

DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY



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The Red Menace

by

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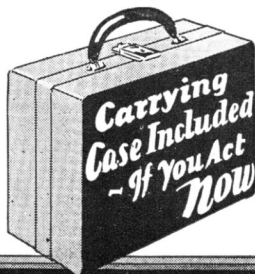


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DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME XLIV

Saturday, September 28, 1929

NUMBER 5

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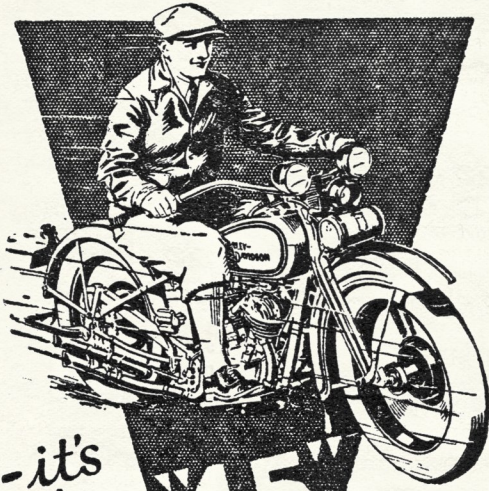
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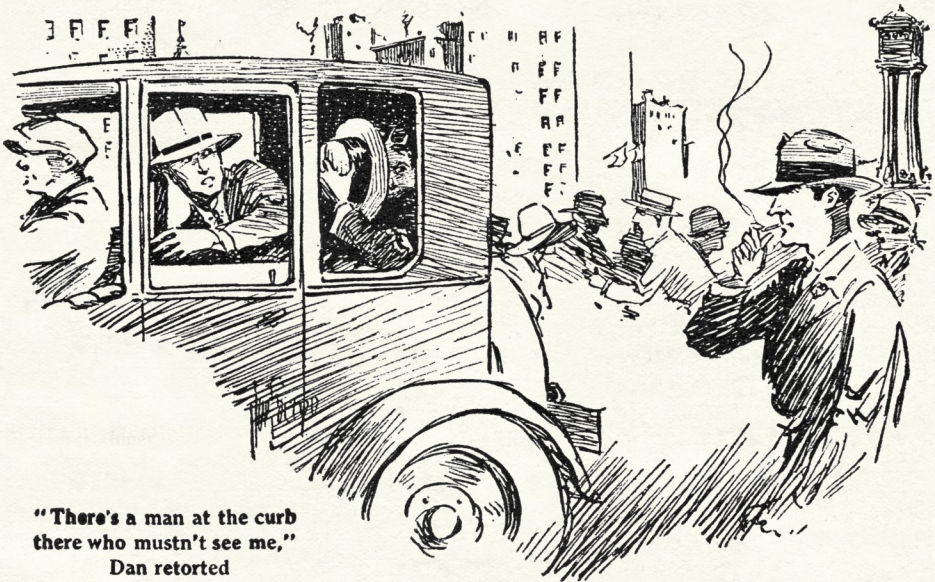
DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



VOLUME XLIV

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1929

NUMBER 5



"There's a man at the curb
there who mustn't see me,"
Dan retorted

The Red Menace

*Barry Sloan Runs Afoul of a Sinister World-Wide
Plot and the Most Dangerous Man in New York*

By T. T. Flynn

CHAPTER I

The Girl in Black

THE S.S. Leviathan was coming into New York Harbor.

There had been a fog as the mighty ship passed through the Narrows; but as Bedloe's Island and the

huge serene Statue of Liberty slipped up alongside, the curtains of mist rolled away, and the sun came out, flooding the decks warm and bright. Passengers began to line the rails, looking for the first sight of the towering, serrated sky-line of the city.

Barry Sloan, walking on the prome-

nade deck, with his pipe clenched between his teeth, and the cool morning breeze fresh on his face, did not bother to look at that inspiring sight. He had seen it before. Many times before. This made, to be exact, the seventeenth time he had crossed the North Atlantic, and proceeded up the lower harbor, past the Statue, Ellis Island, historic Castle William on Governor's Island, the Battery, and docked at one pier or another in lower Manhattan.

Seventeen times—and the whole seventeen didn't amount to much, Barry thought, as he bit down on the pipe stem. Yes, one of them had. The trip after the war—

Barry sighed, and went to the rail and gazed moodily down at the water far below. Something was wrong with life, and he didn't know what it was.

In all honesty he asked himself at that moment what was the matter. Why should a healthy, single young man, with three and a quarter millions in the bank, not a cloud on the horizon, not a thing to worry about in all the world—why in the devil should he feel that life was a washout after all?

And in all honesty Barry Sloan admitted to himself that there wasn't a reason in the world why he should feel that way. Still—he did. And he thought as he tapped the ashes out of his briar that he'd spend a couple of weeks in the city, look up a few friends out of town, and then run back to London again, or take a small apartment in Paris, or loaf along the Mediterranean coast—

He didn't really know what he wanted to do.

Barry went, after a few moments, down to his cabin to make certain that everything was ready to go ashore.

He had left the door unlocked when he went out. There wasn't anything

in the room really worth stealing. An attempt would have injected a little spice into the dull routine of the days. Now, as his fingers closed about the knob of the door, it refused to open. Barry tried again, for he distinctly remembered that the door had not been locked. It now was.

The room steward must have been around, he thought, as he fished for the key, found it and slipped it in the lock. He walked in.

As the door closed behind Barry Sloan, he was suddenly aware that something was not as it should be. The soft scent of perfume came to his nostrils; the window curtains were drawn—and he had left them back not thirty minutes before.

He stopped and stared around the dimly lit room. There was a little jog in the left wall when one got a yard or so into the cabin. Barry stepped there, frowning, his fists unconsciously clenching. The next moment they relaxed. His mouth opened a little in surprise—

A young woman was cowering back in that corner, eyes wide with emotion. A dress of black silk covered her tall, willowy form. She seemed at first a black shadow. Barry had to look closer to make certain that she was really alive, was really there.

For a moment neither of them moved; and then Barry asked the first thing that came into his mind. "What are you doing in here?"

She made a quick move, like the startled flight of a bird, and then stopped as Barry stepped back, barring the way out of the room. "Not so fast," he told her curtly. "I want to talk to you first."

"There is a mistake," she said quickly. "I must have gotten in the wrong room. Please."

Barry pressed the light button; the room flooded with illumination, and all the objects stood out sharply. He saw her then, plainly.

The black dress came a little below the knees, and black silk stockings shimmered over graceful legs. Black pumps were on her feet. Soft black hair molded about her face, framed it. Gray eyes gazed at him from under sharply penciled eyebrows. There was strength in her chin, character about her face—and Barry couldn't decide whether it was good or bad.

He frowned at her. "I suppose," he said with a trace of sarcasm in his voice, "that you accidentally locked my door on the inside and pulled the curtains together."

She nodded.

"The number of this cabin," he told her, "is on the door very plainly. How do you account for the fact that you didn't notice it?"

He saw the muscles of her alabaster throat flutter slightly as she swallowed. "I wasn't looking very closely," she answered. "I am sorry. Very sorry. I will go."

"What is your name?" he asked.

"That," she replied without a bit of hesitation, "is none of your business."

"I think it is. I find you in my room. I don't remember seeing you about the ship at all. Are you one of the passengers?"

She flushed a little, lifted her chin a trifle. "Yes."

"What cabin were you looking for when you came into this one?"

"Mine."

"I see," Barry said politely. "Your cabin is along here?"

"Yes."

"Which one is it?"

She hesitated the barest fraction—and then said casually, "The third one

down, B-53. I remember now. It was foolish of me to make the mistake."

Barry smiled slightly. He couldn't help it.

"Queer," he observed. "The third cabin down is occupied by a bald-headed hardware salesman from Chicago, who has told me no less than six times in the smoking room that he never was married, never will be, and doesn't give the wink of an eye for any woman that ever lived."

A wave of red swept over her face. The eyes closed a little; her mouth set. Before he quite knew what was happening, her right hand had made a quick, lightning-like dive inside the neck of her dress. He looked suddenly into the small round muzzle of a dainty, pearl-handled automatic.

"Put that thing up," Barry snapped harshly.

"I will shoot you if you so much as move," she said coldly. "Keep your hands before you, and your mouth closed. I've had enough of you."

She had been merely a woman before—now she was a woman with a gun. Queer what a difference it made. Barry thought of that even as he lifted his hands before him. He wasn't afraid. Rather—the fact that she was carrying a gun, and had been willing to produce it so quickly made him the more interested in her. There was little doubt in his mind now that she was a crook. A woman crook.

He grinned.

"The man did say it," he informed her. "I thought there must be something wrong when you claimed his cabin."

"Did you hear me? I have wasted enough time with you. Step aside. I am going out. I will lock you in. If you try to raise an alarm before I'm out of sight, I will shoot you."

"But you can't get off the ship," Barry pointed out.

"That is my affair. Stand aside."

"I shall try to find you, and have this matter settled. I can't believe your story about getting in the wrong room."

"Stand aside!" She gave a little flirt with the automatic. A decidedly menacing movement.

Barry obeyed. After all, there was no point in risking a shot. He had caught her red-handed in his room. It might be possible for her nerves to bring her to the point of shooting.

In silence she went to the door. In silence Barry watched her, realizing anew what a striking looking young woman she was.

The door closed, the spring-latch clicked into place, and she was gone. Gone without locking him in with his keys as she had promised.

Barry lowered his hands and stepped toward the door. He didn't think she would shoot him if he looked out after her. If she did, she'd probably miss. He'd take the chance at any rate. He jerked open the door and looked out.

The corridor was empty.

Barry glared up and down, and then stepped out. She had not been out of his sight many seconds. Certainly not long enough to get out of the corridor. And yet she was gone. It could only mean that she had gone into one of the staterooms along the corridor. In that case she might have been telling the truth.

But, if she had been telling the truth, what had she drawn the automatic on him for? Why had she been so eager to get away? And why had she lied about her room? There was no chance of her being in with the hardware man from Chicago. Barry had been in that cabin himself. There was never a trace

of perfume there, never a chance that a woman could be traveling with the fellow.

Barry turned back, biting his lip thoughtfully, frowning. What could it mean?

CHAPTER II

More Mystery

HE went over his luggage to see if she had been in it. The two kit bags had been locked. They were still locked.

As Barry bent over the kit bags, the sheen of light on metal, in the corner where the girl had been standing, caught his eye. It was a small safety-razor blade, lying there on the rug where she had dropped it. And she had dropped it. The room had been freshly cleaned when he went out. In addition, the blade was a different brand than he used.

He picked it up with thumb and forefinger, and smiled slightly as he saw that the sheen of the metal was marked plainly with finger prints. The girl in black had slipped up on one point. She had left behind as evidence of her visit, proof more damning than the word of half a dozen witnesses.

Barry found a small match box in one of the bureau drawers, and emptied it, and carefully dropped the blade inside. He had no definite plans as to what he would do with it, wanted only to have it safe if he did need it.

And as he closed the match box and laid it on the top of the bureau, he puzzled over the use the girl in black could have had for that razor blade. It was the last thing in the world he would have looked for her to leave. What had she been doing with it, or what had she intended to do?

Cut the kit bags open?

She had evidently had plenty of time to do so if she cared to—and had not.

Steps sounded outside in the passage. Some one knocked on a door. Voices followed. There was more knocking, more talking. It moved nearer.

Barry took notice after a few minutes, during which he had been sitting on the edge of the bed, thoughtfully smoking, pondering. Something was up out in the corridor. He opened his own door and looked out. Three men were standing before a door, on which one had just knocked.

Two of the men were ship's officers—the mate and the purser. The other man was a short, unassuming, grizzled person, in the fifties. He wore a black derby, striped suit, in a style decidedly too young for his age, and chewed a dead cigar, that had never been lighted.

This man looked around as Barry's door opened. He spoke without taking the cigar from the corner of his mouth. "Want to see you, mister, wait a minute."

The mate knocked several more times on the door, but no one came out. The purser made a mark on the list that he carried.

The short grizzled person came to Barry, biting on the end of the dead cigar. "Looking for a young woman dressed in black," he said out of the corner of his mouth. "Seen her any time during the trip?"

Barry was startled, but he managed to cover most of it, although he had a feeling that the other was looking past all barriers and seeing what was down in his thoughts. "Woman in black?" Barry asked in genuine surprise.

The other nodded. His eyes narrowed a trifle. "That's right," he assented. "Young woman in black. Where did you see her?"

By that time Barry had control of his emotions. He said with a poker face: "What makes you think I saw a young woman in black? I didn't say so."

The mate and the purser had come over also, and were standing behind the grizzled man, watching. Barry looked at the mate. "What is the meaning of this?" he asked coolly.

"There seems to be a young woman on board who is wanted at the captain's cabin," the mate replied noncommittally. "She was seen in this passage a short while ago. We are making a check of the cabins to see if she is in them, or has been seen."

"Hasn't she paid her fare?" Barry asked.

"I can't say," the mate replied.

The purser said nothing.

The small, grizzled man tipped his derby back a little farther and shifted the dead cigar to the other corner of his mouth. He seemed to be getting bored with the matter. "Well, have you seen her?" he asked.

Barry had made up his mind in the few moments he had sparred with them. She had been a plucky girl, able to take care of herself. If they wanted her, let them get her, especially since they wouldn't tell him why they wanted her.

One of the three knew, probably all. Certainly the short grizzled man, who was not even a member of the crew, or at least did not function so. Barry had seen him several times since the boat sailed, sitting around, chewing a dead cigar, saying nothing, seemingly bored with life.

"I can't tell you where to find such a young woman," Barry told them truthfully. "And I certainly haven't seen such a one in this passage. I'll keep an eye out for her."

"Thanks," said the other. He turned away to the next door, where the mate was already knocking.

Barry stood there and watched with interest.

The two ladies who had the next cabin were in their forties, modishly dressed always, great bridge players. One of them was in. Her voice sounded plainly. "No, I have not seen such a person." The door closed with a little slam.

The next door was opened by a man. He, too, disclaimed any knowledge of the girl. The hardware salesman from Chicago was in the third. "Me?" he said loudly. "No! I haven't seen a young woman in black—and I hope to the good Lord I don't. Is there anything else you want?"

The mate answered him politely while the purser made another check on the list he carried. The third man chewed on the end of the cigar in silence.

At that moment the second door down, on the other side, opened. The young woman in black stood there, eyeing the three men.

The grizzled man took the cigar from his mouth for the first time. "Hello, Olga," he said with a distinct air of satisfaction in his voice. "I thought we would root you out of one of these cabins."

Olga looked, as he spoke, down the hall and saw Barry standing in his doorway. No expression appeared on her face at all. She might never have seen him before. But their eyes locked together for an instant. Barry had a distinct feeling that she was smiling inwardly at him. Then she turned the same blank gaze on the man who had addressed her.

"Do I understand that you want to see me, Harris?" she asked crisply, and

not at all uncomfortably. Barry was interested to note that she seemed as much master of the situation as any of the three men who faced her.

Harris put the cigar back in his mouth, and nodded.

"Captain wants to see you in his cabin," he said.

She looked for the briefest moment down the hall again, as though she was studying Barry. Harris noted it with his sharp, shrewd eyes. "You seem kind of interested in the young man," he observed. "Is he with you?"

Then she did look slightly surprised, before she smiled sarcastically at Harris. "You might ask him," she suggested.

Harris shot another glance at Barry. "Are you?" he asked bluntly.

Barry smiled also—he was enjoying himself. "You might," he informed Harris politely, "ask the young lady that."

Harris flushed slightly, and frowned. He chewed on the cigar for a moment, and then said to Barry: "I guess you'd better come up and see the captain also."

Barry raised his eyebrows.

"Sorry," he drawled, "but you have another guess coming. I know of no business that requires me to visit the captain. He can come and see me if he cares to; or you can take me forcibly—if you care to."

The girl, Olga, laughed softly, with appreciation.

"There you are, Harris," she giped. "Think that over for a minute."

Harris grinned ruthfully. "If that's the way he feels about it, he can stay here," he said. "But I guess you'll come along and have a little talk, won't you?"

"If you insist, certainly. Why not? And I'll leave the door of my room

unlocked if it will make you feel any better. Come along."

No one paid any more attention to Barry as they went down the hall. He stood there in the doorway for some moments, trying to piece together what he had seen. He had said nothing to the authorities about her being in his room, and yet they had come for her. She had not seemed the slightest bit worried that he would report her. Probably she thought he could not prove a charge, knowing nothing of the razor blade.

Barry didn't know himself as he stood there, why it was that he did not report her. All he realized was that he did not care to. Presently he closed the door behind him, locking it this time, and went back up on the deck.

He remained up on the deck until the boat shut off steam and the busy little tugs took her, and warped her into the dock, and the gangplank went down, and the first exodus began. In that time he had seen no sign of the girl in black. He wondered, as he went down to his cabin, what they had done with her, and for what offense.

The door of her cabin was closed. He knocked. There was no answer. Barry shrugged, rang for a steward, and presently went down to the customs line. There was no trouble about his scanty luggage. The inspector he drew had served him before, and nodded as soon as Barry came up. They had several pleasant minutes of conversation while the government man did his duty. And then Barry was free to go. He did, to the Plaza, where he usually stayed while in town.

The next few days the Leviathan, the girl in black, and all that had happened, faded gradually back in his mind. He spoke about it several times to friends, and they agreed it was in-

teresting; and so it gradually became old news, uninteresting, and due to be forgotten.

CHAPTER III

Secret Service

THE morning of his fourth day ashore, Barry took a taxi in front of the Plaza and ordered the driver to take him down town to his bank. They were held up at Forty-Second and the Avenue. For no reason at all, Barry looked out the window on the left, at the taxi alongside them. And his eyes opened wide, and a broad smile came across his face, and he uttered a shout that brought the head of his driver around as though worked by strings.

"Dan!" Barry shouted across at the other cab. "Dan Brady!"

A face peered at him—a face he had not seen for all of four years. Dan Brady, army buddy, good sport, friend! Good old Dan Brady, who was all of thirty-two years of age by now.

Dan's reply came clearly over the cacophony of the busiest corner of the busiest city in all the world. "Barry! You son-of-a-gun! Come over here!"

The lights flashed again; traffic started forward. Barry shoved a bill at the driver of his cab. "Never mind the trip. Changed my mind," he called, and opened the door and leaped out, running the risk of getting knocked down by the onward surge of the traffic.

Dan Brady opened the door of his cab just as it started to move. Barry leaped in, the door slammed—and they sat there pumping each other's hands.

"Dan, you no-account, what have you been doing with yourself?"

"How's the worthless, idle rich these days?"

Thus they insulted each other enthusiastically, grinning from ear to ear. For there had been a time when they were better than brothers to each other, and the years that had passed had done little to erase that feeling. Buddies, friends—then and now. The fact that they hadn't seen each other for years made little difference. They were both the kind that could part casually in Piccadilly, and meet years later in Zanzibar just as casually.

As the cab rolled down Fifth Avenue they sat there and brought the last four years up to date. Barry had not a great deal to tell. "Just been hanging around," he said ruthfully. "Doing nothing for my country or myself. Here to-day, there to-morrow. How's it been with you?"

Dan Brady was a stocky, open-faced chap, who looked most of the time like a great big innocent boy just in from the country. Other times, when he needed a shave, and was dressed in old clothes, with a sullen look about his mouth, a cigarette drooping from one corner, and a cap pulled low, he appeared a rather bad customer. Unless one looked very closely, one would never see the keenness in his eyes, the brains that were plentiful in his skull.

He grinned now, this Dan Brady, and answered Barry's question with a shrug. "Still at the same old game," he declared. "Secret Service. Watch-dog of the Treasury, the President, and what have you."

"I tried to get hold of you last year," Barry told him. "My telegram to the Treasury brought the information that they did not know where you were."

"In China," Dan said briefly. "There was a tricky case that ran all around the world. Had several of us working on it. They didn't want our

whereabouts to be known—although as a matter of fact, they didn't know themselves half the time."

"Sounds interesting," Barry said with a trace of envy in his voice.

"It was."

"Stuff like that gets me all hipped up. I want to be in on it."

"Why not try to make the grade?" Dan grinned.

And Barry grinned ruthfully. "I might get by for a few months, but I couldn't stick the grind. What's on your program now? Let's get away and take a little boat trip, or an auto trip, or blow the lid off in some way."

Dan shook his head regretfully.

"Sounds nice, old man," he admitted. "But I'm tied down tighter than a circus tent for the main show. There's a big case on, and I'm doing most of the work."

Barry noted for the first time that Dan's clothes were not very new, and they certainly needed pressing. So did Dan's face need a shave—and his finger nails were actually dirty and untrimmed. That, from Dan Brady, who had been fastidious in the muck of the war, was proof that something was afoot. "Can you tell?" Barry asked.

"'Fraid not," Dan said regretfully. "It's heap big medicine, and the Lord help some folks if we don't make good on it."

"Here's hoping, if it's that bad."

"Sure is."

"Maybe I'm gumming up some of your work now," Barry declared quickly.

"No. I was just riding down to Eighth Avenue and Twenty-Fourth Street to see if my partner has shown up there yet, I won't even talk to him if he has. We have a code of signals, and I'll read them as we go past."

"And then what?"

"Nothing till this evening," Dan declared.

"Come around to the hotel with me as soon as you get the dope from your partner and we'll have a little celebration. There's lots to talk over."

"Sure thing," Dan agreed.

All the way down to Twenty-Fourth Street they talked as fast as the words would come. Dan said just before they reached the spot: "My partner is wearing old clothes and a big beard that makes him look like he's just over from the other side. You'll see him." And to the driver of the cab, Dan said: "Slow down when you pass Twenty-Fourth Street. I want to have a look around."

As they went slowly past the spot, Barry saw the man whom Dan meant; it could be no one else. A tall, poorly dressed fellow, with a ragged beard that swept his chest, and a battered soft hat on the top of his head. He was leaning against a lamp-post, hands jammed down in his pockets, eyes on the sidewalk, and he did not seem to have a thought in his mind on any subject save himself. He did not look up when the cab went by; could not have known that it was there.

Barry had been looking eagerly for some signal; and when none was given, and they were past, he was surprised to see Dan sit back with a look of satisfaction on his face. "That's that," Dan remarked. "Now for the hotel and that little celebration. I hope your drinks are good."

"Supposed to be, old man. They cost enough. Look here—it's none of my business, but what kind of signal did you get from that fellow? I was looking at him, and he didn't make a move. Didn't even know we were there I'll bet."

Dan chuckled. "You'd win the bet,

too," he declared. "I don't think he did see us pass. He didn't have to. If things were going one way, he was to stand there with his hands in his pockets. If they were not, his hands were to be down at his sides. That's all there was to it."

"I'll be darned," Barry said ruthlessly.

The driver turned his head. "Where to now?" he asked.

"The Plaza," Barry told him.

They went back by way of Seventh Avenue. At Thirty-Seventh Street they were stopped again by the change of lights. Barry was surprised to see Dan Brady suddenly cower back in his seat and hide his face.

"What's the matter?" Barry asked in amazement.

From behind his hat, Dan retorted sharply: "There's a man at the curb there who mustn't see me! It's Ivan Alexandranoff, one of the most deadly men in the country to-day. He's part of the case I'm working on."

Several people were standing at the curb, but Barry had no trouble in picking out the man. He was lounging there, smoking a cigarette, looking idly at the traffic. He was a medium-sized man with a thin, smooth-shaved face, shadowed somewhat under a dark green fedora hat, whose brim was turned down in front. Barry caught a glimpse of extraordinarily small feet, almost like a woman's, of soft hands, small and white and womanlike also, and a feline grace about the figure lounging there. He started to study the sharp features of Ivan Alexandranoff, but caught only a fleeting glimpse of a thin cruel mouth when the lights shifted and they went forward again.

Dan came out from behind the shelter of his hat, clapped it on his head, and took a deep breath of relief. "That

was a close shave," he said fervently. "I would have had a devil of a time explaining what I was doing here in the cab with you. You look too damned prosperous to be seen with me."

"That chap struck me as being decidedly unusual," Barry remarked thoughtfully. "I don't know when I've seen a man who, well, lingers in my mind so. What's his history?"

Dan thrust a cigarette between his lips and lighted it, and inhaled deeply before answering. When he did, his voice was solemn. "Blood," Dan said. "That's Ivan Alexandranoff's story in a nutshell. *Blood*. He's a spawn of the Russian trouble. We don't know much about him and his beginnings before he floated to the top of the cesspool of murder, blood, and torture. What we do know is that he was one of Lenine's right-hand men. Not one of the figure-heads whose pictures and histories were paraded around the world. He was too deadly for that.

"Ivan Alexandranoff was kept under cover, like a snake. Not many men in the inner circles of the party knew about him for a long time. But he was busy. The tales that have come out about his activities would make your blood run cold. He went out of the country shortly after Germany and the Allies signed the Peace Treaty. We know he was in France for a time, and then Italy, when Mussolini routed the unrest and took charge of things. Then he went to England.

"Always where he remained there was unrest, trouble, plots against the government. Down under the surface the Red Menace seethed and bubbled, spreading out through the land. But no trail of guilt ever led to the door of Ivan Alexandranoff.

"Finally he came to America."

Dan inhaled again from the ciga-

rette, and then said grimly: "The greatest, finest, most contented country in the history of the world only makes them envious. We have everything but their rotten gospel of revolution, and 'justice' for the masses. So their worms are boring, boring—"

"You think that fellow is making trouble?" Barry asked.

"He is here," Dan answered cryptically. "We haven't anything concrete against him; but his record is enough. And there is no doubt that something is afoot. Something—we'll drag it out in the light of day pretty soon. And then—" Dan fell silent, his face brooding, as though he was looking into the past and the future, seeing things that had best not be put into words.

Barry fell silent also, his mind filled with the memory of the man he had seen back there at the curb. Ivan Alexandranoff. Feline-like, sinister.

CHAPTER IV

Olga Cassarova—Spy

IN Barry's rooms at the Plaza they had a drink, and fell to yarning of old times. Lunch was sent up, and they ate it there, with a bottle of wine, and talked on.

Sight of his kit bags stirred Barry's memory, and as they sat there, he told of the happening on board the ship.

Dan listened with interest. "That razor blade," he asked at the last, "do you still have it?"

"I think so." Barry got up and crossed the room, and felt in the pocket of the suit he had worn the day he came ashore. The box was there, just as he had picked it up and pocketed it when he left the cabin. He gave it to Dan.

Dan walked to the window with it,

and stared at the shiny surface of the blade. "You have a good print here all right," he said. Unfortunately, it would be pretty hard to get any one to believe your story now. She could swear that you found the blade in the passage, or even in her room. She might reverse the charges against you." He smiled slightly.

Barry shrugged. "I have no intention of doing anything about the matter. I would have proceeded at once if I had."

"Why didn't you?"

"I don't know myself," Barry admitted. "There was something about her. And she seemed to be in trouble anyway."

Dan pursed his lips. "Probably a moll who travels the shipping lines all the time. She must have thought you had something valuable along."

"But I didn't. And there was no mark on my bags. That's the only thing that she could have cut with the blade. She seemed to have plenty of time to cut if she had been minded to. Curtains were down, door locked, and all."

"By me," Dan said with a shake of his head, and he closed the box and handed it back. "You say the man who nabbed her was named Harris?"

"That's what she called him. And he called her Olga. I couldn't find out anything else."

Dan looked up sharply. "Olga?" he echoed. "Did you hear her last name?"

"No."

Dan pursed his lips, and took a turn up and down the room. "It must be the same girl," he said, more to himself than to Barry.

"What girl?"

"Olga Cassarova. She just came over from England. The Department tried to keep her out, but there was

some hitch and she came in as sweet as the flowers in June. She is a Russian agent, and that's about as much as we know about her. She's been mixed up with the Bolshies in England—the same crowd that Ivan trained with when he was there. Now she's here for some reason or other. We think we know, but can't be sure."

"What was she doing in my room then?" Barry asked, tapping the match box with the end of a finger nail. "I had nothing that would interest a Russian agent. And if it is the same girl, she wouldn't be stooping to theft."

"No," agreed Dan.

"Then what? I knew subconsciously when I saw her, that there was something funny about her presence there. What was it?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," Dan confessed. "If you had been connected with international intrigue at any time, or knew any of the gang, or were connected with the Service in some manner, there might be an explanation. As it is, I'm stumped."

Dan left in the middle of the afternoon, promising to call up the next day. Barry picked up the latest issue of his favorite magazine and sat down by the window to read for a time.

He was occupied in that manner, silent, still, when a key slipped into his door lock with a little rasp of metal against metal. There was something furtive about that sound that quite precluded any thought that it could be the room maid or one of the hotel staff.

Barry sat up abruptly, and then as the key turned in the lock he got to his feet noiselessly and reached the open door of the clothes closet with three silent steps. He barely had time to draw the door partially shut before his own room door opened and a figure slipped in, and closed the door after it.

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It was several seconds before that figure moved in far enough to come within Barry's range of vision. And when it did, he almost gave an audible gasp of surprise. It was the girl in black, the girl of the Leviathan—Olga Cassarova.

She was dressed in black again, a trim, modish outfit for street wear, including a small close-fitting black hat that came down low over her black hair.

She stood in the middle of the room, Olga Cassarova, poised, alert, listening, searching about with quick, keen glances. There was no mistake this time, no chance that she could have got in the wrong room. She was in the right room, and she knew whose room it was, and what she wanted in there.

Barry almost stopped breathing as he stared out through the small opening at her. And as he did so a score of questions rioted through his mind. What did she want with him? What was the meaning of this second visit? How did she know where he was staying? Even to the hotel and the room. How had she got a key that would fit his door, and why?

She stepped to the door of the bathroom and tried the knob, and when it turned she opened the door and looked in. No one was there, of course. The sight seemed to reassure her. She came back into the room, and went without hesitation to the spot where Barry's two kit bags reposed on the floor. She stooped down over them, looked for a moment, and then picked one of the bags up and placed it on the bed.

She carried a small leather purse. Opening that, she took out a tiny hooked instrument and inserted it in the lock. With a dexterity that was almost an art she worked on the lock, and finally opened it.

All the time Barry stood as though carved from stone, staring at her. He simply could not make himself believe that this young woman was the common thief she seemed to be. Even as he saw her opening the bag he could not believe it. There was nothing inside that had any value. Nothing that would pay her for the trouble of looking him up, getting a key to fit his door and making the risky attempt at entering and stealing.

Still, she worked as if by plan, certain that there was reward of some kind waiting for her. And Barry watched, struggling with himself, not knowing what to do about it.

Finally, as he saw his bag open and her shapely hand dart down inside, he could contain himself no longer. He shoved open the door and walked out into the room.

She heard the sound and whirled, the same small automatic appearing in her hand as if by magic.

This time Barry did not raise his hands; the sight of the weapon, coupled with his knowledge of her record, aroused in him a measure of anger. "Put that down," he said coldly.

If sight of her had surprised him, his sudden presence almost dazed her. She stood there with the gun in her hand, staring at him, saying nothing.

"Put that gun up," Barry ordered, scowling at her.

She started to lower it, and then caught herself and held it steady. The same movement seemed to give her self-control. She asked unsteadily: "What are you doing here? I—I thought I heard you go away."

Barry did not choose to enlighten her. "No matter what you heard, I'm here now. So you were spying on the room, waiting until I went out?"

Her answer surprised him. Her voice was steadier, cooler, with a hint of hysterical laughter bubbling down underneath it. "Certainly. You don't think I would try to come in while you were present, do you?"

"I wouldn't think, from your looks, that you would ever stoop to it," Barry told her. He scored too. A bit of red crept up into the white of her cheeks.

Her chin came up. "What you think," she told him, "does not matter in the slightest."

"Yes, it does," Barry assured her. "For on what I think rests the decision as to whether I call the house detective or not."

"You wouldn't."

"No? Have you stopped to think that you are a common crook? You have entered my room, and opened my locked bag, and were searching it when I walked out on you. There is only one name for that sort of work, and usually only one treatment."

All surprise and anger, all emotion, was out of her face now. She looked at him gravely from her big gray eyes.

"Quite true," she admitted with a slight nod of her head. "Every word that you say is right—but have you stopped to think that I may have had a reason for entering your room this way, and opening your bag?"

Barry raised his eyebrows.

"Reason? Certainly. You must have had. I credit you with more sense than to do things like this for the pleasure of doing it. But—it will take a mighty good reason to cover what you have just done."

She smiled—and the effect was astonishing. It was as if a veil of clouds had been whisked away from a fair, beautiful sky. No longer was she pale, no longer did she appear wearied. Years dropped away from her shoul-

ders. She seemed what, in truth, she was, a beautiful young woman. Young.

"And if I should tell you that there was a very good reason, would it be all right with you?" she asked. "For you must see that I can't be looking for anything to steal."

In that moment Barry found it hard to believe that she could be all that Dan had imputed her to be. Olga Cassarova, Russian agent, Bolshevik, fellow-worker with Ivan Alexandranoff. A creature of the Red Menace. A beautiful lily, with roots thrust deep into the mire and muck of World Revolution.

Hard indeed—and yet here she was.

Barry wiped all expression off his face as he faced her smile. Knowing her for what she was, he knew the smile for what it was. A trap. He had caught her, and now she was trying to use her beauty to get out of it. Well—let her.

"I shall be glad to hear what you have to say," he told her. "It does seem that you are looking in an unlikely place. I never carry valuables with me. In that bag you have just opened there is not a thing of value."

"Perhaps there is. Listen to me—suppose with me. Suppose there was a girl on board ship who had something that was very valuable to her, and a little dangerous if found on her. And suppose that she saw a man on that ship who could make trouble for her if those papers were found—and who had the power to do so. And suppose she got to her cabin, and got the papers and hid them in the first place that came to mind—"

"Did she?" Barry asked without expression.

And the girl nodded. "Yes—she did; I did. I had been making the trip in my cabin, and I went out for a little walk, not knowing Harris was on the

boat. He did not know I was either, until he saw me. I managed to get to my cabin and locked the door before he came up with me. But I knew he would soon find me. I had seen you on the deck, and knew which cabin you had. It would be empty. I took a skeleton key—but the door was unlocked. With a razor blade I slit the inside seam of one of your bags and slipped the envelope containing the papers under the leather lining. You would not be likely to find it, and the customs men would not look. In your effects I found information that you stayed at the Plaza in New York. You would probably go back there.

I was detained on the boat, but I located you here as soon as I was free. I thought it would be easier to get the papers without bothering you. That is why I slipped into your room. But—again I was unlucky, or you have the luck of the devil. You will give the envelope to me, and forget about it?"

She smiled winningly, and put the gun in her purse.

CHAPTER V

Poison Gas

BARRY would have believed her if he had not talked first with Dan Brady. Would, without doubt, have done exactly as she wished him to. It was plain that she was telling the truth—as far as it went. Everything jibed in to support her story—and Dan's also. Olga Cassarova, creature of the Red Menace. This smiling girl, whose hands, perhaps, were tinged with the blood that her associates had shed. He felt a sickish wave of revulsion sweep over him. It could not be true—and yet it was.

"You will let me have the papers?" she asked again, gently, winningly.

Barry heard his voice asking coldly: "They are in the lining of that bag?" "Yes."

"Show me." He crossed to the side of the bed, and bent over the bag.

Her gloved hand pointed. "Down in that corner," she said. "The tiniest rip of the leather. I am sorry about the damage. I will buy a new bag if you wish it. There was no time to think about the harm when I was hiding the papers."

Barry found the place all right—a small slit that he would not have noticed for some time, if ever. And as his fingers explored around the spot he felt the slightest crackle of paper underneath. Carefully he parted the leather and drew those papers out.

They were in a plain envelope, two or three sheets by the feel of them. The envelope was sealed with three small drops of wax, stamped with an intricate mark. At the moment Barry did not try to make out that mark. He stood up.

"You see—I have told you the truth. And now I thank you for the help you have given me." She stretched out her hands for the envelope.

The briefest silence fell over them as they stood thus, Barry with the papers, she with her hand out. In that silence he made his decision, and a tension seemed to fall over them swiftly. With a quick movement he put the envelope in his inside coat pocket.

"Sorry," he declared coolly, "but I think I'll keep them until I know more about this matter."

"They are mine," she said sharply.

"Perhaps. They are mine right now. Possession, you know, is nine points—"

He had looked for anger, but, at that, he was hardly prepared for the passion that swept over her face. "You

will keep what is mine?" she burst out.

"For a time, yes."

The blood drained from her cheeks. "For the last time," she uttered in a tight voice, "I ask for what is mine. I did wrong in putting that envelope in your luggage. But it is mine, and I will have it. Give it to me."

"No," said Barry.

She jerked open the purse she carried—and Barry sprang at her, anticipating her move. She stepped back just as quickly. And the next moment he was facing the same pearl-handled automatic. Queer how deadly it looked. He stopped.

"Now," she said passionately, "give it to me!"

"No."

"I am serious. Give it to me!"

"No," said Barry stubbornly.

He was not angry at her—yet. Rather, greatly irritated. This young woman had ceased to be just a woman. She was Olga Cassarova, companion of Ivan Alexandranoff. What the papers were he did not know, or what her mission was in the country. But she stood against all that he lived for, the ideals, the love of country, of fellow man. She was the enemy of him and his kind. She was not bringing secret papers to this country for no reason at all. Since they were important to her, they would be doubly important to those who were working against her and her associates. Important to men like Dan Brady.

"Put that gun down," he ordered.

How white her face seemed. Little lines were running out from the sides of her mouth as her lips tightened. "Don't be foolish," she whispered huskily. "Give them to me." The small weapon was aimed straight at his face.

Barry was not a coward. He weighed chances swiftly, and cast the

die in his own mind. His chin thrust forward slightly. "If you're going to shoot, get ready," he said grimly, and took a step toward her. A slow step, so that she would not be startled into firing without realizing what she was doing.

He was banking everything on the fact that she was not cold-blooded enough to shoot him down ruthlessly.

She stepped back—and Barry went forward again.

"Stop," she gasped, and there was a note of pleading in her voice. "Stop," she said again.

Barry moved toward her deliberately, right into the face of the weapon. It shook a little, but the muzzle did not waver from his head. The little round hole in the end seemed as big as a silver half-dollar. Common sense urged that he stop, and something else drove him on. He could not back down now.

She seemed to sense his feeling. The gun became steady. She straightened. Her left hand fished a small lacy handkerchief down from that sleeve. And the finger that rested on the trigger contracted with a sudden jerk. In the same moment the handkerchief went to her nose.

Nothing happened. No explosion leaped out at him. But the next instant there was a sharp acrid feeling in his nostrils; and then the world began to swim, things went faint, and strength faded from his muscles.

Barry's mind was working even as he went down. He saw her lower the gun, and sway toward him, still pressing the handkerchief against her nose. He fell suddenly on the floor, and she bent over him, and groped in his pocket, and jerked out the envelope.

The next moment she was away from him, at the door, and gone.

Barry lay there for the space of ten minutes—it might have been fifteen, helpless, but retaining some power of thought. Her weapon had been loaded with gas instead of lead. He was out, how bad he did not know, and she was gone, victorious. He raged at himself for allowing her to get the upper hand in such a manner, and at the same time had to admit that he could not have guarded against it. For how could he have known what manner of weapon she carried?

And in those long minutes there on the floor, one strong purpose was forged from the confused welter of his thoughts. He did not know what it was all about, but the thing had been brought to his very door, and he'd see it through. There was mystery here—and he would tear that mystery aside. There was menace also, and he would scotch that menace as best he could. He had money and brains of a sort. Had also friendship with Dan Brady. If Olga Cassarova was connected with Ivan Alexandranoff, Dan would be interested in her. Perhaps Dan would help, or he could help Dan.

Gradually, as that purpose formed in his mind, the effects of the gas wore off. Strength came back into his body, and his mind cleared fully; and presently he was able to sit up, and then stand up and get to his bed. A little later he was as well as ever, save for a slight shakiness that went away as soon as he got to the window and opened it.

A swift brushing of his suit, a brief look in the glass to see that he appeared all right, and Barry went down to the desk hurriedly. His question there was answered speedily. A young woman had checked out from that floor less than five minutes before.

A bell boy had taken her bags to a

taxi. He did not know what her destination had been.

He would not easily find out either, Barry thought as he turned away. She had gotten clear away, and by now was safe in the wastes of the city, the best place in the world to hide.

It took him one brief moment to realize that he was stumped, unless he could get hold of Dan Brady. And he had not thought to ask Dan where he was staying now. Half an hour of telephoning produced no results. Dan Brady had never been heard of, it seemed, even by some who should have known him.

Barry did not bother to report the case to the police. They might help, and they might not. It would only serve to drag the whole thing out in the papers, to no good cause. That was the last thing he wished. He decided to wait until Dan called him over the telephone in the morning.

CHAPTER VI

Perilous Adventure

BARRY was up the next morning, finished with his breakfast, and reading the paper when Dan called.

"You're just the man I wanted to see," Barry told him thankfully. "I've got some important news to tell you. Come on up."

Dan chuckled. "I'm not calling from the lobby," he said. "What is the news?"

"The girl—Olga—paid me a call after you were here yesterday afternoon, and got some stuff that belonged to her. Stuff she had left in the lining of my best kit bag."

"Are you trying to kid me?" Dan demanded severely.

"No. It's the last thing in the world

I'm thinking of. She put me out with a shot of poison gas, and got away with an envelope. There must have been something very important in it from the way she acted."

"Listen," Dan ordered swiftly, "you sound like you've had a brain wave. But if any part of it's true, don't say anything more. Tell me about it face to face where there is no chance of anyone hearing you. I can't come up there to see you this morning. You'll have to meet me in the park. Say along the south shore of the lagoon. Be there as soon as you can."

"I'll start right away," Barry agreed.

He wondered, as he walked into the park with long strides, what the reason was that prevented Dan from coming up to see him. Wondered also why Dan had cut him off so quickly, and insisted that the story come when they were face to face. It seemed a little far-fetched—and yet Dan knew his business.

Dan was not on the walk that skirted the south side of the lagoon. Two nurse-maids were there, pausing a few moments in their slow promenade for a few bits of gossip. A young policeman stood near, looking at them now and then as though he would welcome a chance to make the twosome a trio. And last but not least a shabby and unshaven individual carrying a seedy valise stood at one corner of the lagoon eying the water vacantly, back to the policeman, the nurse-maids, and Barry.

Even as Barry looked at him, he turned and trudged slowly away.

The walk caught Barry's eye. After a moment he started rapidly after the other. And as he came up, he looked sidewise at the other's face.

It was Dan, more unshaven, dirtier, far shabbier than he had been the day

before. By subtle methods he had completely transformed himself, until he looked thoroughly down and out.

Dan grinned as Barry caught his eye. "Mister," he whined under his breath, "how about a dime for a cuppa cawfee? I ain't had a bite of breakfas'."

"Go to the devil," Barry replied, smiling. "What's the idea of this get-up?"

"Business," said Dan. "Can I sell you a good knife sharpener? One that's guaranteed to put an edge on the best and poorest steel? Only fifty cents, and cheap at half the price." He opened the shabby valise that he carried and displayed a stock of slim whetstones.

"Doesn't the government pay you enough to live on?"

"Shhhh," Dan husked, closing up the valise and walking along beside Barry. "I'm not working for the government. I never heard the name before, hardly. Whetstones is my line, and I live off of it." And then Dan's levity departed and he said: "What's this you were trying to tell me over the phone? Let's get a quiet bench and keep out of sight while we talk."

They found a bench back in the bushes that fringed a stretch of the walk, and Barry told his story. Dan listened closely, frowning slightly at the last, where the matter of the gun and the poisoned gas came in.

"That's a new one," he muttered. "I didn't know they were getting so scientific. Have to keep an eye out for more gas guns."

"What do you make of it?" Barry asked.

"Guess there's no doubt that she's Olga Cassarova now."

"No. I'm perfectly willing to believe that."

"Those papers," said Dan, "must have been pretty important, or incrimi-

nating, for her to take all that trouble with them."

"Barry said: 'They must have been important. If they'd just been incriminating, she could have got rid of them before friend Harris caught up with her.'"

"That's right. Your head is working nicely. Have you still got that box and the razor blade?"

"Yes."

Dan fell into a thoughtful silence.

Barry broke it. "I could have called up the police, and given them her name, description, and the razor blade. They should have hauled her in very shortly. But I thought there might be better ways of dealing with the matter. Some way that would give better results. I tried to get hold of you, but you seemed to be out of sight."

"Was," Dan said. "Working blind, and the department and most every one else have lost sight of me. Then, too, they're not giving out information. If I'd been there they might have called me to the phone; but there wasn't a chance of them telling where I could be found. How did they know who wanted me? Might have been some one on the other side, who merely wanted to get a line on me. All the brains aren't with the government, you know."

"Yes, that's what I thought. Anyway, I made up my mind to wait until I had a talk with you before I did anything."

"Glad you did, old man. It looks like you've stumbled on something that comes pretty close to what I'm working on. There ought to be a way of getting some good out of it. If Olga Cassarova was bringing such important papers over with her, it jibes in with other things that are happening. Gad—I wish you could have kept that en-

velope so we could have seen what was inside."

"I tried to. But I didn't have any idea she was going to give me a dose of gas."

"Of course not. Better luck next time. Question is now—how to make the best of it. She's probably lost herself in the city. The papers are taken care of by now. Won't do any good to have her up. Just put her and the rest of them on their guard, and give them notice that some one knew more about them than they thought."

