

DETECTIVE



FICTION WEEKLY

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And Stories by

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DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME XL

Saturday, April 13, 1929

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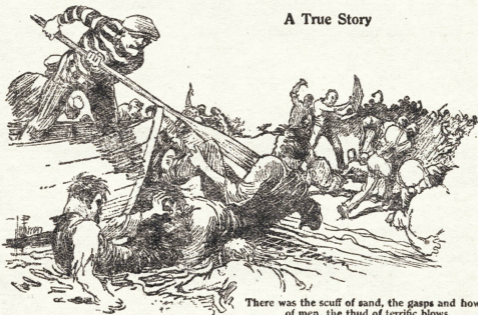
VOLUME XL

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 1929

NUMBER 5

The Roaring Road

A True Story



There was the scuff of sand, the gasps and howls of men, the thud of terrific blows

How America Gets Its Rum—The Inside Story of the Crookedest Racket in the World, by a Millionaire Bootlegger

As Told to Don H. Thompson

CHAPTER I

The Bootleg Chief

THERE we sat, the two of us, empty of stomach and pocket, with nothing to do but wonder if we would ever get another square meal.

A fat negro, played a monotonous, jangling tune on an ancient piano; waiters hurried to and fro; glasses rattled on the bar; there was much loud talking and laughter, but we paid no attention to the merriment. We sipped our beers as slowly as possible for we had but a dime between us. Inside the

Piccadilly Café it was light and warm and outside it was a wet, chilly New Orleans night.

"If we can get a flop some place," said Graves, as calmly as though he had a hundred-dollar bill tucked in every pocket, "we might be able to snare a berth on a rum runner to-morrow."

I did not even answer. I was immersed in gloom. Being broke was no new experience to me, but our luck had been consistently bad for more than two weeks and I could not make myself believe that it was about to change for the better.

"Would you ship on a whisky boat?" persisted Graves.

"I'd do anything," I growled. "Anything to get the black cat off my back."

We returned to gazing with meditative dejection at the damp table top. From the corner of my eye I saw a waiter hovering expectantly behind us. After a few minutes of watching he approached.

"Another beer?"

"No," said Graves.

"Anything else?"

"No."

The waiter dropped his servile pose. He was a burly fellow and he spread his big hands upon the table and said: "You bums can't sit here without buying. Buy or get out, and make room for somebody that 'll spend some dough."

"Who said so?"

Graves was on his feet. He was big and tough and wicked. His temper, strained by hunger, was as mean as that of a wild cat. The waiter, undismayed, took a step toward him, one hamlike hand doubled into a hard fist. Then Graves's punch caught him be-

hind the ear and he went down like a log without even the subconscious reflex of arms thrown out to break his fall.

In an instant the place was in an uproar. A bartender and a half a dozen plug-uglies started toward us, armed with bottles. They were the riffraff of the New Orleans water front and their ragged clothes probably concealed more than one sharp knife.

"We're in for it," said I.

"We'll clean 'em up," snarled Graves. He peeled off his coat swiftly. "Come on, you dirty bums!"

A shadow fell across the table. A well-built, well-dressed man of medium size stood between us and the crowd.

"What's the matter, boys?" he inquired pleasantly. "Havin' a little trouble?"

"Yeah," said Graves, "and it looks like we're due for worse."

The newcomer turned to the men.

"Have a drink on the house," he said. "I'll handle this thing to suit myself." The crowd surged back to the bar. Our rescuer touched a match to a fat cigar before he spoke again. "Broke?"

"Flat," said I.

"Want a job?"

"Yes," retorted Graves. "We'll take any kind of a job."

The fellow grinned at my companion.

"A man with a right hand punch like yours hadn't ought to be beggin' for work," he said. "Come on, follow me."

And without even a backward glance at the fallen waiter who was now beginning to stir and gasp for air like a fish out of water, we walked away to

EDITOR'S NOTE.—Don H. Thompson, the man who wrote the history of the Mafia in America, in "Black Hand," an article which appeared in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, and also wrote the gripping story of Dint Colbeck, St. Louis's "King of Crime," has scored another journalistic triumph with this inside story of the working of the liquor traffic. His informant is a wealthy and powerful bootlegger.

a narrow little room under the back stairs where we sat around a table and talked.

"My name's Hurd," said our host removing his derby. "I own this bar and I do a pretty good business with some big guys over in Cuba. They run the stuff in, but I have to go out after it in small boats and get it into town. Some of it I use here and the rest goes north over the highway to Kansas City and St. Louis.

"It's a risky business, but a good one. I can always use good, strong, dependable men. You birds looked like pretty good prospects and that's why I stepped into your fight. What do you say? Interested?"

"Absolutely," said Graves. I said nothing at all.

"Who are you?"

"Sailors."

"Show me something to prove it. I can't take any chances on getting the wrong guys to guard my liquor."

Graves had several letters addressed to him aboard our last ship and I had my mate's papers. Hurd spread them all upon the table and read them carefully.

"Looks all right," he said at last. "You see, I prefer to pick my own men as I go along. I never hire a guy who asks me for a job. Figure that if I used that system I'd be payin' wages to some prohi and my next stopping place would be Leavenworth.

"Now listeh, boys. This job takes cool, steady heads and plenty of insides, but you'll find it's easy work and good money. You guard the stuff and your pay goes on as long as you bring home the bacon. If you lose a load, that's your tough luck and you're fired. Agreed?"

"Right," said Graves.

"Here's a ten-spot," went on Hurd. "Get yourselves a good square meal and come back about eleven o'clock. We'll start out to do some business."

"Say," said Graves, "are we guarding this stuff against dry agents?"

Hurd laughed, exposing solid gold teeth.

"Dry agents, hell!" he snorted. "We don't worry about those birds. It's hi-jackers that get our trucks. I lost two last month and, by God, I don't propose to get stuck for a third one. There's going to be a lot of plain and fancy shooting on some of these roads to-night if Bascom's bunch tries to lift any of my stuff."

We took his tenner and headed for the nearest restaurant.

And that, my friend, is how I became a rum runner. That is how I quit being an honest ship's mate and tossed my lot with the ex-convicts, ex-prize fighters, bouncers, gamblers and gunmen who combine to make a mockery of the law which says that strong drink shall not be consumed in these United States. Once in with them, I never had a moment of hesitation. All about me I saw ignorant men, many of them criminals, growing rich. I determined to make a fortune.

I began at the very bottom, toting a shotgun to keep hi-jackers from stealing the cargo, and worked my way up until I owned distilleries, ships, trucks and warehouses and commanded the services of several hundred sea captains, shore men, drivers, bottlers and label counterfeiters.

During the year just past, the syndicate of which I am the head, shipped more than five million dollars' worth of alcohol, rum, whisky and champagne north from New Orleans. The tremendous percentage of profit on this amount of liquor will be readily realized when I tell you how the stuff was manufactured and run into the country. The losses to government dry agents have been practically none, but the ruthless hi-jackers are, and always will be, the fly in the otherwise smooth ointment of the bootleggers. For them we wear bullet-proof vests and carry sub-machine guns and many a battle is fought on a lonely road at night, the

prize being a five-ton truck filled to the top with Cuban whisky.

When I retire from this business with more than a million dollars I will go to my country estate and live the quiet life of a rural gentleman, but there will be others behind me. The unslaked thirst of the big cities will continue to roll fortunes in gold into the laps of those who are strong enough to take and hold control of the liquor supply. The prohibition law will never be enforced. Until people get tired of the rotten stuff we give them, there will always be rum runners and bootleggers.

It would take the whole army and navy to prevent the whisky pirates from landing their cargoes at New Orleans alone. There is a town that is the rum runners' dream of a perfect city. It is so situated that all of the natural advantages are with the smuggler and it has become the home of the syndicate men, the ship owners, ship captains, truck owners, salesmen and thugs who form the motley bootleg army. The pirates who infested New Orleans in olden times never mustered a more hardboiled, murderous bunch of men. They make a handsome living bringing in the liquor and since there are more than eighty ways of getting a boat into the Mississippi from deep water, hundreds of islands where a schooner may anchor, thousand of places where small boats can unload and many routes into the city, it will be seen that the risk is really very small.

To combat this vast army of men who quench the nation's thirst, the government had two cutters and between thirty and fifty men on the job in New Orleans. They might as well try to drink all the water in the ocean. Now and then they capture a fellow with a small load, but I have never known them to get their hands on one of the big operators. If they catch a loaded boat, the men who are sent to jail are just hirelings.

I believe that I know this game as well as any man in the United States.

Certainly I have been a success at it. I've gone all through the mill.

To give you a clear, comprehensive picture of the inside operations of the liquor rings I am going to tell you my own story. I am going to tell you where the whisky is made, how it is made, what it costs to manufacture, how it is smuggled into the United States, how it is sent to your home town, how it is distributed and who gets the huge profits that you pay every time you buy a drop of illicit liquor.

I am going to take the cover off the underworld of booze and let you see the distillers, label counterfeiterers, sea captains, gunmen, hi-jackers and bootleg kings in action. I am going to tell you of the murder, blackmail, bribery, graft and corruption of every kind which is closely interwoven with the activities of these men. The whole machinery of the enormous industry which has resulted from the Eighteenth Amendment will be revealed. None of it will be opinion. It will be the facts, the true story of a desperate young man who saw an opportunity to win a life of ease and luxury and took it.

CHAPTER II

The First Skirmish

FOR the proper beginning of my narrative I must again go back to that rainy night in New Orleans when my friend Graves and I started out to guard a cargo of liquor being hauled in from a bootleggers' hangout on Shell Beach.

It was a night as dark as the inside of a wolf's stomach, with a fine rain being driven in from the sea. I sat in the rear of a lurching truck, a shotgun across my knees. Beside me was "Shady" Smith, a noted and talented administrator of lead poisoning. He was a wicked little morsel of a man with a bent beak of a nose and the cauliflowered ears of a former ringster.

"New, ain't you?" asked Smith, taking a generous chew of cut-pug.

"New on this job," I replied, for I had no intention of letting him know that I was a green hand.

"Well, you picked a hot spot. There's always hell to pay when the booze hustlers fight among themselves. And Bascom's gang has been gettin' away with so much murder that he thinks he owns all the hooch that's shipped into New Orleans. Baby, won't he get fooled if he monkeys with this layout."

"I'll tell the world," said I.

Smith leaned out of the jolting vehicle and peered into the darkness ahead.

"Guess we're all here. Got three big trucks and four hearses to-night."

"Hearses?"

"Sure. Didn't you ever hear of that racket before. One of Kid Hurd's brightest ideas. The booze that goes to his joint, goes in trucks; the stuff that goes through the town and north travels in undertakers' dead wagons. They split up. Each travels a different route and who the hell would ever think of looking for tiger-juice in a nice, pretty gray hearse? Neat, eh?"

I laughed to myself. Truly, there was more to this bootlegging game than I had suspected. A resourceful fellow with a little ingenuity and a small organization could make a fortune. Right then I began to lay plans for the future.

The truck came to a shuddering halt.

"Here we are," said Shady Smith, and tumbled out of the truck, lugging his sub-machine gun. I followed suit and saw that we were at the water's edge on a narrow, sandy beach. The trucks and hearses were turned around and the work of loading them with the cases of whisky and tins of alcohol began. The stuff had been piled upon the beach and was being watched by a picked crew of Hurd's gunmen.

As I came up to my truck with a tin of alcohol, I passed Graves.

"Great stuff isn't it?" he asked.

"It is," said I. "It looks like we're in a big game, all right."

As each vehicle was filled it started back toward the city, a guard on the front seat beside the driver and another sitting in the body with the liquor. The men worked like machines. Each fellow knew his job and did it with precision.

When our truck was ready, Smith found me and restored my weapon.

"I'll ride with the driver," he said. "You get in the back and stay there. If anybody starts anything with us, you stick in the back. Don't hop out into the road. If you do, they'll get you. The edge will be yours if you're shooting at 'em from the inside. This canvas top won't protect you from bullets, but it'll hide you. Get me?"

I got him. The ride back to the city began. I could see nothing. There was nothing to do but wait developments. Once or twice the truck came to a halt and I sat up, tense and alert, with my shotgun ready. But we moved on again and I relaxed, leaning against a case of liquor and wondering how much I would be paid for the trip.

We had gone about halfway to our destination when I was jolted out of my reverie by Smith's hoarse, excited voice.

"There's something doing down the line!" he bawled. "Heads up now!"

The truck stopped, then crawled forward slowly, growling along in low gear. There came a brief rattle of rifle and pistol fire. The truck swayed into a ditch.

Chak, chak, chak, chak! Smith's machine gun ate into a belt of clips and spat death into the night.

"Take that, you thieving dogs!" he howled. The gun chattered again. I crouched on my knees, with my shotgun ready for action, but there was no need. It was all over in an instant. A gang of hi-jackers had tried to cut off the truck just ahead of us, had shot and seriously wounded one of the guards, but had fled into the surrounding woods when Mr. Smith arrived with his stuttering weapon.

"I told you we'd get 'em!" exulted that worthy. His white teeth gleamed in the darkness. "Wait until I tell Hurd. We'll get a bonus for this night's work."

The trucks climbed back to the roadway and proceeded cautiously into the city without further difficulty. We drove to a dry goods store in a middle-class neighborhood, unloaded our liquor and stowed it in the cement-lined basement under the place. Then the six of us, including the driver and two guards from the other truck, got into a small touring car and hurried to Hurd's saloon where Smith recited the details of the encounter.

"Good work," said Hurd. He scratched a few words on a piece of paper and handed it to the gunman. "Here, give this to Limpy. See you to-morrow night. May have some stuff cached down on that bayou by then."

We reentered our machine and drove to a water front warehouse which we entered by a secret door. Up two flights of stairs and we came out into a large room where a man sat behind a kitchen table. He was flanked by four heavily armed ruffians. This man at the table was unlike an ordinary human being. He was stoop-shouldered with a mean, narrow face and ratlike, anxious eyes. Before him was a dirty ledger and a pile of currency.

"Hello, Limpy!" said Smith with easy familiarity. "We come for our dough."

The man behind the table snickered.

"Always first, aren't you?" he asked.

"I like to get paid," admitted Smith. "You act as though you were giving away a quart of your blood every time you fork over. I earned my money to-night. Look at this." He tossed the paper which Hurd had given him upon the table.

Limpy looked at it carefully. Then he dipped into the currency and counted out fifty dollars.

"Twenty-five for the trip and twen-

ty-five for saving the truck," he said grudgingly.

"This guy gets the same," said Smith pointing to me. Limpy paid me off and then began counting out money for the others.

"Well, kid," laughed Smith. "I guess that's all for to-night. See you to-morrow. Maybe we'll ride together again."

We left Limpy writing in his dirty ledger and I set out to find Graves to see how he had fared on our first night of adventure as the paid hirelings of the rum ring. I had made fifty dollars and was content. The fact that I might just as easily have been lying at the side of a lonely road with my hide full of bullet holes, did not enter into my calculations. This was the game for me and all manner of wild schemes raced through my head as I strode through the darkened streets.

CHAPTER III

A Dead Man's Cargo

ONCE more we sat in the Piccadilly Café, Graves and I, and this time we looked upon our world and found it good. We had been working for Hurd for two months. We had made a stake and were restless with the plans which we had been discussing while we watched over our employer's whisky. We had agreed to seize the first opportunity to get into the rum game for ourselves.

And now Graves, smoking a cigar and looking quite prosperous in a new suit of clothes, was outlining a proposition.

"There's an old guy over near Point à la Hache who has about fifty cases of Scotch that he wants to let go of. He's broke. Brought the stuff in and landed it on the beach, then got in a row with his pals and drove them off with a gun. He hasn't been able to get a truck and even if he had one, he's afraid to try to make it into town. Figures his former friends tipped off

Bascom and fears that the hi-jackers are laying for him.

"We could buy the stuff cheap, probably as low as twenty dollars a case. We could sell it right here for thirty-five and if we wanted to run it north we could get a lot more. Of course, if we get stuck up our investment is sunk. Want to take a chance?"

"Sure," I said, without hesitation. "This whole game is based on chance. I can get Smith to help us."

"And I could get the truck," said Graves. "We'll drag the hooch in and peddle it to Burney. He's got a flock of phony milk trucks going to St. Louis next week."

We were mulling the scheme over in our minds when a girl in a short red dress and a row of spangles around her neck came up to our table. She was one of Hurd's entertainers.

"You gave me a five-dollar bill last night," she said to Graves.

"Yeah," he agreed. "I gave it to you to get rid of you. Think you can tap me every night?"

The girl smiled at him.

"No, I just want to tell you something. Bascom's on your trail and you better look out. I was told all about it by a red-hot who hangs out in his gambling hall. Bascom says you two birds kept him from copping one of Hurd's trucks and pumped one of his best men full of lead. He's looking to get even."

"Thanks," said Graves dryly. "We'll take care of brother Bascom."

When the girl left he turned to me.

"Looks like we've made an enemy."

"It's a bluff," said I. "If we can get a start on this first job, we'll hire Smith and a few of his hardboiled friends away from Hurd, and they can all go to hell. Let's have a drink."

"Not me," objected Graves. "The more I see of this bootleg stuff the more I like orange juice. We better go see Hurd and arrange to get off tomorrow."

So it was that we journeyed toward

Point à la Hache the next night in a rattling truck, outward bound on the first of our many bootlegging adventures. In the rear, with his legs hanging over the side, was Mr. Shady Smith, a machine gun in the crook of his arm.

Thirty miles from town we parked the truck at the side of the road, left Smith with it, and struck off through the brush and scrub trees. Presently we came to a trail which we followed with the aid of a flash light and soon we emerged into a little clearing. I saw a sort of a shack, an open affair, with a canvas roof supported by four posts. Under the canvas was a table and at one end of the table was a man.

"Asleep," said Graves. "Come on, make some noise. He's liable to get excited and drill us."

We walked noisily forward. The man, suddenly awakened, jumped to his feet, a gun in his hand.

"Steady," called Graves. "We've come to take the white elephant off your hands."

The fellow grinned sheepishly and lowered his weapon.

"I remember you," he said. "You were over here last week. Well, I'll be glad to get out. I'm about dead for sleep and I figured some of these high-binders would have my stuff before I could sell it."

"We've got nine hundred dollars," said Graves. "It's yours for the liquor, providing you help us load it. That's a good price, since we are taking all the chances."

"It isn't as much as I expected," replied the runner, "but I guess it will do. I'm in no spot to bargain. Come on, let's get busy."

I passed over the money and the work of loading the liquor began. The cases were hidden in the brush back of the camp and we were hours getting them out and down to the truck. When the cargo was stowed and we were ready to leave, Graves invited the runner to ride into town with us.

"Not a chance!" was his reply. "Why? Because I'm afraid you boys will never get there. No, sir, I'll walk."

And with that cheering pronouncement he ducked off into the weeds and was gone.

"Look sharp, now," commanded Graves who was driving. "Shoot first and talk to the corpse afterward. If these buzzards get the jump on us, we're done."

We moved forward slowly and without lights.

It had been a dark night when we started out, with a sultry promise of rain in the air, but now the moon was climbing the sky, a dim silver bubble, striving against the heavy clouds. We could see the road as it stretched out ahead of us.

"A little light won't hurt," said Graves. "We can get a look at anybody that comes along, anyway."

As he spoke he jammed on the brakes, threw out the clutch and we rolled to a silent stop.

"Something around that next curve. Looks like a truck. You and Smith scout ahead. I'll stay here."

Smith came from the rear with his machine gun and together we hurried along the road, turning the corner cautiously.

"Truck," whispered the gunman in my ear. There it stood, a heavy, well-made machine with a brown canvas cover. There was not a soul in sight. We hurried forward.

"Holy Smoke!" cried Smith who was in the lead. "There's a dead guy on the runnin' board. Plunked right through the head!"

The man was sprawled out in awkward fashion, his head and shoulders jammed under the wheel, his legs dangling on the running-board. Smith, ignoring the body, trotted to the rear of the truck and lifted the canvas.

"Loaded! Boy, this is just like finding money! Come on, let's try to start her up."

We worked for ten minutes and gave

up in disgust. The battery was evidently dead.

"That's why them hi-jackers didn't move her," explained Smith. "They bumped this guy off, then they went away and left the whole works when the rig wouldn't start. Say, I'll bet a bullet musta hit the battery, eh?" He lifted the floor-boards of the car quickly. "Sure enough! Knocked it all to hell. Well, we ain't beat yet. We can shove her. Hurry, the boys will be back here pretty quick."

We jogged back to the waiting Graves and explained the situation. He agreed readily with Smith's suggestion and a few minutes later we were again on our way to town. This time we had two trucks loaded with liquor instead of one!

Urged on by Smith, Graves made good time, although it was awkward work shoving the seized truck and we had nothing to use for a towline. It was almost dawn when we pulled up to the garage owned by a gentleman named Burney. The garage was just a blind. Mr. Burney was one of the most extensive liquor wholesalers in New Orleans. We drove into the place and Graves and Burney talked in low tones in one corner.

When Graves returned to us, he said:

"All fixed. Burney takes the whole works and he'll get rid of the truck so nobody'll know who grabbed off their hooch. We'll come back for our wagon to-morrow. All right?"

"Fine," said I, "if the price is right."

"It's one hundred per cent profit on the stuff we bought and two thousand for the other."

"Okay," approved Smith, and the bargain was struck. We gave Smith a third on the truck we had found and went home and to bed, very well satisfied with the result of our initial venture as big-league bootleggers. It had been an interesting night, we had made more than two thousand dollars, and

our belief that we were in the right business had been confirmed.

We realized, of course, that we could have made more with the proper kind of backing and organization. Graves mentioned it the next day when we were talking over our plans.

"Burney will truck that stuff to Kansas City and almost double his money," said Graves. "He is in touch with a mob and he gets the best prices possible. That's what we should be doing, buying this stuff at the beach and selling it to saloon keepers up north where liquor is worth big jack. I know where I can get enough for two trucks. Suppose we make a stab at peddling it in St. Louis?"

"It sounds good to me," said I. "How do we go about it?"

"Here's the dope. I've been keeping my ears to the ground ever since we worked for Hurd, and there's two things I know we need. One is a place to store the stuff and the other is a stand-in with a certain gangster in St. Louis. This fellow controls the whiskey business there and he is lined up with politicians who carry the keys to the jail.

"If we get in right with them, there is no limit to our market. We can run all the booze we want to and clean up. Suppose you hop a rattler north, buy some kind of a business joint as a blind and put the fix on the gang leader and his friends?"

"A good idea," I replied. "In the meantime you can snoop around and get another bunch of liquor lined up."

CHAPTER IV

Graves Gets Vengeance

A FEW days later I was in St. Louis, registered at a good hotel and spending most of my time reading newspaper advertisements of various business concerns which were for sale. One by one I looked the prospects over and finally I found a place that appealed to me as being al-

most perfect for our purposes. It was a feed store on the South Side, apparently on its last legs, for the German proprietor was glad to sell out, lock, stock and barrel for a thousand dollars down and my note for a like amount. He was voluble in his description of his wonderful establishment. He did not know that I had no interest in anything save the fine, dry, strong basement underneath.

Now for the gangster. I had learned by now that one of the most important things in my new profession was to know the right people. It is seldom that the run runner approaches the representatives of the law themselves. He usually works through other persons. In this case I was depending on the gangster to pull the correct political strings and see that our trucks were not molested either by the authorities or by the thugs who made a business of robbing honest hooch carriers.

I met my man in his St. Louis County resort. It did not take me long to outline my proposition, and I tossed in the name of Hurd to help things along.

When I had finished, he looked at me from brooding eyes and said:

"It'll cost you five bucks a case."

"That's fair enough."

"You won't be bothered by the red-hots," went on the gangster, "and the law will lay off as long as you work on the quiet. Phone me from down the line each time you come in. One of my boys will meet you, count the cases and take the dough. Then he'll ride in with you. There'll be no trouble."

We shook hands on the bargain and I left to return to New Orleans, where I found Graves fuming and fretting at the delay. He had two good cargoes spotted and he craved action. He got it.

We rented three trucks, hired Shady Smith and several of his rough-neck pals, and headed north. The trip was completed without trouble, the whiskey was stored in the base-

ment of the feed store, and in a week it was all sold to St. Louis bar owners and we were back home with more money than either or both of us had ever seen in all our lives.

"We need a bigger layout," declared Graves. "We're working on too small a scale. Just think how much dough we could make if we pulled off one of these trips every week."

Acting on his suggestion, I hired an office in a down town building where I set myself up as the representative of a New York leather company, and from this place we transacted all our business. Graves became the buying agent and I handled the arrangements for the transportation and sale of the stuff at the other end, with the murderous Mr. Smith as my first assistant.

It was a busy life. We worked night and day, sleeping and eating when and where we could. We bought cargo after cargo from the independent shippers running out of Cuba and various South American ports and sold the liquor—Scotch and Canadian whisky and raw alcohol—in St. Louis, Louisville and Kansas City. Our connections in all three of those towns were excellent and grew better as our importance in the underworld increased in proportion to the size of our bank roll.

Despite our success, I found myself, at times, in the depths of despair. For a fellow who would have peace and quiet and the caresses of a wife and children it was a hopeless outlook. For a man who would sleep in a bed and smoke his pipe in security it was a bad business. We lived violently and gave promise of dying the same way. We wore bullet-proof vests, never went out minus our pistols, spent our nights on the front seat of a lurching truck and our days in plotting our schemes of bribery and corruption.

Graves usually jollied me out of these fits of depression.

"You're in the greatest game in the world," he would say. "In a few

years you can quit and do just as you damned please for the rest of your life. Snap out of it."

His words were unnecessary. I knew I was sitting pretty, and I had no intention of quitting, but I could not help but wonder, now and then, if the effort was worth the result.

It was at this stage in our careers that we were dealt a blow that almost ruined us.

We had invested a large part of our capital in four truck loads of whisky and had delegated Smith and his bullies to bring it into New Orleans. Bascom and his gang, after lying low for several months, came out of hiding suddenly, surrounded our vehicles on the road, killed one of our men, wounded Smith and drove away with their loot.

Graves swore dire vengeance when he heard the news, but I reminded him that vengeance would not restore our stolen whisky or revive our waning bank accounts.

"Then," said he, "I'll figure out some way to get our money back, if we have to hold Bascom up and rob him."

It was days before he perfected his plan, but I found him in our little apartment one night, bubbling over with enthusiasm.

"I've got it!" he cried. "Here's where we stick Bascom. We'll get our cash and have a good laugh at his expense. Remember Jacobs, the loan shark?"

I said that I recalled the gentleman as an extremely unsavory individual who frequented The Tavern, a gambling house in which Bascom was reported to have a financial interest.

"He's more than that," said Graves. "He's Bascom's agent, sort of a society bootlegger. He was well acquainted among the wealthy people of the town, and he keeps them supplied with liquor at fancy prices. All of Bascom's best stuff goes to Jacobs and they split the profit."

"A shrewd fellow from all that I

can hear. The story of how he got his start is a good example of the man's ability. He ferreted out a society dame who was rather hard up for cash. This lady was famous for her parties. Jacobs made a deal with her. Every time a guest asked where she got her fine liquor she replied: 'From a very high-class gentleman, Mr. Jacobs. He handles only the best.' Then she would slip the guest Mr. Jacobs's telephone number. He would cut her in on the profit, and they both did very well. A clever bird, indeed, but I believe we can put a fast one over on him. We are going to sell him some liquor."

"How will that get our money back?" I demanded.

"Leave that to your uncle," replied Graves. "Come on, we're going to see him now. Bring your gat—you may need it."

We walked to Mr. Jacobs's establishment, which was only three blocks away, and came upon that oily gentleman in his tiny office, where he was, ostensibly, a loan agent. He was expecting us, for Graves had telephoned, and after grunting an acknowledgment of introductions he waved us to chairs.

"What iss it you want?" he asked. There was just the trace of an accent in his soft voice. "A loan, perhaps?"

"No, Mr. Jacobs," said Graves. "We've got some very fine whisky, and we were told that you handle the best stuff in New Orleans. It's all in barrels, you can let it age as long as you want to. It's a bargain. Twelve barrels for twenty-five hundred bucks."

"So?" Mr. Jacobs pursed his fat lips and raised his thick, black eyebrows. "You will deliver it, yess?"

"Nope, we can't do that. You'll have to come after it. Somebody might relieve us of it on the way. They will know better than to touch you."

Jacobs laughed.

"Quite right," he said. "Well, if your stuff iss good I can use it. I will bring a truck and take a look tomorrow night. Give me the address."

Graves wrote the street number on a piece of paper and we departed. When we were outside, Graves snorted and said:

"Can you imagine that old buzzard! Wanted us to deliver it so he could stick us up. He won't dare to try to storm our own joint, though."

Apparently, if he had any thought of robbing us, Mr. Jacobs had forgotten it by the following evening, for he appeared at our storage place with one man and a small truck. Graves took him down to the basement and they went from barrel to barrel while the wily bootlegger tasted the contents of each.

"Very good!" he cried when he had finished. "I can use them. Remember, if you get any more like this, Jacobs is the man. I will always give you a fair price, and I know enough to keep my tongue between my teeth."

We helped roll out the barrels and place them in the truck. Jacobs passed over the money, held out his hand. Graves shook it and they rattled away.

"Did it!" breathed Graves when the machine turned the corner. "Trimmed him and trimmed him good! Lord, what a yarn this will be for rum row. Jacobs, the smartest guy in town, buys one barrel of good whisky for twenty-five hundred plasters. Oh, boy, it'll be good for a laugh ten years from now."

"One barrel," I objected. "It looked like twelve to me."

"Twelve barrels," corrected Graves, "but only one barrel of whisky. I was a week getting those things made. Each one had a false bottom, was just the right amount of wood for weight. The whisky is on top, there is nothing but wood below. It took exactly one barrel of the best stuff money could buy to fill those barrels. Do you see the light?"

I did, and I enjoyed the joke nearly as much as Graves did. It was a real accomplishment. We had most of our money back, plus the very real

satisfaction of having put one over on our ancient enemy. By the next day the story was all over the city, and all the rum kings, hi-jackers and sea captains were talking about it. The righteous Mr. Jacobs was said to be three times as angry as a rattlesnake in August. Bascom's reaction to our little joke was not made public.

CHAPTER V

Hooch War

WE soon forgot the incident under the stress of protecting and expanding our own interests. From this point on we grew rapidly. We acquired additional capital from an attorney, who was a pillar of his church, but who was not above investing five thousand dollars in what looked like a sure thing.

Our syndicate continued to buy from the independent skippers, and in a few months we were taking nearly everything they could bring in. If our market got much larger we might be hard put to fill the demand. I mentioned this to Graves and he countered by buying a small power boat which he put under the command of Shady Smith.

There are two kinds of ocean-going rum runners, you know. The ships which are owned by syndicates and which run in close to shore are under one classification, while the boats which lay outside the twelve mile limit and wait for customers come under the other. These latter ships are usually owned by their skippers, who do not care to take chances of losing their craft by running the blockade. They prefer to loaf along, out of the reach of the coast guard cutters, until somebody comes along to buy and unload their cargoes. It was to meet these latter boats that Graves made his purchase.

It was at this stage of things that we began to meet the grafters. We were just getting big enough to merit their attention. Naturally there were some

spots where we were more than willing to make an investment in protection, but for the most part we turned down the proposals of the petty officials and peanut politicians. Graves was hardboiled about it, too.

"You can't do us any good," he told them, "and we won't pay you a dime. If you think you can make it tough for us, step right out and try it. Two can play at that game."

We had one or two influential gentlemen on our pay roll in New Orleans. We also kicked in to three or four constables on the road north and we continued to pay the St. Louis gangster who delivered the goods for us in his territory until the government sent him to Leavenworth for being so indiscreet as to rob the United States mails.

However, while we did not pay out a great deal as we went along, we always knew where money would square almost anything except murder.

Graves and I made it a rule to play ball with our friends. If they helped us, we helped them. There was not anything, within reason, that we would not do to assist the boys who were instrumental in making our game a success. There was no sentiment attached to it. We knew that it was good business, that it would pay real dividends in the future—and we intended to be rum runners for some time to come.

An example of the way we worked:

There was a prosecuting attorney in Missouri who had made it very easy for our trucks to run through his county. Despite all kinds of opposition, he had used political pressure to force the sheriff and his deputies to let us alone. Election time was drawing near. The prosecutor was under fire from his opponent and in several of the newspapers. It looked as though he was certain to be defeated for reelection. He came to New Orleans and appealed to Graves for assistance.

"Go back home," said Graves, "and defend your record in a few speeches.

Bring the bootlegging issue up. Get them to talking about it. As soon as some politician or newspaper demands to know why you haven't made war on the rum runners, send me a wire. I'll do the rest."

The wire came a week later. Graves loaded up an old truck with some odds and ends of whisky and alcohol which we had in one of our warehouses. He started it north in charge of two of our men.

Then he called the prosecutor on the telephone and, in a guarded conversation, gave him his instructions.

The next night the prosecuting attorney, single-handed, seized a whisky-laden truck as it passed through his town. In a battle with the desperadoes—according to the local newspapers—more than twenty shots were fired. Both men escaped, but the whisky was the prosecutor's prize. It was poured into the sewer with appropriate ceremonies and plenty of photographers. When the ballots were cast and counted our friend had been returned to office with a record-breaking majority and our rum trucks continued to roll past the courthouse every night.

"That's the way to do it," said Graves. "Now, if nothing happens in St. Louis, New Orleans, Louisville or Kansas City we are all set to make that million dollars in mighty short order."

It developed that Graves was a bit optimistic. We had a long way to go and the road was to be rather rocky.

I was sitting in the leather company office discussing ways and means with Shady Smith when the door was thrown open and in walked Hurd, the man who gave us our first job in the whisky game. We had always been friendly with him; in fact, we had effected a sort of a combine to present a more united front against the raids of Bascom and his hi-jackers.

"Howdy, gents," said Hurd. "I come as the bearer of sad tidings. Brother Bascom has figured out a new

one, and if it works we're out of business."

"Aw, sit down," retorted Smith. "You musta been drinking your own stuff. How can Bascom put us on the bum?"

"Just like this," said Hurd, sitting down and lighting a cigar. "He has served notice on all the independent skippers that they will not be allowed to sell to you fellows or to me. If they do, he threatens to put his men in boats and start raiding them. Most of these lousy sea captains are scared to death of Bascom. I'm afraid he's going to make it tough. He orders them to sell to Charley Crouse. They get the same price, why not? Save themselves trouble, see?"

"A sort of an embargo," said I. "We're out. Crouse gets all the business."

"Exactly."

"Say," snarled Smith. "You birds aren't going to let him get away with this, are you?"

Hurd shrugged.

"How are you going to stop him? If he can bluff the skippers, he's got us on the run."

"I'll bet Graves won't stand for it," growled Smith. "We'll see what he has to say."

Graves had plenty to say. But he refused to fall in with Smith's proposal for a war to the finish with Bascom's crowd.

"A waste of time and money," he declared. "We don't want a long drawn-out fight if we can avoid it. This thing simply means that we will have to do what we should have done a long time ago. We will go into the shipping end of this game, too. We'll form a syndicate, the three of us, with shares to a few outsiders. Then we'll buy a boat or two, hire our own captains and bring over our own booze. In the long run we will make twice as much money as we make now."

"But we take twice as many risks," objected Hurd.

"Risks!" shouted Graves. "Of course there'll be risks. This whole game is made up of risks. The fellow that takes 'em is the fellow who collects. You've got to come in with us in self-defense. If you don't Bascom will break you."

Hurd smiled.

"I guess you're right," he admitted.

"I'll get busy in the morning and see if this is as bad as it's supposed to be," went on Graves. "If it is, I'll take steps to buy a ship and get a captain. We'll meet here to-morrow at noon and clean up the whole affair. I'll show this bozo Bascom a thing or two about his own specialty."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I am going to organize a crew of hi-jackers and rob Bascom of his stolen goods as fast as he gets 'em. Watch me."

"Attaboy!" yelled Smith. "I appoint myself chief hi-jacker."

"Shut up!" barked Hurd. "You crazy guys will have us all in the government's boarding house. If you are going to start a free-for-all battle you can count me out. I'm not afraid of Bascom, but I'm not going to get mixed up in a hooch war that won't get us any place."

"This won't be a hooch war," said Graves. "The first thing to do is to get ourselves fixed up, then we can take care of Bascom nice and quiet like. We'll just hoist his stuff and what the hell will he do about it?"

"Nothing," answered Smith.

"And you better come in with us, Hurd," went on Graves, "or you'll be busted flatter than a pancake. How about it?"

"Oh, well, declare me in. But keep your heads. Don't let that blood-thirsty Smith start a lot of shooting."

"I'll keep my head," growled Graves. "I'm in this business to make the dough. Getting even with Bascom is incidental. Now you boys amuse yourselves for the afternoon and I'll go out and talk turkey with the agents of

some of these yellow-livered skippers. If things are as bad as they're cracked up to be I'll be back here this evening with some real news. See you then."

Graves stalked out. The three of us went to Limpy's pay-off room in the warehouse and played pitch for two or three hours, ate in an Italian restaurant and returned to the office to find Graves, grinning like a donkey, waiting for us.

"Brother Bascom has certainly put the fix on the boys," said he. "All of 'em are scared pink. Wouldn't talk to me. Said it wasn't even healthy to be in the same neighborhood. We can't buy one dime's worth of liquor from the boats. But we should worry. I bought a boat. Remember, the old Romolda? Well, she's ours and—"

"That old tub!" yelled Hurd. "Why the lousy scow won't hold together for one trip."

"Yes, she will, and one trip's all we need. If we lose her we won't be in so deep. Anyway, I've bought her and I've got Cagle for a skipper. Guess that isn't good, eh?"

Captain Cagle was the toughest sea-going man on the New Orleans water front. A man-breaker and a man-driver who was feared and hated wherever he was known, he had a reputation for square dealing that was something unusual among the motley army of double crossing cheaters who made up the rum rings. Queer tales were whispered about the wharves about Cagle. It was said that he was a madman. Bloody yarns were told of how he had beat off and sunk a boat manned by hi-jackers, how he had subdued a mutinous crew and had thrown some of the members to the sharks.

"Cagle is a good man," said Hurd. "He's tough as leather, but he is on the level. If anybody can bring that old mudboat of yours into port, it's Cagle. Where are you going to get a crew?"

"The captain is picking them," retorted Graves. "He's making the

rounds of the joints now. Expects to have all hands ready by to-morrow noon.

"Now here's the lay of the land. One of us birds will have to go to Cuba and buy the cargo. The other two can stay here, make plans for landing the stuff and take care of Bascom. Who'll make the trip?"

"I'd like to go," said I. "I'm a sailor. I could probably help out if anything happens."

"Wouldn't mind going myself," said Hurd.

Graves laughed, then said:

"We'll draw. The fellow that gets the short piece of paper takes the ride."

He tore up three strips of paper, turned his back and arranged them in his hand. Hurd drew first. I followed. Graves took the one that was left. We held them up. I had won. I was going to Cuba to buy a cargo of liquor for the Romolda.

CHAPTER VI

Where Bootleg Liquor Grows

I WENT to a party the other night. The host, one of those amiable business men—fat, florid and forty—was very proud of his private stock. For my benefit, he went down into his basement and brought up an assortment of bottles covered with fancy labels. He exhibited them proudly, extolling the virtues of each.

"The best stuff money can buy," said he. "No bootleg liquor for mine. I get this direct from the fellow who runs it in. He charges me plenty, but it's worth it. Here, taste this."

He uncorked a bottle of Scotch and poured out two generous drinks. We downed it. The stuff was passable, but that was all. I recognized it immediately. It had never seen Scotland. It was from Cuba. Perhaps my own syndicate had brought it in!

My host, hypnotized by the beautiful labels, actually believed that he was drinking first-class liquor.

There are thousands of persons like him in this country to-day. They suffer, in more ways than one, from the belief that any kind of liquor brought in on a boat is, naturally, good liquor. Nothing could be further from the truth. A fine label which sets forth that a bottle contains Scotch, rye, bourbon or Gordon gin means no more than a fine dress upon a handsome woman. The drinkers let their eyes deceive their stomachs.

Let me make this point here and now:

There is very little real liquor in the United States. The warehouse whisky is diluted, the moonshine is poison and the stuff which is run in from South America and Cuba is of an inferior grade. The man who tells you he is selling you real whisky, gin or champagne is a liar. Practically speaking, there is no such animal.

When prohibition came along and created another giant industry, those bent on violating the law went to England, France and Scotland for their goods. But it was a long and expensive trip. The profits did not compensate the runners for the risk. And then, as the available liquor supply in the United States was consumed, the drinkers became less particular. Some of them took to hair tonic. Others drank one-day old moonshine. Anything that had a kick in it was marketable. So, said the bootleggers to themselves, why should we give these people real whisky when they will drink something half as good? And where, they asked themselves, can we manufacture the stuff without interference from the law?

Cuba provided the answer and Cuba took this new industry to her heart. Now, nearly all of the booze consumed in the United States is made there. Hundreds of distilleries have sprung up. The stuff is turned out over night. It is about half as good as the cheap whisky of other days. Bottles are decorated with counterfeit labels and

liquor supposedly from all points of the compass is made to order for the rum rings. And the American public, which has lost its sense and its taste, drinks the stuff and likes it.

The base for most all the varied liquors manufactured in Cuba is the same—alcohol made from sugar cane. It is easily and quickly produced and sells for from twenty-five to thirty-five cents a gallon. The same gallon of alcohol in Chicago, St. Louis or Kansas City costs from twelve to fourteen dollars.

I had no idea of the immensity of the trade when I arrived in Havana with Captain Cagle. We docked at a wharf which had been constructed for rum ships and which we had reserved by cable. Then we left the boat, took a taxicab, and went to the office of one of the hundreds of brokers who made a business of supplying the wants of American skippers.

"I think I'll take you to Jensen," said Cagle. "He's honest and will give you a good price."

"Okay with me," said I. Cagle had won my confidence on the trip across. He was a peculiar man, tall, lean, sunburned, with thick black hair and shining dark eyes. His high cheek bones bespoke the Indian blood which undoubtedly coursed in his veins.

We went to Jensen. He was a huge, square-faced, tow-headed Swede who greeted me with a grin and a bone-crushing handshake.

"We want a load," said Cagle. "I think about forty-five hundred cases will do the trick. What have you got?"

"Everything. I can give you whatever you want. Look over the price list while I transact a little business in the inside office." He handed me a printed sheet and left hurriedly.

Together we examined the list.

Jensen, like most of the Cuban brokers, featured Scotch whisky and he had a large assortment of the stuff in his warehouses. The price list on Scotch was as follows: "Peter Daw-

son, case—fifteen dollars; Haig and Haig, case—twelve dollars; Lawson, case—twelve dollars and fifty cents; House of Lords, case—six dollars and fifty cents; Old Smuggler, case—six dollars and fifty cents."

For American and Canadian whisky he had Hill and Hill at five dollars and fifty cents a case; Green River at five dollars and fifty cents a case and William Penn at fifteen dollars a case. He also listed apricot, cherry and peach brandies at ten dollars a case; cognac at seventeen dollars and fifty cents a case; benedictine at twenty-two dollars a case, and all kinds of wine.

When Jensen returned I told him that we would take two thousand cases of Scotch, a thousand cases of Canadian, a thousand five-gallon tins of alcohol and five hundred cases of mixed brandies.

"Righto!" he cried.

The order was made out and handed to one of his assistants who hurried away with it.

"When can we get loaded?" asked Cagle.

"We'll start right away," said Jensen. "It'll all be in your hold by late to-morrow afternoon. You can bring the money here to-morrow. Now that we have business off our minds, let's go into my office and take a shot."

In the private office Jensen unlocked a desk and produced a bottle and three glasses.

"This actually came from Scotland," he said. "When I first got into this game I ran a boat load of Scotch in here to be used as flavoring for some of this synthetic stuff. I've still got enough of it left for my own needs. Well, here's how!"

We sat and talked and drank through the warm, lazy afternoon. Across from Jensen's office were two of the largest liquor wharves in Cuba and from the window I could see the thousands of cases of liquor piled up and awaiting ships to take them to the United States. Trucks were arriving

constantly from the warehouses, disgorging more booze for thirsty Americans. Beyond the wharves were dozens of ships lying in to get their cargo, fishing smacks, schooners with auxiliary engines, several small steamers and a beautiful high-powered yachtlike affair with guns fore and aft.

Prohibition! What a joke it was. What a comedy! Hundreds of men fighting, scheming, killing to get liquor to thousands of other men and women who had passed a law declaring it a crime to sell or drink it. Six dollars a case! In St. Louis six dollars wouldn't buy one bottle.

Jensen was talking, telling of his experiences.

"Four years ago you couldn't sell this synthetic booze for love or money," he was saying. "Now you can sell every bottle you can lay your hands on and the distilleries are going full blast. That's because the supply in the States has fallen away off. There isn't any more good stuff and the drinkers will stand for this phony Scotch made out of sugar cane alcohol, so why not give it to 'em?"

"All you have to do is to preserve the illusion. If you labeled your bottles, 'Cuban whisky, made from sugar cane,' there isn't a rum runner in New Orleans or Miami that would look at you. But if you put on a phony Scotch or Canadian label, it's fine. That's why Havana has one of the biggest printing plants you ever saw, devoted to printing bum labels for our booze. The engravings are made by workmen employed by the distillery owners.

"It reminds me of the time the bootleggers complained that we were making our whisky cases out of Cuban wood. They kicked like mules. Said the customers were getting hep to the fact that the hooch was synthetic. We had to give in. Now all the whisky cases made in Cuba are made out of wood which is sent over here on a schooner. There's a big load of it out there, right now. Can you beat that?"

"What about the bottles?" I asked.

"Oh, they're imported, too. No facilities here for making them and they wouldn't measure up. The old customer who drinks this stuff insists on being fooled. He knows he's a sucker, but he won't admit it.

"Say, if a fellow could get control of one of these distilleries along with a distribution organization in the States he could make a fortune so fast he'd be dizzy. He could make this stuff for a few cents a bottle and the net profit would be something tremendous. Too many people handle this stuff now. Each one gets a cut out of it."

"You may hear from me on that," said I. "My partner's got big ambitions in that direction. If we can get the capital we may do something soon."

"I could swing a fourth interest in a plant," said Jensen. "How about you, Cagle, want in? You could be the commodore of our fleet."

Cagle shook his head.

"No, the sea is all I know. I'm afraid I'm too old a dog to get mixed up in anything new. Sometimes I wish I had the nerve and the ambition to step out and make a lot of money, but I haven't."

Jensen laughed.

"Sounds funny," he commented, "when a guy like you talks about nerve. You're supposed to have plenty of it."

"Only in one way," replied Cagle. "I've got the nerve to fight a gang of drunken sailors, but I can't burn all my bridges behind me and become a rum runner. I can command a ship that carries booze, but I hang onto a shred of respectability by pretending that I am just the messenger. Queer, perhaps, but that's the way I feel about it."

