

# Edgar Wallace

## MYSTERY MAGAZINE

*EWMM True Crime Classic*

**EDGAR WALLACE**

*The Suburban Lothario*

**BEN HECHT**

*Miracle of the Fifteen Murderers*

★ a new short story

**MARGERY ALLINGHAM**

*It's All Part of the Service*

and other outstanding stories and features

No. 10  
**MAY**  
1965

Edgar Wallace

3/-



Edward Wallace

# EDGAR WALLACE

## Mystery Magazine

Vol. II No. 10

May, 1965

---

*Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado*

---

### CONTENTS

#### STORIES

It's All Part of the Service	MARGERY ALLINGHAM	3
A Night's Work	MARTEN CUMBERLAND	9
I Copped a Packet	PETER ARDOUIN	29
Message for Short-Time Lew	ERIC PARR	47
The Black Finger	JAMES PATTINSON	52
The Detectives of Ispahan ( <i>period piece</i> )	JAMES MORIER	57
Miracle of the Fifteen Murderers	BEN HECHT	75
The Quiet Death	JOHN SALT	91
Trump . . . and Trump Again	COLIN ROBERTSON	108
The Bomb	PETER FRASER	117

#### FEATURES

<i>Editorial: Briefly</i>		2
<i>Relaxation: Crossword</i>		36
<i>Crime: The Suburban Lothario</i>	EDGAR WALLACE	37
<i>Autobiography: The Cat's-paw</i>	NIGEL MORLAND	68
<i>Cartoon: No. 1</i>	PHILIP MEIGH	74
<i>Reportage: The Good Old Days</i>		106
New Books	JOHN DE SOLA	124
Readers Say		127

---

Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine is published monthly by arrangement with Edgar Wallace, Ltd., on the 1st of each month by Edgar Wallace Magazines, Ltd. Printed in England at The Philips Park Press, Manchester. Distributed by Representation Services, 130, Hither Green Lane, London, S.E.13. Sole agents, Australia: Gordon & Gotch (Asia) Ltd.; New Zealand: Gordon & Gotch (N.Z.) Ltd.; South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.; Federation of Rhodesia, Zambia and Malawi: Kingstons, Ltd. © 1965 Edgar Wallace Magazines, Ltd., 4, Bradmore Road, Oxford.  
NIGEL MORLAND, Editor.

‘THE crime book never amounted to a great deal, and is on the way out’ a critic wrote recently. The intended profundity of the statement, the solemnity with which such an old bromide is offered again, are fascinating. There is about it all the portentous threat in the behaviour of the very small boy in disgrace when he announced: ‘I have ’pitted on the wall, I have ’pitted on the floor . . . and now I’m waiting for more ’pit’.

## Briefly

These detractors, these pontificating prophets of doom, are inevitable, not unlike those who have for five hundred years told us that the theatre is finished, that it never amounted to much, either.

But how far they are, from reality indeed. Crime fiction is one of the tremendous money-spinners of these days, possessing an entertainment value and earning power that have increased steadily year by year since that momentous month of July, 1891, when the first short adventure of Sherlock Holmes appeared in *The Strand Magazine*.

This is no attempt to take from Edgar Allan Poe the right of being the true founding father of the whodunit, but it was with Arthur Conan Doyle that the modern edifice of best-selling crime writing was truly begun.

And without a single set-back, for all these years, the crime novel has grown out of all proportion. It ticked over steadily, improving all the time, through the period when it was something of a joke to certain people and many newspapers . . . until Edgar Wallace. That master of story-telling, suspense, and the morality play, turned it into an international passion. Any bookseller can tell you of the days when the top world sales of books were, first, the Bible and, second, Edgar Wallace; for that matter, he still sells in millions.

*Après Wallace le déluge* . . . a flood that has washed into every corner of the world, that brought awe-inspiring money-makers like Agatha Christie, superb stylists like Raymond Chandler, exciting public headlines like 007, unique chroniclers of reality like Simenon. The catalogue is endless, a catalogue of brilliant writers, the story-tellers who lift the average man out of his mundane life into enchanted places where cops-and-robbers enable every Walter Mitty among us to enjoy vicarious fun.

It is a happy thought to visualize our critic penning his misplaced venom against the crime novel and, reading his words over his shoulder, stands the gargantuan figure of the crime-writing Muse, pockets packed with money, face blooming with health and future set very fair indeed.

*The Editor*

## MARGERY ALLINGHAM

*a problem of death and protocol so complicated that perhaps only a London hotelier could solve it.*

# it's all part of the service

HOW THE body of the young Emir of Eulistahn came to lie in state in the vaults of the Norfolk Street Safe Deposit is one of London's secrets. The old city takes its overseas visitors far more seriously than most of them suspect. Under a blank exterior there lurks an almost fanatical determination to oblige the poor lunatics, however absurd their requirements. All it insists upon is the exercise of a modicum of common sense.

On this occasion it was the famous, if slightly ramshackle, Alderton's Hotel which did the insisting. The Emir's entourage was composed of his black-bearded uncle, his doctor, two private secretaries and the best part of half a dozen valets and cooks. They desired that the corpse of their young Ruler, who died so suddenly and tragically less than two hours after his arrival in Britain for the Royal Wedding, should repose in the centre of his private drawing room on the second floor of the hotel overlooking the Park. Even that could have been arranged, at least during the period whilst a suitable escort for the journey home could be mustered and flown in, had it not been for the value of the state jewellery with which protocol demanded the corpse should be arrayed.

Actually, Mr. Sydney Robbins, who was the manager of Alderton's, had won a minor tussle about this very jewellery before the party arrived in London at all.

He was one of those placid English business men who appear to have been knitted rather loosely out of woolly good-nature until something arises to threaten their interests, when they become opaque-eyed and quite incredibly obstinate. Therefore, when the

Emir's Second Secretary, who was young, slim and olive-skinned, had first arrived earlier in the month to make the original booking and had mentioned, in an impeccable Oxford accent, the question of adequate protection for the Diamond Shawl, the Pigeon's Egg Rings, the Five Emerald Stars and the Black Pearl, Mr. Robbins put his foot down at once.

He pointed out that the Emir would be only one of five foreign Royalties honouring the hotel and, whereas the security arrangements were adequate for most eventualities, this occasion was a little out of the ordinary. He then recommended the Norfolk Street Safe Deposit, as he always did in similar circumstances.

The Second Secretary protested the His Highness was bringing the jewels to *wear*. First at the traditional Reception and Ball and, next day, at the Abbey, and he mentioned several illustrious sponsors. But he was no match for Mr. Robbins when it came to discreet name-dropping and in the end he listened meekly to the merits of the Safe Deposit.

Everything Mr. Robbins said about the place was quite true. It *was* a British Institution, it *was* used by the highest in the land, all personnel *were* appointed on a basis of heredity and safety and discretion were indeed guaranteed. In the midst of a covetous world it lay inviolate, a nest of five steel chambers deep in the yellow London clay.

A great deal of legend surrounded its contents. At least two South American Dictators were said to prefer it to Switzerland for the safe keeping of certain negotiable items. The secret recipes of two sauces and one world famous liqueur were certainly there, for their advertisers said so. Connoisseurs were always criticizing the Stanoway family for hiding the rarest of all art treasures in its darkness, three little studies for the *Mona Lisa*, only a few inches square made in sanguine and said to be as fresh and lovely as the day Leonardo drew them. Yet the Stanoways were poor, one would have thought. The first Countess had laid waste most of the family fortune before her lord divorced her in one of the bitterest suits on record and the second poor lady, her son who was the heir, and his young sister were kept busy exhibiting the mansion at half a crown a time. Meanwhile the Leonardos remained out of sight to add to the covetous dreams of wealthy collectors.

\*

After listening for half an hour the Emir's Second Secretary

gave way gracefully and with the energetic assistance of the once more helpful Mr. Robbins the negotiations were hurried through. At Norfolk Street the Second Secretary hired a small casket in his own name in Vault 4 where the smaller containers were kept and, as decreed, received its key with the number of the box engraved upon it. He then walked back and forth three times before a panel of scrutineers and had it explained to him that the mere physical possession of the key meant little but that he must always come himself whenever the box was to be opened. He agreed to put the jewels in its safe keeping immediately on their arrival in the country and to withdraw them again a few hours later for the Ball and the Procession to the Abbey. The Chief Custodian assured him that at any time of the day or night one of the keepers of Vault 4, who now knew him by sight, would be waiting for him. These were the unvarying rules of the establishment. They were never waived to oblige any client whomsoever and the Company attributed the Safe Deposit's success to the inflexibility of its system.

The Second Secretary left, but a few weeks later all his happy arrangements were violently upset. The blow fell on the day before The Wedding, almost immediately after the sickly young Emir and his party, picturesque in flowing burnous and kaffiyahs, had been safely established in their suite at Alderton's.

The first Mr. Robbins heard of the catastrophe was an almost hysterical message from the harrassed Desk. It appeared that the young Ruler had been travelling against the advice of his medical men and now, what with one thing and another – strange air, fog, and the flight – he had had a heart attack and died in his doctor's arms. "Yes, sir! Right here in Aldertons. Now what?"

For a moment Mr. Robbin's aplomb deserted him. From his point of view the tragedy could hardly have occurred at a more awkward moment. Apart from the four other Royal parties, the hotel was crammed with only slightly less exalted guests each demanding individual attention at once and all the time. He hurried up to the Emir's suite, his head full of the addresses of discreet morticians, only to be met by the startling information about the bejewelled lying-in-state and the necessity for a strong police guard.

Mr. Robbins was appalled. It was against his whole philosophy to disoblige a distinguished guest in difficulty. But at such a moment, when no adequate protection could possibly be procured and no insurance cover the risks involved, such a proposal was,

from the hotel's point of view, utterly out of the question.

Fortunately for him the Second Secretary had already heard the arguments at their original meeting. The black-bearded uncle, who was a man of considerable poise and personality, appeared to be in charge and listened gravely to the younger man. Finally they withdrew and Mr. Robbins waited with sweat on his forehead.

By the time the Second Secretary returned, the Manager was beside himself and the young man's proposition burst upon him like a gleam of sanity. Instead of taking the jewels to the Emir, take the Emir to the jewels? Have the lying-in-state in the Vault? Mr. Robbins trembled with relief. It was unconventional but reasonable. Ludicrous even, but practical; Britain's magic word 'common-sense' popped up in his mind like a figure in a cash register.

"Could it be arranged?" murmured the Second Secretary.

"Leave it to me," said Mr. Robbins briefly.

During the next half hour he excelled himself and by the end of the time the Norfolk Street Safe Deposit fully understood that it was about to be honoured in a very special way by people who could pay for favours. The necessary arrangements were made with the utmost discretion.



Within an hour the Emir's frail body was taken to the Safe Deposit and carried in to Vault 4 by his own people. They laid it reverently upon a table moved down from the Chief Custodian's room and the Second Secretary, accompanied by the keeper on duty, unlocked the steel box and took out the leather jewel cases. Then, as the official withdrew discreetly to the doorway the uncle, assisted by a doctor and a valet, arrayed the body in its traditional glory. From his position the Safe Deposit men saw the gleam of stones.

When the ritual was complete everybody retired to the ante-room and the keeper locked the door of the vault. For the rest of the night the four privileged members of the Emir's household took turns, two at a time, to keep watch from the keeper's bench while the official himself retired to the far end of the apartment where he could see but not overhear.

The Safe Deposit made only one stipulation in the whole business – no publicity. Since the same request was echoed by the Emir's suite and had also been made by Mr. Robbins on behalf of the hotel there was no difficulty about it whatever.



In the dawn next day when Norfolk Street was empty a motor hearse drew up outside the Safe Deposit, a coffin was carried in and presently brought out again. The Emir's uncle shook hands with the Chief Custodian and the Second Secretary paid the dues. Meanwhile, on the other side of town, the Emir's First Secretary and the remainder of the entourage checked out of Aldertons. The First Secretary insisted on thanking the manager in person. Arrangements had been intelligently made he said, but for Mr. Robbins there would have been only delay and difficulty. As a mark of esteem, a signed photograph of the late Emir was placed in his hand. Mr. Robbins was gratified. Guests were beginning to arrive back from the Ball and the hotel was in turmoil after a momentary lull. It was good to hear that someone was satisfied about something. He went down to the courtyard and saw the party drive off.

The rest of the day was devoted to The Wedding and no one in London was permitted to think of anything else. Mr. Robbins forgot about the Emir and indeed, in the flurry of three hundred departures, he had little time to recall him during the following week, but some ten days later when the hotel was its dull, discreet self again his eyes rested on the portrait of the young Emir and he wondered who his successor might be.

For all up-to-date information he had long ceased to rely upon the printed word. He had a very good friend on the central switchboard of the British News Service and on impulse he dialled her number. As usual she had the answer at her fingertips. Cool and efficient her lovely voice came back to him packed with authority.

"Eulistahn? It hasn't existed for fifteen months. Don't you remember? Ernst Bey took over all that corner last year. Emir? Oh, no. That title has been extinct for a generation. Can I help you?"

Mr. Robbins hung up very slowly and sat still. From a spot just above the nape of his neck a sliver of ice ran smoothly down his spine. He put out his hand to telephone the Safe Deposit but withdrew it cautiously, and from that moment his life became a nightmare of apprehension.

Gradually the days passed and no whisper reached him, and after a while he gave up waking in the night and sweating although the question remained in his mind. Seven months crept by and still there was no enquiry, no scandal. The Emir and his retinue could have been as insubstantial and meaningless as a dream.

The news that the Earl of Stanoway was permitting the world to see the Mona Lisa studies after all and the usual controversy about whether or not he should be allowed to sell them across the Atlantic, broke in the Spring of the following year. Naturally there was gossip. The old story of how the first Countess, on the eve of her divorce, had taken the drawings, and had placed them in a safe deposit and sent her lord the key, knowing that he could not withdraw them without meeting her again, was freely mentioned in the clubs and bars. As the depositor, she alone could unlock the box. Everyone who knew Stanoway was adamant that he would never have broken his vow not to see her again. Indeed, he had kept himself and his family a good deal less than rich for twenty years rather than relent.



Mr. Robbins heard the gossip and tried hard to put two and two together, but nothing 'jelled' until, one day, his eye lighted on a paragraph in one of the more frivolous of the news magazines.

It was no more than a caption under a laughing picture of a young brother and sister in fancy dress, the boy dark, the girl very fragile and both curiously familiar to Mr. Robbins.

Recently much in the news because of the proposed sale of a family treasure, *Viscount Bluebrooke*, son and heir of *The Earl of Stanoway*, and his sister the *Lady Sarah* are both of an age when there is no greater fun than the Stage. They are said to be quite ruthless in their demands on staff and family in the furtherance of their hobby and, I am told, even Lord Stanoway was compelled to grow a vast black beard to suit a recent part. The family motto is in old French and can be translated: '*Without Impudence I Take my Own.*'

Mr. Robbins looked at the somewhat fuzzy portrait of the young Emir and then at the girl in the magazine. After that he tore them both up into very small pieces.

© Margery Allingham, 1965



Local farmers were not impressed with a theory that such grains would tend to promote latent criminal tendencies, and they would go on cultivating serials as they always had done.

*American magazine.*

Hand on heart *EWMM* solemnly pledges that it never would dream of publishing such anti-social cereals.

# A NIGHT'S WORK



**MARTEN CUMBERLAND**

*A leisurely story of detection in Paris,  
again featuring the shrewd and amiable  
Saturnin Dax*

JUST BEFORE eleven, on a November evening, two cyclist agents, Pierre Mernet and Charles Collen, were on patrol. They had reached a narrow thoroughfare, little more than a lane, which runs at the back of the Rue Suchet, when Collen observed lights in a certain house. He hesitated and then dismounted. Mernet, a few paces behind, at once got off his machine.

"Something wrong?" he queried.

"A light," said Collen. "Downstairs in the De Chaceroy house. And the owners are away. They gave us notice they were departing for the country."

"No, my friend," said Mernet. "You have a certain regrettable habit of getting things mixed up. Madame la Comtesse is away. Monsieur remains in Paris. In fact though he takes his meals at his club, he sleeps at home, and at least one domestic is there to attend his wants."

"Listen, my clever one," said Collen. "In essentials I have got matters perfectly clear. Monsieur may or may not sleep at home. If he does so, he certainly never enters until about three in the morning. What is the good of one's wife going away if one can't amuse oneself a little? And it is not yet eleven o'clock."

Mernet caressed a virile moustache.

"What do you suggest then?" he said.

"That we look into things a little. The light shows in the ground floor, back. If by some miracle Monsieur le Comte came home to a lonely bed, at this early hour, he would, nevertheless, not be alone in his drawing-room."

"He could have brought a pal back from his club?"

"That is not his habit. And the club or the café is more amusing than a home, where there are no women."

Collen turned his bicycle, and began to wheel it back the way they had come.

Mernet followed, a little reluctantly.

"All the same," he said, "it is too early for burglars; and do thieves signal to us with lights?"

"We look into things - that's all," said Collen.

"And we find the comte in his drawing-room drunk, and with a girl. Then we get a flea in our ear!"

"Our instructions are to keep an eye on the house. We are doing our duty."

"Fine! Magnificent!" said Mernet. "All the same, one does not desire to look an imbecile."

"One has not always any choice," said Collen, darkly.

This discussion brought the two men to the spot where Charles Collen had observed a possibly aberrant light. By mounting their machines, and leaning against the garden wall, they obtained through leafless trees a clear view of the back of the house. A single light showed at the long windows that gave on to the garden.

"You are right," said Mernet, softly. "It's a bit queer. To me it looks as though those windows are not properly closed. The curtains are moving. It is a mild night, but scarcely one on which to leave windows open, eh?"

"Come on!" said Collen, and clambered from his bicycle-saddle to the top of the wall.

Mernet followed, and the two men walked softly up the narrow strip of garden, large for a central position in a great city.

"Listen carefully," said Mernet. "If there is a party of messieurs from the Paddock Club, then I for one don't wish to do my duty! Discretion, my old one."

Collen made no verbal answer, but nodded in agreement as he stole, on his toes, to the windows. They were open as Mernet had suspected. No sound came from within.

Mernet put his lips close to his companion's ear.

"A little moment," he whispered. "They may merely have left the room for an instant. Madame may have returned. Wait a while."

They waited. They heard no sound; and the waiting seemed long. Collen gently pushed back the windows a few centimetres.

He could see a strip of carpet, the side of a brocaded armchair, a small table, holding *bibelots*. He pushed harder.

He then uttered a rude word, and, flinging the windows right back, strode into the room.

"Good God!" said Mernet, softly.

To their right, and beside a brocaded couch, lay the body of a girl. She was slender, with auburn hair, and, though her face now was no pleasant sight, while she lived she had probably been attractive. She was dressed in a rich evening gown of green velvet. The body had a grotesque, dehumanized appearance.

"Strangled!" said Collen, who stooped and scrutinized the neck and face.

"Then the Comtesse came home . . . ?" said Mernet.

Collen turned, and there was a Mauser in his hand. He jerked his head towards a telephone that stood on a grand piano.

"Call Headquarters. Touch nothing. I shall explore the house."

He was gone – stepping like a cat, and opening the door softly before he disappeared.

Pierre Mernet rang Headquarters.



Twenty minutes had passed and the two *agents* were still quietly disputing different theories when a car was heard in the Rue Suchet. Collen went to open the door.

Two men stepped into the hall. One was very large, but not fat, and had a small, clipped moustache, a mahogany skin and quick eyes. He had once been described, rather unkindly, as looking like a Chinese wrestler. The other was young, tall, athletic. He might look like an Englishman – to untravelled Frenchmen. He wore English shirts and ties.

Charles Collen saluted.

"Good evening, Commissaire Dax," he said. "Evening, Brigadier Norman. It is at the back."

Saturnin Dax did not move. He glanced round the hall; he looked at the hatstand and at a card-tray on it. He gazed down at the mat, turned it over, and found nothing. He opened the letter-box and saw it was empty. Then, followed by Felix Norman and Collen, he went down a long passage to the *salon*.

Pierre Mernet spoke eagerly.

"Robbery and murder, Commissaire," he said. "Madame la Comtesse must have returned from her trip to the country. You

see that pearls were torn from the neck. I have found two on the carpet. Also a man's hat just outside the windows."

Saturnin nodded.

"Good!" he said, and knelt beside the body.

He looked at the face, which, despite its grim appearance, was that of a young girl – perhaps not more than nineteen or twenty. He examined the dead hands, lifting them one after another, and studied the nails which were painted scarlet but were broken here and there. He looked closely at the palms of the hands, and even smelt them.

The robe of green velvet, echoing the fashion of the forties, was obviously a model from one of the big houses. A band of sable surrounded the hem of the full skirt; there was no under-slip. The gown, which was extremely *décolleté*, fitted the young girl's figure none too well. The stiletto-heeled green satin shoes and the silk stockings were inferior in quality to the dress. The soles of the shoes were damp and bore some traces of mud. A stain, possibly made recently by red wine, showed on the skirt.

Saturnin took out a pocket-lens and examined scratches at the back of the neck. He smelt the wine-stain on the skirt, then rose and stood staring in front of him abstractedly, thumbing his moustache to left and to right. But despite his abstraction his eyes travelled round the handsome room, noting chairs, the piano, the couch, two pearls on the rose-coloured carpet; and silver-framed cabinet photographs of a man and a woman.

Felix Norman coughed uneasily. He turned away from the body.

"A rotten case, Chief," he said. "I've heard she was a handsome woman. She seems to have been quite young, too."

"What? Who?" said Saturnin, emerging from his reverie.

"The Comtesse de Chaceroy," said Felix. "She has appeared on the stage now and then, for charity shows, and . . ."

"Very likely, my boy," said Saturnin, briskly. "And probably she will continue to appear. There is the Comtesse de Chaceroy."

He pointed towards the photographs, one of which depicted a handsome woman of about thirty-seven.

"What!"

Felix looked at the photo, and then back to the young girl's body.

"Who is this, then?"

"A housemaid, I imagine."

"What, dressed up in her mistress's clothes?"

"Poor kid!" said Pierre Mernet. "So she went out on the loose. Well, she paid for it."

"Met some apache," said Collen. "Who killed her for the pearls. We found his hat, Commissaire. Just outside the windows."

"Good! Leave the pearls where they are. Let us take a look at the hat."



They all crossed the room and Mernet opened the windows wide, and flashed his torch on to a hat. Saturnin, with a gloved hand, picked it up. It was black and greasy. Most of the lining had been torn out. A single printed word: *Hermanos*, still showed on the remains of the lining.

Saturnin carried the hat into the room and examined it more closely under the lights. He used his lens to scrutinize the inside and outside of the hat. Finally he gave it to Mernet to replace it where it had been found.

He turned next to the couch beside the body. It held two large rose-brocaded cushions. Lifting these he found beneath one cushion a green velvet evening bag. He opened it, still with gloved hands. It contained a cheap lipstick, a handkerchief, mostly lace; some francs, and a small figure made of plastic. It represented a bat-like creature, the head and spreading wings being green; the body, very pink, was that of a naked woman. At back of this doll were printed the words: *Succuba: Dancing; Suppers, Fazio's Orchestra. Telephone: Clignancourt: 49:16.*

Saturnin put this into his pocket, returned the other articles to the evening bag, and put it back behind the cushion on the couch. He picked up one of the pearls, looked at it closely, rubbed it against his teeth, then replaced it where he had found it.

His eyes met those of Pierre Mernet.

"Telephone the Quai des Orfèvres, my friend. Ask for Monsieur Edmond Baschet of the technical laboratories. If he is not there, ask that his home address is telephoned at once. Monsieur Baschet will know what to do. If you should speak to him personally, give an adequate description of what has happened here."

Saturnin looked at Collen.

"I should like you in the garden - but not obviously. A sharp look-out, and always in sight of that hat. No smoking."

He turned to Felix.

"Come along, my boy. We shall take a look round the house."

Saturnin led the way along a passage, and, turning right, began to mount a wide staircase, the foot of which was about a dozen metres from the front door. There was a dining-room in between front door and staircase; and another door of green baize obviously led to kitchens and servants' quarters. The house was not so large as it appeared from the outside, but the rooms were of considerable size.

On the first floor the police-officers found two doors leading to bedrooms, and another to a bathroom. One bedroom was evidently occupied by the Comte de Chaceroy. A photograph of him stood on the mantelpiece, and showed him as a youngish man, about thirty, with a high forehead and a military moustache. A box of cigars was beside the photograph. The bed had not been made.

Saturnin only glanced round this room, and closed the door again.

The other bedroom was larger and perfectly tidy in its appearance. The handsome bed and dressing-table were in bleached wood, and white rugs lay on a pale pink carpet.

Felix looked at the bed.

"They sleep in separate rooms," he remarked. "They think two beds are better than one?"

"You are a little coarse," said Saturnin, reprovingly. "We now move in exalted circles. What do you expect? A big feather bed, holding papa, maman, and a dozen brats, like figs in a box?"

"It might be better that way," said Felix.

"Bah! There is a communicating door. What more does one want?"

As he spoke Saturnin went across the room, opened a small door and entered an adjoining bedroom.

"My mistake," he said. "This is for Madame's personal maid."

The room, in fact, was comfortable and even elegant, but not luxurious like the others. In a plain wardrobe hung some clothes and a light coat. The clothes had chic but were mass produced.

"Not many garments," said Saturnin. "Madame took the maid away with her, and she took most of her clothes."

Followed by Felix he returned to the room of the Comtesse. Saturnin looked around him, humming as he did so.

Suddenly he checked, and walked over to a picture that hung over the mantelpiece. It was the only picture in the room. He lifted it slightly until the cord was free of the hook from which it



hung. He rested the picture on the mantel. He found what he expected to find, the door of a little cupboard, opening upon a wall safe. It was locked.

"All right. Now for the servants' quarters," he said.

He shut the cupboard door, which, covered with a matching wallpaper, now scarcely showed. He put back the picture, and finally turned out the bedroom lights.

He and Felix ascended a narrower staircase, covered with a cheap carpet. There were three rooms on the next floor. One had evidently not been inhabited for a considerable time. A second one was neat and tidy, and a photograph of a fat woman stood on a chest of drawers, beside a large book on cooking. The bed was covered, and had the appearance of not being slept in for several days.

"By the way," said Felix, "what about the cook? Madame may have taken her maid and chauffeur, but scarcely the cook. If she's out visiting friends, or something, she's a bit late, isn't she?"

Saturnin shrugged.

"It's not midnight. Anyway, one thing at a time, my boy."

They went to the third room of the servants' quarters; and here the bed-clothes were turned down, whilst a lump near the foot of the bed proved to be a hot-water bottle wrapped in a night-dress of nylon and cheap lace. On a small table beside the bed was a paper-covered crime novel by Simenon; Saturnin opened it and found a *carte d'identité* used as a book-mark.

Pasted on the inside page, at the left-hand top corner, was the photograph of a young and pretty girl. It gave her family name as Bady; her first name as Luce; her age as nineteen; her occupation as domestic servant. Saturnin studied the card, and its further details of physical description. Felix looked over his shoulder.

"Poor kid!" said the brigadier. "But she looks a bit dumb. Fancy bringing her boy-friend into this house! And she was wearing her mistress's pearls, as well as her best go-to-meeting party frock."

Saturnin grunted, and slipped the *carte d'identité* into his pocket.

He went to the cheap chest of drawers on which stood a mirror. Between its glass and woodwork some snapshots had been stuck round the edge. One showed Luce Bady, sitting on a wall, the sea behind her. On back of the snapshot was written: Luce, Petites Dalles, August, 1964. Saturnin put the snapshot in his pocket.

He prowled about the room, examining everything. He looked over some handkerchiefs, and some nylon underclothing. He found no letters, diary, nor any kind of writing.

"All right," he said. "Let's go down again. I suppose Baschet has gone home. And the surgeon hasn't turned up either. Well, even police officials need their amusements."

In the *salon* Pierre Mernet threw a cigarette out of the window and saluted smartly.

"The chief of the technical laboratory was not at the Quai des Orfèvres, Commissaire," he reported. "But they are telephoning him at his private address. I have thoroughly searched this room, and can assure Monsieur le Commissaire there are no other pearls besides the two he has seen."

Saturnin nodded. A square of fine brocade covered an occasional table, on which stood a bowl of roses. He lifted the flowers, took the brocade and gently laid it across the dead face of Luce Bady.

At that moment a car was heard stopping in the Avenue Suchet, in front of the house.

"I don't recognize the engine," said Felix. "No - I think it's a taxi."

He paused, and they heard a key go into the front door lock. Someone entered. A man's voice sang cheerfully, a light song popular on the boulevards. Then the man broke off and uttered a little exclamation. The door of the *salon* was open and its lights could be seen from the hall.

Steps approached; the long stride of a tall man. Comte Paul de Chaceroy appeared in the doorway.



He wore a dinner-jacket and a gardenia in his button-hole. He was hatless, but a dark overcoat hung over his left arm. There was a cigar between his teeth.

