," he answered. "This other chap is all right. He's on the radio here several nights a week. He and Plenn are as thick as thieves."

"What's your name, fellow?" the inspector queried.

"Dutton, sir—James Dutton."

"H'm!" said McMahon. "I know about you. Been selling securities for Jessup, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, during our investigation we decided that you were all right—just one of Jessup's dupes, not knowing he was a swindler."

Young Dutton gaped in excellent imitation of amazement. "What!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean to tell me

that Jessup has been hoodwinking me into peddling fake stocks?"

"You said it. He sure did. But Jessup absolves you. He says you weren't in the swindling ring. However, you'll have to appear in court as a witness."

Dutton began stammering protestations of innocence. He was an able actor. To look at him was to believe.

Meanwhile the other inspector had been searching the roof. "Not a sign of anything, chief," he reported as he returned to the open doorway.

McMahon's official capacity was more of a model for the rising generation than was his choice of language. He cursed a blue streak. Then he became thoughtful. "This sure is a puzzler," he admitted presently. To his associate he directed the query: "Are you confident that you did not overlook any possible hiding place out on the roof?"

"Chief," the other declared emphatically, "a cat couldn't have escaped my scrutiny. It was an easy job—just plain flat roof, chimneys and a few skylights. I even thought of the possibility of the Chinaman hiding inside a chimney. But they all have smoke consumers on the top, so he couldn't have crawled in. No, sir, take it from me, no one is out there."

McMahon began to whistle softly between set teeth. It was obvious that he was exasperated. He glanced keenly about the room. He opened a cupboard—and found only an old raincoat.

"What's in the trunk?" he asked. "It's big enough to hold a man."

Plenn cleared his throat. "Take a look," he invited willingly. "It isn't locked. Nothing inside except some rope and wires and a few odds and ends of radio apparatus."

"Rope, eh?" McMahon repeated with interest. "What's it doing here?" He had opened the trunk and was groping among the contents.

"That's guy ropes, sir," Plenn explained glibly. "The building manager has given me permission to put up a

newer and bigger antenna. The ropes are to brace it."

Burke, the watchman, cut in with, "I heard something about it, mister. The boss told me there was a new aerial going up. Plenn doesn't do much of anything else, just radio. He works in a radio shop."

The explanations appeared to satisfy McMahon. He moved to the window and, leaning over with his palms on the sill, looked out. The moonlight, filtered through light-gray clouds, was rather dim. But it enabled him to see to the bottom of the courtyard far below.

Involuntarily he shivered, and not from the cool night air. "I'd sure hate to lose my balance here," he said.

Spellbound, as men so often are when gazing from a great height, he stared fascinatedly into the yawning chasm. Quite unaware was he that the fugitive Chinaman was only a few feet above him. Mr. Chang, body curled up to keep his legs from view, was hanging from his support by his left hand. Though he had been in this tiresome position for some minutes, he was neither cramped nor weary. Nature, fitting him to be a prowler in the jungles of society, had endowed him with a jungle body.

The Oriental's right hand was free. It clutched one of his two pistols. Strange, how close men can be to death without knowing it. If McMahon chanced to elevate his head so that he could look upward, a bullet would crash into his brain. That would start the fireworks.

Mr. Chang would have to shoot his way out. He had his plans drawn. Following the murder of McMahon, he would pull himself to the low roof of the workshop and from there shoot down the other postal inspector and the night watchman the instant they rushed outside the radio cabin.

Providence takes care of fools and drunkards; so runs the old saying. To

the list might be added, occasionally, detectives.

McMahon did not look upward.

Instead, he drew away from the window and turned to the four who had been watching him. His eyes moved back and forth from Plenn to Dutton. His look was penetrating, boring, as though reading their minds. At first they returned his stare innocently. But gradually they sensed that they were under suspicion. Plenn was the first to crack under the pressure. He swallowed with an effort, averted his eyes and began nervously toying with a screw driver. Dutton, too, grew uneasy, restless.

He lit a cigarette, inhaled, blew the smoke from his nostrils and faltered: "Why do you look at me that way, sir?"

McMahon's face was tightly set, rigid, hard. His voice came metallically. "We're right above Jessup's office," he said. "Maybe the chink, when we chased him, darted into the main room instead of going on down the hall. That would explain why the watchman did not hear him. As for his baffling disappearance, it has occurred to me that maybe your pal's explanation of presence of the rope in the trunk isn't altogether plausible. Using rope, a Chinaman could descend from here to Jessup's quarters."

Dutton agreed with this readily enough. "But, sir," he protested, "why isn't it just as logical to assume that the Chinaman lowered himself to a lower floor instead of coming to the roof? If he came this way, where is he?"

McMahon scowled. "That's just it," he admitted. "I'm up against a stone wall. But I'm going to detain you two fellows for questioning."

This was sad news, indeed—except to Mr. Chang. If the postal inspectors took the Chinaman's fellow conspirators away, Mr. Chang would have the entire swag to himself. On the other hand, his immediate peril was multiplied.

Placed under arrest, either Plenn or Dutton might break down and confess in hope of gaining leniency by turning state's evidence.

"I'm going back downstairs and go through those offices again," McMahon announced. "We might have overlooked such as a wardrobe in which the Chinaman could be hidden. Mr. Night Watchman, you come with me in case I need help. My associate will remain here and keep an eye on these two ambitious radio enthusiasts."

He departed with Burke. Their footsteps rustled on the loose gravel of the floor. Then came the sound of them going down the stairs. Their voices died away into silence. Conversation lagged in the radio room. Plenn and Dutton were terror-stricken. It was all they could do to maintain a calm front.

Mr. Chang did not have to be a mind reader to grasp all this. He would have bet the bag of plunder, which he still held between his teeth, that it would be just a question of time—probably minutes—until one of his henchmen would toss the sponge and blurt out the entire truth.

"The adventure must be terminated at once," the Chinaman decided.

He shifted his position so that his head went down. Cautiously he peered into the room. None of the three occupants saw him. Plenn and Dutton sat in chairs, elbows on knees, cheeks in palms, moodily staring at the floor. The assistant postal inspector was watching them alertly. He stood with his back to the window.

Quietly Mr. Chang lowered himself. His feet rested on the window sill. And then he crouched, ready to spring. A vague uneasiness seemed to come over the inspector, as of a premonition of danger. He tugged at his collar. The Chinaman gripped his pistol by the barrel.

He leaped forward just as the detective turned.

CHAPTER X.

THE DISASTER.

THE human skull is sometimes remarkably thick. But the butt end of a revolver is hard and heavy. It is not on record that when the two meet in determined combat the skull emerges victor of the encounter.

The postal inspector, turning, saw Mr. Chang in mid-air and almost upon him. Before he could cry out or lift an arm to ward off the blow, the handle of the Oriental's pistol struck him viciously on the head.

The government detective went down like a wet towel. He collapsed in a sprawled-out heap. His attacker turned him over with a foot, knelt, felt for his pulse—then shook his head approvingly from side to side.

Plenn and Dutton were frozen with horror. Their eyes bulged almost from their sockets.

"Oh, oh!" the radio bug gasped. "Did—did you kill him?"

"What if I did?" Mr. Chang asked indifferently. "Three babies are born every minute in the United States to take his place. I am a follower of Malthus, who feared overpopulation, and I believe in direct action."

And now he darted to the switch near the door and turned off the lights. The die was cast. Mr. Chang had determined to fight his way to freedom. With the inspector knocked out, it was impossible to turn back. Hereafter safety demanded that he move in darkness. McMahan and the night watchman, if they returned and saw him, would shoot him instantly. For the presence of the Chinaman in the radio cabin would mean that foul play had overtaken the official left on guard while the others re-explored the lower offices. Those two searchers would return, no doubt of that—and return quickly, not finding Mr. Chang below. He must work fast. He did.

"Plenn," he commanded, "get that rope out of the trunk and lower it ready for escape."

Plenn did not respond, either by word or movement. He seemed paralyzed with fright. The moon had clouded over. The room was pitch dark. But even in the blackness the radio man knew that the Chinaman was approaching him. He saw two eyes, saw them because they were catlike, phosphorescent. A gurgle sounded in Plenn's throat.

"Yes, sir," he faltered faintly. And hurried to obey orders for there was nothing else to do.

Dutton was calmer. "We're in for it now, all right, the whole caboodle of us," he said. "We've got to flee, and we'll take the plunder with us. Have we time to divide?"

Mr. Chang spat audibly. "Not here," he said.

His original plotting had been cunningly shaped so that when it came time to "whack up" he could bait the two young white men into going at each other with knives. Each had been duped into believing that the other had conspired to double cross him, cheat him of the plunder, even make away with him if necessary. Each, in turn, had agreed to reverse the tables—to aid the Chinaman to dispose of his pal.

But there was no time now for any such proceedings.

Two courses were open to Mr. Chang. He could flee with his henchmen and, if they reached a safe distance, under cover set them upon each other. Then, while they fought, he might steal away with the canvas bag and its three hundred and eight thousand dollars in entirety.

His alternative was to shoot them both—now. They could not put up a very formidable fight, for he had seen to it that they were armed only with knives. Shots, however, would be heard downstairs. Back would come the

postal inspectors before Mr. Chang could get away.

So, in prudence, he was compelled to adopt the first course—take the white men with him in flight. This was no pleasant prospect to contemplate. They would be burdensome baggage. Plenn would be, in particular. There was no mistaking his gasping breath nor the sounds of nervously uncertain actions. Once he slipped and fell into the trunk. Dutton cursed him and administered a vicious kick.

Plenn turned on him in a rage. "I'll settle accounts with you later, you dirty double crosser!" he threatened.

"What! You have the *gall* to call me a double crosser? Well, of all nerve!"

"Silence!" Mr. Chang ordered sharply. They obeyed sullenly.

The moon broke through the clouds again. It filled the room with a radiance that under the circumstances was ghastly. Spectral was the light. It illuminated the face of the man lying motionless on the floor. His eyes were closed, his face that of a corpse.

Yet he was not dead. Mr. Chang had merely knocked him unconscious. It was not his strategy, however, to permit Plenn and Dutton to know this. They might balk, decide to take a chance on surrendering since there would be no murder charge. In the uproar that would rise, Mr. Chang would be unable to escape. If he tried it, by going down the rope to the courtyard roof far below, they might retaliate by cutting the rope and dropping him to his death.

Mr. Chang was standing guard at the door, pistol drawn, ready to shoot down any one showing his head at the trap-door opening some distance away.

"Hurry!" he ordered Plenn.

"I am," that individual responded with a whine.

"Who goes down the rope first?" Dutton asked.

"I do," said Mr. Chang. "I'll wait for you below with the loot."

"Not by a jugful, you won't!" Dutton declared heatedly. "We'd get down there and find you gone."

"The guy with the plunder ought to descend last," Plenn suggested. "Then the others can wait for him to join them."

"Very well," Mr. Chang agreed smoothly. "That suits me. How much of that rope you got out?"

"About a third," Plenn answered. "It got tangled in the trunk."

Dutton swore. "You blasted fumbler, you did it!" he charged.

"Shut up, boys!" said the Chinaman. His voice was so soft that it was almost velvety. But it had something in it that silenced them on the instant.

The radio enthusiast was feeding out the rope. Doing it as fast as possible, too. Frequently he had to stop and shake the coils on the floor until mixed-up loops came loose.

"You'd better hurry." Mr. Chang advised quietly, "else you'll end your days strapped in an electric chair."

"I—I didn't kill him," Plenn protested. "You did it."

"No matter, you were in the gang."

Out, out went the rope—down, down, down. Each foot of it meant a corresponding narrowing of the distance that separated the thieves from escape.

Dutton was panting. "It's curtains for us," he muttered, "if they happen to look out the window below and see this rope going past." He paused, then went on, as though talking to himself. "Course, they wouldn't see it unless they leaned out, for the rope is in line with the window of the washroom, not the other offices of Jessup's. Oh, oh, I wish I'd never gotten into this mess. I should have kept clear. I might be snug in my bed at home now if——"

His voice gradually trickled away into silence.

The pile of rope on the floor was growing smaller.

Only a few more coils of it remained.

Out, out it went—and down, down, down toward freedom.

At length the lowering was completed, and Plenn held the noose end in his hand.

Joy gushed through him, for now all was ready for escape. He stepped closer to the window sill, arm outstretched to loop the noose over the stout hook.

At that instant the unconscious inspector on the floor moaned. Dutton jumped as though he had been shot. So did Hector Plenn. Both had believed the victim to be dead. The moan, to them, was a sound from a dead man.

Plenn was of the nervous temperament, highly strung. As Mr. Chang had frequently meditated, one never could be sure of what he would do in emergency. Such was the case.

Startled, Plenn involuntarily opened his fingers.

The rope, sole means of escape, dropped from sight—down, down, down to the bottom of the courtyard far below.

CHAPTER XI.

WITH HIS BACK TURNED.

A DISASTER worse for the looters than the dropping of that rope would be difficult to imagine. There they were, stranded at the top of a skyscraper. To escape down through the inside of the building was next to the impossible, under the circumstances. And to descend along the outer wall, to the courtyard eighteen stories below, was out of the question, now that the rope was gone.

Plenn had dropped it—Plenn the neurotic, Plenn the blundering, Plenn the unreliable. And, we should add—Plenn the unfortunate.

For he would most assuredly pay the full price for his gross error. Poor Plenn! Fate had not been kind to him. Never in his life had he made more than a living wage. Before the war his

various employers had, in turn, held him down to twenty cents an hour. Advancing cost of living had kept pace with his increased income during the war boom and after. He received more dollars, but in actual buying power he was no better off than in the old days.

In radio, the new and wizardly science, he had seen a possibility of bettering himself. Night after night he had toiled, mastering the intricacies of wireless. Because radio was his expected avenue to prosperity, he had grown to love it with a passion that was little short of madness.

Alas, he became an expert, only to learn that the profits were largely in the sales or manufacturing end. The younger rising generation had hordes of individuals who seemed born for this new field of entertainment and communication. They were natural experts at the game. Plenn had realized this when he began noticing lads in knee trousers who knew, seemingly by instinct, as much about receiving sets as himself. Moreover, they were quite as fanatically zealous as himself; were eager to assemble sets at low wages. Their competition kept his own wages low. It held him to the rut.

He accepted the situation philosophically, though at times he burned with a maniacal bitterness. His lone hope was to stick to the business and, perchance, invent something that he could patent to profit. To date, he had been unsuccessful. That was why he so willingly fell in with Dutton's plan to rob Jessup, the master swindler.

And now he had brought catastrophe upon himself—and upon Dutton who had long been his pal, as well as upon an unscrupulous Chinaman who would, no doubt, as soon murder a man in cold blood as look at him.

Frozen with terror, appalled by the magnitude of what had resulted from his fumbling fingers, Plenn stood motionless at the window. He was leaning

on the ledge, looking down into the courtyard. There was something forlorn and pathetic about his figure. It suggested that he had a fleeting hope that possibly he could bring the rope back up to him by merely gazing at it.

The moon still was out. Plenn could see the rope, though indistinctly, lying yellowish in a heap on the glass that roofed the bank lobby far below. Ah, if he only were that rope! How quickly he would race across the strong, steel-reinforced glass, thence down a fire escape of the adjoining building and on to freedom.

"If I ever get my feet on the ground again," he vowed, "I'll keep on running for a year."

Dutton, too, seemed paralyzed by the disaster. Fate had been more kindly to him than to Plenn. Dutton, smooth and of agreeable personality, had been able so far to sidestep his way through life without much work. The falling of that precious rope, however, might well mean that he would shortly do an honest day's work—many of them—perhaps years—on a prison rockpile.

This robbery of the get-rich-quick swindler, Jessup, had been born from Dutton's scheming brain. He had sensed the opportunity. Emboldened by numerous petty crimes that he had gotten away with safely, he had gone into this large criminal venture with considerable confidence. It had looked like a sure thing, if cautiously handled.

Dutton had even been so convinced of a successful outcome, that he already had made plans as to how he would spend his share of the plunder. No more America for him! He'd head for the Continent, where a man could buy all the liquor he could pay for. Paris would be the place, he figured. In the French capital he would be a millionaire while his money lasted.

But now he abandoned all hope of ever spending any of Jessup's swindling profits. As the rope fell from view,

down in a heap went also Dutton's dream castles. Recovering from his daze, his mood abruptly changed from despair to rage.

Plenn was the object of Dutton's fury—and immediately.

Uttering a low animal cry, Dutton seized a near-by dry battery, a dead cell. He leaped toward the man at the window. Up went the arm holding the battery—clump! It landed viciously on the blunderer's head.

And now the post-office inspector was not alone in his unconscious condition on the rough hemlock flooring of the room. Another man lay near him, motionless, ghastly of face as the moon played over him.

Dutton stood still for a few seconds, holding the battery. Then gradually he emerged from his insane trance. He realized what had happened. The attack had taken place in a moment of fury, when he was quite out of his head.

His fingers opened. The battery fell to the floor. Dutton swayed. He recovered his balance and staggered back against the workbench where Plenn had, night after night, toiled on his inventions.

"My soul!" Dutton whispered. "May God have mercy on me! I've killed Plenn."

Spellbound, he stared at his victim.

As he regarded the object of his wrath with eyes flickering in horror, the world began to turn dark around him. He fancied that he was swooning. But it was only the moon, slowly being obscured by the drifting clouds. Dim grew the light—dimmer, dimmer—and then came blackness.

Dutton moaned.

He had, in the excitement of his terrible deed and terror after its completion, forgotten the presence of the Chinaman. He gave a violent start as Mr. Chang's calm, emotionless voice reached him in a low tone:

"White man, you will never travel

far unless you learn to control your emotions. That temper of yours will get you into trouble."

Dutton whirled, peering into the darkness, straining his eyes to see the speaker. But the room was too black. Mr. Chang's voice had sounded from near the door. Dutton's brain was reeling. His thoughts were confused, with no logical sequence. He realized that he was in frightful trouble. Knew, too, that any faint chance he might have of escaping depended on quick and accurate thinking. Creature of exceptionally nimble wits and fast decision, his intellect failed him now when he needed it most. Such was the effect of fear.

The young bond salesman was on the verge of hysteria. He fancied that he could see something luminous in the darkness—a grimly impressive chair with black straps—the electric chair! That was what this State had in store for killers like himself. By strange contrast, he saw another vision, the scene of his boyhood. Ah, but it rose clear and fascinating from memory—the old swimming hole at the bend of the river, the dam where he had fished for rock bass, the haymow where he had read Nick Carter on rainy days.

Where was that Chinaman, anyhow? What was he doing? A fresh terror convulsed Dutton. Had Mr. Chang, by some mysterious Oriental magic or by a prearranged method, faded away and abandoned him?

"Mr. Chang!" he whispered imploringly. "Are you still here?"

"Reluctantly I answer in the affirmative," said the slant-eyed scoundrel placidly. "Aye, I am here—and so are the two corpses."

Dutton felt clammy at the Chinaman's serenity and utter lack of emotion in the midst of such a double tragedy.

In the brief vocal silence that followed, the white man heard a methodical swishing, a sound that he could not identify.

"In Heaven's name, what are you doing?" he quavered.

"Rest assured that I am not lying on my back wooing Morpheus," said Mr. Chang. "I have just had an inspiration. And if you keep your foolish mouth shut, there is a possibility that I can get you out of this mess. I have been in much tighter corners, in encounters with Lontana, and escaped."

"Lontana?" Dutton repeated dully. His hysteria, by some emotional nervous freak, was subsiding into dazed stupidity. "Who's Lontana?"

Breath hissed audibly between the Chinaman's teeth. "It is well for you that you do not know the answer by first-hand experience," he responded throatily. "Lontana is a Scotland Yard operative who has long been on my trail. He is a man of a fair degree of intelligence, considering that he is a detective."

The swishing had changed to a rustle, with occasionally a light thump.

Somehow the air seemed charged with a subtle force, akin to electricity. Vaguely the bond salesman comprehended that it was a psychic current emanating from the Chinaman. It was so powerful that it stimulated him, gave him a glimmering hope and confidence. Perhaps his companion might rescue him, after all.

If so, it would have to be quickly. True, things had been happening fast. Only a few minutes had elapsed since the falling of the rope. But other minutes had intervened between that catastrophic incident and McMahon's departure with the night watchman to search again the lower offices. At any moment they might return. Then it would be all up with Dutton. They would arrest him and lead him away along the legal trail that led to the electric chair. His only alternative would be suicide by leaping from the top of the building, plunging to death.

Suicide! The thought made him

cold. Next instant he was feverish. After all, it would be over quickly. Just a few seconds of terrifying descent, an agony that would be terminated by death—and, he believed, oblivion forevermore.

As one hypnotized, Dutton approached the window. The chill breeze fanned his face. It was invigorating, remindful of the joys that made life worth while. No, no! He could not do it, could not take his own life. He staggered back, and nearly lost his balance as he tripped over something on the floor, in the darkness.

The object could not be one of the motionless victims. He had carefully avoided them.

What was it, then? Dutton stooped and felt with his hands. His heart leaped into his throat as his fingers closed on the thing.

It was the canvas bag containing the three hundred and eight thousand dollars' worth of plunder.

A fortune! Ah, if he could only outwit his accursed fate and escape with this precious loot.

Cornered men sometimes have inspirations. Dutton did. In a flash he saw a means of flight. It was so simple, so obvious that he silently swore at himself for not having thought of it before. And how was it that the crafty Chinaman had overlooked such a good bet? Dutton did not linger to reason.

Softly he picked up the bag. Quietly he tiptoed to the window. Gripping the bag of plunder between his teeth, he stepped up on the sill. Stealthily he reached overhead.

Hector Plenn had boasted that his radio antenna wire was strong—that it would support the weight of a man. This aerial extended out across the open court. Its far end was affixed to the opposite building, firmly fastened to the roof. And that building had a fire escape! Once he reached it, Dutton could descend to the ground and rush off into

the friendly night in a matter of minutes.

Possibly he could make it. All depended on a silent get-away, so as not to arouse the Chinaman's suspicions. If he started in pursuit—would the wire support the weight of both of them combined? Dutton doubted it. But it was a gamble that he had to take.

He was not of a praying temperament, this bond salesman. Spiritual weakling, he subconsciously fancied that the universe revolved around himself—that all natural phenomena had been created for his individual enjoyment. He was, for instance, the sort that pooh-poohs the idea of Mars or any other astronomical body being inhabited, having a notion that such things existed merely as specks of light for him to glance at when he felt like it.

But now Dutton raised a prayer of thanks. It went, pantheistically, to the moon for its friendliness in remaining behind the clouds. The fugitive was sufficiently egotistical to believe that darkness was being staged for him instead of his happening to have it by coincidence. It was what he called "good luck." Surely it was, at that. In darkness, Mr. Chang could not take aim with a pistol and shoot his treacherous confederate while still in mid-air before reaching the skyscraper across the courtyard that separated the two buildings.

The antenna wire sagged as he entrusted his whole weight to it. A wave of consternation gushed through him. There are more pleasant situations than being suspended eighteen stories aloft. He felt cold sweat ooze out on his forehead and trickle along his ribs from under his armpits. But the wire, multiple strands of copper, so far was holding gallantly. Dutton was no expert at the science of stress and strain. Yet it seemed plausible to him that if the wire held him at this end it should be as faithful at the middle or any other point.

Out he went, hand over hand, the bag of plunder gripped determinedly between his teeth. From far down in the city streets came the steady rumble and murmur of metropolitan night traffic. It was a sound that heartened him. Already he was halfway across the chasm. Permit him just a few more minutes, and he would be safely hurrying along those streets. A few blocks away was a garage, operating as a blind for a relay headquarters of motor-car rum runners. Dutton was well known there. They'd put him in hiding, all right, and later sneak him across the line into Canada. A man with three hundred and eight thousand dollars in cash and negotiable securities has no difficulty finding shelter.

Out, out he went, farther and farther away from the roof on which he had been trapped—and farther and farther from the Chinaman.

In the radio workshop on the roof of the Buckeye building, Mr. Chang completed the transaction that had kept him busy on the floor near the door. He had not heard Dutton's furtive, silent departure. The pitch darkness had prevented him from seeing it. For one thing, the Chinaman's keen ears and sixth sense were concentrated in the other direction—listening for a sound that would herald the return of McMahan and the night watchman.

Rising to his feet, the Oriental whispered: "I shall now demonstrate the power of foresight."

There was no answer. This was surprising, for the agitated Dutton would naturally be expected to exclaim in grateful delight.

Immediately Mr. Chang jerked a flash light from his coat pocket. He pressed the switch. A white cone of illumination swept the room. Dutton had vanished. Breath hissed inward between the Chinaman's set teeth. Like a panther he leaped to the window. The

light was turned off now. It had gleamed only for a second. But in that second Mr. Chang had discovered that the bag of plunder had disappeared along with the white man.

At the open window, Mr. Chang stood motionless. He cocked his ears and listened. A faint creaking reached his ears. It came from overhead. Instantly he identified it, and comprehended what was transpiring. This end of the radio antenna was straining and vibrating as Dutton worked his way hand over hand along it.

"A fine kettle of fish!" the Chinaman murmured. "*Mosangee!*"—which is Malay Chinese for "bad business."

He was stranded on the roof, outwitted, his precious plunder gone. He could not, with safety, start in pursuit until Dutton reached the opposite building. It was extremely improbable that the aerial wire would support two men at once. If he lingered until he would have the wire to himself, Dutton would get such a start that he would be down to the street and lost in the crowds before Mr. Chang could overtake him. Mr. Chang had observed the fire escapes on the skyscraper across the courtyard. He had, too, contemplated the possibility of flight via the radio antenna. But, though brave, the Chinaman was no rash fool. He had doubted that the wire itself would hold under the strain of a man's working his way along it, however secure might be the supports at the ends. The odds appeared on the side of disaster. Dutton, however, was demonstrating that Mr. Chang had underestimated the strength of the wire leading out from the bracket to which he had clung while eluding McMahan.

Again the Oriental used his flash light. Its brilliant cone sped through the air. It disclosed Dutton more than halfway to his goal. The fugitive saw the light play on his advancing hands. He realized that his escape had been

discovered. Knew, too, that he now made an excellent target. His heart almost ceased beating. His strength ebbed. It was all he could do to maintain his grasp. With utmost effort he stifled in his throat a scream that would have opened his mouth and precipitated the plunder downward.

Mr. Chang, however, dared not risk a shot. True, a bullet would loosen Dutton's clutch. He would drop to destruction. But a shot would bring the postal inspectors on the run. They, too, could shoot men clinging to a copper line in mid-air.

Mr. Chang leaped to the workbench and back to the window.

And now he was flourishing a pair of pliers.

Without hesitation, he reached up and, smiling mirthlessly, severed the antenna wire to which Dutton was clinging far out.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BAG OF PLUNDER.

HAVING severed the radio antenna to which Dutton clung, Mr. Chang calmly leaned out of the window and listened intently. Time was precious, delay dangerous, what with the postal inspector and the night watchman apt to return at any moment. But it would require only a few seconds to ascertain Dutton's fate. That fate—a downward plunge of eighteen stories—was something new in the Chinaman's checkered experience. Most certainly he would not pass up such a fine opportunity for observation of what happens when gravity operates without restraint on the body of man. To Mr. Chang the thrill fully compensated for any added danger due to lingering on the roof.

"How unfortunate," he meditated, "that the moon is behind the clouds. It would, indeed, be a choice spectacle to watch Mr. Dutton's descent. However, we cannot have ice skating and peach blossoms simultaneously. I must con-

tent myself with the sensations that reach me through my ears."

And, as he listened, he deftly rolled a wheat-paper cigarette with one hand, and with the other clicked match into flame on a thumb nail.

Jim Dutton had confidently expected to hear the roar of a pistol and feel bullets penetrate him. This he considered inevitable, the moment his body was illumined by Mr. Chang's flash light. He was an excellent target and, no doubt, the Chinaman was an expert marksman.

Ah, if he could only stay those bullets! It occurred to him that, if he called out quickly, perhaps the enemy would permit him to return. In order to shout, however, he would be compelled to open his mouth. Down would go the bag of plunder—three hundred and eight thousand dollars. It was light in weight, that sack, compared with such an article as a paving brick. But, with the momentum of falling eighteen floors, it might crash through the ridged glass roof of the bank lobby at the bottom of the court. Or would it? That glass must be fully two inches thick. Its strength was reënforced by steel lattice.

Dutton had dared much in hope of making a get-away with old Jessup's get-rich-quick gains. Now that he had the entire loot, he by criminal instinct clung to it.

Then he suddenly realized that his position in space was changing. It was a queer sensation, weird, unearthly. Why, the wind seemed to have shifted. But how could this be—a furious gale blowing around him from beneath?

Everything was going topsy-turvy. An earthquake must have taken place. A faint glow of illumination showed through the glass roof far below. That roof seemed tilting.

It flashed over him, that he was falling. He could not understand, for he still clung to the wire. Nor did he loosen his grip. Instead, desperate,

panic-stricken, he held more firmly, as a drowning man clutching any manner of support, however illogical, even a straw.

The bag of plunder still was clenched between his teeth. He had lost interest in the loot, was concerned only with his personal safety; hysterical lockjaw had taken place.

So he dropped to destruction.

His body described an arc through the air.

The human pendulum went hurling toward the brick wall of the building.

It was long believed that a man falling a great distance, as from a skyscraper or precipitous cliff, is dead before he strikes the ground. The medical profession indorsed this supposition. They discoursed learnedly, advancing a theory that the sudden rush of air into the lungs, at great pressure, would most certainly stop the beating of the heart.

This notion has been disproved, however, by aviators who have dropped hundreds of feet before their parachutes opened and slowed down their descent. Certainly these bird-men must be believed, inasmuch as they lived to tell the tale.

Jim Dutton had ample opportunity to learn the truth in this regard.

Mr. Chang, listening alertly, heard a thud as Dutton's body struck the brick wall at the opposite side of the chasm. A brief silence followed. Then came another impact as the dead man landed far below. Having clung to the wire until he crashed against the wall, then dropping straight, he ended his terrible journey on the main roof below instead of smashing through the glass dome that vaulted the bank lobby.

Somewhere near him lay the canvas bag with its three hundred and eight thousand dollars of plunder—for which he had sacrificed his life.

Other people's money may be enticing. But striking for it is apt to be as dangerous as teasing a rattlesnake.

Extract from the written report of Patrick McMahon, United States post-office inspector, to his superior officer in Washington:

From the foregoing, it would seem that the Chinaman, by severing the radio antenna, in effect cut off his nose to spite his face. In other words, that it left him stranded on the roof. We know that he cut the wire, for we have the sworn testimony of Hector Plenn, the radio expert. Plenn had been dazed, not killed, by Dutton's attack. He was recovering consciousness when the tragedy reached its climax. And, from faint sounds he heard at that time, and from what we have since told him, he was enabled with us to piece together the events that followed.

This Chinese scoundrel was the notorious Mr. Chang. (See our department files, including reports from American operatives in the Orient, also confidential exchanges from Scotland Yard.)

I was, as previously outlined in the communication herewith, on the lower floors of the Buckeye Building, searching for the Chinaman. Having left an able assistant on guard in the radio workshop, I felt no necessity for haste. Instead, the night watchman and I conducted a systematic exploration of the skyscraper, not overlooking the basement, in the belief that he must have gone that direction instead of roofward.

Upon returning to the roof, I found Plenn and my knocked-out associate both regaining consciousness, though still extremely weak from the fury of the attacks upon them.

As any one who knew him would have foreseen, the crafty Mr. Chang is not the sort to intrust his safety to any other man's rope, particularly in making such a perilous descent as from the top of a skyscraper in the dark of night. Unknown to Hector Plenn, the Chinaman had procured a rope of his own and smuggled it to the radio workshop, where he secreted it under the flooring near the door. This rope is rather in the nature of a cord. But it is powerful despite its small diameter, being of pure China silk, such as mandarins use in fishing for shark.

Attached by a loop to the heavy iron hook near the window, I found the aforementioned silk rope. It dangled outside, swaying in the breeze, its far end reaching to the bottom of the courtyard, far below.

We found James Dutton's mangled body. But the canvas bag holding the three hundred and eight thousand dollars, which had fallen with Dutton, had disappeared. Certainly it was a rich haul for the Chinaman.

The Smooth Samaritan

By Charles J. Dutton

Author of "He Certainly Does," etc.

IF it had not been for the sudden bend in the road, it is very much to be doubted if Peter Collins would have turned off the main highway to travel upon a road which he did not know. But then, if there was anything which he could not resist, it was a road which had a bend in it. Always he wanted to know what was around the corner. And that is the reason, that when he first glimpsed this road—a road which ran for almost a quarter of a mile, and then suddenly bent away from sight—he simply had to turn his car around, and discover what was around the corner.

There was no reason in the world why he should not do this, if he wished. He was going nowhere in particular. Many months before, the chief of the New York police had informed him that the city could well spare his presence. He had gone to a small place some hundred miles from New York, and opened a little bookshop. Books he had always loved, and then again the bookshop gave him some excuse for being in the city. But when the winter had given place to spring, and the warm days had come, Peter Collins had become restless.

For a while he played with the idea of going to Europe. Though the gilt sign on the window of his bookstore bore the name—Peter Collins—still he remembered that the police of Europe knew him under his own name—David

Phelps. Europe was out of the question at present. So in the end, he decided to take his car, and simply ramble through the country. He closed his bookshop, and taking the Airedale which had one day walked into the store and adopted him, started upon his travels.

Three weeks after he started, he found himself in the lower end of Rhode Island. He had driven to Providence, crossed over to Fall River, and was rather listlessly on his way to Newport. Driving along, his eyes had fallen upon another road, which lost itself around a distant corner. The road looked so peaceful, under the leaves of the great trees, that after a moment's thought he turned his car away from the main highway. Where the new road led, he did not know, nor for that matter did he care a single bit. After all, the one thing which he had most at his disposal, was time.

As is usual, the bend in the road led to another straight stretch, and then, of course, another bend. The road itself did not seem much traveled, for he encountered no one. On each side, great elm trees rose far above his head, their branches meeting in an arch of green leaves. On his right, large fields stretched down to a river, and far away on his left, he saw a green mass of woods. Here and there he passed a white farmhouse, its front lawn filled with gay-colored flowers, flowers whose

fragrance came to him upon the warm air.

After driving about three miles, the road left the plain, and began to climb a high hill. The trees suddenly ended. At the top of the hill he saw, only a few miles in front of him, the dark waters of the ocean, and far below, that the river had widened out into an arm of the sea. Then, as he drove along, he saw ahead of him the tall, white steeple of a church, pointing high in the midst of many trees. But what the name of the little town might be, he did not have the slightest idea, and though the Blue Book would have told him, he had not the slightest desire to find out.

A few moments later, when he stopped his car, he decided that it was a very little town indeed. Perhaps at the most there were twenty houses centered around a small square, a square with a great, rambling, white church on one side, and a little post office and general store on the other. It was before the store that he had stopped, and after a moment he got out of his car, and entered the open door.

Just why, he did not know, but Peter Collins had decided that if he could find some place to stay, he would spend a few days in the village. This was such a restful little place, with not a sound to break the silence, that the thought came to him, that he might as well stay here. Then again he had no place in particular to go.

It was the typical general country store. The shelves were very much in disorder, the goods piled high. And there was no doubt it sold everything, as most country stores do. But when he entered, it took him several moments before he saw any one, and then it was only after he had gone out of a back door and into a large barn that he was able to find the storekeeper.

In response to his questions as to where he might secure a room for a few days, he received the response that

so far as the storekeeper knew, there was no place. He was told that though there were a great many summer people, they owned their own homes, and that no one rented rooms in the town. Then, as Peter pressed him, he finally said there was an elderly woman, who lived in a brown house about a mile down the road; she might be willing to take him in. Securing the directions, Peter thanked him, and climbed back into the car.

For a moment his first thought was to turn around and retrace his route, and go to Newport as he had planned. But then again for some unknown reason, Peter Collins felt he would like to stay a few days in the place. He had what he called a "hunch," that is, something might happen—and Peter Collins was a great believer in playing a hunch. So he started his car and drove down the road.

He had no trouble in finding the place. It was the only brown house he had seen in the village, and was in a rather unkempt condition. All the other houses had been white, freshly painted, lawns close cut, and plenty of flowers in the front yard. But this house sadly needed paint; the grass was long; even the apple trees by the side looked old and tired. But one thing he did notice, the glass of the windows shone, as if they had been polished.

He drove the car into the yard, and then going to the side door, knocked. In fact, he knocked several times before it was opened. Peter Collins had half expected from what the storekeeper had said, that the woman who might take him in for several days, was a semi-invalid. But when she opened the door, he saw that she must be seventy, yet a very active old lady, indeed. Her kindly eyes traveled over him as he asked regarding a room, and then turned to glance at the expensive car in her yard.

When she replied it was to say, she was very much afraid that he would not

be satisfied with what she could offer. She made no apologies for the fact that she was poor, and said that if he wished, she would be pleased to let him have a room. From the moment Peter Collins had seen her open the door he had liked her. In fact, he had a very soft spot in his heart for old ladies. So he soon brushed aside her remarks, and at length was shown the front room on the second floor.

As the door closed behind him, there came a tender smile over Peter's face as he surveyed the room. It reminded him a great deal of a similar room that he had once occupied, years ago, when a boy. There was a braided rug on the floor, such as he had not seen for years. The furniture was old, and a glance at the counterpane on the bed showed it had seen many years' service. But it was clean, and there came a faint odor of lavender. When he found upon the wall an old steel engraving of "Washington Crossing the Delaware," nothing could have given him greater joy.

He had intended to stay but a few days in the village, but a week soon passed by. His landlady accepted him as if she had known him all his life. And soon Peter was informed as to the history of the town, and all its inhabitants. For though his landlady might have been seventy years of age, she had spent every year of it in the village, and what is more, she loved to talk.

It was one of those villages which you find once in a while in New England. A village some miles off the main roads, which the passing years have left untouched. Though the city was but fifteen miles away, yet so far as the town was concerned, it might just as well have been a hundred. Cut off as it were from the city, life flowed on in a very quiet manner. Only in the summer did the village come to life, and then there arrived several hundred wealthy people, who passed their days in the farmhouses they had bought. But even these peo-

ple did not bother the sleepy hamlet very much, for their estates were several miles away, down by the shore. One thing did interest him, it was the fact that the town people as a rule were fairly well to do. Farms had been handed down from one generation to another, and the village was prosperous.

During the week, Peter learned the personal history of his landlady, and to him it was a pathetic story. Years ago her husband had died, and then one by one her three children. In the end she had been left alone in the world, without even a relative to whom to turn. For many years her life had been a long struggle against poverty, with very few moments of cheer. And Peter discovered something else. Though most of the time she was cheerful, and he heard her singing some hymn as she moved around the house, yet once in a while she was very silent. Twice he caught her in tears.

The last time he found her with her apron to her eyes, he set to work in an attempt to discover what was the trouble. And in a short time he found out. It was an old story, the backbone of every old-time melodrama. There was a mortgage coming due, a mortgage of two thousand dollars, and she did not have even a hundred dollars to her name. It was some time before he had the whole story regarding the mortgage, and when he did have it, he could not see any way in which he could help her. But he did discover something else.

The mortgage was held by a rich farmer, named William Miner. He was the local money lender. From what the woman told him, he pictured the man. He was the leading deacon in the white church on the village green. Hard and narrow in his opinions, he had once succeeded in having a young minister thrown out of the church, because the man had said in a sermon that the world was not made in six days. He owned five farms, and held mortgages upon

many more. Any one could always secure money from him, if they were willing to pay ten per cent interest. But he was always very careful to collect what was due him and woe betide the borrower who was behind in his payments.

In the case of Peter's landlady, the mortgage had been renewed several times, because after all was said, her little farm was not worth much. But she told Peter that only a few weeks before, she had been told that she would have to pay the face of the mortgage when it came due. With a little sob, she said that the money lender now wanted her farm for some purpose, and she knew when it was sold there would not be even a thousand dollars left for her old age.

Now, Peter Collins once had been called perhaps the most skillful of all the men in the country, who live by their wits. Peter knew very little about the old Book the woman so often quoted, but there was one statement upon which his entire philosophy was based. Like a good many other men, and most of them well educated at that, he thought that the expression—"God helps those that help themselves"—was in the Bible. Of course it is not, but that expression summed up Peter's philosophy. But though the sad face of the woman troubled him, there did not come to his mind even the slightest idea of any plan to help her.

But on his seventh day in the village, he took his car, and with the Airedale as a companion, started out to look at the farm of William Miner. He found it down by the edge of the sea, a large farm with fields which stretched from the road to the high bluffs that lined the shore. He even got out of his car, and walked across the large field, until he stood on the very edge of the bluff. And then as his eyes went down to the sandy beach below him, and to the smooth surface of the sea, there came a sudden

little smile across his lips. He turned and studied for a moment the field. It contained, he judged, about five acres, and he knew that most of the houses that he saw far down the road belonged to the summer people. When he climbed into his car he gave a laugh. There had come to him a simple idea, one which contained many interesting things. Everything he had heard about the money lender, he did not like. He liked no man who took advantage of poor people.

It was ten o'clock the next morning, when he stopped at the village store, and, seeking out the storekeeper, asked what might seem to be a very foolish question. All he wished to be told was what newspaper Miner took. Securing the information, he went back to his car, and started toward the near-by city. As he swept over the road, he was humming a little tune, a foolish little tune, but one which told that Peter Collins was in good humor.

The first thing he did, when he reached the city, was to stop at a large bank. There he secured the name of the leading criminal lawyer of the city. This also might have caused those who knew Peter to wonder, for he did not care any too much for lawyers. And his next move might have caused far more wonder, for ten minutes after he left the bank, he was seated in the private office of the lawyer whose name had been given him.