The conversation languished. Presently, Cagle and I departed, promising to return to-morrow for another chat before we sailed for home. We strolled down the dock and watched the yawning

ing holds being filled with Cuban liquor. At the Romolda an escalator rattled and banged as the tins of alcohol were shot into the ship. One of Jensen's checkers stood near by, keeping tab on the cargo as it was loaded.

"It 'll all be in by to-morrow noon," he said. "We were short on Scotch and had to have some made up before we could fill the order."

"Then we can leave by two o'clock," said Cagle. "To-night we'll go see the Scratcher."

"The Scratcher? Who's he?"

"You'll see when we get there."

We dined at a hotel and returned to the water front after dark. Cagle led the way down a narrow, evil-smelling street. He stopped in front of a house and pushed the bell-button which was set in the wall. A panel in the door was opened cautiously and a pair of eyes gleamed in the gloom.

"Ah, captain!" exclaimed a voice.

"Come in. It has been some time since we have seen you."

"It has, that," said Cagle. "Is the boss in, Henry?"

"He is. He'll see you in a minute. Will you sit down here and have a drink?"

Henry brought the drinks and vanished. When he returned he announced that his employer was ready for us and we stepped into the next room. A man, tall, lean, with narrow, drooping shoulders, sat behind a mahogany desk which was littered with papers. Before him was a row of pens; at his elbow were dozens of ink bottles; behind him stood a drawing board on an easel.

He looked up as we entered and I was struck immediately by his face, which was deadly pale, and the burning darkness of his eyes.

"Hello, captain!"

When introductions had been accomplished, Cagle plunged into the object of our visit.

"Want some papers, Scratcher," he began. "Need them by to-morrow. I

have to get out of here in a hurry and I knew you wouldn't turn me down. You can get them out by morning for me, can't you?"

"I've got a lot ahead of me," replied the Scratcher, "and my hand isn't as steady as it used to be. My eyes are bothering me, cap. I'm afraid I'm going to have some trouble."

"Rubbish!" snorted Cagle. "You're looking better than ever. How about it? Can I drop around again in the morning?"

The Scratcher smiled wearily.

"I'll start in right now. What do you want, the usual stuff? Honduras and New Orleans?"

"Yes. The price will be the same I suppose?"

"The same old three hundred."

We took our leave and as we walked back toward the hotel the captain told me what it was all about. Every ship engaged in international trade must obtain clearance papers before leaving a port. The papers set forth the name of the ship's owners, home port, the cargo and the destination. Captain Cagle had arranged to buy two sets of forged papers, one showing our destination to be Honduras and our cargo to be liquor, the second showing that we were running into New Orleans without cargo.

"Then if we are boarded at sea by a revenue cutter, I show 'em the Honduras papers," he explained. "There's nothing they can do but let me alone, and after we unload our stuff, I toss the Honduras manifest overboard and use the others to get into New Orleans with. It's the best scheme yet devised for protection from the prohibis."

"That's one bill that I always pay myself, that three hundred for the phony papers and I figure that it is well worth the money. May keep me out of the pen some day."

"This Scratcher is an expert?"

"The best in the business."

"Queer-looking fellow. Queer complexion and funny-looking eyes."

Cagle laughed grimly.

"He's a sleigh rider. You know, sniffs coke. Made a fortune writing papers for booze hustlers and has spent every dime of it on snow."

CHAPTER VII

The Hi-jackers Attack

THE old Romolda, her insides bulging with liquor, rolled like a drunken man as she fought her way toward the States through great green seas. The sky was dark with gray storm clouds and the howling wind tore masses of foam from the tops of the waves and hurled them at the ship.

No need to ask whether the glass rose or fell with such a wind shrieking about us. We were in for a hard fight and the success or failure of our venture depended upon the ability of this old hooker to pound her way through the vast stretch of tumbled waters, tossed and tormented by the gale, boiling and swirling as it smashed and swayed to and fro.

I stood on the bridge with Stilson, the first officer.

"Looks bad," said I.

"Rotten," he retorted bitterly. "This dirty old tub will be mighty lucky if she gets through a sea like this."

The day wore on. The Romolda struggled and fought. A huge mass of water swept over her forecastle head and crashed against the upper bridge, wrenching the lifeboats from their davits.

From aft there came a hoarse shout—

"Engine room skylights carried adrift!"

The Romolda, moaning and groaning in every rivet, rose slowly on the crest of a great wave and slid down into the trough.

On the after well-deck members of the crew struggled with the ship's canvas. Others, not needed for the work,

had taken refuge against the sea in the wheelhouse.

As the Romolda rolled on her side a man broke from the crowd around the sails, shouting:

"We'll sink. We're done. We'll never get 'ome, we won't!"

Instantly the members of the crew dropped their work and gathered in knots, muttering to themselves.

"We ought to take to the boats!"

"There's a steamer on this lane. Make Cagle send an SOS."

Stilson was bawling orders, cursing and yelling for the men to get back on the job.

Suddenly Cagle appeared, dressed in black oilskins. One hand clung to the shattered bridge rail. The other gripped a wicked-looking revolver.

"Back to work!" he roared, menacing them with the weapon. "You, Givens, you dirty little cockney! I heard you squawking about not getting home. One more word out of you and your home will be some shark's belly. Step lively!"

Sullenly the men returned to their duties.

"A rotten gang," said Cagle to me. "They'd scuttle the ship and take to the boats in a minute."

All night long the booming gale held us in its grip. We rolled and pitched through the savage darkness, now in the depths of despair and certain that the next minute was our last and again riding high and hoping for the best. The wheelhouse was smashed. The boats, ventilators and davits were so much wreckage and still the Romolda hammered ahead, her broken nose pointed toward New Orleans. Cagle never left his post. By the binnacle light his face showed up, thin and cruel; but his eyes were the eyes of a man who would never surrender.

"Get us through and I'll see that you're taken care of," I told him.

The captain smiled grimly.

"I never lost a ship to a storm," he said, "and I never lost a cargo to a

hi-jacker. That's about all I've got to be proud of."

By morning the gloom had lifted. The wind veered off. The glass began to rise. We knew that the worst of the gale was over. We were safe with our precious load of liquor.

All the next day we made good progress. The wreckage was cleared away. The upper structure was patched.

"The old scow stood up pretty well," said Cagle. "She's good for another trip or so if she doesn't run into more bad weather."

Sunset found us skirting the coast. The watch was doubled to keep an eye out for coast guard cutters and whisky pirates. Cagle and his officers wore automatics and sawed-off shotguns were placed in handy places where they could be reached by the crew in case we were boarded.

"We'll run for it if we can," explained Cagle, "but if they corner us, they'll get a hot reception."

When darkness came we nosed in-shore without a light burning. From time to time the engines were shut down while the captain listened intently for the throbbing engines of a pursuer. Hearing none, we proceeded. Cagle knew every foot of the way and he steered the craft without difficulty. The channel was wider now, almost the size of a small lake.

"Must be about here," muttered Cagle to himself. With a flash light he consulted the written instructions which Graves had given him before we sailed. Then he ordered the motors shut down. Holding the flash light before him he turned it off and on four times.

"Watch," he said.

We strained our eyes peering into the darkness. From far away toward the shore came the answering winks of light—four times.

"Okay," said Stilson. "They've spotted us and the coast is all clear."

Twenty minutes later a small power boat came alongside and Shady Smith

sang out his greeting from the darkness.

"All ready!" he cried. "Let's get going!"

Another boat was in his wake and presently three others appeared. The work of unloading the ship began, all hands, including the negro cook, turned to. Cagle and I got into Smith's boat which was the first to make the run for shore. We wanted to see Graves. I was hungry for news of New Orleans and the rum kings.

"Looks like we've made it," I said to Cagle.

"Looks like it, but don't be too sure. You've got a long way to go yet."

"Right," said I.

As we neared the sandy beach I could make out a knot of men gathered there. They came toward the water to meet us. Graves's bulky figure loomed above his companions.

As the boat ran its nose into the sand our shouted greetings were stilled by a shriek of terror from behind the dense undergrowth which lined the shore. Then a crowd of milling, fighting men crashed through the brush and came toward us.

Graves's face was a white mask of fury.

"Bascom!" he bellowed. "Bascom's gang has jumped our truck drivers! Come on!"

We leaped from the boat and joined in the fray. It was too dark and the quarters were too close for the use of firearms. Knives, clubs and fists were the only effective weapons. There was scant time before the whole mad mob was upon us and we were at handgrips with the professional bullies hired by Bascom.

There was the scuff of sand, the gasps and howls of men, the thud of terrific blows. Now the mêlée sloshed calf deep into the sea, now they were on the sand swinging, kicking, biting in primitive combat.

Graves fought with the end of a smashed whisky case, knocking his as-

sailants right and left, blood streaming from a great gash in his forehead. Cagle, dour and silent, used his fists and struck like a sharpshooter, making every blow count. Every time he lashed out with those terrible hands a man went down.

My side was numb from a blow that I did not remember. My nose bled freely. Using both hands on a rifle which I had picked out of the boat I cleared a space around me, then picked out a big, hulking ruffian and cracked his skull. As I did so another man dived for my legs and brought me down in the shallow water. Rolling over to extricate myself from his grasp, I almost drowned before I got to my feet again. A blow with the barrel of the rifle ended the fellow who had tackled me and I returned to the fight.

In the meantime the second boat came ashore and we were strengthened by ten men, enough reinforcement to make the contest more equal. Slowly we drove the attacking force back toward the underbrush and then, as suddenly as they had appeared, they broke and ran for cover.

"Now!" bawled Graves. "Give it to 'em!"

Shady Smith was ready. His automatic rifle chattered its song of death and bullets sang about the heads of the fleeing hi-jackers as they fled into the darkness.

"That's enough," said Graves. "Let 'em go. Let's make speed with the loading."

The fight was over. Not a man engaged in it had gone unscathed. Graves had suffered a scalp wound. Cagle's face was a mass of beaten and bruised flesh. Smith was covered with blood. Several of the truck drivers were unconscious, but none of them was seriously hurt. A broken arm seemed to be the worst of it.

My side pained fearfully. One of my eyes was closed. My jaw ached. The whole world seemed to be sliding

about me crazily as I walked toward the line of trucks.

"You're about all in," said Graves. "You're white as a sheet. Better go in on the first truck. Come on, I'll fix it with the driver."

He conducted me to a machine, an oil truck with a false end which could be taken out to make room for liquor, and said to the driver:

"Take this fellow in to the station. He's all right."

A few minutes later we were rolling down the dark road toward New Orleans.

I had a sawed-off shotgun across my knees. I was earning my ride by acting as guard.

"Wonder how they got wise to us?" I asked.

"Dunno," said the young driver. "Bascom paid somebody for the tip, I guess. They tried to stick us up, then they were going down to the beach, grab you fellows and take what hooch they could get. But we wouldn't be stuck up. There was about a dozen of us and we just jumped right out in the middle of 'em and the whole gang of us rolls down to the beach fighting like mad." He laughed at the memory of the battle.

"Boy, this is a fighting business. If you don't fight, you don't last. Wonder if Smith clipped any of those boys when they beat it for the brush? He was layin' down on 'em pretty heavy."

We passed through several dark and silent villages and headed toward St. Bernard. The young truckman was peering anxiously into the gloom.

"Things look right to-night," he said. "No signs of hi-jackers or dry agents."

We rattled through St. Bernard and turned north to Poydras. As we did so a speeding sedan came from behind, tore past us and came to a halt about fifty yards down the road. Two men leaped out and hurried toward us. I raised my weapon.

"Keep your shirt on," said the

driver. "They may be a couple of the boys."

Both men were heavily armed, but they made no motion to draw the pistols which were strapped on the outside of their garments.

"What's your number?" called one, after they stopped at a discreet distance.

"Sixty-nine," said the driver.

"What's the word?"

"Red roses."

"Get rollin' to town."

The men stood aside and we proceeded on our way.

"What was all that?" I demanded.

"Dunno myself. Guess this mob I'm workin' for has got the business on this road sewed up. They put out numbers and passwords and if you ain't got 'em it's just too bad for you. If we hadn't been right those two birds would have started shootin'.

"You see, the guy that runs this outfit is no sucker. He ain't going to buy protection for a lot of stiffs to muscle in on his game. See?"

I saw and marveled at what Graves had accomplished in the short time that I had been in Cuba. With the help of Hurd, no doubt, he had provided for the safe landing and transportation of our goods into the city.

But there were other surprises in store for me. When we arrived in town we drove to a long, low building which looked like a factory or a garage. As we approached two wide doors swung open and we drove into the place which was lined with trucks of every description. In one end of the room cases of liquor were piled high and there was a complete bottling, capping and labeling outfit.

When Graves arrived an hour later he took great delight in showing me around the new establishment.

"Safe as a church," he explained. "I've got it all fixed. We can haul our stuff here, and start it north. I've figured out that we can make about twen-

ty per cent more profit by buying alcohol in Cuba, shipping it here and making it into synthetic whisky.

"That's why I bought all the equipment. And look at this—" He pointed to a big tank with a huge faucet at the bottom.

"This is the best rig yet. When you get the stuff in the case, you tuck in a lot of straw, then you shoot the whole works under the faucet and give it a dose of salt water. When the old customer opens his case he gets a whiff of that salt water and he says, 'The real stuff right off the ocean,' and you've made a customer for life."

We sat for an hour making high plans for the future. I told Graves about Jensen and his scheme for buying an alcohol plant.

"Great idea," he said. "It would give us a complete production and distributing outfit. But the first thing we want to do is to buy a couple of real ships. We'll sell the Romolda and get a line on something worth while. Then we'll put Cagle in charge of the fleet and we'll run the stuff and count the money.

"Now there's one thing that's got to be done right away. The business is so big in Kansas City and St. Louis that we've got to have more storage room and more men on the job up there. Suppose you look after it. All right?"

"I'm ready to go."

"Want to go now?"

"Sure."

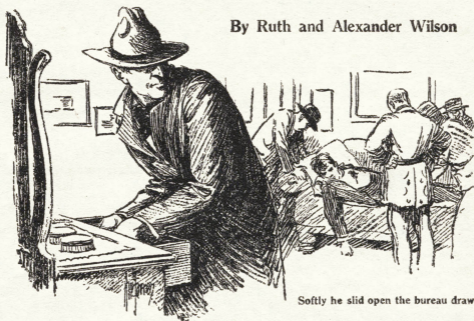
"Fine," said Graves. "You can ride up with the boys when they take the first of this stuff up. They'll be ready to start in an hour. Come on over, I'll introduce you to Henry, the boss driver."

Just as the first gray tinge of dawn was touching the sky, the booze trucks rolled out of the plant and headed north. I sat on the front seat beside the square-jawed Henry, a repeating shotgun across my knees.

TO BE CONCLUDED

The Silent Witness

By Ruth and Alexander Wilson



Softly he slid open the bureau drawer

Arty Beele Tackles the Strange Case of the Prisoner Who Wouldn't Talk—Even to Her Lawyer

CHAPTER I

Murder at the Locust

ON the night of the murder the night clerk at the Locust Apartments saw the side door open and three men come in. They were supporting Mr. Skeets Brady. The clerk said afterward, when Commonwealth *versus* Jordan came up for trial, that Brady appeared to be drunk. No, he was not close enough to smell liquor, but he knew a drunk when he saw one. And Brady had spoken of attending Al Dooner's birthday party, which, from what the clerk had heard, meant a party wringing wet.

Yes, Brady had been a permanent guest. He lived on the same floor as Whitey Higgins. The men had taken Brady upstairs, accompanied by a bell-boy who had a pass key.

Then the three went to Higgins's room; the bellboy had told him so, and he knew them as his friends. Higgins had arrived and gone up to his apartment about fifteen minutes earlier. In a minute or so he phoned down and asked for ginger ale. The same bell-boy took it up.

Then, went on the night clerk, Floss Jordan rushed in and demanded excitedly: "Is Mr. Brady in?" The clerk stalled for time, but she demanded the key. Her breath was heavy with the sweet redolence of flavored alcohol. Could he smell it? He could! But he had not thought it unusual. Miss Jordan was Brady's girl, she had also been at the party, and he gave her the key she was yelling for. Brady had said she could have it in his absence; why not, therefore, when he was at home?

Two minutes later—the clerk said it was exactly twenty minutes after two—she came flying down the stairs and through the lobby. He noticed that her hat was askew and that she was very pale. She went out, and he thought he saw her getting into a cab.

Was he sure about the cab? Not exactly. Because at that moment the poker game was telephoning for more ginger ale. And at the same moment some one else came flying up to him. But this time it was the bellboy, whispering wildly: "Say, listen, Brady's shot an' bleedin' like a pig! An' a gat onna floor by the couch! I'm turnin' the corner in the corridor toward his room an' I hear shootin'. Brady's door's open an' I get that funny burned smell. So I dash in an' there he is where we put him on the couch. Mouth open. Shirt all red. Dead or I'm a liar!" The clerk called the police.

Captain Ryan and his assistant, Wood, answered in person, because this looked like the latest of a series of gangster killings that had aroused the newspapers almost to frenzy. All previous arrests had achieved only new editorials. Wounded gangsters had died with buttoned lips, and suspects had managed to squirm out. But Ryan arrested Floss within an hour, lodged her in a city hall detention cell, and had her finger-printed the first thing in the morning.

The finger-prints were identical with those on the revolver found by Brady's body. But she refused to say a word. At Ryan, Wood, or Brown, the assistant district attorney whose specialty was murder, she only shrugged.

"You know what'll happen to you if you don't talk," they said.

"I won't talk," she answered.

"Well," said Ryan, "how about those waiters at Al Dooner's party that heard you scrappin' with the boy friend? How about them hearing you say you were gonna kill him? How about that, huh?"

"Well, what about it?" she retorted.

"Why did you say it?"

"I was sore at him, that's all."

"Why did you follow him home when you knew he was drunk?"

"Say, listen," she said, putting her knuckles on her hips, "who had a better right to follow him home?"

"Have you talked to Higgins lately?"

"I wouldn't spit on Higgins," she said sweetly.

"You used to be Higgins's girl before you were Brady's, weren't you?" put in Brown.

"Well, can't a girl make a mistake?"

"Didn't Higgins give you the air?"

"I just took it."

"So you took up with Brady?"

"Well—yes."

"Higgins didn't mind, did he?"

"Nobody cared if he did."

"Higgins ever try to get you back?"

She was silent, shrugging.

After they left her Brown said to Ryan: "There's a story around that she and Higgins made it up and laid for Brady. You'd better check up on where Higgins was last night."

"I did," said Ryan, "and it's all O. K. That's what makes me sure she did it. Brady didn't cheat himself on dames no matter how he cheated on them. An' that Jordan baby's no lamb-stew and lilies. I'm givin' it out to the papers she's gonna get the works. I'm goin' back to Brady's."

As he entered the Locust's lobby a tall, gaunt, unshaved individual, whose battered Stetson hung like a cloud over his hawk's beak, laid a hand on his shoulder. It was Arthur Beele, crime reporter for the *Telegraph*. That hat and that beak had followed every murder of consequence since the day that Gyp the Blood, Dago Frank and Lefty Louie had made themselves a part of the history of crime.

"So you've made a pinch, eh, Ryan?"

There was that in Beele's nasal greeting which always made Ryan apprehensive. He looked up at him.

"Oh—hello, Arty. That's right. Got the goods on her too."

"Nice work," said Beele. "You're getting better all the time, Ryan."

Ryan did not answer. They walked up the stairs to Brady's apartment on the second floor. The door was locked, but one of Ryan's men opened it. The body lay on the couch awaiting removal to the morgue. Everything else had been left as it was the night before.

"When is Doc Smythe going to make his autopsy?" asked Beele.

"Say, Arty, why are you always tryin' for individual information?" Ryan demanded. "Can't you wait until the other boys get here from their papers an' then take it with them? You always act like—"

"Hell, Ryan," said Beele sharply, "what's individual about that?"

"Oh, I don't mind telling you it's some time this afternoon. But don't ask so many questions."

But Beele was bending over the body. Two bullet holes, close together, from which the blood had bubbled slowly, marked the white sheen of the stiff shirt. The eyes were open. Beele examined the couch and the floor around it.

"You said last night there were three bullets out of his rod, Ryan."

"Say, how many times do you have to be told?" demanded Ryan truculently.

"I was wondering where the third bullet hit him." Beele examined the body more closely. "Here," he said. "Look, Ryan. It grazed his shoulder and buried itself in the frame of the couch. How many shots did the bell-boy hear?"

"For the love of Mike, Beele, what's eatin' you? Can't you wait for the other guys to get here to find out the kid heard three shots? What's all this monkey business anyway? You always think you know it all. Three bullets."

"Three shots. She killed him. An' there you are. Put that in the paper

and cut out this *Sherlock Holmes* stuff."

Beele shrugged. "I like to get the facts," he said, and began to wander about the room. Ryan scowled at him.

There was a knock at the door. Ryan's man opened it to admit the other reporters. Beele nodded to them and continued his explorations. Yes, Ryan began, it looked very much as if the girl had done it. Her threats. Brady's other women. The waiters, the night clerk, the bell hop. Three shots; three bullets. Her finger-prints on the revolver. He preened himself as he talked, and Beele's long nose drew down to sour mockery. Softly he slid open the bureau drawer which he had been fingering, fumbled about inside, and took out something which he slipped quickly into a handkerchief in his pocket.

"See you later, Ryan," he said. "There's something I want to show you."

Ryan ignored him. Beele pulled his hat down hard and went out. With the greatest possible haste he sought his city editor.

CHAPTER II

Higgins's Alibi

"HARRINGTON," he said, as they retreated into a corner of the local room, "I think I've got something."

Harrington looked at him, quizzically, wearily. A city editor's life is a dog's life, a hound dog's life. And he and Beele had worked together, from the beginning, for a long, long time.

"What do you think about the case, Arty?"

"Do you want a hunch?"

"We can't print hunches."

Beele fished a cigarette out of his side pocket. "I've never steered a paper wrong yet, and you know that, Harry. But you're right just the same. We can't print hunches." He expelled a cloud of smoke through one

nostril. "And yet I think she's innocent. And I think I'll prove it. I've never let you down, Harry. And we haven't scored a beat together since—since when?"

Harrington sighed. "There aren't any beats any more, Arty."

"If we said the girl is innocent that would be a beat, wouldn't it? If we turned out to be right we'd be sitting on the world, wouldn't we?"

"If," said Harrington.

"Let's do it," Beele said.

"What's up your sleeve?"

"It's in my pocket."

For a moment Harrington looked at him. Then he said: "We've been out of jobs before. And I guess we will again. But there's a typewriter, and the office is lousy with copy paper. Write that story. Go ahead! Don't stare at me like a damn fool!"

An hour later the first night extra hit the street. The *Telegraph* declared that Floss Jordan was a victim of circumstances. But who had made those circumstances—and why? Did the police think they could wipe clean a record of past futilities by the arrest of an innocent girl when there were others with definitely established motives for wanting the dead man out of the way? Floss Jordan was innocent of Brady's murder. The police being willing, the *Telegraph* would co-operate with them in an effort to fix the blame where it belonged.

There was a picture of Floss, a picture which showed her a slip of a girl with an uptilted chin and a big picnic hat. It was the kind of picture that editors love, readers adore, and district attorneys fear. No newspaper reader, seeing that picture, would ever believe that a girl who looked like that could ever kill a mouse, much less a man. It looked exactly the picture of the poor innocent young thing sacrificed for somebody's honor or pocketbook. And Arty Beele, with diabolical circumlocution, hinted so in eleven paragraphs. After all, gangsters are no angels. And

she was a gangster's girl. Two gangsters' girl, in fact. And the make-up man wrote under the picture: "A Face a Man Could Die For." And the circulation of the *Telegraph* multiplied like mayflies in May.

That night a slim young man whose blond good looks would have distinguished him anywhere strolled into the Detective Bureau and smiled genially at the detectives in the outer room. He knew them all. And he greeted them like hail fellows. In his way Whitey Higgins was an ingratiating person.

"The captain around, Woody?"

"He want to see you?"

"That's what I want to find out."

Wood shrugged. "He's in there," indicating Ryan's private office. "He's talkin' to Arty Beele."

"Yeh?" Higgins too read the *Telegraph*. He knocked at Ryan's door and walked in.

"Want to see me, captain?"

"What about, Whitey?"

Higgins smiled slyly and gave Beele a look. "Why, Brady."

"Did you knock him off?"

"Hell, no."

"Know who did?"

Higgins shook his head. "I just came up here because the boys outside"—he jerked his thumb toward the outer room—"they all know I was after Brady. If somebody else hadn't 'a' done it I would've. But I didn't. See what I mean?"

"Just called to be sociable, is that it, Higgins?" said Beele. "Just come in to put your alibi on file, eh?" He gave a tug at the battered Stetson. "Where were you a little after two last night, Higgins?"

"Playin' poker."

"Where?"

"In the apartment."

"Can you prove it?"

Higgins again smiled slyly. "I guess the captain's done that already."

"Did you hear the shots, Whitey?"

"How could I help it? I'm on the same floor, ain't I?"

"Willing to testify to that?"

"Sure. Any time."

"Why were you after Brady?"

"You ought to know that without askin'. He was poachin' in my territory. We had an agreement, Brady and I did. He was to keep out of South Philly. I meet him in front of the Sylvania last week. And I tell him, 'Brady, you're workin' the wrong side of the street. Cut it out.' He said sure he'd cut it out. And the same night one of his trucks delivers a load of beer on Snyder Avenue. So that's why I'd 'a' got him if somebody else hadn't."

"And if somebody else should happen to be the girl Brady took away from you that wouldn't make any difference either, would it?"

Higgins lit a cigarette. "I'm sorry about the kid," he said. "It's just tough she had to get mixed up with a guy like Brady. But don't get it wrong. Brady never took her away from me. You know how a guy gets with a dame. Soon as she started tryin' to run me I smacked 'er down. Told her I liked her, all right, but she'd better hit the breeze and try a change of scenery. So Brady took her over. And if she killed him it serves him right for trying to take over my territory, too."

"You were at Al Dooner's party last night, weren't you?" said Beele.

"Sure. So were you, Arty. A lot of the newspaper crowd was there. I understand the captain here got an invite too."

Ryan scowled. Al Dooner was a rising racketeer. Beele went on: "And Brady was there and so was Floss. Listen, Higgins. I saw how you kept your eye on Floss. What did she and Brady fight about?"

"He was neckin' with some other dame—that's all I could see. So she got sore. But that's the kind of rat Brady was. Never had enough—money, liquor, women—"

"Brady got drunk, didn't he?"

"And how!"

"Did he start home alone?"

"I wasn't that interested, Arty. Somebody did say he started to go home with that dame he's been warmin' up. But I couldn't say. I was too anxious to get back to the apartment and play poker myself to worry about that punk."

Beele regarded him closely. Then he said: "What are you going to do for Floss?"

"What do you mean—what can I do?"

"Take care of her. See that she has a lawyer. Don't you know that she's held on suspicion of murder? Don't you know that yet, Higgins?"

Higgins looked undecided. Then he took a sheaf of bills out of his pocket. "If a couple of grand'll help, I'll come through." He handed Beele two one-thousand dollar notes. "Here's two grand, Arty. Hell—here's another five hundred. Get the kid a mouthpiece. Anything else?"

Beele pocketed the money and shook his head. Ryan said: "Hit the breeze, Higgins. If I want you I'll send for you."

"K. O. with me," Higgins replied, and turned to go.

"Just a minute," said Beele. "When did you get that apartment on the same floor as Brady?"

"A month ago. Any more of my business you'd like to know?"

Beele considered. "Yes, while I'm at it and if you don't mind, Whitey. Let me see your rod."

"Sure, anything to oblige." Higgins slipped a Colt automatic out of his hip pocket and handed it to Beele. "It's a .32, if that's what you're after."

Beele examined the gun, removed the clip, then snapped it back and returned it to Higgins. "That's what I'm after all right. Brady's was a .38 Smith & Wesson. Thanks, Whitey."

"And while you're at it, Higgins," Ryan cut in, "leave that gat here! What t'hell you mean coming into my

office with it? You certainly got your nerve. An' I got a mind to pinch you for carrying concealed and deadly weapons."

"Really want it, cap? You can have it because I'm packing a .38 after this."

"Leave it an' get out," Ryan growled.

Higgins left. When the door had closed behind him Beele said: "I'd keep my eye on that guy if I were you, Ryan."

Ryan bridled. "Never mind tellin' me wha't to do. And never mind askin' me about it, either. Comin' around here suckin' up information an' goin' back an' puttin' me on the pan!" He picked up a copy of the *Telegraph*. "Where the hell do you get this stuff, anyway? I've checked up on Higgins, and he's not mixed up in it. He an' Floss had a fight, and I know damned well she's off him for life!"

"There's a mixture some place," Beele replied calmly. "I don't like its smell. And the better that blond beauty frames his alibi the less I like it. Now I'm asking you, Ryan. Do you want me to work with you, or around you?"

"I want you to get out of here and stay out."

"All right, if you feel that way about it. How about talking to Floss?"

"Nothin' doin'. Nobody 'll talk to her for that matter."

"No? Why not?"

"Because I say so."

Beele pulled down his hat. "I'll talk to her, all right, and no thanks to you. When will you learn, Ryan, that it takes more than a flat foot like you to keep me from a story? Never," said Beele, answering his own question, "or you wouldn't be the kind of flatty you are."

Ryan felt a familiar twinge of apprehension. He knew Beele of old, as did the local rooms of a dozen cities from New York to Chicago. "Listen, Arty," he began in a conciliatory tone. But Beele had opened the door and

Ryan turned in time to meet it closing quietly in his face.

CHAPTER III

Pop Dinsmore's Case

ON Arch Street, facing the northern wing of City Hall, stands a row of once sturdy but now decrepit five-story buildings, whose tenants, in view of many postponements, view with equanimity its perennially announced destruction. Henry Kendall Dinsmore, Esq., attorney and counselor-at-law, whose offices occupied the second floor front of 1415, intended to retire when the building was razed, and he said so as Beele dropped his gaunt frame into Dinsmore's favorite armchair.

"Arty, I know a place in Maine where—"

"You're too rheumatic to fish any more, pop, and you're too old to retire. Come across with a drink and I'll give you a retainer." He displayed one of the thousand-dollar bills he had got from Higgins. "Like the looks of it? I know where there's another just like it."

The old lawyer, his little blue eyes popping, his tongue incapable of speech, slid open a desk drawer and produced a bottle and glasses.

"Rye?" said Beele.

Dinsmore, Esq., nodded. Then the drink made him articulate.

"It's from Judge Gray's stock. How d'you get a thousand, Arty? Honestly?"

Beele threw the bill across the desk. "It's good rye, counsellor. Tell the judge I said so. Yeah, I got it honestly. What made you ask me? Do I look like a lawyer?"

Dinsmore stuffed the retainer into his vest pocket, and adjusted the wing collar which encircled his heavily fleshed neck. Dinsmore's corpulence, his little marblelike blue eyes, belied him. More than one jury had discovered to their surprise, and several of

the younger prosecuting attorneys to their sorrow, his rapacious brilliance. Since Beele's visits more often concerned negotiations for a five-dollar loan than the casual tossing over the desk of thousand-dollar fees, those eyes now glittered zestfully.

"What's the trouble, Arty?"

"No trouble, pop. Just murder."

"Perpetrated or merely intended?"

"Maybe both. I don't know yet."

"By whom?"

"The police say Floss Jordan. Know who she is? It doesn't matter. But the bad smell that assails my beezee comes from a long-lashed blond boy not unknown to the police. His name is Higgins. And the dead man is—"

"Brady, of course. I'm part of your public, Arty."

"Anyway, your client is dark and petite and she's got eyes that can swim in tears better than any you've ever seen. You won't have to tell her how to act in court. And she's even better looking than her picture. And with all that, pop, she's a good kid—and too damned good for the guys that have had her. You'll enjoy defending her."

"Why are you interested?"

"It doesn't matter much, does it?" said Beele, shrugging. "But I've got a hunch there's a story in it for me."

Dinsmore reached for his pipe.

"How good's her case?"

"You'll have to decide that yourself after I've told you about it. That's why I'm paying you."

Beele related the details of the previous night. Then Dinsmore said: "Who did you say is paying me?"

"Higgins," said Beele quietly. "Let's go over and talk to Floss."

She was sitting in her cell, giving herself a careless manicure when Ryan took them up.

"Hello, Mr. Beele. Come to bail me out?"

"Just to introduce you to your attorney, kid. The jam you're in isn't bailable. Is it, Ryan?"

"I'll say it isn't. Come along, Arty, if Mr. Dinsmore wants to talk to her."

Dinsmore, rising from his bow over Floss's hand, said: "Mr. Beele is assisting me in this case, Captain Ryan. If you don't mind—he will continue to do so. Thank you, captain."

Ryan turned, grumbling, to go.

"Thank you, captain," said Beele.

"I won't eat your prisoner, charming as she is." He waved Ryan to the door. "Read all about it in the paper, Ryan." Then he turned back to Floss and Dinsmore. She was busy with her orange stick.

"Floss," said Beele, "if anybody at all can get you out of this, Pop Dinsmore's the one. Tell us just what happened. Did you plug him, kid?"

"I don't want to talk about it, Mr. Beele. I'm telling you now, I don't care what happens to me, so don't pull any soft stuff. He was just like the rest of them, once they get a girl where they want her. The devil with the whole works. If they want to burn me, let 'em. I'm ready."

"But, my dear girl—" Dinsmore started to say.

"You heard me," Floss interrupted.

"I mean it." She flung down the orange stick. "It's swell of you and all that, Mr. Beele, getting Mr. Dinsmore for me. I appreciate it all right. Don't think I don't. But—"

"Don't thank me, kid," Beele said.

"Thank Higgins. He's paying for it!"

Dinsmore noted approvingly how the tears rushed to her eyes. But Beele was pleased to see that they were tears of rage. She half rose. "I don't want him to pay for—anything—for me." She was trembling. "Now or any other time. After what he did to me. Why—"

"In that case," said Dinsmore suavely, "it would please me to represent you without fee, Miss Jordan—if you will do me the honor."

She choked back a sob and did not answer. Beele gave her a cigarette and lit it for her.

"You've known me for some time, haven't you, Floss? Since you came to town and got a job as coat-room girl at the old Cyrano. That's two years now. And you know that a lot of people think I'm a pretty square guy. Can you believe I'm playing square with you when I ask you if you weren't pretty sweet on Higgins once?"

"Everybody knows that," she replied. "But I wised up."

"And Brady? You sort of liked him, too, didn't you?"

She exhaled a ring of smoke. It floated slowly upward, dissolving into nothing.

"I liked Brady—at first. I wouldn't have gone to him if I hadn't. But these racket guys are all the same. Just because they can flash a roll they think they can have any girl or as many of them as they want. But that stuff doesn't go with me."

"Like last night at the party?"

"Sure," she said.

"Floss, haven't you ever thought of laying off these racket guys and tying up with some regular fellow that could give you a home and a radio and a pay envelope on Saturday night? You know what I mean—be regular yourself and have a couple of kids—"

She flicked the ash off her cigarette. "Forget it," she said. "I had my chance and I muffed it. It was just before I busted up with Higgins. The kid was crazy about me, and I'd known him back home—before I came to Philly. Kid stuff, you know. We used to go out in his brother's flivver and neck in the moonlight. Then I run smack into him on Chestnut Street and he buys me a soda and wants to marry me. Got a good job and the rest of it. But would he handle me now? Not for a dime a dozen!" Her tears, this time, were not of anger.

"What's his name?" asked Dinsmore.

"Who cares?" And she was silent again.

"How the hell, Arty, am I going to

defend her," Dinsmore said as they left City Hall, "when she won't even talk to me? How are you going to help her when she won't even talk to you? And her finger-prints on the gat that killed Brady as plain as an engraving!"

"She'll talk," said Beele. "After she's been in jail for a week and when I've produced the kid sweetheart. She comes from Phoenixville, and that's where I'll find him. But tell me, pop, how does it look to you?"

"It looks to me," replied Dinsmore, "that as long as she won't talk, we won't talk. Maybe it's the best thing after all. We'll make 'em believe she came in, grabbed the gun, got scared, and ran out. We won't offer any defense. Let 'em prove she did it. Nobody saw her shoot him. Just as you say, others—Higgins, for instance, or one of the lads that was with him, might have done it. We'll make the jury believe that—if we can. If we can, Arty. We'll offer no defense at all and let them get a good long look at her good looks."

"Hm-m!" They walked on toward Dinsmore's office. Beele whistled a lugubrious melody which, if it sounded like anything at all, was reminiscent of Chopin's "Funeral March." Then, as they paused before 1415, he said: "Pop, you think she did it, don't you?"

"Don't you?" Dinsmore was mildly surprised. "Admitting that Higgins's mixed up in it somewhere, do you really think she's innocent?"

"I do," said Beele. "Let's get straight in this. If I—we—get her off I'm entitled to all the story there is, all the story possible. I'm a reporter, and I don't rescue maidens in distress unless there's something in it for me—and that means my paper. I'll let you in on all I know already. I'll tell you everything else as I find it out. But when she goes to trial—well, it's my party and short of getting her convicted you'll do as I say and get the glory. O. K.?"

"Certainly, Arty. I'll get the glory

and go fishing. Come on up and spill it, and we'll try some Chartreuse I got from Judge Lacey."

CHAPTER IV

Witnesses for the Defense

"AND so, ladies and gentlemen of the jury," said Brown when Commonwealth *versus* Jordan came up a month later, "the State will show that the defendant had a motive for killing Brady and that she did, in fact, kill him." He lowered his voice to conversational tones, a favorite device. "The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is not vindictive, it does not seek vengeance. As its instrument I am not vindictive nor vengeful. And, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, neither, I know, are you. But the laws by which you and I and the defendant are governed say that Floss Jordan cannot, on the peril of her own life, take the life of another. If she had a grievance against the deceased, real or fancied, these very laws, this very court, would have provided a remedy. But, as I shall show, she disregarded these laws: she killed. I want you to give the defendant, when the time comes for you to decide her guilt or innocence, the benefit of every doubt. But I ask you now if the evidence you shall hear points unequivocally and undeniably to her guilt, to act as men and women who wish to see the law upheld. I shall ask you, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, when the time comes for me to do so, for a verdict of murder in the first degree."

Brown bowed, sat down, and called his first witness. It was Dr. Smythe, the coroner's physician, who took the oath like a temperature.

"Dr. Smythe, you are the coroner's physician, are you not?"

"I am."

"Did you examine the body of the deceased?"

"I did, sir. The deceased died of two bullet wounds through the heart."

"Did you extract the bullets?"

"I did."

Brown held up three leaden pellets.

"Do these look like the bullets you extracted?"

Smythe examined them. "They look like thirty-eight caliber bullets. I extracted two of them. There was a third wound, a surface wound over the shoulder. I did not find the bullet which caused it."

"Thank you, doctor," said Brown, resuming his seat and indicating by a wave of his arm that Dinsmore could cross-examine.

"No questions," said Dinsmore.

The Commonwealth's next witness was the head waiter at the Club Cy-rano, where Al Dooner had given his party.

"Do you know the defendant?" Brown asked.

"Fairly well."

"Did you hear what she said to Mr. Brady on the night of the 23rd of September?"

"I did."

"What did she say?"

The head waiter paused for a second. "She said: 'Listen, you two-timing skunk, I don't give a damn if you take on every tramp in town when I'm not around, but I won't go for it here. Get me?'"

"Were those her exact words?"

"Pretty nearly."

"And what did Brady say?"

"He didn't say anything at first. Then Floss—I mean the defendant—said something I couldn't hear, she said it so low. And Brady turned around—not all around, because some one was sitting in his lap—and told her to go back to Higgins."

"Do you recall his exact words?"

"As closely as I remember he said: 'Go peddle yourself to Whitey, deary. You're no bargain.'"

"Then what happened?"

"She started to cry. I don't remember just what she said. But she did say she wouldn't take that from any-

body. She said Whitey was a wet smack, but if he were half the man Whitey was he'd still be a louse. And then she cried again. And she said again she couldn't go for that stuff."

"What did Brady say then?"

"He said: 'Go to hell, deary.'"

"Do you remember what happened next?"

"I interfered. I asked her to sit down somewhere."

"Did she do so?"

"No."

"What did she do?"

"She said: 'You may think I'm drunk, Charley. But I know what I'm saying, and I'll do it, too. I'm going to kill that skunk if it's the last thing I ever do.' And she snatched up a bottle of ginger-ale and started to bring it down on Brady's head. I took it away from her and then Al Dooner came up and made her dance with him."

"Were there any of the other waiters near you when she threatened to kill Brady?"

"There were Frank Tetti and Oscar Cantz."

"Your witness," said Brown, turning to Dinsmore.

Dinsmore pushed down his collar.

"Do you mind if I call you Charley?"

The witness smiled. "You've always called me that, Mr. Dinsmore."

"Well, Charley, how long have you been a waiter?"

"Seventeen years."

"And a head waiter?"

"The last six years—ever since I left the Bellevue."

"Now, Charley, in your business, you have found it necessary, from time to time, to deal with people under the influence of liquor, have you not?"

"Many times, Mr. Dinsmore."

"I thought so. So that in plain parlance, you know a drunk when you see one."

Brown interposed an objection. "I fail to see, your honor, how Mr. Dins-

more's attempt to qualify the witness as an expert on alcoholization is within the scope of my original examination."

"The witness," said Dinsmore, "has testified that the defendant intimated that he thought her drunk. I am about to ask him if she appeared to be."

"Objection over-ruled," said the court.

Dinsmore continued: "Charley, was Brady drunk?"

"Oh, yes."

"Was the defendant drunk?"

"Very drunk."

"That's all, Charley."

Brown then called Tetti, one of the other waiters. But before he could be sworn Dinsmore was on his feet. "Your honor, if it is the purpose of the district attorney to prove by the next witness and other witnesses that the defendant threatened Brady's life, I suggest, in order to spare the patience of the Court and jury, that the defense admit that the defendant threatened Brady. If it please the Court, the defense admits that Floss Jordan threatened to kill Brady, and more than that, had an actual jealous motive for killing him."

"I'm satisfied," said Brown, and called the hotel clerk.

The clerk's testimony passed unchallenged. More than that, Dinsmore nodded approvingly and said to the reporters' table: "Good witness. Has anybody seen Arty to-day?"

Nobody had. Nor had he been in court. They were curious, but they had more immediate concerns.

Brown was putting the bellboy on the stand. He said his name was Henry Collins, that he had worked at the Locust for seven months and had been on duty on the night of the twenty-third of September.

Brown asked him: "Did you have occasion to enter Mr. Brady's room about twenty minutes after 2 A. M.?"

"Yessir."

"Tell the court and jury in your

own way the circumstances which led you to enter his room and what you discovered when you entered it."

It was evident, with his first words, that Collins had rehearsed his narrative. He told it tersely.

"I took some ginger ale up to Mr. Higgins's room. Then I'm coming back and turning the corridor corner when I heard three shots. I noticed that the door to Brady's room was open, and when I went in there he was on the couch with blood all over him."

"Dead?" prompted Brown.

"He looked dead to me."

"Collins," said Brown, "was there a revolver on the floor by the couch?"

"Yessir."

Brown held up a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson revolver.

"Is this the one?"

"It looks like it."

"That's all," said Brown, turning to Dinsmore.

"Collins," said Dinsmore, "when you took the ginger ale up to Higgins's room what was Higgins doing?"

"Objected to as irrelevant," snapped Brown.

Dinsmore looked grieved. "I do not wish to question the credibility of this witness. I pay him no compliment when I say that his honest face impresses me. However, the district attorney's objection compels me to question it. If he can tell me what Mr. Higgins was doing when he entered his room, he can convince me that he really entered it. Or may I ask the district attorney whether he intends to call Mr. Higgins to corroborate the witness?"

Brown growled inaudibly and the court said: "I think the witness may answer the question."

"Well, Collins?" said Dinsmore, "what was Higgins doing?" Dinsmore held up one finger like a rotund school-master.

"He was playing cards," Collins replied.

Dinsmore's finger dropped. He smiled approvingly, his blue eyes very

bright, and turned to the bench. "I no longer question the credibility of this witness. I make this remark, your honor, for the record, and for his benefit: Collins, you delivered the ginger ale to the poker game. You took your tip and departed. And then, you say, three shots ran out upon the still night air. Is that right?"

"Yessir."

"Now tell us, Collins, did the shots follow each other quickly? Like this?" He gave three staccato raps with his pencil.

"No, sir. There was one shot. I stopped when I heard that, and then, right before I turned the corner of the corridor that Brady's room was on, there were two more shots. That's when I smelled the powder. I thought at the first shot that it was the backfire of some engine."

"You're pretty sure about the shots, are you?"

"I'm pretty sure."

"And was a revolver like the one Mr. Brown showed you on the floor?"

"Yessir."

"And Mr. Brady looked rather dead, eh?"

"He certainly did."

"That's all, Collins. Thank you." Dinsmore looked pleased.

"Captain John Ryan," Brown called out.

Ryan walked to the stand with a dignified tread, took the oath and hung his cap on his knee as he prepared to testify.

"Captain Ryan—" Brown began, but stopped as Beele walked down the center aisle, pausing for two seconds to whisper to Dinsmore, and then sat down beside Floss Jordan. There was a murmur at the press table, and Judge Brazleton looked inquiringly at Dinsmore. Dinsmore rose. "If the court please, Mr. Beele is assisting me in this case," and sat down. Judge Brazleton nodded. Beele, with his elbows on the table, looked at Ryan steadily, without a smile.

"Captain Ryan, give us the circumstances which led you to arrest the defendant," said Brown.

Ryan related how the clerk had called headquarters, and how he and Wood had hurried to the Locust and made their first investigation. "Then I went to the defendant's apartment and arrested her."

"Did she protest her innocence?"

"She didn't say much."

"Didn't she say anything at all?"

"Nothing important. Just cracked wise at first and then got sullen and shut up."

"You say she 'cracked wise.' What do you mean by that?"

"Why, she said she wasn't sore at me," Ryan attempted a lighter pose. "She said I was all right even if—I—did look dumb. Ryan felt impelled to chuckle.

"You say," Brown continued, "that you arrested her. Did you have prints made of her fingers and the revolver you found in Brady's room?"

"Certainly."

"That's all."

Beele moved closer to Dinsmore. Dinsmore took a handkerchief out of his inner pocket and fluffed himself with it. But he kept his seat as he proceeded to question Ryan.

"Captain Ryan, how long have you been in the police department?"

"Twenty-seven years this January," said Ryan.

"That's a long time, isn't it?"

"I guess it is."

"Now then, captain. You say that my client jocosely declared that you looked dumb. You are not so, in fact, are you, or you would not hold the office you now occupy. Isn't that true?"

