

A MAGAZINE OF MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE STORIES

THE BLACK MASK

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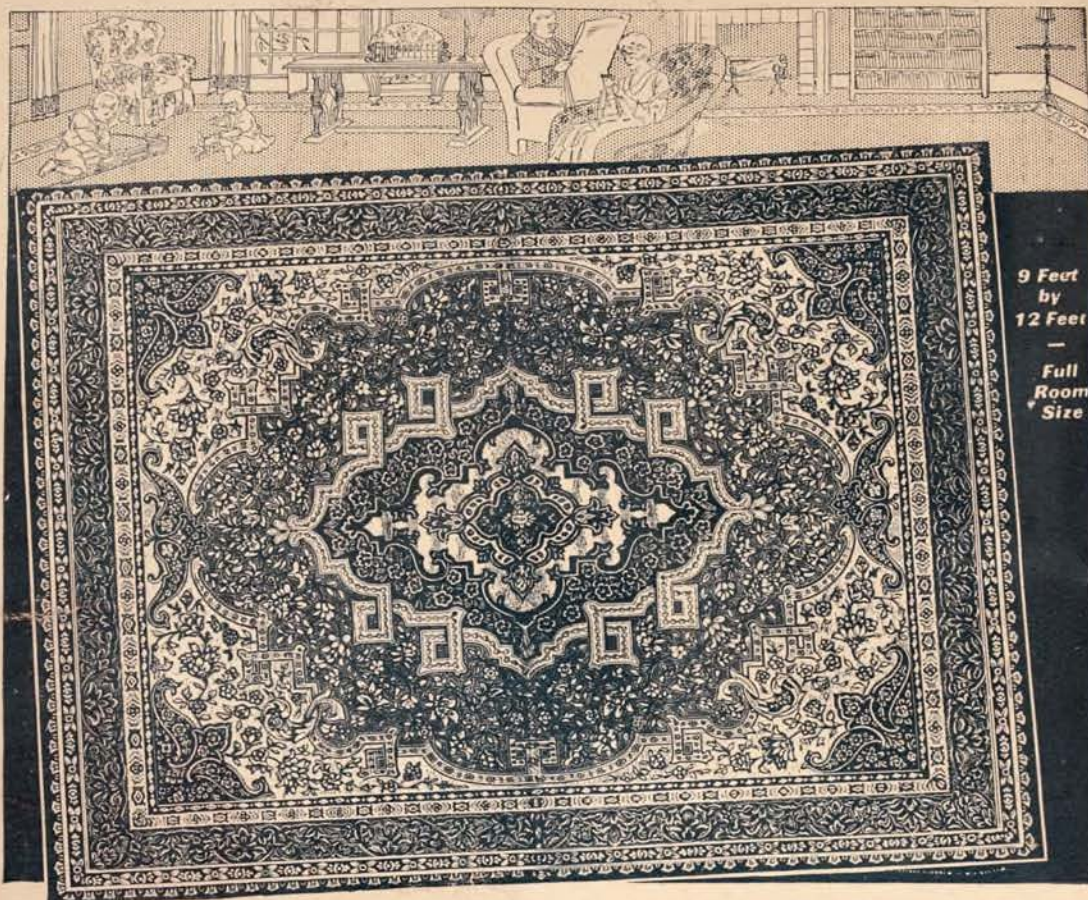


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THE BLACK MASK

A MAGAZINE OF MYSTERY, THRILLS AND SURPRISE

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"Well, Marston," she said softly, "and what's the matter?"—Page 4

Exterior to the Evidence

(A Detective Novel in Five Parts)

By J. S. Fletcher

Author of "The Middle Temple Murder," Etc., Etc.

Editor's Note.

The Black Mask takes pride in presenting herewith what it considers to be not only J. S. Fletcher's masterpiece in mystery writing, but, as well, the best detective novel that has made its appearance since the heyday of Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes. Mr. Fletcher, as is well known, is the greatest living writer of mystery fiction. His earlier novel, "The Middle Temple Murder," made a sensation upon its publication in America. We confidently believe that "Exterior to the Evidence" will duplicate its success.

CHAPTER I

Youth

AT the extreme height of a broken and widespreading moorland a vast mass of dark rock rose abruptly from the heather and ling, and on its table-like crown some man or men had built a high and tapering cairn of stone.

A girl sat on a boulder at the foot of the rocks, on a cloudless afternoon in the middle of May, looking fixedly along a narrow sheep-track which ran towards the sharply defined edge of the moor. As a figure suddenly showed itself far off against the sky-line, the girl's quick eyes recognised her lover, and she sprang to her feet and went forward to meet him.

"Marston!—you're an hour late!" she called in clear, ringing tones while they were yet thirty yards apart. "I've been up there at the Pike since two o'clock, and it's three now, if it isn't more!"

The boy thus hailed came hurrying along, panting and out of breath, flung

himself on a cluster of heather, and pulling out a handkerchief began to mop his forehead.

"By George, and so would you have been late if you'd been in my shoes!" he exclaimed. "The wonder is that I'm here at all! There's been the very deuce to pay at our place since lunch, and yet, by George, I don't know which I've done most of as I came along—lost my breath with hurrying to get here, or laughed till my sides ached!"

The girl stood for a moment looking thoughtfully at him. He was a well-knit, handsome, open-faced lad of no more than twenty or twenty-one in appearance, though in reality he was already twenty-three; fair-haired, blue-eyed, typically English, and bearing all the signs and marks of fresh air and outdoor life. She herself was a dark beauty—the hair that showed under her hat was black and glossy, the colouring of her cheeks almost gipsylike. A smile began to dimple the corners of her full red lips, and she suddenly laughed softly as she sat down on the bank

across which the belated lover had flung himself.

"Well, Marston," she said softly, "and what's the matter? Nothing wrong, if you've been laughing at it."

Marston Stanbury sat up and resumed the soft cap which he had thrown aside in order to mop his forehead. He glanced approvingly at the girl by his side, who in her turn gave him an answering glance of entire contentment. It was not until he had got his pipe in full blast that he slipped an arm round the girl's waist and gave her what was intended for a confidential embrace.

"You'd better prepare yourself for a pretty big sort of surprise, Letty," he announced. "I wouldn't mind laying my new gun against any old thing you've got that you couldn't guess in a hundred!"

"Better tell, then," responded Letty. "What is it?"

Marston took his pipe from his teeth and looked fixedly at his sweetheart.

"Hold tight!" he said warningly. "This is it. Sir Cheville's going to be married!"

"Nonsense!"

"Fact!" declared Marston. "And jolly soon, too. Next month!"

"At his age!" exclaimed Letty.

"Just so!" said Marston. "Seventy-five last time. Still—a fact!"

"And—to whom?" asked Letty.

Marston gave her another warning look.

"Now you will have to sit tight!" he replied. "Else you'll get thrown. You'd never guess that, either. Mademoiselle de Coulanges."

Letty started and stared.

"What!" she exclaimed. "The Vicar's French governess?"

"You've hit it in one," said Marston. Mam'selle Zélie de Coulanges—French governess at the vicarage. That's it!—she's to be my Lady Stanbury. May and December—she's twenty-five, and

Sir Cheville's just fifty years older. Um!"

Letty plucked a sprig of heather and began thoughtfully pulling it to pieces.

"Marston!" she said at last. "Whatever does your mother say?"

Marston nodded his head, Chinese mandarin style, with great vigour for several seconds before he replied.

"You mean," he answered with a significant look, "you mean—what doesn't she say!"

"Saying it—to whom?" asked Letty.

"I'll tell you all about it," continued Marston. My mother and I were at lunch, when I walked my uncle. I saw at once that something was up—he wouldn't have any lunch, nor even a glass of Sherry, and he was jolly fidgety. And then, all of a sudden, he made a formal announcement—he was about to be married. And—to the Frenchwoman. Gad!—I thought my mother would have a fit!"

"Yes," said Letty, "I should have expected her to. Well?"

"At first," Marston went on, "she refused to believe it. Talked about his age. He said stiffly that he believed he was as hale and hearty as any man of sixty. And then, of course, she got personal—you know what a hot temper my mother has—and talked about how it would affect me. There I was, she said, his nephew and heir to the title, and always been led to expect it, and a jolly lot besides, and all that sort of thing. If he'd a son by this marriage, I'd be disinherited, and so on, and so on. She—well, to put it plainly, she was just furious!"

"And—Sir Cheville?" asked Letty.

"He got stiff and icy," answered Marston. "Said it had always been a possibility that he might marry, even late in life. And that whether I ever came to the title or not, he made full provision for me, most handsome provision, he repeated, with emphasis, and

I should never have cause to blame him. But—it's the title business that knocked my mother over! She's always been awfully keen on my being Sir Marston Stanbury, Baronet—that's about it!"

"And you, Marston?" suggested Letty. "What do you think?"

"Don't care a hang about the title!" declared Marston. "If the old boy wants to marry, let him. What I want is to marry you. And, if this comes off, as it certainly will, it'll make things all the easier for you and me.

"How?" asked Letty. "What difference will it make?"

"This," said Marston eagerly. "So long as it was certain that there was nothing but Sir Cheville's life between me and the title, he'd a hold over me. And as we know very well, he and your father are, somehow, not on very good terms. Now, if he takes his own way about this marriage, he can't object to my taking mine about my marriage. And—I suggest that we tell your father and my mother all about our engagement now, straight off."

Letty turned away and looked thoughtfully across the moor. It was some time before she spoke, and when she glanced at Marston again there was a suspicion of foreboding in her eyes.

"Marston," she asked quietly, "have you any idea why your uncle and my father are not on very good terms?"

"Not the slightest notion," declared Marston. "But you know how things are. Your father's a Radical, and Sir Cheville's an out-and-out Tory of the old school. And there was a difference over that last County Council election. That's all I can think of."

"There's something more than that," said Letty. "They were always—well, pleasantly friendly, until lately. My father's been awfully bothered for some time—I've seen it, though he tries to keep it from me."

"Business matters?" asked Marston.

"It may be," replied Letty. "But I don't know. They say trade's bad. You see, you and I don't know anything about things of that sort—we're only children, after all."

Marston made no answer. He was thinking of what lay beyond the northern edge of the moor—the manufacturing villages, the big mills, the crowds of folk who worked in them, and particularly of Lithersdale Old Mill, Lucas Etherton's place, which was one of the biggest manufactories in the district. He was thinking, too, of Lucas Etherton himself, a big, burly, reserved man, who always gave people the impression of power and of well-to-do-ness.

"I should have thought your father was all right in the way of business!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Why, look at the number of people he employs, and his mill's always running!"

"All the same, I know there's something," declared Letty. "And—I don't want to bother him about anything just now, so let it wait. Wait until Sir Cheville's married, anyway."

"After all," said Marston ruminatively, "they must know, if they've got any eyes. All right!—leave it till the old chap's tied himself up to the Frenchwoman. Then I'll tell my mother, and you can tell your father, and we'll get married this summer. How will that do?"

"I suppose so," said Letty.

She looked down at him in a half-amused, half-teasing fashion, and Marston knocked the ashes out of his pipe and slipped his arm round her waist.

"It's jolly hot here," he said. "Come on through the coppice—only bit of shade there is on this moor."

The two lovers strolled away in the direction of the pines; an hour had passed before they came out again on the farther side and walked rather more rapidly in the direction of the valley. A winding track led downwards, and

Marston and Letty turned along it until they came to a point, close by an old farmstead, where it divided.

"I'm going down to the mill, to take father home," said Letty. "He's been there since seven o'clock this morning."

"All right, tomorrow then, same time," said Marston.

The click of the gate close by made him turn sharply. Letty turned, too. A tall, thin, pale-faced young man, of a peculiarly reserved and watchful expression of eye and mouth, came out of the garden of the old farmstead, wheeling a bicycle. He lifted his cap as he turned the machine in the direction of the valley, and while Letty nodded in response, Marston scowled.

"Can't stand that clerk of your father's!" he growled. "He always makes me think of that chap in Dickens—you know, Uriah Heep. What's the fellow's name?"

"Bradwell Pike," answered Letty. "He isn't prepossessing—but I believe he's useful."

"Pike!" sneered Marston. "Good name for him! Shark would have been better, though. Well,—tomorrow, then."

Letty smiled and nodded as they separated. Tomorrow seemed close at hand, and there was nothing to indicate that the sunshine of today was not to last.

CHAPTER II

The Gathering Clouds

LITHERSDALE OLD MILL, towards which Letty took her way after leaving Marston Stanbury, was the oldest industrial building in that district, a survival of the age wherein manufacturers got their motive power from water. Its machinery had long been driven by steam, but the old water-wheel still stood, and the water-course still ran down from the moors above. The mill itself was out of date, and its present

owner had often been advised to pull it down. But Lucas Etherton, Radical though he was in politics, was conservative enough in all else. The lives and endeavours of five generations of Ethertons were built into its gray walls, and Lucas Etherton felt that it would last his time—he was the last of his race in the male line, and Letty would marry. Let the old place stand, till he and it finished together.

Letty turned into the mill through a garden and orchard which lay at one end of it. There was a private door at the end of the garden which admitted to a staircase at the head of which were two or three rooms, shut off from the rest of the premises; Lucas Etherton used these as offices for himself and his clerk, Bradwell Pike. Letty always used this entrance when she went down to the mill of an afternoon, to fetch her father away in good time for their six-o'clock dinner. Lucas, in her opinion, was too much at the mill—going there at an early hour in the morning, breakfasting and lunching there, and occasionally staying there until late in the evening. And of late she had made a practice of going down to the mill between four and five in the afternoon and dragging him away, so that he might have an hour's rest before dinner.

The rooms at the head of the private staircase up which Letty presently climbed were three in number: the first, a sort of anteroom for callers; the second, Lucas Etherton's own room; the third, which opened into the mill, an office wherein Bradwell Pike was usually to be found. All three opened one into another, and instead of being shut off by doors were separated by heavy curtains, made of a certain fabric manufactured on the premises. They were all heavily carpeted, and Letty was light of foot, and she was halfway into the anteroom, intending to throw back the intervening curtain and sur-

prise her father at his desk, when she heard voices in the next room, and knew that Lucas was there talking with Sir Cheville. There was nothing in that, but there was something in the words she caught which pulled her up sharply and sent the blood flushing hotly to her brown cheeks.

"Dishonourable!" Sir Cheville Stanbury was saying in loud, angry tones. "No other word for it! You're treating me in a dishonourable fashion—a highly dishonourable fashion. That's plain truth, Mr. Etherton."

Letty felt her heart throb painfully as she waited for her father to speak. She had no impulse of retreating; after what she had heard, her one instinct was to stay where she was. There was trouble here, and bad trouble, and her father had no one in the world but herself.

It seemed a long time before Lucas spoke. She heard a movement, as if he were shifting or rearranging books or papers on the desk at which she knew he would be seated; it appeared to suggest that he wanted to gain time, or as if he felt at a loss for words.

"There are—well—various ways—of regarding it," said Lucas Etherton. "It depends how—how you look at it."

Letty heard a hasty, half-suppressed exclamation from Sir Cheville—it seemed to express contempt as much as to show irritation.

"Pshaw!" he said. "There is only one way of looking at it. You come to me a year ago, as a neighbour, and tell me that owing to certain trading reasons, which I, of course, didn't ask you to explain, you were temporary short of ready money, and asked for a loan of five thousand pounds. I gave you a cheque for that amount there and then—with pleasure, and without even so much as asking for an acknowledgment. I naturally expected you to return my money as soon as your tem-

porary embarrassment was over. A year has passed—you haven't given me back one penny! Yet your mill goes on working—you are turning out quantities of goods—you seem to be going on as, to my knowledge, you have gone on for many a long year. What does it all mean?"

Letty's heart was beating like a sledgehammer on an anvil by this time. Here, then, was the trouble of which she had had some foreboding, at which she had hinted to Marston. In the silence which followed upon Sir Cheville's direct question, she stole gently to the curtain which separated her from the two men and looked cautiously into the room beyond.

One glance was sufficient to make her more puzzled than before. Her father sat at his desk, his chair tilted back, his long legs crossed; the toe of his right boot was quietly kicking the big waste-paper basket in front of him. But what puzzled his daughter more than this attitude was the fact that the upward twitch of his moustache showed that Lucas Etherton was smiling—smiling, so it seemed, at his own thoughts. Yet—how could a man smile who had just been called dishonourable, to his very face?

She glanced from him to the old baronet. At any other time she would have been amused. Sir Cheville Stanbury was noted in Lathersdale as being a dandy, and the best-dressed man in the neighbourhood, but Letty had never seen him in such gay garments before, and she wondered if his festive appearance had anything to do with his engagement to Mlle. de Coulanges, the fascinating governess at the vicarage. Sir Cheville was a spare, medium-sized man, who made the most of every one of his inches and held himself invariably square and erect.

Everything about him was naturally aggressive—the glance of his eye, the

cock of his chin, the upward twirl of his gray, carefully kept moustache, the very set of his shoulders. And now all this was set off in a faultlessly cut suit of summer tweeds finished by a tall white hat with a black band, white gloves with black stitches, white gaiters over patent leather boots—a vivid contrast to Lucas Etherton's shaggy figure in an old blue suit liberally adorned with patches of grease and shreds and slivers of wool.

Why did not her father speak? Why did he sit there, evidently jingling the money and keys in his pockets, certainly kicking the waste-paper basket, certainly smiling in that queer, provoking way? This puzzled Letty beyond belief; it evidently puzzled Sir Cheville too, for after a long pause he turned from the window through which he was affecting to look, picked up the eyeglass which dangled from his neck by a thin gold chain, fixed it in his right eye and stared at the man he was reproaching.

"I repeat—what does it all mean?" he said testily. "And I'll supplement that by another question. Are you going to repay me my loan, Mr. Etherton? I concluded it was for a few weeks—it has stretched into twelve months. I want my money. I am resettling my affairs. Why don't you speak, sir?"

Lucas Etherton tilted his chair farther back and looked up at the ceiling. Even then, to the hearer who was with him and to the listener behind the curtain, it seemed as if he was unnecessarily slow in answering.

"Different folk have different notions, Sir Cheville," he said. "When you were kind enough to lend me that money, I told you I wanted it until I'd got something fixed up. You said—I'm giving you your exact words—'Oh, any time, Etherton, any time—suit your own convenience.' I took you at your word. It isn't convenient to repay you yet."

"But damme, sir, you must have known that I was using a mere figure of speech!" exclaimed Sir Cheville. "A man does say something of that sort when—he lends money to another man. Mere politeness, don't you know! But—one doesn't mean it!"

Lucas Etherton chuckled.

"Ah, but, you see, I thought you did!" he retorted. "I'd always understood that you were one of those men who never say anything but what they mean."

Sir Cheville made a final contortion, dropped his monocle, and tapped his smart walking-cane on the floor.

"You're trifling with me, sir!" he said angrily. "You know as well as I do that the loan was a temporary one. Will you repay me—at once?"

"Can't!" answered Lucas Etherton laconically. "Haven't got it!"

"When will you have it?" demanded Sir Cheville. "Fix a date!"

"Couldn't!" said Etherton, almost indifferently. "Might be soon—might be longer. Can't say at all today. I'm speaking as I do because you're talking about this matter as an ordinary, common creditor might. You're talking about a debt of honour between two gentlemen as if it were a vulgar trade account, and you were the butcher or the candlestick maker. If—"

Sir Cheville, who had grown very red and angry during the manufacturer's last few words, suddenly stepped up to the desk and smote his fist on it.

"Damme, sir!" he vociferated. "How dare you talk to me like that? Honour, indeed; I'd like to know what you know—"

"About honour?" interrupted Etherton. "Perhaps quite as much as yourself. You lent me a sum of money, willingly, to be paid back at my convenience. Now you come and demand it—"

"I'll tell you what it is!" exclaimed



"How dare you talk to me like that?"—Page 8

Sir Cheville abruptly. "If you don't pay me my money by ten o'clock to-morrow morning, I'll instruct Birch to serve you with a writ! That's final!"

Etherton looked up from his desk, and it seemed to his daughter that a new mood showed itself in his face.

"Birch?" he said slowly. "Ah! Now, do you mind telling me if you ever told Birch that I owe you this money?"

"No, I have not, sir!" retorted Sir Cheville indignantly. "I'm not in the habit of telling my solicitor that I lend anything—as I have done, more than once. But I shall tell him—now!"

"Don't!" said Etherton, with a peculiar glance. "Don't! If you please."

"Why not, sir?" demanded Sir Cheville.

Etherton looked hard at his creditor for several seconds.

"Because it would upset certain plans of mine," he answered. "That's all."

Sir Cheville pulled himself up and stared back.

"Plans! What plans?" he asked. "Tell me!"

"No!" replied Etherton. "Certainly not! Not if I owed you fifty thousand. And I'd like to know why you come upon me suddenly with a demand for five? You're a very rich man, Sir Cheville, and you don't want it."

Sir Cheville turned round to the window and for a moment looked out in silence. Suddenly he turned again to the manufacturer.

"Do you know what's being said about you, Etherton?" he asked in a low voice. "It's rumoured that you're in Queer Street! Now, if I am in pretty comfortable circumstances myself—well, even if I am a rich, a very rich man, I'm not going to lose my money. I have other people to consider. Now, it seems to be a fact that you can't lay your hands on five thousand pounds, in spite of your apparently big business, and so on. So—"

Etherton suddenly lifted his hand as if to command silence. He pointed to the curtain which shut off his clerk's room, and then called quietly:

"Pike! Are you there?"

There was no answer, and Etherton turned to his visitor.

"I thought I heard a step in that room," he said. "That clerk of mine has a foot like a cat. Well, Sir Cheville, I see I shall have to give you my confidence, after all. Come this way, if you please."

Etherton rose from his desk, motioned Sir Cheville to follow him, and crossed over to the opposite doorway.

He held the curtain aside; the visitor stepped through; he himself followed. And at that Letty turned, went down the private staircase, and crossing the garden and orchard climbed slowly up the hillside to Low Hall.

The comfort and pleasantness of the old house struck her painfully as she walked into its great stone porch. Any one entering it for the first time would have said that there was an ideal house filled with all that mortal could desire. And yet, as she now knew, there was something wrong, and some secret, and money owing to Marston Stanbury's uncle which her father could not pay. And—she could only wait.

She was waiting at six o'clock when Etherton rang her up on the telephone.

"Letty," he said hurriedly, "I shan't be home to dinner, nor tonight, at all; I've got to go away on business. Take care of yourself!"

"Oh!" she answered. "Can't you run up for five minutes? Or shall I come down? Do let me!"

"No!" he replied. "Can't manage either. I'm off, just now. See you in the morning. By-by!"

He rang off there and then, and the girl turned disconsolately away—to find the parlor-maid at her elbow. Dinner was ready, and she must sit down alone.

CHAPTER III

The Confidential Clerk

HAD Lucas Etherton come home to dinner, his daughter's naturally healthy appetite would have done justice to the carefully cooked food which always appeared on the table at Low Hall. But as things were, Letty could make no more than a pretense of eating, and she was glad to escape and get out into a favorite quiet nook in the garden. That had been an ideal day of spring, full of warmth and brightness, but the events of the last two hours had driven all its color away. What was the secret which Lucas Etherton had evidently been keeping to himself? Why should he take old Sir Cheville into his confidence about it? Why did he not take her into that confidence?—he and she had been inseparable, ever since she had come home from school eighteen months earlier. But, to be sure, there was a reason why her father was taking Sir Cheville into counsel—he owed Sir Cheville five thousand pounds. It galled her to think that money was owing to this proud, arrogant old man. There was a great deal of old-fashioned pride in the Etherton race, and Letty had her full share of it, and it was peculiarly distasteful to her to know that her father owed money to Marston Stanbury's uncle which he could not pay on demand, and about which he spoke with curious uncertainty and vagueness. Moreover, she was utterly puzzled by what she had learned that afternoon. Her father's mill was always running, he was employing four or five hundred workpeople, and there must be a lot of money about somewhere. Why, then, did he not pay Sir Cheville Stanbury his five thousand pounds and have done with him? And why, having said with emphasis that he wouldn't tell Sir Cheville his plans if he owed him fifty thousand, did he

suddenly turn round and say that, after all, he would take him into his confidence?

Letty Etherton was one of those people who become utterly miserable if left alone with a wearing secret. If her father had only come home that evening, she would have made a clean breast to him of her knowledge of what had happened at the mill, and have begged him to tell her what it all meant. But Lucas had not come, was not coming; she did not even know where his business had taken him. And there was no mother to turn to—Mrs. Etherton had been dead some years—and no brother and no sister. She needed a confidential ear that could be trusted, and the knowledge of this sent her thoughts instinctively flying to her godfather, Mr. Nicholas Getherfield, an old gentleman who lived, all alone, in a queer old house seven miles higher up the valley.

To think of Mr. Getherfield, with his sweet, quiet, old-world manners, his ready sympathy and understanding, was sufficient to make Letty long to go to him, and within a few minutes she had made up her mind; had got out her bicycle and taken the road which led far into the wilder, uninhabited parts of Lithersdale. In half an hour she had left the mills and houses behind, and was following a winding track that ran between the river and the hillside. And there, as she turned the corner of a coppice of stunted oak trees, just then bursting into leaf, she came face to face with her father's clerk, Bradwell Pike, who was busily engaged at the roadside, mending a puncture in the tube of his bicycle.

Letty had no reason for sharing the boyish aversion which Marston always manifested whenever Pike crossed his path. She had known Pike ever since she was ten years old. He was as much a feature of the Old Mill as the ancient

water-wheel or the stone sundial in the mill garden. She knew him as her father's clerk—a quiet, reserved, hard-working fellow, eminently useful. She had grown so used to his looks and appearance that she had never particularly noticed them. Perhaps his nose was a trifle too long, and too thin about the nostrils; perhaps his eyes were too closely set together; perhaps he carried an habitual air of furtive secrecy—but Letty had never thought of him as anything else than the clerk at the mill. And she was only thinking of him in this way when she jumped off her bicycle at his side.

"Mr. Pike!" she exclaimed, "do you happen to know where my father has gone on business? He telephoned to me at six o'clock saying he was going somewhere, for the night, but he was in such a hurry that he didn't say where. Do you know anything about it?"

Pike, who was endeavouring to locate the puncture in his tube, looked up eagerly from his work.

"I don't, Miss Letty," he answered. "I don't know anything at all. He never said a word to me. He came into the office from the mill just before six, and I heard him telephoning to you—then he went out, straight off. But I should say he was going over to the station to catch the six-ten into Hallithwaite."

"You don't know of any reason—business reason—that would take him away?" suggested Letty.

"No," answered Pike. "No, Miss Letty, can't say that I do."

He had located the puncture by that time, and he methodically proceeded to mark its whereabouts by drawing a pencil line round it. She stood watching his long, slender fingers—fingers of an unusual length and thinness—why, she could not tell. And Pike suddenly looked up at her.

"You're not anxious about him, Miss Letty?" he asked.

"I don't think he's very well," replied Letty half-evasively. "And—yes, I am a little anxious."

Pike produced a small box from the bag which hung behind his saddle, and finding a bit of sandpaper in it began to clean the coating off his tube.

"Miss Letty," he said suddenly, "you've known me a great many years. So has Mr. Etherton. I've been a good servant to him ever since I came to the Old Mill. So—I can speak. I saw you this afternoon."

"Yes," said Letty unsuspectingly. "On the moor."

"I didn't mean that," answered Pike, with a swift side-glance. "I meant—at the mill. You were looking through the curtain on one side of your father's room—I was looking through the curtain on the other side."

Letty's face flushed and she instinctively drew back a little.

"You were—listening?" she exclaimed.

"Just as you were, Miss Letty," replied Pike. "It wasn't my fault I came in there. I heard your father and Sir Cheville Stanbury talking, and—well, I did listen, for a minute or two. But—I didn't learn anything that I didn't know already."

"You knew that—that my father owed that money to Sir Cheville Stanbury!" exclaimed Letty. "You did?"

Pike's thin lips curved in a curious smile.

"I keep your father's banking account," he said. "There's not much about it that I'm not aware of. I remember the time of his borrowing that money from Sir Cheville—and he wanted it pretty badly."

Letty made no remark. She was astonished to find that Pike knew so much, and she stood, considering, while he proceeded to coat his little patch

with the necessary solution. Something in the way in which he clapped the patch on the puncture and held it there seemed to denote his grip of things.

"There's some queer secret about Mr. Etherton, Miss Letty," he said suddenly, in his quietest manner. "I don't know where the money goes! I mean—I don't know where a lot of it's gone, this last year or two. I'm uneasy. You mightn't think it, but I've a fondness for your father. He's always been very good to me. To be sure, I've served him well, but he's been a kind employer. And, frankly, I don't know what's up! He draws big sums for something or other—and I don't know what he's doing with it. But, it isn't going into the business, I know that. You're uneasy yourself," he added, with a suddenly sharp glance. "You know you are!"

"Mr. Pike!" said Letty. "Did you overhear the end of that talk between my father and Sir Cheville? Did you hear my father say that, after all, he'd have to take Sir Cheville into his confidence?"

"I heard that," replied Pike.

"Have you any idea what he meant?" asked Letty.

"Not the least idea," affirmed Pike. "But I can tell you this. In the old part of the mill your father has a room into which nobody's ever admitted. They'd have a job to get in! About two years ago he'd a special door made for that room. It's sheeted with iron; it's sound-proof; it's got a patent double lock. And when your father took Sir Cheville out of the office this afternoon, they went in the direction of that room."

"But—but what does my father want with such a room?" exclaimed Letty. "It sounds like a secret—"

"There is a secret," said Pike. "He spends most of his time in that room. What doing, I don't know. But then,

I don't know everything. I never go into those parts of the place—my work's in the office. All I know is that money's going somewhere as it oughtn't to. Piles of money, Miss Letty! And it isn't paid by cheque, either. Your father keeps drawing big sums in cash—and what he does with it, Heaven knows, I don't! Just now, for instance—"

"Well?" demanded Letty, as Pike paused, evidently uncertain whether he ought to say more. "What? As you've said so much, you may as well say everything."

"Well, he'd be glad of ready money at the moment," continued Pike. "I know that! The business is all right, or would be if it weren't for this drain on it. However, after all, it's not my concern, and I daresay I oughtn't to have said as much as I have said just now. Still, you asked me. And of course, you're bothered. And so am I. You see, I've had ideas, notions—you might call them dreams, Miss Letty."

The punctured tube was mended by this time, and Pike's lithe fingers were adjusting it to the wheel. There was something almost fascinating in the strength of those apparently fragile fingers, and Letty could not keep her eyes off them as they went about their work.

"Yes—dream!" said Pike, with a final pressure of the slim finger-tips.

"What sort of dreams?" asked Letty, curious to know what he meant, and contrasting his somewhat odd face and figure with his soft, suave voice. "I shouldn't have fancied you were a dreamer, Mr. Pike."

"You can't always tell by appearances," said Pike. He leaned his tall figure towards her, resting his hands on the bars of his bicycle, and Letty noticed for the first time that he had curiously green eyes which scintillated in a strange manner. "Most people who

know me, Miss Letty," he went on, "think I'm a money-grubber. I don't drink—never tasted even a glass of ale in my life!—and I don't smoke—even cheap cigarettes—and I save every penny I can. But—all for a purpose. I want to be somebody—I mean to be somebody! And of late years, I have thought—I won't deny it—that I might be somebody in a certain direction."

"Oh!" said Letty. The conversation was becoming personal in a way for which she had no taste, but it was difficult to break it off. "What direction? I hope you'll succeed, I'm sure, Mr. Pike."

"Do you, Miss Letty?" he exclaimed eagerly. "Do you indeed! Ah, I'm sure that's very kind of you. And I wonder if I might dare to tell you in which direction my thoughts, ambitions, hopes, and all that, have tended of late? Do you know, I've even dared to hope that, perhaps, your father would take me into partnership? Etherton & Pike, eh, Miss Letty! It—it wouldn't sound or look so bad, would it, now?"

"Oh, well, that's a question for my father, Mr. Pike," answered Letty. "That's business."

"But you?" said Pike. "You now?—you wouldn't object? You see, your father has no son. Ah, Miss Letty, I would be a good son to him—if I were allowed to be! Eh?"

Letty moved her bicycle a yard or two away and gathered her skirts together preparatory to mounting it. There was something in Pike's green eyes which she did not like, something extraordinary in the queer curve of his thin lips which she could not understand, and she wanted to leave him.

"All business that, Mr. Pike," she said with an attempt at nonchalance. "You must talk to my father about it—I don't know anything."

"Not just yet," remarked Pike softly.

"But the time may come, Miss Letty!"

"Well?" asked Letty with one foot on the pedal and without turning her head. "What is it?"

Pike edged his machine a little nearer, and in spite of the solitude in which they stood, lowered his voice to a whisper.

"Would you like me to find out what this secret is that your father's got?" he asked. "You know it's troubling you. I can! There's little that I can't do in that way, if I set myself to it."

"No, certainly not!" answered Letty coldly. "My father's secrets are his own, Mr. Pike. No!"

"You mean—were his own, Miss Letty," said Pike, with a meaning smile. "He was going to give them—or it—away this afternoon to old Sir Cheville, because he owes him five thousand pounds. Yet—only a few minutes before, too!—he'd just declared he wouldn't tell him if he owed him fifty thousand!"

"It is my father's concern entirely," declared Letty. She got into her saddle and moved off. "Good-night, Mr. Pike," she said, over her shoulder.

"One moment," said Pike. He stretched out one of his long arms and laid a detaining hand on the bars of her bicycle. "You're going to Mr. Getherfield's, Miss Letty?" he continued, with his face in closer proximity to her own than she liked. "Aren't you?"

"What if I am?" she demanded half-angrily.

"Just so—but you are," said Pike, "and if I were you, I shouldn't say a word to Mr. Getherfield about what you heard this afternoon, or about what we've spoken of this evening. You know what Mr. Etherton said to Sir Cheville?—if Birch, the solicitor, heard, it would upset all his plans. Mr. Etherton doesn't want anybody to know. Let you and I keep to ourselves—what we know. It's safe with me."

He lifted his hand as he spoke, and Letty took advantage of the movement to push off her machine.

"Good-night, Mr. Pike," she repeated.

Pike made no answer beyond raising his cap, and Letty rode rapidly away along the lonely road. Somehow, she was now far more upset than when she had first set out.

CHAPTER IV

Foxden Manor

ANOTHER mile of lonely, widening road had slipped away beneath her wheels before Letty suddenly realised the true significance of what Bradwell Pike had called his dreams. Pike had adopted this method of letting her know that he was in love with her! A curious, indefinable feeling of aversion came over her, and was as suddenly swept away by an equally curious and vague sense of fear. What a pity, what a thousand pities, she thought, that the clerk knew so much of his master's business! It gave him a hold which Letty, knowing what she did, had no wish he should have. Pike, the quiet, reserved clerk, suddenly became to her a watchful schemer, and the only relief from this deduction was that he had in some degree shown her his hand.

"I shall tell Mr. Getherfield all about it!" she murmured as she sped along. "He'll understand things better than I do."

The sun was just dipping behind the far-off hills in the West as Letty rounded a cliff-like promontory of the valley and came in sight of Mr. Getherfield's house, Foxden Manor, a quaint, seventeenth-century structure. Here, amid the solitude of the moors, Mr. Getherfield grew roses, improved his grounds, planted rare shrubs, and indulged in the antiquarian tastes which had been his recreation through a long life spent among mills and machines.

He came out of his door as she wheeled her bicycle up the path between the trim lawns, and trotted eagerly towards her, a little, spare, very old but intensely active man who still clung to something like a Quakerish simplicity and invariably presented himself in old-fashioned drab-hued garments. He admitted to being already eighty years of age, but Lucas Etherton had once remarked to his daughter that he honestly believed the old fellow had dropped ten years somewhere in his journey and forgotten to pick them up again.

Eighty or ninety, there was a plenitude of vigour in the hearty embrace which the old man gave his godchild as they met in his garden, and in the way in which he took her bicycle from her and wheeled it off to an outhouse. That done, he linked his arm in hers, and turned her towards a distant corner of the grounds.

"Just in time, my dear, to see by daylight a nice little improvement we've carried out since you were here," he said, with a satisfied chuckle. "Do you remember saying I ought to put a seat up, down there by the stream? Well, come and see what's been done—for you."

But Letty held back and glanced at the house.

"Godfather," she said, "I'm in no mood for improvements! I'm awfully bothered—so I came to you. Let's go in—I want to tell you something—a lot."

The old man gave her a quick glance out of his shrewd old eyes, and turned to the porch.

"Come along!" he said soothingly. "Glad you came, my dear—always ready, here, you know."

"That's just why I came—knowing that," answered Letty.

She followed him across the raftered hall into a low-ceilinged, oak-panelled room, on the open hearth of which,

although May was nearly over, a bright fire of pine logs was sending out an inviting crackle.

"Now, my dear?" he said quietly. "What's it all about?"

Letty had made up her mind to tell Mr. Getherfield everything, and narrated the whole story of the events of the afternoon, from the time of her meeting with Marston Stanbury to her recent encounter with Pike, and Mr. Getherfield listened in silence, only nodding his old head now and then at certain passages.

"What does it all mean, Godfather?" asked Letty in the end. "Don't you think I've cause to be anxious—and unhappy?"

Old Getherfield laughed softly, and turning to his desk, drew a cigar-case to him and selected a cigar.

"Only about one thing, my dear," he answered, as he began to smoke—"only about one thing!"

"What?" demanded Letty.

"I don't like that young man Pike knowing so much about your father's affairs," said Mr. Getherfield. "That's not well! Now, though Pike has been at the Old Mill so long that he couldn't fail to know a good deal, your father ought not to have let him get as much knowledge as he evidently possesses. Pike is a sly fellow, my dear!—and I'm surprised that he was as candid as he was with you tonight. It looks to me as if he knew rather more—perhaps a good deal more—than he revealed. But of course he does—men of that sort never tell all they know."

"Oh, you don't think he knows more about father's affairs?" exclaimed Letty.

"He may," answered Mr. Getherfield. "Probably he was paving the way this evening, thinking that next time he had the chance of a *tête-à-tête* with you he'd tell you more—if you let him. Have a care of that fellow, Letty! Your

father's kept Pike too long. He knows too much. But as regards the rest—"

"Yes—the rest!" said Letty eagerly. "That's what's bothering me!"

"Has nothing struck you?" asked the old man, with an almost whimsical smile. "Think!—a locked room into which nobody but your father goes—money going out otherwise than for strictly business purposes—a secret, to be revealed to somebody who's lent some of the money—why, of course, the whole thing's plain enough! And you can't see it?"

"I see nothing!" replied Letty.

The old man waved his cigar and laughed.

"Why, you father's inventing something!" he said. "That's it! Years before you were born, my dear, your father spent time, thought, money, prodigally, in trying to perfect a certain invention—he gave it up then, after spending a fortune over it, because he came to the conclusion that it was premature. But I happened to know that he always meant to return to it, and I should say that he has returned! Leave him alone—he'll come out all right. All the same, I wish he hadn't borrowed money from Sir Cheville Stanbury. Why didn't he come to me?"

Letty's eyes had grown bigger and bigger during this explanation, and at its conclusion she heaved a sigh of intense relief.

"Oh, do you really think that's it!" she exclaimed. "Of course, that would account for everything! But—would so much money go into a mere invention?"

Mr. Getherfield laughed drily and patted the girl's head.

"Bless your innocence!" he said. "There's one man within twenty miles of us, now a peer of the realm, who spent three hundred thousand pounds over a machine before he got it to be what he wanted! Oh, yes, my dear, invention is—a sink down which you

can pour money like water, as in those cases."

"But they succeeded?—and made money?" asked Letty.

"Yes, they succeeded and made money—so much money that neither of them knows how much money he's got!" replied the old man, still more drily. "And the probability is that if—as seems certain—Lucas Etherton has gone back to his invention, why, he'll come out on top, and then—we shall see! And that's why I'm sorry, very sorry indeed, that he either borrowed a little money from Sir Cheville or gave him his confidence this afternoon."

"Why, particularly, Godfather!" inquired Letty.

"It would have been far better if he'd kept his secret to himself," answered Mr. Getherfield. "However, he may have had another idea in taking Sir Cheville into his confidence—perhaps that didn't strike you?"

"No!" said Letty wonderingly. "Nothing struck me. I must be very dense."

"Ah, well, I don't suppose Lucas is so wrapped up in his invention that he isn't aware of his daughter's love affairs!" remarked the old man, with a teasing laugh. "And Lucas may have said, 'Oh, well, no harm in letting the old fellow see that when my girl marries his nephew, she'll not go to him empty-handed—far from it!'"

Letty made no answer. She sat for a long time staring into the fire, and the old man continued to smoke, silently watching her. At last she got up and kissed him.

"I knew you'd be able to smooth everything out!" she said. "You're a wise old thing!—like an old owl in a barn. Now I'll go home—quite happy."

"Nothing of the sort!" declared Mr. Getherfield. "You'll stop here for the night. Your room's always ready, and your father's away, so why should you

go home? Now run off to the telephone, and then come back and tell me all the gossip about Sir Cheville and his French lady—I'm dying to hear it."

