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EVERY WEEK
THE CONVICT'S DAUGHTER
By Marion Scott

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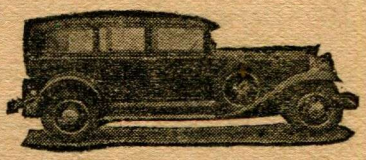

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29 diseases may enter the body through the mouth

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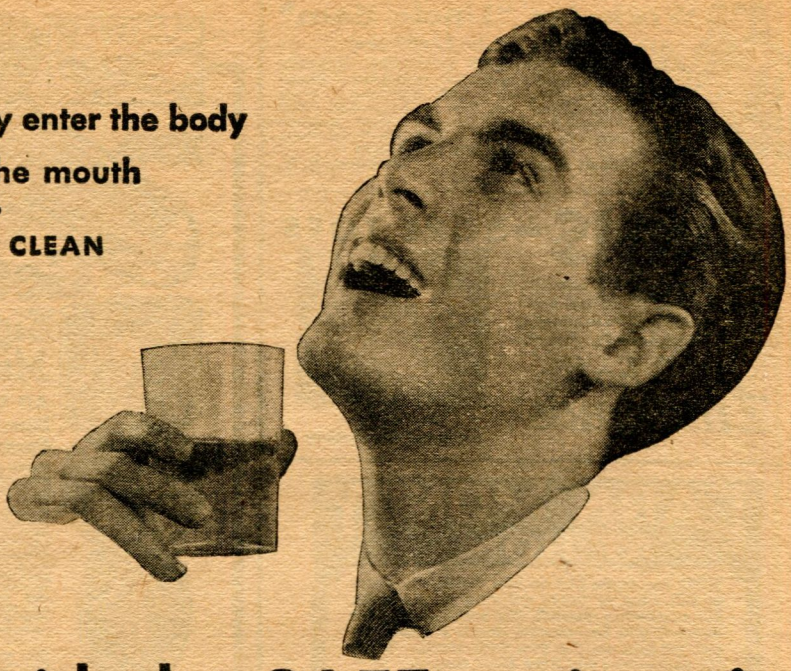
KEEP IT CLEAN



For colds and irritated throats

Gargle with the SAFE antiseptic

Make sure that the mouth wash you use kills germs. But make doubly sure that it does not irritate tender tissues with which it comes in contact. Mouth washes so harsh as to require dilution may irritate tissue and thereby make it easier for germs to gain entrance to the body. Such irritation also slows up nature's processes of recovery.

Safety wins acclaim

There can be no question of Listerine's safety and its germicidal power. Both have won the commendation of the medical profession. Its entire reputation as an aid in preventing and remedying colds and associated sore throats is based upon these two properties.

If you compare the product itself and its results with ordinary mouth washes and their results, its superiority is at once apparent.

Aid in preventing colds

To keep the mouth healthy, gargle with Listerine twice a day at least. It is a precaution against colds, other mouth infections, and bad breath. When you feel a cold coming on increase the frequency of the gargle to from three to five times a day. That often nips the cold at the outset or checks its severity. Millions realize this.

Half as many colds for garglers

Controlled laboratory tests contribute further proof of Listerine's ability to prevent infection.

Of 102 persons under medical supervision for a period of sixty days, one-third, called "controls" did not gargle Listerine; one-third gargled twice a day; one-third gargled five times a day. Note these amazing results:

Colds less severe

The group that gargled twice a day contracted only half as many colds as those who did not gargle at all. The group that gargled five times a day contracted one-third as many. And in both groups the colds contracted were less severe and of shorter duration than in the group that did not gargle.

These scientifically controlled tests, performed on average people under average conditions, definitely indicate the high value of Listerine in arresting infection.

Keep Listerine handy in home and office. Gargle with it twice a day at least. It keeps not only your mouth but your breath clean. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

reduces risk of COLDS 50%, tests show

TRAPPING OF THE EEL

By HARRY R. KELLER

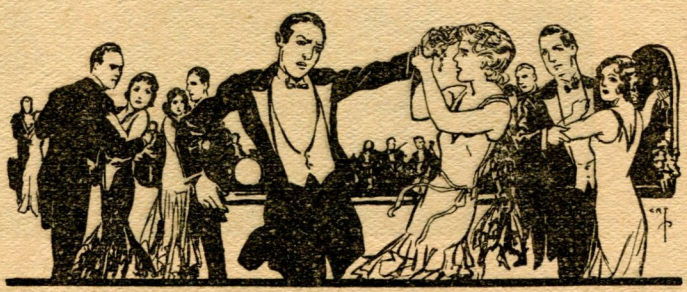
THE swanky set of gay Mobile
Were very much distressed;
For in their circles moved the "Eel,"
A most unwelcome guest.
And many were the precious stones
And baubles made of gold
That vanished. And the Eel alone
Knew how the tale was told.

The brave police were all at sea,
They knew not what to do;
"They seem a lot of chumps to me,"
Said Nancy Belle la Rue.
And added with a ring of steel,
This pretty young coquette,
"I understand to catch an eel,
One first must place a net."

The evening of the Swanson Ball
Found lovely Nancy there,
An amber comb, with jewels all
Incrusted, in her hair.
And stretched across her locks of gold,
(Across the comb as well)
She wore a hairnet, strong to hold,
But quite invisible.

Across the floor the dancers swayed,
Across and back again;
The orchestra gallantly played
With frenzied zeal—and then
A shriek from Nancy pierced the din;
The Eel was in the snare,
His fingers fast entangled in
The net in Nancy's hair!

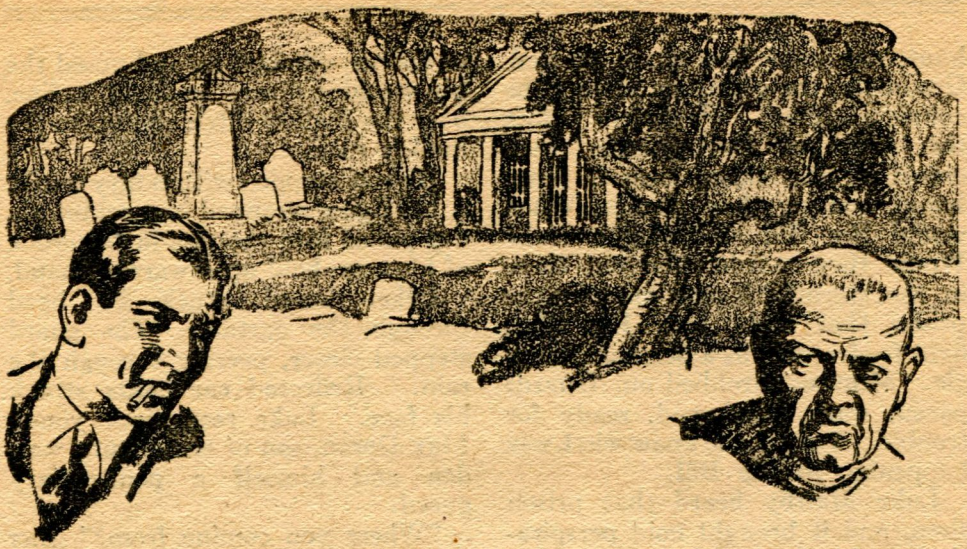
They jailed him down in gay Mobile,
And there you'll find him yet.
For this is how the wily Eel
Was taken in a net!



THE CONVICT'S DAUGHTER

By MARION SCOTT

Having tasted freedom, he couldn't bear to have it suddenly snatched from him.



CHAPTER I.

THE ESCAPE.

THERE was a storm raging the night Luke Maltby returned to Graveyard House. High in the black heavens it soared, trailing long streamers of cloud, twisting and turning to send a breath of its fury down to the shuddering earth.

The little town of Sommersville huddled behind closed doors and drawn blinds, secure, yet apprehensive. A mile and a half from the city limits, the grim walls of the State penitentiary presented gray ramparts to the futile elements.

There were men inside who prayed that the storm would tear it rock from rock, hurl its hateful steel cell blocks, its leering watch towers, a mass of twisted wreckage on the beach. They crouched behind bars, or padded the length of their narrow prisons, taut with the tension of the tireless wind. They were tense with the secret knowledge that one of their number was even now outside the walls, gambling his life against a chance at liberty. Sullenly, they listened for the wail of the prison siren that would spell doom to "Big Bill" Mahoney's hopes.

How long had Bill been gone? Since supper, to be sure, but only the last twenty minutes had he been outside. Good old Bill! Three cheers for old Bill! Every minute was that much gained. How many minutes did it take to reach freedom?

Then came a low throaty moan, that seemed to start deep in the heart of the great gray structure, rumbling up to burst in a surging volume of power, thinning to a screaming crescendo of noise that split the black night like a sharp blade. The siren! Bill's crash had been discovered. Frantic men surged suddenly against steel bars, yammering their disappointment, shouting their defiance at the law that held them prisoners.

"Yah! Yah! Yah!" Their yells fused into a rumbling, dangerous sound that brought guards racing, fingers nervous on triggers. The warden heard it, too, and his grim lips hardened.

He started things humming. He gave orders, shot directions. The

hunt was on. The chase started. Gradually, the confusion among the convicts stilled. Powerless before the guns of the guards, they crouched like sullen beasts, fangs bared, waiting their chance. When would Big Bill be brought back? Would they murder him out there in the storm? Every man in the prison that night took Big Bill's fight for freedom as a personal struggle. Minutes throbbed on. Guards paced, wary, hard-eyed, ready for trouble. And no one knew what was happening to Big Bill.

Luke Maltby heard that prison siren, and it brought cold perspiration on his face. Maltby was not wanted by the law. Not yet. But with a curious honesty that lived deep inside his twisted nature, he realized that only lack of opportunity and stakes sufficiently high had kept him on the right side of the law.

He stood beside the tool box on the running board of his expensive and unpaid-for roadster, with the rain pattering on his face, lifted, just then, to the walls of the prison not a dozen feet away. A short detour for culvert construction brought traffic round by the penitentiary. A rusty nail had punctured his tire. He had driven off the soggy road into the comparative shelter and firm ground of the narrow graveled side road to change his tire. The clamor of the prison whistle made the night hideous. Luke brushed water from his eyes and squinted into the dark. Lights were shooting up inside the walls. Floods played in erratic, sweeping arcs. There were shouted orders, a distant shot, the baying of dogs.

What would it be like to be hunted this way? Men pounding through the night, ready to shoot on sight. He shivered, opened the door of his car, climbed in, and nosed the big machine down the slight incline, over the shallow ditch and up to the muddy road.

He was stopped within fifty yards. A tall figure wrapped in mackintosh, cap pulled low, shotgun in the crook of his arm, held up a warning hand.

Luke slowed, stuck his head through the curtains. The guard stepped closer, peering through the rain. Reflected car lights struck his face. Luke recognized young Max Doran, son of the deputy warden and himself a penitentiary guard.

"Where you coming from?" Max demanded.

"Hello, Max." Luke grinned. "Oh, I'm just out from town. What's the row?"

Max squinted into the darkness, then nodded briefly. "Oh, hello, Maltby. There's been an escape. Seen anybody?"

"Sure haven't. Who made the grade on a get-away?"

"Big Bill Mahoney. Lifer. Back to set up housekeeping at Graveyard House, Maltby?"

Luke frowned. "Going to sell the blasted place," he said. "The name is enough to give me the creeps. Well, if that's all, I'll be going on."

"O. K.," Max waved him on. "If you get any dope on this egg, give us a tip," he called. "There's sure to be a reward. Big Mahoney's hot stuff."

"I'll remember that. Good night." Luke eased the clutch and started on again.

Somehow, the incident impressed him unpleasantly. Even young Max Doran looked strangely forbidding, standing there straight and tall like a soldier, gun in hand. Luke knew Max Doran slightly. He was a handsome kid, Luke reflected sourly. Something clean-cut and

convincing about him with his clear gray eyes, his strong pugnacious jaw, his crisply curling dark hair; the sort that women would like.

Luke's thin lips twisted. Yes, women would like Max Doran. They didn't, generally speaking, like Luke Maltby. He was all right, maybe, when he had money.

He cursed under his breath and gave attention to his driving. Such thoughts didn't get a man any place. He was suddenly tired and cold. Even Graveyard House would be welcome. He scowled. Who had named the dump that? Nobody, likely. It had just come to be referred to as Graveyard House because an old burial ground, no longer used, occupied the sloping hill behind.

Through three generations, Graveyard House had come down at last to Luke Maltby with the death of his uncle Thomas, the preceding spring. The house and five thousand dollars, Uncle Thomas had left to his only relative, certainly not because he owed him anything for thought and care of an old man bedridden and alone the last years of his life.

But the inheritance had come to Luke Maltby, restless and resentful in the city, and he had immediately given up his job with the broker's firm and set about the business of living as he thought a gentleman should.

The five thousand had lasted nearly five months. It had been a glorious period from Luke's standpoint. It had brought him luxury and ease, a host of friends, who vanished like mist in a summer sun when the money was gone, and a mass of debts on which he deliberately turned his back when he embarked on his trip to Graveyard House.

The road leading up the hill to the house was better than the temporary highway. Luke sent the big car along at forty-five, swung the wheel, roared up the old graveled drive, and stopped. Well, that was that!

He grinned bitterly. This was the end of his short fling. Midnight, and Graveyard House in the rain. He opened the door, flung out, leaving the car lights on. The place was beastly dark. The house, a low, rambling structure, built of massive gray stone, the same kind, in fact, of which the penitentiary was constructed, stood in a grove of towering maples, all that remained of the forests that had once covered the countryside.

There was an air of desolation about it all, viewed sketchily in the lights of the car. Blank windows! A shutter sagging here and there! Dead leaves drifted thickly in the corner of the wide, deep veranda, rain slashing in long, silver knives of light.

Luke shrugged, ran up the steps, unlocked the door, then came back for his bag. It was tossed in the rear compartment of the car, and he jerked up the lid, put a hand in, groping for the thing. A stifled cry died on his lips. His face went gray.

His fingers had touched human flesh! Cold, wet flesh that seemed to crawl beneath his quivering hand! He stumbled back, staring. There was no stir inside that little compartment, no sound. There was no sound at all except the whistling wind and the beat of the rain.

Luke snaked to the driver's seat and extracted his flashlight and the automatic which he always carried. A guarded beam of light gave him the explanation.

As passenger in his car, past the very gates of the prison, past keen-

eyed young Max Doran, he had carried the escaped convict.

The fellow was curled up inside, eyes closed, blood soaking the front of his gray prison shirt. He was unconscious or dead! Luke snapped off the light and stood there thinking. How had the convict got there? Then he remembered leaving the car for a few minutes while he groped around for a flat rock that would support the jack in the soft earth. The storm had been at its peak. It had been dark as death. Somehow, the escaping convict had stumbled on to the car.

Luke grinned thinly. If he had guessed that he had the chap, if he had been really trying to get him through the lines, what would his feelings have been when Max Doran stopped him? His car hadn't been searched because he was known thereabouts.

A dull groan roused him. He shot on the light. The man was struggling to sit up. He was a small, thin fellow, with a deeply lined face and short clipped gray hair. He had a wide, stubborn mouth, a strong chin. He blinked at the light, made a half gesture toward escape, then sank back, hand pressed against his shoulder.

Luke regarded him speculatively. "How did you get in my car?" he demanded.

The man huddled lower in the car. For all his bedraggled appearance, his desperate position, there was a sullen defiance about him. Back to the wall, he was still fighting.

Luke studied him curiously. "Well, speak up," he snapped. "How did you get in my car?"

The man answered thickly: "It was my only chancet. Aw, mister, ain't you givin' me a break? I been in there seven years." He shivered and blinked at the night from blood-shot eyes. "I'm doin' it all," he whispered hoarsely. "Doin' it all. Ain't you givin' me a break?"

Luke said slowly, "Come in the house. We'll talk." He turned toward the porch. "Better make it snappy," he tossed over his shoulder. "They may come up here looking for you."

The man scrambled out, groaning brokenly, followed Luke up the steps, and slithered through the door he held open. Luke found the switch and put on the light. Everything was just as old Thomas Maltby had left it. Luke had not before visited his inheritance, though he knew it well from boyhood visits. Knew it and hated it.

Thick rep curtains were drawn over the windows. The old furniture was thick with dust, the bare, polished floor gritty with it. The place smelled of dust and death. Luke shivered as he glanced around. A swell place to come home to!

He turned toward the convict, hunching over in a chair by the table. "Now," he said, "we'll talk. Who are you?"

"Big Bill Mahoney."

Luke frowned. The man was not over five feet eight and thin to the point of emaciation. He grinned. "Big Bill, eh? Well, Big Bill, what you mean leaving the nice home the State had offered you?"

Big Bill Mahoney lifted his deep-set, burning eyes and regarded Luke Maltby unwinkingly. "Give the screws a buzz," he said. "Send me back and get it over. But don't stand there grinnin' at me and thinkin' you're funny."

Luke grunted. Slowly, he removed his topcoat, tossed it to a chair with his hat and gloves. He stood, a straight, handsome man, just past thirty, with a long, strong face and wide, thin-lipped mouth.

The lines in Luke Maltby's face turned down. His thick blond eyebrows had a decided downward curve. There were shadowy grooves from his nose to the corners of his mouth. The mouth itself drooped slightly. It gave an indication of the man's character: fits of morbid depression; a restless, turbulent spirit that whipped him toward some hidden, unguessed greatness, greatness which he had neither the ability nor the determination to reach. "Seething" described Luke Maltby. He was motivated by a never-quiet ambition that was at the same time too vague, too formless to permit of realization.

Drawing out a thin silver case, he extracted a cigarette and lighted it casually, unconscious of Bill Mahoney's hungry eyes. He spoke with the same careful deliberation:

"I'm not turning you in—yet." Then he smiled, and a dull color burned in the convict's cheeks. "In fact," Luke Maltby said, "I may not turn you in at all, if I see any reason for keeping you. If that reason doesn't develop, then I'll wait until the reward reaches decent proportions and collect that."

Bill Mahoney sat up straight, his small, slight body tense. "You'd do that?" he whispered. He blinked unbelievingly. Evidently, the business of holding a fellow being for reward did not belong in his criminal code.

Luke laughed pleasantly. "Why shouldn't I?" he inquired. "They'd have got you if it hadn't been for my car. I need money."

Mahoney's deep-set eyes narrowed. He sucked in thin lips on a dry whistling sound. "Money?" he husked. "You need money, mister?"

"Who doesn't?"

"Yeah," Mahoney repeated slowly. "Who doesn't? Well, look here, mister, are you gonna hand me over for a century, or are you goin' to play the game and take a chance on somethin' really big. On, say"—he leaned forward, perspiration gleaming on his thin, furrowed face, "on say—half a million?" he whispered.

Luke Maltby's tall, lean body straightened. His lips narrowed to a thin, white line. "Don't kid me," he suggested softly. "What business has a bird like you got talking about millions?"

"Gimme a smoke, mister," Mahoney begged. "This shoulder's drivin' me nuts. Thanks." He hunched lower in the chair and regarded Luke from bright, hard eyes.

"Reckon you never heard of Big Bill Mahoney before?" he asked.

Luke shook his head. He was holding a tight rein on himself because mention of half a million dollars had set something whirring in his brain. Of course, the man was mad.

"I headed the mob that pulled the knock-over in the Syber City First National, seven years ago," Mahoney said.

Luke shook the ashes from his cigarette absently. Syber City First National? Yes, he remembered that. A small bank that had acted as a halfway house for a shipment of currency headed to a branch of a big New York institution. The case had been sensational because of the seeming ease with which the job was pulled and the surprise in discovering that the Syber City bank had anything like that on hand. No one on the outside was supposed to have known about the shipment.

"Yes," Luke said sharply. "I remember the Syber City business. You claim to have been in on it?"

"I was in on it. Me and three other eggs pulled the job. Two of 'em was plugged in the get-away.

Me and Sandy McGurk pulled a fast lam and laid up a coupla weeks, then they nabbed us and we got life." He scowled. "Sandy only lasted six months," he added. "Croaked in stir. But I'm tough and I'd 'a' lived to do a long stretch. The point is"—he tossed the cigarette butt away—"before they got us, Sandy and me, we cached the coin. It's still where we hid it."

"Where?" Luke asked, hardly recognizing his own voice. "Where is it?"

Mahoney grinned. "They tried hard to make me spill, but boilin' oil won't make old Bill Mahoney talk if he don't want to." He hugged his skinny body and squinted up at Luke knowingly.

"Is this straight dope, Bill Mahoney?" Luke demanded fiercely. "You actually know where half a million dollars is hidden? You can get it?"

"No," Bill Mahoney said slowly, "I ain't got a chance at gettin' it. I thought it would be easy but I can see different now. But you could get that cash, mister, without bein' suspected. You could bring it here, divide with me, and go your way. With a quarter of a million, I could fix an out. I'd go out to Australia and live quiet the rest of my days. You could——"

Luke didn't hear him. What he could do with a quarter of a million dollars loomed before his straining eyes like a colossal dream. Money! Money to burn! That's what a quarter of a million would mean to Luke Maltby who had never earned over thirty-five dollars a week in his life, to whom five thousand had seemed magnificent.

Then through his teeming brain came a sly, creeping thought that oozed its way in slimy stealth. Quarter of a million? What was that compared to half? Who was this little wrinkled gnome of a man that he should share? Wouldn't it be poetic justice to steal from a thief? He grinned.

Mahoney, watching him shrewdly, saw the tightening of the thin lips, the gleam of avarice in the pale eyes, the tensing of the jaw muscles, and he knew the signs. It was Bill Mahoney's only chance, spilling the works to this man, his only possible "out," but Bill Mahoney had not been a crook forty years for nothing. He had not defied prison officials, bank detectives conducted to his cell to learn his secret, without becoming canny. Oh, they had tried hard to worm his secret from him. They had held out hope of pardon, tentatively suggested reward, but old Bill had set his stubborn jaw and held his tongue. Some day, he'd crash out. Some day, he'd go to that house in Archer Street, creep up the sagging stairs, and find the room with the loose floor board.

Luke Maltby said suddenly: "If you're handing me straight dope, Mahoney, it's a bargain. I'll see that you're not picked up, look after you all right, and, when it's safe, we'll collect the cash and split two ways."

Mahoney nodded, grinning thinly. Let this bird take care of him. He needed it, with that smashed shoulder, a flock of screws combing the district, wires humming, reward notices flooding the country. He'd lie low here under the shadow of the prison, safe and snug, and he'd use his head. There was Nora in the offing, Nora, as a stray card up his sleeve. He'd get word to Nora, some way. There was not so much risk in that because no one knew that lovely Nora Gamble was the daughter of old Bill Mahoney, the lifer. Bill Mahoney had a queer

sense of decency in his twisted get-up. He lived according to his lights and played the game straight, as he saw the rules.

One of his tenets was that Nora should never suffer because of what he had done. So Nora had grown up, bearing the name of the delicate, frightened girl whom Bill Mahoney had married twenty-five years ago, the girl who had been Nora's mother.

Bill had kept away from Nora and her mother, once he had been successfully launched on a life of crime. He had sent them money and he, on rare occasions, had visited them secretly, but in the little town where they lived, the first Nora Gamble was known as a young widow, sewing to support her only daughter. Then Nora Gamble Mahoney died and Bill Mahoney crashed out of a Western prison to attend her funeral and arrange for young Nora's keeping. He did it all before he was captured and sent back.

Young Nora knew all about her father. He came to assume the proportions of a legendary figure in her dreams. Letters reached her sometimes by a roundabout way.

Bill Mahoney clutched his throbbing shoulder, stared at Luke Maltby there in the dank, musty room at Graveyard House, and thought of young Nora. Yes, he had a card up his sleeve.

Through the beat of the rain came the throbbing of a laboring motor climbing Graveyard hill. Bill rose slowly, backing to a corner, crouching there like a trapped beast. He had tasted liberty in that brief moment when he had thought of Nora; tasted it, and found it sweet.

"Them's the screws," he said hoarsely. "Gimme your gun, mister. They ain't gonna take me back."

Luke's head was turned toward the door. The motor pounded loudly now. It seemed to fill the room like the rushing sound of waters that would sweep before it all of Luke Maltby's hopes and ambitions, this dazzling chance at fortune.

Bill Mahoney was muttering to himself. "I won't go back; they ain't gonna take me back."

"Shut up," Luke snapped. "Lend me a hand." He shoved the massive center table aside, kicked back the dusty rug, dropped to his knees, groping for a big iron ring that lay flush with the floor. Bill Mahoney was beside him, one arm useless, tugging at the edge of the trapdoor which Luke was struggling to lift. The thing had been closed many years. It held stubbornly.

A car door slammed. Feet sounded on the porch. Luke gave a mighty heave. The trapdoor yielded with a squeal of rusty hinges. A black opening, some three feet square, was revealed. Dank, dead air rushed up. Luke's flash showed a flight of narrow, moldy stairs.

"Get down! Step on it!" he said thickly.

Bill asked no questions. He doubled over and scuttled down, stumbling to fall groaning to the floor, face white with pain. Luke lowered the door, arranged the rug, and dragged the table back. He was breathing in gasping sobs. His hands were cold and wet.

There was a sharp peremptory knocking on the door. He straightened, eyes sweeping the room for signs that might betray his secret.

He opened the door. Rain and cold air rushed in. A sear wrinkled leaf rustled across the threshold, bouncing and leaping around the room like a gay brown elf. A tall, heavy-faced man stood on the porch.

He had pleasant blue eyes and a wide, uncompromising mouth.

Luke recognized him with a queer feeling of dismay. It was Tom Doran, deputy warden at the penitentiary, and father of Max, whom Luke had already encountered once to-night.

The elder Doran grinned and touched his cap. "Sorry to disurb you, Mr. Maltby," he said, "but there's been an escape at the prison to-night. I'm looking for a convict who crashed out. This place being vacant, so long, we thought he might have hived up here. Any objection to my looking around?"

"None," Luke said, heart hammering so he could scarcely breathe. "Come right in," He stepped aside.

Tom Doran came in wiping moisture from his face. He glanced around with keen, penetrating eyes.

"I just got in half an hour ago," Luke said, hoping that his voice would cover the thunder of his racing heart. "I've been giving it the once-over and I don't think you'll find your man here."

"Likely not," Doran agreed, "but we've got to be sure." He crossed to a rear door and disappeared, shooting the rays of a powerful flash before him. Luke heard him slamming doors, banging furniture. He lighted a cigarette. The fellow would leave in a few minutes now, clear out for good. Then he could talk to Bill Mahoney.

Tom Doran reëntered the room. He walked with a long, easy stride, hands hanging carelessly by his side. He said: "Well, I guess you haven't had any visitor, Mr. Maltby. Thanks for your courtesy." He stopped, head suddenly thrust forward. Luke's eyes jerked down on a line with his, widening slowly.

A corner of the old, thin rug was folded into a crack of the trapdoor. Just beside it was a small, dull spot of blood.

Luke Maltby stood perfectly still, staring at it while his body went icy cold.

Doran was frowning. It seemed hours that he stood there, head bent forward, eyes fastened to that telltale spot, then slowly he looked up. His eyes were hard. There was a square jut in his jaw. He said quietly:

"Hurt yourself recently, Mr. Maltby?"

Luke tried to think of some natural, simple explanation. But his mind was chaos. He would have to remain like that while Doran lifted the door, dragged Bill Mahoney away, and with him, a chance at a fortune. Luke's hand crept toward his side pocket where the automatic lay.

Doran was regarding him steadily. There was a thin, tight smile on his lips. He said again: "You didn't mention a trapdoor in this room. I'll just have a look at it."

He heaved against the table, kicked at the rug, and bent down before Luke fired. The report did not seem so loud. It sounded rather dull and flat. Rather as if a tough paper bag had been blown full of air, then smashed. But Tom Doran pitched forward on the floor—a small, ugly hole gaping at the base of his brain!

Luke stared at the gun, back at the dead man. Murder, eh? Well, somehow, he wasn't so surprised. He'd always known, with that queer distorted honesty of his, that he would, if the stakes were high enough and he had a chance at coming out safely.

Chance? What were his chances now? He was still cold with that deadly frozen sensation, but his brain was alert and humming. He

glanced at the outer door. It was tightly closed. There was no sound from below, but Bill Mahoney must have heard the shot. Well, what could Mahoney do? Yet he wished the little withered convict didn't know.

Then suddenly Luke roused to a full significance of what he had done, and, for a moment, he stood there shivering violently, clinging to the table's edge to keep from falling, while sound of his chattering teeth in the silent room was like the clatter of dry bones.

Gradually, he got hold of himself. It was done—something that could never be undone. He must go on from there. He slipped the gun into his pocket and approached the dead man. The wound had not bled much. There would be no telltale signs on the carpet. He slipped his hands under Doran's arms and dragged him to the kitchen. He stood there a time, trying to think what to do.

Suddenly, he decided to make Bill Mahoney help. Bill would have experience in murder, though something told Luke that the little convict was not a killer.

He went back, lifted the trapdoor, and shot the light down.

"Mahoney," he called softly, and his voice startled him with its husky dryness. "Mahoney," he repeated. There was no answer. Nothing but the tap of rain on the roof, the furtive rustle of sear leaves at the window. Sudden panic seized Luke. Mahoney had escaped! Somehow, he had found a way out of that cellar. He was even now headed for the half million buried loot, and he, Luke Maltby, was left with only a dead man for recompense.

He stumbled down the stairs, cursing in his frenzy. The light made a bright splatter on the wet, moldy walls. The air was thick and dead. It brought perspiration to Maltby's face.

Then he saw Mahoney, sprawled face down on the floor, arms outflung, eyes closed.

Luke bent down and shook his shoulder. Mahoney groaned, lifted his head, and stared round blankly. "Are they gone?" he whispered. "Gosh, mister, did they tumble?"

Luke's eyes narrowed. His lips twisted in a hard, satisfied smile.

"What happened to you?" he asked. "What put you out?"

Mahoney was sitting up now, rocking back and forth, clutching his shoulder. "Aw," he whimpered, "my foot caught and I come on down on my ear, slammed my bum shoulder against the wall, and passed out. Are they gone?"

Luke nodded slowly. "They're gone," he said.

"How many was there?"

"Two. They never tumbled to that trapdoor, but, look here, Mahoney, you've got to lay low. They're liable to come back, so for to-night you're bunking down here."

Mahoney nodded. "All right, can you give me something to lay on? This shoulder——"

Luke stood up, suddenly alert and full of purpose. Mahoney didn't know that a man had been murdered just over his head. That fortunate tumble on the stairs had put him out of the picture. It was a grand break. Luke could not analyze his unwillingness for the little convict to know of the guard's death. He put it down to a murderer's natural aversion to sharing his guilty knowledge.

Fifteen minutes later, he stood again in the kitchen regarding the man he had killed, by the light of the flash. It was nearing two

o'clock. He had several hours to dispose of the body. He would need it. Bill Mahoney, his wounded shoulder roughly bandaged, was in the cellar bedded down on a bunch of old quilts and cushions. Luke had found him some food and given him a battered old lantern for light.

He had also provided him with a suit of Uncle Maltby's clothing in place of the old prison garb. And as a last precaution, Luke had moved the massive table directly over the trapdoor. He grinned, thinking of that. There was no other way out of the cellar. Bill Mahoney was his for as long as he cared to keep him.

CHAPTER II.

HIDING PLACE.

LUKE turned off the light in the living room, tiptoed back to the silent, dark kitchen, opened the back door, and looked out. The rain had slowed. It still fell patteringly, but the fury of the storm was past. High in the black heavens, a rioting wind pursued its boisterous way, but its breath was spent before it reached the earth. The night air, already tinged with the far, faint scent of dawn, was freshly cold.

Through scudding clouds, a watery moon peered vagrantly. By its bleary, uncertain light, Luke could make out the dark blur of trees surrounding the house and sloping gently upward, the shadowy expanse of the old burial ground. Far off there in darkness, an owl hooted lonesomely, and Luke shivered.

In spite of his sophistication, his blasé cynicism, there lived in Luke Maltby a strong superstition Perhaps it had its origin in his dreary, casual childhood, when for months at a time he was left at Graveyard House with only taciturn Uncle Maltby for companion. Perhaps on those nights, when he crouched under the covers in his barren little attic room and listened to the wind soughing over the old graveyard, there was fused into his nature, an ineradicable fear of the dead. And now, with his first murder behind him, concealing Doran's body somewhere in the recesses of the old cemetery reduced him to shivering weakness.

Yet common sense told him it was the safest hiding place. The countryside would be infested with posses searching for the escaped convict. When Tom Doran's disappearance was established the hunt would be intensified. To Luke Maltby there seemed but one practical and safe place of concealment. The ancient Maltby vault. It was old-fashioned and massive. It was grim and forbidding. But it was solid as the rock of Gibraltar, was never opened, and Luke Maltby had the key.

He stepped back, closed the door, got his coat and hat, his flashlight, then he heaved the body of Tom Doran onto his shoulder, opened the door, and went out into the night.

It was a nerve-racking journey. Rain sluiced down from the low hanging branches of the cypress and cedars. Heavy, matted grass, soggy with water, caught at his stumbling feet. He staggered under the weight of the gruesome burden he bore. He was panting with terror, clammy cold with perspiration, when at last he dumped Doran's body on the ground outside the Maltby vault and with trembling fingers inserted the key in the huge, rusty padlock.

As he opened the door, something whirred past his face. He choked a cry and shuddered back as a star-

tled bat zoomed into the darkness. He hid his flash inside his coat and snapped the switch. Its partially covered rays disclosed the interior of the vault, blank and cold, its gray walls gleaming with moisture. Directly before him on the slimy floor lay a withered bunch of flowers, a pitiful memento of Thomas Maltby's funeral. The old man had specified that he should rest in the family vault back of Graveyard House rather than in the new, carefully tended burial ground on the other side of town.

Luke kicked the faded things impatiently aside as he dragged Doran's limp body inside. Here it would remain, undiscovered, until such time as he could provide a better grave. The vault would hold its secret well. No prying eyes——

He stiffened, eyes on a tiny square barred window to the right. Dusky as the vault interior would be, that small opening might betray him. He glanced around frantically, scooped up the stiff withered bouquet from the floor, and crammed the window tight, winding the three-inch bars with the flimsy ribbon. Then, turning, he stumbled toward the fresh, clean air of the outer world.

As he noiselessly swung the heavy door to, he felt again that creepy whir of wings as the bat, disturbed by his coming, hovered around its home.

Luke shuddered from its half-seen presence and started on a stumbling run back toward Graveyard House. He still had work to do. His natural instincts had made him conceal Doran's body first, but even now the deputy warden's car was standing out on the drive, silent witness for any searching party that happened along.

As he considered that, Luke's pace increased and he reached the machine in a shivering welter of terror. He leaped in, started the motor, and, without turning on lights, nosed it down the hill. He had what he considered a well-formed plan for taking care of the car.

Down in the cold cellar of Graveyard House, old Bill Mahoney hunched on the pile of quilts, a stubby pencil clutched in his blunted fingers, a piece of crumpled paper spread out on the top of an overturned keg. A battered lantern burned beside him. There was little oil left. Soon, he would be left in darkness, and, before that time came, he had to finish that letter to Nora. The paper he used was the back of an advertisement he had found in Uncle Maltby's old coat. There was a stamped envelope bearing the printed address of the firm. This could be marked out, and Nora's name inserted. Nora held the position of secretary to Mrs. Winton Crosby, at 4287 Claremont Drive in the city, and, somehow, some way, Bill Mahoney would get the letter to her. He knew now beyond the shadow of a doubt that not only his chance at the bank money, but his very life depended on his escape from Luke Maltby.

Bill had not been unconscious when over his head sounded the dull report of that pistol. Hunched there in the darkness, tense with the fear of capture, he had heard quite clearly the conversation and the resultant shot. Bill wasn't squeamish. He was a criminal with a long list of offenses to his credit, but murder was not charged against him.

When he realized that Luke Maltby had killed Tom Moran, he knew that his first impression of the man was correct. Maltby would murder him as quickly as he had Doran, once he had what he wanted.

So Bill had thrown himself face down there, feigning unconsciousness, and now the letter was finished. He had sent to Nora directions for recovering the loot from the Syber bank, and, somehow, he was going to mail the letter.

He sealed it carefully, concealed it under a pile of moldy straw in the corner, curled up on the quilts and tried to sleep. Far overhead the rain tapped monotonously, and presently, to his wakeful sense, came the sound of a starting motor.

Bill Mahoney nodded grimly in the dark, and resolutely closed his eyes. He was not young any more; he was impoverished from seven years in prison, and he was wounded. He had much to do and he would need strength.

CHAPTER III.

A LETTER.

MARCELLA CROSBY paused by the table in the hall. She was humming softly to herself, but there was a tight frown drawn between her delicately arched brows. She was annoyed and she was frightened. She had been that way a great deal of late. She glanced sharply over her shoulder, picked up the stack of mail, and ran through it.

Her lips hardened. Nothing but bills. Oh, yes, there were a couple of invitations. She tossed them contemptuously aside. They were from people who were currying favor from the woman, who, the preceding winter had been a social sensation; people who were so stupid as not to have learned that she was a fraud, that even now she was being dropped by those who really mattered. She noticed another envelope, grimy and stained, a printed address clumsily blocked out in pencil, a name laboriously written below.

A door at the end of the hall opened. A girl came in. She was whistling gayly, and a large-footed police pup tumbled adoringly at her side. Marcella Crosby glanced up, frowning slightly, at her secretary.

"Letter for you, Nora," she said, "and such a peculiar one. You'll pardon my curiosity, I hope, but who on earth would write like that?"

She extended the envelope, still holding tightly to one corner. Marcella was obsessed with curiosity. She dearly loved to know things about people—guilty, unpleasant things, if possible. She kept her lovely sea-green eyes fastened on Nora Gamble's suddenly white face as she reluctantly released the envelope.

"Oh, thank you," Nora faltered, feeling as if she were being slowly suffocated. "I'll be in my room if you need me, Mrs. Crosby."

"Of course," Marcella agreed slowly. "That's quite all right, Nora, but I *am* consumed as to the identity of your unique correspondent. Don't tell me you're in the habit of receiving such missives. Come now, who would write you like that?" She leaned forward, peering avidly at the girl. Marcella had no burning interest in the matter. But she saw that Nora was deeply distressed, and a certain cruelty in her responded to that confusion. "I insist on knowing," she repeated. "As your employer, I surely have a right to ask."

Nora's gleaming head lifted. In the whiteness of her face, her blue eyes blazed with quick anger.

"No, Mrs. Crosby," she said clearly. "I do not recognize your right to inquire into my personal affairs." She whirled and ran up-

stairs, the panting pup stumbling clumsily at her heels.

Marcella Crosby gazed after her in white-lipped fury. Insolent hussy! What ailed the girl? Who would have thought she possessed such a devilish temper? But after all, what *was* in that letter? Nora had gone white as a sheet.

Marcella went slowly up the stairs to her room. It didn't make any difference, of course, and she really had plenty to worry about. But what was in the letter?

The thought tormented her like the buzzing of an insistent fly. As she passed noiselessly along the upper hall, she paused before Nora's door. The girl was crying—low, strangled sobs that are only born of desperate trouble.

Marcella went on, brows contracted in thought. She'd have to dismiss the girl because she couldn't pay her but, just the same, she wanted to know what that dirty, smudgy letter contained. She entered her own quarters, threw herself full length on the chaise longue, lighted a cigarette, and fell to a steady contemplation of the gray expanse of the window. Twilight was drawing in. It had been raining for days. Marcella hated dusk and rain. She sighed, picked up a book, tossed it down, and leaned back. What was in Nora's remarkable letter?

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN CROOKS MEET.

TO Nora Gamble, that moment in the hall, when her employer extended the wretched-looking envelope, had been one of unbearable suspense. She knew instantly that it was from her father. The papers had screamed his escape, and Nora had lived in hourly terror of his capture or death. She had read feverishly of the progress of the search. It had been a long, breathless nightmare for her.

Every spot in the vicinity of the prison town, where an escaped convict might hide, was faithfully pictured. One place had filled Nora with shuddering revulsion, a lonely-looking house, set in a grove of trees, and under it the caption: "Graveyard House, near the State penitentiary." Then the information that the prison authorities considered it likely that Bill Mahoney might have hidden out there. Search, however, had failed to confirm their suspicions, and the owner, Mr. Luke Maltby, had denied seeing anything of him.

There was that business of the deputy warden. Tom Doran was his name and his son, Max, was firm in his conviction that his father had met with foul play. The older Doran, according to the papers, had set out along lines of his own, the night of Mahoney's escape. He had not returned, and nothing had been learned concerning him, though his wrecked car had been discovered three miles from the prison, in the ditch. The authorities quite naturally connected Bill Mahoney with the disappearance of the deputy warden.

One fact, which bore out the theory, was the absence of all prints on the steering wheel, on car doors. That, to the prison officials and the police, argued the forethought of the professional criminal. The law had one more reason to capture Bill Mahoney. He had quite likely murdered Tom Doran. Young Max Doran had refused to give a statement to the press, but had been

heard to declare that he would never rest until the mystery of his father's disappearance was solved.

It had all been inexpressibly horrible to Nora, and, when she stood there, staring at the letter in Marcella Crosby's hand, faced with the woman's cruel, insatiable curiosity, she had lost control.

Crumpled now in a chair in her room, she regretted that outburst. She should have simply given some obvious explanation and let it go at that. But Marcella's prying into a personal matter was the crowning point of a long list of petty tyrannies, and Nora's nerves had broken under the strain.

And now what was she to do? She gazed at the room with shadowed eyes. Her father had escaped; he was hiding. He did not say where. He was too canny for that. He told her he would communicate with her further. At present, she was to——

Nora buried her face in her hands. She loathed anything connected with crime. An abnormal terror of it had been bred in her bones by the gentle, frightened mother whom crime had killed. The first Nora Gamble had devotedly loved Big Bill Mahoney. Crime had taken him from her. Her life had been a series of evasions, a long, agonized period of suspense. Some of that had been communicated to the child. To young Nora there seemed nothing more terrible than any real connection with the underworld.

She lifted her flushed face and studied the letter again.

She was to go to the old house on Archer Street, which had been left her as a pitiful legacy by her mother. The place was practically worthless as far as investment went, and Nora had not known what to do with it. But in a certain room upstairs, under a certain floor board, according to her father, reposed an old brown suitcase, and in that suitcase was the loot from the Syber city bank.

Nora rose wearily and crossed to the window. Darkness had fallen. Rain drummed endlessly on the panes. She shivered, thinking of the old house on Archer Street. But it never occurred to her to disobey Bill Mahoney's instructions. Her father was a little-known force outside her life, something to be watched for, like a storm that is hourly expected, but unaccountably delayed.

She took down a dark raincoat, a small hat, and prepared to go out. It was getting on toward seven o'clock, and she had not eaten since early luncheon, but thought of food sickened her. She wanted to get the thing over. Bill had told her what to do with the suitcase once she had it. It really ought to be simple. She felt that she could not rest easily until it was taken care of.

Opening the door, she stepped into the hall. Her heart was beating tremulously. She felt a guilty sense of secrecy. She wanted to creep from Marcella Crosby's house without meeting any one, without being seen. So it was that Mrs. Crosby's deceptively lazy voice reached her as a distinct and very unpleasant shock just as she rounded the stair head.

"Nora," Mrs. Crosby said, "where on earth are you going?"

Nora whirled, hand going out in an involuntary gesture of defense. She was suddenly acutely conscious of the incriminating letter crushed in her pocket. She wished she had destroyed it.

She said rather faintly: "I have an errand to attend to. I shall not be gone long."

Marcella came slowly toward her from the open door of her room. She

had evidently come from her writing desk. Ink stained the slender fingers that still held unanswered mail. She was a soft, lithe creature of sinuous, unsuspected strength. Her delicately pointed face was heart-shaped, with high cheek bones and long slanted eyes, oddly green between narrow, black-fringed lashes. Her mouth carried out the triangular motif. A wide, upper lip, a bit too straight and thin for real beauty, the under one so full it seemed much shorter.

She had changed to a clinging green gown that left her gleaming arms and shoulders bare. She had naturally curling hair of dull, tawny gold. It gave her a surprisingly youthful look.

"That is absurd," Marcella said slowly, eyes sweeping over the girl. "Dinner will be served shortly. After that, I wish you to take dictation." Her glinting sea-green eyes fastened on Nora's hand, tight clenched in the pocket of her raincoat. Her lips parted in a hateful little smile. She really didn't care what the girl did or where she went, but she was still tormented by an unreasonable interest in that curious letter. "I much prefer that you do not go just now," she said.

"I'm sorry," Nora answered evenly, and her hands fastened hard on the small tapestry purse she carried. "I shall not be gone long."

"But what is so important?" Marcella insisted, her natural stubbornness conquering her judgment. "You entirely arouse my curiosity."

Nora's eyes glinted. She said fiercely: "You have no right to be curious about what I do. My time after dinner is my own. I am going now."

"If you do, you need not return."

Nora stiffened. She could not afford to lose her position. Marcella laughed softly. "You will remain as I request or you will cease to be in my employ," she spoke evenly. The girl could not know that she would be discharged to-morrow, anyway, Marcella reflected. Keep her from this terribly important business, then give her notice in the morning. That was Marcella's idea of a good joke. To her intense surprise, Nora's blue eyes narrowed. The girl nodded definitely.

"Very well," she agreed. "I will not return. I will send for my bags, and you can mail my check to an address I shall furnish. That is all, I think. Good night." And turning, she ran down the stairs, her heels clipping sharply on the polished floor.

Marcella stood motionless, staring after her. Anger swept over her like a tumbling flood. It shook her so she had to lean against the wall. It blinded her and set her heart to leaping. Marcella was not used to being defied.

In her senseless rage she wanted to hurt Nora Gamble, beat with clenched fists against her cool, lovely face, twist her soft white flesh until it showed blue and bruised. And there was nothing she could do—nothing except return to her room, wait the summons of the dinner bell, spend the evening facing her old host of worries: unpaid bills, I O U's given to people who took such things seriously. The matter of that kited check—the morning would surely bring the law.

She lifted her clenched hands filled with that hateful assortment of duns, and pressed them tightly against her burning eyes. Somehow, that business of Nora's silly letter, the girl's stubbornness, her departure, seemed to intensify and accentuate Marcella Crosby's troubles.

Breath caught in her tight throat.

Her eyes focused on a crumpled envelope lying at the edge of the rug. She swooped it up. The little fool had dropped it! She had stood there with one hand so tightly clenched in her pocket, and, when she had clutched at the small tapestry purse, the letter had fallen out.

Marcella, now she had the thing, felt bored and disinterested. Angrily, she drew the wretched sheet out and smoothed it against her hand, frowning at it. Why, it was only a form letter, a silly thing about books.

With a muttered exclamation, she wadded it up and threw it furiously to a darkened corner, then, on impulse, retrieved it, thrusting it into the low front of her gown. Angrily, she swept downstairs. Bevins, the butler, was speaking to some one at the door.

"I am sorry, sir," he said with his careful courtesy. "Miss Gamble has just gone out."

Marcella paused, looking over the butler's shoulder. Light from the hall shone onto the porch. She saw a tall, handsome man, rain gleaming on his shoulders and on his thick, blond hair. She stared at him curiously, then, on impulse, she motioned Bevins to retire.