"I know my business," he said.

"Then why," asked Dinsmore in a puzzled voice, "did you arrest the defendant?"

"Because I figured she did it."

"Of course, captain, you thought she did it."

Ryan nodded.

"Were you so thoroughly convinced, captain, that this girl had committed murder that you questioned no other occupants of the hotel and made no inquiries as to their possible connection with this crime?"

"I did check up on various people."

"Miss Shaw, for instance?"

"I don't know Miss Shaw."

"Then I'll inform you. Miss Shaw is an elderly lady who lived on the floor above Brady's apartment—directly across the court and opposite to Mr. Higgins's apartment. Hadn't you thought it possible that she was the murderer?"

"I didn't figure elderly ladies for shootin' racket guys," said Ryan.

"And yet," said Dinsmore piously, "there are more things in heaven and earth than are mentioned in the police regulations. Did you question Mr. Higgins?"

"I had his movements checked up."

"Did he account for his movements at the time that Brady met his death?"

"He was playing poker," said Ryan.

"Now then, you arrested the defendant. You had her finger-prints compared with those on Brady's gun. And as a result of that comparison you were convinced that she was the killer. Is that right?"

"Yes, that's right."

"You were so certain, in fact, that you refused the coöperation of some one not connected with your department, some one who in the past had been of assistance to you?"

"The Detective Bureau," said Ryan, "can take care of its own business."

"Of course," agreed Dinsmore. "And you are still convinced that no more searching investigation was necessary, that no possible ally, no possible detail, was overlooked. Am I right?"

"You are," said Ryan.

"And I thank you," said Dinsmore. "That's all, captain."

Brown, frowning, called Major Duffield, the finger-print expert. He ques-

tioned him as briefly as was possible to establish the fact that the finger-prints on Brady's revolver were Floss Jordan's. Dinsmore's cross-examination was equally brief.

"You have written a book on your subject, haven't you, major?"

"I have," replied Duffield. "I collaborated with Mr. Boyd Fredericks."

"And is Mr. Fredericks a recognized authority?"

"He is not only a recognized authority," answered Duffield. "He is *the* authority."

Dinsmore thanked him and sat down. Brown got up, bowed to the court, inclined his head to the jury and said: "The Commonwealth rests." Then Beele patted Floss on the shoulder, winked at Dinsmore, and went out.

There was a moment of silence. Dinsmore adjusted his collar and walked slowly to the rail of the jury box.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, on the basis of the testimony you have heard to-day, given by impartial, unbiased witnesses, Floss Jordan is guilty of murder. It is evidence which calls upon Floss Jordan to stand before you and tell you under oath what she did in Brady's room and why the weapon which killed Brady bears the marks of her hand. My friends, I can put her on the witness stand. I would do so—if I were sure she would talk. If I were sure that she would tell us just what happened during those minutes which elapsed between the minute when she hurried into the lobby of the Locust, and the minute when she raced out of it again, we would have a basis to work on. We would have the facts that would vindicate my own belief in her innocence. I regret that my able opponent, the district attorney, does not have even a stronger case against my client, strong as it is. But if it were so convincing that, instead of the pity I see in your eyes as they rest upon this little girl, your gaze was such as would make her

shrink in terror, then, perhaps abandoning hope, she would tell her story, and we would have the real truth.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I repeat—and I have practiced in these courts for more years than I care to remember—I know no more of Floss Jordan's actions in the room where Brady was so foully slain than you do. But why doesn't she speak? There are theories, my friends. Floss was a gangster's girl. Perhaps, in keeping with gangster code, her mouth is sealed even with her life to pay for silence. Perhaps there is some one she wishes to protect. Perhaps, afraid of the ordeal of cross-examination, she relies blindly on the mightiness of truth which must prevail. But I can only surmise.

"But this I know, because I have not lived so many of my years in these courts without learning a little about my fellow man: I know that Floss Jordan is innocent of this crime. Mr. Beele of the *Telegraph* knows, from that fountain of instinct with which God sometimes blesses newspapermen, that Floss Jordan is innocent. Hence he is assisting this defense. Fortified with faith in that innocence we shall fight the good fight in her behalf. I ask you, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, when her fate is put into your hands, to consider everything brought out by our evidence which may be in her favor. I shall ask her once more to speak. If she still refuses, remember there are some things which, to all of us, are better, more sacred, than life itself."

Dinsmore sat down, looked at a memorandum, and called his first witness: "Ralph Higgins."

CHAPTER V

"I Shot Him"

THE reporters' table in front, and the gangsters at the back, sat up, pop-eyed. This was better than they had feared. The whisper flew about the room: "Floss's first sugar."

Higgins, very debonair in English homespun and a rosebud in his coat, took the stand.

"You live at the Locust Apartments, don't you, Mr. Higgins?"

"Yes."

"On the same floor as the apartment occupied by the deceased?"

"Right."

"Isn't your room just on the other side of the corridor from Brady's?"

"Yes."

"Were you home about 2.15 A. M. on the twenty-fourth of September?"

"I was."

"And did you hear any shots about that time?"

"Three."

"Do you recall how they were spaced? Were they fired in rapid succession, or like this?" Dinsmore tapped once with his pencil, paused, and tapped twice in succession.

"I don't recall," Higgins answered.

"Do you know the defendant, Miss Jordan?"

"About three years."

"Do you know about her association with Brady?"

"Well—yes."

"Were their relationships pleasant, so far as you know?"

"So far as I know."

"And you knew her rather well at one time, didn't you?"

"Pretty well."

"Was she familiar with the use of firearms?"

"Not that I know of."

"Did you ever see her handle a gun?"

"Not that I remember; I didn't," answered Higgins.

"Were you friendly with Brady?"

"Not very."

"Would you mind telling me why?"

"Oh, he just didn't click with me, that's all!" Higgins relaxed a little from his elegance.

Dinsmore said slowly: "But in spite of your unfriendliness with Brady, in spite of his—association with the de-

fendant, nevertheless you were willing to assist in her defense. Isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"In fact, you were willing to finance it. You are financing it. Isn't that so?"

Higgins looked embarrassed. "Well—yes."

"Why?" said Dinsmore gently.

Higgins fingered his hat. "Well, she's not a bad kid. I think she rates a break."

"I see. You think she's innocent?"

"Do you think I'd pay out that good money any other way?" Higgins demanded irritably.

"Did the police question you in connection with this case?"

"They certainly did!"

"That's all. Cross-examine."

Brown began: "Higgins, you say you've been a friend of the defendant for three years. Tell me, did you ever live with her?"

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," Higgins protested.

"Answer yes or no," put in Judge Brazleton.

Higgins shrugged. "No," he said.

"But wasn't she your woman?"

Again Higgins shrugged. "We ran around together."

Brown grinned significantly and nodded. "Was she Brady's—girl, too?"

"I don't know."

"You don't, eh?"

"No, I don't."

"All right, then. That's all," said Brown, and again nodded significantly.

The reporters nodded significantly to each other also. One remarked, "Pretty punk for her. And four women on the jury." But Dinsmore, quite unperturbed, motioned to a middle-aged man who had entered the court room while Higgins was testifying, and signaled him to the stand.

"What is your name, sir?"

"Boyd Fredericks," said the witness.

"Are you the same Boyd Fredericks who is the co-author, with Major Duf-

field, of a treatise on identification by means of finger-prints?"

"I am."

"How many years have you devoted to your subject?"

"Twenty or more."

"Now then, Mr. Fredericks," said Dinsmore, taking two pieces of cardboard from his briefcase, "I show you two photographs of certain finger-prints. Have you compared one with the other?"

"I have, sir."

"Are they or are they not identical?"

"They are."

Dinsmore handed him the photographs.

"Will you tell me where you saw these before, and how you came to examine them?"

Fredericks held up the prints. "This one I secured from the Bureau of Identification or 'Rogues' Gallery' of the Police Department. The other I made myself from prints on a Maxim silencer given me by Mr. Beele."

Dinsmore held up a metal object. "Is this the silencer?"

Fredericks looked at it. "It has my mark of identification on it. It is."

There was a scramble in the court room. Dinsmore wheeled and yelled, "Stop that man! Stop him!" Higgins had darted down the center aisle, bowling over the rheumatic tipstaff who tried to block him. But as he reached the swinging doors one of them hit him full in the face, and Beele, coming in through the other, bent his arm back in a hammer-lock, pinned him face against the wall, and, reaching over Higgins's shoulder, pulled a revolver out of his armholster. Ryan elbowed his way down the crowded aisle, and Beele, smiling sardonically, said: "Ryan, he's got a .38 this time! As an officer of the law you've got to arrest him for carrying concealed and deadly weapons."

Uniformed officers and plainclothes men, together with the tipstaves, were quieting the court room. Ryan took

Higgins away. Dinsmore fluffed himself with his handkerchief, while the court pounded for silence, which was immediately broken by another stir at the door. The court frowned judicially up the aisle. Dinsmore turned his head expectantly. Then he grinned, and the reporters' stable stood up as a body.

It was Arty Beele again. Sauntering down the aisle, baggy-legged, rough-jowled, weary-eyed, yet smiling faintly, he came, his hands in his pockets, his hat crushed under his arm. And behind him stumbled a nice, straight-nosed, brown-eyed young man, the kind that every girl hopes to be able to invite to Sunday dinner.

"Well," Beele was beginning half-audibly, "here we are. See me nab that Higgins baby, Dinsmore?"

But Floss was on her feet, crying out brokenly: "Don! Oh, Don!"

"I'm here, Floss!" The young man shouldered Arty aside. "It'll be all right now!"

"Oh, Don—oh—" She choked, and then he was clinging to her hands, and they were sobbing and laughing together. The women in the front rows whispered to each other and smothered applause sounded at the back. The reporters' table sat down and scribbled madly.

"For the last time there will be order in the court!" thundered Judge Brazleton.

"Your honor," interposed Dinsmore suavely, "may I ask for a recess of five minutes?"

"Is this young man also assisting you in this case?" rasped the court. "Your assistants seem to partake of the quality of a circus."

"Not precisely. But he is assisting the defendant."

"No recess," declared the court.

Arty Beele sat down in the chair which somehow had remained inviolate to him, took out a cigarette, put it away, and leaned back to take in the proceedings. Dinsmore removed the young man's arm from Floss's shoul-

der and replaced it with his own. He whispered to her. She nodded her head. The reporters' table heard him say, "Everything, Floss?" And they heard her answer, "Everything, Mr. Dinsmore—so help me." Dinsmore led her to the witness chair.

She was nervous, but it seemed the nervousness of courage. She seemed supported by the fact that not ten feet away was the young man that adored her, and by the knowledge that she looked as well as it was possible for her to look. The effect produced by her smartly plain hat, her suit of velvet-soft tweed, her scarf of pointed fox, held every eye. Her hands, in gloves of immaculate doeskin, rested on the rail before her. She did not look like a gangster's girl—like two gangsters' girl.

Dinsmore waited a moment for the picture to register, then stepped before the witness stand.

"What is your name?"

"Florence Jordan." Her voice was low.

"Speak a little louder, Floss," said Dinsmore.

"Florence Jordan," she repeated in a louder voice.

"That's better." Dinsmore smiled at her. "Thank you, Floss."

"Now tell us, please, what happened on the night of September 23 and in the early morning after."

Nervously at first, and then with more control, she told of what had happened at Al Dooner's party. Dinsmore interrupted her once to say: "Were you jealous of this woman Brady was making love to, Floss?"

She answered: "I wasn't jealous. I just didn't want to be insulted that way. And the way he spoke to me drove me crazy."

"What did you do after Brady left the party?"

"I went home."

"Where do you live?"

"Around the corner from the Locust."

"And then what happened?"

"Somebody called me on the phone. Somebody called me on the phone and said that Brady—that he had taken this woman to his apartment."

"You had been drinking, hadn't you?"

"Well, it was quite a party."

"And who was it that called you?"

She hesitated. "Does it make any difference?"

"The truth's important now, Floss," Dinsmore told her.

"Well—it—it was Whitey Higgins."

"Your friend Higgins who testified here awhile ago?"

"Not my friend!"

"And you were still under the influence of liquor?"

"I bet I drank a month's rent."

"Then what happened?"

"I ran around to the Locust. I went up to Brady's room. I saw his gun on the dresser. He was lying on the couch." She stopped. Her breath was coming hard.

Dinsmore said: "Now take your time, Floss. Just take your time. We've got all the time there is. Want some water?"

Floss shook her head. The words came slowly, but terribly clear. "You understand, I was cock-eyed drunk. I grabbed the gun—I closed my eyes—And I—I shot him." Her hands, in their new gloves, gripped the rail.

The court room was so silent that the creak of Brown's chair sounded like a whip-crack. Dinsmore shoved one hand into his pocket, took it out, and said: "So that's what you wouldn't tell us, is it, Floss?"

She nodded and closed her eyes. An attendant gave her a glass of water. Dinsmore went on: "How many times did you fire?"

Her whisper was clear at the very door. "Once. Once—and then I ran."

"Cross-examine," said Dinsmore, and sat down.

Brown walked up close to her. "You

say you shot Brady as he lay there on the couch?"

"Yes. I said it. God help me—I did!"

CHAPTER VI

The Lady in Black

AND you say you only shot him once!"

"Once."

"Well, if, as you say, you were—er—cock-eyed drunk, how can you be sure you only fired once?"

"I am sure. There are some things you're sure of."

"Why did you run away?"

"Say," she demanded, "do you think I was waiting for the tabloids?"

Brown looked annoyed. "You say you only shot him once. All the other witnesses, of proved credibility, have testified to hearing three shots."

She nodded. "I heard the other two shots myself. I heard them just as I was running out of the room."

Brown permitted himself to smile. "So you account for three bullets in Brady's body by two of them being fired after you threw the gun on the floor."

"I am not accounting. I'm telling you what happened. I heard them. I don't know where they came from."

"Do you expect me to believe that?" Brown cried savagely.

"Well," she snapped, "if you're really interested to know, I didn't expect you to."

Brown waved her angrily away. She smoothed the doeskin gloves with trembling fingers and sought the chair beside Don.

"Now," said Dinsmore grimly, "I will call Mr. Arthur Welliver Beele."

Beele took the stand without a change of face.

"What is your occupation, Mr. Beele?"

"I'm a reporter for the *Telegraph*."

"Were you in the course of your duties assigned to this case?"

"It looked to me more like an act of God."

"Did you inspect the room where the crime was committed?"

"Oh, yes," said Beele, "yes, indeed."

"Alone?"

"If you mean I had company, yes; if you mean I had help, no."

"Who was there?"

"Among others, Captain Ryan."

"During your inspection, did you find anything which you considered evidential with respect to this case?"

"Oh, yes," said Beele calmly.

"What was it?"

"A Maxim silencer designed to fit the barrel of a thirty-eight Smith and Wesson revolver."

"Did you know that when you found it?"

Beele shook his head. "I'm only a reporter, so I took it to an ordnance expert that I know."

"Who is that?"

"Frank Johns. That fat man over there with the fuzzy overcoat."

"You took the silencer away with you?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"It would have been a shame to waste it."

"Didn't you endeavor to coöperate with the proper police authorities when you were in possession—wholly inadvertent possession—of what might prove valuable evidence?"

"I always try to."

"Did you," snapped the court, "or did you not?"

"Your honor," returned Beele, "the answer is yes."

"And what about the police department?" said Dinsmore.

"The police department," Beele declared sadly, "gave me the cold shoulder."

"So thereafter," Dinsmore went on, "you worked by yourself."

"You might as well call it that."

"What did you do with the silencer?"

"I turned it over to Mr. Boyd Fredricks for finger-print comparison with some prints in the Rogues Gallery."

"Whose prints?"

"Ralph Higgins. Arrested for highway robbery with intent to kill in 1926, but never brought to trial."

"Object!" shouted Brown.

"Objection overruled," snapped the court. "The witness may continue."

"Then I made the rounds of the residents of the hotel. The one I wanted had become an ex-resident."

"Who is that?"

"Miss Euphemia Shaw—that nice little lady there in black. She'd lived on the floor above Higgins and Brady right across the court from Higgins. She told me she ate lobster on the night of the murder. She remembered being awake at two fifteen, because she was trying to read a magazine story in less time than the minutes allotted at the beginning of the story. She'd heard the shots and she thought lobster was a better way to die." Beele paused.

"Why?" said Dinsmore.

"Because it sounded to her as if somebody was trying to kill her. Two of the bullets landed in the woodwork over her window."

"Are these the bullets?" Dinsmore handed them over.

"They are."

"Did you ascertain their caliber?"

"They're thirty-twos."

"And Brady was shot with thirtysixes."

"Exactly."

"Go on."

"Well, I just had a hunch that they might have been shot from an automatic. An automatic ejects the cylinders. So I climbed down the fire escape from Miss Shaw's room—there's a glass roof that covers the court. And there they were. Two nice little cylinders."

"These?" said Dinsmore, handing them over.

"These."

"Go on."

"Then I went to visit Captain Ryan. He took away a thirty-two automatic from Higgins one day when I was there. I went to see it again."

"Did you get to see it?"

"See it? Why, he even told me to go and shoot myself with it! So I took it and gave it and the cylinders and the bullets to Mr. Johns, who is, as I said, the fat man in the fuzzy overcoat who knows all about ordnance."

Mr. Johns, who was indeed fat and fuzzily overcoated, corroborated what Mr. Beele had said about the silencer, the automatic, the cylinders and the bullets.

Miss Shaw declared that Mr. Beele had broken both blades of her sewing-scissors in digging the bullets from her window-frame, and had forgotten to get her a new pair. Also that henceforth she simply couldn't bear lobster.

Dinsmore shoved together the exhibits. His little eyes glittered above his flushed cheeks.

"Your honor," he began, "the defendant has admitted firing a shot at Brady. But it is my purpose to give emphasis to the proof, by reestablishing the time of the murder and calling back Mr. Higgins and Collins, the bell-boy, that Higgins was in his room at the time when Floss Jordan ran out, I shall prove that there were not three shots fired, but *five* shots. Of these five, only one, as I shall prove, could have been fired by Floss Jordan. I intend to prove that the other four were fired by Higgins. I—"

Brown was on his feet, interrupting. "Your honor, it seems to me—"

"Mr. Dinsmore may continue," ruled the court.

"I shall show," Dinsmore went on, a little faster, "that Higgins fired two shots, the shots that killed Brady. He fired those in Brady's room, from Brady's gun, the gun with the silencer. They were not heard. The dead man lay on the couch. I will show that he took off the silencer and placed it in the drawer. He wiped off the gun and

put it on the dresser. But he forgot to wipe off the silencer. They always forget something. Then—"

"Your honor," said Brown, "I—"

"Go on," snapped the court, "go on, Mr. Dinsmore."

"Then," Dinsmore continued quickly, "he telephoned to Floss Jordan his lying story of Brady and the other woman. He knew Floss well—well enough to know she wouldn't let it go by. And when he knew she was in Brady's room, he heard the shot she fired. Immediately he went to his window and fired twice from his own gun, and—"

"If the court please!" Brown was shouting wildly. Then some one shook him by the elbow. It was Ryan, his face red.

Dinsmore raised his voice. "The number of shots heard correspond to the number of thirty-eight caliber bullets fired from Brady's gun. I will show that Floss Jordan fired her shot at a dead man. And so—"

"If it please the court!" Brown shouted still more loudly.

Judge Brazleton exclaimed wrath-

fully: "Mr. Brown, you are decidedly out of order."

"I beg to differ," Brown retorted. "Captain Ryan informs me that he has just elicited a confession from Higgins, claiming self-defense!"

"Well," said Beele an hour later in Dinsmore's office, "now let's see: five hundred for experts, five hundred for expenses. That leaves five hundred I have and a thousand you have. Write a check for that, pop, before you go fishing."

"Check?" Dinsmore demanded. "I don't have to make checks out to myself."

"Don't you ever think of anybody but yourself? It's not nice to give wedding presents in cash. Checks are a lot more refined. And you can give me a drink because I'm going to brace old Harrington for a five-buck raise."

Dinsmore made out the check and filled the glasses. "This is nice Benedictine, Arty. Real extra-legal stuff. I got it from Judge Brazleton."

"Well," said Beele, holding up his glass, "save a shot for Ryan."

Concealed Weapons

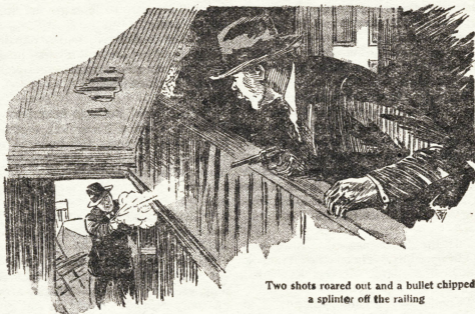
OUT in Kansas City, Joseph Desmond, night attendant at the Monarch Garage, was going about his work shortly after midnight, when he felt a nudge in his side. Turning, he saw standing beside him a masked negro. The negro had one hand hidden in his coat pocket. The pocket bulged in a highly suggestive manner. The object that caused the bulge seemed to be pointing at Desmond.

Desmond paused not to argue. Without a word he went to the cash register and surrendered the sixteen dollars and some odd cents it contained. The bandit pocketed the money and started out of the garage.

Alas for the bandit's plans! Fate stepped into the ring in the person of W. J. Brown, a street car dispatcher who had seen the whole performance. Brown had a revolver. He displayed it to the negro, who, curiously enough, showed no fight, made no attempt to draw his own weapon, and hastened to admit that Brown was the boss.

At police headquarters the bandit's curious lack of belligerence was explained. A search of his bulging side pocket brought to light, not a snub-nosed automatic, but—an empty soda bottle.

The negro explained that he needed the money, but didn't want to kill anybody to get it.



Two shots roared out and a bullet chipped a splinter off the railing

Murphy Kills Two Birds

*The Slayer of Duke Puccelli Tangled
His Trail Almost Beyond Unraveling*

By Leslie MacFarlane

DUKE PUCCELLI was shot in the back early Saturday afternoon as he sat at a table in Moran's speakeasy, and within an hour gangland was in an uproar.

Duke's slayer made a quick getaway. Moran was out in the back opening a case of beer at the time, and he didn't see the shooting. There was only one other customer in the place then, an inoffensive citizen from uptown, and he cleared out in a hurry. So, in a manner of speaking, the identity of the killer was unknown.

In a manner of speaking.

Every one knew that the man who had finished Duke was either Butch Sikorski or one of his henchmen.

Butch was a beer baron; Duke was another. And Duke had crossed the Sikorski deadline once too often. It was common knowledge that one or the other was ripe for the hurdles.

At any rate, reprisals followed swiftly.

Somebody heaved a pineapple onto the veranda of Sikorski's home and blew a hole in the house that you could have driven a truck through. Somebody else took a pot shot at a Sikorski torpedo as he was coming out of a river front poolroom and put a hole through his hat brim. It was that close.

The war was on.

It had been brewing for months. Down in gangland, men kept their rods

loaded, their eyes and ears open and their mouths shut. The Homicide Squad turned out, almost to a man, ready for action. There was a dirty night ahead.

All of which is by way of leading up to the announcement that Detective Murphy didn't get the job.

Like any normal man, he had no particular relish for a bullet in the back, but, like any normal Irishman, he did have relish for excitement and the prospect of a battle. So when the inspector detailed most of the Homicide Squad for the Puccelli case and the resulting uproar, Detective Murphy was disappointed because he was kept in the office. Detective Levinsky, whom Murphy didn't like, was also retained.

"Gorry, and it's no place for a man, warmin' a chair when there's all sorts of murderin' cutthroats out lookin' fer trouble," groaned Murphy.

"You should worry," chirped Levinsky. "It's better than spendin' a couple of weeks in hospital, ain't it, or havin' the rest of us cough up to buy you a wreat?"

"Ye would say that," grunted Murphy. "Sittin' down is no job fer an Irishman, when there's fightin' in the air."

"Somebody's gotta stick around," said Levinsky. "Never know when something else might break."

"There'll be nothin' else break this day—excepting down by the river, where we won't be sent."

But Detective Murphy was wrong. Something did break. The inspector called him in.

"Beat it out to 87 Manley Street," he ordered crisply. "Chap named Fenwick killed. House belongs to a man named White."

"Ah!" beamed Detective Murphy. "Thank ye, inspector. It's more than I hoped fer."

"You'll have to handle it alone. I can't spare Levinsky just now."

"And it's not me that'll kick about that, either."

Murphy departed, happily. At any rate, a death in the suburbs was better than nothing, although deaths did not always mean murder. Levinsky muttered: "You love work, don't you?" and lit another cigarette.

Murphy clambered into a department car and drove out to Manley Street, where he found that No. 87 was a neat little brick house exactly similar to a score of other neat little brick houses on either side and across the road. A patrolman was at the door, while a little group of bystanders stood at a respectful distance and stared.

"What's it all about, Dan?" asked Murphy.

"Guy named Fenwick got bumped off," said Dan, opening the door. "Shot through the head. He roomed here."

"Anybody else in the house?"

"White and the wife. They're upstairs havin' hysterics together."

Dan led the way toward a kitchen at the back of the house, and there Murphy saw the body of the man, lying on the floor. It could be seen at a glance that he was dead and that his death had been caused by a bullet that had struck him in the forehead.

The victim was in his early thirties, a square-faced, solid-looking fellow, almost six feet in height and heavy in proportion. Beside his body lay fragments of a bottle that had smashed on the floor, and the neck of this bottle was still grasped in his right hand. On the table, just beneath the window, were two glasses, one of which contained a small quantity of colorless fluid.

Murphy inspected the room. The patrolman, spying half a dozen youngsters who had clambered to the roof of the garage in the back yard for a better view of proceedings, brandished his baton through the open window and ordered them to clear out.

"You'd think it was a ball game," grumbled Dan.

On the floor, near the body, was a sheet of crumpled newspaper. Murphy picked it up carefully. It was page fifteen of an evening paper published in the city, of a date about two weeks previous.

The detective examined it, thoughtfully. To the patrolman, he gave the sheet considerably more attention than its importance warranted. Murphy finally put the paper on the table, without folding it, looked around the room again and asked where he could find Mr. and Mrs. White.

"They're upstairs," said Dan. "She went sorta cuckoo and he's been tryin' to quiet her. Although he's almost as bad himself."

"Who told you about this business?"

"The woman. She came gallopin' out of the house, yellin' murder. Kept sayin': 'Oh, Tom killed him! Tom killed him!' I come in and White was sittin' in the front room, talkin' to himself. Scared green. I got a whiff of his breath and I think he's kinda stewed."

"Tom killed him! eh? What's White's first name, do ye know?"

"Tom."

Detective Murphy went upstairs. In a bedroom at the top of the landing he found Mrs. White, a fragile, pretty little blonde, lying on the bed, sobbing and moaning convulsively. Sitting beside her was her husband.

Murphy had seen frightened men before, but he had never seen a man quite so frightened as Mr. White. His face was gray, beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead, his lips were blue, his eyes stared vacantly. He was a big man, and for one of such bulk such abject fright was somehow incongruous. Murphy's practiced eye saw that while the fellow was not drunk he was under the influence of liquor to some extent.

"Well," said Murphy. "This is a bad business. What happened?"

White gulped, then said thickly: "He—he was shot."

"That's easily seen. Who shot him?"

"I—I'm not saying anything," muttered White. "There's no use asking me. I'll have to see my lawyer."

Murphy rubbed his chin reflectively. "Ye don't have to talk unless ye have a mind to," he admitted. "Did ye shoot him yourself?"

White shook his head.

"No, I didn't kill him. I'm not going to say anything. I'll have to see my lawyer—"

Mrs. White sat up suddenly.

"You killed him!" she screamed. "You said you would! I've seen it coming. Your suspicions—all those things you've said about Jim and me—why couldn't you let him go? He was leaving anyway."

Overcome, she fell to sobbing hysterically again.

"There was some trouble between ye and the man who was killed?" asked Murphy.

White, his hands twitching, stood up. "No! There wasn't any trouble—"

"There was!" clamored the woman, fiercely. "There's been trouble all along. Ever since Jim came here to live with us. You've been silly and jealous."

"Let's get this straight," said Murphy patiently. "Who are ye talkin' about, ma'am? Who was he jealous about?"

"Jim. Jim Fenwick. And now he's dead. Murdered."

"I wasn't jealous," said White sullenly. "Jim was a friend of mine. I wouldn't have asked him to come and room here if he wasn't."

"Yes," snapped the woman. "You were the one who asked him. And from the day he came into the house you were suspicious of me. You accused him of all sorts of things. There's been nothing but trouble."

"Thought he was tryin' to break up your home, eh?" said Murphy to the man.

"I did raise a row," White admitted.

"He wasn't to blame, though. He convinced me that there was nothing wrong. Why, we just made up the quarrel this afternoon. We shook hands on it and we were having a few drinks, just to show there was no hard feelings."

"Yes?" encouraged Murphy.

"Well—we were having a few drinks. He got killed."

"How?"

"That's all I'm going to say," muttered White doggedly. "I'll have to see my lawyer."

"You killed him!" screamed the woman. "I heard the shot. I came downstairs and he was lying dead in the kitchen."

II

"WHEN ye came downstairs, ma'am," said Murphy, "where was your husband?"

"In the dining room. Sitting by the table, mopping his face with a handkerchief."

"Did ye see the revolver?"

"No. I didn't see it. I guess he threw it away. Out the window, probably. But he has a revolver—a great big one!"

"You heard the shot, ma'am?"

"Yes. Then I heard somebody fall on the floor, and a bottle smashed. I ran downstairs right away."

"And your husband was sitting in the dining room?"

"Yes."

"How long did it take ye to get downstairs?"

"Only a few seconds. I ran."

"Did they have a row this afternoon?"

"They had one this morning. Tom had been throwing slurs at Jim all week—about me. This morning, Jim took him up and told him what a fool he was and that there was no reason for being so jealous and suspicious. Jim said he was sick and tired of it, and he was going to room somewhere else. Tom went out after lunch and came

back about the middle of the afternoon. Jim was upstairs packing. Tom went up and they talked for awhile. They came downstairs and went out into the kitchen. I went up to my room. I could hear them talking and drinking!"

"How long were ye up here before ye heard the shot?"

"More than an hour, I guess."

"Hm!" Murphy turned to White.

"Now have ye anything to say?"

"She's right, as far as it goes. I'm not talking. I'll wait until I see my lawyer."

"Mebbe ye'll need him," Murphy said politely. Nevertheless, as he went downstairs again he was aware of a certain professional admiration for the suspect. "The lad knows his potatoes. The less he talks, the better chance his lawyer will have to get him off."

There was no doubt in his mind that White had killed Fenwick. That seemed clear enough. Just the same, there were a few points that puzzled him. He went out into the kitchen and found that the doctor had arrived and was now examining the body.

"If ye can dig that bullet out, doc, I'd like to have a look at it," suggested Murphy.

"I guess I can get it for you. It isn't in very deep, and I have my instruments here."

"He went out quick, eh?"

"Like that!" said the doctor, snapping his fingers. "Never knew what hit him."

"Didn't even have time to let go the bottle," said Murphy, shaking his head sadly. "We never know, do we? One minute we're here and the next minute we ain't. It's a caution, to be sure."

He went over to the table and looked long and earnestly at the two glasses; then he gathered up the fragments of the broken bottle from the floor and subjected them to scrutiny, even making an attempt to fit some of the pieces together. After that he made various

measurements, in relation to the position of the body. He went outside and prowled around the garage for awhile, looked at the newly planted garden, finally returned to the house.

The doctor had extracted the bullet. "There you are," he said, handing it to Murphy. "What kind of a cannon fired that?"

Murphy turned the slug of lead over in his hand.

"A big one, eh?" he grunted. "Forty-five caliber, by the looks of it." He looked at the body on the floor. "Ye didn't have much of a chance, me lad."

He put the bullet in his pocket, then went over to the table and picked up the sheet of newspaper again. It interested him. The page had been torn from a two-page sheet, and it was crumpled at the top and bottom. Murphy made various experiments, restoring the paper to its original folds and at last nodded sagely.

"Of course," he said. "I should have seen that in the first place."

He telephoned to headquarters and reported to the inspector, then went upstairs again. The man and the woman, silent and fearful, were still in the bedroom.

"Ye'll have to come with me," he said to them.

White stood up readily.

"Are you arresting me?"

"Yes — and no!" said Murphy. "The lady will have to come, too."

Mrs. White was astonished.

"Me!"

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but the inspector will have some questions to ask ye both."

"There's no need of that!" declared White brusquely. "My wife was upstairs when this happened. She doesn't know any more about it than she has told you already."

"Mebbe," said Murphy, enigmatically. "She'll have to come along just the same."

"But why? She doesn't know any-

thing, I tell you. She didn't see the shooting."

"Listen!" roared Murphy suddenly. "Listen, me man! Are ye tryin' to shield somebody?"

The question caught White off his guard. He made a nervous, frightened gesture, then licked his dry lips.

"No, of course, not. But—"

"Then why don't ye talk? Why won't ye tell what ye know?"

"I don't have to talk. I know things look bad for me. That's why I want to see my lawyer first."

"Sure," growled Murphy. He swung suddenly about to face the woman. "Why was Fenwick leavin' this house?"

For a moment she could not answer. Then she said, in a high, tense voice:

"I've told you. He was tired of Tom's attitude. He didn't want to cause trouble—"

"Are ye sure?" bellowed Murphy.

"Are ye sure it wasn't because he had a quarrel wid him? Were ye sore at him because he was leavin'?"

"Listen here!" exclaimed White angrily.

"Shut up! Hurry up, ma'am. Answer me. Was that the reason?"

She began to sob hysterically.

"No. It wasn't. I've told you the truth!"

Murphy turned to the man.

"Where's that revolver?"

"Downstairs."

"Where?"

"In a cupboard in the kitchen."

"I want to see it. Both of ye can get ready to come with me to headquarters."

White accompanied the detective downstairs and led him to the kitchen cupboard, where he took a heavy revolver from an upper shelf. It was a forty-five caliber weapon. Murphy held it by the barrel, then wrapped a towel about the revolver in order that possible finger-prints would not be eradicated.

"We'll take a look at this later on,"

he promised. "Better get your hat and coat."

White hesitated.

"I won't walk to headquarters," he said. "Will you let me call a taxi?"

"No need of that," Murphy assured him. "I've got a car outside. We never let our customers walk—at least not until we're finished wid 'em."

Murphy left the house under police guard and drove down to headquarters with Mr. and Mrs. White. He sat in the front seat with the chauffeur, but he noticed something that made him think. White turned up his coat collar and pulled his hat down over his eyes, even in the shelter of the car. It was natural enough, perhaps, that the man would want to hide himself from the eyes of curious neighbors, but it struck Murphy that the suspect carried his caution to an extreme.

Suddenly he slapped his thigh.

"A hunch!" he exclaimed. "I've got a hunch!"

"What's that you say?" asked the chauffeur.

"Nothin'."

At headquarters he reported to the inspector, and the Whites were brought in for questioning.

The inspector, who could bluster and bellow with the best of them when it came to cowing some tough victim, adopted a more subtle technique in this case. He made his inquiries suavely, even sympathetically, treated the pair with quiet courtesy, tried to lull them into a sense of security. But he learned no more than Murphy had gathered. The woman asserted that her husband had slain Fenwick in a jealous quarrel; the man doggedly clung to his determination to say nothing until he had conferred with his lawyer.

They were detained, pending arrival of the district attorney. Murphy was left with the inspector, who turned to him and said:

"It's the woman, of course."

"I had that idea meself," observed Murphy.

"She killed Fenwick, and now her husband is trying to protect her. I guess he figures that if he keeps his mouth shut we'll charge him with the murder instead of her, and when it comes to trial we won't be able to get enough on him to convict, so they'll both go free."

"It's a smart scheme, so it is, sir."

"We'll give her a grilling later on. She'll come through."

"If she did it," said Murphy, "she will."

"Well, stay on the case. You may be able to pick up something new. Talk to the neighbors. Nose around."

"I'll do that, sir."

Murphy withdrew. But instead of returning to the White home he made his way directly to Moran's speakeasy, where Duke Puccelli had met his death earlier in the afternoon. Had any of his superior officers encountered him and inquired the reason for his presence in a locality to which he had not been assigned, Murphy would have explained, with perfect truth, that he was still working on the Fenwick murder. As a matter of fact, he was following the "hunch" that had occurred to him while he was bringing Mr. and Mrs. White to headquarters.

The speakeasy was located above a pool room, and consisted of two sparsely furnished rooms, with a businesslike bar at the rear, and a little alcove back of that. One of the precinct men, Hansen by name, was still on the ground. Puccelli's corpse had long since been taken away.

"Who sent you here?" growled Hansen. "I don't need no help."

Murphy grinned as he eyed the neck of a bottle protruding from Hansen's pocket. "No," he said, "I don't believe ye do."

"Have one, then," growled Hansen reluctantly. "They missed it in the clean-up."

Murphy was prowling around back of the bar. "None fer me, thanks. Not when I'm on duty."

"What are you lookin' for?" asked Hansen suspiciously.

"Evidence."

"Everything's gone. There was a squad here from uptown. They took away everythin' they'd need."

"Sure, but I'm thinkin' they might have left somethin' I might need," grunted Murphy. He was hidden behind the bar. Then he straightened up, thrusting something into his pocket.

"And they did."

"I don't get this at all. What's the big idea?"

Murphy whistled amiably.

"Have they found who killed Puccelli yet?" he asked.

"No. And they won't. Nobody'll talk. You know how it is. These mobs settle things themselves."

"I guess the Sikorski mob could tell, eh?"

Hansen became confidential.

"That's just it," he said. "I've got more than a pretty good idea that they don't know either. One of them birds is a guy I can talk to, see, and if he knew anythin' he'd tell it to me. And he says that it wasn't a Sikorski man. Butch himself said so. They figger it was some outsider that had a grudge against Duke and bumped him off, knowing Sikorski's mob would get blamed for it."

"Boloney!"

"You don't have to eat it. I'm only tellin' you what I know. If it *was* an outsider did the job he's probably sittin' back all safe and sound and laughin' to beat hell because he's stirred the gangs up to battle. They've been lookin' for an excuse long enough."

"I don't like to brag," said Murphy, expansively, "but I'm willin' to bet ye a cigar—a ten-center—that inside an hour I'll know who shot Puccelli."

"I thought you said you weren't on this case."

"I'm not," returned Murphy. "I'm just performin' a delicate little trick known as killin' two birds wid one stone. It's an old Irish custom."

Whereat he strode out, jauntily, and hastened back to headquarters.

III

IN a private room, he faced White.

"Have ye seen your lawyer yet?"

White shook his head.

"He's on his way down."

"And ye still insist ye won't talk?"

"No."

Slowly, Murphy took a sheet of newspaper from his pocket, unfolded it and put it on the table.

"See that?"

"What about it? A sheet of paper, that's all."

"Know where I found it?"

White hesitated. His eyes shifted. He was pale. "Why—no," he stammered.

"Back of the bar in Moran's speak-easy."

White tried to remain calm, but the effort was a failure.

"Ye'll notice," said Murphy, "that it's half of a full sheet of newspaper that was torn in two. And here," he continued, taking another sheet from his pocket, unfolding it and piecing the two together, "is the other half. Ye can see how it matches. I found it in the kitchen at your house. It was used for wrappin' up a bottle of gin. So by puttin' two and two together, in a manner of speakin', I guess you were at Moran's place this afternoon. That's where you got the gin that Fenwick was pourin' out when he was shot."

White was silent. He rubbed the back of his hand across his perspiring brow. At last he said:

"Yes—I got the gin there this mornin'."

Murphy shook his head.

"Ye got it this afternoon. Ye were workin' this morning, and ye left the house early this afternoon, went to Moran's, got the gin and then came home." Murphy leaned across the table. "Who shot Duke Puccelli?"

White leaped up.

"I don't know! I wasn't there—"

"Ye were! Tell me! Who shot him?"

"I don't know, I tell you. I don't know his name. I only saw him for a few seconds. I don't want to say anything about it," White clamored. "You know what it means if I get in wrong with any of these gangs. If you use me as a witness, I'll be murdered. They'll get me. Moran said so. He told me to keep my mouth shut."

White sat down weakly. He was trembling, frightened.

Murphy studied the man for a few moments. Then he remembered what Hansen had told him.

"Is that what ye're worryin' about?" he laughed. "Well, just listen to me. The man who shot Puccelli ain't in any of the gangs. He's playin' a lone hand. He don't belong, see. If he wants to shut you up he'll have to do it himself. And as long as he's runnin' around loose, the more danger-for you. Once we get him locked up, ye've got nothin' to be scared of, for he won't have any friends on the outside gunnin' for ye. Figure that out."

White figured it out.

"Is that straight goods?" he asked, finally. "I won't have the whole Sikorski gang on my neck if I tell what I know?"

"The Sikorski gang won't give a good-sized hoot what happens to the man who killed Puccelli. He ain't in their crowd. If it's playin' safe ye want to be, tell what ye know and have him locked up."

White nodded his head thoughtfully.

"If he's an outsider, that makes a difference," he said.

"I was tipped off to it not less than twenty minutes ago."

White drummed on the table with his finger tips.

"I was in Moran's place, all right," he said. "I went down there to get a bottle of gin. I sat down and had a drink. Puccelli was sitting at a table near the door. He was pretty drunk. The door opened. I guess the fellow

must have had a duplicate key, for Moran keeps it locked and only opens if you give the right knock. This man stepped into the room, looked over at Puccelli, hauled out a revolver and let fly. He drilled one at me, too, but I was under the table by then. Moran gave a shout, from the back, and was just coming in when this fellow beat it. Moran didn't get a look at him."

"Do ye know his name?"

"Never saw him before. He was short and slim, dressed in a gray suit. A neat little chap, but tough. Thin face. His nose looked sort of funny. I think it must have been broken at one time."

Murphy's big fist thudded on the table.

"Ye've as good as told me his name!" he declared. "Wait a minute and I'll show ye his picture."

He hastened out of the room and returned in a few minutes with two rogues gallery photographs, profile and full-face, of a young man officially listed as Hymie Kranz, alias Grant, alias Robinson, former pugilist, confidence man and convict, in the order named. When White looked at the pictures he nodded.

"That's the man."

"Ah!" said Murphy.

IV

ACCORDING to all the rules and regulations, Murphy should have reported to the inspector, but he didn't. He had handled the case alone so far and he had no mind to let some one else — Levinsky, for instance — share the glory of the climax. So he hastened out to locate Hymie Kranz without assistance.

There are ways and means. The underworld has many eyes. So has the police department. In twenty minutes Detective Murphy was ascending a flight of stairs in a cheap apartment house uptown.

He halted before a door and rapped. Footsteps. Some one called out:

"Who's there?"

"Headquarters," growled Murphy.

"Open up!"

"Just a minute."

"Come on. Come on. Open up!"

There were vague sounds in the apartment, and then a sudden and suspicious silence. Murphy tried the door. It was locked.

No time to lose. He whisked out a bunch of keys designed for just such delicate emergencies. He tried one, and then another. He lost valuable moments before he found one that fitted the lock. He thrust open the door, rushed into the apartment. It was deserted. He ran into the kitchenette at the back. The window was open. He looked out. A steel fire escape dangled against the brick wall. It swayed slightly, and the window just below was open. At the same time, Murphy heard the scream of a woman and a confused uproar in the apartment beneath.

He wheeled about and ran back through the apartment into the hall, and peered over the stair railing just in time to see a man plunge through a doorway just below.

"Stop!" roared Murphy, tugging at his revolver.

The man looked up. Something flashed. Two shots roared out, and a bullet chipped a splinter off the railing.

Murphy returned the compliment, but the man was already racing toward the street door. He fired again. Glass crashed. Hymie had reached the door. The apartment house was aroused. A woman was screeching. People were running out into the hallways.

Detective Murphy plunged down the stairs. Hymie was out in the street now. Murphy gained the pavement just in time to see his quarry leap to the running board of a taxi parked by the curb and thrust his revolver into the face of the astonished driver.

The taxi man was taking no chances. The car began to move away from the curb.

Murphy crossed the pavement in two bounds and leaped toward the car just as Hymie swung around, revolver upraised. More by good luck than good judgment, Murphy struck Hymie's wrist and the revolver went off harmlessly. They grappled together, tumbled off the running board and crashed to the paving. There, even Hymie's pugilistic skill was of no avail because Detective Murphy, weighing close on two hundred pounds, was uppermost.

Hymie did make an effort to get rid of the gun. He managed to free his arm for a moment while Murphy was reaching for the handcuffs, and hurled the weapon far out into the road, into the traffic. The taxi driver, however, retrieved it. This was fortunate, because the revolver was important.

A certain laboratory device at headquarters revealed the cold fact that the bullet extracted from the body of Duke Puccelli had been fired by the revolver of Hymie Kranz, and could have been fired by no other weapon. It was a big revolver, and the markings on the bullet were distinctive.

The laboratory device revealed a further astonishing fact. At least, it was astonishing to every one save Detective Murphy. The bullet that took the life of Duke Puccelli was identical in markings with the bullet that killed Jim Fenwick.

Later on, Hymie Kranz admitted what science had already proved. He had murdered both men.

"I bumped off the Duke, all right," he confessed sullenly. "He stole my sweetie while I was in stir so I come back to get him. There was another guy in the speakeasy when it happened, and he got a good look at me. This beak of mine gives me away every time, so I got scared he'd tell. I figured I'd better get him out of the way, too. I made Moran tell me his name and where he lived, so I went up to the place and hung around the garage until I saw him standin' in the kitchen, pourin' a drink. Then I plugged him."

"The mistake he made," said Murphy, discussing matters with the inspector, "was in pluggin' the wrong man. Poor Fenwick was just about the same size and build as White was. He was the goat."

"You certainly killed two birds with one stone," said the inspector approvingly. "But how did you dope it out? What made you figure that neither White nor the wife killed Fenwick?"

Murphy shrugged.

"Anybody could see it," he observed modestly. "Fenwick had the bottle in his hand when he was shot. And there was only a bit of gin in one glass and none at all in the other. The glasses were on the table. So Fenwick must have been standin' at the table, facin' the window, when he got shot. The bullet was right in the middle of his forehead. That showed two things—that whoever did it was a fine shot and that he was standin' outside the house. More than that, the bullet hadn't gone in very deep, and it was fired by a big revolver. If it had been fired close to him it would have gone clean through his head. Puttin' two and two together, I figured that the lad who shot him must have been standin' out by the garage. So that got me to thinkin' that it wasn't White nor his wife. If they was doin' any murderin' they'd stay in the house to do it."

"But how did you hook that up with the Puccelli affair?"