However old and wise he might be, Mr. Getherfield was not above an innocent love of the current talk of the countryside, and he listened with great interest and amusement while Letty told him what she had heard from Marston Stanbury about Sir Cheville's engagement to the French governess at the vicarage. In the end he shook his head and smiled—the smile was as sage as it was whimsical.

"Ah, my dear!" he said. "It's all very well for a boy like Marston—who's particularly youthful for his age—to say that he doesn't care if his uncle marries, nor if he should have a son, nor if the baronetcy doesn't come to him; but I'll make bold to say that if there's a thoroughly angry, and even furious, woman in all England tonight, it's Marston's mother! And upon my word, I think she's good reason!"

"You think Sir Cheville oughtn't to marry?" asked Letty.

"I don't say that Sir Cheville oughtn't to marry, not I!" answered Mr. Getherfield. "But I think he might have done it some years earlier! Here's Mrs. Stanbury, his sister-in-law, been led to expect that her one chick was to inherit the baronetcy—a very old title—and at the last moment Sir Cheville elects to put Marston's chances in jeopardy. And of all the women I know," added the old man with a chuckle, "Mrs. Stanbury is the hottest-tempered, and the most determined, and the most implacable, and under a different condition of things she'd have moved heaven and earth to get her baronet brother-in-law shut up in a lunatic asylum!"

"Marston says she was fearfully angry with Sir Cheville," remarked Letty. "He left her telling Sir Cheville no end of her mind."

"She could—I'm sure!" said Mr. Getherfield. "Well, we seem to be living in strange times, hereabouts. You'll be hearing that I've run away with somebody's cook next."

Letty went to bed that night in the room which was always kept for her at Foxden Manor, and she slept the sleep which follows on sudden relief from anxiety that has no very definite cause. When she joined the old man at breakfast next morning, she was in her usual good spirits. She forgot all the fear which had oppressed her the previous evening—and she forgot Bradwell Pike. But a word from Mr. Getherfield, spoken as they made ready for departure, recalled him.

"I'm going to have a quiet chat with your father this morning, my dear," said the old man, as he stood with Letty in the porch, waiting for his cob to be brought round. "I'm going to advise him—very quietly—not to trust that fellow Pike too much. If he says anything to you, afterwards, tell him that you told me all that Pike said to you

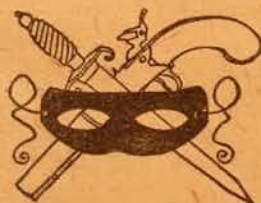
last night. That's best—don't have any secrets from your father."

"I never had one until yesterday, Godfather," responded Letty. "And I meant to tell him I'd been behind that curtain and what I heard. He knows—quite well—about Marston."

She was wondering all the way down the valley if she would find her father at the mill, whither she meant to go before returning home; if so, she was going to tell him straight out, in her godfather's presence, what her trouble had been. But before she and Mr. Getherfield came in sight of the manufacturing village and its tall chimneys, a man, striding rapidly down the hillside from the moors, lifted a hand and stopped them. Letty recognised him as one of Sir Cheville's moor-rangers. He came up to Mr. Getherfield's stirrup, looking from him to Letty with a face full of grave concern.

"Have you heard it, sir?" he asked excitedly. "Sir Cheville's dead! Found dead on the moors, this morning, by our head keeper. And the police will have it there's been foul play. *Murder!*"

(To be continued next month.)



The Finger of Guilt

By J. J. Stagg

I

THERE was, at the time, an epidemic of jewelry robberies. The pestilence had attacked Scofield's six times in four months; but the disease never "took." The six hold-ups failed and in every instance the robbers were caught. Scofield's had a system of locks and alarms that appeared to be unbeatable.

Then along came Judson Farris.

Scofield's occupies the ground floor of a building on Maiden Lane. The store takes care of the retail business. To the rear of the store is a private office in which Mr. Scofield himself sells jewelry at wholesale; he also serves his more extravagant retail clients.

Judson Farris entered the shop, handed a letter to one of the clerks and asked that it be delivered to Mr. Scofield. The clerk walked to the rear of the store and entered the private office. A few minutes later he returned and announced that Mr. Scofield would see Mr. Farris at once.

Farris stepped into the private office, and as he closed the door, he noted absently that there was a latch attached to it. The latch was unique in appearance. It looked somewhat like the disc of a safe. When the mechanism was set, it was necessary only to close the door in order to destroy the combination. The door could then be opened only if the brass knob on the latch was turned and twisted in a certain way. To be sure, the combination was a simple one. Mr. Scofield, when ushering a person out of the room, could manipu-

late the latch so speedily that the client seldom became aware that he had been locked in.

Farris, however, was little concerned with locks. He appeared to be quite indifferent to his surroundings. Such indifference was easy to affect, for the room was so sparsely furnished that everything could be taken in at a single glance.

Running parallel with the front wall was a low mahogany counter which divided the room approximately in half. In the space before the counter were three chairs; behind the counter were two flat-top desks. Two vaults were built into the rear wall.

Scofield, who had been seated at one of the desks, came forward to the counter and stretched out a hand in greeting. He said he was always glad to be of service to any of Mr. Moffat's friends. (Scofield was a member of the yacht club of which Moffat was president; it was Moffat who had written the letter of introduction for Farris.)

Farris said he wanted to buy a lavalier. Scofield inquired as to the amount Farris wished to spend and Farris replied he didn't care to go over ten thousand.

Scofield went into the right vault, the door to which was open. The walls of the vault were lined with small drawers. Scofield pulled out two of the drawers. As he returned to the office, he glared frankly at Farris, who had half-turned and was looking up at a picture.

Scofield considered himself a shrewd judge of character. Farris was a tall, well-groomed man with a collar-ad face.

"Shallow," mused Scofield, "but trustworthy and prosperous."

The two trays were placed upon the counter. In one of them were a dozen platinum chains; in the other, a dozen diamond pendants.

"These are assorted lots," explained Scofield. "Please indicate your choice of the pendants, so that I can bring you another tray of pendants which are made along the lines of the one you like."

Farris made his decision quickly. He chose a pendant which consisted of four graduated blue-white diamonds set in a small petal design. "You need bring no other samples, Mr. Scofield. This is one of the prettiest drops I have ever seen."

Farris thereupon made his choice of a chain. Scofield took the chain and the pendant out of the trays, ran the chain through the loop at the top of the pendant and dangled the lavalliere before Farris.

"How much will that set me back?"

Scofield consulted the tags. "Seventy-three hundred, Mr. Farris. Eight hundred for the chain and sixty-five hundred for the drop."

Farris remarked that he had with him a certified check for ten thousand and that if Mr. Scofield cared to, he could call up the Second National for verification. The deal seemed to be completed. Then Farris changed his mind.

"I think that yellow diamonds would look prettier on a platinum chain," he said. "Could you let me see—?"

"Certainly," replied Scofield.

He picked up the two trays and took them into the vault. After a moment he came back and placed a pendant in the palm of Farris' right hand. "This is the exact counterpart of the one you chose, except that it has yellow stones."

Farris looked at it a moment and

then said, "Put it on the chain, Mr. Scofield, so that I can see how it—"

Scofield glanced up sharply. "I left the platinum chain and the blue-stone pendant with you, Mr. Farris."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Scofield. I gave the lavalliere to you and you took it with you when you went into the vault."

For a moment Scofield remained undecided. Then he went quickly into the vault, pulled out two drawers and came back with them into the office.

"As you can see, Mr. Farris, the trays on each of these drawers have hooks for one dozen pieces. I make it a rule never to display a tray which is not filled. As soon as one piece is sold, another piece is taken from our stock and put in the tray. In each of these trays one piece is missing. There are only eleven chains and eleven pendants."

"You may have dropped the lavalliere on the floor," suggested Farris. "I know positively you had it in your left hand when you walked away from the counter to the vault."

Scofield began running a hand through his sparse hair. There was no doubt about his being nervous. He finally pushed a button which summoned a clerk. (The clerk had to unlock the latch with a key from the store side of the office door.)

"Bring in the vacuum," ordered Scofield.

The vacuum cleaner was run over every inch of the floor before and behind the counter. It was also run over the aisle in the vault. Some little dust was sucked in, but no lavalliere.

After the clerk had left the room, the flustered Scofield ventured, "You may have put the lavalliere into one of your pockets, Mr. Farris." Then he added—"By mistake."

"That suggestion is a trifle—crude—isn't it?"

"But don't you see, Mr. Farris, under

—under the circumstances, you—you must have—”

“Now see here, Mr. Scofield, I came to buy a lavalliere, not to be insulted. If you can produce the lavalliere, we’ll complete the deal. Otherwise I must bid you good-day!”

At this, Scofield became a trifle panicky. “No, no! You can’t leave till the lavalliere has been found. And there’s no use trying—the door is locked.”

Farris shrugged his shoulders, lighted a cigar, and sat down. “This is a new one on me. I didn’t know jewelers made prisoners of their clients.”

Scofield paced nervously back and forth behind the counter. He knew it would be useless to plead further with the obdurate Farris. Finally Scofield pushed a hidden button under his desk. A red light flashed over the police signal box in the street. After a few minutes, Gorman, a uniformed policeman, and Joe Deagon, one of the private detectives hired by a jeweler’s association to patrol Maiden Lane, were admitted to Scofield’s office.

Scofield explained the situation. Deagon decided that under the circumstances the lavalliere must be on the person of either Scofield or Farris. Thereupon Scofield turned all of his pockets inside out. The detective then insisted that Farris submit to a search.

Farris emphatically refused to suffer this indignity. This put the next move up to the jeweler. He was faced with the alternative of permitting Farris to walk out of the shop, or having him arrested. And Scofield was in no mood to let seventy-three hundred dollars slip through his hands without making some decided gesture of self-defense.

“I don’t want to order your arrest, Mr. Farris,” began Scofield, apologetically, “but if you—”

“Logically, that is the only solution,” agreed Farris at once. “I’m as anxious

to have this thing settled as you are. But I make this one condition: you will have to take me to the police station in a taxi, or if you wish, you may send for the wagon. And as we go from this office, I insist that I be surrounded on all sides. I want to make it impossible for Mr. Scofield even to hint that I might, at any time, have passed the lavalliere to someone else.”

The condition was complied with. Farris was taken to the station in a taxi. Mr. Scofield, Detective Deagon and Officer Gorman accompanied him.

After Farris had given his name to Captain Loury, the latter consulted a small memorandum book. Thereupon the captain called up Headquarters on the phone. As the captain put up the receiver again, he said to Farris.

“We have orders that in the event a Mr. Judson Farris is arrested, Headquarters be notified at once. I believe Detective James McKeane, a special-squad man, is personally interested in you.”

“Nice fellow, James,” smiled Farris. “I shall be glad to meet him again.”

Detective McKeane reached the station after some twenty minutes. Once again Scofield rehearsed the circumstances under which the lavalliere disappeared. An immediate search was decided upon; Farris himself invited Scofield to be present.

When a detective from headquarters executes a search, he makes a thorough job of it. Farris was taken into a private room and ordered to strip. He was wearing a minimum of clothing: a Palm-beach suit consisting of coat and trousers, a straw hat, a silk shirt, shoes, stockings and underwear.

Every square inch of this clothing was examined with the greatest care. A microscope was used; button by button, seam by seam the search proceeded—nothing was overlooked. A long, thin double-edged dagger was used to pry

and probe for false heels or soles on the shoes. . . . The clothing yielded two handkerchiefs, four cigars, a silver match case, a watch and fob, seventy cents in change and a bill case. In the latter were three single bills and a certified check for ten thousand dollars.

They ran a comb through Farris' hair; they looked in his mouth; they poked into his ears. . . . Mr. Scofield himself was satisfied that if Farris had had so much as a grain of salt on his person, McKeane would have found it.

Farris was left to dress in the private room; Scofield and the detectives Gorman and McKeane came out into the main room of the station.

"He may have swallowed—" began Scofield, gloomily.

"Don't be absurd," cut in McKeane. "If a man swallowed a twenty-inch platinum chain, it would kill him."

"What are you going to do?" asked Scofield.

"Let him go," replied McKeane, promptly.

"*Let him go!* But man, don't you see that the circumstances being what they are, he *must* have stolen the laval-liere?"

"If you wish to be personally responsible for his detention, and if you will prefer the charges yourself, of course we will hold him. But since you can't prove he has the laval-liere, I don't see how you can get a conviction—or even an indictment by the grand jury. You must admit that he has carefully protected himself. No one was present in your office but yourself—and for a few moments one of your clerks. And you have said that the clerk was never near enough to Farris to have the laval-liere passed to him. On the way here, Farris was protected by a policeman and one of your own detectives. And he was searched in your presence."

But a man doesn't lose seventy-three hundred dollars without a struggle.

Scofield held a forty-minute conversation with his lawyer over the phone. The lawyer's advice was that it would be a loss of time and energy to press charges. "The certified check proves that Farris came to make a bona-fide purchase. And since you have not one iota of proof that he has the necklace, it would be futile to—"

Scofield banged the receiver onto the hook and hustled out of the police station. McKeane informed Farris that he would not be held.

As Farris reached the door to the station, McKeane asked,

"As a personal favor, Judson old boy, would you mind telling me what you did with that laval-liere?"

Farris lighted a cigar. "Are you hinting, Jim, that you or the captain might be wanting to buy it from me?"

After Farris had gone, Captain Loury remarked, "The finger of suspicion certainly points in his direction."

"Not the finger of suspicion," said McKeane, "the finger of guilt. But what can we do about it?" . . .

II

CLAUDE LANGE gathered in the cards which had been tossed upon the table. He arranged the deck in two stacks; then he ripped each stack in half. He threw the bits into the air, rose and stumbled away from the table. Another deck of cards was produced and the game went on. The club members were accustomed to Lange's idiosyncrasies.

An hour later, when Farris was leaving the club, Lange came up to him and asked if he could see Farris alone for a few moments.

"Certainly," replied Farris, "but if it's about a loan—"

"It's not—a loan."

When they were in a room of Farris' apartment on One Hundred and Twen-

tieth Street, Lange said, simply, "I know a woman who has a pear-shaped emerald drop on a platinum festoon. The drop alone, because of its unique design, is worth upward of fifteen thousand. Does that interest you?"

Farris regarded the other through narrowed eyes. Lange, he knew, had lost heavily that evening, and it was obvious that the loss had unnerved him. There had been rumors that with Lange's next disastrous plunge, he would be disinherited and disowned. Farris guessed that it was the fear of such a calamity that had driven young Lange to flirt with crime.

"I don't quite get you, Lange," said Farris.

"Cut out the innocence stuff! I've heard about Scofield's lavalliere—we're members of the same yacht club. I'm making no insinuations. Maybe the lavalliere was not stolen—in that case, you're not the man I want to talk to. You needn't be afraid to be frank. There are no witnesses—I couldn't prove anything on you, nor you on me. If you're really handy at making jewels disappear, say so."

"What's your proposition?" asked Farris.

"Mrs. Ellingwood is giving a week-end party at her place in Great Neck. I can have you invited. If you get the stone, I get half the profits. Yes or no?"

Farris answered that he would be glad to be one of the guests at Mrs. Ellingwood's week-end party. . . .

Mrs. Ellingwood entertained some ten guests. Farris and Lange arrived on Friday evening in the latter's car. Saturday passed and Sunday forenoon; in all that time, Mrs. Ellingwood had worn no jewelry of any kind except her rings.

Then Lange drew Farris aside in the garden and confided, "I've taken the liberty to look about a bit in the house.

There's a strong box in Mrs. Ellingwood's boudoir—"

"So I noticed myself," smiled Farris. "But the box is about ten-by-twelve-by-fourteen inches and it weighs several pounds. It could hardly be hidden under a Palm-beach suit. And even if we could get it out of the house, it would probably be missed at once and we'd have to run for it. And that's one rule I never break—I never run away. I don't like the idea of being hunted."

"Well—couldn't you open the strong box somehow—?"

"All it takes is a little skill and a hair-pin and—"

"Then why not—?"

"And time," finished Farris. "I'd have to be certain no one would disturb me for at least half an hour. Of course, Mrs. Ellingwood stays downstairs with her guests. But there's the maid—she's in and out of the boudoir all the time."

Lange thought it over. "Suppose—suppose that after dinner this evening, I succeed in coaxing the maid to take a spin in my car—"

"Excellent—if you can manage it."

"I don't think she'll take much coaxing," grinned Lange.

Lange's evening, up to a certain point, was a grand success. The maid slipped in and out of the house unobserved. The two motored over an hour and Lange was not required to keep more than one hand on the wheel. But when, on returning, he again drew Farris aside, he could tell by the latter's downcast expression that the plan had gone awry.

"There was someone on the upper floor all the time," said Farris. "I didn't have the chance to go anywhere near the boudoir."

The next morning the party broke up and Farris and Lange returned to the city.

The day was a rather hectic one for

young Lange. He spent it trying to borrow the money with which to pay off the I O U's he had written during his last disastrous poker game. But Lange met with no success; his friends were unanimously of the opinion that it was a bad investment to lend him money.

Lange was haunted by the fear that some of his creditors might become obstreperous and threaten to sue. And he was now on his good behavior; any notoriety would serve to break the truce existing between him and his father.

His only asset was his car, which might bring two thousand dollars. He was in debt for over five thousand. If Farris had only succeeded in getting that emerald drop—

At nine o'clock, Mrs. Cartwright called up Lange on the phone.

"Mrs. Ellingwood had me on the long distance wire a short while ago," said Mrs. Cartwright. "She had intended going to the opera this evening, and she wanted to wear her festoon. She found that her strong box had been forced open and that the emerald drop had been clipped from the festoon. It's upset her terribly. The last time she used the strong box was on Thursday, so she can't be sure that one of her week-end guests is the thief. She's going to put a private detective on the case and instruct him not to bother any of her friends until every other possibility has been run down. . . ."

Farris had tricked him! Lange went into a paroxysm of fury. He paced his room repeating, "The skunk double-crossed me!" The deception was apparent; Farris had denied the theft so as to avoid the necessity of sharing the proceeds. And the enraged Lange decided not to let Farris get away with it.

Immediate action was necessary. He would confront Farris and demand his share of the profits. If Farris tried to bluff . . . Lange took a revolver out of

his bureau. It would be dangerous to match wits with a man of Farris' cunning. But Lange, urged on by his lack of funds and by his anger against Farris, did not reflect long upon the risk. He was in the mood to play a desperate game and to kill, if necessary.

So the reckless Lange went forth on the quest which could end in but one way—disastrously . . .

Farris admitted Lange into his apartment, led him into the sitting-room and then offered him a glass of wine. Lange impatiently waived his claim to hospitality and told Farris about Mrs. Cartwright's phone call.

"What rotten luck!" exclaimed Farris. "Someone else beat us—"

"You stole that pendant!" cut in Lange. "I'm here to demand a split!"

"Are you suggesting that I may have—?"

"You double-crossed me!"

Farris became nettled at the other's insolence. "I could throw you out of here, you know!"

"You could try! But it'll be a man-sized job to get me out of here before I'm convinced you haven't that stone."

"If it'll ease you any, you might search the place. Don't mind me. I'll have a few drinks while you're enjoying yourself."

That, in Lange's opinion, showed Farris' hand. Farris had already disposed of the stone. There was nothing Lange could do . . . he could not even threaten blackmail. He was beaten. He had made it possible for Farris to attempt the job—and now Farris had cheated him out of his share.

Lange went momentarily mad with rage. Every semblance of self-control went from him. He lashed out furiously and caught Farris a stinging blow on the side of the head. "You're going to take a beating!" cried Lange.

But Farris met his rush with a straight-arm jolt to the wind which sat

Lange neatly upon his haunches. Infuriated, the tears of chagrin streaming down his face, Lange drew his gun as he staggered to his feet.

Farris closed in. They wrestled. Farris slipped and in his attempt to keep the gun from being twisted against his chest, he unfortunately put his hand over the front of the barrel just as Lange pulled the trigger.

His left hand crushed by ball and powder, Farris backed away. He reached his desk and jerked at a drawer. Lange sent a second bullet through Farris' left shoulder. Farris fell. From a sitting position, he reached into the drawer and fetched his revolver.

Quite deliberately he aimed at Lange who was sneaking out of the room. He fired and Lange crumpled to the floor. Then Farris, too, lapsed into unconsciousness.

A woman in the next apartment telephoned to the police. . . .

III

THE next morning, Detective McKeane, after a visit to the hospital, called on the district attorney and announced that both Farris and Lange would pull through.

"And even though he's already disposed of the jewels, I got a confession covering the Scofield and Ellingwood robberies," said McKeane. "Look here—know what this is?"

The district attorney looked at the curious thing McKeane had handed him and shook his head.

"It's all shot to pieces—doesn't look like much now. But it was once the most perfect *artificial finger* ever fashioned by man! It took Farris one year to make it—and he was an expert at the manufacture of artificial limbs. Lost his own finger in an accident—the finger next to the pinky on the left hand. Cut off just above the knuckle. Well, he took his own finger and made a

plaster mold of it. In the mold, he made this artificial finger of rubber and other substances. Feel it . . . you can't tell it from flesh. Look at the ridges—the veins painted in . . . and he could get a perfect *finger-print* with it! It will stand a microscopic test! It is hollow—that's where he hid the lavalliere!"

"But how was the finger kept—?"

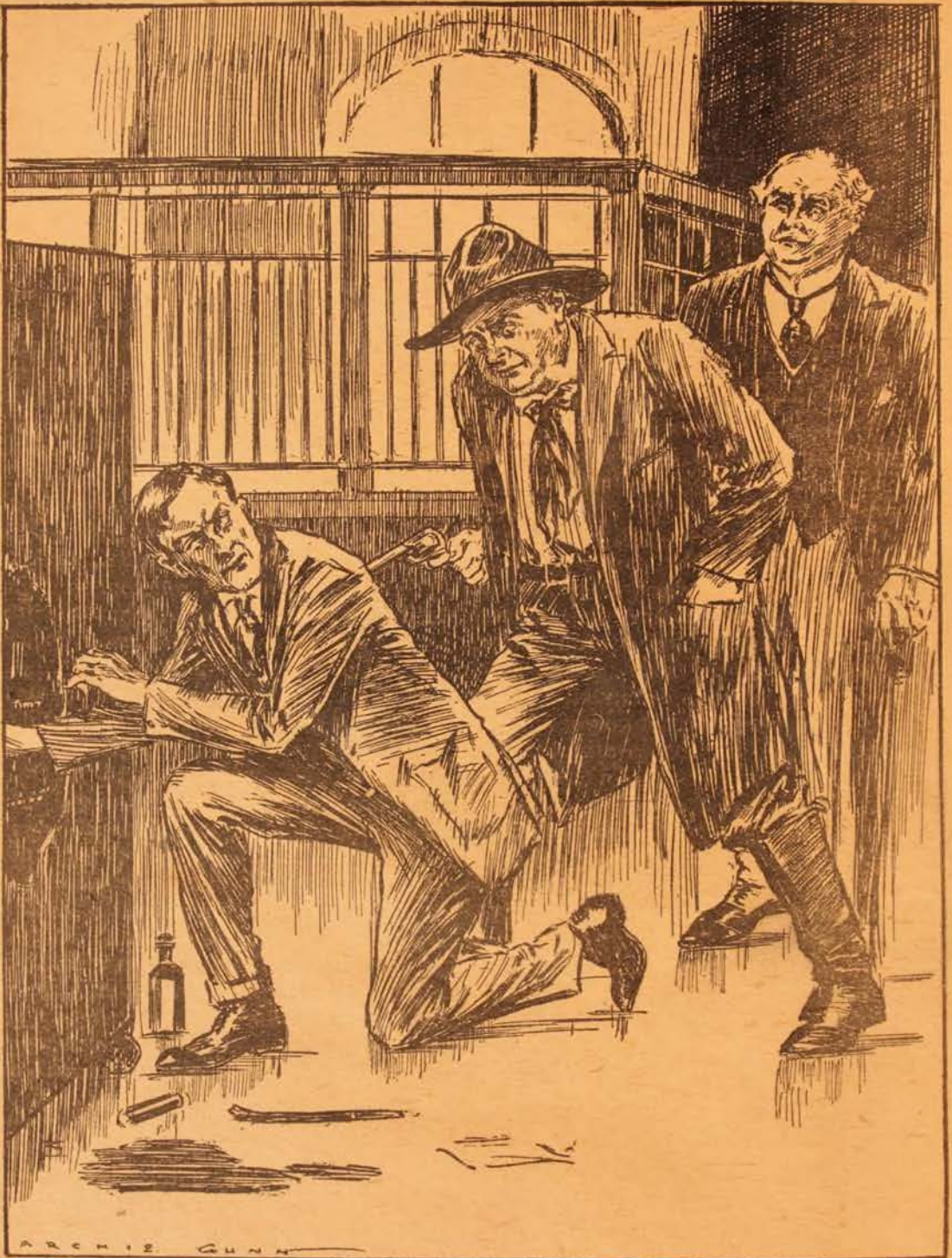
"He made a thin silver ring which fitted snugly around his stump; this silver ring was threaded. Inside the open end of the artificial finger he had another silver ring, also threaded . . . he simply *screwed the finger on—and off!* Matter of a few seconds! The artificial finger came over the stump: there was a slight visible line, which was painted flesh-color and then protected again by a gold band ring he always wore around the place where the finger and the stump joined."

"And the finger was perfect in every respect—?"

"But two. By sight or touch it could not be distinguished from a flesh and bone finger. And by a few month's practice, he had even learned to move it! You see, with his stump, he could move it up to the first joint. The other joint he manipulated by pressure with his pinky. But in these two respects the finger was wanting: it did not take temperature, and if you squeezed hard, you could press it together. But in these latter respects, he was in little danger, since he shook hands with his right hand, of course, and there was no other reason why anyone should ever feel his left. Try to imagine me searching that guy for a lavalliere!"

"H'm. I should say it's a good thing he's in for a long siesta!"

"Well . . . he's already promised that when he gets out he's going to make an artificial hand to replace the one Lange blew off of him. Then, he says, he'll be able to hide half a jewelry store. . . ."



One swift glance over his shoulder, and hope fell from him.—Page 33

Appearances Are Deceiving

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

I

GARBETT squeezed himself out of the East Side subway train, walked through the tunnel, and took a shuttle train that would disgorge its passengers at Times Square. He hung to a strap in complete oblivion of his surroundings, for his mind was busy with the "trick" he was planning.

Mazie had been loitering in the vicinity of the wholesale silk house for the last two weeks. On the following evening she would be ready to report. At that time she would give him a complete description of the location, together with a floor-plan of the building, showing all entrances and exits. Then, there remained the selection of the men he would use, and hiring the trucks to carry away the loot, and making arrangements for selling the silk.

Garbett was an executive. He planned crimes as business men plan advertising or selling campaigns, and with equal skill and intelligence. Not once during his long career had he ventured upon an undertaking without first making careful and thorough investigations. Quick to take advantage of every opportunity, he nevertheless had a code of ethics. He preferred to scheme and plan rather than to wait for a lucky chance. And he had the skilled worker's justifiable contempt for blunderings and amateurish crudities.

As he stepped from the shuttle train and hurried through the underground tunnel that crawls under Broadway, his mind was busy. Nothing must be left to Fate, every possibility must be anticipated. For half of his thirty-

four years he had been in active conflict with law and order. Consequently, even in his moments of concentration he was unconsciously alert.

A portly, white-haired gentleman, moving with the dignity demanded by his weight and build, was walking a short distance before Garbett. A thin clerk, sprinting for a train, collided with Peter Riddick, and raced on without apology. A bobbed, trim stenographer, after completing her *toilette* with the aid of a pocket mirror, jolted the white-haired gentleman. And Peter Riddick's long, flat, leather wallet, disturbed from its repose in his hip pocket, fell to the grimy floor.

Temptation reared its tempting head within the crook's mind. Unaware of his loss, Peter Riddick continued upon his peaceful though buffeted way. Garbett stopped and picked up the purse.

The thunderous roar of racing subway trains, the voices of bellowing subway guards as they called the name of the station, the conversations and shuffling feet of hundreds of subway dwellers, mingled and blended, sounding like the murmurous roar of angry surf breaking upon a rocky shore. Garbett stared at the purse a second, and then he smiled scornfully at the voice of Temptation. He had not acquired this purse and contents in a legitimate and honorable way. Neither had he secured it through his own skill or cunning. Anyone, irrespective of their intelligence or ability, might have found it.

Garbett had worked in crowds before when he had been serving under an

instructor in pocket-picking. Therefore he knew how to avoid unwelcome collisions, how to weave his way through tightly packed humanity. He squirmed his way through the flowing masses of people like a drop of water sliding down greased glass.

Peter Riddick turned at the firm touch on his arm and observed the young man who had stopped him. He saw a keen-eyed man, nervously assured in manner, who wore an inconspicuous blue serge suit, a soft brown felt hat, tan shoes, and a sombre necktie.

"I think you dropped this," said Garbett, presenting the purse to its portly owner.

Naturally, Peter Riddick was astonished when he saw what the young man offered him.

"Well, I'll— Yes, that's mine!" he said, his face breaking into a smile of startled happiness as he tapped a pocket and made sure his own wallet was missing. "Young man, I thank you." He studied his benefactor again.

"I've been coming to New York for the last thirty-five years," he announced, "but never before has anyone—I've been robbed, and cheated, and double-charged, but— In New York City, too!"

He took the purse.

Garbett smiled, and edged away.

"Wait a minute, young man!" commanded Peter Riddick. "I not only want to thank you, I want to— You're an honest man, and while some people say that virtue is its own reward, I think that honesty is a virtue that—"

"I don't want any reward," Garbett interrupted. He didn't mind being told that he was an honest man, for he had a sense of humor. "I saw your wallet drop, and so I brought it—"

"If you're in a hurry," said Peter Riddick amiably, "I'll walk along with you a little ways. For I'm not through with you, young man. I don't want to

hurt your feelings, but— Don't you need a little help some way?"

"Not that I know of," Garbett answered, smiling. "I don't need a thing, thank you."

"It certainly is strange to meet an honest man," mused the white-haired gentleman, standing directly in the path of hundreds of hurrying people, "particularly when you've had to pay extra for theater tickets, and something for just sitting at a table when you want to eat, and—" His manner changed swiftly. "Young man, I want you to come in and see me. I live in Velma, Delaware, and I need you in my business. I'm the president of the First National Bank, and I can certainly find a place for an honest young man in my bank. Now if you—"

Garbett's ears twitched, and his eyes became introspective. Mr. Riddick thought these signs were good omens, and his shrewd, kindly eyes brightened.

"A young man, an honest young man—" the portly gentleman paused. "I suppose you have something to do—but—if you ever need a job, and come in to see me, I will see that you get it."

"Well, I'm rather busy just now," remarked Garbett, thinking of the wholesale silk house robbery.

"That's too bad," Peter Riddick was sincerely regretful. "But—the time may come when you'll need some help: a position, or a loan. I want you to call on me then, young man"; he extracted a card and a banknote from the wallet. "Here's my name and address, and here's something for—for you to buy a present for your best girl."

Garbett wanted the card, and he realized that Mr. Riddick really intended that he should accept the fifty-dollar bill. Already, possibilities had flashed into the crook's mind. Here was a perfect entrée into the First National

Bank of Velma, Delaware! The limitless opportunities here! Opportunities for an honest young man, of course.

Garbett shook hands with Peter Riddick, and they parted with mutual expressions of esteem. And the crook put the bank president's card carefully away where he could find it in case of need. The fifty dollars was invested in a present for Mazie.

II

NEEDS, unfortunately, have a habit of arising. Two days after Mazie had finished her work the proprietor of the wholesale silk establishment had a new burglar alarm system put in and engaged the services of a private detective agency.

Therefore when Garbett and his associates began their activities a number of things happened. Bells burst into sound, gray-clad private detectives rushed to the warehouse, and a rapid and undignified retreat was in order. One of the gang, 'Red' Somer, the lookout, did not escape, and he was requested to mention the names of his fellow criminals.

Garbett heard the call of the far and distant places. Red might not squeal, and then again he might. A bullet had pierced his thigh, he was kept in a hospital with a policeman stationed at the foot of his bed, and he had always been talkative. If Red made statements, Garbett would be visited by blue-coats, and the crook did not care to meet officers of the law in either a social or a business way.

Peter Riddick's card was still in his possession, so Garbett decided to visit Velma, Delaware. With his usual care, he made thoughtful and intelligent preparations. First, he traveled to a small suburban town in New Jersey, and went straight to a hardware store on a side street.

Dan McKee was a black-haired man in the late forties, who wore a ferocious mustache behind a long black cigar. In the rear of Dan's tiny store was as complete and well-equipped a laboratory as even an instructor in chemistry could desire.

It was rumored that Dan had made a discovery that would be of great benefit to a certain section of the world's inhabitants. Several drops of water will soften a lump of sugar; gold will dissolve in chlorin and *aqua regia*, or nitromuriatic acid; and Dan's solvent had a swift and penetrating effect upon even the hardest and most burglar-proof steel. Poured upon a knife-blade, it turned the blade into a paper-like substance. Properly applied to a safe, it would turn the metal into material of the consistency of cheese. The solvent did not attack aluminum or glass or rubber.

After a demonstration of the solvent, Garbett purchased a quart of the necessary liquid and returned to New York to say farewell, and 'I'll be back next week' to Mazie.

In the Pennsylvania Station, Garbett made his farewell to Mazie. She was small and slender; she had a huge flood of golden brown hair; she wore a tan and deep blue scarf and a swagger coat suit of russet brown.

"Goodby," said Mazie bravely, wondering whether Garbett would think of her every moment that he was away. "Bring me back a souvenir—something pretty."

"Any particular kind of souvenir?" he asked, glancing up at the enormous clock with its black hands and Roman numerals.

"Oh—something—something I can wear in my hair," she suggested.

A moment of thoughtful silence. Mazie knew of a hundred things she wanted to say, but she couldn't decide which one was the most important.

Garbett had the uncomfortable feeling that he hadn't a thing to say, but he wished Mazie would not look as though she was about to cry.

"Have you got—it?" she asked. 'It' meaning Dan's solvent.

"Yes, and a quart of something else."

And then the announcer wailed his unintelligible and garbled song, which rose high and echoed from the ceiling, a signal that a train going for somewhere was soon to depart.

III

LONG lines of apple trees, mostly plucked of their fruit, could be seen from the car windows. Velma was a thriving town, boasting a drug-store, several large stores that kept in stock everything from needles, on through clothing, china, typewriters, tobacco, furniture, up to literature—the works of Harold Bell Wright. It had a garage, and the county jail, as well as that prosperous, at present, financial institution—the First National Bank.

Garbett turned in between the stuccoed Colonial pillars of the bank, and entered the building. Behind a wire wall, beyond the desks and books, in the center of the ground floor, was the modern up-to-date bank safe.

"Young man, I'm glad to see you! Just in time for lunch!" said Peter Riddick, coming out from behind the wire wall. To this white-haired, portly, beaming bank president, every male was "Young man."

"Sit down, and rest yourself first," he invited, leading the way into his private office, "and then we'll go home for food."

In the banker's office Garbett told his carefully prepared story. He was, he said, on his way to Washington, but he had stopped off for an hour or two. He was expected in the Capital on the following morning, so he could not

accept Mr. Riddick's instant invitation to spend the night. All the time the crook was remembering the appearance of the inside of the bank; he had a mental picture of its interior now, and he would refresh it later, when they went to lunch.

Garbett opened his suitcase and extracted a bottle and a corkscrew. While Peter Riddick waited expectantly, the crook sent the steel deep into the cork.

"Have you got a glass?" asked Garbett, a trace of nervousness in his manner. He had made a mistake; he was about to open the bottle of solvent.

"I'll get one," the bank president said, and departed with a smile of anticipation.

The moment he was out of the room, Garbett tore the corkscrew out, and hastily changed bottles. Almost at once the white-haired man returned with two glasses. He saw Garbett trying to force a crumbling corkscrew into place.

"Very poor steel. Sorry." The crook laughed at his own futile efforts. As fast as he thrust the corkscrew down it crumbled into bits.

Peter Riddick was plainly puzzled; he tapped the corkscrew with a blunt finger. The steel flaked off, and fell to the floor, and he rubbed it with his shoe. Now, the flakes were a fine powder that disappeared into the rug beneath his foot.

Finally, the contents of the other bottle were sampled and approved, and then the crook was taken on a tour of the bank. He was shown the safe, and its various burglar-proof features, the workings of the time-lock, and an explanation of the way the safe was made fireproof. Garbett professed a total lack of knowledge of bank safes, though such was far from the case.

Garbett felt not the slightest twinge of conscience. His profession was, in

his opinion, an ancient and dishonorable one, but it was nevertheless his profession. From early days, according to the history he studied in college, there had been those who by skill or brute force, by cleverness or wit, had made their living in the same manner. By thrift and hard work, some men and nations rose to prosperity, and then other men, or other nations, came and conquered, or stole.

"This is an honest man—an honest man from New York," said Mr. Riddick, introducing Garbett to the office force of the bank. And Garbett acknowledged the soft impeachment, and shook hands with them all.

At luncheon the crook met Mrs. Riddick, a matronly, gray-haired woman who dressed in startling elegance. The lady had soft hands, splashed with diamonds, earrings that contained two large blazing stones; a crescent pin of white fire sent sparks from her ample bosom. And Garbett's eyes held an odd expression as he saw the lavish use she made of such expensive bits of carbon.

In the afternoon Peter Riddick returned to the bank, while the crook strolled about the rambling streets of the town. He walked aimlessly, a frown of concentration on his face, as he planned his actions for later in the evening.

The train for Washington left at 9:45 from the railroad station at the southern end of the town. Riddick's house was halfway between the bank and the station, five minutes from either one. Doubtless they would escort him to the station, and wait there with him until he had left the town.

Garbett stopped in his walk, and stared at the signboard as he thought. He must devise some way to keep the Riddicks from going with him to the station. He needed thirty minutes—an hour would be far better—between the

time he left the house and the time the train left.

Also, he wanted to know whether the bank was guarded at night. If there was a watchman, that individual would have to be silenced. Doubtless there was a police force in the town too; he must make inquiries.

Garbett came to himself, and his eyes read the signboard. Up to this time, he had been too busy thinking to look.

Cabaret and Dance
Velma Dramatic Club
Tonight

Garbett* chuckled with amusement and strolled toward the garage. The Riddicks could be disposed of very simply. He remembered, now, that Mrs. Riddick had drawn the conversation during luncheon to artistic channels. Of course she wanted to go to the "Cabaret and Dance" that evening; she was just the sort of woman who would desire to shine in society. Her diamonds insisted upon an audience.

A grime and grease covered mechanic willingly ceased his languid investigations into the interior of a flivver and indulged in the luxury of a new listener.

"We've only got one policeman," he said, in answer to a question, "and he's the worse one in the United States. Prohibition ruined Pop Gordon; he's tried more recipes than any man in the county, and he makes the worst hooch in the State. Why, he fed some of his stuff to a yellow dog I found, and the dog chewed up a tire casing trying to get the taste out of his mouth!"

"Then who looks after traffic, and keeps an eye on things at night?"

"Nobody," answered the mechanic. "There's not much traffic anyhow. Well, the next day, I saw that yellow dog looking sick, and—"

Garbett let the youth continue, and finally satisfied himself that he had nothing to fear from an unwelcome

interrupter. By the time the garage monologist had come to the end of his seventh saga of the town of Velma it was time for dinner.

As he smoked a cigarette after the evening meal, the crook recalled his promise to Mazie. He had promised her "something for her hair," yet he had not made a single purchase so far. A kerosene motor chugged in the cellar of the Riddick home, manufacturing electricity for the illumination of the house. Resplendently attired in a jade canton crepe evening gown, with bouffant draperies over the hips, Mrs. Riddick wore, also, her complete collection of diamonds.

"Since you insist upon our going," she said, when she returned to the room after a short absence, "I think we had better start."

Garbett rose instantly and took her opera cloak from her hands. She wore a bar pin of astonishing brilliancy in her hair at the side. The pin was crescent-shaped, large, with the usual simple clasp.

Peter Riddick clambered into his overcoat and put his hand on the electric light button preparatory to pressing it. Mrs. Riddick held her cloak closely about her. Garbett stood near her, waiting until the lights should be extinguished. When they went out he would take the pin.

"We are sorry that you are going," said the bank president, as darkness dashed into the room. "An honest man, such as you, Mr. Garbett, is a rarity. But I know—"

At the words "honest man," Garbett had unclasped the crescent bar pin, and by the time the sentence was finished he had slipped it into his pocket. Mazie was going to have a souvenir for her hair!

Turning, the crook followed Mrs. Riddick from the room, leaving Peter Riddick to follow from the farther

corner. The hour was 8:30, so he had plenty of time.

The walk through the crisp, fragrant air to the station was a pleasure. Not a cloud threatened from the sky; there was no moon; only the faint radiance of stars softened the darkness. Once in the railroad station, Garbett opened his suitcase and took out the bottle of Danny's solvent.

