THE FACE OF THE MAN FROM SATURN

A DUTTON CLUE MYSTERY

HARRY STEPHEN KEELER

Jimmie Kentland, reporter on the 'Chicago Sun,' was not too happy even though he was 'subbing' for the Night City Editor. Things hadn't been breaking right. Suddenly his eye lighted on an illiterate note lying on the desk. He read it, then dashed out--'Number 1700, Crilly Court,' he shouted to the taxi driver, 'and step on it.'

"Thud--the taxi stopped suddenly. Kentland knew by the sound and feel that a human body had been hit. In the street lay a dark young woman motionless. 'To the hospital, quick,' ordered Kentland. He took one long, lingering look at the young woman, the kind that wants to remember something--and then started once again in the taxi for Number 1700 Crilly Court. It was an Oriental antique shop--mysterious looking, silent. Kentland opened the door. ... 'Am I too late?' as he saw the proprietor stretched out on the floor and pinned with a dagger which had hung on the wall of the shop. As he looked around the place he saw a picture entitled 'The Man from Saturn'--and the face had been cut out.

"It was the long arm of a curious little clue that eventually led Kentland to the secret power that had brought death to the curio dealer and revealed to Kentland something that eventually cleared up a lot of other things, particularly something about a beautiful, dark, young woman who had been taken to a hospital and almost forgotten."

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Harry Stephen Keeler

has also written

THE WASHINGTON SQUARE ENIGMA
THE BOX FROM JAPAN
THE MATILDA HUNTER MURDER
THE RIDDLE OF THE YELLOW ZURI
THE GREEN JADE HAND
THE FOURTH KING
THE AMAZING WEB
THIEVES' NIGHTS
THE SPECTACLES OF MR. CAGLIOSTRO
FIND THE CLOCK
SING SING NIGHTS
THE VOICE OF THE SEVEN SPARROWS

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BY

HARRY STEPHEN KEELER

DUTTON CLUE MYSTERY

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to my friend

DR. CHARLES M. SCHERER

whose many inventions in the optometrical field, and whose curious little optical shop at 2658 N. Clark Street, Chicago, suggest in themselves a world of mystery novels!

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the face of the man from saturn

CHAPTER

I

"ON THE CARPET"

IT WAS one minute to four in the afternoon when Jimmie Kentland sprang from a Madison Street car on the west fringe of Chicago's great Loop. He shot up Market Street to the dingy building at No. 10, took the weather-beaten steps three at a time, and entered the city room of the morning *Sun* just as the big, wooden clock on the wall struck four.

Presently he dropped into the rickety chair in front of his typewriter. "Nearly late again," he

said to himself. "Can't seem to figure out these Chicago street-car schedules to save my li—" He stopped abruptly, his eyes falling on a long, official *Sun* envelope that lay on top of the rubber cover of his writing machine.

Gingerly he picked it up, stared at it a second, tore off the end slowly and withdrew the single white card it contained. Its one side bore the engraved words: "August L. Fornhoff, Proprietor and Editor-in-Chief the *Sun,* Chicago's only Socialist Newspaper."

He turned it quickly over. On the other side a few brief words had been scrawled in pencil. They ran: "Mr. Kentland: Kindly step into my office as soon as you reach the *Sun*—Fornhoff."

"Good—night!" he groaned, after he had taken it in with one sweeping glance. "It's come! Here's where little old yours truly goes up—on the carpet!"

He gazed uneasily down the small city room with its few typewriting stands, its editor's ink-spattered desk at one end, its floor covered by scraps of papers, its air of utter, complete confusion. Then his eyes ran along the outer corridor to the ground-glass partition at the other end which housed Fornhoff—owner, editor-in-chief and high dictator of the Socialistic policies of the *Sun.* Without a look toward the three other

individuals in the city room, he arose slowly and stepped to the cracked mirror on the adjoining wall. There he smoothed down a mop of rumpled brown hair that overtopped a pair of steel-gray eyes. Then he spun on his heel and made his way down the corridor to the door of the ground-glass cage.

His energetic rap brought forth a deep "Come in." He stepped in and closed the door behind him. At a mahogany table near the window sat a big, corpulent—even beefy—man, of slightly bald head, blue eyes and great jowls. In front of him stood a half-opened, black traveling bag, partly filled with papers, and strewn over the surface of the table itself were miscellaneous papers of all colors, sizes and descriptions.

"Sit down, Mr. Kentland," said the chief.

Kentland dropped stiffly into a chair at the side of the desk and waited. It seemed to him, somehow, that there was an intensely worried look on the other's face—a look that he had not seen there before. The older man closed up the black traveling bag with a sharp snap and swung around in his swivel chair.

"Mr. Kentland, I leave for Cincinnati on the six o'clock Monon Airways plane, and allowing for time to skip home in a taxi to Drexel Boulevard and thence out to Central Air Field, I won't

have much time to say what I've got to tell you. The Cincinnati *Herald* is up for sale, and I've decided at the last minute to run down there and get in a certified check with five per cent cash before midnight when the bids close. I shall take the Monon train back, so I can sleep, and get back here by morning." Under his heavy eyebrows he looked at the younger man. "Think a Socialist newspaper would go well in that town, Mr. Kentland?"

The other cheered up at once. He had thought at first that he was in for a severe lecture—if not a discharge—on account of the two news stories he had "fallen down on" in his first week with the *Sun,* here in this gargantuan and many-sided city so rightly termed "The London of the West." But by the trend of Fornhoff's present talk, it looked as if he were about to be consulted as to the big man's business plans.

"Ought to go fine, Mr. Fornhoff. Cincinnati, with the return of beer to America, has certainly become one huge brewing center, and employs a devil of a lot of people in that industry. And people with the same trend of mind that the Milwaukeeans had, around the time beer departed from the U. S. A. Real beer, that is! And it—you see, I happen to know something about Cinci—it has

nothing like a New-Socialist newspaper at present."

"Um!" Fornhoff nodded absent-mindedly. Again that worried, distraught look crept over his face. For a few seconds he seemed to forget his visitor, his surroundings, even the business on hand on which he had summoned Kentland to his office. But suddenly he caught himself up with a start and spoke:

"Mr. Kentland, it won't take me long to tell you what I've got to say. It's simply this: One week ago you landed here from Omaha and asked for a job with the *Sun;* said you'd been night city editor on the Omaha *Courier* under the old management." Kentland nodded, wondering if it was coming now. "I hired you. First night here you fell down on a big story, with the result that the *Sun* went to press scooped by the other papers. Last night you repeated the performance. Now——"

Fornhoff stopped suddenly and pressed a button imbedded in the side of his desk. The summons was answered by a red-haired youth who looked as though he would have danced a jig before the Director-General of Russia's G. P. U., so exuberant were his spirits. Fornhoff jerked out a twenty-dollar bill, and a ten: "Here, boy, skip over to the Monon ticket office on Clark and

Adams and buy me one round-trip ticket for Cincinnati—going on the plane leaving Chicago at six o'clock, and returning on the train leaving Cincinnati at midnight. Lower berth, of course, on the train passage. And—are you listening? What are you supposed to get?"

"One round trip, Chicago-Cincinnati," parrotted the boy, "on the six o'clock Monon plane, returning to Chi—Chicago—on the Monon train leaving Cincinnati at midnight. Lower berth."

"Correct. Now skip."

The boy disappeared, and Fornhoff turned to Kentland once more.

"Now, the point of the matter is simply this, Kentland: The *Sun,* a Socialist newspaper, is a new venture, and it's got to have news, above all, if it's to be a success. Remember that. While it's a political organ to a big extent, catering to those who believe that Franklin D. doesn't represent the truly new deal the world needs, nor Technocracy either, it's a newspaper. And this shop can't afford to hire men who are unlucky enough or inefficient enough to fall down flat on hot news stories." He paused. "You get me on that, do you?"

Kentland nodded silently. He might have entered into an explanation of the unlucky incidents which had caused him to make a failure of

those same two stories, but an extended experience with men and newspaper offices had taught him that silence and acquiescence go further than excuses.

"And so," Fornhoff went on, chewing abstractedly on a big black cigar he had taken from his vest pocket, "the ironclad law of this shop will have to take its course with you, just the same as with any young cub that strolls in and gets a fifteen dollar job. Either bring me in a big, exclusive story within the next seven nights, to show me you're all you claimed you were, or——"

"Or sever my connection with the paper," put in Kentland.

Fornhoff nodded. "Exactly." He glanced at his watch. Outside, the big clock in the city room toned forth the hour of four-thirty. The sun dropped back of the tops of the dingy buildings on Newspaper Row, with the result that the shining panes of glass across the way on Market Street became suddenly dark, and the whole interior of the tiny office took on a dismal and cheerless aspect quite in keeping with Kentland's spirit.

"Now—two more things," the big man went on. "Mr. Boltman,—the night city editor of the *Sun*—just now telephoned that he's laid up with gastric cramps—at least *he* calls 'em gastric

cramps—I call 'em just a bellyache—but anyway, he just now telephoned that he's laid up with such and won't leave his room tonight. My usual substitute for Mr. Boltman is on his vacation. The rest of the few men on night duty know Chicago pretty well—while you don't. Then, too, you've had this desk experience with the Omaha *Courier*. So, I'm going to put you down in Boltman's chair tonight—and I want you to watch that telephone and everything else and stick here until the paper goes to press at three A.M. On any tips from police or fire you can send out the boys—and they'll take care of the rest." He paused. "You'll be able to handle it all right, will you?"

"Easily, Mr. Fornhoff," Kentland replied, brightening.

"Now for point No. 3." Fornhoff consulted a memorandum pad at his elbow. "You'll probably see Jeffrich tonight. I understand he comes in about nine o'clock with his stuff. You know him when you see him?"

Kentland pondered a moment. Then it came to him whom Fornhoff meant. Jeffrich, he recalled, was the *Sun's* one outside contributor—a dilapidated specimen of humanity who evidently belonged to the army of free-lance writers who besiege the city papers for space work.

Where he had come from not even Boltman seemed to know. But it was rumored in the office that his masterly analyses of the rapidly shifting war situations in the so-called 2nd Chino-Jap war, as well as his recent 2,000-word prognostication of a deliberate declaration of war against Russia by France, precipitated by a hypothetical diplomatic "incident" on the Russo-Rumanian frontier that would first bring an army of 600,000 Poles, Rumanians and Jugo-Slavs marching into Russia, not to omit his recent scathing political diatribes against capital, were beginning to win him a tight place in Fornhoff's esteem. At any rate, they had won him a regular unsigned column in the morning *Sun*. At 9 o'clock each night on which he himself had not been out on an assignment, Kentland recollected, Jeffrich had drifted jauntily into the *Sun* offices, his threadbare suit brushed and carefully mended, his heavy cane swinging airily, his lean face carrying the pronounced sneer that invariably brands the writer who considers his work too good for the publication in which it appears.

Each time, he had deposited his next morning's copy and military diagrams on the 2nd Chino-Jap war with Boltman for use on page 3 and then drifted out again—probably into the Bohemian haunts that knew his type the best.

Kentland nodded in the affirmative, at which Fornhoff, his face darkening for an instant, went on:

"Well, I want you to tell him that he's got to remain more neutral in those Chino-Jap military articles of his—or the *Sun* will have to dispense with his stuff. That previous analysis of his of an inevitable French invasion of Soviet Russia was a fine thing from a technical standpoint—but even it was too confoundedly pro-Russian—and we must remember that even though we, here, are to some extent pro-Bolshevik, pro-Soviet, at least pro-Socialism—everything, in fact, but pro-Communism—we can't slop our policies over into matter that should be as impersonal to us as a write-up of an auction bridge tournament. And—but while I'm on the subject of France, tell Jeffrich that if this last Moroccan uprising by Abd el Hazar against France continues to grow, we'll want a daily 200 words on the African campaign and at least an occasional diagram. I have it from confidential sources that the Foreign Legion is now recruited from the regular French Army to three times its usual strength solely because of el Hazar's activities. And—but I'm getting way off the track. I was speaking of Jeffrich's daily Chino-Jap war articles. In them, he's pro-Jap—whereas if he had to be anything

he should at least be pro-Chinese—for China is sure to become Socialistic during the next ten years, whereas Japan becomes more imperialistic every year. However, I'm not asking him to align himself with any particular political views if he hasn't got 'em, but do kindly impress on his mind, Kentland, that the *Sun* is a neutral paper wherever outside wars go—an American paper, first, last and all the time. I won't stand for articles that are so biased as his are in favor of this or that or the other country. Tell him that in a political article, he's free to go as far as he likes against capital and big business—without becoming an agitator. But tell him that so far as the military articles go, he can either discuss and analyze the new Chino-Jap situations each day impersonally or cut off his stuff altogether, and we'll get somebody else to do it." He pointed to a stack of letters held down by a brass paper weight. "There are the kicks of the last few days from various people who have business connections in China. If this stuff keeps up its present tone, we'll be known as a Jap newspaper instead of a Socialist organ. I won't have it; that's all. Please tell Jeffrich tonight without fail."

He stood up, glancing sourly at his watch. That, Kentland knew, was an indisputable sign

that a Fornhoffian interview was at an end. So he, too, rose.

"I thank you for your confidence in me on the matter of the city editorship tonight—" he began. But the older man waved a hand. The *Sun* was not one of the great Chicago dailies; its proprietor was not taking a chance in putting this man of doubtful ability in charge for the night.

"Save your thanks," Fornhoff remarked, dryly. "It's merely a case of reserving my better men—the ones that don't fall down—for the news trails." A wave of resentment suddenly rolled over Kentland, and his face flushed. But he made no retort, for jobs in Chicago, in spite of the much ballyhooed "Prosperity Return Era," were scarcer than broiled lobsters in bread lines—which bread lines still existed! And he needed the job he had. "But kindly remember this, Mr. Kentland," Fornhoff continued, glancing at his watch again. "Within seven nights following tonight—I don't count this one—either bring in a live, exclusive story for the *Sun* columns, so that I'll know what you're made of, or resign from the staff. That's final. . . . Good night, Mr. Kentland."

CHAPTER

II

A MESSAGE OUT OF THE NIGHT

THAT night, Jimmie Kentland, reporter, had the extreme satisfaction of being James Kentland, night city editor—on Chicago's smallest newspaper! But of satisfaction, there was little in him. His accidental loss in the past week, of two live, vital news stories still rankled in him, particularly since it was his first week with a new paper. And his remembrance of Fornhoff's cool remark that, in the absence of the usual substitute for the regular night city editor, he was

saving his best men for the news trails, was hardly one that would be considered a compliment to his own news-garnering abilities.

In spite of the fact that he did not know the city thoroughly, he found himself handling the flood of small news tips with the same celerity and ease that he had displayed on the Omaha *Courier* before that paper had gone into new hands and he, Jimmie Kentland, had found himself without a berth—and without a salary. Toward nine o'clock in the evening, however, matters began to slow down, and the lack of anything live over the wire began to become monotonous; he found himself wishing that a big story would break somewhere in the city—a story by which he could show Fornhoff what he could do—and perhaps mollify that august gentleman a trifle. But nothing whatever came in and the two reporters remaining in the small city room began to yawn at their desks.

But at 9:30, Jeffrich came in. He sauntered up to Kentland's desk. He was a tall man of about 48, his black hair streaked with gray, and his smooth, sharp-cut features and narrow, half-closed eyes were quite in keeping with the thin lips that seemed to have grown into a rigid, permanent sneer.

"Hmph!" he grunted, staring superciliously at

the younger man. "What in the devil, my good friend, are *you* doing in the most honorable Boltman's chair? Where is the night king-pin of the city room? I want to see him."

Kentland had been talking over the phone, but he replaced the receiver on the hook and spun around, facing the man with the sneer. "Sit down, Jeffrich. Boltman's home with a prime, A No. 1 bellyache, and I'm official office boy tonight. Got a hot message for you from the old man." Then he leaned forward and told the other, word for word, what Fornhoff had stated five hours earlier, not forgetting to mention the latter's threat of cutting off the war material altogether. "So there you are, Jeffrich," he finished. "It's up to you to tone the Chino-Jap articles down and make them neutral. And in case you do any more stories at space rates, lay off of La Belle France as having designs on Russia. And so on, in like manner, in each and all and every respect! If you don't, it's your funeral—not mine."

Jeffrich sat for a moment, his lean face carrying a scornful look. "I see," he growled. "Got to refashion my own sentiments in order to corral a few of Fornhoff's big, round, silver dollars." He laughed out loud—a laugh that was utterly devoid of real merriment. "All right, old man. Neutral shall all of my future Chino-Jap stories

be—and also my free-lance stuff—to the *n*-th degree. I need the money." He dug down in his breast pocket but went on talking as he did so. "Whenever Fornhoff is ready for any North African stuff, I'll sling it together. Abd el Hazar doesn't want Morocco spanned with any of France's narrow-gauge railways. That's why he's raising hell. He knows he'll be just an office boy of the desert sands when she gets done, especially now that she's got the Fez-Oujda part of her system completed." He extricated by this time from his breast pocket the thing he was trying to pull forth and flung it on Kentland's desk: a folded piece of foolscap on the bottom part of which, partially exposed, showed the corner of a carefully drawn map in black ink, and a mass of fine, cramped handwriting. He rose:

"There's the copy for tomorrow morning. Analysis of the Japanese attempt to capture the new, modernized Woosung forts from the rear instead of from the Yangtze river with the 6,400 troops they landed on the beach a mile up the Whangpoo river. They can't do it this time. They'll be turned back, mark my words. For the lousy Chinks—as explained yesterday—are heavily intrenched with machine gun nests back of the Woosung forts—the yellow bastards have learned a lot since that first Chino-Jap scuffle in

1933—and besides, they've heavy, long distance ordnance at Liuho, above Woosung and Soochow creeks. Which makes all the difference in the world. You can safely send the story downstairs to the linotypes as is—I haven't expressed any personal sentiments of any kind in it. And you can use this morning's zinc-cut all over again—for the diagram. Or, if you make a new cut, use my drawing for today's cut, but make a bunch of crosses along the left bank of the Whangpoo half the way to Shanghai to represent where the estimable Japanese—who by rights should own and control all of China—are trying to land forces. That's all. This story is quite neutral. So don't worry." Jeffrich looked vacantly across the room for a second, and then down at Kentland: "And lend me a dollar, will you, old man, till I see the cashier tomorrow?"

Kentland dipped into his pocket and produced a dollar bill which he flung over to the other. Jeffrich pocketed it hastily, but uttered not a word of thanks, his every motion seeming to convey the impression that he was doing the younger man something of an honor by borrowing from him. A minute later he had vanished out into the night.

Eleven o'clock came, and information from Harrison Street police headquarters that a Chi-

nese gambling joint had just been raided on South Clark Street. Kentland promptly sent out a man who had just come in. Eleven-forty-five brought news from the telephone operator in the fire department offices at the city hall that a fire had broken out in the tenement district. Things were picking up. Kentland sent out one of the cubs. At 12:15 a tip came from Central Station that a New York embezzler had been arrested as he stepped off a train in the Twelfth Street depot. At 12:30 the news came from the cub on the fire assignment that the tenement fire was out—and no one injured. Things began to slow up again. At 12:50 reporters began to straggle in, one at a time. Then followed the furious clicking of typewriters, till a man could hardly hear himself think. At 1:30, the din had ceased and the big door of the city room slammed twice as the two earlier men dropped away home.

At 2 o'clock there was left only Kentland himself, Johnson, the night rewrite man, and two nodding reporters who had been on the staff of the paper at the time of Kentland's arrival. Downstairs in the basement, three linotype machines were clicking methodically away, and the galley boy was running off damp, smudgy proofs. Then Kentland realized, as he leaned back in Boltman's swivel chair, that his ten hours as substitute night city editor of the Chicago *Sun* were

nearly over and, that beginning with the following night, it was up to him either to bring home the bacon in the form of an exclusive story in another week, or hunt another job. He wondered vaguely where he, Jimmie Kentland, a stranger in a strange city, was going to pick up a real news story that should grace the front page of the *Sun* exclusively.

His ruminations, though, were interrupted by the entrance of a khaki-clad messenger boy with a cigarette hanging from the corner of his mouth, who shuffled sleepily up to his desk and flung down a soiled and crumpled letter with the typewritten address: "City Edditer, *Sun,* Market Street."

"Sign 'ere," the boy mumbled, puffing away on the cigarette and blowing the smoke in Kentland's face. The acting editor wrote his signature on the boy's receipt book, and ripped open the envelope. Its surprising contents—typed like the envelope—ran:

> EDDITER: If you will sen a man at once to 1710 Crilly Court you will fin out something strange and startling wat no other paper has got. This is bony fidy.
>
> A FREN TO THE SUN.

For a moment, Kentland sat pondering the strange message, then he sprang to his feet.

CHAPTER

III

OFF TO CRILLY COURT

THE messenger was just ambling out into the night through the swinging doors of the city room when Kentland shouted after him: "Boy! Boy! Come back here!"

The messenger lurched back to the desk.

"Who gave you this?"

"A guy phoned in to de Nort' Side Western Union office dat he had a rush note to go to de *Sun* office."

"And where were you to pick up this note?"

"Tol' de boss he'd be waitin' on de corner of Nort' Avenue and Wells Street."

"What kind of a looking man was he?"

"Couldn't tell you, boss. When I got to de corner at ten minutes o' two in de mornin', he was standin' up de street away from de corner light —an' his lid was pulled down over his blinkers."

"All right. You can go." The boy disappeared. Kentland looked at the big clock at the end of the room. Its hands pointed to 2:30. At 2:45, he knew, the forms of every other newspaper in the city would be locked up—and a few minutes later their giant presses would begin to clank. A little while after that, the *Sun,* with its smaller output, was supposed to follow its brothers to press. Again he read the note with perplexity.

On a second reading it looked better to him. If it were the key to an exclusive story—then here was a miraculous chance to bring out the *Sun* with something in its headlines that the other papers could not show, provided, of course, they did not "lift" it for a later edition. And, on the other hand, if the thing were a hoax—well, even that could be determined by the time the deadline was announced by the clock in the press room. To be sure, Fornhoff had instructed him to hold his desk until the paper went to press. But even Fornhoff had not been reckoning with

such an unexpected contingency as a special news tip coming in at the last moment. So he made up his mind in an instant.

"Johnson," he called sharply to the lone rewrite man, who was drumming idly on his table at the other end of the room. "Hassel and Pilken," he added, in the direction of the two remaining men who were on duty till the deadline. "Step over here, all of you."

He showed them the note. Then he got his hat. "I'm going out on this story myself," he said. "Perhaps you boys don't know it, but I'm in bad with the old man—and I surely need a scoop. You, Johnson, hold the front page open till you hear from me on the phone. I'll call up the minute I get anything at all. And you two fellows can hang here as usual in case of any emergency."

The hands of the big clock on the wall pointed to 25 minutes to 3. Without a further word, Kentland jammed the typewritten slip of paper into his coat pocket, slipped from the city room and dashed down the steps of the *Sun* Building. For a second he hesitated under the huge shaded-globe light in front of the offices, wondering whether to make for Clark Street by way of Madison Street and secure a taxicab or to trust to a shifty transportation system to get him up the city to Crilly Court. The latter street, he re-

called vaguely from a rather assiduous study of a street guide in the past week, was two or three miles north of Madison Street, the center line of the city. But as he stood there vacillating, undecided, a huge yellow taxicab, with its headlights dark, rolled slowly down Market Street past him.

"Hi, there," he shouted. The chauffeur stopped with a jerk, and Kentland could see, by the sickly rays of the overhanging street light, that he had turned his head. He lost no time in running over to the stationary machine. "How quick can you get me to No. 1710 Crilly Court?"

The driver looked at him with an exasperating smile. "Couldn't get you there no-how, boss. Can't you see my lights are out? My light battery's gone blah."

Kentland jerked out his watch and peered at it in the imperfect light. Its hands pointed to 20 minutes to 3.

"To hell with the lights," he exclaimed. "I tell you, I've got to get to No. 1710 Crilly Court in ten minutes at the most. Here!" From a pocket, he drew his small roll of money. Quickly he peeled off a 5-dollar bill and held it up. "Get me there in ten minutes and this 5-spot's yours."

The driver, familiar with nocturnal Chicago, realized that there were few—mighty few—policemen around the streets at 3 o'clock in the

morning. A rate of payment approximately ten times the regular rate allowed by the last city council for a two-mile trip may have influenced him to a great extent. He took but one glance at the bill in Kentland's fingers before reaching down and pocketing it. Then he said:

"Jump in. I'll chance it. Hold tight when we get out o' th' Loop. I'll have to burn up Wells Street to make it in ten minutes."

Five seconds later, Kentland, bumping from side to side on the cold leather cushions as the machine bowled around the corner of Madison and Market Streets, realized with a feeling of both supreme satisfaction and bewilderment that he was actually on the way to cover a "strange story what no other paper" was likely to get.

CHAPTER

IV

WHAT HAPPENED AT EUGENIE STREET

ALONG Madison Street, which is always brightly lighted regardless of the time of day or night, the driver went at a moderate speed. Once at Wells Street, however, under the shadows of the elevated road, he turned northward and within less than a minute, the car was passing over the Wells Street bridge. Far below in the darkness, the multitude of shimmering lights on the water, together with a few twinkling red

lamps on the masts of moored vessels, showed the Chicago River. Far ahead stretched an interminable row of yellowish street lights that marked Wells Street from the Loop to Lincoln Park.

Once over the bridge Kentland perceived by the sudden forward jerk of the car that the driver had thrown the gears onto a higher speed. That driver, he reflected, as he found himself momentarily flattened against the cushioned rear of the seat, was going to earn his 5-dollar bill.

In a few minutes they whirled across North Avenue, marked like Division Street by the many all-night restaurants and drug stores. Kentland saw by a big, illuminated clock in front of a jeweller's shop that it was now 11 minutes to 3. Good enough! Unless the other papers had got wind of something unusual, they were already locked and started on their runs. As for the *Sun,* he knew that he could safely allow the presses to stand open for a while beyond the deadline—twenty minutes if need be—should conditions at the end of his journey promise anything like an exclusive story.

Along the block that lay beyond North Avenue, the chauffeur ran with undiminished speed. At the first corner, however—"Eugenie Street" was the name that Kentland hastily caught from the blue street sign—he turned with a wide sweep

that threw his lone passenger flat and helpless against the side of the car. Then he shot straight west on the smaller street, lined on each side with giant elm trees that seemed to throw the whole narrow thoroughfare into utter blackness and gloom.

And then something happened! A sharp jerk, and the car came to a dead standstill with a rapidity that flung Kentland forward out of his seat. A second later, he saw the driver climbing out on the running board. Muttering a curse, the man hopped to the ground and struck a match. For only a second, though, did Kentland remain inside, wondering; then he, too, opened the door and got out. By the flickering light of the match in the driver's fingers, he could see a dark form lying in front of the machine, and he no longer needed to ask what had happened. The machine, running at an illegal speed and without lights, had struck something or someone.

Kentland stepped over to where the driver was now kneeling on the asphalt, holding another lighted splinter of wood in his hand. As the match flared up, the reporter caught a better glimpse of the victim. He saw that it was a girl, slender of form. She lay partly on her back, the ringlets of her dark hair falling over white temples, her eyes closed, her blue wool dress disar-

ranged, its cape lying spread open, her hand tightly clutching what appeared in the flickering light to be a tiny, worn purse.

"Good heavens, man!" Kentland ejaculated. "How did it happen?"