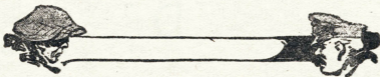
"That was where me hunch came in. I was wonderin' why White wouldn't talk, when things looked so bad ag'in' him. At first I got to thinkin' as ye did—that his wife did the killin' and he was just tryin' to protect

her. Then I noticed how he kept himself hid when he was in the car on the way to headquarters. I had seen the smashed gin bottle in the kitchen, and the newspaper it had been wrapped up in. The paper bein' on the floor showed me he must have got the gin just that day and when Mrs. White said he had gone out for awhile in the afternoon and started drinkin' wid Fenwick when he come back, it showed me he got the gin early in the afternoon. He must have been in a speakeasy. And then it all popped into me head at once, sir. He was scared and he was keepin' his mouth shut because if he told us that Fenwick was killed by mistake, he'd have to tell us about the affair at Moran's. He was afraid if he give evidence ag'in' the lad that shot Puccelli, the whole Sikorski mob would lay for him."

"Can't blame him."

"I just sorta guessed that he must have been the customer in Moran's place when Duke got bumped off. After that, it was simple enough. I went down to Moran's to make sure, and I found the rest of the sheet of newspaper Moran had used to wrap up the bottle of gin. That proved it. Then I talked to White, quietlike, and he had to admit he saw the killin'. I persuaded him he'd be a lot better off if he told me who did it, so he described the lad and I knew it must be Hymie Kranz. The broken nose pinned it on Hymie. So then I went out and got him."

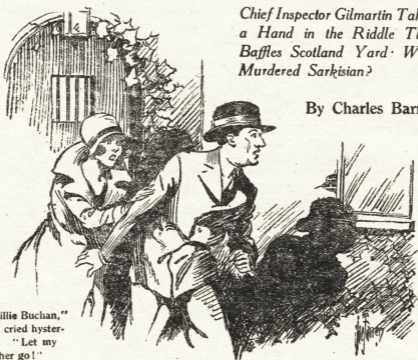
"It sounds simple when you say it quick," remarked the inspector. And he grinned approvingly at Detective Aloysius Murphy.



The Clew of the Clot

Chief Inspector Gilmartin Takes a Hand in the Riddle That Baffles Scotland Yard · Who Murdered Sarkisian?

By Charles Barry



"I'm Millie Buchan," the girl cried hysterically. "Let my father go!"

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

Leonidas Sarkisian, an unscrupulous money lender, was found murdered in his office in the Brandt Building. His secretary, Miss Ransome, summoned Buchan, the elevator starter, who called the police.

Miss Ransome could shed little light on the circumstances of the murder. She did relate to the police that Buchan, bending over Sarkisian, muttered: "You deserved it, you dirty swine." Buchan confessed to Barber of Scotland Yard that he had said such a thing because he knew Sarkisian was the man responsible for sending his daughter, Millie, "on the road to hell."

Suspicion was also directed against Bertram W. Buckeridge, but he proved an alibi. Buckeridge was a debtor of Sarkisian. A sudden development of the case sent Barber on an-

other angle. Sarkisian, he learned, was one of the conspirators in a huge white slave traffic plot. Barber's informant was Rose Bamberger who, with Millie Buchan, had narrowly escaped being shanghaied.

While Barber was tracing down the white slave angle, two men called at Sarkisian's office, where Sergeant Wilkins was in charge. One was Kyprianos, Sarkisian's partner. The other was a young man named Barraclough.

CHAPTER X

The Open Safe

DURING the journey back to London Rose Bamberger was no longer the vivacious creature who had enjoyed telling her story to the police. She was subdued and

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for April 6

silent, and her handsome eyes were now and then on the point of shedding the tears which she would fain have kept back.

Barber was thoughtful also. He found himself wondering what his next step should be, and he was less confident than he had been that morning of solving the mystery of the murder



of Leonidas Sarkisian. Already within a few hours he had run up against several developments which might or might not provide clues to the identity of the killer but practically every one of them pointed in a different direction from the others. To follow one track might mean the cooling of the scent upon another.

Remembering his promise to look in on Sergeant Wilkins he decided to visit the Brandt Building first, and so, having deposited the grateful Rose at a spot not far from her lodging, he arrived there to find that his subordinate had been nothing if not thorough. Not only had Kyprianos been detained against his will, but his visitor as well. Having received Barber's instructions, the sergeant had promptly gone to the outer office and, without a word of explanation, had asked that young gentle-

man to give his name and address, a request which met with the indignant refusal which its heavy-handedness undoubtedly deserved.

"All right!" the bluff detective said calmly, "you'll stay here till my inspector comes along."

Kyprianos advised his friend to comply with the sergeant's demand, but Wilkins had already retired to the inner office with a wink to the constable, whose back was now made to lean against the outer door. It was the resistance of that back which met Inspector Barber's effort to push the door in from the landing.

"Hello!" he said when the door opened. "What's the trouble?"

Without waiting for an answer he asked:

"Which of you is Mr. Kyprianos?"

Sarkisian's partner rose from the easy chair in which he was sitting tranquilly smoking.

"I am," he said politely. "To whom have I the honor of—"

"Ah! There you are!" the sergeant's voice interrupted from the door. "Just a word, sir!"

Barber went into Sarkisian's office.

"The other young chap," the sergeant told him hurriedly, "is the one I told you about over the phone. He saw Kyprianos in town last evening, but Kyprianos says he came up from Folkestone this morning. Says he can prove it. The young 'un wouldn't give me his name and address when I asked for them, so I thought I'd let him cool his heels out there till you came. His first name is Reggie, that's all I know."

Barber smiled, then nodded and went back to the outer office.

"So you are Mr. Kyprianos!" he said, as if he had not been interrupted. "I should like a word with you in a minute or two. In the meantime I wish to see your friend, Mr. Reginald—er—"

"Barracrough," the young man in question supplied at once in an aggrieved tone. "I don't see why I should be kept here like this. I have nothing to do with this bally murder, and—"

He stopped, probably because he had not expected to be allowed to get so far, and stood gaping open-mouthed at Barber, who was quietly listening, with a slight smile on his lips.

"Yes?" the inspector said, "and?"

Barracrough was silent.

"Now," Barber resumed in a cheerful tone, "will you kindly give me your address, Mr. Barracrough?"

The young man, after a short hesitation, handed over a card which Barber immediately passed to Wilkins.

"Verify this," he ordered.

He turned again to Barracrough.

"While the sergeant is going through that little formality," he said, "it would save your time and mine if you would just tell me in what circumstances you saw Mr. Kyprianos last night."

"I was probably mistaken," Barracrough answered readily enough now, "but I must say—sorry, Kip, if it puts you in a hole—I must say I thought I saw him getting out of a taxi in the Strand—corner of Craven Street—about nine o'clock last night, but if Kip says I was mistaken, then I was mistaken, that's all about it."

"I see."

Barber turned to Kyprianos, but the latter said nothing. He was standing, with a smile on his handsome face, looking at the smoke curling up from the cigarette he held in his hand.

"Excuse me, sir," the constable addressed Barber, "but this gentleman hasn't said that he wasn't in the Strand last night. I heard every word they've said about it."

"The constable is quite right," Kyprianos said then. "I have neither denied nor asserted the fact."

"Will you do one or the other now, please?" Barber requested.

"Well, no, I don't think I will," the Roumanian replied.

"Why not?"

"Because, frankly speaking," the other said, "I don't see the relevancy of my presence or otherwise in the Strand yesterday to my partner's death in the Brandt Building this morning."

Barber was spared a remark on this by the return to the room of Sergeant Wilkins. The latter nodded to his superior.

"You may go now, Mr. Barracrough," Barber told that young man. "If I want you I know where to find you."

The tone in which this was said made it equivalent to an order, and Barracrough went, though now he would have been quite willing to stay. Barber returned to Kyprianos.

"I am quite aware, Mr. Kyprianos," he said, "that the matter may not appear relevant at first sight, but there is this to be considered: if I find that you have been in London during the past few days when you have told Sergeant Wilkins that you were in Folkestone, I may feel inclined to doubt the statement that you arrived in London this morning, and act accordingly."

"Quite so," Kyprianos answered coolly. "But before you go any further may I correct you in one particular? I have never told Sergeant Wilkins that I spent two days in Folkestone."

Barber turned to the sergeant, who was now glaring at the Roumanian.

"Well—I'll be—d—sorry—blowed!" Wilkins exclaimed, almost apoplectic with anger. "He told me just that, didn't he, Crocker?"

"I believe so, sar'nt," the constable to whom he had appealed answered.

"I distinctly remember," Kyprianos told Barber, "telling the sergeant that I came over from France on Saturday and that I stayed two nights at the Queen's Hotel in Folkestone."

"By George! Yes, that's right," Wilkins conceded handsomely after a

pause. "So you did. It's a mistake I shouldn't 'a' made."

"H'm!" Barber commented. "So you were in London last evening."

"I have not said so."

"H'm!" the inspector reflected aloud. "Sunday! Now if I remember aright, the last train to Folkestone on Sunday is somewhere round about half past nine. That would get you into Folkestone about midnight, eh?"

"That is so, I believe," Kyprianos agreed with a smile. "There is a train which arrives at Folkestone Junction a few minutes after midnight."

"Wilkins," Barber said to the sergeant after a pause, "get on to the Queen's Hotel, Folkestone, and find out, firstly, if Mr. Kyprianos has been staying there; second, if he had his meals there, in other words, how much they saw of him, when he went out and when he came in and all that sort of thing. Third, when he left definitely, and, lastly, above all, get a description of the Mr. Kyprianos who stayed there."

Wilkins disappeared into the other room.

"That last point was a clever idea," Kyprianos commented with a smile.

"Now, look here, Mr. Kyprianos," the detective inspector said. "It is quite clear to me that you are trifling with me, I don't know why, but let me tell you that it's not a profitable pastime. However, while the sergeant is in there we will talk of other matters. Just tell me how you found out that Sarkisian was engaged in the white slave traffic."

"Ah! You know that?"

Barber nodded.

"In that," Kyprianos declared, "I am out to help you all the way, but I tell you honestly, inspector, that I will not give you the slightest help in the matter of finding out who killed my late partner."

"Oh? Why?"

"Because the man deserved to be killed. I have no strong feelings at all

about the murder as murder—crime against society and all that sort of stuff. A greater crime against society is the one he was engaged in. That is my opinion at any rate, and I will tell you all I know. As you probably have been told, I went to the continent on a business tour. In a Paris hotel I came into contact with a man—a Greek, who discovered in the course of conversation that I was Sarkisian's partner, and took it for granted that I was in with him in all his affairs. In fact, I believe that Sarkisian gave him so to understand. This man is doing on the continent what Sarkisian was doing in England, and is the individual who practically controls the whole business in France.

"At first when he spoke to me about it I was somewhat bewildered and probably showed it, for the man thought that I was merely—how do you say?—playing safe, and began to chaff me. I am not very slow, inspector, and it occurred to me to humor him. I asked him how was I to know that he was who he said he was and that he wasn't trying to pump me? In other words, I played the man who was afraid of a police trap. He immediately produced a little brass token which looked Indian in type."

Barber nodded.

"Ah? You see the significance? At any rate, I pretended to be satisfied when I saw it, and he began to talk of certain details of the organization. Believe me, inspector, it will need all the efforts of the police of a dozen countries to smash that organization. Why, there are even police officials mixed up in it—not in England, but elsewhere—so you see the difficulties. I let this fellow think that I had been away from business for some weeks and that I was rather 'out of it' for the moment, and that gave me an excuse to take notes quite openly of what he said. So I have a lot of data which I can let you have—addresses, changes of address, and all that sort of thing.

"I was lucky, though, in one matter. This creature complained that Sarkisian had not answered his last communication, and I happened to ask how the fellow had addressed it—to the office or to Sarkisian's house. He told me that he didn't know what the address was, except that it was a place in Greenwich. I wrote that down too, and told the man that that address had been abandoned. I gave him the Crouch End address in order to keep my end up, and made that an excuse to get his list of English addresses to see if it needed revision. I may say that I'm afraid I rather messed up his list, so that the police will probably be getting curious communications from the dead letter office soon."

"You will let me have all that information as soon as possible, I hope," Barber said.

"Yes, as soon as you like after I get to my rooms."

Barber could not help congratulating himself on the "leg-up" that these discoveries would give him with his superiors, even if he did not succeed in elucidating the murder case.

"That will be very useful," he said aloud, "but I must say that I am not quite satisfied about you, Mr. Kyprianos. I can quite well imagine you killing Mr. Sarkisian, especially after getting possession of the knowledge that you were being associated with his dirty traffic."

"I can quite well imagine it also," Kyprianos replied. "In fact, I think I had almost intended to do it up to Saturday evening, and—er—ah!"

"Oh? Why up to Saturday evening?" Barber asked quickly.

"That is my affair, inspector," was the suave reply as Kyprianos seemed to recover from a momentary confusion. "Let us put it that I thought that he would meet with his deserts otherwise."

"You're a bit of a mystery to me," the detective said bluntly. "In fact, I'm rather astonished even at your at-

titude with regard to the white slave traffic. In the part of the world you come from they aren't easily moved to indignation about it, I believe."

The Greco-Roumanian's face darkened.

"I was mostly brought up in England, inspector," he said curtly. "Besides, I have special reasons for my attitude in the matter."

Wilkins came in, and Barber did not hear what the special reasons were.

"What's the report?" he asked.

The sergeant's notebook was in his hands.

"I spoke to the porter on duty at the Queen's Hotel, Folkestone," he reported, "also to the receptionist at the same hotel. Both state that a Mr. Kyprianos arrived at the hotel in a taxi which came from the harbor at half past one on Saturday afternoon, as if he had come from the one o'clock Boulogne boat. After engaging his room he washed, asked for that day's London papers, looked through them quickly, and went out immediately. Did not come back till dinner. Dined in the hotel restaurant and went to bed early. Yesterday, Mr. K. breakfasted in his room. A Fiat car from a local garage came for him. Mr. K. drove off in it and was absent all day until about half past eleven. Both porter and receptionist are certain to within five minutes of the hour, as they happened to have come into the hotel a few minutes before. This morning Mr. K. breakfasted at the hotel and left at seven-thirty. Was heard to direct taximan to Central Station."

"And the description?" Barber asked.

"It's Mr. K. all right!" Wilkins declared. "Tall, handsome, dark, small black mustache, heavy eyebrows almost touching over bridge of nose, scar on back of index finger of right hand—receptionist noticed that when he signed the register."

Kyprianos held out his right hand in silence. The scar was there.

Wilkins continued, reading from his notebook:

"Dressed in a brown double-breasted suit, turned down collar with pointed ends, dark and light brown check tie fastened at the 'V' of the waistcoat by a plain gold bar safety brooch."

The description was an accurate one of the man standing before them.

"M'm!" the inspector murmured. "That seems all right."

"It is all right," Kyprianos averred.

"May be," Barber replied, "but I wish you were more frank about your movements."

"Sorry not to be able to please you, inspector," the other said, "but I cannot. All that matters, I presume, is that it is clearly demonstrated that it was physically impossible for me to have been here this morning to kill my partner."

"M—yes," the detective agreed, "I suppose that is all that matters, but I don't consider that it has been clearly demonstrated."

"Oh? Why?"

"If you were able to get to Folkestone from London in less time than it takes a train to do it on one occasion, what is to prevent you getting from Folkestone to London in a similar manner?"

"True," Kyprianos admitted, "but that is an 'if.'"

"Well, we won't discuss it now," Barber told him, "and if you wish to leave you may do so, provided you leave me the keys of any safes there are."

"I have only a sort of tin cash box thing," Kyprianos said. "Sarkisian has a safe, but it is open, I believe. However, here is my key ring."

"The premises will be at your disposal some time later in the evening," the inspector informed him, "but I hope to see you at the Yard before that with that information you promised me."

After the Roumanian had left Bar-

ber stood looking at the floor for some minutes.

"I say, Wilkins," he said suddenly, "did you let Kyprianos into Sarkisian's room?"

"No. Took him into his own office."

Barber unfolded the evening paper he had bought on his way and skimmed the meager account of the Brandt Building murder, which nevertheless filled several columns of print.

"Humph!" he muttered. "They've even got my name, but not a word about that! How the dickens did he know that Sarkisian's safe was open?"

Wilkins turned to the open-mouthed constable.

"Did you tell him?" he asked.

"Never spoke to him," the man replied.

The two detectives looked at each other.

"Unless," Barber reflected, "he met that Ransome girl and she told him, but—yes—why did he never mention her—not once?"

CHAPTER XI

Father and Daughter

"I'M off to the Yard," Barber said then. "Here! Take these keys. Go through all the papers you can find. You, constable—you look an intelligent fellow—you give the sergeant a hand. All papers that you don't understand or that refer to anything outside the business of the firm, put aside and take to the Yard. And Wilkins, it's a case of white slave traffic, so hurry!"

"You don't say!" the sergeant gasped, and would have asked more, but his superior was already halfway down the stairs.

Barber found his way out through the front door blocked by the broad back of the commissionaire who was deputizing for Buchan. He pushed the man unceremoniously aside and came face to face with Rose Bamberger—an angry and perturbed Rose.

"Oh! Here he is!" she exclaimed. "D'jew know! This guy with the uniform like a general in the navy is all bone from the neck up. He wouldn't lemme go up to see you!"

"Indeed!" Barber asked in amusement, "and why the desire for a sight of me? Come! Walk along with me."

They left the commissionaire staring after them.

The girl was out of breath from excitement and from running.

"Gosh! I've had a knock!" she panted. "I went back to the roomin' house an'—an'—oh! Millie's gone!"

Barber stopped on the bottom step.

"Gone? Where?"

"Wisht I knew! Look at this!"

She handed the detective a piece of paper.

"It was pinned on the pillow," she told him.

Barber read:

DEAR ROSE:

Many, many thanks for all you have done for me. You can have all my things and the money in the top drawer. Good-by.

MILLIE.

"Can you beat it?" Rose declared, almost in tears, "and gee! I'm fond o' that kid! She's gone an' killed herself as sure as shootin'!"

"Shootin' isn't always dead sure," Barber consoled her.

"Taxi!" he called out to the rank opposite, and, when the taxi came, bundled the girl into it and ordered: "Scotland Yard!"

He pulled out his notebook as they drove along.

"Now," he said, "give me as good a description of your friend as you can."

The little New Yorker proved herself an observant friend, for when Barber entered the narrow door under the archway of Scotland Yard ahead of her he found no difficulty in recognizing the girl who stood beside the doorkeeper's office as Millie Buchan.

"Lady to see you, sir," the door-

keeper announced. "Been waiting here for nearly an hour."

"Oh! You're Inspector Barber!" the girl exclaimed almost hysterically. "I'm Millie Buchan! I killed Sarkisian! Let my father go!"

"Millie!" Rose exclaimed as she saw her friend and heard the statement. "You didn't! That's a darn—"

"Yes, Rose, I did!" Millie Buchan interrupted. "That's why I went out early this morning."

"Come upstairs, both of you!" Barber ordered. "There's no need to let all Whitehall and the Embankment know it!"

"Well, for the love o' Mike!" Rose half sobbed as she went up the stairs in the wake of the other two. "Can yah beat it? Can yah beat it?"

Millie Buchan was a tall, not unhandsome girl whose features bore a striking resemblance to those of her handsome father, but her otherwise pleasing appearance was marred by the discontented pout of a rather foolish girl to whom life has not yet given all that she wants of it.

Barber, in a room temporarily placed at his disposal by a Yard man whose duties for the time being were out of doors, took down her statement without other comment than a question here and there whose object was merely to clear up a detail left obscure. He had given her the stereotyped warning beforehand, and when she had placed her signature at the foot of the foolscap page he had filled he said as he blotted it:

"Now, Miss Buchan, I have only a word to say. If this confession of yours has been made for the purpose of obstructing the work of justice your position is a serious one. There is still time to tear it up."

"I don't want to tear it up," the girl answered stubbornly.

"Aw! G'wan! Millie! Many's the one wouldn't give yah the chance!" Rose, sitting forlornly in a corner of

the room, pleaded earnestly. "Take it all back! Don't be a darn fool. Yah know there ain't a word of truth in it!"

"You won't?" the inspector asked, and, receiving no reply, stood up.

"Very well, Miss Buchan," he said, "I will keep it. In the meantime, you may go back to your rooms with Miss Bamberger. And you, Miss Bamberger, will please keep your eye on this young lady and see that she gets into no more mischief."

Rose's stare of amazement was transformed into a broad grin as she noted the meaning look in the detective's eye.

"I getcha!" she answered, nodding vigorously. "I getcha! C'mon, Millie. I'm sworn in as deppity sheriff, but gee! I'm just dyin' for a feed."

"But—but—" the other girl protested. "Why don't you arrest me? I—I—and won't you let dad go?"

"Oh! We don't do things like that," Barber told her quite seriously. "I suppose I should really put you in the cells, but I can't just let your father walk out like that, because you signed this thing. Oh, no! There's a lot more to be done before that."

"Aw! C'mon, Millie!" Rose cried with a wink in Barber's direction. "He'll pull yah in when he's good an' ready. Yah must wait till he gets yer sheets aired for yah. Gosh, goil, yah don't want to catch cold 'fore you go to the chair!"

Barber could not help smiling at this curious method of consolation.

"I don't wish to be rude, ladies," he said, "but I'm a busy man these days, so if Miss Buchan will be good enough to write down for me the address of that house in Greenwich I could bear to see you go."

"I getcha!" was Rose's answer. "Millie! Write quick."

Millie wrote the required address on the paper Barber placed in front of her, and they went to the door, Rose holding the other firmly by the arm.

"I'll look after her all right," Rose

called out. "Don't you worry none whatever, an' say, don't b'lieve her neither."

When they left, Barber smiled, not altogether in amusement at the thought of the relative positions of the two girls—the one, a stranger to the country whose life, by her own admission, had been none too regular and who had only that day tried to kill another person as well as herself, now mothering the other, older by a year or two than herself, a native or at least a denizen of London, and hitherto supremely confident of her own ability to steer a way through the pitfalls of a great city.

As soon as he judged that they had left the building the inspector took up the paper just signed and, holding it in one hand, went down to Cannon Row police station and requested that Sergeant-major Buchan be brought to him from the cells. When the commissioner, looking no less spruce than when at the main entrance to the Brandt Building, appeared before him, Barber spoke at once with well-assumed heartiness.

"Well, sergeant-major," he said, "so we've got to admit a mistake. You didn't kill Sarkisian after all."

"A see!" Buchan replied somewhat dourly. "A suppose ye got the one that did it that ye're talkin' like that."

"Yes, I've got a written confession here," Barber told him and offered the paper. "Would you like to read it? It will interest you, I'm sure."

"Onybody A know?" Buchan asked, taking the paper hesitatingly.

"Read it."

The commissioner read the first few lines of the confession and stopped. The paper fell to the floor while his hands remained stretched out before him in the same position as when he had held it. He stared aghast at the inspector.

"Millie!" he whispered hoarsely. "Man, it canna be! She's gone aw—d'ye mean ta say she didn' go away after all?" he finished lamely.

"She signed that paper ten minutes ago," Barber assured him.

"An' she says that she killed that da—that swine?" the other questioned incredulously.

"So she says—as you can see if you read to the end."

The sergeant-major was silent for some seconds. Then he stooped and picked up the paper from the floor. He read it through from beginning and then began again. Barber turned as if to look at something on the desk behind him. A ripping, tearing sound did not make him turn back again.

"It's a damn lie!" the commissioner cried. "There's her confession for you!"

Barber turned then.

"M-m!" he said calmly. "I see! You've torn it up! Why?"

The sergeant-major looked at him pityingly.

"Why?" he growled. "Why? Because she on'y made it up to save me! She's fond o' her father still, the bairn; but it won't save me. A killed him—d'y'e hear? A killed him masel'."

"I wish you'd settle it between you," Barber told him in the weary tone of one who was rather uninterested.

"What d'y'e mean?"

"Oh! Nothing at all!" the detective said sarcastically. "I'm just talking for the sake of talking. As a matter of fact, Buchan, I'm fed up with all you would-be murderers. However, if you want to make a confession to take the place of this one, I'll hear it, but mind you, make it a confession that I can't pick any holes in or you'll be the victim of the next murder and I'll be the candidate for the rope."

"A've already made a confession," Buchan mumbled.

"I heard you," the inspector said dryly, "but I'd like details—whens and hows and things like that—and also I'd like to see the revolver."

Buchan was silent.

"H-m?" the other went on. "You can't make any of that up on the spur

of the moment! Isn't that it? Suppose I told you that I don't believe a word of your daughter's confession would you stick to yours then?"

"Is she all right?" the sergeant-major asked anxiously. "No harm has come to her?"

"What has that got to do with it?" Barber asked. "You can't make a conditional confession, you know."

"If any harm has come to her A don't care if A do swing for killin' that dog," was the commissioner's only reply to this.

"I see," Barber said. "Now listen to me—a man who has never married and knows nothing about it. Your daughter, I'm practically certain, has come to no real harm. And, Sergeant-Major Buchan, if any harm *had* come to her, you would be in great part to blame. You have been too hard on her. Don't forget that young people nowadays can't be treated as we were in our young days."

"A know it! A know it now!"

"It was only the other day that an old clergyman—a man who had never married," Barber went on, "said to me: the young girls nowadays are like the young fillies that have been brought in from the hills for the first time. You must ride them gently. Their mouths are soft and their backs are ticklish. Do you get me?"

"Aye!"

"I'm telling you all this," the inspector went on, "because it is only a matter of minutes before you are released. Go and see your daughter. Her address is on that paper you have torn up. Go and see her, and for Heaven's sake, don't preach at her."

"Ma God, man!" the sergeant-major exclaimed. "D'y'e think A need you to tell me that? A know it! A know it all!"

"All right! And by the way, there's a girl living with your daughter who pulled her out of a very bad hole. You may have seen her before, and you may not approve of her, but she is—"

"If she saved ma bairn from—well, ye understand—I'll look after her, dinna worry."

The sergeant-major in his emotion was dropping deeper and deeper into his native Doric.

"Right! I'll go and arrange matters here for your release."

"Then ye don't believe," the commissioner asked, "that either of us killed Sarkisian? Is that it?"

"Oh! Lord! Don't ask me what I believe!" Barber snapped, and left the room.

On his way to his bachelor rooms the inspector that evening laughed at himself crookedly.

"By Jove!" he said to himself. "You're taking on a lot, son—advising foolish girls and intolerant fathers and what not! H'mph! Ought to have been a bloomin' parson!"

CHAPTER XII

Three Statements

BEFORE leaving for his home Barber had arranged that the house at Greenwich should be watched and that anybody coming away from it should be detained for inquiries. The next morning's experiences, however, drove out of his head all thought of asking what had resulted from these measures.

When he arrived at Scotland Yard well ahead of his usual time for beginning work he found that no fewer than three visitors already awaited his coming. He gave orders that they were to be admitted in the order of their arrival. The first was a lady of mature years dressed in a fashion which identified her calling at once.

"Your name, please?" Barber interrogated when she was shown into his temporary office.

"Sarah 'Ickson," she replied.

"I believe you have some information for me."

"That's as may be, sir," Mrs. Hickson said, still standing.

"Won't you sit down?" the inspector invited.

"Thank *you*, sir," the lady replied, obeying. "Yes, sir, I'm Sarah 'Ickson, an' I'm a cleaner—a office cleaner. I cleans out seven offices at that there Brandt Building."

"Yes?"

"Well, sir, Monday mornin' I come to the Brandt Building for me money from some o' them offices—I should get it Sat'days, but there's some o' them gawf players as doesn't come to their offices o' Saturdays an' makes me lose my time Monday mornin's comin' for it."

"Yes? And you came yesterday morning?"

"Yes, sir, as ever was! I was on the fourth floor—w'ich I may say is reely the fifth, seein' as they call one o' them a mezzareen floor—yes, sir, I was on the fourth floor an' all of a sudden I 'ears that young lady, Miss Ransome, screamin' fit to wake the dead. Next thing I 'ears is that that there Mr. Sark-issy-ann is murdered."

She paused to let this sink in.

"Yes," Barber asked, "and perhaps you had seen somebody going into his office before that? No?"

"No, sir, 'twasn't that. It's about Sat'day I was wantin' to see you about."

"Well? What about Saturday?"

"Sat'day I comes for my money, too," Mrs. Hickson explained, "an' 'fore I goes into Mr. Sark-issy-ann's office I could 'ear 'im an' the young lady 'avin' a set-to."

"What young lady?" Barber asked.

"The young lady as types for him—'er name's Ransome—Miss Ransome."

"What were they quarrelling about?"

"Not knowin', sir, I couldn't say," Mrs. Hickson replied. "She's a good girl that, as treats a lady as a lady should, not like some, an' I wouldn't like anythink I say to do 'er any 'arm, but I 'ad to come, seein' as the papers

says this mornin' as that head sergeant-major 'as been let off an'—"

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Hickson," the inspector interrupted, "but didn't you hear anything of this quarrel?"

"Well, sir," the charlady said, "I did 'ear some of it. The young lady was sorter 'alf cryin' like, an' she said as clear as she would kill 'im for somethin' 'e done. Then I knocked at the door an' went in. That there Sark-issy-ann made off inter 'is own office an' the young lady sorter pretended she was blowin' 'er nose. She was red in the face an' short-like with me as alwis 'as a pleasant word for all o' 'em. She just gives me my money an' says 'good mornin'' an' begins 'ammerin' that typewritin' machine thing that loud so's you couldn't 'ear yourself speak. So I come out."

"And you know no more about it?" Barber asked.

"Not if you was to torcher me!" was the lady's earnest reply.

"At what time did this quarrel take place?"

"Time? It must 'a' bin a couple o' minnits to one 'cause when I was comin' down the buildin' steps I met Anne Skinner as lives in our street an' she's like a clock herself, she is, an' alwis comes out'er business place next door on the tick o' one an' on the tick o' six. I says to 'er, Anne, I says, you're just the—"

"I see, I see," the detective interrupted hurriedly, "so if I want you I suppose I can always find you through the Brandt Building people."

"Yes, sir, an' every p'liceman from Covent Garding to Aldgate Pump—what was knocked down the other day—knows Sarah 'Ickson."

"Favorably, I hope," Barber smiled.

"Oh, me an' them boys alwis passes the time o' day, jokin' like," Sarah laughed. "They're good lads. Times is, p'raps, when I do forget me sorsers a bit, but the police never worrits me knowin' as I've 'ad troubles—more'n me fair share—"

Barber had no inclination to listen to a catalogue of the charwoman's troubles. His experience as a policeman had taught him that the list was likely to be prolonged, so he interrupted with a question:

"When you were at the Brandt Building on Monday morning did you hear anything like a shot before the girl screamed?"

"Now, I might 'ave, sir, an' I might not," Mrs. Hickson replied, "an' if I did as like as not I'd never 'a' noticed it with the busses an' things goin' past, an' the lifts goin' up an' down an' their gates openin' an' shuttin'. It's a very noisy time o' the day in them big office buildin's, sir. I was just thinkin' me-self, sir, as—"

But the detective had no time for the lady's theories.

"Have you ever heard any rumors about Sarkisian himself?" he asked nevertheless.

Mrs. Hickson sniffed.

"Rumors!" she repeated. "There's them as'll tell you he was the worst as ever was. Me an' Anne Skinner—'er as I was tellin' yer about—was talkin' about 'im the other day. She says 'e's a dopeseller an' 'Eaven knows what."

"What exactly do you mean by that, Mrs. Hickson?"

"Oh! Things a respectable woman can't talk about to a man," Mrs. Hickson replied virtuously, "it's that 'orrible, but it's the talk of our street."

"How is that? Surely your street is a long way from the Brandt Building?"

"Yes, indeed, but there's Emily 'Awkins, an' Liza Mullins, an' Jane 'Ogg an' me as is cleaners at the Brandt, an' we talk things over like."

"I see, and what has started this talk, do you know?"

"Mpf! Ain't we got eyes an' ears? It was 'im as led that pore head sergeant-major's daughter into bad ways, an' everybody knows as she wasn't the only one."

Finding that there was nothing more to be extracted from the charwoman except the gossip of her street he escorted her courteously to the door—an honor which her contented expression showed she appreciated.

On her departure there entered a pasty, pimply youth with an affected voice and laudably careful enunciation who gave his name as Albert Sweeter. He stood for a moment in front of Barber twirling his bowler hat round and round in front of him.

"Well, Mr. Sweeter?" the inspector invited.

"I came to say," Sweeter began after a polite cough, "that I believe I—that this 'ere—er—this Mr. Sarkisian was killed by Mr. Erskine of the Anglo-Uruguayan Trading Company."

"Indeed?" the inspector exclaimed, and then thought, "By Jove, I heard that name somewhere yesterday."

"Yes."

"What are your grounds for that belief?"

"I 'eard—er—'eard Mr. Erskine threatening to blow the 'ead off Sarkisian."

"When was that?"

"Saturday morning, ten o'clock, on the landing above Sarkisian's floor."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, spit it out," Barber exclaimed irritably, "I can't waste time squeezing it out. If you have a statement to make, make it. What exactly did you hear? How did you come to hear it? Go on!"

"I—I—" the other went on, with less assurance, "I am an invoice clerk at Osborne & Clark's, an'—and on Saturday morning I 'appened to be passing along the corridor from my room to the manager's office and Mr. Erskine and Sarkisian was—were standing on the landing outside Mr. Erskine's door, and Mr. Erskine was very angry, and I heard him say to Sarkisian that if he found him interfering with any

of his young people any more he would blow the top of 'is 'ead off o'—off him!"

"I see! Can you swear that?"

"Yes."

"Good! Write your name and address on that pad, and if I need you I will send for you."

Sweeter wrote as directed, and hesitated before going to the door.

"Well?" Barber asked, "got something else to say?"

"Will there be a reward," the other asked, "if Erskine did do it?"

"I don't know whether there will or not," Barber snapped. "Good morning!"

He rang a bell and the third visitor was shown in. This was a little spick and span elderly man with gray hair and gray toothbrush mustache, and the detective was not surprised when he announced himself, in staccato tones, to be Major Heald-Hawkins, late of the Rutland Light Infantry.

"Yes, major?" Barber asked after waving him to the easy chair. "What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, sir, nothing," the major barked, "but perhaps I can do something for you, help you to discover the murderer of that scamp Sarkisian."

"You didn't hear anybody threaten him on Saturday, I hope?" Barber asked involuntarily.

"Eh? What? Gad, no, sir, but I've threatened to horsewhip him myself, sir."

"Oh? When?"

"What does it matter?" Major Heald-Hawkins asked brusquely. "Never had a chance to do it, sorry to say! But we can't have murder, we can't have murder. Here! What do you think of this?"

While he was speaking the major had a hand in his breast pocket, and he now jerked it forward toward Barber so suddenly that the latter almost expected to see it grip a pistol. It held, however, nothing more dangerous than a foolscap envelope. The detective took

it and drew from it its inclosure. Half a dozen pieces of torn paper fell onto the desk. Accompanying these was a typed slip whose characters showed it to be a carbon copy.

"By Jove!" Barber exclaimed when he had read this, "this is interesting. I am very glad you brought this along."

"Thought so! Thought so!" the major jerked out. "Didn't want to bring it, but—hum!—we can't have murder, sir, we can't have m—"

"We've had it!" the detective could not help interrupting.

"Yes, by gad, we've had it!" the other agreed.

"How did you get this?" Barber asked.

"Came by post last night—ten o'clock delivery!"

"Hum!" Barber murmured as he examined the envelope. "Typewritten address. A poor hand at using a typewriter. Misspell one word. I happen to know that that particular Montagu Crescent of yours, major, hasn't an 'e' at the end."

"Quite right, sir, quite right! It hasn't."

"Half a minute, major!" Barber exclaimed suddenly and darted from the room. "I'll be back in a—"

When he came back he held in his hand the private ledger found in Sarkisian's safe.

"By gad, sir, I know that book!" the major coughed and flushed to the roots of his hair.

Barber was paying no attention to him, but was rapidly turning over the pages.

"Here it is!" said he. "Major O. L. Heald-Hawkins, 16 Montague Crescent, with an 'e.' This is where he got it all right!"

"I never thought anything else," the major commented in his curious barking voice. "But who's *he*?"

"That's the question!" Barber nodded. "First thing I am going to do is try to find the typewriter."

"That's your lookout! Now, do you want me to leave that with you?"

"If you don't mind, major," the detective said. "It will be shown to nobody outside one or two people in this building."

"Very good. Don't want half the world to know I was a damn fool!"

"So you were one of Sarkisian's victims? How did you get to know he lent money? He wasn't a registered money lender."

"I know that, sir, I know that!" the major barked. "That's what took me in. Johnny Corsellis introduced me—know Corsellis? Shot himself two months ago. That rogue's fault! I took a loan from the scoundrel—paid it back three times over—still owing all of it! I was a damn fool, sir, a damn fool!"

"Well, major," Barber said rising from his seat, "I can imagine worse things in your bedtime mail than your own promissory note torn up and a note informing you that you're free."

CHAPTER XIII

Another Would-be Murderer

INSPECTOR BARBER had just got rid of his third visitor and was trying to concentrate on the new aspects of the case presented to him by the three statements he had received when a telephone message from his own division caused him to give a new direction to his thoughts. He had intended to devote the rest of the morning to the examination of the papers found in Sarkisian's office and house, with the special object of comparing the information he might derive from them with some of the material furnished by Kyprianos in a typed statement handed in to Scotland Yard on the preceding evening after his own departure for his home. He anticipated, from a casual look at this statement, that its value was great—if not for the purpose of discovering the murderer of the Armenian, then undoubtedly as a

pointer in the direction to be taken by the police in their attempt to unearth the secrets of the unholy traffic of which the murdered man seemed to have been one of the principals.

The inspector was, however, not to be allowed to examine the papers just yet.

"We've got a young fellow here," was the report from the "E" Division, "who was snooping around on Sarkisian's floor in suspicious circumstances. Perhaps you'd better see him. Shall we send him along, or will you come here?"

"I'll go there," Barber replied and reached for his hat.

At the police station he found the prisoner to be a young fellow of about twenty-five, with nothing particularly striking about him to distinguish him from scores of others of his class in London. The detective sergeant who, during Barber's absence, was taking charge of criminal investigation usually conducted by his superior, gave the inspector a short summary of what he knew. Now that Sarkisian's papers had been removed a policeman was no longer in possession of the office, but a plainclothes man had been instructed to keep an unobtrusive eye on all comings and goings. Nobody of interest had visited the office on the previous evening after Sergeant Wilkins's departure. Two employees of the firm of Auguste Cherre, the chemical cleaners, acting, it appeared, on the instructions of Kyprianos, had removed the carpet from Sarkisian's room to be cleaned.

While they were so engaged the young man now detained had been observed peering into the office, but no attention had been paid to him, as it was thought that he was employed by one of the firms in the building and had acted from a natural curiosity to see what was happening on the scene of so recent a murder. This impression had been strengthened by the fact that he had gone out of the building,

not by the main entrance, but by one of the side doors, as if very familiar with the premises. This morning, however, he had reappeared and was hanging about the landing on which the offices of Sarkisian & Company were situated. The plainclothes constable—the same who had been on duty the previous evening—had therefore asked him to explain his presence, and on his refusal had invited him to accompany him to the police station. The young man had made no protest, but now refused to say anything. He had been searched, and, besides a small sum of money and a letter signed "Millie," was found to be in possession of a cheap Belgian revolver of .32 caliber, fully loaded, for which no permit had been issued.

"Let's see that letter!" Barber interrupted the recital.

The detective sergeant handed over a rather dog-eared envelope addressed to "Mr. Charles Molesby" at an address in Streatham. The inspector read the letter.

"Humph!" he said. "She got this out of a penny novelette."

"Just what I thought," the sergeant laughed, "especially that bit about not being 'fitted for a humdrum and prosaic suburban existence.' Who is she, I wonder."

"Oh! I think I know who she is," Barber told him. "In fact I'm sure she's Millie Buchan, that sergeant-major's daughter."

"Ah! That explains it!" the other exclaimed. "By gum! I wonder—"

"Explains what?" the inspector interrupted.

"Oh! Yes! I didn't tell you," the sergeant replied. "When the constable was conducting this young what's-his-name—Molesby—out of the building one of the commissionaires, who is assistant porter, told him that he had seen him in and out of the building quite a lot lately. He used to talk with Buchan at first, but recently he used to come in by a side door as if he wanted to avoid him. He was there

on Friday evening, Saturday morning and—the commissionaire thinks, but is not absolutely certain—on Monday morning, but not till after Sarkisian had been found."

"I think I'd better see him," Barber decided.

When Molesby was brought in the inspector noted in him an entire absence of curiosity—a total indifference to all that went on around him; he slouched into the room as if it were too much trouble to straighten up.

"Your name is Charles Molesby?" the inspector asked.

"M'm! Charles Molesby." The tone was neither listless nor dull, just that of a normal statement of a fact which had no great personal interest for the speaker. Barber decided to make an effort to change that. In the man's present frame of mind there was no hope of getting any information from him.

"Curious that I should come across you," the inspector said casually, "so soon after seeing Millie Buchan."

Barber thought for a moment that his ruse had failed, but it was fully successful.

"Millie Buchan?" Molesby echoed. "Millie Buchan?"

Then he faced the inspector with bared teeth.

"Where is she?" he ground out. "Tell me or I'll put a bullet through you."

He fumbled at his side pocket and then grinned with a more natural expression.

"They've taken it away. I forgot," he said, and then, after a pause, "I'm a bit mad, I think."

He shook himself and straightened his shoulders.

Barber said nothing.

"Sorry," the young man went on, quite normally. "I forgot where I was. Who are you?"

"I am Detective Inspector Barber."

"Was I dreaming, or did you say something about Millie Buchan?"

"You were not dreaming," Barber replied. "I said that I had just been talking to her."

"No!" All indifference was gone now. Excitement had taken its place. "Where? Then she didn't go away. Then, that swine—"

"There seems to be something monotonous about that expression as applied to a certain dead Armenian," Barber interrupted, and went on sharply: "Now, young man, that you have come more or less to your senses, perhaps you would explain why you have been hanging round the Brandt Building recently."

"If you really want to know," the other said calmly, "I wanted at first to kill Sarkisian, because I believe he was responsible for turning Mill—Miss Buchan's head—taking her out to dances and all that sort of thing, and introducing her to a lot of flashy devils that live on their wits in the West End. If he hadn't given her a taste of that life she'd never have thought of going away to America with—but you say she didn't go?"

"No, she didn't go," the inspector said, and held up his hand as Molesby was about to resume, "but I'm afraid your explanation is incomplete. It is all right as far as Friday, Saturday and Monday are concerned, but to-day, at any rate, if not sooner, you must have known that Sarkisian was dead. Why were you there to-day?"

"I wanted to find that typist girl," was the reply. "I thought she might know exactly where Millie had gone."

"I see. Now tell me what you were doing yesterday morning—say—from eight till nine-thirty?"

"Yesterday?" Molesby answered vaguely. "I think I left my digs in Streatham at eight, or perhaps a few minutes later, and came straight up to the Brandt Building. I suppose it took me over an hour. I came by bus. I wanted to catch that—well, that Sarkisian coming in, and if he didn't tell me where Millie was, to shoot him

there on the steps and then give myself up to the police."

"You knew Sarkisian, then?"

"I had seen him. Millie's father pointed him out. If I'd been able to get a revolver in time I'd have killed him weeks ago, I think."

"Indeed? And what about yesterday? What happened?"

"I hung about, but I didn't see him. Then I saw the typist calling a policeman and the policeman went in. A few minutes later a commissioner told me that Sarkisian had already been shot."

"You're sure you didn't shoot him yourself?" Barber asked dryly, "in a dream or something like that?"

"I'm sure enough of that. I didn't dream much when I was in that quarter, I can tell you."

"How is it that you didn't get a chance of shooting him—say—on Saturday? You would have had more time then in the afternoon when your own work was finished, but perhaps you hadn't the revolver then?"

"Oh! Yes!" Molesby answered in a matter-of-fact tone, "I got the revolver on Thursday. I waited for the blighter nearly all day on Saturday, but it was no good. I thought I had got him once, but just as I was going to go up to him a young chap who was waiting in a car got there before me and shook his fist in his face and then went back with him into the building."

"Sarkisian didn't come out again with the young fellow, and I waited on. The main entrance was closed about two, I suppose, and I was hungry by then, so I went away for a bit to eat. He must have gone out by one of the side doors when I was there, or else he left while I was away, because though I waited a long time after I had eaten I didn't see him. The only one I saw was that young partner of his ringing at the main entrance to get in."

"What?" Barber exclaimed.

"You're sure of that? What time was it then?"

"About five, I should say," was the reply, "and I'm sure it was Sarkisian's partner."

"Hum!" the inspector reflected in silence. "He must have spent the week-end in a car, that lad! I wonder what he was doing?"

Barber walked over to the window and looked out.

"I wish I knew if that early train business is faked somehow," he said to himself, and then turned round suddenly.

"There is absolutely no doubt in your mind," he said to Molesby, "that the man you saw was Kyprianos—not another foreigner very like him? They are often alike to us, you know, these southerners."

"I don't know his name," Molesby replied, "but I'm sure it was the partner chap. If it wasn't, it was his twin brother. I've seen him several times."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea," Barber told himself, "to inquire into his family history. Seems far-fetched, but by Jove it's not impossible! Twin leaves Folkestone. Man himself in London all the time. Makes an appointment to meet his partner early. Kills him after a quarrel about that business. Arrives later as the man who had traveled up to London from Folkestone. Oh! Hang! Theories!"

He turned to the detective sergeant.

"We must hold our friend here till all the necessary inquiries have been made," he directed, "you can charge him for the present with carrying firearms. Then make the routine inquiries. By the way, Molesby, how do you come to have so much leisure?"

"I took my holiday," the young fellow replied glumly, "but, I say, why are you keeping me? I want to see—"

"I don't care a hang who or what you want to see," Barber snapped. "You don't seem to realize that you are liable to twenty years' penal servitude for being in possession of firearms with intent to endanger life. Think that over!"

With which he left the police station with a rush.

CHAPTER XIV

Gilmartin Takes a Hand

BACK in the little room in Scotland Yard Barber found Sergeant Wilkins awaiting him with a pile of papers on the desk topped by a tear-off calendar about eight inches square. The sergeant was replacing the telephone receiver on its hook when his superior entered.

"I was just making a little inquiry on my own," Wilkins explained.

"What about?"

"Oh! Nothing much," Wilkins replied. "You see that calendar? Notice that Saturday's and Sunday's leaves are not torn off?"

"Yes! Well? What about it? I should think that the secretary-typist had something else to think of yesterday morning beside tearing off calendar leaves. Those funny hieroglyphics on the top page seem more interesting to me. I wonder what language they're in."

"They're notes in Armenian, the typist says," Wilkins replied. "But the point is this, the girl never does tear off the leaves. I phoned her up to ask. She's working there as usual to-day."

"For Heaven's sake, Wilkins," Barber exclaimed impatiently, "what does it matter who tore them off?"