"Miss Gamble is not in," she said. "Will you leave a message?" She was leaning slightly forward, and the shaded light touched the ivory whiteness of her slim shoulders, lit her tawny hair with a golden glory. She saw her beauty reflected in his eyes, noticed the tightening of his thin, slightly drooping lips, as he looked at her. She smiled, suddenly happy. Marcella loved admiration.

"Won't you come in?" she asked very low. "It's unpleasant standing there in the rain."

Luke Maltby stepped in. He could not take his eyes from her delicate face. She seemed to quiver like a flame there in the softly lighted hall. He brushed a hand across his eyes. He had been near frantic when his whirlwind journey to the city had ended here at Marcella Crosby's home. Disaster had swept after him on that mad ride, hooting in the singing wind, mocking in the slashing rain, and now he was suddenly quiet and relaxed. Looking at this tawny woman was like a narcotic.

"It is very important that I should find Nora Gamble," he answered slowly. "I am Luke Maltby. Can you tell me?" His glance dropped to the mail in her hand.

Her eyes narrowed swiftly. She asked: "Luke Maltby? Not the Luke Maltby who lives at Graveyard House?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Newspapers," she replied. "You and your unpleasant-sounding residence have been much in the public eye of late. What do you want with my little secretary?"

He smiled grimly. "Tell me where to find her, that's all."

For answer, she opened the library door and motioned him to follow her. Again that restless curiosity was consuming her. Who was this man? What did he want with Nora Gamble? There was nothing in the silly chit to attract him. She faced him, standing by the glowing fire, one long white arm resting on the mantel.

"I don't like to be rude," she told him, "but Miss Gamble's men friends will have to wait. She left rather suddenly a short time ago, before the evening mail was taken care of, in fact." Marcella nodded toward the pile of letters which she had laid on the mantel. "She'll be busy to-night," she added, watching him closely.

Luke Maltby tensed forward. It

was all he could do to keep from snatching up that pile of correspondence, tear it apart, searching for the letter he wanted—the letter Bill Mahoney had written.

"You'll pardon my insistence," he said with difficulty, "but there was a certain letter mailed to Miss Gamble. It's better—much better that she doesn't receive it. She——"

Marcella drew smoke into her lungs. Her heart was pounding thickly. She sensed intrigue. It was life to her. She replied coldly: "Miss Gamble has no secrets from me. Naturally, I have all the correspondence that came to the house to-day. What of it?" In spite of herself, one hand strayed toward the crumpled sheet in her dress, then dropped. Had he caught that betraying gesture?

He was gazing bleakly into her eyes, and baffled fury choked his voice when he said: "This thing was mailed by mistake. Let me have it. Nora mustn't get it. It might upset—her." What a floundering fool he was! Couldn't he think of something better than that? He cursed his lack of invention, but she unnerved him.

Marcella ran a manicured finger along the mantel's edge. And she kept watching him—watching from her smiling green eyes. What was his game? What was there about that stupid letter that should bring him here from Sommersville? Why did the mention of it dot his forehead with perspiration? She smiled in secret assurance. She'd find out. Clever, Marcella knew herself to be. She'd extracted information from shrewder men than Luke Maltby.

"I can't think what could be in the letter to upset Nora," she said, playing for time as she sensed the growing frenzy in him.

Luke Maltby shut his teeth hard. He mustn't make a fool of himself. He had figured it would be easy to deal with old Mahoney's girl, but Marcella Crosby was something else. All the time fears and surmises buzzed madly in his brain. Did Nora Gamble already have that message? Was she even now hurrying toward the secret cache, or did this woman hold the secret?

He took a step forward, flushed face hard. Marcella, sensing the action, casually picked up the pile of mail and spread it before him. She caught the gleam of his narrowed eyes as they flashed over the letters, saw the sudden tensing of his clenched hands. What he wanted was not there! She laid the mail down; stood very still, studying him.

Luke bit his lip. He had overplayed his hand in showing so much anxiety. His glance groped again to the letters. One had fluttered to the floor at his feet. It was rubber-stamped: "Overdue" in hard, red characters. An idea struck him.

"I'm willing to pay a thousand dollars for that letter to Nora Gamble, if that means anything to you," he muttered.

She blew a smoke ring with elaborate care, but her face had gone a gleaming white. A thousand dollars! For that wretched, smudgy sheet! If it was worth that, it should bring more, if she played her cards correctly. Marcella Crosby was wise in the oldest game on earth. She played it with the skill of the master, delicately or brazenly, as conditions dictated. This was no time for finesse.

She went toward him, seemingly drawn by a force she could not control, appearing to be literally struggling against bonds that drew her. She touched his arm, let her hand fall, but he was conscious of the warmth of her, the fragrance of her

hair, the vital allure of her body. Her nearness blinded him, yet he realized definitely that beneath that vibrant softness lay the glittering hardness of ice. He knew just then that he would never get that letter for a paltry thousand.

She looked up into his working face through shadowy lashes.

"Is it really worth that much to you?" she asked softly.

"It's worth a fortune," he cried thickly.

He heard the quick intake of her breath, choked off a curse. Well, he'd spilled it. He might as well go on.

"You know that convict who escaped?" he demanded recklessly. "Well, he knows where that bank loot is hidden."

"Yes," she whispered. "I read the papers. Go on."

"Nora Gamble is his daughter!"

Her eyes flared wide. "Daughter! Nora—his daughter!"

She did not take her eyes from his face. She stood so still she seemed not to be breathing, but she was a seething tumult of emotion. Bill Mahoney had disappeared at the prison gates. This man Maltby lived near the penitentiary. A thousand dizzy speculations whirled through her brain.

They stood there, the two of them, only inches apart, eyes clashing. They were strangers. Or were they? They had never met before, but, out of the drama of old Bill Mahoney's fight for freedom, out of the hateful passions that leaped to life because he knew where money was hidden, their paths had converged. They had walked their appointed ways, blind with their own selfishness, struggling for gratification of their hidden desires, and suddenly they were face to face, and between them loomed the mirage of great wealth.

"Half a million!" she whispered, then suddenly she cried: "Don't lie to me, Luke Maltby. You know where that money is hidden. Nora knows, too, doesn't she? Isn't that where she went to-night?"

His tight grasp left blue marks on her satiny shoulders. "She has gone then? She got the letter? You didn't mean it when you said you had it?"

"I did. But before I give it to you, we must make a bargain. I am not a fool. I can find it as well as you. Do you agree? Do we split even?"

She clutched his coat, staring up into his face, and he saw the naked, terrible greed in her eyes without flinching. He fought momentarily against agreeing to a division. Everything within him rebelled at the thought.

Then her hands were on his shoulders; she was clinging to him, and he heard her voice as from a great distance. "You won't keep me out. I can help you. I need help. I need —you. I am so lonely—fighting everything alone."

She was sobbing, with her tawny head bright against his dark coat. He frowned at her a moment, then his arms went around her.

He laughed harshly. Women had never liked Luke Maltby. There'd been something hard and aloof in his nature that repelled them. This tempestuous interview marked a new era in his life.

"Don't be afraid any more," he said unsteadily. "Don't be lonely. We'll find this fortune, enjoy it. Think of the things we can do, the places we can see."

The bright head nodded slowly. Her face was still hidden against his shoulder. As the incoherent words tumbled from his lips, she kept on nodding, and he could not see, in his

inspired idiocy, that she was laughing—that her whole beautiful face was distorted with silent, triumphant laughter. He did not know that men were merely grist for the greedy mill of Marcella Crosby's passion.

Presently, they were sitting on the divan before the fire, for the moment oblivious of individual personalities, engrossed only in piecing together this puzzle that would make them rich. Luke told her of Bill Mahoney's hiding place. He did not explain that he left the old man in a senseless, broken heap on the moldy quilts in the cellar before he started this mad dash to town. He did not tell her about Tom Doran. She did not ask.

He told her briefly how he and Mahoney had struck a bargain and how the convict had double-crossed him by calling in this wretched girl, Nora. How he, Luke, had discovered the beginning of a second letter, containing further instructions to Nora for aiding her father's escape, how it had given him the clew to Nora's residence in the city, the information that she had been previously instructed to remove the money.

Marcella interrupted him sharply. "But, Luke, there is nothing on the letter. It must be code. It is only a foolish form letter."

"Let me see it."

Slowly, she drew the paper out and released it to his eager fingers. He scowled at the printed form, then involuntarily he turned it over. She exclaimed sharply at her oversight, leaned closer, eyes racing over the clumsy characters.

"It's true," she gasped. "See, he says it's true—half a million."

"And it's hidden in a house in Archer Street!"

"In a room upstairs, third from the end of the hall on the left." She clawed at his arm, fighting to get closer to the precious paper.

"Under a loose board," Luke said. "That ought to be easy. Think of it staying there all this time. It's ours for the taking."

"You think so? You forget that she left here nearly an hour ago, that a taxi would take her there in ten minutes, that——"

He leaped up, groping for his hat. She was on her feet beside him at once.

"Where are you going?"

"To Archer Street. She may have trouble finding it. She——" He stopped suddenly. "You forget she lost this. She may have to hunt for that board."

"If you find her there—if she is in the way——" She did not finish the question. They looked into each other's eyes and smiled. A little shiver of anticipation shook her. Here was a man after her own heart. A man unafraid of murder!

He reached the door, opened it, and stopped, closing it to a narrow crack. A cold wet breath of air swooped through the hall. The outer door was opening.

They crouched there in the dimness, waiting silently, as Nora Gamble slipped in, glanced swiftly to right and left, missing the two tense faces that watched her, and darted up the stairs.

"There she is. What brought her back?" Marcella said sibilantly.

"What?" He glanced at her suddenly. "This," he said, and extended the crumpled letter. "She missed it and she came back for it. She could not find the money without it."

"Then there is nothing to do except——"

A light step sounded on the stairs. Nora ran across the hall, reached

the door, and opened it, before Marcella's voice halted her.

"Nora," she called gently, "come here, please."

Nora Gamble whirled, back against the door, eyes stabbing the gloom. Terror was all about her, in the thick warm air, the fragrance of flowers and the pleasant scent of tobacco. She saw Marcella's delicate, pointed face as the woman came swiftly toward her, caught the gleam of her bare throat, and slowly, furtively she inched the door open, backed round it, and darted through.

Marcella caught her wrists. Nora cried out at the pain of those long, soft fingers. Their pressure made her suddenly limp. She stared blindly at the rain-fogged street, the blur of car lights, the blob of passing figures. It was a dream, a figment of her fevered imagination. She couldn't be at this moment, held prisoner by fingers so terribly strong. There wasn't something dragging her back—hauling her inexorably inside that house she thought to have quitted forever.

Suddenly, Nora screamed. It seemed to her that the cry must slash through the night to the farthest limits of the great, teeming city.

In reality, her frightened cry barely reached the street, scarcely made itself heard to the ears of the shabby lounger shambling aimlessly along, head bent against the storm. But it did penetrate that far, and the man glanced up, so the light struck his face fleetingly.

Then the girl in the dark raincoat disappeared, almost as if she had been dragged inside. The door closed. Silence settled over the street. The man paused in the darkness, studying the house with hard, gray eyes. Beneath his shabby clothes, his body appeared lean and well-conditioned, tall, with broad shoulders and long, loose swinging arms. His face, in the shadow of his battered cap, was white and deeply lined. He had a strong, normally humorous mouth, grim set now.

As he stood there, the radiance from the main door disappeared. The light had been snapped off. Cautiously, he mounted the steps, pressed his face against the glass, trying to peer through the filmy curtain on the other side. As he stared, the curtain moved very slightly and directly opposite his, another face appeared.

The vagrant street light touched it briefly. Stark, white lips drawn in a stiff line, eyes dilated. For a brief moment, Max Doran looked straight into the face of Luke Maltby, then, like a shadow, he ducked, plunging down the steps.

Inside the hall, Marcella Crosby stood panting above the limp figure of Nora Gamble huddled in a deep chair. The girl's head was thrown back. Her eyes were closed. On her throat, above the collar of her coat, showed dull bruises where the woman's unnaturally powerful fingers had choked her to unconsciousness.

Marcella was breathing unevenly. Her eyes glittered like bright, hard emeralds. She glanced over her shoulder at Luke Maltby crouched against the curtained glass of the front door. Something in the tense posture of his body startled her.

"What are you doing? Come away from that window!" she said sharply.

He jerked up, wiping his brow. When he turned to look at her, his face was ghastly. He tried to smile. "I saw some one out there," he said hoarsely, "when that door was open."

"Who?"

"I don't know. Likely, I was mistaken." He shivered and held his shaking hands to the blaze. "Just a notion maybe, but, when I looked just now, I could have sworn his face was against that glass. It's raining, you know; made it hard to——"

"Who was it?"

"It looked like a chap who's been snooping around my place on the trail of that deputy warden, Tom Doran. It's his son, Max. I saw him prowling in the cemetery." His voice shook. He cursed under his breath.

She was watching him curiously. She had the feeling that there were depths to this man, depths of cruelty and darkness at which she might shudder. Yet she yearned for the time when she might explore them at her leisure, draw out his secret thoughts, study his hidden motives, convince herself that he was as potentially evil as she judged him.

"You might have been followed here," she said quietly.

His lips curled. "I think not. I came too fast. And, besides, why should any one follow me?" As he asked the question, he thought of Tom Doran and sank shivering to the chair.

Marcella roused abruptly, motioned to the unconscious girl. "Carry her upstairs!" she ordered.

CHAPTER V.

FREE!

IT was all part and parcel of that dim nightmare horror which had gripped her there at the door of Marcella Crosby's house, Nora felt; that moment when she stared out at the misty night, saw the yellow blobs of light, the blur of passing figures, felt that terrible pressure on her wrists, and knew that she was being dragged inside.

That moment had seemingly stretched to hours, days, years. There had been no cessation of terror for her, even when she was unconscious. She had lain helpless there in the chair in the hall, paralyzed by the cruel choking, and clearly she had heard them talking.

Marcella Crosby and a man! She knew when he lifted her and carried her upstairs to Marcella's room. Her body was powerless as the dead, but her mind was alive and fluttering like a frantic bird against the iron bars of her helplessness. Through her closed lids, she seemed to see them. Marcella, lovely and aloof! The man, just a formless shape that spoke and moved but did not possess features of definite outlines! Once she heard his name, Luke Maltby, and it haunted her blurred consciousness with a queer sort of horror, though she could not think when she had heard it.

They were talking about the money in the house on Archer Street. They had found her letter, the one she had returned to search for, not because it held the clew to that suitcase alone, but because it contained proof of her father's hiding, because it might be the means of recapture.

Marcella bent over her. Struggle as she would, Nora could not keep her lids closed. She dreaded to look at that pale, pointed face, but a force outside herself jerked her eyes wide. And all the time something was saying to her:

"Fool them! Trick them! Don't let them know!"

"What did you do with the brown suitcase, Nora?" Marcella said clearly, much as she might have

asked where her secretary had placed a certain letter.

Nora saw Maltby then. He was standing by the fireplace. His face was long and very white. There were blue shadows beneath his eyes. He drummed restlessly with a short, thick finger.

"What do you want? I don't know," she replied faintly.

Marcella put her face close to the girl's. "I'd hate to be unpleasant," she said. "I'll give you one minute to answer truthfully. Where is the suitcase?"

"Fool them! Trick them!" ran the endless refrain through Nora's mind. "Don't let them know!"

She moaned and pressed a cold hand to her throat. "I haven't got it," she whispered. "I—went—there. It was terrible, so damp and dark, I was so frightened. I think I was in the wrong room. I was so afraid I ran away. I had lost the—letter." She began sobbing chokingly. She was acting all right, but the terror she described was very real. She had raced from that house on Archer Street.

Marcella studied her reflectively. Then she turned her head, and her eyes met Luke Maltby's and held in a long, slow stare. He nodded slightly.

Marcella rose. "You sound as if you were telling the truth, Nora," she decided. "We will check up on you. If we find the suitcase, no harm will come to you. You will receive a share of the money. Mr. Maltby will assist your father in his escape from the cellar of Graveyard House."

Nora's fingers bit into the silken covers of the lounge. So that was where Bill Mahoney was. In the cellar of Graveyard House.

Marcella went on. "You see, we intend to be perfectly fair with you, provided you play fair with us. I ask you again, did you find that suitcase?"

Nora's eyes closed. "No," she moaned. "I didn't find it. It is there I think, but I became frightened. You have no right to take it."

Marcella laughed. "Right? What right did your father have to steal it in the first place. Thief! Common thief!"

"Don't bother with that," Luke Maltby snapped. "You'd better stay here with the girl. I'll go to Archer Street."

Marcella was standing up now, and her slow, cool glance met and clashed with his. "You think so, Luke? Well, I'm sorry to disagree with you. I, too, shall go to Archer Street."

The man scowled. Then he shrugged. "What about her?"

"Don't worry about her," Marcella advised. "Just do as I tell you."

Nora screamed as Luke Maltby picked her up.

There was darkness all about her. Darkness so thick and sentient that she cringed, shuddering into a corner trying to avoid it. She was not bound. She was not gagged. But she was tucked neatly into Marcella's closet, and the heavy door was bolted on the outside. She had been there how long? She had no notion.

She brushed damp hair from her eyes, opened her lips, sucking in the dry, heavy air that smelled of sandalwood.

When she moved in the cramped space, garments touched her. Soft, filmy things, crawling fur, cool silk, hateful bunches of feathers that seemed like vicious little creatures oozing over her. Nora fought an impulse to scream. She had already

screamed herself hoarse. The closet was buried in the house. There were many rooms and corridors between it and the servants' wing at the back. Marcella had chosen the prison well. And Nora had never dreamed that mere garments, the clothes that are used to drape the human form, could be so unspeakably horrible.

She dropped to the floor, face buried in her hands. This would be the end. They would not find the suitcase. They would return and——

She leaped up, tearing blindly at the rows of limp dresses, ripping them with frantic fingers, as she stumbled toward the door, swayed against it, pounding with her knuckles, screaming her terror.

Light! She wanted light. She couldn't wait for death there in the velvet dark. She could die if she had to, but she wanted to see the sun again, breathe free air, hear human voices, human sounds.

She stopped, breath caught. From the other side of the door came a sound. A scratching match! She backed slowly. Who was there? Marcella and Luke Maltby returned already? Why were they scratching matches? Was the current dead from the storm?

Then she heard a cautious footfall, a muttered exclamation. She pressed her hands tight against her stiff lips and cautiously backed to the corner, buried herself behind a rack of voluminous negligees, waited, completely hidden, for what new danger she could not guess.

It seemed ages before she sensed the intruder directly outside the closet door. She heard fingers passed lightly over the panels, a grunt, then the slipping of the bolt.

She stuffed silken folds into her mouth to keep from crying out. Whoever it was meant danger to her. It wouldn't be Bevins, one of the maids. They wouldn't come creeping like this. If they had been attracted by her cries, they would walk in boldly, open the door.

The door was opening. There was a breath of fresher air. But still darkness! Darkness and the sense of human presence, faint sound of human breathing! Then a blinding light filled the place. Nora's eyes closed against it, hidden as she was.

Slowly, the light traveled over the rows of garments, lifted, explored the shelves where hatboxes were stored, dropped, drifted over the rows of small gay shoes arranged neatly on trees—disappeared!

The door closed. Nora waited breathlessly for the shooting home of the bolt. It did not come!

Again there was the cautious prowling outside, then gradually the sounds died. There came the distant furtive closing of a door. She could not move for a long time. Presently, she was creeping out of her hiding place, groping her way toward the unlocked door. The sitting room was in darkness. A faint light sifted out from the charred embers on the hearth. It showed the room empty.

Hardly daring to believe in her release, not even trying to figure who had unconsciously freed her, she darted from the hall, found it deserted, and raced toward the stairs. Tumbling down them, groping for the front door, fearful of finding it locked, she jerked it back and stumbled onto the small porch.

The street was deserted. It had stopped raining. The air was delightfully fresh. She breathed greedily. There were lights on the corner, rustle of leaves, drip of eaves.

Round the corner came the headlights of a big car. She heard its

soft, powerful purring as it swept toward her. Instinctively, she crouched in the shadow under the high, steep steps, and waited for it to pass. It did not pass. It slowed before the house, then stopped. The door opened. A woman got out, ran across the sidewalk, high heels tapping angrily. A man followed her. Nora huddled lower. Marcella and Luke Maltby!

Over her head a door slammed. She darted out and ran blindly for the corner, rounded it, and stopped her headlong flight only when lack of breath halted her panting, three blocks away.

CHAPTER VI.

A BAT.

BILL MAHONEY groaned and struggled to sit up. A wound on his head was bleeding sluggishly. His bruised body was a mass of pain. His shoulder wound had broken open. It was like a knife being slowly turned in quivering flesh.

Getting to his feet, he clambered up the steep steps and pushed with his one good arm against the trapdoor. Then, with a dull groan, he sat down and stared straight ahead. Of course, Maltby had moved the table over it.

He stumbled back to the pile of bedding in the corner. He had the lantern but the oil was nearly gone. He was hoarding it against a possible greater need. Bill Mahoney was not afraid of the dark. He had been in dark places before.

Pain was weakening him, loss of blood sapping his lowered vitality. He had not given up hope. For seven long years inside the gray walls of the penitentiary, hope had kept him alive. He would not give up easily now.

Old Bill was very tired. He sat there in the darkness looking back along the twisted trail of his life, and weariness settled over him like a fog. It had all seemed gay at the time: the danger, the excitement, the thrill of taking what was not his. The moral side of it had not existed for him. It had merely been his wits against the wits of the men who, for some reason he could not quite understand, were placed strategically to prevent him possessing what he desired. The law was a huge abstract force to Bill Mahoney, something to be taunted and tricked, something to be avoided as a devouring machine of punishment.

He groaned and rested his gray head against the damp wall. He had ceased to think about himself, but he was sick with worry about young Nora. Maltby's anger had been a terrible thing to witness in that moment when he had snatched the letter from Bill's hand. Bill had been preparing final instructions for his daughter. The ease with which he had sneaked out of the house and reached the mail box at the foot of the hill, had strengthened him to try again.

And now he had nothing to do except wait. He longed for sight of Nora. She was like her mother—not so frightened, not so timid. Brave, young Nora was. He smiled faintly. Nora looked like her mother, but she had inherited her father's courage. If Nora should come to him now, what would she say?

He was growing light-headed, what with the pain and weakness. He was hearing things that did not exist. For instance, he thought he heard Nora calling him. He blinked dully. Which Nora would it be? The gentle, dark-haired girl he had

married—the brave blue-eyed girl that was his daughter?

The first Nora had called him Billy. With young Nora, it had been "daddy." He roused himself from growing delirium. Those voices bothered him. He wished the two Noras would stop calling.

Then, quite clearly, he heard a very real voice, sharp with tension, directly over his head, and it said: "Father! Father! Where are you?"

Old Bill Mahoney leaped to his feet, staggering with weakness and confusion. He was dreaming!

"Father!" the voice insisted. "Father!"

"Here, Nora," the old man called. "Here in the cellar. Move the table, that's a girl. Push hard, colleen. Stay with it, Nora. That's a brave girl."

He shouted in his relief and joy. Nora upstairs? How? Why? He didn't stop to figure. He heard her tugging at the heavy table. He was up the stairs, pounding at the trapdoor, ready to help with the lifting of it when she had moved the obstruction.

As the door gave, he caught her choked, gasping cry. Then he saw her white strained face, her wide, startled eyes. She was bareheaded. Her gleaming hair was loosened and fell about her shoulders. She wore a dark raincoat, glistening with moisture. As he climbed out to drop weakly on the floor, he caught the dull smudge of bruises on her throat.

She knelt beside him, arms around his shaking shoulders. Through sobs, she was telling him something. She had the suitcase. Marcella Crosby and Luke Maltby had tried to make her tell. They had shut her in a closet. Some one had released her. Who was it? She didn't know. She had come out in a taxi. It had been a terrible trip. She thought she was being followed, but the car lights had turned off somewhere in the town. She was going to save him. He must never go back to prison.

Through her incoherent tumbling words, came the sound of a big car roaring up the hill. Nora leaped to her feet. Bill rose weakly.

"Put the trapdoor down, Nora," he directed calmly. "Now the rug. Let's shove the table back. It will give us a little time."

Steps sounded on the porch. Bill Mahoney had Nora's hand. He was leading her through the kitchen to the back door, slipping the bolt, drawing her out into the dark. They stood there helplessly for a moment, the old man and the tense, white-lipped girl. Then, without words, they started running, stumbling in their frantic haste, slashed by wet boughs, torn by dead branches.

After fifty yards, Bill Mahoney gave a sudden gasp and fell to his knees.

"It's no use, girl," he groaned. "I'm beat. Go on!"

"Hush! Don't talk like that. Let me help you."

Bill got to his feet uncertainly, one arm over her strong, slim shoulders. There seemed no way out for him. Where could he go? Wounded! Hunted! Beaten!

A sob caught in Nora's throat as she sensed his slumping body. She thought then she would gladly hand over that suitcase to whoever wanted it just for a chance at saving her father.

She stopped, leaning against the cold wet side of a low stone building. Old Bill sank down at her feet, groaning between set teeth.

Nora stared at the gray darkness around her dully. Where was she? There were looming shapes of white stones. Dark mounds drifted with

wet leaves. With a shudder, she got it. A cemetery! The graveyard of Graveyard House!

Then she heard her father's voice: "Nora, there's a door open."

She thought he was wandering in his mind, but he was tugging at her sleeve. "Inside. We can rest a bit."

"Hush!" she whispered, crouching beside him. "Some one's coming."

Through the still, wet air came the sound of feet pounding recklessly in the underbrush, the furtive gleam of a flashlight. Nora pulled the old man into the shelter of the stone wall, huddled beside him. Suddenly, the light came on brightly, circled slowly, touching the gaunt trunks of trees, the moldy, tipping stones, then a woman's voice said petulantly:

"You're insane. They didn't come this way."

Marcella Crosby!

Luke Maltby answered impatiently: "Well, the back door was open. There's no place else to go. I had a hunch that girl would come out here. You gave the show away by letting her know the old man was——"

"Don't quibble," she returned coldly. "They're gone. We've got to find them."

The light came on again, probing with its bright eye at shadowy clumps of bushes, prying into darkness. Somewhere from the right came a stifled cough. Nora's head jerked round, back to where the inquisitive beam of light was approaching. Some one was lurking behind that pile of brushwood.

Abruptly, the finger of light stopped, and too late Nora leaped aside, dragging old Bill after her. They were discovered. She tried to run, tried to support her father's staggering steps. With a groan, he collapsed, and she stopped, staring dully into the face of Marcella Crosby.

"All right, Nora," Marcella said crisply. "You'll come along back with us. We've got some questions to ask you."

Big Bill Mahoney surged to his feet. It took every reserve ounce of strength in his ruined body. It called for the last atom of his indomitable will.

He shoved Nora behind him and he spoke through set teeth: "Lay off my girl. You ain't takin' her any place."

A shot cracked. Mahoney's frail body spun around and sank twitching to the ground. Nora's stricken moan was lost in the cry that burst from Luke Maltby's lips. As he fired, the flash in his hand had jerked round and shone full on the door of the Maltby vault. It was wide open!

Maltby stood glaring at the yawning entrance to that tomb, the light still clutched in his shaking hands. Marcella Crosby, too, was startled into momentary immobility, then a quiet voice said from the darkness to the right:

"Hold 'em steady, everybody!"

Into the circle of light from Maltby's tumbling flash stepped a grim-faced man, dressed in a shapeless suit, a battered cap. His grimy hand clutched a revolver. It covered Luke Maltby unwaveringly. He spoke without removing his eyes:

"Take his gun, Nora Gamble. In his side pocket, likely. Quiet, Maltby! I'd like to shoot."

Maltby cringed from the light. "Doran!" he gasped. "Max Doran!"

Nora found herself on her feet, jerking an automatic from Maltby's pocket. There was a deathly stillness inside her, an absence of feeling that filled her with a dull wonder. Her father was dying. For a

moment, her finger tensed on the trigger of the gun she held, then the man in the battered cap said:

"Bring it here, Nora. You can trust me. I'm Max Doran. We've got Maltby. Got him twice for murder."

Luke Maltby lifted his head, slowly, like a man roused from sleep. He blinked at the light, at Nora, Marcella, the quiet form of old Bill Mahoney, then, fascinated, his glance came back to the vault door. He said carefully:

"It shouldn't be open. I closed it——"

"When you hid my father's body there?" Max Doran cut in. "Yes, I know you did. And when you closed that door, you signed your own death warrant. I knew my father had come to Graveyard House that night. I didn't think Bill Mahoney had killed him, then stopped in his flight to conceal the body so carefully that fifty men couldn't find it.

"Headquarters went over dad's wrecked car for prints but they missed the ignition keys. You had, too, Maltby, when you cleaned that car. I got those impressions and later, at Graveyard House, I took more, working on my father's hunch that Mahoney might be around the place without your knowledge. I found dad's prints on the center table and prints that matched those on the keys. They were yours, Maltby!"

Max Doran spoke quietly, but there was a fierce intensity about the words that told of the long hours of strain, the grief of his father's death, his savage triumph in trapping the killer.

He went on: "Then I knew that you had driven my father's car to destruction. Why, if you weren't trying to conceal the fact of his death? I named you his murderer in my mind and I set out to prove it. I thought dad's body might be hidden out here and I spent a lot of time around the place.

"On my first visit, I was attracted by a bat. It was fluttering around that side window in the vault. Its actions aroused my curiosity. The bunch of dried flowers stuck in the opening looked funny. I figured the bat's home was inside the vault. Some one had let it out, and it couldn't get back. That argued the door had been opened. Folks don't visit vaults on pleasure jaunts. I filed the padlock, got inside, and found——"

With a choked curse, Maltby turned to run. A bullet stopped him. But it did not come from the gun in the hands of Max Doran. From the shelter of the bushes stepped a tall, lean man in the uniform of the prison guards. Another appeared from the left. The first one said as he snapped cuffs on Maltby's wrists:

"Well, we got your message, Max. We found old Tom."

Max Doran nodded briefly. "Thanks, Joe. I had the door open and found—what I was—looking for, when I heard Maltby's car start. I was afraid he'd given me the slip. I followed him to town. He went to 4287 Claremont Drive."

He glanced sharply at Marcella Crosby. A quick, angry exclamation escaped from her white lips. Luke Maltby had succeeded in getting her involved in this ugly mess by coming to her house, and what did she have for her trouble? Her eyes, wild with baffled fury, flashed to the groaning, cursing man whom, a few hours ago, she had inveigled into telling her a story of fortune to be found, a fortune that would have wiped out her debts, erased her worries.

Max Doran smiled mirthlessly. "When you dragged Nora Gamble inside the house, Mrs. Crosby," he said, "you started me wondering. I got in through a basement window. Thought I heard a woman scream upstairs some place, but I couldn't locate her."

Nora gasped. "You let me out of the closet?" she asked breathlessly.

Max Doran gazed down at her. The death of his father had aged him ten years, but he smiled and shook his head. "No. I thought the sound came from the closet, but, when I opened it——"

"I was hiding in the corner," Nora said. "I was so—afraid—but you left the door unlocked."

He nodded. "I'm glad. Mrs. Crosby and Maltby must have slipped out a side door while I was hunting an entrance; anyway, I was still in the house when they came back. I heard their plans. They were wild over your escape, Nora Gamble. When they left, I trailed in my own car. I had given the boys at the penitentiary a ring earlier in the evening. I guess that's all. I'm sorry I couldn't save old Bill."

The limp huddle that rested against Nora's shoulder stirred faintly. A voice, very faint and far away, spoke brokenly: "All right. I'm glad—couldn't beat the game. Better this way. Look out for Nora."

Old Bill Mahoney's head dropped lower. Nora's arms tightened convulsively around his shoulders. She was sobbing monotonously. But a strange peace had settled over her. There would be no more prison cells for Bill Mahoney.

She said clearly: "The suitcase containing the money—my father—hid is checked at the Wentworth Street Station. The ticket I mailed to myself, general delivery. You are to give the money back where it belongs."

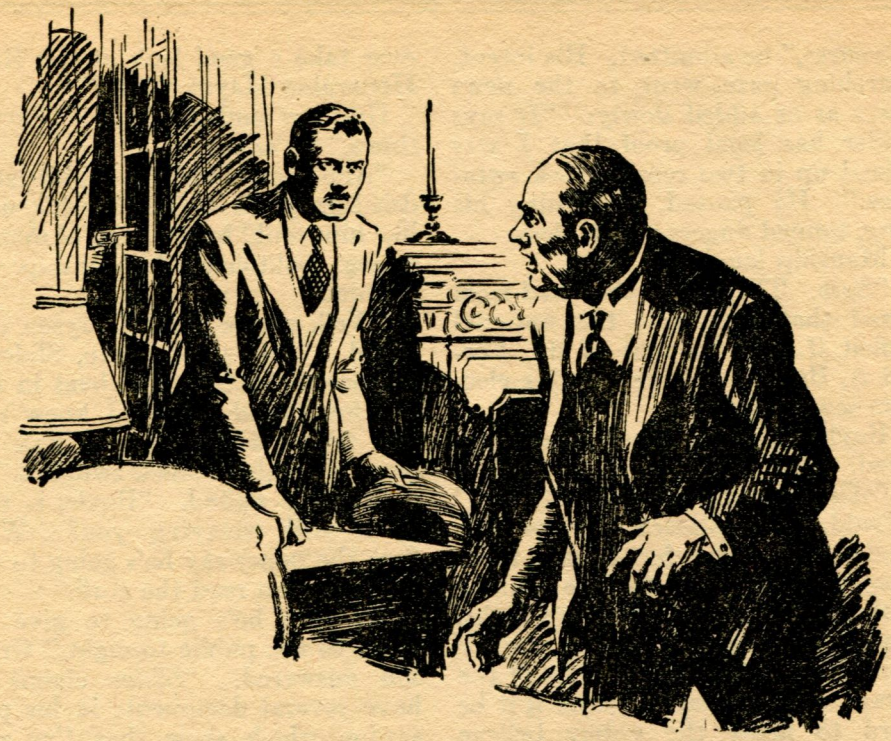
An exclamation broke from Marcella Crosby's lips. She started forward, face livid with rage. One of the guards dragged her back. She crouched in his grasp, eyes stark and terrible on Nora's lowered head. Luke Maltby was sitting up, groaning dully. A widening stain of crimson showed on the front of his shirt. He fumbled at it and his dazed eyes clung to the open door of the vault.

"A bat," he whispered. "A—bat!"

Max Doran laughed shortly. "Yes, a bat, Maltby. When you closed that vault door after blocking the window with flowers, you locked your doom outside. If it hadn't been for the bat, I would never have thought of the vault."

Luke Maltby wasn't hearing him. He slumped limply on the wet ground, and through his numb brain beat the endless whirring of restless wings. He cursed brokenly. As long as he lived, he would hear them, beating, fluttering, marking the way to destruction for him and his hopes. Dully, he glanced up. Marcella was drawing the limp folds of her cloak around her, pretending to ignore the firm pressure of the guard's hand on her arm. Max Doran, his tired face oddly gentle, was drawing Nora Gamble to her feet.

Maltby shivered and closed his eyes. He was alone, as he had always been, and in his ears was that endless drone of frenzied wings.



SECRET HEAD

By MARK FARLEY

His innocent nature made him walk right into a murder trap.

BOYLE GRAYSON, independent candidate for mayor of Magnol, stared moodily at the newspaper spread on his desk. As he reread the lead story, his full-cut lips tightened a little. But, presently, they relaxed into a rather wry smile as he glanced up and spoke to the man seated opposite him.

"Well, Lee, what's Slider's outfit up to this time, do you suppose?" Grayson tapped the newspaper as he put the question. "They wouldn't come out with a story like this unless they had something to back it."

"High-powered bunk!" Lee Manship, Grayson's campaign manager, always spoke and acted explosively. "That bunch of mud-slingers backing Slider would pass the word out that you murdered your grandmother for her gold teeth, if they thought anybody'd believe 'em."

"I know." Grayson frowned thoughtfully. "But there's something more than mud-slinging behind this story." Again, he tapped the paper before him.

"What's behind it?" Manship demanded, leaning forward.

Grayson shrugged. "I don't know,

of course," he admitted. His intent, searching gaze went to the news sheet as he added slowly: "It says Slider has legal proof that I was mixed up in two recent stock swindles." He paused, drumming his long, tanned fingers on the desk.

Manship laughed.

"Sure. They'd *say* they had legal proof that you stole the national deficit if they thought of it. Forget it, Boyle. You've got this election sewed up."

Boyle Grayson slowly shook his head.

"Wish I could believe that, Lee," he said. "But Slider's ring has controlled this town for a long time. They're not going to lose control without putting up a nasty fight. And I can't help thinking they're about to get in the best licks of the scrap. Fouls, maybe. But it'll be hard to make the voters believe that."

Manship made an impatient gesture.

"Don't forget I was a political reporter before I turned to campaign managing," he advised. "I know as many tricks as they do." He paused for a moment to light a cigarette, then added abruptly: "There's only one thing about that gang of gorillas I don't know."

"What's that?"

"Who the head of it is—the power behind the throne, so to speak."

Grayson looked at his campaign manager in some astonishment.

"The head of it?" he repeated. "Isn't Slider?"

Lee Manship's expression and voice changed from intentness to mock pity.

"Boyle," he said, "you're going to make a cracking good mayor for this town. But you'll never be a politician. You're too darned innocent and honest. Why, man, did you ever take a good look at the Right Honorable Mayor Slider?"

Grayson smiled a little. "Several times," he admitted.

"And you think a rabbit-faced, dried-up piece of last week's news like him could boss a gang of money-eating politicians?" Manship demanded.

"Well, maybe not," Grayson conceded. "But at any rate, Slider is the one we're trying to beat in this election. And I wish I knew now how he's going to try to link my name with those stock swindles."

Manship sighed. "Boyle, is that bunk still worrying you? What does the paper say he's going to do? I didn't even read the stuff."

"It says he's going to give his proof to the public to-night," Grayson answered. "Slider claims to have several documents in his possession which show that I'm connected with those swindles. He's going to read these documents as part of his speech to-night. Then later they'll be open to public inspection." Grayson frowned deeply as he added: "Here's the nastiest part of the story, though. Slider insinuates that there's some danger of my trying to have the documents stolen. So he's keeping them in a safe in his home, with a special detective guarding."

"What's that?" Manship had sprung to his feet. The amused toleration in his face hardened into tense interest. He stepped swiftly around the desk and stood leaning over Grayson's shoulder, avidly reading one column of the paper.

For a moment, neither man spoke. Then Manship said bitterly:

"You're right, Boyle. There is something to this. Plenty. I was a fool for not reading the whole dirty story sooner." His right hand balled tightly as he continued, his voice

cutting: "It's plain enough what they're trying to pull, anyhow. And I'm the boy to break up that kind of a game."

Grayson glanced up at him.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you see?" Manship's voice was almost harsh. "Those documents aren't ever going to appear on the scene, of course, because they don't exist. But Slider's gang is going to fix things so people will believe you had the papers stolen. That's their idea, anyhow."

Grayson nodded. "I thought of that. But it hardly seems possible that——"

"That even politicians would try anything that rotten?" Manship interrupted. "Aw, wake up, Boyle! Slider's outfit could teach professional racketeers a few tricks. But don't do any worrying. I'll have things fixed before I get back." He was already halfway to the door, lighting another cigarette as he went out.

"Where——" Grayson began. But Manship had left the room before the question could be completed.

For some time after this abrupt departure, Grayson had little leisure in which to worry or speculate on his campaign manager's plan of action. A continuous stream of telephone calls, visitors, and interviews with campaign workers kept the young mayoralty candidate more than busy. A number of his well-wishers asked Grayson what answer he intended making to the sensational charges brought against him by Slider. And each time, Grayson made the noncommittal reply that Lee Manship was attending to the matter.

About five o'clock, the pressure of urgent business began to slacken. Grayson had a few minutes to himself, and immediately his anxious thoughts went to the whereabouts of Manship.

Glancing at his wrist watch, Grayson realized that the other had been gone for more than three hours. That was a long absence for Manship. He usually did what he had to do in the least possible time, especially when the matter was important. And Grayson was at a loss to understand why his campaign manager hadn't at least made a telephone report before now.

He had about decided to make some effort to locate Manship, when he was again interrupted by a visitor.

The newcomer—a tall, distinguished-appearing man of about fifty—glanced swiftly about Grayson's private office before stepping into it. He seemed relieved to find only the young mayoralty candidate there and said quickly:

"Can we be alone for a few minutes, Grayson? I've something important to discuss with you."

Grayson had risen as the other entered.

"Of course, Mr. Lashern." He paused, then added with a friendly smile, "I'm honored to have you here, sir. I didn't know you took much interest in politicians or their affairs."

Lashern's black, deeply socketed eyes rested on the younger man's face for a moment in a searching stare. After a second, he replied abruptly, his deep voice smooth and dry:

"I don't. But I hardly consider you a politician. That's why I've been working, probably without you knowing it, for your election. And that's why I'm here now."

As he spoke, Lashern seated himself in a chair near Grayson's desk. The visitor, sitting or standing, held himself rigidly erect. He wore an

expensive and perfectly tailored blue suit which emphasized the sun-darkened swarthiness of his skin. His thin right hand gripped the head of a cane—an unusual accessory in the Southern city. Seated, he removed his panama hat, laid it in his lap, and ran nervous, slender fingers through his sparse whitish hair.

Grayson, waiting courteously for the other to open the conversation, offered him a cigar. Lashern refused it with a gesture. After a short silence, he began suddenly:

"We don't know each other very well, Grayson. And I rather expect that you're going to resent what I'm about to tell you—at first. Later, I think you'll thank me."

Grayson made no comment. But something of his surprised interest showed in his eyes. Lashern continued, his voice clipped:

"It's about your campaign manager, Manship, that I've come to see you. About him and the story printed in this afternoon's papers. The two, I have reason to believe, are rather closely connected."

Grayson stiffened. His gaze changed from friendliness to open hostility.

"I suppose you wouldn't make a charge like that without good reason, Mr. Lashern," he said coldly. "But before you go any further—Lee Manship is one of the best friends I've got. And neither you nor any one else can make me believe he's a double-crosser."

"Splendid of you to feel that way." Lashern seemed to have anticipated the other's reaction. "But I always finish what I——"

He broke off and jerked his head toward the office door. It had been thrust open by a uniformed messenger boy who glanced inquiringly from one to the other of the seated men as he demanded:

"Is one of you Mr. Grayson?"

Grayson nodded. A moment later, he was reading a wire which the boy handed to him.

As Grayson read, the sharp, hard sentences seemed to drill their way into his mind. He reread them twice, at first unbelievingly, then in slow bewilderment. The wire ran:

SAW SLIDER STOP I CAN'T CONTINUE TO MANAGE A CROOK'S CAMPAIGN SO AM OFFERING MY RESIGNATION STOP IT TOOK LOTS OF PROOF TO CONVINCE ME YOU ARE A SWINDLER, GRAYSON, BUT SLIDER HAD ENOUGH STOP I'M LEAVING TOWN AT ONCE FOR IF I STAYED HERE I MIGHT FEEL OBLIGATED TO WORK AGAINST YOU AND I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO DO THAT LEE MANSHIP

Grayson's hand was white as he crumpled the wire. Mechanically, he dropped it into a wastebasket. He could feel the slow drain of blood from his face. His thoughts boiled. Lee, his best friend, breaking with him, turning against him, without even asking or giving a real explanation.

What was behind it? Slider, of course. What sort of black story had he forged? What kind of lying evidence had he collected against his opponent? Was there any way to——

Suddenly, Grayson was conscious of Lashern's curious stare. And with that consciousness came clarity of thought, control of himself once more.

"No bad news, I hope?" Lashern asked.

"Couldn't be much worse." Grayson's voice was bitter. But he made no offer to take the other into his confidence. Lashern had the name of being one of Magnol's best and wealthiest citizens. But he was little more than a speaking acquaint-

ance of the young mayoralty candidate.

"I'm sorry. Anything I can do?" Lashern's interest and sympathy seemed entirely sincere. He rose as he spoke, adding. "Perhaps I'd better be going. You seem badly upset. I can see you again in the morning."

"There's one thing you can do for me if you will." Grayson's voice had a vibrant ring in it now. "I'm going to see Mayor Slider at once."

Lashern's right eyebrow went up slightly.

"About something that's just come up," Grayson added quickly. "Something personal and rather unpleasant." He hesitated for only a second. "And there's a chance that I'll have trouble with him. I'd like to have a witness with me. Some one like you, whose word would mean something to the general public."

Lashern looked at him in apparent doubt. But, presently, he said lightly:

"I'll be glad to go with you. Slider is at his country home now, I believe. At least, so I read in this morning's paper. I'll drive you down there in my car."

Mayor G. L. Slider's country home, located about twenty miles from Magnol, was a pretentious establishment. More than one rumor had been circulated to the effect that the place had been built with misappropriated city funds. But wherever the money had come from, there could be no doubt that large sums had gone into the creation of the luxurious house and spreading, beautifully kept grounds. The estate was picturesque.

The car which bore Grayson and Lashern to those grounds was stopped at the entrance to them by a man who seemed to be stationed there as a guard.

Grayson gave his name and said that he had to see Mayor Slider on important business. The fellow seemed uncertain for a moment, but finally climbed onto the running board, growling:

"The mayor ain't seeing many people to-day. But I guess it's O. K. Anyhow, I'll ride up to the house with you and see."

When the car stopped under a porte-cochère, the guard gruffly told Grayson and Lashern to wait. With that, he left them, disappearing through a side door into the house.

The hush and shadow of early night deepened around the Slider estate as the two men waited in the car. Once, Lashern broke the silence with:

"I'll stay here, Grayson, unless you particularly want me to go in with you."

"I think I'd better go in alone," Grayson answered absently. He was wondering how he should word the demand he'd come to make of Slider—demand for an explanation of what Magnol's mayor had told Lee Manship that afternoon.

And the young candidate was still uncertain as to what he would say to Slider, when the guard appeared in the doorway and called:

"O. K. He'll see you. Come on in."

Grayson left the car, determined that he would learn what he must know even if it meant starting an actual fight.

The guard led him through a hallway and into a handsomely furnished drawing-room. Glancing about, Grayson saw that the room was deserted. He turned inquiringly.

"The mayor'll be here in a minute. Take a seat." The guard was

gone almost before he completed the two brief sentences.

Ten minutes went by without Slider making his appearance. Grayson tried to curb his impatience by an inspection of the fine pictures on the walls. But the only light in the place, a floor lamp near the hall door, afforded poor visibility.

Once, Grayson turned abruptly, thinking he heard a footstep behind him. He was still alone. Puzzled, he stared toward the French windows opening onto a veranda. The vague sound had seemed to come from that direction. But he could see nothing. He shrugged, deciding that his imagination had tricked him.

A moment later, an unmistakable footstep in the hall turned him again.

Slider was standing in the doorway—a short, flabby man whose large, pale-blue eyes seemed to harbor an eternal and indefinite fear. He was plainly astonished to see Grayson, and, after a brief, startled glance at him, shrank back toward the hall doorway.

Then, as though some invisible force held him, he froze into motionless rigidity. His gaze, widened into terrified fixity, had left Grayson, flashing toward the left—toward one of the French windows.

For a fraction of a second, he remained motionless. Then his mouth worked spasmodically as he cried out with the shrill brokenness of death terror. As the shuddering scream left his lips, another sound, deafening and chaotic, roared through the room—the explosion of a large-caliber revolver.