"How'd it happen?" snarled the driver looking back at him from his position on the asphalt. "How'd it happen? Reason enough. That's what we get for burnin' up distance and runnin' without lights. You're to blame as well as me." He stopped. It was evident he was excited, if not frightened; but when he went on, his voice was a little more calm. "All I know is that she jumped out of these here tree shadows an' I hit her."

"Wheels didn't pass over her?" queried Kentland, anxiously.

"Not on your life, boss, they didn't! I seen her by that street light back there, an' I jammed down them brakes like a shot. But the radiator came ker-plam against her just the same—before we stopped dead."

Kentland knelt down and listened carefully at her heart. He could detect a slight pulsation. "She's just unconscious, either from shock or concussion," he said as he rose to his feet. "If you're sure the wheels never touched her, she may not have a bone broken." He paused, still be-

wildered by the sudden, unexpected incident. "Where's the nearest hospital?"

The chauffeur raised the peak of his cap and scratched his head. "Le's see," he said, dazedly. "Polyclinic—on Chicago Avenue near Wells. No, the Augustana at Cleveland and Lincoln. Augustana's about six blocks north of us."

"And how far am I from Crilly Court?" inquired Kentland, still confused by the accident that had come up to delay his errand.

The driver waved a hand toward a small lamppost with a frosted globe two hundred feet to the west of them. "That there is Crilly Court. It's a block long. Begins here at Eugenie an' runs north to Florimond."

"All right," said Kentland. "Help me to get this girl into the back seat of the car. You rush her down to the hospital as fast as you can. Here's my card, in case there's any questions. I can't help matters by going with you, so I'm going on to take care of a news story up the street. It's up to you to get her to that hospital at top speed."

Together they lifted her and placed her gently in the car. As they did so, her pendant hand relaxed and the tiny, leather purse that her fingers were holding fell to the asphalt. Once in the car, Kentland stooped and recovered it. He went to

replace it by her side, but then, as if by a sudden thought, opened it and glanced inside while the chauffeur held a lighted match. All it contained was about 60 cents in change and a tiny slip of white paper which bore the written words: "Dr. Steven Watling, 413 S. Halsted Street."

Kentland stood for a second in doubt. It was quite likely that this Dr. Watling knew the identity of the unconscious girl, he concluded. So he slipped the name and address into his pocket, snapped shut the purse and handed it to the driver. The latter sprang back into the front seat, threw on the clutch, made a wide circle, and a moment later only his solitary green tail light was visible as he bowled away.

Kentland stood where he was for several seconds, watching the receding tail light, forgetful, for the moment, of the peculiar errand that had brought him to the locality. He found himself wondering what errand could have brought the girl to that spot. And he found himself hoping that his trip to Crilly Court was not to result in the crippling of a human being.

With a start, the newspaper man in him came to the surface again. He walked rapidly westward under the elm trees and reached the lamppost which the chauffeur had said marked Crilly Court. Then he glanced up the street. On each

side of the short, narrow thoroughfare was a line of frosted-globe lamps, similar to the one under which he was standing. On his own side stood a great flat building, which loomed up in the half-light not unlike a prison. Across the way stood a row of neat frame houses, among which, at about the center of the short block, was a single low store that stood out clear to the sidewalk. As his eyes rested on it, he noted with surprise that it was lighted up, but that a great shade had been drawn over the show window. Then he managed to make out, by the solitary street lamp which stood in front, a huge black panel swinging from an iron arm like a tavern sign. Its bright, gilded letters read:

No. 1710.
ABDUL MAZURKA.
Curios, Art.

Kentland cut across the street and approached nearer to it. As he did so, a figure stepped from around the side of the panel—a figure clad in a blue suit with brass buttons: a policeman. A second and there fell on his ears the sharp tattoo of a nightstick beating against the panels of the door.

CHAPTER

V

A SURPRISING DISCOVERY

AS KENTLAND reached the curbing in front of the lighted store, the bluecoat glanced back over his shoulder and stopped his tattoo against the shop door. The younger man pulled back his coat and displayed his reporter's badge.

"I'm from the *Sun,*" he said. "Got a tip that there was a story at this number. Know anything about it, Officer?"

"I do not," said the other, staring at him. "The place was dark till midnight, then she lighted up

just as she is now. Old Mazurka, the Persian what runs the shop, lives in the rear. Seeing he was up and doing and believing that we was always friendly, I thinks I'll step in and use his telephone to call up my old lady. My little shaver's at home sick—and the old boy inside's got a telephone. I been ringing and knocking, front and rear, for the last three minutes—but no answer. Don't look good to me, Mr. Reporter." Again he drew his nightstick and rapped sharply against the door panels. Still no answer came.

"Have you tried the rear door?" asked Kentland.

The officer nodded: "Tried 'em both. Both locked."

For a few seconds the two men stood undecided, the bluecoat twirling his club and surveying the lighted store front with troubled eyes, Kentland eyeing the massive polished Yale lock that held fast the tiny shop door. It seemed to him exceedingly strange—even disregarding the weird tip that had come in to the *Sun* office a half hour previously—for a store to remain dark until midnight and then to become as brilliantly lighted as this, yet totally unresponsive to knocks from outsiders. But time was passing. He turned to the policeman.

"This Mazurka—this Persian—did he ever light up before midnight? Did he——"

"He sure did," the other grunted. "I've been on this beat for a couple of months now. There's a guy in the neighborhood—over a block west—that's asked protection against kidnapping—for his girl kid. He's got a drag at the city hall—so I'm coverin' this neighborhood, while the regular squad car keeps to the west. And I've seen the Persian's front lighted up as late as four or five in the morning many a time. But always with the shades drawn."

"Suppose we go around the side," the other said. "We might find an open basement window. There's something here, Officer, that isn't in accordance with Hoyle, and the sooner we dig it up, the better it will be for all of us." He stepped around the side of the store toward the dark rear.

The bluecoat followed, an electric pocket light in his hand illuminating both the wooden side of the store and the matted grass that fringed the gravel path. Near the rear, Kentland stopped suddenly, for a small glass window just above the ground was reflecting the beam of light from the other's searchlight. He tried the sash. It proved to be quite fast.

"As a mere reporter for the *Sun,*" he suggested adroitly, "I'd be overstepping my author-

ity if I pushed that pane of glass in with the toe of my shoe. But as an officer of the law, investigating something out of the ordinary run of things, I'd——"

"I get you," the other replied with a laugh. He gave a vicious dig with his toe. With a few more kicks, the window had ceased to exist. The bluecoat dropped to his hands and knees, wriggled backward into the dark opening, hung by his hands and dropped inside. Once on the basement floor, he pressed the button of his pocket light again, and Kentland could make him out standing on the floor of a dusty cellar, which was filled with empty packing cases and boxes in all confusion.

Kentland also dropped into the basement. With the bluecoat, he threaded his way through the overturned boxes in search of a stairway leading to the upper regions. Presently the tiny, wavering beam of the pocket light disclosed a crude, pine staircase that led upward and ended at a narrow door some ten feet above them.

Up the stairway they went without a word, the policeman in the lead, Kentland hard on his heels, his reportorial instinct aroused to the keenest pitch at this unexpected procedure for running down a possible news story. At the top, the man

in front turned the knob carefully and the tiny door swung inward.

Together they stepped into a large room—the curio shop itself. For a second, Kentland blinked at the sudden flood of light that greeted his eyes from a Tungsten cluster on the ceiling. But then as he became accustomed to the glare, he began to take in the furnishings of the store with a few sweeping glances.

It was a typical curiosity shop, such as one can find in any large city in the United States. Hanging from the ceiling, so low that a man could hardly pass beneath it without bending his head, was a great, old-fashioned chandelier, bearing hundreds and hundreds of triangular glass prisms such as graced our grandfathers' houses in days gone by. The prisms seemed to take up the bright, white light from the Tungsten cluster and to separate it into thousands of dancing colors that reflected from the polished hard wood floor back to the white, painted ceiling.

On one side of the further street door was a small, round wooden pedestal which had evidently held a complete suit of medieval armor, for the armor itself lay tumbled in a heap about the floor, and the helmet had rolled a distance of several feet. On the other side of the same door, on a smaller wooden pedestal, stood a grinning,

complete skeleton; but its equilibrium had not been disturbed.

Along the wall that stretched from Kentland's right shoulder to the front door were several hundred Japanese prints, the tiny, black hieroglyphics of the nearest ones showing quaintly in the garish light. As he allowed his gaze to swing slowly around from right to left, Kentland caught a glimpse of a group of iron and brass andirons, a shelf full of copper and silver candlesticks, and four or five old grandfathers' clocks ticking away. He caught a hurried look at a showcase which seemed filled to overflowing with flint arrowheads and Indian tomahawks; of another filled with ancient Roman goblets; and still another containing coins and butterflies. On the wall back of the long counter that filled that side of the room was a row of miscellaneous paintings, surmounted by a pair of huge South Sea Island shields.

Kentland's attention was suddenly riveted by the ejaculation of the bluecoat who, his lower jaw slightly open, was staring toward the inner end of the wooden counter. One look in that direction and Kentland knew that they had come too late—that his news story was to be a story of tragedy.

CHAPTER

VI

A CLUE OF CRYSTAL

ON THE floor, partly in the shadow from the end of the counter, lay the body of a man, his coffee-colored face turned slightly upward toward the light, his short, black beard showing plainly in contrast with the tips of his whitely gleaming teeth. He was without coat or vest, and his silk shirt was belted into a pair of dark gray trousers.

That he had fallen exactly where he stood, and why he had done so, was evident, for the long

wooden shaft of a lance—plainly the lance from the overturned suit of armor across the room—protruded from his chest at a point in the region of his heart. As they continued to stare for a moment, Kentland's eyes took in the exact place where the spear had entered, then the tiny trickle of crimson that had oozed out from the silk shirt and collected in a pool on the smooth hard wood floor.

Together they strode forward without a word. The officer knelt down and, turning the body slightly over, listened carefully. Then he got up on his feet. "Dead as—as the Volstead Law itself," he said. He scratched his chin undecidedly. "It's a piece of nasty work, all right. What do you make of it, News Hound?"

Kentland had seen too many cases of violent death in his years of newspaper work to be much affected by the sight. But he was thinking of the typewritten note that had come in to the *Sun* office. Either someone had seen this sight before, he told himself, or had known in advance that something out of the way was going to occur in this tiny curio shop. And that same someone had sent in the information. The fact was painfully obvious.

He stooped and stretched forth his hand to test the rigidity of the lance. But at that the blue-

coat suddenly came to life. "Nix, nix!" he growled. "Hands off there, my friend! That there spear might have finger prints on it. Nobody must touch that without gloves—and that, damn careful, too. Keep your hands away." Kentland stood erect again without having touched the weapon. The officer was right, he reflected. More than one individual had been convicted of a crime on the evidence of the finger prints he had left behind him.

Still staring down at the body and the long shaft of the lance, and trying to fathom the reason for the whole thing, his attention was riveted by an exclamation from the man at his side. He glanced up quickly. The latter was pointing with one finger at the wall, near one end of the counter but directly back of it.

Rapidly following the other's forefinger, Kentland's eye came to rest on a peculiar thing. Held in a massive gilt frame was an oil painting that measured, perhaps, two feet by a foot and a half. A signature in bright red, in the right-hand lower corner read, simply: "Durri," and the words neatly painted in black on the lower left-hand corner proclaimed the title: "Man from Saturn." That it was one of those bizarre paintings to be found here and there in every collection and in every art studio was evident. The

green-taloned hand with seven fingers that seemed to be reaching up to clutch the frame was never hand of man or beast on earth. That the painting was that of the face—the supposed face —of an extremely fantastic being was also patent, for the tips of two speckled brown horns stretched almost to the top of the frame.

But the surprising thing—indeed the startling thing—about it was that the painting had been mutilated by a sharp, roundabout cut, and all that now remained was a wide fringe of canvas and a black, gaping hole which must at one time have presented the face of "The Man from Saturn."

A momentary silence descended on the two men. Then it was broken by a sharp question from the bluecoat:

"Well—what do ye make o' that, News Hound?" He scratched his head bewilderedly. "The pitcher slashed, the face of it gone, this dead Persian lying on the floor, the—" He turned suddenly to the younger man. "See here," he demanded curtly. "What was that ye were tellin' me on the sidewalk? Ye got a tip that there was a news story at this here number? See here. Who sent in that tip?" He jerked out a worn, leather notebook, and, rummaging around in his pocket, produced the stub of a lead pencil. "There's

scrooey work here tonight—and I want to know who knew it ahead o' us."

Kentland told him about the anonymous note that had come to the *Sun* office. The bluecoat shook his head, dumbfounded, and stared all the harder at the figure on the floor. Kentland stepped around the counter closer to the oil painting and studied it. But there was little more to be seen than from the front—only the jagged, elliptical hole in the canvas, the tips of two speckled brown horns projecting above the top edge of the gash, the greenish, hideous hand resting near the bottom of the frame.

Was that strange marring of the picture, he wondered, really connected in some definite way with the man who lay so silent, with ghastly, gleaming face on the floor at their feet? Or could the old Persian curio dealer have been killed by a fanatic whose one mad object was to destroy the bizarre likeness of a creature from some other planet?

He shook his head, nonplussed. For the time being, he had quite forgotten that he was a reporter on the *Sun,* feeling, instead, that he was a casual spectator who had wandered in from the street. But the sudden, sharp, tinkling strike of the many clocks ranged on the wall, caused him to jerk out his watch and glance at its hands. It was

10 minutes past 3 and the presses of the *Sun* were still being held for the news story that had threatened to break on Crilly Court.

Kentland looked around the room and his eyes fell on a telephone which stood on the other end of the counter. Had there been any likelihood that the other Chicago papers were still open, he would have formulated a plan to "get to it" before the bluecoat—to hold it as long as he could, to prevent the other from getting the information into the nearest police station. By that reportorial trick, he could delay the news from reaching the nearest desk sergeant and in turn being relayed to the various night city editors. But those other papers had gone to press on their last edition. He realized with a wave of joy that they must have been running off the presses for the last ten minutes or so. The bluecoat himself was down on his knees, his notebook and pencil in hand, slowly and laboriously recording the details of the crime.

The scoop would be a complete one. Kentland saw that full well. He reached the telephone, raised the receiver and asked for Market 2222. He recognized the feminine voice that answered as that of the switchboard girl on duty all night. He asked for the city room, and quickly heard the low, melodious voice of Johnson, the rewrite man.

In clean-cut, comprehensive sentences, he outlined the crime, the exact appearance of the dead man, the overturned suit of armor, and the long lance that stretched from the victim's chest to the floor. After that, he described the appearance of the shop itself, for a sense of dramatic values told him the added worth of a striking, see-able description accompanying the details of the crime.

"Now, old man," he said when he finished, "it's a clean beat for the *Sun.* Kill that 3-column head—the rumor that the kidnapper of the Lindbergh baby died in Vienna and left a dying confession—and sling this thing into its place for a 3-column head. Pad out to at least a column and a half, double leaded, and get on the presses as soon as possible. Don't let Hassel and Pilkin go. Let one of them write the head and the other read your copy, and chase it up to the composing room, page at a time."

"I get you," came Johnson's voice enthusiastically over the wire. "They're waiting to make the matrix now. We'll have this stuff upstairs in no time." Johnson was one of the swiftest writers on the Chicago Press.

Kentland turned from the phone. For a minute he stood watching the bluecoat, who was still taking down the details of the scene. Then he stepped over to an open doorway that evidently

led to a living-room at the rear of the shop, where he fumbled around the edge, searching for an electric button. Presently his fingers came in contact with it and he pressed it. A single suspended electric bulb which burst into a glow, showed a large room, simply furnished with a brass bed, a desk, a kitchen table, a cupboard, a small sink and a two-hole gas stove. This scene being of no interest to him, he stepped back over the threshold to the shop in time to see the bluecoat look up at him.

"And what's your name, please, News Hound?" that individual asked. "I'm thinking that me and you are going to be the king-pin witnesses at the inquest."

Kentland told him. The bluecoat took it down. Then he rose, went over to the phone and presently was talking to the night sergeant of his own precinct station.

As the policeman talked, Kentland's eyes roamed about the curiosity shop. So unreal, so rapid had been the events which had unfolded themselves that night, that it seemed to him as if he had stepped from civilization into some scene that was the product of a dozen ages and a dozen lands. The sole notes of modernity among the odd ornaments that filled the room were the Tungsten cluster on the ceiling and another article

which his eyes lighted upon—a small iron safe in the corner of the room, whose polished black surface reflected the gleams from the low-lying chandelier prisms; its shiny combination dial seemed to stand as a silent barrier between the safe's contents and the outside world.

But as his gaze left the safe and traveled over the polished hard wood floor, a tiny point of red light seemed to scintillate from its wax surface. Curious, Kentland strode forward, stooped over and picked up the diminutive object that was acting as the source of the crimson illumination. In his fingers he held what resembled a ruby of octagonal cutting, or it might have been no more than a piece of glass.

CHAPTER

VII

AT AUGUSTANA HOSPITAL

KENTLAND stared inquiringly at the object for several seconds. Then he found himself wondering how it had come there on that hard wood floor; whether it had been dropped by a customer during the previous day's business, or whether its existence was due to the tragedy enacted there that night. As to the latter theory, though, he was far from certain. He knew that in the majority of fictional detective stories, the detective himself was invariably fortunate enough to pick up some loose article that had been left at

the scene of a crime by the perpetrator. But an article such as this—evidently the cheap stone of a man's tie pin—was hardly an article that could drop easily and scientifically at the proper spot and the psychological moment. He knew that stones do not fall from rigid settings, despite the law of poetic justice which demands that a murderer leave behind some trace, ever so small, of his presence.

Kentland decided on an experiment. He moved over to the edge of the room where neither he nor the night patrolman had yet stepped, and stooping, rubbed the palm of his hand lightly over the floor's surface. Then he examined his palm. It was scarcely soiled; hardly a smudge of dust even was visible on his hand. Judging from that —and an acquaintance with the dust-collecting propensities of hard wood floors, drawn from experience in his father's home—that floor had been swabbed late the day before, and not many hours since. The fact, therefore, remained, that the tiny stone—be it ruby or glass—be it clue or not—had reposed not over a few hours on the spot where it had first attracted his eye.

But as he stood there, rolling the stone about in his hand and absent-mindedly watching the officer explaining matters over the telephone, he thought once more of the unfortunate girl that

his machine had run down on the way to the spot. It seemed strange to him that she should have been in this locality. On the other hand, many a strange coincidence was produced by the intricate, complex life of a great city.

Remaining here longer was of no further use. Kentland slipped the tiny object into his vest pocket, and turned to the policeman who, by this time, had hung up the receiver and was sitting with his chin in his hands, dubiously surveying the body at the other end of the store.

"Officer," said Kentland, "I'm going to leave you. My time stops on the *Sun* at 3 o'clock, and I happen to live on the South Side—a long, long way from here. When I am wanted tomorrow, either at the inquest or to be interviewed by your captain, you can get me any time after 1 P.M. through the newspaper office."

"All right, News Hound," the other replied. "Cap Shannon will want to talk to you. That's where us night workers gets the dirty end of it—got to lose sleep being interviewed by this guy and that guy. Squad car's on the way here now with some of the boys from Hudson Avenue station, so I can get along all right."

When Kentland got out once more into the cool night air, he breathed in deep drafts of it, trying to work off, as it were, the poisonous

miasma of the remembrance of the scene in the Crilly Court shop.

Fortunately a lumbering car wheezed up and he boarded it. Within five minutes he dismounted at what must have been the Cleveland Avenue junction, for a great, triangular, brownstone building at the intersection of the two streets bore the illuminated door plate, "Augustana Memorial Hospital."

He made his way inside and up to a telephone switchboard, where a young girl was drumming idly in front of a row of jacks and plugs.

"Was a young woman, injured by an automobile, brought in here tonight?" he asked. "I'm the man who sent the driver here with her."

"Yes," she answered. "About thirty minutes ago. She was sent up to one of the emergency rooms." She consulted a pad of paper at the side of the switchboard. "Room No. 604. Push the button at the side of the elevator and the night nurse on that floor will give you what information you want."

He stepped into the elevator and was whisked to the sixth floor. Sitting at a desk in the farther end of the corridor, he made out a striped-clad nurse and a young, white-suited interne talking in low tones. He made his way down to the desk, told his name, and stated the incident that had prompted him to come.

"Yes," said the interne, "your man brought her here not a half hour since. She's been put to bed and we've made a thorough examination."

"Any serious injury?" asked Kentland, anxiously.

The interne shook his head: "Luckily, no. Not a bone broken, so far as we can determine. Evidently it isn't a case of brain concussion, for she's come out of her stupor, partly, and her eyes give the proper pupilary reflexes. So we took the cab driver's registry number and let him go."

"What name did she give?"

The nurse laughed quietly: "I'm afraid you're not familiar with cases of shock. They stay in a daze for several hours—sometimes more than a day. Follow me, please. There's no objection to your seeing her."

She led the way to a small room at the other end of the corridor, the interne accompanying them. Its furnishings were a narrow, white bed and a white enameled stand, the latter article bearing a tiny silver tap bell. But in the bed, contrasting vividly with the white furnishings and equally white walls of the room itself, lay the girl of the accident, her jet black hair scattered in ringlets on each side of the pillow, her eyes opened wide, the big brown orbs staring at Kentland with a dazed light in them.

CHAPTER

VIII

A BEWILDERING RECOGNITION

KENTLAND stopped in his tracks for a second, struck by the girl's youth and loveliness. Then he stepped over to the bed, and, looking down at her, said: "Do you know where you are?"

No answer came from her lips. Her face displayed not a sign of recognition that she had heard; only the eyes seemed to show that she dimly perceived that she was the object of his question.

"That's quite the usual thing in shock," Kentland heard the interne saying, back of him. "Her mind has a cloud over it, and will have, for a number of hours perhaps. There's no telling how soon it will clear up, but she'll find herself suddenly, when she does come out of it."

"What nationality would you say she is?" asked Kentland. He noticed a graceful hand, slightly moving, where her arm, covered by the white sleeve of the hospital night dress, stretched out over the top of the coverlid. He reached down and covered it with his own larger one. "What—is—your—name?" he asked, laying stress on each word in an effort to pierce the cloud which seemed to shut her off from the world. The nurse and the interne smiled at his futile endeavor. The girl's only answer was to stare at him dumbly with the big, brown eyes that appeared reluctant to leave his face.

"I might make a number o' ventures as to her nationality," the interne said in reply to Kentland's first question. "She's got the features, the typical dark hair and brown eyes of the Latin race. Of course it's not an absolute standard to go by."

Kentland nodded, absent-mindedly, for he remembered the slip of paper which he had taken from her purse at the time she had been struck.

It bore the name, Dr. Steven Watling, 413 S. Halsted Street. His plans quickly crystallized into a determination to return to his rooming house by a roundabout way, to stop in and see Dr. Watling on the way home. If he were a relative or a friend, or even if she were a patient of his, then the problem of her identity would be solved in short order.

He turned from the bed and thanked the interne and the nurse for their trouble. Outside in the corridor, he left his card with them. Then he took the elevator downstairs to the first floor, where the big clock in the entrance of the hospital showed the time to be 3:30 A.M.

Kentland stepped out to the street just in time to enter a Lincoln Avenue owl car that was grinding past, devoid of even a single passenger. In the course of his journey he wondered what relation Doctor Watling would prove to be to the girl in the hospital, and what explanation the former might be able to proffer as to the errand that had brought her out into the city streets at such an hour of the morning.

At North Avenue, he transferred to a North Avenue car which brought him to Halsted Street, and there he managed to board the tail end of a Halsted Street car just leaving the junction. Through the gas house district the car carried

him, where the darkness was lighted up by crimson and orange pencils of flame from all-night foundries; past mammoth gas tanks which loomed black against a slate-gray, star-studded sky; past silent coal yards lighted only by low, old-fashioned lamp posts whose square glass globes were so encrusted with coal dust that they gave scarcely any light; over a railroad viaduct where, far down below, a snorting, puffing switch engine could be seen playing hide and seek with thousands of twinkling and blinking red-and-green yard lights; and into the western fringe of the downtown district once more, lighted by four or five street lights to every block.

At Van Buren Street, he swung off the car, for he had glimpsed the number 398 above a darkened Greek coffee-house on the corner. As the car drew away from him in the darkness and he stood uncertainly where he was, his attention was riveted by a large, black automobile which stood alone and unattended under the bright corner street light diagonally across from him. Something about that car seemed familiar to him.

Rather puzzled, and standing where he was, he allowed his gaze to travel along the opposite side of the street as far as the greenish-yellowish rays of the street light illuminated the numbers. He was able to make out several swinging signs in a

row before his eyes came to rest on No. 413, a dingy doorway which evidently led to numerous offices upstairs. The black sign swinging and creaking above the sidewalk in the breeze, bore the name he was searching for: "Dr. Steven Watling, Physician and Surgeon."

As he thrust one foot forward to cross the street, his attention was caught by the moving figure of a man which came slowly from the doorway of No. 413 and stepped down to the sidewalk. The figure walked, dejectedly it seemed, toward the automobile on the corner, and, climbing in, jerked a lever and threw in the clutch. As the machine shot away from the curb and the lone occupant glanced upward for a second, the rays of the street light illumining his features with startling distinctness, Kentland across the street in the shadow gave a start. The man in the motor car was Fornhoff, proprietor of the *Sun*. And Fornhoff was supposed to have left for Cincinnati at 6 o'clock the preceding day!

CHAPTER

IX

VIRTUE IS ITS OWN REWARD!

KENTLAND stared after the retreating car, which was rapidly whirring eastward on deserted Van Buren Street. That he could have been mistaken in his identification of its lone driver, there was not the slightest chance in the world, for he had seen that face and corpulent figure in the *Sun* offices for the past seven afternoons. And Fornhoff's distinctive cast of features was one in a thousand.

What, in the name of all that was logical, Kent-

land wondered dumbly, was Fornhoff, owner and editor-in-chief of the *Sun,* doing on the city streets at this hour of the morning? And why had he taken such pains to prepare for a trip to Cincinnati even to the extent of sending for a combination air-steam round-trip ticket before Kentland's eyes during the interview in the office that past afternoon? It was hardly reasonable to suppose that a man who lived on Drexel Boulevard, five miles southward from the city's business district, would come all this distance to consult a physician at this hour. And why the dejected slump to Fornhoff's shoulders as he stepped from the doorway and made his way to the automobile on the corner?

Kentland found himself rooted to the spot for several minutes trying to forge some explanation of the mystery. But he was forced to give it up. No doubt the morrow, he told himself, would see the explanation—perhaps from the lips of Fornhoff himself—as to why he had canceled his trip to Cincinnati.

To stand there staring after a car was a ridiculous procedure, and one not likely to help solve another of the night's bewildering succession of mysteries—the identity of the girl who lay dazed and dumb in the emergency room of Augustana Hospital. So Kentland hurried across the street,

and turned in at the dingy doorway out of which Fornhoff had come. He glanced upward before starting the ascent, but saw only a flight of well-worn, uncarpeted wooden stairs which seemed to lead to a succession of small landings, each dimly illuminated by a sickly yellow gas jet, turned halfway down.

He made his way up the creaking stairs but stopped at the first landing, for he had caught sight of a white card tacked on the panel of the door, directly beneath the ground glass. The glass itself, he saw, as he fumbled in his pockets for his match box, bore the black, painted letters, just visible in the flickering hall light: "Dr. Steven Watling, Residence and Office."

