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Oct. 6, 1928

Detective

Story Magazine
Every Week

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Clinton Dangerfield
Arthur Mallory

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JOHN DOE'S GOLDEN GIFT

By Paul Ellsworth Triem

Delicious, cool and refreshing was John Doe's present to his worst enemy—but to the latter it meant a taunt, a gift laden with vengeance.

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WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE

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By Robert Ormond Case

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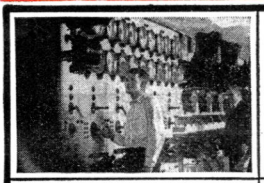

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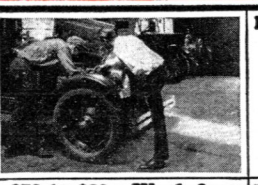

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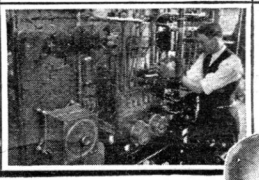

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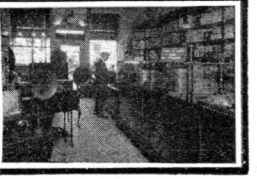

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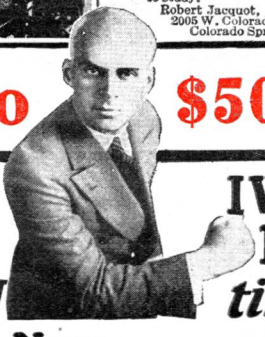

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AFTER EVERY MEAL

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BY

CHARLES HOUSTON

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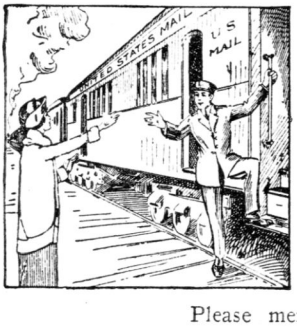
In such a place almost anything might happen. And if you know Mr. Montague's other stories, "Sanctuary Island," "Ol' Jim Bridger," "Wild Bill," and the rest of the galloping yarns which flow from his talented pen, you know that somehow Mr. Montague will contrive to have lots happen.



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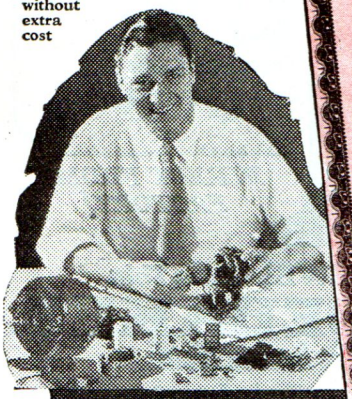

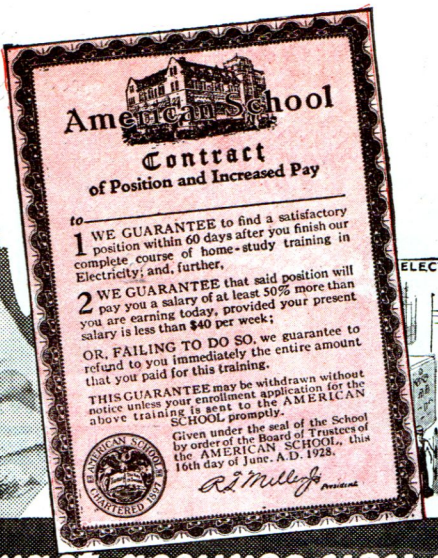

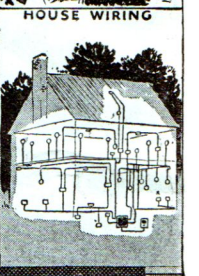

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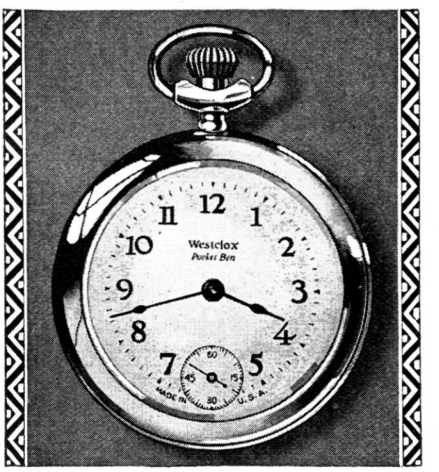

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DETECTIVE STORY
MAGAZINE
EVERY WEEK

Vol. CIV October 6, 1928 No. 5

Haunted Bells

By Madeleine Sharps Buchanan

Author of "Rock-bound Gems," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIT OF LACE.

IN a fringe of woodland on the Sheldon estate, the ancient church lifted its lopsided belfry against the rising moon. Crumbling gravestones a century old and more were grouped about it, gleaming here and there from out the mass of weeds and overgrown shrubs that had crept closer and closer to the aged church as time went on.

The dates upon the broken, stained tombstones were ancient indeed and, inside the crooked belfry, two old iron bells still hung, rusty chains dangled from them into a small stone room be-

low, the floor of which provided uncertain and dangerous walking. Inside the church, rats and mice and numerous wild things had their way.

However, Clarke Sheldon and his brother Rex, who lived in the mansion which could just be glimpsed from the church steps, refused to tear down the old building because it had been on their grounds for so many years and because there were various stories connected with it. They valued it, though the spot was depressing and uncanny, even in the daytime, since it was buried so deeply in the shadowy strip of unfrequented woodland.

At eleven o'clock on a May night, the figure of a man stepped out of the gloom of the trees into the moonlight, and entered the door of the church which gaped open.

He was a portly man, and he moved stealthily, looking every now and then over his shoulder, starting at every little sound.

Inside the musty old church he went directly to the little room under the belfry, stepping carefully over the rotted boards and the open places in the floor. A flash light in one hand, he bent above the dust-covered boards, examining them carefully. Once he knelt and looked with a grim smile at a dainty footprint in the thick dust, and then paused beside the stone wall and gazed long at the mark left by the tips of four slender fingers and a thumb in the accumulated dirt of years.

Placing his flash light in a convenient spot, he dusted the prints with a gray powder which brought them out with startling distinctness, and, nodding delightedly, regarded his work. He would come early in the morning and photograph those prints. Time enough then! People were not so keen in frequenting that old church buried and forgotten in that neck of the woods, so that there would be danger in leaving those telltale prints.

Chuckling softly, the portly man turned away, and started at a sudden grim clanking of chains which his movement caused. It was immediately explained, for his shoulder had come into contact with the two chains that hung from the old iron bells in the belfry above him.

From one of the chains, from a jagged point on the end of it, a small, white thing fluttered, catching his eye instantly. It took but a minute to reach out, loosen the white thing from the clutch of the chain, and to examine it with the aid of his flash light. He held in his pudgy fingers an exquisite bit of fragile lace, delicate as a fairy's garment, unreal as a moonbeam. Raising it to his nose, he got a faint whiff of a perfume he had frequently smelled during the past two weeks. An elusive fragrance seldom encountered but almost as condemning as a finger print!

Taking out his pocketbook, the portly man placed the bit of lace inside it with a tremendous feeling of satisfaction. Then, stepping out of the belfry room, he stooped over a slab of stone hidden beneath weeds and brush. After thrusting aside the débris, he evidently found the thing he sought—an iron ring, sunk deep in the old moss-covered stone. He pulled at this until he panted for breath, and, with a muttered exclamation, was forced to give up. Again covering the slab with the weeds and underbrush, he tiptoed through the church to the gloom of the surrounding wood.

In the fringe of trees that grew close to a graveyard, he paused and rubbed his hand up and down his trousers, nodding grimly to himself as he did so. Then, stretching forth his arm so as to catch the moonlight, he glanced at his wrist watch and started. It was later than he had thought. Turning swiftly, he made his way out of the woods and across a strip of lawn to the beginning of the spacious grounds of the Sheldon estate.

As he did so, some one moved lightly in the silence of the ancient church, and all the rats and mice scurried quickly to cover. A hand parted a veil of shrubbery, and two dark, intense eyes followed the figure of the portly man, while the silver moon, creeping higher, flung into even bolder relief the black outlines of the old belfry.

CHAPTER II.

THE BELLS.

ON the third floor of one of the oldest office buildings in Kenderport, the black letters "John Morris Detective Agency," were printed across a frosted-glass door. There was no light anywhere in the building except behind that door, where a young man sat at a typewriter, and picked out the letters upon it with patient care.

He was an attractive-looking young man, although a bit seedy as to dress; and his strong chin, firm mouth and direct eyes seemed to hint that he would get on in the world.

The cheap alarm clock upon the littered desk top struck twelve, and, as it did so, the telephone rang.

It did not ring any too often in that rather untidy little office, and Ray Bartley took off the receiver with a thrill of anticipation. The voice of his partner, John Morris, spoke to him.

"Come on out to the Sheldon place, will you, Ray? I've got onto something big. It'll make us, boy. I'll wait for you by the gate on Van Ess Avenue."

Ray needed no urging. He had been idle, just hanging around the office since Clarke Sheldon, one of the richest men in Kenderport, had engaged John to stay at his palatial home and watch his lovely young wife. He was glad Sheldon had not asked him, for that sort of thing was not in his line.

As he closed the office, put on his coat, and got into his car, Ray was reviewing the history of the Sheldon place —which John had jotted down in the records.

Clarke Sheldon, financier, had five years ago married in New York and brought his wife and her sister to his home, Shady Ways, to live. Sheldon's brother Rex already lived in the great house and spent most of his time in his studio, for he was quite a well-known painter for whom some few predicted a great future.

Sheldon's jealousy of his young wife soon became known about town. Therefore, Ray had not been surprised when the financier called upon them one day, and told John frankly that he wished him to come as a guest to his home, and that he would pay him well to watch his wife. That had been two weeks ago, and Ray had heard nothing from his partner during that time. But, oddly enough, it was not of their business with Clarke Sheldon that he thought as he drove out toward the aristocratic residential Van Ess Avenue, where the Shady Ways acres spread their velvet expanse, but of the records John had of the place.

On the Sheldon grounds, in a strip of woodland, there stood an ancient church. In the belfry hung two iron bells which were said to ring mysteriously every time a Sheldon died or there was a death on the estate. There was also a story that, in years past, after the tolling of the bells, a member of the Sheldon family had been found dead on the floor of the room beneath the belfry, the rope of the bells held fast in their stiffening hands.

How true this was Ray could not say, for, in his time, he had never heard the bells ring or known any one who had. Out of curiosity he had one day gone to look at them, but had found that the ropes had been replaced years since by rusty old chains, and that no amount of strength on his part could stir the bells.

John and he had raked up this old

story when Sheldon had sent for John, and, while they laughed at it, they admitted that they needed all the information on any new case that they could get.

Ray Bartley was wildly eager to see his partner and hear what he had discovered, as he drove along the lonely, concrete road that was edged with the woodland where the old Sheldon church stood. They had both considered that any work done for such a powerful and wealthy family as the Sheldons was bound to mean a change in their fortunes.

But, gradually, as he passed along the road that dipped through the Sheldon woods, his eagerness faded, his enthusiasm died, and a strange cold feeling crept over him. He had not reached the spot where the woodlands ceased when the after-midnight silence was shattered by a deep tolling of old, cracked church bells—age and death seeming to vibrate in every shuddering note.

For a full minute after they ceased, the air seemed to hum with the horrible echo of those ancient bells. Ray Bartley, who had stopped his car without thought when first the bells began to toll, sat staring at the dark strip of woodland from which the sound had come.

There was no doubt in his mind that he had heard the actual tolling of the old bells in the aged church in the Sheldon wood! But he had no time to get out then and investigate. John was waiting for him by the big gates on Van Ess Avenue, and, in all likelihood, what he would tell him would explain that uncanny tolling.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE BELFRY ROOM.

BUT John Morris was not waiting for his partner at the Sheldon gate on Van Ess Avenue.

When Ray reached the place, the silence which had been momentarily shattered by the uncanny tolling of those cracked old bells, remained unbroken. No car flashed along the curve of Van Ess Avenue, and no pedestrian disturbed its sleeping quiet by the sound of a sharp footfall. Not even a dog barked. Ray grew vaguely uneasy.

Leaving his car, he entered the gates of Shady Ways, catching a glimpse in the distance of misty fountains, of gleaming statues, of arches of flowers, and the white curve of the drive. But of John, there was no sign.

As Ray walked about, listening, growing momentarily more uncomfortable, he seemed to hear constantly in his mind those tolling bells. What did they mean? As far as he knew, and he had lived all his life in Kenderport, no one had ever heard them, though many claimed ancestors who had. He knew that he would not return to the office or to his room until he had penetrated that dismal wood and examined that belfry.

Presently, it was borne in upon him that John would not meet him there that night. Something had detained him—or worse. And his next job was to go to that bewitched church and find out what he could. Since he was utterly in the dark as to what John had discovered during his stay at Shady Ways, it would not be so easy for him. But he was a detective. He hoped to do big things. Here, perhaps, was his chance.

Leaving his car where it was, Ray stole through the Sheldon grounds to the edge of the woods that surrounded the old church. He had a strange feeling that everything was not quite right, and he was frankly uneasy about John.

As he moved silently through the woodland, he realized that he was very nervous, for he compared the clinging vines that impeded his progress to ghost hands that sought to detain him. A fine detective he was! What would

John think of him? He'd give him the laugh.

And what was he afraid of? It had taken strength to toll those old bells. No phantom had pulled that stunt. But there were things more horrible than phantoms.

There stood the old church, with its belfry. A fine place for ghosts!

Stepping soundlessly, Ray made his way through the church, dozens of little feet hurrying away at his approach, and came at last to the room beneath the iron bells, the room into which the rusty chains hung down.

His flash light in his hand, he peered about, conscious still of that creeping horror that seemed to envelop him. Whether ghostly or not, surely evil forces were at work in that spot that night! Ray felt it.

And then he staggered back, almost dropping the light he held. For, at his feet, on the rotting floor with its hideous gaps, lay the body of his partner, John Morris, both his hands caught in the loops of the chains that hung from the bells high up above them! And there was no doubt that John Morris was dead. A red stain on his chest proclaimed it.

CHAPTER IV.

"THIS IS NO SURPRISE TO ME."

FOR a moment, Ray stared at the body of his partner who had summoned him. He could scarcely believe what he saw, and, when he recalled the tolling of the bells, he shook with horror. At that very moment, as he passed down the road, John must have been murdered, while the murderer's hands pulled the rusty chains that controlled the bells.

And as he realized that, he shook his fist fiercely at the iron bells that hung far above him.

"I'll get your secret, if it takes me years!" he muttered. "If it leads me to the Sheldon mansion itself! I'll find out what John was going to tell me and why he was killed!"

Then Ray realized that here was the biggest case that probably would ever come to him. Just how big it was to be, he had no premonition.

Using his flash light, Ray began an examination of the belfry room. Of the weapon that killed Morris there was no sign, and the young detective had no way of knowing whether it had been a bullet or a knife.

The dust-covered floor showed unmistakable signs of many feet. Or perhaps only two very busy ones had disturbed its surface so that no definite footprints were distinguishable. Upon the dirt-encrusted wall, one large sooty smudge showed where some mark had evidently been erased. Ray looked long and carefully at that.

"Prints of some kind erased," he muttered. "Done for now, anyhow."

Then he knelt and went tenderly over the body of the dead man, examining his pockets and all that they contained. Twenty dollars and fifty cents he found in the pocketbook, a clipping about a famous Western murder trial—and nothing else. From the pockets, he produced a handkerchief, a bunch of keys, a small box of grayish powder, used, Ray knew, for bringing out finger prints. John's seal ring was on his finger, and his wrist watch was untouched. The motive had certainly not been robbery. One question kept hammering at Ray's brain as he worked: What had John meant to tell him?

The enormity of the thing and the hopelessness of it grew upon him by degrees. John had been engaged by Sheldon, who was powerful and wealthy. He had been killed on his estate. How could he go about getting at the secret of that? How would he dare brave the exclusive and aristocratic doors of the Sheldon mansion?

If some one there proved to be guilty of this crime, how could he get at the

truth? How would he prove it? Clarke Sheldon had a fortune at his command. He was powerful politically. That there was a dark secret locked in the Sheldon house, he now knew. John had discovered what it was. But could he? And if he did so, in the effort to avenge his friend, would he not meet with the same fate as John?

He shuddered, realizing all this, but determined, nevertheless, to go untiringly on with it. There was no one else to take up John's work and expose his murderer.

Suddenly, he stood erect, his hand on his gun, his ears strained. Surely, that was a footstep, coming cautiously through the woods in the direction from which he had come!

Slinking into the shadows of the belfry room, Ray clenched his fingers about his gun, his mouth taking a grim twist. Who was it that sought that lonesome church at that hour? Who but the murderer, returning to his crime?

In another moment, however, Ray was enlightened. A sturdy step strode through the interior of the church, and a flare of light swept the belfry room, pausing upon the body on the floor. Ray saw the gleam of buttons, caught the hint of a uniform, and, with a gasp of relief, went forward.

The young policeman in the door swung the light upon him and snapped out an order.

"Put up your hands!"

"Rubbish," said Ray, declining to do so, "don't be a fool, Aldrich! Don't you know me? It's Ray Bartley. This man is my partner, John Morris."

And while the officer kept the light on him, Ray told his story as briefly as possible. To his surprise, Aldrich did not laugh at the account of the bells. He stooped, instead, and examined John's hands where they were slipped through the rings in the ends of the chains.

"This is no surprise to me," he said then. "I've seen queer things in these woods and about this old church for some time. I ride past here, you know, every night about midnight. Various queer noises have taken me many a time into this wood. To-night I saw you park your car and creep in here. I didn't examine the car. Just came along after you. Of course, I have no reason to think you didn't kill Morris."

"I know it," said Ray simply. "But, you'll find that some one a good bit higher up in the world than I am, pulled this. What did you hear in here, Aldrich?"

"Oh, plenty of things," replied the officer grimly. "The boys would laugh if I told them and so I never did. These old chains clanking on a still night, and once a faint pull at the bells. Footsteps in the woods! Stuff like that! And what I saw——"

"Yes, what did you see?" whispered Ray eagerly. "I've got to know. John was going to tell me something important."

Aldrich was silent for a moment, and then he shrugged.

"Oh, I saw something white through the trees once in the old church yonder," he replied. "Honest! It vanished when I gave pursuit. But I've always felt that this old place was cursed. This thing to-night don't surprise me. Follows out the ancient story, don't it, about murdered folks being found here with their hands fast to the things that make the bells ring?"

Ray nodded, kneeling beside his dead partner. Suddenly, he looked up, his fingers holding Morris' right hand.

"He's got oil on his hands," he stated. "He's tried to rub it off on his trousers. See here? Wonder what that means?"

Aldrich said nothing, but he stepped close to the body, reached up and grasped one of the chains that dangled from the bells. Pulling on it gently, he watched the great bell tip far above

him, and then he held out his hand to Ray.

"Got oil on my hands, too," he sighed. "And see how easy that bell rings now? Won't take much strength to tip her. Been oiled lately. Morris found that much out, poor fellow, anyhow, before he was tied to the chains."

"And he discovered something else in here," said Ray. "Look at that smudge on the wall there. I just examined it. John had tried to take finger prints, for there's some of his powder mixed up in that dirt. You can see it plain. And somebody rubbed the whole thing out."

The young policeman stepped to the wall, and swung his torch upon the spot Ray indicated. He turned back to the detective with a nod.

"You're right. We've never had much use for you fellows, being opposed to you kinda, down at headquarters. But I guess you've got the goods this time."

"And there is more," went on Ray grimly. "I looked in John's pocketbook, but I wasn't the first one who did. His money is still there, but the hands that searched it before I did were not after his money. They took the pocketbook out of the pocket after John was killed, and put it back after he was in the position we found him in."

"And how do you know that?" demanded Aldrich.

"Because the pocketbook was only halfway down in his pocket," replied Ray. "Try to get it into the trousers pocket of a fat man like John when his body is on the floor, and you'll see what I mean. His own hands would have pushed it down where it belongs. No! Somebody looked for something, and I guess they found it."

The policeman nodded. "I get you. Well, you can amble along in this case as you like, Mr. Bartley. But we're in on it, too. You understand that? And you gotta handle anything that happens on this estate with gloves. That's why I haven't said anything about the goings on around this old church. Sheldon is the richest man in town and he's pretty powerful. I'll have to go up to his place now and tell him about this. Your partner was in his employ or his guest or whatever you want to call it. He's got to know about this."

Ray nodded. "I'll stay here," he said briefly.

CHAPTER V.

NILE GREEN.

HOWEVER, Ray had no intention of remaining in the belfry room while the enterprising young policeman went up to the Sheldon house with the news. Nothing else could happen to poor John, and he felt that the murderer was entirely through with searching him and erasing all clews in the vicinity of the old church. Therefore, he was sure, the center of interest from that moment on was the Sheldon house.

And so, cautiously and soundlessly, he trailed young Aldrich through the woods, across the lower lawn, along a rear path to the front of the long, low mansion.

One would expect, after seeing the old church, that the Sheldon house would prove to be an ancient stone castle, forbidding and gloomy, seeming to house all sorts of evil possibilities within its timeworn walls. But it was not so.

The two-story mansion was of silver-gray shingles and graystone blocks, and was spread over an enormous amount of ground, making up in breadth what it lacked in height. Gay awnings hung from its many windows, and there were several sun parlors. Early spring blooms were banked along the terraces and beneath the wide porch rails, while, from window boxes, there trailed exquisite blossoms and feathery green vines.

A modern, delightful home of the

wealthy! Surely nothing there which made one think of clanking chains, ghosts, old legends and crime!

Ray, stealing along in the darkness behind the striding policeman, crouched low among the borders of flowers beneath the porch rail as Aldrich rang the bell at the front door.

It was some time before there was any reply. When the butler finally opened the door, having put on his clothes in a hurry, luck favored the young detective, for when the policeman followed the man into the house, the door was left open.

Stealing across the porch, Ray peered in and saw to his joy that Aldrich was standing at the foot of the branched stair at the back of the wide marble hall, evidently waiting for the butler to summon his master. It was no trick at all to steal into the hall and crouch behind a heavy drape which shrouded an archway leading to a white-and-gold reception room, but it might be quite a trick to get out again! However, Ray did not hesitate, for he knew that he must see how Sheldon took the news of John's murder, and it might be months before he found a way to penetrate that house again.

In the center of the hall floor, a fountain dripped coolly, and one lamp glowed like a smoky red jewel, against a magnificent tapestry on the opposite wall.

The nerve of the young detective almost failed him as he looked about. Dare he tackle this thing? He had nothing but his brains to pit against Sheldon's wealth and power.

A sharp, curt voice broke the silence suddenly, and Ray jumped and glanced at the staircase down which a big man in a gay silk dressing gown was rapidly descending. He knew Sheldon at once, recognized the heavy jaw, the reddish face, the sleek hair, and the narrow eyes.

"What does this mean, Aldrich?"

The young policeman explained, hurriedly and a bit nervously.

"You see, I had to come and notify you, sir," he apologized.

"Notify me! I should think you would!" cried Sheldon, horrified. "Heavens! Poor Morris killed in that wretched church! A thousand times I've been tempted to tear it down and the belfry with it! Was he robbed?"

"Not that I can see, sir, and his partner, Ray Bartley, who is down there with the body now, says he wasn't," replied Aldrich.

Sheldon passed a hand over his brow. He seemed shocked and acted as if he had no previous knowledge of the crime.

"I will go with you," he said then. "Just wait a moment while I get into some clothes."

"May I use your telephone?" asked Aldrich briskly. "I must call our coroner, Doctor Drake, and headquarters must be notified."

"Yes, of course, do what you wish," replied Sheldon as he ran up the stairs.

The policeman walked to the telephone which stood on a pedestal on the opposite side of the hall. His back was turned to the staircase while he used it, and thus he did not see what Ray, peering from behind those heavy draperies, saw: A slim foot in a Nile-green bedroom slipper thrust around a curve of the stair, and the edge of a Nile-green robe with a quilted edge and white-fur trimming.

Ray stared. He felt sure he would see no more, that the foot inside the slipper would come no farther. Was Mrs. Sheldon who listened there, who did not care to show herself? Perhaps she would not come any farther down those stairs while an ordinary policeman telephoned in her hall!

And yet Ray felt an intense interest in the women of the Sheldon household—Mrs. Sheldon and her sister.

A Nile-green bedroom robe, quilted, edged with white fur. Nile-green slip-

pers to match. Which woman in that magnificent house owned such a garment? Perhaps John's discovery concerned the lady of the green robe, for he had been employed to watch the mistress of the house!

Emerging from his hiding place, he seized the astounded Aldrich by the arm as he turned from the telephone.

"Ask to see Mrs. Sheldon," he whispered. "Please, do as I say and I'll explain later."

"What!" gasped Aldrich, his face flushing angrily. "What the devil are you——"

But Ray had again vanished behind the draperies, and Sheldon was coming down the stairs, still fumbling with his hastily arranged collar.

Aldrich, staring at the archway where Ray was concealed, his face still flushed, hesitated. He was just an ordinary young cop with very little experience. And he stood in awe of Clarke Sheldon and his magnificent surroundings, as almost every one else did. But there had been something in Ray's whisper which gave him courage.

"I beg pardon, but is any one else up in the house, sir?" he asked timidly. "Mrs. Sheldon, or——"

"Mrs. Sheldon retired long ago," snapped Sheldon with a frown. "She sprained her ankle rather badly while riding this afternoon, or rather yesterday afternoon. I could not possibly have her disturbed. Indeed, Doctor Boyne said she must not be roused until morning. I don't know of any one else who is likely to be awake. Why do you ask? Surely, you do not intend to try to cast the shadow of what happened down in those woods upon my home, Aldrich?"

The young policeman trembled before the displeased manner of the rich man. He flung an angry glance at the draperies which concealed Ray and preceded Sheldon from the house, leaving the door open behind him. The old butler, however, closed it and retired before Ray could follow the two men.

CHAPTER VI.

"I WANT TO TALK WITH YOU."

HIDDEN in the archway, the young detective took out his notebook and scrawled within it two items.

Nile-green bedroom robe, quilted. Trimmed with white fur. Nile-green slippers to match.

Mrs. Sheldon sprained ankle. See Doctor Boyne.

Then he hesitated. Should he use this opportunity to look around that handsome house into which he would never be admitted, and to penetrate, perhaps, the private apartments of Mrs. Sheldon? Or should he hurry to the old church where Sheldon and the policeman had gone?

If he should be caught stealing over that house, it might cramp his chances for the future, and run a decided risk.

Sheldon had been known to buy men to suit his purpose. Every man, in Ray's opinion, had his price, if it was high enough. He could not trust the young policeman with Sheldon very long. It would be himself, alone, against Sheldon's power and money. The sooner he realized that the better. The police of Kenderport would never offend Clarke Sheldon or carry crime into that magnificent house of his, no matter what happened in the church on his estate.

And so Ray quietly let himself out of the big front door, slipped through the trees on the rear lawn and was soon hurrying through the woods by a short cut.

Sheldon and Aldrich were entering the church, their feet echoing in a hideous, hollow fashion against the old walls, and Ray followed them silently. He was conscious of a lessening of enthusiasm since he left the mansion across the lawn. It was there, not here in the belfry room, that he would find

the secret of his friend's death. But Aldrich would never get it out of Clarke Sheldon. If John had been killed by some one at that big house because of what he had discovered, then there was more to be learned than Sheldon had engaged him to discover. Or, perhaps, Mrs. Sheldon had a hand in this.

Ray had heard of dainty ladies hiring people to do such deeds. And her ankle had been sprained at such an opportune moment.

In the belfry room, Sheldon was bending over John's body.

"Horrible! Horrible!" he was saying in a shocked voice. "You didn't tell me his hands were fastened in these chains! And his friend heard the bells ring? Aldrich, this belfry will have to come down now! My brother has always fought against it, but after this, it is doomed."

"Well, sir, I wouldn't have such a thing on any property of mine," said Aldrich firmly.

"I thought you said your friend the detective was here?" asked Sheldon, looking sharply about.

"I am here," said Ray coming forward out of the darkness. "A bad business this is, Mr. Sheldon."

"Bartley, we've got to get to the bottom of it," said Clarke Sheldon eagerly. "I can trust you to do what you can? I feel very responsible. You understand? I engaged Morris for reasons of my own."

"I know it," replied Ray.

"You told Aldrich that you heard these bells toll?" went on Sheldon with a glance up at the bells.

"I did just as I was coming along the road beside these woods," replied Ray flatly. "John had just called me up and asked me to meet him at your gates on Van Ess Avenue. He said he was onto something big. As I passed here, those old bells tolled. I couldn't make any mistake about them. They sounded just awful."

A shudder ran through him as he spoke, and he kept his eyes from the body of his friend, the dead hands linked high above his head, in those horrible chains.

"But nobody has been able to ring those bells for heaven knows how long!" cried Sheldon, puzzled. "They're rusted; the chains are not——"

"They've been oiled, sir," put in Aldrich. "We found oil on Morris' hands and on his trousers where he tried to rub it off his fingers. He'd found out the bells had been oiled all right. They ring all right now—because I tried 'em."

"Oiled!" Sheldon again passed his hand across his brow. "Why, that seems ridiculous! Of course, everybody knows the old legend about this spot, but I never had any proof of it. This is the first time——"

"Well, sir, in my opinion, it won't be the last," said Aldrich with a meaning look. "Nobody went to all this trouble to finish off John Morris. I'd watch out, if I was you."

The horn of a car outside on the road, footsteps and a medley of voices told the three men that the authorities were at hand, and Sheldon turned to Ray hurriedly.

"As soon as we can get away from here, I want to talk with you in my study," he whispered. "Come with me! I must see you."

Ray Bartley nodded grimly. He did not hope for much from that requested interview. And he had a notion that he was to be asked to take up John's work. To invite John's gruesome death, perhaps! But he would not do it. He could not spy upon a woman. Not that way! In open warfare, yes. To trap a murderess, yes! But not like that. Not as John had done!

Nevertheless, he was not turning down a trick, and he waited patiently for the coroner and the chief of police to arrive upon the scene.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RED BOOK.

DAWN was far off over the hills when Ray Bartley sat down with Sheldon in the latter's luxurious study.

There was a low fire on the hearth, for, despite the early blooms in the gardens, there was a chill in the air. Moreover, Sheldon had served his guest with drinks and cigars.

"I fancy you wish to know why I hired your partner to stop in my house," began Sheldon, puffing on a cigar, his narrow eyes studying the young detective.

"I thought it was to watch your wife," said Ray brutally.

Sheldon did not wince. The muscles in his heavy jaw tightened a bit, but he did not appear to resent Ray's bluntness.

"It was," he said with a sigh. "Had poor Morris not been so mysteriously killed on my own property, I should not be telling you this. I am—to be frank—anxious to know what it was he was going to say to you at midnight last night at my gates."

"So am I," sighed Ray grimly. "And I'm going to devote my time to finding out."

"You understand that naturally I am as interested as you are in the matter," reminded Sheldon pleasantly. "I hired him to learn and tell me what he could. That he was killed just after he summoned you, looks bad, Mr. Bartley. I fancy you see what I mean."

Ray looked at the big man with a sneer. The cur that he was!

"You mean that your wife, having been found out in whatever you suspected, killed Morris herself?" he snapped.

"Mrs. Sheldon commit that crime!" Sheldon turned purple with rage, but controlled himself with an effort. "Certainly not! I know myself that she sprained her ankle badly yesterday and could not walk. I am only saying how it looks."

"Did anybody else know why you hired John?" asked Ray.

"No, of course not. And your partner was most discreet. I do not think Sonia once suspected what he was. And now I have a small matter which must be told to you, unpleasant as I find it. It is the reason why I engaged your partner."

Ray said nothing. He watched his host's inscrutable face, his big well-groomed body slumped down in the richly upholstered chair. And he was prepared to believe nothing he was to hear. He fancied that Clarke Sheldon knew well what John was to tell him if he had ever met him at the gates of Shady Ways.

"For the past two years, I have been holding my wife at my side by sheer force," began Sheldon slowly. "I love her devotedly. She is exquisitely beautiful and most fascinating. I am not aware that you have ever seen her?"

"Several times, but at a distance," replied Ray.

"She has a sister who is quite as lovely, but rather a problem," resumed Sheldon. "Isabeau lives with us. We call her 'Bo.' She has recently taken a position as secretary for my lawyer, Paul Silvester. She makes no secret of her hatred for me, although I have done everything I could for her. That hatred extends to her sister, my wife. They share it. Nevertheless, while I am aware of the fact that Sonia or Bo would get rid of me, if they could possibly do so with safety, and that both nimble young brains are quite capable of it, I have kept my wife here with me, despite her various attempts to leave my roof, because I am madly in love with her."

Sheldon did not look as though he could ever be madly in love with anybody, but Ray merely nodded and listened breathlessly.

"I have protected myself," went on

the suave voice, "in rather a novel fashion. Two years ago, when my wife had an affair with Brace Curry, I started a diary. In it I set down and dated all that I had against the couple. I spied upon them. But I was jealous, and he was my friend, staying here."

Ray remembered John's complete records.

"Why, Brace Curry went to Africa a year ago and died there!" he said.

"Exactly," replied Sheldon dryly. "But he was very much alive while he was here and my wife was mad about him. My account of that matter in the red book I have been keeping is very exact. I have also set down in the book that I have told my wife of its existence, that I have read her portions of it, that it is only because she cannot find and destroy it that I keep her in my home, and that she has threatened to kill me if ever I make it public."

"Good heavens!" gasped Ray in disgusted indignation.

Sheldon nodded. "Yes, I fancied your reaction would be just what your partner's was. But I paid him enough to overcome his scruples. Then after Curry, there came along this past year, Oscar Wildon. Sonia's affair with him was fast and furious and so openly defiant that I had no trouble in getting details for my little book."

"Oscar Wildon dropped dead two months ago at his club," said Bartley slowly. "Both these men are dead!"

Sheldon inclined his big head.

"Most unfortunately, yes. But no matter! I have proofs. My lawyer, Silvester, knows of the existence of this book, but not of its contents. With the will which is locked in his safe, I have given him a sealed note which tells him where the diary is to be found. If I die a natural death, he destroys it unread. If there is anything strange about my demise, he makes the book public and uses it as he sees fit. In the meantime, I hold it over my wife's pretty head and keep her here as mistress of my home. She and her sister, as I have told you, hate me heartily. Your partner knew this story, and I asked him to keep an eye on my wife and young Dick Randolph. I expected to be away on a trip soon and I wanted to know whether or not Dick's name should be added to the list in the red book."

Ray Bartley rose and laid down his cigar. His young face was white with contempt.

"Sheldon," he said very low, "you could not pay me enough to take up this work for you, if that is what you want. I'm going to investigate John's death and learn, if possible, what it was he had to tell me. But I have no time for a man who could keep such a diary as you have just mentioned. And that's that."

Sheldon did not look at all upset. He leaned back in his chair and smiled slightly, puffing at his cigar, a diamond shimmering on the little finger of his big white hand.

"I expected that," he stated. "You are an entirely different type from your friend Morris. Young, and full of ideals and that stuff! I was going to make you an offer, I will admit, to take up your partner's job, and learn what he was going to tell you, that he should have told me. But I fancy we wouldn't get along. You may be sorry that you turned down this chance."

"Say, I'm going to be pretty busy from now on," said Ray bluntly. "And I'm going to find out all right what John was trying to tell me, no matter what the cost or where it takes me! If somebody in this house is mixed up in it, they'll get theirs, that's all. It looks mighty queer to me."

"Well, when you've cooled down and gotten over the shock, remember that I've offered you a thousand dollars to come up here and do the sleuth act for me, and come to me with whatever you

unearth," reminded Sheldon with a sharp tone in his voice. "A thousand dollars, young man. I need somebody smart now, worse than ever, and somebody I can trust. Think it over!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TORN BILL.

RAY felt dazed as he walked through the cool marble hall, where the fountain still dripped into its basin of early spring blooms and the smoky red lamp still burned against the rich tapestry.

If Mrs. Sheldon could get something on that big brute of a husband of hers, she might have a chance. But not otherwise. Guilty or not guilty of the affairs with the two dead men Sheldon had mentioned, she was certainly in a hopeless muddle. And now came this murder in the belfry room of the church on her estate. He knew what Sheldon meant when he said that it "looked bad" against his wife.

If Sonia Sheldon was guilty of the murder, directly or indirectly, of his partner, he would get her for it. But if she was innocent of that, no matter what else she had done, he was for her, after that interview with Sheldon.

Dawn had almost fully come when he stepped onto the smooth white drive and started along it at a rapid pace, his pulses pounding angrily. It had taken nerve to defy Sheldon, and he wasn't denying it.

Looking back over his shoulder, he looked at the house in the pink tint of the coming sun, a misty spray of fountains before it, the exquisite rose of early blooms hemming it in. That was what he had to fight—wealth, beauty, power, and social standing. All that against him—a poor, struggling, private detective.

But, remembering John's fate he shook his fist at the Sheldon mansion and turned away.

"I'll win out," he muttered. "I've got to. I can't lose my nerve. As Aldrich said, those chains were not oiled for poor John. This is only the beginning. I must be ready. If she killed John to shut his mouth, she'll kill Sheldon—sooner or later."

As he reached the gates where he was to have met his partner, a small green wisp of something on the smooth white drive caught his eye, and he stooped and picked it up. Astonishment then held him motionless for a moment while he stared at one half of a hundred-dollar bill. Around the No. 3 in the serial number, was a circle drawn in red pencil!

"Now what the deuce can this mean?" Ray asked himself in amazement.

It was plain, as he examined the bill, that it had not been torn in haste or by a careless hand. Moreover, at some time or other, he must find the other half of the bill.

He was still examining the torn bill when a step on the drive startled him and he looked up to meet the grave eyes of a young man in a golf suit, a pipe in his mouth, and a dog at his heels. This pale, tall person with sandy hair and glasses, Ray knew was Rex Sheldon, the painter, of whom the world saw little but would hear much, according to several critics.

"Ah, find something?" drawled Rex Sheldon, waving his pipe toward the torn bill Ray was examining.

"Yes," said the detective briefly, placing the bill in his pocketbook. "I certainly did. You've heard about the murder of my partner, Mr. Sheldon, down in the belfry room of that old church?"

Rex' face grew grave. Ray fancied that it whitened and that little black snakes of fear suddenly coiled in his pale eyes.

"Yes. Horrible thing! I'm sorry for you, Bartley. Have you any clews at all?"

Ray shook his head dolefully. As he did so, his heart sank, for what detective leaves the scene of a crime without any clews at all? That seemed like poor business—to have nothing to take back to the untidy office he had shared with poor John. Nothing to go over, nothing to examine, except perhaps—that torn bill.

"I must admit that I am up a tree just now," he said. "But I shan't give up until the thing is solved. Did you know that John was planted in your house by your brother?"

"I guessed as much," replied Rex dryly. "But it isn't my house at all. It's Clarke's. I pay him board. I invested my money, you see, and Clarke built with some of his. So that I have nothing to say about this property now."

"He says you won't have that cursed belfry torn down," exploded Ray.

"I have nothing to say about what is torn down on this estate or what is built up," said Sheldon coldly. "I am sorry for you, Bartley. And I hope you find the criminal. A particularly horrible crime! All Kenderport will be shocked. Mind showing me what you just picked up?"

"I sure would," said Ray, and moved off.

Walking slowly along the avenue toward the spot where he had parked his car, Ray again took the torn bill from his pocketbook and examined it. Why had that artist chap been so anxious to see what he had found? He didn't trust anybody in that house.

It was just then that the unexpected happened. The fresh morning breeze whipped the torn bill from his fingers and sent it whirling along the sidewalk. With a muttered word Ray darted after it, but Rex Sheldon's dog seized the bill in his teeth, trying to dodge past Ray on his way back to his master who stood in the gate of Shady Ways and whistled to him.

Ray's face grew brick red at the sight of him. Clever, that! Quick work, too, for how could the artist have foreseen that the breeze would snatch the bill from his hand?

With Sheldon's whistle summoning him, the dog sought to dart between Ray's long legs, the green paper still in his teeth. However, the detective forestalled him at every attempt, at last getting his hands in his heavy collar and forcing his jaws open with a strong fearless hand.

Sheldon came swiftly along the pavement then, calling out sharply.

"Be careful, Bartley! He may bite you! Let me handle him!"

"Not much," said Ray grimly, thrusting the wet and torn bill into his pocket as Sheldon came up. "I know dogs. He never touched me. And it didn't work. Clever, Mr. Sheldon, but I'm ready for almost anything now."

And he left Rex Sheldon with his hand in the collar of his excited dog, staring after him.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK RANDOLPH'S TIP

AFTER a few hours' sleep, Ray dropped in at his favorite restaurant for an egg and a cup of coffee. He felt bodily weary but mentally as strong as a lion. He knew how John would have welcomed this case, had the positions been reversed.

The morning paper, which he propped against his coffee cup, devoted columns to the murder, for it had happened on the handsome Sheldon estate. Moreover, it gave the reporters an opportunity to unearth the hair-lifting story about the bells ringing whenever a death occurred on the Sheldon grounds.

The detective had been engaged by Mr. Sheldon, the papers said, to guard the invaluable articles he had brought from a recent trip to Japan. And he,

Ray, was brought into it with the story that he had heard the bells as he was hurrying to meet his partner. The dreadful account, most of it true, fascinated Ray, and he read it to the end. The headlines of the column beside it escaped his gaze until he had finished with the crime story. Then he noted a familiar name, one that during the past few hours had been mentioned to him.

Dick Randolph, popular young clubman, gets tip from the other world!

Spirit of Oscar Wildon, defunct financier and friend of Randolph's, gives him tip on market which nets clubman thirty-five thousand dollars!

Madame Hildegarde Bloomington, famous medium, brings back Wildon to Randolph at a recent séance!

Ray read the entire column with care. Oscar Wildon was the financier whose name, Sheldon said, he had set down in the red diary he kept of his wife's love affairs. And Dick Randolph was the chap that John was supposed to have watched. Ray Bartley had known Wildon slightly, and he knew Randolph. It was his business to be familiar with as many people as possible. Yes, and to keep track of their affairs!

What did this connection mean between the dead Wildon and the living Randolph? The two men who had been entered in the red book were dead. But Curry had died in Africa. He had been killed by a lion. Every one knew that. No mystery about it! It did seem strange, however, that every man who came in contact with Sonia Sheldon died. Would Randolph be the next? Would he himself have been the next if he had accepted Sheldon's offer and taken up the job of shadowing his wife?

Well, it would do no harm to see Randolph and ask him about this séance. He might need the information later on. And he could visit the Bloomington woman. Just how all this hinged upon the death of John, he could not understand, but he had so little to go on that he must follow every trail that showed promise.

If Sheldon had filled that diary with lies, the fact that some people might believe Wildon could come back from the dead, might help Mrs. Sheldon, if ever she needed it. And then he pulled himself up short, and sat staring with a kind of horror across the little restaurant. He was taking for granted that Sheldon would die before long, and that his death would need explaining! He had somehow known that as he sat in the study with the man. Inside his brain, a small voice whispered that the bells in the old belfry had been oiled for Clarke Sheldon! Had John known that? Good heaven, was that it?

Shaking a bit, Ray Bartley paid his bill, gathered up his paper, and went out into the fresh, morning air.

Dick Randolph, who had an apartment in an ornate building near the new park, was in bed when Ray was announced, but he sent word that the detective was to be shown in.

A bit disgusted, Ray stood in a rose-hued bedroom that would have been suitable for a débutante. He regarded with interest the handsome young man who lay in the elaborate bed propped up with pillows, a breakfast tray beside him and his mail scattered over the fluffy silken coverlet.

Randolph was the lounge-lizard type —a cake eater. He would have made an excellent gigolo. His face was sallow and interestingly good looking; his eyes dark and almond shaped, his black mustache a mere shadow, and his black hair pasted flat to his head and shining.

As Ray came close to the bed, he stretched a languid hand to the young detective.

"A cop calling on me at this hour!" He grinned. "Life perhaps still has a few thrills. The reporters have worn me to a frazzle. What can I do for you?"

"Just tell me the story," stated Ray.

"I saw it in this morning's paper. I suppose now you believe firmly in ghosts."

"Not ghosts," said Randolph seriously. "Spirits! But don't come here to scoff, my dear chap. Thirty-five thousand dollars talks convincingly."

"Did you really clean up that much?" asked Ray.

"I should say. And good old Oscar gave me the tip. Just as he used to! He was good to his friends that way. A keen man, too. I simply went to that séance for fun, Bartley. And when Oscar's voice came from the lips of that fat, untidy-looking medium, I nearly passed out. I could swear it was Oscar. And he knew I was broke. Of course, I always am. But the tip! I acted on it instantly and I got the cash. It was wonderful. If Oscar can come back to me like that through that woman, Bartley, I'm fixed for life."

Ray Bartley sat studying the handsome young man in the luxurious bed. He wondered just how all this was connected with John's death.

He looked at Randolph's arms and then thought of poor John's wrists fastened in those horrible rings on the ends of the chains.

"You know Mrs. Sheldon well, don't you, Randolph?" he asked then.

"Sonia? I should say."

"You are up at the house a good deal?"

"Sure I am. Say, what are you getting at? Anything to do with the murder in that old church?" Randolph rose on his pillows and stared keenly at the detective. "Sorry for you, old man. Ghastly thing! I never go near that church myself. It oozes ghosts. I see by the paper you heard the bells."

Ray nodded. "Yes, I heard them. And the account in the paper is true, with a few omissions. I only stopped in to ask you about that séance."

"Well, there isn't anything to tell you," sighed Randolph. "It was wonderful, that's all. I'm on easy street. That woman is a wizard. You'd believe in her stuff, too, if you'd had the experience I had. Just a while ago I had Sonia on the wire telling her about it. Poor Oscar used to be up there a lot. Of course, Clarke will laugh at me, for he doesn't believe in anything, the big brute. But his lawyer does, Paul Silvester. He's a regular séance fan. Gets in touch with his dead wife all the time. Keen man, too!"

Ray missed nothing—not the flush that passed over Dick Randolph's face when he mentioned Sonia Sheldon, or the flash of hatred that followed it when he spoke of Clarke Sheldon. And his nerves gave a little jump when Randolph said that Sheldon's lawyer believed in spiritualism. It was Silvester who knew about the diary. If Sheldon died suddenly, mysteriously, what use might not the clever young wife make of the fact that one of the men mentioned as her lover in that diary had come back from the dead? That the lawyer, who held her fate in his hands, was a firm believer in séances, and also in spiritualism?

He didn't understand why he was so sure that Sheldon would be killed. Yet he could not get away from the idea. Sonia Sheldon, if she had brought about John's death because of what he had discovered, would make clever use of all this if she murdered her husband, who had tortured her beyond endurance!

An overwhelming desire to see Mrs. Sheldon without further delay, before anything else happened in that doomed belfry room, swept him. What type of woman was she? Capable of all this? Ray flattered himself that he would know, if he could just see her close at hand, speak with her, look into her eyes. Had she, having bewitched so many men, also captivated the pale-eyed brother, Rex? Why had Rex sent his dog instantly to bring him the torn bill

the wind had snatched from Ray's fingers?

"Well, if you get any more tips, let me know," he said as he rose to go.

"I sure will, and, if I can help in any way about this death of your partner, Bartley, you let me know," said Randolph with a wave of his hand. "But you can feel mighty sure, explain it or not, that the voice I heard from the medium's mouth was that of my friend Oscar Wildon, all right, and that the tip came from him. If she made it up, why didn't she clean up on it herself? I ask you?"

"Perhaps she did," replied Ray, "and, anyhow, you've got to admit it was a clever bit of advertising. She'll spring into fame."

CHAPTER X.

DOCTOR BOYNE.

IT was still early when Ray left Dick Randolph's apartment, and he thought that Doctor Boyne was probably having his morning office hour. He had a great desire to see the physician who had attended Mrs. Clarke Sheldon's sprained ankle. In his mind, there lurked the fear that the mistress of the Sheldon mansion had employed some one to kill John while she cowered among her silks and satins in her luxurious suite, nursing an ankle that had been deliberately sprained that very day.

Doctor Boyne was just entering his car as Ray walked up the brick path to the white house where he lived with two servants.

The physician was of medium height and size, with a nice-looking, smooth shaven face, neither homely nor handsome. Not until he looked deeply into Doctor Boyne's eyes did Ray see that he might prove interesting. Cold eyes they were, like those of a man without any feeling; calculating, colorless.

"You wished to see me?" Doctor Boyne asked, sweeping Ray with an indifferent glance.

"Oh, just a moment," replied the detective pleasantly. "I stopped by to ask about Mrs. Sheldon's ankle. Was it badly sprained?"

Boyne regarded his caller frowningly, his foot on the step of his car.

"Why, yes, fairly bad," he replied slowly. "Her horse threw her. Why do you ask?"

"I'm Bartley, the partner of the man who was killed on the Sheldon estate last night," answered Ray frankly. "I'm wondering how soon Mrs. Sheldon can use her foot to attend an inquest!"

The doctor stared indignantly.

"Man, it isn't to be thought of!" he snapped. "I've ordered complete rest for Mrs. Sheldon. And why would she be drawn into a crime that happened in that old church on the outskirts of her husband's property?"

"Well, I can't answer that," said Ray slowly. "Not yet! But you never know. I have my own reasons for ascertaining the state of Mrs. Sheldon's ankle."

Boyne bowed abruptly and entered his car.

"I've told you all that I can," he said. "And I advise you not to plunge into anything you cannot handle."

Ray stood on the path looking after the car.

"I flatter myself I know when a man is telling me a lie," he mused. "And I guess it will have to go at that. I will most certainly not have a chance to examine Mrs. Sheldon's sprained ankle! But I'd like to know her taste in dressing gowns. Perhaps she is all her brute of a husband says she is, and that this conceited young doctor is in her toils just as completely as Dick Randolph. I don't think I can progress far until I've met Mrs. Clarke Sheldon whom poor John must have had a chance to know."

As he walked slowly down the street, Ray Bartley reflected upon what he

knew, and he found it to be so pitifully little that his spirit began to fail him. Perhaps that torn, hundred-dollar bill might give him a clew. As yet, it had told him nothing.

As he walked along in the sunshine, however, Ray felt that Aldrich had been right. The thing had just started. And, before it got into full swing, he must know all that he possibly could. If Clarke Sheldon was the next victim, providing he had not killed John, then he must be ready to cope with the situation in some sane fashion.

It would be a good idea to see the medium, Madame Hildegarde Bloomington and find out what he could about the spirit of Oscar Wildon giving that tip to Randolph. He could not say why that interested him so. It may have been a hunch. But it seemed to be connected in some way with the murder of his partner.

As Ray walked gloomily along, Aldrich galloped up the street, saw him, and reined in his horse, springing to the ground beside the detective.

"Got anywhere yet?" he asked, walking along by Ray's side, the bridle over his arm.

"No," said Ray dejectedly. "I must admit I'm a bum detective."

"It's a queer case," sighed the young policeman. "But I've got an idea. It's all my own. Just come as a result of me patrolling around that estate every night around midnight like I do. Nobody but me would get it. And to-night I'm going to that old church all alone and lay low there until daylight. I'm going to do that every night until——"

"Until what?" asked Ray breathlessly.

"Oh, until my expectations come true," replied Aldrich. "It will. Then I'll get a raise and a medal maybe, and this town will feel like dynamite has been exploded under the middle of it."

"But——"

"We didn't find the thing that killed your friend, see?" went on Aldrich. "Of course, we didn't search the Sheldon mansion. Maybe it was there. I dunno. But it was a knife. He was stabbed. One good, expert thrust! Somebody had strength and knew how to do it. And we ain't sure he was killed where we found him. Maybe it happened at the gates where he was waiting for you. There was nothing to show where it was done. But you can depend on it that there was a good reason to have found him where you did. The sooner a match is set to that belfry the better."