He had, in the breast pocket of his coat, an eye-dropper, and he made sure that this was in working order. The station clock read 8:37. Garbett waited five minutes more, and then retraced his steps as far as Riddick's home. Then the crook turned down an alley, passed in the rear of the garage and the drug store, and kept on to the back entrance of the bank.

His mind was at ease; he even had an explanation prepared in case he was stopped. Next door to the bank was the hall where the "Cabaret and Dance" was in progress. If questioned, Garbett was prepared to say that he had changed his mind and thought he would look in on the festivities until train-time, but had lost his way in the darkness owing to his unfamiliarity with the town. The explanation might not be convincing, but if said with an air of surprise and apology it would probably be believed.

He reached the rear door of the bank without trouble and extracted a short bar of aluminum from a pocket. With this he pushed down the cork in the bottle of solvent until the liquid rose above it. Then he pressed the rubber bulb of the eye-dropper and half-filled the glass tube. He carefully squirted the solvent into the keyhole of the door, directing the stream toward the bolt.

A moment later he pulled upon the door and it opened. The solvent had acted instantly upon the metal lock of the door. Garbett waited, straining every muscle in an effort to hear a

sound from the interior of the darkened building. There was the bare possibility that Peter Riddick had dropped into the bank for some purpose. But the bank was deserted.

From the adjoining building a strong and untrained masculine voice sang a negro dialect song written and composed by two Jews. Garbett was grateful for the noise; it made him feel safe and secure. He slipped noiselessly through the bank, looking into every room to make sure that a watchman would not surprise him later. Once absolutely convinced that he alone was in the building, he began operations upon the safe.

The bottle of solvent was tilted against the back of the steel safe, and a small stream poured. Then, with the aluminum bar, Garbett dug the now soft and crumbling steel out in a thin line. Four feet to the left he poured more of the solvent, and then a horizontal line that connected the two cavities. He worked in complete darkness, thrusting with aluminum bar, trusting to the messages of his fingers, and he worked desperately fast.

The singer in the adjoining building had now received assistance. A dozen voices joined in on the chorus in an attempt at harmony. Garbett tore and thrust at the crumbling wall of the steel safe, digging a hole that led into the depths of the strong-box. Like a barrier, the wire wall cut off one-quarter of the room, and the long desk were heavy black shadows.

Suddenly, every electric light in the bank flashed into life. Garbett froze, every muscle rigid, one arm elbow deep into the wall of the safe. He had been caught!

One swift glance over his shoulder and hope fell from him like a discarded garment. A huge and well-polished blue steel revolver, with a barrel eight inches long, was being pointed straight

at the crook's back. If he rose or moved that ponderous gun would explode. It was held by a nervous and excited man, whose rubicund face identified him as Pop Gordon, the town policeman.

"Don't move—don't you dare move!" ordered Pop, dragging a pair of handcuffs from a sagging pocket of his ancient overcoat. He clicked one handcuff on Garbett's right ankle, and the other on his left. "Stay right where you are." He produced another pair of handcuffs, and fastened the crook's hands behind his back.

Peter Riddick had remained silent; now he put his small automatic back into his pocket. "Young man," he said, "I am certainly disappointed. I thought you were honest. When I saw you steal that crescent pin from my wife's hair I was the most surprised man in Velma, Delaware. I didn't think—"

"I'll bet he's a big New York crook," said Pop Gordon. "Come look at the big hole in your safe, Mr. Riddick! If we had waited—"

Peter Riddick observed the opening with brooding eyes. "That's remarkable, but—I am sorry this young man made it. In about ten minutes he has—" He turned once more to Garbett. "I recall that your corkscrew—fell to pieces. You are a clever young man"—he shook his head sadly—"but you are not an honest one."

Garbett knew that the evidence against him was complete and damning. He was helpless and hopeless. So he refused to answer any of the questions that were asked.

Pop Gordon led the crook through the starlit cool night, while the sound of dance music lilted gayly through the air. The huge, long-barreled revolver was pressed nervously against the crook's side.

"What'd you steal that pin for, anyway?" asked Pop Gordon. "You

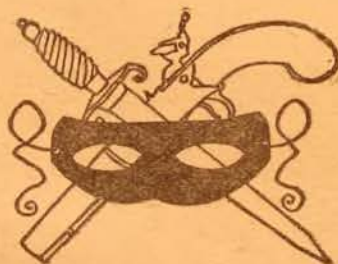
New Yorkers think you're smart, but you ain't! You ain't smart at all. There was all that money in the bank, and you'd 'a got it, if you hadn't been so smart. Stealing a two-dollar dingus from Mrs. Riddick's hair and letting her husband see you. Why, he came right away and got me, and we followed you the whole way from the railroad station back to the bank. And all because of that two-dollar pin.

Garbett sneered, and his mouth twisted in an unbelieving smile. "Two dollars? It's worth five hundred! Isn't she the wife of the president of the bank?"

"Yes, sure she is," cackled Pop, his watery eyes swimming with amusement. "But she ain't stuck up. She bought

that pin when she was a waitress in the Busy Bee Restaurant; bought it from a peddler long before she was married. And she wears it just to show folks that she ain't stuck up, now that she can afford the real thing. She says the peddler told her the stones were real—were real white sapphires that came from Peru. And you thought you were smart!"

Long after he had heard the whistle of the 9:45 train on its way to Washington, Garbett stayed awake. Pop Gordon was right. He wasn't smart. He was a fool. Shackled and manacled, locked in the county jail while the New York police were being notified, Garbett realized he was a fool. If he had only been honest—



The Light That Lies

By Pettersen Marzoni

WHIRLING dust devils danced down the sun-baked road. The heat from a brazen sky beat on the head of the man concealed in a clump of summer-dried bushes. The heavy woolen garb of the State prison clung to his bulky shoulders, which seemed to steam under the fierce sun.

Eight hours before, he had crawled into the shelter of the brush, and he had at least eight hours to wait. He was afraid to sleep, had sleep been possible in the overpowering heat. He knew that the chase was on.

There was reason enough to pursue Convict 1836, now free, aside from the fact that in a house without the prison walls a widow mourned a dead guard.

The escape had been planned carefully, and so far each detail had worked out perfectly. Except the dead guard. That had been one of the contingencies considered probable but hoped improbable. However, what was, was, and the man dismissed the thought. He was to be hanged anyway.

The road was empty of traffic. It was a short cut through a mountain pass from the main highway. Rarely used, it was chosen by the man's friends. That morning at dawn he had drawn back, eyes gleaming hatred and the defiance of a wolf at bay, as he watched a car of guards drive madly down the road in the direction of Bayfield. The convict had lived there, so it was the first place of search. The man almost laughed at the simplicity of their reasoning.

For hours he lay still in his thin

cover of brush, fearing to seek the cooler shadows of the scrubby willows he could see in the hollow just below him. The guards might return. He tried to review the details of his further flight. The car would come for him at eight that night; they would detour around Bayfield to Edgewood. He wondered who would drive the car—they hadn't told him.

But it was too hot to think. He had to find shade. The thin mesquite offered no protection from the sun now high overhead. And those willows looked so cool. He decided to try for them.

Cautiously he began to work his way down through the scrub growth. He was afraid to leave the bushes and to keep behind them he couldn't rise to his feet. Once he slipped and rolled down a little gully. A sharp flint at the bottom gashed his head.

The blood from the cut mingled with the streaked grime on his face. With oaths he removed the spines of a prickly pear from an incautious hand. The trip of the night before was as nothing to the slow crawl through the all-too-thin fringe of brush.

Finally he slipped into the clumps of willows. Luxuriously he buried his face in the rank grass—growth of the recent Spring rains. He stretched himself at length and reached for his cigarettes. Then he remembered he couldn't risk a smoke.

But it was almost cool here anyway. He sat up and looked around. A depression hid him from the road if he kept his head down. The leaves hid

him from overhead observation. He lifted his head above the ridge and inspected the growth on the other side of the road.

Then he saw it. It was the reflection of the sunlight on the tail lamp of an automobile, drawn up in the bushes. Now he could make out the shape of the car behind the curtain of leaves. How had it come there? It hadn't arrived since he had.

Why should anyone leave a car there?

When was the owner coming back? Suppose he arrived when Slim Bates came for him. Then this other car might take up the pursuit, and he would be taken back. Everyone knew he was out now, and they knew about the guard too.

He cursed. Why was anyone using this road? It wasn't a highway. There weren't even any ranches on it. Probably it was only a joyrider who had smashed up his car, and it would stay there for a day or two.

But that explanation didn't satisfy. The man could see that other car pursuing him. He knew his friends would send a racing car, and they could outrun that thing in the bushes. But the police might see the race. And then where would he be? Even now there might be someone waiting behind that screen of leaves.

The car preyed on his mind. The convict tried to turn his back on it—to forget it. But always he returned to gaze on it and vision the pursuit through the night. He had to do something.

Like a sprinter he drew himself up on his finger-tips. Like a streak of dirty gray he hurled himself across the road to fall panting beside the car. With a twist he rolled into the brush. Fearing almost to breathe, he lay still. But there was no stir in the car. The whir of a winging grasshopper was the

only sound other than his own labored breathing.

With infinite caution the man edged his way up to the front of the car. Carefully he raised himself to his knees. Now that he was there what was he going to do? He was not familiar with the mechanism of automobiles, but he knew the engine was the source of its trouble as well as its power. He had seen Slim Bates working on a flivver once, and he had lifted the hood.

Slowly he released the catches of the hood of this car that stood between him and liberty. Gently he raised it until the engine was revealed. Then he looked with bewilderment at the unfathomed mysteries before him. Baffled, he couldn't decide what to do. Wires led everywhere, and the thing seemed inclosed in an impassable casing of iron.

But the wires were open. With teeth showing in rage, he caught them where they led from the fuse-board and tore them loose. There was the ferocity of murder in the strength that broke the set screws from the board.

"Now get me," he snarled as he lowered the hood into place.

II

ROBERT EMMET LONG was in a hurry. He didn't like driving at night, particularly through the Bayfield cutoff. About half a mile from the main highway his lights blinked twice, then went out. There was a screech of protesting brakes as he brought the car to a stop.

"Wait till I get that garage man," Long groaned as he climbed out. The trouble wasn't much. Just a loose connection and in a few minutes he had found it. The lights blinked several times, then settled into a steady glow.

"Thank God, you got here, bo. Where's Slim Bates?"

Long's nerves were good, but he almost sent the car crashing into a gully at the roadside as the question came to him from the rear seat.

Who was it? How had he got there? What did Slim Bates have to do with it? Everyone knew of Bates, the fixer and friend of crooks in Bayfield. Who would be waiting silently in the cutoff for a car sent by Slim Bates? There must be some sinister reason.

And the back of Long's neck crawled as he remembered the afternoon paper. It had told of the escape of a convict awaiting action on a hopeless plea for a reprieve for murder. He had killed a guard. Could he be the man behind him? It couldn't be anyone else, and Long thanked the gods of chance for the darkness that hid him. He didn't dare turn. He could feel the double murderer behind him with a gun at his back, awaiting some move. But he had to do something.

"Just a minute, this is a bad stretch of road here," Long replied, trying to collect his thoughts.

His way out lay through Slim. He had to take a chance.

"Slim is waiting for you. He was afraid to try it himself," Long tried desperately to be matter of fact. Would he get away with it?

The convict peered at the man who was now driving the car madly through the night. He didn't look like a friend of Slim's. And this sedan, richly upholstered, wasn't the kind of car he had expected.

"Where'd he get you? I never saw you before."

Where did Slim get him? Long sought for an answer. He had never seen Slim Bates. He knew him only by reputation.

"No, you haven't seen me before. Slim got me so the officers wouldn't suspect anything. I owe him a big

favor for getting me out of trouble once."

It sounded reasonable enough, but the man on the back seat wasn't sure. Slim ought to have come himself. However, this man had given him the signal with the lights—two flashes.

"Well, if Slim sent you I guess it's all right. It had better be. Where's Slim goin' to meet me? Edgewood?"

Long almost sighed his relief. At last he had something to go ahead on. Edgewood was the meeting place then. If he could get him to Edgewood he might find a way out.

"Yes."

"Where's my clothes?"

Again Long took a chance.

"At the Edgewood Hotel."

"How in hell am I goin' to get in any hotel in this stuff?" and the convict tore savagely at his prison jacket.

Again Long felt that crawling sensation at the back of his neck. There was menace in his tone. How could he get to the officers before the hotel was reached? But he thanked the dealer who had sold him the cap and long dust coat under the back seat.

"I was afraid to bring too much. You'll find a long coat and a cap under that seat you're sitting on. Roll up your trousers and put them on. Just as soon as you get to my room, I'll get your clothes."

Grumblingly, the convict dug the coat and cap from under the back seat as the car lurched on through the night. The guy might be an outsider, but he sure could drive, and Slim had sent him. The man settled down comfortably and thought of that car back in the bushes—the car that wouldn't be able to pursue him. He could smoke now, and he did.

Long was driving faster than he had ever driven before, but the speed was slow compared to his racing brain. What was he to do? The convict was armed. He had shot down a guard. Perhaps he

didn't know the road to Edgewood, and Long might turn off the Bayfield when he reached the highway. How could he find out?

Then, too, there was the real car Slim Bates was sending after him. Perhaps that was roaring down the road behind him even now. Apparently it had been due just when he arrived.

He stepped on the accelerator as the car started to climb the last grade where the cutoff joined the main highway. The lights of Edgewood would be in sight then, and he would have to decide quickly whether to try the run for Bayfield. The car reached the top of the grade and shot down the road at a speed that drove the convict against the back of the car.

"Slow down, bo, slow down," came the harsh command from the back seat. "Do you want one of these Bayfield speed cops stopping us? They used to hang around here."

Long's question was answered. He had to keep on to Edgewood.

The man on the rear seat stirred uneasily. Why was Slim getting so careful? And if he couldn't come himself, why did he have to pick an outsider? This one could drive all right, but he didn't like it. He'd tell Slim so when he met him.

"Where'd you say Slim was going to meet me?" he asked again.

"At the Edgewood Hotel; I will have to go for him"; Long had to stick by his story.

The convict didn't like the idea of the hotel. Why didn't Slim pick out one of the regular hangouts.

"How you goin' to get me in that hotel? I can't go through the front. Slim must be crazy sending me to a hotel where the bulls could find me without lookin'."

Why had Slim picked out a hotel? It didn't seem natural. Again Long took a chance.

"A hotel is just the place they wouldn't look for you. It's too public. I'll take you up the back way."

"And have everybody asking why. No you don't."

"No one will see you but the porter, and he knows me. I live there." If he could get the man to his room he might find a way. That menacing tone behind him had driven out any thought of attempting to hail an officer.

"Well, see that you keep to the dark streets. I don't like this much," and the convict's tone carried dread.

They were in the outskirts of Edgewood, and the man on the back seat pulled the cap down over his eyes and huddled into a corner. His eyes never left Long's hands as they gripped the steering wheel. He wasn't quite sure of this driver, even though he talked so smoothly.

And Long gave up hope of being stopped by a policeman. That first caution about driving had been sufficient. He was going carefully now. Through side streets and up alleys he drove and he twisted and turned by devious ways. Long could not shake off the thought of Slim Bates following close behind. Finally he brought the car to a stop.

In an instant the convict was leaning over him, and Long's vision of the revolver at his back was a reality.

"What are you doin'?" he demanded. A nameless iron door showed under the glare of a light. Iron doors meant barred windows to the man who had done murder to escape them. And there was murder in his voice now.

"This is the back door of the Edgewood Hotel," and Long struggled to keep his voice steady. "Wait until I get the porter."

"Don't you leave me. Just knock until he comes."

So, Long knocked and prayed that no questions would be asked by whoever opened it. Eventually the knock was

answered, and a negro stuck his head out. The convict settled back in his seat, but Long could still feel in memory the ominous thrust of the revolver muzzle.

"Whacha want?" the porter demanded. "Howdy, Mista Long, I didn't reckugnize you. Is they anythin' the mattah?"

"Nothing, Julius. Just a friend of mine in an accident, and I want to take him upstairs the back way to my room."

"Come right on in. It's suttinly too bad. Is you hurt much?" and Julius looked with amazement at the dust-covered, blood-streaked man who accompanied Long. But the negro went without an answer as he took them up in the freight elevator.

The corridors were empty as Long led the way to his room.

"Slim said not to telephone, but to come for him," Long said when they were inside. "You wash up, and I'll go get him."

"Looka here. I don't like this. Slim ain't actin' right."

"He figured it out as the best way. I'm risking my neck helping you now. You will have to fight it out with Slim. I'd take you out, but Slim said he would bring your clothes when I got you here. You can't wear mine." The convict didn't reply as he felt the constriction

of the dust coat across his burly shoulders.

"Make yourself comfortable. I'll bring Slim back with me," Long started for the door.

"Well, see't you make it snappy," and the convict threw himself onto the bed.

He stretched himself luxuriously. This was something like. He was almost free now. Slim would have the rest of it all arranged. He burrowed his way down into the softness of the bed. How tired he was. That guy who brought him here wasn't so bad, after all. He would tell him so when he came back. He thought at first he'd made a mistake. But old Slim knew what he was doing, and now Slim was coming. Nothing further to worry about.

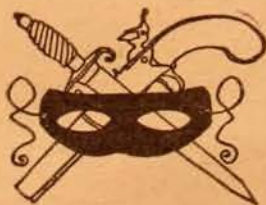
A knock on the door roused him from a doze. Sleepily he rose to his feet. Slim was here, and soon he could go to bed for a week.

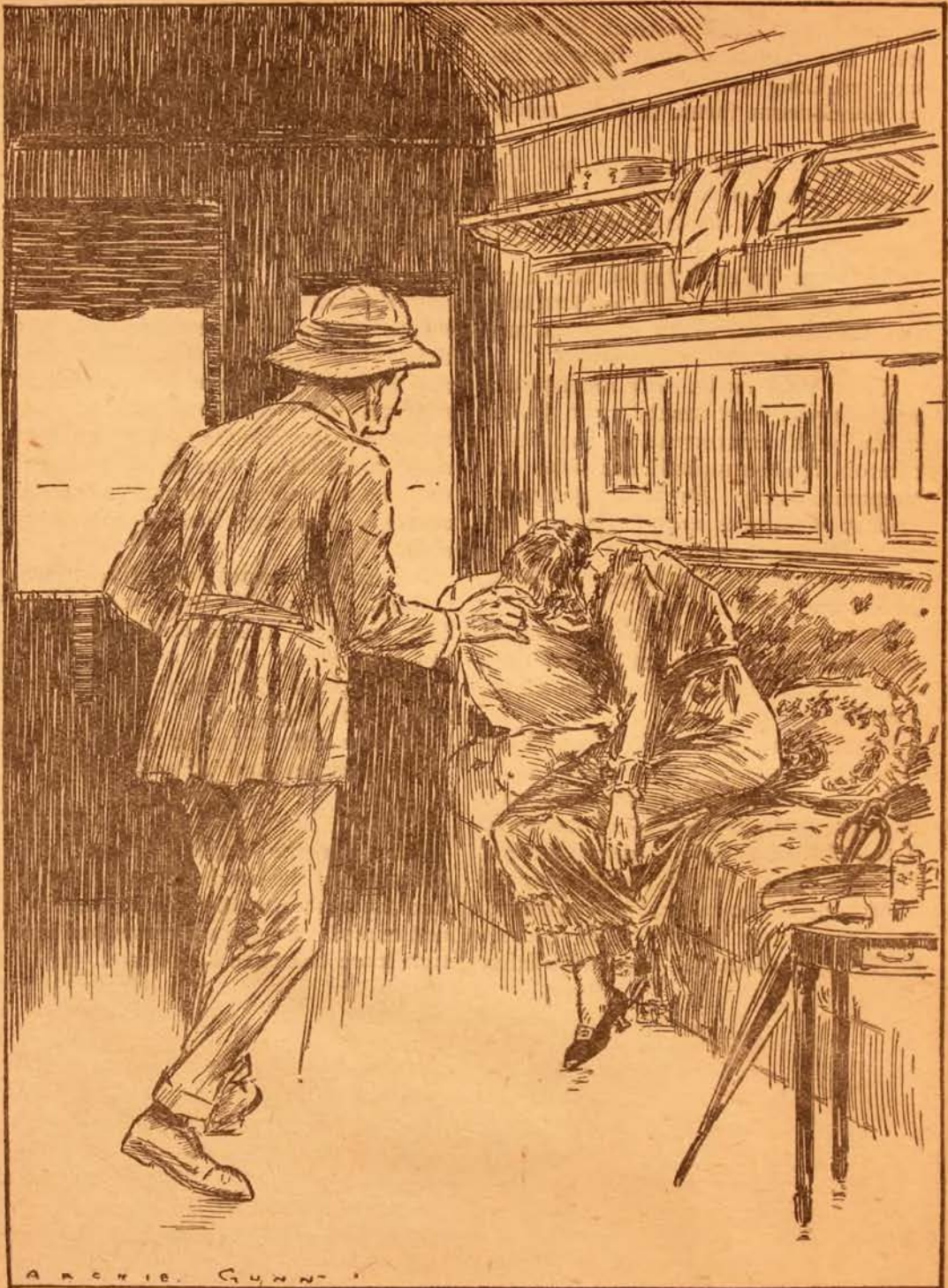
He crossed the room hastily and opened the door.

With mouth agape he stared into a revolver in the hands of a detective.

III

BACK in the Bayfield cutoff Slim Bates raised the hood of his car, drawn into the bushes at the side of the road, and cursed. Every connection had been torn loose from the fuse-board.





Her back was turned and she appeared to be sobbing her heart out.—Page 45

The Trap

By R. T. M. Scott

I

THE dusty, sun-baked train of the Madras Railway rumbled across the long bridge over the Kistna River and came to a halt at Bez-wada. Smith of the Criminal Intelligence Department of India threw open the door of his first-class compartment and strolled indolently through the throng of shouting natives toward the station restaurant. Shrill-voiced pawnee-wallahs lugged their skins of water from window to window of the third-class carriages and sweetmeat venders cried the virtues of their confections as they held their trays aloft.

It was an old story to Smith and one might have thought that he paid no attention whatever to his surroundings. He gave no sign of interest but in reality he was keenly interested. Three times during the last ten days had his life been attempted. It was well for him to be on the alert.

After a light tiffin Smith sauntered up and down the platform for a few minutes before the train was due to resume its long journey to Calcutta. He was the only white man among the crowds of natives. Indeed there were only two first-class compartments on the entire train. One of these—directly in rear of Smith's compartment—was reserved for ladies. An unusually old ayah scuttled backwards and forwards between this compartment and the restaurant. She was busy with refreshments for her mistress, who preferred not to leave the train and who kept her blinds drawn against the curious gaze of the natives.

Sharp toots of warning from the engine caused Smith to turn abruptly and enter his compartment. As he closed the door behind him he heard it opened again and he turned like a flash to ascertain the cause. Unexpected occurrences had come to have ominous significance for him of late.

What Smith saw upon turning, however, did not seem very dangerous. He was a dapper, little man who entered, smooth shaven and far from strong in physical appearance. He threw his topee into the rack for small parcels and sat down upon the seat opposite to the one upon which Smith's kit was lying. No word was spoken. White men who live in India do not talk much without a formal introduction.

Smith paid as little outward attention to his new traveling companion as he had paid to the throngs of natives upon the station platform. As the train gathered way he stretched himself full length upon his seat and lighted a cigarette. Notwithstanding his apparent indifference, however, Smith had noted several things which the ordinary observer might have failed to perceive. Instinctively he felt that the little man had attempted to display an easy manner that he did not feel when he threw the topee into the rack.

Smith felt that the act was an attempt at nonchalance and was not genuine. He noted, too, that the man had no native servant which is unusual for the first-class traveler of the East. In addition to this the eyes of the little man had a story to tell. They were not straight eyes. They were shifty and it was Smith's profession to read eyes.

He closed his own as he tossed his cigarette out of the window, but opened them again at once. The man on the opposite seat was looking at Smith and he was looking at Smith's eyes.

Smith stretched wearily and settled a pillow more comfortably as if preparing for a snooze. The shifty eyes had darted away and the little man busied himself in examining the rush screen in the center window upon his side which is constructed so that water may drip downward and cool the air by evaporation.

Smith observed the sudden interest in something other than himself and read the action once more as not being genuine. Again he closed his eyes and it was impossible to see that they fluttered open just far enough for observation. It was hot and sultry and sleep comes easily and unexpectedly under these conditions. Smith knew this and he knew that his life might depend upon his remaining awake. He might be wrong but his life of adventure had taught him the value of deduction combined with intuition. Previously the man he was hunting had sent natives to kill him. Now he had sent another white man. If Smith could last out long enough the man himself would come and then the battle would be decided once and for all—one way or the other.

The man on the seat opposite soon lost interest in the automatic cooler. He drew a small book from his pocket and settled back as if to read. As the train rattled on along the Madras coast the reader's eyes glanced over the top of his book at the tall man stretched silently upon the seat. Gradually Smith's breathing became deeper and more uniform. Once the little man dropped his book but the breathing did not alter. A minute or two afterwards he rose from his seat and took a pace

toward Smith, only to sit down again very suddenly as the door of the tiny servants' compartment opened.

Langa Doonh's spotless white livery and towering turban were as immaculate on board train as they were when standing behind his master's chair at a dinner party. It was one of Langa Doonh's secrets—and he had many since he had entered the service of Smith sahib. Other servants might be dirty when they traveled and none too clean at any time, but Langa Doonh was the servant of Smith sahib who was the greatest sahib in all India—to Langa Doonh.

To all appearances it made no difference whether the little man had sat down leisurely or hurriedly. He might have been a thousand miles away for all the attention he was accorded by the servant who had so suddenly entered the compartment. Silently, with bare feet, he moved about. With a small whisk he cleaned every inch of floor upon his master's side of the compartment and not an inch did he touch upon the stranger's side. With mathematical precision he adjusted Smith's cigarettes, matches and watch which lay upon the small table at his head. This finished he withdrew to his own compartment and closed the door without the slightest sound.

Five minutes followed, during which Smith's even breathing continued and the stranger read but failed to turn a page of his book. At the end of that time the little man dropped one hand into his side pocket. No longer was he looking at the book, although it was still held in his left hand. His eyes narrowed as they gazed hard at the prostrate man whose steady breathing showed no sign of altering. Little by little the right hand came out of the pocket and with it emerged a black automatic. It was half out when Smith spoke.

"Put it on the seat beside you and be

careful not to point the muzzle this way."

Smith's eyes were open and over his leg was pointing the barrel of a gun quite as black and formidable as the stranger's. Quickly the little man obeyed and, dropping his book, sat motionless. There was nothing else to do.

"Sahib call?"

The door of the servants' compartment stood open and Langa Doonh regarded the scene as if automatic pistols were matters of ordinary occurrence in his life.

"Cigarette aur dyasali lao," drawled Smith.

Carefully the boy reached for the cigarettes and matches. Extracting a single cigarette he placed it in the disengaged hand of his master and, lighting a match, applied it to the cigarette when Smith was ready. Not once did he come between the muzzle of his master's gun and the man opposite. For an instant he hesitated and then returned to his own compartment, closing the door once more.

"Why shouldn't I clean my pistol?" asked the stranger, who had had time to think a little.

"Because I got mine out first," snapped Smith. "Pass yours over with the muzzle toward yourself."

The man shrugged his shoulders and obeyed.

"Stand up, turn your back and grip the rack above your head with both hands," ordered Smith.

Smith rose and searched the man but found nothing beyond a railroad ticket to Calcutta and a few rupee notes of low denomination. He reached up and took one of the man's hands off the rack in order to examine a curious turquoise ring. He slipped the ring off the finger but returned it upon finding no initials upon the inside. Shoving the man down into his seat in no gentle

manner Smith resumed his reclining position as if the affair had lost interest for him.

"What's your name?" he queried indifferently.

There was no answer from the stranger, who remained inert and crumpled in the corner of his seat where he had been jammed.

"It doesn't matter," continued Smith. "Go to your master and tell him that the wholesale stealing of jewels in India for sale to tourists in Ceylon must stop. He knows that I caught his best agent in Ceylon and that his business is already crippled. Tell him that it will only be a matter of time before I catch him and that I may not bother to take him alive since he has sent so many people to put me out of the way."

"You mean that I am free to go?" asked the little man in surprise.

"Uh-huh," said Smith.

"When?"

"Now, if you like," was the careless reply.

Suddenly the eyes of the little man gleamed. Rising, he darted to the door, opened it and stepped out.

The train was crawling up an incline and there was a sandy embankment beside the roadbed. Smith did not even trouble himself to look out.

"Boy!" he called.

"Sahib?" replied the native servant, who had opened his door instantly.

"Darwaza bundo!"

Unconcernedly the native closed the door which the dapper little man had left open when he stepped out. What mattered it to Langa Doonh if his master had seen fit to throw another sahib out of the compartment? It was quite proper for his master to do such a thing but it would be highly improper for him to bother closing the door afterwards so long as he, Langa Doonh, was present.

Alone once more Smith again lay

back upon his pillow and reflected upon the situation. Was his course of action best suited to bring out the man he wanted? Would the head of the organization of thieves attempt a personal blow when so many of his agents continued to fail? Did he lack personal courage or was he, perhaps, known to Smith and feared recognition in the event of a failure to kill? These and similar thoughts occupied the mind of the man upon the carriage seat until he was suddenly interrupted in a most unexpected manner.

II

LEAPING to his feet Smith pressed an ear against the thin partition which separated his compartment from the one in the rear. Above the noise of the train he had distinctly heard a feminine shriek. Again, with his ear against the wood, he heard the high-pitched agonized call of a woman. The screams changed quickly to a low groaning which could scarcely be distinguished and then only the rattle of the train remained.

For an instant Smith reached for the chain of the emergency alarm but, changing his mind, opened the door and leaned out. It was before the time that the Government did away with the running-boards on account of the number of murders by assassins who crept along the outside of trains and struck through the open windows at those who slept.

Smith glanced at the foot-board with a question in his eyes. It was possible—just possible—that the little man had not jumped off the train, after all. With care he could have bent low and crept back along the train. Would he have dared to attack a woman so close to an agent of the Criminal Intelligence Department? Smith thought not. Was it a trap? It seemed impossible.

No matter what might be the explanation, a woman in distress had called—and Smith swung himself out upon the running-board. As he clung to the hand-grips on the outside of the swaying train and worked his way backward the head of Langa Doonh protruded from one of the windows.

"Sahib?" the boy whispered enquiringly.

Smith placed a finger upon his lips and motioned his servant back just as he passed the last of his own compartment windows.

A hurt look spread over the face of the native boy as he withdrew from the window. Sometimes, when his master went upon particularly hazardous expeditions, Langa Doonh was left behind. The boy grieved over these occurrences but, above all else, he had to obey. To disobey Smith sahib was so utterly impossible as to be beyond his imagination.

There being nothing else to do, Langa Doonh decided to clean the compartment once more. He was bending over to brush up the dust and cinders that had accumulated when something hard flew through the window upon the opposite side of the train to that upon which Smith had made his exit. Langa Doonh fell senseless to the floor, while a heavy rock lay by his head. Instantly the almost naked body of a native wriggled through the window from whence the stone had come.

The intruding native knelt quickly and proceeded to bind the hands and feet of his victim with a stout cord that he took from around his waist. With a strip torn from his loin-cloth he forced a gag into Langa Doonh's mouth and dragged him most unceremoniously back into his tiny compartment, the door of which he bolted before climbing out through the same window through which he had entered.

As Smith reached the first window

of the compartment in rear of the one he had left he held with one hand to the iron support while, with the other, he nursed his gun just inside the breast of his pongee coat. Very carefully he raised his head and looked inside.

There was but one occupant to be seen. Upon the opposite seat lay a young woman. Her back was turned and she appeared to be sobbing her heart out into a cushion. Her body shook almost as if in convulsions.

Smith spoke, but the distracted woman paid no attention or failed to hear the rather low voice above the rattle of the train. His eyes searching every corner of the compartment and keenly inspecting the figure of the crying woman, Smith moved on from window to window until he reached the door, which he opened, and stepped inside. For a minute or two he stood motionless while he examined the contents of the compartment, noting white-covered umbrella, gloves, green veiling and some toilet articles upon the small table. Everything appeared to be genuine—and yet Smith was not satisfied.

Turning to the door of the servants' compartment he jerked it quickly open and glanced inside. Lying upon the floor, with her head resting upon her bundle, was the old ayah whom Smith had seen upon the station platform. Her closed eyes and heavy breathing gave every indication of sleep, which is so commonly indulged in, whenever possible, by the native during the heat of the day.

Smith closed the door very quietly. Since entering the compartment Smith's eyes had not left the figure of the sobbing woman for more than a couple of seconds. He felt that something was wrong and, intuitively, he sensed the presence of danger but he could not tell where it lay.

Not quite decided as to his course of action, Smith opened the door oppo-

site to that which he had entered and threw one swift look back toward the compartment he had left. Even then, although he had seen that which caused him deep concern, his eyes flashed back to the figure of the girl, whose sobbing had nearly ceased. He had just seen a strange native crawling from the window of his own compartment. The incident needed quick investigation but first he must question the girl.

Smith took one step toward the now silent girl and his lanky, loose-framed body tensed as he crouched into the springing attitude of one of the jungle beasts of prey. Such a little thing he had seen—just an exposed finger upon which was a peculiar turquoise ring. The sudden crouch undoubtedly saved his life. There was the sharp crack of a small caliber pistol as the girl raised her head and fired over her reclining body.

III

SMITH did not return the fire although his pistol was drawn. Instead he hurled his body forward as the beast of prey that he resembled might have done. One long arm shot out and the pistol was seized with lean fingers and wrenched away before the girl could press the trigger a second time. The girl, nonplussed by the suddenness of her defeat, sat up, her face exposed. A broad grin spread over Smith's face. All his indolence of manner returned. Carelessly he stretched out a hand and lifted the mass of curls from her head. Before him sat the dapper little man who had pretended to jump from the train.

"Got any more guns?" asked Smith.

The little man sullenly shook his head but Smith made certain by a thorough patting from head to foot.

"Put your hair on again," continued Smith, tossing back the curly wig, "and

climb back into my compartment. You are cleverer than I thought and I think I'll take you to Calcutta. You are almost clever enough to be the man I am after; but no,"—Smith paused in thought—"he would have removed the turquoise ring."

The man in woman's attire looked down at the ring and sullenly turned the blue stone in.

"So that was what warned you," he commented. "Shall I get out of these woman's things?"

"No," returned Smith. "Get out on the running-board and back to my compartment just as you are. If you try to jump off I'll shoot you before you touch the ground."

Few people hang their heads out of the windows of Indian trains on the long, dusty stretches between stations. Nobody saw a man and a woman clinging to the foot-board of the swaying train. Had they done so they would have noticed that the woman went first and that the man did not bother to offer the slightest assistance to his companion. Indeed, when the woman came opposite to the first window of the adjoining compartment she caught her skirt on a loose screw of an iron hand-grip and seemed to be in considerable difficulty. Even then the man, only a few feet behind her, offered no help. After considerable delay, however, he became impatient and spoke in a low voice.

"Move on," he said, "or I'll shoot your dress free."

The delay had considerably exasperated Smith, who was anxious to ascertain what the strange native had been doing in his compartment. As he followed his captive through the door he dropped the gun, which he had been carrying, into his side pocket and turned toward the servants' compartment.

"Your hands up, old chap, if you don't mind."

Smith wheeled, but it was too late. Stretched full length upon the long seat, so close to the windows as to have been invisible to Smith as he climbed along the running-board, was the ayah—the infirm old native woman who had apparently been sleeping so soundly but a few minutes before. In her hand was a pistol and Smith's hands slowly went above his head. It was the ayah and yet it was not. The sluggish mentality of an old native woman was gone and with it the timorous attitude of the humble servant. Only his long training in self-control allowed Smith to depict the outward indifference that he was far from feeling.

"Just turn your back, old dear," continued the man's voice of this strange ayah, "while a woman takes off a few of her clothes."

It was undoubtedly a man who spoke and with the words he rose and began unwinding a long, dirty sari from about his head and waist. With the sari came the gray matted wig, revealing nut-brown, close-cropped hair.

"Shall I go through his pockets?" asked the dapper little man. "He's got a gun."

"You have blundered twice already, Higgins," was the reply in sarcastic tones. "I would as soon trust a baby with a razor as I would you with this man again. Go back to my compartment and bring my clothes. Change your own while you are there."

As Higgins once more climbed out upon the foot-board the other man tossed out of a window the long, cotton, bandage-like garment and revealed a circle of dark skin where a skimpy white jacket failed to reach down to a sagging woolen skirt. Deftly he picked Smith's gun from his pocket and, with a few expert pats, located and extracted the two pistols that Smith had taken from Higgins. Meanwhile Smith, tall

and angular, stood silently with his hands up and his back turned.

"Now that your teeth are drawn, Mr.—ah—Smith, you might make yourself comfortable on the opposite seat."

Smith quietly did as was suggested and gazed, in a bored manner, at the opposite seat, where sat the incongruous figure of a white man partly disguised as an old native woman. He gave but a glance at the gun resting on the seat beside his companion and then studied the remarkably clever make-up on the face. As he looked he began to smile.

"So you came down the opposite side of the carriage and arrived first while our friend Higgins pretended to have his skirt caught and so delayed me?"

"A fairly clever deduction," returned the man with the gun. "Anything else you would like to ask?"

"It would interest me to know why Mr. Sterne, the well-known pearl buyer of Calcutta, has taken to thieving."

"I am honored by your recognition," was the suave reply. "Perhaps you remember a game of billiards that we had at the club. You said then that the only profession more exciting than the detection of crime was the profession of the criminal. That is true. You do not detect crime for money but for the excitement. There is not sufficient excitement in your profession to satisfy me."

"And yet," continued Smith in an easy conversational tone, "throughout all India your word is known to be as good as your certified check."

"To break one's word is to lose one's self-respect," replied Sterne. "To steal is to lose the respect of a few people for whose esteem you may not care a snap of your finger."

"All honest men despise a thief."

"There are few honest men," was the cool reply, "and most of them are stupid."

"May I smoke?" asked Smith, languidly gazing out of the window,

although he was keenly estimating the distance to the next station.

Sterne took a package of Smith's own cigarettes from the table and tossed it over. He followed it with a box of matches before adding:

"We are coming to the small town of Ellore. It is extremely unlikely that there will be any first-class passengers or that anybody will come near this compartment. However, I will pull down the blinds on this side, which is next to the station. Whatever happens I will handle the situation, and if you make the slightest untoward move I shall be forced to shoot—and shoot to kill."

IV

SMITH made no reply and smoked lazily, leaning back with his eyes half closed. He was puzzled about Langa Doonh. He knew that the boy's training would make him try to keep in touch with his master. Had he heard through his thin door? If so, what was he doing? Had he met with foul play at the hands of the strange native? Smith feared for his servant and it worried him even more than his own awkward predicament.

When the train stopped at Ellore it was just as Sterne had anticipated. No stranger came near their compartment. A few seconds before the train started, however, Higgins entered from the platform, dressed in his own clothes and with a suitcase in his hand.

"Sit here," directed Sterne very curtly. "Take this gun and shoot him if he moves."

Smith reflected that it was fifty miles to the next station, which was Rajahmundry, an important one on the Godavary River. At Rajahmundry he felt sure that the guard would look into his compartment. Instinctively he knew that his critical moment must arrive

before the train stopped again. The failure of his boy to appear at the last station convinced him that he had to depend entirely upon himself. Only his own wits could save him.

Meanwhile Sterne had opened the suitcase and taken out a bottle of whitish fluid with which he liberally sponged face, neck, hands and wrists. Magically the dark skin turned to the sunburned hue of the average European. Disregarding the remainder of his body he quickly donned the white man's garb, standing forth in a faultlessly pressed suit of white flannels. The transformation was almost incredible. Where had been a slovenly old ayah was a smartly dressed white man of India.

"While I was dressing, an idea occurred to me," said Sterne, taking the pistol from Higgins and sitting down opposite to Smith. "It is foolish for any man to commit murder so long as he can get somebody else to do it for a few hundred rupees. Any man with brains would be willing to pay more than that to escape the danger of the death penalty. However, nobody seems to be able to kill you—even when you walk straight into my trap. It remains for me to do it. Isn't that reasonable?"

"Uh-huh," said Smith very casually, "but what's the idea that occurred to you while dressing?"

"Look!" continued Sterne, carelessly throwing open the door of the small servants' compartment. "My servant carried out my orders in regard to your servant."

Through the open door Smith saw the bound form of Langa Doonh lying upon the floor. A great load was lifted from his mind at the sight. Smith was fond of Langa Doonh, and dead people do not have their legs tied.

"I merely show you this so that you may know how utterly helpless you are," continued Sterne as he closed the door and resumed his seat. "It would be

weak-minded for me to kill you if I can find another solution. You have intimated that I never break my word. The same truth applies to you. Every criminal in India knows it. Your word would be accepted by any thief with brains if he has worked long in this country."

"Your proposition?" drawled Smith.

"I will spare your life," returned Sterne, "if you will promise to do as I tell you."