The lawyer was fairly young, and he treated Peter with great respect. The respect due a client who wears a gray suit which must have cost several hundred dollars, and whose voice has a slight Oxford accent. For if there was one thing about Peter which was true, it was the fact that he looked prosperous—very prosperous. And his great, black-rimmed glasses gave him a cultured look. The tone of the attorney's voice showed that he was sufficiently impressed.

But, after all, what Peter wanted from the lawyer was a very simple thing. He asked the attorney if he would go that very afternoon to Stradford, and see William Miner. When he saw him, he was to offer him one thousand dollars for a ten-day option upon his land, that is, Peter explained, for the five acres which faced the sea. He was to say that he had a client who wished to buy the land, and who would at the end of nine days pay an extra nine thousand dollars. The lawyer, who seemed to know the village, insisted the land was not worth anything like that amount, but a gesture from Peter silenced him. He agreed to go that very afternoon, and to stop at the brown house on his return and inform Peter of his success. After paying the lawyer a much larger fee than had been expected, Peter bowed himself from the office.

His next move might have seemed even stranger. Inquiring where the office of the *News* was, he parked his car before the brick newspaper building, and in a leisurely manner went up to the editor's office. Though the editor was busy, as the paper was an evening one, Peter's well-tailored gray suit—his general air of money and position was as effective as before.

But for a while there seemed to be little occasion for Peter's call. He told the editor that he had simply called because he thought that a newspaper editor could give him the information he wished. And then he asked questions regarding the little village of Stradford. These questions all seemed to center about the fact that, though Stradford was but six miles from Newport, there was no hotel there. And he let drop, very incidentally, that a syndicate of New York hotel men were thinking of putting up a hotel there, near the shore.

This last remark stirred the editor to attention at once. It was news, real news upon a day when he wondered how he ever would be able to fill his front

page. And he begged Peter to allow him to publish the story. Like the good psychologist he was, Peter at first protested, but at length laughed and agreed that, if the editor would mention no names, he could give a general hint that a hotel would be built. And then, a little later, he left the editor and went down the stairs to the street. It was not until the next afternoon that the editor suddenly remembered that he had not discovered the name of his visitor.

Peter went back to the village after that, for the hot mill city made him glad he did not live in it. And all the way back, as he drove slowly along the river, and then down the tree-lined road, he talked to the Airedale. The conversation was a bit one-sided, for the dog stretched himself as far out of the window of the car as he could get. A one-sided conversation, but one which showed that Peter Collins was very much pleased over something.

Three things happened during the afternoon and evening. The first was the smiling visit of the lawyer, who told Peter that Miner had jumped at the chance to give an option on the land. He produced the paper, but Peter told him to keep it, and then walking out to the road, he stood by the lawyer's side and talked in a low voice. When he finished, the attorney laughed, but there was an admiring note in his voice as he drove away.

The next thing which Peter did was to go to the store at five o'clock and meet the stage. What he wanted was a copy of the evening paper. Securing it, he gave one glance at the front page, then smiled. He had found what he had been looking for, an account of almost a column, telling of the new hotel which was to be built at Stradford. And as he read it, he marveled at the ability of a newspaper man to build a story out of nothing. For this account, though it did not mention any names, hinted of a half-a-million-dollar hotel,

which, when it was built, would make Stradford the rival of other summer places. It even said that a very wealthy group of New York hotel men were back of the project. A rather overdrawn article, thought Peter after he read it—but it would serve his purpose.

The last thing he did that night, was to take his car, and, about eight o'clock, drive down to see William Miner. He drove up a narrow, winding lane, and stopped before a long, unpainted farmhouse. Though William Miner had a great deal of money, he never spent it except upon what he called useful things, and so it was that Peter saw the barn looked much better than the house. As he stopped, a dog came running from the house and growled at him. But Peter paid no attention to the dog, and, walking to the house, banged on the shut door.

It was opened in a moment by a man, and Peter knew it was the person he wished to see. A large man, with a heavy face that had not been shaved that day, and with narrow, little eyes. They were cold eyes, and very suspicious as they went over Peter. The lines of his lips were cruel, and the face was that of one determined to get in this world what he wanted, and not overparticular as to how he got it. And as Peter looked at him, there came to him the thought of how much he disliked him. But he noticed one thing. In the man's hand was a copy of the *Nexus*—it was open to the first page.

The money lender glared at Peter as the latter asked: "Are you William Miner?"

"Yes," snarled back the man.

Peter saw at once that the man was not in very good humor. With a little smile he said: "If you are Miner, and own that field over there"—and he swept his hand toward the five acres beyond the barn—"it will not take me long to tell you what I want."

Miner's face turned red as he fol-

lowed Peter's gesture, and an angry look came over his face. As he did not speak, Peter went on:

"I am a busy man, Mr. Miner, and always go to the matter at hand. It will take me but two minutes to tell you what I want. I am after a five-day option on those five acres. I will pay you one thousand dollars when you sign the option, and agree to pay you twenty-nine thousand more in five days. What do you say?"

The man's face went white, and, seeing his confusion, Peter swept on:

"Of course, that land is not worth any more than four thousand dollars at the best. I see you have the paper, and you have read that a hotel is to be built here. I want your land; I am not sure the hotel will be built upon it, but I will take the chance. How about it?"

The man's face was a study of greed. In a moment he stammered: "But I just gave an option on the field for ten thousand dollars."

"You have?" came Peter's disgusted voice, and with that he turned and started to walk over to the car. But the money lender rushed across the yard and grasped his arm. If there was anything that Peter did not like, it was for some one to place his hand on him. He shook off the man's grasp, though he did stop.

"Well?" he drawled.

"Maybe," came the eager voice, "maybe the lawyer I gave the option to will be able to get his man to give it up."

Peter looked at him, and then asked if he could get the lawyer on the phone. The money lender assured him that he could, and half broke into a run as he turned to the house. Peter waited his return in the yard, and when the man came out again, was told that the lawyer said he could see him in the morning. Soberly agreeing to meet him at ten o'clock at the lawyer's office, Peter left him.

Before he went to bed that night, Peter took a number of bills from his pocket, and looked at them thoughtfully. Like most men, he felt a bit foolish about being sentimental. He wrote a little note, and placed it in an envelope with the money. The envelope was addressed to the old lady who had been his landlady for the last few days. By a strange coincidence, the money he placed with the note was just the amount of her mortgage, which was due in five days. He gave her the envelope the next morning when he said good-by, and she promised not to open it until noon. It was just a little gift for her kindness.

Though he had been told not to be at the lawyer's office before ten o'clock, Peter was there at nine. He held a short but rather intense conversation with his lawyer. In his inquiries of the day before, he had discovered all he wanted to know about his attorney. He had not wanted a lawyer who had much of a conscience. This young man had simply thrown back his head and laughed.

At a little before ten, Miner came bursting into the office. Peter was sitting in a chair by the lawyer's desk. He looked rather distinguished, with his smooth face and mass of snowy hair. His gray suit did not have a single crease. As befits a moneyed man, he bowed rather coldly to the money lender, and waited for what was to come.

"Did you see the man who has the option?" came Miner's eager voice.

"Yes," replied the lawyer.

"What did he say, what did he say?"

"Well," drawled the attorney, "it depends a good deal upon yourself. My client wanted to sell those five acres for cottage sites. He thinks that maybe your eagerness to get the option back, means that perhaps that hotel he read about in the paper wants the same land. But on the other hand, he is not sure, and, what is more, is not eager to give up the option. But he says he will do it for a consideration."

"What is it?" came the sharp voice of the money lender, and as Peter looked at him, his face reminded him of a wolf he had seen once at feeding time.

"Ten thousand dollars," was the short reply.

The man's face turned white, then flushed a brick red, as he shrieked: "Ten thousand dollars, ten thousand dollars? Why, that was what I was going to get."

"Well, Miner," said the lawyer, "my client knows your reputation. You have gained your wealth by never missing a chance to take care of yourself. You have foreclosed a good many mortgages in the past, and will do the same in the future. He simply says that if you want the option back, you are to give him ten thousand in cash. You can keep the thousand I gave you yesterday."

The man's face was a study. Then he turned eagerly to Peter: "You will want to take an option?"

Peter simply nodded, and the money lender thought for a moment. Then, with a greedy expression on his face, said: "It will cost you forty thousand."

Peter rose to protest, but at length agreed to give him one thousand cash, and in five days pay thirty-four thousand more. And this agreement the man accepted.

About an hour later, when Peter drove across the bridge which leads into Rhode Island, he was content. He had waited until the man had gone to the bank, and had returned with ten thousand dollars, which he had given to the lawyer. The first option had been destroyed, and then Peter had given him a thousand dollars, and both men had signed the new option.

The money lender had been rather excited, but when the lawyer had drawn up the option, he had read it very carefully before he signed. There were two copies of the paper; the man was to have one; and Peter the other. He read the one he was to keep very carefully,

signed it, and signed the other, pushing them both over to Peter to sign in turn. And Peter signed. But the options were not the same in wording. The one the man had read, was an agreement by which he was to sell in five days his property to Peter.

The man read this, and glanced through the other one. But Peter was very sure of one fact. It was that when he signed the paper which the money lender had read and was to keep, he would never have to buy that land. All he had done was substitute the copy he had intended to keep himself, and hand it back to the money lender. That copy contained a word which was not in the option that had been read, a phrase

which read, "and the party of the second part agrees that if he takes up this option, to pay——" Peter knew the man never saw the substitution, and as the print was rather small, knew that little word *if* had been overlooked.

As he drove across the bridge he figured it out. The lawyer had received a thousand dollars. He had paid Miner two thousand, a thousand for each option; the landlady had taken two thousand, also. That left him five thousand ahead. Not so bad, he thought, for a week in the country, and not such a bad trick to play on a man who had played far worse on people himself. And as he thought of it, he was very glad he had wanted to explore the bend in the road.

"SUCCESSFUL ACTOR" TRAPS DRUG PEDDLERS

TWO men were taken to police headquarters in New York recently, accused of taking three thousand dollars in marked money for eight and a half pounds of heroin from a supposed customer, stylishly dressed, wearing a silk hat, diamond studs and stick pin, spats and other accouterments of ultraprosperty. This customer represented himself as a "successful actor," but actually he was Henry Starr, a Federal narcotic agent.

Starr had been working along what he describes as "the Broadway Dope Curb," for several days and made the acquaintance of Bernard Schertzer, one of the prisoners, who he said agreed to sell him the heroin. Later he met George Judell, the other prisoner, alleged to be the head of a large drug-peddling ring. After the sale of the narcotic, the pair were arrested by Ralph H. Oyler, chief of the Federal Narcotic Division, and Agents Convent and Mallon. If these prisoners ever have the opportunity to sell drugs to a successful actor again, they will investigate him pretty thoroughly beforehand and make sure that they are not dealing with a Federal agent in disguise.

CIGARETTES CAUSE ROBBERS' DOWNFALL

THE longing for a cigarette caused the arrest of three men on the charge of highway robbery in New York City, a few weeks ago. Benjamin Schildhaus, a taxi driver, was held up by a trio of highwaymen. One of them pressed an automatic pistol against his side and demanded his money, but one of the others asked the victim for a cigarette.

Taking advantage of this diversion, the chauffeur reached out for a crank handle and struck out at the bandits, who promptly fled. Patrolman Crowley, noting the disturbance, came on the scene at about that time and pursued the three young men into a basement. There, by firing a number of shots, he finally induced them to surrender. Only for the fact that one of the trio could not control his craving for a cigarette at the crucial moment of the holdup, they might have got away scot-free.

The Snake in the Grass

By Lee Thayer

Author of "The Mystery of the Thirteenth Floor," "The Unlatched Door,"
"The Key," etc.

CHAPTER XX.

"HOW DID HE KNOW?"

JUST at that instant, a man entered the shop through the front door. Like a flash Clancy was out of sight behind the partition. He spoke softly to Kelly.

"Go on, Dan"—with a jerk of his head in the direction of the intruder—"see what he wants and if you need any help, call me."

With a face the picture of bewilderment, Kelly did as he was bid. Peter listened. A voice that brought back to him distant memories and foreign lands said quietly, "You're the proprietor here?"

"Darn it, he shan't try any of his third degree on Kelly," Peter thought. He started around the end of the partition and came to a sudden stop. Kelly had answered in the affirmative, and it was the other man who was now speaking.

"I wonder if I could see your assistant," he said in an easy tone. "Some one told me he mixes the finest frosted chocolate in the State, and I want to try one. Is he around handy anywhere?"

"No," said Kelly. "I'm afraid he isn't."

Peter quietly drifted out from behind the partition. The man who was talking to Kelly, the same man who had

been in the telephone booth the night before, caught Peter's eye again, and again he made no sign. Peter drifted nearer.

"Well," said the stranger to Kelly, "if he's likely to be in soon, I'll wait. He will be in before very long, won't he?"

"Hello, Bill," said Peter in a low voice, "I thought you were a Federal agent. I had no idea you were after Karl Swartz."

"Karl nothing, Pete!" exclaimed the man grasping Clancy's outstretched hand and speaking rapidly. "Mean to say you don't know? I thought you were ahead of me on the job! Mean to say you don't know who this guy is? Pierre Cotonne, James Flag, Franz Pietroff—he's got a hundred aliases. I thought you were on the job and I had nothing to do but stick around and help. And do you mean to tell me——"

"That's just about it, Bill Travers," said Clancy disgustedly. "Mr. Cretonne-Flag-Peterhoff-Swartz, or whatever he calls himself, has faded from these parts!"

"That's the worst of trusting in luck," exclaimed Travers. "When I saw you in here yesterday I was sure——"

"And when I was in here yesterday," Peter retorted, "I was just as sure of something else. I wasn't after Swartz then at all."

"Then?" Travers repeated eagerly. "Do you mean you're after him now, Clancy? Has he pulled something in the provinces? He's had time enough, God knows. It's been months since we started to crave for his society. He fell down flat on a big job in Detroit. You must have read about it, Pete. Bank robbery. He croaked the watchman, but almost got his when he was making his get-away and had to drop the swag. This nice little quiet drug-store clerk is the one all right. He started life as a first-class experimental chemist and he's been able to pull a few, let me tell you. It's only lately that he's started on the rough stuff. We just got wind of him a couple of days ago—more by good luck than good management, and I came out to identify him——"

"You knew him by sight then?" Clancy interposed. Travers nodded. "And by the same token he probably knew you. What made you take a chance like that, Bill? That phone stuff was pretty good, but there was light enough for me to recognize you——"

"Yes, Pete," Travers objected hastily, "but when you saw me last I was clean shaven like I am now, but when Pietroff saw me—he called himself Pietroff that time—I had a full beard and mustache and so did he for that matter."

"You darn fool," said Peter disgustingly. "You recognized him in spite of his being trimmed off, didn't you? No doubt it was more to him to be on his toes than it was to you. And now he's gone. Cleared off last night, didn't he, Kelly?"

"Last night," Kelly replied sadly.

"Know what train he went on?" asked Travers.

"No," answered Kelly. "I don't even know if he went on a train. He has a motor cycle."

Travers spread his arms in the air. "The plot widens," he said. "Train—motor cycle—where shall we start?"

"I think you can be pretty sure he left on the motor cycle, Bill," said Peter quietly. "I've got a reason for thinking so that we won't take the time to go into. Your best bet is to get this bunch of State constabulary on the job. They're a peppy lot of ex-service men and they'll comb the countryside for you. And, of course, you'll telegraph and have all the railroads watched and all the rest of it, but he's got a good ten or twelve hours' start. You've got some chase before you, Bill, old scout, and you'd best go to it!"

"Aren't you coming too, Pete?"

"Not right away, Bill. I'll trust your bunch to get the chase started in form. You don't need me. And, besides, I've got to take an inventory of the goods I've got on your friend Peterhoff-Swartz. I was just starting to take stock when you blew in."

"Then you haven't got your case made up yet, Pete? Well, mine's complete and finished if I can only get that guy. I've been a fool and let him give me the slip for once, but I'll get on his trail again, Clancy. You watch my smoke! So long, old top. Keep in touch."

"I will, Bill. And let me know when you catch him. I may have a case against him by that time that will help finish him if he has as many lives as a cat. Good luck, old scout."

Peter watched Travers' rapidly retreating figure until it was lost to sight around the corner. Then he turned and glanced at Dan Kelly.

"The best drug clerk I ever had," mourned Kelly. "Satisfactory in every particular. What your friend said was true. He could mix the best frosted chocolate——"

Clancy was not listening. After a moment he said, "How did you ever happen to pick up a man like that, Dan?"

"Easiest thing in the world," Kelly answered. "I advertised in a Newark paper and he answered the advertisement. He had fine references. He

showed me a diploma from one of the big colleges in Germany, Heidelberg I think it was. He said he was a Belgian and had studied there before the war. Oh, he sounded O. K., Mr. Clancy. And, by gosh, he behaved O. K. so far as anybody could see. I knew he liked to talk a lot to the girls that come in here for sodas, but that sure was nothing against him, and he was so polite—it was good for trade. Everybody liked him. I can't believe——”

“You can believe what Bill Travers said,” asserted Clancy firmly. “You can't get back of those returns. Your polite Swartz has a criminal record as long as an arctic night. And at that, Dan, I can't make out what his object was in getting mixed up with that business up on the hill. That's why I haven't really cast him for a part in the piece until this very morning. What was he to get? How would he benefit by the old man's death? And he couldn't have done the actual poisoning himself. I don't see how he could, Dan. I can't see that at all.”

At this point a man came in for cigars and a little girl for chewing gum. Kelly waited on them automatically and hurried back to Clancy, who was leaning on the high marble soda counter. He did not look up when Kelly reached his side, but spoke with his eyes on the floor.

“Did you ever notice, Dan—I mean to say, did you ever see Swartz talking to—to any one in particular—any—woman?” Suddenly Peter's keen blue eyes fixed themselves on Kelly's. “Did you ever happen to see him talking with Miss Helen Field? He was quite good-looking and rather a gentleman in appearance. Did you ever see anything to make you think——”

“I see what you're driving at, Mr. Clancy,” said Kelly, soberly. “But I never saw anything to make me think there was anything between—those two. No more than with a dozen that

come in here every day or so in the hot weather. Karl was polite to 'em all, in his foreign way, but I never saw that he was more—interested, you might say, in Miss Field than he was in Pat Conroy's sister, Lizzie. She comes in here 'most every afternoon and——”

Peter flipped his hand in the air by way of interruption.

“It was Lizzie Conroy, Dan, that gave me my first real suspicion of Swartz. Now isn't it funny how things work out. I heard you rowing Pat Conroy last night, and after a friend had told me the story that was going the rounds of the village, I just thought I'd make it my business to find out whether Lizzie was telling the truth about Pat, and if so, who her informant had actually been. While I was talking to her this morning I made sure she hadn't had that drug story from you or her brother, Pat; and yet, Dan, she had a very straight story. I checked that up before. She knew most of the facts, and where did she get them, I ask? Not from you. Not from Pat Conroy. Well, who else had accurate knowledge? I knew one person who had, for the simple reason” —here Peter tapped Kelly's arm— “for the simple reason that he had carefully told me all the revolting details of those pilocarpine prescriptions—last Monday night.”

“Karl did?”

“Karl Swartz and no other,” replied Peter.

“The infernal hypocrite!” said Kelly, turning very red. “The little—great Scott, Mr. Clancy! That man swore by all that was holy, he'd never mentioned the subject to a soul! And you say he told Lizzie Conroy? He might as well have broadcast it.”

“That's about the size of it,” said Peter. “He sure got bigger returns from telling Lizzie than he did from putting me wise. I don't quite see how he happened to pick on me at all. For some reason, maybe just plain devilish-

ness, he wanted to get that story on the press and I suppose the opportunity was too good. Why, Dan, he showed me your chart with those two pilocarpine entries last Monday night, when we had drinks together back there. You remember!"

"To think I drank with the scoundrel!" groaned Kelly.

"He met me outside," Peter went on, "and he explained to me how there happened to be so much of that particular drug floating around, on those particular dates. He told me all about the explanation Miss Field made to you in regard to the second prescription you put up for her——"

"I!" Kelly touched his breast with his fingers. "I, is it? She told *me*, did she, Mr. Clancy? Not on your life! It was Karl put up that second prescription. It was Karl, not me, she told the story to—if, by jinks, she did tell that story at all, at all. Maybe he made it up, Mr. Clancy."

"Maybe he did, Dan," said Peter soberly. "What was it he told you?"

Kelly eagerly related the incident in relation to Helen Field's accident with the first prescription of pilocarpine. It was in all particulars the same as the account that Karl Swartz had given Peter.

"But, even so, Mr. Clancy, you know it could be that he was lying to both of us."

Peter nodded, but his face was still very grave.

"That's true, Kelly," he said, "but that theory doesn't help us such a lot. It doesn't account for the two perfectly correct prescriptions; the one signed by Doctor Rice and the other by Doctor Druse—if the signatures are genuine, and Doctor Druse's is, I'm sure."

"I know the first one's O. K.," Kelly asserted confidently. "I put that one up myself. I didn't know anything about the second till Karl called my attention to it. With a guy as slick as he seems

to be, maybe he forged Doctor Druse's signature."

Peter shook his head slowly.

"I don't think so, Dan," he said meditatively. "It looks to me as if Miss Field did actually have in her possession, within two days, forty one-eighth grains of pilocarpine. And it certainly did look to me—that horrible death, up there at Craighurst—I've never seen anything like it but once, and that was a suicide—a frightful case of poisoning by pilocarpine."

"Karl said that, too," Kelly admitted reluctantly. "And I'm certain I needn't ask if it was yourself might have put it into his head, Mr. Clancy?"

"No," replied Peter. "He had spoken of it to Doctor Druse before I got there Monday morning. Cases of fatal poisoning by this particular drug must be very rare, and yet—of course Swartz may have been lying—he may never have seen a case like that—but he certainly was familiar with the symptoms."

"What makes you so sure, yourself, that the old man was murdered, Mr. Clancy? That he was poisoned on purpose?" asked Kelly argumentatively. "Ptomaine poisoning is something terrible and——"

"It isn't much like that was, Dan, and it never lasts as long. The symptoms aren't as violent either. Doctor Druse had no real doubt about it. I'm sure of that. He admitted to Mrs. Brown, at the very first, that he thought it was some violent poison, and he didn't back water until Karl spoke of pilocarpine. Then he side-stepped as fast as he possibly could. Karl's word for this might not mean so much, but it was backed by my own observation. Which makes me think, Dan, that Doctor Druse knew of both of those prescriptions. Either he wanted to shield Helen Field or——"

"Of course," said Kelly eagerly. "That would be it, wouldn't it? Miss Field told him about dropping the first bottle in the wash basin, and he gave

her a new prescription, naturally. And, by the same token, he wouldn't want a question to be raised about it for fear—well, of some sort of trouble for the young lady."

"That's the way I figure it out now," said Clancy thoughtfully. "But, Dan, how do you think I felt about Doctor Druse when I found that the atropine he was giving Craig as an antidote for whatever sort of poison it was—that the atropine," he repeated, "was nothing at all—but sugar of milk."

"Lord have mercy!" Kelly ejaculated. "You don't mean to say——"

"Yes, I do," said Peter. "I swiped one of the tablets that same morning. Don't ask me why I did it. I don't know myself, unless it was that the vial it was in seemed to me to be in a kind of an out-of-the-way place for a thing they were using constantly: or else it was just habit—and a bad habit at that. Anyway, Dan, I did take one of the tablets and sent it in to be analyzed, and the report was, as I have said, sugar of milk and nothing else. Well, you can easily see how bad that looked for somebody. I can see now that that somebody was probably your sweet little friend, Karl——"

"Oh, Mr. Clancy, don't rub it in. He's no friend of mine! But I can see how it would have been an easy thing for him to do," Kelly answered. "When Doc Druse phoned in the middle of the night for morphine and atropine—if Karl knew what the atropine was wanted for—if he didn't want Craig to recover—he could easily substitute blanks for the real stuff." His knitted brows showed his strenuous effort at concentration. "He'd probably save the atropine tablets and trust to luck to sell some in a box to somebody and put back the vial, properly filled, so as to make the count on the chart come right. He wouldn't dare to change the chart without having a prescription to account for the tube that was missing."

"Bully for you, Dan," said Peter. "That's about the way I figure it out now that Doctor Druse has been in here and insisted that there should be a charge for atropine on Gifford Craig's bill. It isn't reasonable to think he'd be smart enough to make that up. He had no reason in case he'd been using blank tablets in place of atropine, and knew it, to think that I, or any one else, was on."

"To think," said Kelly, "of Doc Druse, all night, pumping that poor, suffering devil full of—sugar of milk! Isn't it horrible, Mr. Clancy? Do you see——"

"There's a lot that I don't see yet, Dan," said Peter. "I think that between us we've got enough on Swartz to have him arrested—if they find him. But I can't see, for the life of me, unless he's just a fiend, Dan, why he should deliberately keep back the atropine which would have relieved Gifford Craig's agony at least, and might have saved his life. And I ask you, Dan, was it just that he guessed, on general principles, what the atropine was to be used for, or did he hold it back because he knew—because he *knew* that it was wanted as an antidote for pilocarpine? And if so, how did he know that, Dan?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HOUSE IN THE BLACK SWAMP.

IT was night again. A night of hard white stars and scudding clouds. A great wind screamed in the high trees tearing the reluctant leaves, and sending them spinning through the shadows. Peter listened to the sound, like the beating of mighty wings, in the woods all about his little cottage. He threw another log on the fire and wished that Ben Dawes was there to lighten the loneliness of the empty room.

There was little chance that the trooper would drop in. All day long the constabulary had been on the alert,

watching highways and byways and stopping every motor cycle on the road. From long experience, Clancy knew how little was accomplished by these broad gestures of omnipresence on the part of the police, but it was all part of the game, and sometimes, often enough to keep the public paying taxes for this sort of protection, the wide net would be caught up at one corner, and in it would be found the hunted man.

In this instance, Peter felt sure that watching the open roads and stopping the obvious and easily traceable motor cycles in the broad light of day, was a mere waste of time. A clever criminal like the many-aliased Swartz would be far away by this time—or else——

The incompleteness of the evidence incriminating Swartz in the death of Gifford Craig was as miserably teasing to Peter's mind as the hum of a hornet. That the man was at least an accessory before the fact, Peter was morally certain, although, in his later talk with Kelly that afternoon he reluctantly realized that he had turned up a fact which was capable of an ugly interpretation. It seemed that there was an actual foundation for Swartz's innuendo in regard to Doctor Druse; that there always had been a very real antagonism between the doctor and Gifford Craig. It had started in their boyhood and grown with their growth. If it had not been for the strong friendship between their parents, Winstead Druse would probably never have put his foot inside the doors of Craighurst, or so Dan Kelly said. He was also certain that it was owing to the fact of Doctor Druse's professional preëminence that Craig, after having tried every other physician within many miles' radius for his more or less imaginary ailments, and latterly been brought to place himself in Doctor Druse's charge. Peter could not fail also to understand, as much by what Kelly omitted to mention as by what he did say, that there had been a good deal of talk in

the village just before Craig's marriage; that the marriage was in itself a surprise and that "everybody thought it would have been the doctor."

Peter felt at that moment, as he sat in concentrated meditation before the fire, that he was justified, in view of all the circumstances, in discounting the idea of an active, vicious hatred between the two elderly men. At thirty, or thereabouts, it is difficult to believe in the existence of vivid, sweeping, overpowering passions in those who are twenty years or more our seniors. Clancy's experience should have taught him otherwise, but it is always fatally easy to fit our theories to our desires, and so he urged that whoever else was implicated, Larry's father was clear of suspicion. And Larry's fiancée? Still in Clancy's mind were the questions he had asked Dan Kelly. Was Swartz's action in regard to the atropine based on guess work? Or did he know? And if the latter, how?

Helen Field was a stranger. Stockton Brown had been out of the country for a number of years. They had appeared in Somerset, unexpectedly, within a few months of each other. Almost at the same time Swartz had answered Kelly's advertisement, and had remained ever since an inconspicuous drug clerk in an inconspicuous village. Was there nothing suspicious in these facts? Nothing significant in the large legacies which two of these persons were to receive upon the death of the man who had so recently died? If these three were in collusion, why had Swartz taken such pains to throw suspicion on Helen Field? Was she proving recalcitrant? And had Swartz been taking this means of putting on the screws when his plans were rudely interrupted by the appearance on the scene of Bill Travers?

And then a vision of the girl's bright, fascinating face came before Peter's mind and argued for her. Was it possible that a hideous, frightful crime

could find lodgment behind those clear, beautiful eyes?

He leaned over angrily to poke the fire. Suddenly, above the moan of the dying wind, and near at hand, the telephone sounded. Peter jumped to his feet and swept the receiver off the hook. "News, news!" he thought. "At last!"

"Hello," he said quietly. "Whom do you want?"

"Peter. Peter Clancy, is that you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Brown. Is there anything—"

"Yes, Peter. I want you to do something for me if you will."

"Surest thing you know, Mrs. Brown. What is it?"

"I'm afraid I'm an awful nuisance, but I don't know how else— You see I must get there as quickly as I can, Peter. And it's so far. The horses—"

"I'll take you anywhere you say at any time day or night, Mrs. Brown," said Peter cordially. "Don't bother to apologize."

"Win Druse said you would." Mary Brown's voice sounded hurried. "And he said there was no time to lose. Could you bring your car—"

"I'll be over there in ten minutes, fifteen at the outside," said Clancy promptly. "You can tell me then—"

"Yes. I will. You're very good to me, Peter. I'll be ready at the door when you come. You're mighty good to an old woman, Peter Clancy."

In less time than the least he had calculated, Peter made the run to Craighurst. The front door of the big house was flung open as his foot sounded on the stone steps, and in the light of the hall he saw Major Mary already attired in a queer sort of long old-fashioned wrap and a black hat tied as usual under her chin. Behind her, dressed in a soft white gown, the simplicity of which set off the exotic beauty of her face, was Helen Field.

"It's good of you to do this, Peter,"

she said, and turning to Mrs. Brown she added, "I do wish you'd let me go in your place, Aunt Mary. Night nursing is so much easier for me."

"But it's not so much the nursing, you know, Helen," said Mrs. Brown hurriedly. "I must go. Don't expect me before morning. Win says there's very little chance—"

"Yes. I understand, Aunt Mary. We won't worry. Take care of her, Peter. Good-by."

In the hurry and excitement Peter had scarcely spoken. He wondered what it was all about, but realizing that some one was ill and that Major Mary wanted to get somewhere as quickly as possible, he started the car and shifted to third before he even asked, "Where to, Mrs. Brown?"

"Turn right on Highland Avenue, Peter," she answered quietly. "We go out along the Myerstown road and when we get to the schoolhouse turn right again on the road we call the Swamp Road. Do you know it, Peter?"

"Yes, I know where you mean, Mrs. Brown, but if you don't mind telling me, why in the world do you have to go away out there in the middle of the night? Or at least it is after ten. And who is it that's ill? I thought I understood from what Helen said—"

"Yes, Peter. You're right. Some one is desperately ill—dying. Win Druse says. It's no one you know, Peter. An old woman I went to school with so long ago it makes me ache to remember. Win's out there now, of course. The poor thing was all alone. She managed to crawl to the window and stop a trooper who was riding by. He brought in the message and Win went out post-haste. He found the poor creature—Esther Moore, her name is, Peter—he found her dying. She wanted only one thing. She wanted to see me—and made Win leave her alone and go nearly a mile to the nearest neighbor to telephone me. He said he thought she'd

last the night, but I'd better hurry; Larry's in town, but Win said you'd bring me, he was sure. I just don't know what we'd ever do without you, Peter Clancy."

Peter reached over and touched her hand but said nothing. He could see that Major Mary was rallying all her forces to meet this new demand on her courage and strength. It made him rather indignant with Doctor Druse. Knowing at least a great part of the strain Mrs. Brown had been under for the last week, it would seem to be the duty of a wise physician to prevent a further tax on her endurance. The poor woman who was dying was, apparently, not even a close friend. Why should Doctor Druse subject Mrs. Brown to a second experience of the kind within the week? It seemed cruel to Peter. He could see no sense in it. Many days later in thinking it over, Peter saw that the true and tempered steel of Major Mary's character had been used as an effective weapon in the hand of some great, inscrutable destiny; that without Major Mary, much that was written would not have been written, or would have been written with a different purpose and effect.

But the mist which hides the future still hung before Peter's eyes as, in silence, he drove forward. Mist of the future and mist of the present; for the road they traversed ran through low-lying fields where marsh mist, faintly wavering in the fitful light, hung above patches of tall rushes and over little, secret pools. Within the hour, the wind had veered to the east. It was dying now and the clouds were drawing silently together, blotting out the pale face of the moon. The Swamp Road lay, a faint, gray track, turning a warmer tone where Peter's headlights bored a little way into the fog.

"You'll know the house when you come to it?" Peter asked at last, breaking a long silence.

"Oh, yes," answered Mary Brown. "We'll be able to see it. It stands almost directly on the road, and there aren't many houses along here to confuse us. It's queer to have this great, lonely tract of swamp right in the midst of so many towns and villages. You know, Peter, the Black Swamp runs along here for twenty miles or more. It's full of little trails, but almost no one knows them all. They say there are deer and lots of smaller game in the depths of the swamp. Hunters go in in the fall, but almost no one else at any time of year. There are a few poor farms here and there, but the land lies so low it's almost impossible to drain it and for miles and miles— There"—she pointed to the right—"do you see, Peter? Over there. The little white house? That's John Owen's farm; the place Win Druse telephoned from. We're almost there. It's only a mile farther to Esther's. You mustn't be shocked at what you see, Peter. She's very poor. And she never would take any help from any one. Her husband and children died many years ago. It's a very sad story. Terrible."

"Don't tell it then," urged Peter. "It isn't necessary for you to remember, nor for me to hear it."

"No," said Mrs. Brown. "No, Peter. This life has plenty of sad things without dwelling on those that are gone by." Neither of them knew then under what circumstances Esther Moore's story would be told before another day.

"Slow down now, Peter," Mary Brown said after another minute or two. "It's just beyond this bridge. It's hidden by the trees, but you'll see it as soon as we get around the bend. There. The little light by the side of the road, Peter. Do you see?"

Peter saw it then. A pale, thin glimmer, in a small, huddled shape of blackness, which, as they came close, resolved itself into a little old unpainted house with one faintly lighted window.

"Would you mind waiting a minute, Peter?" said Mary Brown as Clancy helped her out of the car. "There may be something needed from the village, and I know——"

"Of course." Peter answered almost eagerly. There was something eerie about this lost little dark house. Not for his life would Clancy have allowed the brave old soul to enter that low door alone, even though he was assured that there could be no physical danger.

With his arm under hers, Clancy guided Mary Brown along the short rough path which he could feel but could not see. As they reached the door, something dark moved on the step in front of it, and a low, whimpering sound half menaced and half welcomed their approach.

"Good old boy." said Peter in that tone of comradeship that all dogs trust. "Good old pup."

At the sound of his voice the door opened quickly, showing the tall figure of Doctor Druse silhouetted against the dull light.

"Ah, Clancy, that was good work to get her here so soon. So sorry to have to call you out at this time of night, Mary Brown, but it seemed the only human thing to do." Doctor Druse spoke in a low hurried tone.

"It's all right, Win. How is Esther? Is she still——"

"Just living and no more." answered Druse scarcely above a breath. He had drawn Major Mary inside the house.

Peter followed and closed the door, pushing back the old black hound before he could shut it. Then he turned and looked about him. They were all three standing in a small entry from which a steep short flight of stairs led upward into black darkness. To the left a door opened into a small, disordered room where, standing upon the seat of an old wooden chair, an oil lamp burned dimly. To the right was another door through which Doctor Druse led them into a

little cluttered kitchen. He pushed the door as nearly shut as its sagging hinges would allow, and with his hand on Mrs. Brown's arm, he said:

"You know me well enough, Mary Brown, so that I don't have to tell you that I wouldn't have brought you out here to-night if any one else would have answered. It's you that the poor creature wants—wants terribly, for some reason that she won't tell me. She's just kept herself alive by sheer force of will until you could get here. As soon as she is able to relieve her mind, she'll—go on. I warn you. She's very low and there's nothing more that we can do. You must be prepared for the end. It will come almost immediately. Hush." A low moan came from the front room. "We'd better go to her at once. No time to lose. Will you wait, Clancy? It may be best to——"

"I understand," said Peter quietly. "Don't bother about me."

Major Mary was still clinging to Peter's arm. She seemed to derive strength from the contact, and when she turned to follow Doctor Druse she did not release her hold, so that all three crossed the little entry together, the kind physician in the lead.

"Is she here, doctor? Has she come at last? I thought I heard——"

The voice was very low and rough, but the words came clearly to Peter's ears. Looking past Doctor Druse he could see across the little room, in the far corner, an old wooden bedstead, drawn close against the wall, to leave room for a rusty stove, two chairs, and a table on which stood a pitiful row of old flower pots and tin cans filled with dry earth from which limp and dusty plants drooped upon a faded red cloth. These things Peter took in automatically. What he really saw was the old face against the ragged pillows on the bed; a face lined and carved with weariness and pain, but instinct now with a purpose that would hold the straining spirit

in its outworn house until that purpose was accomplished.

"She's here, Esther." The doctor's voice was very kind. "She came as fast as she could."

Peter felt the grasp on his arm loosen. Major Mary went quickly forward into the room.

"Mary Craig! Ah—I can hardly see. Come close, Mary. I want to see your face again. Move the light nearer. There."

"Oh, Esther, Esther! I didn't know you'd come to this. I had no idea——"

"Hush, Mary." The dignity of the great change was in the poor old creature's voice. "I have little time I know. I have waited. Hold me there. I'm slipping—slipping—— Doctor!"

Druse came quickly forward with an old white cup ready in his hand.

"Drink this, Esther," he said, and with the gentleness of a tender mother he slipped his arm under the pillow and raised the frail body. "It will give you strength. There. Rest a minute. So. Better?"

The dark, burning eyes were raised in gratitude to the face that bent above them.

"Yes." The voice came stronger now. "I can go on. Come close, Mary. I must be sure you hear. I must see that you understand."

Softly Doctor Druse drew a chair forward and with a touch on her shoulder, made Mary Brown take her seat on it close to the tumbled bed. From the shadowy doorway, unseen by the dying woman, Peter waited and watched. Mrs. Brown leaned forward and laid her wrinkled hand lightly upon the other woman's breast.

"You can tell me anything you like, Esther, and be sure I'll understand," she said. "If there is anything you want done——"

"It's not what I want done, Mary." The words were spoken so clearly that Peter heard every one. "It's for you

to say. You shall decide. I will tell you what I saw, and you can do what you think best. I was afraid——" There was a pause, then the voice came clearly again. "I was afraid they might not tell you. I'm too ignorant to figure things out for myself. But you were the brightest girl in school, Mary. You helped me time and time again at recess, do you remember? And at night when I couldn't get my lessons——"

The voice trailed off into silence. The eyes closed. Mrs. Brown glanced up at the doctor in alarm. He only shook his head and touched his lips, enjoining silence. After a moment, Esther Moore opened her eyes and spoke softly.

"I think I wandered off somewhere. It was very still and quiet, but I knew I had to come back. Where was I?"

"You wanted to tell me something, Esther. It's Mary Craig, you know. You wanted to say——"

"Oh, yes. Listen, Mary. It was only yesterday I heard—what they're saying in the village—about Gifford—Gifford Craig's death. That he was poisoned." There were short pauses after every phrase. "I would have gone to see you, but I was stricken down. Doctor Druse will tell you about that. John Owen's wife comes here sometimes. She told me—how he died—Gifford—Gifford Craig. You never suspected, did you, Mary? You never knew that once I loved your brother. Long, long ago. It's all past. So long past. And yet, when I heard that he was dead, and how—Lucy Owen told me how he died. And then—I—knew!"

Esther Moore's voice had gained in strength as she went on. Now she raised herself on her pillows and fixed Mary Brown with her deep, burning eyes.

"This is a lonely place," she said grimly. "A lonely road and lonely fields and woods; but a lady rides by here on a big black horse. Often and often I've seen her, but she never glanced my way

but once. That was a few days ago. Only a few days. Sunday morning, early. See this, Mary Craig. It was Sunday morning, early. I was out in the woods, picking up a few sticks to make my fire, when I saw this lady riding toward me down the road. She did not see the old gray woman among the gray stems of the trees. Before she reached the clearing around the house here, she turned off in the path that leads down into the swamp. I had seen her do this before and thought nothing of it, but this morning—why I can not tell you—this Sunday morning I said to myself, 'I will see why the pretty lady rides down into the swamp!'

"So I put down my bundle of sticks and crept softly through the trees. I know every foot of the marsh for miles about. I know the birds and where their nests are. I know what grows in the woods and on the marshy meadows. I know all the little paths and short cuts. I went along one of these. Soon I came to a place where I could see the wide trail where it comes into an open space. There was the lady before me. She was on foot now. She had a basket on her arm and was hunting for and finding something in the short grass. Now and then I could see what it was she was picking, and I said to myself, 'Oh, she's after mushrooms, that's all.'

"I had found out what I wanted to know and I had started back through the woods when something made me turn. There was the lady, on the other side of the meadow, close in by the trees. Now and again she stooped and added something to what was in her basket. Deeper and deeper she went into the marshy woods, and suddenly a thought came to me and my heart stood still."

There was something so compelling in the voice that Peter held his breath so as not to lose a word.