"But what have you discovered, Aldrich?" asked Ray eagerly. "What do you expect to see when you stick around that place all night?"

"That's nobody's business," replied the policeman sharply. "If I need your help afterwards, which I probably will, I'll let you in on it. But, beginning with to-night, I'm going to start that watch until I see what I expect to. You just keep quiet about my plans, that's all."

"Why, of course I will," said Ray slightly hurt. "And I don't expect the police to favor me much. But look here! Did you ever see anything like this?"

From his pocketbook he took the torn bill and showed it to Aldrich, pointing out the red circle drawn around the No. 3.

Aldrich started, and his fingers closed eagerly about the bill, while he bent above it, studying every line and jagged edge.

"Where did you get this?" he cried.

"I found it inside the Sheldon grounds this morning, on the drive," said Ray. "Know what it means?"

Aldrich handed it back to Ray with a long breath. His face was flushed.

"No, I don't," he replied slowly, and Ray knew that he lied. "You better keep it to yourself. Some day, maybe, there will be something that'll explain it to you."

Without another glance, Aldrich vaulted into the saddle and went clattering down the street, leaving Ray staring frowningly after him, the wisp of green paper still in his fingers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TIME LOCK.

NERVOUSLY, Paul Silvester, Clarke Sheldon's lawyer, paced up and down his office, swinging his glasses by the thin, black ribbon that hung about his neck.

Silvester was a tall, angular man with the face of a hawk. His heavy brows almost met over the large Roman nose, and his mouth was a mere thin, determined slash in a lean smooth-shaven face. He had a quick attractive way of speaking, a dry sarcastic manner, and he was considered one of the brightest lawyers in that part of the country.

Clarke Sheldon, slumped in one of the easy-chairs, was a decided contrast to Silvester, and his narrow eyes followed the pacing lawyer cunningly.

"I hope that this deplorable crime on your estate which occurred last night, Sheldon, has nothing to do with your request this morning," said Silvester, fixing his client with his keen, boring gaze.

"Why would it?" snapped Sheldon. "What do I know about that poor fellow dying? His affairs were none of mine."

"But you had made your affairs his, for the time being," reminded Silvester mildly. "Engaged him to spy upon Sonia, did you not?"

"Yes, I did," asserted Sheldon defiantly. "She deserved it. You must admit that. I'm pretty lenient with her."

"I admit nothing of the sort," said Silvester, a gleam of disgust in his eyes. "I don't know an earthly thing the girl has done. You're insanely jealous, Clarke. I've told you so before."

"Well, I didn't come here to discuss that," snapped Sheldon. "Trot out the will! I told you that I wanted to alter it."

"What do you wish to do to it?" asked Silvester. "Unless you improve it, Clarke, you had best let it alone. The amount you have left your wife—well, after your death that is bound to cause comment. The idea of the bulk of your money going to your brother Rex, is a disgrace. Rex is a decent sort, and he won't have it when he finds out."

Sheldon thrust out his heavy jaw. For a moment, he resembled a prize fighter of the lowest type.

"I suppose you'll shed tears when I tell you that I've come here to find out just how little I can leave my wife and stay within the law," he sneered. "I want to cut her off with as small an amount as possible. Believe me, I know why. I know what I'm doing."

"Well, it looks devilish to me, after what happened last night," snapped Silvester, continuing to pace about. "Wait until Monday before you decide."

Sheldon brought his fist down on the desk with a crash.

"Is this my will or yours?" he thundered. "I've got a reason for this move, I tell you!"

Silvester set his long slim finger on an ivory button on the desk top. His eyes rested upon Sheldon with a coldly calculating expression. It was apparent that Sheldon's references to his wife and his desire to alter his will still further against her, had angered the lawyer.

In reply to the bell, the door into the outer office opened, and Isabeau Carter stood upon the threshold.

Mrs. Clarke Sheldon's sister was pretty enough to cause comment wherever she went. She had copper-colored curls, wide defiant gray eyes, a lovely mouth, and was exquisitely built. Paul Silvester felt that he had discovered a jewel. Faithful and bright, she was always on the job, and he was glad to pay

her a good salary which he was fully aware she actually needed—even though she lived at Shady Ways.

As she entered the private office that Saturday morning, she carried a pad and pencil. She gave her brother-in-law no sign of recognition save a flash of hatred which was hidden swiftly beneath her heavy lashes.

"Miss Carter, will you bring Mr. Sheldon's will here if you please?" asked Silvester briskly. "There are some changes he contemplates making."

Bo looked blank. She lifted her hand and pressed it over her brow, tangling a few of the bright curls that straggled there.

"Gracious, I've set the time lock on the safe!" she said plaintively. "It is past closing time, and I had my hat on. We always——"

"You mean to say, Bo, that the safe cannot be opened until Monday morning?" flared Sheldon, his jaw thrust forward.

"Sure it can't," she replied indifferently. "We always lock it on Saturday. All the important papers are in it."

"What time on Monday?" snapped Sheldon.

"My dear man, come down here at nine, and we'll open the safe and you may do what you wish with your will," said Silvester impatiently. "You'll hardly die before Monday. You look in the best of health. And it may be best to think about this."

"You can draw up another," growled Sheldon, "dated to-day! I can make it brief. I——"

"You can't make your will brief, Clarke," said Silvester with a shrug. "You've got too much money. And, frankly, I have not the time just now to stay here and make out a new one for you. I'm due at the club. I'm playing golf with Boyne and Randolph this afternoon. Boyne and I need the air and the exercise. Be reasonable, man, and come down early Monday."

Sheldon stood up. His face was purple with rage. While the lawyer got his hat and coat, he strode to Bo and seized her slim white wrist, his eyes burning furiously.

"You little devil, you did that on purpose!" he snarled. "But it won't help your sister. Monday morning she'll have even less than she has now. And none of your tricks can stop me."

"If I were you, Clarke," said Bo coldly as she released her arm and kept her level gaze on his, "I'd tear down that dreadful old belfry. Take my advice! Tear it down!"

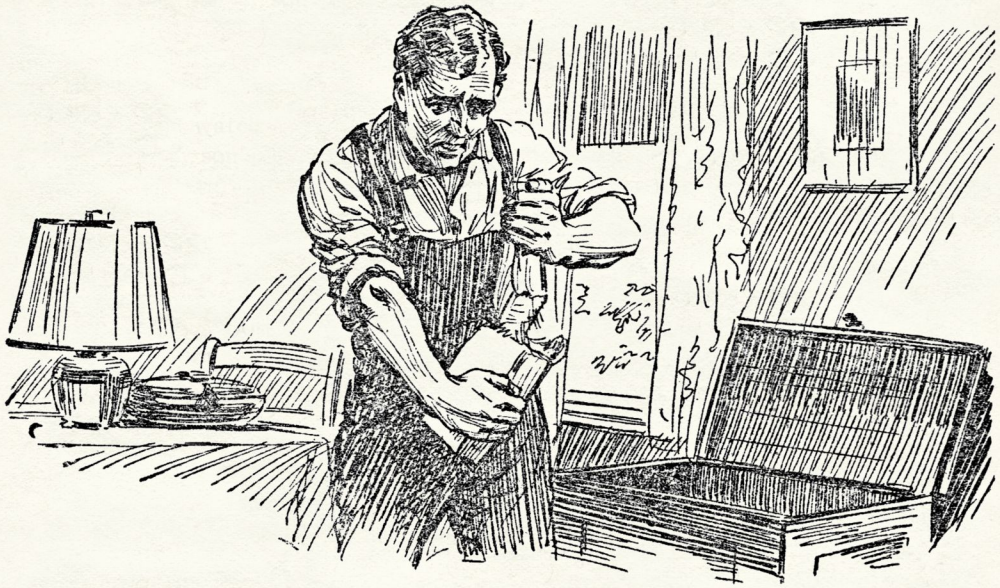
To be continued in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

A LIFELIKE POTATO BAG

IN a Brooklyn grocery store, recently, was a suspicious movement that a passing officer of the law noticed as he looked in the window. He called two confederates who assisted him in breaking in the store. After the lights were turned on, a search was made, but the prowler seemed to have disappeared. Nevertheless, the first officer continued swishing his club about.

Suddenly, the club stuck a potato bag, out of which came the cry: "Ouch!" The mystery of the sudden disappearance of a burglar was solved as a man emerged from the bag. While he was able to spare himself more blows, he was unable to dodge a waiting cell in the near-by jail.

Two Good Fools



By Clinton Dangerfield

Author of "What Price Safety," etc.

EVEN when the gardener sat at the table with them, he could plainly see the chest in their adjoining bedroom.

The yellow glitter of the inpouring sunshine fell on the chest's heavy, brass padlock. The padlock was a challenge, an insolent challenge, to the gardener's secret greeds.

How much money did these two old people have in that handmade, black-walnut chest? It must be a large sum, for the old man always wore the key on a light chain around his neck, and likely the sum was all in gold, for didn't hicks in the sticks always love gold? It wouldn't depreciate like silver in fluctuating values, and it couldn't be torn or gnawed by rats like the long green. Yes, the treasure in that chest was sure to be in gold.

True, the old couple led very simple lives, seeming to depend entirely on a small annuity paid them quarterly, and on the cow and kitchen garden. Still, didn't misers always throw up a blind that way?

At last, one morning, at breakfast, the gardener took the bull by the horns and boldly asked the old man:

"Always made your own way, didn't you?"

"No, I had help."

"Maybe you had a bit of luck about inheritance?"

The old man hesitated, but the old woman said with a sudden flash of eagerness: "Tell him all about it now, Henry, dear."

The old man shook his head.

"It isn't time yet to tell him all." He turned back to the gardener. "But I'll tell you this: we have inherited riches."

"We have inherited riches."

The words sang dizzily through the dark branches of the gardener's brain.

He'd been right, of course. There was gold in the padlocked chest. He stammered aloud:

"Y-you did inherit riches. And, like a wise feller, you got them riches locked up in there. Instead of riskin' 'em in banks that bust and stocks that get watered, you got 'em locked up in your big chest. Eh?"

The old man smiled in an odd way, you might even say in a cunning manner, and admitted, in his piping old voice, that yet had a hint of youth in it, like the peeping of young frogs in the spring:

"Yes, all we don't use for our immediate needs we've got locked up in the big chest."

The old woman stated in rather a timid tone:

"We thought that if you would stay with us, that, in a few months, we might see our way—to share those riches with you."

"Why not now, instead of months from now?" he asked coaxingly. "Ain't I wantin' to be a son to you?"

"We do not think you are ready for your share yet," the old man asserted with grave firmness. "There is always a right time for everything!"

The gardener said to himself:

"You're darn right there's a time for everything! And you're just about fixin' to drive me into it. Wantin' me to wait months! Months of this place, and I'd be in the bug house for keeps. Stingy old devils! They just can't bear to share and share alike, and yet me offerin' to be a son to them! But maybe it's for the best! What's a third when you can get all? Why, they might have thousands in that infernal chest!"

Aloud, he observed smoothly, pushing back his chair from the white-oilcloth table edge:

"I reckon I'll go hoe out them onions this morning."

He rose, showing his pliant, powerful figure, sleekly padded with flesh like a well-fed panther's. Moving toward the exit on the garden, his gait was noiseless and easy; he whirled round in an effortless way as the old woman said gently:

"Do fetch me my shawl, Esau, before you go out."

He smiled at her, stretching his greedy mouth in a pretty fair semblance of kindness. His great, topaz eyes gazed at her in an oddly winkless stare. He had the shawl for her in a minute; but, in that brief space, his eyes had swept the bedroom in which the shawl lay.

The cottage had three large rooms. Two, forming the front of the house, looked out on the west plains which stretched away to the horizon. The south room was the old people's bedroom and living room. The north one was kitchen and dining room. In the room which ran off from the north room, the gardener lived.

The living and bedroom of the old couple was quaintly furnished with an ancient, hand-cut, walnut four-poster with corded springs; that is, instead of slats and steel springs, the thick feather mattresses were upheld by heavy cords woven like a big mat, and running into holes in the bed. A discarded spinning wheel was pushed into a corner. Down on it looked distorted, enlarged photographs that smiled painfully.

The gardener's eyes didn't linger on these.

His gaze leaped to the chest. A tide of hot curiosity, of desire, surged up in him, almost unbearably. He drove it back and returned to her with the shawl. Then he went out to the onion bed.

In less than an hour, they trotted out after him, for there were rows of flowers in the kitchen garden. These were for the house; every day the old man cut a basketful for his wife.

Both these old people had round, rosy faces, with small eyes—his black, hers blue. Each face was deeply

wrinkled, but they had the wrinkles of sound old apples healthily drying up, not rotting.

He was of medium size, a little stooped; she, smaller and demurely straight. His hands were large and firm, hers soft and given to fluttering over his coat lapel or his collar with tiny, adjusting touches. Both were extremely neat in dress—he always in gray, she always in blue chambray or soft white. Both had plenty of snow-white hair and seemed to be part ermine, they were so instinctively averse to dirt.

They had in common one arresting peculiarity—an elfin impishness that came and went in their still-bright eyes, or at other times an elfin wistfulness that also came and went. And in these odd mental flashes lay so extraordinary a hint, and more than a hint, of some strange, concealed youth, that once in a while, when they talked to the gardener, he got a bewildered feeling that they were not old at all.

"I'm goin' goofy stayin' in this buried place," he would tell himself angrily, for the hint would vanish in a flash, and again he would see only two very old people, pottering among the yellow flowers they especially fancied. He hadn't supposed there could be so many different kinds of yellow flowers; he pondered over why they preferred yellow and then the reason came to him. They were the color of gold! They were naturally the flowers for misers. Golden!

Yes, that was it! That was why the curtains at the shining windows were yellow; the hand-knitted rug was yellow; why, even the cat that purred on the window sill was yellow!

Gold! He could never get away from the thought of it if he wanted to! They had stuck gold color all around. It was their greedy, miserly souls wanting to hug even the sight of gold color, and it would be their greedy, miserly fault if they made him see yellow till his thoughts of the chest got so strong he couldn't stand it. Yes, if they were croaked, whose fault would it be but theirs?

He was psychologist enough to know that there is only one vice which increases in strength and power with age. Gluttony grows feeble with indigestion, hate pales, but avarice grows younger with each year! No miser like an old miser!

Often he saw them whispering together, chuckling and nodding. But when he came close they would fall silent, and look at him with queer, crafty looks.

His ears began to listen as avidly for words related to the hidden treasure as men's eyes stare for indication of lodes in mining. He began to catch exciting fragments of their speech when they murmured to each other.

"Dust of gold! Lay up gold as dust and the gold of Ophir as——"

That was last week. Yesterday he'd caught from the old woman's whisper:

"And spread gold upon the cherubim!"

What the devil was a cherubim? Sort of table?

Later, the old man said something aloud to her in which the gardener caught vivid sentences:

"Seven golden candlesticks!" And then, "Onyx stones inclosed in ouches of gold, graven as signets are——"

What were "ouches"? Why, the old pirate must have all sorts of golden spoil in that chest! Onyx wasn't very valuable, but there might be diamonds, for once they had muttered to each other of "something more precious than gold."

Yes, it all pointed one way.

Only once had he caught a silly fragment that pointed nowhere: "It cannot be gotten for gold!" You could, of course, get anything if you had gold enough.

Vainly, he hoped the old man would forget some day and leave the brass key sticking in the ancient, carved walnut chest—say, at bedtime—so that the gardener could slip in while they slept and open the chest. He really didn't want to kill the old man and woman, for he had recently committed murder and had had to bolt from New York. Naturally, he felt modest about calling any public attention to any further act of his, for the study of an act too frequently results in a trail to the actor.

Still, if there was no getting the key any other way, he would kill them both.

Heavens, but he was sick of the quiet place!

Even the scenery was monotonous: a great plain stretched to the west in front of the cottage. The only eye relief was at the back, where a chain of hills shouldered each other. They broke in one place directly in line with the cottage, and this gap, torn out by primeval forces, was called "The Suck" because the wind rushed through it as the line of least resistance.

Miles beyond The Suck lived the fat county sheriff. He had none of the smart appearance of the big city arms of the law. He was unkempt and bovine-eyed; you could, the gardener had reflected the one time he saw Sheriff Smith, sell a man like that a gold brick with your eyes shut!

Only the gardener had no gold brick to sell. He had nothing, indeed, but his clothes and his small wages. The wages he regarded with angry disgust, but he was so green a gardener he didn't dare ask for more. Besides, his real inducements for remaining had been, first, a port in a storm, and secondly, only now it stood first, the padlocked chest. More and more he came to feel that in this stupid little country community he could execute practically any plan with safety. Yet he let another week slip by.

Then the monotony nagged him so that he resolved to delay no longer. He would inherit their inheritance at dawn.

In this intention, he ate supper with his old employers, joked with them, and later said "good night" to them. Then he himself turned in and slept, tired with the healthy fatigue of hoeing.

In his sleep he dreamed of money—of yellow gold piled up and up on a bed of yellow flowers, until it crushed their silky blossoms.

He dreamed of what this money bought for him—delirious pleasures pushed to drunken and wanton extremes.

The thin crowing of a cock cut through his visions. He sat up and realized that this was the morning set for freedom and wealth. He had acted the fool in delaying so long, and he'd be a fool no longer.

It was a heavily sultry morning, too hot for the season, as though Nature were holding her breath and likely to let it go again in some huge puff.

Last night the old man had predicted a storm within twenty-four hours. His predictions were generally right about the weather. Well, if it did come, that would be just the thing! A storm to wash away tracks when a fellow was hiking for the railroad, hiking heavy with gold! If it was too heavy, he'd steal a car.

It was barely light when he slipped from his room, already clothed. He moved with feather-light steps, for he had tried his employers out and had found how lightly they slept. Extreme old age has little need of sleep.

But they had waked several times in the night, so now, in the very early morning, they slept deeply.

In sleep they resembled two brown cocoons, ugly enough, yet around them hung faintly a vague promise of something to be realized—that something you feel when you examine an unbroken cocoon glued to some isolated bush.

But the gardener had no thought of

cocoons. Over everything in his mind loomed the challenge of the padlock and the vision of the cash it guarded.

"We have inherited riches!"

He hesitated, then crept closer to the bed, for there sang in his ears, like a chant invisible, a single word:

"Gold!"

But the word "gold" is never just a word. It is a complex for blended delights, a promise of power and luxury. It assures action and yet smells of poppies.

His hairy fingers tightened on the iron poker he carried.

As he drew closer, rapidly closer, to the sleepers, the preoccupation in his face was more ferocious than any ferocity. He moved toward the slaying of them as a man might move toward throwing aside a chair which was in his way—a mechanical, necessary act set about almost subconsciously while his conscious mind was full of the glittering gold he would secure after the deed.

It was quick and easy work, although a trifle more grim that he had expected. But he would wash carefully, at the last, and then he would pour oil around and fire the house just before he left.

For a minute after the murders were done, he hung over the bodies, staring down with keen, experienced eyes. Yes, they were gone. The crafty fools were out of his way at last! In a minute, he had the key and was making for the heavy, padlocked chest.

The well-oiled padlock opened instantly. He lifted and threw back the chest lid, exploring the interior with burning, avid eyes.

The glittering, seductive pile of gold coins he had imagined, and the golden candlesticks, were not there.

Only one object met his view—a very large book bound in yellow leather, gold scrolled. This volume, a huge one, closed with heavy, gold clasps.

From the yellow-leather binding flashed two words in gold scrolls—"The Bible."

Sickened with disappointment, he stared down at it. Nothing but a big Bible!

Then his cunning intelligence reacted in saving optimism. Hadn't he heard a thousand times how the hicks in the sticks put the long green between Bible leaves?

He snatched the huge book out. The clasps resisted him when he tried to open them. Irritation and fury rose in him. Exerting his great strength, he tore the Bible not only open but clean in two at the back binding.

The edge of the text was spotted with red—blood from his own hands, but not his own.

Squatting there, like an enormous ape, with a half in each hand, he decided that one half at a time for thorough examination would be best. He dropped the right half and rapidly investigated the other.

He found no money, but he did find a large envelope sealed and carefully addressed to Esau Potter, the name he had used when hiring himself to his old employers.

With hurried excitement, he broke the seal. Still no money, but a paper which he read rapidly:

To Whom It May Concern:

We, being of sound mind, but very near the kingdom and hoping daily to go together, leave this to testify that this paper wills to our gardener, Esau Potter, all we possess materially, which is our land, cottage and stock and personal property. And we especially leave to him this golden-text Bible, which is the true and only golden treasure we possess, so that, if we go before he does, he may know that we plotted to turn his mind on the chest that he might gather to himself the greatest riches ever known—the power and the glory and the spiritual gold of the kingdom.

Other sentences followed. In these were interwoven strangely familiar bits:

"Dust of gold! Lay up gold as dust and the gold of Ophir as—— Seven gold candlesticks!" Sentences all struggling toward what they called "The Great Inheritance!"

He shot up to his feet on the springs of fury and he saw red with a rage that shook his powerful frame.

Inheritance! A fine inheritance! The dead—and danger!

What was the piffling property to him? Worse than nothing!

Then a sound arrested his ear—a crescendo of sound rushing toward him and soon roaring as though forty trains in the subway were coming down on him at once.

The storm! The desired storm, which was to wash out his gold-laden tracks, was rushing prematurely from the west toward the house.

Swiftly, he sprang to the front door and looked out.

He had never been in the cyclone belt before, but even his ignorance recognized the funnel-shaped, suction-hearted monster speeding toward the cottage.

With only seconds to spare, he turned and dived for the cellar trapdoor, which opened in the bedroom floor near the east wall, because this bedroom had once been the kitchen.

Crouched below in darkness, he heard the wild fury of the wrecking monster's power tear through the house, and an active terror bit down to the bone in him.

But in a surprisingly short length of time, the wind roared away, rushing off toward, then through, The Suck.

Unharmed, indeed not even scratched, he waited, fearful of a second section of storm. Then he recalled reading in the newspapers that a cyclone got busy, got through, and went permanently away. So, feeling along, he crawled up the cellar steps.

On trying to lift the trapdoor, he found it pinned down, evidently by wreckage.

But he was not dismayed. There was an ax in the cellar, and he could chop his way out. He felt his way to the ax without difficulty.

He began to chop out an exit—an unpleasant task in the dark, for he was a poor ax man. Besides, dust and splinters fell on his face. But soon daylight streamed through the planks he cut into, and, at last, he had opened a place just wide enough to get his shoulders through.

With a gasp of relief he popped halfway out, like a jack-in-the-box, and looked around. His gaze first went to the bed. The dead had not been touched by the freakish wind monster. His gaze fell on the chest whose lid had been wrenched off and carried away. The fireplace was merely a gaping hole in the wall. Shattered glass lay everywhere. A section of the west wall was smashed in.

He turned around mechanically and looked toward the east door, or rather where the door had been—for it was torn off and gone.

Framed in its scratched casing, half of a Bible under his left arm, loomed the huge, fat figure of the sheriff. In his right hand he carried a large .38. Held as steadily as a rock, it covered the unpleasantly astonished gardener. The sheriff said, in a low, grinding voice like a backwoods' coffee mill:

"Put your hands up!"

The gardener obeyed, but he protested in well-simulated grief:

"I didn't have time to get them out of bed! Did the cyclone kill them?"

"The cyclone never come here to hurt them," the sheriff replied in slow, monotonous tones. "It crossed this county to fetch me this half of their gold Bible. I helped 'em buy it. The edge of that suction just touched my front yard. I was runnin' for the house, but the wind hit me in the back with this half o' book, and bowled me over with it.

"When I got my breath the suction had gone on, and I was staggerin' into the house with the half book in my hand. I looked at it, wonderin' what object had hit me. Handlin' it, it fell open, dry as a bone inside, of course, at one o' the markers. It looked like a chance, till I come here. It says:

"And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death."

"What the devil you tryin' to put over?"

The coffee-mill voice growled on:

"There's a sayin': 'God rides the wind.' He never even give you time to wash that poker nor burn them crimson-stained printed pages, did He?"

"Can the patter!" snarled the cornered killer. His mind raced over and discarded one wild idea after another, for that fat figure, those eyes full of real grief and fury over the dead, held something as coldly resolute in purpose as Destiny itself. There'd be no throwing this hick off the rails. "Can the patter!"

But the sheriff, finding relief in an outburst, raged on.

"That half a Bible sent me here quick as my old car would carry me. I was a-thinkin' of wreckage! Never of this! The car stalled.

"I run for the house here, and I heard choppin'. So I come up a little easy and I slipped in. There they was in bed. No cyclone harm had come to 'em, but they were dead—murdered. And somebody in the cellar was choppin' his way out. Let him chop, I says to myself, and stood there thinkin'. Thinkin' of their funny, little ways, their queer, crafty ways of gettin' people interested in their kind of gold. They told me how they was leadin' your interest to that chest, and how you was 'goin' to be led to love the only real gold.'

"All their fool, beautiful lives they been thinkin' out queer little ways to interest folks in their kind o' gold. I orter realized that this time they'd picked a dangerous way, but it's the first time your kind ever come into our neighborhood."

The gardener's face suddenly smoothed into what seemed blank despair. "I surrender," he said humbly. "I confess. But let me get out. Though you can't see it, I'm bad hurt."

"Come on out then," growled the fat sheriff.

The gardener came—and coming, got the even break, which he believed to be much more than that—for what did this sheriff know about shooting?

Two shots snarled through the room. For the rest of his life the sheriff carried a torn ear lobe, but his own shot shattered the pistol wrist of the killer who dropped screaming to the floor.

The fat sheriff picked up the gun, yanked his prisoner to his agonized feet, and marched away with him, heading for the nearest party phone.

As they vanished into distance, the sun, from an unclouded sky, poured golden sunshine into the broken house. It fell on two withered and dead cocoons, that still had clinging to them, as all discarded cocoons do, a hint of unfolded and far-escaped wings.

POLICE DUTY MORE HAZARDOUS

THE father of the present Baumes Laws, giving a fourth offender a life sentence, believes that, because of these laws, the police incur greater responsibility and risk.

He says that the present minimum wage among first-grade policemen of twenty-five hundred dollars a year should be increased to three thousand a year.

The End of Doctor Krook

By Arthur Mallory

Author of "A Horse on Him," etc.

CHAPTER I.

SECOND THOUGHT.

FOR a while, Karl B. Krook, who now called himself Doctor Justus J. Honor, wandered about the streets of Chicopolis, distraught with superstitious panic. He believed that he had seen the ghost of William Wright, investigator for the Universal Life Insurance Co., whose murder he had himself procured. And he was ready to imagine that Wright's ghost was accompanied by the ghosts of other men whom he had killed: Theodore Bender, that impractical inventor who had trusted him and Elbert Goodrich, the banker whom he had poisoned only a few weeks ago. He dared not glance over his shoulder lest he see vengeful spirits at his heels.

And so the doctor walked until he was exhausted, and finally stepped into a shabby little restaurant to sit down. He ordered coffee, and drank it without relish, for it was bitter and rank.

Yet the hot drink heartened him, and brought back a semblance of calm. The doctor began to reason. He was in a highly nervous state, he reminded himself; overstimulated by the large doses of thyroid extract which he had been taking to keep his weight down. He might well have had an hallucination. He had been misled by a resemblance, that was all. William Wright was dead. Hadn't he seen the newspaper item which had said so? He would stop taking thyroid. Even though he did gain in weight, no one could possibly identify the reserved, dignified, bearded Doctor Justus J. Honor for that stout, cleanshaven, jovial person, Karl B. Krook. Certainly not! He had done his work

too well; he had changed his personality, for the alterations went far deeper than any crude disguise. As Justus J. Honor, he was perfectly safe. Yet he must finish plucking those coarse black hairs from the backs of his large, thick-fingered hands.

So far, so good! He would give up this silly notion; force himself to think no more of that infernal insurance detective. Wright was dead, and the dead do not walk. He shivered, and called for another cup of coffee. There were no ghosts; there could be no ghosts! He repeated the declaration half aloud, so that a sleepy waiter stared at him. But, for all his assurances, he glanced uneasily over a shoulder.

He would dismiss the thought of Bill Wright from his mind. But there remained another danger, more real and more imminent; that from "Slash Jack" Padrone, the gangster chief whose note, written in violet ink on scented lavender paper, lay on his office floor. Padrone meant to blackmail him and to rob him of all that was left of the bonds which F. Elbert Goodrich had given him. He had earned that money honestly. Hadn't Goodrich begged him for poison? The banker had wanted to commit suicide, and had declared his intention of doing so; he, Justus Honor, had only helped the other to carry out his purpose. Was it his fault if Goodrich had changed his mind too late? No; he had fairly earned that quarter of a million, and Padrone had already robbed him of nearly half. The gangster should have no more!

Pardone knew him as Karl B. Krook. Padrone alone, of all in Chicopolis, knew that he was wanted for murder, back in Blankburg, New Jersey. If Padrone squealed, as he had threatened to, what then?

Doctor Honor moved restlessly, and glanced over a shoulder. Behind him, sat two men engaged in low-voiced talk. "All you need," said one, "is a good mouthpiece. Lookit 'Kid Gippo."

"T'ought he got a stretch, rootin' into that rube bank," replied the other.

"Yeah, sure he did. W'at of it? They sprung 'im two days after."

At that, the second man swore. "After that rowdy-dowdy? Gosh! Who's his mouthpiece?"

Doctor Honor stirred a spoon around his empty cup, listening attentively. He had an idea.

"Mouthpiece?" repeated the first young man. "W'y, who would it be? Leven, 'o' course; Tom Leven. He c'd get anybody sprung."

"I'll say so!" agreed the other, in sincere admiration.

The doctor rose, slipping a dime beneath his saucer. His mind was made up. He needed a mouthpiece himself, if ever a man did. And he had often heard of Tom Leven, considered the cleverest criminal lawyer in all Chicopolis. Leven had defended notorious thieves, forgers, murderers, by the score; surely, he would not be too squeamish! He would not hesitate to advise Justus J. Honor, though the doctor did not admit, even to himself, that he had done anything to forfeit the respect of honest men.

He would go to see Mr. Leven, and at once. He would tell him all about Slash Jack Padrone, and the gangster's unconscionable demands; more, he would tell him about the unreasonable attitude of Mrs. Goodrich. No doubt, an able lawyer could convince that lady that she was foolish; that the part of wisdom would be to divide her dead husband's insurance money with Doctor Honor, lest that gentleman inform the insurance company that the policies were void. For it was not known that Goodrich had committed suicide—as, in fact, he had not, though he had threatened to do so.

Doctor Honor had signed a death certificate declaring that the banker had

died of wood-alcohol poisoning—which was quite true. A very able medical consultant had agreed with the diagnosis. But the affair had been more complicated than that. Goodrich, an embezzler, had come to Doctor Honor talking wildly of suicide; had even paid the physician two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to bring about his death so that his widow might collect his insurance; and, at the last minute, had lost his nerve. Whereupon, Doctor Honor had proceeded virtuously to poison him by stealth.

He'd been paid to kill the man, hadn't he? And then he had written a death certificate declaring Goodrich's end to be accidental, for the banker's insurance policies all contained a suicide clause which made them void in case of self-destruction. Now, if his widow kept quiet, she might collect a half million dollars in insurance money; while, if it became known that Goodrich had committed suicide, she would get nothing. Was she not a fool to refuse to divide with Doctor Honor? Naturally, she did not know that it had been murder, instead of suicide. The doctor refused to admit so much, even to himself.

But he would explain these matters to Leven; enough of them, at least, to enable the attorney to deal with Mrs. Goodrich, and to persuade her to collect the insurance, and to divide it. He'd pay Leven a good, round fee. No doubt, he'd have to.

Doctor Honor left the restaurant, feeling much more cheerful; he hailed a taxicab at once, and had himself driven to Levens' offices.

CHAPTER II.

LEGAL ADVICE.

LEVEN proved to be an impressive personage. Though rather below medium height, he managed somehow to convey an impression of physical bigness, so that his huge office seemed too small to contain him. Doctor Honor felt crowded and apologetic. The lawyer was clad in sober black; he had a ministerial air. His very long upper lip was habitually drawn down as though in disapproval; his black eyes seemed to mourn over the frailties of mankind. When he rose to meet his caller, and enveloped Doctor Honor's hand in a warm, soft clasp, his smile was a benediction; his voice contained a note of benevolent condescension.

"My dear friend," he said, "how can I serve you?"

Doctor Honor felt uncomfortable. Had he come to the wrong shop? This chap was all ready to preach a sermon; the doctor felt an impulse to bow his head in prayer.

Instead, he glanced up, and surprised the other in a sidelong, furtive stare. As though a mask had been lifted, he looked through Leven's sanctimonious expression into a cold and devious soul. Suddenly, he relaxed in his seat, smiling comfortably. It was all right, after all. But what a front! It made him envious.

"I need a little advice," began the doctor, rather uncertainly. It was not too easy to explain.

Mr. Leven smiled gently, and looked down his nose as though at his sermon notes. "Something you've done?" he inquired blandly. "Or is it something you want to do?"

"Er—well, it's both, really. You see, I——"

The lawyer had been busy, also. His next words proved that he had read his visitor as truly as Justus Honor had read him. "A doctor, you said, I think? Ah, yes! Some little trouble in your practice, doctor; about a death certificate, perhaps?" He smiled at the other's amazed stare. "Oh, very many physicians have consulted me in matters of the sort. People are often so unreasonably suspicious, when their relatives die suddenly, and begin to talk about in-

quests, and the police, and such unpleasant things. Did you—ahem?"

His prim little cough, and the glance that accompanied it, asked plainly as words: "Have you murdered any one?"

Doctor Honor hesitated, and shuffled his feet, kneading his thick-fingered hands together. Their backs were now almost denuded of hair.

Leven went on, in the rotund voice of a preacher. "You need not hesitate to speak freely, doctor, quite freely. We lawyers, even the worst of us"—with a sudden change of tone and expression that made him, for the instant, frankly wicked—"know how to keep our clients' secrets." Then, without waiting for a reply: "Perhaps I can help you. I have seen your name in print, recently; an unusual name. Let me see!"

He stared at Justus J. Honor, whose prominent, pale-blue eyes did not quite meet his. "Ahem! I have it. You attended Mr. Goodrich, didn't you? The bank cashier who died of wood-alcohol poisoning the other day. Accidental death, it was called. Ahem! Well, was it suicide or——"

Again the pause asked a pointed question. "He was heavily insured," the physician pointed out. "And his policies all had a suicide clause."

The lawyer leaned back, and clasped his hands upon his plump abdomen. "That makes it plain—admirably plain," he applauded. "You have a gift for concise statement, doctor." Was there a faint mockery behind his blandness, Doctor Honor wondered. "And so"—he ticked off the points upon a plump palm with impressive forefinger—"if it was accidental poisoning, those life insurance policies will be paid up; and if it was suicide, or—ahem!—I mean to say, if it was suicide, his poor widow gets nothing. Very clearly put, doctor. But why come to me?"

"Because," replied Doctor Honor resentfully, "the fool woman won't come across."

"I take it you have called upon her? Yes? And explained, no doubt, the reproaches of your conscience, which urge you to make known the truth to the insurance companies?" There was mockery behind his smoothness. Doctor Honor flushed dully. "Surely, she could not have considered the dishonor which she would put upon her husband's name by accusing him of self-destruction?"

"It's no joke," grumbled the physician. "The man was a known embezzler—a thief. A little more dishonor wouldn't matter."

Leven gave him one of those keen sidelong looks. "An embezzler? So he was! And, if I recall, the police have failed to account for about three hundred thousand dollars of his stealings?"

Doctor Honor wished he had kept still. "Let's get down to cases. Do you think you can make Mrs. Goodrich come across?"

"Why, very probably. It would be easy if she is properly approached. A choice between half a million dollars or nothing, except added disgrace, ought to be easily made. How much do you want to keep quiet?"

"Half," answered Honor. His thin lips tightened. "It's little enough," he went on defensively, "when you consider what I'm risking. And your fee will have to come out of it, too."

"Oh, my fee!" The lawyer waved that aside. "A trifle, that! A hundred thousand, say!" And then, while Doctor Honor still writhed: "But exactly what are you risking, doctor? Could you afford to have the facts come out?"

The physician considered the matter, kneading his hands together. "Why, ye-es. At least, the facts that would come out; all the facts that could be proved. Except that it would cost me too much money. They can't do me any harm in that case, if that's what you mean. I planned to conceal a suicide, entirely out of sympathy for the widow;

but my conscience wouldn't permit. You know the line."

"Naturally! Well, I think I can handle that for you, easily enough. But first, doctor, I'll have to know exactly how Mr. Goodrich did die. I won't be kept in the dark, understand?"

That was asking a good deal, Doctor Honor felt. He was reluctant to confide in any other, after his experience with Slash Jack Padrone. Yet, without the lawyer's aid, he could not hope to deal with Mrs. Goodrich, and that insurance money made his mouth water. Furthermore, if he was to be blackmailed by the gangster, he might lose everything. He felt that Mr. Leven would be able to cope with Padrone. The attorney's confidence was stimulating; he was extraordinarily keen-witted, too. It was almost clairvoyant, the way in which he had grasped those points which Doctor Honor had slurred over.

Suddenly, the doctor was swept by an impulse to tell this man everything; to throw himself upon the lawyer's mercy, to invoke his aid. Leven might even be able to settle that affair back in Blankburg, which had driven Karl B. Krook out of New Jersey, and forced him to change his name and identity. Yes, he would do it.

Leven leaned back in his chair, and the good doctor, who had felt himself almost crowded out into the hall by the impact of the other's personality, relaxed somewhat and felt at once less oppressed.

"It was like this," the doctor said. "Goodrich came to me, saying he wanted to kill himself, and asked me to give him something that would let him die easy. I felt sorry for him; he was dreadfully afraid of going to prison, and I promised to help him out. But he got cold feet, and wouldn't go on with it. Then, one day, he came to me scared to death, and said he'd poisoned himself, and begged me to save his life. But I couldn't; it was too late. So he died, and I let it go as an accident, to save his widow's feelings."

He stopped, eying his host rather uneasily. Mr. Leven's benignant smile did not change; his black eyes were soft and credulous. He bowed his head as though in prayer for that errant soul. But Doctor Honor felt, none the less, that the lawyer was not deceived.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Leven presently. "You offered to help him out of pure kindness of heart. Then, when he backed out, you let him go?" His black eyes stared into Justus J. Honor's pale-blue ones with hypnotic intensity. "I suggest," he barked, "that Goodrich changed his mind too late—after you had poisoned him yourself!"

Doctor Honor put in no denial. He gazed at the other helplessly. What was the use of lying to this man?

"How much did he offer you to make his death seem natural, so his widow could collect his life insurance?"

Honor could not resist that demand. The words were on his tongue: "Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars," when Leven's desk phone rang sharply.

The lawyer answered it, scowling. "Hello. Yes, Leven speaking. Tom Leven. What? Killed Inspector Muldoon? You infernal idiot!" He listened, playing a tattoo on the desk top with nervous fingers, while the phone snapped and crackled through a long speech. Then, "No!" he said, decisively. "No! Certainly not. Of course, I couldn't get you out on bail, you fool. Are you crazy, Padrone? Shoot a policeman in cold blood, and then expect me to get you sprung. You'll have to lam out of it, that's all. If you're caught, you'll have to take the rap. Don't expect me to spring you, because I can't."

He bit off the last word with a snap of strong, white teeth, and slammed the receiver back viciously. Ignoring his guest, he rose and began to pace the office floor, seeming much too large for

the room, large as it was, that Doctor Honor unconsciously pushed his chair back against the wall, to give him space. The doctor eyed him furtively, wondering how close was his connection with Slash Jack Padrone, that the gangster's mishap should upset him so.

"Bloodthirsty fool," muttered Leven, half aloud. "With everything coming his way, and a big job on, to knock off a cop! He might have known——"

Abruptly, he appeared to remember Justus J. Honor, and stopped short. "Ahem! Upsetting news from a client of mine." He forced a smile. "You'll have to excuse me; we must have another talk, later. I'll begin negotiations with Mrs. Goodrich at once, though. What's her address?"

He wrote it down, and hurried Doctor Honor out of the office, murmuring perfunctory excuses. Before the door was closed, he was at his telephone, calling a number with feverish impatience.

The doctor was glad to go. Once outside, he shook his head mournfully, wondering at himself. This man Leven must be a wonderful cross-examiner, he decided. He rejoiced that he had escaped without betraying more of his secrets. The interruption had been lucky for him.

Lucky in more ways than one, decided Doctor Honor, as he pondered over his affairs. It would be strange if he could not turn Slash Jack Padrone's latest crime to his advantage. True, the gangster was now a badly wanted man; he would need money with which to escape from Chicopolis, for there is one crime for which no police officer, anywhere, can find palliation, and that is the murder of a policeman.

Undoubtedly, he would send word to Justus J. Honor, and would renew his demand for the payment of another hundred thousand dollars. But the doctor decided not to pay him. Instead, he would arrange a meeting, and would see to it that the police were tipped off. Of course, if Padrone should find out that he had been betrayed, Honor would suffer; but that was a risk he must take. He was adroit enough, surely, to make himself appear innocent. And Padrone would hesitate to tell the police that Justus J. Honor was Karl B. Krook, wanted for murder in Blankburg, New Jersey, while he still hoped to shake the doctor down. Leven's attitude might make matters still more complicated; but, if he had read the lawyer aright, Doctor Honor decided, he would not defend any man except for cash in advance. Nor would he aid one client to blackmail another. That was one point of ethics to which the most crooked of attorneys must cling, for his own sake; and Justus Honor had heard that Leven prided himself upon it. He would violate any or all of the Ten Commandments, the lawyer had been heard to boast; he would do anything—for a price—except betray a client.

From Tom Leven he was safe enough, now, the doctor decided. And as for Slash Jack Padrone, he had the means of making himself safe. Once the police laid hands upon him, it was unlikely that the gangster would have any opportunity of informing against others—even if he survived his capture. His affairs were looking up, thought Justus; and he walked home, whistling jauntily, his pale-blue, bulging eyes cheerful and alert.

Already, newsboys were crying extras upon the street: "Aw 'bout great bank holdup case; two p'leecemen murdered! 'Ere y'are, aw 'bout 'orr'ble crime in Oval district!"

Doctor Honor bought a newspaper, and read the headlines printed in red ink on the right-hand side of the first page.

Slash Jack Padrone's gang, it appeared, had attempted to hold up a downtown bank, but their plans had gone awry. The police had had a tip;

the gangsters got no money, and barely escaped with their lives—the leaders, at least. Two gunmen had been killed, and the police thought at least three others had been hit. One of the bank's clerks, foolishly brave, had snatched the black mask from Padrone's face, and the gangster chief had been identified by that long, threadlike scar of the razor slash which had given him his nickname.

The mob had used machine guns in a pitched battle with police reserves who, armed only with pistols, had been unable to prevent the bandits' escape. Detective Inspector Muldoon had been killed instantly, and four witnesses were ready to swear that Padrone, himself, had fired the shot which struck him down. Two other policemen were badly injured; one of them was dying.

Justus J. Honor smiled his tight-lipped, cruel smile, and rubbed thick, pulpy hands together. That was fine, he thought; couldn't have been better! The police wouldn't try to take Padrone alive. They would shoot him on sight, and so his mouth would be closed permanently. The doctor began to hope that Slash Jack would call on him soon, and ask for money.

Meanwhile, Padrone's gang was broken up, and its members were in hiding, or fleeing for their lives. Police would have no time to shadow any one. Doctor Honor seized the opportunity to make the round of those banks in which he had rented safety-deposit boxes. He removed all that remained of the bonds which Goodrich had given him—about a hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth—and took them to still another bank, where he rented a new box and locked them away.

Now, even if Padrone escaped, he would not know where the bonds were hidden. The doctor could take him, or his emissary, to all five of the banks he had visited before, and show empty deposit boxes. He could insist that the police had shaken him down; that he had sold the bonds and gambled away the proceeds; that he had given them to a stranger who represented himself as coming from Padrone; and the gangster could not disprove it.

That last was a good idea, he decided. In the unlikely event that Slash Jack should escape and visit him, he would simply declare that an unknown man had come in Padrone's name, and that he had given up the bonds. The gang had broken up; it was every man for himself; if any of Padrone's assistants had information enough, he would undoubtedly proceed to shake the doctor down. And at the thought, Justus J. Honor began to shiver. Suppose some other gangster should blackmail him, even after Padrone's death!

But he put aside such gloomy thoughts. He was still nervous, he reminded himself; he wasn't over the effects of thyroid extract. Fortunately, he had seen no more ghosts since yesterday. He glanced over a shoulder, and walked on, not whistling, now, but with a white, hunted face.

CHAPTER III.

NEW BUSINESS.

IT took all of Justus J. Honor's determination to drive him back to those office rooms through whose windows he had seen Bill Wright's ghost. He went reluctantly, with set teeth, his bearded face slack and frightened. But his interview with Leven had heartened him; the news of Slash Jack Padrone's debacle had encouraged him; and, having been forty-eight hours without thyroid extract, his nerves were much more steady.

His office had been watched by one of Padrone's gangsters, but Doctor Honor had little fear of being shadowed now. The members of that mob would have their hands full keeping away from the police. And, of course, the doctor told himself tremulously, it was ridicu-

lous to fancy that the insurance investigator's outraged ghost was haunting his office, waiting for revenge. As a man of science, he had no patience with such superstitions.

None the less, Doctor Honor was ready to start at any shadow as he finally climbed his office steps, after walking irresolutely around the block half a dozen times. And when he entered and dropped into a chair beside the window, he wiped cold perspiration from his forehead before he peered fearfully out, lest Bill Wright's spirit still kept up a gruesome watch from that hallway opposite.

There was no one there. Of course not! There could be no one there; certainly not a ghost. There were no ghosts. Somewhat relieved, the doctor went back to the inner room and took a long drink from his private stock. His morning office hours were over. Either no patients had come, or, finding the door locked, they had gone away, disappointed. He was free for the day. However, he decided, it would be best to run out to the Almshouse Hospital and make his peace with the resident. It was wise to maintain the attitude he had assumed, and to go on as the sedate, self-sacrificing physician—at least until Mr. Leven had collected from Goodrich's widow, and Slash Jack Padrone had been put safely behind the bars.

Doctor Honor began to be impatient for some message from the gangster. His plan was made; he knew how he could betray Slash Jack without the slightest danger to himself. He wished the chance might come soon.

And so, when he returned from the hospital, Doctor Honor stayed close in his office until dinner time, waiting for a message. When the telephone rang, shortly after six, he answered it promptly, though with a beating heart. Perhaps the gangster chief might be arrested to-night!

It was not Slash Jack whose voice he heard. Instead, the smoothly assured tones of Tom Leven came over the wire. Even at the sound of the lawyer's voice, Doctor Honor felt crowded.

"That you, Doctor Honor? Yes. I am already in touch with Mrs. G.," the unctuous voice declared confidently. "That affair promises well—very well. However, there is another small matter, which came up to-night, just as I was leaving my office. Something that requires very delicate handling. When my client made his wishes known, I thought of you at once, doctor."

Justus J. Honor scowled, and clinched one large, well-padded hand. The subtle mockery of the other's intonation was maddening, yet impossible to resent.

"Can you come and dine with me?" Leven went on blandly. "Oh, quite informally, of course. I'd like to have you meet my friend, Mr. Warner Seldon."

The good doctor started. Warner Seldon! Why, that must be the vice president of the Continental Trust Co. —the very man whom he had marked down as a victim, with Elbert Goodrich. But for the accident of that fight in the Tivoli Night Club, through which he had scraped acquaintance with the latter, Warner Selden might well be dead, now, and Justus J. Honor the gainer thereby. Perhaps, thought the doctor, eagerly, it might not be too late, even now. Perhaps that was why Leven had phoned. He knew that Seldon was a gambler, that he had played the stock market, and had lost heavily. He more than suspected that Seldon had used the bank's money.

Why should the vice president of a great bank consult a notorious criminal lawyer, unless he was short in his accounts? Justus J. Honor licked thin lips, and smiled that rapacious, mirthless smile that made him resemble a hungry shark. He would be very glad to help Mr. Seldon out of his troubles

—at a price. Yes, even out of the greatest trouble of all, which was the trouble of living! However, he had no particular wish to kill the fellow, if he could make more out of him alive.

Well, he would go and dine with Leven, at any rate. He would meet Mr. Warner Seldon and size him up; and it would be strange indeed if he could not turn that meeting to account. With the lessening of his more acute anxieties, Justus J. Honor, finding himself still out of jail and unthreatened, began to believe that he was extraordinarily clever and cunning.

Though Mr. Leven had said it would be an informal affair, the doctor took time to change into dinner clothes. It was one of the characteristics of the personality he had built up when he abandoned the name of Karl B. Krook and assumed that of Justus J. Honor, to be meticulously well dressed at all times, in a modestly sedate and unostentatious manner. Krook had been flamboyant, inclined to violent neckties, loud checks and off-color diamonds; Honor was dignified, conservative, and very exact in dress. He wore dark-colored fabrics, soberly cut, even a trifle old-fashioned, but he was always point-device.

Wherefore, it was the very model of a gentleman of the old school who set out, half an hour later, to dine with a lawyer and a banker. His dinner jacket fitted to perfection; his linen was immaculate. His bearded face was lean, and scored with deep lines; his mustache was cunningly trimmed to give him an air of quiet kindliness, shortened a bit at the corners, so that he seemed on the verge of smiling. Yet it was long enough to hide his lips, whose tight, rapacious lines would have belied all these pretensions. His pale-blue eyes, naturally rather prominent, had receded beneath overhanging brows when he succeeded, by determined banting, in reducing the redundant flesh which had marked Karl B. Krook; but now, after repeated doses of thyroid extract, they began to bulge noticeably.

Doctor Honor surveyed their glassy stare in his mirror, and scowled. Those were not the eyes of a kindly, ascetic physician. They were hard, cold, and ophidian. He must be very reserved, he decided, and a bit shy; he would keep his gaze upon his plate.

Mr. Leven had reserved a private dining room at the Magnificent Hotel. With Warner Seldon, he awaited the doctor's coming. Empty glasses stood on the table before both men, as Doctor Honor entered.

The lawyer wore a black suit and a black Ascot tie which made him seem more than ever ministerial. As always, he filled the room; though he was not a large man, he had the faculty of making his companions feel crowded and small. Seldon sat in a corner, against the wall, and, at first, Doctor Honor scarcely noticed his presence.

Leven came forward to give his guest a soft, warm hand, murmuring what might have been a benediction. Then he turned to present the banker.

"This is my friend, Warner Seldon, doctor. This is Doctor Justus J. Honor of whom I spoke to you, Seldon. He's a very clever man—is the doctor; very clever. Ahem! Yes, and quite a philanthropist, in his way. All heart, you know. Do anything in the world for a friend of his."

Doctor Honor flushed darkly, and scowled, and then forgot his irritation in examining the banker. Warner Seldon was a thin, small man, with a huge head. His high forehead bulged into two prominent bumps, one over each deep-set eye, and a lank and heavy lock of hair fell down across it. His eyes were hot and feverish, and glowed oddly from deep sockets; his nose was high and aquiline. But he had a pouting, thick-lipped mouth, like a Cupid's bow that drooped too much at the corners,

and his chin was receding and weak. His whole face fell away from that bulging brow and those hot eyes into an anticlimax.

He shook hands limply, muttering something. His feverish eyes peered into Doctor Honor's for an instant, and then dropped. His mouth sagged wearily; a trembling hand reached out after his glass. This was a bold dreamer, decided Justus J. Honor; a man capable of great plans, but too irresolute to carry them out; a man consumed with self-importance, constantly admiring his own genius, and as constantly fearing that others might not recognize it. He would always dramatize himself, and, throughout his acting, he would always be on the alert for mockery. He must be very respectful to Warner Seldon, decided the doctor.

"Mr. Seldon is first vice president of the Continental Trust, as perhaps you know," Leven explained.