Barry spoke earnestly. "Look— isn't there some way that I could get in this thing and help work against her and her crowd? She's made a fool of me, and it certainly looks as if some one ought to take a hand against them. I don't mean that in any way that slights you fellows."

"I know."

"I have the time and the money to do almost anything," Barry said eagerly. "I'm not exactly a moron, and—I'd like to do what I can." Barry did not say what had been at the point of his tongue—that he wanted to engage in the business that was woven about Olga Cassarova—he could not put it in words; knew only that if Dan didn't agree to his suggestion he was going it alone.

Dan did not reply for some moments. His unshaved face was grave.

"Barry," he said finally, "I wonder if you know what you're asking."

"I think I do."

"You heard what I said yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Heard me say that Ivan Alexandranoff was not hardly human. That his whole career can be summed up in the one word—blood?"

"Yes."

"I am pretty sure that this girl is

connected with him, or will be before long. She comes from circles that are very close to him."

"Well—"

"It means that if you go after her you will be brought into contact with him. And if he finds that you are liable to get in his way, the chances are almost certain that he will put you out of the way. One of his men, rather. They do things like that without turning a hair."

"Are you trying to frighten me?"

"No," said Dan with a slight smile. "I'm merely trying to give you a picture of what is ahead."

"Is it ahead? Do you think I can do anything?"

"Pretty certain of it. It's not at all regular, but there ought to be a way you can do a lot of good. I've just been turning it over in my mind. You were coming from the other side when you met Olga Cassarova. She was coming from England, and she's been there for some time. Now there is nothing to prevent you from coming from Paris."

"Nothing," Barry agreed, "since I actually was. Had been there for three months. Paris and the south of France."

"We have contact with a man high in communistic circles in France who can give you a recommendation that will go a long way with the members in this country. It doesn't matter whether you have been active over there or not. If you can put across a good imitation of one, a sympathizer, and back it with his O. K., you will be pretty well received over here."

"Even if they know how much money I have? This Olga Cassarova knows my right name now. I'll have to be myself."

"Certainly. That makes it all the

better. There'll be no question about your being an agent of the government. There are plenty of poor deluded fools with money who take up for them. Some actually believe what they profess, and some only think they do. It makes no difference if you are rich. You can get by all the better, backed with word from Rene Garre."

Barry's imagination carried on swiftly. "I didn't know who Olga Cassarova was, or wasn't supposed to. If I can get in contact with her, I'll tell her a yarn, and then get friendly with her."

"Yes. The more I think of this the better I like it. We men are not in the inner circles. They investigate too much. We work from the outside most of the time. But you, obviously not connected with the government, with a past that is clear and open to all the inspection they care to give, can go far. It is so simple that it is good." Dan smacked a fist into the palm of his hand enthusiastically. Then continued:

"Rene Garre is a little man with a great hooked nose, an apparently fiery temper, a hatred of everything that is not communistic, and a wooden leg. He is vain about that leg. Three times in fights he has been wounded in that wooden leg instead of the good one. He thinks there is a charm about it, and always tells of it and brags about it. One of the standard jokes in the inner communistic circles of France, England, and America, is Rene Garre's wooden leg. Remember that. His right hand man there is Leon Coline, tall and slim. And there is Jean Didier, who also does good work for Garre."

"I will have a letter from Garre forged, and cable him to-night to O. K. it, if he is queried about the matter. Take the letter to the offices of the

Brotherhood, the paper that is the rallying point of most of the breed in the city. The main ones will be found around it, and the paper itself goes all over the country. Once there you will be on your own. What you do is up to you; and you can't even see me, for it is probable that they will watch you closely at first. Just ordinary caution. Something is afoot. Something big. Keep your mouth closed and your eyes and ears open.

"And you may die."

Dan said the last as casually as if he was stating a minor fact of little consequence.

The very casualness of it sent a lit-

tle cold shiver down Barry's spine. He shrugged and grinned. "Get me the letter," he said.

"It will be brought to your hotel by a messenger," Dan said. "When you get it, use it as you see fit. But on no account open your mouth about me, or anything that you have learned. Now I've got to get to work myself. Good luck, old man."

Dan held out his hand. They shook—and went their ways, Barry to the left, toward Fifth Avenue, and Dan toward Columbus Circle. And it was, perhaps, better that neither of them could foresee what the future held in store, both for Barry and for Dan.

TO BE CONTINUED



Hoods For Prisoners

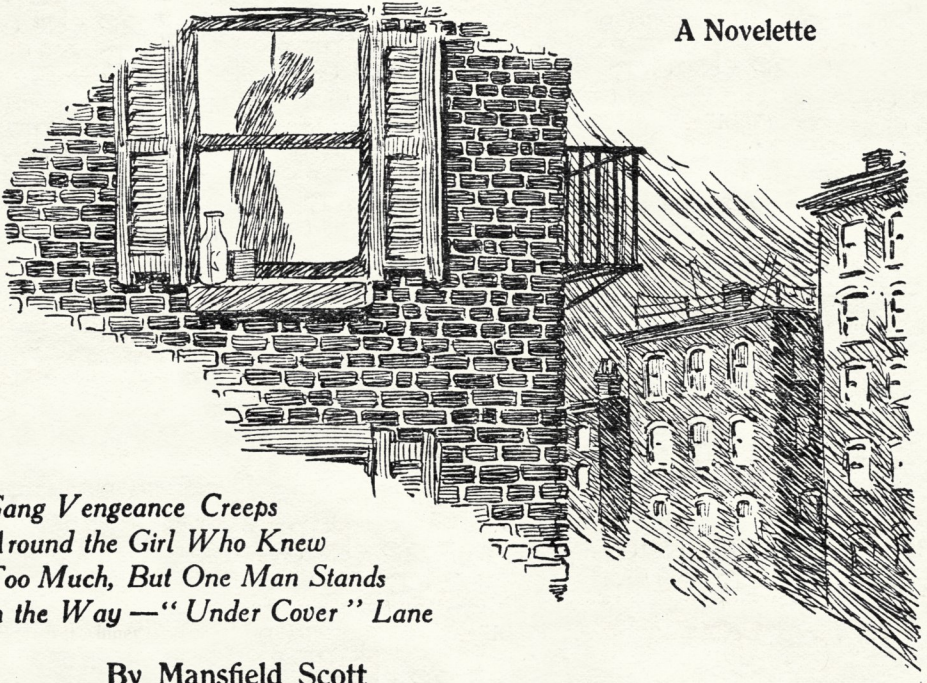
SOLITARY confinement, never a soul to speak to, and a mask always over the face—there is the keynote of the new model French prison Fresnes, near Paris, France. All prisoners are required to wear masks during their waking hours, making it impossible to recognize comrades, should they perchance see one, and preventing the plotting of two or more to escape. The Fresnes prisoner can breathe and see freely through his mask, but he cannot see through other masks.

Special precautions were taken in the chapel of the institution, where all the prisoners gather at least once a day, and oftener on Sunday. Each prisoner has a covered box with a small opening on the side facing the altar. The tiers are arranged on a steep slant up to the rear of the chapel, and the boxes are entered from below. There is no chance for one prisoner to see any other in the chapel, even when it is filled with men.

One of the features of the prison is the zoo-like row of individual outdoor exercise pens. These pens have stone walks and grass plots, and face on the prison garden. They are separated by stone walls. Even in the exercise pens the lone prisoner must wear his prison mask. Fresnes prison is modern in equipment and embodies novel features which other prisons, including many in this country, are watching with interest.

False Witness

A Novelette



*Gang Vengeance Creeps
Around the Girl Who Knew
Too Much, But One Man Stands
in the Way—"Under Cover" Lane*

By Mansfield Scott

AT eight o'clock on Friday evening, it became evident to Foxcroft that a new criminal project was being planned in the underworld. He did not learn the exact nature of the affair, for he was unable to hear enough of the snatches of conversation.

The meeting was in the little back room at the Roost—a room from which many quiet orders had been sent out, and in which, more than once, sentence had been passed upon unfortunates who had incurred gangland's disfavor. Few of the patrons of this notorious resort knew of the little back parlor. One-Eye Beckett, the manager, knew, and several of the waiters; but to all appearances the space was only a part of the big wine locker which adjoined the gaudy clubroom.

On occasions, nevertheless, there were secret gatherings there—as on the Friday evening when Foxcroft learned that a plot was afoot.

He sat with "Bugs" Flaherty, a gunman, at the outer end of the room, close to a narrow back stairway which led downward three floors to an alley. Both men were silent, sipping liquor, awaiting orders from the group around a table a few feet away.

The talk at the table was in low voices; and the intermittent pounding of jazz on the opposite side of the partition, together with sounds of hilarity from the booths and tables, kept Foxcroft from hearing all.

He well knew the identity of those present. F. Henderson "Stuffy" McHugh, politician and gang leader, dom-

inated the group, holding the others' attention with his bright eyes while he accepted or rejected their suggestions. There was a flush upon McHugh's cheeks to-night, an extra keenness in his glance; and Foxcroft felt that it boded ill for some one. Then there were Murphy and Culhane, runners for the biggest gang lawyers; a bootlegger, Sawtell; and Jack Conlon, proprietor of a chain of gambling houses.

"Aw, it's a cinch!" The bootlegger spoke in rough assurance. "It'll be dead open and shut—"

"But get this," interposed Culhane, tall and beady-eyed, tapping the table with his forefinger. "You've got to be darn certain he's in his rooms at twelve-thirty, and *alone*."

"We'll make sure of that," said Jack Conlon.

Then for several minutes Foxcroft could hear little. At intervals Conlon

vigorously nodded his small, round head. The gaming-house keeper had a repulsive face, and this evening it wore a leer. His cheek bones stood out prominently.

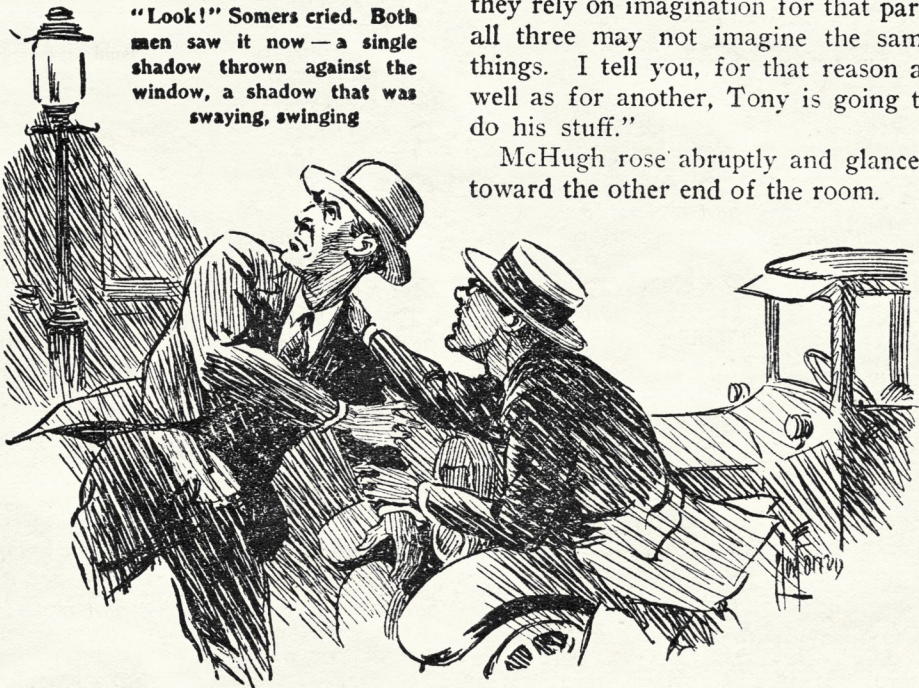
At length Stuffy McHugh's voice broke in, smooth, rich, and forceful. "Now, you fellows let me handle that end of it. I'm not a lawyer, but neither am I a fool. Tony must do his stuff. That's just where you've gone wrong once or twice before. You think the details aren't important—"

"But what's the need of it, chief," Conlon protested, "if Massey and Pearson will swear they seen him there? And then there's Benny—a coupla grand'll buy his testimony any day."

"I've told you, I'll handle this. It's all right for three men to swear a thing happened at a certain place—but under cross-examination they'll have to go into details before and after. And if they rely on imagination for that part, all three may not imagine the same things. I tell you, for that reason as well as for another, Tony is going to do his stuff."

McHugh rose abruptly and glanced toward the other end of the room.

"Look!" Somers cried. Both men saw it now—a single shadow thrown against the window, a shadow that was swaying, swinging



"Bugs—there's a job for you to-night. Foxy—we'll not need you."

Foxcroft nodded, set down his glass, and pushed back his chair, while his companion crossed to join the others. When the gang leader said that a man wasn't needed, it meant that he wasn't wanted. Foxcroft knew better than to invite displeasure by remaining. He took up his cheap straw hat, opened the door, and stumbled down the long, steep, creaking stairway to the alley at the rear of the building.

The fragments that he had overheard had left him perplexed and uncertain. All of the gangsters, by their tense, quiet demeanor, had made it plain that the occasion was momentous. It might prove an evil night indeed for the unknown victim against whom their plans were being directed!

The Roost was at the top of an old brick building on Columbia Street, in the heart of gangland. Crossing thoughtfully toward an intersecting thoroughfare which led to his third-rate rooming house, Foxcroft caught sight of a crowd gathered on a corner a block farther south. He advanced with interest.

There was a raid in progress—a raid on a notorious dive, Hurley's gambling joint. Two patrol wagons waited outside, and the lower floors of the structure swarmed with officers in plain-clothes. Foxcroft shook his head grimly. Here was another slap for the big mob—a raid conducted within a stone's throw of their leaders' conference in the back room at the Roost!

As he moved on, he passed a knot of gangsters on the opposite corner. They were watching the police and muttering darkly. He paused, ostensibly to light a cigarette.

"Leonardos—!"

"He never comes wit' th' cops."

"Dat's all right wait! De dirty skunk will turn up one o' dese nights!"

"Leonardos—the—!"

II

FOX CROFT smiled oddly, bitterly, a twisted smile, as he walked through the poorly lighted thoroughfare. Here was an example of the reward of the common crooks, the vast majority of crooks. They weren't even permitted to share in inside information necessary for their own protection. It was Leonardos, editor of the *Beacon*, the reform newspaper, whom they blamed for the campaign against gang-controlled interests; it was Leonardos whom they hated and threatened—with never a thought of the man *behind* Leonardos!

Stuffy McHugh and a few more at the top knew, of course. They were aware that there was another with whom they must reckon; an outsider, a man who had planned the whole long series of raids and prosecutions, and who had signed a contract to rid the city of organized gang rule. A very few knew also that their arch-enemy's name was Lane—"Under Cover" Lane—a consulting expert. Yet even the chief, McHugh, didn't guess the whole truth.

The vast campaign had been almost ruinous for McHugh. One by one, his biggest enterprises had been halted; police captains in the gang districts had been moved about like chessmen; and nearly all of the mob's best friends had been transferred. And McHugh laid the blame upon the police commissioner, wondered at his unerring knowledge; he didn't suspect that the commissioner's hand had been forced by the Governor, nor that the latter's information had come from—Under Cover Lane!

Foxcroft gave a quiet, hollow laugh. Perhaps Lane's work was nearly ended—this time might be the last! He knew of the sums offered by different gang leaders for the exposure of the secret investigator who had cut off their enormous profits. In Cincinnati, in Cleveland and Brooklyn and other cities, Lane's identity had never been known.

He had directed huge drives against law-defying organizations: yet in every case, others had received the credit. The present task might have a different outcome—a single slip meant the end.

The end! There wouldn't be the slightest doubt about that part. It would come without warning, in a flash; and through all the underworlds would spread a murmur of relief and satisfaction. In gangland there is no hatred so deadly as that which the mob holds toward an agent who works from the inside; he is called a snitcher, a stool pigeon, a *rat*!

Crossing the street, the man known as Foxcroft entered a small rooming house, a dingy and unattractive place like hundreds in the South End. He slipped up the stairs to his room, where he lit the gas, drew the shades, and went to work at once with the thoroughness of one who realized that his life might depend upon his care.

A cracked and dusty mirror hung facing the light, reflecting an oblong patch on the faded wall paper. It was a lean and sallow man of forty, prematurely gray, whom the glass first revealed; a man cheaply yet flashily clothed, with several gold teeth prominent among others broken and darkened, and with hollow, pale, bitter eyes. The underworld was well acquainted with this individual—Foxcroft, inveterate gambler, rapidly aging, buffeted by the winds of chance.

But in a few minutes an amazing change had taken place. The flaring check suit, the bright shirt and tie, were discarded, and the man donned plain, quiet apparel. His sallow, dry complexion disappeared beneath a dampened cloth, and a sponge dipped in dye hid temporarily the gray streaks in his thinning hair. His eyes lost their sunken appearance. Finally he took from his mouth his full set of false teeth, and opened a wallet which he kept in his pocket.

In this wallet were two other sets of plates. One, much more repulsive than that with the gold teeth which he had just removed, displayed only two crumbling fragments adorning the lower jaw and one above. The third set were faultless—small, white, and regular. He selected these, and his transformation was complete.

No longer was Foxcroft, the gangster and gambler, reflected in the mirror. A different man, erect, well-poised, square-jawed, had taken his place. The highest executives of several states knew this man, and listened attentively when he spoke.

Opening a drawer which he kept locked, Under Cover Lane paused, glancing at an assortment of hats and caps. He chose a dark felt, despite the warm evening. Turning out the gas, he quietly raised the shade and window at one end of the room, peering out.

A musty odor rose from the back yard below. There was no sound. Lane groped for the railing of the fire escape and softly descended. In silence he made his way through an alley to the street.

From the point where he emerged, he walked three blocks, then signaled a passing taxicab. Riding to a corner well outside of the South End, he en-

tered a drug store and slipped into a telephone booth.

A man's deep, well-modulated voice answered his call.

"Donaldson?"

"Yes. Who's speaking?"

Lane's reply was quiet, in a tone very different from Foxcroft's whine. "My initials are J. B. L."

He heard a quick word of recognition.

"I must talk with you, Donaldson, to-night."

"Yes. Well, I must talk with you," said the other. "Er—where are you now?"

"Public booth."

"Well, you know that young woman who stepped into the situation at the Roost a few months ago, and spoiled some very interesting plans in regard to marked money? Beatrice Ashton is her name. She phoned me just now."

Lane caught his breath. "You don't say! Knew where to find you, eh?"

"Apparently she looked me up. The—er—" He dropped his voice slightly.

"The gang have been after her."

"Eh? Well, they would!" was the instant, bitter comment. "They must have found out she was the one that queered the game—although I tried to cover it."

"Listen. I don't want to say any more over this line. Miss Ashton is on her way up here to consult with me now. Take a taxi and you can get here first. I'd like to have you present."

"I'll be right up!" replied the under cover man.

III

BEATRICE ASHTON had found herself involved in the situation without warning. For months she had been in dread of such a meet-

ing, had been constantly on guard, until in recent weeks the comparative tranquillity of her life had lulled her almost to a sense of security. The more unnerving, therefore, had been her experience.

As she stepped from an uptown subway entrance a few minutes before nine on Friday evening, only a sharp observer could have guessed that she was in a state of uncertainty and uneasiness bordering upon terror. There was, perhaps, a hint of forced resolution about her firmly set lips, an unusual watchfulness in the glance of her blue-gray eyes. And, as she walked briskly away from the entrance, one might have noticed that occasionally she glanced backward and across the street, pausing at times as though looking for a friend.

It was not a friend, however, for whom she was on the watch; and in her heart a growing fear conflicted with a sense of obligation. Of one fact she was certain: her danger, if already great, might soon be greater. To be observed arriving at her present destination might lead to the more dire consequences.

Accordingly, when she had crossed several intersections and arrived opposite a large apartment building where the figures 447 stood out dimly on the glass of the main entrance, she stopped, carefully regarding each of the other pedestrians within view, and waiting until each had passed out of sight. An automobile had drawn to the curb a short distance down the street, and she did not move until all of its occupants had alighted and disappeared. Then, watching her chance, she crossed the busy thoroughfare.

Entering the door numbered 447, Beatrice glanced quickly at the several bells, pressed one, received a response,

and heard the clicking of the latch on the inner door. She ascended hastily to the second landing, where, in an oblong of light, a pleasant, dark-eyed woman of thirty-five stood smiling and returning her glance with quick interest.

"I'm looking for Mr. Donaldson's suite," Beatrice said.

"Yes. Come in. I am Mrs. Donaldson."

Stepping over the threshold, the girl passed through a well furnished hallway to a comfortable room lined with bookshelves, where a large, rugged man of uncertain age, who was busy at a writing desk, rose instantly and welcomed her with quiet courtesy. He had a prominent chin and quick, active, light blue eyes.

"I'm very grateful for your interest, Mr. Donaldson."

"It is I who should be grateful, Miss Ashton," he replied.

A warm glance from Mrs. Donaldson showed that she shared her husband's knowledge of events that had occurred at an underworld rendezvous several months earlier. She excused herself politely and left the room.

"I hope I'll not take too much of your time," Beatrice declared, when they were seated.

"Don't feel troubled about that in the least," the investigator assured her. "My first concern at present is to hear your experience. I judge from what you said over the telephone that it was a rather trying one."

He had taken a chair near a wide, dark-curtained doorway which apparently led to another room. The curtain was fully drawn.

"It was startling—terrifying," she answered, meeting his gaze earnestly, "although, of course, I've realized for weeks that sooner or later such a meeting would be likely to take place."

"You met one of the underworld characters? One of the gangsters?"

She hesitated, then spoke a trifle timidly. "I—I'm not sure, Mr. Donaldson, how much you know about—about—past events."

"I know nearly everything about them," he returned frankly. "That's why I'm grateful."

"You've learned about the marked money?"

He nodded. "It was to have been planted in my pocket."

"Then—then you know also about my assisting the gangsters?"

"I know that you did so without knowledge of what you were doing."

She drew a deep breath, conscious of relief mingled with amazement.

"Since that evening, Miss Ashton—have you found other employment?"

"Yes. I have a position in the advertising department of King, Hadley & Company—drawing pictures for clothing advertisements. The manager has spoken of having me transferred to their big store in New York, and I've been hoping the change would come soon. As I said, I've been living rather in terror of the very meeting which took place to-night."

"Recently it has been my custom to have supper at the Lisbon Café, a very quiet, pleasant place not far from where I am rooming. I was there this evening when a man suddenly stepped to my table and sat down in the chair opposite mine. I looked up in surprise, which changed to horror when I saw who he was; and for an instant I was so frightened that I couldn't speak at all. The man was the gang leader, Mr. McHugh."

"You mean F. Henderson McHugh, the politician?"

"Yes. It was he who—who employed me, because of my ability to

draw people's faces from memory. Since the night when he sent me to place money in your pocket, I hadn't seen him. I was terrified; I glanced wildly around to see how many others of his gang were in the café. And then, all at once, I noticed that Mr. McHugh's manner didn't appear to be menacing—he was smiling.

"He spoke to me then, asked me why I had disappeared so suddenly; and I still couldn't find words to answer. He said, 'You don't think we hold it against you because you slipped on that one occasion?'"

"Bitter words came to my lips when he said that, and I was on the point of denouncing him openly, regardless of consequences, but at that instant he made another remark, a bewildering one.

"'Come,' he said, 'tell me, Miss Beatrice. You don't think I'm so ungrateful as that—after all the fine work you had done previously?' And then, just in one amazing instant, I realized the truth—that Mr. McHugh didn't know I had spoiled his plans intentionally, but thought I had become confused and had made a mistake.

"How he could have failed to learn what really happened," the girl added, "is beyond my conception! Because there was the man Foxcroft—I threatened him with a pistol—and he was one of the gang! The only possible explanation is that Foxcroft, for some reason, didn't make a full report to McHugh; perhaps he realized that the gang's revenge would be a dreadful one."

Donaldson was listening intently, his face expressionless.

"Well," she continued, "the instant I realized the true situation, I checked the remarks that I had been about to make. If Mr. Stuffy McHugh didn't

know that I had intentionally upset his scheme, I certainly didn't want him to know! I made an excuse, explaining that I had obtained a well-paying position with a clothing firm, and that I had been afraid my error at the night club would make it impossible for me to continue as one of his secret agents.

"To my still greater astonishment, he leaned across the table and said quietly: 'Miss Beatrice, there is an exceedingly important matter that I'd like to send you on to-night.'"

"He added: 'If it's on account of insufficient salary that you deserted us, I'll increase it. I will pay you two hundred dollars for to-night's work.'"

The investigator sat forward quickly. "Did you accept?"

"I pretended to, yes. I did so because I was afraid a refusal would anger him, and I didn't know how many others were close at hand."

"Then he told you what he wanted you to do?"

She nodded.

IV

"OF all the assignments that Mr. McHugh ever gave me," Beatrice declared, "I think this is the strangest, the most incomprehensible. As was usually the case before, it's a piece of work which makes use of my ability to draw accurate likenesses of faces from memory. At ten minutes after twelve to-night I am expected to leave my lodging house—"

"Pardon me just a moment," Donaldson interrupted. "Did you tell McHugh where you are living now?"

"I told him in a rather vague way," was her answer. "I didn't give him the number of the house, yet I didn't say anything actually misleading, for I thought he might have me followed home—"

"He didn't ask for your telephone number?"

"Not when he learned that it wasn't a private phone."

"I see. Proceed, Miss Ashton."

"At ten minutes after twelve I am expected to leave my lodging house in the West End, take a cab, and ride at once to the corner of Mortimer Avenue and Groveton Street, in the South End, alighting opposite the Mortimer Avenue car barn. A Mortimer Avenue surface car leaves this barn at twelve twenty-five every night. I am expected to be a passenger on that car."

"Then, according to McHugh's plan, one of his gangsters will enter the car at the next corner, a man named Flaherty, in a dark brown suit and cap. We are ordered to pay no attention to each other. But farther along, at Albion Avenue, another man will enter. He will be of very dark complexion, wearing a stylish blue suit with a light line in it, and a straw hat. He will be reading a Greek newspaper, Mr. McHugh said."

"This stylishly dressed man will ride across town in the car until it arrives at Columbia Street. There he will suddenly glance out of the window, give a sharp, quick gasp, throw down his newspaper, and hasten out, signaling to the conductor to stop. The first man, Flaherty, will then pick up the newspaper, make a grimace when he finds that it is in Greek, and lay it on the seat."

"Meanwhile, I am expected to watch the other passengers, and to select any two who are together, and who have observed the incident at Columbia Street. I am to indicate my choice to Flaherty, and he is to follow these two people to their destination, wherever it may be. I am instructed to leave the car at Dover Street, then

to return home and draw close likenesses of the two people whom I have chosen."

The investigator was puzzled.

"You mean that you are to draw pictures of any two people in the car whom you choose?"

"Yes—any two who are together. Mr. McHugh says there are always quite a number of passengers on that car, late home comers, and he wishes me to choose two of the most respectable. Aside from that, the selection rests entirely with me."

"And Flaherty, you say, is to follow whatever pair of strangers you indicate? He isn't to follow the stylish man with the Greek newspaper?"

"No. That man leaves the car at Columbia Street."

"Humph," said Donaldson. He sat in silence for a moment with heavy brows contracted. At length he shook his head.

"I confess, Miss Ashton, that at present I'm in the dark about this proposition. You've narrated everything that McHugh told you?"

"Yes, Mr. Donaldson. When he and I parted at the door of the café, he understood that I would be in the street car as directed, and would bring the two pen drawings to his residence to-morrow morning. I went to my lodging house, very much unnerved by the interview, and quite at a loss what I should do. I thought of going at once to the police. Then I decided that it might be better to consult with you."

"I'm very glad you did," was his comment. "The matter interests me deeply."

"And then, another reason why I came," she told him, "I felt that after having done so much, unknowingly, for the other side—so much against

the commissioner of public safety and other honorable men—I felt it was my duty to place these facts before you right away.”

He nodded. “You may be sure that I appreciate it. Your information may serve to prevent some very serious crime. I only wish that I knew more of the details—” He hesitated, glancing at her in a quick, thoughtful manner.

He rose and took a chair nearer. “I wonder, Miss Ashton, if you would be willing to be of still further service to us. If you are still troubled by any slight qualms of conscience at having done so much for the other side—would you consider squaring the account by undertaking to do a little for us? I promise that you will be well paid for your time.”

For a moment the girl did not answer. With her whole heart she shrank from further contact with the underworld, its furtive denizens, its ugliness and greed. The thought of returning to such surroundings filled her with nameless dread. Donaldson seemed to realize what was passing through her mind.

“Let me resolve the question to more definite terms,” he suggested. “You spoke of being transferred to New York by your firm. I certainly advise it, and I think you should ask to have it arranged as soon as possible. While you remain here, you are in danger of suspicion by McHugh and his gang. If you remain passive, if you fail to keep your agreement with McHugh to-night, you merely increase the risk of suspicion. Therefore, why not take sides with us?”

“What would you like me to do?” she asked doubtfully.

“To follow McHugh’s instructions to-night exactly as he has given them

—then to return here and report to us, drawing pen sketches of all the actors in this little piece of melodrama. Then, in the morning, if McHugh pays you, accept the money; and we’ll see that it is turned over to the proper authorities later.”

She hesitated, a deep uncertainty in her eyes.

“But—but suppose,” she objected, “that the gangster, Foxcroft, should betray me? He might not maintain silence if he saw that I was about to do his friends more harm.”

Donaldson smiled faintly. “I think I can guarantee—” He stopped.

“Did some one knock?” Beatrice asked.

He glanced toward the hall, then shook his head.

“I was going to say, Miss Ashton, that the danger of Foxcroft’s betraying you cannot possibly become any greater than it is already, now that his chief has engaged you to do more work. He probably knows of it. If he has failed to speak so far, he can scarcely do so now, for he would have to explain his previous silence. In any event, we, too, are rather well organized, and I think we shall be able to warn you promptly in case of danger.”

She drew a long, steady breath.

“I—I certainly think, in the interests of justice, I should do as you request—”

Donaldson rose, thanking her heartily.

“You must permit me to take you to your neighborhood in my car. We can’t risk your being recognized in this vicinity. Now—” He paused again. “I’m considering whether or not you should make your report to me to-night.”

Beatrice turned her head. “I’m sure some one tapped. In that direc-

tion." She nodded toward the room beyond the drawn curtain.

He gave her a swift, half-humorous glance.

"Spirit knockings, perhaps, Miss Ashton. I think you should return here with your report to-night, no matter how late it is. I'll send two operatives to make sure that you aren't followed or molested on the way. One moment—I'll send for my car."

Mrs. Donaldson said good night to the girl, and presently the investigator accompanied her downstairs to the front door, where his sedan was waiting, his chauffeur at the wheel. Donaldson was quick to observe Beatrice's apparent surprise.

"My profession is one where a chauffeur is really needed," he remarked as they stepped into the car. "When I move from place to place, I need all my faculties to give to the problem at hand; I can't be obliged to watch red and green lights."

He explained that there was one stop to be made; and soon afterward they were joined by a well-built, freckled youth wearing spectacles, who was waiting at the curb. Beatrice started in surprise.

"Miss Ashton—Mr. Somers. Oh, you've met?" said Donaldson.

"Mr. Somers of the National Detective Agency?" the girl asked.

"Yes!" replied the youth. "And I certainly remember you, Miss Ashton! Wasn't it you—the evening when you met with an accident—"

Beatrice did not explain that the accident had been a sham, and Donaldson judged that she didn't wish Somers to know of her previous alliance with the underworld.

In the West End, they left the girl within a few blocks of her lodging house, and she promised to return to

Donaldson's home as soon as she had completed the night's assignment.

When she had hurried from view, the younger detective turned a puzzled glance upon his companion.

"Who is she, Mr. Donaldson? And what's up to-night?"

The other gave him a swift look, half amused and half anxious, as he answered:

"She's a mighty smart girl! And I'm afraid there's the devil to pay!"

V

DONALDSON'S face wore an expression of deep gravity, his lips were firmly set, as he alighted from his sedan on Temple Street at nine in the morning. He spoke briefly to his chauffeur, then entered the building where the car had stopped. An elevator carried him to the second floor, which was occupied by the editorial and news rooms of a small daily newspaper, the *Beacon*, owned by a wealthy resident of the city, Colonel Franklin Graye, who was interested in law enforcement.

Entering, Donaldson stepped at once to the office of the editor in chief in a manner of familiarity. An erect, energetic man of thirty-five, with a keen Grecian countenance, bounded to his feet.

"Ah—Donaldson! Good morning!"

"Good morning, Leonardos," returned the investigator, very quietly.

The other sobered. "You don't seem in good humor to-day."

"Oh, I'm always in good humor," said Donaldson, taking several papers from a portfolio. "I've brought my operatives' reports."

He crossed to the most comfortable chair, sat down slowly, and thereupon lit a cigar—to the young editor's obvious annoyance.

Leonardos had become widely known through the *Beacon's* campaign against gang rule and crime. In a little village not far from Athens he had begun life humbly, dreaming, as he grew older, of the time when he would journey to America and provide comfort for his large family. But in America his way had been long and hard, an uphill battle.

Hampered by the necessity of learning English, handicapped by race prejudice, Leonardos had struggled on, through college, through a school of journalism, unfaltering in his determination to achieve success. One friend there had been whose advice and encouragement had proved invaluable. Then, in later years, had come a modest fame, and with it new hopes—a girl; but Leonardos hadn't been able to think much of her yet; his family in Greece still needed nearly all that he could earn.

Donaldson sat regarding him steadily through a swirl of cigar smoke.

"That's a nifty suit you have on today, Leonardos," he remarked at length.

"Do you like it? I bought it at King, Hadley's."

"Indeed?" The older man raised his heavy eyebrows. "That's curious. I know a young lady who designs advertisements for them. Yes; I like the suit. That light gray line goes with the blue very nicely."

Leonardos was eager to hear the operatives' reports. The recent work was of great importance in his drive against organized gambling.

"We want these taken down, together with my verbal interpolations," Donaldson suggested, shuffling his papers. "Has your estimable assistant, Winston, got in yet?"

"Winston is not an assistant edi-

tor," Leonardos corrected with dignity. "He is a man without previous newspaper experience, whom Colonel Graye engaged to act as my special assistant and secretary, in connection with the law enforcement campaign." He rose and went to the door in exasperation.

"Not here, as usual! Ten minutes after nine. The fellow keeps banker's hours, comes and goes as he pleases! I'll have a stenographer step in—"

"No. One of these reports has rather tough language."

Leonardos breathed a sigh of uneasiness.

"I don't like this Winston," he said. "He is too inquisitive. And twice he has had the temerity to offer me suggestions. S-sh! Here he is—"

The special secretary, a lean, rather sharp faced man of forty, entered and hung his hat in a closet.

"Winston, we have some material to be taken down in shorthand," Leonardos directed with a frown.

Without answering, the newcomer obtained a pencil and pad and took a chair at a desk near the door. Donaldson at once began reading the reports, adding comments at intervals.

Suddenly he paused and again regarded the editor.

"By the way, where were you late last night, Leonardos?"

It brought a scowl to the other's keen, dark features.

"Surely that is immaterial. I was at home after eleven."

"That is, at your new apartment? Were you alone?"

"Of course." Then sharply the editor caught his breath. "But, now that you speak of it, there was a very peculiar occurrence late last night!"

"M-mm!" said Donaldson dryly. "Well, as a certain associate of mine

might remark, there would have been! What happened?"

Leonardos cast an uncertain glance toward his special secretary before explaining quietly:

"Exactly at twelve thirty I was awakened by the bell. I rose and answered through the speaking tube, but received no reply from below. This made me somewhat uneasy. I put on the light. Then I stepped quietly to the open window, and, as I did so, several men who had been at the mouth of an alley across the street disappeared."

The investigator's countenance was grave. He thoughtfully tapped the ashes from his cigar.

"I, too, encountered a peculiar situation last night," he stated. "It was brought to my attention by a young—" He stopped. "When I was first told of the matter last evening I misread its significance completely."

"Plans had been made by McHugh's crowd for a stylishly dressed, dark-complexioned man to be in the twelve twenty-five Mortimer Avenue car; and I thought the man in question was a well-known gunman, Frankie the Greek, framing an important alibi. You see, it was clearly a case where two strangers were to be located, persons who had observed this particular man in the car, and who would be called later as witnesses. But the matter has now taken a very different aspect."

Leaning forward, he drew an envelope from his pocket. "I'm afraid that the new aspect is unmistakably indicated by these several pen sketches."

Again Leonardos turned his head toward his assistant. "Have you any further dictation?" he asked Donaldson.

"Yes; let Winston remain. And

now look at these first two drawings and see if you recognize either face."

A man of sixty and one much younger had been represented on separate slips of paper. There was a distinct family resemblance.

"These two men were selected at random from among the passengers in the car. So far we don't know their identity."

The editor shook his head. "I have never seen either."

"Then look at this man." Donaldson offered a third sketch.

"That's a gangster, 'Bugs' Flaherty," said Leonardos at once.

"Right. And now what about *this* man?"

"W-why—!" The other started. "It—it appears to be my own likeness!"

"M-mm," Donaldson mused. "So it does. You will be surprised to learn that this individual was seen by my informant in the Mortimer Avenue electric car at twelve thirty last night. He was reading a Greek newspaper—or, rather, pretending to. His eyes weren't moving."

Leonardos was troubled. "Why didn't you bring your informant to my office?"

For a moment Donaldson hesitated. He had avoided bringing Beatrice Ashton because Under Cover Lane had deemed the move inadvisable; but Lane did not wish any one connected with the *Beacon* to know that he was now in full charge of the work.

"Listen to this carefully," Donaldson urged. "You are facing an ugly situation. You're probably about to be framed. I've warned you often that you shouldn't live alone, shouldn't go around alone—"

"Fiddlesticks!" replied the young editor. "I am not afraid of the mob

in this city. They are always threatening. They've been trying for years to frame the head of the National Detective Agency—"

"And why have they never succeeded? Because, wherever he goes they're afraid he may have operatives near by; they don't dare risk false testimony. At present, my friend, the whole underworld is seething with hatred of you. For months you've been pushing the big gambling ring extremely hard—Jack Conlon's three joints in particular."

"Jack Conlon's yes!" agreed Leonardos, and a deep, warm light crept into his dark eyes.

"It was my dear friend's last case," he explained. "The Rev. Mr. Wentworth. To him I owe everything. He was working to close Conlon's chain of establishments when he died; and then"—he bent forward earnestly, a new intensity in his voice—"and then, even before Mr. Wentworth was in his grave, a dastardly traitor was at work, selling out his cases to the mob!"

Much moved by the discussion, the editor rose, looking at his watch. "You must excuse me for a few minutes, Donaldson. I have an important engagement."

With another troubled glance at the four pen drawings, and a stare of dissatisfaction toward his assistant, he left the room.

VI

DONALDSON came to his feet slowly, brushing ashes from his clothes, and peered over Winston's shoulder.

"Are you taking this down accurately?" he asked.

The secretary turned. "Could you do any better?"

"Probably not; but you might make

it look something like shorthand. Leonardos was looking askance at the pad as he went out."

"Eh? Well, he would!" was the man's response. "He's too damned suspicious of me to have time for much else!"

"But I mustn't blame him too much," he added. "He has the most thankless job in this city. A man who works for a reformer has either got to be a crook, or be called one. What do you make of this now?"

Donaldson regarded him soberly. "It's beginning to take pretty definite shape, isn't it?"

"They've found a man who looks almost exactly like Leonardos. The two strangers are to be located by the gang and summoned, to testify that they saw him leave that car in considerable excitement at Columbia Street. They want corroboration; civilian testimony is worth twice as much as police testimony in most cases. They'll be able to bring almost any charge!"

"This other Greek, wearing the right clothes, is a dead ringer for Leonardos. He purposely attracted attention to himself—"

The man at the desk shook his head.

"Not a Greek, Donaldson. An Italian."

"Why do you believe so?"

"In the first place, because of his name, Tony. McHugh refused to take chances on a pure tissue of lies—Tony must do his stuff. Then you know Miss Ashton said the man in the car wasn't reading his newspaper, only pretending."

"If you were in that fellow's place, and had an open newspaper before you for appearances, you'd read without consciously doing so, even though you read the same paragraphs over and

over. Wouldn't you—eh? But this man's eyes never moved—he didn't read. Why didn't he? Because he couldn't. Eh? He's not a Greek; he's an Italian."

He tapped the pen sketches with a lean forefinger. "We may be able to beat this thing yet. Have copies made out of this Italian's picture. Send three or four good men to scour the South End for him. Send others to the North End. If we can hit this before it breaks—"

Somers and other operatives were dispatched, each with a sketch of the mysterious Tony as well as a photograph of Leonardos. All efforts, however, to locate the ringer, who had impersonated the young editor, were fruitless; and by Sunday evening Lane and Donaldson were convinced that the man had left the city.

On Monday the blow fell.

Donaldson first learned of it when he heard newsboys shrieking as he descended from the office of the National Detective Agency on State Street. Gradually the significance of their phrases came to him. He snatched a paper from an urchin's hand.

REFORM AGITATOR HELD IN HUGE THEFT PLOT

The details were clear at last. Leonardos, editor of the *Beacon*, was under heavy bail, together with "Big Bill" Bonnell, a stick-up man with a long record, and Fred Loger, who was already facing trial on a bank robbery charge. Evidence had been unearthed, it was said, of a conspiracy between Leonardos and the two hold-up men to loot a chain of gambling houses on the busiest nights, when many thousands could be taken.

The account added that Loger and Bonnell had been arrested while at-

tempting a robbery at one of the gaming parlors early Saturday morning, after police had shadowed them from a meeting place in the cellar of the ruined South End Church at Mortimer Avenue and Columbia Street. Loger's subsequent admissions had led to the apprehension of Leonardos, who was said to have been present at the meeting.

"You see?" Donaldson remarked, as he sat in his comfortable living room that evening with Under Cover Lane. "Loger's part in the game is clear enough. He's there to turn State's evidence. Why shouldn't he, when he's already facing a long term on another charge?"

His companion lit a cigarette and nodded bitterly.

"Their aim," Donaldson continued, "is to deal our campaign a terrific blow by showing that our supposed leader has been in cahoots with bandits. Brought to court with these two hardened criminals, Leonardos will be prejudged as surely as fate. Unless we can prevent it—"

"We must find Tony," the undercover man insisted.

"Yes; that's our one chance. But I have no doubt that he's been sent many miles away. He probably doesn't live near here, anyway, or they wouldn't have felt safe in using him. I suggest that we interview every railroad and steamship ticket agent."

Lane nodded. "And while we're about it, let's match them at their own game. They engaged Miss Ashton to draw the witnesses' pictures so they'd be sure of locating them afterward. Now, if Tony looks just like Leonardos, then Leonardos looks just like Tony.

"Eh? Get me? Don't rely wholly on an inanimate sketch when you inter-

view the ticket agents. Present Leonardos in person. His face might jog the ticket seller's memory. But don't let him talk—his voice may not match Tony's so closely."

The effect of the accusation upon the young editor had been peculiar. His was an artistic and idealistic temperament; not at all a suitable type to deal with crime and corruption. It wasn't so much the serious charge that had unnerved and crushed him; it was the experience of being placed in the dock between habitual lawbreakers, vicious gunmen.

"It will be in the Greek papers, of course," he told Donaldson in an odd, harsh voice. "My family will see it."

He breathed a shuddering sigh. "Will you stand by me? The worst is to come. I know it would kill my mother if she should read of my being sent to prison."

"But if it was an unjust conviction—"

Leonardos shook his head hopelessly. "She wouldn't understand."

"Well, you're not in prison yet, old man."

"Will you stand by me Donaldson?" begged the younger, seeking his face with his deep, dark eyes. "You are almost the only friend I have—"

"No; you have at least one other, although you may not realize it—a very powerful friend. We'll do our part, and you must help."

There was little time in which to work. The district attorney, aroused by the discovery that a reformer had stooped to crime, had promised to push the trial with all possible speed. While Donaldson and Leonardos went that night to begin their rounds of the ticket agents in the several depots. Under Cover Lane moved quietly through the underworld in the guise

of Foxcroft, on the alert for the slightest clew.

He did not make inquiries, for he knew better; his years of constant hazard had taught him never to do that. A casual question regarding the missing man's whereabouts might do no immediate harm; but later, if Tony were found, it would be remembered! Throughout the evening Foxcroft drifted back and forth, to various dives and hangouts, watching the faces, listening for chance remarks.

At Cassidy's, a den where two shifts of keen-eyed men accepted horse race bets throughout the afternoon and served as gamekeepers at green-covered tables by night, Lane picked up his sole scrap of information. It came unexpectedly, from a group who had stepped from the gaming room to a spacious bar at the rear.

"Tony ain't in town now, is he?"

"Naw. He lit out Saturday."

"A game sport, Tony."

"Smart driver, too—eh, Pete?"

"Dat's right—go on, kid me, damn youse!" exploded the man addressed. "Youse t'ink I minda da spill, loosa da booze. But dat is not so; it's his damn crazy drive in town I mind—lika to get pinch—"

"Yeah," agreed another, "Tony starts to make a left turn off the avenue—he pulls 'way over to the right curb and tries to make it from there!"

"Shouldn't have let him drive. Might have known—"

The group moved on, and Foxcroft heard no more.

VII

THE next two days brought further set-backs.