Slider lurched backward as from a heavy blow. He struck the lamp behind him, crashing it over, falling with it.

Grayson had whirled toward the window from which that shot had come. Plunging through the sudden darkness, he reached it and tore the curtains aside.

The high casements were open. Grayson sprang out onto the veranda. His right foot struck against a metal object lying on the sill. As he felt the sharp impact, he knew that he had stumbled on the murderer's death weapon.

The veranda was deserted. Grayson paused. Which way had the killer gone? The night-blanketed grounds stretching gloomily away from the house had swallowed him already. Foolish to try following. And there was a possibility that Slider might not yet be dead.

As Grayson turned toward the window again, a flood of light from the drawing-room swept over him. The next second, the guard was at the casement.

"Stay where you are, Grayson. I've got a gun. And I know how to use it." The rasped warning was emphasized by the glint of an automatic in the man's right hand.

Grayson remained motionless as the other advanced cautiously.

"Did you look at Slider? Is he dead?" Grayson's tone was quiet, cool.

"Sure he's dead," the guard snapped. "Your aim was swell. But you didn't move fast enough for a get-away."

Grayson made no direct comment on the ugly accusation. The guard's conviction seemed natural enough under the circumstances. And time was too important now to waste in useless words.

"Better phone the police right away." Grayson ignored the threat of the automatic trained on him. "The murderer's probably still on the grounds here. And he won't have time to get far."

The guard interrupted him with a harsh laugh. "Cut the funny stuff, fella. Think I'm dumb or something? Come on. Get back through that window. And don't try no fast ones."

Grayson obeyed silently. He was not yet concerned by his own dangerous position. Intensely aware of what had actually taken place, he didn't for a moment consider the possibility of any one but the guard thinking him guilty of Slider's murder.

Who had the killer been? Some political underling of Slider's whom the dead mayor had double-crossed? Ugly stories of Slider's treatment of his henchmen, when he no longer had use for them, had circulated through Magnol frequently.

But it was idle to speculate on the murderer's identity. The urgent need of the moment was to make the apparently stupid guard get in touch with the police at once.

Grayson had hardly climbed through the French window, closely followed by the armed guard, when Lashern entered the room from the hall. He stared slowly from the huddled body near him to Grayson, his dark, heavily lashed eyes questioning. Then, seeing that the guard had Grayson covered, he exclaimed:

"Great heavens, Grayson, you didn't——" He broke off, completing his question with a gesture toward the body.

"No." Grayson's voice remained even and cool. But for the first time, he had a vague foreboding of how difficult his innocence would be to prove. "The murderer got away. Will you phone the police, Mr. Lashern?"

"Still play acting, fella?" The guard's words came in a vicious snarl. "He's the one that did the shooting all right, Mr. Lashern. He was standing here by this window, wiping that gun"—and he jerked his free hand toward the revolver lying on the sill—"with a handkerchief when I come here and switched on the lights. Then he kind of yelped and dropped his gat and ducked out to the porch with me hot after him."

The smooth lies came with the glibness of truth. Grayson whipped around toward the speaker and stared at him in dazed unbelief. The guard thrust his gun arm warningly forward. His eyes met Grayson's burning gaze and returned it almost unblinkingly.

Very slowly, Grayson understood. The jaws of a powerful trap had closed on him when the shot that killed Slider was fired—a trap that must have been planned, set, and sprung within the past half hour. For so far as Grayson could see, whoever had worked that trap couldn't have known beforehand he was coming to Slider's home.

The guard had shown by his ready lies that he was part of the trap. But who was behind it? If the murder victim had been any one but Slider, Grayson would have been quick to believe *him* responsible. But Slider had been sacrificed. Why and by whom?

For silent seconds, Grayson's thoughts swirled about that question. Then a sudden remembrance of something Lee Manship had said that afternoon flashed into his mind: "Only one thing about that gang of gorillas I don't know. Who the head of it is."

The hidden head of Slider's political ring! No one else could have been so desperately determined to ruin Grayson as to play and carry out what had happened.

And unless he, Grayson, could discover who that hidden head was, the city of Magnol would continue un-

der the lecherous control of rotten politicians. Slider had been their candidate for reëlection. But they would have time to run some one else. And with Grayson's reputation swept away by the murder evidence against him, the election could go but one way.

Then, crowding these thoughts from his mind came another—one that gripped Grayson's entire consciousness and steeled him for swift action.

The guard—he was part of the trap. Then he must know who had set and sprung it. That knowledge could be forced from him.

He seemed to sense something of Grayson's intention. His trigger finger tightened perceptibly as he growled:

"Don't move, fella. I'm liable to take advantage of the fact that it ain't no crime to shoot a murderer if he tries to escape."

"I don't think Grayson's going to try to escape." Lashern advanced toward a telephone on the far side of the room as he spoke. "He probably shot Slider unintentionally during an argument. I'll get the police up here, and he can do his explaining to them."

"Wait a minute, Mr. Lashern, please." Grayson's voice was low but vibrantly insistent. What he planned to do would have to be done quickly now. "This fellow covering me seems to be certain that I murdered Slider in cold blood. And he'll shoot me down on the slightest pretense. Will you take the gun from him, keep me covered yourself, and let him do the phoning?"

The guard laughed coarsely. "Got cold feet, fella? Well, that suits me if it's O. K. with Mr. Lashern."

"I don't see why not, if it'll make Grayson feel easier." Lashern stepped past the prisoner and extended his right hand for the automatic.

As the exchange was made, Grayson bolted into action. In one darting movement, he crouched, threw himself forward, and crashed into the two men before him. The smashing impact came just as the automatic was passing from the guard's hand into Lashern's. It fell from shock-relaxed fingers, thudding onto a thick carpet.

Grayson made no attempt to get the weapon. The momentum of his rushing charge carried him on to the open casement window. He stooped, snatched the revolver still lying there on the sill, and whirled.

The guard and Lashern were both leaping toward the dropped automatic. A terse command from Grayson stopped them.

"Stand back! I'm running things now."

They obeyed, the guard cursing, Lashern in seemingly amused silence. Grayson apologized briefly to Lashern:

"Sorry I had to jump on you, Mr. Lashern. But I didn't have anything more to do with killing Slider than you did." Lashern's eyes narrowed almost imperceptibly, but he still seemed peculiarly amused. Grayson continued swiftly: "This guard lied about finding me at the window when he came in after the shooting. I know from that that he had something to do with the murder. And I'm going to find out what."

He turned toward the guard, who cringed from the burning gaze fixed on him.

"I didn't kill Slider," Grayson repeated with biting emphasis. "But this frame-up has me in a tight place. And I'm ready to shoot my way out of it if I have to. I want to know just two things from you.

If you don't answer, I'll put a bullet through you as quick as I would through a snake."

Something in his voice and eyes made the threat a real one. The guard's face went white as he shot a sullen, venomous glance toward him.

"Answer fast," Grayson snapped. "Who shot Slider? And who's the real head of the political ring Slider was supposed to control?"

The guard's thick mouth writhed as though he were both trying to reply and fighting against it. Then, as though drawn by a magnet, his gaze slid toward where Lashern stood a little behind and to one side of Grayson.

Something in the fellow's stricken look automatically turned Grayson's eyes in the same direction. He started violently. The next second, he had dropped the barrel of his revolver a fraction of an inch and jerked against the trigger. For the second time that night, a blast of sound thundered through the room.

For as Grayson turned, he had glimpsed the light of almost insane hatred and the menace of murderous intention in Lashern's gleaming eyes. He glimpsed, too, Lashern's right hand coming up from a coat pocket, gripping a gun. Grayson's bullet had shattered the wrist of that hand.

The other two men were once more at his mercy. But now he no longer needed to question. That momentary view of Lashern transformed from impeccability of appearance into killing fury had told him all he needed to know.

Late that night Boyle Grayson and Lee Manship were again seated in the young mayoralty candidate's private office. Both were absorbed in an extra edition of the evening paper. Manship looked up from his copy to exclaim:

"Well, they've got the whole story, all right. All about how I was kidnaped, the fake wire sent to you with my name on it, that guard's confession, which probably means Lashern will hang, and all the rest. They played my name up a lot," he added happily. "Gave all the dope on how the guard told where I was being held and how a special police car was sent for me."

"Yes," Grayson said slowly, tapping his paper. "The whole story's right here. But parts of it are hard to believe. Lashern, with the reputation of being one of our best citizens, the real head of the political ring here! And with such a black record to hide that he shot his own henchman, Slider, with his own hand to complete a frame-up that would make my defeat at the polls certain. It hardly seems possible——"

"That a politician could be so rotten?" Manship interrupted. "Well, one thing isn't possible."

"What's that?" Grayson demanded.

"That *you* will ever be a politician," Manship answered, grinning. "You're too honest and innocent."

A Million-dollar Dog

A SERIAL

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY

A dog, only a dog, but it was keeping him from a million.

CHAPTER I.

BY WAY OF PROLOGUE.

LIKE a sudden shock there came to Roger Rengate the full import of the old attorney's words. He lurched to his feet like a man dazed. He seemed to stagger a little, as though from a blow, and clutched at the end of the long, old-fashioned library table for support.

The thing was so unexpected, so incredible, that it knocked the feet right out from under a man, so to speak. It was something like the proverbial "bolt from the blue." Only the stilted words of a legal document, intoned in a sonorous voice by an old family attorney—but they had upset a world of expectation, had wrecked plans, possibly had changed the course of lives.

Roger Rengate felt the hot flush of anger engulf his body. His mind

spun in bewilderment. He almost laughed, probably he would have laughed had not emotion choked him and rendered laughter impossible for the moment.

What a situation! What a farce! What a personal calamity! He had anticipated receiving about a million in cash and property, the estate of his late aunt. He had been taught to expect it, had been told repeatedly that he would get it. And he was to have only six thousand a year.

And all because of a dog—a police dog named Major!

The others in the library were giving attention to Morgan Tayne, the distinguished, gray-haired lawyer who always had attended to the business of Mrs. Amanda Rengate. Astonishment was written in their faces. They scarcely could believe what they had heard. They, too, had expected that the reading of the will would be but a mere formality, that the entire estate would go to Roger Rengate, with the possible exceptions of a few minor bequests to old servants.

None of them was looking at Roger Rengate at the moment, a thing for which he was thankful. He did not want them to see the disappointment which he felt sure was mirrored in his countenance. He glanced at them swiftly.

There was Mrs. Jane Dorne, who had been his aunt's housekeeper and companion for years—a tall, bony woman with a hawklike face and a stern manner. Beside her sat her niece, Patricia, a beautiful and wholesome girl of twenty. John Hartson, the aged gardener, cringed in a corner like a man who felt out of place in the gathering. Doctor Louis Walsh, the fat veterinary, sat at the end of the table and tried to look professional and important.

Shocked, all of them, by the words of the will! Pleasantly shocked, some of them!

Roger Rengate suddenly found that Patricia Dorne was looking at him searchingly. He managed to smile at her, and then glanced toward the lawyer again. He regained his composure in a measure, and tried to speak in a natural manner as he addressed Morgan Tayne.

"Will you kindly explain that again, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly, my boy," Morgan Tayne said. He cleared his throat and adopted a professional attitude again, a sort of old-fashioned, pompous attitude belonging to the legal days of Prince Albert coats, starched shirts and little black bow ties. "You are to inherit the entire estate of your late aunt, Mrs. Amanda Rengate, without any strings on it whatsoever—but not until the death of the dog. In the meantime, you are to receive six thousand a year from the estate. If you do anything to shorten the life of the dog—kill him outright—you lose the million."

"I understand that, sir."

"This house is to be kept open and run as usual, with Mrs. Dorne, your aunt's housekeeper, in full charge. An allowance is to be made from the estate for that purpose. Mrs. Dorne is also to be the custodian of the dog, and care for him. She receives a salary of three thousand a year as long as the dog lives. Doctor Walsh, the veterinary, receives a like sum per annum during the lifetime of the dog, in return for which he is to inspect the animal regularly, and attend him in case of injury or illness."

"I understand."

"I know that this must be a keen disappointment for you, Roger. But perhaps it will be a good thing. You'll inherit the estate eventually,

and it will be increasing in value all the time, you know. You are now a little past twenty-two. You'll have your six thousand a year—five hundred a month—and that is enough for a man of your age. You can live like a young gentleman on it. Use the time fitting yourself for the handling of this big estate when it finally comes into your hands. You'll be the sole heir."

"I appreciate that, sir."

"Major cannot live forever—not for more than five years longer, I'd say offhand. Your aunt had your best interests at heart, I'm sure. Possibly, she had the feeling that you are yet too young to be intrusted with such a big estate. And Major saved her life, and she wanted to be sure that he would be cared for properly."

"But I'd have cared for him gladly, sir, if my aunt had asked it. I—I really like the dog."

"And Mrs. Dorne, your aunt's housekeeper and companion for so many years, will be provided for."

"My aunt could have provided for Mrs. Dorne in her will—could have left her a lump sum. I certainly would not have begrudged any amount she might have left Mrs. Dorne, or Hartson, our old gardener."

"Do not grow bitter about it, Roger."

"Bitter?" Roger laughed mirthlessly. "I do not want to feel bitter. But this—it will make me a thing to be laughed at. The man kept out of his inheritance by a dog! Major is sure to have his picture in all the Sunday papers. The million-dollar dog! And everybody will be saying that my aunt was crazy—crazy—that's it!"

"Steady, my boy!" the old lawyer said. "She was not insane. Anticipating such a charge, she had herself examined by competent alienists at the time she made the will. Moreover, if you contest the will, you are to get only ten dollars, and the estate goes to charity. Your aunt was a splendid woman, a lady of courage and sterling common sense. I had the pleasure of knowing her for years. I would not criticize her actions."

"I suppose I have no right to do so, sir. She had the right to do as she pleased with her money. If she wished to give it to dogs, or found a home for cats——"

"Roger!" the old lawyer interrupted.

"You drew up that will, didn't you? Then why didn't you stop her? Why didn't you show her how foolish it would look—and how foolish it would make me look? A dog—holding up an estate! Keeping a man from his inheritance! Wrecking plans! Why didn't she tell me what she intended doing? If she had, perhaps I—I'd not have made certain plans." His voice dwindled away, dead.

There was an unpleasant moment of silence. Then Mrs. Dorne began asking a multitude of questions, and those in the room gave their attention to the lawyer again. Roger Rengate slipped unobserved through the open door and into the wide hall of the old house. He went across the hall and into a dimly lighted drawing-room.

He felt that he wanted to be alone while he readjusted himself. In this huge room, with its rich furnishings of a past day, its valuable objects of art, its painted portraits of Roger Rengate's ancestors, perhaps he could gather strength to face the ordeal he felt was coming.

As he crossed the wide hall, he could hear the voice of Attorney Morgan Tayne rumbling on:

"—had given my word not to reveal any of the contents of the will beforehand. Will is absolutely sound and cannot be broken."

Roger Rengate walked across the big room and came to a stop in front of a full-length mirror which, in days gone by, had reflected the images of beaux and belles of fashionable society. He looked at his own reflection there. He saw the not unhandsome face of a youth of twenty-two, with curly brown hair, clear brown eyes, a well-shaped head on stalwart shoulders. He was a Rengate, without doubt—an aristocrat.

But his face was pallid now, and his lips and nostrils were quivering with emotion. A hot flush of rage swept through his body. His face tightened with anger. His eyes narrowed and blazed. His hands became fists. He turned abruptly from the mirror, disliking the picture he saw there, and started toward the front of the room.

He could hear the others talking in the library, and guessed that his absence had been noted and that he was the subject of comment. Mrs. Dorne, the old housekeeper, undoubtedly was pleased. Doctor Walsh, the veterinary, probably was gloating at the prospect of some easy money. The will satisfied them, no doubt. They were not suffering disappointment.

He heard a step, and turned swiftly. Patricia Dorne was hurrying toward him, drifting across the big room like a pink vision. She quickened her stride, rushed to him, and clasped him in her arms.

"Oh, Roger, darling!" she whispered. "It—it is too awful!"

"Can't be helped, Pat, I suppose."

"And all—all the plans."

"Smashed! Busted! On account of a dog! Only a dog standing between us and——"

"Perhaps there'll be some way out, my dear," she said.

"No way out!"

"Oh, what do we care, darling? We don't need the silly old million! We can get along splendidly on six thousand a year."

"Mrs. Roger Rengate will be Mrs. Roger Rengate," he said. "She must live like a Rengate! The apartment—the rental of that is eight thousand a year alone."

"Don't even think about it tonight, dear," Patricia begged. "We'll talk it over to-morrow. Come on back into the library."

"You skip along, Pat. I'll be there later."

She kissed him swiftly, and hurried away, turning at the door to toss another kiss back at him. Roger Rengate went on to the front of the room. He pulled aside the heavy draperies in front of a window, and peered out into the night. It was a black night, with a fine drizzle of rain falling. A proper night for the receipt of such unpleasant news, Roger Rengate told himself. As the old saw had it, a fine night for a murder—for a murder!

He tossed up his head, breathed deeply, and tried to thrust such black thoughts out of his mind. He had received an unexpected shock, but he was a Rengate, and a Rengate was supposed to exhibit fortitude when necessary. His ancestors had done so. Surely, he had enough strength of character to fight off this thing and win a clean victory.

In a way, he could not blame his aunt. The dog had saved her life two years before, out at the lake, when she had slipped and fallen off the end of the boat landing into deep water. Nobody else had been near at the time. The dog had got her ashore, and had howled until help had come. It was all right for her

to show gratitude toward the dog, and want to insure him care and comfort for the remainder of his life. But this horribly unusual will—it was too much!

Now he would have to wait for the estate, perhaps for years. It would be in excess of a million dollars after all inheritance taxes and expenses of liquidation had been paid. The old house was in the center of a block of land surrounded by a high wall. On every side of it were towering apartment houses. Fabulous offers had been made for the property, but Roger's aunt had refused to sell. She had wished to remain on the old estate during her lifetime. And now Roger could not sell it—as long as the dog lived.

Six thousand a year! He had expected to spend fifty thousand. He had decided on an apartment at eight thousand, wanted to furnish it sumptuously, wanted a couple of cars and a small yacht, a place in the country, a chance to live as a Rengate should live. And he had planned to be married.

Everything would have to wait now, be delayed indefinitely. Mrs. Dorne and the veterinary had every incentive for keeping the dog alive as long as possible, and undoubtedly would surround him with every safeguard. They had their three thousand a year each as long as Major continued to exist, and he was in his prime. But an accident might happen to the dog. A blow, a shot, a bit of meat drenched with poison!

Roger Rengate laughed mirthlessly again. There was something about that in the will, too. When the dog died, it must be shown clearly that Roger Rengate had nothing to do with the death. Nor could he conspire with the others, offer them a share of the estate if they allowed the dog to die. If such a thing could be shown, he would lose everything, and the estate would go to charitable institutions.

Roger left the window and turned back into the room—and came to an abrupt stop. Toward him was coming the innocent cause of all his disappointment. He was a splendid animal, this police dog known as Major, one to delight any dog fancier. He, too, had ancestors, and a pedigree. But the sight of him just now brought a surge of rage to Roger Rengate.

Major stalked toward him in canine dignity, looked up at him inquiringly, wondering what had become of the usual smile with which this man generally welcomed him, the cheery word, the friendly hand reaching out to give him a pat on the head or a rub between the ears.

"A million-dollar dog!" Roger Rengate muttered.

He dropped into a convenient chair. Major approached him slowly, and rested his chin on Roger Rengate's knee. He looked up at the man, as though trying to read what was to be found in his eyes. What he saw there caused him to back away quickly, and the hair of his scruff bristled.

"As long as you live, you're keeping me out of a million," Roger muttered. "A dog—only a dog! As long as you live——"

Major continued to back away from him. He sensed a sudden animosity. The old comradeship was gone. He knew that something had come between him and this man with whom he had romped so often and whom he always had considered his friend.

The dog went slowly toward the hall door, looking back frequently as though trying to solve the puzzle. Roger Rengate got out of the chair and started forward. The eyes

of the man met those of the dog again.

Major suddenly retreated to the hall. His eyes blazed; his scruff arose again. He did not offer to attack. But he snapped and snarled in sudden enmity and warning, and his vicious challenge rang through the house. He seemed to sense that this man was his friend no longer—and desired his death.

CHAPTER II.

TO A NEW HOME.

THE others rushed from the library and into the hall, and saw man and dog confronting each other. Major had crouched as though to spring. Roger Rengate was bending forward, his eyes flaming and his hands clenched.

"Back, Major!" Mrs. Dorne cried. "Please keep him back, Mr. Walsh! Roger! Is it possible that you were trying to harm the dog?"

Roger Rengate looked at her in swift astonishment, and found accusing eyes fixed upon him. He glanced quickly at the others, to find that the most of them were regarding him with suspicion. The veterinary quieted Major, kept him back against the wall, speaking to him in soothing tones.

"My boy——" Morgan Tayne began.

"Why are you all looking at me so?" Roger cried. "Do you mean that you think I—I was trying to kill the dog?"

"A million dollars is a lot of money," Mrs. Dorne observed. "And you have been sorely disappointed, Roger. With only a dog standing between you and a great fortune——"

"But I'd not get the fortune, if I killed the dog. Please don't be absurd!" Roger begged.

"Why did Major act so toward you?" Mrs. Dorne asked. "You have always been friends with him. Why should he suddenly turn against you, show fear of you? If you were not trying to attack him, you——"

"He began barking and snarling at me, and that's all I know about it."

"But there must have been something to make him act so," Mrs. Dorne persisted.

"A dog knows!" Doctor Walsh declared. "A dog senses the feelings of a person toward him. He knows if you are afraid of him, if you like or dislike him."

"My boy, you must guard yourself," Morgan Tayne intoned. "Do not, in a moment of anger, commit some rash act that will ruin your life."

"I consider that Mrs. Rengate left me a sacred trust," Mrs. Dorne declared. "I shall make it my duty to see that Major has every comfort and attention to prolong his life."

"And draw three thousand a year as long as he lives," Roger added. "Doctor Walsh, too. Very good! On my side, I shall make sure that the dog is indeed alive. I'll appoint somebody to drop around once a week and make sure of that."

"Will you not be here to see for yourself?" the housekeeper asked.

"Here? I cannot live here any longer," Roger replied. "I must give up my home here, though the house will not be sold."

"But, why?"

"I intend to safeguard my own interests. Since I must wait for my inheritance, I intend to be sure that I receive it when the dog finally dies."

"Roger, I do not understand," the lawyer put in.

"It is very simple. A moment ago, all of you believed that I was attacking the dog. If I lived here, and anything did happen to him, you might suspect me. And don't forget that I lose the estate if it can be shown that I had anything to do with the dog's death. So I'll live elsewhere, keep away from the dog. Nobody will ever be able to hint that I might have hurried matters through my own acts."

"I am sure your aunt meant you to reside here," Tayne said.

"Possibly so. But my aunt should have foreseen this situation. I certainly do not intend to risk losing the estate I have been taught to expect would be mine some day. I owe it to my family, to the Rengates, to handle the family fortune, live like a Rengate, keep the fortune from being scattered among a dozen hospitals and such. So it'll never be said that I had anything to do with the death of the dog. Mr. Tayne!"

"My boy?"

"I want you to remain here an hour or so, until I can pack a trunk and some bags. I'll leave when you do, and I want your testimony that the dog is all right when I leave. I'll go to some hotel to-night, get an apartment to-morrow. I'll not set foot on this place again as long as Major is alive."

"I can see the sense of your stand, my boy. But don't you think it is unnecessary?" the lawyer asked.

"It is absolutely necessary, if I am to protect my own interests. It must never be said that I even had a chance to harm the dog. The dog—that has wrecked everything."

Patricia Dorne slipped up beside him, and clasped his arm.

"Everything will be all right, Roger," she said. "Suppose you do have to wait for a few years? Don't let this make a difference."

"A difference?" At that Roger Rengate laughed. "It just ruins everything, that's all."

"It doesn't make any difference with me, Roger," Patricia said. "I'll struggle along with you on six thousand a year."

Mrs. Dorne hurried forward. "What's this?" she cried. "What do you mean by that, Patricia?"

"I'll answer for her, Mrs. Dorne," Roger said. "Your niece and I are in love with each other, and had planned to be married as soon as I came into my inheritance."

"What?" Mrs. Dorne cried. "Why, I—I never suspected——"

"We were keeping it a secret," Roger continued. "And now——"

"Now he thinks we can't be married until he gets his million," Patricia interrupted. "Oh, Roger, it's you I love—with or without your million. We can be married and live in a little apartment somewhere."

He stopped her with a gesture. "Can't you understand?" he asked. "Think! My wife's aunt is custodian of the dog, let us say. If something happened to Major, persons might say that Mrs. Dorne did not use proper care, knowing that her niece's husband came into a million when the dog died. They might even think we had promised her money to see that the dog was removed. There'd be suspicion, at any rate."

"Roger! Do you mean that we can't be married until after the dog dies?"

"It'd be running a risk, Pat."

"Young man, I consider it a sacred charge, and would not let harm come to Major even to further the interests of my niece," Mrs. Dorne declared.

"I'm not saying you would," Roger told her. "I'm saying what the public might think. And those charitable institutions that profit if I lose the estate—you may be sure they'll be watching carefully."

Patricia confronted him, tears starting from her eyes. "You don't love me," she said. "You love that million more."

"I do love you. But I'm not a fool," Roger replied. "I want that million. I've been educated up to it. It's right that I should have it and carry on the Rengate traditions. I don't intend to risk losing it. I go out of this house to-night, and stay out of it until that dog is dead, even if it is years. We'll have to wait, Pat."

"Won't I even see you?" the girl cried.

"We—— Oh, we'll work it out somehow," he replied. "I can't even think now. But there must be not even a breath of suspicion——"

"Oh!" she cried in interruption. "You don't love me—never did love me. If you did, you'd not care for anything but me. You'd marry me, and let me share your lot, whatever it might be, whether you got the fortune or lost it."

"That sounds fine in a book," Roger said. "Pat, can't you understand?"

But she turned from him, sobbing, and rushed away from him, toward the foot of the stairs. Roger looked after her a moment, then turned toward the lawyer.

"Well, Mr. Tayne, let's pack," he suggested. "I wish you'd come along and watch me—see that I don't leave any poison scattered around, or anything like that. The dog not only stands between me and a fortune—he also stands between me and a wife!"

Morgan Tayne went up the stairs with him. John Hartson, the old gardener, followed to be of service. Roger packed a small trunk and a couple of bags, and arranged his other belongings so they could be packed easily by others. Then they went downstairs again, and Roger telephoned for a taxicab.

"Roger, I sincerely regret that you think this step is necessary," Mrs. Dorne said. "You should be here in your old home. And I—I am astounded to learn about you and Patricia. I never dreamed of such a thing. Oh, it's a shame that you two cannot be happy! But I have a——"

"A sacred duty to perform at three thousand a year!" Roger interrupted.

"Roger! I do not like your tone. How you have changed!"

"How everything has changed since that will was read! Perhaps it'll be better if we are not friends. Then nobody can accuse us of collusion. You'll keep the dog alive just to spite me." A bell tinkled. "There's the taxi. Come along, Mr. Tayne! I want you to leave the house with me. Doctor Walsh has the dog there in the hall. He's quite all right, isn't he, Doctor Walsh?"

"He's all right. Got him quiet now."

"There you are, Mr. Tayne! Please make official note of that; the dog's all right as I leave the house. And I leave nobody here who thinks enough of me to kill him in my behalf. I had friends here a short time ago and a sweetheart. Now, they're gone. That's what the will has done, Mr. Tayne!"

"Your bitterness will wear away, my boy," the old lawyer said. "At twenty-two, things look black when they are only a dark gray."

When they came to the front door, they found that Patricia Dorne had

got there ahead of them. She lifted a tear-stained face.

"I'm sorry for what I said, and for the way I acted, Roger," she said softly. "I—I think that I understand, Roger. Won't you kiss me good-by?"

Roger Rengate bent and kissed her, held her close for a moment, whispered something to her. Then he hurried out to the porch and went down the steps and along the dark walk toward the big front gate. Morgan Tayne walked beside him, clinging to his arm, talking in soothing tones. The old gardener and the taxicab chauffeur followed with the bags and trunk.

CHAPTER III.

THE SERPENT.

WITH his shoulders bent as though beneath a heavy burden, Cyrus Borkmer passed along the street, shuffling as he walked, his long arms swinging loosely at his sides, his ill-fitting garments hanging on his gaunt frame like rags on a scarecrow.

It was late in the afternoon, and the walks were thronged with a home-going crowd. Cyrus Borkmer thrust his way through the throng without apology, his manner that of a man who knows where he is going and what he intends to do when he arrives there.

Cyrus Borkmer could have afforded a motor car, a fleet of them in fact, and chauffeurs to drive them. But he was a man who spent his life in amassing money, not spending it. If his methods at times were a bit unscrupulous and his dealings ruthless, that was offset in his own mind by the fact that he took reckless chances at times where a big profit was in sight.

He shuffled from the busy avenue and into a quieter side street, and went along it before a row of apartment houses. One of these, he entered. He used the telephone, ascended in an elevator, shuffled along a hall, and rang the bell at a certain door. It was opened for him immediately.

"How do you do, Mr. Rengate?" Cyrus Borkmer said. "I'd have known you any place. A picture of your father!"

"Come in, Mr. Borkmer," Roger Rengate invited.

He ushered his guest through a short hall and into a comfortable living room. Cyrus Borkmer was about fifty-five, but looked seventy. He dropped into a chair as though exhausted, and Roger Rengate waited for him to speak. Cyrus Borkmer had telephoned and asked for this appointment, and Roger did not know the reason for it.

He had heard of Cyrus Borkmer, had seen him often. He knew that the man was wealthy, eccentric, lived very much to himself, and frugally. He had an office where he pretended to do a brokerage business.

"My boy, I knew your father and your uncle," Cyrus Borkmer said. "I did business with them at times. I met your late aunt once or twice, too—but I never did get along with the ladies. Your father was a splendid man."

"Thank you, sir!" Roger said.

"I have heard all about your aunt's will naturally."

"Naturally," Roger said bitterly. "The newspapers printed enough about it, including pictures of the dog."

"Ah, lad, life is a peculiar thing! I've found it so. We must learn to

laugh at ourselves as well as at others. Take the bitter with the sweet, and 'all that."

"I suppose so," Roger said.

"You perhaps have been wondering why I asked this interview with you," Cyrus Borkmer said. "I want to be your friend. Possibly, when you get your fortune, we may be able to do some business together. I'm looking ahead, you see."

"Perhaps a long way ahead," Roger said.

"Oh, not so very far! A dog doesn't live forever. You're the same as a millionaire now, young man. Ever stop to think of that? You're a good risk financially."

"I suppose so," Roger agreed.

"You are a Rengate." Cyrus Borkmer paused to glance around the room critically. "And a Rengate should not live like this."

"It happens that a Rengate is compelled to do it."

"Perhaps not, my boy. You should have an elaborate apartment, some good cars, should get about at the clubs and all that. You are young, and should live. Why wait until a dog dies? Why not do it now?"

"Only one little thing holding me back—lack of funds," Roger said.

"Splendid! If you could start tomorrow living in the manner you desire, would you be willing to pay for the privilege?"

"What do you mean, Mr. Borkmer?"

"I'll finance you," Cyrus Borkmer said simply. "For a little profit, of course. Just the usual thing."

"Perhaps you'd better explain just what you mean."

"Very well, my boy. You are a good risk, to my way of thinking. You'll have plenty of money in a few years. But why live cheap during those few years? Moreover, your death may precede that of the dog. Why not enjoy a part of your fortune now?"

"Before I get it?"

"Certainly—before you get it. I'll gamble on you, my boy. Aside from the profit, I'll be glad to see you living as a Rengate should. And my small profit should not bother a man who will be worth a million some day. It would only be a small percentage of the natural growth of the estate."

"If you'll please explain more fully——" Roger began.

"Surely! It is simply this: I lend you money so you may live properly. Ten per cent bonus and interest at six. By that I mean—you borrow ten thousand and give me your note for eleven thousand, the note to bear interest at six per cent. And you have the use of your estate while you're waiting to receive it, if you can get my meaning."

Roger Rengate's eyes glowed suddenly, and he bent forward in his chair.

"I understand," he said. "I could afford to pay the bonus and interest."

"And have enjoyment of the money now," Cyrus Borkmer persisted. "Be a Rengate, without waiting for a dog to die! Have your cars and other pleasures. Get a fine apartment and furnish it as it should be furnished. Spend money in seeing life."

"But what if something should happen to me?" Roger asked.

"Let me do the worrying, my boy. Your notes will be good. Even should you die before you come into the estate, I'll collect. No chance of that, though. You want to live —live!"

"Live!" Roger Rengate sighed.

"Live now—not wait for a dog to die."

Roger bent forward again. "How much?" he asked.

"How's that, lad?"

"What's the limit, in money? How far could I go with you on a deal like this?"

"As far as fifty thousand the first year, and twenty-five thousand a year after that. Starting will be a bit expensive, you see."

Roger Rengate got up, lighted a cigarette, and paced back and forth across the room. Here was the solution of his problem, he believed. It was costly, but would be worth the cost. It was worth something to enjoy his money when he wished to enjoy it.

He turned and walked back to the table beside which Cyrus Borkmer was sitting.

"You understand all about the will?" he asked.

"I read a copy of it," Borkmer replied.

"And you're willing to take the chance?"

"It's small risk," Borkmer declared. "You'll come into your money some day, and then I'll collect from you. It's just a business deal. Been done hundreds of times before. An advance on the prospects of an estate, that's all."

"I'll be glad to take you up!" Roger said.

"Fine! Meet me at my bank at ten o'clock in the morning, and we'll fix it up."

Roger Rengate got the eight-thousand-dollar apartment. And he furnished it elaborately, but in good taste. He bought his motor cars, and a tiny cruiser, and an airplane. For a time, he kept his tailor busy. He joined clubs, entertained, made trips, conducted himself as a wealthy young man is expected to do. There was no foolishness about it. He was not a wastrel. He lived splendidly, but in a dignified manner.

And he was quiet about it. There was no sensationalism. He did not strive to get his picture in the Sunday newspapers. The newspapers mentioned him only in connection with some dignified event, included his name with others. Roger Rengate was living like a young gentleman of good breeding.

A veterinary he engaged went to the Rengate house once a week with Doctor Walsh, to look at Major, and reported back on the dog's condition. Major was a pampered pet. He had a special room in the house. He was aired in the big yard only under the eyes of Mrs. Dorne and John Hartson, the old gardener. He was being cared for like the heir to a throne.

Mrs. Dorne, the veterinary reported, took her charge seriously, almost too seriously. Caring for the dog had become an obsession with her. She seldom thought of anything else. She was always fearing that something would happen to Major. Though she never hinted that Roger Rengate might resort to unfair means to get rid of the dog, she remarked often that a million was a lot of money for a dog to keep from a man.

There were new burglar alarms in the house. Half a dozen other dogs had been purchased, ferocious animals which were let loose inside the yard at night, when the gates were closed and locked. Doctor Walsh was called if Major showed the slightest symptoms of being not his usual self.

The first year slipped away, and the second began with Roger Rengate making a trip to Europe. He was gone for three months. He returned to open his apartment again and resume his regular life. Cyrus

Borkmer supplied money when it was needed. Roger signed more notes.

The second year came to an end. There came an evening when Cyrus Borkmer called at the apartment by appointment. He puffed at the cigar Roger gave him, talked for a time of ordinary things, finally bent forward in his chair, and lowered his voice.

"How is the famous dog?" he asked.

"Well as can be expected," Roger replied. "I had a report from the veterinary yesterday. Mrs. Dorne may be playing into my hands, however. She'll pet him to death."

"Anyhow, you've been living fine."

"Thanks to you," Roger said.

"Two years! I've allowed you to go beyond what we agreed on at first, Roger. You haven't wasted the money. Outside your living expenses, you've spent it on travel, books, works of art, things a man has to buy but once."

"I bought that little summer place," Roger said. "Could have let that wait, of course."

"Why let it wait? It was a good buy. As it stands, Roger, I'm in a trifle over a hundred thousand dollars. It's a splendid investment, the way I look at it. But I'm a bit pinched for cash just now."

"I'll keep down my expenses, Mr. Borkmer, if that's what you're hinting at," Roger said. "Nothing more to buy—that costs a lot. Just running expenses from now on. Have to keep up now, and all that. But I'll make it as easy as possible."

"You should have your fortune," Cyrus Borkmer declared. "You should be handling it as you see fit. It is growing a little, but the investments are bringing in poor rates. If you had the estate in your own hands——"

"I'll have to wait for that, I guess."

"Why wait?" Borkmer asked.

"What else can I do?"

Cyrus Borkmer bent forward, and his eyes gleamed. He lowered his voice. "Why should either of us wait? It's sheer nonsense! That woman and that doctor have had two years' good salaries. That's enough. There's only that dog."

"Yes, there's the dog," Roger admitted. "Are you suggesting that I kill the dog? It'd be foolish to risk such a thing. Suppose I did it, and got caught? No estate for me—and a big loss for you!"

"It could be done cleverly. There are ways where the risk will be very small. I need ready cash, and would like very much to get some from your estate."

"You understood, when we made our deal, that you might have to wait for years."

"Quite so, Roger! I am not exactly complaining. And I'm thinking of you as much as myself. I'm pinched for cash and cannot go on financing you. You've been living like a gentleman. What are you going to tell your friends if you suddenly turn cheap? How are you going to explain it? Going to let them think you've been running a bluff—you, a Rengate?"

"I'll not think of it!" Roger declared. "There's entirely too much risk."

"Ah! Perhaps it may be done without you appearing in it at all. Just hint that you grant permission, and leave the rest to me."

"They'd catch you—trace our connection."

"They'll never trace it, Roger. I'll think out some perfect plan. Above all other things I need my money, Roger."

"I'd be glad to pay you off, but

I can't. You'll have to wait, as we agreed."

"But it is so silly to wait. What's a dog? Why wait possibly for years longer? It would be easy. So many things may happen to a dog."

Roger Rengate laughed. "Just try to get at him," he said. "You can bet that Mrs. Dorne watches over him as though he were a sick infant."

"It could be done."

"The plan would have to be a mighty good one. I'll try to get along as cheaply as possible, so I'll not have to make heavy calls on you."

"But I can't let you have any more money, Roger—not a cent!" Cyrus Borkmer declared.

"You mean that you can, but will not!"

"Have it your own way, Roger. Your bank account is pretty low at this moment, isn't it? You'll have your current expenses to meet and you've learned the art of spending money. You'll feel the pinch."

Roger Rengate's eyes flamed a little. "Very well!" he said. "If that's the way you feel about it, I'll ask nothing more of you. I'll manage to get along on my five hundred a month. When I get my inheritance, I'll take up those notes."

"Now, Roger, don't get angry at an old man. I'm trying to bring you to your senses, that's all. It's so silly to let a dog stand between you and a million dollars. It would have looked suspicious if anything had happened to that dog immediately after the will was read. But two years have elapsed. It can be done safely now. Just leave it to me, Roger. I'm trying to make a rich man of you—now, to-day! Trying to do it in spite of yourself. Only a dog stands between you and that million dollars."

"How would you go about it?" Roger asked.

"The less you know, Roger, the better for all concerned. Just nod your head in agreement, and let me handle the affair."

"I'll think it over," Roger Rengate replied. "We'll talk about it again—soon. But if you attempt to do anything, make a move without my consent—I'll—I'll—— But I know you won't.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLUTCH OF FEAR.

FIVE weeks later, on a certain evening about eight o'clock, Detective Sam Ponnet sat at a table in a precinct police station and played solitaire with a pack of worn-out cards. An old desk sergeant was slouched down in his chair with his hands clasped over his ample paunch. The two were carrying on a desultory conversation between yawns.

It was a dead night as far as that precinct was concerned. It was dark, and there was a drizzle of rain falling to make the city pavements unsafe. Plain-clothes men had been sent forth to prowl. A few reserves in uniform were in a room upstairs, playing cards and gossiping. Nothing of importance to the police had happened during the day.

"As I was sayin'——" the old desk sergeant began.

He was interrupted by the buzzer on the telephone switchboard before him. He yawned again as he bent forward.

"'Ullo!" he called into the transmitter. "Yes—yes, this is the police station! . . . How's that? . . . Try to calm yourself, madam. I

can't get a word of what you're sayin'. . . . What's the trouble, you say? . . . Yes, we'll send a man out there to see about it. . . . Sure! Right away!"

The old desk sergeant turned toward Detective Sam Ponnet again, and cleared his throat.

"Some old dame half scared to death," he remarked. "Thinks that she heard a noise in the house. Prob'ly thinks there's a burglar under her bed. Fears she's about to be robbed and murdered and her body maybe tossed into the river."

"And what are you going to do about it?" Detective Sam Ponnet asked, grinning.

The old desk sergeant touched a button which caused a gong to strike.

"That's what I'm goin' to do about it. Order out a car and send somebody to see what's what," he replied. "And you can wipe that grin off your face. You're the only man around here in plain clothes, Sam."

"How's that?"

"Put on your raincoat!"

"Yeah? I graduated from calls like that years ago. Allow me to remind you that I'm a full-fledged member of the homicide squad in good standing, and have been for a couple of years. Send a rookie cop."

"Ain't got any rookies here," the old desk sergeant complained. "Got to send a good man, anyhow. Important people. It'll do you good to get some fresh air, Sam. When you get back, you'll be able to tackle that there game o' solitaire with renewed strength and skill. The old girl may give you a piece of pie or somethin'."

"Where did the howl come from?" Ponnet asked.

"That old Rengate place, out by the boulevard. It was the housekeeper callin'. She acted real scared."

"The Rengate place? That's where that million-dollar dog sleeps on silk cushions and eats porterhouse steaks. I'll go take a look," Detective Sam Ponnet decided.

Two minutes later, he was in a police car which was being driven at a terrific rate of speed along the broad boulevard. Gus Lucas, police chauffeur, was driving that car, and he gloried in his work. In the days of his extreme youth, he had aspired to being a race driver. That had been denied him, but he reverted to his youthful ambition whenever he had the right of way, with the siren shrieking.

Twenty blocks up the boulevard, Gus Lucas sent the heavy car swinging around a corner and into a side street. The vehicle lurched sickeningly, missed the high curb by scant inches, righted itself, and rushed on through the darkness and the drizzle. After a time, Gus Lucas swung in toward the curb again, applied the brakes gradually, and brought the car to a grinding stop.

"Here you are!" he announced.

"You idiot!" Detective Sam Ponnet exploded. "This wasn't a murder call or a riot alarm. It's only a case of some old girl thinking she's heard a peculiar noise in the house."

"It's all the same to me, mister. When I take 'em, I strive to get 'em there."

"One of these days, you're going to spill a load of cops, and they'll either wake up in the hospital or be found in the morgue," Sam Ponnet complained. He turned up the collar of his raincoat and got out of the car. "A fine job, this is, for a member of the homicide squad! I did this kind of thing in my rookie days."

"Yeah! What a fine job for me,

too, drivin' you—me, what's used to drivin' squads on raids and gang fights and murder cases," Gus Lucas retorted. "But it's all for the good of the service. Ho, hum! When you're ready to go back to the station, Sam, you'll find me waitin' here in the car, where it's nice and dry. If you get in a scrap and need me to back you up, blow your whistle."

"There ought to be a law against police chauffeurs," Sam Ponnet declared. "But maybe they're covered by the nuisance ordinance."

Not far from where the car had been brought to a stop, there was a heavy metal gate set in the high stone wall. Sam Ponnet hurried toward it, tried it, and found that it was locked. Through the trees and shrubs inside, he could see a faint glimmer of light which seemed to come from the distant house. In the grounds, the vegetation evidently had been allowed to run riot for several years. It was pitch dark in there except for that one faint streak of light.

Sam Ponnet got out his electric torch. He snapped it on and began searching for a gate bell. Before he could locate one, a voice came to him from the darkness on the other side of the gate—a thin, squeaky voice which made him jump.

"Are you the policeman?" it asked.

"Yes, I'm the policeman," Sam Ponnet replied. "Who are you, and where are you? What's the trouble here?"

"I don't know about any trouble, sir. Mrs. Dorne told me to come to the gate, and unlock it and let the policeman in when he came. But you ain't wearing a blue uniform."

"I'm a detective. Here's my badge." Sam Ponnet revealed it in the light from his electric torch. "There's a cop in uniform out there in the car, in case you're suspicious. Anyhow, he draws pay from the department."

"I—I reckon that you're all right. I'll open the gate and let you in."

There was the grating sound of a heavy key being turned in a lock, and the gate clicked open. Sam Ponnet threw the beam of his flashlight on the man standing inside the gate. He was old, gnarled, stooped. Rain was dripping from the rim of his tattered hat, and from his shoulders. His cheeks were hollow, his face white, his eyes gleaming strangely.

"Who are you?" Ponnet demanded.

"I'm John Hartson, the gardener, sir. You come right along with me, and I'll take you to the house. We go right up this walk to the front porch. You couldn't go alone, because of the dogs."

"What dogs?" Ponnet asked.

"Our dogs—eight of 'em, sir. Fine, splendid police dogs! I've trained 'em myself. We keep them in the grounds at night, sir. If you were alone, they might—might—well, maybe we'd better not talk about that."

"You haven't any business keeping such vicious animals around," Ponnet grumbled.

"They're never loose except when the gates are locked. When they're locked, honest folks won't come into the yard. If the other kind do, then it serves 'em right if the dogs get 'em."

Ponnet snapped off his flashlight and went along the walk with the old gardener, holding to the man's arm. They passed beneath the dripping trees. It was a dismal place, and gave Ponnet the shivers.

"Mrs. Dorne probably got scared about the dog in the house," Hart-

son said. "I mean the famous Rengate dog—Major."

"I've heard about him," Ponnet admitted.

"Mrs. Dorne is a mighty fine woman. She's been kind to me. She's a mighty fine woman."

"She sure seems to stand high with you," Sam Ponnet said, grinning in the black night.

"Nothin' bad is goin' to happen to Major while she's in charge of him. No, sir! She's got a sacred duty, she says, keepin' that dog alive and in comfort. If he dies, Mr. Roger Rengate gets the estate, and Mrs. Dorne loses her wages of three thousand dollars a year. And she needs it. If the dog lives three or four years longer, she says she can save enough to last her the rest of her days."

"That sounds fine," Ponnet said. "But, let's be getting along. She telephoned for help, and may be in trouble."

He quickened his stride and compelled Hartson to do the same. And suddenly Ponnet sensed a menace of some sort in the darkness near him. He saw green eyes gleaming in the black night, ahead of him, to the right and the left. A shadowy form leaped across the walk and through the streak of light. He heard the soft *pad-pad* of an animal running.

Sam Ponnet snapped on his flashlight and quickly directed the beam. It revealed huge dogs on every side of him—dogs that snapped and snarled as the light struck them, and crouched for an attack.

"Turn off that light—quick!" John Hartson cried. "I'll keep the dogs back."

Ponnet snapped off the torch and reached for his service pistol. The old gardener began calling to the dogs in a nasal singsong as they continued along the walk. Sam Ponnet could only hope that Hartson's words were having the proper effect. It was a creepy proposition walking along through the dark, knowing that such animals were almost within springing distance.