The little banker straightened his sagging shoulders, tossed back that hanging lock of black hair, and thrust two fingers into the front of his waistcoat. It gave him a faint likeness to the paintings of Napoleon Bonaparte. Doctor Honor, watching, saw that he knew this, and prided himself upon it, and fancied that he would ape that autocrat in the scope of his plans. Napoleon was no model for a banker, the doctor reflected, smothering a grin. He had been too much the gambler.

"Of course, I know who Mr. Seldon is," he said aloud. "I've read his name in the papers often enough; yes, and I've seen his picture, too. I knew him at once." He made his tone admiring, almost sycophantic.

From a huge, silver shaker, Leven poured cocktails all around. The three men drank. The lawyer's glass held scarcely a teaspoonful, and Honor decided it would be best to keep sober, too. But the banker drank deep, and his hot eyes turned hotter and redder.

Throughout the meal which followed, Mr. Seldon was almost mute. He ate little, but drank as often as his host offered liquor. Doctor Honor, clinging to his rôle of the dignified physician, was abstemious; the lawyer, too, drank but little. But he talked, smoothly and well, always in that orotund, almost episcopal, fashion of his, like some prince of the church unbending with beloved parishioners. Doctor Honor listened and admired his front. He must watch himself with his lawyer, he knew; the man was altogether too smooth.

Dinner over, Leven produced oily, aromatic cigars, such as one seldom sees in America. When they were lighted and going well, he proceeded to business.

"Mr. Seldon," he said, almost casually, "is tired of his life. He wants to 'end it all,' as the saying goes, and make a new start elsewhere."

The banker's hot eyes glowed. He leaned forward, tossing back that long, lank lock of hair that hung over his bulging forehead. "I'm cramped, confined and hampered," he declared feverishly. "I can't live this way. At the bank, I'm held down by men of no vision; tangled in red tape—smothered. At home, I'm ridden by my social position, forced to conform to petty conventions. I can't stand it any longer. I was born to be free, to lead and to govern, not to be tied to a silly whirligig!"

He was scarcely coherent. He gestured widely, knocking over a glass, and his weak lips worked as though he was about to cry. Doctor Honor moved uncomfortably, wondering if the man were quite sane. True, he had been drinking too much; but, drunk or sober, no well-balanced individual would talk like this. He "wanted to be free, to govern." Indeed! It was ridiculous.

"How much are you short?" asked the doctor irritably. He would bring the fellow back to earth!

Seldon dropped his inadequate chin into his collar, thrust two fingers into the front of his waistcoat and glared from beneath scowling brows. He was absurdly like the paintings of Napoleon; like a caricature of Napoleon, rather.

"Short? Where? What do you mean?"

"You've been dipping into the bank's funds, haven't you? You've looted the till?"

"Sir! You insult me." Seldon was furious; in the interests of peace, Mr. Leven was forced to interfere.

"You've misunderstood, doctor," he interpolated, with that benevolent smile. "Mr. Seldon is actuated by the highest motives. And he hasn't misappropriated one cent of the bank's money."

Thus far, he was very serious, though his black eyes regarded Doctor Honor askance; but now he thrust his tongue into a cheek and winked furtively.

"Not yet!" said Leven softly.

Seldon would have spoken further, but the attorney cut him short. "I'm sure that we shall save time, and avoid —ahem!—further injury to your sensibilities, if I explain your plans to the doctor, very briefly."

The banker subsided, muttering, and Leven began to speak, always with that faint undertone of mockery.

"You see, doctor, Mr. Seldon has seen the light. He's been converted by a very able, devoted and charming missionary—Madame Kolovski—Sonia Kolovski, from Archangel. She has shown our friend the sinfulness of wasting such genius, such personality, as his in a frivolously effete nest of capitalism like Chicopolis. And our friend has, consequently, resolved to depart for Russia, and there to furnish that suffering country with the dictator it needs."

Justus J. Honor glanced sidelong at the banker, expecting a furious outbreak. The fellow had resented his question angrily enough. But Warner Seldon sat still, two fingers thrust into his waistcoat, chin buried in his collar, a fatuous smirk on his weak mouth. His hot eyes glowed feverishly, and the doctor knew that in fancy he was already Emperor of Russia—the liberator. Surely, the fellow must be crazy. He was crazy. But when crazy men have the handling of money, sane ones may feather their nests.

"Go on," urged the doctor. "This is interesting."

"And so, Mr. Seldon has decided to leave us and go with Madame Kolovski. But Chicopolis is so conventional, so unreasonable, so thoroughly infected with the poison of bourgeois morality, that his motives might be understood. In short, Mr. Seldon hesitates to go openly. He's afraid his wife wouldn't like it."

At this last shaft, the little banker did stir restlessly. His hollow cheeks flushed, and he started to interrupt, but Leven went smoothly on.

"Besides, there are the sinews of war. Even a genius can't expect to conquer half a world without funds. And Mr. Seldon's personal funds are, unfortunately, somewhat depleted. Consequently, he thinks it would be best for him to die. Then he can be resurrected, and leave for Russia quite unhindered —together with the funds of the Continental Trust."

"For the cause!" explained Seldon, flushing. His eyes had a glassy stare. "It is the workers' money; the hard-earned coin of wage slaves, hoarded by bourgeois capitalists. I take it for them to use it for the emancipation of wage slaves everywhere. It is just! It is right! But——"

"But," finished Leven unemotionally, "since our friend doesn't care to go to jail, it must be done surreptitiously, as it were. And so I suggested calling on you, Doctor Honor. Seldon wants to die and be born again; to efface himself, and to develop an entirely new personality. And, knowing that you were

an expert in such matters——" He waved a hand.

Justus J. Honor flinched, and looked closely at his host. His bulging eyes were hard and suspicious. What did the man mean? Could he have guessed that Justus J. Honor had been Karl B. Krook? That he had had personal experience of such a change of personality? That was impossible, of course. And yet——

"What are you hinting at?" demanded the doctor with sudden roughness. "Come out into the open, and say what you mean!"

Leven stared at him from inscrutable black eyes, his brows raised in astonishment which the doctor felt to be hypocritical. "Mean? Why, my dear fellow, nothing offensive, I assure you. In my feeble way, I was attempting a compliment."

But the doctor was not entirely pacified. He was under a strain, after all. It is not comfortable to be a fugitive from justice, even when one's tracks are well covered.

"Well, go ahead," he grumbled, his hackles still raised. "Get down to cases. Just what do you want of me? Let's have it right away."

"We'd like to have you arrange Mr. Seldon's demise, quietly and without scandal; as you did—ahem!—as you did Goodrich's."

At that, Warner Seldon cried out an objection. He didn't want to die, not really to die! But his protest was drowned by Justus J. Honor's outbreak. The worthy physician was aroused. For the moment, he had shaken off Leven's dominance; he no longer felt crowded and oppressed. He was suspicious, affronted, angry. He leaped to his feet so that his chair fell over, and leaned forward to thrust his face close against the lawyer's.

"You're going too far," he warned, his eyes glassy with fear and rage. "You can't talk like that to me! How dare you hint or suggest—— How dare you make it appear that——"

His protest trailed off. When it came to wording his meaning, Doctor Honor realized that his hands were tied; that he dared not resent the other's slurs, or even insist that he make his meaning plain. In brief, Leven was hinting that there had been something discreditable about Elbert Goodrich's death. So there had been. Better to let Seldon think no worse than this, than to force the statement that Goodrich had been murdered.

Mr. Leven's black eyes stared into his with hypnotic intensity. The lawyer was quite unperturbed, even smiling. Honor subsided gradually, muttering, while the dark flush died out of his bearded cheeks. As his host still eyed him, he turned very pale, and dropped his own sullen eyes. Fancying some covert threat, he even managed a lame apology. "Been drinkin' too much, maybe," he mumbled, shamefacedly.

In his heart was black despair. This lawyer had bested him. From to-night on, he was no more than Tom Leven's creature. He was enslaved. Then he took heart of grace. After all, Leven could help him, would help him. It was to Leven's interest that he should remain free.

The lawyer accepted his apology with that benignant smile of his, which seemed to forgive all the foibles of imperfect humanity, to whelm the entire world in an ocean of spiritual love.

"My dear fellow! Don't mention it; don't even think of it again. And now that's settled, shall we go on with our business?"

His personality filled the room. The others seemed ineffectual and negligible.

"You must arrange, then, that Warner Seldon shall die and be buried, and so our friend may be free to leave Chicopolis. He'll be generous, I'm sure."

Justus J. Honor scowled. "You don't know what you're asking," he ob-

jected. "It's easy enough to fake a suicide, but to provide a body is a different matter. Burking is out of date; it's too dangerous now."

The lawyer rose. "Think it over," he urged. "Don't decide to-night. There's no great hurry. Take your time. I'm sure you'll be able to work out something satisfactory."

The bland words conveyed a hidden threat. But Justus J. Honor shook his head stubbornly. He wasn't going to be bullied into anything as dangerous as this.

He examined the little banker attentively, then looked at Leven. How much, he wondered, did Leven care whether this man ever got to Russia or not? As long as he was paid, little enough, he fancied,. Well, he'd have to think about it. But if Leven agreed to——

"I'll let you know in a day or so," he promised. "Meanwhile, you'll keep after that lady I spoke of, Mr. Leven?"

CHAPTER IV.

AN ARREST.

IT was after midnight when Doctor Honor returned to his rooms. His mood varied between illogical gayety and a depression which was not unwarranted. He dreamed roseate dreams of future wealth and security, based on his alliance with the attorney; and then those dreams burst like bubbles as he reflected that he was wholly in the other's power. Leven had mastered him, and he did not like to be under control. Moreover, he distrusted the lawyer. Leven was too clever; he could read men's minds; he saw through Justus J. Honor and into the cringing soul of Karl K. Krook, who was wanted for murder.

Recalling the attorney's bland smile, and that veiled mockery which lay behind his smoothest words, Doctor Honor shuddered. Had he bettered himself, he wondered, by attempting to escape from Slash Jack Padrone's clutches? Would not Tom Leven be more dangerous than the gangster? Why couldn't people leave him alone? Why must he be persecuted thus, when all he wanted was to enjoy the money he had earned?

Tears of self-pity filled Justus J. Honor's bulging eyes. He sobbed in maudlin grief as he fumbled uncertainly for his keys.

Inside his rooms, the telephone was ringing persistently, in long, repeated peals which indicated that central had been trying for some time to get an answer. Doctor Honor shook his head, to clear it, and stumbled through the darkened office to his desk. Some importunate patient, no doubt! Why couldn't folks get sick in daylight, anyway?

"Hello!" he cried thickly. "Hello! This Honor speakin'!"

A remembered voice, softly suave, yet urgent, came over the wire; and at the sound of it Doctor Honor gasped.

"I have a message for Doctor Krook —Karl B. Krook. Can you deliver it to him, doctor?"

The doctor sat limply down in his swivel chair. "Yes," he groaned.

"You know who I am, don't you?" the voice went on inexorably. "I'm sure you do."

"Yes," groaned the miserable man once more. "Oh, yes, I know!"

It was Padrone, of course. Who else in all Chicopolis knew that Justus J. Honor was Karl B. Krook? Why, oh why, had he been fool enough to tell the gangster that? Yet he couldn't help it. His life had been at stake, and he had been too much frightened to invent a plausible lie.

"Yes," he said, aloud. "I know. You're——"

"Never mind!" that pleasant voice warned him sharply. "No use in repeating names unnecessarily. You

know, and that's enough. You know what I want, too; don't you?"

The doctor knew that, but he tried hopelessly to deny it. Padrone paid no attention to his protests. The suave voice ran on implacably. "I want money, of course. And I've got to have it, doctor. You realize that, don't you? You know the circumstances. I had meant to be easy on you, to let you off entirely, except for a little cigarette money, maybe, but the way things are, I'll have to have at least ten thousand. I've got to get away for a while, see? And I need help. My mouthpiece won't let loose of the fall money, so you've got to come across."

Through the apparent assurance of that pleaant voice, Justus J. Honor fancied he could detect an inner disquiet. Slash Jack had no intention of "being easy on him," he knew well enough. The gangster had intended to bleed him white. But now, in imminent fear of arrest, hiding somewhere in an attic or cellar, perhaps, he would be glad to get even ten thousand, instead of a hundred and fifty. He had imagined that Honor would rejoice at being let off so easily. He was trying to curry favor, to pretend friendship, and to appeal to that "honor" which is proverbially—but never actually—found among thieves.

The physician's brain was active now. He thought smoothly, logically, with cold calculation. He had no pity for Slash Jack. He would have no mercy upon him. Padrone would have stripped him of his last cent, if he could; and now, when Padrone was in danger, the fellow had impudence enough to make a friendly appeal! Let him look to himself!

"Why, that's kind of you," said the doctor, aloud, in dulcet tones. "I was sure you wouldn't hold me up, Jack. Of course, if you need it, I can let you have ten grand. You sure that's enough?"

He must have been too complaisant, for the other's tone changed. The gangster's voice was hard now, and threatening. "When I want more, I'll send for it, see? And you'd better come across, too. Don't try to slaver me. Bring ten grand to-morrow morning."

"Why, certainly! You needn't act ugly; I haven't said I wouldn't, have I? Where to?"

"Be at Union Station, upper level, at noon to-morrow, with ten grand in big bills: fifties and hundreds, with a few twenties. Wait there until somebody comes."

"But how'll I know him?"

"Oh, you'll know him all right. All you got to do is hand it over, see? Anybody tells you to give him ten grand, you do it, that's all."

Padrone's voice was blustering, yet uncertain. Shrewdly, the doctor reasoned that he would not trust any other to get this money; he would come himself. Yet he did not want the doctor to know. This would be easy.

The gangster was speaking again. "And, mind, Krook! Mind what I say: You try any funny business and do any little thing that looks queer, and I'll knock you off if it's my last act. I'd as soon go out in a rowdy-dowdy as sit in hot wires, anyhow. So don't you try to double cross me, see?"

"Oh, I'll be there," promised Justus J. Honor, striving to put a convincing quaver into his voice. Padrone was frightened, he could see; the gangster was in a panic which had shaken his usual poise. Otherwise, he would never have spoken thus over the telephone, for some inquisitive operator to hear, perhaps—and understand. He would never have appointed a meeting twelve hours in advance, giving his victim ample opportunity to notify the police.

No, Slash Jack Padrone was all through. His nerve was gone; he was rattled. No doubt, he believed that he

had sized Justus J. Honor up on that other occasion; that he had read the doctor through, and knew that he was too much a coward to attempt a double cross.

Justus J. Honor was a physical coward, beyond doubt. He was very much afraid of pain; the mere thought of being shot could make him tremble. Yet the doctor was, in his own way, a man of some courage. He was able to take a big chance, to run great risks, as long as he was not in the actual, physical presence of danger. With Slash Jack pointing a gun at him, the doctor would have been helpless, a willing tool; but, while Slash Jack was still miles away, he could face boldly enough a future risk.

Here was a twist of psychology too deep for the gangster, and it was one which might ruin him yet. He believed that Justus J. Honor would pay over the money because of fear, and would play square because he dared not to do otherwise. He did not realize that a voice over the telephone was less intimidating than a gunman in the flesh. He would have been surprised to hear Doctor Honor laugh contemptuously as he hung up the receiver.

"Oh, I'll be there," he said. "I'll be there, with bells on!"

He went to bed and slept peacefully. But, first, he set his alarm clock for six in the morning.

When its shrill clamor broke the silence of dawn, Doctor Honor rose, yawning, and went out at once. The streets were deserted, the shops still closed, but half a dozen blocks away was an all-night drug store. He went in there, shut himself into the telephone booth, and called up police headquarters.

"Police?" he inquired, in a hoarse, gruff voice. "You look for Padrone? This here—now—Slash Jack Padrone? You police wants him?" He did his best to assume a thickly Germanic accent, for he had no wish to be recognized.

The police sergeant at the other end of the wire barked excited questions. "Who are you? Where you talking from? What do you know?"

"It makes nothing. Lissen good, mine friend. You want Slash Jack? Vell! Then you watch Union Station, see? Watch there good, at twelluf o'clock to-day noon, and he maybe comes."

Then he hung up and left the store. As he went out, the phone began to ring furiously, but he did not pause. By the time the sleepy clerk had answered it, he would be out of sight, and he had never entered that drug store before. The clerk would not be able to identify him.

Doctor Honor went home in a cheerful mood, supported by a sense of duty well done. He would go to the station at noon, and take with him ten thousand dollars in large bills, as directed by Slash Jack. But, if this morning's message bore fruit, Slash Jack would be caught before he could demand payment. There was but one danger: that the gangster might be arrested while Doctor Honor was delivering the goods. If this should happen, Slash Jack's suspicions might well be roused, and he might shoot. Well, that was a chance he must take. If all went well, Padrone would scarcely survive his arrest, anyhow. Unless he killed Doctor Honor before the police saw him, he would never do it, for the police would shoot first.

Yet the doctor went to the station, at noon, in an unenviable frame of mind. There was that chance, after all—and at every sudden sound he flinched, fearing a lead slug.

Purposely, he was half a minute late. As he climbed the stairs to the upper level, the noon whistles were shrilling out from the stockyards near by. At the head of the stairs, he saw two heav-

ily built men wearing square-toed shoes, and smiled thinly. If he died, he would be avenged.

He reached the platform, and walked its length once, and halfway back. As he passed the double doors of the men's room, he imagined a movement within, but walked on, unheeding. His spine tingled; his breath came unevenly; he braced himself for a bullet.

Reaching the end of the long platform, he turned to retrace his steps. Yes! Some one was in the doorway of the men's room; a slender figure clad in the baggy uniform of a station porter, which was oddly incongruous with the man's alert carriage. He mopped his face with a soiled handkerchief; a red cap was pulled low over his eyes. Doctor Honor could not see the fellow's face, yet he knew instinctively who awaited him. He felt a sudden twinge of fear. Suppose the police failed to spot their quarry? Who ever looks at a red-cap porter? Why, Padrone might have been working here in the station ever since that shooting!

Justus J. Honor advanced reluctantly. Great drops of perspiration formed on his forehead and trickled down into his beard. He puckered quivering lips, and tried to whistle, but could not for his trembling. He looked about, here and there, in a desperate attempt to appear unaware of that waiting figure.

Then things began to happen. There was a sudden commotion in the men's room; some one shouted urgently; a stout man with a derby hat began to run heavily that way from the other end of the platform. Another man thrust Doctor Honor to one side and ran forforward, tugging at his hip pocket.

Slash Jack Padrone saw, and cast one desperate look about him. There was no way of escape; he was hemmed in. He leaped forward, into the center of the platform, dropping his hand so that Justus J. Honor saw his full face, its smoothly handsome oval distorted with rage. The threadlike scar that ran from beneath his left eye across his face flamed suddenly into a brilliant scarlet line that vanished beneath a celluloid collar at the right side of his neck. He was scarcely ten yards away; fascinated, Doctor Honor watched the pulsations of that scarlet thread.

Padrone's black eyes danced, glowing softly until they seemed phosphorescent. In every line of his tense, graceful body danger spoke clearly. Justus J. Honor was oddly thrilled, all the while that fear gripped. In a curious exhilaration, he waited for death—that death which he feared so terribly.

It was over in an instant, yet the tableau printed itself upon the doctor's brain. He seemed to have stood thus, paralyzed, waiting, for a thousand years, while the policemen closed in. The fellow who had pushed him aside was running toward Slash Jack, but he moved like some figure in a slow-motion moving-picture film. Beyond, that other officer seemed to stand quite still in the posture of advance, like a statue of some Marathon runner, Honor thought, whimsically. His fat face was red; his mouth was open; he shouted incoherently.

Slash Jack took one more step, to clear the man who had passed Doctor Honor. He ignored him and the other policemen; his flaming black eyes were fixed upon the shrinking physician.

"You dirty crook!" he said softly, with deadly menace. "Cross me, would you?" And then, in a tone of regretful wonder: "I didn't think you'd have the guts."

To Justus J. Honor, waiting in agony for death, his movements seemed theatrically deliberate. A flat, black automatic pistol appeared in his hand; dully, the doctor wondered whence it had come. Already, a policeman was reaching for his shoulder, but Slash Jack evaded his grip, still eying Doctor Honor. Would he never, never shoot?

A sharp, whiplike explosion, merged with the heavier roar of a heavy-caliber police pistol. Justus J. Honor closed his eyes; his knees bent beneath him. Where had he been hit, he wondered.

He heard confused shoutings and exclamations; all about him, the people began to run this way and that, aimlessly. Amazed at finding himself alive, the doctor opened his eyes again.

Strange, how centuries could be compressed into half a dozen ticks of the clock! That fat policeman who had rushed past him just now was standing on widespread legs, three strides away. He held a police-model revolver, from whose lowered muzzle a faint wisp of smoke still trailed.

Slash Jack Padrone was moving now. His knees were bending slowly; he began to crumple together, to shrink in stature. It was like a telescope being slid together. He still faced the doctor, and in his forehead, between the eyes, was a small, blue hole from which one drop of crimson oozed. His black eyes were shut.

A metallic clatter made Doctor Honor start convulsively. The automatic pistol which had hung loosely in Padrone's right hand fell to the platform. The gangster folded together, and doubled into himself like a doll when the sawdust trickles out. He lay on his face on the platform, inert, pathetic, like an empty bundle of clothes.

Abruptly, Justus J. Honor's sense of timelessness vanished. As though the vast gears of time had meshed once more, as though the operator of this motion-picture projector had speeded up his crank to normal, events began to race past, treading on each other's heels.

The policemen rushed together, milling about that prostrate form. A crowd of morbid, curious ones formed, as by magic, and pushed and elbowed each other in the effort to see what had happened. The officer whose shot had saved Doctor Honor's life put his revolver away and turned, grinning stupidly in an embarrassed fashion. He produced a red bandanna handkerchief and mopped his forehead.

"That was close!" he said, amiably enough, approaching Justus J. Honor. "Half a second, and he'd 've punctured you. Wha'd he have against you, anyhow?"

The doctor saw a slow suspicion in the man's dull eyes. His stupid smile faded; his red face grew stern and inquisitorial. "Say!" he barked. "Hold on! Stand still, you! I wanna talk to you."

He reached back, fumbling for the revolver he had just holstered. But Doctor Honor did not pause. The pushing, prying crowd grew with each second, and now a gabbing eddy surrounded the doctor and drew him away. Folk milled and clamored, elbowing each other, shouting incoherent questions, fighting for a closer look at the dead man. Thankfully, Justus J. Honor allowed himself to be submerged and swept away. To the policeman, it must have looked, he thought, as though he had been hustled off against his will. At least, he hoped so.

Shoving manfully, using elbows and shoulders with a will, Doctor Honor fought his way down the long platform to the nearest stairway. It was thronged with people, but he managed to struggle through them. Now he was downstairs, and out of the crowd. Glancing back, he fancied he could see an angry red face leaning over the rail; he heard a vague shout: "Come back here!"

But the roar of an incoming train drowned it out, and the influx of passengers fighting their way upward separated him from the thinning crowd. He had escaped.

Drawing a quivering sigh, Justus J. Honor made his way on bending legs to the carriage entrance, and beckoned

to a taxi man. Reaction overcame him; he was scarcely able to climb into the car, and the chauffeur stared at him uneasily. "Say, boss, you sick? You hadn't oughta be out alone. I'd oughta get——"

The doctor cut him short. "I'm all right. Perfectly all right. Somebody slammed a suit case into me; knocked my wind out. Drive me to M Street, and hurry up about it."

Muttering, the chauffeur obeyed, and Doctor Honor leaned back in his seat and wiped his forehead. He had been very close to death, and it unsettled his nerves. His heart pounded terribly; must be the after effects of thyroid extract, though it had been a week, now, since he stopped that. Well, anyhow, he was safe from Slash Jack Padrone. Slash Jack was dead; he couldn't blackmail Justus J. Honor now. The good doctor's savings were safe from him.

At that reflection, the doctor experienced a sudden surge of relief and confidence. Why, he was on the up grade now! He was riding them high and wide; he was sitting on top of the world. This had been an omen. His luck had changed. He had risked a lot in squealing on the gangster, but he had won. Now, Mrs. Goodrich would settle; he could feel it.

Suppose that policeman had recognized him. Pshaw! What of it? He couldn't be connected with Padrone, now; the fellow was dead, and no one else would know his secret. Padrone's gang was broken up, its members fugitives from justice. No, his luck would hold; he'd never be connected with the gangster's death—or, if he was, it would be as a good citizen who had helped the police to make an arrest.

His luck was in, and he would play it to the limit. He'd take on that little matter for Leven; he would agree to help Warner Seldon disappear. He could fake a suicide for him, easily enough, and then do some plastic operation, perhaps; change the shape of the fellow's nose, disguise his appearance somehow, and ship him out of the country—for a fee.

There was one drawback, of course: the corpus delicti. When a man died, even though he committed suicide, there should be a body to bury—and it must be one identifiable as the dead man. Might stage a fake drowning, and pretend that Seldon's body had been carried off by the river current; might leave his clothes on the bank, with a note of some sort.

But that had been done so often, it would be suspicious in itself.

A slow, cruel smile dawned on Justus J. Honor's face, and spread until his drooping mustache could not hide its inhuman malice. He had an idea! Its humor appealed to him; the doctor chuckled and laughed aloud, slapping his knee. Would Leven kick up a fuss about it? Pshaw! He wouldn't care, as long as he got his pay. And if he did? He needn't know anything about it until afterward; and then he couldn't say anything for fear of implicating himself.

Doctor Justus J. Honor roared with laughter, rolling about in the cab until his chauffeur looked around, staring uneasily. He choked with mirth, for he had a keen sense of humor, although one rather grim and perverted. This would be the hugest joke!

He would do it. He'd almost do it for nothing, just for the sake of an immortal jest.

CHAPTER V.

AN AGREEMENT.

THAT very afternoon, the good doctor telephoned to Tom Leven's office. "Hello? Mr. Leven? About that little matter we were discussing last night—you remember? Well, I've decided to undertake it."

"Ah! I thought you might." The lawyer's smooth tones conveyed a subtle

menace. It was as though he had said, "I knew you wouldn't dare refuse."

After a tiny pause, Leven continued: "I have a friend, then, who wishes to consult you professionally. I'll have him call at your office, shall I?"

Doctor Honor paused in his turn. Since the apparition of Wright's ghost, hallucination though he assured himself that it must have been, he was not too comfortable in these rooms. He had almost decided to move. However, it might seem suspicious. Perhaps he'd better stay awhile; it wouldn't be for long.

"Why, yes," he answered slowly. "Suppose you bring him around, yourself?"

"Oh, no, no!" Mr. Leven's disclaimer was emphatic. "I'd much rather not be mixed up with it. I mean, you'll be able to diagnose the case much better without the presence of another layman. I'll send our friend over to-morrow, at eleven o'clock, say?"

Doctor Honor grinned to himself. So Leven didn't want to mix in the matter further? All the better!

"Very well," he agreed. "I'll expect your friend at eleven."

Prompt to the minute, Mr. Warner Seldon entered the doctor's office next morning at eleven. Honor was engaged with one of his occasional patients, but the banker rapped sharply at the closed consulting-room door, none the less. When Doctor Honor opened, he stood there, frowning at his watch—a self-important little man who concealed his evident nervousness beneath a front of fussy aggressiveness.

"Three minutes past the hour," complained Mr. Seldon, tossing back that lock of hair and looking more Napoleonic than ever. "Am I to be kept waiting?"

Beneath that bulging brow, the little man's black eyes stared out feverishly. His slack lips twitched, his inadequate chin was unsteady. He was frightened, Doctor Honor decided, chuckling inwardly.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Seldon. I'll be ready for you in five minutes."

Justus J. Honor got rid of his patient in short order, and invited the banker to his inner office.

It took some time to soothe the little man's injured dignity; but after a while his first anger, born of an inner trepidation, subsided, and he began to talk grandiloquently of his plans for the future. Once in Russia, under the guidance of Madame Kolovski—a genius, if ever there was one!—he could begin to fulfill his destiny.

Doctor Honor listened with increasing impatience, and, at last, cut his guest short. "All very interesting, no doubt, Mr. Seldon. But, to come right down to brass tacks, what do you want of me?"

The other frowned majestically, and thrust a hand into the front of his waistcoat, and tossed back that overhanging lock of hair. But his Napoleonic pose did not very greatly impress Justus J. Honor.

"You want it to appear that you've killed yourself, isn't that it?" the doctor continued briskly. "You want me to help you stage a fake suicide, to provide a body which may be identified as yours, so that you can go to Russia with your lady friend, and the funds of the Continental Trust, unhindered by the police." And, as Seldon frowned more blackly, and began to splutter protests, he finished: "Either come clean, and talk plainly, or get out. My time has value, too. Say what you want, in so many words—there's no one within earshot, you know—or else go along home and let me work."

Warner Seldon hesitated; obviously, he was very angry. Then he swallowed his wrath, perforce. "We-ell, yes." He smiled feebly. "After all, there's nothing like plain speaking. Even Nap—even the greatest of men have always

respected boldness. Let it pass, doctor. No doubt, you were in the right."

Mr. Seldon waved a magnanimous hand, as who should say to a waiting executioner, "Go! I have pardoned this creature. Let him live." The doctor wondered with some amusement what Mr. Warner Seldon's subordinates at the Continental Trust Co. thought of him.

"You were in the right; time is precious," pursued the banker. "Yes, that is exactly what I wish: to vanish from this bourgeois community, and to begin a new life! And a—'fake suicide,' as you put it, would doubtless be the best arrangement. Will you do it?"

"It's a difficult matter," declared Doctor Honor. "You'll have to trust me implicitly." And he smiled, very much as the wolf must have smiled at Little Red Riding Hood. "I'll have to obtain a suitable body, and to make the necessary alterations in its appearance, you see."

Trusting to the average layman's childlike faith in the ability of a physician to work miracles, he spoke lightly, as though it were an easy matter to remake a dead man's features. Warner Seldon nodded, completely convinced that it could be done.

"Then, of course, I'll have to have you here, and the body here, so we can make the shift, and slip you out the back way while I put the other body into a coffin, and all that."

Seldon shuddered. "W-will that be necessary?" he objected feebly. "Can't you let me slip out first, and obtain a b-body afterward?"

"Certainly not! I must have you here alive, but apparently on the verge of death, for some other physician to see. Can't take any chances, especially with the insurance companies. You're insured, I suppose?"

"Er—what? Insured? I? Why, no." Mr. Seldon hesitated, and looked at the floor. "No, I've never taken out life insurance; couldn't pass the examinations."

Doctor Honor gave a sigh of relief. Even though that wretched investigator, Bill Wright, was dead, he felt a certain uneasiness regarding life-insurance companies. His dealings with them, thus far, had not been lucrative. One of them had driven him out of Blankburg; Elbert Goodrich's widow was still holding back what he felt was his rightful share of that banker's policies in another. It was much better, he decided, to deal with private persons, instead of with insurance companies; they were less inquisitive.

"Very well," said the doctor briskly. "Everything can be arranged for a price. And before we go any further, we'd better discuss that."

The other shuddered visibly. "It's uncanny," he objected. "I don't like the idea. Fancy bargaining for one's own suicide—even if it is a fake suicide."

"Oh, you'll soon get used to the idea." Justus J. Honor grinned to himself behind his hand, lest his guest perceive the quality of that cruel smile. At least, he'd got this little blowhard to the point. Seldon was ready to discuss terms.

"Can't you arrange all that with Leven?" asked Seldon nervously. "I'd much rather not be harassed with details."

Details indeed! The fellow was talking about his own ostensible death, about his disappearance from Chicopolis, and about deserting his wife and family in order to depart for a very unsettled country—carrying a fortune in money—and he called all that "details"!

"Leven won't do it," the doctor said patiently. "He even refused to come here with you. He doesn't want to be involved, in case of any hitch."

Warner Seldon paled; his loose lips quivered. "Hitch?" he quavered. "In

case of a hitch? But I can't take any risks!"

"Risks? Why, you fool!" Justus J. Honor stopped short, biting his lip. Mustn't frighten the poor idot away! But if he fancied that such a wild dream as his could be made into reality without risk, he must be insane! "Don't be nervous," urged the doctor, in his most suavely professional manner. "Just trust to me, and you'll be quite safe. But to get back to the point——"

"The point?"

Doctor Honor controlled his impatience with an effort. The man was clearly demented; he wasn't safe to be at large. It was doing a public service to aid the Continental Trust Co. to get rid of such a creature. Again Justus J. Honor grinned, as he wondered what the officials of that bank would say if they knew just how he planned to accomplish that service.

"I mean," he said aloud, "that you will have to pay me well for managing this affair. I shall have to spend a lot of money; why, even the detail of obtaining and preparing a suitable dead body will be expensive."

Seldon was white and shaking. "Don't mention that again," he begged. "Just tell me how much you want."

"Two hundred thousand—net!" replied the doctor promptly.

He had given some thought to this matter. He wanted as much as he could get, yet he dared not ask too much. After all, Seldon wasn't short in his accounts—or so he claimed. He wasn't compelled to leave Chicopolis, as Goodrich had been. Unless he could get away with enough to make it worth while, over and above expenses, he wouldn't go at all. On the other hand, such a service as this was worth a good deal.

So Mr. Seldon seemed to feel, for he made no serious objection. "Two hundred thousand?" he repeated. "Isn't that a great deal of money?"

"I'm doing a lot for it. And besides, as I said, I'll have to spend a whole lot for"—he grinned again, as the other flinched—"for necessary expenses. So it'll be two hundred thousand—net, mind you! You can settle with Leven yourself; I shan't split with him. Take it or leave it."

The banker took it so promptly that Justus J. felt a twinge of regret that he had not asked for more. But, after all, that was a comfortable sum; and Slash Jack Padrone couldn't blackmail him out of any of it, and Tom Leven wouldn't dare. The lawyer was too deep in the scheme, himself. Besides, he would undoubtedly make Seldon settle with him in full.

"It's settled, then. And when would you like your demise to occur?"

Warner Seldon moved restlessly. "As soon as possible," he said. "This suspense is terrible!"

"I can be ready by to-morrow morning."

"Oh, no! Not quite so soon. I'd rather——" Warner Seldon paused, then took a deep breath, like a man about to dive into ice-cold water. "Let's make it Thursday, day after to-morrow. That will give me time to get some more cash together, down at the bank, and——"

"Thursday it is. Bring me the money, in large bills or coupon bonds —Liberty Bonds. You'd better not come here, though. Meet me at the public library, in the reading room, where the newspaper files are. I'll be there at ten o'clock. You can bring the money, wrapped in brown paper, and, when I get it, I'll tell you what to do next."

The doctor rose, but Seldon was not quite ready to go. "But I'd like to know just a little bit more," he objected. "What must I do?"

"Oh, nothing to speak of. I'll give you a dose—just something to make you feel upset and sick for a little while, so

I can convince another doctor that you've taken poison."

"No, no, no!" cried Seldon. "No other doctor!"

But Justus J. Honor overbore his objections. "Remember, I'm taking a bigger risk than you are. Suppose I had to account to the police, for an unidentified body, for instance. And if anybody should get suspicious, I must be able to prove you were poisoned. It can't rest on my bare word. I must have another doctor to see you, who'll be willing to swear you had taken poison. Moreover, you'll have to talk to him yourself and admit that you attempted suicide. Why, people might think I'd murdered you, otherwise!"

With a grave, concerned expression, Doctor Honor insisted upon this plan, and, presently, the other yielded. After all, it would be better, he conceded, to have all possible evidence to prove that he had died by his own hand. Then, when a body had been buried in his grave, nobody could dream that he was alive and happy, in Russia.

"No one, indeed!" agreed Justus J. Honor.

CHAPTER VI.

ENCOURAGING PROGRESS.

NEXT morning, Tom Leven telephoned. "Everything is coming beautifully in your affair," he said. "I have arranged with that lady. You know the one I mean? Yes. Well, she is to meet me to-morrow, and make final settlement. What? Oh, yes, yes! In full, upon your own terms."

Doctor Honor breathed loudly. That had been more of a strain than he had realized. He'd feared the woman might act up nasty, might even go to the police. And that would have been embarrassing, even though they could prove nothing, especially with this new affair of Seldon's on hand.

"That's fine!" he agreed heartily. "I'm certainly obliged to you, Mr. Leven. I couldn't have done anything without you."

The lawyer chuckled benevolently. "Oh, I shall expect to be paid!" he declared. "I shall expect not less than twenty-five per cent."

"Why, that's very reasonable indeed!" Doctor Honor was much relieved. "I'll be awfully glad to do that."

What a fine, generous chap this man even was, after all! Justus J. felt a glow of positive affection for him. And so efficient, too!

"By the way," that benign and almost sacerdotal voice went on, "how about our banker friend? Have you made a diagnosis there?"

"Oh, quite!" Honor did not attempt to conceal the contemptuous amusement of his tone. "Napoleon, Junior, has made his deal. It's set to come off very soon, now, so you'd better plan to settle your account with him at once."

"I'll do that. The little swine is quite capable of sneaking off without paying me, if he dared. Thanks for the tip."

As Justus J. Honor hung up the phone, he congratulated himself anew upon his wisdom in retaining Leven. There was a man after his own heart, the worthy doctor told himself—a regular fellow. And he was obviously as disgusted with Warner Seldon as was Doctor Honor. He wouldn't care what happened to the little banker, as long as he was paid.

Now he would have about two hundred thousand dollars from the Goodrich insurance company. The dead man's policies had amounted to half a million, in all; if Doctor Honor got half, even after Leven's modest commissions were deducted, there'd be two hundred thousand left. Then he would get two hundred thousand more from this fellow Seldon. Moreover, there was more than a hundred thousand left of the bonds Goodrich had given him before his untimely death. Why, he'd

be worth half a million dollars; perhaps even more! It was a fortune.

And yet, so strange is human nature, Justus J. Honor was not fully satisfied. He had still a rankling, bitter memory of the time when he had sneaked out of Blankburg in an empty box car, like some miserable hobo, to escape a warrant for murder. The Universal Life Insurance Co. still owed him one hundred thousand dollars—the value of the policy upon Bender's life, which Doctor Honor had taken in the days when he was still Karl B. Krook, M. D.

When he thought of that terrible time, and of the privation and humilition which had followed, he felt bitterly ill used, and convinced that the Universal Co. owed him reparation. Why, he had even been compelled to enter medical college all over again—though it had been a cheap "diploma mill" from which he could buy the right to practice under his new name—and had lost fully a year from profitable activities on that account!

And it was all the fault of the Universal, and, particularly, of Bill Wright, private investigator of death claims for that company. Of course, his score with Wright was evened. Hadn't he hired Slash Jack Padrone, gangster chief, to knock him off? In his pocket, preserved through some obscure impulse, was the yellowed clipping which told of Wright's death. His body had been found in an alley near the stockyards, with fractured skull, the meager news story said. Bill Wright was safely dead. Now that his nerves had regained their normal steadiness Doctor Honor was ashamed of the panic which had gripped him, only a few days ago, when he had imagined that he saw the insurance investigator's ghost. It had been a mere hallucination, due to nervous strain and an overdose of thyroid extract. The dead do not walk. "No life lives forever, and dead men rise up never!"

Yes, Wright was dead. And Slash Jack Padrone, the only man in Chicopolis who knew that Justus J. Honor had been Karl B. Krook, was dead, too. The doctor had seen him shot by the police, there in the Union Depot. He'd been so busy since, reflected Justus J., that he hadn't even read the newspapers. He must take a look, and see what they had to say about the gangster's death.

On the whole, he was very well off indeed. And yet his grudge against the Universal still rankled. This Leven was so clever. Why not consult him about it? He might even be able to collect that old insurance policy. The Universal owed Karl B. Krook, the beneficiary named therein, one hundred thousand dollars, the face of that policy which he had taken out on the life of Theodore Bender. And, since Bender was unquestionably dead, why shouldn't the company be made to pay?

He'd take it up with Leven, he decided. His luck was in, and he might as well press it. And then, when he had collected everything that was due him, from every source, he would retire, and live like a gentleman, upon his income. Perhaps he'd take up philanthropy.

Thus contentedly planning, Doctor Justus J. Honor settled himself to wait for Thursday morning. In spite of his protests to Warner Seldon, he had no especial preparations to make. The affair would arrange itself—almost. This would be easy money—the easiest money of all!

Abstractedly, the doctor got out his daily newspapers for the last few days, which lay in a heap on the office desk, still folded as when they had been delivered. Might as well read about Slash Jack Padrone. It would be amusing.

What? What was this? He stared at the headlines unbelievingly. The fellow wasn't dead, after all! He must have had a head of solid concrete.

"Gangster chief captured after exciting battle! Stunned by glancing bullet." Justus J. Honor groaned disgustedly.

What was the matter with the police, anyhow? There must have been defective powder in that cartridge. A .38 police-special revolver bullet had struck Slash Jack between the eyes—and had glanced from his skull and plowed its way beneath his skin to the back of his head.

Doctor Honor felt ill used. But, reading on, he plucked up heart. The gangster was still unconscious; his skull was probably fractured; it was not thought that he would ever regain consciousness. That was better! And if he did, he probably wouldn't squeal. He had no means of knowing that Justus J. Honor had tipped off the police; the newspapers didn't even say that they had been tipped off at all. Credit for the capture was laid to the efficient detective work of the department.

He was safe enough, Doctor Honor decided, even if Padrone lived. He would go to the chair mute, true to the distorted ethics of the underworld; and his once-powerful gang was scattered, so that he could not pass the word to any lieutenant, even though he suspected it, that Justus J. Honor was the double crosser. He'd put the whole thing out of his mind, and plan for the future. His darkest days had passed with the death of Bill Wright; he must remember that. None but that slight, insignificant-looking, apologetic little man, with dandruff on his coat collar and a husky, deprecating voice, had ever been able to get anything on Karl B. Krook or Justus J. Honor. And Bill Wright was dead.

On Thursday morning, Doctor Justus J. Honor went to the public library at ten o'clock. Outwardly, he was as sedate and dignified, as kindly and trustworthy as ever; inwardly, in spite of a tiny, irrational, nagging qualm, he was serenely confident. He was going to pick up a nice little bunch of easy money. But he wished that Slash Jack Padrone was dead—as dead as Bill Wright! In an inner coat pocket, he carried a small glass vial with a frankly red label bearing the skull and crossbones, and the word "Poison!"

The vice-president of the Continental Trust Co. was a few minutes late. Doctor Honor looked all about the big reading room, and failed to see him. So, to while away the time, the worthy physician picked up a file of old newspapers and settled himself to read. He had selected this corner of the library because it was the least frequented; few people were interested in old newspaper files, and he would confer with Mr. Seldon undisturbed. But, while he waited, there was no reading matter at hand except those same files, and so the doctor began to glance them over, philosophically.

By chance, he had selected a year-old file of the Chicopolis *Gazette,* the city's leading morning paper. Struck by a whimsical fancy, Doctor Honor began to search for that small item which he remembered so vividly. It had been dated June 10th. Why, this was queer! There didn't seem to be any such item in the paper. Surely, this was the issue of June 10th of last year? Yes! He must have overlooked the item which told of the death of William F. Wright, private investigator employed by the Universal Insurance Co. He'd look once more. But here came Warner Seldon.

Justus J. Honor rose with a smiling nod. "I'm on time to-day, you see, and waiting for you," he greeted the banker.

Seldon looked haggard and irresolute. He mopped his forehead with a silk handkerchief, and pushed back that straggling lock of hair. "I've half a mind to give it all up," he muttered.

Doctor Honor sneered. "I thought you had more force of character."

It was amusing to see how quickly the

little banker reacted to that thrust. He straightened, tossed back his lock of hair, and pushed his hand into the front of his waistcoat, assuming his Napoleonic pose. "Sir!" said he. And then, with tolerant superiority: "No doubt, it's hard for ordinary men to understand the moods of genius. No, no; it's quite all right, doctor. Say no more!"

With a magnificent gesture, he waved aside the apology which Justus J. Honor had *not* made. The doctor stared at him, speechless. Certainly, this little fool must be crazy; no sane man would be capable of such tremendous egotism.

"Let's get to business," Seldon was saying, and Doctor Honor agreed with alacrity.

The banker opened his brief case, cast a searching glance about to make sure they were unobserved, and drew out a considerable package, wrapped in brown paper. Justus J. Honor took it, almost snatched it, and held it caressingly between his hands. It emitted the faint, unmistakable, cracking sound of new paper money.

The reading room was almost empty; at this end, there was no one at all aside from these two. Doctor Honor set up a newspaper as a screen, and, behind it, opened the package and meticulously counted and checked over its contents. He disregarded the banker's indignant protests; he had no intention of taking any man's word upon such a question as this.

He counted everything over twice: Eighty-five thousand dollars in large bills—thousands, five hundreds and hundreds; and one hundred and fifteen thousand in coupon bonds, mostly Liberties, and all gilt edged and as readily negotiable as cash.

Satisfied, Justus J. Honor rewrapped the packet and tucked it under an armpit. His muscular arm clamped down over it like a vise; it would be no easy matter to snatch that parcel from him! Then he turned to his companion with a wide and tight-lipped smile, from which the banker shrank involuntarily. With just such a smile, a man-eating shark might have welcomed a new victim. Seldon seemed upon the verge of running away; he actually gathered his feet as though to rise.

Justus J. Honor saw this, and noted the frightened widening of the other's eyes, and cursed the limitations of his own countenance. He knew well enough what had happened; he had seen other men flinch from his smile. He must be more careful! He lowered his eyelids over his bold, rapacious stare, and schooled his features to an expression of sedate kindliness, tugging at his heavy mustache to hide those grinning lips. When he spoke, his voice was as smooth as honey.

"In twenty-four hours, you'll be on your way to Russia," he said. "Free forever from the harassing annoyances of life in Chicopolis. I declare, I envy you. You have a wonderful opportunity! But, of course, it takes a remarkable man. I couldn't handle it, myself."

Mr. Seldon swelled visibly. Watching him from beneath lowered lids, the doctor decided that it was safe to go ahead. He produced the vial from his inner pocket, and handed it over.

"Drink that," he directed. "Drink it all down. No, not here!"

He caught Seldon's arm, though the banker had shown no inclination to drink. Instead, he was staring with frightened fascination at the skull and crossbones on the label.

"That's nothing," explained Honor carefully. "Just camouflage! There's nothing harmful in the bottle; nothing but a mild drug that'll make you feel upset for a few hours—just enough to convince people that you're sick. You see, everybody must think you've been poisoned, or you can't get away with it."

Seldon still hesitated; Justus J. went

on a trifle more urgently. "Just go back to the bank," he directed. "Stay in your office for a minute, until you're sure somebody is watching, and then drink the contents of that bottle, and put the bottle into your pocket. Be sure to do exactly as I say! Then, when some witness cries out that you've taken poison, I'll come along and say I'm a doctor, and take you to my office, and call some other doctor in consultation.

"You'll be just sick enough to make him believe you're in danger; and he'll go away convinced that you're dying." Seldon still shook his head, and the doctor added his last inducement: "As soon as he's out of sight, I'll give you an antidote that'll make you feel like a fighting cock again, and then you can slip out the back way and join your friend, while I arrange the body in your clothes, and all that. I've got a body all ready," he urged, "and when it's fixed up in your clothes, your own brother would swear it was you. Oh, you'll be safe and free to live your own life! Think of that!"

Half hypnotized, Warner Seldon yielded, and rose with a wan smile. "I'm ready," he announced, thrusting the vial into a pocket.

"Good!" Justus J. Honor was vastly relieved. He had begun to fear the other might back out, and demand the return of his money. "I'll give you an hour's start." They compared watches. "At eleven forty-five exactly, I'll be at the Continental Trust, right near the entrance to the executive offices. There won't be any hurry, of course, except that you don't want any other doctor called ahead of me. Better make sure that some one asks if there's a physician in the bank. If nobody else does, do it yourself. You can pretend you've changed your mind, or that you're in pain. Oh, no," he added quickly as Seldon's face fell, "you won't be in pain. You won't feel a thing for several hours, and, when you do, it won't amount to anything. Just a sort of sick feeling, that's all."

Presently, he was rid of the banker, and reasonably sure that his plan would be put into effect. He watched Warner Seldon out, grinning widely and contemptuously at his thin back; and if the little man had turned around, he would surely have refused to go any further, for the expression which Justus J. Honor wore then was more malevolent than the most vicious grin which fat Karl B. Krook had ever worn. It was an evil thing to see.

Doctor Honor glanced again at his watch. He need not leave for another half hour. Meanwhile, just to gratify his whim, he would look through the old newspapers until he found the account of Bill Wright's death. It wouldn't take long; it must be in the paper for June 10th or 11th, surely.

But it was not. The doctor searched painstakingly through the files of the Chicopolis *Gazette,* the *Sphere,* the *News,* the *Inquirer*—all the daily papers published in Chicopolis. He looked through the papers for the 5th of June, the 6th, 7th, 8th, up to the 15th of the month. He did it again. But he found no single reference, in any newspaper, to the untimely death of William F. Wright. It was unsettling; Justus J. Honor felt oddly uneasy. He took out his pocketbook, and withdrew from it the original clipping which he had preserved, and read it over. Yes; surely, it was dated June 10th. But its edges were very cleanly cut, and there was no printing upon its back! Of course, there might have been a big advertisement on that side, with blank spaces which happened to correspond to this little item. Still, it was odd.

That tiny, nagging qualm which he had felt earlier returned now, with redoubled force. Justus J. Honor turned rather white; he felt faintly nauseated. What if that clipping had been a fake, not cut from any newspaper, but printed

especially for his benefit? What if Slash Jack Padrone had rooked him? What if Bill Wright were still alive?

But that was too dreadful to contemplate. Bill Wright was his hoodoo. He could find no peace, no safety, if that fellow still lived. Therefore, he would not allow himself even to think of such a possibility. Later on, he might telephone to the newspapers and inquire, or he might inquire at the coroner's office.

Justus J. Honor glanced at his watch. He must hurry down to the Continental Trust Co. at once. He must go through with this now, even though Wright should prove to be alive; it was too late to drop out. Before he could find means of stopping him, Seldon would have swallowed the colorless, harmless-looking contents of that vial. Anyhow, Warner Seldon wasn't insured. The life-insurance companies wouldn't be interested in his case.

The doctor hurried out, and signaled to a taxicab, and had himself driven to the Continental Trust Co. in haste.

CHAPTER VII.

AN OSTENSIBLE SUICIDE.

FORTUNATELY, Doctor Honor was just in time. He had barely entered the bank, and taken up a position near the door which led to the executive offices, when he heard a confused outcry from within. Somebody screamed; a girl's voice cried shrilly: "Oh, isn't it terrible!"

A man's heavier tones shouted: "He's taken poison! Get a doctor, quick!"

There was a commotion, a babel of contradictory cries. As usual in such circumstances, every one had a different idea, and every one gave his or her advice unasked, shouting down all the others. But presently the door opened, and a messenger boy rushed out, followed by a gray-uniformed bank policeman.

This latter, the doctor stopped. "I heard somebody scream," said Doctor Justus J. Honor, looking very serious and efficient. "Is there some trouble inside? Is somebody sick or hurt? I'm a physician."

The officer looked relieved. He was rather pale, and his face was twisted into anxious lines. "Sure, and the big boss is just after takin' poison," he answered. "Do you come inside now; there's a good felly, an' see can you do annything for him, sir. For it is a grand little man he is, entirely, if he didn't be such a blowhard."

All the while, he was urging Doctor Honor through the doors with a huge and hamlike hand upon his back. He talked nervously, absently, evidently not fully aware of what he said; the doctor noted that Warner Seldon was not disliked by his employees, and decided to govern himself accordingly.

In an inner office, Mr. Warner Seldon sat slumped down in a swivel chair behind a huge desk. His face was white and wet; his weak mouth quivered, and that Napoleonic lock of hair hung, unregarded, over his burning eyes. He looked very sick; his eyes held the pathetic appeal one sees in the eyes of a trapped rabbit. At Doctor Honor's coming, he stretched out tremulous hands.