Striking a match, Kentland held it up and read the few words written on the card: "Left on very important case. Back *any* minute."

Evidently, that accounted in some way for the dejected and slumped-up appearance of Fornhoff as he made his way from the doorway to his automobile. His man—granting that it was Dr. Watling, and not one of the tenants above, whom he was trying to find—was gone temporarily.

Kentland gave it up with a sense of irritation. Instead, notwithstanding the specific information on the card, he pressed his finger on the round wooden disk of a push button that projected from

the side of the door, and gave it a long push. He could hear the rhythmic sound of an electric bell inside, not far from the very door at which he stood, but no answer came.

For an instant, Kentland stood undecided, wondering whether to sit down on the staircase and wait for the man whose message promised an early but unknown return, or to get back to his own room and bed. He reached the conclusion that, since the girl was being well taken care of in the hospital, he might as well go home and get some sleep.

He consulted his watch. It was 4:20. Then he turned his back on Watling's door and made his way down to the street again. The sky, as he stepped out on the sidewalk, was showing a marked gray, particularly over in the east, and as he stood there for a moment, he saw a delivery wagon swing up with a rush to an empty, deserted news stand on the corner of Van Buren and Halsted, dump out a bundle of papers and drive rapidly off.

He sped up the street to the deserted news stand. Before he reached the corner, all the street lights went out suddenly, dying away slowly over the course of several seconds. Morning had come. At the corner were four bundles of papers, tied

with twine, two or three lying on the sidewalk where the delivery wagons had tossed them.

He flung down a dime and worked out one paper from each of the bundles. The last proved to be the *Sun,* and, with the other three under his arm, he unfolded it eagerly. There, in black headlines, was the announcement of the murder—sensational, to be sure, but accurate, truthful. Underneath the head—and he saw with joy that Johnson had set the story in double-leaded ten-point—was his own complete description of the body of the old Persian, of the interior of the shop itself, of the position of the lance and the overturned suit of armor, and last, but not least, the condition of the picture on the wall, with its face hurriedly hacked out.

Kentland did not waste time reading it carefully. He jammed the *Sun* into his coat pocket and with trembling hands opened each of the other papers in turn. The *Tribune,* which called itself the World's Greatest Newspaper but which was fully as widely known as the World's Greatest Nuisance, had not a word about it. The *Herald-Examiner* had not a word. The *Times-Star,* the fourth and last paper, he opened up hurriedly. Its front page showed that not a hint of the crime had reached its city room in time.

In Kentland, there was just enough of the boy,

combined with the newspaper man, to make him want to throw up his hat on that deserted street, and shout at the top of his voice. A clean scoop! Fornhoff, in the last interview, had given him seven days to bring in an exclusive story, and now he had done it, even before starting on the seven days' trial. True, some credit was due to the unknown benefactor who had sent in the tip to the *Sun* city room—and, if that individual had been present, Kentland might have embraced him then and there. Truly, it was a bewildering thing, that tip; but the satisfaction connected with it more than overweighed its unexplained mystery.

The approach of the Halsted Street car put a stop to Kentland's internal jubilations. It was full sunrise when he stepped into an all-night restaurant in his own neighborhood and swallowed a hasty meal. Ten minutes later, he was letting himself quietly into the Calumet Avenue flat where he roomed.

After a none too successful effort to sleep, Kentland rose finally and went to the restaurant for coffee. To his satisfaction, he saw the proprietor reading the headlines avidly; also, another man, his *Sun* propped up against an egg glass, devouring the news at the expense of letting his breakfast grow cold. Truly, this was the game of games, Kentland told himself.

He knew now what he was going to do as soon as he should leave that restaurant. He was going straight down to the *Sun* office. Fornhoff—if his early morning trip to the Halsted Street building had not changed his hours—would be there, for Fornhoff kept to a working schedule in the *Sun* office. And Fornhoff would thrust out his hand and congratulate one Jimmie Kentland for having put one over on all the other Chicago papers.

He gulped down his coffee, and, 25 minutes later, he was walking jauntily up the steps of the *Sun* Building. He entered the city room. A couple of early-time day reporters were lolling back in their chairs. One of them stepped over to him and congratulated him on the morning's beat.

"Thanks, old man," said Kentland. "But how did you know it was my story?"

"Why," said the other, laughing, "it's over there in black and white on the bulletin board."

Kentland turned his head. Sure enough, on the blackboard near the city editor's desk, Johnson had scrawled in big letters: "This morning's beat: by James Kentland. Anonymous tip sent in 2:35 A.M. On presses, 3:42. Rewrite by Johnson."

The glory of the achievement was proclaimed to the journalistic world. Everybody in newspaper work would know that day. Quite pleased, Kentland stood where he was and looked down

the corridor toward Fornhoff's private office. Sure enough, it was occupied, for he caught the shadowed profile of the big man moving over the ground-glass part of the partition. But as he remained undecidedly where he was for a second, the door of the office opened and Fornhoff himself stepped from the opening, gazing about him as though looking for an office boy or a reporter.

Kentland walked over to him smiling: "Good morning, Mr. Fornhoff. What did you think of my beat in this morning's issue?"

The other looked at him narrowly. Then his face darkened and his lips broke into a half snarl. "You're down here rather early, aren't you?" he said. "It's just as well, my officious sir; it's just as well. Stop at the cashier's desk on your way out and get your money. You're discharged from the staff of the *Sun,* Mr. Kentland."

CHAPTER

X

ANOTHER VISIT TO THE NORTH SIDE

KENTLAND looked at Fornhoff in utter amazement. He wondered if he had heard correctly. "Do you mean to say I'm discharged from the paper?" He looked curiously at the big man, trying to ascertain whether he were the victim of some joking propensities in Fornhoff.

"Discharged is what I said," snarled the other. "Plain English, isn't it?"

"But my beat—my story in the morning *Sun.* Did you see it? It's an exclusive——"

"Don't care what it is," snapped the other. "You disobeyed orders, Kentland, and for that reason you're no longer on the staff of the *Sun.* I told you to remain in the night city editor's chair until the edition went to press at 3 o'clock, didn't I?"

Kentland nodded, still trying to collect his wits.

"And you deliberately deserted your post to go gallivanting out on a mad news tip that somehow reached only the *Sun,* leaving Johnson and a couple of reporters to keep shop. Don't care if you did get a beat—don't care if you got a thousand beats. You disobeyed orders rankly—and the *Sun* doesn't want men who can't follow instructions to the letter. That's all."

Kentland stared at the other. He realized now that he was actually discharged, and not the victim of any jocularity. He found himself wondering vaguely how long it had been in this shop that a trifling infraction of the rules, at a time in the night when that infraction could mean absolutely nothing to the detriment of the paper, could have greater weight than a big, screaming, exclusive story which the whole city was reading. Assuredly there was something back of Fornhoff's ire—something that was not according to the Hoyle of newspaperdom.

"I never dreamed," he began, "that you——"

The other waved his hand impatiently. "I'm not in the mood for argument, Mr. Kentland. The sooner you terminate the interview, the better for each of us. Your time is already made out downstairs, and the cashier will give you your envelope." He stepped back into his office, closing the door in the younger man's face, and a second later, Kentland saw his shadow sink into the great chair by the window and hunch down with his face in his hands.

Slowly he turned away. Without a word to anyone, he passed through the city room, went downstairs to the cashier's window, received an envelope that appeared to be in readiness for him, mechanically signed a receipt and proceeded out to the sidewalk.

Fired! His mind went back to the picture of early that morning, when, standing in the protection of the shadows of Van Buren and Halsted Streets, he had seen Fornhoff come down the dingy steps that led to Dr. Watling's office, walk dejectedly to his automobile under the street light, climb in and drive away. Was that incident connected in some way with Fornhoff's anger against him? The whole thing seemed incomprehensible. By all the laws of newspaper ethics he had brought about the consummation most devoutly to be desired—a scoop; yet in so doing he

had brought about his own severance with the paper he had benefited.

He was discomfited, too, at the thought of searching all over again for a new position on the Chicago Press. He had gone the rounds completely when he had first struck the city, but had met with the same story at each one: "Quite full, Mr. Kentland." It had been only by the merest chance that he had tried the *Sun,* the New-Socialist paper, the last of them all, and had been hired by Fornhoff on the strength of the fact that he was a newspaper man with night city editor experience in Omaha. Fornhoff, at that interview, had proved to be a pleasant individual, as unlike the man who stood this morning in Fornhoff's private office as day is from night. But standing here on dingy Market Street, Kentland decided quickly, was not going to advance him very rapidly toward a new job. His capital was not great enough to warrant his being out of work for a long stretch. He pondered the question of the advisability of staking the greater part of it in going farther eastward—clear to New York—in search of a job. On the other hand, matters in the newspaper world might have changed in Chicago since he had last made the rounds, and perhaps he might find a berth where a week before he had been unsuccessful.

In that case, however, the first question was a matter of recommendation from the *Sun*. "Why did you leave the *Sun?*" might be the first query put to him. And that query would be a difficult one to answer satisfactorily. He found himself wondering whether Fornhoff would give him a letter, but his spirit quailed at the thought of going back to the ogre in the ground-glass cave. Then his mind jumped to Boltman, the night city editor. Would the latter give him a few lines of introduction or of recommendation that might gain him a better hearing in other Chicago offices? At any rate, he decided to try it.

Boltman was a widower and lived in North La-Salle Avenue. Kentland had good reason to remember that, for it was to Boltman's boarding house he had been sent by Fornhoff on the afternoon he had first joined the staff of the *Sun*. By this time of morning it was very likely that Boltman, not having worked the preceding night, would be up.

At the big, rusty, brownstone boarding house, his ring was answered by the same blowsy maid who had answered it a week before. She shuffled ahead of him to the back parlor and knocked on the door.

When he heard the night city editor's familiar voice saying, "Come in!" Kentland opened the

door. Boltman, a sour, morose-looking man of about forty, with slightly gray hair that stuck up on his head in every direction like the quills of a porcupine, and a pair of gold-rimmed eyeglasses perched on the end of his long nose, was sitting in a morris chair in a bathrobe, a copy of the morning's *Sun* in his hands.

Kentland dropped into a chair near by and briefly told Boltman of the two occurrences—the anonymous tip received the night before, and the morning's incident in which Fornhoff had politely informed him that he was no longer a part of the *Sun* machine. At the conclusion, he mopped his brow and waited to see what Boltman's verdict might be.

The latter scratched his chin reflectively. "No, I don't believe you got a fair deal by any means, Kentland," he commented. "The *Sun* needed a beat more than any other paper in town—and that ought to have mollified the old man so far as any infraction of his orders went." He paused. "But he's been pretty worried, lately, Kentland, about a number of things connected with the paper, and frankly I don't believe he's quite himself. I know Fornhoff mighty well, and he's one of the best of men, under normal conditions. You see," he added, smiling rather forcedly, "I'm trying to give even the devil his due."

Kentland nodded. He was aware that the verdict of a man depends upon the point of view of the man who is rendering the verdict. And that point of view, in turn, is influenced by the direction from which the bread and butter comes. So he ventured a question: "I understand that Mr. Fornhoff went to Cincinnati last night to bid on the Cincinnati *Herald* before midnight, and got back by an early train this morning?"

"Yes, I believe so," Boltman said. He studied the younger man for a moment. "Might be," he proffered, "that the double trip tired him out and made him irritable."

It was on Kentland's tongue to describe the incident that he had witnessed earlier that morning on the corner of Van Buren and Halsted Streets. But now, in the face of things, he began to be assailed by doubts. Perhaps that individual had not been Fornhoff at all. And if he should voice his suspicions to Boltman—if suspicions they could be called—it might make him utterly ridiculous in the night city editor's eyes; and ridiculous he did not want to become, especially since he had come to secure something in the way of a recommendation—the more eulogistic, the better.

"The question now before the house," he said, "is whether you'll write me out a letter to some of

the other papers. I'm a stranger in a strange land, Boltman, and consequently——"

The other waved a hand. "Say no more. I'll fix you up," he added hurriedly. "Now just keep yourself company for a few minutes till I write you out the dope. I think I've got a blank *Sun* letterhead somewhere in my junk." He stepped over to a smaller door at the other side of the room and threw it open, displaying a tiny office fitted up with a rickety typewriter, a wabbly desk and a bookcase filled with books of various colors, sizes, shapes and bindings. "Used to do a little work on specials, when I was just a leg man," he explained. "This is my shop. I dabble in fiction, too, but—damn it!—I can't seem to make it pay."

He closed the door, and presently Kentland heard him jerking out drawers in his search for the letterhead. For a few seconds, Kentland remained in his chair, his eyes roving about the sombre room with its old-fashioned furniture and its four-poster, wooden bed; but the faint tinkling of a party line telephone came to his ears, and, turning his head, he caught sight of a wall phone behind him.

In the rush of affairs in the past hour, he had almost forgotten about the girl in the hospital; but the phone and its easy method of getting into communication with the hospital authorities,

brought back her picture—her black tresses, her big, brown eyes—with startling distinctness. He stepped over to the instrument and called up the hospital.

"I'm inquiring," he explained, "about the young lady who was run down by a machine late last night—or early this morning. How is she now? This is James Kentland, who was in the taxicab that struck her. I came to the hospital early this morning, but she was still in a daze."

"Oh, yes," the nurse replied. "Miss Roberts, the night nurse, told me about the case. The young lady came out of her daze entirely, by dawn, and by a quarter to seven this morning—shortly after I came on duty—she had recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital. We tried to induce her to remain, but she demanded her clothing and became very excited at the thought of staying here any longer. Of course we have no right to hold anyone against his wishes, so we were forced to let her go."

"And what name did she give?" Kentland asked. "I feel somewhat responsible for her safety."

"She left no name with us, and we never press emergency patients for information when they're so reluctant to give it as she was. But she—" The nurse turned from the phone a moment. "Yes—

she left two personal articles behind, in her hurry —a rather fancy hair clasp and a bracelet. The bracelet bears some sort of a name inside, but it's partly worn off."

"Is that name 'Watling'?" asked Kentland.

"No. If you'll hold the wire a second, I'll give it to you letter by letter."

A short pause followed. Whether Boltman had yet found the blank letterhead Kentland could not surmise, at least through the closed door. Presently the nurse's voice came over the phone again: "All we can make out on it are the letters, N-N-E-space-R-I-C-A-R-D-I-N. Ricardin."

"Ricardin," repeated Kentland, curiously. He thought for a second. Then he spoke into the transmitter: "I'm greatly obliged to you. I may be over to the hospital in a short while to look at that bracelet."

He hung up. Ricardin. Where in his life had he heard that combination of syllables before? Ricardin. It had a strangely familiar sound to him. It seemed to him that far back in his memory he had heard the name, or had seen it in print, but for the life of him he could not place the circumstance or the place or the time. As he stood by the telephone, mechanically repeating the word, the odd impression came to him that it was trying to draw to his memory some prefix—some word

that seemed to belong to it as a handle belongs to a knife.

Suddenly, like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky, the prefix sprang to his memory: Captain! Captain Ricardin! That was certainly it. Yet where he had seen it, or heard of it, he had no recollection whatever; but down in the depths of his subconscious mind, he knew that the two words, "Captain Ricardin" were connected in some way with a newspaper story—with a stir in newspaper circles—of several years back. He shook his head exasperatedly. He was completely baffled. As a newspaper man for the past five years, he had stumbled, beyond all doubt, upon something that had once formed a tiny eddy in his own world.

CHAPTER

XI

BUT MEMORY'S CURTAIN FAILS TO LIFT

AS KENTLAND stood there trying to fathom this new problem that had entered into his affairs, the tiny door to the "literary office" opened, and Boltman came forth, waving in one hand a handwritten sheet of *Sun* stationery and holding in the other a set of typewritten sheets held together at the top by a paper clip. "There you are, Kentland," he said, handing the latter the handwritten sheet. "The carriage of my

old mill is jammed; so I had to write it by hand. It's brief, but gives you a cracking good send-off, and ought to square you with any employer—prospective or otherwise."

Kentland quickly ran his eye down the hand-written sheet of paper, and its contents quite satisfied him.

"That's fine," he commented, after he had read it through. "That'll square up my case in the event that any newspaper gets inquisitive as to why I left the *Sun*. That's mighty white of you, Boltman, especially since I fell down on those two stories in the first week."

"Say no more," replied the other, smiling grimly. "I gave you the devil, at the time, because it was all in the course of things. But I realized you had bad luck tagging you at the heels on those two stories, and besides, that you were new in the city. It was tough on the *Sun,* that's all."

Kentland folded up the letter and tucked it away in his breast pocket. "Well, I'll be going," he said.

"Wait a second," commented Boltman. "Now that I've done something for you—I want you to do something for me—for us, in fact!"

"Sure. Sure. What is it?" Kentland asked, curiously.

Boltman paused, a bit embarrassedly.

"I've written a very short short-story touching deeply on Socialism," he said. "It's—it's a sort of a satire. It's just the sort of thing I want in the paper—and need, in fact—only I can't buy it from myself. Rules, you know. I just can't get enough feature—and fiction stuff—that hits *our* keynote. Now I was wondering if you'd submit it, directly to me. You're out of the outfit, now—and you can submit what you please—and I can buy what I please. I need the story to build up our general policy—really, I do. But I can't bust a rule, or the old man would say I was running a sideline to my own job. Do I make myself clear?"

"Well—yes—pretty much so. Just what do you want me to do?"

"Nothing much. Submit the story to me. By mail. I'll run it. Under the pseudonym 'Socialisticus.' I'll have the cashier draw you up a check at space rates—no, say word rates—half a cent a word is all we can pay—but that'll be twenty-six bucks. Five of the twenty-six, however, will have to go to the mathematics professor who fixed me up with the actual figures that are set forth in the story. He had to compute them out for me, with logarithms. That'll leave a balance of twenty-one dollars. We'll split it fifty-fifty. It isn't the money I need, I tell you—it's material. And how! And if, by any chance, the Old Man asks me who

wrote it—which he may do, I'll say I ordered it from you before he fired you. And had to take it. See?"

Kentland pondered. This wasn't altogether ethical. And yet it was an old trick in newspaper offices. And after all, Boltman had been a mighty good fellow—given him a perfect recommendation after he had muffed two stories and been fired in the bargain.

"Listen, Boltman, I'll be the goat—but without any charges. I'll pose as the author—since it's to run anonymously. And if you'll meet me outside the *Sun* office with the check, I'll cash it at Jake's place and turn you back the coin. All of it. Lord, man, after your grinding out a whole long story—why should I take part of the money?"

"You're a regular guy," said Boltman. "Here it is. Mail it to me tonight, so's I'll have the postmarked envelope, and all. And I'll meet you tomorrow night in front of the *Sun*—no, say in Jake's place—you can endorse the check—I'll O.K. it with him—and we'll cash it and split it. I insist, though, that you take half the check—that is, half after the five is taken out for this mathematics professor."

Kentland took the story. Unfolding the manuscript, he could see that its title was:

HOW SOCIALISM FINALLY ARRIVED IN THE WORLD!

by "Socialisticus"

"O.K." he said, folding it up again. "I'll mail it in tonight. And since it's already accepted, I'll be in Jake's place at seven tomorrow night—to endorse the check. If you must split—just buy me one of Jake's triple-decker sandwiches and a cup of his daily ground coffee."

"Nothing doing on that!" replied Boltman. "Ten dollars and a half for each of us. I'll see you, then, at seven tomorrow night and will have the check all made out, and ready."

Kentland, tucking the folded manuscript away in his breast pocket, rose. He shook hands with Boltman, and made his departure. Outside on the street, he paused, irresolute, but decided that since he was back on the North Side again it might be advisable to drop into the Hudson Avenue police station and see what new developments had taken place in the strange case of the past night. To be sure, he no longer had the authority, as a reporter, to wander into a police station and inquire as to what was going on behind the scenes, but he realized that since he and the special night patrolman were the first ones

to view the scene of the crime at Crilly Court, he now held a position stronger than that of reporter—a position of actual witness at the inquest.

Behind the desk at the police station was the usual grouchy sergeant. "Cap Shannon?" he grunted. "He's got a visitor. Set down on that there red bench over there—and he'll maybe be free in ten minutes, no more."

So Kentland sat himself down on the hard bench in front of which stood a tall, brass cuspidor in a pool of sawdust deposited there for expectorators who were blessed with poor aim.

And since this outlying police station was quite deserted this morning, and he had nothing to do, he decided to read Boltman's manuscript.

He took it out and unfolded it. How Socialism Finally Arrived in the World! That sounded more like a fantastic article than a story. But dipping into the thing, he read and read and read—a something that was story, satire, article and prognostication, all; but as he read, he did not know that that very manuscript, strangely, was to be the means of explaining why August Fornhoff had been in Dr. Watling's old rattletrap of a building at 3 in the morning, nor that underneath its typing—so to speak—it contained a

news story bigger than any that had been published in any Chicago newspaper for several months. And thus he bent himself to the narrative, if one could call it such, which opened, queerly enough, in the year 3235 A.D.

CHAPTER

XII

THE STRANGE STORY OF JOHN JONES' DOLLAR

ON THE 201st day of the year 3235 A.D., the professor of history at the University of Terra seated himself in front of his Chromo-Visaphone and prepared to deliver his daily lecture to his class, the members of which resided in different portions of the earth.

The instrument before which he seated himself was very like a great window sash, on account of the fact that there were three or four hundred

frosted glass squares visible. In a space at the center, not occupied by any of these glass squares, was a dark, oblong area and a ledge holding a piece of chalk. And above this area was a peculiar-looking microphone, suspended by two hair-like springs, toward which the professor directed his subsequent remarks.

In order to assure himself that it was time to press the button which would notify the members of the class in history to approach their local Chromo-Visaphones, the professor withdrew from his vest pocket, a tiny contrivance no larger than a quarter, which he held to his ear. Upon moving a tiny switch attached to the instrument, a metallic voice, seeming to come from somewhere in space, repeated mechanically: "Fifteen o'clock and one minute—fifteen o'clock and one minute —fifteen o'clock and one min—" Quickly the professor replaced the instrument in his vest pocket and pressed a button at the side of the Chromo-Visaphone.

As though in answer to the summons, the frosted glass squares began, one by one, to show —in absolutely perfect hue and tint and color and shade—the faces and shoulders of a peculiar type of young men; young men with great bulging foreheads, bald, toothless, and wearing immense square horn spectacles. One square, how-

ever, still remained empty. On noticing this, a look of irritation passed over the professor's countenance.

But, upon seeing that every other glass square but this one was filled up, he commenced his talk.

"I am pleased, gentlemen, to see you all posted at your local Chromo-Visaphones this afternoon. I have prepared my lecture today upon a subject which is, perhaps, of more economic interest than historical. Unlike the previous lectures, my talk will not confine itself to the happenings of a few years, but will embrace the course of ten centuries, the ten centuries, in fact, which terminated three hundred years before the present date. My lecture will be an exposition of the effects of the John Jones Dollar, originally deposited in the dawn of civilization, or, to be more precise, in the year 1935—just thirteen hundred years ago. This John Jon——"

At this point in the professor's lecture, the frosted glass square which hitherto had shown no image, now filled up. Sternly he gazed at the head and shoulders that had just appeared.

"B262H72476Male, you are late to class again. What excuse have you to offer today?"

From the hollow cylinder emanated a shrill voice, while the red lips of the picture on the glass square moved in unison with the words:

"Professor, you will perceive by consulting your class book, that I have recently taken up my residence near the North Pole. For some reason, radio communication between the Central Energy Station and all points north of 89 degrees was cut off a while ago, on account of which fact I could not appear in the Chromo-Visaphone. Hence——"

"Enough, sir," roared the professor. "Always ready with an excuse, B262H72476Male. I shall immediately investigate your tale."

From his coat pocket the professor withdrew an instrument which, although supplied with an earpiece and a mouthpiece, had no wires whatever, attached. Raising it to his lips, he spoke:

"Hello. Central Energy Station, please." A pause ensued. "Central Energy Station? This is the Professor of History at the University of Terra speaking. One of my students informs me that the North Pole region was out of communication with the Chromo-Visaphone System this morning. Is that statement true? I would——"

A voice, apparently from nowhere, spoke into the professor's ear. "Quite true, Professor. A train of our ether waves accidentally fell into parallelism with a train of waves of identical wave-length from the Venus Sub-station. By the most peculiar mischance, the two trains happened

to be displaced with reference to each other one half of a wave length, with the unfortunate result that the points of negative maximum amplitude of one coincided with the points of positive maximum amplitude of the other. Hence the two wave trains nullified each other and communication ceased for one hundred and eighty-five seconds—until the earth had revolved far enough to throw them out of parallelism."

"Ah, thank you," replied the professor. He dropped his instrument into his coat pocket and gazed in the direction of the glass square whose image had so aroused his ire. "I apologise, B262-H72476Male, for my suspicions as to your veracity—but I had in mind several former experiences." He shook a warning forefinger. "I shall now resume my talk.

"A moment ago, gentlemen, I mentioned the John Jones Dollar. Some of you who have just enrolled with the class will undoubtedly say to yourselves: 'What is a John Jones? What is a Dollar?'

"In the early days, before the present scientific registration of human beings was instituted by the National Eugenics Society, man went around under a crude, multi-reduplicative system of nomenclature. Under this system, there were actually more John Joneses than there are calories

in a British Thermal Unit. But there was one John Jones, in particular, living in the Twentieth Century, to whom I shall refer in my lecture. Not much is known of his personal life—except that he was an ardent socialist—a bitter enemy, in fact, of the private ownership of wealth.

"Now, as to the Dollar. In this day, when the Psycho-Erg, a combination of the Psych, the unit of esthetic satisfaction, and the Erg, the unit of mechanical energy, is recognized as the true unit of value, it seems difficult to believe that in the Twentieth Century and for more than ten centuries thereafter, the Dollar, a metallic circular disk, was being passed from hand to hand in exchange for the essentials of life.

"But, nevertheless, such was the case. Man exchanged his mental or physical energy for these Dollars. He then re-exchanged the Dollars for sustenance, raiment, pleasure, and operations for the removal of the vermiform appendix.

"A great many individuals, however, deposited their Dollars in a stronghold called a bank. These banks invested the Dollars in loans and commercial enterprises, with the result that every time the earth traversed the solar ecliptic, the banks compelled each borrower to repay or acknowledge as due the original, plus six one-hundredths of that loan. And to the depositor, the banks paid

three one-hundredths of the deposited Dollars for the use of the disks. This was known as three per cent, or bank interest.

"Now the safety of Dollars, when deposited in banks, was not absolutely assured to the depositor. At times, the custodians of these Dollars were wont to appropriate them and proceed to portions of the earth sparsely inhabited and accessible with difficulty. Again, the banks, at times, tiring, presumably, of banking, failed to open their doors, facetiously notifying their clients that they were 'frozen': I say 'facetiously' because it is obvious that a bank in a tropical or semi-tropical clime could not suffer a calorific change amounting to a downright glaciation. But, be that as it may, they did not thereafter open up, and many of the Dollars deposited therein automatically ceased to exist, due to the vagaries of higher accounting. And, at other times, nomadic groups known as 'yeggmen' visited the banks, opened the vaults by force, and departed, carrying with them the contents.

"But to return to our subject. In the year 1935, one of these numerous John Joneses performed an apparently inconsequential action which caused the name of John Jones to go down forever in history. What did he do?