Donaldson, in his efforts to locate an agent who had sold the unknown Tony his transportation, had

met only failure. By Wednesday evening he and Leonardos had visited every ticket window and stateroom office in the city, at various hours; and they were ready to admit the probability that some other person had paid the Italian's fare.

But when Donaldson reported this to Under Cover Lane, the latter's firm jaw tightened. A glitter appeared in his pale eyes.

"No, no, man—I won't say it—I won't say yet—that we're beaten! There's just a chance; there's one more reference that might prod some fellow's memory."

He leaned across sharply, poking the other's knee.

"You go the rounds once again—take Leonardos and the pictures—ask each agent if he remembers selling such a man a ticket to *Atlantic City*."

Donaldson was curious.

"Eh? A guess—that's all," said Lane.

A curly-haired young man, in the second grilled window of a long row, shook his head with a pleasant grin as Donaldson and Leonardos approached.

"You've tried me before," he said. "Sorry I can't help you."

At the older investigator's words, however, he suddenly snapped his fingers together and stared at Leonardos.

"By Jove! I do recall you now, sir! If you'd mentioned *Atlantic City* before—"

"Is there any way you can fix the date?" asked Donaldson.

The agent considered for an instant. "Yes! I know just when it was—last Saturday morning! I was standing part of Berry's trick; he had a severe headache and went to a doctor for a prescription—"

The two men were jubilant as they

left the depot. The editor hurried to his office.

"My new hat's off to you!" declared Donaldson to Lane. "But please enlighten my feebler mentality as to how you guessed it."

The undercover man seemed irritated by the tone.

"Well—if you must hear it—I had three reasons. First, the remarks I overheard at Cassidy's gambling joint. Tony tried to make a left turn from the right curb."

"Oh. That's permissible in *Atlantic City*—"

"Permissible, man? It's obligatory! Of course, I don't say that's the only place where there's such a regulation. But *Atlantic City* has gang-controlled interests very much like the ones here. And it has a large percentage of Italians."

He hastily busied himself, thus averting his face, as an operative arrived to report to Donaldson.

In the afternoon, Somers of the National Detective Agency and another youth left the city by train, still carrying their photographs and ink drawings. Donaldson's hopes were high as the pair departed. But as day after day passed and brought only expense accounts and reports of failure, his anxiety rapidly deepened. He knew that there wouldn't be time to redeem another false start.

The district attorney was making every effort to bring the defendants to an immediate trial. Kent, the shrewd lawyer defending Leonardos, fought desperately for delay.

"It's all in the bag. This proves it!" Donaldson pointed out. "Bonnell isn't trying to prolong it; both he and Luger probably have been promised quick paroles. It's Leonardos they want."

"Eh? Well, they'll know they've

been in a fight before they get him!" returned Lane, thrusting out his lean, pointed chin.

A week dragged along, and another report came from the two absent operatives. Again it was negative.

"They'll never find him!" rasped the undercover man.

The next night there was a new figure sauntering through the streets of Atlantic City—a large man, plainly dressed, with a soft hat pulled over his eyes to avoid recognition. Yet Donaldson knew that in all probability he had been identified. He was well known at the resort.

Hidden between the railroad and the famous Boardwalk, and extending westward from New York Avenue, exists a side of Atlantic City's life of which most visitors know little—a secret and sinister side. It was through this district that the investigator was strolling, constantly watchful, searching every face. Twice he was almost certain that he was being followed. Groups of men at corners appeared to stare at him with hostility.

He turned south on Missouri Avenue and ascended to the Boardwalk, mingling with its throngs. Here, he knew, a shadow's task would be more difficult. He moved along with the crowd, pausing occasionally to gaze at the brilliant windows of the shops.

His glance fell upon an unoccupied chair, approaching eastward in the slowly moving line. He stepped across.

"I ain't allowed to pick up passengers," said the man.

Donaldson handed him a dollar.

"Down to the Steel Pier—I'm tired walking," he said.

He watched to see if any of those walking westward turned to follow. The man pushing the chair observed his backward glance.

"Out for a little entertainment to-night, guv'nor?" he offered.

Donaldson grunted. "I'm off the night clubs."

"This place ain't no club, boss. A cabaret show—the finest at the resort, or your money back."

"Oh, yes?"

"Yes, sir. On New York Avenue. The Sunset Café. Lots of pretty girls."

"Only cost you a sawbuck," he added. "See the doorman. *See Tony DiRocco*." As he said the last he bent close to Donaldson, his twisted smile revealing an almost toothless mouth.

The other returned to his hotel in elation. Tony DiRocco, doorman at the Sunset Café, could not be summoned from the State of New Jersey; but there were other plans. Late that night he sent a code telegram.

Then came the Monday when Leonardos was notified that he would be called to trial on the following morning. Defense summonses were sent out. Somers, the freckled youth with glasses, was detailed to interview Beatrice Ashton. This task was not unpleasant to the operative. He had seen the girl several times before.

"McHugh hasn't called upon you again?"

"Not yet."

"You're sure that you'd be willing to testify if needed, knowing what it would mean?"

Her lips came firmly together. "I'm willing."

"You'll not be called if we can avoid it. What about being transferred to New York by your firm?" he asked anxiously.

"I can make the change at any time."

"Good," said Somers. "Then try to arrange it for to-morrow. It—*it* might be advisable."

There was a strained note in his voice that he couldn't hide.

Early in the morning he and Donaldson visited Leonardos's office. The editor of the *Beacon* was putting his desk in order.

"In case I don't return!" he explained grimly.

"What nonsense," scoffed the young operative.

"Where were you late last night, Leonardos?" asked Donaldson.

"I was out driving."

"Out driving?"

"Yes!" he replied, his deep, dark eyes lighting for an instant. "I hired a car. I drove past Conlon's three gambling houses. The windows were dark, the doors boarded, the paraphernalia destroyed. Gentlemen"—he drew a long breath—"my automobile drive last night has given me great courage. Are you ready? Let's go to the court!"

VIII

THE trial was well advanced. The police testimony had been brief but damaging. Two special officers and a route patrolman had been standing at Mortimer Avenue and Columbia Street at about twelve thirty on the night in question. They had observed Leonardos alighting hastily from an electric car. His furtive actions had caused them to watch him, and they had seen him enter the cellar beneath the ruins of the church.

Investigation had revealed two other men in the cellar. Loger and Bonnell had been followed and captured in the act of attempting a holdup at a dive on West Middleboro Street. After long questioning, the former had admitted his part in a conspiracy to commit grand larceny. He had named Leonardos.

Loger had become the State's prin-

cipal witness. In hard, sharp syllables he had told of the plot to loot a chain of gaming houses. He and Bonnell and others were the actual robbers, while Leonardos, from investigator's information, had chosen the nights when business in the various gambling houses was at its peak.

The bandit was cross-examined at length by Kent, Leonardos's counsel. His long criminal record was shown, but he stuck doggedly to his story. When he stepped from the stand the jury appeared impressed.

The two defendants displayed contrasting reactions. Bonnell was slouched in an attitude of stolid indifference, while Leonardos was rigid, following every move with troubled eyes.

The State called Edmund Gormley.

A man of sixty, thick-set and heavy build, advanced and took oath. The district attorney assumed an ingratiating tone.

"Where do you live, Mr. Gormley?"

"I now live at 65 Kirby Street," replied the witness, speaking with a precise Canadian accent.

"Do you recognize either of the defendants?"

"Yes, sir. The one on my right," replied Gormley.

"That is the defendant Leonardos. When and where have you seen him previous to this morning?"

The jury then heard of the peculiar incident in the Mortimer Avenue car at the corner of Columbia Street.

"Were you alone in the car?"

"No, sir. My son, Clinton Gormley, was with me."

"How do you fix the date as August 31, Mr. Gormley?"

"Because, since September 1 there has been no Mortimer Avenue car at that hour."

"Your witness," said the district attorney.

There was a slight stir in the jury box. The character of this witness was obviously above question.

Kent rose quietly, adjusting his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Er—Mr. Gormley. You said that August 31 was the last date when a Mortimer Avenue electric car ran at that particular time?"

"It was, sir."

"But that fact was announced to the public in advance, by means of new schedules, wasn't it?"

"Oh, yes."

"Now, Mr. Gormley, do you feel positive that the man with the Greek newspaper, whom you saw in the car that night, was Mr. Leonardos?"

"I should not have testified to the fact if I didn't feel positive, sir."

"You feel quite sure that it couldn't have been any one else?"

"I do."

Kent took two photographs from his desk.

"Will you kindly glance at these, and tell us if you can identify either as a photograph of Mr. Leonardos—and, if so, which one?"

The prosecutor was wary. "I pray your honor's judgment," he said, rising. "I don't think the witness's opinion in regard to these photographs—"

There was a pause while Kent sought to have the snapshots admitted as exhibits. He was allowed to repeat the question.

"Indeed, sir," was Gormley's response as he glanced at the two pictures, "I believe they are both excellent photographs of the defendant Leonardos. This one, in particular, is unmistakable."

"Mr. Gormley, if you should be

shown positive proof that the photograph you have selected is *not* of Mr. Leonardos, what would you say then?"

"Your honor, I ask that the question be stricken out."

Judge Kenyon considered. "It may be stricken out," he ruled.

"Your honor will note my exceptions," requested Kent.

"They are saved."

"That's all, Mr. Gormley," Kent said.

Clinton Gormley then took the stand and corroborated his father's testimony. Asked by Kent if he could identify either photograph, he chose one unhesitatingly. Of the other he felt reasonably sure.

"Are you aware that you have not selected the same one as your father?"

The young man showed confusion.

"Of course he's not aware of it" the court interposed. "You haven't demonstrated the fact."

"It's marked on the back, your honor," replied Kent mildly.

He had no further questions, and the State rested its case.

The first witness called by Kent was the defendant, Leonardos. In a clear voice he told of his whereabouts on the night in question. He narrated his experience in his apartment at twelve thirty. Under Kent's questioning, he denied emphatically any knowledge of the criminal plot by Loger and Bonnell. "It's a damnable lie!" exclaimed Leonardos—and the court reproved him.

The State's attorney spent little time in cross-examination. He had one telling question, which he brought out with full effect.

"Is it not true, Mr. Leonardos, that you had intimate knowledge, through certain investigators' reports, of the nights when the largest amounts of

money were in play at the different gambling establishments?"

Leonardos was obliged to answer in the affirmative.

"Walter Merrihew!"

A curly-haired young man stepped to the witness box. Sworn, he named the suburb where he lived.

"What is your occupation, Mr. Merrihew?" asked Kent.

"I'm ticket agent at the South Central Depot."

"Were you on duty there on the morning after these events are alleged to have occurred?" He repeated the date.

"Yes, sir. That morning I relieved a friend who was ill."

"Did you, on that morning, see the defendant, Mr. Leonardos?"

"No, sir. I saw a man who looks almost exactly like him."

There was a spreading murmur of amazement, a general craning of necks. The jurymen sat up sharply.

"Did you have any conversation with the man who resembles Mr. Leonardos?"

"I did. I sold him a ticket to Atlantic City."

"Have you, on any occasion, seen Mr. Leonardos at the depot?"

"Yes; twice. In company with an investigator, Mr. Donaldson."

Court officers tapped for silence.

Handing the witness two photographs, Kent asked: "Can you tell us which is Mr. Leonardos, and which is the man who resembles him?"

"I cannot, sir. They look too much alike for that."

Kent gave a swift, shrewd glance at his opponent.

"You may examine," he said.

The prosecutor rose, facing Merrihew. "If these men, as you say, look too much alike to tell their photographs

apart, how were you able to differentiate so positively in your testimony?"

Merrihew smiled.

"Their voices are altogether different," he replied.

The room was buzzing with excitement when he left the stand. Kent hesitated, drew a calculating breath. He searched the jurors' faces. It was evident that he had scored heavily. But the State's case, with six witnesses, was still dangerous.

In a low but resonant tone he called: "Beatrice Ashton!"

IX

ESCORTED by Donaldson and Somers, Beatrice advanced between rows of tense faces, beneath the glare of hostile eyes. Sharp intakes of breath, mutterings, told her all too plainly that she was recognized by gangsters among the spectators. Trying to conceal the nameless terror which clutched at her heart, she went steadily forward to the witness stand.

She raised her hand mechanically. The clerk's voice, administering the oath, seemed to jump and pound in her ears.

Moistening her dry lips, she gave her name and place of residence.

She heard Kent's tone, calm and reassuring. "What is your occupation, Miss Ashton?"

"I draw designs for clothing advertisements."

"A little louder, please," said Judge Kenyon.

Kent repeated her answer. "And you also possess ability to draw faces accurately from memory, do you not?"

"I've drawn faces from memory for years."

"Do you recognize the defendant, Mr. Leonardos?"

"Yes."

"Now, Miss Ashton, were you in the twelve twenty-five Mortimer Avenue car on the Friday night—or, rather, the Saturday morning—"

"On August 31," replied Beatrice.

She heard a tapping. There was a growing murmur in the room. Glancing for an instant among the rows of spectators, she recognized denizens of gangland there, members of the big mob. These men knew what was coming. She read the implacable hatred in their gaze.

Like wolves in a circle they had gathered, waiting for the kill, waiting to carry the word to the underworld—that the young Greek who had won his way to prominence would trouble them no more. A shudder passed over the girl as she met those burning eyes. She did not hear the attorney's question.

He repeated: "Was there a man in the car that night who very closely resembled Mr. Leonardos?"

"Yes. He left the car at Columbia Street."

"We don't hear you," the prosecutor said.

"Try to speak a little louder," the judge again requested.

"Was it Mr. Leonardos who was in the car, Miss Ashton?"

"No, sir."

"How do you know?"

"There are two slight differences. Mr. Leonardos's forehead is just a trifle wider; his chin is a little more rounded."

"Is this witness to qualify as an expert?" the State's attorney ventured in an acid voice.

"Have you seen the other man since that night?" Kent persisted.

"Yes. In Atlantic City."

"Can you tell us his name?"

"He is known there as Tony Di-Rocco."

"Were you present when a snapshot was taken of him in Atlantic City?"

"Yes, sir." She identified one of the photographs.

"What others were present when it was taken?"

"Your honor, my brother is leading this witness—"

"Were there others present?" Kent asked.

"Yes. The photographer and Mr. Donaldson."

"Now, Miss Ashton, when you were in the electric car that night, did you see the two men who have since been summoned by the State?"

"Yes. Mr. Edmund Gormley and his son."

"Did you draw their likenesses shortly afterward?"

Beatrice replied in the affirmative, and there was a legal wrangle while Kent sought to have her drawings exhibited to the jury. Again, as if in a dread fascination, the girl found her gaze wandering among the spectators. Suddenly she caught sight of a gangster whom she well remembered—Foxcroft. He returned a chilling stare from his dull, pale eyes.

"Miss Ashton," asked Kent, raising his voice a trifle, "why did you make these two drawings?"

"My services had been engaged for that purpose."

"By whom?"

There was an instant of silence.

"By a Mr. F. Henderson McHugh," answered Beatrice.

The district attorney leaped from his chair. He was white.

"I object! This line of inquiry is absolutely irrelevant—"

Judge Kenyon shook his head.

"The State has offered evidence pertaining to the electric car."

The prosecutor sat down, glaring. Beatrice testified that McHugh had made the request at the Lisbon Café.

"And, as a result, you knew that there would be a man with a Greek newspaper in the car?"

"Yes."

"You knew that he would leave the car at Columbia Street?"

"Yes!"

"How much did Mr. McHugh pay you for this service?"

"Two hundred dollars."

"What did you do with the money?"

"I turned it over to Mr. Donaldson."

"Stool pigeon!" came in a low, guttural voice from the back of the room.

Kent sprang up. "Your honor," he cried, while officers hastened to restore order, "I ask that the spectators be restrained from making threatening remarks while this witness is testifying."

"It wasn't a threatening remark—" the prosecutor demurred.

"If there is another disturbance of this nature," Judge Kenyon warned, "the offender will be ejected from the court."

Steadily and calmly, using all her force of will, Beatrice answered the district attorney's questions. In vain he tried to shake her quiet story.

"Isn't it true," he thundered finally, "that you have lent your aid to a half dozen lawless enterprises in this city?"

This precipitated a fiery exchange between Kent and the prosecutor. Soon afterward, court was adjourned for the day.

X

SURROUNDED by operatives, the girl went quickly from the building and was hurried to a waiting automobile.

"You'll not be needed to-morrow,"

Donaldson said, when he and Somers were seated with her in the machine, with a carload of their associates behind. "No honest jury could fail to acquit Leonardos after hearing your evidence and Merrihew's.

"Nevertheless," he added, gravely, "if McHugh hadn't gone one step too far, if he hadn't engaged you to sketch the two witnesses, a good man might have been sent to prison. It makes us wonder who is safe, while machines of corruption rule."

"Where are we going now?" she asked.

"To your lodging house. You must start for New York to-night."

"But—but I can't get ready—"

"You'll have to manage. You must take the midnight train."

She returned their glances uncertainly.

"You must pack at once, Beatrice," declared Somers.

"And remain at a hotel, guarded, until train time," Donaldson added. "Also, be sure to request your employers not to give any information about where you've gone. I'll see that they receive an official request of the same nature."

"But I'm sure all this—can't be necessary—" Her voice trembled slightly.

"I dislike to alarm you," the older man said, "but you should realize your peril. If you can't imagine what might happen to a young woman who's done what you have, it would be useless for me to go into details. Not only is it a question of gang revenge; the whole mob will be mortally afraid that you may testify against McHugh later."

In a dazed way Beatrice peered out the window. Amidst the rush of traffic on the streets, the whole situation seemed grotesquely unreal, unbeliev-

able. Yet in her mind's eye was the fearful hatred which she had seen in the faces at court.

Bolton of the National Detective Agency, at the wheel, was driving fast. In the mirror they could see the second machine keeping the pace. At length they turned into Beatrice's street and stopped.

Donaldson and Somers entered with the girl while she informed the landlady of her departure, and waited upstairs in the hall until she had finished packing her trunk and suitcase. Her nervousness made the task difficult.

At length she emerged, dressed for traveling, and contrived a wan smile when she found her protectors on guard.

"We're now going to the Fenmore Hotel," Donaldson confided. "You will remain there until eleven twenty, when my chauffeur will call to take you to the depot. But not to a depot in the city. He'll take you to Framingham."

"And you must send a man for your baggage," Somers cautioned. "Don't, under any circumstances, return to this house!"

Beatrice promised that she wouldn't.

Three operatives were stationed in the hotel, mingling unobtrusively with the guests. Donaldson and Somers remained in the lobby until the evening was well advanced. It seemed impossible to both men that the underworld could have learned any part of their plans, yet neither was willing to take chances.

At length the two rode in Somers's coupé to the South Central Depot to complete arrangements for Beatrice's reservation at Framingham. The curly-haired Merrihew had returned to service in his window, and he saluted them cheerily.

"Watch yourself for a week or two," Donaldson advised. "I don't imagine they'll hold it against you, but one never knows."

Entering a booth, he called the hotel and left final instructions. Then he inserted another coin and obtained communication with a man who frequently supplied him with information about gang conditions.

The other's words were not reassuring. Gangland was in a frenzy.

"God help the girl if they find her!" the informer told him.

Donaldson stepped out of the booth and stood twirling his watch chain.

"What did you learn?" Somers asked.

"Nothing very surprising," was the older man's response. He glanced to where the New York expresses were being made up.

"Confound it," he muttered, "I don't know why I'm nervous! There's no reason to be."

A few minutes later, Donaldson suggested that they go back to the vicinity of the lodging house. A man had been left to watch the neighborhood, and both were anxious to learn if he had observed any of the gangsters.

As they neared the street in the West End, Donaldson drew out his watch for the fourth time in a half hour.

"Miss Ashton will be on her way to Framingham in eleven minutes."

"Once in New York," opined Somers, "she'll be safe."

"Yes; for only three of us know her destination."

"As a matter of fact," the youth confided, "I'm expecting to be moved to the New York office of our agency next month."

"Oh-ho!" said Donaldson with interest.

They turned the corner, parked the

coupé. Suddenly Somers gripped his companion's arm.

"A light!" he whispered. "In that window. That's the room Beatrice had—"

"There's some one moving inside," the other remarked.

"Can it be the man for the baggage, as late as this?"

"No. Probably the landlady," replied Donaldson. He laughed, to convince himself that their alarm was needless. Yet away in some deep corner of his mind, a dreadful thought was crying out to him. What if the girl had discovered that she had left something—and, despite her promise, had returned for it?

Somers uttered a sharp, husky exclamation. "Look—look there!"

Both men saw it now, plainly—a single shadow thrown dimly against the curtain, a shadow that was swaying, swinging.

Donaldson gave a cry of horror and raced madly toward the door, Somers at his heels. They stumbled up the steps, into the dim front hall; then, halfway to the top of the carpeted staircase, they met two figures descending.

"Where's Mrs. Winters?" cried Donaldson.

"She's gone out," said one of the pair, a big, swarthy man.

"Well, who's in charge? We must get into Room 7!"

"I'm Mrs. Winters's brother," was the dull response. "You the guys for the baggage? Go ahead in—there's no one there."

The door, however, was locked. Donaldson drew back and flung his big shoulder against it, and with a splintering sound it crashed inward, revealing a shocking spectacle.

From a steam pipe which ran part way across the ceiling, hung a slender

form, smartly clad, the head and throat enveloped in a pillow-slip and bound cruelly with the same stout cord which stretched above.

Dashing forward with a low cry, Somers whipped out a pocket knife; and in an instant they had laid the form upon the bed. While Donaldson worked frantically to loosen the rope, the younger man plunged across the room for water. After a few seconds the suffocating linen was torn away, and two great realities impinged upon Donaldson's consciousness: that the girl would live, and that she was not Beatrice Ashton.

A woman, wide-eyed, was standing on the threshold.

"Do you know who this girl is?"

"The Lord have mercy!" she burst forth in answer. "If I'd ever dreamed she intended to do this—"

"When did she come?"

Others were crowding to the door.

"W-why—about six o'clock—Miss Ashton left. She telephoned—said she wouldn't be back—asked me to tell the man to check her baggage on the train that stops at Framingham—so we moved her things downstairs and let this girl have the room—"

"Your brother didn't know it—"

Her gaze was blank. "I have no brother."

Donaldson whirled, and Somers followed him as he ran down the stairs to the street. A dark form rushed to meet them.

"Burke! Two men—did you see them? Came out of the house—"

"Three men!" gasped the operative. "I tried to tell you; their car was right at the curb as you went in. The third man came out just now, ahead of you—they drove away—"

Somers started. "Then he told them it wasn't Miss Ashton?"

"Speak, man! What did he say to the others?"

"I think he made some reference to Leonardos. Something about 'framing him'—"

"About framing him?" repeated Donaldson. Then, in staggering realization—"My God!"

Somers turned to face him, and the same word was on each man's white lips:

"Framingham!"

XI

BEATRICE ASHTON stepped from the entrance of the hotel and crossed the sidewalk to the waiting sedan in nervousness which she still endeavored to conceal. For many minutes she had been ready, waiting, watching the gilded hands of the clock in the lobby with a strange fascination. Eleven twenty! Precisely at the moment, the big car had rolled quietly to the door.

She heard the double snap of the latch, then a soft acceleration of the motor. Through the window she saw two operatives in the doorway of the hotel. The men raised their hats to her, and the automobile glided away.

Beatrice settled back in the roomy seat with a peculiar mixture of emotions. Although eager to be on her way, she felt regret that she must leave the city. Her struggles in the weeks following her arrival, her determination to attain success, made it doubly hard to realize that she must flee for safety. She sat for a few minutes recalling the chaotic events of the day.

The route from the city led uptown through the suburbs, far from the gang districts, yet here and there were flashing electric signs, reminding her of those which beckoned to the cabarets of gangland—places which she had

grown to abhor. There was no doubt of it now: fear was in her heart; and it had been there, slowly mounting, through the long hours while she had tried to keep Somers and Donaldson, and even herself, from realizing its presence. Somehow her terrors were more real at night. She shuddered when a touring car drew abreast and passed; and when men stared in at her from street corners, she shrank back from the glass. The terrible hand of the underworld seemed reaching out toward her from the dark.

The chauffeur was driving fast—much faster than necessary, she thought, as she remembered the distance to Framingham. The lights and traffic of the city slipped behind, the streets became quieter, intersections less frequent. Finally, as the car turned sharply off into a much less traveled thoroughfare, Beatrice sat forward in uncertainty.

"Are you sure this is the right road?"

The man did not answer. His silence chilled her. She strained forward in her seat, but only the side of his begoggled face was visible in the dim light from the dash.

A bridge swept into view, and beyond was a solitary blinker marking five corners. The man at the wheel diverged slightly to the right, entering a highway that was lonely and unlighted. He sped on.

"This—this isn't the way to Framingham!" cried Beatrice, in a hollow, unnatural voice.

The chauffeur spoke thickly:

"To Framingham? No, miss. To Woodfields."

A choking gasp escaped the girl's lips. Her throat seemed gripped convulsively, rendering further protest beyond her power. Woodfields! That

wasn't on the railroad division which passed through Framingham; it was a tiny village miles to the south.

But it was too late to call for assistance. The flitting roadside was utterly black, deserted. Into her mind leaped that most fearful phrase in all gangland—"taken for a ride!"

In the tiny railroad station at Woodfields, the lights winked out. A well-built man of thirty appeared in the darkened doorway, fumbling with a ring of keys. From down the track came the staccato coughing of a train gathering headway; a pair of red lights were receding. The man turned in quick surprise as a large sedan swerved into the driveway.

A chauffeur wearing goggles leaped out. Then the rear door opened and a slender, well-dressed girl appeared.

"You're too late!" called the station agent. "The last train's just gone."

"It's the New York train we want," returned the chauffeur.

"There's no train for New York on this division! Only the Nightingale, the crack flyer, no stops."

"Take a look at this!" the driver of the automobile said, thrusting something toward the railroad man.

They were standing in the glare of the headlights. The motor was still running.

The station agent stared downward, and gave a startled exclamation.

He darted back to the depot and switched on the lights. Seizing a red lantern, he lit it, then hastened out and continued at a rapid trot along the track to the east.

Far down the track, around a bend, came the scream of a whistle, piercing the night. The station master quickened his pace. He stumbled on over the roadbed until a single bright eye

appeared in the distance, growing larger, and the shining rails began to pound and sing.

There was another shrill warning—two long and two short—for a crossing. The man raised his lantern.

There was a rush of wind that caught his breath—and the great, glistening hulk of the locomotive took shape behind the headlight. The long line of dark Pullmans went flashing by; then, above the clatter and roar, he heard the grinding bite of the brakes—and sparks were flying from the wheels.

Adrip with cold perspiration, the agent raced back to the depot. He saw the tail-lamps come to a standstill; then quickly they crept again into motion; there came the snorting barks of the giant locomotive as if in indignation—and the night flyer was on its way.

The station master found the platform deserted, the big sedan still waiting with motor running. He paused, unfolding again a crumpled paper—an order signed by the president of the railroad, at the request of the Governor of the State.

The chauffeur had entered the station and was at a telephone.

"Hello? Hello—yes, I hear you perfectly!" came Donaldson's strained voice from the other end of the line.

"Where's Miss Ashton?"

"On the train."

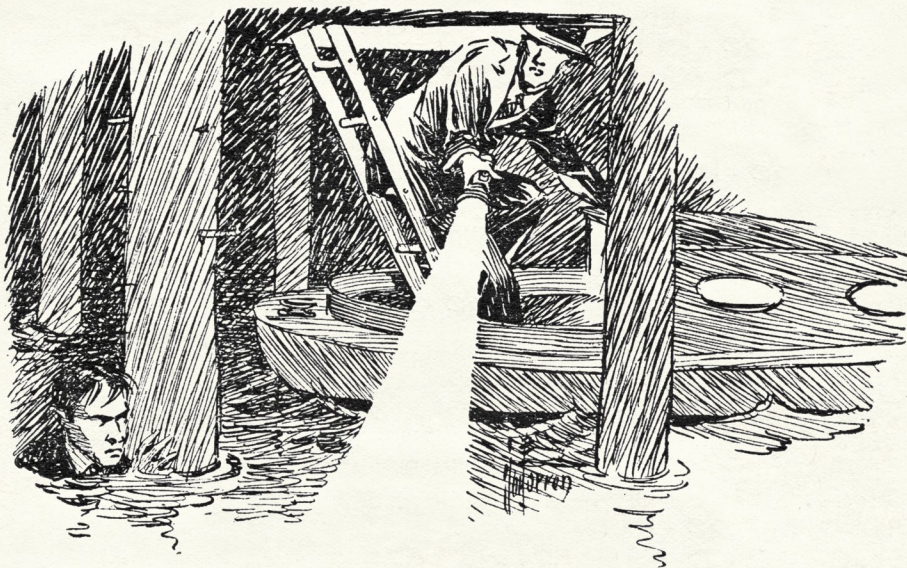
"On *what* train?"

"The Nightingale. Shore line express."

"Great idea!" cried Donaldson.

"And lucky, too, by the Lord! Somers and Burke went racing to Framingham to overtake you, to warn you. The mob learned our plans! They sent gunmen to the Framingham depot!"

"Eh? Well, they would!" the chauffeur flung back. It was the voice of Under Cover Lane.



The beam of a flashlight played on the water, roved about the surface near the wharf

The Frame-Up

*Jimmy Dugan Finds Some Strange Birds in Blacky Swain's
"Nest"—One Was a Blonde and the Other Red-Headed*

By J. Allan Dunn

NOTHING in the shape of a blinking electric sign announced or advertised the Nest. There was not even a name place in connection with that basement combination speakeasy, cabaret and dance hall. Total strangers never discovered it, all those who were not habitués were regarded as outsiders, unless their credentials were exceptional. It was far over on the East Side, the resort of gangsters and their "broad." A foul place.

The music was good, so was the liquor, and the dance floor. All the houses on that side of the dingy block

were more or less united in a sort of warren. There was only one entrance to the Nest, but there were several exits, known to the initiated. The back space of two adjoining basements had been made into one big room for general entertainment. The other rooms were used for private parties, for card games, for conferences of racketeers, the division of loot or its proceeds. One basement doorway was entirely closed. Above the other was one dingy electric bulb.

No one got through that entrance who was not wanted. An easier place to enter than to leave, for all the

emergency exits, if you did not belong. A place suspected but not yet raided. A place protected, beyond question. At the back was a dingy stretch of ground. Adjoining fences were all negotiable, though the places for passage were masked.

Two entertainers were on the floor, a tawdry blonde who was still slender, still graceful, though her face showed the ravages of dissipation for all its make-up. Her dress was revealing rather than suggestive, she wore a number of gems that flashed too brilliantly to be genuine. Her partner was a slim, slick lizard of a man, with the eyes of a weasel and the suppleness of that feral brute.

They knew their audiences, and their audiences knew all their repertoire, save when, at rare intervals, the blonde introduced a new song. Her voice was husky but not unpleasing, there was still a lure about her of days when she might have been a headliner.

The dance over, dutifully applauded, she sprang up to a seat on the piano, played by a man whose pasty face had eyes in it dead looking as dried currants; from whose dry lips the fag of a cigarette constantly hung.

"I'm tryin' out a new song to-night, people," announced the blonde. "See how you like it? Jangle the pan, Looley."

A couple were admitted after a whispered talk with the burly guard, a broken-nosed paluka, whose prize fighting ambitions had been flattened with his nasal organ. The man who came in looked as if he might be a truck driver. The girl was petite and pretty. The blonde looked at the newcomer with interest, her dancing partner surveyed the girl with a speculation that was an insult to decency, a speculation he was careful to keep

veiled. He did not have too much courage, or masculinity, and it was a risky game in the Nest to interfere with another man's girl. The man in question looked as if he could give a good account of himself.

And when that solo sax-o-phone
Starts in to drone—
Just sets you cra-zy,
The lights go ha-zy,
You can't be la-zy
Just have to rise and sway
This way—that way—
To the moan,
To the drone,
Of that solo saxophone!

The two gave their order, lit cigarettes, surveyed the room with languid interest. The blonde deliberately ogled the man. As the song ended, the proprietor of the Nest, an Italian named Salterno, came over to their table, nodded to them.

"My fren', you say Dutch Frank tell you to come here to have good time, *si*? I hope you do that. When did you see heem last. You know where he ees, *si*?"

His beady eyes were more than inquisitive, they held a flame of doubtful hostility.

"I ain't seen Dutch since I went up north on my last run," said Jimmy Dugan. "Last I knew he was over on West Fifteenth."

"Ah! You did not know he was on a trip up the reever? No?"

"You mean Dutch is in stir? That's bad news. How long a stretch?"

Salterno held up five fingers.

Dugan whistled.

"Say, that's too bad. What d'ye know about that, kid?"

The girl shook her head in commiseration.

"Dutch was a good guy," she said. "It's bum luck."

"They spot heem by that bum mitt of hees," said Salterno. "You know wheech feenger was missing, my friend?"

"What are you tryin' to hand me?" said Dugan. "There was nothin' wrong with Dutchee's mitts. What's the big idea?"

Salterno laughed.

"I theenk you are all right," he said. "But we hav' to be careful. You come an' say Dutch send you here, an' Dutch ees in stir. So, I ask you one question. Now you dreenk weeth me. Si."

Nobody knew better than Jimmy Dugan, second-class detective, that Dutch Frank had nothing wrong with his hands. He had helped to send Dutch on that trip up the river. He knew his mug, his measurements, his Bertillon description.

He breathed a little more easily after Salterno expressed his satisfaction, not so much for his own sake as for that of his companion, Mary Brady. He knew that the very air one breathed in the Nest was fraught with danger to the intruder—and so did the girl—but, to enter there alone increased the risk, and he did not expect to do more than size up the clientèle.

As for Mary Brady, she also was in the game. Her present job was with the Garrity Detective Agency. She was holding down a counter job in a jeweler's establishment where there had been a recent record of missing gems, valuable rings; believed to be an inside affair. Her evenings were her own, after the store closed, and she gave some of them to Jimmy Dugan.

It was not the first time they had worked together, though the association was not official. Jimmy hoped, some day, to make the partnership permanent. Then, he resolved, Mary

would get out of the fascinating but risky game, too risky for the girl he loved, though the adventure of it was in her blood as well as his own.

He had a hint, also a hunch, that the Nest was a rendezvous of the gang known as the Blackbirds, their racket the looting from freight cars of valuable silks whose contents they knew beforehand. Their identity was still a secret to Centre Street, a secret Dugan meant to solve. There were vague descriptions of some of them, given by blackjacked watchmen and others who had been put out of the way.

There had been some who had been less mercifully treated. Floaters who had been found bumping against wharf pilings, brought in with the tide, shot in their defense of the goods the Blackbirds coveted. A desperate lot of racketeers with no thought of the value of human life outside their own.

Dugan watched those who entered the Nest. He and Mary Brady seemed the only strangers. But he recognized none as members of the Blackbirds. It was getting late. The place was filled with the fumes of cigarettes, the reek of liquor. Jests were bandied back and forth. He was conscious of the advances of the blonde entertainer, bolder as the general attitude became more rowdy, more intimate. She was dancing, off and on, with a red-headed, undersized, rat-faced man who seemed more eager than she was, though he was a fine partner, dancing almost as well as her professional team mate, who gave up his attempts to interest Mary Brady, foiled by her indifference.

It looked like an off night. Unless the red-headed man was one of the outfit he wanted. They had a note at headquarters that there was a red-head among the Blackbirds. He did not

look like a potential villain, and, while he was evidently well-acquainted, Dugan saw no signs between him and any one else of close intimacy.

"You can stay here all night," he said to Mary. "We might as well be going. It was just a chance lead."

But Dugan was disappointed. It was the first time his hunch had failed him, the hunch that was an inborn attribute of the instinctive detective. Dugan was making good, though he had not been long a detective. Six months ago he had been a harness bull, pounding the pavement as two generations of Dugans had done before him. He had been lucky, he told himself, and might well have spelled the word with a p in front of it. "Pluck" and "luck," and that mysterious phenomenon called a "hunch," had helped him to promotion, still kept him on the highway to advancement.

It was based, that hunch, upon a natural faculty of observation, of deductions arrived at subconsciously, brought to life by illuminating circumstance, heightened by persistent study of criminal ways. But Dugan was modest. His opinion of himself was far less than that of Deputy Commissioner Connelly, a friend of his father, dead now—Sergeant Dugan. Connelly liked the boy, believed him a comer. It was he who had suggested the capture of the Blackbirds, given Dugan the tips that brought him to the Nest.

II

THE blonde was singing again, singing pointedly and provocatively to Dugan, posturing in front of their table.

Some day I'm going to meet *my* man,
A lonely man,
The only man,
And—when I find him,

I'm going to let him see,
He is the *one* for me.
With love I'll blind him.
I'll take him by the hand,
I'll make him understand,
All he's been missing.
I'll make him play with me,
He'll never stray from me,
Once we start kissing.

The song ended with perfunctory applause. They had heard it before. The blonde stopped by Dugan's table. The red-head came up to her as the orchestra jazzed for a dance. But—

"Lissen, big boy," she said to Dugan. "This is a social dump. You've been dancing with the same dame all evening. And you shake a lively hoof. Split up. Be amiable. Let 'Blaze' Menken take on your twist and twirl and give me a number."

Dugan felt the touch of Mary's elbow. She knew what they were there for, knew the tip concerning a red-head. She was playing the game. Dugan stood up. His blood was tingling, not from the prospect of the dance, but with the impulse of his hunch. It gave no direct message, but it seemed somehow like the rap of opportunity on his door.

"I didn't suppose you wanted to dance with me," he said. The blonde gave him a coquettish look.

"You don't mind, deary?" she flung over her shoulder to Mary.

"Not *yet*," Mary answered.

They glided off. The blonde danced intimately, complimenting Dugan. But his hunch persisted that she was making use of him for some purpose of her own. The vindication seemed to arrive suddenly. The music was in the last bars of the dance when three men entered. Dugan saw them over his partner's shoulder.

A dark man in the lead, with a

drooping left eyelid, a face that was the essence of evil, of craft and cunning. His neck seemed slightly twisted, so that he carried his head to one side.

If this was not "Blacky" Swain, reputed leader of the Blackbirds, then Dugan's hunch, the reports at headquarters were at fault. There was no proof against Blacky, beyond persistent rumors coming through the stool pigeons of other gangs, but, if the Nest was his hang-out, here was a definite lead that Dugan had come here to find.

Also, there was a subtle stir in the crowd. A personage had arrived. The two went with Blacky, Dugan set down as his guards, pure and simple.

The dance ended. There was applause for an encore.

Then the man with the stiff neck strode through the couples, who made room for him, caught the red-headed man by the shoulder, grabbed Mary Brady by her arm and flung her off.

The blonde broke from Dugan, thrust herself between Blaze Menken and the other. Blacky caught her by the bare shoulder, sent her reeling. His eyes glittered.

"I told you to steer clear of this dump!" he barked at the red-head, who stood as if robbed of motion, staring at the other. The dance floor was cleared as if by magic. Mary Brady a bruise on her flesh, came toward Dugan, who set her back of him, his own eyes blazing. He took a step forward. Blacky Swain wheeled on him.

"You keep out of this, fella!" he said. "If you know what's good for you!"

It was not only the detective in Dugan that made him interfere. He saw Blacky reach inside his coat, caught the first glint of a gun. It was not meant for him, but for Blaze Menken.

He had not brought a weapon with him. Such things were not easily hidden, as he knew. Not on a crowded dance floor, in such company. He had come for observation, for clues, not to make arrests; lacking definite reason. But he saw the bruise on Mary's arm, and murder about to be done. He was first a man and a lover, also an officer of the law.

He caught up a chair and whirled it. It struck Blacky's bent arm, a leg hit his elbow. The two guards were starting forward and Dugan flung the chair at them, snatched another.

Blacky was writhing with the anguish of the blow. Blaze had darted from the floor, making for the back. Dugan knew no exit save the front door.

"Beat it," he said to Mary. "I'm with you."

In the confusion he clove a way with the second chair, thrusting, swinging. The doorman faced him and he beat him down. Behind him the crowd was milling. Every second he expected a bullet in his back; he wasted no time. He faced about as Mary slid through the entrance, leaving it open. Once more he slung the chair into the milling crowd and followed her, slamming the door behind him. In the confusion no one fired. They were clear, the night air fresh on their faces.

He caught Mary by the arm and sped her up the steps to the sidewalk. They raced together to the corner of the block, around it. A cruising cab, its fare delivered, came down the middle of the empty street in the gray light of dawn, and Dugan hailed it with relief. It had been a close call.

"'Tis the last time you'll come with me to such a place," he said. "'Tis no place for a decent girl to be in any ways. You've got to get out of this

game, Mary, though 'twas me took you into this end of it."

"You found what you wanted, didn't you?" she asked.

"That's naught to do with it."

"It's part of the game. Jimmy, I think it was a put-up job. I think they suspected you."

"They hurt *you*," he said. "You've left your wrap behind."

She snuggled to him. She was in the game, she ran the risks, but she knew that it was Jimmy Dugan, the man, not Dugan, the detective, talking. And she liked it.

"Never mind the wrap, Jimmy," she said. "If you get that gang you can charge it to expenses. But I think it was staged, Jimmy boy. You'll not go back there? Promise me that? It's not because of the blonde, Jimmy. I'm not jealous."

It was the first time she had intimated that she might be. Jimmy slid an arm about her and she let it rest.

"That man Blaze," she went on. "He wanted to know all about you. They don't like strangers in that dump."

"He came nigh to gettin' bumped off," said Dugan, "though 'twas not for him I interfered."

"I know that, Jimmy. But, somehow, I think it was a—"

Dugan's lips were on hers, in the first kiss between them.

"You're safe. Mary, that's all that matters," he said.

III

"THIS is Blaze Menken speaking," said the voice. "You remember me, in the Nest? Where can I have a talk with you? I don't want to come up where you are."

Jimmy could understand that. Blaze Menken! He had saved his life, but

he remembered Mary's warning. Man-like, he wondered if she was right. Without conceit, recollecting their ride home, he was not sure how much she had been afraid for him as he for her.

A detective had no right to be in love, he had told himself more than once. It confused things. If Mary was fond of him it might upset her judgment. This was a lead he had no license to refuse. For once his hunch gave out no indication.

"I'll meet you uptown," he said. "In the drug store, *Times* station, in half an hour."

Blaze was on hand, furtive, glancing about him. He suggested a subway ride, and Dugan accepted the proposition. In the subway they got off at Rector, between trains, and Blaze spoke his mind. Dugan had some questions of his own to put.

"You dicks are not so wise," said Blaze. "You put on masks at line-up, but you have to come out in the open when you testify at trials, and you can bet we're there to watch you. You pulled in that Greek crowd and you went on the stand. The papers carried your picture. Say, it's easy. We're on the lookout for you fellas, same as you are for us. The minute I saw you in the Nest I knew who you were."

"But Black don't treat me right, see? That blonde is *my* broad. I mean the singer, Mae Morgan, who made a play for you. I got her that job. She was a down and out dope when I picked her up. Looks different now. She's got Blacky's goat, an' I reckon he's got hers, though she tells me he said he'd bump her off if she didn't quit me fer him."

"Thet may be the truth or a stall. He told me to lay off. An' I wasn't layin' off. He may run the racket, but that don't give him any right to cop

my doll. There's some things a guy can't stand for. You wouldn't. I buzzed your broad when I danced with her. She wouldn't give you erway. She's solid fer you, but Mae—well, she acted like she still thought a lot of me when Blacky starts to stick me up. He'd have bumped me off if it hadn't been fer you. And he knew I didn't have a rod on me.

"I'll fix him. The whole outfit is lousy. They think Blacky is Gord Almighty. They'll do me in if we don't git to 'em first, an' I'm puttin' you wise. They're runnin' a load to-night. Silk. They'll come in a launch on top the flood, round midnight. They may stow it or a truck may come fer it. Depends on how Blacky's fixed up the sellin' end. They've got a snug dump. You'd never uncover it. But you meet me at ten o'clock and I'll put you hep."

"Tell me now," said Dugan.

But Blaze Menken was plainly nervous, fidgeting with his finger ends, flicking the end of his nose. He had said the singer used dope when he met her. He carried all the signs of an addict himself.

"No," he said. "I gotta go. I'll meet you at Mother Blinn's. She runs a lunch dump close to the hide-out. The gang 'll all be away."

The man was trembling all over. It might be hate, fear, but Dugan thought that Blaze was needing a sniff of cocaine. He was probably in jeopardy. If Blacky had meant to kill him in the Nest he would not hesitate to finish the job. Blaze knew too much. Blacky would not overlook the fact that Blaze might turn on them to save himself.

Dugan let him hop the next train uptown after he had got the directions concerning Mother Blinn's location—right on the edge of the river, catering to longshoremen and wharfingers.

Then he bought a paper, looked at the tide tables. Blaze had told the truth about the tides. It would be high water on the East River at twelve eighteen.

Dugan knew that the racketeers were well-organized. They had spies hanging about headquarters, around the courts. The masks of the detectives were all right for general inspection, but they could not wear them during a trial. It was a weak place in the armor of the law.

He knew also that one of the great assets in making arrests and getting convictions came from flaws in the gangster's equipment. Jealousies were frequent, of one sort and another—dissatisfaction about cuts in the division of spoil, suspicion that leaders held out on the others. There was little honor among racketeers. And life was held lightly. Their affairs with women were frequently the cause of disruption, if not of downfall.