"H-help me, doctor!" he begged. "I—I'm s-sick. I'm pup-poisoned."

The big room was full of clerks and stenographers, milling about and getting in each other's way. A rather pretty girl leaned over the desk, offering Seldon a glass of water; another bathed his forehead with perfume; a third wrung her hands and wept, crying repeatedly, "Does it hurt? Oh, tell me, Mr. Seldon, does it hurt you anywhere?"

Doctor Honor turned to the big policeman, the calmest person in sight. "Is there a doctor in the building?"

"Indeed and there is—one of the best.

The boy do be gettin' him right now, sir."

Doctor Honor scowled, and felt the banker's pulse. "What did he take? Poison? Where's the bottle?"

Seldon pawed feebly at a pocket, and produced that red-labeled vial which the doctor had given him. Honor scowled more blackly.

"There's not a minute to waste," he declared, taking his victim's pulse again. "Have to wash his stomach out immediately; why, he's almost pulseless."

As a matter of fact, Seldon's pulse was strong enough. The man was in a blue funk, that was all; as yet, he had felt none of the effects of Doctor Honor's mixture. But the doctor saw that it was necessary to get him out of this concerned and sympathetic throng before some other physician arrived and complicated the affair. Otherwise, they'd keep Seldon here, and wash out his stomach, and spoil everything.

"Not a minute to waste," he repeated. "Can't even wait for another doctor. He might not have a stomach pump when he get here. H'm! Let's see! We'll just load him into a car and take him right to my office; it's close by. I can take care of him there nicely; I've got everything to work with. That is, if that suits you, Mr. Seldon?"

He leaned over the sick man and nudged him sharply. Seldon stirred, and raised fear-haunted eyes. "Oh, oh, yes," he moaned. "Take me away; get me out of here; take care of me. I'm so-o-o sick!"

"Hurry!" barked Justus J. Honor. "Run out, you, and stop a taxi. Can't wait for an ambulance. You and you"—indicating the bank policeman and another large man—"pick him up and carry him out to the street. By the way, are you sure he actually did take poison? Who saw him do it?"

A babble of replies; a dozen fingers pointed at the girl who had been bathing Seldon's brow. She turned, shrieking above the noise of other voices. "I saw him drink what was in that little bottle that he showed you."

The other girl, who held a paper cup of water, nodded her head. "I saw it, too," she screamed. "He swallowed every drop. The bottle was full."

"Sh-h-h!" Doctor Honor raised an arm authoritatively, and the crowd stopped its noise and stood ashamed. "You're enough to deafen a healthy man. You two saw him take poison, then? You'll swear to that?" They nodded, looking awed. "Well, remember everything you've seen and heard, because, if he should die, you'll have to testify at the inquest!"

On that he departed, gesturing to the men who carried Seldon to precede him, and left a roomful of anxious people in whose minds it was ineradicably fixed that they had seen Warner Seldon attempt suicide. As he went out, Justus J. Honor smiled to himself. Nobody, now, could possibly suggest that this was anything but a bona-fide suicidal attempt. No stigma could rest upon him, no matter what the outcome!

Yet he purposed to make himself safer yet. While the others placed Mr. Seldon into a taxicab, Doctor Honor spoke aside with the cashier of the bank, who had followed them out. "Telephone to Doctor Murdoch at once, please," he directed. "Ask him to come to my office." He gave the address. "Tell him the circumstances, and ask him to hurry."

He climbed into the cab after his victim. He had sent for one of the most eminent practitioners in Chicopolis. After Doctor Murdoch had examined the banker, and concurred with the diagnosis of poisoning, the skirts of Justus J. Honor would be wholly clear. He would have done his best by the patient, surely!

Doctor Honor turned to the limp and tremulous figure beside him. "Sit up!" he ordered callously. "Pull yourself

together. There's not a thing in the world the matter with you yet."

"But," protested Seldon uncertainly, "you said it would make me feel bad."

"So it will—later on. But nothing to speak of, even then. Just now, you're as well as you ever were, so don't let your imagination get the better of you."

Vastly relieved, Warner Seldon straightened, and wiped his forehead. "I must have been nervous," he admitted. "At least, I do feel a whole lot better now."

The doctor concealed a sardonic smile. "Of course! Here we are at my place. Remember to act sick, now; let me help you out."

He paid off the cab man, and helped his patient into the office. Seldon walked briskly, forgetting his pose for the moment; but hardly had he entered the inner room than he doubled up, clutching his midriff with both hands.

"Oh-h-h-h!" he moaned. "I'm d-dying!"

"Nonsense! Nothing of the kind! Just a bit of cramps, that's all. I've got a beautiful body in the next room for your double. Want to see? No? Well, lie down here, take off your coat, and loosen your collar. Hurry up! And remember to act as sick as you can, when Murdoch gets here. Don't forget that your stomach has been washed out. And remember, most of all, that you've taken poison because you wanted to die—and that you still want to die."

Doctor Honor rapped the words out in a manner almost threatening. The other rolled weak eyes at him, and moaned again. "Sick? I'm dying!" he declared. "Aren't you going to do anything for me?"

"Of course! Just as soon as Doctor Murdoch goes out, I'll give you an antidote—something that will stop your pain instantly. Hey! What now? Come back here!"

Seldon had risen, and was struggling to get out of the room. His eyes were wild; his breath came harshly. But presently another dreadful qualm gripped him, and he relaxed, half fainting.

Scowling, his host prepared and administered a hypodermic of morphine. "There! That ought to keep you quiet. What on earth ails you, anyhow? Can't you stand a little bit of discomfort for a minute or so?"

"It wasn't that," murmured the other, spent and gasping. He was very pale. "I think I must be delirious or something. Why, when you said that about the antidote—about stopping my pain—you looked perfectly horrible! Like a fiend. It frightened me. I was delirious, I suppose."

"H'm!" Justus J. Honor schooled his features to an expression of gentle sympathy. "Poor chap! You'll feel better in a minute."

He must be careful, he told himself. This was no time to laugh. He must wait until after Doctor Murdoch had gone.

There came a peremptory rap upon the door, and that eminent practitioner entered. Doctor Graeme Macgregor Murdoch was a tall, rawboned man of sixty, with a fringe of fiery-red hair about a high, domed, bald head. His eyebrows were sandy red; his face was red, and covered with huge freckles; his big hands were freckled, and there were freckles upon his thick, rawboned wrists.

"What is all this?" he demanded, in a rough voice that carried an accent determinedly Scotch. "What has he done, this little man?"

Doctor Honor explained swiftly. "He's take poison. Arsenic, apparently." He displayed that red-labeled vial. "See? I've washed out his stomach, and all that, but——"

Seldon doubled up where he lay, clutching at his abdomen. "Ah-h-h!" he screamed. "I'm dying!"

"Hech, sir!" grated Doctor Murdoch. "Let's have a look at ye."

He examined the sick man, swiftly and expertly, and turned toward Doctor Honor, scowling. "A peety!" he said, harshly. "A vast peety!"

Justus J. nudged his patient, unseen. "Tell him!" he muttered. "Quick! And then I can fix you up."

Obediently, the little banker began to babble. "I want to die. Ow-ow! I wanted to die; I took poison; I want to kill myself. Oh-h-h-h! I wish I were dead now!"

"Have sense!" the consultant admonished him, with stern pity. "Ye feel badly enough, nae doot. Patience, little man, an' we'll dae oor best." He turned to Doctor Honor. "Ye'll have given him ferric hydrate an' magnesia, nae doot, after the lavage?"

"Yes, of course, doctor. I've done everything."

Doctor Murdoch shook his shining, high bald dome until the fringe of red about its base was ruffled. "'Tis a peety," he repeated. "Well, doctor, I'll be going on. There's nae more that I can suggest here. Keep y'r spirits up, little man," he told Seldon, with forced optimism, "an' 'tis like ye may pull through this after all. Though I misdoot it sore," he ended, half to himself. "An' when ye're well of this, ye'll nae try suicide again, I hope!"

"Oh-h-h!" wailed Seldon, playing out the rôle assigned him, though unconsciously, for he was very sick indeed. "Oh-h-h! I want to die and end this awful pain!"

The tall Scotch physician sighed windily, shook hands with Doctor Honor and departed. "I'd be giving the lad morphine in plenty," he advised. "'Tis all ye can to still his cramps. Happy to have met ye, doctor-r!"

He was gone at last, and Seldon, sobbing thickly, had tumbled off the couch to his knees and was pawing at the doctor's legs, begging for the promised antidote. "Quick, man; quick!" he screamed. "I can't stand this! It's horrible!"

The sight of his anguish moved even Justus J. Honor's stony heart. His face was ghastly, with a sick, wet shine upon it. His eyes were staring from his head. Doctor Honor looked the other way.

"I'll fix up something," he promised. "Wait a minute!"

With a hand that was not quite steady, he reached for a bottle upon his desk, and shook a few grayish crystals from it into a glass, and mixed them in water. "Drink it down," he directed. "Every drop—and you'll be all right. Every bit of pain gone instantly. And then think of the future!"

Still on his knees, the other stared up at him wildly. "I'm afraid of you!" he wailed. "I'm afraid! Oh-h! Your face! You look at me like a fiend. You're murdering me."

"Drink!" commanded Justus J. Honor sternly; his face was the face of a devil, as the other had said. "Drink!"

He held the glass to the sick man's lips, and Seldon drank, perforce, his teeth chattering. Leaping to his feet, he clutched at his throat, gave one strangled cry, and dropped into a limp heap upon the floor.

Doctor Honor stared down at him, grinning evilly. He was dead.

"There, my friend," said the gentleman who had once been Karl B. Krook and now called himself Justus J. Honor. "There! I've kept my word, haven't I? All your pains stopped instantly!"

He laid the dead man out on the couch. Upon his desk, in plain sight, he placed that red-labeled vial which bore the skull and crossbones below the word "Poison!" Upon the label, also, in smaller characters, was written: "Fowler's solution. Arsenic. Beware!" followed by a list of antidotes.

Then he took that other vial, from which he had taken a few crystals, and

thrust it into the dead man's coat pocket. This vial was also labeled "Poison!" and bore the added legend, "Cyanide of potassium."

"A determined suicide, sure enough," said Justus J. Honor. "He was afraid arsenic mightn't do the business, and so he whipped out this bottle of cyanide and swallowed some of it before I could stop him. Poor devil!"

CHAPTER VIII.

COMPLICATIONS.

AT intervals, as he moved about, straightening out the room, Justus J. Honor was shaken by spasms of unholy laughter. It was such a huge, sardonic joke! Hadn't the dead man swallowed poison before witnesses? Hadn't he repeated, again and again, that he wanted to die, that he had attempted suicide, that he did not wish to live? How could any suspicion rest upon the kindly physician who had striven so hard to save him, in spite of himself?

And he had been paid in advance; paid in full. That was the best of it. The doctor patted that brown-paper parcel lovingly, where it lay upon his desk. This was the very best of all his coups. Why, even Leven could prove nothing. Suppose Doctor Honor declared that Seldon had been determined to kill himself, how could Leven prove that the banker hadn't changed his mind since his talk about a fake suicide? Men who plan to leave their families and loot banks are erratic, surely. A sudden change of plans on their part would surprise nobody.

Well, it was all a vast joke, and Justus J. enjoyed it to the full for a while. It was the sharp ringing of his desk telephone which interrupted him. He went to answer it, still chuckling.

"Hello? Doctor Honor speaking. Yes, Mr. Leven. What?"

"It's all up," repeated the lawyer's voice. It came over the wire strained and thin, lacking its usual unction. "It's all up. The woman was roping us. The money is marked. She's got a little, dandruffy fellow with her—an insurance-company dick. He put her up to it. We're framed."

The shock unmanned Doctor Honor. He could only goggle and make queer noises in his throat.

"Can't you understand?" Leven went on impatiently. "I tell you, you're up against it. You'll have to get out!" It's a conspiracy to defraud, at the best of it—a felony. And heavens knows what you've got on your consience besides. I may be able to wriggle out; I'll have to throw you down and pretend ignorance. I'm taking a devil of a risk to give you this warning. But——"

A good fellow, Leven, thought Honor, vaguely. Wouldn't throw a client down! His mind seemed empty, hollow and echoing. He must think! An irrelevant notion kept rising.

"Hello!" he shouted abruptly. "Hello, Leven?" It was impossible! "Leven? Are you there? A little, dandruffy detective, you said, with Mrs. Goodrich? What's his name?"

"Wright," came the reply. Leven was evidently uneasy. "I can't talk any longer, I tell you. The man's name is William Wright, from the Universal Insurance Co. Hey! Hello!"

But the phone had dropped to the floor, and Leven's repeated "Hellos" went unheeded. His new identity forgotten, Karl B. Krook was staring Nemesis in the face. Bill Wright! Why, then he was ruined!

In a panic, he leaped to his feet and began to run about in circles. The fellow would be here presently. What could he do? Here was a dead man. Well, Seldon was a suicide; that could be proved. He'd stick to that. Besides, the banker hadn't been insured; Wright wouldn't care about him, therefore. And there was no need to fear any one at all except Bill Wright.

Feverishly, the doctor plunged a hand into the dead man's pockets, with some vague idea of searching for incriminating documents. Warner Seldon's dead face was set in a sardonic grin, that mocked this frightened searcher's agony. Why, the fellow was laughing at him —at Karl B. Krook! The doctor slapped that dead, chilly face, again and again.

Here was something in the inside coat pocket—a document, stiff and crackling. A life-insurance policy for five hundred thousand dollars, and in the Universal Co.!

Its date was only two days old. Warner Seldon had lied. The utter, blind simpleton! No doubt, he'd had some vague notion of providing for the wife and children whom he was deserting. The insane idiocy of it! To think that any insurance company would pay such a claim!

But it was worse than that—far worse. Again, the doctor struck that cold, dead face. "I wish you were alive again," he gasped, "so I could kill you all over—slowly! You fool!"

The calm dead face smiled on, gently amused; the doctor turned away from it, awed and afraid. He had been overreached, even by this dead fool; the man Wright would be here soon, would recognize Seldon as an insured in his company, and would be on the trail of his slayer. He might deceive the coroner, other physicians, and the police, but he could never deceive Bill Wright. The fellow was his especial Nemesis.

He looked fearfully out of a window. There he was, already! Across the street, in that same doorway where he had stood when he had taken him for a ghost, was William F. Wright, in the flesh; a little, stooped, insignificant-looking man with dandruff on his coat collar. He seemed an ineffectual, timid man whose husky, apologetic voice the doctor remembered as clearly as though it still rang in his ears.

There were policemen about; uniformed patrolmen, three of them, and a couple of plain-clothes men whose shoes made them unmistakable. But the doctor scarcely saw them. It was William Wright whom he feared. Padrone had lied to him; must have faked that clipping. He had never killed Wright at all. He'd collected his money for nothing. The crook! And William Wright was alive!

"If I'd known that," moaned Karl B. Krook—he had quite forgotten his identity as Doctor Honor—"I'd have stayed honest!" He did not see the humor of that remark.

Suddenly, he turned bitter. He was lost, but he wouldn't die alone. No, he'd take this scoundrel Wright along! He looked about for a weapon. Why hadn't he ever bought a pistol? Opening a cabinet, he snatched out an old-fashioned amputating knife with a heavy-backed blade, six inches long, set upon a smooth metal handle, and thrust it into his breast pocket.

The men outside had gathered in a group by the steps. Presently, they would knock. Should he let them in? He dared not!

Karl B. Krook wrung his large, thick-fingered hands, chafing them together in a characteristic gesture. He stared down at their backs, a vague idea struggling to enter his consciousness. Once, those hands had been different; their backs had been covered with coarse, black hair. Now they were hairless and smooth. Slash Jack Padrone had recognized him by his hands so he had changed their appearance, as he had changed face and figure.

Why, of course! What a fool he was. Mustn't allow himself to get so rattled. He had forgotten. He wasn't Karl B. Krook any longer, wanted for murder in New Jersey and known to the police and to Bill Wright, as a large, stout, smooth-shaven man of boisterously jovial manner. After much pains,

he had become Doctor Justus J. Honor, a physician of unblemished reputation; a lean, almost cadaverous man, heavily bearded, of reserved demeanor, sedate, dignified, abstemious.

Without some clew, who could recognize him as Krook—now that Padrone was unconscious in the prison ward? He was perfectly safe from his past; he need deal only with the present situation. He might be charged with extortion, with suppression of facts in a death certificate, or with an attempt to defraud the Universal Co. by representing Goodrich's death as natural, when the man had committed suicide—or, at least, had planned to commit suicide. But could these charges be proved?

Leven had thrown him overboard; he owed nothing to the lawyer. His word was as good at Leven's; better, since the lawyer was notorious, and Doctor Honor was, thus far, of excellent reputation. He could deny everything, insist that he had consulted Leven upon a matter of conscience, and that the lawyer had taken advantage of his confidences to blackmail Mr. Goodrich's widow. Oh, he wasn't in jail yet. And even jail would be better than the electric chair.

As for this chap Warner Seldon, a dozen witnesses would swear to his suicidal attempt. Doctor Murdoch had examined him, and found him to be suffering from arsenic poisoning. His coat pocket now, as he lay there dead, contained a vial of cyanide of potassium, properly labeled as poison. Seldon was a suicide, quite obviously; and he, Justus J. Honor, had but done his duty as a physician, by trying to save his life.

All these reflections whizzed through the miserable man's mind with the speed of light. Before the officers outside had begun to knock, his mind was made up. He would brazen it out.

Another sharp knock! A husky, apologetic voice said: "He's probably gone out. Better try the door!"

That was Bill Wright's voice, and it brought back horrid memories of the first time he had ever heard it—in the office of the Universal Insurance Co. in New Jersey, when Wright had told so unemotionally about the murder of Theodore Bender—Krook's first victim. Abruptly, the doctor's nerve broke, and, instead of answering the door, he fled.

He dashed through into the tiny bedroom behind his consulting room, intending to slip out into the hall. But when he opened the door a crack, he saw a bored policeman without. Shaking, mouthing soundlessly, he drew back into the room. He stared wildly about, made a dash for the closet, whipped into it, and cowered there, behind a row of coats. The communicating door was half open, but he dared not close it; so scant was his concealment that he could see, through a crack, when the police entered his office, and could hear their every word.

Cowering there, shaking, sobbing noiselessly, struggling to quiet his harsh, uncertain breath, the wretched man saw his remorseless pursuer, Bill Wright, enter the next room, accompanied by two stalwart detective officers.

These visitors glanced about, and one of them cried aloud: "There he is—asleep or drunk. See?"

"That can't be him," said another. "He's a lot bigger'n that. Say, guy, wake! Good grief!"

He advanced to the side of that quiet figure on the couch, touched its motionless shoulder, and started back with a cry. "Got my goat f'r a minute," he said with an apologetic laugh. "This little guy's dead."

A brief, tense pause. One of them said: "Well, it ain't so awful queer, I s'pose, findin' a dead man in a doctor's office. Though, maybe——"

"It is, too queer," said another. "To me, anyways. I bet it's——"

Still another voice came from beyond Justus J. Honor's range of vision—a gruff voice, vaguely familiar. "Naw! 'S all right. The little guy tried to knock himself off, see? The doc fetched him in here a while back—had Doctor Murdoch in to see him. It's Seldon, down to the Continental Bank, see? Some big guy down there, he is, 'at took poison this mornin'."

Through his crack, Justus J. Honor could see the insurance investigator's stooping figure, and hear his husky, diffident tones:

"Warner Seldon, you say? Committed suicide? Well, well! And he's one of our insureds, too. Let's see, now."

He went over to the couch, outside Honor's range of vision, but the hidden man heard a detective protest uneasily: "Hadn't oughta touch him till the coroner comes."

"I won't move a thing," promised Wright. "I'll do just as you say, of course." But for all his diffident apologies, he evidently searched the dead man's pocket, for Honor heard him say: "Yes, sir, here's his policy, right in his pocket. Half a million dollars! Wonder if he thought," the little man went on, mildly reflective, "we'd pay that out? H'm! Folks are queer. Killed himself, did he? Yeah, here's a poison bottle in his pocket. Cyanide, too! H'm!"

Ensued a faint rustling and a rattling of paper. Then Wright spoke again, in a changed tone, almost sharply. "Killed himself, hey? Say! Who is this fellow Justus J. Honor, anyhow?"

No one answered, and presently the little detective went on, musingly. "I never knew but one man with nerve like that, and brains, too. A thin man, you said, officer? Tall and thin, with a beard?"

"And a real quiet, civil-spoken, decent man, too. Kept to himself, always, and a reg'lar gentleman. Sober an' polite." That was the patrolman on the beat; Honor recognized his voice. He had often passed the time of day with him.

Wright's fingers beat out a tattoo. It seemed to Justus J. Honor like sledge hammers beating upon his skull. "So this Seldon killed himself," he remarked vaguely. "Committed suicide! H'm! Listen to this."

Stiff paper crackled. Evidently, he had unfolded a note, and was reading it aloud.

"My Dearest Sonia: I shall be with you soon—forever! But how the hours drag! I am scribbling this because I am kept away from you so long—for a whole day! Why, it's like eternity.

"But it's all fixed now, sweetness, and, in another forty-eight hours, we will be together and forever. Ah, divine one, how can I wait? It's all been arranged, though. A crooked doctor, called Honor, has fixed it all up. I'm to fake suicide. He'll provide a dead body, and substitute it for mine, and they'll bury that while I fly from this detestable place forever, to be with you.

"Bah!" remarked Bill Wright. "Clever guy, this doctor, hey?"

There was an unbelieving hush. "But," protested one officer, "this ain't any substitute body. This here's Seldon, aw right. I seen him when they fetched him here, and I seen him before, many a time. Sure, this here's Seldon."

Wright laughed shortly. "That's what's clever," he said. "Can't you see? This doctor just double crossed him. He's 'provided a dead body to substitute,' all right—only it's Seldon's own body!"

Shivering in the stuffy closet, Justus J. Honor gritted his teeth and cursed the dead man. His last hope had gone. Why didn't he know that Seldon might be foolish enough to write such a letter, and keep it in his pocket? Why, even if his plan had gone through, that letter would have ruined everything! Such matters ought not to be written.

But there it was. Even in death, this

utter fool had managed to betray him—and to Bill Wright! Of course, it must be Wright who thought to search the dead man's pockets. Why hadn't he been given thirty seconds more, to find that incriminating letter, and destroy it, before the officers entered? What next, he wondered, dully. Not that it made much difference, now!

"I wonder who this Justus J. Honor is?" Wright was saying, in the other room. "I never heard of but one man who——"

He wandered over toward the doctor's desk. Honor could see him through the crack, watched him fumble among the loose papers there; saw him stiffen, pick one up, and stare at it in amazement.

"I knew it! I felt it!" cried the little detective triumphantly. "How the devil he ever managed, I can't guess, but it must be he. I knew there couldn't be two such animals alive!"

He turned toward the wondering officers. "I know that handwriting!" he cried, rapping the paper he held. "I know it as well as my own. I've seen it often enough. There's a reward out for him in Jersey. Men, your Doctor Honor is Karl B. Krook, of Blankburg, the man who murdered Theodore Bender. What? Looks be dashed. I don't care how he looks. He's a doctor, and clever. I'll say he's clever! Must have fixed himself up, changed his looks somehow. But he's Karl B. Krook, just the same. I'd know that handwriting anywhere. Mighty well named, he is. The crookedest crook alive!"

The others gathered about him, staring at the document. Doctor Honor saw a blue-uniformed figure among them; the patrolman must have come in from the hall outside. The coast was clear!

Breathlessly, making no more sound than a shadow, Justus J. Honor wormed his way out of the closet, across the room, through the outer door. He was in plain sight from the other room, if any one had looked up, but none did.

Now he was in the hall; he had rushed through the rear door to the basement, past an astonished janitor, and out into the alley. He was safe for the moment!

CHAPTER IX.

THE END OF THE ROAD.

CAUTIOUSLY, Justus J. Honor crept to the end of the dark alley, and peeped around the corner, up and down the brightly lighted street. There were no officers in sight; evidently, it had not been expected that he would try to slip out the back way. Escape—temporary, at least—lay open before him.

But Karl B. Krook—to revert to his real name, since the identity of Justus J. Honor was no longer of any protection to him—had no thought of escaping. With the advent of Wright, from the moment that he had learned definitely that the detective was alive, he felt himself lost. Bill Wright was his Nemesis. It was useless to fight against Fate. In their long duel, Wright had had all the breaks. It had all been luck, Karl B. Krook told himself, bitterly. That was the worst of it. Wright had no brains. He'd just stumbled against that one, inevitable clew which every criminal must leave.

It had become a matter of superstition to this doctor gone wrong. All his criminal ventures were doomed to defeat, not because they were wicked, not for any ethical reasons, but simply because Bill Wright played against him with dice loaded by Destiny. He was beaten; it was time to give up.

But if sucess, if freedom, if life itself, were lost, there remained the matter of revenge. He resigned himself to death, but he did not wish that Wright should outlive him. He had committed three murders. What would a fourth

matter? He could die but once, and the chair wouldn't carry a higher voltage because of the untimely death of a private detective.

No! His mind was fully and desperately made up. He would kill William Wright, and then take his medicine. He would prove that he could be dangerous, even in defeat; he was tired of running away.

Boldly, he stepped out into the street, and started to walk around the block. Beneath the front steps of the house which held his office, there was a deep, dark areaway. There he would hide and wait until Wright emerged; then he would make one swift rush, and strike! He caressed the long, heavy amputating knife in his pocket He knew where to strike—straight down, from behind, into the triangle between collar bone and shoulder blade, on the left side—down into the arch of the aorta, and through it, and into the heart itself. This blade was long enough to reach even the apex. The doctor's lips drew back into a tight and mirthless grin; he walked faster.

At the corner was a news stand beside which a boy stood, shouting: "Here y'are, extray! Aw 'bout gunman's escape!"

By now it was quite dark, but the light from an arc lamp shone down upon the lurid headlines of the newspapers displayed upon the stand. "Gangster Escapes from Ambulance. Bandit Shams Unconsciousness, Fools Police!"

Karl B. Krook read without understanding; the words did not penetrate his consciousness. He walked on.

His office was in the edge of the amusement district; the streets were full of well-dressed folk, on pleasure bent. It was a favorite spot for street meetings, and to-night, as once before, there was a little group of indifferent folk clustered about two or three men and a girl in uniform. Karl Krook brushed by them, unheeding, and dived into the darkness of the areaway in front of his house. Now let Wright come out!

From the curb, a few yards away, came the sound of an earnest, raucous voice. The leader of the meeting was preaching to a bored group of people. He was thin and very serious, with strained, nearsighted eyes behind thick goggles; as he spoke, his Adam's apple moved up and down.

"You can't beat the game, fellows," he declared. "You think you can get away with it, and reform some day when you're old. But what does the Bible say?" He pointed to the pages of an open Bible with his flattened hand.

In the black dark of the areaway, Karl B. Krook groped his way toward the steps so that he might be ready to leap forth. He felt along the wall, until, abruptly, his hand struck something yielding that moved beneath his touch. Krook jerked away, his mouth open to scream, but he checked himself.

In the street, the preacher's voice was raised to a shout: "The wages of sin is death! That's what the Bible says!"

There in the dark, he felt himself caught in a fierce grip. Some one was there already—hiding! Limp and nerveless, he resigned himself to capture.

His unseen attacker held him by one shoulder, and dragged him close, and turned him so that the faint light from the street shone upon his bearded face.

"Heavens," said a remembered voice harshly, "it's him!"

The doctor's knees refused his weight; he slumped down upon the uneven bricks of the area floor. There followed a pause whose length Karl B. Krook never learned. It seemed an eternity. The preacher closed his book; his assistants gave a feeble shout, "Hallelujah!" They moved off down the street, and the little group about them broke up. All the while, the wretched man knelt upon those rough

bricks which hurt his knees, and trembled.

A last, faint phrase drifted back from the departing street preacher: "The wages of sin is death!"

Then a voice spoke in Karl Krook's ear. "You dirty crook!" it said. "You'd give *me* a rank, would you? Turn me up, would you? You double-crossing dog!"

With eyes now used to the darkness, the doctor stared upward, and saw an oval, handsome face, across which ran a threadlike scar that seemed to pulsate. He could not speak or move; he waited dumbly for the vengeance of Slash Jack Padrone.

"I'll burn you up!" declared the gunman, with an oath. "Did you think the bulls could hang onto a man like me? Take that!"

Something hard was pressed into the doctor's shrinking side; it felt cold, even through his clothes. He moaned faintly.

Eight sharp, cracking explosions, only partially muffled! Karl B. Krook's body jerked and leaped convulsively, as steel-jacketed bullets ripped through it. His coat smoldered and glowed, where the burning powder from the pistol pressed close against his body ignited the cloth.

The reports roared in his ears like thunder; but, from the street, they must have been faint enough, for no commotion followed. There was no one within a hundred yards; Slash Jack had chosen his moment well. There was no outcry, no immediate pursuit. The gangster let go of his victim, leaped up the area steps and fled. Dully, Karl B. Krook heard the thud of his running steps, growing more and more distant.

The doctor did not lose consciousness. He lay in a huddled heap, as he had fallen when Slash Jack released him—paralyzed and numb. He did not suffer, but his body seemed heavy, as though made of lead, while his mind was feathery light. His consciousness seemed to float freely in the air above that inert body.

Lying thus, he waited with sure knowledge. He held to consciousness with set teeth, for there was still a thing to do. He must live, for a few moments, at least. Patiently, he waited, mustering his strength for one last effort.

Presently, the door at the head of the steps opened. He must have waited for hours, thought Karl B. Krook, though it was really not more than two minutes. The officers within the house had heard those shots; they emerged at once to investigate.

And so it was that, waiting grimly, the dying man looked up and saw William Wright leaning over him. The little detective was as diffident and as apologetic as ever. Krook's right hand groped for his inner pocket, found that amputating knife and brought it forth, held daggerwise.

"What's wrong?" asked Bill Wright. "Somebody shoot you?" And then, as though it were a lesson learned by heart and recited parrotlike: "You're under arrest for murder, Karl Krook, alias Justus J. Honor, and anything you say can be used against you. Are you hurt bad?"

Krook moaned, and motioned the other to lean closer. Now was his moment!

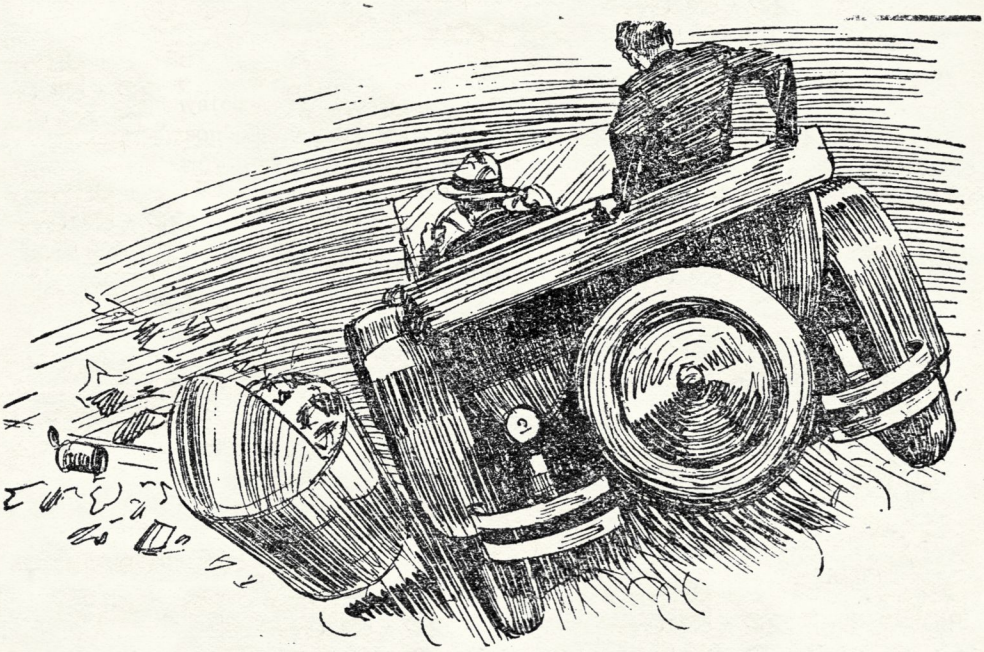
His right hand flashed up and back; he struck fiercely at Wright's left shoulder, marking the place with an expert eye.

Not even this last triumph was to be allowed him. The keen knife flashed; but his fainting senses failed. He could not drive it home. His wavering stroke barely scratched the other's shoulder.

Bill Wright leaped back; the knife dropped, tinkling, from the nerveless hand which held it.

"Not even that!" groaned Karl B. Krook weakly. He began to weep slow, ineffectual tears, and, sobbing, died.

Too Nice to Rob



By Roland Krebs

Author of "Flying Time!" etc.

I FEAR very much that I never shall receive my full measure of success in the profession of burglary and kindred activities, because I'm too overburdened with scruples, 'Simp,'" said my pal, "Sheik" Shannahan.

I laid aside my racing sheet and turned around in my chair to stare at him, expecting to see a wild, insane gleam in his eyes. Instead, I found his eyes kind of dreamy as he puffed big clouds of smoke toward the ceiling and gawked into them.

"Maybe we don't understand each other," I told him. "Let's start all over again."

"I say," he explained, "that I doubt if I will be given a reward commensurate with my talents in our profession, because I'm too high-minded for the sometimes distressing demands of the work."

"Sheik," I warned him, "if it's opium you're cooking in that pipe, you'd better cut it out. Opium will ruin your insides."

"I'm perfectly serious, my dear Mr. Simpson," he raved on. "I find myself in rather an incongruous position. This massive brain of mine has concocted quite a wonderful scheme, but, because of my lofty moral code, I hesitate to go through with it."

Well, sir, anybody that didn't know Sheik as well as I did, would have figured that he was just soaping me. The fact is that Sheik Shannahan is an awfully decent sort of an egg.

Him and I, we feel that most people

nowadays are crooks anyway. Look at all the highly respected business men that unloaded fifth-grade stuff onto the government while Sheik and I were in the service during the war! Read the income-tax returns most folks make!

Sheik Shannahan and I make it a point never to bust open a man's safe unless we're sure he's got the loss coming to him. We wouldn't swipe a piece of jewelry from any dame we knew was spending as much on charity as she was on knickknacks to hang on herself.

Couple of nice fellows, hey?

"What's the scheme?" I asked my pal, sensing that he wanted to be talked into putting it across.

"I want to—uh—appropriate some currency from Archie Dozier," he informed me, "and yet I hate to do it, because Archie's such a fine chap at heart."

"Who's Archie Dozier?" I inquired innocently.

"What!" Sheik exclaimed out, sitting up straight in my morris chair that he uses every night. "You don't know who Archie Dozier is? Well, of course, you wouldn't know him. You pay no attention to the activities of our better people."

I snorted. Sheik's a little cracked on the subject of what he calls "the smart set." Instead of trying to help me dope out a good parley of an evening, he sits around reading the society pages of the newspapers.

"Go on and give me the deep-down on your old college chum, Arch; I can bear it," I invited Sheik.

"Archie is the son of the Westminster Terrace Doziers," he outlined me. "Their ancestors not only came over on the *Mayflower*, but they rode all the way on the bridge with the captain. Mr. and Mrs. Dozier are two of the finest people prominent socially. Their son, Archie, is a fine boy, too, but he's weak.

"Poor Archie! His friends are his worst enemies. A deceased grandmother, who was daft about him, left all her estate in trust for him. Its earnings provide Archie with a sizable annuity. His parents have no control over this money—nor has he, I'm sorry to say. He's so generous that he can't say, 'No,' to Tom, Dick and Harry that borrow from him and impose on his good nature."

"Gee!" I gloomed. "A sap like that is crusty with jack and couple of dudes with sense, like us, have to work for it."

"And, occasionally, he drinks to excess and gambles," Sheik sighed, just like he was talking about his own son.

"Such a fellow!" I laughed. "Stops at nothing — probably smokes and swears and throws peanut shells on the sidewalks, too, hey?"

"His losses on the horses are scandalous," Sheik rambled on. "Archie uses no judgment whatever. He'll get aboard any nag, regardless of who it is gives him the tip. He has too much money, poor fellow."

"Poor fellow!" I chimed in with. "Let's be sensible and grab some of it. What good is dough to a guy like him? He's a no-account bum is my idea."

"Don't! Don't!" Sheik busted out, holding up his hand like it hurt his ears. "Archie Dozier's nothing of the sort! He's a natural gentleman, a big-hearted boy whose sad fate it is to be imposed upon at every turn—and yet——"

"Ah, yes—'and yet,'" I put in, glad to see that, after all, Sheik had a practical side.

"And yet, since he's so accustomed to being imposed upon by enemies in the guise of friends, it seems sensible to have some one who has a friendly feeling for him impose upon him, too."

"Sheik," I told my pal, "you were never more right in your life. What's this swell scheme you've skimmed out of that tremendous brain of yourn?"

The goofy look went out of Sheik Shannahan's eyes, and he got a businesslike expression on his pan.

"Why," he explained, talking fast now, "Archie has a weakness, among others, for long, big, expensive touring cars. Almost every night, until a late hour, you'll see his big gray and nickeled car parked outside the Racquet Club. He plays cards there and drinks and loses his money.

"Finally, he drives through Forest Park, lonely and deserted late at night, to the palatial Dozier mansion in Westminster Terrace—the scene of many gay functions, the spot where the élite——"

"Can the society ga-ga and go on with your immense scheme," I suggested.

"The fortunate thing about it all is that Archie has a touring car, open all around. If he had a closed car, my plan wouldn't do. You see, Simp, I shall loll about the sidewalk outside the Racquet Club—in that new, blue-flannel lounge suit of mine, and, with the new soft, gray hat, passers-by, such as stray policemen, will think me a member. Then, when the coast is clear, I shall hop into the rear of the car and lie on the floor."

"Yes, yes, yes," I encouraged Sheik. "Then what?"

"When we reach the lonely stretch of park road, I appear from behind, press a gun into Archie's perfectly tailored clothes and, after suitable apologies, appropriate his bundle."

Sheik leaned back and looked at me with a big, wide grin on his mug, but, after a minute or so, it faded away.

"What's the matter?" he asked, surprised. "You don't appear to be enthusiastic."

"How do you expect to find any pickings on this dude," I asked my pal, "after he's come out of a bridge or poker game at the Noisy Club?"

"Supposing he's a big winner?"

"A sap like him? Fat chance!"

"Archie's no sap."

"You said yourself he was, Sheik," I argued.

"I said nothing of the kind."

"Well, you said so in so many words—but, anyways, even if you didn't, why I'll say it for you that he's a big sap."

"He's not a sap! Archie's a fine, clean-cut——"

"Yeah, I know," I came back. "We went into all that—and I still think he's a big sap."

"You can be extraordinarily mulish, Simp." Sheik yawned. "Well, I guess I'll cast off and attend to Mr. Dozier and give his roll a good, first-class reducing treatment." He frowned and looked worried. "I hope he'll not attempt any fancy driving to-night. Archie Dozier, you know, is notorious for his jams with the traffic squad. He's a very impetuous driver, a very reckless young man behind the wheel at times. Oh, well!"

Sheik took a cornflower out of a bowl, put it into his coat lapel, looked hisself over in the mirror and then sauntered out, swinging his cane.

"What," I thought to myself, "does a fellow who's not any cripple want to pack a cane for?"

Well, sir, I waited up till two thirty for Sheik and then, when he hadn't showed up, I figured that, after putting the shake on the Dozier dodo, he'd beat it to some night club or other for an all-night rumpus, him being such a great hand for entertaining and all.

I was badly surprised next morning when I woke up and saw that his bed hadn't had a customer all night. It was then seven fifty-five in the a. m., and Sheik should have been home by such a hour.

My worries got multiplied by two when I picked up the morning paper, and saw a long story on the first page along the lines that Archie Dozier, scion of a wealthy family, had run

amuck the night before with his auto and had banged things up generally before wrecking his own motor car.

There was a list of names in black type of the folks that the Dozier persimmon had injured, and I liked to fell dead when I made out that one of the names was Sheik's. It said he had abrasions and contusions and was resting quietly in the General Hospital.

At the time I wasn't so sure about what an abrasion or a contusion was, and, worrying that it might be something fatal, I beat it for the General Hospital as fast as I could turn a wheel.

I got a big surprise when I saw Sheik. He was sitting up in bed, happy as a lark, smoking an Egyptian cigarette and smiling at a pretty nurse who was straightening up the room for him. Beside his bed was a tray of emptied breakfast dishes.

"Cheerio!" he sang out to me, waving his hand as the nursie beat it. "Fine morning!"

"Yeah," I agreed, "and it must have been a fine evening. Say! What happened? Did that big sap hurt you much?"

"Please don't call my friend, Mr. Dozier, a big sap, Simp!" Sheik dictated to me. "He is, as I told you he was, a very estimable gentleman. He's one of the finest——"

"Don't start puffing the guy up to me again," I cut him off. "Tell me what happened, quick! Shall I get hold of a lawyer and have him start a damage suit right away?"

"By no means, by no means," Sheik by-no-meansed me. "It's quite unnecessary. Let me apologize to you first, old fellow. I was unfair to you last evening when I made slurring remarks about your perspicacity, your canniness, your native shrewdness. You predicted that Mr. Dozier would be dry-cleaned when he left his card-game pals. Your error was trivial. He was cleaned, but not dry. Archie was as full as a flounder. I could have hung my hat on his breath."

"Sheik," said I, I shaking my head, "you're a puzzle. You don't get a cent out of the guy, he bangs you up and still you like him!"

"Wait till you hear!" Sheik laughed at me. "I was alarmed when I saw Archie coming out of the Racquet Club as I lay in the rear of his big car. He was quite befuddled with liquor. In fact, knowing his reputation for driving when sober, I was fearful of what he might do when shellacked and, had an opportunity presented itself, I would have slipped out and abandoned my wild venture for a more propitious evening.

"There was not a chance, however. He stumbled right in behind the wheel and started out in second. He turned his first corner by going over the curb, knocking aside a refuse can and upsetting a fat lady with a gentle sweep of his right fender.

"Then he drove through the safety bars of a railroad crossing, just making it before the train hit the intersection. Next he hit the rear end of another automobile, swung it around, and broke most of its glass, giving the occupants trifling cuts. After that——"

"Good heavens! More?" I gasped.

"Lots more," Sheik told me. "He raced past a street car, discharging passengers, and nearly upset some folks there. He took off one machine's running board and another's fender. By this time, we were being chased by several automobilists and some motorcycle officers.

"Suddenly, Archie swung around a corner on two wheels and into a wet pavement that some street-department sprinkling trucks were flushing, and we skidded."

"And that's where you got yours!" I suggested.

"If you mean that in a purely Pickwickian sense," my pal informed me,

"yes; that's where I got mine. Before I go on with my story, Simpie, reach into that bureau drawer like a good fellow. There's a check there for two thousand dollars, made out to me, but indorsed to you. Just deposit that in our joint checking account."

"Where did you get it?" I asked.

"Ah, we're getting to that—to where I got mine. Well, the big car skidded, hit a telephone pole and turned over. Archie flew in one direction and I flew in another, although it seemed more as if I was flying in half a dozen directions."

"Once more," I exploded, out of patience, "I want to know how much you were hurt."

"Sh-sh-sh-sh!" my pal sh-sh-sh-shed me. "Hardly at all, although my catsy blue suit was ripped and ruined and that new blue tie with the Roman stripe—the one from the little Boulevard des Capucines shop in Paris, you know—was torn and soiled beyond repair.

"Archie, though, seemed to fear I was half dead. Both of us had miraculous escapes. While he was helping me up and wondering where I came from, the mob following us caught up and surrounded us and began yelping for vengeance—they supposing that Archie Dozier and I were friends out riding and drinking together."

"And he let you take the rap for it?" I prompted Sheik.

"No, sir!" he exclaimed. "Archie's too decent to do a thing like that. He's a fine fellow. He stepped out manfully and told the irate citizens that, while he was at a loss to account for my presence, he wanted it understood that he alone was at fault."

"That still left you in a jam, didn't it?" I pointed out.

"Yes, but the old bean was working. I became indignant. I told Mr. Dozier that I had been a passenger of the street car past which he had run while it was discharging riders—a violation of City Ordinance No. 22,333,877-A—and that, just as I was about to step down from the platform, he had come along and I had been scooped up by his speeding machine and tumbled prostrate inside, just as a fast train scoops up a mail sack."

"And he fell for it?" I inquired.

"He dived for it!" Sheik corrected me. "He got out his wallet and wanted to know if I'd take two thousand, besides having him pay my medical bills to sign a waiver. But, there wasn't a cent in the wallet. The card game boys had cleaned him. So, he offered me his check and, when I accepted, I suppose he thought me a tremendous clown—but, I haven't a scratch; just a little shaking up."

Sheik lit another cigarette, looked up at the ceiling and smiled.

"I'm glad," he said, "that everything turned out as it did. Had I held him up, I'd have got nothing from that empty wallet. As it is, I have two grand. The trouble with Archie is that he has too much money and some of it ought to be taken away from him. Do you know, Simp, that I'd hate to have held him up. He's such a fine fellow!"

Maybe he is.

I still think he's a big sap—but, I'm in favor of it.

MOTHER TEACHES CHILD TO STEAL

A MOTHER of twenty-seven was recently arrested in Brooklyn and sentenced to serve two years and six months in Auburn prison, since she was a second offender. Her method was to engage proprietors of small Brooklyn shops in conversation while her small six-year-old daughter roamed unnoticed about the store and filched money and pocketbooks from the counters and desks.

Chester

MILD *enough for anybody*

What a cigarette meant there

Down from a starless sky . . . and after hours of utter strain, a moment of utter relaxation. Safety after peril . . . rest after struggle . . . companionship after lonely vigil . . . no wonder the solace of a friendly cigarette has a place of its own in men's hearts.

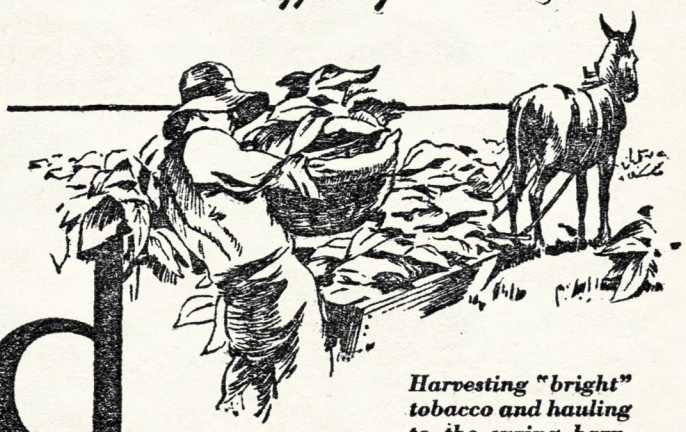
What a cigarette means *here*

Up from the sun-drenched earth—drowsily nourished under smiling skies, the tender leaves of tobacco ripen into gold or bronze.

From what soil and rain and summer sun prepare, we *select* the prize lots. Aroma and fragrance from Turkey; from old Virginia and the Carolinas, rare mildness; mellow "body" from Kentucky. We "age" it and blend it . . . and from earth's choicest tobaccos we give you Chesterfield.

And about six million smokers tell us it's more than worth all the trouble we take!

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.



Harvesting "bright" tobacco and hauling to the curing barn.

field

. . . . *and yet* THEY SATISFY

Big-scar's Prison Break

By Henry Leverage

Author of "Done Quiet," etc.

A HEAVY-SET man, nicknamed "Big-scar," was serving life and fifteen years at Rockglen. He glanced through the rain and over the wall to where a green-cloaked hill loomed.

"Charlie," he whispered, "we might as well try it this afternoon. Are you game?"

Charlie O'Mara, sixty-five years old, bent, broken and bitter at the law, coughed a warning signal. He raised his pick and started digging around a flower bed.

A guard, in a heavy raincoat, carrying a dripping rifle, came toward the two prisoners. He stopped a few feet away from Big-scar.

"Quit that talkin'," he snarled. "I'll chalk you in if I see any more of it."

Big-scar did not answer the guard. He spaded the earth, dug deep, tossed the shovelfuls to one side, and waited until the guard had strolled within the shelter of a low shed.

"Charlie," he continued, without moving his lips. "Listen, pal! See that motor truck near the shed?"

"I see it, Scar."

"See where that screw is standin'?"

"He's watchin' us."

"An' I'm pipin' him off, Charlie. We can beat this stir in an hour. D'you want to try it?"

"How are you going to do it?"

"Will you follow me?"

"Yes, Scar."

"Wait till it gets a little darker, then we'll take the chance."

The prison guard stood with his rifle lowered toward the moist earth beneath the shed. His eyes ranged from the two convicts to the wall upon which were other guards, sheltered in tiny guard houses. He yawned and drowsed, standing.

Big-scar worked in a slow circle. He had seen the auto truck come into the prison yard at noon. It was part of the road gang's outfit. There was no road work that day on account of the rain. The inmate driver had gone into the cell block.

Old Charlie O'Mara let his pick sink into the earth with feeble strokes. He paused at times. There was that to Big-scar's actions that presaged much. The burly safe blower was gradually closing in on the drowsing guard. He was like a surly bear getting ready for a killing.

The attack came with lightninglike suddenness. Big-scar dropped his shovel, crossed the earth, struck the guard a short-arm uppercut, and bore him down to earth. He smothered his cries with the flap of the raincoat.

Charlie O'Mara came limping toward the shed.

"Get a rope!" growled Big-scar. "I don't want to croak this screw yet."

"Croakin's too good for the likes of him, Scar."

"Get somethin' to tie him. We've only got about fifteen minutes to work in. We ought to be beyond the wall by then."

Big-scar, whose other name was Guffman, worked swiftly for a big man. He took the piece of rope the old convict found and trussed up the guard, after removing his raincoat. He made sure the screw would make no outcry. Then he fastened a stick in his mouth and tied it behind his head. He rose and glared through the downpouring rain.

"I knocked him cold turkey," he said. "Now, Charlie, put on that raincoat, take the cap and rifle, and walk slowly toward the auto truck. Get in the front! Stand up like a guard!"

"But they might know me, Scar."

"They won't recognize you. It's rainin'. The screws on the wall will think you are takin' the truck out—by order of the warden. I'll drive. An inmate always drives."

The guard who sat huddled in the little house which loomed over the great gate at Rockglen rose, opened a small window and glanced out as he heard the motor truck mounting the grade from the prison yard. He saw what he thought was the figure of a guard standing by a convict. This convict crouched with partly hidden face over the steering wheel.

"All right," shouted Charlie O'Mara, motioning with his rifle toward the closed gate.

The cautious guard squinted for a second time. Through the rain he caught the gleam of gold braid on the cap Charlie wore. He saw the rifle. He reached and pulled at a lever—like a signalman in a tower. The gate slowly opened, first to a crack, then wide. Big-scar pressed forward the clutch pedal, shifted from neutral to first speed, stepped on the accelerator, and let the clutch pedal up gently.

The truck mounted the top of the grade, churned through the gate, turned in front of the warden's house, and took the incline which led over the hill from Rockglen.

All might have gone well for Big-scar and the old convict if it had not been for the rain. Water had formed in deep pools along the road. Into these pools Big-scar guided the clumsy truck. He heard the engine miss an explosion. A sputter followed. The truck slowed. An explosion sounded in the muffler. The insulated wires had grounded and short-circuited. The truck suddenly stopped.

Big-scar leaped from the driver's seat and opened the hood. He attempted to find the trouble. A dangling wire, touching the engine's frame, was sodden with water and oil.

"Wot the devil!" he exclaimed. "No go," he added to Charlie. "Come on! We'll leave the truck an' take to the

woods. That means a rumble an' a chase as soon as the big whistle blows."

The two convicts were crossing an open field when they heard the first menacing blasts from the prison siren. They ran for shelter. A dog barked. A farm hand came through the underbrush. He stood gaping at them.