Smith merely raised his eyebrows in an interrogative manner.

"You will get off the train at Rajahmundry," continued Sterne, "and go down the Godavery River by native boat to Yanaon, which is a French possession. There you will take ship out of India and you will *never* set foot in this country again."

"An interesting idea," replied Smith but showing slight interest. "Will you entertain a counter proposition from me?"

"Proceed."

"I will give you two hundred thousand rupees in jewels if you will go down the Godavery River and leave the country as you would have me do."

"Scarcely enough, old dear," bantered Sterne, but a gleam came into his eyes.

"You forget," argued Smith, "that you will avoid the necessity of killing me and thereby escape the unpleasantness of a death penalty hanging over your head. That surely is worth several lakhs of rupees."

Through his half-shut eyes, as he smoked, Smith believed that he could detect upon the face of his opponent the faintest trace of cunning covetousness. He was fencing for his life and was about to deliver his most skilful thrust. Failure to penetrate his adversary's guard almost surely would forfeit his life or his honor. With apparent unconcern he flicked the ash from his cigarette and waited for the reply.

"Just—a—what jewels are these?"

"The loot that your organization collected and which came into my hands when I captured your lieutenant in Ceylon."

Sterne's eyes narrowed as he scrutinized the face of the agent of the Criminal Intelligence Department. He knew that Smith was far removed from a fool and he tried to read the thoughts of the man who smoked his cigarette so calmly in the face of death or dishonor.

"I had hoped to use the jewels," continued Smith, "to bait a very beautiful trap for you in Calcutta."

"You have them here?"

Smith's eyelids quivered ever so little. It might have been smoke and it might have been nervousness. He was playing to a subtle audience and the least bit of overacting would be fatal.

"Is it a bargain?" he asked. "Will you accept the jewels?"

"I have made no promise but I will inspect your dispatch box," replied Sterne, indicating with his pistol a leather-covered box of considerable size which lay upon the floor. "If the jewels are there they are mine without the trouble of making a bargain."

"Permit me to open the box," offered Smith, extracting a small key from his pocket and bending forward rather eagerly.

"Sit back!" snapped Sterne. "Throw me the key."

Smith tossed over the key and shrugged his shoulders resignedly while Sterne glanced from the dispatch box to Higgins and hesitated.

"Open the box for the gentleman, Higgins, like a good boy," interposed Smith with what might possibly have been a gleam of hope in his eyes.

"Shoot him if he gets off his seat," said Sterne, shoving a spare pistol across to Higgins. "Smith, for some reason, you want anybody but me to

open that box and that is just the reason I shall open it myself."

"Go to the devil!" growled Smith.

Sterne smiled in amusement as he dragged the box in front of his feet upon the floor. He unbuckled the leather cover and threw it back, exposing the top of the steel box within. Smith bent forward a trifle as if to watch the opening of the box. In reality it brought him a few inches nearer to Higgins and allowed his body to assume an attitude that would permit a spring.

"No false move!" warned Sterne, looking up and feeling the gun beside him on the seat.

Higgins stood up as Sterne inserted the key and could not resist glimpsing the operation out of the tail of his eye. Mainly, however, he watched Smith and kept his gun well forward.

"Look out for the Jack-in-the-box when you lift the cover," warned Smith with a chuckle. "My trap may be better than yours."

It was a subtle speech and a most audacious one. Sterne grunted contemptuously, turned the key and lifted the steel cover. There was exposed the usual upper tray containing papers, pens, pencils and other odds and ends.

"Gracious me! The ugly face didn't jump out!" jibed Smith.

"Hold your tongue!" snarled Sterne.

On either side of the tray were two brass lifters that sank in slots, flush with the tray, when not being used for raising it. Sterne inserted two fingers of each hand under these brass loops and lifted. They rose freely for a good two inches and then came a violent clang from within the box while the loops shot downward, crushing the fingers to the bone and holding them fast against the heavy box.

"Shoot!" screamed Sterne.

With the clang and the scream Smith's body catapulted toward Higgins while his long right arm sent his

clenched fist straight at the solar plexus of the man with the gun. It was a desperate attempt and might have ended in disaster had not Langa Doonh bounded through the door at that very moment and struck up the pistol so that the bullet went six inches over Smith's head. The next instant the blow landed and Higgins crumpled into a senseless heap upon the floor.

After collecting the various guns Smith turned his attention to Sterne, whose forehead was streaming with perspiration from pain and fury.

Unconcernedly he pressed a concealed spring in the box and released the man's fingers.

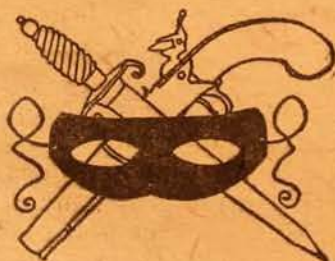
"Nice little trap, wasn't it?" he commented. "Better than yours, eh what?"

"Sahib," said Langa Doonh, "boy very sorry to get tied up. Only could work loose just now. Sahib angry?"

"Not at all," replied Smith, busily engaged in handcuffing the sullen Sterne and the senseless Higgins.

"Sahib like clean shirt?"

"Uh-huh," said Smith, "might as well."



The Extra Dozen Eggs

By J. B. Hawley

I

"I AM absurd enough to believe that in nine cases out of ten I can determine the innocence or guilt of a man accused of a crime by looking into his face. I have looked into Gerald Grayson's face and I do not believe that his was the hand that poured poison into Robert Marsh's wine. From his eyes, innocence shines as clearly as the sunlight shines through that window."

My friend Mountfort made the foregoing statement with an air almost of defiance. My impulse was to laugh at him, but knowing how sensitive he was to ridicule, I refrained. Instead I adopted a somewhat judicial attitude.

"But considering the evidence," I asked, "do you think you can convince an unimaginative jury of your young client's innocence?"

Mountfort answered me with a gesture of irritation.

"Hang the evidence!" he exclaimed bitterly.

"It is more likely to hang your client than to be hung," I retorted. "Consider it. Robert Marsh died suddenly in his home on the morning of March 29. An autopsy showed that his death was due to poison taken into his system in a glass of wine. There are four witnesses to testify that on the evening preceding his death he was at the home of Graham Cumberland and with him drank a glass of wine that was poured from an almost empty decanter by the accused. These men will further testify that the wine

was served by Grayson, first to his host and then to Marsh and that he, himself, did not take any. Cumberland is alive and well today, which does away with the supposition that the wine was poisoned before Grayson poured it. Therefore we are left with only one conclusion, which is that between the time when Grayson had served Cumberland and his pouring the wine for Marsh he slipped the poison into the latter's glass."

My friend rose and stood in front of me, an expression of amused tolerance on his face.

"You state your case, Tom," he said "with all the precision and bias of a district attorney. Nevertheless I tell you that Grayson is innocent. And I am going to prove him so or I shall never stand before the Bar of Justice again."

He caught up his hat and stick and with only a nod to say good-by left the room. From my window I saw his absurdly thin figure go flying down the street looking for all the world like that of some modern Don Quixote.

And as I turned back to my desk I reflected that probably no knight errant had ever set forth on a more futile quest than Mountfort was pursuing in his search for evidence to prove that Gerald Grayson was innocent of the murder of Robert Marsh. Yet it was like my friend to take up the cudgels for a man in as hopeless straits as his present client. It seemed to me, at times, that it was impossible for him to vitally interest himself in a case of any kind unless all the circumstances

and evidence were against him at the very outset. In my heart I wished him good fortune, while believing that in this instance good fortune could not come to him.

Indeed, there seemed no other explanation of Marsh's death than that which I had just stated to Mountfort. There was no doubt that he had died of poison administered in a glass of wine. There was no doubt that the wine had been poured for him by Gerald Grayson. Could there be any doubt that the poison was mixed with the wine by the same person who poured it? And Grayson's motive for this terrible deed? It was known to every man and woman in the town. He loved and was loved and the woman was Marsh's only daughter, who was prevented from marrying him by her father's prejudices against him.

These prejudices were the result of one of those absurd feuds which still exist in Southern communities. At some remote period the Graysons and the Marshes had been involved in a dispute over certain lands which when taken to the courts had been decided in favor of the former family. Since that time the name of Grayson had been anathema to a Marsh and succeeding generations had at different times done their utmost to bring misfortune to members of the Grayson family.

It is only fair to state in favor of the Graysons that their activities in this quarrel had been directed along only defensive lines. Until this act of the last of the race in poisoning Robert Marsh, not one of them had done anything to keep alive the fires of hatred. And in the beginning even young Gerald had shown no animosity toward his hereditary enemies. He had permitted himself to be attracted by a daughter of the race and in an upright, manly way had done his best to gain her father's consent to their marriage. Only

when this consent was refused did he strike.

I was not present at the gathering at Graham Cumberland's house where Grayson committed the act that would send him to the gallows, but what happened was adequately described to me by an eye-witness. The meeting was not a social one but was called by Cumberland as president of the town's largest bank to obtain the consent of his directors to certain innovations he desired to establish.

Present besides Cumberland, himself, and Marsh and Grayson were Herbert Stanley, the bank's vice-president and cashier; Samuel Townsend, the richest and most powerful man in the State, and Cashel Heming, an attorney who held proxies for the absentee directors. Except by Marsh, no objections were raised to Cumberland's plan. But Marsh, who always enjoyed being in the minority and was of an unusually antagonistic disposition, fought Cumberland tooth and nail. At moments he was positively insulting and had it not been for his adversary's tact and tolerance of an old man's irritability, a serious quarrel might have ensued. As it was, after a great deal of argument, it was decided to hold the matters under discussion over to another meeting when it would be possible to get together a greater number of the bank's directors.

It was when they had all risen to go that Cumberland with his well-known suavity and tact had said: "Mr. Marsh, you and I have spoken pretty plainly this evening. To show these gentlemen that our disagreement in no manner affects our personal relations, I am going to ask you to drink a glass of wine with me."

He turned to Grayson, who had been sitting with his back to the buffet.

"Gerald," he said, "will you oblige me by reaching into the cabinet there and getting out the decanter and glasses?"

Obedient to his host's request, Grayson had brought forth a decanter which to Cumberland's chagrin was seen to contain only about two glasses of wine. While Cumberland was offering to go into the cellar and procure more wine and being dissuaded by the others, it was noticed that Grayson had filled two glasses from the decanter he held in his hand and that he had placed the first before Cumberland and the second before Marsh. Then the two men drank each other's health and the party separated for the night.

At about half-past one the following morning Marsh awoke in his bed in frightful agony. Before his daughter could get a doctor he was dead.

II

I DID not see my friend Mountfort for a week after the day he left me, swearing to clear Grayson from the charge of murder or give up practising his profession. When at length he did come to me he was in such low spirits that I felt sorry for him. He frankly admitted that repeated interviews with his client and with everyone who had been at Cumberland's on the night of the tragedy, had brought him nothing of value for the task he had set himself.

"But hang it all, Tom," he said despondently, "I know—I feel in every bone in my body—that that boy is as innocent as you are. If only I could strike upon a sign to set me off in the right direction."

"Oh, why not admit you're beaten," I argued. "Persuade Grayson to let you put in a defence of temporary insanity and take his chances with the jury."

"I'd as soon let him plead a straight and unqualified guilty. You know how the newer element in the town feels toward the old families. And it's this element that composes most of our

juries. Why, the boy wouldn't have a chance."

"Then forget the whole rotten business for a while. Come with me and hear Tot Walters play on her violin. Such music ought to be an antidote for anybody's troubles."

Mountfort did not reply to my suggestion. When I had finished tying my cravat I turned around and looked at him. He was standing bolt upright in the centre of the room staring at me intently, yet somehow or other seemingly looking beyond me. I spoke his name.

"The sign! The sign!" he exclaimed in a voice hoarse with emotion. "Gad, Tom, I think you've shown it to me. If only you have!"

And with no other word he dashed from the room, leaving me to go on to the Walters Concert at the Opera House alone.

That evening Miss Walters, who was just back from two years in Dresden, where she had studied under the best teachers, played divinely. Lulled by the exquisite notes of her instrument I was able to thrust aside all my problems and vexations and soar into a world of purest melody. The music gripped me to such an extent that even after it was over and I was walking homeward through the soft Spring moonlight, I was a being apart from other mortals. Therefore the shock was considerable when from out of the shadows surrounding my porch a figure darted and caught me by the arm. I had raised my fist to strike when Mountfort's familiar voice came to me out of the darkness.

"Tom!" he cried, "I'm on the trail. The scent is strong. Come, I want you to be in at the kill."

"What on earth are you talking about?" I cried, thinking for a second that my friend had gone mad.

"The Grayson case, you idiot," he answered impatiently. "By the grace

of God I'll have that boy out of jail before I'm a day older."

Without listening to my protests and vouchsafing me no further information, he led me hurriedly along the street toward the upper end of the town. When at length I was going to declare my intention to go no farther unless he told me what wild goose chase we were pursuing, he turned in at the gate of a fine old mansion.

Surprised beyond belief I saw that the house toward which we were heading was the home of Graham Cumberland.

"What are we doing here at this time of night?" I demanded. "Surely you've been over the case with Cumberland a hundred times before this?"

Mountfort ignored my question. Instead of answering it he took the steps of Cumberland's stoop at a bound and an instant later I heard his ring at the bell.

The door was opened to us almost instantly and it was Cumberland's handsome, genial face that looked out at us from the lighted doorway.

"Come in, gentlemen, come in!" he cried when he had recognized us, "I am very glad you have taken the trouble to look in on me. I had become so bored with my own company that I was just about to pack off to bed."

He stood aside and held the door wide for us to enter.

"Mr. Cumberland," Mountfort said when a minute or so later we were seated in our host's library enjoying the flavor of his cigars, "our visit is not entirely a social one. In fact, I've come to ask you a further question or so about the death of Robert Marsh. Perhaps you will bear with me when I tell you that my belief in Grayson's innocence is still unshaken, and I do not want to leave anything undone that might in any way help him."

Cumberland made a deprecatory

gesture. He spoke in a tone of the utmost sincerity.

"No one more than myself pities that unfortunate young man. If there is anything I can tell you or do that will aid him in any way, come to me at any time of the day or night and as often as you choose."

I turned toward Mountfort to see how he was impressed by our host's generous speech and I was amazed to see him grinning almost malevolently.

"Then why, Mr. Cumberland," he asked in a voice barely above a whisper, "did you purchase so many eggs on the afternoon of March 29?"

"Eggs!" Cumberland cried quite rightfully startled out of his habitual calm; "what in heaven's name do you mean?"

Mountfort drew a memorandum book from his pocket and with exasperating slowness turned the pages until he found the notation he was seeking.

"On March 29," he read at length, "from Simon Greene, grocer, at four-thirty in the afternoon you purchased a dozen eggs which you carried home yourself."

Graham Cumberland settled back in his chair and regarded Mountfort with an amused smile.

"We'll grant that astounding fact," he said good-humoredly, "but what has a quite ordinary household purchase of mine to do with Robert Marsh's death?"

"But it wasn't an ordinary household purchase. You see, just the day before your cook had purchased her usual weekly amount of three dozen."

Cumberland shook his head and regarded my friend with a puzzled expression.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I don't quite see what you are driving at. Are you suggesting that I am extravagant in the matter of buying eggs? Or is it that you think eggs are bad—"

"No, no!" Mountfort broke in, "not

bad. I think that they are the best thing in the world for a man who has just taken a huge dose of corrosive sublimate."

Cumberland literally sprang from his chair. He towered over Mountfort and for an instant I thought he was going to strike my friend. Then he fairly shouted:

"What do you mean, you infernal fool!"

"I mean, Cumberland," Mountfort answered with a deadly calm, "that when you poisoned Robert Marsh, in order to direct suspicion away from yourself you too drank of the deadly wine. But you had an antidote in the form of the whites of a dozen eggs ready to hand; you lived while Marsh died."

Cumberland made a gesture of disgust and turned away.

"You're—mad, man—stark, raving mad," he said contemptuously.

"Your plan was very clever," Mountfort continued, "and had it not been for an accidental word from Tom here and a moment of inspiration that came to me when I needed it most, you would never have been found out. Grayson would have hanged for the murder you committed.

"It is probable that you wanted Marsh out of the way because you knew that while he was alive you would never be able to make the changes in the bank that would cover up your irregularities. Ha! You didn't think I knew about the bank? As a matter of fact, I didn't. I merely guessed, but the expression that crossed your face just then showed me that my guess was a good one.

"But to continue. You emptied your decanter of all but two glasses of wine and to this wine you added enough corrosive sublimate to kill a man. Then you arranged the seating of your guests on the tragic night so that Grayson, who was known to hate Marsh, would be near the wine and therefore the logical

person to pour it when you called for it. He did pour it and Marsh died. Then everyone believed that he, Grayson, must have poisoned Marsh's glass, since you yourself had drunk from the same decanter and suffered no bad effects. That was because no one had seen you rush to your bathroom after your guests had gone and drink down the whites of eggs that saved your life."

"But do you think you can make a jury believe that silly yarn?" Cumberland snarled.

"Yes. You see, I am able to show them the bottle in which the poison came and bring before them a druggist from a town fifty miles away who will swear that on the 26th of March he sold you a quantity of corrosive sublimate on the excuse that you wanted to kill an ailing dog."

At Mountfort's last statement, Cumberland straightened himself, and wheeling, dashed into his bedroom. Before either Mountfort or I could reach the door it was slammed to and bolted. Then as we pounded on its panels, we heard the sharp crack of a pistol shot. Mountfort stepped back and said:

"There, Tom, was Cumberland's confession to the murder of Robert Marsh."

III

LATER that night after the authorities had taken charge in Cumberland's house and Mountfort and I had made our depositions before the District Attorney, my friend told me how he had discovered Cumberland's guilt.

"I deserve no credit, Tom," he said modestly. "When I was in a highly keyed-up state, open to every sort of influence, you gave me a hint. I followed it—that was all."

"I gave you a hint!" I repeated in amazement.

Mountfort nodded.

"Sounds silly, I know," he continued, "but it's a fact that from your using the word 'antidote' in something you were saying came the idea that set me on the right track. Remember, I was searching madly for someone besides Grayson who might have poisoned Marsh. Until you used that word it seemed impossible that anyone else could have done so, since all the witnesses agreed that only he had touched the decanter from which two glasses were served—one harmless, which went to Cumberland, and the other deadly. Then came my inspiration. You said 'antidote' and as suddenly as lightning illumines a dark sky my mind was lighted.

"I saw as in a vision how a man could poison another and keep himself from suspicion by taking some of the poison himself; saving himself from its deadly effects by taking an antidote already prepared. I left you and rushed to the library, where I read that the

best antidote for corrosive sublimate was a mixture of the whites of eggs. The man toward whom my suspicions were now directed was, of course, Cumberland, since the poisoned wine came from his decanter and he was the man who had taken the other glass of wine poured by the innocent Grayson. I made the rounds of the groceries and dairies until I found the store where he had purchased a dozen eggs on the day of the murder. Then, hoping to find something else that might incriminate him, I went snooping around his house. And there, back of his barn in a pile of refuse, I found the parts of a broken bottle that had once contained corrosive sublimate. One of the pieces bore the druggist's label. I wired to him and in less than an hour had a reply that proved to me that my case against Cumberland was complete. I found you and brought you to his house so that I might have a witness when I accused him. And that is all!"



The Man Who Was Two

By Harold Ward

I

TO The Governor and Members of The Board of Pardons:

Some six years ago, according to the Daily Press, Captain John Conners of the Detective Bureau of the New York City Police Department was killed in a wreck of the Oscalooosa Limited between Chicago, Illinois, and Clinton, Iowa. His body, horribly mangled and disfigured beyond recognition, was shipped home, where it was buried with all the honors due a man of his position.

In view of the fact that his was the only body not positively identified, together with the further fact that he was a personal friend of the conductor, one James Barley, who testified at the inquest that he had talked with Conners not over five minutes before the wreck, his family and friends accepted the remains without question.

I alone know the true story of John Conners.

I am making this statement in the hope that a great wrong may be righted.

II

CAPTAIN JOHN CONNERS had been in the West in search of a gang of forgers who had made New York their headquarters. Failing to locate his men, he was on his way home when a telegram intercepted him at Denver asking him to keep an eye open for one Simon Latham, wanted in New York for murder.

Latham, known throughout the coun-

try as a gunman and gangster, had, according to the telegram, committed a crime of unusual atrocity, killing two policemen in cold blood and making his escape unscathed. He was believed to have gone to Denver, where he was known to have friends. Conners, being well acquainted with him, was asked to stop over in the Colorado city to assist the police in their search.

Two days spent in Denver convinced him that there was nothing to be gained by a longer stay.

The second day out of the Western metropolis he was passing through the train on his way to the observation car when he suddenly located his quarry slumped down in a seat in the smoking compartment. In spite of the fact that Latham had disguised himself to the best of his ability by growing a stubby beard and donning smoked glasses, Conners had no trouble in recognizing him.

Latham was alone in the compartment at the time. Before he had time to make a move Conners had him covered.

"Up with your hands, Latham!" he commanded.

The gunman obeyed the order. "Who d'ye think I am, damn yeh?" he snarled.

Conners smiled. "I don't think—I know!" he answered. "You are—"

He was interrupted by a crash. His revolver flew from his hand as he pitched forward into the arms of the man he had arrested. An instant later both men were huried across the car and buried under a mass of débris.

Then hell broke loose. The wrecked

train was enveloped in flames. Clouds of scalding steam drove the rescuers back time after time. The air was filled with the shrieks of the wounded and the groans of the dying. Men worked like demons to save those who were buried beneath the burning wreckage.

Conners and Latham, hidden under the débris of two cars, were among the last to be found. The body of the policeman was little more than a charred mass of flesh. Under him, yet protected to a certain extent by his form, was Simon Latham. He, too, had suffered terrible injuries, yet within his shell still lingered the breath of life.

As they dragged the form of the murderer from beneath the wreckage even the hardened physicians and volunteer nurses gasped with astonishment that he still lived. His face had been parboiled by the scalding steam until the flesh hung in strips. His body, from which the clothes had been burned, was a solid mass of burns.

Swathed in cotton, saturated with oil, they rushed him to the hospital. A week passed. He remained unidentified.

After a month he took a slight turn for the better. Finally he was able to speak a few words. Physicians and nurses gathered around his bed and asked him to identify himself.

He answered them listlessly, seemingly as a child repeats a lesson.

He was Simon Latham, gunman, gangster—murderer! He was wanted in New York, he told them, for the killing of two policemen. Captain Conners had been about to arrest him when the wreck intervened.

They expected him to die. It was an impossibility, said the physicians, for a man in his condition to continue living. They believed that he realized it and was making a death-bed confession. They summoned a priest. To the Holy Father he repeated the same story.

And then he got well—as well as a

man can get who has passed through hell.

The New York police were notified. When he left the hospital it was with handcuffs on his wrists. Yet he made no resistance. His spirit was broken. He reiterated his confession, denying nothing, admitting everything. The State furnished him with an attorney. Acting on the lawyer's advice he threw himself on the mercy of the court. A kind-hearted judge, taking his physical condition into consideration, sentenced him to life imprisonment rather than the chair.

III

SIMON LATHAM became a model prisoner. He went about his appointed tasks in a solemn, mechanical sort of way, a broken-down old man scarcely out of his teens—a man whose face was seamed with myriad scars, twisted and contorted out of shape by muscular contraction. His short-cropped hair was snow-white, his form bent and feeble. In his eyes was a far-away look—the look of a dog that has lost its master.

Eventually he was made a trusty. He performed his work with a servility that surprised those who had known him in former years.

Everyone remembers the prison break of some weeks ago. Five hundred men—the dregs of civilization—armed with a miscellaneous collection of weapons garnered from God knows where, threw themselves against the little group of guards in the big dining-hall. For two hours the battle waged to and fro. Eventually the officials, better armed, better disciplined, won out. Yet the victory was not gained without considerable loss.

As is always the case, many of the prisoners aligned themselves on the side of law and order. Among them was Simon Latham, the lifer.

When the trouble broke loose Latham was standing midway between the row of prisoners and the little knot of guards. As the missiles flew through the air he was caught between two fires. Something—a dish or bowl—struck him squarely on the head. He dropped to the floor unconscious.

For five minutes the battle waged across his body. Then he recovered consciousness and plunged into the fray with almost maniacal strength, aiding the guards wherever possible. When the affair was ended and the mutineers were finally herded back into their cells he was bleeding from a dozen wounds.

Here is the peculiar feature: Immediately after the fight Latham, the model prisoner, became a prison outlaw. He refused to obey prison discipline, insisted on hobnobbing with the guards, and attempted to escape whenever occasion offered itself.

He was taken before the warden. The latter, who had taken a great interest in the case of the former gunman, especially since his services at the time of the break, tried argument.

Latham insisted to the warden that he was being unjustly held. *He asserted that he was not Simon Latham, the outlaw, but Captain John Conners, the policeman!*

The warden, a man not prone to forget favors, finally ordered him taken from the cell where he had been confined after his outbreak and placed in the insane ward under observation. He is there now.

Here are the facts as I deduce them. I am positive that I am right:

Captain Conners was in the act of arresting Latham when the wreck occurred. He had, as I have said, drawn his revolver and with it covered the murderer.

"Who d'ye think I am, damn yeh?" the gangster demanded.

"I don't think—I *know*," Conners answered. "You are—"

Before he could finish his sentence the cars were piled together. He was thrown forward and received a terrific blow on the head. Then and there all memory disappeared.

But in his subconscious mind were the thoughts that had been flashing through his brain while he was making the arrest!

His subconscious memory retained nothing but the impressions of Simon Latham. He had known Latham for years. His history was, to the policeman, an open book.

He was about to utter Latham's name when the blow came that erased all memory. So while the conscious mind of Captain John Conners was obliterated, there remained in the tiny cells in the back of his head the recollection of the man who stood before him at that last instant.

Latham was killed. His body, mutilated beyond all recognition, was buried as Captain John Conners. Conners, disfigured and mutilated, speaking only the thoughts that, as I have said, were in his mind at that last instant—thoughts that had only to do with Simon Latham—accepted the role of Simon Latham, lived it, accepted the punishment of Simon Latham!

Yet somewhere in those tiny cells of subconsciousness remained the policeman. He could not be the renegade that Latham had been, because it was not in his make-up, even though in his own mind he was Latham. Why? Because his training had all been on the side of law and order.

Then came the prison break. That flying dish, striking him on the head, removed, in some way, the pressure against his brain. Immediately the role of Simon Latham was forgotten and he started in again where he had left off six years before. He was again Captain

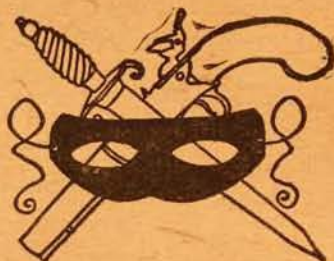
Conners, policeman and guardian of the law. As Captain John Conners he plunged into the fight against the convicts.

I am positive, gentlemen, that I am right. I asked that you allow me to

return home to my family and friends.

For, Your Excellency and Gentlemen of the Board of Pardons, *I am Captain John Conners!*

I trust that you will accept my word. I have no other proof.



The Campaign for Vengeance

(A Complete Mystery Novelette)

By John Baer

I

THE coffin was carried from the house by eight pall-bearers, all in the uniform of the force. The narrow street was crowded with men, women and children, all of them eager for a last look at the plain brown casket.

While the coffin was being lifted into the hearse, the men bared their heads; most of the women held handkerchiefs to their eyes. Even the children kept an awed and reverent silence. All but one of them. A lad of about seven, red-headed, chubby, strong-necked and slightly bandy, pushed his smaller sister and called out, "Look! Cap'n Jimmy's in that!"

Cap'n Jimmy—that's what he was to his friends in the neighborhood—and by "friends" we mean everyone within a radius of five blocks, old enough to walk, crawl or be wheeled about in the streets. As a boy and young man he had been merely Jimmy; then he "made the cops" and after a phenomenal career of seven years reached the rank of captain. But even at that he was never promoted from Jimmy to James.

The parents came out of the house and entered the first coach. Then came Commissioner Anderson and by his side Alan Nevins, a plain-clothesman with the rank of sergeant.

Nevins had come half way down the stoop, when he suddenly faltered. The commissioner seized him by the arm and said, rather roughly, "Come! come!

Don't go to pieces! Steady now!"

Thereupon the commissioner had a violent coughing spell, which was strange, considering it was a warm April day, that he had no cold, and that nothing he had tried to swallow had lodged in his throat.

So Captain of Police James Cornell was buried.

II

FIVE days later, Sergeant Nevins called at the Cornell home. In the little front parlor a girl was waiting for him. Slight of build she was and of the fragile loveliness of an anemone; her dark eyes were the more sparkling because of the pallor of her cheeks.

The Sergeant came toward her and held out his arms as if to take her into them and hold her close. The girl took a sharp breath, stepped back a pace and nodded toward a chair. Nevins sat down and nervously tapped the brim of his derby against his fingers.

Marguerite Cornell had been in Europe as traveling companion to a wealthy woman when her brother Jimmy died. She had come home too late for the funeral. She now spoke to Nevins (her fiancé) with the detachment of a person discussing a purely professional matter in which she had no personal interest at all.

"The news reports are always garbled," she said. "And I can't bear to speak of it to mother or father. Tell me—give me the facts straight."

Sergeant Nevins cleared his throat.

"We know nothing definite about—about—Jimmy was found—a roundsman stumbled, by accident, over his body, in an empty lot. That was at three o'clock in the morning. Jimmy was in uniform at the time, but not on duty. On—on his chest was found a small, plain white card—an ordinary visiting card—bearing the words *The Mogul* in a flashy handwriting. Jimmy was dead."

"How—many wounds—?"

"Three. The one in his forehead did for him instantly."

"Did he have a chance to—fight—?"

"Evidently. Two of the cartridges in his gun had been exploded."

"Five shots—and no help—"

"He wasn't shot in the lot—that's the explanation. He was brought there in a car."

"Who or what is *The Mogul*?"

"We don't know. We surmise—that is—there seems to be plenty of evidence to support the theory that quite a bit of the crime in this city is organization-crime. We are often able to link crimes together—different types of crime—counterfeiting, robberies, assaults; something in the manner in which they are executed, something in the precautions used by the criminals to avoid detection, seems to indicate that there is a central idea, a single brain, if you will, that is giving directions. We have, however, no inkling as to this person's identity, nor are we able to point out the individuals who are the links in this chain of hirelings. Every member of the department was questioned, of course, but only one had previously heard the name *The Mogul*."

"Yes?"

"Two men seemed to be having an argument in the Bird's-Eye, a dance hall on lower Third Street. A detective came as close as he dared, but one of the men ended the argument with '*The Mogul* has slapped his O.K. on the

scheme, so I'm going ahead, whether you like it or not.'"

"I see. The Department infers that Jimmy, by accident or design, stumbled upon *The Mogul* and was shot—"

"For knowing too much."

"Damn them!" The girl was standing near a small round table. Her cheeks became whiter, she suppressed a sob and shrank back; she had become suddenly aware that with her oath she had unconsciously layed her hand upon the family Bible.

With this realization, a strange, mystic light glowed in her eyes. She stared straight ahead of her, and it seemed beyond, beyond everything material and into some other world. Quite gently she put her hand upon the Bible again.

And now her voice was as from out of the distance, low and echo-like but distinct. "Jimmy! Jimmy! Do you hear me? I'm keening for you, Jimmy, and my mourning shall be long and bitter! And the heart of me shall be torn and smarting with hate, and I shall be fierce and cruel and pitiless till my vow is fulfilled.

"Jimmy! Jimmy! *I'll get them for you!* Each one of them, Jimmy! And may the soul and flesh of me writhe in agony, may the mind of me be in torture and torment, till my mission is done!"

Quietly Marguerite came over to Sergeant Alan Nevins. "You said this—Bird's-Eye dance hall is on lower Third Street?"

"A respectable girl doesn't go there—if that's what you're intending," replied Nevins.

He rose suddenly, alarmed by the strangeness of her manner. "Look here, Marge, don't attempt anything foolish! You can't mix with that gang! You'd die of nausea—"

"If Jim isn't avenged, I'll die of shame!"

"Put you're no match for them. You



"Jimmy! Jimmy! I'll get them for you!"—Page 62

are kind, they are pitiless; you are fragile, they are robust; you are innocent of all evil, they are practiced in every conceivable kind of crime and violence."

And now the bright round eyes of the girl narrowed till they were as two slits; her rich, red lips were drawn thin. "Against all of that, I match my courage! A courage that will be eternally fired and fanned by the memory of Jimmy, lying there in a lot—"

Once again Alan Nevins came toward her with outstretched arms. Again she drew away.

"Mr. Nevins, from now on, and until that gang has paid, you and I are strangers!"

III

THE Step Lively Club was giving a dance at the Bird's-Eye. Among those present in the crowded, smoke-smelly hall, was a slender, brown-eyed, dimpled girl. Her delicate hands, fine features and something in her manner indicated that she was of a decenter stock than the motley crowd surrounding her. But her cheeks were heavily rouged and her nose was a plaster-cast white; and she chewed gum. If you looked long enough, you began to feel that perhaps the refinement was a delusion on your part.

She sat at a table with six others, but she was not "in with them." She "wall-flowered" through five dances before receiving so much as a smile from anyone in the hall. There was a reason; the girl was an outsider and the tribe that hangs around the Bird's-Eye is suspicious of strangers.

Then the band played a waltz.

Some four tables to the left of the girl, two men and a woman were holding a whispered discussion. The woman was a tall, coarse-featured, capacious-chested blonde. One of the men was of the dark, slender, olive-skinned,

small-moustached type you see in every movie; he's the fellow who has his head broken by the hero in the last reel. The other man was a stunted, narrow-shouldered specimen, bleary of eye, pasty of hair and splotchy complected. When the band started the waltz, the woman shrugged her shoulders and said, "Well—go on then and try her."

So it came that the runt stood at the table of the brown-eyed girl, "Are you dancing, Miss?"

The girl gazed at him vacantly and switched her gum from her left cheek to her right. "Yeh, I dance."

"My name's Breen, Rudie Breen," he volunteered, as he took her arm. "Y'ever been in this place before?"

"No. I'm in the town only a week. My name's Rita Daly." As they danced, she gave him the address of the house in which she roomed, on Fourth Street, near Avenue B. She also consented to let him join her at her table and buy her a drink.

"The waiter will put a kick in it, if I wink at him," he suggested.

"All right. Ginger ale and wink," she smiled.

But the drink was never served.

Above the din in the dance hall, there suddenly came the sounds of a scuffle in the barroom. Then harsh cries, oaths, the crash of broken furniture and the tinkle of splitting glass.

"Raid!" exclaimed Rudie.

The dance hall was on a level with the street. Some few feet from their table was a window. Rudie Breen seized the girl's hand and pulled her toward it; but when he raised the lower frame, a uniformed officer poked his head through the frame-work and pointed a gun at them. They shrank back into the hall.

And now policemen rushed into the place through every opening; they came from the barroom, through the windows and through the door leading into the

street, the door opening on the hallway. Every exit was covered. Mingled with the policemen was a goodly number of detectives.

An officer whose white cap and stripes showed his rank of inspector, and who seemed to be in charge, got up on a table, raised a hand, and when the place became hushed, he said: "No need for alarm, ladies and gents. We've found what we want in some barrels under a false floor in the cellar. Just pass out quietly in single file; all those not armed will be permitted to go."

The procession started. The members and friends of the Step Lively Club were put to the indignity of having their pockets emptied and their handbags looked into before they were hustled through the door leading to the street.

Our brown-eyed girl with the chewing gum quid, took in the scene calmly. But of a sudden she felt that the hand still holding hers was trembling. Somewhat surprised, she turned to the young man and saw that his yellow complexion had turned a sickly pallor. His eyes shifted nervously about the room; he was evidently thoroughly frightened.

"What's the matter?" asked the girl. "Got a gun on you?"

"N—no. But—this raid for booze is a blind—a cover. They're diggin' for snow—and if they find—"

Now if the truth be told, the girl had no idea of the meaning of Rudie's words. She was sure of one thing, however; Rudie felt himself threatened by a terrible calamity. And reflecting upon this fact, it occurred to the girl that Rudie would be very grateful to the person who helped him get outside that hall. And if she had one good friend in that crowd—that would be a start.

"If—if someone could manage to put out the lights—" she suggested.

"Fat chance. The switchboard is in the barroom."

B. M.—Apr.—5

"Locked?"

"No. They keep the board open for emergencies like this. The cops must have come in on them too quick for—"

"Which way do you work—?"

"You couldn't go wrong. There's only one lever—you pull it from left to right. But how you goin' to get at—?"

"Oh!" The girl's exclamation interrupted him. He noticed that she was staring hard and that a flush had come into her cheeks. He was too confused, however, to notice that the object of her stare was the detective who covered the door to the barroom.

"You pick out your exit," she whispered to him. "I guess, maybe I can make it."

With that she pushed aside several others and joined the line which was winding its way slowly out the side door. The process appeared too slow for her; she stepped out of line and came quickly forward. But she did not head for the door leading to the street; instead, she dodged past a policeman and ran toward the barroom door. She had almost reached it when the officer caught up with her and gripped her shoulder.

"No you don't, Miss. You go out the same way as—"

For a moment, the girl looked up at the detective standing in the open barroom door. That gentleman suddenly startled, recovered quickly, and then favored the policeman with a frown.

"Why can't I go out any way I please?" demanded the girl.

"Nix, Fritz, lay off!" muttered the detective.

The policeman grinned, released his hold on her. And the detective let her slip by him.

Thereupon things happened.

The searching process was going on in a slow, orderly way, when suddenly every light in the building went out.

In an instant everything was in a bedlam. Screams and terrible oaths, pleas, wailing cries of pain rang out in the darkness. The line broke; everyone fought viciously for freedom. Tables were overturned and windows smashed. The police dared not use their revolvers or clubs out of fear of injuring each other.

When the lights were switched on again, the hall was half empty. Most of those who remained were women; women with bleeding faces and torn hats and dresses.

Inspector Carrigan mopped his forehead. Then he looked with pity upon the cowering humanity before him.

"Send for an ambulance," he instructed. "And go easy with them poor broken dolls. What we were after got away in the dark."

IV

AT five o'clock the following morning, the mother of Sergeant Alan Nevins was startled by the raucous ring of the door bell. Looking out of a front window, she saw a girl standing at her door. A moment later, Alan Nevins was being shaken out of a profound slumber. "Miss Cornell is at the door, Alan. Alan! Wake up!"

When Alan, dressed completely, up to and including the correct knot in his scarf, came down, the girl was waiting in his sitting-room.

"But my dear Marguerite," he began. "Miss Rita Daly, if you please," she corrected. Then, "I've come to inquire whether your little raid of last evening was a success."

"We didn't get a blamed thing on anybody," he confessed, dejectedly. "But do you know, Marguerite—"

"Miss Daly!"

"Do you know, *Miss Daly*," fiercely—"that they could almost give you life for turning out the lights?"

"They could, Mr. Nevins, if they had

caught me. I crawled out right through the legs of the fat cop at the front door—honest I did," she smiled disarmingly. "I've come for my lesson."

"Lesson?"

"My lesson in slang. First, what is snow?"

"Snow!"—he leaned toward her eagerly: "Then there *was* snow in that place last—"

"What is it?" she insisted.

"Drugs, in powdered form."

"And what is a *gat*?" she asked. "And a *goof*, and a *billy*, and a *cake-eater*, and a *sniffer*, and a *hard-boiled egg*, and a *finalé hopper*, and a *belly-wash*, and a *wet-blanket*, and a *dumb-bunny*. And what do you do when you *pull in your ears*, *kid*, you're coming to a tunnel, and when you should hope to kiss a pig, and when you shake a wicked shimmy, and are paralyzed above the Adam's apple?" She crossed her legs and smiled wistfully. "I hoid all dem woids las' night at the dance and I dunno wotinell dey mean. See?"

Sergeant Nevins scratched his chin. "Five o'clock in the morning is hardly an opportune time, Mar—Miss Daly, for a les—"

"All right. I'll find another instruct—"

"No! No!" he seized her hand and pulled her back into her chair. So the lesson commenced.

And when she was up on definitions, she once again smiled wistfully into his sleepy eyes, and said simply: "Now teach me to swear."

He glared at her with all the dignity a man of twenty-five can put into a glare, but the smile did not fade from her face.

So he taught her.

V

Two nights later, Rita Daly, on her way home from the department store in which she worked, found Mr.

Rudie Breen waiting on her corner.

"I missed you last night, Miss Daly," he said. "I—I kind of owe you something for that stunt you pulled. Will you let me take you to supper?"

"Where would you—take—?"

"Well, personally, I lean to Chinese grub. But you can name the place—"

"A chop-suey joint it is," said Miss Daly. "I won't have to change costumes."

She had guessed—and correctly—that Breen would sit in one of the private booths with her. And it was part of her scheme to encourage his friendship.

"Where ya hail from, Miss Daly?" asked Breen, after they had been served. "Chicago."