It looked like a good lead, and he resolved to meet Blaze at ten o'clock.

Mother Blinn's lunch dump looked like a stranded scow. A long counter with stools ran for two-thirds of its length, stove and supplies back of it. There was a line of small tables, and, in the rear, two cubby-holes of rooms for privacy. Mother Blinn was a mammoth figure, half white, half Cuban negress, powerful enough to run that place where rough men gathered and racketeers dropped in.

Blaze was waiting outside for Dugan in the shadow. He had pulled himself together, seemed confident, crafty, and capable. They went to one of the back rooms. Mother Blinn did all her own work, cooking, waiting, and washing up.

"We gotta order some grub," said

Blaze. "She don't let you hang round without payin' fer it. She makes good strong corffee. I didn't eat no supper. I'm takin' ham-and."

Dugan contented himself with coffee and doughnuts. The woman left to fill the order.

"Tell me about this hideout," said Dugan. "I want to know all about it before I go ahead."

"It's a junk warehouse. Salterno has a nephew who buys up the cuttings and trimmings from the loft trade. See? Brings 'em down here an' sorts 'em. He leases the warehouse. That end of it's straight. You could search the place any time an' find nothing. But it's double-decked—see? The stuff he brings in is all over the floor an' hides a trap, though you'd have to look close before you found it even when you know about it.

"The stuff comes in the launch, always on the flood. The end of the wharf is fixed so the launch can get right under it, right up to the lower deck. We take it up through the trap as it's sold. Salterno's nephew, Rocco, Does most of the delivering."

"Where is it?" asked Dugan.

Blaze pointed out through the window of the little room to a long, irregular line of wharves and sheds, with docks occasionally in between.

"Fifth one," he said. "The lower deck is fixed up with bunks, got electric lights. It's snug enough. We got grub there an' electric plates fer cookin' if we need it. We could hide out there fer a week, or a month, fer that matter, if we wanted to. Usually we just use it fer a sort of dump to wait in when we're lookin' fer Rocco to show up fer the goods. Play cards there sometimes."

"Only way in by the trap and by water?" asked Dugan. Blaze's story

was frankly told. Dugan was beginning to plan his attack. They would need the river police.

"That's all," said Blaze.

"How many in the outfit?"

"Six, countin' me out. Two of 'em generally stay in the launch."

Mother Blinn entered, bringing the food. The coffee was strong, if inclined to be bitter. Dugan put in plenty of sugar and milk, broke his doughnuts and ate them swiftly.

Blaze would admit him to the warehouse, open the trap. It could be closed from beneath. Dugan wanted to make sure, to give the whole hideout a look-over before he made up his campaign. He was not sure what he would do with Blaze. Probably have him held at headquarters.

He looked at his watch. It was twenty minutes after ten. There was time enough, but not too much. They might have some trouble in getting in touch with a river patrol. It would be best to let the stuff be landed, watching them from the farther shore, to wait for Rocco to arrive, or perhaps to stop him, load officers in the wagon, force Rocco to let them in, give the proper signals. Then close in from land and water. There would be a fight. Racketeers were rats, in Dugan's estimation, but they fought viciously when cornered.

The plans began to shuttle into a pattern in his mind as Dugan stood up. He finished the coffee in one gulp and nodded at Blaze.

The latter's face had suddenly become distorted, dim. It enlarged, diminished, the walls of the small room seemed to contract, to swirl. A giant hand seemed closing on Dugan's heart, his brain.

He saw Blaze grinning, or some one who must be Blaze, grinning like an

imp. The half white woman was in the open doorway, a gigantic figure with rolling eyes and flashing teeth. He had been drugged. Chloral or—

His thoughts were no longer coherent. Mind and body lost coordination as Dugan strove to gather himself, clutching with forceless fingers for his gun. Then he felt himself falling, falling through infinite space in utter blackness.

IV

DUGAN woke with a shudder. He had been violently, automatically sick and he still felt the nausea. But that and his own vitality had fought the drug. Still, he could hardly breathe. Sweat poured out of him. He was stretched in some sort of a bunk in darkness, in a place that was un-ventilated, hot.

Yet he shivered. His brain seemed to open and shut. It was not yet clear, memory did not function. There was the sound of lapping water close by and that proved the link that brought him to full consciousness.

He lay there, listening. He must have been brought to that lower deck Blaze had told him about, truthfully enough, realizing it would sound better than fiction, sure that it would do Dugan no good.

He was miserably weak. The drug had poisoned him. Feebly he felt the damp wall beside him, the sideboard of the bunk he was stretched in. His watch was gone, his gun, his badge. They had stripped him. Blaze and Mother Blinn between them. The pair had probably carried him along the lonely water front. Blaze could not have managed it by himself.

Then he heard voices. A line of dim light showed overhead, widened. A trap was opening. He heard foot-

steps shuffling on a ladder. Then the click of a switch as an electric light was turned on, dazzling to his blood-injected eyes.

He kept them open, as a drugged man would, staring at the ceiling. Slowly, forced by his will, strength was coming back to him. Very slowly—and he was unarmed, helpless. It was a wonder they had not killed him outright. He guessed why not. Blacky was the type who liked to jeer and gloat over a dick who had fallen for his frame-up.

It had been well planned. They had recognized him, Blaze or some one else, from the first time he had come into the neighborhood. The play at the Nest had been cleverly staged. They knew he would come there sooner or later and they had all been in it. Salterno, the doorman, the singer. And he had fallen for it.

But he could not quite comprehend their virulence. They hated all dicks, of course, but Dugan had not found out anything definite against them. It was true he had pulled off some successful things; they might be afraid of his uncovering them, but, to get rid of him so early, only meant that others would take his place. He had happened in close on a run, but it was very doubtful if he could have interfered with that so swiftly.

The two men came and looked at him. He lay huddled, his eyes fixed.

"What you goin' to do with him?" asked one of them. "Give him the works?"

Dugan dared not glance at them, dared not show sign of intelligence, hardly of life.

"That's up to Blacky," said the other. It was Blaze's voice. "This is the guy that turned up the Circle Cross outfit. Turned up some others, too.

He's a dangerous dick—or he was. He'll be crabmeat before mornin'. Cross was Blacky's pal. Blacky's gittin' even."

"Goin' to dump him in the river?"

"Naw. Blacky's too wise fer that. We don't want no floaters identified. Soon as the load's clear they'll put him in the launch an' take him out on the ebb into the Sound. Blacky'll weight him down with pigiron ballast an' let him slide to the bottom."

"Bump him off first?"

"Not Blacky. He'll wait fer him to come out of the drops an' he'll tell him a few things before he ties him up. He'll drop him in alive, the dirty —"

Dugan listened to his fate, to the filthy stream of abuse from Blaze's lips. Rage urged his glands to function. Adrenalin flicked through his system, clearing his blood."

"He sure fell fer the play," chuckled Blaze. "Figgered he'd saved my life. He nigh busted Blacky's elbow, though. He had a swell dame with him. I'd have liked to git her. Maybe I can yet, if I can locate her. She'd come runnin' if she thought he was hurt. Stuck on the lousy dick. Mother Blinn 'ud handle her."

"You want to cut out monkeyin' wit' janes, Blaze," said the other man. "It's after twelve. Better open up. They'll be here in a few minnits. An' Rocco's due right now. The stuff's all sold."

Dugan dared not look. His blood was racing now, his heart pounding. The talk of Mary summoned the last reserves within him. The drug was still in part possession of him, but they had not bound him. He could hardly hold himself in, but he knew he had slight chance, unarmed, against the two of them.

He felt a draft of air, the smell of

tidal water. He guessed what they were doing. Opening up some sort of hatch through which the stolen silk would be passed.

He was grateful for the air, though he dared not fill his lungs. He lay breathing stertorously, unmoving, save for occasional twitches. But his senses were alert once more.

He heard the clink of bottle and glasses. Suddenly a buzzer sounded.

"There's Rocco," said Blaze. "Help me open those doors. He'll run the truck inside."

They mounted the ladder. Dugan heard their tread overhead. He sat up and realized how weak he still was. His brain seemed filled with fumes and he could not rise. But he had to. It was his only chance. They were busy, but they would not be busy long. Once they came back it was the end. His chance was slim enough, as it was.

He could barely stand. He looked round for some weapon, but that hope faded. He caught up the bottle and swigged from it. It was good liquor and it steadied him though he reeled, from weakness, as he made for the open hatch.

Deputy Commissioner Connelly sat at his desk, laboriously filling in a crossword puzzle with the stump of a lead pencil, a cold cigar between his lips. He was feeling uneasy about Dugan. He had not reported in all day. It might mean that he was hot on a lead, it might mean he had met with some disaster.

If Dugan had a fault, it was that of over initiative. So far his luck had helped his pluck to bring him through. And he had brains. But Connelly was given to hunches and he did not like it.

If he did not hear from the lad soon he meant to send to the Nest. He

thought of going himself. Dugan was more to him than a promising detective, one who had the genuine instinct for the game. He was fond of him, as he had been of his father. He admired Dugan's ambition, his studies; and his affection made him more sensitive to Dugan's welfare.

Still, the lad had common sense. He would not try to tackle such a gang as the Blackbirds alone. If he had got anything on that outfit.

He pushed aside the puzzle that would not work out to-night, lit his cigar and puffed at it, frowningly. His telephone rang.

"What's that? What name? Send her in."

He rose as Mary Brady entered, her face pale. He knew her, knew her affiliation with the Garrity Agency, and he was pretty certain how affairs stood between her and Dugan. She did not take the chair he offered, but stood alert, calm enough, for all the sign of worry in her face.

"I was at the Nest with Jimmy last night," she said. "There was a quarrel started and Jimmy interfered. A man took hold of me to get at another one. He started to pull a gun. Jimmy fought his way out with a chair. I think it was faked."

"Why?"

Rapidly she told him the whole story. Came to her conclusion.

"The blonde entertainer must have been in it. She was wearing a lot of jewelry. Most of it was paste, but there was one ring that wasn't. A diamond nearly eight carats. She didn't buy that. If we could get hold of her we might find out what has gone wrong."

"What makes you think it wasn't a phony ring? What do you know about diamonds?"

"I'm working for the agency with Oppenheim. They've lost a lot of stones lately. I don't know, of course, that this is one of them, but I do know that some of the stones that were taken were Brazilian. They were not blue-whites. Brilliant, but off-color. I heard them talking about them. And I know that imitations are not made of off-color stones, unless on a special order. If she didn't come straight by that stone you could get it out of her. And—"

"You're a smart girl," said Connelly. "We could use you on the force if the regulations stood for it. We'll collect this Mae Morgan. I've a notion we've got something on her. We'll bring her in, and this partner of hers, with our friend Salterno. We'll raid the Nest. What they know we'll find out."

The deputy was of the old school. His methods of dealing with crooks might not be considered humanitarian, but they were efficient. He pressed a button, gave swift, concise orders.

"I'm going with the squad," he said, opening a drawer of his desk and taking out his gun.

He examined it expertly, set it in a shoulder holster.

"I'm going with you," said the girl.

Connelly shook his head at her.

"No place for you. We'll bring them back here."

"You may find something out right there," she said. "I'm going, anyway. I'm a detective. I'll go by myself if you won't take me."

Connelly put his hand under her rounded but firmly molded chin, looked into her eyes.

"You can't ride with the squad," he said. "But I can't stop you following. I'll take you in my own car. You can handle the woman. You're right. There's no sense in bringing them here."

We'll hold our little third degree right in the Nest."

V

DUGAN hung from a sodden beam, almost submerged. The shock of the water helped to revive him. He could swim, as soon as he was sure enough of his strength. His rapid exit had left him exhausted. He was thankful for the days when, as a youngster, he had learned to dive, to swim under water, from the wharves where he played with the boys of the neighborhood.

The hatch was above him and to the right as he held himself close to the planking that covered the piles. He heard the excited voices of Blaze and two other men. Rocco had come down the ladder, probably for a drink. The beam of a flash light played on the water, roved about the surface, along the boarded-in section of the wharf.

"He was shammin'," said Blaze. "Got rid of the dope when he threw up. We gotta get him or Blacky'll raise hell."

"He'll raise hell, too, if he makes a giter-way. Maybe he drowned. He can't git out."

"I'll shoot the rat," said Blaze. "Swing that torch, can't you?"

The ray came toward Dugan and silently he sank under the surface, groping for a handhold, finding it in a snag of slimy iron bolt with a square nut at its end, hanging to it, holding his breath, fearful that a bubble might betray him.

Looking up he could see the ray moving away, a dim spot through the murky water. Silently he came to the surface again, took long breath, swam under water, making for the front of the wharf. He had seen that the torch ray barely carried that far. Soon the launch would be coming.

It was here already. He heard it bump lightly against the end of the wharf, close in. Treading water in a far corner he saw a gate swing open. A launch came in silently, thrust forward by boathooks, gliding through. The gate was closed. He could not get out to the river.

But he had not been seen. The launch had been darkened, but now lights showed in the cabin. There was a bustle of men. The engine was shut off. The launch moved on, came to rest by the open hatch.

Dugan could see the men handling the stolen stuff expeditiously. There were three of them at it, the fourth standing in the bows. Evidently Blaze was not eager to break the bad news and Black was busy with getting the loot ashore. Blaze had said two men usually stayed in the launch. They would probably go into the cabin. When they did—

He had got another hold. The drug seemed to have leached out of him. Energy had returned. When Blacky heard the news, they would make a thorough search of the space beneath the wharf, would find him, shoot him if they did not haul him ignominiously aboard.

Blacky had gone inside with two of the men. Dugan heard a sudden storm of words. He launched himself out beneath the water, body straight, making for the hull. He had to act at once. Black was cursing Blaze, who was excusing himself. The two men aboard went forward and Dugan dragged himself into the cockpit.

"Turn on that searchlight," Blacky ordered, appearing in the hatchway. "Start that engine. Set her over by the gate. If he ain't drowned we'll git him. I'll fill him full enough of lead to sink an' stay down."

He broke into curses. Beside him some one held the torch that stabbed the darkness, but failed to locate Dugan, crouching back of the hood.

The engineer was coming back along the narrow gangway beside the cabin structure. Dugan prayed that he would have a gun.

The man did not see him as he stooped to enter the cabin. Dugan was on him like a tiger. He brought down the back of his hand in a rabbit punch with desperate force and the man fell inside the cabin, Dugan on top, feeling for a weapon, finding it.

"What the hell's the matter with you?" cried Blacky. "Turn her over. Go aft and help him, Jake."

Dugan met the second man as he stepped down into the cockpit. He clubbed him with the barrel of the gun he had found, rejoicing in the feel of it. His strength was with him again.

The man toppled backward, across the gunwale, sprawling, struggling convulsively, falling into the water with a splash.

"What's up?"

Blacky leaped aboard and Dugan fired at him over the cabin hood. He saw Blacky reel and then straighten up, shooting back. The bullet whined close to Dugan as he sent a second slug straight to the mark. Blacky went down in a heap, but now other bullets were singing, spurts of fire coming from the hatch.

But no one dared to come aboard. He held them, and he drove them back.

His hammer clicked on his last cartridge as they disappeared from his accurate marksmanship. Not for nothing had he practiced at the police gallery.

Dugan raced forward, got Blacky's gun with shells still in it. He gained the hatch and saw the room empty, a pair of legs disappearing up the ladder. He fired at them and a body came hurtling down, a body topped by a red head. Blaze!

Blaze rolled on the floor, twisted, trying to aim his weapon, collapsing as Dugan's lead tore through him.

He heard the scrape of opening doors, the starting of a motor. They were making their get-away. Leaving the loot. And he had got four of them.

Three. He heard a slight noise as he was about to mount the ladder. The man he had rabbit-chopped was looking through the hatch, but ducked, unarmed, as Dugan let him go. He might need all his shells for men who would fire back.

One man would have a hard job to open the gate and get the launch out. Dugan was but one himself as he sprang up the ladder.

The truck was moving out. Then it halted.

Headlights sprayed it. There were sharp commands. Officers came swarming into the warehouse, surrounding the truck. Dugan saw Connelly with unbelieving eyes. And then, back of the deputy, he saw the shining face of Mary Brady.



Watch for a new, thrilling *Jimmy Dugan* adventure in an early issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

Manhunts of a Great Detective

A True Story



Suddenly a figure crept to the side of the grave and stood erect. He held a spade,

Old "Never-Let-Go" Tells What Makes a Detective—and Relates the Strange Case of the "Weazened Wonder" of Erie

By John Wilson Murray

Late Chief Inspector of the Department of Justice of Ontario

As Told to Victor Speer

CHAPTER I

The Grave in the Swamp

IN a tangled swamp on a farm near Galt, in the County of Waterloo, Province of Ontario, Canada, one August, searchers were hunting for the body of a farmer's wife. She had disappeared, and blood by the wood pile,

and near the house, told of a crime and the hiding of the body.

One of the party beating the swamp came upon a half dug grave. He kept silence as to his discovery, and, when night fell, he secreted himself in the thick brush near the grave and waited, in the faint hope that the murderer would return and finish his task.

It was bright moonlight overhead. In the thicket of the swamp all was gloom, save for a broken filtering of pale light where the underbrush and tall brier had been thinned out. It was a lonely, dismal place. An owl's wailing and the swamp-frog's croaking were the only sounds. The hours passed. Midnight came and went. Not even a lizard appeared by the grave. The watcher was about to creep closer and ease his limbs, when a rustle sounded in the brush, a noise like the wind swishing a bush. It ceased, then came again, then all was still. Suddenly, on the side of the grave farthest from the watcher, a figure crept swiftly out of the thicket and stood erect.

The moon shone full upon him. He was tall and broad shouldered, with a pose like that in the old-fashioned prints of heroic figures of the ancient wars. He wore knee boots, with a long, loose coat reaching to their tops, and buttoned to the chin. A slouch hat, pulled well down on the forehead, shaded his face. In his left hand he held a spade. He paused by the grave, thrust his spade into the earth, and left it upright like a headstone, then shoved back the hat, and knelt on all fours, with his face close to the ground, for all the world like a bloodhound sniffing for a scent. On hands and knees he crept around and around the grave. Finally, from a pocket of the long coat, he produced a tiny lamp, and turning its light full upon the ground, he re-

sumed his circling of the grave, his face not five inches from the earth, his eyes searching every foot of ground.

For half an hour this creeping around the grave continued. Then the figure squatted by the mound of earth and sat motionless. Suddenly he arose, seized the spade, and swiftly tossed away the mound of earth dug from the grave. All was done so noiselessly, so deftly, that it seemed unreal, phantom-like, the antics of a ghost. As he neared the bottom of the pile of earth his care redoubled. At length he began to dig around the remnant of the pile as if making a second grave beside the first. He had left about four inches of the earth from the first grave lying undisturbed on the site of the second grave. It was thick, sticky soil, that held together firmly, being less watery than elsewhere in the swamp, yet full of heaviness and moisture.

He dug cautiously, sinking the spade about four inches in the soil, then driving it under, as would a man in cutting sod. When he thus had cut under the entire remnant of earth from the first grave, he cleared a space on the ground beside it, and as one would turn a pancake on the griddle, he flipped earth out and turned it onto the cleared space, so that the remnant of soil from the first grave was underneath. He then painstakingly lifted away the upper layer, and thus exposed to view the soil from the first grave, precisely as it had formed the surface

Editor's Note:—A year ago one of the greatest detectives the world has ever known died. He was John Wilson Murray, Chief Inspector of Criminal Investigation of the Department of Justice of the Province of Ontario. His career was one of the most amazing a man ever had, for more than thirty years in the grim business of the manhunt. Fortunately for readers of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, John Wilson Murray told the story of his life to his close friend and collaborator, Victor Speer, and we are able here to present the gripping chronicle.

or top of the earth before the digging of the grave began. He knelt over this earth as a mother over her child. He turned the light of the little lamp full upon it. Then he grunted, a subdued, deep, satisfied grunt. With the spade he carefully cut out a piece of the earth about a foot long and half as wide. He produced a measuring rule, and for half an hour worked over the piece of earth. Then he took the earth in his arms as tenderly as if it were a babe, picked up the spade and vanished in the thicket.

Like a flash it dawned on the watcher that this mysterious figure had been searching for footprints. He had found no clear footprints around the grave. The marks there had been trampled by those of the watcher. But on the surface of the earth, where the grave had been dug, the footprints of the digger were certain to appear. So the figure in the long coat had reclaimed this surface undisturbed, and, judging from the one sound he made, the grunt of joy, he had found what he sought.

The watcher trailed after him, ignorant of who he was or whence he came. The gray dawn was creeping into the sky as he entered his hotel at Galt. A sleepy porter was lolling on a table—footsteps sounded in the hall, and past the office door on his way upstairs went the figure of the long coat. The coat was in his arms, borne carefully, for it concealed the precious piece of earth.

"Who is that?" asked the watcher.

"That!" said the porter with a yawn. "That's Old Never-let-go."

"Who?" asked the watcher.

"Old Never-let-go," answered the porter. "Murray, John Murray, Old Never-let-go, the greatest genuine detective that this here or any other

bloomin' country can produce. He's snoopin' around now a gettin' ready to fix a hangin' for whoever killed Mrs. Orr."

The figure of the long coat was in his room before the porter finished. He had laid the piece of earth on a table and turned the light full on it. A footprint showed, distinct in every detail of the shoe's outline. He re-measured it carefully, noting the measurements on a slip of paper. When he finished he compared this slip with another slip. Then he went to a closet and drew forth an old shoe, earth stained and worn. He gently lowered this shoe into the imprint on the piece of earth. It matched. The clew held true.

After locking the piece of earth in an iron box, he went straight to the jail, where a suspect was under guard. He entered the cell and slammed the door. An hour later he returned to his room at the hotel, glanced longingly at the bed, then at his watch, shook his head, and five minutes later was in a cold bath. When he appeared in the hotel office shortly after, the newspaper men and others, including the watcher in the swamp, crowded around him.

"Any news?" they asked eagerly.

"The murderer's locked up," was the reply.

"Who is he?"

"Jim Allison, the chore boy. He'll confess before he's hanged."

Allison was tried and convicted, and he confessed before he was hanged. At the trial there was no inkling of the all-night labors in the swamp or of the fatal footprint. The case was complete, without a revelation of the methods of the man who ran down the necessary evidence. If it had been necessary, the piece of earth with the tell-

tale tread, a plaster cast of it to make it still plainer, would have been in evidence at the trial. It was not needed, and hence it did not appear. In a somewhat similar case a few years before, proof of footprints was needed, and it did appear.

"You're sure Allison did it?" asked the newspaper men at the Galt Hotel.

"Sure," said Murray, and he went to breakfast.

It was the writer's first experience with John Wilson Murray, before his death Chief Inspector of Criminal Investigation of the Department of Justice of the Province of Ontario, with head offices in the Parliament Buildings, Toronto. For almost thirty years he was inspector, and, in that time, murders by the dozen, burglaries by the score, crimes of all kinds, totaling thousands, were solved by him, and the perpetrators apprehended.

His career was a record of events outrivalling the detective tales of fiction; for fact, in its fullest scope, is stranger far than fiction. He followed men over two continents, he pursued them over land and sea, from country to country, from hemisphere to hemisphere, from new world to old world and back again. He traveled over thirty thousand miles in the chase of a single man. He shot and was shot. He was worsted in desperate struggles when help came in the nick of time, and he fought grim battles single handed when defeat would have meant death. His prisoners ranged from men of high estate to creatures of the lowest depths. The cases he solved ranged through every variety of crime known to the police records of the world.

He ran down counterfeiters of one million dollars and more; he unraveled

the mysteries of murder where life was taken for eighty cents. He had the counterfeiting plates, valued at forty thousand dollars, as a trophy of the one chase, and he had a rusty iron pipe as a souvenir of the other.

Before his death he lived in Toronto, in a comfortable brick house in Brunswick Avenue. A stranger seeing him would have regarded him as a prosperous business man, of placid life and uneventful career. His home life was the antithesis of his official life. He lived alone, with a trusted housekeeper and discreet servants. His pleasure, apart from his work, was in outdoor life, with his dogs and gun, his fishing tackle, or, above all, a boat on the open sea. Beside his desk in the library of his house, were his favorite books on a separate shelf—the poems of Robert Burns, the works of Scott, the essays of Emerson, the Count of Monte Cristo, Gulliver's Travels, and the Bible. He was an omnivorous reader, but these were his favorites. On the wall, side by side, were pictures of Queen Victoria and Abraham Lincoln. His den was filled with reminders of his life's work. There were rusty bullets that came from the brains of murdered men; there were bludgeons, knives, revolvers, and sandbags, pieces of pipe, jimmies, kits of burglars, outfits of counterfeiters, symbols of the crucial clues that fastened on criminals the guilt of their crimes. Each had its history, and in the story of his life all have their place.

And in a gold frame on the top of his desk, in old English lettering on heavy paper, was the following:

They talk about a woman's sphere
As though it had a limit;
There's not a place in earth or heaven
There's not a task to mankind given

There's not a blessing or a woe,
There's not a whisper, yes or no,
There's not a life, or death, or birth
That has a featherweight of worth,
Without a woman in it.

Murray used to smile when a visitor read it.

CHAPTER II

What Makes a Detective

MY experience in the United States Secret Service some thirty years ago," Murray said, "settled my determination to make the detective business my life work. I realized that to make a success of it I would have to go to work to perfect myself in it, just as does a man fitting himself for any other business and advancing himself after he engages in it.

"The detective business is the higher branch of the police business. A man may be an excellent policeman, and yet be an utter failure as a detective; and I have seen many a clever detective who was out of his element in the simpler lines of police duty. There is no magic about the detective business. A detective walking along the street does not suddenly hear a mysterious voice whisper: 'Banker John Jones has just been robbed of one million dollars.' He does not turn the corner and come upon a perfect stranger, and then because the stranger has a twisted cigar in his mouth, suddenly pounce upon him and exclaim, 'Aha, villain, that you are, give back to Banker Jones the one million dollars you stole ten minutes ago!' The detective business is of no such foolish and impossible character. Detectives are not clairvoyants, or infallible prophets, or supernatural seers. They possess no uncanny powers and no

mantle of mysterious wonder-working. I remember a few years ago I was subpoenaed before a grand jury in the city of New York to testify on a matter pertaining to a prisoner whose record I knew here in Canada. The foreman of that jury was a man prominent in New York's business life. When I was called he looked at me and suddenly said:

"Inspector Murray, what crimes have been committed within the past hour in New York, and who committed them?"

"I have not the slightest idea," I replied.

"Oho! So you cannot go out and put your hands on every man who has committed a crime? You are a detective, yet cannot do that," he said.

"I am not that kind of a detective," I replied. "When I get a guilty man it usually is by hard work or good luck, and often by both."

"Thank the Lord we've found a detective who is not greater than God," he said.

"As a matter of fact, the detective business is a plain, ordinary business, just like a lawyer's business, a doctor's business, a railway manager's business. It has its own peculiarities because it deals with crime, with the distorted, imperfect, diseased members of the social body, just as a surgeon's business deals with the distorted, imperfect, diseased members of the physical body. But it is not an abnormal or phenomenal or incomprehensible business. There is nothing done in it, nothing accomplished by any detective that is not the result of conscientious work, the exercise of human intelligence, an efficient system of organization and intercommunication and good luck. A good detective must be quick to think, keen to analyze, persistent,

resourceful, and courageous. But the best detective in the world is a human being, neither half devil nor half god, but just a man with the attributes or associates that make him successful in his occupation.

"A wide acquaintance is one of the most valuable assets of a detective. The more crooks he knows the better. I have seen detectives visit a prison and walk through it, recognizing man after man—hundreds of them. I have seen detectives stand before photograph cases and name and describe criminal after criminal, even to the minute eccentricities of each one. A good memory is a great help; in fact, it is essential to the equipment of a clever detective.

"A wide acquaintance of the proper sort is invaluable. Personal friendship, among detectives and police departments of different cities and different countries, is one of the greatest aids to efficient detective work. Detectives and police departments can help one another, for by their coöperation they create a detective system that covers the world. If a criminal escapes in one city he is apt to be captured in another, and times without number the perpetrators of crime in one community are arrested by the police of another, and held until called for by the police of the place where they are wanted.

"From the outset of my career I have made it a point to increase steadily and systematically my acquaintance among detectives, among criminals, among bankers, lawyers, business men, professional men, people of all sorts and conditions. Hundreds of times I have had occasion to be glad I did this. By knowing a man in the right way personally, you will find he will do things for you in a pinch that he never

would do for you otherwise, under any circumstances.

"Personal knowledge of crooks is valuable for many reasons. Often you may recognize the perpetrator of a crime from a witness's description of a person seen in the vicinity. You may recognize a certain kind of burglary as the work of a certain gang. In an emergency you may gather information from crooks that will enable you to lay your hands on the very man you are after.

"Much has been written about crooks by students of the social problem and by scientists. At least all writers agree that they are a queer lot, a class by themselves, with a life of their own and a point of view that is peculiarly their own. They have the characteristic of gratitude in perhaps a greater degree than some other classes of humanity. Of course there are exceptions. But crooks as a whole have a code of honor, or rather a code of dishonor, that is always paradoxical, yet they adhere to it.

"If you do one of them a favor—that is, a turn that he, not you, regard as a favor to him—he will not forget it. More opportunities than are imagined present themselves where, in no way inconsistent with his duty, a detective may gain the favor instead of the disfavor of a crook. The best crooks make the least trouble personally to a detective. They are the hardest to catch, next to unknown crooks who are on the road for the first time, but once they are caught they realize that the part of wisdom is to acquiesce.

"Crime is a disease. It is hereditary, just as consumption is hereditary. It may skip a generation, or even two or three generations. But it is an inherent, inherited weakness. I am satisfied of this. I have seen instances

where the identical kind of crime has appeared in generation after generation, great-grandfather down through grandfather, father, son and grandson. I have known men whose grandfathers were horse thieves or counterfeiters, and whose fathers were honest, to become horse thieves or counterfeiters and do nothing else dishonest. In the oldest records of crime we find inherited crime traced through three hundred years, and even longer. The conditions of the criminal may be bettered, just as the conditions of the consumptive may be bettered. The disease may be checked; in some instances it may be averted, but the crime germ, if I may use the word, is there, lurking in the life of the victim.

"Once dishonest, always dishonest. That is the general rule. I believe in it absolutely. Reformation is the exception. The degree of dishonesty may vary, but the fact of dishonesty does not alter. I made up my mind slowly on this point, and I reached my decision with reluctance. But I have seen it over and over again. It is observed more clearly about professional dishonesty than amateur dishonesty, if I may draw such a distinction. The crook who goes to prison once is apt to turn up again in the hands of the police.

"The business is full of vexations. There are times when you know to a certainty the doer of a deed, yet arrest must wait until the evidence is in hand. Sometimes the evidence never comes, and you see the years go by, with a guilty man enjoying the liberty denied to another, no more guilty, who had not the good fortune to lose some links in the chain of evidence that surrounded him. It is the law of chance.

"I believe in circumstantial evidence. I have found it surer than di-

rect evidence in many, many cases. Where circumstantial evidence and direct evidence unite, of course, the result is most satisfactory. There are those who say that circumstances may combine in a false conclusion. This is far less apt to occur than the falsity of direct evidence given by a witness who lies point-blank, and who cannot be contradicted save by a judgment of his falsity through the manner of his lying. Few people are good liars. Many of them make their lies too probable; they outdo truth itself. To detect a liar is a great gift. It is a greater gift to detect the lie. I have known instances where, by good fortune, I detected the liar and then the lie, and learned the whole truth simply by listening to the lie, and thereby judging the truth. There is no hard and fast rule for this detection. The ability to do it rests with the man. It is largely a matter of instinct.

"The best detective, therefore, is a man who instinctively detects the truth, lost though it may be in a maze of lies. By instinct he is a detective. He is born to it; his business is his natural bent. It would be a platitude to say the best detectives are born, not made. They are both born and made for the business.

"The man, who, by temperament and make-up, is an ideal detective, must go through the hard years of steady work, must apply himself, and study and toil in making himself what he is born to be. Sandow was born to be a strong man, but, if he had not developed himself by hard work he would not have become the strongest man of his time.

"As a detective advances in his business he will find that the more he studies and works, the stronger his powers of intuition, of divination, of

analysis, become. A very simple broad illustration will prove this. If a detective is chasing a criminal from country to country, and has learned, by study of the extradition treaties, that a certain country offers a better haven than another, he may save himself many a weary mile by going to the country where his common sense tells him his man is more likely to be.

"A mechanical knowledge of the use of tools, a knowledge of the effects of poisons, a knowledge of the ways of banking, of the habits of life of the various classes in various callings, a knowledge of crooks and, above all, a knowledge of human nature, in whatsoever way manifest, are invaluable elements of the equipment of a good detective.

"In a vague way I held these opinions away back in 1866, when, as a young fellow of twenty-six, I left the service in the navy after the war, and for about two years served as a special agent in the employ of the United States Government. I made acquaintances all over the country in those days, many of them being young fellows like myself, who were in the police business then, and later became heads of detective or police departments. I obtained my first experience then in the secrets of counterfeiting, in the arts of burglars, in the ways of the classes of thieves busy in those days in all parts of the United States, and more or less bothersome at times to the government. It was precisely the experience and training I needed at that time.

"Afterwards I was persuaded to go to Erie, Pennsylvania, where I had made friends during my early days on the lakes, including prominent railroad men, and joined the police force there. In the four or five years I remained

there I had plenty to do, and it fitted me further for the work I had outlined for myself. I became a detective on the force in Erie. Tom Crowley, a man I loved and respected, was chief at that time.

"Sometimes, when the wind howls and the world is full of gusts and gales, and I am caught where the man next me has a pipe as old as Methuselah, and tobacco as strong as Samson, my mind turns back to Crowley, and there flit through my memory, like ghosts of long ago, episodes of the old days in Erie when I was a sleuth from Sleuthville, and mighty proud of it, too."

CHAPTER III

The Weazened Wonder

A PLAGUE of sneak-thieving broke out in Erie, Pa., shortly after Murray became a detective. It grew to be epidemic. Furniture vanished out of houses. Clothing seemed to fall upon the backs of invisible wearers and saunter into Spookland. Plows disappeared from farmers' fields as if they had started on the shortest route to China. Horses trotted off into nowhere. Entire shelves in stores were swept bare in a single night, and from one of them twenty dozen pairs of shoes seemed to walk out of sight at midday.

"'We had better order the people to anchor their houses,' said Crowley to me," said Murray, telling the story. "We watched all day and we watched all night for weeks, but the stealing went on just the same. Crowley said it must be giant rats, who had a den in the bowels of the earth and decided to furnish it from Erie. He said some one had told him that in India they had a plague, by which people wasted

away and finally dried up. He concluded that the plague had spread from India to Erie, and had seized upon everything portable in and around the town. 'They're not stolen, they just waste away,' said Crowley. 'It's a case of now you see them, now you don't. To clinch this, one of the men began to lose his hair. Crowley pointed to it and exclaimed: 'See, it's just wasting away.' I had a mustache that was not flourishing just then, and I shaved it off. When I appeared for duty the next day Crowley gasped:

"Great Scott, Murray! They didn't steal your mustache, did they?"

"Finally a new democrat wagon disappeared. It belonged to James Tolwarthy, a grocer, who had left it in front of his store the day after he had paid two hundred and seventy-five dollars for it. The democrat had gone, as completely as if a modern Elijah had impressed it for chariot service to the skies. Tolwarthy was angry. He kept his wagons usually in a hotel shed near his store. When he went there to look for his new democrat he found an old crackey wagon standing in its stead. It stood there for weeks, and every day we went to look at it, as if its tongue could tell us who left it there.

"We searched every stable and every vacant building in the town. Not a trace of Tolwarthy's democrat or of any other vanished property did we find. A little child can lead us, however, and I came across a boy who said he thought he had seen the man who left the wagon in Tolwarthy's shed. He described him as best he could. It was not much of a description, but a poor description is as good as a good photograph any day. I would rather have a fair description than a dozen photographs when it comes to going after a man I never saw. I took

the lad's description and started out to visit every farmhouse on every road leading out of Erie. I nosed into all of them for a radius of several miles. I found no such man as the lad described, and no haymow hid any plunder, either, for I climbed into all."

"At last I found a farmer who had seen a fellow drive by his house in a new democrat about the time Tolwarthy's wagon vanished, and the description of the democrat tallied with that of Tolwarthy's democrat, while the description of the man proved him the same fellow seen by the lad.

"Crowley, Officer Snyder and myself got a team and started to drive over the road the stranger went with Tolwarthy's wagon. We stopped at every house along the way, but not a sign or trace of him could we find. For a dozen miles we made this farm to farm search. After fifteen miles or more we decided to put up the horses for a feed and rest. We turned off the main road, and in a secluded, out of the way place, in a clearing with about twenty-five acres of pine woods around it, we saw a house. No one was in sight. We hailed, and presently a buxom, blooming woman, about twenty-five years old, seemed to pop out of nowhere and ask us if we wanted anything. Crowley asked for the man of the place, as he wanted to feed his horses. The woman whistled, and out from a clump of bushes near the barn came a little, weazened old fellow, about fifty years old. He reminded me of a muskrat. The moment I laid eyes on him I recalled the description by the lad of the man who left the crackey wagon.

"We alighted and fed the horses. The old man eyed them keenly and looked at their teeth.

"'What's your name?' I asked him.

"George Knapp," he said.

"Lived here long?"

"Me and my wife been here about a year," he answered.

"Your wife?" I said.

"Yep, ain't she a bloomer?" and the old man chuckled hideously as he leered at the young woman who was standing in the doorway of the house.

"He was as keen as a scythe. I innocently asked him if he had seen any stranger driving past his house in a new democrat wagon.

"Nope! No one ever drives past here," said he, "there ain't no past; the road stops here."

"He parried us at every point. We searched his place, barn, house, and outbuildings and found nothing. Yet I was morally certain we had our man. As I sat in the shade by the barn I gazed idly at the stretch of cleared land running down to the creek. I noticed a place or two where the sod had been turned recently. It is the little things that point the way to big results. A sign-board a foot long often tells you the road for the next forty miles.

"Knapp," I said, "I am going fishing in that stream."

"All right," said Knapp.

"Lend me a spade," I said.

"What for?" said Knapp, with a sudden sharpening of his glance.

"I want to dig some bait," said I.

"Knapp hesitated, then brought a spade, and followed me as I set out for the stream. I halted at one of the spots where the sod had been turned.

"No good digging here," said Knapp. "Come on farther down."

"Why?" said I.

"This has been dug," said Knapp. "It's worm-scarce right here."

"Never mind," said I. "I only want a few, and it's easier digging."

"The perspiration started on

Knapp's weazened, wrinkled face. I never dally in my garden with my spade, but I see a vision of Knapp dripping like an April shower.

"I drove in the spade. It struck something hard. I turned back the soil and there lay one of the wheels of Tolwarthy's democrat buried beneath a foot of earth. I looked at Knapp and he was grinning in a sickly sort of way. I called Crowley and Snyder and arrested Knapp. Then we led him down to the stream and sat down and informed the old man, on the edge of the water, that the wise thing for him to do was to confess the whole series of thefts. He looked at us and then at the water and then back at us. I think he understood. At any rate he stood up.

"Come on," he said, and led the way to the house.

"The buxom woman met us at the door.

"Get the shingle," said Knapp.

"Without a word she went indoors and returned with a broad shingle. It was covered with red dots, which Knapp explained were made with chicken blood. One big blotch was to show where the barn stood. The smaller dots spreading out beyond it showed where Knapp had buried the plunder.

"We began to dig. The first thing we struck was a coffin.

"You murderer!" said Snyder. "Now we know why you used blood to dot the shingle."

"We lifted the coffin carefully out of the grave. It was very heavy. We pried off the lid, expecting to see the mutilated body of one of Knapp's victims. Instead of a pallid face and glazed eyes we found dozens of boxes of shoes. Knapp chuckled.

"Coffins ain't only for corpses," he said.

"We unearthed samples of everything from a needle to an anchor, a shroud, a toilet set, a baby carriage, forty silk dresses, gold watches, seven ploughs, a harrow, surgical instruments, a churn, a log chain, a grandfather's clock, a set of grocer's scales, hats, overcoats, pipes, a barber's pole, even a policeman's shotgun, that cost one of the Erie policemen eighty dollars, and that Knapp had stolen from his house. One of us would dig for awhile, then Knapp would dig, and if any one dug more than his share it was Knapp. We uncovered ten wagonloads of stuff, including Tolwarthy's democrat, which Knapp had buried piece by piece.

"We took Knapp and his wife to Erie, and locked them up. We hired a large vacant store in the Noble block in Erie, hauled in the plunder from Knapp's, and put it on exhibition for identification.

"In burying his plunder he had boxed it up, preparatory to sending it away in the fall. He said frankly that he had been stealing for years. He explained that the way he did it was to drive into town in a wagon pretending he was selling farm produce or garden vegetables, and seize opportunities in that way to familiarize himself with houses, and then sneak in later, and steal whatever he could carry away.

"Knapp was very angry over having been compelled to help dig up his loot. He vowed he would get even. Some time after he had been locked up in Erie, he called us in and informed us, in profound confidence, that he had buried twenty-five hundred dollars in gold out on his place, and if we would take him out there he would show us where it was. The story was plausible, and three of the fellows got a team,

and drove out seventeen miles with Knapp.

"They took three spades and a pick with them. Knapp began a lot of maneuvering, pacing off distances from house to barn, and from barn to tree, and from tree to stump. They followed him, and he tramped about for an hour, leading them through briers and swamps, and finally back toward the barn again.

" 'There is the place,' he announced.

"They began to dig as if their hope of eternal salvation depended upon it. Knapp encouraged them to greater exertion, and told them he had buried the gold seven feet deep to have it secure. They toiled for hours, digging to a depth of eight feet, but finding nothing. One of them, who knew unbroken earth when he dug it, accused Knapp of tricking.

" 'This is the place,' insisted the old man. 'There is twenty-five hundred dollars in gold in two canvas bags.'

"They fell to again. It was a broiling hot day. They toiled until toward sundown, when the old man began to chuckle.

" 'That'll do,' he said. 'I'm even.'

" 'Even for what?' they asked.

" 'For the two days I had to dig,' said Knapp.

" 'And there's no gold here?' they demanded wrathfully.

" 'There's gold all right, but I cannot remember where it is,' said Knapp.

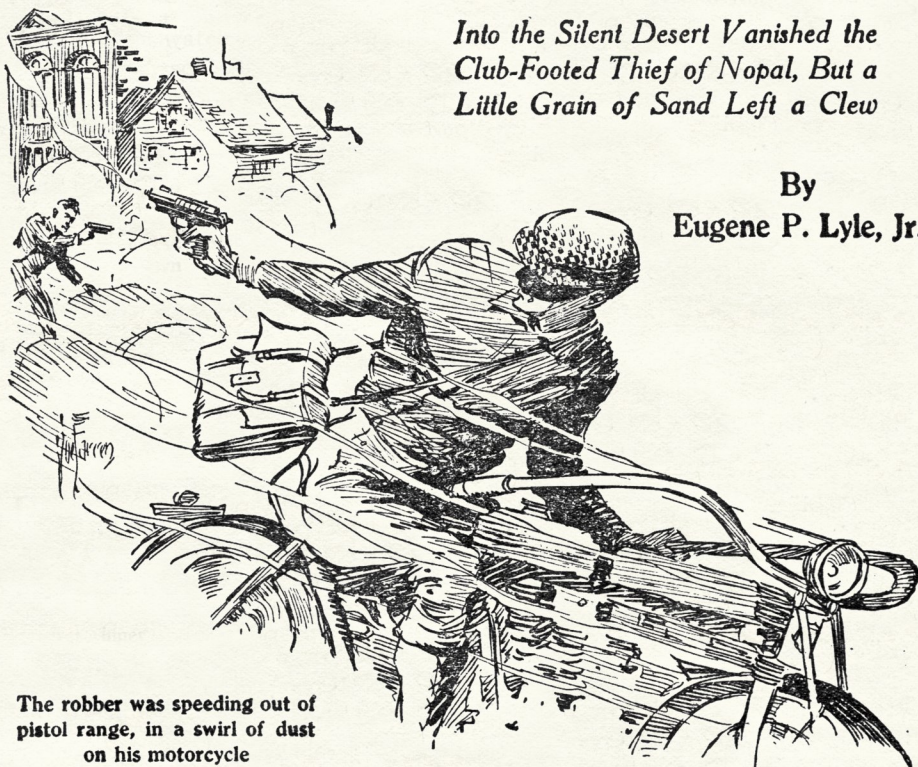
"They drove him back to Erie, and locked him up again. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to sixteen years in the Alleghany Penitentiary. His wife was released. Knapp played insane, and beat the penitentiary. He was transferred to the lunatic division, and, soon after, he sawed the bars, escaped, and never was caught."

TO BE CONTINUED

The Robbery at Nopal

*Into the Silent Desert Vanished the
Club-Footed Thief of Nopal, But a
Little Grain of Sand Left a Clew*

By
Eugene P. Lyle, Jr.



The robber was speeding out of pistol range, in a swirl of dust on his motorcycle

THE bank had not been opened for business ten minutes when the club-footed robber entered. The red tile floor still glistened from its usual morning wetting down with a hose, which was done as much for the cooling effect of swift evaporation in the dry air as to flush out the sifting of desert dust. Facing the entrance behind his cage, big Bart Stollard was cashing a check for Doc Avery, the druggist next door; and Mrs. Merriwether, fidgeting behind Avery, was the only other customer in the place. Mr. Trawl, the president, had just come in, trim and severe and very much the banker as always. Nodding

curtly to Bart's father, who was cashier, vice president and bookkeeper, he had passed on to his desk by the open window, which looked out across the shaded sidewalk into the hot glare of Nopal's one business street.