"Keep your nerve," said Big-scar. "That sap won't bother us. You've got the rifle. Night is comin' on. Tail me wherever I go."

The trail led away from Rockglen. Big-scar sensed the general direction. He attempted to gain a railroad junction where a freight could be taken for points north. He was headed off by an automobile load of prison guards.

"To the right," he whispered to Charlie. "Follow me! Don't cave, pal."

Big-scar ran an arm beneath Old Charlie's elbow. He took the rifle. They crossed a swollen brook, broke through the hedge of a vast estate, and came suddenly upon a trio of watchmen who had been alarmed by the blowing of the prison siren.

"It's all up with us," sobbed the aged convict.

The fight that followed was entirely one-sided. Big-scar pumped lead in the direction of the watchmen. He was answered by a salvo. Crimson cones burned through the rainy night. Bullets whined. A shout sounded far away. Other watchmen and constables were surrounding the estate.

Old Charlie O'Mara, crouched in the shelter of a hawthorne clump, coughed, rose, spun and fell face downward. A great spot of scarlet hue ran over the guard's raincoat. Charlie's face twisted in agony. Big-scar got down on his knees beside the convict.

"I'm croaked, pal," gasped Charlie. "They winged me through the lungs. Good-by, old-timer."

"Anythin' I can do, Charlie?"

"Do you think you'll get away?"

"I know I will."

"To the big city?"

"Sure, Charlie."

Big-scar examined Old Charlie's wound. He looked around in the gloom. "You may live," he said. "They may find you in this clump an' take you back to stir."

"I don't want 'em to do that. I rather die outside if I got to croak. You know how I feel, Scar."

The "yegg" lifted the old man, slung him over his back, and dodged through the estate until he emerged and, crossing a road, came out in a clearing where a small hut showed signs of seldom being occupied.

"I'll hide you here," he said. "Maybe I'll come back."

"Where you goin'?"

"I'll see if I can cop a car, circle around, an' get a doctor. You ain't dead yet, Charlie."

"I'm goin' to croak, but I don't want to croak in stir."

The old convict's voice was almost fanatic. Big-scar remembered the many friends in the outer world who knew Charlie O'Mara.

"I'm beatin' it," he said. "Be sure to look for me some time to-morrow, if the darn screws will let me through to you."

"The darn screws," repeated Old Charlie.

Big-scar left the convict, dodged the circle of prison guards, and gained at midnight, a point on a high ridge that overlooked Rockglen. The siren was still blaring; the searchers had autos on every road.

"Me for a car then," the yegg said to himself. "I'll make my get-away in one. Then I'll do wot's right for Old Charlie, but it's goin' to be a tough proposition settin' him free."

He started down the ridge, walking in the shelter of the side of a road. Now and then, he stopped and listened. His eyes were superkeen. He discerned ahead of him signs of cultivation and

evidences that a clearing had been made in the forest land.

"Where there's life there's hope," he told himself.

On the incline, a half mile from the crest, reared a house with a windmill and hay stacks. It was an oasis in a hostile world. A battered flivver stood in front of the house, by a split-rail fence.

Big-scar saw that the front wheels were straight as he climbed over the back of the machine, crashed against the wind shield, and released the brake as he twisted into the seat. The light car, set in motion by his impact, gained speed.

"If there is another car at that house, I'll have to step on the gas," concluded Big-scar. "Somebody is sure to phone ahead from there if they heard me start this flivver up."

Early morning mists closed over Big-scar like a sheltering cloak. He switched on the lights, the road bent, climbed and dipped in its course from Rockglen and the ridge. The car rattled the bumps, rebounded the culverts and took the ditch now and then. Big-scar leaned over the swaying wheel and strained his eyes through the broken wind shield.

Suddenly the carburetor sputtered. The flivver slowed down.

"I'm out of gas or out of luck," muttered Big-scar getting out when the car stopped. He jerked up the hood. The spot was a lonely one, on the shelf of a mountain.

Nothing seemed wrong with the ignition wires; the tank was half full. What had caused the car to stop? Big-scar scratched his short-cropped head. He tried the self-starter without success. Going around the bumper, he grasped the starting crank and quickly spun it.

There flashed on him the actinic rays of a high-powered automobile whose roar sounded like a riot gun. Big-scar stood erect and bared his teeth in the fierce light that shone on him. Brakes ground; gravel flew.

The car stopped. Its polished hood nosed close up to the flivver's. It was going in the direction of Rockglen. A lone, well-overcoated man sat at the steering wheel.

"He's my meat, whoever he is!" exclaimed Big-scar.

His advance upon the man was fierce. No shaggy grizzly ever struck harder. Big-scar made the running board creak with his weight; he brought his right arm and fist around the driver's neck in a garroting hold.

"Stay down there!" he grunted. "Naw, I've changed me mind! Stay over there, an' if you move, I'll come back an' eat you alive!"

The man landed in a ditch on the mountain side of the road; Big-scar's fingers peeled off the overcoat. He leaned and leered when he released the brake of the car and slipped the transmission into reverse. "Lay there, runt! What d'you mean—comin' along a road an' blockin' me from goin' about my business?"

A galvanic shock brought the man to his feet. He started running after Big-scar. He fell, got erect, staggered in a circle within the rays of the powerful lights, and came blindly forward. He seemed dazed but determined.

Big-scar turned the car at a wide place. Its rear wheels ran up an embankment; the gas tank scraped rocks. The hood dipped when he swung along the edge of the road and straightened out. He shot a glance backward.

The "runt" was reaching for the tail light. He missed by inches. A cry came to Big-scar. "Give me back my overcoat! You give me that overcoat!"

"He don't want the car, but he wants the benny," exclaimed Big-scar. "Guess he's batty."

The overcoat and a plaid cap on the floor boards proved sizes too small for Big-scar. He drove with one hand and

twisted into the coat. His shoulders and muscles bulged the seams. It was a splendid coat—silk and woolly to the touch—an ideal covering for a man wearing stripes.

"That runt," mused Big-scar, "had a mean disposition. Likely he's goin' to miss me as much as the warden."

The car—an eight-in-a-line roadster—surged up the hills like a gale of wind; it took the slopes downward with hardly a rattle. Big-scar saw that the gas and oil gauge were high. He actuated a spotlight that showed the edge of the highway. His back sank into deep cushions.

"This was made to m' order!" he declaimed. "Lucky that runt came along when he did. He's helpin' me save Old Charlie."

He looked over his shoulder. The road through the mountains resembled a silver thread. On it, miles in the rear, shone two faint lights that were without much power of penetration. Big-scar grimaced fiercely.

"That runt's comin' with my flivver. He got it started. One lamp's brighter than the other—that's it."

At a fork in the road, Big-scar got out and deciphered a sign that had been the target of some hunter's shotgun. "I ain't goin' to Redonda," he muttered, "'cause that's where they expect me to go. I'll take this pike to Loon Lake. Maybe I'll branch offen that when I get up a piece. I ain't afraid of the warden, but why's that runt trailin' me? Does he think he'll get his benny back?"

Loon Lake road was mostly bumps. The high-powered car made slow headway. The motor was geared for less of a climb; the long wheel base made the sharp turns difficult. Big-scar kept glancing back.

Again he saw the unmistakable lights of the flivver. It had gained on him; it was gaining with its shorter turning radius and its high clearance.

"If that runt gets too close," Big-scar threatened, "I'll fix him so he can wear a wooden overcoat. He didn't have a gun; he's just naturally persistent."

At Loon Lake two trails crossed. Big-scar had new directions to choose from. He selected the best—a county pike stretching westward. He opened the throttle with the weight of his prison-made shoe. The car leaped forward.

Behind, he saw the flivver, its pale lights turned in his direction. The runt at its wheel was bareheaded, caked with mud and dust.

"If I can't beat him on this pike I'll bust him!" concluded Big-scar. "I'll sap him on the bean!"

The first five miles were smooth going for Big-scar. The wind cut through his prison hair cut and lifted the plaid cap from his head. The runt's snug-fitting overcoat was none too warm. Big-scar concluded that individual was out of sight. He turned his chin; the flivver's cocked lamps leered at him, at a two-mile distance.

"He's stickin' tighter than a strait-jacket," swore Big-scar. "Can it be this benny he's after—or is he a copper?"

Big-scar hardly thought a man would be so persistent concerning an overcoat.

The runabout was worth two hundred overcoats. The runt had not insisted on getting back the car. Perhaps he could always recover it. The license plates bore a low number—00065.

A sickening report, a jerk at the steering wheel—that almost yanked it from Big-scar's hand—the swerve toward the right ditch, indicated that a tire had blown out. Big-scar steadied the runabout and brought it to a stop. He climbed out on the running board and scowled at the near, front wheel. Air was hissing out from a pinched inner tube.

Behind Big-scar sounded the thin honk of the flivver.

It, too, came to a stop, and the runt ran forward. Big-scar swung to the

road; he advanced with menacing hands. "You!" he throated. "You've been tailin' me long enough. I'm goin' to eat you alive, I am!"

"The overcoat!" exclaimed the runt. "Give me that overcoat!"

"Well, I'll be——" Big-scar began, then his teeth clamped. "You want your benny, eh?" he added through closed jaws. "I'll give you another kind of overcoat, I will. You're tailin' a respectable, hard-working man, who was jus' goin' about his own business."

Big-scar's arms reached and twined about the man. With slight effort, he lifted the squirming runt, charged with him toward the ditch and heaved him over a stone fence where he landed in a puddle.

Back to the runabout strode Big-scar. He lifted the front cushion, got out a jack and handle, and began jacking up the front wheel after seeing that the brake was securely set. He went around the car. The rear spare had a patent lock on it. Big-scar twisted it loose with the point of the jack handle. Then he glanced up. The runt was resolutely climbing over the stone fence.

A half boulder catapulted from Big-scar's palm. It whizzed past the runt's head and splashed in the puddle.

"Come any nearer," threatened Big-scar, "an' I'll heave another pebble. Jus' sit there an' watch me."

Big-scar bolted the tire to the wheel; he tossed away the blown-out one, gathered up the jack and handle and started the engine. Glancing back, he saw the runt running toward the flivver.

"If I'd of thought," muttered Big-scar, "I'd of jabbed a knife in that runt's gas tank. He'll stick closer to me than a fresh dick after a pickpocket."

A grade crossing offered a new obstruction. Both gates were down. Big-scar backed the runabout, went into first, second and third and crashed the gates. The rebound, when he struck the crossing, unseated him. He came down in a shower of splinters. Behind him honked the flivver.

The end of the road came when a steam roller, with a red light, blocked the way and indicated new construction. Big-scar discerned, through the gloom, a satisfying sight. He felt at home. Box cars, to the number of a hundred, stood in a railroad yard. Switch engines puffed; checkers ran between the rails.

"A division point!" he concluded. "I'll hop a rattler an' give that runt my cinders."

He abandoned the runabout. Crossing the tracks, he slouched through a dark row of furniture cars being made up for an extra West. A hobo leaned against one of these cars. Big-scar went by him, paused, swung on one heel, then stared at the tourist sharply.

"There's a railroad dick tailin' me," he confided. "See, here he comes. Stick out your foot when he goes by. I want to make a get-away. That dick is meaner than——"

Looking backward, Big-scar saw the runt sprawled face downward on the gravel. The hobo had aided a brother in trouble.

"Guess he'll quit followin' me now," Big-scar concluded. "What right has he got makin' all that rumble about a benny that's only half-sized."

Big-scar swung aboard the front end of the extra. Bracing his feet between the bumpers of two cars, he gulped in the morning air and made plans for saving Old Charlie. Big-scar felt entirely at home aboard a freight train. He began itching to get on top and stretch out.

His cropped head was thrust upward; he climbed the iron ladder and scowled along the line of swaying box cars. He was a conspicuous mark—in the dark. Stripes showed below the overcoat.

The locomotive's whistle sounded for a crossing; there was an added toot to it that Big-scar did not exactly like. Per-

haps the fireman or engineer had looked back and detected him.

There came menacingly from the caboose two brakemen, fortified with brake sticks. Big-scar eyed them; he squared his shoulders and measured the speed of the train, and the distance to the ground. Both were considerable.

"Let 'em come," he commented, then his eyes popped.

The advancing brakemen had scared up another tourist; the runt was dragged from between two furniture cars. He argued with the brakemen a moment; Big-scar saw him pointing in his direction; the three hurried forward.

"That lets me out!" said Big-scar.

He climbed down the ladder, swung outwardly and let go with a skilled twist to his body. He struck the gravel, rolled over with his elbows protecting his face, and lurched erect. The red caboose flashed by.

A lumber road "diagonaled" the tracks at an unnamed siding. Big-scar lurched down this road, brushed through new timber, and came out on the shore of a lake whose water reflected the sparks from the early morning stars. A nip was in the air; Big-scar tried to button up the runt's overcoat. He thrashed his arms and ripped the seams. A rowboat, with oars, was beached almost at his feet; the calling outlines of an island cheered him.

"I'll plant out there," said he. "Nobody'll look there for me, an' if they do, I'll sap 'em!"

He rowed to the island, concealed the boat under brushwood, and, after a search, discovered a small cabin wherein were canned goods, a bunk and a rude table with a kerosene lamp perched in its center. He lit the lamp and opened two cans of beans. These he washed down with a half pot of lake water. Stretching out on the bunk, he fell asleep.

Awakened by a sound, Big-scar squinted through the doorway. The door hung there by one leather hinge. The view was momentarily peaceful. Then Big-scar saw the runt coming in his direction.

Red rage gripped Big-scar. He ground his teeth and thrust out his jaw. There was a two-by-four section of timber in the hut. It had been used to bar the door. Big-scar lifted it and tested its weight. He swished the air when he swung his shoulders.

"Come on, now!" he muttered threateningly. "I've got to croak that runt to keep him from followin' me."

The little man's form was framed in the doorway. He resembled an insect that had been dragged through mire. Big-scar swung back the timber. He aimed at a spot on the runt's head.

"Hold on!" the runt gasped. "I don't want you; I want that overcoat. I'll give you fifty dollars for it, and say nothing to nobody about what happened."

"Gawan out of here!" Big-scar ordered. "Gawan—fifty bucks, you said?"

"Yes, fifty. Here it is! Two twenties and a ten."

A suspicion filled Big-scar's mind. Why was the overcoat so valuable?

The runt tiptoed into the hut. "You see," he insisted, "I've got the money in my hand. It's yours for the overcoat. I'm connected with the State. I was on a very important mission when you interrupted me. The papers——"

Big-scar dropped the scantling; he ran his fingers in both side pockets. There was nothing there but cinders.

"The document I want is in the inside pocket," the runt explained. "I was on my way to Rockglen to deliver it to the warden. It's a very important document."

Big-scar yanked out an overlooked envelope. He scowled at the runt. His fingers drew forth a pardon, signed and sealed.

"Who's this for?" he asked.

"A convict named Charlie O'Mara—serving time in Rockglen."

Big-scar felt his knees weaken under him; he braced himself with an effort. His body went forward until his arms had seized the runt in a grizzly's hug.

"Mitt me!" he cried into the runt's ear. "Charlie O'Mara is a pal ov mine."

All the long, twisting, dodging way back to where he had left the convict Big-scar ventured, in spite of a cordon of prison guards and rural constabulary. He was shot at once. The shot missed his head by inches.

He crawled through the underbrush and entered the hut. Old Charlie lay propped in one corner—his eyes baleful at the sound of intrusion.

"It's me, old-timer," whispered Big-scar. "I come back as I promised. A man's no better than his word. How you feelin'?"

"I'm goin' to croak. I know it. But, Scar——"

"Wot?"

"I don't want to die in disgrace. I don't want to be buried in that prison graveyard, with the quicklime an' the little wooden crosses."

"You needn't, old pal. Here's your pardon. Didn't I say I'd help you beat those prison guards?"

SAVED BY THE WEEKLY WASH

A MAN who had played a confidence game and made seventy-five hundred dollars a year ago, was walking along New York's notorious Broadway, recently, unaware that a pedestrian had recognized him, and had informed a policeman of his identity. The confidence man had been indicted by the grand jury and managed to escape, so that a warrant for his arrest had been issued.

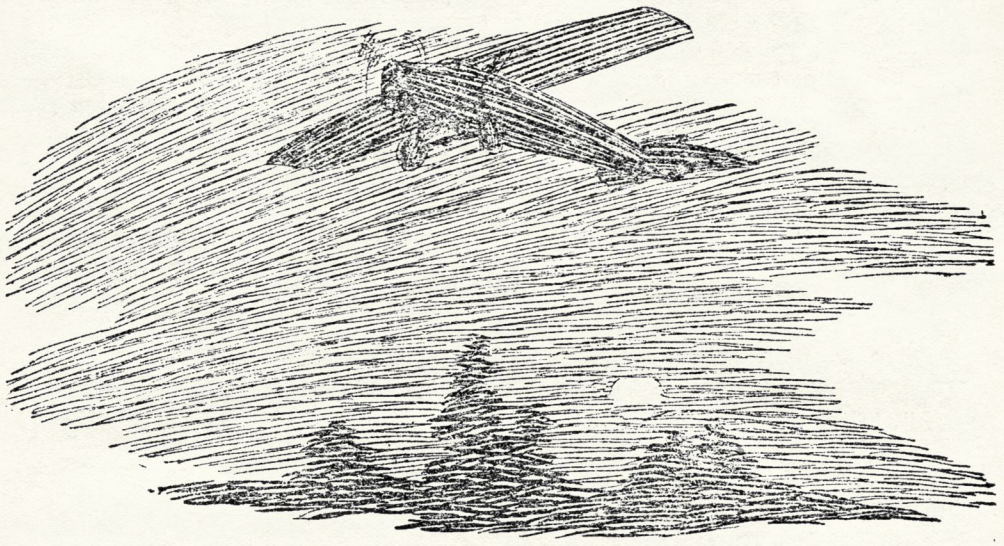
Learning this, the policeman stepped up to the wanted man and took him to a police station where he awaited some one to identify him as the man he was supposed to be. While the captain of detectives was speeding his way to New York to prove the man's identity, the prisoner was showing signs of restlessness. He noticed a stairway leading up from the adjoining room where he was sitting. He decided to take a chance—it was better than submitting docilely. With a leap which his captors were unprepared for, he dashed up the stairs.

Climbing stairs at so rapid a pace was hard work for the policemen who joined in the chase. Puffing and wheezing, they reached the roof and discovered, much to their dismay, that their prisoner was nowhere in sight. Peering over the cornice of the building, the policemen saw the confidence man making a desperate attempt at a get-away. It was Monday and the residents of that district had their wash out to dry. The fleeing man was going along the clothesline hand over hand. But the clothesline was not made to withstand the weight of a human being in addition to wet linen. It began to sag as he neared the center which stretched across two apartment houses six floors above the street.

To the gaping audience it was a scene which rooted them to the spot in utter fascination. The line snapped, and the man fell grabbing vainly at a line just below. The third line stretching beneath he managed to clutch, but the force of his fall snapped that immediately, and he was hurled to the pavement below in a mass of clinging, wet sheets and pillow cases.

Strangely enough he was still alive but unconscious when policemen rushed to him. It was found that he had fractured his arm in two places, cut his elbow, and bruised his neck. The injuries were considered slight in view of the fact that such a fall would ordinarily mean almost certain death.

The Children of the Poor



By Edgar Wallace

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

REX LEFERRE commits suicide and in a note to his sister, Margaret, tells her that Luke Maddison—a banker and Margaret's fiancé—has led him to his ruin. Danton Morell influences Margaret, so that she gets Maddison to turn over all his money to her.

After Maddison marries Margaret, she tells him that he no longer has any right to the money that he has legally given her. He bids her good-by and, later, when walking with Lewing, a gangster, Lewing's enemies kill the latter and stab Maddison in one of his lungs. He comes down with pneumonia.

After he recovers, he gets in with Connor's gang, who think he is a certain Smith from Australia. He is framed in a robbery, and is wanted by the police. However, he is able to get away.

Later, he is caught again by Connor, who decides to put him to death, but "Gunner," a friend of Luke's, comes to the rescue and takes him away to his flat. Then Connor, realizing Maddison's real identity, capitalizes the knowledge and writes to Mrs. Maddison, urging her to give him money for the safety of her husband.

However, Gunner prevents the meeting of Connor and Mrs. Maddison. Now that he has Maddison in his own flat, he agrees to bring Mrs. Maddison to him, but, when he does so, he finds that Maddison has been kidnaped.

CHAPTER XXX.

ARRESTED!

LUKE had only the most confused memory of what followed his incautious opening of the door. He had been sitting reading when he heard a knock, and saw nothing suspicious in the appearance of two men in green-baize aprons and shirt sleeves.

"Is this Mr. Haynes' flat?" asked one. "We've come to take away the wardrobe."

"You'd better return when Mr. Haynes is here," said Luke, thinking naturally that the Gunner had given instructions for the removal of a piece of furniture.

"If we can't take it away, we'd like to measure it," said the man, who carried a notebook ostensibly in his hand.

Luke Maddison hesitated. He knew nothing about wardrobes, or indeed of

any of the domestic arrangements of the flat. But there could be no harm in acceding to this request. He turned his back upon the men for a second, and, after that, he remembered nothing distinctly.

His first conscious impression was of having his face roughly cleaned by a cold, wet sponge. There was a rank smell of tar in the air, and the room in which he was sitting seemed to be in motion. He thought at first that this was one of the many illusions he was experiencing, but, when his eyes wandered round the apartment and saw the heavily timbered ribs of the room, the low wooden ceiling and the black, tar-painted floor, he realized that he was not dreaming.

"Am I on a ship?" he asked huskily, and heard a laugh.

He recognized the man who had the sponge in his hand as the artist who had once before wielded a cosh.

"Was it you—in the baize apron? I didn't recognize you."

"It wasn't me this time, guv'nor," said the man, who seemed chronically hoarse. "You ain't hurt. Drink this."

Luke drank the weak brandy and water that was offered to him, but would have preferred plain water.

"You're a regular nuisance to us, you are, guv'nor," said the man, dropping the sponge into a pail of water and wiping his hands on a grimy-looking handkerchief. "Now you take my advice and keep quiet. There's a proper bed for you here, and you'll find a pail of water in the stern. Nobody's going to hurt you if you behave yourself."

"Am I on a ship?" asked Luke again.

"Barge," was the reply. "There's nothing to be afraid of. The Gunner's looking for you, but he won't find you."

He turned to his silent companion, and only then was Luke aware that there was a second man in the cabin, if such a foul place could be dignified by such a name.

"We oughtn't to have laid him on the bed. That was the give-away, Harry," he said. "It was my fault, but we had to put him somewhere. You're stronger than I thought, Maddison."

Luke chuckled feebly.

"I don't remember that I put up a fight, did I?"

"Put up a fight?" said the other. "I should say you did! It was when we got you in the bedroom that you started scrapping. Don't you remember?"

Luke remembered nothing.

"The guv'nor's coming aboard in a minute; we're moored very near the wharf. If you're a sensible man, Mr. Maddison, you'll do what he asks. There'll be no funny business, now we know who you are."

He looked curiously at Luke.

"A pal of Lewing's, wasn't you? That's a funny game, mixing with a crowd like that. I'm surprised that a gentleman like you should have got yourself into that kind of trouble."

Luke did not reply. The two men went soon after, leaving the smoky lamp to illuminate the gloom.

A short flight of steps led to a heavy hatchway, which was closed. There was a kind of washing place in the stern of the craft. There was no port-hole through which he could see daylight, and a system of ventilation did not exist. Such air as came was admitted through three circular holes cut in the hatchway, and he suspected that over this was a canvas cover, for he could see no light.

Everything of value had been taken from him. His clothes were soiled with crimson; he found his sodden collar in a corner of the cabin, and his head ached all the time. Nevertheless, he was beginning to feel hungry when the hatchway was pulled back and the legs of a man appeared on the first step of the ladder.

He discovered now why he had seen no light: there was evidently a small deck house above the hatchway, and he caught a glimpse of this as his visitor was descending. It was Connor, who greeted him with the air of a friend who had been badly treated.

"You've given us a lot of trouble, Mr. Maddison," he said, unconscious of repeating the words of his lieutenant; "and, when people give me trouble, they have to pay for it. I've come to have a little talk with you. You want to get away to the continent, don't you?"

Luke did not answer.

"Don't be obstinate," begged Connor, with a friendly grin. "I'm trying to help you. I've fixed up with a boat—the skipper's a friend of mine—to take you to Rotterdam in the morning."

He took something out of his pocket which Luke recognized.

"Here's your passport; my boys found that when they were rummaging round at the Gunner's house. You take it from me, Mr. Maddison, I am the best friend you ever had."

Luke smiled wryly.

"I gather that this is the trouble I'm going to pay for, isn't it?" he asked.

"Spoken like a sensible man," said Connor. "Yes, it's going to cost you a bit, but you can afford it."

From his inside pocket he brought out a long envelope, and from this extracted three blank checks.

"I want you to make these out yourself: one for two, one for three and one for five thousand. It'll look better that way, and look much better if the checks are in your handwriting."

"May I see them?"

The man passed the checks to him, and Luke chuckled again.

"My poor conspirator!" he said mockingly. "I haven't more than a hundred pounds in that account or any other."

Connor's eyes narrowed.

"Are you pulling one on me?" he asked.

"I'm telling you the truth," said Luke, "though I can quite understand it sounds so strange to you that it seems a lie. This is on my private account, which is down to nothing; one of the last things I did before I went away, was to transfer most of the money I had in this account to my own bank."

"But you always used the Northern & Southern?" insisted Connor.

He was obviously perturbed by the discovery, as well he might be, for he had spent that afternoon searching London for the right "kites." There is quite a brisk trade in blank-check forms, and certain sources from which they can be obtained. It had taken him some time to track Luke's bank, a longer time to get the necessary forms, and his discomfiture was pardonable.

"Anyway, I've got no money," said Luke, "so your labors are all wasted."

"Yes, you have," interrupted Connor. "Your missus transferred all your money back to you after you'd left."

This was news to Luke, but obviously the man was not talking at random.

"Who told you this?"

"A pal of yours," said the other coolly.

"Danton Morell?"

Connor nodded.

"It would not have gone back to this account, anyway," said Luke after a moment's thought; "it would be in my own bank."

Connor understood humanity sufficiently well to realize that his prisoner was speaking the truth.

"But you'll sign the checks when I get them, won't you, Mr. Maddison?"

Luke shook his head.

"I'm not going to threaten you: I want this thing done in a gentlemanly way," said Connor earnestly. "You're a rich man, and a few hundreds more or less isn't going to hurt you. Some-

body's got to get you out of the country, and the Gunner can't. If you trust me, I'll see you right, and I'll never come to you for another penny; you know that I can't put the black on you once you get away from England; that's why I'm asking big money now.

"You're a business man, Mr. Maddison, and you've got enough sense to see that, if I blacked you after this, I should be cutting my own throat. I've had a cabin made up for you, and I'll take your word that you won't try to escape; and I don't see why you should either, with the police looking for you. Is it a deal?"

"You'll get not a bean out of me," said Luke defiantly.

Connor looked at him long and thoughtfully.

"All right," he said; "you can stay here and starve till you change your mind."

For a second, Luke was tempted to rush at him as he ascended the steps. A low tackle would bring him down; but Luke was still very weak; he sat passively till the hatch was pulled tight. It was dark on deck, but not too dark for Mr. Connor, as he dropped to the little rowboat which was alongside the barge.

He did not go to his wharf, but made for some narrow steps opposite to where the barge was moored, and, making his way to the city, he hailed a taxi and was driven to Half Moon Street.

Danty was just going out when his visitor arrived, and Mr. Danton Morell was not in a good mood.

"What was the idea of sending me that address?" he said. "I went down there this afternoon and nearly ran into Gunner Haynes."

"Then why did you go?" demanded Connor.

"To see Maddison. I could have persuaded him to part. Maddison isn't there. A woman in the building told me that the Gunner had locked up his flat and gone away. Where is Maddison?"

Connor lit a cigar before he replied.

"I've got him; I think I was in a quarter here, wasn't I, Danty? Well, I'm in three quarters now, and I'm being generous. You've had your chance, and you've missed it. What is he worth?"

Danty stifled his rising anger which was provoked by the tone of the man. There was no sense in getting on the wrong side of Connor, and the question of distribution might very well wait over for another and more propitious moment.

"Half a million, I should think. Where is he?"

"Half a million, eh?" Connor ignored the question. "Would he stand a hundred thousand?"

The other man thought a moment.

"Yes, he'd stand a hundred thousand if he could get it," he said.

"He said he hadn't got a bean."

"He's got money all right," said Danty savagely. "It's all in his own bank."

Connor pondered this for a long time.

"That'll mean ten kites. Can you get them?"

Danty frowned.

"What do you want checks for?"

Connor closed his eyes wearily.

"You've been so long out of the con game that you've forgotten your business," he said offensively. "I want the checks for him to sign, that's all. Can you get them?"

Danty thought for a moment.

"I've got a check book on that bank," he said. "I had a small account there. But they won't be any good; they'll be able to trace the checks to me. But I can get them."

He went to the telephone and called Margaret's number. The servant who replied told him that she was out, which was just the news he wanted.

"When will she be back? It is Mr. Morell speaking."

He half expected a message to the effect that Mrs. Maddison would not be in to him at any time.

"Not till after lunch, sir."

Danty hung up the phone.

"Wait here," he said. "I think I know where I can get all the kites you want."

He knew a great deal about Margaret and her domestic habits; he had been deeper in her confidence than any other man. The butler was surprised to see him, but took him up to Margaret's sitting room without hesitation.

"I didn't make myself clear, sir. Madam will not be back **for** another hour."

Danty smiled.

"I think you will find she returns a little sooner than that," he said almost gayly. "Anyway, I'll wait for her."

The door had hardly closed upon the servant before he was at Margaret's desk. It was unlocked, and, in one of the side drawers, he knew she invariably kept two check books. They were there, as he had expected: one half empty, one unused. From the end of the latter he tore a dozen checks, slipped them in his pocket and closed the desk, before he rang the bell.

"I don't think I will wait; I'll call back in an hour. My business isn't so pressing, and I've just thought of some calls I had to make."

Within half an hour of leaving, he was back with Connor and laid the checks before him. Mr. Connor asked no questions, nor was there any necessity.

"You're going to make him sign these? Shall I come along with you?"

Connor grinned.

"I don't think that's a clever idea," he said. "You'll get your corner, Danty."

He could not approach the barge in broad daylight, for he knew that he was under police observation. As soon as it was dark, he slipped down the stream and clambered aboard the craft, carrying with him a basket of food and a vacuum flask full of hot tea. The light which he had left had burned itself out. Luke was half sleeping on the bed that had been prepared for him, but the rush of cold, fresh air awakened him.

Connor switched on an electric lamp he was carrying and put it on the floor, with one or two refills.

"Here's your food," he said. "I'm sorry to have kept you so long, but I hope you've got more intelligence now than you had when I left you. And here are the kites; I'd like you to fill them in in your own hand."

Luke reached for the food and ate ravenously. He was feeling hungry, and his vitality was at its lowest ebb. The hot tea probably revived him more than the food, and he was almost cheerful when he swept the last crumbs from his knees.

"Now, what are your kites?" he said. "Oh, checks! You want me to fill them up and sign them—for what fabulous amount? You can make it a million if you like, but I can assure you that they will not be honored. I think I told you before that all my money is in my wife's name."

"In that case, we'll have a little joke," said Connor, not taking his eyes from his prisoner. "You'll make each of these checks out for ten thousand, and date 'em a week apart. If you want to stay longer than ten weeks, you can date 'em a month apart; or, if you'd like to get away in a few days, you can sign one check for a hundred thousand pounds, and you can write a letter to your bank manager telling him the kite's got to be honored."

Before he had finished, Luke was laughing.

"I've got a very keen sense of humor," he said, "but it doesn't strike

me as being a joke for a banker to draw checks on a debit account."

Connor pulled up a stool and sat down.

"Let's have this thing right," he said. "You know me, you know my name; I've put myself in for a ten-years' sentence, probably longer. I'd as soon hang as spend my life in Broadmoor, and that's just the risk I'm taking, Mr. Maddison. I'll plug you and drop you over the side, or you'll do as I ask. You're a sensible man, and I'm putting the case to you. I can't let you go without the money."

He drew the stool a little closer. "I've been battling for years at this river work and gang work, and what do you think I've got to show for it? The lease of an old wharf that's not worth a monkey; about a couple of thousand planted away in country banks, and the certainty that sooner or later one of my rats will squeak on me. I've got a chance now of getting away with big money; you've got a chance of clearing yourself. I'll make a signed statement, giving the facts about the Taffanny smash. Is it a bet?"

It was not the moment for heroics. Luke realized this very definitely. He had no doubt in his mind that, in the last extremity, Connor would keep his word, and there would be the end of all things. It was not a moment to snap fingers in the face of fate.

Connor had put the situation on a business basis, and this was not the time to consider the niceties of business etiquette. If he drew a check and it were presented, he had no doubt in his mind that the check would not be met; inquiries would be set afoot, and possibly he would be traced.

"I think it is foolish to attempt to put in a check for ten thousand," he said. "The amount is so big that, even if I had the money, Stiles would be suspicious. I'm willing to make a compromise: I'll give you a check for five thousand pounds. If that is honored —which it will not be—your luck is in, and you had better clear before there are inquiries. Obviously, no bank manager in his senses would pay out a hundred thousand pounds without communicating with the man who drew the checks."

He saw Connor smile.

"That's the stuff I like to hear," said the man. "That's intelligent. Where are you supposed to be—in Spain, aren't you?"

Luke frowned.

"I suppose I am. Why?"

"We'll draw this five thousand, and then you and me will go to Spain together. I'll get you away to-night."

The scheme did not even seem feasible to Luke, but he made no comment. He wrote and signed the check and handed it to the other.

"And now," said Luke, "I'd like a little fresh air. This place is stifling me."

Connor hesitated.

"Come up on deck, but, if there's any monkey business, I may have to do something I shall be sorry for," he finally said.

A few seconds later, Luke sat on the edge of the hatchway, sucking in the cool, sweet air. The hatch was on the well of the barge, and this was covered with tarpaulin. He could see this by the light of a flashing-electric sign erected on one of the towers that fringed the river. Opposite was a line of lights which stood for the Thames Embankment.

A fussy little tug was moving slowly against the tide upstream; he heard the hoot and shriek of a train as it passed across one of the bridges. The lights of the West End painted the low-lying clouds a dull orange. The tide was on the turn; he heard the lap of it against the flat bow of the barge.

For ten minutes, he sat in silence,

then rose on to the deck and stretched his cramped limbs.

"If I promised not to leave the barge, or attempt to attract attention, would you leave the hatch open, Mr. Connor?"

Connor's laugh was his answer.

"Don't be silly! That word-of-honor stuff doesn't mean anything to me."

"I'm glad," said Luke. "If you had accepted my word, it might have been very embarrassing."

As he spoke, his hand shot out, and Connor went sprawling on to the hatch. Before he could recover, Luke had reached the edge of the barge, and, without a glance, had plunged in and was striking out for midstream.

He heard no sound but the patter of footsteps on the hollow hatches, and then a voice giving urgent instructions. Connor must have a rowboat moored alongside, he decided. The tide had already swept him clear of the barge; it was running strongly, and there was nothing nearer to him than a line of moored lighters in the center of the river. To make for these, however, would be to invite discovery. He struck back toward the shore.

As he did so, he saw a shape come around the bow of the barge. Connor had come in a motor launch. It moved too quickly to be anything else. There was only one thing to do. He drew a lungful of air and dived toward the launch, swimming hard against the tide. He seemed to be under the water for an eternity; his lungs and head were bursting when he came to the surface, coming up just under the stern of the launch, so close that the whirling little propeller seemed to touch his hair.

Neither of the two men in the launch had seen him. He just caught the silhouette of their heads and shoulders peering over the side, and then he sank again.

He was lamentably weak; his effort could not be long sustained. He had to come again to the surface and was relieved to see no sign of the launch. As he trod water he saw it, making for the lighters in midstream. He was now twenty yards from the barge moored to a wharf, and, striking out, he caught the mooring chain and recovered his breath before he attempted to reach land.

He was too weak to climb up to the barge; the only thing he could do was to complete his journey to the shore, and with infinite labor he succeeded at last, wading through mud up to his knees until he came to the blank face of a warehouse. There seemed no escape here. Looking back over his shoulder, he saw the launch returning. Somebody was fanning the water with an electric torch, and escape seemed impossible.

It was at that moment he heard a hoarse voice hail him from the barge.

"Give us your hand."

He reached up and found it gripped.

"Catch hold of the top of the pile," whispered the voice cheerfully, and, groping upward, Luke found a hold, and, with a superhuman effort and the assistance of his unknown friend, dragged himself up on to a narrow strip of wharfage running before the warehouse and scarcely wide enough for two people to walk abreast.

"They didn't see you, did they?" whispered the unknown, and, before Luke could reply: "Push round to the left. Follow me! There's a watchman here; he's asleep, but don't make a row!"

Luke Maddison found himself picking a way across a yard littered with paving stones. He saw a long shed and the projecting shafts of vans. Somewhere near at hand were horses, for he heard one kicking in his stall.

He followed stealthily, past a little lighted hut, wherein the night watchman—as he hoped—was sleeping. After a while, they came to a heavy black

gate; the wicket door was unfastened, and through this they slipped. Luke's rescuer closing the door softly behind him; apparently he had a key.

"I saw 'em looking for you, but I thought they was out for Connor's lot."

He swore most foully for a few seconds.

"These river dicks are worse than the land ones."

By the light of a street lamp, Luke took stock of his companion—a sharp, lantern-jawed man of thirty, with a long nose and furtive eyes that never kept still.

"You're wet, ain't you? Come into Connor's yard; he'll give you a change."

"No, thank you," said Luke hastily. "I don't want anything to do with Connor."

"You don't want anything to do with Connor, eh? Well, you're wise. Got any money?"

Luke felt in his pockets.

"No," he said.

The man uttered a grunt of disgust.

"I thought at least I'd get a little something out of it. Where do you live?"

"I don't know where the devil I do live," said Luke irritably, and he heard the thin, whistling laugh of his companion.

"You're a swell; I thought you was when I first heard you speak. Ever busted a safe? There's one in that warehouse and nothing else. They told me there was a lot of stuff there. I've been three days getting in and out. The only way you can do it is to go through the stone yard. But I'll bet there's some stuff in the safe. Have you ever busted one?"

"Never," said Luke, and added: "It's one of the few things I haven't done."

"What were the dicks after you for?"

The man was under the impression that Luke was a fugitive from the river police, and he did not undeceive him.

"It's a pretty hard life," said the other agreeably.

They were reaching now a more populous center, and the little man, who said his name was Curly, stopped.

"You can't go into the street like this; they'd pinch you in a minute. You'd better come home with me. But I can't afford to keep you."

Luke was led through divers byways to the meanest street he had ever struck. Although the hour was late, children were playing and screaming, women stood at the doors gossiping. Nobody took any notice of Luke and his companion, and presently they passed through a door, which Curly unlocked, along a passage and up an uncarpeted flight of stairs.

"Go in there and get your wet clothes off." Curly opened a door, and, striking a match, lit a candle.

The windows were heavily screened with an old piece of horse blanket, and the furniture of the room consisted of a bed with horrible-looking bedding, and precious little else.

Curly said he was going to see the landlord. He was gone some time, and, when he returned, Luke had overcome his repugnance to the soiled linen, and, having stripped and dried himself as well as he could on the one grimy towel that the room possessed, he had crawled into the bed.

Curly threw down on a chair a pair of trousers and an old shirt, which had the advantage of being clean.

"That's all I can get for you," he said, and picked up Luke's sodden suit, eying it with approval.

The boots also came under his scrutiny.

"Silk shirt, eh? I thought you was a swell. I'll get these dried for you."

He disappeared and did not return. Ten minutes later, in spite of his unsavory surroundings, Luke was fast asleep. When he woke, the light of day was shining through the holes in the

blanket. Rising, he put on the shirt and trousers, feeling uncommonly chilly.

There was noise enough downstairs; the howl of a crying child, a woman's strident voice, and the deeper, bullying tone of a man. He opened the door, went out on to the landing and called. Presently, the owner of the deep voice appeared.

"What's the matter?"

"Are my clothes dried?" asked Luke politely.

"What clothes?"

The man was interested, and came heavily up the stairs—a big, unshaven brute, puffy faced.

"Gave Curly your clothes?" He kissed his hand loudly. "Say good-by to 'em, old man."

Luke stared at him aghast.

"Do you mean he's gone away with them?"

That apparently was what he did mean. He also informed his guest that he needed half a crown for the night's lodging.

"And then there's my trousers and shirt," he said. "What do I get for 'em?"

He took a long time before he consented to add to the loan an old jacket and a pair of worn shoes that were two sizes too small. He could, he thought, "get a bit out of Curly," from which Luke gathered he was going to share the proceeds of the stolen clothing. He added to his other beneficences a cup of tea and a thick slice of bread and margarine, and, with this equipment, the shivering banker was turned out into the street.

Rain was falling heavily. By the time he had reached Lambeth Bridge, he was soaked through. He made for the park, and, finding a chair, drew it into the shelter of a big, overhanging tree. For a long time he sat there, and then he reached a decision. Disgrace and prison seemed a little less unpleasant prospect than cold and hunger. He decided to go to the bank.

He did not know the time and asked a man who was hurrying past, without, however, eliciting the slightest response. Then he asked another man, who gruffly told him it was nearly twelve. He would find Stiles in the office, and Stiles meant comfort and food and decent clothing.

As he came out of the park gates, somebody caught him by the arm and swung him around, and he looked into the unsympathetic face of a man who was obviously a detective.

"Begging, eh? I saw you speak to those two gentlemen."

"I asked them the time," said Luke.

"I dare say," said the detective, tightening his lips. "Take a little walk with me."

Ten minutes later, a door closed on Luke Maddison, and he found himself alone in a clean but very uncomfortable cell of a police station. In this experience, he was entirely unfortunate, for Connor had been trailing him, hoping that he might go to some part of the park where persuasion, peaceful or otherwise, could be, with safety, attempted.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GUNNER—AND MARY.

NO man wasted less time or effort than Gunner Hayes. His method represented the very economy of labor. He was satisfied that Connor had carried away his victim, but was wrong when he associated Danty Morell with the abduction.

He called upon Connor, but was told vaguely that the man had gone into the country. He did not attempt to seek an interview with Danty Morell but, after a day spent in a vain search of Connor's wharf, made his way to Half Moon Street, watched the house until he saw first Danty and then Pi Coles leave.

To get into Danty's flat was a very simple matter.

Once inside the flat, he proceeded at his leisure. He was not at all anxious at the thought of Danty's return. His hatred of Morell was in one sense illogical. They had been friends and partners, though he had lost sight of the man and the partnership had broken off. He had no direct proof of the duplicity he suspected. Gunner Haynes had loved that feather-headed little wife of his, and when she had disappeared, never to become more to him than a record in a workhouse register, a tremendous part of his life had been cut away from him. He might suspect Danty as the cause of his agony; he had no clear evidence that the story the man had told was untrue.

Danty had said the girl had disappeared, and that he was as ignorant of her whereabouts as her husband. Yet, for all this, the suspicion in Gunner Haynes' mind amounted to a certainty. He was a just man, and so long as that proof was missing, Danty Morell would come to no harm.

He made a quick but thorough examination of the two rooms. There were letters which had to be scanned, pocketbooks to investigate, drawers to be opened and searched, but in none of these did Haynes find the slightest clew to Luke Maddison's present place of imprisonment. He did find the note which Connor had scribbled, giving the address where Luke was staying, but no more. There remained only the safe, which was not so much a safe as a steel cupboard fastened with a spring lock—the type that is found in most business offices. To open this was a matter of five minutes' patient work.

There were four shelves, and each was crowded with letters, bills, and curious souvenirs which Danty had collected; the cupboard was in such disorder as only a man without method could create. On the third shelf, he found a wooden box, the lock of which he forced. There were paper here—bundles of letters tied up with shoe laces, bits of old string; there was nothing romantic in Danty's disposition.

The first bundle did not interest him. At the sight of the writing on the second, his face went gray. He brought the box into the dining room and sat down, read three of the letters, glanced at the others, and very slowly and deliberately tied them up again and put them back in the box. As he did so, he caught sight of a scrap of paper exactly the size of that on which Rex had written his last message. He took it out; yes, it was scrawled in the same handwriting. But the message was unintelligible. It ran:

DANTY MORELL: The man is a common swindler. I was warned against him by——

And then in a flash he realized. He had an extraordinary memory, and could repeat almost word for word the complete message as Rex had left it.

MARGARET, DARLING: I have lost. For months I have been gambling. To-day I took a desperate step on the advice of Danty Morell. The man is a common swindler. I was warned against him by Luke Maddison. He has led me to ruin. Money is his god. I beg of you not to trust him. He has led me from one act of folly to the other.

That was it! Danty had found that the first and last of those scraps made a complete message; he had put the second in his pocket; it still bore marks of being screwed up.

It took him quite a long time to realize all this. His mind was numbed from reading the letters; he was almost stupid in his horror and hate. Mechanically he put the telltale slip of paper into his pocketbook, and closed the lid. His wife's letters must be burned. He opened the box again, took them out, threw them into the fireplace and put a match to them. He stood

watching and stirring them until they were black ashes, then he put the box back where he had found it, and closed the steel cupboard.

For the moment, Luke Maddison and his safety were subsidiary considerations. The only thing that mattered was Danty. The agony and appeal in those letters! Gunner Haynes caught a glimpse of his face in a mirror over the mantelpiece and for a moment was shocked. He had become suddenly old.

Danty did not return, and he was glad. He turned out all the lights, closed the door behind him and went out into the street. He had hardly crossed to the other sidewalk before a cab drew up to the pavement and a man alighted. It was Danty.

The gunman watched but made no effort to intercept him. That would come later; there would be a great accounting.

He strolled into Piccadilly, moving like a man in a dream, and heard his name spoken twice before he turned with a start to look into the pretty face of Mary Bolford.

"I wondered if it was you," she said, "and if you were contemplating some nefarious act. Of course, you're not!"

The Gunner drew a long breath.

"To tell you the truth, I was," he said gently. "I haven't had the good fortune to meet you in this last week, Miss Bolford."

She shook her head.

"I've been very busy. I've accepted a job on an Australian newspaper, and I'm leaving London next week."

Her tone was jaunty, but he could detect a strain in the voice that was very flattering to him.

"Well, I've given you enough to write about," he said. "Enough material, I mean."

She sighed.

"Yes." A little pause. "I shall miss you. I suppose if I told Mr. Bird that, he would be annoyed."

"He'd be furious," said the Gunner, a slow smile displacing the pained look she had seen in his eyes.

"You won't come to Australia, of course, ever? I shall be there for seven years."

"By what boat do you travel?" he asked, and, when she had told him: "There's another mail leaving a week or so after. Do you sail from London?"

She nodded.

"They wanted to pick up the boat at Naples—we call there; but I rather want the sea journey. I've got what is called a lung—not a bad one; that is why I have taken work in Australia."

They had coffee together, and, in that flying time, he thought neither of Luke Maddison nor of Danty Morell nor of the letters which were ash in the grate. When he left her at eleven o'clock, he said:

"If I can get my business through, I may join your ship at Naples."

She looked at him very gravely.

"Do you really mean that?" she asked. "And is Australia to be the scene of your next——" She hesitated for a word, but he anticipated her.

"I am going to be the rarest of phenomena—the reformed crook," he said.

She sipped her coffee in silence.

"Would anything help you to that end?" she asked, and Haynes nodded.

He did not put into words the thought that was in his mind and hers, but she understood. It was then that he gave her his first confidence, and she listened open-eyed, stricken dumb with amazement, to the true story of Luke Maddison.

"I've been searching for him all day," he said, "and I haven't even got a thread of a clew."

"He isn't dead?"

Haynes shook his head.

"That is most unlikely," he said. "The trouble is that the police cannot

be told; I suppose the press shouldn't be either," he added, "but things are —different now, aren't they?"

"Have you got the little piece of paper you found in Morell's flat?" He had omitted nothing from his narrative.

He passed it across the table to her. She read and nodded.

"What was the rest of it?"

He recited the full message almost word for word.

"I have seen Rex; in fact, I know a great deal about him," she said. "Mr. Bird was very confidential and told me about the forgery. I could have given him a lot of information, because I was standing in the doorway of the bank the day the forged check was cashed. It was the day Mr. Maddison gave me a hundred pounds; I've still got it."

They were talking of the Sparrow as they came out of the restaurant, and, at the corner of Bury Street, they met him. He looked disapprovingly at Gunner Haynes and frowned at the girl.

"Getting a first-hand crime story? What's doing, Gunner? Are you giving evidence before the select commission?" he asked with a sneer.

Gunner Haynes chuckled. There had been one of those periodical police scandals; somebody had been arrested who ought not to have been arrested, and there was the inevitable inquiry on foot into police methods.

"We've got to go so carefully nowadays that I wouldn't arrest a man if I found him cutting his wife's throat, without making a few inquiries," said the Sparrow. "I'll tell you how bad it is: they've just turned a tramp out of a police station, charged with begging, but only one witness—a policeman. So they hoofed him out. When we've got to consider the feelings of tramps, you might as well turn Scotland Yard into a home for lost dogs. I mention the tramp because I was down at the police station just after they pushed him out. I suppose it's happening all over London. You're going to Australia, they tell me, Miss Bolford?"

His keen eyes searched the Gunner's face.

"You're not going too, are you, Gunner? You'll miss those little tea-table talks, won't you?"

Mary Bolford turned red. She had never dreamed that those unrehearsed and informal meetings with Gunner Haynes had attracted the attention of this stout man.

"Both of you ought to be warned," said the Sparrow soberly, "and I'm warning you! There never was a crook who could be anything but a crook. There never was a girl who married a man to reform him who didn't finish by bolting with somebody better."

"You're in your most prophetic mood to-night, Mr. Bird," said the Gunner coolly. "Now tell us what's going to win the Derby?"

The Sparrow grunted and went on with a little chuck of his head—a gesture of farewell. Haynes and the girl walked along Piccadilly till they came within sight of the circus, and here they parted. As they lingered, her hand in his, he said:

"You've saved a man's life to-night, Mary," and wisely she did not question him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ATTEMPTED GET-AWAY.

IT came as something in the nature of a shock to Margaret Maddison to discover how completely changed were her feelings toward the man with whom she had passed through stages of toleration to liking, and from liking to a sort of passive affection, and from that again, in the cataclysmic revolution of feeling that her brother's death had brought about, to the bitterest loathing.

For the first time in her life, Margaret was in love, and in love with

something which was neither a memory nor an idea, but something which was to her as real as her own hand. She had gained that sense of possession which is the wife's own sense, an understanding of her obligations. Now she could not afford to waste time in regrets at the amazing follies and wicked errors of the past; in the days that followed, her mind was occupied with schemes for helping him out of the morass in which he struggled.

She did not hear from Gunner Haynes, although she stayed up until nearly two o'clock the next morning, having the telephone switched through to her bedside. Nor did the next day bring news. She was out when Danty called, and, having no occasion to go to her check book, she did not discover his theft.

The following morning brought the Sparrow—professionally.

"Did you give orders that none of your husband's checks over a thousand pounds were to be cashed at the bank?" he asked.

She nodded.

"A young man brought one in for two thousand this morning. Very foolishly, Mr. Stiles didn't call me up, and he got away before I arrived."

"Was it in Luke's handwriting?" she asked eagerly. "Where is he?"

The Sparrow could not supply information.

"I thought he was abroad. Is it usual for your husband to send people to the bank with checks for cash? It seems queer to me."

"The money was not paid?" she asked.

"No; Stiles said if it had been for a thousand he'd have cashed it."

She was purposely evasive, and, after the detective had gone, she telephoned through to Stiles. He had little to add.

"The man who brought the check seemed very respectable."