"I dunno, sir," Wilkins said humbly, "but you always say details is important. I took the calendar along because of the notes on it and then I noticed the date. It seems Sarkisian had the habit of tearing off the leaf in the mornings almost as soon as he arrived. In fact, he gave strict orders to the Ransome girl not to touch that calendar because the notes on it were reminders. It just shows that he didn't have time to tear it off yesterday."

"Well?"

"Then whoever killed him either

came in with him or was waiting for him," Wilkins finished.

"M-m! That's so," Barber admitted, "but it doesn't tell us anything we didn't know. There was no evidence of a struggle in that room anyway. Come on! Let's see what's in this heap!"

Wilkins drew his chair up, but he shook his head and looked disappointed.

While the two detectives were busily engaged on the papers inquiries were still being made by a small army of plainclothes men into the movements of all the potential suspects on the preceding morning and reports were coming in by telephone every few minutes. One man to whom Barber had given the task of tracing those persons whose names figured in Sarkisian's ledger reported at intervals his success in several cases and added that each person traced had, when questioned diplomatically, admitted the fact that he had received his promissory note by post on the previous evening. In each case the note was torn in four or eight pieces and accompanied by a note worded exactly as had been that of Major Heald-Hawkins; some were carbon copies and one or two were top copies identical with the carbons.

The papers, Barber thought as he examined them, seemed to give no clew to a possible murderer, what ever might be their value in other respects. They revealed details of an organization which horrified even the hardened policemen. Accounts there were which told a tale needing no explanation, and the strict conscience of the sergeant was stirred to its depths as he saw the sums under the headings of "Entertainment," "Fares" and such like. He swore aloud when he read minute descriptions of the physical and moral characteristics of what was euphemistically termed "Stock."

"God! Inspector!" he exclaimed at one point, "I haven't been a 'busy' all these years without knowing that

there was this damned traffic, but I never thought it was as bad as this."

"Neither did I," Barber replied, "and I'm all the more worried. An organization like that is bound to have got the wind up, especially as that old Schaffer woman has got away—and dammit, we've been slow. The translation of some of these foreign papers will also take time."

"Oh! I dunno," the shrewd Wilkins said to this, "that needn't hold us up. Besides, a big thing like this is easier to get at than a small gang that can scatter in a brace of shakes."

"I hope so," Barber murmured gloomily, busy underlining extracts for copying.

They were still thus engaged half an hour later when the door opened without warning to admit a tall figure dressed in the cutaway coat and striped trousers of morning wear now so rarely seen save on occasions of great ceremony. He held in his hand a top hat which reflected the light from the window thus revealing a curly black head of hair in which a few streaks of gray appeared. The mustache was of the same color as the hair and had the curling ends more popular in a former day.

"Hello, Barber," he greeted the inspector, "you're looking worried."

"I'm more than that, chief," was the reply as Barber rose to his feet, "I'm rattled."

"That's bad," Chief Inspector Laurence Gilmartin—for it was he—commented, "and I thought you were such an unrattleable beggar!"

He turned round toward Wilkins who was standing rigidly erect.

"You're Sergeant Wilkins, I suppose," he said, "I think we've met before somewhere, haven't we?"

"You an' me was at Peel House together, sir," the sergeant answered.

"By Jove, so we were!" the big man agreed. "Then you're the Wilkins that helped Peters to get Pete the Slinger in your first year on a beat."

"Yes, sir," Wilkins replied, his face showing all the pleasure he felt at this example of the memory of his one great feat on the part of one of the well-known men at the "Yard"—a man who, moreover, had outdistanced all his contemporaries in the race for promotion while exciting no jealousy anywhere.

"I've just been seeing off the Emir of Daghestan," the chief inspector now told his juniors, "hence the festive attire. I thought, however, I'd look you up, Barber, before going home. The assistant commissioner tells me that your case is more complicated than it looked at first."

"It's even more complicated than that," Barber told him. "Since I reported to him there's been quite a lot of new happenings. I'm not comfortable about it, chief, I don't mind telling you."

"Oh!" Gilmartin sat down on the edge of the desk. "Give me an outline of things."

The big Irishman listened attentively to the account which Barber made as concise as possible, while sacrificing nothing to clarity. He nodded approvingly when the inspector somewhat diffidently told him of his action with regard to Rose Bamberger.

"Quite right!" he murmured. "Quite right!"

"We-e-ell!" he said when the inspector had finished. "It certainly does seem involved, all that, but it may be simpler than you think. Personally, I don't see how you could have done any more with the means at your disposal. We'll have to get more people on to this. It's a Number One case, and smaller things can wait if necessary."

He got down from the desk and took the chair which Wilkins had vacated. He pulled toward him a double sheet of foolscap.

"Now, let's see!" he went on. "The first thing to do is to get everything clear and tidy in our minds. I'm afraid

I have a simple mind and I have to put everything down on paper. It looks like a waste of time, but it isn't—in my case. This is how I do it when I have a lot of suspects!"

As he spoke he divided the foolscap into four columns.

"I make a thing like this," he continued, "the first column being for the name of the suspect, the second for the points against him, the third for the things favorable to him, and the fourth for any odd remarks that may occur to me. Who's the first? Sergeant-Major Buchan? Down he goes."

(1) BUCHAN—
Against

- (a) Sufficient motive.
- (b) Admits planning to kill S.
- (c) Had opportunity if S. arrived office before 8.40 A.M.
- (d) Words to dying man overheard by girl.
- (e) Removal of ledger page, and measures to insure being alone in office.

For

- (a) Previous good character.
- (b) Motive would imply quarrel; not shot from behind.
- (c) No firearm found.
- (d) Animosity sufficient explanation of words. Not natural, would say them if had already had it out with S.
- (e) If killed S. why wait to get page then?

Remarks

- (a) Question Erskine closely about time.
- (b) Find exact hour of S.'s arrival at office.

Query: Did Buchan send out prom. notes?

"That's the sort of thing," Gilmar-tin remarked, "that you'll always run up against: a lot of presumptive evidence, enough, perhaps, to make a prima facie case, but not enough to convince a common jury. On the other hand no really positive evidence in the man's favor."

"Unfortunately," Barber replied, "it's not up to the accused to prove innocence; it's our business to prove him guilty."

"Fortunately!" the chief inspector corrected. "Fortunately English law is like that."

"Why do you put that bit about the promissory notes, chief?" his junior asked.

"Just as a reminder that specimens of the work of all the typewriters in the Brandt Building must be taken."

"I hadn't thought of that," Barber admitted.

"Make a note of it then," Gilmartin directed. "Who's next on the list of suspects?"

"The list is a long one," the inspector said. "I suppose we can take Kyprianos next?"

"All right! We'll take Kyprianos."

(2) KYPRIANOS—
Against

- (a) See (a) Buchan.
- (b) Movements suspicious during entire week-end.
- (c) Knew safe was open without entering the room.

For

- (a) See (b) Buchan.
- (b) Alibi.

Remarks

- (a) Visit Queen's Hotel, verify alibi.
- (b) Find car used by K.—probably hired. If possible find mileage covered. Query: Did K. send promissory notes?

"Yes," Barber commented on this. "Kyprianos strikes me as being a more likely person to have sent those promissory notes."

"Perhaps," Gilmartin admitted, "that's why I queried. Let's see the wording of the typed message that was sent with them."

The sergeant turned up the note in a file and placed it before the chief inspector.

"M-m! Yes," the latter said. "It's more like the phraseology of an educated man, though you never know with these Scotsmen. The most uncouth of them have a knack of turning a neat phrase on paper."

"There's a typed thing here from Kyprianos, chief," Barber suggested. "You know, the list of addresses and things he found out in Paris."

"I know," Gilmartin said, "but we'll leave that to the specialist concerned. Besides, if it turns out to be the office typewriter, it doesn't help us much, as anybody who had access to it could have typed the note. I can think of several who might have done it. No, let's get on with this tabular thing."

In silence Gilmartin wrote on from his memory of Barber's account. When he had finished it was evident that he had missed no important point of the narrative. The sheet of paper which he handed over to Barber, including the "Buchan" and "Kyprianos" tabulations, followed:

(3) ERSKINE—

Against

(a) Clerk's statement *re* quarrel and threat.

For

- (a) See (b) Buchan.
- (b) Motive weak.

Remarks

(a) Question about motive for quarrel.

(b) Find out whereabouts between relevant times.

(4) BUCKERIDGE—

Against

- (a) Page cut out of ledger.
- (b) Possible quarrel over above.

For

- (a) Alibi.
- (b) See (b) Buchan.

Remarks

(a) Verify alibi by personal visit to Sir John Straker.

(5) MISS RANSOME—

Against

(a) Motive: Self-defense against assault by S.

(b) Opportunity.

For

(a) See (b) Buchan.

(b) No evidence of possessing firearm.

Remarks

(a) Question *re* charwoman's statement.

(b) Search for firearm.

(c) What is her height?

(6) ROSE BAMBERGER—

Against

(a) Motive: Revenge for shanghaiing.

(b) Possessed pistol.

(c) Attempt to kill Rivka Schaffer.

For

(a) See (b) Buchan, and if no quarrel S. not likely to let her get behind him to shoot.

(b) No evidence of presence at Brandt.

Remarks

(a) What is her height?

(b) Caliber of pistol?

Query: Is she the girl referred to by Rivka Schaffer?

(7) MILLIE BUCHAN—

Against

(a) Own confession with motive as preceding.

For

(a) Cf. (a) and (b) of preceding.

(b) No evidence that possesses firearm.

(c) Confession probably to save father.

Remarks

(a) What is her height?

(8) MOLESBY—

Against

(a) Sufficient motive.

(b) Admits planning to kill S.

(c) Possesses pistol.

For

- (a) Cf. (a) of preceding.
 (b) No evidence arrival before 9 A.M. at Brandt Building.

Remarks

- (a) Caliber of firearm?
 (b) Visit M.'s lodging and find when left home Monday.

(g) UNKNOWN MEMBER OF S.'S OWN

GANG—

Against

- (a) Motive: Quarrel over S. not playing fair.

For

- (a) Cf. (a) of preceding.
 (b) Gangster not likely to leave money intact.

"A most unsatisfactory document in some ways," Gilmartin said, handing over the foolscap sheet to Barber.

Barber read it through.

"Very," he answered ruefully.

"Still," the chief inspector went on with a smile, "it keeps one's mind from wandering."

"Why," Barber asked, "do you want to know the height of the women?"

"That is to be taken in conjunction with the direction of the wound," Gilmartin explained, "because if Sarkisian was killed—as you say he probably was—when standing, the height of the various suspects as compared with his height might possibly be important."

"If a smaller person did it, the bullet would travel upward, if a taller person or one the same height, it would go straight across, and if very much taller possibly downward, though that is not likely. The query applies, of course, to the men as well. By the way, what was the direction of the bullet?"

"We don't know yet," Barber replied, "the post-mortem will take place to-day if Sir Wilfrid Sherbury gets back to London. He is away giving evidence in that Cardiff case."

"I see. Well, pay particular attention to that point."

"Is there anything you could advise, chief," the inspector asked diffidently, "besides what you have written here?"

"Personally," Gilmartin replied, "I think the case is one for a special conference with the assistant commissioner and the superintendents of the department. I shall ask that men be put on to these points I have mentioned here and that they report to you and me, and that we two concentrate with as many men as possible on finding that old woman and rounding up this white slave gang. I have an idea that we might find our murderer there, and even if we don't it's a lot more important that we scotch the gang than that we bring in the killer of a dog like that. By the way, is that stuff that Kyprianos sent in any good?"

"I haven't had time to test it."

"Hum! Then look here! We must phone the stations concerned to watch the addresses he gives and I'll get them to put a couple of intelligent youngsters to sift this stuff of Sarkisian's. Then we'd better collect the superintendents and you can tell your little tale. So, let's look up these addresses."

In a few minutes the addresses had been sorted out according to their police divisions and it was Chief Inspector Gilmartin himself who gave the necessary instructions to have the houses watched. In each case he laid particular stress on the possibility that Rivka Schaffer, who already figured in the list of "wanted" persons, might be connected with one or all of them, and he found in almost every instance the divisional inspector concerned to be astonished at the information, for the houses, with one exception, were in quiet residential streets. The exception was a servants' registry office which—the inspector who answered Gilmartin said—catered mainly to girls from the country and from small provincial towns. On hearing the address

the inspector in question exclaimed in astonishment.

"Now that's a coincidence, chief!" he said. "There has just been a report from the constable on the beat about that place. He says that there's a line of girls obstructing the pavement in front of it. It didn't open to-day."

"Then," Gilmartin ordered, "get a warrant and search it. Get every scrap of paper you can find on the premises and send them along here."

"They've probably removed their books," he went on, speaking to Barber, "but if not, we might at least be able to trace some of the country girls who have been reported to us as missing during the past months."

They were on their way along the corridor to the assistant commissioner's room when they met one of the departmental superintendents on his way out. Gilmartin stopped him and explained why he wanted him.

"Funny you should mention that case," the superintendent said, "because Sir Wilfrid Esherbury, on his way

to the mortuary to conduct the post-mortem on your friend, has just got mixed up in a motor accident. I've just been to see the scene of the collision."

"Is he hurt?"

"He's hurt, but not very seriously, I think, but the lad who seems to have been responsible for the thing—a young sport in a lavender-colored car he calls Jane—has had his leg broken. Eh? What's that?"

The question was directed at Wilkins, standing behind the others, who had uttered an involuntary exclamation.

"Sorry, sir," the sergeant apologized, "but would the young fellow's name be Buckeridge?"

"It would, and it is. Why?"

The three detectives engaged on the Sarkisian case looked at each other.

"Talk about coincidences!" Barber exclaimed. "There's one for you, all right!"

"Is it, sir?" Wilkins asked significantly.

Gilmartin said nothing.

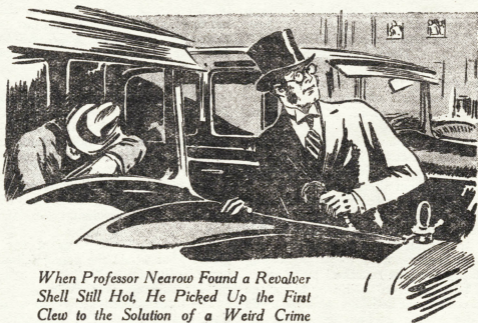
TO BE CONTINUED



"Get Your Man"

THE Royal Canadian Mounted Police always gets its man! That motto which has made famous one of the world's finest police forces, was recently vindicated again when the Mounties arrested a man for a murder seven years ago. Joseph Germaine and Samuel Pat lived together on a small farm in the Squaw Valley in Saskatchewan. Pat worked for Germaine. The farm was not much of a success, Germaine ran into debt, and Pat entered into an agreement to buy the place. Pat had paid an installment when Germaine suddenly disappeared. No one knew what had become of him. Pat, with a bill of sale, took possession of the farm.

Murder was suspected, but there was no proof. Interest in the neighborhood finally languished; Pat prospered and married. But the Mounties had not forgotten. Constables on patrol in the district made it a habit to drop in on Pat—just friendly calls which he never suspected. But slowly the Royal Mounted was gathering the proof, and one day a constable visited Pat, not to pay a friendly visit, but to arrest him for the murder of Joseph Germaine.



*When Professor Nearow Found a Revolver
Shell Still Hot, He Picked Up the First
Clew to the Solution of a Weird Crime*

The Murder at City Hall

By Claybourne Dabney

THASSOWAY NEAROW, top hat, tail coat, spats, stick, spectacles, side whiskers and all, scrambled over low railings that divided the patches of lawn about the statue of the city's founder.

He stepped gingerly over the last fence behind a row of automobiles, parked on the Mall facing City Hall, just as the blaring, thumping Street Cleaning Department band drew up at the head of a small procession of cars bearing Count Adelphi, unofficial representative of Mussolini.

Through the space between two of the parked cars Nearow darted, but was brought up abruptly by a man who blocked his way, standing in the open door of a car, talking to another man seated behind the wheel.

Professor Nearow was on the point

of turning back, when the standing man wheeled suddenly, gave Nearow a sharp glance, called good-by to the man at the wheel, and walked briskly toward the crowd packed behind a line of police along the front of the row of cars.

Nearow followed him toward the crowd, noticing out of the corner of his eye—a fact which was to prove later of the greatest significance—that the man at the wheel waved and then leaned down as though to shut off his motor.

The man whom Nearow was following shouldered his way roughly through the crowd, with his brief case tucked firmly under his arm, thrust a policeman to one side, and walked importantly through the noisy band toward the mayor and the official party on the steps of City Hall, who were



"Here he is, sergeant!" Nearow wheeled about

posing with the distinguished guest for the cameramen.

Nearow, impressed because the policeman, instead of shouting at the man, saluted, tried the same tactics, but a heavy hand swung him about, and he found himself facing an irate patrolman.

"Who do you think you are, President Hoover?" asked the policeman.

"No," replied Nearow, abashed and annoyed. "I saw that man do it, so I thought I would try it too."

"Oh, you did, hey? Well, you're a pretty smart boy, ain't you? That's Alderman Craigwillie. Who are you?"

"I'm Thassoway Nearow, professor emeritus of psychology at the university, and its official representative at the reception here. The police wouldn't let me through over at Broadway, so I climbed over the fences to get in here."

"Oh, you did, hey? Well, I suppose you got your invite with you, doc?" asked the somewhat mollified officer.

"No, I haven't. You see, the profes-

sor of romance languages was invited, but he was taken ill, and as I am familiar with the Italian tongue and have few duties, I was pressed into service."

"Well, it's too bad, doc, but I simply can't take a chance. Too many gate crashers at these receptions to distinguished foreigners, and we all get hell about it. I tell you; come on back behind the crowd and I'll get the sergeant."

The policeman pushed his way through to the back of the crowd, and Nearow followed, much put out.

Those nearest them eyed Nearow curiously for a moment, but the magic of martial music, and the thrill of seeing prominent men on the steps of City Hall drew their eyes away again, prompting in Nearow the sudden, incongruous thought that although ten thousand persons were standing within a stone's throw, he might beat the policeman unconscious with his heavy palmetto cane, and no one would notice them.

"Now spill it, brother, while I look around for the sergeant. What's the song and dance again?"

"Well, you see, the professor of romance languages was ill," began Nearow, "and—"

"Hey! Hey! Look out! Let me by!" shouted a shrill voice as its owner, an excited, hatless little man with long black hair, dived between Nearow and the policeman, forcing each of them to step back to regain his balance.

The excited man plunged into the crowd, and tugged and clutched at those nearest him, trying to make a way through.

The policeman, bellowing like an indignant rhinoceros, leaped after him.

Nearow saw the man's hat lying on the ground in the space between two cars from which he had so suddenly appeared.

The professor, his seamed face wrinkled in a wry smile, stepped over and stooped to pick it up. As his hand was closing on it, he noticed a shiny brass object just under the running board, stooped further, and seized it, holding it in the palm of his hand to examine it.

It was a revolver shell, and it was still hot.

He stared at it in his hand, and wondered who would fire a revolver in the midst of a crowd like that. Perhaps, before the parade, a policeman had tested his revolver, but it seemed improbable.

The patrolman and the excited man, on the skirts of the crowd, were in the midst of an argument.

"Calm down now, Mr. Stani," the policeman said. "You've got to show me your invitation, or you don't get in. Them's my orders and I stick to it."

"It's an outrage. It's a Fascisti frameup," screamed the man addressed at Stani, reaching frantically in an inner pocket, and extricating a handful of papers.

Professor Nearow placed the hat upon the man's disordered head and

was rewarded by a quick look of alarm.

Stani immediately turned his attention back to his papers, however, and triumphantly produced a large envelope which he waved in the policeman's face.

"Ha! Aha! Hey! You see? The Fascist plots fail again. I, Stani, always outwit the Fascisti! Bah!"

"It's O. K. with me, brother," replied the officer. "If you're through with your speech now, suppose you come along and I'll get you in."

The policeman led the way, and Stani, still chattering and waving the letter, followed him through the crowd, and through the band toward the steps of City Hall.

"Don't forget me, please," Nearow called after the officer, and then, in chagrin, so far forgot his dignity and composure as to say, with a vast amount of feeling, "Damn!"

"What's trouble?" asked a voice at his feet, and he looked down to see a cameraman changing a magazine.

"I can't understand it," Nearow explained, with a wry expression, tugging at his side whiskers. "I am treated practically like a common criminal, and there's no telling what complaints the university people are likely to receive about it, but the same police that hold me back let by some alderman—Craigwillie, wasn't it?—and a lunatic named Stani."

"No mystery about that, deacon," said the photographer with a grin. "Craigwillie's head of the bootleg ring. Any cop that got him sore would be lost in the marshes out in Little Neck the next day. As for that little dago, he don't look like much, but he's editor of an Italian daily and head of the anti-Fascist outfit here."

"Well," sighed Nearow, his crinkled face twisted in a smile, "being neither a bootlegger nor a political wrangler, but only a retired professor, I suppose I can do nothing but wait."

"Wait until I get a shot from here,"

said the photographer, scrambling up on the hood and silver radiator top of an Isotta to focus his camera over the head of the crowd and band, "and I'll fetch the sergeant and fix you up O. K."

"I'm much obliged to you," said Nearow graciously, "and may I warn you, since you seem to be scratching up that nicked surface rather generously, that there seems to be some one in the car you're standing on?"

"Oh, him. He's dead, sound asleep. I already shot a picture from here while you were talking to the cop."

"Judging from the motor car owners I've known, who approach hysterics if any one so much as grazes a fender, I should say that he must be dead," Nearow said.

The photographer laughed and jumped down, his picture taken.

"You stay right here, and I'll get the sergeant," he said, running off.

Professor Nearow was staring at the man in the car, sprawled over the wheel. It was a funny place for a man to take a nap, and a funny moment, too, for one. Of course, if he were a chauffeur—but he obviously was not.

Nearow found his curiosity had in it a trace of nervous excitement, and suddenly remembered the revolver shell which he was clutching still in his left hand.

He stared at it.

"Tickle my sideburns," he said aloud and solemnly.

He took a step toward the car door.

Of course, the man was probably asleep, and doubtless would be indignant at being awakened, possibly might even accuse him—Nearow had had some unpleasant experiences because of his curiosity—of being a pickpocket. It might be embarrassing—

Still—there was a bare chance—

He took another step.

"Here he is, sergeant," called the photographer's voice immediately behind him. Nearow wheeled about.

"Please excuse us for causing you

any trouble, professor," said the booming voice of the gray-haired sergeant. "The men got their orders, so you can't blame them. I'll take you right in now, sir. They're just going in, and all you've missed is the bother of having your picture took."

Nearow smiled affably and bowed acquiescence, but immediately half turned and nodded toward the car.

"Odd place to choose for a nap, isn't it?" he asked the sergeant.

"Yes," agreed the officer, glancing first at the occupant of the car, still sprawled over the wheel, and then at the license plate, which displayed a very low number—a single digit and a single letter.

"You don't think anything's wrong?" suggested Nearow.

"Oh, no, probably just got a hang-over, I guess. He must be some big politician, judging from the license. I'll probably know him if I could see his face."

"Easy enough to find out," said the cameraman breezily. "I'll open the door and yell at him."

"No, you don't. Not while I'm around," replied the sergeant, catching the photographer by the arm. "He's probably soused, and I'd never hear the end of it if we caused any sort of a scene here. His friends will probably get him away when the crowd's gone."

Nearow hesitated. His faint suspicion was rapidly becoming a conviction. Yet if he opened the door to find out, the man might prove to be merely drunk, there might be a scene, and he had no wish to bring any unpleasant notoriety to the university upon such an occasion.

Ought he tell the sergeant about the shell he had picked up. Was there a connection? He thought there was.

"Would you mind coming right along now, sir?" asked the sergeant. "They're going in, and I've got to change the positions of my men to get the crowd moving along."

"I'll tell one of the officials,"

Nearow said to himself, and followed the sergeant up the steps of City Hall. The photographer joined a group of his fellows on the steps.

II

IN the small reception room off the crowded aldermanic chamber, Nearow was effusively greeted by the aldermanic president.

"Professor Carimo was taken ill suddenly and I am taking his place. By the way, I have a possibly ridiculous suspicion that a man outside has been shot."

"Shot, eh? Ha, ha. Been that way myself many a time," the genial politician laughed, nudging Nearow roguishly. "That's a good one, eh? Shot. Ha, ha!"

"No, I mean murder," said Nearow, flushing and feeling he was making somewhat of an ass of himself.

"Murder, eh!" said the politician, who wasn't going to let any one think he was lacking a sense of humor. "You're a sly one all right. Let me tell the commissioner."

He beckoned to a man in a police uniform adorned with a great deal of gold braid.

"Hi, Commissioner Ahearn. Meet Professor Naggle—"

"Nearow," interrupted the professor, reddening again.

"Nero, my little dog, has fleas," said the aldermanic president with another nudge. Nearow decided to say nothing more of his suspicions.

"Glad to meet you, professor," exclaimed the police commissioner with a hearty handclasp. "It's a great honor."

"Where'd you get the pretty suit, in Macy's toy department?" asked the president.

"How do you like it? First time I've worn a uniform. Got it made especial because the mayor said this Count Adelphi was going to pin a couple o' medals on. Say, who is he, anyway?"

"I'll be darned if I know. Somebody told me, but I forgot. I know half the Italian vote's packed into the aldermanic chamber, and Congressman Pagano said we had to look out or the anti-Fascisti might start a riot."

"Nonsense. We got two hundred police reserves hid right next door in City Court, but there ain't going to be any trouble. Not while I'm around. Do you know who he is, professor?"

"I don't know very much about him, except that I was given to understand that he had been sent over by Mussolini to reward the leaders of the pro-Mussolini faction."

"Yeah, that's it," agreed the aldermanic president, and then, growing suddenly serious, said to a swarthy, stocky man with grizzled hair, who had just stepped worriedly from a telephone booth, "Have you located Congressman Pagano yet?"

"No. I can't understand it. He drove away from his home nearly an hour ago they say."

"You've tried the speakeasy on the other side of the Hall of Records? He stops in there a great deal."

"He wouldn't take a chance drinking before a thing like this. Why he's been planning this for months."

Nearow, embarrassed by overhearing what seemed to be a somewhat delicate conversation, turned to the commissioner, who laughed, noting his confusion, and explained in an undertone:

"The Congressman does like his little nip, and he gets plenty, seeing as how he's the one, so they say, that collects for the prohibition permits. Worries his friends a great deal."

"You amaze me," exclaimed Nearow.

"He's no friend of mine," said the commissioner, with a touch of sarcastic bitterness, Nearow thought. "We've been trying to close up most of the speakeasies, but it's pretty tough when a Congressman is in on it."

"Why, this is shocking," Nearow

said, genuinely amazed. "Can't you do anything about it?"

"What can you do?" shrugged the police chief. "Everybody holds everybody else's hand, and you never know whose toes you're stepping on. Why," he went on, waxing confidential to an interested, unbiased, innocent listener, "I came in on a reform ticket, but I'll be darned if I can make any headway."

The stocky man was going back to the telephone booth.

"You try those places, and, meanwhile, we'll have to start things going," the aldermanic president called after him, and turned to Nearow:

"Come, professor, I want you to meet the mayor."

Nearow, feeling that the commissioner would treat his suspicions seriously, was thus prevented from immediately disclosing them. In turn, he met the mayor, Count Adelphi, the Italian vice consul, and several members of the mayor's cabinet, including Alderman Craigwillie.

The man Stani, still as excited as ever, was dashing in and out among the group, all of whom were nervous about the delay.

"I can't understand it," Craigwillie told the mayor. "He must have stopped in at one of the places around here. He drove up at the same time I did, and we parked our cars together. I hurried on in because I wanted to see my constituents in the chamber, there, before he started things off, but he said he was coming right up, and the parade was already here."

"Listen to them," the mayor said, nodding to the double doors leading to the platform of the great chamber. The excited chattering was plainly audible. "No telling what they'll do if we keep 'em waiting any longer. We'll have to start off."

"Better let me do the speech-making," said Stani shrilly. "We'll get off the little ceremony here, and then I'll introduce him to the crowd out there."

"Much obliged, Stani," said the mayor, plainly relieved.

The Italian vice consul looked quickly about in anxious amazement. The stocky man was still in the phone booth. The vice consul seemed on the point of objecting to Stani as toast-master, but thought better of it, and held his peace.

Nearow, was growing more and more curious. He edged over toward the window.

Below him, he could see that the man sprawled over the steering wheel of the car had not changed his position.

He edged over to the commissioner, who was listening intently to Stani's torrent of Italian delivered to Count Adelphi.

"Hell, I don't get a word of that lingo," whispered the commissioner. The mayor, equally uncomprehending, was idly biting his nails. The other city officials fidgeted.

The guest of honor was staring at Stani with an expression of surprise.

Nearow's mind, although it was fretting about the man in the car, caught and automatically translated fragments of Stani's speech.

"We appreciate the great honor extended by his excellency, but we feel, owing to unfortunate differences now existing between pro-Fascist and anti-Fascist groups of our Italian-born American citizens, that it might be very much more discreet if the highly prized decorations be not awarded—"

Nearow looked at Stani in sudden interest.

The vice consul was black with suppressed rage. The stocky man was still telephoning. Count Adelphi still wore his look of pained surprise. The others, not understanding the language, looked bored.

"If he is dead," Nearow said to himself, "I was standing only a step or two away when he was killed, for I saw him wave good-by to Craigwillie. Of course, the band was making an uproar, but even the booming of the bass

drum would not have covered the sound of a revolver shot.

"It must have been done with a silencer. When I picked up Stani's hat there was the warm shell. If I am not mistaken, silencers are quite long and bulky. A man could not very well conceal it under his coat without it showing somewhat. There is a bulge under Stani's coat where a shoulder holster might be.

"Certainly, he would have the gun on his person. A man couldn't walk into City Hall after committing a murder and lay the weapon down in a corner somewhere. It would eventually be found and traced. Still, he might have had an accomplice."

Nearow decided he had dallied long enough. He must at once confide his suspicions to the police chief.

Count Adelphi was replying to Stani's speech, also in Italian. Nearow caught phrases:

"And so, as you so gracefully suggest, we will not bestow the decorations upon his honor, the mayor, and the honorable commissioner of police, but will merely convey to them his excellency's cordial felicitations and deep appreciation for the flattering reception—"

The stocky man came out of the phone booth, and his jaw dropped in amazement. The vice consul whispered to him, and both glared furiously at Stani, who seemed on the point of bursting with excitement.

The mayor delivered a pat little speech of welcome, and then the party started to file in through the double doors into the packed chamber, as a roar went up from the excited crowd, and the band, ensconced in the balcony, struck up the Italian national anthem.

Nearow caught the commissioner by the sleeve, and held him back.

"Just a moment, please, Mr. Commissioner. Something of great importance," he said.

The commissioner was impatient.

"Say, I got to get my medal," he said.

"Count Adelphi just said he wasn't going to present the medals," said Nearow quickly, "but—"

"Well, wouldn't that burn you up?" exclaimed the astonished police chief. "Here, after I got a uniform and all, and stood all that guying, why, the nerve of—"

"It was Stani's doing. I'll explain in a minute. But first. Look down there. See that man in the car, over there? The Isotta."

"Asleep, hey? Yeah. What about him?"

"I'm afraid he's dead," said Nearow solemnly.

The commissioner searched his face in sudden alarm, and laughed nervously.

"Dead? You're joking, aren't you?" Commissioner Ahearn's face plainly showed his growing fright.

"No, I'm not joking. Look at this," went on Nearow, handing the shell to the police chief.

"A thirty-eight caliber revolver shell," the chief pronounced. "Where did you get this?"

"Beside the car—"

"Why didn't you tell me, man? Why—"

"Well, it seemed so impossible—"

"It is impossible. It can't be." He was gripping Nearow's arm and the pair were walking fast, almost in a trot, down the hall, down the circular stairs, down the front steps, and across the Mall. Most of the crowd had dispersed, but the police were still out in force.

The grizzled sergeant saluted, as he ran up.

"What's the matter with that man, Mac Murrachu?" the chief asked in a low tone.

"Why, commissioner," explained the sergeant in embarrassment, "this gentleman called my attention to him before, but I thought he was taking a little nap like, and I didn't want to take

any liberties with some one who might be somebody of importance like, so—"

"Tell your men to keep people moving along here," ordered the chief, shutting him off, "and then come over."

To Nearow, he added:

"Did you tell him about the shell?"

"No, you see, I didn't want to make the university ridiculous, and it seemed so impossible."

"It is impossible. It must be."

"Even though the shell was still warm," concluded Nearow.

"Oh, my God, man," moaned the chief, carefully opening the door.

It was with a slightly sickening sensation, but nevertheless with a thrill of excitement that his suspicions were well founded, that Nearow saw the form of the man lurch slightly toward the commissioner as he opened the door.

The commissioner put his hand against the inert man's chest to stop the movement, and when he drew it hastily away it was stained with red.

The chief gently turned the face toward me.

"Oh, my God," he exclaimed again. "It's Congressman Pagano."

III

SERGEANT MAC MURRACHU, white and anxious, had run up.

"Quick, Mac Murrachu. Get an ambulance. Throw a line about the car. Keep everybody moving. Don't let any one stop to see what's going on here."

Mac Murrachu hurried off again to give instructions to his men.

The commissioner gently closed the door, and sank weakly down on the running board, placing his head in his hands in a momentary gesture of despair.

Quickly, however, he got down on his knees and searched the ground around the car, without finding anything.

He next examined the running

board, and then, again carefully opening the door, looked about on the seat and floor of, first, the front and then the rear compartment.

"Get the Homicide Squad, quick. Tell them to keep it under cover and not, under any circumstances, to let the papers know. Don't let anybody touch the car until the finger-print men have taken their impressions. Tell the inspector to report to me at once in the mayor's office when he comes."

Mac Murrachu saluted.

"Come on, professor," said the commissioner, and led the way back into City Hall and up to the mayor's extensive office.

"Wait till I get this note off to the mayor, telling him to keep that meeting going for awhile," he said, scribbling, and then sent it out with the mayor's secretary.

"Now tell me everything you know about it," he said.

While Nearow recounted chronologically what he had seen, without, however, going into what he thought, the chief stood at the window, hands twisting behind his back, staring down at the detectives, buzzing like ants around the car.

"If you're so positive that you saw him wave good-by to Alderman Craig-willie, that means he was killed right there in the next few minutes. I was hoping maybe he was already dead, and had been brought here and propped up while nobody was looking.

"But—oh, hell! It's too— Why, man, it's simply impossible. Ten thousand people looking on, and police so thick you fall over them—

"Why even I was standing there, next the mayor, posing for the pictures, and looking pretty right over in that direction—"

The door flew open, and the mayor, pale and excited, rushed in.

"They'll keep 'em there," he said. "Stani's going to make a long speech. What's the matter? What's happened?"

"Oh, not a thing in the world," moaned the commissioner. "Not a single little thing, except that while we were standing there getting our pictures took, why somebody strolled up, with half the police in town twiddling their fingers, and took a pot shot at Congressman Pagano, right here in front of City Hall—"

"You don't mean it—"

Ahearn indicated the window. The mayor looked out.

The ambulance was moving slowly away, and policemen were carrying the body to a patrol wagon.

"Dead!" exclaimed the mayor. "Joe, I'm afraid this is your finish, old man. After your speakeasy campaign was such a flop. Any chance of catching him?"

"Can you beat it?" exclaimed Ahearn, after a burst of profanity. "Pagano nearly ruins me by selling permits while he's alive, spoiling my speakeasy campaign, and then finishes the job by getting himself bumped off under my nose."

"But how did it happen?"

"Oh, sure. How did it happen? I did it. Sure."

"Well," said the mayor slowly, "I suppose you would if you got the chance, but you happened to be right with me."

"I ask you how it happened," the chief said, with sudden intensity. "With ten thousand people looking on, hundreds of them looking down from the windows of the Woolworth Building and a dozen other buildings, how is it that not one single one of them—not one, mind you—notices a man walk up to another man in a car, draw a revolver, shoot him dead, and walk away? I ask you."

"It's impossible, Joe. That's all."

"Sure it's impossible, but it happened."

"Could it have been done with a silencer?" asked Nearow.

"I guess so. Probably was. With the band and all. Of course, even if

a man yelled, nobody'd hear him out there right behind the band."

"Well, that may be true, but that still doesn't explain how a man could stand there and draw a gun, and aim it, and fire it, without one single soul noticing him," objected the mayor.

"Could a man carry a revolver with a silencer in a shoulder holster?" asked Nearow meekly.

"I guess so," replied the chief, "but it would be as bulky and about as awkward as a sawed-off shotgun."

"Stani's coat bulged on the left side," said Nearow quietly.

The chief half rose, gripping the arms of his chair, and staring at Nearow. The mayor, pale again, stared at Ahearn.

"My God," whispered Ahearn.

"He was jabbering something to me," said the mayor, taking a folded newspaper from his pocket, "and gave me this, but I couldn't make it out."

"Perhaps I can," suggested Nearow and took the paper, which proved to be the first page of that day's issue of the Italian daily, of which Stani was editor.

Nearow adjusted his spectacles and scanned it.

"Ah," he murmured, pointing out to them a three-column, boxed editorial in large type on the front page, over Stani's signature.

"I can't read dago," protested the chief.

"I'll give you a free translation. Or, better, I'll summarize it. Stani says that for the last time—it's headed 'A Last Warning'—that he is warning *signors* the mayor and commissioner of police that they must not accept medals from the present ruling faction in Italy, that feeling runs high locally between Fascist and anti-Fascist sympathizers, and that if the officials accept medals the police in any future demonstrations will side against the anti-Fascists, and riots and bloodshed may follow. 'At any cost,' he concludes, '*signors* the mayor and police commis-

sioner should be prevented from accepting these decorations, thus aligning themselves on the side of one faction in a dispute in which no American officials should participate. This is our last warning."

"A fanatic!" whispered the mayor.

"He figured if he could keep Pagano away and do the speech making himself, he could prevent it. Sure," added the chief, greatly excited, pounding his fist on the mayor's desk.

"He's apt to bump off Count Adelphi," added the mayor.

"Come on," shouted the chief, reaching back to his hip pocket as he ran out the door.

In the hall, they found pandemonium.

It was packed with uniformed men, struggling to get into the double doors of the assembly room, from which a roar of voices, with an obbligate of screams, was issuing.

Over the heads of the officers, Nearow, who is unusually tall, could see into the room, with a milling crowd sweeping back and forth on the platform.

"Come on," shouted Ahearn to Nearow and the mayor, and led the way through a side door, through an office, and into the little reception room.

Just as they arrived, the doors leading to the assembly room platform burst open, and in came Count Adelphi, and the official party, safe in the center of a flying wedge of patrolmen.

Behind them came another group of policemen, clinging to Stani, who was screaming imprecations and putting up an amazing fight for his small size.

The doors were quickly closed, and guarded, shutting out the sound of the bedlam.

Ahearn ran over to Stani, and calmed his men.

"Maybe I'll be a martyr, but I saved my city from disgrace. *Sic semper tyrannus!* Down with all Fascisti," Stani screamed.

"Did you search him?" Ahearn asked.

One of the policemen handed him a revolver, Nearow and the mayor examined it with interest.

"Perhaps he threw the silencer away," suggested Nearow.

Ahearn flung open Stani's coat, and examined the holster.

"Couldn't have carried one in this holster," he said. "No mark of it on the revolver. I don't think this gun's ever been fired. It's a thirty-two, anyhow."

Ahearn looked suddenly at Professor Nearow.

The mayor had hurried to reassure Count Adelphi, who, though his clothes were awry, readjusted his monocle, and stood as cool as though he were attending a lawn party.

Nearow was thinking fast, trying to reconstruct, without bias from his previous conclusions, everything that he had seen in its proper relationship.

"Why did you kill him?" Ahearn demanded of Stani.

"Kill him?" asked Stani in surprise. "Kill who?"

"You know well enough, who," retorted the chief, "unless you killed so many that you've lost track—I mean Congressman Pagano."

"Is he dead?" Stani cried, clasping his hands in happiness. "Glorious. Thank the good God."

"Well, you won't be so thankful when you go to the chair," retorted Ahearn.

"Me? Ah, no. It is another damnable Fascist plot, perhaps, but I will outwit them as I always outwit them. I do not fear them."

"Take him up to headquarters and I'll question him later," the commissioner ordered. "Hold him *incommunicada*."

He flung open the double doors and gazed into the empty assembly room, with its wreckage of broken chairs. The last of the crowd was going peacefully down the emergency stairway,

herded between two lines of police, holding drawn clubs.

IV

"**W**HAT the hell happened, anyhow?" Ahearn asked Craigwillie, who was standing near by, mopping his head, and breathing hard.

"Haven't any idea," muttered the alderman. "This fellow Stani started talking to 'em, all excited as usual. First there was a cheer, and then some hissing, and then somebody else applauded loudly and shouted, and some others started booing and waving clenched fists, and then suddenly a fist fight started down among the audience, and first thing you know the whole mob was fighting, and some of them rushed up on the platform after Stani, and others rushed up to do battle to save him, and—"

"Believe me, brother, I never been so scared in my life. I'm usually pretty cool."

"It's a marvel, a miracle nobody got stabbed," the commissioner declared. "Well, I guess this is hearts and flowers for me. The last straw. Wait till the papers get this."

"Say, I just heard that poor Pagano got bumped off. Too bad."

"I guess you ain't any sorrier than I am, from all I hear about his holding your syndicate up for protection money."

"Nonsense," retorted Craigwillie, with a show of indignation. "We were great friends, and I was the last one to see him alive. Don't you think that means nothing?"

"I know you were, Professor Nearow, here, saw you."

Craigwillie looked quickly at Nearow, and then a slow smile wreathed his heavy face.

"Say. Maybe I ain't lucky to have an alibi witness—and a college professor, too. Can you beat that, hey?"

"Well, you won't need him. I'm thinking we'll have a confession out of

Stani pretty quick. That kind of a nut always wants to boast to the world about what he's done."

"You know, commissioner, burning in the chair's too good for a guy like that."

He walked away, shaking his head.

"Mr. Commissioner, do you think you could discreetly have every man present here searched?"

"I get you, professor; you think one of them might be a confederate and have taken the gun. Sure, you're right. We got to search every one if we search any."

The commissioner, with great tact, explained what he proposed to do, and even Count Adelphi and the mayor consented to be searched by the detectives.

Several of the men carried revolvers. Each of them had a permit.

An examination of the barrels of the weapons showed that not a one had been fired since last being cleaned.

Nearow was as chagrined as the chief, and took his leave, after promising to testify or appear whenever wanted.

It was while he was claiming his top hat from the old policeman in the little check room off the reception room that he suddenly remembered what he had forgotten, and leaned over and whispered a word or two.

"He wants me to take it down to the car with me," he added, aloud.

"Look out now, sir. It's real heavy, and he warned me it's right off the boat and of the best," said the old check room keeper as he handed Nearow a slightly bulging brief case. "Sure, and I wish I could open it with you."

"Indeed, I do, too," smiled Nearow, and went down and out of City Hall.

He stood for a moment in perplexity, and then spied Sergeant Mac Mur-rachu.

"Sergeant, will you kindly go up to the reception room and ask the commissioner to come down at once, as I

have something of the greatest importance to show him."

The sergeant dubiously entered City Hall, and Nearow walked toward Pagano's car, which stood just as it had been when he had first seen it.

The police, however, not only refused to let him see it, but ordered him to move along, desisting when he explained he was waiting for the commissioner.

Ahearn appeared on the steps, and was immediately besieged by a horde of young men who had been kept from entering City Hall by the line of police.

He pleaded with them for a moment, then argued, then beckoned to his men, who surrounded the group and kept them on the steps while Ahearn walked over to Nearow.

"The newspaper men," he explained. "I've got to give them a statement in five minutes, but I don't know what I can say that won't ruin me."

Nearow looked back. The young men were looking sullenly at the commissioner.

"Would you mind sitting in the car?" Nearow asked the commissioner. "I've suddenly had a great light."

"You're very mysterious," grumbled the chief good-naturedly as he sat behind the wheel where Pagano had been slain, "but if you think there's a secret gun in the car, or anything like that, I'm afraid my men would have discovered it long ago."

Ahearn had both hands on the wheel, and was sitting back, looking pleasantly and tolerantly down upon the professor, who was standing close in the open door of the car, fumbling with the flap of the brief case.

"Suppose," said Nearow, tugging at the lock, "that I said this minute that I was about to take ten thousand dollars in cash out of this brief case and hand it to you, to keep. What would you do?"

"Take another drink of the same hop," replied Ahearn, with a laugh.

"Seriously, now. Suppose you had

asked, or, perhaps, demanded the ten thousand dollars, and I walked up to you and said, here it is. Take it—"

"Why," replied Ahearn, half serious and all curious, "I'd take it, of course. Can I help you get that open? It's locked, isn't it?"

"I'll get it," replied Nearow, and taking a firm hold, he suddenly ripped open the flap.

He reached carefully down into the brief case, as Ahearn watched with interest.

On the steps the newspaper men, and nearer Sergeant Mac Murrachu and his men, were all watching with unconcealed curiosity.

Nearow suddenly whipped his hand out, and fired a shot from the pistol it held.

The bullet passed bare inches from Ahearn's arm, and buried itself in the upholstery.

The silence on the weapon had muffled the sound, so that, in the open air, the police standing a few feet away had not heard it above the city noises.

Nearow was leaning in the open door, which hid the weapon from the onlookers.

Ahearn's face was gray.

Nearow was grinning triumphantly.

"My God, man," whispered Ahearn hoarsely, "are you mad? Give me that gun."

"I will be, if you don't see instantly what I'm getting at," said Nearow brightly, handing it over.

"It's slowly dawning," sighed Ahearn, resting his clammy forehead in his hand for a moment. He looked faint, but his color soon returned.

"You know," he went on, "for a moment I thought you were the killer—absolutely cuckoo. But if you've any heart at all don't ever give me any more practical demonstrations. I'll take your word from now on."

"It's not Stani's weapon," said Nearow slowly.

"It's not? Then who's it is?"

"Who had Pagano been asking for

protection money for his illicit liquor business?"

"You don't mean Craigwillie?"

Nearow nodded.

"Great guns, man, how did you know about the protection and liquor and all?"

"You told me yourself."

"Did I, really? I must guard my tongue. But how can we prove it's his weapon?"

"Possibly by his finger-prints, possibly by finding upon him the key that fits this brief case. Certainly by the testimony of one of your own policemen, with whom Craigwillie checked the brief case in the check room up there."

"What? The nerve of that guy. First he bumps off his enemy under my nose, with half the policemen in town standing around, and then he checks the gun with a copper. Can you beat that?"

"What else could he do? I don't think he planned it. Probably realized all of a sudden what a golden opportunity he had there, and took advantage of it, and decided if he told the check-room man it was extra special liquor, it would be safer than if he carried it around himself."

"But what made you think of it?"