He halted in the doorway, took the cigar from his mouth, and said: "What the devil is all this?"

Saturnin stepped forward.

"Commissaire Dax of the Judicial Police," he said. "A crime has been committed here, monsieur."

"What? Robbery? What did they get?"

"Not robbery - murder, Monsieur de Chaceroy. A young woman . . . Perhaps you can identify the body?"

As Paul de Chaceroy advanced into the room, and passed the piano that had concealed the body from his sight, Saturnin lifted the brocade covering the face.

"The devil!"

The Comte dropped his coat, and thrust his cigar into an ash-tray.

"It's Bady!" he said. "My God! I thought it was Charlotte!"

"The Comtesse?" said Saturnin. "No; your housemaid borrowed her mistress's robe."

The Comte shuddered.

"Poor girl!"

Mechanically, he took out a handkerchief, as though to wipe his forehead. He paused. Thrusting the handkerchief back into his trousers' pocket, he got a clean one from an inside breast pocket, and with this he wiped his face. As he did so he caught sight of a pearl, and picked it up.

"What has happened, Commissaire?"

"Pearls were torn, rather violently, from her neck, monsieur."

"Ah! She dressed herself up, and went out to meet a lover. These are my wife's pearls, of course. Charlotte is always leaving her things lying round. How did you find her, Commissaire? Were the windows open?"

"Yes. Two *agents* saw lights, and investigated. They found a man's hat outside the windows."

The Comte nodded slowly.

"Yes, it seems pretty clear. The girl fooling about, whilst my wife is away, and I am spending most of my time at the club. As it happens our cook is away, too. In hospital – some trouble with her tonsils. So – there it is. Bady dolled herself up for a boyfriend, who killed her for the pearls. A crook, Commissaire. Only a crook would know the pearls were real; a clerk or shop-assistant would have thought them imitation."

"A good point," said Saturnin.

The Comte laughed.

"You got all that for yourself, of course. I'm not trying to take over your job."

Saturnin went to the windows and pushed them back. He returned with the hat.

"This is the hat, monsieur. You have never seen it? Don't touch it, please."

"The devil – no! A pretty filthy-looking object. This crook is not making crime pay!"

Saturnin shrugged.

"Very few do, monsieur."

De Chaceroy glanced uneasily at the body. Saturnin crossed over and once more covered the dead face. He also went out through the windows and put the hat down where it had been found.

"We are waiting," he said, "for our surgeon who, at this hour, has to be located. He is fond of the theatre, and probably supper after it. The same thing, more or less, with the head of the technical squad. But they will be found, and will be here soon. I need scarcely say that science can do nothing for this poor girl, except help us to revenge her."

De Chaceroy nodded.

"Perhaps you would like a drink? For my part, I need one!"

Saturnin shook his head.

"No, thank you, monsieur. But if it would be possible to have some black coffee? For the last three nights, as it happens, I have seen very little of my bed."

"Coffee it is! I'll make it myself." He laughed as he swept aside Saturnin's polite protestations. "It's nothing. As a matter of fact I am often in the kitchen, although cook doesn't much like it. What about an omelette? I'm an *amateur* of cooking, Commissaire. A chef, particularly famous for omelettes!"

Saturnin declined offers of food, and de Chaceroy went off. His long stride was heard as he went down the passage. A door banged.

"Would you like me to make a projection sketch, Chief?"

Felix Norman took a pencil and graph paper from his pockets. Saturnin shook his head.

"Not worth while, my boy. Photographs will suffice."

As he spoke a car was again heard stopping before the house. The front door opened. Voices of women came to their ears.

"It's the Comtesse back!" Felix whispered. "This is our busy night."

Just as her husband had done, the Comtesse saw the light coming from the *salon*. Some hurried whispering was exchanged, and feminine exclamations, in the hall. Then there were light steps along the passage.

"Is that you, Paul?" A musical voice called out; and then, sharply: "Who is there?"

Two women appeared in the doorway. One was handsome,

and in the late thirties. Behind her another woman, in black, older, tall and sallow, stood with a rug over her arm.

"Oh!" she cried. "It is the police, madame!"

The younger woman took a step forward. Her eyes went to Saturnin, who placed himself in front of the body.

"What is it? What has happened?"

"A crime, madame. Your housemaid - Luce Bady. She is here . . ."

The maid screamed, and the mistress turned to her.

"Go upstairs, Françoise," she said, sharply. "Take my valise. You can start unpacking."

The Comtesse looked at Saturnin again.

"I don't understand? Do you mean the girl has . . .?"

She had come forward into the room, as she spoke, and saw the shoes, the spreading skirt of green velvet. Her face flushed angrily.

"My new dress!" she said. "And I haven't even worn it! What has the girl been up to?"

"Madame, she is dead," said Saturnin. "She borrowed not only a robe, but your pearls - and she has been murdered."

He pointed to one of the pearls, lying on the rose-coloured carpet. The Comtesse stared at the jewel; then went to a chair, and sat down.

"Murdered!" she whispered. "I thought the poor girl was merely intoxicated. I didn't . . ."

She broke off - her face sallow white. With trembling fingers she opened the bag she was carrying and took out a handkerchief.

"This is ghastly. Horrible! Has my husband come home yet?"

"He is making some coffee, madame - in the kitchen. No doubt that is why he has not heard you return."

As Saturnin spoke, a door banged, halfway down the passage, and a moment later De Chacerois came into the room, carrying a small tray, with coffee, cups and sugar.

"Charlotte!" he said. "I didn't expect you back. You have heard what has happened?"

"Yes." She looked at him as he set down his tray. "I couldn't stand Sannois any longer, Paul. It rained from morning to night. Finally, I hired a car, and Françoise and I came home. We have been five hours on the road. And now - this horror!"

She pulled off her hat. There were tears in her eyes. Her husband looked at her.

"You need some food," he said. "I'll get you something. Gau-

bert is in hospital, for a few days, with her tonsils. I could do with a cup of soup myself. Been in the club, playing billiards and so on. What about an omelette? Or there's cold stuff – chicken, *paté* . . . ?”

“I . . . I don't think I *could* eat,” she said.

She glanced towards the body and shivered.

“Nonsense! Go into the dining-room, my dear. Have some brandy. I'll fix you up some food. Won't take me five minutes.”

He smiled at her, and went off. The woman rose, gripping the back of her chair.

“Has . . . has a doctor seen her?”

She looked at Saturnin.

“Not yet,” he said. “It is only about fifty minutes since we got here. Our surgeon has to be found – but he will be here, any minute now.”

She nodded, and then tried to smile.

“I shall get out of these travelling clothes. Excuse me.”

She went out of the room. Saturnin gave her about a minute, then followed. Quietly he went along the passage. As he passed the green baize door the sound of the Comte singing, accompanied by a clatter of cooking utensils could be heard.

Dax went up the stairs. Outside the bedroom door of the Comtesse he paused, and listened. He opened the door and went in.

The woman looked round, startled. She still wore her coat. She stood on a chair in front of the mantelpiece and the little safe was open in front of her.

Saturnin smiled at her blandly.

“The same idea occurred to me, madame. I hope no other jewellery is missing?”

He went over to her side. The maid, Françoise, came past the door of the adjoining room, and stared at him.

“It's not likely anything else has gone,” said the Comtesse. “I foolishly left the pearls on my dressing-table.”

She opened a jewel-case, and diamonds and emeralds flashed under the electric lights. She opened several other cases, all of them containing jewels.

“No,” she said. “Only the pearls. I'm rather absent-minded, I'm afraid. It was stupid of me to overlook them. But I went away, on impulse, and in rather a hurry. Poor Bady! These girls are frightfully inquisitive. She must have come in here, seen the pearls, and my new dress, and wondered how she would look in them. From trying on the robe, to going out in it, to see some man, would be an easy step.”

"It sounds quite possible, madame. In any case it is a relief to learn that nothing else is missing."

He went out of the room. Outside the door Saturnin stood still, listening. He heard the maid speak:

"But, madame . . ."

Then Françoise stopped, abruptly, as though at a sign from her mistress.

Saturnin went into Paul de Chacero's room. He was not in it for more than a few seconds. Then he heard two cars arrive in the Rue Suchet. The technical squad, and probably the surgeon, had come. The Commissaire went downstairs.



The *salon* was full of police. The surgeon, in evening-dress, was examining the body. Edmond Baschet, an owl-like, youngish man with horn-rimmed spectacles, was talking to two assistants. Brigadier Georges Alder, dark and Mephistophelean, and in his eternal black mackintosh, turned from talking to Felix Norman to grin at Saturnin.

"Heard the news, and thought I might as well come along, *patron*," he said.

"Thanks, Georges," said the Commissaire.

He went over to Baschet.

"That dress ought to give us some finger-prints, Edmond," he said. "And there is a hat outside the windows – but I don't want it taken away. You saw the wine-stain on the skirt. I'm interested in that, too. The real owner of the dress has never worn it."

The surgeon looked up at Saturnin.

"This is charming," he grumbled. "And I was having a pleasant evening, for once!"

Saturnin crossed to him.

"Why don't you retire, doctor? You could afford it, as a bachelor. If you had a wife and five children it would be different. What do you make of her? Was she a good girl, and circumspect?"

"Not altogether," said the surgeon. "Not unless she was married. I'll be able to tell you more, later on."

Saturnin nodded. He beckoned to Georges Alder and withdrew with him into a corner.

"Do you know a night-club called the 'Succuba,' Georges?"

"Yes, *patron*. Just off the Rue de Clignancourt. Opened recently

– that is, with the new name. An old mob running it. Montevecchi is *maitre d'hôtel* – and probably owns the place.”

Saturnin took a largish envelope from his pocket and gave it to his brigadier.

“Get along there as quick as you can. Find out who dined or supped tonight – in private rooms. I suppose they have them?”

“Half a dozen, *patron*.”

“Right. If Montevecchi doesn't know his clients' names, these photos will probably help. Find the waiter who served them. Wine was spilt on the girl's dress – the waiter may have seen that.”

“I understand.”

“Another thing, Georges. See if a waiter there has lost a hat, tonight.”

“A waiter lost a hat?”

Georges Alder looked mildly surprised.

“Yes, it's just a hunch, but I'm thinking of the hat found outside the windows there. Take a look at it, but leave it where it is. I think maybe a ‘Succuba’ waiter lost it. He is very possibly a Spaniard. Certainly he has red hair. They probably nickname him ‘Rubio.’ All quite clear?”

“Perfectly, *patron*.”

“If you find a waiter whose hat is missing, bring him back here. And the waiter who served the girl and her boy-friend. Work as fast as you can. I don't think you'll have much trouble.”

Alder nodded and went out of the room.

Felix Norman, who had heard part of the conversation, looked at Saturnin suspiciously.

“A Spanish waiter with red hair?” he said. “Lost a hat? Sounds like something out of Sherlock Holmes. Why a waiter? Why Spanish?”

“You saw the hat, my boy. The word *Hermanos* is Spanish for ‘brothers.’ Like So-and-so, *frères* – a firm of hatters. Surely I don't have to explain the red hairs – or do I?”

“No . . . I see that. But, a waiter?”

Saturnin was about to speak when the green baize door was heard to bang in the passage, and then came the sound of a musical gong.

“Food! Supper! Commissaire Dax, will you come along?”

It was the voice of Paul de Chaceroy calling from the hall.

“Lord!” said Felix. “He takes this murder pretty coolly, doesn't he, Chief?”



"An untroubled mind," said Saturnin. "You and I will go and eat with him, my boy."



The dining-room was a spacious place. The table was large, and seemed empty with only four people seated at it.

The Comte was at head of the table, his back to the windows. On his right hand was the Comtesse; on his left Saturnin Dax, and Felix Norman.

Charlotte de Chaceroy had put on a housecoat of rose-coloured, quilted satin. She looked pale and almost haggard; her brown eyes appeared black with anxiety or fear. Her husband, on the other hand, was almost gay. It was obvious he had been drinking, and it was fairly certain this drinking had begun well before his return home.

The police-officers were quiet. Norman possibly a little awed by the unaccustomed splendour of his surroundings: Saturnin, pre-occupied, and rather gloomy, sipping a Chambertin with less attention than it deserved.

"Of course," said Paul de Chaceroy, who had been talking steadily for several minutes, "the Bady affair is pretty obvious. I'm sure the Commissaire agrees. The girl was pretty in her way. I mean that childish figure, the auburn hair. She went into your room, Charlotte – just out of curiosity. And then she saw that new dress. Pity it came just after you'd left for Sannois. Pity you didn't take it with you – and your pearls."

"What on earth would I do with velvet and pearls in Sannois, Paul!" The Comtesse shrugged her shoulders. "I went away for a complete rest, and I saw no one."

"Quite," said the Comte. "I mean, a pity for that girl's sake. Had she not seen that dress and thought her boy-friend would like to see her in it, and had she not borrowed the pearls to go with the gown – well, she'd be alive now. As it is, she slipped out to see some fellow. Obviously he is a crook. He said she looked marvellous, and asked her to go dancing with him. She went out, all right. Her shoes were wet, eh, Commissaire? I bet they went to a dance. She had to get home early – like Cinderella. He persuaded her to let him in here – for a drink – or a last kiss. And then he strangled her. After that he lost his head a bit. He tore the pearls off her neck, breaking the string. He ran out, across the garden at the back, dropping his hat. That's about how things happened, Commissaire, no? Have some more wine? You, too, Brigadier?"

Saturnin recharged his glass, and looked at Paul de Chaceroy, who was smiling in his direction.

"I don't agree with you, monsieur," he said. "I don't think the girl went out to dance."

"No?"

Saturnin shook his head.

"She wouldn't go to a dance-hall with the wearer of that shabby hat. Not in velvet, trimmed with sable, and with pearls at her neck."

"Bady wouldn't know any better, Commissaire. What do you think, Charlotte?"

"I . . . I don't know," the woman stammered.

She was drinking a white wine, and the glass so shook in her hand that the wine spilt over and splashed on the cloth. She had scarcely touched the soup or omelette prepared for her.

The Comte frowned at her.

"Well, I don't think a girl like Bady would know the difference between a model and a hand-me-down from the Rue du Temple."

"According to her *carte d'identité*, she was a Parisienne," said Saturnin. "And she has lived, and picked up little refinements in this house. Her own clothes are neat, and in excellent taste. No Parisienne goes out to a dance-hall absurdly overdressed."

"Very well, what is your theory, Commissaire? I suppose you see a thousand things that I miss. You have it all worked out, eh? That is why you are sitting here so comfortably, and my wife and I have the felicity of entertaining you?"

"To me," said Saturnin, imperturbably, "it seems plain that the girl went out, not to dance, but to take a late dinner, or supper. A wealthy man took her."

"A wealthy man?" Paul de Chaceroy refilled his glass and half-emptied it at once.

"Her dress and the pearls," said Saturnin. "She wouldn't dare take those pearls into the kind of dance-hall she would normally frequent, or to the sort of place he of the greasy hat would take her. Not merely because she might be robbed – for the place might well be most respectable. But because she would fear to lose the pearls. That girl – nineteen only and simple – would be in an agony of fear, with such valuables around her neck. No, some wealthy man, or man of good position, at least, persuaded her to accompany him to a good restaurant. You saw the wine spilled on the robe, Comte? Surely, having noted the damp shoes, that wine-stain could scarcely escape your keen eyes?"

"I noticed it – yes," said the Comte. "But that wine could be the cheapest entrail-twister."

"But it wasn't," said Saturnin. "It was a Haut Brion, and I wish I had a few dozen in my cellar at Meudon."

"Ah! Well, I missed that. Of course I scarcely looked . . . and it's not my job, thank the Lord! Then, what about the wet shoes, Commissaire? What do you make of them?"

"At a guess, I would say her escort was not only a man of a certain position financially, but also socially. He is rather well-known. He walked Bady home, at least part of the way, because he feared being seen. Presumably he had no car with him – for that might involve a chauffeur. He even disliked taking a taxi. It looks rather as though is very well known. Perhaps he did not want the doorkeeper of the restaurant to call a taxi – for himself and the girl. Our unknown walks the girl some little way, either taking a taxi when out of sight of the restaurant, or leaving a taxi well before it got to this house."

"Ingenious!" said the Comte. "Highly ingenious! But it overlooks one thing, doesn't it, Commissaire?"

"You mean the monsieur would not steal pearls?" Saturnin smiled. "He might be hard up, and heavily in debt. Those pearls would tempt a number of quite elegant club-men, provided they were dishonest. Then again – is it certain robbery was the real motive? There are other reasons for killing a pretty girl, monsieur. The robbery might come as an afterthought."

The Comte frowned at his wife, who was staring like one in hypnosis down at the cloth before her. He got up.

"What about a cigar?" he asked. "There are some in this room, somewhere."

He went over to a handsome chiffonier that stood against the heavily-curtained windows.

"Now, where the devil are they?" he said, irritably.

He opened a drawer, and shut it. He pulled out another, so violently, that it came loose in his hands. He put it back in its place, and opened a third. "Ah, here we are!"

He turned back to the table, and, as he did so, a car stopped outside the house, then the front door bell rang.

"One of my men, Comte," said Saturnin. "Felix, my boy . . ."

Felix Norman went out and shortly returned. With him were Georges Alder and two men. One of these was elderly, grey-haired and rather frail-looking. The other was broad-shouldered and had vivid red hair.

The elderly man looked at Paul de Chaceroy and bowed.

"Good evening, monsieur," he said.

"Good evening," said the Comte, with a puzzled expression.

Alder looked at Saturnin and nodded slightly.

"Take them into the drawing-room, Georges," said Saturnin.  
"You know what to do."

Alder went out with the two men. Felix went back to his chair, but remained standing.

Paul de Chaceroy was staring after the men.

"I've seen that old fellow somewhere," he said. "He is not one of your men, is he, Commissaire?"

"No, he is a waiter," said Saturnin. "In fact the two of them are waiters."

"Waiters . . .?"

The Comte abruptly put down the two boxes of cigars he had been holding.

"Help yourself, please," he said.

He himself had a cigar in his hand, but he made no attempt to light it. His eyes were fixed on the door. His body was tense; he appeared to be listening intently.

The door opened and Alder came in again, the two waiters with him.

"It's all sewn up, *patron*," said Alder.

"Good!" said Saturnin.

He looked at the red-haired man.

"That is your hat?"

"*Si, señor*. Someone stole it, tonight. From a little room we waiters use, just off the stairs that lead to the private dining-rooms. I was puzzled about it – for it is strange, *verdad?* It is not a valuable hat, perhaps, but I don't want to lose things like that."

"Evidently," said Saturnin, gravely. "And you, my friend?"

He turned to the older waiter.

"You recognize the girl's body?"

"Yes, monsieur! And she was so young and happy! I spilt some wine on her dress and I could see she was distressed. She did her best to reassure me the accident was nothing. She was . . ."

The old man broke off, deeply moved. His grey face puckered. Miserably, he glanced at Paul de Chaceroy, and then away.

"And, of course, you recognize Comte Paul de Chaceroy, no?" said Saturnin, "You served them at supper. You saw him wipe some of the wine from the girl's dress with his handkerchief?"

The old man nodded.

"I did," he said.

"That's a lie!" the Comte shouted. "You old cretin! What do you mean? You never saw me in your life."

"I waited on monsieur and mademoiselle, at the Succuba, tonight," said the old waiter, quietly.

Paul de Chaceroy turned swiftly. But, quick as he was, Felix Norman had him by the arms, and Saturnin gripped his wrists.

"I arrest you for the murder of Luce Bady," said Saturnin, and Georges Alder came over and put handcuffs on the prisoner.

"You're mad! All of you! Why the devil should I kill the girl?"

"The medical evidence will show that," said Saturnin, grimly.

Georges Alder went through the prisoner's pockets and found money, cigarettes, a petrol-lighter, two handkerchiefs, one wine-stained.

Saturnin looked at the wine-stained handkerchief and smelt it.

"No pearls, Georges?" he said. "But I don't suppose they are far away."

He went to the chiffonier and looked through the drawers Paul de Chaceroy had opened. In an empty cigar-box Saturnin found the pearls, the string broken but re-knotted.

Saturnin took the pearls to the Comtesse and laid them on the table-cloth before her.

"Too valuable for him to throw away, madame," he said. "I think only two are missing, and they were on the floor."

The woman covered her face with her hands.

Her husband started to curse her like a madman.

"You betrayed me!" he shouted at her. "You and your damned jealousy! You came back suddenly, to spy on me. He saw what you thought - that policeman! You let him see you hadn't left your pearls unlocked. You sit with your silly face twitching! He has watched you all the time. And the other little bitch tried to blackmail me! To pay for her pranks with some guttersnipe . . ."

He stood there, his face distorted, as he reviled his wife, and the girl, Bady. His pale blue eyes were blazing. A vein was throbbing in his forehead.

"Take him out," said Saturnin.

Norman and Alder dragged de Chaceroy from the room; the two waiters followed.

The Comtesse took her hands away from her face and stared at Saturnin.

"Did I?" she whispered. "Did I let you see . . .? I tried to hide what I knew. But my feelings were too strong for me."

"You did your utmost," said Saturnin. "But he betrayed himself. We always betray ourselves. He was too clever. He stole a waiter's hat, thinking it would pass unnoticed, in the restaurant, but these men can't afford such a loss, and they make a fuss. Your husband was too glib when he came into this house. He didn't expect to find us. He had to act the part of a man seeing that body for the first time. It would have tested a fine actor. He isn't a fine actor. He took a wine-stained handkerchief from his pocket - which might not have mattered had he not tried at once to conceal it. He relied on that stolen hat to put us on a false scent. It helped to put us on the right one."

"Yes . . ." she said, faintly. "Yes, I suppose there can be no doubt. He has always been passionate and . . ."

She broke off, and half rose from her chair. Suddenly she swayed and would have fallen had Saturnin not caught her. Her eyes were closed.

He picked her up, and carried her to a couch.

He went out of the room, halted at foot of the stairs, and called: "Francoise! Francoise!"

The maid came to the head of the stairs and peered uncertainly down.

"Yes . . .?" she said. "Yes, monsieur?"

"Come down," said Saturnin. "Your mistress needs you."

© Marten Cumberland, 1965.



Time washes colour out of judges' minds as it does out of peoples' shirts.

- *Lord Justice Harman.*

\*

Crime is the only industry which has reached the target of a four per-cent increase.

- *Professor Dennis Gabor.*

\*

The days when judges ask 'what is so-and-so' or 'who is so-and-so, are happily dying out.

- *Lord Parker, Lord Chief Justice.*

# I

## *Copped a Packet*

PETER ARDOUIN

*The same oddly engaging  
writing again, which gives this  
EWM discovery a lifelike  
plausibility*

FOR A man who'd done as much porridge as Ivor had, you'd have thought he'd have learnt to be more careful, but when Ivor did a job by himself there were more ends left hanging out than from an overflowing plate of spaghetti. It wasn't so bad when I did a job with him, because if you told him what to do, he'd do just that and no more; he could never think for himself.

It was just that way when he did the warehouse job. The next day the police were knocking at his door, but this time it was going to be a bit more serious, because either he or that Irish nit who was with him, had bashed the nightwatchman. I never really did know which one of them had done it, neither did anyone else, for when the poor old sod died of a fractured skull, the Irishman disappeared back to the land of bogs, and Ivor wasn't talking to anybody; well would you if you'd got your throat cut from ear to ear.

I did know who'd croaked Ivor, though. It was me! The Law found out, too, but do you know what put them on to me?

It was two cigarettes. Just two white tubes of tobacco, and one of those I shouldn't think they knew anything about. Because it'd been smoked down to a stub long before they came looking for me.

They wouldn't have got either if I hadn't been so ruddy generous. I don't know about you, but if I'm talking to somebody and I want a fag I always offer the other bloke one; I just can't help it somehow. Anyway I'll tell you how it all came about.

I met Ivor in stir a few years back now. It was only the second time I'd been in, but Ivor seemed to have spent most of his life in and out of one prison or another. He wasn't a bad bloke apart

from the fact he couldn't see beyond the end of his nose, in a manner of speaking. When he did something he'd never plan it, just go out and do it. With the result he never stayed outside long enough to do more than one job.

We came out on the same day. Neither of us had any money, apart from what we'd been given when we'd been discharged. Ivor was all for bashing some old girl over the head and taking her bag. I had a hell of a job to stop him.

I said I had a much better idea, I knew where there was a little sweet shop and tobacconist run by a miserable old cow not far from where I used to live, before I'd been nicked the last time. If she was still there it'd be quite easy to get enough to set us up for awhile.

\*

It was a pushover. First I went into the toy department of a big shop and bought myself a toy pistol you couldn't tell from a real shooter. At the women's counter of the same shop I bought a pair of nylon stockings.

When I walked into the old girl's sweet shop, just before she closed, with a stocking over my head and waved the gun under her nose, she gave a sigh and went out like a light. I walked round the counter, emptied the till, opened the drawer underneath and took out the tin in which I knew she kept all her bank notes and emptied that. Finally I pulled the telephone away from the wall. The old girl was still out cold on the floor when I left. Ivor was waiting outside and together we went up the street to the main road, where we mixed with the crowds going home from work.

A nice, quick, quiet, job. Nobody got hurt; no mistakes made and, more than anything else, no chance of a hangover in the shape of a small stone room with bars on the window. Ivor couldn't believe anything could be so easy, and from that moment onward, until the last job, we always worked together.

I nearly went spare when I heard on the wireless that morning that somebody had done that bonded warehouse. I knew only Ivor could have done it, and I knew he couldn't have done it by himself, I didn't find out till later about that Irish basket, who was an old mate of Ivor's, who'd turned up one night to collect a debt.

Ivor had told this Paddy that he didn't have any money but he'd be doing a job before long that'd put him in funds, so would he like to come round and collect then? The Irishman hadn't



thought much of this and said he wanted his money there and then, or he was going to make sure that Ivor was in no fit state ever to do a job again.

The result of it all was that Ivor took the bloody Irishman out that night to do the job and of course made a hash of it.

Everything was laid on – a plan of the building, the quickest way in and the quickest way out and a time-table of the movements of the watchman. I know they had it all, because I'd spent nearly six weeks of hard work getting it. They also used our small van; I wasn't using it that night, I'll explain about it later.

When I say hard work I mean it. I'd got the idea some six weeks before and so that I could get a good look over the place, I got myself a job as a brickie's mate on the night shift of a building site next to the warehouse. The site foreman was a mean bastard who chased you all night; it was only because I wanted to keep the job that I kept my hands off him.

I soon found it was quite easy to get up on to the warehouse roof from the scaffolding of the building I was working on. There I found a skylight which, once opened, would make an easy way in. Once inside it'd be child's play to open up one of the wire-mesh cages with a pair of wire cutters.

Getting the cartons of cigarettes out of the warehouse looked as if it might be a bit of a problem, because the place was inside the docks. But here I had a real bit of luck, for there was a yard whose gate led straight out on to the road, but it was the doors that let out on to the loading bays in the yard which made my heart sing; they were only bolted from inside the warehouse.

My plan was to go to work as usual on the night, and when everybody is hard at it I slip out on to the warehouse roof down through the skylight, along the rafters and down a maintenance workers' ladder, which was bolted to the wall, cross the yard and let Ivor in through the gate which led out on to the road.

Once both of us were inside, it wouldn't have taken us long to have opened one of the cages and get our hands on enough cigarettes to keep us in marbles for a long time. We could've stacked them by the gate, then one of us could slip out, get the van from the building-worker's car park (which is where I'd been putting it every night so people'd get used to seeing it there) and bring it round to the gate, and then load up.

Ivor would have taken the van off and unloaded it, returning it later to the car park ready for me to pick up in the morning when

I knocked off. Meanwhile, I'd lock up, nip back over the roof to my job and carry on working for the rest of the night.

I knew we wouldn't be disturbed; the night watchman could be depended on to do the rounds every hour on the hour, and no matter which way I worked it out the whole job would only take three-quarters of an hour.



Of course it didn't go like that when Ivor and that ruddy Irishman did it. What they did was this – Ivor did my bit by sneaking into the building site, climbing up the scaffolding to the roof and through the skylight into the warehouse and opening up to let the Irishman in. They ripped open one of the cages. Ivor knew which one; I'd already been into it pretty carefully with him and he had the map I'd made. They started to carry cartons of cigarettes out to the yard gate, ready to load into the van.

At this point the Irishman, who was half cut, tripped over his own big feet and made such a row about it the night-watchman came out. Instead of quietly fading away, as I'd have done, one of them ups and bashes him. I expect it was Ivor – like all small men he was always quick with the cosh. Well, the old boy's skull was a bit thin, so that was it. The clout croaked him.

They finished the job, loaded the fags on to the van and hopped it. They'd made another damn silly mistake on top of croaking the old boy; instead of leaving the van in the car park, they'd left it outside the yard gate, with its real number plate on, the one that was registered in Ivor's name, and without lights. A passing bobby had seen it, taken the number and reported it as being parked without lights in a temporarily restricted area.