Nothing much was stirring out there when the clatter of a motor cycle broke the stillness. From the direction of the paved highway it came, raising the dust, then swerved in a half circle and stopped in front of the bank. Dismounting, the rider leaned his machine against a pillar of the arcade, and crossed the sidewalk with a decided limp toward the door of the bank. Mr. Trawl supposed he was the messenger

from the Southwest National of El Metropole, with the ten thousand dollars in ones, fives and twenty-dollar bills to take care of the month-end demand for cash. He was thick-set, coatless, dusty. An old brief case slung over his shoulder presumably contained the expected currency.

And then, before anybody rightly knew what was happening, the man was inside, and masked, and proceeding to hold up the bank. From first to last he spoke no word.

Big Bart Stollard, slow and deliberate as usual as he counted over the bills for Doc Avery, became aware of a black object thrust toward him between the bars of the wicket. It was the short barrel of an automatic pistol leveled at his breast. His good-natured face stiffened to rigid attention. The man had wedged himself in between Mrs. Merriwether and Doc Avery.

"Where's your manners, young man?" Mrs. Merriwether squeaked indignantly.

She did not know that the bank was being robbed. But chubby Doc Avery did. The hand that held the pistol was resting on his shoulder, and he twitched and perspired, trying to keep very quiet. Over Avery's shoulder Bart Stollard looked into a pair of eyes fixed on him through the slits of a gray felt mask. The mask covered the face down to the man's tight-lipped mouth and up to the visor of a soiled checkered woolen cap. Bart spoke quietly to his father, to the frail, resolute man at the bookkeeper's desk behind him.

"Please, dad, don't try anything. I'm all right."

"You won't try anything either, Bart?"

"No, dad, I'll be good."

The robber gestured with the pistol.

Bart nodded. Hands in air he backed toward his father until he stood on a line with him, both facing the eyes behind the gray mask at the teller's wicket.

"Keep backing toward the wall, dad. That's what he wants."

They did that, and the robber stepped out from his usurped place in the line in front of Mrs. Merriwether. The old lady gasped to see that he was masked.

"My gracious, what can a body do?"

He showed her. He motioned her and Doc Avery backward to the rear wall beside the Stollards. Only Mr. Trawl, a petrified spectator at his desk, was left. The pistol motioned to him to join the others; he edged sideways through the gate, then backed as before royalty. Doing so he brushed against the edge of the elder Stollard's desk and knocked off a metal box in which the notes of the bank's debtors were kept. The box struck the tile floor with a terrific crash. They all jumped—all except the robber.

"He's deaf as a post," muttered Doc Avery.

"Don't stoop for that box, Mr. Trawl," Bart shouted. "He'll shoot you. He thinks you're reaching for a gun. Come back here. That's right. It's no use to resist."

Now the man moved swiftly. Dipping down at each stride in his violent limp he came skittering through the gate toward them. A monstrous cripple he seemed, and in his unremitting silence there was death alert to strike should they fail to comprehend the viperish pantomime of the instrument in his hand. Bart Stollard had a full view of him now. Tight over his heavy coatless body he wore a soiled chambray shirt, once blue, but faded to an ashen gray. Also he wore gaber-

dine riding breeches, old and grease-spotted, and high laced boots, one with a raised sole. His mask was wet with perspiration.

Throughout he spoke no human intelligent word, and once only mouthed an inarticulate growl. This was when, confronting them lined up against the wall, he had to make the same gesture twice and still they did not understand. He reached out with his left hand then, and sank his fingers in the elder Stollard's thin shoulder and whirled him half round, pushing him face first against the wall. Bart Stollard lowered his hands, but the robber swung upon him and struck up his chin with the barrel of the pistol. Bart thought of the sidewinder, the desert rattlesnake that attacks man, as he felt the cold deadliness in the pupils of the eyes leveled on him. With the others he faced the wall, his hands over his head.

The rest was incredibly swift. Out of the tail of his eye Bart saw the robber dart into the open vault, skimming unevenly as he went—the sidewinder again in his horrible crippled haste. He gave them no chance for a break. Repeatedly the checkered cap, the masked face, reappeared, to vanish again within the vault. Bart could guess what he was doing in there. He was stuffing his brief case with packets of bills. He was stuffing the last of them in when he emerged. Keeping the automatic trained on them, he skittered backward as far as the gate when he faced about and ran for the street. Jostling past two Nopal merchants just coming in, he crossed the sidewalk, straddled his motor cycle, and kicked the starter. With a snort like a startled horse the machine leaped forward.

Bart Stollard was the first to break from the line facing the wall. The instant the robber turned at the gate

he broke. He ran to the teller's window and snatched up his pistol on the shelf underneath. When he reached the street the robber was speeding out of pistol range, but through the swirl of dust he noted that the motor cycle was grayish green in color. One of the two men jostled by the robber had a car outside. Bart sprang into it, and the two men scrambled into the tonneau as he started the car. Others joined the pursuit behind them, Mrs. Merriwether screaming, "Stop thief! Stop thief!"

Over his shoulder Bart heard shots—no, not shots. They were blow-outs, tires gone flat. Two of their own tires blew out, and the car lurched to a standstill.

Tacks—roofing nails! The robber had sown them in the dust as he rode.

"Any skunk that would do that—" said the owner of the car.

Bart jumped out and turned back. Three other cars had stalled, though others were coming, and he ran toward them, waving their drivers to the side of the street. Two more had to stop before he could reach them, but the light delivery truck of the Imperial Grocery, with two citizens on the seat beside the Mexican driver and four in the body, was just getting under way as Bart swung aboard over the tail gate.

"Off to the side, Tony," he ordered. "Climb the curb! Keep to the sidewalk!"

A half mile ahead the robber turned south into the highway, toward El Metropole and the Mexican border beyond. Fully a minute later they themselves reached the highway. The cement road lay like a strip of gray carpet upon the yellow floor of the desert. It sloped gently upward over the dunes to the crest of a rise some

five miles away. They peered into the jiggling heat waves. The one moving speck visible was the motor cycle and its rider, which topped the rise and was gone.

"We'll never catch him," said one of those in the truck.

"Don't need to," argued another. "He's as good as nabbed already. He can't leave the highway." The man waved a hand over the sea of powdered dust. "If he keeps on they'll grab him at the first town. The bank has phoned everywhere by now, you bet."

"Don't you suppose he's thought of that?" Bart asked.

"What of it? What can he do?"

"I don't know what he'll do," said Bart, "but it's my guess that he's got something figured out. We'll just keep on after him."

II

THEY did, but when they reached the crest of the long rise they could see no sign of the motor cycle. As straight as a string, the cement strip stretched to the horizon. Nothing moved upon it except a sand truck about a mile away. They overtook the truck and passed it. They picked up the tracks of the motor cycle where the dust had drifted over the paved road. In these places they saw two tracks, one made by the robber when coming to Nopal, the other when leaving. At last they came to a stretch where there was but one track. The robber then had not come this far.

They blinked at the desert that shrivels and erases. The man was gone. Nowhere to the mountain haze on either side was there aught to screen him. The clumps of greasewood would not do it. The sand verbena would not hide a jack rabbit. The man was gone.

The pursuers turned back. They

stopped and questioned the driver of the slow-moving sand truck. He regarded them with lazy interest. He wanted to know if their doctors knewed they was loose in this oven heat. Yes, he sort of remembered seeing a motor cycle. Where did it go? Huh, where would it go? It just went. Wished he had a motor cycle instead of a load of sand, to hit up a little breeze. They would have to excuse him, but he wasn't paying no attention where the motor cycle got to. Real nice broiling weather, wasn't it?

"Oh, come on," said one of the men. "This bimbo's asleep, and he'd be a dumb-bell even if he was awake."

"And keep out of the sun the rest of the day," the driver of the sand truck advised them as he threw in the clutch.

A crowd stood around in front of the bank when they returned. Bart saw then that the doors of the bank were closed. His father admitted him. He started to speak to Bart, but turned without a word and led the way to Mr. Trawl's desk. Bart followed. Two of the bank directors were there. Mr. Trawl's brows arched behind his nose glasses as he greeted Bart.

"Ah, the end of the grand stand chase, eh? And did you get your man?"

Bart shook his head.

"You wouldn't," said Mr. Trawl, "even though he was crippled and deaf. Why didn't you shoot him when he came in here? But no, I suppose you were counting the buttons on his shirt. Always hipped on details! I suppose you can tell us the color of his pants?"

"I can tell you," said Bart, "that he wasn't deaf."

"Not deaf? He was stone deaf. When that tin box dropped he didn't so much as start."

"That was iron control. A deaf man

would have jumped. The concussion would have made him jump. Doctors have told me that. When the robber did not jump, that showed that he was pretending to be deaf."

"Well, what of it? What good does your knowing that do us?"

"It probably kept the robber from shooting you, Mr. Trawl," said the elder Stollard. "He believed that we thought he was deaf. Consequently Bart convinced him that you were not stooping for a gun. I saw his finger on the trigger, but Bart saved you."

"But," Trawl objected petulantly, "that catches us no thief. Very convenient for your father, your not catching him, young man."

"I don't understand, Mr. Trawl?"

"Oh, indeed! However, these directors of the bank and myself, we understand only too well."

"Bart," said the elder Stollard, "it's worse than you think. The robber must have known that we were expecting a large sum from the Southwest National."

"But he didn't get that. It hadn't come yet."

"He did get it, though."

Mr. Trawl's laugh was sarcastic. "That is your story, Mr. Stollard."

The elderly cashier looked only at his son. He went on:

"That money from the Southwest National was brought by a messenger, Bart. He came on the stage before the bank opened. I was alone here, and let him in. I received the money, ten thousand dollars, and the messenger left at once. I opened the vault and put the money there. The robber took it, of course."

"Like blazes he did!" Trawl burst forth, throwing off his manner of deliberate sarcasm. "A most convenient robbery for you, Mr. Stollard. And

you and your son needing money badly for that ranching experiment of yours. Come, come, produce the money so that we can open the bank's doors."

Bart trembled where he stood. "That's rot, Mr. Trawl!"

"Yes, a rotten betrayal of trust."

"You'll be saying next that we knew the robber was coming."

"It would almost seem so. Very strangely the fellow happened in during the only few hours in an entire month when more than a thousand dollars would be in our vault. It's curious—very."

"Not so curious. The Southwest National has been sending us currency the same day every month for the past year. Almost any one could make it his business to find that out."

"Why, yes, that's so," spoke one of the two directors. He was Witheral, owner of the sand pits near Nopal and owner of most of the bank. His eyes, under stubborn bushy brows, were afflicted with a squint in their steadfast gimlet boring. "Mr. Trawl's charges are serious," he went on, "and your father, Bart, is either unfortunate or—the charges are true. That's what we have got to find out. However, Mr. Trawl, I might as well tell you this: You have misrated Mr. Stollard in the past. Jealousy, no doubt. Afraid he will displace you. Now listen. In case these charges are proved untrue, we could no longer trust to your judgment, and your place would likely be taken by one whose probity as well as judgment we could in that case trust absolutely."

"Now you are meaning my father, Mr. Witheral?"

"Yes, but only if these charges are proved false."

"It's a dirty shame! My father—"

But that line would get nowhere.

Bart Stollard became slow, plodding, his usual self.

"How much," he asked, tense about the lips, "would be required to balance the bank's cash?"

His father was able to tell him. Eleven thousand, six hundred and eighty-five dollars. That amount exactly the robber had taken from the vault. Methodically Bart noted down the amount.

"Since the bank is closed and I'm not needed here," he said, "I'll be taking the rest of the day off."

"I suppose," said Mr. Trawl, "that you are going to catch the thief?"

"I'm going to try."

"Ah, yes, and you'll be sure to count his buttons, won't you?"

"Oh, let up, Trawl," said the other director wearily. "The boy knows the robber has got to be caught. All right, Bart, take the afternoon off."

Bart felt a hand on his shoulder, his father's hand.

"Thanks, Bart," said his father.

Bart hurried to the garage where he kept his roadster and drove straight to the highway and turned south. "A man can't just disappear," he said to himself. That was all he had to go on.

He stopped and questioned the drivers of the few cars he met. He got plenty of interested comment, but no information. He made the same inquiry at the filling stations at Mesquite and Date Grove. No one had seen a grayish-green motor cycle. They had been on the lookout too, ever since hearing of the robbery over the telephone.

At every culvert bridging an arroyo or washout, Bart stopped. His thoroughness as to detail, which had often earned him chilled reprimands from Mr. Trawl, would not permit him to pass any possible hiding place. At last,

under a culvert some twelve miles south of Date Grove, he found the motor cycle. Nor was that all. Here also the man had left his clothes, or such of his clothes as might form a part of the description broadcast by Mr. Trawl. There were the faded chambray shirt, the soiled checkered cap, the laced boots, one with a raised sole, the gaberdine riding breeches, and the gray felt mask, evidently cut from an old hat.

"About everything except the money," Bart said to himself. He took up the garments one by one and set his faculties to work to read signs on them. Finally he rolled them up into a bundle and took them with him. The motor cycle he had to leave. He looked for its serial number, but found that it had been chiseled off.

A question filled his mind as he drove on. How was the robber traveling now? Bart put on all speed to the next little oasis of adobes and palms, and here at Golconda Wells he telephoned north and south that the robber was no longer on his motor cycle and that the previous description as to his clothes no longer applied. After leaving Golconda Wells he overtook a seed salesman that he knew, who was bowling leisurely along in his work-a-day coupé. The compartment in the back of the coupé was open and filled, as usual, with sacks of alfalfa seed, the "real genuine hairy Peruvian" which the energetic Mr. Weerts boosted endlessly up and down the valley.

Only recently Bart and his father had bought an experimental assortment of budded avocados of him. That putty-colored coupé with its sacks of alfalfa seed and the spry, slim nurseryman in his linen suit at the wheel had been a familiar sight on the highway and county roads for more

than a year past. As Bart came alongside he saw that the coupé was carrying a passenger, a thick-set man in overalls slumped forward, inert, his head on his hand. Bart honked, slowed down, and both cars stopped.

"Suppose you've heard about the robbery, Mr. Weerts?" Bart began.

"Been hearing about it all morning," the salesman replied. He had a keen, kidding way about him usually, but he was serious and genuinely concerned now. "Say, that's too bad. Caught the fellow yet?"

"I was wondering," said Bart, "if you haven't got him there now," and he nodded at the figure besides Weerts. "Where did you pick him up?"

"Back at Barlow's," said Weerts. Barlow's was on a county road twenty miles off the highway. "They tell me he is a dare-devil broncho buster, but," said Weerts, his lean face twisting into an ironic grin, "look what a tractor plow did to him this morning."

He tilted up the man's head and Bert saw that one eye was bandaged and that one forearm was in splints.

"They did what they could for him seeing Barlow has no telephone and they couldn't get a doctor, and when I happened along, they asked would I deliver him to the hospital down at El Metropole."

"And can't we be getting there?" complained the man.

"Sure," said Bart hastily. "Sorry I stopped you, but—"

"Don't mention it," said Weerts, starting his car.

III

BART smiled feebly and speeded ahead. The floor of the valley widened on either side as he rode. The mountain ranges receded into the orange haze of late afternoon. Out

over the vastness were flecks of silver—mesquite in the lowering sun. More and more the dunes gave way to irrigated fields. Now and again Bart Stollard felt a lesser dryness in the air, as if there had been a shower of rain, and he did not need to look to know that he was passing between long stretches of growing alfalfa. Canneries, icing plants, cotton gins, refrigerator cars on sidings, began to mingle with the clumps of greasewood. He had reached El Metropole.

He turned into the wide paved main street flanked by long blocks of covered sidewalks and shops of stucco, one and two stories high. He kept on to the plaza and got out at the town hall. He found the police station inside, and the chief of police in his office. He was a moist, sodden man in a swivel chair. His eyes regarded the intruder without moving. He listened unblinkingly to Bart's story and Bart's appeal for aid. Then he removed the loose dead cigar from between his lips and said:

"Are you Bart Stollard? Uh-huh, I've been hearing about you."

"You have? Who from?"

"From the Southwest National. A guy in your bank phoned them. Guy named—Crawl."

"Trawl."

"All right, Trawl. He mentioned you'd be rampaging down here, telling us how to catch the robber."

"Not at all," said Bart, "I'm asking for help."

"Yeah, but the Trawl gink warned us we wasn't to take you as any way representing the bank, wherefore you'll kindly bear in mind that thief catching is my business and I would like to attend to it myself."

Bart departed. So that was what Mr. Trawl had done for him. Mr.

Trawl did not want the robber caught. He could not afford to have his charges proved false.

At the Hotel Metropole across the way in the privacy of the room assigned him, Bart called up his home over long distance.

"Oh, Bart—your father!"

It was his mother's voice.

"He needs you, Bart. People are saying things. The bank must have cash or it can't open in the morning. Mr. Trawl telephoned to the Southwest National for money and they refused. Things are serious and your father—oh, Bart, it would kill him!"

"Mother, you don't mean—"

"Yes, Bart, I do. I'm afraid—I'm afraid he will be arrested if—if nothing worse."

Bart Stollard was white to the lips, saying what he could as his mother hung up the receiver.

He sat down, but he couldn't think. He got up. He went out and drove around in the twilight. He passed an empty sand truck, and recognized the driver. Bart had passed him during the afternoon after leaving Weerts and the thick-set man. His truck was empty now. He had dumped his load and was going home for the night.

The sand bunkers were here in El Metropole. Bart remembered shaking sand from the garments he had found under the culvert, and it was not entirely the yellow sand of the dunes. Part of it was bluish-black, like black loam, very fine. It was a rare sand, and came only from the Witheral pits north of Nopal. It had one peculiarity. It adhered tightly when wet and kept its form, so that it was in demand by foundries for making molds. Bart remembered also that there were grains of it embedded in the grease-caked hubs of the motorcycle under the cul-

vert. His thoughts were racing now. He drove to the railroad, to the sand bunkers from which the molding sand was shipped to San Diego and Los Angeles. The man in charge was leaving for the day—a red-headed man cursing under his breath.

"Trouble?" Bart inquired.

"It's that dumb buzzard that just pulled out," grumbled the red-headed man. "If his truck body leaks, why don't he get it mended 'stead of patching it with junk? What do you reckon I just got through snaking out of the bunker?"

"Was it a box?"

The red-headed man regarded Bart with respect.

"They was boards, with the nails still in them! Might have been a box at that, only it busted when he dumped it along with the sand." Evidently the man believed Bart belonged to his company. "I wouldn't say nothing to keep you from firing him, boss. He's a mean buzzard."

"I can't promise," Bart told him, "but I'm beginning to think that he may be relieved of his job for quite a long spell. Now show me those planks."

The man showed him the planks. Some were five feet long, others four feet. They would have made a large packing case about three feet high, except that the boards for one side were missing.

"You are sure you got them all out?" Bart asked.

"Every last one. I tromped around in that sand until I got them all."

"Good work," said Bart. "Now if you want to get rid of that driver, you keep your mouth shut."

"Trust me, boss, I'm saying nothing at all."

Bart drove back into town and put

up his car in the hotel garage. "A man can't just disappear," he was saying to himself. A packing case five by four by three under a load of sand would hide a man and a motorcycle. Let down the tail gate of the truck, and if the box were there, its open side facing out, the robber could climb into the box and there would still be room for the driver to stow the motorcycle in after him. Then close the end gate and back the truck, and who would guess that the fleeing bandit was hidden under tons of sand in a truck that he had overtaken and passed? It was pretty shrewd stuff.

Disconsolate at the thought of trying to outsmart such an adversary, Bart went on, reconstructing the rest of it. At the first culvert where there were no observers the robber had left the truck, taking the motorcycle with him under the culvert where he had changed his outer clothes. There would be a second confederate—one in a car who had whisked him away. The approach of other cars may have prevented the truck driver from ridding himself of the box as well. Nevertheless the robber had vanished more completely than ever. Bart gloomily returned to the hotel, after putting up his car in the hotel garage next door.

At the cigar stand in the lobby, Weerts, the seed salesman, was buying cigarettes. He looked cool and slim in fresh linens after coming in and scrubbing off his day's journeying among the desert ranchers. He looked fit and humorously content as his small keen eyes regarded Bart from under the snap brim of his crisp white Panama. He waved a hand.

"Smoke?"

"Thanks. Haven't had supper yet."

"Me neither. Got your robber yet?"

"No. Guess he's gone for good."

"Say, that's too bad." Weerts pulled a bill from his billfold and tossed it on the showcase for his cigarettes.

The girl behind the counter picked up the bill and a grain of sand dropped from it upon the plate glass. Bart stared.

"Yes, yes, certainly too bad," he agreed hastily with Weerts. "Guess I'd better go up and wash."

He left Weerts. He could not be mistaken. The grain of sand had dropped from Weerts's bill upon the showcase. It was fine and black, with a dark bluish gleam. It was like no sand in all the valley except that which came from the Witheral pit above Nopal. How had it got into Weerts's billfold? Though a man might change his clothes, and change them yet again, he would not change his billfold. Was it Weerts who had lain concealed in the box in the truck? Grains of sand so fine would sift through the cracks in the box. One grain told the story. Was it enough? Could he ask the police to arrest a respectable and well known man because he had seen a grain of sand on a showcase?

No, officers of the law would investigate first. They would trace the motorcycle back to its former owner. They would shadow or question the truck driver. Bart couldn't wait.

He recalled seeing Weerts's coupé in the hotel garage. Weerts had strolled into the dining room. Bart glanced in and saw him at a table facing the door. He himself continued down the lobby to the street entrance.

IV

IN the garage, which was large and dimly lighted, he told the attendant that he wished to get something out of his car, and went direct to Weerts's coupé where it was parked behind other

cars against the rear wall. He hoped for time to do what he had come to do. Using his pocket knife he slashed the binder twine with which the bags of alfalfa seed in the rear compartment of the car were sewed. He thrust his arm to the shoulder into the seed of one sack. His fingers touched bottom. He tried a second sack, a third, and in the third his fingers came on a woolen softness. He pulled out a heavy sweater, a sprinkling of seed coming with it. He reached in again, and brought forth a pair of golfing knickerbockers and a second sweater.

"Small wonder the robber was swimming in perspiration," thought Bart.

He held up each garment in turn, and noticed that each sweater was torn in the back, each in the same place. Then the door of Weerts's coupé opened and a man half stumbled out, evidently just aroused from a nap, but he rushed at Bart Stollard. Bart recognized him as the thick-set man he had seen in Weerts's coupé, though no patch covered his eye and neither arm was in a sling. He was able-bodied in every particular. Bart struck him as he came on. He slumped, at the same time yelling:

"Weerts—Weerts!"

The garage attendant ran to them.

"Get Weerts! Get Weerts!"

Bart did some quick thinking. Had Weerts picked up this man at the culvert, or had he picked Weerts up? He could drive, all right. The bandages were only a blind. He was thick-set, like the robber—but no, that meant nothing. He had no club foot. Neither had Weerts. That required thought. But Weerts came. The thick-set man had lapsed into the deep shadows. Weerts turned to the garage man.

"Jerry, ask the hotel manager to

step here. We'll see, Mr. Stollard, how far a man can go prying into another's private and personal effects."

Bart waited. It gave him more time to think. The hotel manager appeared, looking very serious. Weerts said:

"Mr. Monroe, this young man is the teller of the bank at Nopal that was robbed this morning. It seems to have turned his head. Look what he has been doing, rummaging through my alfalfa seed."

The hotel manager was aghast. That a guest in his establishment should violate the privacy, the property, of a fellow guest!

"Jerry," snapped the manager, "phone the chief of police. No. Mr. Weerts, I can't let this pass. Furthermore, the chief asked to be notified should this man get officious. You'll not stir, sir!"

"Not an inch," Bart agreed.

The police chief came. He eyed Bart with a dull cold look of gratified malice.

"Snooping, eh? Huh, I thought so."

That put Bart on the defensive, and Weerts had maneuvered it. Keen and resourceful wits were against him, and he counted his own as nothing. He was slow and plodding. His way was method—details welded one by one until they were a ponderous machine, like a steam roller. One detail was the thick-set man. Weerts had not seen him yet. Bart pushed him into the light. Weerts was quick.

"Look here," he said angrily to the thick-set man, "I thought I left you at the hospital."

The man looked foolish. Weerts gave him no time to reply.

"So you weren't hurt at all, eh? Just a trick of Barlow's to get me to give you a lift to town."

Bart spoke: "He was here guarding your car, Mr. Weerts."

Weerts parried that, too. "The bum picks out my car to sleep in. What would he guard? My old clothes, maybe?"

"Oh," said Bart, "are these your clothes?"

For a split second Weerts did not reply. Then he said:

"Of course. I wear them when I have to demonstrate tree planting for customers."

"Two sweaters at a time, Mr. Weerts?"

"They're not too many in cold weather."

"You wouldn't wear them both on a day like this then?"

"That's a bonehead question. Certainly not."

Bart turned to the chief of police.

"Mr. Weerts robbed our bank at Nopal this morning. I'm asking you to arrest him."

"What?" The chief was disgusted. "Look here, we all know Mr. Weerts. Besides, the robber was deaf and dumb and club-footed and thick-set."

"He wasn't deaf," and Bart explained why that was true.

"But he was club-footed, wasn't he?"

"Wait," said Bart. He went to his roadster and produced the roll of clothing that he had found under the culvert. He told briefly how he had found them and identified them as those worn by the robber. He held up the laced boots.

"There," exclaimed the chief, pointing to the one with the raised sole, "that shows he had one leg shorter than the other."

"It shows," said Bart, "that one leg was made to look shorter than the other. He dipped down on his left foot, but this shoe with the raised sole is for the right foot."

"Well, maybe so," the chief growled, "but how does that prove anything on Mr. Weerts?"

Weerts smiled. "Yeah, on a slim feller like me, Bart?"

"Pad yourself with these sweaters and the knickerbockers and you wouldn't look so slim, Mr. Weerts."

Weerts sighed, shook his head pityingly.

"You're a bigger dub than I am, Gunga Din."

"Yes, and I'm going to take him along," exploded the chief. "He's daft. He might get dangerous."

At once Weerts became serious. "No," he said, "I want this thing cleared up. I can't afford to have even a crazy man going around saying I robbed a bank. Besides, I'm sorry for him. I'll do anything I can to help get this bug out of his head."

In spite of himself, Bart was shaken. He had to steady himself, remembering the grain of sand—that grain of sand on which he had built so tremendous an edifice.

"Very well," he said to Weerts, "take off your coat."

"Sure, I'm perfectly willing to be searched."

"Now your shirt. The undershirt, too."

Weerts was puzzled. "You don't think I'm hiding loot under this gauze undershirt, do you?"

"I want it off. And if there isn't a scratch over your left shoulder blade, then I'm mistaken, and I'm probably all wrong."

Weerts complied. It could be seen that he sincerely believed now that he was humoring a crazy man. He stood before them, stripped to the waist, and on his back, over the left shoulder blade, they saw the thin red line of a scratch that had broken the skin. It

was so slight that Weerts himself evidently did not know that it was there. The chief gaped, oozing moisture. They all stared at Bart Stollard. They might have been convinced in witchcraft. Bart picked up the two heavy sweaters he had found in Weerts's car and handed them to Weerts.

"Put them on."

Weerts hesitated, and put them on.

"Now," said Bart to the chief, "tell me if the snag in each of the sweaters corresponds to the scratch in his flesh."

The chief prodded through the two holes with his fat forefinger, rubbing the tip of the finger along the skin.

"The scratch is right here," he announced.

"Then," said Bart, "he was a liar when he said he hadn't worn them today."

Weerts scarcely flinched.

"I remember now," he said, "that I did have them on this afternoon. I had to get under my car and I didn't want to ruin my clothes. I don't remember getting the scratch. Maybe a sharp rock in the road did it."

Bart nodded. He was Method, moving ponderously. From the roll of clothing he had found under the culvert, he shook out the faded chambray shirt. Weerts's eyes grew steady and cold at sight of it.

"Put this on over the sweaters, Mr. Weerts."

Weerts floored the chief of police with a blow of his fist and dashed for the street. Bart was expecting something of the kind. He drew his pistol and fired in the air. "Stop!" he shouted. Weerts swerved from his clear but long path to the door and darted behind a car. Bart went to where he was and brought him back.

"Now put it on," he said.

The chief of police was up and sput-

tering. "Why all this fuss over putting on a shirt?"

Forcibly they put the robber's faded shirt on Weerts. Bart pointed to a torn place in the shirt over the left shoulder blade. He put his finger through the hole and it went through the hole in each of the sweaters beneath. Drawing apart the edge of the three gaps, he bared the white skin. The fine red line of the scratch appeared before their eyes.

"For the love of fish!" breathed the chief. "But how did he get the scratch?"

Bart told him.

"On a nail. The nail was in a box. The box was in a truck under a load of sand. The robber was hiding in the box. He was crowded in there with his motorcycle. He pushed back against the side of the box, against a protruding nail."

The chief's expression grew shrewd and crafty.

"Gosh all rip, then that makes Mr. Weerts the robber."

"Imbecile!" muttered Weerts.

"What are you doing now, Mr. Stollard?" asked the chief.

Bart was pouring Mr. Weerts's alfalfa seed out upon the garage floor. Sack after sack from the coupé he emptied upon the floor. His haste was eager and desperate. What use to catch the thief if—

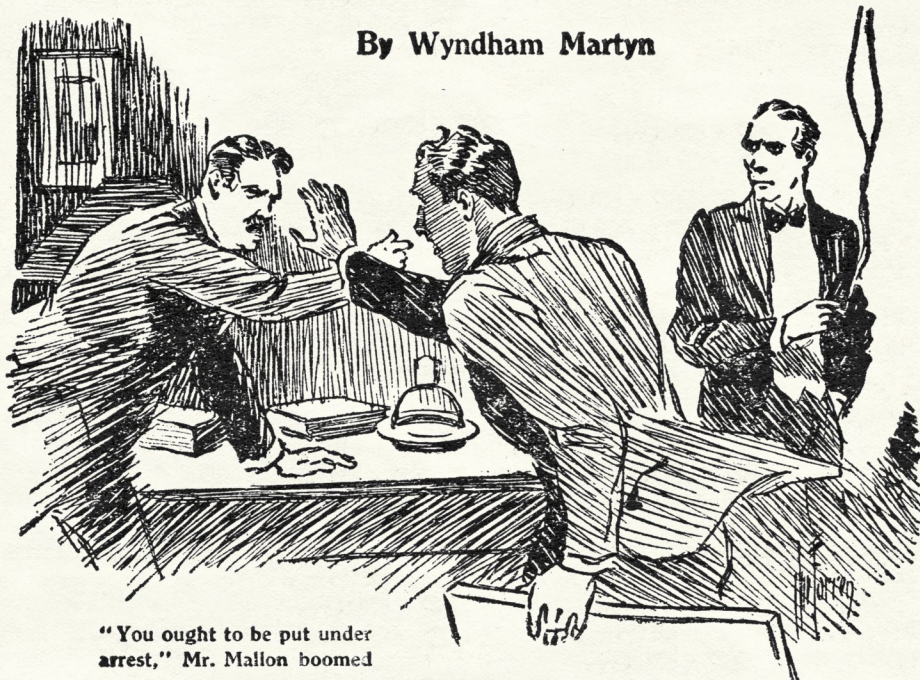
Then with the seed from one sack came an old brief case. The brief case was heavy and distended. Bart opened it, turned it upside down, and let the contents shower upon the floor. Packets of bills were the contents. He stooped and began counting them, slowly, methodically. He looked up, and he was smiling happily.

"Eleven thousand six hundred and eighty-five dollars," he announced.

The Death Dread

*Trent's Talk With the Former Insane Asylum Head
Reveals an Amazing Clew to the Addison Case*

By Wyndham Martyn



"You ought to be put under arrest," Mr. Mallon boomed

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

JOHN ADDISON, Wall Street financier, tells his daughter Cynthia to send the servants to bed and stay indoors. Later that night Cynthia and Roger Ellis, Addison's secretary and her fiancé, hear the dragging step of Hubbard, the lame butler.

Ellis investigates at once, but finds Hubbard in his room, at least the butler's voice answers his knock.

The next morning Addison is found on the floor of the library, his face horribly battered. He is not dead, and explains it was an accident. Hubbard has a black eye which he sullenly re-

fuses to discuss. Inspector Edwards, who has been called, arrests and releases both Ellis and Hubbard. Mr. Jessup, an invalid; Nurse Gregory, Mrs. Addison and the other servants are all questioned. It was learned that Ellis had received a mysterious blackmail call from a woman the day before the attack, a call which he declines to explain.

Anthony Trent, millionaire sportsman, takes an interest in the case. Addison hires a corps of private detectives to guard his place. Trent smuggles his way into the house to continue his investigations. Addison and his wife

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quarrel, she accuses him of hitting the faithful Hubbard, and then replacing him with a detective-butler. He denies hitting the butler, saying it was the same person who attacked him. Night before Addison planned to return to New York he is again attacked and kidnaped from the locked library room. Trent visits a Robert Camplyn to run down a new clew.

Ellis tells Trent that he believes foreign powers are after financial secrets held by Addison, to use in swaying the stock market. Trent confides in Ellis, confessing that he was the fake Mr. Jessup outside the door of the library the night Addison disappeared, and he then demonstrates to all in the house that he can escape from the locked library. Trent learns from Mrs. Colton, Addison's first wife, that John Addison's cousin, Marcus North, is insane and his whereabouts unknown. Trent also learns from Hubbard that a fist greeted his queries at the library door the night of the first attack.

CHAPTER XII

Marcus North's "Past"

WHEN Anthony Trent left Dartmouth for New York and the newspaper game he was fortunate in having as city editor a famous journalist named Clarke, who in those Park Row days was used to imbibe constant stimulant in the alluring bars of the neighborhood.

It was as a cub reporter under Clarke that Trent covered police headquarters and came into touch with crime. Later, when Clarke fell from his position he and his wife lived in the same boarding house as Trent. Just before the war, when Trent sailed on the Leviathan for France, he bought an old house in the Chelsea district and

installed Mrs. Clarke and the boarding house proprietress as joint owners. It was a gift from one who did not expect to return.

Trent had a definite use for Clarke. He had an extraordinarily retentive memory for sensational front page cases. More than once Clarke's card-index system had saved him months of research. Trent had not seen him since the Deal Beach case. At that time Clarke, raving at prohibition, was engaged in distilling his own poisons. But all the toxins that live in unaged alcohol had taken their toll of him and for a time he was near death. Thereafter he dared not try strong drink, and Trent, on his way to see him after leaving Mrs. Colton, wondered in what condition he would find him.

The exterior of the house surprised him. Where there had been one quiet red-brick house there were two united by a basement restaurant that seemed to be doing good business.

The small upper room in which he had last seen Clarke was now as large again. The wall between his room and the corresponding chamber in the new house had been removed. Clarke was no longer thin. He seemed to be better than he had been for years. He looked at his visitor with affection. He used to say Trent could have been managing editor of any paper in the world if he had stuck to it. But Trent had adventured into fiction instead.

Mr. Clarke, who had formerly sung so loudly the praises of the Demon Rum now chanted pastorals that had to do with milk. He liked to think that two cows passed contented lives so that their lacteal fluid should be his.

"My boy," he said, "if you want a real nightcap, try a pint of hot milk before you go to bed with a pinch of salt in it and ten drops of Worcester

sauce. Look at me." He tapped his head, "And the old brain still functions. I keep up with my card-index. It was mighty good of you to have all those out-of-town papers sent me. I'm working on a big thing. I'm getting up an annual so that you'll be able to see what New York, or Detroit or Kansas City or any big town were interested in on any day of the year you like to mention. Front page stuff is all I've time for. Take February 15 for example. Chicago is talking about the assassination of the Moran gang in a garage by rivals pretending to be police officers." He picked up another card. "Los Angeles is still interested in the Keyes exposé.

But why the happy occasion? It wasn't to look at your old milk-fed city editor. You only come when you want something." But there was no reproach in his tone. He knew of Trent's innumerable activities and his infrequent visits to New York.

"It's the Addison case," Trent told him. "It was one of those things that didn't ring true to me and as I had friends near their summer place I took the opportunity to meet the Addisons."

"A fine man, Addison," Clarke commented. "I've no dirt on him."

"He never would meet me," Trent said, "although at first when he heard I wanted to make sketches of his house he sent cordial messages. In the end I felt I was being asked to go."

Clarke was again the astute city editor. "What have you found out?" he demanded.

"Practically nothing. I've just left his first wife. Mrs. Sidney Colton."

"Messalina," Clarke cried, "Faustina, Catherine of Russia, Cleopatra and what have you. My boy, she's high voltage danger."

"I felt it," Trent admitted. "In

the end I permitted myself to offend her. She has emerald eyes, Clarke, and a caressing voice and not a shred of conscience. It is better to be her enemy than her friend."

"She gets that way honestly," Clarke said. "Her father was about the gayest rip this old town had in the mauve decade. I could have told you all about her—and him. I remember now that Addison did marry her." Clarke closed his eyes. His old pupil knew that in a few moments the front page of some forgotten paper would be called into being for Clarke to glance at. After that all the details would be clear. "I wonder how I forgot that," Clarke said. "Sometimes I think milk is too soothing."

"What I want to know about is Marcus North, whose divorced wife Addison married."

"Sure I remember Marcus," Clarke said. "Funny how the vicious remain in the memory when the good sort of fade out. There was a rip-snorter for you," Clarke cried. "A handsome devil and if he had any good in him nothing ever brought it out. The divorce case was a famous one. Weren't you on the *Leader* then?"

"Before my time. Why was he found insane?"

"To keep him from the chair. In those days we didn't know how to pull the Remus stuff successfully. He tried to kill John Addison for the beating he took from him and actually did beat up a valet, who testified against him, so badly that he died from the effects."

"How did I miss that?" Trent cried eagerly. "It must have happened while I was in Europe on my first trip and didn't take any interest at all in crime." He frowned. "Why didn't that fool butler tell me?"

"I guess Marcus is dead by now,"

Clarke said, "and people have too much to attend to without rattling skeletons. My files don't go back that far, but you can read about it in the public library, Forty-second Street and the Avenue. You can bet the Addisons and Norths don't want it known. Not that they have anything to fear, but it wouldn't soothe the second Mrs. Addison."

"Was Marcus North mad?"

"Not then," Clarke said. "Very likely he got that way before he died. They say it's catching if you live long enough with nuts."

"Didn't his family try to have him adjudged sane so he could get out?"

"They did not. Having him proved mad salved their honor in a way and they didn't want that revengeful, extravagant devil out again. They administered the estate and there wouldn't have been any to administer if he'd lived another couple of years outside of a psychopathic establishment. He'd been getting away with too much."

"But the authorities are the people to decide that. They don't want to keep people who don't need them."

Clarke shrugged his shoulders. "It may be a question of money. The North family could afford to pay big fees. That I couldn't say. It ought not to be difficult for you to get particulars."

"I'll put David More on the case. I think I'll run out to Fort Lee now. I'll be in to-morrow to talk it over again."

David More was a small melancholy looking man whom Trent had often employed in the more pedestrian tasks of obtaining facts. He was a shrewder judge of men than he looked. Since much of his life had been spent as collector for installment houses, there

were no excuses or human evasions foreign to him. He was indebted to Anthony Trent for the little store which enabled him to live comfortably and had a great but silent admiration for the younger man.

More never asked unnecessary questions and his reports were concise and to the point. In adventuring for information he rarely antagonized. It was his custom to sell things at the door so cheaply that the help at the house where he needed information welcomed him gladly. His silk stockings, often sold below cost price, insured him a pleasant reception. More was not without pride in his work. He had been far more valuable to the installment house than he had ever known and he was delighted to see his patron again. One of his younger daughters just returned from High School was given charge of the store and More drove back to New York in Trent's car.

He purchased an extensive supply of silken hosiery and rejoiced that it was a day when Judith O'Grady enveloped her calves in the same shade and material as the colonel's lady. David More thought of the day when his excuse had been no more compelling than the offering of an accident policy. David More went to a hundred per cent talkie for the first time while Trent busied himself in the newsroom at the Public Library. They met at dinner later.

When Trent left the library he was in possession of many facts concerning Marcus North. Trent was struck by the comparative reserve of the newspapers of that period in dealing with a story that offered so many opportunities. In tabloid times it was different. But he learned the name of the State institution to which North had been committed. It was not in New York. David More would be the one to get

him the more intimate knowledge he required.

At his hotel there was a wire from Roger Ellis to the effect that no new developments had occurred. The unfortunate Hubbard was now engaging Edwards's attention and was proving an obstinate and unwilling witness. Edwards's men had taken him only late yesterday afternoon. Within an hour, so Trent reckoned it, of his departure from Fairhaven.

When More had set out on his journey next day, Trent went to the office of the agency which had supplied Mr. Addison with his operatives. Trent encountered Evans as he went up in the elevator. It amused Trent to remember that the last remark Evans had addressed him was of a singularly biting nature. Now he was glad to remind the other of his existence. Evans felt he needed influential friends since his chief was not pleased with his work. Trent drew him aside.

"I think you had a rough deal in the Addison case," he observed.

"That's gospel truth," Evans returned. "I wish you'd tell the boss that."

"I want to see him. Can you arrange it?"

"You bet," said Evans. "He's in his private office right now I expect. I'll get you in all right and I'd be mighty grateful if you'd say a good word for me."

The agency manager contrived to know a great deal of what was going on in the world. He knew that Anthony Trent was a rich sportsman, a player of polo and the friend of some of New York's important people. He therefore displayed extreme courtesy and offered, when Trent informed him he came at Mrs. Addison's request, to put what information he had at his

service. But he was a shrewd man and had to show a good balance.

"We haven't had any answer to our request for payment of our account," he said. "I suppose Mrs. Addison didn't ask you to say anything about it?"

Trent took out his fountain pen and his check book. There could be no better way of gaining the man's confidence.

"Mrs. Addison didn't mention it, but she would want me to pay. Just now you will understand she is terribly upset." Trent looked at the bill and wrote his check. The agency rates were high.

"That man Evans you sent down," he said, "seemed always on the job. He even suspected me."

"It was my impression he had bungled things, Mr. Trent.

"The breaks were against him, that's all. The police haven't found anything either. Mrs. Addison hoped," and here Trent considered himself justified in stretching a point, "that you could tell me what your relations were with her husband. He kept her and his secretary completely in the dark."

"We've had the police ask about it, too," said the manager, "but we have no information. Mr. Addison wrote to us for men who could fill certain positions. We supplied them and when he disappeared our operatives were dismissed by Mrs. Addison at the request of the police."

"A man with your vast experience," Trent suggested, "must have some theories about the case. Why should a man of his peculiarly high type want all those husky men to guard him?"

"Mr. Trent," said the manager, "I used to be a policeman before I took this up and I guess I know as much

about men as most, but I'm learning more every day about 'em and it don't make me think any the better. I guess Addison got into a jam and thought he'd be safer down there with our men than he would have been in his town house."

"What sort of a jam?" Trent asked.

"Women I guess," said the other. "My experience is that men of his age have a mushy spell for a bit when they're the easiest things on earth. Maybe he fell for some tabasco baby. Then there was the war. Lots of men lost their moral bearings there, Mr. Trent." He smiled tolerantly. A wholly virtuous world would have found him out of his job and he had his own expenses. "You were in the big war?" Trent nodded. "Then you get me." There were few things the manager liked better to discuss than the less proper diversions of the high and mighty. "I read a piece in a magazine that said it was the chemicals and explosives that made men act that way. Interesting idea and it may be true. In my work it's hard to believe in anyone. I may be all wet about Mr. Addison, but it looks like trouble with a woman or rather with the men that the woman has sicced on to him. You wouldn't believe the time and trouble some crooks go to to land a big fish like Addison. Mr. Trent, some of the high-grade crooks would make fortunes on the stage the way they can act. My guess is that one evening when his wife was away Addison went to a roof show and thought he had his youth back."

Not a grain of comfort did Anthony Trent get from the agency manager. Indeed the man's disbelief in the integrity of Addison was a blow, for it chanced that Trent had been very fa-

vorably impressed and he did not like to be proved wrong. He had merely paid out several hundred dollars to be told that all men were base.

Evans stopped him as he waited for the elevator. "Did you say anything for me, sir?"

"Yes. I told him I thought you were on the job the whole time." Trent smiled a little, "I had greater opportunity to observe your work than you will ever know."

CHAPTER XIII

The Hidden Exit

THE Addison women in their vast and quiet house were tasting to the full all those unpleasantnesses inseparable from a *cause célèbre*. It was impossible to keep those people away whose newspapers demanded intimate particulars. But it was Cynthia and Roger Ellis who bore the brunt of these interviews. Mrs. Addison seemed to grow weaker with her despondency. It was as though the strength that had been hers had been derived from the stronger partner who had gone.

The hope she cherished that the police would find John Addison, at first vivid and sanguine, died down when not a trace of him was found. The innumerable false alarms when it was found that rumors of Addison's presence in distant towns were no more than that, discouraged her so that her health suffered.

"Mother," Cynthia said one evening, "Why was it that when you heard that Dad had been murdered you seemed not to be surprised?"