"You know, Doctor Druse"—Esther Moore turned her head that she might

include the doctor in her deep, fateful glance—"no one knows better than you how my children and my husband died, for it was you that tended them, patiently and well. And you know what it was they died of—and you can think how it was I felt when I saw the lady gathering mushrooms where my children did, that dreadful day so long ago. The 'deadly amanita' they call it. Deadly. Yes. I know it now, the poison cup, the scales and all. Had I but known it then!"

Spellbound by that voice of woe the listeners waited. There was a moment's silence. No sound was heard save the soft, blurred splutter of the dimly burning lamp, and, outside, the old hound snuffing at the door.

"When I saw where the lady was going," Esther Moore went on, "I think I screamed. I know I must have, for the lady turned quickly and stood still, facing me, as I went fast across the field. I suppose I was frightening to look at, waving my arms and calling and trying to run. The lady was very white when I came up close to her. 'Let me see what you've gathered,' I said as soon as I could speak. And she said, 'Why? Are all the mushrooms in the field yours?' And she twisted round so that the basket was out of my reach.

"That made me angry, because I wanted only to save her; to spare her, young and beautiful, what I had suffered. So I said, 'You fool! Do you think I care how many mushrooms you take, so you take the safe, healthy ones. Let me see your basket,' I said and made a snatch and caught the edge of it. And when I saw what was in it—"God help you," I said to her. "A dozen or more of these here are more poisonous than a rattlesnake. Throw away every one of those with the yellow, scaly tops and the bulge at the bottom of the stem. That's where the poison lies. The white and brown ones are good, but if I was you I'd throw every one away.

Poison. Poison! There never was worse poison than what you've got there,' I says.

"I was only trying to do her good, but she got very angry. She jerked the basket away and she said, 'You're crazy, you poor old thing. You don't know what you're talking about. I have a book and I know every mushroom that grows.' And more like that. I argued—pleaded with her. I told her about my husband and my little children. She only smiled and shook her head at me, and went her way."

The voice was growing fainter, but Esther Moore rallied all her forces for a last effort. She reached out and caught Mary Brown's wrist.

"Listen, Mary Craig," she said. "Listen to me. Doctor Druse will bear me out. It took my husband and my little children nearly three days to die—nearly three days of agony and torment. And I watched and waited and suffered with them—as you watched and waited and suffered with Gifford while, in agony, he died. I know, I *know* he died as they did"—the voice rose almost to a shriek—"for the woman that gathered the deadly amanita in the woods—I knew her—knew her all along. It was Gifford Craig's beautiful young wife!"

She fell back stiffly upon the ragged pillow. And outside the door, the voice of the old, black hound rose suddenly upon the silent night.

CHAPTER XXII.

WILHELM VON LOWEN.

PPETER CLANCY, tell me what you think."

It was nearly an hour later, and Peter and Major Mary were on their homeward way. Doctor Druse remained to watch until some one could be summoned to relieve him. Peter, glad to be of service, had made the necessary arrangements by telephone from John Owen's farm, while Mary Brown waited

for him in the car outside. She had scarcely spoken up to that time, and it was not until they were nearing home that she broke silence.

"Tell me what you think of it all, Peter Clancy," she repeated, noting his hesitation. "What do you make of this story of poor Esther Moore?"

"Well," Peter's voice was grave and troubled, "I don't know what to say, Mrs. Brown, and that's a fact. A strange coincidence—very strange indeed. Enough to rouse wild thoughts in a wild brain. Certainly strange enough for that. But how can it be anything more, I ask you?"

"How can it, Peter?" said Mrs. Brown slowly. "We have had the wild mushrooms often this fall. They have been very plentiful and very delicious. Ilsa has always gathered and prepared them. As she told Esther, she knows all about all sorts of fungi. We have eaten them many times—all of us except Gifford. He has never touched them."

"You're certain of that?" asked Peter.

"Absolutely certain," answered Mary Brown decidedly. "There can be no possible question on that score."

"Then," said Clancy, "how could the idea that your brother had died from mushroom poisoning be anything but the vagary of a flighty brain?"

"It couldn't, Peter." Major Mary's voice was deeply troubled. "How could it be anything else? Poor Esther. Poor thing. She meant to do the right thing, of course, only she's started something buzzing, away in the back part of my tired brain—something that won't come clear, and yet buzzes, buzzes and will not stop. Oh, Peter." She turned suddenly and put a trembling hand on Clancy's arm. "I don't trust Ilsa. I've never trusted her from the first. And when Stockton came home—"

"Stockton!" Peter exclaimed involuntarily. Did Major Mary know, then?

"You've seen nothing, Peter?" Mary

Brown answered his tone rather than his words. "You've never seen them together—I mean in such a way as to make you suspect——" She hesitated and stopped. Since she knew that much, Peter felt that it was possible to be quite frank.

"I will confess to you, Mrs. Brown," he said slowly, "that once I did see—something. I would never have spoken of it, of course, only——"

"I understand, Peter. I know you wouldn't want to make trouble any more than I would. Gifford believed in her and trusted her—and after something I saw and heard, I had it out with Stockton. He has one great weakness—that you know of, Peter"—the old voice was very tender—"but otherwise he is quite all right. After I'd talked with him I knew I could trust to his honor, even if it had not been for Helen. You have realized, haven't you, Peter, how it is with Stockton?"

In a daze, Peter answered with another question:

"I'm not quite sure, Mrs. Brown. Do you mean—do you mean to imply that Stockton is in love with—with Helen Field?"

"Why, yes, Peter. Surely you must have known that. He told me about her letter—the letter you took to him in town—the one that brought him home. It was Helen's kindness and strength that gave Stockton the courage to put himself completely in Win Druse's hands. He has done it completely, without any mental reservation, I'm sure." Clancy had never heard the old voice so moved. "He wanted to prove it to his old mother, and he gave me this. Look, Peter."

In the bright ray from the little hooded light on the dash board she held a small object. Clancy looked at it curiously. It was a small Chinese box, jade green, and as he looked Major Mary removed the cover, disclosing a number of brown tablets.

"It's morphine, of course, Peter," she went on. "He had it hidden somewhere on his person when you brought him home. I knew nothing about it and he gave it to me of his own free will. It made me so happy that I've carried it about with me ever since—like a foolish girl with a love token. But of course it was Helen who did it all. It was she that persuaded him to give it up forever and to go with Win Druse and let himself be cured. And though he knows now that Helen's heart is entirely given to Larry, Stockton has made up his mind to prove himself worthy of her loving friendship. God bless her, I think she's saved my boy."

After a tense silence Peter said: "Did I understand, Mrs. Brown—— Forgive me, but I'd like to get this straight in my mind. Do you mean to charge Mrs. Craig——"

"Oh, I know nothing happened, Peter," Mary Brown interrupted hastily. "I make no actual charge against her, you understand, except that of course I know that she was and is infatuated with Stockton. I couldn't help knowing that. What I saw with my own eyes—— You see I naturally move quickly and I don't make much noise about it, Peter. And I'm about the house early and late. I came upon them one night when Ilsa had completely lost her self-control. I couldn't help being sorry for her, in a way. It was plain that she really suffered."

Peter's brain was in a whirl. Had he been jumping at conclusions again? Was it possible that his observation was wrong, and Major Mary's right? But Ilsa Craig had practically told him, or at least purposely allowed him to believe that Stockton Brown had been pursuing her ever since his return from the East. Ilsa knew that Peter so understood the situation. There had been no possible ambiguity in that connection.

Had she been deceiving Major Mary, then? Would any woman be so noble

and self-sacrificing as to incriminate herself in order to save a son's character in the eyes of his mother?

They had turned into the drive at Craighurst and at this moment, as was his custom, Peter cut out his engine and coasted down the gentle slope to the door. Up on the ridge the wind still moaned a little in the tops of the trees and now and then the moon looked out between the drifting mists. As Peter helped Mary Brown from the car it was light enough to see her little old face, and he found himself marveling again at the strength and endurance it expressed.

In silence they passed around the corner of the house and were approaching the garden door when Major Mary suddenly clutched Peter's arm.

"Look! Look there!" she exclaimed in his ear. "Over by the stable, Peter! Can you see? Something moved."

"It was a man!" whispered Peter, striving to shake off her grasp. "Let me go, Mrs. Brown! Let me go. I may be able——"

"No, no, Peter. You'll never catch him that way, and on foot. He's got too good a start." The words almost tripped each other up. "We haven't any light and he'd only have to step off into the thick woods to let us go right by him." Her voice thrilled with excitement. "There's just one chance, Peter." She was dragging on his arm. "The car! If we go round by the road——"

"I may be able to head him off," Peter whispered. "Good idea. There's a chance."

Still clinging to his arm, Major Mary was fairly dragged along by Peter's impetuosity. In a second they had reached the car. The door was open. Peter jumped in, slid across to the wheel and reached back to slam the door.

"I'm going too, Peter."

"Oh, Major Mary!" Peter expostulated.

"Yes, Major Mary," she repeated swiftly. "Major Mary it is, and you'll take orders from your superior officer for once, Peter Clancy." She had climbed in with the agility of youth, and closed the door. "Now go ahead. If we have luck we'll head him off at the place your road comes out on Western Boulevard."

There was no time for argument. Peter started the engine and threw in the clutch, heedless of the noise it made. If this was the same man Mrs. Brown had trailed on the previous night, he very likely had his motor cycle concealed along the road, somewhere near Peter's cottage. There was a chance that he would trust to it to make good his escape, even if he was aware that he had been seen, but Peter felt quite certain that the intruder in the garden of Craighurst had been unconscious of their near presence and would, therefore, have no suspicion of being followed.

As to the man's identity, Peter had little doubt. Some intuition had told him that Craighurst was a lodestar; that it would inevitably draw the man who had been in hiding since the night before. Some strong necessity had drawn him back to Craighurst, that was plain. But what, Peter asked himself as he drove swiftly through the night.

"I'm going to find out," said Peter to himself. "I'm going to get to the bottom of this if it takes——"

The car swerved madly as it swung around the curve into Western Boulevard. It was very late. The roads were empty. There were no traffic laws and Peter drove as he had rarely driven before, but Major Mary, leaning forward from the edge of the front seat, only clung closer and never made a sound. It was not until they reached the top of the long hill at the bottom of which was the road to Clancy's place, that she spoke.

"Shut off the engine and coast,

Peter," she said, breathlessly. "I'm not afraid of going fast and it'll make less noise."

Peter grinned in the darkness. Not once had the game old lady backed down on any proposition.

Silently they slid down the long hill. Faster and faster they went. Major Mary's bonnet strings flapped in her eyes. She gave them a jerk and chucked her little black bonnet into the back seat without taking her eyes from the dim road ahead. Suddenly she leaned close to Peter.

"Listen," she said. "Don't you hear?"

Off to the right came faintly the quick *putt putt* of an engine—a motor cycle unmistakably, and coming that way. Peter's car was running almost noiselessly, and at terrific speed. Instinctively his foot came down upon the brake. He must not get to the junction of the roads too soon, but he must not be too late. If he had been alone, Clancy would have staged a collision and timed his driving for that result, but with Major Mary aboard he could not take that risk. Realizing the speed powers of a motor cycle, Peter felt that his one chance was to get to the crossroad just long enough ahead to block the road; to be seen from a sufficient distance to avoid a collision, yet not to be seen in time for the rider of the motor cycle to take to the woods. It would be a nice calculation.

Nearer and nearer, though still hidden by the trees along the side road, came the motor cycle. The *putt putt* was now a rattling blur. The other machine must be moving as fast as Peter's.

"Down on the floor, quick," ordered Peter, in a voice of command. "He may shoot. Get down. Keep your head down whatever happens and—*look out!*"

The last words were a shout, and then things happened so rapidly that Major Mary was never able afterward to describe them in sequence.

At Peter's cry, the lights of the machine, which had just appeared in the crossroad, swerved wildly in a wide arc. Peter's car failed in its purpose of blockade. The motor cycle took the main road, ahead by little more than Peter's fender, and the chase was on!

Peter was running so fast that he was able to pick up his engine in third. Without an instant's hesitation he stepped on the gas, there was the roar of the double jet, and the car leaped forward like a willing horse, but swifter, far swifter and more enduring than any horse that was ever foaled. But was Major Mary content?

"Oh, Peter Clancy," she cried in his ear, "I thought you had a good car! Yes! Yes! Now! That's better! We're gaining, Peter. We're gaining! Look out! Peter!"

There was the crash of glass, and Major Mary's voice rose again. "Never touched me, Peter! He's a bad shot! Get him, Peter! Get him!"

"Keep down, Major Mary!" yelled Clancy, almost beside himself. Out of the tail of his eye he could see the little old gray head bobbing about behind the shattered windshield. Close ahead was the swiftly moving motor cycle, its rider now in plain view in the glare of Peter's headlights. "Oh, God, if I only had a gun," groaned Peter. He was equipped for a peaceful mission only. He had had no idea that Major Mary would be leading him to battle.

"Run him down, Peter! He can't shoot! Run him down!" Major Mary's little old voice fairly cracked. "Can't you speed up a little? Oh, Peter, if only you——"

There had come a flash, a sharp report, and Peter's car slowed up with a flat tire.

"He's got us," groaned Peter. "It's no use——"

In the shine of Clancy's lights the rider of the motor cycle turned and waved a mocking farewell. At that in-

stant, from a road at the left dashed another motor cycle and on it—

"Ben Dawes!" yelled Peter. "Ahead! Look! It's—"

His words were drowned as the trooper came into action, for Sergeant Ben Dawes of the State constabulary was not one who weighed risks. There had been a time in his life, owing to this quality of his, when, had it not been for one of Uncle Sam's secret-service men, he would have intercepted a bullet on its way to an old white French wall. It took but one glance of his quick eye to recognize the occupants of the limping car, one look at the fleeing figure down the road, and the cause and effect of the shots he had heard was clear.

There was a blinding flash, and then two almost simultaneous reports.

"Keep on, Peter! I said he couldn't shoot!" said Mary Brown from between shut teeth.

"I'll stop dead if you don't keep your head down," cried Peter fiercely, at the same time making all the speed possible.

"You're a good boy, Peter"—Major Mary was shaking with excitement—"but you're young. Too young, and careful! It's only the old that aren't afraid of risks. Faster, Peter. Faster! Ah—"

Staged in the glare of Peter's headlights, a shifting duel moved to its sudden end. Another exchange of shots, and as the man ahead still looked backward, there was a grinding crash, a horrible cry. There had been an unseen turn of the road—a high stone wall—a twisted heap of wires and metal, and in their midst something stirred and groaned.

"Help me to lift him, Peter. Oh, poor thing, poor thing." All the excitement and exaltation were gone from Major Mary's voice and only pity remained. There could be nothing but pity for a thing so shattered and broken.

"Give him a little of this, Mrs. Brown." The trooper's gloved hand thrust a small flask into hers. "I think he's trying to speak, Mr. Clancy." This over his shoulder to Peter who leaned above him. "Can you make out what he's saying?"

"German," said Peter. "He's speaking German. I can understand only a few words, but—"

"Ilsa!"

Mary Brown started. It was the broken thing in her arms that had spoken the name.

"Ilsa!" The eyes opened slowly and peered up into the old face above them. From the ground there came a little, chuckling, sinister laugh. "You're not Ilsa, beautiful Ilsa. The witch—the white, golden devil. Thought she'd give me the slip after all our plans worked out so well. Thought she'd double cross me, did she? Well, we'll see. She did not come out to-night, nor last night, but there are other nights coming. Night for her, and night for me. Night at last for all of us." The voice trailed off. The eyes closed.

"I think he's gone, Mr. Clancy." The trooper, kneeling on the dusty roadside grass, spoke gruffly.

"Not—not yet." Slowly the heavy lids were raised. "Wilhelm von Lowen, sometimes called by other names, and known at present as the humble chemist, Swartz, is about to go. But listen to this, trooper, and you others, he does not plan to go far alone. He'll be waiting for *her* to join him. You tell her this for me. And bear witness, all of you"—the voice took on a solemn note—"I speak the truth before God, I speak it. I planned it all, and Fate played into my hand as if she had been a partner in a game. The long waiting; and the time ripe to strike. Then came the two prescriptions for pilocarpine. Unforeseen! I'd never thought of anything so good. And the kind doctor telephones Karl Swartz—Karl Swartz

who knows. To him and to no other does the good physician telephone in haste for the antidote! Ah, it is to laugh! How simple. But like all good things, too perfect—too perfect to last—like—Ilsa." The name was a snarl. "Too perfect in her beauty, too perfect in consistent evil. Thought she could defy me from her high place at last—the place I found and made for her! Bah! I spit upon her name. Ilsa!"

And with that name upon his lips, the twisted soul of Wilhelm von Lowen went out into the dark.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NIGHT.

ONCE more Peter's car slipped silently down the Craighurst drive, and for the third time that night stopped at the door. Again he helped Major Mary out of the car, and together they went around to the garden. This time there was no swiftly moving shadow against the white stable door at the garden's end. That shadow at least had passed forever from their lives.

"I'll get the key," said Peter softly. "I know just where it is." In another moment they were inside the house.

It was very dark and still. Not a rustle. Not a sound, save from the steady, slowly swinging pendulum of an unseen clock.

"Good night, Peter," whispered Major Mary. "I think I won't make a light. I can find my way."

"I can't bear to leave you here like this," Peter replied in the same low tone. "Won't you reconsider what you said in the car just now, and let me sleep on a couch down here? I'd feel so much safer. It's almost three o'clock. There's not much of the night left. Wouldn't you be glad to know you could call me in case—in case you were ill—or nervous?"

"No, Peter." Her voice was low but firm. "I'm not afraid, and it's best for

you to go. I'm sure of that. So, good night. And God bless you, Peter Clancy!"

"Good night, Major Mary," Peter whispered back.

Moving very quietly, Peter went outside and closed the door softly, but with sufficient strength to spring the lock. He withdrew the key and stepped off in the grass as Mary Brown had done the night before. But he did not return the key to its hiding place on the ledge behind the ivy. Instead he stood for a moment with it in his hand. Then he stepped back on the path and went around the house to the drive. There he got into his car, started the engine and drove quietly away.

When he reached a spot on the drive near the boundary of the grounds, but well out of sight of the highway even in daylight, he slowed down, methodically backed his car off the drive, locked the engine switch, and left it there. Then very quietly indeed he made his way back to the house. Treading softly on the grass, and keeping to the side of the road that would bring him to the garden without necessitating the crossing of the gravel near the house, Peter found himself once more at the garden door. There was only the faintest breath of sound as the key again turned in the lock, and like a shadow Peter slipped into the hall, closed the door and tried it to see that the snap lock was fast.

In Peter Clancy's varied life accurate remembrance of detail was often as necessary as breathing. In fact on several occasions it had been his accurate memory which had made it possible for him to keep the breath of life in his body. Hence had arisen an almost photographic faculty of revisualization, and at this instant, as he stood at the entrance of the silent, pitch-dark hall, he could see every detail of the interior as plainly as if it were broad daylight. Unhesitatingly, and stepping soundlessly

from one thick rug to another, he advanced, making for a couch which he knew stood in a deeply recessed window almost opposite the foot of the main staircase. From that point it was possible to see in both directions down the L-shaped hall, and it would be practically impossible for any one to leave the house by either the front or the garden door unperceived, even in the dark.

Clancy sank upon the deep cushions and composed himself for thought. The events of the night had followed each other too closely to admit of more than a hasty tabulation, and now, with a feeling of dread and horror, Peter faced the problem of arrangement and deduction.

Scarcely, however, had he achieved that acme of physical comfort which is one way of freeing the mind from the body, scarcely had his head touched the heap of pillows in the corner of the couch, when suddenly he was sitting bolt upright again, listening with every power of mind and body. Some one was moving on the floor above. A faint, wavering circle of light played along the upper walls of the hall and about the head of the stairs.

Cautiously, Peter turned himself about, and with the soundless agility of a cat he was on his feet upon the cushions of the couch. One step, and he was behind one of the straight, heavy curtains that hung on either side of the recess. Taking care that the metal rings above, should not slip, he drew back the edge of the curtain and peered out through a narrow opening between the curtain and the corner of the wall.

Some one was coming softly down the stairs. The ray of a flash light picked out each step as the person descended. It was difficult, at first, to make out the figure behind the blinding veil of light, but as it came nearer and nearer, Peter's taut muscles relaxed a little.

It was only Major Mary. Wonderful, indefatigable Major Mary. Was there no limit to the strength in that slender, straight old body? He watched her turn down the hall, away from him and toward the back of the house. She disappeared under the arched entrance to the library. Peter maintained his position, and in a few moments she came back down the hall. He could see her a little more plainly now, owing to the position of the light she held. She was still fully dressed except that she must have changed to soft slippers or none at all, for her feet made not the slightest sound as she went rapidly up the stairs, and again disappeared from view.

"Too restless to sleep and wanted something to read," Peter thought, for on Major Mary's return from the library he had noticed a fairly good-sized book under her arm. "Poor old dear. I'm afraid she'll be a wreck in the morning. And Heaven knows what she'll have to face. But she'll face it, Peter Clancy," he answered himself sternly as he dropped down again upon the couch. "She'll face it—and so must you." With tense concentration he proceeded to consider that night's events. One fact contradicted everything else and presented to Peter's mind an unsurmountable difficulty.

Everything else tallied. Wilhelm von Lowen of the many rôles had made clear much that had been dark. Helen Field's explanation in regard the loss of the first vial of pilocarpine was undoubtedly true. Her emotion when Clancy had first mentioned the drug to her was readily understandable, on the supposition that her patient was very ill and a very disagreeable woman. It would be natural for a person of that type to make it exceedingly unpleasant for a nurse whose carelessness had made it necessary for her to go without her medicine.

It was plain, too, why Doctor Druse, knowing of the circumstances of the double prescription, should have been

very much disturbed when both Clancy and the so-called Swartz seemed to recognize Gifford Craig's symptoms as those of pilocarpine poisoning. He would readily have seen the several ways in which this fact might become known, and so had warned Helen, and had tried in every way to protect her from the inferences that might be drawn from the facts, if they were known. Very likely the doctor might not have thought of himself as implicated in any way, since it was obvious now that he had used the blank tablets in perfect good faith. Von Lowen's words had been few, but they had been quite clear as to this point.

And Gifford Craig's dying appeal. What was to be made of that? Peter turned restlessly on the couch and stared up into the darkness. He could not bring himself to believe, nor to think that Doctor Druse actually believed at the time, that Gifford Craig was delirious. No. The dying man knew that he had been poisoned. But how? Craig would ask himself, how had it been accomplished? And his type of mind, full of hatred and suspicion, would it not, perhaps, hark back to the only thing he was conscious of having taken, the nature of which he did not thoroughly understand? The hypodermic injections that Helen Field had been giving him, must he not have had these in his mind when he whispered in Clancy's ear, "Hypodermic—you find——" Did he then suspect the nurse who had administered the drug? Or did his racked mind hark back to the hatred of his youth and to the unsuccessful rival of his old age? And did he try to throw suspicion on the doctor who had prescribed the hypodermic treatment? Who could tell? Those lips, with their suspicions and innuendoes, were sealed forever.

But the words they had spoken still echoed in Peter's ears. "Poisoned!" Yes. But how? Von Lowen—or Karl

Swartz, as Peter still called him in his mind—had not been near Craig until several hours after he had been stricken down. Yet his last words had made it plain that the whole criminal plan had been his, and that his accomplice was Ilsa—Ilsa Craig! How unthinkable. So beautiful, she had seemed, so gentle, so gracious. There had never been a flaw in her manner to her elderly husband so far as Peter knew. Even to his sophisticated mind she had seemed above suspicion, and when he had seen Stockton Brown with her in the arbor, only one inference had occurred to him. But now, if Major Mary was right in thinking that Stockton truly loved Helen Field, if he had repulsed Ilsa that day for the last time, how easy to think that it was outraged pride that spoke in her voice when she gave Peter to understand that it was Stockton who was the pursuer; how natural to believe that lust for revenge was at the root of her simulated fear of cholera and her clever suggestion that Stockton had given Craig the Chinese tiles with criminal intent.

Revenge—and fear. Fear for herself. Anything, no matter how bizarre, to throw suspicion elsewhere. If Ilsa Craig were guilty— Over and over again the scenes of this tragic week were enacted in Clancy's mind. Only a week, think of it, and everything changed. This house that had welcomed him was now silent and dark—and he, watching, waiting—for what? He scarcely knew. Something sinister. Something terrible, fateful. And yet, nothing happened. Twice during the night he thought he heard a faint stirring somewhere above, but there had been no outcry—nothing to alarm him. Only for a long time there seemed to be, somewhere in the otherwise silent house, voices murmuring very low—and at last, silence, utter and profound.

Perhaps it was only the chill of early morning that made Clancy shiver under

his heavy overcoat as he waited for the homely household sounds that would release him from his watch.

At last they came. A heavy, shuffling tread upon the back stairs, the sound of coals rattling in the kitchen range, and the flip-flop of slippers as the servant went back upstairs to dress. Peter, feeling that his watch had been relieved, drew a long breath, and slipping into his overcoat, made his way softly out of the house. Keeping close to the wall, so as not to be observed from an upper window, Peter gained the trees at the far corner of the house and quickly made his way back to his car.

A few hours later, a little pale from his all-night vigil, but refreshed by a bath and a good breakfast, Clancy presented himself at the front door of Craighurst. He had determined at last to take Major Mary entirely into his confidence, and with her permission to call Larry and Doctor Druse in consultation. The horrible story that had been told about Helen Field was still rife in the village, and some drastic means must be taken to refute it. The best way of accomplishing this must be a matter of careful consideration. There would be, of course, a great deal in the papers both in the New York dailies and in the local press, about the capture of so eminent a criminal as Wilhelm von Lowen of the many names, but Bill Travers knew nothing of the local record of Karl Swartz, and with the coöperation of Ben Dawes it would be quite possible to color the rough drawing of Karl Swartz's dying confession to harmonize best with the wishes of those most deeply concerned in the protection of Helen Field.

As to Ilsa Craig, what was to be done with her? What did they really have against her that would stand in point of law—or even in clear, daylight common sense? A dying criminal breathes his hatred of her; a dying woman accuses

Gifford Craig's beautiful young wife—of what? Why merely of having in her possession a number of mushrooms which Esther Moore recognized, or thought she did, as the deadly amanita. Peter could see, in imagination, how absurd this evidence would appear to judge and jury.

And yet, the confession of Karl Swartz was almost certainly true in every other respect. Twice he had been seen attempting to gain secret communication with some one at Craighurst. Why should he lie as to who it was? And Ilsa Craig would inherit over eight million dollars even after the other bequests had been paid.

Peter had still no light on this point as he followed the servant down the hall at Craighurst that bright October morning. If he had been possessed of a greater degree of vanity he would have hated to admit to Major Mary that he was a professional detective, and yet had been unable to detect the most important part of this entire plot, if plot it was. Having, however, a simple, direct and modest personality, he was quite unembarrassed when the butler, with a quiet, "Mis' Brown say you're to come in here," opened the library door.

It gave him a feeling of relief rather than of anything else when he saw that besides Major Mary there were, seated in the library, Doctor Druse, Larry, and Helen Field. Since his story must be told, it was just as well to have it over once and for all, and he was glad to have Larry there to vouch for his reputation and character.

As he crossed the room, Peter was not surprised at the look of care and anxiety expressed by each face as it turned toward him, and it gave him a thrill of happiness to see the look lighten with confidence and welcome as he advanced.

"Come and sit by me, Peter," said Major Mary holding out her hand.

"You're just in time. I have told Helen and Larry and Win all that happened last night, and I want you to hear what I have to say now. After what happened last night, Peter Clancy, and the way you stood by, you deserve to hear the rest." She spoke slowly, and with a tragic weariness that Peter thought he could understand. "I have told them of the words of that villain who died last night—of what he said"—her voice was very low—"about my brother's wife. I have told Helen and Larry of the death of Esther Moore, and why she made Win call me there, and what you and Win and I heard. And Helen and Larry say as you did, Peter, 'What does it matter if Esther Moore saw, as she thought she saw, the deadly amanita in Ilsa's basket? Since it is we who ate the mushrooms she prepared that day, and we are well. While Gifford, who did not touch them, died.' They ask this. But Win says nothing." She fixed the doctor with her eyes. "Is it because you know, Win Druse?" she asked.

He bent his head. "I know—now," he answered solemnly. "In view of everything, and of what you have just told me, I can see but one thing to believe."

"And you had no suspicion before—last night?"

Doctor Druse spread his open hands toward them. He mused for a second and then spoke.

"Over and over again I have said to you, Mary, that Gifford's symptoms were those of amanita poisoning. That that seemed to me the only sort of poison that would have such frightful effects, and that would rack its victim for so dreadfully long a time before he died. I even knew what you have been looking up in that book." He pointed to a rather large volume that Mary Brown held in her lap. "But it meant—it meant—not accident, but deliberate murder, and I could not bring myself to

believe that any one here could be capable of such a crime."

Mary Brown sat stiffly upright in her chair regarding him. On her fine, thin face was the fateful look of some old sibyl. Slowly she opened the book she had been holding and with her thin finger she traced the words upon a certain page.

"And yet it seems there have been, in history, several beings who are believed to have been guilty of such a crime," she said solemnly. "Pliny speaks of a mushroom 'very conveniently adapted for poisoning' and goes on to say that they are 'deservedly held in disesteem since the notorious crime committed by Agrippina, who through their agency poisoned her husband, the Emperor Claudius.'" She looked up from the book with still, cold horror in her eyes. "Was it this entry in the book she so often consulted that resulted in my brother's death? Or was it this other?" She turned a few pages. "I will read it to you. Remember all the circumstances. Listen. I leave you to judge." In a low voice, as if reciting a lesson, she read:

"A fungus can be absorbed by a harmless element. Then, if this element in which the fungus is absorbed, is eaten, the venom acts quickly. Furthermore, if the amanita is cut in sections and laid in vinegar the fungus may be eaten without danger to life."

"You mean," cried Peter starting forward. "you mean that you all could actually have eaten that deadly fungus—"

"Yes, Peter. Let me finish," said Mary Brown. "It means that, and more. Listen to this." As the horror of comprehension dawned slowly in the youthful eyes fixed on her, she read:

"If the amanita is laid in vinegar, the fungus may be eaten without danger to life; but if a very small dose of the vinegar is taken, death will follow more speedily than if the whole fungus were eaten."

"No, Aunt Mary!" cried Helen Field,

her face blanched with horror. "No! No! I can't believe it. I was here that day. Last Sunday. It was only last Sunday! I saw her. The servants were off for the day, and I saw her arrange the salad course with her own hands. And— Oh, I remember something now; but it can't be true. She couldn't—"

"What do you remember that can't be true, Helen?" asked Mary Brown.

The girl bent her head. Her hands were fast locked in her lap. Her voice was scarcely above a whisper.

"I started to put all the plates on a tray to carry them into the dining room and Ilsa said to me, quite sharply, 'Don't try to take so many, Helen.' Then she took off one plate, and I went into the other room. She didn't bring the last plate until those I had brought were placed." Then, as if the words were dragged from her, Helen said, "I remember clearly. She said something about grandfather's liking more red pepper than the rest of us, and she took the plate I had placed for him and substituted the one she had in her—"

A sharp knock sounded at the door. So tense was the atmosphere that the sound had almost the effect of an exploding bomb. Peter jumped for the door, but it was opened before he could reach it and the scared face of the butler appeared.

"Oh, Mr. Clancy," he said quickly, "do come, please, sir. Mis' Brown say I wasn't to 'low nobody in, but I don't guess she knew—"

"Mr. Clancy!" A voice sounded over the butler's shoulder, and Sergeant Ben Dawes of the State constabulary came suddenly into view. "Oh, Mr. Clancy," he repeated, "I'm so glad you're here, sir. I—"

"What is it, Clancy?" Doctor Druse had joined Peter at the door. "Oh, Ben Dawes," he said looking past Peter into the hall. "What do you want, Ben?" he asked regarding the trooper steadily.

Ben Dawes hesitated. "If I might come inside, doctor," he said, with a glance at the butler.

Mary Brown spoke quietly from across the room.

"Come in, Ben Dawes," she said in a tone of authority, and, as they all came forward, Peter having closed and locked the door, she went on addressing the trooper: "You've come here to find out what your duty is in regard to last night. You can't make up your mind. Is that right?"

"That's exactly what it is, Mrs. Brown," said Dawes nervously drawing off his gauntlets and pulling them through his belt. "I can't feel right about your being here, in case, for once in his life, that devil we all called Swartz told the truth last night. It don't sound reasonable a bit—I mean—you know, what he said about Mrs.—about Mrs. Craig."

"And yet it is the truth." The strength of Major Mary's voice surprised them all. "Listen, Ben Dawes, and all of you." She stood up and raised her right hand in the air. "I accuse Ilsa Lockhart, latterly known as Ilsa Craig, of having murdered my brother by the most horrible poison known to man, the deadly amanita."

"Good heavens, Mrs. Brown," cried the trooper, "do you realize what you are saying?"

"I do," answered Mary Brown sternly. "I know what I am saying, and I will abide by the consequences."

Peter started forward. Mary Brown checked him with a gesture. Ben Dawes spoke:

"You mean, Mrs. Brown—you mean you wish me to arrest her?"

"Now!" said Mary Brown, and her lips closed in a straight line.

"But it would be illegal, Mrs. Brown," the trooper objected. "There must be a warrant—"

"You were sent at the right moment," said Mrs. Brown inexorably, "and you

will come up with me now—or I will go alone."

"But, Mrs. Brown," Dawes expostulated, "I must go down and swear out a warrant. You tell her so, Mr. Clancy. I'll come right back, Mrs. Brown. You'll be perfectly safe with Mr. Clancy and Doctor Druse and——"

"Do you think I'm afraid, Ben Dawes?" The old voice was filled with scorn. "Do you think I was afraid last night? Do you think I am afraid now to face—whatever there is to face? Come or not, as you please." And like some old king she swept past him, opened the door for herself and left the room.

But not alone. Instantly Peter was at her side. By some strange but deeply centered sympathy he felt he could divine much if not all that was passing in that clear, brave, strong old mind. He realized now what the errand was that brought her down through the dark and silent house last night. The book from which she had just read that illuminating and convincing paragraph, was the book she had carried up under her arm. She must have remembered that statement, after those dying words of Esther Moore. She must have verified it—and then——

With a curious contraction of the heart, Peter passed with her along the hall and up the broad flight of stairs. Behind them, undeterred by the illegality of the action, since it was supported by Peter Clancy, came the trooper. Close on his heels were the Druses, father and son, and, as they turned on the landing, Peter, looking into the hall below, saw Helen Field, her face paper white, shrinking in terror against the wall.

With step unflinching, Major Mary led them along the upper hall and to a certain door.

"Knock," she said to Peter.

Peter obeyed. Softly at first, and then louder and louder still.

There was no answer. Suddenly the trooper stepped forward.

"Has she gone—escaped, Mr. Clancy, do you think?" he whispered in Peter's ear.

"The windows are high. And I was here all night, in the hall downstairs," Peter answered. "She didn't go out after——"

He looked at Major Mary. She was white to the lips. Quite suddenly, like the swift rolling up of a curtain, Peter saw and knew. The footsteps—the voices in the night—the silence—he could read the meaning of these in the stern, white old face before him. With a heart full of pity and horror, Peter put his arm about her and stepped back.

"Try the door, Dawes," he said in a tone of command. "If you find it locked, break it in."

There was a strong intake of the breath from the two men behind them, a sharp word of expostulation from Doctor Druse. The trooper paid no heed. He turned the doorknob and pushed. The door did not yield. He stepped back with a gesture to them to clear the way and hurled his young strength against the panels. Again—and yet again. At the third onslaught there was the tearing crash of splintering wood, and the door fell inward on sagging hinges.

One look, and Peter caught Major Mary in his arms as she sank toward the floor.

"I gave her the chance, and she took it, Peter," the tragic old voice sounded faintly in his ear. "Life is too hard sometimes, and fate too relentless. You understand how it was? Peter, how can man judge the temptations of a soul like hers? I let her judge herself—and she has paid."

A little later Peter stood alone beside the body of Ilsa Craig. Beautiful beyond words, the pale face was turned up toward him. The coverlid was

smooth as if she had but just dropped asleep. The little table by the head of the bed was in neat and exquisite order, and upon it stood a glass half full of water and beside that, a small box—a little, Chinese box, jade green. Peter opened it. The box was empty.

It was a week later, and in the golden rain of autumn leaves and autumn sunshine, Peter Clancy sat by his cottage door. Upon his knees was an open book, a book he had recently borrowed from the village library where he had, latterly, become a frequent visitor. The title of the book, "Great Crimes of History", had intrigued him, and he had brought it home the night before, but had not opened it till now. He was sitting by his cottage door, staring down at a face which looked gently up at him from the open page; a face tragically familiar, and as haunting in its beauty as an old melody.

Startled and shaken, Peter looked at the small inscription under the portrait. Lucrezia Borgia. Yes. Of course. He remembered now. That same portrait had been in one of his text books at school. That was why he had been troubled by a persistent sense of familiarity when he had looked upon that other face so like it, the face of Ilsa Craig. What could it mean? Was it only a coincidence?

The sound of wheels upon the rough roadway caught his ear. Steel tires, and the beat of horses' hoofs. Peter closed his book and stood up quickly, looking curiously toward the triumphal arch of gold and scarlet where the trees flung their branches across the road.

In a moment a sight one sees but rarely nowadays met Peter's eye. Issuing from the opening in the trees came a handsome and well-kept old Victoria, drawn by two sleek carriage horses. On the box, his silk hat shining in the brilliant sun, sat an old Irish coachman, handling the reins with ease and grace.

As the apparition drew near, Peter uttered a cry and ran down the steep, short path to the road.

"Look who's here," he said with a glad note in his voice. "By all that's great if it isn't my captivating friend, Major Mary Brown!"

"You're a very saucy boy, Peter Clancy," said the old lady rising as the quaint vehicle stopped. "But the captivating part of your remark is correct. I've come"—her strong little chin was thrust forward, her eyes twinkled and her little gray side curls vibrated like springs—"I've come," she repeated, "to take your castle by storm. Help me out, Peter."

"But of course, Mrs. Brown. And it's so good of you to come to see me," said Peter heartily.

As he lifted her from the carriage, she turned her head and looked at him darkly.

"What is that thing you say? 'You don't know the half of it, deary. You don't know the half of it.'" She imitated Peter's tone. Then she turned back to the carriage. "Carry the trunk into Mr. Clancy's guest room, Patrick," she said. "It's the door at the right of the fireplace. Be very careful of the rods. I thought we might try for bass over at Elkins Pond, Peter, so I brought my tackle along."

"But, Mrs. Brown," Clancy exclaimed rather hastily, "do you mean that if—"

The coachman, with a steamer trunk on his shoulder, was already starting to climb the steep path. Mary Brown looked up at Peter with an expression half tragic, half quizzical.

"I can't stay in that house any longer, Peter," she said. "No matter if I have been ill for a week or more, I'm well now. Helen has taken care of me as if she were my own child, but she wants to go to town for a while now, and she ought to get into a different atmosphere. As soon as Stockton is completely re-

covered, we're going to travel, but until then—I knew you had a guest room, Peter—and so—I came.”

Clancy laughed aloud.

“But what a scandal that will start in Somerset, Major Mary,” he cried. “Have you considered that? What *will* the people in the village say?”

“What will they say?” Crinkling

laughter made a network of wrinkles around the sad, old tired eyes, making them young again, and infinitely appealing. “Don't you know what they'll say, Peter?” She put her little, worn hands on his shoulders. “They'll say, ‘God help Peter Clancy!’” And, leaning forward, she kissed him smartly on the cheek.

THE END.



SURRENDERS TO SAVE GIRL

FROM Edwards, Kansas, comes the report of the capture of William La Trasse, a notorious outlaw, who for a quarter of a century has played a lone hand against the authorities. It was a woman who was the cause of the bandit's surrender. He had a chance to escape from the shack in which officers had found him, but fearing that the fire from their guns would injure his sweetheart, Hazel Henderson, he turned back and gave himself up. La Trasse and the girl had planned to be married.

“I am a prisoner now and on my way back to the penitentiary to do fourteen years and nine months,” La Trasse is reported to have said shortly after his capture, “because I could not run away and let Hazel get hurt. I never had a woman around me before, but Hazel ain't like the rest of them. She believed in me and was ready to marry me and help me make good all the promises I made when I was paroled.”



FAKE INSPECTORS FOR BANK

A RECENT news report from Bloomington, Illinois, tells how two bank robbers perpetrated a daring impersonation on J. F. Kelly, president of the Farmers State Bank of Chenoa. Posing as bank inspectors they kept the president busy counting cash and checking up accounts for some time after other employees of the bank had left. When the time seemed ripe for the robbery, a third man dressed as a mechanic, entered the bank and informed the two “inspectors” that repairs to their car had been completed. This evidently was the signal for action, for the three at once set upon Mr. Kelly and bound and gagged him. Then they gathered together seventy-five thousand dollars of the bank's cash and bonds, and drove away in the car that was waiting for them outside. It was an hour before the bank president could release himself and give the alarm.

The Face in the Foam

by

R.M. Bemis

Author of "Twixt the Bucket and the Lip," etc.

AFTER canoeing the short distance from the summer-resort hotel, across the lake to the mouth of the Ripley, Eric Holvin and his wife continued on, up the river as far as the foot of the rapids. There they beached the canoe and traveled on foot up the bank of the rushing stream to the second pool below the falls. It was mid-morning of a summer day.

Holvin's wife was a slim, blue-eyed, distinctly modern woman, some would say a little too modern for her husband. Holvin was proud of her, and very jealous, too.