As I said, I'd heard on the wireless that the warehouse had been done. If I'd gone to work that night, I'd still have been there when the police turned up, but I'd been round to see a mate of mine about getting rid of the fags when we got them. That's how Ivor had been able to get the van as I wasn't using it that night.

The old night watchman was still alive, but on the danger list; if he'd been dead I'd never have gone near Ivor. In fact I think he died after the bloke who'd bashed him.

I decided I'd go and have a little talk with Ivor. To be sure he'd not forget what I'd got to say, I took along my razor. One of the things I was going to point out was that our partnership was good and dissolved, and, another, was that if ever he got in my way

again he'd become one of those unidentifiable corpses found in the river from time to time.

I discovered him in the room he rented, that afternoon. He was a little cagey at first, but I made out there was no hard feelings and got him to tell me how it had gone off and what had gone wrong. He told me everything, but of course he didn't know about the van being spotted; that came out at my trial.

I remember I offered him a cigarette, and he tried to refuse, saying he'd got thousands and offered me one from a packet which lay on the table. It was just like Ivor to open up the stuff he'd nicked. I was willing to bet, too, that all the stuff was still in the van because he'd not know where to get rid of it.

Anyway, to get back to the point, I didn't want one of his cigarettes because I wanted to keep my gloves on. It would have looked too obvious if I'd fumbled around trying to get one out of a packet he was holding, but my own packet I could lay on the table and shake a fag out.

I heard him out, then walked round to where he was sitting. I said I reckoned this was the end of our little association, but before I went I'd got something for him that'd remind him not to double-cross his mates again.

With that I pulled out the razor. Ivor knew what he was in for and jumped up which caused me to make a mistake I'd never made before. Instead of the blade going across his cheek it went across his throat, and nearly cut his ruddy head off.

It was awful, with blood everywhere. For a second Ivor just stood there staring at me, then his eyes went glassy and he sagged down on to the floor making a weird gurgling noise.

It was the only time I've seen a man die like that; I hope it's the last. I thought I was hard but I still think of him choking to death in his own blood – at least that's what it sounded like.

After he'd stopped making that noise, and I realized he was dead, I sort of came to myself and knew I was going to have to think fast if I was going to get out of this without finding myself on a murder charge. I'd got blood all down the front of my raincoat, and on the right sleeve, though I'd been prepared for a little blood. You can't chive anybody without spilling some on yourself, so I'd got one of those cheap plastic raincoats on. Nothing soaks into them and you can throw them away easily, if you do want to get rid of them.

I wasn't going to lose any sleep over my gloves, either. I'd

bought them at a chain-store. Even if they were found they'd never be traced to me.

When I got over by the door I remembered I'd brought a packet of cigarettes in with me and that they should be on the table; I couldn't see them. I tried to think what I'd done with them - I couldn't remember picking them up.

I walked round the room, then saw a packet on the floor, about where they'd have been if I'd knocked them with my sleeve as I got up to go round to where Ivor was sitting. I picked them up, went back to the door and let myself out, taking care to use only the left hand, because my right glove was wet with blood.

Outside it was dark and raining, so that took care of the splashes on the coat. All I had to do was get rid of the gloves. Ivor's place wasn't far from Woolwich Ferry; I walked down there.

Here I took the right glove off, filled it with all the loose change I had in my pocket, stuffing the razor in as well. Then I took off the other glove, I pushed the right one into it so that it made a neat bundle, took a quick look round to make sure nobody was watching, and lobbed it as far out into the river as I could.



My nerves really were jumping now. I headed for the nearest pub for a quick whisky. It's funny, but once I'd got inside in the warm and dry, with people walking round and talking, what I'd done didn't seem real anymore. In fact, when the bloke, sitting across the table from me started talking, and drew me into conversation I forgot all about Ivor lying in his room.

Even when I gave this bloke a cigarette, I didn't think about the last time I'd offered a packet to somebody. This feller took one and asked if I minded if he kept it till later. I said no, and he put it in the top pocket of his jacket.

Now you or I couldn't tell the difference between one cigarette and another, but this bloke could. All he had to do was lick it along the join, open up the paper and look at the figures there. Of course he didn't do it where I could see him but outside in the toilet.

The figures he was looking for were on the fag I'd given him. He was a Customs officer who, together with a policeman, was going around the dockland pubs looking for cigarettes from the raid. I suppose the brand had made him suspicious. Anyway,

there's a bit of difference in the packets and you know how sharp eyed those Customs boys are. And it wasn't only the cigarettes they wanted, but the bloke who'd bashed the night watchman.

When this Customs bod came back he seemed a bit thoughtful and didn't seem to want to carry on talking. Since I needed company I thought I'd go round to the pool-room where I knew all my mates would be. I must have taken a tail with me when I left the pub. I hadn't been there an hour when I was picked up and charged with murder.

The police had traced the van that was seen outside the warehouse gates, and raided Ivor's place. It didn't take them long after that to find the van, still full of cigarettes, in the garage we'd rented. One carton had been opened, but there was only one packet gone. They couldn't find it in Ivor's room; they knew where it was, though, in my pocket!

I'd picked the wrong one up. In its place was the one I'd taken there with the glossy cardboard of the packet smothered in my dabs. I'd taken my gloves off to get the cellophane wrapper undone. It was just my bad luck that it was the same brand as Ivor had nicked.

Pretty weak evidence to make a murder charge stick, you think? You're right; it didn't stick. But this is the green rub. That ruddy Irishman wore gloves all the time and because there was no trace of anybody else, the police never believed he existed. They only believed what they found, which was my prints plastered all over the inside of a van full of cigarettes.

My prints were on the tools as well, even on the tyre lever Ivor had used to bash the poor bloody night watchman, and which of course he'd left behind.

So I got done for croaking him.

© Peter Ardouin, 1965.

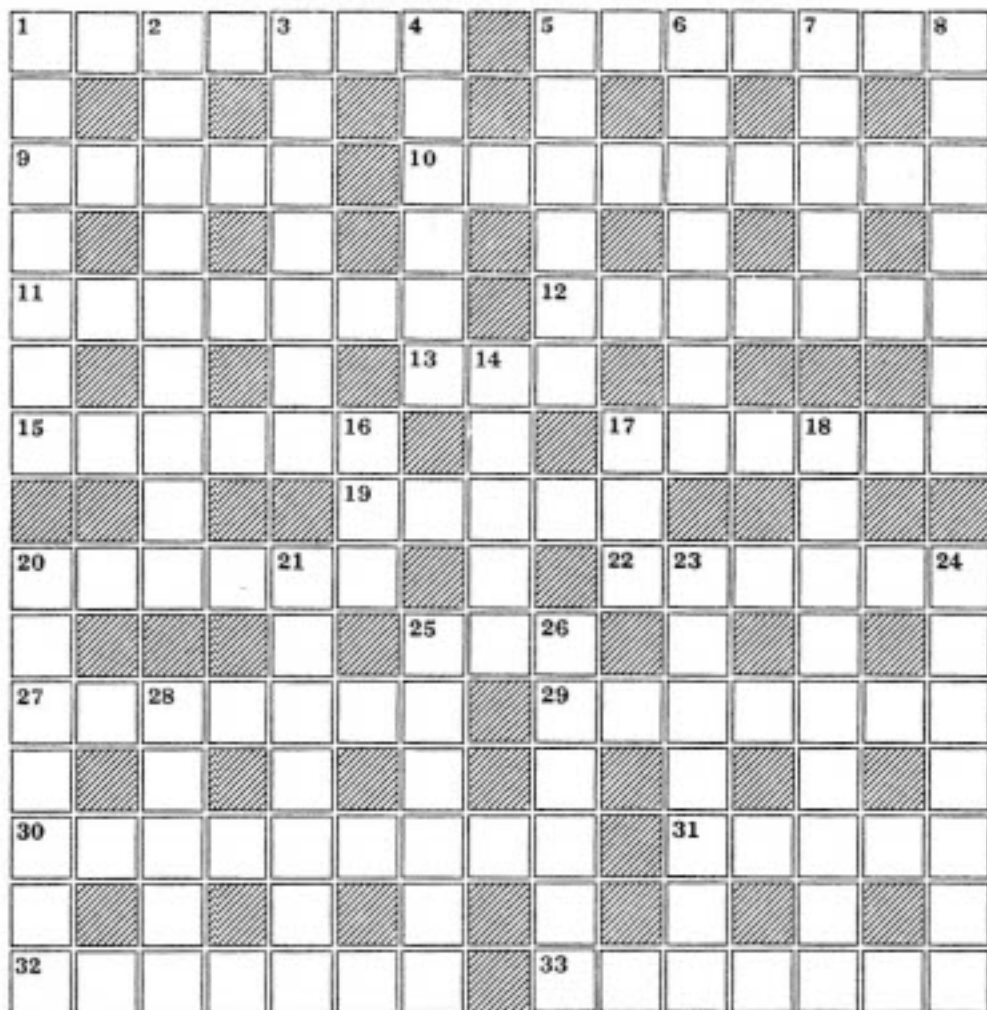
## **Like EWMM . . . ?**

**hate it . . . pleased about something . . . angry with somebody . . . ?**

**You will find that the Readers Say page welcomes letters with something worth-while in them.**

**And it pays a guinea for the month's best.**

# EWMM CROSSWORD No. 4



### ACROSS

- 1 Character who smoothed things out? (7)
- 5 Bones – the brain case (7)
- 9 Slave dance? (5)
- 10 All the king's men? (9)
- 11 Again give permission (7)
- 12 There's a letter on the way out for her (7)
- 13 Hard-boiled, perhaps, but it can be cracked (3)
- 15 Nymphs for TV anti-booze advertizing? (6)
- 17 Like the classified results? (6)
- 19 Uniform? (5)
- 20 Region, maybe, to disregard (6)
- 22 Not exactly the Squeaker (6)
- 25 Beastley pen! (3)
- 27 Edgar Wallace's countess was (7)
- 29 Like the P.C. who's not on duty? (3-4)
- 30 Was such a serpent a boa? (9)
- 31 A foreigner with a girl (5)
- 32 Goes places! (7)
- 33 Favour a little girl? (7)

### DOWN

- 1 Cut off (7)
- 2 Best-seller at Drury Lane? (4, 5)
- 3 Square gem, according to E. W. (7)
- 4 Bond for Maigret? (6)
- 5 Cringy way of uttering (6)
- 6 Lively musically? (7)
- 7 Edition for children? (5)
- 8 Sue's dim and my be badly treated (7)
- 14 Stranger to Wallace – pinched! (5)
- 16 Understand it's a diocese (3)
- 17 Novel shop at this corner! (3)
- 18 Like the date of a summit conference? (3, 6)
- 20 To some extent, for a sin, maybe (7)
- 21 Wild West worker (7)
- 23 The way Eif acts on one! (7)
- 24 Contest for black-legs? (3, 4)
- 25 Ever mixed up in ships, old China? (6)
- 26 Dry one scattered over there (6)
- 28 Some ways taken by *The Northing Tramp*? (5)

(Solution will appear in our June issue)

Edgar Wallace

# THE SUBURBAN LOTHARIO



*A murder that remains a gem of horror,  
told as only a great master can write it*

**I**T IS a natural thing for the humanitarian to say, of any man convicted of wilful murder, that he could not have been sane when he performed the act; and when murder is done in such circumstances and in such an atmosphere as that which marked the destruction of Emily Beilby Kaye, more profoundly does the mind of a balanced man grow bewildered.

Yet all things were possible with Patrick Herbert Mahon, whose form of insanity took the shape of a colossal vanity. Mahon was a man of pleasing address, popular with women and with his fellow men. For all his anti-social acts, he was in the way of being a social success in certain circumstances in those circles to which he had the entrée.

He was born in Liverpool; one of a large family of struggling middleclass folk – a boy of some small talent and an assiduous attendant at Sunday school. So he became an office boy, ultimately a junior clerk. He continued to go regularly to church and took a vivid interest in its social affairs. He displayed some prowess in athletics and was particularly fond of football, becoming indeed a prominent member of one of the local church teams. His early mode of life is described as having been a model for all young men.

At school he first met the pretty, dark-haired girl to whom his life was to become so tragically linked. She was two years younger than he, and their school friendship developed into something warmer at a later stage. Indeed, they were both in their teens when he first proposed marriage. There was strong opposition by both

families and it was two years after this – in 1910 – that they were married. He was then twenty and the girl eighteen.

Perhaps it was a reckless marriage. But this at least should be said. If any woman could have deflected Mahon from the path that was to lead to the scaffold, it was Mrs. Mahon. With singular devotion she held to him through the black and anxious years to the end. Hers is the real tragedy of this story.

Within a year of their marriage he had forged and uttered cheques for £123 on the firm which employed him. With this money he took a girl to the Isle of Man. He was traced, brought back, and bound over. Mrs. Mahon forgave him and they left Liverpool to start life anew.

Ultimately he obtained a position with a dairy firm in Wiltshire. There is no doubt that he had a fund of business ability, and this, with an apparent genial vivacity of manner, served him well for a time. He was still a 'sportsman', and played football for a local team.

About this time a little girl was born. Hard upon this Mahon was arrested for embezzling £60 from his employers and was sentenced at Dorchester Assizes to twelve months' imprisonment.

Upon his release he is known to have lived for a while in the neighbourhood of Calne, Wiltshire. There was a mysterious epidemic of burglaries in this neighbourhood, and it may or may not have been a coincidence that Mahon suddenly decided to seek other quarters.

He is next heard of at Sunningdale, where he was employed by a dairy. This time there were some love affairs which provoked a little scandal. Again Mahon was thrown out of work. There is a gap here which the imagination may easily fill in. Mahon had become interested in racing, and, when opportunity offered, attended race meetings in many capacities – preferably as a bookmaker's clerk.

However that may be, it fell on a day in the early part of 1916 that a branch of the National Provincial Bank at Sunningdale was entered at night. A maid-servant who interrupted the intruder was ferociously attacked with a hammer. When she regained consciousness she found herself in the arms of Mahon, who was kissing her. Later Mahon, who had dodged to Wallasey, was arrested and tried at Guildford Assizes for the offence. It was brought plainly home, and after he had been found guilty he made a whining appeal to the judge to be allowed to join the Army. Lord Darling sternly retorted that he was a thorough-paced hypocrite whom the Army



could do without, and sentenced him to five years' penal servitude.

That term he served. A boy was born in 1916, but died a year or two later without having seen his father. Mrs. Mahon, left to her own resources, with indomitable courage sought a living for her little girl and herself. She obtained a post with Consols Automatic Aerators Ltd., which had a factory at Sunbury. Her efficiency and energy soon attracted the attention of the heads of the firm, and she was promoted to a responsible position.



Mahon came back from prison – full of promises of reform, anxious to be again with his wife. Observe that he always came back – that Mrs. Mahon always took him back. Superintendent Carlin of Scotland Yard made a shrewd observation on this trait: “He was keenly disposed to ‘philandering’ or having ‘affairs’ with this or that woman casually as they attracted him. But he never, I am convinced, wished to sever his connection with his domestic hearth. He felt in his his own mind that the woman he had married was his sheet anchor; that, if he cast off from her, he would be adrift.”

They settled down in a flat in Pagoda Avenue, Richmond, and Mrs. Mahon used her influence to procure him a berth as a soda-fountain salesman with her firm. Mahon did well – so well that when in May, 1922, the business was put in the hands of a Receiver he was appointed sales manager.

Now it chanced that the Receiver of the Company, a member of a firm of chartered accountants, in the beginning of 1923 engaged as a typist a woman – she can scarcely be described as a girl, since she was then thirty-seven years old, Miss Emily Beilby Kaye.

Miss Kaye had maintained herself by her own efforts for many years. She was a competent, experienced woman, not uncomely, who lived at a bachelor girls' club, and had managed to put by a sum of money, considerable for one in her position. She was not in the least averse from a flirtation with the handsome sales manager, this suburban Lothario, with whom business circumstances now brought her in contact.

The affair developed rapidly. She at least fell violently in love. Mahon may have thought that it would end as other episodes of this kind had before ended for him. But Emily Kaye was not easily discarded. I think we may accept Mahon's own words on this point:

Just before Christmas, Miss Kaye was dismissed from the office where she was employed, and, as a result, had a lot of time on her hands, and she wished me to see her more frequently which I was unwilling to do for several reasons. She reproached me on several occasions as being cold, and told me quite plainly that she wished my affection and was determined to win it if possible. I felt sorry for the fact that she had been dismissed and did, as a result, meet her a bit more frequently. I temporized in the hope of gaining time, but from that moment I felt more or less at the mercy of a strong-minded woman, whom, though I liked her in many ways, I did not tremendously care for.

Mahon was embarrassed – perhaps a little scared. But he went on, and there were certain dabbings with francs in which he was proved to have had some concern, with Miss Kaye's money. He asserted that some of his own money had been used in these transactions, but there can be no question that the funds were provided by the woman. Miss Kaye was for a short while in employment, but again fell out of work and some time in February, 1924, she probably became aware that she was pregnant. Said Mahon :

She became thoroughly unsettled and begged me to give up everything and go abroad with her. . . . I plainly told her that I could not agree to such a course. I agreed to consider the matter, however, in the hope of gaining some time, but she suggested I should take a holiday and go away with her for a week or two, and take a bungalow, where we would be alone together, and where she would convince me with her love that I should be perfectly happy with her.

This was the immediate prologue to the tragedy. Miss Kaye was not as some of the other women Mahon had made his playthings. She could not be easily thrown aside.

Apart from this episode, Mahon felt the ground solid beneath his feet. His income was more considerable than it had ever been and, added to that of his wife, allowed a very comfortable existence. He was happy in his work; he was popular among his social acquaintances in Richmond and the neighbourhood. He had become secretary of a local bowling club. Save to his wife, his past was utterly unknown. The future looked full of promise. All this would have to be jettisoned, his career, his friends, his home – and he had a sort of attachment to his wife and little girl – if he yielded to Miss Kaye and took to flight with her.

He fought weakly to save himself. Even so, he might have succeeded, had not fate put into the hands of Emily Kaye somewhere about this time a weapon against which he felt impotent. It was the first of a number of strange coincidences with which the case was marked. No reference was made to it at the trial, nor did it leak out in the newspapers.



Emily Kaye was clearing a drawer of some of her belongings. At the bottom of the drawer someone had placed a sheet of newspaper. And as she took it out her eye lighted casually on the name of Patrick Mahon. Thus she read of his trial at Guildford Assizes.

It may be assumed that she used this knowledge in her interviews with Mahon. She pressed the idea of 'a love experiment', and he gave way. He engaged a bungalow on the stretch of lonely beach between Eastbourne and Pevensey Bay for two months, using the assumed name of Waller. This bungalow, known indifferently as 'Officer's House' and 'Langney Bungalow', had formerly been the official residence of the officer in command of a coastguard station.

This was at the beginning of April, 1924. Miss Kaye received the news with some coldness. She had not intended the 'experiment' to last longer than a few days. However, she sold out her remaining shares, and went down to stay at Eastbourne by herself while she looked over the place. Mahon was to join her later.

He was very worried: "I felt in myself very depressed and miserable, and did not wish to spend the three or four days together as she desired, but as I had given my word, and as I felt that I could definitely prove . . . how foolish the hope was on her part to expect to keep my affection, even could she gain it, I thought I had better go through with it."

Yet the ruling passion was still strong in him. Two days before he was to take possession of the bungalow with Miss Kaye he met Miss Duncan - a stranger - in the street at Richmond, and although it was a wet night walked with her most of the way to her home at Richmond. He remarked that his married life was a tragedy, and invited her to dine with him on the following Wednesday. The episode gives a clue to the psychology of the man. Murder must have been very close to his mind at that time, and yet he could philander with still another woman.

On April 12 he purchased a saw and knife at a shop in Victoria

Street, and travelling down to Eastbourne met Miss Kaye at the station. They took a cab to the bungalow, and so the 'love experiment' started. So far as his home and his firm was concerned Mahon was supposed to be travelling 'on business'.

Miss Kaye had set her heart on eloping to South Africa. She had informed her friends that she was engaged – she had shown some of them a ring – and that her fiancé had a good post at the Cape. In a letter written to a friend on April 14 she said that she and 'Pat' intended to spend a little time in Paris before going out. This was the last communication that any of her friends or relatives had from her.

On Tuesday, April 15, the two travelled to London together. Mahon had agreed to apply for a passport, but when they met in the evening to return to Eastbourne he told her that he had not done so, and did not intend to do so. A quarrel broke out in the train.

If Mahon's story is to be credited the woman presented him with an ultimatum when they reached the bungalow. She insisted that he should write to friends that he intended going to Paris and thence to South Africa. Mahon refused, and Miss Kaye, in an access of ungovernable fury first threw a coal axe at him, and then attacked him with her bare hands. In the struggle – this is Mahon's version – they fell, and she struck her head on a coal cauldron. A little later he realized that she was dead.

I mention Mahon's explanation, but few people will be found to believe that it was other than a cold-blooded and premeditated murder. Clearly he knew that he would be free the following evening, for he had during the day wired to Miss Duncan making an appointment.

His story of consternation and horror has a genuine ring. Mahon was a man of temperament and he felt the reaction. He was face to face with the problem that has confronted many murderers – the disposal of the body. And although he seems to have formed his plans beforehand – witness the purchase of the saw and the knife – he had not the nerve to put them into immediate execution. He carried the body to a spare bedroom and covered it with a fur coat.

That night he spent in Eastbourne, and on the next evening he dined in London with Miss Duncan. He remarked that he was staying at a charming bungalow and induced her to agree to pay him a visit two days later – on Good Friday. He confirmed this the following day by a wire from Eastbourne, 'Meet train as arranged,

Waller,' and sent a telegraphic money order for four pounds.

This was on the face of it the act of a lunatic. The body was still at the bungalow. The man was taking a grotesque chance – for what? He himself gave the answer: "The damned place was haunted; I wanted human companionship."

Unquestionably Mahon's nerve was badly shaken and yet to all outward appearance he gave no sign. Miss Duncan does not appear to have had any suspicion and she went down to Eastbourne on Good Friday afternoon and was met by Mahon and taken to the bungalow. That day before her arrival he had commenced a sinister work, and there was one room that was barred to his visitor. He told her that it contained valuable books.

The next day he left her at Eastbourne and went by himself to Plumpton Races. Here he was noticed by an acquaintance who attached no special significance to the meeting, although it proved to be of vital importance in the chain of circumstance that was to betray the murderer.

Mahon realized by now that the presence of Miss Duncan was going to embarrass him. So he concocted a telegram in a fictitious name and despatched it to himself as Waller at the bungalow, making an appointment in London for an early hour on Tuesday morning. Thus he was afforded an excuse for cutting short Miss Duncan's stay. They returned to town on Easter Monday, and somewhere about midnight Mahon arrived back at his home at Kew.

He was back at the bungalow on Tuesday. Here I may tell a curious story which did not come out in evidence. He had already partly dismembered the body, and he now set to work with the intention of disposing of the remains piecemeal. The day was dark and heavy. He built a huge fire in the room and upon this placed the head. At that moment the storm broke with an appalling crash of thunder and a violent flash of lightning. As the head lay upon the coals the dead eyes opened, and Mahon, in his shirtsleeves as he was, fled blindly out to the rain-swept shingle of the deserted shore. When he nerved himself to return the fire had done its work.

It was an extraordinary coincidence that whilst he was giving evidence at his trial a thunderstorm was also raging. He gave calm denial when he was asked if he had desired the death of Miss Kaye. Almost on his words the court was illumined by lightning and re-echoed with the crash of thunder. Those who saw his face and knew the truth will never forget that moment when the sound of the storm brought back to his mind that fearful mid-

night scene. He was a broken man when he faced the deadly cross-examination of Sir Henry Curtis Bennett.



Mahon discovered that with every method his ingenuity could suggest the disposal of the body was likely to be a long job. Meanwhile he had to show himself at his office and his home. He returned to his home on the Tuesday night, and during the rest of the week he had to be at his work. On Saturday and Sunday he renewed his labours. On Sunday he conceived the idea of distributing some pieces of the dismembered body from a railway carriage window.

He spent some time over the gruesome business of packing a Gladstone bag. No chance seems to have offered itself on the journey to London that evening but he did succeed in getting rid of some portions between Waterloo Station and Richmond. But he was unable completely to empty the bag, and he decided to go on to Reading. The night he spent at an hotel in that town.

The next day – Monday – he returned to London. The bag was now empty save for the wrappings he had used and a cook's knife. These he probably intended to destroy later. He was acute enough to realize that if he had thrown them away they might have been identified.

The bag he left at one of the cloakrooms at Waterloo Station and went home. Now, although Mrs. Mahon had forgiven more than most women would have done, she was a person of intelligence. Mahon's strange comings and goings of late, his messages by telegram, his stories of business out of town, did not altogether impose on her. She knew him too well. Still, although she could not fail to be suspicious, no glimmer of the real truth was present in her mind. Someone had mentioned casually that he had met Mahon at Plumpton Races and she feared that this was an explanation. Her husband had been previously mixed up with bookmaking and, in spite of his promise to her, it was possible that he had gone back.

She found the cloakroom ticket in one of his suits. She took a friend into her confidence – he had been formerly connected with the railway police – and asked him to discover what it referred to. She had a belief that it might be some of the paraphernalia used by

bookmakers. Thus it came about that the bag was closely examined. It was locked, but by pulling at the one end some indication of its grim secret was revealed.

Scotland Yard was immediately informed, and Chief Detective Inspector Savage had men posted to watch the cloakroom. Mrs. Mahon was informed that there was nothing to suggest that her husband was bookmaking.

Mahon returned for the bag on the Friday evening (May 2). As it was handed to him a detective stopped him. "Rubbish," he exclaimed when told that he would be taken to a police station. This little touch of bravado did not help him. He was taken to the station and later to Scotland Yard. The bag was opened and was found to contain a cook's knife which had been recently used, two pieces of silk, a towel, a silk scarf, a pair of torn knickers, and a brown canvas racquet case marked EBK. Most of these things were blood-stained, and the whole contents of the bag had been heavily sprinkled with a disinfectant.

Savage confronted his prisoner with these things and asked for an explanation. Mahon explained, lamely, that he had carried meat for the dogs in the bag. "That will not do," said the Inspector. "These stains are of human blood." "You seem to know all about it," retorted Mahon.

For a quarter of an hour or more there was silence. Then Mahon spoke. "I wonder," he said, "if you can realize how terrible a thing it is for one's body to be active and one's mind to fail to act."

Apart from one other muttered remark there was again silence for three-quarters of an hour. Mahon came to a resolve. "I suppose you know everything," he said. "I will tell you the truth."

He was cautioned, and then he told for the first time his version of the tragedy. I have drawn upon this and his subsequent statements in this account of the affair.

The Scotland Yard experts and the East Sussex Constabulary at once got to work. A search of the bungalow revealed many traces of the crime. There were portions of the body, and evidence of the attempt to get rid of it. But two very important parts of the body were missing. No trace of the head could be found. This, in all probability would have shown exactly how the murder was committed. There was no trace of the uterus.



The trial opened at Lewes Assizes during July, 1924, before

Mr. Justice Avory, an experienced and strong criminal judge. Sir Henry Curtis Bennett led for the Crown, and Mr. J. D. Cassels, K.C., for the defence.

The point taken by the defence was that the death of Miss Kaye was an accident, that either during a struggle between Mahon and Miss Kaye, she had died from striking her head against a coal-scuttle, or that in fighting her off he had unintentionally strangled her. Mr. Cassels handled the case with notable skill, but he had to fight some deadly and almost irresistible inferences.

Although Sir Bernard Spilsbury, the pathologist, refused to commit himself to an opinion on the precise manner of death he was definite in his assertion that it could not have been caused by the woman striking her head against the coal-scuttle, which was of fragile construction. He was able to say that Miss Kaye, had she lived, would have become a mother.

All the shifts and deceits of Mahon during his intrigue with Miss Kaye were exposed to the jury. It was shown that over £500 of Miss Kaye's savings had disappeared. Three one hundred pound notes, which had been in her possession, were shown to have been changed by Mahon in false names at various places. Overwhelming motives were shown by which he might have been actuated to murder.

The judge's charge to the jury was a lucid, perfectly fair, but damning summary of the case. Within half an hour the jury had found Mahon guilty.

You may say, as has been said, that none but a lunatic could have acted as he did; but apart from the deed, Mahon acted like a sane, calculating man.

I have referred to Mahon's vanity: it is a peculiar trait in all the 'great' murderers that they desire to be thought well of. He cannot bear the thought of leaving a stunned servant maid with a bad opinion (not unnatural) of the man who assaulted her. He is at all times anxious to be considered by his respectable companions as a man of substance and a prince of good fellows, a self-described 'Broth of a bhoy'.

There was never a more cold-blooded murderer except perhaps George Joseph Smith, than this unspeakable villain. Even at the end, when he confessed his guilt to the prison officials, he begged that they would not make public his confession for fear of the 'bad impression it might make'.