But the dogs did not attack, and Ponnet could hear them scampering away. He came to the porch steps with the gardener, and they ascended and crossed to the front door. Hartson rang the bell.

There was a moment's wait, and then the door was opened for the space of about six inches. Sam Ponnet observed first that two heavy chains held the door in that position. Then he saw a woman's face in the faint light.

"Here's the policeman, Mrs. Dorne," Hartson said. "He's a detective, which is why he ain't got any blue uniform on. He showed me his badge."

"Go back to the gate, Hartson," Mrs. Dorne directed. "Doctor Walsh may come, and possibly Mr. Tayne. You'll let them in and bring them to the house."

"Yes'm!" Hartson hurried away, shuffled down the steps and along the walk, calling to the dogs.

The chains rattled and clanked, and the door was opened wider. Sam Ponnet stepped into the hall. He saw, now, that the lower floor of the old house was ablaze with light. Mrs. Dorne closed the door and replaced the chains. She also locked the door.

"What's the trouble here?" Ponnet asked. "Are you the woman who telephoned the station?"

"Yes. I'm Mrs. Dorne, the housekeeper. Please come into the library."

Ponnet followed her down the hall and into the room. His swift glance at the woman had assured him on one thing—she was a bundle of

nerves. She was frightened. She flinched at every sound, glanced around continually, as though expecting some enemy to spring upon her.

"Please do not believe me an ordinary fussy woman afraid of a mysterious noise," Mrs. Dorne begged. "And do not think that I am insane."

"But, what's the trouble?" Ponnet demanded.

"I have a premonition that something terrible is to happen here, and to-night."

Ponnet was nettled. "You mean to say you sent for a policeman just on a hunch that there might be trouble? We've got plenty of real work to do——"

"Please," she begged. "Do you know the story of the Rengate dog?"

"Yes. Do you think somebody means harm to the dog? Is that it?"

"I have a feeling that somebody is going to try to kill the dog," Mrs. Dorne declared. "It never has been tried, as far as I know. But I—I have been expecting it."

"What leads you to believe so?" Ponnet demanded. "Have you received any threats—letters, telephone calls?"

"No, nothing like that. I have guarded Major well. I have felt that Mrs. Rengate left me a sacred trust."

"Sit down, Mrs. Dorne!" Ponnet commanded. He sat in another chair a couple of feet from her. "Now, listen to me! You have what you call a sacred trust. You are guarding the dog from harm. You've been doing so for more than two years. Your brain has been concentrated on protecting that dog and carrying out the provisions of Mrs. Rengate's will——"

"I am not insane, I tell you!" she snapped in interruption.

"I know that you are not—yet. But you are obsessed with the idea of the dog. You continually fear that somebody may kill him. The obsession has grown upon you until you are afraid of every stranger, every sound. The way I understand it—if I remember the story correctly—nobody can benefit by the death of the dog except Roger Rengate. Do you think he would try to kill the animal?"

"I—I have no wish to accuse him," Mrs. Dorne said. "Mr. Ponnet, this house is well guarded. By day, nobody gets into it without being admitted by me—not even my niece, who works as a secretary downtown. By night, the gates are locked, and the dogs are loose. They'd tear to pieces anybody who managed to get over the wall and approach the house. Nobody lives here except my niece, the old gardener, and myself. The veterinary drops in once a week, and Mr. Tayne, the lawyer, once a month to audit the accounts."

"What's all this leading to?" Ponnet asked.

"You'd say that nobody could get into the house, wouldn't you? But somebody has got in. This morning, I found a burned match and the end of a cigarette in the hall on the upper floor. Nobody around this house smokes cigarettes. I've heard noises at night, too. And I found the prints of a man's shoes in the dust on the floor of the storeroom in the basement."

"But, what happened to-night?" Ponnet asked.

"A few minutes before I telephoned the police station, I heard noises on the second floor. My niece tried to tell me that I had not heard them, but I know better. And I thought that I heard whispering, too."

"I really think, Mrs. Dorne, that you're only nervous and imagining things," Ponnet told her. "But I'll go over the house with you, from cellar to garret. Try to be calm, now. Let's examine the upper floor first."

They left the library, went into the wide hall. Ponnet got out his pistol, just for the feeling of security he felt it might give the housekeeper. He told himself that the woman was a nervous wreck and had imagined a lot of things. He scarcely wondered at it, in that atmosphere.

"Is your niece at home now, Mrs. Dorne?" Ponnet asked.

And, as he spoke, he saw her. Patricia Dorne appeared suddenly at the head of the stairs and came down toward them. Her face was white, her eyes wide with fear.

CHAPTER V.

TRAGEDY.

SAM PONNET knew that the girl was fighting herself to keep from betraying terror. She made a pitiful effort to smile as she slowly descended the stairs toward them. Her lips were quivering, her breast rising and falling rapidly, and one hand gripped the balustrade as though she feared to fall through weakness induced by fright.

She did not fool her aunt. Mrs. Dorne rushed forward to the foot of the stairs and looked up at her.

"Patricia! What is it?" she cried. "What has happened?"

"Why—nothing."

"You look scared to death. This man is a detective. Tell us what has happened."

"Aunt, you're all worked up over nothing," the girl declared. "You'll go crazy, if this thing doesn't end soon. You're so nervous!"

"Patricia Dorne, you can't fool me. Something has frightened you, and I demand that you tell me what."

"I—I think it's just a case of nerves," Patricia replied. "You've been frightened all evening, and the epidemic has spread to me. I've been through the hall and rooms upstairs. There's nothing for you to be frightened about, Aunt Jane. All the windows are closed and locked, and you know that the burglar alarms are connected."

Sam Ponnet, being a gentleman of some experience, realized that the girl was making a lot of talk to get her aunt's mind off the subject of her appearance. He looked at Patricia Dorne closely. Pretty girl, he decided. Looked wholesome and practical. Probably a good secretary. Had that capable appearance.

"If anything has frightened you, Miss Dorne, please let me know," he said. "That's what I'm here for. My name is Ponnet."

"Everything is quite all right, Mr. Ponnet," the girl replied. "My aunt has been badly frightened. She is so afraid that something will happen to the dog in her care, and she makes mountains out of molehills, as the saying is."

"I can understand that," Ponnet said, as the girl finally reached the bottom of the flight and stood beside him. "But, really, you looked frightened as you came down the stairs. We both noticed it."

Patricia had regained a measure of her usual composure now. She smiled again, and this time the smile was such a success that Sam Ponnet answered it with one of his own. But she did not throw him off guard. He knew, did Ponnet, that the girl had been stricken with terror.

"We were going to the upper floor to make an investigation," Ponnet said.

"But I've just been all around up there. Nothing is wrong," she told him. "I went into all the rooms."

"Somebody is able to get into this house," Mrs. Dorne said. "That match and cigarette have never been explained."

"Perhaps Hartson——" Patricia began.

"Nonsense!" her aunt interrupted. "Hartson wouldn't be caught smoking a cigarette. He smokes a pipe when he is working in the yard. And I've heard somebody moving around —and voices, whispers."

"You just imagined it, auntie."

"I'm not a woman to bother the police unless it is necessary."

Sam Ponnet had stepped aside. He was watching the girl closely as she talked. It was remarkable how swiftly she had recovered her composure.

"Miss Dorne, I think I'd better go through the house, just to reassure your aunt," Ponnet said. "It's what is expected of me when I answer a call of this nature. If I returned to the station without making an investigation, and anything happened afterward—well, it might not be pleasant for me when my superiors learned of it."

"Kindly wait a moment, until I get a wrap," Mrs. Dorne said.

She disappeared down the hall and entered one of the rooms. Sam Ponnet had been wishing for something like that, had been wondering how he could be alone with Patricia Dorne for a moment. And now he had the opportunity. He stepped swiftly to the girl's side.

"Now, tell me," he said. "You were half scared to death at the top of the stairs."

"Why, I——"

"Hurry, before she gets back, if it is something you do not want her to know. What frightened you? Did you see something upstairs, somebody? It's my duty to help you."

"Thanks very much, Mr. Ponnet. I'm sorry if I seemed to be frightened. But it really was nothing."

"If you won't tell me, you won't," Ponnet said. "But you're not fooling me, young lady. I know fright when I see it. You can trust me, you know."

"I feel quite sure that I could, Mr. Ponnet. But I have nothing to tell."

"You aren't anxious to have us investigate on the upper floor."

"Why should I care if you do? I just think that it is unnecessary. I looked around, and found nothing wrong."

She smiled at him again as she finished speaking, and Sam Ponnet felt something like a flush of anger. Mrs. Dorne came hurrying back toward them along the hall, drawing a shawl over her thin shoulders. She stopped beside them.

"We'll start upstairs, then search this floor, and then go into the basement," the housekeeper suggested.

At that instant, they experienced the sensation of plunging into pitch blackness from the midst of glaring lights. As the housekeeper finished speaking, all the lights went out. The darkness came with a suddenness that shocked them, seemed to engulf and smother them.

Sam Ponnet felt both Mrs. Dorne and Patricia brush against him, cling to him. A little cry of fear came from the girl.

"Steady!" Ponnet said. "There's a storm outside, you know—something wrong with the lighting system, probably. One moment—I've a flashlight."

He got it out of his pocket, turned it on, played the beam up and down the hall and up the stairs. The light revealed that Patricia Dorne suddenly was frightened again. A look of wild terror was in her face. Ponnet turned to glance at Mrs. Dorne.

The housekeeper made a move he had not anticipated. She had been standing like a statue. Suddenly, she was moved to violent activity. She gave a cry, wrenched the flashlight from Ponnet's hand, and rushed wildly up the stairs.

Patricia gripped Ponnet's arm.

"She's afraid for the dog; he's in a room up there," the girl explained. "Caring for that dog is driving her insane. Oh, I wish that the lights would come on!"

Ponnet, shocked to inaction by the woman's move, had stood at the foot of the stairs watching her. And now Mrs. Dorne disappeared at the top as she rushed along the hall, and the light went with her. Ponnet and Patricia were in total darkness again.

"We'd better follow her," Ponnet suggested. "I'll keep a hand on the balustrade, and you hold to my arm."

"She'll be right back."

"Are you afraid to go upstairs?" Ponnet demanded. "What is up there that you don't want me to see?"

"Don't be silly! There's nothing wrong upstairs. You're as bad as my aunt—and you're a police officer. She'll come back as soon as she's sure the dog is all right."

"Where do you keep the dog?"

"She had a room upstairs especially prepared for him," the girl explained. "Bars at the windows and double locks on the doors. Major doesn't like it, either. He's a normal dog, even if he does have a pedigree. He wants to run and romp and bury bones, and not be treated like a baby."

Sam Ponnet was watching the top of the stairs. The last trace of light had disappeared. Nor was there any faint streak to show that Mrs. Dorne was returning along the upper hall. No sounds came from the floor above. It was black, still. The girl was still clinging to his arm, and Ponnet could feel her hand trembling.

"We'll go up!" he decided suddenly. "Come along!"

"But, really——"

Ponnet did not say anything more to her. He put his foot on the bottom step, and started up, and she continued to cling to him.

And then they heard a throaty cry from above. Light flashed at the top of the stairs, and went out. Ponnet plunged upward, shaking himself free of the girl. There was a scream—Mrs. Dorne's scream.

"Oh, wait—wait!" Patricia was crying after him.

Sam Ponnet took the stairs in the dark three steps at a time, sensing the jumps and risking a snapped ankle. As he neared the top, he could see the light again. He sprang up and into the hall, and ran forward.

The flashlight, burning, was upon the floor. Mrs. Dorne was crumpled against the wall beside it, holding her hands to her face, and moaning. And the beam of the flashlight struck upon the face of a man stretched on the floor of that upper hall, his eyes open and fixed, his countenance twisted in a horrible grimace of death.

A ghastly situation, but one that was expected! Who is the dead man? Can you guess? You'll find the answer in next week's issue of Detective Story Magazine.

CROSSING THE BAR

By WARREN KIMSEY

A ten-pound idea knocked him on the head with its cleverness.

IT takes a smart officer to put anything over on another smart officer; but, when two smart officers cross swords, something interesting is sure going to happen. Anyway, I've decided to take good advice and read bigger magazines next time.

You see my Uncle Tom has been writing me to spend my vacation with him in Canada. Well, I harken to this invitation. And then, right when I'm ready to start my long journey from the U. S., my uncle Harry eases up and gives me a buzz.

"Listen, Joe," he whispers, "can't you manage to bring me a drop of something good when you come back? A smart feller like you ought to get a bottle across without any trouble. You know, everybody brings a little back just so they can say they done it."

"Yeah, but I'm an officer," I protest. "No officer wants to let down the bars like that."

"Sure, you're a officer and a blamed good one," Uncle Harry brags. "But you're off duty when you're on a vacation. You're just a private citizen like the rest of us, so you don't need to be afraid to kick up a little dust. Then if I had a bottle of good stuff, I could stop the bragging of Newt Bumpus and Gus Kennedy."

"What do you mean by that?" I say, firing up since I never did like a son of old Newt Bumpus.

"Well, Newt's boy went up there last summer and he brought back a couple of quarts of brandy that was made in 1900," goes on Uncle Harry. "And Newt ain't stopped bragging about it yet. It sure would do me a powerful lot of good to get hold of something with more whispers on it so I can do some bragging on my own account. Newt just naturally needs to be put in his place."

Well, when I get to Canada I'm standing up straighter than George Washington crossing the Delaware, in my determination not to monkey with something that I ain't got no business to monkey with. But you know how it is when you get sandwiched in between two uncles. And I'm in deeper because Uncle Harry has willed me his farm.

So I start getting weak around the knees when I find that likker drinking ain't no novelty in Canada; and, more than that, it ain't even stylish. Why, Uncle Tom and me get invited out to dinner a lot of times while I'm up there, but nobody ever says, "Would you like to wash your hands before dinner?" and then pulls out a bottle of something in the bathroom.

Yeah, I've been visiting Uncle Tom a couple of days, and, while I'm no rumhead, I'm dying for a taste of some dyed-in-the-wool-and-a-yard-wide stuff. I've got it all figured out that Uncle Tom will wheel in a five-gallon bottle just as soon as I hit the house, hand me a quart cup and tell me to go to work. But now two whole days have gone and I haven't even smelled a cork! So at the end of the second day, I hint that maybe I'd like to smell some.

"Sure thing, Joe. Why didn't you mention it sooner?" says Uncle Tom and leads me to a cupboard. He swings open a door without any lock on it.

There, on a shelf, I lamp five or six bottles that would make a millionaire out of any ragpicker this side of Timbucktu.

"Gosh, it looks to me like you'd keep it hid or locked up," I say and start caressing one of the important-looking bottles. "Ain't you afraid somebody will steal it?"

"Why, no," says Uncle Tom and breaks out laughing. "There are only a few dollars invested in those bottles at best, and, if somebody did steal them, I could step over to the government store and replace them."

Well, I know I'm still thinking in terms of the U. S. So to hide my confusion on account of the break I've made, I grab another bottle off the shelf and look it over. Then I get a kick. The label says the stuff was made the year General Grant took Orchard Knob and started shooting at Missionary Ridge. Gosh, wouldn't it set Uncle Harry on fire if he could pull a bottle like that on Newt Bumpus and Gus Kennedy? Right then, I jump in and tell Uncle Tom about Uncle Harry's request.

"By all means, take him a bottle of brandy," beams Uncle Tom. "Harry will brag about it the rest of his life. Then I'd like to see him put something over on Newt Bumpus for I never did like the fellow."

So that's the last straw that leads me into temptation. On my own account, I never would've dreamed of trying to herd a bottle across the border, but, with two uncles putting on the screws, I feel my conscience is clear.

Well, two days before I'm due to return home, Uncle Tom and me make a trip to the government store to buy a bottle for Uncle Harry.

"How long will you have to stand

in line?" I ask as we get near the place.

"Why—stand in line? Why, what do you mean?" says Uncle Tom with a puzzled look on his face.

"I was just thinking," I tell him. "If you was to open a government likker store in Chicago on January 1st, a guy who applied for a bottle on July 4th would have to take his place in line down about Memphis, Tennessee. Then, if he had good luck, he ought to get it in time to celebrate on Christmas morning."

We're at the door now and Uncle Tom ushers me in. My first thought is we've drifted into an undertaker's establishment by mistake, it's so quiet. But rows of bottles on the back prove I'm wrong. We wake up a guy at the front desk who looks us over and sees that Uncle Tom tallies with his permit. Then another sleepy fellow writes out the order.

We pass on down the line to another guy who tears the paper in two and takes the money. He gives back part of the paper and we take it to still another fellow who glances at it and wraps up a bottle. As we start for the door, I hear one lonesome fly buzzing around looking for trouble. It sounds like a bull fiddle in a tomato can.

"Now, how are you going to get it across the border?" says Uncle Tom when we're back home.

Well, that's a hot one right off of anybody's griddle. In the excitement of getting stocked up, I've plumb forgotten the most important part. I know if the U. S. custom officers frisk my baggage going back like the Canadian officers frisked it when I came over, I've got a fat chance of getting it back, even if it was made the year Grant captured Orchard Knob. Nope, getting it across in my traveling bag is out! I can see that with both eyes shut. It's up to me to work out bigger and better methods.

"Some folks pour the stuff in a hot-water bottle and hang it under their pants," says Uncle Tom trying to do his bit.

That ain't a bad suggestion so I try it out at once. I pour a quart of water in a hot-water bottle and hang it under my pants the way it's supposed to be carried. Then I parade for Uncle Tom.

"How does it look?" I ask him.

"Well, if I was an officer and you walked that way on the train, you'd be the first feller I'd search," says Uncle Tom. "What's the matter? Are you afraid it's going to bite you on the leg?"

"No, I'm afraid the durn thing is going to bust," I tell him feeling like I was carrying a hundred-gallon tank of gasoline. So that lets out the water-bottle idea.

"I've heard of folks taking an inner tube from an automobile tire and sealing up both ends," says Uncle Tom. "Then they fasten the thing around their waist."

But I pass up that bright suggestion, too. It finally winds up that I'm headed for home with the bottle in my traveling bag. I've got a night and a day to figure out what I'm going to do with it when I get to the border.

During the first day on the train, I catch the idea from gossip that most folks stick a bottle or two in their hip pockets and sit steady while the officers frisk their baggage. They say the officers have to put you under arrest to search your person, but that they ain't apt to do this unless you look or act suspicious. I'm wondering if I've got the nerve to sit steady with a quart of liquid dynamite in my hip pocket while an officer paws through my hand baggage.

I pick up another hot tip during the day. It's to the effect that a government spotter always climbs on at Jawbone and rides the train to the border. The tip has it that he don't dress in uniform like an officer, but wears plain clothes so he can mingle with the passengers and maybe pick up hot tips about folks who are trying to get stuff across the border.

Well, being a smart officer myself, I decide to play a little game just to pass the time away to see if I can spot this government man after we leave Jawbone. The train pulls out of that burg about four in the afternoon after we take on quite a bunch of passengers. We're not due to cross the border until ten that night. I'm thinking, if I can't spot a spotter in that time, I might as well go on back to Tennessee and start raising sassafras sprouts.

About thirty minutes out of Jawbone, I start getting hot. I'm ready to gamble my extra shirt that I've spotted the government man. Yeah, I've got his number according to my way of thinking.

When I hit the dining car that night for supper, the place is crowded and I'm a son of a gun if the car steward don't sit me right down opposite to the fellow I've picked out. We get into conversation and ease along talking about a little of everything. But he's a smooth bird and don't tip me off to the fact that he's connected with the law, no matter how I lead him on. But he does drop one hint that is chicken gravy for me.

It comes when he happens to say the custom officers start working the train at eight o'clock instead of waiting until ten when we cross the border over into the United States. Well, I eat that up and I sure am grateful. I've been figuring on waiting until about nine thirty before getting that bottle out of my bag.

Seven thirty rolls around and I'm still in the dark. By this time I'm wishing Uncle Tom had the blooming bottle cracked over his head and that the stuff was running down over Uncle Harry's chin whiskers. But I don't dare wait any longer. The porter has got my berth made up. So I sneak in behind the curtains and slip that Civil War brandy in my hip pocket. Then I parade off to the smoking room just to get the feel of it. The first ten steps, it feels like thirteen pounds of hot lead. By the time I reach the smoking room, it's jumped up to an even hundred pounds and going higher.

Four men are in there smoking and they all look right through me. So I sit down right quick on my ton of molten rock. I try to smoke but it only makes me hotter. I know I can't sit still with that stuff in my hip pocket while a custom officer goes through my baggage. Well, I want to jump up and run back to my berth and get the bottle out of my pocket, but I'm afraid to move for fear it'll drag my pants off.

Glancing at my watch, I see it's fifteen minutes to eight. I know I've got to do something. So I ease off the seat and slip out. By the time I reach my berth, that bottle it jabbing a hole through my coat collar.

Well, Uncle Harry can go on drinking mountain dew as far as I'm concerned. I lean over and reach for the window to throw that stuff out to the ground squirrels and chipmunks when a ten-pound idea knocks me on the head. It comes from seeing my overcoat hanging on the coat rack at the edge of the berth. In one pocket is a folded magazine that I've been reading. I drop the bottle down between the

covers of the magazine and presto, *zip, bang!* it's out of sight.

Why, to all outward appearances, it's nothing but a folded magazine in my overcoat pocket. And a tailor-made alibi hits me in the eye right on top of this. If an officer should find that bottle by chance, I don't have to own it, do I? Of course not. Any passenger could slip it in there and then figure on getting it out on the sly after the inspection was over.

Hot dog, I think. Check that up for a bright idea from me. Just like laying a valuable letter on the desk while a crook blasts open the iron safe looking for it. I'll say that's some deducing. I lean back and wipe the perspiration off my brow and then start getting as cool as a June pig on ice. Let the officers come and inspect. What do I care? There ain't one chance in a thousand that a fellow would think of looking in my overcoat pocket. I stroll off to smoke and take life easy with all of my troubles gone.

It's close to eight thirty when an officer in uniform comes through the car and tells us to open our baggage so it will be ready for the inspection. I bump against my overcoat pocket just to see if the baby is still there and grin at my little plan. Then I get to feeling sorry for Uncle Harry and regret that I didn't bring him two bottles instead of one. I could put another magazine in the other pocket and get by with the second bottle.

And the funny part about it is that, while one of the officers is frisking my bag, his arm actually brushes against the magazine and I'm wondering what he would think if he knew he was less than two inches from something hot. And then he's gone.

When the inspection is all over, I slip Uncle Harry's present back in my bag and I'm feeling good. Yeah, I'm feeling so good a couple of hours later I can't keep from bragging a little to the porter who has run out of anything to do. I want to test out my theory and make the porter agree I'm right.

"That spotter who got on at Jawbone is a pretty smooth boy, ain't he?" I says as a starter.

"What you talking about, boss?" says the porter. "No spotter didn't get on this here train."

"Sure, I know how it is with you," I tell him. "I know you've got to be on the quiet. But I got the number of that fellow who wore the tan cap. He's smooth all right. But he needs a little finishing touch to his style to round it out."

I'm grateful to him for having let slip the tip about working the train before we get to the border. Because of this, I'm thinking maybe I can do him a little favor as well as brag some to boot.

"Say, boss, what makes you think that man was a spotter?" says the porter sticking up his ears.

I know all right because I've got him hooked.

"Well, porter, it's like this. When the conductor came in the smoking room collecting tickets, he took one from all of us except the man in the tan cap who got on at Jawbone. The conductor didn't pay any attention to him. So that's how I got his number."

"Well, boss, you sho did get his number," says the porter and spreads his mouth in a big grin. "That was the big chief of the force and he was doing some special looking around to-night. I'll say you got his number. Say, boss, you sho ought to be a detective."

I let that one go by.

"The next time you see him, give

him my regards and tell him the man in lower seven said for him to offer a piece of paper when the conductor comes through collecting tickets so the folks will think he's a regular passenger."

"I sho will," says the porter slapping his leg. Then he looks at his watch and thinks of something. "Maybe I can catch him to-night before he gets off the train. I sho do want to tell him about that ticket." And with that, he trots off to see if he can catch the government man.

A little later, the train stops. The porter comes back grinning.

"Well, boss, I caught him and he says he sho does appreciate that tip about having a ticket for the conductor to punch and he says he's gonna have it from now on. And he says he sends his regards to the man in lower seven. And he says to tell the man that putting a magazine around a bottle and dropping it in an overcoat pocket is old stuff."

That crack makes me pick up my ears.

"And he says to tell you to use a bigger magazine next time," goes on the porter. " 'Cause if you don't he says some of the passengers on the train sho is gonna steal your likker."

SUCCEEDED AT SUICIDE

A RESIDENT of San Francisco tried to commit suicide recently by cutting his wrists and throat. He was discovered in time and sent to a hospital, where doctors believed he had an even chance to recover.

A friend unwittingly helped the man to make a success out of his apparent failure at suicide by sending him flowers in the shape of a large horseshoe. Together with the floral piece came a note. The suicide patient smiled as he opened the envelope containing but one line. He read: "Better luck next time."

The man gave a gasp and fell back unconscious. A few hours later he died.

In California there is a law against urging a person to commit suicide. It is a question whether the flowers, accompanied by the note, could be construed as urging suicide by suggestion.

SOLD FOR TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS

IT is not uncommon for a wife to be "sold," but a Chicago wife was recently sold for cash. Her husband sold her to another man for one hundred dollars, but only got twenty-five dollars down.

It made the wife very angry to think that her husband would demand only twenty-five dollars down, so she called him into court. She told the judge that she wouldn't have minded it so much if she had been sold for cash, but she objected to being sold on the installment plan.

The judge fined the two men one hundred dollars each and ordered them to work out their fines at the rate of one dollar a day.

Like a man mortally stricken, he took the only thing she had to give—a blow.

BRIDES OF CRIME

By ELISABETH SANXAY HOLDING

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

SOME time after the ceremony of her own wedding, Dolores has a call, supposedly, from her stepdaughter, Liza, to come to her rescue. She goes. She is driven by a man to a shabby house. Here he throws at her the necklace which has been stolen from her, and he tells her that Maisie, the maid, who was blamed with stealing it, is suffering. Then he locks her in a storeroom.

Later, when she gets out, she opens a door and discovers her husband—dead. She is persuaded by Reynard that it is best for her to escape and take a position as a maid. Dolores accepts a position as a maid to Mrs. Sackett. There she is accused of stealing a vanity case, and she is forced to run away. She is aided in her escape by Gallagher. She goes to Merrydew Inn in Stamford, where Gallagher plans for her further escape, but which does not materialize.

After many trials, Dolores becomes ill, and Reynard comes to her rescue.

CHAPTER XVI.

"I CAN'T LET YOU GO."

DOLORES sat motionless, frozen with despair. She stared at Reynard for a moment, and then looked away.

"Come on!" he repeated. "The house is only a few steps."

He took her arm, to help her out, and his touch brought her to life again. She pulled away from him.

"You've lied to me," she said in a voice shaken with anger and fear.

"I haven't. I——"

"You have!" she cried. "You let me think I was going to another position. You've lied! You're false, and cruel, and despicable!"

"Come into the house and let me talk to you," he said briefly.

"No! If you have any honor, any decency, let me go! I can drive. Let me go!"

"Look here!" he said. "I give you my word——"

"I don't believe your word. You've lied to me once."

"Come on!" he said. "Get out of the car and come into the house. You'll have to—in the end. It's no use my trying to talk to you when you're in this state. Come into the house and smoke a cigarette. Try to pull yourself together."

This steadied her. She must not, she would not, lose control of her nerves in the presence of her enemy. Utterly helpless, it was the worst sort of folly to provoke him. Perhaps, if she kept her head, she could persuade him, threaten him, find some way of escape.

"I'll—come," she said.

He took a torch from his pocket; the clear light showed a steep path leading uphill.

"Are you going to leave the car here?" she asked. For there was in her mind some confused hope that she might be able to evade him, dash out here, get into the car, and drive off, anywhere.

"No, I've got a garage," he said. His fingers closed on her arm, to help her, and she stopped short.

"Don't, please," she said.

He let her go, and walked beside her. Now, in the light of the torch, she saw at the end of the path a little log house, dark and forlorn among the trees. He opened the door with a key, and they entered. There was a dank, musty smell like a tomb.

He struck a match and lit an oil lamp.

"Sit down!" he said, pointing to a chaise longue.

Then he set about laying and lighting a fire in the huge chimney place. The ruddy flames shot up. He pulled her chair nearer, lit another lamp, and went into the next room, a kitchen. She could see him in there, moving about. She half rose, but he turned his head, alert as a wild animal, and she lay back again.

"I'll have some supper ready in a moment," he said.

The warmth of the fire was doing her good, relaxing her cramped limbs. She looked about her at the room, a long, low-ceilinged room, with a bare floor covered with skins, furnished with a couch, easy-chairs, a built-in bookcase, a cabinet phonograph. There was a smell of bacon frying, and presently he came in with a tray.

"Hot soup," he explained. "And a club sandwich—bacon, tomato, chicken, salad dressing on toast. How's that?"

She glanced sidelong at him, and decided to humor his naïve satisfaction in his cooking.

"It looks awfully appetizing," she murmured politely.

He drew up a table beside her, and placed a chair for himself.

"All right, Miss Fallon!" he said. "What's the verdict?"

It was an enormous sandwich, but she was hungry enough to finish it, and the soup, with relish; they were both silent until they had finished and he had removed the tray.

"This air makes you hungry," he said. "Do you mind a pipe?"

His civility did not disarm her for an instant. He had deceived her, got her here under false pretenses. Heaven only knew what lay beneath this new manner of his. Again and again, she glanced at him, but she could read nothing from his dark face.

He talked to her, easily and courteously, and she responded readily. If this were a game, she could play at it, too. But her nerves were taut; she was unceasingly vigilant. This casual conversation was a torment to her. What did it mean? Why had he brought her here?

He was telling her of a Christmas he had spent here, in a snowstorm. She sat with a politely attentive air, but she was not listening. She had decided to bring matters to an issue. Anything would be better than this. When he stopped speaking, she made no comment, and he, too, fell silent, for a long time.

"Tired?" he asked. "Do you want to turn in now, Miss Fallon?"

She could not comprehend this use of name she had assumed; she could understand nothing.

"Mr. Reynard," she said slowly. "If you'd explain a little."

"Wouldn't you rather wait?" he asked. "I mean—after a good night's sleep?"

"I couldn't sleep!" she cried. "This—I'm sure you can realize and——"

He got up to put a fresh log on the fire, then he sat down again, farther from her, in a shadowy corner where she could not see his face.

"There was something I'd meant to say to you in that inn in Stamford," he said. "But I didn't have a chance. Then, when you didn't come back—I was worried, naturally."

"You thought I'd escaped," she said, and could not keep the bitterness from her voice.

He was silent again for a time. "I went to look for you," he resumed, "but I couldn't pick up the trail. Of course, I thought I could have traced you, easily enough, if I'd given the police the number of your car. But I didn't care to do that. So I wasted a lot of time, looking in what I thought were probable places. When I read in the newspaper about Albert's smash, I didn't connect it with you. I went to see him in the hospital, and then he told me."

He moved a little, and she had a glimpse of his face, intent, preoccupied, as he leaned forward, hands clasped between his knees.

"If you knew more about Albert," he said, "I think you could make allowances for him. Poor devil! He was shell-shocked in the War, and he's never got over it. He's made a good fight. Sometimes for months he's all right. And then something'll set him off again. And when he's at his worst, he's not responsible."

"No," she said, "I could see that."

"He'd got this idea," said Reynard, "that you weren't taking his sister's disgrace seriously enough."

"He told me that," she interrupted. "He said you were 'too easy.' So there had to be two 'avengers.'"

"He's sorry now. I talked to him."

"So he's going to leave the avenging to you?"

He did not answer that.

"I was seriously worried then," he went on. "Albert told me he'd shot at you. He thought he hadn't hurt you, but he wasn't sure. And I imagined——"

"But wouldn't it have been a good thing?" she asked. "A perfect example of poetic justice, if he'd killed me? And it would have saved you so much trouble."

"I went to see Gallagher at his hotel in New York," he said, "and then I found your telephone message, asking him to ring you up.

He wasn't there, so I did, but you'd left. So I drove out there. Plenty of people there had noticed you. I found the car still in front of the garage. Some one had seen you going up the hill. And I came across your hat."

He reached in his pocket, and drew it out, a shapeless, sodden object.

"I went past the wood. Twice. If you hadn't been by the roadside when I came back, I might not have found you—until too late."

"That might have been awkward for you," she said with undisguised irony. "If I'd been found dead, there'd have been an inquiry, I suppose."

"Look here!" he said. "In a way, I think I can understand why you feel as you do. You must have had a bad time with Albert. And I'll admit you were in danger. But you're—I mean, if you manage to look at the thing without bitterness—he's not responsible. And, after all, he didn't harm you."

"Not *me*," she said.

"Not you?" he repeated. "Then what do you mean?"

She was afraid that she had gone too far. She was here alone with this man. If she were to let him see that she suspected him, or his accomplice, Albert——

"I mean," she said hastily, "that a man like that is a constant menace to every one."

As he glanced at her, it was almost as if she could see his quick brain working.

"No," he said slowly. "I don't think that's what you meant. I reckon——" He paused. "Are you trying to connect Albert with your husband's death?" he asked directly.

She could not decide how to answer that, and said nothing.

"Because if you are," he went on, "you're mistaken. He was at the hospital with his sister all that afternoon and night."

Whether it was prudent or not, she could not swallow that brazen lie.

"He wasn't," she said briefly.

"Do you think he wasn't, or do you know?"

"I know," she said. "And you do, too. You must." In her anger and agitation, she had risen. "The man's employed by you. Only a few moments ago you admitted that you were in his confidence. If he told you about his attack upon me, he must have told you—if you didn't know it before—that it was he who brought me to that flat."

Reynard had risen, too, and was looking at her squarely.

"What?" he said. "You're telling me Albert took you there?"

She was about to answer hotly, but the look on his face was so extraordinary as to check her words. They stared at each other in a strange silence.

"You didn't believe what I told you then," she said. "I can see that. You thought my whole story was a lie."

"I didn't care," he said.

Bitter anger, and something else, a dreadful despair and rebellion rose in her heart.

"You thought——" she cried. And searched his face. "You *did* think I'd done it!"

"I told you I didn't care."

"That's your opinion of me—of all women, I suppose."

"Look here! I did what I could for you."

"And why?"

"All right, why?" he said.

"I know what you've done to Liza."

"Liza's told you I've done anything to her?"

"No. I've had no chance to speak to her, as you know."

"Then," he said, "it must have been—little Gallagher." His soft voice was deliberate and thoughtful. "I shouldn't worry much about what that lad says, if I were you. I reckon that when I see him, I'll have to settle with him. Once and for all."

"Murder him?" she asked with a cold, contemptuous smile.

"Killing isn't always murder," said Reynard mildly.

"If that's your point of view, I suppose you rather admired me."

"I didn't," he said. "The first time I saw you two months ago you——"

"What, you saw me two months ago?"

"You were having lunch in a restaurant, with Keyes. I came in there, with Liza, and she pointed you out to me. She said you were going to marry her father. And I thought——" He paused. "I thought that was a crime," he said.

"So you're a self-appointed censor of other people's morals, as well as a——"

"No," he said. "It was your business. I reckoned you knew what you wanted, and what you'd have to pay. But at your wedding you——"

"You were there, too?"

"Yes, I wanted to see. I wanted to hear you, making those vows. I did."

"It's a pity I didn't know you were there," she said. "It might have had a good influence on me."

"I saw you weren't happy," he said.

"That must have been a comfort."

"No," he said. "It wasn't. I was sorry. I'm sorry now."

"I suppose," she said slowly, "that you don't—that you can't realize—how offensive and arrogant your pity is."

He said nothing to that.

"Is it necessary for us to talk any more?" she asked.

"It's for you to say. Only I'd like to add one thing, if you don't mind. I said I didn't care what you'd done. I still don't care. But I'd like to tell you that I think you're straight. And you're game."

"Thanks," she said. But her irony was weakened by the sudden hope that had sprung up in her heart.

He was alert and subtle. But she was a woman, and a woman in danger, and she was more alert, more subtle than he. His words had betrayed him; he had shown an interest in her which she could not mistake, and of which she meant to take advantage.

"If you do think I'm straight," she said, with a new softness in her voice, "you'll let me go, Mr. Reynard."

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I can't."

"Why?"

"Well," he said. "You see, I'm afraid you and little Gallagher would make trouble for me."

This candor startled her.

"So you see," he said, "I can't let you go until I've got him out of the way."

CHAPTER XVII.

TANGO.

SHE saw, clearly enough, that any attempt to argue with him, would mean only defeat and humiliation to her, and she turned away.

"Now I'll get things ready for

you," he said, almost cheerfully, and began making up the couch with clean sheets and pillow slips and gray blankets.

"Here are towels," he said, "and a warm dressing gown, and a pair of moccasins. If you want anything else, just knock on the wall. I'll be in the next room. Good night!"

"Good night!" she answered mechanically, and, when he had gone, closing the door behind him, she sat down on the edge of the couch, with her head in her hands.

This man was dangerous. There was something incalculable in him, something merciless and inflexible. She shivered a little, recalling his words, spoken so gently: "Until I've got him out of the way!" He would stop at nothing. She could not get the better of him, either by force or by guile. She had never known or imagined anything like this feeling of helplessness. Because she had beauty, dignity and charm, she had had power over men; they had been deferential to her. From this man, she had an outward courtesy; yet she discerned no deference in him. He had professed to help her, but from what motives she did not know.

Now he refused to let her go. He would prevent her from communicating with René Gallagher. He would keep her here, where she would not even know what was going on, what was happening to Liza, his second and still more unfortunate victim. "Bled white," Albert had said.

She must reach René. Albert might be able to leave the hospital any day; he might escape. And she was more certain now than ever that he was her husband's murderer. She could not guess his motive; perhaps he had none, beyond his half-mad rage at his sister's downfall. It was possible that Reynard did not know the facts of the murder; if he did know them, he was an extraordinarily good actor. But she felt sure that Reynard knew why Liza had come to the flat.

"Liza's got to be protected," she thought. "It mustn't be known ever that she was there, or that she telephoned to me. Yet Albert can't be allowed to go scot-free."

Then back came that thought she could not endure. If Liza were being blackmailed, if she had come to the flat to meet the man who was threatening her, if Frank had somehow followed her, had reproached her! She remembered how Liza had threatened her, Dolores, struck her, in a fierce outburst of rage. Had that dreadful cry been one of remorse?

"I must see Liza first," she said to herself. "I must get away from here and telephone to her to meet me somewhere. Then I'll see René."

She thought she could see one chance of escape, one way to disarm her enemy. She had never before stooped deliberately to allure a man. But she meant to do so now. Reynard was already interested in her. Perhaps more so than he realized; so much so that he had helped her to escape in spite of his atrocious suspicions. She would make his interest increase to something more ardent. She would do what other women had done. Yes, she would make him love her, make him her slave.

It was cold that night. Lying awake in the dark, with the windows open, she shivered under the blankets. The pine trees stirred in the wind, making a melancholy sound like the rushing of a strong river. It was so lonely here, so cold.

Drawing the blankets over her

ears to shut out the sound of the pines in the wind that was like a river—dark water flowing, somewhere—she soon fell asleep.

In the morning, she was awakened by the sound of footsteps that sounded very close. She rose and dressed quickly, but with care. It was her misfortune that she had only this shabby black dress, but at least she could take pains with her hair, add a little touch here and there.

It was a gay, glittering morning; the sky bright-blue above the trees. She felt well-rested, vigorous, sure of herself. She knocked on the door into the kitchen where she heard the footsteps, and it was opened promptly by Reynard in a bathing suit.

"Good morning," he said. "Do you want a swim before breakfast?"

"Yes, thanks," she answered. "Only I've no suit."

"I've got one," he said, and brought her a black woolen one, with the label of an expensive sports-wear shop in it. As she put it on in the living room, she wondered where it had come from, whose it was.

When she was ready, she rejoined him in the kitchen, and, against her will, she was obliged to admire a certain charm in him, in his lithe body, straight as an arrow, his narrow, dark-browed face.

"I'm ready, Mr. Reynard," she said. "I don't suppose you have a cap and shoes?"

"No," he said, crestfallen. "Can you manage without? Come on, then!"

She followed him out of the cabin and downhill, to a scene so lovely that she paused, with a little sigh of delight. At her feet lay a lake, ruffled by the wind, sparkling in the sun, ringed by wooded hills.

"Nice, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes," she said. "It's—nice."

But it was cold, that water, bitterly cold. She hesitated on the shore, while he climbed to a rock behind her and dived in, a magnificent dive. She watched him as he swam out, and then came back to her.

"Know how to swim?" he asked.

He was in good spirits this morning, smiling, with his teeth very white against his dark skin. And he was trying to show off! Like a small boy.

She could swim very well. Without a word, she turned and climbed to the top of the rock from which he had dived. She had never before been so aware of her own beauty.

"Don't try that unless you're good at it," he called.

"I am," she said coolly, and poised herself, came down like an arrow through the air, and into the icy water. He swam to her side, and, glaring at him, she saw in his face what she had wanted to see—an ardent admiration.

She tried to swim away from him, but he kept easily by her side. And, in spite of herself, she could not help a certain joyous lightness of heart on this sweet morning.

"There's a snake," he said. "Don't worry. It's only a black snake. But I found a nest of water moccasins here one year. You'll have to be careful."

The pins came out of her hair, and it floated loose; she saw him looking at her, but he said nothing for a time.

"Time to get out now," he said.

She turned on him with a sudden flare of anger.

"Are you to regulate every action of my life?" she cried. "It's intolerable!"

"I'm sorry," he said, perfectly un-

moved. "Your lips are getting blue. If you don't come out, you'll be ill again. Then I'll have to take care of you, and you wouldn't like that."

She swam to the shore, climbed out, and started up the hill. But he was there with her, all the time, and he was whistling. The stones bruised her feet; her hair caught in a branch, but she forced herself to smile when she met his eyes. She dressed and went into the kitchen with a towel about her shoulders. He was frying bacon, but he stopped when she entered, drew the pan off the stove, and took a towel down from the line.

"I'll dry your hair for you," he said.

"You won't," she said.

"But you can't have it all wet on your shoulders."

"I've managed to live for twenty-two years without your help and advice, Mr. Reynard. You're cooking the bacon too fast. If you'll kindly move, I'll look after it."

"I'm going to do it," he said. "I won't let you do one thing here."

Their eyes met in a glare of frigid hostility.

"I don't care to be waited on by you," she said.

"You will be, though," he said.

And then suddenly, he laughed, standing before her, debonair and lithe in his blue shirt and dark trousers, his hair still damp, his head thrown back. She raised her eyebrows scornfully, but she could not hold out. She laughed herself.

"You win!" he said. "You can give the orders."

They got the breakfast together, ate it together, in a curious sort of camaraderie.

"It's easier than I expected," she thought. "I think I can manage him now."

She washed the dishes and he dried them; then he said he had to drive into the village for supplies.

"Anything you want?" he asked.

"No, thanks."

"Well, look here," he said with a slight embarrassment of which she had never before seen a trace. "The —a—girl who was up here once left some things behind. If you'd like to change, they're behind that curtain."

As soon as he had gone, she looked behind the curtain. There was a sports suit, a dress, and a coat hanging up there, and she knew every one of them. She had seen Liza wearing them.

Her eyes narrowed; she smiled to herself. Then she set to work, tidying the cabin. Her own gay energy surprised her a little.

"It's because I feel so well," she thought.

She had never felt like this in the past, never so alive. And in the future? Then let there be just to-day, no past with bitter memories, no future, with its sorry complications; only to-day, when she was young and alive, and could laugh. She must not even think or plan. No escape was possible now, on foot, in the daylight.

He did not come back until noon.

"There you are!" he said, throwing down a bundle on the couch.

She opened the package, which had evidently come from a drug store; in it were a box of chocolates, a bathing cap, and an electric torch.

"Thanks!" she said, looking up at him.

"I——" he began, but apparently changed his mind. "Let's begin our fight about the lunch now," he suggested. "I'm hungry. And the sooner we get it over——"

She let him get the lunch, and in the afternoon they went out on the lake in his canoe, swam again,

spent the sunny hours in a strange friendliness that never for an instant went below the surface. They could talk amiably and cheerfully, yet they were always on guard, always wary with each other.

They had dinner early, and she cooked it, a steak and fried potatoes and strawberries and cream. When the sun went down, it was cold again. He lit a roaring fire, and they sat before it for a time. She could not see his face, but she felt that he was watching her, and she stirred uneasily.

"Let's have a little music," he said, rising and going to the phonograph.

He had put on a tango.

"Dance?" he asked.

She said "yes" without thinking, but the moment his arm was about her, she realized her mistake. An arm like steel, holding her fast; his dark face so close to hers, a faint smile on his lips, a look in his eyes that confused and alarmed her. The sensuous beat of the music seemed like the beating of her own heart. He drew her closer to him; she felt his lips brush her hair. And a new and terrible emotion swept over her, an intolerable ecstasy.

He was not dancing now. He stood still, and their eyes met.

"Dolores," he said unsteadily. "I —you don't know——"

"Don't!" she said faintly.

She could not take her eyes from his dark face; a strange weakness assailed her, a terrible tenderness.

"I didn't know," he said, "until I saw you there at Carita's with that tray——"

She did not speak or move.

"I love you," he said, his cheek against hers. "I love you so. My little dear darling!"

His voice was infinitely caressing; his hand smoothed back her hair. Then fear, of him, of herself, seized upon her.

"Let me go!" she cried.

She struck at him blindly, and he released her. He crossed the room, and she heard the door close after him. The phonograph went on, with the sensuous rhythm of the tango.

Sitting down on the couch, she covered her face with her hands.

"I wish I were dead," she said to herself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAIL.

SHE made up her mind that she would leave this place now, at any cost. Not for anything on earth would she face Reynard again.

"He must know——" she thought.

She had said nothing; she had even struck him. But he must have known her one moment of surrender, when she had been quiet in his arms, and wildly happy to be so. If she were never to see him or even hear his name again, still she would remember that moment, with intolerable shame. She hated him for it, but she hated herself a hundred times more. This affront to her pride made her desperate. She had meant to conquer this man, and her own heart had betrayed her.

"I'll get over it," she said to herself. "I'll forget."

She must get over it. She must forget that moment in his arms, must forget that they had once laughed together, had been happy and careless together, even for an hour. He had offered her the supreme insult of his "love" while he believed her guilty of a monstrous crime.

And she saw in him a man coolly unscrupulous, reckless, capable of anything. He had done his utmost to humiliate her, making her take the position of a servant. Infinitely worse than all of that, he was cruelly, horribly using his power over Liza.

Rising and moving noiselessly about the room in bare feet, she dressed herself in one of the frocks Liza had left there. Then she sat down on the bed again to wait. It would be folly to leave now. She would wait until it was light. Leaning back against the pillows, she dozed a little from time to time. She waked from one of these uneasy naps to the sound of steady rain, to a world gray, pallid, bleak. It was time now.

Putting on her shoes and stockings and her hat, she took up her purse and crossed the room cautiously to the door. She had been lucky enough to find some money lying around the place, and she had appropriated it. Reynard had locked it the night before. As she tried to draw back the bolt, she realized that it would be difficult, and almost certainly noisy. And she had the idea of his sleeping lightly as a cat.