They began casting for trout at the lower end of the pool, in the deeper water below the big tree which lay across the shallow sand bar at the upper end, Holvin eagerly showing her just where to cast the tiny bit of silk and feathers to best attract the notice of the huge trout which he assured her lay concealed under the big rock at the edge of the pool, thirty feet away on the other side of the water.

Not long after they had begun fishing in this pool, there came a cheery hail from above. A man was waving to them from the rocks at the top of the falls. The woman answered, and the man, waving his hat to her, started to climb down the rocky path. Holvin waved a hand in salute, but, turning away, apparently intent on the fishing, scowled. His lips tightened to a grim line.

Holvin hated Leslie Brentling, although it had not always been so. Outwardly they were still close friends. Brentling, with his easy ways, his violently forceful manner, his dynamic energy, and ever cheerful friendliness, seemed to Holvin to be everything that he was not.

It did not lessen his hate for the man to see his wife, after waving again, go up to the next pool to meet Brentling. Holvin, pretending to be fishing, watched them closely out of the corners of his eyes. Above the roar of the falls he could hear what they were saying, for they talked loudly.

"Aren't they beauties?" Brentling had opened the cover of his fishbasket, and the woman was peering into it.

"Oh, Leslie, they're wonderful!"

Holvin cast his line out viciously, pulled it in regardless of the fact that the fly had not floated down to the spot where the fish might be expected to be, and cast it again, with venom.

"Caught 'em up above the old bridge," he heard Brentling explaining. "Caught any yet?"

"No," said the woman. "How many are there? And they're such big ones!" She was looking up at Brentling in a way that caused Holvin to bite his lip and swear softly. "She might have told him that we'd just started fishing," he thought bitterly. Brentling was a good fisherman, always a successful one. He was like that, always a little better than

Holvin, no matter what it was. As far back as Holvin could remember, it had been like that.

"How's that one, Eric?" called the man above. He was holding up a trout, a large trout, a speckled beauty that would have gladdened the heart of any fisherman.

Holvin grinned up at his friend. "Pretty good," he called, and silently cursed himself for the show of appreciation, cursing Brentling as well. He wondered just what he should have done. Hated the thought that he might have to go on grinning at Brentling, and applauding his success. But what else could he do? He did not know.

"Caught them under the big stump, above the old bridge," called Brentling. "Hard place to get at, but man! they grow big, up there. I'm going to get out early to-morrow and try them again."

Holvin grunted an answer and returned to his automatic casting. The woman was still admiring the fish.

"You won't get much, down there," called Brentling. "Come up here. I lost a big one here, before I went up to the bridge. Try 'em in here, Eric."

Holvin swore softly, and hoped that he might at least this once get a big one here, and show Brentling. But even as he wished, he knew that he would not. Brentling would be right, of course. After a few more casts he reeled in his line and went up.

Brentling was a big man, a head taller than Holvin, with clear, blue eyes, that seemed to sparkle with that dynamic friendliness that is hard to put aside. Holvin knew that his own eyes were lusterless, unfriendly, as he climbed the path to the higher ground and came up to them.

Here the ground was several feet above the pool, dropping off at the edge in a sheer cliff. The woman had gone to the edge, and was preparing to cast, while Brentling was lighting his pipe. Suddenly the woman gave a little cry.

"Oh! there's a dead man in the water!" She turned toward them, staring with horror.

It was Brentling who moved first, and it was perhaps natural that the woman would run to him, and cling to him. She was very much agitated, and not, probably, thinking of anything but what she had seen. Brentling had already put a comforting arm about her before Holvin moved.

"Queer I didn't see it when I fished here, half an hour ago," said Brentling. "But pull yourself together, Frances."

Holvin, his thoughts all on the little thoughtless action of his wife, ran quickly to the edge of the cliff and looked down. Below him was the bank of foam, held back by the branches of the fallen tree, in shallow water at the lower side of the pool. A mass of white and gray foam from the falls, with bits of leaves, sticks, and general rubbish washed down the river. He searched the whole of it with a rapid glance.

He turned. The woman was still in Brentling's arms. "I don't see anything," snapped Holvin. "What's the matter with you, anyway? Don't make a fool of yourself, Brentling. There's nothing here."

"I saw it," protested the woman. "A man's face in the edge of the foam!" She still clung to the man. Holvin grunted his anger.

"There's nothing here," he said shortly. "Come back and show it to me, and don't make an idiot of yourself." There was uncompromising hardness in his tone.

Brentling gently pushed the woman away from him, and the two of them approached, the woman fearfully, Brentling more intent on the obvious anger in Holvin's face. "The little girl's had a bad scare, Eric," he said. "Must be something down there, eh?"

"There isn't a thing," said Holvin again, his eyes on the woman. "Show it to us," he demanded coldly.

She looked down, searching the fleecy masses with timid eyes. "There! Over there beyond that big stick. Just a face, can't you see it?"

Holvin laughed. "Rubbish!" he snapped. "It's not the face of a man. You're seeing things!" He picked up several pebbles, and began tossing them at the thing which his wife called a face, in the foam.

The others watched intently, the woman obviously horrified. The pebbles fell wide of the mark, at first. "It's nothing, anyway, but a little mass of foam, with dead leaves for eyes, and a bit of straw for a mouth," Holvin declared, still tossing the pebbles.

"It would be the natural place for a body to ground," said Brentling, staring down at the face uncertainly. "There's a sand bar under the foam. The water there is hardly ten inches deep. But I guess you're right, at that, old man. It's only a mass of foam. Frances, but there is a remarkable resemblance to a face. Ghastly looking thing, but nothing but foam, and bits of rubbish."

"There!" exclaimed Holvin at last, as one of his pebbles, striking fairly, plopped down through the face, splashing the resemblance entirely away.

The woman laughed, an uncertain little laugh that was drowned out by the rushing of the water over the fall. "It did look like a face to me," she said. "I was sure it was a dead man in the water. I guess I must have something on my conscience! I'm seeing things."

Holvin glanced at her sharply, and then looked quickly away, and, picking up his fishing rod, prepared to cast again. It was Brentling who decided that the fly the woman was using was not just the right kind, and tied on another for her, out of his own fly book. She cast it, under his direction, but the trout would not rise. Holvin was not having any luck, and after a few minutes suggested that they continue on up

the stream. Brentling was not fishing any more. "Guess I'll be going along down," he said. "Hope you have lots of luck, folks. Try that hole above the old bridge, when you get up there. It's the best spot in the whole brook."

"I think I'll go down with you, if Eric doesn't mind my deserting him," said the woman. "I'm getting tired of fishing, already."

"And I'll paddle you to the other end of the lake and back," agreed Brentling, falling in with the idea instantly. "Eric won't mind. No man wants a woman around when he's trying to catch fish, eh?"

Holvin shrugged his shoulders and tried to smile. He began casting again.

"You don't mind, do you, Eric?" asked the woman. "I think that awful face scared the life out of me."

"Come on, then. We'll leave Eric to his fishing. And don't forget to try that place above the bridge," Brentling called back, as they went down the path.

Holvin grunted noncommittally, and as he turned away his lips set grimly. After a few casts he reeled in his line and climbed up the path to the top of the falls. There he stopped and looked down. He could see his wife and Brentling on the path below the pool. They were striding along rapidly, with the woman looking up at him as he talked. Holvin did not like the look on her face. Bitterly he turned away, continuing on the path along the stream until he came to the old bridge.

Along the stream here were thick bushes, shielding the rapidly rushing water from view. The old bridge, he knew, was one which some logging crew had thrown across many years before. He squeezed down the narrow path in the bushes to the end of the bridge. By going out on the weatherworn planks one could cast up and down the stream without interference from the bushes that lined both banks. Up above was the hole which Brentling had spoken of,

where the river, making a slight turn, had washed out the bank on the nearest side, leaving the roots of an old stump exposed, forming a sheltering spot for some big trout to hide in.

Stepping gingerly on the rotten planks of the bridge, Holvin went out from the shore. The dark water rushed underneath, running swiftly down from there to the falls, a couple of hundred feet below. The planks did not go all the way across the bridge, having rotted entirely away in the middle, leaving only the bare, moss-covered beams, stretching from shore to shore. Holvin did not fish. He sat down on one side of the bridge, and with his feet just above the black water, bitterly contemplated the past. He thought again of all the little things which had occurred recently to inflame the jealousy that had already been there.

"Another six weeks with Brentling and I'll be out of it altogether," he said bitterly. He tore off bits of the rotten planking and threw them into the stream, and watched them. How swiftly they were carried away! In half a minute they would be dashed over the falls.

"If Brentling would only fall through this rotten old bridge to-morrow morning when he comes here to fish," he mused coldly, "it would be the best thing that ever happened for me. But there is no chance of that. He's been here before, and he knows the planks are rotten, and steps only on the safe ones."

He stared down at the rushing black water. It was deep here, for the river was narrow—deep and black, and rushing with terrible certainty to the brink of the falls.

"Tired, was she?" he grumbled, thinking of his wife, and how quickly she had deserted him when Brentling came on the scene. "She's getting tired of her husband, more probably. If I don't do something soon, curse him, there'll be only one end to it. He's too infernally perfect to live, confound him!"

All the while he was staring down at the black water. It fascinated him to see the bits of rotten plank whisked away. He got up suddenly and surveyed the bridge. The end nearest the shore seemed much the safest. Toward the middle some of the planks were so weak as to be almost ready to break in two of their own weight.

There was an evil light in his eyes as he took notice of the fact that the narrow path through the bushes came out on the bridge between the two beams which stretched across the river. The planks, being laid crossways, were held up only at each end. If the planks at the end of the bridge were as weak as those out over the middle of the stream, he thought grimly, Brentling would fall through as soon as he stepped on the bridge.

Speculatively he lifted one end of the plank nearest the end. He was surprised to discover that it was not nailed down solidly. The big nails, rusted and weak, came out easily from the rotten wood of the beams. The whole bridge, he discovered, was in a very weak condition. He passed suddenly from the stage of hoping that Brentling would meet with an accident to wondering if it would be possible to weaken the bridge, and make the accident certain.

It was a terrible thing to contemplate, but he tested the planks with a hardening of the heart—grim resolution growing in his mind. It would be easy, he decided. Easy to move some of the planks at the middle, and put the weaker ones at the end. It would be a man trap that would claim as its victim the first living thing which stepped on the bridge from the path.

That, he knew, would make his trap a little uncertain. Unless Brentling were the first to step on it, he would escape and an innocent person would suffer. Holvin sat down again, and with one hand tearing at the rotten wood unconsciously, thought over his desperate mar-

der plot in a coldly calculating fashion. He was not afraid of being caught and convicted of murder. The idea hardly occurred to him, yet he realized that once the trap was sprung, the evidence would be torn away, and with the drowning man, be washed over the falls. People would say it had been an accident, there seemed no doubt of that.

He decided, finally, that he would come back late in the evening and change the planks, then no one would walk into the trap that day, and it would be ready for Brentling when he came the next morning.

Holvin got up and walked slowly down the path, got into his canoe, and paddled about the lake, thinking, and thinking, bitterly, working himself up to a state of mind by brooding over his troubles. When he got back to the hotel, he was silent, shunning the other vacationists. He told them he did not feel well, and in truth he did not.

The long day wore away at last, and that evening the final straw was added to the weight of evidence which told him that he must kill Brentling. After various unsuccessful efforts to interest Holvin in something, Brentling and the girl went canoeing in the moonlight. He watched them go, and for the first time since planning his crime he smiled, a grim, leering smile that was not good to see.

Half an hour later he left, quietly, taking one of the canoes and paddling across the lake to the mouth of the Ripley. Aware of the possible danger of his presence there being connected with the death of Brentling on the next morning, he drew the canoe far up into the bushes before he went on, up the path toward the bridge. The moon was shining brightly, round and white in the sky, only occasionally dimmed by the passage of a cloud.

When he had arrived at the bridge he sat down, studied the problem of how best to arrange his trap, and waited till

the moon should pass behind a cloud to do the work. There was no sense in taking any unnecessary risk, he told himself coldly, even though he hardly cared whether his crime found him out or not.

He heard, above the droning beat of the falls the sound of voices on the path. Some one was coming. There were two of them, a man's voice and a woman's. He grinned leeringly again as he realized that they were Brentling, and his own wife.

"Out walking in the moonlight!" he grated between clenched teeth. "I hope to Heaven, Brentling, that you get here before any one else to-morrow morning!"

Would they stop at the bridge? He sat on one of the beams and kept quite still. He could barely make out what they were saying. Brentling was telling of some exploit of his. At the end of the bridge they hesitated for the fraction of a minute, then passed on. Soon their voices faded into the distance. Holvin sat on the beam for a time, and then, the moon having passed behind a cloud, he set to work on the trap, lifting the planks from the end to the middle, and placing the very weak ones at the end. One of them broke in his hands as he picked it up. The two pieces darted quickly out of sight in the black water. The suddenness of the disappearance gave him a thrill.

There were other weak planks, however, and it was only a short time till the trap was finished. He sat down again and contemplated what he had done. He would have to be careful when leaving the bridge to walk along the very edge of the thing, over a beam, and force his way up through the bushes, at one side of the path.

"The next man who steps on those planks," he thought grimly, "goes into the river and over the falls." He waited for Brentling and his wife, who would probably return the way they had gone

up. And as he waited he cursed Brentling silently.

There was a half formed plan in his head to call to them when they should pass. Brentling would come out on the bridge, and die before his eyes. He thought of it coldly, and decided that while dramatic, it would be an unnecessary risk to himself.

He had not long to wait for them. As he heard their voices, coming down the path, he cursed Brentling again. They were not talking very loudly, and at first he could not hear what they were saying. They stopped at the path leading down to the bridge. Brentling seemed to be arguing about something, and the woman protesting, laughingly.

Then the wind seemed to carry the a few of Brentling's words, "—go away—better that way—never know—"

Holvin's muscles tightened, and he leered down at the black water. "Yes," he thought grimly, "you're going away, drone of the falls away, and he caught Brentling, but not with my wife!" Then in a sudden panic he caught a few more words. "First train in the morning—" Did Brentling mean that he would leave in the morning? He set his teeth hard on the thought that the man might get away from him after all.

"No, you don't, Brentling," he muttered between clenched teeth. "I can call you into the trap, right now!" He was about to call out to them, when the wind, blowing fresh from up the river, seemed to dull the drone of the falls, and he could hear Brentling's words plainly. The man was talking louder, too, and more insistently.

"The first train in the morning, dear. It's the best way, and the only way. People are talking. Eric is frightfully jealous of you, and he must have heard some of the things that are being bandied about among the gossips about us. Even though there is nothing at all between us, the effect on him must be the same." Here Holvin caught his breath suddenly.

What did Brentling mean by that? Brentling continued.

"We've been good friends, Eric and I, and there's no sense in my stirring up trouble, especially when you and I are only friends. I'll slip away, and spend my vacation elsewhere. Eric is unreasonably jealous of you, but he's a friend of mine, you know."

Suddenly Holvin scrambled to his feet. What was Brentling saying, that there was no affair between them? That he was going away because he had discovered that he was creating discord? With a sudden wave of nausea at what he had been about to do, Holvin remembered all the good things about Leslie Brentling that he seemed to have forgotten in his moments of mad jealousy.

The man and the woman in the path started on again, the woman protesting laughingly about something. Holvin stood as though frozen till their voices died away. He could not realize that what he had heard must be the truth, yet neither Brentling nor his wife could have known he had been listening. What a blind fool he had been! He was filled with contrition by the thought that he had doubted Leslie Brentling. Why, there was no sense in the man going away. Let the gossips talk. He did not care; this was a matter for only the three of them. Forgotten now were all the foolish imaginations of the past weeks; forgotten were all his furious resolutions to bring about the death of Brentling; forgotten was even the death trap itself as he quickly started across the bridge in his eager haste to overtake them and apologize, and insist that Brentling stay.

Brentling and the woman had got nearly to the falls when Brentling stopped suddenly. "What was that, eh? Sounded like a cry." They listened.

"It was nothing," said the woman.

"Probably a bird," agreed Brentling. They went on, down the rocky path, past the falls, in the white glow of the moonlight. They stood at the foot of

them, admiring the glistening white and black of the falling water, and passed on.

The woman laughed, a little ripple of sound, as they passed the bank of foam where she had seen the face that morning. "Poor Eric was quite provoked about my thinking that thing in the water this morning was a real face." She laughed again. And then gave a little cry. "For goodness' sake! I do believe I can see another one, almost in the same place! Do you see it, Leslie?"

Brentling peered at it. "It does look

real," he replied. "It is remarkable, we shall have to tell Eric about it. I think it was just then, when you first saw the face, that I realized how jealous of you Eric is. He was angry because you came to me, instead of him, when you were afraid."

"Don't be silly, Leslie," said the woman. "Ugh! But I don't like to see dead people in the water. Let's go."

And long after they were gone, the white, glistening face in the water remained, staring up at the sky, waiting for morning.



EDWARDS ESTATE A MYTH

FIVE hundred persons from Illinois, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, attended a conference on February 21st, in Fort Worth, Texas, to form an association to recover the proceeds of a vast estate to which they were led to believe they were the heirs. It was said to be the Edwards estate in New York City, but according to the register's office of New York County, there is no such estate. At the meeting held in February, two Texas lawyers had advised the supposed heirs not to take any steps to investigate their claim until the New York register's office should be heard from. The claimants, believing that a share in the fictitious estate would be paid to them eventually, had contributed from ten to twenty dollars each for the purpose of forming the association. It would appear that what might have proved a hoax of colossal proportions was thus nipped in the bud by the shrewdness of the Texas lawyers, before any further contributions were levied from the numerous "heirs."



SWINDLER OF WOMEN GETS EIGHT YEARS

THE General Sessions Court in New York City contained many women who had been victims of Allen Kichman, when that gentleman was sentenced a few weeks ago to serve from four to eight years in Sing Sing. In the front row of the spectators' benches were six women whom he had defrauded of sums ranging from a few hundred dollars up to ten thousand, after he had become engaged to their daughters. Two of them were the complainants in the cases in which indictments had been returned. Kichman pleaded guilty.

Although already having a wife and child, the prisoner had become engaged to various girls and had not only borrowed money of their mothers, but had also induced them to cash bogus checks. Only two of the victims, however, would make complaints against him. Judge Collins flayed the swindler severely when pronouncing sentence. "You are the most despicable kind of a thief and a crook," he said. "You victimized dozens of confiding young women and their mothers. If there is any swindling scheme you haven't tried, I've not heard of it!"

Prisons, Then and Now

Early American Experiments

by Edward H. Smith

Author of "Newgate," etc.

MEN have always considered it legitimate to conduct experiments on the living bodies and minds of other men who happened to be convicted of offenses. In the time of the great Ptolemy Soter, convicts were handed over to court physicians, Herophilus and Erasistratos, who performed vivisection upon them by cutting open the abdomen and the chest, to observe the beating of the heart and the working of other organs. Mithridates of Pontus had his doctors try the effects of various poisons on felons. And both poisoning and vivisection were practiced on criminals in Italy at the dawn of the Renaissance.

Horrible as all this may seem, the custom of human experimentation in the case of lawbreakers has by no means been abandoned. It has been no more than changed and modified.

In the preceding article of this series the failure of the first reform prisons in the United States was related—a failure due partly to a faulty system of construction and lack of segregation, but even more to mismanagement and official corruption. Thus, in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the pioneer States, Pennsylvania and New York, found themselves facing a terrible dilemma. Must they go back to

the old physical tortures and the revival of capital punishment for a long list of major crimes, or was there some path forward?

The late O. F. Lewis, for long secretary of the American Prison Association, has recorded some opinions of the time in his book on prison customs, to which I am indebted for much material that has gone into these writings. These show clearly enough what the drift was. The old prisons had been "colleges" and "refuges" for convicts. They had not punished, but sheltered the worst elements of the community. They had not paid. They were a burden. Many cried out in clear terms for a return to the direct methods of earlier times, and there was a very grave danger that these men would prevail and that this terrible retrogression would take place.

The reformers, themselves, as I have already related, were appalled by the condition in which their first experiment had been left, after about twenty-five years of trial and disorder. They fought, however, to retain the prison, instead of returning to the ever busy gallows tree, the branding iron, clipping shears, stocks, pillory, lash, and what not. They won their fight, but at a cruel price.

Since one of the greatest objections to the older prisons was based on the charge that the young were corrupted by the old, the inexperienced by the hardened, it was a natural conclusion that association of convicts in prisons should be done away with. This idea gave rise to the building of single-cell prisons, where every convict, as some wag of the times said, "would have his private room."

A good many writers seem to believe that this idea originated in America; but not so. As a matter of fact, the cell prison was imitated from the models of cenobite monasticism, under which each monk occupied, more or less continually, his separate room, den, or cell. And it was a pope, Clement XI, who built the first single-cell prison, San Michele, at Rome, in 1703. It was he, too, who first used the word penitentiary. Later a prison on this model was built at Milan, and still later, the famous Maison de Force was erected at Ghent, where the one-to-a-cell system and other features later used in America were put into practice. As a matter of fact, this Ghent prison first tried out a plan of prison conducting which has since become world famous under the name, "the Auburn system," because it was put into practice at Auburn, New York, in 1820. But Ghent began it, in accordance with the ideas of Count Vilain XIV, of Flanders, in 1791.

The great debate in the minds of prison advocates of this period was, as already noted, between the idea of solitary confinement and the perpetual silence discipline. There was also the lesser conflict between those who advocated hard labor and those who felt that complete idleness and time to meditate upon sins and crimes were the sure cure for criminality. John Howard, the father of prison reform, impressed by the foul conditions he found in British and European jails and lazarettos, because of the association of all kinds of

prisoners, frequently of both sexes, had a strong feeling for the solitary-confinement method, and when he finally persuaded Parliament to let him take charge of and rebuild the Gloucester prison, he instituted this form of punishment there. In the beginning the prisoners were kept in idleness. Later they were given such work as might be done in their cubbies, singly and alone. This happened at least two decades before the solitary idea was adopted in America as a method of correcting the evils which did their part to wreck the Walnut Street Prison in Philadelphia and Newgate in New York.

The fall of Newgate was foreseen, mainly because it became indescribably overcrowded. Consequently the State had begun, as early as 1816, the construction of another prison in west central New York, at the village of Auburn, where parts of the original prison are still standing and in use, among them the administration building with the Continental soldier at the top of the tower. The early parts of this prison were no departure from the older models of Walnut Street and Newgate, for they consisted of a number of large rooms, to hold from eight to ten prisoners, and about sixty solitary cells, into which one or two men could be locked. So Auburn started out on old and discredited lines, with the result that there were outbreaks, mutinies, corruptions, and what not? Also there were, by 1819, more prisoners than the little institution could hold. Accordingly, in that year, Governor De Witt Clinton recommended to the legislature that money be appropriated and provision made for an enlargement of Auburn through the building of the famous "north wing."

This wing is a building inclosing a double row or block of cells, back to back, but entirely confined within the main structure. The wing is one great cell in which are many smaller cells.

The thing is thus a good deal like a hive. Each cell was built to accommodate only one prisoner, and special facilities for guarding and observing the men were provided by the architect. I make mention of these details because they had a tremendous influence on prison architecture all over the world, and they still control the prison builders of to-day. No better model, save for obvious variations, could be found when the great Federal prisons were built in Leavenworth and Atlanta, and even now the Auburn plan is being followed in the new Sing Sing, as it was at the new Stillwater, Minnesota. In fact, nearly all later American prison houses trace back to Auburn in some detail. Great Meadow, which was built without a wall, also followed the Auburn plan.

A good deal has been written about the question of the invention of the Auburn plan. Some believe that it was conceived by William Brittin, the first agent and warden. Others credit Elam Lynds, his deputy and successor. Still other writers say that the plan was matured by one of the five supervisors of the Auburn prison, natives of the village, who served without pay. We shall see a little later that this is all untrue.

Salaries at Auburn in 1820 may interest present-day wage workers. The warden, who was also a builder, received \$1,800 a year; his deputy, \$450; his chief clerk, \$450; turnkeys or keepers, \$350; the surgeon, \$200, and the chaplain, \$125.

Discipline at Auburn, continued so bad that in 1819 the five inspectors organized a militia force of three officers and thirty privates in the village of Auburn, who served without pay, but received their arms and equipment, in return for which they were required to assemble and rush to the prison to help the turnkeys in case of trouble. Nevertheless, there was turmoil inside the new keep, and the situation was brought

to the attention of the legislature by members who were hostile to prisons and wanted no more money spent on this now dubious experiment.

The legislators decided not to give up the prisons because they did not work perfectly, but they passed a grading bill, by the terms of which all prisoners in the State institutions were to be divided into three castes. The old, hardened offenders were the first, and their punishment was to be perpetual solitary confinement without work. The second class were refractory prisoners, who were to alternate between solitary confinement and association, and between idleness and work. The third and best grade were the younger men and first termers, who were to be permitted to work in common during the daytime, and be locked up separately at night. This law forced the English form of solitary confinement on about half of the inmates of Auburn. Oddly enough, it was on Christmas Day, 1821, that the law went into effect, and an unfortunate eighty bad men of Auburn were thus locked away.

This was not, be it known, the first or the only infliction of the solitary as a general form of prison discipline in this country. The Western Penitentiary, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, had opened its doors three years earlier, having been built expressly for the solitary-confinement plan of punishment, and similar methods were being tried in Virginia and elsewhere. The solitary was, of course, in full swing in England, where it was also combined with the principle of silence. In some of the British prisons the thing was carried so far that such convicts as had to go about from place to place, doing the absolutely necessary work of the prisons, were masked.

All this seems barbarous nonsense now. Let me quote from an official document of those times to show how the matter was then regarded:

The end and design of the law is the prevention of crimes, through fear of punishment, the reformation of offenders being a minor consideration. Let the most obdurate and guilty felons be immured in solitary cells and dungeons; let them have pure air, wholesome food, comfortable clothing, and medical aid when necessary; cut them off from all intercourse with men; let not the voice or the face of a friend ever cheer them; let them walk their gloomy abodes and commune with their corrupt hearts and guilty consciences in silence, and brood over the horrors of their solitude and the enormity of their crimes, without the hope of executive pardon.

Contrast with this the sarcastic comment of George Ives in his famous "History of Penal Methods," which deals mainly with English and European jails:

Once make the prisoners think and they will forthwith see the error of their ways. The broken-down, the cretinous, the neurotic, the unbalanced, once made to think were somehow to solve all the terrific problems of disease and environment; repent, and so save themselves.

But there was no understanding of such matters in 1821. The idea that crime might be another term for disease had not yet crept into the minds of men, nor did the folks who ran prisons and made laws even dimly apprehend that a man, cut off from the solace and communion of other men, will die as surely as the hive bee if placed in solitude. Men knew little of human minds then, and cared less. Force was the most obvious means to an end, and it was employed, unsparingly. But it didn't work.

In Auburn the eighty men in solitary confinement slowly went mad. One committed suicide in his cell; several others tried it. Another solitary prisoner, being let out one morning so that his dungeon might be cleaned, threw himself over the railing of the gallery to the pavement below, and was horribly mangled, but still alive. He was patched up and put back into solitary. Another man, driven to frenzy by the

loneliness and terror of the dark and silent cell, butted his head against the stone walls of his keep until he had broken his skull. He, too, survived and was sent back to the torture.

The State, which until now had expressed little interest in prison matters, was horrified by the reports of these happenings, and for the first time there was popular indignation.

Meantime, in other communities, solitary confinement had been no more successful. In the Thomaston Prison, in Maine, the men confined in solitary cells without labor either went insane or broke down physically, so that they spent about half their time in the prison hospital. The physician reported at last that the solitary men had to be taken to the hospital and kept there under treatment so that they might be sufficiently restored to endure a return to the solitary, where they again shortly broke down and had to be carried back to the care of the physician and nurses.

In Virginia the health of the men in solitary grew so poor that any sort of mild disease carried them off inevitably. Such things as measles and heavy colds killed these shattered hulks one after another, and the system had to be done away with.

At Auburn, the solitary business lasted a little more than eighteen months. In 1823 Governor Yates visited the prison and saw at firsthand what confinement was doing to the penal charges of the State. The good man was shocked and appalled. He ordered the solitary discontinued on the spot, and before the year was out he had pardoned nearly all of the men who had been subjected to this dread punishment.

In issuing these pardons, Governor Yates in that early day made one of the most striking demonstrations of the failure of punishment as a means of reforming human beings that ever has been recorded. The chance to "reflect on their crimes" had not made any of

these tragic human beings honest. It had made maniacs of some, and they ended their days in State institutions of another kind. It made derelicts of others, who came to their conclusions in the State almshouses. Twelve of the pardoned men soon committed other crimes, and were returned to Auburn, while more found their way into other prisons. One man committed a burglary the very night he was released, after seventeen months in the lonely dungeon!

Now what? If prisoners were left to associate one with another the bad contaminated the good, the discipline broke down, and there was the devil to pay. If men were locked apart, so that they could not corrupt one another, they went mad and became wrecks, so that the humane feelings of the public became aroused and governors stepped in with edicts. Was it possible that prisons would have to be abandoned after all?

Once more the good old conservatives rose in their chairs at many a lecture and public meeting, and in the halls of the legislature, to demand a return to physical torture, the only method ever devised "to strike terror into a felon's heart." The identical phrase has lately been used by a New York judge in his defense of the death penalty.

But, once again the friends of the prisons were to have their way. They gave up the solitary-confinement idea and undertook to try the method known to penologists as the silence-and-association system. For this plan the foundation had been laid at Auburn in the building of the famous north wing, already described. Here there were ranks of small individual cells, where one man could be kept apart from his fellows in the hours of leisure or of sleep. Men could be locked up here and made to work in their cells. That was one idea, strongly sponsored by the 1822 report of the New York Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, perhaps the earliest document in this coun-

try dealing with an investigation of social conditions by a public committee, as Lewis points out. The society summed up its ideas in these terms: solitary confinement, hard labor, moral instruction, and discipline.

But Auburn soon did better than that. By 1824 there was in full operation in the prison the Auburn plan. Prisoners of all grades and kinds were locked into separate cells by night and at leisure time. In the daytime, for from eight to ten hours, prisoners were forced to do hard labor in shops and yards, in complete association. But, and here was the important and long-lived feature, they were enjoined with perpetual silence. They must not communicate with their fellows at any time or in any way unless their keepers specially permitted. They could see other human beings, work beside them, eat with them, touch them, and know them, but they must never speak. The authorities of the prison went to the greatest length, short of gagging, to enforce this rule.

Many additional keepers were needed to see that the convicts did not sneak a word with one another. The matter caused the wardens many sleepless nights and much graying of the thatch, but the silence system was at length made to work with a fair degree of success, so that prisons, after thirty-five years of travail and failure, were at last established as permanent institutions. The success at Auburn was soon reported in all other States and in foreign countries. Prison managers and penological students came from all the ends of the earth to visit Auburn and see how this wonder was being worked. Some went home and wrote reports of what they had seen. Others wrote learned books on the subject. Approval was widespread if not unanimous. And, with a single exception, these writers and reporters gave the men at Auburn credit for the origination of this system. Only Doctor Rudolph Julius, a

Prussian, who also visited Auburn and saw with wide-open eyes, reminded his readers that the Auburn system was really the Ghent system. For thirty-six years before Auburn had its plan in full operation, the Maison de Force had used solitary cells for the night keeping of its men, had employed them in "forced labor" by day, and had imposed complete silence upon all inmates. Ghent had also, as did Auburn, retained the solitary confinement for reasonably short periods as a method of handling refractory fellows and discipline breakers. Many a man went to the solitary for whispering the time of day to his neighbor at the lathe or loom.

It may be of interest to note at this point that the silence rule has endured in some of the prisons of our leading States to within ten years, and that in many of the backward communities of the United States it is still the rule. Other customs, which still persist, also originated at Auburn in this period, perhaps copied from Ghent again. What these things were can be read from a report of the Prison Discipline Society of Boston, made in 1826. It reads in part:

"The unremitted industry, the entire subordination, the subdued feeling among the convicts, has probably no parallel among any equal number of convicts. In their solitary cells, they spend the night with no other book than the Bible, and at sunrise they proceed in military order, under the eye of the turnkey, in solid columns, with the lock march, to the workshops, thence in the same order at the hour of breakfast, to the common hall, where they partake of their wholesome and frugal meal in silence. Not even a whisper might be heard through the whole apartment.

"Convicts are seated in single file at narrow tables, with their backs toward the center, so that there can be no interchange of signs. If one has more food than he wants, he raises his left

hand, and if another has less, he raises his right hand and the waiter changes it. When they have done eating, at the ringing of a bell of the softest sound, they rise from the table, form in solid columns, and return under the eyes of the turnkeys to the workshops.

"From one end of the shops to the other, it is the testimony of many witnesses that they have passed more than three hundred convicts without seeing one leave his work or turn his head to gaze at them. There is the most perfect attention to business from morning till night, interrupted only for the time necessary to dine—and never by the fact that the whole body of prisoners have done their tasks and the time is now their own, and they can do as they please.

"At the close of the day, a little before sunset, the work is all laid aside at once, and the convicts return in military order to the silent cells, where they partake of their frugal meal, which they are permitted to take from the kitchen, where it is furnished to them, as they return from the shop. After supper they can, if they choose, read the Scriptures undisturbed, and can reflect in silence on the error of their lives. They must not disturb their fellow prisoners by even a whisper.

"The feelings which the convicts exhibit to their religious teacher are generally subdued feelings."

So here we got the lockstep; the cowed convict, who dared not turn his head to see the face of a passing woman; the common dining room; the supper-in-the-cell and the Bible-per-cell idea. All these customs of early Auburn have survived until the latest years, and many of them will not pass till many another snow has fallen on the walls and parapets of the grim houses.

Another custom which originated at Auburn at this time or, at least, was then made into a formal practice, was that of visiting. Any and all persons

were admitted to Auburn on payment of a fee of twenty-five cents. It was said that this habit was founded on the idea that any citizen was entitled to inspect the prisons and so guard against abuses. Others said that the visiting was permitted so that many might get an idea of what prison was like, and so be deterred from crime. No matter. The prisons visitations began here, such as have only lately been forbidden by the most forward-looking wardens and commissioners, who have, after the lapse of a century, come to understand what havoc is played among convicts by intrusions of all and sundry.

A good deal is always said about the frugal meals—frugal but healthful—served to convicts. At Auburn the food of the prisoners in 1825 was provided by contractors, who were paid a fraction more than five cents per day for each convict's meals. Clothing was provided on the same basis, and each man's garb cost five dollars and eighty-seven cents a year.

For breakfast, this was a typical provision: Cold meat, bread, cold hominy, hot potato, pint of rye coffee, sometimes with molasses sweetening.

And here is a dinner of the usual sort: Meat, soup made of corn meal cooked in broth, bread, potato.

The meat was usually salt pork or corned beef. Fresh beef was permitted once a week. The convict got from ten to sixteen ounces of meat a day, according to the official reports.

Prisoners were not permitted to write or receive letters or visits from relatives except under the most extraordinary situations, which is to say when a prisoner lay dying or when there was a legal paper commanding the warden to permit the visit. There were no books except the Bibles, no schools, no teaching of trades, no fitting of the men for facing the world at the expiration of their terms. Flogging was going on from morning to night, and the up-

right judges and political wiseacres of the day stated with their usual assurance that the prison could not be kept going without this infliction. Such was the beginning of the system of penology on which the present form of punishment is based, except for the additional scientific and medical understanding which is now being used.

Among the foreign gentlemen who came to visit Auburn in the days of its great repute was an English ex-chaplain and inspector of prisons for the British government, William Crawford by name. What he tells about Auburn in those days is illuminating, especially when we consider that he approved of the prison and was enthusiastic about it, save that he felt there wasn't enough religious and moral instruction for the prisoners' good.

At Auburn the prisoners at work in the shops. Crawford tells us, were watched by seen and unseen keepers, some of the later operating from peep-holes and slits in the ceiling. At the first infraction of the silence rule the convicts were flogged on the spot with heavy, rawhide, cutting whips, which all the keepers carried. These warders could inflict as many "stripes" as they liked. There was no trial system, no reference to the warden or deputy before the punishment was inflicted, and no recourse for the convict, in case he might prove innocent. All the keeper did was to lash his man and later make a report to the warden, according to his own lights. What cruelties, injustices, and partialities this system must have evoked can be imagined.

Crawford recounts that in this way, because of a keeper's violence, a woman convict was practically flogged to death, and prisoners were constantly being treated in the hospital for blows and other injuries received at the hands of the turnkeys. The men, Crawford further relates, were forced to sit with heads bowed and keep their eyes on

their work. No matter what happened, they dared not look up, "and if a convict is caught looking off his work he is flogged by the overseer."

This dreadful rule of silence, night and day, gave birth, of course, to many of the strange inventions of convicts. Men learned to talk without moving their lips. They learned how to communicate by means of little taps on the cell walls. They invented the Siberian square—not in Siberia, we may be sure, but in Auburn or one of the Pennsylvania prisons, for Siberia knew of no such cruelty as perpetual silence.

Eventually this had to be discarded.

Men found out after a while that it was not possible to make men moral and sweet even by taking from them the power of communication, on which so much of civilization, so much of even animal life, is based. Thus both the solitary-confinement experiment and the silence experiment came to grief, after their human victims had numbered hundreds of thousands, in this and other lands. But the keepers and the lawmakers went right on making their experiments. Perhaps there was no other way.

What they did next we shall see presently.



CRIPPLE HELD AS BLACKMAILER

EXCLUSIVE society circles of Cambridge, Massachusetts, were terrorized a little while ago by a supposed "Brotherhood of Death" blackmail ring. The blackmailing demands lasted for two months and culminated in the arrest of a nineteen-year-old youth, Kenneth Wiltshire, on suspicion of being the guilty one. It was Miss Alice Longfellow, daughter of the poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the "grave Alice" of his famous poem, "The Children's Hour," who enabled the police to trace the blackmail demand for three thousand dollars to young Wiltshire.

According to police statements, Wiltshire admitted authorship of the blackmail notes received by Miss Longfellow and gave as his reason for his action his need for money for an operation on his hip. His parents, however, stated that they had spent hundreds of dollars to remedy his defect, whereupon the prisoner wavered in his story.



FINGERPRINT EXPERT RETIRES

AFTER thirty-nine years of service in the London police department, C. S. Collins, superintendent of the identification bureau of Scotland Yard, has retired. Mr. Collins is said to have made nearly five hundred thousand finger prints of criminals and suspects during his term of service. From the prints on file in his department, about two hundred and sixty thousand identifications have been made, without a single mistake.

In speaking of his work a little while ago, Mr. Collins said: "I would stake my life on the probability that there never will be finger prints alike on any two human beings, even though the world should go on indefinitely." During the next generation, he asserted, finger prints would be more generally used everywhere, not only in the identification of criminals, but as a matter of record in births, and in numerous other ways.

The Crimson Witness

by John Jay Chichester

Author of "The Secret of the Sands," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

MAXWELL SANDERSON, who is known as "The Noiseless Cracksman," has gambled away his money at Frey's, and is now compelled to work out a scheme by which to replenish his bank account. Sanderson and his friend, Barton Clark, hit upon the idea of stealing the Russian Crown gems, which are to be seen at a benefit at the summer home of Mr. Rodger Wellington, near Port Chester. Their plan is for Sanderson to impersonate an Italian count, and pose as a guest of the Wellingtons, while Barton Clark is to stand outside to await his cue.

In the meantime Peter Blodgett and Sam Lash, detectives employed by Adam Decker, who have been shadowing Sanderson, on the chance of catching him, set themselves up to guard the safe in which the gems are placed, at the Wellington house. However, Sanderson overlooked the fact that there might be two detectives guarding the safe instead of one, and at first things seem to go against him. After a combat, followed by shooting, Sanderson and Barton Clark escape.

CHAPTER VI.

A DOCTOR OR DEATH.

LIGHTS were appearing in the windows of the second and third floors; one after another they flashed on in quick succession. A woman's scream, shrill with terror, rang out through the night.

It was no easy task to carry a man of Barton Clark's weight, for he tipped the scales at better than a hundred and sixty pounds, but Sanderson had the desperate urge which made the feat possible. He did not stumble beneath the burden but strode steadily toward the road, his progress aided by the downward dip of the lawn, yet when he had reached the public highway and the edge of the Wellman estate his breath was wheezing from his mouth in exhausted gulps and his arms were numb.

"This is about my limit, Bart," he said as he lowered his wounded friend to the roadside. "I'll have to leave you here, get the car out of the lane and

drive back." He bent down and tried to peer into Clark's face. "Are you suffering much, old man?"

"Not—not as much as you might think," Clark answered with difficulty. "I'm pretty sure this is the end of me, Sanderson; the final curtain. It was a thriller while it lasted—down to the very last. It—it couldn't go on forever; as we've both said before, there had to be an end—some time. I want to tell you—"

"Nonsense!" Sanderson broke in, but his voice was husky. "Get that sort of stuff out of your head. You've never been a quitter and you're not going to quit now. Make yourself as comfortable as you can while I get the car. I'll be back as quickly as I can. There's little enough time to lose. As soon as somebody in the house gathers enough wits to do any thinking they'll be telephoning all the towns to stop us. They may search the roads."

He plunged through the darkness, broke into a run and, a hundred yards

or so further on, turned into the lane. The burning dash light of the parked car shone faintly through the foliage, guiding him to the machine. He sprang into the driving seat. He had to take the time to put on his shoes, for both the bedroom slippers had been lost somewhere on the Wellman lawn and his feet were bare. Also, since the gaudy silk pajamas would likely increase the hazard of their escape, he hastily drew on his clothes over the sleeping garments.