# Message for Short-Time Lew

*It was only right that Lew's song  
should indeed be a very joyful noise*

**ERIC PARR**

**H**IS full name was Lewis Carroll Lovelace. It had caused many an eyebrow to be raised in police courts when it was read out and answered to by a cheery, one eyed person, who was obviously one of the boys. It had been given him by his Mum in honour of her favourite author. But in that tight circle (of criminals) known as the Fraternity, he was Short-Time Lew to one and all.

By profession he was a drummer, a day-time housebreaker. Careful and conscientious, he worked the suburbs once a fortnight, grafted alone. He never carried the objects described by the Law as 'housebreaking instruments' and which cause a frown of annoyance to appear on the face of an overworked Chairman of Quarter Sessions.

Lew was no exception to the law of averages, of course. From time to time he got his collar felt and was duly charged and eventually sentenced. But the fairies must have been present at his birth, for he never got more than twelve months, no matter how serious the offence. Thus his name of Short-Time Lew.

The only real bit of bad luck he ever experienced was the loss of his eye which was poked out by the ferrule of an umbrella belonging to one of two old ginny judies, who were fighting in the Edgeware Road. Lew stepped in between them, and as a result he spent three months in the Eye Hospital.

I first got to know Lew at Wilmer's Sports and Social Club, which is known to the Fraternity as 'Wilmers' and to the long

suffering local divisional detective inspector as 'that flipping den of iniquity'.

Eventually I was always able to tell when Lew had got it off for a big tickle. He never used to talk shop. In fact, his favourite topic of conversation was the chances of Chelsea. It was when he started singing a hymn. It was always the same one: 'Hark, hark my Soul, Angelic songs are swelling'. He had a smashing voice, too, a natural tenor.

When I got to know him better, and we discovered that we were both Roman Catholics, he told me that it was the hymn his old Mum used to sing when she had a fit of conscience, laid off the gin for a few days, and made a steak and kidney pudding. Whenever Lew heard that hymn, it used to give him a glorious feeling that everything was all right with the world.



That winter I got nicked, in Manchester of all places. As a consequence I found myself buttoned up in Strangeways Prison, which is no nick for a Londoner as the north country types, prisoners and screws, combine to make life a misery.

As soon as I could, I pulled a few strings and got myself transferred south to my old London nick. In no time at all I had back my usual job of R.C. Red Band, which gave me the run of the nick, plus one or two other profitable little jobs.

One morning I was drifting around the centre, which is on the ground floor, in the middle of the cartwheel whose spokes form the various halls of the prison, when the principal officer on duty called me over.

"We've got a capital charge coming in tonight," he said. "He's an R.C."

"Poor bastard," I said. "Anyone I know?"

"I dunno. He's a small-time screwsman. Name of Lovelace, Lewis Carroll Lovelace. With a monicker like that it's small wonder that he ends up in the condemned cell."

"Blimey," I said. "Short-Time Lew! He wouldn't hurt a fly."

"Perhaps he doesn't know his own strength. As you're such a pal of his, you can help the E-Two landing screw to get the C.C. ready."

Nutty Ferris was the screw on the E-Two Landing which houses the three condemned cells and the topping shed. Under his watchful eye I drew clean bed linen from the Partworn Stores, made the bed and saw that the cell was all shipshape with its

armchair for the prisoner, two straightbacked chairs for the death watch, and table for draughts and chess.

I watched in morbid fascination as the Partworn Stores screw laid out a new kit of prison grey on the bed. I noticed that the jacket had white tapes instead of the normal buttons and that there were no laces in the shoes.

My eyes kept straying to the almost imperceptible door let into the wall. Only a thin hair line, a break in the wall betrayed the presence of the execution shed. Through that door the condemned man was finally led, by the death watch straight on to the scaffold. There his hands and feet were pinioned and a white cap placed over his head together with the hempen noose which would jerk back his head at the end of the drop; this had previously been worked out mathematically, to dislocate his fifth cervical vertebrae.

When the Partworn screw had gone, old Nutty Ferris and I sat down for a quiet smoke and a chat. It was then that he told me the whole strength of the Short-Time Lew affair.

It seems that Lew had taken up with a little mystery, which is the Fraternity's expression for one of those teen-age girls who drift into London from the provinces.

He found a flat and within a few weeks he had gone overboard for her. He spent all his money on her and soon he was going out to graft twice a week which, as any drummer will tell you, is putting yourself on offer.

Then she started messing. Not with a mug who didn't know any better, but with the biggest grass in the business, a geezer known as Harry the Thief. He got his name from his habit – whenever he was accused of informing – of spreading out his arms, rolling his eyes up and exclaiming, "What? Me a copper? But everyone *knows* I'm a thief."

It wasn't long before Harry had fixed it with this little trollop that the next time Lew had it off she was to get him on the blower quick. He could then tail Lew to his buyer and thereby present his favourite bogey with the spring double!

Just how Lew got wise to the lumbering, no one seems to know. Anyway he saw red and clocked the mystery with a bronze statuette of a nymph on a globe that she had conned him into buying for her. The law got him before he could get near Harry, much less do him. So he went up the steps at the Old Bailey with a lot of unfinished business on hand . . .

★

You've no idea the fuss the authorities make when they've got

a condemned man in the nick. No other prisoner is allowed to clap eyes on him. If he's got to pass through the gaol during normal hours, a message is sent ahead and all prisoners along the route are hustled away into the nearest cells.

Despite this hush-hush, cloak-and-dagger cods-wallop, the grapevine still hums and the word went around that Lew was taking the whole business very badly. He wouldn't eat and he spent most of his time lying on his bed, smoking like a chimney and staring at the ceiling.

Six days before Lew was due to be topped, I got the big news. It was part of my job to go to the Reception Wing and issue each R.C. entrant with his religious books. This morning, the first man on my list was Jimmy Walker, London's leading creep, or in case anyone gets the wrong idea, the best burglar in the business. He had a special message for me from Monty Rose, Short-Time Lew's buyer.

The message was that two of Monty's boys had caught up with Harry the Thief who now had twenty-six stitches in his boat-race and both knee caps so badly smashed that he would be a cripple for life.

Monty was relying on me to pass on the news to Short-Time Lew.

"Monty's an optimist," I said. "What chance have I of getting near a geezer who's due to be topped a week from now?"

"I don't know," replied Jimmy. "I've given you the message and Monty doesn't like disappointments."



For three days I racked my brains, and then, at midnight on Saturday, I had an inspiration.

Lew was due to be topped on the Tuesday. That Sunday was the last of the three laid down by the law (he had declined the right to appeal) and I knew that he would be led into the R.C. Chapel before the rest of the congregation. He would sit in the small curtained cubicle at the side of the sanctuary with a screw on either side of him.

Twenty minutes before Mass was due to start, I fussed around old Father Murphy, purposely getting in his way. Two minutes before the off I pulled my master stroke. "I've picked the hymns, father," I said, showing him the list. "Will these be all right?"

"Yes, yes," he said testily, waving me away.

"I'll give them to the escort, then," I said, and dodged through the sacristy door into the chapel.

It was sticking my neck out with a vengeance, of course. It was his job to give the hymns that were to be sung to the death watch. I wasn't supposed to set eyes on the prisoner. I steamed straight over to the condemned cubicle, pulled aside the curtains and handed the list to one of the two screws. At the same time I looked hard and straight at Lew; his eyes lit up to see someone he knew.

"Father Murphy says he thinks the first hymn will be much appreciated," I said to the bewildered death watch, and dropped the curtain as if it were red hot.

Mass began. Father Murphy was reading the Epistle, the organist played the opening bars of the hymn. The lads stood up and started bawling the tune in their usual slaphappy way, and all the time I was straining my ears as I knelt on the altar steps.

Then from behind the curtain, soaring loud and clear above the others, came a firm tenor:

"Hark, hark my soul,  
"Angelic songs are swelling."

Out of the corner of my eye I caught Father Murphy's signal that the Epistle was ending and I rose to take the missal across the altar to the Gospel side. I remember I was smiling. Father Murphy looked at me in puzzlement.

I couldn't explain to him that my smile was no act of impropriety but merely satisfaction and a certain amount of joy that the message to Short-Time Lew had got through. He could now get on with the business in hand without loss of face.

© Eric Parr, 1965.



An Albuquerque (New Mexico) policeman, following a rule in rendering concise reports, recorded an event thus: 'Norman Wright, 16, moved his motor-cycle into his drive. It was leaking fluid. Wright struck a match to see if it was petrol. It was.'

\*

Most of these stories [by ex-criminals] are highly fictionalised, and if we forbid the criminals to write about their misdeeds, we may well reach the stage where politicians cannot write about theirs.

- Lord Willis.

# THE BLACK FINGER

James Pattinson

MY GRANDMOTHER LOGAN was forced in her widowhood to let seaside lodgings because Grandfather Logan had lost all his money by indiscreet gambling with stocks and shares. To her everlasting credit, Grandma never held it against him. She said it would never have happened if the stars had been in their right courses when Grandpa was born.

Time and again she would explain it to me: "It wasn't his fault. You can't fight against the stars. Either they're with you or they're against you. They were against him, poor soul, and so nothing ever went right for him."

Even his death had apparently been caused by a malignant fate. He had been run over by a number 78 bus. "It was his unlucky number, you see. The colour was green, too, which always had been bad for him. So, what with one thing and another, he didn't stand a chance."

Grandma Logan believed implicitly in the influence of the stars, though she probably couldn't have pointed out the Great Bear if you had asked her. She would never take a decision of any importance without consulting Madame de Vernon at half-a-crown a time. She said it was worth ten times that amount to be sure you were doing the right thing, and even if after one of these consultations it turned out that she had certainly done the wrong thing, she never blamed Madame de Vernon and would go back to her on the next occasion with completely unshaken faith.

Madame de Vernon had a small three-storeyed house at the end of a row, with a view from the front windows of the jetty, a whelk stall, and the circle where the trams turned round. The house had a bright blue door with a sign over the top depicting a giant hand with all the lines of fate marked on it. There was also a board with white lettering which read: *Madame de Vernon. Palmist. Patronized by Royalty.*

I was never able to discover just which royal person had ever called on her for assistance. If asked, she would mutter something about state secrets, and you gathered the impression that it would have been treasonable to reveal the details.

Madame de Vernon was a squat, fat woman with greasy black

hair and a mole on her chin. Besides reading hands, she looked into a crystal and told fortunes with cards, being a versatile woman in her own particular line of business.

I don't think she ever had the windows open and the house was as stuffy as a tomb. It had a tomblike odour about it, too; at least that is how it seemed to me; but Madame herself smelled strongly of garlic and eau de Cologne, which is not the most pleasing of mixtures. Added to this, she smoked Turkish cigarettes in a long ebony holder. Their pungent smoke mingled with the other odours to induce in me a feeling of nausea whenever I was forced to enter the place.

For of course Grandma could not rest until Madame de Vernon had read my palm and had peered into the crystal ball to see what the future had in store for me. The result was not altogether reassuring. Madame shook her head so violently that a pin fell out of her hair.

"This child was born under an evil star."

Grandma was more perturbed by this information than I was, because I didn't know just what unfortunate birth entailed and she did from bitter experience.

"It's just like his poor dear Grandfather. I always knew he had the look." And then she went on to warn me never to go near the Stock Exchange because if I did there was no telling what might happen.

Madame de Vernon said gloomily that it was no use warning me because it would happen whatever I did and there was no getting away from the facts. She said that if a child had the black finger on him then that was that, and there were no two ways about it.

When she talked about the black finger she wagged one of her own, and as it was none too clean, especially about the nail, I thought she was referring to this and moved quickly out of range.



I had never seen Mr. de Vernon and when I asked Grandma about him, she raised her eyes to heaven and said it was a mercy he went away when he did. "Poor Madame. He led her a dance, I can tell you. Lived on her, he did. Never did a stroke of work and used to spend half his time in the Netmaker's Arms drinking away Madame's hard-earned money."

I said she shouldn't have given him any, but Grandma said I

didn't know Mr. de Vernon. "He terrorized that poor soul. A man with a moustache like his and those staring eyes would terrorize anybody. Used to send cold shivers all up my spine just to feel his eyes on me."

I was fascinated by this story, and it seemed to me a pretty splendid achievement to terrorize a woman like Madame de Vernon. He must have been a superman. But I still couldn't understand why he should have gone away if the living had been so easy at home. Grandma admitted that this was something of a mystery.

"It was just as if he got tired of this part of the world. One day he was here, the next he was gone. Madame never talks about it. I don't suppose she wants to be reminded of him. It's understandable."

"Do you think he'll ever come back?"

"Let us hope not. For Madame's sake."

For my own sake, I rather hoped he would. I wanted to see this hero. I wanted to see Madame shake at the sight of him. She had scared me often enough and I wanted to see someone scare her.

I suppose I was about ten years old when it happened. I had gone with Grandma to visit Madame de Vernon for another half-crown's worth of foresight and advice. It concerned the position of my bed. It had always stood north and south, but now Grandma had got it into her head that this might be having a bad effect on me because of the magnetic field; she proposed turning it east and west. Madame de Vernon said she doubted whether anything would really help me, seeing in what unpropitious circumstances I had been born, but after gazing into the crystal and consulting the cards she gave it as her opinion that if the bed were placed with the head pointing towards the coast-guards' hut on the end of the jetty, it would probably make the best of a bad job. After that she said she had something to discuss with Grandma that wasn't for childish ears, and as it was raining I had better go and sit in the attic.

"But don't touch anything, whatever you do. You can look out of the window."



This attic was a stuffy, dusty little room with a sloping ceiling and a dormer window with a cracked pane. It was full of all kinds of junk like tin trunks and broken-down clothes-horses



and perambulators and china dolls with the heads missing. Why there should have been perambulators and dolls I couldn't imagine, since I had never heard of any de Vernon children. I could only conclude that these things had been in the attic when the de Vernons came to the house and had never been thrown out.

The dormer window looked towards the sea. I dragged a box to it and when I stood on the box I could see the jetty and a drenched flag hanging miserably from a flagpole. Off-shore there was a coaster attached to a great banner of black smoke which the rain was beating down on to the waves. The coaster didn't appear to be moving; nothing did; it was all like a drab, washed-out picture, a water-colour with more water than colour. It depressed me to look at it, so I got down from the box and began to rummage among the junk.

There was one trunk in particular that interested me. It had a high, arched lid and seemed to be made of shiny black oil-cloth stretched over a wicker frame. It was fastened with two leather straps and I had difficulty in freeing the buckles because they and the straps were stiff from lack of use.

I worked at them and at last succeeded. When I lifted the lid it made a creaking sound like the lid of a hamper. The trunk was lined with blue and white striped cloth and there was a kind of tray in the upper part, which was empty. I lifted out the tray, and I suppose I had been building up some wonderful idea of jewels and gold coins and treasures of that sort, so that what I really found came as a great disappointment. It was just a pile of old clothes, and not very pleasant smelling clothes at that.

If I'd given any thought to the matter it might have struck me as rather peculiar that they should all have been men's clothes, but I was too put out by lack of any treasure to pay much attention. I put the tray back and refastened the lid and looked round for something else that might contain hidden treasure.

There was a wardrobe standing against one wall and this seemed a likely place, so I tried the door, but it was locked. And then I noticed that the wardrobe was standing in front of a cupboard. I could just make out the edge of the cupboard door; of course I knew for certain that if there was any treasure it had to be in there.

I tried to pull the wardrobe away but it was too heavy, so I hunted round for something to use as a lever. I had read about a man who once said that with a long enough lever he could move

the earth. I thought it should be possible to find one that would shift a wardrobe.

It was a wooden curtain-rod that I eventually found. It was about six feet long and I was able to push the end of it between the wardrobe and the wall. With this lever it was surprisingly easy. The wardrobe swivelled round on one end and left the cupboard door free of any obstruction.

There was no lock on the door; it was just one of those old-fashioned latches and when I lifted the latch the door opened outwards with a squeal of unoiled hinges.



I suppose it was the fact that the cupboard was built into the wall just at the side of the chimney which explained Mr. de Vernon's remarkable state of preservation. The hot, dry air must have desiccated him, so that he had become mummified. Even the fearsome moustache was still there. The eyes stared out at me as if in rebuke for my ill manners in opening the cupboard without permission.

He was standing upright; indeed, he could never have got into the cupboard in any other position. Suddenly he began to lean forward. I jumped back just in time, and he missed me by inches.

After that things became rather confused. I heard Madame de Vernon screaming and I remember thinking that anyway I'd had my wish - I'd seen her terrorized by Mr. de Vernon. And then Grandma was hurrying me out of the house. Later on there was a policeman asking questions, and it was all wonderfully exciting, much better than looking at the sea and the rain.

Of course I never had my fortune told by Madame de Vernon again, and I don't suppose anybody else did either. Nor did I ever find any treasure, so perhaps she was right about the evil star and the black finger. I had also offended Grandma and was in disgrace for some time. She said I was a heartless boy with no proper human feelings.

Yet, after all, it was a perfectly reasonable remark, bearing in mind the peculiar circumstances of the affair.

All I said was: "No wonder she smoked those Turkish cigarettes."

period piece

# **THE DETECTIVES OF ISPAHAN**

JAMES MORIER

*This delicate crime story is taken from the author's Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan, published in 1824. It is beautifully observed, filled with oriental colour and guile*

**M**Y father having died without a will, I was, of course, proclaimed his sole heir without any opposition, and consequently all those who had aspired to be sharers of his property, baulked by my unexpected appearance, immediately withdrew to vent their disappointment in abusing me. They represented me as a wretch devoid of all respect for my parents, as one without religion, an adventurer in the world, and the companion of wandering dervishes.

As I had no intention of remaining at Ispahan, I treated their endeavours to hurt me with contempt, and consoled myself by giving them a full return of all their scurrility, by expressions which neither they nor their fathers had ever heard – expressions which I had picked up from amongst the illustrious characters with whom I had passed the first years of my youth.

When we were left to ourselves, my mother and I, after having bewailed in sufficiently pathetic language, she the death of a husband, I the loss of a father, the following conversation took place:

“Now tell me, O my mother – for there can be no secrets between us – tell me what was the state of Kerbelai Hassan’s concerns. He loved you, and confided in you, and you must therefore be better acquainted with them than anyone else.”

“What do I know of them, my son?” said she, in great haste, and seeming confusion.

I stopped her, to continue my speech. “You know that, accord-

ing to the law, his heir is bound to pay his debts: they must be ascertained. Then, the expenses of the funeral are to be defrayed; they will be considerable; and at present I am as destitute of means as on the day you gave me birth. To meet all this, money is necessary, or else both mine and my father's name will be disgraced among men, and my enemies will not fail to overcome me. He must have been reputed wealthy, or else his deathbed would never have been surrounded by that host of blood-suckers and time-servers which have been driven away by my presence. You must tell me where he was accustomed to deposit his ready cash; who were, or who are likely to be, his debtors; and what might be his possessions, besides those which are apparent."

"Oh, Allah!" exclaimed she, "what words are these? Your father was a poor, good man, who had neither money nor possessions. Money, indeed! We had dry bread to eat, and that was all. Now and then, after the arrival of a great caravan, when heads to be shaved were plentiful, and his business brisk, we indulged in our dish of rice, and our skewer of kebab, but otherwise we lived like beggars. A bit of bread, a morsel of cheese, an onion, a basin of sour curds – that was our daily fare; and, under these circumstances can you ask me for money, ready money too? There is this house which you see and know; then his shop, with its furniture; and when I have said that, I have nearly said all. You are just arrived in time, my son, to step into your father's shoes, and take up his business; and *Inshallah*, please God, may your hand be fortunate, may it never cease wagging, from one year's end to the other!"

"This is very strange!" exclaimed I, in my turn. "Fifty years, and more, hard and unceasing toil, and nothing to show for it. This is incredible! We must call in the diviners."

"The diviners?" said my mother, in some agitation; "of what use can they be? They are only called in when a thief is to be discovered. You will not proclaim your mother a thief, Hajji, will you? Go, make enquiries of your friend, and your father's friend, the *âkhon* [schoolmaster]. He is acquainted with the whole of the concerns, and I am sure he will repeat what I have said."

"You do not speak amiss, mother. The *âkhon* probably does know what were my father's last wishes, for he appeared to be the principal director in his dying moments; and he may tell me, if money there was left, where it is to be found."

Accordingly I went straightaway to seek the old man, whom I found seated precisely in the very same corner of the little parish mosque, surrounded by his scholars, in which some twenty years

before I myself had received his instructions. As soon as he saw me he dismissed his scholars, saying that my footsteps were fortunate, and that others, as well as himself, should partake of the pleasure which I was sure to dispense wherever I went.

"Ahi, âkhon," said I, "do not laugh at my beard. My good fortune has entirely forsaken me; and even now, when I had hoped that my destiny, in depriving me of my father, had made up the loss by giving me wealth, I am likely to be disappointed, and to turn out a greater beggar than ever."

"Allah kerim, God is merciful," said the schoolmaster; lifting up his eyes to heaven, placed his hands on his knees, with their palms uppermost, and exclaimed, "Oh, Allah, whatever is, thou art it." Then addressing himself to me, he said, "Yes, my son, such is the world, and such it will ever be, as long as man shuts not up his heart from all human desires. Want nothing, seek nothing, and nothing will seek you."

"How long have you been a sûfi," said I, "that you talk after this manner? I can speak on that subject also, since my evil startled me to Kom, but now I am engrossed with other matters." I then informed him of the object of my visit, and requested him to tell me what he knew of my father's concerns.

Upon this question he coughed, and, making up a face of great wisdom, went through a long string of oaths, and finished by repeating what I had heard from my mother; namely, that he believed my father to have died possessed of no ready cash (for that, after all, was the immediate object of my search); and what his other property was, he reminded me that I knew as well as himself.

I remained mute for some time with disappointment, then expressed my surprise in strong terms. My father, I was aware, was too good a Mohammedan to have lent out his money upon interest; for I recollected a circumstance, when I was quite a youth, which proved it. Osman Aga, my first master, wanting to borrow a sum from him, for which he offered an enormous interest, my father put his conscience into the hands of a rigid mullah, who told him that the precepts of the Koran entirely forbade it. Whether since that time he had relaxed his principles, I could not say; but I was assured that he always set his face against the unlawful practice of taking interest, and that he died as he had lived, a perfect model of a true believer.

I left the mosque in no very agreeable mood, and took my way to the spot where I had made my first appearance in life – namely,

my father's shop – turning over in my mind as I went what steps I should take to secure a future livelihood. To remain at Ispahan was out of the question – the place and the inhabitants were odious to me; therefore, it was only left me to dispose of everything that was now my own, and to return to the capital, which, after all, I knew to be the best market for an adventurer like myself. However, I could not relinquish the thought that my father had died possessed of some ready money, and suspicions would haunt my mind in spite of me, that foul play was going on somewhere or other. I was at a loss to whom to address myself, unknown as I was in the city, and I was thinking of making my case known to the *cadi*, when, approaching the gate of the *caravanserai*, I was accosted by the old doorkeeper.

“Peace be unto you, *Aga!*” said he; “may you live many years, and may your abundance increase. My eyes are enlightened by seeing you.”

“Are your spirits so well wound up, *Ali Mohamed,*” said I, in return, “that you choose to treat me thus? As for the abundance you talk of, ’tis abundance of grief, for I have none other that I know of. *Och!*” said I, sighing, “my liver has become water, and my soul has withered up.”

“What news is this?” said the old man. “Your father (peace be unto him!) is just dead; you are his heir; you are young, and you are handsome – your wit is not deficient. What do you want more?”

“I am his heir, ’tis true; but what of that – what advantage can accrue to me, when I only get an old mud-built house, with some worn-out carpets, some pots and pans, and decayed furniture, and yonder shop with a brass basin and a dozen of razors? Let me spit upon such an inheritance.”

“But where is your money, your ready cash, *Hajji?* Your father (God be with him!) had the reputation of being as great a niggard of his money as he was liberal of his soap. Everybody knows that he amassed much, and never passed a day without adding to his store.”

“That may be true, but what advantage will that be to me, since I cannot find where it was deposited? My mother says that he had none – the *âkhon* repeats the same. I am no conjurer to discover the truth. I had it in my mind to go to the *cadi.*”

“To the *cadi?*” said *Ali Mohamed.* “Heaven forbid! Go not to him – you might as well knock at the gate of this *caravanserai* when I am absent, as to try to get justice from a judge, without a heavy fee. No he sells it by the *miscal*, at a heavy price, and very light

weight does he give after all. He does not turn over one leaf of the Koran until his fingers have been well plated with gold, and if those who have appropriated your father's sacks are to be your opponents, do you not think that they will drain them into the *cadi's* lap, rather than he should pronounce in your favour?"

"What then is to be done?" said I. "Perhaps the diviners might give me some help."

"There will be no harm in that," answered the doorkeeper. "I have known them make great discoveries during my service in this caravanserai. Merchants have frequently lost their money, and found it again through their means. It was only in the attack of the Turks when much property was stolen, that they were completely at their wits' end. Ah, that was a strange event. It brought much misery on my head; for some were wicked enough to say that I was their accomplice, and, what is more extraordinary, that you were amongst them, Hajji, for it was on account of your name, which the dog's son made use of to induce me to open the gate, that the whole mischief was produced."

Lucky was it for me that old Ali Mohamed was very dull of sight, or else he would have remarked strange alterations in my features when he made these observations. However, our conference ended by his promising to send me the most expert diviner of Ispahan; "a man," said he, "who would entice a piece of gold out of the earth if buried twenty *gez* deep, or even if it was hid in the celebrated well of Kashan."



The next morning, soon after the first prayers, a little man came into my room, whom I soon discovered to be the diviner. He was a hunchback, with an immense head, with eyes so wonderfully brilliant, and a countenance so intelligent, that I felt he could look through and through me at one glance. He wore a dervish's cap, from under which flowed a profusion of jet-black hair, which, added to a thick bush of a beard, gave an imposing expression to his features. His eyes, which by a quick action of his eyelid twinkled like stars, made the monster, who was not taller than a good bludgeon, look like a little demon.

He began by questioning me narrowly; made me relate every circumstance of my life – particularly since my return to Ispahan – enquired who were my father's greatest apparent friends and associates, and what my own suspicions led me to conclude. In short, he searched into every particular, with the same scrutiny

that a doctor would in tracing and unravelling an intricate disorder.

When he had well pondered everything I had unfolded, he then required to be shown the premises which my father principally inhabited. My mother having gone that morning to the bath, I was enabled, unknown to her, to take him into her apartments, where he requested me to leave him to himself, in order that he might obtain a knowledge of the localities necessary to the discoveries which he hoped to make. He remained there a full quarter of an hour, and when he came out requested me to collect those who were in my father's intimacy, and in the habit of much frequenting the house, and that he would return, they being assembled, and begin his operations.

Without saying a word to my mother about the diviner, I requested her to invite her most intimate friends for the following morning, it being my intention to give them a breakfast; and I myself begged the attendance of the âkhon, the doorkeeper, my father's nephew by his first wife, and a brother of my mother, with others who had free entrance into the house.

They came punctually. When they had partaken of such fare as I could place before them, they were informed of the predicament in which I stood, and that I had requested their attendance to be witnesses to the endeavours of the diviner to discover where my father was wont to keep his money, of the existence of which, somewhere or other, nobody who knew him could doubt. I looked into each man's face as I made this speech, hoping to remark some expression which might throw a light upon my suspicions, but everybody seemed ready to help my investigation, and maintained the most unequivocal innocence of countenance.

At length the dervish, Teez Negah (for that was the name of the conjurer), was introduced, accompanied by an attendant who carried something wrapped up in a handkerchief. Having ordered the women in the harem to keep themselves veiled, because they would probably soon be visited by men, I requested the dervish to begin his operations.

He first looked at every one present with great earnestness, but more particularly fixed his eyes upon the âkhon, who evidently could not stand the scrutiny, but exclaimed "*Allah il Allah!*" stroked down his face and beard, and blew first over one shoulder and then over the other, by way of keeping off the evil spirit. Some merriment was raised at his expense; but he did not appear to be in a humour to meet anyone's jokes.



After this, the dervish called to his attendant, who from the handkerchief drew forth a brass cup of a plain surface, but written all over with quotations from the Koran, having reference to the crime of stealing, and defrauding the orphan of his lawful property. He was a man of few words, and simply saying, "In the name of Allah, the All-wise, and All-seeing," he placed the cup on the floor, treating it with much reverence, both in touch and in manner.

He then said to the lookers-on, "*Inshallah*, it will lead us at once to the spot where the money of the deceased Kerbelai Hassan (may God show him mercy!) is, or was, deposited."

We all looked at each other, some with expressions of incredulity, others with unfeigned belief, when he bent himself towards the cup, and with little shoves and pats of his hand he impelled it forwards, exclaiming all the time, "See, see, the road it takes. Nothing can stop it. It will go in spite of me."