"He proceeded to one of these banks, known

at that time as 'The First National Bank of Chicago,' and deposited there, one of these disks—a silver Dollar—to the credit of a certain individual. And this individual to whose credit the Dollar was deposited was no other person than the fortieth descendant of John Jones, which John Jones stipulated in a paper that was placed in the files of the bank that the descendancy was to take place along the oldest child of each of the generations which would constitute his posterity.

"The bank accepted the Dollar under that understanding, together with another condition imposed by this John Jones, namely that the interest was to be compounded annually. That meant that, at the close of each year, the bank was to credit the account of John Jones' fortieth descendant with three one-hundredths of the account as it stood at the beginning of the year.

"History tells us little more concerning this John Jones—only that he died in the year 1945, or ten years afterward, leaving several children.

"Now you gentlemen who are taking mathematics under Professor L127M72421Male, of the University of Mars, will remember that any number, such as X, in passing through a progressive cycle of change, grows, at the end of that cycle,

by a proportion p, then the value of the original X, after n cycles, becomes $X\ (1 + p)^n$.

"Obviously, in this case, X equalled one Dollar; p equalled three one-hundredths; and n will depend upon any number of years which we care to consider, following the date of deposit. By a simple calculation, those of you who are today mentally alert, can check up the results that I shall set forth in my lecture.

"At the time that John Jones died, the amount in the First National Bank of Chicago to the credit of John Jones the fortieth, was as follows."

The professor seized the chalk and wrote rapidly upon the oblong space:

1945 10 years elapsed $1.34

"The peculiar, sinuous hieroglyphic," he explained, "is an ideograph representing the Dollar.

"Well, gentlemen, time went on as time will, until a hundred years had passed by. This First National Bank still existed, and the locality, Chicago, had become the largest center of population upon the earth. Through the investments that had taken place, and the yearly compounding of interest, the status of John Jones' deposit was now as follows." He wrote:

2035 100 years elapsed $19.10

"In the following century, many minor changes, of course, took place in man's mode of living; but the so-called Communists still agitated wildly for the cessation of private ownership of wealth; the First National Bank still accepted Dollars for safe keeping, and the John Jones Dollar still continued to grow. With about thirty-four generations yet to come, the account now stood:

2135	200 years elapsed	$364.00

"And by the end of the succeeding hundred years, it had grown to what constituted an appreciable bit of exchange value in those days—thus:

2235	300 years	$6920

"Now the century which follows contains an important date. The date I am referring to is the year 2313 A.D. or the year in which every human being born upon the globe was registered under a numerical name at the central bureau of the National Eugenics Society. In our future lessons, which will treat with that period in detail, I shall ask you to memorize that date.

"The Socialists and Communists still agitated, fruitlessly, but the First National Bank of Chicago was now the First International Bank of the Earth. And how great had John Jones' Dol-

lar grown? Let us examine the account, both on that important historical date, and also at the close of the 400th year since it was deposited. Look:

2313	378 years	$68,900
2335	400 years	$132,000

"But, gentlemen, it had not yet reached a point where it could be termed an unusually large accumulation of wealth. Far larger accumulations existed upon the earth. A descendant of a man once known as John D. Rockefeller, III, possessed an accumulation of great size, but which, as a matter of fact, was rapidly dwindling as it passed from generation to generation. So, let us travel ahead another hundred years. During this time, as we learn from our historical and political archives, the Socialists and Communists began to die out, since they at last realized the utter hopelessness of combating the balance of power. The account, though, now stood:

2435	500 years	$2,520,000

"It is hardly necessary for me to make any comment. Those of you who are most astute, and others of you who have flunked my course before and are now taking it the second time, of course know what is coming.

"Now the hundred years which ended with the year 2535 A.D. saw two events—one, very important and vital to mankind, and the other, very interesting. I shall explain.

"During the age in which this John Jones lived, there also lived a man, a so-called scientist called Metchnikoff. We know from a study of our vast collection of Egyptian Papyri and Carnegie Library books, that this Metchnikoff promulgated the theory that old age—or rather, senility—was caused by a colon bacillus. This fact was later verified. But while he was correct in the etiology of senility, he was crudely primeval in the therapeutics of it.

"He proposed, gentlemen, to combat and kill this bacillus by utilizing the fermented lacteal fluid from a now extinct animal called the cow, models of which you can see at any time at the Solaris Museum."

A chorus of shrill, piping laughter emanated from the brass cylinder. The professor waited until the merriment had subsided and then continued:

"I beg of you, gentlemen, do not smile. This was merely one of the many similar, quaint superstitions existing in that age.

"But a real scientist, Professor K122B62411-Male, again attacked the problem in the Twenty-

fifth Century. Since the cow was now extinct, he could not waste his valuable time experimenting with fermented cow lacteal fluid. He discovered that the old γ rays of Radium—the rays which you physicists will remember are not deflected by a magnetic field—were really composed of two sets of rays which he termed the δ rays and the ε rays. These last-named rays—only when isolated—completely devitalized all colon-bacilli which lay in their path, without in the least effecting the integrity of any interposed organic cells. The great result, as many of you already know, was that the life of man was extended to nearly two hundred years. That, I state unequivocally, was a great century for the human race.

"But I spoke of another happening—one, perhaps, of more interest than importance. I referred to the account of John Jones the fortieth. It, gentlemen, had grown to such a prodigious sum that a special bank and board of directors had to be created in order to care for, and re-invest it. By scanning the following notation, you will perceive the truth of my statement:

2535	600 years	$47,900,000

"By the year 2635 A.D., two events of stupendous importance took place. There is scarcely a

man in this class who has not heard of how Professor P222D29333Male accidentally stumbled upon the scientific fact that the effect of gravity is reversed upon any body which vibrates perpendicularly to the plane of the ecliptic with a frequency which is an even multiple of the logarithm of two to the Naperian base 'e.' At once, special vibrating cars were constructed which carried mankind to all the planets. That discovery of Professor P222D29333Male did nothing less than open up seven new territories to our inhabitants; namely: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. In the great land-rush that ensued, thousands who were previously poor became rich.

"But, gentlemen, land which so far had constituted one of the main sources of wealth, was shortly to become valuable for individual golf courses only, as it is today, on account of another scientific discovery.

"This second discovery was, in reality, not a discovery, but the perfection of a chemical process, the principle of which had been known for many centuries. I am alluding to the construction of the vast reducing factories, one upon each planet, to which the bodies of all persons who have died on their respective planets are at once shipped by Air Express. Since this process is

used today, all of you understand the methods employed; how each body is reduced, by heat, to its component constituents: hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, calcium, phosphorus, and so forth; how these separated constituents are stored in special reservoirs together with the components from thousands of other corpses; how these elements are then synthetically combined into food tablets for those of us who are yet alive—thus completing an endless chain from the dead to the living. Naturally, then, agriculture and stock-raising ceased, since the food problem, with which man had coped from time immemorial, was solved. The two direct results were, first—that land lost the inflated values it had possessed when it was necessary for tillage, and second—that men were at last given enough leisure to enter the fields of science and art.

"And as to the John Jones Dollar, which now embraced countless industries and vast territory on the earth, it stood in value:

2635	700 years	$912,000,000

"In truth, gentlemen, it now constituted the largest private fortune on the terrestrial globe. And in that year 2635 A.D. there were thirteen generations yet to come before John Jones the fortieth would arrive.

"To continue. In the year 2735 A.D. an important political battle was concluded in the Solar System Senate and House of Representatives. I am referring to the great controversy as to whether the Earth's moon was a sufficient menace to interplanetary navigation to warrant its removal. The outcome of the wrangle was that the question was decided in the affirmative. Consequently—

"But, I beg your pardon, young men. I occasionally lose sight of the fact that you are not so well-informed on historical matters as myself. Here I am talking to you about the moon, totally forgetful that many of you are puzzled as to my meaning. I advise all of you who have not yet attended the Solaris Museum on Jupiter, to take a trip there some Sunday afternoon. The Interplanetary Suburban Line runs trains every half hour on that day. You will find there, a complete working model of the old satellite of the Earth, which, before it was destroyed, furnished this planet light at night through the crude medium of reflection.

"On account of this decision as to the inadvisability of allowing the moon to remain where it was, engineers commenced its removal in the year 2735. Piece by piece it was chipped away and brought to the Earth in Interplanetary freight

cars. These pieces were then propelled by Zoodelite explosive, in the direction of the Milky Way, with a velocity of 11,217 meters per second. This velocity, of course, gave each departing fragment exactly the amount of kinetic energy it required to enable it to overcome the backward pull of the Earth from here to infinity. I daresay those moon-hunks are going yet.

"At the start of the removal of the moon in 2735 A.D., the accumulated wealth of John Jones the fortieth stood:

2735	800 years	$17,400,000,000

"Of course, with such a colossal sum at their command, the directors of the fund had made extensive investments on Mars and Venus. By the early part of the Twenty-ninth Century, or the year 2821, to be precise, the moon had been completely hacked away and sent piecemeal into space, the job having required 86 years. I give, herewith, the result of John Jones' Dollar, both at the date when the moon was completely removed, and also at the close of the 900th year after its deposit:

2821	886 years	$219,000,000,000
2935	900 years	$332,000,000,000

"The meaning of those figures, gentlemen, as

stated in simple language, was that the John Jones Dollar now comprised practically all the wealth on Earth, Mars and Venus—with the exception of one university site on each planet, which was, of course, school property.

"And now I will ask you to advance with me to the year 2920 A.D. In this year the directors of the John Jones fund awoke to the fact that they were in a dreadful predicament. According to the agreement under which John Jones deposited his Dollar away back in the year 1935, interest was to be compounded annually at three per cent. In the year 2920 A.D., the thirty-ninth generation of John Jones was alive, being represented by a gentleman named J664M42721-Male, who was thirty years of age and engaged to be married to a young lady named T246M-42652Female.

"Doubtless, you will ask, what was the predicament in which the directors found themselves. Simply this:

"A careful appraisement of the wealth on Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus and Mercury, and likewise Earth, together with an accurate calculation of the remaining heat in the Sun and an appraisement of that heat at a very decent valuation per calorie, demonstrated that

the total wealth of the Solar System amounted to $6,309,525,241,362.15.

"But unfortunately, a simple computation showed that if Mr. J664M42721Male married Miss T246M42652Female, and was blessed by a child by the year 2935, which year marked the thousandth year since the deposit of the John Jones Dollar, then in that year there would be due the child the following amount:

2935 1,000 years $6,310,000,000,000.00

"It simply showed, beyond all possibility of argument, that by 2935 A.D., we would be $474,758,637.85 shy—that we would be unable to meet the debt to John Jones the fortieth.

"I tell you, gentlemen, the board of directors were frantic. Such wild suggestions were put forth as the sending of an expeditionary force to the nearest star in order to capture some other Solar System and thus obtain more territory to make up the deficit. But that project was impossible on account of the number of years that it would have required.

"Visions of immense law suits disturbed the slumber of those unfortunate individuals who formed the John Jones Dollar Directorship. But on the brink of one of the biggest civil actions the

courts have ever known, something occurred that altered everything."

The professor again withdrew the tiny instrument from his vest pocket, held it to his ear and adjusted the switch. A metallic voice rasped: "Fifteen o'clock and fifty-two minutes—fifteen o'clock and fifty-two minutes—fift—" He replaced the instrument and went on with his talk.

"I must hasten to the conclusion of my lecture, gentlemen, as I have an engagement with Professor C122B24999Male of the University of Saturn at sixteen o'clock. Now, let me see; I was discussing the big civil action that was hanging over the heads of the John Jones Dollar directors.

"Well, this Mr. J664M42721Male, the thirty-ninth descendant of the original John Jones, had a lover's quarrel with Miss T246M42652Female, which immediately destroyed the probability of their marriage. Neither gave in to the other. Neither ever married. And when Mr. J664M-42721Male died, in 2961 A.D., of a broken heart, as it was claimed, he was single and childless.

"As a result, there was no one to turn the Solar System over to. Immediately, the Interplanetary Government stepped in and took possession of it. At that instant, of course, private property ceased. In the twinkling of an eye, almost, we reached the true socialistic and democratic condi-

tion for which man had futilely hoped throughout the ages.

"That is all today, gentlemen. Class is dismissed."

One by one, the faces faded from the Chromo-Visaphone.

For a moment, the professor stood, ruminating.

"A wonderful man, that old Socialist John Jones the first," he said softly to himself, "a far-seeing man, a bright man, considering that he lived in such a dark era as the Twentieth Century. But how nearly his well-contrived scheme went wrong. Suppose—suppose that that fortieth descendant had been born!"

CHAPTER

XIII

WHAT SHANNON SAID

KENTLAND looked up with an amused smile as he reached the last word of Boltman's odd manuscript.

"Not bad at that," he commented. "It——"

"All right," said the desk sergeant. "The Cap's at leisure now."

So, Kentland stowed the script away in his breast pocket, again, little dreaming of the bearing it was to have on his affairs. And went through the swinging gate in the desk sergeant's

partition, and thence into a now open door. The captain of the Hudson Avenue station sat at a table littered with papers. He was a wiry, well-knit little man, a battered police cap tilted at an angle over his eyes. But they were remarkable eyes, for they seemed to Kentland to be the most genial-appearing ones he had ever yet seen on a Chicago police station captain. He stepped up to the table.

"Captain Shannon? My name's Kentland. Last night, while representing the *Sun,* I——"

The police official indicated a rickety chair.

"Sit down," he directed. "I was just going to phone you."

Kentland took the chair and waited for the other to speak.

"Our man Duffy tells me," Shannon began, "that you showed up near Crilly Court this morning while he was pounding on the door with his club. You had a tip that there was a news story there?"

Kentland nodded: "Yes. The tip came in by messenger to the *Sun* about two-thirty A.M." He fumbled in his pockets and then remembered that he had left the typewritten note on his bureau that morning. "But I left it at my room," he ended by saying.

The little man nodded. "Odd thing about that

tip, but after all it ain't got much bearing on the case. We get anonymous tips here all the time. Looks to me like as if one of them people in the big flat building across the way saw signs of a rumpus early this morning and suspected something wrong. But they'll keep under cover so's they won't be wanted as witnesses. Now tell me just how that body lay when you went in through the basement window. Also let me know if it's a fact that neither you nor Duffy touched the lance."

Kentland described the scene again, Shannon taking in every word.

"Well, the thing's plain enough," he commented. "There ain't much mystery about the case to me, at any rate. Maybe you know that the Persian Society, down around the Moody Church, posted a reward of five hundred dollars an hour ago for the capture and conviction of the person who killed old Mazurka. Awful clannish, them Persians. Put that news of the reward in your sheet, if you want to, for I've given it to Lancaster, of the *News,* and Roller, of the *American."* He paused. "Yes, we know who killed this Mazurka, all right. But when the newspapers clean up the crime with the last step, I want credit as the man who put the Federal au-

thorities on the right track, and who furnished the scientific evidence to convict."

The Federal authorities! Kentland pricked up his ears. He was puzzled. But seeing that Shannon still believed he was on the staff of the *Sun,* he decided to say nothing for the present.

"In the first place," said the police captain, lighting his cigar and leaning back in his chair, "I know pretty well what happened in that Crilly Court shop last night—by certain evidence that was left behind. I'm going to give that to you, first, but it's to go in the paper as the theory worked out by the Hudson Avenue station." He winked an eye genially. "Don't lose sight of that, buddy.

"There was a hot argument there last night,—or rather, early this morning—while old Mazurka stood behind his counter and a visitor to the shop stood in front of the counter, the latter's hands resting on the edge of it. That argument didn't terminate satisfactorily for the visitor, since that same visitor turned his back on the counter, crossed the floor and started to go out of the door of the shop. Then it was that— Suppose I call that visitor X for the present, like as though it was a problem in algebry? All right. Then it was that X caught sight of that suit of armor and the long lance with the wooden handle and the metal

head with its needle-like point. What did X do? X just grabbed at that lance, spun round and either flung it at the old Persian or else rushed back and jabbed it into him as he was coming out on a run from behind the counter."

Shannon paused; so Kentland put in a remark: "This is surprisingly interesting, Captain, but I'm afraid I don't get the source of your deductions at all. How did you find out the movements of this X?"

"Because," the other shot back, "there's smudges o' black paint or enamel on the shaft of the lance. Subsequent developments this morning brought out the fact that that there counter had been enameled black just about a day ago. I tested that enamel coating myself. It's quite hard, unless you lean on it for a period of about three minutes. Then the pressure and heat of your hand make it soft. Likewise that there lance handle was sandpapered white every few weeks by the old man's Persian assistant, who—but I'm coming to that later. Now do you see the steps in my reasoning?"

"As plain as day," replied Kentland. "The transference of the enamel coating proves the preliminary argument between Mazurka and—er—X." He paused. "After all, Captain, you fellows aren't so bad in your practical criminol-

ogy. But I believe you said you knew *who* killed Mazurka. That's rather puzzling."

"I'm ready for that point now," said Shannon. "And don't forget to give us credit." Again he winked his eye. Then he went on: "Well, we nabbed the old boy's assistant as he was coming to open up the shop this morning about seven o'clock. Hamil Ablahat's his name, a Persian boy from the Persian colony down around the Moody Church. Flunkied in the store, cleaning windows, mopping up, fixing stock and so forth for five bucks a week."

"But it looks to me," said Kentland curiously, "that the older Persian couldn't afford to hire an assistant to help out on such a little business as he had. Curiosities don't pay much nowadays."

Shannon knocked off some of his cigar ashes. "There ain't many sold in the course of a week, to be sure, but there's about a thousand per cent profit on a sale, and I wouldn't put it beyond any of them fakers to sell a phony curio to get the coin. I know 'em. But I got to thinking myself that the old boy couldn't be making enough money in that game to hire assistants to take care of the store, so I had the Persian lad brought up here.

"The first thing he admits," Shannon went on, "is that the old man takes long trips to St. Looey

pretty near every week—and that's why he had to have someone to take care of the store in his absence. The second thing he admits is that the old man was quarrelsome as hell, and wrangled with everybody on everything. The third thing he admits is that the old man went to St. Looey night before last, and was to get back to the shop about midnight last night."

"And the object of those trips?"

"Exactly. The object! Well, he got stubborn and pretended he didn't understand. So I sent him downstairs to a cell. Then I phoned down to the detective bureau. On a flyer, I had 'em look over a St. Looey directory for the name of Mazurka. They found it. What d'ye think the entry read?"

Kentland shook his head. "I give up," he said.

"Mazurka and Nazimov, pharmaceutical chemists and drug manufacturers. The old boy's brother was a partner in a wholesale chemical-and-drug firm in St. Looey. Do you see the connection yet?"

"I'm afraid I don't, Captain," Kentland replied. "I'm still in the dark."

"Well, I was myself," admitted the captain, reluctantly, "but daylight was beginning to filter in on me. I sent down and got up the Persian boy. He collapsed and spouted the whole

thing when I told him if he didn't come across, he'd burn for killing his boss. Here's what I found out: Old Mazurka was making weekly trips to his brother's plant in St. Looey and bringing back heavy consignments of morphine, heroin and coke for Chicago dope fiends. Running a regular clearing house, you see, under the guise of a curiosity shop. That's where he was piling up his coin."

"You don't say!" Kentland exclaimed. "Well, that's certainly—why say, Captain, he ought to have been coining money. The dope-heads can't get the stuff nowadays for less than ten times what it costs legitimately."

"Exactly. Now maybe you'll be seeing daylight as to why the old boy was bumped off. Are you next yet?"

"Murdered by a dope-head, Captain?"

"I'm coming to that," Shannon replied. "This Hamil Ablahat let out the information that the old boy was bringing back those consignments of dope from St. Looey, and that he was selling to an agent of the dope ring here in Chicago. Obvi'sly, this St. Looey firm, being wholesalers, handles huge quantities of all three narcotics—under registration and all that. Which don't prevent 'em one bit from cutting hundreds of selected orders with sugar-of-milk—or synthetic

'mule-powder'—just like smuggled Canadian whiskey used to be cut in the old days with green alky. But, instead of selling the divided-off part at regular rates to regular legitimate drug-store customers, they shoot it down here and sell it, through brother Abdul, to peddlers and dope heads at 5 to 8 times its value." The captain paused a second, then continued: "Well, that agent for the dope peddlers in this neck of the woods was to call at the shop at midnight or one o'clock this morning, receive the consignment, and pay over the sum that had been agreed on. Pretty neat, eh?"

He paused and then went on: "That cleared up the motive for the crime so far's I'm concerned. That agent came and they had a hot row about the price of the stuff, for the old boy Mazurka was holding out for a bigger sum on account of th' way we're putting the heat on dope peddlers, dealers and what-all during the last couple of months, which made all the bigger chance against him. Since the stuff was locked tight and snug in his safe at that moment, he had the bulge on the person who came. At any rate he got a Fifteenth Century lance jabbed into his Twentieth Century cardiac organ, and the one who pulled the stunt got away in a hurry."

"Chief," commented Kentland, "that sounds

interesting. But there's a couple of features in the case that your theory doesn't explain. What about that picture with the face slashed out? Also why did this agent go there supplied with a sharp knife that could cut through tough canvas?"

Shannon laughed quietly. "That was did just as a blind," he said. "It was an attempt to put the police on a false scent. Young Hamil admitted that an agent was to call there at one o'clock in the morning: that it was the same agent that had been calling for weeks. Ablahat has seen that party twice in his employer's dealings, and he's already given us a pippin of a description. And so we know that the agent was to come and take over the week's consignment of dope.

"But the person that did it," the captain continued, "this same person who was a go-between for a dope wholesaler and a ring of dope users, was a dope fiend himself. Why"—he waved a hand—"they're all users of the stuff if they handle it at all. And when he got there, we can assume that he was as crazy for the stuff as one of his own customers. What happened? Mazurka got greedy and tried to hold him up on the price. What did the agent do? He killed Mazurka in the same mad craze that makes all the dope fiends do anything under Christ's name to get the stuff."

Shannon leaned back: "So there you have it,

Mr. *Sun* Reporter. The knife that picture was slashed with was an Eighteenth Century Florentine dagger that hung on exhibition back o' the counter. Duffy found it underneath the counter after you left, early this morning. Is it all clear now?"

"Yes," said Kentland after a pause; "and since you've got the evidence to convict, all you have to do now is to look for this agent who went to the shop at one o'clock this morning. You say that Hamil Ablahat has seen him twice, and that you've got his description?"

"To a T," said the police captain with a chuckle, "but it ain't a him—it's a her! It's nobody else but Nell Hannaford, that's been wanted by the Federal authorities for over two months. She's the slickest peddler of the dope, and the cunningest and coolest customer that the police have ever dealt with. But she came a cropper when she stuck that lance into old Mazurka this morning."

CHAPTER

XIV

A CHANGE OF BADGES

AT SHANNON'S words, Kentland straightened up in his chair. In his mind's eye, he could see once more the slim, young form of the girl in the hospital. Somehow Kentland was not pleased; a profound sense of depression entered his soul.

He looked up at Shannon after a pause. "Captain," he said slowly, "I've been practising a little deception on you for the past few minutes and I'm afraid I'm in for a wigging unless you wait

to hear all I've got to say. In the first place, I'm no longer with the *Sun*. I got the bounce this morning."

The police official's lower jaw dropped open, and a look of anger came over his face. "What?" he exclaimed. "Why the hell didn't you tell me that before? Here I thought I was giving you out some hot copy. I'll admit I was talking for publication, for I want credit for our steps in this speedy solution." He frowned disgustedly. "Here I've wasted a half hour of my time."

Kentland paused for a second, wondering how Shannon would take his next step. Then he resumed: "Captain, I'm going to make an unusual proposition to you." The other became all attention. "You say that there's five hundred reward been offered by the Persian society for the apprehension of the person who killed Mazurka. You've also proved beyond all doubt that this was the crime of a dope fiend; and by your description of the agent who came there at midnight once a week or so to get the next consignment of the stuff, you've pretty well determined, with the help of the Federal authorities, that it was this Nell Hannaford."

Shannon nodded, watching the younger man. "Very well," Kentland went on, "it may be that your solution of the thing is the right one, and

ninety per cent of my common sense tells me that it is. On the other hand, there's always a chance that some other element, perhaps some other individual, might be tangled up in the affair. Always a chance, you know, Captain." He paused while this soaked into the police official. "As I just told you, I had a little row this morning, with the result that I cut myself out of a job on the *Sun*. So here's my proposition: Appoint me as a special worker for the thirty-sixth precinct station here—you can do it if you want to—and let me put in a day or two working on this case. I might—"—he smiled enigmatically—"be able to lead you to your Nell Hannaford before the Federal authorities get her. It wouldn't be a bad beat for the thirty-sixth precinct station, would it?"

"Nonsense!" said Shannon, rocking back in his swivel chair. "Where could you ever know how—" Kentland's enigmatic smile had not yet faded by an iota. Shannon suddenly ceased rocking. He studied the face of the younger man across from him carefully, his own eyes narrowed to mere slits. "Say," he exclaimed, "you know something, my friend, don't you?"

Not by so much as a motion of the head did Kentland deny or affirm the other's statement. "What makes you think so, Cap?" he replied.

"Maybe I've merely got aspirations toward being a detective. Maybe I need half of that five hundred reward, being out of a job. That's the custom, isn't it? Half of the reward usually goes to the man who leads to the arrest, and half to the station he works from?"

Shannon chewed on his lower lip for a second. "My friend," he said, finally, "I'm no fool. You know something, I'm thinking. If you do—if your dope is strong enough and exclusive enough to round up this Nell Hannaford, my one best bet would be to help you out in the way you say —for the sake of old Hudson Avenue station if for nothing else. But if you don't, then let me tell you that you got as much chance of rounding up this Nell Hannaford against the trained network of the Federal authorities as a snowball in hell." He leaned over a little closer. "Come across, my friend. Is it some inside stuff you've got on the situation?"

"What difference does it make, Captain?" returned Kentland, wearily. "If I could lead you to Nell Hannaford, you'd get as much out of it for Hudson Avenue's share as if any of your regular men did the trick; and from what you've just told me, they've got a red-hot chance of doing it. On the other hand, if the Federal men pick her up, or round her up, or get the stool

pigeons in and third-degree 'em to find her whereabouts, you get—nothing! If I don't accomplish anything, you're out—nothing. Is it clear now?"

Shannon spun around in his swivel chair. "My friend, I don't mind telling you that only at headquarters can an ex-reporter or any other individual be sworn in as a special cop. But there's something in your eye that looks like it's bargain day for you. You were the first—with that bonehead Duffy—to reach that spot last night; and for all I know, he was probably sleeping while you were taking in the lay of the land." Jerking open a drawer in his desk, he fumbled in it and presently withdrew his hand, his fingers holding a tiny, silvered badge that was lettered: "HUDSON AVENUE STATION—SPECIAL." He slipped it over on the edge of his desk, then turned and gazed out of the window for about thirty seconds. Kentland caught the significance of the movement and hastily transferred the badge to his pocket. Shannon turned back again. His face did not betray by a flicker that he saw the badge was gone. "Remember, my friend, it's Captain Shannon that will make any pinches that you need to make. Now what are you going to do? Where is this girl?"

Kentland rose at once: "A thousand thanks, Captain. If any human being ever needed half

of that five hundred, I'm the man. As to where this girl is, suppose we consider that reserved for a later period? At any rate, I never forget my friends on the force. You're likely to hear from me again before the day is over. First thing I'm going to do is to walk out of this station. After that—who knows?"

"Good luck to you," said the other, fervently. "If your path crosses Tonino or O'Rourke, my regular plainclothesmen, say nothing about what's between me and you. They'll get peeved sure." He stood up. "And let me know here by phone if you really do anything up to six o'clock; at my home, after that. Name's in the telephone directory."