With his foot on the starter button he paused for an instant, listening. He heard a motor burst into a rhythmic humming through the night stillness, and knew that there would be pursuit—speedier pursuit than he had expected. There was indeed no time to lose.

"The luck's against me!" he muttered. "The luck's all gone against me!"

The car lurched forward and poked its nose out of the lane and into the main road. He swung to the left, driving it blind, for to switch on the headlamps was to advertise his presence.

"It's a quiet motor, thank Heaven!" he told himself. As he came to the spot where he had left his wounded friend—the location marked by a tree of unusual size—Clark pulled himself up from the roadside and lurched drunkenly forward. Sanderson stopped the car, got down and helped the other up.

"I seem to feel a little better," said Clark; "I guess you've bucked me up." But the effort had drained that small remnant of strength he had called upon and he collapsed against the seat.

"Good!" Sanderson said tensely and began to turn the automobile, for to proceed in that direction was to drive past the entrance of Wellman place. They could hear voices, men shouting back and forth, and some one racing a motor impatiently. Hardly was the fugitive machine in motion when a pursuing car shot from out of the driveway, headlamps glaring.

It turned to the left, but Sanderson's satisfaction, as he noted this through the reflector, was lost in a renewed alarm as he saw a second pursuer shoot down to the main road and swing—to the right.

"This means a race, Bart. Our only hope now is to outdistance those fellows. Somebody with a brain inside his head is giving orders back there. Pursuit in both directions, hoping to nab us no matter which way we went. If this engine's got the power and the speed you claim for her——"

"I've had 'er do better than seventy," Clark responded, but his voice was so faint that it was hardly more than a whisper. "If you hadn't stopped to bother about me——"

The pursuers had sighted the fleeing car. A shot crashed from behind, a second, a third, until the fusillade had the sound of a bombardment. Bing! A bullet struck the metal of the body; if a shot like that should happen to pierce the gas tank——

Sanderson trod on the accelerator, calling for every ounce of speed the motor possessed. Clark had not exaggerated the maximum of its performance. The needle of the speedometer touched fifty, climbed to fifty-five, sixty, then crawled to sixty-five, sixty-seven, sixty-nine, and then edged across the seventy mark. Such a pace as this over a dark, strange road, with curves concealed in the shadows ahead, was madness, but the risk had to be taken. The only alternative was capture and Maxwell Sanderson, for his own part, preferred being crashed into eternity. More than once he had told Clark that he would never let himself be taken alive.

He had not, of course, once the car was headed away from the Wellman estate, attempted to drive without lights. The powerful lenses cleaved the night and the man at the wheel strained forward, his eyes glued to the road ahead.

A sharp turn, a narrow, unsuspected

bridge. The brakes screamed like a soul in agony, the machine careened wildly and the fenders missed the stone railing by a matter of bare inches. A film of cold perspiration beaded Sanderson's forehead, for a narrow escape like that was enough to strain even nerves of steel.

The terrific speed did not slacken but the pursuers matched it, almost mile for mile, taking the turns with less recklessness but making it up on the straight stretches.

"I'm not able to shake them off, Bart!" Sanderson shouted. "It must be a racer that's after us."

Clark stirred from a daze that approached semiconsciousness.

"Box of tacks," he said jerkily. "Pocket of the door. Forget that. Brought 'em for an emergency like this. When I made my get-away that time in the Rittenhouse job, it taught me something. Pretty sure—to puncture their tires."

"Good!" Sanderson exclaimed. "Do you think you can manage——"

"They're on your side." Clark told him.

Sanderson checked their mad rush to a pace which would permit him to drive with one hand without so much danger of ditching the car and, reaching into the space within the door, found the cardboard box with the tacks. This slackening of speed allowed the pursuit to gain on them.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The men behind had again opened fire.

The tacks were the largest size Clark had been able to purchase, wicked things to strew in the path of pneumatic tires. Sanderson leaned far out and tossed a handful of them behind him, followed by several more until the box was emptied. Then he gripped the steering wheel with both hands again, trod upon the accelerator until the car was again lurching forward with all the speed of which the motor was capable. The

headlights blazed upon a sign which warned, "Danger Ahead. Go Slow." But there was greater danger behind.

Sanderson took the abrupt downhill curve without mishap and the road straightened into a long black ribbon which led on now for several miles without a twist. It was under conditions like this that pursuit was most likely to overtake the two fugitives, but the lights of the following car did not swing their probing beams over the top of the hill and around the turn.

"The tacks must have done the trick, Bart," Sanderson exclaimed with a deep breath of relief. "A puncture has stopped 'em; at the rate they were coming a flat could have easily piled them up into a ditch."

"And killed somebody most likely!" Clark groaned. "Lord, but what a trail of tragedy we've left behind us!"

"I'm not so much concerned about that, Bart, as I am over you. How do you feel now, old man?"

"Pretty badly, Sanderson; at first there was no pain to speak of, only a sickening numbness, but it's hurting now—like the very devil. It—it's queer, isn't it, that there doesn't seem to be much bleeding."

"A bullet wound is like that sometimes, thank Heaven! If it had cut an artery you'd have been a goner by now."

"I'm afraid I'm a goner anyhow, Sanderson; with this chunk of lead in my middle——"

"The motion of the car is doing you no good," Sanderson interrupted, "but there's no helping it. Now that we've lost those fellows back there I can drive more carefully, but we've still got to make time. Daylight is our enemy; the roads ahead will be watched by the police of the towns telephoned to but there's a chance for——"

"You'll never be able to get into New York before the sun comes up; dawn is breaking now."

Sanderson was silent for a moment; they came to a crossroad, one branch leading north and the other south. He slackened speed and, for an instant, seemed undecided, then he swung the car northward.

"We're not going to New York," he said. "Connecticut is our best chance; we'll be across the State line almost any moment."

"Connecticut?" Clark gasped. Why?"

"Two reasons," Sanderson answered tensely. "For one, that's probably the direction they expect us to take; it's the roads into New York that will be our worst danger. The machine that chased us may have been able to make out our license number.

"Then also New York's the worst possible place for a wounded man who doesn't want the police prying into things, demanding explanations."

"But where, in Connecticut, can we get safety? Clark asked. "Anywhere we go they'll want to know how I got this bullet, and there's no way we can explain——"

"Perhaps there is, Bart. Do you remember that shack of mine back in the woods where we went fishing one week-end the past spring? You know I told you that it might come in pretty handy some time if it became necessary for me to suddenly drop out of sight. You'll remember that I'm known up there under another name."

"But that must be forty or fifty miles from here," Clark said dully. "I don't believe I can hold out, and those damn-able roads——"

"We're in a tight fix, Bart; about the tightest possible fix that it's possible for two men to be in. We've got to get you medical attention; it's a choice, probably, of——"

"Of a doctor—or death," the other completed.

"Yes, Bart, that's it—a doctor or death. An internal wound—if it's as bad as we think—demands surgery.

But we've got to get it for you without arousing suspicion, and that's not easy. My plan is to take you to this place of mine, make you as comfortable as the conditions permit, and then I'll go get a doctor—a surgeon. The story will be that you've accidentally fired your revolver while cleaning it. There's a chance that we can make it plausible enough to prevent an investigation."

Clark made no response for a moment. The pallor of his face was ghastly in its grayness and there was a tight pinch to his lips.

"Sanderson," he said, speaking with difficulty, "you've told me more than once that you preferred death to being sent up the river—if it ever came to that. Sometimes I've thought you were right, but when it comes to the show-down, old man, perhaps you'll want to live—as I'm wanting to now. It's easy to talk about dying, but it's not easy—when you're face to face with it.

"Maybe it's fear; I guess it is. I've never bothered much thinking about the hereafter. I've said a thousand times there is no hereafter, but even if that's right—oblivion!" He shivered. "Snuffed out—forever; total oblivion! To me that's more horrible than being turned on an eternal spit. I want to live, Sanderson; no matter what the alternative, I want to live."

"Don't talk like that!" Sanderson begged, his voice unsteady. "Keep a grip on yourself, old man, and don't let yourself think of dying. We'll pull out of this—somehow. I got you into it and it's up to me to get you out. Don't lose your nerve."

"There's just one chance for me to pull through," Clark went on, speaking with pauses between his words; "that is, to get to a hospital, or a good doctor, quickly. The drive to your place in the woods would finish me; I'd be dead before the doctor got there. Just drive me to the first hospital, make your own get-away, and——"

"Do you realize the chance that would mean, Bart?" Sanderson asked.

"Yes, I know; I've thought that out. It probably means I'll have to stand the rap for the job to-night. It's a chance I'm ready to take. that I've got to take!"

"But, Bart," Sanderson persisted, "there is something else. We don't know how badly that detective back there got it; if the man's done for——"

"I've thought of that, too," Clark broke in. "If I croaked him it means—the chair. "That's a chance, but if I don't get to a doctor quickly it'll be all over with me anyhow." He coughed, wiped his hand across his mouth and held his fingers down to the dash lamp; they were flecked with a pink foam. "You see, it's like I thought; I'm bleeding inside."

Sanderson's face was almost as pale as that of the wounded man. He drove on for perhaps three miles.

"All right," he said heavily, "we'd better do as you say. We're getting into a town now, but—I'll see you through somehow. So help me, Bart!"

Clark braced his feet and mustered the strength to pull himself to a more erect position.

"Stop the car for a moment; there's something I want to do before—before we separate." As the machine was brought to a halt, he fumbled at his pockets and drew out a folding check book and a pen. Clumsily, at the cost of considerable effort, he began writing out a check.

"The money I've got," he explained jerkily, "is in this bank—under an assumed name. I'm writing this check to you for the full amount; if it comes to my cashing in——"

"Do you think I could ever touch a dollar of it?" Sanderson's voice was choked.

"There's not a soul in the world who means anything to me—except you, Max. No, don't blame yourself for what happened to-night, old pal. I

played the game—just as you'd have played it for me. Here; take the check. If I do pull through and they nab me for to-night's job, there'll be money needed—for the trial." He coughed again. A trickle of crimson seeped through his lips. The check book fell from his fingers and he reeled in the seat, his body sagging heavily against Sanderson's shoulder.

"It's getting darker when—when it should be getting lighter," he whispered thickly. "Where's your hand, Max? I think—I think I'm snuffing out."

CHAPTER VII.

THE NET CLOSES.

THE village of Baileysville was both picturesque and beautiful; the streets were wide and lined with stately trees, and the lawns rolled back to attractive houses, many of them very old. Still, Maxwell Sanderson, his eyes moist and his face set grimly, failed to see the beauty. Driving slowly through the graying dawn, he searched for a doctor's sign. Presently he found it, a neatly lettered name-plate mortared into the stones which formed the entrance posts of a driveway, back of which stood a rambling white house. The plate announced "Doctor M. S. Cotter."

The grounds as well as the house indicated Doctor Cotter as a man of substance and affairs. The driveway led beneath a portico and Sanderson turned in. His forehead was furrowed with desperate thinking. When a wounded man, possibly dying, is brought for treatment at this unusual hour, even the most credulous country physician may be expected to demand a satisfactory account of the circumstances. Only a fool would have minimized the hazards of the situation, and Maxwell Sanderson was not a fool. He knew the danger for himself.

"The story's got to be a plausible

one," he told himself as the cord tires bit into the white gravel of the driveway. At this moment Clark stirred faintly.

"Bart!" he said tensely. "Do you hear me?"

"I—I guess I fainted; I thought it was—the end."

"I'll have you in a doctor's hands in another minute or two, Bart. Remember, no matter what I tell him, back me up. Do you understand?"

"Yes," the other answered mechanically.

There were two surprises for Sanderson as he halted the car beneath the portico of the doctor's residence. One was the startling promptness of a man's appearance, for Sanderson had expected there would have to be much ringing of bells before he was able to arouse any one. The second surprise was the man himself.

He had, somehow, preconceived Doctor Cotter as being a graying old fellow, easy going, genial, kindly. Instead, the Baileysville physician was not far into his thirties, crisp, businesslike, and rather chilling in his personality. He had the medical air but it was not that of the old-fashioned practitioner, rather that of the new school which makes the field of medicine a business, as well as a profession.

"You are Doctor Cotter?" Sanderson asked.

"Yes, I am Doctor Cotter." The physician came across the porch. "That man with you is hurt?"

"Badly hurt, doctor," Sanderson answered. "I'm lucky to find you up so early. Will you help me get him into the house?"

"Just returned from a maternity case. What is this—an automobile accident?"

"My friend is shot; he's got a bullet in his abdomen." At this the physician's expression changed slightly and he looked at Sanderson sharply. The latter expected that. "Are you prepared

to give emergency treatment in a case of this kind? I don't suppose there's a hospital——"

"No nearer than forty miles, but I have operating facilities, if that is necessary, and my wife has been a trained nurse. We'll see how bad it is."

Together they lifted Clark from the machine and carried him within, through the doctor's reception room for patients and past a second door into as completely a surgical layout as Sanderson had ever seen outside a modern hospital.

"I see I came to the right place," Sanderson said with obvious relief. "I hadn't expected to be so fortunate."

Doctor Cotter made no response. He was engaged in getting the wounded man placed on the operating table. Clark opened his eyes and as his gaze rested upon Sanderson's face he tried to smile, but the crooked twist of his lips told that he was in much pain, dulled a little perhaps by a merciful semistupor. The physician filled a hypodermic syringe and gave his patient an injection of morphine before probing the wound, for that was bound to be more or less agonizing. The examination was brief but Barton Clark's hands clenched and his face streamed with cold perspiration.

Still without comment to Sanderson, the doctor laid aside his probing instruments and stepped to a telephone, fitted with a dial, for intercommunication through the house.

"Emergency case, Helen," he said crisply. "Gunshot wound. Abdominal. I'm going to operate immediately. I'll want you down to give the anæsthetic." He switched on the button of an electric device used to sterilize his surgical instruments and turned to Sanderson.

"How did this happen?" he demanded.

Maxwell Sanderson had prepared himself for that question and a most amazing answer he gave.

"I shot him," he replied, his voice low and husky. At this amazing statement Barton Clark's eyes popped open and his lips parted as if to make a protest, but he had the good sense to keep his silence until he could know the true purpose of Sanderson thus taking responsibility.

"Oh, I see!" The doctor's words were clipped and hard as steel. "You shot him."

"Accidentally," Sanderson added.

"Oh, I see," the doctor said again, staring questioningly. "So it was an accident?"

"I've got a little summer camp up on Mirror Lake. Barton"—it was his intention to convey the impression that Barton was Clark's surname—"and I drove up there yesterday afternoon to spend a few days fishing. It's heavily wooded up there and not infrequently there's big game which wanders down from the mountains. About dusk last night I sighted a bear at the edge of the clearing, a big brute, but he got away before I could get my gun out of the house.

"Early this morning I heard something prowling outside, and"—Sanderson gave a hollow groan—"how was I to know that Barton had been seized with a fit of insomnia, had got up and dressed to try and walk it off? The rest of it, I suppose you can guess. I thought it was the bear. The window of my sleeping room was open; I got my gun and saw something moving in the darkness, and—and I pulled the trigger. You're going to be able to pull him through, Doctor Cotter? In heaven's name don't tell me that he's—"

"This man—Barton, has what you might call a fighting chance; a good deal depends upon his vitality. There's a very grave possibility that he may not survive the operation. In such a case I must get his version of his injuries."

Barton Clark heard and turned his head.

"It happened—just as you've heard," he said faintly. "An accident. There's no one to blame."

Doctor Cotter seemed entirely satisfied and Maxwell Sanderson experienced a great relief. Obviously he had forestalled an investigation which, in all probability, would have led to the truth. The physician, busying himself with the necessary surgical preliminaries, asked no more questions. Presently his wife entered the room in nursing uniform, conversed with her husband regarding the case in a low-voiced, professional manner. She did not speak to Sanderson.

"You will not wish to remain while the operation is in progress?" said the doctor.

"No," Sanderson answered huskily. "I'll wait outside. May I say good-by to him, in case—"

"Certainly, you may do that," Cotter agreed.

Sanderson leaned over the operating table and touched his friend's hand.

"It's going to be all right, old man," he said; "you're going to pull through, and everything's going to be all right—everything."

With as much strength as he had, Clark's fingers closed about Sanderson's; the bond between the two was closer than it had ever been and the latter, as he turned away, could not conceal the depth of his emotion although he was not an emotional man. The doctor had put on his face a mask of white gauze; the doctor's wife was ready with the ether, and she placed herself at the head of the operating table.

"We are ready now," the doctor murmured, and Sanderson went out, closing the door behind him. On the wide porch, with a cool morning breeze stirring through the trees and daylight warming into a golden flood of sunshine, he paced to and fro.

"A fighting chance!" he muttered, re-

peating the doctor's words. "Good old Bart! I'd pray for you, old pal—if I knew how."

The sun climbed higher and the sleeping town began to stir itself. For more than an hour Sanderson moved restlessly back and forth. It was nearing eight o'clock when Doctor Cotter appeared in the doorway and the other strode toward him with a swift stride.

"How is he, doctor?"

"The operation was a success, but—will you step inside, please?" The physician's face told nothing beyond a tense expression which might be that of the surgeon who has just emerged from another conflict with death.

Sanderson followed into the doctor's office. Cotter sat down at his desk and motioned the other to a chair opposite.

"As I said, the operation was a success, but your friend's life hangs by a thread, a very slender thread. The bullet punctured his stomach and one of the kidneys, and there was a good deal of bleeding internally. Another half hour and it would have been too late to have done anything for him. Frankly, there is considerable doubt in my mind that he will recover." He saw the twitch of Sanderson's mouth. "You are very fond of Barton, I see."

"He is my best friend, the only true friend I ever had," Sanderson answered huskily. "Do everything you can, doctor; spare no expense. I can pay for the best. What is to be done about caring for him?"

"If he does pull through," Doctor Cotter replied, "it will not be possible to move him for a good many days. He will have to remain here; my wife will act as nurse until I can get a professional on the case."

The physician opened the drawer of the desk and reached his hand inside but his eyes did not leave Sanderson's face. There was something about the steely intentness of the stare which forewarned the other man.

"Have you ever seen any one under the influence of an anæsthetic?" Cotter inquired.

"No, I never have."

"Ether drugs only the conscious mind and the subconscious is often stirred to great activity. Frequently the patient talks. Sometimes it is only a jumble of nothing, crazy fragments of fancy. A nice old lady, one of the most pious souls I ever knew, cursed like a pirate while I was removing her appendix. The human mind is indeed a mystifying organism."

Tensely Sanderson waited; he had an apprehensive suspicion of what was coming and yet, so complete was the mastery over his facial expression that he seemed merely interested.

"What was the effect on Barton?" he asked quietly.

"Very startling," responded the doctor, his voice taking on a harder edge. "He rambled constantly of detectives, of a trap, of making a get-away."

Sanderson pretended to ignore the accusing note in Doctor Cotter's tone. His lips parted into a faint smile.

"That's what comes of reading detective fiction; Barton's an addict of the thriller type of literature." He didn't have much hope in soothing the physician's suspicions so easily, and he took note of the position of the other's hand—just reaching within the half-opened drawer of the desk.

"You must think that I am a most credulous person!" Cotter exclaimed. "That was a very clever little story you told about the camp on the lake and the prowling bear; I believed it until Barton's anæsthesia set me to thinking. I have just taken the trouble to telephone our local police. Some two hours ago he received a message, phoned from across the State line, asking him to be on the lookout for two men in a black roadster—and that one of them would be found wounded." The doctor's hand darted up from the drawer. "Don't

move, sir! This gun is fully loaded and I am an excellent shot. Stay where you are; the constable will be here at any moment."

Sanderson obeyed; there was no bluff about this crisp country doctor. But if the trapped man's body was motionless his mind was active, seeking the possible loophole—if, indeed, there was one. A faint, sardonic smile flitted across his mouth as he stared into the unwavering bore of the weapon held in the physician's steady hand.

"Gad, but you're a cool one!" exclaimed Cotter, not without admiration. Sanderson merely shrugged his shoulders; further talk was just so much breath wasted. The net had closed. The constable was on his way; it wouldn't be long before the handcuffs clicked—the thing he had always dreaded most. He measured the distance between himself and his captor; it was too great to allow any chance of grappling for the gun before the other had a chance to fire.

"Yes, you're a cool customer," Doctor Cotter repeated; "no matter what you're wanted for, I've got to admire your courage in sticking to your pa. You could have driven away while I was operating, but you knew that would arouse my suspicion and spoil his chances of ever getting out of it, and your scheme might have worked—if Barton hadn't talked under the ether."

Sanderson's head lowered a trifle; his eyes came to a rest on the back of the desk. It was open in the center so that from where he sat he could see Cotter's legs beneath. Suddenly his blood tingled with a new-born hope and his muscles tensed, ready to execute the plan which had leaped into his mind.

A sluggishly moving man would have been a fool to attempt it and it was a grave hazard for even one of Maxwell Sanderson's quickness. He fairly flung himself out of the chair, forward to the floor, out of the other's gun range with

the desk barricading him from sight. As he fell, Doctor Cotter fired, but the bullet passed harmlessly through space, crashing through the framed diploma which testified that the Baileysville physician had taken a postgraduate course in an European medical university.

Sanderson's hands shot out and his fingers fastened themselves about Cotter's ankles before the latter could arise from the swivel chair. A violent tug and the doctor was jerked forward, pulled under the desk, trying in vain to use the revolver. The cramped space gave him no opportunity. He was, perhaps, the strongest man of the two but Sanderson had the advantage; one knee butted into Cotter's stomach with a force that knocked all the wind out of the man, and an instant later it was Sanderson who was in possession of the weapon.

There was no time to be lost. The crashing of the revolver shot must have been heard through the house; even if there were no servants, there was the doctor's wife.

The operating room, Sanderson remembered, had no windows, being lighted by a skylight. There was but one door, that which now faced him. The key must be in the lock on the other side.

"Get up!" he said panting, for it had not been an easy struggle.

Doctor Cotter looked chagrined but not particularly malicious. He complied.

"Gad, but you're a game one!" he gasped. "That—that was neat! But you can't hope to get away—and damned if I'm not almost a little sorry!"

"Go into the operating room!" Sanderson commanded. "I've got to lock you in."

Again Cotter obeyed without any signs of opposition, and Sanderson removed the key from the door, trans-

ferred it to the outside of the lock, and turned it. As he swung around to take flight he heard some one running through the hall. The next instant the doctor's wife had burst in upon him, white and anxious of face.

"What has happened? I thought I heard—a shot." She was tremulous but not hysterical, for she was not the hysterical sort. Her training as a nurse had steeled her nerves to the unusual, but when she saw the revolver in Sanderson's hand she took an involuntary step backward and her eyes went wide with apprehension, yet she did not scream.

"You did hear a shot, madam," Sanderson responded with a calm politeness, "but, fortunately, no harm was done beyond a slight damage to one of the doctor's diplomas. Will you step in and close the door behind you—if you please."

"But where—where is the doctor?"

"He is in the operating room where, under the circumstances, I shall have to ask that you join him." He took it for granted she was aware of her husband's telephone call to the local police and the information he had got from that source; evidently she had. "I hope you will be reasonable, Mrs. Cotter; it is not a pleasant thought that I might have to use force with a woman, but when a man finds himself in a desperate plight it is not always easy for him to act according to the rules of chivalry."

This somewhat amazing speech, particularly amazing from a man hunted as a criminal, seemed to hold the doctor's wife spellbound. She came to the sensible conclusion that he *would* use force if she refused, but at the same time she leaped backward to the door behind her, thinking to escape from the house and give an alarm.

Quick as she was, Sanderson leaped forward, his hand closed upon her shoulder, at the same time slipping the gun into his pocket.

"I am sorry," he murmured; "I shan't hurt you unless you struggle." He picked her up, clapped his fingers over her mouth to prevent her screaming, and carried her to the door of the room wherein the doctor was a prisoner. She was not, perhaps, so much terrified as angry and, as she squirmed and kicked, she tried, womanlike, to claw his face with her nails. But her struggles were futile.

A moment later the door was open. Sanderson deposited her on her feet within the operating room and, as he did so, he saw Doctor Cotter hastily putting down the telephone. Undoubtedly he had been sending out a call for help.

The telephone in the operating room was one thing Sanderson had forgotten, but it was too late now to remedy that oversight, for the damage was done. As he slammed the door and turned the key in the lock again, the woman was pounding her fists upon the panel.

"I'm ashamed of you!" she cried at her husband. "You—you're going to let him get away. You—you coward!"

"Take it easy, Helen," the doctor answered. "I've just telephoned. The constable left his house five minutes ago and ought to be here any moment. The fellow can't possibly get away."

Sanderson bolted from the house, flung himself across the porch and into the driving seat of the roadster; he started the motor, swung the car around the circle of the driveway and shot it swiftly forward toward the street.

"Poor Bart!" he groaned. "I'm leaving him behind to face the music. There's no helping it; fate stacked the cards against us—every hand that was dealt."

But this thing that men call fate, fickle and erratic, had turned a tardy smile upon Maxwell Sanderson. As the roadster clipped past the second street intersection, he passed a burly bodied man who hurried in the opposite

direction. This was the Baileysville constable, floating in a cloud of ecstasy, for the two prisoners he expected to take into custody meant a large sum of money in his pocket. Five hundred dollars reward, the message from across the State line had said.

The black roadster rounded the corner; Sanderson was putting the town behind him.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FIGHTING CHANCE.

IT was four days before Barton Clark had any intimation of the true state of affairs. For almost a hundred hours he hovered between life and death, conscious of nothing. There was a part of that time when he was in the grip of a fever. Fortunately or unfortunately, judged from the point of view, this fever was unaccompanied by delirium as is so frequently the case.

Unfortunately, certainly, for Peter Blodgett who, arriving at Baileysville within a short time after having received news that one of the suspects had been arrested, had kept a tireless vigil beside the wounded man's bed. It was Blodgett's hope that, in delirium, the prisoner would let drop one word, a name—Sanderson.

Doctor Cotter had never expected to permit the use of his house as a hospital, but there was no choice in the matter, and Clark occupied a guest room on the second floor in which, of course, he would have to remain until such time as removing him would not endanger his chances of recovery.

Peter Blodgett was taking a stroll about the grounds of the doctor's place, smoking a cigar. The nurse attending Clark refused to permit any smoking in the same room with her patient, and with the detective a good smoke every few hours had become almost a necessity.

One of the village taxicabs, a sorry,

disreputable affair, scurried along the street from the direction of the railroad station, turned in at Doctor Cotter's place and came to a noisy halt. The solitary passenger alighted, an undersized, sad-faced man with a medical bandage about his head in such a fashion that his hat cocked up at a ridiculous angle.

Blodgett, turning on his heel as the taxi approached, gave a grunt of surprise and strode forward.

"Hello, Sam," he said and held out his hand after a moment of hesitation which totally robbed the gesture of cordiality. The truth of it was that he blamed Sam Lash for the debacle at the Wellman house. "I didn't expect to put eyes on you for a week to come. When did he let you out of the hospital?"

"Yesterday afternoon, chief," Sam Lash responded. "Them medico birds tried to keep me a coupla days longer, but I talked 'em outta it, and here I am."

"You're a lucky fellow, Sam; a darn lucky fellow, take it from me. We thought you was good as dead that night. The doc Wellman called in said it was a skull fracture—but that's the way with you tough little runts, can't kill you with an ax."

"If that bullet hadda nicked me a quarter of an inch lower I'd be playin' on a gold harp," Sam Lash nodded. "Guess you had a pretty narrow squeak yourself, huh?"

This remark caused Blodgett to give his operative a resentful stare.

"I wouldn't have been knocked out except that you went to sleep," he said accusingly.

"Yeah, I knew you'd be sore at me over that, chief, but I wasn't asleep when——"

"Don't try to lie out of it, Sam; I heard you snoring!" Blodgett broke in angrily.

"What I was tryin' to tell you, chief,

that I was awake after you and that fellow started talkin'. I was asleep, all right, but I come outta it before he walloped you. I was layin' there, and——"

"You were *awake* and let him black-jack me?" the other bellowed. "That makes it worse. I got a good notion——" Further words failed him.

"On the level, chief, there wasn't no time for me to stop it. It was the fastest piece of work I ever seen. Greased lightnin', that's what it was! That was clever stuff, too, him walkin' right in on you, bold as daylight, in them flashy pajamas, with his pal posted outside the windows to make that noise at the right time."

At the memory of the way he had been tricked, Peter Blodgett's face flushed uncomfortably and angrily.

"It was Sanderson, chief; there ain't any doubt of it bein' Sanderson." Sam Lash declared in a positive tone.

"You recognized him—despite the disguise?" Blodgett demanded eagerly. "Can you swear to that?"

"W-well." Lash answered cautiously. "I ain't so dead sure I could go on the witness stand, look a jury in the eyes and take my oath it was him. But there was somethin' about him that made me think of Sanderson. I was tryin' to get a good look at his hands but I guess he's wise enough to know they mean trouble for him; he was darn careful to keep 'em outta sight."

"Us just *thinking* it was Sanderson doesn't help any," Blodgett said. "In a case like this what we need is proof; we can't arrest him for what we think. The coppers laughed at Decker when he tried to get 'em to make the pinch that first time and they'll just laugh at us.

"This guy that we've got here in the house is supposed to be named Barton and he's the fellow that plugged you. You got him, too, you see, and he came mighty near croaking. It's only

this morning that the doc said he would pull through. I've been camping beside him, mighty near night and day, hoping that he'd spill something while the fever had him—something that would give it away that he's Sanderson's pal. Not a peep, Sam, but he's going to get well now and he'll talk before we get through with him. Oh, he'll talk, all right!" An expression of ruthless determination settled upon his features, that expression which emphasized the outward thrust of his jaw and which always gave force to the legend: "Bulldog Blodgett always gets his man." It was upon the strength of this reputation that Blodgett, retiring from the police department, had started his private detective agency with considerable success.

"Oh, he'll talk, all right," he repeated: "there are ways of making a man talk, whether he wants to or not."

"Wouldn't be surprised if that'll come easy." said Sam Lash. "It always makes a guy sore to take the rap when his pal's made a get-away. Hand 'im that salve about Sanderson bein' the big game we're after and that we'll try and let him down easy if he'll come through with a full confession."

"Yeh, I'd thought of that." Blodgett agreed with a jerk of his head, "but I got another scheme I want to try on him first." The two men walked toward the house and sat down on the porch.

"Who caught this fellow Barton?" Sam Lash inquired curiously.

"It was Doctor Cotter who did the headwork," Blodgett answered, "but the constable is claiming the reward." He recounted Cotter's version of the affair, how Sanderson had managed to make his get-away with the odds against him.

"I've got one of my men watching Sanderson's apartment," he added, "and he hasn't showed up there. I didn't expect he would; that would be a fool's trick—and Maxwell Sanderson is no

fool. We're hot on his trail this time and he knows it."

On the second floor of the house, Barton Clark was emerging from a fevered fog, regaining consciousness for the first time since the past Monday morning when his last memory had been the suffocating fumes of ether and the voice of the doctor's wife, murmuring, "Breathe deep; breathe deep."

His first thought was a degree of amazement that he was still alive and his second was to wonder if anything had happened to endanger his own and Sanderson's safety. He turned his head upon the pillow and saw the young woman in nursing uniform. She was reading a book by the window and now she turned.

She did not smile with that professional tenderness of her calling when she observed that her patient had regained his faculties; instead there was a cold hostility which telegraphed to Barton Clark an apprehensive warning. The nurse arose swiftly and left the room.

"They suspect something!" Clark thought, and there flashed through his mind the dread possibility that he had been out of his head and that he had let something slip.

Alarmed as he was, he was totally unprepared, a moment later, for the opening of the door and the appearance of three men—Doctor Cotter, Peter Blodgett and Sam Lash. This could mean but one thing; the jig was up!

Clark's sensation, as he recognized Sam Lash, was partly one of relief for, at least, he did not have to face a charge of murder! He took refuge in a simulated weakness and closed his eyes, trying to make it appear that the presence of the two detectives meant nothing whatever to him.

"Steady!" he told himself. "Watch yourself, old boy!"

Blodgett and Lash remained to the rear as the doctor approached the bed-

side and reached for his patient's wrist, smiling a grim, knowing smile as he timed Clark's pulse. No other proof was needed to tell him what agitation the appearance of the two detectives had caused.

"How do you feel, Mr. Barton?"

Barton Clark stirred a little and muttered something unintelligible. At that Doctor Cotter laughed softly.

"Oh, come, Barton, you can't fool us by pretending. I can tell the way your heart is hammering that you know what's going on." He turned to Peter Blodgett. "I consider it safe for him to be questioned—within limits, of course."

But Barton Clark's eyes remained closed as the burly detective came forward; he didn't want to run the risk of letting some expression of his face possibly betray him.

"You and Sanderson led us a merry chase," Blodgett said as he sat down, "but we got you. Yeh, we got you—with the goods."

Clark clung to the refuge of silence but he wondered if Blodgett's use of 'you' was singular or plural.

"Maybe you've got it in your head," went on Blodgett, putting a sneer into his voice, "that you're still going to get away with it, that Sanderson is clever enough to pull you out of this hole. Well, guess again; we've got him in a place where all he's thinking about is saving his own skin. Sanderson, the great Maxwell Sanderson, has fallen!"

A chill swept through Barton Clark. Perhaps it was true that they had Sanderson, and then again it might be a bluff. He wasn't sure.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he muttered weakly. "Sanderson? I don't know any one named Sanderson."

"Oh, yes, you do!" Blodgett crowed. "Now see here, Barton, I'm going to put my cards on the table. You're in a bad box. Take a look at this!"

The detective took from his pocket a small cardboard container which he opened and which revealed what appeared to be a piece of paper. It was a piece of wall paper and it was discolored by some brownish stains which revealed, with startling clearness, the imprint of four fingers and a thumb.

"I'm giving you the low-down on this," rumbled Blodgett, "so you'll see how tight we got you sewed up and what a darn fool you are to think you can ever squirm out. These are *your* finger prints and this is paper we peeled off the wall of the Wellman library. You got blood on your hand, your own

blood from the wound where my operative plugged you, and you put your hand—here."

Barton Clark stared for a brief moment at this exhibit, the crimson witness that no alibi could hope to impeach, and then he closed his eyes again wearily, hopelessly. Yes, they had him—cold; no lawyer on earth could save him in the face of this proof.

Twenty years! That's what it meant, twenty long, dark years. There was just one hope left, that Sanderson was still at liberty and would find a way, with that master mind of his, to engineer an escape.

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



THE JUDGE PROVED HIS POINT

A JUDGE in one of the Boston courts was trying to impress a jury with the fact that a witness was not necessarily untruthful because he altered a statement he had previously made. In order to illustrate his point, the judge said:

"When I entered this court to-day, I could have sworn that I had my watch in my pocket. But then I remembered that I had left it in the bathroom at home."

That evening when the judge went home, his wife, after greeting him, asked: "Why all this bother about your watch—sending four or five men for it? I gave it to the first one who came. He said you'd told him just where to find it—in the bathroom, and sure enough, that's where it was."

Neither the caller nor the watch has been seen since, and now, when the judge wants to elucidate points in his discourse to a jury, he finds material for the illustration elsewhere than in his own personal affairs.



PRISON TRUSTY MURDERED

A RTHUR SMITH, a trusty in Auburn Prison, New York, was found murdered by an unknown assailant within the prison a short time ago. Captain Lamb saw Smith stagger into the yard from the north wing of the cell block and then collapse.

No other convict was seen in the vicinity, and Smith died in the prison infirmary without making a statement of any kind. He had been struck with a three-cornered weapon which fractured his skull, and a second blow severed the jugular vein. So far as is known, Smith had no enemies, although there is often much jealousy of a trusty. He was received at Auburn Prison from Erie County in 1923, to serve not less than six years for manslaughter. He was twenty-nine years old.

Simon Trapp Broadcasts

by Roy W. Hinds

Author of "Into Thin Air," etc.

AN innocent man was in the Tombs. That had happened on numerous occasions and no doubt would continue to happen, with scarcely any one to take heed, but in this instance the victim of circumstances was lucky in arousing interest. On the surface it might appear that he was extremely unlucky, for he was without friends or money. At some future time the State would provide him with a lawyer, who perhaps would do all he could to win an acquittal, but the prisoner needed help at once, before he went to trial.

Where could he get that? Held prisoner, he could not take the steps necessary to prepare his defense. Without money, he could not employ a lawyer. Friendless, he had scant hope of a volunteer agent. So he languished in the Tombs, living the customary life of a prisoner, spending so many hours each day alone in a cell, with certain periods for exercise in the corridors or in the yard, which gave him brief opportunities for talks with other prisoners.

Therein lay his luck, for it happened that one of these prisoners was Jack Augler, a notorious burglar, a man who had strong connections in the underworld of the city. And so it happened that this innocent man, baffled by the police system in his efforts to get help from society, found what he sought in the underworld. A strange circum-

stance, when the underworld is called on to right the wrongs of society.

Yet the prisoner's case presented an intricate problem, even to the underworld, which is used to intricate problems. It was by no means certain that any one could help the man, yet it cheered him immeasurably to think he had won the sympathy of one man, no matter if that man was a burglar who seemed to be bound for Sing Sing himself.

The innocent prisoner's name was Frank Burwedge. He was a young man, scarcely more than a youth, and he had manners and a way of speech which spoke highly of his breeding and education. There was something of a mystery about him. He met Jack Augler, the burglar, in the yard one afternoon, and they walked up and down together, briskly, in the way of men seeking to make the most of a brief spell in the open air. It was on the third afternoon afterward that Burwedge's story was told.

"Did you ever know a fellow in New York named Ed Blainey?" Burwedge inquired, when he had seen enough of the other man to form an idea of the circles in which he moved.

"No," said Jack Augler, but the denial was rather half-hearted. He turned a sharp glance on his companion, and asked: "Why?"

"Oh, I was just wondering," Bur-

wedge replied. "I certainly would like to find him—Ed Blainey."

Another sharp glance from the burglar, and still another "Why?"

"He'd help me out of this scrape," Frank Burwedge said. "I'm quite sure he would."

"You a friend o' his?"

"Yes."

If this were true, it put another face on the situation. Eddie Blainey—"The Lamp," as he was called—was one of the most notorious crooks in New York. If Burwedge and The Lamp were friends, it was safe for Jack Augler to talk quite freely with the former, and Burwedge had a frank, honest way about him that made Jack Augler almost certain of his sincerity.

"Seems like I heard that name some place," Augler ventured, with a thoughtful frown on his brow. "What'd he do, this fella Blainey?"

"I don't exactly know. He was always a mystery to me—more so than ever since this thing happened. I took him to be just a fly young fellow around the town, like myself, until this thing came up. I've done a lot of thinking since then. I've got an idea that Blainey will— Well, I don't suppose I ought to say it without more proof—but something makes me think he's a professional crook."

So that was it. They were not really close friends. This man did not know the truth about Eddie Blainey—didn't even know perhaps that Blainey was called The Lamp in the underworld. The burglar thought he understood. He knew that Eddie Blainey was, as Burwedge said, a "fly young fellow around the town." Eddie was a flashily-dressed crook, a slick article, who liked to pose as a rich young idler. As such he had met Frank Burwedge, and Burwedge knew no more about him.

Jack Augler would have to be careful. Yet he was very much interested now, and mystified too.

"What'd this fella Blainey hafta do with you being in here?" Jack asked.

"Nothing. He had nothing to do with it."

"Then how'd you come to think he could help you?"

"He knows the man who put me in here."

The mystery deepened. The burglar pursued:

"How long since you seen Blainey?"

"Two years—almost two years, I think."

This fitted in with Jack Augler's information in regard to The Lamp. Eddie Blainey had disappeared some two years previously, and being such a familiar and widely known character in the underworld, his disappearance had often been the subject of comment. None had ever heard a word from him, so gossip went, and none had an idea as to where he was. It was natural that the underworld should jump to one conclusion.

Eddie Blainey—The Lamp—was in prison somewhere. He hadn't been sent up from New York. He couldn't very well pass through the process of arrest, trial and conviction in New York without being identified—and if the police had known they had Eddie Blainey in their hands, the papers would have been full of it. And the police would have heard if Eddie Blainey had been sent up elsewhere under that name. If he was in prison, he was there under an alias, and he would take all possible precautions to conceal the name of Eddie Blainey. If he wasn't detained by prison walls, and if he were alive and well, he wouldn't stay so long away from New York—at least some one in New York would have heard from him.

So said the wisecracks of the underworld—and Jack Augler had heard this talked over many times.

"Two years, eh?" said Jack Augler. "And you ain't got no idea where he is, eh?"

"Not the slightest," Frank Burwedge replied. "And that's what makes it tough for me. If I could locate Ed Blainey, I'm sure he'd do what he could for me. He seemed like a square fellow."

"I'll say he's square——"

Jack Augler let that slip. Burwedge looked at him.

"You know him then?" he said.

"Well, I heard about him—and they say he's square. But say, kid, this sounds like a funny mix-up you're in. I ain't a man that asks questions, and I ain't been snoopy when we got to talking here. You said they had you for highway robbery—holdup. wasn't it? Well, what's the dope, eh?"

"I'm not guilty."

"That's what they all say—but you sound differ'nt. You sound on the square with it. Spill it. Might be such a thing as me helping you." And then he added cautiously: "If I think I oughta."

Frank Burwedge told his story. It was interesting to Jack Augler, as all such stories were likely to be, yet he was hardly in a position to help. But he couldn't get the thing off his mind.