After a long pause, Breen leaned across the table. "Now look here—I got more than fat above my ears, and while I ain't perfect, conceit ain't none of my faults. So I ain't believin' you pulled that trick that saved me because you were head over heels in love with sincerely yours." He lowered his voice. "I take it consequently that the dicks got something on you, or, that you were getting square with 'em for something that happened previously. Now which is it?"

Then, for the first time was Rudie Breen favored with a smile. "Listen, Mr. Breen, my quarrel with the cops is a private affair. That's that."

"I ain't inquisitive, Miss Daly. When you say you got a quarrel with 'em, that's enough for me."

Again a pause.

Then Rudie, "Where you workin'?"

"Stapleton's."

"Gettin' much?"

"No!"

"Can you typewrite and stenographate?"

"Little."

"H'm." Breen took a morning edition of a newspaper from his pocket

and passed it to Miss Daly. He pointed to a want-ad. "Now here's a job for someone with—brains. Someone like you."

Rita Daly read the advertisement. J. Stanley Bradshaw, Trinidad Building, Broadway, wanted a stenographer.

"What makes it such a good job?" asked Rita.

"Well—I happen to know—never mind how—that this J. Stanley is a tricky customer. He's in the promoting game and he generally promotes thin air. Now a person workin' on the inside might get the goods on him and—"

"Squeeze him a bit, eh?"

"You ketch on fast, Miss Daly."

"Thank you. But without references, how could I get—"

"I'd fix that part—the references. Well?"

"Almost anything is better than a department store," said Rita Daly. . . .

The next morning, when Rita came out of her house, Rudie Breen handed her a white envelope. On her way downtown in the subway, she took the letter out of the envelope and read it.

It was typewritten on paper which bore the letterhead, Hygrade Novelty Jewelry Co., 111 Fifth Avenue. It assured "whomever it may concern" that Miss Rita Daly had worked four years as stenographer for the undersigned and had always given splendid and efficient services. Harold Creighton was the undersigned.

Rita smiled rather grimly as she replaced the letter inside the envelope. She had evidently rendered a great service to someone when she turned out the lights of the Bird's-Eye and that someone—or perhaps someones—was repaying the favor.

J. S. Bradshaw, a tall, white-haired, black-eyed man, theatrically handsome, took on Miss Daly immediately after reading her letter of introduction. After

some two weeks, he made her his private secretary.

So began the maelstrom of incidents which was to sweep the lovely Rita into the net of the most powerful crime-organization in the city.

VI

THE Bradshaw Mines Co., so Rita learned, had gone into the business three months before she entered into the employment of the firm. On the strength of a preliminary report by experts that the company actually owned mines in Mexico and that the mines actually held silver, Bradshaw sold stock.

Then, after Rita was private secretary, she inadvertently opened a letter addressed to Bradshaw and marked personal. This letter was the final report of the experts. It informed Bradshaw that it was hardly worth while to push his project since the value of the silver deposits in his mines could not possibly exceed ten thousand dollars. And Rita knew that over eighty thousand dollars' worth of stocks and shares had already been sold.

Bradshaw was not in the least disconcerted by the fact that she had read the discouraging report. He shrugged his shoulders, put the letter into his safe and remarked to her, "Well, that needn't worry us any. We'll go right ahead." And he did.

Thus was Rudie Breen's shrewd guess as to Bradshaw's character verified.

Now, all of Rita's actions thus far, had been merely a blind groping stumble along a path which she felt instinctively would lead eventually to the companionship of men and women who would not be strangers to *The Mogul*. The hit-and-miss method was necessary since she knew of no direct connections. For the present, the important thing was to become involved in criminal acts and to get an unsavory reputation. If she

could not seek *The Mogul*, she could at least make it worth while for him to seek her.

As to Bradshaw, she had no scruples about ruining him. He was a crook and a good share of his money was coming from women who may have been widows. She therefore took Rudie Breen into her confidence and invited him to join her in forcing Bradshaw into a position where he'd have to pay for their silence.

"If we can get his book of accounts showing that over one hundred thousand dollars worth of shares have been sold," she told Rudie, "and if we can get that letter from the experts, he'll have to come across, or beat it, and he doesn't want to do that, at least for a while. Business is still good. He's been using the mails to carry his advertising matter—that makes it a federal offense."

"Well—I never sneeze at money. And I still owe you for—"

"Bradshaw keeps his account books and that tell-tale letter in his safe. That's where you might—"

"What's the model?"

"Illington."

"Illington! Keeps his papers in an old ash can like the Illington? There ain't a respectable crook in the business couldn't open that safe in twenty minutes."

"Soup?"

"Not for the Illington. I'll solve the combination. . . ."

Five nights later, they made the attempt. Bradshaw had inaugurated a follow-up campaign and worked after hours with Rita, dictating letters to prospects in the sucker class. Rita supped from six to seven; then Bradshaw went out for an hour, so that Rita was alone in the office from seven to eight. And before eight, persons could still enter the Trinidad Building without registering in the hall-book.

Rita waited till Bradshaw had been

gone for about ten minutes. Then she raised and lowered the shade of a front window; that was Rudie's signal.

There were no lights in any other office on the fourth floor. While Rudie was busy manipulating the tumblers to Bradshaw's safe, Rita kept a look-out in the hall. She stood at a point some fifty feet from her office, where the north and the west corridors crossed. The elevators were on the west corridor; in the event of Bradshaw's unexpected return, she expected to have plenty of time to run along the north corridor and shoo Rudie away.

She had kept her vigil some ten minutes, when, on turning casually she saw Bradshaw standing before the open door to his office! He must have walked quietly up the stairway in the rear of the north corridor!

Bradshaw hesitated only a moment; then he rushed into the room. There came at once a scuffling sound and the thud-thud of blows.

Frightened, but eager to continue actively in this dangerous and unlawful adventure, Rita ran along the corridor and watched the struggle from the doorway.

The powerful Bradshaw was having the best of it. The runt Breen was quicker and more skilled with his fists, but the room was too small to permit of scientific boxing.

Bradshaw drove a straight right to Rudie's face; the force of the blow hurled Rudie across the room and against the wall. With a snarl of triumph, Bradshaw seized a chair, raised it above his head, and rushed at his adversary.

Rita choked a cry.

Breen stood humped against the wall as though too exhausted to raise a hand to ward off the blow which must surely crush his skull. Then, in the wink of an eye, and just as Bradshaw began the downward swing of the chair, Breen

shook off his coma, drew a stiletto from his coat pocket—and struck!

The chair clattered to the floor and Bradshaw tottered. But Breen had not yet finished with him. With his left arm he hugged Bradshaw close; with his right hand, he kept twisting the handle of the stiletto. Bradshaw kept emitting low guttural moans.

Then finally, Breen drew out the blade and pushed Bradshaw away. In falling, Bradshaw, half turned. Rita saw that his white silk shirt was stained a deep red over the heart; from this stain, thin red lines trickled . . . dripped. . . .

At this point she became somewhat dizzy.

Rudie Breen pulled her into the room, locked the door, led her to a chair and fetched her a cup of ice-water.

"Take it easy, sis. Nothin' more serious than murder. Happens occasionally in the very best circles. That's it. Feel better?"

"What—will we—?"

"There are at least a dozen things we could do. This is nothing to worry about at all. You leave it t'me."

He picked up the telephone and when he had made his connection, he said: "Harry? Rudie speaking. I'm in a little mess in the Trinidad Building. Listen. How soon can you make Thirty-ninth Street and Seventh Avenue? Good. Now get this: southeast corner, red and white, Daly, good evening, cane. Right?" He hung up.

Thereupon he scribbled a note, and handed it to Rita.

"When you've delivered this, you're through with this job," he told her. "I'm handling the rest. Here's your end of it: You take a red and white taxi to Thirty-ninth Street and Seventh Avenue. On the southeast corner a man will be waiting for you. Tall, slim, black moustache. He'll be holding his cane up against his shoulder. He will address

you, 'Miss Daly, good evening.' You give him this note. That's all. And tell the chauffeur to drive like hell."

The girl stumbled out of the office. She went through her performance mechanically, almost as one in a trance. And after she had delivered the note, she went home—to her own home, the home she had not seen in over a month. But even in her stupor she did not fail to take a circuitous path, lest she be tracked.

Alone in her own room she threw herself face down on her bed and wept. But out of no pity for Bradshaw. She knew him to have been thoroughly corrupt and remorseless. On his part, he too would have killed and shown no regret.

Her feeling was one of pity and sympathy for herself. She manipulated that strange psychological absurdity whereby a person can be thoroughly emotional and subjective and yet consider self in an objective way.

In her memory flashed the image of a slight, wistful, lovely girl taking a terrible oath of vengeance.

"May the soul and flesh of me writhe in agony"—such was her vow—"till my mission be done!"

Well . . . the tentacles of the monster Evil had gripped her. There could be no quitting now. When planning the theft with the rat Breen, she had made him promise to come unarmed. He had not kept that promise. She was now chained to him and his kind by the crime in which she had participated.

A sardonic Fate seemed intent on forcing upon her an exquisite torture and wringing from her the ultimate in sacrifice, before granting the sweet satisfaction she knew *must* be hers. . . .

VII

JUDGING by every standard and precept by which she had hitherto lived, it was clearly Rita's duty to submit to

arrest. But emotionally such an act was utterly inconceivable. The fierce hatred and cruelty that had been generated by the killing of her brother Jimmy quite precluded the cessation, at the present time, of her campaign for vengeance.

And as the night wore on and her confusion and torment subsided, it became apparent to her that to surrender now was an unsound step from a logical point of view. The greater guilt was Rudie Breen's; he had broken his word to her, he had come armed, and he had killed.

Why should she suffer alone? She could not be sure that the police would catch him, and even if they did—suppose Rudie denied complicity and with the help of his crowd proved an alibi? It would be her word against his. No, clearly the thing to do was to put off action until she had Breen in a position where he, too, could be punished.

Before dawn, Rita left her home and went back to her room on Fourth Street. She fell quickly into a dreamless sleep from which she did not waken till eight o'clock. On raising her shade she saw what she expected: Rudie Breen was waiting on her corner.

She went down at once. He did not look in the least like a man who had committed a murder on the previous evening. His manner betrayed no excitement or anxiety. The inevitable cigarette hung carelessly from his lips.

And now, for the first time, Rita became curious about Rudie's actions after she had left the office. This, strangely, had up to this given her no concern; she had been too worried about the enormity of the crime to wonder about the steps Rudie had taken to protect himself. But now she was all eagerness to ask questions.

"What'd you do, Rudie? How'd you—?"

"We'll have breakfast together," he

broke in. "The Chink will fix us up something."

When they were once more in a private booth at the Chink's, Rudie talked.

"Mr. J. Stanley Bradshaw has disappeared," said Rudie. "That's all."

"But how—?"

"Me and my friend Harry—the gent you slipped my note to, have fixed it. Bradshaw's office is on the fourth floor—his outer room window faces a courtyard. Darker than a coal mine that courtyard—and you can get into it from a nice quiet street. Harry brought me a long rope—then he went down into the yard and I lowered the body. We had a closed car waiting. Me, I cleaned up his office. No sign of anything—Simple, what?"

"Where is the body?"

"Well—there's a nice deep river within four blocks of the Trinidad Building."

"What do I do?"

"Go to work, as usual. Bradshaw won't show up. He has no family. Maybe his housekeeper will ask the cops to find him. They may question you and the rest of the office force. All you know is that you left his office last night while he was still out to supper. They'll think he skipped."

"Will they find the records that show he's been doing a fraudulent bus—?"

"Nix. I opened the safe and took that letter from the mine experts."

"That's where you pulled a bone, Rudie. You should have left that letter. Then the cops would know he's a crook and that would motivate the disappearance."

"You're a wise little cracker," grinned Rudie. "But it so happens we don't care a rap what the police think about Bradshaw's disappearance, and remember this: it's always a good policy to grab inside information whenever you

can; Bradshaw may not have been running this thing alone. See? And if anyone else pops up to continue his scheme—why with the help of that letter, we'll be able to squeeze 'em. At any rate, them was my sentiments; and besides, orders from *The Mogul* is orders and—what's the matter?"

The Mogul! Rita had started and fumbled her cup when the words were spoken. With her very first adventure she had stumbled into a scheme in which *The Mogul* was involved. So *The Mogul* had given orders that Bradshaw's letter was to be taken in any event!

"What's the matter?" repeated Rudie.

He had noticed her astonishment. It was impossible now to feign indifference. The safest manœuvre, she felt, was to be frankly curious, and also a bit angry because of the meddling of an outsider.

Emphasis was called for. She overcame her natural aversion to profanity and asked boldly, "*The Mogul?* And who in the hell is *The Mogul?*"

"That," replied Rudie pleasantly, "is none of your damn business. . . ."

It was two weeks before the official investigation into the disappearance of Bradshaw got seriously under way. Meanwhile, the employees (besides Rita, there were but three—a book-keeper, a typist and a file clerk) had hunted up other jobs. Rita was questioned by the police and said that on the evening of Bradshaw's disappearance she had left the office at seven-thirty while he was out to supper. The hall man remembered seeing Bradshaw come back from supper, but he couldn't place the time definitely; he guessed it was before eight.

The shareholders in Bradshaw's mine formed an organization to inquire into the matter. It took several months before they discovered the details of the fraud. But this investigation, since it

did not solve the question of Bradshaw's whereabouts, does not interest us.

We must keep pace with Rita.

VIII

WHATEVER slight inclination Rita may still have had to confess her part of the crime against Bradshaw disappeared entirely in that moment in which Rudie Breen spoke the words *The Mogul*.

Now that she had somehow wedged into the scheme of things in which *The Mogul* was the pivot, her mind became once again a single-track mind; she excluded every thought except those which were directly connected with her problem of running down her quarry.

Rudie Breen was the medium through which she had established contact with *The Mogul's* sphere; she therefore clung to Breen tenaciously and encouraged his friendship in the hope that he would try again to involve her in some of his machinations. In this hope she was not disappointed. Rudie did not use her again in his personal ventures. He did more; he introduced her into society—a society which practised crime in its more refined forms. With the explanation that he still owed her something for rescuing him when the police raided the dance hall, and regret that he could not pay the debt himself, Rudie offered to introduce her to "some friends of mine who may be able to do something for you."

The friends lived in a private, brown-tone house on Eighty-first Street. You have already met the occupants of the house. They are the couple who were with Rudie at the dance hall and who, like Rudie (Rita was not aware of this) escaped while the place was in darkness.

"Meet Mr. Harold Creighton," introduced Breen. "I think you've met before."

"On the southeast corner of Thirty-

ninth Street and Seventh Avenue," smiled Rita.

Mr. Harry Creighton introduced the statuesque blonde, "Miss Daly—my wife, Judith."

With no further comment Breen stepped out of the room and Creighton locked the door. He motioned Rita into a rocker and joined his wife on the settee.

"We know everything about you that Breen knows," began Creighton. "It appears obvious that your head is more than a garage for bonnets—for which reason you interest us. Here's our proposition: In our—business—we can occasionally use an intelligent, attractive and unattached girl. How we will use you will depend upon the talents you show you possess—more of this some other time.

"It is enough to say now that we work always with a minimum of violence and that we will so arrange matters that the dangerous part of your work will be done by someone else for you. In return for your services we will offer you a room in this house—you pass as Judith's sister—board, clothing (in this respect you can go the limit) and a fifty-fifty split on the profits of such ventures in which you play the leading role."

Creighton paused and stroked his glossy, black hair, then easily: "You will, of course, be in a position to squeal, in which case we could suggest to the authorities that you had not told the truth in regard to the disappearance of Mr. Bradshaw. But we wouldn't. We'd just kill you. Well?"

"I'd like to go into this thing with my eyes open," replied Rita. "Of course, I can't expect you to take me entirely into your confidence at the present time. In one of our talks Breen spoke of *The Mogul*. You give me an earful about this gent and I'll give you my answer."

Creighton began pulling at his waxed

moustache. "Since Breen's been so damn careless, I can at least be frank. You're here by *The Mogul's* invitation. *The Mogul*, part of whose business it is to know everything the police would like to know, has learned of the courage and quick-wittedness you displayed at the dance hall and in connection with the Bradshaw business. He suggested that you be brought into our circle. His identity and whereabouts must remain a secret to you until you have graduated from the actors' class to the ranks of those who can also direct. For the present you will be under orders to me. That's all I can say."

"I like it here," said Rita, "I think I'll stay."

That night, in her comfortable bedroom in Creighton's home, Rita vowed again her terrible vow against *The Mogul*. She was now in one of the inner circles of his scheme of operations; she felt that circumstances would inevitably bring her to the circle's centre and face to face with the man who had taken her brother's life.

A kindly Fate helped her to win her way quickly into the complete confidence of her associates in crime. As Rita suspected, the Creightons first used her as a bait to lure philanderers to their ruin. The first victim offered by Fate was so detestable a specimen that Rita actually enjoyed the part she played in the slaughter.

Rinault was his name; he was the florid, flabby, fat type, with a wrinkled, greasy stout neck. We will gloss over the details of his brief courtship. Rinault was not original; he mingled braggadocio with flattery and indulged in all the inanities of his breed. He made two mistakes; he wrote letters to Rita and, in a careless moment some years back, he had married.

That made it easy for Creighton. After Rita had ten letters, she was excused from bothering further with

Rinault. Creighton handled the dangerous work—the negotiations for the purchase of the missives. The deal netted four thousand dollars.

After that first success, Rita became a member in good standing in bad society. No secrets were withheld from her; she was of the initiate. She got to know the members of the organization and the nature of their work. The ramifications of the organization astounded her; there was no type of crime in which *The Mogul* did not dabble.

He was a systematic gentleman. His followers were divided into cliques, each of which specialized in one particular type of crime. Each clique was bossed by one of *The Mogul's* personal representatives—Henry Wortz was head of the counterfeiters, Tony Iglano was generalissimo of a strong-arm squad, Frank Yost directed the dips, George Geiger, an ex-jeweler, acted as fence, Rudie Breen was the safe expert, and Harry Harker managed the crew that trafficked in drugs. Add the Creightons, experts in the gentle art of blackmail, and your list of *The Mogul's* lieutenants is complete.

Naturally Rita was often in a position where she could have betrayed one or more of her delightful companions to the authorities, but she sat tight till all possible doubt of her trustworthiness was removed. Then finally there was presented to her the chance to lop off—without risking self-betrayal—a most important branch of *The Mogul's* organization. And once this feat was accomplished, the incidents of her career led swiftly to a startling and dramatic denouement.

IX

It was the solicitude of Sergeant Alan Nevins—one time fiancé, more recently "stranger" to Rita—that made her first triumph possible. Rita had put him on his honor to attempt no

interference with her plans; but a little thing like honor is of no moment to a gentleman who happens to be in love and who thinks his fair lady is in danger.

So the dishonorable Mr. Nevins tried to track his wandering girl to her lair, in which fell purpose he had no luck at all till he heard, through police channels, that a Miss Rita Daly had been questioned in connection with the disappearance of one J. Stanley Bradshaw. Nevins had her watched by a friend on the department, and it was his lover-luck that said friend was busy spying on the day Rudie Breen took Rita to the Creighton home.

The Creightons, it may be said, had no standing at headquarters; they had never been finger-printed or mugged, no one on the cops knew anything about them. Proving again that a fellow can be a good crook without help from the police.

But Nevins decided, in view of Rita's avowed and terrible intentions, that the Creightons must be phoney in some respect or otherwise Rita wouldn't be living with them. To shadow the Creighton home was next to impossible; however Nevins did pass through their block in a taxi every evening at about seven-thirty.

After two weeks, his persistence was repaid. The Creightons, with Rita, came out of their home, got into their car and headed downtown. Nevins, in the taxi, followed.

The two cars crossed the Queensborough Bridge and drove into the pretty Long Island suburb of Kew Gardens. Creighton's car finally stopped before a beautiful, many-gabled house on Willow Avenue. A few minutes later, Nevins' taxi sped past.

Some fifteen minutes later, Mr. Franklin, of 117 Willow Avenue, received a phone call from his friend, Captain Webb, of the Kew Gardens Police Station. Captain Webb wanted

to know whether Mr. Franklin objected to having a pleasant young man sit on his porch or in his library for about an hour or so that night. Mr. Franklin said:

"Sure, let Mr. Nevins come. No; I don't know much about Geiger. I think he's in the jewelry business. But I don't like him—he's too noisy."

So it came about that Rita Daly, sitting at an open window in the parlor of Geiger's home at 120 Willow Avenue, was startled to see a good-looking young man whom she recognized at once, walk into the gateway of the Franklin house across the street. There was a light in the Geiger parlor, so that Rita, framed by the window, was clearly visible. The young man paused momentarily under the arc-lamp before the Franklin house; he looked up at Rita and instinctively began to tip his hat. While in this process, he undoubtedly recalled that he was a "stranger" to her; therefore, after his hat was raised, he scratched the top of his head and then walked on into the house.

A few minutes later, a light was turned on in the library of the Franklin home. The library was on the first floor front. Although the shade was drawn, there was a shadow upon it; a man sat near the window. His pompadour betrayed his identity.

Our heroine frowned. So . . . that's the kind of a gentleman Mr. Nevins was, eh? That was his idea of honor—to swear by all the alphabet not to butt into her business and then to chase her all the way to Kew Gardens and shadow her from a house across the street.

It was while Rita was trying to decide whether to cut Mr. Nevins dead for ever and aye, or to waylay him and give him an earful, that she heard Harry Creighton asking, "How much to you expect to get for the stuff, George?"

"Thirty-five thousand, anyway," replied Geiger.

"They are worth at least sixty," protested Judith Creighton.

"The shape of the diamond in the lavalier is too unique—it'll be recognized at once, unless it's recut," explained Geiger. "And recutting is an expensive operation and reduces the value of the stone to us."

"When is Ashley coming?" asked Creighton.

"Ten-thirty."

"Sorry we can't stay," from Creighton. "But we'll have to leave at ten to make Bronxville at eleven. Miss Jahn is a meticulous ass and insists that her guests be on time. I might worm more out of Ashley."

"Some day when I'm rich," said Rita, "I'm going to become one of Geiger's customers."

Tony Iglano, top-sergeant of *The Mogul's* yeggs, spoke up. "Do you like that pear-shape stone, Rita? I had to croak a guy to get it. It has blood on it."

"A little thing like that doesn't trouble our pretty friend," put in Geiger, his lips twitching into a cruel, sarcastic smile. "Remember Bradshaw!"

The taunt stung. Rita flushed; she popped out of her seat and flared angrily: "You quit that, Geiger! I've had enough of your—"

"Dry up," broke in Judith. "The neighbors'll think we're having a fight."

Geiger lit a ciagrette. "Excuse me, my sensitive young lady. I had no idea you were finicky on that subject."

So the matter was dropped. At least, so they thought. But the fury of the embittered Rita did not abate. To be twitted on a murder was not her idea of good humor. And while Geiger's insult blistered and burned in her heart, her mind strived eagerly to concoct a swift vengeance. Thinking along these lines, she remembered Nevins, and looking up, she saw that his shadow was still on the shade of the house across

the way. A few moments ago she was angry with Nevins for having followed her; now, strangely, nothing would have pleased her more than to have Nevins in the same room with her, and see him hand Geiger what was known in the parlance of her set as a swift slap in the snoot.

Still sitting at the open window, she fell into a moody, thoughtful silence. She often affected this pose; the others disregarded her and continued their conversation. Meanwhile, Rita's troubled mind—and conscience—urged and spurred her to immediate vindictive action.

When she came to the Geiger house that evening, he showed her the jewels which had been stolen by Tony Iglano and one of his gang. Geiger had never come under the suspicion of the police, but he played safe nevertheless. He never kept stolen articles in his safe or in any other place which was likely to be searched. During such time as he had them in his possession, he kept the pilfered treasures in the hollow of the moulding which ran across the wall between the two windows in his parlor. That's where the stolen jewels were now, in the hollow brass-lined moulding that ran across the wall one foot from the ceiling, from the window near which she sat to the other end of the room.

There was a lavalier, a pearl necklace and several rings. The lavalier had a pear-shaped blue-white stone, the rings were engraved with initials and dates. The necklace clasp bore a scratch number. That made all of the jewels easily identifiable. She knew that circulars describing the pieces had been sent to all the police and to private detective agencies.

Tony Iglano had been surprised during the burglary and he had shot and killed. *If the jewels were found by the police, Geiger and Iglano could be held on a murder charge.*

And friend Nevins, a detective, was across the street, less than a hundred feet away!

And yet the difficulties which blocked her betrayal of Geiger seemed almost insurmountable. For this one point must be kept constantly in the foreground of the reader's, as it was in Rita's thoughts; she could under no circumstances commit any act which would disclose her identity. She had to retain the confidence of her circle till she penetrated to its centre, *The Mogul*. He, after all, was the one she was seeking; if she revealed herself now as a spy, all her previous suffering would have been in vain.

She could, therefore not cry out nor send any message to Nevins or to the police. Her problem was to communicate with Nevins by some method that would escape the attention of the other persons in the room with her. And the message would have to be complicated and of some length; it would have to tell the secret of the hidden jewels.

Such a message could be written or telephoned, but neither of these agencies was practicable. She had neither pen, pencil nor paper, and if she asked for them her request would be certain to arouse some curiosity on the part of her "friends." And even assuming she could write a note, how could she have it delivered? If she dropped it out of the front window, it would land on the roof of the porch. If she tied it to some heavy object and threw it out, *that* would be sure to attract attention—and it probably would escape the notice of Nevins who was sitting on the other side of a drawn shade. And, of course, it was altogether impossible to have a note carried to Nevins; she couldn't run across the street herself nor could she stop a passerby. All this would too obviously arouse the curiosity of the Creightons.

Neither could she telephone. That

was one respect in which Creighton guarded her anxiously. Though he appeared to trust her absolutely in all other matters, he always tried to listen in when she phoned.

The task seemed hopeless.

Then someone on the same block started his victrola playing the fox-trot, "Say It With Music."

Say it with music. Rita could have kissed the man who wrote that song, the band which made the record and the man who had the inspiration to play it at that particular moment.

Rita looked meditatively up at the silvered moulding which held the loot. Her eyes then rested on the mountain landscape which hung on the wall between the two windows. She continued her reflections a few seconds longer, then she sauntered leisurely to Geiger's victrola and began examining the list of his records.

Geiger fortunately, was an inveterate jazz-fiend. His cabinets held hundreds of records. He had all the popular songs from "Sweet Rosie O'Grady" to "When Frances Dances With Me, Hully Gee!"

There were six titles which especially interested Rita. Her heart beat furiously as she dug out a record, put it on the machine and cranked up the motor.

At that moment, the clock on Geiger's mantelpiece tolled one, indicating half past nine. She would be leaving in half an hour. There would be just time enough to play six records.

But—would the "stranger" across the street tumble? It was late August; her windows were open—there was a screen in the one at which Nevins was sitting—it was a quiet neighborhood—the other victrola had stopped playing—Nevins would hear clearly the music that was poured from Geiger's machine.

Did Nevins have the intelligence, the quick-wittedness to—

Rita cut short her reflections. All she could do was to chance it and—hope.

"You need a little noise in this joint," she said to Geiger, "we're falling asleep." She put the needle on the record and then took her seat at the open window again.

From Geiger's victrola poured the sweet voice of Margaret Romaine, pleading "*Do You Hear Me Calling?*"

Almost instantly Alan Nevins raised his shade!

Rita sitting with one arm on the window sill waved her handkerchief across to him once. The light in his room was turned out and Nevins came down to join several members of the Franklin family who were sitting on the front porch.

"I think that's an awfully pretty record," said Rita, keeping her head turned toward the window and fighting desperately to ward off a feeling of faintness.

"Put on sumpin we c'n dance to," said Tony Iglano when the song had run down.

"Nice fox-trot?" asked Rita, hurrying to the victrola. "Here's something with pep. Come on, Harry."

So they paired off, Rita with Creighton and Iglano with Judith; and they danced to the tune of "*Blue Diamonds*."

"I'll try Tony this time," smiled Rita as she cranked up the machine again. "I want to see how he fox-trots."

"And I'll rest," said Creighton.

"Which leaves Judith for me. Thank you," grinned Geiger.

So they danced again. This time to the music of "*Look For The Silver Lining*."

"Now give us a waltz," suggested Geiger. "I got a couple of good—"

"I like the sentimental ones best,"

put in Rita. "Who's my partner this time?"

"At your service," volunteered Geiger.

"I like my old man best for a waltz," said Judith, pouncing on Creighton.

"You can sing this one Tony," laughed Rita.

And Tony did—"O—vah da hill—O—vah da hill."

"I like the voice of Nora Bayes better,"—from Rita. "Let's give her a chance." So Nora was permitted to warble "*In a Little Front Parlor*."

"We'll have to be going in a few minutes," said Creighton, "if we want to reach—"

"One more fox-trot," pleaded Rita. "Tony does them so beautifully."

Tony bowed his appreciation and whirled Rita around to the melody of "*The Dangerous Blues*."

That completed the musical program. Judith and Rita powdered their noses and put on their hats; then Creighton led them to his car. As they started off, stranger Nevins, still on the front porch of the Franklin house, once again raised his hat, once again caught and stopped himself and scratched his head. Rita, from the back seat of the car, waved her handkerchief to him once, quickly.

On the trip up to Bronxville, Judith talked to her but Rita did not appear interested in the conversation. Rita's brain was in a turmoil of mingled hope, anxiety and dread. Had Nevins caught on? Had he solved her music-cipher? Would Geiger fight if he were raided and would Nevins be hurt?

The fact that Nevins had clearly responded to her first signal "*Do You Hear Me Calling?*" encouraged her to hope that he had understood not only that she was saying it with music but also in titles.

Geiger's stolen jewels were hidden in that part of the silvered moulding in the

parlor, which passed over the picture depicting a mountain scene. And Rita had signaled "*Blue Diamonds. . . . Look for the silver lining over the hill, in a little front parlor—Dangerous Blues.*" . . .

The Creightons with Rita arrived home from the Bronxville party at two o'clock next morning. The phone was ringing as they entered the house. Creighton answered it.

When he joined the two women who were removing their wraps in the sitting room, his face was somewhat flushed and he spoke rather shakily. "Geiger was raided at twenty minutes past ten last night," he announced. "Four detectives. They got in by ringing his door bell and insisted upon searching his parlor. He figured it was a bluff and let them go to it. They browsed around a bit and then pried away the moulding between the two front windows. Iglano tried to shoot but they flattened him. To make matters worse, Ashley blew in while the search was going on and they nabbed him too!" He turned toward Rita, but his gaze appeared to be concentrated on the tip of his cigarette. "It—it looks damn queer."

"My God!" exploded Judith. "Where'd you get—?"

"That was the High Chief himself that had me on the phone." (High Chief was another name for *The Mogul*.)

Judith became enraged. "And while this raid was going on, where in the hell was James?"

"James," explained Creighton, "is at headquarters in New York. *This raid originated in the police station in Kew Gardens.* James knew nothing about it till it was all over."

Creighton looked up from his cigarette and stared straight at Rita, but though the heart in her threatened to burst, she returned his glance fear-

lessly. He shrugged his shoulders. "Well . . . good night ladies. . . ."

X

EARLY the next morning, Mr. Harry Creighton attended a meeting held in a small rear room of the Bird's-Eye dance hall. Some ten men were present, including a white-haired gentleman who appeared to be in command. The discussion lasted an hour and was, at times, rather acrimonious. The gist of what transpired is evident from what Creighton said to his wife Judith when he got back to his home again.

"Sergeant Nevins handled the raid," explained Creighton. "There was a squeal somewhere, that's a cinch, but James, at headquarters, hasn't learned yet where Nevins got his tip. That Nevins, by the way, is a wise bird. He's keeping his mouth shut."

"What about Rita?" asked Judith.

"Yost, Harker and Wortz were for conferring upon her the order of the wooden kimono. Wortz doesn't like her anyhow—she snubs him—and he offered personally to wring her neck. But the High Chief isn't satisfied she's the nigger in the woodshed—and damned if I can see how she could have squealed. She didn't know the gems were in Geiger's house till after she got there, and she certainly didn't signal from the place—not while I was conscious."

"What's the word?"

"James will keep an eye on Nevins for us. We'll try to run the mystery down from that end. Meanwhile, Rita is to have an absolutely loose rein. She's come across with the goods for us several times and she's to be trusted unqualifiedly. *The Mogul* figures that if she is against us, the quickest way to find it out, is to give her enough rope to hang herself . . ."

XI

THAT evening, Rita, knowing that Detective Nevins was generally at home between the hours of six and seven, telephoned him from a public booth and asked for an interview.

"I've been followed all day and some fat boob is watching my house now. Where are you?"

"Times Square."

"Tell you what. You can make my place in fifteen minutes. Come right away. I'll go out now and trot my fat friend around town for half an hour or so. That'll give you a chance to slip in while the house is uncovered."

Rita was admitted by Sergeant Nevins' mother, who ushered the girl into the kitchen. "The front parlor is taboo now that they're watching our home," explained the old lady.

Nevins returned after some twenty minutes. "I brought him back home with me," he said. "He's leaning against a pole across the street. I've a notion to punch his jaw."

"Are you aware," asked Rita, "that someone on the force is having you shadowed?"

"Some one on the force?" Nevins shook his head, incredulous.

"My gang," said Rita, affecting pride, "has a man at headquarters who gives us advance dope when we're goners be bit. Sabe? Ask me not further info. That's all I'm wise to."

"James—James—first or last name?"

"Search me."

"Hm. There are hundreds of Jameses on the cops. Well—" he tossed off his troubles. With outstretched arms, he pleaded, "Come to me, my musical friend, and let's forget—"

"I came here on business," frowned Rita.

Nevins affected humility. "I stand corrected. What business?"

"I know the name and address of a nice little counterfeiter who makes beautiful money, really. Does that interest you?"

"Somewhat." Nevins drew out a note book. "Name, description, street and number, please."

"Henry Wortz," replied Rita, and added a number on Christopher Street. "Printing shop on first floor. On second and top floor, four rooms which should be searched in the event the shop yields no flukey stuff."

"Thanks."

"You're welcome. And now, may I ask how you managed that raid last night?"

"My hardest job was to convince the captain of the Kew Gardens police station that I wasn't loco. The rest was easy. Geiger admitted us when we rang and we went directly upstairs to—"

"Then you had no trouble deciphering my message?"

"Well—not to be unduly boastful—matters like that are in my line. But even so—I'd never heard that song, 'In a Little Front Parlor,' before, and the words of the record were not clear. But Mr. Franklin cleared up that for me. So of course, that's where we went directly—into Geiger's parlor. We could hardly avoid seeing the *hill* on the picture and when we looked *over the hill* we saw the *silver lining*. Simple."

Then, after a pause, "But for heaven's sake Mar—er—Miss Daly—you're certainly going about this thing in a haphazard way. May I suggest that a trained investigator does not depend upon chance and his wits alone, but always uses some set of signals—signals which are *sure* to be recognized by another investigator? We may meet again—and there may be no phonograph around."

Rita was duly humbled. "Won't you teach—?"

"With pleasure, sweet—stranger. Now there's the Morse Code, for instance. That's a system of communication by means of dots and dashes which are used instead of letters. Your—friends—are undoubtedly acquainted with this code. But there are many ingenious ways of employing it. For example: there's the case of the old lady who sent a message in the Morse Code by *embroidering* it on the edge of a towel. Is that clear? She used French knots to indicate dots and a long straight stitch to indicate dashes. And the design she embroidered, spelled a sentence! Clever, wasn't it?"

"I'll stay awhile," said Rita. "Mr. Nevins, will you teach me the Morse Code and some of the methods which—?"

"I sure will."

An hour later, Nevins escorted Rita through his backyard into the kitchen of the house next door. The neighbor allowed Rita to walk out her front door. "Good night," called Nevins, "and remember your lesson."

XII

AFTER her feeling of exhilaration because of her first signal triumph over *The Mogul*, Rita suffered a fit of depression and nausea. After all, one's natural impulses cannot be inhibited indefinitely. The whole business was repulsive to her.

She began brooding over the Bradshaw affair; she could not drive the tragedy from her memory. Although not directly responsible for this part of the regrettable affair, she felt that most of the blame was hers.

And strangely enough, of all her associates, Rudie Breen, who had crossed her, was the only one she could not bring herself to dislike. She could not

explain this. It may have been something about his eyes; generally they were bleary, but they were always calm, never shift. Sometimes she caught in them an expression of utter resignation. He was a criminal, to be sure, but at times there was that about him which seemed to indicate that he was a child of Fate and aware of the tragedy of his life, but powerless—or perhaps too tired—to struggle against it.

But all this did not cancel the fact of Bradshaw's death.

In a moment of abject despair, Rita wrote a complete history of the sorry affair and mailed it in a sealed envelope to Nevins, suggesting that he hold it unopened six months and then turn it over to the district attorney.

Rita, morbid with dread, self-reproach and anxiety, determined to play the game desperately and swiftly. She decided that a furious offensive on her part might force *The Mogul* to strike back at her. She had a feeling that when he did strike, it would be directly and not through a medium. She would meet him face to face—what happened then, lay in the hands of the gods—and Rita was not afraid.

Accordingly, when Creighton informed her that on the following Saturday night a batch of new money was to be turned out at Wortz's, Rita at once wrote to Nevins, saying that nine o'clock would be a good time for a raid.

Then, late Saturday afternoon, Creighton sprang a surprise. Rita had never been at Wortz's. Now Creighton coolly informed her that *The Mogul* had decided that she was to be used as a shover for awhile. "The money we're turning out would get by the U. S. Secretary of the Treasury himself. An attractive, prosperous-looking girl like you should have no trouble changing twenty-dollar bills."

Then he added, "You're to go with me tonight and get an inside line on how the stuff is made, what it looks like, how it differs from real money and so on. We want you to know your business thoroughly."

Rita's first impulse was to try to have the raid called off. But after thinking it over, she decided that she must let matters run their course. If Creighton did not take her to Wortz's till after nine, the raid would precede them, in which case they would be in no danger. If they went before nine, she would probably be caught. . . . Well, the federal authorities would probably handle the raid, but Nevins would be sure to be in it. And Nevins, dear old "stranger," would have the intelligence to permit her to stage an escape.

XIII

THEY made the trip in Creighton's car and reached Wortz's place a bit after eight o'clock. They passed through the print shop, up a narrow flight of stairs and into one of the rooms on the second floor. Two tables were in the room—one in a corner, one in the centre. At the centre table, three men were playing pinochle; at the corner table, four men were playing a game of their own concoction with two sets of dominoes. One man was still fussing around downstairs in the shop.

Creighton and Wortz, with Rita between them, sat down on a couch; the initiation of Rita into the gentle art of counterfeiting began. Wortz spoke of presses, plates, dies, inks, stamps, the fibre in paper; he explained how forged signatures were worked into the process.

At eight-thirty, the pinochle game broke up. One of the three players went with Wortz to the door, another drew Creighton aside and engaged him in a conversation. Rita strolled over

to the table at which the four men were playing dominoes, and watched the game. When the three card players had gone, she rejoined Wortz and Creighton on the couch.

She fumbled for her handkerchief in her sleeve; then she remembered she had put it into her mesh bag. She had left the bag on the couch.

Now it was gone!

Rita sighed resignedly; she had had experiences of this kind before. Mingled with *The Mogul's* crowd, were a certain number of "gents" who attended to minor details—dirty work—and who were inherently incapable of being honest with anyone. The bag was of no great value, so Rita said nothing about the matter.

Wortz continued his explanation of the mysteries of his art. Then, at eight-forty, the man downstairs in the print shop, called up from the hall, "Telephone call for Mr. Creighton."

When Creighton came back from the print shop, his face had turned a grayish white. "Raid!" he cried.

Instantly the four men playing dominoes, jumped to their feet.

"No need getting excited," cried Creighton. "They're due here the minute of nine. We're absolutely safe till that time. James at headquarters sent the tip to the High Chief who just had me on the phone. Nevins is in on this thing—damn him! Now shake a leg—get your plates and paraphernalia and money into suit-cases and beat it. Don't all go in the same car—go in two or three cars. Eighty-six Bay Road—four rings. Jenkins stays here and is printing handbills when the cops arrive. Hurry!"

The four thugs and Wortz ran downstairs. From the hallway upstairs, Creighton kept shouting orders to them.

While the preparations for the escape were being made, Rita tried frantically to think of some way to leave a message

for Nevins, which would betray the address to which the counterfeit money was being taken. Eighty-six Bay Road. She was sure Creighton would force her to leave before the detectives came—how could she tell them where to go?

To write it would have been simplest, but her pencil and notebook were in the mesh bag which had been stolen from her. She searched the room—not a thing to write with or on.

Still, there must be some way—Nevins had recommended the Morse Code—but how was that possible? . . . She ran about the room in a kind of frenzy—Morse Code—eighty-six Bay Road. Nevins would search this room—she could not fail him—she *must* think—

Then her eyes rested on the table on which lay dominoes, some of them turned face up. *There were dots on the dominoes!* This fact struck her with trip-hammer force. *And the blanks could indicate dashes!*

Nevins, who had spoken of the Morse Code for one whole hour the last time she saw him, could not possibly miss. . . .