We followed him until he reached the door of the harem, where we knocked for admittance. After some negotiation it was opened, and there we found a crowd of women (many of whom had only loosely thrown on their veils) waiting with much impatience to witness the feats this wonderful cup was to perform.

"Make way," said the diviner to the women who stood in his path, as he took his direction towards a corner of the court, upon which the windows of the room opened, "make way; nothing can stop my guide."

A woman whom I recognized to be my mother, stopped his progress several times, until he was obliged to admonish her, with some bitterness, to keep clear of him.

"Do you not see," said he, "we are on the Lord's business? Justice will be done in spite of the wickedness of man."

At length he reached a distant corner, where it was plain that the earth had been recently disturbed, and there he stopped.

"*Bismillah*, in the name of Allah," said he, "let all present stand around me, and mark what I do." He dug into the ground with his dagger, clawed the soil away with his hands, and discovered a place in which were the remains of an earthen vessel, and the marks near it of there having been another.

"Here," said he, "here the money was, but is no more." Then taking up his cup, he appeared to caress it, and make much of it, calling it his little uncle and his little soul.

Every one stared. All cried out, "*ajajib*," wonderful; and the little hunchback was looked upon as a supernatural being.

The doorkeeper was the only one who had the readiness to say, "But where is the thief? You have shown us where the game lay, but we want you to catch it for us: the thief and the money, or the money without the thief - that is what we want."

"Softly, my friend," said the dervish to him, "don't jump so soon from the crime to the criminal. We have a medicine for every disorder, although it may take some time to work."

He then cast his eyes upon the company present, twinkling them all the while in quick flashes, and said, "I am sure everyone here will be happy to be clear of suspicion, and will agree to what I shall propose. The operation is simple and soon over."

"*Elbettah*," certainly; "*Belli*," yes; "*Een che har est?*" what word is this? was heard to issue from every mouth. I requested the dervish to proceed.

He called again to his servant, who produced a small bag. He again took the cup under his charge.

"This bag," said the diviner, "contains some old rice. I will put a small handful of it into each person's mouth, which they will forthwith chew. Let those who cannot break it beware, for Eblis is near at hand."

Upon this, placing us in a row, he filled each mouth with rice, and all immediately began to masticate. Being the complainant, of course I was exempt from the ordeal; and my mother, who chose to make common cause with me, also stood out of the ranks. The quick-sighted dervish would not allow of this, but made her undergo the trial with the rest, saying, "The property we seek is not yours, but your son's. Had he been your husband, it would be another thing." She agreed to his request, though with bad grace, and then all the jaws were set to wagging, some looking upon it as a good joke, others thinking it a hard trial to the nerves. As fast as each person had ground his mouthful, he called to the dervish and showed the contents of his mouth.

All had now proved their innocence excepting the *âkhon* and my mother. The former, whose face exhibited the picture of an affected cheerfulness with great nervous apprehension, kept mumbling his rice, and turning it over between his jaws, until he cried out in a querulous tone, "Why do you give me this stuff to chew? I am old, and have no teeth: it is impossible for me to reduce the grain"; and he spat it out. My mother too, complained of her want of power to break the hard rice, and did the same thing. A silence ensued, which made us all look with more attention than usual upon them, and it was only broken by a time-server of my

mother, an old woman, who cried, "What child's play is this? Who has ever heard of a son treating his mother with this disrespect, and his old schoolmaster, too? Shame, shame! Let us go – he is probably the thief himself."

Upon this the dervish said, "Are we fools and asses, to be dealt with in this manner? Either there was money in that corner, or there was not, either there are thieves in the world, or there are not. This man and this woman," pointing to the âkhon and my mother, "have not done that which all the rest have done. Perhaps they say the truth, they are old, and cannot break the hard grain. Nobody says that they stole the money – they themselves know that best," said he, looking at them through and through; "but the famous diviner, Hezarfun, he who was truly called the bosom friend to the Great Bear, and the confidant of the planet Saturn, – he who could tell all that a man has ever thought, thinks, or will think, – he hath said that the trial by rice among cowards was the best of all tests of a man's honesty. Now, my friends, from all I have remarked, none of you are slayers of lions, and fear is easily produced among you. However, if you doubt my skill in this instance, I will propose a still easier trial – one which commits nobody, which works like a charm upon the mind, and makes the thief come forward of his own accord, to ease his conscience and purse of its ill-gotten wealth, at one and the same time.

"I propose the *Hak reezi*, or the heaping up earth. Here in this corner I will make a mound, and will pray so fervently this very night, that, by the blessing of Allah, the Hajji," pointing to me, "will find his money buried in it tomorrow at this hour. Whoever is curious, let them be present, and if something be not discovered, I will give him a miscal of hair from my beard."

He then set to work, and heaped up earth in a corner, whilst the lookers-on loitered about, discussing what they had just seen; some examining me and the dervish as children of the evil spirit, whilst others again began to think as much of my mother and the schoolmaster. The company then dispersed, most of them promising to return the following morning, at the appointed time, to witness the search into the heap of earth.



I must own that I began now to look upon the restoration of my property as hopeless. The diviner's skill had certainly discovered that money had been buried in my father's house, and he had

succeeded in raising ugly suspicions in my mind against two persons whom I felt it to be a sin to suspect; but I doubted whether he could do more.

However, he appeared again on the following morning, accompanied by the doorkeeper, and by several of those who had been present at the former scene. The âkhon, however, did not appear, and my mother was also absent, upon pretext of being obliged to visit a sick friend. We proceeded in a body to the mound, and the dervish having made a holy invocation, he approached it with a sort of mysterious respect.

"Now we shall see," said he, "whether the jinns and the angels have been at work this night"; and, exclaiming "*Bismillah!*" he dug into the earth with his dagger.

Having thrown off some of the soil, a large stone appeared, and having disengaged that a canvas bag, well filled, was discovered.

"Oh, my soul! oh, my heart!" exclaimed the hunchback, as he seized the bag, "you see that the dervish Teez Negah is not a man to lose a hair of his beard. There, there," said he, putting it into my hand, "there is your property: go, and give thanks that you have fallen into my hands, and do not forget my commission."

Everybody crowded round me. I broke open the wax that was affixed to the mouth of the bag, upon which I recognized the impression of my father's seal; and eagerness was marked on all their faces as I untied the twine with which it was fastened. My countenance dropped woefully when I found that it contained only silver, for I had made up my mind to see gold. Five hundred reals was the sum of which I became the possessor, out of which I counted fifty, and presented them to the ingenious discoverer of them. "There," said I, "may your house prosper! If I were rich I would give you more: and although this is evidently but a small part of what my father (God be with him!) must have accumulated, still, again I say, may your house prosper, and many sincere thanks to you."

The dervish was satisfied with my treatment of him, and took his leave, and I was soon after left by the rest of the company, the doorkeeper alone remaining.

"Famous business we have made of it this morning," said he. "Did I not say that these diviners performed wonders?"

"Yes," said I, "yes, it is wonderful, for I never thought his operations would have come to anything."

Impelled by a spirit of cupidity, now that I had seen money glistening before me, I began to complain that I had received so

little, and again expressed to Ali Mohamed my wish of bringing the case before the *cadi*; "for," said I, "if I am entitled to these five hundred reals, I am entitled to all my father left; and you will acknowledge that this must be but a very small part of his savings."

"Friend," said he, "listen to the words of an old man. Keep what you have got, and be content. In going before the *cadi*, the first thing you will have to do will be to give of your certain, to get at that most cursed of all property, the uncertain. Be assured that, after having drained you of your four hundred and fifty reals, and having got five hundred from your opponents, you will have the satisfaction to hear him tell you both to 'go in peace and, do not trouble the city with your disputes.' Have not you lived long enough in the world to have learnt this common saying - 'Every one's teeth are blunted by acids, except the *cadi's*, which are by sweets'? The *cadi* who takes five cucumbers as a bribe will admit any evidence for ten beds of melons."

After some deliberation, I determined to take the advice of the *capiji*; for it was plain that, if I intended to prosecute anyone, it could only be my mother and the *âkhon*; and to do that, I should raise such a host of enemies, and give rise to such unheard-of scandal, that perhaps I should only get stoned by the people for my pains.

---

If you get your **EWMM** from a newsagent then fill out the time-saving form below.

**To the Newsagent:**

Please obtain and hold/deliver for me every month EDGAR WALLACE MYSTERY MAGAZINE.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

EDGAR WALLACE MYSTERY MAGAZINE is distributed by Representation Services, 130, Hither Green Lane, London, S.E.13

# *The Cat's-paw*

**NIGEL MORLAND**

*This new series will regularly  
offer short true episodes  
concerned with crime  
or criminals*

**A**S A proof corrector's assistant on a Shanghai newspaper I held a very unimportant job indeed, but as a newcomer to the Settlement I was happy. The monthly salary I drew was \$100, then the equivalent of 50s. a week, which was not unreasonable in the early 1920s.

Shanghai certainly was the 'Paris of the East' in those days, the mecca of daring visitors, and the home of more rogues and rackets than most modern cities can offer.

A teenager, and an incipient novelist, I went after all the inside information I could get. And nosed through the back parts of the Settlement, in and out of the suburban splendours of the French Concession, and the dark and ugly ways of the secretive Native City: a genuine innocence must have protected me when I blundered through places an intelligent archangel would not have risked.

My headquarters was the Carlton Bar in Bubbling Well Road, where the main stream of gossip tended to run free and wild. It was there, one night, I met a good-looking American named Craker and his wife, Isola. He appeared to know a bit about me (I was publishing short stories locally), and learned that I was well grounded in what was to be my profession, and accepted it that I knew a great deal about books and book production.

He made a proposition to me a few weeks later. The plan was to start a magazine intended strictly for the city's big sporting element. The venture was to be titled *Oriental Star*. Craker was to be managing editor, Isola the business manager; I was offered the editorship at \$300 monthly – my job would be to get the contents together, see the magazine through the printers and act as general editorial dogsbody. I resigned forthwith from the newspaper that

employed me, threw a small party at the Astor House Hotel with money I could ill afford, and three days later sat proudly in my editorial chair in the two-room offices of the *Oriental Star*, in the Glen Line Building.

The work was less difficult than I expected. Most of the material came from British or American agencies or syndicates (plus a highly dramatic serial by the new editor called 'The Lone Captain', by *Raffles* out of *The Four Just Men*).

It was all a question of putting the magazine together intelligently, and running plenty of local news in a manner pleasing to uncritical Shanghai palates. We did it well – once we even grubstaked and trained a rather indifferent Danish middleweight, who wore gaudy pants inscribed 'The Oriental Star' and lost every fight he entered.



The Crakers gave me a wholly free hand, and always liked me to see every visitor, particularly those who called without appointments. At first, too, money was sometimes short and my salary was not always paid, which mattered little since one signed chits for everything in Shanghai and seldom carried more than a dollar or two in change.

Often enough I ran the office on my own, the Crakers frequently being absent on business or seeking advertising in the Outports. Their occasional curious visitors or sometimes odd American acquaintances popped in and out of the office with a confusion of characters I could not always follow.

At that time Shanghai – the International Settlement, where Europeans lived together under a municipal council, and the French Concession, which was France in miniature – was an island on the edge of a reclaimed mudflat, bordered by the River Whangpoo and the sea. On the land side was China proper where, ram-paging up and down beyond our borders, was Wu-Pei-Fu, the local *tuchun* (or warlord), one of several in China whose territory was virtually his private robber-baron's domain. Against him was ranged the biggest of all the *tuchuns*, Chang Tso-lin, the ex-coolie who lived up in Mukden, and coveted Shanghai and the salt-tax revenues it paid to the so-called Central Government.

To protect the white population of Shanghai there was the Volunteer Corps, territorials who were remarkably efficient and took good care of the city barriers when the war-lords got obstreperous. Always, in the Whangpoo facing the city proper, were

warships belonging to the great powers, ships that would shoot or land armed sailors if necessary.



One bitter morning in March, when the Crakers were up-country, Short Finnigan came into my office. He was a sort of general handyman attached to the Crakers, always brightly dressed and, as the light of later experience showed me, a typical hoodlum.

"Lookit," he told me. "There's trouble. Some guy's been double-crossing the boss. You'd best help by sticking around to give him the story. Yep?"

"Right," I agreed, jumping in with both feet.

"Just do as I tell you. Keep the mouth closed and act wise. We have to visit Yangtzepoo. The car's waiting."

In the Willys-Knight, which the Crakers used as the office runabout, were two friends of Short's I had seen in and out. Eddie and Vaco. They were both sharply dressed men with bright eyes, not given much to talking. To us in Shanghai, Chicago was, then, still not much more than a name, but these three were its typical representatives.

We headed east towards Yangtzepoo, the factory district and wharf section where people were tough and wise sailors never went at night on shore-leave except in groups.

Our destination was one of those many little grubby native hotels round about the noisy and dirty Ward Road section. Short and his pals got out, and beckoned me along. By now I was getting scared – this was certainly no business trip, though I could not exactly put my finger on what was wrong.

In the main lounge of the hotel were several Chinese, chatting and standing in groups, blocking the gangway. One of them got in Eddie's way. He was a bookish-looking, rather pleasant faced man who seemed inclined, and quite rightly, to stand firm against the rude and thrusting foreigners. Eddie's face went grim. He started to haul a gun from the belt of his trousers under his jacket, and scared me out of a year's growth. It was Short who told him to put it back and, possibly out of frightened reaction, I pushed his hand to stop the gun coming out any further. Later I learned how readily Eddie would have used his gun, and had used it more than once in his past.

On the second floor we entered a small room without knocking. Two Chinese in black gowns were sitting at a bamboo table.

They jumped up with guns in their hands – the recollection



comes back very clearly, for, in such unexpected events, the mind acts as it does in convalescence after illness, as if everything is slightly unreal, detached, and *hollow*.

Short pushed me back out of the room into the passage. I recall there were several sounds like the breaking of green sticks. Eddie and Vaco came out. In some still unreal fashion I was part of the group hurrying from the hotel by the back way.

We went through a passage, then stopped as if by command – Vaco, who was behind us, uttered a cough and ran forward two paces, then fell down with blood coming out of his mouth. Short and Eddie came to life, pushing me along to the car.



On the road home through the clanging, crowded streets I was still trying to orientate myself, but because I had no experience to guide me in the situation I was half inclined to think it was some sort of dream. Even when I heard Eddie say to Short: "He's *nyeu-nyok*", which was rickshaw-boy vernacular slang for dead, facts did not register. Melodrama is so incredible when it enters ordinary life that reaction refuses to accept it, and tries to shelter behind the mundane and the 'Oh, I'm imagining it!' attitude.

What happened to the Chinese in the hotel room I never did know – certain circles took care of their own – but Vaco's corpse caused a lot of local excitement.

Foolish loyalty to the Crakers kept my mouth shut, and daily routine quickly ran a sort of matrix over the events in my memory until in some way I succeeded in sublimating them into that teenage vagueness of mind.

Then Short vanished; he never turned up at the office again, but Eddie did. He told me to stay put and keep busy. When I asked if the Crakers would soon be home, he shrugged and told me to keep hoping.

People constantly called or telephoned. The Chinese staff of two muttered and talked together in the outer office but, Shanghai fashion, knew, saw, and heard nothing outside routine. The *Star* came out, and that was all I thought about.

I began probing the office in a belated effort to learn just what was going on. In Craker's desk I found a box of silver dollars and, in a second box in a deep drawer, several revolvers and automatics wrapped in grease-proof paper and smelling of oil.

One afternoon just a few days later Eddie appeared and

authoritatively walked off with the silver dollars and the guns; he came back later in the same afternoon and ran into a posse of Chinese policemen, headed by a white sergeant, coming to the *Star* offices. Eddie was out of a corridor window and down the iron fire-escape in double-quick time. The constables on his tail, Chinese fashion, got back quickly off the fire-escape when something pinged against the iron upright and whined off into the area – this time I recognized gunfire and did not know whether to run for it and or dash bravely after Eddie, wielding the ruler I was holding. By the time I had decided, I was on my own. The Chinese staff had not only disappeared but never came back again; it was just as well, for there was no money with which to pay them.

In the office of the British Consul I was later questioned and some facts explained to me. It was clear I had been hired to run the *Oriental Star* because I apparently possessed the right façade of innocence and, so far as Shanghai was concerned, I had no reputation since I had not been in the Settlement long enough to acquire one. Simply, I had been a cat's-paw.

The Crakers had been quietly running guns to Chang Tso-lin (and, characteristically, selling a few to Wu-Pei-Fu, on the side). All went well until local talent decided to horn in, which was where Short Finnegan and the Craker's boys did some strong-arm work to protect their interests.

There was a noisy trial, which the local newspapers dubbed 'the Million Dollar Gun-Running Case'; the Crakers were tried, and sent back to the United States after summary treatment. The rest of the gang was never seen again, but possibly became generals in Chang's army – he was not a very particular man.



Looking back on the case from today's angle, by far the most remarkable and extraordinary slant was parallel, but no part of it.

It happened that, at that time, I went with a very friendly detective named Kelly from the Shanghai Municipal Police to show him exactly what had happened at the hotel I visited with Short and the others.

After my statement had been double-checked, Kelly had a drink with me in the hotel bar, and advised me privately to carry on with the *Star* until the creditors took over. After that we left the hotel for the street, passing, in the lounge, a crowd of chattering Chinese. One of them was the bookish-looking man that Short (and, in a

smaller way, me) had protected by making Eddie put away his gun.

Kelly, an omniscient man, nodded when I asked him in the street if he happened to know the name of the Chinese the trigger-happy Eddie had been ready to kill.

"He's a Bolshevik, or something," Kelly explained. "He's not disturbing the peace so he's quite welcome to remain in the Settlement, as far as we're concerned. Just one of these native crackpots. Name's Mao-Tse-tung."

© Nigel Morland, 1965.



### **Some EWMM Contributors . . .**

*Margery Allingham*, greatest living woman crime novelist, published a successful adventure tale at sixteen. With *Death of a Ghost* she (and 'Albert Campion') became famous. Her latest novel, *The Mind Readers*, comes from Chatto & Windus late this summer.

*Peter Ardouin* was born in Cambridge, 1937, served in the Royal Navy where he played rugby for his squadron. A bachelor he is a fanatical yachtsman, spending most of the year sailing his 20-foot Bermuda sloop. Now writing his first book.

*Marten Cumberland* began writing 40 years ago and is popular both under his own name and under the pseudonym of Kevin O'Hara. An Englishman who lived in Paris for many years, he has now settled in Dublin.

*Eric Parr* is author of the successful book. *Grafters All*, and is an expert on how the Fraternity (of criminals) speaks and acts. A prolific, hard-working writer he is author of a remarkable fragment of autobiography to be published in the June *EWMM*.

*Colin Robertson* was senior press censor for Scotland in World War Two. He has written some 50 novels (his popular character is 'Peter Gayleigh') and is a leading light of the Crime Writers' Association.

# THE CARTOONISTS AND THE CRIME WRITERS

No. 1



*'It is impossible not to be thrilled by Edgar Wallace'*

*Mit Genehmigung des Verlages  
Richters & Co., Heidelberg,  
entnommen dem Kalender Humor  
in Zeichnungen von gestern und  
heute, 1963,*

*'Es ist unmöglich, von  
Edgar Wallace nicht  
gefesselt zu sein.'*

*(By an English artist, Philip Meigh, ARCA, this cartoon comes from  
German sources in which country over 20 million Edgar Wallace books  
have been sold)*

BEN HECHT

# *Miracle of the Fifteen Murderers*

*Another of EWMM's occasional reprints, murder so ironic and so cynical as to be one of the author's finest tales*

THERE is always an aura of mystery to the conclaves of medical men. One may wonder whether the secrecy with which the fraternity surrounds its gathering is designed to keep the layman from discovering how much it knows or how much it doesn't know. Either knowledge would be unnerving to that immemorial guinea pig who submits himself to the abracadabras of chemicals, scalpels and incantations under the delusion he is being cured rather than explored.

Among the most mysterious of medical get-togethers in this generation have been those held in New York City by a group of eminent doctors calling themselves the X Club. Every three months this little band of healers have hied them to the Walton Hotel overlooking the East River and, behind locked doors and beyond the eye of even medical journalism, engaged themselves in unknown emprise lasting till dawn.

What the devil had been going on in these conclaves for twenty years no one knew, not even the ubiquitous head of the American Medical Association, nor yet any of the colleagues, wives, friends or dependants of the X Club's members. The talent for secrecy is highly developed among doctors who, even with nothing to conceal, are often as close mouthed as old-fashioned bomb throwers on their way to a rendezvous.

How then do I know the story of these long-guarded sessions? The answer is - the war. World War Two has put an end to them,

as it has to nearly all mysteries other than its own. The world, engaged in re-examining its manners and its soul, has closed the door on minor adventure. None of the fifteen medical sages who comprised the X Club are in uniform and preside over combat zone hospitals. Deficiencies of age and health have kept the others at home – with increased labours.

“Considering that we have disbanded,” Dr. Alex Hume said to me at dinner one evening, “and that it is unlikely we shall ever assemble again, I see no reason for preserving our secret. Yours is a childish and romantic mind, and may be revolted by the story I tell you. You will undoubtedly translate the whole thing into some sort of diabolical tale and miss the deep human and scientific import of the X Club. But I am not the one to reform the art of fiction, which must substitute sentimentality for truth and Cinderella for Galileo.”

And so on. I will skip the rest of my friend’s all-knowing prelude. You may have read Dr. Hume’s various books, dealing with the horse-play of the subconscious. If you have, you know this bald-headed master mind well enough. If not, take my word for it he is a genius. There is nobody I know more adept in prancing around in the solar plexus swamps out of which most of the world’s incompetence and confusion appear to rise. He has, too, if there is any doubt about his great talent, the sneer and chuckle which are the war whoop of the super-psychologist. His face is round and his mouth is pursed in a chronic grimace of disbelief and contradiction. You can’t help such an expression once you have discovered what a scurvy and detestable morass is the soul of man. Like most subterranean workers, my friend is almost as blind as a bat behind his heavy glasses. And like many leading psychiatrists, he favours the short and balloon-like physique of Napoleon.



The last dramatic meeting of the X Club was held on a rainy March night. Despite the hostile weather, all fifteen of its members attended, for there was an added lure to this gathering. A new member was to be inducted into the society.

Dr. Hume was assigned to prepare the neophyte for his debut. And it was in the wake of the round-faced soul fixer that Dr. Samuel Warner entered the sanctum of the X Club.

Dr. Warner was unusually young for a medical genius – that is, a recognized one. And he had never received a fuller recog-

nition of his wizardry with saw, axe and punch hole than his election as a member of the X Club. For the fourteen older men who had invited him to be one of them were leaders in their various fields. They were the medical peerage. This does not mean necessarily that any layman had ever heard of them. Eminence in the medical profession is as showy at best as a sprig of edelweiss on a mountain top. The war, which offers its magic billboards for the vanities of small souls and transmutes the hunger for publicity into sacrificial and patriotic ardours, has not yet disturbed the anonymity of the great medicos.

The new member was a tense and good-looking man with the fever of hard work glowing in his steady dark eyes. His wide mouth smiled quickly and abstractedly, as is often the case with surgeons who train their reactions not to interfere with their concentration.

Having exchanged greetings with the eminent club members, who included half of his living medical heroes, Dr. Warner seated himself in a corner and quietly refused a highball, a cocktail, and a slug of brandy. His face remained tense, his athletic body straight in its chair as if it were poised for a sprint rather than a meeting.

At nine o'clock Dr. William Tick ordered an end to all the guzzling and declared the fifty-third meeting of the X Club in session. The venerable diagnostician placed himself behind a table at the end of the ornate hotel room and glared at the group ranged in front of him.

Dr. Tick had divided his seventy-five years equally between practising the art of medicine and doing his best to stamp it out – such, at least, was the impression of the thousands of students who had been submitted to his irascible guidance. As Professor of Internal Medicine at a great Eastern medical school, Dr. Tick had favoured the education-by-insult theory of pedagogy. There were eminent doctors who still winced when they recalled some of old bilious-eyed, arthritic, stooped Tick's appraisals of their budding talents, and who still shuddered at the memory of his medical philosophy.

"Medicine," Dr. Tick had confided to flock after flock of students, "is a noble dream and at the same time the most ancient expression of error and idiocy known to man. Solving the mysteries of heaven has not given birth to as many abortive findings as has the quest into the mysteries of the human body. When you think of yourselves as scientists, I want you always to remember every-

thing you learn from me will probably be regarded tomorrow as the naïve confusions of a pack of medical aborigines. Despite all our toil and progress, the art of medicine still falls somewhere between trout casting and spook writing.

"There are two handicaps to the practice of medicine," Tick had repeated tenaciously through forty years of teaching. "The first is the eternal charlatanism of the patient who is full of fake diseases and phantom agonies. The second is the basic incompetence of the human mind, medical or otherwise, to observe without prejudice, acquire information without becoming too smug to use it intelligently, and most of all, to apply its wisdom without vanity."

From behind his table Old Tick's eyes glared at the present group of 'incompetents' until a full classroom silence had arrived, and then turned to the tense, good-looking face of Dr. Warner.

"We have a new medical genius with us tonight," he began, "one I well remember in his pre-wizard days. A hyper-thyroid with kidney disfunction indicated. But not without a trace of talent. For your benefit, Sam, I will state the meaning and purpose of our organization."

"I have already done that," said Dr. Hume, "rather thoroughly."

"Dr. Hume's explanations to you," Tick continued coldly, "if they are of a kind with his printed works, have most certainly left you dazed if not dazzled."

"I understand him quite well," Warner said.

"Nonsense," Old Tick said, "You always had a soft spot for psychiatry and I always warned you against it. Psychiatry is a plot against medicine."

You may be sure that Dr. Hume smiled archly at this.

"You will allow me," Tick went on, "to clarify whatever the learned Hume has been trying to tell you."

"Well, if you want to waste time." The new member smiled nervously and mopped his neck with a handkerchief.

Dr. Frank Rosson, the portly and distinguished gynaecologist, chuckled. "Tick's going good tonight," he whispered to Hume.

"Senility inflamed by sadism," said Hume.

"Dr. Warner," the pedagogue continued, "the members of the X Club have a single and interesting purpose in their meeting. They come together every three months to confess to some murder any of them may have committed since our last assembly.

"I am referring, of course, to medical murder. Although it



would be a relief to hear any one of us confess to a murder performed out of passion rather than stupidity. Indeed, Dr. Warner, if you have killed a wife or polished off an uncle recently, and would care to unbosom yourself, we will listen respectfully. It is understood that nothing you say will be brought to the attention of the police or the A.M.A."

Old Tick's eyes paused to study the growing tension in the new member's face.

"I am sure you have not slain any of your relatives," he sighed, "or that you will ever do so except in the line of duty.

"The learned Hume," he went on, "has undoubtedly explained these forums to you on the psychiatric basis that confession is good for the soul. This is nonsense. We are not here to ease our souls but to improve them. Our real purpose is scientific. Since we dare not admit our mistakes to the public and since we are too great and learned to be criticized by the untutored laity and since such inhuman perfection as that to which we pretend is not good for our weak and human natures, we have formed this society. It is the only medical organization in the world where the members boast only of their mistakes.

"And now" - Tick beamed on the neophyte - "allow me to define what we consider a real, fine professional murder. It is the killing of a human being who has trustingly placed himself in a doctor's hands. Mind you, the death of a patient does not in itself spell murder. We are concerned only with those cases in which the doctor by a wrong diagnosis or by demonstrably wrong medication or operative procedure has killed off a patient who, without the aforesaid doctor's attention, would have continued to live and prosper."

"Hume explained all this to me," the new member muttered impatiently, and then raised his voice. "I appreciate that this is my first meeting and that I might learn more from my distinguished colleagues by listening than by talking. But I have something rather important to say."

"A murder?" Tic asked.

"Yes," said the new member.

The old professor nodded.

"Very good," he said. "And we shall be glad to listen to you. But we have several murderers in the docket ahead of you."

The new member was silent and remained sitting bolt-upright in his chair. It was at this point that several, including Hume, noticed there was something more than stage fright in

the young surgeon's tension. The certainty filled the room that Sam Warner had come to his first meeting of the X Club with something violent and mysterious boiling in him.

Dr. Philip Kurtiff, the eminent neurologist, put his hand on Warner's arm and said quietly, "There's no reason to feel badly about anything you're going to tell us. We're all pretty good medical men and we've all done worse - whatever it is."

"If you please," Old Tick demanded, "we will have silence. This is not a sanatorium for doctors with guilt complexes. It is a clinic for error. And we will continue to conduct it in an orderly, scientific fashion. If you want to hold Sam Warner's hand, Kurtiff, that's your privilege. But do it in silence."

He beamed suddenly at the new member.

"I confess," he went on, "that I'm as curious as anybody to hear how so great a know-it-all as our young friend Dr. Warner could have killed off one of his customers. But our curiosity will have to wait. Since five of you were absent from our last gathering, I think that the confessions of Dr. James Sweeney should be repeated for your benefit."