"When I got my own hat, I was thinking back, trying to remember if there was anything I'd forgotten, and then, suddenly, I remembered Craigwillie had held tight to a brief case as he pushed through the crowd."

"Somewhere I'd read that revolvers with silencers are more often carried in bags or packages than on the person. I thought it was a wild chance, and asked if Mr. Craigwillie had left a brief case, and when he said yes, and I felt its shape and weight, I was pretty sure. The officer thought it was liquor."

"But I thought you said Pagano was alive and waved to Craigwillie, after Craigwillie started off."

"I did and he was and did," Nearow replied. "As soon as I was sure Craigwillie had done it, and set out to reconcile the apparent contradiction of my own eyes, I realized the true significance of what I saw."

"Craigwillie stood in the open door, whipped out the gun — which was hidden from everybody, even myself, and I was just coming up—fired a bullet right into Pagano's heart, saw me, coolly called good-by, slammed the door, and hurried away."

"What I saw, instead of being Pagano's good-by to Craigwillie, was his farewell to life—he cried out, raised his arm spasmodically, and slumped forward over the wheel. At the moment I thought he was leaning over to shut off or to start his motor. The band was thumping right there, and if he had screamed his loudest not a soul would have heard him through the closed doors of his car."

"Amazing. Will you accept an appointment as honorary deputy commissioner?"

"But I thought you were sure you would lose your office."

"Oh, I'll pull through, all right, but—ho, hell!"

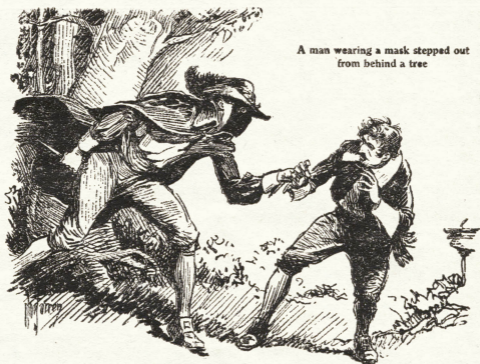
"What's the matter?" asked Professor Nearow.

"I wish it had been Stani. Open and shut. Craigwillie has all the pull in the world, and the best criminal lawyers in New York."

"I'll make the pinch right now, and I'll get him indicted and tried, and convicted, but he'll appeal, and get a new trial, and finally he'll get off with about ten years. Say, the chair's too good for a fellow like that."

"Exactly what he said himself, remember?" asked Nearow chuckling.





A man wearing a mask stepped out
from behind a tree

The Killer Who Couldn't Forget

A True Story

*A Tale of a Terrible Vengeance—the Actual Facts That
Inspired the Great Novel, "The Count of Monte Cristo"*

By Robert W. Sneddon

AMONG Napoleon's subjects in Paris was a young man from the provinces who was making a good living as a shoemaker.

François Picaud, good-looking, was somewhat of a dandy for all his trade, and had managed to win the love of an attractive and pretty girl with some money of her own. He was crazy about the girl, and proud of his con-

quest. As the original says: "Among this class of people there is only one way to have a woman, to marry her."

One Sunday the prospective bridegroom, dressed up in his best clothes, went to have a glass of wine in a café kept by a friend, about his own age. He was richer, which did not prevent him having an overwhelming envy of his prosperous neighbors.

Loupian, who came from the southern city of Nîmes, as did Picaud, had his café and wineshop in a good location near Saint Opportune Place. He was a widower with two children.

When Picaud came in, there were three other southerners in the café, men whom he knew quite well.

"Well, here's friend Picaud, dressed up fit to kill!" said Loupian. "There must be something in the wind." He winked at the others.

"There is," said Picaud simply, as he sat down. "I'm going to get married."

"And who have you picked out to be unfaithful to you?" asked one of the company named Allut.

The Lucky Lover

As the others enlarged on the subject so dear to the writers of French farce, Picaud grew angry and had to be pacified.

"All joking aside," said Loupian at last, "whom are you marrying, friend Picaud?"

"You may not believe it," said Picaud, "but the girl is the heiress, Therese Vigouroux."

"Why, she has a hundred thousand francs in her own name," cried the astounded proprietor of the café.

"Well, I can give her that amount in love and happiness," said Picaud stoutly. "Meanwhile, gentlemen, I want you all to come to the mass, which will be said in Saint Leu's and to the dance after the wedding feast—we're having it at Latignac's in Bear Street."

The four men could hardly believe the evidence of their ears. Picaud certainly was a lucky man if the news was true.

"When is the wedding to come off?" Loupian asked.

"Tuesday."

"This Tuesday?"

"Yes. Don't forget. I'll expect you all there. I'm going over to the mayor's office now to make the final arrangements."

Picaud hurried off briskly.

"Well, what do you make of that?"

"He's a wizard."

"Getting such a beautiful girl, and money to burn."

Loupian sat scowling as the others talked. Suddenly he looked up.

"Getting married on Tuesday, is he? I bet you he doesn't."

"What do you mean?" asked Allut.

"I bet you I'll put off the wedding. I'll play a trick on Picaud. He's too cocky about himself. He needs to be taken down a peg."

"What's the idea, Loupian?"

"Well, suppose I tell the police Picaud is acting as a spy for the English. See. They'll take him to the station and keep him there while they investigate. That will keep the bride waiting a week at least. It will be a good joke."

"It's a joke Picaud won't appreciate," said Allut warningly. "If he finds out you did it, he'll be revenged on you. I know Picaud. Don't do it."

A Practical Joke

"Oh, shut up, don't be a spoil sport. This is carnival time. Let us have our fun."

"Leave me out of it then," said Allut. "I warn you you are laying up trouble for yourselves."

"Bah," said Loupian, "you haven't the courage of a chicken."

"I have some sense of decency," shouted Allut. "Good night, and don't say I didn't warn you to keep off Picaud."

The others burst into jeering laughter as the door shut, and Loupian, being generous with his wine, they approved of his plan. He promised them he would give them something to laugh over.

About two hours later he went to a police station and told his story. The officer wrote a report and sent it at once to the head of the secret police. It came in at a bad time, when the authorities were bothered with rebel-

lions of the royalists in the province of La Vendee. They jumped at the conclusion that Picaud was acting as an agent between royalists in the west and south, and was carrying on the trade of shoemaking as a blind for his real business.

In those days conspirators were dealt with at once, so that night, or, rather, in the early morning, police descended on Picaud's residence and removed him so secretly that his absence was not known until the morning of the wedding. No trace of him could be found, and finally his friends gave up all hope of seeing him again.

Prisoners Released

The years rolled on. In 1814 the imperial government crashed to the ground, and on April 15 the doors of the fortress of Fenestrelle opened to let out a prisoner. He was a man bent with suffering, aged by despair rather than the passage of years. In seven years he had lived half a century. Nobody who had once known him could have recognized him. He stared at a stranger's face when he saw his own in the first mirror he had gazed into for seven years, in the miserable inn at Fenestrelle.

This man, who had been known in prison as Joseph Lucher, had there formed the acquaintance of an enormously wealthy ecclesiastic of Milan, whose relatives had contrived to have him imprisoned in order to enjoy his vast revenues. The ecclesiastic had disappointed them and kept to himself the knowledge that he had huge sums of money in the Banks of Hamburg and England. Furthermore, he had sold the greater part of his estates to an Italian prince and lodged the proceeds with an Amsterdam banker.

This noble Italian, dying on January 4, 1814, had constituted Joseph Lucher sole heir to seven million francs, and disclosed to him the secret hiding place of over a million francs'

worth of diamonds and three million francs in coin, Milanese ducats, Venetian florins, Spanish crowns, French louis, English guineas, *et cetera*.

Joseph Lucher, when he had recovered his strength and resumed the habits of a living man, went to Turin and from there to Milan. He acted with the utmost caution, and at the end of several days was in possession of the treasure he had come to seek, with, in addition, a quantity of antique jewels and beautiful cameos.

From Milan the millionaire went by successive stages to Amsterdam, Hamburg and London, and having the necessary papers to prove his heirship, collected wealth enough to have filled a royal coffer several times over. He kept a million in cash and the diamonds. The rest he placed in investments, bringing him an income of six hundred thousand francs, payable by the Banks of England, Germany, France and Italy.

Lucher Learns

This business concluded, Joseph Lucher set out to Paris, where he arrived on February 15, 1815, eight years to a day since the unfortunate François Picaud had disappeared so mysteriously. Picaud would have been thirty-four years old.

Lucher fell sick the day after he had arrived in Paris, and as he had no house or servants, had himself taken to a hospital. He was still there when Napoleon returned from exile to Paris, and did not come out of hospital until the emperor had been defeated and Louis Eighteenth came back to the throne for the second time. He then left the hospital and established himself in humble lodgings in the Saint Opportune district, where he learned several happenings.

One of them was that in February of 1807 the good people of the district had been puzzled by the disappearance of a young shoemaker on the eve of his wedding. Three friends had played

some sort of a joke on him, and the poor devil had run away or been kidnapped. No one knew what had been his fate.

The bride-to-be had wept and mourned him for two years, and then, giving up all hope of ever seeing her lover again, had married Loupian, a café proprietor, who, through his wealthy marriage, had prospered so well that he now had one of the most magnificent and popular cafés on the boulevards.

Trails Beginning

Joseph Lucher listened to this story without showing any apparent interest or making any comment. He made further inquiries in a quiet way, but found no one who could tell him the authors of the great joke which had sent an innocent man to exile or death.

At last he did find one man who told him:

"I once heard a certain Antoine Allut say in front of me that he knew the men who did it."

"I once knew an Allut in Italy. He came from Nîmes."

"So did this one I speak of."

"The Allut I knew," said Lucher, "lent me a hundred crowns and told me to pay them to his cousin Antoine."

"Why don't you send the money to Nîmes. I believe he went there to live," said Lucher's informant.

The next day a post chaise, preceded by a courier who paid thrice the usual hiring charges, flew rather than whirled on the highway to Lyons. From there the conveyance followed the Rhone by the Marseilles road, which it left at Saint Esprit bridge.

At this point a man dressed as an Italian abbé got out of the chaise. He engaged another conveyance and drove to Nîmes, where he put up at the well-known Luxembourg Hotel. He quietly questioned the people in the hotel whether they knew an Antoine Allut, and found out there were many of this name in all stations of life.

Some time passed before the Abbé Baldini, as he said his name was, was able to trace the object of his quest, and several days before he came into relations with him.

He told Allut, after several meetings, that he had been a political prisoner in the Château de l'Oeuf of Naples, which stands on an island in the port of this city, and that he had there met a good fellow who, much to his regret, had died in 1811.

"At this time," continued the abbé, "he was about thirty. He died mourning his lost country, but he pardoned those responsible for his imprisonment. He was a man from Nîmes. His name was François Picaud."

Allut uttered a smothered exclamation. The abbé looked at him with an amazed expression.

"Did you happen to know this Picaud?" he asked.

"He was one of my best friends, and to think of him dying so far from home," said Allut with emotion. "Did you ever learn the reason for his arrest?"

A Diamond Legacy

"He did not know it himself. I am sure of that, for he swore to me by everything sacred that he was ignorant."

Allut sighed. It might have been a sigh of relief.

The abbé continued:

"While Picaud was alive, he had but one thought. He was ready to give his share of heaven to the person who would tell him the names of the author or the authors of his arrest. And this obsession inspired him to make a peculiar will. But first I should tell you that Picaud in prison was able to be of great service to an English man, a prisoner like himself, and when this man died he left Picaud a diamond worth, at lowest valuation, fifty thousand francs."

"Lucky fellow to get a legacy like that," said Allut sighing. "A man

can do a lot with fifty thousand francs. It's a fortune."

"When Picaud was on his death-bed," the abbé resumed, "he sent for me and said: 'I can die happy if you give me your word to do as I ask. Will you promise me?' I gave him my word, knowing he would not ask me to do anything contrary to honor or religion. I asked him what it was. He said: 'I have never been able to learn the names of those who cast me into this hell, but I have had a revelation. The voice of God has told me one of my friends, a native of Nîmes, by the name of Antoine Allut, knows those who betrayed me. When you receive your freedom, go and find him, and, for my sake, give him the diamond I got from Sir Herbert Newton, but only on this condition, that he gives you the names of those whom I regard as my murderers. When he tells you the names, you will return to Naples and have them engraved on a metal plate over my grave.'"

Three Names

Antoine Allut, after consideration, said he was willing to meet the terms of the bequest, only he was afraid and must consult his wife. He returned next day and gave the abbé the names of Gervais Chaubard, Guilhem Solari, and finally that of Gilles Loupian.

The ring was handed over to Allut, who negotiated its sale to a dealer in precious stones for the sum of sixty-three thousand, seven hundred and forty-nine francs in cash. Four months later, to the fury and chagrin of the Alluts, the stone was sold to a Turkish merchant for three times the amount. This led to a dispute, and the dispute led to a murder, that of the dealer. Facing prison, death and total ruin, the Alluts had to flee and took refuge in Greece.

One day a splendidly dressed lady entered the café kept by Loupian and asked to see the proprietor. She told Loupian that her family was under

great obligations to a poor fellow ruined by the events of 1814, but that he refused to accept anything but her recommendation for a position. All he wanted was to get a place as waiter in some establishment where he would be treated kindly. He was no longer young and looked to be about fifty. To persuade Loupian to take him, the lady would pay a hundred francs a month, which payment the waiter was not to know of.

Loupian agreed. A man presented himself as the waiter, badly clothed and ugly looking. He saw both Loupian and his wife and was set to waiting on the tables.

The Missing Groom

Among the regular customers of the café were the two Nîmes men, Chaubard and Solari. They dropped in every day at the same time, had a drink, read the papers, played cards or dominoes.

One night Chaubard did not appear. The usual joking remarks about having met some lady were passed, and Solari had to find another partner.

Next night he arrived breathless. He had just been called to the morgue to look at the body of Chaubard, found lying in a nook near the Pont des Arts bridge with a dagger through the heart.

The police were powerless to discover the murderer, who seemed to have left no trace behind him.

Two weeks later a handsome hunting dog belonging to Loupian died of poison. A boy said he had seen a customer feeding biscuits to the dog, and described him. This was a young man who drove the mail cart and liked to poke fun at Loupian. He was able to prove an alibi—luckily for him. Seven days went by and madame's favorite parrot also was poisoned.

Loupian, by his first marriage, had a daughter, now aged sixteen. She was ravishingly beautiful. A dandy who said he was a marquis and a millionaire saw her one day in the café.

He spent money like water to have meetings with the girl, bribing the waiters and the maidservants. The inevitable happened when the girl was betrayed. The Loupian insisted that the marquis must marry the girl and he consented, and, as evidence of good faith, showed his documents of identification and the titles of his estates. The Loupian family was overjoyed.

The marriage ceremony was carried through, and a splendid wedding feast was ordered in a fashionable restaurant. Covers were laid for one hundred and fifty guests.

At the appointed hour the guests were all present. The marquis alone was missing. He had excused himself on the pretext that he had been summoned to the king's presence. As the guests waited a letter arrived from the missing groom, begging that the dinner be gone on with and that he would join them later.

"One!"

As the evening went on a great uneasiness pervaded the company and the laughter died away. The bride sat with her eyes upon the door, expecting the coming of the handsome groom every instant.

When the dessert was served one of the waiters laid a letter beside the plate of each guest. In curt and brutal terms it stated that the so-called marquis was an ex-convict and was now in flight. These letters had been left by a stranger, who had hurried away.

The consternation of the Loupian family may be imagined. They could not imagine why they should be the target for such a misfortune.

But worse was to follow. Four days later, on a Sunday, while all the family was in the country, in search of distraction for their worries, the apartment over the café went on fire in several places.

A rabble of people came running and, under the pretense of helping to extinguish the flames and carry out the

furniture, pillaged, damaged and destroyed everything. The flames could not be put out, and the whole building was ruined. What property had been removed had been carried off.

Loupian was a ruined man. All that was left to him was a little of his wife's property. His friends left him alone. The only person who stuck to him was the waiter Prosper, whom he had engaged on the recommendation of the lady. Prosper said he would follow him and serve him for his board. So Loupian opened a tiny café in St. Antoine Street, and gradually old customers began to come again.

Among them was Solari, who, after a visit to the café, was one night seized with atrocious pains, and, in spite of the efforts of a doctor, died in agony a few hours later.

"Two!"

Twelve hours later, when his bier was exposed, as was the custom then, in front of the house where he lodged, a paper was found pinned to the covering of the coffin. On it was printed the single word—"Two."

Loupian's other child was a son, who allowed himself to be drawn into evil ways. He was running around with a gang of others of his own age who seemed to have lured him into their society. One night it was proposed that the gang should rob a wine shop, carry off twelve bottles, drink them and pay for them next day—all as a great prank. Eugene Loupian thought this was great sport and accompanied the gang.

Everything went off nicely. The gang was just ready to steal out with a couple of bottles apiece, when the police surrounded the juvenile criminals. Some one had squealed. Only the royal clemency saved the boy from death. As it was he was given twenty years in prison.

This catastrophe completed the ruin of Loupian. Mme. Loupian died of shame and worry, and as she left no

children, the remains of her dowry went back to her family. Loupian and his daughter were penniless.

At this point the faithful Prosper said he had managed to lay by quite a sum of savings and that mademoiselle might have them—at a price. The disappointed bride to save her father and lift them out of ruin threatening them yielded finally and sold herself.

Loupian existed. He no longer lived. His misfortunes had reduced him to a state where his brain no longer would work. One night as he was walking in an unfrequented path in the Tuileries Gardens, a man wearing a mask stepped from behind a tree.

"Three!"

"Loupian!" said this man harshly. "Do you recall the year 1807?"

Loupian stared blankly.

"Why?" he said dully.

"Remember the crime you committed at that period."

"Crime—crime?"

"Yes, an infamous crime, when jealousy led you to plunge your friend Picaud into the depths of a dungeon. Now, do you remember?"

"Ah," sighed Loupian. "I remember. God has punished me severely."

The masked man drew nearer. The wretched man could feel the intensity of the burning gaze which was cast upon him through the eyeholes of the mask.

"Not God has punished you, Loupian, but Picaud. Picaud himself who to satisfy his revenge stabbed Chabard on Pont des Arts bridge, who poisoned Solari, gave you a criminal as son-in-law, and devised the trap into which your son fell. It was Picaud who killed your dog and your wife's parrot, who set fire to your house and hired the robbers who ruined you. It is Picaud who caused your wife to die of grief and made your daughter his mistress."

The speaker snatched off his mask, and as Loupian recoiled cried:

"Yes, I am Prosper—and I was Picaud, and your knowledge dies with you."

As the dagger in his hand buried itself deep in the heart of Loupian who sank to his knees without a cry, the avenger uttered a strange sound, then turned to go.

But at that moment a grip of steel seized him by the throat. Picaud attacked from behind by a man who had followed him was soon overcome, gagged and bound. His assailant wrapped his cloak about him and picking him up in strong arms carried him swiftly away.

Nothing could exceed the fury and astonishment of Picaud as bound hand and foot he was carried away. Surely he had not fallen into the hands of the police. A single gendarme would have summoned others before attempting an arrest of this kind. His attacker was a footpad, then. But why should he be carrying him away, this person who had been the sole spectator of the murder just committed?

Picaud's Accomplice

His head enveloped in his cloak, Picaud had no idea where he was being taken. After a time he was flung upon a cot of some kind. The air of the place was heavy, and sound was muffled. The cloak was snatched from the prisoner's eyes.

Overhead was an arch of stone. He fancied he must be in an abandoned quarry. He peered at his captor who sitting on a stone watched him without saying a word.

At last his jailer spoke.

"Well, Picaud, what name will you use in future? The one your father gave you, or the one you assumed when you came out of prison. Will you call yourself Abbé Baldini or Prosper the waiter? I wonder if you'll be clever enough to invent a fifth name for yourself. I hope you're satisfied with your revenge now. You must have sold your soul to a demon or you'd be filled

with horror of what you have done. You have spent ten years of your life persecuting three wretched creatures you might have spared. You have committed horrible crimes, and now you are lost forever, since you drew me into the abyss."

"Who are you?" asked Picaud.

"I am your accomplice, a wretch who sold you the lives of his friends for gold. Your gold was my ruin. You kindled a flame of greed in my soul which has never gone out. I killed the jeweler who had cheated me, and I had to flee with my wife. She died in exile. I was captured, sentenced, sent to the galleys. I have endured every misery and dragged the hateful ball and chain.

Dupe's Vengeance

"When I managed to escape I had but one desire, to find and punish this Abbé Baldini who had made such an art of punishment. I hastened to Naples. No one had heard of him there. I looked for the grave of Picaud and learned that Picaud still lived. How did I learn this, neither you nor the Pope will ever extort the secret.

"Henceforth I devoted myself to the pursuit of this man who pretended to be dead, but when I had found him, already two murders showed his revenging hand. Loupian had lost his home, his children, his wife, his fortune. To-night I followed him, I was going to tell him the whole story, to warn him, but again you got ahead of me—some devil must have given you warning—and I was too late to save him from you. But I have you—so we are quits. I am going to pay you back the evil you have done. I am going to prove that where we come from we have arms as well as memories, Picaud. Now you know me. I am Antoine Allut."

Picaud said nothing. Strange fancies were passing through his mind.

Carried away by the passion of revenge, he had almost forgotten the vastness of his wealth and the pleasures

it could give to him. But now his vengeance was accomplished, and he might think of the richness of life before him, he had fallen into the hands of a man as lacking in the quality of mercy as he himself had been.

As these reflections sped rapidly through his brain, he bit on his gag with impotent fury, but gradually he gathered his wits together. He had been able to buy this man before, surely he could buy him again. He could spare him a hundred thousand francs out of his sixteen millions.

And then the state of poverty in which he had lived to accomplish his revenge began to pervade his reasoning powers. Why should he give away any of his money? He would pretend he was no better than a beggar and buy his freedom for a small sum. Once free he would see that Allut would disgorge this amount.

Meanwhile Allut removed the gag.

"Where am I?" asked Picaud.

"You are in a place where you need expect no help nor pity. You are mine, and mine only to do with as I please."

Picaud smiled disdainfully. His former friend said nothing more, but left him lying on the cot.

Money for Bread

In a little while he returned and fixed a wide heavy band of iron about the prisoner's waist, secured by a chain to three large rings embedded in the wall. That done he set out some food on a cask on end and began to eat.

Picaud watched him for some time.

"I am hungry."

"What will you pay for some bread and water?"

"I have no money."

"You have sixteen millions and more," said Allut quietly. "And I know exactly where they are."

With the utmost precision he detailed the various sums invested in several countries of Europe.

"You are dreaming," faltered Picaud aghast.

"Well, dream that you are eating," Allut retorted.

He left the prisoner alone all night, but returned to eat his breakfast before him.

"Give me something to eat," asked Picaud.

"What will you pay?"

"Nothing."

"Have your own way. We'll see who gives in first."

When he returned again with food Picaud said he would pay a few coppers for a loaf of bread.

"Listen to me," said Allut after a time. "Here are my conditions. I'll give you a meal twice a day, and you'll pay me twenty-five thousand francs for each meal."

Picaud uttered a flood of protests.

"That is my last offer," said Allut unemotionally. "Think it over. You had no mercy for your friends. Why should I have any?"

The wretched prisoner passed the rest of the day and the following night, torn with hunger and despair, burning in a hell of his own contriving. His sufferings were such that he was on the borderland between life and death when the merciless Allut saw that he had pushed his revenge too far. Picaud was nothing but flesh still sensitive to physical pain, but incapable of doing anything to combat it. There was no use trying to make him speak.

For a time Allut stood looking down at the prisoner thinking that if he died, all hope of appropriating any part of his immense fortune would be lost to him.

Suddenly he bent down and struck the face of the prisoner. A mocking expression passed across it. And suddenly Allut lost control of himself and threw himself on the prostrate man, and only when he was dead did he come to his senses. Then with a shudder of disgust he fled leaving the body behind him.

He made for England where he lived until 1828. In that year, know-

ing his end was within a few hours, he sent for a French Catholic priest and made him take down his story and that of the other unhappy men, to be sent to the prefect of police of Paris. This the priest did and the unhappy Allut signed the document on each page.

This document was conveyed to the prefect and placed in the archives or files, together with a plan showing where the bones of Picaud would be found, and the addresses at which Picaud had stayed under his two names.

Allut said that he had searched, but had not found any documents or money of the dead man, but had knowledge of his enormous fortune.

"Even on his deathbed," said the priest in his signed letter, "Antoine Allut refused to tell me by what means he had learned the facts set down in his memoir, or who had informed him of the doings, crimes and fortune of Picaud. Only an hour before he died, and in full possession of his faculties he said to me: 'Father, no man's belief can be more alive than mine. I swear as I am about to face my Maker that I both heard and saw a spirit separated from its body.'"

Picaud's history has been made immortal in literature. In 1842 the famous author, Dumas, was looking round for a skeleton plot to fit the title *Monte Cristo*, the name of a rock near Elba, and he undoubtedly found it in the archives of this unusual case of Picaud, though his genius has turned a crude story into a superb masterpiece.

Picaud became *Dantes*, *Therese Mercedes*. *Loupian* turned into *Fernand*, and Allut to *Caderousse*. The Abbé Baldini was transformed into *Abbé Busoni*, and as for the prison, it is easy to recognize the Château d'If in the Château de l'Oeuf.

The novel and its original begin almost in the same way—the hero's approaching marriage, and his betrayal by a jealous rival, and those who know "*Monte Cristo*" must have discovered other close similarities in the two plots.

Death on the 8:45

By Frank King

Paul Grendon Tackles the Mystery of the Unconscious Man and the Stolen Mail



"**B**ET you a couple of fat cigars he's not on the train," wagered Paul Grendon.

"I don't suppose he will be," agreed Chief Inspector Dransfield placidly. "But we can't afford to take any risks. That's where you unofficial folks score. You needn't act on everything you hear. But if we at the Yard neglect the slightest clew, however unpromising, we never hear the end of it."

Paul grinned. "You're an extremely ill-used body of men," he scoffed, regarding the broad, sturdy figure of his friend with appreciation. "I can see you positively fading away under the strain. Have we time for a drink?"

Chief Inspector Dransfield glanced at the illuminated clock overhead.

"Just time, I think," he decided promptly.

It was a slack period at the big London railway terminus. The theater rush was over, and comparative calm would reign until the cinemas and other places of amusement disgorged their hurrying crowds all intent on reaching their homes with the least possible delay. Nevertheless, there was still plenty of bustle and confusion on the long platforms; and departing trains made the night hideous with their piercing whistles.

"I wonder if this is Mr. Baxter," he said

The two men walked across to a refreshment room and ordered drinks. Despite the fact that Dransfield held a high official position at Scotland Yard while Paul Grendon was a private investigator, they were great friends. Very frequently they would work together, each in his own way, on a case; and such a case had brought them to the railway station to-night.

They were hoping without much conviction that the arrival of the eight forty-five would bring to a satisfactory conclusion a very involved forgery investigation in which they were both interested. Word had come to Dransfield by an underground route that the man they wanted would return to London by this train. And though they both considered the information highly unreliable, it was necessary, as the inspector had pointed out, to pursue any clew, however slight, that might come their way.

Having emptied their glasses, they strolled back into the station. The train they were expecting—a boat express—was due, and a few moments later it rolled in with a noisy grinding of brakes.

From the position they had taken up they could scrutinize the alighting passengers as they hurried along the platform. It very quickly became apparent that the man they sought had not traveled by this train.

"Well, we'll have to try again," sighed Dransfield philosophically. "Let's have another drink."

He was turning away when Paul caught his arm.

"Look at the postman, old chappie. Under that third light. What do you think's bitten him?"

At the front of the train, next to the engine, was a mail van. At the door of this which he had just unlocked, stood a uniformed man, gazing into the van with startled surprise evident in his attitude. As the two friends watched, he banged the door to, and ran past them down the platform toward the station master's office.

"Something queer in that van," murmured Paul. "Any business of ours, do you think?"

"Better wait and see what happens," advised Dransfield, fingering his heavy mustache.

Very soon the postman came running back, accompanied by the station master and a railway policeman. As they passed, the station master caught sight of Dransfield and recognized him.

"Come along, inspector," he panted. "Just the man we want. The mail van's been robbed, and a sorter killed."

Paul and Dransfield hurried after the others. The postman unlocked the door of the mail van again, and stood aside to allow them all to enter. Then he climbed in, and pulled the door to after him, shutting out the crowd that had already begun to collect.

There was little sign of any disturbance in the van. The labeled mail bags

were stacked in a row, and hundreds of letters were neatly arranged in the sorting stand. On a cleared space on the counter stood a lighted primus stove, with teapot and cups beside it. The only indication that anything was wrong was the body that lay sprawled in one corner, and the pungent odor of chloroform that filled the van with its sickly sweetness.

Dransfield bent down to examine the man, and removed the thick wad of cotton wool that was tied over his mouth and nose with a handkerchief.

"He's not dead," he said, slipping a hand inside the man's waistcoat. "He's only chloroformed. But he looks pretty bad to me. We can't do anything for him. Better get a doctor, I think."

The railway policeman departed to telephone for the doctor. Dransfield turned to the postman.

"Do you know this man?" he asked, pointing to the unconscious figure. "He's a sorter?"

"Yes, sir. I know him well. Walter Selwyn's his name. He's worked on this train for years, and I meet it more often than not."

"But surely he doesn't travel alone?"

"Oh, no. Ronald Baxter always works with him."

"And where's Mr. Baxter now, old chappie?" drawled Paul, fingering the handkerchief which had been tied over Selwyn's face.

The postman looked helplessly round the van. It was clear that he had been so upset by his discovery of the one sorter apparently dead that he had temporarily forgotten the existence of the other.

"He—he ought to be here, sir," he stammered. "Or some one in his place. Selwyn would not be allowed to come up alone."

"Perhaps he slipped out of the van before you arrived?"

"He couldn't do that. I was waiting on the platform when the train came in. I was surprised that no one opened the door of the mail van. Usu-

ally either Selwyn or Baxter jumps out as soon as the train stops. I couldn't see into the van because the windows are frosted. After knocking and getting no reply, I unlocked the door myself."

"You said there had been a robbery?" queried Dransfield. "I don't see any signs of it. What makes you think so?"

"This, sir." The postman laid a hand on one of the mail bags which lay open. "Registered letters and parcels, sir. It ought to be closed and sealed. Neither Selwyn nor Baxter had any authority to touch it."

"But you're not sure whether anything has gone from it?"

"Not without checking the sheets, sir."

"That can wait. If the bag ought to be sealed, it's pretty evident some one's been tampering with it."

Dransfield's thoughtful gaze returned to the unconscious man on the floor and noted something on his wrist.

"Hello!" he said. "His wrist watch is broken. If it has stopped, it will give us the time when he was attacked."

The front of the watch was cracked and portions of the glass had fallen away. The hands had stopped at eight twenty.

"Twenty minutes past eight," said the inspector unfastening the watch. "Where would the train be at that time, Mr. Rees?"

The station master made a rapid calculation.

"If it was running to schedule," he replied, "it would be about Seven Beeches, thirty miles this side of Wykechester."

"Well, that's something." Dransfield put the watch in his pocket and rose to his feet again. "We have evidence that Selwyn was attacked somewhere in the neighborhood of Seven Beeches. Now what's happened to Baxter? There's no place here where he could be hidden."

"He may have been thrown out of

the van," suggested the station master. "In any case, I'd better telephone down the line to have a thorough search made."

"I wish you would, please," agreed Dransfield; and the station master hurried off.

Looking about for any further information, Dransfield discovered an empty bottle which had rolled behind a mail bag. He picked it up gingerly, avoiding finger-marking the glass, and sniffed at it.

"We may learn something from this," he said, wrapping the bottle in a handkerchief. "It's had chloroform in it."

Paul Grendon was wandering around the van, keen eyes searching in every corner. He tried the door at the rear end of the van, which was intended to link it up with the next carriage if desired, and found that it was unfastened.

"Perhaps Mr. Baxter went out this way," he suggested. "I suppose this door ought to be locked."

"Yes, sir. Regulations are strict about that."

"Would either of the sorters have a key?"

"There's one kept in the van, I think. For use in any emergency."

"That's not very hopeful," murmured Paul.

He opened the door and looked out. The van was not connected by the usual collapsible passage to the next carriage. In fact, this was of an old type, containing no corridor. It had no door corresponding with that of the mail van. There was no means by which any one could pass from one carriage to the other.

"Must have been difficult either to enter or leave this van while the train was on the move," he said thoughtfully.

"Some one might have swung along the footboards," suggested Inspector Dransfield.

"Possibly. But the postman says the door at the side was locked. There's the top of the train, of course." Paul

looked up. "Hello! Hello! What's this?"

Projecting from the top of the next carriage was a leg, with its foot caught in one of the climbing rungs.

"I wonder if this is Mr. Baxter?" he said.

He climbed up between the two carriages. On the top of the one behind the mail van, the body of a man lay sprawled on his face.

Paul flashed his electric torch. The man was dead; and the back of his head, battered to a pulp, was sufficient evidence of the cause.

Something lodged among the accumulated dust in the angle between a batten and the ventilator glinted as the light caught it. Paul picked up one or two small pieces of thin glass. Whistling tunelessly between his teeth, he stowed them carefully away in his pocket. Then, aided by the other two, he lowered the limp figure down.

As soon as the body was laid on the floor of the van, the postman recognized it.

"It's Baxter!" he cried. "It's poor old Baxter."

"Looks as though he was after the thieves," said Dransfield. "But poor devil! That head! Whatever could—"

"A bridge," replied Paul briefly. "He was caught as the train went under a bridge. It would have swept him clear away if his foot hadn't become entangled in the rung."

"I expect you're right."

"There's no doubt about it. Strange that he was so careless, isn't it? Of course he was facing the wrong way. But he must have known every inch of the line."

"Well, if he was all flurried and excited, chasing after the thieves—"

"I'm not sure that he was chasing after the thieves." Paul picked up the handkerchief which had held the chloroformed pad over Selwyn's face, and pointed to one corner of it. "There's something to think about here. Look at it!"

Plainly written in indelible ink on the handkerchief was the name "R. Baxter."

"By crimes!" exclaimed Dransfield. "That alters the whole thing, doesn't it?"

"I believe it does, old chappie."

"It means that Baxter himself was the thief. He chloroformed Selwyn, took what he wanted and—"

II

THE inspector's exposition of his theory was cut short by the return of the station master, accompanied by a dapper, emotionless police surgeon. The situation was briefly explained to them. After examining Baxter, the surgeon definitely agreed with Paul about the bridge.

"I'm sure nothing else could have caused such injuries," he said emphatically. "The back of his skull is smashed in like an empty egg shell. And his leg's broken by the force with which he was thrown back on the carriage behind. Poor devil! Anyhow, he'd never know that anything had hit him."

He turned his attention to Selwyn who lay breathing heavily, just beginning to recover from the effects of the anæsthetic.

"This fellow's lucky to be alive," he muttered, examining the man's pupils. "He's had a pretty hefty dose. However, you got to him just in time. We'll soon have him round; and he'll be no worse for his little trip into dreamland."

Paul watched with interest while the surgeon prepared a hypodermic injection and deftly inserted it into Selwyn's arm. Soon the man's pale, studious face began to twitch, his thin lips to writhe and twist convulsively.

Inspector Dransfield, after searching Baxter's pockets without result, was giving instructions to the station master and the postman. Paul squatted on the floor and helped the surgeon in his efforts to rouse Selwyn.

The man was now near to consciousness. He was babbling the usual incoherent phrases which escape any one recovering from an anæsthetic. As soon as his eyes opened, Paul propped him in a sitting position against a mail bag.

"He's all right now," said the surgeon, after awhile. "He'll be able to answer any questions you care to put to him."

Dransfield stepped forward and knelt down beside the sorter, gazing pityingly at the pale face and trembling lips.

"You've had a rough time, Selwyn," he said kindly. "The doctor says you're lucky to be alive. We want to catch whoever was responsible for doping you, or we wouldn't bother you just now. Can you tell us anything about it?"

Walter Selwyn gazed at him stupidly. Then his blinking eyes cleared as recollection came back to him.

"I don't know anything," he said feebly. "I don't know anything at all."

From the position he had taken up outside the man's circle of vision, Paul watched him intently.

"We don't expect you to know much," Dransfield went on. "But surely you can tell us who chloroformed you?"

"I wish I could," replied Selwyn, fingering his pale face, which was burned and blistered by the contact of the chloroform. "I'd like to see some one suffer for this outrage. But whoever it was caught me from behind."

His wandering gaze fell on the body of Baxter, and his weak eyes opened wide in horror.

"That's Baxter, isn't it?" he gasped. "Is he—is he—"

"Yes, he's dead," answered Dransfield. "But don't worry yourself about that now. Just tell us what you can."

Selwyn withdrew his frightened gaze from his fellow sorter with an effort.

"The devils!" he muttered. "I only wish I could set you on the track of whoever's done that. But I never saw anybody. It was done too quickly and silently. All I know about it is this:

"I noticed nothing unusual until after we had passed through Wykechester. We usually have a cup of tea about that time, and I broke off work to make it."

"You didn't hear any one come into the van?"

"No. Of course the train makes plenty of noise, especially when it is passing through the deep cuttings this side of Wykechester. But one gets used to it, you know; and if there had been any sound out of the ordinary, I think I should have heard it."

"I got out the teapot and stove. I had just lighted the stove when some one seized me from behind and pressed a stinking cloth on my face. I couldn't see and I couldn't breathe. I struggled as hard as I could, but the beastly chloroform choked me. The train seemed to be going at a hundred miles an hour, and I felt my senses leaving me. And then I knew nothing more until I wakened up just now."

"And lucky you were to waken up!" exclaimed the police surgeon. "Another few minutes with that pad on your face would have done you in for good."

"Was Baxter chloroformed, too?" asked Selwyn, his watery gaze returning to the figure on the floor. "Poor old Baxter! We've worked together on this train for—"

"You needn't waste too much sympathy on Baxter," interrupted Dransfield. "When we came in we found his handkerchief tied round your face."

"Baxter's handkerchief?" Selwyn's eyes opened wide again. "Oh, surely you don't mean that he—"

"We don't know yet. But it looks most likely that it was Baxter who chloroformed you, afterward robbing the mail, and being accidentally killed

himself as he was making his getaway."

"Oh, I'll never believe that! Baxter was a good sort—a pal. He'd never do a thing like that. Don't believe it."

"Well, well! Don't distress yourself about it at present. We shall know all that happened in due course. He'd no stolen packages on him, so perhaps he didn't do it." Dransfield rose to his feet. "I say, Paul, would you—"

He stopped short, looking round the van in surprise. For Paul Grendon had disappeared.

III

IT was close on midnight when the missing detective strolled into Chief Inspector Dransfield's private office at Scotland Yard.

"Hello!" he said cheerfully. "Thought I'd find you here. I've just called to collect those two cigars." He helped himself from the box on the desk. "Thinking of going home yet?"

"Yes, I've just finished," replied Dransfield. "Take a pocketful while you're at it, you robber. What the deuce did you do that vanishing trick for?"

"I wanted to get acquainted," grinned Paul.

"Acquainted? With whom?"

"The gentleman who so cleverly robbed the mail van on the eight forty-five, old chappie."

Dransfield stared. "What the devil do you mean, Paul? Are you pulling my leg?"

"Not at all. I hope to introduce you to him in a few days. But don't ask me any more questions now if you love me. I want to know how things stand."

Knowing his friend as he did, the inspector sighed and stifled his curiosity. Experience had taught him that Paul Grendon would not divulge anything about his progress in a case until he could deliver the goods neatly parceled and sealed.

"There are no new developments,"

he said. "The chloroform bottle wasn't any help. There were no fingerprints on it; the thief had been too careful for that."

"Hard luck," murmured Paul.

"I put Rodgers onto the case as soon as possible," Dransfield went on. "Though, of course, the post office have their own men for this kind of thing. We discovered that several packages are missing from the registered mail bag. The thief knew what he was doing. We can't ascertain their value for certain yet, of course. But letters to the Bank of England often contain bank notes; while those sent to addresses in Hatton Garden are frequently carrying diamonds."

"Quite so. And the fact that the thief knew what to take seems to indicate that he had inside knowledge of the contents of the registered mail bag."

"Yes, that's a strong point. So far as I can see, the whole business is pretty well cut and dried, and I can't imagine what sort of a track you're following. It looks pretty clear to me that Baxter was the thief. Otherwise, what was he doing while his pal was being chloroformed? I'm sure no stranger could have entered the van and caught Selwyn unawares, while Baxter had every opportunity. He knew what was in the mail bag, and helped himself to what he wanted. Then he climbed on the top of the train— By the by, they've found the bridge that killed him."

"You asked them to search for that?"

"Yes. I thought we'd better verify our conclusions. The bridge is at Seven Beeches, about thirty miles this side of Wykechester. Part of the stonework immediately above the line shows fresh bloodstains and a few hairs."

"Pretty quick work, Dransfield."

"Well, there aren't many bridges over that part of the line. And the station master wakened up every one down to Wykechester, so there have

been plenty of searchers. It fits in with Selwyn's story and the evidence of the broken watch, doesn't it? Baxter was killed as he was escaping. He met his punishment very soon after his crime."

"What about his loot—the packages he stole?"

"That's where I'm all at sea." The inspector tugged thoughtfully at his heavy mustache. "I suppose there are two alternatives. Either he had a confederate somewhere on the line to whom he threw the spoil, or he threw it from the train at some particular point where he could find it later. In the first case, we may never see it again; in the second—well, a thorough search ought to bring it to light."

"Good luck in the search!" Paul Grendon rose and reached for his hat. There was a gleam of amusement in his gray eyes. "I'll be off now."

"I'm going your way, Paul."

"But I'm not going my way. I've a taxi outside to take me in the opposite direction."

"What the deuce is your game now?" queried Dransfield. "Why aren't you going home?"

"I want another interview with him," replied Paul.

"Another interview with whom? Dammit, man, don't talk in riddles."

"The riddle is solved, old chappie. I'm going for a talk with the clever criminal who robbed the mail van—and murdered Ronald Baxter."

IV

TWO days went by, during which Chief Inspector Dransfield saw no more of his friend. And in those two days, the "Mystery of the 8.45," as the papers called it, grew to worrying proportions.

It was generally accepted that Ronald Baxter was the thief. Everything seemed to point that way, and no other theory had been put forward. The mystery was—what had he done with the stolen mail, no trace of which had been discovered?

The value of the missing packages was too great for the matter to be hushed up. It transpired that bank notes, easily negotiable securities, and diamonds to the value of thousands of pounds had been stolen. And the press, delighting in the mystery, made things very uncomfortable for every one concerned in the case.

If a man was killed two or three minutes after committing a robbery, it should not be a very difficult matter to recover what he had stolen. In the opinion of the press, the case was an excellent example of the well known ineptitude of the police. Public interest was aroused and kept at fever heat. Each paper had a "Special Commissioner" who aired his own views and theories. Unofficial treasure hunts were organized. Reporters made desperate attempts to interview poor Selwyn, who was under medical care, and were only kept at bay by the energetic, incorruptible friend who nursed him.

The case was not in Inspector Dransfield's department, which was chiefly concerned with organization, so that the press criticisms did not affect him personally. Yet he grew very uneasy about it. He had an uncomfortable idea, due to what Paul Grendon had said, that perhaps his colleagues were working on the wrong lines.

He was anxious to see Paul again, and drag some sort of explanation out of him. But he could not get in touch with his friend. When he telephoned, Mrs. Grendon informed him that her husband was out of town, and that was all she knew about it.

He was relieved, therefore, on the third day to hear Paul's voice at the other end of the wire on a trunk call.

"I've been trying to get hold of you, Paul," he complained. "Where the deuce have you been?"

"I'm speaking from Wyechester. A most interesting little town, with many evidences of early Roman occupation. I want you to join me down here."

"I'm very busy. What do you want me for?"

"Just a little fishing, old chappie."

"Fishing! Look here, Paul—"

"Haven't time to argue. These trunk calls cost money, you know. I'll be waiting for you at the White Swan, Wycheater. Incidentally, there'll be a drink waiting, too, if you're here before seven. By, by, old chappie. Don't fail me."

The receiver slammed, and there was silence on the wire.

Inspector Dransfield swore vigorously. Nevertheless, he caught the first train down to Wycheater, and found his friend waiting for him in the lounge at the White Swan.

"What the dickens is all this about, Paul?" he asked irritably, dropping into a chair.

"I'm not quite sure, yet," replied Paul Grendon imperturbably. "But I believe we're going to have some fun." He beckoned to a waiter. "Just time for a drink before we go, I think."

"Go where?" queried Dransfield.

"Fishing, old chappie. Two Martinis, waiter."

It was evident that he did not intend explaining the situation, and the inspector shrugged his shoulders in resignation. But he did not regret that he had come. He knew his friend well enough to realize that there was something important in the wind.

Their drinks finished, they left the hotel and strolled along the main thoroughfare of the quiet country town. It was now quite dark, and when they had left the shopping area behind, they found the dimly lit streets almost deserted.

Walking more quickly now, they soon found themselves in a muddy, ill paved lane.

It was not long before they reached a narrow river, flowing silent and mysterious under the stars, where the lane ended in a footbridge. Paul turned aside and led the way through some cultivated fields which fringed

the water until he reached a single span bridge which carried the railway line over the stream.

"We'll wait here," he said, drawing his bewildered companion into a black corner under the bridge. "This is not much of a river, but I believe there's some curious fish in it. Don't make any noise, please. I hope we shall do our fishing by proxy."

A faint inkling of what was happening came at last to the inspector.

"The stolen postal packets?" he gasped. "They're in the water?"

"If I'm not mistaken," agreed Paul. "Shut up now. I don't suppose our fisherman will be long."

It was very quiet under the bridge. The two friends waited in silence, squatting on their heels against the wall. Occasionally a train roared over their heads, momentarily lighting up the deserted banks of the river.

Long minutes dragged slowly past. From time to time Paul glanced at the illuminated dial of his watch. They dare not smoke, lest the glow or the smell should betray their presence. They grew stiff and cramped through keeping their limbs in the same position.

"I'm sorry," breathed Paul, when an hour had passed. "I expected him here before this."

The vigil continued. Dransfield's excitement began to fade. As time passed without anything happening, he came to the conclusion that Paul Grendon had made a mistake.

Then, suddenly, his body tensed. He had caught sight of a figure approaching over the nearest field. A nudge from his companion warned him that Paul had seen the man too. They sat motionless, watching him approach, scarcely daring to breathe.

Their eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, and by the faint light of the stars, they could follow his progress quite easily. He advanced cautiously, continually glancing about him, until he reached a point on the bank

only a few yards away from where they sat. There he stopped, and quickly undressed.

His nude body gleamed pale against the darker background. After stooping, apparently to hide his clothes under a bush, he slipped soundlessly into the river.