She dared not go through the kitchen to the other door, for to do so, she would have to pass his room, and his door might be ajar. Pushing her window up from the bottom, she climbed out, dropped down a few feet into the wet grass. The rain pattered down on her hat; she smiled faintly to herself to think of the vicissitudes of that unlucky little hat.

On the way to the lake, she had noticed where the garage was; and she made her way there, in the dim twilight of the rainy dawn. It was not locked; in this remote place, keys and bolts were seemingly needless.

Fortunately, the car had been backed in and was facing the doors. She did not hesitate or delay for an instant. Unlocking the car, she got in and started it. The noise seemed to her tremendous, terrible. Carefully, she drove out.

She saw Reynard, running toward her barefoot, in trousers and shirt, fleet as a deer.

"Dolores!" he cried. "What are you doing?"

She accelerated; but the trail was narrow among the trees; halfway down the hill, he caught up with her, made a flying leap to the running board.

In a panic, she struck and pushed him, and he fell backward. As she saw him fall, she gave a sobbing gasp, and jammed on the brake. But he had risen to his feet. He stood leaning against a tree, with his arm across his eyes.

Again, she started. And he did not come after her, did not call. She looked back, and saw him still standing as she had left him, in the steady downpour. Like a man mortally stricken!

Along the trail under the dripping trees, she drove, and it was as if the whole world were weeping. She turned into the main road, and the open sky was above her, gray, bleak, the rain falling steadily. It seemed to her that the world she had left behind her had been strangely bright, with the glamour of the Golden Age; the glitter of clear water, in the morning sun, the ruddy glow of firelight. And she was leaving all that, forever; she was done with all anger, passion and storm, with all that was vivid and swift. Done with love.

At noon, she stopped at the same inn where she had lunched with

Reynard, and she found the same table, and sat down there. His dark face rose before her, and her heart was constricted with pain.

She thought more and more of Liza, as she drew nearer the city. Now, she had to look ahead, not back. It was hard and painful as waking from a drugged sleep; it seemed to her months, years ago, that she had left the life to which she was now returning; it seemed to her that she herself had changed so profoundly that no one would recognize her. And she began now to realize the difficulties before her.

It was dusk when she entered the outskirts of the city, and once more in the familiar streets she became acutely aware of her appearance. It was not only the inner quality that had altered; there was a startling outward difference. She, who had been so fastidious, always with an air of quiet elegance, arrived now in this dress that did not fit, this hat that had never recovered from its ill usage. And more than that, there was something gypsylike about her; she looked younger, thinner, somehow more alive; she felt as if for a long time the wind had blown through her hair, the sun and rain had fallen on her.

She went into a dreary little drug store, and in a booth, asked for a number, the number of the apartment that was to have been her own. It was strange, it was bitter, to be doing this, to be speaking like a creature in a dim, outer world, a sort of ghost, trying to speak to some one in a former life.

"Miss Keyes, please," she said to the manservant who answered the telephone. "Tell her it's private and urgent."

In a moment, Liza's sweet, high voice was speaking—and speaking in a tone of hushed dread.

"Yes? . . . It's Miss Keyes."

"Liza, this is Dolores."

"I—you'd better"—cried the other—"where are you?"

"Somewhere in Fordham. I must see you, Liza."

"But don't you realize——"

"I must see you," Dolores repeated. "I'll meet you somewhere."

"Take down this address," said Liza, so low as to be scarcely audible. "I only want to give it once. Ready?" She gave her a number on a street in Greenwich Village. "It's Jenkins's apartment. It's on the ground floor. Just say you've come to see me. I'll get there as soon as I can."

Dolores turned away, chilled to the heart. There had been no welcome in the girl's tone, no warmth, nothing but fear and hate.

"She doesn't want to see me. She didn't want me to come back," Dolores thought.

Was there any one in the world who wanted her back, needed her? Her aunt? Not now, not in these circumstances. Perhaps that man whom she had left standing in the rain, with his arm across his eyes, like one mortally stricken? He had said he loved her. He had not wanted her to go.

She must forget that. She drove his car to a garage, and left it there in the name of "Miss Brown." Later, she would let him know where it was.

Then she took a taxi, and, leaning back in a corner, tried to make clear in her own mind the points she meant to discuss with Liza.

What she wanted now, above all things, was to come back, not to be a ghost any longer, a shadow, hunted and desperate. She was more than willing to go to the police with her story of that dreadful night, no matter what the conse-

quences to herself. But first she must know what the consequences might be for Liza. She must know why Liza had telephoned to her that night, what Liza had been doing in that flat.

A sudden chill of fear ran through her. Why did not Liza want her back?

"I don't care," she said to herself. "No matter what she's done, I'll help her. For Frank's sake. And for her own. I'll lie. I'll never admit that I saw her. And I'll see to it, somehow, that this blackmailing is stopped."

It warmed her heart, gave her new courage to think of Reynard as despicable and base. He had believed her guilty of murder; it redressed the balance that she would know him guilty of a crime perhaps worse than murder. To think of him in that way was better than remembering her last glimpse of him.

Certainly, Liza had been there in his camp. Heaven knew what other follies she had committed, to strengthen his hold over her. And he was capable——

It was almost as if a voice outside herself said:

"Capable of killing. Capable of almost any audacity, any recklessness. But not of blackmail. And you know it."

But she would not know it; she would cling to that belief in his baseness. Because he believed her to be base.

"I don't care what you've done," he had said.

The cab stopped before a little remodeled house, with gay flower boxes, a green door, a brass knocker, smart even on this rainy night. She found the bell marked "Jenkins" and rang it, and almost at once a fair-haired, good-looking boy opened the door for her.

"Miss Keyes?" she said.

"Yes," he said, turning red. "Come in, please. She hasn't got here, yet, but she'll be here any moment."

He led the way into his little apartment, a small enough room, and cheaply furnished, with a painted table and bookcases evidently homemade, but all in nice taste and tranquil and homelike in the light of a shaded lamp.

"She'll be here any minute," he repeated. It was obvious that he was embarrassed.

"Another of Liza's victims," Dolores thought. "A nice boy. I suppose he'd do anything she told him, as usual."

They sat facing each other in two easy-chairs.

"Er—would you like a cocktail?" he asked.

"No, thanks," she answered.

"Cigarette? No? Then, if you don't mind——"

He lit one for himself, then they sat, in silence, the boy uneasy and troubled, and Dolores lost in her own thoughts, half dreading to see the girl.

There was a ring at the bell; the boy sprang up and opened the door, and Liza entered, paused in the doorway for an instant, and then ran to Dolores and caught her in her arms.

"Oh, Dolores!" she cried, and began to sob wildly. "Oh, darling!"

"Liza. Liza dear!" Dolores whispered. "You'd better not use my name."

"Oh, Jenkins knows who you are," said Liza, drying her eyes. "You can trust him. But, oh, Dolores!"

Her tears began to flow again; looking at her, Dolores was appalled by the change in the girl. She was thin, haggard, and worn;

her blue eyes looked strained, circled with purplish shadows.

"Liza! Don't, dear! Liza, we've got to talk—to make plans. Perhaps if—if Mr."—she made an effort to recall the name—"Mr. Jenkins wouldn't mind our talking alone together for a few moments?"

"No," said Liza. "He knows all about it, Dolores. Everything! He's my husband."

"Your husband?"

"Oh, never mind that now! I'm so afraid, Dolores, that some one will come—some one will find you here."

"Sit down, Liza," said the boy, and pushed her gently into a chair, stood beside her, with his hand on her shoulder. They both looked, Dolores thought, so pitiably young and tormented. "Liza's just been through torture," he said unsteadily. "This fellow's been putting the screws on—making her pay and pay. And the trustees are kicking about advancing her any more money until the estate's settled. I—you can't imagine what she's gone through. And I can't help her."

He looked at Dolores with an expression she could not understand, a sort of austere condemnation in his boyish face.

"She won't let me do anything," he said. "And it's almost killing her. I haven't any money, but I'd settle that swine if she'd only let me."

"How would you settle him?" Dolores asked.

He did not answer, but his mouth tightened.

"He'd like to kill him," cried Liza. "As if that would do any good! It would only mean more of this. No, it's got to go on."

"It can't," said the boy flatly. "Now that Mrs. Keyes has come back—if she realizes what this has been for you——" He turned to Dolores. "Look at her!" he said, with a break in his voice. "You can't let this go on."

"I'll do what I can," Dolores said.

"You'll do nothing!" said Liza. "You can't. You mustn't even let Albert know where you are."

"Albert?"

The boy and Liza both stared at her.

"Do you mean it's Albert who's blackmailing you?" Dolores asked.

"But who else?"

"You mean Albert has your letters? Or——"

"Dolores, I don't understand! What letters?"

"I can't tell you now."

"Yes, you can. There's nothing Jenkins doesn't know. What letters do you mean?"

"Your letters to Laurence Reynard."

Again, they both stared at her.

"I don't understand," said Liza again. "You don't imagine Laurie has anything to do with this? You wouldn't, if you knew him. He's one of the grandest persons. I've told Jenkie all about that. It wasn't real love, but Laurie just went to my head. He's—I don't know—thrilling. Jenkie knows I was engaged to Laurie for a while. But I guess we both saw it couldn't last. Laurie's got sort of pioneer ideas about girls. We used to fight. I went up to his camp once to surprise him, and he was shocked. I stayed two days, and he never even kissed me. He's—oh, you know! One of those all-or-nothing boys. But as for anything low or mean —— What did you mean about letters, Dolores?"

"I suppose," said Jenkins, "that because Albert was Reynard's chauffeur, she thought——"

"Laurie doesn't know anything

about it," Liza interrupted. "It's Albert's own little game."

Dolores was silent, trying to grasp this.

"Liza," she said presently. "Then why is Albert blackmailing you?"

Again, she saw that strange look on the two young faces.

"Jenkie," said Liza, "would you mind going out for a while?"

He took up his hat and left without a word. Then Liza turned to Dolores.

"Dear," she said, and came over to her and sat on the arm of the chair. "Dear, don't be frightened. Don't be worried. Dolores, Albert told me."

"Told you what?" cried Dolores in astonishment.

There was something almost like sorrow in Liza's face.

"Dolores, let's be candid with each other," she said. "We're all alone here. You must have seen that you can trust me. I've done everything to shield you. I've sworn again and again that you were at home that night. I bribed my maid to confirm it. You must see that I'm standing by you. I know the whole thing was some horrible accident."

"What was?"

"Dolores! Albert told me."

Dolores had risen.

"Begin at the beginning, please," she said. "Why did you telephone to me?"

"If I'd realized what it was going to mean—— But just before the wedding, Albert came to me. He—somehow, he knew—about the necklace."

"You'd taken it, Liza?"

"Yes," said Liza. "I needed money terribly. I won't tell you all the details now. I won't even tell you how sorry and ashamed I was. It doesn't matter. I've paid for anything I did. I took it. I just meant to borrow money on it, and get it back later. But Albert made such a row. I gave him the pawn ticket for it. He kept talking about 'avenging' his sister. He said he was going to tell—tell father about my going up to Laurie's camp. He knew about it, because he was there. He asked for an enormous sum of money, and, when I told him I couldn't possibly get it for him, he told me that I should send for you, later on.

"I didn't think there'd be any harm in that. I knew father'd give you anything you asked for. But I was too upset and miserable to go to the wedding. And I didn't know then about Jenkie. I mean, we'd had a row, and I didn't know if he really cared. Everything just looked awful. So I went to a hotel, and rang you up, and said Malcolm would come and get you.

"Then I waited and waited, and you didn't come back, and Albert didn't, either, and after a while I went home. I went to your room; and you weren't there. And the butler told me father had gone out—alone. I know it sounds selfish, but I was so worried about my own affairs that that didn't bother me. I tried to ring Jenkins, but he was out.

"Then, much later, Albert called me. He told me where you were, but I wouldn't believe him."

"Why?"

"I knew who used to use that flat of Albert's to meet a woman—a woman you know. I wouldn't believe you'd gone there to meet *him*."

"Who was the man?"

"Dolores, I beg you. Dolores, let's be frank with each other. It's—it's—so horrible when you pretend not to know. I went there. I

saw you there, with my own eyes, saw you asleep there. And father—dead!"

She covered her face with her hands.

"Albert saw the whole thing. He said you'd just come to say good-by to this man. I know you wouldn't have gone on seeing him after you were married. I knew you didn't mean to kill——"

"So," said Dolores, "you've been paying blackmail to Albert to conceal the fact that I'm—a murderess?"

She began to laugh.

"Don't, Dolores!" cried Liza, catching her by the arm.

Dolores pulled herself free.

"If I didn't laugh, I'd go mad," she said. "You believe that, you! You believe that I'd shot Frank, murdered him, and then gone quietly to sleep."

"Dolores, don't! Albert told me. He told me what a terrible state you were in, after it happened, and that he gave you a sedative, something to quiet you. Dolores!" She shook her. "Don't laugh! I told you in the beginning that I knew it was an accident. I knew you didn't mean——"

"You see," said Dolores, with a laugh like a sob, "I was afraid you'd done it."

"I?" cried Liza, aghast.

"It's not much fun, is it?" said Dolores. "Not much fun to be falsely accused."

She was trembling with a nervous chill; she sank into a chair.

"I think Maisie's lucky—to be dead," she said.

"But she's not, darling. She's almost all right again. Your aunt's taken her for a parlormaid, Dolores! You thought that I——"

"It doesn't matter. I don't any longer. It was Albert, of course."

"Albert? But why, Dolores?"

"That's what I'm going to find out," said Dolores, rising.

"Where are you going, Dolores?" asked Liza.

Dolores raised her head.

"I've had enough!" she cried. "I'm sick of this!"

"Dolores, if you say you didn't, then I believe you."

"Even that doesn't matter now. I—I'm going to finish this. Is Albert still in the hospital?"

"No. He left this morning. He went back to Laurie. But where are you going? You look—Dolores!"

The door closed. Dolores had gone.

CHAPTER XIX.

DOLORES FINDS OUT.

THERE was only one thought in her mind—to be done with this, to put an end to this long-drawn misery of suspicion, dread, and doubt. She wanted to face Albert, with his shameful accusations of herself, and she wished Reynard to be a witness of this meeting. She wanted him to realize the baseness, the cruelty, of his suspicions; she was eager to see his face when he realized. She had the desire to hurt him, as he had hurt her.

Now, she had only a few dollars left in her purse. She stopped at a cafeteria and ate a hasty meal. Then she took the subway uptown, and a taxi to the garage, where she retrieved Reynard's car.

This was to be the end. Now that she was sure of Liza's entire innocence, she was ready to face the police, the whole world, with her story. They could believe it or not believe it, as they chose. At least, she

would be no longer a ghost, a hunted, scared creature.

Dolores was certain that, when she confronted Albert, he would break down, and confess his guilt. Moreover, she had even thoughts of forcing him to write and sign a confession, though she had no weapon but her own passionate anger and scorn. No, she had no fear now of any one or anything.

Faster than she had ever dared drive before, she drove now. She took risks greater than her inexperience allowed her to realize. Luckily, she remembered the road as if she had traversed it a hundred times; she drove with a sort of elation, her hands firmly grasping the wheel.

Leaving the purlieus of the city, she came into the quiet country roads. The headlights threw a river of white light before her; the woods that fringed the road looked like black and impenetrable forests. The air grew cooler, felt exquisite against her face.

"Now I'll make Laurence Reynard see," she said to herself.

And afterward? The notoriety, the anguish of a trial that would be a *cause célèbre* and then her life—as the widow of Frank Keyes. A great lady, wealthy, influential, young, beautiful, dignified. Other men would want to marry her, would offer her the life Frank Keyes had offered; she would be drawn back into that dim, polite existence.

And it would be intolerable to her now. On her lips was the savor of danger, of freedom. Her hard-won little social triumphs of the past seemed to her like the make-believe of a child. This was real—her hands in control of this swift, powerful engine, these hours, alone in the night, in the forests.

It came to her then, that she had never been truly alive before she went to Reynard's camp. She recalled that moment in his arms. She hated him—but there would never again be a moment like that. No other man had ever before awakened her heart.

The sound of another car behind her on this lonely road brought back an old fear; instinctively, she increased her speed, haunted by the memory of her encounter with Albert. Albert, who was employed by Reynard, who had hurried back to Reynard for protection. Perhaps even now Reynard would want to protect him. He had spoken with such compassion of that man, that half-insane criminal; he had had so little compassion for her. He had despised her thoroughly for marrying Frank.

And what if he were right? What if her marriage to Don Dinero had been, not a piece of wonderful good fortune, intelligently planned for, but a crime in itself?

If it were a crime, it had been expiated. Frank was dead, murdered, and for her there lay ahead the dreadful ordeal of the trial. No matter how guiltless she was, she would suffer humiliation, ignominy, and grief. Her story would be picked to pieces, even if Albert confessed there would be doubt and suspicions attached to her.

"My dear, of course she *says* she was lured to that flat. But I wonder who she really went there to meet? It's all so queer, isn't it? Of course, she's got all poor Frank's money, now. My dear, where do you suppose she was all that time? It did look so odd, for her to disappear like that."

The following car had gone off some side road, yet she fancied she heard the sound of a motor, somewhere in the hills. The clock on the

indicator board showed half past three; by six, she ought to reach the camp.

She was glad to think that Albert had gone there. Perhaps Reynard had been hurt in his fall. Even if he were her enemy, she did not like to think of him there alone, in pain.

The sound of that other motor was louder now, unmistakable. Another car was coming along the narrow, winding road, toward her.

"Reynard?" she thought.

But there was no reason to think that whoever was coming, came from his camp. The trail leading there joined a main road, where plenty of cars must travel. It was only a possibility——

She was far more exhausted than she realized. Her fatigue had reached a stage in which she felt immensely alert, assured, daring. This might be Albert, trying to escape. At any rate, she meant to see.

At the top of a steep hill, she slowed down, and backed the car off the road into the black shadow of the trees. Then she switched off the lights and got out, stood where she was herself invisible, and yet could plainly see any car mounting the hill. Her heart was beating fast with an excitement that was sheer joy. If it were Albert, she meant to follow him, never to let him out of her sight until he was in the hands of the police. For without him, she had nothing to substantiate her story. It would be altogether a different matter if she could say, "Here is the man who took me to that flat, the man who drugged me, the man who fired that shot." If he lied, it was his word against hers, and she believed that hers would be more convincing.

The forest was very quiet; the noise of that approaching motor was strangely variable on the winding road; sometimes, it sounded very close at hand; sometimes, she thought it had grown more distant.

Then at last it came within sight; the headlights illumined the dusty road. It began to mount.

And it was the smart little brown roadster she had learned to know so well.

Taking out her torch, she flashed the light upon the driver, saw the slightly upturned nose, the little black mustache.

"René!" she called.

He stopped at once.

"Madame!" he said. "But one does not expect this pleasure on this out-of-the-way road!"

He got out and came toward her; by the light of her torch, she could see his ever gallant, good-humored smile.

"You disappeared," she said.

"I was obliged to disappear," he said. "For my investigations. But shall we not sit in your car while we talk?"

"But isn't there some one else in your car?" she asked, and, lifting the torch, discerned a figure in the seat next to the driver's.

René gently brought down her hand.

"That one will wait," he said. "Let us have our little conversation. If I find you here, it makes me believe something very sad. You are going to see Reynard, *hein?*"

"Yes," she said, "I was."

They got into her car and sat down, side by side; it was so dark there under the trees that his voice, utterly disembodied, had a new sound to her.

"But your passenger," she said uneasily. "Hadn't you better explain?"

"He is very well content," said

René. "But tell me, please, why do you go to Reynard? He is the man who thinks evil of you, and I, never."

"I'm going," she said, "because I believe Albert is there. And I believe Albert is the man—is the guilty man."

"Ah!" he said. "You believe Albert is the guilty man?"

"Yes."

"But for a crime, there must be a motive. What would be the motive of this Albert to shoot your husband?"

"I don't imagine he needs much motive, for anything. He's been badly shell-shocked, you know. It is evident that he is not quite sane."

"You think it is Albert," said René. "Me, I don't think that. Not at all. This Albert, he goes about with his gun, he makes threats. 'I kill you. I kill him!' But I think he kills no one."

"Then——"

"But, madame, I agree with you that it is very good that we have this poor deranged Albert, that we can give the guilt to him."

"That's a mighty strange thing for you to say," said Dolores. "You can't—are you really a detective, René?"

"Not professionally," he said. "I am only a detective to myself. I find out very much. Madame, I admit it. I have told to you a few little lies. But with no bad intention. I have invented that conversation in which Reynard said you were guilty. He has not said that. When he wished you to return to Carita, he has your welfare at heart. But me, I have something else at heart."

"What?" she asked, a great uneasiness growing upon her.

"I want you not to go with Reynard. He is a man more handsome than me, more successful. That evening, madame, in the inn, I wanted you to come with me. But he has stopped me. He would not leave me. I could not come for you, if he were there. So I have to go away with him. I see in his face something I do not like. I am afraid I lose you."

"But——" she began.

"Because, madame," he said, "I love you. I love you before I know who you are. I care nothing that you have wealth, position. If you had been truly the maid of Carita, it would have been the same for me. Madame, if I take advantage of this moment, when you think perhaps I should not speak, it is because I am going away. And I think that it is the right of every charming woman to know when she has made a man her captive. I go, but I do not forget you, madame. Not ever."

She was much too startled, and moved to speak for a moment.

"You're going now?" she said. "Before this—this case is cleared up?"

"Oh, that?" he said. "Madame, I assure you the guilty man will never be caught." He raised her hand to his lips. "Adieu!" he said.

"Wait!" she cried, but he was already out of the car. "I don't understand. René, why do you say that? That the guilty man will never be caught?"

"You are so intelligent," he said. "But you are curious, like all the other charming women. Eh, *bien!* I will tell you exactly what has happened. It was the idea of Albert to disgrace you. To—how shall I say—make appearances false against you as they were against his sister. So he brings you to the flat, and gives you a drug, so that you sleep.

Then he telephones to your husband to say where you are—in the room of your lover. You have disappeared from your home. Your husband does not wish to believe this against you, but he must see.

"It is the idea of Albert, you see, that your husband will never believe your story of how you came there, and he means also that Liza shall support. She shall say she did not telephone you. But there is one thing Albert has not thought of. Sometimes, when his sister would not know it, he has accepted a little present from a certain man, who—I am sorry to tell you this—who meets there a certain lady. This man has a key. It is the greatest misfortune that on this one evening he should decide to come there, to telephone to the lady.

"Frank Keyes is there. He has just seen his wife, asleep. He is denying to Albert that she would ever have come there to meet any man. The door opens. This man enters. He is young. He is not too bad-looking; he has the air of a lover. On going out to find you, his wife, your husband had armed himself. He threatened this man. He would have killed him. But the other fired first. It was in self-defense!"

"Who was—this man?"

"I have not finished, madame. To this—shot, there was but one witness. Albert. The man who fired the shot told to Albert that, if necessary at any time, he could fire another shot. And Albert is afraid to hear that. When this other man goes, he is in desperation. He thinks of Liza. He needs her to be his ally, to swear that she did not telephone to you. He thinks she will be more his ally if he brings her there, makes her believe you have done this thing. It is a fantasy! If persons of position and influence had not been concerned, the police would have found out much—perhaps all. But they were cautious to move in this case.

"This poor, fantastic Albert does one more thing in desperation. At once, he telephones to his employer, Reynard. 'Sir! There is in my apartment a dead man, and the woman who killed him!' Reynard, he, too, thinks this is a fantasy, but in the morning, he goes there. It is clear to you, madame?"

"But who is this man?"

"Ah!" said René. "That I am afraid will never be known."

"Albert can be made to tell."

"I think not, madame. Albert, in the hospital, had an access of remorse. He wished to return to Reynard—to tell him everything. But that was not to be!"

"Why?"

"Oh, madame! In your country, there are many evil characters. I think it will be seen that, on his way to Reynard's camp, this poor Albert was—how do you say?—waylaid. That he was shot. I think they will find his body in the road, not very far from here. Now, madame, adieu!"

"Wait!" she cried. "You must. Who is this man?"

"Madame, adieu!"

She sprang out of the car, and, switching on her torch, ran after him, saw him climb into the car beside that strangely patient figure who had sat there, not moving.

"Stop!" she cried. "Stop!"

His car had started. She turned to go back to her own car, to pursue him, but a dreadful weakness came over her. She fell half fainting on the running board. The sound of the other engine died away. René was gone, the man who had shot her husband in self-defense, and with him that strangely patient

figure—Albert, the ill-starred, whose body would be found to-morrow.

The whole world was black with horror and desolation to her. She started the engine. And she turned where her instinct told her to turn.

When she reached the camp, the sun had risen. The sound of the motor had brought Reynard out; he was standing on the trail, straight, dark, somber.

But when he saw her, his face changed. There was a look she had seen there once before.

"Dolores!" he called, and his strong, young voice came to her on the morning wind.

"I've—come back," she said with a sob.

THE END.

BANDITS CRY FOR MERCY

TWO youngsters, seventeen and eighteen years old, of Brooklyn, New York, stole an automobile and proceeded to hold up pedestrians in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn.

Patrolmen have been under orders to shoot first and ask questions later, so, when an officer caught sight of the bandits, he started following them in his police car. Finally he overtook the youths when they ran into a curb several blocks farther on.

"Don't shoot!" they cried. "We got a fake gun." Besides the fake gun, they had three watches and twenty-one dollars. The watches were soon identified and reclaimed by their respective owners. The money was returned to the fourth victim of the holdups, and it was not long before the police found the owner of the automobile.

WHICHEVER WAY YOU LOOK AT IT

SOME people are capable of seeing something funny in whatever happens. Burglars seldom have a sense of humor, but sometimes the things that they steal are a source of humor to others.

A thief broke into a private house in Pelham, New York, recently and took a shave, a bath, and some jewelry. Another burglar stole two dozen jars of jam from the home of a policeman in Princeton, Indiana. There was also a prowler who broke into a house and stole a pistol, but left behind a dirty shirt and a fruit cake. He had probably taken a fruit cake from some other house and later decided that the pistol was a better deal.

There was another case where thieves made off with the watchdog. One burglar took a traveling bag, which was locked, from a residence in Flint, Michigan, and went back the next night to get the key to the bag.

Callous Catherine

(A True Crime Story)

By Dr. PAGE ROBERTSON

Story of a woman killer who went the gamut of wickedness.

FROM the beginning of time, wise men have stated emphatically that there are no half measures so far as woman's character is concerned; in other words, if a woman is good, she is very very good; if she's bad, well —putting it mildly—she's horrid.

It is not necessary to agree *in toto* with such a finding, but there is not the slightest doubt but that when a woman takes to a life of crime, she goes the whole hog; she does the job thoroughly.

Take the case of Catherine Hayes, for example, without doubt the most vicious female criminal of the eighteenth century, so far as England was concerned.

The daughter of a respectable tradesman in Birmingham, England, she lived with her parents in reasonable amity till she reached the age of fifteen years.

Purposely seeking a quarrel, Catherine packed her grip, left home, and set out for London. On her way to the Metropolis, she met some young military officers who seemed to admire her vulgarly pretty features, flashing black eyes, and seductive figure, and it did not take much

persuasion for her to accompany them to their barracks where she stayed for some weeks.

The officers soon tired of Catherine, and, giving her a gift of money, they turned her out on the road again. Wandering into Warwickshire, she sighted a good-looking farmhouse, knocked at the door, and was admitted for a night's lodging and refreshment.

The proprietor of the farm was named Hayes; he had just recently lost his wife, and he offered the girl a post as servant if she cared to accept and stay on to assist with the work.

Catherine accepted the job and soon won her way to the old man's favor; it was not the old man that Catherine was after, however, but his only son, a half-wit, lazy and ne'er-do-well, whom the girl soon twisted round her little finger, as the saying goes.

Then followed a visit to the nearest town where Catherine and Hayes, Jr., were married before a justice of the peace.

Old man Hayes was nobody's fool; he had a flourishing farm and a good bank account and possibly had an idea of making the girl his own wife; that being impossible, the next best thing was to make the most of a bad job, so he set up his fool of a son in business.

For a time, all went well, but unfortunately decency and respectability were words not to be found in Catherine's vocabulary. Besides, life in the country, in the sticks, did not appeal, as it was the high lights she wanted.

With her wheedling, coaxing ways, she persuaded her silly husband to enlist in the British army. When his regiment was ordered to a coast town, Catherine followed, living in lodgings, not in barracks.

It was not long before the soldier husband wearied of army discipline, so, appealing to his father, a discharge was purchased; the kindly old man also settled a sum of money on the pair so that they were not likely ever to be in want.

Six years later, we find the pair in London where Hayes, Jr., had set up in business as a coal dealer and money lender, achieving considerable success.

All might have gone well had not the demon of wickedness and unrest invaded Catherine, and it is on record that she enjoyed causing trouble among her neighbors and luring weak husbands from their wives.

Ultimately, they had to leave their home for a distant part of the city where success again came to young Hayes, who was so fortunate in his transactions that he was able to retire from business altogether.

A third actor now appears upon the scene, a huge, bull-necked brute called Billings who was said to be an illegitimate son of Catherine by a former lover.

Hayes seemed to have traveled about a bit, for he was often away from home for days on end. In his absence, his wife and Billings were wont to hold highday and holiday to such an extent that the neighbors were scandalized, and they approached the proprietor of the building in order to have the undesirable tenants summarily ejected.

Those were the good old days of the Press gang by which his Britannic majesty kept the personnel of his navy to proper pitch. One had to go carefully, especially after refreshment with whisky or rum; many a decent fellow, staggering homeward after a night out, found himself next morning in the 'tween decks of one of his majesty's ships of war, having been assisted thereto by

means of a blackjack skillfully wielded by a tough master at arms or petty officer.

Such a game had been tried on a certain Thomas Wood who had managed to escape and sought refuge in Hayes's domicile, where he was kept under cover till the danger was passed.

The scene was now set for the horrible purpose which had obsessed Catherine for some time: namely, to get rid of her stupid husband who had made a will entirely in her favor.

Her chief accomplice was, of course, the truculent brute, her reputed son, Billings; next came Wood who seems to have been a facile, easy-going sort of chap, who at first expressed horror at the very idea of such a suggestion, but Catherine was a past mistress in the art of cajoling, and she soon won Wood to her way of thinking.

The old volume in our possession which describes Catherine and her doings at extreme length tells us that she informed Wood "that her husband was a wicked atheist who had murdered two of his own children, one buried under an apple tree, the other under a pear tree."

She finished up also with the promise of fifteen hundred pounds—seven thousand five hundred dollars—if he would join her and Billings in getting rid of Hayes.

Wood ultimately promised to assist, but, first of all, he went out of town for a few days, and, on his return, found Catherine, her husband, and Billings drinking together in apparently perfect amity.

Having been invited to join in on the drinking bout, he did so, but he was careful enough to let the floor boards receive the liquor which was poured out for him.

Hayes had been getting uproariously drunk meanwhile; he boasted that he could drink rum and mountain wine mixed, and feel none the worse for it, so the conspirators took him at his word. Billings was sent out for one guinea's worth of mixed liquor with which he speedily returned.

Catherine poured out the drinks for her husband; in the last one, she placed a quantity of laudanum, and this was sufficent to send the poor fool crashing to the floor. He lay thus for some time, but ultimately managed to stagger to his feet and make for his room, where he flung himself on the bed, fully dressed.

Catherine now produced a large hatchet which she had ready, and, passing it over to Billings, she told him to get on with the job; this, the blackguard did, delivering Hayes a fearful blow which fractured his skull as he lay senseless on his bed.

Hayes chanced to be lying across his couch with his feet barely touching the floor, and the disorganization produced by the awful blow was such that his feet began to hammer spasmodically on the floor.

Wood, on hearing this, took the hatchet, and, after a few more strokes, Hayes was killed outright.

Now a woman, a neighbor called Springate, who lodged in rooms below where the murder was committed, on hearing the noise imagined that quarreling was going on. She came to Catherine's door with the complaint that the noise was keeping her husband, children and herself from sleeping.

The cold-blooded Catherine was not at a loss for an excuse, however, for she explained that some friends had called and were making merry, dancing about and so forth, but that the noise would cease. Mrs. Springate, apparently satisfied, returned to her rooms.

Now arose the question of the dis-

posal of the body to avoid danger of discovery. Mrs. Hayes suggested cutting the head off, for, as she explained, the body could not be recognized without it. A cute thinker, Catherine, if you like!

A pail was produced, this being held by Catherine; Wood with a sharp pocketknife hacked the head off, and Catherine placed it carefully in her pail, taking care that no blood was spilled.

An attempt was made to boil the features, but this was going to take too long, so Billings took the head under his coat, and, hastening out, he threw it into the Thames, hoping that the grisly relic would be carried out to sea and lost forever.

Mrs. Springate was on the watch, and, hearing footsteps on the stairs, called out to find what was wrong; Catherine, with her usual finesse, at once replied that "her husband had been suddenly called away on a journey," and, to make things look more realistic, she pretended to take a fond farewell of Hayes.

It happened that, when Billings had thrown the head into the Thames, a lighterman had heard the splash, but it was much too dark to distinguish anything.

Then came the disposal of the body. A box was procured but was found to be too small to take the entire body, so it was decided to dismember it. The pieces were wrapped up in an old blanket, and at night Wood and Billings carried them to a field in Marylebone and flung them into a near-by ditch.

In the meanwhile, the head of the murdered Hayes had been discovered, and every means were taken to discover the killer or killers; the magistrates ordered that the head be washed clean, the hair combed, and that it be mounted on a pole which was erected in the churchyard of St. Margaret's, Westminster, so that it could be seen by the public, and, if possible, recognized.

All London went to see this extraordinary sight, and some of the spectators expressed the view that the head belonged to Hayes. Some even told Billings of this, but he pooh-poohed such a suggestion, saying that Hayes was all right, that he was out of town for a few days and would soon return.

After four days' exhibition on the pole, it was decided to preserve the relic, when a Mr. Westbrook, a chemist, was ordered to put it into a bottle containing spirits.

Catherine and her accomplices thought it a good idea to leave their lodgings, and this they did, taking the neighbor Mrs. Springate with them to a far part of the city.

A poor woman whose husband had disappeared begged permission to see the preserved head, and, when she saw it, she thought it might have been her husband's, but would not say for certain till she saw some other parts of his body.

Now Hayes had made some quite good friends, among them a Mr. Ashby in particular who found where Catherine had transplanted herself.

On being asked where her husband was, Catherine again allowed her vivid imagination free play as she replied:

"Some time ago," she said, "Hayes chanced to have a dispute with a man, and, from words, they came to blows, so that Mr. Hayes killed him. The wife of the dead man promised to hold her tongue if Hayes paid her an annual allowance; this, he had not been able to do, so he had absconded." A pretty fairy tale!

A distant relative of Hayes now appears on the scene after being visited by Ashby, by name Longmore,

and it was agreed that both should visit Catherine together.

Catherine was not a good liar; she forgot what she had told Ashby, first of all, and the new story differed so much from the other than the magistrates were consulted.

Ashby and Longmore made a careful examination of the head, coming to the definite conclusion that it had once adorned Hayes's torso, so with peace officers they again repaired to Catherine's dwelling whence they took her and Billings into custody.

The two prisoners were examined separately, and each told a different story; Catherine insisted on seeing the preserved head because she felt sure it was not her husband's.

The jar containing the head was brought into the room where she was confined, and, on seeing it, she exclaimed with crocodile tears running down her cheeks:

"Oh, yes. Yes, it is my dear husband's head. It is indeed his head."

She took the jar from Mr. Westbrook, the surgeon who had charge of it, and who offered to take the head out of the spirits so that she could examine it more carefully.

It was taken out of the glass, and she took it in her hands, kissed it tenderly three or four times, then begged for a lock of the hair.

Mr. Westbrook, a far-seeing chap, quietly suggested that "he thought she might dispense with the lock as possibly she had too much of Hayes's blood on her hands."

At that, Catherine either fell into a fit or pretended to. Never in the realms of fiction had such a situation been described.

Murder will out, and, when Catherine was busy kissing her murdered husband's head, the other parts of the body were discovered in the ditch where they had been cast.

Catherine was sent to Newgate prison for trial. Billings and Mrs. Springate were not committed till Wood was discovered, and, when this gentleman knew that the body had been found, he was only too willing to make a full-signed confession of the murder.

Mrs. Springate was soon set at liberty as she was entirely innocent of any offense; Billings also made a confession similar to that of Wood, and Mrs. Hayes artfully put herself on trial, hoping that the confessions of the two others would make her a free woman again.

Fortunately, British law is speedy, direct and just. The result of Catherine's trial was that she was found guilty of diabolical murder by the jury.

She pleaded, remonstrated, and blamed Billings and Wood, but all to no purpose; her argument that she did not strike the fatal blow did not do her an atom of good, so she was sentenced to be burned—the penalty for husband or wife murder in those days. Wood died in prison and escaped execution; Billings was hung, his body being exhibited in chains not far from the ditch into which he had thrown Hayes's remains.

Catherine's end was as terrible as her utterly abandoned life; she was fastened to the stake; the faggots were set and kindled, and she left this earth in dreadful agony.

In the penalty of burning, it was customary for relatives or friends of the condemned to pay the executioner to strangle the prisoner before setting fire to the stake properly.

Whether by accident or design, this was not done, and the cries and screams of the condemned woman would not likely be forgotten in a hurry by those who heard them.

This execution took place at Tyburn, May 9, 1726.

WINGED DEATH

By ERNEST M. POATE

In bafflement, they beheld a crime in the making.

IT was Indian summer, and the days were warm and sunny, with a faint, far-off haze about the horizon, and the tang of burning leaves in the air. But already the nights grew chill, and I knew that winter must come to Ashley Heights very soon. It was time to bed down my roses.

Late one afternoon, I took hat and stick and started for Jerry Talker's place, on the edge of our little suburban town. On the way, I met Sybil Darlington skipping along the sidewalk, intent on missing every crack. She was hatless; her tow-colored hair was tousled, her dress, as usual, in a shocking state of disrepair. One stocking hung in folds about a slim ankle.

None of these things troubled Sybil Darlington. She hopped blithely on, her queer little heart-shaped face intent, humming a small and tuneless song about "Betty Co-ed," until she ran squarely into me.

"Ouch!" said Sybil. "Now, Uncle Jimmy-James, I do think you oughta look where you're going better'n that. You've gone and made me step on a crack, you have."

She wrinkled a short, impudent nose at me, and gave me a gap-

toothed smile, standing on one leg to scratch an ankle with the other foot. Then she murmured some incantation, "so's I won't have had luck from stepping on that crack," and whirled about on the point of a toe, and thrust a small, grubby hand into mine.

"Where you going, Uncle Jimmy-James?" And then, without waiting for an answer: "I'm going that way, too, so I'll walk with you."

"I'm going out to see Jerry Talker," I explained. "He promised to show me a new way of covering rosebushes for the winter. But are you sure it's all right for you to come with me? You were going the other way, you know."

"Oh, yes," agreed Sybil nonchalantly. "It'll be all right. Course, Aunt Anne, she did send me after a spool of thread, or somepin; but that was a long time ago, and she's prob'ly forgotten all about it. When I'm badder than usual," she went on reflectively, "she most ingenerally does think up somepin to send me after; but I don't haf to get it if I just keep out of sight for a while."

The child grinned impishly, and gave a little skip. But I choked, and had to clear an elderly throat, for, in this flash of unchildlike wisdom, I found a pathos of which Sybil was quite unaware. Poor, motherless mite! At ten years of age, a child ought not to know herself unwanted. But Sybil knew, and accepted the knowledge with untroubled philosophy.

"Dad," she continued, "doesn't hardly ever send me after things like that. But, of course, dad has to be away an awful lot, having such an expensive family to support. I'm dreadful expensive, Uncle Jimmy-James. Aunt Anne keeps telling me about it. But anybody has to wear out their clothes some. Don't you think they do? 'Specially when they have to climb so many trees, and crawl through so many fences and hedges and things—in a hurry, lots of times, too." She paused to grin, displaying one large upper front tooth that seemed oddly out of place among the tiny milk teeth beside it, and a gap where its mate would soon appear. She explored that gap with a red tongue tip, and grinned wider.

"Is lipsticks very expensive, Uncle Jimmy-James? 'Cause you'd 'ave thought, to hear Aunt Anne, they was made of diamonds or somepin. And I only just used a little, to make some wounds on Bill Nichols, because we were playing Dying Gladiator, and he was it."

I tried to look properly shocked; but Sybil did not wait for an answer.

"We're almost to Mr. Talker's place," she went on, "if that's where you're going. See, here's ole horrid Mr. Nelson's, now." And she thrust out a red tongue at the dilapidated house.

"He's a mean, horrid man," said Sybil, with judicial detachment. "And it served him good and right he got bank robbed. How does folks get bank robbed anyhow, Uncle Jimmy-James? Do they rob 'em while they're at the bank, or what? I don't care what they did, it served him right. Jus' think of anybody trying to run a drug store 'thout any soda fountain whatever at all! Nor neither any lemon drops, even, 'cause I tried to buy some oncet, on credick, but he wouldn't leave me have credick, nor he didn't have not any lemon drops if he would. Mm-yah!"

She turned her head to thrust out her tongue once more at Mr. Knut Nelson pottering morosely about his neat back yard. Then: "Gee, golly!" she gasped, clutching my

hand closer. "You s'pose he saw me, Uncle Jimmy-James?"

"I guess not. But you shouldn't make faces, Sybil. It's not polite. And you ought to feel sorry for poor Mr. Nelson, too. He lost all his money when the drug store was closed; and he's an old man."

"I don't care! He doesn't haf to be so mean, does he? Say, listen!" Sybil drew closer and turned her face up toward mine, as a new idea struck her. "Was it Mr. Hardy that bank robbed him? I don't think Mr. Hardy would be so horrid as all that, do you?" She widened big blue eyes at me. "Why, even if he wanted to, Denise wouldn't let him, so it can't be so, can it?"

I stopped short beside Jerry Talker's neat, white picket fence. From her portentous look, I knew that Sybil had some piece of news to tell.

"What can't be so? And why did you think Mr. Hardy bank robbed the old gentleman?"

" 'Cause! 'Cause I heard him say so his ownself. Ole horrid Mr. Nelson I mean. He said to Bart Roswell—I don't like him much, do you?" she put in, parenthetically. "He's too slick and sweet smelling, like a barber shop. Well, anyway, he said to Bart Roswell: 'Yust you wait, the both of you.' What makes Mr. Nelson say 'yust' and 'yob' and like that, instead of 'just' and 'job'? He said: 'Yust you wait! You stuck me good, yah. Some day, I get even with you, to ruin me so. But if you are bad,' he said, 'so is Hardy even worser, to sell me a bank-robbed store. I pay you both,' he said. Now, what do you s'pose he meant by that?"

"Oh, nothing of any account, child. I suppose he blamed Mr. Hardy for selling him the business. You know, Mr. Hardy used to own the drug store. Or was that before you can remember? But——"

"It isn't anything to what Mr. Jerry says, though," Sybil broke in. "He says just terrible things!"

"What? About Hardy? Why, he and Denise——"

"Course not!" Sybil was impatient at my stupidity. "I wasn't talking about Mr. Hardy—not any more. I mean Bart Roswell. Mr. Jerry says he is a cheap crook, and a thieving so-and-so, and a small-town giggler—jiggle——"

"Gigolo?" I suggested.

"Uh-huh. What's that, Uncle Jimmy-James?"

"You'd better ask Jerry Talker. Here he is now."

Jerry Talker came around the corner of his cottage: a tall young man, broad-shouldered, lean-waisted and well set up. He wore a khaki shirt open at the neck; his sleeves were rolled to the elbows, displaying tanned, muscular arms; his head was bare. Seeing us, he smiled, and turned to say something over a shoulder, then came forward, his gray eyes twinkling, his pleasantly homely face alight with mirth.

"Good afternoon, Uncle Jim!" For I was, and am, the unofficial uncle of all the young people of Ashley Heights. "And if here isn't my ladylove, Sybil Darlington! If I'd known you were coming, I'd have put on my boiled shirt, honest I would."

"Yah!" answered Sybil derisively. "I bet you would! When you know you're saving it to wear when you take Denise to that dance. Huh, and I bet she's here this minute, too. Wait'll I tell her what you called me!"

Sure enough, with a brief fluttering of white skirts, which Sybil's quick eyes had caught before my old ones, Miss Denise Hardy came into

view around the corner of the house. She was quite self-possessed, though her color was a trifle high.

" 'Lo, Sybil! Hello, Uncle Jimmy! I was just passing, and I stopped for a minute to look at Jerry's flowers," she explained demurely.

She was a strikingly pretty girl, dark-haired and slim, with a clear olive pallor and big, black eyes. She glanced at Jerry sidelong, and he smiled back at her.

"I just wanted——" I began, but a sudden clamor next door interrupted me and drew all our eyes that way.

"Shoo! Git! Shoo out of here!" Old Knut Nelson clapped snarled hands together, and shouted in a shrill, querulous voice.

"Shoo out of mine garden, you dog! Yust wait, now. I fix you. Digging up all mine yard where the bulbs is. Yust wait, I fetch mine air gun, and I fix you good!"

The old man was tall and lean, with hollowed, stooping shoulders that must once have been broad. His face was craggy and harsh; his pale-blue eyes were set deep in hollow sockets; his bushy eyebrows twitched with rage. He turned and hurried to his house at a shambling run, while the small black-and-white dog which had been the occasion of this outburst stood on three legs and waited, head set curiously to one side, tail wagging.

"He doesn't mean any harm," protested Sybil. "He's only just——"

"Only just digging up bulbs, and ruining Mr. Nelson's garden," said I with sympathetic indignation, thinking of my own neat flower beds. "It would serve him right if——"

A screen door slammed sharply as Mr. Nelson dashed into his house, and slammed again two seconds later as he came out again, holding an ordinary boy's air rifle in both hands. On the steps he stopped, set himself, and took aim. But the dog was warned by some presentiment, or he had been there before. He wheeled abruptly and scuttled off, tail between legs. None the less, just as he wriggled through the hedge, a startled yelp and convulsive wriggle announced the success of Knut Nelson's shot.

"Eeee!" shrilled Sybil excitedly. "He hit him. He hit him."

"He always does," declared Jerry Talker. "The old gentleman's a regular sharpshooter. Oh, it doesn't do them any harm," he added, in reply to Miss Denise's murmur of disapproval. "Just makes them jump. It's only a boy's air gun, you see—just a toy."

"Eeee!" squealed Sybil once more, and went into an eccentric dance. "Here's a bee—a bee-ee—a bee-ee-eee!"

"Stand still!" Jerry Talker caught her by the shoulders and drew her close to him. "Just keep quiet, and stop slapping the air like that. You scare the poor thing. He won't hurt you."

Obediently, Sybil stopped her gyrations and stood still, but rigid and trembling. "I just h-hate bees and things!" she wailed.

"Nonsense. Bees are just as friendly as—as puppy dogs, if you treat them right. Let 'em alone, and they'll go on about their business. Look!"

Jerry Talker pointed, and I saw a dozen bees, here and there, flying in straight lines past the house toward their hives, and back again. As he spoke, one of them paused, hovering in the air beside his face. The young man smiled and made a queer, humming sound through closed lips; the insect alighted fearlessly upon his lifted hand, and poised there with closed wings.