"But did you ask him where he got the check?" she demanded impatiently. "Surely, Mr. Stiles, you weren't satisfied——"

"I thought that you expected him to send checks," said Mr. Stiles.

She never realized how dense a man this middle-aged manager was.

After she had rung off, she sat down to think. Luke had broken into his flat to secure his passport and clothes. The passport was now in the Gunner's possession; she must see that he had a change in case he arrived unexpectedly. She went herself to his flat, made a careful collection, packed such toilet articles as she thought he might require, including a case of razors, and had them taken down to her car.

It was the first wifely duty she had performed, and it brought her a pleasing sense of novelty. Even that faint pleasure brought to her a realization of the strain under which she was living, and the ever-increasing anxiety concerning Luke's fate.

If she could have got into touch with Gunner Haynes, she would have done so. She would almost have welcomed the arrival of Danty Morell. She had a reminder of his earlier visit when she went to her bureau to make out household checks. She took out the wrong check book and saw that some were missing. Putting through a call to the bank, she learned that the check presented that day was one of these. Then Danton Morell was in the conspiracy!

Her first inclination was to send for Inspector Bird. But at all costs the police must not be called in. She turned the leaves of the telephone directory and searched for Danton's number, was on the point of calling him when she came to a decision to see him herself.

She did not wait for her car, but, hailing a taxi, and leaving certain very definite instructions behind her, drove to Half Moon Street, and Pi Coles, who opened the door to her, stared in amazement at this unexpected vision.

"Come in, miss," he said awkwardly. "The guv'nor's inside."

Danton heard her voice and was coming across the hall to meet her before the door was closed.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Margaret," he said. "Is anything wrong?"

She did not answer until she was in his room.

"Before I tell you why I've come," she said, "I think it is only fair that you should know I have left instructions that, unless I am back in my house in three quarters of an hour, my butler will ring up Mr. Bird and tell him where I have gone."

He frowned at this.

"What's the idea?" he asked harshly. "That's an extraordinary way to behave. Why the dickens shouldn't you be back in three quarters of an hour?"

"Where are the remainder of those checks that you stole from my check book when you called the other day?" she asked.

She saw his face go red.

"I don't know what you mean," he said loudly. "I stole checks? What nonsense you're talking!"

"You came into my house, and you were in my sitting room long enough to extract some checks. One of them was brought to the bank to-day, made out in Luke's name, and signed by him. On my instructions, the check was not honored."

The color left his face.

"Not honored?" he stammered, and, in his embarrassment, he betrayed his share of the guilt.

"I'm less interested in the checks than in my husband," she said quietly. "Where is he?"

He strove vainly to recover his self-possession and forced a smile.

"Really, my dear girl——" he began.

"You'll address me as Mrs. Maddison, if you have to address me as anything," she said. "I want you to return those checks; I want you also to tell me exactly where Luke is."

"As far as I know, he's staying with a convicted thief named Haynes," the man answered roughly, and to his surprise she nodded.

"I thought so, too. I went down to see him, but he had gone. I think Mr. Haynes was surprised to find that he had gone, and I'm only now understanding that Luke did not go of his own free will. Then I thought he may have wandered out by himself in order to escape association with Mr. Haynes. But the check explains a great deal. Where is Luke?"

He shook his head.

"I don't know."

"In that case, I'm going to do what I was trying to avoid," she said. "I am going to the police, and I shall charge you with stealing the blank checks, and leave it to Mr. Bird to connect you with Luke's disappearance."

She half turned to the door, but he caught her by the arm.

"For Heaven's sake, Margaret, consider what you're doing!"

She saw he was really alarmed; his voice was tremulous, his whole air suggested panic.

"I swear to you I don't know where Luke is; he was on a barge, where Connor was keeping him. The swine didn't tell me that Maddison had signed a check. All he told me was that he jumped into the river and got away or was drowned—I don't know which. That's the truth. I knew nothing about it till Connor had found him. I swear to you this is the truth!"

"Where is Connor?" she asked after a moment.

"I don't know. He was here this morning, and told me about Luke getting away. That is all the information I have. I didn't believe him, and probably it's a lie he told me."

He saw she was undecided and eagerly sought to turn her from her

intention. He had no doubt that she meant what she had said.

She did not know what to do.

"Could you find Haynes for me?"

"Find Haynes?" he almost shouted. "You don't imagine I would communicate with that fellow, do you? He's a dangerous man, Margaret."

"Mrs. Maddison," she said coldly.

"He's dangerous; you oughtn't to have any dealings with him."

He did not attempt to deny the theft of the checks.

"You don't know where Mr. Maddison is at all?"

He accepted the corrected relationship without demur.

"No, Mrs. Maddison, I've no idea. Connor's been looking for him all night."

When she returned home, she found the Sparrow waiting for her on the doorstep. The sight of a large kit bag at his feet surprised her, and, when he carried it into the house and into the little study on the ground floor, she was to have a shock. She did not recognize the crumpled clothes he took from the bag.

"These clothes were found in the possession of a river thief, who was trying to sell them this morning," he said. "He didn't know that your husband's name was stitched in the inside pocket."

"My husband's name?" she gasped, turning pale. "Where did he get them?"

"That's what I want to know. The yarn he tells is that last night he picked up a man who was wet through and who had come out of the river, and took him to a house. We've since verified that, though, from the description I've had, it couldn't possibly be Mr. Maddison, who is still abroad, I presume?"

Was there a note of sarcasm in his voice? She thought she detected it, and very wisely did not answer.

"The man said the clothes were given to him, but that, of course, is the usual yarn. I have reason to believe that they were stolen while the owner was in bed. Can you throw any light upon them?"

She shook her head. It was a pitiable confession, but she knew she could not even recognize an old suit of clothes worn by her husband. It was the suit into which he had changed when he broke into his flat.

"What do you make of that, Mrs. Maddison?"

She shook her head helplessly.

"It couldn't be a suit your husband gave away, because the date it was delivered is written on the tab, and it must have been new a month ago."

He looked at her keenly.

"There's a lot of mystery about this husband of yours, Mrs. Maddison, and I think you're in some kind of trouble. I'd like to help you if I could."

She was going to speak, but he held up his hand to stop her.

"Don't tell me anything until I have told you just how much I know." He ticked off the facts on the fingers of his hand. "I know your husband disappeared the day after your marriage; also that there was a burglary at his flat, and that, when the police arrived, they recognized the man who had been concerned in a robbery that afternoon. Moreover, I know that, among the things stolen from his flat, was a passport; I interviewed his servant subsequently, and he told me there was a passport in one of the drawers of the desk.

"Now, if there were any chance—and it seems one of those fantastic theories that writers make a lot of money from—that this man is Mr. Maddison, the best people to help him are the police. I know him well enough to be sure he wouldn't hold up Taffanny's. If it's a question of impersonation; we can be more than useful. Won't you tell me, Mrs. Maddison?"

She was silent. With a shake of his head, the detective took his departure, carrying with him the suit of clothes and a very deep-seated conviction.

It was a curious coincidence that he should have brought those crumpled garments to the house, when, neatly packed away in a new suit case in her bedroom, was the change of garments she had arranged for Luke.

She was puzzled as to the arrangements she could make that would be most convenient. She decided ultimately upon leaving the suit case at a railway cloakroom. The ticket could be sent to Luke as soon as he was discovered. She waited for the night to come to carry this plan into effect.

The night brought its problems for Danty Morell. That afternoon, after Margaret Maddison had left him, he made a discovery which turned him sick with apprehension. He had lost his hold on Margaret; at any moment, she might go to the police, and just then he was most anxious not to renew acquaintance with Scotland Yard. Things had gone badly with him; he owed a very large sum of money which had to be paid in the city on the following day; and now, with the added possibility of police intervention, his position was perilous.

Danton Morell was in some ways a careful man. However extravagant he might be, he had reserved for himself a fat nest egg in cash which, in spite of all temptation, he had never touched. He had collected the money that day from two or three accounts which he ran in an assumed name. Nothing was needed now but to follow the line of retreat he had planned.

There was a small aërodrome on the outskirts of London, from which exhibition flights were given. Danty had found it expedient to finance the small company which owned the airplanes, and by telephone he arranged his flight.

This was facilitated by the fact that the company had recently acquired a big rebuilt monoplane which was capable of a long flight. Danty, who had decided upon Switzerland for his first hop, gave orders for the storage of petrol and necessities for the journey. He certainly did not anticipate taking a companion with him, but he was not the only panic-stricken man in London.

Danty made a very quick search for papers which, left behind, might have awkward consequences, and his first attention was directed to the little box in which he kept the most dangerous of his correspondence. He brought this into the dining room before he discovered that the lock had been forced. With an exclamation, he threw up the lid, shook out the contents. The one packet of letters that he had been mad to keep was gone! And the little telephone slip—that also had disappeared.

His hands were shaking so that he could hardly hold the papers he was examining. There was no need to speculate upon the identity of the man who had forced that box. The Gunner had been seen in the neighborhood: Pi Coles had told him that, and it had been the Gunner who had made this search and found the documents. Danty Morell saw death grinning at him; was hypnotized into sheer inaction; and, when there came a knock at the outer door, he leaped up from his chair, a shivering wreck of a man, not daring to open to the visitor.

He calmed himself sufficiently to go to the door and demand who was there, and when he heard Connor's voice he could have cried aloud for joy.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Connor, when they were back in the room.

"I've had a bit of a shock, and I'm not particularly well. You know they're after those kites?"

Connor himself was not particularly happy looking.

"I know. They've stopped a check

I sent to the bank, and half of the dicks in London are looking for him. They know who it is, too; that's the worst of it. You're in this, Danty."

"We're both in it, aren't we?" asked the other. "I'm getting out of London to-night."

"You've got a fine chance of getting out of London, unless you take a rattler." And then, suddenly: "How are you going?"

It was on the tip of Danty's tongue to invent a method of escape, but just now he needed the association of Connor. Connor was not above using a gun at a pinch, and, moreover, hated Gunner Haynes.

"I'm going by airplane from Elford," he said. "We've got the Gunner to thank for this. He squeaked."

"He's never stopped squeaking," said Connor without heat. "Where do you land in your flying machine?"

Danty told him his destination.

"That'll do for me," said Connor.

He looked at the papers on the table.

"Having a burn up?" he asked pleasantly. And then: "How much stuff have you got?"

Here Danty lied. He could not tell the truth about money.

The conference was a brief one. They agreed to visit the aërodrome that evening and make final preparations for their journey. The journey through the suburbs into Outer London was a silent one; now and again Danty lifted the flap at the back of the hired car in which they were traveling, and peered along the darkening road.

"What's the matter with you?" growled Connor.

"There's a car, a two seater, following us."

"Why shouldn't it?" demanded the other sarcastically. "Do you want the road to yourself?"

A few minutes later, when Danty looked back, the little car had disappeared.

The preparations for the night's journey were not easily made. The pilot had only just been communicated with. He was on a holiday in the Midlands.

"It's a good job we came, or we might have been in Queer Street," said Connor as they were driving back. "What time did you say you'd be here?"

"About midnight."

"What are you looking for?" asked Connor ten minutes later. "The little car?"

He pushed his companion aside and peered.

"There's a motor lorry. Has that got anything on us?" he demanded.

Danty said nothing. No man could know the terror that was in his heart. Behind him, stalked the grim shadow of vengeance, and every second he expected to see the hawklike face of the Gunner peering into his from the darkness.

Danty did not go near his flat. He telephoned to Pi Coles and they met in the park, Pi bringing with him an overcoat and wrap which were to be Danty's sole luggage. His servitor he rewarded liberally. There was nothing to do now but to pass the few hours which intervened before he left England forever.

He telephoned to the hangar and learned, to his satisfaction, that the pilot had arrived. He would have liked to have advanced the hour of his departure, but he knew that for once he must keep faith; Connor was a dangerous man, and he had no desire to let two enemies grow in the place of one.

Once or twice, as he loafed about the less-frequented streets of Pimlico, he had the impression that he was being shadowed; but, when once he walked back in desperate boldness to interview the man who was following him, he found it was a perfectly inoffensive stranger to the neighborhood who was trying to find a street and a number.

He had work to do—vengeful work—and he completed this in a tea shop near Vauxhall Bridge. Making a wide detour, he reached the central post office and handed in the telegram addressed to Inspector Bird. It ran:

The man who was concerned in the Taffanny robbery was Luke Maddison. He is attempting to leave London to-night. His wife and Gunner Haynes are aware of the double life he has been living.

He signed it with his own name.

Late as was the hour, he knew that the telegram would be delivered. He went back to meet his companion in misfortune, feeling more cheerful than he had felt all day.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HAPPY THREE.

IT was nearly eleven o'clock that night when Margaret had the car brought to the door and Luke's suit case deposited. Her intention was to drive the car to the lower part of Villiers Street and send the chauffeur with the suit case to the cloakroom. She came into the south end of the Strand, and the car had some difficulty in making its way through the returning theater traffic, but, after a long wait, it turned down the steep street toward the Embankment, and, at a signal from Margaret, the chauffeur stopped the machine.

It was raining heavily; there were few pedestrians in sight, and those were hurrying to reach the shelter of the underground station. She pulled at the catch of the door to open it, that the chauffeur might more easily take the suit case at her feet, when, out of the shadows, came a shabby-looking figure. He must have seen her difficulty, for he turned the handle and pulled open the door before the chauffeur could descend.

"Thank you," said Margaret, and handed him the piece of silver she had ready to pay for the luggage-room attendant.

As she did so, she switched on the light. For a second, she stared into the unshaven face and the grimy figure.

"Luke!" she gasped.

He was stricken dumb with amazement, was unable to speak or move.

"Luke!" she said again.

Then, as he shrank back, her hand shot out and gripped him by the coat.

"Come in, for Heaven's sake!" she said breathlessly, and half dragged him to her side.

At that moment, the chauffeur arrived.

"Drive on," she said hurriedly. "This is a—a friend of mine."

She only hoped that the man could not see the scarecrow who was seated at her side.

"Where shall I go, madam?"

"To—to the house," she said.

As the chauffeur climbed back into his seat, a third figure appeared. He came running down the street like a man pursued, and, gripping the handle of the door, leaped on to the running board as the car moved. She thought at first it was a policeman, but then a passing street lamp revealed the dark face of Gunner Haynes.

"Don't make a fuss," he said, as he blundered in, slamming the door behind him. "I've chased your car from the Haymarket. Who's this?"

He peered forward, and she heard him whistle.

"Is that Mr. Maddison?"

"Yes, it's me," said Luke, speaking for the first time.

His voice sounded pitiably weak. He had been turned out of the police station in the early part of the afternoon, and had not eaten since the morning. He made no attempt to explain his need, was too tired and weary to care very much. The soft luxury of the

padded seats dulled him into lethargy; he was nodding almost before the car reached the Embankment.

"All right, don't waken him," said Gunner Haynes in a low voice. "He was arrested this morning; I've only just found out; one of my friends told me. The police are looking for him. Somebody sent a wire to the Sparrow; I suspect it was friend Danty."

"Where are you taking him?"

"Home," she said.

She was wrapping a rug about the chilled figure in the corner of the car.

"You'll have a policeman waiting on the mat. No, you'll take him to Elford. What's this?"

He kicked against the suit case and she explained, and heard him chuckle.

"You must be a mind reader. That's the very thing he'll require—not tonight perhaps, but in the morning. We're going to Elford. Do you know it? It's three quarters of an hour's run, and, if we're lucky, we'll reach there before two of the biggest rats that ever climbed out of Thames mud."

She leaned out of the window and gave directions to the chauffeur.

"Couldn't we drive on to Dover and get on board the boat?" she asked urgently.

Gunner Haynes emphatically shook his head.

"No, that won't work. The Sparrow's a good fellow, but he'd report on his own mother. And if, as I believe, Mr. Morell, or whatever his present name is, has blown—has told the story of Taffanny's, every boat will be watched. Besides, there isn't one till daylight that we could possibly catch. There's only one chance, and that is for Mr. Maddison to appear in Spain, where he is supposed to be. I think that can be worked unless Mr. Danty Morell has got too far ahead of us."

He peered forward again.

"You've got a fur coat on; that's good. You can lend it to your husband. It'll look rather silly, but nobody will see him."

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

"I'm going on an airplane ride tonight, and he's going with me," he said. "As for you, Mrs. Maddison, your work is very simple. You'll return to London; you'll lie a little—I hope it won't hurt you very much—and leave for Spain to-morrow. If I can't get him there after I've landed him in France, I'm a Dutchman."

There was a silence, and then:

"I know a better way," she said quietly. "I can go with him."

To her surprise, the Gunner did not combat that suggestion.

"Perhaps you're wise," was his comment.

They came at last to a dark and bumpy road, and here the car was stopped by the Gunner's instructions. He got down and pointed into the darkness.

"Pull your car over there and shut off all your lights," he said, and, when this was done and, with great trouble, the car had been maneuvered over the rough ground and the engine had been shut off, he came back to the girl. "We're here first," he said. "I'm banking on Danty being a bit cautious! Look!"

Lights were coming along the road from the direction of London. It was a car, which stopped a hundred yards away, and then after a while turned round.

"They're walking the rest of the journey," murmured the Gunner with grim satisfaction. "Wait here!"

He walked back to the entrance of the untidy little aërodrome and slipped something from his pocket. He had not long to wait; Danty and Connor turned out of the road again.

"Is that you, Higgins?" asked Danty. "Is the pilot here?"

"Everybody's here including me," said the Gunner. "Don't try any funny

business, Connor; I've got you covered, and there's a silencer on my gun. You'll hear no more than a 'plop' and you'll be in Hades!"

Danty said nothing. Haynes could almost hear him shivering with fear.

"Well, what next?" asked Connor.

"The next is a long walk back to the nearest town, unless you've had the intelligence to keep your car. If you're clever you'll run; I'm afraid you haven't a chance," he added, as he saw the red tail light of the car moving rapidly away. "The police are controlling this aërodrome, and you've a snowflake's chance of getting away."

"You're being a friendly little fellow and helping us. Is that what you're telling us to believe?" sneered Connor.

"Don't talk! Walk!" ordered the Gunner sternly. "I'm not in my best temper to-night. I've practically promised I wouldn't kill you, but it won't take a devil of a lot to make me change my mind."

"All right, Gunner, we'll go." Danty found his quaking voice. "Come in, Connor. The Gunner wouldn't put us in bad."

"I found the letters, Danty," said Haynes softly. "You know just how near you are to eternal rest, don't you?"

Danty said nothing; he grabbed the arm of his reluctant friend, and almost dragged him back to the roadway. They walked rapidly back the way they had come, and must have gone a hundred yards before Connor stopped.

"I'm not going to stand for this bird," he began, when a voice behind him said: "Walk!" and he obeyed.

When he had seen them well on their way, the Gunner sped back to the car. Luke was awake; they were talking together in a low tone—he and this strange bride of his—and Gunner Haynes thought it delicate to leave them and interview the pilot.

He found the machine waiting, with two weary mechanics and an impatient pilot, and, to the latter, he gave new instructions. The other argument he employed was a very effective one, for the airman agreed cheerfully to all conditions.

"I can carry three or ten," he said. "There'll be no difficulty about getting up. I've done this night trip hundreds of times."

Satisfied on this score, Gunner Haynes went back to the car and interrupted the more than usually intimate conversation.

"I've a little scrap of paper to give you when it's light enough to read it, Mrs. Maddison. It concerns the death of your brother; I'm sorry to be so brutal, but I think you ought to know that the man who ruined him was Danty, and——"

"I guessed that," she said quietly.

It was still drizzling and the clouds were low, but neither of the three passengers evinced the slightest anxiety as, with the roar of engines, the big monoplane swept into the darkness, up and up, through the thick mist of clouds, until they emerged with the moon riding in a clear sky above them and billowing white clouds beneath.

Less than a week later, three people dined at the Taverne in Madrid, and the dinner was in the nature of a farewell banquet to Gunner Haynes, who was going to Naples to join the Australian mail boat.

"I shan't be comfortable till I get on board the Barcelona express," he said. "I've done many things in my life, but this is the first time I've played third to a honeymoon couple."

THE END.

No Escape

By John D. Swain

Author of "The Merrymakers," etc.

THERE was an old woman who cursed Bastien Caillavet every time he visited Bourg St. Etienne, in the adjoining Canton of Ticino.

All the young Swiss bucks from fifty miles around made frequent visits to Bourg St. Etienne, whose shops were celebrated and whose girls were no less so. Also, the inns dispensed a famous white wine, the best in all Switzerland, but which, for some reason unknown, could not be exported. Always, it turned sour when exiled but a very few leagues from its native vineyards. If you would drink St. Etienne, you must go to the town which gave it its name, or at least, to one of the neighboring hamlets.

Palmiere Santuoso, the old Italian woman, sat all day at the porch of the ancient and dilapidated church of San Marco in the market place. She was a wrinkled parchment upon which time had scrawled many faded lines. Only her eyes seemed alive, and to emit a somber light of their own. It was said of her that she could see on the blackest night, like a cat. She sold baskets made by her own skinny hands, cheap rosaries, and little bunches of Alpine flowers. The few coins she received by sales, or oftener from charity, sufficed for her meager necessities. She was the last of her race; there was no one in all the Canton who could claim blood relationship with her.

There had been a granddaughter—a pretty little thing, blond, blue-eyed as are so many of the northern Italians. She had been Bastien Caillavet's sweetheart—one of many. In the time of her greatest need he had deserted her; and in her young despair she had cast herself into the icy waters of the river which, just below Bourg St. Etienne, plunges shudderingly to a peaceful little valley far below. It was because of her, of the little Lucia, that the old crone cursed Bastien.

Since all the shops and the best inns huddle about the market place, dominated by the old church, it was impossible for Bastien to evade the piercing regard of the old woman, forever at her post while daylight held. And in time it got on his nerves, and he stopped coming. This was a real annoyance to him, for not only did he like to do his shopping in Bourg St. Etienne, but he liked its wine, served by soft-spoken, voluptuously moving girls whose rounded brown arms bore the famous earthen pots to the tables, and whose sleepy brown eyes did not falter before the bold regard of the young men. Yes, it was regrettable that he must give up his good pals at the taverns and wine shops, and betake himself to Andermatt whose wine was nowhere near so good, and whose shops, gorgeous enough, to be sure, were very expensive indeed.

The venomous curses hurled at him as he hurried past the church where crouched old Palmiere, did not stir him either to remorse or fear. He had suffered a little pang, to be sure, when news had come to him of the incredibly foolish thing little Lucia had done. He had even, quite secretly, paid for a requiem for the repose of her soul. Himself, he did not believe in these superstitions; still, there might be something in them, after all! Anyhow, Lucia would have liked him to do this for her. It was his farewell gesture to the slim, laughing child who, in all her brief life, had never been farther away from her birthplace than once or twice to Zermatt.

Any number of village girls had been as careless and heedless as she; it had not troubled them overmuch, and most of them had married well. So might Lucia have done, for she was prettier than any of them. He would long since have forgotten her, but for her spiteful old grandmother who never forgot. The other villagers bore him no malice; they laughed or shrugged their shoulders. There was no vendetta; Lucia had no kinsmen among them. Besides, all of them—or most of them—had their own troubles. Youth! Was it not a period of tempests? *Basta!* One must learn to ride out the storm and come in due time into the calmer waters of maturity.

But while suffering no remorse, certainly no fear, the reiterated curses irritated Bastien, and spoiled his visits. Like anything repeated identically and over a long period of time, the thing got on his nerves. And nerves are the one equipment of which no Alpine guide can afford to become neglectful. Once a guide's nerves go, he is through, though his vision may be as keen as ever, his limbs as sturdy, his wind as sound.

Since Bastien, like his father and his grandsire before him, as well as several of his uncles and a brother, was a mountain guide, it was not strange that old Palmiere's curse should concern itself with that dubious profession. Always, thrusting forth from her shawl a brown, shriveled hand like an eagle's claw and with her fingers making the sign that is supposed to protect one from the evil eye, she would invite all the devils to have their will with him, and her diatribe invariably ended with the words: "Thy mangled body shall lie at the feet of the Jungfrau!"

Reasonably enough, Bastien admitted to himself. For the Jungfrau was a peak he had often scaled, and it was one at whose feet many a guide as strong and clever as he had lain. The "Young Maiden" had reaped a fearful harvest since the first man had violated her immaculate solitude! Of course, Bastien always thought of the curse when he was conveying a line of climbers up this particular mountain; he tried not to do so, the very effort causing him to ponder it more and more. He thought of it at other times as well,

but especially when he was upon the Jungfrau.

When he ceased to visit Bourg St. Etienne, and formed new associations in another market town, the memory of the curse began to fade away. He thought of it seldom; once he had even made the ascent of the Jungfrau without recalling it at all. That was on the day when the pretty and vivid little American girl was of the party. There was a beauty for the delight of a young man's heart! He had taken her, alone, for several lesser ascents; especially, the Aiguille Verte, a short but exceedingly difficult rock climb, which he had the honor to be first to conquer. And what courage the little American had shown! What nerve! He was quite inconsolable for nearly a week after she had gone on with her parents, and he knew that she, too, had been moved. Did she not cling to him, a wild creature of tears and kisses, when saying farewell?

It was during the summer that saw her come and go, that there revived in Bastien's heart in a most disagreeable manner, the fast-dying memory of old Palmiere's curse. There had come to the little village where he lived a troupe of gypsies; mysterious folk, coming from nobody knew whence, going to some vague goal, supporting themselves by ancient arts and crafts. Their young men and women were sturdy and handsome in a swarthy way. Handsome as Bastien himself, and with something in common, since they all lived close to nature, and mocked her furies! It was one of them, one of these vagrant gypsy women, who had cajoled Bastien into letting her tell his fortune by the cards, the palm, or in tea grounds, as he preferred.

Since she was very young, with a rich tide of dark-red blood flooding her round cheeks, with milk-white teeth, and smoldering eyes, Bastien chose to have his palm read. She gripped his wrists with astonishing strength in her fingers, while she bent over it, tracing with a forefinger of her other hand the sharp-bitten lines that creased the calloused flesh.

He had at first paid little attention to her patter, content to feel her finger pass lightly across his palm, sending a thrill along his big, muscular arm. But suddenly, bending closer, her voice had risen to a shrill whine, her eyes filled, and she began to rock back and forth upon her firm haunches. Startled, he leaned nearer, managing to gather the sense from her broken phrases.

Most Swiss are tri-lingual, and, in addition to the French, German, and Italian, which is their heritage, many of them acquire English at least, and often other tongues. The young gypsy spoke in a garbled way which borrowed freely, and inaccurately, from three or four languages and dialects, but her meaning was plain enough. She was bewailing his death; crooning over him as if, indeed, he already lay in his coffin! And her words held a sinister resemblance to those with which the old Palmiere invariably had closed her curses.

"Poor broken bones! Eyes that see not! Beautiful straight limbs all twisted! I see thee, asleep at the foot of that mountain your people have called the Young Maiden!"

That was, he thought, passing strange. Ominous, indeed! So much so, that he hastily thrust into her hand some silver coins, and departed, without—as he had intended to do—kissing her on her full, red lips. Which was, after all, as well, since a loose-jointed young gypsy who had been lounging close by, would in such case have nonchalantly thrust a knife between his shoulder blades.

That evening, slipping away from the encampment, the young gypsy maid had stolen into the village church, and beneath the statue of Our Lady of the

Snows, had lighted a votive candle for the soul of the handsome youth in whose thick, muscular hand her ancient arts had enabled her to read his melancholy end. All women loved Bastien, and he had in his time released the fount of many tears.

But youth is flooded with a fine optimism. His apprehensions vanished in next morning's golden sunshine, and, in the mellow warmth of a jug of red wine at the village inn—wine not as good, to be sure, as the moon-shot fire of St. Etienne, but a noble vintage none the less. Reflecting upon the coincidence, the curse of old Palmiere and the prediction of the gypsy—whose encampment had vanished during the night—he realized that it was, after all, simple enough! These fortune tellers were clever.

It would be easy enough to discover, in so tiny a hamlet, that he, Bastien, was a professional guide. Over such as he always hovered the possibility of death amid the ice and snow, of a slip into a crevasse, a frayed rope, any one of the hundred contingencies of their perilous business.

Now, had he been a drover, say, the prediction would have been far different. The gypsy would have foretold death by the sharp horns of a maddened bull, perhaps. Still, it was strange that she had dwelt upon death at all, for it was the custom of such as she to prate of marriage, and good fortune at the gaming table; such things as young men concern themselves with when old age is yet afar off, and death a calamity that overtakes others.

A shrewd idea formed in his mind. He was prosperous; there was only himself to support, and he had money in the banks. And, since he had in France a friend who was a student at the college of Grenoble, he determined to pay him a visit. This he did; and in a town where he was unknown, he hunted up a fortune teller. All cities have such; he found one easily enough in an old, tottering street of decayed houses, once pretentious but now shabby and forlorn.

The woman he consulted was of a far different type from either the old Palmiere, or the full-blooded and buxom gypsy lass. She was a fat, middle-aged woman with watery eyes and tremulous, soft, damp hands. Her name conveyed nothing to him; he was not certain that she was French, though she spoke it fluently enough, in the dialect of Grenoble. Purposely, he was garrulous with her. He informed her that he was an Italian—a pretense easily enough sustained, since he spoke Italian readily. He had, so he told her, a small vineyard on the lava beds near Naples, and having had a successful year, was now making his first visit to France, this indeed being the first time he had ever been away from home, or beheld any mountain, save the smoke-crowned Vesuvius.

He was, he furthermore confessed to the seeress, in danger of the displeasure of the Mafia of his Naples, having incurred the enmity of one of its secret leaders. And he had come to her to inquire as to the manner of his death that, being forewarned, he might take due precautions.

The frowsy woman nodded. He did well; if other young men were as intelligent, she could prolong their lives for decades! Let him but wait until she had spread before them on the table her cards, and read therein what Fate had in store for him.

Bastien smiled complacently. He was well pleased with himself. Had he not given her a lead? If, now, she warned him of the knife wielded by some emissary of the Black Hand, predicted some calamity that threatened him in or about Naples, he would know that it was all a fake. Idly he watched her as, with moist, tremulous hands, she shuffled and spread before

him the faded cards of an incredibly dirty and greasy old pack. But, when, after long scrutiny, and with a puzzled frown having twice reshuffled and cut the cards, she looked up, there was surprise and fear in her eyes. She mumbled toothlessly.

"Louder!" he commanded. "I don't hear you!"

There was no danger threatening him, she explained, from vendetta or Black Hand. The shadow of no knife, no pistol, fell upon the path of his life. In his death, no living soul would be incriminated.

"It is strange," she declared. "But there can be no mistake. Three times, and in different forms, have the cards spoken. They tell me that you shall meet God on the mountaintop; I see ice and snow and cruel rocks! And amid them, your fair young body lying mangled."

Bastien started violently. "But what mountain? Can you tell me that?"

The creature shook her disheveled head. "That is not declared to me. It is a mighty peak, clad in eternal snow."

Bastien paid her and went away. So disturbed was he, and likewise so amazed, that he did not even hunt up his boyhood friend, the student, but, that very day, he left Grenoble and returned home.

And now dreams began to haunt his sleep. A healthy young animal, he had never dreamed, save when his insides had been filled with new wine, or his head with a new girl. But now, once or twice a week, he had a nightmare. In it, though the details differed, he was always climbing the snow-crowned peaks or inching his way up sheer chimneys, or along perilous and jagged blades of granite, where a single slip meant certain death. And always, before he waked up, the mishap took place; he slipped, or his treacherous rope parted, or he lost his ax as he hewed for his iron-shod shoes footholds in the ice, and he fell down unutterable depths, his terrible cry ringing hollowly through mighty canyons and unspeakable crevasses. This final cry of anguish seemed to waken him; he never actually died, in his dream!

Even as he hurtled through the air, with a fleeting glimpse far below of little flat houses, their roofs weighted down with small boulders, and with a sound in his ears of the tinkle of cow bells, he awoke, drenched with perspiration, his heart pounding like a racing engine.

In guide circles, there are plenty of superstitions, endless traditions. Bastien had learned these before he could walk steadily alone. His maternal grandfather, a famous guide, had dreamed such a dream the day before he was to conduct a party of famous English scientists up the Dent du Midi. He had spoken gravely of it at breakfast; his young wife had wept a little, begged him not to go. Honor compelled him, as they well knew! Should a hearty guide yield to a dream, like a doddering crone?

He kissed all his children farewell, and set forth upon as perfect a day as ever bathed the Alps in a golden glory. Of his party, not one returned alive. His own body was mangled out of recognition. It lay in the churchyard beneath a rude marker whose terse lines little Bastien had many times spelled out, picking at the moss which grew in the deep-graved letters.

Other stories, concerning his own folk and the fortune of neighbors, recurred to him now. And their cumulative effect, the old woman's curse, the gypsy's prophecy, and that of the frowsy woman in Grenoble, followed by his dreams and the memory of the traditions that had darkened the little hamlet and helped fill its graveyard, led Bastien to a very sensible conclusion.

After all, there were other ways of

earning a living! He was single, and his parents were dead. He had brothers and sisters, but all were well married and prosperous. There was plenty of money in his pockets; it didn't matter if he took his time finding another, and a less dangerous mode of existence.

The love, amounting to a real passion, for his native Alps, had never burned in him as it had in his forbears. He wanted to have a look at the world! And being extremely intelligent, he realized that the frame of mind into which he had been driven would vastly increase the hazards of mountain scaling. The very slightest trace of nervousness was more fatal than a physical injury. With a broken arm, many a hardy guide had returned safely, with his party. With a broken nerve, his chances were measurably less.

There was obviously one way to beat the devil about the bush! No matter what they said, these old crones, these soothsayers, if he kept away from the mountains, he could not meet his death upon them! And he determined to go away, and to do no more climbing so long as he lived.

In due time, he found himself in Berne, a noble old town which amused him so keenly that he was in no hurry to secure work. Finally, with his funds running low, he found employment in one of the great chocolate factories. Beginning at small wages, far less than he had earned as guide, he advanced by reason of his intelligence and industry to become an expert blender. He had never been so happy. There was much going on at night, after work; one was never at a loss to find jolly companions, lads or lassies! Wine as good as that of St. Etienne was to be had, if one could find the price, and Bastien could! Though a spender, there was a hard vein of thrift which he had inherited from both sides of the house, and indeed from his nationality.

He had almost forgotten his apprehensions when, one day on a cracked door beneath an arcade, he saw the dirty card of a fortune teller. On the spur of the moment, he went inside. There were a number ahead of him. When his turn came, he was ushered into the presence of a venerable man with a flowing white beard which effectually concealed a soiled shirt front and the lack of a cravat. Upon the wall hung pictures of famous seers, notably a steel engraving of the great Cagliostro. A skull grinned from a dusty shelf. Black-velvet hangings, spangled with symbols in tarnished gold, covered the walls.

The wizard who presided in this dingy, yet impressive cupboard, relied on neither palms nor playing cards. Instead, he lighted some suffocating incense, muttered incantations Bastien could not make out, and then directed him to gaze steadfastly into a beautiful crystal globe some six inches in diameter, which rested upon a black-velvet pad. This crystal was the only clean and dustless article in the place.

Peering into it with a careless grin, it seemed to Bastien that its interior became gradually cloudy, like water into which a spoonful of milk has been poured. The clouds resolved, and, for an instant, he seemed to behold a clearly defined picture of snowy peaks etched sharply against an incredibly blue sky across which sailed racing birds. At the foot of the highest peak, something small and black seemed to writhe against the gray rock.

"It is this that you must avoid," the unctuous voice of the seer roused him. "Are you by any chance a guide?"

Bastien blinked, shook himself. "No," he muttered. "I work in the chocolate factories here."

The old one nodded, his white beard gathering dust from the table top.

"Avoid the Alpine heights, if you would live long and die in your bed," he advised. "The fates are not propitious to any ventures as a climber on your part."

"And if I avoid all mountains?"

The old man smiled. "Obviously, the mountains cannot come to you! You must go to them."

Bastien was thoughtful as he paid him, and went out.

Of course, he was safe enough in Berne; and yet, was he? There was always the temptation, in Switzerland, to ascend the heights; indeed, if one traveled at all, one was obliged to do so! The railroads, most of them, by miracles of engineering threaded the eternal snows, at one place or another. The splendid touring roads clung to the sides of shuddering abysses. Berne was all very well, but one did not fancy being prisoner even in this old and tolerant city!

He might go and make his home in some land where there were no snow-clad hills—a land flat as one's hand? There were plenty such, he had read. Nor was it necessary to choose the blazing Sahara, either! There were opulent and pleasure-loving countries where even a little hill, a veritable knoll, was famous; where no snow lingered anywhere after March. Countries in which one might roam for hundreds of miles without finding a height steep enough to knock the breath from the body of one who might leap or fall therefrom! To such a land, Bastien decided that he would migrate. It would be amusing and instructive, and it would resolve for once and all, the sinister prophecies that every charlatan felt obliged to make of his end!

It was naturally to America that his thoughts turned—the United States, whither had gone so many of his countrymen, to prosper exceedingly. Especially were its hotels staffed with Swiss. And there were, as he knew, many wealthy chocolate manufacturers. He would secure papers, certificates of his proficiency, and become a citizen of that fabulous land where everybody was prosperous and most were rich, and in whose generous boundaries were to be found great plains and opulent valleys.

It was wintertime when Bastien Caillavet came to Boston to present his credentials to one of the oldest American chocolate concerns. The country was reassuringly level; true, the very factory in which he found employment was built upon what was called a "height," and just beyond the city limits Blue Hill reared its head, crowned by a meteorological observatory. But these, to Bastien, were hardly respectable hillocks—only a few hundred feet high; one was scarcely conscious of going uphill on the paved or graveled walks which threaded them.

He had found it easy to obtain work at good wages, but it was not the sort he had expected to do. The official who engaged and questioned him, sent him to the offices for a term, perceiving that his knowledge of several foreign languages would in time make of him a first-rate correspondent for the firm's export trade. Bastien had received an excellent training in the public schools of his native country; he was naturally quick and observant. In surprisingly short time, he found himself in receipt of a salary unbelievably liberal, and with easy hours. He felt that he should like America!

A magnificent specimen, even though he had taken on a little flesh since relinquishing his profession as Alpine guide, and his muscles were somewhat softened—he was able to buy himself the best of clothes. A natural suavity he had in common with his race, coupled with the ability to read, write and speak four or five languages, no mean accomplishment in his adopted country, ingratiated him with young people of

his sort, and rather better than his sort. He became as popular outside of working hours as he was with his superiors in the office where he now had his own desk, and a pretty stenographer.

He missed the winter sports of Switzerland. Of sports, Boston offered an abundance, but to one accustomed to the thrilling glide of skis down vast slopes of hard-packed snow, the outdoor pastimes of Boston seemed anæmic if not laughable. And yet, his natural cunning held him from attempting such puerile feats as tobogganing down the slopes of Blue Hill! For, after all, it was a height, of sorts, and its brow was indubitably snow clad. Even here, one might blunder into an accident!

Had he not read, in the droll American journals, so different from those of Switzerland, of a retired sea captain, a whaler, who drowned in his own bathtub? Of a famous automobile racer who broke his neck when his flivver, making barely twenty miles an hour, went over a three-foot embankment? Had he not heard of the big-game hunter, just home from Africa, who was killed in his own garden by his little boy's air gun, a pellet from which entered his eye; and that steeplejack who, attempting to hang a picture from a stepladder in his flat, tumbled to an ignominious but no less conclusive death? Bastien had no notion of falling victim to any of these little ironical gestures of life!

He contented himself with skating, with long walks, and, later on, with the gymnasium class he joined in his fight against increasing girth. Meanwhile the winter sped pleasantly; his English lost most of its exotic traces and took on the latest Yankee idioms. He was more than glad that he had left Berne, and he was untroubled by nostalgia. The more so when, in the free-and-easy manner prevailing over here, he became acquainted with a pretty American girl who might have been the twin sister of the one who, long ago in Switzerland, had pluckily followed him up the almost perpendicular Aiguille Verte.

It was in a suburb of Boston that he had met her; and some instinctive caution had led him to conceal from her his real name, his address and even his business. He was thankful for this when, with the coming of spring and the sudden departure of the last vestige of snow and ice, the child threw herself weeping into his arms, begging him to marry her, beating with her little fists, frantic with terror. Suppose she were able to trace him down!

It was not that marriage was in itself so repulsive to him, but, according to the European standard, marriage must mean something more than mere romance. There was, for instance, another girl, the only child of a prosperous real-estate man who lived within a dozen blocks of where Bastien worked. Perhaps she was not quite so appealing as this other one, as many with whom he had dallied, in Switzerland, but she was pretty enough and healthy.

She would make a good mother for his children; she had been sensibly reared, knew how to buy supplies, to cook, and sew. And best of all, while the absurd Americans did not follow that so excellent custom of the marriage dowry, she would in due time inherit a considerable fortune. Furthermore, her father seemed to approve of the upstanding young Swiss; he had given Sally to understand that, when she set the day, he would build her a house on a good lot, and deed it to the young couple.

Summer came early this year. Before May was past, there were swarms of people making for the many beaches which bound Boston, north and south. For the first time in his life, Bastien was made acquainted with sea sports, and he took to them with enthusiasm.

The mighty beaches of smooth-white sand, the surf bathing, the fish dinners, the noisy dance halls and miles of concessions, filled him with delight. Most of the bigger resorts were a bit rowdy, or worse, but Bastien himself was not too sensitive.

His peasant blood responded to the clamor, and his quick feet picked up the newest dances in two or three lessons. Nearly every Sunday, and always on holidays, he went to the beaches in a party or with Sally alone.

He was welcome in every crowd, was looked up to as a genius because he could crack jokes with the Italian fruit vender, the German near-beer gardener, the young French Canadians who were sometimes of their party. He was admired for his good looks, respected for his great strength, often performed feats on the weight-lifting or striking machines.

On a certain national holiday, Sally proposed that the party charter a car on the scenic railway, which is famous at Revere Beach. Oddly enough, though he had tried most everything else, Bastien had never ridden upon one of these hair-raising contraptions. It was the secret hope of the gang that the experience would get a rise out of him; draw at least one apprehensive yell! They winked and nudged one another as they took their places in a gaudily painted flat car, and started sedately enough up the long, steep incline. Sally, of course, sat beside Bastien, snuggling close, one of his long arms possessively circling her slender shoulders.

At the top of the ascent, there was a hitch, a slight pause. Bastien looked out and over a vast playground, dense with humanity. Beyond this black and wriggling strip was a lighter band, speckled with gay bathing suits and tanned flesh; farther yet, a creaming surf, and miles of blue ocean flecked with sails. Directly underneath, spread a tangle of loops, spirals, and sheer drops. Before he could do more than glimpse the picture as a whole, the car his party was in, shot downward like an elevator whose hoisting cable has broken.

Breath taking it was, especially to one who had never attempted it before; but, if his playmates had hoped for any expression of surprise or alarm, they were disappointed. Bastien enjoyed it immensely, and the faster their pace, the steeper the drops, the more his delight mounted. It was like wine, like the famous white wine of Bourg St. Etienne!

He clung to little Sally, his mouth open soundlessly, not in amazement but as if taking in tremendous gulps of hurtling air. When, suddenly their car swung outward and along a barely guarded and uplifted saucerlike edge, he did at last shout with pure joy, while Sally's slim youthfulness was crushed against his body. They straightened out, and the centrifugal force almost tore her from his firm clutch.

Twice they had made a complete circle, and the first zest was dying down when, looming directly ahead, Bastien saw a dark cavern whose mouth yawned to receive them. He saw another thing: a great sign, printed black on white, which bore the single word: "Jungfrau!"

The word jangled something in his brain. Seen here, it was incongruous and incredible! What had that austere snow virgin to do with this place of burning sands, languorous bathing beauties, lukewarm waters, and silly games? They shot onward, and past the sign with increasing speed; and, unconsciously, Bastien leaned out and turned his head to read once more that word that had leaped out upon him from the past—to see if he had read it aright!

So it was that, just as the car

swerved sharply inward to be engulfed in that black tunnel of papier-mâché rocks, he was thrown outward a little, his wide shoulder striking the sharp edge of a wooden upright. It seemed to have invisible fingers, to pluck him bodily from his seat, snapping his heavy body outward and over as a thumb and finger might snap a pebble. Those who chanced to be looking up from the board walks saw his figure far, far above their heads, outspread like a mighty bird, and seeming for an instant to hang motionless in air. Then, with sickening swiftness, it began to drop straight down.

Bastien's ears were filled with many and strange sounds. There was the bleating of goats, the sweet tinkle of distant cow bells in Alpine meadows; the ruthless crash of the avalanche which yet did not drown the thrill of a lark, invisible above him.

And in the scant second that was his, many sights registered keenly on his brain: Little hamlets nestling far below; the spire of the church of San Marco, beside whose porch crouched old Palmiere Santuoso; the gray stones beneath which slept those of his forefathers who had also been guides, and had yielded up their lives on the very scene of many conquests.

But the thing that ate into his consciousness like an acid, the very last glimpse his staring eyes drank in, was a mighty, snow-clad peak, rising high above the dark tunnel into which Sally, and the shrieking young folks with her, had disappeared; an Alpine fastness crudely painted on flapping canvas by some third-rate artist of the theaters!

In the instant before Bastien's body smashed upon the ground, it seemed to him that obscene dancers formed a ring about him, pointing triumphantly and shrieking curses: old Palmiere, the gypsy girl, the blear-eyed woman of Grenoble, and the old man of Berne.

TEN DAYS FOR CRUELTY

ON his way to the police station at Brooklyn, New York, a policeman saw a spectacle which caused him to see red—a spectacle which would cause any man, woman, or child to feel indignant.

A motor cycle, driven by a young man, going along at a speed of twenty miles an hour, had tied to its rear, a fine-looking police dog. The dog, in an effort to keep up with the motor cycle was running, sliding, and being dragged unmercifully.

The policeman forced the motor cycle to the curb and took both man and dog to the station where the dog was treated by a veterinarian who found the animal's sides and paws to be bleeding from scraping along in the dirt.

When the magistrate heard the policeman's story next morning in court, he told the young man who had perpetrated such cruelty upon a dumb beast, that he would like to tie him to his car and drag him along at a rate of forty miles an hour, so that he might have an idea of what his deed meant to the dog. He fined him fifty dollars or a ten-day jail sentence. As the man did not have the money, he served ten days in jail and promised the magistrate never again to be cruel to an animal.

The Winning Tear

By Donald Van Riper

Author of "Shadow Man," etc.

SHUFFLING wearily up the street after a long, hot day in the shipping department of Henderson & Cogswell, George Haring saw approaching him a man and a girl. The couple stirred in George Haring a confused medley of emotion—love, jealousy, hate, envy and not a little fear. More and more frequently of late, he was seeing Frank Kerwin in company of Jean Porter, and the sight was one calculated to put the finishing touches of dejection to a totally miserable day. Seeing them while yet half a block distant, George, with a reckless disregard for the avenue's teeming traffic, headed abruptly across the street.

Crossing unscathed, he came by means of that diagonal passage of his directly to a point of still greater danger. He had stepped up that far curb just in front of Dreher's place. Dreher's was one of George Haring's old familiar haunts, and he knew full well that there a fellow could get a drink and find companionship more or less consoling to a man in his present frame of mind. From the scuffed tips of his shoes to the shiny button atop the faded cap, George Haring was aware of an acute and overwhelming sense of misery. For a fatal fraction of an instant, George Haring hesitated.

He halted just long enough to catch the eye of the big prosperous-looking man lounging beside the entrance of Dreher's place. "Duke" Fisher stared at George Haring a moment, and then his heavy bass voice rumbled out a greeting.

"Hello, Haring! Where away?"

George Haring answered by stepping with unwonted decision toward that entrance. "Right here's my destination," he answered.

"I thought so," answered Duke Fisher as he swung through the door at

Haring's side. "And allow me to buy you the drink you seem to crave."

George Haring shot a wondering glance at Duke Fisher. How did Fisher know that he wasn't going to play cards or pool? How did Fisher know that he was desirous of having one of his rare but none-the-less-powerful drinks?

"Drink's written all over that face of yours," murmured Fisher as though he had divined Haring's thoughts. "Fact is, you look about as happy as a dog that's just wised up that another pup has located the prize bone he'd picked out and stowed away for himself."

Out of habit, Haring unconsciously allowed Fisher to take the lead to the little back room. George Haring had never yet presumed to do otherwise with men like Duke Fisher. Duke was a big shot along the avenue, and he was after all just plain George Haring. It did not become George Haring to be too self-assertive with the big shots. George Haring, helper in the shipping department of Henderson & Cogswell by day, and small-time crook by night, should always follow the lead of the big shots like Fisher. So, now, he sat down across the small table from Duke Fisher and ordered a "slug of rye" in flattering imitation of Duke.

There was a deep and presumably thoughtful silence until the drinks had been served and they were alone again. Duke sniffed of the rye, tasted it with a most judicial sip, and then, with a preliminary and approving grunt, downed the straight liquor. George Haring followed suit with the exception that he had to add a grunt extra after the fiery liquid had passed his palate.

"And now," began Duke Fisher, "what's on your chest to-day?"

"What do you mean 'on my chest'?"

"What's the load you're carting?" "You were fairly staggering with gloom just now when I saw you outside."

"Nothing special!"

Duke Fisher laughed a most canny laugh. "Nothing to do with the fact that 'Flash' Kerwin is making such a persistent play for Jean Porter? Or with the fact that Kerwin was walking along the other side of the street with your girl friend just now?"

George Haring was silent. It was a moody, half-sullen silence that was as good as a spoken admission of the correctness of Duke Fisher's surmise. Whereupon, with a growing smile of confidence, Duke Fisher spoke again.

"And seeing that that is the trouble, I'm just as glad I saw you just now. I've had my eye on you a long while, Haring. You know what you remind me of? I mean——" Fisher's voice dropped to a whisper, and, with a skilled foot, he kicked against the door of the little room so that it slammed shut. "I mean what your night work reminds me of?"

Night work? George Haring picked up his ears. Was Duke actually going to talk about the business of crime with an insignificant housebreaker like George Haring? Slowly, he shook his head in a hesitant negative. How should he know what his little ventures in crime made Fisher think?

"You remind me of a mouse sneaking into empty buildings and stealing maybe one grain of wheat at a time. All the rackets you play are small-time stuff."

"I play safe," observed Haring in defensive tones. "Outside of you and one or two others, all that any one around this end of town knows about me is that I work for a living in the shipping department of Henderson & Cogswell."

Fisher laughed. "You flatter yourself, Haring. Why, I'll bet there's hardly any one along the avenue that knows or cares where you work. The trouble with you, young fellow, and a trouble that I've always been going to tip you off on, is that you've always

been content to grub along at small pay by day and miserable little tenpenny hauls by night. And tricked out in the clothes you wear, there's no chance for any one ever to notice you or care a rap about you. And at night with a rig like yours, you wouldn't dare go near a real-classy neighborhood."

"What's clothes got to do with it?"

Fisher shot a glance at his own new and neat attire and then over at the wrinkled suit on Haring.

"Clothes make the man, Haring. Now I know you're a wise kid. I realize that you know how to crack a joint, and I figure I can use you from time to time." Fisher paused and fired a rather startling question at George Haring. "How would you like to put a crimp in some of Flashy Frank Kerwin's style?"

"Huh," grunted Haring. "Whyn't you ask me if I would like to have a million dollars?"

Duke Fisher dropped a contemplative eye at Haring. "Because there's not much chance of you getting the million, but there is some chance of your doing yourself a good turn at Kerwin's expense."

"I don't get you," stammered Haring. "I thought Kerwin was aces with you."

"Kerwin," said Fisher with emphasis, "has reached the stage where hat size needs stretching. He always was sort of fond of himself, but too much success seems to have made him worse. I've been trying to figure out a substitute for Kerwin, just in case I need one. And all the time you've been doing the timid-mouse act, nibbling at little jobs. I've been watching you. You know the technique of being a burglar, and I figure that, under my guiding hand, you can make a good, big-time worker."