Dr. Sweeney stood up and turned his lugubrious face and shining eyes to the five absentees.

"Well," he said in his preoccupied monotone. "I told it once, but I'll tell it again. I sent a patient to my X-ray room to have a fluoroscopy done. My assistant gave him a barium meal to drink and put him under the fluoroscope. I walked in a minute later, and when I saw the patient under the ray I observed to my assistant, Dr. Kroch, that it was amazing and that I had never seen anything like it. Kroch was too overcome to bear me out. What I saw was that the patient's entire gastro-intestinal tract from the oesophagus down was apparently made out of stone. And as I studied this phenomenon, I noticed it was becoming clearer and sharper. The most disturbing factor in the situation was that we both knew there was nothing to be done. Dr. Kroch, in fact, showed definite signs of hysteria. Even while we were studying him the patient showed symptoms of death. Shortly afterwards he became moribund and fell to the floor."

"Well, I'll be damned," several of the absentees cried in unison, Dr. Kurtiff adding, "What the hell was it?"

"It was simple," said Sweeney. "The bottom of the glass out of which the patient had drunk his barium meal was caked solid. We had filled him up with plaster of Paris. I fancy the pressure caused an instantaneous coronary attack."

"Good Lord!" the new member said. "How did it get into the glass?"

"Through some pharmaceutical error," said Sweeney mildly.

"What, if anything, was the matter with the patient before he adventured into your office?" Dr. Kurtiff inquired.

"The autopsy revealed chiefly a solidified gastro-intestinal tract," said Sweeney. "But I think from several indications that there may have been a little tendency to pyloric spasm which caused the belching for which he was referred to me."

"A rather literary murder," said old Tick. "A sort of Pygmalion in reverse."

The old professor paused and fastened his red-rimmed eyes on Warner.

"By the way, before we proceed," he said, "I think it is time to tell you the full name of our club. Our full name is the X Marks the Spot Club. We prefer, of course, to use the abbreviated title as being a bit more social-sounding."

"Of course," said the new member, whose face now appeared to be getting redder.

"And now," announced Old Tick, consulting a scribbled piece of paper, "our first case on tonight's docket will be Dr. Wendell Davis."



There was silence as the elegant stomach specialist stood up. Davis was a doctor who took his manner as seriously as his medicine. Tall, solidly built, grey-haired and beautifully barbered, his face was without expression – a large, pink mask that no patient, however ill and agonized, had ever seen disturbed.

"I was called late last summer to the home of a working man," he began. "Senator Bell had given a picnic for some of his poorer constituents. As a result of this event, the three children of a steamfitter named Horowitz were brought down with food poisoning. They had overeaten at the picnic. The Senator, as host, felt responsible, and I went to the Horowitz home at his earnest solicitation. I found two of the children very sick and vomiting considerably. They were nine and eleven. The mother gave me a list of the various foods all three of them had eaten. It was staggering. I gave them a good dose of castor oil."

"The third child, aged seven, was not as ill as the other two. He looked pale, had a slight fever, felt some nausea – but was not vomiting. It seemed obvious that he too was poisoned, but to a

lesser degree. Accordingly I prescribed an equal dose of castor oil for the youngest child – just to be on the safe side.”

“I was called by the father in the middle of the night. He was alarmed over the condition of the seven-year-old. He reported that the other two children were much improved. I told him not to worry, that the youngest had been a little late in developing food poisoning but would unquestionably be better in the morning, and that his cure was as certain as his sister’s and brother’s. When I hung up I felt quite pleased with myself for having anticipated the youngest one’s condition and prescribed the castor oil prophylactically. I arrived at the Horowitz home at noon the next day and found the two older children practically recovered. The seven-year-old, however, appeared to be very sick indeed. They had been trying to reach me since breakfast. The child had 105° temperature. It was dehydrated, the eyes sunken and circled, the expression pinched, the nostrils dilated, the lips cyanotic and the skin cold and clammy.”

Dr. Davis paused. Dr. Milton Morris, the renowned lung specialist, spoke.

“It died within a few hours?” he asked.

Dr. Davis nodded.

“Well,” Dr. Morris said quietly, “it seems pretty obvious. The child was suffering from acute appendicitis when you first saw it. The castor oil ruptured its appendix. By the time you got around to looking at it again peritonitis had set in.”

“Yes,” said Dr. Davis slowly, “that’s exactly what happened.”

“Murder by castor oil,” Old Tick cackled. “I have a memo from Dr. Kenneth Wood. Dr. Wood has the floor.”

The noted Scots surgeon, famed in his college days as an Olympic Games athlete, stood up. He was still a man of prowess, large-handed, heavy-shouldered, and with the purr of masculine strength in his soft voice.

“I don’t know what kind of a murder you can call this,” Dr. Wood smiled at his colleagues.

“Murder by butchery is the usual title,” Tick said.

“No, I doubt that,” Dr. Morris protested. “Ken’s too skilful to cut off anybody’s leg by mistake.”

“I guess you’ll have to call it just plain murder by stupidity,” Dr. Wood said softly.

Old Tick cackled.

“If you’d paid a little more attention to diagnosis than to shot putting you wouldn’t be killing off such hordes of patients,” he said.

"This is my first report in three years," Wood answered modestly. "And I've been operating at the rate of four or five daily, including holidays."

"My dear Kenneth," Dr. Hume said, "every surgeon is entitled to one murder in three years. A phenomenal record, in fact – when you consider the temptations."

"Proceed with the crime," Tick said.

"Well" – the strong-looking surgeon turned to his hospital colleague, the new member – "you know how it is with these acute gall bladders, Sam."

Warner nodded abstractedly.

Dr. Wood went on.

"Brought in late at night. In extreme pain. I examined her. Found the pain in the right upper quadrant of the abdomen. It radiated to the back and right shoulder. Completely characteristic of gall bladder. I gave her opiates. They had no effect on her, which, as you know, backs up any gall bladder diagnosis. Opiates never touch the gall bladder."

"We know that," said the new member nervously.

"Excuse me," Dr. Wood smiled. "I want to get all the points down carefully. Well, I gave her some nitro-glycerine to lessen the pain then. Her temperature was 101. By morning the pain was so severe that it seemed certain the gall bladder had perforated. I operated. There was nothing wrong with her damn gall bladder. She died an hour later."

"What did the autopsy show?" Dr. Sweeney asked.

"Wait a minute," Wood answered. "You're supposed to figure it out, aren't you? Come on – you tell me what was the matter with her."

"Did you take her history?" Dr. Kurtiff asked after a pause.

"No," Wood answered.

"Aha!" Tick snorted. "There you have it! Blind man's buff again."

"It was an emergency," Wood looked flushed. "And it seemed an obvious case. I've had hundreds of them."

"The facts seem to be as follows," Tick spoke up. "Dr. Wood murdered a woman because he misunderstood the source of a pain. We have, then, a very simple problem. What besides the gall bladder can produce the sort of pain that eminent surgeon has described?"

"Heart," Dr. Morris answered quickly.

"You're getting warm," said Wood.

"Before operating on anyone with so acute a pain, and in the absence of any medical history," Tick went on, "I would most certainly have looked at the heart."

"Well, you'd have done right," said Wood quietly. "The autopsy showed an infraction of the descending branch of the right coronary artery."

"Murder by a sophomore," Old Tick pronounced wrathfully.

"The first and last," said Wood quietly. "There won't be any more heart-case mistakes in my hospital."

"Good, good," Old Tick said. "And now, gentlemen, the crimes reported thus far have been too infantile for discussion. We have learned nothing from them other than that science and stupidity go hand in hand, a fact already too well known to us. However, we have with us tonight a young but extremely talented wielder of the medical saws. And I can, from long acquaintance with this same gentleman, assure that if he has done a murder it is bound to be what some of my female students would call 'a honey'. He has been sitting here for the last hour, fidgeting like a true criminal, sweating with guilt and a desire to tell all. Gentlemen, I give you our new and youngest culprit, Dr. Samuel Warner."



Dr. Warner faced his fourteen eminent colleagues with a sudden excitement in his manner. The older men regarded him quietly and with various degrees of irritation. They knew without further corroboration than his manner that this medico was full of untenable theories and half-baked medical discoveries. They had been full of such things themselves once. And they settled back to enjoy themselves. There is nothing as pleasing to a greying medicine man as the opportunity of slapping a dunce-cap on the young of science. Old Tick, surveying his colleagues, grinned. They had all acquired the look of pedagogues holding a switch behind their backs.

Dr. Warner mopped his neck with his wet handkerchief and smiled knowingly at the medical peerage. What he knew was that this same critical and suspicious attention would have been offered him were he there to recite the tale of some miraculous cure rather than a murder.

"I'll give you this case in some detail," he said, "because I think it contains as interesting a problem as you can find in practice."

Dr. Rosson, the gynaecologist, grunted, but said nothing.

"The patient was a young man, or rather a boy," Warner went on eagerly. "He was seventeen, and amazingly talented. In fact, about the most remarkable young man I've ever met. He wrote poetry. That's how I happened to meet him. I read one of his poems in a magazine, and, by God, it was so impressive I wrote him a letter."

Dr. Kurtiff frowned at this unmedical behaviour.

"Rhymed poetry?" Dr. Wood asked, with a wink at Old Tick.

"Yes," said Warner. "I read all his manuscripts. They were sort of revolutionary. His poetry was a cry against injustice. Every kind of injustice. Bitter and burning."

"Wait a minute," Dr. Rosson said. "The new member seems to have some misconception of our function. We are not a literary society, Warner."

"I know that," said Warner, working his jaw muscles and smiling lifelessly.

"And before you get started," Dr. Hume grinned, "no bragging. You can do your bragging at the annual surgeons' convention."

"Gentlemen," Warner said, "I have no intention of bragging. I'll stick to murder, I assure you. And as bad a one as you've ever heard."

"Good," Dr. Kurtiff said. "Go on. And take it easy and don't break down."

"I won't break down," Warner said. "Don't worry. Well, the patient was sick for two weeks before I was called."

"I thought you were his friend," Dr. Davis said.

"I was," Warner answered. "But he didn't believe in doctors."

"No faith in them, eh?" Old Tick cackled. "Brilliant boy."

"He was," said Warner eagerly. "I felt upset when I came and saw how sick he was. I had him moved to a hospital at once."

"Oh, a rich poet," Dr. Sweeney said.

"No," said Warner. "I paid his expenses. And I spent all the time I could with him. The sickness had started with a severe pain on the left side of the abdomen. He was going to call me, but the pain subsided after three days so the patient thought he was well. But it came back after two days and he began running a temperature. He developed diarrhoea. There was pus and blood, but no amoeba or pathogenic bacteria when he finally sent for me. After the pathology reports I made a diagnosis of ulcerative colitis. The pain being on the left side ruled out the appendix. I

put the patient on the sulpha-guanidine and unconcentrated liver extract and gave him a high protein diet – chiefly milk. Despite this treatment and constant observation the patient got worse. He developed generalized abdominal tenderness, both direct and rebound, and rigidity of the entire left rectus muscle. After two weeks of careful treatment the patient died.”

“And the autopsy showed you’d been wrong?” Dr. Wood asked.

“I didn’t make an autopsy,” said Warner. “The boy’s parents had perfect faith in me. As did the boy. They both believed I was doing everything possible to save his life.”

“Then how do you know you were wrong in your diagnosis?” Dr. Hume asked.

“By the simple fact,” said Warner irritably, “that the patient died instead of being cured. When he died I knew I had killed him by a faulty diagnosis.”

“A logical conclusion,” said Dr. Sweeney. “Pointless medication is no alibi.”

“Well, gentlemen,” Old Tick cackled from behind his table, “our talented new member has obviously polished off a great poet and close personal friend. Indictments of his diagnosis are now in order.”

But no one spoke. Doctors have a sense for things unseen and complications unstated. And nearly all the fourteen looking at Warner felt there was something hidden. The surgeon’s tension, his elation and its overtone of mockery, convinced them there was something untold in the story of the dead poet. They approached the problem cautiously.

“How long ago did the patient die?” Dr. Rosson asked.

“Last Wednesday,” said Warner. “Why?”

“What hospital?” asked Davis.

“St. Michael’s,” said Warner.

“You say the parents had faith in you,” said Kurtiff, “and still have. Yet you seem curiously worried about something. Has there been any inquiry by the police?”

“No,” said Warner. “I committed the perfect crime. The police haven’t even heard of it. And even my victim died full of gratitude.” He beamed at the room. “Listen,” he went on, “even you people may not be able to disprove my diagnosis.”

This brash challenge irritated a number of the members.

“I don’t think it will be very difficult to knock out your diagnosis,” said Dr. Morris.



"There's a catch to it," said Wood slowly, his eyes boring at Warner.

"The only catch there is," said Warner quickly, "is the complexity of the case. You gentlemen evidently prefer the simpler malpractice type of crime, such as I've listened to tonight."

There was a pause, and then Dr. Davis inquired in a soothing voice. "You described an acute onset of pain before the diarrhoea didn't you?"

"That's right," said Warner.

"Well," Davis continued coolly, "the temporary relief of symptoms, and their recurrence within a few days sounds superficially like ulcers - except for one point."

"I disagree," Dr. Sweeney said softly. "Dr. Warner's diagnosis is a piece of blundering stupidity. The symptoms he has presented have nothing to do with ulcerative colitis."

Warner flushed and his jaw muscles moved angrily.

"Would you mind backing up your insults with a bit of science?" he said.

"Very easily done," Sweeney answered calmly. "The late onset of diarrhoea and fever you describe rules out ulcerative colitis in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. What do you think, Dr. Tick?"

"No ulcers," said Tick, his eyes studying Warner.

"You mentioned a general tenderness of the abdomen as one of the last symptoms," said Dr. Davis smoothly.

"That's right," said Warner.

"Well, if you have described the case accurately," Davis continued, "there is one obvious fact revealed. The general tenderness points to a peritonitis."

"How about a twisted gut?" Dr. Wood asked. "That could produce the symptoms described."

"No," said Dr. Rosson. "A vulvulus means gangrene and death in three days. Warner says he attended him for two weeks and that the patient was sick for two weeks before he was called. The length of the illness rules out intussusception, vulvulus and intestinal tumour."

"There's one other thing," Dr. Morris said. "A left-sided appendix."

"That's out, too," Dr. Wood said quickly. "The first symptom of a left-sided appendix would not be the acute pain described by Warner."

"The only thing we have determined," said Dr. Sweeney, "is a perforation other than ulcer. Why not go on with that?"

"Yes," said Dr. Morris. "Ulcerative colitis is out of the question, considering the course taken by the disease. I'm sure we're dealing with another type of perforation."

"The next question," announced Old Tick, "is what made the perforation?"

Dr. Warner mopped his face with his wet handkerchief and said softly, "I never thought of an object perforation."

"You should have," Dr. Kurtiff smiled.

"Come, come," Old Tick interrupted. "Let's not wander. What caused the perforation?"

"He was seventeen," Kurtiff answered, "and too old to be swallowing pins."

"Unless," said Dr. Hume, "he had a taste for pins. Did the patient want to live, Warner?"

"He wanted to live," said Warner grimly, "more than anybody I ever knew."

"I think we can ignore the suicide theory," said Dr. Kurtiff. "I am certain we are dealing with a perforation of the intestines and not of the subconscious."

"Well," Dr. Wood said, "it couldn't have been a chicken bone. A chicken bone would have stuck in the oesophagus and never got through to the stomach."

"There you are, Warner," Old Tick said. "We've narrowed it down. The spreading tenderness you described means a spreading infection. The course taken by the disease means a perforation other than ulcerous. And a perforation of that type means an object swallowed. We have ruled out pins and chicken bones. Which leaves us with only one other normal guess."

"A fish bone," said Dr. Sweeney.

"Exactly," said Tick.

Warner stood listening tensely to the voices affirming the diagnosis. Tick delivered the verdict.

"I think we are all agreed," he said, "that Sam Warner killed his patient by treating him for ulcerative colitis when an operation removing an abscessed fish bone would have saved his life."

Warner moved quickly across the room to the closet where he had hung his hat and coat.

"Where you going?" Dr. Wood called after him. "We've just started the meeting."

Warner was putting on his coat and grinning.

"I haven't got much time," he said, "but I want to thank all of you for your diagnosis. You were right about there being a catch to the case. The catch is that my patient is still alive. I've been treating him for ulcerative colitis for two weeks and I realized this afternoon that I had wrongly diagnosed the case - and that he would be dead in twenty-four hours unless I could find out what really was the matter with him."

Warner was in the doorway, his eyes glittering.

"Thanks again, gentlemen, for the consultation and your diagnosis," he said. "It will enable me to save my patient's life."



Half an hour later the members of the X Club stood grouped in one of the operating rooms of St. Michael's Hospital. They were different-looking men than had been playing a medical Halloween in the Walton Hotel. There is a change that comes over doctors when they face disease. The oldest and the weariest of them draw vigour from a crisis. The shamle leaves them and it is the straight back of the champion that enters the operating room. Confronting the problem of life and death, the tired, red-rimmed eyes become full of greatness and even beauty.

On the operating table lay the naked body of a Negro boy. Dr. Warner in his surgical whites stood over him, waiting. The anaesthetist finally nodded. The dark skin had turned ashen, and the fevered young Negro lay unconscious.

The fourteen X Club members watched Warner operate. Wood nodded approvingly at his speed. Rosson cleared his throat to say something, but the swift-moving hands of the surgeon held him silent. No one spoke. The minutes passed. The nurses quietly handed instruments to the surgeon. Blood spattered their hands.

Fourteen great medical men stared hopefully at the pinched and unconscious face of a coloured boy who had swallowed a fish bone. No king or pope ever lay in travail with more medical genius holding its breath around him.

Suddenly the perspiring surgeon raised something aloft in his gloved fingers.

"Wash this off," he muttered to the nurse, "and show it to the gentlemen."

He busied himself placing drains in the abscessed cavity and

then powdered some sulphanilamide into the opened abdomen to kill the infection.

Old Tick stepped forward and took the object from the nurse's hand.

"A fish bone," he said.

The X Club gathered around it as if it were a treasure indescribable.

"The removal of this small object," Tick cackled softly, "will enable the patient to continue writing poetry denouncing the greeds and horrors of our world."



That, in effect, was the story Hume told me, plus the epilogue of the Negro poet's recovery three weeks later. We had long finished dinner and it was late night when we stepped into the war-dimmed streets of New York. The headlines on the news-stands had changed in size only. They were larger in honour of the larger slaughters they heralded.

Looking at them you could see the death-strewn wastes of battles. But another picture came to my mind – a picture that had in it the hope of a better world. It was the hospital room in which fifteen famed and learned heroes stood battling for the life of a Negro boy who had swallowed a fish bone.

© Ben Hecht, 1950.

© Rose C. Hecht (as executrix of Ben Hecht estate), 1965. From *Collected Stories of Ben Hecht* (Hammond Hammond & Co. London).



Of the two possible ways of securing public co-operation, by respect or by liking, there can be no doubt that respect leads by a mile.

– *The Police Review*.



Thirteen murders in 14 days do not constitute a crime wave. Violent crimes increase every year over this period.

*Howard Leary*. Philadelphia Police Commissioner.



It would seem inescapable that as the woman's role becomes increasingly active in all spheres, so it will become in crime.

– *Justice of the Peace Review*.

# THE QUIET DEATH

JOHN SALT

*Rosewarne and Manbre again  
in the very curious case of  
The Sons of Man*

THERE WAS a raw undercoat to the day and a sharp wind from the river that whipped among the bare trees and stiff grasses, mocking the thin brilliance of the January sun. Superintendent Edward Rosewarne turned out of Villiers Street and strode across the wider bleakness of the Embankment Gardens. He was returning to Holborn Central after a morning conference of senior officers at New Scotland Yard, called to discuss the recent spectacular series of armed bank raids and GPO robberies. A certain acrimony had entered the proceedings and Rosewarne's mood was already sombre when he glanced towards the York Water Gate and recognized Gilbert Ledwright standing there in a conversation with a girl.

Ledwright was a slim and confident character who had passed through Rosewarne's hands once before though without sticking. More to the point, Chief Superintendent Retallack had mentioned the boy's name that very morning in connection with bank robberies. He was dressed today in a dark covert coat with a grey checked hat and matching trousers. The lean fox face beneath the hat was hot and angry; Ledwright was shouting at the girl. Her face seemed familiar, too, though Rosewarne could not name it. She wore a red raglan coat with grey fur collar half hidden by the bright hair that swept her shoulders. Her face was a pale oval with high-set cheekbones, her mouth a thought wide but the eyes arresting, deeply blue and narrowly shaped with upturned corners. Just now they were frightened eyes.

Rosewarne said quietly, "Having trouble, miss?"

She gave him a scared glance and shook her head. "No thank you, there isn't any trouble."

"You're in the kind of company to invite it," he told her grimly.

Ledwright grinned without pleasure. "Do you get paid to go around, stirring?" he inquired with deliberate insolence.

Rosewarne watched him dispassionately until the grin faded to sullenness. "Sonny," he said at last. "I don't go around kicking people when they are down but you're not down, you're up and you're saucy. I should watch that. And by the way, if you really want to keep your nose tidy, I should see a little less of Bjorg Aarvold."

He had at least the satisfaction of seeing Ledwright's jaw drop as he turned away. At Kingsway the placards screamed '£30,000 Bank Raid Man Held'. Rosewarne glanced at them and hurried on; he had problems of his own. Back in his office at Otway Street, he sent for the file on Aarvold, his own choice for the man behind the bank raids. It was an opinion shared by Retallack and by no other senior officer.

On the face of it the selection was unlikely. Aarvold was certainly crooked. He had served seven years for company fraud but he was not a member of the criminal underworld. Yet there were tenuous, half-hinted links that somehow connected him with violence. And once there had been a really big squeak that caused Retallack to haul in Aarvold at the double. But he had talked himself out of trouble and, later, there had been a legal tussle and a difficult interview for Retallack with the DPP. Since then Aarvold had been labelled firmly 'Handle with Care' and allowed to run his dingy staff agency in a back street off Leather Lane without further interference. And yet for all that, Rosewarne wondered.

He closed the file with an impatient snap and glanced across the desk at his sergeant, Jack Manbre.

"Gilbert Ledwright has a new girl friend. Do you know her?"

"Blonde, early twenties, about five foot four, eight and a half stone?"

"A fair description. What's her name?"

"Gianna Delizi; she's a journalist."

"Intelligent, then?"

"Highly."

"What would she be doing with a tick like Ledwright?"

"Love is blind," Manbre said morosely. "The girl's besotted."

"I think I've seen her before."

"You did, with me. I died the death months ago when she met Ledwright."

Rosewarne grinned. "Hard luck, Jack. Delizi, what's that - Italian?"

"By origin. The family came from Lombardy in the last century.

There's only Gianna and her father now. They both live at the temple."

"Temple?"

"She's Andrea Delizi's daughter, sir."

Rosewarne blinked. "Good Lord! You mean the odd fellow who runs a church of sorts up in West Smithfield. What's it called now, the Sons of Man."

"Yes, he calls himself Magus – that's some sort of a wise man."

"I am aware of the derivation," Rosewarne said coldly. "There were three of them in another connection, you may remember."

Manbre looked hunted and hurried on. "Delizi has a small following in London but he tours the country in a converted bus, preaching and conducting healing services."

"Saintly character by all accounts?"

"Delizi is a good man," the sergeant said seriously. "He can be pretty disconcerting at times."

"As for example."

"I was round there once, had a raging toothache, mouth out to here with an abscess. I was moaning about it, I suppose, but Andrea just told me I wasn't my physical body. Then he smiled at me, sort of pitying, and touched my face."

"The pain went?"

The abscess, too, by morning."

"Highly impressive."

"Mind, his philosophy takes a bit of swallowing. According to him the sons of man are also the sons of God, and will eventually become gods themselves through a series of reincarnations. He had a whole catalogue of successful candidates from Solomon to Leonardo da Vinci. I told him my experience of life tended to produce an exactly opposite opinion."

"And he told you that the senses are the great deluders?"

"How did you know?"

"It's a theory at least as old as the Pyramids."

Manbre said curiously, "What do you think?"

"I think I should now like to hear how the Delizi girl met Ledwright."

"She was on a story in Holborn and found this little staff agency. The bloke behind the counter was Ledwright."

"And Bjorg Aarvold owned the shop," Rosewarne mused aloud.

"Funny how often that name crops up, sir."

"Isn't it, just. Anything new in that quarter, Jack?"

Manbre shook his head. "Not a squeak, sir."

"Too bad. Have you raised the siege of Miss Delizi for good and all?"

"Personally I should think it worth another try."

Manbre's eyes narrowed. "Official business, sir?"

"Lord, no, it's your own business. If it helps you can tell Johnson to scrub you off the roster for tonight. Go and see her."

The sergeant broke in with his thanks but Rosewarne finished his sentence drily: "Then come and tell me about it afterwards."



Rosewarne sat for another half hour going through a list of provincial towns where stolen banknotes had been passed. An odd thought began to stir. He lifted his phone and asked for Detective Constable Worrell. He talked to him for three minutes and then called Wandsworth Division, the district in which the day's bank raid had occurred. Finally he said: "Right, Tom, keep me posted. May be my turn next."

Aarvold's place off Leather Lane was a narrow, half-timbered dingy building, sandwiched between warehouses. Typed and handwritten postcards crowded the greasy glass of the window and door, and made the shop dark inside. Ledwright sat in an angle of the counter, his feet on top of a battered single-bar electric fire. Rosewarne said briefly, "Tell Aarvold I'm here."

The boy gaped then scrambled to his feet and ducked through a door at the rear of the shop. There was a murmur of conversation then Ledwright reappeared and beckoned Rosewarne through. The back room was much larger, surprisingly well furnished and very hot. Aarvold sat in a swivel chair behind a big desk, using an electric razor. He did not switch it off nor invite the superintendent to sit down.

Rosewarne watched silently till Aarvold reached and flicked a switch. "I was always a tidy man," he remarked pleasantly. "The warders all commented on it I remember." He began to pack the razor into its box, carefully coiling the flex. "Useful toys these, Superintendent. Somebody should make you a present of one. Now, did you want something?"

"Just a talk."

"How nice, What about?"

"The people you employ."

"But I employ nobody, except young Ledwright. I find employment for many through my agency but that's different."



"There was a bank raid in Brixton today."

"I read about it. Most regrettable."

"You may find it so. A man named Larsen was arrested. He was once your chauffeur and bodyguard."

"That was nine years ago. I have no need of chauffeurs now, still less of bodyguards."

Rosewarne was on difficult ground. He said carefully. "You have had no recent dealings with Larsen?"

Aarvold's round, fat face began to glisten. He said with controlled passion. "Tell me I consort with bank robbers, Rosewarne. I would like to hear you say that, and then I would like to see you prove it."

"I make no accusations, Mr. Aarvold."

The little man's anger burst free at last. He stood up, shaking, and shouted, "No, nor yet charges either. That was tried before and I made them all look silly."

Rosewarne said bleakly, "I came to talk to you in the hope that you could help me."

Aarvold shook his head fiercely. "Not so, Superintendent. You came to try and catch me out. There are words for that, words like coercion and intimidation. It won't work; you know me too well for that. Now get out of here."

Rosewarne went silently. Work at Otway Street kept him busy until late evening. Worrell came in at nine, Manbre a half hour later. Rosewarne said briskly: "Let's have it, Jack."

Manbre shook his head. "She sent me packing, sir, she just didn't want to know." A puzzled look settled on his face. "You know what, sir, I'd say the kid is scared."

"Of Ledwright?"

"Something else, I think. Mind you didn't help me much. What's the idea of sending Worrell round there. I found him supping tea in the kitchen with old Sarah, the housekeeper."

"Sorry about that, there was a reason. Did you see Delizi?"

"No, he left earlier for the West Country on one of his trips."

The telephone rang. Rosewarne picked it up and heard Retalack's breathy voice: "What have you been up to with Aarvold? The old villain has put in a moan to the AC."

Rosewarne started to explain but the chief superintendent broke in, "Forget it, Ted. I know what you were up to but it won't work. The Larsen story is a dead duck. Now for God's sake leave well alone. You'll have to step around here in the morning and make

your peace. I'm serious, Ted; your pension's in it." The receiver crackled as the connection was broken and Rosewarne slammed it back in its rest.

Manbre looked a question but he ignored it. Instead he said: "About Worrell. I sent him to find out what he could about Delizi's journeys. He's a bright boy and he got Sarah to talk. The result is two lists, one of the towns visited in the last six months, the other of the places where stolen notes were passed." He pushed the papers forward.

Manbre studied them then said doubtfully, "Close enough for a reasonable suspicion?"

"Full marks for caution, Jack. Counsel would run rings round it. But you'll admit there's more than coincidence involved."

Manbre shook his head. "I'd put Delizi in the clear."

"Oddly enough so would I. But what's the answer?"

"Somebody plants the notes in the bus then a second agent picks them up at the destination."

"It's a bit steep. Who plants them?"

"You're thinking of Gianna."