"Somehow I believe that kid," he ruminated in his cell that evening. "It's cert'nly a tough break that put him in here—and sumpin oughta be done. But what can I do? I'll be a lucky stiff if I spring myself. He's a clean looking kid—been a gay boy all right, but he ain't no holdup guy. And he'll take his medicine too before he calls on the home folks. He'll stick by that phoney name he give 'em—yeh, he'll stick. He's that kind. Well, I guess there ain't nothing for me to do about it. Fat chance I got o' springing anybody!"

It so happened that Jack Augler, so far as "springing" himself went, turned out to be a lucky guy. Jack had had money, and he knew exactly what lawyer to hire. The attorney had provided an alibi that the jury did not see fit to

disregard. Jack's trial lasted only two days—and he was acquitted.

No one was quite so shocked with surprise as Jack himself.

"Now here I am with my feet on the sidewalks o' New York," he soliloquized. "'S guilty as can be too—so guilty that I almost fainted when that jury foreman said 'not guilty.' Course that was a good alibi, a wonder—but I didn't think that jury'd believe all them crooks that testified for me. Oh well, such is life. I'm guilty, and I'm out. That kid in there—he ain't guilty, and up he'll go. It's up the Hudson for him all right, unless—— Now I wonder what old Simon Trapp'd say if I moseyed over to Broome Street and sprung that yarn on him? Not a bad idea—and anyway I wanta see Simon. I gotta have a lift o' some kind. That lawyer took everything but my shoe laces—but he's welcome. Uh huh—it's Broome Street for mine. Simon Trapp'll pass right out when he sees me stalking in—but he'll be tickled."

Simon Trapp, the Broome Street pawnbroker, was tickled to see Jack Augler, the burglar, at liberty again. The old man showed this in his own peculiar way, bustling about his little sitting room at the rear of the pawnshop, making Jack comfortable and talking a blue streak all the while. "Puggie" Rooks, Simon's youthful assistant, was on duty in the shop, so Mr. Trapp was able to give his undivided attention to the visitor in the sitting room.

That room occupied an extremely important position in the field of crime, for Simon Trapp had occupied the establishment for something like twenty years—and most of those years had been filled with activities far removed from pawnbroking. The pawnshop, in fact, was merely a blind—a screen behind which Simon Trapp operated as a leader of one of the cleverest and most thoroughly organized bands of criminals in New York. His organization had

none of the aspects of an East Side gang. He had nothing to do with gunmen and brawlers. He was a captain of thieves—very quiet and, on the whole, well behaved thieves. They lived for loot and plunder, but they conducted no raids on human life.

The true character of that room was known to those who were close to Simon Trapp and none others. So skillfully had he chosen, that knowledge of his activities had not spread to the underworld in general. That would have brought disaster, for a rendezvous that becomes notorious has a short life. The police and the stool pigeons, if they knew him at all, saw in Simon Trapp only a grubbing old pawnbroker doing a precarious business among the poor of the East Side.

Yet any one in the confidence of Simon Trapp could depend on him for help at all times. That was the secret of the high regard in which he was held. That was why the most skillful thieves in the city came to him for advice and leadership in many of their enterprises. Also they came to him in personal matters, seeking aid for themselves or friends. Simon Trapp had been known to extend his activities inside the very walls of a prison to help a friend.

The pawnbroker and Jack Augler had an extended conversation about Jack's affair and certain prospects in the line of burglary. And then Jack happened to think again of the young man in the Tombs.

"Say, Simon," he said, "there's sumpin worrying me."

"Well you should tell me your troubles," the pawnbroker rejoined with a grin.

"You know Eddie Blainey, don't you?"

"Eddie Blainey—The Lamp—you bet I know him! But say—I ain't seen Eddie in a long time. Now I wonder where he should be at? Fellas some-

times come here and ask me that—but I don't know."

"And I don't know," said Jack Augler, "but I got my own notions."

Simon Trapp wagged his old head wisely.

"You think just like I do about Eddie Blainey," he returned; "and I guess maybe everybody thinks that. Can't see what else'd keep Eddie away from New York. Well, maybe he'll get out some way and be coming back one of these days. He's a fine fella, Eddie is yet— But say—how should Eddie Blainey be worrying you?"

"I'd like to find him." Jack Augler lit a cigarette. "It ain't often I get upset, Simon, about things that ain't right—but there's a kid in the Tombs that— Well, his story's got my goat. Maybe you'd like to hear it, eh?"

"Sure," the pawnbroker assured his visitor, "I should always like to hear stories about fellas in the Tombs. It's like hearing from friends—I got so many of 'em that get in there."

"This kid ain't no friend o' your'n," the burglar explained, "but it's a swell chance for you to do a good stunt."

"And I sometimes like to do that too," said Simon Trapp.

"Sure. I know—that's how I come to think o' you, when I made up my mind sumpin oughta be done." Jack Augler smoked his cigarette nervously, like a man bewildered by his own state of mind. "I never worried much about other fellas' troubles, Simon—and I don't see why I got worked up over this. But it seems funny that I come clear and that kid's gotta take a stretch. He ain't got it coming to him, Simon, and— Well, it ain't right, that's all. And lots o' times I've heard about you doing sumpin for a fella like him, so you—"

"Well you should tell me about him."

"It's like this—way I got it sized up. There's a young fella in the Tombs waiting trial on a stick-up charge. He's

a nice kid, and seems to come from big people, know what I mean? Maybe his people're rich, I don't know—but that's a hunch I got. He's keeping mum about that. He'll take a stretch before he tells who he is. Even if he told, and come clear, there'd be the disgrace—'cause he's guilty o' traveling around with crooks and thieves anyway. It'd be bad for him and the family even if he did beat the stick-up charge. Now here's what he says—and I believe him.

"This kid was wild. He got to playing the cabarets and the gambling joints. He chummed up with two young fellas, and they went the route to-gether. One of 'em was Eddie Blainey. I can't make the other one at all—not a-tall. He ain't nobody we know—just some 'corner-stiff' that Eddie Blainey run with a little when he's posing as a cabaret hound. He ain't no regular crook, or I'd know him—his description don't fit nobody that Eddie Blainey ever run with, that I know about. And the trick he played on the kid proves that too.

"This corner-stiff pulls a stick-up. He does a hum job of it, and he gets chased. He beats it for the kid's room, dashes in and drops the stuff—and out again, on his way. He does the fancy dodge, and when a policeman and the stick-up victim come tearing into the kid's room, a minute or so later, there's the kid standing there looking at the stuff this corner-stiff dropped. He ain't had time even to think what it's all about. They nail him.

"And they give him the big laugh when he says another fella left the stuff there a minute or so before. Where'd he go to, they ask him. The kid don't know. The corner-stiff's dodged through the hallways of that little hotel, and he's out by this time. What's his name, they ask him—and all the kid can spring on 'em is the name he knows him by. That don't mean nothing to the police. Nothing a-tall. The police

laugh harder'n ever then. Ain't the kid been caught with the stuff? And ain't the holdup victim said he's the man that stuck him up?

"You know them identifications, Simon. The holdup victim's excited. He sees a fella about the same size as the real stick-up guy, sees him standing there, looking at his watch and wallet. 'That's him, that's him!' he yells. He's carried away by the way things look—and maybe he's sure of it. He thinks he's sure anyway—and that's all the police want. They got a clear case. The kid's been caught with the goods on him, and the stick-up victim says he's the man.

"But what would that stick-up victim say if they confronted him with the real guy? Why, he'd get all mixed up. He'd see his mistake. If he's any kind of a guy at all he'll admit it. Anyway, it's the only hope the kid's got—and maybe that ain't much hope. But it's better'n nothing. It's a chance. Well, Eddie Blainey's the man that can give us the dope. Who's the corner-stiff that went by such and such a name when he was traveling with this kid? That's what we'd ask Eddie. And he'd tell you. He'd know he oughta tell if you ask him. That'd give us a working line on the real stick-up guy. We'd get a lawyer to go through with it. We'd go after the corner-stiff under the name that maybe the police know him by. We'd have him yanked up. The kid'd have some chance then—know what I mean?"

Simon Trapp meditated a few minutes.

"I see it all plain enough," he admitted; "but ain't it possible that we should get a line on this here corner-stiff without bothering Eddie Blainey? What name did he give this boy you're talking about?"

"Oh, I don't know," Jack Augler replied. "Jones, or sumpin like that—a name that don't mean a thing when it

comes to running a guy down. The name don't count, Simon. It's the name that Eddie Blainey knows him by that counts. If you wanta do sumpin about it, I'm telling you you gotta locate Eddie Blainey. You gotta find The Lamp."

Once again Simon Trapp fell into a meditative reverie.

"And that ain't easy," he rejoined presently; "to find a fella that's in prison some place, and doing all he can to keep his real name secret. That's how it looks about Eddie Blainey." He studied Jack Augler with keen interest, and his friendly manner was a trifle warmer. "But I tell you one thing, Jack," he continued, "I never stand in the way of a burglar that wants to do a thing like this. I don't know this here kid that you're talking about, but I do know this. It don't do a fella like you no harm to help such a fella. It shows a good streak in you. It's things like that that makes it seem better for me—there's something kinda human about us fellas after all. It's important that things like that should be done. It kinda softens the hard life we live. So I always been in favor of them little things. I encourage 'em. I'm going to help you save this here kid—and you know, you'll feel better for doing it. Yes sir, I know—you'll feel better."

And then Simon Trapp performed one of those mental feats which were so disconcerting to those with whom he talked. He leaped abruptly clear away from the subject in hand. Jack Augler sat smoking quietly, after listening to Simon Trapp's offer of help, wondering if the old pawnbroker had a plan to suggest at the moment. Suddenly Simon Trapp, his eye lighting on a newspaper which had apparently claimed his interest before Jack came in, spoke in a voice which seemed to indicate he had forgotten all about the young man in the Tombs.

"Now it beats all," he said, "how

popular prisoners is getting to be these days. Did you read about this here stunt that's being framed up by the American Prisoners' Betterment Society?"

"No," Jack replied, somewhat disappointed.

"Well, read it."

Jack Augler did so, reluctantly. He looked up from the paper, as much as to inquire, "Well, what of it?"

"Now that should be all right," the pawnbroker went on. "That'll be enjoyed by a lotta our friends that ain't getting much enjoyment outa life right now. They're givin' 'em baseball games and movies in prison now—they been doing that for a long time. And they been giving 'em shows too. Only a little while ago I read about a lotta New York actors going up to Sing Sing and putting on a show. Well it ain't funny that somebody should think about a big radio concert—is it?"

"No, it ain't funny," the burglar admitted. "But things is differ'nt now. When I done a stretch up there a few years back there wasn't no shows or baseball games for us. We done our batting with a sledge-hammer, and we hadda hit the ball, which was a big rock, every time we swung. And there wasn't no base-running for us in them days. A guy'd have a fine time making first base with one o' them big iron balls chained to his ankle, wouldn't he? That's the kinda ball we played—ball-and-chain. And shows—— Say, they'd hardly let us look up at the sky!"

"Well," the old pawnbroker suggested musingly, "times is changed. Yes, sir, times is changed." His mind appeared to be wandering. Jack Augler listened in bewilderment. "You know, Jack, I always did say you look like a college pefessor. If I didn't know you was a burglar, I'd never believe it just to look at you. And that's a good voice you got too—a heavy voice, kinda ringing. A good voice to make a speech with. I

bet that if somebody wrote you out a nice speech and you learnt it by heart, you'd rip it off in good shape——"

"For the love o'—— What're you talking about, Simon?"

"And you just got outa jail, too. The papers've been printing stuff about your trial, and what a notoribus burglar you are. Maybe there ain't a burglar in the country that's known better'n you be, Jack. Now wouldn't that make a hit with them there reform societies—Jack Augler reformed? They'd throw their arms right around your neck, and if you said to this here society I'm talking about that you wanted to make a speech to prisoners over the radio—tell 'em how you come to reform, and beg 'em to see what the reformers call the light of—— Well, that'd make a hit too, Jack."

"Simon," said Jack Augler in despair, "maybe I'm dippy. I been in the Tombs a long time—and my brain ain't working just right I guess. For I don't get you, Simon, no I don't—I don't get you a-tall!"

Simon Trapp chuckled.

"But you will get me," he promised, "when I tell you about a little scheme I got. Maybe it won't work. I don't know—I just happened to think about it; and maybe when we talk it over it won't look so good. But just now it looks fine. It looks as if it should be the best thing to do. Jack Augler," he added musingly, "the notorious burglar, has went and reformed. Yes, it looks good. Now listen, Jack——"

And Jack listened.

In the mess hall of a prison in the middle West, more than a thousand convicts sat at the long eating benches, but there was no food in front of them. It was mid-afternoon, and this was Prisoners' Betterment Day. Music from afar filled the big room—a hymn sung by a celebrated choir. The eyes of almost every man were riveted on the loud-speaking radio set on the platform,

as though looking for the grouped singers themselves.

It was only natural that the music and the program, and the purpose of the day itself, should inspire a variety of emotions among that vast assemblage. Many were eagerly interested—others were skeptical and cynical, and filled with hard thoughts about society in general and about "lily-white squads," as crooks call reform organizations. Yet all were pleased by the diversion from the deadly routine of prison.

Two hardened crooks sat side by side about midway of the room. Something like a sneer spoiled the young faces of both men. They had no use for hymn-singing "lily-white squads," and they had sneered ever since announcement was first made of Prisoners' Betterment Day. Thoughts of betterment so far as they were concerned had to do with saws and files and perhaps a rope ladder, none of which they saw a chance of getting.

The radio program was part of a campaign for the benefit of prisoners all over the country. Numerous stations had been hooked up, and the wardens of thirty State's prisons had cooperated. Prisoners in as many penitentiaries were listening in.

In this particular prison each man had received a slip of paper on which was printed the radio program, and one of the two crooks was filled with eagerness in regard to a certain feature—the talk that was to be made by a reformed burglar, Jack Augler. That prisoner was known in the underworld of New York as Eddie Blainey, The Lamp, but he was in that prison under a different name.

"I know that guy," he said to his friend, in a whisper, without moving his lips, as prisoners train themselves to talk. He indicated the name of Jack Augler. "Me and him used to train together—pals, thick as could be. I thought he was A No. 1. I never

thought he'd go over to the lily-whites. Wonder what he'll preach about? He's next."

The hymn ended. A voice announced: "Jack Augler, who knows as much about a jimmy and drill as any man in the country, has taken his recent acquittal in the courts of New York as a 'hunch' to go straight, as he terms it. This society welcomes a man like Jack. He can do great work, and he has an appeal to make to you this afternoon. You will now listen to Jack Augler."

The Lamp bent forward, ears alert for the voice of his old friend, the man who, from The Lamp's point of view, had gone wrong.

"Boys," this voice was saying, "I'm one o' you. I've made up my mind to go straight, but that don't mean I've forgotten my old friends. I s'pose some o' my old friends're listening to me now. I cert'nly had a lot of 'em in places like you're in. I wish you could chime in, so we could talk back and forth—but this is a one-way telephone. You ain't got no chance o' arguing with me, except maybe by writing. You gotta set there and take my guff. But listen, boys, I cert'nly'd like to hear from my old friends, and maybe if we corresponded I could make it plainer just why I made up my mind to go straight. The society's told me they'd be glad to forward mail, if there's any prisoner that'd like to write me and get a heart-to-heart talk. All you gotta do is address a letter to me in care o' the Prisoners' Betterment Society, New York, and I'll get it. I'll answer too. I aim to do what I can for fellas like you. It'll help me to forget all the things I done—and which I'm ashamed of now."

Eddie Blainey—The Lamp—sniffed.

"You fellas that know me, know I was a good crook," the voice was saying now. "I was good at dodging the police. I didn't always dodge 'em, but I was lucky most o' the time. I used to

know a fella we called The Lamp——" The Lamp pricked up his ears. His personal interest in this feature of the program was thus heightened to the keenest edge.

"—— and he come by that name," Jack Augler continued, "'cause he was the best man we knew at showing us jobs. He was a wizard, The Lamp was, at finding places to rob—and he'd come to us with the layouts all framed up. We'd go out and do the jobs—us burglars. But The Lamp was the guy that showed us how to get to these places. And by the way, I'd cert'nly like to hear from The Lamp—but I know he's in Europe now. Only the other day I was talking with a friend o' mine—and he told me The Lamp was in Europe—that he was going straight. I'm glad to hear that. Another fella we called 'Simple Simon' told me that—Simple Simon, 'cause he was always getting into a trap. I hope——"

Eddie Blainey did not miss that point. "Simple Simon," who was always getting into a "trap"—— That certainly was guff. There was something significant in this. Jack Augler and his pointed references to The Lamp—Simple Simon, the trap—Simon Trapp! It certainly would be wise to listen to every word of Jack Augler's.

"—— wandering," so came the voice from afar. "But I ain't no speech-maker—and I can't help wandering. A fella like me mentions the name of an old friend, and he's just gotta say sumpin about him. What I meant when I started to tell you about The Lamp—the guy that showed us burglars the way—was that I wanta be your lamp. I wanta show you how to go straight. Instead of showing you places to rob, I'll try and show you how to get jobs, through the society, as that's the work they do. I'll be your lamp, if you'll let me."

There followed then a brief appeal, a heart-to-heart talk from a supposedly

former crook. Eddie Blainey's thoughts were racing, but he missed not a word from Jack Augler. Jack, under the subterfuge of wishing to turn himself into a guiding lamp, was enabled to sprinkle his talk with phrases highly significant to Eddie Blainey. Eddie Blainey's veins tingled. The hint that he chose to take from this talk—the hint that crafty old Simon Trapp had something to do with it—explained much of the elaborate scheme, if it was a scheme. That was Simon Trapp's way, and well Eddie Blainey knew it.

Eddie Blainey had the curious feeling of having received a personal message. The long line of prisoners was marching from the mess hall, arms folded.

"He was a good friend of mine, Jack Augler was," he mused. "I can't believe he's going straight—but even if he is, he wouldn't play no dirty tricks on me. He might have some word for me that I oughta hear. I'll be outa here in another year, but— 'Twon't do no harm to write that guy anyway—and see if he did mean anything. I'd like to know for sure." He clutched the printed program in his fingers. "The address is on this thing. Jack Augler wouldn't do me no dirt—even if he is going straight. And I can't get over that 'Simon Trap' business. He must 'a' meant Simon Trapp. It couldn't just be an accident, with things fitting in like that. I think I'll write. I'll slip a letter out—and make sure anyway."

Jack Augler, one morning, hastened to Simon Trapp.

"I got it!" he cried. "A letter from Eddie Blainey!"

"Good!" the pawnbroker rejoined. "My, but I never saw you so excited before."

"Well," said Jack, in a quieter voice. "I almost forgot that kid in the Tombs. I got so excited seeing if this thing'd

work out. It did all right—and Eddie Blainey'll come through. That society's going to take up this kid's case, and they're gonta send me out there to talk to Blainey. Oh, they're all right, Simon—that society. They don't spill a fella's secrets. They're out to help fellas like us—and they ain't police. They won't stand for nothing crooked, but they won't spill secrets that come to them."

"Say," said the pawnbroker, studying the burglar sharply, "you kinda got stuck on that society, eh?"

Jack Augler was very much embarrassed.

"Well," he blurted out, "I'm one of 'em now, Simon. I went into this thing just to help a kid—but I met some fine people up there. They think I was on the square. Well, I'm gonta be on the square. They got a place for me, helping discharged prisoners. It's a living, and—and a chance— Don't laugh at me, Simon—I'm going straight."

"I ain't laughing at you," the old pawnbroker assured him. "I never laugh at a fella for going straight—and I never try to stop him. Not me." He chuckled. "But say," he added, "won't it knock the boys cold when they hear how I found Eddie Blainey—how we found him, as you done the talking, even if it was my idea. Only the other day a friend o' mine said I was getting too old for fancy stuff—but I guess I'm keeping up with the times, ain't I? Simon Trapp's using the radio to find a friend, that's what the boys'll say. Nothing like being up-to-date, Jack. Well, I don't s'pose I'll ever see you again. Good luck, Jack. I know you'll go straight right—that you won't turn on your old friends. Now that radio—Finkelberg, acrost the street, he sells 'em. He says they're fine for an old man like me—alone in the evening. I guess I'll get one. I should be up-to-date."

Not So Bright

by Paul Ellsworth Triem

Author of "See You in Church," etc.

DAN LUNDY had had an unusually busy morning; and, indeed, had been kept away from his place of business by various duties which he lumped under the head of "footwork" until nearly three o'clock. He stopped at the corner delicatessen on the way up to his offices, which were on the second floor of an old studio building on Harby Street, and bought a paper bag of kippered cod and a loaf of pumpernickel.

With these comestibles under his arm, he eventually made his way along the gloomy corridor off which his quarters opened; removed the tag he was wont to pin just below the frosted glass panel during his absences, and unlocked the door. The tag intimated that Mr. Lundy would be "Back in ten minutes." The glass panel above it bore the words, "Dan Lundy, Confidential Agent. We never sleep!"

"And that's more truth than poetry," the short-legged, long-bodied little detective grumbled, as he glanced at it this afternoon. "Never sleep, and it's getting nowadays so I don't never eat! I've got to hire a clerk!"

There were some letters on the floor. Lundy picked these up and examined them. They were mostly police circulars, and later on they would have to be filed. He tossed them upon his desk, which stood facing the door. Then he went on into the rear room, which was a combination of laboratory and kitchen, and proceeded to set out the delicacies he had bought down on the

street, and also to put a small pot of coffee to brew over the hissing, blue flame of his Bunsen burner. Then, with the afternoon paper propped against the condensed milk can, the confidential agent sat down to his meal.

Fifteen minutes later, the outer door opened and closed. Lundy cautiously peered out. A tall man with a mane of rusty hair and very bushy eyebrows stood looking about the office.

"There he is again!" the detective communed with himself, an expression of mystification on his round, red face. "Now what in sin do you suppose he's up to? Just three o'clock—why, it was three to the minute he came in yesterday! And he's shaking his head and talking to himself again," Lundy said, as he turned off the lights in the back room and started in the direction of the newcomer.

The new client, if client he was to be, eyed Lundy dubiously as the two came face to face.

"Well," he said, speaking with a slight accent which hinted at Scotch ancestry, "I'm back again!"

"So I see. And now that you are back, what can I do for you?"

This unequivocal beginning seemed to frighten the newcomer. He eyed the door nervously, then settled back in the chair he had taken and shook his head.

"Well, maybe nothing!" said he. "There is a small matter—but I don't know—"

At it again, Lundy realized. That was the way he had gone on the after-

noon before. Well, if he didn't come to the point without much more waste of time——

The stranger arose abruptly and crossed to the window opening upon the side street. His hand was over his mouth, his cheeks showed mottled purple; and he seemed to be in the grip of some mysterious inner paroxysm. Dan Lundy, who was something of a judge of such performances, watched him critically.

"Water!" gasped the stranger. "A drink!"

The confidential agent went back to his rear room, ostensibly to fetch the drink. He turned just inside the door, however, and peered through the crack. Ah, he had known it—the rusty haired stranger was sprinting on tiptoe for the outer door. He reached it, let himself soundlessly out, and was gone.

Dan Lundy stood for a moment, a flush rising into his habitually high-colored cheeks, a smoldering spark in his round, widely opened eyes. This thing had passed the verge of a joke. He meant to know what was really behind it.

Pulling his soft felt hat snugly upon his head, the detective strode across to the hall door and let himself out. He snapped on the spring lock. The elevator, around the corner, was just starting down. Lundy sprinted for the stairway, and was standing in the heavy shadow of its lowest steps when his mysterious visitor passed him, headed at a rapid stride for the street.

Lundy had never prided himself especially on his ability as a trailer. Some men are born with the ability to slip through crowded or vacant streets in the wake of a given victim with an almost total lack of visibility. Their work is instinctive, as is that of a trailing wolf or tiger. But the confidential agent had to use his head at every twist and turn; and moreover, his short legs handicapped him when he was obliged

to shadow a long-geared individual like the man with the rusty hair.

The chase continued up Harby Street and around the corner into Grand. For a time, Lundy was able to hold his own. Then he began to fall behind, and in spite of his utmost efforts he was not able to overcome any of this handicap. It was with a sigh of relief that he saw the man ahead of him pause suddenly, just in front of a drug store, and consult his watch. The stranger turned and went into the store.

"Going to telephone some one, I expect," Lundy told himself as he worked closer to the drug-store entrance and leaned against the side of a friendly doorway. "Well, he don't need to be in any hurry about starting out again, as far as I'm concerned."

That was all very well to say; but when ten minutes passed without any sign from the rusty haired individual, Lundy abruptly moved forward and looked into the store.

"What do you know about that!" he asked himself disgustedly. "I forgot this store went through to the other block—walked out on me! Well, I never told any one I was a class-A trailer!"

There was nothing for him to do now but to return to his office, which he did at a leisurely amble, musing on his recent adventure. Dan Lundy was involved in no big cases at the present time, so that apparently there could be no purpose in this lanky individual's hanging about his office on the chance of surprising information, or stealing evidence. He had something of the manner of a bungler trying to approach the ticklish subject of offering a bribe; but there was nothing Lundy could be bribed to do or to forego doing, as far as he himself knew.

"And I don't believe he's crazy, which some folks might suspect!" the confidential agent told himself, with a shake of his round, capable head. Now, let's

see—he came at three, on the dot, yesterday and to-day. I'm fed up on foolishness. I'll just invest a few simoleons on this bird, and see what comes of it!"

Thereupon he quickened his stride, reached his headquarters, and within five minutes had called a young man who did occasional odd jobs for him. Lundy made an engagement for half past two the following afternoon.

"Probably now that I'm ready for him, this hood won't show up again!" he told himself as he hung up the receiver and turned to the pile of police circulars on his desk. "That's the way things generally work out in this world!"

The man with the rusty hair appeared promptly at three the following afternoon, however. He eyed Dan Lundy craftily, but made no explanation of his abrupt departure the day before except to mutter something about having "turned faint." Lundy grinned. He sat regarding his vis à vis with bland amusement which he made no effort to conceal. Under this treatment the other fidgeted.

"Have a smoke?" he asked, proffering a cigar.

The confidential agent took it and put it into his vest pocket.

"I never indulge," he replied, "but they come in handy in my business sometimes—getting folks to talk. Better than offering them money. Was there anything you wanted along the line of information out of me?"

"Well, I don't know—it depends——"

With a plunge, the stranger was on his feet and halfway to the door. Lundy watched him depart without comment, but the moment the door had closed the little detective jerked on his soft felt hat and followed. He went boldly into the hall and hurried along it and down the stairs to the first floor. He arrived just in time to see his recent visitor springing into the street.

Dan Lundy did his best to keep the rusty haired man in sight, just as he had the day before; but he knew from the start that he was outclassed. The stranger was built like a pair of long-bladed scissors, and his long, straight legs ate up distance in a way that made the little detective marvel. Eventually the man ahead ducked round a corner. When Lundy reached it, he had disappeared.

"All right, my bucko," Lundy mumbled. "But I guess you'll discover before long that this was three times—and out!"

Thereupon he returned placidly to his office and sat studying police circulars till Tim Livingston, the young man he had hired for the afternoon, reported.

"Well, I followed him on my motor cycle. After he shook you, he climbed into a sport car he had parked around the corner, and beat it. He was laughing and shaking his head to beat the band. I tagged along behind, till we struck into Arcadia Way——"

Lundy whistled, and Tim nodded.

"Not only that, but he finally turned in at the driveway of one of the swellest dumps out there! I saw him run the sport car into an eight-car garage, and take himself into the house by the back way. Then I got busy. I learned that this place belongs to old Josiah Hammond, who made a fortune canning smelts and calling them sardines. He's retired, and lives out there alone except for a corps of servants and this red-headed fellow, Andy Reed. Andy is the old man's 'man Friday'—his handy man. Combination of secretary, valet, chauffeur and even does a little fancy work on the banjo and saxophone for Josiah's entertainment. But what Reed means by trying to play jokes on you is more than I can say!"

Dan Lundy nodded.

"Good work, Tim," said he. "I may have something more for you in connection with this business—let you know

later. And now, I think I'll just run out and have a little heart-to-heart talk with the old gentleman—Hammond. Unless I miss my guess, he's the spider at the center of this web!"

The confidential agent took a taxicab to the aristocratic, three-story house on Arcadia Way. He went boldly up the steps and rang the bell. The butler who presently swung it soundlessly open before him eyed the little detective with bilious disapproval.

"Just take my card up to Mr. Josiah Hammond, my man!" Lundy commanded, proffering his business card. "Sure he's expecting me! His dinner time? Well, he can wait. Just you hustle along with that card!"

With obvious unwillingness, the man in black did as he was ordered. He returned a minute later, his face somewhat more tolerant.

"Come into the library, sir. Mr. Hammond will see you at once!"

It was a cheerful room, with bright-colored English sporting prints on the dark-paneled walls and a fire crackling in the big fireplace at one end; and shelves and shelves of books. At a house desk in one corner sat a little old man, with shaggy brows and a great, high-bridged, masterful nose, and two piercing gray eyes; but a small man, for all that. He sat staring unwinkingly at the newcomer, nor did he offer to rise or shake hands.

"Well?" he snapped, his voice curt and domineering.

Dan Lundy smiled and shook his head.

"It won't do, Mr. Josiah Hammond!" he replied. "I'm here, and you know why. It's not for me to venture a guess as to your motives——"

The strong, intent old face relaxed into a grim smile.

"Sit down, Lundy!" the old man said. "You exceed my expectations! Mr. Amos Cushman, my attorney, was good enough to recommend you—but you'll

pardon me for not taking you entirely on his recommendation. I'm a great student of the Bible, sir, and I have always admired the perspicacity of our old friend, Nebuchadnezzar. He believed in testing out the people who claimed to be able to do big things for him—but that won't interest you. I wanted to see if you had initiative and resourcefulness enough to find me. If you hadn't how could I hope that you would be able to find my enemy? So I gave Andy a free hand——"

Dan Lundy had drawn a chair close to the desk, and sat regarding the old man with undisguised interest.

"Your enemy, sir?"

"Aye, my enemy! I realize that in these Pollyanna times, that good old word has become almost obsolete. But I still cling to it. My friends and my enemies are very dear to me! And this one——"

His penetrating, deeply sunken gray eyes were beginning to glow, and a flush had come into his sunken cheeks. With a frown he turned and drew out a drawer of the desk before him. Taking from the drawer a sheaf of letters held together by a brass spring clip, he selected one, after a glance over the collection; and handed it to the confidential agent.

"Just be good enough to cast your eye over that!" he requested.

Dan Lundy read the typewritten letter through without comment. Then his eyes traveled up to the head of the page, and he went slowly through it again, his lips pursed, his head bowed. It was a poison-pen letter—a blackmailing letter—an evil letter that brought the blood slowly into the confidential agent's cheeks.

"Evidently written by a man—signs himself 'Lone Wolf.' 'Lone jackal' would be closer to it. Who is the woman he claims to have incriminating letters from?"

"My sister. She died last year."

Josiah Hammond's face had flushed also, but his sunken and penetrating eyes never wavered or turned aside under the detective's prolonged scrutiny. Rather, a deeper fire had kindled in them.

"And you want me to find the reptile that wrote this letter?"

"That one and the others—you can look them all through at your leisure, but that is a fair sample. *Want you to find him?* More than I want anything else in the world. I want his evil mouth stopped. But can you do it? What do you deduce from this letter?"

Lundy stared hard at his new client.

"Deduce?" said he.

"Aye—deduce. You have a document written by this rascal in your hand. What sort of person is he? What facts can you make out——"

The confidential agent let his glance wander to a case of books set convenient to the house desk. He scanned the titles, and a smile played for a moment about his mouth.

"Ah, Mr. Josiah Hammond," he commented, "I see that you have a taste for fairy stories—just as I have. I've read them all, from Sherlock Holmes, the famous amateur of crime, back to his old granddaddy, Poe's thinking-machine. I read that sort of thing when I'm tired with the world as it is, and wish I had wings. Those lads had, all of them—they didn't have to crawl over the earth. They spread their pinions and flew across difficulties. Did you ever notice—but never mind that. Deduce, is it?"

Josiah Hammond was plainly disappointed, and more than a little troubled. He let his masterful glance rest on the confidential agent, seated comfortably in his chair; and then his eyes dropped to the sheaf of letters on his desk.

"I don't know what to think, or say," he commented. "The man who wrote these is clever, and it will take a thinker to outwit him. I know the sort of footwork the police depend upon, and in

dealing with a thieving maid or butler it is all well enough. But with this villain——"

"Look here—do you mean to say you know the fellow that wrote those letters?" Lundy broke in, a trace of excitement in his manner.

"I know him—but I have no proof. And if I did have, I wouldn't know how to deal with him. I won't pay the money he demands. That would be a tacit admission on my part that the things he intimates are true. But I can't take the thing into court. Her memory mustn't be smirched. In some way I must fasten his crime to him, and then——"

"And then?"

"I don't know. That's one of the things I'm hiring you for—advice!"

Lundy sat forward in his chair. For an instant his glance rested cryptically on the letter.

"Tell me about him!" he commanded. "Perhaps we aren't as helpless as we look!"

Josiah Hammond told his story with the brevity and directness of a trained thinker. His sister was much younger than himself but not as young by fifteen years as this young fellow, Arthur Deering, whom she had met on a visit to friends in a distant city. He had courted her ardently, and for a time the woman had believed his protestations.

"But she had a level head, Beatrice had," the old man explained. "She wrote me about the affair, and I ventured to suggest certain lines of inquiry into her suitor's past, and present. Strange to say, in this day of independence for women, she followed my suggestions. After that she kept her eyes open, and still later there came a break. Deering tried to patch it up. He threatened to sue me for defamation of character, but that was just a shyster trick. He didn't dare. Then he dropped out of sight. He had a pretty fair business started where he was then located, but he wasn't looking for work. So he took

himself off, and I heard nothing more from him or about him till these letters began to arrive!"

"I didn't see the envelopes. They came by mail?"

"They have been delivered one a day now for nearly a week, by messenger—uniformed boys from one of the regular companies."

"Ah," Dan Lundy commented, "he knew better than to drag Uncle Sam into this business! Sending this sort of thing through the mail would constitute an additional felony, I fancy. You say he was in business? What sort of business?"

"He was a handwriting expert—expert witness, consultant."

The detective grunted and shook his head.

"When a professional gent like that turns sour, he makes a bad one!" said he. "He knows *how* to do things, you see. And that accounts for the letters he refers to. He doubtless had something in your sister's handwriting, and with his professional training he figured he could put over something that would defy detection. Maybe he could—but there are points about this case——"

A low knock sounded at the door; and at a word of command from Josiah Hammond, the butler entered, carrying stiffly before him a silver tray. This he presented to his master.

"A letter, sir!" he announced. "Brought by a young lad on a bicycle."

Hammond's face had turned dusky red. He took the envelope from the tray, his blazing eyes resting for a moment on the face of the detective. But Dan Lundy was on his feet, and out the door. He raced along the hall and reached the front porch in time to see a uniformed messenger boy mounting a bicycle at the foot of the broad steps.

"Just a minute, my boy!" he called. "Perhaps we'll have something for you to take back!"

The youngster dismounted and came

nimbly back. Lundy collared him and led the way into the library. He was a common city type, the confidential agent noted with his swift, appraising glance: impudent, self-confident, with beady, black eyes and a snub nose. Lundy smiled beguilingly and produced half a dollar.

"Suppose we should want to send a message back to the gentleman that sent this letter?" he suggested. "Think you could get it to him for us?"

The boy shook his head.

"Not a chance, mister! The letter was turned into the office by a kid about my age, and he said another bigger kid had given it to him to give us. And a man had given it to this first guy, see? He wasn't taking no chances—black-hand, isn't it?"

"Well, something like that. There have been other letters delivered here——"

"Not from our office! We're just a branch," the youngster interrupted. "I asked the boss about it, 'cause I was interested. You're a detective, ain't you?"

Lundy handed over the half dollar and dismissed his inquisitor. He saw Josiah Hammond read the newly arrived poison-pen missive through; and lay it, with steady hand but glowing eyes, upon the others.

"Ah, the same amiable party!" the confidential agent said as his client handed him the document. "And he's getting impatient. You're to communicate with him through the classified columns of the morning paper! Threatens exposure—just hand me those other letters. Mr. Josiah Hammond! Thank you. Ah, now I wonder——"

The little detective settled back in his chair and stared unwinkingly at the documents in his lap. His expression changed, subtly but unmistakably. He was paging through the letters as if searching for something.

"You have a clue?" Hammond demanded eagerly.

"I suppose you never set eyes on this man, Deering, yourself?" Lundy countered.

"No!"

"And he hasn't an office here in the city? Not that you've heard of—ah, I rather think that he hasn't. He would keep himself foot-loose. And there are indications here—but I must be on my way. I will bid you a very good evening, Mr. Josiah Hammond, and I venture to predict that I will have something definite to report within twenty-four hours!"

And in spite of the older man's obvious eagerness to know what he had discovered Dan Lundy left. Half an hour later he was seated in his rear room, a pot of coffee brewing over the blue flame of the Bunsen burner, and one of the blackmailer's letters propped up against the condensed milk can. His soft felt hat was tilted to the back of his round head, and his manner was pensive.

"It's a long shot," he murmured. "But I believe I shall plug the bull's-eye!"

His eyes were sparkling as he sprang up and hurried in to the telephone on his desk.

Dan Lundy was busy with some detail work at the hall of justice most of the next morning, but soon after he had returned to his headquarters on Harby Street he had a phone call from his assistant, young Tim Livingston. The detective's eyes sparkled as he listened to the tinny voice coming to him over the wire.

"Fine—fine!" he exclaimed, breathing hard and gripping the receiver till his knuckles showed white. "Now, keep close track of him till you see——"

His voice dropped and he was almost whispering into the phone. He hung up presently, sat staring into space for a time, and then again removed the receiver from the hook. This time he called Josiah Hammond.

"I'll be glad to have you call at my

office about six, this evening!" he told the old man. "Found him? Got proof? Ah I make it an invariable custom not to discuss my cases prematurely!"

And again he hung up, this time with a smile twitching about the corners of his mouth. If the old herring king wanted mystery, he should have it. Dan Lundy always tried to give his clients what they asked for.

The afternoon passed swiftly; and at six, exactly, the door opened and Josiah Hammond entered the office. He had paused outside long enough to read the sign on the frosted glass panel, and now his eyes rested piercingly on the face of the confidential agent. He asked no questions, however; nor did Dan Lundy volunteer any information. They sat for a time discussing current events in Europe, and the rise and fall of the stock market.

Silence fell, eventually. There was a mysterious tension in the air, which the night sounds from the great city seemed only to intensify. Somewhere down on Harby Street a newsboy was calling the night edition. On the distant avenue street cars hummed and jangled by.

And then there came the droning of the ancient elevator, ascending from the first floor. Its gate clanged open, and clanged shut. Steps sounded in the hall. The office door opened, and two men entered.

The penetrating glance of Josiah Hammond fastened itself as if by instinct on the face of one of these newcomers; a snarling, sinister face, with a trace in it to-night of somber menace. And the stranger regarded the retired merchant with the same intuitive distrust.

"What's the meaning of this outrage?" he demanded, his crooked lips a-tremble. "This fellow insisted on my coming here with him——"

"Ah, Mr. Arthur Deering, let's not begin by using harsh language!" Dan

Lundy broke in. His watchful eyes caught the start of surprise with which the stranger reacted to this boldly spoken name. "Outrage? Why, what do you call this letter-writing campaign of yours? And to assail the memory of the dead——"

The snarling face was turned upon him, now.

"So?" the blackmailer growled. "This is a plant, is it? A conspiracy engineered by a private detective! All of them are thugs and crooks!"

Dan Lundy's habitually florid color deepened at this aspersion on his profession. He took a swift step nearer his unwilling caller, then paused and glanced inquiringly at the young man nearest the door.

"It's all right, chief!" Tim Livingston assured him. "He was just going to give the letter he wrote this morning to a boy to carry for him when I tapped him on the shoulder. He——"

But the cornered crook had heard enough. He was a burly fellow, and now he whirled suddenly and struck out. Tim Livingston, who was between him and the door, went down under the unexpected blow.

Deering leaped forward and had the knob in his fingers. Before he could jerk open the door, however, the confidential agent had gripped him by the collar and with one vigorous jerk had landed him on his back.

Sitting astride his captive, Dan Lundy slid a hand into a side coat pocket and brought out an envelope with a type-written address.

"I have no doubt this is what we are looking for!" said he. Tearing it open, he glanced at the page within. "Just so—and this time we have an unequivocal threat! Now, *will* you lie still?"

Deering was trying to dislodge his captor from his chest. The detective suddenly thrust his finger tips under the line of the blackmailer's jaw and prodded energetically upward.

"I'll have your tonsils out in a minute!" he threatened. "That's better—just examine that letter, Mr. Josiah Hammond!"

Hammond and Tim Livingston had been helpless spectators of this little drama. Now they bent together over the letter Lundy had captured. The confidential agent stood up, gripping Deering's right coat sleeve at the cuff with his own left hand and hauling the blackmailer to his feet.

"Get up!" he commanded. "I'm not going to have you polluting the air of my office any longer than I have to. I'm going to turn you loose, my young friend, but just let me give you a bit of advice: don't ever write to Mr. Josiah Hammond again, as long as you live; and don't let the name of a certain young woman we know ever pass your lips, or appear in anything written by you! If you do, I'll land you as easily as I did this time, and there won't be any smutty and sensational court trial for you, either! I'll attend to your case personally, and by the time I'm through with you, all you'll be needing is a slab down at the morgue!"