"But——"

"But—nothing," snapped Duke Fisher. "What's the matter? Are you afraid of Kerwin?"

Haring sat silent. He could not whip a lying word of denial to his lips. He was afraid of Kerwin. After all, Kerwin was a pretty hard customer, and, when it came to brawn, Kerwin was many, many pounds and not a few inches better than George Haring.

Fisher stared at him now with a curious little sneer hidden beneath the smile on his face. "My advice to you, Haring, is to forget about the way Kerwin mauled you a couple of months ago. Because, as far as that goes, I'll make him lay off if you can show me that you can deliver the goods for me. The main thing now is whether you are game to listen to me and see if I can't turn you into a high-grade burglar instead of a twopenny crook. What do you say?"

"I—I—don't know."

"You what? Say," drawled Fisher, "are you kidding me? That's the whole trouble with you, Haring. No gumption. No decision! No get-up and go to you! Here I am telling you that I can line your pockets with big money, and you say that you don't know. For the last time, do you want to work for me? Yes or no?"

Here was a world of golden promise suddenly and unexpectedly before George Haring's eyes. Here was a chance for him to outshine Flashy Frank Kerwin in the eyes of Jean Porter. This last was just the trouble. The whisperings of the avenue were true. He was really afraid of Frank Kerwin. Still, with Duke Fisher to back him up and now with Kerwin safely at a distance, he could muster up a little false courage.

"I say—yes," answered George Haring.

Yet, even so, he was amazed that no telltale quavering had been in his voice. Just as Fisher had said, he ought to forget the mauling that Kerwin had given him a couple of months before—but that was something far easier said than done. Still he had agreed to follow Fisher's guidance and now Duke

was grinning at him with undisguised pleasure.

"That's more like it," snapped Duke. "And now the first thing is for you and me to sally forth and get you some decent-looking clothes."

"What's the rush for the clothes?"

"Rush enough," answered Fisher. "I want to trick you up in something neat but not flashy. You don't see the percentage in good clothes because you never did have any. Well, here's the dope. I want to try you out on some high-class jobs. And high-class jobs generally mean high-class neighborhoods, and for a lad that just misses looking like a suspicious character to wander around rich pluckings is just asking for trouble.

"So the first thing I do is to stake you to a new suit, some shoes and a hat. Neat but not flashy! That's one trouble I'm having with Kerwin right now. He's overdressing all the time. A crook oughtn't to look like either extreme. It's just as bad for him to be tricked out like a circus horse as it is for him to look too down at the heels. Nice, neat clothes, dark and plain, the kind that no one can describe afterward—that's the sort of stuff I'm going to get you.

"Why, Kerwin will be a mark for any one in a little while. In six months, he's earned the name of Flashy Frank or Flash Kerwin for himself. Gay socks and ties! And, next thing, a diamond stickpin, I suppose."

"I never thought that clothes had much to do with the business of cracking a joint," sighed George Haring.

"Well, young fellow," answered Fisher, "they have. And so, let's ease down the street. There's plenty of shops along the avenue that stay open till nine, but the swell ones all close at six, and there's no time like the present to start anything."

Which explains why, at about half past six that evening, a marvelously improved edition of George Haring sauntered into his favorite lunch room. It was a transformation indeed, for the very sight of his own much-improved reflection in the store mirror had been enough to banish the meek, shuffling gait from George Haring's feet. It was the clothes, too, that had determined him to forego his usual boarding-house fare and blow himself to the extravagance of supper in the Regal Restaurant.

In the Regal Restaurant, he saw none other than Frank Kerwin. Kerwin looked up and scowled as Haring strode past his table.

"I see you're getting some sense, Haring."

Haring halted. He thought for a moment that Kerwin was referring in grudging tones to the new clothes.

"What do you mean?"

"Doing what you did to-night," answered Kerwin. "When you saw me and Jean coming along, you hopped over to the other side of the street. The oftener you keep out of her way, the better I'll like it."

Haring nodded, blinked, gulped, and then wordlessly went on to the most distant table. Under the hard, level stare of Frank Kerwin, the little confidence he had acquired from the clothes seemed to melt from him.

He sat there miserably eating at the tasteless food long after Kerwin had left. The whisperings of the avenue were true enough. Yes, he was afraid. Somewhere in him he had that worst fault of all; he was conscious all afresh of that fearful taint of the yellow streak. He was a spineless, weak-kneed pup. And he did not have insides enough to keep on fighting to hold the girl he loved.

In his heart, he could not blame Jean Porter. Kerwin was certainly a most snappy-looking fellow. Too, when he willed, Kerwin could be just as smooth and polite and agreeable as the next

one. And as far as material things went, Kerwin put it all over him.

Kerwin, too, worked at a regular job as a cover and front to his illegal night-time work. Kerwin was a salesman, and a good one. He was no plugger, but it seemed he could always pick up a good paying place. Contrast that with George Haring as a mere assistant to the shipping clerk at Henderson & Cogswell! A mere assistant and always on edge lest something should snatch his miserable little job away from him.

On the hidden and unknown side of their careers, the edge was all with Kerwin. Kerwin only worked where the picking was sweetest and biggest, while, up to now, George Haring had played the part—as Duke had put it—of a timid, lonely mouse stealing away the merest trifles.

Now, though, thanks to Duke Fisher, this last advantage might soon be reversed. It might be, and very soon, that it would be George Haring who would be on the inside track to the big hauls. Of course, this last would in no wise help him with Jean Porter. On the surface, at least, Frank Kerwin would have all the margin there was in the quest for the girl's favor. The crook stuff never would go down with a girl like Jean.

The natural consequence of his own comparison was that George Haring decided, upon finishing his meal, that he would drift by the block where Jean Porter lived. He wondered if the girl would show the same complete disregard for his new clothes as had Kerwin.

So he strolled for several blocks, a neat and yet commonplace picture. He might have been anything from an executive to an office clerk. He might have been anything but a grubbing assistant to a shipping clerk or a rather faint-hearted and cheap burglar. Just in front of the girl's house, they met.

She eyed him, and he was aware of a surprised and approving light in her eye. "Where have you been keeping yourself, George?"

"Who—me?" He achieved a momentary appearance of cultured ease in keeping with his new raiment. "Oh, I've been pretty busy."

She laughed, but it was a kindly little laugh. It was the first really friendly laugh he had heard since last they had met.

"You must have been busy," she said. "Fact is, you look like you have had a raise or something. Honest, George, you look great."

"What do you mean?"

Again, she laughed. "Listen to you, George. As if you didn't stroll by so I could see the nice new togs you're wearing. But, honest, George, you do look fine when you're all slicked up. Who's the date with?"

"It would be with you——"

"I'm sorry," she cut in. "But I'm just waiting now for Frank. He's coming for me in his new car. But if you——"

"I was saying," cut in George Haring in his turn, "that I have another date to-night myself. But, Jean, if you're willing to hoof it or ride a bus, maybe you'd go out with me to-morrow night?"

"Maybe I would—if you asked me."

"It's a date," he said. He would have lingered, only just then he saw a shiny new roadster swinging into the block. If that was Kerwin he had no desire to linger. "Good night, Jean."

He tipped the new felt hat with a flourish and started on. "See you to-morrow," he called. He walked on again—his head held high although the old fear of Kerwin was in him.

So she was calling Kerwin by his first name now. She was calling him Frank, eh? A futile, seething rage was in him as he marched along. Rage, fear and hate! He'd show Kerwin up! He'd

make a bum out of Kerwin. That date he had mentioned to Jean Porter would make the beginning of the end in a lot of Kerwin's flashiness. That date was to rob a joint for Duke Fisher—a joint that would ordinarily have fallen to Flashy Frank Kerwin's skilled talents in burglary.

He pictured himself with lots of ready money in his pockets, and a wad in the bank. He'd make the hauls that Fisher laid out for him, and he'd salt most of it away. He'd get a big chunk of jack and then he'd quit. With money in the bank, he could ask Jean Porter to marry him.

There was just one fly in the ointment of these happy imaginings. Strive as he would, he could picture nothing that would ever give him nerve enough to cross Kerwin again. He had done that once and had received a real drubbing for his pains. He had been afraid of Kerwin then. And he was really afraid of him now. Would he ever lose that fear? Would he ever be able to defy Kerwin? And if he did, would that old paralysis of fear again seize him at the first impact of the bigger man's fists? Would he ever be able to shake off that yellow streak that had set all the old avenue to whispering about him?

Yet, in his midnight interview with Duke Fisher in Dreher's place some hours later, he was the picture of nerveless confidence. And when, at half past twelve, he sallied forth to pull the biggest job of burglary he had ever attempted, there was no sign in him of the least shred of fear.

Nor were appearances deceptive, for he was nerved to the task ahead, and braced with the knowledge that Duke Fisher expected him to succeed.

Half past twelve! Jean Porter was home by now—home from her date with Frank Kerwin. And to-morrow night he was to have a date with her. So now he was eager to prove himself worthy of Fisher's confidence. Now he was keen to show Duke Fisher that George Haring could do every bit as neat and workmanlike a job of burglary as the hated Kerwin. If for no more than the next hour, all that taint of fear of Kerwin must be banished from him. A man bent on burglary dare have no such thing as fear within his heart.

In this mood, there was nothing strange in the fact that the job was accomplished with a truly professional neatness and dispatch. He had broken into that big house with hardly more trouble than if he had used a key. And, once inside, he had punched out the dial and pin of the safe with a calmly methodical manner reminiscent of the matter-of-fact smoothness which he employed in manual tasks in the shipping department of Henderson & Cogswell.

What a haul he had made! Duke Fisher had assured him that there would be plenty of jewels and some money in that large wall safe. The trouble was that Duke's ideas and his own were still far apart as to what was the meaning of the word "plenty." The jewelry was a fairly sizable lump in the side pocket of his new coat, and the money bulked pleasantly within his trousers pocket.

Think of it! There had been six hundred dollars in cash in that safe. Half of that and half of the proceeds from fencing that jewelry would be his. It was a very well-pleased burglar who quitted those premises shortly after two in the morning.

Now the words of Duke Fisher came back to him. It certainly did give a fellow confidence to be well dressed on a job like this. There was no need to skulk along, and yet he was making his get-away with more loot than he had ever dreamed would fall into his hands. Two o'clock in the morning, and yet, for all any passer-by could guess, he

was some honest householder making a belated trip home.

So he came to a little parkway and swung boldly toward it beneath the corner arc. He was as safe from suspicion as though he were actually invisible. It certainly was great the feeling of security that those neat new clothes gave a fellow.

Just in the darkest part of that little park, George Haring came to an abrupt stunned halt. A shadowy figure, waving a glistening gun confronted him.

"Stick up your mitts!" came the order. George Haring did not hesitate. He knew full well that only a thoroughgoing fool argues with a gun-pointing bandit.

He stood there while the other man frisked him, not only relieving him of the loot, but of his own money and watch as well.

"A well-dressed gent," muttered the stranger. "And a blame good haul! Many thanks! And now," continued the man with a commanding gesture of the gun, "turn around and stay still for five minutes. If you make any phony moves, this thing's apt to go off."

George Haring turned around. Once more point in his education on the subject of clothes had been learned. A fairly well-dressed man need fear no suspicious coppers, but it behooved him to watch out for the stick-up gentry. A fine start this was! He had pulled a neat and thoroughgoing job, and, within a few minutes, he had lost everything at the point of a strange crook's gun. Needless to say, George Haring did not move for a full five minutes.

He did not need to hear the scathing words of scornful abuse from Duke Fisher to know that all his dreams of the earlier part of the day had smashed. There was, he knew, but one aftermath possible to the yarn that he must tell Duke Fisher. Imagine a man of George Haring's experience getting stuck up and robbed like some workaday bookkeeper! It was a profane yet eloquent dismissal that came to Haring. It was a weary and downhearted man who went to his room directly thereafter.

"You can keep the clothes," sneered Fisher. "Keep them! You're so dumb that even clothes can't make a man of you."

So, on the following day, he wore that new outfit down to work. Back to the old routine, back to grubbing along, and to playing the timid little mouse.

The old routine! A sandwich and coffee at noon in the factory cafeteria! The old routine! Day in and day out, the same thing! Due to evil luck, his big chance had come and gone overnight. To-night without a penny in his pocket, he had a date with Jean Porter.

And yet not quite the old routine, for to-day Henry Cogswell paused and looked as he was about to pass by George Haring. Henry Cogswell, junior partner of the firm, must have been as close as that to Haring hundreds of times before, but he had never paid any attention to him.

To-day he halted and stared.

"Humph! You're in the shipping department, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir?"

"I've noticed you. Always wanted to tell you that it would pay you to dress up a bit more. That suit helps your appearance a lot, young man."

"Yes, sir. Thank you."

"Trouble with you is you've always dressed like a shipping clerk. Doesn't pay." Cogswell moved as though to pass along and then halted again.

Cogswell pursed his lips and squinted thoughtfully at Haring. "Always had it in mind to speak to you about the value of appearances. And just heed me and keep it up!"

"Yes, sir."

Haring was meek enough. To think that perhaps the wearing of sloppy, shabby clothes had been holding him back. Still, perhaps, this was just the

old bunk. No doubt, Henry Cogswell would forget all about him in the next five minutes.

However, Henry Cogswell did no such thing. In fact, George Haring had hardly gotten back to the shipping room when he was summoned to the main office. What happened next left George Haring fairly gasping in unbelief.

Henry Cogswell had gone directly back to the office to look up his record. And at the same time, Mr. Henderson had dropped in to consult with his partner about the advisability of taking on a new salesman or two. Henry Cogswell had suggested that they might give the surprisingly renovated George Haring a chance to lift himself out of the rut.

"You'll have to start cheap, but, even so, it will be an increase over your present wage. We believe in giving our old employees a chance. And, when you're dressed up, you make a very creditable appearance. Not too flashy either. Would you be interested in such work?"

"I certainly would."

"The firm supplies a little car. And if you show signs of making good, we'll see that you get schooling and all that."

Salesman! Increased pay! Schooling! A little light car! It was sheer fantasy, and he was still dizzy with these new ideas as he hurried over to Jean Porter's that night after supper. Penniless he was for the moment, but ahead was a glorious and glowing future.

And then, just within a few steps of his destination, a big husky man stepped across his path. George Haring looked up startled into the glowering countenance of Frank Kerwin. And then all the old fear of Kerwin leaped to the surface.

"Listen to me, Haring. Jean told me you had a date with her to-night. You ain't going to keep it, see?"

"Why—why——"

"I told you to keep away from her," snarled Kerwin.

"Uh! Uh!" George Haring felt as though his legs were of water. The menace of Kerwin's bulk, the memory of the power of Kerwin's fists had him hypnotized.

"So, trundle along home again."

He thought of all the news he had been going to tell Jean. He took one wavering step as though to pass Kerwin.

Kerwin's closed fist bounced against Haring's chest, and, caught in midstride, the smaller man went down. Haring was down, and in him was no desire to rise. Why get up and get a beating such as he had known two months before?

Why get up? His eyes caught a glimpse of the ragged tear in his trousers leg. A tear in that precious, miracle-working suit! He rose faster than he had ever done before. Up he came, and clear from the ground came his fist in one looping swing. In a great arc that fist came up and at the jaw of the startled Frank Kerwin. It landed with an explosive force flush on that point known in ring parlance as the "button."

Kerwin crashed in his turn to the walk. It was several long seconds before he rose—long enough for George Haring to survey afresh the tear in his new trousers, and to send that same angry message to Haring's brain. So, as Kerwin rose groggily, that same fist, swinging again in that same fearsome fashion, smashed full to the mark again.

After the fourth repetition of this, Frank Kerwin decided to crawl away before he rose. Haring, with eyes ablaze, followed him.

"Enough? Enough?"

Kerwin did not articulate the word. He merely nodded and backed away.

So the avenue saw another miracle; realized there in plain view that the whisperings about the yellow streak in

George Haring were all wrong. It saw the hard and tough Flashy Frank Kerwin slinking away like a whipped cur in one direction while George Haring and Jean Porter walked in the other.

George Haring was learning a great many things now. He soon realized that even a beautiful and charming girl can have a streak of the elemental savage in her.

"Oh, George, I'm so glad you did that. I was beginning to think that maybe what the avenue was whispering was the truth. So I kept on, letting him have dates, so that maybe you would get really fighting mad some time, and you did. You know, George, he works with that Duke Fisher. Me—I'll stick with you even if you are only a shipping clerk."

"But I'm not—— That is, I will be something better soon."

"You couldn't be better," she whispered. "Only, George, you must never get in a jealous rage like that again. And, George, I think you look great in your new clothes. And, George—— Say——" She paused and stared down at the little tear in the trousers leg. "Say, when you tripped that first time, you must have torn your trousers. Did you know it?"

Did he know it? Did he know that the little tear had stirred all his murderous wrath at Kerwin? Did he know it? He did, but he was also learning other things fast.

"Say, that's right, Jean. I did tear it. I was so mad I didn't have time to think of that."

"That's like you. A new suit torn, and you take it so easy. Easy-going and honest and slow to get mad, but when you do—— Oh, boy! You'll never get cheap and flashy, and play around with people like Duke Fisher, will you, George?"

He stared at the tear in the new suit. "I'll be able to have that fixed easily. It doesn't amount to much."

"I was asking you," whispered Jean, "if you were always going to be good, and easy-going and on the level?"

"You bet I am," sighed George. This time he could look straight at her. New clothes were the makings of a man. "You bet I'm going to be everything you want me to be, Jean."

That was more than simple truth. It was a solemn promise. He had a chance now, and he'd live up to it. A better job, a little car, a good-looking and good little wife! What more could he wish for?

"First money you get, George, I wish you'd get another suit. A blue one for Sundays, and holidays—and things like—like——"

"A wedding?"

The answering squeeze of her fingers against his arm was enough. He nodded his head vigorously. George Haring was thoroughly converted to the theory that clothes can make the man.

DIDN'T "STICK 'EM UP"

IT is usually the wisest course to pursue when confronted by an order, rasped out behind a wicked-looking gun, to "stick 'em up," to do just that and nothing else. But a Chicago detective didn't feel quite that way about it, when he recently received a command to "reach for the sky."

While prowling around in an alley, he was the object of the well-known order. But the detective surprised the bearer of such tidings. He knocked the gun which was sticking in his ribs, from the thug's hand, and succeeded in killing one robber and captured his accomplice.

The Ruthless Streak

By Mel Watt

Author of "Baby Face," etc.

TO be a detective is one thing; to be a born man hunter is quite another. There were many who accused Monsieur Monot of being cruel, of having no heart. This was untrue. Monot's attitude toward crime and criminals was one of complete detachment: there was nothing personal about his arrests. Indeed, there were several of the more intelligent types of criminals whom he liked as men, but whom he was obliged to apprehend as lawbreakers. Monsieur Monot, unlike so many detectives, never set himself up as a "little god on a mountain." He heartily detested the righteous type of policeman.

Monot did not think himself fit to censure his fellow men. His philosophy was simple: he believed that people lived more harmoniously under the law. He realized that the law must have its champions, just as crime must have its champions.

Above all, he realized that only a very thin mental line separated the great criminal from the great criminologist. For, if the expert criminologist can follow—or foresee—the line of reasoning used by the master criminal, it surely follows that the criminologist is, potentially, a great criminal himself.

Had any one asked Monot: "What, then, is the weight that tips one scale toward the law, and the other scale toward crime?" Monot would have replied with another question: "What is the thing we call conscience, monsieur?" And there the interesting puzzle rests.

The prefect of police, Monot's superior, and closest friend, often said: "Monot is not brutal. But he is ruthless. He is as ruthless as a cat—and as patient. He is a born hunter."

Just at the moment that the prefect, for the hundreth time, was pointing this out to a companion, Monsieur Monot was seated with a youthful colleague at

a table of one of those old sidewalk wine shops which add to the charm of Paris, that most charming of cities. The youth was one of Monot's cleverest pupils, and one day he would be a great detective.

The youth, whose name was Georges DeLametre, was watching his chief closely, for on Monot's poker lips was that faint and inscrutable smile which made one think of a cat scenting quarry. Georges covertly peered at the two or three people who were then walking past. There were no police characters among them, so Georges, puzzled, looked politely at Monot for an explanation.

Monot, who habitually spoke in a soft tone of voice, made no unnatural attempt to whisper. He smiled guilelessly, and spoke as though he were discussing a light topic with his colleague. No one would have taken them for detectives; Monot himself looked for all the world like an unobtrusive and stocky Parisian merchant; DeLametre, dressed in the height of fashion, looked like the typical young boulevardier.

"Look cautiously," Monot directed, "at the distinguished gentleman three tables away. He is Paul Lambert, a very famous research scientist."

DeLametre commented suavely: "He looks the part. No one would be likely to take him for anything but a man of science."

Monot nodded, and continued: "Look again, at the man two tables removed from Monsieur Lambert. He is a Roumanian, an international thief, who sells out to the highest bidder. He used to be an international spy, but his present game is more profitable."

"Just what game do you mean, monsieur?" queried Georges.

Monot shrugged. "Monsieur Lambert is known to be at work on a serum to be used as a cure for the dread disease known to the layman as 'sleeping sickness.' To the man, or coterie of men, who gain control of such a serum, it means a great fortune in money."

Georges drew in a short breath through partially closed lips—which is a Frenchman's way of "whistling through his teeth."

"I wonder——" mused Monot. "I wonder——"

Monot let his gaze rest upon a statue on the boulevard, and swept his hand toward it as though he were explaining it to young Georges. But what he said was this:

"Monsieur Lambert received a great shock a year ago. It happened in this manner: He had, out of kindness of heart, befriended a young girl who had been deserted, and left to the streets of Paris, by roving parents. They were of a gypsy tribe; a people, as you know, who are impulsive and irresponsible and often cruel.

"A gypsy is in his element when he is roving the roads, but a great city is not his element, and I suppose that those people had tired of Paris, and also of the annoyances and responsibilities of parenthood. So they had simply left their daughter to forage for herself. Of course, she was utterly lost, in Paris, and was just about to take her life when Monsieur Lambert saved her. Out of gratitude, she at once became his devoted slave, and worshiped him as a young girl will.

"Now, out at his private laboratory, which monsieur maintains in his residence, he employed as a sort of general handy man a man who called himself Ronsard. Ronsard kept the place in proper shape; he attended to those details of existence and business which Monsieur Lambert had no time to bother with; occasionally, he helped Lambert with scientific experiments which required physical strength. Ronsard, you see, was a big fellow, very blond, and very handsome.

"I, myself, was not handling the case, but, when Monsieur Lambert was ques-

tioned, he told our department that, at the time of the tragedy, Ronsard had been in his employ just two years, and the girl, Cleda, had been under his guardianship for something less than a year.

"At any rate, one day our office received a call from Lambert to hasten out to his laboratory immediately, for something terrible had happened. When our men arrived, they found, in the inner cellar room where Lambert kept his materials, the dead bodies of Ronsard and the girl. There was a knife wound in Ronsard's solar plexus. The knife was still in the girl's hand. The back of the girl's head was rather badly smashed, where it had struck against a sharp cement step."

Monot's young colleague was not shocked, for he had seen too many such scenes to become unnerved by them, but he was all attention. Monot continued: "Our men had no trouble piecing the rest together: A handsome young man —a young girl—a secret romance, the natural result of being thrown in contact day by day for many months. Then, Ronsard's refusal to marry the girl. Her anger and her hot gypsy blood had done the rest.

"She waylaid him in the cellar storeroom, probably gave him one more chance to change his mind about wedding her; which he very likely scornfully declined. Then she killed him, using her gypsy knife. But he was strong and healthy, and before he fell, he gave her a great push. As the room was nearly dark, and as Ronsard had not bothered to bring a light, she tripped and fell, striking her head against the cement platform step.

"Monsieur Lambert, wondering what was detaining his aid so long, went to fetch him, and came upon this horrible scene."

Young Georges was regarding the scientist with sympathy. For a man with such a sensitive appearance, it must have been nerve racking. It had, also, left something of sorrow in his face, for it was understood he had had a great deal of faith in the two young people he had taken under his wing.

Georges remarked: "Gypsy blood, and a handsome philanderer! What could one expect?"

Monsieur Monot shrugged: "They do not interest me. But it was hard lines on poor Lambert. He is a very valuable man to the human race."

Monsieur Lambert sat very still, as if he were continually lost in thought, every now and then taking a sip of the drink which stood beside his hand. Georges closely observed the other man, the Roumanian. Not once had he looked at Lambert. He sat toying with his glass, leisurely smoking a cigarette, gazing at the passers-by. He appeared mildly bored by the scene. His dress, his pose, was a bit foppish. He looked as though he had neither the ambition nor the intelligence to accomplish anything daring or clever. Georges decided the man must have been a very ingenious spy, for he had cultivated to perfection the art of appearing artless.

Several minutes afterward, Monsieur Lambert finished his drink, and left. The Roumanian was looking lazily in the opposite direction. When Lambert had proceeded a short distance down the boulevard, the Roumanian leisurely picked up his gloves and stick, and sauntered in the same direction.

Monsieur Monot said to Georges: "Follow him, find out where he lives, and report to me."

Georges obeyed at once. He followed the Roumanian, who, in turn, followed Monsieur Lambert. When Lambert had entered his house, the ex-spy strolled past the place, looked it over in a desultory manner, and continued on his way. Georges followed cautiously. The Roumanian waved away one of two taxis which solicited his patronage, preferring instead to walk. Georges fol-

lowed him into a modest part of the city, and watched him enter a pension, where apparently he had rooms. George noted the address, and then reported to Monsieur Monot.

Monot's instructions were simple: "Do not let him evade you. When he enters a place which you yourself cannot go into, wait until he comes out. Report to me twice a day."

For many days, Georges followed those instructions faithfully. Very often, it was tiresome work, but it did him no harm, for he must learn that part of a detective's equipment is patience, and the capacity to bear monotony indefinitely. But, wait as he would, he caught the Roumanian in no overt act. He had begun to wonder whether his chief were not wasting his time, when, one day as he was reporting to Monot, Monot made the first move in the drama of wits.

Said Monot: "Our friend the ex-spy is going to make his attempt to-night. We are going to be there, Georges, to watch the little scene."

Georges, who had imagined himself the only sleuth concerned with the case, was considerably taken aback. "But, monsieur, h-how do you know?" he asked, somewhat stupidly.

Monot chidingly shook a finger at him, and advised: "Learn well one thing at a time, my young friend. That is how one becomes a full-fledged detective in France."

That night, as Monot and Georges rode in a conveyance to within a short distance from the house of Monsieur Lambert, Georges inquired: "Does Monsieur Lambert know anything of all this?"

"Not a thing," said Monot cheerfully. "This is all a surprise for him, and, I fancy, for our clever friend also." Monot explained further: "Monsieur Lambert is too timid and nervous to trust with our scheme. I want to catch our friend in the act. If Lambert knew, he would be very apt to bungle matters for us."

Georges thought that the unexpected shock would be rather hard on Monsieur Lambert's highly strung nerves, this way; but Georges also realized that Monot could be very ruthless in gaining his ends. The man-hunter's blood was up.

"Quietly, now," warned Monot, as he led Georges to the rear of the great house. At a small door built into a partially hidden alcove under the ground floor of the house, Monot produced two keys. Georges knew those keys. Either the one or the other could open any lock made, provided the locks did not have tumblers attached to them. As steel tumblers are used ordinarily only on safes, Monot had little trouble with locked doors of any kind.

They entered a dark passage, Monot first carefully closing the door again. Several dozen feet down the passage, they came to another door. Monot also made short work of this door. Georges sensed they were in a large room, for the place reeked of drugs and sweet gases. Monot cannily flashed a small flash light about, and Georges saw great boxes and bottles and cement crates piled all over the place.

"This is the storeroom," Monot explained in a whisper. "The passage was built so that those large materials might be brought in here with the least effort. Follow me closely, and be very careful not to stumble or upset anything."

Monot guided the way to a corner farthest from the door. He pulled Georges in behind some huge boxes stacked two high.

"Now we play a waiting game," he said. He added, pointing through a gap in the boxes at a steel case attached to the wall above a raised cement platform: "That, I understand, is where Lambert keeps vials and bottles of the cures he has been working upon. There

is a great deal of thought and effort inside that cabinet, my young friend, and perhaps several boons to humanity. Who knows?"

For all of half an hour, they waited in silence. Georges had begun to wonder whether Monot might have been mistaken about the ex-spy's intended visit. Then, very softly, could be heard a faint scraping within the lock of the door to the room. The thief obviously was so expert at his work that he had gained entrance through the outer door, and had come down the passage, without making the slightest sound. And now, without any trouble whatever, he unlocked the inner door as easily as Monot himself had done it! Georges could hardly restrain his amazement at this fact, but second thought told him that a man who had been clever enough to be a successful international spy would undoubtedly be just as clever at finding a means to open difficult doors.

Monot laid a hand on Georges' sleeve, to caution him to breathe as gently as possible. They both listened intently to the padded movements of the intruder. For several seconds, the thief's small pocket flash lit up the wall upon which was fastened the steel cabinet; it was like a flash of lightning in a pitch-black night. Then he made quickly for the cabinet.

Monot and Georges could just see the small circle of light, where the thief held the flash light close to the lock of the cabinet. They saw a small, straight steel instrument inserted into the lock. An adroit twist of the thief's hand, and the lock was snapped.

They saw the man's hand shaking with excitement as he rapidly ran over the many bottles and vials. Finally, his hand pounced on one large bottle. He clutched it tightly, and held it in the air for a moment, as if his victory exulted him. A low sound, as of satisfaction, escaped him. Still in the throes of excitement—and the value of the potion must have been incalculable to render a man of his caliber excited—he hurried away from the cabinet.

Monot and Georges could not see what happened, but an instant later, they heard a slip and a scurry, a sharp exclamation as of a man trying to keep his balance—then a vicious thud, and a low groan!

Georges exclaimed under his breath, and would have made for the spot, had not Monot grasped his arm and pulled him back. Georges, for once, was angered by his chief, but Monot offered no immediate explanation.

The thief's frightened cry had been rather loud. The sound of it must have carried upward to a laboratory on the second floor, for quite plainly there started the sounds of a man who was hurrying downstairs. A few seconds more, and a key was inserted in the door, and it flew open simultaneously with the hoarse voice of Monsieur Lambert crying: "Who is there? Who is there?"

Getting no answer, the scientist advanced into the room. The first thing that his flash light sought for was the steel cabinet wherein were the results of his labors. Seeing the doors open, his hand began to tremble, and he swept the the beam around the scene. The ray struck upon the cement platform, and there—for the scientist and the two detectives to see—lay the inert body of the Roumanian, his head a horrible mess, where it had struck the sharp corner of the cement platform.

In the semidarkness, Monot and Georges saw Monsieur Lambert's eyes open startlingly wide; they saw his hand go to his throat. The hand that held the flash light began to tremble violently, and they heard him give one high, unearthly shriek, as he backed off, stumbling and shaking, crying out to the form on the floor:

"Cleda! Cleda! I didn't mean it! I didn't mean it!"

Monsieur Monot jumped up like a cat, tiptoed to Lambert's side and said quietly: "I arrest you, monsieur, for the murder of the girl named Cleda."

The scientist went completely to pieces. The utter shock of Monot's voice, coming right after the horrible discovery, was too much.

"I did it! I'll confess!" he screamed insanely. "I did it! Take me away from here! Take me away from this horrible place! I can stand it no longer. I am going mad!"

Monot, calm and poised as ever, held Lambert with one hand, while he motioned to the man on the floor with the other. That gentleman raised himself up, got out a large 'kerchief, and proceeded to wipe off the red liquid which he had burst against his head from the thin, skin ball often used for such purposes by actors and detectives.

The sight steadied the scientist; he saw he had been neatly trapped. But, there followed the realization that he had admitted the murder. He immediately steeled himself to calmness, shrugged, and over his thin lips came a faint, grim smile.

"We will all proceed upstairs, messieurs," requested Monot coolly.

Upstairs, in a small anteroom off the laboratory, Monot bade Lambert be seated, and pushed paper and pen toward him.

"In writing, if you please, monsieur," he requested.

Lambert took up the pen with all the docility of a beaten man, but still with the faint smile playing along his lips. Perhaps he was relieved; perhaps he felt that confession of the thing on his soul was preferable to going mad from the secret knowledge of it. He started to write, slowly, and deliberately.

While he wrote, Monot took the two others aside, and smiled at Georges' astonished features. Before Georges could frame a question, Monot explained:

"A play should always be started from the beginning, my young friend. And careful attention to detail is always of prime importance." He turned to the erstwhile Roumanian. "First of all, permit me to introduce you to Monsieur Charles Marcel. Charles excels at taking tumbles, and makes a most convincing dead person. He is also a past master of the art of changing his features without having to resort to bushels of hair. It is quite possible that, when you have occasion to meet him again, in another case, you will never recognize him."

Monot turned again to grin into the face of Georges. "You see, the scene was all set, that day at the café. Monsieur Lambert refreshes himself there often, and always sits at the same table. He has an extraordinarily well-developed sense of hearing. That is why I told you all about him.

"The average ear would not have heard, but Monsieur Lambert heard quite well. I did not want to arouse his suspicion, but I wished to play on his nerves. So I sympathetically recounted for you the popular version of the killing, at the same time rendering him uneasy with a cock-and-bull story of an international thief who was after his new cure.

"The 'thief' was present, in the form of Monsieur Charles here. Later, when we had studied the case sufficiently, the night of what Americans call the 'showdown' was arranged. We came here, you and I, to see what would happen. As you see, the little drama worked out perfectly."

"But, Monsieur, what——" Georges started to ask.

"Yes," Monot intervened with a chuckle. "Why did I keep you in the dark? Why did I ask you to do what seemed a lot of needless things? First, my young friend, to show you the importance of strict secrecy. Secondly, to show you how precisely a detective

like Monsieur Charles must work, and how carefully he must play his part. Finally, to show you the value of sudden, dramatic surprise, to prove to you the power of psychological suggestion upon the guilty mind."

Monot inclined his head toward the scientist. The smile left Monot's face, and he appeared a trifle sad when he said: "What a pity! He is a great scientist."

If Lambert had been listening to the subdued talk, he gave no evidence of it. Wearily he wrote the last sentences of his confession, and pushed it toward Monot. Monot picked up the sheet, and read it quickly.

In effect, what it told was this: The clandestine love affair had been, not between the girl and Ronsard, but between the girl and her guardian, Lambert. To give him his due, it had not started as a vulgar thing, on Lambert's part. He had been a good deal of a recluse, a good deal of an æsthete, most of his life.

The girl's wild gypsy nature, her motions and passions, had brought to life the long-suppressed desires of the scientist. She worshiped him; she wanted him. It was one of those mad infatuations. But alas! Her love was unrequited. To him, she was still an interesting study, a delightful companion. Later, she had wanted him to marry her. But this, to Lambert, was a horse of a different color. His work was his life, his all. Marriage was not for his genius. He declined her. She had plainly showed her hate for him, and threatened to kill him. Gypsy pride is as strong as gypsy passions. He watched her closely, from thence on.

Finally, she pressed him so hard that he became desperate. At first, he only laughed. But, later, in his desperation for the safety of his famous name, he concocted a plan.

One day, he mentioned in an offhand manner that he would need to go down to the storeroom himself for some special material from his steel cabinet; no one had ever had access to the cabinet but himself. When he said this, he watched the girl closely. He saw her eyes narrow and her lips draw tight in a line of hatred. Almost immediately, she went out, without a word.

When she had gone, Lambert remarked, to his aid, Ronsard: "On second thought, you had better accompany me. I also need one of those heavy crates. Put on one of my white smocks; the stuff may spill."

Down in the dark passage, Lambert left the door of the room open. He handed the keys to Ronsard, and ordered him: "Please get the large bottle out of the cabinet for me, while I look for the crate I want."

From behind a box, he watched Ronsard trying to manipulate the cabinet lock. While the aid did this, through the semidarkened doorway slid a form. It made rapidly for the white-smocked figure standing before the cabinet—the smocks which only Lambert wore, the cabinet which Lambert himself usually opened. A knife flashed, then disappeared into the body before the cabinet. A quick hiss, as of a man shivering, then a low groan that rose to an angry rumble. An enraged "The devil!" followed by a short scream from the woman as she realized her blunder. Then a brief struggle, the woman's screams being strangled by masculine hands and arms. Finally, a great thud; and the audible, labored breathing of one who has been pulled to the ground by another.

When Lambert heard the thud, he had run out; had stood over the girl, who reclined on the cement floor. He had taken hold of the girl, shaken her, and accused in a righteous voice: "Murderess! You have killed him!"

She was a match for him, however. She sneered: "Very clever, monsieur. But not clever enough."

"Yes?" he had scoffed, dropping his righteous pose. "You will die for this. They will believe him to have been your lover. They will say that you killed him because he did not love you."

Her eyes flashed hatred, and her lips twisted cunningly.

But the sudden realization that she might eventually trap him, that this wild creature might give him unpleasant publicity drove Lambert into a fit of temporary insanity. Not knowing what he was doing, he reverted to the instincts of the beasts. He grasped her head between his hands, and dashed it viciously against the sharp corner of the cement platform. Horrified immediately, he stood staring down at the oozing crimson stream. Impulsively, he stood, moaning, over and over, "Cleda! Cleda! I didn't mean it! I didn't mean it!"

When his senses had returned, he saw that he need not move a thing. The terrible scene was just as it might have occurred between the dead girl and the murdered man. There was no mark of fingers on the girl's face; his hands had not pressed hard; he had thrown the head back, instead of holding on to it. He went up to his laboratory, and called the police.

From there on, the story was known.

Monsieur Monot folded the paper, and placed it in his pocket. He spoke quietly to Lambert: "You will accompany us, monsieur."

Lambert nodded wearily, and started to go to his laboratory. Monot looked at him inquiringly. The scientist smiled and said: "My coat and hat, monsieur? And I would like to take off this smock, if you will permit."

Monot nodded. Young Georges gazed at his chief questioningly, but Monot did not see the look.

In the laboratory, Lambert took off his smock, and put on coat and hat. So quickly that it would have been difficult to discover from a distance, he whipped a hypodermic needle from the corner of the shelf where his coat had been hanging, and injected the contents into his arm. He walked back to the anteroom. The faint grim smile was still on his thin lips. He quietly accompanied Monot to the prefecture.

That same morning, when daylight began to appear, he showed signs of illness. For some reason, which Monsieur Monot did not explain, publication of the sensational case was withheld. A day later, Lambert was very ill. A physician was called, who diagnosed the case as "sleeping sickness."

Not long afterward, Paul Lambert died. It had only been a question of time, for his own proposed cure for the dread disease had not been perfected. The case, at Monsieur Monot's request, was closed forever. The only news that was given out was that the noted scientist, Monsieur Lambert, had died a victim of the disease for which he had spent many years of his life trying to discover a cure. It was thought that he must have carelessly allowed some of the germs—which he, of course, kept for experimental purposes—to enter his system.

But Georges DeLametre suspected otherwise. He recalled that, when he had looked questioningly at Monot on the evening Lambert had gone to get his coat and hat, Monot had not met his look. Was it possible that Monot had deliberately permitted the scientist——

Georges, seated now across from Monot at the latter's desk, summoned the courage to voice his admiration. "It was the kindest way," he said softly.

Monot for a moment appeared annoyed. Then he smiled, and said quietly: "After all, he was a great scientist. He had done much for humanity in the mass."

To which Georges agreed, but said nothing. But his thoughts were those: "Ruthless, yes. But how can any one who knows him say that Monot is cruel, that he has no heart?"

The Thief of Time

By Leslie Gordon Barnard

Author of "Eyes of the Deaf," etc.

"THAT clock," said the little watchmaker suavely, "is not for sale, sir."

"You have it on display!"

"I beg pardon. It is hanging there waiting for the customer to claim it. Mr. Block is a connoisseur in clocks of all kinds, and is good enough to intrust me with any minor repairs.

The man on the outside of the counter ran his fingers over the clock possessively. He wore large horn glasses, a fur-lined coat that came well up over his face, and a drooping mustache to which, one or twice, the little watchmaker raised keen eyes. Finally, the would-be buyer sighed.

"It is a very quaint piece."

"Very."

"With a history?"

"Undoubtedly. Mr. Block does not bother with any other kind!"

"It would be interesting to know the exact history of this little gilt creation. French, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"May I just examine it?"

"Well——"

But the customer had taken the little clock in his hands. His eyes behind the horn glasses were greedy. He did not tell the little watchmaker that this was not the first time he had handled the clock. The other time was in Mr. Block's house. Block had several distinguished collectors in for a viewing of his treasures, and Cabal was among them.

"Sell that?" Block had laughed when questioned. "Not if I know it! That clock marked the last hours of the Comte de Soizy, in the French Revolution. He was fond of the clock, and a bit of a wag, and, with a little judicious

bribery, he smuggled it in when he went to his final imprisonment. After that, it became a jest with the guards—a bright, brilliant jest—that the clock with its little trumpet note should so gayly mark the coming death of its owner. It is understood there was a scramble for it when the time came, and some jailer spirited it away—so it is preserved to this day. No, gentlemen, I would not part with that."

The man, Cabal, outside the counter, thought of this now, and a faint smile moved under his mustache.

"Mr. Block must trust you implicitly to let you have this!"

The watchmaker bowed.

"I never let it out of my sight! I fetched it myself this morning, and will return it to-night when the store closes. It is not, certainly, a thing for a message boy!"

Cabal nodded.

Suddenly, he took from his pocket a very ordinary watch.

"Crystal's broken," he said. "Wish you'd renew it. How long will it take?"

"Not very long, sir, but——"

"I'll come back," agreed Cabal hastily. "What time do you close?"

"Seven sharp."

"Well, I can make it, I think, by then. If not, to-morrow morning."

"Very good, sir."

The watchmaker took a ticket from a drawer, detached one portion to tie to the watch, and handed Cabal the other. Cabal took it, nodded, and started out. Behind him, a silver trumpet sounded thrice. Three o'clock!

Other clocks took up the message of the hour, but for Cabal they did not exist. He was shivering with the beauty and significance of the silver trumpet. It held almost a laughing note: "Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a!" Three times like that—a short note and a long one, and then silence, save for the other chiming clocks which did not matter.

Cabal was back in the days when aristocrats went to the guillotine and this jesting trumpet marked the fading hours for a waggish count. A moment later, he put his hand to his watch pocket as if to check off the time; a little sprinkle of glass threatened his finger; one sliver, piercing it, brought blood.

He stood for a second looking at it, wondering what devilish impulse, what prophetic insight, had made him suddenly break that crystal, and to find out the time the store closed, after which the little watchmaker would be taking back this treasure to the man who would not sell it at any price.

From three to seven is four hours, in which time a man may endure much temptation. Cabal, returning to his boarding place, fought with himself in the streets and then alone in his room. It was typical of him, when he traveled from home, to choose some obscure but comfortable place like this, where he might preserve his incognito. As Cabal, the famous collector, to permit any publicity as to his movements was to court financial loss. As Cabal, he would have to pay five times the amount that an ordinary humble citizen might get a piece for.

Seated now in his room, he slouched gloomily in a chair, his overcoat, with its shielding collar, still unremoved, his keen eyes clouded by the slightly smoked horn glasses that protected them. Finally he rose, removed the coat and glasses with something approaching impatience, stepped to the mirror, and, by a deft movement, added a final touch in the process which revealed his true identity.

In his hand now was the mustache that had altered his mouth; he stood revealed as a pale and almost insignificant-looking man of about forty, clean shaven, and redeemed from this insignificance only by certain eccentricities

of feature that made him easily recognizable as Cabal, the collector.

Many a time he had removed this or similar disguises, rarely without a mellow humor. It was one of the adventurous side lights of his curious profession—a passion for disguises, based on a very sound business sense, and used with discretion now and then in the midst of sufficient public appearances as Cabal, undisguised.

In a notebook, guarded with great secrecy and caution, he kept meticulous record of his little triumphs of this kind. There was that time when, in the guise of a taxi driver, he had walked off from a crowded and famous London auction room with some treasure for a fraction of what it would have cost him as Cabal.

As he went out, he remembered hearing some one say: "It was rumored that Cabal would be here to bid. If he doesn't want the thing, I reckon it isn't worth going after much!"

He had chuckled, back in his rooms, in a smoky London side street, that day.

Afterward, he had chuckled still more when people asked: "How did you get that piece, Cabal?" And he had answered: "Bought it for a song for a taxi driver!"

But now, looking at the discarded parts of his present minor disguise, he pushed them a little from him with something approaching aversion. A dark flood was moving in him, whose nature and power he knew. He had struggled with it before, and he knew it as no mean adversary.

Part of his collecting was for speculative purposes—the purchasing of articles that later he could resell to rich but uninitiated gentlemen at a fat profit. Such things did not greatly tempt him, no matter how large the possible profit might be. Money did not allure him. It was the type of treasure that he wanted for himself, for its own sake—something to be added to his small but representative collection—that made every virtue a small thing in the balance.

"No!" said Cabal, now, swinging around as if upon a real adversary.

And then he stopped, listening tensely. As if in answer, from somewhere deep in the house came the echo of a striking clock.

Five already!

The noting of time was a secondary thing. Distance—or was it imagination?—lent to the tinny strike of a cheap boarding-house clock a note not unlike that of the gay trumpet call that had marked the passing of the waggish count. Cabal paled.

For moments he paced the room, as if fleeing from some overtaking enemy; then he flung himself in the chair again and brooded. The slow twilight of the evening crept over the city and into the room, throwing odd shadows upon the furniture and his face. Had there been any witnesses, they might have fancied that the shadow was the promise of evil, and the power of evil, and that gradually it grew upon him, until the face, like the room, had lost its brightness and was cast only in shadow.

Deep in the house rang the tinny notes of the boarding-house clock again, transmuted now more fully than ever into a jesting trumpet call:

"Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a!"

Cabal was sunk deep in a smoldering atmosphere of history! The old impertinent France that went down in blood; the gay, autocratic France that, harkening to no warning, heard at last the imperious call of another autocrat, whose last kiss was that of the guillotine. He stood in fancy where the place of execution whirled with its mad pageant.

He watched the human mass give way, willingly enough, for the tumbril

that passed, in which Cabal could see a gay young aristocrat placing his fingers waggishly to his lips, saluting the coarsened women of the *sans-culotterie* who cried for his death and followed him with wishes for his speedy end. For Cabal, the scene was very real; he could see the movement of the tumbril, the regular fall of the guillotine, the counting of the heads, the bravado of the count as he stepped to take his place—the final fall of the knife.

"Ha—h-a-a!"

One long-drawn note!

Cabal started up. The clock downstairs had spoken again with peculiar timeliness. For a moment, it was this odd coincidence—of its striking with his thinking—that appealed to him with grim humor; then he remembered.

It was half past six.

At seven the little watchmaker would leave the store with the parcel under his arm.

Cabal resumed his mild disguise, and went out into the streets. It was about the time, he told himself, that, in the ordinary course, he would eat his evening meal. There were no facilities at the house, and he liked each day to choose his restaurants according to the whim and appetite of the moment. There was a rather good place two blocks down and one along; he would turn his steps that way, he decided, order an epicurean repast, and lose his momentary madness in the joys of a less dangerous appetite.

But when he had gone the two blocks, he made no turn; he went right on, with scarcely a moment of respectable hesitation. Three blocks straight down, and he would be within a few seconds' striking distance of the watchmaker's. Would it not be, after all, better to face up to his temptation in the fullest degree, and win out?

He would go down, watch the little man leave his shop with the treasure, and then, like an honest man, shrug his shoulders and go his way. Some day, if he didn't face up to his temptation for acquisition of rare bits, he might do something desperate. If he turned aside now, there would always linger in him a wonder what he would have done had he really followed the watchmaker with this souvenir of a waggish count!

So Cabal reflected on the surface of his mind; and beneath these obvious shallows ran the deep current of his passion.

There seemed to be a brooding mystery about the streets and a sense of sinister suggestion, as if the shadows that had crept upon the city, into the room, and across his face, still held a lurking evil. Cabal began to see in his fellow men a reflection of himself. The open honesty of the most kindly face that passed him, as he hurried on, became a mask for some distorting greed. He had no doubt that even the watchmaker, with his ingenuous, simple countenance, had his dark places; that Block, the owner of the treasure, had his; that they were, therefore, all on a plane. Granted the same opportunity they would do—what?

The hurrying of his steps alarmed him now. The shallowness of his excuses was revealed. This was a mission quite different from a high desire to face and triumph over temptation. Even his footsteps seemed to have acquired a furtiveness; he had a fancy that passers-by—of whom there were fortunately few now at the hour of the evening meal—glanced at him half suspiciously. Somewhere, a clock in a tower tolled the hour of seven.

Cabal halted his steps a little. He was within a few yards of his objective. The lights in the watchmaker's store were still on; he slunk into the deep shadow of a doorway, and waited for what seemed to him an eternity. Something was delaying the watchmaker.

Perhaps it was a providence to tire out Cabal and turn him from a sinister satisfaction in the darkness of this side street.

Half past seven struck. Still he waited. Then, suddenly, the lights in the store went out, leaving only a single glow in the rear, for police purposes. Against this faint light, Cabal could see the watchmaker taking a last look about; then the door opened, closed, and locked; a patch of radiance from the shop next door fell full on the figure of a diminutive man with a parcel under his arm. Then the intervening gloom swallowed him.

Cabal, his heart beating in an agony of excitement, let him get a few paces ahead, then stealthily crossed the street and trailed cautiously behind.

This cat-and-mouse progress did more than anything to restore sense in the collector. What wild desire had turned him into something devilishly like a footpad creeping up on a victim? The thing was preposterous. He had known of men in his line who did unlawful things to satisfy their acquisitive passion, but usually through hired tools or by devious and clever ways. This was ridiculous.

Only madmen or desperate bandits went about waylaying people in the open street! Why, already they were coming upon more crowded ways. And the lighting was better; it showed very clearly the little man with his parcel, just ahead. A mirror in the window of a lighted store revealed to Cabal—himself, a furtive figure with horn glasses and concealing mustache.

His blood turned to water, and then the water to some potent wine. If he really wanted that clock, he could have it, and with real safety! Nobody would be hurt, except the feelings of the watchmaker and of Block, and in some way he'd find a method of reimbursing them—a roundabout way, so that there would be some honesty in his act. Shallow thinking again! A salve to a shaky conscience!

Conscience didn't matter much when you got as close as this and saw how utterly easy it was! That little fellow ahead was unsuspecting; the parcel nestled under his arm. There was a dark lane just beyond. And the people around would even help the case!

He must hurry now, before the little fellow passed that lane. How he wished he wasn't so shaky in the limbs! He couldn't nerve himself! Yes, he could, by giving full thought to the clock; not to the man ahead—just to this amazing little treasure. Four paces! A rough shouldering of the little man! A cautious, fearful snatching! An outcry!

He had it!

Cabal had it, and was down the lane like a flash.

"Help! Thieves! Bandits!"

Cries like that reached him; the sound of people running; the shrilling of a whistle.

His hands, holding the little parcel, almost dropped it. It seemed a mad nightmare to think that he, Cabal, had done this thing. He had committed an act of outlawry. If they caught him, he was done for—with a long stretch in the penitentiary ahead of him. Cutting across that horror was a desperate sense of triumph. He had his clock! He'd taken unlawful means, but he'd try and repay if he could, in some roundabout way.

He thrust the clock into a capacious and concealing pocket in his loose-skirted coat.

It had taken only a second or two for these mental flashes, and this concealing act, when he heard a cry: "Down the lane there! He ran that way!" and another voice: "A man with glasses and a dark mustache!"

Cabal smiled. The thing had worked. Quick as a flash, he had off the disguising mustache; it was tossed over

a fence; the glasses followed. The collar of his coat he turned down, thanking the fates that his coat was nondescript. It'd never give him away. The hue and cry was on now; people were running down the lane; Cabal, in the darkness of a gateway, watched them and presently became one of them!