She ran to the table. Thank heaven, there were two sets of dominoes. She could use letters in duplicate. Eighty-six Bay Road. Swiftly her fingers brushed aside such pieces as were useless. The others she lay, face up, in a certain order. When Creighton came into the room again, she had finished.

"You little rat!" he leered. "We're going to eighty-six Bay Road. Suppose you see if you can tell Sergeant Nevins that!"

"What are you talking about?" demanded Rita calmly. (She was standing with her back to the table.)

He took her mesh bag out of his pocket and dangled it before her. "Your pencil and notebook are in here and I gave orders to Wortz that there

was to be no writing material in this room. The Chief trusted you—but I didn't."

"Are you accusing me of—?"

He seized her roughly by the wrist. "Come along. You'll find out soon enough what you're accused of. You sit next to me on the front seat of the car. I'm going to keep a gun with a silencer pressed against your side. If you cry out I'll shoot six pretty holes into you!"

XIV

THE raiding party, consisting of ten members of the federal secret service and four city detectives, including Sergeant Nevins, hit Wortz's print shop at precisely nine o'clock. The place had previously not been shadowed; it was feared a shadow might be noticed and a raid suspected.

In Wortz's place, the raiders discovered such things as can be found in any print shop and one meek little man who was printing handbills. The searchers passed through every room; they tapped for false floors and walls; they overlooked no nook or corner.

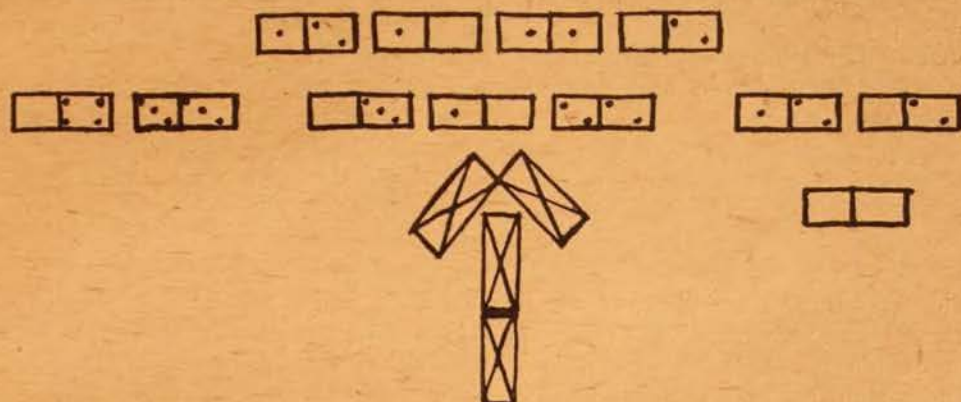
"You got a fine tip, I must say," commented Captain Wayne, who headed the federal detectives.

"I got my tip from the most dependable person in the world!" retorted Nevins.

While this discussion was going on in the hallway, Tim Tripp, a city detective, was standing before a table in one of the rooms on the second floor. There were dominoes on the table; most of the pieces were piled in neat heaps in a corner. But in the centre of the table lay several other dominoes, face up, and something about their arrangement attracted and held Tripp's attention. So that a better comprehension of what followed can be had, we will lay before the reader the dominoes as

Tim Tripp saw them spread before him:

this out calmly." Then, after a pause, "From the arrangement, it would seem



The dominoes forming an arrow-head were turned face down.

After Tim Tripp had stood before the table a few moments, he called, "Hey, Al, come in here and look at this."

Nevins, with several other detectives, gathered around the table. "Do these dominoes mean anything to any of you fellows?" asked Tripp.

After a silence of a few minutes, Capt. Wayne volunteered, "Well—the arrangement certainly appears—deliberate—and not accidental. Take that arrow now—if it is not intended to draw attention to the other dominoes, then why is it there?"

"If a signal—a message was intended," said Tripp, "it is obvious that some code was used."

"Code," muttered Nevins. "Code—code—what kind of a code—?"

"Well, in the Morse system," reflected Capt. Wayne, "dots and dashes are—"

"Morse Code!" exploded Nevins, brushing aside several men and edging closer to the table. He was trembling with excitement. "Of course it's the Morse Code! The dots on the dominoes are dots, and the blanks are dashes. It's clear—"

"Keep inside your shirt," protested Captain Wayne. "Let's try to figure

that the domino at the bottom—the one with the two blanks, is a signature. In Morse, two dashes stand for the letter M. Does M signify any—?"

"Marguerite!" cried Nevins. "Marge is with us, boys! She—"

"All right" interrupted Wayne. "Now assuming that each domino denotes one letter, that would make the first letter in the word at the top—h'm—let me see—*dot stop two dots*—"

"That's an R," said Nevins.

"The next letter is *dot dash*—that's an A," went on Wayne. "The third letter is *dot stop dot*—that's an O. The last letter is *dash two dots*, which denotes D. That makes the word ROAD—which doesn't mean anything at all!"

Again a pause, this time a long one.

Then Nevins. "The third letter, the O, spoils the sense. Now assuming that Marge wanted to use *two dots* instead of *dot stop dot*—there is no way of denoting two dots with one domino. You must either have *dot stop dot* or *two dots dash*. If that third letter was really intended for two dots—that would make it an I. And the word would be RAID!"

"Al," said Captain Wayne, "you'll be of great help to your mother when you grow up. . . . We'll go on with the deciphering. *Dash four dots* stands for

the number 8. *Three dots stop three dots* has no meaning, so we'll have to read it *six dots*, which signify the number 6." . . .

Translated first into Morse and then into English, the domino cipher read as follows:

... .. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
 R A I D 8 6 B A Y R D
 - -
 M

"Raid 86 Bay Road!" thundered Wayne. "I'll say we will!" He nodded to one of his men. "You stay here, Gus, and watch that runt printing handbills downstairs. Let's go!" . . .

XV

EIGHTY-SIX Bay Road was a cottage of the Queen Anne type in Pelham. Harry Creighton paid little heed to traffic regulations in getting there; he made it in forty minutes. Rita, at his side on the front seat, was not in the least inclined to attempt an escape. Rita, you see, was on the sunny side of twenty and engaged; she possessed all the confidence—and recklessness of youth. She expected to be in for an exciting evening and in this expectation she was not disappointed.

They were admitted into the house by a man in the garb of a butler. To judge by his face, he'd have made a better bouncer. He whispered a few words to Creighton, after which Creighton led Rita into a room on the lower floor. Creighton spoke no word; he kept pacing the room nervously. Rita sat down on a settee and wondered how soon Nevins would drop in . . . she expected, of course, that he would see her message at once, decipher it in one or two seconds and come chasing after her . . . we've remarked on her confidence.

While they waited, several men came into the house (they were admitted by

the butler after ringing four times) and went up the stairway to the floor above. Then, after half an hour or so, Rita and Creighton were asked to follow the butler.

They went up one flight and entered a large square room. There was no

furniture except ten chairs and one table. The chairs were arranged in an arc with the table in the centre. One chair was vacant—the second from the right—Creighton sat down on it. "It appears as though they're peeved," thought Rita. "They're going to let me stand."

The butler entered the room, too, locked the door and stood leaning against it.

Rita, glancing swiftly at the men in the arc, recognized Wortz, Larry Harker and Rudie Breen. Breen sat on the end chair, left. "A rather serious minded convention," mused Rita. "And that gentleman, in the centre, at the table—"

Abruptly, that particular reflection was broken off. Rita ran forward, stopped, and then screamed.

The man at the table, the ringleader, the tall white-haired, black-eyed, theatrically handsome man was *J. Stanley Bradshaw!*

Of that there could be no doubt whatsoever! Bradshaw was sitting within a few feet of her, Bradshaw was alive, and grinning at her with that cruel, straight, thin-lipped mouth!

Again Rita screamed. Then . . . there had been no murder! . . . "Good old Rudie—I felt—I knew he couldn't have been so callous!" . . . There was no blood on her hands . . . she was free—free of a terrible nightmare . . . but why was Bradshaw here? . . . here, —at the head of—*head* . . . he was

The Mogul—he must be The Mogul— but if that was the case . . . “You killed Jimmy!” she screamed. “And I’ve got you at last! I’ve got you!”—she ran to the table and pounded upon it . . . she felt faint . . . where—where was Al?—dear old Al—

If this description of Rita’s immediate reaction is a bit incoherent, it is because her thoughts and acts were incoherent. Frenzy, exhilaration, amazement, cold dread, rage, bewilderment, all these sensations were hers. Then, collapse—Nature’s method of procuring a period of rest for an exhausted body and mind.

When she recovered, she found herself being supported by Rudie Breen.

“If you don’t mind, Chief,” Rudie was saying, “I’ll stand. She can have my chair.”

No objection was raised. Rudie Breen led her to the seat he had occupied.

The man at the table turned to Rita. “This room is practically sound proof,” he said. “You may scream to your heart’s delight.” Then addressing the men, “I have called you together to consider the case of Miss Marguerite Cornell, sister of Captain James Cornell of whose disposal—you are all acquainted. Miss Cornell is responsible for the arrest of Iglano, Geiger and Ashley; she worked in conjunction with Sergeant Nevins.”

He paused. “If—if Miss Cornell were a—man—the matter would, of course, be simple. But both because of her sex and her evident connection with the police, I have called you in conference, as I did when the fate of her brother was agreed upon. Miss Cornell must, in some manner be—removed—or eliminated as a factor in the war being waged against us by the authorities.”

The Chief paused and calmly lighted a cigar.

“A few months ago,” spoke up Wortz, “I volunteered my services as—eliminator. But, of course, if you’re against hurting a woman—”

“I am against nothing. If a majority decides in favor of—blotting her out—so be it. I insist only upon a safe method.”

Frank Yost, leader of the dips, put in a word. Yost, it must be said, had been out of town the greater part of the last six months; he was not “up” on all the incidents of Rita’s career. “Who got this girl in with—?”

“I did,” interrupted Rudie Breen.

“You’re some fathead, I’ll chirp,” said Yost.

Breen disregarded the comment. Slowly he turned his head to Rita. And looking up, she saw his eyes half-close and his lips twitch into a faint, brief smile. And after that, somehow, she was certain, absolutely certain that she had one friend in the crowd.

“The blame isn’t Rudie Breen’s,” explained the Chief. “For your benefit, Yost, and also for the girl’s—I take it she’s interested—I’ll clean up the details of her ‘breaking in’ with us.”

“A few weeks after we settled James Cornell, there was a raid on the Bird’s-Eye. Rudie Breen had struck up a chance friendship with this girl, who was in the hall and who passed under the name of Rita Daly. While the search was going on, Miss Cornell slipped into the barroom and turned off the lights that enabled Larry Harker, who was in the place with several thousand dollars worth of snow—I believe you know gentleman, where we keep it—to get away. The girl told Breen she had crossed the cops because she had a private quarrel with them.

“Well—she certainly saved us a lot of trouble that night. I became interested in her through Breen and a letter from Creighton, manipulated her into my employ as secretary—I was

selling mine stock in the Trinidad Building at the time.

"Then, with Breen, she tried to steal a letter from me and blackmail me. That, gentlemen, showed her intelligence—intelligence, that is, from our point of view. Well, I had worked the mine game to the limit and wanted to disappear *anyhow*—so Breen and I staged a murder. He killed me when I surprised him at my safe, see? He used a 'property knife'—a knife whose silvered wooden blade can be pressed up into its handle which is filled with red ink. The blade thus became stained red—and so did my shirt front. After I was dead, he sent her out of the office and the next day he told her he had disposed of my body with Creighton's help.

"That stunt served several purposes. I disappeared; I had the chance to observe Miss Cornell during a trying moment, and by bluffing her into believing she had been in on a murder, I got a grip on her. Is that clear?

"Well—I decided she had the courage, the wit and the—attractiveness to be useful to us. The Creightons took her in. Then she somehow tipped off Nevins about Geiger. We allowed her a free reign, but James at headquarters kept an eye on Nevins and ran down his history. He found that Nevins had been a friend of James Cornell and was engaged to Cornell's sister Marguerite. We looked up Marguerite and found she was missing from her home. We got several good descriptions of her—and these descriptions tallied with the appearance of Rita Daly!

"James phoned that news to me this evening. Later, he phoned again and said that Nevins would raid Wortz at nine. I called up Wortz's place and had them all come here and bring the girl with them. Then I sent for the rest of you. That is all, gentlemen."

XVI

RUDIE BREEN cleared his throat. "Since, after all, I was the sap who nearly queered this gang by picking up the girl, why not let me square myself with the gang by relieving you gentlemen of any trouble in regard to her—blotting out?"

They considered the proposition. "If Iglano were out," said Harker, "he could manage it neatly. But with him in J—"

The door bell rang.

They were in a room from whose windows a person at the front door could not be seen. After a moment's silence, Bradshaw instructed the butler, "Run down, Benny, and see who it is."

Benny went out of the room and left the door leading to the hall open. The others heard him go down the stairway. Then the house door was opened, and then closed again with a bang. There came a crash of broken glass, then two shots, then faintly, Benny's voice, "Cops!"

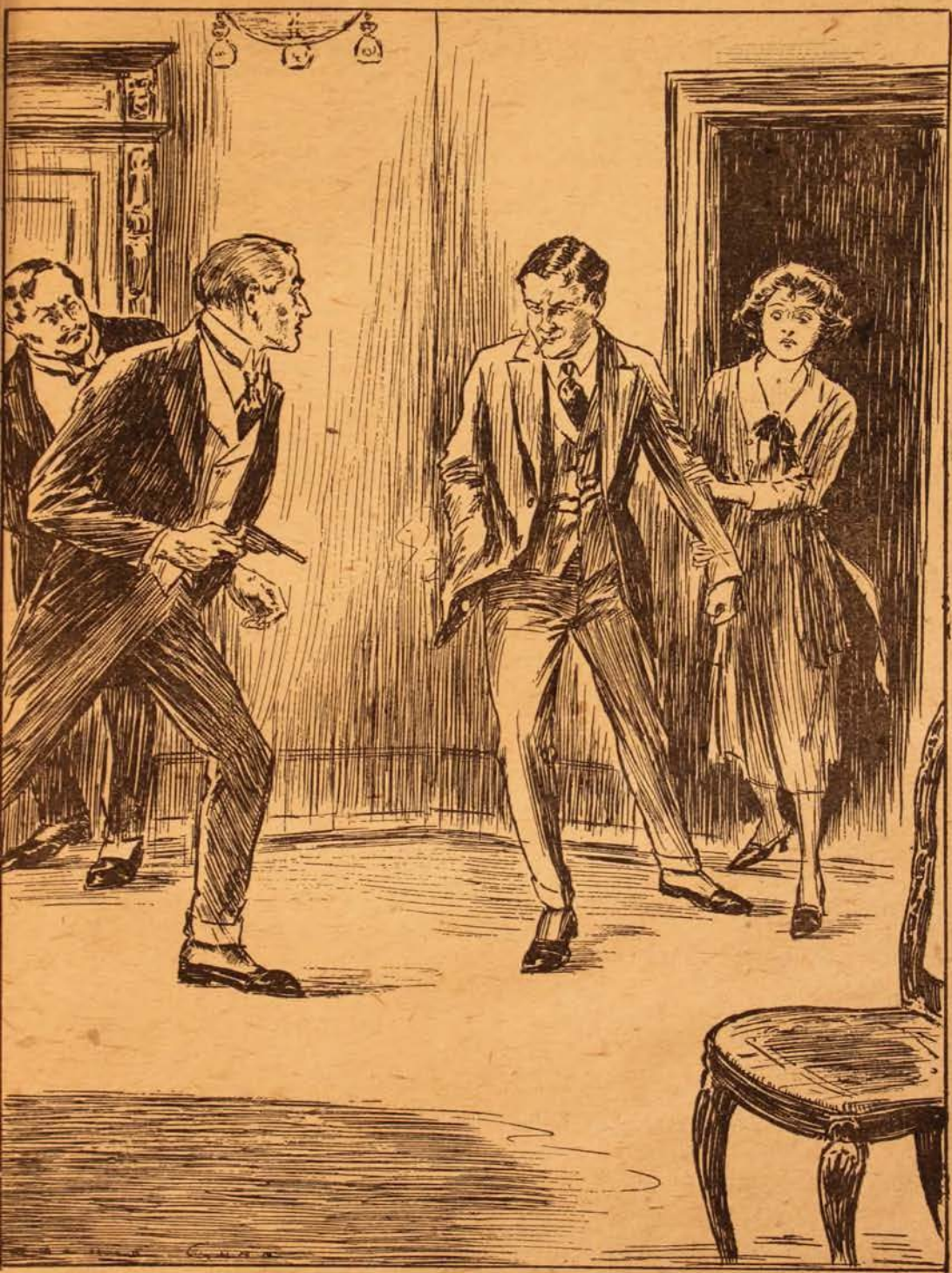
Instantly everyone in the room jumped to his feet. During the commotion, Rudie Breen edged Rita toward the door, keeping himself between her and the others.

Bradshaw waved his men back and snarled, "Another squeal! Well, Miss Cornell, this is your last." He drew his gun and leveled it.

The somewhat muffled report of an exploded cartridge followed. Bradshaw pitched forward on his face, blood pouring from a hole in his forehead.

Rudie Breen, smiling, the inevitable cigarette hanging loosely from his lips, had fired from his coat pocket and he had hit his mark. And this time it was not a stage killing.

Oaths, exclamations from the others. Everyone drew, but Creighton fired first. Breen, still smiling, crumpled silently to the floor.



Rudie Breen, smiling, had fired from his coat pocket.—Page 86

In the confusion, Rita had run from the room. Fleeing down the stairs, she tripped and fell, which was a fortunate accident. Creighton had followed her into the hall; his bullet sped harmlessly over her head.

The next shot was fired by Sergeant Alan Nevins, who was leading the raiders up the stairway. His bullet bored through the body of Creighton, just over the heart.

Yost and Harker put up a fight and had to be shot into submission. (Neither of them was seriously wounded.) The others, finding themselves outnumbered, surrendered.

Rita came to in the arms (naturally) of Nevins. She at once staggered to her feet, climbed unsteadily up the stairway, ran into the room and fell down beside the body of Rudie Breen.

She took his head in her lap. "Rudie! Rudie! I'm calling you!"

Rudie opened his eyes. "I—I hope I've squared it with you, Miss Cornell for—"

"I forgive you, boy! I wanted you to know I forgive you!"

"Thanks—that's—nice of you—Miss Cornell."

She leaned closer and spoke in a crooning voice, "You're—through, Rudie. But don't be—afraid, boy, don't be afraid."

"Me?—afraid—I could die many times like this—"

Captain Wayne, standing nearby, took off his hat—and then turned away. "I can't help it," he said. "When I see a guy pass out with his head up—crook or no crook—it—it gets me, somehow."

XVII

THE Mogul's tribe, having lost its leaders, disbanded and scattered to the four corners of the earth. Frank Yost squealed and pleaded for mercy; that's how they solved the mystery of "James"

at headquarters. "James" was "John Ames," a detective whose record showed several suspensions for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. The gang had run his initial and last name together and called him "James" so as to cover his identity. . . .

Sergeant Alan Nevins tore up the envelope which contained the history of Rita Daly's murder of J. Stanley Bradshaw.

Sergeant Alan Nevins arrested Miss Marguerite Cornell and brought her before the district attorney on the charge of having been implicated in the blackmailing of one Mr. Rinault. The district attorney looked at Miss Cornell over his nose glasses, said, "Hum, hum," and promised to look into the matter.

The district attorney investigated one Mr. Rinault.

A week later, Sergeant Alan Nevins again towed Miss Cornell before the district attorney. The district attorney invited them to have dinner with him at his home that evening and then he threw the two of them out of his office.

April. The anniversary of the death of Police Captain James Cornell. A slender girl with wistful eyes and a handsome young man are standing at Captain Cornell's grave. The girl is holding a small note-book which is turned open to a page bearing the following inscription:

IN MEMORIAM.

From Marge and Al.

J. STANLEY BRADSHAW—assassinated.

HARRY CREIGHTON—killed during raid.

BENNY KAMP—killed during raid.

TONY IGLANO—convicted of murder, electrocuted.

JUDITH CREIGHTON—suicide.

GEORGE GEIGER—convicted receiving stolen goods, 5 years.

ARTHUR ASHLEY—convicted receiving stolen goods, 5 years.

HENRY WORTZ—convicted counterfeiting, 10 years.

LARRY HARKER—convicted of attempted assault, 5 years.

FRANK YOST—convicted of attempted assault, 4 years.

FOUR OTHER ARRESTS AND CONVICTIONS ON CHARGES OF COUNTERFEITING AND ASSAULT.

And now, Jimmy, sleep in peace!

There was no mention of Rudie Breen, who had atoned by giving his life to protect a woman.

"If Jimmy could see this book, what you do think he'd say?" asked Marguerite Cornell.

"Jimmy would be proud of the fine courage of his little sister," answered Alan Nevins. "But he would be pro-

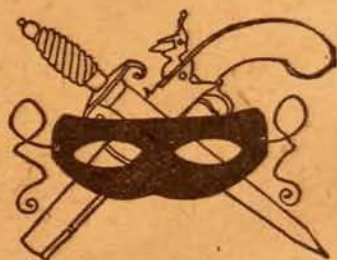
foundly grieved because so much suffering was necessary to atone for his death."

"Hold a match to this note-book, Alan."

So they watched the book burn to ashes.

Then—we have said it was April—it rained. The two were holding hands, but in his free hand, Nevins had an umbrella. It never occurred to him to open it, nor did Marguerite ask him to. Perhaps the two had noticed the sun smiling behind the cloud. Or perhaps they considered the shower a blessing upon them from above. . . .

(The End)





Upon the forehead of Hitchens was the sign of the cross!—Page 94

The Brand of Cain

By Ward Sterling

I

DOCTOR ANDREWS, the physician who had been called in by the coroner, gave as his opinion that Waldo Fellows had met death shortly after midnight. The condition of the body, he said, proved his contention. Then, too, the fact that the blood with which the sheets were smeared had dried and hardened caused him to stick to his statement.

Yet Orville Hitchens, Fellows' secretary, swore that his employer had been alive and well at two o'clock in the morning.

Hitchens stated that he had been summoned by Fellows at one o'clock and requested to drive to Amboy, two miles away, for some bromide. Mr. Fellows had been extremely nervous of late and found himself unable to sleep. Finding that he had no bromide—a drug that he was accustomed to taking—he had awakened the secretary. Hitchens asserted that he had taken the light car, made the trip and returned just before the clock struck two. Fellows had taken a dose of the drug and Hitchens had again retired.

Henry Phelps, the drug clerk, verified Hitchens' statement as to the purchase of the bromide, while Landes, the chauffeur, told of getting out the light car for the secretary, who had driven it himself.

In spite of this Doctor Andrews stuck to his statement that the murdered man had been dead at least ten hours when he made his examination. Swenson, the valet, had discovered the murder

when he went to awaken his master at eight o'clock.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Coroner Stevenson arrived, accompanied by Doctor Andrews and Bram Dwyer, the New York detective, who, with myself, was spending a few days' vacation in the little village. The prominence of the murdered man, coupled with the fact that the detective and Stevenson were old friends, caused the New Yorker to interest himself in the case at the latter's request.

Fellows was a gentleman farmer—a man worth several millions of dollars made in Wall Street, who, tired of life in the city, had purchased Samoset Farm just at the edge of Amboy township and, after stocking it with the finest blooded cattle and horses that money could buy, had settled down to a life of rustic bliss. As time passed he had added to his acreage by purchasing adjoining farms until half the township was his.

He had erected a mansion around which he had built smaller homes for his employes. These with the great barns, sheds for the machinery, dairy and offices made Samoset Farm almost a small town.

Such a man as Waldo Fellows set down in the midst of a rural community is bound to be sought out by his fellowmen. Twice he had reluctantly allowed himself to represent his district in the State Legislature. The Governor's chair could have been his for the asking. His fellow-townsmen loved him for the nobility of his character. Yet he had enemies by the score—many of them the small landowners whose farms sur-

rounded his. For the man who does things on a big scale is certain sooner or later to tramp on the toes of others.

But who among those he had offended hated him to the extent of taking his life?

II

FELLOWS was murdered in bed, apparently in cold blood, for there was no evidence of a struggle of any kind. Nothing in the room had been disturbed. So far as could be ascertained nothing of value had been taken. The fact that the bedding was not mussed led to the belief that the murderer had struck while his victim was asleep.

None of the servants nor Mrs. Fellows—who slept just across the hall—had heard any noise save when Hitchens returned from the drug store with the drug which Fellows had requested. Mrs. Fellows had called over the transom to Hitchens to ask what was the matter and he had told her of his employer's sleeplessness.

The bottle of bromide with a small quantity gone was found on the table beside the bed. Bromide seldom acts inside of half to three-quarters of an hour. Hence, assuming that Hitchens had told the truth—and everything pointed to his having done so—Fellows must, if he was killed in his sleep, have met death not earlier than three o'clock.

Yet the blood which had flowed from the wound, the condition of the body—everything—led a cool, conservative medical man to declare that death had struck at least three hours earlier. Nor could his testimony be shaken.

There were twelve servants who slept in the house, all occupying the upper floor, with the exception of Hitchens, Marie, Mrs. Fellows' maid, and Swenson, the valet.

Watson, the butler and general man about the house, was the last person to

bed and, according to his own statement, the first up in the morning. He had personally locked all the doors and windows on the first floor. They were all locked when he made his rounds in the morning.

Hitchens, in going to the drug store, had left the house by the side door. This he had left unlocked, relocking it upon his return. This led to the assumption on the part of some of the officials that the murderer had entered the place by that door during the secretary's absence, hiding until his return, and after Fellows was asleep had struck the fatal blow and escaped by the same door, springing the lock after him.

There was no other way of looking at the matter unless one went on the theory that the deed had been committed by one of the servants or Mrs. Fellows. And the latter was unthinkable, while the servants, all of them had been in Fellows' employ for years and were known to be absolutely loyal.

Of course the windows of the sleeping rooms on the second floor were open. A man of agility might have gained an entrance in this way. But luckily there had been a slight rainfall earlier in the evening and, as a result, the ground was in a condition to take impressions easily. The coroner and the sheriff made a thorough search for marks of a ladder or footprints, but were positive that there was none beneath any of the windows.

And there was always to be considered the lack of motive. Aside from the farmers who were jealous of the big landowner there was no one known to hold a grudge against him.

My friend Dwyer declined to assist the officials in their hunt for footprints, contenting himself with dawdling about the house as if greatly bored with the whole affair. Conversant as I am with his methods, I admit that this surprised me, for he is usually energy

personified when there is some perplexing problem to be untangled. Eventually, however, the officials, nonplussed, were forced to turn to him for advice. He answered with a shrug of his shoulders, absolutely refusing to be drawn into a discussion of the case.

Following the time-worn methods, the sheriff called all of the servants together and examined them, eliciting no more information than had already been gained. It was at this point that Dwyer, who had listened to the questioning without comment, offered a suggestion:

"There's a band of gypsies camped a few miles the other side of town," he remarked quietly. "Their chief is old Father Lipki, a friend of mine. The old fellow knows his business from the ground up—fortune telling, mind reading and all of that sort of stuff. In fact, he's assisted me on more than one occasion. I know that you'll laugh at me for the suggestion, but let me bring him here. I'll guarantee that he'll have the murderer by the heels inside of half an hour. How he does it I don't pretend to know. It's positively uncanny, the way he pulls off his stunts. But if it's results you want, then Lipki is your man."

The sheriff sneered. Coroner Stevenson, in spite of his friendship for the detective, suppressed a smile with difficulty.

"You don't want us to think that you believe in such rot, do you, Bram?" he inquired.

My friend shrugged his shoulders again.

"You asked for my opinion," he answered. "I'm giving it to you. I'll take a chance on Father Lipki. In fact, as I have stated, I have many a time. The man has powers beyond the understanding of men like us. But of course it's up to you and the sheriff."

III

DARKNESS had fallen when Dwyer and the coroner again drove up to the Fellows home accompanied by Father Lipki, the gypsy.

A typical member of his race was Lipki, a wrinkled little figure far past the age allotted to man. But in spite of his years he carried himself like a youth of twenty and his black, beady eyes glittered like those of a boy as he prepared the stage for the affair, his huge brass earrings rattling like castanets as he hurried here and there.

The spot selected by the coroner, upon the advice of Dwyer, for the test of Lipki's powers was the huge living-room on the lower floor. The servants were ordered to carry out all of the furniture with the exception of the chairs, which were arranged along the wall. Then every member of the household with the exception of the widow was ordered to be present.

The old man, mumbling to himself, drew a large circle on the floor in the center of the room with a piece of charcoal, after which he commanded us to seat ourselves just outside the circular mark, warning us under penalty of death not to enter the circle unless commanded to do so by him.

His next act was to produce a brazier, which he lighted and placed in the center of the circle. By its side he placed a small vessel containing water.

The lights were then turned out. For an instant we were in darkness. Then the brazier flamed up, filling the room with an unearthly bluish-greenish sort of glare. Chanting to himself, the old man threw a pinch of powder into the flames at intervals; the light would turn for a second into a vivid red, then die away again to the dull, sickly bluish-green.

Suddenly he seated himself cross-

legged at the side of the brazier and bowed his head. Closing his eyes as if in prayer, he mumbled to himself in an unintelligible jargon. I confess to a feeling of nervousness; I could tell from the expression on their faces that the others were the same.

The tension was becoming almost unbearable when the old man slowly raised himself to a standing position and, seizing the vessel of water, sprinkled it on the floor inside the circle, being extremely careful that not a single drop fell outside the mark.

"I must protect you from the powers of evil!" he explained.

Keeping carefully inside the mark, he made the rounds, touching each of us lightly on the forehead, making on each of us the sign of the cross.

"In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost!" I heard him mumble to himself.

Reseating himself on the floor, he again bowed his head and once more his lips moved as if in prayer. Suddenly he fell over and for several minutes writhed about as if in terrific pain. I leaped to my feet to assist him, but the strong hand of Bram Dwyer held me back.

"Remember!" he shouted. "The old man commanded us, regardless of what happened, not to cross the line!"

After three or four minutes the spasms ceased and the gypsy seemingly none the worse for his experience arose and addressed us:

"My friends," he commenced in his halting, broken English, "you have asked me here to use my arts in the detection of one who has committed a crime—the crime of murder. I have done my best. Inside this circle have I wrestled with the powers of darkness and the spirits of light. I know not which one of you committed this foul deed. No one knows save God.

"Yet He who created all things will not allow the crime of murder to pass

unnoticed. Therefore I say unto you this:

"If he who committed this crime is in this room there will appear upon his forehead the sign of the cross—the mark that God placed upon Cain!"

"This alone can I do. More than that I am not allowed, for my powers are limited."

He signaled for Dwyer to turn on the lights. An instant later we were blinking at the unaccustomed brightness. The old man seized the brazier and held it close to the face of each of us, gazing into our eyes as if seeking to read there the secret he was bent upon obtaining.

Then came a shriek! A gasp of astonishment—of horror! A cry! I turned my head, my eyes following the gaze of the others.

Upon the forehead of Hitchens was the sign of the cross!

For a second there was silence—cold, oppressive silence. The secretary gazed from one to another of us mutely, questioningly. Then his eyes sought the mirror above the fireplace. Afterward I recalled that Dwyer had seated him in front of the glass. His face became drawn. The sweat stood out on his forehead in great beads.

Slowly, as if stunned, his fingers sought the accursed mark upon his forehead. He spat upon his hand and rubbed the spittle across the spot as if to erase it. He held the tips of his fingers in front of his eyes, surveying them thoughtfully, dazed.

Then, without warning, he dropped to his knees, his arms outstretched towards the swarthy man within the circle.

"I did it! I did it!" he shrieked.

IV

"No, I never met Lipki until yesterday," Dwyer chuckled to us as, two hours later, Hitchens safely lodged in

jail, he sat with the coroner, the sheriff and myself in the former's parlor and went over the various phases of the case.

"I'm a fairly good judge of character and when I noticed him begging on Main Street yesterday I immediately placed the old fellow as being far above the average of his class mentally and capable of playing almost any part he might be called upon to take. I realized far better than the rest of you that the murderer was too clever to be captured unless some subterfuge was used and when you appealed to me, Stevenson, my thoughts reverted at once to the old man. A falsehood or two in the interests of justice is, in my opinion, perfectly allowable. And that I was correct in my estimate is proved by what happened.

"What appealed to me from the very start was the apparent lack of motive. Had we been able to supply a motive we might have been able to have laid our hands on the man who struck the blow. But in the absence of one, it became necessary to take some radical step. To imagine that one of the farmers hereabouts would become jealous enough to strike Fellows down was absurd. And, granting that some of them might have the nerve, they lacked the imagination to pull off so mysterious a crime.

"I was confident in my own mind that Hitchens was the guilty party. Why? Because he was the only man who had an opportunity to kill Fellows. But, on the other hand, his frank statements apparently eliminated him from the suspects.

"Let us analyze the affair a trifle deeper: Doctor Andrews swears that Fellows was killed shortly after midnight. We now know that he was correct. But Hitchens bobs up with the story of being in conversation with the murdered man at two o'clock. He was

able to prove his statements by two reputable and disinterested witnesses—Landes, the chauffeur, and Phelps, the drug clerk. Therefore my conclusion was that either Hitchens was lying or that the physician was wrong. But my experience has taught me that medical men are, as a general rule, cold-blooded—that is, they figure things out with mathematical accuracy and, by the law of averages, they are right ninety-nine times out of a hundred. Therefore Hitchens was lying. But so far as we knew there was no motive.

"Now, the average man has deep within him a streak of superstition and a fear of whatever he does not understand. Therefore I took the indolent attitude before the servants, finally working things up to a climax so that they expected wonderful things from the gypsy whom I had touted so highly. As soon as you gave your permission I hunted up the old man, whose name, by the way, is not Lipki, but Rodereigo. For ten dollars he agreed to play the part the way I told him to—and that he sustained my estimate of him I believe you will all agree. I spent the afternoon in coaching him.

"I felt that, in case Hitchens did not confess, we would have lost nothing. But I was betting on the superstitious streak in his makeup and won out.

"We all know now what his motive was. He had been systematically robbing his employer for years. Fellows had become suspicious and last night notified the secretary that they would go over the books together today. Hitchens waited until his employer was sleeping, then entered the room by means of a key that he had secured possession of, struck the fatal blow, then went through the mummery of going to the village after the bromide, thus providing himself with an almost perfect alibi. With Fellows dead, he figured that, as confidential man, he

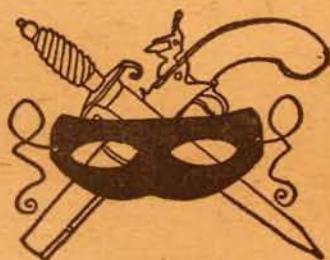
would be retained for a year or two to come, finally reaching a point where he could get his hands on a large sum of money and make his escape before his defalcations were discovered."

"But," rumbled the sheriff, "I'm still in the dark as to how the gypsy caused that black cross to appear on his forehead just by mumbling a few prayers. Those people know a lot of black art that we more civilized people will never be able to understand."

Dwyer grinned. "I furnished the 'black art' myself," he answered. "It cost me ten cents at the drug store. The old man made the cross on

Hitchens' forehead first, if you will recall the affair. He had just dipped his hand into the vessel of what looked like water. He only pretended to dip his hand into it when he annointed the rest of you. The heat of the brazier brought out the mark—or started it—when he held it up and pretended to peer into your faces.

"What was it? Merely a ten percent solution of ammonium chloride—the same stuff from which invisible ink is made. The old man's skin being dark, it didn't come out on his hand as it did on Hitchens' forehead. And that's the whole story."



A Track-and-a-Half

By Walter Deffenbaugh

I

BENEATH the library window of the millionaire, Garret Garrison, the footprints of a burglar showed plainly in the flowerbed that ran alongside the house. The bright sun following a rainy night had retained them perfectly and the two detectives breathed together in a sigh of satisfaction as they saw there a vitally distinguishing mark.

The toe of each sole had been newly repaired with a patch. Here undoubtedly one of the thieves who had committed the \$15,000 jewel robbery the night before had left a trace that would simplify their work and send him to prison. In these tracks he had undoubtedly stood while he operated the jimmy whose marks showed on the casing above.

A little outside, but still within the flowerbed, were the marks of his heels where he had landed as he leaped back into the yard after his fight with the butler. Here the heels were deeply indented, but the prints of the same repaired toes were again in evidence. In the damp soil the marks of the burglar's feet were plain, showing where he had entered the grounds through the hedge and crashed out again.

Detective Sergeant Harrison was showing his associate, Harbin, over the ground for the first time. Harbin had been working on another angle of the case.

"Now look up here, Harbin," he said and led the way to the soil under the adjoining window of the Garrison

drawing-room. "Here's where the other guy jumped out."

Sure enough, there were the prints of another pair of heels and the marks of a running man's footprints across the lawn to the same break in the hedge. But on these prints there was no such distinguishing mark as upon the others. The shoes that made these might have belonged to any one of a million men in the big city.

For perhaps twenty minutes the two detectives paced in silence up and down the lawn alongside the house. Twice, with the aid of stepladders, they inspected every window within reach from the ground. Outside the house, they were satisfied, there was not another trace of the thieves who had broken in and stolen a pearl necklace worth \$10,000 and other trinkets worth \$5,000 more. They must be content to rest their case upon these marks in the dirt and the story of the butler who had surprised one of the marauders in the hallway of the mansion.

At the end of this time Harbin, the senior of the two Headquarters men, stopped in his tracks and scratched his head vigorously.

"Tom," he ventured at last, "do you see anything wrong with these feet tracks?"

"Hell, yes," replied Harrison. "Have you just tumbled? They show plain enough where scuffle-toes came in and went out and they show where the other fellow came out, but they don't show this other gink coming in at all. That's been botherin' me for an hour."

Harrison, who had been on the case since it was first reported, had already

interviewed the members of the household but since Harbin had reported to assist him they could see nothing to do but start again from the inside.

The robbery, it was again explained to them, had occurred about one o'clock in the morning. The Garrison home was supposed to be untenanted except by the butler and two women servants who slept on the top floor, the family having been called away by the death of a relative. Their departure had been announced in the newspapers the day before. It seemed, however, that the daughter, about twenty years of age, had decided at the last moment to remain behind and was also in the house at the time of the robbery.

Schmidt, the butler, and the other servants had been with the family for years and were, by all standards, beyond suspicion. He had not heard the robbers enter but had been aroused by the noise when the strong box in Mrs. Garrison's room—just below his—had been forced open and had dashed down, half-clad, to investigate.

In the hallway he had encountered a masked man in cap and overcoat and grappled with him. In the struggle the burglar had slipped out of the overcoat and leaped down the front stairs, firing two shots that missed but halted the servant. Schmidt had paused for slippers and then given chase by way of the front door. By the time he reached the street there was the noise of a starting motor car around the corner, hidden by the tall hedge, and he saw nothing but a blur of tail-lights.

At daybreak the police had found a revolver in the gutter three blocks down the street and an hour or so later an abandoned automobile was reported a mile away. In this was a plaid cap that the butler identified as the one worn by the burglar with whom he had struggled.

In addition to these tangible clues,

the detectives had valuable evidence also in the shape of the overcoat the burglar had left in the butler's hands. It was particularly valuable, since it bore the maker's name. But there was something strange about all this silent evidence that had been left behind—the coat particularly.

It was an unheard-of thing for a burglar to wear to work such a fashionable and distinctive garment, so easily traced. The cap that had been found was a gaudy affair that would attract attention even in a big city. The pistol still bore its factory number. It had been scratched in an effort at effacement, but apparently the job had been given up as not worth while. As for the shoes with the cobbled soles, it seemed indeed remarkable that a crook would trust himself in a pair leaving so unmistakable an imprint wherever he walked.

With such material to work with, the detectives assigned to the job considered that they had accomplished only an average half-day's work when they announced at noon that they had solved the mystery of the Garrison robbery.

The coat had been speedily identified. The name the purchaser had given the tailor was not known to the police but his description was and the maker had instantly recognized his Rogue's Gallery picture. The third of the police stool-pigeons consulted gave the name of the owner of the plaid cap—a known crony of the owner of the coat, and a man who had often driven the abandoned automobile. The tracing of the revolver and the shoes would take a little time, but if they did not belong to the same two men, the police felt certain at least that they could name two of their friends to whom they did.

The greatest mystery was why such men as these should leave such a trail. The two men positively identified were two of the best known burglars in the

country but had never before been known to work in New York City. It was their home—their playground. Almost any night they could be found in Eichorn's restaurant with their friends. In fact, Harbin had seen them there the night before.

It was incomprehensible, yet there was the evidence. And so, at noon, the police alarm went out to bring in Dave Bamfield, Red Doran, Billy Evans and Jim Anthony.