"Sticks out, doesn't it?"

Manbre said carefully, "Suppose she got herself involved with Ledwright without knowing what he was up to? She'd find out fast enough but the minute she started talking police, he'd turn violent. That wouldn't scare Gianna but suppose he threatened to harm her father. Would that cover it?"

"Might do."

"You'll apply for a search warrant?"

Rosewarne shook his head. "I'm not too popular just now, Jack. This will have to be the waiting game. Don't make any plans for an early bed."

"You want me to watch the temple?"

"No, the watching will be done in Salisbury. Delizi is due there at ten. Push off now and get a meal, but be back at twelve. If it's on they'll hold Delizi and we'll nip over and pick up the girl."

In fact the call came in soon after one. It was negative. Delizi had never arrived in Salisbury.

"He found the money," Manbre said with conviction.

"If it was there," Rosewarne sounded sceptical. "We can't do more tonight. Worrell is on watch at the temple. See what the morning brings."

Andrea's bus was back in its shed by dawn. Rosewarne learned of it when he returned still smarting from his interview with the

AC. He said sharply to Manbre, "Allowing Delizi to be honest, what would his reaction be to finding that money?"

"He'd come to us, sir."

"He hasn't done so, has he? You get back to the house, Worrell. I've another job for you, Manbre - do the rounds in Holborn. See if you can find a bird that will sing about Aarvold."

"Fat chance, sir."

Rosewarne said explosively: "Well, make yourself some chances. Get off, man, move."

Worrell returned in the late afternoon with the news that Delizi was in bed with a sudden illness. Sarah had told him that Gianna was staying at home to nurse her father, but Worrell had not seen the girl.

"Is there a doctor attending?"

Worrell nodded. "Sarah shushed me out of it when he arrived. Ledwright was with him, by the way."

"Did he recognize you?"

"I'm pretty sure."

"All to the good. Listen, Worrell, I've fixed a day and night watch on that place. Make it as obvious as you like. We might scare them into doing something silly."



A week passed uneasily. Little disturbed the boredom of the watch in West Smithfield, though Worrell had reported on four occasions that various large parcels and cases had been taken into the house.

Rosewarne went to his wall map, and spoke musingly, "How long since the last big raid, Jack?"

"Couple of weeks, just on."

"Exactly. And during that period no stolen currency has been passed, though, at a rough estimate, five banks are the poorer for something like two hundred thousand quid."

"You think it's being gathered in?"

Rosewarne's finger moved to the red pencil line encircling the temple in Smithfield. "That's where."

"Take a chance and raid the place."

Rosewarne shook his head. "Ledwright is at the temple. He's the link with Aarvold; everything I know about Aarvold is in a file on the AC's desk. Every report that Worrell brings in goes there, too. The Yard is as wise as I am."

"Well then, move in."

"I can't. I'll tell you why. Bjorg Aarvold has issued a writ alleging police persecution. I'm named in it and so is the AC. The result is that I'm warned off and if I take the chance you seem so damn keen on, there'll be a new Super in this manor and I'll be out to grass. That's why I'm like a bear with a sore head these days, Jack. I make no apologies."

Worrell came into the office.

"Something new?"

"Delizi is dead, sir. I've just had it from the housekeeper. Heart attack, some kind of cardiac condition apparently. The doctor signed the death certificate and the funeral is fixed for tomorrow. Any fresh orders, sir? There doesn't seem much point in keeping three men hanging around there, now."

Rosewarne's face was grim and two tiny white lines appeared on either side of his straight, hard mouth. Manbre recognized the danger signs and looked away. Rosewarne said icily, "Constable, when I require your advice as to what is, or is not, worth your while, I shall make a point of soliciting it."

Worrell blushed to the roots of his hair and withdrew hastily. Rosewarne said: "Get out into the manor, Jack. Go to all the places. Talk to all the people; find me something I can use before they put Delizi under the ground."

Ten minutes later Worrell again poked his head around the door. "Something you should know, sir. Aarvold has just arrived at the temple."

Rosewarne grinned suddenly. "Worth keeping a watch on the place would you say, Constable?"

Worrell blinked, gulped, and was gone.

The watch in Smithfield tramped its boots in three inches of snow that night and cursed its superintendent comprehensively and with feeling. At dawn the weather changed, a warm wet wind set the snow sliding from the roofs and steamed the windows of Rosewarne's office. He scalded his lips and tongue with strong tea and surveyed the growing day without joy.

The telephone jangled. He picked it up and listened, fighting sleep. "Thanks," he said finally. "Nice to know what happens to them in the end. Pity it wasn't his partner, though. Would have saved me a headache."

Manbre came in, blue and chilled. Rosewarne pushed tea at him but the sergeant leaned over the desk, his voice was urgent, "I've got something, sir."

Rosewarne came to life in a moment. "Who squeaked?"

"Nobody, but this was on my doormat this morning." He pushed a crumbled blue envelope across the desk. Rosewarne fished out the scrap of ruled note paper and read the single line of pencil scrawl. "Talk to Grierson." He laughed.

"Something funny?"

"Just ironic, Jack. I had a call from Epping police. Grierson was knocked down last night on a forest road by a hit-and-run merchant. Dead for hours when they found him." He tapped the paper. "Recognize the hand?"

Manbre shook his head. "Could be Gianna's; I wouldn't swear to it. Who was Grierson, anyway?"

"Aarvold's partner ten years back, the one who kept out of prison. Put-up job, of course. Grierson obviously held funds for Aarvold. He certainly helped set him up again when he came out. Queer customer, Grierson. Brilliant though; he was a practising doctor at one time." He stopped talking for a moment then added suddenly, "Jack, I'm a damned fool. Did you hear what I said just now?"

"That Grierson was a doctor; what of it?"

"Get on to the Holborn Registrar; dig him out of bed if you have to. Find out who treated Delizi and signed his death certificate."

Manbre had the information in ten minutes but Rosewarne received it without animation.

"But it's the same man, Roderick Grierson. What's stopping us now?"

"We're no forrader, Jack. Aarvold's old partner treats Delizi and signs his death certificate. That's no crime. We're back where we started and I'm beginning to think Worrell was right."

"Give it the day. Let me nose around some more."

"I've no faith in it, Jack. I'll call the dogs off tonight, always supposing Retallack doesn't make me do it before."

"The funeral is today."

"I know it."

The two men stood silent, watching the telephone, waiting for a miracle. The bell gave a warning flicker then burst into an urgent clatter. Rosewarne snatched up the receiver and listened silently. By degrees the tension left his face and was replaced by excitement. He put the phone down after a word of thanks then said to Manbre: "Get your coat; we're making an early call."

"What's on?"

"Plenty. That Epping job looks sticky. The snow lay longer in the forest and there were footprints where somebody had walked back to view the body. Grierson was hit from behind. Tyre marks showed that the car waited for him in a side-road while he walked up from the station to his house."

"But why?"

"I'll tell you why. His clothes were sorted at the hospital. There was a fiver caught in a torn lining, one of the stolen notes."

"Aarvold paid him for something?"

"Probably, but not in stolen money; that would have been too stupid. Grierson was greedy. He stole it from the store at the temple. It was rumbled after he left and an accident was arranged at short notice to recover the money, and silence an unreliable associate. I see our Gilbert's hand in this but he worked too fast and overlooked that torn pocket lining. There's more, Jack. Grierson had a big old house backing on the forest. Behind it was a hangar and inside it a light aircraft fuelled and ready to go."

Manbre pulled his coat belt tight. "We'd better do the same," he said.



A uniformed sergeant and two plain clothes men stepped forward as the two squad cars drew up outside the Delizi house. It was snowing again with heavy, wet flakes and the day was dark. Rosewarne told Manbre: "Stick close to me; the others can spread out through the house. I want it turned upside down."

"Did you get a warrant, sir?"

Rosewarne kicked the door without answering. Bolts grated and the door swung. Sarah quavered into view. "There's no service today, sir. You can't come in."

He moved her gently to one side and went across a brick-floored yard to where yellow light flooded from an open kitchen door. The place smelled of paraffin and cooking. Gianna sat at a plain deal table, Ledwright behind her. He said fiercely, "You've got a neck, you bloody coppers. Her old man's dead in the chapel."

Rosewarne turned to Gianna. "I'm sorry about this, Miss Delizi. We shall be as quick as we can." She looked up and nodded wearily.

There came a sudden scuffle and the clump of heavy feet. The inner door opened and two of the search party came in with Aarvold.

"Found him hiding upstairs, sir."

The fat man pulled down his waistcoat and shot his cuffs. "I was not hiding, Superintendent. I am a friend of Miss Delizi, and I had no wish to embarrass her during your interview with her."

"Very well, what *were* you doing, then."

"I have as much right to be here as yourself. More in the circumstances, I should imagine."

Rosewarne studied him with a perfectly expressionless face. "I should imagine so too," he said. He walked from the kitchen and halted outside a second door. "What's through there?"

"The chapel, sir; it's locked," Manbre told him.

Rosewarne said softly, "Give me the key, Miss Delizi."

Ledwright said on a high note: "You can't go in there. That's where her old man is."

Gianna spoke for the first time. "I am sorry, Superintendent, I don't have it."

"Will whoever has the key please give it to me."

"I question your right, Superintendent." It was Aarvold's unctuous voice.

"Nevertheless, give it to me."

The fat man still hesitated then surrendered at Rosewarne's sudden shout: "Give me that key."

He took it then looked back at the group in the kitchen. "Will you please come forward, Miss Delizi. None of the rest of you for the moment. Now take the key and open the door."

He bent forward as she twisted the key in the lock. For a moment their heads were close. Manbre saw her lips move but heard only the faintest murmur.

The door swung wide and the chill of the great room beyond reached out at them. Tall windows high up cast winter light in diamond patterns on the stone-flagged floor. A large bronze-coloured casket stood on a black-draped catafalque in the centre of the room. Rosewarne clicked a wall switch. Eight pendant bulbs lit bare whitewashed walls. Forty or fifty bentwood chairs were ranged in rows for Delizi's congregation. They stood empty now before his bier. Aarvold went forward suddenly in a macabre little run and stood at the head of the casket, hands half-raised as if to protect it.

Rosewarne spoke to Worrell. "Fetch a screwdriver."

Aarvold began quite suddenly to shake, the flesh of his face seemed palsied and his teeth started to click. He clenched his hands into tight fists then opened them again and rested them on the casket.

Worrell brought the screwdriver. Rosewarne said woodenly: "Back out the screws and lift the lid."

Aarvold said in a harsh whisper: "This is too dreadful, you have no right." He swung on the girl. "Gianna, it is your father's coffin! Tell this man to stop."

Rosewarne spoke without taking his eyes from the bier. "Is it by your wish and with your consent that we open your father's coffin, Miss Delizi?"

"Yes, you must."

"Very well. Take you hands away, Mr. Aarvold. Let the officer do his duty."

The coldness at Manbre's heart was a part of the coldness of the room and the terror of the scene, and yet he knew that the fear he felt was for Rosewarne. The detective constable took out the last ornamental screw. Manbre helped him lift the heavy lid and lay it beside the casket. Silence grew and deepened. All eyes were on the narrow black coffin that rested inside.

The backs of Rosewarne's knees felt as though they had been kicked but his face was stony. He said in a clear, hard voice: "Lift out the coffin."

Ledwright screamed: "For God's sake!" Aarvold's voice rose hysterically above the boy's. "I won't stay; you can't make me." He set off at a stumbling run towards the door, where Worrell stopped him.

Rosewarne said crisply: "Right, four men, top and toes; you too, Jack."

Manbre laid hands on the coffin, trying not to think what he did. It was easy work. The coffin came free of the casket and was laid beside it on the stones. Rosewarne put a hand inside the casket and twitched aside a purple cloth. The bank notes were packed tightly beneath the inner coffin. It was surprising how little room so much money required.

Worrell brought Aarvold forward and lined him up beside Ledwright. Rosewarne gave the formal caution to each man. The boy went to pieces and whimpered, but Aarvold had recovered his self control. "It was desecration, you hear me, sacrilege of the worst kind," he hissed at Rosewarne. "My lawyers will have you begging for mercy. I shall ring them, ring them the moment I reach the station." Rosewarne made a weary sign and the two men were led away, Aarvold still protesting.

Rosewarne walked alone towards the kitchen. Manbre hurried



after him and caught his arm. "That coffin, sir. I'd swear it was empty."

"It was, Jack."

"But what did they do with Delizi. Good Lord - "

Andrea Delizi came forward, holding his daughter by the hand. He spoke in the calm and musical voice that Manbre remembered well.

"There was no body, Sergeant. Some evil men thought they saw me dead, that is all."

Rosewarne said gently, "I have only heard a whisper of all this from your daughter, Mr. Delizi. Please sit down and when you are feeling better, try to tell us about it."

Delizi smiled at his daughter. "I am quite well, a little cold but well enough." He gave Manbre a look of pity. "Oh, my poor young man, don't look like that. I assure you that I live."

"I don't know what to believe," Manbre said doggedly.

"Believe only that the senses lie. They lied to Gilbert Ledwright, and they lied to poor Dr. Grierson. Yes, I know he is dead. Aarvold talked of it this morning."

"Did Ledwright do that?" Rosewarne asked sharply.

"I fear so. He is a man of violence as you will observe from my face." He tilted it against the light to show bruises and abrasions.

"Knuckleduster?"

"Just a ring, I think," Delizi spoke very calmly. "But you will be impatient to hear. I had a breakdown on my journey to Salisbury. Hunting around for a mislaid tool, I found a metal box secured to the underpart of my vehicle. You will guess what was inside. I returned at once to London and talked to this foolish child of mine. She confessed that she had gone in fear for weeks on my behalf."

"Why didn't you report it?"

"Ledwright was already here. I told him that I would carry no more and attempted to use the telephone. He attacked me and threw me to the ground. I endeavoured to appear more seriously injured than I was and in fear they sent for Grierson. We became prisoners, Superintendent. Aarvold and his associates knew the house was being watched. The only one who left the temple during that dreadful week was poor Sarah. It was she who carried the note."

"But surely she could have told us the whole thing," Manbre broke in.

Gianna shook her head. "I was being watched the whole time. I could not write more but I knew that Grierson was the weak link ;

he might talk where the others wouldn't. And Sarah is old and uncertain in her mind. She did not know what was going on – my father refused to put her into danger by telling her.”

Rosewarne shook his head. “Finish your story, Mr. Delizi.”

“I feigned the symptoms of a brain injury. I knew that Grierson was frightened and I played on his fears. They talked over my bed, bullying him into signing a death certificate should I succumb. Finally he agreed and I put my plan into effect.” He smiled gently. “I turned my head to the wall and I died.”

“I take leave of you there, Mr. Delizi.”

The old man showed a trace of impatience. “Superintendent, this is not a game that children play, keeping the eyes closed and holding the breath. This was a self-induced catalepsy. It can be performed by those adept, though not for too long. Doctors have been deceived by it before. Think how much more likely it would be to deceive a group of frightened men who were expecting just such an eventuality.”

“You lay in that coffin; but what about the undertakers?”

“Some men of Aarvold's came. The plan was to take the casket out by night, bury the coffin and fly out of the country with the money.”

“You might have been buried alive.”

“Oh no, Sergeant. Once they had put me in my box they had no wish to look at me again. Who shall blame them? I left it the same night, with Gianna's help, and concealed myself in the loft where your men found me.”

“It's an incredible story, Mr. Delizi. I take it you would have raised the alarm as soon as the casket left the house.”

“Of course, Superintendent. They were taking Gianna with them. I had to save her.” He looked hard at Rosewarne. “You still seem dubious.”

“I'm wondering how the dickens I explain this one to the Assistant Commissioner. We'll get off now, though it's fair to warn you that I'll have a few extra questions to ask you, Miss Delizi. The sergeant will take your statement in the morning.”

Gianna looked at Manbre. “Are you still talking to me?” she asked seriously.

“If your father wasn't so opposed to physical violence I'd do a sight more than talk,” he told her grimly.

“The siege is on again, I take it?” Rosewarne said as they walked from the temple.

“It has never really been off, sir.”

The two men travelled back across Holborn in a companionable silence. Finally Manbre said: "That was the queerest one yet, sir. What was it? Yoga or something?"

"It's outside my experience, Jack, I will admit. But it's not impossible. There have been a number of authenticated cases."

"Among Indians, that sort of thing?" Manbre said doubtfully.

Rosewarne chuckled. "Let's not be insular, Jack. As a matter of fact I can recall at least one good precedent. So can you, if you put your mind to it."

Manbre fell silent, watching the windscreen wipers push wet snow from the glass. It was not until the big squad car swung into Otway Street that he spoke again: "Oh, I see. Lazarus."

© John Salt, 1965.

---

### **CLASSIFIED**

---

#### TUITION

---

**LEARN WHILE YOU SLEEP.** Details: The Sleep-Learning Association, 14, Belsize Crescent, London, N.W.3. SW1 6160.

---

**PRIVATE DETECTIVES** wanted everywhere. Correspondence course for certificate. - Details from NNE, 27, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex.

---

#### TYPEWRITING SERVICES

---

**HIGH-CLASS ELECTRIC TYPING OF MSS., &c.,** carefully and speedily executed - Lilian Dryland, 24, Canham Road, London, S.E.25. LIV. 3650.

---

**TAPE-RECORDINGS** (including Stenorette) transcribed. General typing. Clients visited by appointment. Scripts a speciality. - P. John, 67, Sedlescombe Road, London, S.W.6. FUL. 6093.

---

#### SERVICES

---

**THE ASHLEY MARRIAGE BUREAU,** 10, Corporation Street, Manchester, 4. Reliable service for success and happiness.

---

**HEATHER JENNER MARRIAGE BUREAU.** Established 1939. Personal interviews. 124, New Bond Street, London, W.1. MAYfair 9634. General advice bureau incorporated.

---

# *The Good Old Days*

## **Criminal Soccer**

Football has not always been the profitable and widely followed game that it is today; at one time it was actually considered a criminal offence.

In Maidstone in 1654 an apothecary named John Richard Bishop was hauled before the Justice of the Peace in very short order, the accusation against him stating that he 'did wilfully and in a violent and boisterous manner, running to and fro, and kicking up and down [on] the common highway and street within the said town a certain ball of leather, to the annoyance of the good people of the Commonwealth, and to the evil example of others'.

For this dreadful offence he was clapped into the public stocks and there kept until he was deemed to be purged of whatever demon which drove him to act so sinfully.

## **The Letter of the Law**

Until the middle of the 18th century it was the custom to render an indictment null and void if in its drawing up there was the least mistake, error or omission. Everything had to be clarified to such a precise extent that, on one occasion, a judge refused to permit the continuance of a trial because it was stated in the indictment that the accused had stolen a cow from a field, but the shape of the field was not specified. The learned judge stated in open court that, 'it would be a subversion of the law if the jury were not to know thoroughly whether the paddock in which the cow was situated was square or oblong'.

## **The Bellman of Newgate**

An important part of every procession to the gallows at Tyburn was the Bellman, a leading official.

He was paid out of a charity fund endowed in the will of a Master Richard Dawe, and on the eve of an execution his first task was to ring a hand-bell beneath the windows of the condemned cell and declaim a special verse always spoken:

*All you that in the condemned cell do lie  
Prepare you, for tomorrow you shall die.*

*Watch all and pray, the hour is drawing near  
When you before th' Almighty must appear.  
Examine well yourselves, in time repent,  
That you may not t' eternal flames be sent.  
And when St. 'Pulchre's bell tomorrow tolls,  
The Lord have mercy on your souls.  
Past twelve o'clock.*

On the execution day, after the condemned had left Newgate in the death carts, they were stopped at the steps of the Church of St. Sepulchre where the Bellman was waiting, large bell in hand. After sounding it twelve times he was bound to address both condemned and spectators, saying:

"All good people, pray heartily unto God for these poor sinners, who are now going to their death, for whom this great bell doth toll.

"You that are condemned to die repent with lamentable tears; ask mercy of the Lord for the salvation of your souls through the Merits, Death, and Passion of Jesus Christ, who now sits on the right hand of God, to make intercession for as many of you as penitently return unto Him. Lord have mercy on you! Christ have mercy on you!"

Having done this the Bellman then offered to each one of the condemned (there were usually several of them) a bunch of sweet-smelling flowers and a cup of wine. The carts then resumed their journey.

### **The Prototype of Fagin**

In a letter written by a Recorder of London in Elizabethan times there emerges the possible origin of Charles Dickens' *Fagin*. The letter recounts of a man named Jhon Wootton who fell on evil days and became proprietor of a Billingsgate ale-house, popular with the city's rogues. There Wootton had 'a schole howse sett up to learne younge boyes to cutt purses. There was hung up two devises, the one was a pockett, and the other a purse. The pockett had in yt certen cownters, and was hunge about with hawkes' bells, and over the toppe did hange a little sacring bell; and he that could take owt a cownter without noyse was allowed to be a publick Hoyster [pickpocket] and he that could take owt a piece of silver of the purse without the noyse of any of the bells, he was a judicial Nypper [cut-purse].'

# TRUMP . . . AND TRUMP AGAIN

COLIN ROBERTSON

*The problem of raising money  
was unintentionally made  
easy by the blackmailer*

**E**VEN NOW I find it hard to picture her as a murderess. She was so small and delicately made. Without her make-up and her silky blonde hair, mousey in its natural shade, she would have looked like a very unattractive little girl. Except for her clothes, of course. They were expensive, for Edwina Belton's husband was an oil tycoon.

"Dear Charles!" she would say. "You're always so attentive. I do enjoy my visits here."

As I continued with my work she smiled at me through the mirror, the patronizing smile she bestowed on people who were just a cut above servants. I came into that category, and she never let me forget it for long – a vain, talkative woman with beady eyes and a foraging nose, softened by the way I arranged her hair. Lately, it was the same shade as Isobel's, only my wife was a natural blonde, and very different. But for Isobel I'd never have made the grade when I came out of jail, for the going was pretty tough. She had to support me while I was living down my past, trying to get a worth-while job. During this difficult time she never groused, never referred to my inability to keep her. That was Isobel.

"Be careful! What do you think you're doing?" Mrs. Belton spat out suddenly, as I caught her hair with the comb. Now, I wasn't her dear Charles. I was a menial who'd failed for the moment to give her full attention.

"I'm very sorry, madam."

Through the mirror I saw her scowling at me.

"I don't think you heard a word I was saying!"

I assured her I had, taking up the thread of her trivial conversation. You'd be surprised what some women tell their hair-dressers, the stories I hear about their so-called friends, their

families, and themselves. It seems to do these women good to get rid of their pent up feelings, and they can talk quite safely to me because I'm only on the fringe of their lives.

Since I'd been employed at Francois' for nearly a year and Mrs. Belton had been coming regularly, I could have written a dossier about her. A two-faced vixen, if ever there was one. She'd married Joe Belton for his money, spending most of her time playing around with other men. And, from what I gathered, the poor dope didn't suspect a thing. She hadn't a spark of affection for him – she'd told me he bored her almost beyond endurance – but he was a bluff, hail-fellow-well-met character, and crazy about her.

He must have been because whenever he went away on business, which was pretty often, he wrote her letters almost daily. More than once she'd read bits of them aloud to me, so that I could chuckle, too, at his simple loyalty. I'd found it hard to crack a smile.



Very shortly Isobel was going into hospital for a spinal operation. When she came out she wouldn't be fit enough to look after young Tommy, Janie, and me. She'd need to take things easy during her convalescence. A sea trip, or maybe a holiday abroad would do her a power of good. I'd have seen that she got it – but I just couldn't afford it.

Three hundred pounds would have paid for everything, including a daily help to look after the two youngsters, while she was away. But how was I to find that much money? I hadn't got it, and I could see no way of raising it.

The thought was nagging at me while this gilded sparrow in my barber's chair went on about her shabby little life, her latest boy friend, and the fatuity of her husband.

This afternoon she was in a particularly difficult mood, and I knew why. He'd just returned from one of his business trips, cramping her style. He'd told her fondly that he expected to be at home much more in future. Though he hadn't realized it, he had delivered a body blow.

Presently, she said, screwing up her lips: "He makes me cringe when he touches me. I hate big, clumsy men – I always have. And he's so childish. Do you know what he's done recently?"

I shook my head, simulating interest.

"Well, he has a wall-safe in his dressing-room. It has a three

letter combination. We always keep quite a bit of cash in there and he got a man to fix it."

"To fix it?"

"A man from the safe company. Joe thought it would please me if the combination was changed to my initials - AEB. So he had it done. And you should have seen him when he told me, his silly face beaming. 'Now it's your safe,' he said, delighted with the idea. As if I cared! I've always known the combination anyway, so it made no difference. I take what money I want when I need it." She paused, breathing heavily through her nose. "How he gets on my nerves! Sometimes I could scream. I'll tell you you another thing he did. . . ."

She went on, but I was hardly listening now. Her wall-safe! '*We always keep quite a bit of cash in there.*' More than I needed, I was ready to bet. Three hundred pounds would mean nothing to her. But for Isobel and I. . . .

I couldn't help thinking about it, temptation feeding on necessity.

Then, presently, she said something else which made me prick up my ears. She was going with her husband to a party that night, much against her natural inclination. This slipped out when I'd almost finished setting her hair. In the meantime, she'd been talking about her servant problem. Her housekeeper had left; the cook and a maid had both been recruited locally and slept out.

So there would be nobody in the house that night.

When she was ready to leave, I helped her on with her mink coat, and she gave me a nice tip. Then, while she was fiddling about in her handbag before going to the cash desk, her expression changed. She'd noticed one of her husband's letters she'd put there.

Evidently it annoyed her, reminding her of him and as I ushered her politely out of the cubicle she crumpled the letter, tossing it into a waste-basket. Simply a gesture. I figured she'd got quite used to throwing his letters away.

I was kept pretty busy after she had gone, but you can work with your hands on a familiar job while your mind is on other things. I could take my vintage coupé and drive out to her house. I knew where it was, off the beaten track, a couple of miles out of town, and during her visits to Francois' I'd learned quite a lot about the lay-out. If I could get into the place I felt sure I could locate the wall-safe.

Such an opportunity might never occur again.



Though I thrust the thought aside it still lurked in my mind. Maybe just this once – for Isobel. The Beltons were rolling in money. They'd give what I needed to charity without noticing it. By late afternoon I'd almost convinced myself it was my moral duty to steal the money.



It was after midnight when I drove along to the house, parking my coupé in a lane some distance away. Nobody was about as I walked to the gates leading to the short drive. No lights showed in any of the windows. Belton's dressing-room was round the side and I moved quietly in that direction. I told myself I just wanted to see if I could pick it out. That was all. They had separate bedrooms; hers was at the front, his across a landing.

It was on the second floor, and I located a large room with a smaller one adjoining. That must be it. Then I saw that a drain pipe ran past the window, and my heart began to race. The window was partly open.

That settled it. Fate was making everything easy for me – I couldn't pass up this opportunity.

Five minutes later I was in his dressing-room.

I closed the window, pulled the curtains and thumbed on the flashlight I'd brought. The door leading to the landing was ajar. Not a sound came from below. Why should it? Nobody was in the house, I knew that. The party, she'd said, would be going on until the small hours.

The door to his bedroom was locked. Not that it mattered. No need to go in there. The wall-safe was nearer at hand. Actually, it wasn't very cleverly hidden, because I discovered that one of the pictures moved away from the wall on hinges – and there it was!

I passed my tongue over my lips, bending over the dial. A . . . E . . . B . . . Ten seconds after I started working on the safe it was open. It couldn't have been easier. And they wouldn't find any fingerprints. I was wearing gloves.

Her jewel-case was lying there and some documents. These didn't interest me: my eye had settled on a cash-box. It held some five pound notes. Quite a packet – and most of them weren't new ones, which suited me. Without troubling to count them, I took about a sixty, pushing them into my pocket.

I closed the safe, scattered the combination, and I was turning round when a voice from the landing door said:

“So you fell for it beautifully, Charles!”

She was standing there, wearing the same dress in which I'd seen her that afternoon. In her hand was a small revolver.

After a moment that seemed to stretch endlessly I said stupidly: "You - you didn't go to the party?"

"No." Her eyes were bright under the beam from my flashlight as she came into the room. "There wasn't one. That was simply part of the bait I used to get you here. And I left the window open, of course."

I was blinking at her and she went on: "If you try to rush me I shall shoot. Just listen. Even if you managed to get away with the money it wouldn't do you any good. I've got the serial number of every note in the safe. How much have you stolen?"

"About three hundred," I said miserably.

"Only that much?" She seemed surprised.

"I took what I needed - no more."

"Such commendable restraint!" She cocked her head on one side, studying me afresh. "Could it have been to pay for your wife's convalescence?"

That shook me almost as much as her sudden appearance, because I'd never said a word to her about Isobel.

"I made a few inquiries," she said. "Your wife is sick, she's going into hospital, and you have a couple of kids. Well, she's going to be even more sick about this - if she hears about it. And I understand you've already served one jail sentence. Too bad! You're in quite a spot, Charles."