"In the excitement I may have said anything. We were all of us unstrung, Cynthia. I'm tired enough to sleep tonight."

Cynthia had been put off several times, but it was not in Mrs. Addison's power to stop her now. The girl had puzzled over the matter a great deal and now when there seemed to be no probability that Edwards's clues would amount to anything, she determined to see if she could not find one in what had been wrung from her mother in that moment of agony.

"You said," Cynthia returned, "If it had happened before I could have understood, but now—' What did you mean by that?"

"What does one mean by things torn out of one in a moment of that sort?" Mrs. Addison had recovered her calm admirably. Cynthia felt she was again a little girl asking impossible questions. But she remembered she was twenty and great responsibilities devolved upon her. She was not again to be side-tracked.

"In moments like that," she answered, "the truth comes out. It is only now when one is alarmed at having said such a thing that one tries to explain it away. Muvvie, dear, don't look at me like that. You did say it and I feel I must know why."

Mrs. Addison did not answer. Cynthia could see that she was wondering whether or not to give her confidence.

"Dear," she said, "you have often wondered why I did not love this place as much as you do or your father did. It is because I am by nature timorous and I have been afraid here. Until some years ago I feared something dreadful might happen to your father. There used to be trees that touched the roof and made strange noises when there was rain or wind. Your father loved them, but he had them cut down because he wanted me to like being here. When you were a little girl I hated it but tried to pretend I did not."

"You don't mind it now, though, do you?" Cynthia asked.

"No, but it takes a lot to wipe out some memories. I'm not fearless as you are."

"What did you mean by saying that if father had been murdered once you wouldn't have been surprised?"

"There was a man who threatened to kill him."

"But mother," the girl cried, "you ought to have told that to Inspector Edwards. When he asked you if you had ever heard of any one who had a grievance against dad you said 'No.'"

"My dear, it was true. The man who hated us both died five years ago. You were at school in Paris when it happened and when you came home you said 'Muvvie, what has made you grow so young and pretty?' Do you remember?" Cynthia nodded. "The reason I looked so well was that the haunting dread had been removed."

Cynthia recalled the incident. It was at a time when the family was disturbed about Mrs. Addison's health. She seemed likely to develop into a chronic invalid when suddenly the miracle happened.

"And you kept on living here all the time you were so afraid?"

"It didn't much matter where I lived so long as he was alive. He seemed nearer to me here, somehow, so perhaps that is why I dreaded the summer."

"Mother, who was it? I ought to know."

"My dear, I shall never tell you. If you have any love for me let me forget that nightmare. Please, please, don't talk of it again. It would do you no good to know and it would only bring back things I want buried."

"The best way to rid yourself of fears like those is to talk about them."

Uncover them, the psychoanalysts call it."

"For moderns like you, perhaps. Not for me." Cynthia knew her mother's obstinate look. The matter was closed. And since Mrs. Addison was in a highly nervous condition the girl had to abide by her decision. Knowing her mother's imaginative nature she could picture to herself the horror she must have experienced. And while Cynthia had played joyously about this great lonely house, her mother had been anticipating a tragedy. This explained so much. Contritely she kissed the wan lips. "Poor muvvie," she whispered. "Forgive me. I only wanted to help you."

Roger met her in the hall, "What luck!" he said. "Anthony Trent's back. Phyllis phoned from the Mill House where he's staying. They're coming over. I said it wasn't too late. You don't mind?"

"I'm delighted," she cried. "I simply adore Anthony Trent. She patted his arm affectionately. "Why shouldn't I? Didn't he give us back to one another?"

Directly the first greetings were over, Trent drew Cynthia aside.

"Did you do what I asked you to?" he demanded. "You know, about your mother. You told me she has said things that puzzled you."

"I did, and the poor dear explained everything satisfactorily."

"Satisfactorily to you, perhaps, but how am I to accept that?"

The girl hesitated. The interview was so near still and she was not yet recovered from the emotion communicated to her by her mother that she felt it was too private a matter to discuss.

"You are going to disappoint me," he said, rebuke in his tone. "In a matter like this it isn't your province

to decide that you'll tell me as much as you like of one thing and nothing at all of another. I am quite certain that your mother knows more than she has let the police believe. Edwards seems to think she is just a woman broken down by grief who knows nothing."

"In a way you are right," Cynthia answered. "Mother did know something. Years ago there was a man who swore to kill dad."

She saw Anthony Trent's eyes light up.

"What man?"

"I didn't even ask her. I know she wouldn't tell anyhow. Don't look so distressed. The man died five years ago. I remember it well. Mother seemed a new woman from that moment."

"Where is Mrs. Addison?" he demanded.

"In bed. She is not a bit well. What I told you is in confidence." There was alarm in the girl's manner.

"She'll never know you told me anything," he said.

Cynthia looked at Trent curiously. "I don't understand why you look suddenly as if you'd find something out."

"I've found out nothing definite," he answered. "Hello, what's that?" He turned to see Inspector Edwards and Mallon, his chief of detectives. Nor was there any longer on the faces of these officers any sign of good feeling.

"What do you mean," Edwards said, not returning Trent's greeting, "by running away like that?"

"Running away?" Trent replied. "Success and public flattery have turned your brain. I do not run away. You had every opportunity to ask me what you wanted, but you couldn't bring yourself to admit defeat. I even

demonstrated that an amateur could find the way the crook escaped." Deep concern was in his manner. "You are not going to tell me that you and the truculent Mallon are still in the dark?"

"It was your duty to show us," Mallon cried. He did not recognize the adjective Trent had applied to him but he felt it was something unflattering.

Trent shook his head. "Only when your superior requests my aid."

It was a heritage of those past and regretted days, when Trent worked outside the law, that he retained a concealed dislike of the police. Inspector McWalsh of the New York Department, although he flattered himself that Trent, the millionaire sportsman, liked him was far from the truth. It had amused Trent when he was a master criminal to outwit the police. He enjoyed now bewildering them. Edwards was a sound professional as they went, and he had not neglected the usual conventional things. He had regarded the maidservants with suspicious eyes and had become a nuisance to Nurse Gregory and Mr. Jessup. He had rounded up all the questionable characters in the county and had a large collection of finger-prints, none of which were identified at headquarters.

His fault was too great a dependence on tradition and traditional ways of crime. He had once arrested the members of a mob of gangsters which had invaded his city and broken up their racket by excellent work. But these men had no new methods of crime except in so far as death at the muzzle of a machine gun differs from death at the mouth of an automatic pistol. It worried Edwards not to be able to find by what means the Addison abductor had fled. Not, he admitted,

that it would clear up the mystery, but it would relieve him of the gibes of the newspaper boys, and keep him from becoming the subject of irritating cartoons.

His manner toward Anthony Trent changed. It was again the suave Edwards who spoke. "I should have thought," he said, "that considering your personal feelings toward the family you would be more than glad to help me." He looked at Cynthia and smiled with benevolence. "If I could help a young lady like her I don't think I would hold back." Edwards shook his head. It was gathered that he considered Mr. Trent's action something less than was to be expected from a gentleman, something beneath the dignity of a man.

"Then why hold back?" Trent retorted. "All you have to do is to admit yourself beaten. Your own terms, Edwards, your own ingenious suggestion."

"You ought to be put under arrest," Mr. Mallon boomed.

"That'll do," Edwards called sharply. There were few things he would like better to do than to put this Anthony Trent in a private room and administer the good old, discredited, third degree; but Edwards found it unwise to antagonize wealth and influence. Trent had too many highly-placed friends. He made an appointment to see him early next morning. Trent knew he would capitulate.

And Edwards did. But he made it a private matter and Mallon was not with him.

Cynthia, Roger and Edwards walked through the library. Trent opened the long window that led to the porch. It was thirty feet in length and ten wide. Under it, cars or carriages were sheltered as they reached the front

door. The drive was twenty feet beneath. At each corner it was supported by white fluted Corinthian pillars. The wooden floor of the porch was covered with lead, as was the roof above. In each corner stood a pedestal of wood painted white, as were the railings on which at some time or another vases had stood holding potted plants.

Mallon puffed into the scene just as Trent was set to stage his triumph. He bore on his florid face the marks of resentment at having been ignored. Those watching saw Trent lift up one of the wooden pedestals. He did not remove it, but pushed it on its side. Then he raised more slowly the lead sheeting, which bent easily.

"These pillars are hollow," he said. "Most pillars are to-day, even if they are made of stone or cement. This one leads down to a bin of egg coal. Obviously egg coal reveals little disturbance. I don't propose to descend again, but Mr. Mallon is burning to show I'm wrong."

"Why Mallon?" Edwards asked almost angrily. Why had he not thought of this simple solution? "Why Mallon?" Asperity was in his voice.

"Because it narrows somewhat at the base and Mallon's paunch would hold him there until the world had forgotten him. You're about Mr. Addison's build, inspector, and you'll only just make it."

They saw the inspector prepare for the descent. Then they saw him disappear with great swiftness.

Later he came from the cellar limping. He had sprained an ankle and bitten his tongue. He was in a flaming temper. His pose as that of a superior intelligence was shaken.

"I might have broken my neck," he cried passionately. He felt he had been made a laughing stock of.

"Haven't you any ingenuity?" Trent demanded. "I expected you knew how to brake yourself with knees and elbows. Must I help you all the time?"

Cynthia's face was troubled. If her father had been dropped down this tunnel unconscious, what injuries might he not have received. She felt this way of escape would worry her mother even more than by having the thing remain a mystery. Inspector Edwards's asperities brought her mind back to the present. Plainly he was bruised in body as well as spirit. He refused comfort and announced his intention of going again to the porch.

"There's something I don't understand," he said and scowled at Anthony Trent.

"You wrong yourself," Trent answered.

"It's this," the inspector said. "There must have been confederates in the house. I don't deny that Mr. Addison's body was slid down there." Cynthia shuddered, but he paid no attention to her. He looked still at Trent. "You said you had proof. What was it?"

"A shred of Harris tweed from the arm of the suit that Mr. Addison wore. Hubbard identified it."

"Hubbard," the inspector said grimly. "I'm mighty glad I sent a hurry call for him. We'll need Mr. Hubbard."

"You are wasting time," Trent declared. "He is innocent."

"Then some one else isn't," Edwards snapped. "Listen. I admit the body was shot down that tube and later disposed of, but the man who threw it down didn't follow. I'll tell you why. How could he put that lead sheeting back and *then* lift that pedestal in place so nobody saw anything wrong?"

Mallon snorted. He tried to give the impression that this problem had occupied his brain, too. "What wise crack will do for that one?" he asked. Trent thought his manner impertinent. Nor was Mallon alone in thinking he had discovered a weakness in this reasoning. Roger Ellis, heart and soul for Trent and with his own grievances against the police for excess of zeal, was troubled. And he was strengthened in his discomfort by the look of dismay on Trent's face.

"Well done, Edwards," Anthony Trent said. "You have begun to observe things. Perhaps I was unduly thrilled with my discovery."

Without protest he mounted the stairs. Mallon gave his arm to his chief, who frowned at Trent's suggestion that he use Mr. Jessup's elevator. "That's another mystery you've no doubt cleared up while I was attacking it in my timid amateur fashion. I forgot you picked up the fake Jessup on Tremont Street, didn't you, Mallon?"

Mallon disdained to answer. The fake collector of charities had air-tight alibis given by the police of Boston themselves.

When once they were in the library and Edwards had seated himself a moment, and was massaging his swelling ankle, Trent's manner changed. He was again the professor lecturing his pupils.

"Talking of observation, Edwards," he began. "It amazes me that you and Mallon did not see how that trick was worked. I did not expect Mr. Ellis to observe it, because that isn't his profession. But you two!" Trent shook his head.

"What are you giving us?" Mallon growled.

"Elementary instruction," Trent retorted. "You will note when you go

out there that a piece of piano wire is thrust through the lead flooring and attached to a nail in the inside of the hollow pedestal. The other end of the wire is attached to the north side of the pillar's interior by a nail. The shred of cloth I spoke of was caught by that same nail. All that is needed to conceal the exit is for this very strong wire to be pulled. The pedestal itself is hinged to the roof so that it cannot get out of place."

Feverishly the two officials examined it. What Trent had said was true. It was plain to Edwards that the work of affixing hinges was new. The man who had probably killed Addison was, in all likelihood, the man who had run the wire through the lead. Careful preparation had been made. There had been leisure and opportunity to work here. And it could hardly have been done except at night, when the marauder would be undisturbed. Edwards knew very well that this would be unlikely during the time that the private detectives were in charge. By this strange route the assailant had come during the Hubbard incumbency. How long had this plot been maturing?

It was stupid to show enmity to Anthony Trent. Edwards had been foolish to allow his professional pride to spur him to rivalry, in the first place. McWalsh had been right. Perhaps it was not too late to make amends. More than ever Inspector Edwards needed his aid now.

"A fine bit of work, Mr. Trent," he said, "and I guess Mallon and I know when we are licked. You are absolutely right, but how in the world could anybody climb up? I'm a proof how easy it is to go down, but how could any one climb up? No space for a ladder there."

"Perhaps some one on the top lowered a rope," Trent suggested.

"He'd have to be there first, and how could he make it? I understood you to say this bird climbed up and fixed things." Edwards had noted in his descent that there were no projecting pieces of wood for a man's foot to use in the ascent. He had been stopped in his fall by nothing.

"That was merely a suggestion," Trent explained. "If you say it's impossible, why then we'll eliminate it; my address, if you want me, is the Mill House, Elm Falls." He nodded. "Good hunting."

"A good riddance," Mallon growled. He was amazed to see the sudden look of anger on his chief's face.

"Damn him," said Edwards. "He knows, but he won't say."

"Knows what?" Mallon asked with tremendous interest.

"How that bird climbed up," Edwards answered. He was examining the orifice carefully.

In the hall where Trent was talking things over with Roger, Cynthia said: "For a moment I really thought you did know how one could climb up the pillar. Edwards looked so disappointed."

Trent smiled. "Cynthia, keep my secret. I do know and I've climbed up it myself. No, I will not tell you yet. My present aim is to pass the time of day with Mr. Jessup. Please persuade Nurse Gregory to let me see him."

A few minutes later he was talking to the old man he had so successfully impersonated. Mr. Jessup was delighted at an excuse to talk, and his nurse was pleased at the opportunity to take a little air. She promised to be back in half an hour. Trent allowed Mr. Jessup to rid himself of all his ingenious theories. Then he asked casually: "But you liked Marcus North, didn't you?"

"We weren't talking about Marcus," the old man said. "Or were we?" His memory was not what it had been, he knew, and it was quite likely that he had made some mention of Marcus North. "Yes, I liked him. That type appealed to me. What a life he led John Addison, from all I hear, when they were kids in this house. Brought up together, you know. What a contrast! There was John, who wouldn't tell a lie, and Marcus, who wouldn't tell the truth. It wasn't that I liked him for that though. There was something about him that just got me. I knew he was no damned good just as well as I knew John was too damned good. I told my niece." The old man broke off. "There was a girl for you! She's one of a thousand."

"Loves?" Trent asked.

"You must have met her," the uncle returned, not at all offended. A marvel. She was taken by John's good looks. He was as handsome as Marcus in his way. Evelyn used to say he was an unawakened Antinous. She soon grew tired of him."

Mr. Jessup tried to get back to his favorite topic, the identity of the man who had successfully impersonated him, but he found himself led again to the subject of Marcus North.

"He was bad all through," Jessup conceded, "and when he murdered that valet of his the family thought it about time to call a halt. Their influence kept most of the evidence out of the papers. There was a National Convention meeting at the same time, and that helped. I've always thought that the beating John gave him affected his brain. That was certainly some beating. I never saw Evelyn so interested in anything. She wouldn't let me stop it. Not that I wanted to, but I could have made a stab at it.

"John got back all he had suffered from his cousin's bullying when he was smaller, but to do John justice it wasn't that. He was crazy over Edith and he fought for her. Never think John couldn't fight. He'd have been heavy-weight champion if he had put his mind to it. In the beginning I'd have bet all I had on Marcus, but not after the first minute. I remember saying to him: 'You've killed him.' John looked at Marcus on the ground and said, 'I hope I have.'"

"How long after the divorce did he kill his valet?"

"Two years, I imagine." Mr. Jessup went back to the trial at which he was a witness. "His family certainly put one over on Marcus. There was no 'temporary maniacal insanity' alibis then. Just plain paranoia was good enough to get him sent to Deerfarm. His money was administered by his people and the idea was that in a few years, when the public had forgotten, he was to be let out. That's where they put it over on him. They kept him there. They were afraid of him, and they didn't want the North name disgraced again. They were wise at that. I'm told that when Marcus found out he was in for life he actually went mad."

"You think he was sane when he killed the man?"

"Who is sane?" old Jessup retorted. "They say I'm not, and you don't look normal to me. You have strange eyes, Mr. Trent. I believe the only sane man I ever knew was John Addison. Maybe that's why I didn't like him."

"Not many parents," Trent said, dismissing this suspicion of his mental health, "would be content to let their son remain in a psychopathic institution when he might have been removed."

"Marcus was an orphan. That's why he was brought up here with John. His uncle and aunt benefited materially by administering the estate. They hadn't much and their nephew had. They came in for a lot of criticism."

"When did he die?" Trent asked.

"Before I came here to live, and I've been here almost five years."

"Was it in the papers?"

"Very likely, but I didn't see it. Edith told me, and I never saw a woman change for the better as she did when she knew. She was in deadly fear he'd get out and kill John. John knew it too. He told his wife that the time he spent in the trenches was the only time for years that he felt he could relax. Relax in the trenches! I guess that was the truth. John will not tell a lie."

"Would he for his wife?"

"He might, but not for any one else. John was one of those men who were made for fidelity to one woman, and my niece wasn't the woman. So you know Evelyn. How is she getting along with Sid Colton?"

"I gather that she is disappointed with captains of industry."

Trent was glad to see Nurse Gregory. He had obtained the information for which he had come and was now anxious to see Hubbard who was even now in the house, but in bed with the after effects of influenza.

Hubbard was glad to see him. Now that John Addison was gone, the old man needed some strong man from whom to derive comfort. And he felt that his blameless senescence was being vilified by the police. Especially by Mallon who licked his lips every time he saw him and sought to entangle him in long cross-examinations.

"I've been through a lot, sir," he said, tears in his faded eyes, "since you left me at Fairhaven. I used to

think Mr. Roger's teasing was bad enough, but he's an angel compared with Mallon and I am bound to say he's behaving very well now. I guess it's Miss Cynthia's influence."

"I suppose," Trent said, wasting no time in arriving at his point, "that you disliked Marcus North principally because he used to bully Mr. Addison?"

"And," Hubbard cried with a touch of his old acidity, "because he used to play practical jokes on me. I never saw a boy who had so many ways of bothering you. I've always had this room since I took service with Mr. John's father and you'd think nobody could get in here when the door was locked, but that Marcus, he got in one time and sawed the wooden legs of my bed nearly off so that when I climbed in they collapsed. And I got blamed for it. I had a Yale lock put on the door so I could keep my room to myself and Marcus couldn't get in. I was the only one who had a key. Marcus swung himself on to the roof from a tree. There were trees all around the house then. Tall trees. I don't know what sort. I'm not interested in trees and I wasn't the one to raise a holler when Mrs. Addison had them cut down. I felt safer. That boy could get in anywhere, no matter whether the windows were barred or the doors locked."

"And Mr. Addison followed suit?"

"In the early days he fairly worshipped his cousin. Yes, he tried everything Marcus did and nearly broke his neck doing it, but he wouldn't give in and Marcus was always trying stunts that he hoped Mr. John would fail in. A lot he cared if any one broke their necks."

"Well," Trent said, "death got him at last. Did any of the family go to the funeral?"

"Mr. John did, I think, but it wasn't

a subject to talk about. The Norths and the Addisons hold their heads high and they didn't want any publicity of that sort. A pretty penny it cost Mr. John to buy silence, I've heard. It'll be six years on my birthday that he died, and I was born the same day Washington was. Mr. Roger used to say it was the same year, but that was his exaggeration."

"What I came to see you about," Trent said, and spoke only half a truth, "was about the necessity to employ a good lawyer."

Hubbard's obstinate jaw was thrust out. He was conscious of his innocence and did not think truth needed any assistance. Trent pooh-poohed this naïve theory. "You, more than any one else, need a good lawyer. Nothing convinces the ordinary jury less than bare truth. It is so unreasonable as a rule, whereas the clever lie carries conviction with it. I've already arranged for a good man to look after your interests. I don't anticipate any trouble, but the police have to have some one to exhibit and you made a mistake in attacking Mr. Ellis."

"I know," the old man admitted, "but I was out of my mind with worry at the time. I've apologized to him, Mr. Trent, and I will say he showed himself the gentleman. Shook my hand and said the whole family were grateful to me for my loyalty. It was after that, feeling good, you understand that this Mallon said I insulted him. Perhaps I did." Hubbard smiled as he thought of his splendid sarcasm toward authority as exemplified by Detective Mallon. "I guess what I said was a bit above him."

Trent did not stay long at the Mill House. After the first cold snap and snow the weather became mild and the meteorological bureau—that faithful

and unjustly abused public servant—promised a continuance of it.

"Golf calls me," said Trent to Barton Dayne, "and as my wife won't be back until Christmas I am going to see what those new links at Hillsbro are like. They've been chosen for the National next year so they're certain to be first class. I may be down here at any moment."

"Your bed and board awaits you," Dayne said, "and you'll be the most welcome guest in the world." He hesitated a moment. "Does this mean you're giving up the Addison case?"

"I have allowed Inspector Edwards to think I am retiring, vanquished. It has done a lot to restore his self-confidence. But, my dear Barton, privately, do you think I'm the sort to give up things?"

Dayne looked into the keen face and shook his head. "No."

"Golfing with me is often a way of getting information. I've asked Roger to keep me posted as to what happens. Just now the police are doing good work and work that I couldn't hope to equal them at. Their theory is that Addison was killed and is buried in the woods or old quarries somewhere near the house. Naturally that search takes a lot of time and men. It may very well be that they find the body. That will be their triumph."

"And what will yours be?"

"I should like to find the man who killed him."

"Edwards says if they find the body they'll get the murderer."

Anthony Trent was not inclined to be communicative. "Edwards has his moments," he said, "but that was not one of them. It's a *cliche* to say that dead men tell no tales, but it's worth remembering if Edwards has another burst of hope."

"It beats me," Dayne said, reverting to golf, "why you don't go in for the big tournaments. You'd land in the first six, I'd bet." He was not to guess those reasons which drove Anthony Trent to remain little known and wholly unphotographed. In the early, wild days he had met men who might still be able to identify him if his photographs stared from the papers and magazines. And since, in these days, we pay so much more homage to supremacy in sport than to any intellectual achievement, his decision was wise. But what Dayne had said was true. It would take one of the celebrated golfers to beat him.

"I haven't energy to keep perpetually in trim," he answered, "and I'm getting more and more interested in aviation. I've got three hundred flying hours to my credit already."

Thomas Perkins was not forgotten. Trent drove into the paved yard where he left his car before taking his farewell of the Addisons. "I want you to report to me on what you personally observe the police to be doing," he said. "Here's my address."

"They're still searching the quarries," the chauffeur told him "and they've dragged every pond in the county. There won't be much to tell."

"They may find the body," Trent answered. "They probably will if it's anywhere near. Edwards is thorough, though uninspired."

"I've got the letter from the Zodiac people," Perkins said. "I don't know how to thank you. They offer me a splendid position from the first of the year. I'm afraid you exaggerated my abilities."

"It's up to you to preserve my reputation," Trent retorted. "I'm not worrying about that. I haven't made many mistakes in the men I've picked."

I've just come from Elm Falls. Dayne is turning out to be a business genius who would, but for a little luck, have tried to be a college professor. I'm cashing in on him already and I shall on Captain Evvyndike, too. I'm at heart a rapacious and mercenary type."

Thomas Perkins, soon to cease the driving and cleaning of other men's cars, looked after him with gratitude in his heart. It was still inexplicable why this Anthony Trent should have given him this opportunity, but it had nothing to do with mercenary motives. So long as one played fair with this man with the keen eyes and the hawk profile one had nothing to fear. That his tongue could be sharp Perkins had found when he heard him talk to Mallon. Perkins turned again to the polishing of a panel of the big limousine. It was hard work to make its luster match that other panel upon which his former helper had spent so many hours.

At Hillsbro, Trent registered at the new hotel which had sprung up for the convenience of golfers, a hostelry which called itself an "Inn" and, consequently, charged high rates. He was now a golfer come for a few weeks' play. In reality he had come to meet and become friendly with a certain Dr. Lang who had found time from his work to become runner-up for the State championship two years in succession. Dr. Lang's handicap was two, and his position that of superintendent of the Deerfarm Asylum four miles away.

Deerfarm Asylum was behind the times in its buildings and equipment and for a long while there had been dissatisfaction with it. In the southern part of the State there were splendidly-appointed psychopathic institutions, but these were always filled owing to the large increase in insanity, which is one of the warning signs of

the rush era. No man had fought for better conditions more consistently than this same golfing physician. Indeed his published articles in professional magazines had occasioned some annoyance to those who administered such institutions and he had been warned that it was disloyal of him to malign his State and State establishments.

When Trent learned that Dr. Lang played almost every day and there were no local golfers fit to give him a game he saw that ere long he would be on friendly terms. A two handicap. This meant that Trent must be on the top of his game. His putting was not too good and when he had joined the club and become acquainted with the professional he putted until dusk and then drove into the old city of Hillsbro.

It was here that More, now president of the Fort Lee, New Jersey, Hosiery Company, had established headquarters. He was living at the Hillsbro House. One of his points of value to Trent was that More never wanted to know anything beyond his instructions. He had been sent to Hillsbro to peddle his wares. After hours he was told to play pool in the principal pool rooms in the town and get in touch with the men who worked at the asylum. Mr. More's not to reason why. He sold his silk stockings and he played pool. He was an earnest player, slow and cautious, but the recreation cost him twenty dollars a week. He lacked dash and his safety play was not of the modern school.

His *bona fides* were established. Letters and packages came to him from the More home in Fort Lee and the hotel clerk could see by the labels that he was the president of the concern. He said he was engaged in preparing routes and assigning territories for the

salesmen he was to engage when he went home. More went out of his way to be friendly with the attendants from Deerfarm and listened in what was almost horror at the stories they had to tell. When they offered to show him around he rejected the offer. In truth David More had a normal horror of the insane and the stories the attendants told made it deeper. The incredible cunning of these madmen shocked him. Some of them would wait for years until the moment came when they could inflict the vengeance they desired. And all this time they seemed ordinary people reacting apparently to normal stimuli in a way that was calculated to deceive even experts.

More had never played pool so badly as that night when one of the younger men had told him how last night he had occasioned to take an old patient back to the bed from which he was constantly escaping. The attendant, careful not to inflict bruises or injuries which the doctors would detect, took the old man by the ear, and the ear came off in his fingers! Mr. More used to dream of it at night. He was astounded at the courage of his kind. Rather starvation, he told himself, than such a life as these attendants led.

"The pool cost more than I expected," he said rather timidly, as he laid his expense account before his employer.

"That's all right," Trent said, writing a check. "I suppose you know the place pretty well now?"

"I've specialized on the Deerfarm people mostly as you told me to. They seem a friendly bunch. That may be because they're all new here."

"What do you mean?" Trent demanded.

"There was a big shake-up a few weeks ago and the whole staff got fired

and practically every attendant, male and female, is new."

"Did Dr. Lang go?"

"Yes, him first of all. Politics they say. Lang never would kowtow to the bunch at the State House and they got him at last, and put in a staff that would keep quiet."

"That's bad news for me," Trent said slowly. "At least it seems so for the moment. I had a definite use for Lang. Who is the new man?"

"Dr. Humphries. He's a politician and once was a State Senator, a good machine man, but they say he isn't fitted to succeed Dr. Lang."

"Have you ever been over the asylum?" Trent asked.

"No, but I could any time I want to. I'm afraid of those folks in there, Mr. Trent. A penitentiary ain't so bad. A crook in them knows it's no good pulling rough stuff if he wants to get out. He tries to make a good impression, but not them Deerfarm people. It's the epileptics that are the worse," More went on retailing his newly acquired knowledge. "You never can trust them especially when there's a change in the moon." More described the incident of the ear and was gratified to find that even his listener shuddered. "He was an epileptic, too, and that feller I played pool with has to sit there all alone with a hundred of 'em around him. And he daren't hit 'em when they begin to act up. The doctors see to that. Those fellers have their own way of protecting themselves. They get soap and knead it so it's kind of soft and then put it in a sock. It knocks the lunatics out, but it don't leave a wound. They have to, Mr. Trent. I used to think there was a lot of cruelty in them places, but I was wrong. They've just got to protect themselves."

"You've done good work," Trent said commendingly. He was silent for a little. Presently he began to tell More what he had not yet confided to any one. Trent had implicit faith in the little man.

"More," he said, "I may have wasted a lot of time and a good bit of money on a hunch that is worthless. I'm here—and you, too—because I have eliminated everybody in the Addison case except one man."

"Fine," said More approvingly. He had unbounded faith in the other. "Trust you, Mr. Trent, to find out anything you go after."

"You may not think so when I tell you that the man I suspect has, I have been told by three distinct persons, been dead these six years."

"How could that be?" More asked.

"I'm here to find out. Do your friends, the attendants, talk about the people they have in charge?"

"When they get together they do," More said. "There's not so many in Deerfarm as in the other asylums, but they've got Mrs. Pate who killed her husband by taking him into the garage when he was drunk and then running the motor while she went into a picture show to alibi herself. They've got the Hersey brothers who made enough money out of bootlegging to have their murders made out like as if they was crazy when they committed 'em."

Trent scribbled a name on a piece of paper. "Memorize that," he said, "and start inquiries about him."

"Marcus North," More read, "I never heard of him, Mr. Trent, but I'll find out about it as soon as I can."

"I am informed Marcus North died six years ago. If he did I shall have to own myself beaten on the Addison case."

"But the bureau of vital statistics," More said. He had often worked on such tables at his employer's request. "What's the matter with them?"

"The name Marcus North does not occur. Naturally I had that looked up at once. But the omission may be accidental. I was fooled that way before. Vital statistics figures lie like all others. In itself it is no proof that Marcus North is alive. The only way to find out is to see him."

"Mr. Trent, sir," More cried, "I'd be scared to, honest."

Anxiety was reflected on the little man's round face. He felt he was behaving very badly to his benefactor, but he could not shake off the terror he experienced at the suggestion. He expected to be reprimanded.

"I don't understand," he went on, "how those fellers can face that crowd and have authority over them."

"It's largely a matter of when you were born," Trent said. "I can say with certainty that your birthday doesn't come between the third week of January and the third week of February."

"It's May," More said, "but I don't understand how that makes it any different."

"Nor I. But it's almost universally true that men born under the Zodiacal sign of Aquarius have a strange influence on the insane and make the best attendants for them. I'm an Aquarian and I have it. You'll find probably that your friend who makes light of epileptics and straying ears was born under the same sign as I am. Be reassured, More, you shall not be delivered to the lions yet, but I want all particulars about this Marcus North. He murdered his manservant and should have been hanged. Instead the family wealth got him to Deerfarm."

"I'd rather have been hanged," More cried.

"He was sent there just seventeen years ago. Not a word of the Addison case to any one. If you hear it discussed just listen. Offer no suggestions at all. That's all for the present. I suppose if any one asks about me you'll say I'm the money behind the Fort Lee Hosiery Company? Good. That's a perfectly good reason for your seeing me. You want more capital. Is business good?"

"Too good," said Mr. More, "I don't have any time to myself. I've got to raise prices."

CHAPTER XIV

A Maniac at Large

DR. STEPHEN LANG was a big, gray-haired man of fifty. He had learned his golf when a student at Saint Andrew's University and because of the correctness of his form, he was still a first-class player when most men of his years had begun to drop behind. He had been offered the Deerfarm superintendency after one of the periodical scandals when the politically appointed head had allowed the institution to become a byword. He was to find that there were many in the State more important than its new superintendent and much of his long tenure of office had been embittered by strife. The relief he felt at his freedom was tinged with regret that his successor seemed to forget that he was a physician and began at once to appoint inefficient at the dictation of his party.

More than ever Dr. Lang was in favor of divorcing psychopathic establishments from lay control, but his influence was now very small. Rumors were circulated that he had been dismissed for incompetency and Trent met

him in a bitter mood. The professional offered the new temporary member, whose approaching on the practice hole he admired, as a victim to the club's best player.

In the beginning Dr. Lang disapproved of Trent. Lang addressed the ball with great deliberation and drove it two hundred and thirty yards. Trent stepped up to it and without a preliminary waggle outdrove the doctor by twenty yards. A fluke, the older man told himself and waited for the second drive. In the end Trent was beaten by a hole, but this was mainly because the links were strange to him. Even Dr. Lang conceded that and looked forward to some excellent golf. After all, he admitted, Duncan, too, had this absence of the protracted waggle and a man who could play as well as this stranger need make no apology for style, stance or speed. And there was something he might learn in putting from the new member. Perhaps he was over-deliberate himself on the green.

The two men dined at the same table and Lang's Caledonian reserve dropped away from him. He referred to his long connection with Deerfarm. Trent did not think it would be long before the doctor would talk freely. "I should think golf must be a great relief in work of that sort," he said.

"I should have gone mad without it," Lang answered. "I created the old nine-hole course that this is built on, almost single handed. Golf wasn't the proletarian thing it is to-day and the natives thought I must be one of my own charges. I'm inclined to be sorry to see it so popular. Golfers' manners aren't what they were."

In the two weeks that were to follow, Anthony Trent managed to beat Dr. Lang three matches out of four.

The friendship that ripens so quickly among devotees of sport, a growth impossible under ordinary conditions, found the two men seeking one another's company in the evening. It was a bond between them that Trent was the son of a distinguished physician who had turned his uncommon talents to the hard work of a country physician in a mountainous locality and had died of it in the end.

There was much of the reformer about Stephen Lang. Prison abuses stirred his ire no less than those of the psychopathic institutions.

"We are too prosperous here," he contended, "to investigate the conditions of prisoners and lunatics. Because they are housed in fine buildings, and cost a lot of money to maintain, we assume everything is all right. Take prisons for example." Trent did not yet dare turn his mind to the discussion of Deerfarm. That had to come as an outcome of this allied subject. "How many Americans know that nearly ninety per cent of commitments are made to local institutions such as county and municipal jails, workhouses, farms, chain gangs and camps where there is filth, indescribable filth and overcrowding disease. Innocent are herded with the guilty, the well with the foully diseased. How many of these club women who prattle loyally know the prevailing practice of subjecting female prisoners to the oversight of male attendants?"

"And then, too, that pernicious system of paying jailers a daily sum for boarding prisoners without specifying how much food is to be given. Great Britain is more than half a century ahead of us there. That's a chance for the professional jingo, Trent. Let them stop battleship rivalry and cleanse their own Augean stables." Dr. Lang smiled

a little. "I apologize," he said. "I have made many enemies by talking that way. Truth is not always pleasant. What time shall we tee-off tomorrow morning?"

"What you say interests me very much, doctor. I can only say that our women don't know about those things."

"They ought to," Lang said, "I've lectured and written about it enough to get thrown out of Deerfarm."

"Are places like Deerfarm run as badly as prisons?"

"Deerfarm wasn't in my day. This new man who is using it as a step to something more paying will set it back a generation. There can always be abuses when politics run things. You know that. I had a fairly good set of men with me, but the new bunch will probably take its tone from the men higher up. The State doesn't worry much about Deerfarm. The buildings are old and ought to be condemned. It isn't light enough and it isn't warm enough."

"You had some famous patients there I've heard," Trent said. Mrs. Pate, for example. I suppose she was undoubtedly mad."

"No more than you or I. She planned her crime very carefully. She made her husband so drunk she had almost to carry him into the garage. Her watchdog could be depended on to warn her of the approach of any one to her remote farm, but he hadn't the habit of barking at airplanes and it happened that a passing flier saw that Pate was intoxicated and that she was helping him to the garage where carbon-monoxide finished him. His evidence convicted her. It was death for Mrs. Pate, or Deerfarm, and she chose a spell of the latter. She'll be out before long. The term shyster lawyer is

often used, but no one speaks of shyster alienists. I tell you they are a peril to civilization."

Dr. Lang thought of the patients to whom he had tried to be just and kind. He saw that Anthony Trent was interested and since Lang liked to discuss things with men of intelligence, he spoke of many of the Deerfarm inhabitants whose names had once flared across the newspapers of the country. Trent thought he would never come to the only one in which he was interested, but did not deem wise to mention.

"One of the men I never could establish sympathetic contact with was Marcus North. I expect you have heard of him. Most of the Deerfarm people are of the poorer classes. He on the contrary was a man of fashion and wealth. Yet he killed two people."

"Two?" Trent cried.

"His valet first and years later the night attendant in his ward. North had a room to himself, mainly because there were several in the old wing and he was well behaved. The new night attendant didn't like North. Class hatred I imagine in its origin and North was put in the general ward. So he bided his time and strangled the night attendant.

"Then he is mad, of course?"

"When I took charge I was told he was a paranoiac. He may be. They can be sane on all subjects but one. He spends his time in reading and sketching. He has no intimates. Yes, I suppose his is a paranoiac. There is no record of violent outbursts except in the case of the attendant he killed. He seems so sane and reasonable that a night attendant used to slip off to play poker with men off duty and leave him in charge. I found it out and dismissed the man."

"I suppose even those fellows can be reached?"

"Do you suppose in this age when lavish spending is the rule, and every laborer has his car and radio, that an attendant is immune to bribery? Do you know what they get at Deerfarm? The men are paid forty dollars a month with no possible increase. The women get thirty-five after a year. They start at twenty-five. Attendants are on duty sixty hours a week and have one full day off each week with a fortnight vacation of full pay. Deerfarm is popular because uniform is not compulsory for males. I ask you whether or not in a group of men who earn four hundred and eighty dollars per annum there will not be some who refuse to turn down the chance to make more if there isn't much risk. And yet I firmly believe that prison guards have many more opportunities to graft. I should like very much to believe in men as I did when I was an idealist at Saint Andrew's, but I'm suspicious now. They'll demand proof to know it is Saint Peter who guards the gate if ever they get up there."

Dr. Lang, once started, rambled on, pausing only now and again to light his pipe or refill it. Trent's expression was one of deferential interest and the exclamations that fell from his lips were admirable. But he heard no word of the Scot's commentaries on life.

Marcus North was not dead! The belief that John Addison had lied to his wife in order to relieve her mind of the haunting fear of the paranoiac, was justified. That others had accepted this statement was perfectly reasonable. For what cause would they investigate? No doubt Jessup had informed his niece and as the news could not be unexpected why should she doubt it?

Trent's investigation of the Addison mystery showed him clearly that the man who was responsible knew the house inside and out. Further that Addison recognized his visitor that first night and did not wish his wife or family to discover that he had lied. What, Trent wondered, must have been poor Addison's state of mind when he found the man in his library who had threatened to kill him? Had he, perhaps, hoped to be able to reason with him, or, if that failed, to silence him for ever?

Marcus North, if Trent's theory was correct, had broken out of Deerfarm on that October night and had reached the Addison house unseen. He could not have walked the thirty-five miles nor have taken a train. The automobile might be eliminated insofar as considering North to be its driver. Seventeen years or more had made so great a difference in automobiles that to one who had not kept up with their gradual evolution would probably be wholly at sea in undertaking to drive one. Probably North was driven there.

The problem immediately before Trent was to discover if North had made a known break. And if there was none reported against him it would mean one of two things: either that he had the backing of a Deerfarm attendant or else that Trent's deductions were wrong. The name of North recurred in Dr. Lang's talk.

"I wonder a man of his sort sane enough to stand out among the rest, didn't try to escape."

"He did," Dr. Lang replied. "After killing the night attendant he got away. We found him twenty miles distant. That wasn't the first time. Apparently he has some fixed idea as to his route, for he is always headed in the same direction."

Trent knew fairly well in what direction it was. John Addison must have known, too. What obstinacy was it that made him come back year after year to this old home whose childhood memories were common to Marcus and he? Psychologists called by the name of Phobophobia that emotion which is fear of fear, or fear of being afraid. Possibly John Addison had been spurred to particularly gallant feats in the war by the same motives which made him ashamed to admit to himself that he dared not live near Deerfarm.

"The paranoiac," Dr. Lang went on, "is the most deceiving and dangerous type of madman and the clever criminal has only to persuade a jury that he is paranoid and he will escape the gallows. I have often talked to this man North and I find it very difficult to make a decision about him. The Joseph G. Robin case should be a lesson to all alienists. Ten of our most eminent psychiatrists testified that he was insane; and when the judge complimented the jurors for disregarding this mass of expert evidence and convicting him, the New York Academy of Medicine held a mass meeting at which Jerome spoke contemptuously of him as a half-baked judge holding office through grace of Charlie Murphy. I was just as indignant as Jerome until Robin admitted he had been shamming insanity in the hope of evading conviction. I don't wonder intelligent laymen suspect expert evidence when it can botch a case so horribly. If those experts were honest they were ignorant. If they were not ignorant—what were they? It's a bad business, Trent, and thinking of it will put me off my drive if I'm not careful."

The doctor paced the floor, frowning. "Thinking of North brings the two Haggertys to my mind and that

scoundrelly little Dr. Gross who married Dr. Humphries' daughter. I firmly believe they were all engaged in trying to get evidence on me. I dismissed all three, but they were reinstated. I said it was either them or me. So they let me go after my years of service."

"Why should North bring them to your mind?" Trent demanded.

"He was in Haggerty's ward and Gross showed a favoritism to North which was unwarranted and bad for discipline. I would have no 'trusty' system in Deerfarm when I was there."

The question Trent asked seemed innocent enough, but on its answer a great deal hinged. "You mean that of all the men in Deerfarm Haggerty and this Dr. Gross alone survived your reign?"

Trent smoked a pipe or two as he pondered upon what he had just learned. By some fortunate array of circumstances, Marcus North was under the control of people inimical to Lang. These men were the venal types which the fallen head had tried to eradicate. Had North escaped but once, it might be supposed that the break had been discovered and he had been taken back. But on the second occasion there was probably collusion. It would be well to find out what information More had about these attendants. He determined to drive over to the Hillsbro House and see More.

More remembered a great deal about the Haggertys. He had lost money to them at pool and poker and they regarded him almost with affection as a source of income. "I went driving with Big Haggerty this evening," More said. "He certainly has a swell new coupé. They've both been left money. Not before they needed it, the pool room owner said. They're drinking

quite a bit now. Big Haggerty says there's no one big enough to fire him now, Dr. Gross is in charge. Humphries' son-in-law." More explained. "Humphries is too busy campaigning to spend much time here now."

"You've done good work," Trent said commendingly, "and it's time to talk about Marcus North. You remember his trial and you'd like to see some of the famous patients. Suppose you summon up enough courage to see Mrs. Pate and North. They are under restraint."

Trent saw More squirm at the prospect, but he did not propose to allow this fear to defeat his plans. "I'm afraid I'll have to insist, More. Get as friendly as you can with Big Haggerty. The bootlegger at the Inn comes to me with splendidly inspiring analyses of his goods and I'll see you have something to offer Haggerty when he visits you. You must seem no more curious about North than you do about Mrs. Pate. Haggerty is a boasting type. Get him to talk about Lang who tried to get him fired and how he put things over on him. Haggerty is just the sort who can be readily induced to brag especially when he's drinking."

"He's got something on Dr. Gross," More said, "and that's bad for discipline. All right, Mr. Trent, I'll do it. I'm sort of getting used to the idea now. It was at first I was so scared. Haggerty says all hell looks out of some of their eyes, but there's nobody sane or insane that can frighten him."

"Call me up at the Inn," Trent said. "I'm having a debauch of golf and I imagine Lang will think he talked too much. I've got all I need from him."

Dr. Stephen Lang did, indeed, think he had said more than was wise. He feared he had betrayed almost vindictiveness. And, too, there was the feel-

ing that he should not take sides with a layman against his own profession. Lang was glad that during the next week Trent made no reference to Deerfarm or its prisoned guests. Probably he had bored Trent with his talk of reform.

More did not report to his employer for eight days. Then he suggested a visit.

"Mr. Trent, sir," More said in his slow, mild voice as he smoked one of the cigars that Trent sometimes gave him, "there's something wrong about Marcus North. I give Haggerty some of that liqueur Scotch of yours and he's been to my rooms several times. Very friendly. No, he don't need my money although he's a great one for gambling. He's got a big wad and I've seen it. One night he began to laugh at me for being afraid to go to Deerfarm. I told him I'd been there and most of the women were wearing my stockings—the nurses I mean—but he said that wasn't what he meant. So I said I'd like to show I wasn't a coward and I'd see Mrs. Pate." More shivered a little. "I seen her, Mr. Trent. A good looking woman in her way but she scared me stiff. I couldn't believe she was a murderess and a homicidal maniac. Then I went back to the ward where Marcus North was. I asked Haggerty suddenly where he was and I did what you told me and looked at his hands. They clenched like hands do when you're going to sock some one. I couldn't tell a thing from his voice or his eyes when I looked up. He asked me what I knew about Marcus North. I said some one down at the Hillsbro House said he killed an attendant."