Kentland strolled down the street, thinking over the new facts now in his possession. On leaving the station he had intended first to go back to the Crilly Court shop and look over the place again, but he decided that could wait, for after the advent of from ten to fifteen detectives and reporters that morning, it was unlikely that anything worth seeing could remain. Anyway, he could drop in there later.

He decided to run over to the Augustana Hospital and make an examination of the bracelet that bore the name Ricardin. The thing troubled him exceedingly. As he aimed northward in order

to strike Cleveland Avenue, he racked his brain again in the effort to try and place the identity of the Captain Ricardin that seemed to be dodging about in his mind, but he had no better success than before.

Proceeding along Hudson Avenue, his thought again reverted to the brown-eyed girl. Somehow those eyes, as they had followed his face early that morning, seemed to contain in their liquid depths something that stirred him deeply. Years ago, Kentland had conceived in his mind the picture of the girl he was some day going to marry; his dream-girl, as he liked to call her. She had just such brown eyes, big and tender.

He turned in at the hospital where he gave his name, and was referred to one of the nurses, to whom he related the accident of the night before. "I'm sorry," he said in conclusion, "that the young lady got away before I could express my regret for the unfortunate accident. It might be that the name in the bracelet will be some clue to her identity. Could I see it?"

"Certainly." The nurse stepped to the end of the corridor, where she unlocked a small cabinet in the wall and brought forth two articles, one of which reflected the morning sunlight with the glint of gold. She brought them over to her desk where Kentland was waiting. One, he saw at a

glance, was a bracelet; the other, a hair clasp. "Sit down here," she said genially, "and look them over, if you wish. I've got to see a patient for a moment."

She disappeared up the corridor. Kentland dropped into her swivel chair, but he left the bracelet untouched. He was staring at the ornamental, jewelled hair clasp. Even though studded with cheap crystals—crystals of mere colored glass, at best—it was an odd thing, inasmuch as it conveyed the idea of a peacock, if not the complete picture thereof. That is to say, the exposed portion of the generously broad clasp itself carried the peacock's head, and then broadened out, past and beyond the point where its utilitarian prong was connected, into a fan-shaped extension presenting the glorious outspread tail of the creature. But the more elaborate tail did not interest him nearly so much as the head, which latter design fascinated him quite. For the reason that the eye of the peacock was missing!

Mechanically he reached down into his vest pocket and withdrew the imitation red stone he had found early that morning on the Crilly Court shop floor not ten feet away from the dead man. He inserted it carefully in the tortoise shell aperture that comprised the setting of the peacock's eye. It fitted perfectly, completing the bird.

Kentland laughed grimly. Evidently there was no longer any doubt that the owner of those wonderful brown eyes had been a visitor that night at the Crilly Court shop. In other words, it seemed certain that it was Nell Hannaford herself who had been run down by his speeding machine.

CHAPTER

XV

ON THE INNER SURFACE

SLOWLY Kentland withdrew the red stone and returned it to his pocket. His possession of it, he knew full well from a long experience with the workings of criminal law, would prove sufficient in court to convict any man or woman whose motives were adequate to cause them to commit murder. Then he turned his attention to the bracelet.

It was a pitifully thin, worn little bracelet, and it reminded him somehow of the girl herself. A

few wrought figures could be seen on the upper side, a lion's head and a woman's face, with the tresses flowing clear around the entire circlet. An inspection of the inner side showed traces of lettering that had once existed, engraved clear around the inner, flat surface of the band; but they were so badly worn from long and constant friction against a wrist, that all that now remained were the letters:

—NNE RICARDIN

He glanced up suddenly. The nurse had reappeared and was looking down at him curiously. "Any luck?" she inquired.

Without a reply, he opened a city directory and turned to the R's, to the Ric's, to the Ricar's, but entry of Ricardin there was none whatever. He shook his head and looked up at the nurse. "Would you remember," he asked slowly, "that a stone that formed the peacock's eye was missing? I have a peculiar reason for asking the question. Could you testify to that on oath?"

The nurse's face showed bewilderment. "Testify to it on oath!" she exclaimed. "Why, you don't—" She paused, then smiled. "I'm a woman," she said, "and I like pretty things. I confess that I studied that bobbie-pin—that's the name for those hair clasps—pretty well after I

found the young lady hurried away and forgot to take her personal belongings that were removed from her last night. Yes, one eye of the peacock is missing. I noticed that at once. But may I ask why——"

Kentland looked out of the hospital window far and away. "Just a private reason prompted me to ask, that's all," he said. "Just keep the fact in mind." He rose. "I'm greatly obliged to you for your information. I suggest that you keep these safely, although I'm inclined to think that their owner will never come back for them."

He left the staring nurse and took the elevator downstairs. Out on the sidewalk, however, some distance from the hospital, several things struck him with peculiar force. He had one more clue, that of the hair clasp, or bobbie-pin, as the nurse called it, on which he had not counted when he induced Shannon to appoint him a special investigator for the Hudson Avenue station. A hair clasp in itself was a rather common, nondescript article, but already a mode of possible procedure was forming in his mind as to a way in which he might make use of this new lead; but he could see, too, that it was going to take a lot of time and painstaking effort to follow it up in the manner he had outlined to himself, and at the risk

that it might produce nothing in the way of information.

For the present, though, he dismissed it from his mind. He thought momentarily of telephoning Shannon and asking him if he could find out anything on the quiet about this Dr. Watling, who had either feminine acquaintances or patients running about Chicago streets at three in the morning with his name in their purse, and newspaper proprietors calling on him in their own automobiles during the wee, small hours.

But he soon decided that the Watling lead was too strong a one to risk giving it to Shannon, for without doubt, Shannon would immediately follow up any clue that might come to his notice rather than have to confess at some future time that the Mazurka crime was actually solved by an outsider, working only temporarily from Hudson Avenue station.

No longer was there any doubt in his mind that Nell Hannaford had killed Mazurka in the manner and for the reason outlined by Shannon in his office, and that the girl herself had awakened after the crime to find herself in the Augustana Hospital. Every fact of the case dovetailed together with devilish accuracy. The only thing that remained to be done now was to manipulate the few clues so as to lead the police either to

the woman's whereabouts or to some one who knew her and who could be forced to tell who she was. But that was an easier thing to say than to do.

Still, however, there was one odd point that did not fit in with Shannon's theory. The captain had stated that the cutting of the bizarre face from the canvas was only an attempt to confuse the police. But what had become of the face that had been cut from the canvas? The police admitted that the piece of canvas had not been found. Granting that Nell Hannaford had done the cutting, she undoubtedly had carried the piece away with her as she flew from the place. Then what had become of it? Also, what had taken place during the hour between the time that the tip had started for the *Sun* office and the time that she had been run down by the taxicab? Had she remained in the region, turning over in her head some scheme for going back and robbing the dead man of the precious consignment of drugs that he held in his possession?

The thing got so perplexing the more he studied it, that Kentland stopped dead in his tracks and tried to gather the scattered threads into some semblance of orderly arrangement.

As he had determined, the points that did not quite fit in with Shannon's theory were: First,

what about the hour or more gap that had elapsed? Second, what had become of the canvas face?

Regardless of whether Shannon's theory was false, correct or only partially correct, there were still points of mystification other than the preceding ones. How did it come to pass that a stone dislodged itself from a firm setting right at the scene of the crime? Who was Dr. Steven Watling whose name was on a slip of paper in the purse of the brown-eyed girl? Why had Fornhoff lied about going to Cincinnati, and why, in addition, had he been coming down from Watling's office at twenty minutes after four in the morning? Who was Ricardin, the name engraved in the brown-eyed girl's bracelet? Who had sent in the tip to the *Sun?*

Jumping quickly over the possible leads which might prove fruitful to investigate, he found very few. There was a peacock hair clasp, which the red stone in his vest pocket fitted. There was a slip of paper bearing the name of Dr. Steven Watling and there was actually such a person on South Halsted Street. There was an illiterate, typed note bearing information that there was a news story on Crilly Court. There was a possibility that a further look about the shop owned by the dead Persian might reveal some illuminat-

ing point. And there was a nondescript gold bracelet bearing the name Ricardin.

Again Kentland found himself thinking of a Captain Ricardin. He repeated the two words over and over; there was no doubt that the two together held a familiar sound. They reminded him of something, of some one connected with foreign military affairs.

He stopped suddenly as an idea flashed on him. There was one individual in Chicago who should be able to tell him anything about affairs and personages of foreign military importance, especially when those affairs were of American news interest, as this one undoubtedly had been. That one person was Jeffrich, the hack free-lance military writer on the *Sun*.

Immediately Kentland sought a telephone, called up Johnson at the *Sun* office, and obtained Jeffrich's address. A quarter of an hour later he dismounted from a car and ran up the steps of a disreputable, ramshackle house on West Division Street, not far from LaSalle Avenue, the paint of the bricks peeling off in great, red scabs, the front door steps sagging on one side, a greasy sign in the front window proclaiming that there were light-housekeeping rooms to rent.

In answer to his query, he was directed to go up the inside stairs to the top floor and knock at

the rear hall bedroom. Kentland made the climb, passing, on the way, a number of rooms, from which the smell of frying lard and gasoline stoves emanated, together with the peevish cries of irritable infants. At the top floor, rear, he knocked.

CHAPTER

XVI

"FIVE THOUSAND MILES APART"

JEFFRICH himself answered the door, his gaunt frame shrouded in a long, torn, gray bathrobe, a cigarette held between his teeth. For a moment he stared, rather discomfited, at Kentland, but suddenly collected himself and stood aside.

"Welcome, my good friend, to my—er—palace!" He waved a hand toward the interior of the room, and the sneer in his voice seemed to grow more pronounced than ever. "Step in.

What can I do for you? Don't mind the appearance of things; as soon as I can persuade Herr Fornhoff to pay a little more for the best military articles in print today, maybe I can invite you to better lodgings. But why the honor, the extreme honor, of your call?"

Kentland dropped dubiously into a straight, wooden chair near the wall. While the other closed the door, he glanced about him. The interior of the room was hardly different from the general atmosphere that was radiated by the outside of the house. A rickety iron bed, covered with a greasy crazy quilt, filled one corner. In another stood a wooden chair. In another was a rocker filled with old newspapers. A two-hole gasoline stove on a tiny stand covered with oilcloth, and a cupboard filled with dishes and surmounted by a tin dishpan hung crazily on the wall, stood at the foot of the bed. The open space near the window was occupied by a small table bearing a number of bottles of fountain-pen ink and several dilapidated—and in some cases, even capless—fountain pens. A shelf under the table was piled with books of all sizes and shapes, but in bad condition, and evidently purchased from secondhand stores. Kentland's glance also took in a pint flask of whiskey sticking from between

two of the volumes, the original paper still upon it, but torn away at the neck of the bottle.

The opposite wall, however, was the most striking thing in the room. Several hundred military clippings were pinned upon it, together with a huge map of eastern China, including Jehol, the latter article bearing several hundred varicolored glass pins and a number of irregularly laid out colored cords, held in rigid position by thumbtacks and obviously representing the positions of different battle lines in the Far East.

Jeffrich flopped down on the side of the bed and tossed his cigarette away. "Well," he inquired, "why the honor of the call?"

"Jeffrich," began Kentland, fastening his eyes upon the older man, "I dropped in on you on a rather odd errand. I came up to get a little information on military affairs."

"That's easy," returned the other. "My vast knowledge of tactics and strategy, gained from perusal of countless books—and study of countless campaigns—is at your command!"

Kentland smiled. The remark was characteristic of the man, for though it sounded bombastic, it contained the invariable sarcastic note that accompanied most of Jeffrich's utterances. But Kentland forged on with his inquiry. "I didn't come up, Jeffrich," he said, "to find out anything

connected with tactics or strategy, but something to do with persons. I want to find out from you who in the devil was Captain Ricardin, a man who once created something of a stir in newspaper circles."

Jeffrich paused in the act of rolling a cigarette. "Captain Ricardin?" he repeated. "And you a newspaper man for the last five years! And you come up to me, to old man Jeffrich, wealthy military expert, to find out something that's in your own line?" He paused, his fingers still holding the half-rolled cigarette. "Say, Kentland, what the devil are you driving at, prying into the affairs of a notorious, but dead, Frenchman? Are you going to dabble in articles military?" He laughed mirthlessly. "Not—not trying to get my job away from me?"

"No, nothing like that. It's bona fide information I want, and of all the people I could think of, you were the only one I figured might be able to give it to me. You know, do you? Then who was Captain Ricardin?"

"I can quickly enlighten you on that point," said the other pleasantly; "but I'm puzzled as to why you're looking up a dead man. May I inquire?"

Kentland, wishing to get his information without delay, told briefly how early that morning

he had run down a girl, that the girl had been taken to the hospital, that she had left the hospital without a word as to who she was and that her bracelet had borne the letters, "—nne Ricardin." Then he described the strange, mind-tickling effect the words had had upon him.

Jeffrich completed the rolling of his cigarette. "Well," he commented, moistening the paper with his lips, "that was a rather odd experience. So the word Ricardin on the bracelet brought back partial memories to you of that old Ricardin scandal? I'm afraid, though, my friend, that the two aren't connected by a hair, for the only Captain Ricardin that was ever in the American newspapers was involved in something that happened just about five thousand miles from little, old Chicago."

He leaned back against the iron foot of the bed. "Surely I can tell you about that case," he began. "Even more, I can put you in touch with a bird—a former English soldier-of-fortune, who lost one arm at Montedier in 1918—who hangs around Joe Roussell's red-ink and spaghetti joint on South State Street, right here in Chicago, who knew Captain Ricardin and was with him in London just before the latter died in that city. This fellow—I've forgotten his name—Blackwell or Blackmoor or something like that—told

me himself about being with Ricardin in London. But perhaps what I can give you is all you really want. In that case, you won't have to hang around Roussell's for seven or eight nights eating yourself to death on spaghetti and swilling his red-ink till Ricardin's ex-boy-friend drifts in; and if and when he did, you'd have to shout yourself hoarse, for he's deaf as a post from the cannonading at Montedier."

Jeffrich paused:

"Captain Ricardin was the central figure of a quite good-sized scandal in the French Army some years ago. His full name, as I recall it, was —was—" He tapped impatiently on the floor with the toe of his shoe and ran his fingers through the fringe of hair on his head. "The name —let's see. Dreyfus, of the Dreyfus case, was Alfred Dreyfus, wasn't he? And this man—Etienne! That was it. Captain Etienne Ricardin." He paused. "Where was I?"

"You stated that he was the central figure of a good-sized scandal," Kentland said.

"Yes. The sale of the plan for the 'relay'-boxes for the defense of Paris."

Jeffrich drew on his cigarette.

"You see, Infant, France today is prepared against any drive by troops on Paris, like the Germans tried to make many, many years back

in the big war when you were wearing diapers. She can hold her enemies—German or Italian—off in the air—but if they start to come by road—that's a horse of another color! It's no secret—especially in view of the Ricardin trial, which, though it was held behind closed doors, leaked out sufficiently to the journalists to make the front pages of the papers of all languages—that France has every road into Paris mined day and night, and all the time!—and in not less than three places—each of which places is capable of being blown sky-high into smithereens, separately or together, so that an oncoming army—marching, say, from Germany, Belgium, Italy or Spain—would have nothing but a gigantic crater to try and move artillery, horses, tanks and men over. Same even with the railroads going out of Paris towards all four countries." Jeffrich paused. "These spots that are mined can be blown up—so far as I understand it—from certain so-called 'relay'-boxes—huge, steel-encased, automatic switch-containers buried deep in the earth, and connected to local power lines as well as lines leading out from Paris. These 'relay'-boxes are so placed as to control a number of explosion spots lying in a given area. Where they are buried, nobody knows—for the reason that when they were sunk in the earth, the real ones were

put down more or less surreptitiously, while hundreds and hundreds of dummies were buried—and the dummies, in turn, connected to false conduit leads and false electrical circuits; so that the real network in this whole tangle, is quite unfindable. At any rate, the real boxes are connected by no less than three separate circuits with the offices of the Grand Military in Paris. A series of dot-dash impulses are required to direct their operation, and the switches to throw these impulses are on a switchboard in a locked vault of the Grand Military, to which switchboard there are three separate keys, held by three, separate, high-up military figures on the Home Defense Division. In case of emergency, of course, the locks to the switchboard can be actually broken.

"However," Jeffrich went on, "these relay-boxes—buried God knows where, today—are naturally the very pulses of the whole defense. If Germany—or Italy—planned a land drive on Paris, so as to paralyze all of France—and incidentally grab all that fine gold lying in the vaults under the Seine!—and if they had fifty or so spies in France—and could locate these boxes exactly, the boxes could be dug down to in an hour and the connections to them sawed apart—or, even better, the boxes could be blown to pieces, and the

electrical connections to them dislocated from the connections going out from them—thus rendering the whole system inoperative. In short, the whole beautiful system would be dead from the Grand Military. The roads could not be blown up. And would remain unimpaired."

Jeffrich paused a second and then went on:

"Well, Ricardin, as I say, was a strategy expert in the Great War. After the War, he was stationed in the Department of Internal Defense. And he had access—at least, so it was claimed—to the very diagrams showing the wiring—and locations with exact descriptions of such—of these relay-boxes, buried around Paris in various woods and fields, and even under actual roads.

"News finally got in to Paris that such a diagram had shown up in Germany—and that one of the relay-box locations—which was on the southeast corner of a non-cultivated farm owned by a non-resident owner called Degin, or Degon, or Degan, or something like that—was actually known. Ricardin was arrested. You must have been a cub about that time, trying to hold on to your bread and butter. For the details of his arrest certainly were mentioned in papers all over the world. All kinds of things were drawn into the scandal. At any rate, the old generals who comprised the military tribunal who tried him,

couldn't get quite enough proof to line him up against a brick wall and shoot him. Don't you recall it yet, Infant?"

"Well, you know, Jeffrich," said Kentland, "now that you give me the main facts, the Ricardin case comes back to me—but just partially only. For at the time this broke, I was in an Omaha hospital recovering from an appendicitis operation, and what I got of world news was more or less in dibs and dabs, especially during my first week after the doctors whittled on me. Nevertheless, I do remember the case now. The tail end of it, anyway. The French news bureau soft-pedaled on a lot of it, didn't they? Just as in that famous Dreyfus case, which my father has told me about?"

Jeffrich nodded. "The two cases were very similar. Much more was suppressed than got out to the outside world. But one thing is known. They drove Ricardin out of the army and gave him twenty-four hours to leave France. A year later, a German spy captured in Paris gave enough further information to apparently confirm that Ricardin *had* made a copy of that whole map of relay-boxes, and sold it for some 2,500,000 francs—which is only a hundred thousand dollars, after all—to some agent for Germany, which country has never given up its ideas of

working a military comeback some day. Cheap at the price, the map was, I guess." Jeffrich paused. "Well—is your question answered?"

"More than," Kentland assured the other. "And Ricardin died later, you say?"

"Yes, in London." Jeffrich puffed on his cigarette for a second. "A confirmed gambler, as I understand he was, Ricardin evidently ran his francs up into a snug number of English pounds —for this one-armed fellow whom I can put you next to, if you've the patience to hang around Joe Roussell's for a sufficient number of nights, said Ricardin was living in a swell style in a mansion across from Hyde Park, with a half dozen servants at least, at the time he died."

"How did this one-armed Britisher chap come to get in touch with Ricardin?"

"He says," Jeffrich replied, "that he answered a blind ad in the *London Times* for a chess instructor. And when he was summoned for an interview, the advertiser turned out to be Ricardin—frankly stated who he was—and said he wanted, not an instructor but an A No. 1 crackerjack player to play with him. The Englishman tells me that Ricardin had a set of solid gold, hand-carved chessmen, heavy as hell, and a butler to lay them all out on the board. And paid him a pound sterling for every game they played—

for the Englishman claims he is a crackerjack player."

Jeffrich puffed on his cigarette for a second. "The reason I was particularly interested in that Ricardin case, enough, at least, to remember its main details, was because of the fact that it tallied with my own theory that infantry will always decide military questions. All air attacks can be offset with air defenses. The so-called experts predicted a lot of things about air attack in the first Manchurian campaign Japan waged—in 1933—and yet she had to go at it with infantry, you notice. And it occurred to me then that these relay-boxes were truly indeed the key to Paris. Although I will admit that I have always looked on Italy as more a potential menace to France than Germany. For Germany had her teeth too badly drawn at Versailles." Jeffrich blew a few smoke rings ceilingward. "But that's all that I personally can tell you about Ricardin. He dropped out of sight at least for a year after his trial, and then there was a little squib in the papers about his dying in London. I never heard anything more for several years until, as I say, down at Joe Roussell's one night recently, when I met this English soldier-of-fortune with the one fin. I'd been shouting in his ear because of his deafness—but the red ink had everybody so

drunk they were all shouting anyway—and the talk got over to Joffre's famous taxicab defense of Paris—then jumped to the modern mining of France's roads—then naturally to Ricardin—and the Englishman told me how he'd talked with Ricardin a score of times just before the latter died there in his mansion off Hyde Park."

Kentland leaned back in his chair. "Well, that clears the matter up pretty thoroughly as far as I'm concerned. You've given me the whole layout on Ricardin; so there's nothing to be gained by my hanging down at Roussell's—think I know the place—waiting for this Englishman to put in an appearance. All he could tell me anyway would be how Ricardin felt about everything before he shuffled off. Which doesn't matter very much to me personally. For it doesn't look as though there's much connection after all, between Ricardin and the bracelet the young lady left in the hospital."

"No, hardly," said the other. "What's the matter, Kentland?" he asked with sudden keenness. "Didn't fall in love, did you? That the reason you're trying to connect bracelets with dead ex-captains of another nation? By God, I believe you did!"

Kentland laughed, but rather glumly. "No, my

conscience troubled me and I wanted to express my regrets to the young lady—and other things," he added. He rose. "Well, Jeffrich, I'm much obliged for the information and your time. That connection was playing billiards in my subconscious memory, and I'd have gone crazy in another hour, trying to fathom where I'd heard the name before. A thousand thanks."

"Say not so," said the free lance. He tossed his cigarette away and cast a covert, longing took toward the whiskey flask which protruded from the books below the writing table. Quick as it was, Kentland caught it and hastily bowed himself to the door and out.

The other watched him, after they had parted, till he was down the dingy stairs to the lower landing, and then went back and poured himself a generous drink in an ordinary drinking tumbler. "Sweating blood, that estimable young man," Jeffrich commented half aloud. "Fell down on two stories last week and trying to work out a new story now, I'll bet. Old man Fornhoff'll send him flying in another day. Lucky thing I borrowed that silver eagle last night. If he parts company with the *Sun,* I'm in by one round dollar. Silvery lining to every cloud, I guess." He lay back full length on the bed, puffing dreamily on a new cigarette.

Kentland was undecided whether to go next to the Crilly Court shop or back to his rooms. It was plain now that the Ricardin lead was a false one; that he had been misled by the similarity of sound between the name in the bracelet and his lurking remembrance of the old Ricardin scandal. In the circumstances, there could be no connection whatever. And yet— He stopped suddenly as the name Etienne flashed across his mental vision, particularly its spelling. The last two groups of consecutive lettering in the bracelet were "—nne Ricardin." Truly that seemed rather coincidental, for the last three letters in the first name of the court-martialed French captain corresponded exactly to the three letters of the group preceding Ricardin in the bracelet.

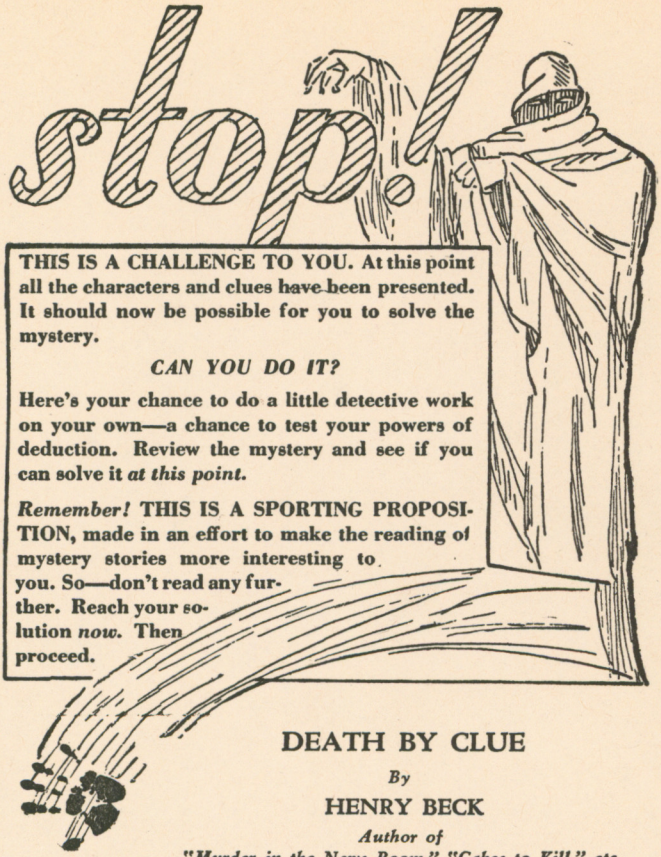
He had reached the corner news stand now, and his reportorial gaze was caught immediately by a familiar name in the headlines of a noonday paper. They read:

DOCTOR WATLING FLEES INDICTMENT

Doctor Stephen Watling, the South Halsted Street Physician Indicted Last Night by the Federal Grand Jury for

Violating the Harrison Anti-Narcotic Law by Selling Drug Prescriptions, Skips Town to Avoid Arrest and Trial.

Hoaxes Police by Leaving Note on Office Door Promising Return Late in Evening



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By

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CHAPTER

XVII

MAZURKA'S RECORDS

KENTLAND flung a nickel down and picked up a copy of the paper. He unfolded it and moved over to the curbing, where he stood while he read.

The short article told little more than the headlines, which were the typical "flares" that usually accompanied a noontime edition of an afternoon paper. Dr. Watling, a South Halsted Street physician, it stated, had been indicted at six o'clock the preceding evening on the testimony of three

witnesses, who had declared, in a late session before the Federal Grand Jury, that he had sold them prescriptions for both morphine and cocaine.

On going to take him into custody, the deputy sheriffs found a note on his door announcing that he was out on an important case and would be back at any minute. But it had been nine o'clock that morning before they came to the conclusion that he had been tipped off by telephone and had flown; then they entered his offices and rooms with a search warrant.

His personal belongings, instruments, satchel and medical case were gone, however, and a further investigation revealed the fact that a man of his description had been smoothly shaved in the barber shop of the Chicago and Northwestern Depot the night before. By means of the decoy note on the door, he had secured at least fifteen hours' start of the authorities, and if he had boarded a train in the C. & N. W. R. R. depot, he might now be at any point between Chicago and St. Paul.

Kentland rolled the paper up, jammed it into his coat pocket, and stood thinking. If he had had any lingering doubts that the brown-eyed girl in the hospital was the notorious drug runner, Nell Hannaford, they were totally dispelled now, con-

sidering these last revelations concerning Doctor Watling. The fact of Doctor Watling's name being in her possession led to the conclusion that he was undoubtedly a customer of hers. To such of his clients as he could trust implicitly, he no doubt sold the actual drug. To those of whom he was a little afraid, he charged a high price for an office visit—and "gave" them the prescription, fillable, no doubt, at some drug store that was in league with him. The connection between him and the girl had turned out, after all, to be a logical one.