His movements here were not so visible, but the watchers could still catch occasional glimpses of his head, a dark smudge on the water, as he swam about. His movements seemed to be quite aimless. He swam here and there, without any obvious purpose, to all appearances merely enjoying the exercise.

Soon, however, he disappeared beneath the surface. Almost a minute passed before the watchers saw his head again, only to lose sight of it once more.

"He's caught his fish," Paul murmured in his companion's ear. "He's diving for it."

Almost immediately the swimmer appeared again, making for the bank. When he climbed out they could see that he carried a bulky parcel under one arm.

Paul nudged Dransfield and sprang to his feet.

"Good evening, old chappie," he said, stepping quickly forward. "Queer uniform for a postal official you're wearing."

The swimmer stared at the two figures that had suddenly appeared from nowhere.

"Wh—who are you?" he stammered.

"I'm nobody," replied Paul cheerfully. "My friend here is Chief Inspector Dransfield from Scotland Yard."

The other man shivered. There was nothing else he could do. He was naked and defenseless. He could not even run away.

"I was frightened something like this would happen, gentlemen," he said quietly. "But I had to take the risk. It's no use trying to bluff you. I'm

done, and I rather think I'm glad. You'll find all the stolen mail in that parcel. May I put my clothes on?"

"I seem to know your voice," muttered Dransfield. "Who the deuce are you?"

He flashed an electric torch; and almost cried out in surprise as the light fell on the pale face and weak, blinking eyes of Walter Selwyn.

V

"YOU see," said Paul, settling himself in the corner of a reserved compartment in the London express, "I didn't want Selwyn to see me in the mail van, so I stood behind him while he told his tale, and slipped out as soon as he had finished. I had got his address from the postman, and I wanted to arrive there before him."

Walter Selwyn sat in the opposite corner, gazing out into the night. Inspector Dransfield looked at his friend in surprise.

"You suspected him so soon?" he asked.

"I didn't suspect—I knew," replied Paul. "There was no doubt in my mind that he was the culprit. What I didn't know was how he had disposed of his loot."

"That was why I wanted to get to his lodgings before him, and take rooms there myself. Finding me there when he arrived, even though I had only just come, he was not likely to think that I had any connection with what had happened. You never guessed, did you, Selwyn?"

Selwyn glanced round. Then, without speaking, turned back to his window again.

"But what was the idea, Paul?" queried Dransfield, after awhile. "What line were you working on?"

"Well, I had evidence that Selwyn was lying. It was obvious that the whole business had been very carefully planned. He had planted his loot in some safe hiding place, and probably intended to let it remain there until

things had quietened down, then quickly unearth it and disappear. My idea was to bluff him into betraying his hiding place. Then there would be enough evidence to hang him.

"I made friends with him by interfering when the reporters came, and keeping them away from him. He was glad enough to have me sit with him, and warn them off. So there I was, nursing my criminal, trying to think of some way to bluff him.

"He's not the type of man who would take any one into his confidence, so I didn't believe that he had a confederate. Wondering what I myself should do if I had to throw a parcel from a moving train into a place where it would be safely hidden, I could think of nothing that would suit my purpose so well as a river.

"As I sat discussing the mystery with him the next day, I put forward this theory as a possible way in which Baxter might have acted. I could see anxiety spring into his eyes, and knew I was on the right track. So I carried matters a stage further. I told him that, according to the reporters who were continually calling, the police had come to the same conclusion as myself, and had commenced dragging all canals and rivers over which the railway passed after leaving Wyechester.

"This put the wind up him thoroughly—didn't it, Selwyn? If the police carried their activities a little further afield they would find the loot, and all his trouble would be wasted. He decided to recover the stolen packages at the first opportunity and hide them somewhere else.

"To-day the doctor took the bandages from his face and he was allowed to go out. He told me he was going to visit a friend. I shadowed him to the station and heard him take a ticket for Wyechester. I came down by car, and beat him by half an hour. I noticed that the railway crossed the river just outside the town, and felt that my job was nearly finished.

"I knew he wouldn't attempt anything until after dark, so there was plenty of time to send word to you, Dransfield. I had an idea you'd like to be in at the death."

"It was jolly decent of you, Paul," said the inspector. "You seem to have caught us all napping. But I must confess that I don't see it yet. What about Baxter?" He pointed toward the silent prisoner. "Did he—"

"Yes, Selwyn killed him."

"I didn't!" snapped Selwyn, suddenly turning. "You caught me red-handed with the mail, and I can't deny that. But I won't have murder hung onto me. I didn't kill Baxter."

"Selwyn killed him," repeated Paul, ignoring the outburst. "It was part of an exceedingly well thought out scheme, which had been brewing in his mind for months. And the essence of this scheme was that no suspicion should be allowed to fall on himself.

"The best way of insuring this was to throw it on some one else. That's why poor Baxter had to go. He was knocked out some time before the train passed through Wyechester by that piece of iron piping we found in the waterproof bag. Correct me if I go wrong, won't you, Selwyn?"

"It's all wrong," muttered the prisoner sullenly. "I didn't kill Baxter."

"Well, you can tell another story to the jury if you like. I prefer to believe this. After Baxter was knocked out, the packages from the registered mail bag were placed in a waterproof bag along with the bloodstained piping. You've seen the bag. The numerous little floats attached to it were calculated to come nearly to the surface of the water and make it easy for a swimmer to find it without searching all over the river bed.

"The bag was dropped into the river as the train crossed the bridge. Then Selwyn turned his attention to Baxter.

"He laid aside the unconscious man's handkerchief, dragged him to

the end of the car and unlocked the door. If he had simply thrown the body onto the line, suspicion might still rest on himself. He wanted it to appear certain that Baxter had been accidentally killed after robbing the mail. Also to hide the wound made by the iron piping.

"He got the limp body onto his shoulders and, with the greatest difficulty, managed to climb the rungs of the next car. Took some courage to do that, Dransfield, when a slip meant certain death. However, he got up in time. He knew the train was nearing a bridge. Holding the unconscious man under the arms, he hoisted him up with a great effort so that the stone-work of the bridge crushed his skull and threw him forward onto the top of the carriage behind."

"I didn't do any such thing," cried Selwyn. "I'm not a murderer. I wouldn't have the nerve."

"You've plenty of nerve, Selwyn. More than is good for you. It took courage to climb up that carriage. It took courage to fasten that chloroformed pad over your face, carefully avoiding making any finger-prints on the bottle. You must have known you were risking death there."

"A likely story, isn't it?" sneered Selwyn. "I don't know who you expect to believe it."

There was a long silence. Walter Selwyn sat staring out of the window again. Inspector Dransfield smoked thoughtfully, watching his friend.

"You're sure about all this, Paul, I suppose?" he said at last.

"It follows, doesn't it? If Selwyn robbed the mail he must have killed Baxter. And that iron piping tells a pretty definite story."

"But you didn't know about that. Why did you suspect him in the first place?"

"That handkerchief with the name on it. The only reason it was used was to throw suspicion on Baxter. Baxter himself would never have been so foolish as to use his own. Baxter, knowing the line as he did, would never have been careless enough to be caught by that bridge. These two points made me suspect Selwyn from the beginning. And, in addition, I found definite proof that he had killed Baxter."

"You're lying!" cried Selwyn. "You're trying to bluff me again!"

Paul drew a little paper packet from his pocket and handed it to Dransfield.

"Bits of his broken watch glass," he said. "I think you'll find they'll fit together with the pieces you have." He turned suddenly on Selwyn: "Perhaps you'll explain how these came to be lying on the carriage top with Baxter?"

Selwyn stared at the incriminating fragments. His face blanched and he shivered.

"I—I don't know," he stammered. "I can't think—"

"Well, I'll tell you! Your wrist watch was broken up there. When the impact of the bridge snatched Baxter from your grasp. At eight twenty precisely. The official time for the train to pass Seven Beeches. The time at which your watch stopped."

"Damn you!" snarled Selwyn, jumping to his feet. "You've got me! I thought every detail was perfectly planned. And you've got me! But I won't live to—"

He made a sudden dash for the carriage door. But Paul Grendon was there before him.

"Not that way, old chappie," he said quietly, helping Dransfield to handcuff the struggling prisoner. "What was good enough for Baxter is too good for you. You've had your fun. You mustn't try to avoid paying the price."





A woman sat there with dark furs round her face, and I'll never forget her expression

The Body of Sir Henry

When All His Suspicions Have Been Explained Away, MacIver Arrests a Murderer

By Augustus Muir

I HAD been so engrossed in MacIver's talk that my cigarette had burned right down to my fingers and, cursing it heartily, I hurled the wretched thing into the fire.

MacIver laughed.

"That reminds me of a queer thing that happened to me once," he said, lying back in his chair and smiling at me out of his keen gray eyes—the shrewdest eyes I think I have ever looked into. On MacIver's face are clearly written the qualities that have helped him to rise from the ranks of the police force to be one of the really big swells

at Scotland Yard. I count it worth losing five hours' sleep any night to hear the man tell of some of the strange people he has run up against.

"That reminds me," he repeated, "of a mighty queer thing that happened to me in the Border country soon after I joined the force." MacIver pronounces the word "force" as though he were speaking of the most marvelous affair in all Christendom; it is his only vanity.

"The case," he continued, "has to do with the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. I'm mebbe no great judge.

I certainly never saw the woman yet that made me feel like—like, well, what's called falling in love. But if ever a woman made me melt with the sheer witchery of her, it was Lucille Vallandri. Aye, and she was a devil, yon young woman. A beautiful devil. She should have hung; I'm not joking. She missed it by the skin of her teeth. I'll tell you all about her—and the burning cigarette that cost the life of the man whose mistress she was at the time—no; the facts never came out. He cheated the gallows before they even got him the length of trial; he kept poison ready in his wrist-watch."

As far as I was concerned (went on MacIver) it began one night when I was on duty at Battlekirk. I had only been in the district about a couple of months, and I used to wonder how many years it would be before anything happened to break the awful monotony in yon out-of-the-way corner of the Borders. I can mind how the rain was pelting down that night, and the wind from the Cheviots lashed round you like a whip. It seemed that everybody else in Teviotdale was in bed except myself, and just because I had been fool enough, as I thought, to join the force, in preference to trudging behind a plow on my father's small holding in the Merse, I had to be out there on duty—aye, and shivering under a doorway with the rain trickling down my neck, and wishing to God somebody would break into the Clydesdale Bank or commit a murder, just to stir things up a bit.

I nearly gave three cheers when I saw a white smudge of light show up in the distance. It was a motor car coming down from the North. So I wasn't the only body in Scotland out in the storm that night! It cheered me up to watch the light getting nearer, and soon a big car went rushing past the crossroads. Then I heard the brakes go on and the tires grinding and grinding on the rough surface till the car stopped.

It started to reverse. It was a big yellow limousine, I could see from the shelter of my doorway, and a man was leaning out of the driving seat. He turned the car in to the side, so that his headlights shone on the signpost. At this, I stepped out of the doorway and hurried over to him—

"Can I help you?" I asked. I noticed that he wasn't dressed like a chauffeur, but had a cloth cap pulled down over his face.

"Are we near Battlekirk?" he inquired, and I told him he was already in Battlekirk.

"Is it far to Milne Easter?" he said.

"Three miles, sir," I replied. "And Milne Wester is five miles down this other road," I added, for it struck me that Milne Wester, a decent-sized village with a lot of gentlefolk living in it, was the place he really wanted to get to, Milne Easter being only a few poor cottages with no houses of any size near it at all.

But it seemed to be Milne Easter he wanted right enough. He thanked me, and began to turn back to the south road again. As if he'd had an afterthought, he leaned out and said:

"How many miles is Newcastle?"

I told him, but I had a queer feeling, by the way he spoke, that he didn't care a rap how far Newcastle was. And then I saw something that took my breath away, and left me standing on that road as stiff as the white signpost beside me.

In turning the nose of the car, the headlamps had blazed into the shop window five or six yards away. The light was reflected back, just as if it had shone against a mirror. The driver was half-blinded. He swore good-naturedly, and swung the wheel quickly round. But not before I had seen into the back of the car.

A woman sat there, with dark furs round her face, and I'll never forget her expression. It was one of unspeakable horror. Beside her, a man lay huddled stiffly back on the cushions.

Right up to his chin he was covered with a traveling rug. He was elderly and had thick gray hair. His skin was chalk white, and his eyes were wide open and staring straight upward. The light didn't seem to dazzle them. It would have dazzled mine if I hadn't had my back to it. But one quick glimpse at him was enough to tell me the important thing. The man was dead.

In a flash the woman's hand came out from her furs and pulled the traveling rug up over his face, from which it had apparently slipped down. The car swerved away from the shop window, and the reflected light snapped out.

The limousine gathered speed and was gone. I stood there with my head buzzing round as I watched its shape getting less and less against the glow of its lights ahead of it. And then the little red tail-light moved around the bend and disappeared.

II

I TELL you I could have kicked myself right over the crossroads and back again. I hadn't even had the gumption to cast an eye on its number-plate. A fine fool I'd look when I reported this to the sergeant, as I'd have to do—and I was to meet him in a little less than half an hour's time.

But Sergeant Gailes just laughed at me.

"A dead man?" he said. "You young fellows read ower much o' that sensational trash nowadays. Drunk mebbe, but not dead. Na, na, MacIver. I'm thinking ye were ower dazzled by the lights yoursel' to see very clear. Na."

"I'm sure the man's mention of Newcastle was just a pure blind," I declared.

Sergeant Gailes grunted, and shook some of the rain from the top of his flat-peaked cap. "Ye'd better keep your tongue between your teeth about it," he advised. "That kind o' thing

is no' likely to do ye any good wi' the inspector at Tevióthead. Ye'll be reporting that ye've seen a ghost next, laddie. Na, na."

But I wasn't satisfied. As I cycled back toward Battlekirk, I kept chewing the matter over. It was just before I got to the main road that an idea struck me, and instead of going home to bed I turned south toward Milne Easter. I had suddenly remembered that about a mile from the village was a big house called Black Weir—in fact, the only house of any size round about. If that car was really making for Milne Easter, Black Weir was probably the actual destination. Then I remembered something else. The house was shut up. It belonged to an old bachelor, Sir Henry Elliston-Stewart. I didn't know him by sight, but in the couple of months I'd been stationed at Battlekirk I had heard plenty about him. He lectured to antiquarian societies, and was supposed to have a wonderful collection of antique Scottish and French jewels. He was wealthy, of course, and they called him half-daft—seemingly he thought nothing of sending all his servants home on holiday for three months, and going away on his travels, with Black Weir House shut up. Aye, and it was shut now. When I remembered this, the only thing that kept me going on was sheer dourness. The chances were that I was on a wild-goose chase.

I got off my cycle, and went forward to the big iron gates. They were padlocked. So that finished it.

My spirits were away down in my boots—along with a lot of rain-water—and, turning back, I started to mount. But I nearly sprawled across my machine in surprise. Curving in from the main road to the avenue were the fresh marks of motor car tires.

It took me about two minutes to wheel my cycle along the road, hide it in a ditch, and climb over the high stone dyke beyond the lodge. The lodge, I knew, was unoccupied—and had been since the head gardener left

—so there was no good trying to seek information there.

The night was desperately black. Rather than risk losing my way by taking the short cut through the woods, I preferred to trudge the quarter of a mile of twisting avenue. And a long quarter of a mile it was.

Black Weir House, when I got to it, was the most dismal-looking thing you ever saw—a great rambling place with turrets and crow-step gables, and not a chink of light showing anywhere. And then, beside the doorway, I made out the shape of a motor car. I had been right about the tire-marks, but it remained to be seen whether I had been right in jumping to the conclusion that I was on the track of trouble—trouble, I mean, for other folk.

I walked round the car, and went up the steps to the front door. I was about to switch on my lantern when my eye caught a slit of light in a window on my left. The curtains had been pulled close, but not close enough. By craning out over the stone balustrade, I was able to see into the room.

A lamp stood on a table, and beside it was a leather suitcase with the lid lying back. There were also two bunches of keys, one of them on a long chain.

And then I saw a detail that gave me a jar.

I had run into the real thing at last! I had been wishing that something would happen to break the monotony of life. Well, it looked like being broken into half a hundred bits now! For a door stood open in the opposite wall of the room with another small but very thick door of steel behind it. I could see enough to tell me that I was looking into an open safe.

I thought of Sergeant Gales, and how long I would take to get hold of him. Hours, probably. That was no good. If I was going to do anything, I had to do it myself—and at once. I wasn't afraid of rough work—I was a match for most of the brawny lads of the Borders—but I was helpless

against firearms. However, I'd have to risk that.

Then I got a brain-wave. Whatever action I took, they would try to get away in the motor car—it was their quickest means of escape. I went back down the steps and opened up the bonnet. I knew a little about motor cars, and I shone my lantern in till I got the top off the float-chamber, and saw the petrol running out. I watched it till the last drop had gone; then I closed the bonnet, satisfied that I had scored the first point.

As I straightened up, I thought I heard a low thudding noise. It wasn't the bough of a tree in the wind; it was too near at hand for that. Then I noticed another sparkle of light. This time it was in a grating in the wall, close down to the ground. Somebody, I knew, must be busy in the cellar. A queer occupation for anybody after midnight. Flashing my lantern up, I clanged the bell.

The thudding stopped. I looked over the balustrade. The light down at the grating moved, and went out. Then silence. I could still see the light at the window of the room on my left, but only a glimmer, for the narrow slit in the curtain had been closed.

I waited for a matter of three or four minutes, then rang the bell again.

The front door was at once thrown open, as if somebody had been waiting behind it in case I rang again. Half a dozen candles had been lit in the big hall, and standing in the doorway was the man who had been driving the motor car.

"Good Lord," he said, "I wondered who the deuce it could be at this time of night. Come in, constable. It's too damned stormy to be out of doors."

III

I WAS glad he had spoken first, for I was a bit flustered, and not very sure of what line to take. I decided to go very cautiously, and bide my time.

"And what can I do for you, constable?" he said, lighting a brier pipe. I could see he was a man of about fifty-five. He was dark, and thin, but he looked wiry, and he had a frank and extremely pleasant smile. "Nothing wrong, eh?"

"Nothing, I hope sir," I said. "I'm doing what I thought was my duty. I knew Sir Henry had been away for about a month, and hadn't come back, so, seeing the marks of a car at the gates, I thought I'd have a look around."

"Quite right," said the man at once. "Glad the police are so wide awake. Didn't we pass you at the crossroads, eh?"

"That's correct, sir."

"Thought so." He nodded. "Hadn't you better have a drink? It's a foul night, and I've just been down in the cellar opening a case of Sir Henry's brandy."

Which explained the thudding I had heard, but I couldn't think why his hands looked as if they had been scraping among brown earth.

"My name's Norgate," he went on. "Colonel Norgate. We're on our way to Newcastle. We should have been here quite early in the evening, but Sir Henry wanted to collect some goods and chattels—and some odd things from his safe. I told him he shouldn't leave valuables here, with the house empty. It's asking for trouble—don't you think so? He hadn't even warned the police to keep an eye—Hullo!" He broke off and stared at me in amazement. He must have read some of my suspicions in my face, for he burst into loud laughter. "You don't mean to say you've been thinking that—Come in and have a drink, constable—that's worth a drink any day!"

He led me into a large room on the left—the one I had seen through the chink in the curtains. It was lined with books, and had some big carved furniture. The safe was closed, I

noticed, and the door in the wall looked like any ordinary door. The suitcase still lay on the table near the lamp, but it was shut. The bunches of keys had gone. Away at the other end of the room a fire was crackling and spluttering in a grate as if it had only recently had a match put to it.

On the hearthrug, with her back to the fire, was the woman I had seen in the car. Her fur coat was open, her hat was off, and in the lamplight she looked wonderful. She was laughing and chatting with a man who sat in an armchair.

And then I saw that Providence had prevented me from making a grand fool of myself. I couldn't see the man's face, for his back was to me, but I recognized his thick gray hair at a glance. He was the man I had spotted beside her in the motor car. A half finished tumbler of spirits was on a little table at his elbow, and a long spiral of smoke curled up from the cigarette in his fingers.

"My wife and Sir Henry Ellison-Stewart," said Colonel Norgate, nodding in their direction. "It was only the local police constable," he called out to them. "I've brought him in for a drink."

The woman looked up, gave me a smile that set my raw young heart astir, wished me good evening, and went on chatting.

Colonel Norgate had stepped to the sideboard near the door and was pouring me out a drink.

"Sir Henry turned very groggy on the way here," he said in a lowered voice. "I thought we'd have to stop the night at some wayside pub and call in a doctor. However, a good stiff dose of brandy has pulled him together. I don't think it's anything very serious—Yes, my dear?"

The woman crossed the library with an empty glass. "Another drink for Sir Henry, Jim—he says he's feeling all right again." She turned to me. "Oh, constable, by the way,

would you do Sir Henry a favor? It'll save him writing."

"Certainly, ma'am," I said readily.

"You see, Sir Henry is coming abroad with us," she explained. "We'll be yachting, and he won't be back for three months, and perhaps longer. He wonders if you'd mind telling this to the police sergeant, or to whoever should be told, so that the house will be looked after. Will that be all right? Thanks most awfully for all your trouble."

Charm is a queer thing. That young woman stood talking to me by the side-board for less than five minutes, but by the time she had finished I think I would have done anything in the world for her. Because she had merely taken notice of me I felt a good two inches taller. And then I remembered what I had done to their motor car, and I wondered how in heaven's name I was going to blurt out what a fool I had been! I wondered if I should clear out and say nothing, hoping that they'd have some spare petrol on the car. It was a devilish awkward situation, I can tell you. I was on the point of broaching the subject when she turned away with a bright laugh and a friendly nod.

"Give the constable another drink, Jim," she said. "It'll keep out the cold and wet."

While the colonel was refilling my glass, I followed her in admiration with my eyes. She sauntered back to the hearth, carrying herself superbly with that easy swing of hers. And then my eyes fastened on one detail, and for a long second I felt as though I'd had a sudden icy douche. Everything became plain to me—everything. The colonel handed me my glass.

"I wonder, sir," I said, in a steady voice, "if you'd mind signing my

book? It'll keep me right with the sergeant to-morrow."

"Certainly," he declared, taking the pencil and notebook I held out to him. And when his hands were together, I clicked the handcuffs on his wrists.

With one leap I was at the door and had locked it, and slipped the key in my pocket.

"What the hell are you getting at?" The man's face was twisted and white as I pulled a little automatic pistol from his hip pocket.

"The murder of Sir Henry Ellison-Stewart," I said, "and the attempted robbery of his safe—with the keys you took from his body. It was a good idea to bury him in the last place they'd look for him—his own cellar."

The man was crouching like an animal, but he knew I had him beat. Everything I said was going home on him like successive blows.

"You had to pull the wool over me somehow," I said, watching him closely. "You had to convince me he was still alive. When you saw me there at the front door just now, you knew I'd seen too much back at these cross-roads. I've no doubt you stopped the car on that lonely bit of road on Soutra and killed him in cold blood. Aye. Well, I compliment ye both, and especially the lady. You're clever devils, the two of you. But for one thing, aye, one thing only, I'd have left this house without a single suspicion in my mind—which is what ye've been playing for!"

I pointed toward the hearth.

With a cry, the woman had run forward. But the gray-haired man, who sat with his back to us, had not stirred. His white hand rested on the arm of his chair. The lighted cigarette burned right down until it had charred the flesh of the dead fingers.

THE END



The wealthy manufacturer threw him out of the room

Adventures of a House Detective

A True Story

How an International Blackmail Ring Used a Motion Picture Film to Trap an Innocent Man

No. 6—MOVIE BLACKMAIL

As Told to Charles Kingston

I HAVE a contempt for the person who is wise only after the event and, therefore, I will not pretend that had my advice been taken I should have vetoed the proposed inclusion of our hotel in a film to be entitled "New York's Fashionable and Famous Hotels."

The motion picture is all embracing and universal nowadays, and everybody knows the saying that sweet are the uses of advertisement, but I think I

should have made a few inquiries before granting permission. I was away for the week-end when the representative of the film company called, which may not have been merely a coincidence. However, permission was given, the film was taken so unobtrusively that many persons who appeared in it never knew it, and some weeks later a wealthy French boot manufacturer was shot dead in a hotel at Nice by a jealous husband.

That sentence contains an abrupt transition from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from comedy to tragedy, but it does not exaggerate, as there would have been no murder had not our hotel been included in the series which I have named. And now I will link up both by relating in sequence the events which culminated in a ghastly crime.

The movie operator had first urged that Sunday afternoon should be the chosen time for making the film, but at the request of the manager he agreed to Monday night, usually our worst from the point of view of patronage, but on this occasion rendered important by a dinner concert by artists of renown who were certain to attract a large and fashionable crowd. It was arranged that three episodes in the story of the hotel should be told—lunch time, afternoon tea time, and dinner time; there were to be films made of the exterior, depicting our patrons arriving, and a few interior scenes which would have to be touched up at the studio because the management could permit nothing likely to interfere with the comfort of our guests.

An Odd Defect

That was the simple arrangement, and when I returned to the hotel on Monday morning to resume my duties I heard all about it from the manager, who was feeling nervous lest such a method of publicity damage our prestige by making us seem cheap. I did not quite agree with him, reminding him that if all the other leading hotels were in the scheme we could not afford to be left out. That cheered him up, and he was quite keen on it when at half past twelve the operator and his assistant arrived. They were both youngish men of unimportant appearance and void of personality, but they evidently knew their work, and I congratulated them sincerely on their smoothness and efficiency.

When the third episode was "shot,"

they prepared for departure. It shows how little they interested me when I say that I never troubled to inquire their names, and I should have forgotten them completely had I not been keen to see the copy of the film which they had promised to send the manager.

It duly came to hand in less than a week and at first sight I thought it excellent, but a closer scrutiny enabled me to spot at least one defect—in almost every scene the same man and woman appeared. They were a striking couple and could not be mistaken, the tall, clean-shaved man with the large, dark eyes and rather prominent lips standing or sitting beside the petite little lady with the wonderful teeth revealed by an even more wonderful smile.

Under False Names

"They might be actors posing professionally and they make it look unreal," said the manager, with a growl. "The funny thing is I can't recall seeing either of them in the hotel. Can you?"

I could not, but then there was nothing surprising about that. I never profess to keep a mental register of our patrons—it was as much as I could do to keep an eye on those who interest me professionally—but at the same time I was surprised at the manager's failure to recall the most prominent persons in the film, for I am certain that once seen they could not have been forgotten easily. However, there was nothing more to be said on the subject; the film was apparently complete, and in a short time our hotel would be shown on the screen in some hundreds of theaters.

A month or so later the whole affair had degenerated into the commonplace, one of those exciting events which grow stale before they are a day old and we had far more important things to think about long before a headquarters detective brought to the manager a letter from the chief of police at Nice,

France, inquiring if a Frenchman of the name of Decalon and a Mme. Yibert had stayed at our hotel on Monday, June 26.

It was the work of a few minutes to run through our books and ascertain that no one bearing either name had been among our guests on the night in question, and the manager was telling the detective so when the latter drew from his pocket a couple of photographs.

"They may have used false names," he said. "The probability is that they did, but you may be able to recall their appearance. Look at these photographs."

A Murder in France

I uttered an exclamation of surprise the instant I saw them.

"Why, they're the couple who figured so prominently in the film that was taken of the hotel that very day!" I cried, and all three of us stared hard at the photographs for quite a minute.

The detective was the first to break the silence.

"I'd like to hear about that film," he said, settling himself in the armchair facing the manager, "but before you start I'd better tell you that the French police are interested because the day before yesterday Decalon, the original of that photograph, was shot dead at Nice by the husband of the original of the other photograph."

It did not take me long to satisfy his curiosity concerning the film, but when I had finished he had to confess that he knew little more than he had already related about the tragedy at Nice. It was apparently another instance of the eternal triangle, in this case the actors being a young married couple in poor circumstances and a middle-aged bachelor of considerable wealth. Apparently, the latter had been the tempter, and the jealous husband, unable to convince his wife that all that glitters is not gold, had followed his treacherous rival to Nice and had shot him dead in a

corridor of one of the principal hotels there.

"It is the sort of thing that's always happening in Europe," said the detective, preparing to leave us.

"Except in one particular," I remarked, picking up the photographs from the table and gazing at them. "According to your story Decalon and the lady eloped to New York and stayed at this hotel under assumed names, but if they were so desirous of secrecy why did they make themselves so conspicuous during the taking of the film? I don't refer to the exterior scenes in which they appear, for then they might have been filmed without knowing it, but that scene where they are almost sitting in the same chair in the lounge could not have been photographed without their being fully aware of the fact."

"By Jove, you're right, it does seem odd," said the headquarters man. He rose and stretched himself. "It's no business of mine anyhow. The man's dead and it's the job of the Nice police to deal with his murderer, who's in jail. But I'll mention what you say to the chief in the event of further inquiries being considered desirable."

A Vain Couple

The little problem I had propounded kept my interest alive, and the next time I was down town I looked in at headquarters and found the detective who had brought us the photograph. He had half a dozen French papers in his desk and in each one of them the photographs of Decalon and Mme. Yibert were reproduced, and once again I scrutinized faces which were by now almost as familiar to me as my own.

There was no doubt that they had been at our hotel on June 26, whatever the manager or the reception clerk might say to the contrary. But how could they have been there and yet pass unobserved in spite of the man's remarkable appearance and the woman's amazing beauty? I marveled at the

vanity of the couple in boldly posing for the movie operator when they both must have known that there was a wronged husband capable of avenging himself by committing murder.

"The husband is in prison now awaiting trial," said the detective, as I handed the papers back to him; "he'll be acquitted, of course, for they never convict in crimes of passion in France."

He yawned, lit a cigarette, and having chatted on general topics for a few minutes we parted.

An Amazing Meeting

It was a lovely afternoon and I made for City Hall Park where there was quite a crowd enjoying weather perfect for New York. I was strolling along Broadway when I was startled by seeing in front of me the originals of the two persons in the film of the hotel. I had less than ten seconds in which to identify them as they passed me, but in that brief time I discovered all the proof I needed, including a tiny scar to the extreme left of the upper lip of the man, and although they as suddenly disappeared I felt as though I had suddenly discovered that the age of miracles had not yet passed.

It was clearly a case for action, however, and I acted promptly. A taxi was at hand and I was soon at the address in Forty-Second Street from which the copy of the film sent to the manager had been addressed. But all that rewarded me was the information, given grudgingly by a surly housekeeper, that the film company I was inquiring about had rented the single room office for only a month, and then had merely used it as an accommodation address.

By now I had come to the conclusion that the affair was beginning to look serious if not sinister, and I drove back to headquarters, but I was not prepared for the good humored chaff of the detective when I related what I had seen.

"No," he said, in laughing protest, "you must be mistaken. Why, Decalon

is dead and Mme. Yibert is at Nice under the supervision of the police who are determined that she shan't avoid giving evidence at the trial. You can't expect me, therefore, to believe that not only is Mme. Yibert in New York, but that Decalon, the murdered man, is actually alive and walking about New York."

"I don't care what you say," I retorted. "I saw the originals of these two photographs little more than half an hour ago, and it's my opinion that if you'll find the man who took the film of the hotel you'll also find the real story behind the murder at Nice. Isn't it odd that the so-called film company should have had what amounts to a fake office in Forty-Second Street? Isn't it odd still that what I may call the principal and most prominent actors in the film of the hotel should be a man and a woman who to all intents and purposes had the very best of reasons for avoiding the very prominence the film gives them?"

Inside the Plot

He played nervously with the pens on his desk and was silent.

"I'll have inquiries made about the film company," he said at last. "Perhaps, you'll send along the copy of the film and any communications you have had from the company?"

"They'll be in your possession tonight," I said, and I was as good as my word, for a special messenger delivered them at headquarters within an hour, and then the manager, in whom I had confided, and I waited for the developments which we both knew would be sensational.

But we had to wait some weeks, and the reason was that the man and the woman I had seen in Broadway had recognized me and had promptly sailed for Europe. They were actually arrested in Pontorsin, a village in Brittany, a month after my visit to headquarters and the charge against them was blackmail and conspiracy.

For the film of the hotel had been part of a blackmail plot by a gang of four, including one woman. They had rented the room in Forty-Second Street, given themselves a high-sounding name, and had selected our hotel as the scene of the film which was to be used to extort money.

The real Decalon, the man who was murdered at Nice, was a friend of the Yiberts, who were, as I have said, poor in comparison with the wealthy manufacturer. Decalon entertained them frequently and on occasions was seen alone in Mme. Yibert's society, but there never was any question of intrigue until a mutual acquaintance by the name of Lendra concocted the scheme which he intended should compel Decalon to pay hush money.

Owing to his intimacy with both parties Lendra heard regularly of their few engagements, and when one evening Decalon casually mentioned that he was going to New York on business on a certain date and the next morning Lendra ran into Mme. Yibert, who informed him that she was going to spend three weeks with an aunt at Marseilles, he began to make his plans there and then.

He assembled a little company, including an out-of-work actress who in figure and face resembled Mme. Yibert and who could "make up" to look like madame to the life. There was also a big, burly ruffian to impersonate Decalon, and the fourth member was an expert movie operator who may be described as unemployable because of his record and character.

I need not describe in full how the film was taken which apparently depicted Mme. Yibert and M. Decalon entering our hotel and chatting intimately in the lounge and later dining together. It was very well done and when the picture was complete, Lendra called on Decalon to inform him that he had been asked by a certain person to offer him for sale all the rights in a film which Decalon would find it to

his advantage to suppress. The wealthy manufacturer, who had returned to France and was on eve of leaving for a holiday at Nice, had first thought that Lendra was attempting a silly and meaningless joke, and when at last it dawned on him that the blackguard was serious he threw him out of the room and kicked him out of the front door. Had the Yiberts been at home he would have telephoned to tell them of the attempt to blackmail him, for he and Mme. Yibert had nothing whatever to hide, but the latter was still with her aunt and Yibert himself was staying with a bachelor friend in the country. And it was to this unfortunate absence from home of the Yiberts that the tragedy was due entirely, for if Decalon could have had a few minutes on the phone with either of them he would have saved his life.

As it was he went off to Nice, and Lendra, crazy for revenge, sent the copy of the film in his possession to Yibert, accompanying it with specially enlarged photographs of the scenes in which the bogus Decalon and the bogus Mme. Yibert figured prominently.

To Yibert the evidence must have appeared decisive—he believed that whereas the camera cannot lie an aunt can and will to help a niece engaged in an intrigue—and being naturally of a very jealous disposition he had thought of nothing else but revenge. How he took it has been told, and all that remains of the story can soon be related. Lendra was arrested shortly after the impersonators of Decalon and Mme. Yibert were under lock and key, but the fourth member of the gang escaped to South America. The trio were put on trial a week after Yibert had been acquitted as the result of an emotional appeal by one of the most celebrated French lawyers. But there was no emotion when the three blackmailers stood in the dock and in contrast to the acquitted murderer got ten years' imprisonment each. It is a way they have in France!



The Golden Idol

The Maid Heard an Angry Cry: "Go Away!" The Library Door Clicked Shut—and Three Minutes Later Harry Tenby Lay Dead

By J. Jefferson Farjeon

"GO away! D'you hear? Go away!" shouted Harry Tenby.

The library door closed with a little click. Three minutes later he lay dead on the carpet.

There was no sign of struggle. The furniture was not disarranged, the standard lamplight still glowed with amber mellowness; but a little cool breeze flowed in through the open French window, and some four feet from the dead man's head lay a blood-stained handkerchief.

In the distance, across a night-black fringe of foliage, a church clock chimed eleven. Two minutes ahead of the church, a little brass clock on the mantelpiece ticked restlessly. Ticked away the hours of twelve, and one, and

two, informed of its impatience each hour by the leisurely, distant chimes.

Three. Four. Five. The night-black fringe of foliage took on a gray hue. Six. Birds stirred, waking the eaves, and a hoarse cock announced the day. Seven. The library door opened, again with a little click. Some one gasped.

The silent room, with its grim inmate, and its incongruous amber glow from the standard lamp, became suddenly alive. Forms flitted about. Voices whispered above the dead man's form.

Eight. The voices grew louder; they whispered less.

Nine. The room lost all its privacy. It became the center of buzzing officialdom; was pervaded with heavy signifi-

cance. A picture of the Battle of Waterloo, slightly askant on the wall, was stared at with rude suspicion, and a volume of poems by Humbert Wolfe, innocently leaning against Wells's "History of the World" in a book-case, became ridiculously significant.

Ten. Eleven. A dozen hours ago the form on the ground had been alive. An inspector stared at it meditatively, then suddenly turned. A newcomer had entered the room.

"Ah, Crook!" the inspector exclaimed. "Glad to see you! We've got a ticklish job on here."

"So I gather," answered Crook, his eyes on the silent figure. "What's known so far? Leave out theories for the moment."

The inspector nodded.

"All that's known so far," he replied, "is—that!" He pointed downward. "The parlor maid found him this morning at seven o'clock. He was lying just as he is now. Lamp up—as you see. Nothing's been altered."

Crook's eyes swept the room.

"No sign of a struggle," he commented.

"No," replied the inspector. "It must have been done—quick."

"That handkerchief?"

"It was lying just there. I did look at that, but it's replaced."

"Finger-prints?"

"Nothing to report in that line yet."

"Who saw him last?"

A slight frown came into the inspector's eyes.

"Ah—I was wrong when I said nothing else was known at the moment. It seems that Mr. Tenby's butler saw him last. And Mr. Tenby's butler has disappeared."

"That's interesting. And when was the butler seen last?"

"Shortly before eleven. A maid, passing on her way to bed, saw him go into the library—this room we're now in—and a few minutes later, when she was passing again—"

"Why did she pass a second time

if the first time she was on her way to bed?" interposed Crook.

"She says she forgot something. A book. She reads before going to sleep. I've checked that."

"Well? Go on."

"The second time she heard voices raised. Mr. Tenby seemed angry. She heard him shouting: 'Go away, do you hear? Go away!'"

Crook considered the words.

"Is that all she heard?" he asked.

"All I can get out of her," answered the inspector. "She's a bit hysterical."

"So—coming now to theories—the superficial, schoolboy theory would be: Tenby quarrels with his butler over some matter unknown; the butler kills him and runs away. By the way, has the butler's bed been slept in?"

The inspector shook his head.

"You're searching for him?"

"Obviously."

"What's the doctor's report? How long has Mr. Tenby been dead?"

"He was alive at eleven o'clock last night—that we know. The medical evidence suggests that life was extinct before twelve. Wound inflicted by some sharp instrument. And no sign of the sharp instrument."

"Anything stolen—as far as you know?"

"Nothing."

"Papers reveal anything? Letters?"

"Not so far."

"Heard anything that might account for the tragedy—apart from the assumed quarrel with the butler?"

"Blank again. Nothing."

"Then why do you call this case a ticklish one?" inquired the detective. "You've got some nice superficial evidence on which to search for a butler, haven't you?"

"Well, of course, we're searching for that butler," retorted the inspector. "What do *you* think? But—come here—to the window."

They walked to the window, and the inspector pointed to some impressions in the earth outside.

"Big foot, that," he said. "The butler takes size seven. There's not a boot in the establishment that will fit those impressions. And they're newly made, too."

"Good," grunted Crook, his eyes lighting. "That's important. I rather thought you had something up your sleeve, inspector."

"I wish I had the boot that fits those impressions up my sleeve," returned the inspector, smiling sourly. "We've got a double trail here, and I'm blessed if I know what to make of 'em."

II

CROOK bent down and examined the footprints carefully. Then he searched the adjacent grass, while the inspector stood by watching.

"I can't find any more," said the inspector. "The ground's pretty hard, and we've only got *these* because some of Mr. Tenby's special flowers happen to be growing there. The servants had orders to water these every evening, and that's what made the earth soft."

"I suppose," observed Crook, as he straightened himself, "you don't happen to have that boot that isn't up your sleeve on your foot?"

The inspector grinned.

"Oh, my boots fit there, right enough," he confessed. "I've a useful toe, as you see." He advanced his big boot, unashamedly. "Only, if you want to pursue that line, sir, I'll have no difficulty in producing my alibi."

"Well—just for the sake of argument—let's have it!"

"Right. Between ten and one o'clock last night, I was trying—unsuccessfully—to trace one Jim Smith who's been terrorizing Downthorpe, three miles from here."

"Burglar?"

"That's right. We'll get him presently."

"But you didn't get him last night—in Downthorpe."

"Didn't see his shadow."

"Do you think you might have found him if you'd searched—here?"

The inspector whistled. He stared at Crook, then at the earth.

"By Jove, that's an idea!" he exclaimed.

"But does it account for the vanished butler?"

"It might! Let's see if we can fit the pieces. Smith comes here, and—"

He paused abruptly. A constable was approaching, rather breathlessly, across the lawn.

"We've found Davis, sir," he reported, with big eyes.

"No, have you?" cried the inspector, and turned quickly to Crook. "That's the butler—Davis." He swung back to the constable. "Well, get on with it. Where is he?"

"In the pond," answered the constable.

The inspector gave an exclamation, and looked at his companion.

"Pond, eh?" he muttered. "That makes *another* piece to fit in, eh? Well—come along!"

"How far is the pond from here?" asked Crook.

"Don't know. There's more than one. Which pond is it?" he inquired of the constable.

"'Arf a mile off," replied the policeman. "Through them woods. They're bringin' 'im out now."

The inspector made a movement, but Crook interposed.

"Better leave some one to watch the library," he suggested.

The constable heard the remark, and inwardly groaned. He wasn't too keen on the library. He'd really rather have been a cinema actor than a constable. It was much more interesting watching a corpse fished out of a pond. Still, duty was duty, and for half an hour he waited in the library while his superiors enjoyed better sport.

Davis, the butler, was as dead as his master. The doctor, who declared subsequently that he had never had such a busy morning, pronounced the opinion

that the butler had been dead almost as long as Mr. Tenby.

"Drowned, obviously," he said, "but whether by his own hand or another's—well, I leave that for you to determine, gentlemen."

"Looks to me like suicide," confided the inspector, to Crook. "Kills his master, and then saves the hangman a job."

"Why should he kill his master?" asked Crook, as they walked back to the house. "We want a motive."

"We know they quarreled."

"Do we? I don't think so. A sharp order isn't necessarily a quarrel. Suppose—" He paused, and revolved an idea that had come into his mind.

"What?" queried the inspector.

"I must interview that housemaid—that's what," responded Crook. "Send for her, will you?"

They reached the house, and while waiting for the maid Crook made a further examination of the library. The constable watched him, and suddenly jumped.

"What have you moved the handkerchief for?" demanded Crook, and his voice sounded like a pistol shot.

"I just took it up, sir—" began the constable.

"Then just put it down again," snapped Crook. "Surely you know better than to move things before you're given permission?"

The constable colored, grew more convinced than ever that he ought to have taken up film acting, lifted the gruesome handkerchief from the table on which he had placed it, and dropped it on the floor.

"Was it as near the body as that?" inquired Crook, frowning.

"A bit farther off, sir, I think," said the constable. "More *there*, like."

"Yes—that's better. I remember it was there, by the pattern on the carpet." Crook's voice had lost its anger. You cannot concentrate while you are indignant, and Crook was concentrating now on the handkerchief. "Now,

how did it get in that exact position?" he murmured. "It's beyond the dead man's reach. Though—of course—he may have dropped it."

"Floated down, like," suggested the constable poetically, trying to reinstate himself.

"Perhaps. And yet, do you notice, constable, that if the handkerchief had floated down, like—from the position of the body, it would probably have floated down on the other side. The attack assumedly came from the window. Everything points to that. The handkerchief is one of Mr. Tenby's. You cannot fight with a handkerchief. It either lay by his side when the attack came—but, then, why should he take it up?—or was in his hand at the moment, and so became involved? Perhaps he was about to blow his nose. Then—a few seconds later—it was used to try and stanch a wound. Yes—but Mr. Tenby's wound much have been beyond stanching."

He paused, then turned sharply. The housemaid was standing before him.

III

HE scrutinized her keenly for a second or two, placed her in a category, then asked:

"You are the maid who heard Davis's voice in this room last night?"

"No, I didn't hear Davis's voice, sir," answered the maid tremulously. "I never said I heard his voice."

Crook nodded approvingly. The maid was calm now, despite her nervousness, and the fact that he had not tripped her up in this little detail impressed him with her usefulness as a witness.

"How are you sure, then, that Davis was in this room?"

"I'd seen him go in."

"He might have come out again, without you knowing it?"

"Yes, sir. He might. But I wasn't gone long before I came by again myself. I think he was still there."

"Please repeat what you heard."

"It was Mr. Tenby's voice. 'Go away,' he said. 'Do you hear? Go away!'" She paused. "He spoke sharp—that's why I heard."

"Did he seem in a rage?"

"No. I wouldn't say that."

"Very angry, then?"

"A bit angry, yes, sir. Irritated, as you might say."

"They weren't actually quarreling, then?"

"No, sir."

"Now, listen. This is important. Is there no other word—even one single word—that you can remember having heard?"

The maid flushed a little.

"Yes, sir," she said. "I was that upset that I couldn't think of it when the inspector asked me. But I've been thinking it all over, and I do remember the words, 'look after myself.' He said them just before the others. 'Look after myself.'"

Crook's eyes brightened. He leaned forward, and exclaimed, "This is important! Were the words in the form of a statement or a question?"

The maid did not seem to understand. "Listen," he said, and repeated the three words, "'Look after myself.' That's a statement. 'Look after myself?' That's a question. Which was it more like?"

"It was a question," answered the maid.

"Thank you," replied Crook. "That's all, for the moment. You can go."

He also dismissed the constable, and ten minutes later the inspector came upon him in a brown study.

"Getting anywhere?" asked the inspector. "If you're not—I am!"

"Where are you getting?" inquired Crook.

"I've got Jim Smith," said the inspector. "Just been on the phone. They took him half an hour ago, and it's pretty clear you were right, and he was around here last night. They've

looked at his boots. Size eleven. Same as those prints outside the French window—and same as mine."

"Then Davis may have been warning his master," mused Crook, and the inspector looked at him sharply.

"What's that?" he exclaimed.

"I've just got a little more out of that housemaid than you did," the detective explained. "She heard three more words than she told you. Mr. Tenby said—assumedly to Davis, before dismissing him, 'Look after myself.' Was he a headstrong man, do you know? Plenty of pride?"

"That's it! You're right!" cried the inspector. "Davis heard noises, or rumors, and interviews Mr. Tenby before going to bed. 'Jim Smith's about,' he says to Mr. Tenby. 'Thought I'd better tell you, sir.' Tenby is busy. A bit nervy. We all are, at times. 'Think I don't know how to look after myself?' he cries. Davis is about to press his point, when Tenby rounds on him, 'Go away! D'you hear? Go away!'" The inspector chuckled delightedly. "How's that, for our lost pieces, eh?"