II

HARBIN, more methodical than the other detectives—perhaps a trifle more intelligent—went over the evidence like a schoolmaster as four police officers sat down to lunch in Eichorn's, where he had seen two of the wanted men the night before, apparently just before the robbery. Bamfield and Doran had been seated at the marble-topped table in the corner with June Jennings, Evans's girl. As the detective noted that Billy Evans was missing, he recalled the gossip he had heard that the coming of the pretty blonde girl into the society of the gang was threatening to disrupt it.

His attention had been attracted to the gang by meeting, just outside, Frog Fagin, looking as though he had failed in his nightly effort to sponge a meal from the prosperous crooks and slinking away to quarters more within his measly means. Just beyond he had seen Evans hurrying toward the restaurant with determined stride and protruding jaw. He had been half tempted to wait to see a grand row over June Jennings but his bed had called loudly and he had gone home.

Now it seemed that while he slept these acquaintances of his had been, not fighting, but hard at work. The picture identified as that of the purchaser of the overcoat was that of Bamfield. The cap had been definitely placed as one

used by Doran for motoring—indeed, had his initials scratched on the inside of the sweatband in small letters. Thus two of the men were fixed to a certainty. It was considered almost certain that a third man had acted as lookout and also that a fourth had remained at the wheel of the automobile. What two men would Doran and Bamfield most likely have with them on such an enterprise? They associated habitually with Anthony and Evans. The deduction seemed clear as gin and the finding was so entered and confirmed by the Old Man himself.

The capture of the four was ridiculously easy. Jim Anthony was found in what his wife violently insisted was a sick-bed and she was not a whit placated at the grinning assurance of the officers that the prison physician would give her husband the best of care, without cost. Doran was nabbed as he came to Eichorn's for a belated breakfast. Bamfield was arrested at the hotel where he always stopped when in town, and Evans was found drunk, with a bottle beside him, in the furnished room he had lately occupied with June Jennings. The girl was nowhere to be found. Probably that was the reason for the bottle.

To say that the men denied their guilt is putting it far too mildly. They were profanely vociferous about it—almost in tears at the injustice of the accusation. A strange feature of their behavior, though, was that as they sat in the same room for a time at Headquarters, three of them each shot searching looks, as though of puzzled inquiry, at Jim Anthony. That cracksman, however, seemed to have troubles of his own. He was either a most excellent actor or really had a severe cold in the chest.

It wasn't necessary to take their finger prints. These were already on record. To attempt a third degree with such veterans would have been a waste

of time. The police listened with amused grins to the strenuous denials and calmly locked up the quartet in separate cells to await arraignment on what seemed to all a clear case.

III

RETURNING toward Headquarters on a street car, Harbin and Harrison heard an excited hail from the opposite track and recognized Detective Kelso as he swung to the pavement and joined them on the sidewalk.

"They've traced the gun," he announced hurriedly. "It's Bill Evans's. June Jennings bought it across the river a month ago. She's been packin' it for him. That's what they've got her for—gun moll, sabe? Come on and we'll get her."

"Where? Get her where?" demanded Harbin of Kelso, who was already hailing another car.

"Bill Evans's room," spluttered Kelso. "Just got a flash she was seen going into the house. Hurry up"; and the three clambered aboard to continue Kelso's journey.

Kelso had been there before and knew the place. Running noiselessly up the stairs of the rooming house, the three hurled themselves at the door and burst it in at the second shove to confront an astounded young woman who grabbed frantically at her throat. Harrison seized her wrist and, forcing open her clenched fingers, disclosed a diamond brooch she had torn from her waist. Twelve diamonds, set in platinum, it fitted to a T the description of one article of the Garrison loot.

"Great Gosh, this is the plant!" ejaculated Kelso hoarsely. "Search the dump. The other stuff's here, surer than hell."

While Harrison clung to June Jennings the other two swiftly and thoroughly searched the room. Almost at

once Harbin chuckled in added delight. In a tin of smoking tobacco his fingers encountered something hard and drew forth another one of the Garrison jewels—a ruby-and-diamond ring. But Kelso found nothing and the three turned again to the flame-faced girl.

"Where's the rest of the stuff?" they demanded. "Where's the pearl necklace? Where did you get that brooch? Where's the plant?"

"Leggo my arm," was the defiant reply. "Howdje get that way? That brooch was given to me by a friend of mine. If it was stolen, I didn't know it. Prove it was, if you can, and take it. I was wearing it, wasn't I? You can't do nothing to me for taking presents from a friend."

"Who gave it to you?" demanded Kelso. "Bill Evans gave it to you."

"That skunk? Why he wouldn't—" the girl began, then stopped and changed her tone. "Perhaps he did and perhaps he didn't," she concluded.

"When did you see Bill last?" asked Harbin quietly.

* "Not since—" Again the girl stopped her reply—"this morning."

"Where's the necklace?" demanded Harrison with a shake of her arm.

"He hasn't given me that—yet," the girl replied and laughed in the detective's face.

With a snort of anger Kelso suddenly dashed across the single cheaply furnished room and seized the knob of a door in the corner. A bare closet was revealed as he flung it open, but fastened to the wall and reaching to a skylight was a narrow ladder, placed there to conform to the fire laws. A scraping noise caused him to look up just in time to see vanishing through a door in the glass one trousered leg that undoubtedly belonged to a man who had lingered perilously long to hear what was going on after the detectives burst into Bill Evans's room.

"Evans, by —," he shouted and fired a futile shot through the opening.

Harbin, waiting for no explanations, dashed for the street, but Harrison kept his head and held to the girl.

"Don't be a fool, Kelso," he ordered. "Evans hasn't been sprung this quick. It's some other guy in the gang. Get up there after him."

Whoever it was apparently knew the block better than the detectives, because they did not find him on the roof or in the streets roundabout. From the girl they could get nothing but malicious chuckles, and after a half hour spent in tearing the room to pieces, despite the angry protests of the landlady, the three summoned a patrol wagon and locked up June Jennings in a cell at Headquarters.

Disgruntled as they were, they had at least one satisfaction. They had traced two pieces of the loot to Bill Evans's room.

As for the revolver, June Jennings readily admitted purchasing it, when confronted with the dealer.

"Sure, I bought it," she says. "Bought it for protection against guys that grab a girl's presents of jewelry. You didn't find it on me, did you? Is there a law against buying a gun in another state?"

IV

SOMEWHAT shamefacedly, the three detectives glared at one another after this job was over. Apparently even though they had easily rounded up the men in the case, they still had the women to contend with.

"You know, boys, Jim Anthony's Nell has got a pretty nasty temper," said Kelso, by way of contributing to the general gloom.

"Yes," said Harrison, "and then there's that Miss Garrison. She ain't telling a story that's any straighter than a hound's hind leg."

"What do you mean?" said Harbin.

"Why, she told me three different stories in as many minutes this morning about where she was when the robbery was pulled."

"Excitement—reaction from excitement," explained Harbin in his best manner.

"Excitement my eye," came the discouraging answer. "There's a pair of men's rubbers in the hall with last night's mud on them that won't fit Schmidt and won't fit Old Man Garrison either. I suppose excitement put them there. No visitors at the house, they say. Now what do you make of that?"

To avoid a direct reply, Harbin turned to Kelso. "What's Nell Anthony up to?" he demanded.

"Well, you know, I went out to trace those cobbled shoes," Kelso explained. "I did, all right. They're Jimmy Anthony's. No doubt about it. That's admitted. Didn't have time to tell you before. But guess where I found 'em."

Neither Harbin nor Harrison was in a mood to try.

"I found them in the cobbler's shop where Anthony left them a week ago. But they've got mud on the new soles and it's the same mud that's in Garrison's flowerbeds. Now, how the hell and why the hell did they get back there?"

"More than that, Jim's wife and all the neighbors will swear on the original text of the Bible that Jim was in bed all night. And besides that Mrs. Jim has gone out on the trail herself and offered to bet me her savings bank account that we're dead wrong on the whole proposition. Now, what do you make of that?"

They did not have much time to speculate over what to make of it, as they journeyed down to Headquarters.

Pacing up and down in front of the building they found Jim Anthony's

wife, angry, sarcastic and triumphant in one mingled mood.

Refusing them even time to go inside and report, she dragged the three bewildered detectives six blocks up the street and halted them in front of the cobbler's shop at which Kelso had located Jim Anthony's wandering shoes.

"I know you've been in there and got Jim's shoes," she announced dramatically. "That's good and proper. But are you going to tell the truth about what the old shoe man says?"

"Yes, lady," responded Kelso, meekly.

"Well, then, come with me and see that you remember the rest of this straight, you bum Sherlocks." And the indignant wife of one of the best burglars in the world led the unresisting forces of Law and Order around the corner and through a tiny door in a huge billboard which shut off a vacant lot.

Inside were half a dozen rusting wagons and a couple of disintegrating Fords, ranged around the outskirts of the lot. The main part of it was open to the sun and the mud created by the Spring rain of the night before was plainly undisturbed, save for the prints of three pairs of shoes.

One set had been made by a woman and into the first of these prints Nell Anthony set her foot, which fitted perfectly.

"You see that?" she questioned. "I made that this afternoon looking for what I'm going to show you. These are my tracks. Look at the others."

With a gasp the detectives read the signs in the baked mud—four sets of tracks of a man's feet—one plain set going toward the rear of the cobbler's shop—one with the patch returning—another, with the patch, going toward the shop and, in places, superimposed on the first—and then a set of plain

tracks returning to the little door to the street.

Never waiting for a comment, Nell Anthony's gesture led them across the lot to the rear of the cobbler's shanty facing on the other street. Before the window in the rear she paused and pointed at the casing. She did not need to explain it to these trained eyes. Along the middle of the sash, just under the catch, the paint had been scraped away by the blade of a knife, inserted to open the window. A plain, neat and simple job of housebreaking was revealed as clearly as if all had seen it.

"Now, then," Nell Anthony demanded, triumphantly, "who did that? Who stole my Jim's shoes and put them back again after pulling off a job? Who tried to slough my man and him not out of his bed in a week, as all the neighbors will swear to? Answer me that, you dicks."

There was a silence in the vacant lot—silence as disconsolate as the dismantled Fords. Finally Harrison ventured to break it.

"Mrs. Anthony," he said, "admitting that Jim wasn't in on this deal, have you any idea who did pull it?"

"Huh," she answered. "Have I now? I'm Jim Anthony's wife and he'd rather see me his widow, much as he loves me and I love him, before he'd see me squeal to a copper. Go ask June Jennings."

The last sentence was spoken with so much bitterness that the three men started.

"We—we have asked her, ma'am," said Kelso, finally. With a laugh, Nell Anthony had started for the gate, but she flung a reply back over her shoulder.

"Well, ask her again," she said. "She was boasting all over the neighborhood this morning that she was going to wear real jewelry. Go ask her, the hussy. I shouldn't say this much, but she tried to cop my Jim, because anybody can see

he's the best man in the mob. Ask her. She knows the man who pulled the job."

Striding hastily forward, Harbin put his hand on the woman's shoulder.

"You said 'the man,' Mrs. Anthony," he reminded. "Do you mean that it was an inside job?"

"Inside is right," was the cryptic answer; and with a defiant smile she stooped and vanished through the little gate, leaving the three detectives to stare in contemplation at the dissolving vehicles and the structure of their solution of the mystery.

V

"INSIDE job!" echoed Harrison. "That's what I told you, Harbin. Remember the girl—and the overshoes? Remember those one-way tracks up there?"

Harbin did remember all of these things. In the last few minutes he had not been able to remember anything else. Previously he had thought a man's footprints as open as his soul was closed, but up there in Garrison's garden and here in this sordid lot were sets of them that did not track at all straight with honesty and square dealing. Impatiently, he beckoned his companions and without waiting for a street-car they hailed a taxi and sped to the Garrison home.

Garret Garrison and his wife had returned from their sad errand and the banker himself received them. This made it a little easier for the detectives, who were able to state their suspicions bluntly to a man not inclined to hysterics and used to dealing with the police.

The result was rather shattering to the structure of evidence the detectives had built up—if that tottering edifice could longer be called a structure—but they stood it like men and pressed on to their new conclusions.

Confronted by facts and suspicions in the presence of her father, Miss Garrison made a frank confession—under pledge of secrecy, of course. It seems that she had practised a little deceit. Having a horror of funerals, she had played a double game—avoided the obsequies of her aunt on the plea of sudden illness and also kept a perfectly proper *sub rosa* engagement with a young man who lived around the corner. The two had attended a theatre and afterward were chatting in the drawing-room, under a rather dim light, when alarmed by the noise in the upper hallway and the escape of a man through the library window.

Quick-witted, like her father, Miss Garrison had instantly realized the embarrassment which would be caused all around by the disclosure of her deception and had practically pushed young Tom Chalmers out of the drawing-room window. She had thrown his hat, coat and stick after him but had forgotten his rubbers. And like the faithful servitor he was, Chalmers had crashed through the hedge and faded out of the picture until betrayed by his one-way footprints.

"Do you mean to say, Miss Garrison," Harbin asked, "that there was only one burglar in the house?"

"Only one," she answered, steadily now, with her father's hand in hers. "I saw him distinctly as he swung around the newel post and darted into the library."

"Dave Bamfield," whispered Kelso. "We've got his overcoat."

"He had on a bright plaid cap," went on Miss Garrison.

"Red Doran," muttered Harrison. "We've got the cap."

At this moment the telephone bell in the library rang and Garrison went to answer it.

"Detective Jacobs of Headquarters wishes to talk with one of you gentle-

men," he announced a minute later, and Harbin went to the phone.

"Say, Harbin," said Jacobs, "the Old Man says to go slow. There's something damn queer about this Garrison case."

"You said something," replied Harbin, "but what now?"

"Well, Bamfield and Doran have got a lawyer and sent him over to Eichorn's restaurant to get their overcoats."

"Their what?" shouted Harbin.

"Their overcoats. They say they left them there night before last when they left in a hurry. Doran's coat is there but Bamfield's is missing and Doran's cap—the one he uses when he's auto-riding and carries folded up in a pocket is gone out of his coat. The waiters remember that they had 'em when they came in and left without 'em. They thought they would be back in a few minutes and didn't say anything about it."

"Holy mackerel!" said Harbin and hung up the phone without a reply.

When he returned to the drawing-room Miss Garrison was still describing the burglar. He arrived just in time to catch a thread of it.

Harbin forgot his manners, his surroundings and everything else as, with a bellowed "Come on, you!" he leaped for the front door.

"Do you know who did it?" demanded the slow thinking Kelso on the way downtown.

"Yes," barked Harbin, "a sneak thief."

"Sneak, nothing," interrupted Harrison. "We've got one burglar left anyway."

"Yes," admitted Harbin, "one—such as he is—a dirty sneak—the man who stole Bamfield's overcoat and Doran's cap out of Eichorn's and left them behind him for a plant. The man who stole Jim Anthony's shoes to track him into the pen. The man who used Evans's gun and Doran's car for the same

reason. What I don't know is where he got his nerve and his idea."

"Nell said to ask June Jennings," reminded Kelso.

It was rather a bitter pill, but Harrison and Kelso went to the woman's prison for the girl while Harbin continued downtown. He asked them to wait until he returned to Headquarters and to have the Old Man himself there. Two hours later the mystery of the Garrison jewel robbery with its wanton clues and its track-and-a-half footprints was definitely cleared up.

Harbin entered the room where June Jennings was defiantly awaiting developments, swinging in his hand a string of glistening, rose-tinted pearls. At sight of them the girl gasped, then flung her cigarette into a cuspidor, cursing the world in general.

"Well, young lady," said the Captain, "it's all off, you see."

"Yes," she answered, drearily. "I might have known the dirty sneak wouldn't have the nerve to go through with it. If he'd given me the beads this afternoon I'd be on easy street. Now the whole works is off. I'm through."

"Any use holding those boys we have got locked up?" inquired the captain.

"Not a bit," replied June Jennings. "They were just a stall for a good get-away. You fell for that fine. Who put you wise?"

"Oh, a couple of women—Nell Anthony for one," answered Harbin.

"I might have known that. She thought I was playing for Jim, but I was just sore at the whole gang—afraid to work in New York. Bah! Jim planned the job but didn't have nerve enough to tackle it. He laid out the whole thing to show how easy it was. Last night was the night for it but they wouldn't budge, and so when Bill came into Eichorn's and acted nasty, just after they'd kicked out the Frog—"

"The Frog," shouted Hartison and Kelso.

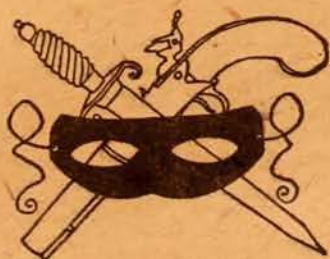
"Yes, the Frog," the girl repeated. "I chased after him, gave him the dope and Bill's gat and drove him out there in Red's car. I guess that's all."

"Yes," said the Captain, touching a bell, "I guess that is all."

The door opened and a uniformed officer led in the slinking form of Frog Fagin, outcast even of crooks, who had had his big chance and failed as usual.

The telephone bell rang and Harbin answered it. It was a woman's voice.

"Have you asked June Jennings yet?" it queried tauntingly.



The Too-Easy Alibi

By George Briggs

I

AT fifteen minutes past ten, "Little Joe" raised the window of his room and stepped out onto the fire-escape. He was short, squat, with an oblong head, and a thick growth of jet black hair grew vigorously above his low forehead. His jaws were heavy and distinct, and his mouth was fixed in a habitual sneer.

He moved casually up the fire-escape, ascending with apparent unconcern. Little Joe was muscular, thick-set; an ape-like animal.

Earlier in the morning Joe had tried to borrow five dollars from Pug, but had been refused. Even though Pug had made two hundred dollars the day before, he declined to make a loan to Joe.

And Joe had a "sure thing" on the third race at Belmont. By investing five he would win sixty. Often before Pug had staked him. This morning, however, Pug had been surly and vicious. Too much bootleg. Pug dealt in illicit liquors, and sometimes he sampled his own stock.

Through the open window of Pug's room, Joe saw the stingy financier asleep in bed. Pug had removed his coat, vest and shoes before retiring the night before, though he had neglected to completely disrobe. A short nose and a huge lower jaw had given Pug his name. He was an unlovely object as he slept. His mouth was open; his forehead was wrinkled as he tried to keep the morning light from his eyes; he breathed heavily.

The gruff rumble of traffic wavered and growled in the air. An elevated crashed by a block away. In this mean, crowded section of the city, men lived and died in sordid, half-crumbling buildings.

No one had noticed Joe as he climbed the fire-escape. If they had seen him, they would not have remembered the fact. People were too busy in the unending struggle to keep alive to bother with gossip, or remembering the movements of their neighbors.

Joe crept softly into the room. He must not awaken Pug, for then there would be an argument, and possibly a fight. Joe did not fear a tussle; battles were an everyday occurrence. A well-used black-jack reposed in Joe's hip-pocket. It had seen experience, and possibly it would see more.

To the left of the window in Pug's room was a small table. Joe was seized with a humorous idea. He drew a stub pencil from his pocket, and looked about for paper. A newspaper slumped upon the floor. With laborious fingers, Joe wrote on the edge of a page, "I O U 5 Little Joe." He had gained the sobriquet in a crap game, and it was used by everyone.

As Joe tore the words from the margin of the newspaper, Pug stirred uneasily. Joe halted, and kept still. Apparently, he had suddenly been turned to stone. Not a muscle moved; he held his breath; he was rigid.

And then the even breathing began again on the bed. Joe relaxed, and moved toward the sleeping man. He paused and glanced once, swiftly, at the

recumbent bootlegger, but Pug made no sound or movement.

A truck ploughed down the street outside, clattering and bumping, and the air hummed with the muffled roar of the ponderously alive city.

In the small cell-like room a small, squat man thrust his hand cautiously beneath the bed-pillow. His careful, sensitive fingers touched the cold steel of a stiletto. Joe stopped, chilled by the knife's keen edge. This was not what he sought. Pug's money was somewhere near his stiletto, though.

Pug sighed, and again Joe grew tense. If Pug awoke, he would be in a murderous humor. Joe's intrusion would not be misunderstood. For Pug would be positive that Joe had come to rob him. Which was correct.

Joe's stubby fingers fumbled with the end of the pillow-case and then searched within it for the bootlegger's banknotes. Joe dared not look at Pug, for a steady stare will arouse a sleeping person. And then, a vise closed upon Joe's windpipe and began to squeeze. His head was forced back by the pressure of a huge, hairy arm. An instant later Pug's other hand increased the pressure upon Joe's neck.

II

FROM the moment Joe had entered the room, Pug had been awake. His sleep had been interrupted twice before during the morning. Once when Joe had requested a loan, and later when someone else knocked upon Pug's door.

Pug had awakened the first time with his temper ragged. He had swallowed a large quantity of whiskey the night before while celebrating a lucky escape from revenue officers. So, when Joe came in and tried to borrow five dollars, Pug had been angry. It was damnable that a man whose throat was caked with concrete, whose eyes were pin-points of

pain, should be awakened for such a reason. Pug had a grouch, Joe was the first man he had seen; therefore, Joe's request was declined violently.

Rebuffed, and equally angry, Joe had departed, and Pug went back to bed. But the bootlegger could not resume his interrupted slumbers. His tongue tasted unpleasantly, and his forehead was hot and dry. For several moments he tossed uneasily, and then someone else had knocked on the door.

This time Pug answered by locking the door. The person on the outside announced he wished to enter. Pug told him to go away, whoever he was, and suggested a destination. And, notwithstanding their repeated knockings, he had not opened the door.

When Joe had entered from the fire-escape, Pug had been almost asleep. But the tearing of the newspaper had roused him, though he had concealed the fact that he was awake.

And, when Joe had neared his money, Pug had been moved to action. He opened his eyes and grasped Joe at the same second. A second later Joe leaped backward, dragging Pug from the bed.

Joe snarled, and a wordless oath rasped from between his yellow teeth. He knew that he had been tricked; that Pug had not been caught unaware.

Pug sprawled upon the floor; his grip upon Joe's neck had been broken. But he did not remain recumbent. Flashing upward, Pug uttered a cry of rage and surged forward.

The small uncarpeted room held few articles of furniture. A small table was perched near the window that looked upon the fire-escape. There was an unpainted, wooden chair tilted underneath the knob of the door. The bed occupied one side of the room.

Though it lacked furniture, the room held sounds and actions. Snarling and swearing, their arms going like piston rods, their fists crashing brutally upon

flesh, their bodies bent and tense, the two men gave and took punishment.

Pug was the taller, his arms were longer, and his fists cruelly battered his opponent's body. Then Joe dashed into close quarters, his arms short and crushing, his squat body aflame with hate.

He was met by a man whose friendship had been violated, whose mood was a mixture of fury and rage. Pug was wiry; huge hands dangled at the ends of his nervously strong arms; he was viciously ferocious. His fingers sank deep into the short, round neck of the man who had come to rob him.

As they fought, words flowed in a horrible stream from their lips. The argot of the underworld and the frightfully meaningless phrases of their ordinary conversation shot in fierce fragments from them. A moment before, the room had been silent save for the stealthy movements of Joe; now it was filled with hot oaths, the writhing bodies of the two antagonists, and the straining hate of their struggle.

Seizing an opportunity Pug swung the smaller man against the side of the bed, and they toppled prone. Out flashed one long arm, and Pug had the stiletto.

As the steel flashed above him, Little Joe turned, caught the descending hand and stopped its downward fall. He squirmed, terrified, for death leered from the face above him. With a superhuman effort Joe lifted the taller man with one short massive arm, and pushed him aside. And then, grasping Pug's hand that held the knife, Joe put his utmost efforts into an effort to force it downward.

It was a question of strength, and Joe was a trifle the stronger. The tension did not last long; with a swiftly increasing speed the stiletto descended.

Pug sank back upon the bed, his eyes filled with ludicrous surprise. Wordlessly, his mouth opened, and his body

twitched. The knife remained in its human sheath.

Panic seized Joe, a sudden, overwhelming fear. He tore furiously at the pillow case, grasped the thick bundle of bills, and dashed to the window. Quickly, furtively, he slipped down the fire-escape.

When he reached his room, which was directly below Pug's, Joe had a horrified second. Instinct told him to protect himself; he must not be accused of killing Pug. He must leave his room, leave the building, do something to take suspicion away from himself.

He caught up a cap, pulled it down on his oblong head, and slipped quietly down the stairs of the cheap rooming house. He reached the sidewalk without seeing anyone. And he turned into a small cigar store instantly.

Tom, the man who ran the cigar store, was thin, with small, kindly, black eyes set in a wrinkled face. He had an eager, talkative way, and he was continually buying new things,—a pencil, or a billfold, or one of the innumerable novelties that are sold by street-corner peddlers,—and insisting that all of his customers notice and admire his new possession.

Joe slipped into the cigar store, and grunted when Tom spoke to him. At intervals a chill plucked at his scalp and made the hairs rise and waver. His breath was still accelerated from his fierce struggle with Pug, and his body tensed each time he thought of the man he had killed.

Perhaps even now Pug was still faintly breathing. The knife had sunk deep, and had not been removed. Pug had twitched; his feet had stirred upon the floor. . . . No, he was dead now. Lying with a surprised look in his eyes. Maybe Pug had squirmed a bit, or fallen from the bed, but. . . . He was lying quiet now. Looking surprised, but quiet. Joe felt his scalp crawl.

He had to do something; fix things so he wouldn't be suspected. He had to do something; plan something. Make Tom think he had been here a long time. Stayed here from ten o'clock until—

"Look at this watch," said Tom, offering a thin, octagon-shaped timepiece for Joe's approval. "Bought it this morning. Perfect shape. Seventeen jewel. A bargain."

Joe looked, and then his eyes blurred. The watch was a half-hour slow! A half-hour slow. . . . Joe knew that the time was at least ten-thirty, because he had started for Pug's room at ten-fifteen. But the watch was a half-hour slow! The hour hand had crossed the figure ten, and the minute hand was at twelve. The watch was running, its second hand was gayly marking off sixtieths of a minute, and—it was a half-hour slow! The watch said *Ten o'clock*.

Here, begging to be used, pleading to be accepted, was an alibi. It was almost too easy. It was being forced upon him. It was too easy. And yet—

Joe took the watch from Tom's proud hands, and caressed it with trembling fingers. Ten o'clock. A half-hour slow. But Tom should not know that—

"Pretty good watch," continued Tom, his manner insinuating that the timepiece was an extraordinary and extremely valuable article. "Cost me twenty-five. Worth a hundred. See this lever?" He touched a small gold slide. "That's the chimes. Listen."

While Joe held the watch, Tom drew out the tiny gold lever. A soft, clear bell rang ten times, slowly.

"Tells time in the dark. Pretty good watch," said Tom, boastfully.

Joe gripped his jaws together to still the chattering of his teeth. When Tom had worked the lever of the watch, he had thought that perhaps the cigar store man wanted the return of his property. Joe would give the watch back, but he

would begin his alibi first. He would make sure that Tom would be positive that he had been in the cigar store at ten o'clock. Too easy? Why, he wanted something easy like this.

Putting the watch to his ear, Joe listened to its clicks. His body prevented Tom from seeing the timepiece. So, when it crashed to the floor, the cigar store clerk was surprised. Joe had deliberately dropped it.

Now! No matter what happened, Tom would now swear that Joe had been in the cigar store at ten o'clock. There remained but one thing to be done: Joe must now arrange that he should be remembered somewhere else at ten-thirty, or later.

"I'll pay for having the watch fixed," said Joe, picking it up from the floor, and finding that it had stopped. "I didn't mean to drop it."

He took Pug's roll of bills from his pocket, and peeled off the top one.

Tom was distressed; new lines appeared in his wrinkled face.

"That's the best—" he began.

"You've got the money to have it fixed," Joe interrupted. He was impatient, eager to go elsewhere. "I've loafed around here long enough. Think I'll travel."

He started toward the door. He would go to the corner grocery store, and make some mention of the time there. Or to the nearest drug store. Then his alibi would be perfect, bomb-proof.

His feet clung to the floor, and he stretched one hand to the counter to steady himself. He felt sick, as though a solar-plexus blow had caught him unawares.

Looking in through the door of the cigar store was a detective.

Joe could tell a "dick" by one swift glance. Just as wild animals know when a man is armed and dangerous, and when he is without a weapon, so

Joe could detect those who were dangerous. And the man who peered in the doorway was an officer of the law.

Cummings was a huge mountain of a man, ponderously built, blue-eyed and impassive. He saw Joe, and started to enter the store.

Fright flowed frigidly through Joe's veins; he was caught in the grip of a paralyzing fear. Now, while his alibi was in the process of making, would he be caught and held? Would he be arrested? Now, immediately after he had seemed so safe. That alibi had been too easy.

"You live next door," stated the detective, his enormous body filling the doorway. "Who runs that rooming house?"

"Mrs. Britt." Joe answered weakly. "She lives two blocks away. What do you—"

"Never mind what I want. Where have you been all morning?"

Sullenly Joe said, "Around here. Talking with Tom."

"Talking with Tom," Cummings repeated. "Well, you come with me."

Joe stepped out of the cigar store, feeling the shadow of the electric chair had touched him. He would be questioned, and—

"I want to know where Ernest Worth—he's called Pug—lives in this house," the detective said, leading the way toward Joe's home.

Little beads of sweat appeared upon the squat man's forehead, and his arms stiffened. He stifled the moan that trembled in his throat. He dared not try and escape from the detective.

They climbed the uncarpeted silent stairs and paused before Pug's door.

"Is this the room?" Cummings asked, and Joe nodded wordlessly. "Well, I knocked on this door this morning," the officer continued, "and got a grunt

and a get-out-of-here for an answer." He rapped upon the door.

"Mrs. Britt, who runs this house, lives two blocks away," said Joe. If he could get the detective interested elsewhere, perhaps his captor would no longer detain him.

"She's out," was the brief reply. "I went down to see her. Now, where is your room?"

"Downstairs."

"Let me have your key. This fellow Pug is wanted; he has been mixed up in a bootlegging gang that—"

"I don't know anything about it." Joe broke in.

He did not want the door to open; he did not want to see Pug, with that surprised expression on his face, lying dead. A spasm of despair fluttered through Joe, his knees shook slightly. "I—I haven't—had anything—"

Again Cummings knocked upon the door. . . .

"Pug growled at me when I was here before," he said. "This key might not fit—"

In the midst of his fear Joe had a dazzling idea. He had wanted to go to the grocery store in order to complete his alibi. Why not ask Cummings what time it was?

"Pug goes out for breakfast every morning," he said. "Got a watch? Let's see what time—"

The detective consulted a cheap nickel watch.

"Ten-thirty-five," he announced. "Pug was here at ten o'clock."

Perfect! Joe almost screamed with relief. With these words the detective had completed Joe's alibi. Cummings had roused Pug at ten o'clock, therefore he was alive at that time. Tom's dropped timepiece would prove that Joe had been in the cigar store at ten o'clock, and the clerk would say that he had chatted with Joe both before and after that time. When he left the cigar

store, Joe had departed with Cummings, consequently his actions during the thirty-five minutes were satisfactorily accounted for. He could not be convicted for killing Pug, for his alibi was perfect. Perfect!

The detective inserted Joe's key in the door of Pug's room. Joe fought to control himself; he must appear astonished and appalled, as though he had not anticipated seeing the lifeless body of his friend. There would be a ludicrous expression of surprise on Pug's face; the bootlegger would be lying on the bed, or on the floor nearby.

The key fitted the lock on Pug's door. Joe was sure of this fact, for he had entered by the door on his first visit to Pug that morning. He had made his second visit by way of the fire-escape, because Pug had tilted a chair underneath the doorknob to prevent another visit.

The detective pushed the door open, shoving the tilted chair to the floor. Joe was alert, ready to be shocked by what they would find. Again a crawling fear squirmed across his scalp. He closed his eyes, fearing to see that limp, sprawled body.

From a distance, Cummings's voice sounded. It was a placid, indifferent voice, quiet and composed.

"Well, I guess Pug has gone out to breakfast," the detective said calmly.

Joe opened his eyes. He saw a disordered room, the overturned chair, the bedclothes disarranged, but no sign of Pug. There were no splotches on the floor, nor any evidence that a man had been hurt or killed. And the body had disappeared!

The detective rummaged in a small closet, and discovered an empty bottle underneath some soiled clothes. He held the dark brown bottle aloft. It was empty.

"No evidence of bootlegging here," he said. "Let's get out."

Joe was stupefied. He stood in horrified bewilderment, looking for some trace of the man he had killed. His mouth seemed hollow, and his eyes were huge and full of biting pains. Again and again he stared at the bed, where he had last seen Pug. Nothing there. Nothing. Joe forced himself across the room, and put his hand in the depression in the bed made by Pug when he had dropped back after being knifed. Nothing. Pug was nowhere in the room. And there were no stains upon the floor, nor any evidence that the bootlegger had been killed.

"Come on," said Cummings, "I'm going to take a look at your room."

Joe did not reply, but followed the detective from the room and down the stairs. Terror whimpered in the squat man's mind, horrible fear coursed through his veins and he stumbled as he descended the uncarpeted steps. Even though his alibi was perfect, a premonition seized him. He recalled Pug's face with its expression of ludicrous surprise.

The detective stopped and opened Joe's door. The short, squat man hesitated in the hallway, held motionless by a mysterious dread. Again his frantic mind assured him that his alibi was perfect, that if his actions during the morning were investigated he would not be convicted of murder.

A muffled curse came from Cummings. The word held horror and dismay and astonishment. And an intangible force impelled Joe into his own room where the detective stood.

Cummings was staring at the window in dazed surprise. Joe's hunted eyes followed the detective's glance, and—his body snapped into numbness. Pinpricks of biting cold bit into his brain. All his strength vanished from him.

And then the short, squat man began to scream. Shriek after shriek came from Joe's bulging throat, each rising higher and higher. No words issued

from his mouth; the sounds were the fear-filled, desperate, horrified screams of a trapped animal that knows it cannot escape.

For, upon the fire-escape, peering into the room, was Pug! The knife was still imbedded in the bootlegger's body; it had not been dislodged from the time Joe had forced the stiletto to its mark. Even though Pug had crawled to the window for assistance, had leaned out, and had fallen down the fire-escape to the floor below, the knife had remained implanted in his flesh.

Joe saw the man he had killed; saw Pug looking in through the window. Now, Pug was not ludicrously surprised. Instead, ferocious hate glared from his features, devilish anger stared from his sightless eyes. And in one cold hand Pug held a torn bit of newspaper which bore the words "I O U 5 Little Joe."

There was no need to accuse Joe of the crime; no need to seek for incriminating evidence. His screams had reached a pitch that sounded as though his vocal chords were being torn from his throat by the strain. He proclaimed his guilt in horrible noises. He forgot that his alibi was perfect; forgot everything but Pug's loathsome, leering face. Joe's wild screams betrayed him, and Cummings knew that he was in the presence of the man who had killed Pug.

Later, of course, Joe was calmed by opiates, and his confession written down. But the confession, and the bit of newspaper found in Pug's lifeless hand, were only corroborative evidence. The thing that destroyed Joe's perfect alibi, that broke down his feeling of safety, and that finally sent him to the electric chair *was Pug's face staring through the window from the fire-escape.*



Pink Ears

By Murray Leinster

I

THE Stratford is a hotel for men only, and has the air of quiet seclusion that usually is associated with a conservative club. The lobby is small and far from ornate. The smoking-room is large and comfortable. The dining-room is low-ceilinged and quaint,—a place where one can smoke comfortably,—and the kitchen produces viands that are worth a special trip to taste. Altogether, the Stratford is a place for those who want comfort, quiet, and the best of everything.

James Craig, from his air of well-being, had enjoyed it to the full. An hour before, he had arisen from his table with that sensation of internal comfort that can come only from a well-ordered and well-cooked meal. He had chosen a cigar with discrimination, and lighted it with care. He had spent possibly twenty minutes or more in the smoking-room, idling over his newspaper in comfortable repletion, and then had scribbled a note at a writing-desk. With the methodical air of one to whom life is an excuse for the perpetration of systematic actions, he drew out a small notebook and extracted a stamp. He affixed the stamp and made a note in the book. It read:

Postage on letter to firm..... \$.02

The note was just beneath three others:

Dinner	\$3.45
Tip25
Cigar25

He reached toward a button to summon a bell-boy, and then changed his

mind. It was almost possible to read his thoughts by his actions. He glanced out of the window nearby, and saw the last golden rays of the evening sun striking upon street and passersby. One who watched him would have guessed at his mental processes so:—

"I'll have a bell-boy mail this. . . . No. . . . This is a beautiful day. . . . A walk after dinner will do me good . . . I'll stroll out and mail it, or stroll out, anyway. . . ."

He tucked the envelope carefully in his pocket, rose, and sauntered out of the doorway. He moved slowly, carelessly, idling with the relish of a man who finds little time to idle.

He was gone for less than ten minutes altogether. When he came back in the door and passed through the lobby his expression had grown subtly more content. The ten-minutes' exercise had "shaken down" his dinner, his cigar had proved all that the brand warranted, and he was at peace with the world. As he made his way into the elevator he was even humming a little.

"Three," he commented, as the car shot upward. "By the way, is there a good show in town tonight?"

"Yessuh, Ah reg'n so. Dey usual' is. Y'might ax at de desk."

The elevator-door clanged open at the third floor and he went out. The elevator-boy saw him fitting a key into the lock of his room. He was still humming. The elevator-door shut, and the cage dropped to the lobby floor again.

"Gosh," said the elevator-boy to his *confrère*, the chief bell-hop. "Dem

trabelin' men sho' has it easy. Dey goes to de shows an' jes' chalges it in d' expense account. Y' bettuh tote out half a pint. Dis gen'leman in three-eighty looks lak he mought be intrusted."

The chief bell-hop rose.

"Bress Gawd fo' Prohibition," he commented piously. "Ef t'wasn't fo' de law, us hotel-help would hab t' live on ouah tips."

He sauntered into a small private closet and a little later stepped briskly up the stairs. It was certainly not more than two minutes from the time the elevator-boy saw Craig unlock the door, humming a little, to the time the bell-hop knocked softly. But where the elevator-boy carried away an impression of carefree contentment and casual cheer, the bell-hop straightened involuntarily when he heard a voice from within.

"Come in!"

The voice was a harsh croak, a rasping gasp, metallic and unhuman. The bell-hop pushed open the door cautiously and peered in. The room looked as if a whirlwind had struck it. Sheets, rugs, pillow-cases were thrown helter-skelter about the place, and at the moment James Craig was on his knees before a suit-case. Where he had looked carefree and at peace with the world, he now looked ghastly. His face was a pasty, chalky white. His eyes seemed to have sunk into his head, and they stared at the bell-hop with a strange deadness.

"I've been robbed!" he croaked harshly. "I've been robbed!"

The bell-hop ducked instinctively.

"Bress Gawd!" he gasped. "Y' don' mean it!"

A choked sob burst from the throat of the chalky-faced man.

"I've been robbed!" he repeated in a certain strange calm. Then he sobbed again, his whole body writhing

with the sound. "My God! Eighty thousand dollars!"

The bell-hop jumped a foot in the air at mention of that sum and departed swiftly. The result of his flight was seen a moment later in a pale and worried desk-clerk who came hurriedly into the room. Craig was moving dumbly about, looking hopelessly here, there—everywhere.

"You—you've been robbed, sir?"

"Eighty thousand dollars!" Craig seemed stunned by the calamity. "I'm ruined! Ruined! Eighty thousand dollars!"

He sat down suddenly in a chair and stared before him with lack-lustre eyes. The desk-clerk, alarmed as he was for the reputation of the house, could not but feel sympathy for the man who had changed so absolutely in so few minutes. His very lips were gray. His eyes seemed to have retreated deep into his skull. His voice was a pitiable parody of a living man's voice. It was dead, harsh, lifeless.

"Carrying bonds from New Orleans to New York," he said dully. "Nobody knew I had 'em. Can't sleep on trains, and stopped over here to have a night's rest. I went out for dinner. . . . The bonds are gone."

"I'll send for the police," the desk-clerk assured him. "We've a splendid detective force here. If anybody could find them, Jamison can."

Craig's fingers unclenched and he automatically began to look through the articles in his suit-case again, in the utterly forlorn hope that he might yet be mistaken, and might yet find the bonds.

"Eighty thousand dollars!" he said apathetically. "I'm ruined! They'll suspect me, even me, of stealing them. And nobody knew I had them!" He groaned. "Nobody knew I had them!"

The clerk slipped from the room and telephoned frantically, while he gave

orders that assured the continued presence of every one of the hotel employees and a careful note of every guest who left the place. He would be able to give the police a list of every man who slipped out, and would be able to produce all the hotel help. It was quick and efficient work. But once that was done, the desk-clerk allowed himself to think sympathetically of the man in the room above. He had seen Craig stroll into the elevator, pleasantly flushed by his dinner and walk. And now that chalk-white man with sunken eyes, croaking of ruin and disgrace. . . .

The desk-clerk shook his head in genuine regret.

II

A RATHER shabby young man with a cigarette dangling from his mouth strolled into the room without the formality of knocking. He nodded ungraciously at Craig.

"I'm Jamison," he said gloomily, "Police Headquarters. They sent me down to find out about this robbery. What's up?"