Jerry lifted his hand and seemed to whisper, and the bee flew away. "He'll tell the rest of them," the young man assured Sybil. "He'll tell them all that you're my friend, and they won't come near you again."

Denise Hardy and I smiled at this quaint assurance, but Sybil took it all in good faith. "And if you tell 'em that somebody is mean and horrid, would they go sting him for you?" she asked, wide-eyed.

"We-ell, maybe. I've got some Italian bees back there that would, all right; sting a man to death, if they swarmed on him."

Denise shuddered. "How dreadful!"

But Sybil was not in the least shocked. "Oh, goody!" said she, wriggling with pleasurable excitement. "Come on, let's try it. Here's that ole, horrid Bart Roswell coming right now. Go on and tell your Italian bees about him, and probably they'd sting him to death for you, and then he'd be out of your way."

She cast a shrewd sidelong glance at Denise Hardy, who flushed bright red. "Why, you terrible child!" she rebuked, but her eyelids fluttered, and she did not seem wholly displeased.

Jerry Talker flushed also. "I do get worried, sometimes," he admitted, his gray eyes on Miss Hardy's face, "for fear he might get in my way. But I don't think it would be quite fair to have him stung to death—unless——"

He did not finish, for by now Barton Roswell was within hearing.

Roswell was a man of about thirty, rather slight, and very graceful and supple. He was a wonderful dancer, so all the young ladies averred; Jerry had been unjust in calling him a gigolo, for he was one of Ashley Heights's rising business men. He had an oval, rather handsome face; his eyes were large, dark and languishing; he wore a tiny, waxed mustache, and his black hair was slicked back with cosmetics. As usual, he was dressed a little in advance of the latest fashion; and to my mind he looked more like the gigolo Jerry Talker had called him than the prosperous young real-estate agent he was.

He came up to us, swinging a slender Malacca stick, and swept off his Panama hat in a low bow. "Miss Denise! Delightful!" he cooed.

Sybil, half aloud, said: "Yahr!"

Roswell smiled condescendingly. "And Miss Sybil, too! How are you, my child?"

"I'm not no child, ner yours, neither," replied Sybil promptly, and turned her back.

Roswell bit his lip, but turned to me with undiminished suavity. "And how is Mr. Jamison to-day? Beautiful weather, isn't it?"

Last of all, he tossed a curt nod toward Jerry. "How do you do, Talker," he said cavalierly.

Jerry grunted. As the two young men stood, one on each side of Denise Hardy, both claiming her attention, they were as stiff and surly, as elaborately oblivious of each other's existence, as two strange dogs—a mastiff and a whippet, say: Roswell all slenderly sleek and elegant, Jerry Talker big and stalwart and roughly sturdy.

"Won't you allow me to walk home with you, Miss Denise?" Roswell spoke with airy assurance, as though a refusal were impossible. "As soon as I've had just a word with Talker, here."

Jerry opened his lips, and closed them stubbornly. He would ask nothing, but his gray eyes beseeched.

Miss Hardy looked down. Her eyelids fluttered demurely; she was not wholly displeased by the situa-

tion. As girls will, she obviously extracted a tiny thrill from the patent rivalry between these two men.

"Why, thank you," she hesitated. "But Jerry was going to show me how he beds his rosebushes for winter; and then I promised to walk home with Uncle Jim."

That was my first knowledge of her promise; yet I was well satisfied, being none too ancient, old as I am, to enjoy the company of a pretty girl.

"Of course!" said I firmly. "And I'm not going to let you off, either. She promised me first, Roswell; you'll have to wait for another time."

Barton Roswell bit his lip, and gave me an unfriendly look. Then he turned toward Jerry. "Another time, then." Once more, he bowed deeply to Denise. "If you'll excuse me, I must just speak a word with Talker on business."

He drew the other young man a little away from us. Denise, Sybil and I made polite pretense of conversation while they talked in undertones. But the young lady seemed distraught; she kept glancing toward the two men, and answered me at random. Sybil did not even pretend to be interested in me; she stared at them, listening quite frankly, and I must admit that even I was curious.

Like every one else in Ashley Heights, I knew of the ancient enmity between Barton Roswell and Jerry Talker, strengthened as it had been by their rivalry for the favor of the same young lady, and I wondered mightily what Roswell was asking of his enemy.

For he was asking something: there could be no mistaking that. He made his request in a condescending fashion that took assent for granted; and he seemed vastly surprised when Jerry shook a stubborn head.

"But," he protested, raising his voice unconsciously, "when I tell you I can't make the sale?"

"What's that to me?" growled Jerry.

"Well, really——" and Roswell's voice sank to a persuasive murmur again.

Ensued a low-voiced colloquy, during which both men showed signs of rising temper.

Roswell stamped his foot pettishly. "I'll take it before the town board, then!" he flared. "I'll show you whether you can maintain a public nuisance in this way."

"My bees," answered Jerry, his voice two full tones deeper than usual, "don't do anybody any harm. It's none of your business," he went on. Now we could hear everything he said.

"If the old lady won't buy because she's afraid of bees, you'll just have to find another buyer, that's all—or do without your commission, and I'd lie awake nights, crying into my pillow, if you lost any money. You've got your nerve, to come to me at all with any such proposition. After stinging me the way you did when I bought this place—and you know I paid two prices for it, and you got more than old Peabody himself, what with your fees and commissions and charges and overage—after selling me a lemon, you come around asking me to give up my bees so you can sell the place next door and make more fees and commissions and overage. Why, half my income comes from those bees! So you may as well run along because I won't do it."

"I'll make you, then!" Roswell switched his stick angrily. "I guess I've got pull enough in this town to run you out of it if I start in; you and the confounded bees both."

Talker's face was red with rage.

He balled a heavy fist, then relaxed, glancing with contempt at the other's slenderness.

"I'll show you something about bees!" he promised suddenly. Now, you get off my land, and don't you ever come back, either—threatening me! Why, I could eat three of you at one bite."

He stood for an instant, scowling: then, "I've a good mind to set my bees!" he promised suddenly. "Now, whether he made the threat seriously or not, I could not say. "I've got some Italian bees back there, and if ever I turned them loose on you, you'd be mighty sorry!"

With that, he turned his back on Roswell, and spoke to Denise and me. "I'm sorry," he apologized. "But you'll have to excuse me a minute. I'll be right back. As for you, Roswell, get out!"

Jerry turned, and went around the corner of his house, and so out of sight, moving at a half run. Sybil stared after him, fascinated. "You s'pose he's going to sick those Italian bees onto ole horrid Bart?" she inquired.

As for Barton Roswell, he stood irresolute for a moment, then wheeled, scowling and biting his lip, and stalked off toward town, switching at Knut Nelson's privet hedge as he went.

We three, Denise, Sybil and I, waited in Talker's front yard, not knowing what else to do. Certainly, Roswell seemed in no humor for company; we must let him get out of sight before going on. And perhaps Jerry would come back in a better humor, and show us his rosebushes.

So we stood, rather embarrassed, and waited. At least, Denise and I were embarrassed; Sybil Darlington was quite at ease, as always. She stared after Roswell, hopping up and down, her blue eyes big.

"He better hurry, or ole Bart'll be gone. Come on, Jerry, turn 'em loose, quick! There! I bet they're coming now."

Indeed, the bees seemed more numerous; they moved more swiftly, and their hum was louder and more threatening, or else it was my fancy, as, of course, it must have been.

"Goody!" cried Sybil. "Go on, bees, sting him hard!"

I felt an irrational foreboding. The quiet, restful, sunny afternoon seemed of a sudden to be full of sinister tension. I opened my lips to cry out, to warn Barton Roswell, and closed them again, flushing at my own silliness. It was absurd to allow a child's fantasy to upset me thus.

The whole scene photographed itself indelibly upon my brain. I shall never lose that picture: Sybil dancing up and down with clasped hands, urging the bees on, Denise Hardy leaning forward tensely, her smooth forehead puckered as if in alarm, her soft lips parted.

We stood in Jerry Talker's front yard, flowering shrubs all about us; the air was murmurous with the drowsy humming of bees that seemed to grow louder momently. At my right, as I gazed after Roswell, was Jerry's white-painted picket fence, and beyond it the privet hedge that inclosed old Mr. Nelson's yard. Past this hedge, Barton Roswell stalked, moving rapidly and striking at it with his slender stick. The very swing of his shoulders betrayed his ugly temper.

Barton Roswell stalked on; but nothing else in all the world seemed to move at all, save only those swift-flying bees. Half consciously, as one will mark irrelevant details in moments of stress, I noticed that Knut

Nelson had gone into his house. At least, I supposed so, for he was no longer in sight. His air gun still leaned against the steps, but I heard a screen door slam.

In the same instant, I heard a new sound, shriller and sharper than the humming of honey bees. It was a high-pitched, buzzing whistle, to my overwrought nerves infinitely menacing. Sybil heard it, too, for she clapped her hands.

"I bet that's a Eyetalian bee right now. Go sting him!"

Barton Roswell checked in his stride, almost opposite Nelson's front door. He slapped a hand to the left side of his neck, and cried out sharply:

"Ah-h!"

"Goody, goody! G'wan, sting him some more!" said Sybil.

Roswell hesitated, and half turned as if to come back. I could hear him swearing in an undertone something about bees.

He shook his fist toward Talker's house, and went on, but, before he had taken a dozen steps, he staggered and almost fell, then caught himself.

For a moment he stood, rigidly erect, his back toward us. He dropped his stick and clapped both hands to his head with a queer, strangled cry. He swayed unsteadily and reached out as though for support.

Then he crumpled abruptly, swung to the left, and fell forward in a heap, right into Knut Nelson's privet hedge.

"Why," I said stupidly, "wh-what is——"

Jerry Talker came around the corner of his house, breathing hard. "I'm sorry," he began, and stopped short.

Denise gave him a queer look. She was white to the lips; her black eyes were unnaturally large. "M-murderer!" she said.

The boy's face turned ghastly. His jaw dropped. "I——" he mumbled uncertainly. "Why, Denise!"

Not noticing this byplay, Sybil caught excitedly at his arm. "You fixed him, Jerry!" she clamored joyously, with all of a child's callous indifference to reality. Like most imaginative children, Sybil Darlington lived in a dream world crowded with battle, murder and sudden death which in no way discommoded their victims. "You fixed him! I bet those Eyetalian bees stung him right plumb dead!"

Jerry stared at me, pained and puzzled. "What are they——"

But I did not wait to enlighten him. My momentary paralysis past, I was hurrying toward the fallen man as fast as my rheumatic old legs could carry me. My mind was full of troubled speculations. Why had Roswell fallen thus? Was it—— Could it be——

Nonsense! He must have fainted or something.

I plucked at Jerry's gate, my fingers clumsy and stiff, managed to wrench it open somehow, and ran down the dirt sidewalk, Roswell lay as he had fallen, head and shoulders buried in the stiff hedge. He was very still.

I reached him, laid a hand on his arm. "Roswell! Roswell! Get up! What ails you, man?"

Beneath my urgent grip, Barton Roswell was inert and limp; terribly limp, so that I was afraid. I tried to lift him, by my muscles were unequal to the task. Half crying, babbling incoherently, I strained at that lax body, raised the head a little, only to see it drop back.

Then a strong hand put me aside, gently enough. Jerry Talker stooped over the fallen man and lifted him.

I could see the great muscles bulge beneath his shirt.

He lifted Barton Roswell out of the hedge, and tried to set him on his feet. But the man's limp legs refused their burden. Roswell's limbs hung lax and useless; his body was spineless, without stiffening.

Jerry stood with an arm about the other's shoulders, so that Roswell's head lolled against him and I could see, on the left cheek and the left side of the neck, half a dozen small cuts and abrasions where the sharp stems of privet had cut him. A tiny trickle of dark red still oozed from one of them, so that I shivered in superstitious awe. Had Jerry Talker's touch set a dead man's wounds to bleeding afresh?

For Roswell was dead. None who had seen his face could question that. His eyes stared blankly; his bloodless lips were drawn back into a mirthless grin. I turned my face away.

Right at my elbow, Sybil Darlington's shrill, piping voice broke out. "Why, Jer-ry!" she cried. "Didn't they sting him good, though!"

Then I heard her gasp. She crowded against me; I could feel her thin little body shaking against my side. Her heart-shaped face was pale; her big blue eyes stared appealingly at me.

"Listen, Uncle Jimmy-James," she begged, gripping me with both hands. "Listen! It isn't—isn't *real*, is it? Not honest-to-goodness real that he's—dead?"

Poor babe, plucked so rudely from her dream world, wherein people died without discomfort, and stayed dead only as long as she chose. She buried her face in my coat.

"This is worser'n ole Mr. Walters," she wailed. "I don't like to look at him. Ple-ease take me away, Uncle Jimmy-James. I think you're just mean, Jerry Talker, you and your ole horrid Eyetalian bees!"

She began to sob brokenly. But Jerry Talker widened gray eyes, and the puzzlement vanished from his kindly face, to be replaced by horror.

"Does she mean——" he asked uncertainly. "Do they mean, she and Denise—do they think I did this? Why, Uncle Jim, I really haven't any Italian bees, and if I had, they couldn't have done it. Why, it would take a hundred bees, at least, to sting a man to death, and there isn't one, even, on him."

He still held Roswell's limp form, hanging over one muscular arm; and as he spoke, a honey bee crawled sluggishly across the dead man's shoulder. One bee, and another, and another!

"They—haven't any stings, Jerry," said I queerly.

Thus we might have stood, staring at each other in dumb amazement for I know not how long, but that Sybil Darlington recovered from her fright. Now she raised her head and spoke practically.

"I should think," she said, "you oughta be doing somepin, 'stead of just gaping. Hadn't you oughta get a doctor, or a policeman, or somepin?"

Denise Hardy came toward us, slowly and with obvious reluctance. "Is he dead?" she asked in a small voice. "Oh-h-h!"

"Take Sybil away," I advised her. But it was Sybil who led her away, trembling and sobbing brokenly, and comforted the older girl as a grown woman might. "Nothing only an accident," I heard her say. "It couldn't 've been bees, Denise. Course not! Just an accident, like fainting away or somepin."

I took a grip of myself. At my age, I should be ashamed to go to pieces like this. "Lay him down,

Jerry," I directed. "Lay him flat on the ground. It doesn't do any good to hold him like that. Now, you've got a phone, haven't you? Well, you go right in and call Doctor Norbury. Tell him to hurry."

Jerry started off obediently, and left me alone, staring down at that dead face. Whatever had killed him —and it must have been heart disease or something of the sort: "death from natural causes," I told myself—Barton Roswell had not died an easy death. That rigid, grinning face was dreadful to look upon.

It was strange, significant, that Roswell should have died so suddenly, two rods from Jerry Talker's doorstep, and thirty seconds after their quarrel and Jerry's odd threat. Was it possible that bees could be trained in any such way, could be set upon an enemy, just like a vicious dog?

The idea was absurd. Yet here lay Barton Roswell, who had been whole and strong, and seemingly in the best of health, five minutes ago. I had counted only three bees; there might have been a few more. But not enough, unless these were peculiarly poisonous bees, as, indeed, Jerry had hinted. Then a sudden chill of fear ran over me. What if there were more of them? Could I be sure they would know me for a friend? Could I be sure, even, that Jerry did not wish me destroyed, also?

I took a step to run, and checked myself. Old as I was, I could never outrun winged death. Besides, the whole notion was absurd, ridiculous. Such things were impossible. None the less, I wiped my forehead with a shaking hand, and my handkerchief came away wet.

Jerry Talker came panting back. "I've called Norbury. He'll be here in five minutes. What on earth could it have been, Uncle Jim?"

I avoided his eyes. Doubt, suspicion, disbelief, and certainty swept over my fogged mind in successive waves. I didn't know what to believe. Jerry Talker didn't look like a murderer. Yet—— Perhaps I ought to notify the police, I told myself. Chief Sullivan would have to investigate.

Well, Norbury was coroner. Let him call the police, if he thought best. It wasn't my place to cast suspicion on a friend. Surely, Jerry Talker couldn't have done this thing.

With a half sob of relief, I heard the distant purring of a motor car, and looked up to see Doctor Norbury's green coupé swing into the avenue and come toward us.

Doctor Oliver J. Norbury was the leading medical practitioner of Ashley Heights, as well as our medical examiner. He was a lean, dapper man, always very precisely dressed; though his fashionable air was slightly damaged, perhaps, by the strong odor of iodoform which he carried about with him. He had a thin, smooth-shaven face, deeply lined and sour-looking; he kept his tired eyes always half closed, so that he wore a look of sleepy cynicism. He was an able man; no doubt of that. But his personality was unpleasing; to me, at least. I never liked him much.

He stopped his car opposite where we stood, and swung out from under the wheel.

"What's all this?"

Neither Jerry nor I answered. Doctor Norbury knelt beside that inert body, and touched wrist, throat and eyes with deft fingers. Then he sat back on his heels and looked up at us.

"Chatty, aren't you?" he said, in

his sharp, jeering voice. "Brilliant conversationalists, the pair of you. Well? Well? What happened?"

I glanced at Jerry Talker; then, seeing that he had no mind to answer, I said: "Why, he must have fainted, or something. He was walking away from us, and all of a sudden he put his hands to his head and fell over into the hedge, and, when I got to him, he was dead."

Norbury sniffed. His sleepy eyes searched first my face, then Jerry Talker's, suspiciously. "Dead when you got to him, eh? Well, he's still dead," he grumbled, and shook his head as if highly dissatisfied.

Then he bent over Roswell's body once more, touching it here and there, his eyes and fingers swiftly, deftly busy. At last, he stooped still lower, and carefully sniffed at the dead lips.

"Huh!" he grunted, rising. "Dead when you got to him? You're sure of that? And where was our silent friend? Come along, Talker, live up to your name! What do you know about this?"

My heart sank. So he had begun to suspect Jerry already! I wondered why, and noticed with a sick foreboding that three or four bees still crawled sluggishly about on the dead man's coat sleeve. Were there definite signs and symptoms, I wondered, by which a doctor could tell that death had been due to bee stings? Then I shook my head impatiently. What nonsense, to imagine that three or four bees, no matter how venomous, could have killed a man!

Jerry Talker wet dry lips, and put one hand to his forehead, confusedly. "I," he hesitated. "Why, I—I didn't see anything, much. I was out back. As I came around the corner of my house, I saw him fall down, and that was all. Uncle Ji—— Mr. Jamison got to him before I did."

Doctor Norbury's face was more saturnine, more suspicious, than ever. His sharp eyes probed at us from beneath sleepy lids. He scowled blackly.

"Nobody was near him when he fell, eh?"

Suddenly, I resented his manner. Why, he was acting as if he suspected me of some guilty knowledge!

"Nobody was near him," said I stiffly. "Miss Denise Hardy and Jerry and I were together, in Jerry's front yard. Yes, and Sybil Darlington was with us. We all saw it."

"Sybil, hey?" Doctor Norbury drew down his upper lip. There was an odd, grudging, almost resentful respect in his manner, for he had had dealings with Sybil Darlington before.

"So Sybil was here? I believe I'll talk with her about it. How long after he left you did Roswell fall down? He'd been talking with you, hadn't he?"

"I didn't say so, but he had. Yes, he came to see Jerry, here, on some business. They talked together for a minute, and then he started away. He had just time to walk from Talker's gate here, and then he dropped."

Norbury measured the distance with narrowed eyes. "Did they have words, he and Talker? Quarreled, didn't they? Yes. Did you see Talker strike him, or——" He broke off, mumbling to himself.

"Nobody touched him," I said. "He wasn't out of my sight. What ails you, anyhow? Why do you ask such questions?"

"Well, did you see Roswell put his hand to his mouth—as if he was taking a pill—swallowing something?"

"No! He did put his hands to his

head, but—— Maybe, if you'd tell us what you're driving at, Norbury, we might help you."

The medical examiner looked at me queerly. "Driving at? This man's been poisoned. He died of cyanide poisoning. You can smell it, even. And so, naturally enough, I'm curious."

I drew a long, quivering breath of relief. Cyanide! Then it couldn't have been Jerry Talker's bees, after all. I gave a silly little giggle.

"Oh-h," said I. "I—I thought it might have been something else."

"What?" asked Norbury sharply.

But a shrill, piping voice from behind saved me the trouble of answering. "He thought it was Jerry's Eyetalian bees, of course—just like we all did," declared Sybil Darlington excitedly.

She had materialized from nowhere, as was her habit. It was startling how the child would suddenly appear, fairly bursting with information, when you thought her miles away.

Norbury stared. "Italian bees? What do you mean?"

"Why," said Sybil blithely, "ole horrid Bart Roswell wanted Jerry to get rid of his bees, 'cause some woman didn't like bees. So Jerry said he wouldn't, and he got mad, and they both got mad—because Denise was there, mostly, I guess," the child interpolated wisely. "And Bart says he's going to get Jerry run out of town, and Jerry says he'll show him somepin about bees, and sick some Eyetalian ones he's got onto him so's they'd sting him to death, like in my 'Children's Cyclopedia' book when bees swarmed onto a dog, see? So Jerry went to call his bees and sick 'em onto Bart, and 'en Bart, he fell down right away. So, naturally of course, we all s'posed it was the Eyetalian bees did it. Do you s'pose maybe they could 've, anyhow?"

The medical examiner looked outraged. He was a methodical man, and Sybil's flights of imagination annoyed him greatly. "Ridiculous!" he scoffed. "Well, there's no use standing here. I'll send for Chief Sullivan, and have the body taken to Newkirk's undertaking rooms: I can do the autopsy there."

"But," I objected uncertainly. "I thought you said you knew he was poisoned already with cyanides? Maybe——"

"Maybe an autopsy will show I was mistaken?" Doctor Norbury smiled mirthlessly. "No fear! He's had cyanogen, right enough; you can't mistake the odor—like peach pits, or bitter almonds. But an autopsy will show how it was administered, I hope, and in what form. It might have been hydrocyanic acid," he went on, half aloud, as if thinking to himself. "But that's hard to get. Or cyanide of potash; that's easier. Only, they act so quickly, both of them." He scowled.

"I'll have to ask you to stay right here, all of you," he said aloud, in an official manner. "The cyanides act so quickly that he must have been given the poison within ten minutes, at most, before he died."

"And that means," supplemented Jerry Talker, stupidly, as though the idea had just struck him, "that you think one of us must have murdered him!" He bit his lip perplexedly. "You don't believe Uncle Jim—you don't think Mr. Jamison would murder anybody?"

"No."

"Then you think I did it?"

Norbury was silent.

"Denise Hardy was here, too," I blundered, seeking to comfort the distraught boy. "And—and Sybil, and——"

Talker laughed bitterly. "You can't hang it onto Sybil, either. And Denise——" He choked.

The medical examiner's eyes narrowed suspiciously. "That's an idea, too. What has become of Miss Hardy?"

"You—you wouldn't dare——" Jerry's big fists balled; he crouched as though about to spring upon Norbury.

"Denise is sitting on your steps, fanning herself," piped Sybil, whom we had forgotten, she was so quiet. "And I went and phoned Mr. Sullivan my ownself, while she cried and took on, so he oughta be here presently. And you better do somepin," she told Norbury sternly, " 'steada jus' standing around and saying mean things about folks."

While she spoke, I heard the asthmatic panting of an elderly flivver; presently, the chief of police drove sedately up, and dismounted. Chief Sullivan was an elderly man, quite tall and very stout, so that his blue coat drew into deep, transverse creases at every button. He wore a big, bushy mustache, and his grizzled eyebrows would each have made a mustache sufficient for the average man. His deep-set eyes were small and sharp; his manner was slow and ponderous, but he was an efficient officer.

"What's all this," rumbled the chief in his deep, gruff voice, "about Bart Roswell getting himself stung to death by bees?"

Doctor Norbury stared, then gestured impatiently toward Sybil. "Oh, just another of this kid's fairy tales. He died of cyanide poisoning."

Sullivan blinked, and tugged at his huge, walrus mustache, glancing sidelong at Sybil's interested face. "Huh!" he said. "You oughta be willing to listen to her fairy tales by now, seems to me, doc." She has proved helpful."

The medical examiner flushed, and did not answer. Indeed, if it had not been for Sybil Darlington and her fairy tales, I doubt if the murderer of Solon Walters would ever have been caught.

"Well," rumbled the chief, "suppose you tell a feller what happened, huh?"

"Roswell talked with Jerry Talker," replied Norbury crisply. "They had words. Talker threatened, according to Sybil"—with a sneering side glance—"to set his Italian bees on Bart Roswell. Bart started off, walked this far, and dropped dead. He died of cyanide poisoning, by the odor, and he must have taken it within ten minutes, at the very most, before he dropped."

"Huh!" Chief Sullivan blinked, tugging at his mustache. "Said he'd sick some bees onto him, and sting him to death. Huh!"

His small, sharp eyes ran over Roswell's body, that still lay on the ground beside us. He pointed at it, now, gripping the medical examiner's arm with his left hand.

"Lookit, man!" His deep, gruff voice broke almost to shrillness. "Lookit the bees crawling on him right now!"

Indeed, half a dozen bees were still creeping sluggishly about on Roswell's head and arms; and I wondered again, sickly, what this might mean. But Jerry laughed a harsh, barking laugh.

"No wonder," he said sharply. "With him scented up like he always is—was, I mean. The bees at once smell perfume; they're looking for flowers."

Sullivan shook this off impatiently. "How many bees would it take to kill a feller, doc? And, say! Gosh, supposing they was to get

after us!" He made a sudden, panicky slap at the air.

"They won't touch you," said Jerry. "It's nearly sunset, anyhow. The most of them have gone back to their hives."

"They's some kinda acid in bee stings, too," persisted Sullivan. "It could be that, insteada prussic acid, couldn't it, doc?"

"No! Certainly not. It would take at least a hundred bees to kill a man; and I haven't seen twelve around here. Besides, bee stings contain formic acid, like all insect bites; and that isn't anything in the world like hydrocyanic."

"He could've fed poison to his bees, though," rumbled Chief Sullivan. The idea intrigued him, obviously; perhaps because it came from Sybil. He had good reason to respect her notions. "I've heard about feeding poisons to bugs."

Doctor Norbury threw up his hands in patent disgust. "Of all crazy ideas! I tell you, that's impossible. Why should the bees have attacked Roswell, anyhow, even if they'd been poisoned, which is impossible? Why didn't they sting Jamison, here, or Sybil? Why don't they sting us, now?"

"Roswell's all smelled up with perfumery," the chief argued stoutly. "Didn't you hear Talker explain that?"

"And I suppose Denise Hardy hasn't a bit of scent on her, eh? I'll bet she's perfumed as much as Roswell, but she hasn't been stung. Oh, don't be silly, Sullivan. Use your head. One of these people—probably Talker or Denise Hardy—has poisoned him; they've been pretty thick, and lately Roswell's been going with the Summers girl. Denise might have been jealous, and——"

Norbury stopped, with a cautious side glance toward Jerry Talker. Then, apparently ignoring that young man's fury, he went on. "One of these people gave Bart Roswell poison, in a piece of candy, maybe, or some chewing gum, and he died. Cyanide acts almost instantly, so it must have been one of the four. Unless it was given in a keratin capsule; that would take an hour or more to dissolve. That would make it harder, but the autopsy will show."

Chief Sullivan coughed impatiently. "Well, then. Le's get—Sybil Darlington, you beat it outta here, quick! Come on, doc, we gotta move him right away."

The chief had glanced down at Barton Roswell's dead face. It was livid, swollen, horrible. He turned Sybil about by main force, and pushed her away: he looked sick, himself.

Doctor Norbury was in no way discomposed. "Cyanides always cause marked post-mortem lividity," he said indifferently. "That's only another proof. Eh? Oh, yes, yes; better call Newkirk, and move him now."

The officer started off very willingly. Over a shoulder, he called back: "Better stick around home, Talker. Might wanta ask you some more. Guess you won't run away, nor you, neither, Mr. Jamison. And Sybil—Heaven knows we couldn't get rid of her if we wanted."

In fact, the child still hung about, leaning over Jerry Talker's fence. Seeing that Chief Sullivan had no idea of arresting any of us just yet, in spite of the medical examiner, I went toward her.

"Come on, Sybil," I said. "It's time you were going home. The five fifteen'll be in, and your father will be looking for you."

"Oh, all right," she sighed. "Only —— Gee, Uncle Jimmy-James, isn't it exciting, though?" Her face

was pale, so that every freckle stood out; her blue eyes were wide. "Do you suppose Jerry could've fed those Eyetalian bees poison, like they said?"

"No," said I shortly, hoping I was right. "Where's Denise? We ought to take her home, too."

"Denise? Oh, she's around on the side porch, crying and taking on like everything."

Sybil led the way around the house. Following her, I noticed that Knut Nelson was out in his garden, digging up bulbs. His air gun lay on the ground beside him, ready to his hand; as I watched, I saw him snatch it up to aim at a wandering Leghorn hen. The gun went off with a sharp *whutt!* The fat, white fowl emitted an indignant squawk and fluttered wildly over the hedge.

"Good shot!" applauded Sybil softly. "Do you suppose it hurts 'em much, Uncle Jimmy-James?"

"I guess not," I answered absently. "It doesn't seem to."

In fact, the white hen had settled in the next yard already. I could see her scratching contentedly enough, and picking up insects with sharp, sudden darts of her bill, as hens do. No doubt, the air-gun pellet had bounded harmlessly from her thick feathers.

Denise Hardy sat on the steps, huddled together with elbows on knees and face buried in her hands. As we approached, she glanced up tearfully, a picture of woe.

"H-have they arrested him yet?" she quavered.

"Arrested whom, for what?"

"Why, J-Jerry, of course, for killing Bart Roswell! Oh, why did he have to do it? I wouldn't have thought twice about him; I wouldn't ever have looked at him, even, only —only I w-wanted to make Jerry jealous, just a li-ittle bit. And now see what has happened!" She sobbed forlornly.

"So you didn't really care for Roswell?" asked Jerry Talker queerly. He had come around the corner of the house just in time to hear the girl's last words.

Denise came to her feet, and stretched out both hands.

"Oh, J-Jerry!" she choked, head on his shoulder, arms tight about his neck. "Oh, J-Jerry, how c-could you? Will they lock you up, Jerry? They won't, will they? I don't care wh-what you did, I——"

The rest was indistinguishable. Her face buried in Jerry Talker's shoulder, the girl wept luxuriously.

Jerry did not look as happy as a young man should in such circumstances. Over Denise's black head, his eyes sought my face.

"You can swear, can't you, that you were watching me every minute? That I couldn't have given Roswell anything to eat?"

"Why," I hesitated, "of course, I don't believe you did, Jerry; but I can't swear you didn't."

"I will, then!" cried Denise magnificently. "I'll swear you didn't do it. I'll tell them I gave him a piece of candy; they won't send *me* to the electric chair. And maybe, that'll keep their minds off those bees," she finished in a half whisper.

Jerry Talker groaned aloud. "Those bees! Why on earth did I have to crack a silly joke, just at that time?"

"Mebbe," suggested a gruff, bass voice, "mebbe you'll find it ain't such a joke after all, young feller."

Chief Sullivan's figure loomed into view. He drew in his stomach with an effort, and unbuttoned one brass button. At once, the sides of his blue uniform coat flew apart, exposing an inverted V of rumpled shirt. He fumbled in his fob pocket,

brought out a large silver watch and squinted at it.

"Time I was down to the depot," he grumbled. "But I gotta take a look around first."

He replaced his watch, drew the sides of his coat together, and rebuttoned it after a struggle, so that a third deep, transverse crease was added to the two above. Then he turned purposefully to Jerry Talker.

"Come along, young feller. I gotta take a look around; see what-all you been feeding them bees."

Jerry Talker shrugged indifferently. "Come on!"

He turned toward the rear of his house, then stopped short. I heard him gasp; I saw his stalwart figure stiffen. Then his shoulders sagged, and his head dropped forward. He went on toward the woodshed, but he moved like one going to execution.

The two men disappeared into the shed, while we others, Denise and Sybil and I, waited uneasily. I was worried; I could not imagine what Jerry feared, but I knew very well that he was most reluctant to show the chief over his premises.

We had not long to wait. In two minutes, I heard a gruff shout of triumph, and stout Chief Sullivan emerged, waving a glass jar over his head.

"First crack outta the box," he exulted. "Just like I suspicioned. Say, you gotta hand it to Sybil, here. She's a smart kid! I'd like to know if anybody else on earth would've figured this thing out, only her? It's a new way to commit murder, that's sure. Who'd 'a' thought of feeding poison to bees, so's they'd sting a body to death? This'll take Doc Norbury down a mite, I bet you. Too high-chin, anyways, he is. But I suspicioned all along it could've been them bees."

He was excited; his voice broke hoarsely, his big, gnarled hands shook; he breathed deeply. Beneath bushy, working eyebrows, his sharp little eyes were bright with triumph. He held that jar beneath my nose, and I read its label, perforce.

"Cyanide of Potassium," was the legend. "One pound, Avoirdupois." And then, in bright-red letters, below a skull and crossbones: "Poison!" and a list of antidotes.

I was shaken. I glanced at Jerry Talker's flushed and lowering face, and wondered: Was that the look of guilt? For the moment, I was stunned, and ready to believe anything.

Then I heard Sybil Darlington's piping voice. She stood at my elbow —of course! If there was anything happening, Sybil would be there.

"That couldn't 'a' been it, after all," she announced.

Sullivan looked at the child with grudging respect; he had reason to give some weight to her ideas. "Why not?" he asked.

"Because—— Well, I don't exackly know for sure," Sybil confessed. "You see, this time, Jerry was good and mad, so it's different, kinda. You can't be sure by the color," she explained vaguely. "But, anyways, if anybody should feed poison to bees, it'd poison the bees first, wouldn't it?"

That seemed reasonable. Moreover, I told myself, it would have been impossible to direct such weapons. If Jerry Talker's Italian bees had poisoned stings, they must have killed any person whom they attacked; and it was too much of a strain on my imagination to believe that he could direct them against an individual. And surely, angry as he might have been at Barton Roswell, Jerry was not cold-blooded enough to have run the risk of poisoning any

bystander, especially since his own sweetheart was near by.

No, I decided with vast relief, it couldn't have been the bees.

But what, then? I gave it up, thankful that the responsibility of deciding was not mine.

Chief Sullivan tugged at his mustache, muttering uncertainly. At last, he shrugged heavy shoulders and turned away.

"I ain't satisfied; not a mite," he declared. "But I don't know's I've got any call to arrest you yet, Talker. You better stay close to home, that's all. I'm liable to be back."

With that, he left us. I persuaded Denise Hardy that it was time for her to go, also. Between us, Sybil and I led the weeping girl away; and when we had taken her home, I sent Sybil to her own house, doubtless to pour out the tale of this afternoon's happenings to her beloved father, just returned from his day's work in the city. Then I went home, also, and spent a lonely evening cudgeling my brains—with no result.

Next morning, Doctor Oliver Norbury came to my house. "I want to go over this affair with you, Mr. Jamison," he explained. "Maybe you'll remember something that will help. I must confess I'm stumped. I haven't an idea in the world how it was done."

"Anything I can do," I began, but the medical examiner was not listening. Chin in hand, a worried pucker between his eyes, he sat and stared at my rug, pondering.

"The autopsy," he said presently, "shows that Roswell died of cyanide poisoning, just as I said. Cyanide of potash, probably, though it might have been prussic acid. But the queer part of it is that there's very little cyanogen in the stomach. It's mostly in the blood, and the liver, as one would expect if it had been given intravenously. But that's absurd."

He paused, frowning deeper. "If Talker had jabbed a hypodermic needle into him now. But he couldn't have done that without Roswell's feeling it. Are you sure Talker didn't touch him? Jab him with anything?"

"Reasonably sure. At any rate, I didn't see him; and, as you say, Bart would have said something, or done something, surely, if he'd been pricked with a needle. Wouldn't that have left a mark, too?"

"Ye-es. It ought to have left a needle prick, and a swollen, discolored area around it. Cyanide is irritating. But I didn't find a mark on him, except those little wounds in his neck, where he fell into the hedge. And I found bits of bark and dirt in them."

It was beyond me, and I freely said so.

"The poison might have been given in a keratin capsule," Doctor Norbury went on. "Keratin won't dissolve until it passes through the stomach and into the duodenum; and so the poison wouldn't have acted for some time. But we didn't find any partly dissolved capsule; and there was very little cyanide in the duodenum—just a trace. As I say, most of it was in the blood. Besides, Talker had a motive. And who else would want to kill Bart Roswell?"

"Plenty of people," said I. "You know how he's always bragged about being such a sharp bargainer? It wouldn't surprise me to learn that half the people who have bought real estate from him, wanted to murder him. Besides, what motive did Jerry Talker have, after all? Roswell cheated him when he bought that place, maybe; but that was several years ago. Why wait all this time? And just because they had words

yesterday, is no reason why Jerry should murder him."

"It might have been jealousy."

"Nonsense!" I rejoined. "If you'd seen Denise Hardy crying in his arms after Roswell died, you'd realize that Jerry Talker had no reason for being jealous."

"Maybe he didn't know it, though. But however that may be, I've got to find out how Barton Roswell was killed before I can decide who did it."

A new idea struck me. "Perhaps it was suicide. Maybe he gave himself a hypodermic as he walked away?"

Norbury laughed cynically. "And what did he do with the syringe? He didn't drop it, because I've looked; and he didn't swallow it, either, because I've looked. No, all I can see for it is to wait until Sybil Darlington has an inspiration," he finished in forlorn jest.

"I doubt if Sybil is going to be inspired, this time. She says she 'can't tell by the color, because Jerry was mad.'"

"What did she mean by that?" inquired the medical examiner.

"I don't know exactly. But as I understand it, Sybil sees, or thinks she sees, an aura surrounding other people; and if a man has committed murder, his aura changes color."

Norbury sniffed. "That's a very common notion, among neurotics," he admitted. "Purely subjective, of course; the colored aura exists only in the eye of the observer. Yet it does happen that high-strung persons, and especially young children, have an intuitive power that——"

He stopped, fumbling for words, and I understood that he was trying to justify Sybil's previous exploits to his own purely objective mind. It was hard for Doctor Norbury to admit the possibility of such impalpable and unscientific things as auras, yet Sybil Darlington's achievement in the case of Solon Walters's murder could not be denied.

Norbury rose, sighing. "Sullivan wants to arrest Talker; but if he does, he'll have to turn him loose again, unless we get more evidence. All I can do is to postpone the inquest a few days, hoping that something may turn up."

He gave me a curt nod and went away, a much puzzled man.

I could not settle to my own affairs; this matter intrigued me vastly. So, after pottering about for a while, I took hat and stick and went for a walk, and, half unconsciously, took the direction of Jerry Talker's place.

As I went, I heard sharp footsteps behind me—the steps of a man with some settled destination which he was in a hurry to reach. Glancing around, I saw Sam Hardy coming.

Denise's father was an elderly man, not overtall but very erect and dignified. He came on at a great pace, setting his heels down smartly; his thin, high-bred face was stern and set. As he came closer, I saw that his fists were clinched at his sides; his close-clipped white mustache twitched, and his nostrils were dilated. Obviously, Samuel Hardy was very angry.

He nodded to me, courteously enough, but without a smile; and he would have gone on without stopping, but that I spoke to him.

"Good day, Mr. Hardy! Are you going my way?"

"'Morning." He spoke curtly. "I'm going to see that young scoundrel Talker."

"I'll walk with you, if I may," I told him, wondering inwardly. "I was going that way myself."

"We-ell." Hardy was patently not overjoyed to have my company; but

he was too courteous to refuse it outright. We went on in silence for a while, and I had to stretch my old legs to keep pace with Hardy's haste.

Sam Hardy stalked on, nostrils twitching, the eyes beneath his white brows stony hard. Presently, his inward heat demanded expression, and he burst forth:

"The idea! The ve-ry idea of that murdering ruffian daring to get my girl mixed up with his affairs! As if it wasn't enough for him to commit a cowardly murder in broad daylight, but he has to mix Denise up with it. Has to kill an inoffensive man like poor Bart Roswell, in the child's very presence. And that's not the worst of it, Jamison." He paused, and struck one fist sharply into the other palm.

"That's not the worst. He's got the poor child hypnotized in some way, so that she swears she'll stand by him; that she'll marry him tomorrow, if he'll have her. A cold-blooded murderer, Jamison! Now, isn't that a fine thing for a father to hear?"

His angry eyes burned into mine. I knew Sam Hardy for a hot-tempered man, but I had never before seen him in such a state as this.

"You seem very sure he's guilty," I ventured.

"Guilty? Of course, he's guilty! Who else could have done it? You didn't, certainly, nor Sybil Darlington. But I'm going to talk to that young man! I'm going to tell him to keep away from my daughter!"

By this time, I began to wish I had not offered to accompany him. I had no desire to stand by while he abused Jerry Talker. As though the boy hadn't troubles enough already! Yet cutting through my sympathy for Jerry, came an uneasy suspicion. What if he were guilty, after all? I wished myself well out of the whole affair.

It was too late now. Already, we were passing Knut Nelson's place. I saw the old man in his garden, stooping painfully, pottering about his shrubs, his trusty air gun at his side. For an instant, I wondered, irrelevantly, why he took such pains to keep dogs and chickens away. They could not do much harm at this time of year.

The old man went on with his work, never glancing around. A queer, morose sort of person he was, surely! Not even Barton Roswell's dramatic death, almost in front of his house, had sufficed to distract his attention from his own affairs.

But now we had passed Nelson's privet hedge, and Jerry Talker's white-painted picket fence was at our right. Beyond it, Jerry himself sat on his front steps, pipe in mouth, making a pretense of reading his newspaper, but with a wary eye upon us two, as I could see.

Mr. Hardy stopped outside the gate, careful not to set foot on Talker's land. He beckoned imperiously, and Jerry laid down his paper and came toward us.

"Listen to me, young man!" Mr. Hardy burst out furiously, waiting for no word of greeting. "Listen to me! You're to keep away from my daughter hereafter. Don't you dare speak to her! Don't you dare even so much as look at her! You——"

He paused, incoherent with rage, and stood there glaring and blowing out his cheeks.

Jerry Talker went rather white, and clenched his teeth on his pipe stem so that his cheek muscles bulged. He glanced at me, sidelong, half appealing, half accusing, and I turned away and made pretense of seeing something far up the street. What was I doing here anyway?

"Did—did Denise send you here to tell me that?" asked Jerry.

"Did—— Confound your impudence, sir! What business is that of yours? Why, you—you murdering dog!" And Mr. Hardy struck his fist sharply on a picket point, so that the blood came. "You cutthroat! Do you dare to stand there and argue with me? Keep away from my daughter, I tell you!"

I drew a little away, my glance wandering unhappily, trying to look as if I could not hear. Knut Nelson still stooped in his garden, wielding a trowel busily. He had not glanced up, though he must have heard Mr. Hardy's voice. The man was fairly shouting.

Then, with vast relief, I saw Sybil Darlington round a corner and swing into full view. She was hippety-hopping blithely, singing a tuneless song:

"He's so charming, it's alarming, how I fall!"

I waved a hand and started to meet her, thankful for an excuse to withdraw and let Hardy and Talker fight it out.

As I left, I heard Jerry's voice, low and trembling: "If you were a younger man, if you weren't Denise's father, I'd——"

Sam Hardy fairly danced up and down, defying him. "You'd what? If you want to do anything about this, just come out into the road right now!"

Sybil skipped up to my side and stopped. Her blue eyes were very big. "Listen to Mr. Hardy," she said. "Gee, Uncle Jimmy-James, isn't he just aw-w-ful mad, though?"

She squinted up her eyes, and stared at the man intently. "Goodness me!" she sighed. "I'd like to know how a body's going to tell anything, when they're all such an ugly color. Why, Mr. Hardy, he's so mad-colored all around, he could've killed somebody his own-self. Yes, and Jerry!"

Sybil's breath caught in her throat. She stopped short, clutching at my arm; her face was pale and frightened. I stared, but I could see nothing alarming.

Jerry Talker had evidently tired of the older man's abuse, for he turned his back, now, and stalked around the corner of his house, indignation in every line of his rigid body. Hardy stood still a moment, gripping the palings of the fence in both hands, and blowing out his cheeks furiously; then, with a muttered oath, he turned away also, and marched down the sidewalk toward town.

Sybil was gripping my arm still. I could feel her meager body trembling, where it was pressed against mine. Her breath came fast; the freckles stood out on her pale cheeks. Jerry Talker had disappeared, and I noticed now that Knut Nelson's garden was empty also. The old man must have gone into his house, I thought; but he'd be back. He had left his air gun on the ground.

Sam Hardy stalked along, past the privet hedge, muttering to himself and gesturing occasionally. He was all alone.

Suddenly, it seemed as though he were alone in very truth—that there was no other living person in all the world save Sybil Darlington and me, who stood in the background, watching. Nothing else in the visible world moved; no other being was in sight. There was a queer clutching at my heart, and I began to breathe faster than Sybil. Ugly things portended; the world trembled on the verge of sinister happenings.

My ears seemed unnaturally acute. Suddenly, I could hear Jerry Talker's bees humming past, the sound of their swift flight, louder and more ominous every instant.

"Golly-gee!" whispered Sybil. "I do believe somepin's going to happen to him, too. Uncle Jimmy-James, I'm s-scared!"

As she spoke, a screen door slammed somewhere; and in that strained silence, the sound was startlingly loud.

In the same instant, I became aware of a shrill, high-pitched buzzing, almost a whistle—a venomous sound, infinitely alarming. Numbly, I wondered why it seemed familiar. No ordinary bee, surely, had such a hum as this!

Then I knew. This was the sound that had preceded Bart Roswell's death. I tried to shout, but could make no sound; I wanted to run, but could not move. I must do something, must warn Sam Hardy at once.

All these things were simultaneous. They came in one rush; there was no time to appraise them then. While the slamming of the screen door still reverberated, while that ominous and shrill whistling still sounded in my ears, Sam Hardy started convulsively, and slapped a hand to his neck.

While we watched, helpless and terrified, the man turned, left hand still clutching his neck, and shook a fist at Jerry Talker's house.

"You and your bees!" he bawled, shaking with rage.

He was scarcely fifty feet away; I could see the expression of his face. And as I watched, insensate fury changed to surprise, amazement, dawning fear.

Sam Hardy began to tremble. His face was livid, terrible to see. He raved with his hands in the air; his eyes bulged; he cried out thickly, unintelligibly, in sick appeal.

Then he crumpled suddenly, and collapsed, half turning as he fell, with head and shoulders buried in Knut Nelson's privet hedge. He hung there, sprawling, terribly inert and limp, motionless.

Before I reached him, before I saw his livid, ghastly grin, I knew the man was dead. He had died as Barton Roswell had died, after quarreling with Jerry Talker, as Roswell had quarreled.

How it had been done, I knew not; but that Jerry had murdered these two men I knew now. I saw it, in an instant of terribly clear vision, and I was stricken with fear, so that I caught at Sybil's hand and ran away at top speed.

I heard Jerry's voice calling after me, but ran the faster. Perhaps, I thought, confusedly, he might intend to do away with the witnesses to this latter crime.

We had run two blocks before I could get my panic under control. Then I stopped short, somewhat ashamed.

Sybil now was giggling joyously. "Golly-gee, uncle!" she cried. "I didn't know you could run that fast. What'll we do now? Go and get ole Doc Norbury and the chief? I'm getting scared to go near Jerry Talker any more," she added, more seriously. "Seems like as if he must be crazy, or somepin. Still"—with a relieved sigh—"I suppose Mr. Hardy'll be better off in heaven. I hope he's gone to heaven. But he'd ought to've learned to control his temper."