Kentland decided to pay another visit to Crilly Court. On the car, he commenced turning over again in his mind the connection of Fornhoff with Watling. Was Fornhoff a secret user of the drug and had he gone to Watling's early that morning in order to secure a prescription for it? In the absence of a supply of the same? Or had he been informed earlier in the day by Watling that a supply was expected to come that night through an agent? Truly, that dejected slump to Fornhoff's shoulders, as he had marched back to his car under the street light, denoted pronounced disappointment at something. It seemed like the only conclusion that could be drawn.

At the Crilly Court shop, things were externally the same as in the gloom of early morning. The great flat building across the way gleamed

white and new in the bright sunlight of noonday, in vivid contrast to the more old-fashioned, more dilapidated frame dwellings across the street. Stationed in the doorway of the shop itself, Kentland found a bluecoat, who quickly stepped aside as he displayed the badge that had been given him by Shannon.

Inside, everything was disarranged; every article, he saw with a single glance, had been pawed over by countless detectives from Hudson Avenue and from the detective bureau downtown, if not by a dozen curious reporters. He stood by himself, a lone figure in the deserted shop, and surveyed the damage. The suit of armor was scattered all about; the showcase containing the butterflies was smashed where someone had leaned his elbow; the counter was shoved far out of place; the polished hard wood floor was marred by dozens of marks made by thick-soled, hob-nailed boots, and soiled by clumps of mud and grass from the outer street.

There was nothing much to be seen or studied here, he concluded. A peek into the rear room where Mazurka had lived by himself, showed the same condition of disarrangement.

A further scrutiny around the shop itself, showed that the picture frame that had contained the old painting of the Saturn man was gone.

Kentland asked the bluecoat in charge about that feature.

"Captain Shannon's got it locked up over at the Hudson Avenue station," the patrolman said, "so's it can be used for evidence when they round up this here Nell Hannaford what pulled the stunt."

"I see." Kentland paused on the threshold. Then he turned back again. He stepped over to a little desk which appeared modern enough not to have constituted one of the for-sale curios that filled the place. A few up-to-date, cloth-bound ledgers showed him that his surmise was correct.

He drew up a chair and ran his eye over the first of the books but found only daily entries of sales, the name of the article, and the sale price, being entered in lead pencil. He dropped that book and opened a second, which appeared to be a further part of the dead Persian's records.

Again Kentland ran his eye over the daily items, which seemed to be those of purchase rather than of sale, for in each case, while the price was put plainly enough, the name of the other party to the transaction was abbreviated. Leaf by leaf he turned back, some days showing purchases galore, evidently at auctions, for the same name was affixed to all the purchases; other days showing no purchases.

From the date preceding the murder, he ran back a little over a month. Then he stopped, for he had stumbled across an entry that described the purchase of the very painting that had been damaged at the time of the murder.

There were two entries for that day. They read:

O. P. "Man from Saturn." Durri. $16. Leit.

O. P. "Child and Lamb." Koskowics. $14.60. Leit.

Kentland stared at the entries for several seconds before he caught the significance of the letters, O. P. Of course they stood for "oil painting." He glanced up at the wall. Sure enough, there was a painting of a child and a lamb.

Durri, of course, was the name of the painter. Kentland went over to the telephone directory that lay on the counter near the instrument itself, and as an experiment, turned to the names grouped under the heading of "Auctioneers." Running his eye down until he came to the L's, he found exactly what he was looking for: M. Leitzinger, art auctioneer, No. 455 South Wabash Avenue.

The two oil paintings, then, had been bought from this Leitzinger. Kentland wondered, as he closed the book with a snap, if it would be worth while to dig further into the source from which

the "Man from Saturn" had come. In the light of Shannon's conclusive revelations, it seemed rather a waste of precious time and energy to follow up such a thing; but it was a possible clue and, as it was time to go back to his own room, wash up, get a bite to eat, look over his mail, and take a brief rest, Kentland decided that on the way, he might just as well drop in at Leitzinger's place of business.

At the big art store, a suave salesman came forward. "Can you give me any information about Durri's stuff?" Kentland asked.

The salesman smiled. "Why yes. Durri's stuff has become rather popular in the last few months. He runs to the weird. He's one of these quick-brush artists; does an oil painting, I understand, in a day or so. Unfortunately we've got no more of Durri's things in stock."

"Have you seen his conception, the 'Man from Saturn'?" asked Kentland curiously, watching the man. "It was auctioned off here some time ago."

"Yes," the other replied, "I've seen it, but it left the stock here before I came to work for Mr. Leitzinger. A query came in over the phone about it yesterday, and I had to refer it to Mr. Leitzinger himself, just as he was leaving for Elgin, Illinois."

"But you say you've seen it," Kentland persisted.

"Yes. Sort of a strange, staring face, with immense, yellow, protruding eyeballs, red pupils, a pair of speckled brown horns, and a green, seven-fingered hand, just stretching up into the foreground. I saw it at a private exhibition in Durri's studio just after he started in on this kind of bizarre art."

Kentland paused a second. "So a phone inquiry came in yesterday about that picture?" He paused again. "Did you read this morning's *Sun?*"

The salesman looked at him with undisguised curiosity in his face: "Why, no. Can't say that I did. Don't care for the *Sun* and its Socialistic policies. I read the *Times-Star*. But didn't even read that this morning, I hopped out of bed so late." He paused. "But what's that got to do with the painting?"

Kentland leaned over the counter. "My friend, I want you to look in your records and tell me where you purchased your copy of the 'Man from Saturn.' One which was afterward sold at auction to an A. Mazurka at No. 1710 Crilly Court."

"Say," said the other, gruffly, "you aren't from Durri, are you? If there's anyone stealing or copying his popular stuff, he can't get the law on

us for selling it. We don't guarantee the genuineness of any oil painting we sell."

"Not for a minute," said Kentland quickly. "Don't know Durri and never met him. But I want to know where you got your copy of the 'Man from Saturn.' "

He turned back his coat, displaying the Hudson Avenue station special badge. A long whistle escaped the clerk's lips. He stared, fascinated, at the badge. "Why didn't you say so in the first place?" the latter asked. "Crooked work, eh?" He glanced back to a huge filing cabinet which appeared to contain hundreds of specially arranged index cards. "I can tell you where any painting we ever had, came from, by the old man's filing system here. He's in Elgin, today, but I can probably fix you up with the dope on it. You say the customer was A. Mazurka on Crilly Court?"

Kentland nodded. The clerk stepped to the cabinet and began to examine the cards. "Here we are!" he exclaimed after a short search. "Here's the record of a 'Man from Saturn' painting that went from Leitzinger to this Mazurka on Crilly Court a little over a month ago."

"And what was the original source?" asked Kentland. "You didn't get it direct from Durri?"

"No, it was purchased at auction from the studio furnishings of a dead artist."

"And the name of that artist?"

"The name," the clerk read from the card, "was Mr. Carl Fornhoff."

CHAPTER

XVIII

THE TALE OF THE READING GLASS

SO FORNHOFF, editor-in-chief and proprietor of the *Sun,* was definitely involved, in some obscure manner, with the Mazurka case! Kentland found himself forced to this conclusion as he journeyed home. Just who was Carl Fornhoff, and what relationship had he borne to August Fornhoff? That was the question that was looming up now. Was he a son, cousin, nephew or brother? The whole thing was rapidly becoming too bewildering, too complex for Kentland to

find any solution of it; but that Fornhoff's presence on the streets early that morning was not a coincidence seemed more than certain, in the light of the statement made by Leitzinger, the art auctioneer.

Was the death of the Persian art dealer a drug maniac's crime after all? Or was there something deeper, something more vital, that lay hidden back of it? That it was a drug crime seemed indubitably proved by a complete chain of circumstances. Yet in no way had this chain wound itself about Fornhoff, except in his chance connection with the doctor, who had fled the city.

But now it was coming to light that the same oil painting which had been slashed had been originally purchased from the effects of a dead artist, obviously some relative of Fornhoff's. Was this the real coincidence of the case, rather than the chance connection of Fornhoff with the Halsted Street doctor?

Once inside his room, Kentland dropped into a rocking-chair by the window, not even taking the trouble to remove his hat, and sat thinking of the web that had dropped like a net over the Mazurka case. Web it was, but with such elusive and slippery meshes that each strand seemed beyond his grasp. Still lurking in his mind, however, was a possible lead for him to follow in order to throw

further light on the affair, although it might prove to be of no value at all. That lead was the oddly jewelled hair clasp that had been left in the hospital.

For the dozenth time that day, he fell to thinking of the peculiar tip that had come into the night city room by rush messenger early that morning while the printers were locking up each page. Was it possible, he wondered, that the tip had been sent out before the murder; a tip that an altogether different story was breaking at the Crilly Court shop, but that when he had arrived, he had found it something other than what the unknown sender had intended? What story could have been breaking, then, in Mazurka's shop before the proprietor had met his death?

The answer to that was not an easy one. The Persian, according to Shannon's narration of the assistant's reluctant testimony, was not supposed to get in from St. Louis until about midnight, when he was supposed to wait there in the store for Nell Hannaford. The only possible manner in which the tip could have come into the *Sun* office in advance of the crime was from someone in whom Nell Hannaford had confided her impending profitable business deal. In that case, commercial jealousy was a possible motive. But why

had the informant notified a city newspaper rather than the nearest police station?

Kentland stepped over to his bureau, regained the illiterate note, and read it again:

> EDDITER: If you will sen a man at once to 1710 Crilly Court you will fin out something strange and startling wat no other paper has got. This is bony fidy.
>
> A FREN TO THE SUN.

Somehow, each time he read the note now, it seemed to bear an air of familiarity; it seemed to him that he had somewhere seen that note under other circumstances. That was an odd phenomenon, he reflected, and one which he had not experienced at the first reading in the *Sun* city room. But it suddenly came to him with a rush that it was not the note itself, but the typing of it that he had seen. He leaned over and jerked out the lower drawer of his bureau, where he rummaged wildly through a mass of what he called his "junk" articles. Suddenly his fingers closed on the object he was searching for—a powerful reading glass. He held it over the note and moved it back and forth till he got the proper focus.

At once the peculiarities of the typing became quite plain to the eye. The tiny, closed, upper

loop of the "e," he saw at one glance, had become choked with ink from the typewriter ribbon, which had caused it to print solidly black. As he scanned the thing closely under the magnifying glass, he saw that the tiny metal circlet comprising the "o" of the machine had parted or worn at the top and bottom from age, leaving a white gap across the continuous ring of black.

He dug down into his breast pocket and drew forth the 6-page, typed manuscript that Boltman had entrusted him with, and which the latter had hammered out quite certainly on that old mill in his story workshop. And above its first page he poised the reading glass. Then he studied what he saw, carefully. Here, too, in this script, the letter "e," on account of the choking of ink from the ribbon, had printed solidly black on top. Here, too, the letter "o" showed the broken or worn places at the same points in the circle. But now, for something more concrete yet, Kentland told himself. A pair of letters—or better, digits. Say—the "1710" of 1710 Crilly Court. He turned the pages of the script until he found the line showing how far John Jones' dollar had progressed in its growth by the year 2735. $17,400,000,000 was the colossal sum. But what was most important was that the "17" in that sum was identical with the "17" in 1710 Crilly Court! Not only

did the "1" and the "7" touch shoulders when struck in succession by the particular finger pressures of this particular touch operator on what must be an L. C. Smith machine, but the "7" was a shade short of full height. And the "1" was shy the right-hand half of its horizontal base-line. And having the two writings now side by side, Kentland even had no need of the glass to prove that beyond a doubt they had been written on the same machine—an old, rickety affair that turned out work so distinctively bad that it bore a stamp all its own.

Kentland jumped to his feet as the meaning of the discovery dawned on him. Boltman, who was supposed to be at home sick, the preceding night, was the man who had sent in the tip to the *Sun!*

CHAPTER

XIX

A BATTLE WITHOUT WORDS

WAS Boltman the man who had hurled the lance that ended the Persian's life? That was the first question that hit Kentland with smashing force after he recovered from his astonishment at finding that Boltman's typed manuscript and the illiterate note had come from the same machine. Again he studied the two letters carefully under the reading glass, moving the lens nearer and farther from the paper, but the identity of the print was beyond doubt; both the

manuscript and the note had come from the same machine.

Hair clasps, jewels, bracelets, art auctioneers, everything was temporarily forgotten by Kentland in his satisfaction in this sudden and definite clue to the previous night's mystery. Jubilantly he wondered what Shannon would have to say at this surprising development, and even more he wondered what Boltman himself would say when confronted with the indisputable evidence that he knew, before even the police or the newspapers, that a crime had been committed in the lonely curiosity shop on Crilly Court.

But Kentland had no intention of sitting idly in his room. He jerked out an upper bureau drawer and slipped his revolver into his hip pocket. Then with the reading glass in the side pocket of his coat, and the typed note and manuscript in his breast pocket, he left his room and hurried out.

A half hour later, Kentland was dismounting from a North State Street car at Clark and Division Streets, and heading on foot for LaSalle Avenue, a block west. He passed the ramshackle rooming house wherein Jeffrich lived, and Kentland wavered for a brief second, wondering whether to enlist the free-lance writer on his own side, in case of any possible violence on Boltman's part; but he decided that Jeffrich's sympathies

were an unknown factor in a newspaper row. He went on toward Boltman's house, determined to handle the affair by himself.

Boltman seemed surprised at seeing his morning's visitor again that day. The night city editor was dressed, Kentland noticed, in the checked suit of clothes that he always wore during his work down at the *Sun* office, and he wondered whether the other was getting ready to take up that night's duties as though nothing out of the way had happened.

Kentland motioned Boltman to a chair, closed the door behind him and, dropping into a chair himself, outlined the mad events of the night before. Then, without any delay, he drove straight to the point. In turn he showed the reading glass, the note containing the tip, and the manuscript.

The older man's face was a study of conflicting emotions as Kentland proceeded. Surprise, bewilderment, defiance, and finally, fear, flooded his somewhat stolid features.

Kentland was holding the two incriminating documents in his hand—one, a single paper—and one, a series of six sheets stapled together. Boltman sat on the edge of a chair not seven feet away. A look of sudden keenness came into the night city editor's eyes. Kentland caught the look and was wondering what it portended, when, with

a bound, the other was upon him, springing clear across the intervening space between the two chairs. The weight of his hurtling body overturned Kentland, his chair, and even Boltman himself; and Kentland found himself gasping on the floor, the night city editor's body flattened upon him, the latter's fingers clawing fiercely at the wrist of the hand which had held the two papers.

But Kentland had seen that look of cunning just too soon. With one motion of his fingers, he had crumpled the illiterate note into a compact ball, and, as he went down on the floor, he flung it from him with a quick, short-arm motion. The ball sailed clear across the bed to the floor on the other side. The manuscript itself—which could prove nothing, anyway—tumbled to the floor.

Boltman saw at once that the prize—the really important paper—the incriminating paper—had eluded him; he struggled fiercely to spring to his feet as though to get across the bed and regain it. But that was the exact motion that Kentland was prepared for, now that the other had shown his hand. With all his might, he tightened his arms about Boltman's struggling form, and the latter found that instead of holding the upper hand through being on top, he was himself at a disadvantage.

But slowly Boltman was tearing loose. Kentland realized that the moment the other should regain his feet, he was most assuredly going to leap across the bed, gain the ball of crumpled paper, and, with a few quick motions, either destroy it, tear it, or render it useless for the purpose Kentland had intended it.

He resolved on a desperate expedient. He relaxed his grasp altogether; that released Boltman completely. The latter staggered to his feet, swaying slightly, but ready to leap clear. Kentland with his left hand, raised his recumbent body halfway. He flung his other arm fiercely about the night city editor's calves. The other swayed for a second and then toppled over.

With a motion like a cat, Kentland rolled over and pounced on top. Boltman had lost his breath by his sudden and unexpected tumble. Evidently he had not presence of mind enough to fasten his own long arms about the man who a moment before had been underneath him.

Kentland saw his advantage. With a quick bound, he sprang off the prostrate form of the night city editor, and even as the latter struggled vainly to sit up, Kentland had jumped with one stride across the old-fashioned bed. He picked up the crumpled ball on the other side, and jammed it into his pocket.

As Boltman labored, gasping, to his feet, his face flushed and his eyes bright, Kentland stepped against the opposite wall of the room and drew out the revolver he had brought with him. "Back up, Boltman, back up!" he said. The other stopped short, daunted by the weapon which had so suddenly entered the game. "Don't go a step farther than where you are. In fact, you may as well back up clear to the phone over there, and call up Police 1313. Then ask for Hudson Avenue station, and tell Captain Shannon to come over here at once with two men."

The other gasped. His eyes shone forth a fear that was as plain as day; his lower lip trembled visibly as he spoke. "For God's sake, Kentland, don't—don't make me do that! Yes, I'm the one who sent in that tip last night, but if the police find it out, they'll railroad me, sure. I was a damn fool to take such chances; and just to help the paper! Don't let the police in on this. They'll railroad me sure, if I don't talk; and if I do talk —then the *Sun* will be ruled off the Chicago news stands!"

CHAPTER

XX

THE WEB TIGHTENS

KENTLAND looked at the other curiously for several seconds. Then he spoke: "No one is trying to railroad you, Boltman. You were rather decent to me this morning, but, beyond that, you're nothing whatever to me, and any favors I got from you, I had coming. I was kicked out of the *Sun* offices like a dog this morning, and so I'm quite sure that the *Sun* and Fornhoff are nothing to me. Just now I'm working for Jimmie Kentland, and no one else. It's up to you

either to talk or else to take a walk over to the Hudson Avenue station. Suit yourself. Which is it?"

The other was the picture of gloom; he dropped into a near-by chair, at which Kentland himself sank down on the opposite side of the bed. Boltman remained hunched in the chair for a few seconds, and then looked up: "You're right, Kentland. Why should I stand under the shadow of suspicion for Fornhoff or anyone else? But why call in the officials? If I tell you—if I convince you—will you be satisfied?"

"That's up to you entirely," replied Kentland. "I'll hear what you've got to say, and if you let slip any lies, it won't be hard for me to know it. It's up to you, friend Boltman."

"You bet it's up to me," the other replied. "I'm going to watch out for Tom Boltman now, and no one else. To hell with the *Sun!*" He paused. "Well, what do you want to know? Wondering what I was doing at Crilly Court last night, aren't you?"

"Yes. Also, who is Carl Fornhoff?"

"Carl Fornhoff? Well—to boil the thing down to plain English, he is—or was—the old man's son. They were estranged."

Kentland nodded: "I half suspected that much. Is he connected with the Crilly Court tragedy?"

"He is—and he isn't. Heaven only knows the truth of the affair. But he's the cause that set everything in motion that wound up in that old Persian's death there last night." He paused again. "Kentland, do you know what an Anarcho-Communist is?"

"Why—yes. He's a sort of—of Communist-extremist, who skates close to anarchy—to revolution, sabotage, and the whole works—for overturning capital. Believes, in short, in the forceful destruction of private property to attain the ends of true Communism and the abolishment of all law, if I'm not wrong."

Boltman nodded his head glumly. "Yes, you've got it. The *Sun* is a Socialist paper; but let me tell you, man, that the difference between Socialism and Anarcho-Communism—or even Socialism and Communism—or, for instance, even Communism and Anarcho-Communism—is as great as the distance between the poles. Carl Fornhoff, the old man's son, was just the type of mind to get drawn into the revolutionary miasma. Belonged, too, to all the extreme societies that we commonly term anarchists. He was a strange chap. Went in for painting, too, and became quite an artist, with a studio on West Center Street. But he was deep in the revolutionary stuff, and when the police here in town were tipped off

about two months ago that there was an organized plot brewing to dynamite the whole building and plant of the *Times-Star,* they came down and pounced on all the well-known anarchists, Communists, revolutionaries, and fiery, soap-box agitators here in the city, and they——"

"A plot to dynamite the *Times-Star* building?" exclaimed Kentland with a long-drawn whistle. "A regular replica of the old McNamara case in Los Angeles, eh? Is the *Times-Star* here——"

"Exactly," said the other, before Kentland had finished. "The Chicago *Times-Star* is one of the worst foes of organized labor in the country. Employs nothing but scabs in every department, and fights the revolutionaries—both the extreme ones and the law abiding new-radicals—unionism and every phase of political freedom, by unlimited cash, by editorials, and by every means in its power. It's just the old case of——"

"But about that plot to dynamite the buildings," said Kentland. "I never heard even a rumor of it in Omaha. Tell me about that."

"Yes, good enough reason you didn't hear of it, for the police never could prove it. And here's the big secret: Young Fornhoff was the brains and machinery of that plot. And when I say plot —I mean plot! A really completely worked-out

plan to fling into the teeth of the *Times-Star*—and all similar labor-employing institutions—that all the skillful precautions in the world were of no avail against organized anarchy. The directions in which the main I-beams in the big building ran, and their exact placements, were detailed in the plan; all obtained, of course, from the blueprints on file downtown in the building department. The rooms in which no occupants were present—at least at certain hours—were all listed together with such hours. The points where the heaviest stresses on the floors existed, were worked out. The names of employes who had licenses to carry revolvers were all listed. And their exact descriptions. The secret steel cabinets where the *Times-Star* machine guns were stored were designated on a special map. A couple of blind fire escapes were marked in red so that no dynamite planter would try to use 'em for a getaway. The places that every man in the proposed scheme was to be at the zero hour were mapped out; and where he was supposed to be at every minute after by his wrist watch. The amounts of explosive needed at different points —so as not to kill or maim workers in the adjoining buildings—were calculated pretty fairly. Descriptions of the men who were to destroy the *Times-Star* were given, with pass signals for

each; so that newcomers or substitutes in the plan wouldn't kill men actually in the plot." Boltman paused glumly. "Well, on account of certain things that have transpired, the old man knows that his son was the brains of that plot, and here, Kentland, is the funny thing about the case: On the day that the Chicago police got ready to pounce down on all the main revolutionaries here in town, Carl Fornhoff went out on a fishing trip in the Forest Preserves—the ones, that is, along the Desplaines River, out on the western outskirts of the city. They were waiting for him when he reached his studio that night, and they requested him to step down to the office of the Chief of Police. I happen to know that they grilled him and searched him there. They'd already searched his studio for the plans and letters and building diagrams—the thing, that is, that I've already described to you—for such were known to be in existence, since some sneak who had seen them actually assembled together—though in the hands of someone unknown to him—had peached."

"Did the police find the plans? Or any incriminating letters? Or data?"

"Not a trace of anything. When they took Carl Fornhoff up on his return from the Desplaines River that night, after the big roundup, there was nothing incriminating on him. They had to let

every one of their suspects go. The whole matter was hushed up in a hurry, for old Fornhoff himself, even though he was down on the boy for his extremely erratic views, would have brought a gigantic suit against them for false arrest and imprisonment of his son."

Boltman leaned over toward Kentland and lowered his voice: "The day that the police made the roundup, young Fornhoff sallied off on a fishing trip to a river where the fishing isn't worth a damn. He wore long boots, had a rod and reel, and a strong, metal tackle box that locked with a Yale key; but when he was taken up at the door of his studio that night, as he got back from the river, all he had was the rod and reel. The metal tackle box didn't come back with him."

"So you think the tackle box contained the fully worked-out plans and diagrams for the dynamiting, and that he hid it out along the Desplaines River?" asked Kentland.

"I not only think it but know it. Wait till you hear the rest of it, my friend." Boltman paused for a second. "It was a mighty good thing for the old man that the matter came out as it did; that the police and the *Times-Star* had nothing on his son. Can you imagine the results of an exposé that the son of a Socialist newspaper owner was involved in a plan to blow up a big, rival news-

paper plant? The Chicago public would have turned in a body against the *Sun;* the rival papers would have united against him; the *Times-Star* would have raised a fund to fight him to the last ditch. Why, man, not a news stand in town would carry the *Sun.* Do you see what the result of these plans worked out by the old man's son would have produced?"

"Mighty clearly," returned Kentland. "It would have meant the death of the *Sun,* and the ruin of Fornhoff as a possible political power in this town." He paused. "But how about the Crilly Court tragedy? I fail to see yet where it comes in."

"I'm coming to that now. When Carl Fornhoff died suddenly a couple of months ago, the old man, I believe, really heaved a sigh of relief in spite of his sorrow. He knew at least that it was the end of that ugly *Times-Star* conspiracy that had so nearly entangled him. But, lo and behold, Kentland, it popped up again yesterday afternoon in the shape of blackmail."

"Blackmail!"

"The same. Fornhoff was visited in his private office at two o'clock in the afternoon by a girl, as nice and pretty a young girl as you'd want to meet, but evidently a crook of some sort."

"Was she small and slim, with brown eyes and dark hair?" asked Kentland quickly.

"Yes," replied Boltman, "that would describe her. In a three minute interview, she informed Fornhoff that the location of a metal tackle box out on the banks of the Desplaines River was known to certain people, and that unless the sum of five thousand dollars was handed over to her—as agent—by that time next day in Fornhoff's home, the box would be dug up, the documents and letters given over to the *Times-Star* people, and the *Sun* killed as a newspaper. It was a smashing threat, you may be sure, for the public would never be able to dissociate the errors of Fornhoff's son from Fornhoff's own law-abiding, Socialist propaganda.

"With her interview ended," continued Boltman, "she nervously bowed herself out and disappeared. Fornhoff was all up in the air. He had just decided at the last minute to put in a bid for the *Cincinnati Herald,* and perhaps start a Socialistic organ in that town—and here something was threatening to expose and ruin him in this town. At any rate he decided to think it over on his way to Cincinnati last night, and, if there was no other way out, pay over the five thousand and get back those nasty documents that Carl had buried. But as he was about to leave for the airfield to catch that six o'clock plane to Cincinnati, something happened that changed all his plans."

CHAPTER

XXI

NEWS FROM THE OFFICE

BY THIS time Kentland was intensely interested. A team of wild horses could not have dragged him away from that room and the unnerved night city editor. To be sure, the case was still mystifying, but it seemed as though Boltman was rapidly reaching the facts that were to throw some light on the previous night's happenings.

"That something was an anonymous note," went on Boltman. "It was written in pencil and directed to Fornhoff's Drexel Boulevard home.

It was signed, 'A Friend to Justice.' It told him briefly that if he wanted to circumvent certain individuals who were blackmailing him, he should immediately secure a picture entitled 'The Man from Saturn,' of which there were two copies, one in the possession of a Dr. Stephen Watling, of No. 413 South Halsted Street, and one in the possession of an A. Mazurka, on Crilly Court; that one of those pictures held the secret of the blackmailing scheme."

Boltman paused for a minute, then continued: "Fornhoff gave up his Cincinnati trip—it would be a simple matter anyway of turning in the unused transportation and getting his money back—and went to this Doctor Watling's combined office and residence. He found a note on the door saying that the doctor was out on an indefinite call. From there he went to the Crilly Court shop, and found it was closed for the day. The Persian assistant—the one mentioned by the last newspaper out—must have locked up at around six o'clock, and gone back to the Persian settlement at Moody Church. But someone in the neighborhood told Fornhoff that the old proprietor of the shop lived back of the store, and came and went at all hours of the night; that on Wednesday night, the place usually lighted up around midnight.

"Then Fornhoff came here to me," Boltman went on. "He told me the whole story and asked me to co-operate with him on this mysterious message. I've known Fornhoff for twenty years, so I guess he knew he could trust me. I was feeling better about seven o'clock last night, and the cramps that had kept me home, seemed to have left me. Fornhoff asked me to make trips throughout the evening to the Crilly Court shop, to rouse the owner, if possible to see if there were such a picture in his stock, and to purchase it at any cost."