"Haggerty said he'd show me him. He took me to a room and made me look through a little grating with a

shutter across it. It was too dark to see much at first but he turned up a light in the ceiling and there in the corner on a mattress was Marcus North. He was in one of his bad spells and they put him in there and pushed his food under the door until he gets less violent. No furniture in the room and the mattress is on the floor so he shouldn't have a bed to break and use as a weapon."

Trent thought a moment over what More had said. Haggerty did not welcome questions about North, whereas he did not mind what was said about another inmate, Mrs. Pate. He had displayed this emotion before he showed More the cell where violent maniacs were put. That was worth a thought. Why, if he did not wish More, a person of no importance in so far as influence was concerned, to see North or ask about him, did he take him to the cell when he need not have offered more than an excuse?

"You have no proof that the man lying there was Marcus North."

"Nothing except his word and I've proved him a liar. I made a note of it because I thought it might be worth investigating. I was in his place last night. He has bought a house outside Deerfarm by the depot and the gang meets there for poker. I had a bottle of your Scotch and he said to wait and not open it until the bunch was gone. You know me, Mr. Trent, I'm no drinker so that meant pretty well the whole quart for him. He can drink, believe me. While he was getting ice the phone rang and I answered it. It was long distance from Worcester and the girl at this end wanted to be sure it was Big Haggerty. While I was saying I'd fetch him he came in. It's my belief he's a maniac."

More rubbed his arm where Hagger-

ty had gripped him. "He just threw me away from the phone and your bottle was knocked off the table. That made him madder than ever. I tell you, sir, he put me through the third degree and wanted to know if I knew who'd called and the number. I was mighty glad I didn't know. Then the way he talked to the operator was a scandal. Then he got my hat and coat and fairly threw me out. This morning he apologized and said he was drunk and that a man at Worcester who owed him money had called him up. All the time he was apologizing he was looking hard at me. I wouldn't like to be a patient under him."

"When a man behaves that way to me," Trent observed, "I don't accept an apology very readily."

"That's because you are a scrapper," More said. "I wasn't very well pleased considering the money I'd dropped to him and the three quarts he'd had from me of real stuff." More smiled a little. "I found the operator Haggerty had called down and she's had my special gift box of six pairs of stockings. A pleasant-spoken sensible young lady." More took out a scrap of paper. "That's the number that was trying to get Haggerty. He calls up every night. May be nothing in it, but I knew you like to know everything. It's a man."

Trent smiled.

"Fine," he cried.

More was always to be depended on to remember things more brilliant men overlooked. "I'd like to meet Haggerty. I want particularly to hear him talk."

"I'm playing pool with him at seven," More said. "If you drop around and watch the tables the voice you hear above all others will be Big Haggerty. His brother don't say much and he'll be on duty."

"All right," Trent said. "You won't recognize me, of course. I'd like to know one other thing. When does he have this nightly conversation with the man in Worcester?"

"Always at one A. M. It's over in a few words."

"I shall be passing Haggerty's house at one to-night. I want you to signal me when Haggerty hangs up. Promise him another bottle."

More never raised difficulties. "That ought to be easy. I'll come out on the porch and light a match. As a matter of precaution I'll light three at once so you'll see my face. That means okeh, he's through." More hesitated a moment. "If there's likely to be a mix-up with Haggerty you'd better watch out. He was telling me some of the tricks he has of subduing them poor devils in there when they get violent. It made me sick to the stomach just listening to him."

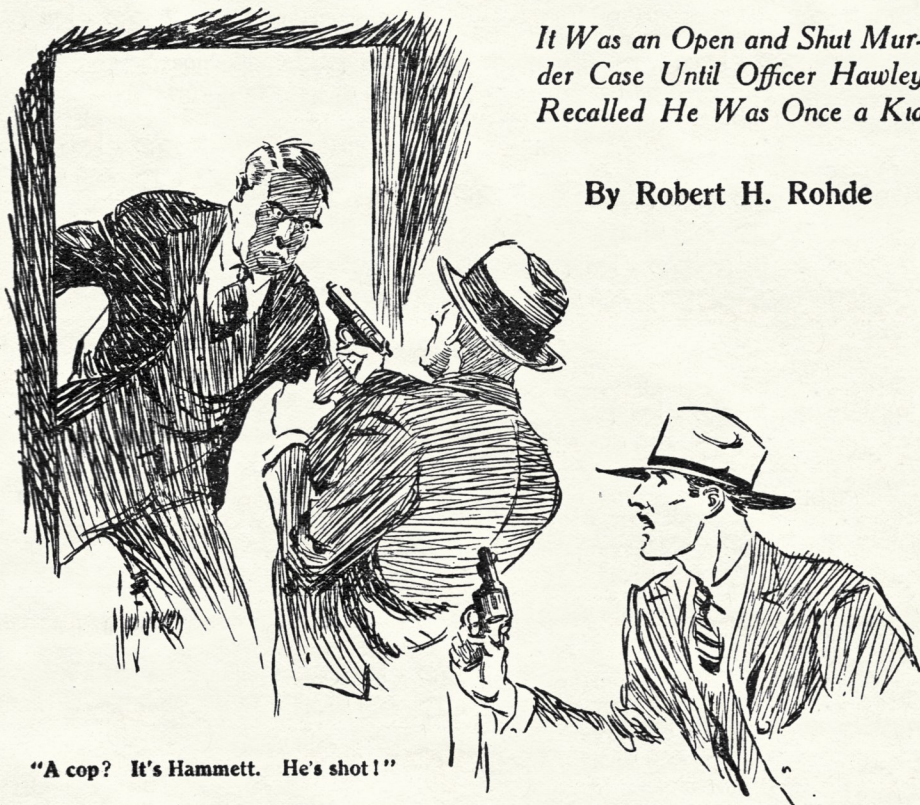
"Thanks for the tip," Trent said. "I may never have to speak to him. I am working on the flimsiest of ideas. I may be all wrong." He looked at More and the smaller man saw that adventure light in Trent's eyes. Trent knew more than he said. Well, More was not inquisitive. In due time he would be told. "If I do have occasion to talk with your friend Big Haggerty I don't think there'll be a great deal of risk involved."

TO BE CONCLUDED

Shadow of the Rope

It Was an Open and Shut Murder Case Until Officer Hawley Recalled He Was Once a Kid

By Robert H. Rohde



"A cop? It's Hammett. He's shot!"

FULLY fifty people must have witnessed the prelude to the tragedy, for the light in that second floor window of No. 31 was brighter than showed in any other along the row, and the half-strangled and terror-shaken scream had come from somewhere close behind it.

"Bradley! For God's sake! Don't, Bradley, don't!"

Then those two figures, sharp-etched in black on the yellow of the drawn shade; after that the wilder cry, the crash of the gun and the muffled echoing thump of a heavy body on a hard floor.

Up the block, on one of the crowded boardinghouse stoops, some one had been strumming a ukelele. The playing stopped abruptly. A breathless silence settled on the breathless summer night.

On the steps of No. 38, diagonally across from the house of the brightly lighted window, two men who had been looking at a girl sitting between them leaped to their feet and stared at each other.

"That's murder!" snapped Detective Sergeant William Brill. "A job for me!"

A flush came into the cheeks of the

younger man who had been bidding against him for the girl's attention. It was just like Brill to point that distinction for Mary Corcoran's benefit; he never passed a chance to rub it in. He was a first-grade man, drawing top pay in the Detective Bureau, close to a lieutenant. And Jim Hawley was a mere patrolman, a pavement-pounder, a wearer of the "harness"—one of the rankers that Brill liked to call "you guys with your brains in your feet."

Hawley felt the flush, but he forced a grin.

"There it is for you, Bill," he said. "Go get it. I'll be behind you."

Brill threw a hurried word to the girl:

"Excuse, kiddo! Business before pleasure!"

It wasn't exactly necessary, so far as Hawley could see, that he should have drawn his gun there, before her. But he did, and flourished with a clatter down the steps. Jim Hawley, off duty and in civilian clothes, lingered a second.

"Listen, Mary," he whispered urgently. "Get in the house, will you? There may be—a gunplay. Leave it to us." He caught himself and swallowed hard. "I mean," he amended, "to Bill."

He was halfway across the street when he eased his pistol in the service holster under the tail of his shiny serge coat, and Brill, ahead of him, was racing up the stoop of No. 31 two steps at a time.

Hawley stayed on the sidewalk below, an all-gone feeling at the pit of his stomach. He wasn't afraid of anything that might happen; hadn't even thought of that. But to him there was something symbolic in Brill's swift ascent.

It wasn't only the closed and cur-

tained door above that Brill was making for: it was his lieutenantcy. Not discounting the nerve that he really had, good breaks had taken him up where he was. Now, first on the job at a killing, close enough by to collar the murderer red-handed, he was getting the breaks again. Give him this hot grab here, with a lieutenant's rank and a lieutenant's pay coming to reward it, and the race for Mary was over. Hawley couldn't see it any other way. He'd have to drop out; let that be the proof of his love for her; leave her for Bill.

Looking up, he saw Brill's big hand at the bell—saw it come away as the front door, with a soft glow behind its curtains, was snatched open. A broad figure blocked the light. From the sidewalk, Hawley got an impression of wild eyes in a round, red, bewildered face.

The red-faced man started back at sight of Brill's pistol and his flashed badge.

"A cop?" he croaked. "It—it's Hammett! He's shot!" He drew a deep breath wheezily. "I'm Easler," he explained, as if that guaranteed him. "Easler of the City Contracting Company."

"I get you," said Brill, but he still barred the way.

To Hawley the name meant something too. Both names did. He could remember them coupled, years back, on building jobs all over town. There was a time when a man couldn't walk a dozen blocks without seeing their signs—"Hammett & Easler, General Contractors." After that, for awhile, the signs put it: "City Contracting Company, Successors to Hammett & Easler." John Easler, if he was *that* Easler, was a sure enough big shot.

But Bill Brill wasn't handling the red-faced man with gloves.

"Where were you goin' in such a hurry?" he demanded, stretching out a detaining arm.

"To find a policeman."

"Yeah?" said Brill. "Well, you've got one." Briskly he patted Easler's hips and his coat pockets. "No cannon on you, hey? No; there wouldn't be."

The red face grew redder.

"W-what d' you mean? Say! You don't think—"

"Never mind what I think," grunted Brill. "You get back in the house while I have a look. Upstairs, is he? And who is he, did you say?"

"Hammett. Oscar Hammett, that used to be my partner. Yes—upstairs. In front."

Brill gave the stout man a push, straight-armed, that sent him back to the door through which he had just come.

"Come along, Hawley!" he called; and over Hawley's shoulder he cast a withering glance at the crowd of excited stoop-sitters marshaled behind him. "Come in, and close the door on them rubber-necks."

When the door was shut and the three of them stood under the hall light, Brill dropped his pistol out of sight.

"Now, Easler!" he barked. "I know who you are, all right; but that don't get you nothing—not now. If you didn't do it, who did? Tell me that! And where is he?"

Wrath and a dawning fright had started perspiration in a beady deluge down the contractor's cheeks.

"I don't know," he protested. "I didn't see anybody. Didn't think there was anybody in the house but Hammett and me. But somebody got him. I guess you heard."

"I heard," Brill agreed grimly. "I wasn't more than a mile away, see?

And you're the only one I've seen comin' out. Shake a foot now! Upstairs! Lead me to it!"

The impact of his staccato command carried Easler up a step or two. He stopped there and turned.

"You're making a mistake, officer," he said. "Being hard-boiled like this—with me. You'll find it out."

Then he began to climb again, Brill at his heels, Hawley trailing. At the front of the second floor hall the door of a lighted room stood open. Easler hung back and made way for Brill to pass him.

"In there," he said with a shudder, and pointed.

Brill walked into the room, but Hawley halted at the threshold. One glance at the figure prone and rigid on the rug was sufficiently convincing. It had the posture and the immobility of death.

"He's done," Hawley said. "We'd better get busy, Bill, hadn't we?—and see where our man got to?"

Brill's sidelong eyes mocked the suggestion, and so did the exaggerated seriousness with which he considered it.

"You're a fast thinker, Hawley," he grinned. "If they knew their pineapples they'd had you in the Detective Bureau long ago. Sure they would. They'd 'a' slung out some of us dumbbells to make a place for you." He cast a quick glance about the room, marking an upset chair and a reading lamp overturned at the end of a table, and came back into the hall. "All right," he gibed. "It's a smart idea. You hang onto Mr. Easler here, Hawley, and I'll check up."

He ran up the stairs to the floor above, and before a minute had passed was down again.

"Nobody went out *that* way, mis-

ter," he informed Hawley, broad in his deference. "Not over the roof. The trap's locked on the under side. And, in case you might think that somebody jumped out one of the back windows—they're all locked, too." He passed down the hall and opened a door at its rear. "No; nobody hidin', either. Nobody in the closets, nobody under the beds."

He vanished into the dark room, and lights presently flashed on to reveal him trying windows.

"All locked here, too, Hawley," he reported. "But I aim to satisfy. S'pose you want me to try downstairs? And the basement and the cellar?" He turned his grin on Easler. "How about *you*? Want me to keep on huntin'?"

He started toward the entrance hall, beckoning Hawley to follow with the sweating and speechless contractor. Hawley, from the front hall, saw him trying windows again—heard him puttering below afterward.

When he returned he said nothing, but crinkles of malicious mirth were about his twinkling small eyes as he looked at Hawley and at Easler and picked up the telephone.

"Sergeant Brill talking," he announced when he had been connected with headquarters. "Just walked into something out here on Planton Street—No. 31. You hear me, captain? It's Oscar Hammett's house, and he's been murdered. Yes; that's what I've said. Sure, send the homicide squad—but, hell! I've got their man!"

He winked at Hawley as he hung up the receiver.

"Don't that sound," he wanted to know, "as though you might be seein' me in church?"

Then, not expecting a reply, he wheeled on Easler.

"It's all settled," said he, "but the warrant. The whole back of the house is locked tighter than a drum—locked from the inside. That's proof nobody went out the back way, and there's plenty witnesses besides me to swear that nobody left by the front. There was just you and Hammett in the house when he was bumped. And say, Mr. Easler: am I wrong, or ain't your first name Bradley?"

II

TEN minutes later, when a Police Department car sounded its siren in front of No. 31 Planton Street, busy Sergeant Brill had a dozen witnesses corralled in Oscar Hammett's disordered "front parlor." Hawley and Easler were there, too.

Hawley opened the front door to a gray mustached man in a square-blocked derby who brushed swiftly past him at sight of Brill in the hall beyond. Four men of the homicide squad, close at the gray man's back, likewise piled in.

Saluting, Brill addressed the leader.

"The case is all cooked for you, Inspector Gregory," he said. "Ready to serve up on a silver platter. Hammett's upstairs. Want to see him first?"

Before the inspector had answered, a voice hailed him from the thronged parlor—and Hawley recognized the voice as Easler's, tremulous with relief.

"Hello, Tom! Glad to see you! *That's* no lie!"

Gregory straightened and stared.

"Brad Easler! What're you doing in this?"

Glaring at Brill, Easler jerked a thumb in his direction.

"Ask him," he said savagely. "He thinks that he's got me arrested."

The inspector glanced sharply at Brill, who nodded.

"He was here alone with Hammett," he said succinctly. "And Hammett's dead. Shot through the head, inspector. Yes; I'd call it an arrest!" Gregory frowned.

"You don't often make mistakes, sergeant," he said, "but you're all wrong here. Mr. Easler and I have been friends for years. I wouldn't believe he'd shot anybody until he told me so himself." He walked to the contractor and put out his hand. "How about it, Brad? What happened?"

Easler mopped his face with a jaunty handkerchief.

"Your man," he said, nodding curtly toward Brill, "makes a lot out of the fact that Hammett shouted my name. Well, it's the truth. He did. But I don't see how anybody could hang me for that."

Brill bared his teeth in an unpleasant grin.

"Maybe you don't—now," he remarked. "Go ahead, Easler. Tell Inspector Gregory the same story you told me. He's your friend, ain't he? Let's see how it sets with him!"

The inspector nodded encouragement.

"Let's hear it, Brad," he said. "You were here visiting Hammett, were you? First time in a blue moon, wasn't it?"

"In ten years," Easler told him. "In exactly ten years. Hammett called me up this afternoon—reminded me it was just that long since we broke up the old partnership. He wanted me to come here to-night. Said he had something to talk over with me. We made an appointment for nine o'clock."

"Check!" put in Sergeant Brill. "Anyway, inspector, it was just about nine when Easler got here. I was sittin' on a stoop over the way, and I noticed him ringin' the bell outside.

He's got a shape to remember, ain't he?"

Gregory's gray eyes lingered for an instant on Brill, and the gleam in them was not wholly approving.

"I'm listening to *you*, Brad," he said. "Must have been a surprise to hear from Oscar Hammett."

"It was," admitted Easler. "But it's a funny world. After all I've seen—" His eyes lifted to the ceiling. "Well, I came to call, anyhow. Even your Siberian wolfhound here agrees to that.

"I came to call; and, far as I know, Hammett was alone in the house. He let me in himself. I didn't see anybody else, or hear anybody. I and Hammett set down together in this very room where we're standing. He was nervous—I can say that much. And he had liquor in him."

"He would have," commented the inspector. "I've kept some track of him. What did he want with you, Brad?"

Easler hesitated.

"Why—why, that'd be pretty hard to answer.

"Yeah!" came a *sotto voce* echo from Brill. "Pretty hard is right!"

"I mean," Easler went on hurriedly, "that I never got it clear. While we sat down here, he just talked about how long it was since we'd seen each other, and all that. I played along with him, waiting for him to come to the point.

"But he never got there. Maybe ten minutes after he let me in, or maybe fifteen, he got up and asked me if I minded being alone for a couple of minutes? He wasn't worried about anything then, because he turned around after he was out of the door and grinned at me.

"He went upstairs, and I heard him

moving right overhead, in the front room."

"Sure it was *him*?" demanded Gregory hopefully.

Easler blinked.

"I never thought about it being anybody else."

"We'll come back to that," observed Gregory with a quick nod. "And you sat tight down here, did you, Brad?"

"Until Hammett yelled, I did. That lifted me out of the chair like it had been dynamite under me. I couldn't hear just what it was that he was shouting, but I could make out my name clear enough."

He paused to mop at his sweaty face again, and Sergeant Brill dryly addressed the company at large:

"So could a lot of other people!"

Easler passed the interruption.

"He was yelling my name," he repeated. "And his voice was enough to send a shiver through you. It was like—like a man being murdered. I ran into the hall, and just as I started upstairs there was a shot and something fell. I kept on going."

"Oscar Hammett was in the front room on the second floor, stretched out, with a bullet in his head. I gave one look at him and started to find a cop. If ever I saw a dead man, it was Hammett."

Inspector Gregory was looking past him. A youngish man with black-rimmed spectacles, who had driven up a moment after the arrival of the police car, had poked his head in at the door.

"Killed instantly, inspector," he said. "The gun wasn't more than a few inches from his head. That's about all I can tell you now."

The inspector stared speculatively at Brill, although his question was directed at Easler.

"You've heard the medical exam-

iner, Brad," he said. "And your guess was right, you see. And then you came straight downstairs, did you, and went to look for a policeman?"

"That's it."

Brill, boldly holding the inspector's eyes, made himself heard once more.

"Funny," he remarked, "that Easler thought he had to go *out* to get a cop."

"What do you mean by that?" snapped Gregory.

"That it looked more to me like he was tryin' for a fast get-away. D'you see, inspector, there was a telephone in the hall!"

Then Jim Hawley spoke. He had been listening in that stolid silence with which ordinary patrolmen, plain harness bulls with their brains in their feet, should properly attend conversations between dignitaries of the detective bureau. He hadn't meant to butt in—but, suddenly, involuntarily, there he was doing it.

"And there was something else in the hall," said he.

Gregory's eyes swung to him; so did Brill's.

"He's just a cop," Brill explained, scowling, "that happened to be with me. A uniformed man, off duty. I brought him over in case I'd need him."

Swiftly the inspector sized up the accidental patrolman.

"That looks," he decided, "as if it might be a head that you've got on your shoulder, officer. *What* else was there in the hall?"

"Mr. Easler's hat," said Jim. "It's still there, on the rack. That is, I guess the brown one's his. It's got the initials 'B. E.' in it. And he was starting out without it. It didn't seem to me that he could have meant to go far."

The contractor flashed him a grateful glance.

"That's right, Tom! Maybe if I

said I didn't see the phone, or think of it, that might be hard for some people to believe. But it ought to mean something that I didn't bother about my hat, either. Yes; that brown felt is mine."

Gregory's relief was manifest.

"What's your name, officer?" he asked. "Hawley? O. K., Hawley. It is a head!"

Brill regarded Hawley without kindness.

"Hat or no hat, inspector," he said, "Easler's in this mess with both feet. You've got to look at the simple facts. There was only Hammett and Easler here. That's a cinch. The whole back of the place is buttoned up on the inside, and that tells the story from that end. The same goes for the roof. The bolt is shot under the scuttle. As for the front—I and Hawley can tell you that nobody came out after the shooting but Easler. And if our word ain't good enough, there's dozens of others can tell you the same."

Gregory made a gesture of impatience.

"You're careful, Brill," he said. "I'll agree that conditions are probably as you say they are. But why are you so set on making murder out of it? Haven't you ever stopped to think that Hammett could have killed himself?" Gregory caught the medical examiner's eye. "What do you say, Dr. Young?" he asked. "Couldn't it have been suicide?"

The physician nodded.

"I certainly wouldn't say it couldn't have been, inspector. The bullet was fired close up, as I've told you already. It entered the forehead, on the right side. It's probably not my province to remark that there are indications of a struggle up above."

Gregory stiffened.

"I haven't been upstairs yet myself," he said. "What—"

Brill eagerly anticipated the question.

"A lamp and a chair upset, and a rug kicked up," he volunteered. "And that was more than I expected. It didn't last long."

The inspector stared at him.

"What do you mean, it didn't last long?"

"That's more fact. I *saw* the whole of it!"

Easler's jaw dropped; Gregory's went up at a sharp angle. Their voices were one:

"*Saw it?*"

Sergeant Brill folded his arms and impressively cleared his throat.

"I saw it, Hawley saw it, and so did all these people sitting around here. I guess I could dig you up even more if I had to. You ought to know Pantton Street, inspector. Along this block they're boarding houses, mostly. And you know how boarding house crowds'll go for the stoops on a hot night.

"I and Hawley were paying a call ourselves. We've got a sort of mutual friend—a lady friend, see?—that lives at No. 38. We were on *her* stoop. Just chinnin' along, you know. And then, all of a sudden, somebody starts yellin'. The noise came from over here, in No. 31."

Gregory challenged that brusquely.

"Aren't you guessing, sergeant?"

Brill shook his head.

"Not a bit of it. It was Hammett yellin'. And he hollered out Easler's name. That is, his first name. He was beggin' 'Bradley' not to kill him."

He glanced along the line of his witnesses for confirmation, and got it in a series of nods. Gregory's gray face tautened, and his eyes went to Easler's.

For the first time they expressed a doubt.

III

BRILL allowed a pause to let one sensation sink in before proceeding to the next. Then he resumed:

"There was a bright light upstairs, and the room it was in was where the hollerin' seemed to come from. The shade was down, but—"

"Then you couldn't actually see anything?" Gregory wanted to know, still covertly watching Easler.

Brill grinned.

"If you mean faces, no," said he. "But figures—yes! They were between the lamp and the window. They were as clear on the shade, almost, as I see you now against the light."

Gregory's sharp chin went up again.

"*They?*"

"That's what I said—and that's the clincher, inspector! There were two men in that room. And they were scuffin'. I leave that to anybody."

He solicited further corroboratory nods, and was not disappointed. A thin-haired man spoke up:

"That's the truth, inspector. I testify to it—and I was on the force once myself. There were two men upstairs in No. 31. Their shadows were on the shade. I just caught a flash of them, fighting; saw one take a clip at the other. After that they got out of the line of the light, but it wasn't another second before the shot was fired."

"It's right," some one else assented breathlessly. "Just what I saw!"

Gregory took a cigar from his pocket and for a little ruminatively chewed its end. His shrewd eyes studied Brill's parked witnesses, and nowhere along the line of them could he discover dissent. He walked to Easler and dropped a hand on his thick shoulder.

"Brad," he said gently, "it doesn't look so good. I know that Hammett has had it in for you all these years. If he got you here to trim you, if you had to let him have it to protect yourself, I want you to tell me."

The color had drained from Easler's face, leaving it with a pasty and blotchy pallor.

"They're all—crazy," he said unsteadily. "Trying to pin it on me! I don't know any more than I told you. There wasn't anybody but Hammett in that room when I got up there. Maybe there had been somebody. Maybe it's fact what they say about seeing two shadows on the shade. But I can't say anything about that."

Gregory stood away from him, searched his ashy face.

"It's not so good," he repeated. "Look here, Brad! You and I have been friends for a good many years. The best I could ever do for you wouldn't be too good. You know it. You've helped me when I needed help, and I'm not forgetting it."

"But there can be times, Brad, when a man's best doesn't mean much. Times when he hasn't any choice. This is one of them. All I can advise you to do is come clean. And that's a friend's advice, remember. There's been a killing here, and I've got a policeman's duty ahead of me. No matter how it hurts, there's no getting away from it."

Easler dropped into a chair, and threw out his hands.

"I'm through," he said. "What's the use of going all over it again? You're as cuckoo, Gregory, as any of the rest of 'em. I don't know what it's all about. I didn't see anybody but Hammett in this house since I got here. I didn't see anybody coming in or anybody leaving, front or back. I didn't shoot Hammett. Didn't raise a

hand to him. When he was shot, I was sitting right in this same chair where I'm sitting now. If the back of the house is all locked, maybe nobody skipped that way. If a lot of people were watching the front and say that nobody went out—well, maybe nobody did. You'll have to figure it out for yourself. *I'm licked!*"

Gregory sighed and shrugged, and turned to Brill.

"I suppose, sergeant," he said stiffly, "that I ought to congratulate you on another piece of good work. Mr. Easler seems to be your prisoner. It's time, I think, to warn him that anything he says in regard to this matter may be used against him."

Avoiding Easler's startled eyes, he passed a thin hand wearily over his forehead.

"Now, Brill," he said, "we'll have a look upstairs. And you come along, too, Hawley!"

IV

AT the door of the lighted room with the drawn shade, Gregory stopped to ask a curt question:

"Everything's been left the way it was?"

"Exactly," said Brill.

The spectacled medical examiner, who had followed them upstairs, answered with a nod.

"Naturally," he said. "I opened the man's coat. That was all."

Gregory gnawed the dry cigar while his eyes roved.

"Looks as if Hammett put up a fight," he observed. "See that lamp?"

Jim Hawley was looking at it.

"Strong, isn't it?" he asked. "It's a wonder the filament didn't break when it went over. I never saw one of those high-power lamps that'd stand a lot of jar."

Gregory, without comment, walked into the room and picked up the revolver that lay beyond Hammett's sprawled feet. He held it close to the upset reading lamp. From the crowd on the sidewalk a strident voice came up as he bent to examine it:

"Look! The cops are up there now!"

The inspector saw the shadow of his head on the shade, magnified to giant proportions.

"That's how it was, eh?" he murmured. He moved back out of the light stream, and turned the gun over. "Not a sign of a finger-print," he said. "The revolver won't tell us anything—unless we can trace it."

Sergeant Brill patted a complacent yawn.

"Do we need to have it tell us anything, inspector?" he queried. "Did you ever see so many witnesses to a murder in your life? Or a case so open-and-shut?"

Gregory said nothing. He put down the gun carefully upon the exact spot where it had lain and picked up the pencil with which he had marked its proper place. A glint of white under Hammett's body caught his eye then. He stooped, and gingerly plucked at the edge of it. A moment afterward he was by the lamp again, examining a rumpled silk handkerchief.

"Now, that's sort of funny," he reflected, aloud.

Hawley saw what he meant by that. The handkerchief was knotted at either end. He looked hard at it, and then harder still at the reading lamp, on its side at the near end of the mission table.

"No!" he said suddenly. "It isn't?"

Gregory straightened and stared at him.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"What are you saying, Hawley?"

Brill interpolated, severely:

"Better keep your oar out, young fella! I guess the inspector can get along without your advice. If you don't think it's queer for anybody to knot up a handkerchief that way, that's no license for you to chip in."

There was a strain of stubbornness in Hawley. It came hotly to the surface.

"It's not so queer," he insisted, coloring as Gregory's eyes narrowed upon him.

But the inspector wasn't rebuking him with that steady regard; his mind had flashed back to the incident of Bradley Easler's hat—to his observation that what Hawley's shoulders supported was a human, reasoning head.

"Why isn't it queer?" he presently wished to be told.

Jim Hawley, so swiftly and directly caught up, had an impulse to temporize. He looked away toward the lamp and blinked in its glare. Was somebody, pretty soon, going to be telling him *he* was crazy?"

"I mean," he said lamely, "it is and it isn't. If it was just the handkerchief, maybe I wouldn't have thought anything. But—take that lamp there, now!"

Gregory transferred his stare to the lamp.

"Well?" His voice was crisp.

"It's a reading lamp," said Hawley.

Brill burst into an explosive and uncomplimentary laugh.

"That's keen! Goes to show you, inspector, that we've got a lot of talent harnessed up in the precincts! Hawley's found out that it's a reading lamp! Can you beat him?"

Gesturing Brill to silence, Gregory popped out another, "Well?"

Hawley squared his shoulders and his jaw.

"There's something funnier about the lamp than about the handkerchief," he asserted doggedly. "Could a man read under a light like that without being blinded? It's a hundred-watt bulb, inspector! There it is, marked on it. The glare of it off a book or paper would start your eyes watering in a jiffy. Nobody'd use more than a sixty-watt lamp for reading, at the outside."

Gregory nodded absently. Brill was grinning.

"You must burn better than a hundred watts yourself, under your hat, Hawley," he sneered. "But what's the lamp got to do with the handkerchief? What has watts got to do with knots?"

Hawley wheeled on him, his eyes blazing.

"Don't you remember anything at all," he demanded, "from the days when you were a kid? Didn't you ever—"

Again Brill laughed, and the sneer was caught up in the laugh, giving a cutting edge to it.

"Hey!" he cried. "What's *that* got to do with—anything?"

With an effort, Hawley caught back two things that had been ready to slip. One was the latter part of an uncompleted question, the other a right fist that ached for contact with Brill's sardonic mouth. But his defy was out before he could check it.

"I'll show you!"

There were danger signals in his eyes, and Brill did not misread them. He looked away to Gregory, who asked quietly:

"What do you mean, Hawley? What'll you show?"

Hawley drew a deep breath, and caught up the challenge.

"Just what happened up here," said he. "My idea of it, anyhow."

Again Gregory was studying him.

"Go ahead," he invited shortly.

But Hawley shook his head.

"I can't do it; not with both of you here," he demurred.

"There's nerve!" gasped Brill.

"What the hell d'you think you're pulling?"

Gregory rubbed his chin.

"I don't understand," he admitted.

"If you think you've got something to show us, Hawley, let's see it—in a hurry. We'll have the reporters here in a couple more minutes."

"I know," Hawley said. "But this is something I've got to do my own way. Or else it won't mean anything. You've got to leave me alone here."

"And—us?"

"I want Brill to go over and sit where he was—on the stoop of No. 38. If it's just the same, inspector, I'd like to have you alongside him. Just sit there—and watch!"

Brill held up his hands.

"Jeez!" he ejaculated. "If that ain't brass! How long is it, inspector, since you took orders from a rookie patrolman?"

Gregory's gaze bathed him with a cold light. It was only a straw—but he grasped at it for his sinking friend.

"I haven't been so long in the department myself, sergeant," he said, "that I'm sure there isn't anything left for me to learn. As for Hawley's proposition, I'm ready to be shown. We'll stroll across the street together, Brill, if you don't mind. Where did you say you wanted us, Hawley? On the stoop of No. 38?"

V

MARY CORCORAN was over there, watching No. 31 with strained eyes, when Sergeant Bill Brill came back to her. Just as he had gone, he returned—with a swag-

ger. But now it was not a pistol he flourished, but a police inspector.

"This is my boss, kiddo," he said.

"Inspector Gregory, meet Miss Corcoran. She's my extra special."

The girl took the inspector's thin hand, and by her speech betrayed how little she knew of the department. What she said—and warmly, too—was:

"Then I suppose you know Jim Hawley, Mr. Gregory!"

Brill frowned, but the inspector smiled.

"I've just had the pleasure of meeting him," he replied. "An enterprising young man."

His gaze wandered over the way, and discovered the head of the enterprising young man poking from the brightly-lighted second floor window of No. 31.

"Set?" called Hawley.

"We're here."

Mary Corcoran gasped.

"It's Jim! He's in that room where the man was killed!"

And then she was on her feet, screaming. What had happened twenty minutes ago was being repeated. A wild, horror-filled shout was echoing along the street.

"Bradley! For God's sake! *Don't*, Bradley, *don't!*"

"Help him!" cried Mary Corcoran. "The murderer's come back, and he's after Jim! Look, look!"

Black shadows were again on the yellow shade, the swollen shadows of two men struggling behind it.

Brill's eyes popped. He jumped up, his hand swinging automatically to his hip. But the shadows had vanished then. There was a whir, and a sharp crack.

The crack wasn't another pistol shot; the yellow shade had been yanked and

let go smacking onto its roller. Jim Hawley leaned out the window.

"A one man show!" he called across the street. "How was it, Inspector Gregory?"

Gregory was already on his way over. He pushed into No. 31 and ran up the stairs. Hawley met him at their head. He had the knotted handkerchief in his hand.

"The knots were the giveaway," said he. "They made the shadows of the two heads. Maybe Bill Brill doesn't remember being a kid, inspector—but don't you? Don't you remember making shadowgraphs between a strong light and a screen? Just with your fingers you could make a lot of things. Horses and dogs and elephants and churches. And if you tied knots in a handkerchief—say, couldn't you put on a first-class battle?"

A roar escaped Gregory—a roar of appreciation and relief. He went down the stairs with a rush, burst into the parlor where Easler sat among the hostile witnesses.

"Brad!" he shouted. "You're clear! It was a last dirty trick that Hammett tried to put up on you. He'd got ready

finally to bump himself off—and he thought he'd leave you to swing for it. That's what he'd been scheming these ten years toward, planning a red anniversary!"

He whirled around and caught Jim Hawley's arm; whispered energetically to him. Then he lashed out at Brill.

"You're a good man, sergeant," he wound up. "I'd be the last to say you weren't. But there's such a thing as being too anxious to force a collar. You're inclined to be that way, sometimes. Sometimes your brains are in your feet!"

Hawley didn't hear that. Already he was sitting on a straw mat on the steps of No. 38, holding hands with Mary.

"Luck!" he exulted. "To-morrow I go into the detective bureau as a second grade sergeant. Pop Gregory says so, and he never breaks his word. Know what it means, Mary? A jump of a thousand a year! *Now* I can say the word!"

The girl's eyes were starry.

"Why didn't you say it a long time ago, Jim?" she wanted to know. "Ain't I—working?"



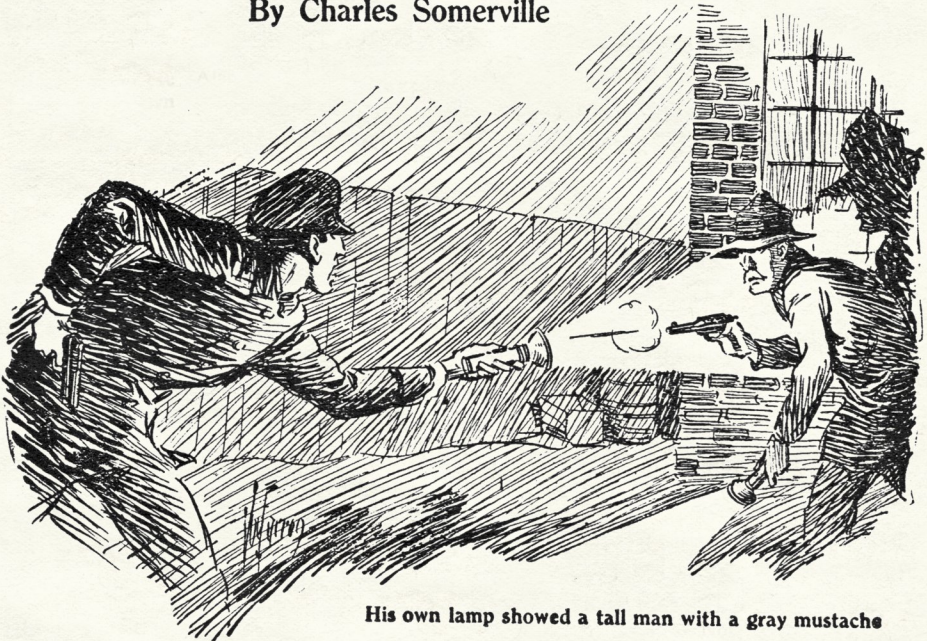
Clancy's bride was bought and paid for, but it was a bad bargain he got. Read this puzzling murder mystery in next week's issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—"The Alibi Bride," by John L. Tiernan.

Liverpool Jack

A True Story

When the Two Best Sleuths of the Tenderloin Go to Public School the Underworld Learns a Thing or Two

By Charles Somerville



His own lamp showed a tall man with a gray mustache

IF there were ever two vexed, irritated, bothered, worried and chagrined man-hunters they were Detectives Ed Burgess and John Fitzpatrick of the New York force on a certain night back in 1912!

These two were, at the time, the star sleuths of the branch bureau of headquarters established at the West Forty-Seventh Street station, in the heart of New York's new "Tenderloin" district, known also as the Great White Way and the "Roaring Forties." It draws vast crowds from all over the nation and from all over the world—people with lots of money in their

pockets, lots of jewelry on their persons. It becomes, therefore, a Mecca for all the experts of crookdom. A detective in that district has his work cut out for him working his wits against the razor-edged ingenuities of the fastest criminal performers on earth.

Working together, Burgess and Fitzpatrick had achieved an imposing record for difficult cases well handled. They had solved several very knotty mysteries and bagged many dangerous criminals. They had sent the vicious "One-Eye" Lynch, otherwise known as "The Eel," to the electric chair

after long and implacable pursuit. They had taken the million-dollar thief of the American Bank Note Company affair. They successfully laid the mysterious crime of the murder of the West Side philanthropist saloon-keeper, "Paddy the Priest" at the door of "Happy Jack" Halloran, and sent him to the chair for it. They had pursued the youthful thug and plunderer known as "The Crusher," and closed the bars of prison upon him for a long stretch of years. They had landed "Stutters," a wizard at burglary, notorious "dinner" and "theater" thief, who pillaged the homes of wealthy New Yorkers of more than a quarter of a million dollars before Burgess and Fitzpatrick got a chance at him. They had raided and routed the thieves' resort of "Scushi" Thomas, fence and gunman, who himself was in the end "taken for a ride" in New Jersey by fellow desperadoes. On the tiny clew offered by the scratch on the side of a stolen gem they had stopped an up-State society woman in the beginning of a career as a jewel thief.

But the Law, in its pursuit of malefactors, frequently gets some hard bumps itself.

Burgess and Fitzpatrick had been long organizing a corps of tipsters, or "stool pigeons," working underground in the underworld. All detectives must establish such liaisons with the secret lanes, byways and resorts of crime if they are to be successful in their careers. These two detectives had displayed fine tact and ingenuity in playing one crook off on another while maintaining friendly and confidential relations with both. Important as had been many of their captures after the commissions of crimes, even more important had been their ability to nip

numerous criminal projects in the bud.

And it was when bent on such a task that from one of their secret sources of information came news of an impressively dangerous mating up of three certain criminals for the purpose of bank robberies by safe breaking.

"Bugs" Reilly, they learned, was one of them. But Bugs was the smallest of the game. He was little more than a stripling in years. He was no "touch system" adept, or expert in the use of the explosives employed in the crashing of the heavy steel doors of bank vaults and safes. Bugs would rank as not much more than a "lobbiegow," an errand runner, a lookout on the job during its performance and a "toter of the tools."

But another member of the combination was to be "Connecticut Blackie" Blake. That was very different. Very. Blackie had done several prison stretches to be sure, but he had left a trail of smashed bank vaults from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from Canada to Mexico, and even in Mexico itself. He was a yogi among yeggs. Expert, daring, reckless in the use of gat or rod when cornered.

Big game as Blackie Blake was, bigger yet, however, would be the capture of the third member of the mob, if it might only be achieved. This would be the leader beyond doubt—the master mind truly. To bag Liverpool Jack Walsh wouldn't be merely a feather in a cop's cap—it would be a plume, and a red one at that.

For Liverpool Jack had a reputation as a highly skilled safe-breaker that was world-wide. The very neatness and precision and swiftness with which he handled his steel tools and explosives left his trade-mark indelibly on all his jobs. He had robbed banks in the United States, England, Bel-

gium, Holland, France, Austria, Italy, India, Australia, China and several of the nations of South America. He had "done time," as had Connecticut Blackie Blake, but more sparingly, in very small degree, indeed, considering the large number of his depredations, the riches he had taken in plunder. His greatest disaster had befallen him in Australia. There Liverpool Jack was taken red-handed and meted an eight-year term which he was compelled to serve to the bitter end.

As his criminal moniker or alias indicates, he was of English birth. His Rogues' Gallery picture, long a vain exhibit in that of New York headquarters, displayed a well-featured, refined countenance. One examined it without reward for any of the asymmetries of eye and mouth and eyebrows exploited by the Lombroso. There was a well-shaped, high forehead, evenly and widely set, keen, rather large eyes; a high-bridged nose in no way aslant; a firm jaw, but not outstandingly large, a full, finely molded chin. A gray mustache concealed his mouth. Further description stated that he was tall and rather heavily built. He was getting along in years at the time Detectives Burgess and Fitzpatrick turned their attention to him. Computed from the Headquarters Identification Bureau's record, Liverpool Jack was then past his fifty-sixth year.

It will be seen then that if Connecticut Blackie was a yogi among yeggs, Liverpool Jack Walsh was the Grand Guru himself.

Burgess and Fitzpatrick were hot to land him. No lion or tiger hunters ever experienced keener fever of the chase.

They began a patient, tireless espionage of the movements of Liverpool Jack, Connecticut Blackie and their satellite, Bugs Reilly. They trailed

them from different criminal "hang-outs" west of Broadway day on day, but without more result for several weeks than to learn the situation of the obscure hotel where Connecticut Blackie and Bugs were living, and to shadow Liverpool Jack to an apartment in the upper Eighties, where he lived with his wife and a son about ten years old. He was evidently in funds.

The apartment house where he lived was of a class commanding a monthly rental of at least one hundred and twenty-five dollars. He dressed very well himself, his wife wore fashionable attire, and their little son was equally well cared for. Liverpool Jack, however dangerous he might be to society at large, was a good family man. Certainly he was tremendously fond of his little son, spending hours at play with him along Riverside Drive daily before joining up with his newly adopted partners, Connecticut Blackie and Bugs Reilly, at the thieves' resorts further down town.

Detective work in large part is dreary business. It is very much of a waiting game. He who cannot school himself to infinite patience would find the profession intolerable. Only the big game hunter can have a sympathetic understanding of the fascination of the work which keeps a spirit of eagerness awake in man-hunters through long, monotonous sterile periods of watchful waiting.

In this case there was six weeks of it, day and night, before action came.

Burgess, shadowing the hotel where Connecticut Blackie and Bugs Reilly lived, saw Bugs leaving it one afternoon about four o'clock. Blackie accompanied him as far as the lobby. Burgess noted that the older crook's words at the parting were swiftly and decisively spoken. What interested the

detective even more was that which dangled from Bugs's right hand. Dangle is hardly the word. It was a satchel of costly black leather, and it hung heavily. In fact, its weight caused him to put it down on the floor until Blackie's talk ended. When he picked the satchel up again it required a sturdy heft of his shoulders to lift it. And Bugs lost no time in engaging a taxi on leaving the hotel. In another cab Burgess, of course, followed. The trip ended at the depot of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad. There Bugs made straight for the parcel room, heaved the heavy satchel on the counter and checked it. He made no purchase of a railroad ticket at the time, but returned again by taxi to the hotel.

In following Bugs, Burgess had not left Blackie unwatched. Detective Charles Flaherty remained to hold Blackie under espionage. When Bugs rejoined his pal, Burgess consigned the two of them to Flaherty and returned to the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad station and to the package room. There a show of his shield quickly obtained him the privilege of examining the bag Bugs had deposited there. He shook it and the jangle of metallic contents gave him a thrill. A kit of burglar tools doubtless. The newly formed trio, with the masterful Liverpool Jack in command, were, in all probability, planning an out of town trick.

He wished he might look into the bag and confirm the ring of metal that had come out of it. But he dared not tamper with the lock, he figured. It would advertise to Bugs of a certainty that strange hands had been upon his possession. Still, there was the possibility that the bag hadn't been locked. It was worth testing. Burgess

tried the catch, and smiled. The bag was open! Greater his satisfaction when full confirmation of his deduction presented itself. Brace and bit, hammer and chisel, soap and "soup"—nitro-glycerine—in vials in sufficient quantity to wreck the entire railroad station if it exploded—he found in Bugs Reilly's bag. But the vials were packed well in pads of cotton and waste, so that Burgess had no misgiving in allowing them to remain where they were.

Trailing Bugs back to his New York hotel, Burgess sent swift word to Fitzpatrick, watching Liverpool Jack at his uptown home. He left Flaherty at the hotel long enough to get Fitzpatrick on the secret wire of the branch bureau at the West Forty-Seventh Street station by means of the policeman on post in the vicinity of Liverpool Jack's apartment.