Craig, no more than the wreck of the debonair man of a half hour before, told his story, with his eyes glowing strangely from sunken sockets. Jamison listened from a comfortable chair, gazing at the ceiling.

"Y' went out?" he queried, when Craig had finished. "Why didn't you leave the bonds in the hotel safe?"

"I should have," groaned Craig wretchedly. "But no one knew I had them with me. Only the president of my firm and myself knew I had them. We thought that if I just went on up to New York quite casually, as if on an ordinary business trip, there'd be no suspicion of my having anything valuable with me. God! If I'd only known!"

"How long were you gone?" asked

Jamison, fishing in his baggy pockets for tobacco and paper to roll another cigarette.

"I don't know," said Craig despairingly. "I finished my dinner, wrote a note, and went out to the street. I asked the way to the nearest mail box and dropped my letter in. Then I came back, came up to my room, and the bonds were gone! I'm ruined! I'll be suspected of stealing them myself!"

Jamison yawned and rolled a cigarette with one hand, watching his own fingers with the absorbed attention of one who has but recently acquired the feat.

"Well," he said in a moment, after licking the paper. "I guess we've got a job ahead of us. What train did you come in on?"

"I got in about four-thirty."

"That's number twenty-seven," commented Jamison. "You came to the hotel right away?"

"Yes. I registered, washed up, had my dinner, and—"

"Bonds negotiable?" queried Jamison uninterestedly. "What issue and numbers?"

Craig told him.

"N.O. and W. 4½s," Jamison yawned again. "Twenty-nine four eighty-seven to twenty-nine five twenty-two. All right."

Craig rose as Jamison stood up negligently. Craig looked like a wreck. His face was a sickly white and his eyes burned from cavernous depths. His lips were trembling a little.

"They're going to suspect me!" he said desperately. "Only one man beside myself knew I had those bonds. They're gone—stolen. Man, you've got to clear me! Search me, search the room! Put me under arrest. Do something!"

"I'll put you under surveillance," said Jamison, "if you like." He yawned. "Just to prove to your firm

you didn't hide out on 'em. I'll send a man up in a little while."

"I can give an account of every movement since I've been in the city," said Craig suddenly. "Look here. I keep an account of all my expenditures. You can check me up. Here's my dinner. Here's the tip, and a postage-stamp on the letter to my firm. Here's a magazine I bought. . . . You can check up the time on every one of them. You can trace my movements that way."

Jamison glanced uninterestedly at the open page held in Craig's shaking hand.

"Don't get so excited," he said grouchy. "Don't y' know that if you had swiped the stuff you'd have faked a book like that?"

He eyed the page for a moment and sat down again, as if a new chain of questioning had occurred to him.

"Say, do you often come through here?" he inquired.

"Yes, on an average of once a month."

"Stop at this hotel?"

"Yes. . . ." Craig began to look hopeful. "Do you suppose some one of the help—"

"How big a package were the bonds?"

"There were eighty of them. They'd make quite a wad of paper."

"Make a man's pocket bulge out?"

"Surely."

"The hotel-clerk kept all the employees waiting," observed Jamison. "I'll take a look. Was your place much messed up when you got back?"

"Practically like this. I left the bonds in my suit-case. When I opened the door I saw the place was torn upside down, everything thrown all about."

"You'd left your suit-case open?" queried Jamison. "They'd look in there first. . . ."

"The bonds were under a shirt—in

the folds of a shirt. At first glance they wouldn't seem to be there."

Jamison puffed thoughtfully for a moment.

"Ever use your firm's stationery here?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Just thinking," said Jamison. "You see, if you dropped a letter-head in a waste-basket, whoever cleaned up the room might connect you up. . . . Say, your firm is a bank. You come through every so often. Suppose you leave a letter-head. Banks sometimes send currency from one place to another by messenger. A chambermaid or bell-hop might notice. . . ."

Craig's face brightened. Jamison wore an air of innocent pride.

"You have to think of those things," he said modestly. "I'll tell you. You go down and get the desk-clerk and a cop. Tell the desk-clerk to have the darkies that clean up this floor come in, one by one. Come back with the clerk and the cop."

Craig obediently started for the door, hesitated, glanced back, and then went out. Jamison allowed himself the luxury of a grunt when the door closed, and the expression of innocent pride vanished utterly from his features, leaving them somewhat bored and entirely disgusted.

"Sloppy work," he commented gloomily, to himself. "I wonder where he keep his shaving-soap. That's the answer, ten to one."

He began to rummage in Craig's suit-case.

III

WHEN Craig pushed open the door again with the room-clerk and the policeman, Jamison was standing by the bureau, where there was a light. He seemed to be examining something in his hand. Craig looked vastly more

hopeful, though his face was still a deadly white and his eyes were still sunken deeply into his head.

"This officer," he announced, "saw me when I went out to mail that letter. Tell him about it, Officer."

"I saw him mail a letter, sorr," said the policeman. "I was standin' by the mail-box whin he come up. He axed me for a light, sorr, and lighted his cigar with it. It had gone out. Thin he put his letter in the box. 'Twas a small letter, sorr, in one av th' hotel envelopes."

Jamison nodded uninterestedly.

"Oh, all right," he said wearily. "Nobody thought he mailed 'em away and then called for the police to find 'em. Say." He turned to the hotel-clerk. "When did you open up this part of the hotel?"

"About six months ago."

"New help?" queried Jamison. He sank into a chair and yawned.

"Partly," said the clerk. "The chambermaid's been here a long time. The cleaner for this floor is Sam Whitehouse. You know him, I think. He's a pretty good negro. Been fined a couple of times for shooting crap, but that's all."

Jamison sat up.

"Sam Whitehouse!" he said with more energy than he had displayed before. "Why didn't you say so before? Look here."

He took an envelope from his pocket and scribbled a few words on the back, then handed it to the officer.

"You can attend to it better than anyone else," he commented. "See to it, won't you? I'll wait here."

He lay back in his chair and frowned at the clerk.

"I wish you hotel people wouldn't hire known criminals," he complained. "They're always making trouble. If there's a smart ducky in the city, it's that same Sam. He'd steal the brass

plate off a coffin—and get away with it. I guess we'll have him now, though...."

He rolled a cigarette and puffed gloomily on it until the policeman returned.

"Got him, sorr. An' he had the bonds. A thick wad av thim, sorr."

Craig sprang to his feet.

"What!"

"He's got the bonds," said Jamison wearily. "You see, I guessed right when I said you'd probably left a letter-head or something. He just waited for you to come back to town and went through your room."

Craig's face was a puzzle for an instant, and then he sank back into his seat and mopped his forehead, patting it with his handkerchief.

"Thank God!" he gasped.

"Well, we're through," said Jamison. "Not much of a case, this. You can get your bonds in the morning at the police station."

He strolled out the door with the policeman and room-clerk. Craig watched the door close behind them and sprang to his feet in a noiseless bound.

"Good God!" he muttered, desperately. "How—how—"

In a catlike leap he sprang to the cheap bureau in the room. With a jerk he pulled out an empty drawer. He stared at it for an instant, and then brought it down with a crash upon his knee, splintering the bottom utterly. The real bottom of the drawer came out in fragments, and a layer of veneer that fitted neatly over it was twisted and wrecked as well. And tumbling out upon the floor were the eighty neatly engraved bonds, fallen from their hiding place in the neatly contrived false bottom, just where Craig had placed them two hours before. And yet—

"I thought so," said Jamison's voice wearily. "It was a sloppy job."

There was an infinitely bright flash and the room was full of smoke.

IV

"YOU'RE mugged, now," observed Jamison. "I guess a flash-light picture will go well in court. . . ."

"His ears were pink," explained Jamison, his tone indicating the ultimate of boredom. "His ears were nice and pink. That gave him away."

Craig was huddled in a chair in the police-station. The big policeman stood guard beside him and the desk-sergeant listened sympathetically to Jamison's tale of woe.

"My Gawd," said Jamison disgustedly, "I haven't seen a really neat job in so long you'd think everybody with brains had turned honest. Look at him, now. He passed through here once a month for six months or so, carrying stuff from New Orleans to New York and back. He was a regular at the hotel, and the clerk always gave him the same room, and he saw it had one o' these cheap made-by-the-million bureaus in it. And he set to work from that!"

He flung away his perpetual cigarette and grunted.

"He took some measurements of the inside, an' got a piece of veneer to fit the bottom of one of the drawers. Then, today, he climbed off the train, went to the hotel, took his bonds and laid 'em, neat, in the drawer, trimmed up his veneer to fit exactly, and glued it down on top of 'em. To look at it, it was a perfectly empty drawer, and nobody looks for secret compartments in hotel furniture, particularly of the made-by-the-million kind. He wandered downstairs, ate his dinner while the glue dried, smoked a cigar, and went back up to his room and yelled bloody murder. He thought he'd get away with the story that his room had been robbed while he was out!"

The desk-sergeant shook his head sympathetically.

"Tst! Tst! . . ." he said commiseratingly.

"He had a good make-up on" commented Jamison morosely. "He looked like the wrath o' Gawd, and he played his part pretty well, but he overdid it, of course. Showed me a note-book to check up his movements by—and he'd made an entry in it while there was a bit of glue on his finger. The smudge told a lot, since I'd already made up my mind he was tryin' to steal from himself. Say"—he addressed the prisoner—"were you thinkin' maybe your firm would prosecute you for the theft and be unable to get a conviction for lack of evidence?"

The prisoner seemed to shrink a little farther into himself, but did not reply.

"That was it," said Jamison gloomily. "Once he'd been tried, you know, they couldn't have done a thing no matter how much proof they got that he had recovered and was selling the bonds later."

"He gave himself away, you say?" the desk-sergeant asked.

"Dead away," admitted Jamison depressedly. "I knew he'd done it, the minute I first saw him, and if that wasn't enough, I sent him out to get the room-clerk and he stopped in the doorway to take a last look straight where he'd put the bonds. And the first place he looked when he came back was the same spot. It was a shame to pinch him, he was so innocent."

"But can you jug him?" queried the desk-sergeant.

"Jug him? I could hang him," asserted Jamison in the profoundest disgust. "I got Murphy to frame a story that he'd found the bonds on a bell-hop, and when Murphy—"

"Me name's O'Ryan, sorr," interrupted the policeman.

"When O'Ryan sprang the plant and we went out, Craig went straight to

look at the bonds and make sure they were safe. All I had to do was take Murph—O’Ryan by the hand and wait two minutes and then swing in the door and pull a flash-pistol. I had Craig neatly mugged with the bonds in his hands. Could I jug him, I ask you?”

“You could,” agreed the desk-sergeant. “But you keep saying all along that you knew he’d hidden out the bonds. How’d you know that?”

“His ears were pink,” said Jamison wearily. “If you saw a man who’d just been robbed of a fortune, you’d expect him to look sort of pale, wouldn’t you?”

“I would that.”

“This man was made up pretty good.

His eyes looked sunk way back in his head, and he was pale to just the right extent. He put over the voice stuff pretty well, too. He’d made himself up with number one dead white, that he carried in his shaving-soap tube, but he’d left his ears pink, a nice, healthy pink. And I had only to take one look to know what was up.”

“’Twas careless,” said the desk-sergeant.

“Careless? It was criminal!” Jamison seemed to be mourning over the decay of crime. “I haven’t had a real good case in a coon’s age. Crooks haven’t got brains any more.”

And he shook his head in the most abysmal gloom.



Hankenson's Perfect Crime

By Ward Sterling

I

HAVING decided to kill Chester O'Hearn, Hankenson commenced making his plans.

He had often read of the perfect crime—the fool proof crime to which there is no clew, but which always ends disastrously for the perpetrator because of some straggling little thread left untied. In his case there would be no slip-up. The average murderer, he believed, killed on impulse; few, if any, went about it as he was doing, weighing every minor detail, covering every track as he proceeded.

Carefully—for he felt that he had months ahead of him in which to complete his arrangements—he went over every possible contingency. Every method of killing known to civilized man was carefully jotted down, newspaper clippings relating to crime were card-indexed and filed away for future reference.

When he had secured all of the information he desired, he sat down, spread the various data before him and dissected them bit by bit. This work completed, he tabulated the results carefully—then rejected the whole. The crimes of others served him as an object lesson in what to avoid.

There were two pitfalls to be watched for. One was the fact that O'Hearn was carrying on a *liaison* with Mrs. Hankenson. In spite of their efforts to avoid scandal several people of their acquaintance knew which way the straws were blowing, and one or two

had hinted at the facts to the husband. And O'Hearn was a man of great wealth and Hankenson's cousin. Hankenson, upon his death, would inherit the greater part of his millions.

Therefore any suspicion of murder would cause people to look naturally in Hankenson's direction.

Therefore there must be no suspicion of murder.

To kill O'Hearn and have it appear as a suicide would never do either. People always talked too much about suicide and inquired into the whys and wherefores. Talking might cause some blundering officer to accidentally guess at the truth.

After debating the matter thoroughly in his own mind, he finally decided that there was but one solution to the problem.

First—O'Hearn must be killed in such a way that it would look like an accident.

Second—When the killing took place Hankenson must be close by, but not actually present.

Third—Others must be witnesses to the tragedy. There must be enough witnesses to prove conclusively that an accident had been the cause of death, and they must be men and women whose testimony would be accepted without a question of doubt in any court in the land.

These things having been decided upon, Hankenson had next to select a method of committing the deed.

O'Hearn was an ardent sportsman, hunter and trapshooter. What, then, would be more natural than that he

should be killed in the field and by his own gun?

But how?

It took Hankenson several weeks to decide this point. Here, as before, details were mentally discussed, catalogued and discarded. The solution was finally reached through the application of chemistry. And, having arrived at a decision, Hankenson applied himself vigorously and with his usual painstaking thoroughness to the task of putting the affair through to a successful conclusion.

In an obscure drug store in another city he purchased a small bottle of nitric acid. Several weeks later he motored to the metropolis, a hundred miles distant, in order to secure fifteen cents' worth of sulphuric acid. Laying both purchases aside, he waited several weeks, finally finding occasion to make a trip to a third town, where he bought a bottle of glycerin. He now had the ingredients to manufacture enough nitro-glycerin to blow up a regiment—all purchased in such a way that suspicion could never be traced to him.

But he was wary. The time was not yet ripe. There was always the chance that some over-alert clerk might, through some unforeseen circumstance, remember his face and connect him with the purchase of one of the chemicals. It was best to wait until the memory of his small purchases faded from their minds. It was lack of attention to such small details that had caused others to be caught. In his case nothing was too tiny to be overlooked. His was a brain that could foresee all contingencies.

Six weeks passed before he was ready to act. One day while visiting O'Hearn's bachelor apartments he managed to pocket half a dozen shells such as his cousin used in his favorite gun. Again he waited for weeks to see if the theft was noticed. Finding that it was

not, he proceeded to carefully draw the wads from three of the shells, uncrimping the edges in such a way that it would not be noticed. He even wore gloves to avoid tell-tale finger-prints.

Pouring out the charges of powder and shot, he poured into the empty shells enough nitro-glycerin—which he compounded from his chemicals—to make small bombs out of each, replaced the wads, and, turning back the edges carefully, he looked over his handiwork.

To all appearances the shells were identical with their mates. Yet when the hammer struck the cap it would create an explosion sufficient to tear the very head off of the unfortunate O'Hearn. The terrific jar would explode the other shells and the remaining evidence would be destroyed.

Naturally, as Hankenson knew, there would be an inquiry. But as a method of committing a murder it was so unique that it would never be suspected. Instead, the company which manufactured the cartridges would be blamed. Accidents are always likely to happen in powder factories. In the end the coroner's jury would decide that something had gone wrong with the formula when the powder was made. He, as O'Hearn's next of kin, would bring suit against the manufacturers and the latter, for their own protection, would settle as speedily as possible in order to avoid unnecessary publicity.

He next poured the acid and glycerin down the sewer. The bottles in which the chemicals came he broke into small pieces and buried in the ashes. Thus he covered his tracks as he went along.

The hunting season opened next day. He and O'Hearn had made all arrangements to leave early in the morning for a forenoon's sport among the ducks. A large party of friends was to accompany them. The friends were to be the necessary witnesses.

Waiting until late in the evening, he

hastened to O'Hearn's rooms. A matter of business would, he stated, keep him in town for an hour or two after the party had started. As soon as he could conveniently get away, he would motor out to the club grounds and join the others.

O'Hearn was examining his hunting gear and filling the pockets of his coat with cartridges as Hankenson knew he would be. Waiting until the other had left the room for a second, he removed three of the shells from the right-hand pocket, dropping into their place the three filled with the deadly nitroglycerin.

He knew O'Hearn's habits. At the club grounds the sportsmen would divide into small parties, each picking out his individual "blind." Most of them would go in parties of twos. With Hankenson absent, O'Hearn would occupy a blind alone until his partner's arrival. With the ducks flying thick, one of the three "fixed" cartridges would surely be fired inside of the first half hour. By the time he arrived, the others would be on their way back, carrying with them the mangled remains of Chester O'Hearn.

II

SOMEONE has remarked that it is the little things that effect human destinies. In this case it was a small leak in a rubber boot that saved Chester O'Hearn's life and prevented Carl Hankenson from committing the perfect crime.

O'Hearn had been suffering from a slight cold. Arriving at the clubhouse, he no sooner set foot on the ground than he accidentally stepped into a tiny pool of water. An instant later he discovered the leak in his boot. There were no other boots available, and to enter the blind with those he wore meant to invite an illness. Never of a robust

constitution, he feared to take a chance.

As a result he sat on a log along the bank of the river, his dog by his side, watching the others fill their bags.

The morning turned out warmer than usual. Finding his heavy canvas hunting coat, its pockets loaded down with shells, too heavy over his thick sweater, O'Hearn divested himself of it and laid it on the grass close by. Stretching out, he filled his pipe and took matters as philosophically as could be expected of an enthusiastic sportsman forced to keep out of the game at the opening of the hunting season with the ducks thicker than ever before in history.

Meanwhile Hankenson, driving slowly, reached the grounds. Looking around carefully, he was astonished to find no evidence of the tragedy. Where there should have been a white-faced little group of men standing around a blanket-covered form, all of the members of the party, as far as he could see, were busily engaged in banging away at the feathered game.

He hesitated an instant. It would never do to go back now that he had come this far. Someone might have seen him. The "accident" was certain to happen shortly. To turn back now would be equivalent to admitting a guilty knowledge. Nor would he dare enter the blind with O'Hearn. For when one of the "doctored" shells exploded, anyone within a radius of a dozen feet would be in danger.

Moving slowly, trying to think of some excuse to keep out of the other's company, he rounded a curve in the pathway. He was almost upon O'Hearn before he noticed the other sprawled upon the river bank, half asleep.

III

Dogs are affectionate animals. The one owned by O'Hearn was no exception to the rule. Forced to remain with

its master when the other canines of the party were enjoying a full day's sport, it longed for a romp. Hankenson had often played with it in times gone past. Recognizing its friend, it leaped to its feet, and, tail waving, started toward him.

Hankenson's gun was in his hand. It was this that probably caused a streak of peculiar dog reasoning to flash through the animal's brain.

"Here," he probably thought to him-

self, "is why my master has been waiting. Now that he's arrived, let's get started."

Seizing O'Hearn's hunting coat in his mouth, the animal leaped toward Hankenson, the heavily loaded pockets of the coat swinging wildly.

As it fawned upon the newcomer one of the loaded pockets struck the butt of Hankenson's shotgun.

Nitro-glycerin explodes upon concussion!



The New Mystery Books

By Captain Frank Cunningham

I

THE GREAT QUEST, by Charles Boardman Hawes.—A lukewarm tale of buried treasure, fittingly published by the Atlantic Monthly Press of Boston. Which means, of course, that it is aimed at the off moments of literary middle-aged ladies and old gentlemen who never leave their arm-chairs. Neither very new nor very original. Reminiscent of Stevenson, but lacking both his style and his manner. It can't possibly offend you. Nor will it even thrill you. "Dainty" is the word that best describes it.

* * *

II

THE TRIGGER OF CONSCIENCE, by

Robert Orr Chipperfield.—The usual detective story concerning a mysterious robbery and a murder. The plot is developed according to the accepted standards of this sort of fiction. So I warn you in the beginning that the detective is unbelievably brilliant; everyone in the story is suspected at one time or another of having done the dirty deed; and there is a surprise ending. It ought to make good reading, but somehow it just doesn't.

* * *

III

THE SCARLET HAND, by Charles Gilson.—A terrible book to have to read. Yes, German spy stuff with a Chinese

(Continued on page 126)

Don't Wear a Truss



BROOKS' APPLIANCE, the modern scientific invention, the wonderful new discovery that relieves rupture will be sent on trial. No obnoxious springs or pads. Has automatic Air Cushions. Binds and draws the broken parts together as you would a broken limb. No salves. No lies. Durable, cheap.

Sent on trial to prove it.

Protected by U. S. patents. Catalogue and measure blanks mailed free. Send name and address today.

C. E. BROOKS, 209F State St., Marshall, Mich.



7 JEWEL 10YR. CASE

FREE

RUSH your name and address and we will tell you **HOW** you can get this handsome 7-jewel, 10-year guaranteed, gold-filled Bracelet Watch **ABSOLUTELY FREE**.

Remember, with our plan, it **WON'T** cost you a cent. Bracelet Watch comes to you in an elaborate velvet box. **Write at once for FREE Watch Plan.**

HOME SUPPLY CO.
116 Nassau St., Dept. 92 New York

Instant Bunion Relief Prove It At My Expense



Don't send me one cent—just let me prove it to you as I have done for hundreds and thousands of others in the last six months. I claim that **FAIRYFOOT** is a most successful treatment for bunions, and I want you to let me send it to you **FREE**. I don't care how many so-called cures, shields or pads you ever tried without success—I don't care how disgusted you are with them all—you have not tried Fairyfoot.

FREE TREATMENT

I have such confidence in it that I will send you a sample treatment absolutely **FREE**. It is a wonderful remedy which relieves you almost instantly of all pain. Just send name and address and **Fairyfoot** will be sent in plain sealed envelope. Write today.

FOOT REMEDY CO., 2207 Millard Ave., Dept. 187, Chicago




\$2.63 **\$3.25**

SEND NO MONEY

If You Can Tell it from a GENUINE DIAMOND Send it back

To prove our blue-white MEXICAN DIAMOND cannot be told from a GENUINE DIAMOND and has same DAZZLING RAINBOW FIRE, we will send a selected 1 carat gem in Ladies Solitaire Ring. (Cat. price \$5.20) for Half Price to introduce, \$2.63, or in Ladies Heavy Tooth Fitcher Ring (Cat. Price \$6.50) for \$3.25. Our finest 12k Gold Filled mountings. GUARANTEED 20 YEARS. SEND NO MONEY. Just mail postcard or this ad. State size. We will mail at once. When ring arrives deposit \$2.63 for Ladies ring or \$3.25 for Gents with postman. If not pleased return in 2 days for money back less handling charges. Write for Free catalog. Agents Wanted.

MEXICAN DIAMOND IMPORTING CO., Dept. F.T. Las Cruces, N. Mex.
(Exclusive controllers Mexican Diamonds)

In answering advertisements, please mention THE FOLLIES TRIO

ADVERTISING

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG

We will compose music, secure copyright, and print. Submit poems on any subject.

SETON MUSIC COMPANY

920 S. Michigan Avenue, Room 114, Chicago

MAKE MONEY AT HOME

YOU can earn from \$1 to \$2 an hour in your spare time writing show cards. Quickly and easily learned by our new simple method. No canvassing or soliciting. We teach you how and guarantee you steady work at home and pay you cash each week. Full particulars and booklet free.

AMERICAN SHOW CARD SCHOOL
217 Ryrie Building Toronto, Canada

MUSIC LESSONS FREE



IN YOUR HOME. Write today for our **FREE** booklet. It tells how to learn to play Piano, Organ, Violin, Mandolin, Guitar, Banjo, etc. Beginners or advanced players. Your only expense about 2c per day for music and postage used.

AMERICAN SCHOOL of MUSIC, 38 LAKESIDE BLDG., CHICAGO

SELL US YOUR SPARE TIME

We will train you to write show cards for us. No canvassing or soliciting; we supply you with steady work; distance no object; will pay you from \$15 to \$50 a week.

Wilson Methods, Limited, Dept. IP, 64 East Richmond, Toronto, Can.



Eyes That Sparkle!

SOMETHING NEW! Make your eyes sparkle with that wonderful, natural crystal clearness and tantalizing charm they should have. Use the new preparation, "Sparkle-Eye," guaranteed harmless. Mail a \$1.00 bill in envelope today, with your name and address, for full-size bottle of "Sparkle-Eye," sent postage paid. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Order today before this offer expires. **HARDING IMPORTING CO., Dept. 65, 3104 Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.**

Dress Designing Lessons FREE

Women—Girls—15 or over, can easily learn Dress and Costume Designing during their spare moments **IN TEN WEEKS.**

Dress and Costume Design—

\$45 to \$100 a Week

Many Start Perfers in Their Own Homes. Every woman who now does plain sewing should take up Designing.

Hundreds Learn Millinery By Mail.

Mail to **FRANKLIN INSTITUTE** Dept. 8-602, Rochester, N. Y.

Send me **AT ONCE**, free sample lessons in the subject here checked.
☐ Dress Designing ☐ Millinery

Name.....
Address.....



TYPEWRITER SENSATION!

Free Trial—Use as You Pay

Send us only \$5.00 a month until the low total price of \$64.85 is paid, and the machine is yours.

This is absolutely the most generous typewriter offer ever made. Do not rent a machine when you can pay \$5.00 a month and own one. Think of it—Buying a \$100.00 Machine for \$64.85. Cash price, \$59.85, just a little more than half its original price.

L. C. SMITH Model No. 5

Perfect machines. Standard also. Keyboard of Standard Universal arrangement, 42 Keys, writing 84 characters—universally used in teaching the touch system. The entire line of writing completely visible at all times, has the tabulator, the two color ribbon, with automatic reverse, the back spacer, ball bearing type bars, ball bearing carriage action, ball bearing shift action, in fact every late style feature and modern operating convenience. Comes to you with everything complete; tools, cover, operating book and instructions—nothing extra to buy. You cannot imagine the perfection of this beautiful reconstructed typewriter until you have seen it. We have sold thousands of these perfect late style machines at this bargain price and every one of these thousands of satisfied customers had this beautiful, strictly up-to-date machine on five days' free trial before deciding to buy it. We will send it to you F. O. B. Chicago for five days' free trial. It will sell itself, but if you are not satisfied that this is the greatest typewriter you ever saw, you can return it at our expense. You won't want to return it after you try it, for you cannot equal this wonderful value anywhere.

SEND NO MONEY Put In Your Order Now

\$4.85 AFTER TRIAL

When the typewriter arrives deposit with the express agent \$4.85 and take the machine for five days' trial. If you are convinced that it is the best typewriter you ever saw keep it and send us \$5.00 a month until our bargain price of \$64.85 is paid. If you don't want it, return it to the express agent, receive your \$4.85 and return the machine. We will pay the return express charges. This machine is guaranteed just as if you paid \$100.00 for it. It is standard. Over half a million people own and use these typewriters and think them the best ever manufactured. The supply at this price is limited, the price will probably be raised when next advertisement appears, so don't delay. Fill in the coupon to-day—the typewriter will be shipped promptly. There is no red tape. We employ no solicitors—no collectors—no chattel mortgage. It is simply understood that we retain title to the machine until full \$64.85 is paid. You cannot lose. It is the greatest typewriter opportunity you will ever have. Do not send us one cent. Get the coupon in the mails to-day—sure.

SMITH TYPEWRITER SALES CO., 90, 218 N. Wells St., Chicago, Ill.

SMITH TYPEWRITER SALES CO., 90, 218 N. Wells St., Chicago, Ill. Ship me the L. C. Smith Model No. 5, F. O. B. Chicago, as described in this advertisement. I will pay you \$5.00 monthly as rent until the \$60.00 balance of the Special \$64.85 sale price is paid. The title to remain in you until fully paid for. It is understood that I have five days in which to examine and try the typewriter. If I choose not to keep it I will carefully repack it and return it to the express agent. It is understood that you give the standard guarantee.

Name.....
Street Address.....
City..... State.....
Occupation or Business.....

In answering advertisements, please mention **THE FOLLIES TRIO**

(Continued from page 124)

secret society of the Scarlet Hand thrown in for good measure. And the dear old island of John Bull is again threatened. Its complete destruction was planned, mind you. But ah! our two boy heroes appear, get kidnapped, carted off to China, but in the end manage to save the British Government. If you don't believe me, read the book yourself. Diamond Dick stuff for \$1.75.

* * *

IV

THIS MAN'S WORLD, by Will Levington Comfort.—Please, Mister Editor of this Magazine, can you tell me why this book was ever published? . . . What? You think it was originally a rejected movie scenario? . . . But do you think it will now be filmed? . . . No. Neither do I. It's too bad even for the movies. And the author might have written such a nice yarn about the South Sea Islands, had he been so tempted, instead of this cheap, improbable story.

* * *

V

WITHIN FOUR WALLS, by Edith Baulsir.—One of these mysterious house yarns that a noble hero inherits, goes to the place to live, and gets mixed up in a murder. Of course he is wrongly accused, as is everybody else. But in the end "there is a surprise in store for the reader." Same old stuff, a little worse than usual, that's all.

* * *

VI

YELLOW MEN AND GOLD, by Gouverneur Morris.—Again a buried treasure yarn; always a safe bet for authors in need of money. This time the plot is clumsily conceived and rather badly written. It will try your patience. And let us hope that this is the last time a Chinaman appears between the covers

of an American novel. Yes, I think the hero finally gets the buried gold and wins the girl. I didn't finish the yarn, so I don't know for sure. But I drew my own conclusions.

* * *

VII

QUILL'S WINDOW, by George Barr McCutcheon.—Remembering the adolescent thrills I got many years ago from "Graustark," (bad stuff, I grant you, but amusing), I can't quite forgive Mr. McCutcheon for publishing this most recent of his atrocities. It's something of a small-town story, and deals with a queerly shaped cave on a hillside called "Quill's Window"; where old Quill himself was found hanging by the neck one day, where a woman's skeleton was also discovered, and where other supposedly thrilling things took place. After all, it's nothing but a dime novel.

* * *

VIII

THE PANELLED ROOM, by Rupert Sargent Holland.—"The rubies were gone!—that was certain." Thus runs the style of this lurid masterpiece. Blackmailers, an accidental murder, a persecuted woman, and similar juicy bits go to make up this yarn. I have said before, and I say it again, they are publishing books nowadays in cloth bindings that used to sell in the days of Street and Smith for ten cents.

* * *

IX

THE SNOWSHOE TRAIL, by Edison Marshall.—This is the one plot that is invariably used by writers who lay the scene of their story in the great Northwest—the search for a missing man. This time you have more poetical descriptions than usual, about the same number of hairbreadth escapes, and the same old last chapter. Will we ever get a new plot of the North woods?

JUST TRY ONE!

The two magazines named below are among the best light fiction magazines published. You like good stories: you will enjoy these magazines immensely. Take one (or both) home with you today.

Saucy Stories

CONTENTS OF APRIL NUMBER

THE LAGOON OF LOST PEARLS, by *Harry Hervey*. A fascinating story of love and adventure in the South Seas.

THE TEN OF SPADES, by *Carl Glick*. One of the best detective stories we have ever found.

"MOVE AND I KILL YOU!" by *Ray St. Vrain*. Spanish love and vengeance.

THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS, by *Eric A. Darling*. Politicians and another crook.

THE MIDNIGHT PRANK OF MIMI, by *Beulah Poynter*. A delicious story of how orange pajamas and a night in jail prevented a divorce.

And a half-dozen more that will hold your interest from first page to last—*Corking good stories!*

And SAUCY SHOTS FROM STUDIOS—
News about pictures and picture-makers.

FOLLIES—the Magazine of

FASCINATING FICTION

"There is no other magazine quite like The Follies."

CONTENTS OF APRIL NUMBER

A BEAUTY FOR THE SULTAN, by *C. S. Montanye*. The Ruler of Turkey sends envoys to steal an American beauty for his harem. What happens?

THE MAN-CHASER, by *Kenneth Barr*. How a Newport vamp drove a man to the arms of the woman who wanted him.

THE MERCENARY LITTLE WRETCH, by *Crosby George*. About a red-headed gold digger who didn't dig.

SPANISH EYES, by *Gordon Malherbe Hillman*. Because she sang like a phonograph she became a star overnight. And caught a millionaire.

Seven other stories in the style that has made this a magazine apart from all others of its kind.

"There is no other magazine quite like The Follies."

On all good newsstands
Buy them today; they sell out early

ADVERTISING



Your Choice, On Trial

THE Wurlitzer plan gives you *any instrument* with a complete musical outfit for a week's Free Trial in your own home. No obligation to buy. Return the instrument at our expense at the end of the week, if you decide not to keep it. Trial won't cost you a penny.

Monthly Payments

Payments are arranged in small monthly sums. A few cents a day will pay for your instrument and complete outfit. The Wurlitzer plan gives you all at direct cost. You get the outfit and instrument practically for the cost of the instrument alone.

Artistic quality of Wurlitzer instruments is known all over the world. Wurlitzer instruments have been used

by artists and in the finest orchestras and bands for years. The house of Wurlitzer has made the finest musical instruments for more than 200 years.

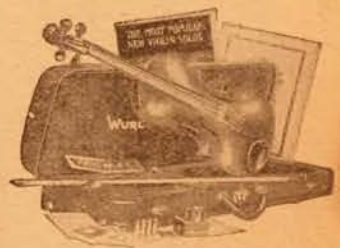
Complete Outfits

The new plan includes with the instrument everything that you need—velvet and plush lined carrying case with lock and key, all accessories and extra parts, self instructor, book of musical selections, etc.

A Wurlitzer Outfit

This shows the Wurlitzer Violin Outfit. Case is professional style, beautifully finished. Complete outfits like this are now furnished with all Wurlitzer instruments.

Every musical instrument known, including Pianos and Victrolas, is embraced in the Wurlitzer plan.



Send for New Catalog

Every known instrument illustrated and fully described in detail with prices, monthly payments and free trial blank. More information and pictures of instruments than in any other book published. (Also complete catalog of accessories, repairs, strings and all needs for replacements for any instrument made. Instant mail service.) Book is absolutely free. No obligation. Send the coupon now.

The Rudolph Wurlitzer Company

Cincinnati Chicago New York San Francisco

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THE RUDOLPH WURLITZER CO., Dept. 1693
117 E. 4th St., Cincinnati 120 W. 42nd St., New York
700 Jackson Blvd., Chicago 215 Stockton St., San Francisco

Send me your new catalog with illustrations in color and full description of the Wurlitzer Complete Outfits and details of the free trial and easy payment offer.

Name

Address

(State musical instrument in which you are especially interested)

In answering advertisements, please mention **THE FOLLIES TRIO**



\$2500 REWARD For the Capture of An Unknown Man

Twice he had entered the St. Clair Mansion. What was he after? Who? What was in danger?

Berteau, the famous detective had warned St. Clair that the mysterious marauder would come again. And now—a noise in the passage! The creak of an opening door. A shot in the dark! A capture!

Is this wounded stranger the mysterious intruder? Who could tell? Yet Berteau identified the man without hesitation and won the \$2500 reward.

How did he do it? Easy enough for the Finger Print Expert. He is the specialist, the leader, the cream of detectives. Every day's paper tells their wonderful exploits in solving mysterious crimes and convicting dangerous criminals.

**Why don't You be a
Finger Print Expert?**

More Trained Men Needed

The demand for trained men by governments, states, cities, detective agencies, corporations, and private bureaus is becoming greater every day. Here is a real opportunity for YOU. Can you imagine a more fascinating line of work than this? Often life and death depend upon finger print evidence—and big rewards go to the expert. Many experts earn regularly from \$3,000 to \$10,000 per year.

Learn at Home in Spare Time

And now you can learn the secrets of this science at home in your spare time. Any man with common school education and average ability can become a

Finger Print Detective in surprisingly short time.

Free Course in Secret Service

For a limited time we are making a special offer of a *Professional Finger Print Outfit, absolutely Free*, and *Free Course in Secret Service Intelligence*. Mastery of these two kindred professions will open a brilliant career for you.

Write quickly for fully illustrated free book on Finger Prints which explains this wonderful training in detail. Don't wait until this offer has expired—mail the coupon now. You may never see this announcement again! You assume no obligation—you have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Write at once—address

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Gentlemen:—Without any obligation whatever, send me your new, fully illustrated, FREE book on Finger Prints and your offer of a FREE course in Secret Service Intelligence and the Free Professional Finger Print Outfit.

Name.....

Address.....

Present Occupation..... Age.....

Win \$5000



Bank Guarantee

State Bank of Philadelphia
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

E. J. REEFER

This will acknowledge your deposit of \$20,000 with this bank which we will hold as a guarantee that the prizes awarded by the judges to the winners of your puzzle contest will be paid.

It is understood that the Cashier of this bank will serve as one of the judges of this puzzle contest as a guarantee that E. J. Reeper will award these prizes.

Yours very truly,

H. C. KRAUSKOPF
PRESIDENT

**How many objects
in this picture
Begin with "S"?**

A Great Big Puzzle Picture Free

Join in this fascinating puzzle game. Work from this picture or send for large size puzzle picture.

Costs Nothing to Try List all the objects you find in picture beginning with "S." You need not buy any Reefer's Yeast Tablets to win a prize. Open to everybody. Largest and nearest correct list wins first prize of \$50 even if you buy nothing. But look to right! See how you can win \$5000, \$2500, or one of the other 103 biggest cash prizes. \$50 or \$5000, which do you want? Start now. Contest is for the purpose of introducing the latest scientific aid to—

BEAUTY—Health—Vim—Vigor

The world has waked up to Nature's own beauty and health secret. Vitamines!



Reeper's Yeast Tablets

—embody all 3 necessary vitamins. Help to build up vitality, strength, endurance. Induce youthful natural complexion. A food. Has all the elements your body needs to derive the proper nourishment from the food you eat. Send for some today.

E. J. Reeper, Dept. A-1124 9th and Spruce Sts., Philadelphia, Pa.

Win the \$5000 Prize

A one package order for Reefer's Yeast Tablets qualifies your list for first prize of \$750. A two package order qualifies you for \$1500. But if you have ordered five \$1.00 packages and your list is largest and nearest correct, you win \$5000. Study the Prize List.

105 Prizes

Winning answers will receive prizes as follows:

	If no Reeper's Yeast Tablets are ordered	If one \$1 pkg. Reeper's Yeast Tablets ordered	If two, \$1 pkgs. Reeper's Yeast Tablets ordered	If five \$1 pkgs. Reeper's Yeast Tablets ordered
1st prize	\$50	\$750	\$1500	\$5000
2nd prize	35	375	750	2500
3rd prize	25	200	400	1250
4th prize	25	125	250	600
5th prize	25	75	150	400
6th to 55th prizes, each	2	4	8	25
56th to 105th prizes, each	1	2	4	10

Observe These Rules:

1. The contest is open to every man, woman, girl or boy living in America, except employees or relatives of employees of E. J. Reeper, 9th and Spruce Sts. There is no entrance fee of any kind.

2. You must use only one side of paper. You must number your list of objects in regular order—1, 2, 3, etc. Your full name and address must be written on each page in the upper right hand corner. Use a separate sheet for anything you may wish to write outside of your list of names and your name and address.

3. English words only will be accepted as they appear in the English dictionary. Obsolete words will not be counted. Both the singular and the plural of a word will not count; either one of them may be used.

4. Compounds or words which are made up of two or more complete English words cannot be used.

5. The same spelling of a word will be counted only once even though it is used for different articles or objects, or parts of them. Each article or object can be given only under one name.

6. Two or more people may co-operate in answering the puzzle. However only one prize will be given to anyone household. No prizes will be awarded to more than one of any combination outside of the family where a number—two or more—have worked together.

7. If a contestant sends more than one list under the same name, an assumed name, or a pre-married name, then all lists of such contestant will be disqualified.

If more than one list is sent by any group or by any members of the same group who have co-operated in the preparation of such lists, then all lists of such contestants will be disqualified.

8. All answers must be received through the mail by E. J. Reeper, 9th and Spruce Streets, Philadelphia, Pa., and must be post-marked by Post Office closing time, April 10th, 1922.

9. The first prize will be awarded for the answer containing the largest and most nearly correct list of the names of visible objects and articles beginning with "S" shown in the picture. No other consideration, such as neatness, style or handwriting will have any bearing in making the decision.

10. The full amount of any of the prizes will be awarded to each contestant in the event of a tie.

11. The decision will be made by three judges entirely independent of and having no connection with E. J. Reeper. They will judge the answers submitted and award the prizes at the end of the contest. Participation in the contest carries with it the acceptance of the decision of the judges as final and conclusive.

12. All answers will receive full consideration whether or not "Reeper's Yeast Tablets" is purchased. At the close of the contest, when all lists have been graded, the names of the prize winners will be announced and the list of words will be sent upon request to any participant who sends us a stamped, addressed envelope.

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