I stared at the incomprehensible mite, puzzled, as so often before, by the inexplicable quirks of her mind. She did not seem particularly upset. I hoped that the sight of this second ugly death might slip out of her

mind without leaving its scar. Children forget so easily, I told myself, trying to believe it, but the haunted look far back in Sybil's blue eyes troubled me.

"I'm going to take you home, first," I decided. "It's not good for a child, to——"

"Fiddlesticks!" Sybil broke in impatiently. "I mean, excuse me, please, Uncle Jimmy-James. Only, we gotta do somepin; we gotta stop folks getting theirselves killed this way. So let us get Doc Norbury first."

"You're right, child," I admitted. After what she had seen already, poor Sybil ought not to be more troubled by its aftermath. "We'll stop right here and phone him."

We stopped at the nearest house to notify the medical examiner, and in fifteen minutes he drove up in his car. We followed his car back to the spot where Samuel Hardy lay dead.

He lay alone. Knut Nelson was nowhere to be seen, though once I thought I saw a window curtain move furtively—and Talker stood waiting in his own front yard.

"I haven't been near him!" Jerry shouted, while the medical examiner was still climbing out of his car. "I was out back, and soon as I heard him yell, and saw him fall down, I phoned for you and Sullivan right away. I haven't been nearer him than this."

As he spoke, the young man came closer, but with evident reluctance; he stopped three yards away from the dead man. "I didn't dare to help him even," he went on bitterly, "for fear you and Sullivan would accuse me of this, too."

Doctor Norbury gave him a sharp, sidelong glance from beneath lowered eyelids. The medical examiner's thin lips drew down cynically; but he said nothing. Instead, he knelt beside Sam Hardy's body.

Hardy was dead, too. No doubt of that! One glance at his livid, contorted features told me as much, and I turned away, shuddering.

Then the chief of police drove up in his rattling old flivver, and clambered out, and came lumbering toward us where we stood around Sam Hardy's limp body. He tugged his thick mustache viciously; his little, sharp eyes were bewildered, almost frightened.

"Where's it going to end? Same thing, is it, doc?" he muttered.

Norbury nodded glumly. "Just the same. Cyanide poisoning. You can smell cyanogen distinctly. And how it was done, I'd give a hundred dollars to know!"

"Is they any bees on him?"

The medical examiner glared. "Don't be a fool, Sullivan! Haven't I told you that's impossible?"

"I believe it must have been some kind of an insect, just the same," I blurted suddenly. "I could hear it coming; it buzzed like a bee, only louder and sharper. It made an ugly noise," I shivered.

"Uh-huh!" put in Sybil Darlington at my elbow. "I could hear it, too. Just the same as when Bart Roswell got killed, it was. A funny, nasty, buzzy noise, like—like——" She stopped short, and caught her breath.

Norbury sat back on his heels, disgustedly. "Of all the idiotic notions I ever heard of!" he scoffed. "Do try to be reasonable. What insect in the known world carries a poison sac full of prussic acid?"

"Now, look here, doc. Mebbe you don't know quite everything there is to know. Why don't you listen at Sybil, for oncet? The kid's had it right before. They could be some kinda bug that a body could feed

cyanides to, couldn't they? Leastways, you could look him over, and see if there's any signs of a bite on him anywheres."

Muttering his exasperation, Norbury bent closer over that quiet body. "I looked Roswell all over," he declared, "trying to find hypodermic marks, but there wasn't a thing except the spots on his neck where the hedge pricked him. Hardy fell into the hedge, too, and might——"

His voice trailed away; his wearily cynical look changed, became intent, astonished.

"Those scratches," Sullivan put in. "You sure they were all made at once?"

Norbury made an abstracted gesture. "Hush!" he murmured. "Be quiet a minute."

Kneeling beside the dead man, he touched that livid face, the neck already growing rigid, feeling with deft, skilled fingers. His breath began to come sharply from between clinched teeth; he fumbled in his pocket, brought forth a pair of thumb forceps.

"There's a cut here on his neck," he said slowly. "The other scratches haven't bled, but this one—see, here's a trickle of blood?"

"What's 'at mean, doc?"

"It means it must have been made earlier than the others. He was as good as dead when he fell into the hedge; his circulation had practically stopped. So these scratches didn't bleed. But the mark on his neck it——"

He stopped, staring into vacancy with half-shut eyes, striving to remember. "The scratches on Roswell's neck and face," he muttered. "I looked at them closely, I remember."

We all leaned forward. "Well?" asked Sullivan eagerly.

The medical examiner shrugged. "I found bits of bark in several of them. But did I probe into them all? I can't be sure. I'll make another examination, presently. But this time——"

He returned to his gruesome task, picking delicately at that tiny wound on the left side of Sam Hardy's neck. Leaning over his shoulder, I saw him pick up a bit of gelatinous-looking stuff, and sniff at it.

"Cyanide!" he announced confidently. "Here's where he got it, and Roswell must have been fixed the same way. Why, there's even a bit of the drug left, still granular. And what's this stuff, like glue? Hm-m-m! He got jabbed in the neck, sure enough; but when, and how, I can't imagine."

"Mebbe that bug——" Sullivan ventured, but stopped, chagrined, at the other's snort.

Sybil Darlington plucked at my sleeve. "Come here, Uncle Jimmy-James!" She drew me aside. "Listen! You suppose it could've been a—a blowgun, like what the savages use in my South America book?"

I listened absently. In my mind was the picture of Sam Hardy, clapping a hand to his neck. The man had started as if—as if he had been stung by a bee! And so had Roswell. I felt shaky all over as I turned back to the medical examiner.

"They were walking along past this hedge," I declared, stuttering with eagerness. "Both of them: perfectly sound and well. When they got right here, each man stopped with a jerk, and slapped a hand against his neck as if he had been stung sharply. Then they began to stagger, and—and that ended it."

"Yeah!" said the chief wisely. "A poison bug, like what I said."

But Norbury ignored him. "Will you tell me," he demanded, "how anybody could have injected cyanide of potash into their necks from a distance, without using an arrow, or a dart, or a bullet, or something that would be left in the wound?" He scowled savagely. "The cyanides are soft, crumbly, granular substances. You couldn't pack cyanide together hard enough to make it penetrate the skin; and, if it had been sneared on a dart, we'd find that either in the wound or near by."

Sybil Darlington was plucking at my sleeve again. "Listen!" she whispered imperiously. "Listen! You just come along with me, and stop paying any attention to them. They'll just talk and talk and talk," she averred, with regal scorn, "and won't get anywheres. But you listen to me!"

Seeing that she had my attention, she drew me farther away, and turned her face up to mine. The child was in dead earnest.

"Listen!" she repeated. "I can't be sure by just looking, because Jerry was so mad he'd look red, kind of, anyways. But about darts—listen! That ole horrid Jenks boy, he's got an air gun that shoots darts out of it. And when he shoots those darts, they whistle nastylike, just the way we heard somepin whistle when Mr. Hardy was killed, and Bart Roswell, too."

I started. An air gun! That might explain it. "But, Sybil," I argued, "you heard what Doctor Norbury said; that if the poison had been on a dart, we'd have found the dart, too."

Sybil's soft lip curled. She thrust out a red tongue tip, derisively.

"He don't know ever'thing, quite," said she superciliously. "Oncet I read in a detectiff story about bullets made of ice, or somepin, so's they'd melt and you couldn't ever find what killed the fellow. So mebbe they——" She paused, with a sweeping gesture to indicate that all this was detail.

"What I mean," she went on, "it might've been an air gun; and, listen, Uncle Jimmy-James—who's got an air gun around here?"

I stared at her with slowly widening eyes, while the implications of this question sank home. Just before each man had died, in the same instant with that sinister, whistling buzz, I had heard a sharp, slamming sound. At the time, I had thought it the slamming of a screen door somewhere, and I had attributed the sound to old man Nelson, entering his house, though one could not have placed its direction, I realized. Yet Nelson had an air gun. Nelson was a crack shot with that gun, and the discharge of an air gun made a sound very much like the slamming of a screen-door spring.

"Ole Mr. Nelson," Sybil continued, fixing me with terribly serious blue eyes, "he was awful mad at Bart Roswell, and Mr. Hardy, too. He said they'd bank robbed him, and he was going to get even with them both. I heard him myself, I did!"

And old Mr. Nelson had been a pharmacist—was still, of course, though his drug store had gone into bankruptcy. It would have been easy enough for him to procure cyanide of potash, or prussic acid.

"Ole Mr. Nelson," Sybil went on relentlessly, "he's a druggist, too; a pharmacy-pharma-suiter, he called it to me. He could've made some kinda pills, couldn't he, outta somepin good and hard, mixed up with poison, so's it'd make a bullet?"

"What shall we do?" I asked meekly. Evidently, the child's ideas

were better than mine; I would let her lead. "Shall we tell Norbury about it?"

"Him? Say, listen, Uncle Jimmy-James. We couldn't tell him anything a-tall. Not one thing. We gotta show him, see?"

Sybil had judged him shrewdly. The medical examiner was a hard-headed man; and this notion would seem too imaginative to him no doubt.

"No. Let's us just go over and talk to ole Nelson ourselves, and take a look at his gun, and everything."

Sybil started off confidently enough, through the gap in Knut Nelson's hedge, and up the walk toward his door. I followed reluctantly.

As we approached, the old gentleman emerged from the side door, and came around the corner of the house, eying us morosely.

"What you want?" he inquired.

Sybil smiled up at him ingenuously. "How-do, Mr. Nelson? Say, aren't you all excited up, having folks drop dead in front of your house like this?"

The old man shrugged bent shoulders. His harsh, craggy face was expressionless; from beneath bushy brows, his pale-blue eyes glittered queerly.

"Me excited? I do not get excited for such things," he answered gruffly. "It is not my business what happens in the streets. I stay in mine own yard and mind mine own business."

"But—but aren't you sorry for poor Bart, and Mr. Hardy, getting theirselves all killed up that way?" While she spoke, Sybil's eyes were busy, roving about the neat garden. Now she must have noticed Nelson's air gun, leaning against the side of the house close to his hand, for she nodded and jerked her head to direct my eyes that way. "Aren't you sorry for 'em?" she inquired sweetly.

Knut Nelson gave her a somber stare. His pale eyes glared from their hollow sockets. Repressed bitterness vibrated in his voice.

"Sorry? Yust why must I be sorry, if two crooks get yustice? For it was only yustice, whoever did it." The old man's voice rose excitedly. "Whoever it is did this, I do not know; but he did only yustice, to punish these crooks that robbed me, selling me a no-good store for such high prices, I must bankrupt mineself trying to pay. No, child; I am not sorry if they are dead. It serves them right."

Abruptly, Sybil reached out and caught the old man's arm, simulating vast excitement. "Lookit!" she shrilled. "Lookit, Mr. Nelson! See that ole horrid cat? It's Mrs. Martin's cat, and it ate up my canary only last week. I wisht you'd shoot that ole horrid cat, Mr. Nelson, and make it jump. No, let me do it, please? Oh, let me!"

She jumped up and down, clasping her hands in appeal; and I wondered at her poise. The most finished actress could not have done better. She caught up the air gun and half raised it to her shoulder, gazing artlessly up into Knut Nelson's face.

His somber, craggy face softened, as if he had been moved by her appeal, and he nodded indulgently. "Sure, go ahead, if you want. It does no harm."

I felt a pang of utter disappointment. I had been so certain! But if there was anything dangerous about this air gun, surely Nelson would not have left it in Sybil's hands so calmly.

The child hesitated, made as if to shoot; then, "No-o," she decided. "I might miss the horrid thing, because I can't shoot very good. You

take it, Uncle Jimmy-James, and give it to that ole cat for me."

She handed me the weapon, and I took it and turned it over in my hands, examining it with minute care. It seemed a perfectly ordinary air gun. I shrugged, and would have set it down.

"You first point it, and then pull this little trigger, see?" came Knut Nelson's dry tones. I glanced up, to see the old man staring at me, a peculiar glint in his deep-set eyes. I flushed dark red, muttering apologies.

"Shoot it," urged Nelson. There seemed a hidden significance in his gruff voice. "Yust shoot it once. See, it is all loaded and ready."

With those glittering eyes upon me, I could do no less. I raised the light weapon to my shoulder and pulled its trigger, scarcely pausing to take aim.

As luck would have it, I hit the cat squarely. The big yellow beast jumped and squalled; instead of running, it sat down to bite at its side. Then it turned toward me and snarled, and walked slowly and insolently toward the hedge, and curled up in the shadow and apparently went to sleep. Was it dead? Had I fired a poisoned dart?

Dropping the air gun anyhow, I started off. I must see; I must find out at once, regardless of what the old man thought of my actions. But as I neared the hedge, that huge yellow cat rose, yawned widely, and came toward me to rub against my leg, purring aloud, as if to show it held no malice. I stooped to stroke its sleek fur, and surreptitiously examined its body. No sign of any wound. The cat was in perfect health. Obviously, Knut Nelson's air gun was no more dangerous than any other child's toy.

All this had taken but five minutes at most. Norbury and Sullivan still stood beside Sam Hardy's body, and the chief called to me derisively.

"You fixing to qualify for a sharpshooter's badge?" he inquired. "Cat seems to like being shot at, kinda. Mebbe you could fix it up with her by the hour, to play target, huh? Where you going now?"

Disregarding his talk, I swerved, and crowded through the hedge into Jerry Talker's yard. A sudden, unpleasant idea gripped me.

Knut Nelson being excluded, for his air gun was harmless, some one else must have murdered Roswell and Hardy. And who else was there, save Jerry Talker?

I remembered that he had been out of sight, behind his house, when both men had dropped. Had he crouched at a window, gun in hand? He had cyanide in plenty.

Jerry had left the others. As I approached his house, I could see him through an open window. He was in the shed at the back. He saw me coming, and called to me.

"Come on in, Uncle Jim! You'll have to go around to the door; that window's too high."

I came to the window and leaned upon its sill, looking into the shed. Jerry was lifting cans and bottles down from a shelf, mixing something in a bowl.

"Got to get things fixed up to leave," he explained. "Norbury and Sullivan never'll let me stay home. They'll lock me up, sure as shooting."

I hesitated. "We-ell, Jerry. If you look at it from their point of view, you know—— After all, they can't be blamed for thinking it's unhealthy for folks to quarrel with you."

The young man turned to face me squarely. Beneath lowered brows, his gray eyes flared smokily; his fea-

tures were suddenly distorted with fury; he made a fierce gesture, suddenly suppressed.

"Have you got an air gun, Jerry?" I asked, point-blank.

I did not need to wait for his answer. Even as I spoke, I saw the weapon, right at his elbow, leaning against the wall. It was one of those sporting air rifles; a real weapon, powerful enough to kill small game.

My eyes traveled from the rifle to its owner's face, and paused there, fascinated. Jerry Talker's features were convulsed, livid, maniacal, so that I was frightened. Had the boy gone crazy?

That was it, of course! He was a maniac—a homicidal maniac, who had slain two helpless men; and now the fever of killing had mounted to his brain once more, and death peered out at me through those hot, gray eyes.

For a second, I was paralyzed, held rigid by that deadly glare; then the use of my muscles returned. I saw his hand twitch; but I did not wait for him to snatch up that deadly air gun. I turned and fled.

Behind me, I could hear Jerry Talker's voice shouting: "Hey, wait! Hold on, Uncle Jim!"

"'Dilly, dilly, come and be killed,'" I quoted to myself, and hurried the faster.

I was at the hedge that divided Talker's place from Knut Nelson's; I was through the hedge, somehow—anyhow—and running toward the street. As I ran, I looked about for Sybil Darlington. Where was she? She must run, too; this was no place for a child.

But I could not see her, and my dry throat refused to emit a sound when I tried to scream. In my absence, the dead-wagon had come for Hardy's body, and was already driving off with its grim load. Norbury and Sullivan were in their cars, two blocks away. I ran the faster, for there was no help in sight.

Now I was in the street. I crashed through Nelson's front hedge right at the spot where Roswell and Hardy had fallen; looking down, I could see the crushed leaves and broken twigs where they had lain.

Instinctively, I swerved away from that fatal spot; in the same breath, I heard that ominous slam that was so much like a screen-door spring, but was the recoil of an air-gun spring instead.

Then came that shrill, sinister, high-pitched whistling, right past my head, so close I felt the wind of it. Missed! Missed! The fatal dart, or bullet, or whatever it was, had missed me, thanks to my involuntary swerve.

But if I had run before, I flew now. I could never have dreamed that my rheumatic limbs held such possibilities. Sybil Darlington appeared from nowhere, screaming a question; but I snatched at her hand in full flight, and dragged her off with me.

As a man runs whose life is dear to him, so I ran that day, and never paused until three full blocks lay between me and that winged death.

Seeing me, Norbury and the chief of police had stopped. Now they piled out of their cars and came running back.

"What's happened?" asked the medical examiner.

"Wh-what's wrong?" Sullivan queried excitedly.

I fought for breath, pointing an unsteady hand backward. "He—he—shot at me. It was Talker. Crazy," I stuttered, between great gasps, my heart shaking me.

"Talker! Got an air rifle. I saw it, and he shot at me while I ran. Tried to kill me to shut my mouth.

Must have made poisoned bullets. I could hear the thing whistling past my face." I shuddered violently as I thought of it.

They stared dumbly, trying to understand. Then Chief Sullivan's face hardened, and he loosened the pistol that hung at his hip.

"I'll go get him," he said simply.

Surely, this was bravery—to walk right into the muzzle of a silent, death-dealing weapon such as Jerry Talker had used. The stout, untidy old policeman knew his danger, but he did not hesitate. He marched straight toward Talker's house.

None the less, he had discretion enough to approach from the front, where closed windows and a screened front door promised at least some warning before the winged death might leap out at him.

Up the walk marched Chief Sullivan, while we others followed at a respectful distance, breathless with anticipation. Reaching the steps, the chief paused, and drew his revolver.

"Jerry Talker, come out!" he shouted. "In the name of the law, come out to me."

After an instant's tense waiting, Jerry appeared, very pale, but composed. Lifting both hands above his head, he kicked the front door open and came to meet the officer.

"You didn't need the gun," he said quietly. "I'll come peaceably."

Chief Sullivan produced a pair of handcuffs, and locked them about the young man's unresisting wrists. "Le's go," he said grimly.

Then he changed his mind. "Nope. First off, we better go inside and take a look around."

Thrusting Jerry Talker before him, the chief mounted the steps and entered the house, and we others followed curiously.

"Where's that air gun?" inquired Sullivan. "Where'd you see it, Mr. Jamison?"

"In the woodshed, leaning against the wall," I replied uncertainly. Jerry Talker's fixed and mournful gaze embarrassed me; I hung my head, as uneasy as though I had been guilty, not he.

"You keep an eye on him, doc." And Sullivan stamped off through the house.

We could hear him rummaging about, here and there, and muttering to himself. In ten minutes or so, he returned, carrying the air rifle across his arm, but his face wore a dissatisfied look.

"Where's them darts—bullets—whatever they are?" he demanded. "Or did you use the last of 'em on Jamison?"

"What darts?" asked Jerry sullenly. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"I'd like to see them myself," said Doctor Norbury under his breath. "I don't believe there are any." He was a hard-headed man.

"Darts or bullets," answered Sullivan impatiently. "The poisoned darts, or whatever they are, that you used to kill Roswell with, and Hardy."

Jerry shrugged. "Find 'em yourself," he challenged. "If you're so sure I did it, you ought to know how, at least. But I can see you've made up your minds to railroad me, so I might as well keep my mouth shut."

I stared at him, amazed. Surely, he would not deny his guilt now, when he had just tried so boldly to murder me? But he was crazy, no doubt; and crazy men are notoriously crafty and sly.

Sybil Darlington had been sitting quietly in a corner, her eyes very wide, her lips pressed tight together. Now she came slowly to her feet, and

brushed back her tow-colored shock of hair with a characteristic gesture.

"You men!" she said, in the tone of a woman of fifty, at least. "You men! Haven't you got any sense at all?"

We stared at her. "But, Sybil," said the chief of police placatingly, "it was you suggested his using an air gun, wasn't it?"

Sybil shook her head vigorously. "I did not! I sud-jested somebody used an air gun, but not Jerry Talker. Can't you see?" she inquired curiously. "Isn't it plain enough, now? Why, anybody can see he isn't the right color. It's plain as plain, this time, 'cause he wasn't mad at Uncle Jimmy-James."

All eyes turned toward the prisoner. I for one, found myself fully expecting to see some strange chromatic display; but to my elderly eyes, Jerry was of the same color as always. A trifle pale, no doubt—nothing more.

But Sybil stamped an impatient foot. "It's plain as day. He ought to be that awful funny kind of horrid color, kind of redlike." She gestured ineffectually, seeking for a means of expressing her idea. "Anyways, he's just not the right color to've done it. So there!"

It was strange that we three mature men should have listened with respect to this childish outburst. Why did we not send this ten-year-old home to bed, instead of allowing her to interrupt the councils of her elders?

Well, in part it was because her clear-thinking, childish brain had solved the mystery of Solon Walters's slaying, when both police and medical examiner were confessedly at fault. In part, it was because, even in this matter, hers had been the only really sensible suggestions. But it was chiefly, I think, because in such moments there was something eerily forceful about the child. Her face was white; her eyes blazed; she seemed inspired. Even so must the pythoness of ancient Greece have appeared, after she had mounted the tripod and received the divine afflatus.

For whatever reason, we all listened. And Sybil stood facing us, her head thrown back, a far-away look in her blue eyes.

"I know who it was," she said. "I can tell you who did it. I can show you. I can see him right now, almost, waiting."

I could have imagined that her glowing eyes looked right through the wall, and far off into space. She stood thus, staring as at the far distance, for a moment, and her lips moved silently.

"You come along with me," she ordered. "No, you." She pointed at the medical examiner. "He's so big and fat, he'd make too much noise; and, besides, I suppose you folks'll think somebody oughta watch poor Jerry. Well, all right, watch! But you come with me, Doctor Norbury, and you come, too, Uncle Jimmy-James, and go awful, awful quiet, so's nobody'll hear us."

Obediently and without protest, the medical examiner rose, and he and I followed Sybil Darlington.

The child seemed to know exactly where she was going, and what she would find. Without a moment's hesitancy, she led us through the house, and out its rear door.

Following her, we made a wide circuit through the fields, which brought us into Knut Nelson's back yard. Here Norbury stopped.

"Now, look here," he protested, "didn't you tell me, after Talker took his shot at you, that you'd been in here and examined Nelson's air gun, and it was just a kid's affair?

Why, I've seen him shoot at cats with it, myself, and at dogs, and hens, and it never fazed 'em."

Sybil gave him a look of superb scorn. "Oh, hush up, do! And come along, and keep awful still, too!"

Half chagrined, half amused, but wholly subdued, the medical examiner followed without further protest, and Sybil led us quietly to Knut Nelson's back door.

She turned, a finger at her lips. "Sssh-h-h!" she hissed, and beckoned us on.

On tiptoe, she entered the shabby little house, and we followed. Through the bare kitchen clean with that meticulous neatness which only old bachelors can achieve, through the tiny dining room, we followed her.

At the double doors which separated dining room and living room, Sybil stopped, and pushed aside the hangings with a cautious hand, and peeped through. Then she nodded, satisfied, and clapped her hands in dumb show.

She gestured us on. Norbury and I crept forward and peered through the narrow space, shoulder to shoulder, over Sybil's head.

The front room was darkened. The shades of its side windows were tightly drawn, and the shade at the front window was drawn, also, but in it a hole perhaps two inches in diameter had been cut, so that a little beam of light crept through and lightened the gloom somewhat.

The window itself was open, for I could see the shade moving in the gentle breeze, and facing it sat Knut Nelson.

He sat hunched forward on a straight-backed chair, staring out through his peephole; across his knees lay something like a broomstick. I could not make out its outlines clearly.

Knut Nelson sat there, hunched forward, and chuckled softly to himself. At the sound of his laughter, a chill ran up my back; it was uncanny.

"He-he-he-he!" he giggled. "How I must laugh, to see the old fool run so fast. But yust as soon as they come out of Talker's, I get him sure. I get him; I fix him; so ee-ee-easy, it makes me laugh. Yust so easy as was Roswell and Hardy, that cheated me once. So easy it is, I think maybe I get me another one to-day, and mebbe two to-morrow, and more every day and every day, because it is so very funny. Because I have to laugh so, yust to see them tumble over like they do. He-he-he!"

"There!" said Sybil clearly. "I guess maybe now you'll understand that I know what I'm talking about."

Nelson started convulsively, and came to his feet, whirling on his toes with amazing agility. He faced us with bared teeth, his eyes shining maniacally, that deadly, silent, weapon half raised. For now I could see plainly what he had held across his knees: it was an air rifle, a powerful weapon, more deadly than Jerry Talker's.

My old knees bent under me. At the last moment, Sybil had blundered; and it seemed likely that one of us, at least, must pay the penalty. Knut Nelson raised his air rifle.

"Maybe," remarked Sybil, quite calmly, "maybe we better duck."

"So-o!" said old Nelson, through clinched teeth. "So it is the child, not this old fool, that has guessed. I might have known. Better was it if I had shot her, as I would have shot you, mister, if you had not ducked."

Slowly, with deadly cold deliberation, he drew a bead upon the neck

of the helpless child. "I shoot them in the neck," he explained, grinning, "so the clothes do not interfere with penetration."

"If your ole horrid dart things won't go through anybody's clothes," argued Sybil dispassionately, "I bet they won't go through these curtains, neither. So there, now!"

As he pulled the trigger, she drew the curtains close together, and giggled while she did it—the amazing child!

In the same breath, I heard for the last time that sharp twanging, like the slam of a screen-door spring, and the high-pitched, venomous whistle of the winged death—cut short abruptly as the missile struck the curtains.

It thrust against them smartly, even pierced them, but dropped harmlessly at our feet.

Then Doctor Norbury pushed Sybil to one side, and drew a revolver. I had not known he was armed. He was breathing hard, and his forehead was wet with perspiration. He fired a shot into the ceiling.

"Let me hear that gun drop, Nelson!" he commanded harshly. "Then turn your back and stand with hands up. Better move, if you want to live a few days longer because I'd love to shoot you."

I heard the air rifle drop with a clatter, Norbury pushed the curtains back, and there stood the murderer, hands high in air.

"Walk out the front door ahead of me!"

Out in the street, Norbury lifted his voice to a shout. "Sullivan! Oh, Sullivan! Take those handcuffs off Jerry Talker and bring them here. We've got a better use for them."

He turned to me. "Go pick that dart, or whatever it is, off the floor. We'll need it for evidence. I was afraid it might be lost, until Sybil got the notion of catching it in the curtain."

I obeyed, and presently returned, carrying Nelson's air rifle and the dart, or bullet, or whatever one might call it. I held it gingerly enough, too.

It was perhaps a quarter of an inch long, and of about the same diameter as a BB shot. It was tipped with a hard, translucent substance, which turned out to be mucilage of acacia, dried almost to the hardness of glass; and its tip had been shaped to a sharp spear point with a cutting edge that must penetrate soft tissues with ease. And, strangest of all to me, the deadly thing was feathered, so to speak, with tiny threads of gelatin, drawn out into a sort of fringe to make it fit the gun barrel and fly straight and true, point foremost.

Norbury squinted at it interestedly. "Hm-m-m. It took a pharmacist, and a good one, to make that," he declared. "Cyanide of potash, I should say, compressed. Three or four grains at least; maybe more. Enough! Well, Sybil, here's a vanishing bullet all right, if you never saw one before; just as good as the one in your detective story. This would all absorb within five minutes; and inside two it would be dissolved into just such a mess as I found in Hardy's neck a while ago. Clever work, Nelson!"

Knut Nelson bared his teeth and snarled, but said no word.

So the mystery of these two sudden deaths was solved—thanks again to Sybil Darlington. We learned that Nelson had ordered his air rifle from Europe, eighteen months before, expressly for the use to which he put it. It was a cruel thing, with misshapen butt concealing a large air chamber, and its penetrating force was more than equal to that

of an ordinary .22 rifle. The bullets, he made himself; and afterward, we found a full dozen more of them, packed carefully away in a small box.

"I was puzzled," Jerry told me, "when you popped that question about air guns, and then it struck me all of a sudden that the murders might have been done that way, and I suppose I did look queer. But I wasn't mad at you, Uncle Jim, and, when you started to run like you did, I tried to call you back. But you wouldn't come."

Sybil Darlington stayed with us until the patrol wagon had taken Nelson away. The man was talking to himself now, and giggling in that horrid fashion he had. "Incurably insane," declared Norbury.

Sybil watched him out of sight. Then she turned to me, her lips trembling.

"I th-think I'm going to be s-sick," she whispered. "I feel awful bad. I wisht you'd take me home, Uncle Jimmy-James. I want my daddy."

She collapsed into my arms, and I had to carry her to her home, luckily not far away. For three days, she was very sick indeed, then she reappeared a trifle pale and drawn, but as chipper as ever. Children are resilient.

A DUMB-WAITER FUGITIVE

A BANDIT recently, in order to escape a patrolman who was following him, ran into an apartment house on Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn, New York. There he secreted himself in a dumb-waiter, pulling it up between the second and third floors. Just as he decided that it was not such a dumb idea, he was discovered.

The burglar, it seemed, had been arrested several times before and had been convicted once. The policeman who was on his trail said that the man had been trying to break into a jewelry store in that section.

FINGER-PRINT ESSENTIALS


PART II.


By CHARLES E. CHAPEL

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Facts that one should know to pass an examination for finger-print expert.

FOR the ambitious person who cares to master the few simple facts, there are plenty of opportunities to secure a position as finger-print expert. Only ordinary schooling for a background is required; the pay is good; the conditions of employment are pleasant; and yet, in spite of these alluring inducements, the number of really trained candidates is limited.

Detective Story Magazine again demonstrates its desire to be both interesting and instructive by presenting a comprehensive list of questions and answers—in this and in last week's issue—that actually appear in examinations.

Q. What is the primary classification of finger prints?

A. Primary classification is the assignment of a numerical value to finger prints according to their patterns.

Q. How is this numerical value determined in primary classification?

A. Arches and loops have no numerical value, but whorls and composites are given values according to their locations in the set of prints, and these values added together give us our primary classification.

Q. What are these locations which determine values of whorls and composites?

A. The fingers are taken in pairs; the first pair is the right thumb and right index finger (value 16); second pair, right middle and right ring fingers (value 8); third pair, right little finger and left thumb (value 4); fourth pair, left index and left middle fingers (value 2); and fifth pair, left ring and left little fingers (value 1). Whorls and composites in any of these pairs receive the corresponding value.

Q. How is the numerical value of these prints expressed?

A. Classification according to the Henry system is expressed in the form of a fraction.

Q. How do you secure the numerator of the fraction in the primary classification?

A. The second finger values of all pairs when added together give the numerator. These are the index of the right hand, right ring, left thumb, left middle and left little fingers.

Q. How is the denominator secured in the primary classification?

A. The denominator is obtained by adding together the values of the right thumb, right middle, right little, left index, and left ring fingers.

Q. Is this all there is to the primary classification?

A. No, to the fraction so secured, 1 is added to both numerator and denominator.

Q. Why do you add 1/1 to the fraction secured by adding the values together?

A. In order to give a place in the finger-print files for certain groups of finger prints.

Q. Is the question about the reason for 1/1 of any importance?

A. Yes; it appears on practically all examination papers; the answer we have given is sufficient, but the complete, detailed answer would require a long account of the original finger-print filing systems that made this addition of 1/1 necessary.

Q. What finger prints are placed under 1/1 primary classification?

A. Those having no whorls or composites on any finger.

Q. How many combinations are possible under primary classification?

A. 1024.

Q. How do you reach that figure?

A. By multiplying 32 x 32. Primary classification extends from 1/1 to 32/32.

Q. What prints are placed in the 32/32 primary classification?

A. Those having whorls in all fingers.

Q. What do you mean by subclassification?

A. Subclassification is the separation of sets of prints into groups that are of convenient size for filing.

Q. What do you mean by secondary classification?

A. It is the first subclassification; it follows the primary classification.

Q. How do you determine the secondary, or first subclassification?

A. By assigning letters to the numerator for the right hand, and to the denominator of the finger-print fraction for the left hand.

Q. What are these letters and how are they assigned?

A. A stands for arch, T for tented arch, R for radial loop, and U for ulnar loop; these capital letters are for patterns in the index fingers. Patterns appearing either before or after any of the above are represented by the small letters, a, t, or r.

When whorls appear in the index fingers, they are assigned the letters I, M, or O according to ridge tracing. Whorls appearing in both index and middle finger of the same hand are represented in the first subclassification by any combination of two of the three letters M, O, and I.

When a loop appears in the index finger of one hand with a whorl in the index of the other hand, the secondary classifica-

tion is shown by ridge counting and assigning I or O.

When loops occur in the index and middle fingers of one hand, with whorls in the index and middle fingers of the other hand, we again employ ridge counting, to get our I and O designations.

Q. Isn't this hard to understand?

A. Yes, at first, but a few illustrations will make it clear.

Q. What do you do if you have two or three small letters after A, T, R, or U?

A. Aaa should be written A2a; Rtt is correctly written R2t.

Q. If you find a whorl in both indexes, do you show a, t, and r?

A. No, after I, M, O in indexes, a, t, and r are never shown.

Q. How are missing or damaged prints classified?

A. The same as the corresponding fingers of the other hand.

Q. What do you do when the corresponding fingers of both hands are missing?

A. Class them both as whorls; if ridge tracing is necessary in the secondary classification, call them both meeting whorls and mark them with the letter M.

Q. In addition to I, M, O, A, T, R, U, a, t, and r, what other abbreviations are used in marking prints?

A. The mark / indicates an ulnar loop in the left hand or a radial loop in the right hand. The same mark, sloping in the opposite direction, thus \ indicates a radial loop in the left hand or an ulnar loop in the right hand.

The small letter "w" is often used to indicate whorls and composites, although their full abbreviations, such as C.P., L.P., T.L., and Ac. are sometimes used by beginners who wish to avoid error.

Q. Are all of these terms used in classifying prints?

A. No, ulnar loops are never considered unless they appear in the index fingers; abbreviations such as L for loop and W for whorl are not used since they are more accurately expressed by R, U, I, O, or M.

Q. Are either R or U ever shown with I, M, or O?

A. No, conditions which might call for such designation are handled in the case of loops, by ridge counting expressed as I or O.

Q. What is meant by the "fulcrum" in finger printing?

A. "Fulcrum" is the term applied to the index finger in subclassification.

Q. In my right hand the prints are: tented arch, ulnar loop, radial loop, ulnar loop, ulnar loop; the left hand impressions are: arch, radial loop, radial loop, ulnar loop, ulnar loop. What is the correct secondary classification?

A. $\frac{tUr}{aRr}$

Q. What is the secondary classification when my prints are as follows? Right hand: ulnar, ulnar, radial, ulnar, radial; left hand: ulnar, radial, ulnar, arch, tented arch.

A. $\frac{U2r}{Rat}$

Q. I understand now that ulnar loops are disregarded in the secondary classification unless they appear in the index fingers. Do you disregard any other patterns in this manner?

A. Yes, if whorls or composites appear before or after an index

finger having an arch or loop, they are disregarded.

Q. How would you classify this set? Right hand: arch, tented arch, tented arch, whorl, tented arch; left hand: whorl, radial loop, arch, whorl, radial loop.

A. $\frac{aT2t}{Rar}$ is the correct secondary classification.

Q. What is the subclassification of this set? Right hand: tented arch, arch, tented arch, arch, arch; left hand: arch, inner whorl, arch, tented arch, arch?

A.. $\frac{A}{I}$ The reason for this is that we have an arch in one index with a whorl in the other index. We would have the same secondary classification if we had any other whorl type such as lateral pocket loop or central pocket loop, with an inner ridge tracing. If the right index had been an ulnar loop, we would have had U/I for secondary classification.

Q. The index and middle fingers of my right hand are both inner loops, and the index finger of my left hand is a meeting whorl. What is the subclassification?

A. $\frac{II}{M}$

Q. The index finger of my right hand is an outer whorl; the index and middle fingers of my left hand are both outer loops. What is the subclassification?

A. $\frac{O}{OO}$

Q. If the index and middle fingers of both hands contain whorls, how many secondary classifications are possible?

A. 81 combinations are possible by juggling around the three letters I, M, and O so that in each secondary classification you have two of the letters for the numerator and two for the denominator. Some of the possible combinations are:

$$\frac{II}{MM} \quad \frac{OO}{II} \quad \frac{MM}{OO} \quad \frac{IO}{OI} \quad \frac{OI}{IO} \quad \frac{MI}{MM} \quad \frac{MO}{OO} \quad \frac{OM}{II}$$

Q. How many combinations are possible if you have whorls in the index and middle fingers of the left hand and loops in the index and middle fingers of the right hand?

A. 36 combinations are possible. In writing them down, remember that loops are always either inner or outer, while whorls are inner, outer, or meeting.

Q. What is the purpose of the second subclassification of finger prints?

A. A second subclassification of prints is necessary to take care of large accumulations of loops; there is no second subclassification of whorls and composites.

Q. Why is it that a loop in the index finger with nine or less ridges between its fixed points is inner, and a loop with ten or more is outer? Why was this dividing line chosen?

A. Statistics show that there are as many index fingers having loop patterns with less than ten ridges as there are with ten or more; therefore ten is the dividing line.

Q. Why is it that for loops in the middle fingers ten or less is inner, while eleven or more is outer?

A. A similar reason explains both index and middle finger conditions, but eleven is the dividing line according to experience with middle fingers.

Q. Under what conditions is the second subclassification necessary?

A. When there is a loop in both index fingers, and a loop in either or both of the middle fingers.

Q. When loops appear in the index and middle fingers of both hands, with no arch, tented arch, exceptional arch, or radial loop appearing either before or after the index fingers, what combinations are possible?

A. The following sixteen combinations are possible in the second subclassification under the above conditions:

$$\frac{II}{II}\ \frac{IO}{II}\ \frac{OI}{II}\ \frac{OO}{II}\ \frac{II}{IO}\ \frac{IO}{IO}\ \frac{OI}{IO}\ \frac{OO}{IO}\ \frac{II}{OI}\ \frac{IO}{OI}$$

$$\frac{OI}{OI}\ \frac{OO}{OI}\ \frac{II}{OO}\ \frac{IO}{OO}\ \frac{OI}{OO}\ \frac{OO}{OO}$$

Q. If both index fingers are loops, with an arch, tented arch, exceptional arch, or radial loop appearing in any finger before or after the index fingers, is there any second subclassification?

A. No.

Q. If there is a loop in the right index, and a whorl in the right middle finger, with loops in both the left index and left middle fingers, what are the possible combinations?

A.

$$\frac{I}{II}\ \frac{O}{II}\ \frac{I}{IO}\ \frac{O}{IO}\ \frac{I}{OI}\ \frac{O}{OI}\ \frac{I}{OO}\ \frac{O}{OO}$$

Q. If both loops are in the right hand, with the loop and whorl in the left, what are the combinations?

A. Turn the above combinations upside down and you have the answer.

Q. How is the final classification formed?

A. The final classification is formed by counting the ridges in the right little finger if it is a loop; there is no final classification if it is an arch, tented arch, exceptional arch, or a whorl type. The actual numerical ridge count is written down in the numerator of the finger-print fraction.

Q. Do you have a final classification for the left little finger.

A. Yes, all large bureaus count the ridges in the left little finger and write the result in the denominator of the finger-print fraction.

Q. What provisions are made for extremely large accumulations?

A. Large collections are classified according to the Henry system, but it is amplified by modifications and extensions; many bureaus adopt their own methods of adding to the regular procedure and still conform to the essentials of the Henry system.

Q. What do you mean by the finger-print fraction?

A. It consists of the primary classification, first subclassification (sometimes called secondary classification), second subclassification, and the final classification written in the form of a fraction, thus:

$$\frac{I}{I}\ \frac{R}{U}\ \frac{OO}{IO}\ \frac{16}{12}$$

Q. How are finger prints prepared for court?

A. Enlarged photographs of the known and the disputed prints are indexed by drawing lines from their prominent characteristics to numbers in the margin; at the bottom of each photograph prepared in this manner is a "key" which explains the numbers. Short ridge lines, forks in ridges (also called bifurcations), abrupt ridge endings, islands, dots, and ridge

terminations caused by cuts are some of the important characteristics displayed. These lines are never drawn on the prints themselves, but on the photographs after the photographs have been enlarged.

Q. What are latent finger prints?

A. They are impressions accidentally left on some surface which are so indistinct that they cannot be photographed until they are developed.

Q. What do you mean by developing latent finger prints?

A. Latent finger prints are developed by sprinkling powder over the impressions and then either blowing or brushing away the excess.

Q. What kind of a brush do you use for this purpose?

A. A camel's-hair brush.

Q. What kind of powder do you use to develop latent prints?

A. Some experts use a black developing powder made of powdered graphite and lampblack; their white powder is a mixture of one part by weight of chemists' gray (mixture of finely powdered chalk and mercury) to three parts of fine talcum powder. For developing on a dark background, aluminum powder can be used; for a light background, it is also possible to use Paris blue, dragon's blood, or vine black.

Q. What principle must be remembered in developing latent prints?

A. Use a light powder for a dark background, and a dark powder for a light background.

Q. When the impressions have been rendered clearly visible by developing, what is the next step?

A. Either lift the finger prints or photograph them as they are.

Q. What do you mean by lifting prints?

A. A sheet of elastic substance made of glycerin and gelatin is pressed against the latent print, and thus receives an impression which can be later photographed.

Q. How do you photograph finger prints?

A. All progressive finger-print operators use a specially made finger-print camera which is held against the surface containing the impression; all that is necessary for the operator is to snap the picture; lighting and focus are automatic and foolproof.

Q. What do you do when the latent print is on an irregular surface?

A. In that case, it is necessary to call upon an expert photographer who arranges lighting effects that will bring out the developed latent print to the best advantage. Most cases, however, can be handled with the regular finger-print camera.

Q. What are the relative advantages of the Bertillon and the finger-print systems?

A. Bertillon instruments are costly and complicated; Bertillon operators require considerable training; a slight inaccuracy will spoil the whole record made under the Bertillon system; the Bertillon system is only reliable during the central span of a person's life and is undependable while bones are undergoing change; Bertillon measurements require considerable time to take; a margin of error is necessary to allow for personal mistakes under the

Bertillon method; Bertillon records are hard to file and find, owing to a complicated classification system; the Bertillon system has been discarded in practically all countries, and even France only retains the first few phases of the original system.

In comparison with the Bertillon disadvantages are the facts that finger prints can be taken with a few simple tools by any one who has had a few minutes of instruction; classification and filing can likewise be learned by any one of average intelligence; no allowance is necessary for personal error; finger prints remain the same from the cradle to the grave; finger-print identification is standard the world over; no two finger prints can ever be the same.

Q. Who discovered finger prints?

A. It is said that they were first used by the Chinese; Sir Francis Galton laid the foundation for the present Henry system, but it was made practical by Sir E. R. Henry, who developed the present system of filing and classifying.

Q. What books on finger prints do you recommend?

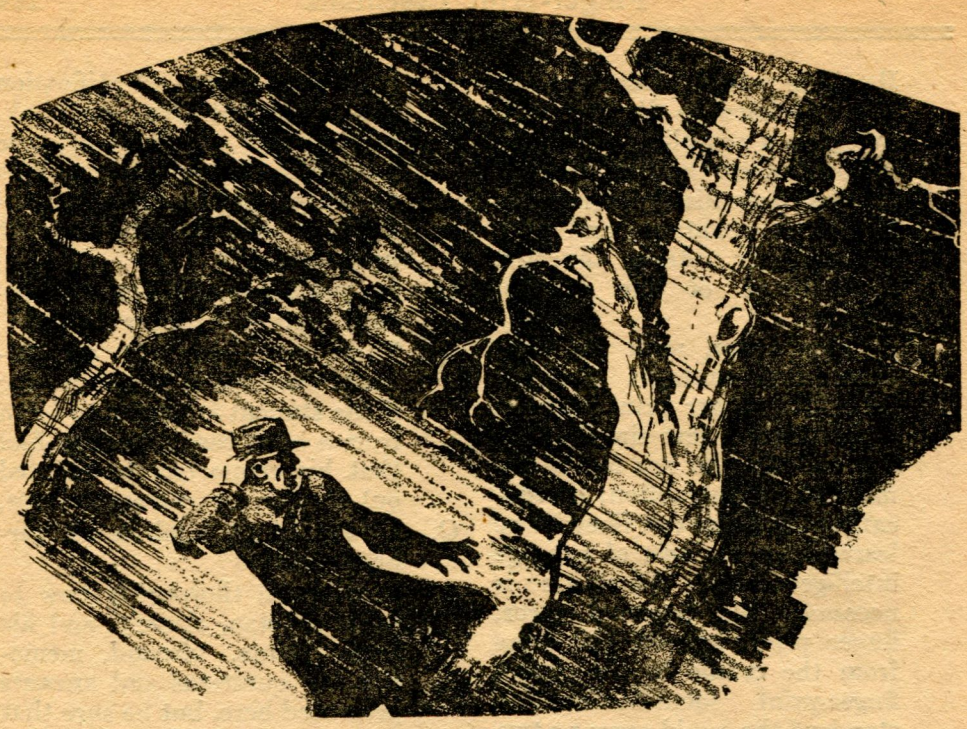
A. The finger-print "Bible" is "Classification and Uses of Finger Prints," by Sir E. R. Henry, but this book is printed in England, has never been revised to conform to recent developments, and is not necessary unless the student wishes to read Henry's own words on the subject. The whole field of finger-print identification hinges around this one book, but any one who masters these questions or has read articles on finger prints already published in this magazine does not need the book.

Q. Do you recommend correspondence courses on finger prints?

A. There are practically no residence courses in finger prints; if the student is unable to learn from a book easily, he may find that his errors can be pointed out to him by correspondence.

Q. How can I get a job as a finger-print expert?

A. First, learn thoroughly how to take, develop, classify, and file finger prints. Second, memorize the questions and answers presented here, but be sure that you can explain the meaning in your own words. Third, go to the nearest post office and ask to see the list of civil-service examinations which are to be held in the near future; if there is one for finger-print expert, you should apply for permission to take the examination. Fourth, if you fail to secure a position under the United States civil service, write to sheriffs, chiefs of police, wardens of penitentiaries, State identification bureaus, and directors of State police; some of them are always looking for an operator. Fifth, if all else fails, try to persuade the personnel director of some large company or factory to hire you to install an identification bureau for his establishment.



ROOTS OF EVIL

By ALFRED I. TOOKE

He was at the mercy of a dying tree.

"HAPPINESS is the faculty of concealing one's miseries," Silas Karney said.

His brother Pete smiled as he threw a log into the fire.

"You have it wrong, Silas," he replied. "Happiness is the faculty of forgetting one's miseries—if one has any."

"You must have plenty to forget, living the way you do, Peter; wandering about the country dependent on the homes of others for your shelter, beholden to them for your food, and——"

"That's not right, Silas," Pete interrupted. "I've always earned my way, and I've always paid for what I got. I've never stayed but where I'm welcome, and there are very few places where I'm not welcome. Old Sam Marshall was one who always welcomed me, but I never thought he'd leave me ten thousand dollars."