"There's a bit more of the picture to fill in," replied Crook. "What happened then? Davis, not satisfied, went into the grounds. Smith creeps up to the window. Enters. Kills Mr. Tenby. Davis comes upon him. There's a chase—and Davis ends his life in the pond. Pushed in by Smith, eh?"

"That would be about it," nodded the inspector.

"Well, if that's it," said Crook, "you'll have to find bloodstains on Smith somewhere or other, I should imagine, and you'll have to prove him the sort of man who would commit two murders in a single night. And you'll have to search for the doctor's 'sharp instrument.' A sandbag seems to me more in Smith's line."

"Yes, but—confound it—" began the inspector. "Well, then, what do you think?"

"I think you've nearly got the story, but not quite," replied Crook.

"What is the story?" demanded the inspector.

"I don't know yet," admitted Crook, "but I've a notion that handkerchief on the ground there may tell me. Do you mind if I take it away?"

"Not at all. But what are you going to do with it?"

Crook smiled.

IV

DETECTIVE CROOK had been summoned from Hampstead that morning. Now he returned, with the bloodstained handkerchief carefully preserved in his pocket, and locked himself in a large and not too appetizing room.

The room bristled with bottles, containing queer fluids; with microscopes and magnifying glasses; with instruments, reflectors, tubes, and powders.

The handkerchief was brought out. The instruments, the magnifying glasses, and the fluids got to work. When, in due course, it had told all it could tell to the ruthlessly inquiring mind that ransacked its secrets, Crook traveled back to its former home.

He went straight to the library, and found the inspector there.

"You haven't hanged Jim Smith yet, have you?" he asked, almost facetiously.

"No, not yet," responded the inspector. "Who shall I hang in his place?"

"Some one with a darker skin, for choice," suggested Crook.

"That'd be hard," answered the inspector. "Smith used to be a miner, and the coal's still in him." But, though he spoke lightly, he was looking at Crook rather hard.

"Coal washes off," said Crook. "Try some one whose dark skin *won't* wash off. Say—an Indian."

"Look here! What are you driving at?" demanded the inspector.

"I'm driving at an Indian. Some of

his blood was on that handkerchief. We've got to fit *that* into our picture, haven't we?"

"How do you know it's an Indian's blood?"

"I know because I've tested it, and analyzed it. Did you think all blood was the same, inspector? It differs in every country. Yours and mine might be hard to tell apart, but if yours or mine were on one end of a handkerchief and the Spanish ambassador's on the other end, it would be easy to say which belonged to which."

"How'd you do that?"

"By examining its composition. There are two qualities in blood that vary in proportion according to nationality, or locality. Call one A, and the other B. Mr. Tenby's blood contained forty-three per cent of A and seven of B. I found some of his blood on the handkerchief. But somebody else's blood was also on the handkerchief, with only eighteen per cent of A, and as much as forty-one per cent of B. That points to India—indisputably."

"Does anything else point to India, though?" demanded the inspector.

"We'll have to put that question, I think, to Jim Smith," answered the detective. "But, first—can't you help me at all?"

Almost as the question was asked, the inspector gave an exclamation.

"Wait a bit—I've thought of something!" he cried. "An Indian. Why—it was from an Indian's house that Smith made his last haul in Downthorpe! Does that fit into it anywhere?"

"It will be an amazing coincidence if it *doesn't* fit into it somewhere," responded Crook; and there was silence for a few moments. Then he asked: "What did Smith take from the Indian's house? Did you get any definite report about that?"

"Oh, yes. We've got a list. Money, trinkets, odds and ends, ornaments, a little gold idol—"

"You needn't travel beyond the idol," interrupted Crook, his eyes narrowing. "We've got to it, now—or to the general idea of it. It's just a question of fitting in small details. Suppose Smith stole, unwittingly, an idol that was particularly valued by this Indian? Suppose the Indian, burning with a hatred that only an Oriental mind could understand, tracked Smith, and followed him, and effected a meeting at last—in this very room? Suppose—"

"Wait a minute," interposed the inspector. "It's Tenby's been murdered, not Smith!"

"I know that. The best-laid schemes of mice and Indians go astray! Listen! The butler warns Tenby about Smith. He's got hold of some rumor. When Tenby hears Smith outside, he slips into some dark corner for a moment. In comes Smith. Almost before he knows it, in slips our Indian after him, knife raised. Seeing this, Tenby rushes out. In the scramble, Smith escapes, and Tenby gets the knife—but not before he has managed to do some damage to the Indian, too. There was the Indian's blood on the handkerchief, you remember."

"What about the butler?" asked the inspector.

"I'm coming to him. Smith gets away. He may not even have seen the Indian—it's conceivable. As soon as he saw Tenby he turned and fled. The butler, going into the grounds to satisfy himself, gets there too late to see Smith, but he sees the Indian flying out. There's a chase. It ends at the pond. And the poor butler gets the worst of it."

"By God!" muttered the inspector. "If that's so—Mr. Hoodi Singh will have something to answer for!"

"Let's go to Downthorpe, and hear his answer," suggested Crook.

They went to Downthorpe. Mr. Singh received them courteously. With Oriental caution, he listened to their story, gravely, inscrutably, his eyes ap-

pearing unnaturally bright in their environment of dark skin. He volunteered nothing until every detail had been given to him. Then he smiled.

"And so I have killed Mr. Tenby and his butler?" he observed.

"We have made no accusation," said Crook.

"Oh, no. And you will not, I think. If my blood was on the handkerchief there will be some wound from which the blood has flowed." He held up his hands calmly. "Examine me. My skin is whole. There is no mark upon it." He smiled again. "And last night, as three very dull people will testify, I tried to learn your English game of bridge. While Mr. Tenby was dying—I was not much happier."

"The coincidence is odd, you will admit?" suggested Crook.

"Who speaks of a coincidence?" replied Mr. Singh. "There is no such thing. Fate decides. If that gold idol had belonged to me, the man who had taken it might have died at my hands. Yes, *him*," he added contemptuously, "and not another, through foolish blundering."

"Do you know whom the idol did belong to?" inquired Crook suddenly.

"Oh, yes," returned Mr. Singh. "It belonged to my servant. The man who let you in. Did you not notice his bound wrist?"

"Oh—so that's it, is it?" cried the inspector, jumping up. "Then we'll have to see your servant!"

"I will ring for him," answered Mr. Hoodi Singh. He pressed a bell. "But I fear he may not come. You will not blame me, I hope, if he has had some start?"

Hoodi Singh's servant did not come. Science had thrown its searchlight upon him for an instant, but it could not catch him. He disappeared into the void. And so, when Jim Smith's haul was eventually unearthed, did a little gold idol.

A Murder Classic

A True Story

*Ruprecht the Usurer
Meets His Last Debtor
When a Mysterious
Visitor Calls for Him
at "Hell"*

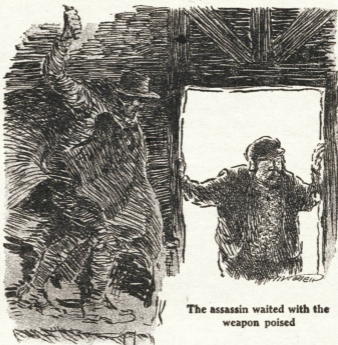
By Louise Rice

WHEREVER specialists in crime discuss murders they are sure to mention the Ruprecht case. This was one of the first unsolved murder mysteries to become celebrated, and the reason was that it was one of the first to be carefully investigated at the time of the occurrence.

The victim of the crime was Christopher Ruprecht. His trade was that of a goldsmith, but his real business was lending money at usurious rates, not illegal at the time, but none the less iniquitous.

His death came at the end of a singularly harsh life, and caused few tears, yet he lingers on, a tantalizing figure, in the annals of crime.

Ruprecht was an uneducated man. In 1817 that was more of a rarity than it had been for many hundreds of years. Education was seeping down and up, catching the lower and the higher levels of society. It was remarked that Ruprecht kept all his numerous accounts "in his head," being unable to read or write a word and quite unable to figure.



The assassin waited with the weapon poised

When he had any paper connected with his business affairs, he called in some one who could be trusted, and had it read to him.

Notwithstanding, he was a man who held quite a place in the small town in Germany where he had lived all of his life. While he kept a slovenly house, with only one manservant to attend it and him, his daughter was married to quite a fine gentleman, who had carriages, servants, and a pretentious house; one, in fact, which was maintained in a style somewhat beyond his means. He was something of a fop, was Beiringer, very much the gentleman. And inclined to shift the blame of his extravagance on his wife—at least, when he was talking to his father-in-law, from whom he was always seeking some pecuniary assistance, which he seldom got.

Ruprecht was really not meanly born, but as a boy he had repeatedly run away from school, and had early in life shown such a shrewd ability to add *thaler* to *thaler* that his family had soon abandoned the effort to force him through school.

He had learned his trade as a goldsmith easily enough, after a short apprenticeship, and, as soon as he had begun to make money, had started out to be a loan broker. The woman whom he married brought him a house, and soon died. People said that her husband had starved her to death.

An Evil Place

His daughter, however, grew up more or less attached to him, and this attachment became greater as she grew older. She married against the advice of her father, but this did not break the tie between them. At any moment when something worried or fretted him he was apt to send his servant posthaste for his daughter. This was a fact which was to bear weight later.

She was a woman with something of her father's harshness in her and with a tongue of her own, as is shown by the fact that she once passed forty-eight hours in the town lockup, put there by the complaints of neighbors who insisted that she managed her household and her husband in such a loud voice she disturbed their peace.

It is worth noting that her husband allowed her to stay "in durance vile" until her father went and took her out, which does not argue much of husbandly love; and it is worth noting, too, that she was, like her father, a shrewd one in business, and that Beiringer was a poor one. She had more money from her investments of money given her by her father than her husband had through his business.

In modern times men have become used to women being financially independent, but in Germany at that time Beiringer often showed that he thought it a disgrace that he did not

have all of his wife's money to handle for himself. Her father, in making her marriage contract, had seen to that.

Ruprecht, for all that he had his own house, and for all that he was a man of substance, chose very ordinary society. He frequented alehouses of the lowest sort, instead of the comfortable and cleanly places where the better classes went, and was well known for his rages at "the gentry." His son-in-law was one of the gentry, and ever since his acquisition of that relation by marriage Ruprecht had flouted his association with the commonest of the town.

On February 7, 1817, Ruprecht, after a day spent in conducting business at his house, which was also his place of business, and after the meager meal which his servant gave him, went to an alehouse where he was very well known.

It was up a dark, narrow lane, bordered by mean houses and bits of a very thick hedge, and was at the very end, where it blocked the lane. Either because of its gloomy situation or because of the reputation which it bore, the place was known as "Hell."

The Last Round

About eight o'clock Ruprecht was in the upstairs lounging room of this alehouse, and a number of men, who knew him very well, made room for him before the fire. His grumbling, peevish and irritated talking was well understood there, and the man was liked.

He had been going to that place for several years, but it was not the only place which he ever visited, and no one knew that he was going to Hell that night.

Time passed, and more beer had been taken upstairs by one of the maids. At a quarter past ten the landlord came into the room, as was his custom. At eleven the place would close, and it was to be sure that beer and other refreshments were at hand

for the last three-quarters of an hour that he always visited the lounging room at exactly that time. The maids had gone to bed.

There can be no question of the time. The landlord had been doing that very thing for years.

The men in the room gave him orders, and he went downstairs with a large pitcher in his hand. It took him only five minutes, at the most, to fill the pitcher and to take some cheese from the pantry. He was going right up the stairs again, and had put his foot on the first step, when a man's voice came from the front door, which was partially opened:

The Ax Man

"Is Ruprecht upstairs?"

The landlord had a dim light in the hall, and the man stood in the shadow of the door. However, he did not try to see who it was. He was used, as every alehouse owner was, to having all sorts of people dog the footsteps of Ruprecht, trying to get loans of money from him. So he said yes, Ruprecht was upstairs; and the caller said quietly:

"Ask him to step downstairs a minute, will you?"

The landlord said he would.

Ruprecht took the message without surprise. People were always hanging about places where he was to be found. He set down his mug and went out. The landlord had filled only a couple of mugs, when there was a sound below stairs which made that stolid man stop pouring and stare.

"In God's name," he exclaimed, "what was that?"

As he spoke there was the sound of a heavy fall, and all who were in the room ran out.

It was only a second that it took the foremost to reach the front door, where a figure lay, partly in and partly out of it.

It was Ruprecht, bleeding profusely from a cut in his head, still breathing.

The leather cap which he had been wearing lay inside the doorway—proving that he had fallen inward—and it was cut almost in two.

They lifted him up and tried to get the blood out of his eyes, while they asked him who had dealt him such a blow; but he could only moan. Several ran out, rushed up and down the lane, but saw "no living creature."

After a moment Ruprecht spoke:

"The villain—the villain with the ax."

They told this to the men who had searched the lane, and those men at once went out to search the houses, where people were now hanging out of the windows asking what had happened.

The landlord's wife had hastily warmed a bed, and, half carrying and half dragging, they got the old man up the stairs.

On the way up he said only one coherent thing:

"My daughter—my daughter—"

Every one knew his custom of calling for his daughter whenever anything happened to ruffle the old man, and so they thought this quite natural, and at once sent a runner to the other part of town to tell her. They also sent for a physician.

The Doctors Disagree

The wound on Ruprecht's head was four inches long and was a clean, sharp cut along the whole length of the skull, seeming to be deeper at the back than at the front.

The physicians gave it as their opinions that the blow had been struck from behind and *above*. This was likely in that there was a stone seat against the house, and beside the front door, where a person might stand in the shadow and not be noticed by a person who looked out unsuspecting.

That, it was surmised, was exactly what Ruprecht had done. The assassin, standing pressed against the house, with the weapon poised, could at once

strike down with terrific force that would fairly split the head in two. The reason that it had not split Ruprecht's was that the tough leather cap had taken a little of the force. Otherwise, the man must have dropped dead.

The medical men were most positively of the opinion that the weapon used was not an ax, despite the words of the wounded man. They pointed out that no ax would give a wound of a little over four inches like the one that the man had received, and that the ax, always curving slightly upward at both ends, would give a wound which would be deeper in the middle than at the ends, and that only a weapon with a long blade could have cut as that one had. It was a sword, they thought, and that in the hands of an experienced person.

All for Business

The most diligent search by the town authorities, made within half an hour of the time of the crime, brought forward no record of a man having been seen wearing or carrying a sword—and it must be remembered that this is a weapon hard to conceal, even under a cloak. And no man wearing a cloak had been observed, nor any stranger. In small German towns, at that period, it would have been almost impossible for a stranger to escape observation.

The daughter came hastily, but her father did not know her. She was evidently in a stew over his keys and hunted through his clothes until she found them. Ruprecht's lawyer and man of business had arrived at about the same time and the two of them put their heads together, making arrangements for the carrying on of many bits of business which they knew to be in hand.

The servant was then sent for, in order to give them such details as he knew, and, after assuring the doctors that the injured man must be removed to his own house as soon as possible and that they would have it in readi-

ness for him, the daughter and the lawyer departed. The alehouse companions of Ruprecht, who had, with him, sneered at "gentry," had a good deal to say about this, stating that it was a most unloving action on the part of the daughter—this interest in keeping up the business of her father, instead of grieving more over his hurt.

It was not to be denied that the daughter had a good deal of her father in her, and that she saw to it that a command of his business was at once placed in the hands of the lawyer, so no whit of interest should be lost or financial engagements voided. On the other hand, it was not to be denied, either, that she did exactly what would have pleased her father.

The early hours of the morning saw the wounded man partially conscious and, with the physicians standing by, three members of the town constabulary were admitted to him. The following dialogue took place, Ruprecht being able to answer only in monosyllables and with the greatest difficulty:

A Common Name

"Who struck you?"

"Schmidt."

"What is this Schmidt? Where does he reside?"

"In the *Most*."

"With what did he strike you?"

"Hatchet."

"How did you know him?"

"His voice."

"Was he indebted to you?"

"No."

"What was his motive?"

"Quarrel."

Ruprecht, at that point, gasped and turned a peculiar color and the physicians permitted only one more question.

"What is this Schmidt?"

"Woodcutter."

The interrogation stopped there, but was renewed at noon, when practically the same replies were received, save that they were more vague and that

Ruprecht remained silent when, "What was the motive?" was put to him.

The question was, what Schmidt was it that Ruprecht had thus identified?

The name of Schmidt is as common in Germany as its English version of Smith is among us. The police considered carefully. There were three men by the name in the town.

Two of them, who were brothers, lived in the street called the "Most" and also called the Walsh. It was ascertained that one of these brothers had been in prison in his youth, charged with being a member of a gang of thieves. The other brother, who went by the name of Big Schmidt, was an old acquaintance of Ruprecht's, but had had a quarrel with him over some damages which he claimed, which had occasioned a suit at law. The other Schmidt, who was called Little Schmidt, knew Ruprecht, but although he had had no quarrel with him, was not very friendly to him, either.

Suspicion's Finger

Ruprecht, in a lucid moment, was asked which one of these men he meant to accuse, but although he tried to speak, he could not do so. So all three were brought into the room where the now dying man lay, in the hope that he might make it clear which one of them had killed him, but he was so far gone that when he tried to lift his eyes he lost consciousness. That test failed.

The two brothers spoke to the wounded man by name and said that they were sorry to see him so ill. The other Schmidt seemed restless and ill at ease. First he said that he knew the man in the bed and then he said that he did not and then he said that he thought it was "the man Ruprecht."

His manner was so peculiar that the authorities, who were trying to use psychology, although they did not know it, decided to interrogate him carefully and in such a way as to ease his apprehensions.

His replies confounded them.

First, he said that on the night of the attack he remained with his mother-in-law at her house until eleven, and then he said that he went home and went to bed at nine. He protested his entire innocence of the whole matter. But he was so agitated that the examining judge decided to hold him for further interrogation.

The following day, Ruprecht died, without regaining consciousness.

The man, Christopher Schmidt, was more and more under suspicion. There were spots on the handle of his ax. And, on interrogation, he produced a mass of inconsistent and contradictory statements which made the examining judge hold his head and ask the prisoner to try, please, to make them a little more comprehensible. But this did little good. Schmidt stated that he had gone home at eleven, at nine, at ten; that his wife had gone home with him; that she had stayed with the mother-in-law, that she had gone home before him. Every time that he made a statement about the night of the murder he told a totally different story.

However, his friends and neighbors insisted that this was the way he always talked and that it was never possible to believe a single word he said; not because he intended to tell lies, but because it was never possible for him to remember the events of one hour from another.

A Time Limit

His mother-in-law stated that the couple were accustomed to pass their evenings with her, so as to save light and fuel and that on the night in question, Schmidt and his wife and his child had all gone home together, but that the wife, after putting the two to bed, had returned to her mother's house for an hour. This was confirmed by the landlady of the house where Schmidt had his poor lodgings.

The blow had been given between twenty minutes after ten and half past

past ten. There was not the least doubt about this narrow limit of time.

It was finally established by the people in Schmidt's house and by neighbors who saw him, his wife and his child going home together, that Schmidt entered his house with them at half past nine. The landlady heard him get into bed, and heard his wife leave the house; heard his wife return shortly before eleven, for the town clock struck just afterward.

New Evidence

The "Hell" alehouse was at the other end of town, say, about a dozen modern city blocks away. When Schmidt really understood that he was suspected of having killed Ruprecht, he got his wits together and earnestly represented to the examining magistrate that it would have been impossible for him to rise, dress again, go to the other end of town, get back, undress and get into bed by the time that his wife returned. That he really was in bed when she returned was established by the fact that his landlady passed through the hall as the door was open into the Schmidt rooms and saw him there.

The hatchet with which Schmidt did his daily labor in the back yards of the town was examined. There were some odd stains on it which Schmidt said were caused by his having had an infected thumb, which he had not tied up, and which had been oozing pus for several days. There were no chemists at that time who could establish whether this were the truth or not, but the physicians tried very hard to settle the question and came to the conclusion that Schmidt was telling the truth. As for his thumb being infected, there was no doubt of that.

The two other Schmidts had a couple of the unbreakable alibis that the investigators were to encounter all along the line. They had had a disagreement with Ruprecht, or, rather, they had been witnesses in a suit which had been

brought against him, but they had helped rather than harmed his cause. Another Schmidt was found, on the outskirts of the town, and here we meet with the shadow of a clew. This man had done woodcutting for Beiringer, and he had been seen at the Beiringer house several days before. He stated that it was for the purpose of asking for work, and Beiringer, although he did not know that the man had been interrogated, confirmed this. This Schmidt also had an alibi, given by a number of people.

The authorities now turned their attention to Beiringer and his wife. And through the statements of Ruprecht's manservant and the statements of the landlord of the alehouse, they found something which looked very peculiar indeed; something which the dead man's lawyer was obliged to confirm. This was that Ruprecht had set the following day for the making of a new will in which, while he left his entire fortune to his daughter, he tied it up so that her husband could never get control of one *thaler*.

The Authorities Wonder

Unless this will were made, the daughter would lose control of all that her father would leave her, it passing, according to the marriage laws of that time, into the exclusive possession of her husband. There was an agreeable delusion those days that no gentleman would use such money save for the comfort and happiness of his wife!

With the new will made, in which the daughter would be secure in her individual rights to the quite considerable fortune of her father, Beiringer would be left entirely out in the cold.

The daughter declared that she had not told her husband of her father's intention, although he had talked the matter over with her. Beiringer, informed of the suspicions, showed astonishment and indignation. The servant stated that he had told no one of what he knew. The lawyer, a close,

careful and cautious man, just the sort that Ruprecht would have chosen to be his man of business, indignantly denied that he had ever said a word of any affair which concerned a client of his.

The authorities thought that the daughter had shown a lack of affection in taking her father's keys, and that she had been somewhat cold in looking after his comfort after he was removed to his own house. They thought that she and her husband seemed to have been very much reconciled from their slightly aloof attitude of a few months before, and they thought that Beiringer seemed rather defiant.

A Sound Alibi

It looked like a good case—until the man sent running from the alehouse to the Beiringer home reported Beiringer as having just come in from a neighboring alehouse at that time, which was about eleven. Investigations proved that Beiringer had been in the parlor of such a place, a most respectable house of entertainment called "The Golden Fish," from half past nine to within a few minutes of eleven, when he had started out for his near-by home. So there was another unbreakable alibi.

The servant of Ruprecht was implored to think: had anybody called, during the day preceding his master's death, with whom there had been an argument? The servant did as requested and came up from the depths of his mind with the statement that three men, whom he knew to be oboe players in the military band of the town, had had some kind of an argument with his master.

It was easy to verify this, and the three men were taken in for questioning.

Their story was that Proschl, with two friends, Muhl and Spitzbart, had called on Ruprecht, asking for an extension of the loan of twenty-two florins, which was due that day. There

had been a good deal of talk, after which Ruprecht had promised to wait another day. Again the authorities concluded that they had a good clew. Again they were doomed to disappointment. All three of the men, during the entire evening and until after eleven, were among crowds of people, playing for a dance!

A fantastic theory, which was entertained by a few people at the time, and at which the modern investigator cannot but look with interest, is that Ruprecht was killed by his daughter, and that, in the shock of seeing a weapon descending, his first impression was that a man with an ax was upon him, but that, as he was dragged up the stairs, he really remembered the glimpse he had caught of the figure and that it was a groan of horror which escaped him.

The One Suspect

"My daughter! My daughter!"

His accusation of "Schmidt" might have been the effort of the poor, benumbed brain, with its last conscious thought, to protect the very hand which had struck him down, the one hand beloved in all the world. This would explain the choice of the name, as hard to fix on an individual as Smith. The identification as "woodcutter" would also fit several of them and increase the general doubt. In this light, the inability of the dying man to look up when accused men were brought before him, becomes the last exertion of an iron will to protect a brutal and impious child.

Ruprecht's daughter was the one person whose time could not be entirely accounted for during the time that the crime might have been committed. To be sure, she was at home when the man brought the information to her that her father had been attacked, but she was notoriously a hardy woman, swift of action. If she had struck at twenty-two minutes after ten and instantly had fled, she might well have reached

her home before either her husband or the announcer of the disaster reached there.

It is in the imputation of the motive that this theory is weak. It does not seem that a woman, even granted that she is far more hardened than she appears, would try such a brutal attack on her own father, when what he proposed to do the following day was really for her benefit and would have left her in an exceedingly independent position.

There was a sword in the home of the Beiringers. Too late, it was examined. It was clean, of course, either because it had not been used for many years or because it had been carefully wiped. There was no way, then, of telling which that might be.

There is one other possibility, of course, and that is that Beiringer hired some one from a distance to slip into the town at twilight, to follow Rup-

recht from his home to whatever place he might enter, and to do the deed—some one with an experienced sword arm. The difficulty in the face of this is that the town was reached by a stage coach, and that every one arriving that day and for days before was accounted for—known to the drivers of the coaches.

The Ruprecht crime was committed more than one hundred and ten years ago, but it is still counted as one of the high lights of murder history, and there is hardly a writer on murder, hardly a student of criminology, who has not studied it. It was one of the first mysterious murders to be really carefully studied on the spot with as much of scientific thoroughness as could be used at the time and with the knowledge of the time.

The Beiringers, or, rather, Herr Beiringer, succeeded to the old man's money.

Cipher Solvers' List

AND still solutions to the cryptograms pour in. The following readers submitted solutions to one or more of the cryptograms published during the month of February. Five fans succeeded in solving all twelve. And some of them were hard nuts to crack!

Twelve Answers.—H. L. Bellam, Reno, Nevada; John Q. Boyer, "Primrose," Baltimore, Maryland; G. Fulton, Cleveland, Ohio; Henry D. Howell, "Blue Hen Chick," Middletown, Delaware; L. G. Williams, Sulphur Springs, Florida.

Eleven Answers.—Irving Fischer, Brooklyn, New York; Fred M. Holmes, Burdett, New York; Donald Kendall, "Nutmeg," Meriden, Connecticut; Frank C. Ringer, Chicago, Ill.

Nine Answers.—George W. Bowesman, New York City; Hector Gratton, "Rover," Montreal, Quebec, Canada; J. Lloyd Hood, Bastrop, Texas; Mabel Verona McKeown, Chicago, Illinois; Harry L. Miller, "Anon," Joplin, Missouri; Frank Morris, Chicago, Illinois; "M. O.," Bronx, New York.

Eight Answers.—John Hannan, "G. A. Slight," Newburgh, New York; J. E. Parker, Nada, Utah.

Seven Answers.—F. D. Wood, Lakewood, Ohio.

Six Answers.—Mrs. Mary E. Davis, Fancy Prairie, Illinois; H. G. Oehley, Brooklyn, New York; F. N. Perry, Detroit, Michigan; Clar-

ence E. Seeley, Spokane, Washington; Edward J. Smith, Erie, Pennsylvania; Frank M. Whalen, Deer Trail, Colorado.

Five Answers.—James F. Gilbert, St. John, New Brunswick, Canada; G. W. Morlan, Hawarden, Iowa.

Four Answers.—Monroe C. Sylvester, Troy, New York.

Three Answers.—E. Doran, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; A. Formis, Chattanooga, Tennessee; Mrs. Marguerite Turney Geibel, Buffalo, New York; A. Hobson, New York City; Dr. A. F. Kleykamp, "Gi Gantic," St. Louis, Missouri; Ernest Mules, Montreal, Quebec, Canada; Dr. Harry S. Stratton, Chicago, Illinois; Rev. James Veale, Long Island City, New York.

Two Answers.—Richard B. Edwards, Greenwich, Connecticut; J. H. Newell, Tonkawa, Oklahoma; Louis H. Sander, Jonesboro, Arkansas; Mrs. George W. Schroeder, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

One Answer.—J. L. Floyd, Canton, Ohio; A. G. Metzler, San Antonio, Texas; "Nemo," Biloxi, Mississippi.

Solution of "Poison Gas"

Here is the solution of the problem presented to Captain Curdy last week. Compare it with your own written solution.

WEEEMS could hardly collect himself on his next visit. He kept staring in admiration at Captain Curdy.

"Our chemists have the evidence you said would be necessary, but how did you ever guess?"

"You might have, too," smiled the captain, "except that it was so simple. When you were outlining your theories you recognized that closed windows would have caused the death, but apparently overlooked the simple explanation that the windows might easily have been covered over on the outside.

"Mentioning the empty adhesive spindles and the large drawing paper that littered Gordon's room supplied the rest. While Gordon was sketching on the roof, he was considering in what manner he could do away with Schwartz, so that he could continue to live upon Mrs. Schwartz's bounty. He measured the window's width with the paper, and then had his idea.

"That carbon monoxide, of fatal quantity, is formed by large gas burners in a closed, small room, is frequently attested by newspaper stories, and is commonly known. He saw he could shut off the air by covering the windows with his drawing paper, and then wondered how to fasten it on. Obviously, no sort of thumbtacks, as the window frames were steel. He then, perhaps, thought of passepartout which artists sometimes use, and from that, naturally passed to adhesive tape.

"He purchased the two rolls of adhesive, placed them in his pockets—Jergen noticed how they bulged—and went to the roof and hermetically sealed the windows with his heavy, soft

paper by placing the edge of the tape on the side of the protruding window frames. He had purposely left his paper on the roof, and went up after allowing Schwartz time to fall asleep.

"He borrowed the clock, rose at five when it went off. Went to the roof, removed the paper and tape, put the material in a portfolio, and started off with it, as he had planned, after allowing Jergen to establish that he was in bed. He probably dropped the paper in the river as he crossed on a ferry to Jersey."

"Marvelous!" said Weems. "That's just what he said in his confession this afternoon."

"The adhesive would not leave a mark visible to the eye on the side of the steel frames, but, as your men found when they carried out my orders, the microscopic camera showed the marks, and enough of the sticky matter could be scraped off to be analyzed. You also found his finger-prints on the spindles.

"I eliminated Wrangel as too impetuous, and Cholmondeley as too stupid for that clever crime. Emily might have done it, but I think you will find she and Cholmondeley were married during the night at Connecticut."

"Amazing!" said Weems. "I was over there just now, and Mrs. Schwartz told me."

"I think any of them might have killed the poor old fellow, if they had been clever enough."

"Mrs. Schwartz was in high enough spirits to-day," Weems said. "Here is a check for five thousand as a small token of the company's gratitude."

"I wish you'd have a repair man fix our little burner in the closet," Captain Curdy said whimsically. "I don't want to be found dead and have Victor here suspected."

CHARACTER REVEALED IN YOUR HANDWRITING

EDITOR'S NOTE — *After making character analysis, through handwriting, his hobby for more than a score of years, John Fraser has recently won wide renown in New York City as a popular lecturer on this subject.*

He conducts a thriving business of analyzing character from handwriting; and many notables in this country



JOHN FRASER

and abroad have complimented him on the accuracy of his findings.

By special arrangement his personal analysis is given to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY readers for ten cents, or free with a one-dollar subscription for thirteen issues (in Canada, fifteen cents, or \$1.75 for subscription). Please fill out the special coupon.

*I'm sending you
letter, & enclosed*

K. A. McP., Yonkers, N. Y.—You have lots of temperament, and allow it to rule your life. A person who has the faculty to think ahead and foresee the ramifications of a problem even before it has been presented to you for solution. You are clear-minded and discriminating, and appear to have a keen sense of the difference between what is wise and unwise.

Another thing I notice is that you possess considerable business and technical ability, and ought to be very successful in everything you undertake in the industrial world.

To come to your negative traits, or what I would call your "near virtues." You find it hard to make up your mind, especially about trivial matters, which, however, are of more importance to us than the bigger things of life. You are rather unobservant, and this leads you to overlook

factors which are essential in your sizing up of a situation. In other words, you look, but you don't see.

You are the kind of fellow who doesn't believe in telling all he knows. You like to keep a little reservoir of facts for your own personal consumption, and not for the benefit of the rest of society. Through this trait you are apt to be called "dumb" by your fellows, while all the time you are usually two jumps ahead of them.

You seem to be a "good sport," and enjoy going to places and doing things. The baseball and football campus would have a great attraction for you, and anything pertaining to sport would get your attention.

Altogether, you are a healthy-minded fellow who has a good head on his shoulders, and one who is capable of making lots of money as well as lots of friends.

*myself in leaving
But some day I
out where I can*

K. P., Richmond, Va.—You appear to be extremely logical in all your mental processes, and can reason things out carefully and accurately. You would be prudent in everything you undertook, and would never be guilty of making rash decisions. Another thing about you is you must know the why and the wherefore of every problem. You are a typical Missourian.

I see also that you are clever, and that you possess great nimbleness of mind. Any one with as alert a brain as you should be entertaining company, for you will never allow your conversation to become trite and boring. In addition to this you have quick and vivid fancy, which you employ to enrich and enliven your ideas. You are one of those interestingly candid people who do so much to leaven the dull lump of society. Your frankness, however, may get you into trouble at times, but after all, the real stimulators of public opinion have been men like yourself who were not afraid to speak their minds. You are, at the same time, good natured and gracious so that there is little danger of your ever causing offense by your frankness.

To come to your negative qualities, I notice that patience is one trait which is conspicuous by its absence from your personality. You cannot refrain from outbursts against those who bore you, or who you think are inferior. You love to get into an argument, and this scrappy nature of yours is expressed in a quarrelsomeness which is hardly commendable. You are inclined to pick fights when they are not necessary. You have other besetting weaknesses in

your make-up, but space forbids discussion.

*the next cold one
is necessary to
check up it. it*

W. F., Seattle, Wash.—One of your strongest traits is mental alertness and keenness of vision. Your mind is never dormant and, as a rule, would be two jumps ahead of the other fellow. Forethought is also an evident characteristic in you. You are essentially prudent, and think twice, albeit quickly, before taking any step. Your concentrative faculties are not wanting by any means. You have the habit of sticking to whatever plans or routes you have mapped out, no matter what dissuading influences come along.

I would call you a fighter, in the best sense of the word. Your mentality is always master of the situation, and no "bogy" of self-pity gets much of a chance with you. I would call you a business man to the finger tips. You are never happier than when you are wrestling with a business problem. You have rare executive ability and are full of enterprise and energy.

To come to your negative qualities, I see right away that you are very bigoted in your ideas of men and things. Your opinion is the only thing in the world worth listening to, according to you. I would imagine you to be very autocratic at the breakfast table. You love to lord it over those at home, to the point of meanness at times. Egotism also peeps out here and there in your nature. Discourage this tendency at once otherwise it may neutralize your other commendable characteristics. As far as the spending of money is concerned with you, you might be taken for a Scotchman any day. I believe you would walk a mile to save a nickel carfare. Frugality is

all right, but we must never forget that there are no pockets in a coffin. Think that over.

*accurate character
suggestions for*

A. E., Pasadena, Calif.—By your handwriting I see that you are a man who lives much more for the physical side of life than for the mental. In other words, you exercise your body more than you do your mind. Your disposition is essentially simple, and you don't believe in artificiality, either in your own personal life, or in your relations with others. I like your reserve of patience and self-control. You are not easily riled over the hard knocks that confront you from day to day. To you the latter are like water on a duck's back.

For a man I think you are far too reserved. Your desire to be unobtru-

sive is a great detriment to your ultimate success in life. A nature like yours lets people walk all over it. You like to be seen, and not heard. That may be all right for children, but no fully grown man has any business to act in that manner. What you need more than anything else is self-assertion.

I notice you have an essentially practical mind. You go in for moderation in all things. You love order and dislike anything savoring of untidiness. I also see an affectionate strain in you. You are not, however, very effusive in your love-making. You pour no perfume over your language when you address your loved one. You will never turn any woman's head with your eloquence, nor your flattery. And most women like both. Altogether, you are an individual who has as much a place in the world as the prize fight promoter or the politician. Your work is done quietly and conscientiously and is oftentimes of more value to humanity than the activities of the band-wag-
oners.

Fill out the coupon with specimen writing and send it with ten cents (in Canada, fifteen cents), or one dollar for a thirteen-weeks' subscription (in Canada, one dollar and seventy-five cents) to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

You will then receive a letter from Mr. Fraser giving his analysis of your character.

To John Fraser, Detective Fiction Weekly, 280 Broadway N. Y. City

Signature_____

Street_____City_____



FLASHES FROM READERS

*Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip
and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind*

ONE of the best known writers of fact stories for DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY is Robert W. Sneddon, author of "The Killer Who Couldn't Forget" in this issue. We asked Mr. Sneddon to give you an account of himself. Here it is:

Though I have been an American for a number of years, my native heath is Scotland. They used to say I looked and wrote like Stevenson, but other critics have said I wrote like Merrick, Maupassant, Merimée, Barrie, and Bierce, and I defy any one to say I look like them all. I look like myself and write like Sneddon.

Destined for the law, I studied arts and law at Glasgow University. I am both artful and lawful, but no lawyer. While I was engrossing deeds in an Edinburgh law office I was attempting to write vaudeville sketches and getting a knowledge of stage life. Then I went to London and learned how easy it was to lose money overnight in the theater. Paris next saw me and gave me a liberal education of sorts, and then I sailed for New York in quest of fame and fortune. Page both for me, boy. I've been waiting for them a long time in the drafty lobby.

I discovered that I could not get a living honestly, so I became a writer and satisfied my ambitions. Within a month of landing I was contributing to *Judge* and *Puck*. I tried fiction. The *Forum* took my first story—of Russian East Side New York; the *Smart Set*, a story laid in Normandy; and *Snappy Stories*, just born, a Parisian story. And so it runs. I've written and sold hundreds, dramatic, whimsical, highbrow, lowbrow, mostly with European settings. *Pictorial Review* readers like my fantasy, and probably would not connect me with the gentleman who likes

to write about circus clowns, side show folk, waiters, old wrecks of humanity, Menjou types, mysterious evildoers, gay young ladies, Scottish clergymen and lawyers, orphans, German musicians and ghost hunters. My "Mark Shadow" stories are guaranteed to outhill any Frigidaire.

For a time I figured in hundreds of columns of newspaper reviews as the American Barrie. This was while my play, "The Might-Have-Beens," was in vaudeville for two seasons. "Camouflage" also played two seasons and was turned into a sensational show at Luna Park. And little theaters have played others. Little theaters, write in, please.

Lots of people in England and the colonies bought my novel, "Galleon's Gold," and then "Monsieur X," a detective story with thrills, which has just been published in this country.

How did I come to be a crime expert, you ask. Because it was easier to write a crime than to commit one. I am a canny Scot at heart. But I can honestly say that second to the thrill I got when I heard a crowded theater laugh and sob over my play, comes the real feeling of pleasure when some one writes in and tells me, or you, friend editor, that they like my true stories of crime. I try to make them human as well as strictly accurate.

THE WESTMINSTER BANK ROBBERY

Here is a correction to "The Roving 'Camera-Eye,'" one of Charles Somerville's stories, and some additional light on the daring robbery mentioned in it:

DEAR SIR:

In your issue of January 26, Mr. Somerville, in his entertaining sketches of "Camera-Eye," is somewhat inaccurate in his relation of the Westminster Bank robbery.

I can speak advisedly, having been employed in a logging camp near the vicinity at the time.

The locale was the New Westminster, British Columbia, branch of the Bank of Montreal. New Westminster at that time was a city of about twenty thousand people and is on the Frazer River, about seventeen miles distant from Vancouver.

The Canadian banking system is considerably different from any United States system. It is, in fact, a chain banking system. The various banks are not independent and individual banks, as in the United States, but are dependent banks, subject to the head office of the parent corporation. Consequently the notes stolen from the bank did not bear on them the name of Westminster, or any other reference to New Westminster. The notes, however, were numbered and bore the name of the Bank of Montreal. The amount stolen was approximately three hundred thousand dollars.

The date of the robbery was September, 1911, and not some time prior to December, 1909, as Mr. Somerville has it.

It was a very smooth job, as the bank was next door to the police station, and the police didn't know anything about the matter until the bank officials reported the robbery to them the next morning.

Prior to the war, Canada issued no metallic money of greater value than the fifty-cent piece. Dollar issues, and greater were either Dominion treasury notes, or bank notes. The treasury also issued a note of twenty-five cents, but this, I understand, has been discontinued and outstanding notes called in.

Yours truly,

J. M. BEDFORD,
Hot Springs, Ark.

HOSPITAL CHEER

From Canada comes word that DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY is cheering up the boys in the Central Alberta Sanatorium.

DEAR SIR:

Just a few words in praise of your magazine. I think it is the best magazine of its kind on the market. The quality and variety of its stories can't be beat. All the fellows in the ward read it and they sure like it. It is more popular than free drinks in Scotland.

I read all the stories, and I think the variety is just right. The true stories are very interesting and many of them prove the old adage that "The truth is stranger than fiction." The short stories are my dish and the more exciting the better. I also like a good serial such as "The Mystery Maker" or "The Three Crows." Those two were sure great.

I like the following characters particularly: *Riordan* and *Brady*, *Calhoun*, *Tug Norton*, and *Craig Kennedy*. "The Riddle of the Tortillon" was certainly a thriller. It was a pleasant change from the ordinary run of serials. I would like to see more of its type in the future.

In closing I wish your magazine every success and when better stories are written DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY will publish them.

Yours sincerely,

ALFRED IBBOTSON,
Central Alberta Sanatorium, Calgary,
Alta., Canada.

HE LIKES RIORDAN

The gentleman from Denver likes the *Riordan* stories. If the voice of the people is a final proof, he shows great judgment. You and many thousands of others, Mr. Birch!

GENTLEMEN:

Allow one more reader to put in a few words in regard to your magazine. *It's great!* The best detective and mystery stories one can get anywhere for a thin dime. My favorite character is *Riordan*, the hard-boiled but human police detective. The other stories are good, except the *Whitcher Bemis*, which I cannot enjoy reading.

Another thing I enjoy is the cipher codes running in the present series. In fact, we all have gone bughouse over them, and there is almost a family row every Wednesday evening when I come home with a copy of *Flynn's* in my pocket.

C. R. BIRCH,
Denver, Colo.

"HERE'S MY VOTE"

Editor,

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I did not like _____
because _____

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

Edited by M. E. Ohaver

LAST week's crypt, "Poise," by G. Fulton, reprinted herewith, provides a neat problem in vowel determination. Ordinarily one seizes immediately upon a predominating symbol as a possible substitute for *e*, the most used letter. But here the symbol O is somewhat baffling for the very fact that it occurs no less than thirty-two times.

PSOOTEOPD ORFORTONOT TODON-
 speediest e--e--de-ed dete--
 NORD ORONFEOP GNOWYORDQU
 -e-t e--e--ies --e--e-t--
 NOSNOPORD OVONFORMEOP SNO-
 -ep--eset e--e--e--ies p--e-
 CORDOT, HLOR DOVSON OGGON-
 -e--ted, --e-- te-pe-;e--e--
 COPMOP.
 -es-es.

In the average message the vowels will total about forty per cent of the whole number of letters. On this basis there should be about thirty-eight vowels in the present example. And taking O as one vowel, the other vowels, if any, would probably have to be represented by low frequency symbols, a rather unusual occurrence.

That O is a vowel, however, seems clearly indicated by its use before and after the doubled low frequency G in the last group, and by its conjunction with the low frequency pairs WY and HL in groups five and nine. And that this vowel is probably *e* is suggested by the OO in group one and the penultimate O occurring seven times in the terminals -OT, -OP, -OR, and -ON.

The commonest two-letter endings with *e* in this position are -ed, -er, -es, and -en.

Frequencies suggest P as *s*, and T as *d*. With these values the first group becomes *s-ced-es*-, obviously

speediest. And substituting throughout, as shown, *deterrent* and *represent*, both with the same letters missing, are next to fall. The whole translation, as given herewith, soon follows.

This week's crypts promise a lot of fun. No. 1 has plenty of clues. BY END, used twice, is, as you might easily guess, the commonest two-word sequence in the language. No. 2 is a first attempt, and is rather difficult. But a comparison of MW and WME should get you started. Messrs. Firestone and Birch, two hard-boiled puzzle fans of the West, think No. 3 will floor you! How about it?

No. 1—By Harry L. Miller.

END NRJIBJ BY JOB MD GRUDOJB
 OL UBE BUST BUD BY END ABLE
 IDRCEOYCS ICE BUD BY END IDLE
 OU END PBJSJ.

No. 2—By Mildred Harris.

"KDRZZ NK MW MZV, TPG UH
 DXPTKPZCPK NEP FEROPV; WME
 DXREDH FRPOPK YJVNK KMZV
 XRTKPBZ, GMD OXERKD."

No. 3—By W. J. Firestone and C. R. Birch.
 CILWJTNIT GNOORO SJGJAIHI
 CRQOR, RTXIMNTM HINORT, LOS
 WIFWNFL NTPRNMQR LARNG.
 LFICCIXO JD ONXG YTRIXWARO
 EARXR AJHNFNOR EJXG NTOY-
 FWRO.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

1—Politicians, planning party picnic, prepare pleasant surprises for people.

2—Very nonchalantly husky halfback re-enters imbroglio.

3—Speediest engendered deterrent energies frequently represent emergencies prevented, when temper effervesces.

Cryptograms and solutions are pouring in at a lively rate these days. Keep them coming, fans! See the new solvers' list on page 712.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

IT was in a Japanese auction room that *Pat Murgey* ran across the crazy kimona—that cheap, shoddy little garment with its amazingly riotous design in crimson, yellow and blue—which was destined to lead him into one of the most puzzling situations of his eventful career.

At ten dollars and fifty cents, *Pat Murgey* had apparently been swindled on that kimona, for all its hectic color and crazy design. Yet here was a suave Oriental offering him twenty—fifty—a hundred dollars for that same kimona—and what puzzled *Pat* was the fact that the Japanese had stood idly by and watched him while he bid the garment in!

Pat Murgey had bought that kimona for a girl. He didn't want to sell it. Besides, there was something queer about a man who would let another bid in an article and then offer him ten times what he paid for it.

Pat kept the kimona.

Then, suddenly, the very ground seemed to sprout menacing little yellow-skinned figures rushing toward him from all directions.

And thus starts the intriguing series of adventures you will read about next week in

THE CRAZY KIMONA

BY JOHNSTON McCULLEY



Among other contributors to next week's issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY are EDWARD PARRISH WARE, MAXWELL SMITH, DON H. THOMPSON, JOHN D. SWAIN, and other popular writers of detective fiction and fact.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—April 20

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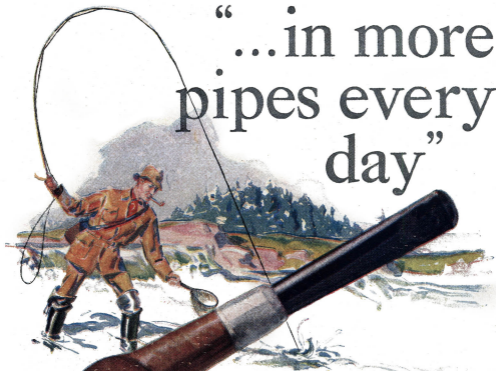
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