I didn't say anything, glowering at her. I was wondering why she'd lured me there. As yet, it didn't make sense. She must have had a reason.

"So I'm sure you'll do as I want," she resumed. "Then you can keep the money and I shan't call the police. In the circumstances I think you'd do anything to avoid that."

"Maybe. So what?"

"As I told you, my husband is a heavily-built man. I can't lift him by myself. I need help to get his body out of the house."

"His body?" I gaped at her.

"Yes, I've just killed him," she said in the same matter of fact tone. "I did it as soon as I saw you creeping towards the window. He's in there." And she pointed to the bedroom. "That's why I locked the door, so that you wouldn't find him too soon."

As I stared at her incredulously, she crossed towards the bedroom, produced a key, and slipped it into the lock. Pushing the door open, she stood aside for me to see. The flashlight showed me

a man lying in the bed. He might have been asleep, but as soon as I stepped closer I knew he wasn't.

"My husband," she said, over my shoulder. "I smothered him with a pillow. Since he always took sleeping pills before going to bed, it was quite easy. He didn't struggle a bit."

"You – you must be mad!"

"No, not mad – simply very determined. He intended to spend more time with me, as you know. That was the last straw. Now he'll never trouble me again." Her eyes were vicious. "I can't move him by myself, and I've got to get him away from here. You're going to help me."

"Never! I won't do it."

"Think again, Charles. Think how this might have happened, as I shall say it *did* happen, unless you agree. You were robbing the safe when he woke up. I was asleep in my own room and heard a commotion. When I rushed in here I found you bending over him with a pillow in your hand. Robbery and murder. Think it over, Charles."

My brain was working quickly, but I knew she'd caught me. She could deny that she'd told me the combination of the safe, and that it was in her husband's dressing-room. Was it likely she'd reveal such information? Any jury would have believed her. And I had a previous conviction. I thought of Isobel and the kids. There was no way out; I had to do what she wanted.



"There's nobody else in the house, I suppose?"

She said mockingly: "What do you think? I'm not a fool."

Just the two of us. And she was still pointing the gun at me, in case I tried something. Because I might have been considering attacking her before slipping away. I could see it in her narrowed eyes. She'd overlooked nothing. But I wasn't that kind. She needn't have worried, and, as I flung the bedclothes away from the dead man, her face relaxed. She knew then when she'd picked me she'd made no mistake.

I hoisted the body on to my shoulders, carrying it downstairs and out of the house to the garage. It was hard work; he must have weighed more than at least ten stone. She could never have got him into her car alone. A spade was lying on the back seat, together with a lantern. I didn't need to ask why.

"Put him on the floor," she said. "Cover him with a rug."

When I'd done that she told me to get in beside her, and she drove along the country road to a secluded copse about five miles away. She'd chosen a suitable spot, shielded by brushwood, that afternoon, and after she'd made quite sure we were entirely alone I hauled the body out of the car. Somewhere an owl was hooting as I started to dig. The only other sound was the soft whispering of the trees.

I buried him under four feet of earth, and my shirt was wet with sweat before I finished. Then, after she'd pronounced herself satisfied we returned to the car. On the way back she lit a cigarette, offering me one, which I refused. Her small delicate hands on the wheel were perfectly steady, and she even passed some remarks about the weather. Since there was nothing more I could usefully do, she dropped me in the lane where I'd left my coupé.

"Thank you, Charles," she said, as we parted. "Between us I think we've managed very nicely. I shall be seeing you at Francois' I expect."

She hadn't turned a hair throughout the whole ugly business. She'd say her husband had gone away, of course. I'd no doubt she would attend to all the remaining details. But if anybody became suspicious after a time . . .

I began to sweat again. I won't repeat what I called her under my breath as I watched the twin red lights disappear through the gates to the drive. Was there any way I could bring her to justice without incriminating myself? It was hopeless, I thought bitterly. She'd planned it too cleverly, making me an accessory, closing my mouth for good.



I got the rest of the story from the newspapers. To me it was more than interesting – it was a life saver. Because the net began to close round Edwina almost at once, leaving me in the clear. There was just one thing she hadn't bargained for, smart as she had tried to be.

It was the Beltones' maid who set the thing moving. Her mistress had gone into town when she went upstairs to tidy the bedrooms. Edwina had told her that Belton had left the house very early that morning to attend to some urgent business, and the girl hadn't given his absence a second thought.

Not until she found a note written in pencil under the bolster on his bed. It was addressed to his wife; he must have put it there so

that she wouldn't find it too soon. The maid recognized his hand writing at once.

Dear Edwina,

I am not quite so blind as you seem to think. For some time I've realized that any affection you showed towards me was sheer pretence. I know now that you never loved me. Though I did my best to make you happy you repaid me with infidelity – one vulgar intrigue after another. I've become just a nuisance to you, and lately I've had the feeling that you'd go to any lengths to be rid of me. All you care about is my money.

I know I was stupid, but I loved you. I never looked at another woman, and I've nothing to live for now. Tonight I shall take an overdose of sleeping pills, and I shall be dead when you read this. Maybe, for once, I shall earn your gratitude!

Joe

The maid ran downstairs and showed the note to the cook. Both of them realized this wasn't as straightforward as it might have appeared. If he had carried out his intention, obviously his body would have been there, lying in the bed.

Whether he had committed suicide or not there was something very wrong. For if he had changed his mind, surely he would have destroyed the note.

After some anxious discussion the servants called the police.

They arrived before Edwina got back from town, and discovered that she and her husband had been alone in the house the previous night, and – since the servants were not particularly fond of her – more than a little about her way of life. When she returned, the police got her story, that her husband had left early that morning, before they showed her the note. They went away and started making inquiries about Joe Belton's whereabouts, seeking solid evidence before they moved.

In later newspaper reports it transpired that nobody had seen him. It was Edwina's turn to worry. By this time they'd begun searching for a grave.

I guess it won't be long now before they find it.



They dug him up less than a week after he died. There was a post-mortem, of course, and it was discovered that he hadn't taken an overdose of sleeping pills, that he'd been smothered. They arrested Edwina, charging her with murder.

And she'll never know that I wrote that suicide note.

All I needed was a sample of his handwriting. I'd retrieved the letter she'd tossed into my waste basket at Francois'. I'd begun to read it after she'd left, shaking my head, feeling genuinely sorry for Joe Belton. Then I'd been called away to attend to another customer, and stuffed the letter unthinkingly into my pocket.

Later, it had come in very useful.

I'd got the idea while I was driving home, after we'd buried him. Writing the suicide note was easy, and it must have been about four a.m. when I returned to the house, climbed quietly up to his bedroom, and slipped the letter under the bolster.

Now, I bet, she's still cursing her husband, thinking he played a lousy trick on her at the end. I'm certain she doesn't suspect the truth. All she knows is that I went to jail once; that was enough for her. She doesn't know why I was convicted.

Maybe it's just as well - they sent me up the river for forgery.

© Colin Robertson, 1965.

---

## *E W M M*

---

June issue includes

---

Edgar Wallace

---

The Remarkable

Mr. Bartlett

---

Ernest Dudley

---

American

Duo

---

and many other top-level stories and features

# THE BOMB

**PETER FRASER**

**T**HE SUDDEN explosion threw the vast crowd into surging confusion beyond the immediate control of the State Police and the soldiers.

Since early on Saturday tens of thousands of people had packed the ancient narrow streets of the capital city, seeping in from the country outside to gather in the newly-named Grenin Square.

Happy in their rediscovered freedom they were eager to welcome Marshal Vaclav Grenin on his return from an official visit to London where the Queen had entertained him at a State Banquet in Buckingham Palace and where he had enjoyed politically valuable conversations with the Prime Minister.

As the leader first of the underground resistance movement and later of the army of liberation, Marshal Grenin, the Liberator, had overthrown the puppet autocratic government. Towards the end of the Second World War the puppet government had seized power under the domination of the balefully menacing state on his country's eastern border. In the first free poll for more than ten years Liberator Grenin had been elected President of the republic.

In the early afternoon of the hot, airless gloomy Sunday the excited crowd was scanning the low-lying cloud, each man straining his eyes and ears for the first sight or sound of the Liberator's helicopter. Drawn up near the point where it would land was a pathetic muster of bandaged men in war-stained uniforms, some on crutches. A contingent of disabled veterans of the recent civil war, they were grouped about Sergeant Previc, already an almost legendary hero of the Liberation.

The explosion, occurring among this group, was devastating in its effect and had reduced the brave soldiers to a mass of broken bodies.

When at last order had been restored an announcement was made that the low-lying cloud had forced back the helicopter to the seaport on the Black Sea where the Liberator had disembarked from his destroyer. He was now making the journey to the capital

by special train and would not arrive before early evening. Slowly the square began to empty.



Three hours after the outrage Pyotr Santovitch, Chief of the State Security Police, was sitting at his desk under a huge portrait of Grenin, idly fingering the papers before him.

He was a thickset man with black, slanting eyes beneath a heavy square forehead and close-cropped grey hair. A bulge in the middle of the dark green tunic of his uniform told of the flabbiness that creeps up in middle age on those with sedentary occupations. Until the Liberation he had been a lecturer in ancient history at the State University, and then Marshal Grenin had persuaded him to undertake his present responsible and fascinating task.

"Police work, like the search for and the imparting of knowledge, is merely the painstaking sifting and application of facts, my dear Pyotr," Grenin had said.

Santovitch and Grenin had been students together in those far-off exciting days immediately after the First World War when the State had been one of the first and most enlightened republics in Central Europe. Santovitch believed in Grenin, he believed above all else in democratic government and he was determined to seek out and destroy the assassin. Somewhere in the reports which littered his desk must lie a pointer to the truth.

Outside the bells of the cathedral began their call to evensong. The lovely comfortable sound was still a sweet novelty in a state which had been denied the public worship of God for almost ten seemingly interminable years.

There was a sharp knock on the door of Santovitch's room. "Come!" he called.

Under-Inspector of Police Mannlich entered briskly and saluted. He was a tall young man, thin as a rail with the blue eyes and almost fair hair of the people from the State's most westerly district.

"Sit down, Mannlich."

Santovitch handed him some notes which he had made, a digest of the meagre facts afforded by the reports on his desk.

"Thank you, sir." Mannlich sat down across the desk from Santovitch and looked at the notes. They told him little enough: the time of the explosion, which a witness had described as muffled, and that nobody had reported anything suspicious in the crowd.



"But why, sir?" Mannlich looked up from the notes. "Why should anyone want to destroy the disabled heroes of the Liberation?"

"*Pour encourager les autres* perhaps." Santovitch's full lips twisted cynically. Mannlich raised one thick wire-haired eyebrow in perplexed query. "'To make an example.'" Santovitch closed his eyes and quoted a saying in ancient Greek.

"Sir?"

"I beg your pardon, Mannlich. Old habits die hard and I forget we are not in the lecture room. '*So perish all who do likewise.*'"

"A warning, sir?"

"Possibly, possibly." Santovitch sighed. "I can't place the original source – the policeman is strangling the pedant in me I fear – but it was quoted by Scipio when Tiberius Gracchus was killed in a riot in Rome; it was 133 B.C. if my memory serves me. His ideas were too advanced; he was a radical, a social reformer."



Mannlich digested this intelligence and, watching him, Santovitch thought that he might have made something of him at the University; he had a capable air.

"The other question, sir, is – how?"

"Speculation along either of these lines is useless, Mannlich; as yet we have no evidence. We must cast about like hounds seeking a new scent. Now then: we know the explosion took place at twenty-minutes-past-two o'clock, and if Marshal Grenin had not been delayed by the weather –" he searched among the papers and picked out a typewritten sheet.

"Here's the timetable for the events of this afternoon: '*Two o'clock,*'" he read, "*'Marshal Grenin arrives. Inspection of guard of honour mounted by the 3rd Battalion, the Orlov Regiment. Speech of welcome by Lord Mayor. Presentation of bouquet by Lord Mayor's daughter. Marshal Grenin replies.'* Ah!" He stabbed at the paper with a thick stubby index finger. "'2:20 presentation of Grand Cross of Supreme Valour to Sergeant Previc.'" "

"Poor old Previc," said Mannlich, "blown to bits; but maybe it's a happy release, he couldn't have had much left to live for."

"No. '*Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste – without everything,*' eh?"

"Yes, sir."

Santovitch pushed back his chair and stood up. He was shorter

than Mannlich, but more powerful; he exuded force, intellectually and physically.

"If the Liberator had arrived on time – and we all know how meticulously punctual he is – he would have been with Sergeant Previc, bending over him to affix the medal to his chest."

"But if the bomb was intended for the Liberator, sir; why throw it when there was no target?"

"You have the wrong verb," said Santovitch impatiently. After a moment he turned back towards Mannlich, and his hands fluttered uncertainly over his tunic as if groping for the support of an academic gown. "I hate uniforms," he said and clasped his hands behind his back. He spoke slowly now with a hard edge to his normally mild voice. "I have an idea so horrible that I do not like to think on it. But we must uncover the truth, however revolting it may be. You saw this Previc today, Mannlich?"

"Yes, sir. I spoke to him." Mannlich shuddered.

"What do you remember of him?" snapped Santovitch.

"He was as excited as a child on Christmas Eve, sir. 'What's the time?' he asked me, and I told him. 'Only a short time, more,' he said, and his sightless eyes seemed to shine."

Santovitch nodded his approval. Mannlich had imagination and humanity. One of his dreams was the establishment of a humane imaginative police force. The young officer standing by his desk might be the nucleus.

"I hadn't heard then that the Liberator had been delayed, sir," Mannlich continued. "'The Liberator won't be late,' Previc said to me. 'He's never late.'"

"The greatest liberator of all is death – and he never misses an appointment."

"I'd always thought of death as a female, sir."

Santovitch made an impatient gesture as if to sweep away such beguiling and foolish discussion.

"I'm not interested in Previc's mental state," he said. "He had lost the use of his legs from a spinal injury, he was condemned to an invalid chair for the rest of his life, he was blind and –" he paused – "his right arm was stiff, wasn't it? Propped up in front of him and bound onto a splint, wasn't it?"

Santovitch had returned to the earlier didactic bullying manner of his short time as a schoolmaster before he got his lectureship at the University. He noticed – and noted for future reference – that Mannlich did not respond to his hectoring approach. Another point in his favour.

"The significance, sir?" Mannlich said stiffly.

"Come!" Santovitch spoke sharply to cover his troubled thoughts. "We shall see."



Grenin Square had been cleared of the public and a cordon of State Police stood guard round the area of devastation.

From the cathedral came the sweet sound of happy, devout voices raised in a hymn of praise, a hymn Santovitch had often sung with Grenin by his side in the chapel of the University. Please God, prayed Santovitch, let this unhappy country return to those carefree and prosperous days. Ambulance men were still at their dreadful work, collecting the grim remains of the dead onto stretchers. One of them was being sick.

Santovitch began to search the ghastly debris methodically with the detached dispassionate air of a scholar turning over the remains of some ancient civilization at an archaeological excavation. He poked about with his stick: a piece of twisted metal, part of the wheel of an invalid chair, a fragment of glass, a strip of torn bandage, a boot with a foot in it.

"Mannlich!" His voice was youthful in its excitement. "What's that?"

His stick pushed at a piece of wood. Mannlich picked it up. It was white, planed smooth and shaped; one end was badly burned, black and cindery; on one side were some markings, part of a name stamped into the wood and a serial number. It was about a foot in length.

"Part of a splint, sir?" suggested Mannlich.

"Yes." Santovitch shuddered; he seemed dispirited and listless. His worst fears had been realized and he was not yet broken in to the beastliness of fanatic hatred. "Trace it through those markings; the matter is of extreme urgency. I'll be back in my room."

Mannlich hurried away. Santovitch walked back to his headquarters, leaning heavily on his stick. If Providence had not delayed the helicopter, his old friend would have been killed with Previc and Previc's comrades in arms. He smiled slightly as he pictured Vaclav Grenin in his railway compartment, fretting at the delay which had saved his valuable life. He had so often told him that one can make too great a fetish of punctuality.

He had ordered the State to be sealed as soon as he had heard of the explosion. No trains, no motor cars, no airplanes could leave

the country. He prayed now that he had not caused the stable door to be shut after the horse had escaped, as the proverb had it.



In an hour and a half Mannlich returned to find Santovitch sitting at his desk, staring grimly out into the gathering dusk.

"The splint," reported Mannlich, "was supplied to the Orlov Military Hospital. The storekeeper there issued it this morning to a Dr. Igor Maroff. He's on the staff and has been for some years. He was screened of course after the Liberation and passed as loyal."

"Was he in charge of Previc's case?" Santovitch asked without looking up.

"Yes, sir. Previc was still attending the hospital for treatment; he was there this morning. It must be Previc's splint, but - ?" Mannlich stopped as Santovitch picked up the internal telephone receiver.

"Santovitch here," he snapped into it. "General emergency call. I want Dr. Igor Maroff of the Orlov Military Hospital - and I want him dead or alive. This is urgent."

"I'm sorry, sir," said Mannlich, "but I do not understand."

"How do you imagine that the splint became charred?" asked Santovitch patiently.

"From the explosion, sir."

"Correct. Go on."

Mannlich hesitated. "May I recap, sir?"

"Please." Santovitch was thinking that while Mannlich might provide the humanity and imagination, he lacked the ability for detection necessary in the nucleus of a new police force. Mannlich's forehead wrinkled in unaccustomed concentration.

"A bomb was thrown -" he began.

"No!" Santovitch brought the flat of his hand down on the desk. "The bomb was not *thrown*. I told you before that you had used the wrong verb. The splint was bound to Previc's arm, was it not?"

He picked up a piece of wood and thrust it towards Mannlich. "How could it then have been charred by an explosion of a bomb *thrown* by an assassin? The explosive with a time mechanism set for minutes past two was bound to Previc's arm. Previc was blind, was he not? The operation would be easy for his doctor. Only such

a device could have charred and burnt the splint *inside* the bandage. And remember – the explosion was muffled.”

There was horror in Mannlich's pale eyes.

“What a horrible plan!”

“Diabolical. Maroff planned to murder the Liberator by blowing up his own patient. Shades of Hippocrates!”

The telephone buzzed quietly.

“Santovitch here.” He listened and then put the receiver down with an air of finality. He stood up and reached for his uniform cap and stick. “Maroff has paid the price of murder; he was shot an hour ago while attempting to cross the eastern frontier to his friends; he ignored an order to stop.”

“*So perish all who do likewise,*” said Mannlich tentatively.

Santovitch looked at him with surprise.

“Good,” he said, “good.”

Mannlich smiled with pleasure. “I can't quite remember the Greek, sir,” he said.

“Come!” With a light step Santovitch walked towards the door. “We must go to the railway station to welcome the Liberator.”

© Peter Fraser, 1965.

---

## EW BOOK MART

*A service for EWMM readers without  
charge for buying, selling, or  
exchanging any books by*

EDGAR WALLACE

*(Each advertisement, other than from subscribers, should be accompanied by  
price figure cut from front cover of the current EWMM)*

OFFERED: *The Thief in the Night*, Readers Library (damaged spine), and *The Man Who Was Nobody*, Ward Lock 1929 ed., foxed. Exchange, what have you? Box A50, EWMM.

EARLY EW's and war-time paper covers (1914-18). Anything up to 1925 considered for purchase. Collector, Flat 1, Nyewood House, The Avenue, Nyewood Lane, Bognor Regis.

EDGAR WALLACE books wanted, buy or exchange. H. A. Smith, 20, Ransome Avenue, Scole, Diss, Norfolk.

BOOKS BY Edgar Wallace wanted. Fair price given for good copies. Box A51, EWMM.

---



# NEW BOOKS

## JOHN de SOLA

SUCH WOMEN ARE DEADLY, Leonard Gribble (*John Long*, 21s.)

A collection of twelve true murder cases ranging from Mary Blandy to such a case as Simone Deschamps, who, to quote the prosecution in the Seine Assize Court in 1958, 'killed Marie-Clair Evenou in the manner of a beast using its claws'.

It is all fine, dramatic stuff, and it gives us a bird's-eye view of several women who found murder a quick and efficient way to settle their problems.

Mr. Gribble is such an expert writer that it seems a waste of his time that he should bother with impressionistic, women's magazine treatments of murder cases. And that he should stretch poetic licence to the point where he is the invisible presence who observed, for example, that Mary Blandy's cook 'stood blinking at her, open-mouthed'.

CALL AFTER MIDNIGHT, M. G. Eberhart (*Collins*, 15s.)

Ever since 1929 when I read Miss Eberhart's first book, *The Patient in Room 18*, she has possessed for me a blend of the best characteristics of Mary Roberts Rinehart and Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, plus her own brightness and freshness of thought.

This novel has the to-be-expected qualities of sober narration and feminine warmth. The plot nub is easily described, telling of a woman who learns from her ex-husband that things have happened which cause him to fear that he might be accused of trying to murder his new wife . . . and when murder actually occurs, the story grows exciting, and is very clever.

DEATH IN SUNLIGHT, Frank Lester (*Robert Hale*, 12s. 6d.).

An adroitly told mystery containing a treasure hunt with the usual buried secret being sought by the usual crowd of self-interested people one expects. Partly against an Arab background the plot unfolds with few surprises.

The enjoyment is in the writing, and the expert construction of

the mystery; the author's touch is light, the narrative good-humoured and superficial. Pure readability and entertainment.

**DEATH OF A GOLDEN GOOSE**, Helen Mace (*Hammond, Hammond*, 13s. 6d.)

Novelist Owen Latimer, one of those best-selling writers who dallies with all sorts of women, goes to the annual convention week of the Chaucer Club. When he becomes the prime part of murder, all hell – as they say – breaks loose.

Australian in background, and very neatly written, here is a thoroughly enjoyable whodunit.

**GREENMASK!** Anne Blaidsdell (*Gollancz*, 15s.)

Third in this month's quartet of lady crime writers, Miss Blaidsdell writes a bookish mystery. When I read of a warning object being tied in bright green satin ribbon and labelled: *This is Number One! Greenmask*, this reviewer gasped with disbelief, then breathed easily at the last paragraph to chapter one: 'Greenmask, he thought. My God. What the hell! A bad 1920 crime novel'.

That is the twist in a story which needs no summary here, and must be read, particularly by the crime fiction addict who knows every twist of the game and cannot be surprised. No?

**GOLDEN TEDDYBEAR, The**, John Marsh (*Boardman*, 13s. 6d.)

Refugees are waiting in a tunnel to make their escape from east into west Berlin. Kate Hunzler gets away but her husband and baby, and others following her, are caught. On that hinge the story is hung, the baby's teddybear being a vital part of the well-woven plot. Top marks for narrative and gusto.

**NOTHING IS THE NUMBER WHEN YOU DIE**, Joan Fleming (*Collins*, 15s.)

Nuri Bey, that unusual and intriguing Turkish investigator, is involved in a problem that takes him from Istanbul to Oxford. Murder and drug-smuggling are integral parts of the plot, and there are several wholly fascinating characters to beguile the reader. The characters rise above the story, which is distinctly weak.

**PREY BY DAWN**, Henry Kane (*Boardman*, 13s. 6d.)

This one opens with detail most American crime novels save for about chapter five, a gimmick this reviewer did not fancy at all.

But Mr. Kane makes up for it with fast and ingenious writing in which he tells the story of Charles Thayer, who possesses a hundred million dollars, and gets tangled in mayhem and murder in the worlds of commerce and fashion. Watch the book's title – it hides a lot.

## A SCATTER OF PAPERBACKS

**CATFISH TANGLE, The, Charles Williams (*Pan*, 3s. 6d.)**

Terrific suspense, excellently contrived by a top-flight writer. Briefly, to protect his boss and draw fire, the deputy sheriff gets out of town . . . and into hot water.

**IPCRESS FILE, The, Len Deighton (*Panther*, 3s. 6d.)**

The loudly-boasted answer to 007, a big seller in hard-covers, but – to this reviewer – irritating in style and boring as a tale. The non-critical may like it.

**LOVE THIEVES, The, Peter Packer (*Pan*, 5s.)**

A fictional version of the Starr Faithfull murder in 1929, which is unsolved – she inspired *Butterfield 8* and *Lolita*, and now this readable novel, if you like reading about drabs.

**SAINT OVERBOARD, Leslie Charteris (*Hodder & Stoughton*, 3s. 6d.)**

Written in 1936, the story has the Saint after deep sea treasure, battling the usual quota of fearful foreign villains. Zestful, enjoyable, small-boyish.

**TOFF AND THE KIDNAPPED CHILD, The, John Creasey (*Hodder & Stoughton*, 3s. 6d.)**

The 29th adventure of the clever Mr. Rollison; this time we have kidnapping and rogues who ship young girls abroad . . . full of excitement, reminiscent of an adult 'Saint'.

**TOUCH OF THUNDER, A, Brian Cooper (*Pan*, 5s.)**

Major Fraser, of British Intelligence, narrates this adventure in India, containing plenty of stock figures. Filled with violence and toughness; top marks for tension.



# Readers Pay . . .

*Extracts from current letters. Opinions expressed are those of the writers. Publication in this open forum does not necessarily mean that EWMM agrees with any views offered.*

## Juveniles and Thrillers

I agree with Miss Conyth Fielder [February] regarding books being blamed for juvenile delinquency. During the late twenties and early thirties I used to read everything I could get my hands on – British and American detective magazines, comics, boys' twopenny bloods (as they were called by our fathers, who forget they read them before 1914 or 1900!)

My parents used to shake their heads in sorrow – 'no wonder,' they would say, 'there are all these murders, and cruelty, in these days.' Nowadays I show critical old-timers a copy of *Sweeny Todd the Demon Barber*. Published in the 1880s, it shows him cutting a customer's throat (on the front page!) before dropping him into the dark regions below his shop.

London, W.10.

J. R. SWAN

## Kate Webster

You were kind enough to send me *EWMM* for February because of my known interest in Kate Webster, who murdered her mistress, Mrs. Julia Thomas, in a Richmond house in 1879.

Though it is so long ago I am not so decrepit that my memory cannot recall that, when I was six-years-old in 1882, my parents rented Mrs. Thomas's house for a year, quite disinterested in what had happened there.

We passed a happy year; no ghosts appeared, and I still remember a lady named (I think) Ives from next door who regaled my mother with terrifying 'eye-witness' stories of the murder. But, I believe, for all her sins Kate Webster was liked locally and her penny-pinching mistress was not.

Swansea, Glam.

E. D. EDMUNDS

● *Editorial memory recalls a night spent at 85, Claverton Street, Victoria, where the Bartlett murder occurred; no ghosts walked that night, either.*

## Missing Story?

John de Sola's excellent review of Jack London's *The Assassination Bureau* [February] deeply interested me.

I knew him many years ago in the States; I recall a landlady in whose house we both stayed (the name was Cleed or Creed). She professed herself a great detective story fanatic. Jack wrote her one in his own hand, and presented it to her. It was a wonderful story, the title having something about 'Killer's Kid' in it. Was it ever published?

Maidstone, Kent

F. E. MITCHELL-EDGE

● *It does not appear in our edition of Moon-Face, nor in Ellery Queen's invaluable The Detective Short Story. Can any EWMM reader help? If unpublished, this magazine will be proud to print such a story.*

## Questions of Reform

I would not involve myself in the controversy on hanging, but believe much of our punishment system is sadly at fault.

Surely the punishment of criminals should be just and severe? Car speeding appears a worse sin than robbery and violence, according to some sentences given out. And train robbery is a far worse crime than murder, on the same basis. I think too many reformers are blowing hot and cold until we are almost in danger of giving our criminals rewards and solace for their misdeeds. And, worst of all, are all our judges *qualified*? My point is this: barristers and court officials have to pass stiff examinations, etc., before they are accepted . . . but who trains men on the bench to be judges?

Would not the wholesale re-building of our prisons be a very important thing? Many of them at present are wholly revolting. Loss of liberty and strict regimen are bad punishment and are right, but not in places which would disgrace the workhouses of Charles Dickens' time.

Bournemouth, Hants.

A. F. RUSTONJI

● *Some of your notions are confused, sir, but at least your straightforward opinions are from the heart. We gladly pay our monthly guinea for this letter, but take no sides, leaving that to our readers.*

# It's a gift-

to yourself, a subscription to *Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine*. It means that we will post your copy direct to you every month. And if you would like somebody else to share your pleasure with you, why not take up a subscription for a relative or friend? Months of enjoyable reading will come out of this gift . . . pamper yourself for once!

---

**To the Publisher, Edgar Wallace Magazines, Ltd.,  
4, Bradmore Road, OXFORD, U.K.**

Please send EWMM for  12 months (40/-)  6 months (20/-)  
I enclose  cash  cheque  money/postal order.

(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

(COMMENCE WITH ISSUE No. ....)



Jeremy Kemp and Rosemary Leach in a scene from the new Edgar Wallace film, *Face of a Stranger*, the latest Anglo-Amalgamated presentation now generally released