"And you say he left it to you just because he liked you?"

"That's what it said in his will. It was to be paid in cash, too, as I told you. That's why I told Lawyer Todd to send it to me in your care, by registered mail. I thought it would have come by now."

"These legal matters take a long time, Peter. I still think you couldn't do better than to buy a

partnership in my bank with it. Then you could settle down here, and——"

"No! I won't tie it up yet a while, Si. I'm not so spry as I used to be, and odd jobs are not so plentiful nowadays, so I'll keep it where I can get at it. Besides, I could never settle down and be contented living in one place."

"Peter! The way you live is no way for a Karney to live!"

"We've discussed that before, Silas, and my views haven't changed. We humans are egotistical creatures, but we are not nearly so important in the great scheme of things as we like to think we are. Perhaps, after all, the world could get along without us. Life in various other forms would still exist, and it's life itself that is important, rather than the form it takes. Our bodies don't last long, but the life that is in them goes on and on forever."

"I don't quite understand, Peter."

"Nothing ever really dies, Silas. The life that is in our bodies to-day may be in a flower, or a shrub, or a tree to-morrow; then in something else; and a million years from now it will still be life. I like to think that the life that is in me may some day be in a tree—a tall, upstanding tree that people will admire, with wide-spreading branches for them to shelter under, and gay with flowers that will nod to the drowsy hum of the bees. 'A tree that may in summer wear a nest of robins in her hair,' as the poet said."

"You say queer things, Peter!"

"Others think so, too—those who lose their perspective of life delving for dollars, piling up profits, scheming for fame, so that the rest of the world will think them important. Yes, they lose their perspective of life. They set the boundaries of time by hours instead of by ages; they measure values in terms of money instead of by standards of right and wrong."

"You refer to me, of course!"

"I wasn't thinking particularly of you, Silas, though I never admired the business you are in or the methods you employ."

"And where will your manner of living get you? How will it benefit the world that will exist ages hence?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you, Silas. Living with nature as I do, you get to understand many things that cannot be explained in words. You can't see far ahead, but you know that, when you walk up to a place, and somebody swings the door open wide and shouts gladly, 'Here's Pete Karney, folks!' and they all rush up to grab you by the hand, and their faces light up with happiness—you know that is as things should be."

Silas grunted.

"They don't do that with you, Silas! When they see you coming, they lock the door and whisper to each other that it's Silas Karney, the money lender, and they pretend they are not in. And that doesn't seem right, Silas."

Silas flushed in spite of the impersonal manner in which Pete spoke. "We all have to earn a living, don't we?" he retorted. "Bankers are necessary. I help people by lending them money. My bank is for their convenience. They say I'm hard and grasping, but, if I make a profit I earn it, don't I? Now, if you would take my advice and buy a partnership with that ten thousand, perhaps we could help them more. Perhaps, with your different viewpoint, you could help them more than I have been doing. Perhaps you——"

Pete raised a protesting hand.

"Let's not talk any more about that, Silas. You live your way, and I'll live mine, and we'll both be happy in our own way, and now——" He strode to the door and opened it. A blinding flash of lightning was followed by the rumble of approaching thunder, and to the sharp patter of rain he closed the door again.

"I guess I'll take you up on that offer of a bed for the night," he said. "Don't go to a lot of trouble. A cot and a blanket——"

"No trouble at all. The housekeeper's visiting her folks overnight, but the spare room's always ready."

"Then if you don't mind, I'll go to bed now. It's late for me, and I'm tired after the long journey I made to-day. Good night, Silas."

"Good night, Peter."

Left alone, Silas Karney stared for long minutes into the dying fire. Matters hadn't been going so well at the bank lately. The stock-market crash had turned several highly profitable loans into frozen assets of doubtful worth, while the liquid assets would hardly satisfy the bank examiners on their next visit. Peter's ten thousand dollars would have made all the difference if he could have been induced to invest it in a partnership, but Peter was funny that way. It would not have helped to explain how matters really stood, and there was no one else who would help Silas, but many who would openly rejoice to see him in the straits into which he had so often forced others.

As he peered into the dying coals, his face grew hard and his expression evil, and presently he strode over to a picture on the wall, and from a small wall safe behind it took the registered letter he had denied having received.

He started as a terrific rumble of thunder shook the house. "So there's ten thousand dollars in currency in the envelope!" he muttered. He slit the envelope, removed the money, and threw the envelope to the flames. He put the money back in the safe and took out a revolver. Again came a deafening burst of thunder, and he smiled. "A shot would never be heard in that," he told himself.

Softly, he stole to the half-open door of the spare room. A vivid flash of lightning showed him Pete sleeping peacefully, oblivious of the storm. Silently, he stole into the room. Other lightning flashes lit his path until he stood close beside the bed. Carefully, he noted the interval between lightning flash and thunderclap.

His next action was perfectly timed. The lightning flashed. Then the crash of thunder drowned the sharp report of the revolver so effectively that only the sharp spit of flame told Silas that the bullet had sped, and that the deed he had planned was accomplished.

Quickly, Silas snapped on the light, fighting down the fear that was in him. He must not give way to panic now, for there was much to be done, and it must be done quickly and carefully. To take the body away would be to risk being seen with it, so it must be disposed of somewhere in the grounds about the house. The flower beds? No! They were overlooked by the neighbors' windows. The lawn would be better, but Dan Marsh, the occasional gardener, would be full of questions concerning the damage to his beloved lawn.

There was only one place left—beneath the spreading branches of the sycamore tree beside the path. The grass had all died there, and the

ground was covered thickly with the leaves that had fallen since the first frost.

Carefully, Silas scraped away those fallen leaves. Then, with pick and shovel, he dug. It was hard work, for his muscles were soft. The tangled roots of the tree bothered him, and sometimes he had to stop and chop one away. It was dark, too, but Silas was glad of that. And, presently, the storm passed over, and he made better progress.

When morning dawned, the leaves lay evenly again upon the ground beneath the sycamore tree. The surplus earth had been sifted into the drain in the roadway at the foot of the garden.

"What became of the bedclothes off the spare bed?" Martha Pletts, the housekeeper, asked.

"Peter came last night," Silas told her. "He slept there. He's gone again, and he has the sheets and blankets with him."

"Aye, he's always taking something to some needful body!" Martha responded. "But why didn't you give him the clean ones from the linen cupboard? I'm sorry I wasn't here to do it myself. He's a mighty fine man, that brother of yours, even if there are them as don't hold with his ways of living and the things he says."

Silas ignored the challenge in Martha's tone. "Next time the gardener comes," he said, "tell him not to disturb the leaves under the sycamore tree. We'll let them rot there through the winter, and next spring we'll dig them in and sow fresh grass seed."

The bank examiners arrived. They found matters quite satisfactory.

Winter passed and spring came. Several times, when suitable opportunity offered, Silas had scraped away the leaves and tramped more earth into a slight hollow beneath the sycamore tree.

The tree itself, that spring, seemed to have come into its prime. Every bud was bursting eagerly with newborn leaf and blossom, and presently it was a stately and shapely mass of beautiful foliage among which the bees droned musically. Silas, himself, preoccupied with other thoughts, did not notice the increased beauty of the tree until others drew his attention to it, and then he stared at them questioningly, for their comments brought back memories of what Peter had said on that fateful night.

"I like to think that the life that is in me may some day be in a tree —a tall, upstanding tree that people will admire, with wide-spreading branches for them to shelter under, and gay with flowers that will nod to the drowsy hum of the bees."

That was what Peter had said. Silas had not thought of that when he buried Peter's body amid the tangled roots of the tree.

He got into the habit of stopping, as he passed the tree, to stare at it. The new beauty of it angered him. One day he reached up and snapped off a branch and ground it savagely beneath his heel; he tugged at another branch until it broke, and left it hanging.

Dan Marsh gazed horror-stricken at the tree the next time he saw it. "If I ever catch the young varmints that did all that damage to the sycamore tree, I'll whale the hides off them!" he declared vehemently to Martha.

Martha sniffed. "Young varmints! It's Silas Karney himself that does the damage every time he passes it, and it's pleasure the doing of it seems to give him."

"Pleasure? To spoil the finest sycamore tree in the whole countryside gives him pleasure? Is he crazy?"

"Crazy or not, that's how he acts. Yesterday, he got a ladder and climbed up to tear a robin's nest out of it and throw it to the ground, and when he got down again he stamped on it."

"He stamped on a robin's nest?" Dan shook his head. "His brother Peter would never have done such a thing," he said. And then he got his pruning tools and carefully repaired the damage as much as he was able.

Silas, returning home, noticed the results of Dan's efforts, and his anger flamed afresh. He got an ax from the shed, and, swinging it savagely, drove it deeply into the trunk of the tree. Many times he struck before his aching muscles caused him to desist. Then a different gleam came into his eye. Cunning replaced savagery as he eyed the jagged notch his inexperienced hands had made.

"I won't cut it down," he muttered. "I'll leave it like that, to die slowly. I'll let it rot. I'll make it ugly, so that people will despise it and laugh at it." And systematically and vindictively through the seasons he did so, until the tree became a pitiable object, and at last gave up the unequal struggle as the new season's buds died unborn. Insects burrowed deeper and deeper into the heart of it. The branches died and the wood rotted, until, after a windstorm, the ground around the once magnificent tree would be littered with snapped-off twigs and broken branches.

Nor was the business of Silas Karney in much better condition than the tree. The money he had stolen from Pete had merely postponed disaster for a short while, and Silas once more faced ruin.

His deed had not brought him the results he had hoped. When he should have been concentrating upon business, he often found his thoughts upon the thing he had done. That tree was more and more in his mind. The life that was in Peter had gone into that tree, and because his thoughts were more and more upon the subject, and less and less upon his business, he made slips and errors that cost him dearly, until this time he knew that there was no way out.

He had stayed at the bank far into the night, delving into records, covering innumerable sheets of paper with figures, seeking in vain for some way in which to bolster up the figures so that the statement would again pass muster when the bank examiners came.

At last, he gave up the hopeless effort and donned his raincoat. Outside, the lightning flashed and the thunder growled as it had done once before when he was in such a plight. The rain had driven in under the hood of his car, and the engine would not start, so he got out again and walked. Automatically, he directed his footsteps homeward. He caught himself glancing furtively about him as he thought of that other night. Then he laughed mirthlessly. There was no danger. Nobody had ever asked about Pete. Pete himself had often laughingly remarked that he never knew where he would go next or how long he would stay. Well, he had stayed in one place now for long enough!

Silas was walking up the path when the last grim thought occurred to him, and suddenly he stopped. Had his act stopped Peter's roaming? 'Hadn't Peter contended that life went on and on forever?

A savage gust of wind swept down upon Silas, and his hand shot up to save his hat. A blinding flash of lightning revealed the tree in its stark misery, and Silas shouted with fear at what he saw. The trunk of the tree, weakened where he had cut that jagged notch, had been unable to withstand that savage blast of wind. He heard the straining, rending sound as it fell toward him. He stepped back hurriedly, only to slip on the wet grass. Then something crashed upon him in the darkness and pinned his legs to the ground; something that felt like a sinewy hand clutched at his throat, and he tore at it till his fingers were raw and bleeding, but he could not free himself from that strong, strangling clutch.

When the lightning flashed again, he saw that the tree, in falling, had torn up many of the roots with it. Great masses of earth still clung to those matted roots, and, from the hole where they had been, a ghost-like hand seemed to point accusingly at Silas.

He wished he had let the tree live.

He wished he had let Peter live.

It was Martha who found Silas there next morning with the forked branch of the tree still clutching his throat; but it was not at Silas she stared so long and earnestly. It was at the hole where the roots had been.

"Merciful Heaven!" she cried, and ran screaming into the house. For there, in a pitiful heap, lay all that was left of the earthly Peter.

LITTLE THINGS ARE IMPORTANT

SOMETIMES we don't think that little things amount to anything. Recently, a motorist in Berkeley, California, went by a stop light and was detained by a traffic officer. The motorist was greatly annoyed and showed his feeling by being impertinent to the officer. A little courtesy on the part of the motorist would have helped to smooth over the matter. As it was, the traffic officer became angry and insisted upon the motorist going to jail. This action resulted in a search of his car, which revealed one hundred and twenty gallons of alcohol. It only goes to show how little things often lead to bigger things.

HARD CANDY

IN St. Louis, Missouri, recently, a bandit entered a candy store and held up the proprietor. The proprietor's brother, who happened to be in the store at the time, picked up a box of candy and threw it at the bandit. The box collided sharply with the bandit's head, and he turned and ran.

Another case in the same city happened when a girl clerk picked up a box of candy and threw it at the robber. Girls are often bad aimers, so this box of candy did not hit the intruder, but crashed through the plate-glass window. However, the results were the same—the bandit was frightened and fled.

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, Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., 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 this 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.

Last week, I promised to print a list of the countries from which I have received letters since the department opened. Well, here it is. Naturally, the bulk of my mail—and it is exceedingly bulky!—comes from the United States and Canada. Next comes the British Empire, then South America. But as you can see from the following list, there aren't very many countries to which the Detective Story Magazine does not circulate. It must be good!

Yukon, Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, Bermuda, Jamaica, Porto Rico, Bahama Islands, British West Indies, Guianas, Colon, Panama, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Chili, Argentina, Uruguay.

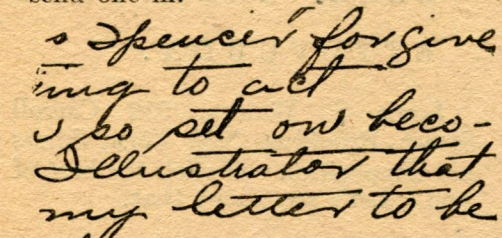
Now we can fly across the Pacific. Here are some Detective Story Magazine readers at Hawaii, Philippine Islands, British North Borneo, Borneo, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Samoa. Then Japan, China, French Indo-China, Siam, India, Egypt, Ethiopia, Rhodesia, South Africa, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, Liberia, Portugal, Palestine, Roumania, Germany, Netherlands, France, Finland, Ukraine, Denmark, England, Scotland, Ireland. And to finish our round-the-world flight, we take the northern route to Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and home to New York City.

That was quite a trip, wasn't it? Greetings to all the friends of this department in each and every one

of these countries. Norway and Sweden are conspicuously absent, aren't they? Well, a great many Scandinavians write me, but never from their home country. They seem to be of a roving nature. I hear from them in the most unlikely foreign countries. The old Viking spirit must be still going strong.

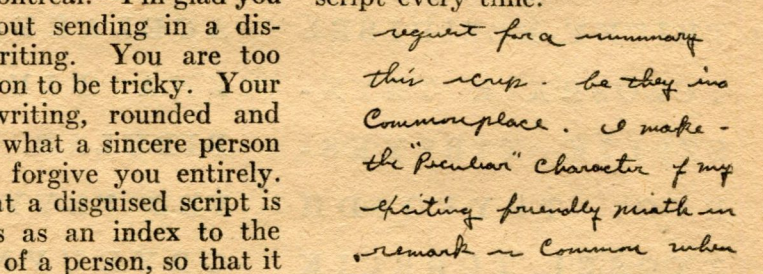
And now I have just received a letter from Spes in Deo, Assin Foso, Tarkwa. No, that is all address! I certainly shall have to get out the map for that one! But he neglected to send a stamp, so I can't say whether they have tigers, queer birds, or dignified sovereigns in that country. Many of the stamps picture the most interesting feature of the country they are issued from, so in that way I learn a little of the world.

K. L. T., Montreal.—I'm glad you 'fessed up about sending in a disguised handwriting. You are too sensible a person to be tricky. Your open, large writing, rounded and simple, shows what a sincere person you are, so I forgive you entirely. You know that a disguised script is utterly useless as an index to the real character of a person, so that it is just wasting my time and yours to send one in.



Yes, you ought to be very successful as an illustrator. In fact, you have all the attributes for making a really good one. Your heavy pen pressure and the long *t* bars, together with some of your capitals point to creative force, energy, and talent. You have the kind of personality that will win you many friends, for you are generous, tolerant, magnetic, sincere, and frank. There is something very genuine and wholesome about you.

O. H. C., Tennessee.—When your associates "rag" you about your handwriting hereafter, tell them that the terrible hen-scratching is due to the fact that you have a very analytical, critical mind, sharpened by study; concentration, and ability for medicine is strongly indicated. It is rather a trial to others to have to read a medical man's script in almost every case—especially if he is a good doctor. There is something unique in the formation of the letters and the nervous speed with which it is written that marks a doctor's script every time.



You are a supersensitive person and will probably do better in research and a specialized field of medicine than in general practice.

It is necessary to send a stamped, self-addressed envelope and coupon with your request for an analysis.

Handwriting Coupon

This coupon must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read.

Name .....

Address .....

UNDER THE LAMP

By GERARD HOLMES

This department is conducted by Gerard Holmes, for those of you who like puzzles. If there is any particular kind of puzzle that you prefer, please tell us, and Gerard Holmes will do his 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 Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine.

All letters relative to this department should be addressed to Gerard Holmes, care of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

ANOTHER "Down-Easter" throws his hat into the ring. Meet A. Steeves, 267 Newbury Street, Boston, Massachusetts. Don't let those long words stick you.

1. TRICKY-RESIDLSRL TCZOSRXIK TBYX-SZSLIK TIBSYKS-EVO. TBYFOSDH TYOSEI TCBRCIK TIBRSRLIDLOM. TRICKY-RESIDLSRL TBYPIK TRMEYTV-LXSE. TBYRIECL-SYD TYRLTYDIK: TIBXVTR TIBQVD-IDLOM.

The sunny South is heard from. Alex J. Conen, 1266 Brook Street, Louisville, Kentucky, sends us his idea of a hard crypt.

2. CBRYUERUV ULSU-FUSNBDA AMENDS ACELAEY FUIEY-ENA BIURBRUEL BIBULAR CEDURU-VBD VEYYNCRUEL, CBYRUVNDBYDX BZELI ZNLUVUCBD ETTUVUBDA.

Louis S. Walder, 932 Carroll Street, Brooklyn, New York, thinks his composition will stick the best of you. Let's see about that.

3. BCDEFGFBH BHF-CBI JBK JFILIM KNNOFHP KQKRN-HBHSN JEFIN TQ-

IRQUNK SFUSINL VTNU EFK ENBL.

Concocted by Vernon Karsnick, care of Recorder of Deeds Office, Court House, Clayton, Missouri, to give you fans a little brain exercise. The answer is a ten-letter word. Use the 1234567890 letter arrangement.

4. AAE) EAFRNA (RINI

HIS

R CAR

R A I A

FCEN

FACH

RASA

RAIA

FD

Frank E. Murphy, 7039 South Halsted Street, Chicago, Illinois, one of our one-hundred-per-centers, takes his pen in hand.

5. ACIDS QRPHULE ZCILPL QCKKPN BUER DUENUQ OQUZ, KNCZIQUDS PXUY-LHPYYUDS DUENCS-PD KPNCMUZP. NIPL PMKPNUHPDE; ERP-NPOJEPN QCDLIHPL NUKPLE YUHTPNSPN UHKPNXUCILYA.

Answers to Last Week's Puzzles.

P. H. Larrabee—sometimes we call him Larry—30 Jefferson Street, Bangor, Maine, is responsible for this crypt.

1. The female Australian kangaroo, herbivorous mammal, carries her young in her pouch and looks nothing like the South African gnu.

Yes, Fred E. Miles, 1525 LaSalle Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota, knows his crypts.

2. Modern newspaper typography favors Ionic series body type with tendency toward Gothic and sans-serif advertising composition.

Was it hard? Bill Duval, 326 Ontario Street, Cohoes, New York, tried to make it hard.

3. Colonial Airways Limited northbound mail plane drones along newly chartered air lane.

Composed by Walter Trawczynski, 5015 McDougall Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

4. MACKINTOSH.

—o—

Once more we are on the up and up. Eighteen puzzles were offered the fans during last month. Twelve fans against seven of last month made a perfect record. Watch us improve as the long cold winter sets in!

PUZZLE FAN'S HONOR ROLL

(One-hundred-per-cent Fans)

SOLVED 18: *John Q. Boyer, 2034 North Fulton Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland. D. C. Walker, Elkhorn, Montana. Claude Spencer, 807 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California. Frank E. Murphy, 7039 South Halsted Street, Chicago, Illinois. P. H. Larrabee, 30 Jefferson Street, Bangor, Maine. Leonard P. Bossard, 54 Partition Street, Rensselaer, New York. L. M. Todd, John Marshall Hotel, Richmond, Virginia. Mrs. J. B. Wells, 362 Summit Avenue, Steubenville, Ohio. R. P. Woodman, 1051 Old South Building, Boston, Massachusetts. Walter Trawczynski, 5015 McDougall Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. Fred E. Miles, 1525 LaSalle Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Earl Karstens, 110 East Ninth Street, Lockport, Illinois.

*A 100% record for 1930.

SOLVED 17: Bill Duval, 326 Ontario Street, Cohoes, New York. Robert Hardesty, 21 East Fourteenth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio. Josephine H. Kelly, 15 Ninth East, Salt Lake City, Utah. Mrs. M. Witt, 237 Dowling Avenue, Littleton, Colorado.

SOLVED 15: Isabel Mae Murdock, 6233 Newell Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

SOLVED 14: Florence L. Nichols, 1315 West Ninth Street, Los Angeles, California. Monroe C. Sylvester, Cropseyville, New York.

SOLVED 13. Plantagenet, Paterson, New Jersey.

SOLVED 12: Charles L. Rohde, 40 Franklin Avenue, Saranac Lake, New York. Mrs. Anna M. Page, 73 Ashfield Street, Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts.

SOLVED 11: August Kehr, Jr., 2205 Lynch Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

SOLVED 10: Irene Laun, Washington, D. C. Mrs. F. M. Ingalls, Box 505, Highland Park, Illinois.

SOLVED 9: G. Fulton, 3510 Carnegie Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio. Jayel, Canton, Ohio. A. W. Bannister, 5113 Marquette Street, Montreal, Canada.

SOLVED 7: Ann Steeves, 170 Magazine Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts. J. C. Newgard, Union Grove, Wisconsin.

SOLVED 5: Otto Hoffman, 130 West Sixty-sixth Street, New York, N. Y.

SOLVED 4: James B. Zachary, 2712 Tarlton Street, Knoxville, Tennessee. Pearl Knowles, Wendling, Oregon.

SOLVED 3: Mrs. James Rund, 1424 Liverpool Street, N. S. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. William Chapman, 1231 Neal Street, N. E., Washington, D. C.

SOLVED 2: Edward O'Connor, 24 East Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. John Martin, 42 Willis Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Ray McGill, 72-36 Sixty-seventh Street, Glendale, Long Island.

PUZZLE FANS' HONOR ROLL

Send in your answers to each week's puzzles, ye fans, and watch for your name on our monthly Honor Roll.

COUPON

How to Solve Cryptograms and Long-division Problems.

If you would like to have the above information please fill in coupon and mail it to Gerard Holmes, care of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York, and full-printed instructions will be sent to you free of charge.

Name.....Address .....

City.....State .....

Headquarters Chat

WE always feel that an editor is in great danger of making a bad selection when he, himself, becomes very much interested in a particular story. To be successful, he must pick the story that he thinks will prove most popular with his readers, and not the story *he* likes.

When we announced to you the purchase of "Murder Morn," by H. M. Appel, we told you that we had found something of unusual merit, a story so interesting, so well-constructed, with characters and situations so well-drawn, that you'd agree with us in thinking that it was about—for its length, at least—the best that had ever been printed between the covers of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine.

We realized, in making this declaration that we were on dangerous soil, that we had dropped our guard—or, rather Appel had made us do so—and become, ourselves, absorbed in the story. It seems, however, that personal interest did not warp, in this instance, our judgment, for readers—the great majority of those who have written us, at least—have said that "Murder Morn" is good.

Miss Malinda Mathews, Cynthiana, Kentucky, writes:

"DEAR EDITOR: I have just finished the last installment of 'Murder Morn.' It is thrilling to the last moment. In fact, it is the most absorbing story I have read for a long time.

"I have read your magazine off and on for several years, but, if your writers are all in the class with H. M. Appel, I am a steady reader from this time on. I could hardly wait for this week's number.

"I heard several speaking of this one story, in the drug store where I bought the magazine. You have wonderful writers for Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, and I congratulate you on adding this new one—new to me—to your list."

Another who congratulates us on "Murder Morn," is Bob Sims, Jefferson, Georgia:

"DEAR EDITOR: I am just one of the readers of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, and, after reading 'Murder Morn,' by H. M. Appel, I just could not resist congratulating you on this story.

"It is the best of the season. Let's have more from Mr. Appel. Take pleasure in saying that it is one story you cannot tell how it will end, until it really does end."

Like father, like son. The son, S. Unschuld:

"DEAR EDITOR: I have been reading your magazine ever since I was nine years old. I am fourteen now. My father and I never miss an issue of it.

"Now for some questions. May I ask them? What has happened to *John Doe* and his wife? Where is *Rafferty* and the *Crimson Clown?* I also like the character created by

Charlotte Dockstader, *Spud McGee. Thubway Tham* is great. Also the stories about *Sanderson* and his friend, *Bart Clark*, make wonderfully interesting reading. Will you please oblige me by asking Triem, creator of *John Doe* to write some more stories about him?

"Well, I wish the magazine lots of luck and I think that no other detective magazine is on a par with yours."

Foland and McDonald, Jefferson Church, late of Speonk, Long Island, New York, has a kind word for both of you:

"DEAR EDITOR: I have just experienced quite a thrill in the current issue in reading John Foland's 'Carved In His Heart.' Will you please extend to him my heartiest congratulations?

"You also have another live wire in the unique style expressed in the writings of Donald G. McDonald.

"This summer, my family spent some time just east of the quaint village of Speonk, in Suffolk County, Long Island, so I passed on several copies of your magazine to a very old friend, who had retired from active life. He was thrilled with Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine."

Lieutenant Chapel, hark ye to M. P. Cardey, Modesto, California, who says he knows his putty, and declares you don't.

"DEAR EDITOR: I have written only once before to your department and that was several years ago. I do not wish to condemn any of your authors or their work. They're all good!

"A little word for H. M. Appel, though. Just finished reading the second installment of 'Murder Morn' and found it very interesting.

"But to get down to business. Please turn to Page 104 of October 17th issue, and read Paragraph 3 of Lieutenant Charles E. Chapel's 'The Business Of Burglary' to the first period.

Putty is made of chalk and linseed oil; after the elapse of a little time, it oxidizes and can be removed easily with a wide-bladed knife.

"Brother you're hay-wire!

"I've followed the paint game for over ten years and it's safe to say it has been my pleasure to remove upward of a hundred glass panes from sash that have stood the weather of our California sunshine (and rain) from one to twenty years. I find that the longer they stand without paint the harder it is to remove the putty. Sometimes a blowtorch must be brought into use to melt hard putty, as the cleaning away of it in its natural state will render a wood sash useless.

"I've had old putty so hard and stuck so fast to the stile that, by lifting the glass to pull it out, it would break along the putty line leaving the putty intact. And don't get the idea that the fasteners did it, for there were only three of them in the whole sash of which I am speaking now. This happened just the other day.

"Now I don't want to bring the house of Street & Smith down on my head, so in closing I'll say that Mr. Chapel hit the right spot with me when he said the glass-cutter story was far from water-tight. That's in Paragraph 2, same page. That has always seemed well worn and foolish to me, too.

"The next time, though, Mr. Chapel, you wish to remove some putty, I'll lend you a hammer and chisel and a broad knife!"

MISSING

This department, conducted in duplicate in Street & Smith's 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 a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that these 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.

Address all your communications to Missing Department, Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

HOWARD.—I was born in Tekamah, Nebraska, fifty-three years ago. My mother and father parted before I was born, and I was adopted by some people named West, at Herman, Nebraska. My mother's maiden name was Howard or Hayward, and her people came from Lima, Ohio. Would very much appreciate hearing from any one having information about my mother, my father, or their relatives. Address Mayme, care of this magazine.

LOWERY, WILL ED.—Missing since 1929. Last heard of in St. Louis, Missouri, where he was shipping clerk for the Fisher Body Works. He is about twenty-five years old, six feet tall, weighs around one hundred and sixty-five pounds, and has dark eyes and dark curly hair. Will any one having his present address please notify Lillian Lowery, Barlow, Kentucky.

DeGARRO or **DeGAREOUX, HOWARD (FRENCHY).**—Last heard of in Pharr, Texas, in 1927. Left there for San Antonio. I have an important communication for this man, and would appreciate the efforts of fellow readers in helping me learn his present whereabouts. Address Allen W. Prescott, Box 279, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

DORMER, EDWARD.—Last known whereabouts was Winona, Minnesota, in 1923-24, where he was engaged as manager of a restaurant connected with a railroad system. His father has since died, leaving an estate in which he is one of the heirs-at-law. His description follows: age thirty-three years; height, about five feet six inches; weight (in 1924), one hundred and forty-two pounds; complexion, fair; hair, dark-brown to black, slightly graying; eyes, blue-gray; heavy eyebrows; noticeably black eyelashes; slightly pugged nose. Teeth show considerable dental work. Was born in Brooklyn, New York, of Irish-American parentage. Spoke with distinct New York pronunciation. Is known to be witty, popular, and good-natured, and inclined to tease those around him. It will be to the advantage of any one having information about this man to communicate with Patrick O'Grady, Superintendent of Police, Detroit, Michigan.

ADAMS, NAT.—Write to me at once. I have your mother's address, and also a letter from her for you. She needs you very much. Please address Clayton Meyers, 777 Lawrence Street, Rome, New York.

DOSS.—My father, Ezra F. Doss, lived most of his life in southern Indiana. He had two brothers, Virge and Bush, and several sisters, whose names I do not know. All would now be over seventy-five years old. I was born near Mount Vernon, Indiana, forty-eight years ago. Would greatly appreciate any word regarding my uncles, aunts, or their descendants. Please write to James H. Doss, Shawneetown, Illinois.

CANTRELL, BILLIE.—Last heard from in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1930. Information regarding her present whereabouts will be welcomed by Carl M. Williams, Wayside Inn, Grove City, Pennsylvania.

SEITZINGER, EDNA.—Last heard from in California, in 1929. Please forward any information concerning her to Carl M. Williams, Wayside Inn, Grove City, Pennsylvania.

AVERY, CLYDE C.—Lived in Fairfield, Nebraska, thirty or thirty-five years ago. Is believed to have moved to Portland, Oregon. Would appreciate any information as to his present location. Charles L. Enwall, Ovid, Colorado.

HUNT, WALLACE.—Left Fairfield, Nebraska, about forty years ago. Was later in the Dakotas. Any information welcomed by Charles L. Enwall, Ovid, Colorado.

BLAKEMAN, FRANK.—Resident of Fairfield, Nebraska, forty-two years ago. Last heard of in southeastern Colorado. Any word regarding him thankfully received by Charles L. Enwall, Ovid, Colorado.

HALL, HERBERT O.—Formerly of Fairfield, Nebraska. When last heard of was with telephone company in Wyoming. Ding, if you see this, write to Charles L. Enwall, Ovid, Colorado.

KARL.—Everything will be all right. Have moved from old address. Please write to Sister Helen, care of this magazine.

AMES, WILLIAM or **MARTIN, and LEWIS.**—Martin was last heard of in Cross Village, Michigan, in 1902; Lewis in Conway, Michigan, about 1906. Information as to their present whereabouts greatly appreciated by Mrs. Clarence Miller, General Delivery, Clarion, Michigan.

NOTICE.—Would like to get in touch with the man who took the Indian baby from a dance hall in Conway, Michigan, in 1906. I was that baby, and I am anxious to locate my real mother. Please address any information to Mrs. Clarence Miller, General Delivery, Clarion, Michigan.

HANLON, HENRY F.—Born in North Attleboro, Massachusetts, in 1894. Son of James and Johanna Hanlon. Left Providence, Rhode Island, in November, 1920. Last seen in New York City. Please communicate at once with Miss Mary Connors, 22 Byron Street (Rear), Providence, Rhode Island.

NEMIC, JOSEPH or **LOUIS.**—Last heard of in Nevada. They are either ranchers or farmers, and formerly lived in Frankford, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Please forward any information regarding them to John Brady, 2064 East Albright Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

ECKLUND, WILLIAM.—Left Manistee, Michigan, about 1902. Information appreciated by his mother and brothers, John, Arvid, and Robert. Address Robert Ecklund, 332 Fourth Avenue, Manistee, Michigan.

LATIMER, REVEREND.—Would appreciate hearing from him, or from any one knowing him. Kindly address Mrs. Beattie, 30 Lake Street, Somerville, Massachusetts.

DELICH, ANTONIO.—Have information of great importance to him. Will he, or any of his relatives, kindly communicate with A. E. Cooke, 1519 Forty-third Avenue, San Francisco, California.

DAVIS, J. H.—Last heard from in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Information welcomed by Mrs. Janie Studstill, Box 137, Bowling Green, Florida.

MENGAL, MARTHA L.—Was in Fairbanks, Alaska, when last heard from. Any word regarding her will be very much appreciated by her friend, F. L., care of this magazine.

FEWELL, GARNET MAGGIE.—An Irish girl about five feet seven inches tall and weighing around one hundred and thirty pounds. Dark hair and rosy cheeks. Last seen in Columbus, Ohio, in 1901. Please send any information regarding her to R. Robert Fulton, 1250 Ocean Avenue, Emeryville, California.

SOBER, SONNEY.—Please write to D. F. Wyse, Archbold, Ohio.

HEWITT, ROY V.—Please send me your address, as I have something of importance to tell you. Write to Burt, care of this magazine.

BRADBURN, DWIGHT ANDREW.—My brother. Last seen in Houston, Minnesota, in the fall of 1883 or 1884. Would be very grateful for any assistance in locating him, or any information regarding him. Please address Frank Allen Bradburn, P. O. Box 1907, Washington, D. C.

PETERSON, GEORGE C.—Was in Santa Barbara, California, when last heard from. Please write to me and Billie. Your wife, Winifred Peterson, General Delivery, Oakland, California.

WINTER, NED N.—Served in the Eighth Field Artillery, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, from 1925 to 1928. Mother needs you. Please write home, or to Sis, care of this magazine.

BEAUCHAMPS, COSTON D.—Was in Miami, Oklahoma, in 1906. Any information regarding him or members of his family will be greatly appreciated by his nephew, Arthur E. Beauchamps, 1518 Obryne Street, Henderson, Kentucky.

SPRINGER, BERTHOLD.—Twenty-six years old, five feet three inches tall, light hair and gray eyes. Last heard of in Montreal, Canada. Your mother is worried and ill. Please write to her, addressing Mother, care of this magazine.

MELTON, JACK.—Please write to your friend, Mack Kessler, 214 West Oklahoma Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

COURTNEY.—Would like to hear from relatives, friends, and acquaintances of Daniel Courtney, railroad worker, of Denver, Colorado, who disappeared in San Francisco ten or more years ago. Please address Mrs. C. F. Sundberg, 226 North Helen Avenue, Sioux City, Iowa.

WESTFIELD, WILLIAM LESLIE.—Please get in touch with Babe, at 8812 Carnegie Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.

DICKIE.—Remember the polar bear? Write to dad at the same address. Ron and I miss you so. Route 5, Wenatchee, Washington.

DONALDSON, WILLY.—I still love you as I did four years ago. Please write to Dorothy S., care of this magazine.

BUCKMAN, LOUIS J.—Twenty-five years old. Last heard from in Monterey, California, about two years ago. Any information concerning him will be appreciated by Frederick N. MacLean, 25 South Street, New York, New York.

EAGER, OLIVER L.—Served in the Thirty-seventh Infantry, 1916-17. Your buddy would like to hear from you. Please address T. A. French, Ward 82, Station Hospital, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

LIBBEY, MAX.—Missing since 1909. Sixty years old. Left hand amputated at wrist. Any information deeply appreciated by his true friend, F. H. McMillan, 401 North Washington Street, Hutchison, Kansas.

BENSON, MRS. MAX.—Formerly of 339 West Thirty-fourth Street, New York City. Will any one knowing her present address kindly communicate with M. L. S., care of this magazine.

KITTY.—Would be glad to hear from you. Please address Bill, care of this magazine.

STOWE, JAMES R.—Last heard of in Los Angeles, California. Please write to your son. Have great news for you. James R. Stowe, Jr., 1144 Fourth Avenue, Columbus, Georgia.

YATES, BERNARD or **DURON.**—Will they, or any one knowing their whereabouts, kindly communicate with R. T. W., 210 North Taylor Street, Amarillo, Texas.

EINBINDER, HARRY.—Lived in Myrtle Street, San Bernardino, California, when last heard from. He is nineteen years old, has blue eyes and dark hair. Information of any kind will be gratefully received by Philip Cohen, 97 Harrishof Street, Roxbury, Massachusetts.

McCOY, BERNIE.—Photographer. Tall and dark. Information wanted by Maurice Pascullo, Shinnston, West Virginia.

SMITH, JACK or **A. M.**—Last known address was 319 South Center Street, Shenandoah, Iowa. Information appreciated by E. S., care of this magazine.

LEWIS, JULE or **NORD.**—Last heard of in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Believed to be with the McClure Construction Company. Word regarding him will be welcomed by E. S., care of this magazine.

MOTHER.—I am anxious to see you. Wherever you are, write to your sister Martha, or address E. S., care of this magazine.

CAIN or **MERRON, MARIE.**—Was working at the Pig 'n Whistle Cafe, in Hollywood, California, when last heard from. A very dear friend is anxious for news from her. Please send any information to E. S., care of this magazine.

SPRAGUE, MARY.—A waitress. Last heard of in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. A friend would welcome her present address. Please write to E. S., care of this magazine.

ROBERTSON, RAY.—Won't you write to me? Same address, or Effie, care of this magazine.

BROWN, J. L.—Daddy, don't you ever think of us? Please write to J. L. B., Jr., care of this magazine.

RIKER, HELEN S.—You can get in touch with your son, formerly of San Jose, California, by writing to F. M. S., care of this magazine.

KLEIN, LUCY.—Nee Killen. Corresponded with Mrs. S. Reid, of Belfast, Ireland, about twenty-six years ago. Information as to her present whereabouts wanted by M. T., care of this magazine.

KIEHL, JOHN.—Would like to hear from him, or from any of his children living in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Please write to C. S. Parks, Lock Box 254, St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin.

WILLIAMSON, McKENZIE.—Last heard of in Chicago, Illinois. Have you forgotten the happy days? Would love to hear from you. I am alone. Edith G. Wilson, 1365 West Thirty-eighth Street, Los Angeles, California.

CLAYTON, FRANK.—About seventy years old. Monologue and vaudeville actor, formerly connected with the Ernie Marks Vaudeville Company. Last heard from in 1914, at Stratford, Canada. Information wanted by one who still cares, who wants to say I'm sorry, and forgive. Any news will be thankfully received by M. G. K., care of this magazine.

SWEIGART, RUSSELL.—Your sister Lizzie needs you badly. Jake is paralyzed and helpless, and is not expected to live. Write or come home. We are still living at Lawrenceburg, Tennessee.

MINNIE.—All is well as usual. Please write to Catherine, 1313 Jefferson Avenue, Toledo, Ohio.

HANSON or **HANSEN, ROY** or **ED.**—Will any one of this name, who, while on the way home from Canada last July, picked up a Boy Scout near Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, please write and receive what you lost. Address M. Bracken, 934 Fruit Avenue, Farrell, Pennsylvania.

WALSH, JOHN.—Left Voluntown, Connecticut, for the West at the time of the gold rush in California. His youngest sister wishes very much to hear from him. Please address any information to Mary Walsh Adams, R. F. D. 18, Washington, Rhode Island.

BURRASTON, EDGAR.—Fifty-two years old, five feet nine inches tall, gray eyes. Left England about 1909 for Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Last heard from in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1920, when he intended going to Prince Rupert. Will he, or any one knowing him, kindly communicate with Mrs. Jack, 13 Elmers End Road, Anerley, London, S. E. 2, England.

McIVOR, GUY WILLIAM.—Native of Hudson, Wisconsin. About forty years of age. Was in New York in 1925. His present address will be appreciated by H. I. B., care of this magazine.

ROUTT or **BALLARD, MARGUERITE MAY.**—Daughter of Helen Frances Roark. After separation from her first husband, she married a man named Al Ballard, at Webb City, Missouri. She is thirty years old. Will any one knowing her present whereabouts kindly write to Bert Routt, R. R. 10, Box 370, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

GUNN, DAVID GRIFFEN.—Last heard of in Marysville, California, in 1930. He is nineteen years old, five feet eight or ten inches tall, weighs about one hundred and fifty-five pounds, and has blue eyes and light hair. Any information regarding him will be deeply appreciated by his father, D. G. Gunn, care of this magazine.

PINKSTAFF, LOUELLA.—Was in El Centro, California, when last heard from. She is thirty years old, five feet six inches tall, and has blue eyes and brown hair. Please write to your sister. I will keep your address confidential if you wish. Mrs. Hattie Carper, R. F. D. 1, Rochester, Washington.

1873 A. D.—Will any one knowing the particulars regarding a baby girl, who, in January or February, 1873, was left with George Bonney, a saw filer, married and living in Boston at the time, kindly communicate with the undersigned? Would appreciate hearing from the parents, if still living. Money was given by a strange girl for the baby's board, but the child was never called for. Any information welcomed by V. G. M., care of this magazine.

ROBERTS, ERNEST C.—About five feet eight inches tall, brown hair, blue eyes, weighs about one hundred fifty pounds. Tattooed on left forearm. Last heard from in Los Angeles, California. Report that he had been killed nearly two years ago received by his mother. Will any one having information about him, or who can verify the report of his death, kindly write to his wife, Mrs. Pearl Roberts, 4047 Kenmore Avenue, Apartment 102, Chicago, Illinois.

BUDDE, BERNARD.—Came from Germany six or seven years ago. He is twenty-four years old, blond, with brown eyes, and is about five feet six inches tall. Stockily built. Was formerly employed by Childs Restaurant, Park Place, Newark, New Jersey. Last known address 10 Burnett Street, Newark, New Jersey. Missing for four years. Any word regarding him will be welcomed by Ralston W. Pierce, 147 North Fourteenth Street, East Orange, New Jersey.

JUMELIN, ANNA.—My mother, who would now be about forty years of age. I was born in San Rafael, California, May 7, 1911, and was taken care of by the Home Finding Society, who placed me in their home in San Francisco. When three months old I was adopted by a Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. My mother had named me Bernice Jumelin. Any information regarding my mother will be gratefully received by Mrs. O. H. Wismer, 1055 Georgia Street, Los Angeles, California.

WHITNEY, VIRGIL and **IRENE.**—Had a railroad camp in East St. Louis, Illinois, at the Centerville Station on the A. B. S. Railroad, about two years ago. They have two little girls, Dorothy and May. Mr. Whitney is about thirty-three years old, and his wife is twenty-six. Any news regarding them will be gratefully received by their friend, Mrs. Jewel Waltz, 2402 North Broadway, Los Angeles, California.

NORWOOD or **MASSEY.**—Would like to hear from any descendants of John J. Norwood or George Massey, who lived in Simpson, Mississippi, and neighboring counties, prior to 1860. Kindly addreess Dallas, care of this magazine.

VINSON, THOMAS.—Last heard of in Henderson, North Carolina, about three years ago. Please write to your half sister, and let her know how you are getting along. Address E. V., care of this magazine.

RAGSDALE, SIDNEY.—A cook. Last heard of in Eldorado, Arkansas. He is forty-eight years old, five feet nine inches tall, weighs about one hundred and thirty-five pounds, has red hair and blue-gray eyes. His brother would be grateful for any assistance in locating him. Please write to Walter Ragsdale, Route 1, Box 107, Alexander, Arkansas.

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"So I started studying after supper at night, in the spare time that used to go to waste. It wasn't hard and pretty soon I began to see it was helping me in my work. In three months a new position was open and the Boss gave me a chance at it because he'd heard I was studying with the I. C. S.

"Well, that was the start. Before the end of the year I received another raise and we began to save. We've got $500 in the bank now and we're going to have a lot more soon."

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Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, **"Who Wins and Why,"** and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X:

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☐ Architect	☐ Automobile Mechanic
☐ Architectural Draftsman	☐ Plumbing ☐ Steam Fitting
☐ Building Estimating	☐ Heating ☐ Ventilation
☐ Wood Millworking	☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ Contractor and Builder	☐ Steam Engineer
☐ Structural Draftsman	☐ Steam Electric Engineer
☐ Structural Engineer	☐ Civil Engineer
☐ Electric Wiring	☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Electrical Engineer	☐ Refrigeration
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ R. R. Locomotives
☐ Welding, Electric and Gas	☐ R. R. Section Foreman
☐ Reading Shop Blueprints	☐ R. R. Bridge and Building Foreman
☐ Telegraph Engineer	☐ Air Brakes ☐ Train Operation
☐ Telephone Work	☐ Highway Engineering
☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Coal Mining Engineer
☐ Machinist ☐ Toolmaker	☐ Navigation ☐ Boilermaker
☐ Patternmaker	☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
☐ Pipefitter ☐ Tinsmith	☐ Cotton Manufacturing
☐ Bridge Engineer	☐ Woolen Manufacturing
☐ Bridge and Building Foreman	☐ Agriculture ☐ Fruit Growing
☐ Gas Engines ☐ Diesel Engines	☐ Poultry Farming ☐ Radio
☐ Aviation Engines	☐ Marine Engineer

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Office Management	☐ Lettering Show Cards ☐ Signs
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Personnel Management	☐ Complete Commercial
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Civil Service ☐ Mail Carrier
☐ Accountancy ☐ Cost Accountant	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ C. P. Accountant	☐ Grade School Subjects
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ High School Subjects
☐ Secretarial Work	☐ College Preparatory
☐ Spanish ☐ French	☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning
☐ Salesmanship ☐ Advertising	☐ Lumber Dealer

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Occupation.....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

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This year you can give FRESH cigarettes

NEVER before at Christmas could you give what you can send to friends this year—because this is the first Christmas of Camel Cigarettes in the Camel Humidor Pack.

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Contrast that with the bite-and-burn of dried-out or parched dry tobaccos, and you'll know why Camels make such a welcome gift.

No matter how many miles you send them, no matter if someone else happens to send Camels too — the fine Turkish and mild Domestic tobaccos in Camels will keep mild and cool and throat-easy, thanks to the *moisture-proof* wrapping which seals Camel flavor in the Camel Humidor Pack.

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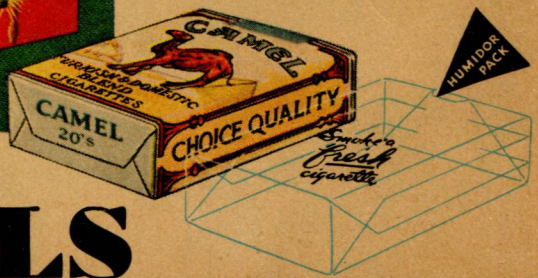
● *Don't remove the moisture-proof wrapping from your package of Camels after you open it. The Camel Humidor Pack is protection against perfume and powder odors, dust and germs. Even in offices and homes, in the dry atmosphere of artificial heat, the Camel Humidor Pack delivers fresh Camels and keeps them right until the last one has been smoked*



CAMELS

Mild **.. NO CIGARETTY AFTER-TASTE**