The door closed, and they heard the writer of the poison-pen letters stumbling hurriedly along the dimly lit hall toward the elevator. Lundy turned to his client.

"The best way, sir!" said he. "I hated to let the reptile get out from under my heel, but he'll land himself behind the bars soon enough without our help. And you'll not be bothered by him again!"

The old man nodded. His eyes glowed with bewilderment and with admiration.

"And now that you've completed your case, would you mind telling me how you managed it?" he asked.

"Not at all. As a matter of fact, most of the credit for the thing goes to you!"

"To me?"

"Absolutely. It was you that set me

to thinking about book detectives, and their methods. They look at 'Exhibit A,' and send out a trusty messenger to bring in the crook. And it happened that this was the one case in a thousand that could be handled best by that system. You'll remember that I looked over one of those letters, and then asked for the whole bunch and examined them? Well, I haven't written any monographs on typography, but it happens that in my bumble-headed way I do know the difference between one typewriter and another by the way it prints its letters. I recognized the machine this first poison-pen letter was written on—it was an 'Underhill.'

"Now, this rascal being in the expert testimony line himself, it was a safe guess that he would know that each individual machine puts its mark on every page and word it turns out. That's been proved in court, plenty of times. So he would figure out some way of using a machine that couldn't be traced to him. He wouldn't even venture to rent one, for that could be run down. He'd used just one make of typewriter for all these letters, but he'd used at least half a dozen different individual machines. Now, how would he manage that? Sure, you guess the answer. He'd go to the Underhill agency, where there are a dozen free machines the public is invited to come in and use!

"Well, having got that far in my chain of deductive reasoning, I called Tim and told him to get down to the Underhill Typewriter Agency the first thing this morning and to stick there till he picked out his man. But we didn't

have any description of Deering, you're thinking, so how could we pick him out? The answer is easy: we made him pick himself out. I told Tim to kind of saunter up behind each man who came in to write a letter. Most of them wouldn't think anything about it, and wouldn't notice him. But I figure our friend would. It would make him nervous. He'd be apt to fidget——"

"He sure did, chief!" Tim Livingston broke in. "I tried out ten or twelve different people before I came along behind this bird, Deering. The rest didn't pay any attention, but he turned what he was writing down so I couldn't see it and gave me an ugly look. I left the office and parked down the street till he came out. I trailed him to his hotel and called you. After that I stuck to him like you told me, till Deering stopped a kid on the street this evening and was about to give him a letter to take some place. Then I took him by the arm, and asked him if he'd come up here with me or go down to the police station. He came!"

Josiah Hammond had followed this narrative closely. Now he sighed, and drew out his check book.

"Ah," he murmured, "I thought you'd done something quite remarkable till you explained it! Now I see that it was simple, after all. No great effort, no display of intelligence——"

The confidential agent flushed with passing annoyance. Then a smile twisted the corners of his mouth.

"Wasn't it something like that they used to tell my colleague, Mr. Sherlock Holmes?" he inquired.

THEY "TIPPED OFF" THE SHERIFF

IN answer to a tip which had been sent to the sheriff's office of Lincoln County, Oklahoma, an armed force from the sheriff's office carefully guarded all the banks in the town of Stroud. In the meantime, the men who had sent the tip to the sheriff were busily engaged in the town of Chandler. There were four of them, and they looted the Farmers' National Bank of an undetermined amount of cash and escaped.

Big-nose Charley Finds a Brother

By Charles W. Tyler

Author of "Big-nose Charley and Madey-line," etc.

IT was an old red brick mansion, dignified, aloof, in grounds that were guarded by a high iron fence with spear-shaped pickets. Massive brick posts punctuated the array of ornamental iron, while ivy softened the prisonlike effect. A gravel driveway wound in from the street to a massive portecochère. Beyond was visible a portion of a brick carriage house, a story and a half affair that was now used as a garage. Huge old trees crowded close on all sides, and rank shrubs filled the nooks and corners.

An uneven brick walk, quilted here and there by grass tufts, led down from the wide piazza steps to an iron gate that adjoined the driveway entrance. The deep shade of the trees conveniently veiled the fact that the grounds had received indifferent attention. The lawns needed cutting and bold weeds towered over meek but smiling flowers. At the side a grapevine flung its snarled branches over an arbor and dilapidated summerhouse.

The entire place seemed to be stubbornly holding its ground against the encroachment of the modern three-flat houses that threatened on all sides. Here and there other staid mansions in the vicinity offered defiance to the onward march of tenements. The Hill Crest section, however, had lost already the greater part of its old families.

In front of the old red brick mansion a small colored boy, molded in iron, stood on a pedestal holding out a ring invitingly. Close beside him at the curb was a venerable automobile. Like the house beyond, it seemed to reflect yesterday's wealth, while it attempted to hold up a proud head in spite of its rags.

The machine was like an ark, an ark that had weathered several floods. Its fenders had been bent and straightened many times. The paint, where there was paint, was cracked; where there was not, rust showed. The rear half of the stately vehicle's top had been lowered, allowing the passenger to ride in state, while the driver occupied a position forward and well apart from the nobility. The tires wore patches until it seemed that there was less of the original material than of the repaired area.

At the wheel of this equipage there sat a chauffeur. He could scarcely have been more a part of the machine had he been incorporated in its manufacture in the beginning. He, too, gave evidence of long, hard wear. He had the same dignity that the house and the machine attempted to retain. His coat was large, and it was patched. It was a winter garment, and the month was July. The gentleman's hat was soft felt, and its brim was rolled up in front and back. Age had ventilated it, and the sweat of old "Giddup" McInnis' noble brow had

sketched the outline of a mountain range on the band.

The man sat stiffly erect, like a little general. The brows of old Giddup were bushy and small eyes looked out fiercely from beneath them. On his cheeks was a coarse stubble.

For years this individual had driven a hack downtown, a tumble-down affair that had been much like the machine in which he now sat. Later when the motor threatened to drive horses from the streets, Giddup McInnis invested in an ancient and honorable landaulet. People knew him for the hackman to whom staid old ladies of the aristocracy entrusted themselves when they wished to go shopping.

A man now appeared on the walk that led from the old red brick mansion. He angled himself leisurely toward the aged machine and its frayed pilot. The gentleman was stepping across the threshold of forty-seven, we'll say. His hair was streaked with gray and, while it was carefully brushed, curled forward slightly from behind his ears in apparent defiance of tonsorial artists. His cheeks were smooth and pink. His eyes were gray and full to the brim with a light of tranquillity and innocence.

The nose of this individual was large and it supported an assortment of pores that were unusually generous in proportion. Nevertheless, it was a well-shaped beak, and the owner was not ashamed of it. The prominence of his proboscis had resulted in a moniker that was more or less famous from Kerry Village, Boston, to the Plaza in Los Angeles.

The personage to whom we refer was attired in trousers that bagged slightly at the knees and he wore a black frock coat. His collar was of the once-popular stand-up, or choker, variety. The tie was a black four-in-hand, and it had escaped from its mooring with characteristic disregard for appearances. The man's shoes were of a type that

is known as the congress boot. His hat would have been described a few years ago as a "dicer." It rested on his head stiffly and with the apparent insecurity of a crown. He adjusted it now, using a hand on the brim at either side, attempting, it seemed, to force it lower and tighter.

Giddup McInnis observed the approach of his fare from the corner of his eye.

Silas Boggs—alias 'Big-nose' Charley—pulled up beside the landaulet and began fishing for the makings. Mr. McInnis did not look around. His jaw began clamping. He with the dicer rolled a coffin nail, lighted it; then said: "Joimes, take meh down t' the willage."

"Wot willage?"

"The cittuy."

"Whut part? I ain't no mine reader."

"I wants t' go t' the Queen an' Crescent D'partmunt Store, Joimes," said Mr. Boggs. "Yuh will wait fer meh, an' then fetch me back—home."

Giddup McInnis grunted as he climbed out to open the door for his passenger. The lanky individual in the black frock coat settled himself, and the driver crawled behind the wheel.

"Now will ye be afther goin', ye gorr dummed ole bone yard, or must I bate the stuffin' out of yez?" He fumbled with the switch and kicked savagely at the starter. Considerable noise and not a little smoke issued from the hood, and finally the engine started. The chauffeur grew tense, his jaw set and a dogged look came into his eyes as he manipulated the levers on the steering wheel and then pushed the gear shift into first. He braced himself and let in the clutch, meanwhile he urged his modern steed ahead quite as he had his ancient quadruped of old. "Giddup! Giddup, durn ye! Go long!"

Some time later Giddup McInnis managed to get his machine parked in a street near the side entrance of the

Queen and Crescent Department Store. He got out and opened the door for Mr. Boggs. The latter straightened his coat, pushed down his tie at the back and ambled into the building.

It was at this moment that a bulky individual near the corner suddenly stopped and squinted in the direction of Giddup McInnis' landaulet; then watched the frock coat and baggy trousers disappearing in the doorway.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Inspector Dorsey. "I've seen that old blat before."

He walked quickly toward the landaulet. "Say," he demanded of the driver, "who was the bird that just got out of this bus?"

Giddup McInnis eyed the other coldly. "What do yez want to know fur?"

"Never mind what I want to know for," retorted the inspector. "I'm asking you *who* it was?"

"What talk have you?" snapped Mr. McInnis, glaring at Mr. Dorsey. "Niver mind, 'tis is it? Mm-huh! An' who might ye be that yez is ashkin' *me* questions about *me* bizness, I want to know? The likes of ye have a foine chance of findin' out who is anybody from mesilf. Gwan! Git away from *me*!"

Inspector Dorsey leaned closer and displayed his badge. "Just cut out that yelling a minute," he advised. "I'm not trying to pick a fight with you."

Giddup McInnis scrutinized the badge; then pursed his lips and nodded his head slowly. "Ye're a detective, hey? Mm. Ye are. Ye're afther wantin' to know things fur information, I shpose. Ye do. I mistrusted ye from the fur-r-st. I did that. Yis, yis. The gintlemin ye be mentionin', now I come to think of it, is a Misther S-Silas Boggs, and a scholar he is, every foot av him. He spinds aisy, an' he ashks no foolish questions from nobody. I wisht there was more like him."

"Oh, my gosh!" muttered Inspector

Dorsey. "Silas Boggs, eh? Well, I'll be jiggered! Hump!" He turned to Mr. McInnis again. "Are you going to wait here for him?"

"I am that," replied the other. He finally cocked his head to one side and added: "I'm thinkin' Mishter Boggs be afther owain' considerable property in Hill Crist, an' I wouldn't be makin' a monkey av meself, if I was ye, *me* laddy buck." He nodded his head knowingly.

Inspector Dorsey grunted. "We'll see about that part of it," he declared, starting toward the entrance. Inside the store, the inspector met the store dick, one Peter Farrell, an ex-harness-bull. The two men exchanged greetings, and then the inspector explained that he had seen a suspicious character entering the building a few moments before, and he wished to check up on the gentleman. "He looked to me, the glimpse I got of him, like Big-nose Charley," stated the headquarters man. "You knew that old stiff, didn't you?"

Mr. Farrell nodded his head slowly. "H'm!" he mused. "I bet I know who you mean. I have been trying to place that guy for over a month. I thought I had seen him, but that get-up fooled me."

"You mean a bird in a frock coat?"

"Yes; that's him."

"I just saw him coming in here." Inspector Dorsey glanced about him. "There he is over there," he said suddenly. "At the jewelry counter."

The store detective turned and glanced in the direction indicated by Inspector Dorsey. "That man has been in here quite a few times the past month," he said. "I was speaking with the floor-walker, Jones, there. I forget who he said the gent was, but he spends money. Everybody knows him on account of his queer clothes. Old Giddup McInnis carts him around in that junk heap of his."

"Well, that's Big-nose Charley all right," the inspector stated positively,

"and he's got some darned scheme under his hat."

"That guy is cuckoo," said the store detective, watching the lanky gentleman who was now hanging over a show case in the jewelry department. "Crazy; that's what's the matter with him. Who ever heard of a regular crook parading around in a rig like that? Huh!"

"Big-nose Charley may be loony, but he's nobody's fool," asserted Inspector Dorsey.

"And that's Big-nose Charley," mused Mr. Farrell, rubbing his chin with his thumb and forefinger. "Mm. He's the guy who put Kerry Village on the map. I got a glimpse of him once or twice when I was on that Green Street beat, too. Old time peterman, slough-worker and the Lord knows what, and look at him now. I thought he was another one of those rich freaks that cling to the old-fashioned stuff till they croak. Yes, sir; he's nutty. Just the same I guess I'd better tip off the house."

"I wouldn't just yet," advised Inspector Dorsey. "I'd like to know what his game is. We have been trying to get the goods on this fellow for a long, long time; maybe our card is coming up."

"Let's just sort of get back here out of sight," suggested Mr. Farrell, "and we'll see what the old fossil has on his mind."

"You say he's been coming in here off and on for quite a while?" queried the inspector.

"Oh, yes. He makes right in with everybody. It's Mr. Boggs this and Mr. Boggs that, and all the time me trying to remember where I'd seen him before. Ain't that a hang of a note?"

The Queen and Crescent Department Store was the largest and most fashionable in the city. Above the basement, their patrons were made up to a certain degree of people of means. The jewelry department had been built up to meet the demands of a class who liked to do their buying under one roof, at the holi-

day season in particular. Big-nose Charley had discovered that it was possible to pick up very expensive little trinkets here, and hence he adapted himself to the personality of one Silas Boggs, with a view to acquiring something nice.

Charley dangled a lavalliere from his thumb, while he contemplated it speculatively. To the attentive salesman, he said: "'At's wery purty. Oh, my, yea-ah." To himself, he thought: "I wonder how much I could git f'r 'em rocks off a good fence like 'Hanover Street Rosey?'"

"I have something a little more elaborate," the salesman was saying. "How does this strike you, Mr. Boggs? Look at that drop. There is a history to that diamond. And the setting. Isn't that beautiful work?"

It would melt down, Charley thought, but when the alloy was removed the gold would not amount to so much. Small stuff. That might do for cheap pennyweighters, but not for a blowed-in-the-glass crook like himself. After all, there was nothing so easy to turn over as precious stones.

"Let meh look at some more di'muns," he said, toying with an elaborate pendant setting. "They is quite a hobby with meh, an' a good investment besides."

"One is fortunate who can spend money for things like these," said the salesman. "There is so much life and color in precious stones that I have known of people who really looked on them as friends."

Inwardly Charley agreed to this. He was thinking of making love to a few himself. Aloud, he remarked: "Yuh know, ol' Solomun says, 'Gold and rubies is well, but the lips of knowledge is a precious joo'l.'"

The other laughed. "Ha, ha! You have some very droll sayings, Mr. Boggs. How do you ever think of them all?"

"I read ut all in Prowerbs," said

Charley. "In another place Solomun was sayin', 'Don't work too hard t' get rich, and cease once in a while from your own wisdom.'"

The salesman took occasion to wink at the floorwalker, who was hovering in the background. Here was a balmy old bird who was just tottering with money, one of those eccentric fellows who could do and talk and dress as he liked, and get away with it just because he had wealth back of him. It didn't seem right that a crazy chap like that should have it so soft, and a bright, snappy person, like himself, for instance, had to slave his days away in the jewelry department of the Queen and Crescent Store.

Big-nose Charley selected a lavalliere, which he explained was for a favorite niece, who was having a coming-out party that evening. Had the gentleman been reading the society notes? The gentleman had not, happily.

Also, Silas Boggs bought a diamond ring, an expensive watch, a diamond stud and a ruby scarf pin. He would have purchased more, but that was all he thought he could get away with. He estimated roughly that when the stuff was broken up, he ought to be able to wheedle a couple of thousand dollars, anyway, out of some fence. He thought he probably would have to leave town before he could connect with Hanover Street Rosey, but it did not matter; there were other receivers of stolen goods in the country. Without a doubt, the bulls would be awfully mad at him for this stunt and he had better stay out of Boston for a couple of blue moons.

Having completed his purchases, he looked around for his friend, Mr. Jones, the floorwalker. He caught the other's eye, and smiled. The gentleman approached. "And how do you find yourself to-day, Mr. Boggs?" he asked genially.

"Oh, I'm purty well f'r an old feller."

said Big-nose Charley. "Ut's gettin' warm, ain't ut?"

It was, Mr. Jones agreed. The jewelry salesman stood expectantly behind the glass show case, his pencil poised above a sales slip. He was waiting for Mr. Boggs to pay for the jewelry he had purchased. "You wish to have this charged?" he asked at last, diplomatically.

"Eh?" said Charley, alias Silas Boggs, quite as though the matter had slipped his mind for the moment. "Charged? What? Why, now, lemme see." He ran his thumb along the edge of his jaw reflectively. "N-no, I guess I won't bother t' get it charged. Yuh see, I'd like t' take ut with meh." He indicated the small array of dainty boxes that the salesman had placed the individual pieces of jewelry in. "I wuz goin' t' give meh niece the halter t'-night."

Mr. Jones smiled. Indeed, this was a peculiar person, a very quaint character. His eyes wandered to the clock. It was after three. He was wondering if Mr. Boggs would offer a check; he hoped not. While the gentleman was a valued customer, he was not as well known to the Queen and Crescent as some. He was, in fact, a comparative stranger. And because he had always paid cash for his purchases previously, he had not been looked up. The floorwalker wondered what he had best do in a case of this kind. Big-nose Charley saved him further mental strain by offering a suggestion.

"If yuh had a d-detective yuh could send out t' the Hill Crest section with meh," he said, "I could give him the cash. I got it t' home, but I didn't figger on makin' no purchases when I come in. It was wery stupid uh meh not t' brung ut along."

When Big-nose Charley adopted the raiment of an entirely fictitious Silas Boggs, he was shrewdly building up a psychological defense. He has often remarked that many a person has dug a

ditch to fall into with his tongue. He has said: "Some stiff sentences theirse'fs to stir ewery time they open their yap."

Hence, realizing that his mode of speech did not belong to the present social circle he had adopted the disguise of an erratic old plutocrat of yesterday, who, it seemed, had never caught up with the parade. Thus attired in a manner that would harmonize with his linguistic attainments, he had set out to work at his trade.

Mr. Jones blinked owlishly and played with his bristly little mustache. "Ahem," he murmured. "Mm. I see. Yes, yes. Why—er—I think that arrangement will be satisfactory. I just saw Mr. Farrell around here a moment ago."

Big-nose Charley had not only seen Mr. Farrell, but Inspector Dorsey, of the front office, to boot, and he was wondering if, perhaps, he hadn't chewed off more than he could swallow.

"It will be a wery great accommodation," said Mr. Boggs, smirking at Mr. Jones and rubbing his hands together softly.

And it would, and the floorwalker didn't know half of it.

"I will speak to Mr. Llewellyn," said Mr. Jones, moving off. Soon he returned with the personage mentioned.

Mr. Boggs was glad to meet Mr. Llewellyn.

"Howdy do, Mr. Lillian," said Charley. "I'm wery sor-reh t' bother yuh."

The busy Mr. Jones went after Detective Farrell now, and there was a general council. After some discussion, pro and con, during which time Mr. Llewellyn pointed out the fact that this was a most unusual procedure, Mr. Boggs won. Mr. Farrell slipped away for a word in private with Inspector Dorsey. The latter scowled. "It's too late now to switch the jewelry," he said, noting that a neat package had already been placed on the counter by the sales-

men who had waited on Big-nose Charley, "and I guess it's up to you, Farrell. You've got a chance to nab one of the best of 'em. Hang to him like a leech, and don't give him any opportunity to get gay."

"The first time he bats an eye I'll wallop him so hard he'll ache till Christmas," promised the store detective. "I've got a nice little blackjack right handy. Will he have a gat, d'ye think, inspector?"

Mr. Dorsey shook his head. "I don't believe so; Big-nose Charley isn't fool enough to pack a rod any more. He's handy with his fists, though."

"What are you going to do?" asked Mr. Farrell, feeling that maybe too much responsibility was being unloaded onto his shoulders.

"I'll follow you in a taxi," stated the inspector. "There are a couple parked right behind that old dog-face with the landaulet out there. If he starts a fuss you tap him, and I'll be right there to hang the jewelry on him."

A moment later Mr. Farrell and Mr. Boggs had shaken hands with the same warmth as a pair of bulldogs. The dick sized the other up as a weak-minded old woman. "I'll numb the loony mutt if he tries anything with me," thought Detective Farrell.

"Would yuh like t' have a drink of sody pop before we go?" asked Charley politely. "Ut's kinda warm, ain't ut?"

Grudgingly Mr. Farrell accompanied Mr. Boggs to the soda fountain. The latter ordered a nut sundae, which he ate with great deliberation, much to the annoyance of the dick, who wanted to get the suspense over with.

Inspector Dorsey immediately acquainted Mr. Jones and Mr. Llewellyn with late developments concerning the Bertillon of one Silas Boggs. Both gentlemen were instantly thrown into a state bordering apoplexy. Could it be possible? And such an innocent appearing old dub.

"What can his game be?" whispered Mr. Llewellyn excitedly. "Our Mr. Farrell has gone with him?"

"Why didn't you inform us immediately?" demanded Mr. Jones in a hoarse voice.

"I wanted to let him play out his hand," replied the inspector. "If it is the means of sending this bird to Charlestown you'll be just that much safer in the future, as will a lot of other people. He can't get away. Well, I've got to go. I'm going to follow right along. We'll bring that stuff back."

Big-nose Charley, alias Mr. Boggs, and Mr. Farrell had finished their temperance round at the soda counter and were now walking toward the entrance through which Charley had entered a short time before. Mr. McInnis eyed the stranger with Mr. Boggs.

"There was a smart aleck afther askin' me impertinent questins immejit ye was wented," stated Mr. McInnis. "I told him a thing or two, I did. Mm-hm. Y's. He was a fresh feller, but he didn't git no place wit' me."

Mr. Boggs smiled on Mr. McInnis. "Yuh done all right."

Detective Farrell scowled at the chauffeur, and Mr. McInnis returned the compliment. A moment later he was engaged in getting his automobile started. "Come on, gorl durn ye! Will ye commence, or must I bate ye?" After several attempts, the engine started. Then, grumbling and swearing under his breath, the old cabman finally got his chariot under way with a great clashing of gears and a dense smoke screen.

Detective Farrell and Mr. Boggs sat stiff and upright in the open tonneau like a pair of potentates in a parade. There was little or no conversation. Each seemed to feel that his breath would be wasted if it was used to formulate any discourse of a social nature. The dick was a trifle nervous. On the other hand, Big-nose Charley appeared

to be enjoying the ride immensely. He looked about him, smiling and saluting a traffic cop now and then with the air of a king condescending to address a servant.

"Wuz yuh ever up this way?" Charley asked at last.

"Naw!" replied Detective Farrell. "And I don't want to be up here again."

At length the McInnis chariot turned into the driveway and squeaked to a stop beneath the porte-cochère of the old red brick mansion at Hill Crest. The driver got out and opened the door for his passengers.

"This is the place," Charley told Mr. Farrell. "Come right in."

Detective Farrell shot a glance toward the street, and was relieved to note that Inspector Dorsey was hovering in the offing. He had a feeling that he might be getting into something. He squared his shoulders and eyed Big-nose Charley. "You live here?" he demanded.

"Oh, my, yea-ah," said Charley; "this is the ol' Boggs hum'st'id. All the Boggses wuz brung up here. Ut's gettin' kind uh run down, but I'm goin' t' fix ut up purty soon. Right this way, Mr. Farrell."

Detective Farrell's fingers went into his side coat pocket and sought the handle of the blackjack. He wasn't as hard as he had been when on the force. It was soft work hanging around a department store.

Mr. Boggs mounted the steps, in his pocket the gems he had selected at the Queen and Crescent jewelry department. Mr. Farrell followed close behind. Inspector Dorsey ducked behind the taxi in which he had been driven out.

Silas Boggs wiped his feet carefully and rang the bell. The door was opened almost at once by a pert little maid in apron and cap. She smiled and bowed at Charley. "Come right in. We were expecting you."

Detective Farrell was puzzled. He

had been looking for some sort of a strong-arm stunt. He couldn't quite make out what sort of a place this was. Everything looked all right.

"They will be right here," said the maid. She smiled again and disappeared.

Now another door opened and two husky young gentlemen wearing white coats marched forth.

"Boys," said Big-nose Charley, "this is my pore brother that I came to see you about this morning. He thinks he is a dick. Take him as gentle as yuh can. An' who'd think he'd ever come t' this."

The two young men evidently knew exactly what to do in a case of this kind; for they placed themselves, one at either side of Mr. Farrell, and took a firm hold on the gentleman.

"And how's the little old detective today?" said one.

"We have a very important case for you," stated the other. "You came just in time. There has been a murder. Are you good on solving murders?"

"Whoop!" howled Mr. Farrell, struggling to free himself.

"I'm afraid he's got a buzzolver," said Mr. Boggs. "He allus carries one. An' probly yuh'll find a second-hand badge on 'im. Don't hurt 'im now. Careful. C'n I help yuh?"

One of the young men twisted Mr. Farrell's arm behind him, while the other relieved the gentleman of his shooting iron and blackjack. "A tough case," panted the second personage in a white coat. "We'll have to put him in a strait-jacket."

"No; I don't think so," said the other. "He'll be all right in a minute." He then addressed Mr. Farrell soothingly: "Now, detective, please be good. We have a large assortment of robberies for you to look into. Calm yourself."

"He thinks he is a detective, you said?" inquired the smaller of the two attendants.

"Oh, yea-ah, he *thinks* he is a dick all right," replied Big-nose Charley. "You ask him if he ain't one."

"I *am* a detective!" yelled Mr. Farrell. "I tell you fools I *am* a detective! That man is a crook! His name is Big-nose Charley! Leggo of me! What the whoopin' Hannah is the matter with you? Leggo my arm! Leggo!"

"Ain't it the truth," agreed one of the men who was holding the gentleman from the Queen and Crescent store. "Of course you're a detective. Certainly. Yes, sir-ee!"

At this Mr. Farrell threatened to blow up and burst. He started to struggle again desperately, but the stalwart attendants knew, from long experience, how to handle such cases. "Somebody will make you birds suffer for this!" shouted the detective. "You wait! Ow-w! Leggo! Stoppit! O-ouch! You're breaking my arm!"

"Pore brother Wil-leh," said Big-nose Charley. "Seems like he's unusual violent t'-day."

"Merciful gosh!" gasped Mr. Farrell, gazing about him with wide eyes. "I believe it's a bug-house! Holy Mackinaw!"

A big man appeared now, a pompous individual with a neatly trimmed Vandyke beard. He nodded at Charley and glanced at his new patient. "Ah, a little boisterous, isn't he?"

"Lemme telephone!" shouted Mr. Farrell. "I wanna call up the store! Whoop! Hey-y, Dorsey! Where the Sambo are you?"

Out on the sidewalk Inspector Dorsey pricked up his ears. He had just been interrogating a passer-by concerning the character of the old red brick mansion.

"Oh, that's a private sanitarium," was the reply. "A nut factory. Hear one of 'em hollering?"

Promptly the inspector ran through the gate. Just then Big-nose Charley opened the front door and cast a specu-

lative eye about. He saw the gentleman from headquarters, and ducked back. "Well, what d' yuh know about that!" he exclaimed, addressing the doctor. "Here comes meh other brother. He's balmy, an' thinks he's a copper, too. He must have follered us."

A moment later Mr. Dorsey was in the toils. Wrapped in the powerful arms of the larger of the white-coated attendants, he was held while the doctor relieved him of his gun and cuffs.

"I'm an officer of the law!" bellowed Inspector Dorsey. "You fools are playing into the hands of an old crook. That man is Big-nose Charley. He just stole some jewelry from the Queen and Crescent. Call 'em up if you don't believe me, but don't let him go."

"Sure, we know," panted the attendant. "You're another detective. It runs in the family. Now you be good!"

"Oh, my gosh!" exclaimed the in-

spector as he was handcuffed to Mr. Farrell.

"Yes," said the doctor, looking sharply at the inspector, "you can see it in his eyes. Delusional insanity. Does it run in your family, Mr. Boggs?"

"Oh, yea-ah," said Charley. He added: "Yuh had better send pore Jim-meh down t' the psychopatick ward, doc; I couldn't afford t' pay t' keep 'em both here."

Big-nose Charley, a strange light in his gray eyes, moved toward the door. "I have a wery important engagement," he said, "an' I gotta be goin'. I'll see yuh ag'in."

A few moments later Giddup McInnis was driving his ancient chariot down the street faster than it had ever been urged along before; for he had been promised fifty dollars if he got Mr. Boggs to the Back Bay station in time to catch the next New York train.



A SIDE-CAR CELL

LOS ANGELES, California, has a new and drastic method for handling motorists who tear up the summons or tags handed them by the police. These tag-tearing motorists are the men who shatter the speed and parking laws of the city and then tear up the summons handed them by an officer. To meet the dodges of these transient motorists who disregard the city's traffic laws, Los Angeles has devised the side-car cell. This is a veritable cage attached to the motor cycle of a traffic policeman, and when an officer now apprehends a man who is breaking speed laws, he does not hand him a tag or summons, but puts his man in the side-car cell and carries him off to court. The victim looks like a caged animal in a zoölogical park menagerie.



MAYOR OUTWITS HIS CAPTOR

QUICK thinking and coolness probably saved the life of Mayor George Cryer of Los Angeles, a short time ago, when for three hours he matched his wits against the determination of a desperate gunman who threatened him with a revolver pressed against his forehead, while he demanded five thousand dollars.

For three hours the mayor stood off the man, pleading inability to get money so late at night. The gunman finally agreed to leave, after Mayor Cryer told him the money would be ready at his office the next morning. The story was made public when the man called for the money and was arrested. He gave the name of Benjamin Critchlow, a former chiropractor and now a hospital nurse. Critchlow gained entrance to the mayor's house by representing himself as a Federal secret-service agent on government business. He had made a telephone appointment in advance.

The Trick of the Drawer

By
John Baer

Author of "The Face in the Circle," etc.

LOU BLEYER was trembling as he entered the cigar store. This was to be his first crooked job and now, at the last moment, his nerve was about to desert him. All during the night his excitement had kept him awake. He had tried to create a spirit of bravado by constantly reassuring himself that the task would be easy and attended with little or no danger. He had tried to keep his mind on the size of the haul. And he had finally deluded himself into believing that he could go through with it with the proficiency of an old-timer.

And now he was trembling. Only the fact that the store was empty prevented him from welching. The clerk was in the rear room, behind the partition. Had the clerk been behind the counter and confronted Bleyer squarely with, "Well, sir, what's yours?" Bleyer would undoubtedly have asked timidly for a pack of cigarettes and then walked out. But now he had a few moments' respite; a few moments in which to control his fluttering heart and allow his quivering fingers to ease on the barrel of the gun in his coat pocket. And in those few moments a little of his courage returned.

For ten days, Bleyer had made observations of the layout. He worked as a waiter at night and so he had the leisure to collect certain significant facts in the daytime. The store he intended

to hold up was one of the Kress chain, situated on Hamilton Street, across the street from a small public square. From a bench on this square, Bleyer held long watches and he had entered the store several times as a customer.

He had learned that the store was opened at eight o'clock in the morning. From eight to noon, only one clerk was on duty; a second clerk arrived at that time. By the simple process of counting those who entered the place, Bleyer gathered that the store had fewest customers between eight and nine in the morning—sometimes not more than a dozen patrons.

Bleyer had also noted that every morning within a few minutes of ten o'clock, an armored express car drew up in front of the store. Two men with guns strapped on the outside of their uniforms went in and when they came out, one of them carried a small black bag. At ten o'clock, then, the receipts of the previous day were collected. The time for a holdup was before ten o'clock—between eight and nine would be safest—and obviously the best day to select was a Monday because no collections were made on Sunday and the store would hold the receipts of two days. Bleyer figured these would run up to a thousand dollars or higher. A thousand in cash was certainly worth the slight risk in getting it.

Bleyer was now in the store. The clock on the wall behind the counter

registered seven minutes past eight. From the room back of the partition came the sounds of some one moving about. Bleyer took a deep breath and then gritted his teeth. He would go through with it; his nervousness had almost passed.

He stepped close to the counter toward the rear of the store. He waited, breathlessly. The clerk came out. He was a pleasant-faced young man, slender, of medium height. He did not look in the least formidable.

"Gimme a Cosmopolitan cigar," said Bleyer. He knew from previous observation where these cigars were kept. They were on a lower shelf, within two feet of the opening to the partition. Right on a line with this point, the counter stopped. Between this main counter and the side counter there was a space through which a man could walk.

The clerk bent down to reach for the cigar box. In a flash Bleyer was directly behind him. Without drawing his gun from his right hand coat pocket, he pressed it into the clerk's back.

"Get up and walk quietly into the rear room!" ordered Bleyer. "If you peep, I'll blow you full of holes. Hurry now!"

The maneuver was a complete success. The clerk was momentarily paralyzed by surprise and fright. He offered not the slightest resistance. Quite slowly he rose, turned and walked into the small back room.

Bleyer followed, keeping the weapon pressed against his victim. It had been Bleyer's intention to force the clerk to open the safe which he felt certain was in this room. But now a hurried glance about him told Bleyer that this would be unnecessary.

Against the front partition wall, a few feet to the left of the opening, stood a small, round table. A key lay on it; nothing else. Beside this table, on the floor, was a large cardboard box, measuring four feet or more in every dimen-

sion. The box was uncovered, and it was filled with refuse: empty cigar boxes, boxes from which packages of cigarettes had been removed, wrapping paper, newspapers and dust which had been swept off the floor. On a hook on the right wall hung a coat and a straw hat—the clerk had put on a lightweight office coat. And against the rear wall stood the safe, a huge, old-fashioned, clumsy-looking affair. And the door of it was open!

There was nothing to do but take the money and then clear out. But there was a strong streak of yellow in Bleyer, and now, in this critical situation, it took possession of him. The remote possibility that the clerk might cry out before the job had been done, sent a cold chill of fear up Bleyer's spine. Acting on the impulse of that fear, Bleyer drew his gun and brought the butt of it down heavily on the clerk's head.

With never a sound, the clerk sank to his knees; then the body toppled sideways and lurched against the small table, upsetting it. Bleyer stepped over the writhing body and knelt down before the safe.

The inside of the safe consisted of three compartments, one of them taking up the lower half. This was closed by means of a door, which Bleyer pulled open. He found only two large ledgers. The door to the left upper compartment was also open, but it revealed only several small order books and hundreds of order blanks and old receipted bills.

The right upper compartment was a drawer about six inches deep and five inches wide. Bleyer, feeling that he must now certainly come upon the money, seized the drawer handle and yanked at it violently. The drawer did not budge. Once again Bleyer pulled, with all his might, but to no avail. Then his eyes fell on the keyhole above the handle of the drawer.

"Hang it, it's locked!" he muttered.

At this point his attention was distracted from the safe by a groan from the clerk. Bleyer crossed the room, rammed a handkerchief into the clerk's mouth and then tied another handkerchief around the lower part of the clerk's face. Then, with a ball of twine he had brought with him, he bound the clerk's arms and legs so that they were immovable.

Bleyer was moving toward the safe again, when he heard the door to the store open and close. Strangely enough, he did not lose his head. The adventure had exhilarated him and worked up in him a recklessness which did not quail before danger. He considered his predicament calmly and arrived at the only sensible conclusion.

He would have to go out into the store. He recalled having read of several cases in which the holdup man had waited on customers. This store was just outside of the theatrical district, in a neighborhood which consisted almost exclusively of shops and office buildings. Most of the trade was undoubtedly transient and there was more than an even chance that a customer would not know the clerk.

Bleyer laid his hat on the safe and stepped into the store. The customer—a mild, middle-aged man, scarcely looked at Bleyer as he asked for a pack of a popular brand of cigarettes. These cigarettes were in plain sight in one of the cubby-holes of the case behind the counter. Bleyer served the man who handed him the exact amount of the purchase and then left the store.

As soon as the man had gone, Bleyer rang up "no sale" on the cash register. And before closing the till again, Bleyer abstracted therefrom thirty-five dollars in bills—he scorned the silver.

The next moment Bleyer was in the rear room again. The problem of opening the safe drawer still confronted him. He had, of course, brought no tools with him, nor would they have

done him much good for he was unusually inept with his hands. To open the drawer he had to have the key—he'd have to get that key and get it quick. A small clock on the shelf of the rear room indicated twelve minutes past eight. He had already been in here ten minutes—and he was beginning to feel that this was long enough.

But how could he get the key? He could look for it—but where? On the person of the clerk? That was a likely place. He knelt down beside the bound man and went through all of his pockets. He found everything a man usually carries—a handkerchief, a watch, a wallet, a small note book, a fountain pen—but no key—not a single key. He pocketed the watch and the nine dollars which were in the wallet. And then he recalled his original idea.

He had intended to make the clerk open the safe for him. Why couldn't he force the clerk to reveal the place where the key to that drawer was kept? He could try it anyhow—a threat might work. He was conscious; he could be talked to.

Bleyer pressed the muzzle of his gun against the clerk's temple, and with his other hand he carefully loosened the gag.

"I want to know where the key to that safe drawer is!" demanded Bleyer in a low voice. "You tell and tell pretty quick or you won't live to say another thing."

The clerk took a deep breath. Then he answered, slowly: "Key? The—the key—yes—no—don't shoot—I won't holler—I'll tell you—the key—there—there was a key—the key was on that small table—the table—it fell over—key must have fallen—fallen——"

That was as far as he got. Bleyer replaced the gag. Yes, there had been a key on the small table. Bleyer recalled seeing it when he first came into the room. The table had fallen in such a way that its top lay over one of the

sides of the large cardboard box which was used for refuse.

Bleyer looked down into this box and grumbled angrily. To find a small key among all that junk and dirt was like finding a needle in a haystack. But there was nothing to do except look for it—or else pass up all the money in the drawer.

He bent forward to the task. He searched slowly, painstakingly at first and then with increasing nervousness and anxiety. He pulled out cigar and cigarette boxes, wrapping paper, newspaper and dirt—but he came upon no key. Finally he had everything that had been in the large box on the floor. He was kneeling down, going through the rubbish again, when he heard some one enter the store.

He suppressed an oath, went out and waited on the man who bought three cigars from a box in the main show case. He had to change a bill for the customer. As he was returning to the rear room, two other men came in—so he had to turn about and play the clerk again. In his excitement he had developed a bravado which enabled him him to play his part with utmost success.

Then once again he was back before the trash heap. He now began to replace the refuse in the large box, carefully scanning each bit of paper, wood or dirt as he did so. The clock now showed twenty-two minutes past eight—the time seemed literally to fly as he worked at this annoying search. His fingers began moving feverishly, divining here and there, pressing this bit and that, creeping into boxes and piles of paper.

Twice more he was interrupted by customers. Twice more he satisfied their wants, pocketing the receipts. And then—at last—he found the key. He fondled it and allowed a long sigh of relief to escape him.

As he rose and walked toward the

safe, he noticed that it was now twenty-seven minutes past eight. He had been in the store twenty minutes—that was what a fellow might call taking some chance! But now he had what he wanted—now there was nothing more between him and a large haul.

He knelt before the safe and tried to insert the key. It did not fit. It was by far too small! He had been tricked! He had wasted all this time—and now the blamed key didn't fit!

With this unexpected turn of events, Bleyer came near to going into a panic. His courage and his temper left him. He threw an emotional fit, swaying between anxiety and rage. He couldn't waste any more time—and here he was, standing in front of all that money—unable to get it.

He was galled into fury. He felt like killing the clerk. But that would not help him get the treasure. He would give the clerk one more chance!

"Say listen!" Bleyer again had his gun pressed against the clerk's forehead. "I'm goin' to take that gag offa you once more and you're gettin' this last chance to say where that key is. Understand? When the gag is off, I count three and if you haven't told then, I'll crash out your brains. And the same goes if the key isn't where you say it is."

But just as Bleyer was about to loosen the handkerchief tied around the clerk's mouth, the store door opened and closed again. Another customer was in the place. This time Bleyer found it difficult to drum up the courage to do his impersonation act, but he finally did get his nerves under control and walk out into the store. He consoled himself with the thought that this was to be the last time. And he felt safe—as long as his gun was in his coat pocket.

The man standing in front of the counter was a small, broad-shouldered fellow, with gray eyes. He made no secret of his surprise at seeing Bleyer.

"Hello," he said, in a pleasant enough voice, "where's Mr. Fais?"

There was a small sign hanging over the cash register which told that Mr. Charles Fais was the clerk on duty. Bleyer had seen this sign and so he was prepared to answer:

"Charley was transferred to the Madison Street store on Saturday night. What can I do for you?"

The man asked for Elipses cigarettes. Bleyer turned to reach for them on one of the upper shelves behind the counter. As his fingers touched the package, the man behind him spoke again, this time in a sharp, commanding voice:

"That's it—just keep that hand up—and put up the other one too. Hurry—I've got you covered—if you'll turn your head a bit to your right you can look into the mirror back of the cash register and see the reflection of my gun. Satisfied? Well—walk slowly into the back room—careful now—you might get hurt—"

So the game was abruptly over. There was no mistaking the intention of this keen-eyed little fellow. He might have been another holdup man—or he might have been a detective. In either case Bleyer could tell by his tone and manner that he meant business and would stand for no nonsense.

Bleyer marched meekly into the rear room. The man followed close on his heels, and as Bleyer crossed the threshold, he felt his gun being yanked out of his pocket.

"So that's it!" snapped the little man. "Well just hike right against that side wall and press your hands flat against it. One minute, Charlie, I'll get you out of these ropes. Steady now, Mr. Yegg, thata boy. Now run out, Charlie, and find a cop—wiggle along."