"But why did he believe so implicitly in this anonymous note that might well have been a hoax?" Kentland asked. "Also, why didn't he use his own time to trail back and forth from the curio shop?"

"Well, the note didn't read like a hoax. It was too damned specific as to persons and addresses. Then, too, another peculiar phase of the case is that Carl Fornhoff, at the time of his death on Center Street, was copying Durri's popular conceptions, and among his possessions that were auctioned off afterward were two 'Man from Saturn' paintings. In view of that, it was plain that there was something back of the anonymous letter. Someone was sincerely trying to tip Fornhoff off to valuable information. The reason he

asked me to take care of the Crilly Court end of the matter was that he was going to take all night, if necessary, to get in touch with this Doctor Watling."

"You went to the shop afterward, then?" Kentland asked. "And where does your tip come in?"

"I went to it at nine o'clock, ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, and midnight. Each time it was dark, and locked up both front and back. Shortly after one o'clock, I made the trip again. It was now brightly lighted. The front door was slightly ajar. I walked in. Well, I saw what you must have seen later, and it was a nasty sight. I took one look at the old fellow on the floor, at that slashed canvas over his head, and I marched out of the place on the double-quick, and got back to my diggings like lightning. I was in a blue funk, but I began to calm down. I couldn't make head or tail of it, but I saw that there was a big news story lying there for the poor old *Sun,* and it worried me."

"Didn't it worry you more to know that you were sending in something that might involve your employer?" asked the younger man.

"But can't you see," said Boltman fervently, "that it was only a question of a few hours before the police would discover it anyway? Nothing could stem the thing now. And there, if I cared

to act on it, was a hot, exclusive story for the paper. I hadn't heard from Fornhoff all this time, but I did what any red-blooded newspaper man would do. I wrote out an illiterate note on my machine, tiptoed out on the deserted streets, rang an A. D. T. boy, and sent him post haste down to our offices. Then I beat it back to my rooms here and waited to hear from Fornhoff. That's all."

Kentland was lost in thought for several minutes. The room was silent while Boltman stared moodily toward him. Then Kentland replied: "I believe you, Boltman. Your story rings true. The police might not believe it if they knew that you were at that shop early this morning to beg, borrow, steal, or purchase the same picture that was later found with its face slashed out. There's your serious predicament." He paused. "But what's your theory of the thing?"

"Heavens! I don't dare to form a theory. As to Fornhoff, I haven't heard from him all day. I've been waiting to hear his tap on the door or his voice at the phone, but not a word from him; and I tell you it's up to him to come here or phone me—I'll not go to him. In his silence, there's only one theory I can hold. Did Fornhoff himself go to the curio shop between midnight and one in the morning? Was the Persian tipped off by the

blackmailing ring not to part with that picture for any money? Did they quarrel and did Fornhoff's anger go too far? If he is not guilty of the deed, he may be thinking that I am the one who did it, and he's staying away in order not to involve or compromise me in any way. But I can't stand the suspense much longer. Unless he comes before another hour, I'll go straight to him and demand an explanation. I'll——"

A faint ring at the doorbell sounded through the walls of the room. Boltman stopped short, a startled look passing over his face. A second later, a tapping on the door sounded. He gave one dubious look toward Kentland, then stepped to the door and swung it open. In the opening stood Jeffrich, leaning jauntily on his cane.

"Howdy, Boltman," said the free lance. "Just came from the office, and thought I'd drop in on you on my way back to my room, and ask if you've heard the news. The old man had a paralytic stroke this morning at nine o'clock, and was taken home in an ambulance."

CHAPTER

XXII

THE MAN BEHIND

WHEN Kentland left Boltman's rooms, he headed straight for the downtown district, to put into execution a line of investigation that had been suggesting itself to him for several hours. As to the night city editor's story, he had no doubts regarding its truth; the one thing that troubled him was, whether, as Boltman suggested, Fornhoff himself had gone to the Crilly Court shop and carried his bargaining too far.

With two men of the temperaments of Ma-

zurka and Fornhoff, there was a big possibility that Boltman had hit the nail on the head; that the latter's story, if told to the police, might bring them down in a jiffy on the *Sun* proprietor.

Still more mysterious was the part played by the girl in the case. If she were Nell Hannaford, her presence was not fully explained by the new developments in the affair. Just such a person as this female underworld character was the one who would most readily enter into a conspiracy to blackmail a prosperous newspaper owner. Yet Kentland had his doubts.

The old explanation so rigidly constructed by Shannon seemed plainly to be crumbling rapidly away. Only one thing was certain now: the girl who had blackmailed Fornhoff, the girl who had been in the hospital, and one of the individuals who had been in the curio shop that night, as evidenced by the loose stone that fit her hair clasp, were all one and the same. But Boltman claimed that he had discovered the dead Persian shortly after one o'clock. It was nearly twenty minutes of three when he, Kentland, had run down the girl on Eugenie Street. If it were she instead of Fornhoff who had done it, had she lingered in the neighborhood and then returned, in accordance with the now untenable theory that involved the shipment of drugs from St. Louis?

For the time being, however, Kentland gave up any further speculation on the matter until he should be definitely blocked or aided in his new line of investigation.

He entered Marshall Field's big retail store, one of the long line of department stores that are on Chicago's "Great White Way." He made his way to the counter where hair clasps and such things are sold.

"Have you ever had in stock," he asked a sales girl, "a woman's hair-clasp carrying the representation of a peacock studded with green, red and white stones on the back of it? With the tail, that is, spreading from the closed or double end?" He showed her the exact shape and size by drawing an imaginary figure on the glass show case with his finger.

The girl shook her head when he had finished:

"No, sir, a hair clasp like that is rather out of the ordinary, and we'd remember it in an instant. They're called 'bobbie pins.' Not for the past year have we had anything like that. The nearest we've had to it is the ordinary clasp studded with a single row of clear rhinestones."

Nothing daunted, Kentland went from one big department store to another, until it began to look like a waste of time and energy.

As Kentland threaded his way through the

downtown crowds, back and forth among the scurrying people and the whirring vehicles, a man kept to his tracks like a leech, his troubled eyes riveted continually to Kentland's back.

In the second store, even before Kentland was halfway to the door, the silently dogging figure stepped hurriedly up to the counter and made an inquiry of the girl.

" 'As it perhaps been, mademoiselle, zat my frien' 'e 'ave yet stopped here to ask about som'-zing?" To which he added a hasty but most courtly bow.

The girl, evidently highly flattered to be called "mademoiselle" in this prosaic city and to be addressed by a cultured foreigner, gave the man a complete answer.

"If you mean a young guy with brown hair and steel-grey eyes, Monsoor, he wanted a lady's bobbie pin—that's a sort of a hair clasp—with a jewelled peacock on the back. But we hadn't nothing like that."

But now that the man had the exact information he desired, he was no longer the urbane Don Juan who had fished for information. For with a smothered exclamation, he hurried from the counter, and picked up Kentland's trail just as the latter passed through the revolving doors to

State Street, and immediately resumed his dogging tactics.

When Kentland stepped into the last department store that Chicago's downtown district boasted—and which called itself The Davis Stores—he met with his first hint of success in his search. The salesgirl recognized his description of the hair clasp at once. "Yes, indeed," she said. "We once had such a hair clasp in stock. They were a special imported lot and we held a sale of them some months ago. I happen to remember it, for the clasps lasted until four o'clock and then gave out."

"Were they for the most part deliveries or articles taken away by the customer?" asked Kentland, wondering if his new clue were to peter out suddenly on him.

"Mostly deliveries," the girl replied curiously. "The first lot gave out by ten o'clock and we took orders for the rest that were billed to us but not yet delivered."

"May I speak to your floor-man?" he asked.

The girl rapped on the glass counter with her pencil. When the floor-man stepped up, Kentland quickly turned back his coat, and displayed the Hudson Avenue badge that had so far proved quite a convenience. "I would like to have access to your delivery-ticket records of this department

on the day that this hair clasp sale took place." He then described the article.

"Certainly," said the floor-man after he had grasped the situation. "Just follow me to the auditing department where those things are filed away."

Kentland climbed up on a stool in the auditing department, and turned over the leaves of the records slowly. He paused a minute, appalled at the hugeness of the task which involved the separate investigation of all those names; then he plunged again into the work. Suddenly, as he turned over one of the stubs, he arrested his pencil and stared at a name, Yvonne.

Yvonne! A most characteristic name, without any doubt. A hasty glance at the last name, however, showed him that it was decidedly American: Yvonne Dale. Again he studied the word and, like a flash out of the dark, he perceived that the last three letters in the name were "nne." Did that "nne" in the bracelet left at the hospital by the brown-eyed girl correspond to the name "Etienne"? Or was it really part of the name "Yvonne"?

His face must have lighted up at his discovery, for the floor-man leaned over, his own face beaming with interest.

"I have a hunch," stated Kentland, "that I've

located my party. I'm much obliged to you, sir. I may have to look at these again, however."

"Don't mention it. Always glad to co-operate with the police. Some female crook, is it?"

Kentland vouchsafed no information beyond a shrug of his shoulders. With the floor-man he made his way down in the elevator. Then he forged straight to the big entrance. Before he reached it, however, the silent figure that had been watching and waiting stepped quickly to the floor-man's side and asked: "Pardone, monsieur, did my partnair—er—obtain ze information zat we desire?"

The "Monsieur" did not bring the same results that the "Mademoiselle" had produced back in the department store. The floor-man eyed the questioner sharply. "What information?" he asked, evidently waiting for the display of a police badge. "I'm sorry, my friend," he added, when no badge was shown, "but you'd better put your questions to your—er—partner."

The floor-man turned away. With a muttered imprecation, the other hurried after Kentland, whom he caught sight of striding up the street at top speed.

It was plain to the pursuer that his quarry had met with success in his search, for Kentland's manner unmistakably was that of a man with a

definite object and destination. At Van Buren Street the pursuer saw him skim up the steps of the elevated railroad, making for the westbound platform. The sight seemed to make the man desperate.

He ran back into the store, as far as the first telephone booth nearest the main door, and obtained a slug from the service desk close by. Entering the booth quickly, he nervously, fumblingly, dropped the slug in the slot and swiftly dialled a number. He waited.

A short delay, then the operator came in on the line; clear and distinct: "Sorry, the line you are dialling is out of order."

"Out of order!" he almost shouted. *"Le Bon Dieu!* Zis is ze Frenz consul speaking. You weel geef to me ze managair's office—at wonce."

French consul! It produced results! Immediately a clicking and buzzing ensued. Then a man's voice answered.

"Zis is ze Frenz consul speaking," the man in the booth began. "Fin' out, sair, eef you can get me a connection wiz Kedzie 1333 at wonce."

A short delay, then the answer came:

"Sorry, sir, but the Kedzie 1333 line is out of order. Probably won't be fixed till tomorrow."

The man in the booth dropped the receiver mechanically back on the hook. The late after-

noon sun, streaming from the high transom of the store door into the dark telephone booth showed a face that had suddenly become drawn and pale. He leaned, grim and desperate, against the door of the booth and tried to regain his composure. His dry lips moved as he muttered his thoughts. And solely in French. "Something—something must be done in a hurry." He paused and shook his head determinedly. "Yes," he repeated slowly, still in French, "I must get there first—somehow —some way."

As though suddenly galvanized into action, he strode from the booth, entirely disregarding the returned slug, and pushed his way forward to the store front, where he stepped out to the sidewalk and gazed up and down the street. Not a taxicab was in sight, and he knew there was no stand in the immediate vicinity.

As he stood there, chewing on his lips, a motor cycle chugged up to the curbing. It carried a blue-clad traffic officer, delegated to chase cars that were eluding the speed limit. Today, evidently, the latter was chasing a present for his lady faire —or perhaps a belated anniversary gift for a sulky wife—for he parked his machine at the curbing with an air of complete assurance that no man on earth would tamper with a motor cycle owned by the law and bearing various markings

and stampings designating it as belonging to the Chicago police department; and this done, he went inside the store.

At the sight of the huge, sturdy machine, the silent man's face lighted up as though by a sudden idea. He gave one cautious look at the blue-coated cycle owner whose broad back was just disappearing within the revolving doors of The Davis Stores; then, waiting just a further ten seconds or so, the man on the sidewalk slipped over to the machine, swung on, opened the gas throttle, threw in the clutch and, with a sharp snapping upward of the spring stand, shot north on State Street, narrowly missing an auto truck which was veering across the street.

It was clear that the man knew how to ride, for less than a minute later, he was west of the Post Office on Quincy Street, with its sparse traffic, and speeding like an arrow further westward toward California Avenue.

CHAPTER

XXIII

A PAIR OF BROWN EYES

THIRTY minutes after Kentland had left the department store, he walked up the steps of a bright red, four-story building out on California Avenue, the presence of a number of gaudy benches out on the weather-beaten porch and the single bell plate in the vestibule showing that it was a flat building converted into a rooming house.

In answer to his query as to whether a Miss Yvonne Dale lived there, a maid with Swedish

accent and a small, handkerchief apron directed him to go to the third floor rear and knock.

He ascended the carpeted inner stairs, traversed a couple of dark inner halls, and finally tapped on an old-fashioned door at the rear of the third floor. It was opened immediately and, even against the light that streamed into his face from the window, he saw that he was looking at the selfsame girl who only that morning had been lying on a bed in the Augustana Hospital, far over on the North Side.

She gave one look at him, then a little gasp escaped her. Silently she stood staring at him, apparently waiting for him to speak first.

"I am talking to Miss Yvonne Dale?" he said finally.

"Yes." It was almost a whisper. "Miss—Yvonne—Yvonne—Dale." He thought he detected a slight emphasis on the last word.

"May I have a word with you in private?"

With her hand still on her breast, where she had instinctively placed it when she opened the door, she stood aside and allowed him to pass in.

He found himself in a medium-sized room, well furnished, and with a piano against the opposite wall. Everywhere were the evidence of dainty femininity.

Slowly—almost fearfully, it seemed—she

closed the door and stood a few feet from it, watching him. "What—what—was it that you wanted to see me about?" Her accent was decidedly French.

He stared at her for several seconds before he spoke. More than ever he was impressed by the subtle charm of her appearance, by her dainty girlishness, by her eyes of soft and unfathomable brown. Suddenly he discovered that he wasn't quite sure of what he was going to say next; that he wasn't certain of the theory he had been constructing during the trip to California Avenue. Down in his heart, a peculiar something seemed to make him wish that he had not come; that everything he had built up would crumble away in a moment; and he knew then that his whole being was secretly rejoicing because once more he had found the girl of the hospital.

Finally he spoke: "Miss Dale; you and I have met before. Perhaps you do not remember me. You were lying in that North Side hospital in a daze when you first saw me. Possibly, therefore, you have no recollection of my face, but I have certainly not forgotten yours. Kentland—James Kentland—is my name. Last night, I was on the staff of the Chicago Morning *Sun*. Today"—here he turned back his coat and displayed the silvered badge—"I am connected, in certain re-

spects, with the Hudson Avenue station detective force."

He could see the color leave her face with a rush, her features blanching white. "There isn't much for me to say," he went on, wondering what she would reply when he had finished. "There was a murder last night on Crilly Court. It happened not long after a prominent newspaper owner here in this city was blackmailed. Shortly after that murder, you were run down in that vicinity; far away, it seems, from your own home. At the scene of that murder, a tiny stone was picked up, a stone which fits exactly a jewelled hair clasp you left at the hospital when you departed so suddenly. Through the letters on a bracelet and the delivery records of a department store which handled that special hair clasp, everything points to the fact that Miss Yvonne—Miss Yvonne Dale—was at the scene of that murder last night." He paused.

Her lips opened as though to speak; she wet them several times before she could find utterance. "And it is only a question of time"—he marked the preciseness of her French-accented English—"when the police will know that it was I who went yesterday afternoon to Mr. Fornhoff. Yes," she added wearily, "it is that everything has closed in on me at last."

A wave of feeling for the girl, for her air of utter desperateness and weariness, seemed to engulf Kentland suddenly. A mad impulse seized him at that instant to step over to her, to fold her in his arms like a child, to tell her that he, Jimmie Kentland, didn't give a rap who she was or what she had done; but that he would step back against the wall and fight the whole world for her if need be. The more he looked into those appealing brown eyes, the more his earlier stern resolution seemed to disappear like the rainbow in the sunshine. "Nothing has closed in on you," he said grimly. "Luckily, Jimmie Kentland, ex-reporter, fool, sentimentalist and what not else, has the connecting link between Crilly Court and this room on California Avenue."

More and more he was falling under the spell of those brown eyes. He dipped his finger slowly into his vest pocket and withdrew the red stone that fitted into the jewelled hair clasp earlier that day. "I feel, somehow," he said, looking at her kindly, "that you have been caught in the swirl of circumstances that were beyond your control. Maybe I'm wrong; it's just intuition on my part. I don't know what you were doing last night in the Crilly Court region: everything is too much for me. But this much I'll tell you: I've actually

met the counterpart of the dream-girl that has been in my mind for years."

He raised the tiny stone and held it between his thumb and index finger. "This stone is for you. It's the connecting link. It's yours. I'm off the case." He looked down at his vest, unpinned the Hudson Avenue badge, and slipped it into his vest pocket. "Jimmie Kentland, victim of sentiment—and perhaps accessory after the fact," he said to himself.

"You will give me that stone back?" she said, suddenly comprehending the import of his words. "You will really give it back and the police will not be able to prove that I was near there last night? You will do that for me, Meestair Kentland?"

He nodded. "Yes, because you are the type of girl that I have always dreamed of meeting; and I'm not going to meet you under the shadow of the law. I can't help believing in you. There's the stone." He stepped over to her and laid the tiny crystal in the palm of her hand.

"But do you realize that it was perhaps I who stabbed this man Mazurka last night?" she asked, looking him full in the face. "You are doing this for me—you are giving back to me that incriminating article—you will forget that you saw me in the hospital this morning—all—all because I

am the type of girl that you have thought that you would some day know?"

He nodded and bit his lips. He wondered vaguely if he had gone bereft of his senses, but he held fast to his sudden decision. "Even if I knew what ugly errand brought you to that spot last night," he said, "I believe that I would have done this thing that I never dreamed it was in me to do." He paused. "And probably day after tomorrow I'll be walking up and down Park Row, New York, wondering if I was a fool or if this was all a dream."

She watched him for a minute. He could see tears in her eyes. To Kentland, that was reward for everything—for years of struggle, worry and searching. She reached down into her bosom and withdrew a letter. Even as she raised it to take out its contents, he saw with surprise that it was postmarked with a French stamp. Without a word she handed him the single brief inclosure. His high school French was entirely out of use and rusty, but the simplicity of the wording allowed him to render a quick and easy translation. It read:

Somewhere in North Africa.
Via camel to Fez, Morocco.
Dear Mademoiselle Ricardin: I grieve

to inform you, as a friend and comrade to your brother Paul, that he fell yesterday, fighting valiantly in our encounter with Abd el-Hazar's forces attacking the Matilfa-Tikiri railroad line.

Laboulaye.

"I have had much trouble," she said as he looked up with surprise from the letter, "but, because of this letter which I have received only this veree morning, it may be that now my lips are unsealed. Perhaps it would be best that I tell you the truth."

CHAPTER

XXIV

YVONNE SPEAKS

A LENGTHY pause followed the girl's statement. Then Kentland broke the silence: "The truth, Miss Da—er—Miss Ricardin, is what I want to hear."

"Will you be seated?" she said sadly. "I do not speak with ease your English language. It is that I must pick my way so carefully among your words and phrases." She dropped into a chair when she saw that Kentland was waiting for her to seat herself first. "You know now that I am

not Miss Dale, but Mademoiselle Yvonne Ricardin?"

He nodded: "Yes, I suspected that all along. From this note I see that you had a brother, Paul Ricardin. Then what connection with the two of you is—or was—the Captain Ricardin who died in London some years ago?"

She shook her head: "Captain Etienne Ricardin did not die in London; no one ever saw him die there. That was just a false story from the English papers. Even I—and he was my uncle—believed as did others, that he was dead; and when I came to your country to earn my living by teaching the new French voice-efficiency methods for singing in front of the microphone, I took the American name of Dale. You see, my mother was an American girl, and that was her name; and I felt that the steegma of the Ricardin scandal would attach to anyone of that family. Perhaps it was well that I did, for after I had been here one year I was to learn that the uncle who had disgraced that name of Ricardin in France was still alive.

"It was one day," she continued, "that I was walking through the Loop on business, when I came face to face with him, with the man who was supposed to be dead. Captain Etienne Ricardin, my uncle! How changed he was! No mili-

tary uniform; no army mustache; no traces of the bearing such as had characterized him in those days when he had held up his head in the French Army, both before and after that Great War which took place when I was a baby girl. But I knew him instantly, for had I not grown up in Paris for years near him?

"He knew that I recognized him and he followed me home to this same room here, where he told me never to mention to a soul that he was alive, for he had changed his name, and Captain Etienne Ricardin was dead to the world. He even threatened that if I did, he would ruin Paul, my brother, a lieutenant in the French Army—then —like as now—engaged in North Africa in protecting the advance of the new French railways over Morocco and Algeria. And you may be sure —oh, so sure, Monsieur Kentland!—that I would never have told his secret."

Kentland leaned forward in his chair: "In what way could he have ruined your brother? I am beginning to see daylight in this affair. This man had you in his power in some way. Was it through your brother?"

"Oh, it is such a terr-ee-ble thing to talk about," she said, her face crimsoning, "but I have said that to you I would tell the truth, and I shall do so. Paul—Paul—had been gambling before

the Ricardin scandal. And was veree, veree badly in debt. He was then, like my uncle, in the Division of Military Defense at Paris, for things were all quiet in Morocco and Algeria. And even the Foreign Legion had nothing to occupy itself with in North Africa. He had the confidential poseetion he did have, for the reason that he had big connections in the French military service—for our name is an old, old one in Paris. He—he was approached by the same foreign agents who later dealt with others—or at least, one other—in that affair. And I may say too, now, that they were Italian agents—and not German. Agents of Bersolino, Italy's Minister of War. And that German spy later captured in Paris had what *he* had only because Germany purchased from treacherous employes in the Italian War Department a copy of the thing that was stolen originally from France, which was a map showing the locations and electrical connections of those—they call them 'relay'-boxes—buried for many hundreds of kilometres about Paris." The girl paused a moment. And then went on. "Well, these Italian agents, acting through a chief agent named Fabrianno, went to Paul first, and not to my Uncle Etienne. They promised him money—much money—if he would make them a complete copy of this paper that was in the archive vaults, and

which Paul could call out of the vaults insomuch as he was the temporary acting *directeur* of the electrical branch of the defense corps. That is, I mean to say he was in a perfect position to call for it through his Uncle Etienne, because his Uncle Etienne had access to *all* such papers, such like that, and like the aerial defense of Toulon and the French Riviera, all because of their bearing on strategy. Or is it tictacs you call it?"

"Both," Kentland told her dryly. And then asked curiously: "But could Italian agents have trusted implicitly in the genuineness of such a paper—as they expected your brother Paul to deliver to them?"

"Oh—yes," she replied helplessly. "It would be easy enough—so I onderstan'—for zem Italian spies to substantiate that—what you call it—genuineness—of such a map, jost by detection instroments placed above the lines where current was supposed to be flowing—and above the magnets, too, in those hidden 'relay'-boxes—the real boxes, zat is. And so zey—forgive my pronunciation—*they*—not *zey!*—they put it up to Paul. Paul believed, I will say, that in this modern age a war would be fought only by air. That roads would never be used again. That such a system of defense was, of course, wrong. Oh, Monsieur Kentland, he was driven to the wall. He did en-

ter into agreement to make and sell a copy of that paper, and even filed an engineer's *réquisition*—requisition, you term it—which had then to be—what you call it?—O.K.'d by his uncle: but Paul came to his senses before it was too late, and canceled that *réquisition.* And became criss-crossed—no, I guess that word is double-crossed—by his own uncle! Who got tried a year afterward and driven from Paris—which is exactly what would have happen' to Paul if he had gone through wiz the scheme. And——"

"But how," Kentland found it necessary to interrupt, "was your brother in the power of Captain Rica——"

"I am coming to that point so best like I can," the French girl continued. "Paul maybe made a mistake that he did cancel his *réquisition* for that paper. For that made it look only as though he did not have very important engineering reason for viewing it. Or was scared of somezing. And Uncle Etienne was a smart man. And a bitter man, too, because in ze Great War he did not get the high honors he thought he ought to have. When Paul canceled that *réquisition,* he alone smelled a—a rodent, as it is called. He called Paul up on the telephone and bloffed him. That is, I think, the American word. Bloff. We don't have exact word like that in French. *Duper* is

the nearest word we have to your 'bloff.' He told Paul that he—Paul—was onder surveillance, at that very moment. Sospected of holding traffic with one of France's enemies. And that the French secret police were about to close down on all foreigners in Paris to try and fin' some foreign agent who was reported to have com' there with moch money. He tol' Paul that only if Paul immediately co-operated with him could he save his skin. That Paul should write him immediately a letter, giving him full details about this agent—the name the agent was going under—his whereabouts—and how far negotiations had gone. And that he, himself—for the honor of the Ricardin family—would see that that agent was warned immediately to leave Paris quickly—before French police closed in on him.

"Paul believed in Uncle Etienne. And was frightened as well. And wrote him all these details. And mailed the letter. But kept away from the War Department building for the time being. And what did Uncle Etienne do but go straight to zis Italian agent—and arrange himself to sell zat map—but for twice the sum that had nearly tempted poor Paul. But Uncle Etienne had—what you call it?—tough luck! Tough—that means bad, doesn't it? Yes, he had bad luck. Veree. For he got arrested subsequently, but jost

because the Italians were careless and let the Germans steal a copy of that precious paper. And a German was picked up with information he should not ought to have had. And things were traced back, point by point, by point. Directly to an incident where Uncle Etienne had withdrawn the paper, with old General d'Auvergne's O. K. And Uncle Etienne got tried for betraying French military secrets. But, during his great trial—the trial in which he was court-martialled out of France—he never produced that letter Paul wrote him, for it would have done no good whatever to his own case. He was too much incriminated himself, as it was. And to produce soch a letter would only have made his defense worse, for the Military Tribunal would have asked him why—since his nephew *had* given him soch information—he hadn't turned it over to the Intelligence Department. And when I left France for America, and Paul told me on his bended knees about the terr-ee-ble treachery he had so nearly committed, we decided together that that letter no longer existed; that it must have been destroyed by Captain Ricardin when he died in London. He——"

"But Captain Ricardin, after he recognized you downtown, informed you that he still had this letter? That if he should send it to the French

Military authorities, Paul would be court-martialled out of the Army? Am I right?"

She nodded: "All of that. Paul—Paul—would have been shot against a wall conseedering the recent threats that Italy has issued against La Belle France. So I did not dare to cross my uncle in anything. Oh, can you imagine what followed? For Uncle Etienne had lost all the money he had gotten for that map. For he now used me for a—a source of income. I could not begin to tell you the nomber of times he came to me, and left, with my money, ostenseebly borrowed, but in reality, taken on the threat of sending that letter to France—of ruining Paul?"

"The dirty dog!" Kentland muttered under his breath. "But your brother has expiated his crime—that is, his thought of a crime—by a hero's death on a far-away North African battlefield. Nothing can hurt him now."