He discovered that already his conscience had ceased largely to trouble him, now that the danger was past. He had done the thing, and got away with it. In a few moments, they were out the other end of the lane and into a well-lighted street: a group of excited citizens, a second police officer—the first was still scouring the lane—and himself secure under the stares even of the frightened, stupefied little watchmaker and these others who still shouted his description.

"Which way did he go?" asked Cabal breathlessly.

Nobody knew.

"Dark man with mustache and glasses!" offered some one again. "I'd know him like a shot!"

"So should I!" said Cabal in quick, bold agreement. "He must be hiding up the lane somewhere."

His eyes went to the little watchmaker, in whose face agony was working.

"My clock!" said the little fellow. "He's got to be found, officer! It's a priceless thing."

Cabal's breath came short. That priceless thing was his, lying in his pocket right now, in a coat whose voluminous skirts were a sure refuge.

"Description?" asked the officer bluntly, taking out a notebook. "Now just what was this clock like?"

The watchmaker gave it; Cabal approved the thoroughness of the description, and there was renewed in him the awful joy of acquisition. He could regard, almost without pity, the tragic face of this little fellow parading his agonizing loss.

"When it strikes, officer, it's like a trumpet: one long and one short—a lovely thing like a trumpet it is, officer!"

The policeman licked his stubby pencil and wrote diligently. The crowd now showed signs of dispersing. Another episode in the life of a city had taken place, and was over. In a moment Cabal, quite casually, would drift off also.

The officer drew out a big watch and consulted it with a frown. "Two minutes to eight!" he said, and made a note of that.

"Just eight!" corrected somebody. "There goes the hour now."

"Tower's always a bit fast," said the officer resentfully. "Two to eight, I make it."

Cabal lifted his head. There was something wrong here, some hitch, and the intoxication of his adventure had left him stupid. Some obvious thing, but he couldn't get his finger on it! So he stood there until the last stroke of eight sounded from the tower. And then, suddenly, he stiffened. His legs itched to run, but he was paralyzed. In a second, it came:

"Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a!"

Like a silly fool, he stood clutching at his pocket as if to silence the telltale voice that had marked the passing of a gay, waggish count, and that marked now Cabal's ruin.

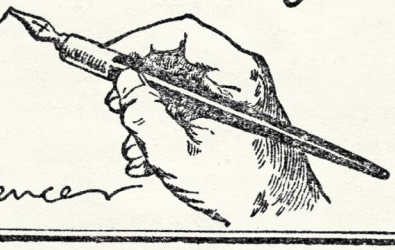
"Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a! Ha—h-a-a!"

Fool! Fool! Why didn't he run?

A mockery of trumpets that had marked, in bygone days, the vengeance of an outraged populace!

What Handwriting Reveals

Conducted By Shirley Spencer



If you are an employer and desire to place your employees in the positions in your office or factory for which they are best fitted; or if you are just about to step out into the world to earn your own living; or if crimes involving handwriting have been committed in your community; or if you want to know the characters of your friends as revealed in their chirography—send specimens of the handwriting of the persons concerned to Shirley Spencer, in care of this magazine, and inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. Shirley Spencer will analyze the samples submitted to her and will give you her expert opinion of them, free of charge.

Also, coupon—at end of this department—must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read. If possible, write with black ink.

All communications will be held in strict confidence. When permission is granted, cases will be discussed in the department, with or without the illustrations. Of course, under no circumstances will the identity of the persons concerned be revealed.

Every care will be taken to return specimens of handwriting, but it is to be understood that Miss Spencer cannot be responsible for them.

O. W. A., San Francisco:—A borrower makes a bad friend I think. There are exceptions. If both borrower and lender are sensible and honorable, the results are not disastrous; but, on the whole, I think we might say that when borrowing comes in at the door, friendship goes out the window! There is something about human nature which is hard to understand in such a situation. I have seen fine friendships bend to the snapping point on the little question of borrowing.

The man whose specimen you have sent is a selfish person, and you are a rather mild and diffident young man, so I rather think he would be likely to take advantage of your kindness and unselfishness. He is not gracious or considerate.

F. S., Mexico:—You are in the right work. You have a good mind for detail and are conscientious. There is considerable evidence of nervousness which is rather unusual to find in the writing of one so young. Have you been under some strain or working too hard? Guard your health!

E. C. Sacos:—Yes, you have literary ability, also the artistic sense and the powers of concentration and observation, and intuition that combine to make a good writer. What you need is a little more driving force, for you certainly have all the other qualities. I am sure you will sell more stories if you will work at it persistently. I don't advise trying detective stories, though. You have a subtle mind and

would be better as a critic or writer of unusual stories. They are not as easy to sell, but, if you want to be an artist, you will have to face that fact.

E. P. S., Jr., Virginia:—Yes, you have chosen the right field. I like the way you say you "intend to make journalism and newspaper work my life work." That is the spirit in which to take up that career. It is a life work and would be approached from that angle and not as if it was a little hobby or pastime to while away spare time.

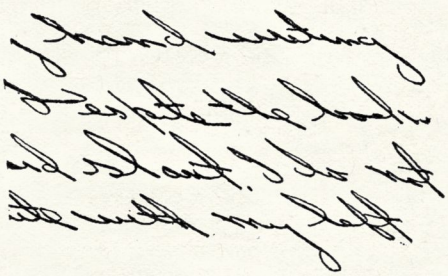
You have originality, a great deal of humor, are intuitive, and have a strong will. You need to be able to concentrate a little better, but that will come with practice. You are still young, evidently. Aren't you interested in music? I can see where you would make a good public speaker, for you have dignity, poise, and ideas. The latter all too frequently missed in speakers!

D. M. P.:—You say you are a stenographer and that you get your stories returned to you with monotonous regularity. Have you read all the stories by the great masters? Your critical judgment needs developing. You have not enough artistic appreciation or enough originality. You are persistent, earnest, and conscientious, but I don't see literary talent.

O. H. M., Arkansas:—The literary ability is not marked in your script. You are much more the commercial type. There is not enough originality or individuality shown in your writing to warrant my encouraging you to go into short-story writing. People seem to think that writing is an easy way to make a living. They don't realize that most people that are writing earn their living in some other way or are left money upon which they live. Selling one story to-day and another in six months is not a profitable business. There are people who live on what they make, but these are not in the majority. It is because we hear about them and not about the millions of others. The way to do it is to keep your job and write in your spare time until you have sold enough to assure you that you would be wise in spending all your time at it. Even then it is risky.

So many of the readers ask me whether or not they would make successful short-story writers. If a person really has the writing "bug" bad enough, he or she will go to and write, send the stuff out and let the editors decide their fate. No one should just stop one thing and decide to begin to write stories. They should experiment for a *few years* at least while still holding a good job that insures them of three square meals!

R. R., New York City:—What an odd person you are! What you need is expansion. All that feeling you have should be allowed to express itself naturally. You are so exclusive and independent that few people will be able to get close enough to you really to know you or learn to like you. Unless you can unbend, you will soon find yourself rather lonely and misunderstood.



It isn't good for any one to be so self-centered. You are storing up trouble for yourself when you bottle up your energies and feelings to such an extent. They will break through in unexpected places and surprise you and your friends.

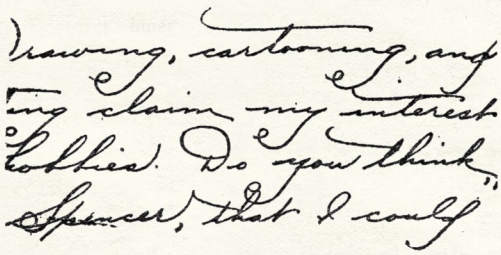
D. G. F., Ban Lai Hook, S. C. Siam:—I'm very glad to hear from Siam!

Your writing looks very British so I assume you are a Britisher.

There is culture and training shown in your script. You are logical and very conservative and have original ideas and constructive ability. I don't think that I'd call you sweet-tempered, but you can be very gracious and sociable. There is a great deal of personal pride and dignity shown in your writing, and the small "e" that is always larger than any of the other letters is a sign of the ego.

HANSON, Montreal:—You have a very clear mind and a fine sense of proportion. There is generosity and tolerance and a mild disposition shown in your pleasant script, also culture, training, and artistic appreciation.

E. H. B., California:—I can't tell whether or not you'll make Annapolis, but all the indications are in your favor as far as your character and ability are concerned.

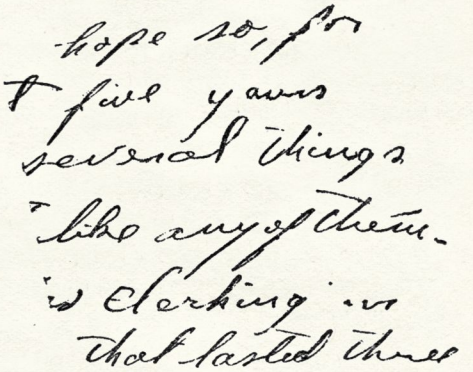


Your script shows that you certainly have artistic talent, and I think that you would make good in the commercial field either in cartooning or printing. There is too much flourish to your writing at the present time, but, as you are only seventeen, you have time to cultivate your tastes and develop your ability for a higher type of art.

You are an affectionate and faithful sort of fellow, very ambitious and desirous of making a personal success. You need lots of affection and attention and are very fond of pleasure.

Be sure to keep on developing your talent with a career in mind.

P. D., Fort, Florida:—It would be difficult to advise any one so erratic and so inconsistent as you are. The first thing that you must do, if you wish to get a steady job and keep it, is to steady yourself.



You are careless and you let your emotions have free play. You are easily depressed and discouraged, are impatient and headstrong and very independent. I know you don't like to take orders from any one because you don't like discipline, but you certainly should get busy and discipline yourself.

F. H. W., Erie:—I wouldn't suggest business for you at all for you are not the commercial type. You are the scholar, the critic, and research work. You should either be editing, teaching, or writing in the scientific field of research.

You are very critical, exacting, and yet mature and pleasant. Your script shows a high type of development.

A stamped, self-addressed envelope, please. Thank you!

Handwriting Coupon

This coupon must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read.

Name .....

Address .....

Under the Lamp

Conducted by Helen Haven

This department is conducted by Helen Haven for those of you who like puzzles. If there is any particular kind of puzzle that you prefer, please tell us and Helen Haven will do her best to give it to you. Also, won't you work on a puzzle of your own, send it in, and let the other readers wrestle with it?

Answers to this week's problems will be printed in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

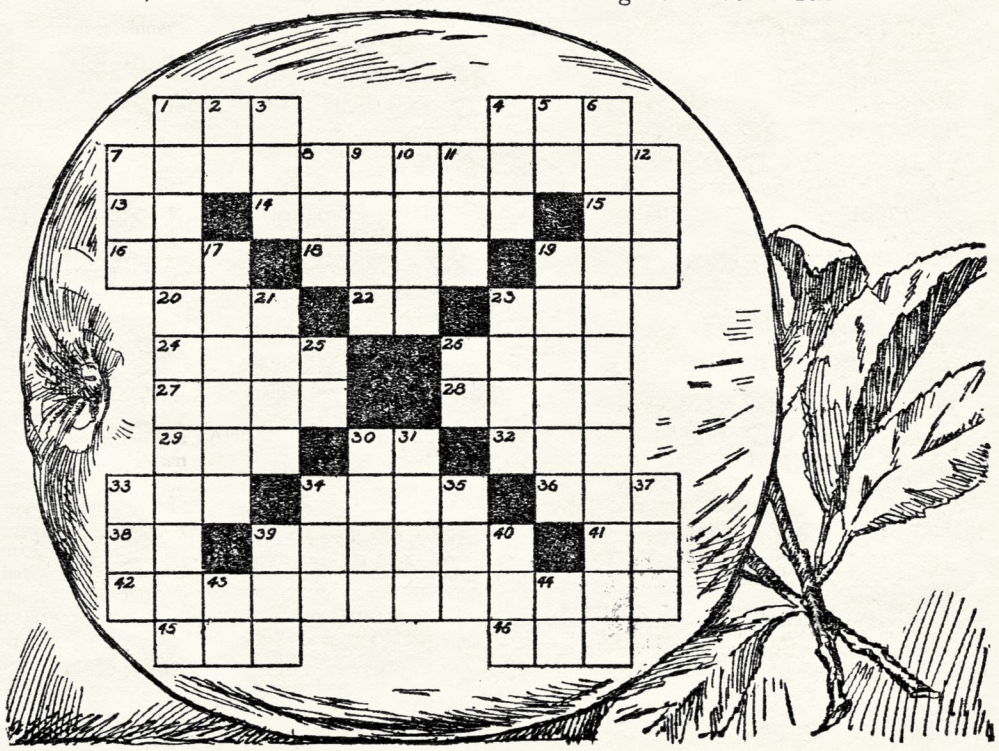
All letters relative to this department should be addressed to Helen Haven, care of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

G. A. ELDER offers a puzzle appropriate to apple time, but with a special application, which he explains in the ditty which accompanies his offering:

"Great is A. E. Apple, and he's as deep as a cup;
Thousands of our readers just eat his stories up!"

Across.

1. Block of paper
4. To haw, as cattle
7. Slang term for detectives
13. Suffix occurring in names of countries
14. Initial and last name of a D. S. M. author
15. Babylonian deity
16. Man's name, short form
18. Summer drink
19. Marsh
20. Slang term: to capture
22. Written addition (abbr.)
23. Slang term: to arrest
24. Slang for crook's den

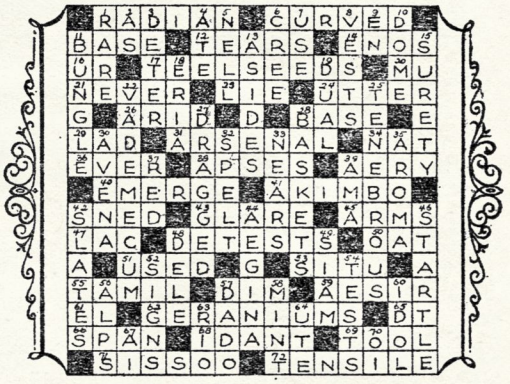


26. A net
27. Similar to
28. Given facts
29. Unit
30. A language (abbr.)
32. Corded fabric
33. Consumed
34. Prudish
36. Scottish hero
38. Abbreviation for courthouse
39. Wise sayings
41. Prefix meaning outside
42. The chief's office
45. Feminine pronoun
46. Signal of distress

Down.

1. Officer's disguise
2. Aged (abbr.)
3. French for duke
4. Exclamation of contempt
5. Forward
6. Shorthand writers
7. Perch
8. Persons afflicted with a lung trouble (slang)
9. Round frame
10. Carriers for coal
11. Pertaining to the ear.
12. Hang loosely
17. Sea soldier
19. Teased
21. Bicycle
23. Wild animal
25. Exist
26. Abbreviation for war department
30. Dutch wife
31. City on the Duna River
33. German expression
34. In a hurry (slang)
35. French for sea
37. Favorable circumstances
39. American humorist
40. Thoroughfares (abbr.)
43. Exclamation of satisfaction
44. Prefix: relating to an early period of time

Solutions of last week's puzzles:



The anagram: TO BE OR NOT TO BE, THAT IS THE QUESTION.

D. C. Walker's cryptogram: CULTIVATION IS AS NECESSARY TO THE MIND AS FOOD TO THE BODY.

Headquarters Chat

HERE is what seems to us a good idea. We will be only too glad to do our part in carrying it out, if enough of you readers will go in for it. The reader who makes the suggestion asks us not to print his name. Here is his letter:

"DEAR EDITOR: First of all I want to let you know how much pleasure the wife and myself get from reading 'Our Magazine.' While we have a few favorites among the authors, we enjoy the stories by all of them. Personally, the Headquarters Chat interests me most of all. In fact, the Chat in the July 7th issue causes me to write you now.

"I wrote a series of historical and descriptive articles on candies that was published by one of the candy trade journals. I must say that I was surprised when they were accepted. Having worked in the candy business for the past twenty years, I felt that I knew my subject, and so my familiarity with the articles described was what 'put it across' for me, rather than my ability as a writer.

"Should I try to write fiction, however, I know the answer beforehand. All of which leads to the suggestion I am going to make. You suggest thinking up a plot with a surprise 'kick' at the end and then trying to write the story. I feel that I know the answer beforehand, so to show the 'like-to-be writers' how difficult it is to write in an interesting manner, why not try the following:

"Let them read any one of the short stories in the magazine, close the book for the evening, and then sit down and write, in their own style, the story just read. Do you think they could do it one half as well as the author? Neither do I, but I sure would enjoy reading the best one of the lot as well as the poorest one of the lot. You might go so far as to offer a small prize for the two stories accepted. As you say, 'we cannot see ourselves as others see us,' and to me the above suggestion seems to be a 'whiz,' yet, when you see it, more than likely you will think it a 'dud.'

"However, it's yours for the taking, and if you don't take this opportunity to show how clever an editor you are, of course that will be your loss, as bright ideas like this come only a few times in our lives. At least I have done my duty to our magazine.

"*Please* more than one serial in an issue.

"In closing, will say we have been reading the magazine for at least twelve years. With all good wishes, I remain,

"Very truly yours,

"W. L. R."

What do you think of the idea, Readers? If enough of you write in, saying that you'll compete, we'll put up a prize, make the needed conditions, and let you all go to it.

As to the serial debate, guess we'll have to go back to two serials, just as often as possible. Though just cast your eye over the following. It comes from Clair Fellows, Angola, New York:

"DEAR EDITOR: Referring to the issue which contained a letter from one H. W. Cooper, it seems to me since we

cannot all of us have what we want, it would be well to see what the majority of us desire. I hardly ever read the serials, though I do not say your magazine is the 'bunk.' For mine, I like your magazine the way it is now. I wouldn't want three serials weekly for myself."

But there have been many more letters which expressed the sentiment found in this one from F. L. Grant, Sunderland, Massachusetts:

"DEAR EDITOR: With reference to some recent discussion as to whether you should publish more serials, I say at least two, by all means. For these reasons:

"1. The serials are far more interesting to a large number of readers than the short stories.

"2. A serial, presenting a large canvas, offers opportunity for plotting and characterization not possible to the much smaller field of the short story. Your magazine is read by many students and writers of fiction who know how to appreciate the serials.

"3. If you publish only one serial at a time, you will shut out from your magazine some of the best serial writers who will naturally dispose of their wares elsewhere. Is that good business?

"I trust there will be an immediate return to the policy of two serials."

Just the same, Clair Fellows has a lot of allies, for this, from K. J. Garner, 68 North Grant Avenue, Columbus, Ohio, has just been laid beside us:

"DEAR EDITOR: For my part, the way you arrange the stories has never entered my mind, but that doesn't mean anything, because, if a thing is done properly, it very often passes by without the least notice. But do a thing wrong, and then you get the complaints.

"Personally, I never read the serials. The short stories are my pleasure, and the shorter the story the better I like the magazine. One of the best stories I ever read in your magazine was printed on one page, as I remember. Would like to read it again, but do not save the magazines, nor remember the author. It was about a man trying to stick up a bank and representing himself to be the party he was holding up.

"I should like to offer a suggestion. Series stories like those of 'Simon Trapp,' and so forth, where an explanation of the character is required, contain much repetition which thousands of old readers do not need for appreciation of the stories. Why could you not have all that explanation in small print at the top of the story for the benefit of new readers? At least, try not to overdo it.

"I hope Rafferty doesn't get caught by the police or the serial-bug. I like all of your authors and would have a hard time choosing the one I like best. That is your job, not mine. I like Simon Trapp and really believe the author reprints the least of all. I only mentioned that one as it came first to my mind. I had always liked Doctor Bentiron's stories so much that I read the serial. But never again. I never was so tired and disgusted with anything in my life. Over and over the author told how he acted until it got to be a bore. But I had a hired girl one time who read seven Bluebeard stories a week, and they were all continued.

"So, as I am only one out of your many readers, I will abide by what pleases the rest. When you get so you do not have enough short stories, I will read something else. But I have tried other detective stories and always come back to yours."

Popular Detective Story Writers

JUDSON P. PHILIPS

By D. C. Hubbard

IN Northfield, Massachusetts, Mr. Philips was born, not so many years ago, and it was here that he received two early influences, one of which might have deprived us of many an entertaining hour reading what has come from his facile pen—or should we say, typewriter?

It seems that Northfield was also the home of D. L. Moody, the famous evangelist, who was a friend and associate of Mr. Philips' grandfather, George Frederick Pentecost. For a brief period, Judson Philips really contemplated entering the ministry, but this idea was offset by another influence which intrigued the imagination of Judson to a greater extent. His uncle, Hugh Pentecost, was a famous criminal lawyer in New York, and Judson soon discovered that the stories his uncle told him of crime and mystery were far more to his liking than his Sunday-school lessons.

Judson Philips' father was an opera singer and his mother an actress, and Judson, being the only child, was taken wherever an engagement called them. When he was but six years old, he went to London where his father was scheduled to sing in Oscar Hammerstein's London Opera Co. For the next eight years, Judson Philips lived in the various capitals of Europe. As he says, he was brought up in a world of make-believe. Traveling about in this way, he was able to make but few friends as there was little opportunity for him to meet and play with other children his own age.

Being obliged to invent his own pastimes, the child, remembering the thrilling tales told to him by his uncle, began writing detective stories himself. Edgar Allan Poe and Conan Doyle were his guiding stars, and many hours were spent with pencil or pen, whichever was at hand, constructing and reconstructing imaginative heroes and villains.

At the outbreak of the war, the Philips' family returned to America, and the son was sent to a military school. From here, he went to Columbia University. With the writing urge still strong within him, he thought he would take up journalism, but, instead, he took the straight college course and gained an A. B. degree.

After college, for a time, Mr. Philips

worked on the *Musical Digest*. It was during this period that he began selling his first fiction story, and became encouraged to the extent that he decided to write seriously for a living.

Mr. Philips is an avid reader. He does not believe in inspiration, but thinks that a story has to be written after much careful thought and planning. He likes to say that his best stories are written only when the howl of the wolf at the door has frightened him into a state of feverish anxiety. If this is true, he now has more cause to keep away the hungry wolf as he has recently become father to a daughter, whose first word—her mother insists—was "clew." This being the case, it bids fair that another budding genius will bear the Philips' name.

We went to say that the above picture does not do Mr. Philips justice. He looks really quite cross, but it is because the sun was shining so directly in his eyes. He is as jovial a chap as you would care to meet, always smiling and ready for a laugh, only looking serious when discussing a new plot for a story. He has very blond wavy hair which would be the pride of any girl, but which is a source of constant annoyance to him. He has the sort of face and figure which never seems to grow up, but always keeps boyish.

With his talented background, it is little wonder that he is fond of music and plays the piano exceptionally well. His other relaxation is golf, and this sport being a tender subject with many players, we refrained from asking him how he stood as a golfer. Good or bad, we are sure he would have said he was terrible, as it is his habit to depreciate his talents. Perhaps it is modesty, perhaps he really thinks so. But we do know all about his writing ability and that is of greatest importance to our readers.

The first story that Mr. Philips sold to DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE was "The Marked Five," a serial. Since then we have had "By Persons Unknown," "Kidnaped Ladies," and "The Black Avenger," and are crying for more constantly.

LOAN SHARK CONVICTED

AS a result of the "loan-shark" investigation, it was brought to light that a money lender gave a client one hundred dollars with the stipulation that the loan be paid back within ten weeks, plus twenty-five dollars. This is considered usurious interest.

The money lender, who is president of his brokerage concern, contended that his client was recommended to him by a broker who declared that the client owed him twenty-five dollars, so that the "interest" charged was really a means of paying back the broker. If this were true, it would mean that the brokerage firm was lending money and asking no interest at all. The brokerage president pleaded guilty to three similar charges.

MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

BARCENAS, BOB.—Sailed from Nola to Frisco, May, 1927. Please let me know where you are. Was in Frisco, in January. Jack, 5505 Hawthorne Street, New Orleans, Louisiana.

MILLER, ALBERT.—Last heard from twelve years ago in Sherman, Texas, when he was a baby. Father's name was Jeff Miller. Information appreciated by his father's sister, Ruth, care of this magazine.

MARIE.—It seems a long time since July 29, 1927. Am lonesome and would like to hear from you. Please write to the Singing Engineer, care of this magazine.

ALLEY, STEWARD M.—Was adopted when four years old. Was nineteen years old on July 23, 1928. Please write to Mrs. Marie E. Merritt, 1025 Brunswick Street, Daly City, California.

BARROWS, HAROLD.—Thirty-five years old. A Canadian. Served in the World War as top sergeant, stationed at Fort McArthur. Last heard from in 1919, at Grass Valley. Babe and I have not forgotten you. Please write to Ard Johnson, Route B, Oroville, California.

BALL, DANIEL LEAVITT.—Between sixty and seventy years old. At one time a gold miner. Six feet tall. Last heard from in Pueblo, in 1922. Believed to be in the real-estate business. Information appreciated by his old pal, Ed Quaife, Route 2, Kalkaska, Michigan.

HORTON, THOMAS and **BENJAMIN.**—Sixty-four and sixty-two years old, respectively. They were placed in a Catholic home, near New York City, when small children. Information appreciated by their brother, John Horton, care of this magazine.

HANSELL, MRS. CARRIE BELLE DIXON.—My mother, who placed me in the Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Oregon, in 1910, shortly after my father's death. Information concerning her appreciated by her daughter, Vy Ella Dixon, care Mrs. Laura Klinger, 211 Randall Street, San Francisco, California.

McCURDY, WILLIAM D.—Disappeared from Hendricks, South Dakota, in 1903. Had blue eyes, brown hair, weighed one hundred and eighty pounds, six feet tall, and wore glasses. Plays the violin. Property here for him. Relatives heartbroken. Information appreciated by Mrs. Mary Snodgrass, Congo, West Virginia.

WILSON, JACK, or **GUS SHULTZ.**—Sold papers in Cleveland, Ohio, four years ago. Information appreciated by Marie Gunder, R. F. D. 2, Elyria, Ohio.

TAYLOR, WILLIAM H.—Sad news about your son Billie. Am grief stricken. Please write to your wife from Toronto, M. T., care of this magazine.

BOLDERSTON, BILL.—Please come home or write to your people. Important. Please write to wife, care of this magazine.

READ, RAYMOND LEO.—Formerly of Mound City, Illinois. Was at Longcliffe, Logansport, Indiana, in 1919 or 1920. About twenty-six years old. Information appreciated by an old pal, Bill, care of this magazine.

WILSON, ERNEST GROVER.—Last heard from in Los Angeles, California, in 1923, when he lived on San Pedro Street, with his brother. Information appreciated by Shorty, care of this magazine.

BRANDON, FRANK R.—Last heard from in Shoshone, Idaho. Information appreciated by N. J. K., care of this magazine.

HOLLANDER, ALBERT C.—Last heard from in Texas, in 1920. Everything is O. K. Please come home to your mother and sisters or write to your sister, Mrs. Virgie Edwards, 1404 Avenue D, Cisco, Texas.

O'DELL, CHARLES.—My father. Last heard from in Wheeling, West Virginia, about thirty-five years ago. At that time he had sandy hair, blue eyes, and weighed about one hundred and sixty pounds. Information appreciated by his daughter, Mrs. Ruby Mae Angler, Route 2, Box 221, Roseville, Ohio.

OWENS, JACK.—Last heard from in 1924, when living at Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts. Was a member of the Order of Elks. Information appreciated by his sister, Mary A. Owens, Varsity View, Manitoba, Canada.

CANFIL, BUD.—Left Haddam, Kansas, about thirty years ago. Believed to have owned a ranch in Montana. Information appreciated by M. E. J., Box 158, Stratton, Colorado.

BROWN, MILO.—Please write. Mother has something to tell you. Dorothy Brown, 417 Landis Court, Kansas City, Missouri.

TRUESDALE, MRS. FRED, nee **PORTIA WHITE.**—Formerly of 2916 East New York Street, Indianapolis, Indiana. Information appreciated by William Grabner, Lock Box 466, Granite City, Illinois.

BARNES, ROBERT A.—Last heard from in 1926. Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. C. T. Loveland, Montezuma, Indiana.

ROGERS, ANTHONY.—About thirty years old. Last heard from in 1914. Please write to Anna L. Reddy, 1035 Lyons Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana.

BENNET, WILLIE.—Last heard from in Arkansas. Information appreciated by his niece, Anna L. Reddy, 1035 Lyons Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana.

WEYMAN, or **WYMAN, MARGARET.**—Of Greenfield, South Deerfield, and Springfield, Massachusetts. Last heard from in April, 1925. Things have changed since I last saw you. Have good news. Please write to 1925, care of this magazine.

L. I. E., who advertised for G. L. E.—We are holding letters for you at this office. Please send your address.

STAPLES, EARL, who advertised for Sallie Staples.—Please send for letters held at this office.

SCOTT, LIZZIE MAY.—Believed to be in Oakland, California. Please come home to your lonely sister, Mrs. Alice Scott Hawkins, Route 2, Jackson, Michigan.

BURGOYNE, MICHAEL, MARY, and **PATRICK QUINN,**—Of Castlerea County, Roscommon, Ireland. Left for Sidney or Melbourne, Australia, about fifty years ago. Information concerning them or their descendants appreciated by Thomas C. Burgoyne, 178 Jackson Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey.

MATTSON, LILLIAN.—Please write to your old friend, Mary of Montana, care of this magazine.

SHEPPARD, ELMO.—Left his home in Newago County, Michigan, about twenty-seven years ago. Was at one time stationed at Fort Brown, Texas, and later sent to the Philippine Islands. Father dead and mother anxious. Information appreciated by his brother, Otto Sheppard, Route 2, Morley, Michigan.

FAULK, CLINTON.—Left home about fifteen years ago for Alaska. Parents lived at Howard City, Michigan. Has a brother, Clifford, who is also missing. Parents have separated. Information appreciated by his cousin, Mrs. Otto Sheppard, Route 2, Morley, Michigan.

ANDRESS, or **ANDREWS, BISHOP** and **DILLION.**—Lived near Council Bluffs, Iowa, forty years ago. Please write to Joe M. Keeler, Hartline, Washington.

TOMLINSON, GUY.—Lived in Morning Sun, Iowa, thirty years ago. Worked in the law office of Courts & Curran. Please write to your second cousin, Joe M. Keeler, Hartline, Washington.

PARKS, WILLIAM G.—Please write to your old pal, J. W. Palmer, care of this magazine.

HOWARD, FRANK LIVINGSTON.—Last heard from in Leonia, New Jersey, where he had a restaurant on Central Avenue. Am East again and would like to see you. Please write to C. A. T., care of this magazine.

RIBLET, EDWARD C.—Twenty-one years old. Lived in Canton, Ohio. Met him in Peru, Indiana, in March, 1922, and went with him to Kansas City, Missouri. Information appreciated by his buddy, Roland F. Maylander, R. F. D. 3, Newton, New Jersey.

MULKEY, VERNON CECIL.—Twenty-six years old, brown hair and eyes. Left his home in Gooding, Idaho, eight years ago. Last heard from in 1926. The letter written to his sister Mildred at this time was not received for eleven months, as she had moved. Please come home at once or write to Mr and Mrs. Fred Mulkey, 595 Settlemier Avenue, Woodburn, Oregon.

YOUNG, CLAUDE.—Of Douglas and Sundance, Wyoming. Accompanied by his wife and two sons, left Phoenix, Arizona, March 17, 1928, for Grand Canyon. We were separated south of Prescott, Wyoming. Information appreciated by Mrs. S. A. Horn, Grand Canyon, Arizona.

ED.—Please come back and forgive me. I love you. **M.**, care of this magazine.

GEPPERT, CARL.—Please come home or write to your mother and father. Mother ill. Information appreciated by dad, care of this magazine.

CANNON, HOWARD.—Formerly of Alberta, Canada. Believed to be in Eugene, Oregon. Information appreciated by V. Johnson, East 1730 Sprague Avenue, Spokane, Washington.

DUVALL, FRANCES VICTOR.—Please come home or write. Mother, dad, and I are anxious to hear from you. Please write to your sister, Mrs. Martha Duvall Fielding, R. R. 2, Sunderland, Ontario, Canada.

LAYTON.—Letter to B. F. Hotel, Philadelphia, returned. You are always welcome. Please write to Tiney of the Pine Tree State, care of this magazine.

McCABE, MICHAEL JOSEPH.—Formerly from New York City. Was in Los Angeles, California, four years ago. Believed to have gone to San Francisco or back East. Your daughter, Rose Marie, now nine years old, needs your help. Please write to her mother, Vida, care of this magazine.

BENBOW, LEO.—Last heard from in St. Louis, Missouri. Please write to your sister, Thelma Benbow, 114 South Oklahoma Street, Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

JEFFERS, MAUDE and FLORENCE.—Thirty-three and thirty-one years old, respectively. Born in North Adams, Massachusetts. Believed to be living near there. Please write to George Shampagne, care of this magazine.

ATTENTION.—Would like to hear from any who served in H Company, Eighteenth Infantry, at Fort Clark, Texas, in 1891, in C Company, Fourth Infantry, Philippines, in 1899-1903, and in C Company, Fourth Infantry, Fort Brown, Texas, in 1903. Fred Eddy, care of this magazine.

HOLLY, WENCEL.—From Iowa or Idaho. Was connected with the United States Hospital Corps during the World War. Information appreciated by E. McL., care of this magazine.

GOODENOUGH, DELOS.—An ex-service man. Last heard from in Denver, Colorado, in 1925. Information appreciated by Velma Johnson, East 1730 Sprague Avenue, Spokane, Washington.

CULPEPPER, ESSIE.—Last heard from, in 1920, at 16 Middle Street, Portsmouth, Virginia. Please write to Chester Halstead, West Palm Beach, Florida.

EWING, MARY, HELEN, EDDIE, and WILLIAM.—My brothers and sisters, who were placed in the Franklin County Home, Columbus, Ohio, in 1910. Anxious to hear from you. Please write to your sister, Elnora Ewing, 554 East Main Street, Chillicothe, Ohio.

PERDUE, JOHN E.—Seventy-six years old. A prospector. Last heard from in Redding, California. Information appreciated by his daughter, Mrs. Viola M. Rogers, Box 42, Elmira, California.

JOHNSON, ROBERT LEE.—Thirty-seven years old, dark complexion, hair, and eyes. Left his home in Palatka, Arkansas, in August, 1911. Last heard from in Aberdeen, South Dakota. Party who caused trouble is dead. Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. Ethel Johnson, St. James, Missouri.

GALLIAR, LYDIA and LILLIE.—Last heard from in the Texas Children's Home at Fort Worth, Texas. Information appreciated by their uncle, Sam Esclavan, 700 Toltee Street, Beaumont, Texas.

J. J. B.—Please write to **A. M. L. F.**, care of this magazine.

JOHNSON, MRS. LUETTA.—Last heard from in Seattle, Washington. Information appreciated by her father, Lewis Hacker, Philomath, Oregon.

WILSON, BILL and LOUISE.—Last heard from in Salt Lake City, in August, 1926. Please write to your pal, Private Clarence E. Brown, V. S. M. C., Boat Crew, Box 368, Parris Island, South Carolina.

GARDINER, LEWIS E.—Mother and sister Lottie anxious to hear from you. Information appreciated by **Mrs. C. B. D.**, care of this magazine.

LAUN.—Anxious to find my brother and two sisters, who were separated from me when I was five years old. We were born in Springfield, Missouri. I am now twenty-eight years old. Information appreciated by Walter Laun, R. F. D. 2, King City, Missouri.

HOWELLS, WILLIAM.—My father, who came to the United States from England or Wales when he was eighteen years old. Would like to hear from any of his relatives. Mrs. R. W. Palm, 1401 Avenue C, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

FIELDS, W. A.—Am sorry for what has happened. I love you. Please come back. I am working. Information appreciated by Mary Fields, 536 West Fort Street, Detroit, Michigan.

THIBAULT, J. M.—Last heard from in Tuckerton and Cedar Run, New Jersey. Worked at the Oakland factory in Pontiac, Michigan, at one time. Please write to your friend, Harry C. Yennior, 304 Fisher Avenue, Pontiac, Michigan.

SMITH, RODERIC RICHARDSON.—Last known address was care W. M. Buesing, R. F. D. 1, Filer, Idaho. Information appreciated by Sunshine, care of this magazine.

CLINE, RUPERT, or CHEROKEE BOB.—Thirty years old, copper colored, five feet nine inches tall, and weighs one hundred and fifty pounds An ex-service man. Classed as first-class investigator, gas-engine mechanic, and awaiting license as an aviator. Last heard from in Portland, Oregon. Believed to be in Canada or the Northwest. Important. Information appreciated by J. L. Black, 2515 Sutter Street, San Francisco, California.

BOWEN, CATHERINE.—Cannot forget you. Have something to tell you. Please write to Eddie, care of this magazine.

BROWNIE or TARP.—Please write to Tahunie, 3733 Riverdale Place, Los Angeles, California.

CLICK, W. W.—Served as a switchman, locomotive fireman, and freight-claim investigator for the C. H. & D. Railway at Cincinnati, Ohio, prior to 1906. At that time wore glasses, was somewhat bald, ruddy complexion, weighed about one hundred and eighty pounds, was six feet tall, and had a Southern accent. Information appreciated by S. L. Cowden, 650 Geary Street, San Francisco, California.

EGGERS, CLARENCE EDWARD.—Thirty years old, brown hair, blue-gray eyes, and fair complexion. Served in the United States army three years. Last heard from in San Francisco, California, in 1922. Information appreciated by his brother, Frank Eggers, Holland, Oregon.

ELLIOTT, JOHN.—Formerly of Montgomery, West Virginia. Last heard from March 8, 1924. Have moved. Information appreciated by his anxious mother, Mrs. M. M. Elliott, 1425 Baymiller Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

CARLSON, MRS. NELLIE.—Thirty-two years old. A blonde. Disappeared from Tulsa, Oklahoma, on June 27, 1928. Everything is all right. Please come back. Information appreciated by A. G. Carlson, 816 East Seventh Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

BUSTER.—Please write to your mother, who is ill, or Ada, care of this magazine.

FORBES, JESSE.—Went to Texas, when he was a young man. Last heard from twenty-five years ago, when he was a ranchman in Montana. Information dead or alive appreciated by his niece, Mrs. Florence Snowden, 113 East Liberty Street, South Norfolk, Virginia.

HAHN, EVERET and KATE and children, MAGGIE, BILL, DAVE, and CLARENCE.—Left them at Sebastopol, California, in June, 1921. Have news for you. Please write to the pals you left in Colusa, California. Mrs. Charles Van Sant, care of this magazine.

CLARK, ROSE and JOE, and NORMA and ALFRED PLUMB.—We have moved. Please write to Mrs. Charles Van Sant, Winters, California.

MILLER, HENRY.—Please get in touch with your old friend, William Moore. Everything is all right and all want you back. Chief remembers you with kindness. Mike, care of this magazine.

SCHUBECK, CHARLES L., Jr.—Mother anxious. Please write to Mrs. Lou Meyer, care I. S. Bailey, Route 3, Livingston, Texas.

WRIGHT, ROYAL.—About twenty-five years old. Dark hair and eyes, nearly six feet tall. Worked at the Strand Theater in Seattle, Washington, for some time. Believed to be in Seattle, Washington. Information appreciated by Della, care of this magazine.

McDONALD, DONALD.—Please write to your old friend, Fred Meeks, 4422 Berrymen Avenue, Culver City, California.

MILLER, NELLIE.—Was at the La Salle Hotel, New York City, in the fall of 1927. Please write to your friend, M. L., care of this magazine.

CAHILL, FRANK J.—Last heard from in Munising, Michigan. Sorry I neglected to write. Please drop me a line. Lorma, 510 Hallett Street, Jackson, Michigan.

ATTENTION.—Would like to hear from any of the class of 1927-28, Dyer School, eighth grade, Guest and Baymiller Streets, Cincinnati, Ohio. Cecil F. Miskimen, Box 119, Zanesville, Ohio.

OXENDINE, JULIA.—Formerly of Graymont, Georgia. Last heard from in Vidalia, Georgia, in 1921. Please write to your old pal, Johnny Washington, care of this magazine.

WHITE, BEATRICE NORMAN.—Last heard from in 1904, at 16 Paradise Street, Portsmouth, England, when she was eight months old. Mother's name was Julia White, nee Hughes. Information appreciated by her brother, Leonard Hawtry White, University Hospital, Canadian Legion, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

KENNEL, or **KINDLE, WILLIAM JACKSON,** and **JOHN WATKINS.**—My father and his uncle. Last heard from in Stillwell, Oklahoma, seventeen years ago. Information concerning them or any of their relatives appreciated by Mrs. Jane Compton, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

FLEMING, ORA.—Last heard from fifteen years ago in Kansas City, Missouri. Information appreciated by Ella Murphy, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

ROSSER, ALBERT.—Last heard from near Bellingham, Washington, in 1916. Information appreciated by Mabel, care of this magazine.

WATSON, ARTHUR.—Am sorry for misunderstanding. Baby Ruth is in hospital. Please let me hear from you or come home. Mrs. A. W., care of this magazine.

KING, HUBERT L.—Five feet, eleven inches tall, blue eyes, brown hair, and weighs about one hundred and seventy pounds. An electrician. Last heard from in Reno, California, in 1923. Information appreciated by Paul King, 32417, Box 47, Jefferson City, Missouri.

KING, MELVILL.—Would like to get in touch with the brothers and sisters of this man. They were born in Ohio and went to Washington about fourteen years ago. Please write at once to your nephew, Paul King, 32417, Box 47, Jefferson City, Missouri.

CLEVELAND, ARTHUR H.—Twenty-one years old, black hair, and is a trifle nearsighted. Left home on May 15, 1923, to seek employment in a steel plant in Pennsylvania or Ohio. Information appreciated by his wife, Mrs. A. H. Cleveland, Oxford, North Carolina.

PEASE, HAZEL.—Last heard from in New York City. Please write to the daughter of Stephen Consolatti, Margaret, care of this magazine.

DESEMONI, MARIA.—Lived in Youngstown, Ohio, in 1905. Parents lived in Chicago. Please write to the daughter of Stephen Consolatti, Margaret, care of this magazine.

M. H. F. T.—Of Santa Monica, California. Many thanks for your stars and stripes. Please write again and send address. William C. Church, Box 825, Oakland, California.

VANDERWATER, DAN.—Last heard from in Houston, Texas. Brother Able is very ill and wishes to see you. Information appreciated by his niece, Mrs. W. B. Esclavan, 700 Toltee Street, Beaumont, Texas.

CURTIS, HARRY.—Forty-nine years old. Born in Cleveland, Ohio. Served in the Canadian army during the World War. Last heard from in the lumber camps of Wisconsin. Information appreciated by his nephew, Harry E. Curtis, 13409 Milan Avenue, East Cleveland, Ohio.

KANE, ERNEST R.—You have two little fellows who need their daddy. Please write to your loving wife, V. K., care of this magazine.

ELLIS, LIBBY.—Born in Peoria, Illinois, in 1854 or '55. Her father died before she was born, and she was adopted. Information appreciated by Mrs. D. M. Evinger, Anita, Iowa.

ALESSANORO, MARGARET.—Was in the children's home in Spokane, Washington, six or seven years ago. Do you remember Eleanor Turner, who was there at the same time? Please write to Eleanor, care of this magazine.

AVERY, CHARLES H.—Missing since 1907. Believed to have been killed or injured on a Western railroad. Information concerning him appreciated by his son, J. Avery, care of this magazine.

BRENNAN, VINCENT J.—In 1921 he was with Battalion D, Third F. A., Fort Myer, Virginia. Please write to Little June, care of this magazine.

COOPER, RAY.—Do you remember your friends of Winston-Salem, North Carolina? If so, please write to Eula and John, Route 5, Box 25, Abingdon, Virginia.

CURRIE, CHARLES.—Twenty-six years old. A native of Glasgow, Scotland. Left Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, in September, 1925, to go West. Information appreciated by his anxious mother, Mrs. Margaret Currie, 24 Simpson Street, Glasgow, N. W., Scotland.

SHERWOOD, HELEN.—There is something you ought to know. Please write to Effie, care of this magazine.

MERCATORIS, PAUL, CATHERINE, MARGARET, MARIE, and **PAULINE.**—Lived in St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1923, on Millmore Street and Commercial Street. Paul worked in Hunt's grocery on St. Joseph Avenue. Catherine was graduated from Neely School. Believed to have moved to Denver, Colorado. Information appreciated by Dorothy Moore, 2308 Davis Street, St. Joseph, Missouri.

R. W. S.—All well and anxious to hear from you. Please write to "Sn'ts," care of this magazine.

C. H. R.—Am home again. Please come back or write to one that never shall forget. Mae, care of this magazine.

ROSECRANE, or **CRANFIELD, ROSE RUTH.**—Last heard from in East Northfield, Massachusetts, in 1910. Information appreciated by Rose M., care of this magazine.

WEST, MERRILL L.—Formerly of Muncie, Indiana. Last heard from in New York City. Please write to Mae Williams, 336 Chase Court, Akron, Ohio.

JOHNSTON, EVA.—Last heard from in Manson, Iowa, May 18, 1928. Information appreciated by Carl Williams, care Wayside Inn, Grove City, Pennsylvania.

SLICK, or **SLICKER, GEORGE.**—Last heard from in Joplin, Missouri. Lived at one time in Cardin, Oklahoma. Tad is in Claremore. Would like to know if you are all right. Please write to E. R. Brittain, Bisbee Hotel, Bisbee, Arizona.

O'MALLEY, JACK.—Please write to your old friend of Chicago. Joseph Walsh, Galveston, Texas.

LEISTNER, JOHN C.—Please make me happy by writing to Mother, care of this magazine.

NIGHTENGALE, JOE and **DAN,** and **MRS. MARION BERRY, MRS. WILLIAM HOLT, MRS. JIM PORTER,** and **MRS. JOE HASSKEY.**—My brothers and sisters. Children of Julius and Fanny Nightengale. Moved to Rockford, Washington, in 1882. Information appreciated by their sister, Mrs. Katie A. Brown, Maple Island, Hollendale, Minnesota.

KNUCKLES, or **NUCKLES, HORTON.**—Last heard from in Texas. Information appreciated by his old friend, Henry Watanoke, 4907 Maplewood, Hollywood, California.

PRUITT, RICHARD.—Twenty years old, dark complexion and eyes, five feet, eight inches tall, and weighed, when he left home three years ago, about one hundred and thirty-five pounds. Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. K. J. Pruitt, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

TIPTON, LEONA.—Last heard from in Chattanooga, Tennessee, with her son, Silas. Please write to Aunt Leona. Clyde N. Bower, 220 N. W. Second Avenue and Twenty-seventh Street, Miami, Florida.

GREENBERG, LUDWIG.—My father. Would like information regarding his relatives. Augusta Greenberg, Box 723, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

COHN, or **KAHN, ALFRETTA.**—Twenty-five years old, medium height, and fair complexion. Formerly of Des Moines, Iowa. Last heard from in Omaha, Nebraska. Information appreciated by Raphella, care of this magazine.

WAYNE, MRS. GEORGIE.—Last heard from in New Orleans, Louisiana. Please write to your sister, Mrs. J. M. Williams, 134 West Eighth Street, Bristow, Oklahoma.

HAY, CHARLES.—Am waiting anxiously to hear from you. Your mother is heartbroken about you. Please write to Agnes, Box 491, Derry, Pennsylvania.

STRONG, FERN.—Twelve years old, blue eyes and brown hair. Last heard from in North Platte, Nebraska, in 1921, when living with a family named Weeks. Information appreciated by Mrs. W. P. McQueen, Box 66, Fairbanks, Texas.

HENLEY, CLARENCE and **HOWARD.**—They were adopted by families in Atlanta, Georgia. Clarence is about seventeen years old. Their sisters, Altie, Grady, Margie, and Daisy, would like to hear from them. Please write to your sister, Mrs. C. C. Harris, Route 1, Box 64, Hamilton Road, Columbus, Georgia.

DUNAHOO, W. A.—If you ever loved me, come back to me now. I have found out everything. I need you. Please write to me. F., care of this magazine.

CROSS, J. V.—Please write to your brother, V. E. C., 632 Bienville Street, New Orleans, Louisiana.

MILLARD, FREDA.—Last heard from in Wisconsin, about twenty-five years ago. Your sister who was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Calloway, of Terry, South Dakota, would like to hear from you. Please write to Mrs. Hazel Wornick, East 2027 Nebraska Avenue, Spokane, Washington.

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—*Soft Water*

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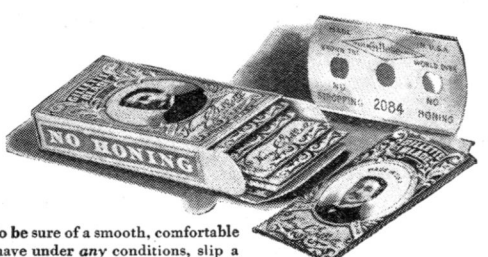

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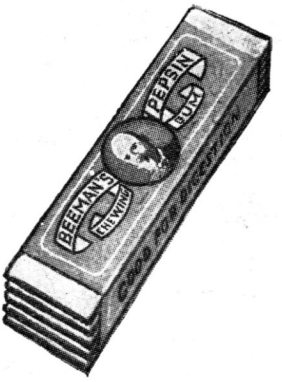

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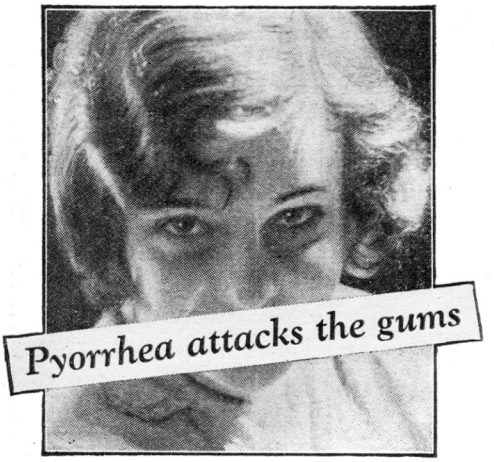

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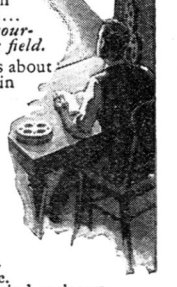

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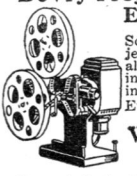

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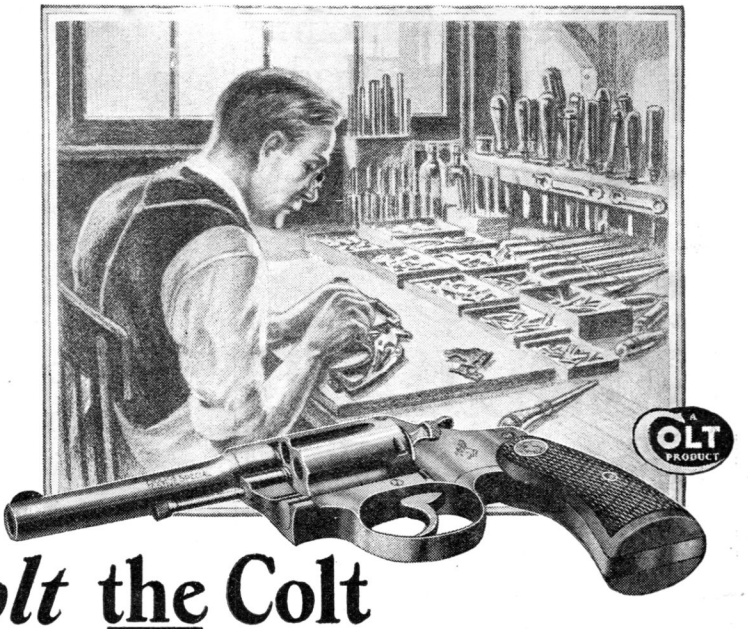

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