Then came a long silence during which Bleyer felt the continual pressure of something hard against the small of his back. There was a commotion in the store—some one called, "this way,"

and after another moment a hand grasped Bleyer firmly by the coat collar and wheeled him around. He was in the grip of a uniformed patrolman.

"What's all this about?" demanded the officer.

Charlie Fais, the clerk, spoke up: "This chap,"—indicating Bleyer—"came into the store just after I had opened the safe and taken out the necessary cash to put into the register outside. He forced me to come in here and then he knocked me down and tied me up. When I came to I saw him fumbling about at the safe, and after a while he came over to me and asked me where the key to the upper right hand compartment of the safe was.

"I knew then that he must be pretty green at this holdup business and so I decided to take a chance and bluff it out with him. You see, officer, it was then about twelve minutes past eight—and I knew that if I could entertain this chap for fifteen or twenty minutes longer, he'd be done for.

"Every morning, between twenty-five after and half-past eight, Detective Phinney calls here." At this point, the little man who had caught Bleyer bowed and smiled. "Phinney is a detective for the Kress Company. He makes the rounds of all the stores in this district just to see that all the clerks are on duty and that everything else is O. K.

"I was fighting for time when I told this yegg that the key he was after—the key he thought would unlock that upper right compartment in which, incidentally there are now eleven hundred odd dollars—had been on this little table, and that in upsetting the table when I was knocked down, the key must have fallen into the rubbish in that large box. I knew—or at least I hoped—it would take him a pretty long time to find a small key in that débris—and it did—it took him longer than a quarter of an hour. Then he found out the key didn't fit—and I was beginning to think

he would brain me—he looked pretty mad—when Detective Phinney came in and——”

Phinney interrupted with: “He told me Charlie had been transferred to another store and that gave him away at once because the Kress detectives are informed of all transfers or changes in the clerical staff as soon as they take place. So I nailed him.” Then: “By the way, Charlie, where was the key which opens that money drawer in the safe?”

Charley Fais pointed to his coat hanging on a hook on the wall. “On the same hook, under the coat.”

“And the key he looked for and found what does that open?” asked Phinney.

“Search me,” answered Fais. “I’ve been carrying that fool key around on my key-ring these last five years without knowing what it was for. You know how a man is—he’ll keep lugging around keys for years after he has forgotten their use. Well, this morning, I took that key off my ring—before I hung the ring up on that hook—and just before I went out to wait on this chap, I placed the discarded key on this small table. Then I set him looking for it——”

“That was using the old bean, all right,” broke in Phinney. “But you were sure lucky you had that money compartment locked when this fellow blew in. Otherwise the two days’ receipts——”

“That’s where you’re wrong.” A broad grin spread over the countenance of Charley Fais. “And that’s where Mr. Yegg was wrong too. And that’s what told me he was a rank amateur and that it might be safe to bluff him. That drawer which holds the money is *not* locked! It——”

“The deuce it ain’t!” cried out Bleyer angrily. “I know it’s locked—I couldn’t open——”

“Sorry to contradict you,” said Fais. “You tried to open the drawer by pulling on the handle in a straight line outward. Nine horses couldn’t pull it open that way. You see, the drawer is made of wood—and when the weather is hot and damp, as it is to-day, the wood becomes warped and the drawer refuses to slide.

“But in that case, all you have to do”—here Fais walked over to the safe and suited his actions to his words—“is to seize the handle of the drawer firmly—yank *upward*, hard—and then—here she comes—a child could do it with one finger.”

The drawer was open and the stacks of bills totaling over eleven hundred dollars were exposed to the view of every one in the room.

“Take me out of here,” said Bleyer. “I’ve seen enough.”

The policeman was still grinning from ear to ear as he ushered his now very humble captive into the presence of the desk lieutenant.

SLICK THIEF GETS FUR COATS

A LITTLE while ago, a polite young man presented himself at the residence of Herbert C. Pell, Jr., in New York City, and informed the maid that he had been sent from the cleaning establishment, at Mr. Pell’s request, for two fur coats which were to be renovated. The maid, unsuspecting of the polite young man, gave him her employer’s two fur coats valued at five hundred dollars, and the caller went away with them. Later, when Mr. Pell returned home and was told of the incident, he stated that he had not given any order to a cleaner. Furthermore, the firm of cleaners whose name the polite young man had mentioned denied having any person answering his description in their employ.

Headquarters Chat

WE have always contended that Apple had more information packed into his stories than any other writer of mystery and detective yarns. Mrs. G. M. Davis, writing from Boston, Massachusetts, appreciates this, saying:

"DEAR EDITOR: Have just read 'Mr. Chang Meets Mr. Jap.' I wonder if the people who dislike these stories have ever stopped to think what a wonderful fund of information Mr. Apple possesses on the subject of Chinese customs. I took the trouble to look up some of the things that have to do with Chinese and Japanese history, their customs, likes and dislikes, et cetera, and found everything true. Mr. Apple has succeeded in creating a clever, unscrupulous character, depicting the very essence of Chinese cunning and deviltry. He has used truth and knowledge of his subject as a background for his very interesting yarns. Although I dislike stories where the author allows the captured criminal to commit suicide, I think the Chang stories should terminate in that way, via the jade dagger route.

"I have made a study of story construction, and am always so interested in the way an author leads up to the climax, and the descriptions of places, mannerisms and everything that goes to make a smooth-reading plot, that I don't have time to get disgusted over the murders and ugly phases of a well-drawn character.

"It's about time for The Gray Phantom to appear in a story of his marriage to Helen. Tell that author to hurry up.

"I did not like the story by Max Brand that appeared a while ago. But I have read some wonderful stories by this author in WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, and any one who has read them knows that Max Brand is a genius at his own style of writing.

"'Mother Hansen' and 'Simon Trapp' are just as clever as ever.

"Where are 'Big-nose Charley' and 'Mr. Clackworthy'?"

"Well, I guess all the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE writers do their best to please, and most of them please me. Good luck to the magazine."

Here is an extremely interesting letter from Fellowes Davis, Jr., M. D., writing from 3 and 5 Place Vendome, Paris, France:

"DEAR EDITOR: Whether modern scientific investigation of crime appeals to the average individual on account of the sordid details it unearths, or because of the science invoked in its investigation, I am unable to determine after many conversations on the subject with a great variety of people. There are arguments from both points of view, and probably, you will agree, there is an appeal to the two sides of human nature. We know, however, that literature dealing with crime and its solution, whether founded on fiction or fact, is widely circulated, and is sought after and consumed with equal avidity by the old and young, the rich, the poor, those who are uneducated, as well as those who possess *summa cum laude* degrees. The type of interest on the part of the reader scarcely enters the question for editor or author.

"To the psychologist, this is all another problem for study.

"My first interest in detective stories dates back to my youth and was directed toward 'Nick Carter's Library.'

"I devoured these pamphlets, and marveled at the ability of the hero and his assistants to be always in the right place at the right time, and at their successful accomplishment of numerous hair-breadth escapes.

"That such tales must have conveyed to the reader a vestige of truth is proved by the fact that an investigator of crime, of no small reputation on this side of the Atlantic, walked into police headquarters in New York City with the expressed desire to meet the great American Detective, Mr. Nicholas Carter. Time: Commissioner Woods' administration.

"But I am wandering from the object of this letter and the article that prompts my writing: 'Poison,' by Edward H. Smith, in the June 6th issue of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

"Certainly the case reported by Mr. Smith is an extraordinary one, and the knowledge of toxicology he evidences proves conclusively the vast amount of scientific study and research necessary for the successful exponent of the law and investigator of crime.

"I wonder that the peach pit did not suggest itself, to the local authorities of Cumberland, as the possible source of the first presumed cause of death? In a noteworthy case in England the defense brought out the fact that prussic acid is contained in apple pips, and that the murdered lady, who consumed many apples daily, pips and all, was in reality a suicide. This was disproved, however, on the grounds that in order to obtain a lethal dose she would have had to consume about a barrel of pips, which would mean at least a couple of car loads of apples.

"It is with deepest interest and appreciation that I read all articles by Ed-

ward H. Smith; they are well written and have the added interest of dealing in detail with the scientific side of the question.

"In the course of my work, over a number of years, I have many times come in contact with cases of poisoning, all of the noncriminal type; which is usually the experience of men on ambulance service or with hotel associations.

"Cyanide of potash is not an infrequent means employed by suicides, and, as Mr. Smith cites, the effect is not as instantaneous as it is usually supposed to be. Two instances of this come to my mind in corroboration of his statements.

"First—A man wishing to commit suicide employed as the means, cyanide of potash, a white crystalline material, soluble in water, and obtained without much difficulty.

"A small handful of this was put in a glass of water, stirred with a spoon, and three quarters of the contents of the tumbler consumed.

"The individual, evidently repenting of his act, had time to step to the telephone and request the immediate services of a doctor.

"I was in the hotel lobby at the time the call was received, proceeded at once to the room indicated, and found death occurring as I entered.

"I calculate that the patient must have lived three or four minutes after drinking the poison, for he had placed the glass on the bureau, used the telephone—replacing the receiver—and thrown himself on his bed. On my arrival I found the door locked on the inside and had to force it.

"Second—Another case, a woman, also using cyanide of potash but employing a different method of administration.

"This individual took a Maws Inhaler—an apparatus for the inhalation of medicated steam in throat and chest

affections—in which she had placed the crystals and upon which she had poured boiling water.

“After inhaling the vapor she had time to put the inhaler on the table beside her couch. She was found lying on her back with her hands tightly clasped; the inhaler with its deadly fluid and fumes on the table beside her.

“In the first instance the patient died from taking a solution of cyanide of potash, death being less rapid than in the second instance where hydrocyanic

acid gas, formed by the action of boiling water on crystalline cyanide of potash, was the cause of death.

“Both cases showed evidence of spasm.

“Of the various magazines on the table in my waiting room, your edition has always received the lion’s share of attention.

“Please accept my compliments to your staff in general, and extend to Mr. Smith my appreciation of his many instructive articles.”

IN NEXT WEEK’S ISSUE:

THE CLEW IN THE BOOK

By ERNEST M. POATE

“The Compact Compendium” may have been *passé* so far as manners were concerned, but when it came to mystery, it was a twentieth-century edition.

THE SMUGGLERS

By EDWARD LEONARD

Dazzled by the precious jewels her pal has smuggled over, she ignores the code of the underworld as well as the law of the land.

PRINCE JONAH

By ROY W. HINDS

No one knew the mystery of this suave, enigmatical crook. It took a strange occurrence to reveal his story.

AND OTHER STORIES. ORDER YOUR COPY NOW

MISSING

This department is conducted in both WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE and DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, in effort 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.

SAMPSON, JOSEPH.—He is twenty-two years of age. He was adopted by Henry Sampson when he was seven weeks old, and he lived at Meyers Falls, Wash., when he was six years old. His own mother is earnestly seeking his present whereabouts, and will be grateful for any information. Please write to Mrs. Edith Ingersoll, 2615 Rainier Ave., Everett, Wash.

NEWSOM, JOHN.—He is forty years old, five feet ten inches tall, has blue eyes, dark hair, and weighs one hundred and forty pounds. In June, 1924, he was working on the highway near Browning, Mont. Any information will be thankfully received by his mother, Mrs. Mary Newsom, Box 192, Tulsa, Tex.

COLE, CHARLEY.—His sister hasn't heard from him for thirty years. She will be extremely grateful for any information concerning his present whereabouts. Please write to Carrie Cummins, or Mrs. D. C. McFagher, 324 5th St., Bremerton, Wash.

CARNAHAN, DAVID C.—He is sixty-one years of age. He has lived in Tex. since 1890. Any one knowing his present address will confer a favor by notifying Fred E. Mohn, 209 Church St., Richmond, Mo.

WOODBURY, STEPHEN.—He is forty years old. He was in the army at Camp Bowie, Tex. His daughter is very anxious to get in touch with him, and will appreciate information concerning him. Please write to Alvin W. Denison, 1489 Washington St., Boston, Mass.

MULLEN, WILLIAM MARTIN.—He is six feet tall, has blue eyes, and light-brown hair. He is generally known as Jack. News of his present whereabouts will be gladly received by Mrs. Hazel Young Schott, 19 N. Manchester Rd., Kenmore, Ohio.

WALSH, MARTIN.—In 1920 he was in Duran, N. M. His friend has important news for him, and is seeking his whereabouts. Please notify Curly Kink, care of "Billboard," Cincinnati, Ohio.

FRANCIS, ELBERT J.—He spent three years in service overseas during the World War. Three years ago he was in Mont. His mother is getting old, and would be grateful for information concerning him. Write to Albert Campbell, Moundville, Mo.

EUGENIO, RANGEL.—He is twenty-one years old, has brown eyes and black hair. In May, 1922, he was in Lampoc, Calif. He was also in Dallas, Tex., and Calif. His family is very much worried over his absence. His present address will be appreciated by M. E. R., care of this magazine.

LEROY, S.—Please write to me, as I have some important news for you. R. E. R., Vienna, W. Va.

BRASHER, JAMES L.—Information regarding his whereabouts will be appreciated by E. P., care of this magazine.

MESSER, JACK J.—His wife's name is Stella. He was last heard from in Memphis, Tenn., in 1921. Any news will be gratefully received by Private Jack A. Randall, Bks. 55, 3d Casual D, Ft. Slocum, N. Y.

HOOSIER, RED.—Both of us wish you luck, and hope you are all right. Please communicate with me. Margaret, care of this magazine.

BIRK, REUBEN H.—He is forty-four years old, five feet five inches tall, and weighs one hundred and forty pounds. His home was formerly near Allendale, Mo., but he left there about twenty-six years ago, and during the World War he was in Sugar Pine Mills, Calif. His presence is required in the settling of an estate, and his father will greatly appreciate any information. Please write to William Birk, Allendale, Mo.

TUSK, ALBERT.—He is fifty-eight years old, six feet tall, has gray hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, and a birthmark over his right temple. He left Huntsville, Ala., on the 11th of Apr., 1925, in a Ford sedan for Tampa, Fla. Information will be appreciated by his wife, Mrs. Orla Tusk, Douglas Hill, Huntsville, Ala.

LAYMON, MORRIS.—He is twenty years of age. He and his sister, Nellie, were in an orphan's home in Iola, Kan., sixteen years ago. He was adopted by an aged couple, named Height, and was given the name of Albert M. Height. His mother is married again, and Nellie lives with her. Information concerning him will be appreciated by Thomas E. Hogie, 410 Dorchester Ave., Muskogee, Okla.

BRASSIE, CLARENCE E.—He is forty-four years old, six feet tall, of medium weight, has blue eyes, light hair and complexion. He formerly lived in Victoria, B. C., Can., and worked as a motorman on a street-car line. He left there in 1921, and it is thought he is working in a lumber camp somewhere in Canada. News as to his present whereabouts will be gladly received by Jack G. W., E. F. D. 8, Box 588, Houston, Tex.

BLACKMAN, HELEN CONSTANCE.—She taught school in Durango, and Creede, Colo., two years ago. Her friend is anxious to get in touch with her. Please send any information to E. A. Brinsard, 33 W. Farnum St., Lancaster, Pa.

MAY.—I received the cards, and everything is all right. Please let me hear from you again. George X.

HARDY, GEORGE HENRY.—He is twenty-six years old, five feet eight inches tall, has dark-brown hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and thirty-five pounds. He has been missing from his home in Talmage, Calif., since Apr. 24, 1925. His wife wishes him to know that everything is settled, and that she has a job for him. She and the baby need him, and want him to come home. Please send information to Mrs. George H. Hardy, Gen. Del., Talmage, Calif.

LANDRETH, DOROTHY.—She was in Haxton, Colo., in Sept., 1922. Any one knowing her whereabouts will confer a favor by notifying Roscoe Crader, R. 1, Portlatch, Idaho.

WHITE, JAMES M.—He was in Colo. Springs, Colo., in Sept., 1922, working for the Tex. Oil Co. Any information will be thankfully received by A. G. Ertlager, care of Mason, 520 Central Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

PAGE, OTTO, BRYAN, CLAUDE, CLYDE, and JOHN.—In 1915 they were in Poplar Bluff, Mo. Information as to their present whereabouts will be gratefully received by J. P. Pace, 344 Flowers Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa.

STARNES, WINFIELD SCOTT.—He deserted his wife in N. Y. City, N. Y., in 1930. Any information concerning him will be appreciated by his wife, Mrs. Marie L. Starnes, Metropolitan Hospital, Ward T, Welfare Island, N. Y.

FALLON, ALICE.—Her husband's name is Francis, and she had two children. Any information will be gladly received by her brother, William George Champion, Rainier, Wash.

CHAMPION, Mrs.—I would greatly appreciate any news of my mother. She was in N. J. in 1918. Please write to William George Champion, Rainier, Wash.

ERWIN, ROBERT O.—I have tried to find you for three years. Please write to your old hudda, of Santo Domingo days. Copper, care of this magazine.

C. E. L.—We love you, Bud, and all is forgiven. Please come home and make a new start in life. Write to your sister, M. L.

EDIE.—I have news of advantage to you. I can explain our misunderstanding. Please write to Baltzle.

WHITESIDE, THOMAS.—He was in Rockville, Pa., thirty-one years ago. His sister wishes him to know that she has been in Can. seventeen years. Information concerning him will be greatly appreciated by his sister, Maggie, or Mrs. A. Campbell, 86 Kathleen St., Guelph, Ont., Can.

FEEES, LOWELL.—He was last heard from in Fresno, Calif. Any information regarding his present whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by F. H., care of this magazine.

WILSON, EVERETT GILBERT.—He was in Greenville, Mo., in 1901. His daughter is anxious to hear from him, and will appreciate any news. Please write to Mrs. Essie V. Wilson Howard, R. 1, Box 120A, Kennelwick, Wash.

C. F. A.—Florence cries for you. Ginger has gone to live with Junior. You can never make amends if you continue to keep silent. Please write to mother.

PATTERSON, CEDRIC R.—He was last heard from in Huntington, W. Va. Information will be appreciated by Pvt. Howard E. Nance, Battery E, 1st C. A., Fort Randolph, C. Z., Panama.

WATERMAN, JAMES G.—He left home on May 13, 1925, and went to N. Y. City, N. Y. His parents want him to come home, and will send him money, if he is in need of it. He is asked to please write to his father and mother.

STARK, ERNESTINE, formerly of Wichita Falls, Tex.—Later she was living in Weslaco, Tex. She is twenty-four years old, tall and blond. Her friend is anxious to get in touch with her, and will be thankful for information. Write to Ruby Dodge, Box 283, Wichita Falls, Tex.

TOWNSLY, FOREST or NELLO.—They were in El Paso, Tex., about seventeen years ago. Information concerning them will be appreciated by an old friend, K., care of this magazine.

HARVEY, formerly of Indian Orchard, Mass.—Father is almost helpless. Please write to us; we love you. Violet, care of Toney Ross, 803 W. Adams St., Chicago, Ill.

SEIFERT, WALTER.—His wife's name was Annie Fisher. He has two children, named Marion and Julian. In 1907 they lived at 3032 Oram St., Philadelphia, Pa. He is a butcher by trade. Any information as to their present whereabouts will be gratefully received by V., care of this magazine.

FLETCHER.—My last hope was in you; my heart is broken over this. The remainder will be light if you return within the next few months. Please come back. Mother.

STEGE, WILLIAM O., formerly of Ky.—He is forty-four years of age, has black hair and gray eyes. He served in the Spanish-American War, and was discharged in Calif. The same year he played ball with a minor league in Calif. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his sister, Edna McDonald, 3065 Sheridan Ave., Detroit, Mich.

BELSPY, JOSEPH.—He is known as Gypsy the Wanderer. His friend wants to know if he remembers their first trip to Syracuse. He asks him to please write to M. Straussberg, 121 Arlington St., Newark, N. J.

LAUX, MARTIN J., formerly of 1411 Chicago St., Omaha, Neb.—He is twenty-nine years old. He served as a sailor during the World War on the U. S. S. "Louisiana." Any one having any information concerning his whereabouts is asked to please get in touch with his sister, Mrs. J. B., Box 423, Wakefield, Mich.

WINDHAM, OVERTON MACK.—He is sixteen years old, has dark hair and complexion, gray eyes, and weighs one hundred and twenty-five pounds. He formerly lived in Sayre, Okla., but later he was in Lubbock, Tex. Any one knowing his whereabouts is asked to please write to his mother, Mrs. Willie Windham, R. 2, Grimes, Okla.

RICHMOND, EARL.—He was a recruiting sergeant in the Canadian army during the World War. His mother wishes him to write to her, Mrs. Susan Richmond, 1702 E. 16th St., Pueblo, Colo.

CARTEONS, VIRGIL.—Please forgive me for the misunderstandings. Write to Rose, care of this magazine.

FIELD, MATHEW.—He came to Can. sixty years ago from Co. Meath, Ireland. He has sisters, named Mrs. Bridget Byrnes and Rose Connors. His relatives have tried for many years to find him. Please write any news to Mrs. W. H., care of this magazine.

LYONS, ROY F.—He is thirty years old, six feet tall, has red hair and blue eyes. In 1919 he was in Co. 14, Coast Artillery Div., at Corregidor, P. I. His time expired in Mar., 1920. Information will be gratefully received by Mrs. Hazel Lyons Greene, 1654 S. Cloverdale St., Los Angeles, Calif.

KING, EUGENE, or RAWLINS, EVERETT.—He has a kempie doll tattooed on his head. His wife wishes him to know that everything is forgiven, and that she is anxious for him to come back home to her and the twins. She asks him to write to Grace King, Gen. Del., Oshkosh, Wis.

O'NEIL, HARRY SCULLION.—He worked in the Charleston navy yard as a ship fitter in 1916. Information will be gratefully received by his niece, Catherine Tweed or Alberts, 508-10 W. 167th St., N. Y. City, N. Y.

HAWKINS, CLARENCE.—He is about twenty-five years old. He left C. B. C. farm and Gobles twelve years ago. He is asked to write to his friend, who worked at the farm at the same time. Roy, care of this magazine.

BLANCHE.—Aunt L. is dead, and things are changing hands. Please write to us, Mother.

HASTINGS, TOM.—His right arm and leg are missing. He was night operator at Marion, Tex., in 1892. He was known as Barney, the sidewheeler. Parties knowing him are asked to please get in touch with Tom Hastings, 629 N. Rose St., Kalamazoo, Mich.

ENGLAND, Mrs. LOUISE, DELLA, CORA, BERNICE, and **WILLIAM**.—My brothers, Leslie and Earl, were placed with me in the Franklin Co. children's home in 1906, after our father was killed in Mt. Sterling, Ohio. My mother, sisters, and little brother were living at 40 S. Mill St., Columbus, Ohio. I am very anxious to find them, and will appreciate any information regarding their whereabouts. Please write to Max England, 4105 Davis Lane, E. E., Cincinnati, Ohio.

H. C. R.—Do you wish to arrange to see me at the some convenient place, and make an agreement as to future? If so, please write to me at the same address. E.

JOLLY, PAUL.—He is twenty-four years old. He was in Detroit, Mich., in Dec., 1925. News as to his present whereabouts will be gladly received by C. R. P., care of this magazine.

ROUTH, MARY.—She is eighteen years old, five feet two inches tall, has dark hair and eyes, and weighs one hundred and ten pounds. She was working in Brown & Borden's Dept. store in Yakima, Wash. Information concerning her will be appreciated by Happy Grant Butler, 551 Hipling St., Akron, Ohio.

JUDD, DANA.—Your letter was lost in a fire, which destroyed our home about fifteen years ago. If you see this please write to your old friend, Olive, care of this magazine.

JOHNSON, HARRY.—He was on a train from Chicago, Ill., to Detroit, Mich. His mother would appreciate any information regarding him. Please write to George Johnson, 742 Lincoln St., McKeesport, Pa.

ROOP, JOHN W.—He is twenty-one years old, five feet eight inches tall, has red hair, blue eyes, fair skin, and weighs one hundred and eighty pounds. He was last heard from at 726 Island Ave., McKees Rocks, Pa. Both of his arms are tattooed. His mother is very anxious to hear from him, and asks for information. Ollie Gaskey, Cramerton, N. C.

EICHBERGER, MINNIE.—She is five feet five inches tall, has light complexion, sandy hair, blue-gray eyes, and weighs one hundred and sixty pounds. She married a man named Horstman, and left Louisville, Ky., in 1917. Her sister is anxious to hear from her. Send news to Annie Selbel, care of this magazine.

LYSTER, CHRIS.—He is fifteen years old, five feet six inches tall, of slender build, has blue eyes, fair complexion, dark-brown hair, and weighs one hundred and twenty-five pounds. He left his home at Senlac, Saskatchewan, Can., in Aug., 1924. It is thought he may be on a ranch, as he is a good rider, and familiar with stock. Any information will be gratefully received by his father, A. T. Lyster, Senlac, Saskatchewan, Can.

BAKER or ROGER, FLORA or LOUZON, VERNA.—She is about twenty-eight years old, five feet five inches tall, has brown eyes and hair. She has been married twice, and may use either Miss or Mrs. to any of the above names. In 1923 she lived in a rooming house in Cincinnati, Ohio, and worked for the Thompson restaurants. Her brother is very anxious to find her. Please write to Leslie L. Baker, 4616 Oakland Ave., S., Minneapolis, Minn.

KIMBALL, LEWIS H.—He left Idaho about ten years ago and went to Kan. City, Kan. He has two daughters, named Mabel and Mazie. Any one knowing his whereabouts will confer a kindness by communicating with his daughter, Mrs. Mabel Marie Lee, 5443 3d St., Chico, Calif.

HART, CHARLEY.—He was born in Tallahassee, Fla., thirty-one years ago, but later lived in Woodsville, Fla., and worked for a farmer named Richard Johnson. It is thought that he served in the World War. His mother's name was Ola Brown Pearly. Any information concerning him will be gratefully received by S. R., care of this magazine.

GILLIAM, BASIL.—He is five feet eleven inches in height, has black hair, dark-gray eyes, and a scar on his left hand. He lived in Denison, Tex., until July 5, 1924, when it is thought he went to Calif. Any information concerning his present whereabouts will be appreciated by Mrs. B. Gilliam, 101 W. Bond St., Denison, Tex.

BLANCHE.—I am sorry that I acted as I did. All is well now. I have good news for you. I am very anxious to see our baby soon. Please write or wire me at once. B. F. Leitch, 5800 Lincoln Ave., Detroit, Mich.

GLENN, Mrs. MATTYE.—Her husband's name is Noble, and they have a son, named Carlton. They formerly lived in Lexington, Okla. They moved to Phoenix, Ariz., and later to Mesa, Ariz. News of their present whereabouts will be appreciated by M. L. G., Duncan, Ariz.

GRAY, WILLIAM H.—In 1914 he was in Utah, working on the railroad. Information of his present whereabouts is sought by his brother, Ralph Gray, Mt. Falls, Minn.

THOMPSON, JOHN C.—He is five feet nine inches tall, has dark hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and sixty pounds. In Feb., 1924, he was canvassing in Dayton, Ohio. Information will be appreciated by his wife and baby, who are anxiously waiting for his return. Please send information to M. E. T., care of this magazine.

PARTAIN, EARNEST EMERY.—He is twenty-four years old, about five feet eight inches tall, has brown eyes and black hair. He married a nurse, named Vera McCormick, who lived in Alhambra, Kan. In 1923 he was working in a creamery in Kan. City, Mo. He belongs to the Odd Fellows Lodge and also the Elks. Any news as to his present whereabouts will be gladly received by Vera McBee, Miami, Okla.

PETERSON, HARVEY, formerly of Pittsburgh, Pa.—He has a picture of Salome and a cowgirl tattooed on his right arm. He worked at the Thompson-Starrett Co. in Powell, Ohio. He or any one knowing his whereabouts is asked to please write to Henry H. Varner, Headquarters Co., 34th Inf., Ft. Eustis, Va.

MADDOX, CHARLES W.—I served with him in the Motor Transport Corps at Camp Gordon, Ga., of which he was the company clerk. I would like to hear from him, or any one else in my company. Kenneth R. Hall, formerly 1st Sgt., M. T. C., 13, Camp Gordon, Ga.

HOUCK, BILLY GRONTON, or **THOMAS STANLEY**.—He is six feet tall, has curly red hair, large blue eyes, tattoo marks on one shoulder, and weighs one hundred and eighty-five pounds. He was in Fairfield, Calif. His wife wishes him to know that she has letters from his mother for him, also that she loves him as much as ever, and wants him to return home. Please write to Mrs. B. G. Houck, 3881 16th Ave., S. W., Seattle, Wash.

PAGANO, JOHNNIE.—All is forgiven. We are longing to see you again. Please come home. Your mother, Mrs. L. Pagano, 105 Cross St., Harrison, N. J.

HENDERSON, JAMES.—Everything is forgiven. I am worrying constantly about you, and longing for your return. Please write to your wife, Irene, 523 Lizette Ave., Webster Groves, Mo.

ZEAL or ZIEL, WILLIAM HENRY.—He was in Silver City, Idaho. His brother, Philip Alfred, is anxious to hear from him or his children. He is asked to please write to his grandniece, Dorothy Zeal, R. 1, Notus, Idaho.

SHAW, MABEL.—I was born in Toronto, Can., on May 17, 1898. My mother's name was Anna Shaw. My father was of Scotch descent, and died when I was two years old. I am very anxious to find my relatives, and will greatly appreciate any information. Please write to Mrs. Harry M. Garman, 1337 Susquehanna St., Harrisburg, Pa.

BAUGHMAN, GEORGE R.—He is the son of Mrs. Trossa Baughman, forty-eight years old, six feet tall, and of large build. He spent his boyhood in Neodesha, Kan. Two years ago he was in Ariz., where he worked as a mining engineer. Information will be gratefully received by Etta Myers, 213½ E. Main St., Independence, Kan.

ANDING, THEODORE.—He is five feet six inches tall, has gray eyes and a dark complexion. He formerly lived in Highland, Wis. His brother is trying to get in touch with him, and will be thankful for any news. Write to Leonard Anding, care of this magazine.

UNDERWOOD, J. CARL, JANET and CARL.—They lived in Missoula, Mont., in 1910. Later they moved to Chicago, Ill., and J. Carl worked in the crockery department of the Marshall Field store. He was last heard from in N. Y. City, where he was employed in an importing house. Beulah D. is anxious to hear from him. Please write to her, care of this magazine.

RANEY, GEORGE.—He is five feet five inches tall, has dark hair, dark-gray eyes, and a sandy mustache. Sixteen years ago he was at Clear Lake, Tex. His brother will greatly appreciate any information. Please write to Joe Raney, R. 9, Honey Grove, Tex.

REED, JOHN and NORA.—They lived in Forsythe, Toney Co., Mo., in 1888. Nora went to Springfield, Mo., the same year, and married a man named Kennedy. Their friend is anxious to get in touch with them, as she has information regarding their daughter, whom she adopted in Nov., 1888. Please write to Mrs. T. J. Baldwin, Box 158, Weston, Ore.

HOWTON, PIERCE.—He was in Bovina, Tex., in May, 1924. Later he was in Frontera, Tex. Any information will be gratefully received by Mrs. P. E. Shaw, Star R., Box 18, Hequiam, Wash.

GIGLIOTTI, ERNEST A.—He is forty-two years old, five feet eight inches tall, dark hair, dark-brown eyes, and weighs one hundred and sixty pounds. He left our home in Holyoke, Mass., in 1913. He was in Pittsburgh, Pa., later. His daughter wishes him to know that her mother died on Easter Sunday. Any information will be very much appreciated by Pearl Gigliotti, care of this magazine.

SWINK, MANFRED.—He is forty-six years old. In 1920 he was in the Woodman Sanitarium. His daughter is very anxious to hear from him. Please send information to Marion Independence Swink, Apt. 26, 487 Charlotte Ave., Detroit, Mich.

STAID, ROBERT.—He formerly lived in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Toledo, Ohio. He is known as Bob. His friend did not go to Calif., and she is very anxious to hear from him, as she has his address. Please write to Ruth, care of this magazine.

MARK.—Mother is very much worried about you. Your father is at Mayer & Co., 419 7th St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Please write or come home. Clarice K.

HARRINGTON, Mrs. MAUDE.—She was formerly from Denver, Colo. Any one knowing her present address please notify Mrs. C. S. Miller, Box 493, Ft. Pierce, Fla.

FRANZ, MOX or M. J.—He is forty-four years of age, six feet tall, and has brown eyes. He is a contractor and carpenter by trade, and was in Wichita Falls, Tex. Any information will be appreciated by his sister, Freda Hodges, Offerle, Kan.

WRIGHT, SLIM.—He is forty years old, six feet tall, has light complexion, blue eyes, auburn hair, and weighs one hundred and eighty-five pounds. He left his wife on Feb. 11, 1925, in Hopland, Calif. He formerly was a cowboy rider in Buffalo Bill's show. Any information will be very much appreciated by his heartbroken wife, E. Wright, 288 Jefferson St., Portland, Ore.

JONES, ELIZA JANE, and HUTTON, KATE, formerly of Lanberris, Carnarvonshire, Wales, England. Thirty-eight years ago they were living in Ashley, Pa. A relative is very anxious to get in touch with them, and will be grateful for any information. Please notify Mr. Francis Walker, No. 1 Chapel Place, Oliver St., Birkenhead, Cheshire, England.

SMOCK, BOBBIE D.—I have always loved you, and can't forget you. The suspense is breaking my heart. I will send for you, if you will come back to me. Laura.

ADAMS, FRANK CLARK, Jr., formerly of Kan.—He is five feet eleven inches tall, has dark hair, bluish-gray eyes, F. C. A. tattooed on his right arm, and weighs one hundred and sixty-five pounds. During the World War he served on the U. S. S. "Henderson." In 1920 he attended the Manhattan Agricultural College, Kan. He has a pal, named Russell, living in Palo Alto, Calif. He was last heard from in Nov., 1922, when he lived with Mrs. Hagenbaugh, at 711 E. 6th St., Los Angeles, Calif. Any information will be gratefully received by Betty, care of this magazine.

SLOAN, FRANK CHESTER.—He is five feet seven inches tall, has light-brown hair, blue eyes, large nose, a scar on his left hand, and weighs one hundred and fifty pounds. His brother has good news for him, and is anxious to get in touch with him. Send information to Harry E. Sloan, 2 S. Green St., Plymouth, Mass.

PIERCE, TURNER.—His Aunt Emma is dead. Jud and his sisters are very anxious to hear from him, and ask any one knowing his address to please write to Box 1218, Sacramento, Calif.

JIM.—I have something for you. Please write to me at once, as your letters will make me happy. Annie.

BRANNEN, T. A.—He is known as Tom, and is fifty years old, six feet tall, has dark eyes, gray hair and right forefinger is cut at the first joint. Any one knowing his whereabouts will confer a favor by notifying Amanda, care of this magazine.

C. L. F.—I am in the navy. Please write and tell me where you are. Ralph H. Fowler, U. S. A., Receiving Ship, San Francisco, Calif.

CHARLIE L. S.—I still love you, and am so unhappy without you. I know we can get along all right now. Please write to me and come home. Lillie.

JULIA.—I am well and hope that everything is all right with you. Please remember the I. L. W., and wait for me. If you need help, be sure to let me know at once. Edw.

BARRINGTON, RALPH.—Please come home and everything will be forgiven. My sister has been very ill in the hospital. Your wife, Rita.

O'LEARY, JOHN M.—He has black hair, blue eyes, false upper teeth, one gold eyetooth, saber wound through his left side, and left hand missing. He was in Salt Lake City, Utah, in Nov., 1924. His wife is very anxious about him, as he was shell shocked in the World War. He was a member of the P. P. L. I. from Can. Information will be gratefully received by his wife, Mrs. J. M. O'Leary, 604 S. Poplar St., Sapulpa, Okla.

DAY, JAMES M.—He is forty-one years of age, five feet eleven inches in height, has blond hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and ninety pounds. He was born in St. Johns, Newfoundland, but was in Winnipeg, Can., in 1903. Any news will be appreciated by A. M. Day, 1268 Park Ave., N. Y. City, N. Y.

DIELH, GUY C.—The children and I are living at an orphans' home. We love you and long for your return. We are at a loss to understand why you left us. Please write to your wife, V. A. D., care of this magazine.

CLICK, ROY.—In 1917 he was in the army and navy hospital in the 4th Co., C. A. C. at Fort Springs, Ark. His present address will be appreciated by Pansy Eulen, Gen. Del., Holtzar, N. Y.

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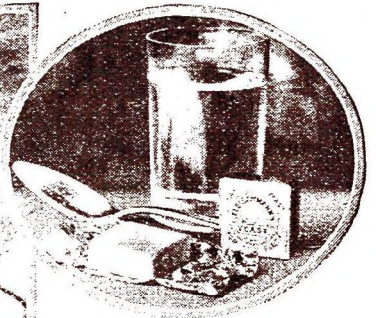
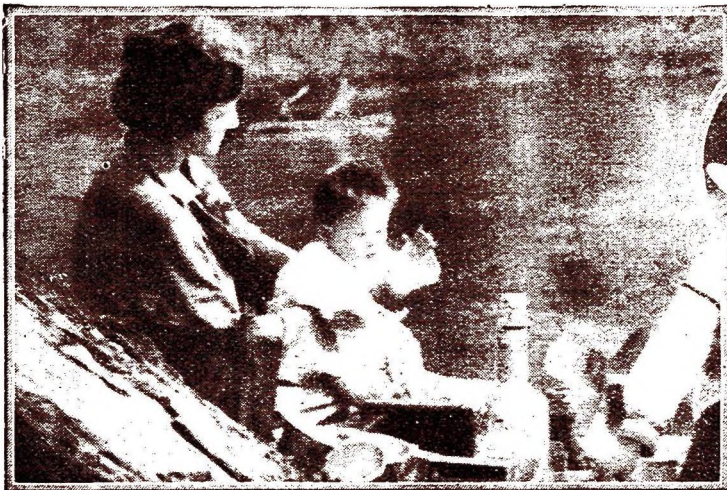
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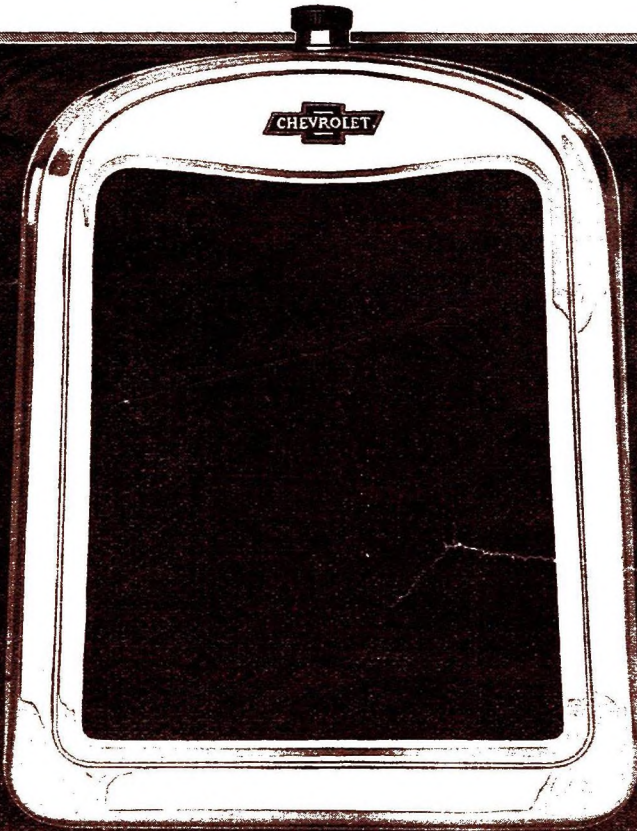


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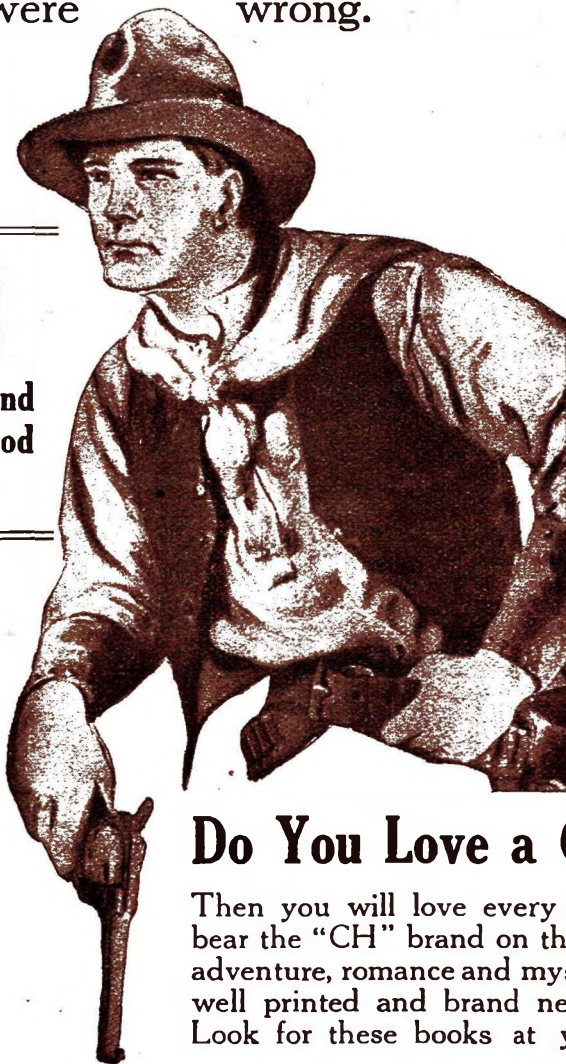
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