"No, not now," she said, sadly. She paused, lost for a moment. Kentland made no attempt to arouse her. But suddenly she collected herself and went on: "I soon saw that I was in the hands of what you call a darkmailer, and that he would continue to darkmail me forever on. But yesterday he came to me with a proposeetion—a proposeetion in which he said he would turn over

that letter to me and leave Chicago for good. He——"

"So—ho!" remarked Kentland, quickly. "I believe I can fill in your story for you. He told you that after he had come to this country incog, he had become acquainted with one Carl Fornhoff, a so-called revolutionary? And anarchist?"

She nodded wonderingly.

"And that he and young Fornhoff and others had been involved in an anarchistic scheme to dynamite the *Times-Star* building? Jove, I can readily imagine that, after his military trial, your Captain Ricardin must have bitterly hated all law and order, all the artificial things of modern society. Did he tell you that young Fornhoff had died suddenly, before the scheme had gone through; that the plans were supposedly buried by the young anarchist out on the banks of the Desplaines River; that those same plans could be used to mulct his father out of money?"

"You are correct, Monsieur Kentland," she said. "You have, in some way, struck the nail on his head," she added, trying to use idiomatic English. "I do not see how you knew this, but that is what he told me. And he ordered that I should go to this Monsieur Fornhoff and negotiate the darkmail of five thousand dollars, for which I was to receive back the letter. After all, what was

this man Fornhoff to me? Or his money? All that mattered to me was that Paul, my dear brother, should not be ruined by a rascal."

"Let me interpose another question," said Kentland quietly. "Did he tell you why he had not gone to this older Fornhoff sooner than yesterday with his information about the incriminating *Times-Star* documents? Carl Fornhoff has been dead for over a month."

"He told me all," she explained. "He was flushed with the thoughts of the power that had so suddenly come to him. He realized that I dared not betray either his identity or his plans, for he knew how I loved Paul. Yes, there was an odd thing about the sudden plan on his part to dark-mail this Monsieur Fornhoff. Only yesterday morning had Captain Etienne Ricardin received a letter. It proved, Monsieur Kentland, to be a note from some artist, who now occupied the studio which formerly was occupied by Carl Fornhoff on Center Street. It told that the inclosed addressed letter was found back of a loose mantel, where it had apparently dropped.

"With the note," she went on, "was a stamped, addressed, sealed letter to my uncle from young Carl Fornhoff. In it, the latter told him—in some sort of code, of course—that he felt a disquieting suspeecion that the police had word of the *Times-*

Star conspeeracy; that they were about to jump down on him for his revolutionary acteevities. He went on to say that he dared not risk any more letters, but that he was going next day to the Desplaines River to bury the plans in a box, which Captain Ricardin could later dig up and proceed to act upon with the other members of the anarchistic group. And he, Carl Fornhoff, could then maintain a perfect al—ali—what you call it?"

"Alibi," corrected Kentland. "And did the letter state how the captain was to find this box?"

"Yes," Yvonne replied. "My uncle was confident enough in his power over me to tell me that the secret was connected with a picture that Meestair Carl Fornhoff had declared would come to him by citee express a few days later; a picture of a man from Saturn. But more than that he would not say. But he was confused in his mind as to which of two pictures was the one that Carl Fornhoff had intended to send him."

"I see," Kentland said. "I happen to know that Carl died rather suddenly at his studio, shortly after the day he left on a fishing trip. And it's evident that the letter he had intended to mail disappeared by slipping back of the loose mantel in his studio. I know that when they sold out his effects, there were two copies of this 'Man from

Saturn,' both of which went through the marts of trade. So it seems rather plain now that your persecutor, Captain Etienne Ricardin, could not determine which of the two paintings was the one which was to have come to him by city express. And neither, I presume, did he know where the two paintings were."

"No, Monsieur Kentland, that is where you are wrong. Captain Ricardin had already made inquiries by phone, and had learned that Carl Fornhoff's effects had been sold in one lot to Monsieur Leitzinger, in the Loop. He was lucky enough to catch the old man as he was leaving for Elgin to attend another sale of paintings. In that way my uncle learned that one picture had been sold to a Doctor Stephen Watling, and the other to Mazurka. Is that quite plain now?"

"Fully so," Kentland replied. "I see your reason for going to Fornhoff, and I can't say that I blame you in the least. You were trying to protect yourself—and yours—to get back that letter. But listen, my dear girl: Do you know that several hours after you left old man Fornhoff's office, he received a note at his house, tipping him off to get those two pictures?"

"Tip-tip-tipping him off? That I do not understand exactly. But it was I, Monsieur Kentland, who sent that note."

CHAPTER

XXV

"EXTRY POIPER!"

KENTLAND looked at the girl in astonishment. Here was a turn in her story for which he was not prepared. "So you sent that note?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Monsieur Kentland," she went on. "I sent that—that tip, as you call it. Captain Ricardin came back to my room here after I left Fornhoff's. I told him that I had carried out my part of the bargain, and asked him for that letter. He refused to give it to me; he hinted that he had

further, bigger plans in view. He even laughed at me. After he left, something came over me; something seemed to tell me that forever and forever would I be under his thumb; that never would I be free from that darkmailer. I am only a woman—a woman of emotions like other women. I determined that Captain Ricardin should not carry out his scheme on this man who owned the newspaper. I sent Monsieur August Fornhoff a letter, written as best I could in your English. In it I told him what to do not to have to pay over that money."

"And what," Kentland asked curiously, "was the cause of your trip to Crilly Court?"

"That I shall explain," Yvonne answered. "I could not sleep last night, thinking of the injustice that was being done to me by that man. It was one o'clock in the morning when I sat suddenly upright in bed, a thought gripping me forcibly. Why had not I myself secured the oil paintings which contained the secret of the location of those *Times-Star* plans? Surely, I reflected, some of those papers would have involved my uncle as well as Carl Fornhoff. And I could have turned the tables on him and forced him to return the letter that concerned Paul. How careless I had been, to be sure, not to have seen where my own power lay.

"You may be sure, Monsieur Kentland," she continued, "that I arose at once and dressed. It was quite poseeble that Monsieur Fornhoff had not acted upon my note; perhaps he had deferred it till tomorrow; perhaps he had thought it a ho-ho-hoax, I think you call it. I tiptoed downstairs and found by the telephone directory in the hall that this Mazurka had his reseedence and business at the same address. Even late as it was, I copied off Doctor Watling's address for later use; then I went out and took the cars, determined to rouse this Mazurka and purchase the picture from him. After that, of course, would I have gone to the Doctor Watling. But you know the rest, no doubt. It was nearly half-past two, I guess, when I found the store lighted and the front door slightly open. I walked in, surprised. Oh, that terreeble sight—the dead man on the floor! I was halfway across the room when I saw it. One look and I backed away—anything to get out of the place! I closed the door after me and fled out into the night—down Crilly Court—past the elms—and suddenly something seemed to whir at me out of the blackness. When I woke up, I was in a hospital bed. You know it all now, and, monsieur—do you believe me?"

"Every word," said Kentland. "I know a lie

when I hear one." He paused for a second. "Now there remains only one question that I'd like to ask. When that is answered, everything will be cleared up regarding your own connection with the case. How do you account for that red stone falling from your hair clasp at just the point to involve you?"

"That is veree simple, Monsieur Kentland," she replied. "When I backed away in horror from that tereeble thing on the floor, some invisible hand seemed to reach down and pull my hair clasp from my hair. A second later it dropped on the hard wood floor and bounced a couple of feet. One of the brass hooks that hold the glass preesms, which hang so low in that shop if you have notice', had caught upon my hair clasp—probably on the part holding the peacock tail—and had drawn the arteecle out. It is a wonder that the blow from its fall did not knock more stones out than it did. In spite of my terror, I stooped and recovered it before I left the place." She paused. "And now, Monsieur Kentland, is it all plain?"

"All clear now," he agreed, "that is, all but the matter of the pictures. Your uncle, Captain Etienne Ricardin, went to the Crilly Court shop after midnight, and quarreled with the old Per-

sian over the price of that oil painting. I imagine he showed his eagerness too much, and the old boy boosted the price far above his purse. On the other hand, Mazurka may not have wanted to argue with him, because he was expecting an important visitor within a few minutes on a crooked deal that meant lots of money. But now," he went on, looking at the girl, "it's going to be up to you, Miss Yvonne. Do you know where this Captain Ricardin is living?"

"No," she answered reluctantly; "that is the one thing he would not tell me!"

Kentland frowned.

"That is too bad! Undoubtedly, your uncle has the picture stolen from Mazurka. I wish we could get that picture, Miss Ricardin. But suppose your uncle's efforts were in vain—suppose the Mazurka picture was the wrong one? Miss Yvonne, before we do anything else, we are going straight to Dr. Watling's. I'm curious to see if the doctor's copy is still there. Afterward, you and I must decide on our course of action, and I'm afraid, my dear girl, that you will have to tell your story to the police."

Without a word she stepped to her dresser and took down a natty little pancake hat of soft, black straw, that made her eyes look blacker than ever.

"You are right, monsieur," she said. "You have believed me and I am ready to do whatever is right and just."

Kentland picked up his hat and led the way to the door. On the street he hailed a taxicab.

It was seven o'clock and almost dark when the machine shot up to the door of No. 413 South Halsted Street. Kentland led the way into the dingy hallway of the building that had housed Dr. Watling, the indicted physician. Hastily pinning back on the lapel of his vest the Hudson Avenue badge that not an hour and a half ago he had removed, he rang the janitor's bell.

A cadaverous-looking man in overalls, his face bearing a two days' growth of beard, answered. "You're the janitor of this building?" asked Kentland hurriedly. He turned back the lapel of his coat, displaying the badge. "I want to have a look in Watling's apartment."

The other stared surlily at him: "The cops looked the place over this morning and I thought they was done. The guy's skipped, all right, so I s'pose I might just as well take you up there." He fumbled in his pocket for a bunch of keys. "Follow me," he directed.

"Wait for me outside," Kentland whispered to Yvonne, as the janitor turned for a second to close the door that led down the basement stairs.

Then he followed the other up to the first landing. The janitor unlocked the door, walked in and snapped on the lights.

One glance was enough to show that the former occupant had left in a hurry after hearing of his indictment. Drawers were pulled out and miscellaneous papers were tumbled in a pile in the center of the floor. The glass instrument rack was empty; the pigeonholes of a small desk were depleted of their contents. Even a small medical cupboard which had contained drugs was open and only a few empty glass jars were left on its shelves. Without doubt Doctor Watling had cleaned out all the things necessary to his profession, and had skipped the city just in time.

Kentland lost no time in gazing about the walls. The man had furnished his small office with some degree of expense, for several oil paintings hung around the sides of the room. But what seized Kentland's attention the most was the bizarre painting that hung over in the shadows of one corner. "Man from Saturn" was the title painted in small letters on the bottom of it. As in the other, a signature had been added, and when Kentland strode nearer to it he could see that it was the one word "Durri." While the frame was different, the picture itself was the same size as the one in the Crilly Court shop. It consisted of a

fantastic head covered with bright green skin, with two short, protruding white tusks, with only the faintest semblance of a nose or nostrils, and with great, yellow eyeballs from which sparkled two tiny pupils of fiery red. As in the other oil painting, it had speckled horns protruding from the top of it, and a long, seven-fingered hand just visible in the foreground, as though about to grasp the frame and help its owner to leap from picturedom into the great terrestrial world.

Kentland immediately stepped over to it and took it down. The janitor watched him through narrow eyes. The younger man turned to him: "I'm going to take this picture away with me, my friend. If you feel that there's any chance of your getting into trouble on account of it, I'll leave a deposit with you so as to protect you. But we want it for a time." He reached down into his pocket. "How much deposit do you ask?"

The other bit on his upper lip: "You cops are queer ones. I don't suppose the Doc will ever show up again—but if he does, then I'll have to account for his stuff. The picture was bought at an auction downtown, he told me; paid fifteen or sixteen bucks for it. Let me hold a twenty-spot and I'll let it go out of here. I got to perteck myself."

Kentland did not argue. He drew two ten-dollar bills at once from his pocket. Then he wrapped up the picture in a large piece of newspaper, wrote out a receipt—taking care to sign it just "James Kentland," and not "Police Department"—and left the deserted office. The janitor snapped off the lights and followed him as far as the vestibule, where he disappeared into the subterranean regions with a new conception of policemen in general, a conception which held the view that the machinery of their brains was composed of many loose, revolving disks.

"And now, Monsieur Kentland," asked the girl when they reached the street, "where are we to go?"

"To get something to eat," he replied smiling. "I'm nearly starving. Then we shall return to your apartment. I want to investigate this picture."

As Kentland stepped to the curb in search of a taxicab, a newsboy came by, shouting: "Extry! New mystery in Crilly Court murder! Extry!"

Tossing the boy a nickel, Kentland snatched a paper, and there, strung across the sheet in black headlines, were the words:

NOTORIOUS CHARACTER PLUNGES TO DEATH

Captain Etienne Ricardin, of the French Ricardin Scandal, Skids Over the Bridge Parapet at Quincy Street Shortly After Four O'clock. Identified by Papers on His Person. Police Make Strange Discovery on Body.

CHAPTER

XXVI

AN EXPERIMENT

WHOLLY oblivious to the curious glances of passers-by, Kentland leaned against an iron railing near by, and cast his eye wildly over the front page for the details. In an instant he saw that the story had broken just at the time the edition was going to press, for the whole information was confined to the narrow paragraph at the edge—the "Drum" paragraph, as it was known. Set in small capitals, glaring in cheap red ink, not even proofread, so late had they been tele-

phoned in, were the remainder of the details. They ran:

> The body of an intrepid motor-cyclist who plunged thirty feet into the Chicago River from the east approach to the Quincy Street turn-bridge at four o'clock to-day, proved to be that of the notorious Captain Etienne Ricardin, of the French Ricardin military scandal. Water-soaked letters found in his clothing established the identity of the man in military circles thought dead. Life was extinct when the entangled body and machine were fished from the river bottom by the crew of the tugboat, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. The cycle was a B-311 Police Department traffic-officer's motorcycle, and had been reported by officer John Tilroy as having been stolen from in front of the Davis Stores where he had parked it for a couple of minutes. Why Ricardin stole it is not known. It was at first supposed that he lost control of the machine, but onlookers to the fatal plunge declare that full brakes were jammed on the motorcycle after the driver discovered that he could not make the bridge before it opened to allow the oar boat *City of Duluth* to pass. The asphalt approach to the bridge was wet and slippery, and the

guard chain, as usual, was not drawn across the street. A mystifying feature of the occurrence is that the complete face of a painting owned by the Crilly Court art dealer, supposed to have been murdered by a police character known as Nell Hannaford, was found concealed between Ricardin's chest and underclothing. Being quite undamaged by its immersion in the water, the painting was readily identified. As this edition is going to press, the body is being taken to the Central Morgue downtown where reporters are being sent. Further details in following issue.

Twice Kentland read the crude article over before he could fully realize its import. Then one sentence seemed to stand out from the paper: "Being quite undamaged by its immersion in the water, the painting was readily identified." So Captain Ricardin had secured what he had gone after. It was complete, undamaged by its immersion. Kentland closed his eyes and harked back to certain knowledge gained in his early youth.

But now he suddenly remembered the girl waiting at his side. He noticed that they were standing directly in front of a drug store and he could see that the small tables inside were deserted. Taking the wondering girl by the arm, he led her

into the place and seated her at one of the tables.

Then he showed her the paper. "This is printed in English," he stated. "But I think you'll be able to understand it. Read it. It tells that your persecuter, Captain Ricardin, reached the unexpected end of his worthless life not over two and a half hours ago."

"Reached the end—" she repeated. "Dead!" She stared unbelievingly at him. Then she seized the paper, and Kentland could see her lips silently moving as she slowly read the article, digesting each word as she translated it into her own tongue.

Finally she looked up at him. "Monsieur Kentland, I do not hardly believe it, but yet it must be true. The world has been rid of one veree bad man. Is it not best that it was so?"

He nodded: "It was all for the best. He'd have burned in the electric chair for it sure, for he never could have escaped the police after they had heard your story. And then the smudges of enamel—on the lance handle. Those smudges doubtlessly contained portions of his finger prints. Yes, he was hemmed in most assuredly. But now, my dear girl, you will not have to talk to them. He himself has accidentally cleared it up so far as they are concerned, but I am going to call up the

Hudson Avenue station just to find out how much they know."

He rose, entered the telephone booth and dialled the number. The unmistakable voice of the little police captain at Hudson Avenue answered.

"This is Jimmie Kentland. Have you heard the news, Captain? About the man Ricardin?"

"Say, you're a wise one, you are!" came back the other quickly. "Mc Gee, that Yellow taxi driver you hired last night, blew into the station this afternoon, and told us about the girl you run down near Crilly Court." He laughed rather bitterly. "Believe me, my smart boy, it wasn't five minutes before we had a man over to the hospital and got your clue that you hoped to work on."

"And what clues were—er—clue was that?"

"That gold bracelet with the name Ricardin in it. I don't get the connection even yet, but it fits right in with the name of the guy who skidded off the Quincy Street bridge approach this afternoon."

"You're right, Captain. I thought I'd work my own clues, that was all. But what about the hair clasp?"

"Couldn't make anything of that," said the police official. "It was the bracelet that held the clue."

Kentland smiled into the transmitter. Perhaps it was well that Shannon didn't see that smile.

"Well, Captain Shannon," he said, "I guess I failed to make good. How about the picture found on Ricardin? Have you any idea why he wanted it?" Kentland held his breath waiting for the answer.

"We haven't figured that out yet," said Shannon, "but we're on the job, and we'll know fast enough. It might interest you to know that Nell Hannaford was picked up in Chinatown late this afternoon. Had a perfect alibi for all of last night. When they pulled her up on the carpet, she explained that she'd had a hunch not to go near that Crilly Court shop last night. Good thing, too, for her. She might have burned for it." He paused for a second. "Well, my boy, drop in tomorrow and return that badge you—ahem—snitched. You're a joke as a copper, and hereafter I'll stick by my own dicks."

Kentland laughed and hung up. Then he rejoined Yvonne.

"The police know nothing about the picture or its secret," he said gravely, "and I have hopes of keeping it from them. We are going to Fornhoff's. I have some theories, Miss Yvonne, that I want to put to a test. If they're wrong, I'm out just twenty dollars."

He led the way from the store and they hailed another cab. Twenty minutes later they ascended the steps of a big, brownstone residence on Drexel Boulevard. When they were admitted, a nurse in white uniform came forward.

"How is Mr. Fornhoff?" Kentland asked. "Is it possible for us to see him a few minutes on a very important matter?"

The nurse looked at him dubiously. Then she stood aside. "He's very much better and resting quietly. Just step this way."

Quietly they proceeded across the heavy, velvet carpet, the nurse in the lead, Kentland going second, still carrying his precious package, and Yvonne following curiously, silently. The nurse threw open the door of a large bedroom and beckoned them in. "Two visitors, Mr. Fornhoff," she announced.

Fornhoff was lying in bed, propped up on pillows, an ornamental, colored glass lamp throwing a subdued light over the rich furnishings of the room. He looked toward the doorway as they entered. "Kentland!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?" Suddenly he caught sight of Yvonne. "You—you—!" he ejaculated. "Is—is this more blackmail?"

"Not in the least," returned Kentland. He stood at the side of the bed while the nurse stared

at him. "May we have a little talk with you in private? What I have to say will be good news."

The sick man stirred on the bed. He looked toward the nurse: "Nurse, give us a few minutes alone, if you will. Return as soon as I ring."

She opened her mouth as though to object, but turned quietly on her heel instead, and left the room.

"And now," said Fornhoff, curiously, "what do you people want of me?"

Kentland drew over the two chairs. Then, as briefly as possible, he related the whole story, beginning with the anonymous tip of the early morning, and concluding with his visit to Yvonne and her strange story of the man who had held such a complete sway over her.

As Fornhoff listened attentively, the hard lines in his face passed away, and his countenance grew kindlier, more sympathetic; and several times he looked toward the silent, dark-eyed girl with a peculiar light in his own eyes. When Kentland finished, he thrust out his hand: "Kentland, I owe you an apology above everything else. I was panic-stricken this morning when I read those headlines, and found that James Kentland, of my own paper, had gone out on that story. I believed absolutely that Boltman had killed the man, and I felt almost guilty myself. I felt too, that if the

thing had only been left undiscovered until morning, then there was a chance that the police would never find out the truth, since the quicker they reach the scene of a crime, the quicker they can solve it. But on account of your taking the thing hot off the reel last night, I felt sure that the whole matter would come out."

He paused. The long speech had evidently been an effort for him. He gazed curiously at the bundle in Kentland's hand: "And you say that a certain feature of Captain Ricardin's death leads you to believe that he was unsuccessful in his quest? And you have the Doctor Watling picture that I couldn't get hold of?"

Kentland nodded. He tore off the newspaper wrappings, exposing the hideous face of the Saturnian man. "Yes, and I hope we'll find shortly that we have the right picture." He looked up. "Now," he directed, "will you summon the nurse? I've a theory that I'm going to put to a test."

CHAPTER

XXVII

THE THREADS OF FATE

FORNHOFF wonderingly reached over and tapped the bell at his side. Kentland continued with his explanation: "When I was a kid, Mr. Fornhoff, I had an ambition to be an artist, and my father used to sink a goodly bunch of money in paints, oils, brushes and what-nots for me. It was in that way that I learned that there are not only oil paints to be used on canvas, and water colors to be used on paper stock, but also——"

The nurse stepped into the room. Kentland looked over toward her. "One bowl of warm water," he said, "and a sponge or a handful of medical gauze."

She withdrew and Kentland resumed: "But there's a third kind of paint known as 'tempera.' It's an opaque water-color paste, and not an oil, but it's used for painting directly on canvas as with oil paints. In fact, Mr. Fornhoff, it's impossible for any ordinary person to tell the difference between a painting made on canvas with tempera water-color paste, and one made in oils; except, perhaps, for a very fine difference in the glaze, almost too slight to be detected.

"Now," he went on, "suppose that your son, Carl, had had this copy of the Durri nearly finished in oils, all but some part. Suppose, too, that it was at that time that he came to the conclusion that he was suspected of being involved in the *Times-Star* conspiracy, at which he buried the tackle box with the dynamiting plans out on the Desplaines River. We'd agreed that he had already determined it would be too risky to write any more letters, and so arranged to send the location of that tackle box, after he should bury it, to Captain Ricardin. Of course, the location was concealed in such a way that no one but Ricardin, who knew just how it was to come, could dis-

cover it. Unfortunately for the latter, though, the explanatory letter, through being sidetracked, reached him a month too late. But to get back to Carl. Would he have painted the location on the unfinished portion of the canvas in black oil strokes? Strokes, that is, of black oil-paint thinned just sufficiently with turpentine so as to leave the mesh of the canvas susceptible to taking further, aqueous pigment—such as tempera? If so, did he not then paint entirely over these oil strokes in tempera?"

"Sounds reasonable," commented Fornhoff, leaning on one elbow.

"If this is so," said the younger man, "it might be that——"

Here the nurse entered the room bearing a long strip of medical gauze and a bowl of water, from the surface of which clouds of steam were rising. She placed them on a near-by stand which had been covered with an asbestos mat.

"You can go for a minute, Nurse," the big man directed.

As she left the room for the second time, Kentland crumpled up the long strip of gauze, dipped it in the hot water, and with a wide stroke, rubbed it across the face of the painting. Nothing happened. He re-wet his cloth, and continued with

the rubbing process, exerting a little more pressure.

Suddenly, however, the fiery red pupils of the eyes disappeared in a red smudge. Then the great yellow eyeballs began to smudge, to blur, to run, and in a second the yellow was traveling down the face of the picture in small rivulets of hot water. A few more strokes and the eyes of the "Man from Saturn" were no more. Instead, two generous, almond-shaped spots of bare canvas were visible, on the surface of one of which was painted in fine, black brush strokes:

1st oak tree S. of Mad. Str.
w. bank Desp. Rver.

The other, completely exposed a second later, bore similar fine black marks, which read:

40 ft. n. 60 ft. w.

Kentland dropped the handful of wet, steaming gauze back into the water and rose: "There you are, Mr. Fornhoff. It struck me, when I read about the complete, undamaged canvas face found on Ricardin's drowned body, that no water paint or tempera could have stood the submersion. Hence, if my theory was correct, he had the wrong painting." He paused: "Send a man out to

the Desplaines River at day-break tomorrow. Tell him to go to the point where Madison Street intersects with it, find the first oak tree to the south on the west bank, and measure off forty feet north and sixty feet west. You'll have those sabotage plans that would surely have wrecked you as a newspaper owner anywhere in the United States,—and you can destroy them for good and all." He turned to the waiting girl. "Come, Miss Dale, our work is done." He took up his hat. "Good luck, Mr. Fornhoff. I guess the *Sun* is safe now."

"Hold on there, Kentland," said the man on the bed. "Just a minute. Don't think you're going to escape so easily as that." Kentland and Yvonne stopped in their tracks. "I've had a warning today in this little stroke. Doctor says I've been working too hard. Says, too, that while I'll be up and around in a few days, I'll have to keep away from strain and worry in the future. I sent a substitute to Cincinnati last night with my certified check for a bid on the *Cincinnati Herald,* and a telegram came at noontime today that my bid was the highest; so I get the paper and the plant."

He paused, looking up at the younger man: "I'll be needing a man to go to Cincinnati to act as managing editor, supervisor and jack-of-all-

positions. Kentland, the job's open to you if you'll take it. What's the answer?"

Kentland paused while the offer seeped into his being; then he turned happily to Fornhoff: "I accept, Mr. Fornhoff. I'll be here tomorrow morning ready to pull out at once; ready to step into the harness of a Socialist newspaper once more."

Strangely silent for the first time, Kentland and Yvonne rode from the publisher's residence, downtown to the central morgue, where Captain Ricardin's body was lying. In the parlor of the little establishment, Kentland waited, while the girl stepped back into the rear room to identify the body as that of her uncle.

Several minutes elapsed before she returned, and she was paler than usual as she dropped down on the divan by his side. "It is he," she said in a low voice. "It is he as I have always known him—my uncle—Captain Etienne Ricardin, just as he was in life. Would you like to see the man who brought so much misery to himself and to others?"

Kentland, curious, rose and went back to the tiny rear room. He stepped to the lone slab and raised the sheet.

And there on the slab, white and cold, the same sneering smile on his rigid features, the same supercilious look on his calm face, lay the body of Jeffrich, ex-military expert of the *Sun*.

At first Kentland gasped. Then for several minutes he stared at the thing on the slab, marveling at the strange weaving of Fate's threads that should have brought the Crilly Court case to such an unexpected ending. But slowly the thing on the slab faded from his vision, and a happier mental picture took its place; a picture of a girl with eyes of unfathomable brown.

He stepped back into the little parlor where the girl was waiting for him. And looked down at her curiously. "Yvonne," he said, "I'm wondering if Chicago has brought you much happiness after all? And I'm wondering if you'd care to go to Cincinnati to carry on your work there—until you become better acquainted with one Jimmie Kentland? And then who knows but that maybe —maybe in time—you might be willing to live there for good under the name of Kentland—instead of Dale?"

A blush suffused her features: "I—I believe I know you well enough now, Jeemie Kentland. So if you are bound for Cincinnati, me—I am bound for Cincinnati too!"

"The parlor of an undertaking establishment," he said, gravely, "is a queer place to begin romance in, but——"

He drew her to him and kissed her on her warm red lips.

THE END