"Looks like a job to-night, Fitz," he said, "so don't let Liverpool slip you. Bugs checked a safe-breaking kit over at the Delaware and Lackawanna this afternoon. Yes—sure. He left it unlocked and I got a good full peek into it. All the works there. No, I don't know where they fix to pull the job. He didn't buy any ticket. But Flaherty and I have got both Blackie and Bugs covered down here. I'm only guessing that it's to-night they are fixing on. But it looks good. He'd hardly be taking the tools to leave in a public checking room for any length of time. I'd say they meant to use 'em right away. Well, keep your eyes on Liverpool."

Shortly after eight o'clock that night Bugs Reilly again left the hotel. Burgess, of course, went after him. Again Bugs taxied to the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad station. This time he made for the ticket office

and bought a ticket. He consulted the station clock, comparing it with his watch, and apparently decided there was ample time left in which to board his train, for he went to a newsstand and began looking over the magazines.

When Burgess was certain Bugs was taking no further interest in the ticket window he made his own appearance there and quickly elicited, by describing the purchaser, that Bugs had bought a ticket for the fashionable autumn and winter resort of Lakewood, New Jersey. He promptly supplied himself with a ticket to the same place. Bugs waited till within a few minutes of train time before presenting his check and recovering the kit of vault-cracking tools. Bugs traveled high, having a conductor assign him to a Pullman seat when he boarded the train.

Burgess, who couldn't be sure that he may not have been pointed out as a detective to Bugs by some fellow crook at one time or another, dared not engage for himself the same luxury. He rode in the common smoker.

There were many stops, and, of course, at each he alighted from the train to see that Bugs didn't steal a march on him in that way. Especially was he careful to do this, for it is an old trick of criminals to get off a train at a station before or a station beyond a town or city in which they mean to commit a crime. This is done for the purpose of beclouding possible identification by trainmen. Criminals traveling in pairs or trios or quartets frequently get off at different stations so that they will not be grouped in the mind's eyes of conductors and brakemen.

But Bugs tried no tricks. At least, not on the journey to Lakewood. He rode the full length of the ride. And

Burgess, elation still running high, loitered after him as he left the station. It was not policy to place himself too closely at the heels of his quarry, of course. He allowed Bugs a good two to three hundred feet of leeway ahead. But as Burgess came to a crossing ill-luck suddenly befell. Four huge lorries headed with milk for New York hove around a turn and halted Burgess while Bugs had escaped the delay.

When the lorries passed Bugs was gone!

This way and that Burgess looked, hurrying his steps, but man and bag had completely disappeared. Burgess ran from block to block peering down the side streets. No Bugs!

And yet, supposing that Bugs knew he was being followed, supposing Burgess had been identified as a detective to Bugs and that Bugs had caught sight of him at the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad station, or on the train, Bugs could not have done any tall running himself, burdened as he was with a bag full of heavy steel instruments and hampered as well by the caution the presence of nitro-glycerine in the kit made imperative. The implements themselves were all securely held in the bag by strap insets, but there was the danger of a trip and fall as he ran.

Burgess then became certain that if Bugs had gone ahead he must have caught up to him. Somewhere between the station and the place he now stood Bugs must have picked a place of concealment. It was possibly a pre-arranged place of hiding in some saloon near the station.

So the detective went back over the ground he had already covered. There were several saloons and lunch places in the vicinity of the depot, but these

he looked into without result. Bugs had evaporated. Somewhere in the immediate neighborhood, Burgess then bethought him, the mob might have a local accomplice and that to his flat or house Bugs had gone awaiting the arrival of his masters, Liverpool Jack and Connecticut Blackie.

Somewhat was Burgess's chagrin ameliorated by the thought of the last two criminals being securely under the espionage of his side-kick, Fitzpatrick, aided by Flaherty. After all, what was there to worry about? Bugs was only the underling, the totter of the tools. The expert, the actual performers, had to get on the job before anything could happen, any crime be committed. Fitzpatrick and Flaherty would be on the heels of the adepts, and this would lead them to the place where Bugs was to make rendezvous with them, the place to which he had so suddenly and blankly disappeared. His own job would be to pick up Fitzpatrick and Flaherty. He and Bugs had arrived on the next to the last train which would come to Lakewood that night. They had got in at eleven; there'd be another train at midnight.

But it was doubtful if Liverpool Jack and Blackie would use the railroad. Rather, they would come in a car, because they would reckon an automobile as their swiftest manner of escape after a robbery. His deduction as to a motor car was quite correct. But as for the rest! The rest was entirely another story.

Fitzpatrick had the satisfaction of trailing Liverpool Jack, making a bee-line—as nearly as possible in a taxi—for Blackie's hotel. Blackie was awaiting him in the lobby, cap and overcoat on, waiting to go. No time was lost in starting when Liverpool Jack arrived. Outside there sat a little ferret-faced

fellow at the wheel of a big, eight-cylindere motor car, not too new nor conspicuous, but a machine of fine lines and in fine condition, as the detectives were soon to find out.

It was apparent the crooks did not think they were being spied on, for the car was parked directly in front of the hotel, and Liverpool Jack and Blackie did not so much as cast a glance over their shoulders to see if any one was noting their entrance to the machine.

To this day Detective John Fitzpatrick, and Detective Charles Flaherty and Ed Burgess, too, for that matter, would dearly like to learn the identity of that little, ferret-faced chauffeur!

He didn't, on this night, at once show his stuff. The detectives in the high-powered car which Flaherty had planted on a side street near the hotel, had no trouble in keeping the other in sight.

But, it is to be remembered, in those days there was no automobile tunnel connecting New York and New Jersey. The detectives had, perforce, to run their car onto the same ferryboat which carried the crooks across the North River to the Jersey shore. The sleuths drove their car on last so that there were several vehicles between them and the crooks' car which had been the first to slide over the gangplank and upon the ferryboat.

On leaving the ferry the crooks gave no evidence that the detectives had been recognized as fellow passengers aboard the ferry. They probably had not. For no effort was made by the car ahead that might be taken to mean an attempt to shake off pursuers. But some time between leaving the ferry and Jersey City and about five miles out of Newark—when truly rural sections were beginning to be traversed—discovery of pursuit was certainly made by Liverpool Jack's conveyance.

It was then the little ferret-faced chauffeur began to "do his stuff." An amazingly intimate knowledge of the New Jersey roads he soon displayed, not only of the highways, but of all the byways. He snaked in and out of remote dirt roads and through woodland roads no wider than lanes. He had the police chauffeur in the car following dazed and wall-eyed in an effort to figure his moves and keep the car in sight. Frequent halts had to be called while the detectives alighted and made out the freshest of the tire tracks ahead. And finally the little man at the wheel of the crooks' car completely outwitted and outgeneraled the driver of the car behind. What the crooks' helmsman didn't know of New Jersey roads could be fully jotted on a thumb nail. He lost the police car so far off the beaten roads that it took the detectives nearly an hour at that time of night to get the information that set them once more on the right highway for Lakewood.

Approaching the resort city, they slowed the car to reconnoiter. They were by no means despairing of a capture yet.

"They were wise that they were being followed," said Fitzpatrick, "but not until after we followed them out of New York. But they are not wise that we know where they are heading for—that we have the dope that their job is to be at Lakewood. They think they've lost us and will go ahead with the business. But I think we ought to park the car and do the rest of it around the town on foot. The sound of another automobile burring around the streets here at this hour of the night"—it was nearing two o'clock in the morning—"would be all the warning they'd need to figure that we were wise to Lakewood, too.

"Besides, there's Burgess on the job. They are bound to meet Bugs with the tools. And Burgess has Bugs in sight. He'll be on deck when Bugs meets Liverpool and Blackie. Their arrival will tell him we must be somewhere around and, anyway, if he spots them enter the bank he has only to get the Lakewood police busy and make the bag. So it's not so bad after all."

This burst of optimism had no more than passed the lips of Fitzpatrick when a voice called from behind a tree on the highway, the car having come to a complete halt:

"Hey, Fitz!"

"Good! There's Burgess now!" said Flaherty.

"Hello, Ed!" said Fitzpatrick. "Maybe we're not glad to see you! Lost our guys!"

"You did?"

"Yes. They had a trick chauffeur that knew all kind of funny things about the New Jersey roads. It was like following a pinwheel—or trying to. But where did they show up at? Where did you trail Bugs? Are they together now? Maybe we're just in time—hey? Have they started their job?"

"Search me!"

"What?"

"Lay off yelling like that," said Burgess, "or they'll hear you if it's in Atlantic City. *They* lost you. Bugs lost *me*! That's the sad story. Don't take it too hard."

Groans chorused from the car.

"Well, if Bugs got wise to you, they got wise to us," said Fitzpatrick, "so I guess it's all off for the night."

"No," said Burgess, "I don't think Bugs got wise to me at all. He never by the least action betrayed that he was. It was simply that damn string of lorries that stopped me in my tracks. But it was for hardly more than a

minute. I didn't think it worth while running around behind them because I didn't want to hang too close to Bugs, of course. But when they had passed—no Bugs. It's simply that wherever he was bound for must have been near the depot and he disappeared into it. But I've looked into every dump in the neighborhood and watched every house and not one of those showed a light. So then I figured they'd be along in a car as we had doped it out and you'd be after them and, of course, that would lead you to Bugs and all would turn out fine."

"Did you see anything that looked like them?"

"I didn't have any idea what they looked like, did I? I didn't know what make of car they'd have. There were two or three hundred cars moving along this road until about an hour ago."

"Sure—that's true enough," admitted Fitzpatrick. "But the main thing is that you are pretty certain Bugs didn't suspect he was being followed!"

"I am," asserted Burgess.

"Then perhaps we are still in line. For Liverpool and Blackie are certain they shook us and if Bugs doesn't say he was followed here, they'll go ahead. We'll park the car up that side road and hit down into the business sections where the banks would be."

"That's a hunch!" agreed Burgess. Which is what they did.

Lakewood boasts several banks. The New York detectives found them and their vaults and their watchman all intact.

In the vicinity of Lakewood are the estates of many wealthy men—some the mansions of the fabulously wealthy. So the detectives telephoned a warning to the State Police headquarters. Prob-

ably one of these modern palaces was the golden "rarebit" the mob was after.

Then a hunch hit Burgess.

"By God! The post office!"

"Liverpool Jack never played one in his life," protested Fitzpatrick.

"No—but Connecticut Blackie has. It's been his principal lay."

"That's right. A post office would be soft for Liverpool, too. No harm to look."

No outward sign of depredation could be seen at the post office. But the Lakewood police chief at word from the New York detectives as to the distinguished character of the criminal visitors to his city, soon had the doors of the institution open. And the inquirers were a minute later gazing at the wreck of a big safe. Aroused from sleep, the distraught postmaster was soon computing the loot up to at least thirty thousand dollars.

"Fast work!" grunted Fitzpatrick.

"Under our noses, Fitz! I've a blamed good mind to resign overnight. Lord, what a kidding we are in for all around—newspapers, headquarters—"

"Lay off the wailing! We're not dead yet. Back to New York for us as fast as the car can take us. They'll head for New York sure. I'll bet if we work fast enough we can hop back to New York and pick Liverpool Jack out of the hay in his West Side flat!"

"There's a chance," put in Flaherty. "Let's get a move on!"

It was something after five o'clock in the morning when the police car slid up in front of the apartment house where Liverpool Jack with his wife and small son had been making his home.

The first move there would be to awaken the superintendent or janitor for admission quietly to the apartment of Liverpool Jack. Flaherty mean-

while was despatched to the street in the rear of the apartment to gain entrance to the backyards there and guard the fire escapes of the Liverpool Jack apartment house.

But the detectives did not have to awaken the superintendent. On the first touch of the bell, he was at the door, eyes glaring with anger, hair mussed, suspenders of his trousers drawn over his pyjama jacket.

"Say, what the hell's the matter with people to-night?" he demanded. "I just manage to get back to bed when along comes somebody else and—"

The glint of the hall lights on two gold police badges choked off further utterance of indignation.

"What's happened that's got you all worked up?" asked Burgess.

"The darnedest thing ever happened since I've had anything to do with apartments! Of course, I could hardly say nothing against it. He had always been a good tenant, always paid his rent regular, always been a darned fine sort of a man to have in the house. His little kid and my kid were good friends and his kid was a dandy kid—used to let my kid play with the things he had that I couldn't afford to buy my kid. But, goshall gee, starting to move out at four o'clock in the morning, waking up everybody in the house—not but what he made the movers work as quiet as he could—but, say, that's not the sort of thing to do, is it?"

"Who are you talking about?"

"Mr. Lawrence Preston—an Englishman, a limey, but a mighty nice fellow exceptin' for what he pulled about an hour ago."

"And he shows up to move out at five o'clock in the morning?"

"Yeh? Can you beat it?"

"What's his hurry—did he explain that to you?"

"Yes, he did. But I'm pretty dopey with sleep. I only got a hazy notion of what he was talking about. It was something about getting a hurry call from the old country that his father's dying and he's got to make a boat in the morning and can't leave his wife and kid behind and has got to get his furniture out and put in storage, and he has only got a blamed little time left to do a whole lot of things. I'm sore as a boil. But he slips me a fiver at that. And, like I say, he's always been an all right tenant."

"How about the van that came to get his things? Did you see it? See the name on it? See where it came from?"

"I just seen it from the window—that's all. There were two of them. But not like regular moving vans. They was open top. Like them big lorries you see going around down at the water front loading off ships. I figured he must have gone down to the ship line dock and scared 'em up somehow."

"Borrowed from the Silk Loft gang," opined Burgess to Fitzpatrick.

"Sure."

"What about the dog—the kid's collie? Leave him with you?"

"Lord, no! That kid of theirs would have died of a broken heart if they ever took that collie away from him. The dog goes with him and his wife and kid into a car."

"A taxi?"

"Not from where I was lookin' it didn't seem to be a taxi. A private car—a big touring car."

"Lawrence Preston—that was his name, hey?"

"Yes."

"Well, of course, after to-night he got wise we have been spotting him here and he's come straight back from the job and bolted," said Burgess.

The discomfited detectives went in the rear to call Flaherty off, and the three were once again in the car and the chauffeur had just started the engine whirring when Burgess suddenly commanded, "Stop!"

He jumped out and called the superintendent, who had turned to go back indoors.

"Just a minute," he shouted. "What was the name of Preston's kid—the first name?"

"Jack."

"Thanks."

"Well, what?" demanded Fitzpatrick when Burgess got back into the car.

"You mean asking the kid's name, I suppose?"

"Sure."

"Can't you get it?"

"No."

Burgess whispered into Fitzpatrick's ear.

The older detective clapped him on the shoulder.

"The bean is working," he said in a congratulatory manner.

When they returned to the branch bureau there was a report on the desk of the senior detective, Fitzpatrick. When he read it he grimaced sourly.

"Some lucky breaks we are getting on this job!" said he to Burgess, handing him the paper.

The report came from Police Headquarters, Jersey City. It conveyed the information that a few hours before Connecticut Blackie and Bugs Reilly had actually been in the hands of the State police somewhere in the vicinity of Newark, and had slipped out of them!

By what method, in what other automobile Liverpool Jack made his get-away from Lakewood that night was never found out. But the evidence

was plain he had parted from his accomplices, and that Blackie and Bugs, driven by the ferret-faced marvel, returned to New York in the car in which Blackie, Liverpool and the tricky chauffeur had traveled to Lakewood.

On the return the car was overhauled by a State Road Inspector. The trio in it were probably on the point of throwing up their hands or—drawing their pistols. But the inspector's words were merely:

"What about your tail-lights there and what's the matter with headlights—only one going? That don't go around these parts, New York."

Blackie, probably with the thirty thousand dollar post office loot under his legs in the tonneau as he spoke, talked fast and well. He emitted apologies in the most polite manner. He asked the inspector to believe that it wasn't neglect or scorn of the laws of motor travel in so intelligent a State as New Jersey that had caused them to offend. The matter of the lights had been an unavoidable misfortune of motor travel. The bulbs had failed back and front. There hadn't been sufficient extras to fix things up properly and they had been anxiously on the lookout for an all-night oil station or garage in which to repair the deficiency. Blackie got by. The inspector told the crooks the situation of the nearest oil station and had waved them on their way.

"Ed," said Fitzpatrick, "if that kid hunch of yours doesn't pan out, we're licked."

"If Liverpool Jack sticks to New York I'm thinking it's bound to work out. We'll have to wait, say, four or five days. I figure the Silk Loft crowd stored Jack's stuff for him for a day or two till he could rent another apartment, then give him and his family two

to four days more to get settled in their new home, and then we'll try the scheme out."

As a matter of fact, Burgess bided his time for a week. Then he went to the public school little Jack "Preston" had attended in the Riverside section and consulted the principal.

"Have you transferred any pupils from your school to the others in the city recently—within a week?"

"Three," said the principal. "I'll get the registry book."

Of the three entries was one stating that Master John Preston had been transferred to a school in West One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Street. It recorded the change of address of the boy, and the new one led the detectives to an apartment directly opposite the schoolhouse which Master John Preston was marked to attend in the future. The name "Preston," necessarily retained by the fugitive criminal in order to effect the school transfer, appeared in the hallway letter box. The apartment was on the top floor.

Then Burgess and Fitzpatrick "went to school." At all hours. That is to say, they consulted with the principal, taking him into their confidence, and he afforded them a small room on the top floor of the schoolhouse which had a window directly overlooking the windows of the Preston apartment. For three days they watched, observing the comings and goings of Mrs. Preston, and the gambolings after school of Jack and his big, festive collie. But no sign was vouchsafed of Liverpool Jack.

If he were warily remaining away for a time while he established a counter-espionage on the detectives to find out if they were tracing him to his new abode, his measures had been ineffectual. Because on the fourth night

of their vigil—they watched at night more assiduously than in the day, because it would be at such a time Liverpool Jack would be most likely to appear at his home—they saw a tall man, one who fitted Liverpool's description, step down the street and enter the apartment house opposite. It was past two o'clock in the morning. Not a light was showing in any of the windows of the big flathouse. But shortly after the big man had entered below a light flared from the front windows of the Preston apartment. The sleuths trained night glasses on the windows, but the curtains were of a heavy silken material, shutting off a view of the room.

They were first tempted to go directly over and arrest the man. But caution warned them against acting hastily. Supposing the man should prove not to be Liverpool Jack, but a crook friend sent by Liverpool from his place of hiding to convey a message to his wife? That would be only tipping their hand and sending Liverpool off on another route of escape. They felt they must be absolutely certain that the man they had seen enter was none other than Liverpool before pouncing on him.

They "spelled" each other in watches through the night, each snatching short sleeps on a cot they had installed in their tower room.

Somewhat after nine o'clock in the morning, and just as Burgess was going out to snatch a bite of breakfast, after which Fitzpatrick might allay his appetite, Fitzpatrick, at the window, called Burgess back.

Fitzpatrick already had his eyes screwed on glasses trained on one of the windows of the Preston flat. The heavy curtains had been completely drawn aside. A florid-faced man with

a big gray mustache was sitting in full sight behind the pane. He was ensconced in an armchair, smoking a long, fat cigar and reading the morning newspaper.

"Liverpool Jack, all right," said Burgess.

Just then the man's hands flickered in turning the pages of the newspaper.

"No question about it, Ed—two fingers of the left hand missing!" exclaimed Fitzpatrick triumphantly.

That had been the most striking detail in the headquarters description of the international safe-blower.

When Burgess and Fitzpatrick entered the Preston apartment the only individual in it who was all for "giving the bulls a battle" was little Johnny Walsh's big collie. But Liverpool Jack called him off imperatively and chased him into a rear room.

He accepted matters quietly, as did his wife. At headquarters he was suave and dignified.

"I would like to oblige you by answering all your questions," he told his inquisitors, "but you gentleman will understand that I would be very foolish to talk before consulting my lawyer. I think you will also understand that I am too experienced in these matters to be worth trying the third degree on. I should tell you the finest pack of lies you ever heard. So if you don't mind, I'll finish reading the newspaper till my lawyer arrives, not that I blame you for interrupting me as you did this morning of course."

Deny it as they may, your metropolitan detective holds in secret respect such renowned law-breakers as Liverpool Jack Walsh. None knows better than the detectives the chances these men take, the daring they must display, the odds they battle against. They are fools, of course, but with a reckless-

ness and an ingenuity that are sometimes incomparable.

Liverpool Jack was allowed to await the coming of his lawyer in peace. After all, it was a matter for the New Jersey authorities. Over there the notorious safe-cracker went swiftly to trial and was as swiftly found guilty. His advanced years got him no mercy. He was sentenced to a fifteen years' stretch. But he didn't serve it. The New Jersey State prison at Trenton was only able to hold him within its steel confines for two years. Then he escaped. How the prison authorities were so reluctant to tell the news that the dangerous Liverpool Jack was once more at large did not become public till long after the celebrated crook had vanished from prison yard, workshop, mess hall and cell.

Indeed, the particulars of the manner in which he effected his "French leave" were never really told. If you listen to the underworld, the explanation will be to the effect that it was simply a matter of a rather heavy financial transaction with one of the keepers.

But within less than six months after Liverpool Jack melted through the bars of Trenton prison, there occurred in the yard of a large factory in Brooklyn at eleven o'clock one night a desperate duel between a yegg and a policeman.

The policeman, a rookie, was on post near the factory when a citizen reported to him that from the window of his home near by he had seen intermittent flashes of an electric lamp in the factory yard. It appeared as if burglars were prowling about seeking a window by which to make entrance, the citizen thought.

The factory yard was surrounded

by a high wooden wall. The young policeman obtained a tall ladder from a near-by garage and mounted it. As he looked over the fence the flash lamp flickered twice near the factory wall. The zealous young cop dropped over the wall into the yard and yelled:

"Come out of that!"

At the same time he leveled his own lamp in the direction where the light had shone and saw the face of a tall man staring at him. He noted a big, gray mustache.

The next instant an automatic pistol began spitting bullets at the rookie. He let go with his own. But when the battle was over the young policeman was on his back with four bullets in him, two of which had inflicted wounds bound to prove mortal.

He died only half an hour later in the hospital. But he was able to make a statement in which he said he was positive his own shots had struck their mark—that he had wounded his man at least twice.

But if his man had been wounded, the yegg had yet been able to escape. Of course, if he had comrades there had also been a waiting automobile to which they could have borne him. They had no need of climbing the tall factory fence, for they had jimmied the door in it which opened on a side street where their get-away car was doubtless parked.

On the fourth night following the deadly encounter of the rookie with the yeggs an hysterical woman ran into a Brooklyn police station. She was nearly incoherent, but finally the desk lieutenant was able to make out that in her apartment near by a man was lying unconscious and dying from the effect of three bullet wounds.

"He's my brother," she sobbed. "And— Oh, I may as well tell you—

what's the use of hiding anything now? He's a—he's Liverpool Jack Walsh!

"He came into my house the other night looking terribly pale and could hardly walk. He asked me to keep him for a few days. And—well, he's my brother. So I put him to bed. Then I saw that his body was covered with blood. I saw he was terribly hurt. And I wanted to get a doctor. But he begged me not to do it. He said the minute I got a doctor it would mean the police would be on him, and that he really wasn't so terribly hurt. But each day he got weaker. He couldn't eat. He couldn't hold anything on his stomach. But when I'd speak again of a doctor he'd curse me with all the breath he had left in him.

"Then he went out of his head in a kind of delirium and then—now—he's unconscious and I'm sure he's dying!"

Liverpool Jack breathed his last in the ambulance. He had three bullets in him, one in his stomach, two in his right lung. A grim discovery the ambulance surgeon made was that Liverpool Jack had saved himself from bleeding to death within a few hours after the duel by plugging the bullet holes with wads formed of cigarette papers. And thus he had lain in a bed in his sister's house till gangrene and fever assailed him. He must have realized that the murder of the young policeman could mean only one finish for him if he gave himself up and survived his wounds—the electric chair.

Connecticut Blackie and Bugs Reilly made good their get-away for the Lakewood affair. Bugs disappeared as an underworld habitu . Blackie, some three years later, was caught in a Long Island post office job and was sent away for a long term. Little or nothing of the Lakewood plunder was recovered.

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 in U. S. POSTAGE, or free with a \$1.00 subscription for thirteen issues (in Canada \$1.75 for subscription). Please fill out the special coupon.

*interested in my future,
I have my desire for an*

D. H., Washington, D. C.—The first thing I see in your penmanship is that you are bucking up against disappointment and discouragement. Conditions at home, or in the office, are not to your liking. You are like millions more, who are trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. Since you are not in your right element, you can never expect to do your best work. You seem to be content playing second fiddle, while all the time you might, and could be, a first violinist in the world's orchestra.

You remind me of the Spartan youth who complained to his mother that his sword was too short, whereupon the old woman's advice was, "add a step to it." Exactly. That's what I would advise you to do. Overcome your circumstances, rather than let them overcome you. Redouble your diligence, and get into your system a more earnest determination to get out of your un-

favorable conditions. Keep your eyes open, and your mind awake. Cultivate your imagination. Stop carrying dead wood around with you.

You are a fellow who believes in "peace at any price," no matter how much you suffer. This is the height of foolishness. God never meant any of us to suffer in that way. What you require more than anything else is plain gumption. Your remark to me about having an "open mind in all things" makes me rather suspicious about your power of discrimination, since the best of us often mistake a vacancy for an opening.

*I am glad the
going to a new*

S. E., Springfield, Mass.—You appear to be a warm, impetuous fellow,

quite full of the joy of living. You have a stirring personality, as well as lots of vitality in your system. With such keenness and vibrancy in that nature of yours, life to you is a big thing, in every sense of the word. This does not refer necessarily to a physical interpretation, but one essentially mental.

For example, there is a bigness about your idealism that brooks no tolerance of petty details. I would call it high thinking, in every respect, which never falls to the common level. Nor is this idealism confined to abstract theories alone but colors, rather, every thought and action.

Your mental daily dozens and credos are of more importance to you as eye-openers, than any setting-up exercises could be. Behind all this, however, your mind seems to be in a turmoil. Your thoughts are in the meantime diffused. You find it difficult to focus your attention on one central idea or goal. The fact of the matter is, you don't know whether you are going or coming.

You seem to be passing through some experience which is a little too much for your mentality. You are seeking for light, and unfortunately you continue sitting in the dark.

Because of this condition, I'm afraid you are over-emphatic about certain points, and inclined to underestimate the importance of others. Moreover, this mental confusion has brought out somewhat extravagant characteristics, both in your mental attitude, and physical expression. For example, you are outspoken and talkative. You love to exaggerate. All your geese are swans, and you imagine yourself the cock of the walk.

Cut out this chestiness, and be yourself once in a while. There is

still hope for you, but meantime you require mental adjusting.

*Having seen
your adjustment deciding*

K. W., St. Louis, Mo.—I observe that you have a very impulsive nature which has many ramifications. It is the reason behind the development of many of your distinctive personality traits. To begin with, you are temperamental in much the same way as some of our greatest artists are temperamental. You are full of animations and ardors, and are of a very vivacious disposition. Your impulses lead you to be extremely affectionate, and a little demonstrative. You seem to be of an essentially economical disposition, which is apt to express itself when your own personal affairs are involved.

You belong to the jovial type of folk, and yet I see that you give way to periods of depression. You get "blue" quite a lot, and think things are going to the bow-wows. These moments of pessimism, however, are brought about by some external condition much more than by a mental attitude.

To come to your less desirable traits, I would say that you have a love of contest which oversteps the bounds and results in your displaying a quarrelsome nature. Your self-reliance leads you to an undue assurance, which, in turn, leads to a domineering attitude, growing out of a somewhat selfish and conceited disposition. Fortunately for you, these traits are usually subordinated to your natural joviality, so that they merely add salt to your personality rather than spoil it. I want you to realize that you have very significant natural gifts. For example, you

have great capacity for concentration. You think clearly. You are a strong lover of order. You are careful and prudent in all your affairs. All in all, you are a very human sort of chap with a mixture of good and bad characteristics.

*and would like
my character*

Mrs. E. B. W., Cambridge, Mass.— You are one of those fortunate individuals who are endowed with great inherent ability. You seldom require a text-book to know how it should be done. You just do it, and that's the end of it. I suppose you go pretty much by the "rule of thumb" and arrive at your conclusions much quicker than most of us spoon-fed mathematicians. You have been blessed with a clear mind, and consequently are able to grasp problems instantly.

You also have a love for order. Your home, I'm sure, is the acme of neatness. Your choice of furniture and drapes and the hundred and one nicknacks which go to make up a restful dwelling, probably reflect your good taste and judgment in this direction. In looking deeper into your nature, however, I observe you are rather self-appreciative. You carry a proud and haughty mien which is sure to detract from your other splendid qualities. You may *think* you were in the front row when Modesty was served out, but I'm sure you weren't. None of us has any right to live as if we expected to be judged from our epitaph rather than from our conduct. A little less self-reliance and egotism, and a wee bit more humility would place you much higher in my estimation.

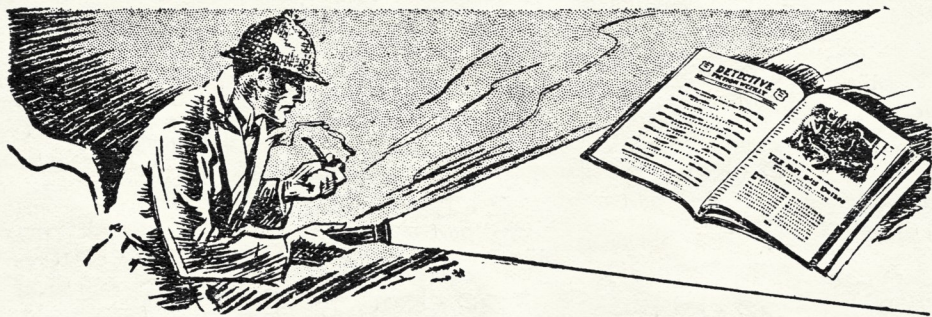
Then again, your temper has not much to commend it. It is as short as a rabbit's tail, and as touchy as a barrel of gunpowder. Altogether you are a very sensitive woman.

Do you want Mr. Fraser's analysis of your character and a personal letter from him? Then send us the coupon and six lines of your handwriting, in ink, with ten cents in U. S. POSTAGE. Mr. Fraser will send you an analysis. Or, send us one dollar for a thirteen-weeks' subscription to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY (in Canada, one dollar and seventy-five cents), and Mr. Fraser will send you a FREE analysis!

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*

BY now you are becoming acquainted with J. Allan Dunn's new detective character—*Jimmy Dugan*. Human, plugging, fighting, winning—the third of the Dugan clan on the New York force. You meet him again this week in

THE FRAME-UP

Here is how Mr. Dunn discovered *Jimmy Dugan* and started him sleuthing for DETECTIVE FICTION:

"I have, in the course of the last score or so of years, written a good many different types of yarns, though all of them smacked more or less of the adventure story, because, I suppose, of a certain adventurous streak in my own nature that started me off in my salad days—the days when one is green—cruising the South Seas in the sanguine hope that I was going to make a fortune out of pearls. Needless to say, I didn't, but I had a whale of a good time and learned navigation, among other things. Since then I have been around the world some five times, deck, saddle and hoof, explored a good many out-of-the-way places; participated, in various capacities, in three

wars and, I trust, am not yet through with the far places and lonely trails.

"Meantime, *Jimmy Dugan* vicariously adventures for me. I have seen the war canoes surge up to a reefed schooner, felt the phantom touch that travels down the spine when you hear the devil-devil drums transmitting your unwelcome progress through the bush, and think of poisoned darts. I have spent a most unpleasant night in a clubhouse with skulls racked all round and a gleam of light glittering on the gold-filled tooth of some unfortunate traveler once on the same trail.

"But I know that there is all the adventure, all the danger of months of such voyaging to be met with in New York within twenty-four hours, not always with having to look for it. And a modern gangster is a far more formidable and aggressive enemy than any fuzzy-haired Melanesian.

"The *Jimmy Dugans*, waging war against crookdom, have always held my admiration. It is true that New York, with the largest assortment of crimes and criminals in existence, lacks much of modern methods. We are still

talking of radio-equipped cars when Scotland Yard has a fleet of them and also publishes three daily papers on the activities, past, present, and often future, of the underworld. Detroit has many cars of this type. Old customs still prevail on Centre Street, but gradually there is springing up a corps of Jimmy Dugans, clear-eyed, clear-thinking, fearless chaps who study as well as follow the profession they have chosen because they are themselves adventurers, loving the game.

"I know my Jimmy, whose second name is *not* Dugan, but who exists in flesh and blood, if some of the affairs I plan for him are imaginary. But Jimmy has the scars of many an encounter with gunmen, with dope-runners, thieves and holdup men. He knows his underworld and he has shown me something more of it than I would have learned for myself. He does not know he is the basic hero of the yarns. He would disclaim any such identity, but he is real and I hope I can make him seem so to the readers of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

"J. ALLAN DUNN."

NO TRUE STORIES FOR HIM

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been a reader of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for about a year or more and find it has as good stories in it as the twenty-five-cent magazines have, and only costs ten cents. I like the novelettes better than those true stories. I suppose the true stories are all right for those who like them but I would rather have something with a little more mystery in it.

Sincerely yours,
DAYTON ELYEA,
Newark, N. J.

THE SOONER THE BETTER

DEAR EDITOR:

Enclosed find ten vote coupons. The sooner I get my picture the better, because if the picture is half as good as the magazine, it will be great.

I have been reading it since it was first

issued and have only missed one issue in all that time.

Lester Leith is great and Murray Leinster is good.

Hoping for a reply soon, I beg to remain
A Constant Reader,

JAMES A. PETERSEN,
New Rochelle, N. Y.

BEST OF ALL

DEAR ED:

Enclosing ten votes for artist's original drawing.

For quite awhile I have been reading your magazine and want to tell it's the best of all I've read. Hang on to *Lester Leith*. He's good. I'd like to see some more *Chanda-Lung* stories, also *Riordan* and *Ruggles*. The *Red Duke* is good, too.

Sincerely yours,
JAMES J. DUNN,
New York, N.Y.

Get an artist's original illustration of a story in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. Fill out and send us coupons from ten different issues of the magazine.

"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

ONE of the weakest points in cryptogram construction is the employment of certain common words which can be recognized through their distinctive patterns; that is, by the number and relative positions of their repeated letters. Two weeks ago we had occasion to present a short list of such words of three, four, and five letters. And to these the following longer words may be appended.

The most frequently used six-letter pattern words are *always*, *anyway*, *before*, *cannot*, *either*, *indeed*, *rather*, *though*, *unless*, and *within*. It will be noted that no two of these words are of the same pattern. In *always* you have the first and fourth letters alike; in *anyway*, the first and fifth, also the third and sixth; and so on.

Words of seven letters also contribute their quota of easily recognizable patterns, the commonest being *already*, *because* and *through*, *between*, *finally*, *forward*, *herself*, *however*, *neither*, *nothing* and *perhaps*, *someone*, *usually*, *whether*, and *without*. Here *because* and *through* are of the same pattern, with the second and seventh letters alike. And *nothing* and *perhaps* also are similar, with the first and sixth letters identical. The other patterns are all different.

Application of these words to the solution of a crypt is of course a very simple matter. Given a cipher group the pattern of which conforms to one of these words, the letters so afforded are first substituted throughout the cryptogram. If the group in question actually signifies the word so tried, the translation of other words will quickly

follow; if it does not, the decipherment will ordinarily proceed no further. Try another method of solution.

This week's No. 1 is built around a story which recently appeared in this magazine. A comparison of L, LS, SYR, and TYLVR should help. Compare EJO and EJYOO in No. 2, and then try for group 16. More about this one next week. No. 3 is an interesting crypt because of the pattern words WNCN, CNNJW, and WRZCCW, which have so many letters in common.

No. 1—By Franklin L. Morgan.

VRBSRE VRLSY BUYRORZ BNJR,
BONES, BSLEELAF BSENSNFRO.
LAZRRZ, LS TNB "N WRNUY IJ N
BUYROR." BI BLOWVR, BTLJS, BN-
SLBJXLAFVX BKER. L ERNZ LS
STLUR, UYKUQVLAF SYR TYLVR.

No. 2—By "Primrose."

EJO JTYDO KD QKDWCCOWYKLS;
ATTQYIUU, LOWY FKDEOYL, JOP-
CD AKLO; FYTDD-DEWUU LTA CW-
DE, ILQOFKQOQPB LT: EJYOO DE-
WEOGOLED, TY CTECTIYYK.

No. 3—By Mrs. W. D. Gray.

ZIOZRONs WRMLHSR HWWZVW
CNNJW LMBOSY WNCN DCOYTR,
WRZCCW XNRNB, YNHV OSRN SN-
WH LOIH, PBZWTHW RTBNMYT
TZSYZB.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

1—Evidently many men resembling the prisoner in general appearance had had encounters of various kinds with the law.

2—Various hypotheses have been set up by scientists concerning the different classes of vertebrate animals.

3—Six new dirigibles sail due north-westwardly over concededly rough territory with perfect safety.

Answers to this week's cryptograms will appear next week. Keep your cryptograms and solutions coming.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

WILLIAM! *You in there!*" the old man hoarsely commanded, his panic clear to all beholders. "For Heaven's sake, William, answer me! What's happened? What've you *done*—"

The bank president's voice trailed off into a groan. Dropping the telephone into which he had been speaking with Cashier Blair, imprisoned in the time-locked vault, he all but collapsed into the big leather-padded chair at his desk.

"What is it?" the other employees gasped in a chorus.

"I heard—" the president began with trembling lips. "I heard a revolver shot. And now—all's silent in the vault."

Yet when a wrecking crew broke into the vault of the First National Bank of Middleburg no weapon of any description could be found. Only the dead body, the body of the man who had been Blair, with a bullet hole in his head. The books of the bank showed a serious deficit, and the finger of suspicion rested heavily upon the dead cashier.

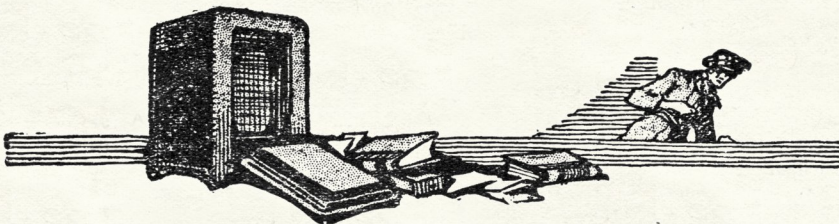
It was an out and out suicide, said the local police. Yet there was that matter of the weapon.

T. Ashley, connoisseur of crime, reading his morning paper, decided the Middleburg case was just the spring tonic he needed. But two days' questioning brought him little or nothing. Then he went fishing, and thereby obtained a clew which answered the riddle which will puzzle you as it puzzled the good people of Middleburg.

You'll like the way T. Ashley tackles a mystery as air-tight as the vault in which the dead body was found. You'll have as many clews as does T. Ashley. Can you beat him to the solution of

The Vault Murder

By George Allan England



Other corking mystery yarns by T. T. Flynn, Wyndham Martyn, Edward Parrish Ware, Marie Louise Elliott, Garret Smith, and other well known detective fiction writers in

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—October 5



"She is Yours, Master!"

SICK at heart the trembling girl shuddered at the words that delivered her to this terrible fate of the East. How could she escape from this Oriental monster into whose hands she had been given—this mysterious man of mighty power whose face none had yet seen?

Here is an *extraordinary situation*. What was to be the fate of this beautiful girl? Who was this strange emissary whom no one really knew?

To know the answer to this and the most exciting tales of Oriental adventure and mystery ever told, read on through the most thrilling, absorbing, entertaining and fascinating pages ever written.

Masterpieces of Oriental Mystery

11 Superb Volumes by **SAX ROHMER**

Written with his uncanny knowledge of things Oriental

HERE you are offered no ordinary mystery stories. In these books the hidden secrets, mysteries and intrigues of the Orient fairly leap from the pages. Before your very eyes spreads a swiftly moving panorama that takes you breathless from the high places of society—from homes of refinement and luxury to sinister underworlds of London and the Far East—from Piccadilly and Broadway to incredible scenes behind idol temples in far off China—to the jungles of Malay, along strange paths to the very seat of Hindu sorcery.

11 Mystery Volumes Packed With Thrills!

Be the first in your community to own these, the most wonderful Oriental mystery stories ever published—books that have sold by the hundred thousand at much higher prices—books you will enjoy reading over and

over again. Handsomely bound in substantial cloth covers, a proud adornment for your table or shelf.

These are the sort of stories that President Wilson, Roosevelt and other great men read to help them relax—to forget their burdens. To read these absorbing tales of the mysterious East is to cast your worries into oblivion—to increase your efficiency.

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Printing these volumes by the hundred thousand when paper was cheap makes this low price possible. Only a limited number left. *Don't lose a minute!*

Complete Sets Free on Approval

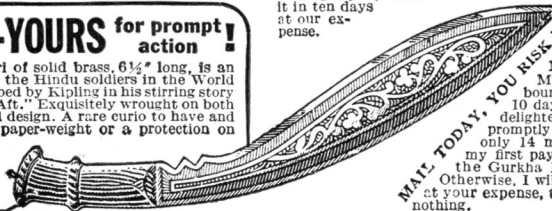
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23
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MAIL TODAY, YOU RISK NOTHING

Please send me on approval, all charges prepaid, your special set of Masterpieces of Oriental Mystery, in 11 handsomely bound cloth volumes. If after 10 days' free examination, I am delighted, I will send you \$1.00 promptly and \$1.00 a month for only 14 months; when you receive my first payment you are to send me the Gurkha Kukri without extra cost. Otherwise, I will return the set in 10 days at your expense, the examination to cost me nothing.



McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, Dept. 23, 114 E. 16th St., New York City, N. Y.

Age: Over 217 Under 217

FOR CASH DEDUCT 3%

Folks! it's really TRUE

On July 2nd, my husband met with his accident

—On July 22nd, I received

\$10,000.

and accumulations, and all my husband paid for his policy was less than **3¢ A Day**

Thank God, my husband didn't laugh at the idea of accident and sickness insurance

"When, on January 18, my husband took out a North American Accident Insurance Co. policy, he did not dream that he would meet with a fatal accident in a few months. Yet we had seen so many friends and neighbors hurt or sick, with no money to help them when they needed it most, that my husband took no chances.

The Premium for a Whole Year's Protection Against Accident and Sickness Costs Only \$10

"It might have been different if the insurance cost a lot, but a friend had told us about the wonderful policy he had taken out with the North American Accident Insurance Company, which cost less than 3¢ a day—and which protects you for a whole year. My husband said 'Why this policy is only the price of a newspaper every day, yet look what it gives you'—\$10,000 for accidental loss of life, hands, feet, or eyesight—\$25.00 weekly for stated accidents and sickness—and it pays Doctors' bills, gives hospital benefits and emergency relief benefits. 'Every man,' my husband said, 'owes it to himself and his family to take out a policy.'

How True Those Words Have Proven To Be

"I don't know what would have happened to me and the children, if my husband had not wisely taken out a North American Accident Insurance Co. policy. We would have had to depend upon charity, for what we had saved would have gone quickly. But this wonderful policy protected us in our hour of need. As soon as I sent the proofs of my husband's terrible accident to the Company, I received a check, which amounted to \$10,000 with accumulations. A representative called the very next day and gave me the full sum."

No One Is Safe—Are You Prepared If Accident or Sickness Strikes You?

There is no way to prevent accident or sickness. No one is safe—You may be next. Supposing you became suddenly ill—could you continue in your job? What if you had lobar pneumonia, an appendicitis operation, or any of the many common ills covered in this policy—wouldn't you rest easier, convalesce more quickly if you knew that this Company stood ready to pay you \$25.00 weekly, or take care of Doctors' bills, hospital benefit, emergency benefit, and other liberal benefits?

Don't Wait For Misfortune to Overtake You!

MAIL THE COUPON NOW

A sudden accident! A sudden sickness!

Can you say neither will happen to you?

Then don't delay another day. Protect yourself by insuring in the largest and oldest exclusive accident insurance Company in America. Send the coupon **NOW** for complete information about our new \$10. Premier \$10,000 Policy—and protect your family the way the Gould family was protected.

Under Direct Supervision of 48 State Insurance Departments

AGENTS Wanted for New Territory



Actual photograph of Mrs. Dora Gould, of Brooklyn, New York, who tells you the true story, in this advertisement, of her experience receiving insurance check for \$10,000 and accumulations for the accidental death of her husband, Julius Gould.

Entire **\$10** a
Cost Year

No Dues No Assessments

\$10,000
Principal Sum
\$10,000

Loss of hands, feet or eyesight

\$25 Weekly Benefits

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MEN AND WOMEN

16 to 70 Years Accepted

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION

This is a simple and understandable policy—without complicated or misleading clauses. You know exactly what every word means—and every word means exactly what it says.

Oldest and largest exclusive Health and Accident Insurance Company in America

Simply tear out and send the coupon, today, it may mean \$10,000 or \$25 weekly in case of accident or sickness and costs only \$10. a year. Send the coupon, now

North American Accident Insurance Co. [of Chicago]
331 Bonnell Building, Newark, New Jersey

GENTLEMEN:

At no cost to me, send details of the NEW \$10 Premier \$10,000 Policy which will insure me for a whole year.

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Address.....

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